Weekly Chillicothe Crisis.

VOLUME VII. CHILLICOTHE, LIVINGSTON CO., MISSOURI, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1883. NUMBER 18.

CHRISTMAS ANGELS.

The Christmas angels, is their mission ended?
They are not seen by mortal eyes, as when,
O'er Bethlehem's plain, their shining troops descended,
And chanted, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

The voices that once joined the Heavenly chorus—
That mighty "Gloria," echoing far and wide—
Are floating in the Wintry starlight o'er us,
And singing sweetly every Christmas tide.

Far over snow-clad hills and moorlands dreary
Is heard the rustling of each silver wing;
Wherever homes are sad, or hearts are weary,
The blessed Christmas angels come and sing.

In the dim alleys of the crowded city
They enter where the sunbeams never came;
Unbidden guests, yet full of tenderpity
For all earth's bitter misery and shame.

And then despairing hearts look up and wonder,
Whence came that sudden hope they feel within;
Bidding them rise and break the bonds asunder—
Those heavy fetters forged by want and sin.

The angels sing of holy aspirations,
Of pure and happy things, of better times;
Until the soul is stirred by strange vibrations,
That seem as if they came from Christmas chimes.

And new desires to resolutions growing,
Are slowly shaped and fashioned into form;
Till frozen hearts become all warm and glowing,
And gain fresh strength to battle with the storm.

In the vast minster, where the anthems olden,
In glorious waves of music ebb and flow—
Those voices from "Jerusalem the Golden,"
Are singing ever with the Church below.

And in the rustic church that rises lowly,
Amid one rolling hills or woodland dim,
The simple song of gratitude is holy,
For angels join the poor man's Christmas hymn.

Those humble walls can boast no sculptured splendor,
Yet is the hallelujah just as sweet;
For angels and archangels sing, and render
The festive notes all perfect and complete.

And we of them their gentle tones may borrow,
While this old world is full of grief and wrong;
The word of sympathy in time of sorrow,
Is pure and precious as an angel's song.

And loving like Christ's faithful endeavor,
To speak their Lord's glad tidings far and near—
The old, old story, that is new forever—
Oh! these are heaven's own music here.

FUNNY'S CHRISTMAS.

Yes, I know its rather an odd name, but then you see, it was rather an odd little girl who owned it. Her real name was Claribel. She had a funny way of jerking herself round, as if she couldn't turn quickly enough, and staring at you, with her eyes stretched wide open, as if she was afraid you would vanish before she got a good look at you. And on one occasion, when one of the Brady children had offered her a bite of apple, this little girl had looked first at the apple, then at the child, giving her head a solemn shake, and walked off; the other children laughed, and Tommy Green called out "Hello Funny!" and the nick-name had clung to her ever since.

She was only six years old, and had no papa, no mamma to love and care for her. All she had was Alice, and poor crippled Alice was both papa and mamma to herself, and sister. For Mrs. Brady had then little ones of her own to feed and care for. She had given the children a bite and a corner to sleep in ever since Funny was a baby.

One day, almost six years before the time I write about, a poorly clad woman with a child of about six years, and a baby, had rented the room next to Mrs. Brady's, all the luggage she brought was a big trunk, she appeared ill and care-worn.

About a week after their arrival Mrs. Brady was called from the wash tub one day, by a little girl, who begged her to come in to her mama; she was very sick. Mrs. Brady wiped the suds from her arms, rolled them up in her apron and went into the next room.

It was entirely bare of furniture. The sick woman lay on a pile of clothing which served for a bed; in a corner stood the trunk, on which the child immediately seated herself, with the baby in her arms, and began rocking back and forth, making a low, cooing sound to soothe it.

The sick woman motioned to Mrs. Brady to come to the bed-side.

There was an air of superiority about her, a certain something that told Mrs. Brady this was a lady. So she dropped a courtesy, and stood at a respectful distance.

"Please come near," said a feeble voice, and the sick woman scrutinized her face closely. "You look honest, you look kind, are you so?" "Oh, my lady, I am so sorry for you, and the little childers, God bless 'em," and there was such a genuine ring to her voice that the lady knew she spoke the truth.

"I cannot last much longer, I am leaving my little ones entirely alone, what is to become of them I do not know, but do not let them become beggars, send them to some institution where friendless orphans secure a Christian bringing up." But Mrs. Brady, who knew of no such place, supposed of course she meant the poor-house, and she resolved to herself, "them swate little creatures shall never go there, to be hated, and trated shameful," and with tears in her eyes, she promised the mother, that the childers should be looked afther, and no harrum come of them.

