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Select Poetry.

THE ORPHAN'S CHRISTMAS.

BY MRS. A. S. GROSS.

The earth was wrapped in a mantle white,
While sad and lone lay a child one night:
His evening prayer had been meekly said,
Ere he sought repose on his humble bed.
His heart was sad and he could not sleep!
He sought his couch but to wail and weep.
His thoughts turn back, through the misty years,
When a mother's hand wiped her darling's tears.

But in yonder grave that form now sleeps,
And bright angels now her darling keeps,
The stars shine bright from their sphere above,
They seem to whisper, "thy God is love."
Long years ere death had taken away,
A mother fond to her son did say,
"Be true to God till He bids you come;
And dwell with me in my starry home."

Few were the words and far less the joy,
That cheered the heart of the friendless boy,
How false the friends of the homeless poor,
When seeking pittance from door to door.
Now morn returns, it is Christmas time,
The bells ring forth with a merry chime:
He awoke to welcome this Christmas morn,
With countenance sad and a heart forlorn.

He started forth in the frosty air,
With freezing feet and with fingers bare,
How sad his voice as we heard him say,
"What will be my joy on this Christmas day?"
He paused to ask at the rich man's door,
The scanty crumbs that fell to the floor:
But turns with tears from the huaghty lord,
Who gives him naught from his winter's hoard.

How cold the world and the hearts of men,
The poor child sighed as he sought again,
The morsel of food to keep at bay,
The gnawing worm from his soul away.
Scant were the clothes, both ragged and poor,
That covered the form of the poor child o'er,
Bitter the cold winds that o'er him swept,
Froze on his cheeks were the tears he wept.

Oh! mother, God! is it willed that I
Be left in the cold to starve and die?
No charity left, Oh! the world how cold,
The image of God they spurn for gold.
The haughty lord as he walked the streets,
A corpse now cold and still he meets,
No care nor hunger awaits him now;
A smile of hope wreathes that smiling brow.

The silent stars from the hosts above,
Smile on that form with a lustrous love:
They seem to speak of the joys of heaven,
To the orphan boy by the Saviour given.
True Christmas joys in that land abound,
That ne'er by the miser shall be found,
None, save the friends of the needy poor,
Shall share the joys of the other shore.

No more on earth shall he ask for bread,
To a loving Saviour he now has fled,
From her starry home, a mother's hand,
Beckoned her son to the better land;
Where the fount of crystal waters flow
And crowns of gold in brightness glow.
Repose at last, the wanderer found,
In heaven, to swell the angelic sound.

From the St. Louis Dispatch.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY E. F. WILLIAMSON.

In the calm of the starlight, a silence profound,
Like a spell over nature is spread;
And where beauty in sleep leans her cheek's blooming rose,
Ev'ry cot where a little sock gracefully flows,
There bright visions are haunting each bed.

For to-night, in the legends of nursery lore,
Will flit forth through the darkness and gloom,
A mysterious saint, full of frolic and glee,
Who will fill up the stockings and cast presents free,
Till enchantment runs riot at home.

And to those who have lain "Santa Claus" on the shelf,
And wandered to new fairy bowers,
There's a pleasure much deeper to thrill through your mirth,
When the dear and long absent clasp hands round one hearth,
And love wreathes the Christmas with flowers.

If this night, hailed by all, from the child to the sage,
Is the eve of that glorious morn
When the harps of the angels rang out over Heaven,
And the world woke to life with the glad promise given,
That Jesus, the Saviour, was born.

Let us bend with the shepherds, adoring this hour;
And as then the sweet symphony ran,
While the anthems float up from each temple of prayer,
And the soft blessings fall, may each heart echo there,
"Peace on earth, and Good Will toward men."

A Story for the Season.

A CHRISTMAS BOX.

"Doctor Barrett, indeed! About as much a doctor as my nose is—humph!" and the old gentleman tucked his hands under his coat-tails and warmed himself. The mirror behind him gave back his bald head, and the mirror opposite showed him his face, with its look of testy impatience. What was the matter with him? He looked up at the gold cornices and back at the carpet, and sighed discontentedly. Not that there could be much to sigh for in the way of comfort or luxury either, for the master of that house. Without, there was snow and frost, but that was nothing to him. Warm curtains covered the windows, and the fire leaped and cracked merrily, and the chandelier laughed into the looking-glasses which lined the room. On the table was a tea-service of silver waiting for him, with loads of good things to tempt him to forget his trouble. But no, something was the matter with him. He took a pinch of snuff angrily, he muttered again, "Doctor, indeed! as much as my nose—hang it!"

And the old gentleman stamped out his discontent till the chandelier chattered, and the cups danced in their saucers.

"A low, mean, driveling apothecary," muttered the old gentleman. "Doctor, forsooth! Well, let's have some coffee, and see if there's any good in that."

But the coffee-pot had a choking in its throat, and wouldn't pour; and the sugar-tongs, like an ancient pair of snuffers, pinched his fingers.

"Hang it!" repeated the old gentleman. Then he got up and began walking about the room again. And he took from his pocket a small pocket-book, and from that a little crumpled piece of paper, the writing on which was yellow and old. He smoothed out the bit of paper carefully, and read it for the third time that evening, with running comments and sundry jerkings and noddings of his bald head.

"Humph!—only wants to be forgiven—dare say—acknowledges the wilfulness and disobedience—of course—beg only for a word of forgiveness—all very fine! Why, it's five years since I got this precious scrawl. What in the name of all nuisances has made me think of it so to-night?"

"Its Christmas eve," whispered something under the old merchant's waistcoat.

