

THE SOUTHWESTERN NEWS.

MARION, VIRGINIA, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1890



THE WATCH-MEETING.

Were coming from the school-house on a starlit winter's eve, When our friends had been debating With some feeling, I believe, On a subject not important, And which needs no mention here, When we suddenly remembered 'Twas the eve of the new year.

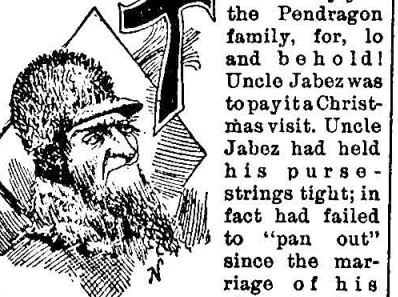
How delightful, quick I answered; As 'twas somewhat after ten 'Twould require but little waiting For the new year to begin, And with such a charming maiden It would surely be a treat, On the sofa 'neath the mantel We then sought a cozy seat.

And we talked of local topics, Of the weather and the times, Of the novels, of the season, Famous poets and their rhymes; And the clock upon the mantel, Calmly ticked the time away, Nor a moment paused to listen To the words we had to say.

—O. L. Dobson, in Chicago News.

A MISFIT VISITOR.

How Uncle Jabez Found His Niece's Home on Christmas Day.



THERE was joy in the Pendragon family, for, lo and behold! Uncle Jabez was to pay a Christmas visit. Uncle Jabez had held his purse-strings tight; in fact had failed to "pan out" since the marriage of his niece to John

Pendragon, a careful man, who, after seeing how things run, and that he need not expect any thing from his wife's rich uncle, settled down to business. A man hates to give up the dreams he has erected upon the shifting shoals of matrimony; but Pendragon did—with what poor grace he'd never acknowledge. He hung over a lot of dusty, musty books in Snatchem & Skinem's office for a moderate salary; also did occasional funny sketch-work for humorous papers. Uncle Jabez held aloof; he would not visit the niece he had never met.

"Stingy old thing!"— "Now, John, don't; uncle doesn't know us yet—never has seen any of us. I know if he could meet baby!"

"Just about now," broke in John, as he snatched baby's sirup-smeared hands away from his polished shirt-front.

"Or if he could only see our Robby!"— "At the present time," sighed John, as Robby came sliding down the banisters with the broken globe of the hall-lamp dangling from one heel.

"But when uncle does come I know he'll be delighted with us all."

"YOU—YOU ARE DEAR UNCLE JABEZ!" "Sure of it—when he does come," John said as he tore himself from the bosom of his family. Upon his return he banged open the door and danced

gayly into his wife's presence, waving a letter as he exclaimed: "He's coming. Saw postmark, 'Danube, Herkimer County, N. Y., and couldn't wait, so I read it. Uncle Jabez will be here Christmas morning bright and early. I'm glad, and hope I can strike him for a fifty!"

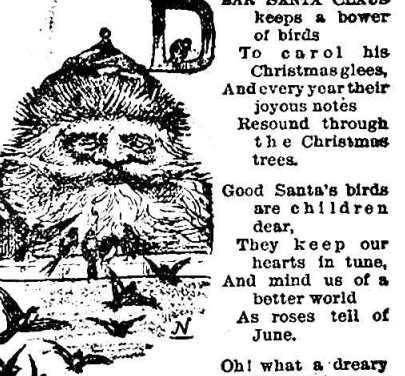
"John! you ought to be ashamed. Uncle Jabez must not be struck!"— "Just for fun, you know. Now bake

parlor. The children went wild over such a state of affairs, and their mother spent a great deal of time explaining matters. It was a bare, cheerless, gloomy Christmas that dawned in the Pendragon family. John sat by a very dead pile of cinders hugging his last year's office coat about him, trying to read and eagerly waiting for the bell. His wife was huddled upon one corner of the lounge with the children gathered close

The children outside are giving forth good-cheer to every passer-by, the merry bells are pealing and all is gayety. The bell rings. John Pendragon gave his wife a knowing look as he went to the door. He opened it and an old chap with a big fur cap and hair muffer was ushered in. "I b'lieve you're John!"— "And you—you are dear, nele Jabez!" cried Pendragon, as he grasped the oth-

buy any presents for the little dears," sobbed Mrs. Pendragon. "Sorry. Thought most any one could buy a leetle candy for babies. The dirtiest runt on the street, almost bare, had a bit of candy." "But our expenses are so large; it costs so much for coal and flour!"— "An' stays like them marble things I seen standin' in the hall, an' paintin's like them hangin' on the wall, an' sich

OLD SANTA'S BIRDS.



SANTA CLAUS keeps a bower of birds. To carol his Christmas glees, And every year their joyous notes Resound through the Christmas trees. Good Santa's birds are children dear, They keep our hearts in tune, And mind us of a better world As roses tell of June.