The lady went on slowly, "they have a grandfather in England; but he will never befriend them, I married their father against his will, and he never forgave me. When I am gone, they will have no friend left." Then, seeing the reproachful look in the other's eyes, hastily added, "but you." "You will find in that trunk some papers, and a portrait, it is my father's picture, the frame is valuable, take and sell it, and keep the money for your kindness to these poor little ones of mine, but give the portrait and letters to the head of the institution where you place the children, and the God of the widows and orphans will bless you."

And the poor woman spoke no more.

Mrs. Brady had been true to her promise that no "harrumi' should come to them. She was very poor, but willingly shared her bite with them, but as she had three little ones of her own, the share was very small. She had look at the handsome gilded frame once, when they had nothing to eat; but had finally shut the trunk.

"No," said she, "it's the childer's, I'll never sell it at all."

So the children had been growing up for about six years with allay children, and as Alice was a cripple, and could not play with the others, she spent most of the time in the room. Thinking was her chief occupation. Sometimes she would seat herself by the window and gaze out at the square patch of sky, and speculate and wonder for hours; at times she would think of her mother so much, that she fancied she saw her. She knew that her life was incomplete; she felt that there was something kept back. She would wonder how much longer she would have to wait, for she always felt there would be some sort of a change.

Well, I want to tell you of what happened in the "Alice Funny" family, one Christmas time.

It was a week before Christmas; Funny had gone down stairs, to the end of the alley, and seated herself on a big flat stone, that rested against the house.

This was her favorite spot.

She seated herself, and began swinging her feet back and forth.

"What's yer doin' Funny?" cried Tom Murphy.

"Swinging my feet," replied she, making them go a little faster.

"I want that place," and, as she paid no attention to him,

"I say I want to sit there."

"Ain't room for two," returned Funny.

"What's yer lookin' at me so hard for?" And the boy, two or three times as big as Funny, assumed a very threatening air, but the child, not a whit abashed by his threatenings, replied, "I'm wondering why you do not wash your face and hands some times." From the laugh which followed, he know the children were on Funny's side, and he also knew from past experience it would be better for him to leave her alone, and after muttering,

"Just wait till I catch you alone, sis," he sneaked off.

Funny's attention was attracted by two nicely dressed little girls who were passing:

"Oh! Susy," said one, ain't you glad Christmas is coming? I'm going to get a big wax doll, and cradle for it, and Santa Claus is going to bring me a beautiful picture book. I asked him to."

"Oh my!" said the other child, "I asked Santa Claus to bring me a"—this was all Funny heard, but it set her to thinking.

"Christmas!" I wonder who that is, and Santa Claus, I wonder who that is?

"I'll ask Alice," and down she jumped and went to her sister.

"Alice, who's Christmas? and Santa Claus, who's that?"

"I almost forget now, answered the sweet voice of the lame girl, after a pause, during which her eyes had a far away expression, as if she was trying to recall a dim recollection, "but they used to come in the winter time, and bring us nice things to eat; I think they must be papas because good things always come from papas you know. Johnnie Murphy always gets his candy from his papa, and Susy and Bella always say: "Oh! papa gave it to me," if they have anything nice, and the Brady children, and we haven't any papa, so we do not have anything nice. I wish we did have one, don't you Funny?"

"Yes, let's ask Christmas, or Santa Claus to be our papa, if the little girl is going to get the doll because she asked for it, maybe Santa Claus will be our papa if we ask him."

"Well, I think they are everybody's papa, only some children have two."

"Alice, do you believe they'd bring us something if we asked them to?"

"Maybe."

"I guess I'll ask them now, think they'd hear me?"

"Maybe."

So Fanny shut her eyes, put her fingers in her ears and said in a loud voice:

"Christmas, won't you and Santa Claus come and bring me'n Alice some cakes, and candy, and me a big wax doll; and won't you please make Alice well?"

She then opened her eyes, looked round as if she half expected to see them then and there, and looked almost disappointed that they did not appear.

Well, after two or three days had come and gone and no Santa Claus, Fanny said: "Alice, I don't believe they heard me, I'll have to see them, and ask them. I wonder where they live, I'm going to find their house." And sure enough off she started, she did not know which way to go, so she seated herself on the rock to wait until she found out.

The first people who passed were two finely dressed ladies.

"Oh won't you please tell me where Christmas lives?"

"What a little heathen," returned the lady, "let go my dress, you horrid little thing." Fanny stared a minute. I wonder what a heathen is, I'll ask Alice.

She next asked a little girl, who told her Santa Claus lived away up in the clouds.

She stood a minute looking up, but could think of no way to get there, so she shook her head slowly, and said: "I don't believe you."

