

TWO POOR OLD SOULS.

'Tis Christmas night; the streets are bright,
And many windows are alight,
And mirth seems monarch everywhere,
For sounds of laughter fill the air.
But in a little room which knows
No gleam save what the fire shows
Sit, gazing at the glowing coals,
Two poor old souls.

Round them no happy children press
With words and smiles of tenderness;
To them no friends bring greetings gay—
Their friends are dead or far away,
Or else forgetful. At their gate,
Foot-deep in snow, no singers wait
To cheer with quaint and jolly trolls
These poor old souls.

And yet two score of years did he
Do much to add to Christmas glee
With pictures drawn with cunning art
By skilful hand from gentle heart,
And she has told of Christmas time
A hundred tales in prose and rhyme.
Now recompense no creature doles
The e poor old souls.

And many a feast, in days gone by,
They've spread, when fortune lingered nigh,
And they but little knew of care,
And bade their comrades come and share;
And there—how joyous was the scene,
The walls all hung with Christmas green!—
Their healths were drunk in brimming bowls,
These poor old souls.

But, ah! they faltered in the race,
And newer life sprung to each place,
And seized the wreaths they'd not resigned;
And thus, disowned and left behind,
In time too brief they were forgot.
Alas! it is the common lot,
And will be while earth onward rolls,
For poor old souls.

Left and forgot, until once more
Their names are brought the world before,
And then, perchance, some one will tell
How such a picture pleased him well,
Or such a story gladdened shed
Upon his children as they read;
But this will be when death's bell tolls
For two old souls.

—Margaret Eytling, in *Harper's Weekly*.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

All day long the steel-colored clouds
had hung heavily over the snow-mantled
hills; all day long the old farmers had
nodded the r heads sagely at each other,
and said:

"There's more snow in the air," or,
"We're goin' to hev a spell o' weather."

But it seemed that the old farmers
were wrong, after all; for just at sunset
the clouds parted away, the sun, all gar-
landed with golden beams, laughed over
the frozen landscape, and the beautiful
evening star came to keep his sacred
vigil above the Christmas Eve.

"An ideal view," said Mr. Mackenzie,
stopping on the crest of the hill to ob-
serve the sweet serenity of the old church,
garrisoned with leafless poplar trees, and
the frozen river which reflects the red
sunset in front; the solemn majesty of
the White Mountain range beyond.

"Upon my word, we sojourners in the
semi-tropical valleys of Santa Barbara
haven't any conception what the word
'Christmas' really means! I should like
to be artist enough to paint this scene.
Let me see. 'The first house after you
pass the toll-gate; painted red, with
white trimmings; gable toward the road;
old well-sweep to the rear.' Yes," with
a nod of the head, "this is it!"

Mr. Rolf Mackenzie was coming East
after ten years' residence on the fair Pa-
cific coast. He had gone thither to make
his fortune. He had made it, and now
he was on the way to fulfill an old love-
engagement with Mary Brown.

They had become affianced ten years
ago. Unlike the generality of men, Rolf
Mackenzie was steadfast and true, even
though all these converging years, he
had gradually become aware of an ever-
growing uncongeniality between himself
and Mary Brown.

"It would have been better for both of
us if I had left myself unfettered," he
thought. "In the e days I did not know
what I wanted, and I suppose she didn't,
either. But a promise is a promise, and
I dare say Mary will make a good wife to
me. I suppose I shall find her changed.
I'm changed myself. When a man has
tided over his thirtieth year, he can't
expect time to deal gently with him."

And with these rather unlover-like
meditations, Mr. Mackenzie rapped on
the door of the red house with the lomb-
ardy poplars in front of it and the well-
sweep behind.

It was all new to him. He had been
only in the second year of his sojourn in
California, when Mary's father, Bela
Brown, had sold out the old Vermont
homestead and moved up into the Maine
forests. But what were a few score of
miles, more or less, to a man who has
crossed the Sierra Nevadas and eaten
sandwiches on the precipices of Cape
Horn?

