

Victorian Times

A Monthly Exploration of Victorian Life

Vol. B-1, No. 12 - December 2024

*Christmas Eve in the Streets of London • The Christmas Tree
Keeping the Spirit of Christmas • Christmas Menus • Decorations
Christmas Bonbons • Desserts for December • A Pine-Cone Christmas
Making Cardboard Toys • British Christmas Recipes*

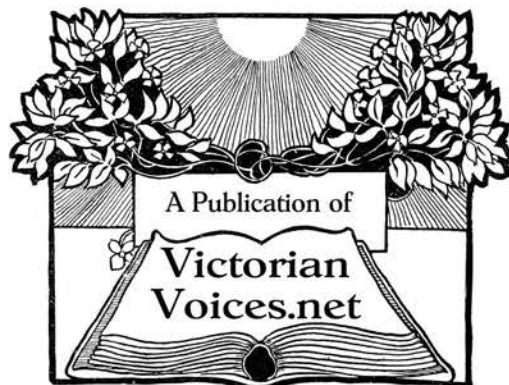
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edited by Moira Allen



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Cover Image: Print of “Angels’ Heads,” also known as “A Cherub’s Head from Different Views,” painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1787. This painting has a delightful history well worth reading at <https://grandearthe.net/joshua-reynolds/angels-heads>. This particular print comes from a Victorian scrap album; it was widely reproduced in the 1800’s.

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- 4 Editor's Greeting: An Old-Fashioned Christmas? by Moira Allen
- 5 In the Heart of London, by D. Rice-Jones (*UK-English Illustrated Magazine, 1887*)
- 30 The Angel's Song, by Francis Ridley Havergal & C.H. Purday (*UK-Girl's Own Paper, 1883*)
- 31 The Christmas Tree (*UK-Illustrated London Almanack, 1853*)
- 33 The Spirit of Christmas, by Edward W. Box (*US-Ladies' Home Journal, 1893*)
- 35 Christmas, by Leonard Larkin (*UK-The Strand, 1902*)
- 41 Poem: "The American Carver" (*US-Good Housekeeping/Philadelphia News, 1887*)
- 41 Christmas Bonbons, by Sara Sedgwick (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1890*)
- 42 Desserts of Nuts (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1894*)
- 42 Every-Day Desserts, and Desserts for Every Day, Part 7, by Ruth Hall (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1888*)
- 44 Wax Flowers, Part 12: The Pansy, by Mrs. E.S.L. Thompson (*US-Peterson's, 1879*)
- 45 A Pine-Cone Christmas, by Mary E. Child (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1890*)
- 51 Card-Board Toys (*US-Godey's, 1867*)
- 52 Poem: "The Christmas Pretender," by Mrs. George Archibald (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1896*)
- 53 Christmas Cheer, by Clinton Montague (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1888*)
- 54 Poem: "Will He Come?" by Clark W. Bryan (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1888*)
- 54 Poem: "Just After Christmas," by Adelaide Preston (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1889*)
- 55 Seasonable Menus, by Margaret Burroughs (*US-Good Housekeeping, 1899*)
- 58 Christmas Decorations of the Home (*UK-Cassell's Household Guide, 1884*)
- 60 Country Scenes - December, by Thomas Miller (*UK-Illustrated London Almanack, 1848*)





An Old-Fashioned Christmas?

Who doesn't dream of having a real, old-fashioned Christmas? We long for something far removed from the "crass commercialism" that we have today, where the only thing that rings is the cash register! We yearn, instead, for the glowing tree, just the right amount of presents, a house full of greenery, perhaps a ball of mistletoe in a strategic doorway, and a fire crackling on the hearth. This old-fashioned Christmas would inspire the gathering of family and friends for fellowship and feasting and making merry—and throughout it all, never losing sight of the real "meaning" of Christmas.

It seems, sadly, that many Victorians had exactly that same dream—or so one gathers from Edward Bok's 1893 editorial (who needs mine?) on "The Spirit of Christmas" on page 33. According to Bok, "to thousands of us Christmas has become a season... the coming of which we actually dread." Christmas in America has become so unbearably commercial, so ostentatious, and so stressful that "we get ourselves irritable and sick in the necessary shopping and purchasing." But this, Bok tells us, is not just about Christmas but about American life in general. "The whole system of our living is becoming one grand mass of foolish ostentation, and our present mode of Christmas is the outgrowth of it."

I'll interrupt for a moment to point out that while I've seen quite a few articles in this vein in Victorian magazines, they all seem to appear in *American* magazines. I have yet to see this complaint in a British magazine—but then, British Victorian magazines rarely say much about Christmas at all. While many magazines produced an annual "Christmas" number, often just about the only reference to Christmas was the title itself, the rest of the issue being simply a collection of fiction and articles utterly unrelated to the season. I'm not quite sure what to "read" into this—but I think I can safely assume that the mad push to give bigger, better, more expensive presents was primarily an American phenomenon.

Bok doesn't blame "commercialism" for driving this misplaced Christmas spirit. He doesn't even mention it—but if he did, I think he'd take quite the opposite approach, and blame the pushy, showy, "look how much I spent" attitude for driving commerce rather than the other way around. Christmas gift-giving, he believes, is a function of trying to discharge personal obligations rather than anything that comes from the heart. However, I believe it's a two-way street. One cannot buy opulent gifts without having the commercial establishments to sell them. In the days that seem "olden" to a writer of 1893, shops were fewer and stocked far less. It's far easier to be content with less when there is less to be had, or to be tempted by.

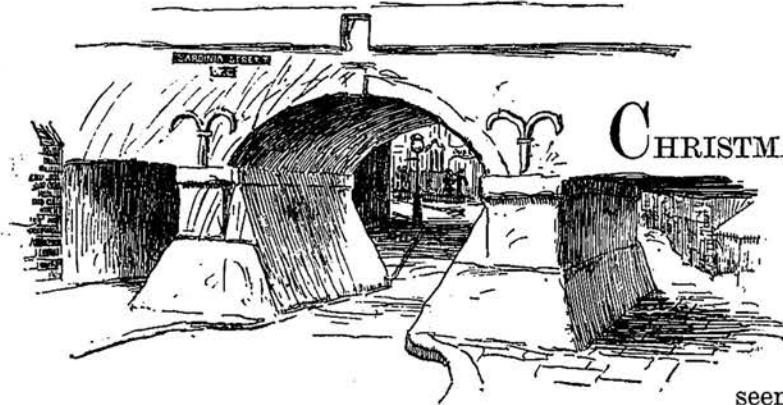
It's a bit disheartening, however, to realize that our image of the modern, commercial, overblown Christmas holiday season (starting as it now does in September, if not sooner) is not so modern as we'd like to believe. Once again, we find that the "good old days" weren't quite what we imagined—and once again we find that those "good old days" were an awful lot like the days we have now.

If a Victorian were to be able to gaze into the future and view our approach to the holidays, I think they'd be disheartened as well. Certainly Mr. Bok would be—for he fondly hopes that his readers may one day come to their senses and regain the true spirit of Christmas. So do we, as evidenced by the way that each year brings a fresh round of holiday movies trying to remind us that "getting" (whether it's getting gifts or getting ahead) isn't the reason for the season. Looking back to see that our ancestors had the same dream is a bit depressing.

So perhaps we shouldn't look back at what we imagine Christmas once was, or ahead to what we hope it might become. The only way to celebrate a "real, old-fashioned Christmas," whatever we may believe that to be, is to do it *now*. The pushy, the greedy, the ostentatious—they will always be with us. But we don't have to spend Christmas with *them*.

—Moira Allen, Editor
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IN THE HEART OF LONDON



I.

CHRISTMASTIDE was nigh at hand. It was the first Sunday in Advent, and it was freezing hard. As I looked out from the windows of the St. Giles's Mission House the street was clear of loiterers save for the presence of the old Irishwoman who may be seen at certain hours every day, and

all the year round, sitting on one of the steps outside the Roman Catholic Church.

Sardinia Street is not usually deserted. In fine weather the door-steps of the house in which I live are almost always occupied in the day-time by poor little children, who amuse themselves with swings, which they fasten to the iron rails on either side of the door, or by building mud-houses or making little gardens of dust and withered flowers on the steps. But not unfrequently the steps are monopolised even in the daytime by a less desirable class of visitors—men and women of the roughest type, who occasionally make it somewhat inconvenient to enter or leave the house. In the evening the steps are a favourite breathing place for persons overcome by potations in the neighbouring taverns, and in summer many homeless ones of all ages, who have no money to pay for a bed, pass the night there.

The St. Giles's Mission Church, which for several years past has been the scene of my labours as a clergyman of the Church of England, stands close to the archway which separates Sardinia Street from Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was originally nothing more nor less than an inclosed shed erected in a back yard. But about three or four years ago it was enlarged by the addition to it of the ground floor of the house, the back underground kitchen being converted into a vestry, which is only lighted by gas. The residential portion of the house is therefore now over the church and is approached by a separate door, and a narrow staircase of the most primitive construction.

Amongst the little group who gathered round the stove in the mission church on this Sunday morning there was one poor boy who had never been seen there before. He had evidently entered the church as a place of refuge from the cold streets, and had crept up to the stove and remained close to it during the service without attracting any marked notice, his destitute appearance exciting no surprise in an assembly composed almost exclusively of the poorest of the poor. But when the congregation had dispersed and it was seen that the poor boy still remained at the stove, looking as if loth to move away from it, my attention was called to him.

As he sat when I first saw him with his face turned towards the stove, his elbows resting upon his knees, and his chin upon his hands, he might have been mistaken for a mere bundle of rags. But when I spoke to him he immediately jumped up and turned

round. I then saw standing before me a lad of rather diminutive stature but muscular, and apparently strong in the limbs. The old coat which he wore had evidently belonged to a man three times his size, but it did not conceal the fact that the wearer was shirtless. The sleeves were rolled up almost to the elbows, but elbows and knees protruded through large holes in the sleeves and trousers, and his throat and chest were quite bare, as were also his feet, except that one of them was bound up with a linen rag. His face was thin and pale, and, I am sorry to be obliged to add, very grimy. But it was an honest face for all that, and when he

“copped” him, neither had he ever been “copped” by a “copper,” “cos he had never done nofin to be copped for.” He could neither read nor write nor tell the clock. How did he earn his living? He didn’t earn no living at all—chaps like him didn’t know nofin about a living, but he knew what fried liver was, cos it was one of his favourite dishes when he had a couple o’ coppers to spend upon a dinner. But he hadn’t had no dinner for some time, and not much of anything else to eat—only just enough to keep him alive like. The wheel of a waggon had gone over his foot a few days ago, and that had made him quite lame and unable to run



A CELLAR TENEMENT IN ST. GILES'S.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

turned it up towards mine there was an expression in the eyes, a pleading and confiding look, which it was impossible to resist.

In reply to one or two questions which I put to him the lad informed me that he was called Jack, that he believed he was fourteen or fifteen years of age, that he had never had a home since he was a very little child, that he had been accustomed to sleep on door-steps, in the passages of poor people’s houses, or in barrows or carts about Covent Garden Market, or under the arches, or in “The Holes.” He wasn’t brought up; he had never been inside a school in his whole life, and the School Board officers had never

on errands, or wait on cabs, or go with the men in the market waggons, or do anything else for a bit o’ bread. His foot was still so sore that it had been as much as he could do to drag himself as far as the church that day, and he would be very thankful if I would allow him to stay there, where he was, by the stove, cos it was so nice and warm—almost as good as wittles and drink. He didn’t want anything more, only to be allowed to stay there near the fire.

I did not, however, allow poor Jack to stay there; I took him into the mission house and gave him a good feed. Then I left him in the room where he had his dinner,

a sort of school-room reserved for the reception of applicants for relief, mothers' meetings, Bible classes, &c. In the course of the afternoon I looked in several times to see how my poor arab was getting on, and each time I looked in I found him fast asleep near the fire.

When it was nearly time for evening prayer I asked Jack whether he would like to go down again to the service, and he replied—

"Oh, yes, sir, I should like to go very much if you would only let me sit by the stove like I did this morning, and—and——"

"Well, and what else, my lad?"

"Well, sir, I don't like to ask you, cos it seems such cheek like, but I've got nowheers to go to arter that cept the cold streets, and as I can't move about now with my bad foot fast enough to keep myself warm, I thought as how if you didn't mind, sir, a begging of your parding, sir, I would ask you to let me bide in the church all night. I wouldn't touch nofn."

When I told him that there were several reasons why I could not allow him to sleep in the church, poor Jack appeared greatly disappointed. He thought it was a beautiful place to sleep in, he said, much more "comfable" than any of the places where he usually slept. But when I added that as he had no better shelter I would have a bed made up for him in the room where we then were his face brightened and he said, "Oh, thank you, sir, that *would* be comfable just!"

Jack went down with me to the evening service, during which he had frequently to be shaken, so loudly did he snore.

II.

AFTER supper I took Jack into my study, the sight of which seemed to fill him with amazement and awe. He had never seen such a collection of books before except in some of the bookshops, and he was evidently puzzled, not being able to understand why any one except a bookseller should have so many books.

"Now, Jack," I said, when I had made him take a seat on the opposite side of the fire, "I want you to tell me truthfully all you know about yourself and your belongings. I want you, in fact, to give me the history of your life. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, "I understans, and I'se quite willing to tell you all I knows

about myself without telling no lies. But I ain't got no hist'ry."

"Well, never mind the history, but tell me what you know about your past life—where you were born and brought up, who and what your parents were, and so on."

"Please, sir, I can't; I dunno."

"Oh, yes, you do; you must know something about yourself. Who are your parents, your father and mother? and where do they live?"

"I ain't got no father nor mother. Mother died when I was quite little, and the woman as father married d'rec'ly mother was dead ain't my real mother, so I've been told."

"But your father is not dead?"

"I ain't got no father, sir."

"Are you quite sure? I am afraid from your face you are not telling me the whole truth."

Jack here began to cry, and then confessed that he was not quite sure that his father was not still alive. "But I can't help it," he added apologetically, "if he is alive. I ain't seed him for years and years, and when I last seed him when I was a little wee chap he tooked no notice of me more nor if I didn't belong to him, so I made up my mind not to take no notice of *he* no more, and not to think as I had a father, for he's only brought me bad luck from fust to last. I might ha' been tooked into a good home oncet or twice, but they said that as I'd got a father alive they couldn't take me in, cos he might come and take me away any day. So arter that I says to myself, says I, 'if anybody axes me again about my father, I'll say he's dead, for it's plain that if I don't they'll all let me starve sooner nor give me a bit o' dry bread.'"

I should have liked to reproduce in his own terse graphic language the narrative which Jack gave me, bit by bit, of his early life, and the scraps of family history which that narrative contained. But for the present the following short summary must suffice.

Jack was the youngest of seven children—four boys and three girls. The mother of the family died while Jack was still a very young child, and soon after her death the father took to himself a second wife, whose first important act was to make him turn all his children adrift, excepting Jack, who was then too young to admit of their casting him out without danger to themselves.

One of Jack's brothers enlisted as a soldier and was sent out to India. The second is supposed to be hanging about London. The third was lost sight of years ago.

Of the three girls the eldest got married

at a very early age, and while still quite a young woman found herself left a widow with three or four children. She then married a very poor man, by whom she has had seven or eight more children, the eldest of the first batch being about Jack's age. Both batches of children live with their parents in one small room. The second sister was deaf and dumb, and married a man who was also deaf and dumb. The third sister spent seven years of her youth in a reformatory, and subsequently went to live with the deaf and dumb couple, who had several children. The mother of these children, however, died at a comparatively early age, and the deaf and dumb man married his deceased wife's sister.

Poor Jack related these startling facts to me as if they were mere every-day occurrences, and quite in the ordinary course of things. With regard to himself, he stated that he continued to live with his father and stepmother for some time after their marriage, but that his stepmother beat him and knocked him about so unmercifully that he was compelled to run away. For seven years after that event poor Jack did not know what it was to lie upon a bed.

III.

It was Christmas Eve and Jack was still with me, though considerably transformed in outward appearance from the Jack of our first acquaintance. His hair had been cut short; he had been well scrubbed and washed at the baths, and his old rags had been replaced by a decent suit of clothes.

I had made him my servant—not exactly my valet, but rather what is called a house-boy, to clean boots and knives, open the street door to visitors, scrub floors, and do anything that I might order him to do—with a view to training him, if it were possible, for domestic service. And I found Jack very willing and obliging, and apt to learn. His conduct in the house was most irreproachable. There was nothing sly or impish about him; he was as open as the day; and it was impossible not to like him.

He adapted himself to his changed circumstances with wonderful facility and bore without a murmur, and even with cheerfulness, the restraint which I at first felt it expedient to impose upon him.

But on Christmas Eve Jack asked me, though not without considerable hesitation,

to allow him to go out for a short time, a request with which I readily complied. And as a reward for his good conduct and an encouragement for the future I made him a present of sixpence to spend as he might think fit, only enjoining upon him that he must not stay out after nine o'clock.

That was an unlucky sixpence for Jack and for me. It was the cause of all the trouble which I am now going to relate.

For nine o'clock came, but no Jack. Ten, but no Jack. My mind began to fill with doubt and misgiving, and the confidence which the boy had inspired in me made the disappointment all the harder to bear. What was to be done? Let the ungrateful boy go back



THE BOTTLE.

From a drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

to the streets and try to forget him? or count the spoons, and then go to Bow Street and set the police on his track? I felt morally sure that the spoons were all right so far as Jack was concerned, and that he had taken nothing away with him except the clothes which he stood in and the sixpence which I had given him. But if after having taken the boy into my house, and fed him and nourished him with the same bread as I give to my children, I allowed him to slip out of my hands without making an effort to save him—what then? Sooner or later he would most certainly be enrolled in that large army of outcasts who spend one half of their lives in penal servitude and the



A DETECTIVE SCARE.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

other half in preying upon society. I resolved therefore to go in search of Jack at once and not to rest until I found him, if peradventure he might be found.

* * * *

It was already past ten o'clock, but that is the hour when the streets about this neighbourhood usually begin to wake up, and now, being Christmas Eve, they were full of activity and life and bustle. So after duly considering where I should be most likely to hear tidings of the boy I began my search in Sardinia Street and at "Duke's Coffee House—the Cheapest House in London."

It is not by any means a People's Palace, nor does it pretend to be. It only professes to be cheap, and it is cheap; for there you may have a pint of tea or coffee for a penny, and bread and butter for a penny, and a beef-steak pudding for three-pence. How they manage to make it pay

has always greatly puzzled me; for the coffee shop itself is only a small front room on the ground floor. There are six tables in the room, and each table might accommodate six persons. But I have never seen more than half-a-dozen persons in all at one time in the place—generally only two or three, and these two or three, perhaps, without anything before them on the table except a box of dirty dominoes. There are about a dozen men lodging in the house at half-a-crown a week, but most of them are generally out of work and unable to pay for their lodgings. And the landlord has such a kind heart that he does not like to turn them out, but goes on trusting them, in some cases to the amount of two or three pounds.

At the back of the coffee shop is the kitchen—a room not more than eight or ten feet square, where all the cooking is done at a stove standing out on the floor two or three feet from the wall, and where the dirty plates and cups and saucers are washed. This kitchen is also used by the landlord and his lodgers as their common sitting-room; and as a large fire has to be kept up in the stove in summer as well as in winter, and as the small window looks out upon a small back-yard bounded on the opposite side by stables and towering workshops, some notion may perhaps be formed of the comfort of that little kitchen.

By the courtesy of the proprietor, I have the *entrée* of this kitchen as well as of the coffee shop, and am allowed to go in and out as often as I like, and to remain as long as I like without partaking of any refreshment. And if at any time I want to get hold of a street arab, or a sandwich man, or a "glimmer" (*i.e.* a linkman), or to know something of the real character of any particular member of these fraternities, the proprietor of the Duke's Coffee House is always ready to oblige me, and generally able to do so.

To him, therefore, I now go for news of Jack, but he only shakes his head and mutters, "The ungrateful wagabone!"

I ask him whether he has seen the boy in the course of the evening, but the only reply I get is,

"The ungrateful *wagabone!*"

Or whether he can advise me as to the most likely place to find him. But the reply is again,

"The *un-grate-ful* WAGABONE!" with a tremendous emphasis on the last word.

"Then you haven't seen him, and you cannot tell me where I should be likely to find him?"

"I don't say that, sir; I only says I haven't seen him, but I don't say I couldn't find him for you if I was to try, and if so be as he is to be found. But if I was you, sir, I shouldn't trouble my head about him; I should let him go. He ain't worth troubling about, a chap like that as runs away from

much more likely to ha' been seized by a bobby, if you'll excuse me for a-using of such a word, sir, which it ain't from no fault in my edication, nor because I don't know no better, cos I *does*."

The suggestion that poor Jack might have been "run in," gave me a shock from which it took me some time to recover, and Mr. Blank's "further remarks" on the subject did not tend to reassure me.

"You see, sir," he added, "a boy like that as has spent his life in the streets must be



AFTERNOON TEA IN ST. GILES'S.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

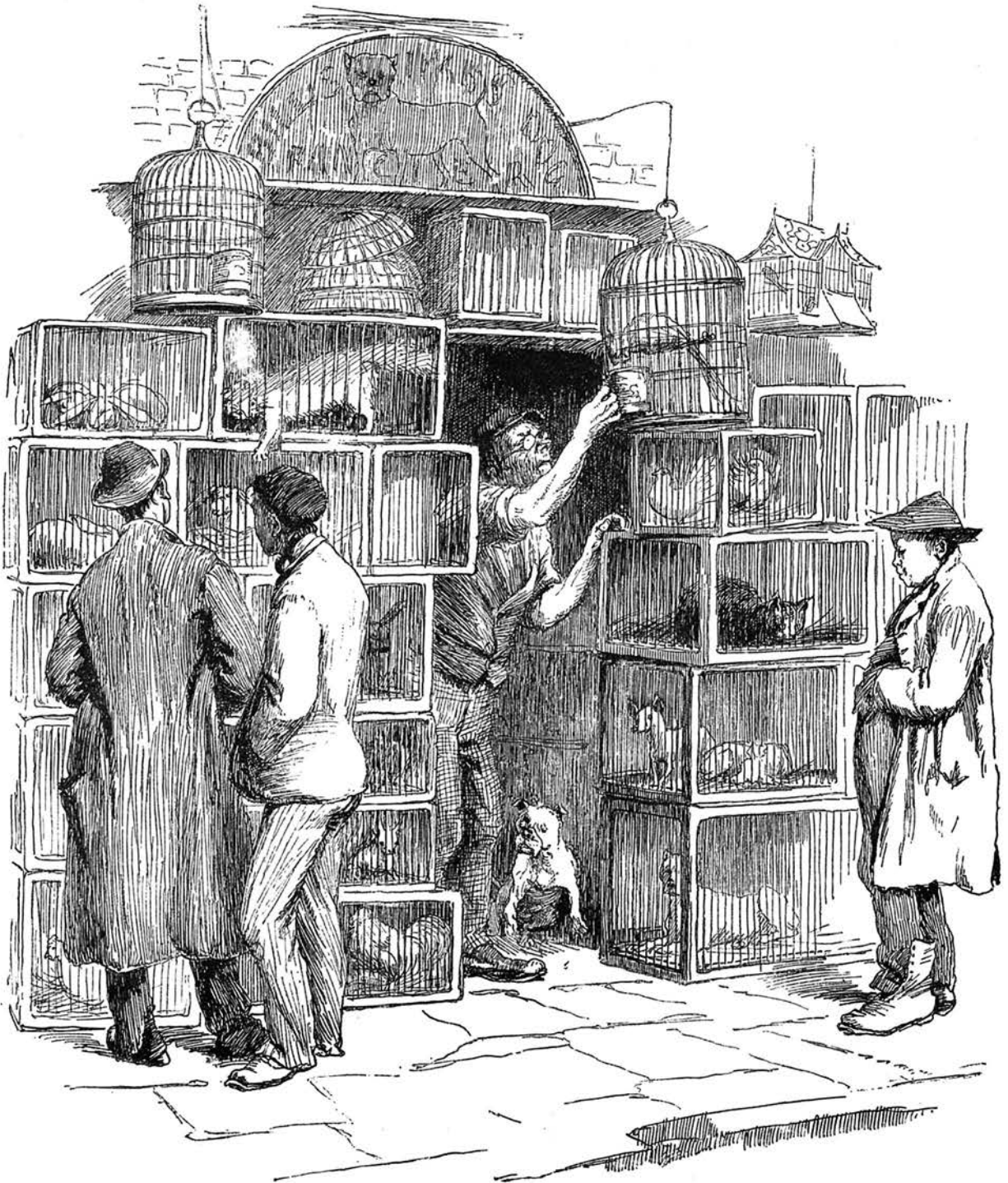
his own bread and butter, and after all that you've done for him, to *my* knowledge—the ungrateful *little* wagabone!"

"But I must find him," I said. "The lad has done nothing wrong, so far as I know, and as to his not having returned home, he may have been prevented by some accident over which he had no control, or he may have been suddenly seized with sickness."

"Seized with sickness—not he! Such chaps as him bain't so easily seized wi' sickness. Nothing won't make 'em sick. He's

pretty well known to the perlice, and if so be as any on 'em sees him in his new toggery and don't know as he's been took in hand by you, why, they'll nat'rally conclood that he stole it, or stole the money to buy it, which is much the same thing, and they'll run him in as sure as a gun before you can say 'Jack Robinson.'"

"Then they'll soon have to run him out again, Mr. Blank, or I'll know the reason why. But I came here to ask if you could help me to find the boy—will you do so?"



A BIRD SHOP.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

“Will I do so? Cert’nly, sir, *and* with the greatest of pleasure; and not another word will I say against the boy, ’cos I see you don’t like it, and I think you are quite right, sir, too, for after all, I don’t reelly know anything against the lad myself ’cept that he was poor and friendless when he fust come to you, which if so be as poverty’s a crime I ought to be the last person in the

world to say so, seeing as how my living depends upon such poor ragamuffins. But although I felt angry when you told me the boy hadn’t come back, I ain’t got no grudge against him, and I tell you what, sir—I’ll go myself with you and try to find him for you.”

This was an offer for which I was most thankful and I at once accepted it. Mr.

Blank then, after whispering a few words to his man, went to get ready, and in a few minutes reappeared fully equipped for our expedition. But before setting out he said,

"There is a boy now in the front room who ought to be able to help us if any one could. He is what you might call a free lance shoe-black, that is to say he is a shoe-black carrying on business on his own account. He don't belong to no brigade and he don't confine himself to any partic'lar spot, but carries on his hoperations here, there, and everywhere, jest as it may suit him or as it pleases his fancy. But on market days he's generally to be seen at certain hours somewhere about Covent Garden, and I'll be bound there's not a street boy for miles around as he don't know pretty well all his movements—Here, Boss! jest step in here for a minute."

These last words were addressed into the public room, whence Boss quickly came to us. He was about sixteen years of age, had a thin face, a keen eye, and a quiet manner, but he did not look a bad boy; and my subsequent knowledge of him confirmed my first favourable impressions.

"Well, Boss," began Mr. Blank, "I s'pose you know this gentleman?"

Boss gave a nod of affirmation.

"And you know little Jack wot he took out o' the streets and made his wallet!"

"Yes, I knows him."

"Have you met him anywhere to-night?"

"I can't say as I have, and I can't say as I haven't."

"Do you think you could find him for us?"

"I shouldn't like to try if he's wanted—I ain't a copper, and I shouldn't care to have a hand in getting any chap copped unless it was for murder, or somethink o' that kind."

I assured Boss that Jack was not "wanted" in the sense in which he understood the word, and that he had nothing to fear from me, as I only wanted to save him from trouble and misery.