"Christmas eve! Well, I know it is; what of that?"

"Look around, you avaricious old miser," said the voice.

"Me avaricious! Me a miser!" cried out the merchant, fiercely, and looked round his luxurious room, at the gilding and graceful drapery, the perfection of everything, down to the tea-service, which he had not been able to use that evening. "Avaricious! *Me!*"

"Yes," said the voice, doggedly; "isn't it all for yourself? Who shares or benefits by it, I should like to know? Where's your daughter, old gentleman? tell me that."

"How should I know? Didn't she run away from me?"

"And didn't she come back and cling about your knees, and kiss your hands, and beg you to forgive her and her husband———?"

"A pitiful, sneaking apothecary!"

"And didn't she write to you that very letter, all blotted with tears and incoherent with sorrow? Who are you that you should refuse to forgive, and your own flesh too, you heathen?"

"She chose for herself," muttered the merchant, "and she must abide by her choice. When, five years ago, I closed my doors and purse against her and her driveling—hump—husband, I swore——"

"More shame for you if you did; but you didn't swear, you only turned them out like thieves, and came back to your loneliness a miserable wretch as you are still, and always will be, unless——"

"Hang it!" cried out the old gentleman.

"Where is she? Where is the bright little figure that used to flit about this very room, and make sunshine in it?—Where are the warm little fingers that used to clasp yours when you came in out of the street cold and weary? Where is the warm cheek that would be pressed tenderly against yours to warm it? You're a nice sort of father, you are: why don't you enjoy yourself amongst all your riches and luxuries, eh?"

The fire blazed up merrily, and still the merchant stood with his hand under his coat-tails, but he did not feel the warmth comfortable, neither was his mind easy.

"It's Christmas eve," repeated the voice under his waistcoat solemnly.

"Well, don't I know it? Of course it is!"

"Yes, but you don't know what sort of a Christmas that little sunbeam of yours may be keeping, though. Perhaps with three or four children round her crying for the bread which she hasn't got to give. Think of it, you old miser."

Once again the old gentleman walked up and down the room, and grunted out his customary "Humph!" and then the fire shone out, and the chandelier looked down benignantly on the silver service, as much as to say, "I told you so, I knew how it would be all along!" For the merchant had gone out, and there was no longer any living presence in the room.

We will leave that little room also for the street, not that it was at all inviting, however, for the frost pinched the children's noses, and sent the hands of the big boys down deep into their trousers pockets. We will stop before a modest house of three stories; very narrow it was, very prim, evidently not liking its juncture with two sisters which could not hold their heads so high in the world; a house which would be described by auctioneers or agents as "genteel."

And there was an organ-grinder opposite the genteel house, looking up at the narrow window wistfully, as he ground out a melancholy version of the "Perfect Cure." A boy or two clung round the lamp-post, and pulled his coat-tails facetiously, or exhorted him with a "Go it, my pippin! stick to it monkey-face!" and other cheering bits of encouragement. But the organ-grinder was used to that, and didn't mind; besides, he remembered that house opposite, and how one of the narrow windows had opened one day, and a little curly pate had been put out, then a hand after the curly pate, and a halfpenny, which was thrown to the organ-boy. So he looked up at the windows with all his might. But it was no use. No halfpenny was forthcoming for him, and he moved on more sorrowful than ever about Mary Anne, and paying no attention to the small boys who dogged his heels ready for mischief. As he moved on, a man in a whity-brown jacket turned the corner and rang the door-bell of the genteel house. No one answered, and Whity-brown moved back a step or two, looking up at the windows as the organ-grinder had done.

A light had sprung up in the hall of the genteel house, and the door opened suddenly,

"Oh, it's you, is it?"

"Yes," said Whitybrown, "it's me."

"You're come for the——"

"Stuff. Yes, I am. I'll wait for it."

"Walk into the hall my man."

"Thank'ee, Buttons, no; I'll wait here. I'd rather."

Just then an old gentleman, much muffled, and carrying a cane which he switched about nervously, stopped at the opposite lamp-post, and stared up curiously at the narrow windows. Then he crossed over, still looking at the house.

"Who lives there?" said the old gentleman, turning to Whitybrown.

"Dr. Barret."

"Humph—Doctor! About as much doctor as my—. Rich man, eh? Keeps his carriage, and all that?"

"Did, but doesn't. Likes walking."

Here the door opened, and the page put his head out.

"Here's your physic, my good man. Master would have seen you, but he's just come from the Duke's, and he's tired."

And Whitybrown shook his head with a half-smile as he turned away.

"Humph!" ejaculated the old gentleman. "Keeps a servant in livery!"

"He keeps a poor beggar in buttons," said Whitybrown. "That's the way with the gentlefolks; if a man don't look rich, and all that, they won't have nothing to say to him."

"Then this—humph—doctor is poor, is he?" asked the old gentleman.

"Sir," said Whitybrown, "I don't know who you are, nor what right you have to question me. It's no sin to be poor, is it? If you want to do the doctor here a good turn, do it—he does a many. Well, yes, he is poor; and he has a wife as is weekly, and little ones too. For all that, he has cured my wife free, gratis, for nothing; and if you was to ask me where his dinner is to come from to-morrow, I should say, the same place as it came from yesterday, and that's nowheres—there!" And Whitybrown turned away with his physic.

There was a round table in the parlor, and a tallow candle on it; at present, too, Dr. Barret's elbows were on it, supporting his head. And there was a work-basket also on the table, and a slender little figure sat near it, stitching with nimble fingers, while one foot was on the rocker of a cradle.

