

THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING.

I see ghostly light I'm
 sitting among of
 long dead Decem-
 bers.
 While the dread
 shapes are fitting in
 and out among the
 eaves.
 On my heartstone in
 mad races, and I
 marvel, for in seem-
 ing
 I can dimly see the
 faces and the scenes
 of which I'm dream-
 ing.
 O golden Christmas
 days of yore!
 In sweet anticipa-
 tion
 I lived their joys for
 days before
 Their glorious reali-
 zation.
 And on the dawn
 Of Christmas morn
 My childish heart was knocking
 A wild tattoo,
 As 'twould break through
 As I unhook my stocking.
 Each simple gift that came to hand,
 How marvelous I thought it!
 A treasure straight from Wonderland,
 For Santa Claus had brought it.
 And at my cries
 Of glad surprise
 The others all came flocking
 To share my glee
 And view with me
 The contents of the stocking.
 Years sped—I left each well-loved scene
 In Northern wilds to roam,
 And there, mid' tossing pine trees green,
 I made myself a home.
 We numbered three
 And hither we were,
 At adverse fortune knocking
 And Christmaside
 By our bedside
 Found hung the baby's stocking.
 Aisel within our home to-night
 No sweet young voice is ringing,
 And through its silent rooms no light,
 Free, childish step is springing.
 The wild winds rave
 O'er baby's grave
 Where plump plums are rocking,
 And crossed at rest
 On marble breast
 The hands that filled my stocking.
 With misty eyes but steady hand
 I raise my Christmas chalice;
 Here's to the children of the land
 In cabin or in palace.
 May each one hold
 The key of gold
 The gates of bliss unblocking,
 And hands be found
 The whole world round
 To all the Christmas stocking.
 —Ladies' Home Journal.

OLD FATHER TIME RECEIVES THE NEW YEAR.



HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

How to Keep Crackers.
 Complaints are frequently heard that crackers bought at grocery stores are soggy and stale tasting, even when comparatively fresh.
 The fault, says the Mercantile Journal, is in the way they are kept. Crackers demand a warm, dry place, and they should not be stored near oil, fish or other strong-smelling goods. Great care should be exercised by grocers in this respect. The cracker trade is one of the most important features of a general grocery business, and it should be taken care of. Crackers should be purchased in small quantities so that they will not have time to get stale before being sold. They should be kept, as stated, in a warm, dry place, and customers should be advised to place them in the oven a few minutes before using. This will restore their crispness, even though they have become damp and soggy.

Scalloped Oysters.
 Take two dozen large salt water oysters. Put them in a pan in their own juice and place on the fire until they boil, then drain. Take five ounces of best table butter, one large tablespoon of flour; mix, and let it simmer for a half minute without getting brown. Then take half of the oyster juice and add an equal portion of cream, and let it cook to thick sauce; mix it with the oysters, and flour and butter. Season with salt, a little cayenne pepper, a soupcon of nutmeg and a little Worcestershire sauce. Wash and clean thoroughly a dozen large, deep oyster shells; then put about six oysters in a shell; sprinkle with parmesan cheese, bread crumbs and a little fresh butter. Bake for ten minutes in a brisk oven and serve immediately.

Corn Custard Pie.
 One cup of grated corn, half a cup of milk, salt and pepper (cayenne) slightly, butter the size of a walnut, one rounded tablespoonful of cornstarch and the yolks of two eggs. Stir the cornstarch into the milk, then add the other ingredients. Bake with an undercrust only and cover with a meringue, to which add a pinch of salt and the same quantity of cream tartar; no sugar. Serve as an entree, not as a dessert.

Hints.
 To every fifty pounds of fresh sausage or pudding meat use fourteen ounces of salt and four and a half ounces of black pepper, and herbs to suit taste.

Another Year Is Dawning.
 Another year is dawning!
 Dear Master, let it be,
 In working or in waiting,
 Another year with Thee,
 Another year is leaping,
 Upon Thy loving breast
 O ever-deepening trustfulness,
 Of quiet, happy rest.

