

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1996

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming are checked below.

- Coloured covers / Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged / Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated / Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing / Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps / Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black) / Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations / Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Bound with other material / Relié avec d'autres documents
- Only edition available / Seule édition disponible
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin / La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure.
- Blank leaves added during restorations may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming / Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- Additional comments / Commentaires supplémentaires:

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured pages / Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged / Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated / Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed / Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached / Pages détachées
- Showthrough / Transparence
- Quality of print varies / Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Includes supplementary material / Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image / Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.
- Opposing pages with varying colouration or discolourations are filmed twice to ensure the best possible image / Les pages s'opposant ayant des colorations variables ou des décolorations sont filmées deux fois afin d'obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

	10x		14x		18x		22x		26x		30x	
	12x		16x		20x		24x		28x		32x	

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

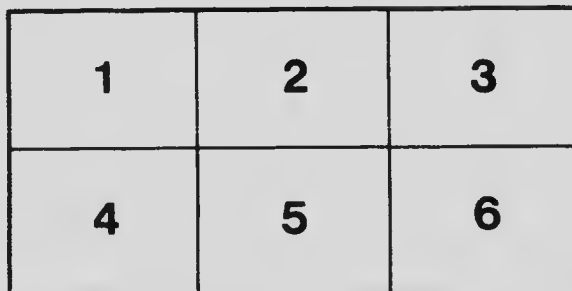
MacOdrum Library
Carleton University

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol \rightarrow (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

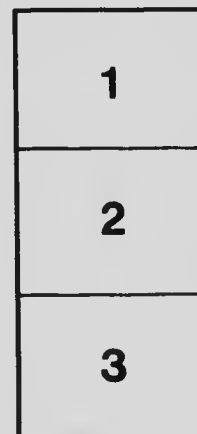
MacOdrum Library
Carleton University

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole \rightarrow signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

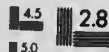


MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.0



2.8



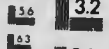
2.5



3.2



2.2



3.6



4.0



2.0



1.1



1.8



1.25



1.4



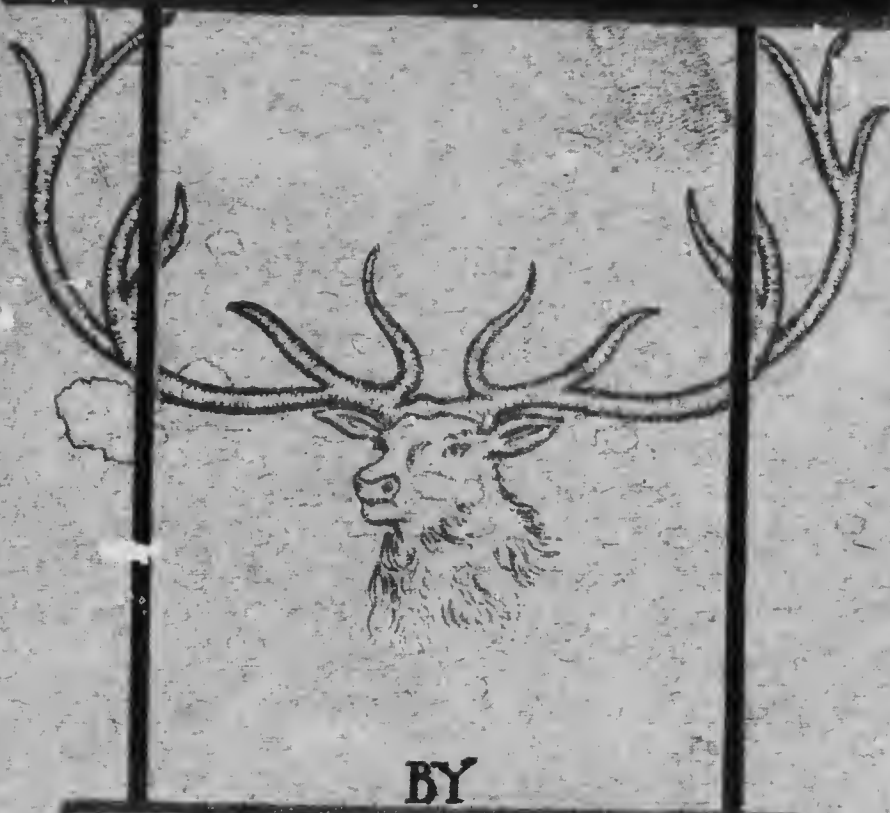
1.6



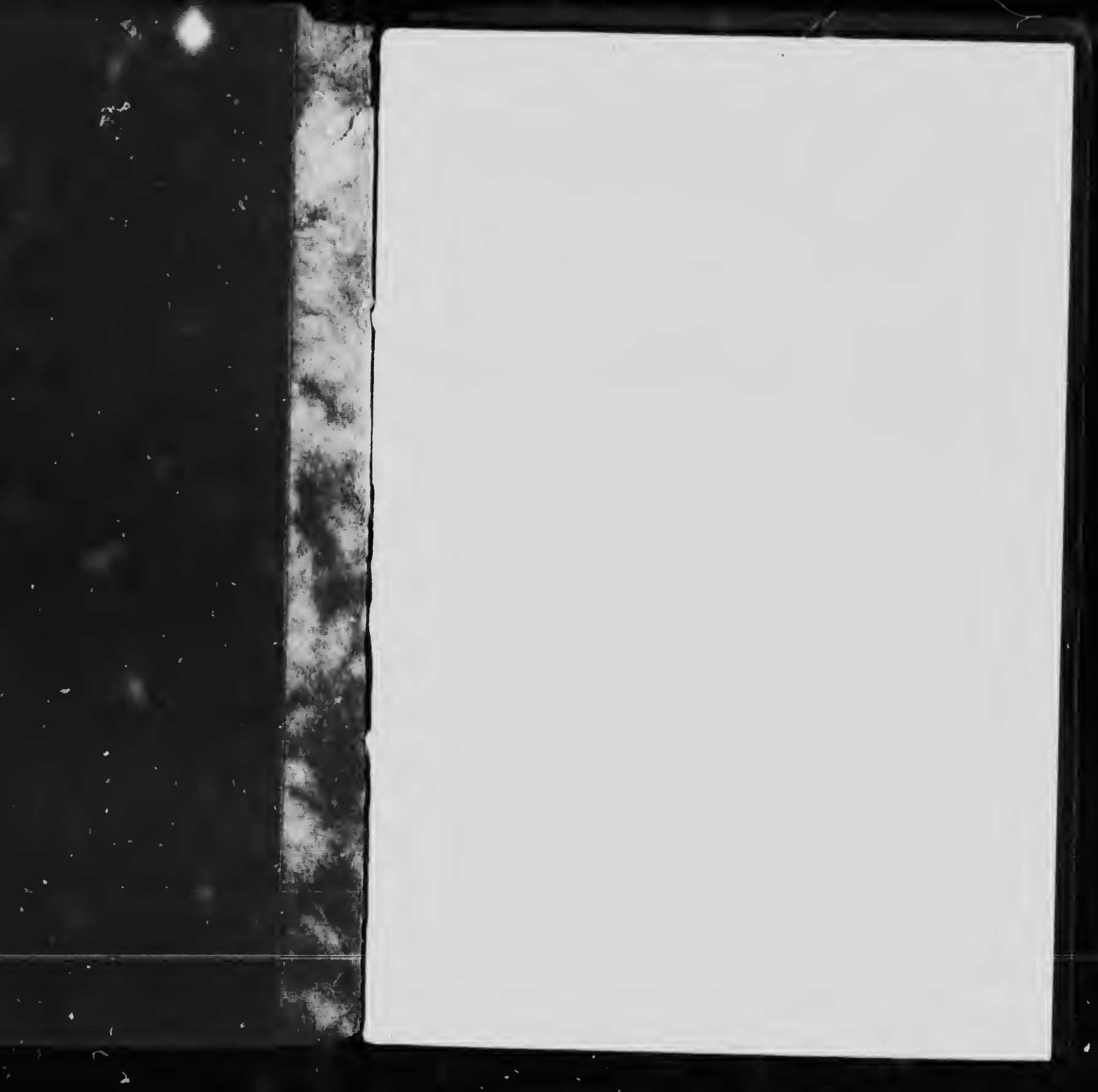
APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

