

# The Home Department.

..Conducted by..

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## After Christmas.

I have lately heard a secret—  
Heard it, too, from truthful lips;  
Santa Claus, the sly old fellow,  
Makes his after-Christmas trips!  
In these trips, he has discovered  
Many things that cause him pain—  
Discontent, and hate, and envy,  
Thoughtful love bestowed in vain.

He has seen his choicest presents  
Torn and broken and defaced;  
Santa Claus, tho' rich and lavish,  
Frowns on willful, wanton waste.  
All unknown, he watched some children,  
In their pleasant home, at play  
With the very toys he gave them  
On the latest Christmas day.

Johnnie's horse was kicked and beaten,  
Just because it could not neigh!  
Thought that Santa should have  
brought him  
Two live horses and a sleigh!  
Katie wished her doll was larger,  
Wished its eyes were black, not blue;  
Finally, in anger, threw it  
'Cross the room—it broke in two!

Santa Claus looked grave and troubled,  
Shook his head and went away,  
"I'll remember this," he murmured,  
"On another Christmas day."  
Then he peered in dismal places,  
Where he was not wont to go;  
Where the little, hungry children  
Never any Christmas know.

And his heart was filled with sorrow  
That he could not help them all,  
While he thought in grief and anger  
Of the broken horse and doll.  
As he took his upward journey  
He was seen to drop a tear,  
And I almost know he whispered—  
"I'll remember this, next year."  
—Selected.

## In the Year's Twilight.

In the closing days of the old year,  
It is well to pass in review before us  
the doings of the twelve-month gone—  
to invoice, as it were, the possessions  
of our soul. What have we gained  
of the good? What set aside of the  
bad? Let us go away into the silence  
of self and, opening our ledgers, bal-  
ance accounts of the dead days. Upon  
which side of the sheet shall we write  
the over-plus? debit or credit?

"Soul, what hath it profited thee?"  
There have been a seed-time sowing,  
a summer growing, and autumn ripen-  
ing; what of the harvest? There have  
been a morning, a noontide and an  
evening; what of the night? Every  
hour of every day has its record. Good  
or bad, "it is written." We are always  
giving or taking; a lifting up or cast-  
ing down. By word or thought or deed,  
we are adding to or subtracting from  
the world's store of general good;  
helping or hindering human progress.  
Into the lives of others, as into our  
own, we are continually bringing the  
sunshine or casting the shadow; we  
are strengthening with our courage  
or enfeebling with our complaint.  
Have we fed the hungry, clothed the  
naked, or visited the "sick and im-  
prisoned?"

Let us ask ourselves all these ques-  
tions and more. No ear save ours  
may catch the reply. Let us honestly  
write down the answers; no eye save  
ours need dwell upon them. This is  
our business. Let us sit in stern  
judgment upon ourselves. When we  
have added and subtracted until the  
answer is clear, until we feel that,  
be what it may, it is written and must  
stand, let us look carefully and crit-

ically all adown the columns and try  
to understand clearly what has swelled  
this side, what has shrunken that; let  
us seek to know what has made the  
answer what it is.

If the balance is in our favor, let  
us rejoice, for thus we shall measure  
our soul's growth toward our stand-  
ard of excellence. Let us advance the  
standard to still greater heights and  
resolve to climb more sturdily yet.  
If the balance is against us—Let us  
not grieve overmuch about the irrevoc-  
able. The past cannot come back to  
us for correction. We should now  
know our weak spots, and should re-  
solve to strengthen ourselves on those  
points in the days to come. It is a  
useless waste to fret and mourn;  
rather, let us take up the tasks that

## Question Box.

The conductor of the Home De-  
partment will be glad to answer  
questions concerning matters of  
interest to Housekeepers. Make  
your questions as brief as possible  
and address all communications  
to "Home Department, The Com-  
moner, Lincoln, Nebr."

lie before us in the firm determination  
to live closer to our ideals, to so regu-  
late our future acts that our lives  
shall not be stumbling blocks to those  
about us. Let us cultivate hopefulness,  
cheerfulness, and the faith that makes  
of us willing tools in the hands of  
Him who doeth all things well.

