

CHRISTMAS.

The stars shone out with quivering light, As shepherds, on that holy night, Their vigils one were keeping.

The shepherds all were sore amazed, As tremblingly they upward gazed At form angelic flying.

Melodious rang the seraph's voice: "Fear not, but evermore rejoice, And cease for'er your sighing.

And now a host, a heavenly throng, Sweeps all the air and earth along, Triumphant chorus raising.

A star more bright than all the rest Shone out, that holiest night and best, The wise men safely guiding.

And as they came to lowly inn, And found the new-born Babe within, They joyed with joy exceeding.

Low at His feet they humbly fell, And sought, in vain, their joy to tell, But opened out their treasures.

Then let the bells their carols ring, To praise the manger-cradled King, The Christ of sacred story.

"UNTO THE GREEN HOLLY."

BY EVA WILDER MCGILLASSON.

No one could understand it. If she had been beautiful, or bright, or well connected, or rich, the village might have found the matter plain.

On the day when Nichols first saw her she was toiling up the steep hill road, clad in a chocolate-colored frock which showed about the skirt yellowish streaks indicative of let out tucks.

"Kind of a sorry looking little trick," remarked a man in jeans, "visiting your vender at Bailey's."

"Any kin to them?" asked Nichols, quickly. He had caught the briefest glimpse of the face under that poor hat—a face so sad, and yet so appealingly childish that something tugged at his heart.

"Huh? Er—yes. Sort of second cousin to Bailey, I hear tell," pursued the other, happy to furnish information to a man so flourishing in worldly matters as was Nichols.

Nichols, with his hands constrainedly pocketed, gazed after the little figure going up the hill road. The evening sun shone through the highway dust, casting about the girl's feet a haze of gold in which she seemed to float.

Clumps of dull red brush burned lustily in ledges of the rocks, but below in the river bottoms, where most of the hamlet lay, only an occasional stubble field took the eye with a touch of vivid color.

It was an accustomed scene to Nichols. From the inn doors, the stove-office window, and the store porch—that Mecca of village bachelordom—he had viewed this evening outlook many times as a dull, unromantic vista.

Those mean houses were homes. That threat of smoke denoted a hearth at which folk who loved each other gathered. The thin crooning of a voice in a cottage had by struck him to the soul.

Nichols' young face paled a little. He drew his cap over his eyes, and turned into the road to speak to Bailey, the sawyer, just then coming up from the mill shoot.

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"You're going to hev comp'ny tonight, Clarissy!" he announced. And as she looked at him confusedly, he winked reassurance.

"I'll never consent to build opposite unless you do," said Clarissa firmly. "It would make me miserable to have that rickety bit across the road."

Day by day the walls of his new house rose in pine hued prominence against the green hill-side. On a certain summer morning he and Clarissa, returning from a wedding journey to Lexington, passed over the freshly painted threshold of the lavender-colored structure.

Clarissa, with her lean hands clinched in embarrassment, sat mute and scared. She had been so evilly handled by her step-mother that an outcast status was the only state to which she was able to accommodate herself.

"Why'n earth didn't you say somethin' pleasant, Clarissy? You set like a stone statue, so you did, and him fahly talkin' himse'lf horse!"

"I shall never be happy," said Clarissa, smoothing down the folds of her pink cambric frock, "till that Saler house is torn down. We've made him offers, but he won't sell. And I can't look out without seeing those broken windows and that baby's grave."

"You're plumb crazy," she remarked, with easy candor. "By the time you got a teet'hin' baby of your own you won't hev time to see ghosts. You better quit complainin', and try to make Vint happy."

"You are handsomer than ever," Nichols said daily to his wife. "Is it—oh, Clarissa, is it because you are happier?"

"I can never be really happy while that old house scowls at me daily," replied Clarissa, slipping coldly from her husband's arms. Nichols sighed.

"Hain't you heard tell of the freshest? Everything's sweepin' through the boom. Wilkins' boy is drowned, and there ain't a man on the river to-night but takes his life in his hands."

"Let's buy up on the hill, Vint, and build a bigger house. I want double parlors," Nichols said daily to his wife.

"I reckon we'll have to wait till next year," said Nichols. "I'm a little in debt—building and all. Every cent I got is invested in staves. I've got a big drive up river waiting for rain."

"Rain!" said Clarissa, playing a small tune on the organ. "This hole of a village is bad enough when it's clear. When the rain sets in—well, I don't know how I'll stand it awful old Saler house then."

