

and hills

Are white with yester-even's snow, and

In ghostly state beneath the ghostly

many a gusty blast the darkness fills

With ever lonely, homeless sound, and chills

The window panes with frost; when crackling fly

The sparks about the hearth, and glow and die. in the pause his note the cricket

trille: Oh, then how dear is home! and what e

Of roddy warmth and peace beguiles

And what a charm in listening while the wind Rlows fierce outside, through winter's

starry tents,

And dies away around the window pane,

And ever rises loud, and dies again! - Ernest Warburton Shurtleff.

かかったサイングラン NOEL CLAYTON'S CHRISTMAS

gaunt, with clear, candid, blue eyes, and his white bands, small kept and nervous-looking, were as well kept as those of a woman.

He was thirty, and a splash of grayon either temple, a strand or two or white in his mustache, made him look

He was broad-chested and muscular by all rules—he should have been a sol-dier—he looked an "open air" man, but for five years he had been writing short stories, povelettes and serials for the weekly press.

It was good, nervous work. His name was becoming known, for he had the happy knack of blending pathos with hu-He had traveled widely, and an Australian bush idyl at the beginning of the week would be followed again by a story of rustic life in the dear West Country that he loved so well.

He lived quite alone, worked—and smoked—from morning to night, loved his profession, and had practically dropped all his friends-male and femalend when a fit of the not infrequent blues got him by the throat, threw his pen into the grate and ordered up his landlady's children, and pandem reigned for an hour.

Sometimes he gave them pennies, but not always-small coin of the realm is not always available to authors-

romps were huge, and he enjoyed them-Of course there was a woman at the bottom of the tangle of the man's life. and women complicate things sometimes he would have said "always."

On one particular evening he was alone and writing, when Jim Courtenay was in-and Jim was an old and tried friend-about the only friend the lonely. self-absorbed man had, and so the in comer sat down and lighted his pipe, and did not bother the author for quite a quarter of an hour, and then Noel rose and stretched himself.

What is it this time, Noel?"

"Oh, the usual thing-love; and candidly I am getting so sick of writing

'Ah! you feel like that?" "Man alive, this is Christmas Eve, and -somehow-my thoughts went back with a jump, and I remembered one

'Your pipe's out, Noel!" "Aye, so it is, Well, there was one Christmas Eve when-

"My dear boy, are you worrying about

Yes," and then a long pause

It is the privilege of chums to alt ailent for a spell.

"And all this happened four or five years ago. I never heard the rights or wrongs of the story."

Noel crossed the room, and digging both hands into his pockets, looked at

"There is nothing to know. After the four happy years of married life, trouble came between us, lies came between us and-and-here I am and it's Christmas Eve. Of course our baby was only a mite—a wee, blue-eyed, golden-inited mite; couldn't walk, crawled, you know: but we were awful chums, and when she went and took our mile-well," and the man's laugh hurt his own ears. "Well, then I took to writing love stories-love, old chap, with a happy ending-bishops bridesunids, bouquets and blessings. and"-his temporary excitement had left

m—he added dryly: "And it pays! Now go, old chap. must get my stuff done for the early and Chum went out while Noel turned again to his interrupted work.

Between each line on every page quaint turns of expression, quaint thoughts baunted him, a dead past spoke

The girl-wife had been very sweet, very lovable, very beautiful-and had

There should be a special place of torment for the person who deliberately comes between two people who love each other and smilingly warps two lives.

Pearl Clayton was as easily led as a soft, emotional, weak little man, and whon Noel returned from a holiday he found the house closed and Pearl and Baby had depart-

Noel drifted for a little bit, the shock mnanned him terribly, but his pen his sole source of income, and it had to be plied if body and soul were to be keptogether, and in a very few weeks he had, to some extent, regained his menta-

The eve of Christmas and the day itself appeals to most hearts, and on the particular eve Noel kept thinking back and thinking back while he wrote.