**CHRISTMAS EVE
A NORMAN STORY**



**BY
NORMAN·DUNCAN**



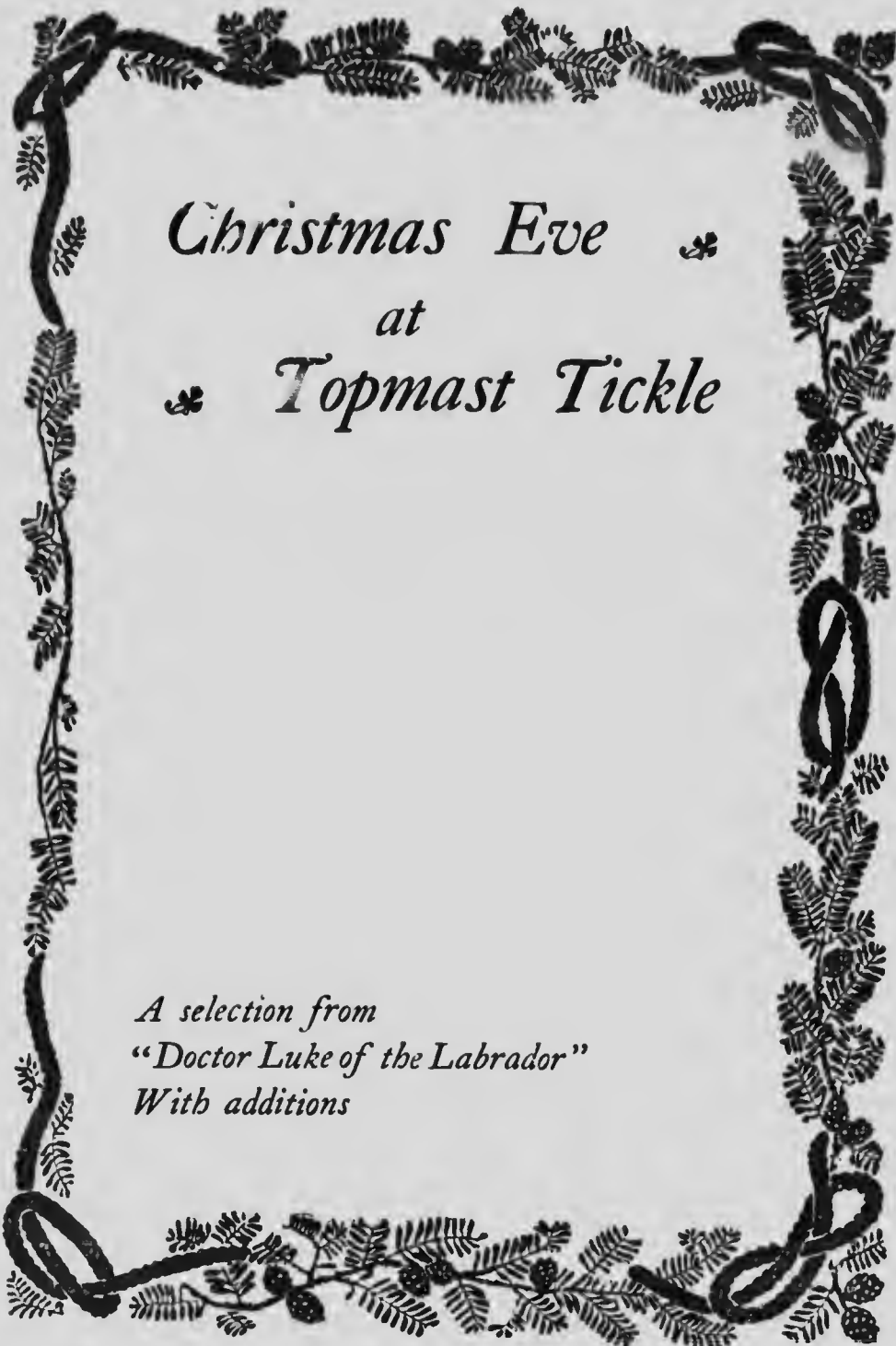


File for committee
on the committee
year. 1910
1910"

...

...

...



Christmas Eve ❄️
at
❄️ *Topmast Tickle*

A selection from
"Doctor Luke of the Labrador"
With additions



T H E W O R K S O F
NORMAN DUNCAN

Billy Topsail and Company

More Adventures of Billy Topsail. 12mo,
Illustrated \$1.50.

Norman Duncan has opened a land abounding in perils, excitements and hazardous experiences perfectly irresistible to young folks.

**The Adventures of
Billy Topsail**

12mo, Illustrated, \$1.50.

A rippling story of adventure by sea—a northern sea, full of ice and swept by big gales—a tale that moves like a full-rigged ship with all sail spread to a rousing breeze.

The Suitable Child

Illustrated by Elizabeth Shippen Green.
GIFT EDITION. Handsomely Decorated
Boards, printed in colors, net \$1.00.
POPULAR EDITION. 12mo, cloth, net 60c.

The Mother

A Novelette of New York Life. 12mo,
cloth, \$1.25. de Luxe, net \$2.00.

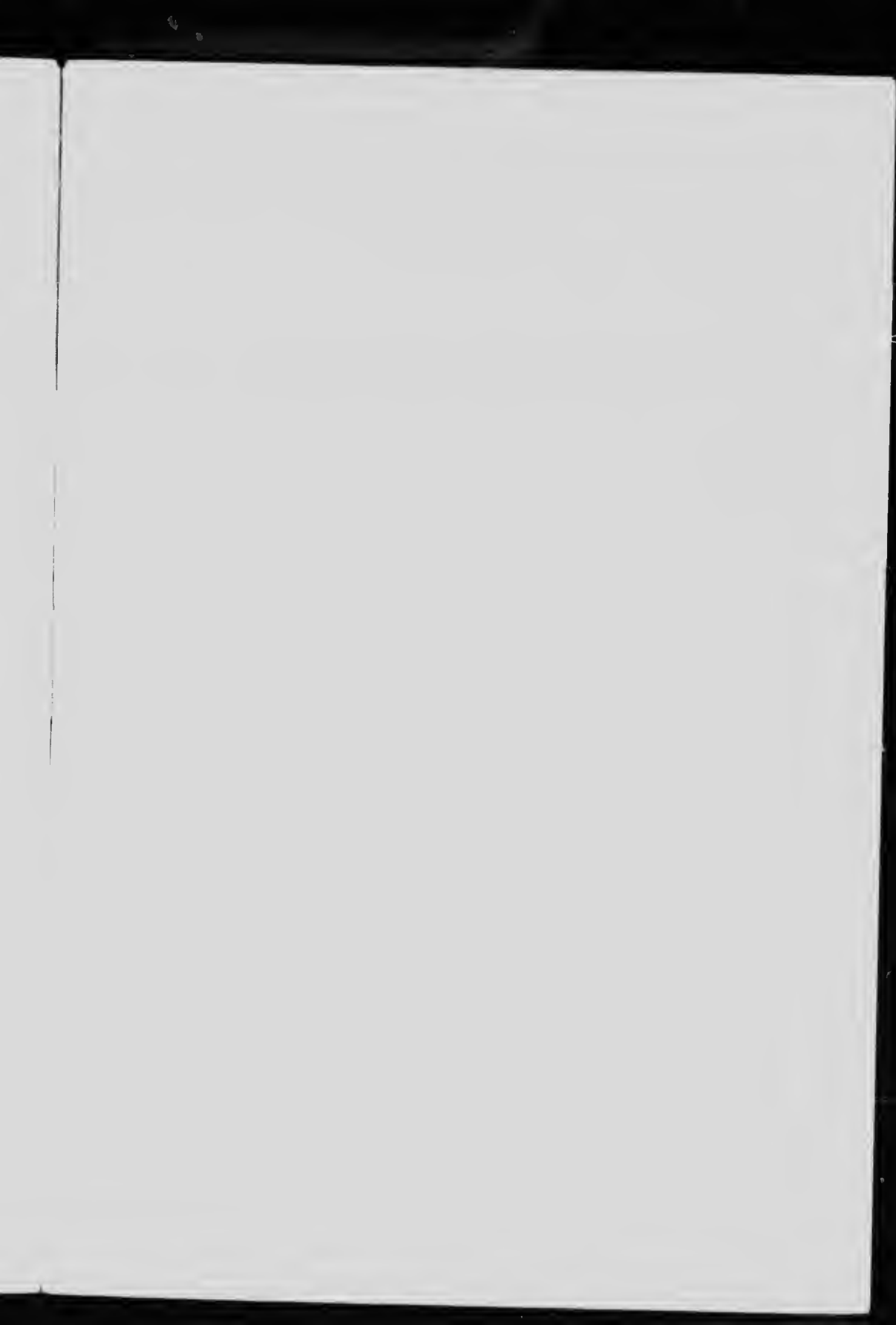
Dr. Luke of the Labrador

12mo, cloth \$1.50.

"Norman Duncan has fulfilled all that was expected of him in this story: it established him beyond question as one of the strong masters of the present day."—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

Dr. Grenfell's Parish

Illustrated. Cloth, net \$1.00.





"By jove, that's jolly! Santa Claus got away at 9:36"