A GLAD CHRISTMAS.

How Two Children Confered and Enjoyed a Happy Day.

Five men, all prominent in the financial circles of the city, were clustered about a table in the gentlemen's dining-room on the second floor of Reisser's restaurant a few days ago, discussing the current gossip of the busy world in which they moved. After the more substantial portion of the meal had been consumed and the quintette were comfortably sipping at an expensive brand of champagne the conversation turned on the various methods of getting the greatest amount of pleasure out of the coming holiday season. As soon as the subject was broached one of the party became unusually quiet and took scarcely any part in the lively discussion which followed. After the other four had offered various plans and suggestions the silent member of the party remarked: "You are all wrong, and to prove the truth of my words I wish to tell you a little incident which happened to me Christmas eve two years ago, and of which I have never spoken since. While stopping to glance almost unconsciously at the display in the windows of an Eighth street confectionery store my attention was attracted by two children, a boy apparently about eight years old and a girl about ten. They were joyously pointing out all the dainties in the windows to each other and speculating upon the amount of the many good things which could be purchased for a quarter. They appeared to be warmly dressed, but their clothes were of the plainest and cheapest material, and they were evidently the children of a poor working-man, who was able to support his family, but to supply them with none of the luxuries of life. From their conversation I learned that their father had given each of them twenty-five cents to spend for Christmas, and the great question was what to buy with the money. While the matter was still undecided a poor, haggard-looking woman came along leading a little girl, and they both looked as if they had not eaten anything for some time. The woman stepped up to another woman richly dressed in furs and timidly asked for help, but her appeal was unheeded and she was haughtily ordered to stand aside. As the poor creatures slunk away in the greatest dejection I noticed a few hurried whispers between the two children, and they quickly followed the woman and child, and when they came up with them pressed something into the woman's hand, who was left speechless by the sudden good fortune. As the children passed me when they returned I heard the girl say: 'They'll enjoy it more than we would. We'll be at home to-morrow with mom and pop and have a good dinner and they'll have nothing.' When I recovered my senses both parties were gone, but I'll wager any thing that those children who gave their all had a happier Christmas than I, who was the possessor of thousands, but gave nothing towards making others happy." The story apparently touched those present, and in a short time the table was deserted with the wine bottles still partially full.—Phila. Inquirer.



"HERE WE ARE AGAIN!"

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up a lot of things and have the rooms bright and tidy." "You are wild. We must let him think that we are—well, you know, I can't bring myself to say it." "Just so—poor, poverty-stricken; nothing to wear, nothing to eat, very low—all arranged so that Uncle Jabez will come down good and solid." There were no Christmas presents bought that year; not even a stocking hung from the shelf, nor a Christmas-tree heavy with gifts in the Pendragon

to her. Of course it was very wrong for the Pendragon family to do this; but then Uncle Jabez was so rich; he'd never visited them before, and—who knows? perhaps his will will find them all nicely remembered. The boy Robby blubbered and yelled for some Christmas taffy; the girl Susie wanted a doll with rolling eyes and a whistle in its stomach. The baby couldn't talk yet, and really was the most satisfied of the lot. Will he never come?

er's hand and drew him into the cold and cheerless sitting-room. "Wal, I guess—hey! no fire sich a cold day? I say—oh! you're my niece, air you? Them's the babies, air they? Yes, I'll sit down." The old man took off his muffer, overcoat and fur cap and sat down. "You don't seem much perked up, you folks. Why don't the babies run about an' play an' show me their Christmas presents?" "Alas! dear uncle, we are too poor to

carpets like these, an' sich nice furni-toor, an' sich lots of books in the case thar, an' so many paper novels on the table, an'—an'—I guess you forgot to peel down to the quick. Sorter expected Uncle Jabez, didn't you? I'm goin'!" They were dumb. The old man put on his muffer, overcoat and fur cap and left. Explanations were not necessary. The Pendragon family had crow for dinner, and when Christmas day came to an end they all wondered how folks could be such fools.—H. S. Keller, in Judge.



Modern Improvements. Santa Claus (emerging)—It's all right—it's all right—but I was originally built for wood fires and open flues!—Puck.

LITTLE MISTAKE.



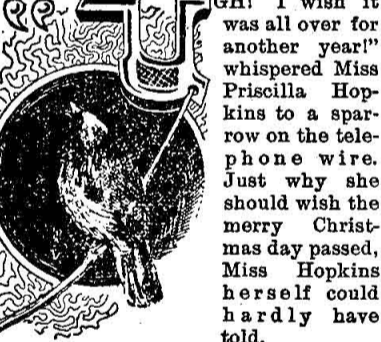
And took his honest ease. But something roused him quickly. He started from his seat. A soldier bold, a maiden fair, Were kneeling at his feet.