How well he remembered the extra end stocking he induced the nurse t knit, and how bulky it looked and felt or Christmas morning. And then came school, college, and then married life.

When the scribbling Bt was on him Pearl used to draw her law wicker chair se to his writing table, knitting, o daintily fingering white material soft and downy and fuffy for the prospective wearer, and the few remarks she made second to chime in and identify them seives with what he was writing: but of course, all this happened five years

One odd little trick Pearl had, and Noel remembered it this evening-and nissed it.

When his pen was working extra estry she used to lay the tips of fingers upon his right hand-just where nd meets wrist. She did not incom mode him in the least. He declared her such inspired him; they were such pink tipped fingers, and so small, and he often written with the tiny touch on his wrist almost unconsciously-only peeping up from time to time at a awee face, into deep violet eyes love lit.

So he wrote on, feeling a little bit serry that Chum had not stayed, for afwork before him, and then they could sit and chat, and perhaps drown the sound at the exact hour of Christ's birth,

But, of course, this was five years

yes tea, dimmed, was t'ears.

"I have returned, Noci." It was a mavering little voice, but it thrilled him.

w like she was to their child. And then the bells clashed forth their essage. "Peace on Earth, Good Will Powards Men," and to two hearts they erried a sweeter, deeper message still, No word was spoken. A small figure, a smoking jacket that reached to his stood at the dividing door, as

ager face turned to either. and husband and wife kissed silently

OLD CHRISTMAS SAYINGS.

An old German saying is that between 11 and 12 o'clock on Christmas we water can be turned into wine,

A Montenegrin saying about Christwas eye is "To-night carth is blended. with Paradise."

The lamp, or candle, must not be alowed to burn itself out on Christmas eve or there will be a death in the anully within the year.

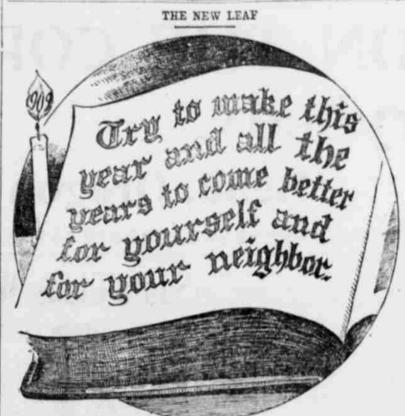
A Magyar superstition is that any ne who cats nuts without honey on 'hristmas will lose his teeth.

mother is that a pillow turned at aiduight will bring dreams of a fo

It is unlucky to trap on Christmas day.

ancient Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxous called Christmas "Mother's Night," the name being handed down to the Chratiantzed people from an old pagan festival formerly celebruted about this senson of the year.

The Sicilian children place pennyroyal in the beds Christmas eve beenuse they believe it always flowers



of the bells that he knew would ring out

He was just in the frame of mind to ummon his landlady's children, but exept for himself, the house was empty There was a Christmas Eve party going on, and Mrs. Marsh and her progeny were attending it.

He had been writing for half an hour ince Chum had left him, and felt the old familiar touch on his wrist. It was imagination of course, he did not even turn his head, and then he was looking into blue eyes, in the round golden-curied framed face of a boy of four, who laughed up at him and presented a rosebud to

"Goodness, childyou come from? and who-who brought you? What is your name?"

"Eric," and the child began to make preparations for climbing a lofty knee. "Who brought you here, Buby Eri-? How did you come?

Noel felt like an Irish member of Par liament, for "no answer was given," but a wee form, full of hugs and kisses, got fast hold upon him, and said gravely,

and yet with a sweet air of command: "Just come'd-and now if you're not too busy, mister Father-

Yes, my son "P'raps-I'd better go to bed."