"It's all right, Boss," added Mr. Blank. "I'll answer for this gentleman, and you ought not to have a doubt about me seeing wot a friend I've been to all on yer and how I lets yer keep yer block and brushes here free gratis for nothink!"

"All right," replies Boss; "in that case I don't mind telling yer I *have* seed Jack to-night, but I don't know where he be now."

"Where did you see him?"

"In Great Wild Street."

"Where there? and what was he doing there?"

"At a raffle at Old Mother Black's."

"Is the raffling still going on?"

"Oh, yes; at least I guess it is, and will for some hours yet."

"Let's go there at once," suggested Mr. Blank, and away we went, Boss leading.

IV.

"A MERRY Christmas, sir! Are you going up stairs to see granny?"

These words are addressed to me by a child who runs to meet me and takes hold of my hand and trots along by my side, as she always does when she sees me.

She is only three or four years of age, but has been accustomed to take care of herself



A SIESTA.

From a drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

ever since she was born, and to run about the streets at all hours of the night as well as of the day. Therefore there is nothing surprising in seeing her out by herself now, between ten and eleven on Christmas Eve, when nobody thinks of going to bed in these parts, from the oldest granny down to the youngest baby.

This tiny little woman always reminds me of the picture of Little Red Riding Hood in the coloured print which came out some years ago in the Christmas number of *The Illustrated London News* or *The Graphic*—I forget which. Her cheeks are like two ripe apples. But when she talks to you the grave expression of her countenance at once changes, her face and eyes beam with pleasure, and you can see that she is the

merriest little creature in the world, full of fun and laughter.

She lives with her grandmother "up stairs" over the barber's shop, in a small back room on the second floor. "Granny" has not been outside the door of that room during the last fifteen years. And yet she is not bedridden, nor, as far as I can make out, in bad health. Indeed, I have not been able to discover that there is anything the matter with her, either physically or mentally. I always find her sitting in the same chair by the fireside, and when I ask her

couple, whilst living in the midst of the densest and noisiest population in the very heart of London, led a life of almost entire seclusion from the world, and even from their neighbours living in the same house.

Why the old lady should have shut herself up so completely for so many years, refusing even to attempt to cross the threshold of her room door, while she was able to move about the room, has always remained to me a mystery. I used to think that she might perhaps have begun that kind of life merely to keep her husband company, and



THE BARBER'S SHOP.

From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

how she is in health, and how she is getting on, she invariably replies, "Pretty well, thank you, sir."

When I first made her acquaintance her husband was alive, and he was even a greater oddity than his wife. He was always to be found sitting on a shoemaker's bench cobbling shoes, his face towards the window and his aged wife in her usual chair by the fireside, a little way behind him. He never went out except when compelled to go to buy food, or on rare occasions when, with great difficulty, I succeeded in inducing him to attend a service in my church. In short, this old

that the habit of passing the day in her chair at the fireside had so grown upon her that she could not give it up. But she never gave a reason for her seclusion. She will tell you that she has not been outside the room for fifteen years, but nothing more.

The old man, on the contrary, made no secret of his dislike to mix with other people, or of the cause of that dislike. When I tried to persuade him to attend the services of the Church, or to go for a walk, he would sometimes become greatly excited, and, turning round and looking at me full in the face, would exclaim in a tragic voice,



A DOMESTIC DIFFERENCE.

From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

"Look at me, sir! look at me! and then tell me truly whether you do not consider me the most repulsive-looking creature God ever created. My face is so deformed that it frightens the little children, and makes them all run away from me as soon as they see me in the streets; and whenever by chance they see me in church they move away to a distance, and keep staring and pointing at me the whole time I am there. I may truly say with the Psalmist, 'I am become a monster unto many.'"

Poor old man! he was by no means a monster. He was a good husband, sober, industrious, and honest; and he was gentle and kind to his wife and their little granddaughter. But he had had what is called "a stroke," which had paralysed one side of his face, drawn the mouth out of its natural position, and considerably affected his speech. It had also affected his eyes. And so terribly did this deformity prey upon his mind that at last he went mad, and I had to get him removed to the workhouse infirmary, where he only lived a few days. But his aged widow is still sitting in the same spot at her fireside as when I first saw her, and that is the little granddaughter now playing outside the street-door, and who has just wished us "A Merrie Christmas."

Not far from Little Red Riding Hood stands the barber outside his shop door; smoking his pipe and carrying on a conversation by means of the fingers with a deaf-and-dumb man. Not the man already alluded to as having married two of Jack's sisters, though he lives not far off, but another, whose wife was also deaf and dumb.

When I first found them out they were living in the Peabody Buildings between Great Wild Street and Drury Lane, and although their tenement was clean and comfortable, they were in great distress, the wife suffering from some painful and chronic malady, and the husband being out of work.

As I was unacquainted with the deaf-and-dumb alphabet our conversation had to be carried on in writing, in which I found the man fairly proficient. Both he and his wife were advanced in age, and he informed me that that circumstance in conjunction with his being deaf and dumb made him fear that no one would ever again employ him. Still neither he nor his wife complained of their lot either by look or gesture. Indeed, as far as I could judge they seemed to bear it with great fortitude and even with cheerfulness. Whenever we met in the streets, as we often did, the poor old fellow would always greet me with a pleasant smile.

One day, however, when I met him in the street he stopped me and made unusual signs of distress. First he shook his head vehemently; then he raised his hand to his hat and touched with one finger a band of crape which I now saw he was wearing on it. Then he pointed in the direction of the place where he lived, then again at his hat. Then he raised his two hands as if in despair, and shook his head, and groaned, and so went away. And I then knew that he had lost his poor old mate—his wife—his well-beloved—and in her had lost all that was dear to him—all that was worth living for.

He is now living quite alone, and this will be the first Christmas he will have passed for forty years without the companionship of her who knew so well how to sympathise with him. See! he is now making the very same signs to the barber, and although the latter, who can talk to him with his fingers, seems to be doing his best to cheer him, it is of no avail. The old man points significantly at the crape on his hat, and makes a despairing gesture with his hands. Then he goes away to pass Christmas in the solitude and unbroken silence of his room.

But as he is leaving, Little Red Riding Hood, who knows him and has been watching him, steps forward in front of him and stops him for a moment, and taking hold of his hands looks up into his face and says in the sweetest tones,

"Christmas is coming!"

V.

MESSEURS BLANK and BOSS are impatient of episode and eager for the chase. "If we waste any more time," says Blank, "the raffle will be over and our bird flown before we get a sight of him." So we hasten towards the dwelling-place of old Mother Black, who keeps a sweetstuff shop in the neighbourhood of Great Wild Street. But when we arrive there it is only to find that the shop is already closed.

"Too late!" exclaims Mr. Blank.

"I'm not so sure o' that—wait a minute till I sees," replies Boss, who then applies his ear to the keyhole. Then after a short pause he says,—"Yes, you be right, they's not there, there's nobody in the shop now barrin' the old tom cat and *he's* sure to be in the oven a keepin' of hisself warm. But I thinks I knows where they is. Foller me!"

Boss then opens the house door and leads us through a dark passage and down a very

narrow and dark staircase into the regions underground. He leads the way down with as much confidence and ease as if the place belonged to him and he had been living there all his life. But on our way down he stops for a moment and says,

"It's all right, they've come down here and they're now at it in the back cellar. I'll jest walk in and see whether the cove you wants is there; they won't take no notice o' me, 'cos I be one o' theirselves like, and old Mother Black 'll think I'se only come to try my luck again and put more pennies into



A TRAVELLING TOY-SHOP.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

her greedy old pawr. But you, sir, and Mr. Blank had best not show yerselves. There's a old pal o' mine, a shoeblack, a livin' in the front cellar, I'll jest take you in there and you can wait there till I comes back to yer. You'll be quite welcome, I can answer for that."

We are now in UNDERGROUND LONDON, but at the foot of the staircase the darkness is so intense that it almost stupefies all the senses. Then before we have had time to carry out Boss's suggestion, the door of the back cellar (euphemistically called the back

kitchen) unexpectedly opens, revealing a scene which it would be difficult to portray.

It is not a large place; it might be sixteen feet by twelve; but it is certainly not more; and the top of the room (for it has no ceiling) is so low that a man of six feet could hardly stand upright in it. And yet there are about fifty boys and girls of all ages, from sixteen or eighteen down to five or six, crowded together there at the present moment.

In the middle of the room stands a small table at which sits an old crone who looks like one of the witches in *Macbeth*. On the table before her burns a solitary candle which throws out a flickering light, just enough to reveal the ghastliness of the scene and the revolting features of its presiding genius.

Between her dirty, fleshless hands the crone holds an inverted hat from which the boys and girls around her fish out in turns small folded pieces of paper, which they open and look at with dismay and then fling away with a curse. Then when a little girl is declared to be the winner of the prize there is a general murmur of disapproval, and the word "cheating" is freely used, and there is much fierce excitement, for the lucky little girl appears to be the old woman's grandchild, and this is the third or fourth prize she has won to-night.

With the cunning of a skilful tactician, however, old Mother Black manages to quell the rising indignation by producing a counter excitement. She brings out of her pocket a set of dice which she immediately begins to rattle in the dice-box, crying,

"Now then, my dears, here's another chance for you—who'll try their luck and win five bob's worth for threepence? Now then, my dears, who'll try? who'll try? Now's your time.—Double fives wins, the others loses, ties plays over again. Prize, another walking-stick three foot long, as thick as my arm, and all made of the best sugar. Will cut up into a hundred pieces, each well worth a penny, and a hundred pence is eight and fourpence. Now then, my dears, come and try your luck. Faint heart never won a fair lady nor a handsome lover. Now then, twenty players only and the game's on. Only twenty threepences and up goes the donkey!"

Old Mother Black evidently knows how to manage these poor children. The bait again takes. The passion for gambling is already so strongly developed in them that for the moment it overrules their feelings of disappointment and resentment against the person who is cheating them out of their

money. The rattling of the dice is like sweet music to their ears; it charms and fascinates them against their will. They eagerly crowd around the little table, and old Mother Black again reaps a rich harvest of pennies.

But is Jack there? Well, that I have not as yet been able to ascertain. For during the short time we have been making these observations, we have been obliged to remain concealed in the dark corridor outside the cellar, and Boss has not left us. He tells

VI.

THE man who, in answer to a peculiar knock and a password from Boss, opens to us the door of the front cellar and lets us in, is not a man of prepossessing appearance or manners. But neither is he of the bull-dog type. He is simply of the lowest type that could be found or imagined in the form of man. The intellectual and moral faculties seem to be absolutely wanting in his com-



THEIR CHRISTMAS DINNER.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

us that before he joins old Mother Black's company it will be necessary for us to go with him into the front cellar and there await his return, in order to avoid the risk of discovery, as Jack, if faced by us in the presence of such companions, would be sure to lack the moral courage to leave them, and would probably brave it out or run away, and as, moreover, he, Boss, if suspected of treachery, would most surely be pursued by the gang, in which case his life would not be worth a farthing rushlight.

position, which consequently appears to be made up entirely of animal and idiot, the animal part being not unlike that of the gorilla, only not so strong—the gorilla wasted and emaciated by disease.

By profession he is a shoeblick, as Boss has already informed us; and his clothes and face bear witness to his calling. So also does the room in which he lives. The only furniture in it is a small table, two old orange-boxes for seats, and a sort of bed, which is nothing but a heap of rags black-

ened with dirt, and spread over a number of other old orange-boxes turned upside down.

On that bed and under those dirty rags lies a woman whom the shoeblack calls his wife, though Boss does not appear to have been aware of her existence until now.

The woman has not retired to rest for the night; she has only just jumped into the heap of rags, on hearing us at the door, to conceal from us her appearance; for the shoeblack has pawned her boots and stockings and her only gown for the price of a bottle of gin for Christmas.

Her face only is visible, and it is so dirty



A POLITICIAN.

From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

that it can hardly be distinguished from the heap of rags by the dim light of the tallow-candle. It is nevertheless a remarkable face, and was once remarkably beautiful, and as soon as I catch a glimpse of it I at once recognise in it the face of a woman whom I have seen before. And it is quite evident that the recognition is mutual, for as soon as she sees me she utters a wailing cry and hides her face in the heap of rags.

Let me tell you how I made her acquaintance and what I know of her. It is only a scrap of her history, but that scrap is enough to give us a pretty clear insight into her past career.

One Sunday night in the middle of winter,

three years ago, I was informed in the vestry that a woman—I think they said a lady—who had been present during the service was still in the church and desired to see me.

Her object in wishing to see me was one with which I am very familiar; she was in distress and wanted me to help her. Nothing could be more commonplace. Women in distress come to us every day in the week. But any one could have seen at a glance that this particular woman was not one of the common herd of either professional or amateur beggars. Her clothes were common enough—nothing could be much worse. She had scarcely a shoe to her foot. But her language and manners were those of a well-bred lady, and her face still looked as if it had once been eminently beautiful. Moreover, she was gentle and modest in her demeanour. She did not begin by saying that she had “seen better days.” She simply said that she was in great distress, without food or shelter, and that it was through her own fault, her own most grievous fault—that, in short, she had brought it all upon herself.

I gave her a trifle—nothing to speak of, but just enough to get a little food and a lodging for the night. I also acceded to her request that she might be allowed to call at my house on the following day, though I never expected to see her again. She did call, however, at the appointed hour, and I asked a lady of experience in dealing with women to see her for me and to let me know what she thought of her.

The lady was much taken with her and pleaded for her most earnestly.

“I am afraid,” she said, “from what she has told me that she has not always been prudent and good, but she seems to be very penitent, poor thing! and to have suffered very much. And I believe her to be a lady, that is, I believe she must have been brought up as a lady, for such manners as hers are not acquired late in life. She says she is an artist and could get work at some shop if she only had decent clothes to go there. Suppose we try her and give her a chance? I dare say I could find a few things that would do to set her up in the way of clothes and boots, and then there would only be her food and lodgings for a week or so. In that time we should be able to see whether her case is one we could effectually help or not, and we need not entrust her with any money.”

This suggestion was carried out. Board and lodgings were provided for her, and the lady gave her some of her own clothes, and

amongst other things a very good ulster. And in the course of two or three days she came to us, looking very cheerful and nice, and informed us that she had been successful in finding work and was going to enter upon it the next day, which statement proved quite true.

For some months she continued to do well, working for the same employers, attending church regularly, and giving great satisfaction to those who had helped her to recover herself. Then to our great grief she suddenly disappeared and I failed to get any tidings of her. When I went to see her late employers they told me simply that she had left them and that they did not know what had become of her, and when I asked the cause of her leaving, they only said that she was very clever and might have earned a good deal of money, but was too fond of ardent spirits.

Look at her now! then look at the fellow she calls her husband!

* * * *

At this moment Boss returns with the news that Jack was no longer at the lottery, that he went away about half-past nine or ten o'clock with two other boys, and that he was afterwards seen by one of the company with the same two boys outside "The Black Jack" in Portsmouth Street.

Thereupon we take leave of the shoeblack and his unhappy partner in misery. She, however, before we go, raises herself into a sitting posture on her heap of rags and produces from under the rags a much-worn garment, which she holds up to me, saying,

"There, sir, look at that! That is the only thing I have left in the world to remind me of better and happier days. It is the ulster your good lady gave me and which I used to wear when I attended your church. It is the only thing I value in the world, and although I have parted with everything else that would fetch a penny or two, I have never once allowed this to go out of my possession even for a day. I have taken my only dress off my back and my shoes off my feet and allowed them to be carried off to the pawnshop, which accounts for my being now in this heap of rags, but I will suffer death sooner than part with this last memento of one who when all the world spurned and shunned me, took me by the hand and spoke in gentle, loving tones to me and treated me more as if I had been a sister than the unworthy creature I am. Tell her this—tell her this from me, sir. Tell her that I am as bad as bad can be, but that I am not ungrateful—to her. Tell her that I have at last fallen down to the very

lowest depths of degradation and misery, from which I shall never again arise. I shall never see her again, never again hear her gentle, soothing voice; but tell her that in the very depths of the hell into which I have already fallen and which I have created for myself, I shall always think of her kindness with feelings of the most profound gratitude. Sir, I thank you for the honour of your visit, and I wish you and yours a happy Christmas!"

Ah me! let us hasten away from these subterranean caverns. There is a strong smell of brimstone here, and it makes me feel sick and faint, and causes a choking sensation in the throat. Let us go up again to the surface of the earth.

VII.

RETURNING through Sardinia Street and the ancient archway, we find ourselves again in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and going round the right-hand corner we pass "The White House," where Charles the Second's favourite, the notorious Duchess of Portsmouth, once resided, though it is said by some chroniclers to have been built by Inigo Jones for the Earl of Portsmouth. Then we enter Portsmouth Street, on the left-hand side of which stands "The Old Curiosity Shop" of Charles Dickens, with the "Black Jack" public house almost facing it. This public house was formerly called "The Jump," to commemorate a desperate leap said to have been made by Jack Shepherd from a window of the first floor when escaping from his pursuers.

I wonder what brought *my* poor Jack down in this particular direction, and to such an out-of-the-world corner as this? Can it be that the old haunts of his notorious namesake have a fascination for him also? that he has made Jack Shepherd his patron saint? and that he looks upon this public house as his shrine? These are very uncomfortable thoughts, but not at all improbable; for although my poor Jack cannot read, many of his former companions can, and the only literature with which they are acquainted is the literature which portrays as heroes highway robbers and thieves and murderers.

But Jack is not now at "The Black Jack," though we are told that three lads, each one of whom answers to his description, have been seen in the bar during the evening.

Boss thereupon suggests Clare Market as a not unlikely place to find him in at such a time. So we pass on to the bottom of

Portsmouth Street, where we turn round to the right and enter Gilbert Passage, over which there is another antique-looking archway or gallery. This passage contains several old curiosity shops and openings into other narrow passages leading to Sheffield Street on the north side, and Clement's Inn on the south. Indeed there is quite a maze of narrow passages round this particular spot, and a stranger losing his way here at night might find it in more senses than one, a very awkward maze to get out of.

gaily decorated with holly and mistletoe and a variety of other things peculiar to the season. Nor are the hucksters and "costers" one whit behind the shopkeepers in their display of Christmas decorations; on the contrary, they excel them in show if not in excellence. For all along the street there are two rows of stalls and barrows, one row on either side, and very many of them contain nothing else but evergreens or apples and oranges, or such things as bon-bons, crackers, banners, Chinese lanterns, and air-



SELLING NUTS.

From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

From the darkness of Gilbert Passage we emerge into Vere Street, and cross over into Clare Market.

The street is so crowded with people and stalls and costermongers' barrows that it is impossible to move along except at a very slow pace. We have therefore ample time and food for observation. And a more interesting scene, to my mind, could scarcely be found.

The shop windows are all ablaze with light, from naked flaming gas-jets, and all

balloons. True, there are many costers' barrows loaded with vegetables—potatoes, cabbages, turnips, carrots, parsnips, and oh! such quantities of onions, and some of them so large! and many with fish. But these displays of the more homely articles of consumption do not in any way mar the scene. They add a charm to it. They proclaim the eternal union of the useful with the beautiful. They make one feel that the land must be overflowing with plenty. And hark! the vendors of all the different commodities, both

the useful and the beautiful, are inviting the people to come and help themselves—to take their choice of the very best, and as much as they like, and not to trouble themselves about payment, as money is no object to the vendors—they have already as much as they want, and they have merely come with their goods to the market to make their friends a Christmas present or two. It is Christmas time and they want all their friends to have a merry Christmas. And if they ask a nominal price for their goods instead of giving them away “free gratis for nothing,” as they would like to do, why, it is only out of consideration for their friends’ feelings, and to avoid the possibility of wounding their honest pride.

The trade in shellfish is carried on in this neighbourhood as a distinct branch of merchandise. Not in close shops, which are very inimical to the welfare of fishes, but in the open air, on barrows, where, if any of them are still alive, they may, if they like, come out of their shells and enjoy freely such sports and pastimes as are accessible to fish out of water.

The persons who own or hire these barrows are vulgarly termed “costermongers” or “costers,” but they invariably style themselves “general dealers.” Why “general,” if they only deal in fish or fruit or vegetables, or any other particular commodity? Because they do not confine their dealings to any particular commodity, but deal in anything which they can buy and sell to the greatest advantage. Thus the man whose barrow is loaded with fish to-day may have been selling vegetables yesterday, or *vice versa*.

But there are certain costers who stick to one particular branch of business; for example, those who prepare and sell such things as sheep’s-trotters, or black-puddings (a mysterious preparation made out of the blood and internal organs of animals), or rock-candy, or baked potatoes, or roasted chestnuts; or who keep a coffee-stall, or an oyster-stall with vinegar and pepper ready at hand, so that the oysters may be eaten on the spot. But with the oysters may generally be found various other kinds of shell-fish, in their season, especially cockles, mussels, periwinkles, and whelks. Shrimps are also held in high esteem in these parts, and are largely dealt in by the costers when

in season. They are generally sold in small paper packets, holding half-a-pint, and are either carried home for the family tea, or consumed at leisure during the course of a promenade in the streets, and the shells, after having been well sucked, are gracefully chucked over the consumer’s shoulder, or playfully thrown at the noses of friends.

A large trade is also done in nuts, which the poor are very fond of, for the same reason probably as they are partial to pork pies, veal-and-ham pies, and pickled pork. All these things are eminently “satisfying.” Make a good hearty meal of nuts or pork



A DEALER IN BALLOONS.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

pie or pickled pork, and you are not likely to want any more food for at least the next forty-eight hours.

VIII.

BUT Jack is not there—nor is he to be found in the Coal Yard, Drury Lane, whither we are directed by one of Boss’s friends in Clare Market. So from Drury Lane we wend our way through Parker Street and Macklin Street, visiting the fourpenny and threepenny lodging-houses, and then finally we make a halt in the Seven Dials.

Most of the shops are still open, and if we had time we should find some of them well worth a visit, especially the bird-fanciers’ shops. Some of these contain not only large collections of birds, but also of other live



THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE OYSTER SEASON.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

creatures, including dogs, cats, white mice, white rats, rabbits and guinea pigs.

The seven streets which converge at the Dials are all more or less in a lively state, and Little Earl Street is excessively lively; for in this street there is always a market, and the market is now at its height.

There is also a good deal of wild revelry going on all around the Dials; and in the open space in the centre the entertainments are of a very mixed character.

There is Cheap Jack, a smart and uncommonly sharp-looking young man, with rings on his fingers and a red muffler round his neck. Before him stands his barrow of trumpery, which he praises in magniloquent language, at the same time announcing his intention to give the things away, as it is Christmas time, for a mere song. And, strange to relate, these poor people buy his wares almost as fast as he can sell them.

There also, not far from Cheap Jack, is the quack doctor, telling the people of the wonderful properties of his drugs and of the marvellous cures wrought by them. He

holds up a box of lozenges which he says will cure any and every disease under the sun; and occasionally he swallows, or pretends to swallow, some of his own drugs in order to prove their harmlessness. Him too they listen to with gaping mouths and attentive ear. And many of them buy his wares.

Mounted on a chair in the midst of another little crowd of people stands a preacher preaching to them in a voice loud enough to be heard by ten thousand people. His language is anything but refined; he is quite ignorant of grammar; and he boasts of never having had a day's schooling. And yet he seems to be well acquainted with his Bible; and he speaks with an ease and fluency which would put to shame many a highly educated parson. He relates to his audience how he was at one time the greatest blackguard that ever stepped in and out of the Seven Dials; and after publicly making this honest though shameful confession, he pauses for a moment and apostrophises himself thus:—

“Was you happy then, Dick, when you was a prize-fighter, and a drunkard, and a wife-beater, and starved your wife and children, and a blasphemer, and a scoffer at religion, and a reviler of all that is good—was you happy then, Dick? Now confess the truth, old boy! And with my 'and on my 'art I answers, No, Dick, no! a thousand times No! You must confess, Dick, that you was the most miserable chap on the face o' God's earth.

“But what about now, says you, and I orfen axes myself the same question, ‘What about now, Dick?’ Well, my friends, I only needs to tell you that now I am commonly known by the name of ‘Happy Dick,’ and Happy Dick I *ham!*”

Then he tells them he will sing them a song, and without any accompaniment, he begins. At first some of the audience begin to jeer and to mock; but the preacher, not in the least daunted, goes on with his singing, and as he has a good voice and sings well, and the tune is a lively one, he soon carries his audience with him. And I pass on, not without a certain amount of admiration and respect for Happy Dick.

At some distance from Happy Dick another orator is holding forth to another group of people on total abstinence. He denounces in very fierce language all persons who call themselves Christians and are not total abstainers. He doesn't care a straw, he says, whether they are Methodists, Independents, Presbyterians, Baptists, Bible Christians, Catholics, or Church of England; if they are not total abstainers from all intoxicating liquors, they are all on the high road to perdition—yes, “*as sure as eggs is eggs!*”

In the middle of another little crowd stands a lecturer of a different stamp from either of the other two. He too, like Happy Dick, is lecturing the people on the subject of religion, but not with a view to making them happy. He is going to prove to them, he says, that they in common with all mankind, or the greater portion, have hitherto been the victims of a delusion. He is come to set them free—free from the tyranny of priestcraft—free from the tyranny of kings and queens—free from the tyranny of a bloated aristocracy—free from the tyranny of grasping capitalists—free— But at this point a police-constable steps forward and requests the speaker to “shut up,” and as he refuses, the constable, who is joined by a couple of his brother officers, walks off with him in custody, and the liberator is locked up; a sad example of the irony of destiny.

IX.

THE hour is very late. It is past midnight. The bells from a hundred church-towers are ringing in Christmas-morn. But no further tidings of poor Jack. I fear we must give up the pursuit, at least for to-night. But before we go away from these saddening scenes I feel tempted to have one more look through the market which is still going on in Little Earl Street, and will probably last till mid-day.



WHO'LL BUY ONE—FOR SIXPENCE.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

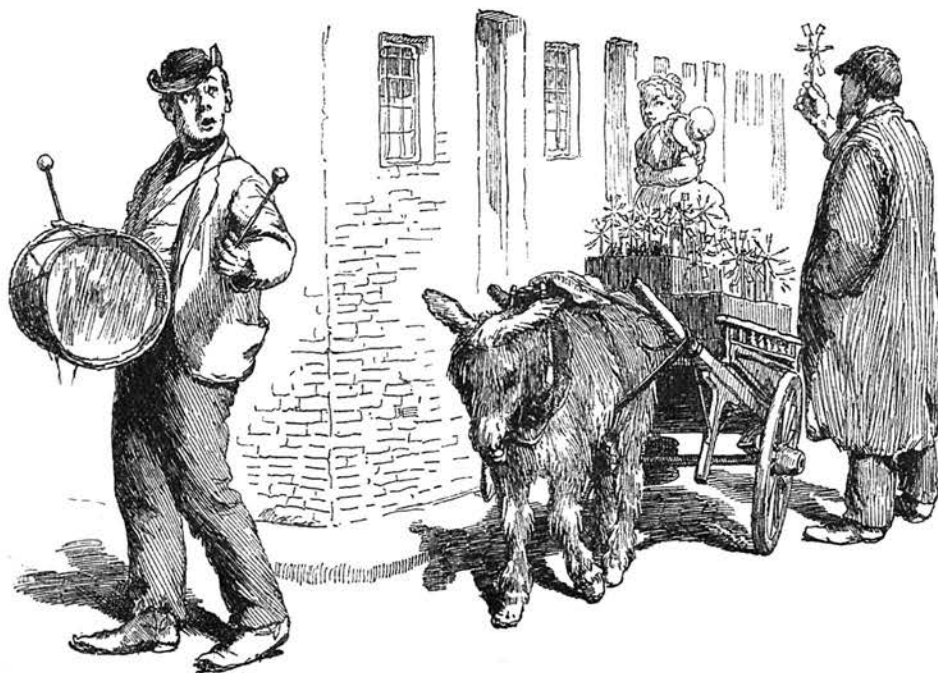
The majority of purchasers in this market are women, some of them accompanied by their husbands, some with infants at their breasts. Here are also tiny little girls with weird-looking faces peering out through their mothers' bonnets and shawls. Some of these children have had to earn the Christmas dinner for their sick mothers and hungry brothers and sisters by selling evergreens during the day, and are now laying out their small earnings with as much shrewdness and forethought as a financier on 'Change could display in investing his thousands. Others, both young and old, are still trying to earn

a Christmas dinner by singing doleful dirges, or quaint carols, or sentimental or comic songs, in different parts of the market.