Don'ts About Gifts.
 Don't above all things ask the giver whether you may exchange her gift.
 Don't forget that it is the inward spirit that makes the real value of the offering.
 Don't express dissatisfaction with a gift, no matter how great your disappointment.
 Don't above all things be guilty of making a list of articles you desire. This is a species of polite blackmail.
 Don't, even in your innermost self, speculate as to whether your gift will bring a return, and above all a return in monetary value.

Sticky Dough.
 Rich cookie dough may be prevented from sticking to the baking board by making a piece of unbleached muslin, stretch it over the baking board so there will be no wrinkles; dust it well with flour, and roll out the dough. Try this method, and making cookies will not try the patience half as much.

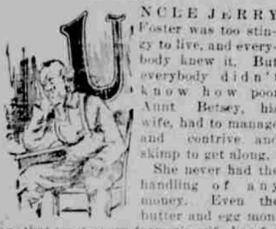
Sickroom Talk.
 For cramps or pains in the stomach, For a few drops of essence of camphor.
 For binding up cuts and wounds always use linen, not cotton, as the fibers of cotton are flat and apt to irritate a sore place, while those of linen are perfectly rounded.
 For tired feet put a handful of common salt into four quarts of hot water. Place the feet in the water while it is hot as it can be borne. Then rub the feet dry with a rough towel.
 For making a clear complexion stir two teaspoonfuls of flour of sulphur into half a pint of new milk. Let it stand a while, and then rub the face over with it a short time before washing.

Will Receive Calls.
 "Do you expect to receive calls on New Year's day?" asked Willie Hecolar.
 "Yes," answered Mamma Hollerton; "I'll have to. The telephone exchange where I work wouldn't give me the day off. Isn't it mean?"—Washington Star.

A Clincher.
 Mrs. Cobwigger—You are to ask only one more question the whole evening, Freddie—Then, ma, if Santa Claus really brings the presents why am I not to look out of the window if an express wagon drives up to the door?—Judge.

A Definition of Christmas.
 Sunday School Teacher—Johnny, what does Christmas mean? Johnny—My pa says Christmas means swapping a lot of things you can't afford for a lot of things you don't want.—Lida.

UNCLE JERRY'S CHRISTMAS.



UNCLE JERRY
 Foster was too stingy to live, and everybody knew it. But everybody didn't know how poor Aunt Betsey, his wife, had to manage and contrive, and skimp to get along.

She never had the handling of a penny. Even the butter and egg money, that most every farmer's wife has for her own use, all went into Uncle Jerry's pockets; and if she wanted a new gown for a bonnet or a pair of shoes—she hadn't better say if she wanted 'em, but if she must have 'em, and there wasn't no possible way for him to skin out o' gettin' 'em—then Uncle Jerry would go to the store with her and buy 'em and pay for 'em, just as if she was a child or an idiot, and incapable o' deatin' business on her own hook.

If Aunt Betsey hadn't had the best disposition in the world, she wouldn't stood it all them years. As it was, it wore on her, and told on her fearful. Though Uncle Jerry was one o' the richest men in town, she might 'a' been the wife o' the poorest and miserablest, so fur's any outward indication was concerned—or inward indications, either—for she was always half starved, and wadn't nothin' but skin and bones, as you might say.

Uncle Jerry grew wuss 'n' wuss, and come along towards Christmas he got a brand-new crocheted for savin' into his head. It was a family devotion one mornin', just before the readin', that he drugged it to his wife. He made the place in Nehemiah—he always read the long chapters in fall and winter—and puts his thumb to keep it, then, drawin' on a long face, he looks at Aunt Betsey over his spectacles, and says her:

"Wife, I are of a notion that this 'ere Christmas business is all foolishness! Seems if it must be a sin in the sight o' the Lord to eat so much one day in the year. I don't believe it's necessary to make plis 'n' gluttons of ourselves in order to have thankful hearts; and if we go to meetin', and so on, why ain't that enough? I reckon we'll sell the turkey this year and have our usual dinner, 'long's there ain't no children comin' home, nor nothin'."