"But, my child-my little soubrought you here? where is your mothand the tall man, suddenly releasing his first-born, paced up and down. Of course, Chum had left the door open, and someone had told the child to walk straight in-and the child had-straight

The author-his tiny son was on th floor now, saying things to the est, and it deserved every word, being a cut that licks stamps off letters, and loves bacon and boiled eggs-thrust his hands deep nto his pockets and looked down, sad

eyed, at little Sunny-face. Yes, perhaps you had better come to hed."

If Chum would only come, if some thing would only happen to break the silence, a silence only cleft by the sigh

The church was only at the end of the

He could hear the bell-ringers shuffling along the frosty pavement, in a few minutes-and he bent to his work.

Haif asleep, haif awake, he was con scious of the old, almost forgotten touch upon his wrist-a dream doubtless-but could not shake it off, and then he looked down.

Kneeling as of yore beside him, blue

A live coal should never be carried out of the house on Christmas eve. All children born at midnight December 31 will become great and

Youthful Schemer.

Little Emerson-You don't believe in any such ridiculous myth as Santa Claus?

Tough Jimmy-Naw! I'm next to dat game. All de same, it's a good graft to let on you believe in him an' git all dat's conin' to you.

An Insuperable Objection.

I would like to give myself to you as a Christmas present," said young Poore to Miss Rocks.

"Papa does not allow me to receive expensive presents from young men," replied the maiden.-Town Topics,

Cruel Man.

Mrs. Newpop-Charley, what are you olug to give baby for Christmas?

Mr. Newpop (with visions of past nights) -A sleeping potion if he keeps on like he has lately.

Where Extension Was Craved. "You wish your stocking was bigger, don't you, dear?" asked mamma of Da

"No'm; my stummick."-Judge. THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT.



Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER IV.

It was finally settled. Alison felt that duty called her home, and soon the day came when she had to part from Aunt Diana. It was a sail leave-taking, and the tears were in Alison's eyes long after the train steamed slowly into the Chesterton station. Alison gathered up her numerous articles of traveling gear, and looked out with some engerness, but Rog er's tall figure was nowhere in sight, and, much disappointed and perplexed, she gave a porter instructions about her tray eling boxes.

"Will you fetch me a cab, please?" fal tered Alison, feeling ready to cry again at her loneliness, and wondering at Roger's unkind desertion, and then all once she encountered a pair of round blue eyes, very wide open. She started; yes, was the wide mouth, the droll, freckled face that she remembered so well; of course it was Rudel, grown, but not otherwise altered, grinning affably at

Why, Rudel," she exclaimed, repreachwhy did you not speak to me? was looking for Roger, and nearly passes

"Oh, but I should have hallosed all in good time," he returned, with another grin, shaking hands with her, but refraining from any warmer fraternal greeting.

As soon as she was seated in he got in after her, and proceeded to put down both windows. "You would not like me to go outside, I suppose," he said, in a good-humored, dawdling voice; "these cals are so stuffy they make a fellow

"Go outside if you like," returned Alison, willing to humor him, but rather disturbed at the boy's coolness.

"Oh, it does not matter," was the contradictory response; "we have not far to go, and cabby is so unusually stout there would not be room for Otter. - Oh. by the bye, Roger told me to tell you that father told him that somebody else must come to the station, as he could not be spared. Roger was awfully put about for he said I should be no help, and I have not been much, eh?" with another grin that threatened to became a laugh.

"I wish dear old Roger could have come, but I am glad to see you, too," was Alison's police reply. "I thought you would have kissed me after two years of

"Oh, I never kiss girls," reddening vis thly.

"Not your own slaters?" exclaimed Allson, in a grieved voice. "Ob, Rudel, you used not to be so stiff and unkind."

"I ain't one or the other," rousing up at this repreach. "I think it is first-rate your coming, I mean and you are no end of a brick to do lt, and," with sudden burst of confidence, "I shouldn't mind giving you a kiss now and then, when you wanted it particularly, if you would promise not to tell Missie; I would not give her one-no, not if she were to ask me on her bended knees a stuck-up little minx !"

