There's going to be a railroad up in Iceland,
In Iceland,
And what a funny railroad it will be!
I would never think of Iceland as a nice land,
A nice land,
For week ends at a cottage by the sea.
For the trains will very likely go on runners like a sleigh,
And they'll harness up the engine in a jingle bells array.
At least, I cant' imagine it in any other way,
In Iceland,

You won't need your thermometers in Iceland,
In Iceland,
And you won't have any fretful vis a vis;
For up there in that anything but spice land,
But spice land,
The cars are always cold as they can be.
Oh, they'll have to dig the sleepers out a dozen times a day,
Or perhaps they'll tunnel through the great big icebergs in the bay,
And that will be just bully till the icebergs move away,
In Iceland,

A journey will be jolly up in Iceland,
In Iceland,
The scenery's so wonderful to see;
It will seem like nothing short of paradise land,
Paradise land,
As the open cars go whirling o'er the lea.
They won't have any schedule so there'll never be delay,
The rates will be so low that almost anyone can pay,
For in that curious climate it is Christmas every day,
In Iceland.

Little Baby Beth

By Caroline H. Stanley.

IT was New Year's eve. Downstairs in the parlor was Baby Beth's Christmas tree, just as it had been arranged a week ago—bisque doll, toys, glittering balls, marvelous sugar dogs and bears and "elphunts," candy apples and hearts, popcorn, colored tapers just ready to be lighted—and upstairs Baby Beth was dying. All week long, with the fierceness of a tigress fighting for her young, Margaret Thorne had fought for her child's life. From the moment that the first hoarse cough smote upon her ear and Beth had said, "Mamma, it hurts me here when I toff," she had lost no time. All that doctors, nurses, servants, friends—mother love—could do had been done, and now in her darkened chamber the mother sat with her baby on her knees and waited. Toward night a change had come. The harsh cough ceased, the panting breath came more quietly.

"Didn't she seem easier?" she had asked, and the doctor had answered briefly, "Yes." Then, after an interval of waiting, "Wasn't her breathing less labored?" The doctor made no reply.

"Doctor," piteously, "don't you think she is better?"

Dr. Lemoyne turned away. He had practiced many years, and witnessed many a scene like this, but to his kind heart each one was new.

"My child," he said, "she will never be any better—she is dying."

Margaret Thorne made no outcry, shed no tear—she would have "to-morrow and all after life for tears," to-day she had—her baby. She bent over the child and half stretched out her arms with the impulse to take her and go somewhere—anywhere—away from everybody. It was the instinct of the wounded animal. Then she fell into the monotonous swinging motion of the knees, familiar to mothers, patting her little one softly the while as if she were putting her to sleep.

It was heart-breaking. The women to whom the child was only a dear little baby who "would be better off in heaven," as the phrase goes, crept about the room weeping softly with aching hearts. After a time Margaret looked up.

"Doctor," she asked, "how long?"

"I can hardly tell," he answered, "but only a few hours at best, I think."

She turned to the women.

"Send for her father," she said briefly.

There was a slight stir of surprise. Significant glances passed from one to another behind her bowed head. Then they went out to do her bidding.

The message was quickly sent and as quickly answered. The case brooked no delay. Margaret Thorne heard the familiar step in the hall, then in the room below. A moment later he came in. The women spoke to him in the sympathetic key of the sick room and the doctor silently wrung his hand. Margaret looked up with a slight movement of the head, but did not offer him her hand.

"Margaret," he said, "it was very good of you to send for me."

"It was only right," she said, her voice hardening in her efforts to steady it; "she is your child, too."

He made no effort at conversation, and so they sat, the silence of death upon them. It grew oppressive. The women, one by one, stole out of the room, and the doctor finally muttered something about going into the library to lie down, telling them to call him if there should be any change. The two were left alone with the dying child.

It was a strange scene. Each held a baby hand; each with a burden of grief unutterable bent over the little form and watched the flickering life go out; and each shut up and double-locked and bolted the heart that the other should not know what was therein. They were but a hand's breadth apart, but between them was a great gulf fixed.

