



A Happy New Year.

Coming, coming, coming! Listen! perhaps you'll hear Over the snow the bugles blow To welcome the glad new year. In the steeple tongues are swinging. There are many sleigh-bells ringing. And the people for joy are singing. It's coming, coming near. Flying, singing, dying. Going away to-night. Weary and old, its story told. The year that was full and bright, Oh, half we are sorry it's leaving. Good-by has a sound of grieving; But its work is done and its weaving: God speed its parting flight!

BABY DEB'S GOOSE.



CHRISTMAS is just as much Christmas at the Boon Island light-house as it is anywhere else in the world. And why not? There are six children there, though, and a mother and a father; and if they cannot make a Christmas, then nobody can. Why, Baby Deb alone is material enough of which to make a Christmas, and a very rollicking, jolly sort of Christmas, too; but when to her you add Tom and Sue and Sally and Ike and Sam—well, the grim, old light-house fairly overflows with Christmas every 25th of December. Ah, then, if you suppose that that cunning old gentleman, Santa Claus, does not know how to find a chimney, even when the cold waves are pelting it with frozen spray-drops ten miles from land, you little know what a remarkable gift he has in that way!

And the Christmas dinners they have there! The goose—the brown, crisp, juicy, melting roast goose! What would that dinner be without that goose? What, indeed! But once—they turn pale at that light-house now when they think of it—once they came very near having no goose for Christmas.

It came about in this way: Papa—ah, if you could only hear Baby Deb tell about it! It would be worth the journey. But you cannot, of course, so never mind. Papa Stoughton—the light-house-keeper, you know—had lost all his money in a savings bank that had failed early in that December.

A goose is really not an expensive fowl; but if one has not the money, of course one cannot buy even a cheap thing. Papa Stoughton could not afford a goose. He said so—said so before all the family.

Ike says that the silence that fell upon that family then was painful to hear. They looked one at another with eyes so wide open that it's a mercy they ever could shut them again.

"No goose," at last cried Tom, who was the oldest.

"No goose!" cried the others in chorus. All except Baby Deb, who was busy at the time gently admonishing Sculpin, her most troublesome child, for being so dirty. Baby Deb said "No doose!" after all the others were quiet. That made them all laugh. However, when Papa Stoughton explained how it was, they saw it as plainly as he did, and so they made no complaint. Only Tom fell a-thinking, and when the others saw what he was doing they did the same; the difference being that Tom was trying to think what could be done to get the goose anyhow, and they were trying to think what he was thinking about, so that they could think the same.

All except Baby Deb, of course; who being only four years old, gave herself very little concern about the thought of others. Her own thoughts took all of her time.

One thing became very certain. There was very little prospect of clear

"We must have a goose," said Tom.

"Oh!" gasped his audience, moved by mingled amazement and admiration.

Tom looked at them with great firmness and dignity.

"Ever since I was born," he went on, "we have had a roast goose for Christmas."

Ever since he was born! It might have been a hundred years before, from Tom's tone and manner, and the audience was tremendously impressed.

"And," continued the orator, "we must have one now. We will have one now."

They almost stopped breathing.

"I have a plan." They shuddered and drew nearer. "We all must contribute!"

"Oh!" in chorus.

"Do you want goose, Sue?"

"Yes, indeed."

"You, Sal?"

"Yes."

"Ike?"

"Do I? Well!"

"Sam?"

"Yes, sir."

"Me, too," said Baby Deb, with great earnestness; for it was clear to her that it was a question of eating, and she did not wish to be left out.

"Of course, you, too, you daisy dumpling," said Tom. "Now, then," he continued, when order was restored, "what shall we contribute? I'll give my new sail-boat. That ought to bring 50 cents."

"I'll give my shells," said Sue, heroically.

"My sea-mosses," sighed Sally.

"You may take my shark's teeth," said Ike.

"And my whale's tooth," said Sam.

The sacrifice was general; the light-house would yield up its treasures.

"All right," said Tom. "Now let's tell father."

And father was told, and for some reason he pretended to look out of the window very suddenly—but he did not, he wiped his eyes. And Mamma Stoughton rubbed her spectacles and winked very hard, and said:

"Bless their hearts!"

"And what does Baby Deb contribute?" said Papa Stoughton, by way of a little joke.

"I dess I's not dot nuffin," was Baby Deb's reply, when the matter was explained to her, "cept 'oo tate Stulpin."

