The Farmers Leader

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CHRISTMAS AT THE FARM.

If I only were a poet and could write in tuneful rhyme
With the graceful words the poets use to charm,
I would be prepared to tell you of the happy, happy time
When, a boy, I roamed about my father's farm.

I could tell you of the old, familiar scenes of long ago,
Which time nor change can cause me to forget,
The barn-yard and the meadow, and the corn-stalks in a row,
For the memories of my childhood haunt me yet.

I could tell you of my brothers, and my little sisters, too,
Companions of the joyous days of yore;
Of things we used to talk about and things we used to do,
In the days that will return again no more.

Of all the happy seasons we children held most dear,
The one whose coming brought us greatest joys,
Was the merry, merry Christmas time, the best of all the year,
With its jolly games, and stockings full of toys.

And O, the Christmas dinner! Belteshazzar's sumptuous feast
Ne'er tempted mortal appetite so sore;
It seemed the more we ate of it our appetite increased,
Until there was no room for any more.

O, I wish that it were possible to turn old Time around,
By some enchantment, or some magic charm,
And I, a little boy again, might hear the welcome sound
That summoned us to dinner at the farm.

I have feasted at great banquets and ate whate'er I would
Of the rarest dishes skillful cooks display,
But the luxuries provided never tasted half so good
As the dinner in the farm-house Christmas day.

—Frank Beard, in Ram's Horn.

A CHRISTMAS GRANDFATHER

BY J. FINDLAY BROWN.

JACKIE sat on the front door step and pondered deeply. To-morrow was Christmas, and for Christmas he must have a turkey. A turkey! Jackie's mouth watered at the thought. A whole, big, beautiful turkey, brown and dripping, on mother's big, old-fashioned platter, with the funny little houses and trees and things in blue on a white ground. It had been mother's grandmother's, you know, and was very old. That was why mother kept it up on the top cupboard shelf and took it down only on Christmas and New Year's and Thanksgiving.

But last Christmas and New Year's it had not been taken down at all. Somehow, it had not seemed a bit like Christmas or anything to Jackie, last year. Never since father didn't come home from the hospital, and mother and Jackie had come to live in the queer little brown house that was so close to Squire Grant's big stone one.

There was something queer about Squire Grant. He lived all alone in his big, old house, and his beautiful big farm was rented out to another man all the time. The people that came to see mother never spoke of him, and mother herself never mentioned him except when Jackie asked some question about him. He always looked very cross, and Jackie thought he must be bothered a good deal with the stomachache; that made people cross.

Suddenly, on the still morning air, clear with frost, came the sound of turkeys gobbling. It was the Squire's turkeys across the field. Jackie listened a moment. Then he brought his hands together with a little clap. Why not go to the Squire and ask him to give him a turkey for Christmas?

He jumped up and ran into the hall. He would have to tell mother, or she would be anxious. He opened the kitchen door and looked in. Mother was peeling potatoes for dinner.

"I'm going down the road a little piece, mother," said Jackie; "I'll be back soon," and before mother could answer he was out of the door. It was only a little distance to the Squire's, and soon he was climbing up over the tall iron gate that stood at the foot of the wide lane. He went up the steps to the back porch and knocked at the door. There was no answer.

Jackie ran down the steps and across the yard to the barnyard gate. It was a big one. He was just getting down the other side when he was startled by a deep voice behind him.

"What are you doing here, young man?"

Jackie turned to find himself face to face with the Squire himself.

"Oh," he said, in a relieved tone, "is it you, Squire? I was coming down to find you."

He held out his hand in his pretty, friendly way, and the Squire took it rather gingerly.

"And pray, what were you coming down to find me for?"

"I wanted to see if I could get a turkey," said Jackie, in his simple, direct little way. "To-morrow's Christmas, you know. I wanted to 'sprise mother. She's always 'sprising me, and she's so good—oh, you don't know how good mother is! There's only mother and me, and I thought—you see, it wouldn't be like as if you really gave me the turkey, for I'm going to pay for it soon as I'm big enough. You could hardly 'spect me to pay for it right now, could you? But when I'm big I'm going to have a farm of my own, and mother and me will live there and I'll have ever so many cattle and horses and things. Mother says grandfather had a farm like that. Grandfather was mother's father, you know. And mother had a little pony—she called it Trix—and she used to ride it all over when she was a little, little girl. Just think! Having a pony all for yourself!"

