

**THE CHRISTMAS
THORN, AND
OTHER STORIES**

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The Christmas Thorn, and Other Stories by Louise Stockton

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LOUISE STOCKTON

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THORN, AND
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THE CHRISTMAS THORN.

BY
LOUISE STOCKTON.

And other stories.



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D. LOTHROP & COMPANY,
FRANKLIN ST., CORNER OF HAWLEY.

THE CHRISTMAS THORN.

IN the December of 1752, Roger Lippett was a boy of ten years, and "Dan," his dog, was six months old and had to be taught to swim. To this pleasing duty Roger addressed himself whenever he had a chance, and the only draw-back was that his mother would allow no wet dog upon her sanded floor, and as Roger had to be wherever Dan was, he had often a tedious time in waiting for such a very curly dog to get dry.

But this Sunday afternoon the two had taken a long walk after the swim, and when they came back Dan was dry and uncommonly clean and white.

In the little parlor Roger found the usual Sunday company. In an arm-chair on one side of the fire-

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place sat Simon Mitchels, the school-master; opposite to him, on a three-legged stool, was Caleb Dawe, the parish clerk, and on the settle, in front of the fire, was Roger's cousin, old Forbes the miller, and short Daniel Green, the sexton. His mother sat in her high-backed chair by the window, and Phœbe Rogers' younger sister was near her playing gleefully with a kitten.

"Christmas!" said Caleb; "there 'll be no Christmas! What between the New Way and the Old Way, we'll all go astray. It is a popish innovation at the best, and if King George knew his duty, he'd put his foot on it."

"Nonsense!" said Simon, testily; "when a thing is wrong, 'tis wrong, and if you mean to make it right, you must not mind a little temporary trouble. King George knows that just as well as any one, and so do you! If you wanted a new roof on your house you would first have to take the old one off."

"Not Caleb," said old Forbes. "Caleb 'd patch the old one until it was new-made over."

"Yes," replied Simon, "that is just what we have been doing with the year—patching and patching. Now here comes King George, and says, 'Look here, this is 1752, and if we are ever going to have a decent regular year with the proper number of days in it,



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'tis time we were about it.' But you people who patch roofs object because it alters the dates for one year a day or two. Thanks be to the King, however he has the power."

"Alters the dates a day or two!" repeated Caleb. "You yourself said the New Way would take eleven days out of the year."

"Only this year," Simon replied; "afterward it will be all right. It is but to bring the first of January in the right place."

"It was right enough," persisted Caleb. "And I say no one, king or no king, has any right to take eleven days away from the English people."

Then Mistress Margery Lippett spoke:

"For my part," she said, "I think the New Way unchristian. Mistress Duncan, you know, has a fine crowing little boy, and when the squire asked how old he was, she told him — 'twas but a day so ago — three months and two weeks; and he laughed, and told her she would have to take the two weeks off. Now *that* I call unchristian, and not dealing justly with the child."

At this the school-master laughed, and taking his pipe out of his mouth, and pushing his velvet skull-cap a little farther back, he replied:

"They were both right, Mistress Margery. Both