

Our Holiday Supplement

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

1886.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.

1887.

IN A CHRISTMAS STOCKING.

"I am going out!" Instantly there rose a clamor at Ethel Carrington's announcement. Going out in such a storm, surely she must be joking. But she was not, and soon left the room to prepare for a walk.

Mrs. Rokfort had gathered together a few choice friends to spend the holidays with her; it was the day before Christmas, and a furious northwest snow storm had been driving everything before it since the night previous, with no signs of abatement. Mrs. Rokfort and her guests had been satisfied to stay in doors, content with the warmth and luxury which surrounded them; and most of all with one accord sought the pleasant morning room.

As Ethel was seen departing some fifteen minutes later, they decried that it would not be long before she would be among them again; but in this they were mistaken, for as she traversed the garden walk, there was a hard, cold light in Miss Carrington's usually soft eyes.

Leon Rokfort had left the gay company about an hour before to write some letters, but his thoughts had gone so far astray that he had not been able to accomplish his mission. He had vibrated between his desk and the window, alternately grasping his pen, and then growing absent-minded he would find himself at the window thinking of Ethel Carrington.

"She is a flirt, she is a flirt," he had said to himself, over and over again, "and I will not notice her, not that I care seriously for her," he explained to himself, "but I so dislike to see women stoop to that sort of thing. However, I have no time to waste harping on that theme. I will write Wilson I accept his offers and that he may expect me on the 5th of January, not considered a very pleasant month to cross the ocean, but then— By Jove! who's that going out in this storm? It must be—yet it cannot. Why should any of our guests go out on foot to-day, least of all Miss Carrington?"

But after a few futile attempts he gave up trying to write and crossed the hall to the morning room. He observed that Ethel was not among the gay young people assembled there, and also noticing that Mr. Morbury was likewise absent, connected these two together, and decided that she was in some safe retreat flirting with him, for Morbury's devotion was evident to all.

Why did he call her a flirt? He had never remarked anything of the coquette about her; but then the world called her such because all the eligible young men—aye, and old ones, too, for that matter—fell in love with and wanted to marry her, and people said she was a coquette, so she went for one because they said so. She was very beautiful; to Rokfort she seemed cold; her smiles were frequent, and her manner particularly winning.

"Where is Ethel?" asked Mrs. Rokfort, coming into the room.

"Said she was going out."

"Gone out in this storm alone?"

"Yes, we saw her, but thought, of course, she would come right back."

"How long since?"

But Leon waited to hear no more; instantly he thought of that figure he had seen an hour or more ago, and which he had entirely forgotten. He rushed out of the room and hastily donning overcoat and hat he was out upon the street before he knew what he was going to do. He could scarcely expect to find her, as he hadn't the least notion in the world where she had gone. He walked hastily over to Wabash avenue, and seeing a passing cab hailed it and entered. He felt strangely affected, and could not have told himself why he was so anxious to find Ethel Carrington; surely there was no reason she should not go out if she chose. Arriving at the corner of State and Monroe, he alighted without definite purpose.

Meanwhile Ethel was hastening through the storm regardless of wind or snow; her mind was in a tempest, and the outward gale did not reach her, she wanted action to keep pace with her thoughts.

"Why should I care? What matters it what he thinks of me more than another? Why do they call me a flirt? I never cared so much before when others said it; because I was conscious of my own good will and regard for truth; that sustained me, for all the protestations in the world will not make people change their opinions, if they are determined not to. Then why should I take what he said so grievously? Only," with a little catching sob; "one would like everyone to think well of them." And in this train her thoughts ran on, over and over, round and round the subject they sped with ever increasing tumult and dissatisfaction, until she found herself on State street in the midst of hurrying crowds, in spite of weather the 24th of December is ever a busy day, before gaily decked windows.

"Please give me a penny?" came a wee voice by her side; looking down she saw a ragged child with a small purple hand held out to her.

"My dear child, what are you doing out in such a storm, at such a time?"

