GROWING OLD.

Softly, O, softly the years have swept by thee,
Touching thee lightly with tenderest care;
Sorrow and death they did often bring nigh thee,
Yet they have left thee but beauty to wear.
Growing old gracefully,
Gracefully fair.

Far from the storms that are lashing the ocean,
Nearer each day to the pleasant home light;
Far from the waves that are big with commotion,
Under full sail and the harbor in sight.
Growing old cheerfully,
Cheerful and bright.

Past all the winds that are adverse and chilling,
Past all the islands that lured thee to rest,
Past all the currents that wooed thee unwilling
Far from the port and the land of the blest.
Growing old peacefully,
Peaceful and blest.

Never a feeling of envy or sorrow
When the bright faces of children are seen;
Never a year from their youth wouldst thou borrow;
Thou dost remember what lieth between.
Growing old willingly,
Gladly, I ween.

Rich in experience that angels might covet,
Rich in a faith that hath grown with thy years,
Rich in the love that grew from and above it,
Soothing thy sorrow and hushing thy fears.
Growing old wealthily,
Loving and dear.

Hearts at the sound of thy coming are lightened,
Ready and willing thy hand to relieve:
Many a face at thy kind words are brightened—
"It is more blessed to give than receive."
Growing old happily,
Blest, we believe.

Eyes that grow dim to the earth and its glory,
See but the brighter the heavenly glow!
Ears that are dull to the world and its story
Drink in the songs that from paradise flow;
All their sweet recompense
Youth cannot know.

Fourscore! But softly the years have swept by thee,
Touching thee lightly with tenderest care;
Sorrow and death they did often bring nigh thee,
Yet they have left thee but beauty to wear;
Growing old gracefully,
Graceful and fair.

A NIGHT IN A STAGE.

A True Story of Christmas.

The year was 1756—the month of December—the place Tamaqua. I was a young man then, and a strong one. I did a good deal of traveling through the State of Pennsylvania, going from county town to county town from the beginning of the year to the close. It was pleasant business enough, for there was less railroading to be done then than now, and more staging, and not unfrequently long rides on canal boats in the summer time. I was not often hurried on my trips, and took my own time. My exact business at the county seats consisted of hunting up titles to obscure, wild lands, paying taxes upon them, and getting them in good condition for immediate sale.

In consequence of the nature of this business, I knew a good deal about the topography of Pennsylvania, and a good deal that, at that time, was worth knowing about its roads and its inns. All of the latter were bad, but some were better than others. One of the worst of them were at Tamaqua, and possibly it is there yet, though when I last slept under its roof, it was in altogether such a lamentable condition of decay, and its roof was such a very leaky roof indeed, that I doubt not it long ago disappeared out of the sight of men and possibly out of their memories also—Tamaqua having achieved a railroad since, and, of course, grown as only railroad towns do grow.

I arrived there that December of 1856, on a Monday afternoon, which was quite as cold and disagreeable a Monday afternoon as I remember ever to have known, though, when compared with the Tuesday that followed, it might be considered rather warm than otherwise. I was half frozen when I got there, and I was not quite thawed out when I left, for I had yielded to a burning curiosity to visit a coal mine, and I fancy that Tamaqua is nothing but a coal mine, with a thousand mouths that every morning swallow so many thousand miners and disgorge them every night. It was then, and I think it is now, a very black and sooty place, with a canal in front of it, and a hill behind it, and a huge mine I have spoken of under it. It was not only black and sooty itself, but its people were similarly black and sooty; and so were its horses, or rather its mules, for it seemed to have few of the former and a great many of the latter. Even its dogs and cats partook of the general sootiness, and were evidently greatly depressed by it. I was very cold when I went down into the mine—which had its shaft just behind the hotel—and I was colder still when I came out of it. I went to bed cold, and got up cold, so cold indeed that I thought I would never be warm any more. When I went down into the frozen breakfast-room, I looked out of the window, and saw that the ground was covered deep with snow, and that it was still snowing as if it meant to exhaust the whole winter's supply in five minutes or so, being very greatly pressed to do it immediately. I drank my cold, black coffee and ate my cold, tough beefsteak in gloomy silence, thinking more than I had done for a long time before of home, of its pleasant cheer and warmth, and of the loving boys and girls in it who were even then, no doubt, expecting my speedy coming, for this was already the morning of Tuesday, and Thursday would be Christmas day. In that home I was St. Nicholas himself, for it was I that brought home in the night the brave tree with its spreading green branches; it was I that planted it firmly in the middle of the wide parlor; it was I that found the infinite variety of toys, cakes, bon-bons, and glittering baubles which covered it; it was I that placed the ever-beautiful image of the Christ-Child on the topmost bough; I that lighted the many-colored tapers, and I that, at the auspicious moment, suddenly threw open the folding-doors and let in the children to behold the glory of that wondrous Christmas miracle.

