

### Santa Claus.

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

Chirrup! Chirrup!—He is tapping;  
Chirrup! There! Under the door;  
See the little children bless him,  
He's been often here of yore.

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

With a bundle white and snowy,  
And his boots a trifle damp,  
And his eyes—the night is blowy—  
Lo! k 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 we offer  
In the chimney corner here,  
And he drinks the glass I proffer,  
As we drink 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 mischief for Misses,  
And his tales of olden times.

Just the same, and little older,  
With the good things in his pack,  
With the white frock on his shoulder,  
Ann! the snowflakes on his back.

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

And the wintry gusts distress him,  
And the way is wild and dark,  
And the little children bless him,  
For their stories and their song!

WILLIAM TWAMLEY.

### Christmas Folk-Tales.

Scattered round the Christmas season, we find in our own and other countries a host of amusing old folk-tales, most of which, apart from their own intrinsic interest, are valuable as faithfully embodying the superstitious beliefs of our forefathers in connection with the Yuletide festival. It would seem that, in days gone by, these fireside legends were extensively circulated at Christmas-tide; the varied incidents they contained acting as so many warnings to those who might, inadvertently or otherwise, be induced to disregard the traditional notions of the season. As the greater part of these tales are novel portents to most readers, it may not be inopportune to give some illustrations of them. Thus Norwegian folk-tales often allude to the merry doings of the "Nisse" at Christmas time—a class of fairies about the size of small children, and who were, we are reminded, far more numerous in the good old times than nowadays. Like Shakespeare's Puck, they are fond of pranks, and unless the master of the house pampers them they are spiteful and vindictive, and hence it is not surprising that their goodwill is deemed worth securing. On Christmas Eve, therefore, offerings of sweet porridge, cakes, beer, and other delicacies are provided specially for them; but care must be taken that this act is performed with every mark of respect, otherwise they will quickly show their displeasure. Thus, it is related how, one Christmas Eve, when a girl in a mocking spirit brought these little beings their customary offerings, she was so severely handled by them that on the following Christmas morning she was found dead in the barn. With tales of this kind told among the peasantry, and received by them with the utmost faith, we can well imagine how ready they naturally were to gain the patronage and friendship of these mysterious elves who, in a thousand and one ways, could befriend those who acknowledged their superior power. Among Norwegian folk-tales of the sea relating to Christmas, we are told how a certain sailor, according to custom, was desirous of presenting on Christmas Day a cake to the spirit of the waters; but when he came to the shore, lo!—much to his disappointment—the waters were frozen over. Reluctant to leave his offering upon the ice, he tried to make a hole; but, in spite of all his labors, he could not make it large enough for the cake to go through. When perplexed as to what he should do, he was agreeably surprised by the appearance of a little tiny hand, as white as snow, which, stretching through the hole he had made, seized the cake and instantly disappeared with it. In this legend originates, it is said, the compliment paid to a Norwegian lady, "Your hand is like a water sprite's."

The Norse peasant, in his popular tales, has a curious solution for the oft-asked question, "Why the sea is salt?" It appears, says Mr. Dasent, that once upon a time, long long ago, there were two brothers, one rich and the other poor. Now it happened on Christmas Eve that the poor one had not so much as a crumb of bread to eat, so he went to his brother for help, who gave him a whole fitch of bacon, at the same time bidding him go to a certain evil magician. On arriving at the magician's house, he was surrounded by a host of persons anxious to buy his fitch. "Well," said he, "by rights my old dame and I ought to have this fitch for our Christmas dinner, but since you have all set your hearts on it, I suppose you must have it; but if I sell it at all, I must have in return that quern behind the door lashed." At first, the old magician laughed outright at this proposal, but the "poor brother" stuck to it, and so at last the magician parted with his quern. On reaching home, the clock struck twelve, as his wife met him at the door, wondering what had kept him so long. "Oh!" said he, "you shall quickly see the cause of my delay;" after which words, he laid the quern on the table, bidding it grind everything necessary for the Christmas fare. The wife, as may be imagined, stood thunderstruck, watching this quern grind out dainties enough to last till Twelfth Day. When, however, the rich brother on Christmas Day saw all that was on the table, he was very envious, and said, "Whence have you got

