CHRISTMAS.

How shall I tell of the ages,
When Christmas was never kept;
When the earth, in dark revolution,
Died her time—and slept!
How speak of the tardy unfolding
Of morn in the crimson East—
When lo! for the Heavenly Infant
There waited the solemn feast!
The shepherds sing
In slow accord:
"Is born our King,
The blessed Lord."

A quiver—as if down the ages
Mortality's cry echoed still;
So long had it voiced every heart-beat,
It lingered the daybreak to fill;
Each bitter, discordant, low earth-wail
Shocked Heavenly air as it rang;
The Babe breathed; Divinity woke,
And the angels in rapture sang.
The shepherds say,
"We seek Him, all.
Look at the Star
O'er Bethlehem's stall.

The Babe swaddled in the manger,
His tiny hand folded soft;
That hand, to be put forth for others
In loving strength, so oft;
To be, even in willing submission,
Extended from Calvary,
Now rests on the Mother's bosom,
In beautiful infancy.
The shepherds whisper,
On each knee,
"We bring our gifts,
O Lord, to Thee."

That head, on its pillow so tender,
Must wear a thorny crown,
Before, the earth-life ended,
Its sacrifice lays down;
But now, oh! gracious promise
Of kingly power and might,
It sends out from the little brow
Rays of divinest light.
The shepherds veil
Their faces now;
"To Thee, O Lord,
We humbly bow."

Oh! now the pæans rolling,
The anthems meet and blend;
"Give praises, oh! give praises,
Forever, without end."
"The Christchild ne'er shall leave us,"
The angels soft do sing;
"But always abided in our hearts,
The Christmas joy shall bring."
The shepherds then
Stole soft away,
"The night has flown,
Look! break of day."

What does it mean, this Christmas,
Down from the ages sent?
Out of the lips of a little Child,
What is the message meant?
Into one word it is prisoned,
Struck into life and light;
Love is the Christmas-tide message
Of Heavenly power and might.
The shepherds far
Upon the plain,
Adore the Lord
Of Love again.

Sing it in Heavenly chorus,
Sing it in earthly strain,
Wake the dark places with music,
To call down the Lord again.
Sing it 'mid Christmas jangle
Of bell and childish voice,
And sweet confusion, sing it:
"Our Lord is come! Rejoice!"
The Christmas bells
O'er hill and plain
Take up the shepherds'
Sweet refrain:
"The child is born
To bring us Love
And Light and Peace
From God above."

—Margaret Sidney, in N. Y. Independent.

HOW IT HAPPENED

That I Was Proudly Owned as "One of the Family."

[Original.]

"O not put such a heapin' spoonful of sugar in your tea, Elsie. Mind, sugar has riz half a cent on the pound," said my Aunt Phillis, sharply, as she moved the yellow, cracked sugar-bowl out of my reach.

"Growin' girls do eat an amazin' lot," joined in Uncle Reuben, from the other side of the table. "It was mighty inconsiderate for Robert to drop off so sudden-like and leave you unprovided for. With his five hundred a year he ort to have laid away a slight of money. But he never was anything of a manager. It was not in him to say 'no' when people came a beggin', and he allus religiously laid by his tenth for the Lord, no matter how poor the harvest Now, my doctrine is, if the Almighty stints the crops, it's His own look-out if He has to take short toll. I reckon I will be obleeged to give you a home, but you must jump round spry and try to pay your way. Now, if Providence could only have seen far enough forward to have made you a boy, it would have been more to my likin'. Then you could have built fence, dug the cellar-wall and sich, which I've got to pay for, seein' you are a girl. If you'd only been a boy, you could have taken hold of the plow-handles and followed the furrows, and I wouldn't have needed to hire a hand to help with the clearin' or grubbin'—but pshaw! what does a girl's work amount to anyhow! What signifies rubbin' out a few clothes, sweep n' the house over once a day, or washin' a dozen dishes now and then! Cryin'! It is amazin' how easy women do cry! Sakes alive! They laugh and cry in the same breath."

"And that reminds me, Elsie, that your uncle has took the schoolmaster to board, and it is high time his room was put to rights; I am sure I don't know what possessed you, Reuben, for them school teachers are an overbearin' set. It is a fact that four dollars a week is a circumstance not to be picked up every day, but if he has not an appetite like a saw-mill, I'll miss my guess."

Aunt Phillis' steel-gray eyes were still upon me, though her closing words were addressed to uncle, who was too intent upon the business before him to grant her an answer. Though trembling violently, I ventured to inquire:

"Can I go to school, Aunt Phillis?"

She turned on me like a whirlwind, fairly screaming:

"Go to school, Elsie! Do you reckon your uncle and me are a-goin' to keep you up a lady, and never git any pay for our pains! You're a better scholar now than even our John—better than any man or woman in the neighborhood, unless it might be the minister himself. You'll not sit mopin' over your books here like you did when your father was a-livin'."