"I'll be a house with rulin'" returned his wife. "Nichols hev bought the best lot in town, and he aims to put up a two story house with piazzers. Law, well! Some's born to luck. Only, if I was Clarissy, I'd hate to live across from that old house of Saler's—a grave in its front yard, and all. It'd give me the shakes, Clarissy."

Clarissa, with dignified unconcern, looked toward the site of her future home. The lot sloped a little over the hill's brow. Just beyond it, in a thicket of beeches, the old Saler cottage slanted its clapboarded roof. Gray lichens scaled the eaves, and glistered the ancient walls like fossil tears.

"The tide" was too heavy. Suddenly came word, too, of a freshet that would be upon the booms by nightfall—the very nightfall when children

freshness of spring, the deep verdancy of summer or the party-colored drifting of autumn leafage, that spot lay always in view. Saler's little daughter had slept for forty years under those myrtle sprigs.

"I'll get him to set the place, and we'll tear the old thing down," said Nichols.

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were wide-eyed with expectation of tomorrow's gifts. "Christmas eve!" muttered Nichols, as he watched the treacherous river foam over its banks, and saw the wild redness of the countless lanterns along shore, and listened to the shouts of the men leaping from log to log, or working with the boom ropes, or tipping about in little skiffs among the loosened drift.

"She's catching it from above! Look out for the boom! Is that you, Nichols? God! A mighty, man! Your staves are slippin' through the boom like snowflakes. No use; we can't hold 'em in."

Nichols leaned forward. A sudden flood swept between the melting banks, and he saw a current sharp with the edges of thousands of staves floating airily out toward the deep sea. A wild laugh seemed to haunt the chill air. It was the time of Christmas cheer.

Nichols could see the lighted store windows full of toys and balsamic greenery. Further off burned a small er light in the room where Clarissa sat at ease. Through the darkness her face, careless, unloving, yet so sweet, rose with eyes of menace. He had hoped to do so much for her, and he had lost everything.

Nichols groaned as he stumbled against a great coil of rope and sank upon it. An intolerable desire for rest stole over him. Through the anguish of his soul he seemed, strangely enough to see the myrtle hidden couch where Saler's little daughter slept so well. To sleep—that was it—to sleep! He cast a dull eye on the river, which, even as he looked, softened to the likeness of a dark, dimpled arm held out to receive him.

"Keep your eye on him, Joe," said one. "It's Vint Nichols. He's lost his pile to-night. Cuss a mounting stream, anyhow!"

"Up in her bright sitting room Clarissa, indeed, sat as Nichols imagined her. She was idly practising on the organ. Some one knocked. The door burst open, and Mrs. Bailey stood excitedly on the threshold.

"Clarissy! my goodness! are you a playin' chunes when men's lives is in danger?" she cried, casting her wet shawl back. Clarissa had risen. She had paled a little, and stood catching at the collar of her crimson gown.

"I don't know what you mean," she stammered. "Hain't you heard tell of the freshest? Everything's sweepin' through the boom. Wilkins' boy is drowned, and there ain't a man on the river to-night but takes his life in his hands."

"You're plumb deranged—and you—your dressed up to kill, a playin' music like Babylon herself. I asks God to forgive me for marryin' kin of yours, so I do, Clarissy Nichols!"

Clarissa had grown white as the thread of ribbon in her shining hair. Her eyes stared large and dazed. She tottered as if she would have fallen; and then, still tremulous, sped suddenly forward, and past the portly figure in the doorway.

"Clarissy!" cried Mrs. Bailey, scared and confused. The wind howled back at her as she peered into the whirling rain, but the darkness had already swallowed the slight small form of Nichols wife.

Down on the river confusion reigned. Everywhere was red streaked darkness, and the clamor of rain and rushing water. Men's voices rose loud and insistent; but Nichols, sitting on the rope coil, heard and saw only vaguely. The sound that reached him most definitely was the siren voice of the river, forever murmuring its rhythm of rest, forever mixing its utterance with Nichols' memory of another voice, as sweet but less concerned to give him a hint of love or peace.

"Where?" said a softer voice. In the red shot dusk something in crimson garments took shape—something with drenched long hair blowing out in the wet wind. "Where?" said the soft voice. And then Nichols, leaning over the river's edge, felt a clasp of sudden fingers on his arm. Clarissa's wet hair blew up against his face, but through its meshes he saw her white cheeks, her slight throat, and parted lips. Was it Clarissa? Clarissa with such a look in her eyes as stilled the very beating of his heart?