all this wealth?" For some time the poor brother refused to tell; but in the course of the day's rejoicings he incautiously gave the history of the magic quern, which his brother ultimately bought for three hundred dollars. Before long, however, he found that it kept on grinding; and so alarmed was he that he resold it to his brother for the same money as he had purchased it. As before, it soon brought renewed prosperity to the poor brother, which enabled him to buy a golden house, the fame whereof spread far and wide, and attracted strangers from all parts. So, one day, a stranger came to see the quern, and the first question he asked was whether it could grind salt. "Grind salt?" said the owner, "I should just think so; and anything else you like." Thereupon, so anxious was he to buy the quern that he promised to pay untold wealth for it. Secured of his prize, he put to sea, and when so far off that no one could reach him, he said to the quern "Grind salt; and grind both fast and good." No sooner had he spoken than the quern forthwith began grinding salt, which, in an amazing short time, arose in heaps on the deck and threatened to sink his vessel. Alarmed at the rapidity with which the quern kept grinding, he retreated it on his knees to leave off; but still it went on, and before many minutes the vessel sank beneath the weight of salt. But the quern, still beneath the water, keeps grinding, and hence the saltiness of the sea.

We may add that these tales, in which the witch element figures strongly, still exist in our own country. Thus, in the Isle of Man, it is related how a fiddler, having agreed with a stranger to play during the twelve days of Christmas to whatever company he should bring him, was astonished at seeing his new master vanish into the earth as soon as the bargain had been made. Terrified at the thought of having agreed to work for so mysterious a personage, he quickly resorted to the clergyman, who advised him to fulfil his engagement, and to play nothing but psalms. Accordingly, as soon as Christmas-tide arrived, the weird stranger made his appearance, and beckoned the fiddler to a spot where the company were assembled. On reaching his destination he at once struck up a psalm tune, which so enraged his audience that they instantly vanished, but not without so violently bruising him that it was with some difficulty he succeeded in reaching home, and narrating his Christmas experience to the family as they were gathered round the fireside.

In Germany, Christmas Eve is the season of all other when fairies are supposed to be most active, keeping their festival on the mountain tops. Then, we are told, the rough stone is transformed into brilliant crystals—veins of gold starting out artistically into majestic pillars—beneath which graceful canopy feasting and dancing are kept up with protracted enthusiasm. The attendants on these fairy-gatherings are generally beautiful Swedish girls, who have unwarily partaken of the contents of the golden goblets offered to them by the fairies, and thus instantly fallen into their power. According to the legendary lore found in most parts of Germany, the magic effects of these fairy potions is threefold:—"At the first draught from that horn, he who drinks forgets Heaven; at the second, he forgets earth; at the third, he forgets his betrothed bride." Hence, on Christmas Eve persons are recommended to stay at home, because the fairies on this night delight to waylay the lonely traveller, compelling him to take a draught of Christmas cheer from their enchanted goblet. Among the large class of folk-tales connected with this superstition, may be quoted one which tells how, when a Christmas feast was being given in a German village, one of the guests, attracted by the sound of music from without, was induced to leave the festive scene indoors, and to wander towards the spot where the music seemed to come. He had, however, not gone many steps before he was met by two beautiful girls, who asked him to join their Christmas gambols in a neighboring field, which, after a little persuasion, he consented to do. On arriving at the fairies' gathering, for such it was, he was surrounded by numberless little beings all anxious to welcome him; one of whom handed him a cup of wine, after drinking which he forgot his former state, and thought of nothing except the feasting and dancing of the fairies. When he had been enjoying himself in this manner for some time, the fairies reminded him of his own home; but what was his astonishment when on passing through the village to find everything in decay, and all his relations and friends dead, for the spell of the fairies' cup on him had lasted a hundred years.

One German version of the well-known legend of the man in the moon connects this wretched individual's solitary imprisonment in that isolated region with his having stolen cabbages from his neighbor's garden on Christmas Eve. When just in the act of escaping with his load he was perceived by some passers-by, who, there and then, conjured him up in the moon. There he stands in the full light of the moon, to be seen by everybody, having his stolen load of cabbages on his back for all eternity. He only has a minute's change one day in the year, when he is said to turn around once on Christmas Eve.

Again, the wild huntsman is said in Germany to make nightly excursions through the air for the twelve nights of Christmas, alarming all who hear him by his furious progress. He generally rides upon a large white horse, no less than four-and-twenty fierce dogs following him. According to a tale quoted by Mr. Thorpe, in his "Northern Mythology," in every place through which he passes the hedges fall with an crash, the road opening of its own accord before him. He rides with such speed that his dogs often fail to keep pace with him, and frequently may be heard panting and

howling. Occasionally one is left behind, as happened one year at Wulsdorf, where it remained panting, howling without intermission until the following Christmas Eve, when the Wild Huntsman again took it with him. Hence various precautions were formerly taken to prevent the Wild Huntsman approaching any particular street—one special rule being that there should be no baking.

