

lent joy to our Christmas. We rose in the morning—earlier than usual—to find that *Santa Claus* had been duly mindful of us, and that the visions of sugar plums which had charmed us during the soft hours of sleep on that eventful ‘night before Christmas’ had not been wholly a delusion. Never before did everybody look so pleasantly and good-naturedly on us. Never before did the flames leap so cheerily in the fire-place. Never before had *Jack Frost* exhibited such taste and skill in his frosted frescoes on the window-panes. Never before had his nimble sprites taken such delight in hanging tree and twig, in forest, field and garden with sparkling flaky diamonds. The snow, too, which the night before had presented a dull and heavy appearance, now had scattered upon its bosom countless myriads of minute mirrors whose polished surfaces reflected the rays of the sun in every direction with such brilliancy as could not possibly grace any but Christmas morning. The horses caught the spirit of the dancing rays and champed their bits in eager impatience for a dash. The bells never rang out such clear notes, nor blended their jingling into such harmony.

And, as the years roll by, Christmas ever seems to return with renewed and deepened springs of joy and gladness. All life appears to be lit up with a new brightness and to be the source of grander strains of music. The “great light” which filled the sky over Bethlehem’s nightly plains seems to have been but little dimmed by the lapse of nineteen centuries; and the strains which the angelic choir sounded in the ears of the humble shepherds re-echo once a year in our souls, and mankind becomes better and nobler by the influence of the heaven-born music.

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“A Happy New Year!” The old one is being rapidly whirled into the past by the revolving wheel of time; and already we can see the mountain-tops of the new looming into sight from out the mists of the future. Will the mountains be as steep and rugged as those we climbed this year? Will the springs of water that gush from beneath those towering rocks be as sweet and refreshing? Will the shadows of the forest be darker? Will the rivers of trouble that we have to cross be as well and safely bridged? Will the winds moan and howl around us as weirdly? Will the storms of the day be fiercer and the darkness of the night be blacker?

These are possibilities which each of us tries to push from the pathway of his friend by the wish “A Happy New Year!” Hope, like a fairy maiden, trips gaily before us, enticing us onward with winning smiles. She describes the gems of love and the flowers of success that strew the way along which we are to pass. She gilds the mountain’s brow, and fringes the darkest clouds with silvery tassels. She plants the forest with fig-tree and orange-groves; and paints the field with the beauty of the lily. She cries, Truly, A Happy New Year! A Happy New Year!