



OUR NOVEL CHRISTMAS-TREE.

My wife will be delighted. See, my dear, Here's one *you* little thought could be so near."

(*Hostess advances, and Host, turning again to Father Christmas*)—

"We hardly hoped to see your face again So soon, but trust you will remain And share our pleasures."

FATHER CHRISTMAS (*shaking hands with Hostess, and addressing her*)—

"Shall I not intrude?"

In coming thus will *you* not deem me rude?"

HOSTESS—

"My husband's friends are mine, but I, as well, Have known *you* longer than I care to tell. Where are the children? Kiss me, little Snow."

(*Kisses her, and turns to Frost*)

"Shake hands, my boy. Dear, dear, how they do grow!"

(*Fog, who has been hanging back, here steals into the room and hides, as well as he can, behind one of the unlighted trees, as if afraid of being seen by Father Christmas, who is now seated. The Hostess, assisted by servant, hands refreshments to Father Christmas, Frost, and Snow, but does not observe Fog in his hiding-place.*)

HOSTESS (*addressing Father Christmas*)—
"I am *so* grieved that such an honoured guest Was not in time to sup with all the rest."

FATHER CHRISTMAS—
"Don't name it, pray, I only can be blamed, And, at so late an hour, I feel ashamed To trespass on your kindness by a call."

HOSTESS—
"A hearty welcome meets you from us all; We're only too delighted you have come, And that you find us, with our friends, 'At Home.'"

CHAPTER III. THE TREE!

A LOUD knock is heard at the door. Host rises to open it, and holds up his hands in great astonishment at seeing Father Christmas, who enters, followed by Frost, Snow, and a servant carrying, *apparently*, heavy carpet-bag and parcels which are put down near the trees.

HOST (*shaking hands with Father Christmas*)—

"My very oldest friend! I do declare! A thousand welcomes! take this easy chair.

FATHER CHRISTMAS (*accepting refreshments*)—

"Thanks, thanks. Some lemonade, I take no wine.

Ah! Frost, my boy, I'm sure that cake is fine. You are a biting fellow, people say, And I have watched you, as you bit your way Through that large hunch, and made it disappear.

True, Winter is a hungry time of year; But if there's famine, you will be to blame; 'Tis well that others supped before you came."

(*They push away their plates and refuse more.*)

HOST—

"Our friends are begging that you'll say a word Or two to them, you are so seldom heard Amongst us."

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Certainly, though I did not expect to speak, But still I'll try."

(*He rises, and leaning on his staff, addresses the guests, Frost and Snow standing, one at each side of him.*)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"I'm Father Christmas, as no doubt you know;

I made your first acquaintance long ago. And, since that time, have paid an annual call,

True to the minute, upon one and all; And as I've journeyed on from place to place,

Could read a welcome upon every face. No cold rebuff, or, 'Master's not at home,' Has ever greeted me when I have come;

But all the children—bless each little dear! Counted each hour a day when I drew near, And whispered, as they helped to stone the plums,

'Shan't you be glad when dear old Christmas comes?'

(*Slowly and solemnly spoken.*)

"Still Father Christmas must one trial bear, Sometimes he comes and finds an empty chair;

Finds that the hand lies cold that used to clasp His own in friendship's warmest, kindest grasp."

(*Here Father Christmas's voice must tremble. He sighs, puts his hand before his face for a moment, and pauses. Then, apparently recovering himself, he continues.*)

"Away these tears, we meet now to rejoice, And, while I paused a moment, sure a voice Said 'Gone before, not lost; in realms above You'll meet to part no more with those you love.'"

(*Slight pause.*)

"Perhaps you wonder I am here to-night, Think New Year had put Christmas out of sight?

And so it had; but hearing there was fun Going on amongst you, I just thought 'I'll run In for an hour or two to make a call, And in my wallet take a gift for all.'

Besides, I do declare until to-night I've had no time to see the electric light. If I am late blame those two chicks of mine;

One (*points alternately to Frost and Snow, who laugh and chuckle*) froze the road, the other blocked the line.

I'll introduce you to these children two. You see them, my son Frost, my daughter Snow."

