

A

CHRISTMAS TIME
BY
PANSY.



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Frontispiece.—Marion and her brothers talked it over,

A CHRISTMAS TIME.

By "PANSY."

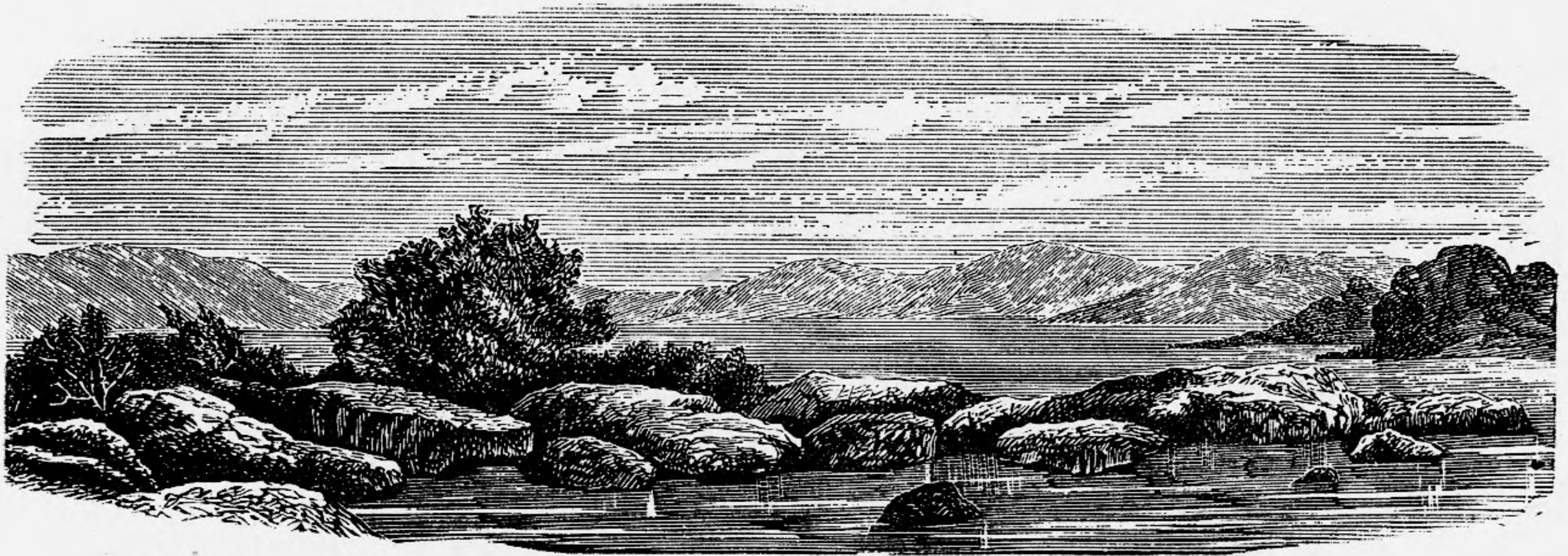


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A CHRISTMAS TIME.

I.

HOW IT BEGAN.

IT began in the woods. Marion and her three brothers talked it over, and the two children on their knees, gathering ground pine, listened and admired; they didn't "belong." "There are nine of us," said Marion; "there's father and mother, and Aunt Charlotte, and Patty Wilson, — we'd have her come in, because she sort of belongs to the family, you know, — and you three, and Neely and me, that makes nine."

"You three," meant her three brothers, Ned, and Willis, and Allan.

"And what would we have on the tree?" said Ned.

"Why, how do I know? We can't tell each other, because then we would know all about our presents, and

that would be no fun; but father and mother would put things on for us, and we would for them; and then, of course, we would for each other; so if each of us got eight presents, — no, seven, because Patty wouldn't give us any, of course, — what a lot there would be!"

Then they fell into a discussion as to how many presents there would really be, and getting confused in their knowledge of arithmetic, waxed violent, until they were suddenly brought back by George Warren's exclamation: "A tree! what makes you call it a tree? Presents don't grow on trees."

"Yes, they do," said Willis, "about Christmas time."

"Why, don't you know about Christmas trees?" said Marion, patronizingly; then she explained, and George said he should think that would be tall fun.

"It is," said Marion. "Maybe they will have one in Sunday-school this year, and then you can see it. Didn't you ever have a Christmas present in your life? Why, George Warren! How funny! Maybe they will give you one down at Gilbert's this year; they ought to, because you do errands for them."

"Well, so he does for us," said Allan.

"O, well!" said Marion, "not often; that's different."

Did you ever notice how easy it is for people to pick out things that those mysterious people called "they" ought to do, and how hard to find out what "we" ought to be doing?



II.

HOW THEY DID IT.

