



IS cruel—yes, I say it is—to send a boy to bed When he feels like turning some ornaments or standing on his head. I never was so wide awake in all my life before. And mother thinks I'm going to sleep a dozen hours or more. I want to sit up to-night to get a little peep At Santa Claus. Why does he come when boys are all asleep? I want to see the reindeer, and I'd really like to know How they can ever stand it to have so far to go. And then I'd like to ask him—for I can't make it out at all— How he scrambles down the chimneys, when they are all so small, With his great big bag of picture books and sugar plums and toys. When he comes to fill the stockings up for little girls and boys. I wonder if he'll bring me just what I want—a sled— A lightning patent coaster; and I want it painted red. How does he know what boys want? He always guesses right. How can he get to everyone in just a single night? Well, I am getting tired here, it will be fine To lie awake all night. There! It's striking nine! Yes, mother will be sorry in the morning, I should think. When I tell her how I haven't slept a single blessed wink. I shall listen every minute, and when I hear him creep Very softly down the chimney, when he thinks we're all asleep, I'll watch, and then I'll see the fun without a speck of noise. Ho! Ho! The jolly fellow cannot always dodge the boys! Hello! I hear a jingle. Have the reindeer come at last? I must get up and see them, for they prance away so fast. I was just getting sleepy—hey! Time to dress, you say? And the breakfast bell is ringing? Hurrah! 'Tis Christmas day! —Sidney Dayre, in Golden Days.



NEW ENGLAND CURTIN: If any one man was better known than another for miles around the village of Conway it was Deacon Harding, the pillar of the Methodist church and the strictest selectman the New Hampshire village had ever known. He had never married, and some folks said he was too mean, and that all he thought about was putting up a goodly share of this world's goods to his credit in order that he might make better provision for the commodities of the next. But, then, people will talk. It was, therefore, a matter of considerable speculation among his neighbors when the deacon was seen to stop occasionally at the Widow Martin's cottage, and many and varied were the conjectures about the outcome. The widow was plump, rosy checked, and good natured, and her dear departed having left her more than two years before she was, as she believed herself, fully qualified to be considered among the eligibles of the little world in which she lived. She had heard (what women does not?) of her neighbors' talk about her, but being of that happy disposition which does not heed the stories Dame Rumor occasionally circulates, she kept on her way regardless of all the gossips said. The widow's cottage was an inviting spot when the snow lay piled up in great masses in the roadways and on the mountain sides and the mercury was away below zero. A bright light always shone from the windows while

the town board. The deacon was feeling cold and out of sorts generally, and somehow his ideas had been traveling for weeks past in a direction decidedly singular for such a confirmed bachelor as he. All he appeared to lead up to one object and that was the Widow Martin. The deacon was getting on dangerous ground, but he didn't seem to know it. He had always said there wasn't a woman who could catch him. He had lived so long without one that he was not going to be taken in by any of them at this time of life. Not he; and he grew seven inches higher every time he hugged this consolation to his breast. But this particular New Year's eve he was unaccountably lonely and dispirited. Everybody who was anybody in Conway was full of rest and cheer and just brimful of happiness. The spirit of the holidays was everywhere, but the deacon was alone. There was no one to welcome him, no one to greet him with "A Happy New Year!" at his home, ex-

sides and across the valley the widow had the door open and was waiting for her visitor. "I just thought I'd stop a minute, Mrs. Martin, to warm up, for it's powerful cold out this afternoon," said the deacon, stamping his feet to shake the snow from his boots before entering. "I'm real glad to see you, deacon; come right in and sit down by the fire." In a few moments Deacon Harding had removed his heavy coat and thick gloves and was comfortably seated on one side of the broad fireplace, while the widow was rocking herself gently to and fro at the other. As his good temper increased the deacon kept looking over at the widow. What a nice, pleasant little woman she was, to be sure, and she was pretty, too—there was no mistake about that! He sat there enjoying his novel sensations without speaking for a long time. Surely there was something the matter with him this New Year's eve. He was usual-