The short Winter afternoon was already yielding up its daylight; thought it was scarcely 4 o'clock the gas and electric lights blazed forth through the snow.

"Please, ma'am, my mother is sick an' I

want some money to buy her som'n to eat."

"Come in here and tell me all about it," said Ethel, taking her hand and leading her into a store.

Miss Carrington did not see a gentleman whom she brushed by and who gave a perceptible start as he perceived her, and stationed himself near the entrance so that he might see her when she came out; she was too intent on her mission.

After hearing a tale of poverty, sickness and distress, to which there are thousands of duplicates in all large cities, she interested herself in the child's behalf. She was utterly sick of dwelling so long on her own troubles, and entered with a zest and activity into the new project. As they went from store to store, purchasing many articles of use and luxury, Ethel felt her own heart grow light as she witnessed the joy of this little beggar

the child, who bounded nimbly along, joy having lent wings to her young feet and chased away her weariness, Ethel thought she heard a step behind her; she paused trembling and affrighted; she did not hear it again and she went on. After all, in a crowded tenement why should there not be many people going and coming all the time? But being unused to it and completely worn out with fatigue, she could not help feeling a vague alarm. At length she reached the top, where her small guide was awaiting her in a fever of anticipation.

Into a small back room she led the way, saying, as she opened the door:

"Ma, here's a real lady come to see you an' she's bought us lots of things."

It was utter darkness to Ethel, but the child had no difficulty in going about; she heard some one stir uneasily on a bed some-

earring. She was too petrified with terror to cry out, but before she had time to face her interceptor, a well-known voice rang sharply on the night air:

"Villain! unhand that lady."

The next moment she was free, and turning she beheld Leon Rokfort. She did not question why he was there, but a devout thankfulness rose in her heart at sight of him. The man wrenched himself away from Leon and sped down the street.

"Ethel, are you hurt?" he asked, tenderly, drawing her hand through his arm.

"No," she answered, wondering a little, in a vague way, why he should use her given name.

"I should have spoken sooner, but dreaded that I might frighten you."

"How came you here?" she asked, the strangeness of it coming upon her suddenly.

her up and put her in; he told the driver to make all possible speed to No. — Calumet avenue.

"Are you cold?" asked Rokfort, after awhile.

"No," she responded, stiffly, her teeth chattering as she spoke.

He took off his overcoat and told her to make use of it.

"Who is nonsensical now? put your overcoat on directly, you will take cold yourself."

"I beg you take it, I am very warm, but you have had shock to your nerves, as well as being overworked and excited, all of which are inducements for taking cold on such a night."

"I have plenty on; it would make no difference in my feelings; I pray you put it on."

"Miss Carrington, why will you be so perverse?" he said, with considerable irritation;

"you drive me to it," and without further parley he forcibly wrapped it around her against all her remonstrances, and to keep it on her he was obliged to hold his arm about her.

"You are rude, Mr. Rokfort," she said; "I did not expect such conduct from you."

"I hope you will forgive me," he said, not altering his position, "but I see no other way."

"I will not forgive you," she said, resentfully.

"As you please." They said no more until they arrived home.

There had been considerable wonder about Ethel's non-arrival, but there was no one about as they went in, for the dressing bell had rung just a moment before and all were in their rooms.

Miss Carrington had only been in her room a short time when there came a rap at the door, she opened it, and there stood Rokfort with a strong hot whisky in his hand.

"Here, drink this," he said imperatively, holding it toward her.

"How much trouble you take," she returned falteringly.

"Will you take it?"

"Yes."

"Thank you," he said, turning away.

It had been decided that they should all hang up their stockings Christmas Eve in the library, and celebrate in royal style.

At dinner Ethel was very quiet, and when questioned about her "running away," she called it, she said but little, only replying that she had met a friend.

Christmas morning dawned with glory, a pale pink flooded the eastern sky long before the lazy sun appeared, and heralded a bright, clear day. The high white snow drifts yielded a rich harvest to poor men and boys, who were out early with their shovels.

