## THE HAPPY NEW YEAR.

THE chill air is crisp, for the frost king discloses
His tiny ice spears, which he hangs on the trees.
No fragrance of summer, no petal of roses,
To brush as we pass; we see only dead leaves.
Now, dear merry Christmas has swiftly departed,
A New Year stands scanning the ghosts of the past.
We gaze o'er his shoulders and feel heavy-hearted
To think months and seasons are fading so fast.

See, whirled in midair are white snowflakes descending!
Each flake seems a spirit dropped down from above,
As though for the New Year to earth they come, lending
A promise of purity, blessing and love.
The tall trumpet creeper, whose scarlet tinged flowers
Last summer made gay its beautiful dress,
Stood yesterday drooping and leafless for hours,
Now, snowclad, it gleams in renewed loveliness.

How they pile, how they gather, the snows in their whiteness,
Led onward by silence, who moves without sound!
Their feet shod in crystal and sparkling in brightness,
They drape frosted ventors o'er tree, bush and mound.

I thought with the summer all beauty was dying;
We thought with the old year all joy down away,
But spirits of snow to our shorn world came flying,
And the New Year has blessings perhaps for each day.

Hark! Wild bells are ringing! Yes, joy bells are flinging
Out welcomes of glee to another New Year.
May each moment be crowded with laughter and singing,
And during its stay may no sorrow draw near.
Ring on, New Year bells! Let thy ringing mean gladness!
Ring all this away, but ring love's warmth within!
Though the old year just died, and we saw it with sadness,
Yet happy may prove the New Year we begin!

—Christian Intelligencer.

## A CHRISTMAS REUNION.

IT was Nell who thought of it first. But about all of the clever ideas in our family had their origin in Nell's fertile imagination. Brother Tom often told her that she ought to put a card in the window and in the papers offering "Ideas for Sale." Nell was grandfather's favorite and she was very fond of him. One day she evolved this idea and laid it on the family altar at a discussion we were having regarding the approaching Christmas festivities:

"I've just thought out the loveliest scheme for grandpa's enjoyment. You know that he hasn't seen one of his brethers for a long time, and it's twenty years since he saw our Uncle Henry. Now, can't we get up a great family reunion as a surprise for grandpa? Uncle Henry could come here in a day."

"He's nearly 80," I said.

"I know, but he is stronger than most men of 70. Uncle Harvey, who is only

"THEY'RE ALL COMING, TOM."

73, could come in a day and a night, and Uncle Joel could come in ten hours. I think that it would be just lovely to see those four dear old souls, all over 70, together, and to hear them tell tales of their childhood and boyhood."

After imposing solemn vows of secrecy on all of us, Nell ran off to her writing desk to write letters to grandpa's three old brothers and to his sister Ann. A week later she met me at the door when I went home to dinner and said gleefully:

"They're all coming, Tom! I've had letters to-day from every one of them! And grandpa said at luncheon that he'd give a good deal to see 'the boys,' as he called them. He wanted to know if I'd go with him if he went to visit them all in the spring. I could just hug myself for thinking up the whole scheme."

Each of my great uncles arrived on the day before Christmas, and grandpa's surprise was complete. He showed no signs of needing Nell's smelling salts, although he was visibly affected when his aged brother Henry arrived and they clasped hands after a separation of twenty years.

"You've grown old, Hiram," quavered out Uncle Henry. "Seems to me ye look 'bout as old as I do."

"Oh, I guess not, Henry; I guess not," said grandpa, a trifle stiffly, for he was sensitive regarding his age.

"Don't he, boys?" said Uncle Henry, appealing to his two white-haired brothers. "I bet I could fetch ye to the ground first in a rassle, that is if ye rassled fair, which ye didn't used to do when we was all boys together. Why, I'm hanged if Hiram don't part his hair, or what he's got left of it, in the middle yit. I reckoned you'd git over that when ye came to havin' one foot in the grave and t'other one no bizness out."

Grandpa flushed and said coldly:

"The combing of one's hair is simply a matter of individual taste, Henry."