In my frequent journeys through the State, I had seen many places which I wanted to get away from quickly, but I never saw another that I wanted to turn my back upon so much as Tamaqua. It was not in any manner a pleasant place, and besides, if these nephews and nieces of mine were to have a Christmas tree at all in this year, 1856, I thought, I must go home as fast as I could travel. I had come to Tamaqua in a stage, and I must go away from it in a stage—not to Philadelphia, exactly, but to the next railroad town, and that was distant, I knew not how far.

I arose shivering from the dreary breakfast, and hunted up the landlord of the inn. He was easily found, and was no better or warmer looking a man than his accommodations promised him to be. I paid his extravagant charges, and then informed him that I wished to reach as quickly as possible the nearest railroad station, and to take the first train for the east.

"The nearest station is at Hium; Ilium is 22 miles distant; you can not get there before night, if at all. I think you won't get there at all."

All this was spoken reflectively, and with deliberation.

"If I can get there by 10 o'clock to-night, can I make the eastern express?"

"You can, but I doubt if you can get there at all."

"Why?" I asked.

He was not a man to waste words. He only said:

"The stage won't go—on account of the storm."

"Are you sure of that?" I ventured to ask.

"Quite sure," and he closed his lips with a snap, as if he knew all about it.

"Who owns the stage?"

"I do," he replied. "And I won't let it go, because the road lies over that mountain yonder; it runs close to the edges of precipices several hundred feet high, it is rough and slippery, the snow is deep now, and getting deeper every minute, and I don't believe any horse could pull through it."

I thought of the little children waiting for me yonder; of their bitter disappointment if I did not come. Then I said: "I am very anxious to go, and I am willing to pay well for being taken."

The landlord leaning over the bar asked:

"How much?"

I told him what I was willing to pay.

"I'll go and get the stage ready," he said. After all, it was only the higher price he had been waiting for.

In five minutes the stage was at the door. It was an ordinary box wagon on good strong springs, having a cotton cover open in front. The horse was a half-starved, jaded-looking beast. I took all this in as I stood on the porch waiting for the driver. Getting impatient at last, I asked:

"Where is the driver?"

The landlord, without speaking, pointed to an ill-clad boy standing at the horse's head. I looked closely at him. He might be, I thought, fifteen years old, or he might be not more than ten. His eyes were clear blue, and he, hearing my question, turned them full upon mine, a frank, boyish smile rebuking the distrust my words implied, and lighting up every feature of his delicate face. His complexion was like that of a girl, his mouth small and tender, his hair yellow, his figure slight and sinuous.

I looked at him, standing there shivering with the cold, out through the driving storm, along the snow-covered mountain road we were to travel together, and asked: "Are you not afraid to go?"

The landlord interrupted:

"It don't matter if he is a afraid. He belongs to me. He shall go."

"No," I said; "he shall not go, if he is not quite willing."

"I am not at all afraid," the boy replied, "and I am quite willing to go. I have gone often and often, through worse storms than this."

There was an earnest, manly grace even in the way he shook the gathered flakes from his tattered cap, and in his voice there was such a hearty, cheery ring, that from that moment I trusted and loved the boy.

I jumped into the stage, took the back seat, drew my great frieze coat close about my legs, and we drove off from among the gaping, sooty crowd of miners into the lonely mountain road; into the cruelest storm of wind and snow that I ever saw.

The boy sat on the front seat, waiting to be spoken to, looking straight ahead.

When we were quite clear of the straggling huts of the miners on the outermost limits of the town, I asked him his name.

"They call me Lewis Shively," he said.

"How old are you, Lewis?" was my next question.

"Fourteen, next April, sir."

"Do you live at home, with your father and mother?"

"That man yonder is all the father or mother I have, and his stable loft is the only home I have had since he took me from the poor-house. That was better than the stable though, for they thought me something there."

There were no complaining chords in the tones in which these bitter words were said, and while he was speaking he was drawing the whip gently across the horse's back, brushing off the snow that had fallen on it.

"Have you been driving on this road long?" I inquired.

"Going on three years. It will be three years in March."

"Is it cold out there? Colder than here, I mean?"

"I think it is," he replied; "the wind and snow cut so; but I don't mind, sir! We get used to tough weather up in these hills."

