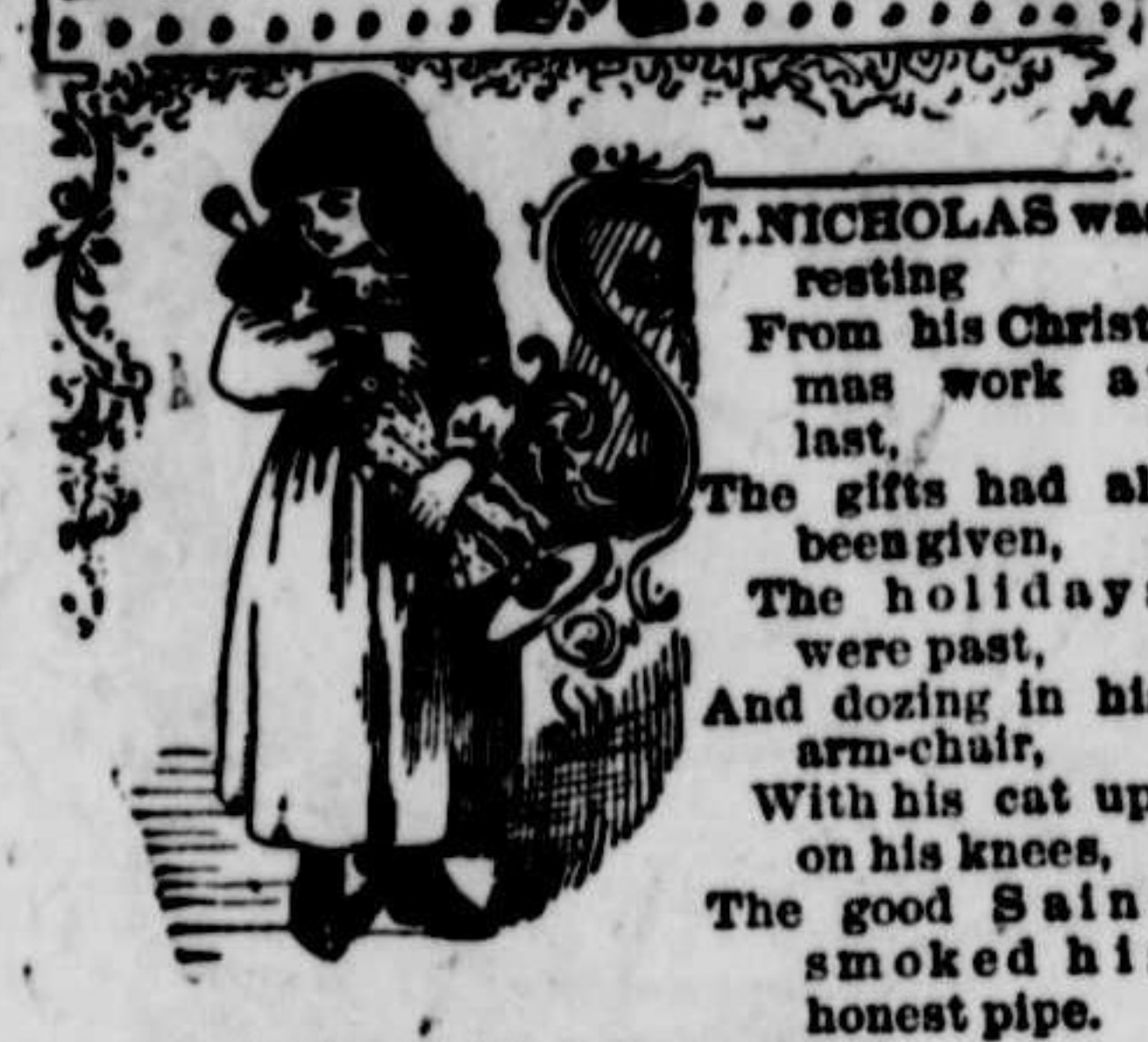


LITTLE MISTAKE.