**CHRISTMAS EVE
AT TOPMAST TICKLE**

BY
NORMAN DUNCAN

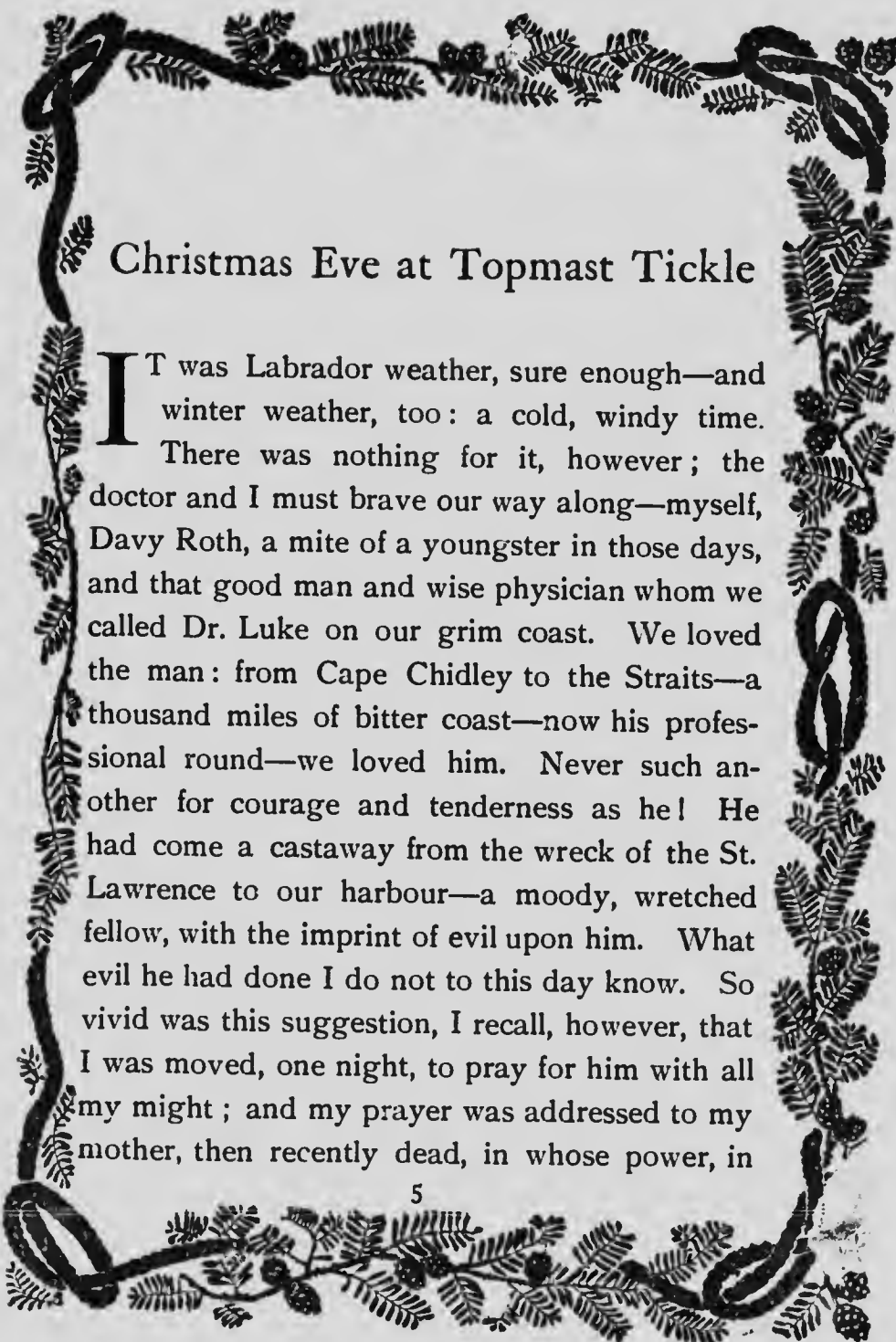


FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY
Publishers



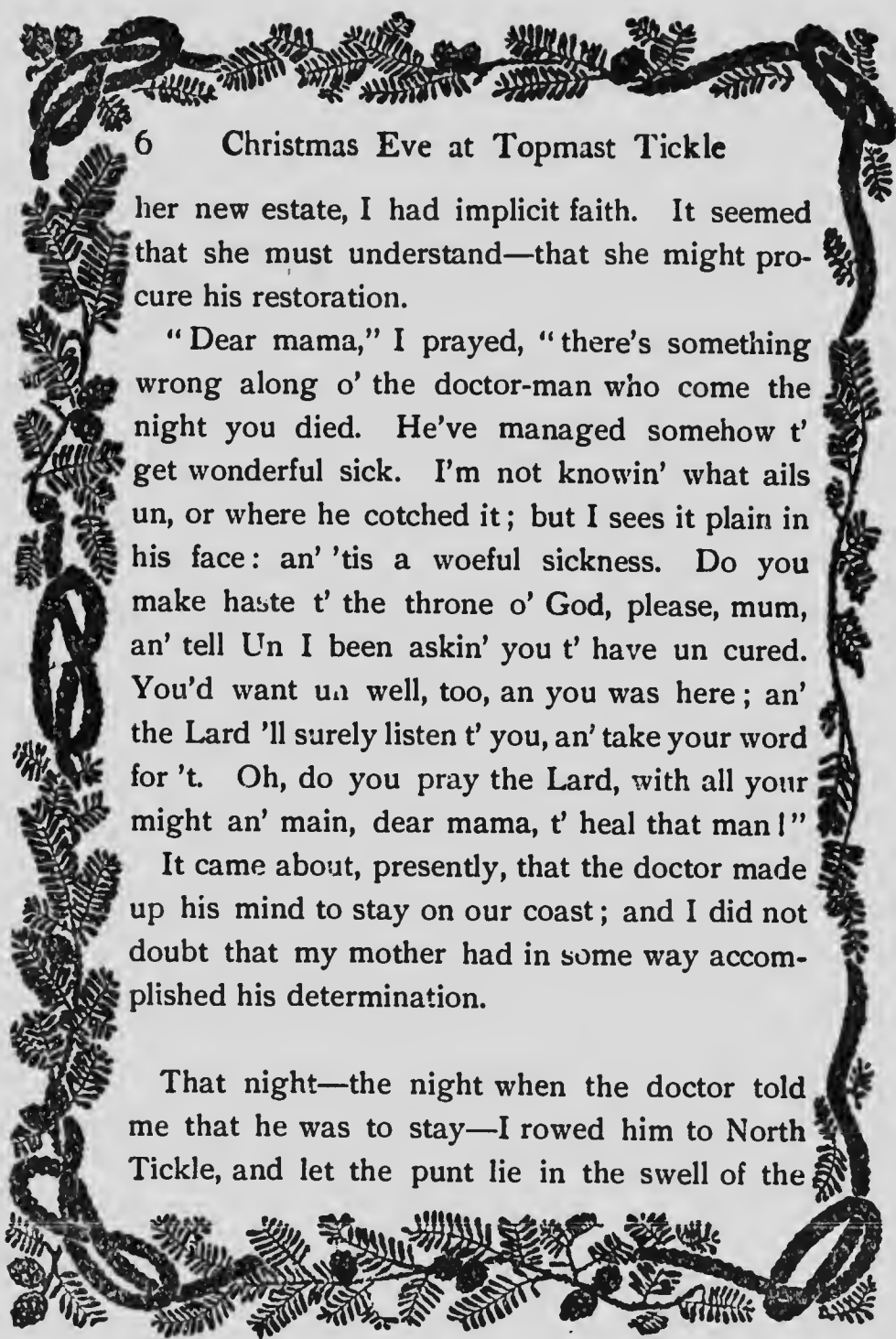
Copyright, 1904 and 1910, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 80 Wabash Avenue
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

IT was Labrador weather, sure enough—and winter weather, too: a cold, windy time. There was nothing for it, however; the doctor and I must brave our way along—myself, Davy Roth, a mite of a youngster in those days, and that good man and wise physician whom we called Dr. Luke on our grim coast. We loved the man: from Cape Chidley to the Straits—a thousand miles of bitter coast—now his professional round—we loved him. Never such another for courage and tenderness as he! He had come a castaway from the wreck of the St. Lawrence to our harbour—a moody, wretched fellow, with the imprint of evil upon him. What evil he had done I do not to this day know. So vivid was this suggestion, I recall, however, that I was moved, one night, to pray for him with all my might; and my prayer was addressed to my mother, then recently dead, in whose power, in



6 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

her new estate, I had implicit faith. It seemed that she must understand—that she might procure his restoration.

“Dear mama,” I prayed, “there’s something wrong along o’ the doctor-man who come the night you died. He’ve managed somehow t’ get wonderful sick. I’m not knowin’ what ails un, or where he cotched it; but I sees it plain in his face: an’ ’tis a woeful sickness. Do you make haste t’ the throne o’ God, please, mum, an’ tell Un I been askin’ you t’ have un cured. You’d want un well, too, an you was here; an’ the Lard ’ll surely listen t’ you, an’ take your word for ’t. Oh, do you pray the Lard, with all your might an’ main, dear mama, t’ heal that man!”

It came about, presently, that the doctor made up his mind to stay on our coast; and I did not doubt that my mother had in some way accomplished his determination.

That night—the night when the doctor told me that he was to stay—I rowed him to North Tickle, and let the punt lie in the swell of the



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 7

open sea, where it was very solemn and quiet. The sky was heavy with drifting masses of cloud, aflame with red and gold and all the sunset colours, from the black line of coast, lying in the west, far into the east, where sea and sky were turning gray. Indeed, it was very still, very solemn, lying in the long, crimson swell of the great deep, while the dusk came creeping over the sea.

"I do not wonder," the doctor muttered, with a shudder, "that the people who dwell here fear God."

There was something familiar to me in that feeling; but for the moment I could not make it out.

"Zur?" I said.

His eyes ranged timidly over the sombre waste—the vasty, splendid heavens, the coast, dark and unfeeling, the infinite, sullen sea, which ominously darkened as he looked—and he covered his face with his hands.

"No," he whispered, looking up, "I do not wonder that you believe in God—and fear Him!"

Then I knew that roundabout he felt the presence of an offended God.



8 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

"And fear Him!" he repeated.

I levelled my finger at him. "You been wicked!" I said, knowing that my accusation was true.

"Yes," he answered, "I have been wicked." I had been wicked, too, in my time—and understood.

"Is you goin' t' b^e good now?"

"I am going to stay here," he replied; "and I am going to heal the people—and try to be good."

"I'd die t' see it!" I cried.

"Ecod!" my friend, old Skipper Tommy Lovejoy commented, when the news was imparted to him. "You're never tellin' me the doctor-man is t' stay in our harbour! Well, well! An' all because the St. Lawrence was wrecked—an' because your mother died the night he come ashore—an' because he might have saved her had he been here in time enough. 'Ecod!' says the Lard; 'now that I got that doctor-man there I'll just put it in his mind t' stay an' do a day's work or two for Me.' I'm



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 9

sure He meant it—I'm sure He meant t' do just that—I'm sure 'twas all done o' purpose. We thinks He's hard an' a bit free an' careless. Ecod! they's times when we thinks He fair bungles His job. He kills us, an' He cripples us, an' He starves us, an' He hurts our hearts; an' then, Davy, we says He's a dunderhead at runnin' a world, which, says we, we could run a sight better, if we was able t' make one. But the Lard, Davy, does His day's work in a seaman-like way, usin' no more crooked backs an' empty stomachs an' children's tears an' broken hearts than He can help. 'Tis little we knows about what *He's* up to."

All of which was characteristic of Skipper Tommy. . . .

And the doctor was presently cured. There is virtue for the city-bred, I fancy, in the clean salt air and simple living of our coast—and, surely, for every one, everywhere, a tonic in the performance of good deeds. Hard practice in fair and foul weather worked a vast change