"You see what book-larnin' did for your father," put in Uncle Reuben. "He was a sight better off than I was when we started in life, for Uncle Robert Cherry left him five hundred dollars for his name. If he had invested that money in land, instead of a puttin' it into his head, you would not have been thrown penniless upon me now. Too much education is not good for men, and it ruins women."

Here uncle gave his head a decided nod, a custom he had when peculiarly well pleased with himself.

As we arose from the table, aunt returned to the subject uppermost in her mind by hurrying me off to arrange the master's room.

"Tuck 'em big pillows into the chest that stands in the corner. Goodness knows, these college chaps carry their heads high enough without propin' 'em up with four-pound pillows; and mind, Elsie, take off that new blanket. You can slip on that old comfort instead. He'll never know the difference."

I was glad to escape from her harsh voice, but a more formidable foe awaited me in the passage. No sooner had I closed the door than Cousin John, a great, burly lad of sixteen, called out taunt ingly:

"Ho, my fine lady! So you expect to put on fine airs and lord it over me in grand style. Pretty cheeky for a pauper, I should say."

"You are a cruel boy and I hate you," I cried, in anger.

"Take that, and that!" he retorted, striking me with a whip he held in his hand. "I'll teach you to talk back to me, you beggar."

"TAKE THAT AND THAT!"

"You are a wicked, unprincipled boy!" I returned, defiantly, springing behind the door to avoid his second attack. In his fury he jerked the door with such force as to throw himself against a table that stood near. His howl of pain brought his mother to the scene of conflict.

"That young viper flew at me like a tiger, and hammered my face into a jelly," screamed he, wiping the blood from the slight wound.

I tried to explain, but Aunt Phillis would not listen to me. Grasping me by the arm, she shook me roughly, and then, after boxing my ears, shoved me toward the staircase, declaring, that as a punishment for my ungrateful conduct, I would not be permitted to speak for a month, except when answering questions.

I crept up-stairs as fast as my suffering and blinding tears would permit, and throwing myself upon my bed, gave way to an outburst of grief. The pain inflicted by the cruel blows I had received was nothing to the excruciating torture of soul I was compelled to endure.

What a sad, sad Christmas it had been to me. Only a fortnight before I had, in dumb agony, listened to the clods rattling upon the coffin-lid of my dear father, who all my life had shielded me from hardships. The dear old parsonage with its vine-clad porch, rose up before me, and in its shadow I beheld my silver-haired father, dozing in his easy chair, the golden rays of a summer sunset touching his sainted face as with the pencil of an angel. Again, his gentle voice thrilled my soul as in days gone by, and, in fancy, his loving fingers were upon my head as we knelt side by side in prayer.

No doubt he intended to prepare me for the shock that had almost crushed me, but the summons came suddenly, and while I slept the angels carried him into Abraham's bosom.

How long I would have wept over my shattered life I can not tell, had not Aunt Phillis' shrill voice called me back to duty.

"Take 'em white dimity curtains down from the window, Elsie. Like as not the master will spatter 'em with terbacker juice. Them college chaps is a wool-gatherin' set at best," she said, with emphasis.

I obeyed her promptly, but my heart ached for Master Newville, who expected to find the comforts of his refined home in this diminutive apartment that was devoid alike of ornament or convenience. What a different welcome was my dear old father wont to give the stranger within his gate!

That same evening, as I was gathering kindling for the morning fire, John came suddenly upon me, and renewed his attack of the morning.

"So, Miss Stuck-up, you are to be the lady, and I the servant," he began. "Really, I feel proud of my smart cousin. How fortunate to have your highness counted as one of the family."

"Shame on you, boy, to thus torment a girl smaller than yourself."

It was Master Newville's voice that startled the young coward, causing him to sneak around the kitchen out of sight. After speaking a few kind words to me my champion went into the house and up the narrow stairs to his cheerless room.

John's taunt concerning my kinship nerved me to action, and from that moment I set my face fixedly toward gaining a point from which he would feel honored in claiming me as one of the family. This

TAKING UP THE UNFINISHED LESSONS.

resolution accounted for the tallow dip burning in my bare room long after even Master Newville had extinguished his light and sought repose. Before I had closed my eyes that night I had marked out a regular course of study which was to occupy my few spare hours. It seemed to me that I had grown old in the last two weeks. I could not realize that I was the same happy girl who had danced so merrily in and out of the parsonage door so short a time ago. If I could only have staid with Margaret, dear Margaret, who had taken me from the arms of my dying mother, and cared for me during all the fifteen years of my life! She would have clung to me faithfully had not the death of my father left her in her old age as helpless and dependent as myself.

"Dear Margaret! I will yet make a home for you, and we will eat the bread of independence together," I cried, bitterly.

