

'Christmas has come! It has come! Come to us!'

A work-basket for mother, dainty toilet articles for Emily, and for the small ones a large doll each, with many other bits of trash precious in the eyes of little girls. All with injuries so slight as to take little from their real value.

'Oh, mother! you're right, as you always are,' said George, as at length the excitement was a little allayed. 'You and Uncle Harvey, too—dear old fellow! It always pays in the end to do your very best—and a little more.'

'At Christmas time and every time in the year,' said mother.

'Christmas time and every other,' came in a chorus of happy agreement.

But George never dreamed how much farther he was indebted to his 'doing his best and more,' for it is ordered that we are not permitted to see the direct results of our best efforts. He never knew that his name had been on the list of those among the clerks who, owing to the approach of the dull season, were to be dismissed after the holidays.

The list was submitted to the head of the firm by one of the foremen, with the remark: 'I made this out some time ago, but, pointing to George's name, 'I think we might keep him on. He's spurring up.'

Turning Over a New Leaf.

Mr. Billings settled himself comfortably in his favorite chair beside the stove in the grocery store, and returned the neighborly greetings of the other regular attendants.

'Yes,' he said, meditatively, 'this is the last night of the old year. Somethin' kind o' solemn 'bout it, too, when ye stop to think of it. A year pas an' gone, an' a new one—mebbe the last some of us'll ever see—just beginnin'.' It makes a man feel serious. People laugh 'bout New Year resolutions, but I maintain it's a good thing for a man to pull up now an' then an' start fresh; an' the first of the year seems the most natural an' fittin' time to do it.'

'Makin' any res'lutions yourself, 'Lisha?' asked Nathan Hobbs, good-naturedly.

'Yes, sir, I am!' replied Elisha, defiantly. 'I'm makin' one, anyway, an' I don't care who knows it. I'm resolvin' to keep a better holt on my temper this year. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city," the Book says. I've had my failin's that way, as some of ye know; but now we're beginnin' a new year an' a new century, too, I'm goin' to turn over a new leaf.'

'What was that you said 'bout a new century?' asked old Eben Cook, from his seat in the corner.

'I said now that we was beginnin' a new century I was goin'—'

'What you talkin' about, 'Lisha? The twentieth century begun a year ago. Tomorrow'll be nineteen hundred an' one, won't it?'

'Course 'twill; but ain't "one" the first number there is? An' don't that make tomorrow the first day of the new century?'

'Not by a long shot, 'less I've forgotten how to count. It don't take a hundred an' one years to make a century, does it?'

'No, but it takes more'n ninety-nine. S'pose I was to begin with one, an' count—'

'Hold on a minute,' interposed Judson, the storekeeper. 'Let's say that Bill, here, owed me a hundred dollars an' started to pay me in dollar bills, callin' out "one," "two," "three"—'

'Well, s'pose he did.'

'No, Jud,' said Seth Gibson. 'Here's the way I heard that feller up to the academy

put it: How old is a man on his one-hundredth birthday?'

'Good land and seas!' shouted Mr. Billings, as he rose excitedly to his feet. 'If he didn't know any more'n this c'lection of hand-picked lunkheads he wouldn't pass for more'n six or seven, at most. It's a waste o' breath talkin' to ye. My ol' sorrel mare's got more sense than the whole pas-sel of ye!' and he started for the door.

'What was it 'Lisha was sayin' 'bout New Year's res'lutions?' McPherson asked the storekeeper, as the door shut with a bang. But Judson was too intent on his argument with Gibson to reply.—Exchange.

A Silver Rouble.

('Chambers's Journal.')

I.

It was in November, 1874, that I succeeded in gaining an appointment that took me far out of the beaten track of the general traveler. Owing to the influence of an old friend in St. Petersburg, I was appointed to the post of superintending engineer to one of the steamboat companies trading on the Amoor River, in Eastern Siberia; and the same letter which reached me in London notifying my promotion, also contained instructions for my immediate departure to take up my duties at Bladivostock, the company's headquarters on the Pacific coast. I had been expecting this journey for some days, and consequently the preparations I had to make before starting were soon completed. Within a week from the receipt of that letter I was in St. Petersburg; thence I travelled to Moscow and Nijni, and at this latter place commenced the long sleigh-journey down the Volga river to Perm; then on by a single line of rail to Ekaterinburg, finding myself at last within Siberia and at the beginning of the strange journey across the thousands of miles of snow and ice dividing me from my destination.