Near the end of the street, next to the Five Dials, stands a public-house called The Bunch of Grapes, and in front of that house there is quite a large gathering of men, women, and children, who seem to be much interested in some performance going on in the midst of them. Every now and then they clap their hands and make the street ring with shouts of applause, as if they were in the gallery of a theatre witnessing the performance of some popular actor. And during the intervals of silence on the part of

ain't the most unlikeliest place in the world to find little Jack in—is it?

“It's the *most* likeliest,” answers Boss; “Jack's uncommon fond o' theayters, and singing and acting and such like, and as he can't very ofen get the money to pay for 'arf-price in the gallery he follers about all the people as performs in the streets, sometimes for hours an' hours together. And I 'appens to know as Mad Nell was allays a special favourite of hisn, and that he followed her about so much that she took notice of him, and was very kind to him, and used sometimes to give him money to buy wittles—when she had any—I shouldn't be



PENNY WINDMILLS.

From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

the crowd we can plainly distinguish the voice of a woman singing and reciting after the manner of opera singers and celebrated actors and actresses.

“It is Mad Nell!” exclaims Blank.

“Yes, it's Mad Nell,” echoes Boss.

“I should know her voice among a thousand,” adds Blank.

“It's a very fine voice,” remarks Boss patronisingly, and with the air of an experienced theatrical critic. “Some folks says it's the finest voice in Lunnon, and that if she'd only a-stuck to the stage she might easily a made a large fortune. As it is, it's *my* opinion as she licks the best of 'em all to fits.”

“I say, Boss,” quoth Mr. Blank, “this

a bit surprised if we was to find little Jack here—suppose we has a look?”

Hereupon, after agreeing as to a rendezvous, we disperse amongst the crowd, and I manage to get near enough to the centre to see and hear all that is going on, my rough overcoat being a sufficient safeguard against the danger of attracting attention to the fact of my being a clergyman.

To see any young woman under such circumstances cannot at any time be otherwise than painful to any with a grain of pity left in his heart; but to see in such circumstances a young girl like Nell, with beautiful features and talents which might have been trained to excellence is exceedingly painful. But however much I may object to the

exhibition I have no right to interfere, and the object I have in view is, I trust, a sufficient apology for my presence at such a scene. It is only due to Nell, however, to state that there is never anything absolutely bad in her public performances, either in word or action, as will be seen from her present performance, which consists of a series of harmless songs and buffooneries; imitations of different characters, and of popular actors and actresses, and more especially of opera singers.

Of her origin and early history very little is known except from her own statements which are far from pretentious. She lays claim to being born of respectable parentage but says her father died when she was very young. Her father was Irish, her mother English, and she herself was born in London. When still quite a child Nell had a passion for the stage and wanted to become an actress; and as her mother objected she ran away from home. She succeeded in getting on the stage, but in what capacity is involved in mystery. She is very reticent on that point. But whatever it was, her chances of rising were destroyed by her waywardness and wilfulness, her extreme independence of manner, and probably also by her defective education. She once managed to get an engagement of some kind in Drury Lane Theatre, but her short-lived success was achieved at a music-hall in the East-end, which is now a theatre. There she unfortunately acquired a fondness for strong drink, which, acting upon her excitable temperament, made her, while under its influence, as mad as a March hare. Her natural eccentricity of character, however, is sufficiently marked to have acquired for her the appellation by which she is generally known in St. Giles's, where she lives in one of the poorest streets. But in her case the nickname is never applied in malice; it is more of a pet name than anything else, for Nell is very popular among the poorer classes, and to a certain extent even respected, for this reason, that while mixing freely with all sorts of characters, and performing for the amusement of all sorts of company, in the street, in the market, or in the bar of a public-house, she will never allow a liberty to be taken

with her—she is “always the lady,” according to the popular verdict.

A very poor lady, to judge from her dress, or rather from the old ulster which conceals her dress, or the absence of a dress, and the boots which do not conceal her feet, and the black hat which is stuck on one side of her head and decorated with red feathers. But genius is a thing which rises superior to clothes and will assert its presence in spite of rags. Nay, it will sometimes turn its very rags into a channel of fun. Here is an example before us. This poor girl is at the present moment personating the character of



RIVALS IN THE CONFECTIONARY LINE.
From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

a fop, or what is called a “masher,” and raises roars of laughter by the supercilious airs she assumes, the manner in which she struts to and fro, and the ridiculous attitude in which she poses herself when she stands still, with a reversed cane under her right arm, while the thumb of her left hand is stuck in one of the tatters in her ulster near the arm-pit.

Then she does a *pas seul* or two, after the manner of the Taglioni or the Vestris of the day. Then she does a few steps of an Irish jig and of a Scotch reel, after which she declares that she cannot and will not dance any more to please the Lord Chancellor.

So the crowd, finding that Mad Nell will not contribute to its further amusement, disperses, and she is left standing alone. Then a half-drunken ruffian goes up to her and attempts to put his arm round her waist, but lithe as a panther she eludes his grasp and at the same time deals him a stinging slap in the face. The cowardly ruffian thereupon "makes for her" with closed fists, but as he is about to strike her, he himself is knocked down.

"Come along, Nellie," says Blank, whose brawny arm has defended her, "we'll protect you.—You know me and Boss, and this gentleman is a friend."

"I return you many thanks," replies Nell, "but I don't stand in need of any protection; I am quite able to defend myself.—Good night and a merry Christmas to you all, gentlemen."

"Stop, stop, Nellie, we want your help if you don't want ours."

"What help can such as you want from a poor girl like me? sure you are after mocking me."

"This is what we want, Nellie," says Blank; "you know little Jacky who always used to follow you about so, to listen to your singing, and you know how he was taken in hand some short time ago by the gentleman who lives near me? Well, this is the gentleman and he's in great trouble because little Jack has been led away by some bad fellows and can't anywhere be found. And now I want you to find him for us; for if anybody can you can; and if you'll only do it and bring him back, you'll be doing the boy a great service, and you sha'n't be the loser by it."

Nell is indignant at the hint about a reward, but professes the greatest interest in little Jack's welfare and ends by assuring me that if the boy is to be found she will find him and bring him back to me. And she goes away muttering, "I cannot save myself, but I may be able to save that poor poor boy, and if I can I will."

And with swift foot Mad Nell disappears in one of the many dark labyrinths that intersect one another at this point; and Boss goes off in another direction towards the lodging-house at which he puts up; and Mr. Blank goes somewhere else; and I am left alone.

* * * * *

Christmas Day comes, but I hear no tidings of Jack, and I am unable to go in quest of him, for I am detained at home by other duties which have a prior claim upon my time. Still, poor Jack is never out of

my mind—I see him again reduced to misery and want, feeding upon the husks of the swine. Alas! poor Jack!

* * * * *

Christmas Day passes, and the day after Christmas, still no tidings of Jack. But on the third day a young woman comes to the door of my house looking so pale and haggard that she frightens the servant who opens the door. It is Mad Nell; and when I see her standing there alone and looking so grave and worn, I fear she has only come to bring me bad news. But she will not tell me anything; she only begs me to go with her at once into Little Wild Street—an obscure street at the back of these premises, and chiefly inhabited by very poor Irish people. There she points out a doorstep, on which I see poor Jack lying fast asleep! "There!" she says, "I have kept my promise; and now, as I haven't had a wink of sleep since the night before Christmas Eve, I must run away and leave the boy in your hands. But you won't be too hard upon him, will you, sir? No, thank you; no money for saving poor little Jacky—I don't do things of this sort for money. Thank you all the same." And she ran away like a March hare.

I must leave Jack to tell his own story.

X.

JACK'S ACCOUNT OF THE WAY IN WHICH HE SPENT CHRISTMAS.

"Yes, sir, that was all the money I 'ad—that sixpunce wot you gived me on Christmas Eve—not a blessed farden besides, and that was sixpunce too much, cos it didn't do me no good."

"That is quite evident, Jack. But I want you now to tell me how you spent Christmas—how you spent the sixpunce does not much matter, for that I gave you to spend as you liked."

"Well, sir, I'll tell you sackly all as I did from the time I left the house till I was fetched back. But please, sir, I must begin with the sixpunce, cos it was all of that that I stopped out, and all that follered arter was in consequence of the sixpunce like."

"Very well, then, tell me first how you spent the sixpunce, and then what you did with yourself—where you went to, where you slept, how you lived, and who were your companions."

“Well, sir, arter you gived me that six-punce you gived me leave to go out to spend the evening an’ I goes. Then when I gets outside who should I meet in the street but two boys, one was a chap called Crocodile, the other a chap they calls Ginger, cos he’s got red ’air. They was both a waitin’ for me outside, and as soon as they catches sight o’ me up they comes, and Ginger says, says he, ‘Let’s go for a walk!’ All right, says I, where shall us go to? says I. ‘There’s going to be a raffle at old mother Black’s,’ says Crocodile, ‘let’s go there,’ and away we goes.”

didn’t like one another and had parted company long ago, so that you can see down into the cellar down below, on’y there’s nofin to see, cos it’s too dark. And then you see, sir, there’s no winder to the cellar, on’y a bit o’ gratin, so the cellar is allays full o’ wind, and the noise it makes down there sumtimes is horful, and the way it comes up whistling through the floor is horful. They calls it the ‘devil’s bellus,’ and that’s wot makes the cat get into the hoven.”

“But is there no fire in the grate?”

“Well, sometimes there is, and sometimes there ain’t. But old Mother Black never ’as



GINGER HAS AN IDEA.

From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

“It ain’t a very comfor’ble room at the best o’ times, cos it’s allays horful cold or horful ’ot. It was horful ’ot on the night o’ the raffle. But gen’ally when it ain’t full of boys and gals it’s so horful cold that old mother Black’s cat gets into the hoven to warm hissself and keep out o’ the wind.”

“Are the windows broken then?”

“Oh, no, sir, the windows isn’t broke, not the window as is in the shop, cos then the toffy would soon all be gone, but mother Black takes good care o’ that. But the floor o’ the shop is all full of holes and cracks and long chinks. The planks all look as if they

much fire in the grate, not enough to keep the cat away, on’y jest enough to keep ’im warm and snug like.”

“Well, I should now like to hear something about that raffle that took place in her shop on Christmas Eve. What was the prize for which you raffled?”

“Ah! it were a splendid prize, sir, and no mistake. A full-size walkin’-stick! But the raffle wasn’t all the time in the shop, before I left they all went down into the back cellar.”

“A full-size walking-stick? And do you mean to say you were such an idiot as to

stake your money on a walking-stick, with only sixpence in your pocket? And is it possible that a number of boys and girls could have been found silly enough to throw their money away upon the chance of getting an article that would have been of no use to them? Pray, what did you intend to do with the walking-stick, supposing you had won it?"

"Eat it."

"Eat it? Eat a walking-stick?"

"Yes, sir, eat it. You see, sir, it wasn't a common walkin'-stick; it were all made o' sweet-stuff."

"Oh! and how much was the stake? What did the old woman make you pay for your chance?"

"Thruppunce apiece."

"And how many paid into the raffle?"

"About twenty in all."

"So old Mrs. Black got about five shillings for her piece of sugar-stick, or whatever it was?"

"Well, sir, she got about twenty thrupences for the walkin'-stick, and about twenty more for a box o' bong-bongs, and both was won by a little girl as lives with old Mother Black."

"What a lucky little girl! And did you put into the second raffle?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I put into two, and lost the sixpence you gived me."

"Well! and then——?"

"Well, when we come away from old Mother Black's, I finds it nigh upon ten o'clock, and I says to Crocodile and Ginger, 'I dunno wot I shall do now; nine o'clock is my time, and now it's ten, and they allays locks up at our place at ten. And if I'm locked out, what shall I do? I 'aven't got even as much as would pay for a bed in a three-penny lodgin'-house,' says I."

"Then Ginger he scratches his head and looks as if he was tryin' to think a bit like, and then he ups with 'is 'ead sudden like, and says, 'Let's go for a walk.'"

"Then you thinks I is shet hout?" says I. 'In coorse you is,' says ee.

"So with that we all three makes a start, and goes fust down round by the 'Black Jack,' then through Clare Market, then up Drury Lane, and through Museum Street into Oxford Street. Then we comes to a dead stop, and looks at one another not knowin' which way to go. 'What shall we do now?' says I, and Ginger considers a bit agen and then says, just in the same solemn voice as before, 'Let's go for a walk!' and with that ee turns upon 'is 'eels and sets hoff towards 'Obun and me and Crocodile follows arter, and we never stops till we comes to Strat-

ford. It was then nigh upon four o'clock in the morning—Christmas mornin'."

"Well, and when you got to Stratford, what did you do there?"

"Oh, at Stratford, we 'eard a band a-playin' in the streets. It was Father King's band. I knowed it by the big drummer, cos ee's a scavenger, and lives in St. Giles's."

"And who is Father King?"

"Oh, Father King he belongs to the people over the way. Not to that 'tic'lar chapel, but it's all the same, and ee's got two bands, a brass band an' a drum and fife band, and they're all teetot'lers, an' 'is big drummer he lives in St. Giles's, and they plays in the streets till five o'clock on Christmas mornin', and till five o'clock we follered 'em about."

"Well—and then?"

"Then we 'ad a cup o' coffee at a coffee-stall in Aldgate, which Ginger ee 'ad a little money still in 'is pocket, an' ee it were as paid for the coffee. Arter that we walks back towards 'ome like, but keeps clear o' St. Giles's and makes for St. James's Park. We stopped in the Park till all the people went 'ome to dinner, 'cept them as 'ad got no dinner an' no 'ome to go to."

"But you had a good home to go to, and a good dinner awaiting you, and I have no doubt your companions might also have had a good dinner at their own homes. Pray, where did you get your Christmas dinner, and what did your dinner consist of?"

"Oh, we went and buyed some bread an' cheese which Ginger he pays for it, and that was *our* Christmas dinner."

"I hope you enjoyed it?"

"Well, sir, can't say as I didn't. I've horfen been glad to get a bit o' dry bread for my Sunday dinner before I see you, and cheese is cheese."

"Well, and after dinner?"

"Arter dinner we gets up and we goes all round Hyde Park. Arter that we comes back to St. Giles's and 'as a sit-down on a doorstep till parst ten at night. Then Ginger gets up again and says, 'Let's go for a walk!' and off we goes without sayin' a word and walks to 'Ampstead 'Eath which it was close upon daylight when we come to the 'Eath. We stopped there all day."

"And how did you manage to pass that day. You got plenty of fresh air at any rate. Did you manage to get anything else?"

"We watched the show people puttin' up the swings and the other people ridin' on donkeys, and Ginger ee bought some bread and cheese and shared it wi' us, which he 'ad two shillings in all, 'ad Ginger at the start, arter the raffle on Christmas Eve."

“ Well, you passed the day on Hampstead Heath, that brings us up to Saturday night. What was your next move ? ”

“ Arter dark we went back to St. Giles’s, which it was near eleven when we got ’ome like, but we didn’t like to go ’ome, so we sits down again on a doorstep till we can’t sit any longer for the cold like. Then Ginger ’ee ups again and says, ‘ I can’t stand this any longer, if we goes to sleep ere, says ee, we shall be friz to death and wake up to find ourselves dead corpses in the morning,’ says ee—‘ let’s go for a walk ! ’ We then went to Battersea Pier and back which it was now Sunday morning when us got back. Then Ginger ee left us and went ’ome, and Crocodile ee goes off too and leaves me alone. I spent the Sunday sittin’ on door-steps in Little Wild Street and was nearly famished. But at dinner time a poor boy brought down some meat and taters and give it me, and that is about the last thing as I can call to mind till you found me out and tooked me back, and you not scoldin’ me and speakin’ kind to me arter wot I ’ad done was a wuss punishment to me nor if you ’ad gived me the jolliest ’idin’ as a chap ever ’ad.”

* * *

After that escapade Jack quietly settled down to his new life, and worked and behaved so well that in less than six months I felt justified in recommending him to the situation which he now holds, that of house-boy in a large institution, where he is serving under the supervision of a wise and kind-hearted lady, and earning twelve pounds a year to begin with, in addition to his board and lodging. And I am happy to say that during the few months he has been in that place I have heard nothing but good reports of him. He works well and behaves well, and they think he will make an excellent servant in spite of a habit which he has not yet been able entirely to throw off—that of turning a somersault or doing “ the wheel ” when he finds himself alone on the pavement, and thinks he may do so unobserved.

Jack came to see me last Sunday, looking so well and respectable and happy that no one could have guessed from his appearance that he had not always been well cared for ; much less could any one, except an intimate acquaintance, have recognised in him the poor waif so unexpectedly tossed at my feet by the troubled waves of life on a cold winter morning, in the heart of London.

D. RICE-JONES.



MAD NELL.

From a Drawing by HUGH THOMSON.

THE ANGELS' SONG.

Words by FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

Music by C. H. PURDAY.

1. Now let us sing the an - gels' song, That rang so sweet and clear
2. He came to tell the Fa - ther's love, His good - ness, truth, and grace ;
3. He came to bring the wea - ry ones True peace and per - fect rest ;
4. He came to bring a glo - rious gift—"Good - will to men"—and why ?

When heav'n - ly light and mu - sic fell On earth - ly eye and ear :
To show the bright - ness of His smile, The glo - ry of His face :
To take a - way their guilt and sin, Which dark - ened and dis - tressed—
Be - cause He loved us, Je - sus came For us to live and die :

To Him we sing, our Sa - viour - King, Who al - ways deigns to hear.
With His own light, so full and bright, The shades of death to chase.
That great and small might hear His call, And all in Him be blessed.
Then sweet and long, the an - gels' song A - gain we raise on high.

CHORUS.

f
Glo - ry to God! Glo - ry to God! Glo - ry to God, and peace on earth!



THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

HERISH how fondly soever we may the relics of those essentially national associations which heralded in the Christmas season in years gone by, we are not the less disposed, when mourning the gradual disappearance of these our own time-honoured observances, to welcome the introduction of any foreign custom which may promise, in some degree, to compensate for their loss by adding lustre and interest to our cherished festival. It

is true that many amongst us may not cease to sigh for the merry days of old, and the bolsterous revelry of which time has enhanced the charm and veiled the disadvantages. They may regret that the boar's head should have ceased to be either a desirable or attainable addition to our good cheer; that the masques and pageantry in which princes once condescended to take part should have been long deemed unworthy the advancing intellect of the age; that the principles of order should be so powerful an element in our constitution as to forbid the reign of Misrule, even for that brief span which formerly witnessed its authorised dominion; and as they look back to the pastimes which it will never be their lot

to enjoy, may feel, be their prepossessions Royalist or Roundhead, that the Puritans did us ill-service in waging a war of extermination against the merry-makings of old Christmas. Others, again, there may be, who, without any antiquarian respect for the habits and manners of the real olden times, or any desire to awaken them from their long rest, may yet lament the departure of those familiar relics which were endeared by their own youthful associations; they may long once more by the light of the yule-log, to be half-amused, half-terrified by mummers; may grumble that their rest is less and less frequently disturbed by the harmony of the waits; and grieve that we are becoming too

refined to admit the privileges of the sacred mistletoe. But let them not be unjust to the present, and the enjoyments it provides. If the lordly boar's head no longer smokes in the centre of our modern dinner-table, have we no lordly baron or knightly squire to supply its place? If no gay pageant assembles eager crowds to witness its magnificence, has not each homestead its own individual gala, its festival of affection? And last, but not least, what matter though the mistletoe be banished, if we have the Christmas Tree, whose fruits, far less evanescent, will, undoubtedly purchase many a kiss, not stolen, but given as a free-will offering.

For this last picturesque innovation, now so completely a feature of our English Christmas, we are indebted to Germany, where it has held the same high position in general favour for years, we might almost say for ages; indeed, if we may credit the testimony of a well-known foreign print, representing Christmas in the household of Martin Luther, the illuminated tree afforded amusement to the children of our great reformer himself. The first instance generally known of the importation of the custom to our own country was during the embassy of Prince Talleyrand, who neglected no means of rendering himself popular and prominent amongst us; the reputation of the splendid tree which commemorated Christmas in his household spread far and wide at the time, and is no doubt still remembered by many. It was not, however, until the Royal marriage had established a kind of brotherly relationship between ourselves and our German neighbours—and by rapidly increasing the intercourse between the two nations, had rendered their habits and manners familiar to us—that this characteristic of a German Christmas was decidedly engrafted on our own. Since then it has gradually taken root in England; Royal example having given it fashion, and its own merits ensured it favour. There are now probably not very many families of which the elder branches are moderately enterprising, that do not establish a Christmas Tree; which, though ostensibly for the gratification of the younger scions, proves a source of interest and pleasure to all. There are, of

course, various degrees both in the beauty of these trees and in the amount of enjoyment derived from them (two points wholly independent of each other); and though each one must have a certain individuality of its own, yet they may be generally divided into two classes. First, perhaps, in splendour, are those summoned up without even the exertion of a thought through the potent intervention of Messrs. Fortnum and Mason. We know there are persons in the world who eschew trouble even when it takes the guise of pleasure. Happily for them many pleasures are to be purchased "ready-made," and our now popular Christmas diversion is of the number. There was a time when the annual display of Twelfth-cakes was esteemed well worthy a visit of inspection, but their attractions sink into complete insignificance before the curiosities and novelties in the form of, Christmas Trees with their adornments, a glimpse of which at the right season fills up an idle half hour very pleasantly.

For the advantage of those whose sphere of personal observation may be limited, but who may have their own reasons for feeling interested in the subject, we shall notice a few of the improvements which have been recently introduced: the benefit of them is chiefly confined to our first class of merry-makers—those who enjoy the result, but have nothing to do with the means. First, then, it must be understood that the Christmas Tree is by no means invariably one that Nature would acknowledge for her own production; indeed, the greater number of those that are supplied, ready dressed, are imitations—very good ones, be it understood—formed of painted tin. Hitherto, the comely and symmetrical fir-tree has served as a model; but, in the coming season, a novelty is to be introduced consisting of imitative palm-trees, varying from two to six feet in height, in which the hand of Nature has not been disgraced by that of the artificer. There is the notched and gracefully tortuous stem, overhung with the long green pendent leaves, which fall so judiciously over each other as to provide for the proper distribution of the lamps, or ornamented tapers which are attached to the points; a row of hooks, placed on the under side of every leaf, enables the ornaments to be disposed in close proximity, without injury to the general outline. Another design, equally new and pretty, represents a vine trained on a trellis, bearing large bunches of grapes, composed of coloured glass, but not on this account less tantalizing to the eye. Of half the elegancies and grotesqueries which are invented for the dressing of this elaborate groundwork, it would be impossible to make mention, for their name is legion. All are, however, receptacles for bon-bons, but so curious and ornamental in themselves that their original destination might be easily overlooked. We can have boxes in the semblance of dogs' heads, and may even choose between the aristocratic greyhound, surly mastiff, and faithful Newfoundland; or, for those who may prefer fac-similes of their own genus, there are half-length figures of sailors in their glazed hats, Saracens in turbans, crusty old men, good-tempered young ones—in fact, characters of every kind, to whom the hand of the Nuremberg workman has imparted a degree of expression that is really marvellous: but all these form receptacles for a store of good things, which are exposed to view by the process of decapitation. The tree is not, however, to be overloaded with these oddities; amongst them are dispersed pretty miniature representations of familiar objects, as book-cases, guitars, balloons, &c.; also, gelatine flowers of great beauty, with gold leaves, made in Paris for this very purpose; and any odd corners are filled up with artificial fruit and similar trifles. To each of these articles is attached a number, and their possession is determined by lot. The principal and best manufactory, both for the trees themselves and for their adornments, is acknowledged to be Nuremberg, which has long enjoyed an established reputation for the ingenuity of its toys, many of which are made by the nimble fingers of children. The prices charged by the importers for the decorated trees range from one to thirty guineas, according to their size and the number and value of the articles which are placed upon them. All are in their degree tasteful and pretty, and can be said to lack nothing, except that particular interest which can only be purchased at the expense of a little trouble.

We must now glance at the second class of Christmas Trees; those of home growth; and ascertain if they have not some peculiar advantages of their own, to counterbalance their inferiority in elegance. In contradistinction to those individuals who do not make acquaintance with their tree until it has assumed its full dress, are a large proportion of aspirants for enjoyment, who would on no account relinquish the preparations to professional hands. They embark in the undertaking with the sensible resolution of extracting from it all the pleasure which it is capable of affording; and the amount, in a large family especially, is by no means contemptible. On our domestic tree comparatively little money is expended, for it is soon discovered that the trouble and ingenuity so willingly bestowed, go very far to supply its place. It may occasionally be made the medium of conveying handsome presents destined for many a year to recall the memory of the day to their possessors; but these can scarcely be considered as part of the legitimate expenses; and, as a principle, the productions of the tree are of an inexpensive character—often labours of love. For weeks before the long-looked-for day, the leisure occupations of those who may have taken upon themselves the responsibility of the affair, have reference to its success. Many an hour is stolen from sleep and the social circle, for the secret manufacture of these same presents, half the charm of which would be lost to the donor if the glance of admiration with which they are received be not equally one of gratified surprise. Many a walk is taken for the purpose of choosing the pretty bon-bons and ornaments which cannot be made at home, or dispensed with altogether. Even amongst the children there is an unwonted cessation of noisy activity, for they, too, have their own important affairs to arrange. They have to select from their own toys those that are to grow on the tree for the benefit of the little cousins who will be of the merry Christmas party; their generous impulses being no doubt rather quickened by the prospect of fresh acquisitions

for themselves. They have to determine the division and employment of the hoarded half-crown, and pay many a visit to the bazaar ere it is laid out to the best advantage. Lastly, there are the book-marks, intended to minister to the intellectual tastes of papa and mamma, to be completed and delivered in to the authorities on the eve of the great day. It will in truth be fortunate if its arrival do not surprise them ere the various plans are fully matured and realised. We should here observe that the time selected for the lighting up and grand exhibition of the Tree depends on individual taste; but as it most usually forms the crowning pleasure of Christmas Day itself, when the circle of assembled friends and relatives supplies a meet audience, we may conclude that the preliminary arrangements are made on the preceding evening. A select committee, consisting of those who are recognised authorities in matters of taste, closet themselves, with the various appliances of their business, in the back drawing-room, or wherever else may be the theatre of exhibition. How gaily they enter on their appointed task of decking the dark spreading branches of the vigorous young fir-tree which, to afford full scope for their genius, should be some six feet in height. The first step is to attach the coloured tapers, by means of large pins, or any better expedient that can be devised. It may, perhaps, prove no easy matter to persuade them to maintain their appointed attitudes, and avoid all the risk of the illumination proceeding into a conflagration; but if the candles do not look quite as much at home on our tree as on those of a more artificial character, they will at least give as good a light. Then the bon-bons, sweetmeats, flowers, and any other pretty things that may have been provided, are suspended from various parts of the tree, with those presents that are of a sufficiently light and ornamental description. The residues are gracefully strowed around, as though they had been showered down by the benevolent hand of some good fairy. During these proceedings, which have occupied considerably more time than their description, general curiosity has been exhibited outside the door to ascertain the progress of affairs; for, be it understood, there is "no admission for any one excepting on business." Idlers would only interfere with the industrious; and for the children, above all, the *coup d'oeil* is reserved until to-morrow; they would not have half the respect for the marvellous tree if they had beheld it unadorned, and discovered that it differed in no respect from those which they often carelessly passed in their country walks. The appeals of little eager voices for "just one look" are therefore entirely disregarded, and the plots laid by mischievous brothers to steal in on some specious pretext are disappointed by wary caution on the part of the besieged. It is ordained that all shall wait till to-morrow, and, fortunately, there is too much excitement going on in every household on Christmas Eve for the delay to be very irksome, or the interval to seem very long.