THEY did it beautifully, and a lovely evening they had. I wish I had time to tell you all about it. The tree glowed, and twinkled, and blazed on every limb. Neely plumped down on the floor, and talked to her new dolly before half the presents were off the tree; you can see that much for yourselves. Aunt Charlotte handed down the presents, and Marion, with her high work-apron on, the better to hold the things, distributed them. Patty Wilson's astonished head bobbed around under the very shadow of the tree itself; she had seven presents; the Rogers household were not of the sort to forget the little girl who did odds and ends for them in the kitchen. Quite a number of the presents wouldn't grow on the tree, they were so large; but there was plenty of room on the floor under its branches. Marion had a fur cap

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and a charming pair of silver-mounted skates, and ten dollars in gold to do with as she pleased. As to the gold, each of her brothers fared the same; this was from



the Western uncle, whose namesake Allan was, and whose wife, queerly enough, was named "Marion."

"What a perfectly splendid time we have had!" Marion said, with a little sigh of satisfaction, after all the

presents had been distributed and talked over. "I do think Christmas trees are the nicest things! Father, don't you think they ought to have one in the church this year? Don't you believe, George Warren never saw one in his life!"

"They aren't going to," Mr. Rogers said, answering the first part of her sentence. "They voted last week to wait until summer, and have a picnic."

"O, dear!" said Marion, dismally; "a picnic doesn't take the place of a Christmas tree. I don't believe a single boy in Mr. Taylor's class ever saw one. I know we have never had one in our school since they were in it. I wish I were rich, I'd make a Christmas tree for them. Father, let's have one here in our house for the class."

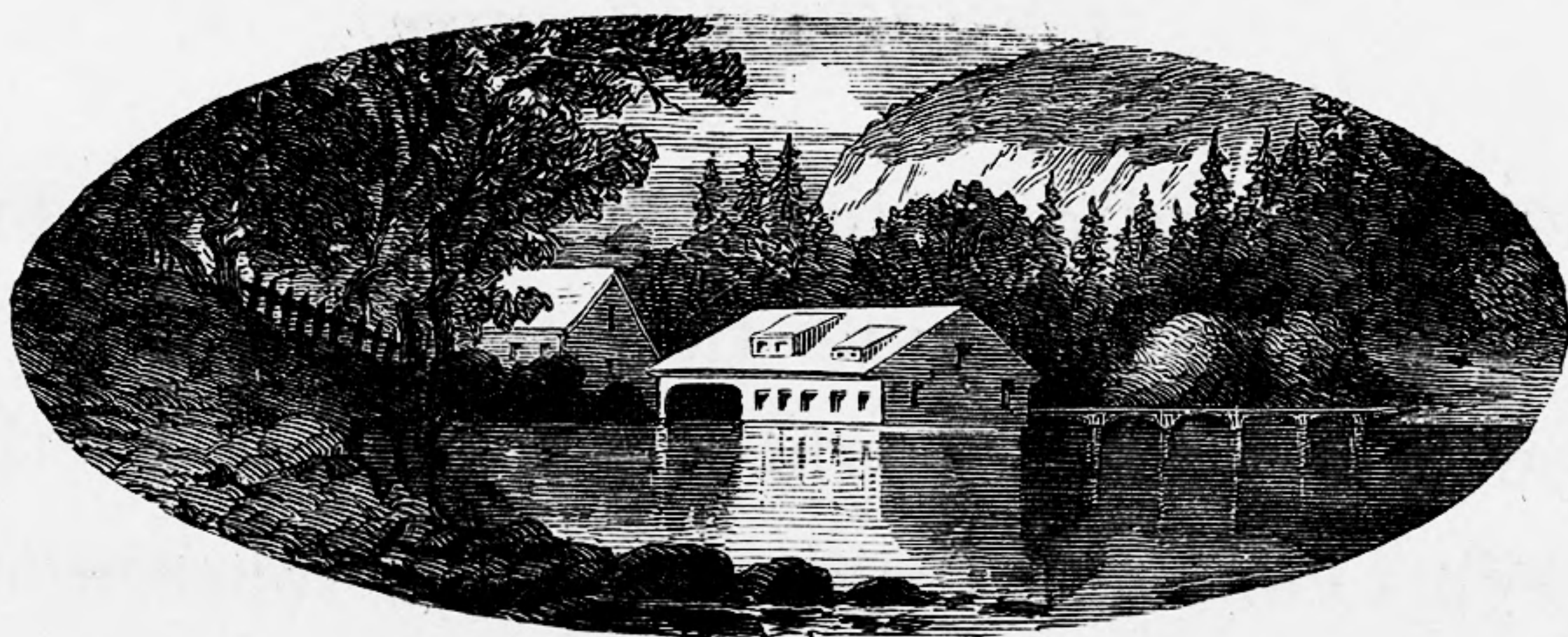
"O, my!" said Allan; "what an idea!"

