



God bless the little stockings
All over the land to-night,
Hung in the choicest corners,
In a glow of crimson light.
The tiny scarlet stockings,
With a hole in the heel and toe,
Worn by wonderful journeys,
The darlings have had to go.

And heaven pity the children
Wherever their home may be,
Who wake at the first grey dawning,
An empty stocking to see!
Left in the faith of childhood
Hanging against the wall,
Just where the dazzling glory
Of Santa's light will fall!

Alas, for the lonely mother
Whose home is empty and still,
Who has no scarlet stockings
With childish toys to fill!
Who sits in the swatny twilight,
With her face against the pane,
And grieves for the little baby
Whose grave is out in the rain!

Oh, the empty shoes and stockings,
Forever laid aside,
Oh, the tangled, broken shoe-string
That will nevermore be tied!
Oh, the little graves at the mercy
Of the cold December rain!
Oh, the feet in the snow-white sandals
That never can trip again!

But happier they who slumber,
With marble at foot and head,
Than the child who has no shelter,
No raiment, nor food, nor bed,
Yes! heaven help the living!
Children of want and pain,
Knowing no fold nor pasture—
Out to-night in the rain.

III.

BY MISS KRINGLE.

They were in a "peck of trouble" at Jim's papa's house. It was the last of July, and papa and mamma and Jim and Nannette were going to the country to stay until October. Nannette was mamma's maid, but she was going to take care of Jim while they were away. Jim had always had a nurse who had no other duties, but she was cross, so she went away, and Nannette, who loved Jim dearly, agreed to take the nurse girl's place. Well, the trunks were all packed and the carriage waiting at the door, when Jim's mamma fell down stairs and broke her ankle. Such a time they had then was never seen. Mamma fainted dead away, and papa had to call the coachman in from the street to help him carry mamma up stairs to her own room. Then he told the man to drive away as fast as he could, and bring back Dr. Galen. He and Nannette then sat about restoring mamma to consciousness. But, dear me! the store-room was locked up, and neither papa nor Nannette knew where the keys were. The little medicine chest was locked up in one of the trunks, and they had no camphor nor ammonia nor anything to use except water, and that was pretty warm, for there was no ice in it.

"There's some bay-rum in the closet," said Nannette; how will that do?" "Well try it and see," replied the half-distracted man, and he opened the closet door and got the first bottle he saw. He poured a liberal quantity into his hand, and "sopped" poor mamma's head and face, but as it happened to be hair oil, instead of bay-rum, it did not help her much. But presently the coachman returned bringing a doctor. He had not found Dr. Galen at home, but he met Dr. Esculapian in the street and brought him in.

As mamma is now in a fair way to be taken care of let us leave her and see what Jim is doing. You must know, however, that Jim was not a boy, as you have supposed, but a dear little blue-eyed girl. Her papa called her "Jim," but her real name was Ruth, and her mamma always called her Ruth, and never in the world said "Jim" when speaking of her dear little daughter. She, herself, always said her name was Jim; she liked it best because it was papa's fancy to call her so. Well, Jim waited and waited and waited for some one to come and look after her, but no one came. All the servants, except Nannette, had been sent away, all the doors of the lower rooms were locked up, and Jim couldn't find any one nor anything with which to entertain herself, except her pretty kitten, which was in a covered basket waiting, like Jim, to be taken into the country. At last Jim saw that the big front door was ajar and concluded to walk out. Taking in the basket, she said to kitty: "Tum little tat, we'll go and find the boat, and go into the country our own selves," and going down the front steps she hesitated a moment, and then started for the country. She walked a very long distance, but kept going toward the docks all the time, and at last she actually reached the pier, where a large

sailing vessel was lying. Jim stood and looked at the ship and sailors, who were busy getting ready to sail, for a while, and then made her way on board.

Now it happened that the captain of the Sea Bird had remarked to his first mate that very morning, within hearing of one of the sailors: "I had a notion to take my Jim with me on this voyage, and thought I'd quite talked the mether over, but at the last minute her courage failed, and she wouldn't let the child out of her sight, lest I should take him after all."

A little while before our Jim appeared on the scene a messenger had come from the ship owners, who desired to see the captain at once. So he was not on board when Jim arrived, and for a little time the busy sailors did not notice her. Presently one of them saw her and asked:

"Who are you?"
"I'm Jim."
"Oh, you belong to the captain, do you?" Jim nodded, not that she meant to tell a story, but her papa was really a captain, Capt. Cain, of the—th regiment.

"So you're going with us, after all?" Jim nodded again.