There are, we should hope, not very many who do not wake to the dawn of the Christmas Day morning with an indistinct consciousness that something pleasant is about to happen; and with the children this something speedily assumes the form of the Christmas Tree. Its prospective glories will present themselves to the best-regulated juvenile minds during church time, and not even the unwonted pleasure of dining with parents, aunts, uncles, and all the dignitaries of the family, is sufficient to prevent many an exclamation of joy when this preliminary is at last over and the moment of fruition arrived. The tapers lighted, and finishing touches given, the folding-doors are opened or curtain raised, and the Christmas Tree, in all its dazzling magnificence, is exposed to view. The admiration is so absorbing, that for many minutes it shines and glitters in undisturbed glory; but at length there is an evident desire to realise the existence of the treasures by actual possession, and to the most humorous of the party is entrusted the duty of distributing to every one their allotted portion, with appropriate remarks of his own.

Now are all those mysteries and hours of seclusion explained and accounted for to the general satisfaction. Every one would seem to have had his own especial secret; even the heads of the family have privately added at the last moment love tokens to their children, whose surprise they not a little enjoy. There may be (we say not that there is) a watch for him whose ambition it has so long been to possess one; a concertina or drawing-box for her whose tastes may render such a gift acceptable; and so munificent an assortment of dolls, with every appliance for their comfort, that the little ones forget to breathe one sigh of regret as they see their own generous intentions realised, and treasures, once the most cherished, pass into other hands. Nor are the juniors without their own moments of triumph; how pleased is the affectionate mother, when the beautiful, braided table-cover worked by the hands of her daughters is presented to her; and yet it scarcely meets with more consideration than the book-marks and the needle book. We must certainly relinquish all idea of enumerating a tithe of the gifts that are interchanged, for it really seems that each one has remembered everyone else, and has been by them as carefully remembered. Finally, the bon-bons are distributed as a *bonne-bouche*, but the tree must not be entirely dismantled on this occasion; some time should elapse before it ceases to be an object of interest; and surely another Christmas will be almost at hand ere its glories fall to prove an agreeable and ever-fruitle topic of conversation.

We have endeavoured to give some little idea of the distinctive characteristics of the two classes of Christmas Trees, as we see them in England; and now without offering any ungracious comparisons, we bid farewell to our readers of every age, desiring for them all possible enjoyment from their own Christmas diversions, be they foreign or be they of home growth; and, in the time-honoured words of our ancestors, wishing them each and all

"A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

The Spirit of Christmas

EDWARD W. BOK



WITH our lengthening seasons Christmas is at our doors almost before we are aware of it. There was a time when Nature seemed to lead up to it more than she does now. Hot weather stopped when August ended. The

last of September brought us the first frost; October days were radiant with winter promise; Thanksgiving Day gave us lakes and ponds frozen over for skating, and by the time Christmas came the earth was wrapped in her most gorgeous mantle of snow and ice. Now, we dread the regulation "warm wave" of September more than the torrid "dog-days" of August; October is what September used to be; skating at Thanksgiving is almost unheard of, and to see snow on the ground at Christmas betokens an unusually early winter. Christmas now comes at a bound. We are scarcely through with the summer before we realize that it is Thanksgiving, and that we are only four weeks from Christmas-tide and the opening of a new year.

PERHAPS it is that Nature is in part responsible for the changed observance of Christmas. For it is an unfortunate fact that Christmas does not mean in these days what it did forty or fifty years ago. The day remains the same. Its significance is as tender and beautiful as ever; its lessons are as love-freighted as when they were given to the world on that first Christmas Day in the stable at Bethlehem. It is not the day that has changed. Christmas has ever been the same and always will be. It is we who have become other than were our parents and grandparents before us. The old has been pushed out of the way for the new. The cheerful yule-log has given way to the cheerless steam radiator; the candles have been snuffed out by the incandescent lights. "Kris Kringle" has become "Santa Claus." The simple token given in loving remembrance of the lessons of the day has become the elaborate present without a meaning. Pessimistic, some one will say. No, my friend, not at all. I was born in the latter half of this century, and I belong to it heart and soul. But, then, I need not necessarily approve of everything that this latter half of the century has done and is doing. And, for one thing, I do not think that the present tendency in Christmas observance and gift-making is going to insure us a happier Christmas Day in the future. Too many of us are losing the true spirit of Christmas.

YOU know, and I know, that to thousands of us Christmas has become a season of the year the coming of which we actually dread. Years ago our forefathers looked forward to it with delight. They thought of it months before. We do, too, only in a different spirit. Our main idea of the coming of Christmas nowadays seems to be what it is going to cost us. Christmas-giving, once regulated by the heart, is in great danger of being very soon almost entirely regulated by the means—if it has not already reached that deplorable state. We have made an actual business of Christmas-giving. Formerly it was considered a pleasure to give; now we sit down and think out our presents as a matter of duty. We have to give; we consider it an obligation to give so-and-so a certain present at

Christmas. Not that we want to do so; we simply feel that we must. "She will give me something, and, of course, I must give her something," is the way we coldly calculate the matter. And then when we receive the present the first thought, in nine cases out of ten, is whether we have received as much as we gave. If we have not we feel provoked at our own generosity, and coolly make a mental conclusion that next year we will give less.

NOW, this is, in hard, cold words, just about what Christmas-giving has come to and means nowadays. Holiday presents have become each year more and more expensive while the actual giving is getting less and less hearty. We bewail the worry of planning gifts, and get ourselves irritable and sick in the necessary shopping and purchasing. And hundreds, yes thousands of us, give a sigh of relief when Christmas has passed, and are ready to confess that we are "so glad it is all over for another year." And why? Simply because of one thing: we are actuated by the wrong feeling. The whole system of our living is becoming one grand mass of foolish ostentation, and our present mode of Christmas-giving is the outgrowth of it. We feel that we cannot afford to give a simple present; we must give something expensive, something that will make an appearance and show. This is felt by the recipient, and next year, to hold her own, she feels that she must return something equally costly. The following year this must again be outdone, and so it goes, each year adding to the expense, and less to the true spirit of the giving. We all try to outdo each other, and we are proud when we are told afterward that our present was the most beautiful of all that were received. Now, as a matter of fact, the most expensive things we can buy are generally the most useless, particularly when we go into the realm of ornamentation. Surely these are not the times to lock up hundreds and thousands of dollars in ornaments as useless as oftentimes they are ugly. Of the useful we can scarce have too much; of the useless a little goeth a very long way. Presents with a purpose are presents indeed, but how few we see nowadays. With a great host of people it does not seem to matter so much whether a present is appropriate, or whether it will prove acceptable to the recipient, so long as it is costly and "makes a show." We too often lay others under obligations which it is impossible for them to meet without embarrassment.

THERE are perhaps no two surer indications of our breeding than the way in which we dress and the manner in which we show our regard for our friends. In both we show at once what we really are. Everything we wear, and the way in which we wear it, is an indication of our inner characters, and the same is true of our present-giving. Just as the simplest gowns are worn by the women of the gentlest birth and the best manners so the simplest presents bespeak our best friends. The value of a present should never lie in its quality, and it never does with the nicest people. A showy present betokens the showy person, just as the showy gown bespeaks the woman devoid of taste or character. The only way in which some people can show that they have more money than we have is in the way they dress themselves, and the presents they bestow upon those whose acquaintance they desire to cultivate. The true woman, the woman whose friendship will wear well and prove a perpetual

pleasure, never measures her regard by the presents she bestows. She gives from her heart and not from her purse. The best present is that which enters into a life with the truest wisdom and the greatest pleasure, no matter what its value may be. Good taste and judgment are looked for in a present far more by the right kind of people than is its actual cost. I think that if we have one great lesson to learn in this country it is contained in the truth that good taste can overcome the simplest expense, and that the largest expenditure cannot hide bad taste. A present selected with taste is a pleasure; one selected only for its monetary value is often an embarrassment. The truth is often forced upon us nowadays that it would be far better if some people never gave presents. Ostentation is never so much out of place as when applied to a holiday gift.

I WRITE of this growing evil—because it is nothing more nor less—of giving Christmas presents in the manner I have indicated, because I know what a strain this Christmas-giving has become upon hundreds of incomes. Nor is it the few who are guilty; all of us, to a greater or less extent, have added to the present tendency. Each one of us, at holiday-time, gives presents purely from an obligatory sense, from the spirit that we owe somebody something. We have made Christmas altogether too much of a time for discharging personal obligations, instead of a festival of the heart pure and simple. The birth of Christ was never intended as an occasion other than of love and heart-offering. I have said before on this page, and I repeat it, that, as a people, I think we are in great danger of running this matter of Christmas-giving into the ground. We are overdoing it now, and it is high time to stop. The notion that presents must be costly in order to be appreciated is taking hold of too many of us. And if, in the opening paragraphs of these comments, I gave a sigh for the Christmas of bygone days, it was because I realized that such a precaution would have been unnecessary then. Now it is necessary, and highly so, too. What was once a beautiful custom is being placed on a commercial basis. We expect so much, and we feel we should give so much in return. This is wrong; it would be wrong in any country on the globe, but it is particularly inappropriate to our nation.

THE great family life of America does not represent opulence. If it stands for anything it stands for comfort, but not for plenty. We can all afford to recognize the Christ-like spirit of Christmas, which teaches us to remember by some loving token those nearest and dearest to us. But only the few can afford to follow the present method of extravagant and senseless giving. Generosity is a synonym the world over for the American; but true generosity is of the heart and of the heart alone. If one has been more fortunate than the other in the acquirement of means, and the will is present, then, I say, by all means give largely and widely. But let such giving be measured only by true feeling and that spirit manifested as it can be, so that others, less fortunate of means, shall not feel that they are obliged to do what really they cannot afford to do. It will not harm us if, in this respect, we go back a little to the times that are past. No one then heard all this talk about the duty of giving at holiday-time. People gave because it was a pleasure to give; they liked to give, and they gave what they could. A Christmas present then meant

more than it does now, in that its only association was the day and the spirit of the giver. Times were simpler, it is true, and wants were fewer. But if we have progressed, and presents are possible to-day which were out of the reach of our forefathers, the spirit can at least remain the same. We need not depart from principles as we grow. We should adhere the closer to them if anything.

THE most difficult foreign criticism of our people to meet is the one so often laid at our doors: the American love of display. I say it is difficult to meet because it is, unfortunately, all too true. Ardent advocates of our institutions meet the criticism by the statement that as a nation we are young, and what is true of us has been true of all countries in their earlier development. This may be so, but I think it is time we were getting over it. As it is, the love of display which governs so many of our people indicates itself upon almost every occasion. We are showy in our homes, in the very manner in which we build, and then furnish. We are showy in our entertainments; we are showy at our weddings; we are showy even at our funerals. In only one thing are we rapidly overcoming our love of display: in our manner of dress, and certainly the reform is a welcome one. In this, vulgarity of display has been relegated to a certain class. But in other things we have yet to overcome the love of show. And if we were to begin the work of modification with our present-making we would do well—present-giving at weddings just as well as at Christmas. As things are now, gift-making is approaching the impossible with those of moderate incomes, and the problem becomes serious even to one of comfortable means, where a large circle of friends has to be remembered. The drain is a heavy one, and it is made with the poorest possible grace. All this is not only morally wrong, but it is un-American. Lavish display can very well be reserved for monarchies, but the citizens of a republic should be free from it. If the democracy of a republic means anything it means simplicity. Too many of us shout ourselves hoarse at being Americans without the slightest knowledge of what the word means. The charge that as a nation we are common and vulgar arises from no other element in our lives so much as it does from this love of display. To be showy is always the mark of vulgarity; it is never born of nor associated with good breeding.

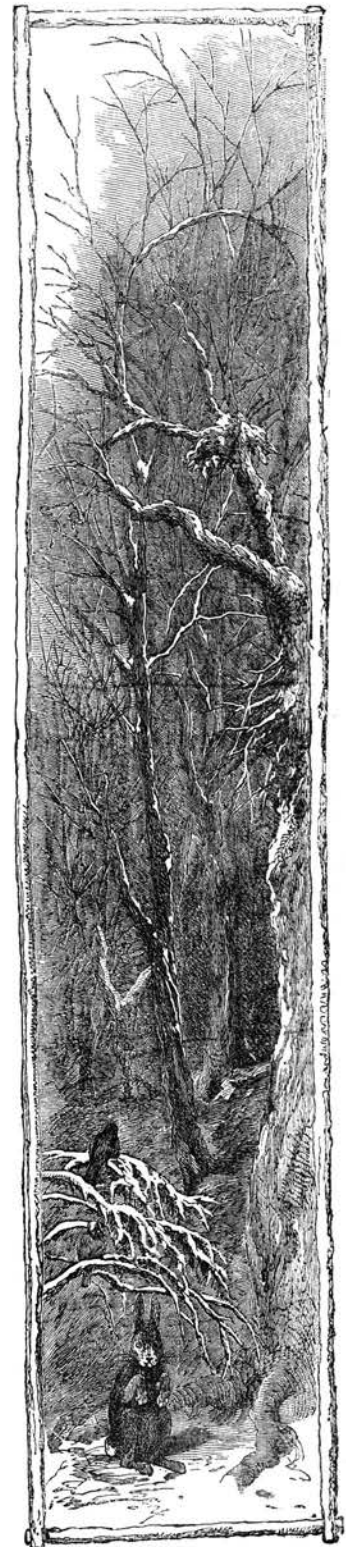
SOME of us like to complain of this world, and the spot we are destined to occupy in it. Things are not just as we want them, nor as we feel they should be for us. But we overlook the fact that the particular spot in this world which we are given to occupy is, and will be precisely as we choose to make it. Whether we do right or wrong, whether we are happy or otherwise, depends very largely, if not entirely, on ourselves. Each of us makes his or her own surroundings. We have all experienced the feeling of brightness which a sunshiny woman brings with her wherever she goes. She may have just as many worries to bear, just as many heart-breaks to endure, just as many anxieties to carry, but she overcomes them largely by a bright and sunny disposition. At all events, she does not show them and make others unhappy. In nine cases out of ten our mood will be reflected in some one else. Few people, however burdened, can resist a hearty laugh, a joyous smile that lights up a face and seems to make a soul radiant. A laughing face is one of the most con-

tagious things in life, and spreads its germs far and wide. We are not all capable of laughing in the face of trouble or adversity. But we can, at least, make an attempt, and even if the laugh lacks the ring of heartiness it is infinitely better than the frown or sigh. Any kind of a laugh or smile is better than a sorrowful look or an anxious face. People flee from a person who always looks sad.

I SPEAK thus of the possibilities that can be found in laughter and in as sunny a disposition as we can create, because I am so anxious that this Christmas shall be a happy one with each one of my readers. The holidays to many are often the saddest days of the year; the absent seem to be so much more absent then. It is not easy sometimes to feel joyful; the sigh seems so much more ready than the smile. Adversity seems so cruel, affliction so keen, ingratitude so brutal. But still we owe it as a duty to ourselves and to others to be joyful even amid sorrow or hardships. The future that lies before us depends much upon what we make of the present. A heart is made far stronger by the look of encouragement, the stimulant of a hopeful love, than by any other medium. A bright home is a greater stimulant than aught else. To look hopefully into a new year has often insured success. Where even spiritual consolation has been known to fail the bright face, the hopeful love and the cheerful word of a good woman have redeemed many a man from utter hopelessness.

AND so, whatever may be our circumstances, let us endeavor to make this Christmas Day as merry and joyful to ourselves and those around us as possible. If absent ones are thought of let them be remembered with gladness. If reverses and sorrows have come with the year just ending let us bury them on Christmas eve. To the discouraged let us be a healthful and life-giving stimulant, ever mindful of the power of a sunny and buoyant example. Let us make our crosses seem as light as possible to those who love us. Let frowns be buried in smiles just for a day—the merriest, happiest day of all the year. Try the panacea of laughter upon the sick—better than all the medicines ever invented. Wherever there exists sorrow let us try, even if we can do ever so little, to wipe it away for the day. If ingratitude has come to us let us believe that there must exist a cause of which we know not. If the spirit of unforgiveness has come to any of us let the Christmas joy soften our hearts. In mercy think of our enemies, never forgetful of the fact that life is too short to harbor ill-feelings. No matter what we have borne during the year, or what we feel we may be called upon to bear during the year to come, let us be merry on this anniversary of the natal day of that Christ who will mend every wrong, who will set all things right, though His ways are not our ways and His blessings are slow in their coming. And whatever may be our own trials let us not for a moment show them to the children of our homes. Christmas is their day. If it be not for us it is cruel to take it from them. Before them, at least, let us carry the smile; let us be young again if but for a day, renewing our youth in the games and romps we can all give to the little hearts which came from our hearts. And in the innocent pleasures of childhood, perhaps, we shall forget the world, and the hard side of our lives. Then, perchance, will the lesson come home to us that whatever our

trials, whatever our crosses, we are kings and queens of happiness in the possession of home and children. For wherever true love exists and reigns there will always be happiness. The happiest hearts are never far off from a home filled with the love of a good wife and the merry laughter of children. And may those two greatest elements of life be found in every home into which these words shall penetrate, carrying with them the merriest and gladdest of Christmas greetings from a heart which, if it could, would bring joy to every being in the universe.





HAS anybody in these days seen such a thing as a wassail-bowl? Nobody that I have questioned owns one; and if anybody did I don't believe he'd know what to put into it. I inquire for wassail at the Stores, regularly every Christmas, without the smallest success. I don't know where I first got the idea that wassail was a liquid, but it seems I was quite wrong; the young man on the wine and spirit floor didn't seem to have heard of it, and suggested the ironmongery department. The assistant in the ironmongery department was quite polite to me, but very indignant at the ignorance of the wine and spirit man, who, he protested, might have known that it was the greengrocery side that I wanted. The greengrocery young man told me that many people laboured under the vulgar error that wassail was a kind of tomato, but, as a matter of fact, it was a newly-introduced sort of cheese. This information seemed to surprise the shopman at the cheese counter, who wouldn't be quite sure, but had an idea that the article I required was a waterproof blacking strongly recommended by the boot and shoe department. The young man in the boot and shoe department smiled

scornfully and assured me that as a matter of simple fact wassail was the registered title of an improved double perambulator on a new principle; but, realizing that the perambulator would bring me to the ironmongery department once more, I flung my arms round the lift-man's neck and implored to be carried out into the fresh air of the open street, where I might cool my brow against a friendly lamp-post.

It is a bitter reflection that the plague of Christmas-box hunters, though it may punish the guilty, will, nevertheless, fall equally on the righteous as on the unrighteous. Why should I "fork out" to the butcher's boy because his master has been charging me for English beef and giving me American at fourteen ounces to the pound for a whole twelvemonth? Purely in gratitude for that pestiferous tune he whistles under my study window every morning, or merely because his dog fights all the neighbouring cats in my area? And who is the water company's turncock that he should blackmail me—the water company's turncock, that uniformed compromise between a railway porter and a parish beadle, who leans against one kitchen poker while he strolls leisurely round another? I don't want him to turn off my alleged



"constant supply" in the hot weather—I would rather he left it alone; and now in the cold weather—gr-r-r-rh!—must I pay for being reminded of cold water?

I find it difficult to believe that once on a time nobody asked me for Christmas-boxes, but some people—not many, though—actually presented them to me. That was when I was a small boy and lived in a place where Christmas was kept in a very old-fashioned way. There was no actual wassail-bowl—that is a thing I never expect to see. But we did have a Christmas log, which we might have called a Yule log if we had thought of it. It was a tough bit of timber, lighted each year by aid of the charred remains of the last. This custom of keeping the half-burned fag of the Christmas log till next year was very general in our part of the country, for it was well known to preserve the house from fire in the interval. But nowadays, such is the growth of luxury and extravagance that people substitute expensive insurance premiums for the economical expedient I remember. But to be effectual the log *must* be preserved for the

whole year. In the only house in our neighbourhood that was burned down in my time the log was utterly destroyed in the fire, and so only lasted four months; which proves the rule to the mind of any reasonable person.

The snap-dragon was another of our mysterious rites which seems to be neglected now. Perhaps it is considered a sinful waste of a liquid which might so much more worthily be used for other purposes; cleaning brass candlesticks, I think, was the use once recommended by a friend. But, reason or not, in these degenerate and effeminate days our hardy forefathers' fine old love of burnt fingers seems to have languished sadly. Even flap-dragon is extinct, I believe, though that offered the sterner joy of burnt noses. Do you understand the rules of the fine old national sport of flap-dragon? It was not a pursuit in favour with the wealthy and the great, and I doubt if ever a duke experienced the fierce delights of the sport. It was practised, in fact, among those lesser noblemen who were in the habit of drinking beer out of gallon cans, and were not always particular what else the can contained so long as the beer was there. In the game of flap-dragon the can contained, beside (or, rather, in

the middle of) the beer, an upright candlestick with a piece of candle in it—alight; and anybody was at liberty to drink as much of the beer as he could. When the can was tilted a little way the candle threw out a sort of hint, as it were, in the shape of a blob of hot grease; but the ardent sportsman never hesitated for a trifle like that, and, in fact, some sorts of candle were thought rather to improve the flavour of the beer; at least, when the grease fell into it direct, and not first by way of the sportsman's eye. In any case the candle, tilted a little farther, followed up the hint bodily, and there was a sudden crisis in the proceedings, and a great complication of spilt beer, flaming candle and whiskers, scorched countenance, and hasty remarks. And so the dragon was successfully flapped to everybody's satisfaction.

The waits still promote a healthy wakefulness, just as they did in my young days, but they charge for their supply of insomnia in a lump at the end of the contract now, instead of getting nightly instalments on the old plan. They have developed a distrustful habit of keeping well out in the middle of the road,

so that the lavish old mediæval largesse, distributed from a water-jug, is going altogether out of fashion. But still, even in these basely utilitarian days, I have known a trombone to be suddenly overcome by choking emotion on the unexpected contribution of a boot-jack to the fund. The carol-singers, however, still take their pay in instalments, and as many instalments as they can get. I am speaking, of course, of the boys who sing on my front steps just when I take my after-dinner nap. There is nothing old-fashioned about these boys—nothing at all except the carol. In the old times the pretence was kept up that the payment was made for the singing instead of for the leaving off; but with the march of civilization and the advance of democracy all these pedantic old forms are being swept away. It is a business-like age, and the carol-singers, correspondingly business-like, leave off in the middle of a verse when the coppers (pennies I mean, not policemen) arrive, and scuttle off to catch another customer without delay. Silence being paid for, the article is delivered instantly, and no time is wasted in pretending that the money is paid for something else.

Snow, too—snow was another Christmas institution we seemed to see more of in my younger days. We see it now, of course, but somehow it seems to dodge Christmas, and we have to imitate it with Epsom salts stuck on a Christmas card with gum. We get it sometimes, though, as I can remember a little while back. But stay—I think it was in 1886, and that is sixteen years ago. If I don't look out I shall be letting out my age itself. I remember this particular Christmas Day because I got most gloriously and seasonably snowed up on my way to a friend's in the country. My train was out-

rageously late, so that I missed connection at a junction, and was finally turned out into a pitiless white world at a roadside station five miles short of where my friend must have been waiting for hours in his dog-cart. There were no more trains, there was no inn, no vehicle, no dinner—nothing! Nothing but a staring stationmaster and a porter, who had most obviously (and offensively) had dinner at midday, my portmanteau, my rug, an umbrella, a stick, and—a barrel of oysters. This last was intended as a little present for my host. The snow was actually feet deep; it dragged down miles of telegraph line and posts that night, and I—well, I had a barrel of oysters. I think the very bitterest and most hideous piece of irony I ever saw or heard of in my life was that barrel of oysters. On a freezing blizzard of a night like that, what possible item of human aliment could offer such agonizing



No. more. Trains.

mockery to a hungry derelict like me as a barrel of oysters? If only there had been nothing at all I shouldn't have felt it quite so keenly. Life might have been sustained for a certain period on leather rug-straps and the soap in my shaving-box—such things have been heard of in other Arctic explorations. But there, I won't talk of it any more. Think of it, dream of it, desolate man

—as the poet didn't say. A barrel of oysters!

You see, that all comes of talking about snow. I never hear snow mentioned without recalling that Christmas night and that diabolical barrel of oysters on the desolate, snow-laden platform of that desert railway-station. But surely the anecdote is comforting to such of you as are sitting by a nice large fire, with *THE STRAND MAGAZINE* and a pipe, and perhaps a glass of wassail-mixture to clean the brass candlesticks with. I think, if anything in this world could make a man grateful for his Christmas dinner, it would be to remember me on that swirling night with my icy, dripping barrel of oysters.

Have you ever tried Christmas furmety? Probably not; nor have I. What is more, I feel as though I could rub along without it still. But in case anybody may be more venturesome than I, here is an old recipe which I have just been reading:—

“Take fresh wheat and bray it in a mortar, that the hulls be all gone off, and seethe it till it burst, and take it up and let it cool; and take clean, fresh broth and sweet milk of almonds, or sweet milk of kine, and temper it all; and take the yolks of eggs. Boil it a little, and set it down and mess it forth”—“mess it forth” is admirable—“with fat venison or fresh mutton.”

There you are—you may temper it and mess it forth, and keep your own temper if you mess it more than you intend. But the venison or mutton may be left out—personally I should prefer leaving out the other things too—for the furmety may be regarded as complete without it. In that case you must add plenty of sugar. Yes, sugar is what it says in the book. Having done all this, you may do what you like with the result. I should think it would be rather a good idea to pitch it out of the window.

Plum-porridge seems to have been a more important thing even than furmety. It was, in fact, the original of the plum-pudding that will insure so many bilious attacks on the 25th of this month. If you would like to go back to the earlier fashion, plum-porridge would seem to be easy enough to make. You take the raw materials of the present style of plum-pudding, pitch them into the soup, and there you are. You can add anything else you fancy, from any part of the larder you please, I should judge, going by the different old recipes I have seen: a little salad, perhaps, a few sardines, half a pound of cheese, a pint of mustard, and a gallon of

treacle might improve it, and, anyway, couldn't make it much worse. If you think it wasteful to make pigs'-wash with it, or fire it at Christmas-box hunters from an upper window, you may distribute it among the deserving poor; but in that case it will be well to avoid the neighbourhood of the deserving poor for some time afterwards.

Perhaps on the whole, however, you will prefer to keep your soup and your pudding on separate plates, in the feeble fashion of this later age; you will possibly be very nearly as ill after all, which is probably the main object. Our robust great-grandfathers seem to have experienced some difficulty in summoning up a bilious attack worthy of so great an occasion, and, like the determined old heroes they were, they took heroic measures, and no doubt their desperate valour was crowned with success and sick-headache. “Pheasants drenched in ambergrease,” we read, was another of the desperate expedients they tried, and I hope I shall never hear another phrase so provocative of deadly discomfort in the stomach. “Ambergrease” itself is terrible, with its horrid suggestions of the cleaning of an old briar pipe, and when I go for comfort to the dictionary I find that ambergrease is “a morbid secretion of the spermaceti whale”! A morbid secretion of the spermaceti whale! Good heavens! After that give me my houseless snowstorm, my rug-straps, and my freezing barrel of oysters.

