

Christmas Graces

WHEN silent are the shady dells,
And southward all the birds have flown,
While breezes through the maples moan,
In grief for joys they once have known,
What music all the gloom dispels?
The Christmas Bells! The Christmas Bells!

While earth beneath a silver sheen
Lies white and still, when moonbeams glow
On tiny graves where drifted snow
Conceals the blossoms in their woe,
What beauty lights the lonely scene?
The Christmas Green! The Christmas Green!

Though wintry winds are bold and free
That shake the orchard kings of old
Whose autumn wealth of red and gold
No more their rugged branches hold;
What bends with fruitage fair to see?
The Christmas Tree! The Christmas Tree!

When lonely hearts by sorrow tried
Find wealth of earth is but alloy
And love deferred their hopes destroy,
What blessing floods their souls with joy,
Till earth and heaven are glorified?
The Christmas Tide! The Christmas Tide!

—Ruth Raymond, in Minneapolis House-keeper.

MRS. SAXTON'S CHRISTMAS

IT WAS early twilight of the day before Christmas, and Mrs. Saxton sat in her favorite window seat with an open magazine upon her lap. She was not reading, however, but was looking out upon the usually quiet avenue, now thronged with package-laden pedestrians and delivery wagons heaped high with good things for the morrow. The expression of her countenance as she regarded the hurrying throng was a mixture of pain and perplexity. She had considered her own plans for to-morrow settled some weeks ago, but something she had just read had jarred her out of harmony with them and it seemed too late to make new ones. It was not the article on "Christmas Giving" that had done the mischief, but the time-worn quotation with which it ended:

"Who gives himself with his alms feeds three; himself, his hungry neighbor and Me."

Not that the words were new to her—Oh, no! They had been her Christmas motto every year since, when a girl of 15, she had first read the Vision of Sir Launfal. It was this that gave the words such power over her, for on this particular Christmas she had decided for the first time in 12 years to set aside her rule and give her alms without giving herself. She had sent turkeys and other good things to numerous needy families, bestowed largesse upon sundry orphan asylums, homes and hospitals, and otherwise used without stint the money of which she had abundance; but for herself—her house was to be closed, her servants given an entire holiday and she, in the solitude of her own chamber, shut away from all sight and sound of merry-making, would indulge the bitterness of her grief for the husband she had loved and lost. Last Christmas had been her wedding day, and the husband to whom she had confided her Christmas motto had said, with eyes shining with joy and tenderness:

"And this year the gift is mine—literally yourself—my priceless Christmas gift!"

They had enjoyed three months of earthly paradise and then—there was a railway accident, and a horrible bruised mass, upon which she was not allowed to look, but from which they extracted the ring she had given him and the watch on whose dial was her own picture—this had been brought home at an hour when she expected her husband, and all the light of the world had for her gone suddenly out.

They had wanted her at home this Christmas, but how could she go where everything would remind her of that joyous wedding day? No, solitude was best for her, and so her day had been planned.

But as she sat now in the deepening twilight with the words of her discarded motto echoing in her mind, this quaint saying lodged there from some long past reading awoke to keep them company.

She gave a quick little gasp and a hot wave—was it shame, remorse, or pure amazement?—swept over her. A coward? Certainly not! But a hero—what was a hero? A hero thought only of others—to save, to succor, to uplift others. For this he sacrificed comfort, honors, life even, that is, he gave himself. So it all came back to that after all; and if she carried out her plans for the morrow, would she be a coward? But it was so late to make new plans. Twilight died slowly away and the electric lights flashed out over the busy avenue and still Mrs. Saxton thought. At length she turned from the window, closed her magazine, drew down the shades and turned on the light in her cozy sitting-room and, touching a bell, summoned the house-

"You will be taking dinner with your sister-in-law to-morrow, Nellie?"

"Yes, Mrs. Saxton," responded Nellie, with the tone and manner of a well-bred lady.

