

CHRISTMAS DAY.

WHAT'S this hurry, what's this flurry, All throughout the house to-day? Everywhere a merry scurry, Everywhere a sound of prattle, matter, matter, Out-of-doors, as well as in, For the bell goes clatter, clatter, Every minute—such a din!

Everybody winking, blinking, In a queer, mysterious way; What on earth can they be thinking, What on earth can it be to pay? Baby piping o'er the stairway, Baby into the cradle, Kitti, too, is in a fair way, Where she hides, to giggle out.

As the bell goes clattering, Every minute more and more, And swift feet go springing, springing, Through the hall-way to the door, Where a glimpse of box and packet, And a little rustle, rustle, Make such sight and sound, and racket— Such a jolly bustle, bustle, Tossing into their places, Hiding slyly out of sight, All at once shoving faces, All at once scream with delight.

Go and ask them what's the matter— What the fun outside and in— What the meaning of the clatter, What the bustle and the din. Hear them hear them laugh and shout All together hear them say, "Why, what have you been about, then. Not to know it's Christmas Day?"

Nora Perry, in St. Nicholas.



FILSEY
RECKON this is goin' ter be bust'er," said old Uncle Billy Botsworth as he came into the family sitting-room where the old man was sitting with a load of wood on his shoul-

ders. With a crash he deposited his burden on the spacious hearth, where a huge fire was already blazing, and began to pile on the long, dry sticks of beech and hickory until in a few moments a perfect sheet of flame was rearing up over the wide-throated chimney.

Grandma Botsworth, who sat in her accustomed corner by the "jab" busy with her knitting, made no reply, while Uncle Billy proceeded to remove his coat, hat and boots, and, having filled and lighted his pipe sat down to enjoy himself.

Outside a furious snow storm was racing, and the chimney was heavily carpeted with white. Presently his two sons, Jacob and Milton, came in from doing up the chores, and like their father, were soon dressed of caps, coats and boots, and seated before the rousing fire talking over the events of the day.

A little later Mrs. Botsworth joined them, and then the family circle was complete. No, not complete, either; a daughter was missing. Three years ago this Christmas eve she had gone out from the parental roof to marry the man she loved, but whom her father had forbidden some time before to enter his doors.

But Mary had gone; and she and her husband, a poor mechanic, went out West to build up for themselves a home and fortune. They were married a day or two before they were to start for Dakota, and Mary had said good-bye to the old home where she got out of the buggy and started to go into the house to say good-bye. She did not ask nor expect forgiveness from her father for what she had done; but she knew her mother and her brothers still loved her, and would gladly have her come to see them. So she just had her hand on the latch, and, with tear-filled eyes, was taking in the dear and familiar surroundings, when her father, coming round the corner of the house, saw her.

"Don't you come in here," he yelled, hoarsely. "Don't step your foot inside 't that gate." Mary Ellen Botsworth had come to the station, only two miles distant, by rail, and had there hired a man and team to bring them over, his services in this direction were not needed.

He did, however, build up such a fire in the old fireplace as it had not seen for many a day, and, as they sat around it and talked until long after the stroke of twelve, it was, indeed, to them a happy Christmas.—Arkansas Traveler.

as the coming one was to be held at his house, and his brothers and sisters, with their families, would be there, he, with some bitterness of feeling, was brooding over the fact that, through no fault of his, he reasoned, the pleasures of the day would be marred. Everybody missed Mary; the children of his nephews and nieces would ask for her and talk about her, despite the admonitions they had received to the contrary. As he was busy with his thoughts, gazing the while moodily into the fire, and now and then punching up the fore sticks in a spiteful sort of way, Grandma Botsworth suddenly spoke up and said:

"Tomor' will be another white Christmas. This makes two on 'em right hand runnin'. Three years ago was a mighty mornin'. That year we had a great Christmas that year."

Here the old lady paused and heaved a sigh. No one said anything and she continued: "I recollect now there was more burryin' that year in the Bald Hill burryin' ground than there has been since all put together."