Strong in my determination to succeed, I gathered my school-books from the bottom of the old chest and took up the unfinished lessons that my father had marked the day before he died. Thanks to his thorough method of instruction and the interesting manner in which he strove to present the great truths he taught, I was not only well advanced for a girl of fifteen, but I possessed that inordinate love for books that makes study a pleasure instead of a task.

Much as I shall always despise John for his cowardly treatment of a friendless orphan, I can not but feel grateful to him for uttering the stinging words that aroused me from my stony grief, and opened a new source of enjoyment to my starving soul. Every moment I could steal from aunt's watchful eye was devoted to my books.

One evening she came upon me suddenly when I was replenishing my humble light, and taking the old saucer from my hand said, sharply:

"Seems to me, Elsie, you use a mighty sight of tallow. Mind, it costs like sixty. Miss Jones gets seven cents a pound for her'n. There is no sense in a great girl like you havin' to carry a light up-stairs every night. Betty Rollins told me she had seen light in your window all hours of the night, and that folks say you set up to study. If I catch you stealin' your time to pore over books, I'll burn 'em every one."

She set the old cracked dish on the upper shelf of the pantry, and I crawled up-stairs, discouraged but not conquered. Just at this time I was wholly absorbed in geometry. I made it a point to learn one new theorem every day, which I mentally worked out at night. In this way I devoured the book, reviewing until I could have demonstrated every theorem it contained without making a single mistake. In a similar manner I became proficient in many other branches. Usually I attempted to master but one study at a time. At a very early age my father had insisted on my writing a verse, story or little sketch, at least once a week. This practice I managed to keep up, and after my composition-book was written through, I had recourse to an old time-worn ledger of my grandfather's.

On Christmas Day—it was my birthday, too—I gained courage to send one of my little poems to a paper my uncle had been induced to take. I watched its columns eagerly every week until my pride was fully gratified by seeing my own production in print. Again and again my vanity prompted me to write a few verses, which invariably made their appearance in the course of a few weeks.

One evening my aunt sent me on an errand to the minister's wife. She was engaged when I told my business, and gave me a new magazine to look over until she would be at leisure. Among the first articles that attracted my attention was one of my own little poems, clipped from the paper for which it had been written. My heart trembled joyously at this token of appreciation. For a few moments I was supremely happy, and then an overwhelming sense of my utter loneliness came over me, and with the bitter thought that I had not a single friend to rejoice over my success, I turned rapidly through the remaining pages, until the words "Five hundred-dollar prize" attracted my attention. I ran my eyes over it hastily, then re-read it carefully, after which I took pencil and paper from my pocket and copied the address. The prize was offered by the editor of the magazine for the best serial for girls. The story was to be of such a length as to run through the twelve numbers, beginning with the New Year. All manuscripts intended to compete for the prize were to be in the hands of the editor not later than June 30.

Before I slept I had written for particulars, and a neighboring lad, passing early next morning, carried it to the office. As soon as I received the proper instructions, I went to work with a will. I have no doubt but that my aunt had good reasons for her fault-finding during the next six months, for my mind was more upon the characters that my imagination had created than upon my work. Aunt had persistently denied me a light in my room during the whole year, but dear Margaret remembered my sixteenth birthday by sending me a dollar. Part of this I used for oil and paper, and the balance was hoarded for postage. On the 15th of June my precious package was committed to the care of Uncle Sam and the next six months I waited and hoped, yet dreaded to hear the decision that the 20th of December might have in store for me. On Christmas morning my weary watching was changed into a glad song of thanksgiving, for a business-looking letter my uncle put into my hands brought me the five hundred dollars I had dreamed of every day for a year. I had won the prize, how, I scarcely know, unless my desperate case had nerved me for the conflict. Probably my aching heart made itself felt through my finger-tips. At any rate, I had won the prize and the money was indisputably mine.

Five hundred dollars may seem a very insignificant sum to those who count their possessions by the thousands, but to me it meant a peaceful home with my dear old Margaret, and relief from the bitter bread of dependence.

"Well, it does seem as if book-larnin' amounts to something, after all," admitted Aunt Phillis.

"Jest as I told you," said Uncle Reuben. "The gal shows her bringin' up."

John looked more sullen than ever though when he took me to the train a few days later, I overheard him explaining my success to a young lady, and if I am not mistaken he proudly owned me as one of the family.

Belle V. Chisholm.

Christmas in Canada.

The social pleasures which Christmas brings in its train are characteristic of the English people and their offspring everywhere. Canada does not grow the mistletoe or the holly of England, but she makes up for the absence of those recognized types of the season by availing herself of the wealth of green things in her own forests. Every house has its bits of green spruce or cedar, and bunches of red-berries in the halls and parlors. This old custom, at all events, is in harmony with modern ideas of home decoration. Even the house-wife of very pronounced æsthetic tastes finds pleasure in placing a bunch of red or white berries, or some native stag-horn moss, above her mantel.