"Do you think it would put her out—that is, do you think she would enjoy having me dine with her also?"

The girl's face lighted with surprised pleasure.

"Do you really mean it, Mrs. Saxton? Would you? Amy would be so glad. She speaks of you so often. She feels so—"

The girl hesitated.

"Yes, I know, Nellie. My friends are all very kind—kinder than I deserve. Well, then, if you think I shall be welcome would you run over to-night and tell her to expect me? Say that to-morrow will be a sad day and I should like to be among friends. Stay—I shall not need you any more this evening. You may as well stay all night. Then if my coming makes extra work you can help her."

"Work! O Mrs. Saxton, how can you say it? Amy will count this among her very happiest Christmases. You see," she said, with a sudden frankness quite unusual with her, "since my brother has been out of work so much, Amy has a pretty hard time, and sometimes it seems to her as though her old friends forgot her. She says the past is all slipping away from her and the future looks dark. Forgive me for telling you, Mrs. Saxton. She was not thinking of you so much—for she knows you have had trouble of your own—but Amy has been a good sister to me and it hurts me to see her getting so discouraged."

"I thank you for telling me, Nellie. Good night, and a Merry Christmas to you!"

"I was getting to be a coward," she said to herself, sadly, as the door closed upon the smiling girl. "I was thinking that mine was the only trouble in the world."

Nellie's sister-in-law had been a classmate of Mrs. Saxton's in the seminary and one of her many admiring friends. The fact that she had married a mechanic and Mrs. Saxton a wealthy man had not interrupted their friendship, and when the young sister-in-law had asked to be taken as one of Mrs. Saxton's servants, she had been cordially welcomed and given a place of friend as well as servant. But during these months of terrible bereavement she had shut herself away as far as possible from all past associates.

From little remarks that Nellie let drop occasionally, Mrs. Saxton had half-suspected the state of mind into which her old friend Amy Harris was lapsing; and she thought that had come to her, when she sat in the twilight trying to

had a brilliant career. Where is she now?"

"She lives only a few doors away. I only discovered her a few weeks ago, and then by chance. She had a hemorrhage and the children, who were alone with her, became frightened and ran over here for help."

"You say her husband left no income. How, then, do they live?"

"Upon the little she earns with her pen. She was our best composition writer, you remember. But it is a meager and uncertain income. Besides, it is hastening her death. The doctor says she cannot possibly live until summer. She sits indoors and writes and coughs when she ought to be in the open air and sunshine."

"Why did you not send me word? Certainly she needs a friend—friends, rather—I know you have done all in your power, but I must do my share. Poor woman! Poor Carrie! Who could have imagined such a life for her!"

"I thought of you, and meant to tell you sometime, but your own trouble was so great—"

The street door, which opened directly into the sitting-room, which on this occasion served as dining-room, was pushed suddenly open and a delicate girl of seven or eight years, with wide-open, frightened eyes, rushed into the room exclaiming:

"O Mrs. Harris, please come quick! Mother has another—"

"You will excuse me," said Amy, springing to her feet and turning to her guest. "It is Carrie's little girl. Her mother is ill again. I feared it. She was working so hard this morning to make a merry Christmas for the children. She said," lowering her voice, "that it would likely be the last they would spend together."

"I will go with you," cried Mrs. Saxton, rising also.

They found their friend lying on the lounge, fainting from loss of blood and scarcely able to speak. Yet she gave a smile of recognition as Mrs. Saxton took her hand. She knew who was to be guest at the cottage. Mrs. Harris had promised to bring Sunshine to see her after dinner. In one corner of the room stood a tiny Christmas tree which she had been helping the children decorate when the hemorrhage came. Under its branches sat three-year-old baby Carrie crying quietly, with her present for

her future and for that of her new-found treasures.

"It is always so," she whispered. "Give and it shall be given to you * * * good measure. It was so little I tried to give this morning, and see what has been measured back to me!"