The other little girl looked shocked at this impolite speech, and hurried off, but our little Fanny had not meant to be rude, what she meant was "I think you must be mistaken;" only she had no mother to teach her to be polite

More than one person had turned round, to look at that queer little figure, standing on the big stone on the corner, and wondered what it was doing there. One lady had approached her with some pennies in her hand, but on meeting Funny's independent look, said to her companion: "Oh, I guess I was mistaken, that child is no beggar, what a bright countenance."

One boy asked her what she was doing.

She answered: "I'm waiting for Christmas."

The reply seemed very funny to the boy, for he laughed loudly.

It was now late in the afternoon—this poor little child had been here most of the day. She had started out confident of success and had not met it, the tears of disappointment rose in her eyes, and she was about to turn homeward, when a carriage, more handsome than she had ever seen, drew up to the store near her, and an old gentleman stepped out; he was unlike anyone she had ever seen, his hair and beard were almost white.

Funny was all eagerness in a moment. "Here they come," thought she, and gave a little hop of joy.

As the gentleman was about to pass, Funny caught hold of his coat.

"O! sir, ain't you Christmas?"

"Hey? why what a funny little creature."

"I ain't creature at all, sir; I'm only Funny."

"What are you doing here? where are your parents?"

"I haven't got any only Alice. And me'n Alice want to find Santa Claus, we haven't any papa to bring us nice things, and we thought if Santa Claus knew it held be our papa."

"What's your name, child?" inquired the gentleman, looking earnestly at the bright piquant, yet half-starved looking little face, and wondered what it was that seemed familiar about it.

"My name's Funny."

"What else?"

"That's all, oh! no it ain't either, Funny Santa Claus I guess."

"Take me to your home little one, I want to see Alice."

"Ain't you going to take Santa Claus with you," pointing to the tall footman in the gilt trappings.

"No, we will send for him if we need him."

So they climbed the three flights of stairs, and Funny rushed into the room with:

"Here comes me'n Christmas, and we left Santa Claus down stairs."

The gentleman followed her into the room, his eyes rested on Alice, his face became very pale, and stretching out both arms he exclaimed:

"My Claribel!"

"That's what mamma used to call Funny!" returned she, "my name is Alice."

She paused; the old far-away look in her eyes, gradually changing, to one of wonder and joy, and pointing to his face she exclaimed."

"The picture, Funny! The picture!" then drawing nearer, "I'm so glad you have come at last, it is so tired to wait so long," and leaned her head against his arm.

The gentleman did not dare trust himself to speak, his feelings were too full for utterance. "Christmas, I'll love you 'cause you make my Alice glad," said Funny.

"My children, do you not know what Christmas means?"

"No, sir."

Then taking Funny up in his lap, he told to these ignorant ones that wonderful beautiful story of the Christ Child, and of the beautiful home that he is getting us ready for, where there will be no more sorrow, no sickness, but all will be well and happy forever.

"This dear Father has sent me to you, my children, no need to examine the contents of that well-known trunk, "I recognize my Claribel in you dear." Laying his hand on Alice's head.

"Do you want to go with me to my beautiful home, and have it for your home?"

"Oh yes! we do, don't we Alice?" But Alice looked up in the gentleman's face and said:

"Please sir, can't I go to the other Home with Him?"

The gentleman put his arms round her, "would my Alice leave me so soon?"

Just then the door opened, and Mrs. Brady appeared. She lifted both hands in amazement, at the unusual sight of a stranger, and exclaimed:

"Sure its the blessed childers grandfather!"

And Mrs. Brady was right. The papers in the trunk were not needed to tell the gentleman these were his grand-children.

He had come all the way across the ocean to find his Claribel, the children's mamma; and beg her forgiveness for his harshness in turning her from him, but his Claribel was gone to her long home, and he found in her stead his little grandchildren; and oh! how his heart smote him, when he remembered that all their poverty, and sorrow might have been avoided, had he listened to her prayer for his forgiveness; for marrying against his will. And he resolved to devote the rest of his life to them. The children could not believe it was true. And when after awhile, they all—Bradys and all—drove in the handsome carriage, to the big hotel, and entered the bright, warm room, and saw the table spread with everything nice you could think of, they were too happy to speak.

Alice was afraid it was just "a think," but no; there was no little square window, and this had always been inseparable from "a think."

And the next day was Christmas, and such a Christmas.

Fanny, or Claribel, as she was now called, was perfectly happy, for Santa Claus bought her a big wax doll, with real hair on its head, and blue shoes on, and a blue satin dress, and more candy, and goodies than she had seen in all her life.

And Mrs. Brady, kind Mrs. Brady, could not believe that she should never touch the wash-tub again, it was too good to be true, she thought.