Dr. Barret's meditations were bitter, as well they might be; and the handful of fire in the wide grate sent forth no glow to brighten him, or thaw the fingers that had grown red and still over that piece of sewing.

Dr. Barret took a shawl from the chair-back and put it over his wife's shoulders, and she lifted up her face to press it to his, gratefully. And then he sank back in his place with a groan.

What was he to do? Hitherto he had fought hard—a long, dreary battle for life; but now his health threatened to give way, and he felt how powerless he was, after all. And his thoughts went back to that slender figure as he had first seen it; and miserable self-accusations tormented him. He had taken her from wealth and luxury, and could not even give her the bare necessaries of life. He knew now, since he had so much at home, what all that stitching was for; and it stung him like a wasp to think she was working for him. As he pondered thus, with his head in his hands, the subject of his thoughts looked up at him quietly.

"The old story, Frank?"

"The old story," responded the doctor, gloomily. "How can it be otherwise, when I see you working those little fingers to the bone in hardship and cold and hunger, Mary?"

"It does me good," said Mary, cheerily, "I never knew before how fast I could sew, nor how well."

"You never had occasion for it till I stepped in with my selfish love and brought you to poverty. And yet I do love you, Mary,—more I think than ever; you don't doubt that, do you?"

"Why should I doubt it? Frank, if you will talk of these things, I must talk, too, and then my fingers will be slower. What is the use of pondering so gloomily over the past? I know we were wrong, both of us, but we have done what we could to retrieve it, and I will not have you take more than your share of the blame. I knew before what luxury and self-indulgence were; now I know more. I have seen trouble, and know what the lives of others are, and how thoughtless and selfish I was once. I hope I could never be so bad again; so you see it has been good for me to have trials. And have we not blessings as well? Oh, Frank, if we had lived in ease and riches, we might have gone on as some married people do, *you* know that,—caring for each other, and only anxious for some perpetual excitement to relieve their *ennui*. But now that we have had a battle to fight together—"

"Ah! but, my darling, the battle grows harder than ever."

"You are ill and desponding. Make haste and get well, Frank, and you will see things through brighter spectacles."

The doctor was silent, and only the sound of the needle broke the stillness. There was only one comfort for him in his poverty—he was not in debt; and the reflection still gave him a thrill of satisfaction.

The handful of fire dwindled, and the coals dropped down lower in the grate; still the click of the needle went on. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, a hard, strong double knock, and the doctor started nervously. "A patient perhaps," said his wife. "When things are at the worst they always mend, you know, Frank."

"Yes, because men always takes means to effect a radical cure, instead of patching up—but hush! how long that boy is!"

You see the doctor did not dare to go himself, because no patient could ever have believed in the skill of a medical practitioner who opened his door. Presently there were sounds of hasty steps and hard breathing in the little hall, as of a boy struggling into buttons which were obstinate. Then the door opened.

"Dr. Barret at home?"

"Yet, but—"

"Ask him to step here a minute. I was to give this into his hands."

Buttons knocked pompously at the parlor door, as if he did not know perfectly well that every word had been audible; and Frank came out in time to see a small box put down in the hall, and the head of the messenger disappearing through the door.

"So it was no patient after all," said Mary.

"No, it's a box," responded her husband wearily. "Perhaps some one has sent us a Christmas present, or perhaps it's a hoax. As likely as not."

I had better take it to the kitchen to unpack sir," said Buttons; "make a mess here, perhaps."

"Yes do. And—I think I'll come with you."

But the little fingers moved on nimbly over the stitching, and the quieting foot pressed the rocker of the cradle. What was in the box? Had some unknown or forgotten friend thought upon them, or was it a hoax? It might be even that the young wife's thoughts pictured the possibility of a Christmas dinner, for how could she see her husband sinking daily before her eyes for lack of necessary comforts without wishing and hoping? More than that, there were the children—those little mouths which she could not fill. How long they were over the box!

Then suddenly there was a step in the room, and Frank stood beside herchair, leaning on it.

"Are you strong, Mary? Can you bear something.

"Oh what is it—don't."

"Nothing bad, little one. Time was when I should have been too proud to rejoice over this Mary; but for your sake and for the children, I think my pride is dead."

And he put before her the mysterious box.

"Papers," cried Mary, disappointed. "What is it Frank? What can papers do for us?"

"Read," responded the doctor, pointing to a label.

"Marriage portion of my daughter, Mary Barret, *nee* Favoursham."

But still Mary turned a puzzled face to her husband.

"Tell me what it means."

"There is more for you to read," responded Frank, placing another paper under her hand. "You are rich, Mary, that's all. You see I am trying to be good and thankful in spite of my own failure and disappointment. Read:"

"Some years ago my daughter asked forgiveness at my hands. I refused it. Now it is my turn to ask, and hers to—which is it to be? I beg my daughter to forgive me. I send that which I have so long unjustly kept back from her and hers. Let her and her husband take pity on a lonely old man and come to him. The old house is dull and miserable; it wants the music of children's voices, and there is room in it for all. Let them come to me, and I will show how thankful I can be.

JOHN FAVOURSHAM."

As Mary's arm was round her husband's neck, and she was trying hard to keep back the tears that would come.

"You will be good, Frank, and forgive him, and be grateful to him for my sake. I know you will! It is a Christmas box worth having, isn't it Frank?"