He looked up with sparkling eyes, and the Squire smiled beneath his scowl.

"Did your mother ever tell you anything else about your—grandfather?" he [illegible], meeting the little fellow's frank [illegible] with a keen glance.

"[illegible] doesn't say much about him," [illegible] Jackie. "I think he must be [illegible] too bad, isn't it? But"— [illegible] over to the turkeys again, [illegible] it out about the tur-[illegible]

[illegible] Squire, as if he had [illegible] "You can have [illegible] about the pay [illegible] bigger." [illegible] "Oh, thank [illegible] it now?" [illegible] Well

tin, half full of grain, and began to call in his big, deep voice, "Pe-ep, peep, peep, peep!" And all the turkeys stopped their strutting and ran after him into the pen. Then Jackie ran and shut the door, and in a very little while the Squire came out with a big gobbler hanging head downwards in his hand.

"I guess I'd better leave it here just now," said Jackie. "I'll come over for it in the evening. I've just 'membered I promised mother I'd be back soon. Or, perhaps, you might bring it over yourself. You would see mother then. I'd like you to see mother."

"All right," said the Squire again, looking down at the brave little figure with a curious feeling at his heart.

"Well, good morning, then," said Jackie, turning to go. "I think you are the nicest man I ever saw—'cept father," and he ran down the lane to the big gate.

As he mounted it, he looked back and waved his hand, and the grim old man standing on the steps felt a strange little thrill, half pride and half something else he did not understand, as he returned the pretty salute. He passed the back of his rough, old hand across his fierce, old eyes and muttered, "Poor Margaret! She was a good little girl, if it hadn't been for that scamp Darcy! The boy looks like him, too—more like him than Margaret."

Meanwhile, mother and Jackie were having their dinner. Mother sat at one side of the little, round, white table, and Jackie at the other. Mother wore her pretty pink woolen house dress, and looked just like a sweet pea, Jackie said. Jackie had just finished his story about the Squire and the turkey, and mother's face was all pink and her brown eyes looked big and bright, like's if there were tears in them.

"O, Jackie," she said, "you dear little son! What would mother do without her little man to manage things!"

* * * * * * * *

Mother was laying the cloth for supper. Jackie was looking out of the window. It had begun to snow—big, heavy flakes that fell softly, silently, in the gathering twilight. Suddenly Jackie gave a glad little cry.

"Here he comes, mother, turkey and all! I can just see him through the snow."

Jackie ran to the door and threw it open. The Squire came slowly up the path, like a great snow man, with a bundle under his arm.

"Come in," called Jackie, cheerily, and the Squire stepped into the narrow doorway, all covered with snow from head to foot.

"You look just like Santa Claus," said Jackie, smiling up at him. "Hadn't you better come in and shake yourself? Mother, this is the Squire."

Mother came forward with her hand out; her face white and smiling in a queer, nervous way.

"I am very glad to see you—Squire," she said, "and thank you."

Jackie looked anxiously at the Squire. Something must be wrong. Mother seemed ill. Then the queerest thing happened. The Squire opened his arms with a little choking cry. "Margaret!" And mother ran to him and put both her arms about his neck, and cried in her sweet, tremulous voice, "O, father, father, can you ever forgive me?" And all the while Jackie stood holding the handle of the door, and staring with big, round eyes at the mother, the Squire, and the bundle of turkey that had fallen to the floor.

Then mother took down her arms and turned to Jackie with such a happy look on her face that he was almost afraid.

"This is your grandfather, Jackie," she said. "My father, darling. Come and kiss him, dear."

Jackie went up and put both his arms round the Squire's neck, just as mother had done, and kissed him gravely on the cheek.

"I am glad we found you, grandfather," he said. "You must stay for supper."

