



CHRISTMAS
PARTY, and
no doubt
a loaded Christ-
mas tree,
And girls and boys
and toys—and
noise;

What do they want with me?
And yet her little friendly note
Decares—thrice underlined—
I must not fail. Well, I won't!
She's always sweet and kind!

Now, let me see. I had not thought
Upon my wardrobe's shelf;
I must not fail. Well, I won't!
By love! it's rather late
To rummage for a satin tie
And fish out gloves to match.
Great Scott! my best shirt's at the wash,
And this one needs a patch.

I'll thread a needle—if I can—
(I am the man who brags
Of single blessedness!) and see
If I can't mend these rags.
This thread's too coarse; or else, perhaps,
My needle is too slim.
The light's poor; or it may be
My sight is getting dim.

Why were men's fingers only made
To drag and stomp and jerk?
I'm thinking how her little hand
Would get around this work!
And how she'd smile and bite her thread,
And look so wise and calm,
And—there! I've started my finger through!
Oh, what an ass I am!

The clock ticks on. I must make haste,
Since she desires—alas
For those lost opportunities!
Our thoughtless youth let pass!
But, as she's single still, who knows,
Some joys may we retrieve.
Perhaps she'll mend up life for me
Before next Christmas eve.

—Madeline S. Bridges, in Judge.



ARTHUR'S
CHRISTMAS
LETTER.

ARTHUR seated himself upon the floor, in a corner of the room farthest from his mother; he wrinkled his eyebrows, puckered his mouth and cramping his little fingers around a stubby lead pencil began to write; and this is what he wrote:

"DEAR SANTY CLAWS: Please don't for Get to Fill my stockin. An Id like A Sled an a par of skates. An plese giv MO'ER the verry nicest thing you got. We live on French street, First Chimby down N 2 FLights."

"ARTHUR HILL"
He stretched out his little numb fingers, with a sigh of relief; for printing was hard work for Arthur's chubby fist. Then he glazied furtively over his shoulder, to make sure his mother was not looking—but no; stitch, stitch, stitch her needle went through the heavy coat, and she did not once look up. So he folded the precious letter in a painstaking manner, and sealed it in the envelope addressed:

"MR. SANTY CLAWS," and stuffing it into his little pocket—regardless of opposition on the part of letter or pocket—went softly out of the room; but his quiet movements ended on the landing just outside, and he tore down the stairs and through the streets to the post office.

Perhaps the thought that there were but two days before Christmas, and the consequent fear that the gentle reminder might not reach Santa Claus in time, gave the deer-like fleetness to his sturdy little feet.

There was no one in the office, so he walked boldly up and dropped the letter through the slot, and watched it sliding down the inclined plane into the receiving box. Then, with a fear of being detected, he ran out of the office, and with his hands in his pockets, scampered home.

Arthur's letter lay among the others for a half hour or so, and then a clerk began assorting them for the mails.

"Here's a good one!" and he laughed heartily as he held up the crumpled envelope.

"Mr. Santa Claus!" and he laughed again, in company with two or three clerks who had gathered around him.

Just then the door opened and the postmaster came in.

The clerk held up the letter: "Mr. Santa Claus—address not given! Are you acquainted with the gentleman's residence?"

Mr. Morris took the envelope and laughed, also, as he glanced at it, and was about to throw it down, when a sudden vision of four little maids, with an unquestioning faith in Santa Claus, arose before him.

"Perhaps I can find the gentleman," he said, with a twinkle in his kind blue eyes; and putting the envelope into his pocket he walked away.

It was Christmas eve. There had been a heavy snowstorm the day before, and it had cleared off very cold. The people were muffled in fur to their eyes—if they had the furs—and hurried along over the crisp snow, which sang sharp little songs under their feet. The rude wind wrestled with them at the street corners, making the gentlemen catch wildly at their hats, and fluttering ribbons and veils in the faces of the ladies.

Jack Frost played coarse practical jokes upon everybody and everything within his reach, so that the market boys felt obliged to run with the turnips and turnips, blowing the white upon their aching fingers or rubbing their smarting ears.