"I wish you would come in here; my coat will cover us both."

"No, I can't," he said. "I must watch the road now. We have to go pretty close to the precipices, sometimes."

"How close?" I asked.

"Within a few inches. I can't see now five yards ahead, the snow falls so heavily."

"Do you think it safe, then, to go on?"

"Quite safe, sir! and I don't mind the cold." But his teeth chattered as he said it, and the ruddy glow was all gone from his cheeks.

I did not talk more then. There were, I discovered, wide cracks in the bottom of the stage, through which the wind poured mercilessly. I was chilled through to the heart in less than an hour after starting. I do not know how far we had gone, or how long we had been upon the road, when I heard the boy's voice, cheery and bright, asking:

"How are you now, sir? Feeling pretty comfortable, sir?"

I nodded my head, and crept closer into the corner. But he was wiser than I and would not let me have the sleep I coveted.

"You are in a hurry to get home," he said, for want of something better to say with which to rouse me.

"Yes," I replied. "I want to be at home on Christmas eve."

"The best days I ever knew were Christmases—a good while ago."

He said it as if he were ever and ever so old, and what was saddest of all, as if he were done with Christmas forever. I told him of the tree I was to get, and how Christmas day was kept in the great cities. He was most interested in the tree, making me tell him again and again about it. But after awhile, as if he were tired of it, he said:

"I never saw a tree like that. I know about Christmas, though. About the star and the shepherds, and the Christ-child you spoke of—they that laid in the manger."

"Then you know all that any one in the world need ever care to know," I said.

It may have been an hour, or two hours, but it seemed but a minute after this that the boy shook me roughly by the shoulder.

"We are to get out here," he said.

I was very stiff in my joints, but I could get up and climb out of the stage, and no more. If I was cold I did not know it; my limbs were numb, but otherwise I was comfortable enough. I crawled out and followed the boy to a miserable-looking shanty by the road-side, in front of which we had stopped. There was a rough bar running across the room, there was a thick, black-haired, brawny looking man behind it, and there were two or three kegs of liquor behind him. There was an iron stove in the middle of the room, a bench along the wall, and that was all. The boy asked for some brandy, drank a glass of it after handing one to me, which I drank, and felt so much better for drinking that I called for another and got it, but the boy refused the glass I offered him. "I have had enough," he said.

We were going out, when the landlord opened the door before us. Looking out into the storm, he asked incredulously:

"Are you going on?"

"Yes!" said the boy, "I was told to drive this gentleman to Ilium to-night, and I'm going to do it."

"If you get there at all, it will be night sure enough," the landlord said.

"I will get there all the same," was the boy's reply.

"Let us stop here to-night," I said; "we can go on in the morning."

"I would rather take you on, sir! There's no danger. I can't put my horse up here, and my master would kill me if any thing happened to him."

That decided me to go on Besides, I did not care to talk. I was beginning to feel cold again standing in the wind.

It was 3 o'clock now, the light in the west growing dimmer and dimmer—the glooms of the mountains and the bare woods coming nearer to us, making their meaning felt in our souls, filling mine with an awful dread uf the snow-covered road beyond. Ten miles to go yet, the night coming quickly on, the cold growing more intense, the road rougher, more precipitous, the horse evidently giving out! But the boy took up the lines, the bright, frank smile upon his face, the cheery word upon his tongue. "Good-bye," he said, to the man in the doorway.

The man stood for an instant in the door-way looking after us. "Good-bye," he said.

We went on along the road that from the beginning of time it was ordained we were to go. I crept back into my corner.

"Do not go to sleep," the pleasant voice warned me from the front.

"Thank you," I replied, cheered and warmed by its hearty glow. "I will not go to sleep."

Then followed a long silence, in which I had views of the falling snow, the white hills above us, the white hills still below us, in which I heard sounds from creaking, crooning branches, from the wind sweeping savagely past us. Then unconquerable drowsiness, fast coming darkness—then night.

I felt a hand on my face, then on my shoulder, shaking me roughly; a sweet cheering voice in my ears, calling me back to life.

"If you go to sleep now, you won't wake up again," it said.

I woke with a sudden start, for an instant, to a full consciousness of time and place. I was not cold, only sleepy. "I am quite awake," I replied. "Have we far to go?"

"Five miles," and the voice was still the same cheery voice that I had heard from the first. He spoke to me often after that; then I saw him as in a dream, fixing a blanket that he had taken from the horse's back, to the hickory bows overhead, to keep the snow from driving in upon me, for I was covered with it to my knees. As God is my judge I did not then clearly know what he was doing, or I would have stopped him. I did not feel cold, though I knew afteward that I was then freezing, and I did not think he was cold. I did not think at all. I was far past that. I had begun a longer journey than I had started upon.