"Do tell, deacon," replied the widow, shuddering, "but don't you think you'll get chilled if you sit so far from the fire? Do draw up closer and get warm; you've got quite a way to go to town and you must take care of yourself in such terrible weather." "Yes, ma'am; it be chilly, that's a fact. I think I'll move up a piece to the fire." "How kind she is!" the deacon kept repeating to himself as he edged nearer toward the blazing logs and at the same time drew closer to the rocker, where the widow still sat sewing. "I saw you at church last Sunday, Mrs. Martin. The minister preached a powerful fine sermon, didn't he?" remarked the deacon, after another long interval. "Yes, deacon; and it did me a power of good, too." "I'm real glad to hear you say that, Mrs. Martin," exclaimed the deacon. His face fairly beamed with delight,

The chairs touched now. The deacon was absent from the town meeting that New Year's eve. When the villagers assembled at church next day they saw a little woman sitting beside Deacon Harding. It was the Widow Martin. She was wedded to the deacon New Year's morning, for the parson had said it wasn't good for man to be alone.—B. A. MacDonald, in Chicago Mail. Timsly Precaution. "Have you thought about doing any Christmas shopping yet?" asked Mr. Hunnimune. "No, dear," was the reply. "It is a little early for such preparations, isn't it?" "M'yes. But it is well to take time by the forelock, you know. Have you a memorandum book handy?" "Yes." "Well, you might jot down these little points. Here's the brand of cigars that I prefer. They cannot by any pos-



HE put it up the chimney so that Santa Claus could get it; Of course I pulled it down again, and now I must regret it. For if I'm to be Santa Claus, and that's of course expected, I'm sorry that I cannot claim the note was misdirected. She wants a great big doll, she says, with wavy, golden tresses. Some hats to put upon the doll, and lots of handsome dresses; A bureau and trunk bed, a set of little dishes. A table and a trunk as well, besides some "real gold fishes." She wants a sled, of course, I learn, and likewise lots of candy. She also adds, quite calmly: "A piano would be handy." She wants a watch and lots of books, and games as well, in plenty; Of minor toys, it seems to me, she asks for fully twenty. She writes that she would like to have a little stove for cooking. And for a necklace, I'm informed, most anxiously she's looking; She wants a desk that's "all her own," on which to do her writing. And altogether, I confess, the outlook's not inviting. The things that she would like to have, I find by calculation, Would cost a thousand dollars at the lowest valuation, And so I say regretfully, with spirits most dejected, I'm sorry that I cannot claim her note was misdirected. —Chicago Post.



The Day After. Oh dear, it's so far to next Christmas! Seems long as forever and more. I've been counting the days over 'n' over. Three hundred and sixty-four! That's a dreadful lot to be waiting To hang up your stockings, you see; But to-morrow—that's something—there's only three hundred and sixty-three! —Harper's Young People.



Chimmy McGovern—Great Scott! Mickey, get on ter dat. I wouldn't want der job of darmin' dat feller's sock. Mickey McSwatt—But say, but just t'ink wot a cinch dat sock would be at Chris'mas time ter knock ole Santy Cluss silly.—N. Y. Truth.

A Woman's Mistake. A well-dressed woman in search of a Christmas present for her son walked up and down the aisles of a book store, closely scanning the titles of the books. At last she picked up a volume and handed it to the clerk. "Is this a good book?" she asked. "An excellent book, madame," replied the clerk, as he wrapped it up, "and the only copy we have left." "How fortunate I am to have secured it, then," the delighted woman exclaimed. "My son is just crazy over the game, and I wanted to get a good authority on it so that he could learn to play it properly." The clerk looked glazed as he handed his customer the copy of Charles Dickens' "Crocket on the Hearth," and she had been gone some time before it dawned upon him what a mistake she had made. No one knows what the boy said.—Golden Days.