AND DOZING IN HIS ARM-CHAIR. "Ah," mused the good St. Nicholas, "I think I understand."

A REAL CHRISTMAS.

How Miss Hopkins Enjoyed Her First Merry Holiday.



THE big New York boarding-house was almost deserted. All of the thirty boarders had scattered for the holidays, except the invalid on the parlor floor.

Miss Hopkins pressed her wrinkled cheek against the window pane, and looked down into the dull, city street, with its patches of dirty snow.

"I don't see any other way," said Mrs. Clark, looking at it, meditatively. "I dread asking her—she is so stiff and silent, and we've hardly exchanged a dozen words."

"There, tell me about it. I didn't know you had any children." She heard a simple story of the brave little mother's struggle to make a nest for her birds; and how, at last, finding a position in the city, she had placed them in a boarding-school where they would be well cared for, and where she could visit them every Sunday.

Five minutes later Miss Priscilla was standing alone before the fire, wrinkling her forehead anxiously; for, somewhat to her own surprise, she had consented to care for a six-year-old child all night.

But when Mrs. Clark appeared at the door that evening, with a little, curly-headed, white-robed figure half hidden in a great shawl, and gazing with big, sleepy, black eyes at herself, Miss Priscilla half forgave her folly.

"Sh!" she said softly, as Marjory's mother entered the room, then flushed over such weakness and straightened into her usual rigid attitude.

"May I borrow your fire-place, too, Miss Hopkins?" asked Mrs. Clark, with growing courage. "To-morrow would hardly be Christmas if Santa Claus couldn't come down the chimney, you know, and there is only a register in my room. I will try and keep the children from being very noisy in the morning, if you'll let me hang the little stockings here to-night."

With two such pleading eyes shining at her over an armful of packages, Miss Priscilla felt she could hardly refuse. "I'm, yes. I don't know that it would do any harm. All foolishness, I think."

"Do you?" said Mrs. Clark, brightly. "But it's such a pleasure to watch them when they find the stockings in the morning! Let me see, here's Noah's ark, that goes in Tot's stockings and the little elephant in Marjory's. Then here is a toy watch for each of them and a stick of candy, a pop-corn ball and a big orange to cap the climax. Why, it just reaches the top! How fortunate there isn't anything more!" laughed Mrs. Clark.

But, somehow, Miss Priscilla's spectacles grew quite misty, and she took them off and wiped them once or twice. The little packages were so very small, and the little mother's way of laughing at her poverty was so brave and cheery!

"Good-night," answered Miss Priscilla, and then she went back to the fire and stared hard at the little crimson stockings, glowing in the firelight. "I'll do it—so!" she said at last, decidedly. Softly leaving the room she called down the speaking-tube for the chamber-maid. Good-natured Katie readily promised to "mind the child a bit," and, while giving numerous cautions, Miss Priscilla arrayed herself in bonnet and cloak and started out into the night.

The stores were dazzling with gas light and the air was sweet with the odor of pine branches, but the gay festoons of bunting were not in half so happy a flutter as Miss Priscilla's foolish old heart. How hard it was to decide between blue eyes and brown, wax and bisque, and blue or gold tea sets!

In the gray dawn of the early morning, Marjory, cuddled close within the protecting circle of her new friend's arm, reached up a timid, little hand and touched her cheek.

"Oh!" the child cried softly, "Oh!" The next moment the little voice burst out into the happiest ripple of a song, without words or tune, but it seemed as if any one would know it was a Christmas carol.

"I declare!" said Miss Priscilla, wiping her eyes on the pillow-case, "I declare, it makes me think of that hymn, 'Break Forth into Joy!'"

"The chubby fingers were already diving into their stockings, and untying puzzling knots, and each new discovery was greeted by a little jubilee from the children and a grateful glance from their mother at Miss Priscilla, who, somehow, seemed always to be looking out of the window. But Marjory found something that puzzled her—a long, black stocking hanging over the back of a chair.

"Why, it's big like yours, mamma—how funny! And there isn't any thing in it!" "Yeth, there it!" lisped Tot. "Tampin round and hard. O-o-h, look, mamma!" And the first ray of sunlight that struggled into the room gleamed on a gold piece in Tot's hand.

Miss Priscilla had disappeared into a deep closet and was fumbling round for something, which for some reason could not be found; perhaps because her nightcap had bobbed down over her eyes. But the next minute two arms were wound around her and she heard a tearful voice whisper: "You have been so good, so good to me, dear friend! I wish I could thank you."

"There, there, child. Don't say another word. I've been a rich, selfish old creature, but I'm going to reform. And we've all made such a good beginning this morning that I really think this is going to be the first merry Christmas I ever had! There, don't say another word!"—H. A. Hall, in Interior.