O! what a happy Christmas, never any more hunger, or sorrow, but all bright and happy before them.

And Alice—dear, patient Alice—before another Christmas came, she had her wish, and went to the "Other Home with Him."

Diamonds of Thought.

Love is sunshine; hate is shadow.—Longfellow.

"He that giveth let him do it with cheerfulness."

Happy is he that cherishes the dreams of his youth.

Be not simply good—be good for something.—Thoreau.

None are so old as those who have outlived their enthusiasms.

A calamity is better borne for not being previously dwelt upon.—Mme. Bunsen.

It is easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it.—Franklin.

In conversation with the egotist, all subjects lead to his "I," as "All roads lead to Rome."

Sweet is the breath of praise when given by those whose own high merit claims the praise they give.—Hannah More.

A man must be excessively stupid, as well as uncharitable, who believes there is no virtue but on his own side.—Addison.

A helping word is often like a switch on a railroad track—but one inch between wreck and prosperity.—Beecher.

What the present man tries to do is a prophecy of what the future man will do—women likewise.

Hold fast to the present. Every position, every moment of life, is of unspeakable value as the representative of a whole eternity.—Goethe.

To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty, and in the same field, it beholds every hour a picture which was never seen before, and which shall never be seen again.—Emerson.

If you would be happy, try to be cheerful, even when misfortune assails you. You will soon find that there is a pleasant aspect to nearly all circumstances—to even the severest trials of life.

Out in a Colorado town the manager of the opera-house was elected mayor, and he announced in his inaugural address that he would spare no pains or expense to make his administration popular, instructive and pleasing, and that there would be in it nothing to offend the most refined taste.—Hawkeye.

A health journal says: "On rising in the morning always put on the shoes and stockings first, and not walk about in the bare feet." Wonder if that editor has ever seen the new style of pants! A man who puts on his shoes first can never get them into the pants without cutting the legs open.—Peck's Sun.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

Here comes old Father Christmas,
With sound of fife and drums;
With mistletoe about his brows,
Merrily he comes!
His arms are full of all good cheer,
His face with laughter glows,
He shines like any household fire
Amid the snow crusts.
He is the old folks' Christmas;
He warms their hearts like wine;
He thaws their winter into spring,
And makes their faces shine.
Hurrah for Father Christmas!
Ring all the merry bells,
And bring their grandsires all around
To hear the tale he tells.

Here comes the little Christ-child,
All innocence and joy,
And bearing gifts in either hand
For every girl and boy.
He tells the tender story
About the Holy Maid
And Jesus in the manger,
Before the oxen laid.
Like any little winter bird
He sings his sweetest song,
Till all the cherubs in the sky
To hear his carol throng.
He is the children's Christmas;
They come without a call
To gather round the gracious Child
Who bringeth joy to all.

But who shall bring their Christmas
Who wrestle still with life?
Not grandsires, youth nor little tots,
But they who wage the strife—
The fathers and the mothers,
Who fight for homes and bread;
Who watch and ward the living,
And bury all the dead!
Ah! by their side at Christmas tide
The Lord of Christmas stands;
He smooths the furrows from their brows,
With strong and tender hands.
"I take my Christmas gift," He saith,
"From thee, tired soul; and he
Who giveth to My little ones
Gives also unto Me!"

THE MISTLETOE.

Most of us can probably remember an old-fashioned song entitled "The Mistletoe Bough," sung to us first and last in the nursery with all a nurse maid's tendency to gloat over a tale of woe like that of young Lovell and his lost bride. It was adapted (apparently from an Italian story, as so many of our old stories were) to English popular taste by a passing allusion to Christmas festivities, with the addition of the somewhat superfluous and irrelevant refrain, "Oh, the Mistletoe Bough!" But in the poet Roger's rendering the unfortunate lady is Ginevra of the Orsini, and the scene of the calamity is Modena; and in this pretty poem there is, *bien entendu*, no mention of the mistletoe bough, though by a certain fatality we have in the old song, this curious parasite once more connected with that mystery of love and death with which, in the most recondite traces of its early mention, we find it inseparably involved.

To be told that the mistletoe has been of old sacred to love, will surprise no one who remembers the purpose for which it is suspended in the halls and kitchens, one of the yule-tide ceremonies, an annual concession made by decorum to love, and honored in the observance by no less a personage than the immortal Mr. Pickwick himself. We see this custom in its present aspect as one long unquestioned and proper to Christmas (or improper, if fastidiousness so prefers to call it;) but when we wake up and begin to ask whence it arose, we are led to indications of a no less than primeval antiquity; while on the transitional period, that is, the period between its origin and our beginning to question that origin, there is, as is usual with such questionings, no light shed.