"Oh, Rudel, for shame! Mabel is a much your slater as I am.

"No, she isn't, and never shall be," growled the lad. "I tell you what, Alion, you are an out-and-outer, and no mistake, and I will help you fight all your battles, that I will, as sure as my name is Rudel, and that is better than ever so

"Dear Rudel, I am sure you mean kindly, though you have such a funny of showing it; but I have no wish to fight any one."

"Oh, but you will be obliged to fight Missie, whether you wish for it or not," was the cool rejoinder; but Alison was spared any further argument on this sub ject, as they had reached The Holms, and In another moment were driving up the graveled sweep between rows of dusty

The Holms was a singularly built house A square, stone hall, uncarpeted chilly looking, led to the kitchen and orbed domestic offices, all on a large scale and unusually roomy; a wide flight of atone steps, differing from the modern staircase by being also uncovered, led to the sitting rooms, dining room, drawing room, school room, and study, all open ing on to a narrow corridor, fitted from end to end with books-books literaly lining it from floor to ceiling.

As Alison wearily ascended the steps a thin ladylike woman in a black gown with a depressed, gentle face, came to the head of the staircase.

"I am so glad to see you, my dear," she mid, kiming her affectionately, "Why I do believe you are grown, Alison; you are tailer than I expected to see you, but you are looking pale."

"Oh, that is nothing," returned Ali son, hastily. "I am tired with the jour For just then she did not wish he looks to be too keenly criticised. are the others, Miss Leigh-father, Mabe and Popple?"

"I am so sorry, Alison, that I am the only one to greet your homecoming. Ma-bel and Popple are out; they had an invitation to an afternoon party at the Brownlow's; it is little Stacy's birthday. wanted Mabel to stay at home and le Popple go without her, but she would

"Never mind, returned Alison, quietly but she was conscious of a hurt, chilled feeling as Miss Leigh brought out this lame excuse. This was her return home after two years' absence, and yet Roger be spared to meet her at the

afternoon's amusement to welcome her sister. Her father was busy as usual; probably he had forgotten her existence as

"You are very tired, my dear," continued Miss Leigh, disturbed at the young girl's sudden gravity and paleness, "Shall I take you to your room, and send you up a cup of tea? I daresay you would like to be quiet a little."

"Thank you," replied Alison, grateful-Rudel skipped up after her, three steps at a time.

I suppose you do not want to see Sulky now, Alfson?" 'No, no," interrupted Miss Leigh, "your

down and leave her to cest." "Oh, I was not talking to you, Mother Leigh," was the boy's rude retort; and as Alison furned round to shake her head him, she discovered him in the act

sister is tired, Rudel; you had better go

of making one of his favorite faces at the back of the unrousclous governess. "I say, missus," he observed, when he had sufficiently relieved his feelings, "have you told Alison about her room?"

'No, not yet, Rudel," returned the much-enduring Miss Leigh,

Then I shall. I call it a mean trick of Missie's; no one but a girl would do such a thing; here she has been and taken your room, Alison, with mother's things in it; and nothing the missus can say will get her to give it up. Missus is awfully wild about it, ain't you, missus?"

"Oh. Rudel! do be quiet," remonstrated Miss Leigh, in the old worried voice Alison knew so well. "What a tiresome boy you are! and I wanted to tell your sister quietly. Alison, my dear, I am very sor-ry, but Mabel has appropriated your oom, and most improperly refuses to give I spoke to your father shout it last night, but he only said it did not signify, that he expected you would not mind, as your visit to us might not be a very lengthy one. I think you had bet ter speak to him yourself."

"I will see almot it," returned Allson, quickly, saxious to stem the governous nervous flow of words. "Am I to sleep here to-night?" as Miss Leigh opened the loor of a back room.

"I have made it as nice as I can," turned Miss Leigh, apologetically, "but I am afraid you will think it an ugly room: wants repspering, and the carpet is dreadfully old."