10 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

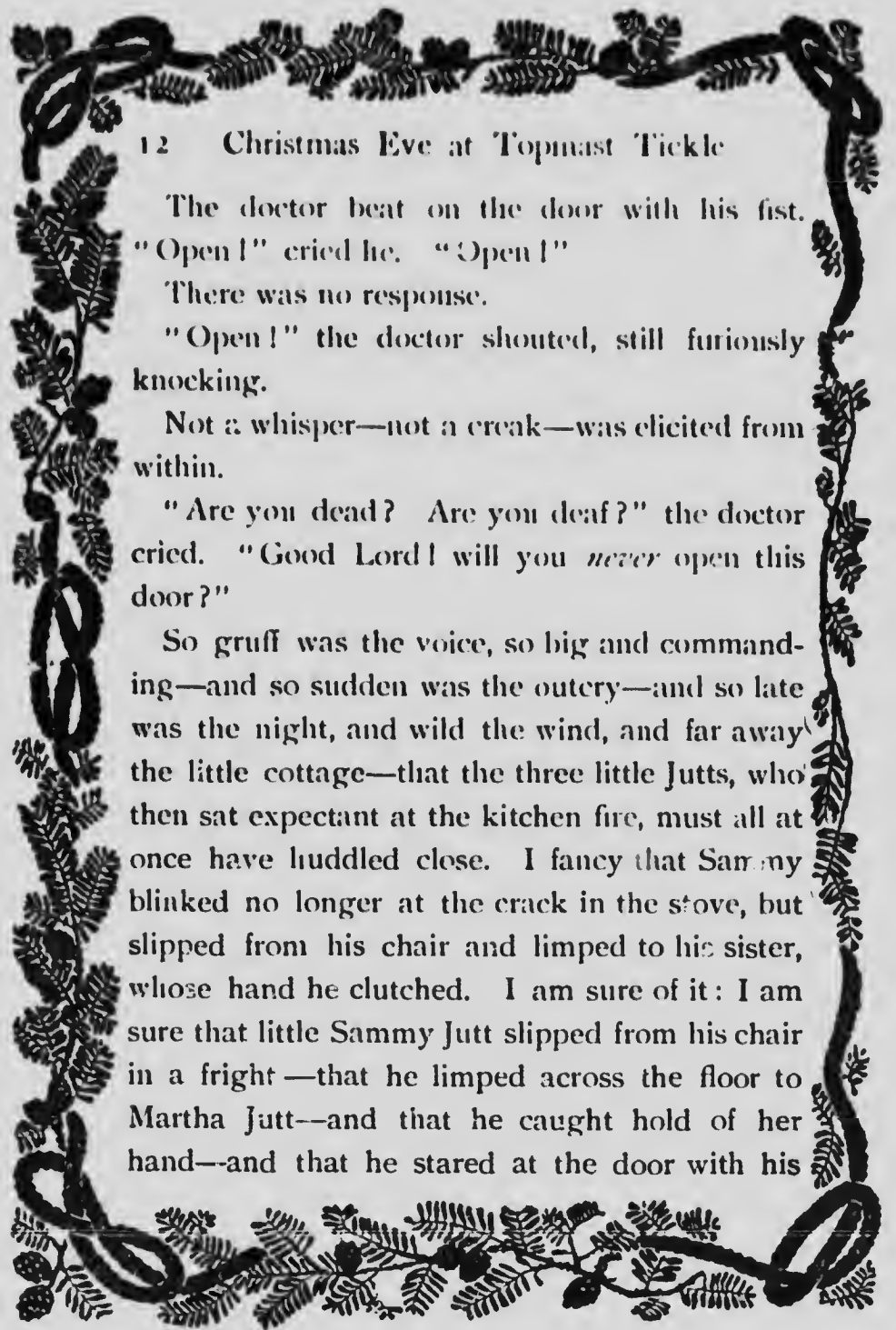
in the doctor. Toil and fresh air are eminent physicians. The wonder of salty wind and the hand-to-hand conflict with a northern sea! They gave him health, a clear-eyed, brown, deep-breathed sort of health, and restored a strength, broad-shouldered and lithe and playful, that was his natural heritage. With this new power came joyous courage, indomitability of purpose, a restless activity of body and mind. He was now, in manly qualities, the man the good God designed—strong and bonnie and tender-hearted: betraying no weakness in the duties of the day. And he went about with hearty words on the tip of his tongue and a laugh in his gray eyes. The children ran out of the cottages to greet him as he passed by, and a multitude of surly, ill-conditioned dogs, which yielded the road to no one else, accepted him as a distinguished intimate.

But to the story! It was Labrador weather, as I have said—white weather, and the day before Christmas. The doctor and I must get



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 11

along. There was nothing for it. We must spend Christmas at home; the wind must not deny us—nor the cold, nor the driving snow. Returning afoot from the bedside of Long John Wise at Run-by-Guess—and from many a bedside and wretched hearth by the —we strapped our packs aback and hearted out from the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Bread-and-Water Bay at dawn. We were to chance hospitality for the night; and this must be (they told us) at the cottage of a man of the name of Jonas Jutt, which is at Topmast Tickle. There was a lusty old wind scampering down the coast, with many a sportive whirl and whoop, flinging the snow about in vast delight—a big rollicking winter's wind, blowing straight out of the north, at the pitch of half a gale. With this abeam we made brave progress; but yet 'twas late at night when we floundered down the gully called Long-an'-Deep, where the drifts were overhead and each must rescue the other from sudden misfortune: a warm glimmer of light in Jonas Jutt's kitchen window to guide and hearten us.



12 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

The doctor beat on the door with his fist. "Open!" cried he. "Open!"

There was no response.

"Open!" the doctor shouted, still furiously knocking.

Not a whisper—not a creak—was elicited from within.

"Are you dead? Are you deaf?" the doctor cried. "Good Lord! will you *never* open this door?"

So gruff was the voice, so big and commanding—and so sudden was the outcry—and so late was the night, and wild the wind, and far away the little cottage—that the three little Jutts, who then sat expectant at the kitchen fire, must all at once have huddled close. I fancy that Sammy blinked no longer at the crack in the stove, but slipped from his chair and limped to his sister, whose hand he clutched. I am sure of it: I am sure that little Sammy Jutt slipped from his chair in a fright—that he limped across the floor to Martha Jutt—and that he caught hold of her hand—and that he stared at the door with his

eyes popping out while the furious knocking went on and the big voice commanded entrance. That was little Sammy Jutt's way—to limp to his sister and catch hold of her hand.

"We'll freeze, I tell you!" shouted the doctor. "Open the—— Ha! Thank you," in a mollified way, as Skipper Jonas Jutt opened the door; and then, most engagingly: "May we come in?"

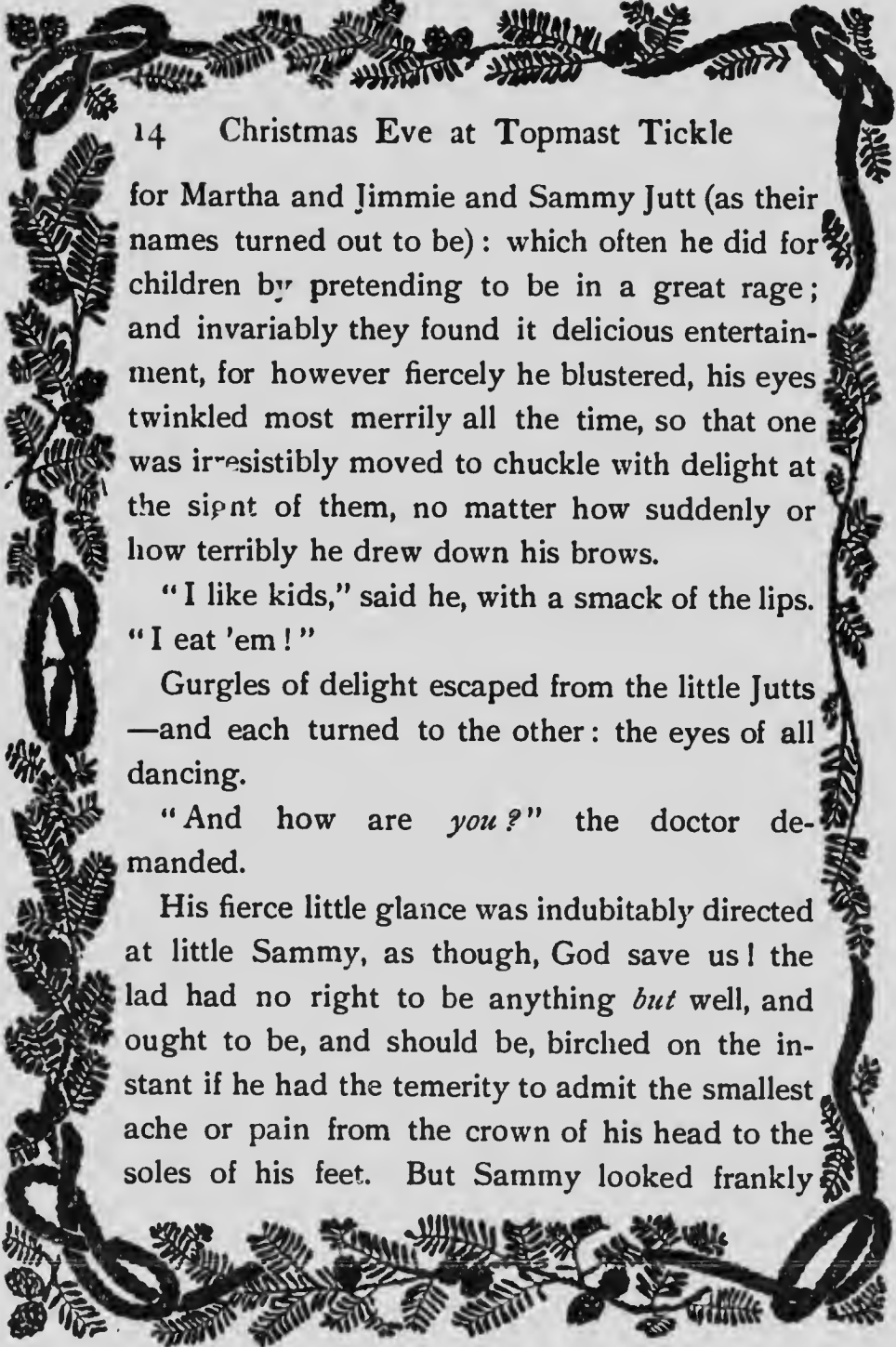
"An' welcome, zur," said the hearty Jonas, "whoever you be! 'Tis gettin' t' be a wild night."

"Thank you. Yes—a wild night. Glad to catch sight of your light from the top of the hill. We'll leave the racquets here. Straight ahead? Thank you. I see the glow of a fire."

We entered.

"Hello!" cried the doctor, stopping short. "What's this? Kids? Good! Three of them. Ha! How are you?"

The manner of asking the question was most indignant, not to say threatening; and a gasp and heavy frown accompanied it. By this I knew that the doctor was about to make sport



14 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

for Martha and Jimmie and Sammy Jutt (as their names turned out to be): which often he did for children by pretending to be in a great rage; and invariably they found it delicious entertainment, for however fiercely he blustered, his eyes twinkled most merrily all the time, so that one was irresistibly moved to chuckle with delight at the sight of them, no matter how suddenly or how terribly he drew down his brows.

"I like kids," said he, with a smack of the lips. "I eat 'em!"

Gurgles of delight escaped from the little Jutts—and each turned to the other: the eyes of all dancing.

"And how are *you*?" the doctor demanded.

His fierce little glance was indubitably directed at little Sammy, as though, God save us! the lad had no right to be anything *but* well, and ought to be, and should be, birched on the instant if he had the temerity to admit the smallest ache or pain from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. But Sammy looked frankly

into the flashing eyes, grinned, chuckled audibly, and lisped that he was better.

"Better!" the doctor exploded.