It has certainly been regarded of old as a custom of much importance, for it used to be said that the maid who was not kissed under the mistletoe at Christmas would not be married that year; and we can only refer its being mixed up with matrimonial considerations to the fact of the plant being sacred to the Venus of Scandinavia:

"Freya, from whom flows every bliss,"
The winning smile, the melting kiss.

The mistletoe was sacred of old with the Persians and the Massagetæ, and the reverence paid to it by the Druids was something very special, and exceeding that paid to other objects of religious importance; for, as Pliny tells us, "The Druids hold nothing more sacred than the mistletoe, provided it be on an oak. They look upon it as a certain sign that their god hath made choice of that tree for himself. But it is a thing very rarely to be met withal (that is *on the oak*, and so it is now); and when it is found they resort to it with great devotion." They deified the mistletoe, and might only approach it in the most devout and reverential manner. When the end of the year approached they marched with great solemnity to gather the mistletoe of the oak, in order to present it to Jupiter, inviting all the world to assist at the ceremony, with the words, "The year now is at hand, gather the mistletoe!" This Borlase tells us; and Picard says that in Burgundy the country people, on the first day of the year, salute one another with the words, "An Guy, l'an neuf (*Ad Viscum annus novus*)!" *guy* or *gue* being the Celtic name still retained for the mistletoe in French, whilst in the upper parts of Germany, where the heathen customs abound, the common people, according to Keysler, about Christmas-time run about the villages striking doors and windows with hammers, and shouting "Gut hyl, gut hyl!" words which are plainly equivalent to the Druidical name of the mistletoe used by Pliny when he calls it *omnia sanans*, All-Heal. For, indeed, there is scarcely anything which it has not been said to cure. In Brittany, where it is now become "l'Herbe de la Croix" (touzaonen ar groaz), it is considered to heal fever, and to give strength for wrestling. Bacon says the mistletoe upon oaks is counted very medicinal, and the Druids consider it a remedy against all kinds of poison, and a sovereign remedy against vermin.

The inhabitants of Elgin and Moray, says the Rev. Mr. Shaw, are accustomed to cut withes of the mistletoe, and make circles of them, to keep throughout the year, pretending therewith to cure hectics and other troubles. "Daily experience," quoth the old herbalist, Johnson (1633), "shewes this plant to have no maligne nor poisonous, but rather a contrarie facultie, being frequently used in medicines against the epilepsie. The leaves and berries of mistletoe are hot and dry, and of subtill parts; the bird-lime is hot and biting, and consists of an airy and waterie substance, with some earthly qualitie; for, according to the judgment of Galen, his acrimony overcommeth his bitternesse; for if it be used in outward applications, it draweth humours from the deepest parts of the body, spreading and dispersing them abroad, and digesting them. It ripeneth hard swellings behind the ears, and other impostumes, being tempered with rosin and a little qualitie of wax. . . . . It hath been most creditably reported to me, that a few of the berries of the mistletoe bruised and strained into oyle and drunken, hath presently and forthwith rid a grevious and sore stitch."

"The people of Holstein regard it, especially if found on an oak, as a panacea for green wounds, and a sure charm to secure success in hunting.

Here is enough to justify its name of *omnia sanans*, and Pliny, after detailing the properties attributed to it, and the pomp and ceremony of white vestments and golden sickle attending its solemn gathering by the Arch-Druid, winds up with all a Roman's contempt for, and horror of, Druidism in these words: "So vain and superstitious are many nations in the world, and oftentimes in such frivolous and foolish things as these!"

The gathering of the mistletoe in Britain was tarnished by all the horrors of human sacrifice which had to be put down by the Romans with a strong hand and a violent antagonism: but we can find Druidical rites and observances in most remote antiquity, in the primeval religion of races, tending ever westward from the far east; the material symbol losing, in its passage through races and through time, its primitive purity of meaning and invariably degenerating into an object of blinded and corrupt idolatry; the plaything of the worst of human passions, in substitution for its once high position as the exponent of the best of moral feelings. There was nothing holier than oaks and groves in the days of Abraham and the Patriarchs; such and such only were their temples, not built with hands, where they met to worship and commune with the Diety. These natural sanctuaries only ceased to be held sacred when the heathen had invaded and corrupted them, and when the only chance of salvation that remained for Israel was that they should worship in one divinely appointed place and no other. divinely marked by only one symbol, the Cherubim, which by their four-fold form and dual number could not be constructed into an idol. But the oak never lost its reputation for sanctity, and was held sacred to Jove; and it is curious to find how long it retained its pre-eminence in Britain.