It is also considered dangerous to spin at Christmas-time, or the Wild Huntsman will gallop through it. On one occasion a woman refused to take the usual warning, and had no sooner sat down to spin on Christmas Eve than she fell into a deep sleep, and was only awake by the entrance of a stranger, who, without any apology for intruding, asked for her spinning-wheel, and commenced spinning. Before long he used up all the flax she had, and on his asking for more, she was obliged to give him her supply of wool. Still, however, he kept on calling for more; and his angry demands so frightened and terrified the poor woman that, although it was but four in the morning, she roused up her neighbor—a cunning old crook—and acquainted her with the stranger's mysterious conquest. Happily, she quickly perceived the nature of the visitor, and hence was not long in driving him away by some magical charms; for had she not done so, his presence might have cost the woman her life.

Of the numerous folk-tales which have in the course of centuries clustered round the Christmas festival in Russia, one of the most popular refers to the celebration of the winter solstice. Thus it is said that the Sun—a female being—arrays herself in her holiday attire, and, seated in her telega, urges her horses upon the summer track. In many places, says Mr. Ralston, in his "Songs of the Russian People" (1872, p. 187) it has been customary to represent this solar goddess—popularly designated Kolyada—by a girl dressed in white, who, seated in a sledge, is driven about from house to house, while the young people who accompany her sing various songs, of which the following is a specimen:—

Kolyada! Kolyada!  
Kolyada has arrived  
On the Eve of the Nativity.  
We went about, we sought  
Holy Kolyada,  
Through all the courts, in all the alleys,  
We found Kolyada, &c.

Kerr Tradition, too, says that at this season of the year all kinds of hidden treasures are specially revealed to mankind, in connection with which belief the following tale, quoted by Mr. Ralston, is current:—The Epiphany the new-born Divinity comes down from heaven in order to wander about the earth; on which account labor of any kind is accounted wrong. At midnight, also, on each of these festivals, "the heavenly doors are thrown open; the radiant realms of Paradise in which the sun dwells disclose their treasures; the waters of springs and rivers become animated, turn into wine, and receive a healing efficacy; the trees put forth blossoms, and golden fruits ripen upon their boughs."

Space will not permit us to multiply further instances of these Christmas tales, but the few we have quoted will suffice to show their general nature.

### RAILWAYS IN CHINA.

In a country where time is no object, where punctuality is unknown, and where haste is regarded as a sign of ill-breeding, the introduction of railways seems a superfluous anomaly. And yet stress of circumstances has so forced the hands of the statesmen of China that an imperial decree has, we are told, been issued inviting proposals for the construction of railways through the northern part of the empire. Thus the day has arrived which has for years been looked forward to by financial syndicates, groups of contractors, and ambitious foreign engineers. Already, no doubt, plans and maps which have been kept carefully pigeon-holed at Shanghai and Hong-Kong in preparation for the turn which events are now taking are on their way to Prince Kung's secretary at Peking, and to his omnipotent lieutenant, Li Hung Chang, whose only difficulty will be to make choice of the best among the many schemes which will be laid before them. It is, however, by no means certain that foreigners, or at all events any subjects of the Great Powers, will have much to do with the construction of the proposed lines. The Chinese have shown of late a natural desire to do their own work, or if foreign help has to be called in, to employ people of nationalities whose desire to encroach may reasonably be considered as limited by their lack of power to trespass. Thus to Danes have fallen much of the work connected with laying the new telegraph lines, which, from a Chinese point of view, could not be entrusted to subjects of states possessing large armies and powerful fleets.

On the subject of the adoption of railways the Chinese have hitherto proved themselves actively indifferent to the promptings of active plenipotentiaries and of interested advisers. For some years it has been foreseen by the most enlightened of their statesmen that railways are inevitable, but at the same time they have wisely determined to wait for the demand of a naturally developed want, and have set their faces steadily against pandering either to a gushing philanthropy or to the outcry begotten of a manufactured need. In this spirit they refused on behalf of the late Emperor, the present of a railway which a number of well-meaning English capitalists proposed to lay down in the palace grounds for the amusement of his Imperial Majesty; and they pulled up the Woo-Sung Railway, which, having been made for the purpose of stimulating the appetite of the people for railways, enjoyed a chequered course of popularity, litigation, and financial

loss for just six weeks. As though destined to be the unfortunate plighting of people in advance of the age, the material of this railway was shipped to Formosa by an enthusiastic mandarin who thought it possible to regenerate the island by carrying passengers and goods about it at the rate of thirty miles an hour. He even succeeded in collecting several hundred thousand dollars to make his road, but before he could begin the work he was transferred to another scene of usefulness, and the mandarin who entered on his labors entered also into the possession of his accumulated dollars. From that day to this nothing has been heard of the funds and the rails and rolling-stock are at this moment resting on the Formosan wharves.