She pressed a kiss upon each tear-stained face and went out with Christmas peace in her heart.—Ella Beecher Gittings, in Chicago Advance.

A CHRISTMAS JOKE.

How Grimmer's Anger was Turned to Joy While Demolishing a Christmas Present.

"Funniest Christmas scene I ever witnessed was only a year ago," laughed the broker whose laugh is all the more cheery because he made a recent hit in wheat.

"Grimmer lives next door to me, you know. Peculiar old gentleman, but he has a heart as big as a Yankee cheese, if you only know the way to reach it. Last Christmas I was sitting at the window when I saw Grimmer come storming out of the house with a little hair trunk on his shoulders, he slammed it down so hard that the lid flew about on one hinge and then went on a dog trot to the barn, returning with an ax. As the air began to fill with fur and splinters, I went out to ascertain the trouble.

"I'll tell you," the old man yelled, in a defiant tone. "I'll tell everybody and anybody. Put it in the papers if you want to. The old skinflint of an uncle of mine sent the trunk last month. At the same time I received a letter from him insisting that the trunk was not to be opened till Christmas. I opened her all right enough, as soon as I had breakfast. What do you think there was in it? A lot of old literary frumpery that no secondhand book store would handle and more cockroaches than you could put in a peck measure. I guess I wasn't mad," and the old gentleman let go with the ax as though he were trying to fell a bullock. "Outrageous insult," and this time the wreckage was completed.

"In the false bottom exposed there were government bonds, greenbacks and quarts of gold. Grimmer stared and then sat down in a collapse. It was an hour before he was himself again and then there were tears chasing each other down the wrinkles of his face as he wrote the 'old skinflint uncle.' You never saw such a whirl as we had at Grimmer's that night."—Detroit Free Press.

PRINCES' HOLIDAY SHOPPING.

The Children of the German Emperor Are Taught the Value of Money.

Writing of "Christmas with an Emperor," Nagel von Brawe gives this interesting description in the Ladies' Home Journal of the ceremonies attendant upon the great feast day in the German palace: "The royal children have exchanged gifts chosen with much solicitude deliberation at a well-known toy shop. Anyone happening to be in the shop at the time might have seen the empress enter with her children, each provided with his own purse, and completing his purchases aside so that the others might be surprised. The younger three princes demanded the advice of their mother in their selections. The princes investigated everything, but upon inquiring the price generally found it too dear. 'Three marks for this book-rack?' and with a glance into his purse. 'No, that is too expensive. I haven't over 75 pennings. What can you give me for that price?' And the shopgirl proceeds to show the princes something quite nice for the required amount.

"But now the brothers and sister have exchanged thanks for their gifts; the first impetuosity of the Christmas rejoicings has given place to a more tranquil examination and inspection, and ladies and gentlemen of the court have made the rounds in a general state of admiration. Lackeys prepare a collation in the midst of the gifts, for which, however, the young people find no time. It fares with them as with all healthy children in the excitement attendant on Christmas Eve, for they are healthy and genuine German children. The Christmas celebration in the Shell salon, the excitement and the rejoicings have produced their natural reaction on them, and at nine o'clock even the elder princes are abed."

THEIR FIRST CHRISTMAS TURKEY.



Mr. Honeymoon (somewhat hesitatingly)—My dear, what a queer taste to this turkey. What do you suppose ails it?

Mrs. Honeymoon (boo-hooing)—Why darling, you don't blame me, do you? if it isn't just right? I took all the pains in the world with it, even to the stuffing with cranberries, which mamma told me always go with roast turkey.

A Christmas Episode.

Tom—Marie jumped six feet when I told her she was standing under the mistletoe.

Jack—Then you didn't kiss her?

"Oh, yes; she jumped in my direction"—Brooklyn Life.

GUARDIAN OF THE CHRISTMAS TREES



WHEN I was but a little fellow, to whom the legends of childhood were dear, I resided with my parents in one of the central states where the beautiful pine tree is practically unknown. Each Christmastide brought with it what was, to me, an unfathomable mystery.