The author of *Magna Britannia*, in his "Account of the Hundred of Croyland," describes a great wood belonging to the archbishops, said to have consisted wholly of oaks; and among them was one that bore mistletoe, which some persons were so hardy as to cut down for the gain of selling it to the apothecaries of London, leaving a branch of it to sprout out; but they proved unfortunate after it, for one of them fell lame, and others lost an eye. At length, in the year 1678, a certain man, notwithstanding he was warned against it, upon the account of what the others had suffered, adventured to cut the tree down, and he soon after broke his leg. To fell oaks hath long been considered fatal, and such as believe it produce the instance of the Earl of Winchelsea, who, having felled a grove of oaks, soon after found his countess dead in her bed suddenly; and his eldest son, the Lord Maidstone, was presently killed by a cannon-ball. It is rather curious, too, that certain English oaks have been named "Gospel" trees and "Apostles."

The Greeks had a custom, long retained by the Athenians, of carrying each new year to their neighbors' houses an olive branch, "the dove's branch," just as we find the mistletoe carried from house to house, at the same season, by the Celts of Armorica and Great Britain. It was beyond doubt an allusion to that glaucous branch which was a pledge of resurrection to Noah from his symbolical grave, the *ramus felicis olivæ*; and admitting this we can see clearly why "righteous branch" should be a name of the great healer of all ills, in whom culminate the purity and pathos of the sublime mystery of love and death.

Stukely says "the Druids laid the mistletoe on their altars, an emblem of the salutiferous advent of the Messiah." Some such meaning may possibly have been dimly underlying the smoke of their sacrifice; but for us the atmosphere is clear. Christmas is with us once more, and the mistletoe; and love and death have again taken up their places conspicuously by our fireside, those otherwise vacant places!

Let us apply ourselves once more to the task of greeting Christmas kindly, remembering for those who have be a scarred and wounded in the past year's battles, there is still one circumstance which makes Christmas festivities endurable, without which they would not be even possible; and that is, that we have the children with us.

In reverence for their blissful ignorance, a vail is drawn over all that, till fate has forced it upon them, they have no need to know, and the very fact of walking with this vail drawn, and acting the part of a perfect sympathy with their childish glee, brings with it a reality of warmth and refreshment which has served again and again to re-invigorate the world and its toilers; whilst behind it all lies a sure and certain prospect which the dwellers in a royal palace and the inmates of the lowliest cottage alike may lay to heart. For, says Love,

The shadow passeth when the trees shall fall,
But I shall reign for ever over all."

The Christmas Festival.

Another Christmas will soon shine across the world. Over land and sea, over palace and hovel, over slave and freeman, the glad light will gleam, reminding all whom it touches with its radiant shaft that they are members of the same family, bound together by the same sorrows and the same hopes.

The first traces of the observance of Christmas as a religious holiday appear during the reign of the Emperor Commodus, and it was probably kept as a fast by the ascetics as a contrast to the beastly debaucheries of that sovereign. After he was strangled, it reappeared in the time of Diocletian; but after looking it over that monarch disapproved of it, and locked the celebrants in the churches and burned them all together.

It does not appear, from the old accounts, that there was any uniformity among churches as to the time of the observance of Christmas, some of them holding the festival in April or May, and others in January, according to convenience. Sir Isaac Newton accounts for the choice of the 25th of December—the Winter solstice—by showing that not only the feast of the Nativity, but most feasts, were located at cardinal points of the year, and that the first Christian festivals having been fixed by mathematicians at pleasure, the Christians adopted what they found in the calendars.

The great "birthday of the human soul" has never been a favorite holiday in New England. Because it was noisily celebrated by the reckless roysterers of Merry Mount, Oliver Cromwell abolished Christmas in England, and holly and ivy were made seditious badges. In like manner, the congregations of Norton and Hooker and the constituencies of Endicott and Winthrop abolished Christmas in New England, and denounced, with amusing fervor, this "invention of the dyvvle." In Massachusetts and Connecticut its observance was forbidden on peril of fines and imprisonments, and the wretched Episcopalians had a hard time of it indeed. Santa Claus had to run the gantlet over the roofs of New England with much fear and trembling, any time for two centuries. The Puritans proscribed the day and all its vanities, as savoring of papistical superstition, but it survived the anathemas of Roundhead Noll and his followers, and once more its gracious light streams across the world, illuminating sombre nooks and cheering weary hearts.