Nell hurried Uncle Henry off to show him his room, and grandpa said to Uncle Joel:

"You bear your years well, Joel. One would hardly guess you to be six years older than I."

"No, Hiram, they wouldn't. One thing, I'm a good deal fleshier 'n you. I'm kind o' s'prised to see you so kind o' all skin and bone."

"Come, now, I ain't quite that, Joel. I weigh 139."

"Is that all; why, Hi, I weigh 178 and——"

"Come, Uncle Joel, I want to show you some of the family portraits in the parlor," said Madge, noting grandpa's rising color. This left Uncle Harvey and grandpa together.

"Joel and Henry were always unnecessarily blunt in their speech," said grandpa.

"Yes, but they gen'ally hit the nail on the head," said Uncle Harvey. "You do look as if the wind would blow you away, Hiram, and I notice you've a kind of limp in your gait."

"I've nothing of the sort, Harvey Myler, and I ain't more than two-thirds as bald as you are and not half so gray."

"Oh, you ain't; I'll count gray hairs with you any time, and I'll bet you a jew-harp that——"

"Come, Uncle Harvey," I said, "let us go to the stable. I want you to give me your opinion of a horse I've just bought."

The combined efforts of Madge and Nell and I sufficed to maintain peace at the dinner table. We kept up such a rattling fire of conversation that the four brothers had hardly a chance to speak to each other. We saw grandpa wince when Uncle Henry ate his mashed potatoes with his knife, and we knew the full extent of our grandsire's agony when Uncle Joel poured his coffee into his saucer and blew it before drinking it. Uncle Harvey spoke but once, but that was once too often, for he said, explosively:

"Oh, I say, boys, do you remember that Sary Jane Skimmerhorn Hi used to be so sweet on when we all went to the Hopvine school? You 'member how he used to kiss 'er there at the end of the lane? Well, she's livin' yit, an' I'd give a deal to see Hi kiss 'er now. She weighs 329 pounds and has a beard that Tom here might be proud of, an' she's had fifteen children an' they're all livin'. I was jest thinkin' what it Hi had married 'er as he used to swear he would! Eh, Hi?"

Uncle Henry and Joel roared with laughter and Joel choked on a mouthful of coffee. Grandpa turned pale and it required all of Nell's cleverness to prevent a scene.

All of the cousins and uncles and aunts in the city had been invited to come in that evening to enjoy a Christmas eve reunion of the family and to be entertained with family reminiscences by the four old and reunited brothers. At 8 o'clock we gathered around a great open fire to hear our aged relatives "reminis," as Madge mischievously put it.

"Tell us all about when you were boys together," said Cousin Ned Drayton. "I guess there wasn't much time nor money wasted celebrating Christmas when you were boys."

"Well, I guess there wa'n't," said Uncle Joel. "I guess—O, say, boys, do you remember that Christmas we four boys went bear hunting back there in the Maine woods when we wa'n't none of us fully grown?"

"I remember it as well as if it was yesteday," said Uncle Henry. "I remember jist how that b'ar squealed when I shot 'im."

"You still stick to it that you shot 'im, Henry," said Uncle Joel, "an' I am as sure as I'm livin' that it was my shot that fetched 'im."

"In a horn it was!" said Uncle Henry, testily. "Your bullet went clar over the b'ar and lodged in that big pine we found with a bullet hole in it."

"There's no use in Henry an' Joel spattin' so about which killed that b'ar," put in Uncle Harvey, "for I've an idee the beast would have got up an' walked off with both your bullets. It was my knife thrust that finished the beast."

"Yes, it was!" sneered Joel. "Oh, yes; to be sure it was," snorted Uncle Henry.

"I guess that the blows I rained down on the beast's head with the club I carried, had something to do with finishing him," said grandpa, calmly.

"Well, ye ain't got over drawin' on your imagination for facts, hev ye, Hi?" said Uncle Henry. "The rest of us kin remember how ye hid in the brush trembin' an' hollerin' until we was almost ready to skin the bear an then you come out with your little club and give the beast a whack or two."

