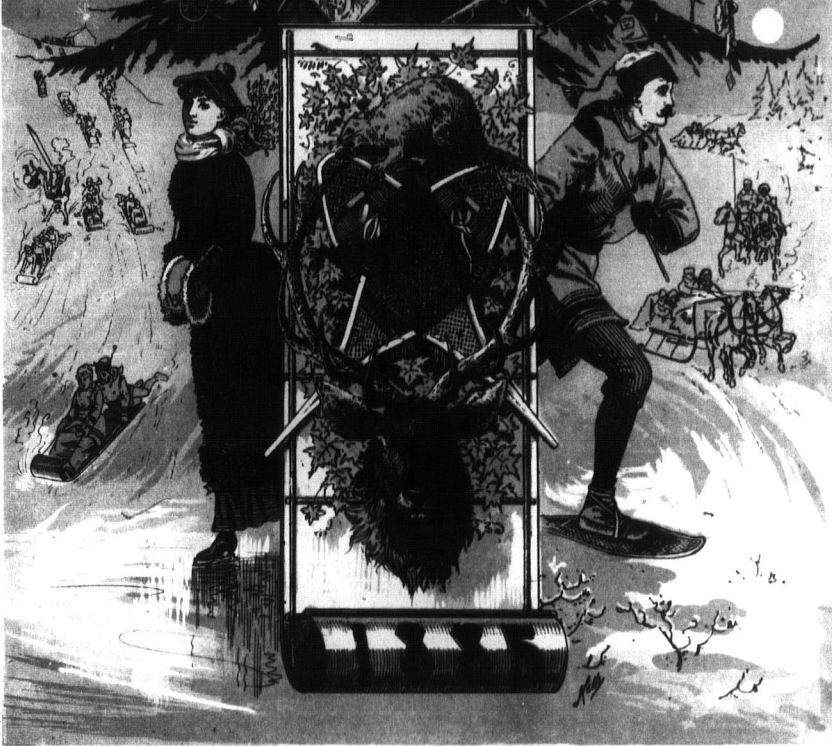


CANADA'S CHRISTMAS



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CANADA'S CHRISTMAS,

A CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

TORONTO, CHRISTMAS, 1885.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

The church is quaint, and carved, and olden;
The sunlight streams in warlike golden,
This Christmas morn,
Through stained glass scenes from Bible stories,
On ancient knights whose sculptured glories,
The aisle adorn.

The rays are shed in chastened splendor
On many a dead and gone defender
Of Church and crown;
On Lancelot, the brave Crusader,
And they, who slew the French invader,
And saved a town.

The major leads in line unbroken
Rest here begin with sign and token
Of ages past;
And dames and maidens, proud and stately:
Lies here with folded hands sedately,
And eyes shut fast.

Among their tombs the sunlight lingers,
Then hush betwixt the anthem-singers,
And warlike grim.
For they amidst many a warlike relic,
Fair children sing the song angelic,
Christ's birthday hymn.

In robes we wrap, I pause and listen,
I watch the dancing sunbeams glitten
On floor and wall;
Then pass from dead to living faces,
And on the children's happy faces,
In splendor fall.

This song of peace, those gentle voices,
These glad young hearts that sing to voices,
Are dearer thoughts,
Are dearer homages to the Master
Than all the Church's low disaster
These dead knights error.

These are the days of gloom and error,
Love's scepter breaks the rod of terror
In our fair life,
And as the children sing His message
Of Peace on Earth the joyful message,
They win God's smile.

—GEOFFREY R. SUE.

ROYAL CHRISTMASSES.

MANY interesting particulars of how Christmas was kept by our Sovereigns in days gone by have been bequeathed to us, from which it appears that it was not only celebrated with the utmost hospitality and splendor, but was the occasion for the most extensive festivities, which, says an old writer, exceeded those of any other realm in Europe. Thus, going as far back as the time of William the Conqueror, we read how this monarch kept the festival in the year 1085 at Gloucester, when its observance was marked with every outward show worthy of a state ceremonial. Later on, Henry II., following the example of his predecessors, honored this anniversary with profuse feasting, plays and masques forming part of the Royal festivities; and it is related that in the year 1171 he kept his Christmas at Dublin, when a wooden house was specially erected for the occasion. Still more imposing was the feasting which took place in Westminster Hall, where many of our Sovereigns from time to time held their Christmas. We even read, too, how, when Henry III., in the year 1248, staid at Winchester, he commanded his Treasurer "to fill the King's great hall from Christmas Day to the Day of Circumcision with poor people, and feast them there"; and it is further on record how Edward II., in the year 1323, kept Christmas at Westminster Hall "with great honour and glory." Referring more, however, to the feasting connected with this season, some idea of the extent to which it was carried may be gathered from the fact that in 1241, Henry III. gave orders to the Sheriff of Gloucester, to buy twenty salmons for the Christmas pies; and in the books of the Salters' Company, London, we find the following:—"Receipt:—Fit to make a moost choyce Pasty of Gamys to be eten at y^e feste of Chrystmase" (17th Richard II., A.D. 1394). A pie so made by the company's cook in 1836 was found excellent. It consisted of a pheasant, hare and capon; two partridges, two pigeons and two rabbits; all boned and put into paste in the shape of a bird, with the livers and hearts, two mutton kidneys, forced meats, and egg

balls, seasoning, spice, catsup, and pickled mushrooms, filled up from gravy made from the various bones. Indeed, the more we read of the festive doings of our early Sovereigns at this season, the more it must be admitted that they far exceeded those of after years; and at the present day, it would create no small sensation if our worthy Queen, after the example of Richard III., should "wear the crown, and hold a splendid feast in Westminster Hall, similar to that of a coronation."

Apart, however, from the feasting of these Royal Christmas festivities, various diversions on a very elaborate scale was kept up, neither trouble nor expense being spared to make them as grand as possible. Thus, in the revs of the olden times, the numbers occupied a prominent place, and we are informed that in 1400, when Henry IV. was holding his Christmas at Eltham, he was visited by twelve aldermen and their sons as mummings, and that these imposing personages "had great thanks" from his Majesty for their performance. This kind of diversion, however, did not find equal favor with all our Sovereigns, for Henry VIII. issued an ordinance against this Christmas pastime, declaring all those who disobeyed his command liable to be arrested and put in prison for three months.

The Lord of Miracle, again, was an important personage in the Royal festivities of former years—his duties consisting in directing the numerous revs of the season. Thus Stow, in his "Survey of London," speaking of this custom, says:—"In the feast of Christmas there was in the King's house, wheresoever he lodged, a Lord of Miracle, or Master of Merry Disports." It appears that some of our Sovereigns expended large sums of money upon the sports of the Lord of Miracle, various entries occurring in the "Privy Purse Expenses." Thus, for instance, in those of Henry VII. we find such items as these:—"To the Abbot of Miracle, in reward, £6 13s. 4d.," and "to Jacques Hauite, in full payment for the disguising at Christenmas, £32 18s. 6d." At Court, too, plays, and the past was not unfrequently held by a poet of some reputation. Such was George Ferrer, "in whose pastimes," we are told by Warton, "Edward VI. had great delight," and Holingshead further tells us that "being of better calling than commonly his predecessors had been before, he the Lord of Miracle was not only performed in the name of the Master of the King's Pastimes." In spite, however, of the encouragement which the Lord of Miracle and his merry doings met with at Court, yet there can be no doubt that scandalous abuses often resulted from the exuberant license assumed by him. Stubbs, a Puritan writer in the time of Elizabeth, denounces the Lord of Miracle as "a grand captain of mischief," and has left us a full account of the extravagant acts of this mock officer.

Another characteristic of the observance of Christmas at Court in years gone by was the performance of various plays, which, it seems, were often conducted on a magnificent scale. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, these were much encouraged; and it has been suggested that even Shakespeare himself may have acted before the Queen at Christmas. At any rate, one Christmas play which was highly popular was that of "St. George"; and we know that on different occasions the children of St. Paul's and Westminster not only performed before Elizabeth, but that in 1593 the Heads of Colleges at Cambridge had the honor of acting a Latin comedy before her. In the ensuing reigns of James I. and Charles I. these plays and revs continued to be the fashion, but with the Commonwealth all was changed. Evelyn tells us that in 1654, there was not even a church open, so that he had "to pass the devotions of that Blessed Day with his family at home." After this period Christmas observances at Court never regained their former grandeur. A Christmas pastime, however, which found special favor with Charles II. was gaming

at the groom-porter's, an attraction which retained its popularity as late as the reign of George III. "The groom-porter of old," says Mr. Timb in his "Romance of London," "is described as an officer of the Royal Household whose business it was to see the King's lodging furnished with tables, stools, chairs and bring; as, also, to provide dice, etc. Formerly he was allowed to keep an open gaming table at Christmas." Among other ancient customs, we are told how a branch of the Glastonbury thorn used to be presented to the King and Queen of England on Christmas morning. Carol-singing, too, seems to have formed a part of the Royal festivities, and to have gladdened the Court feasts.

Although in modern years a great part of the festivities with which our Sovereigns once celebrated this joyous season are now things of the past, yet during the present reign many a charitable custom and hospitable practice have been instituted which, if lacking the grandeur of the state pageants and revs of bygone times, are, perhaps, more suitable to the proper observance of a festival which is essentially of a homely character. At the Royal table at Windsor Castle, a noted joint in the "Baron of Beef," and the Boar's Head, which from time immemorial has been an important item of Christmas fare in this country, still regularly makes its appearance at the state Christmas banquet.

T. F. THIRLSTON DYER.

OLD CHRISTMAS GAMES.