The newsboys, with mufflers and caps pulled closely down, held their papers under their arms and their

hands in their pockets, and thrashed one foot against the other, while they called in cold voices to the passer-by: "Paper, sir, paper!"

The heavens were studded with gleaming stars which blinked merrily down on the hurrying throng; and through uncurtained windows were glimpses of gay Christmas trees with happy children dancing around them, and smiling fathers and mothers looking on.

Holly wreaths hung in profusion and festoons of evergreen and mistletoe adorned the walls; and over these happy scenes played the flickering light of the "yule" log's glow.

The church bells rang merrily, and the organ's deep note pealed forth upon the night winds; lights streamed from the windows and through the doors as they swung to and fro, while softly on the listening ear stole the sound of voices singing of "Peace on earth, good will toward men."

But the peace and warmth and glow had not reached "French street, first chimney, two flights down."

There was a little fire—just enough to give it the name—but it seemed an empty title.

The curtain was not drawn—what need of that? since the frost had worked so thick a screen that not even a loving star could peep in with a happy Christmas greeting. Mrs. Hill, with an old shawl over her shoulders, sat close to the table, with a dim kerosene lamp beside her.

She was blue with the cold, and her fingers were so stiff that the needle went laboriously through the heavy seam. Her tired eyes filled with tears now and again, but she dashed them away—every minute was precious; for if the coat was not finished to-night, and taken back—there was a sorry out look for to-morrow. And the thought of the empty larder and coalhod nerved her to frantic efforts at faster working; and when the clock outside told the hour of eight, it sent a colder thrill through her frame.

But finally there was an end to apples and oranges, toys, strings of popcorn and candy, and the rest of his errand must be accomplished; so clearing his throat, and looking hard at the ceiling, he said:

"My wife thought the nicest thing

for the mother would be a ton of coal and a barrel of flour."

Poor Mrs. Hill—poor Mr. Morris! for it was almost as trying for one as the other; he walked to the window and examined the frost-work; it was so thick and fine that he glanced at the stove next, and then at the empty woodbox and scuttle. The table, with its dim light row of spoons and scissors, with the unfastened coat in the chair, told the story plainly.

"Look!" he said, holding it up before his mother, with a comical expression on his little mottled face.

"O, Arthur, how you do wear your stockings out! I mended them all up last Saturday night."

"But it comed right through again!" and Arthur glanced from the yawning stocking toe to his mother's tired face, then back again to the stocking.

"I shall see you again, Mrs. Hill, and I hope you and Arthur will both have a very merry Christmas. Good-night," and he had gone before Mrs. Hill could speak. He went directly to a coal dealer and ordered a bag of coal and a basket of wood sent at once, and

paid the bill.

Arthur, in spite of the cold, had pulled off one of his stockings, and was looking ruefully at a large hole in the toe.

"Do you suppose the presents will come through?"

"No, I am afraid they won't," she said, both bitterly.

"But I don't want 'em to!" and he

looked up with a perplexed expression at his mother, who was afraid his presents wouldn't come through.

He examined the hole again, taking its dimensions by thrusting three fingers through it and stretching them apart.

Yes, there was no doubt a good sized toy could squeeze through that hole.

"Can you mend it, mother?"

"O, Arthur, don't ask me to do anything!" she answered, fretfully, and Arthur moved away a little; for never in his life before had he heard his mother speak like that.

But the next instant she reached out her arm, and snatched him passionately to her heart.

"Arthur, dear, mother is sorry that she spoke like that to you," and she kissed the little cold face, while her tears—so near the surface—rained over her own face and his. "I am tired, but that is no reason for my speaking crossly to you; and mother will mend the stocking before she goes to bed."

Arthur put his arms around her neck. "You'll have a happy Christmas," he said, looking up into her face with beaming eyes; and her tears started afresh as she looked at his hopeful face and thought of the gloomy prospect.

"I wish I could make a fire and warm you before you go to bed," she said, rubbing his blue cheeks with her cold fingers, "and give you something to eat."