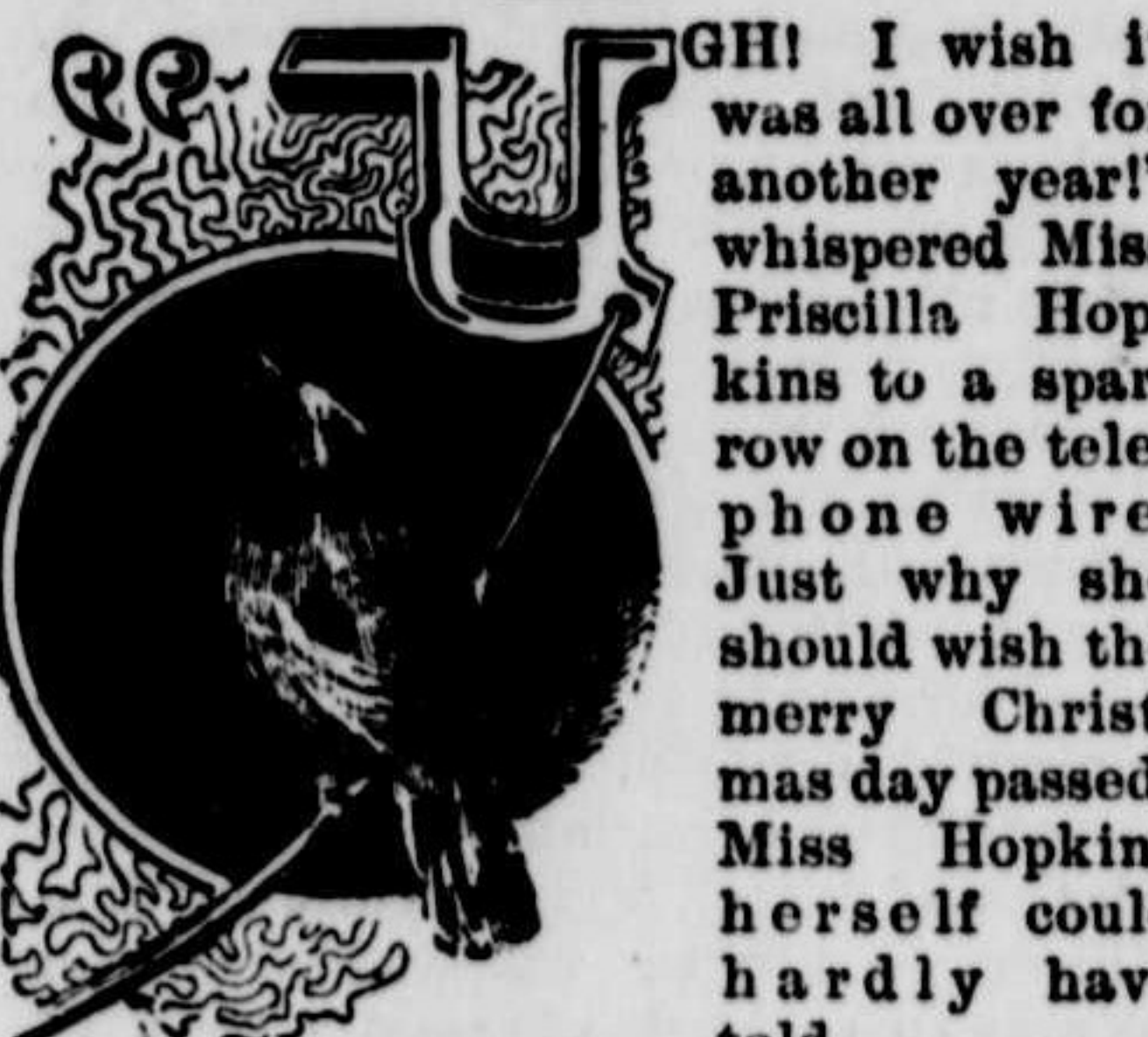
And took his honest ease. But something roused him quickly. He started from his seat. A soldier bold, a maiden fair, were kneeling at his feet.



And dozing in his arm-chair. "Ah," mused the good St. Nicholas, "I think I understand."

A REAL CHRISTMAS.

How Miss Hopkins Enjoyed Her First Merry Holiday.



"Oh! I wish it was all over for another year!" whispered Miss Priscilla Hopkins to a sparrow on the telephone wire.

The big New York boarding-house was almost deserted. All of the thirty boarders had scattered for the holidays, except the invalid on the parlor floor, the crusty German professor, old Mr. and Mrs. Brown, and the pretty, poverty-pined young widow on the fourth floor.