Aunt Betsey set there with her hands in her lap, not exactly thinkin', but kinder ponderin' and grievein'. And when they kneeled down to pray she kept on wonderin' more'n ever. She wondered what she had to be thankful for, anyway. "Now, if Ellen could come home!" Ellen was their daughter, all the child they had in the world, and she lived so far away that she couldn't afford to come home and bring the children—bein' she was a widder and poor—but, oh, how her mother did want her see her! "What did she care about turkey and plum puddin' if Ellen and the children couldn't eat it with her? Yes, the money might as well be put in

any rate, all to once she give out and had to go to bed. The next mornin' she couldn't get up, but Uncle Jerry didn't think much about it, s'posed she'd be up bimoby; but when he come in to dinner, there lay his wife just the same, as if she hadn't no thoughts o' gettin' up.
 He didn't know what under the sun to do, but he knew he must do somethin', so he bet a brick and put to her feet, and was just making a mustard plaster to put on her somewhere when Mis' Hopkins happened in.
 She see how it was with Aunt Betsey in a minute. She's awful cute about some things, Mis' Hopkins is, and she ain't afraid o' no man livin'.

"Uncle Jerry," says she, matter of fact as you please, "your wife's a very sick woman, and she's goin' to die right off, I'm afraid, 'less we hyper round and do somethin', and do it quick. But fast I'd better step over 'n' fetch the doctor."

Uncle Jerry was wonderful took down. All of a sudden he realized that his wife was invaluable to him; he felt that he

has took to her bed in the prime o' life and don't want her no longer. For I find that's about the way it is with her."

When Uncle Jerry came back he went up to the bed and sat down beside his wife and looked at her. She was asleep, and Mis' Hopkins thought he must 'a' realized how pitiful she looked for she seen him draw his hand across his eyes two or three times on the fly.
 Bimoby he got up and went out to Mis' Hopkins, and says her:
 "What was the doctor's orders? What can I do to help ye?"
 "He ordered nourishin' food, and wine, and so on," she says, "and I guess the fast thing you may kill a chicken, if you're munter, and git it ready for the broiler; then go over to Jim Jackson's and buy a quart or so of that oldest grape wine o' his'n. She'll be awake by the time you get back with it, I guess."

Uncle Jerry didn't so much as wink at mention of the chicken, but when she spoke o' the wine so offend and matter o' course he drawed in his breath once or twice kinder spasmodically, but he never opened his head.
 When the broth was ready Uncle Jerry asked if he might take it in; so Mis' Hopkins filled one of the chiny bowls that was Aunt Betsey's ma's and set it in a plate with a cracker or two, and he took 'em along.

The broth was good and strong, and when Aunt Betsey tasted out she looked at her husband real kinder scart, and says her:
 "Where did this 'ere come from?"
 And he laughed and says: "It's made out o' one o' our best Plymouth Rocks; is it good?"
 A wonderin' quiverin' smile hovered for a minute on to her poor face, she didn't know what to make o' it. But when he lugged in the jug of wine and poured out a hull half a tumbler full and handed it to her, her eyes fairly stuck out of her head with astonishment.
 "Drink it; it'll do you good," says he, "it's Jim Jackson's oldest grape wine you've heard tell on."

"Why—why, husband!" she whispered, "didn't it cost an awful sight o' money?"
 "Only \$3 a gallon," he answered, tryin' to smile, but lookin' rather ghastly. She sipped it slow, eyein' him over the top o' the tumbler as she done so; but pretty soon she set it down and spoke again, awful mechin', and pealin', her lips tremblin' as if she was going to cry.
 "I'm sorry to put you to so much expense, husband. I'm afraid—I'm afraid it ain't worth while!"
 He got up and blowed his nose with all his might and main.
 "I want you to get well, Betsey. I want you to get well!" he managed to say.
 The strangest expression come into her face you ever see in any creature's. Then, as if struck by somethin' in his looks, she