It is in the land of the Goths that Christmas has had its most general and joyous recognition. In Germany and Sweden it early became the mother of many kindred holidays, forming the Christmas Cycle, surpassing in the richness of its appointments all other groups of religious holidays. At this Winter solstice the Germans and Norwegians long held their great Yule feast in honor of the return to the north of the fiery sun-wheel, and they believed that during the twelve nights begining on December 25th, they could trace the personal movements and propitiate the favor of their whimsical deities—Odin, Brechta, Nipen and the rest. The Yule log, the wassail, the bacchanalian carols and the Christmas theatricals have passed away, and the observance of the day is now confined to missions of mercy, limited church services, the midnight scurrying of Santa Claus, and the hanging of reciprocal presents on the evergreen boughs. Happier than any of the deciduous trees is the nedle-bearing cone that carries benedictions upon its balsm breath and holds out its mailed fingers to the little ones on Christmas morning.

Christmas is pre-eminently the Day of Gifts. Fathers and mothers give gifts then, if on no other day; brothers and sisters give gifts; relatives, friends, chums, cronies, lovers, all indulge in the pleasant privilage of thus attesting their personal affection. Hemlock and spruce and cedar and pine will bloom in wonderful efflorescence and fructify in rare fruitage on Christmas day, and even when the dawn comes plethoric stockings will be found in every curious nook and corner.

In all sorts of places, especially in the homes of the comfortable and the mansions of the rich! It is a sad thought that Santa Claus, the generous gift-bearer, is a mean-spirited sycophant and flunkey, after all! How he hunts for silk stockings! How he hovers around satin counterpanes, covered with antique lace! How he lingers and unloads his reindeer sled on hearths of procelian tiles, beneath lambrequins of gold-and-olive-velvet and clocks of *ormolu!* How he brings heaps of playthings to the child who is already *blaze* with such trinkets, and jewels to the young ladies whose jewel-case is already full! He is a cruel toady—is Santa Claus. He stops oftenest at the places where he sees a silver plate upon the door. He is fond of costly perfumes, of rich apparel. The reindeer team is the turnout of a tuft-hunter. As "well-bred" dogs bark at beggars, so does Santa Claus shy from the road to avoid the chimneys of the indigent. He obeys and perverts the Bible law, "To him who hath shall be given."

The poor will be but scantily remembered. Kindly and willing as they may be, they can make few and humble reciprocal presents. If you have two dollars to spare, and wish to feel a flutter of that divine pleasure that is indigenous to heaven, get a poor washerwoman to thank you for a turkey. It will tickle your vanity wonderfully; and that is, the earthly machinery which the good Lord long ago set in motion to allure you into kindness.

Church-trimming is excellent, after the poor are provided for; but it were better to spare a few greens from the chancel-rail, and a few flowers from the font, if thereby there can be more certainly secured a green place in some desolate heart, and the blossoms of gratitude in some winter-stricken home.—*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.*

Writing to Santa Claus.

It may indeed be called an age of progress when our little ones, still fondly believing in the beneficent and munificent Santa Claus, undertake to "hurry him up" through the medium of an improvised post-office, to wit the chimney, down which His most potent and gracious Majesty will descend on Christmas Eve, for the purpose of depositing dearly-prized gifts in the little stockings so artfully extended, and carefully hung on tiny cots and beds in nurseries all over the length and breadth of the land. What quaintly worded epistles these missives must be. "Darling Santa Claus," write the girls, "please, please do put a big, big, ever so big doll in my stocking. Let her open and shuth her eyes, and say mamma and papa." While the boy writes, "My Dear Mr. Santa Claus, my stocking will just hold a base-ball bat as if it were made for it. If you please, I would like a base-ball bat, and a couple of balls." Thus do our dear little folks address their innocent petitions to the all mythological, are real, dispenser of Christmas toys. Long, oh long may they continue to believe in him.

Denver Doings.

Mr. J. A. McBeth, Pacific Express Office, Denver, Col., was cured by St. Jacobs Oil of an excruciating pain in the neck, and also tooth-ache. One application did the work.

"What is the worst thing about riches?" asked a Sunday-school teacher. "That they take unto themselves wings and fly away," promptly replied the boy at the foot of the class.—Cincinnati Saturday Night.

Catarrh has killed fifty dogs in Waterbury, Conn., and horsemen fear it will come into the stables next.

FARMINGTON, ILL.—Dr. M. T. Gamble says: "I prescribe Brown's Iron Bitters in my practice and it gives satisfaction."

CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY.

The ideal Christmas is in Germany. All classes, the old and young, emperor and peasant alike, enjoy the festival. Yet it is distinctively the day of the children, and as such has been celebrated by Germany's greatest bards, from Klopstock to Otto Rognette; and Goethe, Schiller, and even such a grim cynic as Heine have enshrined the day in undying verse. The German idea of the day, too, is one of sacred sentiment. The lesson taught to the young is, that the offerings of the Christmas-tree are from the Saviour, testifying His love for little children. The *Weihnachts mann* (Christmas man), is supposed to distribute his favors to the good children; but so impartial is he in apportioning his gifts that all children are good. Thus the religious instinct is cultivated in a most beautiful and telling way, and the anniversary is, indeed, a happy one for the children of Germany, where the Christmas-tree had its birth, and where all the delightful festivities of Christmas, as known in England and the United States, first took root.