Ethel was the last to make her appearance, and was greeted with "Merry Christmas" on all sides. When they were all assembled in the drawing room, they started all together for the library and were as happy and eager as children.

Miss Carrington found down underneath everything in her stocking a letter. The hand was unfamiliar, she never remembered to have seen it before, but it gave her a singular sensation and she slipped it into her pocket, unseen save by one pair of eyes whose owner was closely watching her. At length she found an opportunity to escape from them all. She stole into the conservatory and hid herself behind a high tropical plant and sat down to read her letter.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

My Darling: I love you; I tried to blind myself to the fact, but to-day when I heard you had gone out in the storm alone, my heart rose up in protest; I felt almost as though I had driven you forth and that I might never see you again. After that which I have seen to-day I know that you would not wilfully hurt the meanness of God's creatures. Forgive and love me. I know I am unworthy and do not deserve you, but my soul cries out in longing and I implore you to be my wife. Will you take me for a Christmas present? Most anxiously,

LEON ROKFORT.

Her eyes were filled with tears as she finished, happy tears, and as she raised them murmuring: "I do love him, I know it now," she encountered those of Leon bent wistfully upon her.

"I could not wait for my answer," he said, advancing. "What is it to be?"

"This," she answered, extending her pretty, white hand. It was the left. He took it, thankfully, and pressed it to his lips.

A Mean Man's Christmas Present.

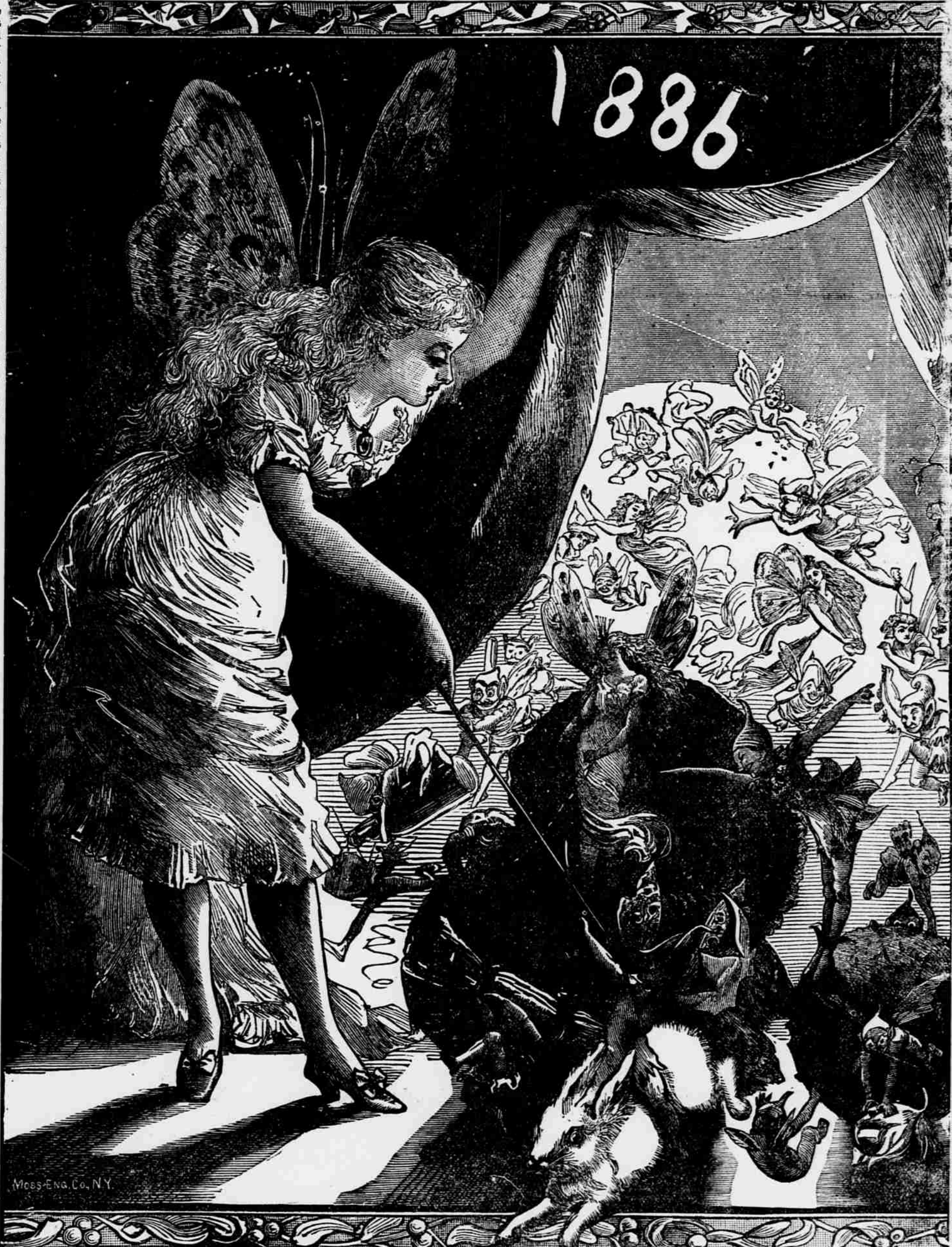
"What are you going to give your wife for a Christmas present this year?" asked a bluff man of his friend the other day.