Jackie thought that was the nicest supper he had ever eaten. He and mother and the Squire all sat round the little white table in the pretty, cozy kitchen, and everybody laughed, Jackie most of all, and then he found out how the Squire came to be his grandfather.

It seemed that long ago, most likely before he was born, mother had run away from grandfather to marry father. Grandfather couldn't have liked father very well because he was poor. Well, when mother married father, grandfather was very angry, and said a great many things. Then when father died, mother had come right back to her old home and rented the little cottage on grandfather's estate, and grandfather had pretended not to know her, because, you see, he was not over being angry yet. And then, it seemed, when Jackie asked for the turkey, he had got sorry all at once, and now they were all so happy. And mother and Jackie were going to live with grandfather up in the big stone house, and they could have turkey every day, grandfather said. And Jackie concluded gravely, "and we've got a turkey for Christmas, mother, and a grandfather, too!"—Montreal Star.

Old Ideas About Christmas.

Even as late as 1753 there was some doubt as to the exact date of Christmas, the old count bringing it to the 5th of January, the new count giving us the 25th of December, which is "the day we celebrate." In Devonshire, England, it is believed that if the sun shines at noon on Christmas day a plentiful crop may be looked for in the following year.

The Thoughtful Giraffe.

The absurd old long-legged giraffe [illegible] laugh. [illegible]

PREPARING THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

THE MYSTIC MISTLETOE.

Once a Feature of Pagan Rites, It Now Belongs to Lovers.

From time immemorial the white berried mistletoe has played a leading part in Yuletide festivities, though it has not always conveyed the osculatory privileges which give it its value in the eyes of the romantic youth of to-day. Like so many other features of the Christmas celebration, mistletoe has been borrowed from the pagans of antiquity and Christianized by the lapse of centuries. The Persians before the birth of Christ used the mistletoe in their sacred rites, and in parts of India pagan priests still incorporate it in their ritual. It figures largely in Scandinavian mythology. Baldur, the son of Odin, though a demigod, was slain by a spear of mistletoe, a proof of its magic powers.

It is from the Druids of old England, however, that mistletoe has come to us. The Druidical priests, sprung, it is said, from the magi of the east, the wise men who worshiped at the cradle of the infant Savior, held the mistletoe as their most sacred possession, and the cutting of the pretty parastie from the oak, the tree which the Druids claimed God loved more than any other, was attended with the greatest solemnity. On the Druids' festival day a grand procession, leading two white oxen, moved to the mystic grove. There the oxen were fastened to the oak by their horns, and a white robed priest climbed into the leafless branches and cut the bunches of mistletoe with a golden knife. The oxen were then sacrificed and religious services performed, after which the procession returned to the temple in the forest and the mistletoe was deposited in the Druidical arcanum.

Besides taking its place in the religious observances of the Druids, the mistletoe, which the priests gave a name meaning "all healing," was made into many curious decoctions by processes in which times and seasons and incantations were supposed to add to its mysterious powers. These medicines were regarded as cures for human ills generally.

With the advance of civilization and the death of superstition mistletoe has lost its religious character, but not its popularity, and the forests of England and of our own Southern States are as eagerly frequented by mistletoe gatherers as ever were the dark woods of the ancient Druids.

Real Lessons of Christmas.

There can be no real love for God which is unattended with love for man. The final test of a Christian love is not the worship of God, but always the love of man for man. If the message of him whose birth we celebrate at Christmas teaches us one thing above all others, it is not that we shall try to do for Him as a person, but that we shall seek to do for one another. That is knowing Jesus and clearly understanding Him.

And whenever this true conception of His life and teaching is reached, there we find men and women thrilled with the passion of giving. The little child wakes on Christmas morning with his heart filled to overflowing with gladness, and by every gift in stocking, or beside cradle or bed, is taught anew the old, old lesson of love. Husband and wife, brother and sister, lover and sweetheart, friend and friend, as they receive their gifts are reminded once more that love is not a dream, but a reality—and a reality which grows more vital, more precious and more enduring with years.

