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AN OLD-YEAR SONG.

As through the forest, it's arrayed
By chill November, late I stray'd,
A lonely minstrel of the wood,
Was singing to the solitude;
Loved thy music, thus I said,
When o'er thy perch the leaves were spread,
Sweet was the song, but sweeter now
Thy carol on the leafless bough,
Sing, little bird! thy note shall cheer
The sadness of the dying year.

When violets pranked the turf with blue
And morning filled their cups with dew,
Thy tender voice with pipping trill
The budding April bowers would fill;
Nor pass its joys to us as way,
When April, rounded into May;
Thy life shall halt no second dawn,
Sing, little bird! thy Spring is gone.
And I remember—well-a-day!
Thy full-blown summer roundelay,
As when behind a broodered screen
Some lily maiden sung unseen;
With a voice like the woodland ring,
And every tree-top found a tongue,
How deep the shades the grove low fair;
Sing, little bird! the woods are bare.

But now the Summer's elan is done
And mists the snow-drifts upon;
The birds have left the sylvan pines
To fill among the treasured vines,
Or fan the air with scented pinions
And give the love-sick orange blossoms,
And thou art here alone—alone—
Sing, little bird! the rest have flown.
The snow has capped yon distant hill,
Al moor the running brook was still,
From driven heads the clouds that rise
Are like the smoke of sacrifice,
How long the forest soil shall mock
The plowshare changed to stubble rock,
The brawling streams shall soon be dumb—
Sing, little bird! the flocks have come.

Fast, fast, the lengthening shadows creep,
The seagulls' flocks are had asleep,
The air grows chill; the setting sun
May leave thee ere thy song is done,
The pipe that warms thy breast grow cold,
Thy song shall die with thee untold;
The lingering sunset will be light—
Sing, little bird! 'twas soon be night.

The Bridal Wine Cup

"Pledge with wine—pledge with wine," cried the young and thoughtless Harvey Wood; "pledge with wine," ran through the bridal party. The beautiful bride grew pale—the decisive hour had come. She pressed her white hands together, and the leaves of the bridal wreath trembled on her brow; her breath came quicker and her heart beat wilder.

"Yes, Marion, lay aside your scruples for this once," said the Judge in a low tone to his daughter, "the company expect it. Do not so seriously harp upon the rules of etiquette; in your own home do as you please, but in mine, for this once, please me."

Every eye was turned towards the bride pair, Marion's principles were well known. Henry had been a conventionalist, but of late his friends noticed the change in his manners, the difference in his habits, and to-night they watched him to see, as they sneeringly said, if he was tied down to a woman's opinion so soon.

Pouring a brimming cup, they held it with tempting smiles towards Marion. She was very pale, though more composed; and her hand shook not as, smiling back, she gratefully accepted the crystal tumbler and raised it to her lips. But scarcely had she done so when every hand was arrested by her piercing exclamation of "O, how terrible!"

"What is it?" cried one and all, "bringing together, for she had slowly carried the glass at arm's length, and was fixedly regarding it as though it were some hideous object."

"Wait," she answered, while a light which seemed inspired shone from her dark eyes, "wait and I tell you. 'I see,' she added slowly, pointing one jeweled finger to the sparkling ruby liquid, 'a sight that beggars all description; and yet listen—I will paint it for you if I can. It is a lovely spot; tall mountains crowned with verdure rise in the awful sublimity around; a river runs through, and bright flowers grow to the water's edge. There is a thick warm mist that the sun seeks vainly to pierce. Trees, lofty and beautiful, wave to the airy motion of the birds; but there—a group of Indians gather; they flit to and fro, with something like sorrow upon their dark brows. And in their midst lies a manly form, but his cheek how deathly! His eye wild with the fitful fire of fever. One friend stands beside him—may, I should say kneels, for see, he is pillowing that poor head upon his breast."

"Genius in ruins! O the high, hoary-looking brow! why should death mark it, and he so young? Look how he throws back the damp curls! See him clasp his hands! Hear his thrilling shrieks for life! Mark how he clutches at the form of his companions, imploring to be saved. O hear him call piteously his father's name! See him twine his fingers together as he shrieks for his sister—his only sister, the twin of his soul—weeping for him in a distant native land!"

