

Christmas at Thompson Hall

Anthony Trollope



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CHAPTER I: MRS. BROWN'S SUCCESS

Every one remembers the severity of the Christmas of 187-. I will not designate the year more closely, lest I should enable those who are too curious to investigate the circumstances of this story, and inquire into details which I do not intend to make known. That winter, however, was especially severe, and the cold of the last ten days of December was more felt, I think, in Paris than in any part of England. It may, indeed, be doubted whether there is any town in any country in which thoroughly bad weather is more afflicting than in the French capital. Snow and hail seem to be colder there, and fires certainly are less warm, than in London. And then there is a feeling among visitors to Paris that Paris ought to be gay; that gayety, prettiness, and liveliness are its aims, as money, commerce, and general business are the aims of London, which, with its outside sombre darkness, does often seem to want an excuse for its ugliness. But on this occasion, at this Christmas of 187-, Paris was neither gay, nor pretty, nor lively. You could not walk the streets without being ankle-deep, not in snow, but in snow that had just become slush; and there was falling throughout the day and night of the 23d of December a succession of damp, half-frozen abominations from the sky which made it almost impossible for men and women to go about their business.