ONE of the interesting features of a Christmas in the olden times was the varied assortment of games which were so heartily joined in by both old and young assembled round the blazing hearth. Most of these merry pastimes have long ago passed away; only a few, such as snapdragon, hide-and-seek, etc., being known by the present generation out of the long list of Christmas games formerly kept up. Thus, an old game played especially at Christmas was "hot cockles," a species of blindman's-buff, in which the person kneeling down, and being struck behind, was to guess who inflicted the blow. It is described by Gay in the following lines:

As at hot cockles once I laid me down,
And felt the weighty hand of many a clown,
Brevins gave a gentle tap, and I
Quick rose, and read out mischief in her eye.

In an old tract, "Round About our Coal Fire; or, Christmas Entertainments," published in the early part of the last century, mention is made of a game called "Questions and Commands." The writer says that the commander may oblige his subjects to answer any lawful question, and make the same obey him instantly under the penalty of paying any such forfeit as may be held on the aggressors. "Handy-dandy" was much in request at this season. One of the party conceived something in his hand, making his neighbours guess in which one it was. If the latter guessed rightly he won the article; if wrongly, he lost an equivalent. It is alluded to in "Piers Ploughman," and it is, perhaps, noticed by Shakespeare where King Lear (act iv., sc. 6) says to Gloucester:—"Look with thine ears; see how yon' justice doth upon you' simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?" Browne, too, in one of his "Pastorals," tells how boys

With the pibbles play at handy-dandy.

A childish diversion also usually introduced at Christmas in the bygone days was the "Game of Goose." It was, says Street, played by two persons, although it really admits of many more, and was well calculated to make the young people sharp at reckoning the produce of two given numbers. The table for playing "Goose" was about the size of a sheet of almanac, and divided into sixty-two small compartments, arranged in a spiral form, with a large open space in the centre marked with the number 63; the other compartments were denoted by numbers from one to sixty-two, inclusive. The game was played with two dice,

each player throwing in turn, and marking with a counter whatever number the dice cast up. Thus, if there were a four and a five he marked nine, and so on, until the game was completed, the number sixty-three had to be reached exactly, and should the player exceed it, he had to reckon back, and throw again in his turn.

Another game seems to have been "Fox & the Hole," and is thrice mentioned by Herrick, but not once explained:—

Of Christmas sports, the vessel bowl,

That's tossed up, after for it the bowl
A diversion which often caused much laughter
was "Dun in the Mine." A log of wood was brought into the middle of the room; this was "Dun," or the cart horse, and a cry was raised that he had stuck in the mine. Two of the company then advanced, either with or without ropes, to draw him out. When unable to do so, they called for more help, until finally all the parties joined in the game, when Dun was, of course, extricated. No small merriment arose from each person's ally efforts to let the log fall on his neighbor's toes. It is frequently alluded to by old writers, and by Shakespeare in "Romeo and Juliet" (act i, sc. 4), where Mercutio says to Romeo:—

Tut, don't be mope, the constable's own word:

If thou art dun, we'll draw thee from the mine.
Some doubt exists as to the precise nature of a game designated "Shoeing the Wild Mare," and mentioned by Herrick, where he speaks of—

Christmas sports, the vessel bowl,

Of blind-maid-luff, and of the care,
That young men have to shoe the mare.

"It appears," says Brand, "that the wild mare was simply a youth, as called, who was allowed a certain start, and who was pursued by his companions, with the object of being shoed, if he did not succeed in outstripping them." Then there were "cap-vases," wherein one gave a word, to which another found a rhyme; a pastime once very popular.

Among other references to old Christmas games may be quoted the "Paston Letters," in which a letter dated Dec. 24, 1484, relates how Lady Morley, on account of the death of her lord, directing what pastimes were to be used in her house at Christmas, ordered that "there were none disguising, nor harping, nor luting, nor singing, nor none loud disputes; but playing at the tables, and chess, and cards; such disputes she gave her folks leave to play, and none other."

Of old Christmas card-games may be mentioned that known as "Post-and-Pair," to which Ben Jonson refers in his "Masque of Christmas":—

New Post and Pair, old Christmas's heir,

Doth make a gaudyally;
And not you who, who one of my two
Sons, card-makers in Purcell.

It is, too, among the diversions described by Sir Walter Scott in his graphic picture of Christmas Eve in "Marmion," and is mentioned by many of our own old writers. Three cards are dealt to all, the excitement of the game consisting in each person's trying, or betting, on the goodness of his own hand. It would seem that a pair of royal aces was the best hand—hence one of its names, "Fair-royal"—and then other cards, according to their order, such as kings, queens, etc. Thus it much resembled our modern game of "Commerce." Another game of cards was "Ruff," known also as "Double Ruff" or "Cross Ruff," one of its most popular names being "Trump." It is mentioned in "Poor Robin's Almanack" for 1693:—

Christians to hungry stomachs give relief,

With ruffion, pork-pies, pasties, and roast beef;
And run at cards upon many idle hours,
At leadum, whist, cross-ruff, put and all-fours.

The game was much the same as whist; and was played by two against two, and occasionally by three against three. Noddy, too, was a card game, also much in demand, being noticed by Middleton, where Christmas, speaking of the games at that time as his children, says:—"I leave them wholly to my eldest son Noddy, whom, during his minority, I commit to the custody of a pair of knaves and one-and-thirty." In "Poor Robin's Almanack" for 1755 it is thus noticed:—

Some folks at dice and cards do sit,

To lose their money and the wit,
And when the game of cards is past,
Then fall to at Noddy at the last.

There is some doubt as to what game was meant, some think cribbage, and others "Beat the knave out of doors."

Such were some of the old games practised at Christmas-tide; and the importance that was

attached to these diversions may be gathered from the fact that every large household had its Lord of Merry Disports, whose duty it was to arrange the merry makings every season; a custom which was extended to our Universities and the Inns of Court. At the present day, when Christmas is shorn of so many of its former glories, some of these old festive games might with advantage be revived, thereby creating harmless mirth and fun.

THE DEAR LONG AGO.

In the gray of the gloaming o'er lowland and highland
The storm-wind is wailing its lugubrious air,
The willow weeps black on the desolate island:
In vain shall the mariner seek for a star.

O keeper, look well to thy beacon forth gleaming;
O fisher, steer boldly, with eye to the light,
Lost slumber unbroke by waking or dreaming
Thy portion shall be in this turbulent night.

Ye quiet I sit, thinking on of the sobbing
So eerie and dreary of tempest and snow,
For tones in my heart with affluence sweetens are throbbing
No place for the phantasms of darkness and woe.

I am born to the days that were swift in their flying;
All pining with music and sparkling with mirth,
The days when my childhood no space had for aging,
No place for the phantasms of darkness and death.

On the heath past the fire's red glow to dwell again
Without, the trees moan in the deepening chill;
But fancy recalls to my spirit the fashion
Of Britain the meadow, the plain, and the hill.

I remember the lilies that bloomed and flowered,
The willows that dipped in the full flood of stream,
The orchards with blossoms so lavishly dowered,
In time when joy held me unshaken and supreme.

Ah, what is the winter on lowland and highland,
And black break the waves on the storm-tossed coast,
And sound the long toques on peak and on island,
And gather the tempest with haste and with host.

I sit by myself in the gray of the gloaming;
I muse on the days that were tender and true,
And my heart, like a child fain to rest after roaming,
Is back in the bright days, my mother, with you.

A CHRISTMAS MISSION.

SEARCH the loveliest county in England through and through, and you would hardly find a cozier nook than the dell in which stands the Highfield Vicarage; nor a prettier, franker, more winsome girl than gray-eyed Elsie Grove, the Vicar's fair daughter. Embowered with tall poplars whose leaves musically rustle in summer, and whose branches gleam like silver spears when the snow is falling, as it should fall to herald a good old-fashioned Christmas, the ivy-clad Vicarage is an ideal English dwelling-place all the year round.

And Elsie—well, someone I know cherishes Elsie as an ideal English girl—soft, tender eyes under well-arched eye-brows, sweet-voiced, bright, fresh, everything that is charming. That other admirers share this opinion may be gathered from Dame Coleman's colloquy with Elsie at the porch late one December afternoon, when the little fairy of Highfield Vicarage had resolved herself in a down-right earnest way into a village Sister of Mercy, and, armed with a basketful of seasonable Christmas gifts, was about to brave the thickly falling flakes, and set forth alone on her charitable mission.

"Does wait a minute now, Miss Elsie, dear," pleaded the gray-haired housekeeper; "as I'll go with yew. Does stop now. I've only got to see the ash-bag's right in the kitchen-hearth for the warm labors. The Maister'd never forgive me if the binds weren't right, would he now! Ah, Miss Elsie, if yew Zephire Hamer were yew, yew'dn't be so mighty proud to hold the umbrella over yew bonny head! I've seen him casting sheep's-eyes at yew, Elsie, up at church, many a time. Or, what would yew say to Laayer Jones's likely son—or—"

"You tease, you! I declare I won't stop a single moment longer," laughingly answered little Elsie in her winning way; adding to herself, as she tripped lightly down the garden path-way, "I only hope I may find a letter from Somebody Else."

The smile which dimpled her fair round cheeks, and played with zephyr lightness round the sweetest of rosebud lips, died away as Elsie faced the snow, and with difficulty sheltered herself beneath the umbrella. Securely as she held the well-filled basket on her left arm, Elsie was for a while utterly absorbed in other than charitable thoughts intent. When the whitened field she was crossing was green, and the Lovers' Walk under yon ghastly avenue of silvered trees was welcomed for its shade, "Somebody Else" had whispered the sweetest message in

all the world to Elsie, and had received her sweet "Yes" in reply. All was sunshine then. Joy filled two united hearts. Love seemed in the very air they breathed. Now, with the lowering clouds sending down wintry misadventures, what wonder Elsie felt depressed at the absence of news from her sweetheart far away in Egypt! Could aught have happened to her gallant soldier love!