Miss Hopkins pressed her wrinkled cheek against the window pane, and looked down into the dull city street, with its patches of dirty snow.

"They tell me about it. I didn't know you had any children." She heard a simple story of the brave little mother's struggle to make a nest for her birds; and how, at last, finding a position in the city, she had placed them in a boarding-school where they could be well cared for, and where she could visit them every Sunday.

"We try to make that do for all the week," the little woman added, with a smile, "and when a holiday comes we spend the whole of it together. And I thought, Miss Hopkins, perhaps you would let Marjory sleep with you tonight."

Five minutes later Miss Priscilla was standing alone before the fire, wrinkling her forehead anxiously; for, somewhat to her own surprise, she had consented to care for a six-year-old child all night.

"What shall I do if it cries?" she murmured, "or has the croup, or falls out of bed, or wants a doll, or—you're a fool, Priscilla Hopkins!"

But when Mrs. Clark appeared at the door that evening, with a little, curly-headed, white-robed figure half hidden in a great shawl, and gazing with big, sleepy, black eyes at herself, Miss Priscilla half forgave her folly.

"Sh!" she said softly, as Marjory's mother entered the room, then flushed over such weakness and straightened into her usual rigid attitude.

"May we borrow your fire-place, too, Miss Hopkins?" asked Mrs. Clark, with growing courage. "To-morrow would hardly be Christmas if Santa Claus couldn't come down the chimney, you know, and there is only a register in my room. I will try and keep the children from being very noisy in the morning, if you'll let me hang the little stockings here to-night."

With two such pleading eyes shining at her over an armful of packages, Miss Priscilla felt she could hardly refuse. "H'm, yes. I don't know that it would do any harm. All foolishness, I think."

"Do you?" said Mrs. Clark, brightly. "But it's such a pleasure to watch them when they find the stockings in the morning! Let me see, here's Noah's ark, that goes in Tom's stockings and the little elephant in Marjory's. Then here is a toy watch for each of them and a stick of candy, a pop-corn ball and a big orange to cap the climax. Why, it just reaches the top! How fortunate there isn't any thing more!" laughed Mrs. Clark.

But, somehow, Miss Priscilla's spectacles grew quite misty, and she took them off and wiped them once or twice. The little packages were so very small, and the little mother's way of laughing at her poverty was so brave and cheery!

"Have the children any dolls?" asked Miss Priscilla, planning the stockings with her own fingers to her cherished plush lambrequin.

In the gray dawn of the early morning, Marjory, cuddled close within the protecting circle of her new friend's arm, reached up a timid, little hand and touched her cheek.

"Say!" she whispered, shyly, "do you think he's come yet?" "Who?" asked her bewildered bed-fellow. "Why, Santa Claus. I don't think I can wait much longer to see—I don't think I can."

"Try and wait till mamma comes with Tot. Lie down and I'll tell you a story," coaxed Miss Priscilla.

Luckily for the success of the story, Mrs. Clark tapped at the door just then, and with a bound Marjory was standing upright in bed, her eyes fixed on the fire-place.

"Oh!" the child cried softly, "Oh!" The next moment the little voice burst out into the happiest ripple of a song, without words or tune, but it seemed as if any one would know it was a Christmas carol.

"I declare!" said Miss Priscilla, wiping her eyes on the pillow-case, "I declare, it makes me think of that hymn, 'Break Forth into Joy!'"

The chubby fingers were already diving into their stockings, and untying puzzling knots, and each now dis-

covery was greeted by a little jubilee from the children and a grateful glance from their mother at Miss Priscilla.

covery was greeted by a little jubilee from the children and a grateful glance from their mother at Miss Priscilla, who, somehow, seemed always to be looking out of the window. But Marjory found something that puzzled her—a long, black stocking hanging over the back of a chair.

"Why, it's big like yours, mamma—how funny! It hasn't got any thing in it!" "Yeth, there th'!" lisped Tot. "Tumpin round and hard. O-o-h, look, mamma!" And the first ray of sunlight that struggled into the room gleamed on a gold piece in Tot's hand.

Miss Priscilla had disappeared into a deep closet and was fumbling round for something, which for some reason could not be found; perhaps because her nightcap had bobbed down over her eyes. But the next minute two arms were wound around her and she heard a tearful voice whisper: "You have been so good, so good to me, dear friend! I wish I could thank you."