After waiting at Ekaterinburg for a few days, spent in purchasing a suitable sleigh and laying in a stock of comforts to be used on the road, I eventually started. This was on Dec. 19, 1874. The first few days were a great hardship to me, as I was unaccustomed to the cramped position necessitated by the size of my sleigh, and the bumping and swinging motion, as we trotted at a good pace over the frozen snow road, kept the sleep I so badly needed from my eyes. On Christmas Eve we had left the last posting-house at which we had changed horses some miles behind us, and I was settling myself into the fur rugs preparatory for a long night's journey, in fact I was just dropping off into a restless sleep, when—crash! went something under me, and in a moment I found myself half buried, head downwards, in the snow. With some difficulty I succeeded in extricating myself, and on rising to my feet, surveyed the scene with anything but pleasurable feelings. There, a few yards off, sat my drosky-man ruefully rubbing himself, apparently with a view of finding out if and where he was hurt. Close beside him lay the sleigh, bottom up, with my clothing, rugs, and paraphernalia strewn around. The two horses stood quietly looking on, only too glad, I suspect, of any excuse for a rest. I could hardly help laughing, although our position was anything but enviable. Here we were some miles from the nearest posthouse, the night coming on rapidly, and the thermometer any number of degrees below zero.

Knowing it was useless standing there thinking, I soon had my driver on his legs again, and found, greatly to my relief, that he was none the worse for his shaking. We then set about righting the sleigh, and I was

able to see the cause of our mishap. The iron tire of one of the runners had become unfastened at the front end, and falling to the ground, had ploughed its way along, until, meeting a harder frozen part of the track, it had stopped us altogether, with the result I have described. Having found the cause, it did not take us long to put matters to rights; but considering it unwise to push on with the runner unprotected, I decided to re-trace the road to our last stopping station, get things put right, and start fairly again in the morning.

After two hours' walking, we reached the small wooden house, and with some trouble succeeded in waking the owner; and we soon had the horses comfortably stabled in the outhouse, and ourselves supplied with beds for the night. In the morning, after breakfasting early, the horses were harnessed, and I proceeded to settle our bill of one rouble. Amongst the change for the note I had given him, the landlord gave me a silver rouble piece, which I noticed had apparently been roughly engraved; and on examining it closer, I found that not only was it pierced near the rim for a cord to pass through, but that on the reverse, some former owner had cut as if with a knife, a rough outline of a Greek cross. I did not pay much attention to this at the time; but thinking it curious, I placed it apart from the rest of my money, intending to keep it as a memento of our over-night adventure.

When, after many weeks and sundry adventures and hardships, I reached Bladivostock, I came upon this rouble in emptying the pockets of my clothes, and being again struck by its peculiar appearance, I decided to keep it as a curiosity; and often would I look at it, and wonder what manner of man it was, and the reasons he could have had for treating a rouble in that manner.

II.

Again it was Christmas Eve; but time had gone by, and the Christmas of 1877 found me with the army of Suleiman Pasha, then fighting in the Schipka Pass against the Russians.

I had spent two long weary years in Siberia, and had succeeded in putting the affairs of my employers into better order; but finding the dishonesty of the under officials too much to contend against, I, with some degree of satisfaction, turned my back on things Russian and returned to London. I had been well paid for my work, and determined to enjoy myself in town, as one can after such prolonged absence in a country like Siberia. But the old longing for adventure and change soon took hold of me again, and when the Russian-Turkish war broke out, I was one of the first to offer myself as a correspondent at the seat of war for a leading daily paper. My knowledge of the language and country procured me the post without difficulty, and I was soon on my way to Constantinople, fully bent on pushing to the front as quickly as possible. Once there, I had some difficulty in getting my papers signed; but at last all was in order, and on that Christmas Eve 1877 I was snugly ensconced in a wooden hut, with my feet to a blazing fire of pine logs, smoking and wondering what the good folks were doing in England. I was not alone, for amongst other Englishmen then with the army were Dr. W— and Mr. S—, both volunteers in the Stafford House employ, and both were doing their best to establish a service for the transport of the wounded to the rear. They were with me that night; and as we sat smoking round the fire we did not forget to pledge a health to friends and relatives at home.