

## Tommy's Christmas Eve.



THE logs in the old fireplace were nearly burnt out, leaving behind them a mass of glowing embers. It was growing very late, Tommy knew, because the great solemn clock on the stairs had taken such a long time to strike out the last hour; but he was determined not to let himself fall asleep. He had begged hard and long for permission to sit up and catch a glimpse of dear Santa Claus on his yearly visit, until at last his mother had yielded and said "Yes." So here he sat curled up in his grandfather's huge arm-chair and snugly wrapped in an old-fashioned comfortable, trying hard not to give way to the drowsiness that was gradually stealing over him in spite of himself. Before him hung his stockings—two, because Tommy did not mean to lose any sweetmeats or toys for the reason that his legs belonged to a ten year-old boy. "Tick, tock, tick, tock," said the sleepy clock. Tommy wished he could stop it, What hard work it was to wink! His eyes felt full of sticks. "Tick, tock"—it was a very hard struggle, to be sure. A mouse scampered along its dark pathway behind the wall, and Tommy fell a-wondering whether it could be the noise of reindeer prancing on the roof. While he was yet wondering, all at once two little men clad in green and wearing tiny red caps on their heads popped up out of his stockings and began to talk to each other hanging over the tops of the stockings like two children over neighboring fences.



"Hello, Gambol!" cried one.

"Hello, Twinkle!" cried the other.

"A nice warm nest for a windy night."

"Indeed, you're quite right. A gay prank this. Hello, there youngster!"

Tommy saw that the little man was speaking to him, so he answered a little timidly.

"Who are you?"