The sick, in chair or in bed, as they open their Christmas packages are almost reconciled to loneliness and pain. The friendless, the poor, the outcast, the waifs on the street; those who have sinned and seem shut out from God and from man, all begin to feel a strange thrill of hope and renewed aspiration as they are taken up and enfolded in the richness and fullness of the Divine love as it comes to them through human love or attention on Christmas day. That is knowing Christmas in its highest and noblest sense; in its truest conception; knowing it in that spirit from which we derive the surest happiness.—Edward Bok.

Santa Claus' Workshop.

Probably every child in the land has wondered where Santa Claus prepares the stores of knicknacks that he annually distributes throughout the length and breadth of the world. He must be a busy old man, indeed, to make so many things that delight the young of every clime. What is known as Santa Claus' workshop is situated in the very heart of the Black forest of Germany, that region about which so many tales of peril and adventure have been written. For two centuries or more Sonneberg, a picturesque little village surrounded by mountains and dense forests, has been known to the world as the workshop of the good saint of childhood. Here it is that most of the finest playthings of the Christmas season are produced—dolls, soldiers, houses, animals and all sorts of gaudily colored trinkets.

"THE CHRISTMAS PRESENCE."

Seasonable Thought for All Who Love Christmas Season.

I couldn't seem to contemplate a continuous Christmas of peace, nowadays, when suddenly I seemed to see the words befo' me all greatly spelled. Instid of "e-n-t-s" I saw "e-n-c-e," an' right befo' my speritual vision I saw, like skywritin', "The Christmas Presence"—thess so.

Maybe it won't strike you, but it was a great thought to me, doctor, an' "Christmas all the year" had a new sound to my ears.

Think of that, doctor—of livin' along in the azurine blue, beholdin' the face of the Little One of the manager by the near light of the Bethlehem star! Or maybe seein' the Beloved leanin' on a pillar of clouds, illuminatin' our listenin' faces with the gleam of His countenance while He'd maybe repeat the Sermon on the Mount from the book of His Eternal memory. Think of what an author's readin' that would be—an' what an audience!

An' it's this Christmas Presence thet inspires all our lovin' thoughts here below, whether we discern it or not.

An' what we'll get on the other side'll be realization—a clair vision with all the mists of doubt dissolved.

This is the thought thet come to me yesterday, doctor, out o' the cyclone of playful good will thet got me so rattled. An' it's come to stay.

An' with it, how sweet it will be to set an' wait, with a smile to welcome the endurin' Christmas thet'll last "all the year" an' forever.—Century.

On Christmas Giving.

Where any uncertainty exists let us give as a token of love, or friendship, or human kindness, something that, while expressing these things, will, at least, be harmless. Let it be something that does not last—that brings the meaning and vanishes—something that never will know the indignity of the top shelf of the spare room closet!

A knock at a friend's door on Christmas morning and the clasp of a hand do this. A growing plant does it. Yes, the loaf of bread, the jug of wine—but, most of all, thou beside me, singing in the wilderness—the personal revelation does it. Suppose a letter came on Christmas morning, to say—not "you are perfectly dear to have sent me a spool box," but "I want you to know that your patience, or courage, or tenderness, during this last year, will help me to live more bravely and courageously and lovingly this next year!" What a Christmas present the receipt of such a letter would be to any one of us, how we would take heart to live ourselves! what a Christmas present for any one of us to send to the human heart that has given us courage for the burden and heat of the day!—Harper's Bazar.

Christmas Bills.

The Christmas bills
Give dad the chills;
He'll never climb
The heavenly hills
Nor wear the angels'
Wings an' frills
Because o' them
Same Christmas bills!
—Atlanta Constitution.

