Between each line on every page

house closed and Pearl and Baby had!

Noel Clayton was tall and gaunt, 'post," and Chum went out while Noel with clear, candid, blue eyes, and his turned again to his interrupted work. ing, were as well kept as those of a quaint turn of expression, quaint do you come from? and who-who woman.

He was thirty, and a splash of gray spoke to him. on either temple, a strand or two of very lovable, very beautiful—and had white in his moustache, made him marred two lives. look older.

He was broad-chested and muscutar-by all rules-he should have been writing short stories, novelettes and two lives.

serials for the weekly press. It was good, nervous work. His name was becoming known, for he had the happy knack of blending pathos a few days' holiday he found the with humor. He had traveled widely, and an Australian bush idyl at the be- departed. ginning of the week would be follow-: ed by a London society story, to be followed again by a story of rustic life In the dear West Country that he lov- had to be plied if body and soul were the child to walk straight in—and the

ed so well. ed his profession, and had practically work improved. threw his pen into the grate and or- back and thinking back while he looked down, sad eyed, at little Sunnydered up his landlady's children, and wrote. pandemonium reigned for an hour.

Sometimes he gave them pennies, but not always—small coin of the to knit, and how bulks it looked and thors—but the romps were huge, and he enjoyed them.

Of course there was a woman at the bottom of the tangle of the man's life. and women complicate things some times—he would have said "always." · On one particular evening he was ! alone and writing, when Jim Courteney was shown in--and Jim was an old and tried friend-about the only friend the ionely, self-absorbed man, had, and so the incomer sat down and lighted his pipe, and did not bother the author for quite a quarter of an hour, and then Noel rose and stretch-

ed himself. "What is it this time. Noel?" "Oh, the usual thing-love; and candidly, I am getting so sick of writing love stories."

"Ah, you feel like that?" Eve, and somehow-somehow-my thoughts went back with a jump, and Tremembered one Christmas Eve.

when ---" "Your pipe's out. Noel" "Aye, so it is. Well there was one! Christmas Eve when ---

about her still?" "Yes," and then a long pause----It is the privilege of chums to sit,

"My dear boy, are you worrying,

silent for a spell. "And all this happened four or five years ago. I never heard the rights !

or wrongs of the story." Noel crossed the room, and digging both hands into his pockets, looked,

at his chum. "There is nothing to know. After the four happy years of married life, trouble came between us, lies came. between us; and--and--here I am and it's Christmas Eve. Of course, our



baby was only a mite—a wee, blue- into deep violet eyes love lit. eyed, golden-haired mite; couldn't But, of course, this was five years walk, crawled, you know; but we were ago. ops, bridesmaids, bouquets and bless- the sound of the bells that he knew ings, and his temporary excitement would ring out in a few hours. had left him—he added drily:

"And it pays! Now go, old chap. to summon his landlady's children, but must get my stuff zone for the early except for himself, the house was

party going on and Mrs. Marsh and her progeny were attending it.

He had been writing for half an hour since Chum had left him, and felt the old familiar touch on his wrist. It was imagination, of course, he did not even turn his head, and then he was looking into blue eyes, in the round golden-curled framed face of a boy of four, who laughed up at him and presented a rosebud to be kissed. "Goodness, child-where on earth

empty. There was a Christmas Eve

thoughts haunted him, a dead past "Eric," and the child began to make preparations for climbing a lofty knee. The girl-wife had been very sweet. "Who brought you here, Baby Eric? How did you come?"

Noel telt like an Irish member of There should be a special place of torment for the person who deliber- Parliament, for "no answer was giva soldier—he looked an "open air" ately comes between two people who en," but a wee form, full of hugs and man, but for five years he had been love each other and smilingly warps kisses, got fast hold upon him, and said gravely and yet with a sweet air

Pearl Clayton was as easily led as a of command "Just comed-and now if you're not child, a soft, emotional weak little woman, and when Noel returned from too busy, mister Father-"

"Yes, my son."

"Praps-I'd better go to bed." "But my child-my little son-whe.

Noel drifted a little bit, the shock brought you here? Where is your unmanned him terribly but his pen mother" and the tall man paced up was his sole source of income, and it and down of course, Chain had told to be kept together, and in a very! child had--straight in.

He lived quite alone, worked—and few weeks he had to some extent. The author-his tiny son was on the smoked-from morning to night, lov- regained his mental balance, and his floor now, saying things to the cat and it deserved every word, being a dropped all his friends--male and fee. The eve of Christmas and the day cat that licks stamps off letters, and male-and when a fit of the not infre-litself appeals to most hearts, and on loves bacon and boiled eggs-thrust quent blues got him by the throat, this particular eve Noel kept thinking his hands deep into his pockets and

> How well he remembered the extra- ... Yes, perhaps you had better come sized stocking he induced the nurse to bed.

realm is not always available to au- felt on Christmas morning. And then | If Chum would only come, if some

H Glad Tidings of Great Joy H



BY PROCKHORST, 1825

came school, college, and then mar-; thing would only happen to break When the scribbling fit was on him sigh of a child.

Pearl used to draw her low wicker chair close to his writing table, knit- the street. happened five years ago.

One odd little trick Pearl had, and and then he looked down. Noel remembered it this evening—and Kneeling as of yore beside him, blue missed it.