"There, there, child. Don't say another word. I've been a rich, selfish old creature, but I'm going to reform. And we've all made such a good beginning this morning that I really think it is going to be the first merry Christmas I ever had! There, don't say another word!"—H. A. Hall, in Interior.

NOT FRUITLESS. A man who has spent a busy year sits down for a little retrospect. He falls into a moody frame, and in a tone of regret says: "I worked all the year through, but there is hardly any thing to show for it; my work has had no permanence."

and then each autumn the winds sweep it all away. But the birds sit there and sing, the cattle gather under it on sultry days, and children collect about it to picnic on their holidays. There is nothing of all that there now, but what a help has the old tree been, and how many pleasant things could be told about it—how noble an object it is, also, in the wintry landscape. The parable was not without its meaning. The good mother returned the smile of the benignant father, and together they sang at their family worship of the loving kindness of the Lord.—United Presbyterian.

CHRISTMAS IN EUROPE.

Little People Across the Ocean Who Have Santa Claus.

England is by no means the only European country to enter into the celebration of the Christmas festival with a zest. In Germany, in Sweden and Norway, in Russia, in France, and, in fact, all over Europe, wherever the Christian religion obtained a foothold, the anniversary of the Nativity is observed with rejoicing and feasting. The ceremonies are not greatly unlike those of the English-speaking people, though, of course, modified by the traditions and usages of each country. St. Nicholas under a dozen aliases has become known to the little ones from the Mediterranean to the North sea.

In Holland he is Santa Claus, in Switzerland, Sant Klaus, in Heligoland, Sonner Klaus, and in Austria, Niklo, or Niglo. Everywhere he is the same pleas-

ant myth, the friend of the children, the old gentleman of snow-white beard, benevolent disposition and invisible movements. In some of these countries a dread personage is supposed by the children to follow in his wake, a person, either male or female, who is prepared to lecture bad little children on their evil ways or seize them in his invisible arms and spirit them away. The myth regarding this dread being is probably a survival of the old pagan idea of the good spirits and the bad spirits, or the gods, of the legend about the annual conflict between Thor, the god of the thunder-storm, and Freija, the goddess of spring.—N. Y. Mail and Express.

During the Holidays. The best part of the holiday season, perhaps, is the opportunity it gives for home gatherings and the family reunions that in these busy days are all too few. Many a young man finds time to get back to the old hearthstone and sit down in the dear home circle who, if the holidays were omitted, would be kept strictly at his tasks. All the schools are dismissed, boys and girls are at home, teachers likewise are off duty, and, with no care pressing, in thousands of places parents and children have happy times together for which they may thank the festive season. There are other unions and reunions, all of them pleasant and helpful, but there is hardly any such joy to a youth in this world as that of getting back to the fire-side where he was reared. There is a rest there for him, a perfection of peace such as that, no matter how prosperous he may be in his pursuits, never come to him any place else. And greatly to be pitied is he for whom no door of the early home is open, or against whom it is blown shut by the pitiless storms that have beset him.—United Presbyterian.

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Then, if you do not have a Happy New Year, it will be your own fault.—Golden Days.

HOLIDAY HINTS.

—Don't expect to find a brown-stone front in your stocking.—Phila. Call.

—Never look a gift-horse in the teeth. It is also wrong to look a Christmas gift in the price-mark.—Somerville Jour.

—The man who economizes Christmas for sake of a New Year's blow-out takes time by the forelock just a week too soon.

—Talk about oil trusts, rubber trusts, coal trusts, etc., as much as you like, but what we want about Christmas is a turkey or goose trussed.—Boston Courier.

—If the man who devised the dumb piano would only invent a dumb horn and drum many of us wouldn't be so resigned to having Christmas come only once a year.—Judge.

—When some men give their wives a little pin money to buy Christmas remembrances for the children, it seems much larger than when they spend twenty dollars raffling to win a two-dollar turkey.—Judge.

—If any child gets up on Christmas morning to find an empty stocking, he will feel as bad for a time as the man who carries an empty sleeve, and the men and women nearest him will be so guilty that they ought never to be forgiven.—Judge.

—The Young Turkey—Well, we've escaped Thanksgiving! Gobble! gobble! Gobble! Experienced Gobbler (sadly)—My son, do not let your life insurance policy lapse. Christmas is coming!—Munsey's Weekly.