"Vint!" she said; "Vint!" "It's all lost," he stammered, confused by her tenderness of modulation. "Home, everything. I risked all—"

I wanted you to have everything I want! I sobbed Clarissa against Nichols' dripping shoulder. "Everything! And if the house is gone—we can live somewhere else." She paused, and broke into a low laugh. "Vint," she cried, "Saler will rent us his cottage. We'll mend the fence and fix the windows. I know now why that place worried me—so it was begging for curtains and spoils of geraniums and paint and soap-suds."

Nichols gazed at her, half forgetting, in the warmth at his heart, that they were not going to be so romantically poor as Clarissa fancied.

"You forget," he said, "dear, you forget Saler's daughter." "I shall plant roses over her," breathed Clarissa, "poor little baby! And to-morrow—ah, Vint, to-morrow!—I'm going to lay a wreath of holly on her little lonely grave, so she'll have a share in the happy, happy Christmas we're going to keep.—Harper's Weekly.

Ye who have scorned each other, Or injured friend or brother, In this fast fading year, Ye who by word or deed Have made a saint heart bleed, Come gather here!

Let stoned against and sinning Forget their strife's beginning, And join in friendship now, Be links no longer broken, In witness spoken Under the holly bough.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT AND WHAT CAME OF IT. There were traces of tears on Tommie's face. His eyes were still red and his hair was tumbled. The boy had been crying. It was a new thing for him to be found in this way.

But this year she had not been getting as much to do as in other years. Fewer parties were made, and the people seemed to wear their old clothes longer; so Mrs. Bogardus (Tommie's mother) saw Christmas coming with only enough money in her purse to buy food and fuel.

Her boy did not know how poor she was, nor how hard she had to work to earn money enough to clothe and feed him. The boys at school were all talking of the big stockings they were going to hang up for Santa Claus to fill; they also told what nice things they hoped he would put into them.

Tommie's mind was filled with what he heard, and he saw no reason why Santa Claus, if he had so many things, and loved good little boys, should not slide down the chimney of the little house, and while mamma and he were asleep, fill the stockings. Without saying anything to her, he went to the drawer, picked out two of the longest stockings, marked on one, For Mamma, and on the other one, For Me, and hung them before the fire place. Then he quietly crept to bed and dreamed about loads of toys, baskets of cream chocolates, and nice things for his mamma.

Waking up before it was light, real early in the morning, he slipped from his little bed down into the front room, to find the stockings and bring them back to surprise and please his mamma. He put his head up in the dark to feel the stockings, as they hung on the back of the chair. There they were, to be sure; but oh! what was the matter? They were as empty as when he hung them up the night before. He felt dreadfully about it. What had he done? Why had Santa Claus passed him over? His mother heard him crying, and called him to her. Then she learned what he had done and expected. Poor woman she cried with her boy, because of his disappointment; and then the little fellow brightened up bravely to comfort his mother.

After his simple breakfast he went out and passed a house near by, where the boy called him into see what Santa Claus had brought. There were nice toys, sweet candies pretty books. Tommie was glad that the boy had them, but at the thought of his own disappointment and his mother's tears would start in spite of himself. The boy's mother understood what the tears meant, but said nothing to him. Shortly she left the room. After a little time she came back and told Tommie that his mother wanted him. He ran over to her asking, "What is it Mamma?" Taking his hand she led him to the wood-shed, and there tied to a post, was a splendid lamb with a blue ribbon around its neck, and on the ribbon was a card with the words, "Santa Claus thinks of Tommie, after all."

All this occurred three years ago. But the lamb has grown into a sheep, and Tommie now has four fine sheep. He has learned how to feed sheep and take care of them. A farmer out there for him and buys it; and Tommie is now wearing a nice suit of wool "Iron Clad" made from the fleece of his own sheep.

TWO PRECIOUS TRAINS.

The first train leaves at 6 P. M. For the land where the poppy blows, The mother dear is the engineer, And the passenger laughs and crows.

The palace car is the mother's arms; The whistle, a low, sweet strain; The passenger winks and nods and blinks, And goes to sleep in the train!

At 8 P. M. the next train starts For the Poppy land afar, The summons clear falls on the ear, "All aboard for the sleeping car!"

But what is the fare to Poppy land? I hope it is not too dear, The fare is this, a hug and a kiss, And it's paid to the engineer.