As it is a boast of the Jews that they founded the family, so it may be a proud one, too, of the Germans, that they have given to children a day in the year, the approach of which they always eagerly await. Many tender and touching stories of this Saxon outgrowth are told in many forms of German and Norse literature, to the delight of the young; but, perhaps, Hans Anderson has done more to hit the child's fancy in this regard than any author of our time. There is also a beautiful poem of Hebel, "Christ-Boum," which celebrates the ceremonies on Christmas Eve, and which gives an adequate idea of that sentimental side of the German nature, which shines so resplendently in the poetry, painting and music of the Fatherland. The manner, too, in which the Christmas Eve festivities are conducted, reflects the sober side of the German mind in a very striking way. A large yew bough is erected in one of the parlors, lighted with tapers, and hung with numerous gifts, sweetmeats, candies and ornaments, the whole producing a very decorative effect calculated to strike the juvenile eye. Every object is marked with the name of the intended recipient, and when the distribution takes place, the scene is one of great happiness, not alone to the children, but to the adults as well. The mother takes her daughters aside, and the father his sons, and the parents then tell the children what has been most praiseworthy or otherwise, in their conduct during the preceding year.

There still exists in Germany the veritable Santa Claus, known there as "Knech Rupert," who, dressed in high buckskins, a flowing white robe, with a mask and enormous flaxen wig, goes from house to house, being received with great reverence by the parents; and, after inquiring carefully about the behavior of the children, distributes the presents with apparent justice. It will thus be seen that Christmas in Germany is almost entirely a children's festival, that the effort has been to make it a high moral institution by giving rewards to the most deserving, and kindling in the mind of the child an aspiration to deserve recompense for obedience to the parental authority. As such, the natal day of Christianity is certainly more poetically understood in Germany than in any other civilized nation.

Aside from the mere juvenile aspect of Christmas, the Germans, indeed, make this a festival day. All the members of the family who can reach the homestead gather about the great fire which is sure to be burning on every German hearth. It makes little difference the distance. Every German will be at his ancestral seat if it be within the range of possibility; and in this is the maternal triumph. The mother is sure to see her children once a year, and thus the anniversary is to her a moment of supreme satisfaction. Even the students at the universities travel hundreds of miles to go to their homes on this day, and no expense is spared to be present at the family reunion. No good German ever fails in this duty, which to him is sacred. From the throne to the hovel the same spirit pervades. Indeed, it is the national feeling that

"A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man's heart through half the year."

The Germans in the United States, as a rule, keep up their reverence for the day, and Christmas, as Americans observe it, is largely the result of German contact. While our Christmas notions come from England in the first instance it should not be forgotten that England got hers from Germany.

How Old May a Man Live?

Demorest's Monthly for January.

In a Bessarabian province lives one Savtchuk, who, at last accounts, was one hundred and thirty years old. He is what is called a Russian by birth. His eldest son is eighty-seven years old, and is far more decrepit than the father. The one family has multiplied into fifty families. The age of this Russian, is, of course, not as well authenticated as that of old Parr, the Englishman. It has been noted that reported cases of extreme old age always occur in the ranks of the very poor, whose date of birth can rarely be verified, while kings, nobles and members of noted families, whose records are kept, in no age or country, have ever lived a hundred years. Generalizing from this fact, a distinguished English writer, Mr. Lewes, gives it, as his judgment, that it is very doubtful if any human being can claim the distinction of being a centenarian. Yet from the analogy of the animal races, every child that is well born should live a century. The rule seems to be that animals live five times the length of their adolescence, that is they ought to live five times longer than the period it takes to attain their full growth. There is no question but what the whole human race does not enjoy the health and vigor which it is possible to attain. There is some defect in the constitution of even the strongest of our race. In the golden age of humanity yet to come, every child will be well born. Its life and habits will conform to the scientific laws controlling our existence on this earth, and then man's environment will help him to achieve the highest possible physical vitality. To-day the great bulk of the human race are born with weak strains in their blood. They eat improper food, use hurtful stimulants as drink. They are poisoned by malarias and subject to contagions due to their surroundings. The two great objects of the best men and women in this life should be first to improve the race itself, morally and physically, and secondly, to make this earth on which man lives a fit abode for the superior people who will then occupy it.