In that longer journey I dreamed of home, of the wondrous Christmas miracle, the lighted tree; of the glad faces of children, whose voices I heard. I heard one of them repeat two or three times, with startling distinctness, "We are lost." I was conscious that the child who said it had thrown herself into my arms, and was lying there a dull heavy weight. But aside from the cry it was all bright and pleasant—this real, terrible journey through the snow, over the rough dangerous mountain road, in that far off December. The dream lasted a long while, through all that night, and the day following and the night following that.

When I awoke from it I was in a large room, which I had never seen before. There were piles of the softest blankets upon me, there was a great wood fire blazing on the hearth, and I had never felt so warm and comfortable in all my life. There were two strangers in the room, a man and a woman, whose faces were kindly ones, but sorely troubled. When I stirred, and they saw I recognized them, they came and stood by my bed.

"Where am I?" I asked of them.

"At Ilium, in the house of the Methodist minister."

"How long have I been here?"

"Since night before last. You came in the stage, and the horse stopped before our door," the man said.

"What day is this?"

"It is Christmas day," the woman replied, taking my hand in hers.

"I have been ill, then?"

"Yes!"

"There was a boy brought me here. Where is he?"

"He is here too." The voice that said it was kusky with tears, and the hand that held mine shook.

"He has been ill, too."

"Yes!"

"Is he better now?"

"He was never so well. He will never be ill again."

I looked into the face of the woman who said this, and I saw that her eyes were red with weeping.

I disengaged the hand she held, and turned my face to the wall.

The woman laid her hand upon my arm.

"You must not feel like that. It is better so. He had only one friend, and he is with him this beautiful Christmas morning. He had no home here. It is Christmas day, and he is at home there."

I took in mine the comforting hand that lay upon my arm.

"I would like to see him," I said. "He gave his life for me."

They took me down afterward to what had been the family sitting-room. There were warm, red curtains at the windows, a bright, glowing carpet on the floor; there were bunches of holly and laurel scattered here and there, and over all was the atmosphere of home.

They left me at the door. I went in and stood by the side of the couch on which they had laid him. The eyes of tender blue were closed forever, and the yellow hair was parted over his boyish brows, and still about the brave, sweet mouth the bright smile played as it did at that first moment of our meeting, when my implied doubt of him called it there. He lay before me dead, in all the glow and promise of his youth.

But the smile which triumphed above death's ruin, rebuked me, and as I stooped to kiss the lips of the beautiful boy, I knew, as well as man could know, that he was not dead; that He who had given more life to the dead girl and the widow's son had given it also to him; and that he had only gone farther upon his journey than I—into a sweeter, fuller, more gracious life than he had ever known. And I also knew that I should see him again if I but made my own life as brave, unselfish, and true as his had been.—*Scribner's Monthly.*

—Rev. Geo. G. Smith, of the North Georgia Conference, has about completed his "History of Methodism." It is to be revised and annotated by Bishop George F. Pierce before publication.

Throw Physic to the Dogs; I'll None of it."

We do not in the least feel like blaming Macbeth for this expression of disgust; indeed, we are rather inclined to sympathize with him. Even nowadays most of the cathartics offered to the public are great, repulsive-looking pills, the very appearance of which is sufficient to "turn one's stomach." Had Macbeth ever taken Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets he would not have uttered those words of contempt. It is really encouraging, when one is ill, to find that a little, sugar-coated Pellet, no larger than a grain of mustard, will as promptly produce the desired effect as a dose of great, nauseating pills. These little Pellets, unlike other cathartics, are really nature's physic. They do not debilitate, but tone and invigorate the system. No family should be without Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets.

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Chickens	2 50	@	3 50
Coffee	22	@	40
Wheat	1 15	@	1 20
Hay—Best	17 00	@	22 00
Whiskey—Common	1 00	@	1 15
Robertson County	1 75	@	3 00
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Lincoln County	1 75	@	3 00
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Essex, ss.

June 5th, 1873, personally appeared Adolph Biornberg, made oath to the following certificate, and by him subscribed and sworn before me.

WM. STEVENS, J. P."

LAWRENCE CITY, Mass., June 9th, 1873.

We, the undersigned, having personally known Dr. Adolph Biornberg for years, believe him to be an honest, moral man, trustworthy, and in truth and veracity unspotted. His character is without reproach.

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