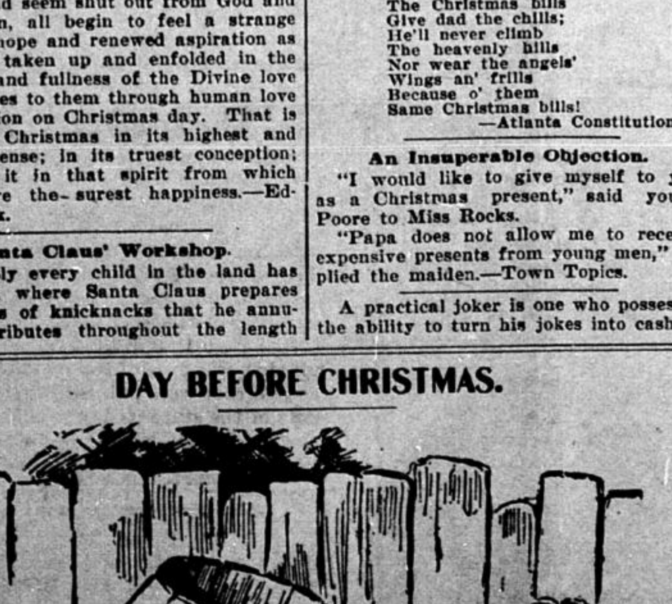
An Insuperable Objection.

"I would like to give myself to you as a Christmas present," said young Poore to Miss Rocks.

"Papa does not allow me to receive expensive presents from young men," replied the maiden.—Town Topics.

A practical joker is one who possesses the ability to turn his jokes into cash.

DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS.



Mrs. Turkey—What is your greatest wish?

BOBBIE'S CHRISTMAS PRAYER.

"Dod b'ess all the family dear;
Dod b'ess mamma, papa, too;
Dod b'ess 'ittle sister Fan—
An' bring me a sled, nice an' new.

"Dod b'ess all the chil'ren poor,
An' make all the sick folks well;
An' dear Dod, p'ease don't forget
To send a pony, big an' swell.

"Dod be gracious to your lambs,
An' keep sin out of my life;

Dod b'ess all my 'ittle frien's—
An' p'ease don't forget a fife.

"An' Dod b'ess ole Santa Claus,
He is such a sprendid man!
An' tell him to not forget
To bring a gun, too, if he can.

"An' a box of marbles, too,
An' a lot of picture books—
An' a toolchest full of tools,
Wif tacks, nails, screws, an' hooks.

"An' dear Dod, some other fings
To fill in corners wif, you know,
Ginger cakes an' nuts an' figs
An' a lot of candy, too.

"An' I wouldn't mind some skates,
(I'll give my ole ones to some 'frien')
An' I reckon dis is all—
So dood-night, dear Dod, amen."
—Detroit Free Press.

Talbot's Christmas

BY FRANCIS HART.

"JAMES," said Gerry Talbot suddenly, looking up from the letter he had just received, "you needn't mind about the rest. The dinner will not come off, after all."

The decorated end of the big, sumptuous studio looked oddly distasteful to Gerry Talbot since the reading of Miss Wakefield's telegram, which had shattered his enthusiastic plans. He had invited her—and her brother and his wife—to a Christmas studio dinner which he meant to make as festive as possible. Of course, her rejection at the last hour had been a gentle invention prepared to avert a greater disappointment, for he had let her know unmistakably how it was with him, and he had been so hopeful of success that he had selected a ring for her Christmas gift—a little golden circlet set with a clear white solitaire.

* * * * * * *

The streets were thronged with bustling Christmas shoppers, glad of heart, with merry, expectant faces, and here and there a wistful one, too, looking on, but not buying. Talbot noticed two little girls gazing wistfully into a confectioner's window.

"Yes, Min, I would. I'd do it fust thing," said the taller of the two. "Oh, my, wouldn't it be nice to be rich an' invite all your friends to a big turkey an' ice cream dinner!"

They were very poorly clad, thin-featured and ill-nourished, but not unpleasant to look at. Talbot was conscious, all at once, of an inexplicable impulse to gratify the child's wish.

"So you would really like to give your friends a Christmas dinner!" said he, smiling down at her astonished eyes. "I have a great mind to let you have your wish."

"Oh, dear me, Min!" gasped Lou. "I can't hardly believe it, can you? It sounds just like a make-believe thing. Won't Mis' Posey be s'prised! An' Jonas an' Meg an' Tom. Oh, won't they be jest too pleased!"

"How many shall you invite?" Talbot asked gravely, taking out his notebook.

"Well, there's Aunt Katie an' Uncle Tim an' the baby. Mis' Posey, Jonas Boggs, Meg an' Pat Fooley—Min, can you think of anyone else?"