John Thorne had not seen his child since that never-to-be-forgotten day when he gave her and his home into Margaret's hands and went forth alone. How he had longed for a sight of the baby face, for a touch of the baby hands, none but himself would ever know. But he had been too proud to ask to see her, and Margaret had said in bitter scorn, "It is the way of the sex. A woman would never have forgotten her own child." And she had clasped Beth passionately to her heart and cried out, "I will be father and mother both to you, my baby, my poor, forsaken baby."

As he bent over her now, all his heart in his eyes, a strange feeling of doubt began tugging at her heart. Had he really loved the child like this? Uncomfortable regrets took possession of her. Could she have misjudged him? She might have sent Beth to see him occasionally, it seemed to her now, when she had her all the time. He had been more generous than she.

She glanced furtively at him. He rested his head on his right hand, his left clasping Beth's. His eyes were fixed on the child as if he would in these few moments left feast his famished heart upon that which had been so long withheld. Something in his position made Margaret think of one other night when they had sat like this and watched Beth through the croup, and how they had felt that if God would only spare her they could have nothing in life to trouble them again. How gentle and tender John had been that night!

And then there was the time that Beth was burned and John had walked with her the whole night long and would not even let the mother rest him, because "she was weak and he was strong," he had said. How the memories came thronging upon her! Oh, if she could only wake and find that this year had been a dream—a horrible dream—and there had been no quarrel!

The clock ticked on, the fire sputtered fitfully, but the silence of the vigil was unbroken. John Thorne raised his head and looked at Margaret as she lay with closed eyes. Her white, suffering face touched his heart. How much older she looked. It was only four years since she had stood a bride of nineteen and given herself to him. Why, could it be only four years? It seemed like an eternity.

The breath comes slowly. The little hands are very still, and yet, O baby fingers, through the solemn watches of this night, thou'rt gathering up the tangled, broken threads of these two lives, and with a touch no other hand might use, art weaving them together, deftly, surely, with heaven-sent skill!

There was a slight stir. The mother and father felt a quiver pass through the little form. With startled faces they bent over her. There was a gasp, a sudden throwing up of the little hands—then all was still.

In an instant his arms were around her, her head on his breast.

"Margaret, my wife!"

"O John, John!" she said.

The clock struck twelve. A New Year had dawned.

* * * * * * *

In the twilight of a summer day a man and woman stand beside a little grave. There is an air of subdued sadness about them that tells to whom the little mound belongs, and yet when they speak it is hopefully and cheerfully. It is a tiny grave—"only a baby," a stranger would say—but we who have stood beside such know that love and grief are not measured by feet and inches.

The glory of the setting sun fills the place. It lights up the faces of father and mother as they lay, with loving hands, forget-me-nots upon the green turf, and then, hand in hand, go forth. A stray sunbeam falls across the white stone. We stoop to read the inscription. It is a very simple one:

BABY BETH.
AGED THREE.

"And a little child shall lead them."
—The Housewife.

Tommy Got One.

Tommy (on Christmas morning)—Where does Santa Claus get all his stuff, mamma?

Mamma—Oh, he buys it.

Tommy—Well, he must be a jay to let anyone palm off a tin watch on him!—Town Topics.

LET'S KEEP SANTA CLAUS.

Memory of Happy Days of Long Ago Protects St. Nick.

THE memory of happy days long ago should ever protect Santa Claus. When your boy looks you squarely in the eye and says: "Papa, Clarence McGuffy said there isn't any Santa Claus and I punched him, for I know there is," what are you going to do? Forgive the blow and cling to a happy myth or destroy your boy's faith in Santa Claus, and, incidentally in a good many other things he believes in, but doesn't understand?

"Why discuss the matter at all?" is a natural question. Because it is a question that always arises at Christmas time. An Eastern preacher is discussing it from the pulpit and holds that deceit is sin and that the truth and only the truth is the best steady diet for both young and old.