"Well, come down into the cabin where you'll be out of harm's way till your pa comes."
Jim followed the man down the queer little stairs into the cabin, where he left her. Poor little Jim! How tired she was! She quickly climbed upon a sofa, and almost immediately fell asleep. Little kittle had been mewing continually, but at last tired itself out and curled up and went to sleep, too.

All was still, and the captain who on his return had made but a hurried visit to his cabin to leave some papers had not discovered either his little visitor or the kitten. And they slept on, while the ship was loosed from its moorings and sailed away, out from the harbor, out through the narrows, on the broad Atlantic ocean. They were away off Sandy Hook, and the night was growing dark, when the captain, who was still on deck, heard a small voice calling: "Nan! Nan! come and get me!" The sailors, too, heard the strange sound,

Why, child, we're going to Brazil. How came you here, anyway? Who brought you?"

"Didn't anybody brought me. I only just brought my own self."
"Well, now, tell me all about it," said Capt. Brooks, as he took the child on his knee.

"Why, don't you know? We's all going into the tountry; papa and Nannetta and me and mamma, and mamma fell down stairs and foudn't walk, and the dotter tum, and I waited and waited a long while, and so I's fraid the boat would be gone, and I toot my tat in the basket, and tum to the boat, and now we's going into the tountry."

The captain didn't know what to do; he wanted to send the child to New York, but it was too dark a night to venture to send her to another vessel, even if they should meet one. He concluded to wait until the next day. But, alas! the next day was stormy, and the sea was too rough for a boat to be sent out, and the storm lasted several days. Meanwhile the sailors and Capt. Brooks, too, had grown so fond of Jim, who was so brave and had such pretty ways, that they were no longer anxious to send her back. So the ship sailed on, day after day and day after day, until seventy days had passed since they left New York, and then they landed at Rio Janeiro. Capt. Brooks had some friends in the city, and he went there with Jim, intending to leave her with them while they stayed in that port. But Jim could not understand their Spanish talk, and would not be separated from her captain. But the ladies were very kind to the little American, whose queer ways amused them greatly. In that city the ladies do not go out "shopping" as they do in North American cities; instead of that, the merchants carry their goods to the houses. As the child's clothing was now very shabby the captain wished her to have some new garments, so the ladies sent for the merchants to bring the articles to the house, and Jim was fitted up with new suits enough to last her a long time.

They went to ride almost every day and Jim saw many strange sights. She

ever saw. Shall we write to him? You can tell me what to say."

Leaving the captain writing at Jim's dictation we will return to Captain Cain's residence in New York. Mrs. Cain's broken ankle is nearly well, but she is so pale and thin that you would hardly know her. The great mansion is silent and desolate, for its light went out when Jim went down the front steps into the busy streets of the city so long ago. It is Christmas eve, and papa and mamma are sitting in their own room sad and heavy-hearted. "It has almost broken my heart to see the display of Christmas goods in the shops the last few weeks, and when I came home to-night and saw so many happy people hurrying along with their bundles— Poor papa! He could say no more!"

Tears were rolling down mamma's pale cheeks, and she said: "I've almost given up all hopes of ever seeing my little Ruth again."

"Well," said papa, "I've kept hoping, and have never felt so inclined to despair as to-night. I've employed the best detective skill to be had; I've offered rewards enough to ensure her return if she had been stolen; I've done everything I could think of or experience suggest, but all seems in vain."

"If we could only know that she is taken care of and is happy! But I think and think and think of so many dreadful things that may have happened to her, that I am nearly driven wild."

"Yes, dear, I know all about it; it is the same way with me, and yet, Ruthie, we ought to trust our Father!"

"I know, but oh, Harry, it is so long!—such a weary, weary time."

At that time the door-bell rang, with a peculiar double ring that announced the detective.

"That's Morton," said Capt. Cain, hastening to the room.

"Show him up here," said he to the servant, who also knew the detective's ring, and was hurrying to the door.

"I have a letter for you," said Morton, as he entered the room; "just brought to the office by a sailor, who said they should have arrived a week ago, but a storm off Hatteras delayed them. He says the Sea Bird is due to-morrow."

Capt. Cain took the letter and read it aloud.

RIO JANEIRO, Oct. 10.—Dear Papa and Mamma: Did you think I was lost? Why, God took care of me all the time. Kitty's here, too, and such funny monkeys, and I've got a parrot, only she can't talk English yet, and the sailors are real good to me, but I like my captain best, and the name of the ship is the Sea Bird, and we're going home in a week.
From mamma's letter and papa's Jim.