"I ain't much hungry," he answered, with a brave smile.

"If I finish this coat in time I shall get something to eat, and I will wake you up and give you some," and kissing him, she turned back to her work and began that weary stitch, stitch.

Arthur hung up his stocking, and going back to his mother pulled the shawl away a little and kissed her on the neck—a form of caress which did not interfere with the needle—and with a bright face opened the bedroom door and shut himself in. How cold it was! for the door had been shut all day, that what heat there was might be kept in the kitchen. He would like to have opened it, for a ray of light from his mother's dim lamp, but it would make her colder; so he kicked off his shoes, not parting with very much else, for it was too cold to undress, and jumped into bed and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

"Didn't he come quick?" and he stood

dreaming, perhaps, of Christmas feasts and Santa Claus.

Arthur had not been dreaming long when a low knock startled Mrs. Hill.

What could it mean? And she trembled a little as she walked to the door and opened it.

A kind-faced man with merry blue eyes was standing there; he had very fat pockets, and a sled in one hand and a parcel in the other; and Mrs. Hill trembled more than ever, but from mother's face.

She drew him to the stove, and sitting down took him on her lap.

"I didn't 'spect so much!" he ex-claimed, finding his tongue at last; "but ain't it jolly—jolly!" and clapping his hands together he threw his arms so tightly around his mother's neck that he nearly stopped her breath and gave her a sounding kiss.

"The stockin's full—an' you mended the hole!" and he got down on the floor and peered up at it. "It's all sewed tight!" Then he pulled down the sled and skates, tried on the mittens, wound the scarf around his neck, scraped acquaintance with the candy, and took a bite out of a shining apple.

Words! words were weak for the expression of his satisfaction; so he danced up and down the room, and clapped his hands, and laughed and whistled, and finally turned a somersault in the intensity of his joy.

Then he and his mother had their Christmas supper in the warm room, with the fire-light shining through the cracks of the usually grim old stove. And they talked of this glad evening—for somehow the bitterness of its beginning had passed from the mother's mind, and the old carol which sings that "night is passed," most fitly expressed the thought of her thankful heart.

"I can see a star!" Arthur cried, and sure enough, the frost had melted a little, and a star was peeping in; oh, more than one! two, three—yes, several shining down on the poor little home, as they had shone, long years before, on lonely Juda, and telling again the old yet ever new story of the Christ-child's birth, and of love and peace on earth.—Annie J. Holland, in Household Monthly.

in the bedroom door, his eyes still blinking, looking from the chimney to the table, and from the table back to the chimney, and then up to his mother's face.

He drew him to the stove, and sitting down took him on her lap.

"I didn't 'spect so much!" he ex-claimed, finding his tongue at last; "but ain't it jolly—jolly!" and clapping his hands together he threw his arms so tightly around his mother's neck that he nearly stopped her breath and gave her a sounding kiss.

"The stockin's full—an' you mended the hole!" and he got down on the floor and peered up at it. "It's all sewed tight!" Then he pulled down the sled and skates, tried on the mittens, wound the scarf around his neck, scraped acquaintance with the candy, and took a bite out of a shining apple.

Words! words were weak for the expression of his satisfaction; so he danced up and down the room, and clapped his hands, and laughed and whistled, and finally turned a somersault in the intensity of his joy.

Then he and his mother had their Christmas supper in the warm room, with the fire-light shining through the cracks of the usually grim old stove. And they talked of this glad evening—for somehow the bitterness of its beginning had passed from the mother's mind, and the old carol which sings that "night is passed," most fitly expressed the thought of her thankful heart.

"I can see a star!" Arthur cried, and sure enough, the frost had melted a little, and a star was peeping in; oh, more than one! two, three—yes, several shining down on the poor little home, as they had shone, long years before, on lonely Juda, and telling again the old yet ever new story of the Christ-child's birth, and of love and peace on earth.—Annie J. Holland, in Household Monthly.

CHRISTMAS GIVING.

Let It Be with a Loving Heart, and Nothing That You Begrudge.