It is well to have lived. It is better  
to know that we have yet time to right  
the wrong, to add to the growing good  
of humankind. It is best to devote all  
our energies to the work, not only of  
lifting others to a higher plane, but  
of lifting our own selves into a purer,  
stronger atmosphere, so that, when  
our call shall come, we can place our  
record in the hands to which it be-  
longs, and say, truthfully and con-  
tentedly, "I have made the best of  
the material entrusted to me."

To each, to all, may the New Year  
about to dawn be indeed a blessed  
extension of Time.

## Other People's Opinions.

It is a common failing for one to  
ask, in view of some humiliation hav-  
ing befallen us, "What will people  
think of us?" Did it never occur to  
you, dear Madam, or Sir, that people  
really think very little of you, "nor  
think that little long?" The world is  
so full of stirring events, great affairs  
and far-reaching questions, that it  
has no time to trouble over the hap-  
penings to the individual. Even one's  
closest friends can pause no longer  
than to utter a word of sympathy,  
while our enemies are generally after  
"bigger game." Very few people are  
saying or thinking anything about  
us, good or bad, unless we are ex-  
tremely out of the ordinary—and very  
few of us are.

Our little humiliations or hurts are  
like our petty triumphs—of very little  
consequence outside of our own door-  
yard. It is but a ripple, and will die  
out very close to the shore.

After all, why should we care what  
others 'think of us?' Have we no  
higher tribunal before which to try  
our case? What is the puny affair to

those who know but one side—perhaps  
not even that—of it, or whose knowl-  
edge consists solely of what some  
gossip has told them? In our own in-  
ner being should be found our judge  
and jury. Before our higher self  
should our cause be plead. If our own  
conscience approve, do you need a  
higher court? Can you not abide by  
the decision of your inner sense of  
right? If this inner consciousness dis-  
approve—if you feel, in your heart,  
that blame is yours, you should set  
about recovering your own self-re-  
spect. We should strive to have such  
confidence in our little world as will  
enable us to believe in the justice of  
their judgment passed upon actions,  
and then we should seek diligently to  
merit only sympathy and kindness at  
their hands, and if we do this, hold-  
ing firmly onto our own self-respect,  
it will not crush us to realize that the  
world has too many interests of its  
own to spare much time for the in-  
dividual.

## What Christmas Really Means.

When the need of observing the an-  
niversary of Christ's birth became ap-  
parent in the fourth century, there was  
nothing by which the date could be  
positively fixed. No one knew exactly  
when he was born. No shred of evi-  
dence shows that the date of his  
birth was even preserved in oral tradi-  
tion. At first, January 6, the day of  
his baptism by the prophet John, was  
fixed upon, but eventually December  
25 was chosen, when the days begin  
to grow longer and the nights to grow  
less, that thus, according to one tradi-  
tion, might be symbolized John's  
prophecy as the foreteller of the com-  
ing of the Sun of Righteousness—"He  
must increase, but I must decrease."

There seems to be little doubt, how-  
ever, that the change was actually due  
to the difficulty of commemorating  
both the birth and the baptism of  
Christ on the same day, and still more  
to the advantage of adopting an an-  
niversary already so deeply rooted in  
popular favor and so readily suscepti-  
ble of religious interpretation and de-  
velopment as was the festival known  
among the Romans as the Saturnalia,  
and among the nations of the north as  
Yule, which was held at the winter  
Solstice, and celebrated the turn of  
the year from the death and dark-  
ness of mid-winter to the life and  
light of returning spring. By an ob-  
vious and striking transition, the nat-  
ural pagan rejoicing at the approach-  
ing triumph of the sun over the cold  
and gloom became exalted Christian  
rapture at the rise of the Sun of  
Righteousness with warmth and com-  
fort for mankind.