Oh, what a laugh there was then! For if ever there was a maimed and demoralized doll, it was Sculpin. But Baby Deb was hugged and kissed as if she had contributed a lump of gold instead of a little bundle of rags.

Papa Stoughton and Tom were to go out to the main-land the first clear day to buy the goose; but—alas!—a storm came on, and they were forced to wait for it to go down. It did not go down; it grew worse. The wind shrieked and moaned and wrestled with the lonely tower, and the waves hurled themselves furiously at it, and washed over and over the island, and no boat could have lived a moment in such weather.

If a goose be only a goose, no matter; but if it be a Christmas dinner!

Ah, then!

Yes, they had good reason to feel dismal in the light-house. It was no wonder if five noses were fifty times a day flattened despairingly against the light-house windows. Yes, six noses, for even Baby Deb was finally affected; and, though she did not know the least thing about the weather, she, too, would press her little nose against the glass in a most alarming way, as if she thought that pressure was the one effective thing.

It took some time for Baby Deb to realize the importance of having a goose for Christmas; but when she had grasped the idea she became an enthusiast on the subject. She explained the matter to her dolls, and

was particularly explicit with Sculpin, with whom, indeed, she held very elaborate and almost painful conversations.

One thing became very certain. There was very little prospect of clear

weather within a week, and it lacked only three days of Christmas. The others gloomily gave up hope, but not so did Baby Deb. The truth was, she had a plan, and you know when one has a plan one has hope, too.

Mamma Stoughton had only recently been having a series of talks with Baby Deb on the important question of prayer, and it had occurred to Baby Deb that the goose was a good subject for prayer. It was a very clear case to her. The goose was necessary. Why not ask for it, then?

The great difficulty was to find a secret place for her devotions, for the family very well filled the light-house, and Baby Deb had understood that prayers ought to be quietly and secretly made.

The place was found, however. Just in front of the light-house was a broad ledge of rock, generally washed by the waves, but at low tide, even in this bad weather, out of water. The other children had been forbidden to go there because it was dangerous, but no one had thought of cautioning Baby Deb. So there she went, and in her imperfect way begged hard for the goose.

Christmas Eve came, and still there was no goose. Baby Deb was puzzled; the others were gloomy. Still Baby Deb would not give up. It would be low tide about seven o'clock. She knew that, for she had asked. She would make her last trial. She had hope yet; but as the others knew nothing of her plans, they had absolutely no hope. To them it was certain that there could be no Christmas goose.

Seven o'clock came, and Baby Deb crept softly from the room and downstairs. She opened the great door just a little bit, and slipped out into the darkness. Really did slip, for it was very icy on the rocks, and she sat down very hard. However, she was very chubby and did not mind it. She crawled cautiously around to the big rock, the keen wind nipping her round cheeks and pelting her with the frozen drops of spray. She knelt down.

"Oh! please, dood Lord, send us a doose. We wants a doose awful. Won't you, please, dood Lord?"

Thud! fell something right alongside of her.

"Oh! What's dat?" she exclaimed, putting her hand out. "Why, it's a doose!" she cried, with a scream of delight, as her hand came in contact with a soft, warm, feathery body.

She forgot to give a "thank you" for the goose; but she was thankful, though not so very much surprised. She really had expected it.

It was a heavy load for Baby Deb,

but she was excited and did not notice it. She made her way into the light-house, and, step by step, pater, pater, she went upstairs and burst, all breathless, into the sitting-room, crying exultantly:

"It's tumbled, it's tumbled," as the great goose fell from her arms upon the floor.

Well! if you think they were not surprised, you know very little about the Stoughton folks. What they said, nobody knows. They all talked at once. But by and by Papa Stoughton had a chance to be heard.

"Where did you get it, Baby Deb?" he asked.

"Why, I played Dod for it!" answered Baby Deb.

"Paid Dod?" exclaimed Papa Stoughton.

"Paid Dodd?" chorused the family.

"Es," responded Baby Deb, convincingly. "Dod—ze dood Lord. I played to him. He send it to me, des now."

More questions and more of Baby Deb's exclamations revealed the whole story. Funny folk, those Stoughtons, but they spent the next ten minutes in wiping their eyes and hugging and kissing and making up new pet names for Baby Deb.

Papa Stoughton did say to Mamma Stoughton that night, as they were going to bed:

"A wild goose. It was blinded by the bright light, and broke its neck by flying against the glass. And, after all, who shall say that 'the good Lord' did not send it?"

At all events, not a word of explanation was said to Baby Deb, and no one contradicted her when she said at dinner next day:

"Dod's doose is dood."—St. Nicholas.