The main features of the celebration of this, above all others, "the children's festival," are borrowed from both England and Germany. Santa Claus, so long the favorite saint of the little ones, has come to us through the worthy old Dutch folks of New York; and we borrow from the German the Christmas-tree, which is every year becoming more in vogue, affording, as it does, a pretty way of presenting gifts to both young and old, and of adding a pleasant feature to the evening's amusements. Still, as an old fellow with decidedly conservative tendencies, and not a few agreeable reminiscences of my own childhood, I have serious doubts whether the Christmas-tree can, after all, compare with hanging up the stocking in the old-fashioned way. How pleasant it was to wake up before the dawn and gently feel whether old Father Christmas had filled the stocking which we had hung up in full youthful confidence that he would do his duty to it and us. What a series of pleasant surprises as we all gathered round the bed and gradually worked the hand into the various treasures that the kindly genius of the festival had gathered for our pleasure. I have had my share of pleasures since then; but I am quite sure that I have never enjoyed them as I did certainly enjoy those gifts of old Christmas times.

* * * * * * *

But, after all, Christmas in Canada does not differ in any essential respect from Christmas in other countries of the same race. From one end of Christendom to the other the bells will be heard in honor of the day—among the hills that hang above the gloomy fiords of Norway, as well as in many a village of the island continent of Australia. The good it teaches, the blessings it brings, are recognized the world over; in the rude log cabin among the prairies of the Northwest, as well as in the stately homes where wealth and culture dwell. As the world grows more busy every day, and men become more engrossed in the accumulation of wealth and in the pursuit of ambition, many old customs and institutions fall into oblivion; but whatever may be forgotten or neglected, the chief festival of the Christian world continues to remind the nations that they are all members of one great family, still brings old and young together in social and religious intercourse, and ever keeps fresh in our hearts those lessons of love and charity which Christ taught long ago among the hills of Palestine.—*Current.*

Salaries of College Professors.

President Webb, of the College of the City of New York, desires to limit the salaries of his tutors to $2,500 a year, and of his professors to $5,000 a year; but he would give no tutor $4,500 a year unless the latter had worked for the college faithfully twenty years.

Smart and Lively Old Lady.

Mrs. Sophia Brown, of Winsted, Conn., though ninety-seven years old, reads the daily newspaper with avidity, knits, sews, threads her own needle, makes her own caps, assists in the house-work, and grumbles because she is not permitted to do more.

FOR SUNDAY READING.

GIFTS FOR THE CHRIST CHILD.

Gold, frankincense and myrrh, they brought
the new-born Christ—
The wise men from the East—and in the
ox's stall,
The far-brought precious gifts they heaped,
with love unpriced;
And Christ, the babe, looked on and wondered not at all.

Gold, frankincense and myrrh, I, too, would
offer Thee,
O, King of faithful hearts, upon Thy Christmas Day;
And, poor and little worth although the offering be,
Because Thou art so kind, I dare to think I may.

I bring the Gold of Faith, which, through
the centuries long,
Still seeks the Holy Child and worships at
his feet,
And owns Him for its Lord, with gladness
deep and strong,
And joins the angel choir, singing in chorus sweet.

The frankincense I bear is worship which
can rise,
Like perfume floating up higher and higher
still,
Till on the wings of prayer it finds the far
blue skies
And falls as falls the dew, to freshen heart
and will.

And last I bring the myrrh, half-bitter and
half-sweet,
Of my own selfish heart, through sacrifice
made clean,
And break the vase and spill the oil upon
Thy feet,
O, Lord of Christmas Day, as did the Magdalene.

Gold, frankincense and myrrh—'tis all I have
to bring
To thee, O, Holy Child, now throned in
Heaven's mid!
Because Thou art so kind, take the poor
offering.
And let me go forth blessed, as once the
Wise Men did.

—Susan Coolidge, in N. Y. Independent.

A REMINDER.

Christmas Comes to Teach Us That the Whole Life Should Be a "Season" for Doing Good to All.

There is one passage in the New Testament the translation of which, both in the new and the old version, has seemed to us to miss Paul's meaning. "In due season," says the English translation, "we shall reap if we faint not: as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men." Now, the word rendered "season" in one clause and "opportunity" in the other is the same. What the Apostle says is this: "In due season we shall reap if we faint not; as therefore we have a season, let us do good unto all men." This is our spring season, when we are to sow our benevolence; by and by comes the harvest season, when we shall reap the fruits of it. If all your good-doing brings you no reward, if it is all a thankless task, still be not weary; the seed may lie seemingly dead in the locked furrow, but faith sees the golden grain waving in the future above the grave. The life is God's appointed season for doing good; the next life is God's appointed season for harvesting.