"Ob, it will do very well," observed Alleon, quietly; but she looked round her with a minking heart nevertheless. was Mabel's old room and very shabbily furnished, and looked over the kitchen garden and the sawmills.

She listened with well assumed patience as Miss Leigh pointed out the various little improvements she had effected. Though Alison did not know it, the easy hair and little round table were taken from Miss Leigh's own room; the fuchsins and geraniums in the blue vase were Hoger's gift; and even Rudel had conributed the hig green fern that stood on the window ledge.

"Now, I will send you up your tes," observed Miss Leigh at last, when the boxes had arrived, and Rudel had assist ed to unstrap them: "there is no hurry my dear; you will have nearly two hours to yourself to unpack and rest."

Alison tried to answer cheerfully, but her head was aching in earnest now; the tears were very near the surface again but she buttled with them bravely

CHAPTER V.

A cup of excellent tea was very restora tive in list effects, and when Alison had freshened her tired face with cold water, and brushed her dishereled locks, and exchanged her traveling dress for a light cool-looking, rephyr cloth costume, felt less reluctance to present herself to the critical eves of her father and Mahel

"May I come in?" questioned a voice that she knew at once was Roger's, and in a moment she had sprung joyfully to the door.

"Oh, Roger, you dear old fellow, I an so glad to see you again!" she exclaimed, forgetting all her troubles in the sight of his familiar face. Evidently her pleas are was reciprocated; a pair of strong arms almost lifted her off her feet, and here her across the room toward the win dow, and after a hasty kiss or two. Roger put his hand under her chin and grave-

ly inspected her. "I suppose you are glad to see me," he observed at length, "as you have been crying evidently at the pleasurable anticipation. So you are sorry to come home Alison, ch? and yet"-rather fully-"you are wanted very bully here."

Alison's only answer was to lay her face down on his arm; this was a little too much for her jaded spirits, a few more tears would come. Roger had found her out, as she knew he would

"Come now, this won't do, Allie," he said, with a sort of soothing roughness; we shall pack you back again to Aunt Diana, if you are going to fret. I looked for rather a different greeting after two

"I can't help it," she said, trying to dismiss her tears; "I am tired, and everything seems strange to-night, and I do miss Aunt Diana.

"Yes, she has spoiled you for us; you have grown a dainty little lady, Allie "Oh, no: I am not spoiled in that way," she interrupted him breathlessly

You can not quite understand, Roger but there is such a mixed feeling. have wanted you all these two years; you have never been out of my mind a single day.

"Well, I am glad to have you back to scold you properly. What color are your eyes generally, Alison? They are as They are as pink as an Albino's to-night."

"It is my turn to look at you," she returned, trying to pluck up a little "Why, you have grown a mustache, Roger. How well it suits you !"but Roger only broke into a merry laugh.

fellow? Really, Rudel and I are marvel ous specimens of manly beauty. He beats me in freckles, though, ha, ha!" station, and Mabel could not give up an Roger quite rocked himself in merriment.

"I like the look of you very much, returned Alison. "Your bair is a little rough and, sh! your boots are muldy You have wanted me to keep you

order "I don't seem to match you, somehow," he observed. "Do you always look as though you were just turned out of a bandbox? I wish you would take Missie and Popple in hand; they drive Miss Leigh crany with their untidiness. we are a happy family, Allie nothing but billing and cooling, and that sort of thing going on from morning to night. You might take Rudel and Missle for a couple of love birds, the sweet young creatures are so fond of each other, and as for Poppie and Missie look, there is a specimen of the home music dulcet strains floating up the staircase. There

Alison's brow knitted with some perplexity as she listened. "Flora, will you go into your own room? I insist on ityou are not fit to be seen in that torn frock," in a sharp, girlish voice.

Khe won't What does it matter? mind," in a shrill, childish treble; "you are so cross, Mabel. Do let me come in with you and see Alison.