"Bless us, if it ain't Miss Elsie from the Vicarage!" exclaimed postman Capper a minute or so later, as he opened his cottage door, and let in a whirl of snow and the warm-hearted girl at one and the same time. "Yew come like a ray a' sunshine, I dew declare. Yur, Miss, yew stir the fire, and make Miss Elsie warm herself."

"Bless yur pritty face, my dear, so yew are like zuzhine," broke in Dame Capper, darting a sharp glance over Elsie's shoulder at the door of the state parlor. "Substantial zuzhine, too! Ah, my dear (this as Elsie mildly opened her lips), and gloriously handed the good woman a packet of tea, a bag of flour, a parcel of Christmas fruit, and a bottle of port)—ah, my dear, if there wur only a few more angels on earth like yew, what a difference would this would be for us poor as yew have always got to have with yew, as the Vicar truly says, my dear!"

"Now don't you try to spoil me with compliments, Mrs. Capper. This is only Father's usual little gift, you know. And I wish you both, and little Billy and Annie, a Very Merry Christmas, with all my heart."

"Zame to yew, Miss; and many of 'em," broke in Postman Capper. "And Vicar, tew! He be a good man, he. He never passes ne y'out giving ne rummunt. Curious, wasn't it, I was just coming up along to Vicarage with this late letter for yew, Miss Elsie, when—"

Sight of the foreign post mark had no sooner sent the love-light into Elsie's soft, grey eyes, and flushed her cheeks a rosy red, than the door of the little sitting room was flung open, and a glad-faced young officer of the Guards rushed out.

"Elsie!"

"Berlie!"

And "Somebody Else" fondly clasped the fair, trembling girl to his heart; and in lovers' whispers ended Elsie's Christmas Mission, as far as the Postman's cottage was concerned, to the evident enjoyment of Mr. and Mrs. Capper.

Under the umbrella held closely over her by Lieutenant Russell, whose other arm stole caringly round her slender waist, Elsie Grove found the walk back to the Vicarage far too brief.

HOW DID THEY KEEP THEIR CHRISTMASSES?

By "they"—them—I mean the Slaves of the reading lamp, the desk, and the grey goose pen, or its filigreed substitute, the "writing fates" as the members of the military clubs call them; the Dictators of the Republic of Letters; the poets, the dramatists, the essayists, the novelists, the historians, who have made the literature of Britain famous all over the world. I want to know how they were accustomed to spend their Christmas—whether they took their pleasure at Yule-tide jovially, or soberly, or even sadly; what they had for dinner, mostly on Christmas Day; whether they danced, or played cards, or forfeits, or blind-man's bluff, or the fool generally, on Christmas night. I have been making anxious researches on the subject lately, but am sorry to have to state that at the outset I was met in my inquiries by a and a rebuff.

In the first place, I found in the course of a fortnight's hard reading material enough bearing on the subject of Authors' Christmas, to fill a small octavo of, say, two hundred pages! Christmas as they were kept Evelyn and Perry, Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, Dickens and Thackeray, Charles Lamb and Thomas Carlyle, Washington Irving and L. ngeloff, Oliver Goldsmith and Samuel Johnson, all seemed with open arms to invite me. Yes; I could have easily made a tale of two hundred bricks as the first instalment, mind you, of literary Christmas. But what said the esteemed Editor of this Journal, "Copy for two columns, my good Sir, and not a line more." That was rebuff number one.

Now for disappointment number two: I picked up the other day what may possibly be a copy of



OUT-OF-DOORS WINTER AMUSEMENTS.



YOUNG CANADA, AT HOME AND ABROAD.

the first edition of the *Spectator* in volume form: that is to say, it is in seven volumes, small octavo, the papers beginning on Thursday, 1st March, 1711, and ending, Saturday, Dec. 6, 1712. Then came the index and "Finis;" and on the title page the date of publication ("by S. Buckley, at the Dolphin, in Little Britain, and Jacob Tonson, at Shakespeare's Head, over against Catherine street, in the Strand") is 1712. We all know that on the termination of the seventh volume the *Spectator* was discontinued for about eighteen months; and that after eighty numbers had been published it was again dropped, and, so far as the original contributors were concerned, dropped forever. The eighth volume, beginning Friday, 18th June, 1714, and ending 50th December in the same year, makes the whole work extend over a period of nearly three years; but it only covers one Christmas Day, Tuesday, 25th December, 1711. Now here was disappointment number two. It befell me when reading the Christmas Day paper in question I found that had nothing whatever to do with Christmas. The article is a solemn homily by Addison on Ambition—a lay sermon, indeed, with a Greek quotation from Stobæus:

No slumber seeks the eye of Providence
Present to us every action we perform.

This is excellent; but I had been in hopes of lighting on something about the social observance of Christmas. Looking backward, to Christmas Eve, I find the Right Honourable Joseph Addison preaching another stately sermon on the subject of fame; text, a Greek one from Hesiod. Nothing about snapper, or about the children gobbling up the plants which their imprudent parents have permitted them to stow. Looking forward, to Boxing Day, I discovered an article by Steele about dramatic and operatic performances:—a very witty and humorous performance, but quite destitute of any reference to crackers and Christmas boxes. To complete my mortification, no index to any one of the editions of the *Spectator* contains a single allusion to the festival of Christmas; and I cannot read all the seven volumes of my 1713 edition, through while the printer's boy is waiting in the hall for copy. Surely Sir Roger de Coverley must have had something to say about Christmas; but I have not the late Mr. W. H. Wells' admirable monograph on Sir Roger by me; and for my life (perhaps my memory is getting a little shaky) I cannot recall any Christmas addresses either of the worthy Knight or of Will Honeycomb.

But I was not to be baffled. I turned to Swift's "Journal to Stella," and there, to my qualified delight, "I struck off," as they say in Petrolia. The Merry Christmas mentioned in the Journal is in 1710; and Swift tells Hester Johnson that on Christmas Eve he went to Court before church, and that in one of the rooms, there being but little company, "a fellow in a red coat and without a sword" came up and asked the Doctor how the ladies were. "What ladies?" asked the Rev. Dr. Swift, he said "Mrs. Dingley and Mrs. Johnson." "Very well," said I [the Doctor], "when I heard from them last; but, pray, when came you from thence (*etc.*), Sir?" The gentleman in the red coat replied that he was never in Ireland; but just then Lord Winchelsea came up, "and the man went off." Afterwards Swift condescended to remember that the "man" was one Verdeau, an ex-shopkeeper, who had left his counter and trade for the Army. After Swift had been to church he went to Court again, and thence Lady Mountjoy carried him to her house to dinner; but he stayed not long, and, coming home early, went to bed, to save fring. On the twenty-fifth "Presto" has actually the grace to wish Stella and Dingley a Merry Christmas; and he proceeds to tell them that he went to court at eight in the morning, came home at ten, and went to Court at two. It was a collar day; all the Knights of the Garter wearing the insignia of the Order. "This is likewise," adds the journalist, "collar day all over England in every house; at least, where there is heaven. That is very well," he adds, in admiration for his rather thin joke. The Doctor dined with his "neighbour Ford, because all people dine at home on this day." Thus, half contemptuously, he dismisses Christmas in its festive aspect. On the twenty-sixth he writes that, "by the Lord Harry," he shall be unfine with "Christmas boxes." "The rogues at the coffee-house have raised their tax, everyone gives a crown; and I gave mine for shame; besides a great many half-crowns to great men's porters, etc." Afterwards the Doctor went

by water to the City, to dine with Alderman Barber, the printer. Next a very merry Christmas; that is why my admiration for the description of it was "qualified." Let us turn to the Christmas of 1711. Swift's letter to Stella on Christmas Eve leaves a bitter taste in the mouth. After abusing the Whigs and Lord Somers, and alternately scolding and pestering Stella, he says, "What sort of Christmas! Why, I have had no Christmas at all; and has it really been Christmas of late! I never once thought of it." He dined on Christmas Eve with Secretary St. John. They sat down at six in the afternoon and late talking—St. John would never allow Swift to look at his watch—till two in the morning. What wondrous talk it must have been! The conversation was moistened, no doubt, by liberal potatoes of burgundy, Florence, and to-koy; and yet I can scarcely realize the idea of its being Christmas Eve talk. The Doctor leaves the proceedings of Christmas Day a blank, save the intimation that he dined at Mr. Stone's, in the City, and went to bed at ten; and that on Boxing Day he took pills and some of the "bitter-drink" which Lady Kerry had sent him. At Christmas, 1712, Swift writes to Stella a little more humanly. He gave his man-servant Patrick half a crown for his Christmas box "on condition he would be good, and he came home drunk at midnight." "I have taken a memorandum of it," adds the Doctor, "because I design never to give him a great more. 'Tis cruel cold." Yes, indeed. Cruelly cold. "I wish M. D. (Stella) a Merry Christmas, and many a one; but mine is melancholy." He could not go to church, it snowed so prodigiously; but he could go in the afternoon to dine by invitation with Mrs. Vanhomrigh, and her daughter Venesia was of the company. Ah, poor Stella; I don't think your Christmas in Ireland would have been a very merry one had you known where your lover was dining on Christmas Day! Now I turn to the last Christmas in the Journal. On Christmas Day he "carried" Parnell to dinner at Lord Bolingbroke's, and "Parnell behaved himself very well, and Lord Bolingbroke was mightily pleased with him."

On Boxing Day Swift went to wish the Duke of Ormond a happy Christmas, and presented half a crown to his Grace's porter. Afterwards he dined with Lord Treasurer Harley, who "chid him for being absent three days." "Less civility and more interest," snarles Harley's grateful guest to Stella. In the June of the same year he arrived in Ireland as Deputy of Patrick's, Dublin, and became more and more famous as "Gulliver" and the "Drapier," but to go mad at last, and die, as he himself put it, "like a poisoned rat in a hole."