So I asked of Him who children took On His knee in kindness great, "Take charge, I pray, of the trains each day That leave at 6 and 8."

"Keep watch of the passengers," thus I pray "For to me they are very dear; And special ward, O gracious Lord, O'er the gentle engineer."—Christian Union.

The Wind's Christmas.

His Adventures on the Ice of the Holy Day.

The eve of the anniversary of Christ's birth was bitter cold; the wind whistled through the leafless trees and remorselessly slashed the windows, which set up a most unearthly wail—their petition for mercy. Master Wind, however, knew no pity. He laughed, and scornfully at their agony, and continued his ruthless mirth with renewed vigor.

He was in a playful mood and tried all manner of tricks with the passers-by, for on this night, tired of the monotony of his Eolian piper, he came out with full intent to seek diversion and by mingling with the crowd find something which would awaken in him some emotion having a different tenor from the old song he was wont to chant. He also felt that it was Christmas. Off he snatched yon duds' hat and hurled it into the gutter. Oh, what a sight that silk headgear was when put on again!

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Wind, "that was well done, sirrah! What fun!" and flew on to further mischief.

Truly, he had plenty of scope to exercise his wild freaks, for the streets were filled with people, hurrying to and fro, in and out of the brilliantly lighted shops where such manifold wonders were displayed to the eager purchaser. Over all these the Wind's eye swept—he scorned and mocked them all—nothing satisfied him.

Hours slipped by. Shall he be thwarted in his wish? No, a thousand times no! Rather will he overstep all boundaries, tear down roofs, unroot trees, and, at any rate, carry out his desire.

At last, almost despairing, he perceived a little hut crossing his route. Its humble, weather beaten roof attracted the Wind's attention.

"Perhaps here," said he, and, moderating his flight, he boldly peeped in. What a sight met his gaze!

In the tiny room, cold, bare and comfortable, a maiden sat near the rickety bed, on which a woman lay seemingly asleep—or did she dream? Surely, that face of marble coldness, those limp and nerveless hands did not belong to a living person. Can it be that this child, alone at such late-hour, watcha bedside the dead?

The Wind sighed; a sense of sadness stole over him—he was moved to pity. He howled no more, but gently creeping in through an air-hole in the roof, he drew himself together in a corner—and—watched.

Hark! The bells pealed out triumphantly. "Peace and good will to man! Christ is born!" The maiden roused herself and looked with tender eyes on the face of the dead, then kneeling, down she prayed aloud: Oh, loving Christ, Thou who wert born this night, to bless and save the world, look down from Thy home on one of Thy poorest children. Yesterday, the world to me was bright, oh so beautiful—my darling mother lived—to-day it is all dark and full of misery. What am I in this wide sphere without her? Oh! do not let me linger—take me, too. Let me join the angel choir singing around Thy throne. Take, oh! take me!"

She ended, the bells without also ceased to peal. With a cry of woe she threw her arms around that beloved form—alas! now only a form of clay—and wept.

The Wind, silent till now, began to moan. "She shall have her prayers answered," cried he, "I will see to that." With a loud murmur he spread his icy breath round and round the now sleeping maiden, and, satisfied with his adventure, returned to his rocky home.

Two days after a small funeral procession was wending its way along the country road. The uncovered heads of the men following the simple coffin, in which two loving hearts were forever united, did not heed the stiff, winter breeze traveling with them.

"When?" suddenly sang the Wind, the sound was so strange, so weird, that it startled the men and all.

What did the Wind say? Did he pity?—Phila. Times.

30,000 Tons of Steel Rails.

Western Iron Works to Start Up With Us, Pittsburgh, Pa.

NEW YORK, Dec. 18.—The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company made a contract this afternoon with the receivers of the Union Pacific Railway Company for the delivery of about 30,000 tons of steel rails.

This is the first large contract for rails that has been made in the West this season, and it will result in the employment of about 1,500 men at the Fuel and Iron Company's works at Pueblo.

It is understood that in resuming operations the company will ask the men in its employ to sign the Pittsburgh scale of wages.

810,000 in Gold Stolen. Savings of a Lifeless Hidden in the Cellar Taken From a Farmer.

INDIANAPOLIS, Dec. 18.—Ten thousand dollars in gold has been stolen from the cellar of David Stout's house, two miles northwest of Haughville. Stout is over 60 years old, and the money was the savings of years.