seemed to get a dim idee that he was different, and she tried to make out how it was, but couldn't, and, bein' too tired and weak to think much, she just shut her eyes and ziv it all up.
 That night Uncle Jerry harnessed the old mare and went over and got Mary Buell to come 'n' stay with 'em a spell. Mary's an excellent good hand in cases o' sickness, and bein' an old maid, she's always ready to go and dew for the neighbors. She's a prime nuss and housekeeper, and she's good company, too—jest the kind o' person to cheer Aunt Betsey up, you know. Well, it come along the day

fore Christmas, and Aunt Betsey lay back in her easy chair in the cheerful sittin' room. A pitcher full of late fall flowers stood on the mantelshelf; a cracklin' fire was burnin' in the open fireplace, and the old tabby cat lay before it on the rug, purrin' for all she was with a perfect pictur' o' content.

The door was open into the kitchen, and she could see Mary steppin' round about her work, gettin' ready for to-morrer. She could smell the stuffin' for the turkey, and the plum puddin' bakin' in the oven. She knew there was a hull shelf full o' pies in the pantry—she see 'em yesterday—six mince, six punkin, three apple and three cranberry tart. She thought it was too many to make at once; and seemed so strange. She sighed and laid her head back, with the old look on her face. She was thinkin' of Ellen and the children.

She sat there, blamin' herself and thinkin' what a poor, weak kind of a mother she was, till the tears rolled down her cheeks. Then, all at once, she heard a noise outside.
 The stage had stopped, and there was the sound o' voices talkin' and laughin', and of feet hurryin' up the steps. Then the door opened—no, it was burst open—and in trooped a parcel o' children, and behind 'em, not fur behind, with her hands stretched out and the happy tears streamin' down her pretty face, come her daughter Ellen!

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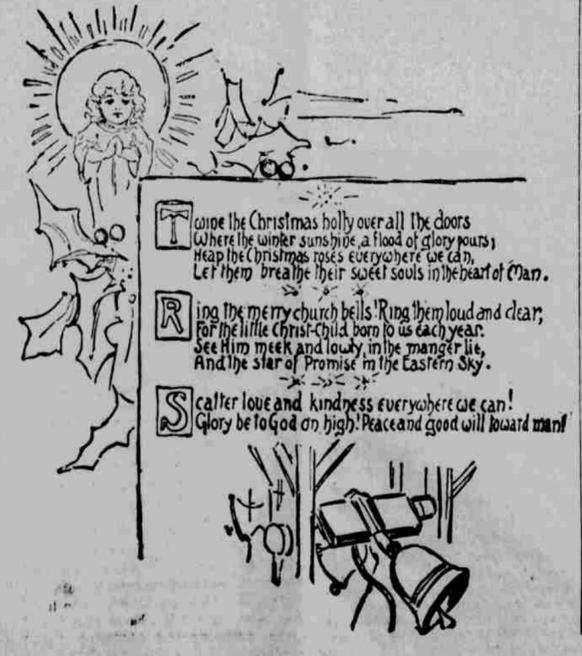
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Trope the Christmas holly over all the doors
 Where the winter suns hide, a flood of glory pours;
 Heap the Christmas roses everywhere we can,
 Let them breathe their sweet souls in the heart of Man.

Ring the merry church bells; Ring them loud and clear,
 For the little Christ-child, born to us each year.
 See him meek and lowly in the manger lie,
 And the star of Promise in the Eastern Sky.

Scatter love and kindness everywhere we can!
 Glory be to God on high! Peace and good will toward man!

"FOUR WIFE IS A VERY SICK WOMAN."
 the bank; she didn't care." So she thought on and on, not hardly sensin' the prayer a mite.
 She went out to her work in the kitchen, feelin' all broke up. She didn't know why she should be, 'less she'd been kinder secretly hopin' to have Ellen and the children. Christmas was more than she could bear. There wadn't nothin' to her, no time, as you might say, and this was the last straw o' he camel's back. T