—Starting on a new year it is well to accept this teaching from Emerson: "Write on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. No man has learned any thing rightly until he knows that every day is doomsday."

—The close of a year is a poor time for good resolutions, but it is an excellent time for good actions. It is late for planning, but it is just right for performance. Now is the time to be and to do, even though the hours are too precious to waste in thinking about being and doing.—S. S. Times.

Just Like Him. "What a queer Christmas gift! Pa, see The monkey Charlie sent to me. 'This strange such an idea should strike him.' 'Oh, he's my dear. It is just like him.'—Judge.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS.

Many Are Made, But Few Are Kept—Yet It Is a Good Habit.

Looked at in a philosophical light, there is no special reason why the first day of January should be different from any other day. It is not the actual beginning of the year; the twenty-first day of March, the first day of spring, more fitly deserves the honor. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the selection of the day, and it probably will never be changed in Christendom.

Practically, the date makes no difference. As a matter of fact, we used to celebrate New Year's day, prior to 1752, thirteen days later than we do now, on account of the change in the calendar, which took effect in that year. The Russians still preserve the old-style calendar, and the Hebrews keep a New Year's day based on the Mosala chronology. The date, therefore, makes little difference, but the day is of considerable importance. As far back as history runs, it has been the custom to mark the death of the old year and the birth of the new by appropriate ceremonies.

In ancient times these ceremonies were of rather a solemn character, but among northern nations it has always been the occasion for the highest demonstrations of merriment and conviviality.

Putting aside these features, we may very appropriately regard New Year's as the day of good intentions. A great deal of fun has been poked at the boy or girl who starts a diary on the first of January and abandons it on the first of February, but it is a question whether it is not beneficial to keep a diary even but one month out of twelve.

What possible harm can there be in proposing to do good? In considering crimes we always take into account the intention of the deed. The intention is the essence of the crime, and, therefore, it must be the essence of the good deed. Only to propose to do better is something; if nothing else, it is an acknowledgment of our need to be so, which is the first step toward amendment. But in fact to propose to do well is in some sort to do well, for "he who is not worse today than he was yesterday, is better."

So there is no harm—indeed there is good—in proposing to break off bad habits and form good ones. All seed can not fall on barren soil, some will bear fruit. Therefore, make all the good resolutions you can think of and keep as many as you can. You can't very well fail to keep some of them.

This is the value of New Year's day. It is an imaginary milestone on the track of human life—a resting-place and a new starting-place. Be sure you start right, and in the right direction, if you would have a Happy New Year. Cast aside your old enmities as well as your old faults; resolve to be as good as you know how and resist temptation as long as you can.