"A Merry Christmas to you!" So, I find that pleasant greeting coming from over the sea, even from the gloomy, antique city of Ravenna, in Italy, in a letter written by Byron to Thomas Moore, on Dec. 25, 1830. But the noble bard has naught to say either about the sanctity of the season or its concurrent merry-making. His Christmas effusion is mainly devoted to the development of a proposal that on his return to London he and the author of "The Loves of the Angels" shall conjointly start and edit a newspaper. The Byronish views of what a newspaper should be, and his opinions on the English newspaper press in his own day are highly entertaining. "There must always be in it," he writes, alluding to the projected journal, "a piece of poetry from one or other of us two; leaving room, however, for such diletante rhymers as may be deemed worthy of appearing in the same column; but this must be a *rose qua non*;" and he also as much press as we can compass. We will take an office—our names not announced, but suspected—and, by the blessing of Providence, give the age some new lights upon policy, poetry, biography, criticism, morality, theology, and all other *em, ality, and abogy* whatever."

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALLA.

AN ANCIENT RECEIPT FOR MAKING THUNDER.

In the middle ages, everybody at all distinguished by knowledge of science was credited with the art of firing, and indeed in many cases did not scruple to claim it. Albertus Magnus was one of these, but refused to give particulars to the world at large. He tells us, however, how to make thunder, and says: "Take one pound of sulphur, two pounds of willow bark, and place where you please a covering made of flint-papyrus to produce thunder. The covering, in order to ascend and float away, should be long grass, or well filled with this powder; but to produce thunder the covering should be short and thick, and half full."—T. W. MATTHEW, in *Popular Science Monthly* for November.

SANTA CLAUS.

Chirrup! Chirrup! Christmas Cricket
Chirrup! all the evening through!
For a footstep's at the wicket,
And the wind is in the flue.

Chirrup! Chirrup!—He is rapping:
Chirrup!—There! Undo the door:
Santa Claus, Sir, from his trough;
He's been often here of yore.

Chirrup! Bless him—Old and jolly
(Just as when I was a boy),
With a little Christmas holly,
And a deal of Christmas joy!

With a handle, white and snowy,
And his boots a trifle damp,
And his eyes—the night is lower—
Looking rheumy near the lamp.

But the same old, honest laughter,
And the same old, cheery tone,
With a chord of sorrow after,
And a tenderness its own.

And he takes the chair I offer
In the chimney-corner here,
And he drinks the glass I proffer,
As we talk of Christmas cheer.

Just the same old, hearty fellow
With his presents for the boys,
With his winter-apples mellow,
And his store of children's toys;

With his crackers and his kisses,
And his rebuses and rhymes,
And his minuet for Misses,
And his tales of olden times.

Just the same, and little older,
With the good things in his pack,
With his white locks on his shoulders,
And the mackerel on his back.

Bless him! Chirrup! Christmas Cricket!
Chirrup! all the evening through!
For his footstep's at the wicket,
And the wind is in the flue!

And the winter gusts disturb him,
And the way is wild and long,
And the little children bless him,
For their stories and their song!

WILLIAM TWISLIT.

A PLEASANT ENDING.

"DEARFUL bore," said Ripley. Ripley was always facetiously derided and gloomed, and it was his ambition to talk like a fool. "Dreadful bore," he said, yawning behind his hand. "Like an old-fashioned story-book. Like those wretched things that Christmas fellow used to write, don't you know. What was the fellow's name? Haunted Man fellow, Ghost's Bargain fellow, don't you know?"

"Ah!" said Fulford, holding on to his big under jaw, and positively beaming on Ripley. "I think I know the man you mean. Name was Dickens, wasn't it? Charles Dickens!"

"Something like that," returned Ripley. "Awful fellow. Got people into country houses at Christmas time, and made 'em spin yarns to one another. Believe that's where Lady Sarah got the notion from. Not at all original-minded woman; Lady Sarah, is she now?"

"Not a bit," said Fulford, with a smile more pleased and amiable than before. "Not an atom like you, old man. Queer lucky bag the world is, isn't it? Nobody would think that she and you were cousins."

"Don't suppose they would, you know," said Ripley, with a transient air of thoughtfulness. "Ridiculous idea. Get a lot of people down here and bore 'em with yarns. Says it kills time. As if they couldn't go to bed, you know."

"Exactly," cried Fulford with enthusiasm. "What a chappie of resource you are! There isn't one of 'em like you."

As a genuine Ripley's face was a triumph of vanity, but at this a faint, false reflex of a smile dwelt for a second or two upon his features and faded away again.

"Carr's got a Christmas yarn to tell to-night," he said. "Been swathing all day at it. Seen it on his mind." Fulford nodded. "Time somebody made a protest," continued Ripley. "More than half a mind to go to sleep when he begins."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Lady Sarah, in her shrill elderly voice. "Captain Carr is ready for us. Let us form in a semicircle about the fire." Her white hair and sparkling dark eyes were in curious contrast, and her aquiline nose was almost manly. Her guests and relatives obeyed her, with the subservience she commonly succeeded in inspiring, and Captain Carr took his seat on a

lounge beneath the chandelier, the others ranged themselves on either side, and formed the required semicircle, giving the great fireplace a wide berth. "We are ready for you, Captain Carr," said the old lady, with her pleased imperious smile.

"I am under orders," said Captain Carr, stroking his moustache with a hand which had a momentary tremor of nervousness in it, "and nobody has a right to go into action with even a look of unwillingness. We are all under orders for that matter, and no one of you is allowed to return my fire until my magazine is exhausted."

"Let us have no preliminaries," said the imperious old lady. "Open fire at once."

"I suppose," he began, in obedience to this order, "that there wasn't a prettier or better girl in the world, but the warmest admirer and best friend she had could see a little tinge of coquetry in her. It went no deeper than the surface, but she preferred, I think, to make her little faults of character prominent and noticeable, and to hide the genuine goodness of her nature. I don't know whether she ever really cared for him, but at times he fancied she allowed him to think so, and at other times he fancied that she was quite indifferent. I have been told that girls often behave in that way, and that their lovers find it hard to understand them."

"Hear the same thing myself," said Fullford. "Silence in the ranks," cried Lady Sarah. "Go on, Captain Carr."

"I think," said the Captain, pulling softly at his moustache and looking straight into the fire, "that I can undertake to say he loved her. He wasn't much of a fellow to describe, and I don't know that I can very well describe him. But the lady was just one of Nature's miracles. She had brown eyes and brown hair, both very auburn and bright and lustrous. I'm not good at description, ladies and gentlemen, and I'm not much of a poet or a reader of poetry, but there was a song the niggers used to sing in South Carolina when I was there as a boy, I believe the Civil War, and a verse of it always reminded me of her when I had once seen her.

"Oh, she looks in at de window,
And she laughs in at de door,
And she dances like de sunshine
Across de parlor floor."

The verse is not Tennyson's, ladies, and is, I dare say, a little artless, but somehow it really has a touch of her which I fail to find in loftier periods."

There was in the chamber in which this Christmas party was assembled, one young lady who seemed less under Lady Sarah's imperious control than any of her companions. She had brown eyes and brown hair, both very soft and bright and lustrous, and as she sat apart from the semicircle in a somewhat ostentatious disdain of the general occupation, she read or pretended to read in the pages of a volume of poems. She was sweetly pretty, but was obviously ill pleased at something, and her lip curled with a grand disdain when Captain Carr repeated the verse of the negro melody.

"The shallow, insolent creature!" said the sweetly pretty young lady to herself. "He once quoted that absurd verse to me about myself."

She made a great pretence of reading, but Captain Carr's voice, though not loud, was clear and well modulated, and she heard every word he spoke.

"If it were not altogether presumptuous to judge of a girl's feeling before she herself has made any actual acknowledgment of it, I should be disposed to fancy that the young lady was very averally disposed to the young gentleman of my story."

"It was a day of mournful weather, and there was a clinging mist about everything, so that the trees looked as if they were steaming. It was a day of rain and wind as well as mist, and it was quite a wonder that the fog was not all washed and blown away. The puddles in the road were all wrinkled and spotted, and the bare hedges were shivering in the comfortless wind, when the young man and the girl with whose fortunes this story has to do, met in the wretched country road, and to one of them at least the day immediately became golden. It was Christmas time—the young lady was on her way to see a sick old woman, and was unattended. She was of a rarely sweet and servicable nature, and was full of kindness to the poor."

The young lady with the book of poems laid the

volume down with much deliberateness, and turning slowly the full light of her brown eyes on the story-teller, regarded him from that moment to the close of his narrative. Her glance was haughty and contemptuous, but the narrator seemed unconscious of it, and pursued his tale with perfect tranquillity, with his glass still fixed upon the fire.

"The young man was so much in love, and so shy of approaching the lady, that he had been wandering in the wretched weather for hours in the hope of catching a glimpse of her. They were neighbors, and had known each other intimately for many years, but his passion made the young man shy. But meeting in this apparently casual way, he ventured to offer the girl his altogether unnecessary escort, and she was graciously pleased to accept it.

"Sometimes in books one finds how very prettily it is possible to offer one's hand in marriage, and how charmingly eloquent it is possible to be in the presence of the lady of one's love. The young man was probably acquainted with many of these examples, and I dare say had often rehearsed his own declaration, being at times persuaded of the certainty of rejection, and at others inflated with hopes of acceptance. That, ladies, is the way with young men who are in love. They are not nearly so masterful or so confident as you imagine. But when, inspired by the presence of his divinity, he found courage to say what hopes were within him, he did it with extreme awkwardness and precipitation; and Angela—I have not told you the girl's name before, I fancy—was half frightened at his vehemence and awkwardness."