"Papa, where does Santa Claus get all his Christmas trees?" I was wont to ask on each Christmas morning as I viewed the little tree covered with prettily colored candles and papers, and laden with the mementos of the holiday season for my baby sister and myself.

"He gets them in the great forests, far to the north, where he lives with his reindeer," always explained my father.

I can still remember how often I wished for a visit to that wonderful land where Christmas trees grew, and how often I asked my father to take me there.

"It is too far away for little boys to go, but maybe when you grow to be a man you will be able to visit Christmas tree land," was always the consoling answer which I received.

Last summer I visited Christmas tree land, and as I traveled through the great forests, first on the Grand Trunk railway and afterward on foot, I thought of the desire of my childhood to see that identical spot. It was away up in northern Canada, north of Georgian Bay, that I found this wonderful land, and there seemed to be Christmas trees enough to give each little girl and boy in all the world one for their very own. There were wee little trees for the very little ones who had just come from Babyland; there were larger ones for the little girls and boys, and there were great large ones for Santa Claus to use when he chooses to have his little folks and big folks get their presents from him together.

But the prettiest thing I saw in this Christmas tree land was a little golden-haired girl, and everheard of Christ she told me as she front of her log of one of those

Back from Lake in the spring drives away they float the swollen creeks lakes to the mills to her. But scattered great trees there little trees that are to gather for the little folks, who do not live where the Christmas trees grow, just before the merry Christmas time.



As I drew the little girl to my knee in front of the rude cabin door, and brushed the pretty golden curls from her forehead, I asked her if she liked the great trees among which she lived.

"Oh, yes, I do," she said. "I like to watch my papa cut them and hear the noise when they fall. And then the men come with the big oxen and haul them to the creek down there and they are floated away. But I like the little trees best, I think."

"And why," I asked, "do you like the little trees best?"

"Because they are Santa Claus' trees."

"And does Santa Claus come and get them?" I asked again.

"Yes, every winter, just before Christmas time. My papa never cuts the little trees until just before Christmas time, and then when he does he piles them up very carefully, and the men come with sleds and haul them to the lake where Santa Claus can get them quite easily."

"And what do you suppose Santa Claus does with these little trees?"

"My mamma says he takes them to the little girls and boys who live away off where there are no Christmas trees, and he takes them down their chimneys and puts lots of toys and candy and books and other pretty things on them if they are good little folks, and, oh, I like so much to have Santa Claus get them to take to the little folks who haven't any Christmas trees like I have."

"All the time when my mamma lets me go out of doors I watch my papa cut the big trees and tell him which way he must have them fall so that they won't hurt the little trees, for if one of them was to get broken there might not be enough to go 'round, and then some little girl or boy would not have a Christmas tree on Christmas morning."

"And sometimes other men come to cut the big trees and they are not so careful as my papa is not to hurt the little trees, and some of them get broken, and then I always cry. But my mamma tells me that Santa Claus has more little trees than he needs, and that all the good little folks will have one anyway, but I am so

"I most believe right," I said, "for where I came from the Christmas trees—"

"And do you live in mas trees don't?"

"And don't all the and boys have one?"

I was sorry for some were slighted and explained to about the many liti-cities where it is

ble for Santa Claus to get to all of them, and then tried to ease the pain by saying that many of these little ones were not badly disappointed, because they had never heard of Christmas and Santa Claus.



"Oh, but you will tell them," she cried, with tear drops in her pretty blue eyes. "And I shall ask my papa to tell Santa Claus to be careful and not miss any of them next Christmas."

As she ran away to tell her mamma of the little folks whom Santa Claus sometimes missed I thanked her in the name of all the little girls and boys in the United States for her watchful care of the little Christmas trees that grow around her home in the northern woods. Wasn't that right?

WRIGHT A. PATTERSON.