

JANUARY
When skies are cold with wintry stars,
And hills are white with yester-even's snow,
In ghostly state beneath the ghostly sky;

NOEL CLAYTON'S CHRISTMAS
NOEL CLAYTON was tall and gaunt, with clear, candid, blue eyes, and his white hands, small and nervous-looking, were as well kept as those of a woman.

It was good, nervous work. His name was becoming known, for he had the happy knack of blending pathos with humor. He had traveled widely, and an Australian bush idyl at the beginning of the week would be followed again by a story of rustic life in the dear West Country that he loved so well.

He lived quite alone, worked—and snaked—from morning to night, loved his profession, and had practically dropped all his friends—male and female—and when a bit of the not infrequent blues got him by the throat, threw his pen into the grate and ordered up his landlady's children, and panderonism resigned for an hour.

Sometimes he gave them penalties, but not always—small coin of the realm is not always available to authors—but the romps were huge, and he enjoyed them. Of course there was a woman at the bottom of the tangle of his man's life, and women complicate things sometimes—he would have said "always."

On one particular evening he was alone and writing, when a lady came in and tried to kiss him. He was not a trifling fellow—about the only friend the lonely, self-sufficient man had, and as the incident set down and lighted his pipe, and did not bother the author for quite a quarter of an hour, and then Noel rose and stretched himself.

He declared he would laugh him; they were such pink-tipped fingers, and so small, and he had often written with the tiny touch on his wrist almost unconsciously—only peeping up from time to time at a sweet oval face, into deep violet eyes love lit. But, of course, this was five years ago.

So he wrote on, feeling a little bit sorry that Chum had not stayed, for after all he only had another half hour's work before him, and then they could sit and chat, and perhaps draw the sound of the bells that he knew would ring out in a few hours.

He had been writing for half an hour since Chum had left him, and felt the old familiar touch on his wrist. It was imagination, of course, he did not even turn his head, and then he was looking into blue eyes, in the round golden-circled frame of a boy of four, who laughed up at him and presented a rosebud to be kissed.

"Goodness, child—where on earth do you come from? and who—who brought you? What is your name?" "Eric," and the child began to make preparations for climbing a lofty knee.

"Who brought you here, Baby Eric? How did you come?" "Noel felt like an Irish member of Parliament, for 'an answer was given,' but a wee form, full of hugs and kisses, got fast hold upon him, and said gravely, and yet with a sweet air of command: 'Just come'd—and now if you're not too busy, mister Father—'

"Yes, my son." "Pray—I'd better go to bed." "But, my child—my little son—who brought you here? where is your mother?" and the tall man, suddenly releasing his first-born, paced up and down. Of course, Chum had left the door open, and someone had told the child to walk straight in—and the child had—straight in.

The author—his tiny son was on the floor now, saying things to the cat, and it deserved every word, being a cat that licks stamps of letters, and loves bacon and boiled eggs—thrust his hands deep into his pockets and looked down, and eyed, at little Sunny-face.

"Yes, perhaps you had better come to bed." "If Chum would only come, if someone would only happen to break the

silence, a silence only cleft by the sigh of a child. The church was only at the end of the street. He could hear the bell-ringers shuffling along the frosty pavement, in a few minutes—and he bent to his work.

Half asleep, half awake, he was conscious of the old, almost forgotten touch upon his wrist—a dream doubtless—but he could not shake it off, and then he looked down. Knowing as of yore beside him, blue eyes, star-dimmed, was Pearl.

"I have returned, Noel." It was a quivering little voice, but it thrilled him. How like she was to their child. And then the bells clashed forth their message. "Peace on Earth, Good Will Towards Men," and to two hearts they carried a sweeter, deeper message still.

No word was spoken. A small figure, in a smoking jacket that reached to his heels, stood at the dividing door, an eager face turned to either. And husband and wife kissed silently.

OLD CHRISTMAS SAYINGS. An old German saying is that between 11 and 12 o'clock on Christmas eve water can be turned into wine. A Montenegrin saying about Christmas eve is "To-night earth is blended with Paradise."

The lamp, or candle, must not be allowed to burn itself out on Christmas eve or there will be a death in the family within the year. A Magyar superstition is that any one who eats nuts without honey on Christmas will lose his teeth. Another is that a pillow turned at midnight will bring dreams of a future lover.

It is unlucky to trip on Christmas day. The ancient Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons called Christmas "Mother's Night," the name being handed down to the Christianized people from an old pagan festival formerly celebrated about this season of the year.

The Stiffian children place penny-royal in the beds Christmas eve because they believe it always flowers at the exact hour of Christ's birth. A live coal should never be carried out of the house on Christmas eve. All children born at midnight on December 31 will become great and famous.

Watching the Old Year Out. Watching the old year out has been a common custom in many lands. In most countries it assumes with the serious-minded the phase of devotion. In many countries where Roman Catholicism is the prevalent form of faith the year is begun with midnight masses. Among the Greek Catholics the same usage prevails. It declined in the Church of England, but was revived by several of the dissenting bodies, the watch night of the Methodists being

merely a modification of the general practice. Among the Unitarians, inclined, however, watch night is anything but seriously, and the new year is welcomed with such signs of rejoicing as to one who did not understand that all men were heartily tired of existence and glad to see their years go by as speedily as possible.