The sweetly pretty young lady, who sat apart from Captain Carr's auditory, kept her eyes fixed upon him, and sat like a lovely statue of contempt.

"The young man," pursued the Captain, "had so timed his declaration, or had so failed to time it, that he had finished his few wild and broken words when the pair reached the cottage door of the old sick woman whom Angela was about to visit. She gave the young man no answer, therefore—being, as I have said already, a little alarmed by him—but left him standing in the muddy, misty, rainy lane, with despair for his companion. Whilst he stood there, undetermined whether to go away, and feeling for the moment altogether hopeless and half suicidal, there came along the lane a second young man, whose presence was gall and wormwood to him. I believe that these young men were gall and wormwood to each other, for each to the other's mind was guilty of an unpardonable crime in daring to love the beautiful Angela. I do not mind confessing, ladies, that from the descriptions which one of these impassioned young men has poured into my ear, from photographs of her displayed to me, and from the general consensus of opinion among those who are so far honored as to know her, that I have myself been a victim to her charms in anticipation, and that when I meet her, as I am certain to do sooner or later, I shall succumb without a struggle, though I am a case-hardened bachelor of six and thirty."

"The newcomer made a pretence of being on perfectly friendly terms, and the two young men shook hands, though they were willing to enter at once upon deadly combat. Number Two seems to have guessed or known why Number One was lingering in the mud and rain in front of that tumble-down old cottage, and they stood there in conversation, which gradually grew less and less warm in tone, and finally merged into a sullen silence. Now these two, as you shall hear, are the hero and the villain of my tale, and rather unusually villainous villain, and heroic hero too, as I make bold to fancy, and yet, do you know, it is a surprising thing to think how little facial distinction there was between them. The one fellow by all prescription ought to have had eyes too near together, and to have had a grudging manner and a shifting glance, but as a matter of fact he had nothing of the kind, but looked as honest a young Briton as you might wish to see."

"When Angela came out of the cottage she had made a much longer stay than usual. To be sure, the cottage had a window in it, which looked upon the uninviting weather, and very likely showed her the two grumpy young men who were kicking their heels in the muddy lane. She might not have cared for a double escort. But it is a poor business for a bachelor to attempt the seducing of the virgin heart, and I had better stick to the certainties. She came out at last and walked

home with them, and she addressed almost all her conversation to Robert, my Number Two and my villain, leaving the hopeless John, my Number One and here, out in the cold."

At this point in his story Captain Carr abstracted his gaze from the fire and looked leisurely about the circle. To tell the truth, nobody had found his narrative especially absorbing so far, and Ripley had fulfilled his threat of snoring loudly, and was already nine-tenths asleep. Lady Sarah's eyes were sparkling with an interest which the story itself could scarcely have had the power to create. The others were politely attentive, or, if they felt bored, suppressed any sign of feeling. The sweetly pretty girl outside the circle was contemptuously still, and when the Captain's eye met hers for a single instant she shot upon him a glance of contempt and scorn so lofty that he might have reasonably have been expected to be quite shrivelled by it. He answered it by a smile which looked unforged and spontaneous, and indeed was full of sweetness and an abler brotherly sort of liking and admiration. Nobly but Lady Sarah noticed this interchange of glances—it was so momentary and slight a thing—and Captain Carr, staring straight into the glowing coals again, went on with his tale.

"Now Angela was not only young and charming, but she was well to do, and the only daughter of an old and honorable house. Her father—a magnificent specimen of the best sort of good old English country gentleman—was as hospitable and generous as the day. He needed to be a wealthy man. If he had been a poor one his open-handedness would have been a trouble to him. The youngsters were each two or three miles away from home, and he happened by chance to ride up to they were paring with his daughter at the lodge would have them in, and the lady yielded. My wicked Robert had so soaked in the lady's smiles on the walk thither, and my good John was so saddened and wretched at the seeming wreck and failure of his hopes that it would have been hard to find a pair wider apart in feeling than these two. But now, the young lady, while retreating or only coquettish I cannot tell, began to smile on John, and to talk so vivaciously and prettily that the poor lady's lesson began to warm again, and the from serpent that lay there to uncoil and smother. I beg your pardon, ladies. My first attempt at a poetic figure is not very successful, but I will not offend again in that way."

"Angela did so shine on the now fortunate John, that before he got out of the house that evening, fortune favoring him, he received something so like an assent that he took it for one, and went away persuaded that he carried with him the rich jewel in the whole wide world. Which brings me to the middle of my song, and the hub and kernel of my story."

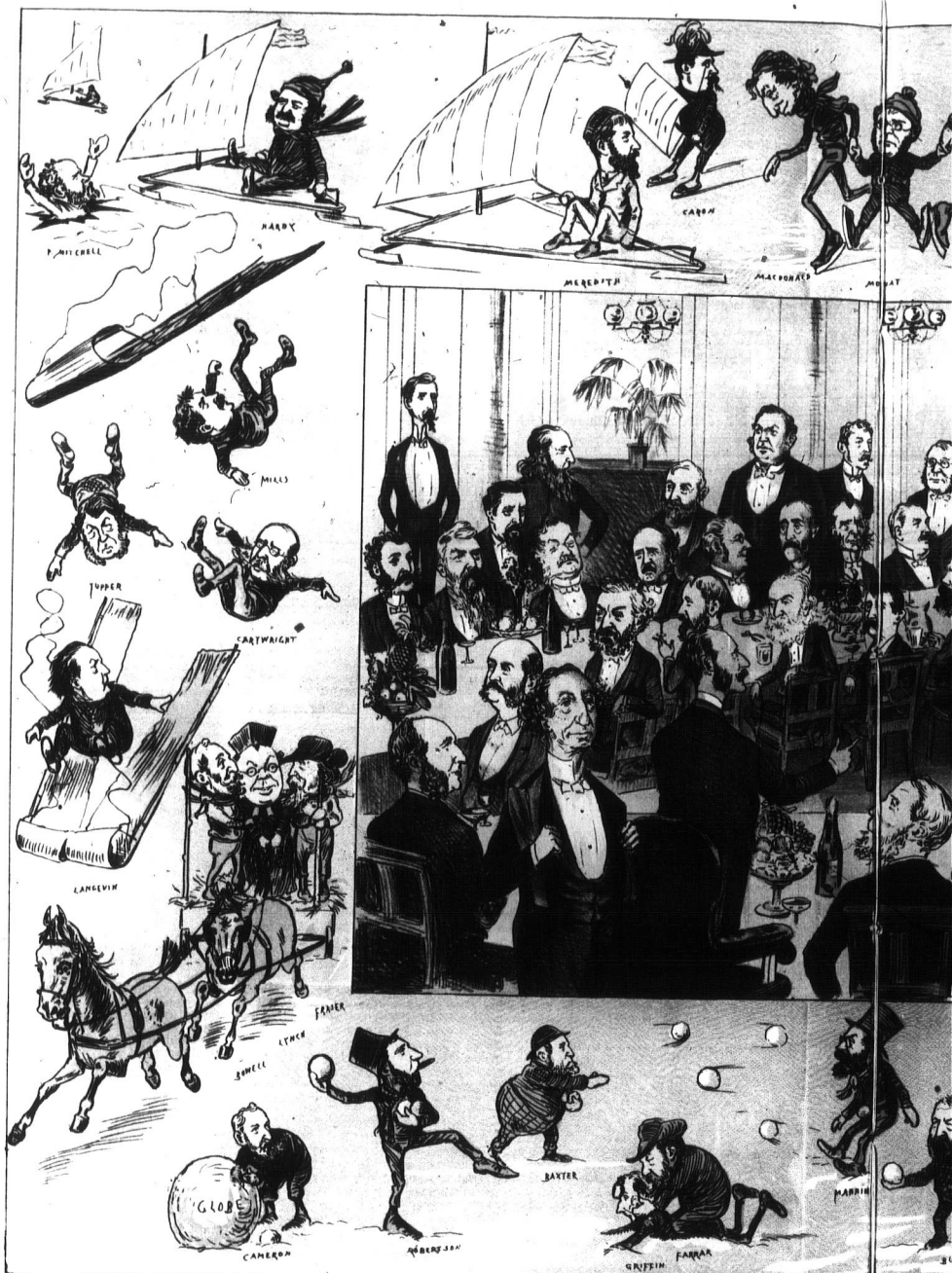
"John," says the old gentleman, "I want you to do me a favor. Here's Christmas Eve actually upon us to-morrow, and I only got this from Paris this morning."

"With that he unlocks an escritoire and takes out of it a little morocco case some six inches long and four broad, and scarcely more than an inch in depth, and opening it displays a handsome neckless of diamonds, worth I scarcely dare to say how much, but anyway of very considerable value."

"This," says he, "is for Phoebe, who reaches her eighteenth birthday on the twenty-first of December. Now I had hoped to give it to her with my own hands, but here's my brother Alexander due in two hours. I had a telegram from him this afternoon—having travelled post haste from Shanghai to the Christmas with us. Angela and I have to stay at home to meet him. At this the heart and countenance of the joyful John both fell, for he had expected nothing less than that he should live in the loved one's presence for three unbroken days."

"Why not bring your brother, sir?" says John, for he was the cousin of the Phoebe who was going to receive the diamonds, and an intimate of her father's house from childhood."

"M-m," says the old country gentleman with a smile. "It's a dozen years ago to be sure, but Sandy and your uncle had a great row. We shall have the breach, I hope, but we must make gradual approaches. I don't quite feel sure that Sandy would go if I asked him, and he must have his first welcome in his brother's house unbroken. So we spend our Christmas time at home, and I



CANADA'S CHILDREN OF A LARGER GROWTH.



LARGER GROWTH, AND THEIR LITTLE GAMES.

want you, since you are to be there, to hand this to your uncle for Phoebe."