(*As their names are mentioned, Frost and Snow bend politely to the guests, whose instinctive good manners, of course, suggests the proper acknowledgment, and Father Christmas continues, shaking his fist at Frost.*)

"Frost is a sharp young rascal, full of tricks, Famous for putting housewives in a fix; He stops their pipes, makes their gaslights go jump,

Leaves not a drop of water in the pump. He numbs your fingers, pinches red each nose, And scatters chilblains upon all your toes."

(*While Father Christmas tells of his doings Frost should shrug his shoulders and laugh quietly, as if enjoying the recital of his tricks. Father Christmas then points to Snow and describes her.*)

"My daughter Snow is a much milder child; But even she is just a little wild. When Frost and Fog and she get out together I cannot say that they improve the weather:

They whirl about like elves, in maddest glee, And will not heed a single word from me. Wind gives a howl, Snow slaps you on the back,

Fills your eye corners, covers up your track; Bewildering Fog then leads you such a dance You can't tell Ludgate Hill from Spain or France."

(*Father Christmas glances round, catches sight of Fog, whose half-subdued laugh has interrupted him, and exclaims in astonishment.*)

"Why Fog is here! Come out, sir; make your bow."

(*Fog gives a sulky nod, but does not come any nearer.*)

"He is so thick you scarce can see him now; I'm glad to say he is no child of mine; He dulls our sports, and nightly takes the shine Out of our revels, throws his ugly cloak On all things—like the blackest smoke;

Soils Nature's face, and I've no doubt that he Would like to cover up our Christmas Tree. But here, mid brightness, joy, and social glee,

(*Shakes his fist at Fog*)

We bid defiance, Master Fog, to thee. Now I must stop; Frost has a tale to tell; And Snow perhaps may say a word as well."

FROST—
"Our father is like fathers everywhere; He has no word of praise for us to spare. He shakes his head (*imitates Father Christmas*), tells all we do amiss,

And shows his sore displeasure by—a kiss! He will say nothing for us when we're nigh, So, to defend my character I'll try: I froze the streams. Speak now, ye skaters, tell If Frost in Winter does not serve you well?

Boys! I appeal to you who love to glide O'er frozen surface—Who prepared the slide?"

(*Snow now begins, and, at the proper places, points to portions of the little winter scene to illustrate her words.*)

SNOW—
"I threw a carpet of the purest white O'er Nature's barrenness, and, out of sight Hid desolation—clothed the leafless trees With beauty, till the lightest breeze Brought glittering showers like diamonds all around.

I warmed the roots that lay beneath the ground. Ye boys and girls, I pray you, let me know Where would have been your snowballs but for Snow?"

FROST—
"I fairy pictures drew, with cunning hand, And flung them, broadcast, over all the land."

(*Fog growls out from his corner, from which he will not stir.*)

FOG—
"I hid a thief that ran from the police."

FATHER CHRISTMAS (*indignantly*)—
"A pretty thing to boast of, rascal! Peace! Fog (*eagerly, and as if to re-establish his reputation*)—

"I hid a bridge the robber should have crossed."

FROST—
"And but for me his life would have been lost. On the firm ice a safe retreat he found; But for that frozen brook he'd have been drowned."

FOG—

"I made old fogies cough and moan and wheeze; Crept up their noses, forced them all to sneeze."

SNOW—

"I did my best to save them from all harm, Snowed up their thresholds, and so kept them warm."

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Enough, my children, we have work to do, Our little gifts to share, dear friends, with you; They are but trifles, still, a straw will show To each observer how the wind doth blow; And these, though straws, to each and all will prove From Father Christmas they are marks of love."

(*Father Christmas unlocks his carpet-bag, and begins to take out the articles and lay them in order upon the table, from which the refreshments have been quietly removed. Hostess comes forward and offers to assist him in unpacking the various parcels.*)

HOSTESS—

"Shall I unpack your wallet? Sure 'twill ease Your task a little."

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Madam, if you please."

(*When all are arranged, Father Christmas takes a paper in his hand, on which are written the names of the guests. In a line with each name is that of the article to be given, and a little couplet is to be said, as it is handed over, by one of the characters—Father Christmas, Frost, or Snow, as the case may be.*)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Girls to my sob, boys unto Snow draw near, You'll find for each I've brought a souvenir."

(*As soon as the distribution of presents is commenced, Fog, feeling himself one too many, slips quietly away, and is seen no more in character, but gets rid of his cloak, and returns to the room in his own proper person to see the conclusion.*)

(*Pretty needle-case and needles for a girl.*)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"A stitch in time, some wise old people say, May save your taking nine another day."