"Lame Betsy an' Moll."

"How many's that?" asked Lou.

"Twelve, counting us three."

"Don't you think it would be nice to have a little present beside each plate?" asked Talbot.

Both girls gasped, but looked immensely pleased.

"Suppose you two go round with me and pick out what you consider suitable for each of your guests, because I should not know what to select."

When Lou appeared at the studio on the following morning she was a very different looking girl, and any one would have known by the pure joy of her voice that some great and festive event was at hand. Talbot had finished the decorations which had been so harshly interrupted by Miss Wakefield's message, and the result was extremely gratifying, especially after Lou's rapturous acclamations.

At precisely 12 o'clock the bell rang for the first time to announce the arrival of Aunt Katie and Tim and the baby, all polished and prinked to the verge of painfulness. Next came Mis' Posey, a little, faded, bowed, ancient woman in rusty black, with long gold loops in her wrinkled ears. Lame Betty thumped in on her crutches, closely followed by Moll, in borrowed finery, of various sizes. Meg brought blind Jonas, and a merry little wraith of a man called Tom Doom.

Talbot shook hands all around with a "Merry Christmas!" after which they all took their places at the beautiful table, the like of which none of that humble party had ever looked upon. But it was a kindly madness that possessed the host of that bountiful dinner, for his stories were of the pleasantest and his watchful care was unflagging. His guests rewarded his efforts by a spontaneous enjoyment of all that was set before them. It was good to see them wait upon blind Jonas, who could not help himself, and upon lame Betty, whose crippled hands made difficult the use of knife and fork.

Talbot rose to replenish a half-emptied plate as the hall bell thrilled merrily. There was a pause; then James' quiet, well-trained voice said: "Yes, madam;

The door swung inward. Talbot knew that he was not dreaming when she came toward him with outstretched hands and a ripple of explanation of which he heard not one word. Indeed, to him one isolated fact filled the world—that she was smiling up at him with a great promise in her eyes.

"A little friend of mine wanted to give her friends a Christmas dinner, and I persuaded her to let me share it," he explained jauntily. "It has been a great treat to me."

Miss Wakefield read the whole truth for herself as she looked into the good, homely faces that reflected their host's praises in every glance. She said nothing, but her eyes told what Talbot would have given all he possessed to hear from her lips. Then Mr. Wakefield and his wife ventured in, and Talbot bethought himself to ask if they had dined, which they had not.

Lou and Talbot made room for three plates here and there, and as there was a plenty of crullers and turkey and icet cream, all went well to the very end of the function, when the eleven originally invited gzuests rose and made their adieus with glad hearts and beaming faces.

Miss Wakefield stood before the grate while her brother and his wife examined a row of pictures half hidden behind the holly wreaths.

"I was so sorry to disappoint you yesterday," she said, "but poor Ted's telegram was so urgent that we were afraid he was worse, and hadn't the heart to refuse him. When I discovered that we could take an early train home I made up my mind to run in and wish you a Merry Christmas, anyway, and so we came, you see."

Talbot thought of the ring. He had taken it from its hiding place. "For a long while I have wanted to ask you to accept this—and what goes with it," he said simply, holding the glittering bauble toward her.

A red glow crept into her face. She made no audible answer, but when the young couple at the other end of the room sauntered toward them they were smiling.

CHRISTMAS TREE FIRES.

How the Danger of Parlor Conflagrations May Be Minimized.

Several accidents on Christmas eve and day each year recall the fact, apparent only on that day, that the Christmas tree is quite as dangerous as it is pretty, and that the proud father personating Santa Claus should take the precaution to equip himself with asbestos whiskers. About the usual number of fires are recorded in the country each year as a result of the inflammable nature of the Christmas tree and its decorations and their careless handling.

This warning always follows Christmas just as the outcry against toy pistols is raised after the Fourth of July. Of course no rose is free from thorns, and apparently no holiday can be observed in the conventional fashion without risk of accident to the merrymakers. Sputtering candles on a Christmas tree are a very real danger, and the same may be said of the trees themselves, the wreaths of evergreen and the mistletoe. After a day or two they become dry and inflammable to a high degree, and in the joy of the celebration risks are run and precautions neglected. A tree thus loaded down with presents and decorations may become in an instant a torch capable of starting a disastrous fire, as many cities discovered the other day, to their great cost and to the serious discomfort of their fire departments.