Capt. Brooks had added a few lines to the letter, explaining the manner in which the little girl had come on board the ship, and saying that the voyage had been good for her, that she was brown and hearty, and the bravest little sailor he had ever seen.

Jim couldn't give her father's address, but she knew the street, and he would send the letter to the chief of police, who would no doubt know where to deliver it. Ah, how quickly those sad hearts were changed into joyful ones, and those words of despair into glad thanksgivings!

"Do not be disappointed," said Morton, as he bade Capt. and Mrs. Cain good-night; "if the ship does not arrive to-morrow, she may be detained by winds, the same as this ship was, on which your letter came, but I'll keep watch and telephone you if she does come."

When he had gone papa took off his slippers and put on his boots, exchanged his dressing-gown for his coat, and made preparations for going out.

"Where are you going?" asked his wife.

"It's Christmas eve, you know, my dear, and Jim mustn't think that Santa Claus has forgotten her. We'll hang up her stocking, and if the biggest doll and the handsomest picture books that can be found won't go into it candy and knick-knacks will, and the rest can be piled upon the floor," and kissing her fondly, he went out into the street, the happiest man in New York. Every poor child he met had reason to remember the "handsome gentleman," as they called him. He had a five dollar bill changed into small coin, and this he placed in his overcoat pockets, where it was handy; and he gave liberally to every poor child he saw. At one place he saw a crowd of poverty-stricken children gazing hungrily into a window at the dainties temptingly displayed, and took them all in and bought generous supplies of cake, candies and oranges, something for every one, saying to them: "These are from my little Jim."

It is Christmas morning. The big house is all alive to-day; the curtains are all drawn aside, and the glad sunshine streams in everywhere. Mamma, with a happy smile on her face, goes all over the house, up stairs and down stairs, as lively as a girl. Nannette has opened Jim's pretty little room and put it all in fresh order. Christmas greens are all over the house, and every one is happy and busy, for Jim is coming home. Capt. Cain has not left his own room (where the telephone is located) since breakfast. At about 11 o'clock comes a lively ring, followed by "Hello! is that you, Capt. Cain?"

"Yes, is it you, Morton?"

"Yes, the Sea Bird is at the pier!" Before the captain took one step away from the telephone he fell on his knees and earnestly thanked God for the safe arrival of the ship. As he rose he called for mamma to tell the glad news to her, but she had heard the telephone bell, and was in the room all the time, and was on her knees too, trying to express her gratitude. The carriage was at the door, and papa jumped in, and was driven away to the pier where the Sea

Bird was lying. As he alighted Morton met him. "Your little girl is all right," he said. "I've been on board and have seen her," and they hurried on to the ship and in a moment Capt. Cain had Jim in his arms. How she kissed him, and hugged him, her own dear papa, whom she had not seen in such a long time!

"Papa almost crushed Capt. Brook's fingers in the grip he gave him. "You must come home with us," he said.

"Oh thank you! but it's impossible. I have a wife and some little lads who are expecting me. I've only waited to deliver my passenger safely to you; now I'm off for home!"

"Well, you will come and see us!"

"Oh, yes, I think too much of my little friend to be willing to lose sight of her."

Jim with her "tat" her parrot, her doll and other treasures, was soon inside the carriage with papa rapidly rolling toward home. It is impossible to describe the scenes that took place in Capt. Cain's house that Christmas day. Mamma wept tears of joy and could hardly let her little Ruth leave her arms—arms that had been empty so long! Nannette could not do enough for her, and all the servants shared the general feeling of thankfulness and joy.

Kitty, who had by this time grown to be quite a good-sized cat, did not behave very well; she acted as if she did not remember that this was her old home, and would like to get back to the ship, so she had to be shut up until she was hungry, and then, Nannette said, she would stay where she was fed.

"Mamma!" said Jim, "I can say 'cat' and 'Capt. Cain.' My captain said I's too big to say 'tat.'"

One of the sailors had taken pains to teach Polly one English sentence, and every little while she would laugh heartily and then call out: "Wish you Merry Christmas!"

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS.

Dear friends, if we cannot be jolly
On Christmas Day,
With roast beef and pudding and holly,
When isn't we may?

We agree that this day, above others,
Should bring good cheer,
And parents and sisters and brothers
Should all be here.

Then let the big fires so bravely
And brightly blaze,
And all enjoy, gayly or gravely,
This day of days.

Our pleasure becomes, then, a duty
That good men love;
And presents of comfort and beauty
The pleasure prove.