"Can't do it," said her father; "I'm not rich, you must remember, any more than you are. I've spent all the Christmas money I had to spare on your tree."

"We have money of our own," said thoughtful Willis, fingering his gold piece; "and it is to do just what we like with."

"I know exactly what I am going to do with mine," said Marion, decidedly.

"So do I," chimed in Allan and Ned. But Willis turned his over, and looked gravely at the date, and said nothing.



III.

HOW THEY UNDED IT.

I SHOULDN'T say "they" exactly; it was Willis that undid it; the rest looked on. The more he stared at that gold piece the more he thought about George Warren, who had never seen a Christmas tree, nor had any Christmas presents. Then, of course, his sister Lucy never had either. There was a verse that Willis had learned a few days before, that came in most inconveniently just here, — "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He had received. Could it be pleasanter to give? He decided to try it. His mother was taken into the secret, and after that there was a shut-up room in the Rogers household. Only mother, and Aunt Charlotte, and Willis knew anything about it.

"What the mischief are you up to?" Allan asked; and Willis said, "If you want to be in it, you may; but it takes money. Have you any to spare?"

"Not a cent. I'm saving up for that patent printing press, 'every man his own printer.'"

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“Then you’ll have to wait a while before you unlock this door,” said Willis, merrily; “money is the only thing that will do it.”

The same offer was made to Ned and Marion, but the one was intent upon a new harness for Button, the shaggy pony, and the other was going to have a “pair of real kid boots and four-button gloves.” Yet this same young



lady was heard to exclaim, as often as the Warren children were mentioned, that she thought it was “real mean” that nobody ever gave them a Christmas present. The library door remained locked until New Year’s eve, then it was opened, and two children were allowed to peep in first. Here they are, — George and Lucy Warren, and, behold, just before them blazed a Christmas tree! And

the fruit on it — the fur cap and mittens, and the hood and sack, and the new shoes, and the red dress, and the brown jacket, even the sled and the rubber boots — were for George and Lucy Warren; it is wonderful how far Mother Rogers made that ten dollar gold piece go! You needn't think I'm going to tell you what those two wild, delighted children said and did. I wouldn't be hired to try it.

"Why didn't you tell us, and let us help?" said Marion, reproachfully.

"You wouldn't be told," laughed Willis. "I offered."

He had one surprise; high up on the glowing tree was an illuminated text, done in flowers, each letter a vine or flower, and it said, —

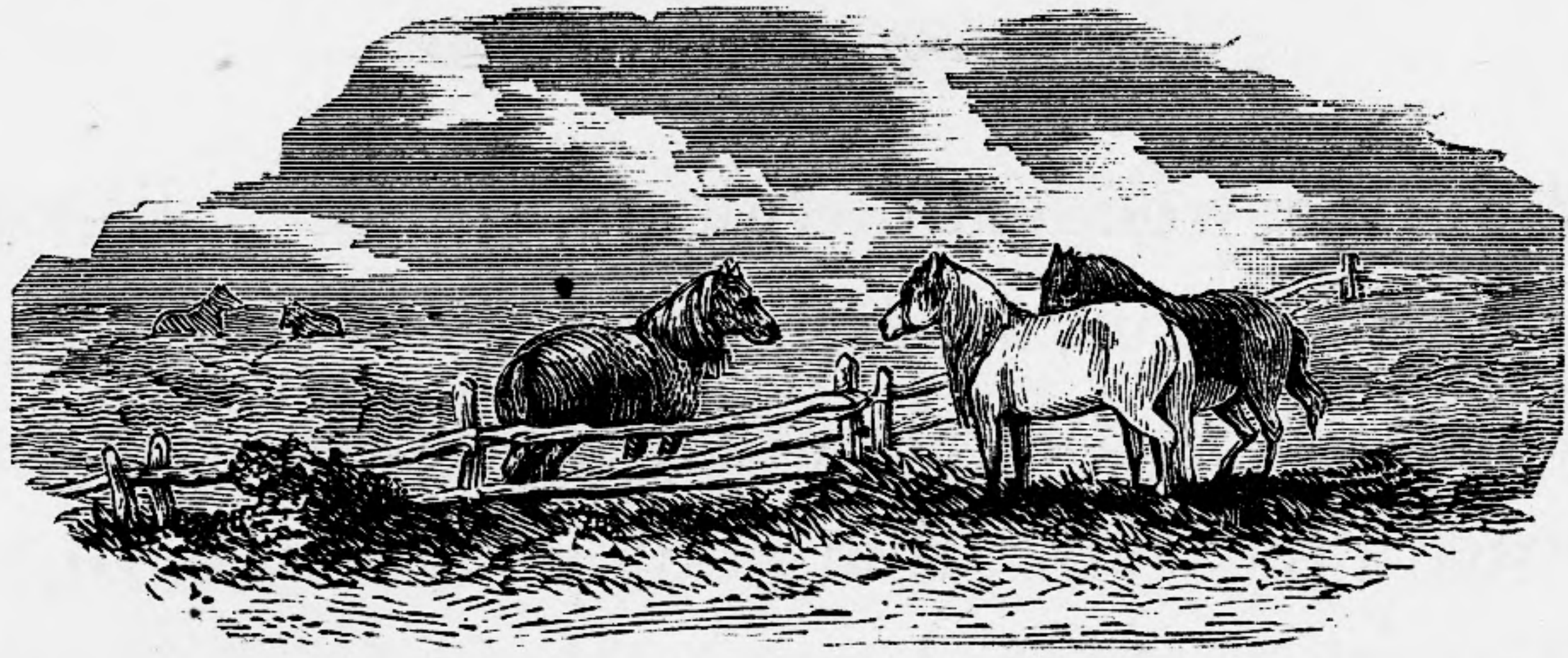
"IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE."