By taking preventive measures thousands of dollars will be saved every year. Trees should be bought late and kept out doors until used. In the case of fresh, green trees the risk will be minimized. Candles should not be too close together and should be constantly watched. Above all, a wet blanket should be at hand, also a sponge on a pole long enough to reach any point of the trees or ceiling. So, at least, say the fire fighters, who every year have their own Christmas spoiled by the neglect of these very obvious precautions.

CHRISTMAS IN SWEDEN.

One Day When There Are Neither Rich Nor Poor.

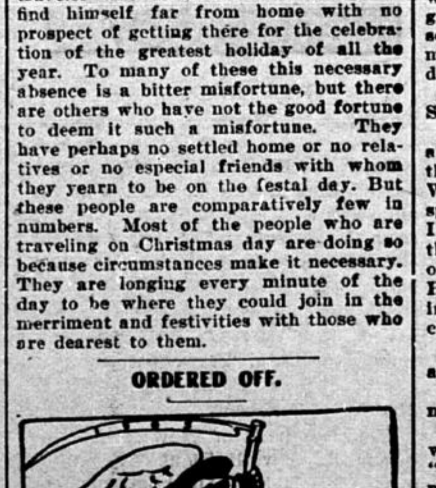
If you were in Sweden on Christmas eve you would hear the church bells begin to ring at 5 o'clock, for everybody stops work then and the festivities begin in great earnest everywhere in the kingdom. Class distinctions are forgotten and servants are allowed to sit at table with the family. After supper comes the universal Christmas tree, for Sweden is one of the early homes of this beautiful custom.

On Christmas morning at 6 o'clock, while it is still dark, you would go to church, for everybody goes, unless you stayed at home to mind the lights in the house, for every home in the kingdom is illuminated. There is almost sure to be a deep snow, and you would go to church in a sleigh. Behind every sleigh you would see two boys standing on the runners and holding pine torches—a beautiful spectacle as a long procession of sleighs glides over the snow on a forest road. These torches are stuck up in a circle around the church. A whole week is given to good cheer and hospitality.

The Christmas Traveler.

When Christmas day dawns many a traveler will be unfortunate enough to find himself far from home with no prospect of getting there for the celebration of the greatest holiday of all the year. To many of these this necessary absence is a bitter misfortune, but there are others who have not the good fortune to deem it such a misfortune. They have perhaps no settled home or no relatives or no especial friends with whom they yearn to be on the festal day. But these people are comparatively few in numbers. Most of the people who are traveling on Christmas day are doing so because circumstances make it necessary. They are longing every minute of the day to be where they could join in the merriment and festivities with those who are dearest to them.

ORDERED OFF.



The New Year—You'll have to move [illegible]

THE BETHLEHEM STAR.

The Bethlehem Star! The Guiding Star
Of Old Judeah's night.
Has it become a faded scar
Across the Orient night?—
The guess of Science, and the guess
Of critic, seer, and sage?
Has it the dimmer grown, or less
For change of clime and age?

Star of the East!—it is not set;
Though Science scout the sky,
'Tis burning in the heaven yet,
As bright and sure and high
As when the Shepherds saw it flame
Over Old Bethlehem,
And followed it until it came
And showed a Christ to them.

The Bethlehem Star—each mother sees
Its holy promise-light.
Believing each its destinies
Her darling's, in the night;
Believing each the little star
Is set above her son
To light her mother-hopes that are,
And shine when hers are done.

The Bethlehem Star! The Guiding Star
That hovers full and clear
Wherever babe and cradle are,
And parents watching near;
Wherever cherub lips of love
Bring tidings of great joy,
Where'er a mother bends above
Her darling first-born boy!
—Aloysius Coll, in Designer.

A CHRISTMAS SOUVENIR.

BY FRANK H. SWEET.