There is one fine old British sport, by the way, first practised by Cromwell's soldiers two hundred and fifty years ago, that is still regularly revived in many parishes at Christmas, though in a far feebler way than that practised by the Ironsides, who were not particular, either, as to what time of the year they indulged in the game. In those hearty days the implements were matchlocks, hammers, axes, picks, spades, brickbats, and clinkers, and ancient churches were the scenes of the diversion. Many a headless effigy, smashed carving, or vanished window gives witness to the weight of the merry pick or the deadly accuracy of the festive brickbat wielded by those pleasantly pious old saints. Nowadays the scene is still the church, but the feebler implements (except the hammers) are tin-tacks, screws, staples, holly, and evergreen, and the noble sport is followed by curates and enthusiastic ladies. The up-to-date name for it is “decorating the church,” and notwithstanding the lack of picks and brickbats it is surprising what a

deal of Ironsiding a healthy curate can get through in an hour with a box of nails and a hammer, flitting merrily from pulpit to rood-screen and from altar-rail to high-backed pew, sometimes by exception hitting an iron nail, more usually a thumb-nail, but in the majority of whacks taking it out of oak panelling and carving and ancient plaster. One rule of the game is that the curate, *being* a curate, and, moreover, being

of return match, in which the curate and the ladies wield pincers, pliers, and tongs, much innocent rivalry being exhibited as to who can snatch out the nail with the most timber attached to it.

The experienced find that the best results are obtained at this stage by the combined use of hammer and pincers—the hammer to knock the nail sideways first, and so ensure a handsome output of splinters at the final extraction. Thus healthy sport and respect for the antique are combined with a proper display of greengrocery on the occasion of the Church's chief service of the year, while the curate and the young ladies are given an opportunity of leaving their marks for the admiration of posterity by the side of those of Jedediah Snuffletext and his comrades.

And the sexton will say to visitors, "That there's where Cromwell's soldiers knocked the top off the font, and this here's where the curate drove a staple into a wooden angel's chest, and them chips an' splinters is where the squire's niece put in a four-inch screw with a good hard whang of the vestry poker, and there's a dispute about that there wooden figure on the tomb with half its head split off; some says Puritans, and some says the last rector's sister with a big lump



in church, must not make any remark when his thumb gets it, but may relieve his feelings by an extra wild swipe at the consecrated fane. And a kind lady with a flaming wall-text and a gallon of tin-tacks can Cromwellize admirably, too, getting more twisted tacks into a square foot of old panelling than the inexperienced would believe it to be capable of holding. After Christmas there is a sort

of holly and a bill-hook."

I have heard of some poor-spirited rectors who are out of sympathy with this time-honoured sport, and who tyrannically insist that Christmas decorations must be tied up carefully with string. But there are not very many of them, let us hope; and even they have no legal right to search a lady's pocket for tin-tacks.





ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

“**W**ASSAIL THE TREES, THAT THEY MAY BEAR
YOU MANY A PLUM AND MANY A PEAR;
FOR MORE OR LESS FRUITS THEY WILL BRING,
AS YOU DO GIVE THEM WASSAILING.”

THE AMERICAN CARVER.

A batchelor tried to carve a goose,
In vain!
He could not find a thigh-bone loose,
'Twas plain;
He stuck a fork in the creature's breast,
And gravy spurted over his vest,
The guests all smiled like seraphs blest
Again.

The carver's face was red and white,
Indeed;
He sawed away, if that he might
Succeed;
His collar parted with a snap,
His coat-tail flapped with many a flap,
The goose slid in the hostess lap
With speed.—*Philadelphia News.*



CHRISTMAS BONBONS.

A wilderness of sweets.—*Milton.*

A box where sweets compacted lie.—*Herbert.*



O the juvenile members of the household, Christmas without *bonbons* is like the Fourth of July without fire crackers. Let them have a bountiful supply. First, however, let us assure ourselves that these sweetmeats are perfectly pure and wholesome. Probably the most satisfactory way of doing this is to make them at home. If one is willing to devote a little time and patience to the work, a great variety of most delicious *bonbons* may be made at less than half the price ordinarily charged by the confectioner. Recipes have been often given for various cream candies compounded of confectioner's sugar worked to a paste with water and the white of an egg. The chief, if not the only merit, which these possess, is that they are very quickly prepared. They are so greatly inferior to the boiled cream confections in every way, especially in wholesomeness, that no space will be devoted to them here.

Granulated sugar may be recommended for all creams as being more *reliable* than powdered or confectioner's sugar. Excellent results are produced with the pulverized sugar oftentimes, but it is not so uniformly pure. In making the foundation cream the writer invariably uses water and the granulated sugar. Milk or cream is preferred to water by some good *bonbon* makers. One objection may be urged against either of these, which the inexperienced will do well to consider. If one chances to fail in the first experiment with the foundation cream, it is a simple matter to add more water and repeat the process, and the cream will not suffer because of the second boiling. Where milk is used, the flavor of the cream is likely to be impaired by so much cooking, and this is even more noticeable with cream.

Foundation Cream.

To a pint of granulated sugar allow a scant half-pint of water. Place them on the back of the range in a granite kettle or bright tin basin, until the sugar has nearly dissolved, shaking the kettle

occasionally to assist the process, but never stirring. Bring forward and boil, skimming off whatever impurities rise to the surface without disturbing the syrup. When it has boiled ten minutes, test the syrup by allowing it to run slowly from the end of a spoon. It will soon drip in elongated drops, and finally a long fine thread will float from the end of the spoon. As soon as this appears, remove from the fire and set in a pan of snow or in ice-water, and allow it to partially cool. While still blood warm begin to work it with a stout spoon. Should the syrup be boiled too long a crust will have formed on the top, which may be removed before stirring. When cooked exactly right the surface is covered with a thin skin. When the syrup thickens and whitens add a pinch of cream of tartar. Beat again until thick enough to handle, then work with the hands. Add any flavoring desired. This foundation cream is the base of almost all fine, rich *bonbons*. Its excellence depends upon several conditions. First, the sugar should be pure; it should be allowed to dissolve gradually; it should not be stirred at all while on the stove; it must be cooked to exactly the right consistency; it should be partially cooled before being worked, and then worked vigorously and well. A little experience enables one to tell just the instant the syrup should be removed from the fire, and the rest of the work presents no obstacles. If cooked too long the cream will "grain" and become dry and hard, while with too little cooking one will not be able to mould it.

Cocoanut Balls.

Flavor a portion of the foundation cream with vanilla and work in a little desiccated cocoanut. Form into small balls and set in a cold place for a little time. Moisten each *slightly* with beaten white of egg—a brush is excellent for this purpose—then roll in grated cocoanut and set in a cold place till firm.

Fig Strips.

Chop a few figs, and cook with a little water and sugar until they become a thick paste. Make a small sheet of the cream, spread with the fig paste, which should be cold, cover with another sheet of the cream, press together well, and cut in short strips or squares.

Creamed Almonds.

Flavor the cream with almond extract and form into loaf-shaped candies. Press an almond into the center of each and roll in coarse sugar or in chopped almonds, as preferred. It is customary to use the almonds without blanching, as the flavor is finer.

Walnut Creams.

Flavor the cream very delicately with rose water, form into balls, and press half of a fine English walnut into each. Hickory nuts are equally good, though the balls should be made smaller for these.

Chocolate Creams.

Vanilla or lemon is best for flavoring the cream. Make into small balls and set aside on a buttered plate till firm. Break up some Baker's chocolate and set the basin containing it in boiling water until the chocolate has dissolved. Add a tiny bit of butter or melted suet to thin it a little. Drop the cream balls, one at a time, in the chocolate till all are coated, then set away to harden. In coating the creams, long slender sticks will be found very helpful. Hard wood toothpicks will answer nicely.

Chocolate Cocoanuts.

Chocolate cocoanuts, which are especially fine, are made very much like the creams save that a little desiccated cocoanut is worked into the cream which is moulded into oblong shapes, then rolled in chocolate. Other chocolates contain walnut meats, almonds or filberts.

The French candied fruits help one in making a variety, the pineapple being especially nice. One slice is sufficient for a good many *bonbons*. The cherries are not quite so good eating, but help to make an attractive assortment.

Some of the *bonbons* may be tinted pink by adding to part of the cream a very little fruit coloring extract.

Ribbon Strips.

Ribbon strips are very pretty. Divide the cream into three equal parts. Add a little dissolved chocolate to one, the pink extract to another, and flavor the third portion with vanilla. Make them into three layers, press together, and when firm cut in small strips.

Chocolate Caramels, No. 1.

One pint of brown sugar, one gill of sweet milk, one-half pint of molasses, one-half cake of Baker's chocolate, grated, and a good tea-

spoonful of butter. Boil over a slow fire, stirring until the ingredients are dissolved and occasionally afterward, as it burns easily. Test it by dropping a little into cold water. If it hardens quickly remove at once from the fire, flavor with vanilla and pour into buttered tins. One should be careful in adding the extract, as the heat is likely to set fire to the alcohol, especially if added while on the stove. When cool, mark the caramels in squares with a buttered knife.

Chocolate Caramels, No. 2.

One cupful of grated chocolate, one cupful of molasses, one-half cupful of milk, and one cupful of brown sugar. Stir till dissolved, then add a teaspoonful of butter. Boil and test as in previous recipe. Flavor with vanilla after taking from the fire.

Molasses Cocoanuts.

Boil together one cupful of molasses, one-half cupful of brown sugar, a small bit of butter and a teaspoonful of vinegar. When cooked, stir in one cupful of desiccated coconut and remove from fire. This, when cool, may be formed into small rolls. If preferred, more coconut may be used and flavoring.

Nut Candy.

Line a buttered tin with nut meats, either freshly roasted peanuts, hickory nuts or almonds. Place on back of the fire one quart of light brown sugar and one cupful of water. Cook slowly. Test as in previous recipes, and when done flavor and pour over the nuts. Mark into strips when cool. Maple sugar may be substituted for brown sugar, with good result.

Sliced Coconut Candy.

Pare a coconut and slice thin. Cover buttered tins with the slices. Boil on top of the stove two pounds of sugar and one pint of water. Test frequently, and when a few drops become brittle and hard in cold water remove from fire, add flavoring and pour over the sliced coconut.

In packing a *bombon* box, place pieces of oiled paper, such as confectioners use for this purpose, between the different layers, thus protecting the soft, moist creams from the heavier *bombons*. Pretty boxes are now sold quite reasonably, and, filled with the delicious home-made sweets, make very attractive little gifts.

—Sara Sedgwick.



Desserts of Nuts.

The "foam of chestnuts," hazelnuts, or of any nut makes a dainty dessert. For this purpose the nut must be shelled and blanched, boiled till thoroughly soft in water, then drained and washed and rubbed through a fine puree sieve. About a cupful of the flaked chestnut meats will be sufficient to use with a pint of cream. Whip the cream to a stiff froth, sweeten it with powdered sugar, using about three heaping tablespoonfuls, adding the flaked chestnuts (sprinkling them in by degrees). You may use a tablespoonful of Maraschino to flavor this dessert, or a little orange flavor if you prefer it to the liquor. Let the dessert be thoroughly chilled before it is served. Sometimes a half-cupful of grated chocolate, sweetened and flavored, is added to the foam. The clear pulp of the boiled chestnuts is sometimes passed through the puree sieve, slightly salted and served in a mound, surrounded by whipped cream and garnished by quarters of glace oranges.—New York Tribune. 1894

EVERY-DAY DESSERTS—PART VII

AND DESSERTS FOR EVERY DAY.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1.

Orange Ice.

Make as on November 20, with juice of six oranges and one lemon to one quart of water and three-fourths of a pound of sugar.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2.

Carrot Pudding (good).

Two cupfuls of grated carrot, one and one-half cupfuls of finely chopped suet, four tablespoonfuls of dark, brown sugar, eight tablespoonfuls of flour, one-half of a pound of raisins, one-half of a pound of currants, one saltspoonful of salt, one teaspoonful of mace. Steam four hours. Set in the oven twenty minutes before serving. Sauce 8.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3.

Mrs. C's Pudding.

Peel and quarter twelve tart apples. Put in a kettle with one cupful of molasses, butter the size of a walnut, one pint of hot water. When it boils cover with paste made of one pint of flour, one and one-half teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one small cupful of milk. Cover well and boil gently twenty minutes. Sauce 5.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4.

Lemon Jelly Sponge.

Bake in layers, cake made of three eggs, one cupful of sugar, butter the size of an egg, one-half of a cupful of milk, one and one-half cupfuls of flour, and one and one-half teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Spread between, three eggs, one cupful of powdered sugar, four teaspoonfuls of cream, and the juice of one lemon, set in a pan of hot water to thicken.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5.

Sago Peach Pudding.

Soak one teacupful of sago in one quart of tepid, salted water one hour. Boil till clear, adding hot water to make thin as porridge and sugar to taste. Pour over a dish of canned peaches and bake. Sauce 12.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6.

Roxbury Cakes.

Fry on a griddle, and eat with maple syrup. Make the batter of one egg, one cupful of sour milk, one-half of a tablespoonful of butter, one-half of a teacupful of sugar, two and one-half cupfuls of flour, and one-half of a teaspoonful of soda.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7.

Mince Pie.

Bake in two crusts, mince-meat made from the mixture of one pound of boiled beef, one pound of chopped suet, four pounds of apples, two pounds of raisins, two pounds of currants, one-half of a pound of citron, one pound of sugar, one quart of cider, alcohol to taste, one teaspoonful each of cinnamon and mace, and one-half of a teaspoonful of cloves.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8.

Hominy Pudding.

Two-thirds of a cupful of hominy, one and one-half pints of milk boiled together one hour. Add two eggs, one teaspoonful of vanilla, one cupful of sugar, and one tablespoonful of butter. Bake. Sauce 3.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9.

Coconut and Apple Tart.

Bake, in pattypans lined with pastry, rich, sweet apple sauce and sprinkle with coconut.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10.

Peach Cobbler.

Line a dish with biscuit dough, and put in a layer of drained, canned peaches, then a layer of sugar and dot with bits of butter rolled in flour, then peaches, and so on until the dish is full. Cover with the crust and cut a slit in the middle and pour in one cupful of boiling water and bake.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11.

Strawberry Roll.

Cut thinly rolled piecrust into oblong pieces, cover with strawberry jam and roll up and bake.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12.

Cake and Bread Pudding.

One pint of mixed bread and cake crumbs, one cupful of sugar, one quart of milk, yolks of four eggs, one tablespoonful of melted

butter. Bake in a deep dish, spread with jelly, and then with meringue made of the whites of four eggs.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13.

Midnight Pudding.

Bake in layers, one cupful of butter, two and one-half cupfuls of sugar, three eggs, one pint of flour, one and one-half teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one cupful of milk, one tablespoonful of melted chocolate. Put between, custard, boiled together, of one-half of a pint of milk, one-half of a tablespoonful of butter, one-half of a cupful of sugar, one-fourth of a cupful of melted chocolate, the yolks of two eggs, one teaspoonful of smooth corn-starch. On the top layer spread one-fourth of a cupful of water, three-fourths of a cupful of sugar, one-fourth of a cupful of grated chocolate boiled together, take from the fire and add the unbeaten white of one egg and spread while-hot.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14.

Roly Poly.

Roll biscuit dough one-half inch thick, spread with raisins and roll up. Boil in a floured cloth in boiling water, eat with sauce 7.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15.

Squash Pie.

One-half of a cupful of stewed squash, one-half of a tablespoonful of smooth corn-starch, one-half of a teaspoonful of vanilla, one pint of milk, one egg, one-half of a saltspoonful of salt, three tablespoonfuls sugar. Bake in open shell of pastry.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16.

Rice Fritters.

One and one-half cupfuls of boiled rice, four tablespoonfuls of sugar, one tablespoonful of melted butter, three eggs, one-half of a teaspoonful of nutmeg, and one tablespoonful of flour. Make in balls, pressing a raisin into the center of each. Roll lightly in flour and fry in deep, hot lard. Sauce 5.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17.

Danish Cream.

Soak one-half of a box of gelatine in water, add to one-fourth of a pint of hot juice from canned raspberries, three-fourths of a pint of sherry, juice and rind of one lemon, one cupful of sugar, and one stick of cinnamon. Set on the back part of the stove until the gelatine is dissolved. Strain in a mould. Sauce 10.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18.

Baked Omelet.

Pour two-thirds of a cupful of warm milk over butter the size of an egg; when melted add the yolks of four eggs beaten stiff, one tablespoonful of flour and two tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar. Stir in quickly the whites of four eggs beaten stiff. Bake in a buttered earthen dish at once.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19.

Wafers.

One cupful of butter, two cupfuls of sugar, two eggs, five cupfuls of flour, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, two tablespoonfuls of milk. Roll very thin, cut in squares and bake. Spread with marmalade, lay two together.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20.

Perfect Pudding.

One-half of a pound of stale sponge-cake crumbs, one-half of a cupful, each, of dried cherries, and sliced, canned peaches, put in a buttered mould in alternate layers, of cake and fruit. Pour over, custard of one and one-half pints of milk, one cupful of sugar, four eggs, and boil. Sauce 7.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21.

German Pie.

Fill an open shell with sour apples cut in eighths and set on end till the dish is full. Scatter over one cupful of sugar, bits of butter, one saltspoonful of salt, and one teaspoonful of cinnamon. Cover when it begins to brown.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22.

Buffalo Pudding.

Make dough, and roll thin, of one and one-half cupfuls of sugar, two eggs, one cupful of butter, one-third of a cupful of sour milk, one-third of a teaspoonful of soda, one-half of a teaspoonful of vanilla, flour to roll. Line patty-pans and bake. Then fill with jam and dot with whipped cream.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23.

Whitpot.

One cupful of cornmeal, one cupful of molasses, one teaspoonful of salt. Scald the meal with one cupful of boiling water and add to

one quart of milk. Bake one hour, stirring thoroughly three times Sauce 8.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24.

Lemon Rice.

Boil one teacupful of rice in one pint of water till soaked up, add one pint of milk, butter the size of an egg, yolks of three eggs, the grated rind of one lemon, and one cupful of sugar. Bake in the oven and make meringue of the whites of three eggs, and one teaspoonful of lemon.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25.

Plum Pudding (very fine).

One pound of chopped suet, one pound of flour, one pound of currants, one pound of stoned raisins, one-fourth of a pound of chopped citron, four eggs, one glass of brandy, spice to taste milk to make a stiff dough. Boil in a tin mould four hours. Sauce 7.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26.

Mary's Pudding.

To one and one-half pints of boiling water add the juice of two lemons and one teacupful of sugar, then three tablespoonfuls of smooth corn-starch. Cook ten minutes and add the whites of four eggs beaten stiff. Eat cold with sauce 10.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27.

Short Cake.

Two eggs, butter the size of an egg, two tablespoonfuls of sugar, one cupful of milk, two cupfuls of flour, two large teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Bake in layers, spread with jelly and ice the top layer.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28.

Apple Turnovers.

One cupful of sugar, one cupful of milk, three tablespoonfuls of melted butter, two large teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one egg, flour to roll. Cut in squares, lay a spoonful of apple sauce on each, turn over half, pinch the edges together and fry in deep lard.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29.

Rice Pie.

Two cupfuls of boiled rice (cold), three eggs beaten stiff, one saltspoonful of salt, one tablespoonful of melted butter, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one pint of flour, milk for soft batter. Bake on a griddle, and pile up with sugar and butter on each cake.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30.

Lemon Apple Pudding.

One-half of a pound of bread crumbs, one-fourth of a pound of suet, one-fourth of a pound of sugar, juice of one lemon, one grated apple, two tablespoonfuls of flour, two eggs beaten stiff. Boil in a mould. Sauce 8.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31.

Berry Pudding.

Two cupfuls of flour, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one egg, one tablespoonful of butter, three-fourths of a cupful of sugar, two-thirds of a cupful of milk, one-half of a cupful of drained, canned berries, rolled in the flour. Bake. Sauce 9.

—Ruth Hall.



WAX FLOWERS, No. 12.

BY MRS. E. S. L. THOMPSON.

THE PANSY.

Materials.—One pansy leaf mould, one bottle dark purple (dry paint), one large-headed cutting-pin, one small-headed cutting-pin, half package double white wax, half package green (a bright color but not light), one bottle light yellow paint, half dozen pieces green stem-wire, a little lamp black. Carefully save all small scraps of wax, laying them between the leaves of an old book. These scraps do for small flowers, stem-winding and calyxes. Cut out of white wax one piece the size and shape of Fig. 1, with a small Canton-flannel cloth color the underside purple. It is necessary to rub the paint on lightly, as the underside does not show. When using the dry

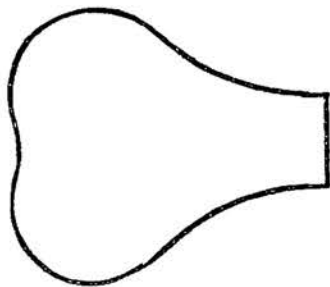


Fig. 1.

paint pour a small quantity of each color you wish to use into a small saucer; it is then convenient, and will not soil wax you do not want colored. Color the upper side of the piece like Fig. 1 with light yellow (a small spot) near where it is joined on the stem. You will see what is meant by looking at Fig. 4, where the whole flower is represented. Then with purple paint color a larger spot purple, around it a band of light yellow, and the remainder of the piece purple. The veining is done with the point of a lead-pencil dipped in mucilage, then in lamp black, and carefully drawn over in lines as indi-

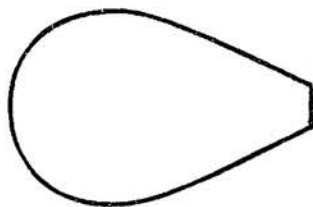


Fig. 2.

cated by Fig. 4. This veining must be done lightly, else it will cut the wax.

Now cut of the white wax two pieces the shape

of Fig. 2, only a little broader and longer. Coloring them as indicated in the engraving Fig. 4. All of these pieces should be rolled with the glass head of the cutting-pin before they are veined with the lamp black or placed on the stem. Cap the edges a very little. Never wet the head of the moulding-pin for flowers colored with dry paint, as the paint prevents the pin from sticking to the wax. For the stem take a piece of wire



Fig. 3.

three inches long, make a small hook at one end and cover it with a very small ball of green wax, first having wound your stem with a narrow strip of green wax.

Now, place the piece numbered as Fig. 1 on the stem. By looking at Fig. 4, you cannot fail

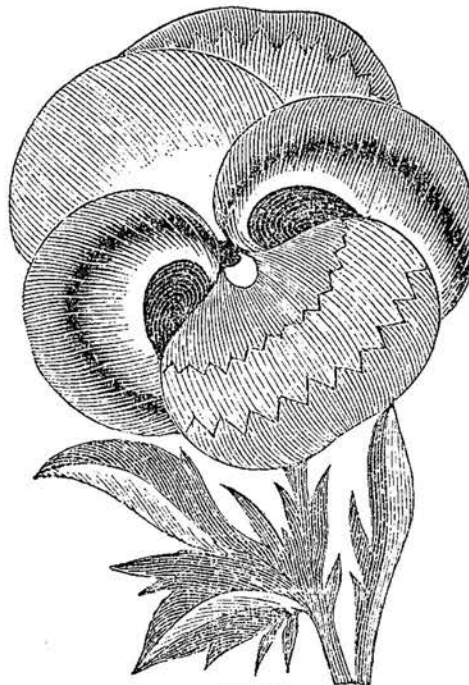


Fig. 4.

to see the exact arrangement of the pansy. When the pieces are all neatly placed on the stem, add a calyx of green wax cut like Fig. 3. The leaves are moulded on the leaf mould exactly as all other leaves before described in the articles on wax work.

A PINE-CONE CHRISTMAS.

WHERE GIVING AND RECEIVING WERE WEIGHED IN AN ADJUSTABLE BALANCE.



WISH," said Benny, wistfully, "that I had something to do."

But none of the family seemed to heed the remark. Farmer Stebbins scowled before him and brooded over the mortgage. His overworked wife sighed and kept on with her mending. The children did not look up from their studies, and Jake, the hired man, dozed in a corner. Miss Stain heard the pathetic words and smiled into Benny's eyes sympathetically. She did not wonder

that he was lonely and tired of sitting in that cheerless room, reading the weekly paper over and over, or the few books that he already knew by heart. She herself felt like throwing out her arms as Benny had, and protesting against the emptiness of the Stebbins's life.

Miss Stain taught in the village school and boarded with the Stebbinses. Every day Jake took her and the children to the little red school-house in the village, and came for them at night. After school hours she taught Benny. Benny was a cripple—a hunchback. She was very fond of Benny.

Miss Stain looked about the room, mentally debating whether she should go upstairs and sit the evening through alone, or remain with the silent family. Either was bad enough. Perhaps it was because there *should* have been a Christmas bustle in the air; that there *should* have been delightful mystery depicted on the mother's face; that Georgie and Bess *should* have been on tip-toe with excitement and curiosity, that the absence of these made her notice, as never before, the cheerlessness of the living-room, and remember that outside the fields were white with snow, that the orchard trees were leafless, and that for miles up and down the country road not a living creature could be seen.

By and by Benny slipped from his chair and went over and stood by his father. How small and pale he looked—that crippled boy—beside the muscular, weather-beaten man!

"Pa," he said, coaxingly; he laid a wasted hand on the shabby sleeve, and looked wistfully into his father's face; "don't you think—that *mebbe*—we could have a Christmas *this* year? An' a tree? We never had a tree."

The children raised their heads from their books and listened breathlessly for the answer. The mother held her needle suspended in the air, anxiously. Miss Stain waited, hopefully, and Benny clutched more tightly at the sleeve, while his eyes grew big and bright.

The children did not know that a lump came into the father's throat and a mist into his eyes at the sight of the pinched face and the touch of the little hand. It was a pity they did not know that he would have given his farm, at that moment, to have been able to say, "Ah, that we will, my boy!" But the mortgage raised its ugly head. It was always thrusting itself upon them. They were so tired of thinking of it, of hearing of it! If it would only go away at Christmas time! But it did not go away; it was there, and they could not forget.

"Christmas!" cried the farmer, bitterly. "What's Christmas to us? Christmas is fer *rich* folks, not poor ones. There won't be a Christmas *here*, I'm thinkin', till Christmas-trees grow their own presents!"

Benny slipped into his chair again, without a word, while the other children winked back the tears and tried to swallow the lump in their throats that hurt so. They had learned the

uselessness of entreaty. The mother sighed and plied her needle once more, and Miss Stain decided to go upstairs.

What a pity! she thought over and over when she was in her unattractive room. What a pity! to be a child and not expect a Christmas! To be young, and not look forward with the certainty of Santa's coming to the Best of Days! The teacher forgot her homesickness; forgot that she was not going to spend the holidays at Annis, as she had planned; forgot that she was far from home and kindred; forgot everything but the hurt, patient look in Benny's eyes, and the grief in the other childish faces.

If only her salary were not so small! If only she could think of some plan of a Christmas for those four children! After she was in bed, she lay awake for a long time, thinking, fancying the wind rushed by shrieking, in a hurry to pass a house where there would be no Santa Claus. Oh, if the spirit of Christmas could but once cast his genial spell over the household! She fell asleep, still thinking of the children, and dreamed that Santa Claus was in the top of the old pine-tree in the yard, pelting her with cones, and that as they touched her hands, they turned into beautiful Christmas gifts.