"No, no; do as I tell you; you shall come in presently. There! you have trampled on my dress and torn some of the trimming, you borrid little thing! I will tell papa if you are so naughty, and then he will not let you come down to Here an expressive roar on Poppie's part interrupted the discussion. Allwho could bear no more, moved quickly to the door and opened It. A pretty looking, fair-baired girl, dressed mewhat untidity and in had style, with rather a vixenish expression on her flushed face, was standing just outside Alison's room, and behind her a somewhat plain little girl between eight and alue years of age, rather small in stature, and with a droll, freekled face like Rudel's, only it. was just now puckered up with cryinga red, inflamed spot on one cheek was evidently the result of a smart blow on her sister's part in payment for the torn trimming.

"How do you do, Mabel?" she said, with a somewhat cold salute of Missie's check. 'Please do not prevent Popple coming to me. I could not help hearing, you spoke so loud, and I do not mind one bit how she looks. Come here, Popple, dear;" but the child, evidently shy and upant by the late fracus, held back in an embarrassed manner, until Missie gave her a rough push. "Why don't you go to Allson, you stupid little thing?" said crossly, for she was put out at her sister's sudden appearance on the acene

"Please do not force her to come to me; we shall be very good friends directreturned Alison, sorry for the poor child's awkwardness, "Come with me Poppie dear; Roger is in my room, and I show you the pretty new game have brought for you.

The child's face brightened in a sent, and she moved instantly to take Ali-

son's hand; again Missie Interposed. "She must change her frock, Alison; tea is just ready, and I hear papa's step in the garden. He will be very angry if Poppie looks rough or untidy; and I can not allow him to be vexed," pursing up

her lips with a virtuous expression Alison controlled a quick retort with some difficulty. She had fully expected to find Missie a most aggravating little person, or why should Miss Leigh complain of her so bitterly? But the reality

was worse than she anticipated.
"Never mind," she said, calmly; "we oust not was pape, must we, Popple? I will help you change your frock, and perhaps after all we may have time to look at the fish ponds." And without another glance at Missie, Allson made Poppie cheerfully lead the way, as she did not

As Alison, after dressing Popple, came down the staircase with the child still dinging to her, Mr. Merle suddenly made his appearance from the study. He al-most started at the sight of his daughter, and an expression of pain crossed his bandsome, careworn face. In the dim light Alison recalled her mother too plain

ly to his eyes.
"Oh, pape," she said, hurrying to him, and putting up her fair young face to He kissed her kindly, patted it, told her that she had grown into a woman since he had seen her, and questioned her some interest about her journey.

The dining room, a large, handsomely furnished room, looked sufficiently cony as they entered it. Missle was in the sent of bonor; she gave a little simper ing laugh as Alison entered with her fath-"I suppose this will be your place to-morrow." she said, for, as Alise plied sluply, "I suppose so, but I need not disturb you to-night," a vexed look crossed Missie's face, but as Rudel was already grinning in hopes of a row she prudently disappointed him.

When they rose from the table, Missie's first words were a peremptory order for Popple to put away her toys and go to This led to a feeble protest on Miss Leigh's part.

"It is not so very late, Mabel, and Popple has not seen her sister for two years. I think she might wait a little longer." "I am not going; there now !" observed

the child, defiantly, quite oblivious of her father's presence. "Go it, Pops. I'll back you," whispered

Rudel, rubbing his hands; "she sha'n't touch you as long as I am here." Mabel's eyes flashed. "You borrid, rude ooy. Papa-" But here Alison gently

interfered. "You will go to bed now, dear, will you not?" she whispered in the child's ear,
"and I will come and tuck you up, and
wish you good-night." And thus propitiated, Poppie's sullenness vanished, and

she trotted on at once. (To be continued.)

Cancer of the stomach causes about 9,000 deaths a year in the United States and nearly 5,000 in England and