But during the eight years which have elapsed since the Woo-Sung fiasco events have occurred which have educated the native mind at an unprecedented rate. One of the most awful famines which ever visited any country has desolated whole provinces of the empire; there have been in the outlying dependencies rumours of wars with Russia and Japan, and actual crossing of swords with France. The telegraphs also, which now carry messages from Peking to Canton in a few minutes, have aggravated the growing impatience at the slowness of the means of transport from one place to another, and the natural result of these conditions is the now expressed desire to have the iron horse running through the land.

Private interests are also in favor of the innovation, and Prince Ch'un, the Emperor's father, who, according to the *quidnuncs* of Shanghai, is opposed to everything foreign, has inaugurated his accession to power by giving his cordial support to the new proposal, and has sanctioned an order for a quantity of steel rails from the Oenabruck steel-works. For the last two or three years the Prince has taken an active interest in the coal and iron mines of the northern provinces, and he probably recognizes the fact that his profits might be increased a hundredfold if the output were carried to market in railway trucks rather than in donkey carts. It is doubtless in connection with these mines that the first railway will be constructed, and fortunately for the undertaking the prospects of an immediate return are unquestionably certain. In Shan-see, the province adjoining the metropolitan province on the west, the extent of the coal field is incalculably great, while in the immediate neighborhood iron abounds in profusion.

In estimating the effects which are likely to be produced on the country by railways, it is necessary to consider the social side of the question. Although caste in its technical sense is unknown in China, the divisions which separate the ranks of the mandarins are as marked as those which divide the different Brahminical grades, and the gulf which intervenes between the official classes and the people is quite as wide as that which yawns between the Brahmin and Shudra classes. And in one sense the Chinese distinctions are more difficult to deal with than the Indian, in that they affect every act in the daily intercourse of life. At first, therefore, the levelling tendency of railways will beyond question produce some searchings of heart among the privileged classes. A red-buttoned mandarin whirling through the country in company with a parcel of rich shopkeepers would be in a position as distasteful to himself as embarrassing to his fellow-travellers, whose only attitude in the presence of so great a man would at any other time be one of humble prostration.

The necessity for punctuality also will be galling to men who have always been accustomed to start on their journeys at any hour they please, unfettered by time or time-tables; and the idea of a railway guard starting a train without waiting for a leisurely approaching local magnate would be an unheard-of want of propriety. Even in the minor question of making the time-tables plain to the people, some preliminary difficulties will unquestionably arise. The day of twenty-four hours is, according to Chinese reckoning, divided into twelve equal divisions, which are known as the period of the rat, the ox, the tiger, the hare, the sheep, the dragon, the serpent, the horse, the sheep, the monkey, the cock, the dog, and the boar. Each of these periods is subdivided into eight parts of fifteen minutes each, and these are the smallest divisions of time known to all except the few fortunate possessors of watches. This at once opens a field for the wildest confusion and strange misunderstandings. What will minute, represent to the minds of people accustomed only to reckon by the rat, the ox, the tiger, etc. and how will the fine distinctions of A.M. and P.M. be brought home to their intelligence? Though these and all other difficulties, not the least of which will be connected with ladies travelling, will disappear with time, they will not be less real while they last; and though railways will ultimately lead up to greater reforms and will produce greater advantages in China than in any empire under the sun, they will probably have to encounter a period of probation which will try the patience and tax the resources of the promoters and supporters of their existence.

Three cases are reported to the French Association for the Advancement of the Sciences of immediate cure of paralysis aglans by means of hypnotic suggestion. The patients had become unable to write legibly, but when the affirmation was made to them emphatically during sleep that they could write as well as other people, they did so forthwith and retained the power after awaking. M. Liebaud showed specimens of the handwriting as produced before, during and after the hypnotic sleep, and said he had obtained like results during several years of practice.

### DR. MAXWELL'S AWFUL CRIME.

He Forces His Four Children to Swallow Poison and Three of Them Die.