It has been nearly two thousand years since the first beautiful Christmas gift came on earth, and it was received with gladness and joy by shepherd and king alike. To-day, in memory of that, I give you some little trifle, because I love you, but I give it so ungraciously you scarcely like to take it. A pretty way to send a gift is to do it up in one of the colored tissue papers, tie it with the extremely narrow ribbon that can be bought for a few pennies, the whole twelve yards, and so give your friend the pleasure of untangling the mysterious box, of removing the pretty ribbons, and of coming to the surprise at last, the something for which she has longed for many a day. I know a woman who has wanted a pin-cushion ten years, who in that time has gotten two diamond bracelets and innumerable rings, but the long-looked-for pin-cushion has never come. She still hopes for it, and believes that this year will certainly bring it. You say: "Why not buy it?" Well, now, who ever bought a pin-cushion without the intention of giving it to somebody else? It is always a something given to you and not bought.

Give with a loving and full heart, and never, under any circumstances, give that which you begrudge. Such a gift will bear no fruit for you, not even the honest fruit of thanks. You can quote as many times as you want that "Unto him that hath shall be given," and so it shall, because it is just this way, my friend: You possess the gifts of gentleness and graciousness, of politeness and of goodness, and these are gifts that call others to them. If people are cross and disagreeable there is very slight inclination to wish them a merry Christmas; if they are irritable and snappish nobody cares whether they are blessed with a Christmas present or not; but unto her who hath the graces which I have cited will certainly come a basket full of good gifts, "pressed down, shaken together and running over."—Ruth Ashmore, in Ladies' Home Journal.

ALWAYS ADMIRE IT.



Clara—Did you get my Christmas card dear?

Maud—Yes; and I have always admired that card so much. I told Ethel Swansdown when she sent it to you last year that I thought it was so pretty.—N. Y. Mail and Express.

Measure for Measure.

"It's not the right sort of feeling, perhaps, but at Christmas I like to give just as valuable presents as I receive."

"So do I. My wife is going to give me a hundred-dollar dressing gown, and I am going to give her a hundred-dollar check to pay for it."—Life.

Equal to the Emergency.

Miss Pinkley—A toilet set is entirely too young for my grandfather.

Clerk (in silver novelty department)—We also have them with fewer teeth in the combs.—Jeweler's Weekly.

Left That for Her.

Kingley—I suppose you have bought all of your wife's Christmas presents, haven't you?

Bingo—All but one.

Kingley—Which one?

Bingo—Mine.—Mail and Express.

SEVEN MEN SLAIN.

Cattle Thieves and Officers Fight with the Above Result.

CHEYENNE, Wyo., Dec. 21.—Meager particulars have reached here by mail of the killing of seven persons in the Big Horn basin a few days ago. The basin is situated near the Yellowstone park and almost inaccessible from the south during the winter. Hyattville, the scene of the trouble, is 90 miles from Buffalo, which in turn is about 30 miles off the railroad. According to the story Bill Nutcher and Jim Huff went into the basin to arrest some cattle thieves. Nutcher was himself under arrest on a charge of stealing in Fremont county, while Huff, whose reputation is rather poor, is said to have been a deputy United States marshal. These men came across three alleged cattle thieves whom they were after, near Hyattville, which has not more than half a dozen houses. The encounter was desperate from the start and was maintained with rifles and finally with six-shooters. Upon its conclusion not only the cattle thieves but the officers lay dead on the prairie, everybody completely riddled with bullets.

It was but little after dawn Monday when suicide added its dark intimations to the cloud of charges, counter-charges, denials and half-suppressed scandal which has been hanging over the office of the treasurer of St. Louis for weeks past.

Edward Foerstel, first assistant and son of Michael J. Foerstel, city treasurer, at 8 o'clock Monday morning shot himself in the right temple, the ball passing through the brain, lodging under the skin on the left side and causing death a few hours later.

For weeks past stories of peculiar doings in the treasurer's office have been afloat. There have been suits brought against the treasurer by money lenders notorious for their usurious charges, assertions regarding real estate