NOT FRUITLESS.

A man who has spent a busy year sits down for a little retrospect. He falls into a moody frame, and in a tone of regret says: "I worked all the year through, but there is hardly any thing to show for it; my work has had no permanence." But a good spirit was beside him and she said: "My dear, do you remember those flowers that grew right out there? Those roses, petunias, heliotropes, geraniums, and most of all, that beautiful lilium auratum? Well, they are all gone. Not one of them had any permanence. You can not find even a stem to tell that they existed. And yet, they were beautiful while they lasted, filling the air with fragrance, pleasing the eye of all who saw them, and they are remembered still by many persons to whom they were messengers of gentleness." And the moody shadow seemed to break away from his brow, giving place to a smile and air of satisfaction. But later in the day, after all the work was done, and she was weary hearing a sigh, she said, sadly: "My life is just a round of the same duties, and seems to be wholly fruitless." It was his time now, and looking up cheerily, he said: "Not so, my dear. Do you see that tree over there, that noble oak? Well, it has stood there these many years, more than you and I can tell, and its life has been almost wholly without variety. Each summer it is crowned with foliage,

and then each autumn the winds sweep it all away. But the birds sit there and sing; the cattle gather under it on sultry days and children collect about it to picnic on their holidays. There is nothing of all that there now, but what a help has the old tree been, and how many pleasant things could be told about it—how noble an object it is, also, in the wintry landscape." The parable waned without its meaning. The good mother returned the smile of the benignant father, and together they sang at their family worship of the loving kindness of the Lord.—United Presbyterian.

CHRISTMAS IN EUROPE.

Little People Across the Ocean Who Have Santa Claus. England is by no means the only European country to enter into the celebration of the Christmas festival with a zest. In Germany, in Sweden and Norway, in Russia, in France, and, in fact, all over Europe, wherever the Christian religion obtained a foothold, the anniversary of the Nativity is observed with rejoicing and feasting. The ceremonies are not greatly unlike those of the English-speaking people, though, of course, modified by the traditions and usages of each country. St. Nicholas under a dozen aliases has become known to the little ones from the Mediterranean to the North sea. In Holland he is Santa Claus, in Switzerland, Samt Klaus, in Heligoland, Sonner Klas, and in Austria, Niklo, or Niglo. Everywhere he is the same pleasant

and in proposing to do better is something; if nothing else, it is an acknowledgment of our need to be so, which is the first step toward amendment. But in fact to propose to do well is in some sort to do well, for "he who is not worse today than he was yesterday, is better."

So there is no harm—indeed there is good—in proposing to break off bad habits and form good ones. All seed can not fall on barren soil, some will bear fruit. Therefore, make all the good resolutions you can think of and keep as many as you can. You can't very well fail to keep some of them.

This is the value of New Year's day. It is an imaginary milestone on the track of human life—a resting-place and a new starting-place. Be sure you start right, and in the right direction, if you would have a Happy New Year. Cast aside your old enemies as well as your old faults; resolve to be as good as you know how and resist temptation as long as you can.

Then, if you do not have a Happy New Year, it will be your own fault.—Golden Days.

HOLIDAY HINTS.

—Don't expect to find a brown-stone front in your stocking.—Phila. Call. —Never look a gift-horse in the teeth. It is also wrong to look a Christmas gift in the price-mark.—Somerville Jour. —The man who economizes Christmas for sake of a New Year's blow-out takes time by the forelock just a week too soon. —Talk about oil trusts, rubber trusts, coal trusts, etc., as much as you like, but what we want about Christmas is a turkey or goose trussed.—Boston Courier. —If the man who devised the dumb piano would only invent a dumb horn and drum many of us wouldn't be so resigned to having Christmas come only once a year.—Judge. —When some men give their wives a little pin money to buy Christmas remembrances for the children, it seems much larger than when they spend twenty dollars raffling to win a two-dollar turkey.—Judge. —If any child gets up on Christmas morning to find an empty stocking, he will feel as bad for a time as the man who carries an empty sleeve, and the men and women nearest him will be so guilty that they ought never to be forgiven.—Judge. —The Young Turkey—Well, we've escaped Thanksgiving! Gobble! Gobble! Gobble! Experienced Gobbler (sadly)—My son, do not let your life insurance policy lapse. Christmas is coming!—Munsey's Weekly. —Starting on a new year it is well to accept this teaching from Emerson: "Write on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. No man has learned any thing rightly until he knows that every day is doomsday." —The close of a year is a poor time for good resolutions, but it is an excellent time for good actions. It is late for performance. Now is the time to be and to do, even though the hours are too precious to waste in thinking about being and doing.—S. S. Times.