O boy in buttons, down with the lamp that requires as much as a baby! No matter about it now. Away with the suit that it doesn't matter about daubing! There will be new buttons when those are gone, and plenty of lamps for the future. And bye-and-bye there will be a big "To Let" in the windows of the genteel old house, and the testy old merchant will be no more alone in his luxurious rooms, but a bright figure will sit before the silver service, and give him his coffee; and childish eyes will look at him with awe, as, in some mysterious fashion, the author of all this grandeur. And the doctor will grow great amongst great surroundings, and visit his patients in his carriage; and the voice under the old gentleman's waistcoat will torment him no more.

Select Poetry.

From the St. Nicholas for December.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

BY MRS. MATTIE S. RUSSELL.

The oak is a strong and stalwart tree,
And it lifts its branches up,
And catches the dew right gallantly
In many a dainty cup.
And the world is brighter, and better made,
Because of the woodman's stroke,
Descending in sun, or falling in shade,
On the sturdy form of the oak.
But stronger, I ween, in apparel green,
And trappings so fair to see;
With its precious freight, for small and great,
Is the beautiful Christmas-tree.

The elm is a kind and goodly tree,
With its branches bending low;
The heart is glad when its form we see,
As we list to the river's flow.
Ay! the heart is glad, and the pulses bound,
And joy illumines the face,
Whenever a goodly elm is found,
Because of its beauty and grace.
But kinder, I ween, more goodly in mien,
With branches more drooping and free,
The tints of whose leaves, fidelity weaves,
Is the beautiful Christmas-tree.

The maple is supple, and lithe, and strong,
And claimeth our love anew,
When the days are listless, and quiet, and long,
And the world is fair to view.
And later,—as beauties and graces unfold,—
A monarch right regally drest,
With streamers aflame, and pennons of gold,
It seemeth of all the best.
More lissome, I ween, the brightness and sheen,
And the coloring, sunny and free,
And the banners soft, that are held aloft,
By the beautiful Christmas-tree.

Select Tales.

Wishing to be a Lady.

A STORY FOR GIRLS.

"Come Nannie, child, it is your turn to-day to take care of the dining-room. Your sister Greta is attending to the work above stairs, and Bridget is ready for her orders by this time."

Nannie's face, as she looked up from the book she was reading, did not express her usual energetic good humor. Yesterday she had taken tea with a companion of her own age—a young miss of fourteen, who knew quite well, as she supposed, what was proper for a lady, and had filled Nannie's head with ideas that had been working there ever since.

"Why, mamma," said she, as she reluctantly took up the cloth to wash the breakfast china, "I don't see how it is Greta and I must do so much housework; I am sure papa is able to hire another servant. And just look at my hands!—all red and ugly; and Bertha Speare says they will grow uglier and uglier if I am kept at drudgery at the time. *Her* hands are beautiful—and she wears the prettiest rings! She *never* has to wear calico morning-dresses either.

"Yes, Nannie, I understand all about it. Bertha Speare is a remarkable well-informed young lady. Drudgery will never do for such as you, and she, I see; it is only fit for mothers and servants. Go up stairs now and put on your best merino dress and kid boots, and take down your curl-papers, and make yourself as fine as possible."

Nannie looked at her mother. It was a quiet, placid face she saw, but she knew by its expression that she was in earnest. Mrs. Lane's children were never mistaken on that point. Such a thing as disobedience was never thought of when she wore that look of decision. So Nannie dropped her mop and went up to her room, wondering in her heart what her mamma could mean. She had only thought of having a little argument with her mother, Nannie was fond of argument—and she had been forestalled so completely that she was puzzled. But on one thing she was clear: she must obey.

After she was dressed—and it took her much longer than usual to array herself, for she was rather nervous over it—she shyly and reluctantly descended to the dining room. There stood mamma, having had the cradle brought in, with the baby in it asleep. She was washing the china and talking to Bridget—the one servant—who had been summoned from the kitchen.

"You see, Bridget," she was saying "the marketing has just come in, and there's the beef to roast, and the cauliflower to prepare, and as for the pudding, I have had a watchful night with Mally, and shall have to give that up."

"Yes, ye do look tired, mum. But, by yees lave, master was spakin' about the puddin', and Miss Nannie said she could make it."

"Don't you see Miss Nannie is all dressed?" said mamma, turning round. "We'll have to do without her, too, Bridget."

Bridget gave a queer, puzzled look at Nannie, who had just entered, attired in best afternoon trim, at nine o'clock in the morning. "Oh, I ask pardon," said she, with her best Irish manners, "I didn't know ye were going out. If its going to the town ye are"—

"Miss Nannie is not going anywhere," said mamma, quietly going on with her work. "That will do, Bridget."

Bridget knew when she was dismissed, but she was by no means satisfied. "It's quare, though," she said to herself, as she retreated to the kitchen; "Mistress Lane's up to something. Ye'll never see that look on her when she isn't."

Mrs. Lane was a minister's wife—a country minister, who, having a small private property of his own, besides his wife's still smaller portion, devoted his surplus money to the poor of his flock. The minister's wife was a wise little woman, and had concluded that in training her daughters to take their share in household cares, she was doing service both to the household generally and to them in particular. "Besides" she said, "I have the baby, and can leave him to no other hands; it is time you begin to relieve me of such cares as take my time from him." As a general thing both girls had been inclined to concur cheerfully, and took no small pride in doing well the part assigned them, and in papa's praise of their thrift.

But this morning Nannie had rebelled, and Mrs. Lane always met rebellion promptly. She now turned to Nannie, with her sweetest smile, and said: "You look very smart and lady-like daughter. Now go into the parlor; this is no place for you, dressed as you are. Go and amuse yourself as you like best."