It is announced that a New York thief is a descendant of Henry Clay. This cannot elevate him to the plane of the morally pure kleptomaniac. If he really descended from Clay, the descent has been too great and rapid to leave any room for pride, and if he did not descend from Clay he is untruthful as well as light-fingered, and not bettering his case at court.

Victoria says so many poets are putting forth their claims for those bits of wine and that pension that she will not appoint a new laureate just now.

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

Beneath the blue Judean sky Three crowned kings swiftly strode. Each with his gaze fast fixed upon A star that brightly glowed. They wandered o'er the chilly plain. Their feet were weary sore; They sought a King long, long foretold. The glory on His face. Soft raiment, jewels rich and rare, And ointments subtle sweet They carried in their hands to lay Low at His royal feet.

They heard with awe such music pour As ne'er reached mortal ear— The angels chanting strong and deep— Sphere calling upon sphere. Lower and lower swung the star Within the azure air. Three crowned kings trembled at the sight, And followed swiftly where It hung above a stable shed, With rays effulgent, mild. Where, housed with loving herds, they found The mother and the Child.

Three crowned kings fell upon their knees With meekly reverent grace; They knew Him by the ring-lit brow, The glory on His face. Lo! we have found Him whom we sought: We know Him by the sign, But how unmeet this lowly place! How rude and coarse a shrine! They spread their costly treasures there— About sweet Mary's knee, And there the Christ was first was said For Him the one in three.

And e'en as on that Christmas eve, Long centuries ago, We seek Him whom the three kings sought, We have not far to go. For where the poor and needy are, The weary ones and weak, We find Him whom the seers foretold, The King whom nations seek, And who so doth His Christmas feast With the cold and hungry share, Lo! he will find the Christmas King Partaking with them there. —Inter Ocean.

Invited me to spend Christmas with 'em, eh?" said old Mr. Knott, pausing in his task of soldering a new tin bottom into a superannuated wash boiler. "Well, it's the first one of our relations as has ever took so much trouble as that for us, eh, old woman?"

Mrs. Knott, who might have formed no bad model for the Witch of Endor, as she bent over the fire of sticks, in her old red hood, from which escaped gray elflocks innumerable, uttered a significant snort which might have been construed into almost any meaning.

"What d'ye s'pose they expect to get out of us now?" demanded the old man. "He's your own sister's son, Hezekiah," said the woman. "Sisters' sons ain't different from other folks, as I knows on," said Hezekiah Knott succinctly. And this 'ere's a selfish world. "Ain't many people selfisher than you and I be," observed Priscilla, his wife. "But it beats me what they should waste a two-cent postage stamp on askin' you and me to come and eat a Christmas dinner with 'em for!" said the old man. "Me, as is in the rag business, and you as is only my wife!"

"It's just possible they wanted to see us," suggested Mrs. Knott, who by this time had blown the fire into a full, uncompromising blaze, and now leaned back against the door-way, satisfied with the result of her efforts. "Tell that to the marines," was the comment of her incredulous husband.

Hezekiah Knott, who was a silent, philosophical sort of a woman, toiled away in her kitchen, scouring up the rusty pots and kettles which Hezekiah brought home, cleaned the shabby suits that were given in exchange for fresh tinware and crockery, and presided over the sort of second-hand store, which, after awhile, Hezekiah set up by way of disposing of his surplus wares. And in time people got into the way of going to "Knott's place" for cheap goods, second-hand articles, and all manner of odds and ends. Prices were always reasonable there—the articles were varied and unique—and there is no one who likes better to save money than your average country farmer.

The Baptist minister had surrounded himself with the "I-am-holier-than-thou" atmosphere, the storekeeper had undoubtedly the advantage of gentility, but it is questionable whether, after all, old Hezekiah was not the happier of the three. Day after day he was on the road. He knew the orchard where the reddest apples grew, the copes where bubbled out the clearest springs, the shadowy thickets where the brown-coated chestnuts rattled down at the touch of the earliest frosts.

In his quaint way he studied Nature, and rejoiced in her mysteries, and cared little that he was outlawed by his kith and kin. And those were not altogether wrong who declared that he shouted "Ra-a-gs—old ra-a-gs—bottles and tin-a-ware!" all the louder when he came past the stiff lilac bushes of the parsonage garden, and trudged beneath the shadow of the country store where his brother practiced the great principles of "exchange and barter."