(*Bottle of perfume for boy.*)

SNOW—

"Who sprinkles this upon his Sunday clothes Will scatter sweets around where'er he goes."

(*Baby doll for little girl.*)

FROST—

"A baby! This of children is the best, I'll guarantee she ne'er disturbs your rest."

(*A very harmless box of parlour fireworks, but with a terrible name.*)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"A Diabolical Box! For Fog alone This can be meant (*turns round to look for Fog, who is no longer visible*). I vow the rascal's gone!"

(*Gives it to the boy who has taken the part, and who is now amongst the guests.*)

(*Woollen muffler, for a gentleman.*)

SNOW—

"East wind, a spiteful, throat-attacking wight is; With this you may defy him and—bronchitis!"

(*Bottle of perfume for a girl.*)

FROST—

"'Sweets to the sweet.' That saying sure is true, I prove it when I hand this gift to you."

(*Packet of ornamental note paper for young lady.*)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Some pretty note paper, my dear, for you; The very thing to use for billets-doux!"

(*Chinese puzzle, for a boy.*)

SNOW—

"'A Chinese Mystery.' Ah well! No doubt A clever lad like you will find it out."

(Photographic album, for girl.)

FROST—

"A photographic album here you see;
Put in your friends, but keep a place for me."
(China box, shaped like a loaf, and containing
perfume, either for boy or girl.)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Only a small one; but I've heard it said
That half a loaf is better than no bread."
(Gentleman's purse.)

SNOW—

"If you put money in and take none out
You'll be a millionaire in time no doubt."
(Pair of China figures, for a little girl.)

FROST—

"These children never quarrel, scold, nor
fight;
No need for you to put them out of sight."
(Book, for either boy or girl.)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Within this little volume you will find
Something to please and to inform the mind."
(Box of bon-bons, for a child.)

SNOW—

"Don't eat too fast, for fear you should be ill,
And need to take a powder or a pill."
(A lady's purse, for Hostess.)

FROST—

"I hope you'll find in this, where'er you
live,
Money to lend, and spend, and some to give."
(Game—"Go-bang" or "draughts"—for a
boy.)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"This is a game, my lad, which you may play
In any place, at any time of day."
(Toy pistol, for a boy.)

SNOW—

"When out of use, upon your highest shelf
Deposit this, and—do not shoot yourself!"
(Pincushion, for girl.)

FROST—

"Pick up a pin where'er you see it lie,
Or you will want a pin before you die."
(Miniature hat-box, full of chocolate creams,
for boy.)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"If you have planned a summer trip to go,
This will be ready for your best *chapeau*."
(Lace tie, for girl.)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"A dainty tie, my dear; you'll put it on,
But wait till Frost, and Snow, and I are gone."
(Box of toy soldiers, for a boy.)

SNOW—

"Would that all battles might begin and end
As when you fight with these, my little friend."
(Writing case, for a girl.)

FROST—

"When using this to ask your friends to tea,
Please don't forget to send a card for me."
(*Father Christmas looks about as if he has
lost something, then rummaging his carpet-
bag once more he discovers the missing
article.*)

(A pair of worked slippers for the Host.)

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"These for our kindly Host, before we go,
And may they ne'er enclose a gouty toe."
(*Father Christmas, Frost, and Snow then
throw handfuls of crackers and bon-bons to
the young guests, saying—*)

"Though Father Christmas cannot bring you
flowers,
He does his best, and sweets around you
showers."

(*Father Christmas alone, and fastening up
his empty carpet bag.*)

"Our pleasant task is ended—we must go;
So, children, say 'Good-bye' to Frost and
Snow."

CHILDREN, HOST, and HOSTESS—

"Don't go, don't go."

FATHER CHRISTMAS—

"Alas! we must away.
Time flies, and time forbids a longer stay.
(A general hand-shaking ensues, during

which HOST, HOSTESS, FROST, SNOW, and
FATHER CHRISTMAS *all say, alternately*)

"Good night to all. Glad days; bright
health, good cheer,
And may we meet again another year."