"Yes," asserted Mrs. Botsworth, reflectively, "a green Christmas allers makes a fat graveyard, they say, an' I never knew it to fail."

"I reckon it'll be good sleighin' to-morrow," observed Uncle Billy, "an' all the folks'll come over in the bobs. Eh! what's that?"

The exclamation with which he concluded his remark was caused by the furious bark of old "Maje," the watchdog, the sound of voices in the front yard, and what seemed to be the cry of a child in fear.

The two boys started for the front door, while the remainder of the family sat intently listening and wondering who could be their visitors. They had not long to wait; for a minute later the sitting-room door was flung open and Jacob strode in, bearing in his arms a bright and lusty 2-year-old boy. Almost snatching the wraps from about it, and holding the little fellow up, he shouted: "Pap, look at your grandson; Filsey's come, an' this is her boy."

"The devil it is," roared Uncle Billy, springing to his feet, with a face as black as a thundercloud. "Take him away; I don't want ter see him."

"Hold on a minute," shouted a clear, strong voice in the doorway. It was the son-in-law who had spoken, and who stepped into the room, his figure erect and eyes blazing with anger. "Hold on a minute, I say," he continued; "I want a word. But, Botsworth, you can't buy and sell; you, I am a rich man, but you don't have to own me for a son-in-law on that account. As for me, I can get along without you. But Mary here wanted to come back and see her mother and all of you once more, and I said she should; and, more than that, I said you should treat her and baby right, or I'd make you; and, by thunder, I'll do it! Understand me, I ask no favors for myself; but for this poor girl here, that still loves you, but who wants to come home only for a little while, I will speak for, and fight for, too, if necessary."

Even while he was talking, mother and daughter were weeping in each other's embrace, and Grandma Botsworth, rising with difficulty from her seat, laid her hand on her son's shoulder. "William, she said, "now as god's time to give in as we'll ever give in. But Mary ain't here to help forgive them. Come now, son, do right."

For an instant he stood struggling with his passion, then love conquered, extending his hand to his son-in-law, he said: "Eh, I knock under; I've made a mistake an' am sorry for it. Daughter, come here."

With a glad cry Mary put her arms around his neck and kissed him again and again.

"There, there, child!" the old fellow murmured, in a voice husky with emotion, "it's all forgot now, an—"

But he did not finish the sentence. And, while Mary was kissing grandma and all were silently crying for joy, he

thought of presents. I have so many to make, too. Now you are elected, I suppose you won't grumble, as you usually do at this season of the year. There isn't any excuse for you saying that you can't afford to give me a few dollars for presents this year. It's high time I had a little money to commence with, too. Suppose you let me have a check for a hundred dollars in the morning, and—"

"A check for what?" asked Mr. Breezy, looking suddenly.

"Only a hundred dollars to start with," said Mrs. Breezy, taking her thread a little further with her work.

"A hundred dollars to start with?" ejaculated Mr. Breezy. "Start what?"

"That's all the attention you ever pay to anything I say," said Mrs. Breezy. "I suppose you haven't heard a word I've been saying. Do put down that evening newspaper and pay a little more attention to your wife for once in your life. I say you may give me a check for a hundred—a hundred and fifty dollars in the morning for Christmas!"

"You just said a hundred," said Mr. Breezy.

"I knew you'd notice that," said Mrs. Breezy. "I know I said a hundred a moment ago, but I've changed my mind. The fact is, I should really have two hundred dollars—"

"If you, if you keep raising the limit at this rate I shall have to draw out of the game."

"I don't understand your horrid gambling terms, and I wish you would respect my language," said Mrs. Breezy, fumbling around in her work-basket for a particular shade of silk. "Two hundred and fifty dollars you won't be any too much for—"

"I call," cried Mr. Breezy.

"There you go again," said Mrs. Breezy. "For heaven's sake drop on—stop that slang. You know you are well afford to give me a few hundred dollars for Christmas presents, and the man who has met with the luck you have this year in politics shouldn't have to kick objects to gain favor with his little Christmas money. You wouldn't think anything of spending three or four hundred dollars on ville liners and cigars for your constituents, as you call them, but when your wife asks you for half that sum—"

"Suppose we return to the original estimates and call it an even hundred?" said Mr. Breezy, pulling out his check-book.