In early times, the rays of the rising  
sun as they shot up and broadened out  
in the sky were believed to be the  
branches of a celestial light-tree, the  
leaves of which were the clouds, the  
sacred flowers, the mysterious light-  
ning flashes, and the golden fruit the  
sun itself, as well as the moon and  
stars. The small white clouds about it  
were swans and doves; the large black  
ones, eagles; and the forked lightnings  
were leaping goats and stags and coil-  
ing dragons and snakes. This is ex-  
emplified in the Christmas tree of to-  
day. At Yule, small fir-trees were  
adorned with animals and covered  
with candles to signify that the light-  
tree had begun to renew its growth;  
so, when Christmas supplanted Yule,  
these fir-trees became Christmas trees,  
representing the Heaven-sent tree of

Life, whose leaves are for the "healing  
of the nations," and whose glory is  
"the light thereof."—Ladies' Home  
Journal.

## St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus, as we  
love to call him, is the patron saint  
of childhood. He it was, who, under  
a different name, used to descend to  
earth on a white steed at Yule, and  
lead the annual army of departed souls.  
Later, he was supposed to lead only  
the souls of the unbaptised, who were  
all children. Finally, he exchanged  
his white steed for reindeer, born of  
the sun-stag on the celestial light-  
tree, and became the friend, not only  
of all departed children, but of all  
living ones, as well, to whom he still  
brings gifts of toys and sweetmeats  
at Christmas time. But in the process  
of his curious evolution from the pa-  
gan prototype of Death on the white  
horse to the Christian representative  
of the Christ-child, the giver of every  
good and perfect gift, both his nature  
and looks were changed, and he be-  
came the merry, kind-hearted, fur-clad  
being, "chubby and plump, a right jol-  
ly old elf," whose prancing reindeer,  
toy-filled sleigh, and beaming face  
thrill the children with delirious rap-  
ture on Christmas day.—Ladies' Home  
Journal.

## The Origin of the Stocking.

An ancient legend thus accounts for  
the custom of hanging up the Christ-  
mas stocking. While yet St. Nicholas  
was a pagan immortal, he became in-  
volved in a struggle with giants, in  
which his son slew a ferocious wolf  
by thrusting his foot, clad in a great  
shoe made by the poor from strips of  
leather given by the prosperous, into  
the monster's mouth. The shoe stood  
for the deeds of loving charity by  
which the wolf of want and sin and  
death is overcome. So, when the  
leader of departed souls came to earth  
on his white steed at Yule, the chil-  
dren placed their shoes, filled with  
oats for his horse, before their doors,  
and in the morning the shoes were  
found to contain apples and nuts in-  
stead of oats. In time, the more con-  
venient stocking was substituted for  
the clumsier shoe as the symbol of  
the happy hopefulness with which  
Santa Claus' yearly visits were ex-  
pected.—Ladies' Home Journal.

## For the Bath.

You must be exquisitely clean if  
your would be beautiful. One of the  
greatly-to-be-desired things in this  
life is a good complexion, and this can  
only be obtained by health and clean-  
liness. To be sure, you cannot bring  
back the bloom of sixteen to the  
cheek of forty-five, but you can in-  
duce a "ripened glory" to even the  
faded cheek of a grandmother by at-  
tending to your health and properly  
caring for the skin. To obtain the best  
results, one must have a good cir-  
culatory and respiratory system—the  
heart and lungs must do their part.

You cannot do without borax in the  
bath-room. Its uses are multifold.  
Sometimes it is the nostrils that need  
attention. Sniffing a borax solution  
every morning, letting a little of the  
wash trickle down the throat, is ex-  
ceedingly purifying, and will greatly  
benefit you if you have nasal or throat  
catarrh.

Salt is also excellent when used  
as a nose or throat wash, or as a  
cleanser for the teeth. Bathing weak  
eyes in salty tepid water is very  
strengthening—a teaspoonful of salt  
to a pint of water; it may be used  
stronger. It is recommended, also,  
for making eyebrows and eyelashes  
grow.

If you can secure the sea salt for  
your all-over bath, it is better than  
the common cooking salt, and to a