"I am delighted, I am sure," says John, feeling anything but pleased at the arrangement, and so, with the case in his pocket, he departed. Now I want to reveal Mr. Lady's secrets, but I cannot tell this story properly without letting you know that as John was in the very act of leaving, he somehow encountered Angela in the lamplit twilight of the hall, and having his suit to be prosperous, and being, therefore, full of what I understand to be a lover's natural tender derring, he ventured to take both her hands in his, and to kiss them, as he said good bye. You may be tolerably sure that he would not have ventured on this if he had been conscious of the presence of his rival, but he had no sooner raised his head from the salute, than he saw Robert glowering at him with a face writhing and pale with jealous hate. The girl became aware of his presence also, and was probably a little awkward and conscious, though she behaved with great self-possession, as, I am told, girls generally do in such cases, being naturally more courageous than the fighting male, who is rarely equal to that sort of occasion.

"The two youngsters left the house together, and for a mile or two their ways were the same. The weather had cleared a little, and there was a feel of frost in the air, and I have heard from John that as he walked along with an occasional glance at his companion, he could see his breath driving out from his lips like smoke, as if he had an inward fire, and this was the only sign of it. Where and how the diabolical idea which ultimately got hold of Robert first laid a finger on his shoulder I cannot guess, but I suppose that from the moment when he had seen that salute in the lamplit hall he was ripe for mischief. The chapter of accident held a leaf or two in his favor, as it often seems to do in the case of villainy.

"The scene is laid away up north, and on the sea coast. They met next morning on the pier, with their portmanteaus, and my scoundrel advanced to his old friend and shook hands with no allusion to the affairs of yesterday, as if he had accepted his fate and were prepared to make the best of it.

"The weather, I should have told you, had begun to look dirty, and there was a fairish sea on, but not enough to frighten anybody. My young John was naturally extremely anxious to get on, for he had accepted a commission from his sweetheart's father, and would not have failed in that for the world if he could have helped it. The bargain for the trip being closed they went out to the hotel and waited until the luggage should be got out, and whilst there my John, seeing no danger in the thing at all—how should he?—must draw the morocco case from his breast pocket and take a look at its contents. The two were alone in the coffee room, and the other came prowling up and laid hands on it in what the custodian of the diamonds thought a strange way, and stood staring at the stones with a look so odd, and somehow to the other's fancy so mischievous and threatening, that he scarce knew what to make of it. By and by he throws the diamonds down on the table, so that they fell clattering out of the case, and then without a word he marches from the room and slams the door behind him.

"And now," pursued the narrator, glancing once more around him, "how he saw his way to the fulfillment of his design nobody will ever know until the day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed. But he marched down into the bar, and having begun to drink there with the landlord he made an amazing statement.

"'Strachan,' said he, 'there's something on my mind, and I must tell it to somebody.' The landlord noticed that he looked wild and disturbed, and listened with amazement, thinking when he heard it that the young man had gone mad. The something on the diabolical young scoundrel's mind was simply this. He told the story of the diamonds, and added that his friend was terribly in debt and was greatly tempted to appropriate them. He was indeed resolved to have them, and had devised a scheme by which he might secure them. He had provided himself with a duplicate case, the which he intended to lose overboard, and then by raising a dreadful outcry about its loss divert all suspicion. Strachan was sworn to secrecy about this for the present, as it was my young villain's professed hope to be able to frustrate his rival's nefarious scheme.

"Well, the two young men got on board. They were a bit undermanned, and the weather was growing rougher and rougher, but there was no danger to be anticipated, and both the youngsters were good sailors. The two had borrowed tarpaulins from the skipper, and lounged about the deck in the rain and wind scarcely exchanging a word. It began to grow dark earlier than usual, even at this season of the year, for the black skies hung low and it had been dusk all day. It was a dreary time and seemed to grow drearier every minute, and at last John, having comfortably arranged a coil of rope on deck, sat down on it with his back to the bulwark, made himself all taut and snug, and began to smoke. He watched the red glare of his pipe, and by and by, with the rocking of the vessel and the darkness and the soothing influence of tobacco, he began to nod. He never believed that he altogether fell asleep, but in any case he was wide awake all on a sudden with a gust of wind blowing coldly and keenly all through him, and a hand in his inner breast pocket. The thought of the diamonds was on him in a second, but he never fancied who the owner of the hand might be, when he leapt to his feet to seize him. The deck was slippery, and the boat was pitching wildly so that he came up with a stagger, and he was encumbered with the heavy tarpaulin coat he wore. It was merely buttoned about him, and he had not put his arms through the sleeves, so that he was like a man in a sack. But he went with a spring and a lurch against the thief and knew him at a flash, saw his wild face and eyes and outstretched hands, as the shallow bulwark took him behind the knees, saw the very case in his right hand as he went over with a cry and a mad clutch at the empty air. He himself fell heavily and cut his face against the bulwark's edge, but he cried 'Man Overboard' as he rolled on the deck, and in a second he was afoot again tearing off the tarpaulin and casting coat and waistcoat left and right.

"It was as wild a thing to do as ever yet was done in this world, but the man who was robbed went headlong into that raging sea to save the thief. He did not know then that the villain was trying to rob him of his sweetheart and to poison the whole world against him. I asked the noble fellow later on—for I am not going to play tricks with you and keep you in suspense—he came out of it with his life—God bless him!—I asked him later on how it came that he faced almost the certainty of death for a man caught red-handed in such treachery.

"'I knew,' he said as simply as a child, 'that he couldn't swim a stroke, and it seemed horrible to think that a man should die in such an act as that.'

"Well, the diamonds were gone and the man was gone. The noble fellow hid the dreadful story for the sake of the lost man's friends, and nobody thought it very hard to fancy that the necklace had been lost in the attempted rescue. But when he got back to the mainland the landlord had told the villain's tale to one or two—had told it to do him justice, in the belief that the originator of it had gone mad, and this grand fellow had for his reward the almost universal belief that he had thrown his friend overboard in order to secure secrecy for his own crime. It was believed that the other had taxed him with his intent, and the mere pretence at a rescue went for nothing. There was no proving anything against him, but he had a narrow escape of being tried for his life. He told his tale to me, and I have written to Angela and she has disbelieved it."

"You know the man?" asked one, "and the story is true?"

"The man is a dear friend of mine," said Captain Carr, "and the story is true."

The girl who sat outside the circle rose and moved away, but Lady Sarah rising also put an arm about her waist and whispered in her ear.

"Don't go yet, dear. The story is not finished."

"Let me go," said the girl, with a sobbing voice. "Let me go."

"Could you bear to hear it proved, my darling?" asked the keen old lady, with a tear in each of her keen black eyes.

"Not here," said the girl, trembling; "not before these people."

To all the rest it was the ending of the tale, and it was not strange to anybody that the hostess should walk away with her arm about the waist of

her favorite guest. The old lady and the young one turned into a conservatory which opened from the room.

"Can it be proved?" the girl cried. Then, facing her companion with agonized entreaty, "Dear Lady Sarah, who can prove it? How can it be proved?"

"There is a providence over all things, my dear," said the old lady, gravely. "It can be proved. Shall I call Captain Carr? He has the proof."

"Yes, yes. Let me know. How could I ever have allowed so black a thought to creep into my heart?"

"My dear Miss Carruthers," said Captain Carr a minute later, "forgive me if I pained you. But you refused to listen to me. You sent back my letter (containing the proof I hold) unopened. My wretched cousin is not dead. God spared him to repent. He was miraculously preserved. He floated all night supported by a mass of spars and cordage, was picked up at day-break, and, fearing, that John would denounce him, fled abroad. He has written at last, moved, I am afraid, more by want of penicillin than by any genuine repentance, and I have extorted the whole story from him. John is only fifty miles away, Miss Carruthers. Shall I write for him?"

She blushed as he bent over her, and a chance onlooker would have taken them for a pair of lovers. She answered, "Yes," in a half whisper, and the gallant Captain sighed. It was the answer he had loyally worked for, but the "Yes" was not for him.

It was for John.

"THE CHRISTMAS BELL-RINGERS."

HOMELY and happy associations of English rural life in the olden time belong to the ancient institution of bell-ringing upon duly appointed festive occasions in the village churches, as well as for the invitation to social worship. The tuneful melody pealing from the venerable tower, which seems to preside over a little group of modest private dwellings as the sole conspicuous public edifice, the headquarters of the parish commonwealth, appeals to the sense of neighborly fellowship, speaking an implied message of "peace on earth, goodwill to men." Christmas Day and New Year's Day must be deemed, therefore, such occasions as may appropriately be ushered in by the best performance of this kind. In the pleasant scene which our artist has delineated, the bell-ringers appear to be encouraged by the presence of the Squire and some of his friends, accompanying the Parson, with the churchwarden and the parish clerk, probably, to exert themselves for the general gratification. The costumes of these good people are those which were fashionable in the middle or early part of last century; but we trust that the same influences friendly to social union and cheerful co-operation in parochial affairs, without detriment to a proper regard for distinctions of rank and office, may still prevail in the country, and that agreeable old customs will not lightly be given up. The labors of the bell-ringers must be very fatiguing; and it will be observed that the village innkeeper has been sent for to supply a jug of good ale, which, having been first tasted by the gentlemen, will be dispensed, with discreet moderation, to refresh the ancient performers. In the reign of George II. or George III. nobody would have thought of taking any objection to this part of the arrangements. The drawing must pass, however, as an illustration of the manners of a former age. With regard to the time-honored practice of bell-ringing, its efficacy in awakening the sentiments of attachment to home, and in summoning good folk to religious observances, has been attested by many poets. The subjoined passage is by Longfellow:

The bells themselves are the best of preachers;
Their brass lips are hoarse with teaching;
From their pulpit of stone in the upper air,
Sounding aloft, without crack or flaw,
Loudly they trumpet under the law,
Now a sermon, and now a prayer.
The eloquent hammer is their tongue;
This way, that way, beaten and swung;
That from mouth of brass, as from mouth of gold,
May be taught the Testament New and Old.