He rapped again. There was no an-
swer, and he did what he would have
done at a Los Angeles ranch—opened the
door and walked in.

The room was bright with blazing
logs and candle shine. The mantle was
decorated with clusters of holly; wreaths
of laurel leaves glistened overhead, and
festoons of the beautiful princess pine
were fastened over the cheap engravings
and the "Map of the United States" on
the walls.

The kettle sang; the cushioned rock-
ing-chair was drawn up in front of the
hearth, and a volume of Jean Ingelow's
poems lay open on the round work-
table.

"As pretty an interior as ever I saw in
my life," said Mr. MacKenzie, looking
complacently round. "Geraniums in the
window; holly and laurel leaves; Jean
Ingelow! I begin to have new hopes of
Mary, after all. She has kept pace with
the times a little."

At this moment there was a little
shriek. The door leading into the back-
kitchen had opened; a lovely young
woman, in a deep-blue merino dress,
with loops of paler blue ribbon in her
hair, stood in the portal, with a glass
dish of apple-sauce in her hand.

"Mary!"
Rolf Mackenzie held out both hands.
He meant to have advanced boldly
and kissed her, as a man should salute
his fiancee, but a certain sense of prop-
riety prevented any such demonstra-
tion.

"You are not frightened, are you? It's
only I."

"Only you."
The blue eyes—Mary Brown's eyes had
deepened and grown larger and more
liquid, it seemed—were fixed wistfully
upon his face, as if she did not quite
understand.

"Didn't you get my letter?"
"No. What letter?"

"Upon my word," said Mr. Mackenzie
"anything like the stupidity of our
postal arrangements, I never knew. I
mailed that letter just one week before I
started. So I've taken you by surprise
eh?"

"Y—yes," murmured Mary, blushing
delightfully.

"Well, well, Father Time had not
been so rough with Mary Brown after
all," thought Rolf.

For a girl of thirty, she really had a
wonderful complexion—and that way of
crimping her red-gold tresses all over
her head was extremely becoming. It
made her look full ten years younger than
her actual age.

"But you are glad to see me, Mary?"
Something of the old romantic tenderness—a sensation that he had deemed
dead and buried long ago—had risen up
into his heart, and quivered in his voice.
It was all right. He was as much in love
as ever!

"Father will be glad to see you, I dare
say," demurely answered Mary. "Please
to sit down, Mr.—Mr.—"

"No 'Mr.' at all," said Mackenzie, half
vexed, half amused, at this very evident
coquetry. "Call me Rolf, why don't
you?"

The large lashes fell over the blue eyes.
"Rolf sounds so very familiar," she
murmured.

"But I call you Mary, don't I?"
"Oh, yes, but you are so much older
than I am."

He bit his lip. So far as he could re-
member there was just eighteen months'
difference in their ages. But upon these
subjects one couldn't very well contra-
dict a lady.

"Is your father well?" he asked, by
way of starting upon a new and entirely
safe topic, as he watched Mary's nimble
fingers—how plump and dimple they
were, to be sure!—arrange the drapery
and set the round table for the coming
meal.

"Quite well," answered Mary. "I ex-
pect him in every minute. He went
over to Berksdale to a funeral this after-
noon, and people have no sort of con-
science about letting him come home in
decent time. I suppose he is a comfort
where there is an illness or death."

Mackenzie lifted his eyebrows inter-
rogatively. Bela Brown was a very
worthy man, as he remembered him, but
short of speech, and entirely devoid of
imaginative qualities.

If he was a comfort to bereaved souls,
it must have been a talent which he had

developed very recently. But he made
no comment on the fact.

"Fine wintry weather," he remarked.
"Quite so," said Mary.

"A decided contrast to the climate I
have left."

"Yes?" questioningly. "May I ask
where—?"

"The little coquette! What will she
pretend to be ignorant of next!" thought
Mackenzie.

But he only answered, pleasantly:
"Santa Barbara, you know. Under the
Coast Range."