"But, mamma!" said Nannie, blushing deep with mortification, "I didn't mean"—

"Oh, my dear, I couldn't suppose you would say what you did not mean. You shall not spoil your hands, my love, and you shall not wear calico wrappers if you do not wish to. You are quite as worthy to be a lady, I hope, as Bertha Speare. Sit down and make yourself comfortable."

Greta was dusting the parlor, and mamma waylaid her. "Run, Greta," said she, "and fetch your sister that footstool, and turn on a little more heat. That will do. Are you quite comfortable now?"

What could poor Nannie do but say, "Yes," in the most feeble way, though in one sense she had never felt so uncomfortable in her life. She took up a book, more to hide her blushes than to read; but the letters had a way of running together. She went to the piano; but the keys refused to obey her nervous fingers. Then she tried to amuse herself by arranging the autumn leaves that filled the bracket vases. Presently a knock at the outer door announced a morning visitor. Greta admitted to the dining-room Mrs. Sage, the wife of a plain parishoner.

"Morning, Miss Lane," said the gingham-sun-bonnetted lady, cheerfully, helping herself to a seat. "Pears to me you don't look over and above rugged this morning. Anything the matter?"

"Nothing thank you, but a little fatigue; Mally kept me watching last night. Poor little fellow, his teeth trouble him." And Mrs. Lane bent over the cradle with a mother's sympathy; Mally opened his eyes and reached up his appealing arms. "Poor little Mally, mamma will take you in a moment—just as soon as she puts away these teacups."

But Mally—who was the best child usually, who had learned patiently to "wait a moment," knowing that his mother's promise never failed—was sick this morning, and a moment was an age to him. He puckered up his little face and gave forth such a pitiful wail that Nannie could not endure it. She left her vases and sprang to his side. "Come to sister, Mally darling," said she; "precious pet; come to sister."

But mamma was at hand also. "Nannie my love," said she, "Mally would rumple your dress and disarrange you hair. Let him come to me."

"Pears to me," said Mrs. Sage, "you're very much dressed up this mornin', Nannie. Goin' out are you?"

"No, Mrs. Sage," said Mrs. Lane, with a comical look in her eyes, "Nannie is *our* visitor to day. She is trying how it seems to be a young lady who does nothing."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Sage, half-mystified, "If Mrs. Lane is punishing Nannie," she thought, "she is uncommon sweet and pleasant about is. I can't make her out. But I guess she knows what she's about. Mrs. Lane commonly does." And so she quieted her curiosity, knowing that Mrs. Lane would tell her just what she meant to tell, and no more.

Nannie, for her part, had retreated to the parlor, where she was about as miserable as a young lady in her best dress, kid boots, perfect frizzles, and nothing to do but to amuse herself could well be. She went back to her books; but how could she read, with her thoughts continually on her tired mother, her disappointed father, who was so fond of the pudding she had volunteered to make for him that morning! And poor little Mally! She began to see how really valuable and helpful a girl of fourteen can be to her family.

"It may be ladylike to be of no use," she said to herself, "but it is detestable! I'd rather be Bridget in the kitchen, feeling a sense of being good for something, than live in a prison of fine clothes and know that I am helping nobody. Oh dear! if this horrid day were only over!"

But it was not over, by any means. She had to meet her father at dinner, and be treated with oppressive politeness in his presence. She had to encounter the fun twinkling in his eyes at the sight of her embarrassment—to see him joining the others by showering attentions upon her, as though she had been a princess. But she was a girl of courage, and having made up her mind what to say, she said it right out before them all, while Bridget was removing the dishes:

"Mamma, dear, I beg your pardon. I have been naughty and foolish. I hope you will forgive me and let me go back to my work. I shall never be so foolish again; and here, bravely trying to smile, she burst into tears.

Mamma gave her the kiss of reconciliation and trust. "Nannie, darling," said she, "you have had your little lesson. I should not have inflicted it on you if I had not been sure it would save you a more bitter one in the future."

Nannie was cured of ever wanting to be a lady, in the helpless sense—a drone in society. She has become a very noble, useful woman, and if her hands are not beautiful, they are so helpful that everybody admires them.

Origin of St. Nicholas.

This person really lived 1400 years ago in Myra, a city situated in what is now Turkey in Asia, looking out upon the Mediterranean, almost at the entrance of the Archipelago. Nicholas was bishop of Myra, and was so devout and worthy a man that he was revered far and near. A mythical story is told of his restoring to life two boys, whom a landlord of Myra had killed and salted down with pork. This miracle made him the special protector of boys and students, and afterwards he became patron of Christmas gifts and the particular saint of those holidays in this wise: Nicholas came to be very rich as archbishop of Myra, and esteeming money for its real worth, the truest happiness it brings, spent a good part of his time in giving it away, so that no one knew from whom it came. There was a nobleman in Myra who had three portionless daughters, and Nicholas enabled them to marry by throwing purses of gold at their feet through the open window. The nobleman found out who the mysterious giver was, as Nicholas was endowing the third daughter in this singular way, and after Nicholas died and was sainted, the secret leaked out. The nuns in the eastern convents imitated Nicholas' secret charity, and used to leave gifts at the doors of their friends on certain holidays. The door of the Abbess of the convent used to be decorated with a silk stocking, labeled with a paper invoking the liberal aid of St. Nicholas, and in the morning the stocking would be found full of presents. Children took to imitating this custom, and hence rose the spirit of Santa Claus or St. Nicholas and his wonderful sleigh load, which so many stockings have been hung up to receive. There is quite a lesson for older heads in the manner in which Nicholas quietly bestowed his charity.