Twopen electricity, says Mr. Proctor, might be obtained by utilizing the heat and vapor arising from the fusion of metals, yet the current produced by a temperature of 100° F., at one junction, and say 60° at the other, would be too small to be successful.

CHRISTMAS VIOLETS.

Lathright I found the violets
You sent me once across the sea;
From gardens that the winter frosts
In summer lands they came to me.

Still fragrant of the English earth,
Still humid from the frozen dew,
To me they spoke of Christmas morn,
They spoke of England, spoke of you.

The flowers are scentless, black, and sore,
The perfume long has passed away;
The sea winds tides are year by year
Is set between us chill and gray.

But you have reached a windowless age,
The haven of a happy clime;
You do not dread the winter's age,
Although we missed the summer-time.

And like the flower's breath over sea,
Across the gulf of time and pain,
To-night returns the memory
Of how that lived not in vain.

THE PIN GHOST.

No! I am certain I did not dream it, because, you see, I wasn't asleep. I was very tired, I know, for I had been sewing busily all day helping my good friend Miss Fairbairn, the dress-maker, to put the finishing touches to my new walking suit, and I had just thrown myself down on the lounge for five minutes' rest, but I was wide awake all the time.

My husband laughs and shakes his head when I say this; but perhaps you, dear reader, will be more reasonable when you have heard the whole story.

It was just after dinner. As I have said, I was very tired, and I left my husband engrossed in the evening paper, while I stole away to my little sewing-room, intending to see the just finished dress was carefully folded and laid away until such time as it should be needed.

But then my weariness overcame me, and I just closed my eyes as I lay on the lounge, to shield them from the gas, when a slight rustling noise attracted my attention, and I opened them instantly to see the very strangest sight: a tiny, slender figure, perhaps two feet in height, clad in a robe of silvery white—an old woman, to judge by her queer wrinkled face; a young sylph, to look at her light agile movements—who was hovering over the countless scraps and shreds which still littered the floor, and apparently picking up something with great eagerness.

For a moment I was too much startled to speak; then, gaining courage as I looked at the little creature, I sprang up, exclaiming at the same time,

"Why, who are you? and where did you come from? and pray what are you doing here?"

The little old woman straightened herself up as she abruptly addressed her, and made a queer little ancient courtesy. Then with great gravity, in a shrill, fine voice which almost seemed to prick one's ears with its peculiar sharpness, she answered,

"I am the Pin Ghost, and my mission has ever been to gather up in all parts of the world the pins that are dropped by so many hasty or careless hands. Especially do I follow in the wake of dressmakers, because then and there have I always found my richest harvest, and that is why I am here to-night."

"Dear me!" I interrupted; "this vocation of yours explains a mystery which has long puzzled the curious. This is the answer to that oft-repeated question of 'Where do the pins go?'"

"Yes," said the sprite, with a queer little smile on her withered face—"yes, and you may congratulate yourself on having fathomed a secret which has baffled wiser heads than yours."

"But tell me," I began eagerly—"tell me what you do with all the pins you gather, and to what use you can put them, come, sit down and let us talk comfortably."

"Sit down, indeed!" said the old woman, with a look of disdain. "Why, I'm neither bent nor crooked, that you should ask me to sit down. No; I always stand, as you might perceive."

Seeing that she was really offended, though I did not know why, I hastened to apologize, and at last the smile returned to her face, and she began her story thus:

"As I have told you, my mission is to pick up the pins that every one scatters, and this work keeps me very busy. By day and by night, in town

or country, in the houses of the rich or the poor, I gather my pins, and having gathered, I proceed to use them. Whenever I see a rich man with more money than brains, building an elegant house and furnishing it in the most costly manner, I begin on him. I put pins in his luxurious sofas, pins in his softest easy-chairs, pins in his bed of down; I even put pins in his favorite dishes, until they cease to gratify his palate—yes, and pins in the elegant dress of his wife and daughters too, until the whole family become uneasy and discontented.

"Then, finding no pleasure in their possessions, they sell or rent their fine house on which they had so prided themselves, and try change and travel. In nine cases out of ten they go abroad and make the tour of Europe, but they do not escape me. No, indeed! I follow them in their journeyings, keeping them continually on the move, putting a few pins in every new purchase or new place, just to keep them from too much tranquillity. Finally our rich man turns his face homeward again, under a vain impression that among the old familiar scenes the old rest and comfort may yet be found. Delusion! I put pins in his old pleasures, his old pursuits, until he can glean nothing restful from them, and is fain to become a dissatisfied grumbler for the rest of his life.

"Then sometimes I find a clergyman who is too happy, too comfortably settled; he loves his people, they love him, and he finds real delight in his duty. Well, I can soon change all that. I stick pins in his sermons, and they prick and vex some sensitive hearer. I stick pins in elder or deacon, warden or vestryman, as the case may be, until their very hand-shakings only sting the more. I put a few pins in the sewing society, the missionary meetings, the social gatherings, until nearly every one gets a prick or a scratch, and is indignant accordingly. By-and-by the poor harassed minister and his perplexed people are mutually glad to sever their uncomfortable relations.

"Then, again, I amuse myself with lovers' quarrels; and let me tell you in confidence that they are the most foolishly sensitive people in the world. A well-placed pin is quite sufficient to make any man absurdly jealous or any girl unreasonably exacting, and I have often known a broken engagement to follow a few good hard pricks.

"Sometimes I stick a pin into an orator just as he is trying to address an audience; and then how the poor man will stammer and hesitate and fidget, and make all his hearers as nervous as himself.

"But my most effective work is done when I can put a few sharp pins into a married man, and then send him home yet smarting from the effect.

"Of course he thinks that his business perplexities have irritated him, and lays his ill humor to some rise or fall in stocks or merchandise; but I know better. Naturally he vents some part of his vexation upon his wife, and this saves me a great deal of work, since no thrust of mine, however sharp, could equal the pain her husband's ill temper can give her.

"In fact, that is the easiest way to reach a married woman; for all the pins I can put in the domestic machinery, all the sharp-pointed frictions of social life, are as nothing compared with the smart a husband's looks and words can inflict.

"Very often, too, I make one at a dinner or evening party, and slyly put a few spare pins in here and there. Have you never been thoroughly uncomfortable at a social gathering where you expected to find only enjoyment? Ah! that was owing to some of my pins."

"Alas!" I exclaimed, as the old woman paused for a moment, "what a list of vexations and annoyances is this! How much real misery you are responsible for, and how complacently you speak of it all! Tell me, do you never do any good—never further any right purpose?"

The sprite looked at me, as I asked this question, with a new expression—a look from which the malice had faded, and was replaced by a gentle gravity.

"I think I may say," she replied, "that my vocation gives me many opportunities of doing good, which I embrace very gladly. Whenever I catch people saying unkind things, repeating foolish gossip, showing selfish disregard for the happiness of others, I never fail to prick them severely. Want of honor or honesty, extravagance, wasted opportunities—all these and countless other causes

provoke me to sharpest pricks and thrusts, given with unceasing vigilance."

"But how is it that all these pricks and stings you give don't make the world any better? Unkindness, selfishness and falsehood abound in every direction, to say nothing of graver errors; and so of what use are your pins, after all?"

"Ah! that is only too true," said my companion, sadly. "I have wondered at that same fact very often, and it is dreadfully discouraging. I can tell you, though I know it is not my fault. But then I sometimes think," she added, brightening visibly as she spoke, "that people get used to my reminders after a while, and so disregard them. For instance, there are the plumbers. Now I have tried faithfully to prick and sting some of those men into being honest; but though I have used up nearly all my reserve pins in the effort, I can't say I have ever met with the slightest success. Indeed, it has often seemed to me that the more I disturbed and tormented them, the more they engrossed themselves in careless work and extortion. Why, I have sometimes been quite in want of pins because of the myriads I have wasted on those people."

"What do you do when you find your supply running low?" I enquired.

"Oh, I practice a little more economy for a time, and then, too, I make use of substitutes."

"I don't see what you can find that would answer the purpose."

"Well, the best of all I employ are the borer, and they are really very effective. Why, bless you, with one first-class borer I can make a dozen people uncomfortable, and so say wretched, and, in consequence, I take the borer of all sorts under my special protection. Nothing less powerful than my care could have saved them from the vengeance of their victims long ago."

"Well, notwithstanding all you have said about your efforts for improving people, I must still think that yours is a cruel and a useless occupation, for you cause much needless unhappiness to many innocent people, while, by your own showing, you are unable to do any real good," I said, warmly; for I was, I could hardly tell why, somewhat cross.

The old woman smiled more maliciously than ever as I spoke, and then, making a sudden motion toward my finger and thumb, as if about to prick me with a pin, she exclaimed, sharply,

"There, take that, and see what it is to be rude to the Pin Ghost!" and the next instant she had vanished from my sight and from the room as completely as if she had never existed. At the same moment my husband called me out, and, with my mind still occupied with my strange visitant, I returned to the parlor and told him the whole story, which he heard with incredulous laughter, declaring that I must have dreamed it all.

But there is one fact which assures me that I really saw the old woman; for ever since she made that paring thrust at me with finger and thumb—ever since that moment, I say—I have been suffering from a vague uneasiness, which has culminated at last in a restless desire to put this narrative in print. Perhaps this was the consummation the malicious old woman intended, and my punishment may consist of sharp criticism, or total unbelief, or—sharpest pin of all—I may be coolly classed among the borer, and thus find myself at once the weapon and the victim of the Pin Ghost.