A terrible tragedy was enacted at Springfield, O., recently, resulting in the death of the three children of Dr. John Maxwell. About six o'clock the doctor sent his wife to a store on an errand which would detain her some time, leaving him alone with his children, ranging in age from 4 to 15. As soon as his wife had gone he called his children into a room, and, threatening to kill them in case of a refusal, induced them to swallow a mixture of aconite and chloroform. Then he tied a cloth saturated with the same drug around the mouth and nostrils of each, and laid his victims on a bed. The children, after struggling for a few minutes, sank into insensibility. Maxwell then administered a dose to himself and lay down on the bed beside his unconscious children. In a few minutes after the doctor had swallowed the poison, Mrs. Maxwell came home. Upon seeing the insensible forms of her children on the bed she suspected the terrible truth, and at once summoned assistance. Medical aid was speedily at hand, but before the physicians arrived Blanche, aged 12, was dead. Arthur, the youngest child, died shortly after 1 o'clock next morning, and Kenneth aged 10, died at 4 o'clock next morning. Grace, the eldest child, is still alive, but the prospects of her ultimate recovery are considered remote. The father recovered during the night, and in the morning was placed in jail. Mrs. Maxwell is in a terrible condition, and it is feared the shock will deprive her of reason. Dr. Maxwell had written a letter saying he was tired of life, and as he did not wish to leave his children to a life of poverty, such as they would have to face he had decided to take them to the grave with him.

Dr. Maxwell came to Springfield a short time ago from Cedarville, O. While living at the latter place he had been indicted by another physician on a charge of criminal libel. The case is still pending. Since coming there he has been unable to provide for his family properly, and his combined troubles are alleged to have affected his mind.

### Zuni Sacred Bread Stones.

For no art or industry within the range of the domestic duties of Zuni, is so much care and instruction bestowed by the old women on the young, as for every process in the making of the he-we, or water-breads. Year in and year out, too, while these lessons are being plied, it is told how the famed and beloved "Goddess of the White Shells" taught not a few of her graces—and some secrets—in connection with the daily occupation, which forms their theme. Of these secrets, a chosen few old women of the tribe are the keepers. With many a mysterious rite and severe penance, they quarry and manufacture the enormous baking-stones on which the flaky, toothsome he-we is made. Garrulous enough, mercy knows! are these crones on most other subjects; but they guard with a sphinx-like jealousy such of their methods and observances as add prestige to experience in their occasional making. The usual number of old women calling up a party of "stone-finishers" is four or eight, rarely more. Four days previously to the tempering of the stones they retire to an estufa or lone room, there to fast and engage in certain ceremonies, in which chronic traditional chants and repeating rituals play an important part. During these four days they never come forth unless at rare intervals and for a very short time (and then under the protective influence of warning head plumes) that they may not be touched by the initiated. Yet, during the intermissions of their religious observances, they prepare great cakes of pinon gum, carefully wrapping them in strips of cedar bark, and in other ways make ready for the work at hand. On the morning of the day succeeding the last night of their vigil, they repair in single file, headed by a particular clan-priest—usually a "Badger," who on no account touches one of them—to a quarry. Before lifting the stoner, before even quarrying any of them, they recite long, propitiatory prayers, casting abundant medicine-meal to the "Flesh of the rock." With other but shorter prayers the fire is kindled by the old priest, who uses as his match a stick of hard wood with which he drills vigorously into a piece of dry, soft root, until the friction ignites the dust of its own making, and to the flames thus generated, offerings of dry food are made. The stones are then brought, and when warm enough, placed over the fires; being constantly anointed with pitch and cactus juice, which they greedily absorb, so that they at least seem solid masses of carbonized substance rather than gritty rock. From the beginning to the end of this tempering process never a word is spoken aloud nor the least excitement or spirited action indulged in. Sounds uttered would penetrate the grain of the rock and expelled by heat or conflicting with the new "being" (function) of the stone, split scale, or shiver it with a loud noise. So also, the evil influence of undue passion or hasty action would alike be communicated to it—with blighting future effect.

### Probably a Bass Invention.

An Oil City boy who went fishing to Oleopolis the other day reports a singular experience. He had hooked a black bass weighing thirty-six pounds, but when he tried to haul his prize to shore the bass jumped at him, chased him up the hill, caught him and tied him securely to a tree with the fish line, ran the fishhook through the fisherman's tongue and calmly walked back to the river. When found the boy was insensible.