God has so ordered the whole economy of this life that no man can well live and prosper without doing good to his fellow-men. The farmer can make nothing from his farm without feeding the hungry; the cotton manufacturer nothing from his mill without clothing the naked; the railroad company nothing on its stock without carrying food from the surplus markets to the hungry mouths. The money that lies idle in a chest is valueless to its possessor; nothing blesses its owner that does not also bless some one else. There are, indeed, some few methods of money-getting that carry only a curse with them—gambling, most forms of liquor selling, many forms of speculation; but all legitimate business holds wealth in both hands, and gives alike to the seller on the one side of the counter and to the buyer on the other. Thus, in the very nature and constitution of life, no man can be actively engaged in the commonest forms of bread-winning without giving also bread to his neighbor. He lives in a season in which he is perforce compelled to do good, whether he will or no.

We have often pointed out this general principle, and urged upon our readers the truth that the law of Christian love is not complied with by doles of charity, large or small; that it requires the consecration of one's whole business, and all one's possessions, to the service of humanity, and the use of all his faculties and all his opportunities in making the world richer, wiser, and better than he found it. It is not enough, as chance gives us an opportunity, to do casual good here and there. True love, wise love, love with the insight of faith, perceives in all of life a season of doing good, and acts accordingly, and oftentimes it finds itself perplexed between the conflicting claims of what men call business and benevolence—perplexed to know whether it can do more good by keeping its energies and its means in the ordinary channels of industry, or diverting them in other directions.

But Christmas comes to remind us, among other things, that no man can afford to confine his benevolence to business channels, and to do good only by methods that straightway remunerate him. Lest we should forget the claims of humanity, and think wholly of our salaries and not of our service, wholly of what we are to receive and not at all of what we can give, the Lord makes clear to us that some benefactions must be rendered which bring with them no return. So He gives us our children, on whom we lavish love and service, looking for no recompense, except the recompense which love pays in grateful appreciation. So He gives us some helpless poor—"The poor ye have always with you;" so He give, us opportunity to minister in higher realms to needs which can not pay for service, in churches which are never truly self-supporting, and in colleges and higher institutions of learning whose stock declares no earthly dividends. So, too, he brings about recurrent festivals, Christmas and birthdays, and bids us forget the larger cares of business toil in the smaller cares of domestic love. And the father escapes the worry of the street, buying toys instead of stocks, and books instead of grain, and studying only how he shall make the home luminous with loving faces, and resounding with laughter and the clapping of hands. This is not, if he be a true man, more a work of love than is all the more serious labor of his life; in truth, it is less; it is not the work and it is the recreation of love. At such times she ceases to wear a serious guise and a knitted brow, and to be tense in nerve and muscle, and gives herself up for a day to the gayety of goodness. These are the holidays of love's life, which, if she take them aright make all love's service easier and all love's burden lighter, and all love's perplexities less perplexing. For this hour love ceases to labor, and simply lives spontaneously; and when the hour is spent, she puts on her work-day clothes with new spirit and assumes her work-day tasks with fresh zest. Such a Merry Christmas gives to all who possess it a Happy New Year. — *Christian Union.*

BE EVER READY.

Christians Not Afraid of Sudden Death—The Test to be Applied.

Suppose that Christ was to come to us at this moment, that for us the earth swung suddenly away into darkness and silence, that unto us the heavens were opened, would He find in us that which he at this instance would accept and approve? Should we be able to welcome Him now at that swift coming? If there be to us any element and power of faith towards Christ which the world has not been able to allure or to conquer; if there be a desire after Him because of the loveliness and holiness conjoined in His spirit; if there be gratitude for the unmeasured blessings which He has directly bestowed upon us; if there be a true longing for that better "country" which He alone exhibits to us; if there be the tenderness and the strength of a heart full of sympathy, charity, piety, such as were supremely in Him, and if there be affection or reverence in that heart towards Him elf He will recognize it, He will bring out each grace into full exhibition before our own consciousness; He will consumate it by calling us to Himself through death; he will crown it all by His Divine gifts and benedictions. If, then, we are ready now to say 'amen,' we shall be ready whenever the summons comes and we are called to cross without warning the crystal threshold. Dying grace is only the completion of living faith. It is the inner assurance of our readiness in spirit for that coming of Christ which has been prepared for long before. There have been richer, sweeter and nobler elements in us than we ourselves knew, and as the shadows part and the Lord appears we shall know surely that we are His.