The man or woman who would take from a child his sublime faith in a Mysterious Being, who rewards all the good children and skips the bad ones on his annual tour of countless chimneys, has a shriveled heart. We want more happiness; not less. We need more good influences in the lives of our children, not fewer. Nothing but good ever came from the Santa Claus Myth. He is a glorious ghost, a delicious impossibility, is this friend of the children. He teaches kindness, charity, goodness. He inspires and encourages. He brightens the lives of millions of little ones with the joy of anticipation and the gladness of receiving. He is a companion of brownies and elves and fairies, and flowers that speak.

When we abolish Merry Old St. Nick lets burn all the story books, the fairy tales, and all the make-believes that wield an influence for good in the lives of children. But Santa Claus is in no danger, for if the children love him, so do the parents. Memory of happy days of long ago protects him. A century hence he will be making his rounds and laughing, with the children, at those who would destroy him.—Cincinnati Post.

Strange Origin of Christmas Tree.

Most of us know that the Christmas tree comes to us direct from Germany. And we know of the tree worship of the Druids which obtained in England and France, and which probably had some influence on the later use of the tree in the Christian festival. But we do not all know that a similar festival with the tree as a crowning feature is observed among many heathen nations, and that it comes from sun worship, which is older than history. The revival of the sun after the winter solstice has ever been the subject of rejoicing and of celebration by ceremonies which represent the new light brought back to the world. Our tree, with its small candles, its gilded knicknacks and toys for the children, is a direct descendant of this old festival in honor of the sun.

Traces of it exist in Iceland, where the "service tree" is found adorned with burning lights during Christmas night. The English yule log is a faint survival of this festival. But it is beyond these that I wish to draw your attention, back further even than the Druid mysteries of the Gallic forests. It is to China, that home of all wonders and of all history. It has been shown that as long ago as 247 B. C. a tree with a hundred lamps and flowers was placed on the steps of the audience hall. This appears again in the records of Princess Yang, who lived 713-755 A. D., and who caused a hundred-lamp tree eighty feet high to be erected on a mountain. It was lighted during New Year's night, and the illumination was seen for hundreds of miles, eclipsing the light of the moon. This candle tree is no longer lighted in China, being replaced by an unusual number of lanterns, which are hung everywhere. A suggestion of the tree, however, still survives in Japan. At the New Year two evergreen trees are placed without, on either side of the door. Their tops are tied together with the sacred band of straw, and various objects, dried lobsters and oranges are fastened to their branches.—Woman's Home Companion.

CHRISTMAS IN DIXIE.

A Quaint Custom the Survival of Slavery Days.

In some parts of the South, notably Alabama, the observance of Christmas is kept up after the manner of slavery days. Two weeks before the festival brawny colored men in the employ of the plantation owner search out a timber tract, fell the tree of greatest size, cut off the trunk where the circumference is greatest, big enough to admit of it filling the space of the open hearth, fasten heavy chains to it by driving in spikes, haul it to the nearest river or pond, sink it and anchor it well below the surface. On Christmas eve it is drawn up, taken to the owner's mansion and in the presence of his family, relatives and friends the dripping log is placed on a roaring fire in the hearth. To reduce the water-soaked wood to ashes is a slow process and sometimes a week elapses before this is accomplished. In the meantime the plantation darkies do not work while the incineration is in progress. On Christmas eve the hostess serves the company with eggnog and she supplies them with eatables while the log sizzles in the fire place. The banjo and guitar are brought into play and the old melodies are sung and jigs and other dances are gone through with zest. The white folks take a hand in the fun making, too, and with song and story make the colored folks happy. At some of these gatherings 300 persons take part, the old, capacious mansion giving ample room for all.

Curious Custom of Oxfordshire.

In some places in Oxfordshire, England, it was the right of every maid servant to ask the hired man for a bit of ivy to trim the house. If he turned a deaf ear to her importunities or forgot her request she would steal a pair of his breeches and nail them to the gate in the yard or on the highway. This was supposed to debar him from all privileges of the mistletoe.

Easy to Be Happy.

Mrs. Nexdoor—Aren't you always worried half to death when it comes to buying a Christmas present for your husband?

Mrs. Sunshine—Mr, no! I buy my husband something I want for myself, and he buys me something he wants for himself, and then we trade.

Blow the trumpet, beat the drum,
Glad am I that Santa's come!

A CHRISTMAS CONCLUSION.