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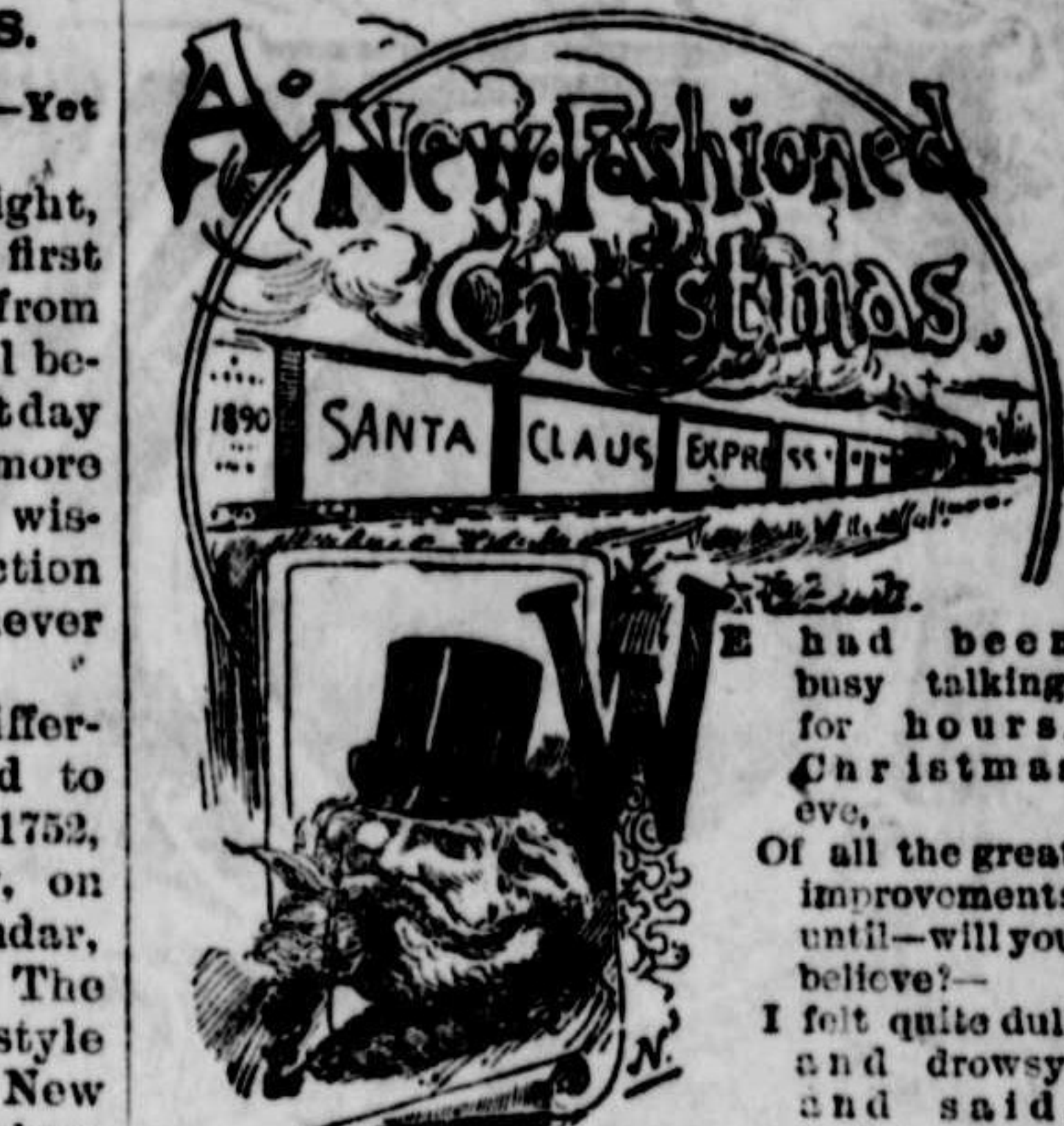
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and said: "Oh! any thing old-fashioned had best pass out and die!"

And then I leaned back smiling and quite self-satisfied. And closed my eyelids slowly, when, lo! they opened wide. In sheer amazement and wonder, and would you know the cause? I saw before me standing, the form of Santa Claus.

But, oh! so strange and altered! In clothes of latest style. And not at all the Santa I'd dreamed of all the while. But still I recognized him, and said: "I didn't see you come out from the chimney—was very dull of me."