"Oh, Santa Barbara!" Her pretty,
oval face brightened. "I've heard so
much about Santa Barbara of late, from
a neighbor of ours!"

"Ah!" said Rolf.
Mary sat down now, and folded her
hands on her lap, with her sweet face
turned away from the fire, and her large,
blue-black eyes sparkling with anima-
tion.

"I wonder," said she, musingly, "if
you have ever met a Mr. Mackenzie
there?"

"A—Mr.—Mackenzie!" he repeated,
wondering what the meaning of all this
was.

"It isn't a great place, like New York
or Boston, you know," reasoned Mary.
"People do meet each other there?"

"Oh, yes; certainly."
"And this Mr. Mackenzie? He was
tall and good-looking, with dark eyes
and a heavy beard."

"Well, yes, it does seem to me as if I
had met him once or twice," said Mac-
kenzie, grimly determined to let Mary
carry the joke as far as she pleased.

"Well," said Mary, smiling roguishly,
"it seems that Mr. Mackenzie, of Santa
Barbara, is engaged to our nearest neigh-
bor—a young woman up toward Cedar
River—only about half a mile from here,
if one goes through the woods; and
what is very funny, her name is just the
same as mine—Mary Brown!"

"Eh?" gasped Mr. Mackenzie.
"She isn't so very pretty," added
Mary. "She's not young, you know, and
her hair is thin, and she wears a frisette,
and somehow it seems to alter the whole
expression of her face. And her sight
has failed, doing fine sewing, and she
has been obliged to take to spectacles."

And she's—oh, so slim, and spare, and
sharp-elbowed!"

Mr. Mackenzie sat holding tight on to
the arm of his easy chair, while a sensa-
tion akin the trickling of ice-cold water
down his back took possession of him.
He comprehended it all now. He had
found the wrong Mary Brown this
Christmas Eve. The right Mary Brown
was still waiting, Gorgon-like, to turn
him to stone.

"But for all that," chirped on this
sweet voiced siren, "Mr. Thomas Briggs
—he keeps the toll-gate just below—has
fallen in love with her. And—they are
married. Father married them, and he
got his fee in cider, apple sauce and
pumpkins," she added, with a laugh.
"And since the wedding she has got a
letter from this very Mr. Mackenzie—
Ralph Mackenzie, of Ruben, or some
such name—that he is coming home this
Christmas to marry her. It was an old
engagement, she says; but he hadn't
written very regularly, and she didn't
think he intended to keep his word.
And Briggs was here on the spot."

"Yes—exact y!" said Mr. Mackenzie,
with some difficulty curbing his extreme
desire to jump up and fling his hat into
the air. "I riggs was on the spot!"

"But," resumed Mary, "what will the
poor man say when he gets home and
finds his sweetheart married to some one
else?"

"I should think," answered Macken-
zie, "that he would say it was the lucki-
est escape he had ever had in his life!"

"But he was her lover once!"
"Y—yes; but that was ten years ago.
These long engagements take all the
life out of a love affair. Mackenzie was
ready and willing to marry her, but—"

"Oh!" cried Mary, with a little rising
inflection, "then you did know him
well!"

"Like a book," cried the visitor, glee-
fully. "In fact, I'm Mackenzie myself—
Rolf Mackenzie! And—I beg a thousand
pardons, I am sure, but I fancied you
were Mary Brown, grown younger instead
of older. I might have known that time
never went backward."

"Oh!" cried Mary. "And I—"
"You've told the truth," said Macken-
zie. "It's always the best thing to do."

"Was it a dreadful blow?" sympathet-
ically murmured Mary. "Did it take
you by surprise?"

"Not a blow, at all! Don't I tell you
it's a relief? But now, Miss Mary, I
suppose I must go right on."

"It's very cold," said Mary, "and this
road is frightfully solitary. And they

even talk of some one's having seen a
bear somewhere on that mountain ledge
last week. You—you'd better stay with
father until morning. I am sure he would
be happy to entertain you."