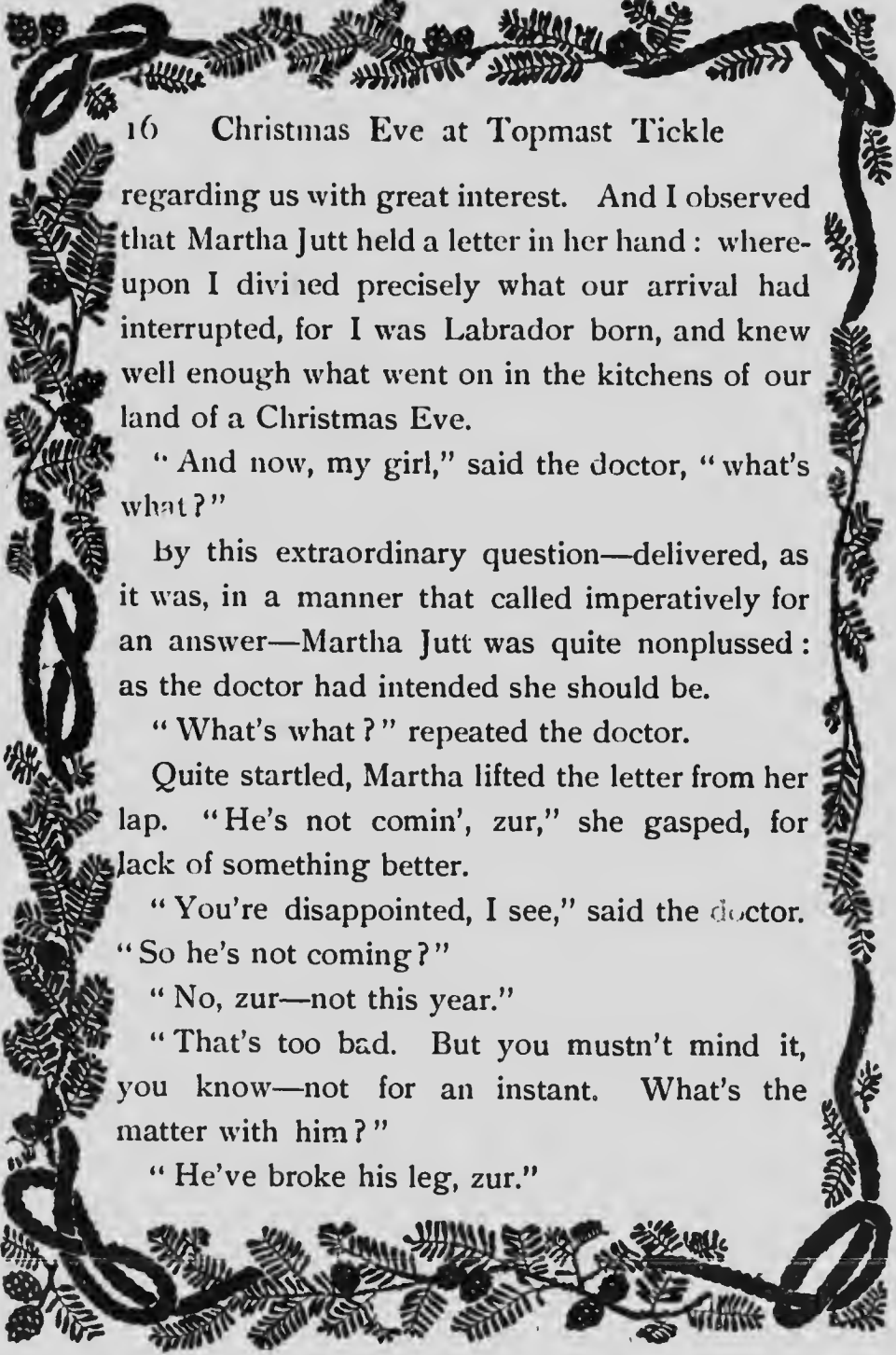
"Ith, thir," said Sammy.

The doctor searched Sammy's white face and scrawny body as though for evidence to the contrary. "Is *that* the best you can do?" he demanded. "Better, eh? Why aren't you *well*? Eh? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

Sammy was not at all ashamed of himself; and he was delighted with the big stranger.

"Huh!" the doctor growled, again looking Sammy over from head to foot. "I'll attend to *you*!"

Thereupon Skipper Jonas took us to the shed, where we laid off our packs and were brushed clean of snow; and by that time Matilda Jutt, the mother of Martha and Jimmie and Sammy, had spread the table with the best she had—little enough, God knows! being but bread and tea—and was smiling beyond. Presently there was nothing left of the bread and tea; and then we drew up to the fire, where the little Jutts still sat,



16 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

regarding us with great interest. And I observed that Martha Jutt held a letter in her hand: whereupon I divined precisely what our arrival had interrupted, for I was Labrador born, and knew well enough what went on in the kitchens of our land of a Christmas Eve.

“And now, my girl,” said the doctor, “what’s what?”

By this extraordinary question—delivered, as it was, in a manner that called imperatively for an answer—Martha Jutt was quite nonplussed: as the doctor had intended she should be.

“What’s what?” repeated the doctor.

Quite startled, Martha lifted the letter from her lap. “He’s not comin’, zur,” she gasped, for lack of something better.

“You’re disappointed, I see,” said the doctor. “So he’s not coming?”

“No, zur—not this year.”

“That’s too bad. But you mustn’t mind it, you know—not for an instant. What’s the matter with him?”

“He’ve broke his leg, zur.”



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 17

"What!" cried the doctor, restored of a sudden to his natural manner. "Poor fellow! How did he come to do that?"

"Catchin' one o' they wild deer, zur."

"Catching a deer!" the doctor exclaimed. "A most extraordinary thing. He was a fool to try it. How long ago?"

"Sure, it can't be more than half an hour; for he've ——"

The doctor jumped up. "Where is he?" he demanded, with professional eagerness. "It can't be far. Davy, a must get to him at once. I must attend to that leg. Where is he?"

"Narth Pole, zur," whispered Sammy.

"Oh-h-h!" cried the doctor; and he sat down again, and pursed his lips, and winked at Sammy in a way most peculiar. "I see!"

"Ay, zur," Jimmie rattled, eagerly. "We're fair disappointed that he's not ——"

"Ha!" the doctor interrupted. "I see. Hum! Well, now!" And having thus incoherently exclaimed for a little, the light in his



18 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

eyes growing merrier all the time, he most unaccountably worked himself into a great rage: whereby I knew that the little Jutts were in some way to be mightily amused. "The lazy rascal!" he shouted, jumping out of his chair, and beginning to stamp the room, frowning terribly. "The fat, idle, blundering dunderhead! Did they send you that message? Did they, now? Tell me, did they? Give me that letter!" He snatched the letter from Martha's lap. "Sammy," he demanded, "where did this letter come from?"

"Narth Pole, zur!"

Jonas Jutt blushed—and Matilda threw her apron over her head to hide her confusion.

"And *how* did it come?"

"Out o' the stove, zur."

The doctor opened the letter, and paused to slap it angrily, from time to time, as he read it.

North poll

DEER MARTHA

few lines is to let you know on accounts



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 19

of havin broke me leg cotchin the deer Im sorry
im in a stat of helth not bein able so as to be out
in hevvy wether. hopin you is all wel as it leves
me

yrs respectful

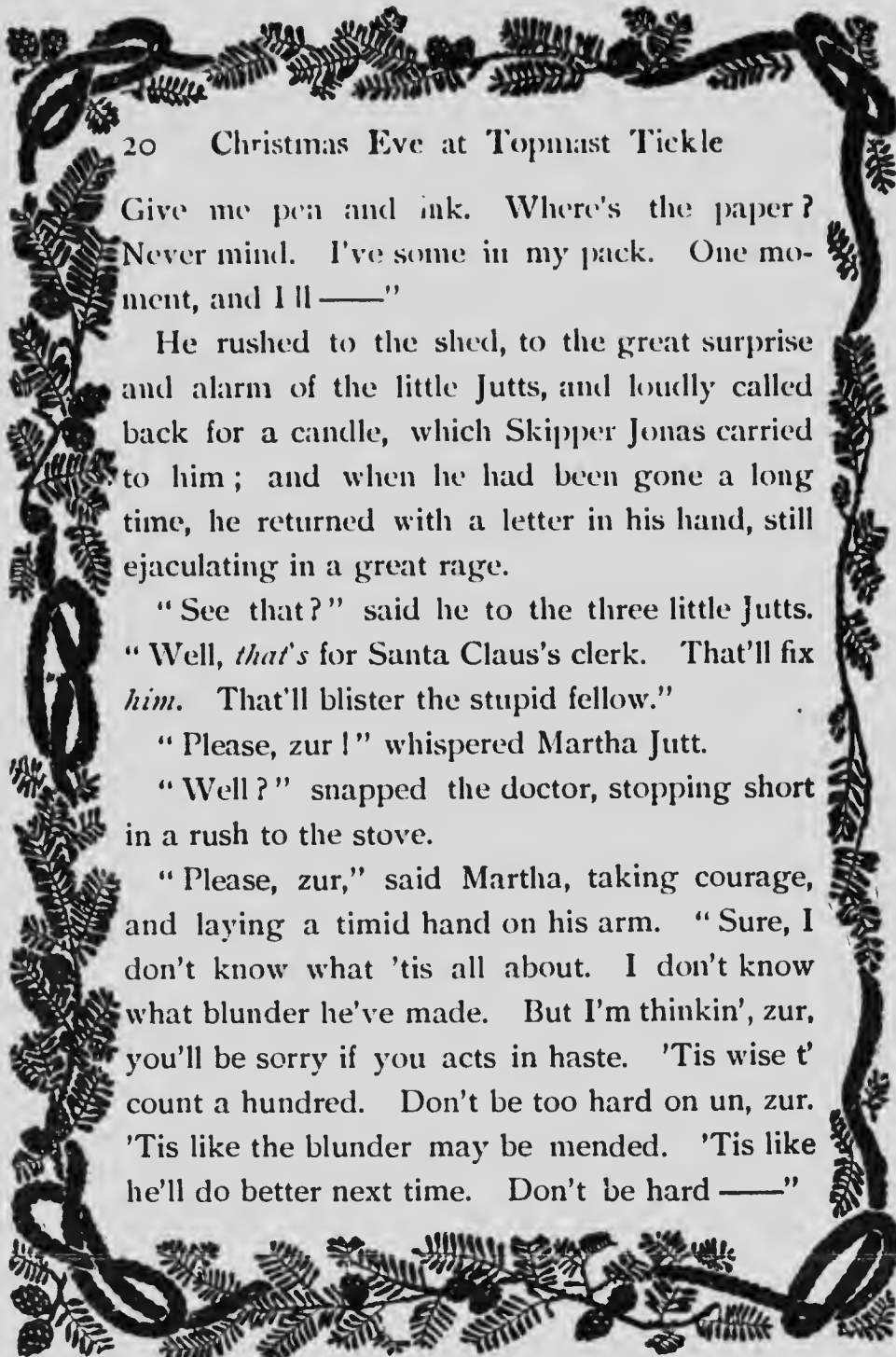
SANDY CLAWS

Fish was poor and it would not be much this
yere anyways. tel little Sammy

“Ha!” shouted the doctor, as he crushed the
letter to a little ball and flung it under the table.
“Ha! That’s the kind of thing that happens
when one’s away from home. There you have
it! Discipline gone to the dogs. System gone
to the dogs. Everything gone to the dogs.
Now, what do you think of that?”