"Henry Myler, that is not true!"

"If it ain't I'll eat my hat!"

"I clubbed the life out of him," said grandpa.

"I tell ye I killed that bear myself!"

"Ye didn't!"

"I know I did!"

"My club counted for more than——"

"Your club! Pooh!"

"Now, Henry, I won't stand it to——"

"I'd like to see ye help yourself."

"Shet up, all of ye, for I——"

"Don't ye tell me to shet up!"

The dispute waxed hot and hotter until Madge got Uncle Henry off to his room, and Nell had done the same service for Uncle Harvey, while I dragged Uncle Joel away for a smoke with me in my own room, where he berated his brothers fearfully. Grandpa stalked off to his own room.

We managed to keep the four old hot heads from getting into a row on Christmas, but Uncle Henry and grandpa did not speak to each other all day, and to tell the unvarnished truth there was great inward rejoicing when our three dear old uncles departed. Uncle Henry thrust his head out of the carriage door and screeched out at the last second:

"I did kill that bear!"

"You never!" called out grandpa, sharply from the stoop, and they never saw each other again.

"I admit that my dear little scheme failed," said Nell, when we were alone together. "The next time I bring four old gentlemen together for a Christmas reunion I'll select deaf and dumb men, or men who haven't quite so much dynamite and chain lightning and undimmed pugilistic vigor in their make-up. I positively believe that Uncle Henry would have trounced grandpa if he'd stayed another day."—Utica Globe.

DISCUSSING THE BEAR QUESTION.

### Christmas Gifts for Men.

It is a great relief to note that some philanthropic writers throughout the country are engaged in telling what sort of Christmas gifts men would like. The writers are not all successful, and they reveal frequently the inspiration of woman's ideas, man's innate modesty and self-effacement precluding him from speaking for himself.

But somebody should speak for him before another Christmas has elapsed. It is recorded in the seventh chapter of "The Autobiography of Pharaoh I." that the monarch's wife gave him for a Christmas present a necktie which he could not wear without inviting insurrections in all Egypt. That's where the Christmas necktie joke began, the Christmas cigar joke following it, when Sir Walter Raleigh first amazed England by puffing tobacco fumes. The jokes have endured, but the joke has not—not if the man knows it. He may have an incorrigible passion for neckties, but to have his own wife go out and pay out his own money for a tie which he will wear only on dark nights and when his coat collar is turned up is what he objects to. The trouble being, probably, that a woman buying something for a man sees it merely as it looks on the counters, while the man sees it in its relation to himself and to the uses to which it must be put.

What is needed is a Wives' Information bureau, where husbands can leave a list of the presents they would find acceptable, with details concerning size, color and weight. The wife would simply have to join the bureau's subscribers, find her husband's list, borrow the money from him and give him a happy surprise on Christmas. This scheme is worth considering. It ought to take a great burden off the ladies' minds, anyhow.

GRANDMOTHER UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

THE event which Christmas commemorates possesses for humanity the deepest meaning. Compared with its profound importance all other events, or indeed the sum of all other events, sink into insignificance, and the great institution of which that event is the foundation-stone has from a very early date observed it with ceremonies of fitting stateliness and reverence. But the note of even the sacred celebration of the birthday of the Saviour has for centuries been one of joyfulness and glad praise. It is the one day of all the year when the whole Christian world puts into practice the cardinal law of Christ. The sternest, hardest and most worldly man pauses in his planning and grinding, and for a day at least allows his thoughts to dwell on projects for making other people glad. The Christmas-tide festival is the special season for renewing the manifestation of those family affections that are not dead but merely dulled by routine and familiarity. The head of the household, who spends hundreds of dollars in providing the necessaries of life for his flock without an emotion other than an occasional thought of what a tax upon his income it is, has his whole being stirred up as the result of the expenditure of a few dollars in rattles and trinkets. A sense of his blessings thrusts itself on his attention. A realization of the patient, heroic performance from day to day, year in and year out, of the unheroic, uneventful, tedious and multiplied duties of the helpmeet and mother rushes on his mind, together with an uneasy knowledge of his frequent forgetfulness of it. She is the angel of his threshold, and he turns to the heaven that seems so far away in his business hours, but now seems so near and powerful, as he asks for its blessing on the little brood that clusters about her knee.