"A BOUQUET FOR MAMMA ON CHRISTMAS MORNING."

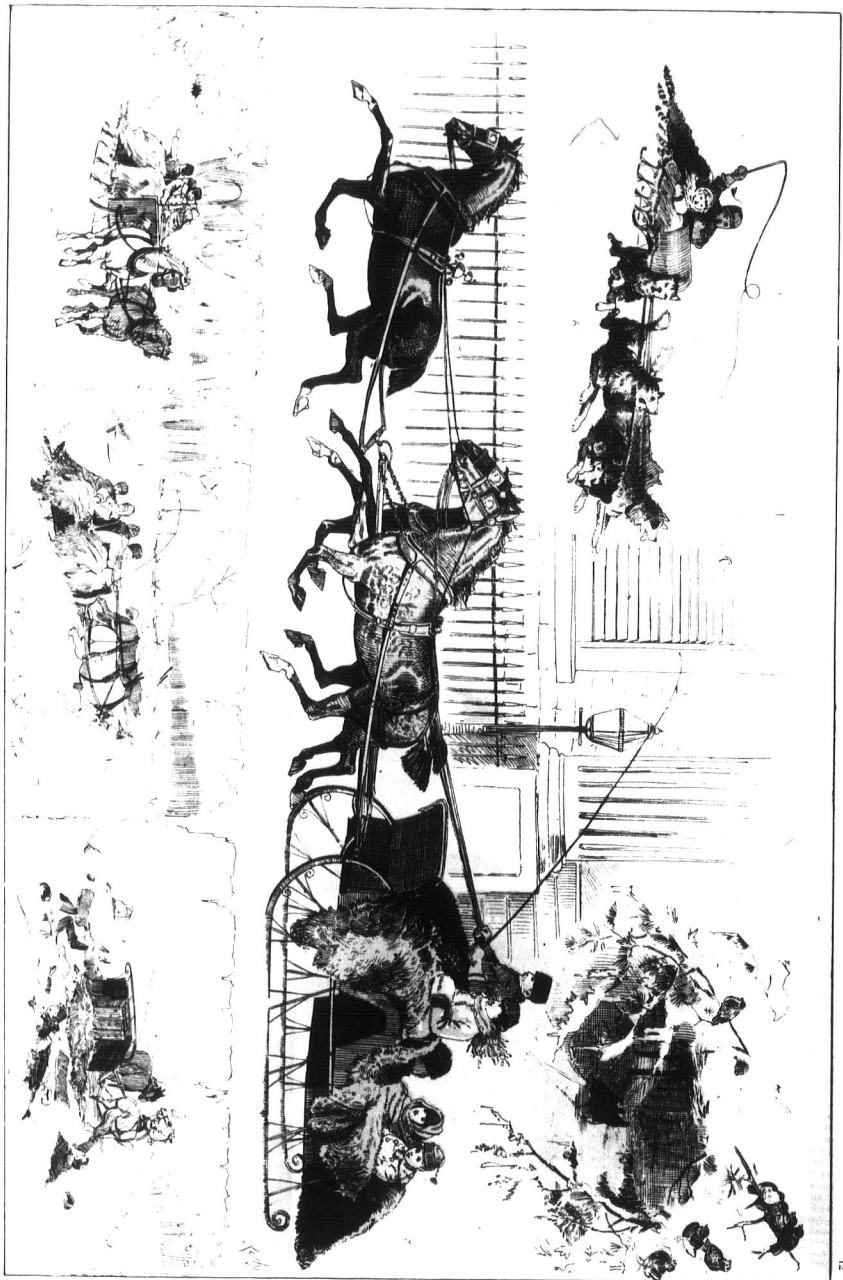
WHAT can brighten the winter hours,
This Christmas spring, the Elm's flowers?
What is the gift that can gladden more
Than that at her mother's chamber door?

Elsie ever this gladness bore,
On which the three-lined hale was born,
Eagerly bears her little gift
Her mother's heart to Heaven to lift.

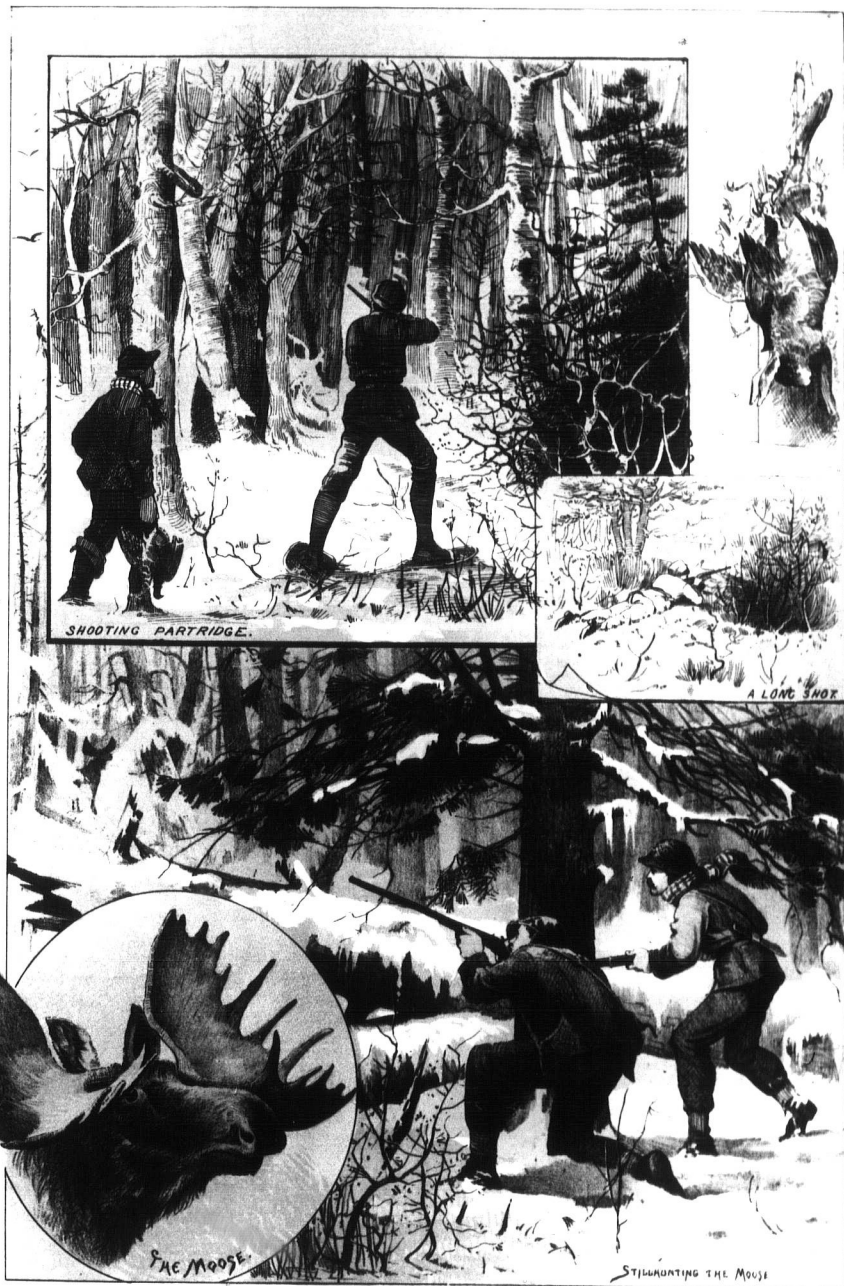
For, oh, to her mother's gaze his sweet,
Her precious darling's eyes to meet,
Glad blue eyes, beaming, show
All other meanings, with yearning love.

Oh Angels of old, that caroled first,
When the Holy Babe this morn was nursed,
Shall ever your hymns this season sing,
To sing us to love and to brother peace!

And of all the Heaven to Earth ye bring,
Of all the love that to ye ye sing,
What more dear than Christmas morn,
Than the love that in Elsie's eyes ye see!



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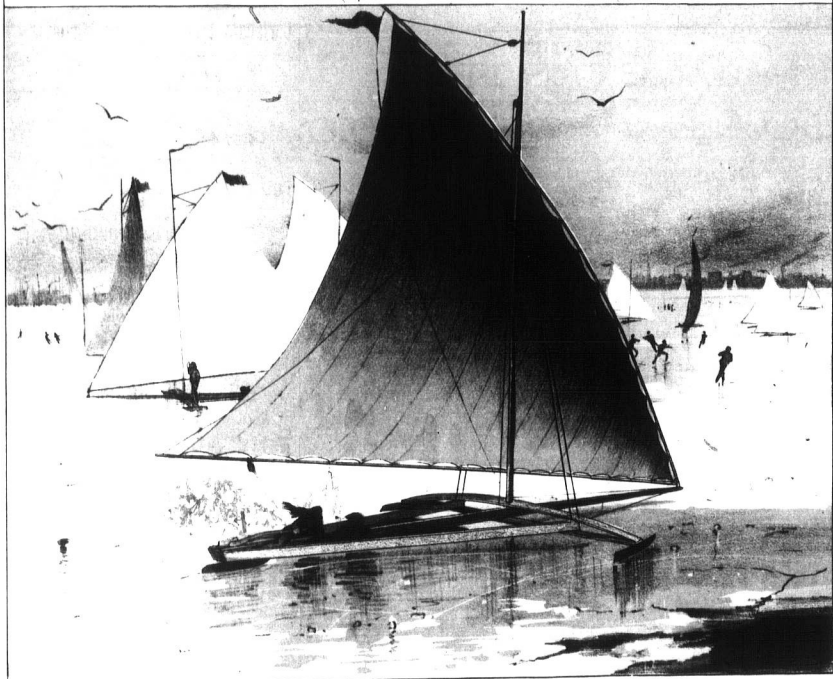
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