He scowled, and gritted his teeth, and puffed,
and said “Ha!” in a fashion so threatening
that one must needs have fled the room had
there not been a curiously reassuring twinkle in
his eyes.

“What do you think of that?” he repeated,
fiercely, at last. “A countermanded order! I’ll
attend to *him!*” he burst out. “I’ll fix that
fellow! The lazy dunderhead, I’ll soon fix him!



20 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

Give me pen and ink. Where's the paper? Never mind. I've some in my pack. One moment, and I'll —"

He rushed to the shed, to the great surprise and alarm of the little Jutts, and loudly called back for a candle, which Skipper Jonas carried to him; and when he had been gone a long time, he returned with a letter in his hand, still ejaculating in a great rage.

"See that?" said he to the three little Jutts. "Well, *that's* for Santa Claus's clerk. That'll fix *him*. That'll blister the stupid fellow."

"Please, zur!" whispered Martha Jutt.

"Well?" snapped the doctor, stopping short in a rush to the stove.

"Please, zur," said Martha, taking courage, and laying a timid hand on his arm. "Sure, I don't know what 'tis all about. I don't know what blunder he've made. But I'm thinkin', zur, you'll be sorry if you acts in haste. 'Tis wise t' count a hundred. Don't be too hard on un, zur. 'Tis like the blunder may be mended. 'Tis like he'll do better next time. Don't be hard —"



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 21

"*Hard* on him?" the doctor interrupted.

"Hard on *him*! Hard on that——"

"Ay, zur," she pleaded, looking fearlessly up.

"Won't you count a hundred?"

"Count it," said he, grimly.

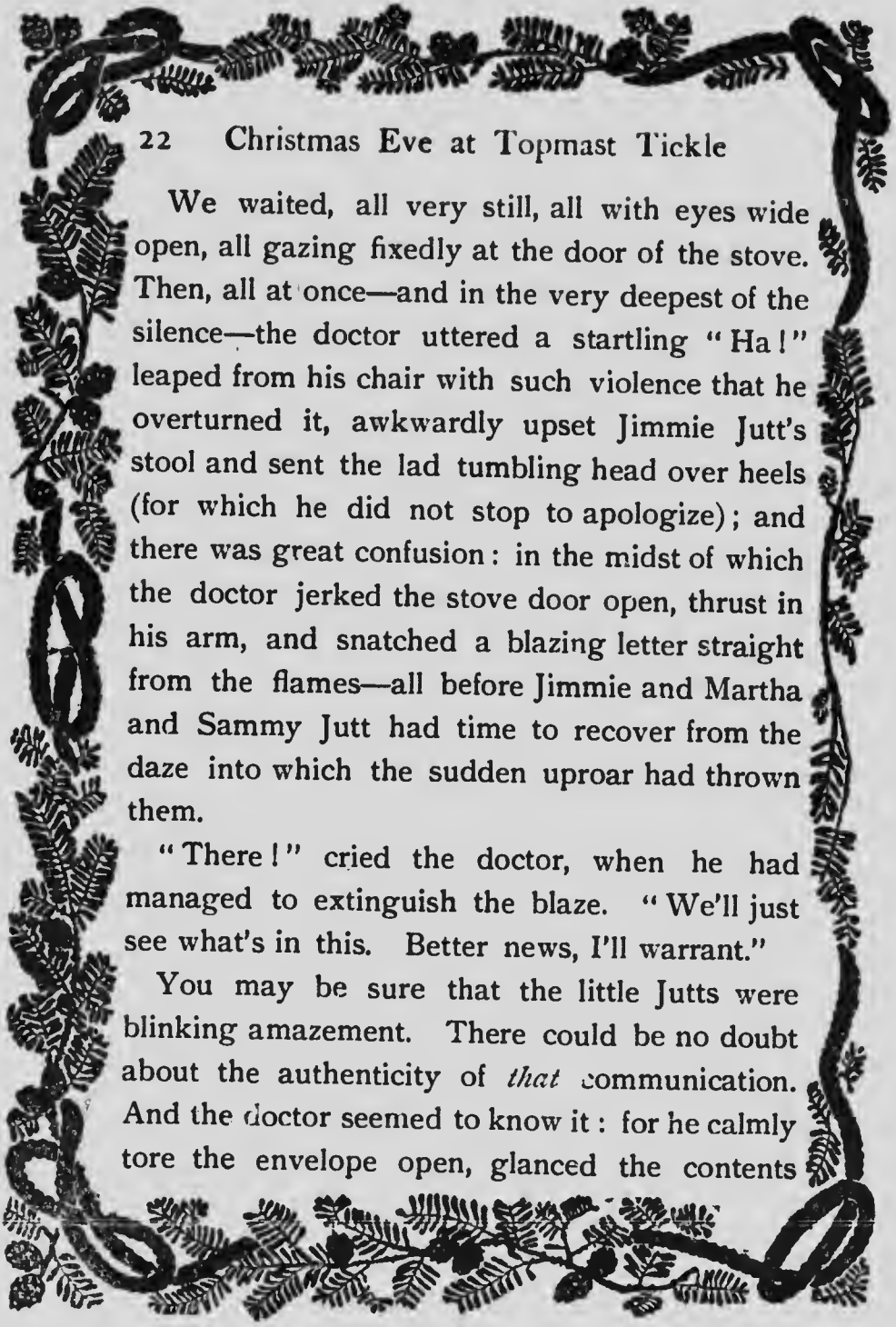
Martha counted. I observed that the numbers fell slower—and yet more slowly—from her lips, until (and she was keenly on the watch) a gentler look overspread the doctor's face; and then she rattled them off, as though she feared he might change his mind once more.

"—— an' a hundred!" she concluded, breathless.

"Well," the doctor drawled, rubbing his nose, "I'll modify it," whereupon Martha smiled, "just to 'blige *you*," whereupon she blushed.

So he scratched a deal of the letter out; then he sealed it, strode to the stove, opened the door, flung the letter into the flames, slammed the door, and turned with a wondrously sweet smile to the amazed little Jutts.

"There!" he sighed. "I think that will do the trick. We'll soon know, at any rate."



22 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

We waited, all very still, all with eyes wide open, all gazing fixedly at the door of the stove. Then, all at once—and in the very deepest of the silence—the doctor uttered a startling “Ha!” leaped from his chair with such violence that he overturned it, awkwardly upset Jimmie Jutt’s stool and sent the lad tumbling head over heels (for which he did not stop to apologize); and there was great confusion: in the midst of which the doctor jerked the stove door open, thrust in his arm, and snatched a blazing letter straight from the flames—all before Jimmie and Martha and Sammy Jutt had time to recover from the daze into which the sudden uproar had thrown them.

“There!” cried the doctor, when he had managed to extinguish the blaze. “We’ll just see what’s in this. Better news, I’ll warrant.”

You may be sure that the little Jutts were blinking amazement. There could be no doubt about the authenticity of *that* communication. And the doctor seemed to know it: for he calmly tore the envelope open, glanced the contents



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 23

over, and turned to Martha, the broadest of grins wrinkling his face.

"Martha Jutt," said he, "will you *please* be good enough to read *that?*"

And Martha read :

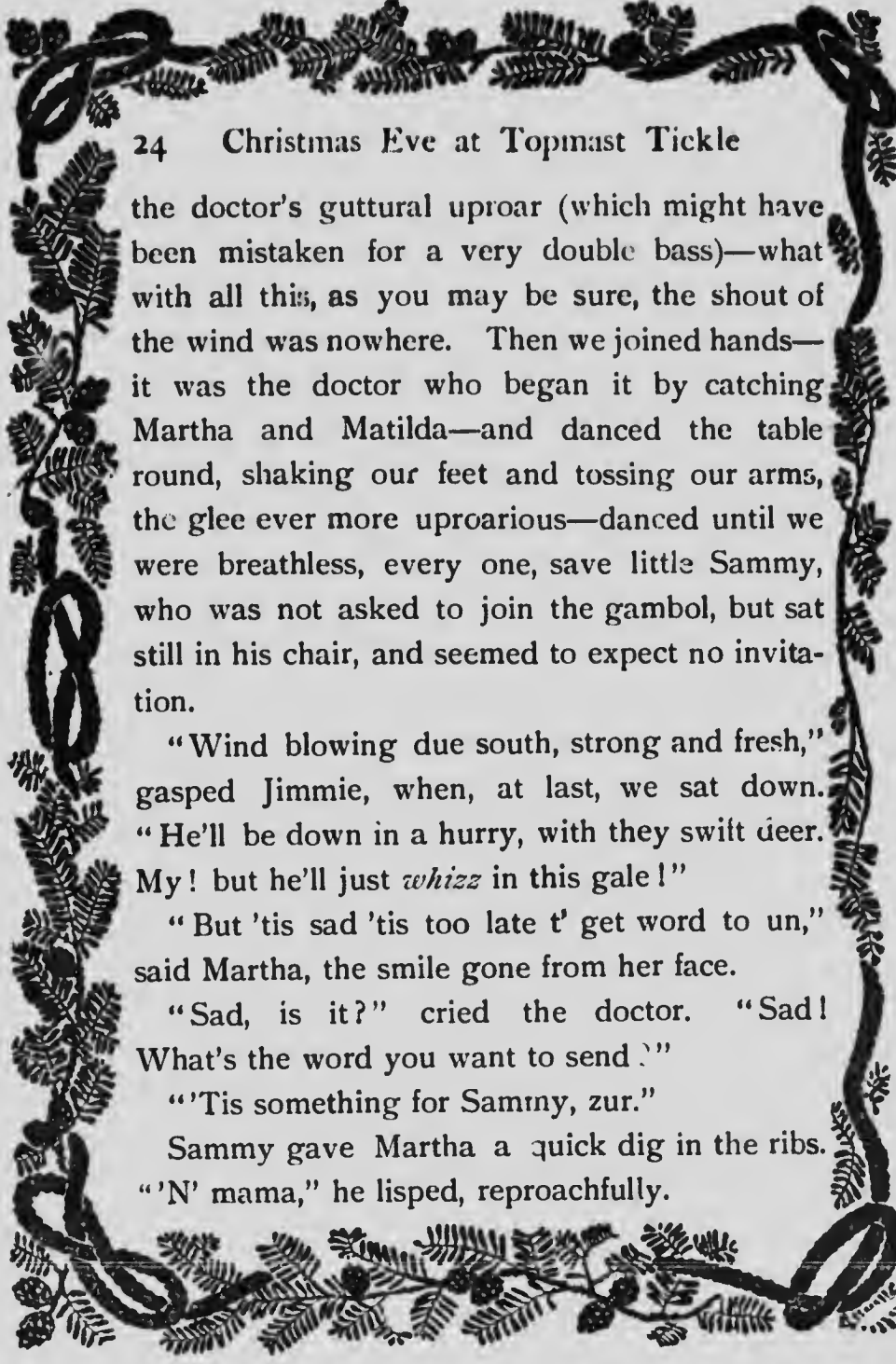
*North Pole, Dec. 24, 10:18 P. M.
To Captain Blizzard,
Jonas Jutt's Cottage, Topmast Tickle,
Labrador Coast.*

RESPECTED SIR:

Regret erroneous report. Mistake of a clerk in the Bureau of Information. Santa Claus got away at 9:36. Wind blowing due south, strong and fresh.