But over all, Christian or heathen,
On Christmas Day
We have, to those worse off than we then,
A debt to pay.

For with us we have, said the Savior,
Always the poor;
Whatever their state or behavior,
Their claims endure.

If we to the poor give as much as
Our means may afford,
The gift is declared to be such as
A loan to the Lord.

Remember the poor who are with us,
And who must stay;
They're not apart from or beneath us
This Christmas Day.

Christmas Eve.

The air of mystery which always pervades Christmas eve is delightful. The children are on the qui vive and watching every movement of the older people with the greatest curiosity, while the papas, mamas, and aunts are busy with closed doors preparing surprises for the anxious little ones. The keen enjoyment which all feel who are in harmony with the season of merry making is real to everyone. Whether a beautiful tree is being trimmed and the happy household are to feast their eyes upon the splendor of its lighted candles and brilliant array of lovely things, or whether the stockings are hung in the chimney corner, large ones or small ones down to the little socks pressed by baby's tiny feet, the same mysterious feeling prevades all. There is no time in all the year like Christmas time; the children look forward to it for months, and the scattered members of the family gather then under the father's roof to enjoy together a happy season. Those who are far away are remembered with precious tokens from home. The regular routine of business is suspended. Father gives up his time to the little folks, and mother plans with them and becomes a willing partner in their secrets and surprises. The colleges and schools close their doors, and a season of pleasure and relaxation takes the place of the busy school life. How the young people look forward to the Christmas vacation! A visit home, free from all the restraints which surround them through the year, is an event which they have anticipated for weeks. Those who do nothing to make the Christmas season a happy one for all, and steel themselves against celebrating this joyous occasion, "miss from life one of its brightest pages. The absent tree is a sorrow to many; the neglected gifts are a reproach." A real Santa Claus will be the grand climax for the children, and can be easily procured if father or uncle will consent to act in this capacity. A mask representing an old man, a wig and whiskers must be obtained at one of the toy stores. The dress can be easily improved by muff, furs, and a buffalo robe. He must have a basket on his back, filled with bundles, and, if possible, make his entrance into the room, where the family are gathered through a window, which is raised when he knocks. This will create lots of fun for the little folks, and make them open their eyes with wonder and amazement.



and the man who had taken Jim down into the captain's room, said: "I guess that's your little gal calling to you, captain."

"What do you mean?" roared the captain.

"Why, your little Jim came aboard while you was up to the office this afternoon, and said she was going with us. I took her down into your room, and I reckon she must have dropped to sleep."

The captain grew more and more perplexed as the sailor went on. He swore at him, and said he didn't know what he was talking about. He had no little girl, and his Jim was a boy ten years old. He didn't want to be bothered with any children aboard, squalling all night and all day, and getting in every one's way.

"Go bring the young one here," he said.

The sailor obeyed, and pretty soon Jim, with her pretty white kitty in her arms, appeared before the angry captain, who began:

"Who the—," he was going to use a profane word, but as he looked at the sweet face of the little child, whose big blue eyes gazed at him wonderingly, yet without a shadow of fear, he was ashamed to swear, and not once after that, during the long voyage to Brazil and back to New York, did he ever let a coarse or profane word pass his lips.

"Who are you, little one, and what are you doing here?" he asked kindly.

"I'm Jim, and me and my tat is going into the tountry on the boat."

"Into the country! I guess you are!

saw coffee growing, and never forgot the beautiful appearance of the dark green shining leaves, the pretty snowy blossoms and the bright red berries.

"Where's the toffee?" she asked, and then Capt. Brooks took her to a part of the plantation where the fruit was crushed and the berries separated and dried. And bananas! Well, she had as many as she could eat, and they were far nicer than those she had at home. And she saw monkeys and alligators and parrots and all sorts of beautiful birds. Capt. Brooks bought a splendid parrot for her to take home with her. The captain's friends gave her some very handsome sea shells and a great big doll with which to amuse herself when she went to sea again.

One week before the Sea Bird was to sail, another vessel left Rio Janeiro for New York, and Capt. Brooks asked Jim if she wanted to go home.

"Yes, I want to go home and see mamma and papa, but I'd a great deal drather wait and go on my own ship," was Jim's reply.

"Well, then, shall we send a letter on this ship to your papa, and let him know where you are?"

"Don't he know?"

"No, and I'm afraid he has been very anxious about his little girl."

"Didn't he know that God would have you tate care of?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Why, he said God would tate care of me always if I's good. Hasn't I been good?"

"Yes, indeed, the best little girl I