(*Father Christmas resumes his staff and goes
out with his companions as the last words are
uttered, and the "Christmas Tree" is over.*)

In our particular case the youngsters who
took the parts were immediately recalled by a
tremendous storm of applause, and a great
many kind things were said about the simple
entertainment provided for our young guests.
We had reason to think the elder ones enjoyed
it quite as much as the juveniles; and I hope,
if the same scene should be enacted in other
homes, it will go as cheerily and leave as
pleasant a memory as it did in ours.

I have given a few couplets to suit little
articles that are commonly found on Christmas
trees; but these are only samples, as I cannot,
even in imagination, choose your gifts for you
and fit them all with rhymes.

I think, however, that any intelligent girl
could compose simple rhymes to suit the
articles selected, the cost of each of which
should be duly calculated, so that the money
allotted for this purpose may not be exceeded.

Perhaps, if you like this, I may be tempted
to write out some of our "Fireside Charades."

RUTH LAMB.

A USEFUL BIRD.

WHEN people in derision say,

"A perfect goose is she,"

It seems to me the other way;

In praise it ought to be.

A goose is such a useful bird,

And was more useful still

When all who wrote, as I have heard,

Wrote only with a quill.

And there are some who still delight

In the old-fashioned plan;

Who never did with steel pens write,

And never will, nor can.

Thus quills to them are useful things,

So long as they can write.

Then there's the feather bed that
brings

Them ease and rest at night.

We know the flesh is good to eat,

And when the year comes round

To Michaelmas, no greater treat

Than roast goose can be found.

Then there's the oily, fatty part

Which makes our chapped hands

soft—

When frost or wind has made them
smart

Full many a time and oft.

And there is yet another thing,

Which housemaids can apply—

A thoroughly dried goose's wing

Will make the cobwebs fly.

I am not versed in classic lore

(So much the greater pity),

But it is said, in days of yore,

A goose once saved a city.

So if you're ever said to be

Exactly like a goose,

You can reply, "I'm glad to see

I am of so much use."

TWO BIRTHDAYS.

By Rev. T. S. MILLINGTON, Author of
"Boy and Man," &c.



It was Effie
Johnson's birth-
day.

A birthday,
like Christmas,
comes but once
a year. All the
more reason for
keeping it when
it comes. Effie
would gladly
have kept hers
for a whole week
if that had been
possible; but the
shades of even-
ing close over
birthdays as over
other days.

Effie received
a great many
presents, for she
had a great
many friends.
These presents
included a great
many nice
things, one of
them being the
first number of

THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER. But she had
another gift of a different kind. The others
were keepsakes, and would keep: this
was not intended to be kept. The others
were precious for the givers' sake: this one
had an interest of its own. The others had
their own special charms or uses which would
not change: but this represented unknown
possibilities, and was made to be changed. It
was a crown, a silver crown—five shillings;
and what this crown should be changed into
was a very pleasant subject for speculation.

Of course, as it was to be spent, there could
be no reason for not spending it at once.
Though it was bright and new, Effie did not
want to look at it or to hang it like a locket
from her neck. So her brother was to drive
her to a neighbouring town that she might lay
it out.

And this was another subject for congrat-
ulation: for Effie was to have her choice of
seats in the pony trap, which was a miniature
dog-cart, with room for two in front and one
behind. She had often sat in front and wished
very much to try the back seat, just for a
change. She was fond of *change*, as we have
already hinted, and now her opportunity was
come.

They started. Ben, the brother, with an
elder sister, were in front, and Effie at the
back, with a strap before her to keep her from
being shot off into the road as they whirled
round the corners; for Ben was known to be a
sharp driver. They went at a great pace, and,
as she looked down at the road, it seemed to
come from under the vehicle like a torrent, and
to pour away in a steady, rapid stream behind
her. She soon got used to it, however, and,
feeling herself safe, ventured to undo the strap.
It was so unpleasant to be "tied in." She
kept her place just as well without it—till they
came to a sharp turn, when the pony took it
into his head, or his heels, to quicken his pace
suddenly.

Then the catastrophe which her careful
mother would have guarded against took place.
Effie was thrown from her seat and fell at full
length on a very soft place in the road.

"Goodee gracious me!" said a voice near
her, before she could pick herself up. "Be ye
hurt, miss?"

"I hope not," said Effie, looking first to
the mud upon her clothes and then to the
good woman who hurried up to help her.