For Christmas is essentially the children's day. Its specially religious significance can of course never be lost, but it is doubtful if its spiritual influence would be so widespread but for the myth of Kris Kringle. With its dawning faculties the child learns of the wonderful little man with the queer, tufty coat and, rubicund face, whose advent on one particular night in the year is the most extraordinary event in existence, and when the revelation of many yuletides has turned reality into myth the disillusioned one enjoys at least half his earlier delights in witnessing another generation of Kris Kringle's little subjects enjoying that monarch's season of blissful lordship. In millions of homes the same picture is seen. Day breaking through the frosted pane, and on the dim stairs tiny white-robed figures stealing down the creaking steps. Eyes are dancing with anticipation and apprehension, for there is something uncanny about this dear old king of theirs, and mother has to take up the rear in similar white-robed dishabille to inspire confidence in those little throbbing hearts. And when the chimney-nook is safely gained, what clamor, what pounding of drums and blowing of horns; what joy that the funny, fat, good-natured old gentleman is still alive and looking after his own. May every home in Christendom see this picture.

### A Warning.

Rhymes on the mistletoe
Are all very well, y' know;
But in mistletoe season
The promptings of reason
Are toward the adage,
The gallant had better go slow,
For kisses at times bring woe;
To the doubting young Thomas
May come breach of promise
By way of the mistletoe!

## THE MISTLETOE.

### Lore of the Little Plant So Popular at Christmastide.

MOST quaint and charming little plant to study is the mistletoe. It is an evergreen. We seldom see it, or hear much about it, save at Christmas time. The reason of this is that where it lives and thrives and grows, it blossoms in February and March, and the berries are ripe and the foliage is in all its glory, its best dress, in the following December, when it is imported and used to decorate our homes and add to the holiday cheer.

This strange little plant is a native of most of the tropical parts of Europe. Half a dozen varieties grow in this country, but as they are not marked by the same peculiarities as their foreign relatives, they are called by a different name, though they all belong to the same family. Some varieties have very showy flowers.

The modest, though widely known, little shrub we call the mistletoe grows mostly in Normandy, a border portion of France, upon the trees of the extensive apple orchards. In the cider districts it is looked upon as a great pest, for, once established, it draws the sustenance as long as there is any life in its host. It is succulent when young, but becomes woody as it grows older. It often attaches itself, too, to the oak, and then is supposed by the peasants to possess magical power and to bestow wonderful strength.

The mistletoe does not grow in Ireland or Scotland or the north of England, and often there young apple trees with the queer little plant grafted and growing upon them are sold as a curiosity, a freak of nature, to "turn an honest (or dishonest) penny."

In olden times the mistletoe was called All-heal. The tree upon which it grew was believed to be chosen of God, was looked upon with veneration and awe, and the curious little plant was considered an antidote to all diseases. Even at the present day in Sweden all ailments are believed to be warded off by wearing a ring made of its wood.

The berries of the mistletoe are of a creamy white, about the size of small currants, and grow in clusters in the divisions of the little branches. The leaves are long, fleate, waxy and of a delicate green, often almost yellow.

Birds are very fond of the berries, and by them the seeds are carried from place to place, and thus the plant is propagated. The berries contain a thick, viscous fluid; they burst open when ripe, and so they readily adhere to the trees and shrubs where they chance to fall. There they germinate and take root and draw their nourishment, not from the earth as other plants do, but from some other growth. So it is a parasite, not self-supporting, but living on something else, and when the tree to which it is fastened dies, then the dependent little thing dies also.

There is an old tradition that asserts that long, long ago the mistletoe was a big tree, nourished from mother earth as other trees are, and that the cross of our Saviour was made from the wood; but after the crucifixion it was fated to be, not a tree, not even a shrub, but a dependent—not even to draw its life direct from the ground itself, but to live upon some other plant—doomed to be always a parasite.