The Nestle's Pasture. Aunt Mabel always sends us things, and so does Uncle Joe. And mother gives us presents, too, but father doesn't, though; He never gives a thing to me, or Will, or Grace, or Bess; But Santa Claus is always kind—he pities us, I guess.

My grandpa and my grandpa they ain't never missed us yet. Our mother she remembers and our cousins don't forget; But Santa Claus! The things he brings, oh, they are much the best! I wonder why our father takes so little notice?

New Year's on the Ganges. To know whether one will outlive the year is almost universally regarded as a very desirable piece of knowledge, and to acquire it the men and women of different nations resort to various stratagems to compel fate to stand and deliver.

New Year's Eve in Italy. Don't you wish you were an Italian on New Year's? Promptly at the stroke of 12 on New Year's eve there are



Woe Etzel had been told, By some hobgoblin hold, To hang her stockings neat And then this verse repeat: 'Twinkle, twinkle, for a to fam, Stocking, oh, stocking, much bigger become.'

On Christmas Eve, therefore, She said these lines thrice o'er. Lo! hardly were they said, When right above her head A pair of stockings were That surely seemed, to her A giant to belong—

Whoo there! my Jupiter, Gallant and Gray! Quietly, reindeer, a moment here stay. And leaving them his sigh, Old Santa made his way Quick down the chimney flue And through the fireplace, too.

And the pile of nuts in the corner of the garret grew and grew. You mustn't think that picking up the nuts was all of the work. Not by any sort of means. For every nut had a little green house of its own; and although sometimes the four little walls of it fell away at a touch, oftener the nut gatherers had to try force.

Two stones would do the business—one to pound on and the other to pound with. Fingers and thumbs got pounded, too, sometimes, and if you want to know if it hurt or not, just try pounding your own finger sometime when it is half frozen.

But that was part of the affair, and mother's arnica bottle and salve would stop the ache and dry the tears. Then, too, it was very interesting to unwind

Christmas in King Alfred's reign. In King Alfred's time, and all through the middle ages Christmas began on St. Thomas's Day and lasted

until Twelfth Night, and was observed as much a festival for fathers and mothers as for their children. There was no pantomime, it is true; but there was a Lord of Misrule, elected in every important household, at court, at the university and above all, at the Inns of Court; and it was his business to see that there was no lapse into seriousness during the Christmas holidays. He was a very expensive institution, it seems; for in Edward VI's reign, when it was the business of the authorities to make the poor little king forget all the murders that were keeping him on the throne, the Christmas revels were particularly costly and the Lord of Misrule's costume alone cost \$250,000—New York Herald.

The Worm Turned. Mrs. Cobwiger—While it's true that women wear men's neckties, you surely couldn't expect me to appear in public in such a monstrosity as this. Where in the world did you ever get such a tie? Cobwiger—My dear, that's the one you bought for me last Christmas—Judge.

A Time of Fun. Charles—I'm always glad when New Year's day is a safety one. Fidelity—Yes; it is a safety one, certainly. Charles—Oh, I don't mean that. Clarence and I always have a horrid quarrel suggesting improvements in each other's conduct.

"Jingle Christmas." Little Jennie woke up on Christmas morning and called to her four-year-old sister Mary: "Jingle Christmas!" "Jingle Christmas!" promptly answered the baby.

Stock on Hand. Briddle—Going to make any new resolutions this year, Arthur? Splice—New ones? I should say not. I've got a lot of old ones I've used, by Jove!

Christmas Day. There are no definite allusions in the writings of any of the disciples of Christ as to the date of his birth, nor has there ever been produced proof of any character as to the exact period in the year when Christ was born. There are, very true, occasional references in the event in the Scriptures, indicating that the Nativity occurred in the winter season.

The institution of the anniversary dates back to the second century of Christendom, and it has been since uniformly celebrated by nearly all the branches of the Christian church with appropriate rejoicings and ceremonies. The frequent and somewhat heated controversies, however, relative to the date of Christ's birth arose in the fourth century, led Pope Julius I to order a thorough investigation of the subject by the learned theologians and historians of that period, which resulted in an agreement upon Dec. 25, and that decision seemed to have settled all disputes that date and anniversary, originally agreed upon by the

Try to make this year and all the years to come better for yourself and for your neighbor.

Sermons of the Week. Impossible Ideals. Impossible ideals make for lawlessness rather than for righteousness and the betterment of life.—Rev. H. Martin, Disciple, Brooklyn.

Earning Christmas Money. The Boy and Margy thought and thought and thought. Finally they went to Violet Amanda in the kitchen, for they did not want to let father and mother know. It was to be a surprise.

Which shows that even our forefathers had their troubles.—Gladstone Post. So Sandy only took The stockings from their hook, And in their place he put One meant for smaller foot; Nor did he leave behind A gift of any kind.

THE NEW LEAF. Try to make this year and all the years to come better for yourself and for your neighbor.

Sermons of the Week. The Worldly Man. The man who permits himself to be the victim of his senses is what the Scriptures truly designate the worldly man.—Rev. E. L. Powell, Presbyterian, Louisville.

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