Not Necessary. Dora—Here's some mistletoe for your Christmas. Cora—Can you spare it? Dora—Oh, I don't need it.—N. Y. Truth. Begun Again. Turn the soiled leaves with one more look, And drop one more repenting tear; And then begin in God's own Book The story of another year. —Frank W. Huff, in Ram's Horn.



Tommy—How many presents did yer get? Jackie—Twenty-one. How many d'yer get? Tommy—Nineteen. But I'll bet yer I can make more noise with mine than yer can with yours.—N. Y. Truth. As Usual. Baggs—Well, old man, what did you get in your stocking this morning? Waggs—My foot.—Brooklyn Life.



"I'M REAL GLAD TO SEE YOU, DEACON." the hickory logs crackled and sputtered in the wide, open fireplace. Everything about the place was so neat, clean and wholesome looking that one felt at home the moment he crossed the threshold. At least that is what Deacon Harding thought on New Year's eve as he came in sight of the cozy home of the widow while on his way to a meeting of

cept, perhaps, his old housekeeper, who was deaf and ill-tempered enough to sour the biggest eask of eider in his cellar. It was no wonder, then, that as he reached the Widow Martin's cottage he determined to stop just for a chat with her and to warm himself before going to the meeting. That was all. If he had been told there was anything else on his mind he would have thought the suggestion ridiculous. The widow heard the deacon's buckboard stop—in fact she had seen him coming up the road—and there had been a hasty glance over the room, and just a peep in the looking-glass on the mantel to see if everything was in order, long before the deacon's voice was heard on the frosty air and the wheels had ceased to revolve in front of the cottage. By the time he had blanketed and covered his horse and led him to the shed out of the cold blasts that swept down the hill-

ly able to talk about something wherever he was, but now he couldn't say a word if his life had depended on it, though he tried desperately several times to start a conversation. And the widow just sat there, apparently entirely unconscious, with her mind seemingly fixed upon some trifle she was sewing. Did she have an idea of what was passing in her visitor's mind? Of course not; women are such dear, innocent creatures, especially widows. The deacon grew very restless as the minutes passed swiftly by and finally, as if the heat was too great, he got up and moved away from the fire. Somehow when he settled down again his chair was much nearer the widow, but she didn't seem to notice the change and kept on sewing. "It's powerful cold to-day, Mrs. Martin. There'll be a heavy frost to-night, I reckon," remarked the deacon, finding his speech at last.

while if the truth must be told he absolutely chuckled aloud and rubbed his hands on his knees as if something had happened with which he was immensely delighted. "Do you recall what the parson preached about?" It must have been the heat from the burning logs that caused the widow's cheeks to blush so. She couldn't even look up from her sewing as she replied: "Well, come to think of it, deacon, I think it was about weddings and such things. But I ain't quite sure, for I didn't pay much attention, I'm afraid, to that part of the discourse." The chairs were getting very close. "That's it, that's it," cried the deacon, bringing his hands down upon his knees with a slap that startled the canary from his perch and set the widow's heart beating furiously. "That's it. And don't you remember where he said it wasn't good for man to live alone? I think he told the truth, don't you?"

sibility be purchased at a bargain. Here is the number of slipper that I wear, and you might make a note of the fact that my preference in neckties is dark red, with small black figure, also that I do not need any suspenders." And she thanked him and wrote it all down, thereby saving no small share of future regrets and embarrassments.—Washington Star. A Holiday Mockery. He held a handsome Russian leather pocketbook up for the inspection of his friends. "Beautiful!" they exclaimed. "A mockery," he replied, turning it upside down and shaking it. "A most useful present," they persisted. "A holiday mockery," he repented. "Of what use is a fine pocketbook to a man who has gone broke on Christmas presents for the very girl who gave it to him?"—Chicago Post.

"WE'RE ALWAYS WELCOME, YOU AND I, WE BRING GREAT JOY AND CHEER; I COME TO STAY BUT ONE SHORT NIGHT, BUT YOU STAY ALL THE YEAR."