MRS. BIGELOW STEVENS was walking slowly on Ormond Beach, gazing listlessly at the white sand dunes or out across the sea, and occasionally pausing to pick up a shell, which she was almost sure to cast aside indifferently a moment later. She was stopping at the Ormond, and a carriage was now waiting her signal at a notch in the dunes which marked the road. On the sand ridge above the road was the Coquina Hotel, isolated and lacking paint, but having a reputation for good viands and excellent table service. It was popular with those who desired quiet and bathing, and there were even now a number enjoying the surf just as though it were not the day before Christmas, and along the beach between then and the hotel were a dozen or more children, some playing in the water and some in the sand.

Mrs. Bigelow Stevens paused, and gazed at them with dimming eyes. She had lost her own little girl but a few months before, and for that reason she was here; not to forget, but to find new scenes to awaken her interest. Presently a child of five or six separated from her companions, and came racing up the beach in pursuit of a hat which was rolling merrily along before a gust of wind. Mrs. Stevens reached out her parasol and intercepted the runaway.

"Thank you!" gasped the little girl, out of breath, but looking up with a roguish smile on her bright face. "I shall whip it when I get home." Then, instead of returning to her companions, she grasped a finger of her new friend. "May I walk with you?" she asked, beginning to swing along as though the permission was granted.

She was silent for some minutes, her lips tremulous with recollections of the past, and during that time the little girl made excursions from her finger to investigate escaping crabs and curious shells, and even the last efforts of waves that sent long lines of shallow water curving up toward their feet. At length Mrs. Stevens' lips grew firmer, and she looked down.

"I suppose your mother is here," she said.

The child in her turn became grave. "I haven't any mamma," she answered; "and my papa doesn't walk with me like he used to." She hesitated a little, and then went on, with childish frankness: "He—he talks loud to me sometimes, and his face gets red, and—and he strikes me. I don't have anybody to play with now."

That evening Mr. Stevens was looking over some new curiosities he had purchased. He did not care much for such things, but this winter he was trying to cultivate an enthusiasm for them in hope of interesting his wife.

"There are some really fine Florida sketches in that studio in the new block," he said, presently, looking up from a nautilus shell he had been examining. "One of them will make a nice souvenir of Ormond. However, if you do not care for them, you may select anything else you like. This year I am going to give you two presents—my usual one and one of your own choosing as an Ormond souvenir." He turned back to his shell, only to raise his head again quickly. "By the way, I forgot to tell you about a man I met on the street to-day. You remember Seaton, the bookkeeper, who ran away with $2,000?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was he, but so changed I hardly recognized him. In his case, crime has certainly proved its own punishment. Two years ago he was reckless, but was very scrupulous about his personal apearance; now he is only a slovenly, red-faced toper." Mr. Stevens paused, and ran his fingers through his hair in an irritable, disgusted sort of way. "It isn't the man I care for," he grumbled, "but a fellow of his stamp seems to drag so much good into the mire with him. Fortunately his wife is dead, but there is a child left."

"Did you have him arrested?" Mrs. Stevens asked.

"No; what was the use?" a little apologetically. "He has gone through the money—and through himself almost. When he saw me he was too scared to speak, and just stood there trembling. I asked a few questions and found that the money was all gone and that he owed a month's board at the Coquina. He even confessed that he was thinking of running away and leaving the child."

"How old is the child?" Mrs. Stevens asked, eagerly.

"Oh, five or six; and she is a very nice little girl."

Mrs. Stevens rose from her chair with an unwonted light in her eyes. "Yes, she is a nice little girl. Now may I hold you to your word, and take whatever I like for my present—my Christmas souvenir?"

"Why, certainly, dear," with glad tenderness, as he detected the new interest in her eyes and voice, "whatever you like."

"Then I will take the little girl to be our own."

He half rose in his astonishment, but the look on her face prevented even the appearance of expostulation. "Very well, dear," he said; "we will go for her in the morning."—Farm and Fireside.

Christmas the Real Turkey Day.

Christmas, not Thanksgiving, is the real turkey day. Last Christmas Uncle Sam's nephews and nieces took care of about 1,500,000 more turkeys than they did on Thanksgiving.