Amid all the glamour that Love throws over his chosen few, nothing is more prettily absurd than the way in which he makes them appear in parts quite foreign to their original characters. It is so fine to see the selfish people become generous under his magic spell; the reserved ones, genial; the taciturn, talkative; the secretive natures, transparent; the sad ones, merry; the jovial ones, just becoming touched with an agreeable melancholy!

To think kindly of each other is good, but to act kindly toward one another is best of all.

If the best man's faults were written on his forehead, he would draw his hat over his eyes.

That is the great happiness of life—to add to our high acquaintances.

Original Poetry.

ON THE MOUNTAINS.

Written for the Democratic Advocate,

BY H. VANDERFORD.

On the mountains! Oh, how sweet!
The busy world beneath my feet;
Outspread before my raptur'd eyes
The wide unbounded prospect lies;
The panoramic vision glows
In beauty, grandeur and repose.
I gaze into the vaulted blue
And on the em'rald fields below;
The genial sunlight shimmers down
Upon the mountain's rugged crown,
The eye sweeps round the horizon
Until its utmost verge is won.
The hoary peaks, with forests crown'd,
Spread their vast solitudes around,
And intervening rocks and rills
The eye with very transport fills.
The bosom wells with joy serene
While viewing all the lovely scene,
The spirit soars on airy wings
Above all sublunary things.
I peer into the depths profound
Of the cerulean around
And ether's far-off heights I scan,
As if, to feeble finite man,
The power of vision here were given
To view the battlements of heaven.
But, though I gaze and gaze intent,
Close scanning all the firmament,
No Mount of Vision, unto me,
Does this bold summit prove to be.
Though in elysian wrapt, the while,
Where sublimated thoughts beguile,
Icarian pinions, all too frail,
Were sure my fancy's flight to fail.
Confined within this mortal clod,
Vain man would yet ascend to God,
Presumptuous, as of yore, to be
The heir of immortality.
But, from those fair celestial heights
Of fervid fancy's loftiest flights,
My airy visions topple down
To where cool reason's realm is found,
And fancy folds her weary wings
Content the while with earthly things.

Our Olio.

What Christmas is as we Grow Older.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

Time was, with most of us, when Christmas Day, encircling all our limited world like a magic ring, left nothing out for us to miss or seek; bound together all our home enjoyments, affections, and hopes; grouped everything and every one around the Christmas fire; and made the little picture shining in our bright young eyes complete.

Time came, perhaps, all too soon! when our thoughts overleaped that narrow boundary; when there was some one (very dear we thought then, very beautiful and absolutely perfect) wanting to the fulness of our happiness; when we were wanting too (or we thought so, which did just as well) at the Christmas hearth by which that some one sat; and when we intertwined with every wreath and garland of our life that some one's name.

That was the time for the bright visionary Christmasses which have long arisen from us to show faintly, after summer rain, in the palest edges of the rainbow. That was the time for the beautified enjoyment of the things that were to be, and never were, and yet the things that were so real in our resolute hope that it would be hard to say, now, what realities achieved since have been stronger.

What! Did that Christmas never really come when we and the priceless pearl who was our young choice were received, after the happiest of totally impossible marriages, by the two united families previously at daggers drawn on our account? When brothers and sister-in-law who had always been rather cool to us before our relationship was effected perfectly doted on us, and when fathers and mothers overwhelmed us with unlimited incomes? Was that Christmas dinner never really eaten, after which we arose, and generously and eloquently rendered honor to our late rival, present in the company, and there exchanging friendship and forgiveness, and founding an attachment not to be surpassed in Greek or Roman story, which subsisted until death? Has that same rival long ceased to care for that same priceless pearl, and married for money, and become usurous? Above all, do we really know now that we should probably have been miserable if we had won and worn the pearl, and that we are better without her?

That Christmas when we had recently achieved so much fame; when we had been carried in triumph somewhere, for doing something great and good; when we had won an honored and ennobled name, and arrived and were received at home in a shower of tears of joy; is it possible that *that* Christmas has not come yet?

And is our life here, at the best, so constituted that, pausing as we advance at such a noticeable mile-stone in the track as this great birth-day, we look back on the things that never were, as naturally and full as gravely as on the things that have been and are gone, or have been and still are? If it be so, and so it seems to be, must we come to the conclusion that life is little better than a dream, and little worth the loves and strivings that we crowd into it.

No! Far be such miscalled philosophy from us, dear reader, on Christmas Day! Nearer and closer to our hearts be the Christmas spirit, which is the spirit of active usefulness, perseverance, cheerful discharge of duty, kindness, and forbearance! It is in the last virtues especially, that we are, or should be, strengthened by the unaccomplished visions of our youth; for, who shall say that they are not our teachers to deal gently even with the impalpable nothings of the earth!

Therefore, as we grow older, let us be more thankful that the circle of our Christmas associations and of the lessons that they bring, expands! Let us welcome every one of them, and summon them to take their places by the Christmas hearth.

Welcome, old aspirations, glittering creatures of an ardent fancy, to your places underneath the holly! We know you, and have not outlived you yet. Welcome old projects and old loves, however fleeting, to your nooks among the steadier lights that burn around us. Welcome, all that was ever real to our hearts; and for the earnestness that made you real, thanks to heaven! Do we build no Christmas castles in the clouds now? Let our thoughts, fluttering like butterflies among these flowers, of children, bear witness?