SNOW, Chief Clerk.

Then there was a great outburst of glee. It was the doctor who raised the first cheer. Three times three and a tiger! And what a tiger it was! What with the treble of Sammy, which was of the thinnest description, and the treble of Martha, which was full and sure, and the treble of Jimmie, which dangerously bordered on a cracked bass, and what with Matilda's cackle and Skipper Jonas's croak and my own hoorays and



24 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

the doctor's guttural uproar (which might have been mistaken for a very double bass)—what with all this, as you may be sure, the shout of the wind was nowhere. Then we joined hands—it was the doctor who began it by catching Martha and Matilda—and danced the table round, shaking our feet and tossing our arms, the glee ever more uproarious—danced until we were breathless, every one, save little Sammy, who was not asked to join the gambol, but sat still in his chair, and seemed to expect no invitation.

“Wind blowing due south, strong and fresh,” gasped Jimmie, when, at last, we sat down. “He’ll be down in a hurry, with they swift ueer. My! but he’ll just *whizz* in this gale!”

“But ’tis sad ’tis too late t’ get word to un,” said Martha, the smile gone from her face.

“Sad, is it?” cried the doctor. “Sad! What’s the word you want to send?”

“’Tis something for Sammy, zur.”

Sammy gave Martha a quick dig in the ribs.

“’N’ mama,” he lisped, reproachfully.



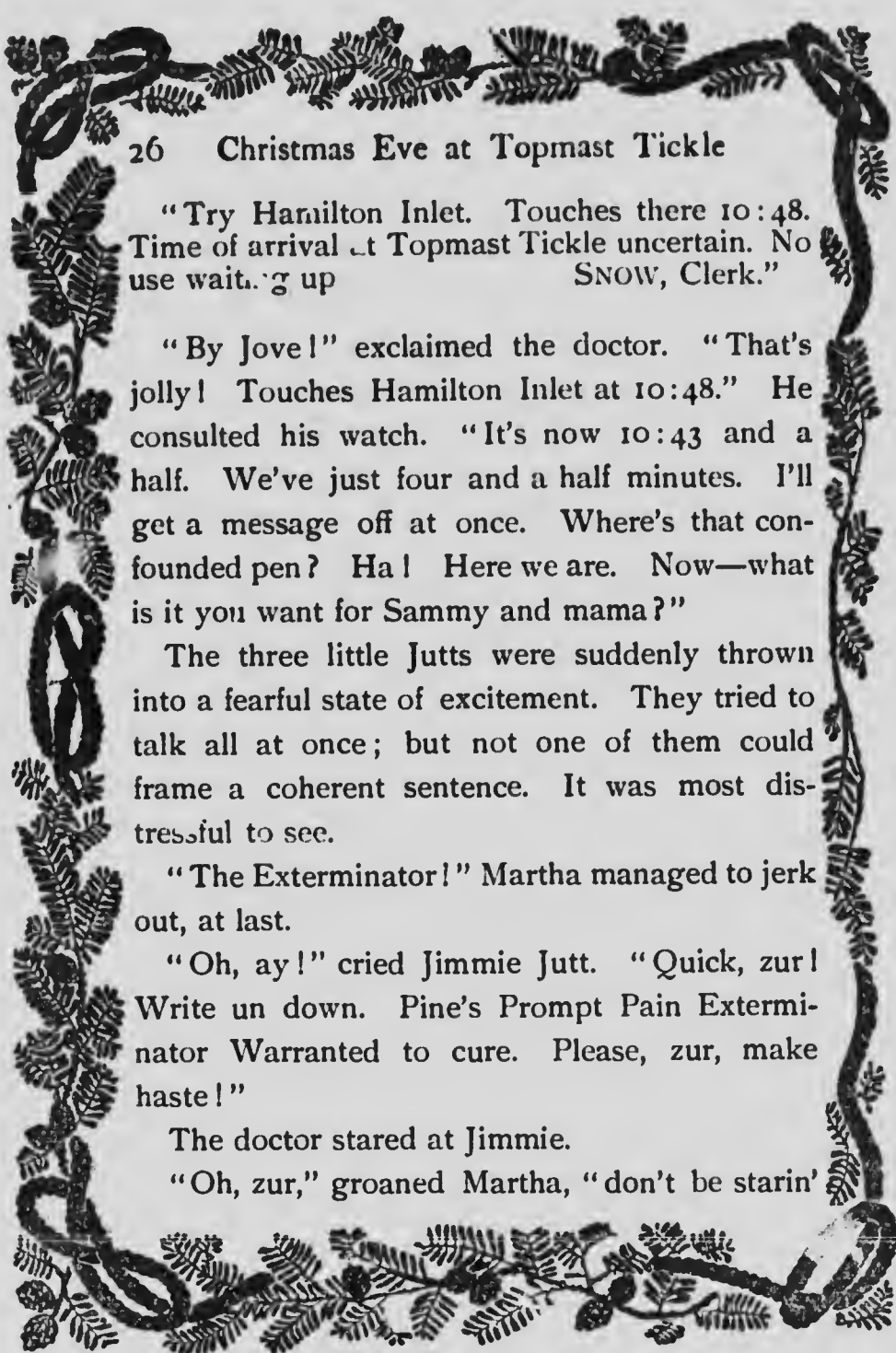
Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 25

"Ay, zur; we're wantin' it bad. An' does you think us could get word to un? For Sammy, zur?"

"'N' mama," Sammy insisted.

"We can try, at any rate," the doctor answered, doubtfully. "Maybe we can catch him on the way down. Where's that pen? Here we are. Now!"

He scribbled rapidly, folded the letter in great haste, and dispatched it to Santa Claus's clerk by the simple process of throwing it in the fire. As before, he went to his pack in the shed, taking the candle with him—the errand appeared to be really most trivial—and stayed so long that the little Jutts, who now loved him very much (as I could see), wished that the need would not arise again. But, all in good time, he returned, and sat to watch for the reply, intent as any of them; and, presently, he snatched the stove door open, creating great confusion in the act, as before; and before the little Jutts could recover from the sudden surprise, he held up a smoking letter. Then he read aloud:



26 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

"Try Hamilton Inlet. Touches there 10:48. Time of arrival at Topmast Tickle uncertain. No use waiting up SNOW, Clerk."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the doctor. "That's jolly! Touches Hamilton Inlet at 10:48." He consulted his watch. "It's now 10:43 and a half. We've just four and a half minutes. I'll get a message off at once. Where's that confounded pen? Ha! Here we are. Now—what is it you want for Sammy and mama?"

The three little Jutts were suddenly thrown into a fearful state of excitement. They tried to talk all at once; but not one of them could frame a coherent sentence. It was most distressful to see.

"The Exterminator!" Martha managed to jerk out, at last.

"Oh, ay!" cried Jimmie Jutt. "Quick, zur! Write un down. Pine's Prompt Pain Exterminator Warranted to cure. Please, zur, make haste!"

The doctor stared at Jimmie.

"Oh, zur," groaned Martha, "don't be starin'



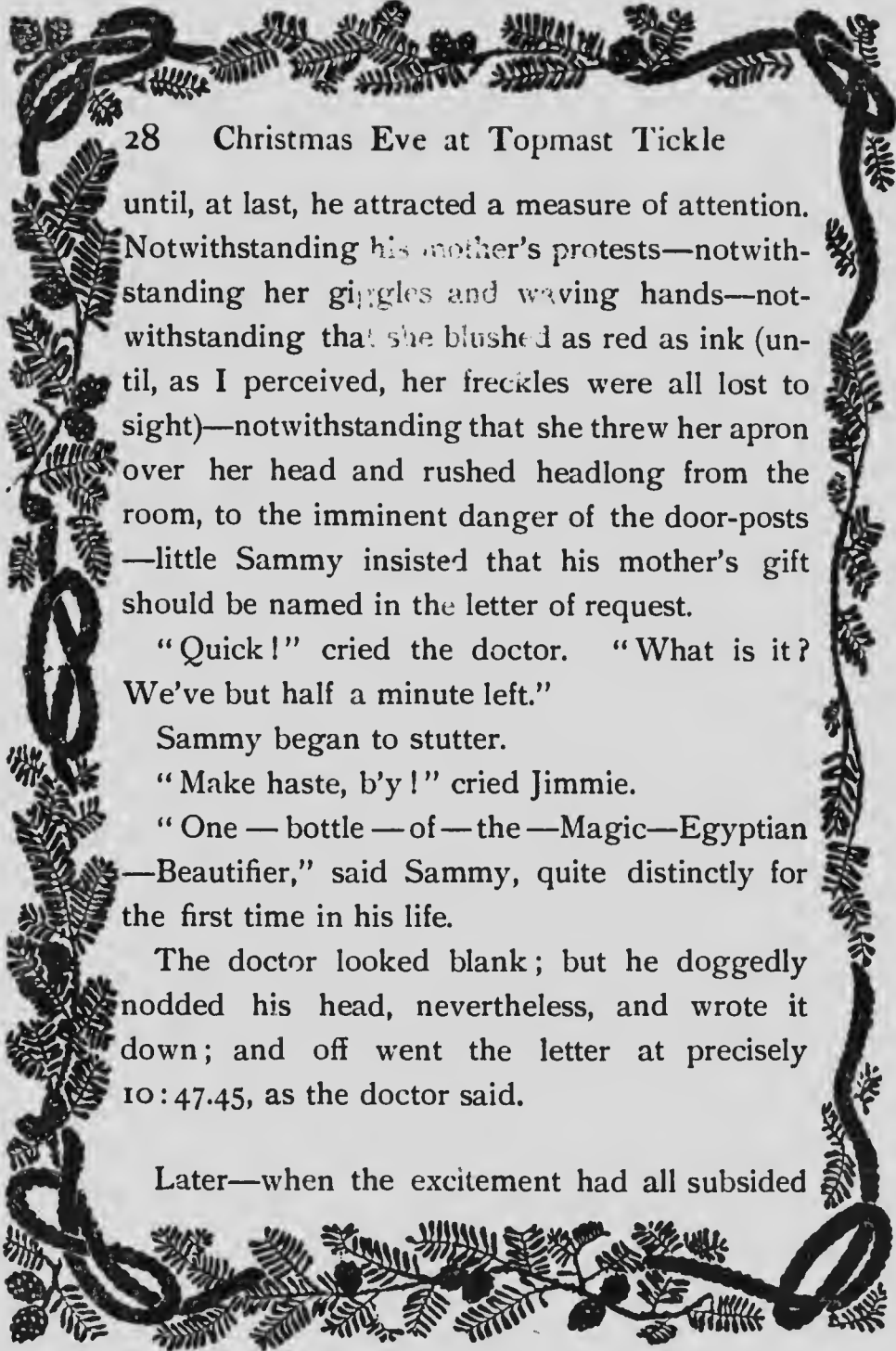
Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 27