If we can meet this sudden test, we need no more be afraid of sudden death. The imagination recoils from it I know. The instinctive love of life in us shrinks instantly and inevitably from it. We would love to say "farewell" to friends. We would love to arrange the things which must be left in the hands of others. We would love to go on, step by step, out of the gradually fading brightness, through the deepening shadow of the end, till up earth's dark glade we see the gates of heaven unclose. But we need never be timed before the thought of sudden death if we are prepared as I have suggested. Within ourselves is that which Christ Himself hath wrought, in which He has gladness. Then we shall share, when we die, in the figure of the transfigured Lord; not seeing it merely, as silently and suddenly it came to the Apostles, but ourselves being participants in it. And that will be all that death is to the disciple.—*R. S. Storrs, D. D.*

JUSTLY WITHHELD.

In the Revelation from God Those Points Which Are Not Revealed Are to Be Considered as Irrelevant.

In a Divine revelation we must expect many points of information to be reserved. You send a child, for instance, on an errand to a distant street, and you give him the street's name and the number of the crossings, and repeat to him, perhaps more than once, his particular business; but you do not detain and perplex him by either a history or a panoramic exhibition of the city he visits. When I was a child I spoke as a child; and the converse is also true. When I was a child I was spoken to as a child. Such knowledge was given to me as was proper for my childhood's estate. And even in our manhood, and with reference to our fellow-men, there are always topics as to which we are more or less ignorant, and as to which speculative information is withheld.

Thus a government sends forth a colonist; but gives him just information enough to enable him to perform his particular work. A general charges an inferior officer with a special duty; but here, too, there is silence as to whatever does not belong to this duty. To enlarge the official directions given in either case, so as to include all the knowledge the superior may possess, would perplex the agent and withdraw his attention from that which concerned it. And if we were to expect such silence in a parent's dealings with a child and in a government's dealing with a subaltern, how much more reason have we to expect in the dealings of God with man! God knows all things, and endures from eternity to eternity! Man comes into the world knowing nothing, lives at the best a life which endures for a few years, and in this short life is charged with the momentous question of settling his own destiny for the eternity to come. Silence, then, on all irrelevant questions is what we would expect in the revelation of an all-wise God, and of the irrelevancy He is the sole judge.—*Rev. Dr. Francis Wharton.*

CHOICE EXTRACTS.

—A great hand is careful lest it crush.—*Browning.*

—Nothing but the Infinite pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life.—*Shorthouse.*

—When death, the great reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness that we repent of, but our severity.—*George Eliot.*

—Grief, it is truly said, is sacred; but grief brought forward promiscuously, harped upon, condoled over, made the staple of conversation, becomes rapidly profane.—*Gail Hamilton.*

—He is the greatest man who chooses the right with invincible resolution, who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully, and whose reliance on truth and virtue is the most unfaltering.—*W. E. Channing.*

Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on midnoon, and under every deep a lower deep opens.—*Emerson.*

—When any earthly object kindles one's desire into a flame, one should ask: "Is this desire in harmony with the will of God? Do I wish to possess the object which charms me because it would enable me to serve God better?" If one's heart replies "No!" then one should trample upon the desire as evil, because a truly spiritual mind will "desire nothing but the knowledge of God's will and the disposition to do and suffer it."—*Zion's Herald.*

—There are chords in the human heart, strange varying things, which are only struck by accident; which will remain mute and senseless to appeals the most passionate and earnest, and respond at last to the slightest casual touch. In the most insensible or childish minds there is some train of reflection which art can seldom lead or skill assist, but which will reveal itself, as great truths have done, by chance, and when the discoverer has the plain, est and simplest end in view.—*Dickens.*

FOR OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

DID YOU EVER SEE SANTA?

Did you ever see Santa Claus, Robbie?
I do wish I could; and I've tried.
My mamma has seen him quite often—
If I only could keep by her side!
Why, whenever she goes in the parlor,
Where the stockings are hung by the tree,
He's sure to come right down the chimney
With some bundle or other for me!

One day I teased my mamma so,
That she said I might creep in behind,
And hide in her skirt very softly,
And peep out when I had a mind.
But the minute we got in the doorway
(He must be the shyest of men)
He scampered away up the chimney,
So it's no use to try it again.

No; children never can see him,
But I heard his sleigh-bells last night;
It was after papa came to supper,
And the shutters and doors were shut tight.
Mamma said: "There, don't you hear it—
The jingle of Santa Claus' bells?"
I dashed to the door like a rocket;
He was faster than that, I can tell!

I could almost have cried with vexation;
Till mamma said: "See where he sleighed!"
And there, sure enough, in the snow-drift
Were the tracks that his runners had made!
What a very small sleigh he must have, though;
No bigger, I'm sure, than my sled!
And how it can carry such bundles,
I can not get into my head.

Nurse says Santa Claus is my father.
What nonsense! I've often been told
How Santa Claus lives in a palace,
Some place where it always is cold.
Papa couldn't climb down that chimney,
And he never could ride in that sleigh!
I don't think nurse knows much about it—
I'll tell her so this very day.

—Our Little Ones.

A RUNAWAY TEAM.

How Tom Granby Proved to His Grandmother that He Could Drive as Well as Anybody.