Before this boy, there stretches out a future, brighter than we ever looked on in our romantic time, but bright with honor and with truth. Around this little head on which the sunny curls lie heaped, the graces sport, as prettily, as airily, as when there was no scythe within the reach of time to shear away the curls of our first-love. Upon anothers girl's face near it—placider but smiling bright—a quiet and contented little face, we see home fairly written.

Shining from the word, as rays shine from a star, we see how, when our graves are old, other hopes than ours are young, other hearts than ours are moved; how other waves are smoothed; how other happiness blooms, ripens, and decays—no, not decays, for other homes and other bands of children not yet in being nor for ages yet to be, arise and bloom and ripen to the end of all!

Welcome everything! Welcome, alike what has been, and what never was and what we hope may be, to your shelter underneath the holly, to your places round the Christmas fire, where what is sits open-hearted! In yonder shadow do we see, obtruding furtively upon the blaze, an enemy's face! By Christmas Day, we do forgive him! If the injury he has done us may admit of such companionship, let him come here and take his place. If otherwise, unhappily, let him go hence, assured that we will never injure or accuse him.

On this day we shut out nothing!

"Pause," says a low voice. "Nothing? Think!"

"On Christmas Day we will shut out from our fireside Nothing."

"Not the shadow of a vast City where the withered leaves are lying deep?" the voice replies. "Not the shadow that darkens the whole globe? Not the shadow of the City of the Dead?"

Not even that. Of all the days in the year, we will turn our faces towards that City upon Christmas Day, and from its silent hosts bring those we loved among us. City of the Dead, in the blessed name wherein we are gathered together at this time, and in the Presence that is here among us according to the promise, we will receive, and not dismiss, thy people who are dear to us!

Yes. We can look upon these children angels that alight, so solemnly, so beautifully, among the living children by the fire, and can bear to think how they departed from us. Entertaining angels unawares, as the Patriarchs did, the playful children are unconscious of their guests; but we can see them—can see a radiant arm around one favorite neck, as if there were a tempting of that child away.

Among the celestial figures there is one, a poor mis-shapen boy on earth, of a glorious beauty now, of whom his dying mother said it grieved her much to leave him here, alone, for so many years as it was likely would elapse before he came to her—being such a little child. But he went quickly, and was laid upon her breast, and in her hand she leads him.

There was a gallant boy who fell, far away, upon a burning sand beneath a burning sun, and said, "Tell them at home, with my last love, how much I could have wished to kiss them once, but that I died contented and had done my duty!" Or there was another, over whom they read the words, "Therefore we commit his body to the dark!" and so consigned him to the lonely ocean and sailed on. Or there was another who lay down to his rest in the dark shadow of great forests; and, on earth, woke no more. O shall they not, from land and sea and forest, be brought home at such a time!

There was a dear girl—almost a woman—never to be one—who made a mourning Chrismas in a house of joy, and went her trackless way to the silent City. Do we recollect her, worn out, faintly whispering what could not be heard. and falling into that last sleep for weariness? O look upon her now! O look upon her beauty, her serenity, her changeless youth, her happiness! The daughter of Jairus was recalled to life, to die; but she, more blest, has heard the same voice, saying unto her, "Arise for ever!"

We had a friend who was our friend from early days, with whom we often pictured the changes that were come upon our lives, and merrily imagined how we would speak, and walk, and think, and talk, when we came to be old. His destined habitation in the City of the Dead received him in his prime. Shall he be shut out from our Christmas remembrance? Would his love so excluded us? Lost friend, lost child, lost parent, sister, brother, husband, wife, we will not so discard you! You shall hold your cherished places in our Christmas hearts, and by our Christmas fires; and in the season of immortal hope, and on the birthday of immortal mercy, we will shut out nothing.

The winter sun goes down over town and village; on the sea it makes a rosy path, as if the sacred tread were fresh upon the water. A few more moments, and it sinks, and the night comes on, and light begins to sparkle in the prospect. On the hillside beyond the shapelessly-diffused town, and the quiet keeping of the trees that gird the village-steeple, remembrances are cut in stone, planted in common flowers, growing in grass, entwined with lowly brambles around many a mound of earth.

In town and village, there are doors and windows closed against the weather, there are flaming logs heaped high, there are joyful faces, there is healthy music of voices. Be all ungentleness and all harm excluded from the temples of the household gods, but be those remembrances admitted with tender encouragement. They are of the time and all its comforting and peaceful reassurances, and of history that reunited even upon earth the living and the dead, and of the broad beneficence and goodness that too many men have tried to tear to narrow shreds.

Mother.

How my heart has been pained to see the coolness and indifference which is often manifested for an aged and dependent mother.

Age may waste a mother's beauty and dim the lustre of her eye, her strength may depart, her limbs refuse to support her tottering frame, or she may become as helpless as an infant, but shall we love her less? Is she not our mother still? Has she not toiled and watched over our helpless infancy? And in youth, has she not tried to lead us in the straight and narrow path? And in sickness she was our ministering angel. Who but a mother could be so patient, so kind and affectionate, so gentle and self-sacrificing?

If we have been tempted into forbidden paths, if we have followed in bad counsels and gone astray, if we have chosen evil companions and forgotten the good counsels of our youth, who is so ready to encourage and lead us back to honor and virtue as a mother? She is ready to forgive, to love and cherish us still.

Who can fathom a mother's love? She is our friend when all the world forsakes us. She will cling to us, die for us if necessary.

A mother's love is strong, tender and true. Hard indeed must be the heart that can neglect and abuse a dear old mother.

