



excitedly. But the little fir cried: "I don't want to go."

"Why not?" asked the white-tailed deer, and the little fir told of the children.

And the deer came closer, and for a long time the two whispered together, and presently a big gray rabbit joined them, and a white owl flew down and added wise counsel, and after a while the deer and the rabbit and the owl went away, and the little tree lay very, very still until midnight.

Then when all the other trees slept it rolled from the sled into the snow, and the wind, which blew through the forest asked, "What are you trying to do, little tree?" And the little tree said, "Help me to stand." So the wind blew under it until it was upright on its stem, and then the little tree went hopity-hop, hopity-hop, until it came to a sheltered valley, and there it lay down and went to sleep.

It lay there sleeping and waking in the sunshine until the men came and carried off the sled full of young trees, but no one noticed that the little fir was gone.

And the night before Christmas the wind blew and blew again until the little fir tree stood upright on its stem, and the little white owl, and the deer pushed softly against the door of the cottage, and the owl pecked at the lock, and the rabbit hunched and hit with his hind feet until the door was opened. And then the little fir tree bent its head and went in and stood in the corner of the room, and the three wild things of the forest went softly from room to room, and came back with things to hang on the tree. And last of all the little gray owl flew to the topmost branch and hung there the pink wax angel with golden wings.

"They are good children," said the little white owl, as he flew down again. "When the winter is cold, they hang scraps of meat for me on the trees."

"And they put carrots in the path," said the rabbit, "and cabbage, so that I may not go hungry."

"And behind the barn they drop armfuls of sweet, juicy hay," said the deer, "that I may come in the night and feed."

And the little fir tree said: "They are good children, and I would rather be here than in the big, big city. And then it whispered, "Good-night," and the wild things went away.

And in the morning when the children came, they cried, "Oh, father, father, look at the beautiful tree!" And the lumberman came in and cried in astonishment, "Who brought it here?" And the little fir tree whispered and sang:

"I ran away from the forest. I ran away."

But they could not understand, and so they stared and wondered, and at last the lumberman said, "It is too late to carry it now to the city, so it can stay." And at that the children cried, "A Merry Christmas to all!" And the fir tree whispered happily, "A Merry Christmas!" And out in the forest the owl and the rabbit and the white-tailed deer wished each other "A Merry Christmas!" as they hurried away through the snow.—Evening Wisconsin.

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND.

A soldier in a scarlet coat,
One winter long ago,
Went out and met a pretty maid
In woodlands white with snow;
She stood beneath an ancient oak;
Her name was Mistletoe.

Her cheeks and lips were glowing red,
Like poppies in the wheat;
Her locks were twined with milky pearls,
Her eyes were blue and sweet;
He looked and loved, and, kneeling,
Laid his saber at her feet.

From icy regions of the Pois
The north wind blew all night,
And hung the branches of the pine
With tinkling fringes bright,
And made beneath the aged oak
A frozen mound of white.

But when the panes are thick with frost
And nights are bitter chill,
And silence, in a crystal coat,
Has eased the silver rill,
The pair of faithful lovers haunt
The wintry woodland still.

When with the burden of its years
The oak is bending low,
The soldier-holly, stiff and straight,
Stands bravely in the snow,
Its slender asher still unshathed
To guard the mistletoe.
—Minna Irving in the Criterion.

"This is our tree," said one of them proudly. "On Christmas it will be lighted with candles, with an angel on the topmost bough."

"Such a dear little tree," said another; "how we shall love it."

And in the evening, when the sun made a red path of light on the snow, the children came again, and when they saw that tree had been cut down they cried: "Where is our own little tree?" And the little tree that lay on the top of the sled answered loudly: "Here I am, here I am," but the children did not understand, they rubbed their eyes with their rough red hands and sobbed.

"What's the matter?" asked their father, as he came tramping through the wood.

"Oh, our little tree, our own little tree," wailed the children. "It is cut down and piled with the other trees that are to be sent to the city."

"We are too poor to have a tree this year," said the tired man, sadly, and the children went away mourning.

And the sun went down and the moon came up, and showed the dark forest and all the little fir trees lying on the great sled, and presently the animals of the forest began to creep, creep among the new white stumps.

"So you are going to the city," said the white-tailed deer, nibbling the moss beneath the snow.

"Yes," whispered all the little trees, and the children thought that it was the wind that shook it.

Then they went away, and later



came men with axes and cut down all the young trees and laid them on a great sled to be carried away.

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NEARING THIN ICE.



A New Year's Wish.

God keep thee, dear, through all the years,
Through all the joys, the sorrows, tears
Of life—its commonplaces, too,
God keep thee sweet, and brave, and true.

Amid the doubts and fears that rise
In every life—the mysteries,
Things that are hard to understand,
The movings of a mystic hand,
God keep thy reason sound and sure,
Thy mind alert, thy heart still pure,
God keep thee always—this I pray
For thee, upon this New Year's Day.
—B. McM. Bell.

In the Dark.

"Well, have you bought your wife's Christmas present yet?"
"I dunno. She has all our Christmas stuff locked up in one of the closets, where I can't get at it."

If Money Brought Happiness.

If money only brought happiness, there would be little Christmas cheer in a majority of homes.

The Runaway Christmas Tree

All the little fir trees in the forest were very much excited.

"To-morrow we shall be cut down," they cried, "and then we shall be carried to the big city."

Now, none of the little fir trees knew what the city was like, but they murmured and rustled and whispered of the wonderful things that they should see.

But there was one little tree that asked: "Do we all go?"

"Yes," said the other trees; "to-morrow we start on our travels."

Then the little tree sighed and said: "But I was promised to the children of the lumberman."

"The lumberman is poor," said a big oak, "and these are hard times. This year they must go without a tree."

The next morning very early, the children came trudging through the snow and stood under the branches of the little fir.

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A new and wonderful musical instrument which is a combination of the grand Italian harp and guitar. It has a beautiful tone and is positively the easiest instrument to play ever made. We teach you at your own home. As an advertisement we are

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How He Went.

"And if you really ascended that awful mountain why did you leave no visible trace?"

"The footprint left by the astral body is not a tangible thing," responded the explorer with a dignity almost frigid.—Philadelphia Ledger.

The Separation.

"I understand that she is separated from her husband."

"Yes."

"Oh, tell me all about it. What did she do?"

"Nothing. He died."

If You Have Common Sore Eyes.

If lines blur or run together, you need **PETTIT'S EYE SALVE, 25c.** All druggists or Howard Bros., Buffalo, N. Y.

A Modern Instance.

The mighty Casey had struck out. "I had to do it or spoil the poem," he explained.

Years afterward, however, when he saw how the elocutionists had overworked it, he bitterly regretted the act.

Adaptation.

"Miss Prim is very particular about having everything appropriate. She even carries this idea into her exclamations."

"She does?"

"At least, I suppose so. The other day I told her that Miss Patty, of whom she has a very poor opinion, had offered to make me some caramel for the fair, and what do you think she said?"

"What?"

"Oh, fudge!"

They Knew.

"And now, children," said the teacher, addressing the question to the class in anatomy and physiology, "can you tell me what milk is?"

"Eight cents a quart!" shouted the children, in unison.—Chicago Tribune.

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