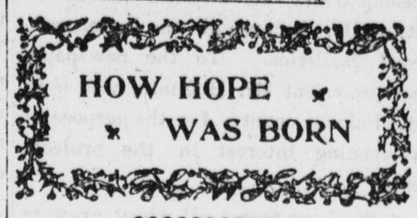
'Twas the day before Christmas, and all through the land,
Rang the cry of the children that none can withstand,
"Old Santa is coming, rare treasures he brings,
A pack loaded down with most wonderful things!"

But, old Santa, alas, like a mere mortal man,
To fret and to fume at his duties began—
For he had been roaming about in disguise,
And the state of affairs had caused him surprise.

For what do you think was the first thing he learned?
Why all the bad children to good ones had turned;
Gone all the ill tempers and cross, angry looks,
Devoted each child to his work and his books.

And he groaned as he said, "I plainly can see
On this Christmas Eve there's no shirking for me.
Not one naughty child in the whole merry flock,
'Tis plain I must work until five by the clock."

"But, my dear," said his wife, "you ought to be glad
That at last there's not left a child who is bad."
Said the saint, with a smile and a look that was queer,
"They ought to expect me each day in the year."
—Waverley Magazine.



THE night was a wild one. Such a night and such weather as only New England can inflict on suffering humanity. The dispensary was in darkness, save a light which gleamed from the windows of the resident physician's room.

Dr. Brown, the resident physician, had made a bad day of it, tramping through the snow, making his regular calls on the sick poor of his district. Now he found small comfort in his pipe as he sat by his little stove in the dispensary room.

Just now the young doctor suffered from an attack of the blues. He had worked hard, this last year, for his degree, and after graduation had been chosen from among 20 applicants for the post of resident at the dispensary. The position paid in experience and gave a wide field for work among the poor of the district, both at their homes and at the dispensary. The salary was chiefly salary in name, $100 a year and room rent free, not enough to cover expenses; but it was the experience to be gained that paid.

He had been a young man with expectations and had had matrimonial designs on a certain dainty young lady, and what hope was there for a poor dispensary doctor? Only that morning the wealthy Mr. Peabody, her pompous papa, had passed Dr. Brown on the street and had returned his polite "good morning" with a cold look, which seemed to say: "I do not wish to know you, sir." And that, too, when but a few years before the student Brown, with great expectations, had been a welcome guest at the Peabody mansion.

Society had gossiped that Dolly Peabody and Harvey Brown would make a match.

He had written once since that to Miss Dorothy and his letter had been returned to him unopened. The Peabodys had gone abroad and he had heard no more of them until to-day, when Mr. Peabody had given him the cut direct.

Dr. Brown had worked hard all day, had had a case at a slum tenement house that afternoon and had missed his supper at the boarding house. As he brooded over these things small wonder that the "blue devils" tormented him.

"Devil of a night out," mused the doctor. "Christmas eve, too! Hope I won't have a call out to-night. What an old duffer that Peabody is, anyway. Wonder if Dol—Miss Peabody would cut me like that? Hang it all! A man don't feel good to be frozen out like that just because he has lost his expectations. I thought I knew Dolly—dash it, I do know her! She wouldn't throw a fellow over like that. But why—hang it all, but I do feel empty; pity that boarding house couldn't keep open of a night once in awhile, and I'm broke, too. Well, there's no hope for me with her pater, that's sure!"

The electric bell over his head rang violently and Dr. Brown, stepping to the speaking tube, shouted: "Well, what wanted?"

"Say, be youse de doctor? Deys a swell bloke up de street wots all smashed up. Dey wants de doctor to get a wiggle on, see?"

A few minutes later Dr. Brown was stumbling through the storm in the wake of the small gamin who had summoned him. At the corner two men were holding a frightened horse, to which was hanging the remains of a broken harness. A little further on was an overturned cab, surrounded by a number of residents who had turned out in spite of the storm. They had just pulled from under the wheels an elderly gentleman, whose dress had stamped him as a "swell" with the gamin.

