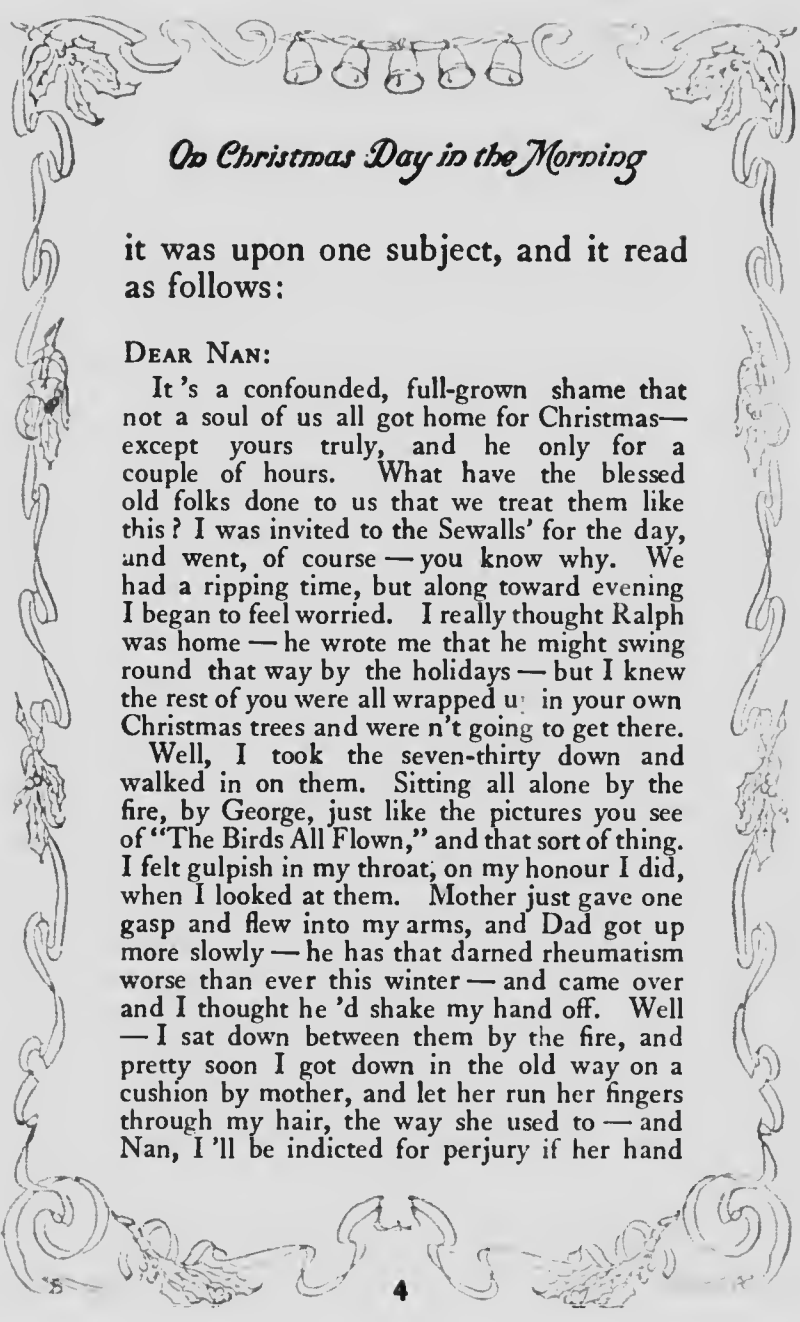




On Christmas Day in the Morning

it was upon one subject, and it read as follows:

DEAR NAN:

It's a confounded, full-grown shame that not a soul of us all got home for Christmas—except yours truly, and he only for a couple of hours. What have the blessed old folks done to us that we treat them like this? I was invited to the Sewalls' for the day, and went, of course—you know why. We had a ripping time, but along toward evening I began to feel worried. I really thought Ralph was home—he wrote me that he might swing round that way by the holidays—but I knew the rest of you were all wrapped up in your own Christmas trees and were n't going to get there.

Well, I took the seven-thirty down and walked in on them. Sitting all alone by the fire, by George, just like the pictures you see of "The Birds All Flown," and that sort of thing. I felt gulpish in my throat; on my honour I did, when I looked at them. Mother just gave one gasp and flew into my arms, and Dad got up more slowly—he has that darned rheumatism worse than ever this winter—and came over and I thought he'd shake my hand off. Well—I sat down between them by the fire, and pretty soon I got down in the old way on a cushion by mother, and let her run her fingers through my hair, the way she used to—and Nan, I'll be indicted for perjury if her hand