That was for Willis.

"Do you believe that, my boy?" his father asked him.

"Yes, sir," said Willis; "I do."





IV.

THE CONSEQUENCE.

You don't see how in the world a sleigh-ride and a runaway can have anything to do with Christmas trees. Ah, ha! there's many a consequence getting ready in this world that doesn't seem to you to have anything to do with what you did. This one came about in this fashion. Allan Rogers found something that went ahead of the printing-press, and what should that be but a team of goats! The boy who owned them was pretty sick of them, so a trade was soon made; and one wintry afternoon they started for a ride — Allen for driver, Ned to hang on behind, and look after Marion and dear little Neely. I suppose you don't need to be told that both mother and Aunt Charlotte were away from home, or they wouldn't have taken Neely. Goats are very uncertain creatures; it suited these to get scared at their shadows or something else, and go tearing down the hill at a break-neck pace. I regret to tell you that Marion had been silly enough to put on both kid boots and kid

gloves for this wonderful ride, and she split one glove from wrist to finger, in holding on to the sleigh. I'm sure if you look at the picture you will not be surprised to hear that the next thing they did was to tip over. Away went the goats, leaving their load in the snow. Only Ned, he tore after them, shouting in such a way that they ran faster every minute. Marion gathered herself out of a snow bank as quickly as she could, and made sure that the weeping Neely was unhurt: then they turned to Allan, for he was groaning and holding on to his boot. There is a boy, you see, with a hand-sled. I want you to understand that that boy is George Warren; he had never been up on coast hill in his life before, for the simple reason that, having no sled and little spare time, he had no particular desire to go; but on this afternoon, new sled in hand, he had gone, and it was he who said, "You've sprained your ankle; it's a mean-looking sprain, too. I'll have to put you on my sled and take you home. There comes Ned back; he'll carry Neely, but you will have to walk, Marion."

Miss Marion looked at her light kid boots and shuddered; the snow was two feet deep in spots. Willis, who had been out with Button to bring home his mother and Aunt Charlotte, was in the yard when the sorry procession moved up the carriage-drive, — Ned first, with Neely in his arms, to show that she was safe; Allan next, sitting doubled up on George Warren's new sled, and look-



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ing very white around his lips; lastly, Miss Marion, with her kid boots soaked, and buttonless in many places. No wonder that Zero barked with all his might. In the evening, when the sprained ankle had been carefully looked after, and was resting on a pillow, Mr. Rogers looked in on his little group gathered around Allan's sofa.

"So, my boy, your ten dollars took wings, or feet, and ran away — did they?"

"Yes, sir," said Allan wrathfully; "and they ought to have broken their necks. I never saw anything like the way they acted."

"What about your shoes, daughter? Your mother thinks it doesn't improve them to walk through snow drifts. Let me see them."

Miss Marion held up a very red face and a very shabby pair of dirt-colored boots. All her father said was, —

"And the gloves split, too — did they? Well, Ned, you must be thankful that you had your gold piece safe in your pocket; it couldn't do mischief, any way."

Ned blushed and laughed. "It isn't in my pocket now, father; not a sign of it. I think it must have rolled into the snow when I did, only it got buried, I guess, or stolen, or something; anyhow, I haven't seen it since, and I went away back, and looked."

I hope you will forgive Mr. Rogers; he couldn't help what he did next; he just leaned back in his chair and

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laughed as long and as loud as he could, and every son and daughter joined in and helped him. When he could speak again he said, "I believe I'll have to make you each a New Year's present of an illuminated text like Willis's; for I certainly think you must all feel by this time that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'"



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