like that! Write, zur! 'Twas all in the paper the prospector left last summer. Pine's Prompt Pain Exterminator. Cures boils, rheumatism, pains in the back an' chest, sore throat, an' all they things, an' warts on the hands by a simple application with brown paper. We wants it for the rheumatiz, zur. Oh, zur——"

"None genuine without the label," Jimmie put in, in an excited rattle. "Money refunded if no cure. Get a bottle with the label."

The doctor laughed—laughed aloud, and laughed again. "By Jove!" he roared, "you'll get it. It's odd, but—ha, ha!—by Jove, he has it in stock!"

The laughter and repeated assurance seemed vastly to encourage Jimmie and Martha—the doctor wrote like mad while he talked—but not little Sammy. All that he lisped, all that he shouted, all that he screamed, had gone unheeded. As though unable to put up with the neglect any longer, he limped over the floor to Martha, and tugged her sleeve, and pulled at Jimmie's coat-tail, and jogged the doctor's arm,



28 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

until, at last, he attracted a measure of attention. Notwithstanding his mother's protests—notwithstanding her giggles and waving hands—notwithstanding that she blushed as red as ink (until, as I perceived, her freckles were all lost to sight)—notwithstanding that she threw her apron over her head and rushed headlong from the room, to the imminent danger of the door-posts—little Sammy insisted that his mother's gift should be named in the letter of request.

“Quick!” cried the doctor. “What is it? We've but half a minute left.”

Sammy began to stutter.

“Make haste, b'y!” cried Jimmie.

“One — bottle — of — the — Magic — Egyptian — Beautifier,” said Sammy, quite distinctly for the first time in his life.

The doctor looked blank; but he doggedly nodded his head, nevertheless, and wrote it down; and off went the letter at precisely 10:47.45, as the doctor said.

Later—when the excitement had all subsided

and we sat dreaming in the warmth and glow—the doctor took little Sammy in his lap, and told him he was a very good boy, and looked deep in his eyes, and stroked his hair, and, at last, very tenderly bared his knee. Sammy flinched at that; and he said “Ouch!” once, and screwed up his face, when the doctor—his gruffness all gone, his eyes gentle and sad, his hand as light as a mother’s—worked the joint, and felt the knee-cap and socket with the tips of his fingers.

“And is this the rheumatiz the Prompt Exterminator is to cure, Sammy?” he asked.

“Ith, zur.”

“Ah, is *that* where it hurts you? Right on the point of the bone, there?”

“Ith, zur.”

“And was there no fall on the rock, at all? Oh, there *was* a fall? And the bruise was just there—where it hurts so much? And it’s very hard to bear, isn’t it?”

Sammy shook his head.

“Nc? But it hurts a good deal, sometimes, does it not? That’s too bad. That’s very sad,



30 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

indeed. But, perhaps—perhaps, Sammy—I can cure it for you, if you are brave. And are you brave? No! Oh, I think you are. And you'll try to be, at any rate, won't you? Of course! That's a good boy."

And so, with his sharp little knives, the doctor cured Sammy Jutt's knee, while the lad lay white and still on the kitchen table. And 'twas not hard to do; but had not the doctor chanced that way, Sammy Jutt would have been a cripple all his life.

"Doctor, zur," said Matilda Jutt, when the children were put to bed, with Martha to watch by Sammy, who was still very sick, "is you really got a bottle o' Pine's Prompt?"

The doctor laughed. "An empty bottle," said he. "I picked it up at Poverty Cove. Thought it might come useful. I'll put Sammy's medicine in that. They'll not know the difference. And you'll treat the knee with it as I've told you. That's all. We must turn in at once; for we must be gone before the children wake in the morning."



Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle 31

"Oh, ay, zur; an'——" she began: but hesitated, much embarrassed.

"Well?" the doctor asked, with a smile.

"Would you mind puttin' some queer lookin' stuff in one o' they bottles o' yours?"

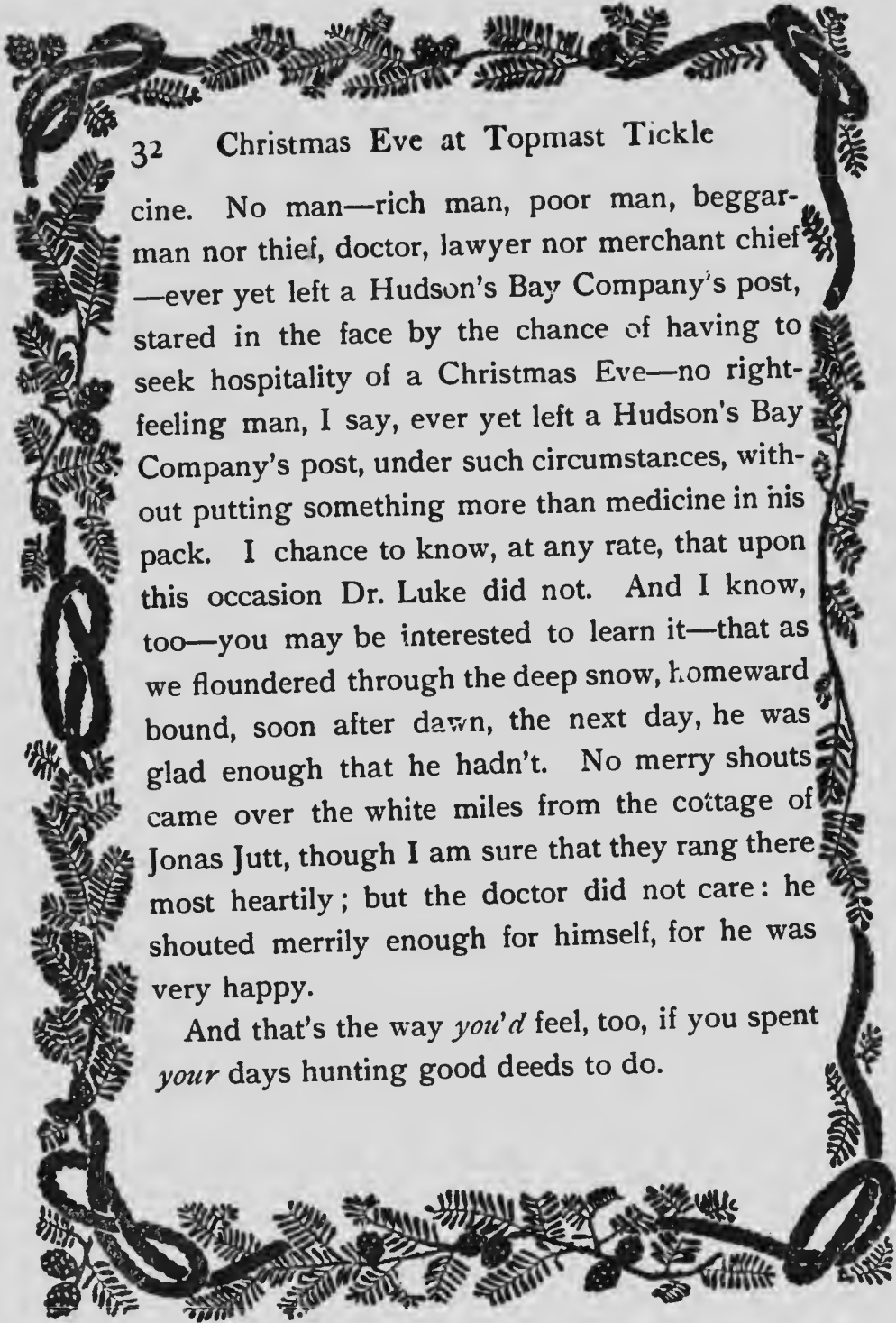
"Not in the least," in surprise.

"An' writin' something on a bit o' paper," she went on, pulling at her apron, and looking down, "an' gluin' it t' the bottle?"

"Not at all. But what shall I write?"

She flushed. "'Magic Egyptian Beautifier,' zur," she answered; "for I'm thinkin' 'twould please little Sammy t' think that Sandy Claws left something—for me—too."

If you think that the three little Jutts found nothing but bottles of medicine in their stockings, when they got down-stairs on Christmas morning, you are very much mistaken. Indeed, there was much more than that—a great deal more than that. I will not tell you what it was; for you might sniff, and say, "Huh! That's little enough!" But there *was* more than medi-



32 Christmas Eve at Topmast Tickle

chine. No man—rich man, poor man, beggarman nor thief, doctor, lawyer nor merchant chief—ever yet left a Hudson's Bay Company's post, stared in the face by the chance of having to seek hospitality of a Christmas Eve—no right-feeling man, I say, ever yet left a Hudson's Bay Company's post, under such circumstances, without putting something more than medicine in his pack. I chance to know, at any rate, that upon this occasion Dr. Luke did not. And I know, too—you may be interested to learn it—that as we floundered through the deep snow, homeward bound, soon after dawn, the next day, he was glad enough that he hadn't. No merry shouts came over the white miles from the cottage of Jonas Jutt, though I am sure that they rang there most heartily; but the doctor did not care: he shouted merrily enough for himself, for he was very happy.

And that's the way *you'd* feel, too, if you spent *your* days hunting good deeds to do.