She should never feel that she is not welcome, never feel that she is a burden to her children, never should her sensitive heart be pained by an unkind look or word. How little do we appreciate a mother's tenderness and love while living—how little do we think of her anxiety for us! But when she is gone, and we see the old arm chair, the vacant place at the table, and hear no more her dear voice, then do we know she is gone, never more to return, and we call her back. She has gone; and happily for us if we can say we have been faithful and made her happy, and could look forward to a meeting beyond this world.

A Wonderful Clock.

Karl Ketter, a poor German miner of the Excelsior golliery, which is situated within a few miles of Shamokin, Pa., has exhibited a clock there recently of a most remarkable character. He had been three years constructing it—the first two years at intervals of time, and the last year he worked at it day and night, scarcely taking time enough to sleep and eat. He became almost a monomaniac on the subject. The clock was in his mind during his waking hours and in his dreams at night. He occupied alone a small wooden shanty, where he worked, slept and cooked his food. Whatever sleeping and cooking he did, however, was but little. It is thought he would have nearly starved but for the kindly interest which his neighbors took in him and his clock. They took him food and encouraged him in his labors. The clock, which was made with no other tools than two common jack-knives, is eight feet high and four feet broad. Its frame is of the Gothic style of architecture. It has sixteen sides, and is surmounted by a globe, on top of which is attached a small golden cross. On the front of the clock there are four dial plates; one shows the day of the week, another shows the day of the month, another shows the minutes and fractions of a minute, and the other the hour of the day. These dials are carved in a most unique manner, having emblematic figures upon and around them of almost every imaginable description. Above the dial plates is a semi-circular gallery, extending around about half the width of the framework of the clock. Immediately in front, in the centre of this semi-circular gallery, is the carved wooden figure of our Saviour. At the ends of the gallery, on either side, there is a small door opening into the body of the clock. Over the door, on the right hand side of the clock, as you stand facing it, is an eagle. Over the door, on the left hand side, is a cock. Twice a day—that is, 12:05 in the day, and at 12:05 at night—a sweet chime of bells begins to play, the small door on the right hand side opens, and the small wooden figures, admirably carved, of the Twelve Apostles, appear and walk out slowly and gravely in procession, Peter at the head. Advancing along the gallery until they get opposite the figure of Jesus, each in turn, except Judas, slowly turns round and bows his head to his Master, then recovers his former position; as Peter does this the cock crows! They continue to advance to the other side of the gallery and enter the small door on the left. As Judas (who is in the rear,) with his right hand shielding his face and his left clasping the bag which is supposed to contain the thirty pieces of silver, comes in full view of the clock, the cock crows again! By a similar arrangement this procession can be made to come out and pass around the gallery at any time desired. On pedestals, at the extreme corners of the front of the clock, are carved wooden statues of Moses and Elias. In the rear are two obelisks of the Egyptian style, upon which are carved hieroglyphic characters to represent the ancient periods of the world's history. The clock will run thirty-two hours without winding. Mr. Ketter, who is a native of Freiburg, in Baden, is very proud of his workmanship. He can scarcely bear to be away from it long enough to eat his meals. He has been offered $10,000 for it by a person from New York, but he refused it. Mr. Ketter says he had often heard of the celebrated clock in Strasburg, but he never saw it, and he has no knowledge of how it was constructed; neither has he ever had any instruction in mechanics of any kind. His purpose is to exhibit it for a few months in this country, and then take it with him to Germany.

Food, Work and Sleep.

The things that man most kneed in this world are food, work and sleep. He does not need riches, honors or office to live in. He needs society because he is made for it. He must love and be loved; his life and happiness are promoted by companionship; mutual dependence and counsel enlarge hope and stimulate courage. Yet after all he lives if his friends die. There is no grief, no form of bereavement, but it has its consolation. The best preserver of man's life is contentment. Nor is work destructive of strength. Men look forward to rest, to a life of ease, which to them mean cessation from toil and from the cares of business. They mistake the cares of business. It is not work; it is care, it is over-exertion, it is ambition and desire after gain that bring worn and weary feelings. All we possess we possess in life. The sooner we get through with life; the sooner we relinquish our possessions. The faster a man lives, the quicker he reaches the end of his life. There are three ends to life, and death is the last and least desirable of them. One end is to live. That is why we were created—to live, and live as long and as well as we can. Some go murmuring and groaning on their way, as though life was a burden, and that it was piety to put a low estimate on it. The opposite is true. A man should seek to live out all his days and he cannot accomplish it in a better way than by using every means to promote life. Among these means are the three things mentioned at the head of this article. When a man denies himself sleep and food and the exercise that work gives brain and body, he robs his life of its full term. Let him be cheerful also. He is like an engine—it will run well and long if it is well oiled. Contentment and cheerfulness are the oil which keep the nerves from wearing out. Busy men and women think that time taken from toil for sleep and recreation is time lost. It is really the cement put in to fill up the joints to keep out the weather and preserve the building.

The musk ox is one of the most remarkable quadrupeds to be found in the Artic regions. It is about the height of a deer, but is much stouter and appears much larger than it really is from the great profusion of long matted woollen hair which covers the whole body, and conceals a thick coat of extremely fine wool. The head is large and broad, and the horns, very broad at the base, are about two feet in length.

A tall man having rallied a friend on the shortness of his legs, the friend replied: "My legs reach the ground—what more can yours do?

The most laudable ambition is to be wise, and the greatest wisdom is to be good.

Idleness is the stupidity of the body, and stupidity is the idleness of the mind.

Afflictions are blessings to us, when we can bless God for afflictions.

Born, lived and died, sum up the great epitome of man.

Little things on little wings, bear little souls to heaven.

Fire and water are good servants but bad masters.