"I've been thinking," he replied. "I hardly know what to do. You see I want a new overcoat, but if I give my wife much of a present I can't afford to get it. I've got a scheme, though, that I think will work. I'll give my wife a twenty-dollar gold piece on Christmas morning as a present, see? and in a few days I'll borrow it and buy a coat. How does that strike you, hey?"

Christmas presents as well as absents make the heart grow fonder.

Never look a Christmas gift in the mouth unless it is a pitifuler of beer.

No, my dear children, you do not always find stockings on the limbs of Christmas trees.



THE ENTREE OF CHRISTMAS.

child. She determined to see her home, although it was then quite dark. They were both heavily laden with parcels; it was a new sensation to the petted darling of wealth, and she felt exhilarated; how glad she was of her soreness of heart which had sent her forth to do some good in the world. Her small companion led along State street, then turned west at Harrison, then on again, then another turn. Ethel was quite lost; the street was dark and narrow, so far it seemed to her; she was getting chilled and tired after her unusual exercise, and now that the excitement was wearing off, but she bravely toiled on until they came to a miserable, rickety tenement, which was dimly discernible by a flickering gas lamp opposite. As she stumbled up the unlit staircase after

where and, a poor weak voice say:

"Thank you, mom, I can't get up or I would, do you, Lucy, light the candle."

Ethel only lingered long enough to render them as comfortable as she could, promising to call again soon. Her heart beat high with apprehension as she slowly felt her way down the dark stairs, and a shiver of cold and nervous dread shook her slight frame as she paused in the outer doorway; not a person was visible. It had ceased snowing and the light from the gas lamp caught the sparkle of the diamonds in her ears and tossed it in iridescent flashes into the eyes of a man who was standing in the shadow of the buildings. As she glided across the doorstep onto the sidewalk she felt herself grasped firmly by the arm and a hand clutched her

"Another time I will tell you, but now I must get you home as quickly as possible."

By this time they had reached Van Buren street, and found a carriage standing in front of the depot, which Leon hastily secured.

"No," Ethel protested, "I will go in the cars."

"Nonsense, you are cold now, and would freeze in the street cars."

"After the suffering I have witnessed to-day, I cannot allow myself to be comfortable hardly, being cold is no consequence. What is it compared to all the suffering among us?"

"That is simply ridiculous! Will making yourself sick, alleviate others' sufferings? Come, get in," he ordered peremptorily. But as he saw she still hesitated, he lifted