"Do you suppose I can get along with a miserable hundred dollars?" cried Mrs. Breezy. "Why, your present alone will cost nearly that. Yes, I expected to give you a real handsome present this year, but if you are going to be so stingy, of course you will have to take what you can afford to give you. Then think of the children and of dear mother, and of grandmother, and my dear sister-in-law, to say nothing of my brother Jack and cousin Harry and your own mother. You don't want me to forget your own mother—"

"You hold over me," said Mr. Breezy. "Scoop the pot," and he threw down a check. "Fill her out to suit yourself."

"Do you really mean it?" asked Mrs. Breezy.

"Yes."

"Well, you shall have just the sweetest, neatest present in the world."

Mrs. Breezy gave her husband a tremendous kiss upon the lips and flitted out of the room with the check.

"The first time in this year," gasped Mr. Breezy, as he slowly recovered from his astonishment.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE.

It was a Sad One and Cost a Brave English His Life.

We were coming up through M'souri on the afternoon before Christmas last year. It was terribly cold and bitter, and the snow lay deep on the tracks.

There were dozens of men on the train with Christmas bundles, dozens of women with Christmas packages, and the afternoon waned and we passed station after station on the people dropped off one by one until a dozen of us were left. Soon after leaving a small station we all noticed the singular action of the train. For a mile or two we would be hauled along like lightning and then the speed would slow down to fifteen miles an hour without apparent reason.

One of the passengers who lived in a town fifteen or twenty miles ahead of us, and who had a dozen or more parcels piled up on the seat, soon began to fret and fume.

"Isn't he going to get us there before midnight?" he growled as the train sped along.

Then, as the speed increased until we seemed to be flying, he continued:

"He'll have us off the track! That engineer is surely drunk! Some one ought to hunt up the conductor."

When we had run ten or twelve miles in the manner described the conductor came through our car on his way forward. He had an anxious look on his face, and did not stop to answer questions. Before he was out of the coach, however, there was a terrific crash, the forward ends of the coaches were smashed and splintered, and then we rolled down an embankment and brought up in a field.

It was God's mercy that every man and woman was not killed outright, but, strangely enough, none of the passengers were even badly bruised. When they extricated ourselves from the wreck we went forward to the engine.

It was off the track, on its back, and under the broken wheels and twisted and bent machinery lay the engineer and fireman, both dead.

As for Uncle Billy, seeing his whole family up in arms against him, he yawned and said no reply, but turning, strode rapidly in the direction of the barn.

From that time on he had never spoken his daughter's name. And although he knew that mother and the boys got occasional letters from her, yet he never by sign or inquiry showed that he ever thought of her, or had the slightest idea of knowing whether she was dead or alive.

But on the Christmas eve that I have introduced to you, our notice, he sat by the fire thinking, and his thoughts were of her. He had long ago admitted to himself that he was too hasty when he drove his only daughter away from his home; but he still remained silent. At each family reunion, always held on Christmas day, he had missed her. And

as the coming one was to be held at his house, and his brothers and sisters, with their families, would be there, he, with some bitterness of feeling, was brooding over the fact that, through no fault of his, he reasoned, the pleasures of the day would be marred. Everybody missed Mary; the children of his nephews and nieces would ask for her and talk about her, despite the admonitions they had received to the contrary. As he was busy with his thoughts, gazing the while moodily into the fire, and now and then punching up the fore sticks in a spiteful sort of way, Grandma Botsworth suddenly spoke up and said:

"Fred was burned to death this noon!"

Then we accounted for the wild running of the train—for what had before been the mystery. There was the Santa Claus gifts for the dead boy at home; then the telegram blasting all hopes—destroying all illusions of happiness—shattering in one moment a thousand plans for the future. And men gathered closer and wiped away tears and whispered:

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