Thomas Granby, jr., was just fourteen. He thought he knew every thing. Grandmother Spinckney did not think that "T. Granby, jr."—that was the way he wrote his name—knew every thing. This difference of opinion was plainly manifested one day, or evening, rather. Grandmother Spinckney sat knitting by a little red stand. Tom sat near the kitchen stove, enjoying the heat and lazily leaning back in a softly cushioned rocking chair. The conversation was about horse driving.

"Of course, I could drive a two-horse team, grandmother; I've seed 'em do it."

"Seein' ain't drivin', Thomas. I've seen 'em build a bridge. Wall, I ain't no bridge builder."

Tom sullenly affirmed, though, that he "knew" he "knew." In the dark depths of his soul, he resolved that the next time Uncle Jeremiah came in his two-horse pung, he would settle that point. Yes grandmother should go with him, even if he "tied her in." He would drive her around town in Uncle Jerry's red pung.

"Hadn't you better go to bed, Tommy? You are tired," suggested grandmother.

"No," he answered gruffly. He said to himself: "I am not going to take any suggestions from her. I wish she was away from here, down at Uncle Jerry's, where she goes next. I wish she was further."

And Tom had his wish. Soon granny seemed to be retreating. Her bright spectacles faded away, while her head-dress, with its knots and bows, the features of her face, the knitting in her hands, seemed to have departed before the spectacles.

"Good!" thought Tom. "Got the room to myself. What's that? Sleigh-bells."

He rose and went to the window. "Sleigh-bells over-head!" he said in surprise. "I must get my cap and go out and see what it means."

It was a white winter's night. The moon flooded the earth with a glory in which the snow flashed like sheets of marble.

"Hark! There are those sleigh-bells again!"

He looked up to the roof of the house of T. Granby, sr., and there he saw a team! Such a handsome reindeer team.

"Guess I must have a nearer look at that!" said Tom, excitedly. "I'll climb that ladder."

Up a ladder leaning against the eaves of the house he climbed.

"Santa Claus's team! Four reindeer! My! San a Claus has gone down a chimney to drop presents. I can drive that team—and—and—I'll try my hand; I'll drive up to the door," exclaimed Tom, "and make grandmother think it is Uncle Jerry."

He stepped into the sleigh, which was half filled with books, drums, trumpets, Noah's arks, and other curiosities, cried "Get up, there!" and didn't those reindeer go!

"Hur-rah!" shouted Tom. "Good-bye grandmother! Young America has got the reins now!"

At a bound the reindeer went from the roof of the house of T. Granby, sr., to the roof of the Town Hall, then to the High School that Tom had just entered, then—but, oh! how many roofs they leaped upon, and in a moment were away! Jingle, jingle, jingle, went the bells in the sharp, frosty air. Tom could see the people coming to the windows and look up in wonder.

"Wish grandmother could see me!" thought Tom. "Look — look — out there!" he suddenly cried. The reindeer almost collided with a huge red chimney. "I guess I must drive a bit more carefully. What's the matter with these reins? Dear me! how do they go? I—I—I—"

Tom trembled. The reins did not work, and he could not work them, and close at hand was another chimney.

"Look out!" he screamed. The frightened deer avoided that obstacle and sprang ahead faster than ever. Suddenly he heard a roar! He looked behind, and there was Santa Claus with another team chasing the runaway; and oh! what a thunder-shout he gave! Tom looked ahead, and there was a big factory chimney!

"Oh dear! I shall hit that sure!" he shrieked. "Grandmother, don't I wish I was in the kitchen!"

There was no help for it. With a tremendous crash, the reindeer team went against the chimney! The next moment Tom was rubbing his eyes open, and also rubbing his aching head.

"Why, mamma, you've got asleep and tumbled agin the stove funnel," said grandmother, rising from her chair at the table and coming forward. "Guess you'd better go to bed."

"Guess I'd better," said Tom, and up stairs he rushed.—*N. Y. Examiner.*

He Got the Prize.

In the north of England, recently, there was a "parrot-show," at which a prize was offered for the best talker. There were scores of birds in the room. Several of them had given exhibitions of their skill, when at last the cover was removed from the cage of a gray parrot, which looked gravely around the room and exclaimed: "By Jove! what a lot of parrots!" The prize was at once awarded.—*Golden Days.*

SOMETHING ABOUT DOLLS.

They Were Made Many Centuries Ago—The Japanese "Feast of Dolls"—German Dolls.

Dolls are by no means a modern invention. Dolls of baked clay, of wood and of other things have been found in Egypt in tombs, where they have lain buried since before the time of Christ. Dolls are now much more carefully made than they were in former times, and a great deal of skill is used in their manufacturing. In the little town of Sonneberg, Germany, hundreds of thousands of dolls are made every year. Most of the dolls are made out of papier mache, but many fine ones are made with wax or china heads. All dolls of the same size which have like faces are made in one mold, and there have to be as many molds as there are different kinds of faces. It takes thirty or forty persons to make a single doll, as each workman does only one thing.