Just Like Him. "What a queer Christmas gift! Pa, see The monkey Charley sent to me. 'Tis strange such an idea should strike him." "Oh, no, my dear. It is just like him."—Judge.



NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS.

Many Are Made, But Few Are Kept—Yet It Is a Good Habit. Looked at in a philosophical light, there is no special reason why the first day of January should be different from any other day. It is not the actual beginning of the year; the twenty-first day of March, the first day of spring, more fitly deserves the honor. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the selection of the day, and it probably will never be changed in Christendom.

Practically, the date makes no difference. As a matter of fact, we used to celebrate New Year's day, prior to 1752, thirteen days later than we do now, on account of the change in the calendar, which took effect in that year. The Russians still preserve the old-style calendar, and the Hebrews keep a New Year's day based on the Mosaic chronology. The date, therefore, makes little difference, but the day is of considerable importance. As far back as history runs, it has been the custom to mark the death of the old year and the birth of the new by appropriate ceremonies. In ancient times these ceremonies were of rather a solemn character, but among northern nations it has always been the occasion for the highest demonstrations of merriment and conviviality.

Putting aside these features, we may very appropriately regard New Year's as the day of good intentions. A great deal of fun has been poked at the boy or girl who starts a diary on the first of January and abandons it on the first of February, but it is a question whether it is not beneficial to keep a diary even but one month out of twelve.

What possible harm can there be in proposing to be good? In considering crimes we always take into account the intention of the deed. The intention is the essence of the crime, and, therefore, it must be the essence of the good deed. Only to propose to do better is something; if nothing else, it is an acknowledgment of our need to be so, which is the first step toward amendment. But in fact to propose to do well is in some sort to do well, for "he who is not worse today than he was yesterday, is better."

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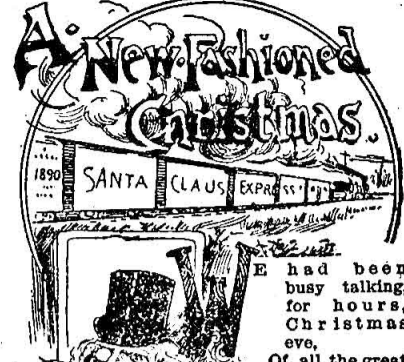
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A New Fashioned Christmas. SANTA CLAUS EXPRESS. I had been busy talking, for hours, Christmas eve. Of all the great improvements until—will you believe?—I felt quite dull and drowsy, and said, 'twixt you and me.

and sigh: "Oh, any thing old-fashioned had best pass out and die!" And then I leaned back smiling and quite self-satisfied, and closed my eyelids slowly, when, lo! they opened wide. In sheer amazement and wonder, and would you know the cause? I saw before me standing, the form of Santa Claus.

But, oh! so strange and altered! In clothes of latest style. And not at all the Santa I'd dreamed of all the while. But still I recognized him, and said: "I didn't see You come out from the chimney—'twas very dull of me."

"The chimney!" said he, gruffly; "I beg of you to know I clamber down no chimneys; I stopped that long ago!" I said: "Your load was heavy, you're tired; won't you rest?" "Oh! no," he answered, grandly, "my goods were all expressed!"

"You must have found it pleasant—the sleighing, sir, I mean. The roofs are much more snowy than I have ever seen." "Indeed!"—his air was lofty—"tis not the present mode To drive a sleigh. I travel by the elevated road."

"'Twas all so strange it chilled me, but still I said: 'Now, please, You won't forget to send us one of your Christmas trees. The children love you dearly and try to be so good.' He said: 'No trees hereafter, I'd have it understood."

"In fact, the time is over for Christmas. I should say. Those very old-time customs have really passed away. We want the very latest, dear madam, you and I. And peace, good-will and Christmas are of a time gone by."

And then he seemed preparing to take his leave and go. But do you think I let him? I called out bravely: "No!" I ran to him and begged him, between my sobs and tears, To leave us blessed Christmas, just as in former years. To change no little custom; to take no part away; To leave us dear, old-fashioned, beloved Christmas day. And then, for just an instant, my eyes were very dim. With tears, and when I cleared them I saw a change in him: His face, 'twas round and jolly, his clothes were as of old, He had a pack upon his back as full as it could hold. And as he beamed upon me I heard his reindeer prance, Then shy old Santa gave me a smile and roguish glance.

"I wish you Merry Christmas!" I thought I heard him say. And when I tried to answer him he'd vanished quite away!