The next morning, as Miss Stain stood waiting outside the door for Jake to drive up from the barn, she noticed that the wind had shaken dozens of cones from the pine-tree. Just why she stooped and picked one up, she could never tell. It must have been the spirit of Christmas that made her examine closely the brown, scaly thing. As she looked, a sudden thought came to her like an inspiration. Why could not something be made of those delicately cut, shining scales? She had been termed ingenious, and had the knack of making pretty things out of little. Why could she not bring her ingenuity to account, when so sorely needed? She thought of it all the way to the school-house, looking at the cone again and again, sure that there were great possibilities in those brown scales. I am afraid that for the first time in her experience the conscientious little teacher allowed thoughts other than of lessons to enter her mind that day, for certain it is that when she came home at night, she was full of a plan that she had developed, and so animated with enthusiasm that unconsciously she brought a cheery little gleam of sunshine into the dreary home circle.

Miss Stain found Farmer Stebbins alone in the living-room, gazing moodily out of the window. She was somewhat afraid of him; he had adverse opinions concerning so "much schoolin'." He believed that "this learnin' put a lot of tomfoolery into the young ones' heads an' made 'em want things they couldn't have." And he had a way of speaking crossly. Miss Stain dreaded unfolding her plan to him, but it must be done, and there was no time to be lost.

"Mr. Stebbins," she said, "I've thought of a plan to-day that I think would please the children. You know I'm fond of the children, especially Benny."

Ah, yes, Benny! It may be the father remembered that a time might come when there would be no Benny, when only the crutch and the low chair and the few worn books and the memory would be left. At any rate he turned from the window and let her tell her plan, without so much as an impatient interruption. He did not seem to be much impressed by it. *He* had never heard of a Christmas that cost nothing, he said. But if she wanted to try, well and good, only she must remember he'd no money to throw away. He was not very enthusiastic, certainly, but the young teacher was not discouraged; on the contrary, she was even jubilant, and Benny coming in just then, she hugged him in her delight.

"Oh, Benny! we *are* to have a Christmas! Your father says so."

"*Did you, pa?*" Benny could not credit his ears.

"It's the teacher's doin's; *I* haint a hand in it. I don't

take much stock in it myself, but she can try, long's it don't cost nothin'."

After supper, Miss Stain and Mrs. Stebbins had a long talk out in the kitchen. No one paid attention to it, save Benny, who was full of the importance of the secret he was carrying. But when teacher opened the door a bit and called to Benny and Susie to come out there, Georgie and Bess began to wonder what was happening. Jake called it a "pow-wow." What was a "pow-wow"? Was it fun? Was it as good as Christmas? *Was* it a Christmas? The idea was too good to consider even. But what made Benny cry, "Oh, Teacher!" and Susie exclaim, "How perfectly lovely!" *Something* was going to happen. It *must* be—they dared not say it, but in their little hearts they hoped it—a Christmas!

For this is one of the dearest things about dear old Santa. *He* knows the pleasure of anticipation, and the very minute he is reasonably sure his offerings will be received, he establishes a sort of telegraphic communication between each little childish heart and his great Christmas office. Those Christmas mysteries—the knowledge that sister slips something out of sight when you come in, and that mother starts, quite frustrated, when you appear suddenly; all the little smiles and sly glances and knowing looks—don't you suppose that Santa sends them on purpose to let you know?

So the children began to suspect, especially when they heard their mother rummaging around in bureau drawers and chests and even in the attic. When Susie and Benny staid all the evening in Teacher's room and would not let them so much as peep in, they were more than certain that something "Christmassy" was brewing.

Miss Stain was not long in getting her materials together and her workers started. There were but two weeks before Christmas, and not a moment to be lost. The day after Mr. Stebbins had given his consent to the plan, before Jake came to take them home, she slipped over to the establishment known in the village as the Store, where everything in the way of general merchandise could be obtained.

She wanted boxes—"any kind, size, shape or color"—she smilingly told Mr. Dick, and that individual, glad to get rid of them, set out a quantity upon the counter. The number that Teacher selected surprised the group of village idlers gathered around the stove into something like animation. She was laying aside boxes, big and little, square deep boxes, large flat boxes, long narrow boxes, shoe boxes, hat boxes—why, it did seem as if Teacher had gone crazy over boxes; *what* was she going to do with so many? Mr. Dick could scarcely restrain his curiosity, and the loungers could not remember when they ever before had been so "stirred up" by anything!

After selecting as many as she wished, Miss Stain asked for the little wooden boxes such as berries come in, and for peach and grape baskets. There were not so many of these, but Mr. Dick managed to find several, some in use as receptacles for various articles in the grocery line, which he obligingly emptied, insisting that he did not need them. They were all somewhat dilapidated—old, stained and dusty—but Teacher assured him it made no difference, and that Jake would call for them all in the morning. Then she bought a spool of brown thread, ten cents' worth of linseed oil, a bolt each of the narrowest satin ribbon in red, yellow and blue; a small bottle of gold paint, and a few sheets of different colored tissue paper, and departed, leaving Mr. Dick more mystified than before.

Meanwhile Benny, at home, had been hard at work. His mother had gathered a quantity of cones, and had found a great many in different parts of the house that the children had brought in from time to time. Some had fallen in early summer and were of a beautiful green, some were golden,

and the greater number the brown of the ripened cone. With his sharp jack knife, Benny cut the scales from the cones, beginning at the stem end, and cutting one at a time, carefully, so as not to break or splinter it. It was hard to do this at first, but a little practice enabled him to do it easily and skillfully. He cut close to the cone-stem, that as much as possible of the beautiful red-brown tints might be left. Benny had never noticed how beautiful these tints were, nor how wonderfully the scales overlapped, each attached to the cone by a flinty, pin-like thorn, and hiding two little winged seeds.

He worked energetically all day, and when school was over and Teacher back there were piles of loose scales ready for her.

"You've cut them nicely," she said approvingly. "Those green and gold will work up finely."

Yet it did not seem that anything pretty could be made from those dusty brown and green cone-scales. Benny and Susie looked dubious, but Miss Stain was in the best of spirits.

"Wait a bit," she said, producing the linseed oil. The scales were put in this in old earthen dishes and stirred about, that each might be wet. "Now we will let them lie in the oil until after supper," directed Teacher.

After the meal was over, when the dishes had been "done up," there was another "pow-wow." Georgie and Bess fairly quivered with curiosity by this time. Once or twice they discussed the feasibility of boldly breaking into the room. They contented themselves, however, by stealing guiltily upstairs and listening at Teacher's door, but it was very quiet inside, and the cold soon drove them back to the living-room, there to whisper together over the remarkable turn affairs had taken and to speculate on what the Christmas would be like.

The four in Teacher's room were too busy to talk. They sat around the little table, each with a pile of scales before him, rubbing and polishing away for dear life. The oil had softened and brightened the scales, and the rubbing cleaned them. When wiped and polished the scales were scattered over newspapers to dry. *The rags they had used were burned*, to prevent a farm-house bonfire, Teacher said, and the party separated for the night.

Miss Stain then took an inventory of her stock. Mrs. Stebbins had brought her the results of her search. "Tain't much," the poor woman had said. "I've brought everything I've got that you thought you could use; but, land sakes! what you can do with *that* truck beats me!"

But the teacher accepted the scanty contribution gladly, although it was, indeed, not much—a few faded ribbons, some pieces of an old brown silk dress that many years ago Mrs. Stebbins had proudly worn; some bits of a pink chambray frock that Bess had outgrown, and a yard or so of turkey-red cotton. Miss Stain examined them thoughtfully; then she went to her closet and took down a white wool dress that hung there. What good times that dress had seen in the days that were before she had been obliged to strike out for herself and seek a livelihood! It had seen several years' service, but it had been worn carefully, and the white surah sash that was attached was not soiled, only creased. How pretty that sash was! Should she do it? Would it be a sinful waste? It could be pressed and worn a year longer. But Miss Stain remembered the children and Benny's joy at the hope of a Christmas, and hesitated no longer. She unpinned it from the dress and, taking her scissors, resolutely cut the beloved sash into three parts. It was for Benny's sake. These, with a few ribbons of her own and a somewhat worn white silk handkerchief, she laid aside with Mrs. Stebbins's little offering, and went to bed.

The next morning, before it was time for school, she descended into the kitchen, taking the silk pieces, and in a trice, almost, they were dyed beautiful shades of red, yellow

and blue, with diamond dyes of those colors that she had had left from dyeing silk for a rug some time before. Jake took the boxes back with him, after he had left the four at the school-house, and Mrs. Stebbins hid them in the teacher's room.

Friday evening the real work began. Teacher made the first pine-cone article alone, Susie watching and proving an apt pupil, Benny sorting the scales, keeping needles threaded and rendering assistance in various other ways. There were busy times for the next fortnight, but the last week was vacation, and much was accomplished. As one article after another was finished, Miss Stain's fertile brain suggested a new one, and her busy fingers soon achieved a fresh triumph.

Perhaps *you* might like to follow her example and have a Pine-Cone Christmas. Miss Stain selected one of the small berry boxes. She first covered the open space at each of the corners with a bit of silk, fulling it on to make it stand out soft and fluffy. Around the top she put a binding of silk, but sewed it on full, so that it was more of a puff. She turned the edges under at the top of the silk at the corners, but along the sides of the box, inside and out, she did not hide the raw edges. Next she sewed on the scales, beginning at the upper right-hand corner, placing the first one so that its tip lapped over and hid the edge of the puff and also the raw edge of the puff at the corner. The second scale lapped a trifle over the first, and so on around the box. The second row was put on so that the tip of each scale came between the two above it, as low as possible without showing the stitches, to let the red-brown tints be seen. In her prettiest articles, Miss Stain put on a few rows of green scales, then of golden, and finished with the brown, which produced a beautiful shaded effect. She found the largest scales most satisfactory, being more showy and more easily sewed on. The box covered with the scales, it was set aside and the lining prepared.

Five pieces of pasteboard, each a trifle smaller than the sides and bottom of the box, were cut out and covered with a layer of cotton batting. Next, silk was cut, larger than the pasteboard, and caught in loose soft folds to it. (In some linings afterwards she tufted the silk at regular intervals.) The silk left at the sides was turned down all around over the pasteboard and fastened. When each of the five pieces had been treated thus, they were slipped, a side at a time, into the box, and fastened securely, and the bottom pressed in the last. The cotton batting had made the pieces larger, and they thus were just the size of the box and fitted snugly. A row of the narrow satin ribbon, matching the silk used, was sewed around the bottom of the box outside to cover the stitches in the last row of scales, a bow was placed at one of the upper corners, and the dainty box was completed, repaying in fold its trouble and expense. By the addition of a cover, "scaled" and lined as the box had been, and attached to the box by ribbon hinges, tiny bows of ribbon hiding each end of the hinge, a charming Handkerchief Case was before them.

A Glove Box was made in the same way, using a long narrow box for a foundation, and a Jewel Box was also treated as the first, after having been divided into compartments by strips of pasteboard, covered with silk.

A wooden grape-box, a foot square, was converted into a beautiful receptacle for photographs, and another like it, made in the same way, was changed by the addition of pockets into a pretty Work Basket.

Miss Stain made this secretly for Susie. She lined the box with pink chambrey. On three sides she sewed full pockets, and in one corner a tiny one for a thimble. The fourth side was occupied by a little emery-bag, a somewhat larger stuffed bag for pins, and a dainty needle-book made of chambrey-covered pasteboard and leaves of pinked white flannel.

A screen-shaped Photograph Frame was next considered. Six pieces of pasteboard were cut, about six inches by nine in size. An oblong hole was cut in three of them—the picture window, Benny called it. The other three were covered on one side with silk brought over so as to cover the edges. In making a second frame these backs were simply gilded, and laid, silk side down, less than half an inch apart, and each two joined together by pasting a hinge of silk about an inch wide and as long as the frame over them. The three with the "windows" were finished at the outside edge by a narrow puff and the scales sewed on, beginning at the outer edge, tips upward. The base of the scales converged at the picture space, and the stitches and edge of the board were hidden by a narrow puff. The three "scaled" pieces were then attached to their mates and each sewed firmly on three sides, after which the frame was ready for its pictures.

A Hair Receiver was made from a round of pasteboard about six inches in diameter, clipped an inch deep all around at intervals of an inch. These clipped pieces were turned up a trifle and each lapped over its neighbor sufficiently to make the pasteboard hemispherical. Three rows of scales were sewed on; finished with a puff of silk, and the remaining space gilded. The puff gave the rounded bottom a foundation and prevented its "wabbling." A piece of silk, half a yard long and six inches wide, was joined at the ends, gathered to the size of the pasteboard and sewed inside the edge. If one is skillful, it is better to sew the silk on the pasteboard first and then add the scales. The top part of the silk was then hemmed, and a ribbon run in, and a convenient little bag that would not overturn, and might be placed on the bureau or hung beside the toilet table, as desired, was the result of their labors.

A Jardiniere was made from a handbox, the curved side made the desired circumference, and cut in two parts. When sewed together again the pieces at the bottom were made to overlap more than at the top, to give the necessary slope. Rows of scales were then sewed on. In one jardiniere they were sewed on to the bottom and the narrow ribbon used to hide the stitches; in the other the scales came a little over half-way, the uncovered part being finished by a band of wide ribbon. Jake sawed round pieces of wood the size of the bottom, and this was slipped in and fastened with tacks just before the ribbon was put on. The jardiniere was highly satisfactory, and any plant might be proud of so dainty a crock covering.

Match Boxes were made by covering small round boxes with scales, pasting in a lining of tissue paper, and finishing with the ribbons and a tiny bow at the top, with a loop to hang it by, if desired.

Hair-Pin Boxes were made in the same way, and tiny Pin-cushions also, with the difference that the boxes were filled with bran and a cover of silk added.

A Lamp Mat was made of a round of felt a foot in diameter. Beginning at the edge, three or four rows of scales were sewed on and finished with a puff of silk, leaving a bare space for the lamp standard. Another was made in the same way, the felt being first cut in deep points.

A Waste-Paper Basket was made from a peach basket. The spaces between the strips of wood were filled in with turkey-red cotton and the puff put on at the top. After the scales were added a lining of turkey-red was quilled in and a narrow piece bound about the bottom outside. A second Paper Basket, equally pretty, was made from an old muff-box.

The three were pretty well tired by this time, but Miss Stain had one more idea to work out, and the most unique and perhaps the most beautiful of all the articles was made. It was a Hand Bag.

She found a piece of Mrs. Stebbins's silk, which was a

pretty shade of golden brown, and was good. She took two pieces, the breadth of the silk in length and about fifteen inches wide, and joined both ends. One edge she hemmed and made a place for a draw-string at least an inch from the top of the hem. The other edge she drew almost together, within, say, an inch. A round of silk was then sewed on over this space from inside, and the gathered edges of the bag were fastened smoothly to it. Next, a round piece of strong cloth, about nine inches across, was cut in the shape of a large, five-petaled daisy. Teacher drew the design first on paper by eye, and then cut the cloth by it. This "daisy" was covered with scales, beginning at the tips, and working in. When the piece was covered, the center was fastened to the center of the bag and the petals sewed down. Done neatly, the bag did not require a lining. The silk was spread as smoothly as possible underneath the petals, and the fullness thus came between the points. A ribbon was run in at the top, a bunch of graceful loops fastened at the bottom, and Miss Stain surveyed a very pretty hand-bag with pardonable pride.

"I believe there is no limit to the articles one could make with these scales," she said, running her hand through the heaps which were left. "A few ingenious people with taste and ingenuity could do wonders in the way of a Pine-Cone Festival for a church or some institution where a novel entertainment was needed. We might be thinking of something of the kind for next fall, and raise money to start a library for the school." And Miss Stain's busy imagination already saw the old school-room bedecked with green, and money pouring in from the sale of dainty pine-cone articles.

"We've enough things for all of us, two or three times over," said Susie. "I suppose Bess and Georgie would rather have some toys instead of a pine-cone box, but it's the best we can do," she sighed.

"It ain't so much what we *get*," said Benny, philosophically; "it's knowin' we're *keepin'* Christmas. And there's the tree, you know."

When Benny and Susie had stretched themselves and gone off to enjoy a well-earned rest, Miss Stain looked over the scraps of silk and pasteboard that were left, for she had an idea of which she wished the children to remain ignorant. She cut the pasteboard into odd shapes—triangles, hexagons, octagons, pears, hearts, diamonds, etc.—and made boxes of them by sewing strips of pasteboard over and over, at right angles to them, forming sides. These quaint boxes she "scaled," lined some with silk and some with paper, pasted paper on the bottom to hide the stitches set in sewing on the sides, and then gilded it. Then, with covers for all and dainty bows of the scraps of ribbon left, the boxes were finished and smilingly hid away.

To say that Bess and Georgie were nearly beside themselves with curiosity, would be expressing it mildly. Nobody pretended to deny that there was to be "a Christmas." Every one was in the delightful flutter which the days just preceding the holidays always bring, and even the father and Jake seemed to catch the spirit of Christmas that was in the very air.

Three days before Christmas, when Farmer Stebbins drove into Annis with a load of wheat, Miss Stain went with him. The children looked wistful, but their father could not be bothered with them, and Miss Stain, for some reason, did not seem anxious for their company.

"Sakes alive! she's had enough of 'em the last two weeks," said the mother, as they watched the two drive off, not thinking it strange that the teacher should wish to be alone; but she *did* wonder what was in the bundle that Miss Stain had slipped so hurriedly under the seat, as if not wanting any one to see it. It was a big bundle, too.

About dark the two returned, Miss Stain very demure. but

seeming to have difficulty in controlling the corners of her mouth. She went directly to her room, and no one noticed that presently Jake slipped in from the barn, where he had been unhitching the horses, and stole up to the top of the stairs, where Teacher stood, waiting to receive the big bundle he carried, and which did not look in the least like the one she had taken away.

At last there was only one day till Christmas. Hourly the excitement among the younger Stebbinses grew, if possible, more intense. Even Susie and Benny, who expected no surprises, began to grow nervous with eagerness.

In the morning, Georgie and Bess were dispatched to the village on an errand, and during their absence Jake hauled in the fine old pine tree he had cut for the occasion, and under Miss Stain's directions set it up in the middle of the parlor.

And then those two took entire possession of the room, and let no one so much as poke his nose inside the door, not even Mother, who bustled about in smiling concern, wonderfully busy at something in the kitchen. Meanwhile Jake carried in great armfuls of pine boughs, and, after the running back and forth and up and down stairs had ceased, and the doors were shut, the bustle and stir and hammering and pounding and orders and assents and exclamations that were heard inside the parlor were simply maddening to the eager outsiders.

And then—Christmas morning! and with it the happy laughter and shrill cries of Merry Christmas! and the patter of little bare feet running down to the stockings! How the children scampered down to peep into the four little hose that, at Teacher's suggestion, they had hung up the night before. And, wonder of wonders, there was something in each!—a little bag of candy, an orange and a Christmas trifle—a bit of ribbon for Susie, a game of authors for Benny, a rubber ball for Georgie, and a doll's chair for Bess, marked with a "Merry Christmas from Teacher and Jake." And underneath each little stocking was a pair of the blackest, brightest, shiniest shoes you ever laid your eyes upon! Farmer Stebbins had done this. The spirit of Christmas had been too much for him, "an' they'll need the shoes, anyway," he said, to pacify the mortgage.

In all their lives the children had never known such a day. Everything went right, all day through. When had breakfast ever tasted so good? When did the sun shine so brightly all the long happy morning? When were tasks so light and chores so quickly done?

Farmer Stebbins—you never would have known him!—and Jake both joined in the games that Teacher taught the children. They had authors. They played ball. It was great fun. Amelia Rosalinda, the rag doll, sat in her new chair and looked on approvingly. Dinner was served late—and when had there been such a dinner? When it was over they popped corn for the evening, and then, as it was nearly six o'clock and the tree was to be viewed at seven, Teacher—or was it Mother?—suggested that they dress in their best for the important event. The children hailed this proposition with delight, and even Farmer Stebbins, although protesting against "such tomfoolery," was induced to don his "other suit" and a collar.

Mrs. Stebbins appeared in her worn cashmere—and when had she looked better?—and Teacher came down in the white wool, that did nicely without the sash, with a sprig of pine stuck in it to look "Christmassy."

Jake had long before started a fire in the energetic little stove in the parlor, and Miss Stain went in to take a last look, she said. The children were just beginning to watch the clock and to think that seven would never come, when there was such a jingle of bells outside, such a laughing and trampling of snow at the steps, and such an unwonted stir and bustle, that for one moment the TREE was actually for-

gotten, as every one rushed to the windows to see what it meant. But Mother threw the door open wide, and cried Merry Christmas! quick as a wink, just as if she knew all the time what was going on (and between us, she did, too), and the shouts of Same to you! and Merry Christmas! again, that came back, made the fields ring.

The children's eyes were like saucers. Was it Santa Claus? No, it was Farmer Krebs and his family, and Farmer Tims and his family, and the minister and his wife and sister, and the young doctor, and ever so many young people. It was not Santa. *It was a party!* The overwhelming importance and intense delight caused at the thought of having a *Christmas* and a *party* at the same time were beyond anything they had ever experienced.

Susie and Benny simply gasped in astonishment, and John Stebbins stared. But, in a moment, everybody was shaking hands and crying Merry Christmas! over again, and acting as glad to see one another as if they had not met before in years. And Mother and Teacher laughed and laughed. They seemed immensely pleased over something.

As for that mortgage,—well, the way that mortgage marched itself off would have done you good! It had hardly had the face to peep in during the day, but now it went off altogether, and no one so much as gave it a thought the whole evening.

After everybody had shaken hands, and the snow was brushed off and wraps removed, and cold ears and noses warmed, the tree had to be seen.

With much laughter and good-natured jostling and choosing of partners, they formed into a jolly procession and marched into the parlor and around the tree.

And what a parlor! and what a tree! Every one said "Oh!" and drank in great breaths of spicy fragrance, and looked at the tree and said "Oh!" again.

You never would have known the bare, gloomy parlor in that bower of Christmas green and color and light. Why, it was like fairyland, everybody said. The corners were masses of green to the ceiling. Each ugly picture was hidden in green, and green was over the tops of the doors and windows, and all over the walls, while bitter-sweet and partridge berries shone everywhere.

And the tree! Did *ever any* body see such a tree? It was a big one, but every branch and twig of that old pine was wound and hung and bedecked with Christmas fancies. There were tapers,—no Christmas tree in proper standing ever appears without tapers,—and there was *something*, yards and yards of it, red and blue and yellow, that was festooned all over the tree. The initiated saw that it was pine scales (Bless 'em!) strung side by side and dyed. There were also pine-cones gilded, suspended from the branches, and red partridge berries winking merrily, as if *they* could tell a thing or two!

But when it came to the fruit of that wondrous tree, every one was speechless. There was not a word in the English language fit to express the admiration due. If the children were surprised before, they were utterly dumbfounded now. Susie and Benny stared as hard as the others, and wondered if they were not dreaming. There was candy! There were books and skates! and *such* a doll!—*all dressed, WITH HAIR!*

Just then Santa suddenly appeared. Nobody knows how he got there, but there he was. He bore a strong resemblance to Jake, and looked a little taller than we usually think of Santa's being. But maybe the good saint grows from year to year. At any rate, he proceeded to unload that tree.

There was something for every one, which proves that *somebody* knew all the time that there was to be a party. And for the Stebbinses, besides the pine-cone gifts, there were such surprises. Susie's work-box was stocked—thread,

needles, pins and even a *silver thimble*, and in one of the pockets were a bottle of perfume and a dainty handkerchief. Benny had a set of books,—ah, you should have seen his face! and Georgie the skates and a knife with *four blades*, and Bess the doll and a tiny gold ring. If there ever were happier children, *I'd* like to see them. And Mrs. Stebbins had a pair of black kid gloves and a pretty handkerchief, and her husband a muffler.

The family were beyond words. Each looked at the other as if to say, *Where* did these things come from? But no one could tell them, and soon they gave themselves up to the enjoyment of their possessions, without trying to solve the mystery.

Miss Stain was fairly overwhelmed with compliments. The young doctor in particular seemed never tired of praising her ingenuity. To think she could make such beautiful things out of cone-scales, he said. Every one else said the same.

"An' I helped," insisted Benny, with dignity.

When the tree and the gifts had been admired, they were called out to discuss sandwiches and coffee, with an accompaniment of cunning little cakes with pink icing, apples, popcorn, and cracked hickory nuts, which proved to be as satisfactory, in a different way, as the tree.

Games followed, good old games like Hide the Thimble and Blind Man's Buff, which seem to have gone out of fashion nowadays.

It was too bad to stop the fun and say good-by to Christmas and go away. But little eyes, even at Christmas, will not stay open all night, and finally wraps were donned, and the teams driven up from the barn, and, full of the Pine-Cone Christmas, the guests said good-night, each declaring that there must be another such time next year.

By and by they were all snugly tucked away under the big buffalo-ropes, and one after another the teams and cutters pulled out of the yard with their laughing loads, every one giving a final cheer for the Stebbins's Pine-Cone Christmas!

When it was all over and the family were taking a last look for the night at the presents, the farmer said, almost sharply, to Teacher:

"See here! where'd these things come from? *You* didn't go off an' buy 'em, did ye?"

Miss Stain laughed. "I said it would be a Pine-Cone Christmas, and it was, from first to last," she insisted.

Then she told them how she had made fancy-shaped bon-bon boxes, which she had sold to the confectioner at Annis for a good price. And that three of the large boxes, which no one seemed to have missed, she had disposed of at a fancy store in that town. The money had purchased the tapers and candy, besides the gifts, and had repaid her for the original outlay in oil, ribbon, etc. But she said nothing about the sash, only "I'm so glad you are pleased."

"But *you* haven't a single thing!" Benny suddenly cried, with contrition.

"That's so! But here's a kiss, an' I'll *never* miss in jography again long's I live!" cried loving little Bess.

They did not know that Miss Stain, having learned that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," had reaped the richest harvest of pleasure from the Pine-Cone Christmas.

—*Mary E. Child.*





IF CANDLEMAS DAY BE FAIR & BRIGHT,
WINTER WILL HAVE ANOTHER FLIGHT.
BUT IF CANDLEMAS DAY BRING
CLOUDS & RAIN,
WINTER IS GONE & WON'T COME AGAIN."

AN OLD WEATHER PROVERB



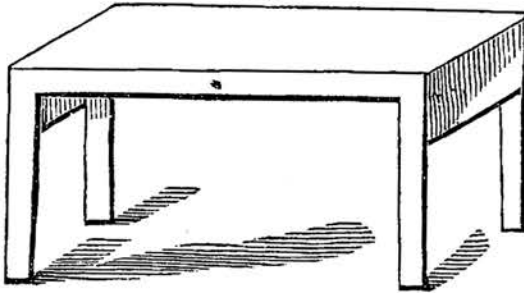
JUVENILE DEPARTMENT.

CARD-BOARD TOYS.

CARD-BOARD will be found extremely convenient in making almost anything in toy furniture and decoration; but in addition to this, a small cutting-board, made of rather hard wood, should be provided, a sharp-pointed penknife, and flat ruler. Compasses, box of colors, and a black lead-pencil, will be required for the more finished works. Some gum dissolved in warm water is also necessary, or a bottle of adhesive mucilage may be procured, together with a brush, which is extremely clean and convenient for fixing the various parts together. Where any wood-work is used, a little glue dissolved in hot water will be found to be the best.