### Thrice Happy.

He was a little ragged waif living in a village of southern Kentucky. A stranger to actual comfort, it is not to be supposed that he was very familiar with the pleasures of life. One Christmas eve he was standing before a shop window with his lean little face pressed against the pane, devouring with hungry eyes the beautiful display within.

There was a lady in the shop, deeply engaged in purchasing gifts for her small nieces and nephews. She saw the waif at the window—ragged, half-clad, and without doubt half-starved as well.

"Prudence," said she, in speaking of the matter afterward, "might have suggested food and clothes. But another idea had taken possession of me. I determined then and there that that boy should know the blessedness of happy childhood for one Christmas at all events."

On the impulse she called him in. Toys, a wagon, an iron horse with a flying driver madly sounding a fire alarm, a drum with gilded sticks, a tin horn, a pack of firecrackers, things which his poverty-blinded eyes had never before looked upon in the light of real possession, were put into his hands.

"There was a kind of awe in his solemn, earnest eyes," said the lady, "as though the joy of possession had stricken him dumb.

"It was the day after Christmas that I came upon him again, hanging about the streets with that same old look of a beggar about him. That is, in all but his eyes; they, I think, were never quite the same again. They fairly shone when he lifted them to my face in recognition. 'Good morning, Joe,' said I. 'What have you done with your toys?'

"Imagine my surprise when he said, 'I give 'em to Jack Parker, the colored boy, over yonder to Scruff Town.'

"'What?' said I, 'you have given them all away? All your beautiful toys?' He was silent a moment, and then his ragged little face glowed as he replied:

"'I had 'em; I had 'em a whole day. I ain't got 'em any more, but I had 'em, anyhow.'"

He was the proud possessor of three pleasures; that of receiving, of giving, and the ever blessed pleasure of a happy memory.—Youth's Companion.

### Puppets Made of Gingerbread.

The city of Amsterdam claims St. Nicholas as its patron saint, and during the first week of December confectioners shops throughout the city display one special delicacy called "St. Nicholas cake," of which large quantities are sold at this season. "Men" and "women" made of this crisp, brown cake, or gingerbread, can be bought in different sizes and at all prices. These sweet creatures are often called "sweethearts" ("vrijers" we say in Dutch), and the girls receive a "man," the boys a "woman." I remember quite well what fun it used to be to hear the servant come in with: "If you please, ma'am, here is Miss Annie's sweetheart"—and hand a gingerbread man to my mother.

### Christmas Eve on the Reservation.

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### Persons Who Are Magnetized.

Recent French experiments have developed the curious and unexpected fact that certain persons possess a magnetic polarity—that is, they act as magnets, having north and south poles. Such a person, when completely undressed and placed near a sensitive galvanometer, will, when turned on a vertical axis, cause a deflection first in one direction and then in the opposite, just as a magnet would. All persons do not possess this polarity. Professor Murani, an Italian, upon whom the experiment was tried, exhibited this phenomenon, and it is was found that his breast corresponded to a north pole and his back to a south pole.


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A fat men's club has been instituted in Paris, with the novel aim of increasing the weight of the members, the rules enjoining all the comrades to sleep, eat and drink as much as possible.

In Illinois there is a big steel plant where the redhot ingots, billets and plates are handled by huge electro-magnets. They take steel weighing five tons and transport it safely to any distance.

A man well up in dog-lore, counsels intending purchasers of a puppy to let the mother of the puppy choose them. In carrying them back to their bed, the first the mother picks up will always be the best.

In the publication of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, Professor Roentgen has an article in which he confirms the observation of Dr. Brandes that it is possible to make the X-rays visible to the eye.

The number of stars pictured on the latest English and German photographic atlasses is about 68,000,000.

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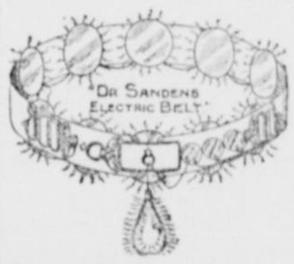


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