But, though they say I dreamed it, I know we shall have still Our dear, old-fashioned Christmas, bringing "Peace on earth, good-will!" —Julia M. Lippman, in St. Nicholas. In Kris Kringle's Land. The German Christmas has supplied us with two of our best-known Christmas customs—hanging up stockings and attaching gifts to sprigs of pine, called Christmas trees. From the German Christmas also come Santa Claus and Kris Kringle. The latter is a corruption of Christ Kindlin, or Christ Child, of whom they have the beautiful fable that with His own hands He places Christmas toys and sweetmeats in the stockings of good children, while those of bad ones receive nothing but a small birch rod, placed in them by one Pelsnichol—literally "Nicholas with the fur," that is St. Nicholas dressed in fur. It is a rare sight in a German household on Christmas morning to see the expression of abject misery on the face of some poor little wight, who, having been disobedient or otherwise naughty on Christmas eve, finds only a birch rod in his stocking, instead of bon-bons and playthings. The dread of getting the rod from old Pelsnichol on Christmas keeps many a German child in order all the year. Hard Up. "Lend me a fiver, will you, Bill?" "I can't, old fellow. I haven't even paid for my wife's present to me yet."—Munsey's Weekly.

MANY CHRISTMASSES.

The Pine Tree Tells the Story of Its Life.

I grew in a wild, tangled forest on the edge of a bluff overlooking the sea. At first, I watched the little spring flowers



unfold their leaves and blossoms, then the glad summer came, and the woods grew green and dark; after that they changed to red and gold, then all this faded and my home looked dull and cold, just as yours do, little ones, when the fire goes out. I did not like this gloom, for I was such a baby tree; the sea and the wind would moan and wail together, and all the great trees in the forest looked so sad. But at last the beautiful snow came; then I liked winter best of all, for I thought the snow flakes were the pretty dead flowers turned to angels, coming down from Heaven to comfort me; then, too, at night the stars were so bright, and if one looks at the stars long they are apt to think of strange things; so it was with me. I was wondering why some of the trees in the forest were bright and green, while all the rest were so bare and brown. I was trying to think this out when I heard voices, and saw a light coming near; by and by it was so near that I could see a strong, handsome man carrying a lantern, and a lovely lady walking by his side; then they stopped and looked at me, and the lady tenderly touched me and said: "This little one is prettiest of all, so shapely and just the right size." Then the handsome man smiled down at me, brushed the snow away, and with a hard, cruel, tool dug me out of the ground, but very gently, indeed, so as not to harm my roots; then he lifted me in his arms and bore me away, and all the trees waved their arms farewell, and I was soon lost to their sight. But I did not feel afraid or sorry, for I looked all the time at the beautiful face of the lady, which somehow made me glad; so the time did not seem long before we came to a cottage, with a bright light in its window, and I heard the lady call it home. She opened the door, and then I knew what a home was. A blazing fire, a smooth clean floor, windows with blooming flowers, a friendly clock, a table with an humble meal spread out, a cradle in a cozy corner, a child nestled upon its pillows; and love in the eyes of the mother. But I had never seen anything so pretty as that baby. I forgot myself, and fairly trembled in my joy as I gazed upon her. At last I heard the mother say: "How beautiful it is, how it will delight my darling's eyes!" They seemed talking of me, so I looked at myself, and what do you think I saw? Festoons of popcorn and scarlet berries, and bright toys on every bough. What a proud little tree I was, to be so dressed as to please that baby; they called me a "Christmas tree;" then I knew why it was that some trees must stay green in the winter.

All night I watched the moonbeams on the baby's face, then the morning came and flooded the room with sunshine, and the mother caught the child in her arms and brought her to my side. Oh, those eyes! they shone brighter than the winter stars, and were far more lovely. I was indeed the child's delight and she was mine. They planted me in a box, and I grew and watched the child grow day after day. At last the summer came, the child and I grew out of doors together, only at night she went to her cradle, while I watched for the morning and her coming. When it rained she stood at the window and laughed to see how bright the rain-drops made me look. All this while the child grew larger and more lovely, and I grew larger and more proud. Again Christmas came, again I was decked for the delight of the little girl. She could talk to me now, and I never grew tired of listening to her voice. Thus many Christmas days came and went until the



"THIS LITTLE ONE IS PRETTIEST OF ALL." child and I were ten years old. Then came the grandest time of all. My darling was so beautiful, and I was a stately tree, almost too large for a Christmas tree; we did not live in the cottage now, but in a stately mansion which stood in its place. My child had hosts of children friends,

all glad and gay as she. Nestled in my arms were fairy dolls, almost as lovely as the children; books with wonderful stories and pictures; gorgeous toys of every description; animals that if wound up would run about as though half mad; miniature houses completely furnished, bon bons, sweet meats, and even jewels. Way up in the topmost branch stood a little old Santa Claus, showering gifts from his hands in a most magical fashion. Besides all this a hundred tiny candles blazed on all my finger tips, until I wondered if the very stars in heaven were not jealous; from a distant room came the sound of sweet, low music; this after a time became

loud and glad, and then the children joined hands and they danced around me, and I became a very proud tree.