"And you, Miss Mary?" pleadingly
"Why," she said, with the same arch
sparkle under her eyelashes, "I should
like to hear all about Mr. Mackenzie, of
Santa Barbara. It gives one such a new
idea of life, you see?"

"Very well, then," said Mackenzie;
"I'll stay."

Presently the old clergyman, Mary
Brown's father, came in, and renewed
his daughter's hospitable entreaties.

Mr. Mackenzie spent Christmas Eve at
the parsonage.

On Christmas Day he walked over to
Bela Brown's, where he congratulated
the bride—a faded, washed-out looking
woman now—and shook hands with the
groom most cordially.

"I hope you don't lay up nothin' agin
me," said Mr. Thomas Briggs, rolling
his light eyes solicitously around in their
sockets.

"Not in the least. I wish you a merry
Christmas!" cried Mackenzie. "And I
dare say Mary will make you the best
wife in the world!"

"But I'm sorry you got so far outen
the road last night," said Briggs.
"When I said the first house beyond the
toll-gate, I meant on the left-hand side,
not the right."

"Oh, it does not in the least signify!"
said Mackenzie, genially. "The Rev.
Mr. Brown entertained me most cordi-
ally."

And thus basely did he conceal the
secret of his kind apprehension. Men
are, morally speaking, rank cowards.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to add that
Mr. Mackenzie married Miss Mary
Brown, after all.

"And it's jest as well," said the toll-
keeper's bride. "I could never hev
brung my-elf to go so fur West. And
they do say the climate'll agree fust-rate
with old Parson Brown's bronical tubes.
Mary she's young and flighty, but of
course my Cousin Rolf has a right to
marry as he pleases."

And the next Christmas Eve was spent
by Mr. and Mrs. Rolf Mackenzie under
the shadow of the palms and manzanito-
trees of sweet Santa Barbara.—*Idea
Forrest Graves.*

A Spanish Masher in 1686.

His hair was parted in the middle and
tied behind with a blue ribbon, three
inches wide and a yard long, which hung
down his back. His corduroys were
fastened above the knee with five or six
buttons, and this was necessary to get
them on, as they fitted so tightly. He
wore a short waistcoat of white satin, a
long frock-coat of black velvet with
wide sleeves, slashed so as to exhibit the
white silk waistcoat sleeves. His shirt
was of black taffetas with colored cuffs
or manchettes. He wore his green cloth
mantle in dandy fashion slung over his
arm. He carried in his hand a long
sword, the guard of which was large
enough to make at least half a cuirass.
These swords were so long that none but
a giant could have drawn them from
their sheaths; the latter were therefore
provided with a spring, which opened at
the slightest touch. An elegantly-shaped
poniard was stuck behind in his belt.
His gaitle or stiff-starched collar forced
him to hold his head so high that he
could neither bend nor turn his head.
His hat was of extraordinary size, with
low crown surrounded with colored
crape. This crape betokened the extreme
height of fashion. His shoes were of
the finest Cordovan leather, like glove-
kid, and fitted as closely as if they were
glued on. On entering a room he made
an elaborate curtsy by crossing his legs,
one over the other, and bowing slowly
and deeply. Moreover, he was redolent
with perfumes.—*Chronik der Zeit.*

The Stamp Collecting Mania.

The mania for collecting postage
stamps seems to be gaining more ground
than ever in France. Among the most
famous collectors in France is a man
who has over a million postage stamps
preserved in 130 richly-bound volumes,
and another who keeps two clerks em-
ployed in classifying and arranging his
enormous collection. Added to this,
there are in Paris about 150 wholesale
firms employed in the trade, and one of
the best known of these has lately offered
from £20 to £40 for certain stamps of the
year 1836. Tuscan postage stamps
dated before 1800 will be paid for at the
rate of £6 each, while stamps from
Mauritius for the year 1847 fetch £80,
and French stamps of 1849 are quoted at
£1 each.—*London Telegraph.*