Dr. Brown was all professional in an instant, and superintended the carrying of the injured man to the dispensary, where he was placed on the doctor's own cot. Dr. Brown did not need to be told that this victim of a runaway cab was the same Mr. Peabody who had cut him on the street the morning of that same day.

In the doctor's room patient and physician had passed the night in silence, the doctor doing all in his power to soothe his patient, his personal feelings buried deeply under professional zeal.

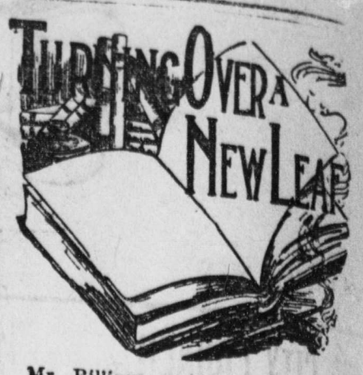
In the morning Mr. Peabody had made an attempt at conversation, but the doctor would not permit it.

The bell was ringing again and Dr. Brown hurried to open the door to Miss Peabody and her father's valet.

"You, Harvey, you?" Then, blushing like a rose: "Harvey, take me to papa." In another moment she was at her father's side.

But Dr. Brown was happy. She had said "Harvey!" Her eyes—well, only Dr. Brown knew what her eyes said.

As the patient was assisted to his carriage he said: "Dr. Brown, this is your case; I shall expect you to finish it, sir. Please call this evening."—Rocky Mountain News.



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

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

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

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

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

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

"What you talkin' about, 'Lisha? The twentieth century began a year ago. To-morrow'll be nineteen hundred an' one, won't it?"

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

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

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

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

"Well, s'pose he did."

"No, Jud," suggested Seth Gibson. "Here's the way I heard that feller up to the academy put it: How old is a man on his one-hundredth birthday?"

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

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

The Week Before.

'Tis the week before Christmas, and all through the place
Each woman goes shopping, with worn, weary face;
And held in her hand is a long, fearsome list
Of names that could simply by no means be missed—
So shopping, and shopping, and shopping they go
Bumped, shoved, pushed, and tangled in squad and in row.

'This the week before Christmas, and father is sad
Though mother and sisters are all of them glad.
Poor father reflects on the state of his wealth
And broods on expenses that tell on his health—
But once in the year come the glad Christmas Day;
The rest of the year's for poor father to pay.

'Tis the week before Christmas—and now the coy girl
Puts on her glad garments, adjusts her cute curl
And sends for the lover with whom she has fussed,
To tell him she knows he's the one she should trust,
And he—he forgives her. The gas is turned low—
And—this is the week before Christmas, you know.

'Tis the week before Christmas, and all through the home
The children are watched as they aimlessly roam,
And when they approach any wardrobe or chest
They are told they must stop—and obey the behest;
And O, the sweet children! So faithful are they
At Sunday school—Santa will come Christmas Day.

'Tis the week before Christmas, and all through the land
Each poet is toiling with pen in his hand
At work on the parody based on the rhyme
That somebody jingled out once on a time—
But where is the prophet who wishes to sing
The row that the week after Christmas will bring?
—W. D. Nesbit, in Chicago Tribune.

Plum Pudding.

One pound of grated bread, one and a quarter pounds of grated suet, one pound of raisins, one pound of brown sugar, twelve eggs, well beaten; two wineglassfuls of brandy, one-quarter pound of citron, cut fine. Mix all these the night before. In the morning before putting it in the cloth stir two tablespoonfuls of wheat flour, beat the cloth and sprinkle with flour. Tie tightly and boil four hours. Put a plate turned on the under part in the pot under the pudding, add cinnamon and nutmeg if liked.

Liked the Old Way Best.

"Pa, I've wrote Santy Claus a 'nother letter."

"What about, Georgie?"

"I tole him he mustn't come in a automobile; I want him to come in a sleigh."
—Detroit Free Press.

That Costly Season.

"What makes your father look so blue to-night?"

"S—s—sh! Somebody thoughtlessly mentioned the fact that Christmas is coming."—Chicago Post.

First and Best of Christmas Stories

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.
And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one unto another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.
And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.
And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.
But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.
And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

ST. LUKE II, 8-20