But amid all the joy and laughter, all the richness and luxury, all the brilliant scene, I could not help remembering that Christmas eve, of long ago, when my brightest ornaments were the scarlet berries, and all that dazzled me was the sweet child's eyes. Now, when the spring came again, my way of life was quite changed. Out in the beautiful garden there was a great hole dug. Again I was borne in the arms of the gentleman, while the same lovely lady walked by his side and the child and all her little friends followed in the train. There was music by the singing birds, and in the light of the morning sun,



and amid peals of joyous laughter, I was planted in my final resting-place. And now the child began to study; she learned too much for a poor ignorant tree like me to tell about. All I know is that very grave-looking masters would come, then my darling would leave me, and I could see through the window the curly head bent over a wise-looking book, and the time would seem very long before she would come back again. Then there came a day more sad than all the rest. My child went away to learn more still, I heard it whispered. I was left alone—for the father and mother could not endure their home with their darling gone, so they went away upon a long journey. My heart was heavy with grief, but I, too, had much to learn; though not from books, but from the flowers and birds, from the rain-drops and the snow-drops; from the sunshine and the wind, from the starlight and the moonlight, and from the blue sky and the storm clouds; and I became the wisest tree in the garden, for I learned how to make all these things comfort me.

After a very long time had passed away, my darling came back, my child still, and yet so changed; the eyes were the same, but the sunny hair had grown brown, and she was so tall and so different, I thought. She would come and dream the hours away by my side. Sometimes she would seem to be seeing something far away, would smile so sweetly, and then the eyes would fill with tears. I thought: "Oh, my child has learned too much;" I thought so still when one day a handsome youth sought her beneath my shade, and I was sure of it when I heard what he whispered; but I changed my mind when my pet ceased to dream and became happy and gay again, and she laughed so merrily that the youth and I would always laugh, too.

All this time everybody seemed very busy, except my darling and the young

BROWNIES' CHRISTMAS SPORTS.

BY ED. R. PRITCHARD.

I. When Merry Christmas time comes round and all the world is gay, The Brownies hold high revelry from dark till dawn of day.

II. And chief among their Christmas sports 'tis coasting holds high place, As down the hill they fly pell-mell in reckless, joyful race.

III. Then up again they bravely tug to try once more the fun, Till morning comes, and with the dawn their Christmas joys are done.

IV. So we, like Brownies, should enjoy this happy Christmas Day, When Santa comes with gifts for all, and peace and mirth hold sway.



ONE OF THEM.

gentleman. Then one night in sweet midsummer imagine my surprise as I beheld myself again one mass of dazzling light. The garden, too, was a brilliant sight, for moving among the flowers and fairy lights was the gay throng of children that danced around me so long ago one Christmas night. They were all grown to lovely women and handsome men, like my darling and the youth that loved her. And again they gathered in a circle about me and my child and her betrothed stood under my outstretched arms. I was crowned with glory now, for they had made me a sacred altar. I heard their whispered vows and blessed them, and



"I WAS CROWNED WITH GLORY NOW." who dare say that a simple pine tree can not shed a blessing? The merry throng grew merrier still, and so the wedding night was passed and gone. I am now a portly old pine; there is gossip abroad in the garden to the effect that I am very proud, and I guess it is partly true. Many years have

prises, and musical with words of charity and good-will for all.

Yet to many people the coming of Christmas is anticipated with dread and looked back upon, when past, with a feeling of relief, because the holiday has come to mean "give and take."

It is no exaggeration to say that thousands of good people in this land have forgotten how to give. Christmas presents represent to them a matter of exchange. To another class, who have loving hearts, but slender purses, the thought of Christmas brings embarrassment and envy. Is there not something wrong in that idea of Christmas time which expresses itself in a conversation like this:

"Mother, what on earth can I get for the Delaneys this year? You know they will be sure to send us something this year as they did last."

"I'm sure I don't know. You might give the two girls those vases we saw in the city yesterday."

"Indeed I won't! I mean to get those vases for Aunt Carol and Cousin Fanny. But" (with a sigh), "we must get them something I suppose."

"Yes, I suppose we must. What a bother, isn't it?" Or take an instance of a different kind, like the following:

A young man, a clerk perhaps, with limited means, receives an invitation from his paternal uncle to spend Christmas at his house, where he will meet a host of cousins and friends. He knows that they will remember him in some way, and yet it is impossible for him to make each of them a present without going far beyond his means.

He is forced either to refuse the invitation and to spend the day in some poorer amusement, or to accept, and to be mortified at his inability to give presents equal in money value to those which he expects to receive.

Many persons at Christmas time are perplexed with such thoughts as these: "How can I give presents to all my friends, though I would like to? They will think I am mean if I do not remember them."