When his pen was working extra busily she used to lay the tips of her | quavering little voice, but it thrilled fingers upon his right hand—just him. where hand meets wrist. She did not Incommode him in the least. He declared her tour's inspired him; they were such pinked-tipped fingers, and so small, and he had often written with the tiny touch on his wrist almost unconsciously—only peeping up from time to time at a sweet oval face,

awful chums, and when she went and | So he wrote on, feeling a little bit took our mite-well," and the man's sorry that Chum had not stayed, for ly.-New York News. taugh hurt his own ears. "Well, then after all, he only had another halftook to writing love stories—love, hour's work before him, and then they old chap, with a happy ending-bish- could sit and chat, and perhaps drown

He was just in the frame of mind

the silence, a silence only cleft by the The church was only at the end of

ting, or daintily fingering white ma- He could hear the bellringers shufterial, soft and downy and fluffy, for fling along the frosty pavement, in a the prospective wearer, and the few few minutes—and he bent to his work. remarks she made seemed to chime in Half asleep, half awake, he was and identify themselves with what conscious of the old, almost forgotten he was writing; but, of course, all this | touch upon his wrist-a dream doubtless—but be could not shake it off,

> eyed, tear-dimmed, was Pearl. "I have returned, Noel." It was a

How like she was to their child. And then the bells clashed forth their message, "Peace on Earth, Goodwill Towards Men," and to two hearts

they carried a sweeter, deeper mes-

sage still. No word was spoken. A small figure, in a smoking jacket that reached to his heels, stood at the dividing door. an eager face turned to either. And husband and wife kissed silent-

As to Santa Claus.

With our modern fangled notions Fairy tales no longer do; 'Stead of coming down the chimney, He has now gone up the flue.

NEWS OF THE FAR EAST. All the Russian warships have sailed

eastward from Tangier.

Another Russian cruiser was reported to have been blown up. Uncommonly heavy cannonading was renorted about Lone Tree Hill.

Kucopatkin used searchlights for the first time in repelling a night attack. General Sakharoff reported the Rusgian loss of a village, but no important !

Nogi's second son was killed at 203-Metre Hill and the General is now

General Rennenkampff's pursuit of the Japanese on General Kuropatkin's left ended after two days.

Russia plans to have 450,000 men in the field in Manchuria for the spring campaigns in three armies. Nogi continued to shell the sunken

Russian warships at Port Arthur and to search for the torpedo craft. Japan's heavy juns were turned from the destroyed Port Arthur squadron to the town and did great damage.

All the Russians at Port Arthur retreated to Laotishan except the troops left to hold some of the forts a while

Russia is planning to send a third squadron from the Baltie to the Fat East, instead of dispatching the Black

It was reported from St. Petersburg that the Emperor had ordered the dispatch of seven battleships, five cruisers and forty destroyers to the East. Having destroyed Wiren's squadron and prevented him from co-operating with Rojestvensky, the Japanese will undertake to starve out the garrison. A dispatch from Mukden said that the heavy cannonade along the Shakhe had resulted in no important changes in the positions of the opposing armies.

LOUIS AIDT'S SHOE HOUS!

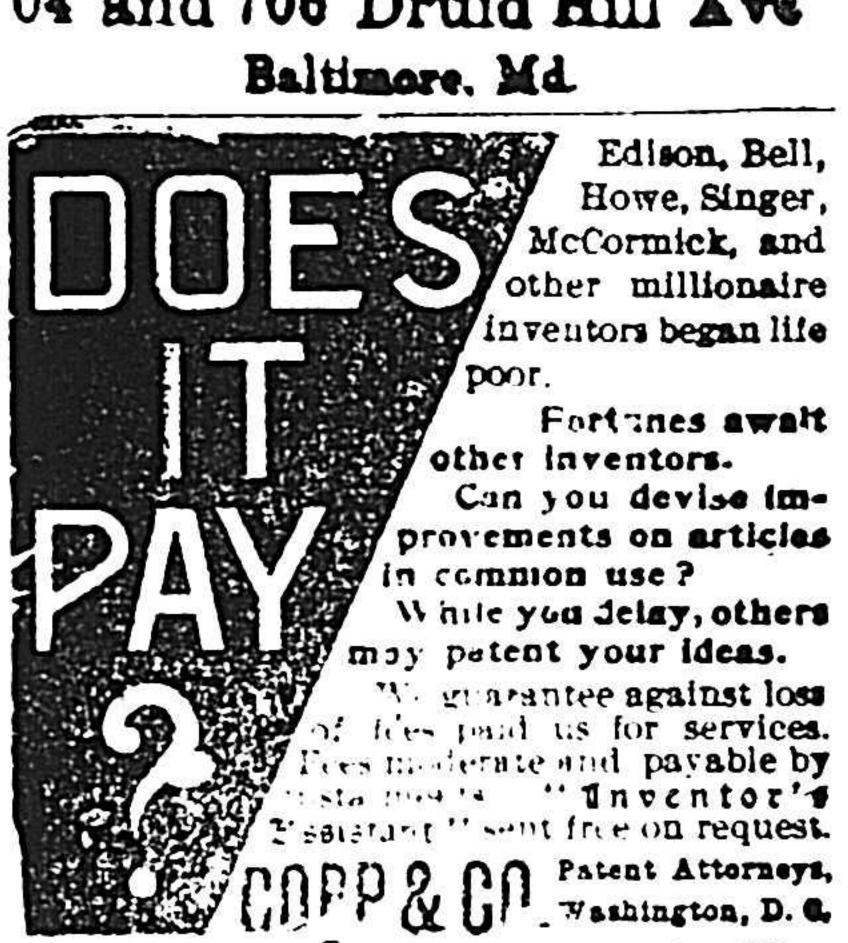
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