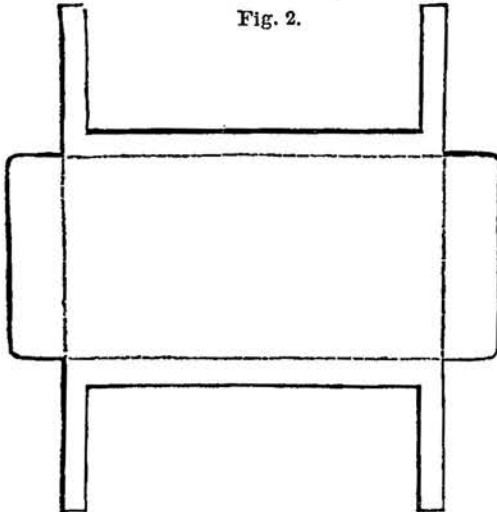
TO FURNISH A DOLL'S HOUSE WITH CARD-BOARD TOYS.

Fig. 1.



For a *Table*, cut out with your knife half through the dotted lines in Fig. 2; bend downwards all the

Fig. 2.



dotted lines, and you will have a perfect table. To form the *Chairs*, cut out the outer form of the dia-

Fig. 1.

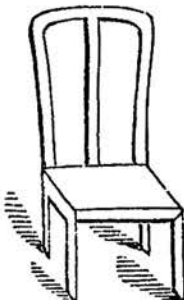
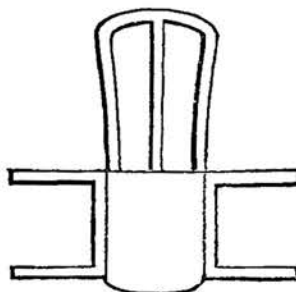
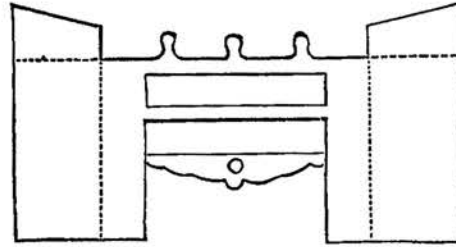


Fig. 2.



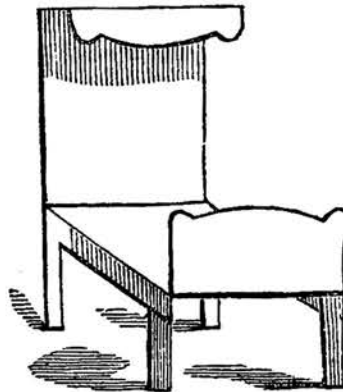
gram, Fig. 2, and in between the back rails with your knife; bend downwards the sides and legs, and turn the back upwards to form the chair, Fig. 1.

A *Fireplace* may also be cut out the shape of the annexed diagram, the inside portions with a pen-



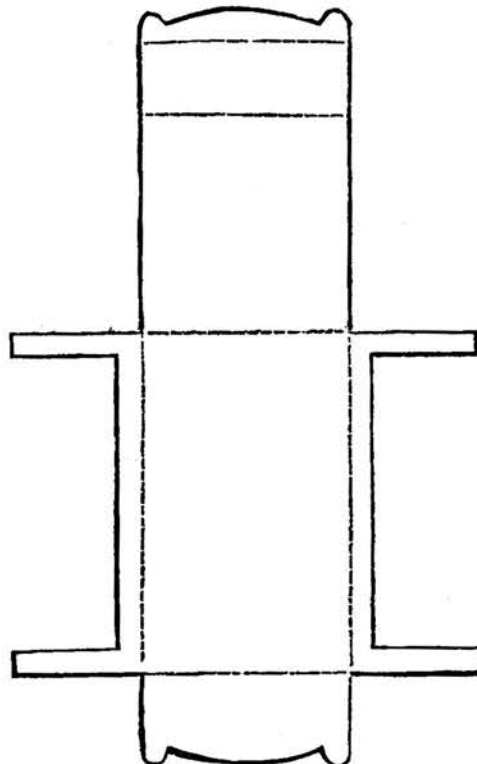
knife; to form the dotted sides double over from the dotted lines, and from the top dotted lines downwards.

Fig. 1.



For the *Bed* cut out the form of Fig. 2; double over for sides and legs the dotted lines downwards, and

Fig. 2.



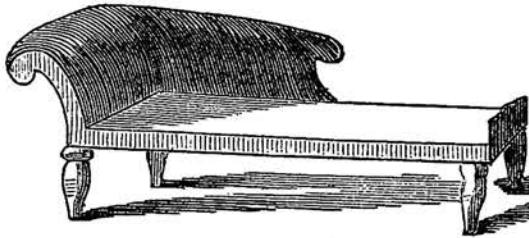
for the back upwards at the dotted lines, and for the canopy at the top, double inwards the dotted lines, and it will form the bed, Fig. 1.

JUVENILE DEPARTMENT.

CARD-BOARD TOYS.

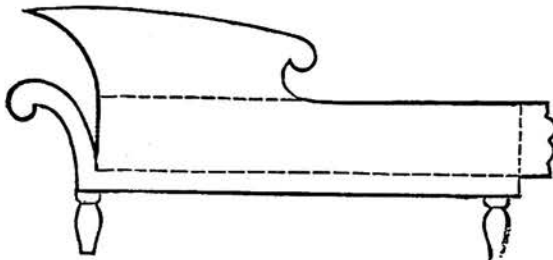
Couch (Fig 1). Take a piece of card-board half as large again as the diagram (Fig. 2), and having cut

Fig. 1.



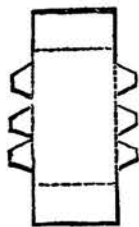
out the outside shape, cut with a penknife and ruler *half through* the dotted line on the face of the card *in front*, and bend over to form the side, arm, and legs, and for the end and back cut *half through* the

Fig. 2.



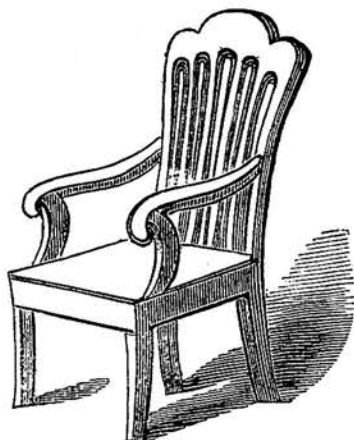
dotted lines on the other side and turn them upwards, which will form the seat, back, and end. To make the head of the couch it will be necessary to make another pattern, Fig. 3. Cut *half through* the

Fig. 3.



dotted lines at the bottom and right hand side at the back of the card, and the left hand side on the *front*, and turning them over, fix first the under portion to the front end below the bottom of the couch, and the smaller extremities to the out- Fig. 4. side of the back, and the other to the inside of the arm; before fixing, turn over the outside end between the fore-finger and thumb. The two legs for the back may be made as Fig. 4, cutting half through the dotted line on the *back*, fix the upper end to the inside of the bottom of the couch, opposite those in front.

Fig. 1



Arm-chair (Fig. 1). One or two of this pattern may be made. First cut out the front and legs, and

half through the card at the dotted line on the *front*, Fig. 2, and bend over; having cut out the divisions on the back carefully with a penknife, cut half through the dotted line on the back of the seat and

Fig. 2.

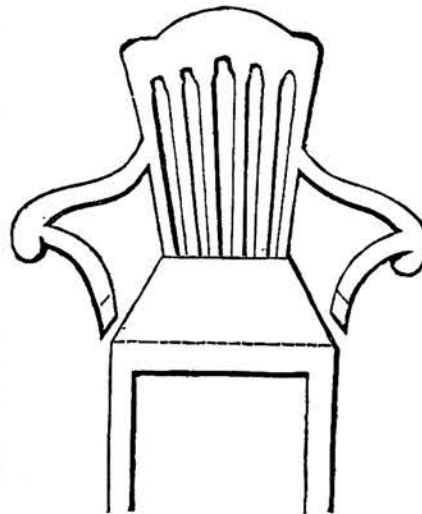


Fig. 3.



turn it upwards, having first cut through the dotted lines at the *outside* for the arms to turn inwards, and the small portion at the ends must be fixed with a little gum under the bottom of the chair. The two back legs may be made of two pieces of the form of Fig. 3, and by cutting half through the dotted lines and bending over, the small pieces can be fixed with gum to the bottom of the arm-chair.

THE CHRISTMAS PRETENDER.

When Christmas time is almost here,
And folks begin to wink,
And hush their talk when I come near,
Then I begin to think
I'll write to Santa Claus about
The things I want, to fill
My stockings.—He won't get the note,
But I pretend he will.

I slip it in the envelope,
And put it with the mail,
And beg mamma to send it
By the postman, without fail;
And thank her when I find it gone,
For doing what I bid;
I know she never sent it off,
But I pretend she did.

I take my stockings Christmas eve,
And by the chimney side
I hang them, while I wish that they
Were twice as long and wide;
And wonder how the chimney
Lets him down, that jolly man!
Of course I know it truly can't,
But I pretend it can!

And when on Christmas morning,
All the things I wanted so,
Are sticking from my stocking tops,
Or standing in a row,
I hug and kiss my mother,
And my father, too, because
I know it's mostly them, though I
Pretend it's Santa Claus!

—Mrs. George Archibald.

CHRISTMAS CHEER.

IN COT AND CASTLE—OF OLD AND NOW.



CHRISTMAS has almost always been associated with good fellowship and good cheer. True to their Saxon origin, Englishmen and their descendants everywhere have seen in every holiday an occasion for feasting. Plenty to eat and plenty to drink has been their idea of a festival, and particularly at Christmastide have they outdone themselves in the variety and savoriness of the dishes belonging more especially to that season than any

other. They then not only lined their stomachs with good capon, as did Shakespeare's justice, but stuffed themselves with all sorts of rich, nourishing food and strangely-compounded puddings and pies. The week before Christmas was occupied in filling the larder with capons, hens, turkeys, geese, ducks, venison, beef, mutton, pork pies, mince pies, puddings, nuts, plums, sugar and honey. The wine cask and the ale and the cider barrels were put on tap, and beverages were mixed that would puzzle a modern bartender. An Italian proverb in usage more than three hundred years ago says: "He has more business than English ovens at Christmas."

Our neighbors across the water know a great deal more about good cookery than we do, with all our lavish use of rich provisions, and several of their standard dishes might be adapted to the improvement of our tables at the Christmas time. Roast turkey, with its accompanying condiments and sauces, has become a standard dish throughout Christendom; the good American housewife can do no better than to return the compliment by enlarging her Christmas cuisine by adopting two or three of the "foreign dishes."

The first of the Christmas dishes served up at the manor house or the castle by our English cousins is the boar's head, as ancient at least as the days of Ivanhoe. And what can be more toothsome or superb-looking than this same royal dish? After being stuffed with parsley, thyme, sage, shallots and pepper-corns, rolled up in slices of the tongue, the whole pickled three days before it is simmered for seven hours in its own draining, mixed with salt, cloves and a pint of sherry, then glazed with a spoonful of soy and the white of an egg, its tusks reinserted, an apple or orange placed in its mouth, handsomely dished with rosemary or parsley spread around it, a nobler dish cannot be found for the head of any table.

Nor is it a costly or a difficult dish to prepare. When a boar's head is not attainable let that of a pig be substituted. Some might prefer stuffed ham, the bone of which is removed after parboiling and slits cut here and there through the skin, while a stuffing of minced shallots, chives, thyme and parsley is added, and the whole roasted. With champagne poured over the hot dish and cloves stuck in the peeled surface it makes a wonderfully savory and wholesome contribution to Christmas good cheer, hardly to be rivaled by the roast swan that has displaced the peacock, and which the turkey is doing its best to displace.

The fancy cooks of New York, Philadelphia and Boston flatter themselves that they are artistic and original when they put roasted ducks and grouse on the table arrayed in their natural feathers. But three hundred years ago Christmas dinners in England were ornamented with a roasted peacock, resplendent in his feathers, variegated tail and gilded beak. Sometimes a piece of cotton saturated with

spirits, was put in its beak and lighted before the carver began his work on this "food for lovers and meat for lords."

A swan is much preferable to a peacock, making as stately and a much more palatable dish. It far exceeds in delicacy and richness the best Christmas goose ever eaten. The swan should, of course, be young to be tender, and as it is in excellent condition late in the autumn, it seems to be a natural dish for the Christmas table. No better recipe can be given for its cooking than the old English rhyme:

Take three pounds of beef, beat fine in a mortar;
Put it into the swan, that is, when you've caught her.
Some pepper, salt, mace, some nutmeg, an onion,
Will lighten the flavor in gourmands' opinion.
Then tie it up tight with a small piece of tape,
That the gravy and other things may not escape.
A meal paste, rather stiff, should be laid on the breast,
And some whitey brown paper should cover the rest.
Fifteen minutes at least, ere the swan you take down,
Pull the paste off the bird that the breast may get brown.
To a gravy of beef good and strong I opine
You'll be right if you add half a pint of port wine.
Pour this through the swan, yes, quite through the belly,
Then serve the whole up with some hot currant jelly.

Served on a platter decorated with Christmas green, with a papillate uncurled about the shoulder, and with tiny swans at leg and wing, either cut out of white turnips or moulded in jelly, it is exceedingly presentable.

The celebrated plum pudding, the pride of an English Christmas, has already been adopted to a certain extent. The history of this dish is peculiar. At first it was a plum porridge made from mutton boiled in broth, thickened with brown bread, in which half boiled-raisins, currants, prunes, cloves, mace and ginger were mixed. The whole was thoroughly boiled and served with the meats. From that mess has come forth that glory of the table, an English plum pudding.

There is another Christmas dish closely allied to this, and as old as the oldest, and that is frumenty. It is not often prepared among us, yet it is considered very delicious. It is composed of wheat boiled in milk till just ready to break, then fresh milk is added, with raisins, dried currants, cinnamon and sugar, and it is boiled a few minutes longer, and still further enriched by a liberal seasoning of sherry.

The well-known mince pie is an ancient and popular Christmas dish. In Queen Elizabeth's day they were called "minched pyes;" and they have also been styled "shrid pyes." They were formerly made of neat's tongues, chickens, egg, sugar, currants, lemon and orange peel, with various spices. The crust was oblong, in the form of a coffin, in imitation of the manger, where the Man Christ was laid. The ingredients were supposed to refer to the offerings of the wise men. Neither the Puritans nor the Quakers would eat mince pies, on account of their association with the Popish observance of Christmas; but during the last hundred years it has become a popular national dish.

Last of all these old dishes is the wassail-bowl, which is familiar in sound enough, but which is hardly ever seen in this country. It is not such a guilty dish as it would appear, and if it got into popular use would relegate the much more dangerous punch-bowl to its dark corner. To make this famous wassail-bowl one has only to grate half a pound of macaroons, the same of ratafias, and a dozen small sponge-cakes into a large bowl—the handsomer this is the pleasanter the dish—and squeeze the juice of a lemon upon them; then whipping half a dozen eggs with a quarter of a pound of sugar and a pinch of nutmeg and cloves, drop into the conglomerate mass, stirring all the while, the boiling contents of

a bottle of sherry diluted with half as much water, and when it thickens pour it over the grated biscuit and cakes. It is literally a "dish to set before the king," and is wholesome and healthful as well as delicious.

I trust that not a few housekeepers will try one or two of these new dishes, if only to change the routine of their table usage. In many households there is a setness and regularity in the cheer of the various holidays. Roast turkey may be expected on Thanksgiving for a certainty, and roast goose on Christmas, and the side dishes alternate as regular as clock work. It is well to get out of this distressing routine, by introducing a new dish or a new way of serving it. I know of one family where mushrooms were served stewed when I was young, and it is stewed mushrooms to-day. The good housewife wouldn't any more think of broiling her mushrooms than of setting her table without silver forks, just because it would be disarranging the usual order of things. But variety is the spice of life, and we should hail with pleasure any custom or dish, that without great labor, will renew our cuisine and give it the charm of novelty.

—Clinton Montague.

"WILL HE COME?"



Three pairs of little stockings,
"By the chimney hung with care;"
Three little elfe, each saying,
"Saint Nick will soon be there."

Three pairs of little, pattering feet,
Going boldly off to bed,
Where mysteries and visions
Fill full each little head.

• • • • •

Three little night-clad cherubs,
Stealing softly down the stairs;
Forgetting, in their curious haste,
To say their morning prayers.

Three little voices shouting,
"Oh! Santa Claus *did* come,"
And Merry Christmas echoes swell
Throughout a happy home.

—Clark W. Bryan.

JUST AFTER CHRISTMAS.

'Tis the evening after Christmas, and poor mother feels, I fear,
She for one is very thankful it can come but once a year!
For most sadly out of temper are her little maidens two,
While she can but sit and wonder what on earth she ought to do.
In her heart, she blames the pudding that they ate the day before;
And the limp neglected stockings lying empty on the floor.
So she hardly likes to scold them, till their voices waxing higher,
Tell of trouble still a-brewing by the dancing nursery fire.
Where all day they've lounged and fretted; then she calls, "Children dear,

If you are so cross, old Santa will not come at all next year!"
There's a moment's sober silence, when asks anxious little May,—
"Do you 'spose he's round a-listenin', still to every fink we say?
I should fink he'd be so tired, when Christmas mornin's come,
And he's filled up all the stockings—he would want to go straight home."

"I asked uncle where his home is," now says older, wiser Sue,
"And he told me up the chimney, but I don't believe that's true;
'Cos he'd get so scorched and blackened; still he can't live very far
Not more than round the corner, for what do you think, mamma!
When I said I wanted dollie, in a little, weensy tone,
He was near enough to hear me, 'less he hears by telephone."
"Oh, his home lies far to northwards, and the way's not often trod,"
Says mamma, "though you may find it, some day, in the Land of Nod.

And if you should come across it, I am very, very sure,
Such a queer-shaped little cottage, you had never seen before;
For the roof is all of frosting, just the kind you think so nice,
While the walls are built of plum-cake, and the windows made of ice.
Then so curiously carven out of citron is the door;
And as if just freshly sanded shines the maple-sugar floor.

All around are playthings lying, and each doll stands on the shelf;
But the rarest thing among them is old Santa Claus himself.
How he cuts, and saws, and hammers, how he uses glue and paint,
Such a busy, cheery creature, is the queer old bachelor Saint!
Now he's stirring up the bon-bons; then he stops to knit his brow,
While he says aloud, 'I wonder what each child is wanting now!'
So he calls the winds and sends them where, at lessons or at play,
The little ones are gathered, just to bring back all they say.
Then he has to tend the holly, and the vines of mistletoe,
And the little fir-trees growing through the summer in the snow.

Now, when all his trouble's over, and without a single cause,
Don't you think its very naughty, to complain of Santa Claus?"
"Do you fink we've made him sorry, 'cos Sue said he brought to me,
All the best things and I wanted more upon the Christmas tree?"
Queries May, then whispers, "Santa it was drefful to complain,
And bofe me and Sue will never be so awful cross again."

Later when the stars have vanquished all the day-time's brighter beams,
And the little ones are ready for the happy land of dreams;—
In the evening's low petition comes a momentary pause;
Then each sweet voice softly murmurs: "God bless dear old Santa Claus."

—Adelaide Preston.



AMBER.

Amber comes mostly from the Baltic sea. Formerly the only way of obtaining it was picking it up on the shore where it was washed by storms, and in this pursuit many persons made a living. The increasing demand for it has led to dredging the sea-bottom. It is gathered also to some extent by divers. Very recently it has been found that the vein of amber extends under the land and shafts have been sunk to work it as a coal mine is worked. It may be that the supply thus made available will eventually reduce the very high cost of the precious substance.



SLIDING.

Seasonable Menus

Including a Christmas Dinner

BY MARGARET BURROUGHS

THE decoration of the Christmas table is oftentimes quite a problem. Flowers are never more costly than during the holiday season, and at Christmas time, when the spirit of giving is upon us, we hesitate to squander our substance upon these perishable luxuries, when the amount expended upon them might carry Christmas cheer of a more substantial sort into a number of homes. But it is possible to arrange a very charming table without them. It will be well to be on the lookout for Christmas greens fully ten days or two weeks in advance. One can often find a better quality of holly by getting it early, and if put away in a cool, damp place it will keep perfectly. Choose sprays having an abundance of large red ber-

ries. A very effective decoration consists of bands of the holly well sprinkled with frost powder. Starting at the four corners of the table these meet at the center where a pyramid is formed of holly, snowballs, and bright red candy shavings. At either side of the center place candelabra with red candles. If liked, large bows of holly red satin ribbon may finish the bands at the corners of the table, though these are not essential. A decoration of this sort will appeal to the young people of the household as especially *Christmassy*, and will be correspondingly popular.

A CHRISTMAS DINNER

Oyster cocktails
 Cream of mushroom soup
 Roast ducks
 Currant jelly. Olives
 Potato vermicelli. Lima beans
 Macaroni with cheese
 Orange sherbet
 Kris Kringle salad
 Crackers. Cream cheese
 Plum pudding
 Almond custards. Christmas cakes
 Bonbons. Nuts and raisins
 Coffee

It is not necessary to use oysters of large size for the cocktails. Be sure they are very fresh, and shortly before they are to be served look them over carefully, removing all bits of shell, and sprinkle lightly with salt. Place on ice till ready to serve. Prepare a sauce in the following proportions:—

Sauce for Cocktails

To a gill of good tomato catsup add the juice of a lemon, two tablespoonfuls of grated horseradish thinned with vinegar, a few drops of tobasco sauce, and, just before serving, two tablespoonfuls of powdered ice. The oysters should be served in small dishes, preferably in champagne glasses, and the sauce poured over them just before sending to the table. Pass with them either salted wafers or tiny graham bread sandwiches. This makes a very pretty course for a company dinner. The plate underneath the wine glass should be a small one, the bread and butter size being sufficiently large.

Cream of Mushroom Soup

To three pints of well seasoned chicken stock add the liquor from a can of mushrooms and a pint of sweet cream. Cut the mushrooms in small bits. Melt a generous tablespoonful of butter and stir into it two dessertspoonfuls of

flour. Pour a pint of the hot soup upon this mixture and cook till smooth; then add to the boiling soup. If not perfectly smooth and free from lumps, strain; then add the mushrooms and simmer gently a few moments. Serve with heated wafers. In case plain salted chicken stock is used for this soup, cook with it half a cup of diced celery and a tablespoonful of minced onion to flavor it, before adding the cream and mushroom liquor. Half a cup of whipped cream stirred in just before removing from the fire will improve the soup for some tastes.

Roast Ducks

There is a great choice in the variety of ducks. The canvasback is considered finest; next to this the mallard or teal. The mallard is the largest of the three and very good eating. Cleanse carefully, removing the oil bag, and rinsing in several waters. Fill with a highly seasoned stuffing, to which a very little onion has been added. Sew up the vents securely, season on the outside with salt and pepper and lay breast uppermost. Put a slice of salt pork on each and roast in a very hot oven. Tastes vary widely as to the length of time a duck requires. Many epicures wish to have the blood follow the knife as the birds are carved. In this case, half an hour in a very hot oven is sufficient. Others give them from an hour to an hour and a half. In any case let the oven be *hot*, and baste frequently. Cook the giblets in advance till thoroughly tender, mince fine and add to the gravy, if gravy is to be served, or, in case the gravy is dispensed with, they will prove an addition to the stuffing.

Potato Vermicelli

Prepare mashed potatoes in the usual way, beating them till very light and smooth. About fifteen minutes before sending to the table, put them through a potato ricer, heaping them prettily in the dish in which they are to be served. Set on the upper grating of the oven to brown delicately.

Macaroni with Cheese

Break half a pound of macaroni in inch lengths, and after washing carefully cook in boiling salted water till tender. From twenty minutes to half an hour will suffice. Have ready a pint of rich thin white sauce, and a generous cup of rich grated cheese. In a buttered baking dish place a layer of the macaroni, moisten with the sauce and sprinkle with cheese. Proceed in this manner till all the macaroni is used. Over the top scatter a layer of rolled crackers and pour two tablespoonfuls of melted butter over all. Bake till finely browned. More cheese may be used if desired, but it will be at the peril of good digestion.

Orange Sherbet

Boil together for five minutes one pint of water and one pint of granulated sugar. When cold add the juice of six large oranges and two lemons, and strain into the freezer. Freeze in the usual manner, and when half frozen beat in the whipped whites of two eggs. Do not freeze as hard as for ice cream. Serve in sherbet or

champagne glasses either with the meat course or as a separate course between the meat and salad.

Kris Kringle Salad

Mix together equal parts of diced celery and chicken; add one-fourth the amount of broken walnut meats and a few green grapes from which the seeds have been removed. Marinate with a French dressing, very delicately flavored with onion. Have ready some sour oranges peeled and torn into sections. Remove carefully all seeds. Lay two endive leaves or curly lettuce leaves on each plate and two sections of orange. Put a large tablespoonful of the salad on each plate and cover with mayonnaise.

Plum Pudding

The following simple plum pudding is not so rich as that which graces the Christmas board of our English cousins, but may be recommended as lighter and more digestible, and with the accompanying burnt brandy and rich sauce will certainly prove very palatable. Mix together one cup of finely chopped suet and one cup of dark molasses. In the cup in which the molasses was measured dissolve a teaspoonful of soda in a very little warm water. With the suet and molasses mix one cup of sweet milk and three cups of sifted flour. Now add a teaspoonful each of salt, cinnamon, and cloves, and half a teaspoonful of grated nutmeg. Mix well, add the dissolved soda, and last of all two cups of seeded raisins torn in two, and two tablespoonfuls of shredded citron. Before adding the fruit mix with it two tablespoonfuls of flour. This will prevent it from sinking to the bottom. Put the pudding in a greased mold or pudding dish, cover closely and steam three hours. When ready to serve loosen carefully from the mold, turn upon the platter, stick a sprig of holly in the center and pour a little brandy upon the dish and over the pudding. Touch a lighted match to the brandy just as it goes to the table. A simple wine or brandy sauce may be used, or the following

Yellow Sauce

Cream one-quarter of a pound of butter and mix with it, gradually, a quarter of a pound of sifted powdered sugar, or light brown sugar. Stir over boiling water until it liquefies, then stir in the beaten yolks of two eggs. Stir constantly till it thickens, remove from the fire and add a gill of brandy or wine and a very little grated nutmeg.

It is very nice to prepare a hard sauce also, by blending one-fourth cup of butter and one-half cup of sifted powdered sugar. Serve a teaspoonful of this with each slice of pudding, the yellow sauce to be passed by the maid. The combination of the two sauces is especially nice.

Among the delicate desserts which find favor at the Christmas tide in Merry England, one of the most popular is almond custards. Served in pretty glasses, with a little whipped cream and bit of bright fruit on top, they make a

dessert which is attractive as well as palatable.

Almond Custards

Scald a pint of new milk in a double boiler. Beat the yolks of five eggs till light, and add, gradually, five tablespoonfuls of sugar and half a saltspoonful of salt. Beat well, then pour the hot milk gradually upon this mixture. Stir well, then return to the double boiler and cook, stirring continuously until smooth and thick, when it should be removed at once from the fire. Have ready a cup of finely chopped blanched almonds which have been mixed with a table-spoonful of rose water, and add these to the custard. Beat for a few moments, then set aside to cool. Flavor with half a teaspoonful of vanilla or a few drops of extract of bitter almond, as preferred.

Christmas Cakes

Bake delicate cake, or any simple white fruit or nut cake, in small tins of fancy shape; frost with white icing and decorate with holly leaves cut from candied citron. The berries may also be simulated by using bits of candied cherries or tiny red candies. Delicate cake may also be cut in cubes, the corners trimmed away, then frosted and rolled in grated cocoanut for the snow balls for the center decoration of the table.

BREAKFAST

Hot baked apples
Shredded wheat biscuit
Broiled salt mackerel
Potatoes, a la Suisse
Toasted whole wheat bread
Coffee

There are many palatable ways in which the shredded wheat biscuit may be served. One of the best, as well as one of the simplest, is to heat them for a few moments, crush in the top, sprinkle with salt, and serve with plenty of thin cream. It is astonishing how much cream they will absorb, and it is not well to plan to serve them if the supply is stinted.