The time, which of all times should be blessed with peaceful, loving thoughts, bustles with anxious scheming as to how a pint may be made to

appear as large as a quart. Could we read the hearts of many persons the day after Christmas we should be more grieved than surprised to read there: "I'm glad another Christmas is gone! Now I shall not have to make any more presents for a year at least!"

Is Christmas to be observed simply as a day of give and take? Shall our best thoughts concerning it be the thought that the presents we give out were equal

Our beloved Master gave the world Himself as His best Christmas gift.—Youth's Companion.

A Mistake Somewhere. Boy Blue—Santa Claus must have been crazy, this year! "Precious baby, why do you think so?"

Boy Blue—Why, he left a big elephant at my house that mews like a kitten.—Puck.

"Handle With Care." Thou art so frail a thing, thou New Year's token

Ye leapt "ye resolution good," I feel Ye book wherein I note thee when unbroken Should bear ye title on ye back "Fragile."—John Kendrick Bangs, in Harper's Weekly.

in value to those we received? Shall not noble souls try to make the day memorable not by the exchange of gifts, but by the expression of love?

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HER NEW YEAR GIFTS.



HE tossed them over with eager hands, Boxes, packages, large and small; And then 'mid her treasures for a-orn she stands And whispers, sighing: "Can this be all? What are these baubles and toys and rings When the heart is hungry for dearer things?"

"So poor, so proud! If I only knew How I hate my wealth—what a weight it seems! He might have sent me a flower or two, But of course, dear fellow, he never dreams Of the pangs and heartache I feel the while I pass him by with a nod and smile."

Yet somehow I thought the bright New Year Would bring me a message or friendly sign— To keep for ever and ever mine. Then breathless, blushing, she sees, half hid, A sealed white letter her gifts amid.

She kissed it thrice ere she smiling read: "Love, what can I lay before your feet? Only my faithful heart," he said, "Must I seal and send to your keeping, sweet?" "Only your heart? But your heart," said she, "Is the dearest gift in the world, to me!" —M. S. Bridges, in Judge.

NEW YEAR THOUGHTS.

Labor the True Key of Success in Life—A Few Excellent Maxims.

Renewed feelings of ambition are synonymous with the opening of the new year. More resolutions are made than at any other time, and as often are they alas! broken. But with some the resolutions made with the dawn of a new year have been carried through to its close. Numerous lives of honor and achievement can be traced to some determination of purpose made upon an occasion such as the first day of the year affords for a fresh start in the journey of life. We all desire success; the problem of life is its winning. Every person carries in his or her own hand the key that unlocks either the door of success or failure.

The true key of success is labor, and it requires a strong, resolute will to turn it. It is hard, earnest work, step by step, that insures success, and never was this truth more potent than at the present time. Positions of trust and eminence are no longer secured at a single leap. Men and women have ceased to succeed in a hurry. Occasionally there will be an exception, but the instances are rare. Success, a writer has said, is the child of confidence and perseverance, and never was the meaning of a word more clearly defined. The secret of many successful careers is the thorough performance of whatever has been undertaken.

An excellent maxim is that which counsels us never to put our hands to anything into which we can not throw our whole energies harnessed with the very best of our endeavors. Perseverance is essential to success, since it is often achieved only through a succession of failures. In spite of our best efforts, failures are in store for the majority of the race. It remains, then, for us all to do the best we can under all circumstances, bearing in mind that races are not always won by the swiftest feet nor triumph in battle secured by the strongest arms. It is not so much the possession of swiftness or strength as it is the right application of them by which success is insured.

In starting out upon the journey of life it is well:

First, to obtain every kernel of knowledge within your reach.

Study people for the knowledge they can impart to you.

Read books for what they can teach you. Next, see what your temperament best suits you for.

Mark your tendencies and apply them. Be sure you have not mistaken your calling.

Once certain, apply yourself to your chosen work.

Then work hard, earnestly and incessantly.

Don't consider any thing beneath you. Be patient, honest and pleasant in manner.

Treat all persons alike, high or low. Have a smile for all, a pleasant word for everybody.

Success may not come at first, but it will not be far off, and when it does come it will be the sweeter for its delay. —Ladies' Home Journal.

The Christmas Sheaf.

There is a pretty and curious custom in Norway. A pole is fastened up over the door of the barns at the farm-houses, and on the top is tied a little sheaf of wheat. A traveler was for a long time puzzled to understand what it could mean. One day he fell in with a kind old Norwegian gentleman.

He asked him the meaning of those mysterious wheat sheaves, and was told they were put there that the birds might have a Merry Christmas. What a pretty and kindly custom; the poor little Norwegian birds with their



nine months of winter, and deep snow and long frost, their short days and long nights; they, too, were to have a little brightness at Christmas time.