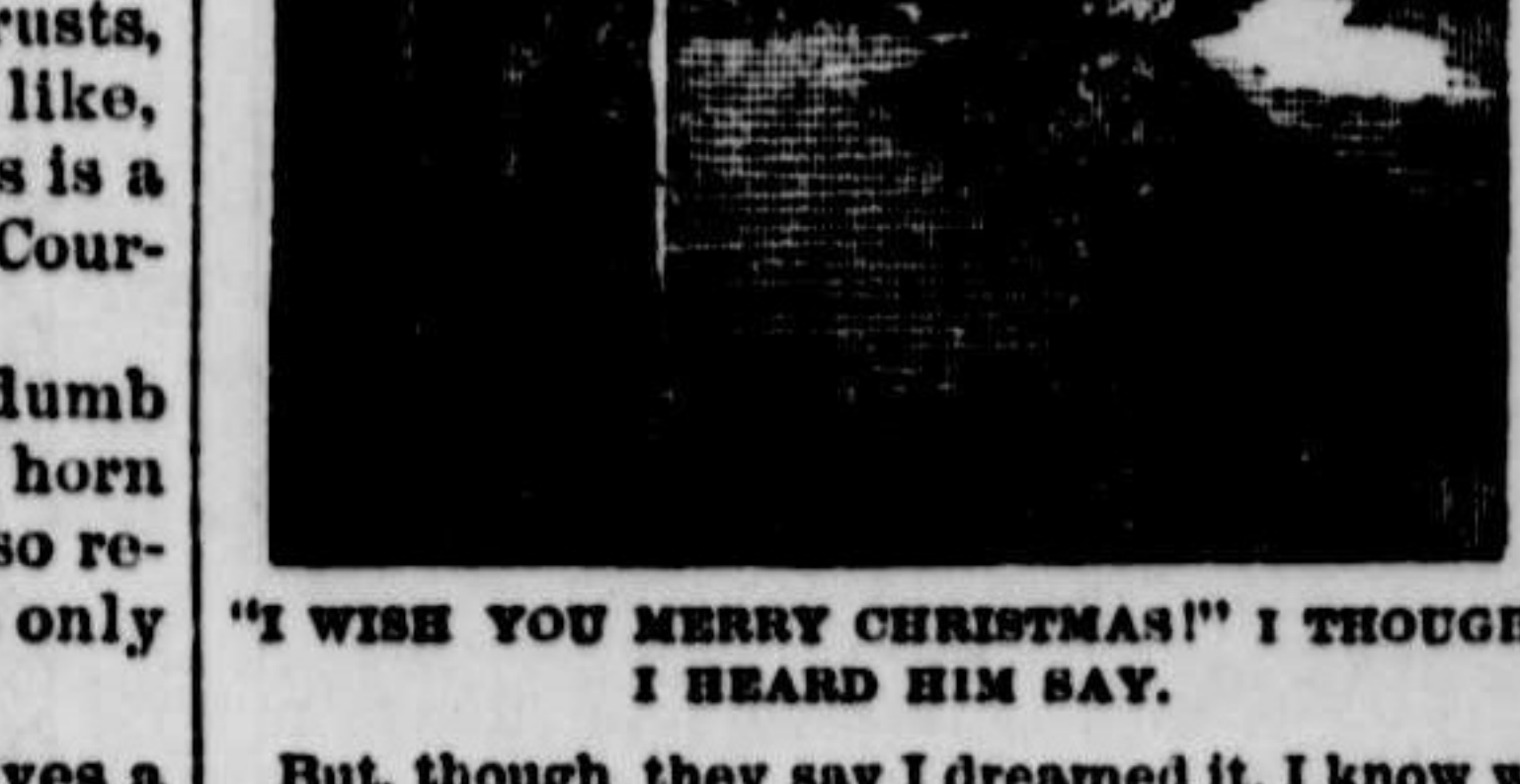
"The chimney?" said he, gruffly; "I beg of you to know. I clamber down no chimneys; I stopped that long ago!" I said: "Your load was heavy, you're tired, won't you rest?" "Oh! no," he answered, grandly, "my goods were all expressed!"

"You must have found it pleasant—the sleighing, sir, I mean. The road was much more snowy than I have ever seen." "Indeed!"—his air was lofty—"tis not the present mode of the good deed. Only to propose to do better is something; if nothing else, it is an acknowledgment of our need to be so, which is the first step toward amendment. But in fact to propose to do well is in some sort to do well, for 'he who is not worse today than he was yesterday, is better.'"

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"I wish you Merry Christmas!" I thought I heard him say. And when I tried to answer him he'd vanished quite away!

"I WISH YOU MERRY CHRISTMAS!" I THOUGHT I HEARD HIM SAY. But, though they say I dreamed it, I know we shall have still Our dear, old-fashioned Christmas, bringing "Peace on earth, good-will!"—Julia M. Lippman, in St. Nicholas.

In Kris Kringle's Land. The German Christmas has supplied us with two of our best-known Christmas customs—hanging up stockings and attaching gifts to sprigs of pine, called Christmas trees.

From the German Christmas also come Santa Claus and Kris Kringle. The latter is a corruption of Christ Kindlin, or Christ Child, of whom they have the beautiful fable that with His own hands He places Christmas toys and sweetmeats in the stockings of good children, while those of bad ones receive nothing but a small birch rod, placed in them by one Pelanichol—literally "Nicholas with the fur," that is St. Nicholas dressed in fur.

It is a rare sight in a German household on Christmas morning to see the expression of abject misery on the face of some poor little wight, who, having been disobedient or otherwise naughty on Christmas eve, finds only a birch rod in his stocking, instead of bon-bons and playthings. The dread of getting the rod from old Pelanichol on Christmas keeps many a German child in order all the year.

Hard Up. "Lend me a fiver, will you, Bill?" "I can't, old fellow. I haven't even paid for my wife's present to me yet."—Munsey's Weekly.