Broiled Salt Mackerel

Soak the fish over night in a large pan of luke-warm water, placing the skin side uppermost. In the morning dry thoroughly and broil over hot coals. Spread with butter, lemon juice, and chopped parsley. A little hot cream added just before sending to the table is an improvement.

Potatoes a la Suisse

Prepare a pint of thin white sauce according to the directions several times given in these columns. Add a teaspoonful of finely minced parsley, a teaspoonful of lemon juice and one and one-half cups of diced potatoes. Simmer a few moments, then stir in the beaten white of an egg. Cook an instant, stirring meanwhile, and serve at once.

TEA

Broiled ham
Cheese soufflé

Cabbage salad
Strawberry preserves
Cake. Chocolate

Broiled Ham

Have the ham sliced very thin and broil in a double wire broiler over a good fire. Turn often. It will require but a few moments and must be watched carefully, lest it scorch. Garnish with lemon and parsley or cress.

Cheese Soufflé

Cook together one heaping tablespoonful of flour and two tablespoonfuls of butter. Add half a cup of sweet milk, half a teaspoonful of salt, and a little paprika. Cook, stirring vigorously, till smooth; then add the beaten yolks of three eggs and a cup of rich, dry, grated cheese. Cool the mixture, then add the stiffly beaten whites of the eggs and bake in a buttered dish about half an hour. Serve at once, as it falls quickly.

Cabbage Salad

Mix together half a teaspoonful each of salt and mustard, a teaspoonful each of sugar and flour, and half a saltspoonful of pepper. Add to this, slowly, half a cup of vinegar and stir smooth. Now add four tablespoonfuls of melted butter and a beaten egg. Cook in a pan set in hot water, stirring constantly to prevent its curdling. While still hot mix this dressing with a pint of shredded white cabbage.

For the Children

Cocoanut Confections

Prepare and grate a cocoanut and take its weight in sugar. To the sugar add half a cup of water and boil until it forms a soft ball when dropped in cold water. Then take from the fire, stir in the grated cocoanut, add flavoring of either vanilla or lemon juice, and stir until it is a smooth, not granulated, cream. Take out about an eighth of the mixture, stir in a little coloring of any desired shade. Drop the cream, cone shaped, on an oiled platter, tipping the point with a quarter of a teaspoonful of the colored mixture. These cakes are good as soon as cold, and are better fresh. They are exactly like the bought confections, are very excellent, and extremely pretty.

Candied Chestnuts

Shell as many chestnuts as will be required and drop them into boiling water, allow them to cook briskly for fifteen minutes, strain and rub off the thin outer skin. Dip each chestnut in white of egg and roll in white powdered sugar. When all are coated lay them on a sheet of white paper in a moderate oven to harden. Prepared in this way they are delicious.

Compote of Chestnuts

Partly roast chestnuts, peel, and put into a granite saucepan with one-half cup of sugar and one-half cup of water. Let simmer fifteen minutes and serve with whipped cream.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS OF THE HOME.

THE materials to be used include all kinds of evergreens, everlasting flowers, and coloured and gilt papers. It is a strange thing that though *mistletoe* is used in the decoration of houses, not a sprig of it is put into a church. But in house decoration no Christmas would be thought complete if there did not hang in hall or dining-room a bunch of its curiously-forked branches, with their terminal pairs of nerveless pale-green leaves, and white crystalline berries.

Holly is of course the special tree of the season. Its leaves bent into various curves, its thorny points, and its bunches of coral-red berries make it the prince of evergreens. Let it be conspicuous throughout the decorations. It is a good plan to strip off the berries, and use them strung in bunches, as the berries get hidden when the sprigs are worked into wreaths and devices; and the berries, bent into little bunches, dotted about the festoons here and there, look very effective.

Ivy must be introduced with care. Small single leaves come in with good effect in small devices, or to relieve a blackground of sombre yew or arbour vitæ. The young shoots of the common ivy are best, or of the kind which grows up trees and old walls, which are very dark and glossy, with a network of light-coloured veins.

Laurel is a very useful green in sprays, and the single leaves may be applied with excellent effect in wreaths, or overlapping one another in borders. The variegated *ancuba* makes a pleasing variety in the colour.

Yew and *Arbor Vita* are useful, especially the small sprays of them, for covering the framework of devices.

Myrtle and *Box* also are pretty in narrow borderings, into which coloured everlasting flowers may be introduced. The black bunches of ivy berries may sometimes be used with advantage, to give points of contrast in the decorations. Of course if chrysanthemums, Christmas roses, primulas, and camellias can be obtained, the general effect is heightened, and the decoration becomes more elaborate and more elegant. The best wreaths for decorating the banisters of a house, or any pedestals, pillars, or columns, are those made in a rope of evergreen sprigs. There are several ways in which such wreaths are made. One way is as follows:—Get a rope or stout cord, of proper length, and a quantity of twine and a handful of evergreen twigs. Begin at one end of the rope, which should be attached firmly to something. Dispose a bunch of the twigs round the rope, and tie them on with the twine; then dispose another bunch so that the leaves may conceal the stalks of those already on, and give the twine a turn round them, fastening it with a running knot, and so on until the rope is finished. This must be done at the fastening of each bunch of twigs. Another way very frequently adopted is, in place of a rope, to use only a piece of stout twine to run through the wreath, so as to prevent its falling to pieces, and instead of twine to tie the twigs on, to use fine wire, which must be firmly twisted round the twigs.

In all kinds of wreaths the thickness of the wreath must be carefully regulated at the outset, and evenly maintained throughout, and care should be taken that all the foliage is turned in one direction, especially where two persons are working at the same rope. The wreaths may be made of one kind of evergreen only, or of any number of kinds mixed: the latter has the better effect. There should be an equal mixture of the fine kinds, as yew, box, &c., to keep the wreath light and sprayey. Whether the berries be left on the holly twigs, or threaded and attached at intervals, is, of course, according to the taste of the decorator. If threaded, they are best fastened among the holly leaves in bunches about as large as the natural clusters, so as to imitate their natural effect.

In fastening the wreath to the pillars, take care not to put it on upside down, as foliage must never be placed in a direction contrary to that of its growth. When small chaplets or wreaths are constructed, each should be made by one person, as the effect is frequently spoiled by the two ends not matching, or it is otherwise wanting in uniformity. When the wreaths are finished, and before they are hung up, they should be kept in some cool place, or else they shrivel up; if necessary, a little water may be sprinkled over them.

If holly berries are scarce, a good substitute may be found in rose hips, which may have a small piece of wire passed through them as a stalk, and several twisted together. The fallen holly berries, strung on wire, made into rings, and slipped over the leaves, are very effective; also split peas, glued on here and there in the shape of small rosettes, look like golden flowers, and they may be made to resemble holly berries by pouring over them red sealing-wax melted in spirits of wine.

Where definite shapes are required, there are several methods of accomplishing the desired effect. Some use a groundwork of tin or perforated zinc.

If outline forms are employed, to be covered with leaves or flowers, these will be best coloured black. The method of arranging the leaves and flowers will depend in a great measure upon individual taste. If it is required to use masses of berries in such a manner that it would be inconvenient or difficult to fasten them together by any other means, paint the places required to be filled in with a stiff coat of glue, very hot, and drop the berries upon it. When the glue is dry they will be found to adhere.

Holly strung has a very good effect. It is very quickly done, and looks like a rich cord when finished, and all the banisters in a house may be draped in holly. It is made by threading a packing-needle with the required length of twine, and stringing upon it the largest and most curly-looking holly leaves, taking care to pass the needle through the exact centre of each leaf. Flat borderings, to lie flat along panels of cabinets, doorways, mirrors, and the backs of sideboards, should be made of leaves sewn in strips on brown paper, or yards of buckram, cut in strips and sewn together to the required lengths. Garlands or half-wreaths (Fig. 1) are best made on barrel hoops for their foundation. For making letters there is nothing that bends to the shape of the letters so well as crinoline wires. Single letters are best cut out in brown paper, and the leaves sewn on with a needle and thread.

Rice decoration is very effective, and looks like carved ivory. The required shape should be cut out in cartridge-paper, and firmly glued down to its intended foundation, and then covered with a coating of thick warm paste, or very strong white gum, into which the rice grains must be dropped, and arranged so as to lie closely and regularly together, and the whole left until it is perfectly stiff and dry. Immortelles, and other coloured dried flowers, may be used in the same manner. The best plan of applying the rice is first to take a small quantity in a paper funnel and scatter it over the design till dry. Pour on more gum, then scatter the rice on again, and repeat the process till the proper thickness and evenness are obtained. When finished, a sharp penknife will remove all superfluous grains. Monograms made in this way, if the shadows are picked out with Indian ink, roughly put on, give a very good effect. Alternate letters of rice and sealing-wax berries look very fanciful and gay.

Mottoes and monograms in white cotton wool have the effect of snow. They are produced by cutting out the letters in thick white paper, and pasting over them an even piece of clean white cotton wool, which is, when dry, pulled out so as to give it a fluffy or snowy appearance. The letters should afterwards be carefully trimmed with a sharp pair of scissors, and mounted on a ground of coloured paper.

If there is a lamp in the dining-room supported by chains, holly wreaths twisted round the chains look well; while a chaplet round the base, and a small basket filled with mistletoe, suspended from the centre of the base, look very effective. Borders of evergreens may be placed along the back of the sideboard, and if there be a mirror in it a small chaplet in the centre, and seeming to join the borders, looks very pretty. Pictures and mirrors can be framed with made-up borders of evergreens. Where these are square, borders arranged in



Fig. 1.

with fern fronds. Fig. 1 is a bordering for the cornice of a hall or large room, and is made of laurel leaves and rosettes of coloured paper or immor-

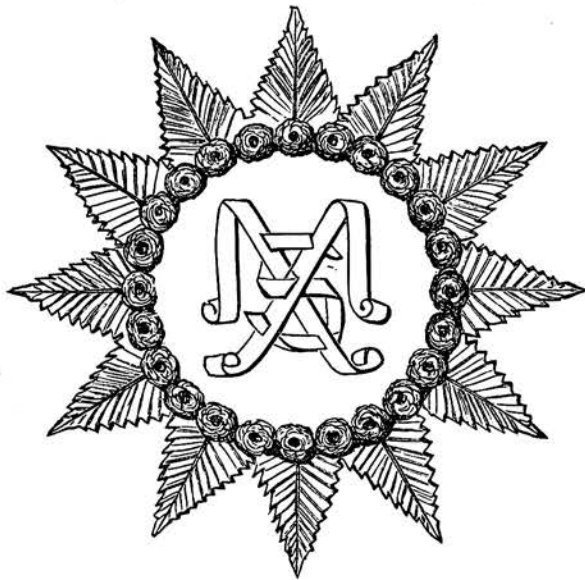


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

the shape of Oxford frames will look very pretty. If the entrance-hall be in panels, narrow borderings of box and ivy look well, laid on all round, and in the centre half-hoops or chaplets, or a monogram. Scrolls, with mottoes, bidding people to be welcome and happy, either laid on bright-coloured calicoes, with holly borderings, or else merely the word "Christmas," done in laurel leaves, and variegated with immortelle flowers. Even in the bedrooms the frames of pictures and mirrors can be edged with wreaths.



Fig. 4

In Fig. 4 will be found a bold and effective device for a large space, as, for example, the end wall of an entrance-hall or landing. The cross-pieces are stout sticks, the size of which must be regulated by the space intended to be filled; and it will be found advisable to join them in the centre by a cross joint, otherwise they will be very awkward to manage. They can then be wreathed with holly and mistletoe, as shown in the figure. The legend surrounding them is made of letters in gilt paper, pasted

on to coloured cardboard, and the figure of the robin is cut out in cardboard and painted.

The monogram in Fig. 2 signifies Christmas, and is very pretty made either of leaves and berries, or moss, glued on cardboard, and edged with three different shades of immortelles. The border is made of bosses of different coloured immortelles, and the outside row of star-points

telles. In Fig. 3 the trefoil is made of holly leaves, and the border of laurel.

In our decorations we must not forget the dining-room table when our guests gather round it. A very pretty centre-piece is made by covering an inverted basin with moss, into which insert sprigs of holly quite thick until it forms a pyramid of holly. On the top place a figure of Old Father Christmas (which may be bought at any bazaar or sugar-plum shop), and instead of the holly sprig he generally holds in his hand, place a small spray of

mistletoe. A great many lights are required, where fir and holly are much used, in table decoration, otherwise the effect is heavy and gloomy.

These hints will make it an easy task to adorn the house for Christmas; but half the pleasure consists in inventing new devices, and giving scope to one's taste and ingenuity, new ideas springing up and developing themselves as the occasion arises, till the worker finds delight in the work, and is thus best rewarded for the toil.



Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
 And the winter winds are wearily sighing
 Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow
 And tread softly, and speak low,
 For the old year lies a-dying. TENNYSON.

Those who have read that exquisite little song of Shakspeare's, at the close of 'Love's Labour Lost'—and who is there that has not?—can never forget the perfect and finished wintry picture which every line presents. The circles are first seen hanging beside the wall like great long, cold, bright-pointed spear-heads, which, only to look at, causes Dick, the shepherd, to blow his tinsling nails more eagerly; to stamp, and jump, and shake off the clouted snow from his heavy shoes, as he beats his numbed feet upon the ground. Tom, who is seated beside the large old yawning kitchen fire-place, jumps up as if he were struck, by the head of a cross-bolt, when he sees Marian enter, with her nose "red and raw," her milk starred and frozen, in the clean white pail, running down over the bright, cold, polished hoops, on which it has congealed, like beaded pearls. Tom wants no summoning; but, leaping up, with a "God a mercy," hurries off to the log-house, and, shouldering a couple of such mighty blocks as could only be burnt in the huge old-fashioned fire-places of Shakspeare's day, rushes into the large hall without ceremony, well nigh stumbling over the great shaggy stag-hound, which lies stretched out at the foot of the old Knight, who, seated in his high-backed oaken chair, watches the sparks, as they go dancing above the quaintly-fashioned hand-irons, up the wide dark chimney, and rubs his hands for very cold. Without, the wind is blowing, bleak and bitter, whistling round the gable-ends of the ancient mansion, yet scarcely turning the frozen weathercock, while beside the hedges, which stretch along the "foul

ways," the birds sit shivering and brooding in the snow—cold, with all their feathers, and scarcely able to peck the frozen berries, though their pointed beaks are rendered sharper by hunger. Sunday comes, and in the old, cold, grey country church, where the figures of Knights are freezing in icy mail, as their grim effigies lie stretched out with folded hands, the old Knight, having left his hall, and his log fire, can scarcely hear a word the parson says, for the loud and incessant coughing. One aisle coughs against the other; north answers south—the sound is contagious; it is caught in the chancel, and all the rounded periods of the old Divine are lost amid that never-ceasing chorus; and the old Knight is thankful when he again places his feet upon his own hearth, and sees his bowl of smoking lambs-wool placed before him, on the surface of which the roasted crabs bob and hiss, as they are popped in hot, from the red logs which Tom had piled upon the fire. Outside, the staring owl is crying "To-whit, too-who," somewhere about the red-bricked twisted chimnies. Such is the picture which the immortal Poet has drawn of Winter in twelve brief lines, each of which would form a text for a longer passage than we have written as a summary of the whole.

Now the brief days are cold, cheerless, and gloomy; the woods are naked and desolate; there is a sad, leaden, melancholy colour about the sky; the open country is silent, the fields are empty, the lanes abandoned by the village children, and, excepting the robin, you hear not the voice of a bird amid the whole

landscape. You wander on in the direction of the village, and there, upon the large frozen pond, surrounded by a few aged willows, you behold a group of hardy rustics amusing themselves with the healthy exercise of sliding, and making a strange, hollow, and unearthly sound, as they run upon the ice. You see the sportsman far off, with his dogs and gun, and behold the white smoke rolling beside the hedge in the valley, while the report awakens the low and soothing echoes. Further on, along the frozen and cheerless road, you see the village carrier's grey tilted cart, rocking between the naked hedgerows, as it moves slowly on past the cold white guide-post, by the embankment which is covered with withered and hoary grass, beside the long plantation where the snow is piled beneath the dark green fir trees, past the reedy pool where the flags stand with their sharp frozen edges, looking as if they would cut like a sabre, so cold, keen, and piercing do they appear.

Dracry would December be, did it not bring with it merry Christmas, with its holly, and ivy, and mistletoe, through the leaves of which peep the scarlet, and purple, and dull white berries, giving a green and snmmer appearance to our rooms, and throwing a cheerfulness around our hearths. We see the laden coach rolling past our window, piled high with game, hares, and pheasants, and great white geese, and black turkeys, whose plumage the wind blows back as they swing suspended from the roof; conjuring up visions of huge comfortable fires, well-spread tables, and happy faces, all congregated to do honour to good Old Christmas, whom Southey has beautifully drawn as seated beside the high-heaped hearth in his great armed-chair, watching the children at their sports, or pausing at times to stir the huge fire, and every now and then sipping the bright brown ale. For nights before the happy season arrives, we hear the village bells, awakening the surrounding silence by their silver music, and throwing a cheerful sound over the wild wintry landscape. When the morning of that old and holy day arrives, we hear the rustic waits chanting some simple Christmas carol, as they stand in the grey moonlight, at the front of the picturesque parsonage-house, telling how Christ was on that day born, and that while shepherds were attending their flocks by night, the Angel of the Lord descended, and proclaimed tidings of peace and good-will to all mankind. How plaintive and tremulous do those old chants fall upon the ear, sinking noiselessly and peacefully into the heart, and filling the soul with a holy and reverential awe; and, while the cock from the neighbouring farm makes answer to the carol of the village waits, we recall that exquisite passage of Shakspeare, in which, alluding to some old superstition, he says:

Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long.

Or we turn to those bye-gone times, so beautifully and feelingly described by Irving, who says:—"Christmas seemed to throw open every door, and unlock every heart. It brought the peasant and the peer together, and blended all ranks in one warm generous flow of joy and kindness. The old halls of castles and manor-houses resounded with the harp and the Christmas carol, and their ample boards groaned with the weight of hospitality. Even the poorest cottage welcomed the festive season with green decorations of bay and holly; the cheerful fire glanced its rays through the lattice, inviting the passenger to raise the latch and join the gossip knot huddled round the hearth, beguiling the long evening with legendary jokes and oft-told Christmas tales."

In our eye, Christmas never looks so beautiful as when it has been ushered in by snow, and frost, and rime; when the thatched roofs of the cottages are whitened over, and the branches of the trees are laden with feathery flakes; when the ivy that covers the grey and weather-beaten church-porch is half buried beneath the weight of accumulated snow, as if

Nature, in awe to Him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathise,
Hiding her guilty front with innocent snow.

Such a scene, witnessed under one of those cold, clear, blue skies which sometimes hangs over the earth in December, with the cottage chimnies sending up their columns of pale silver smoke, and a group of happy faces emerging from the ancient village church, sighing or smiling alternately as they recognise a child or a relation who has walked miles to bid them a merry Christmas—or, as they glance at the surrounding graves, and think of those who will never more sit at the high-piled table, over which the mistletoe branch again hangs, as it did in the days of old. Scott, in the following lines, has graphically described these ancient festivities:—

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the time to grace
Rose then upon its massive board
No mark to part the Squire and Lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn
By old blue-coated serving-man

Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.

England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought his sports again:
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

Those who have looked upon the shadows of the trees as they are reflected upon the ground at this season of the year, cannot fail at being struck by the beautiful forms which they present. Every twig and branch is as clearly made out as if drawn with a dark pencil upon white paper; there you see endless patterns for embroidery and netting—open-work, square, or diamond-shaped threads, that seem to run into squares and ovals, crossing and turning in every imaginable form. In frosty weather, almost every object we look upon is beautifully marked, from the ragged flakes that hang upon the moss-covered boughs—the crimson berries, that seem encrusted with the whitest silver—the dark leaves of the evergreens, along which run pearly lines of frost-work—the bladed grass, sprinkled all over with minute pearls, down to the starry and diverging rays, which every little hollow that contained water has assumed,—all are beautiful. But pick up the skeleton of a leaf, when only the fine fibres are left; hold it between your eye and the light, and you will confess that never did lady wear a lace collar woven in the finest frame, of so fine and delicate a texture as the network of the fallen leaf; and the graceful cup-moss, when closely examined, is shaped in the forms of the most delicate cups, and urns, and vases, pale and dark green, and chased with silver, and all as neatly wrought as if they had come from the hand of the most finished artist.

Sometimes, on a fine day in December, when the snow has disappeared, there is a green Spring-look about the meadows, where the grass has sprouted up fresh beneath the Autumn rains, especially in those pastures from which the cattle were driven away early in the season. Under the hedgerows, and among the shady copses, peeping from amid the fallen foliage, we see the hardy leaves of the primrose and the violet, looking as green and fresh as if it were already the first month of Spring, for neither frost nor snow has power to destroy them in these sheltered places. Near spring-heads, which seldom freeze, we see the little wagtail, the smallest bird that walks, planting one leg before the other, and surveying everything with his sharp eye alights upon, in his busy endeavour to pick up a meal. The larks huddle together in small parties, and seem, by their

Wistful looks, to wish that the air was warm enough to sing in; and if an unusually fine day should break out by the close of the next month, they will be seen trying their wings a little way up amongst the trees, and scattering around a few stray notes; and sometimes, at this season of the year, we see the porch of a cottage wreathed with the China rose, whose pale blossoms throw out a faint sweet perfume, and, with the green foliage, form a Summer-like scene amid the gloom, and cloud, and darkness of mid-Winter. The author of "Waverley" has left us a most graphic picture of the *ennui* which sometimes besets the hardy sportsman at this season. It is full of minute and excellent painting, and abounds in those little touches which tell that it has been struck off from the life, and is worthy of a place beside the little gem which we have commented upon at the opening of the present month.

When dark December glooms the day,
And takes our Autumn joys away;
When short and scant the sunbeam throws
Upon the weary waste of snows
A cold and profitless regard,
Like patron on a needy bard
When sylvan occupation's done,
And o'er the chimney rests the gun,
And hang in idle trophy, near
The game, pouch, fishing-rod, and spear
When wiry trier, rough and grim,
And greyhound with his length of limb
And pointer, now employed no more,
Cumber our parlour's narrow floor

When in his stall the impatient steed
Is long condemned to rest and feed;
When from our snow-encircled home,
Scarcely cares the hardest step to roam,
Since path is none, save that to bring
The needful water from the spring;
When wrinkled news-page, twice coned o'er
Bequeils the weary hour no more,
And darling politician crushed,
Inveighs against the lingering post;
And answering housewife sore complains
Of carrier's snow-impeped wains;—
When such the country cheer, I come,
Well-pleas'd, to seek our city home.

The kitchen garden is worth peeping into at this time, when there is so little to be seen in the out-of-door world. The earthed-up celery beds have a fresh and green appearance, and the lettuces which were planted late, wear a healthy Spring look; while cauliflowers, kale, brocoli, cabbages, and greens of every description, have now a crispy and tempting tenderness, which is fully appreciated when they come to throw their odour around the table, as they are placed beside the red and juicy ham, and the well-fed pullets. If a hare or rabbit cross our path, we scarcely regard them with the eye of a naturalist now, but think what a flavour there would be about the one jugged, and the other, with a few accessories, wrapt up under the comfortable crust of a pie.

The rosemary flowers this month; and there were few plants held in higher esteem than this by our ancestors. They used it to stir up the spiced Christmas tankard; it was also dipped in their drinking cups at weddings, and borne before the bridal party as they went to church. It was strawed upon the dead; and Herrick, in allusion to these customs, says that the rosemary

Grows for two ends, it matters not at all,
Be it for my bridal or my burial.

I shall conclude the description of this month by a snow-scene, taken from my "Pictures of Country Life," descriptive of a ride over a cold, cheerless common:—"The snow had fallen all night long, and continued throughout the day without ceasing. Over the wide, bleak, unsheltered common, it lay deep and untrodden, blown here and there into wild, fanciful ridges, just as the ground rose and fell, or where the wind had whirled it; and it was only by some white-covered hillock of stones, a furze bush of taller growth, the remains of an aged hawthorn, and the relics of an old finger-post, that a practised eye was enabled to trace the winding of the road. All around hung the low, dull, leaden-coloured sky, so low, that, as far as the eye could stretch, it seemed to rest everywhere upon the snow, save where, on the furthest rim of the horizon, the level monotony of the line was broken by a steep slate roof, now covered with snow; and that was all which stood visible of the Union Workhouse, for the rest of the building was lost in the distance. It was so cold and cheerless a day, that not even a donkey—the hardest defier of wind and weather—was to be seen in the whole wide range of the sky-bounded common, for even he had sought a shelter in some unseen hollow; nothing stirred amid the wild solitude of that wintry scene."

The close of December brings with it one great consolation—the shortest day is past, and, after a few more evenings, we shall see them slowly lengthen; and when the snow-drop appears, we know that

The storms of Wintry time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded Spring encircle all.



(Country Scenes for every Month in this Almanack are written by Thomas Miller.)

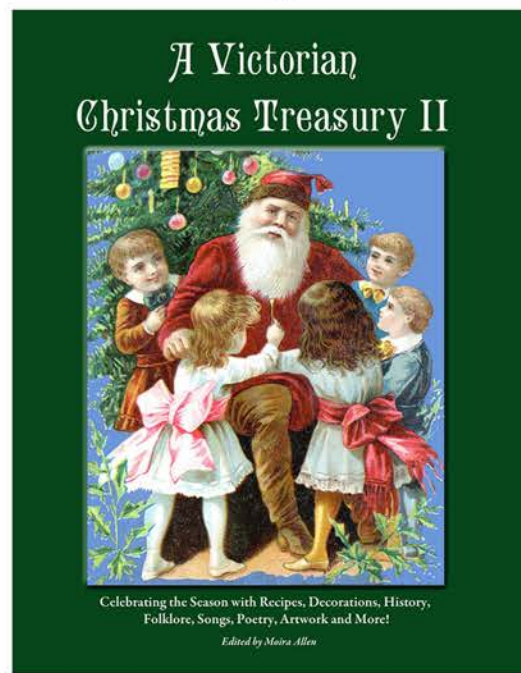
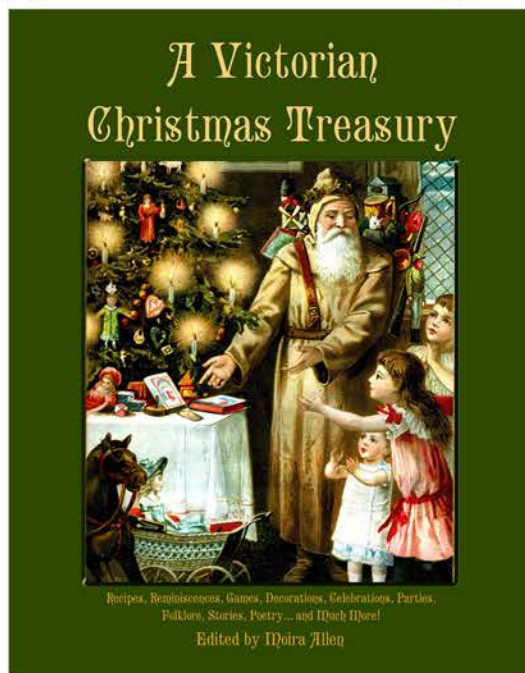


December.—Pictorial Calendar.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Christmas Rose. | Turkeys. |
| Mistletoe. | Geese. |
| Holly in Berry. | Birds in Snows'orm. |
| Reindeer Moss. | Hips of Rose. |
| Lichen. | Farmyard Scene. |

Boy's Own Paper, 1884

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SEASONAL CLIP ART

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