"See!" she exclaimed, while the bridal party shrunk back, the untasted wine trembling in their faltering grasp, and the judge fell overpowered upon his seat—"See! his arms are lifted to heaven; he prays, how wildly, for mercy! Hot fever rushes through his veins. The friend beside him is weeping; awestricken, the dark men move silently away, and leave the living and dying together."

There was a hush in that princely parlor, broken only by what seemed a smothered sob from some manly bosom. The bride stood yet upright with quivering lip and tears stealing to the outward edge of her lashes. Her beautiful arm had lost its tension and the glass, with its troubled red waves, came slowly towards the range of her vision. She spoke again; every lip was mute. Her voice was low and faint, yet awfully distinct; she still fixed her sorrowful glance upon the wine-cup.

A Cracked Satellite.

The story of a cracked and disintegrated moon which is made public through the well-known observatory at Marseilles, has points which, if fully assured as to their authenticity, will arouse a good deal of discussion among astronomers. The story is of Luigi Caeciore, a young man with an idea, and a fortune of \$6,000, a student at the Observatory of Marseilles. This young man was so devoted to his idea that he heaped his little fortune upon it, and with a telescope and other instruments, set sail alone for the solitudes of southern seas. Before embarking, he handed to his old instructor a roll of manuscript, upon which was inscribed the idea which the youth pursued, and his reasons for entertaining it at the expense of his time and fortune. He believed, speaking unscientifically, that the moon was altogether more cracked than modern astronomers imagined and he went to the south seas alone; that being there in that region where passed the shadow he might see the sunlight peeping through the cracked moon at the time of the next eclipse. He went away to the South, even to Pitcairn's Island, erected his rude observatory, gained an old sailor to assist him and they two, with eyes front and instruments pointed, awaited the shadow. It came. Straight through the rugged rocks the ragged sunlight shone as one sees a gleam through a crack in a door.

A cry of joy came from beneath the telescope. The sailor turned photographer, caught three negatives of the penetrating sunbeam. The youth with his idea possessed now proof, to him sufficient, that his belief was not a vision but a scientific reality and he writes to his old instructor in France, with all the enthusiasm of a boy who has stormed a snow fort, and with all the exclamation points of a successful lover. The young man saw enough during his lonely vigil on Pitcairn's Island to make him declare "that our lovely satellite is not only a shell that is crushed in upon some portions of its periphery, and a shell that is now crumbling to ruin with a constant, a savage and frightful velocity."

The old professor at Marseilles, commenting upon the youth's observations and records which accompanied this letter, says he has "pushed his discovery very near to the point of demonstration," and then the old gentleman takes a hand in running things with a cracked moon, as follows:

"If the crumbling be connected with and dependent upon any such intense internal volcanic action as Luigi seems to suspect, the final disruption would be so violent as to project some portions of the moon sheer out of their orbit and down upon us with consequences of the most serious character. Such an impact, if it were of sufficient force, might in less force might, in falling, crush in the surface of our own planet, break through its crust and deluge us with escaping gasses from our own subterranean laboratory."

Is not that a beautiful paragraph? The reader may think that the moon is not the only cracked thing in existence, but restrain the thought, for the above occurs just over the signature of Yvon De Pontecoulant, of the observatory of Marseilles.

Annual Report of the Superintendent of Soldiers' Orphans.

It would be well to present the course of study as now prescribed for the soldiers' orphan schools. The extent to which the several branches are to be taught in the different grades is left to the discretion of the teachers. Advancement will be measured more by thoroughness than by amount.

Course of Study.—First Grade.—Spelling, reading, writing and drawing on slates, oral exercises in numbers, object lessons.

Second.—Spelling, reading, writing and drawing on slates, mental arithmetic, four fundamental rules of written arithmetic, object lessons.

Third.—Spelling, reading, writing, drawing, mental and written arithmetic, geography, object lessons.

Fourth.—Same as for third grade.

Fifth.—Same as for fourth grade, with the addition of grammar.

THE SCHOOLS THE PAST YEAR.