But Jonathan, the only son of the old man's only sister, had always surprisingly delighted in the mysterious contents of the basement where these second-hand goods were packed away. He had helped his uncle tinker up the old clocks, mend the battered tea-kettles and saucepans, and sort out from the rag-heap all that promised to be capable of some rejuvenation. When he married the district school teacher, however, Hezekiah shook his head doubtfully.

"We've seen the last of Jonathan now," says he. "Mary Mix'll be a deal too genteel to let him associate 'long of us any more." But here on the top of all this came the invitation to the first Christmas dinner in the young couple's new home.

It had not, however, been sent without some discussion. "What!" Mary had exclaimed. "Invite the old rag-and-bottle man?" "He's the jolliest old chap you ever knew, Mate," pleaded the bridegroom. "And Aunt Viney's a regular brick. I wish you could see the big ginger cookies she used to bake for me."

"But if they come, Uncle William and Uncle John will keep away," argued Mary. "Let 'em," was the curt reply. "Uncle Kiah's the best of the lot, according to my way of thinkin'."

So Mary acquiesced in her husband's wishes, and the invitation was duly written and dispatched. "It's rather a joke, you an' me bein' invited out, old woman," said Hezekiah. "Well, go, sha'n't us? Hev' we anything fit to wear?" "I guess we can make out," said Mrs. Knott.

"And I'll tell ye what," said Hezekiah, "we won't be-beat in manners, not by nobody. We'll send a Christmas present to the bride. There's that old cast-iron wood-stove that I bought at Hound's Hollow, with the bunches of grapes on the door. She shall have that."

"La, Hezekiah!" said Mrs. Knott, "what do you suppose she cares for an old second-hand rattle-trap like that? It's mor'n likely she's got all the stoves that she wants."

"We are so glad to welcome here," said she. "A merry Christmas, aunt and uncle."

"Hal-loo!" said Knott, around him. "So you started did ye?" "Yes, Uncle Kiah," said Jonathan. "I started it. Do you suppose"

wanted to give my relatives a welcome, eh?" Uncle Kiah flicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth. "Dunno nothin' about that, he. 'All I know is that you've up your Christmas present, doin' up orders this sort o' way."

"Eh?" said Jonathan. "Uncle, what do you mean?" Mary. Uncle Kiah stamped around room and tore his hair in an effort of rage. "The fools ain't all dead yet!" he; "that's plain enough. I'd not to give you and your wife a hundred-dollar bond for a Christmas gift—and I packed it into the stove-pipe, with a lot of waste-paper to make sure there shouldn't be no mistake about your gettin' on it, so it's gone up chimbley, with the oil of the sparks and smoke!"

Jonathan grew lividly pale. For a moment the Christmas seemed to have faded out of all hearts. For a moment only, however. Viney came promptly to the rescue. "You're right there, Hen Knott," said she. "The fools all dead, so long's you're left for nobody but a fool would thought of tuckin' hundreds of bonds up into the elber of a stove-pipe. And it's lucky for and these young folks here happened to want a little waste paper to wrap round this 'ere old in my basket, and took the stouther the stove-pipe—ain't it no?"

She extended the basket to Knott. Old Hezekiah pounced on it like a starved cat on a mouse, dragged the paper wrapping forth. "Here it is now—the very hundred-dollar bond!" he shrieked, waving triumphantly above his head, merry Christmas! Hooray, Jonathan—a merry Christmas! Old woman to his wife, "you're the sensiblest the lot!"

And so they all sat down to the first Christmas dinner that Mr. Knott had ever cooked—with bright faces and joyful hearts. "Uncle," said Jonathan, "how many Mary and I ever thank you for your generous present?" "Don't say nothin' more about said Uncle Kiah. "You're the"

one of our relations as ever invited to spend Christmas—and I guess can afford to make you a present, old woman?" And Aunt Viney smiled a broad smile. —Young Ladies' Bazar.

A UNIQUE feature of the play was recorded in Idaho one citizen wagged his wife three miles. The lady was what aggrieved. She averred that put her up against three miles of reflection that her womanhood would not permit her to overlook a fair valuation she was worth. In four miles that ever kicked to a position wherein public sentiment sustained her, and the bet was declared off.

(WALTER BESANT has laid aside novels for a time and is working on one-act comedy. The average man is never feels so like the farmer as was trying to plow with dogs at a basket in the other. "Will you please to accept some pretty old china as we've took in trade." M. y came forward with a beaming smile and both hands hid out. Is there not such a thing as too present to put in love?)