In Japan, children have every year what is called a "feast of dolls." This is held only on one day of the year, at which time all the dolls that have belonged to the family are brought out from the safe places where they are usually kept and put upon tables with many kinds of playthings. Sometimes there are more than a hundred dolls, some of which are dark with age, for often dolls two hundred years old are shown at this feast. They are dressed in all sorts of ways, some like court ladies and gentlemen, and some like common ladies and gentlemen. Some of these dolls are very small, and some are as large as a little girl. The feast of dolls lasts only one day, yet the toys are shown for many days.

Dolls used by East Indian children are very different from any used in this country. They are all made of wood painted with different colors. Each doll has a baby in its arms, and is fixed to a wooden block so that it can stand up. The clothes are only painted ones, its arms are not jointed, and the only thing that can be taken off is the head, which is fastened into the body with a peg. Common wooden jointed dolls are made mostly in Germany by poor people, who whittle them out by hand.—*Young Folks Cyclopedia.*

Saved too Late.

A young rat once fell into a pail of pig's food. Six of its older mates, after taking counsel together, hit on a plan of rescue which they put into force in spite of human spectators. Twining their legs together, they hung down the side of the pail like a chain. The lowest rat then seized the young in its fore paws, and the pair were both pulled up. The rescued rat was found to be dead, a fact that seemed to fill its friends with genuine grief.—*Little Folks.*

KISSING THE BOOK.

What Originated the Custom of Kissing the Bible in Taking an Oath.

The idea on which oaths, or adjurations, was founded was that the unseen powers or deities would always punish a falsehood if their attention were called to it. That is, the person might be as untruthful as he would be on ordinary occasions, but whenever he called on one of the gods to witness the truth of his assertion, he was bound to keep his word, lest the deity, outraged at being made a party to a falsehood, would wreak special vengeance upon him. From this idea, which has survived from the earliest times to the present, came the belief that the proximity of an object regarded as sacred made the oath more binding; i. e., made men more afraid to violate it. The ancient Jews touched their phylacteries in taking an oath. Later, their practice was to lay their hand upon the book of the law, whence came our custom of swearing on the Bible. The various customs of taking oaths in different countries have all a similar origin. The early Anglo-Saxons laid the hands on a pillar of stone, because stones were regarded as sacred to their gods. In mediæval times it was customary to touch a relic, and this was regarded as giving the oath more sacredness even, than when taken upon the Missal, or prayer-book. When Harold swore allegiance to King William of Normandy, the Missal was placed upon a chest which, when afterward opened, was seen to be filled with bones of the saints. It is a curious proof of the superstition of the times, this idea that an adjuration to the Almighty was made more solemn by the presence of a knuckle-bone, a jaw or a double-tooth of a dead man. Another custom of mediæval times was swearing by churches. A certain number were mentioned, and the attestor was obliged to go to each one, take the ring of the church door in his hand and repeat his oath. From very early times the Russian custom has been to kiss the cross to attest an oath, and the practice has extended into other countries. This was the oath of the Knights Templar and other similar bodies, and the laws of the order of the garter in Henry VIII's time, required the Knights to touch the book and kiss the cross. A common attestation of the oath in Germany in the middle ages and later, was by the bosom, placing the hand thereon. This came from the practice of wearing a crucifix or amulets suspended from the neck. Kissing the book, which is still the common practice throughout the British Empire, as well as in this country, has not been permitted in Scotland since the reformation.—*Chicago Inter-Ocean.*

—The small Cambridge boy discourses on the codfish: "A codfish is the only Annymal that ain't got no neck; there ain't but one kind of a fish in the World that lives on the land flies round in the air, and is a fish-hawk. A codfish has a large mouth and my school Teachers got a large mouth, too. Two kids got fitten in the vestry one day and one of em pulled quite a lot of Hare out of the other kids Hed and the Superintendent pounded one of his Eers with a book and so they quit. A fish would look funny if they had legs and could run."—*Boston Herald.*

—X——meets one of his friends, a Bohemian, for whom he had procured a lucrative position. Learning that he had just quit his employment voluntarily, he asked the reason. "I was just going to tell you," responded the other. "As soon as my creditors found that I was making some money they all pounced down upon me. I would prefer to make nothing at all than to have so much trouble."—*From the French.*

—A New York doctor says that men who have the headache are the most sympathetic. We had supposed that these men are usually about as agreeable as a bear with a sore head; but when a New York doctor makes avowment to the contrary, we must admit that we were wrong, and infer that a man with a headache has a faculty of disguising his feelings which amounts to real art.—*Boston Transcript.*