I will only say that, as a whole, they are doing well. They are not all I would like to see them—not all they will be; but their general condition is such that every Pennsylvania can point to them with pride. Even these words of commendation are altogether unnecessary to be spoken to those who have visited the schools or to the tens of thousands who saw and cheered the eight hundred boys who marched in line through the streets of Harrisburg on the last inauguration day.

LIST OF "SIXTEENERS" FOR 1873.—A pretty full list of all the orphans who have left the schools at the age of sixteen, was published last year; this year we confine ourselves to giving the names, addresses and in many instances the employments of the "sixteeners" for 1873.

CONCLUSION.—I once more commend our orphan schools and orphan school children to the fostering care of the Executive and the Legislature and to the sympathy and support of all good men; above all, invoking for them the protecting arm of Him who said: "suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

J. P. WICKERSHAM, Superintendent.

Christmas Presents.

Who or what was the name of the distinguished individual who first invented Christmas, we know not. In regard to this fact history has preserved a dignified silence. Yet it must be admitted that she has issued passports of posterity to many names far less deserving of such favor. However, we are casually informed by existing chronicles that the usage of gift making doubtless originated in the offspring of presents on the anniversary of the birth of Sol. Sol, be it known, was an ancient dignitary of heathen persuasion, reputed to possess supernatural powers and who, before he would deign to grant his good graces to all worthy applicants therefor, had to be first solicited by divers small gifts, such as money, provisions, clothing, etc.—articles which in those days were essentially necessary to win the good will and respect of any gentleman laying claim to deistical elevation.

Judging the past from the present, therefore, it is seemingly evident that the inventor of this ingenious arrangement was a relative of the old gentleman aforesaid, and was moreover, in all probability, an ambitious office seeker, engineering for a fat position under his (Mr. Sol's) control. But as we do not make any pretensions to profound antiquarian knowledge it is not best to accept this statement as conclusive. Certain it is that the intelligence of this presentation discovery was soon communicated to Jupiter, Diana, Minerva, "Wenus," Juno, and several other oracular orators who moved in the same circle of society as old Sol, and who, at once perceiving the self-evident advantages of the plan, adopted it without debate.

Various Teutonic worthies, in the same station of life, also introduced the plan into their business operations, and for many centuries reaped a respectable competence therefrom. During the interval the custom was somewhat improved upon, and instead of allowing the degenerate old deities to enjoy a sole monopoly of the principle, the people soon began to make presents to each other and thus presuming to testify the esteem felt for those to whom the presents were given. According to the pagan plan, these gifts were exchanged at New Year's, with which in those times Christmas was blended.

At length the advent of the christian era effected a change in the worshipping system and the old gods were thrown out of employment; but the masses had become so universally attached to many of the old pagan customs and superstitions that the christian authorities found it impossible to obliterate them. Accordingly all the usages not in direct opposition to the teachings of the church, and among which was the presentation of gifts at New Year's, were not interfered with.

The Christ tree, or Christmas tree, was invented, and so this attractive and time-honored feature of the holidays has come down to us consecrated by ages. In Germany, where the Christmas festival is always celebrated with the greatest rejoicing, the Christmas tree first came into use. Throughout the many little villages in the northern portion of Germany it was the custom on Christmas Eve for all the inhabitants to repair to the school or meeting house where a grand old tree, sometimes many feet high, blazing with innumerable candles and hung with thousands of presents, was stripped of its heavy burden. Everybody, high and low, rich and poor, received something, and none were too undeserving to be forgotten.

Here, too in the little hamlets of the "Fatherland," the "Knecht Rupert," the remote ancestor of the genial "Santa Claus" of our own time, first saw the light of day. A jolly old fellow in high buskins, white robe and gigantic wig, was the Knecht Rupert, who came round to the houses in the village with a big bag of good things, which were presented to each and every one of the children, the good little girls and boys being especially favored.

From the judgment he displayed in picking out the model little ladies and gentlemen who went to Sunday school regularly, never told lies and were in all respects embryo angels lacking the wings—in preference to the graceless young scamps who swore like troopers, broke the windows, stoned the schoolmaster and went through their mother's sugar-bowls or jam-pots without the least compunction—it was generally surmised that M. Knecht Rupert must have had some previous consultation with the parents of the aforesaid embryo angels.

It was also said that the presents were given him by the parents to be

(Continued on Fourth Page.)