



HANGING THE STOCKINGS.

Six little worsted stockings hanging all in a row,
And I have patched two scarlet heels, and darned a crimson toe.
Over the eyes of azure, over the eyes of brown,
Seemed as though the eyelids could never be coaxed down.

I sang for a good long hour before they were shut quite tight,
For to-morrow will be Christmas, and old Nick comes to-night.
We laughed as we dropped the candles into heel and toe,
For not one little stocking was missing from the row.

Oh, the empty cradles—the tears that pillows wet,
The voice of Rachael crying—my soul cannot forget,
For there is no child to-night in many a house I know,
Where a little sock was hanging only a year ago.

And when our work was ended, we stood a little apart,
Silently praying the Father to soothe that mother's heart,
Who looks on her unworn stockings amid her falling tears,
Whose darling is keeping Christmas in Christ's eternal years.

THE COLONEL'S CHRISTMAS STORY.

"OU see," said Alaire, as he stretched himself out comfortably in his chair before the fire, "it is one of the cheerful peculiarities of Christmas that it makes a man homesick who has no home. It is sentiment, it is tradition, it is human nature, perhaps, but it never strikes one so forcibly and desolately that he is alone in the world as then—when he sees all the world rushing homeward."

"Yes," I assented, "there ought to be a Society for Providing Unattached Gentlemen of Affectionate Dispositions with homes to go to at Christmas and Thanksgiving. I intend to call the attention of the conference of Charities to it at their next meeting."

We had dined together—the colonel, Alaire and I—at a little corner of the club dining-room, and the meal had not been a very cheerful one, in spite of the fact that the chef had surpassed himself. Afterwards we had walked around to the colonel's room for one of the long, discursive talks in which we three, who were friends of many years' standing, delighted.

Somewhat we were unusually quiet. It was Christmas Eve, and at such a time each heart audits its account with fate, and no matter what the world may say of success or failure, it strikes its own balance of happiness or sorrow. Suddenly, across the stillness of the room, there floated clear and sweet from the pavement below a child's voice singing an old Christmas carol. The colonel went over and raised the window and stood listening, with his broad shoulders toward us.

"Star of Bethlehem"—the childish voice quavered and faltered in its song. He threw a handful of coin on the pavement and shut the window down.

"Ah," he said, drawing his breath sharply, "I used to sing that myself when I was a child. My mother used to play on an old-fashioned spinnet, and we used to sing—" Then he turned to us abruptly, "I am going home to-morrow."

We made a little gesture of protest and surprise, but he did not notice it. "It isn't the fashion," he went on, "for people to care much for anything. It isn't fit de siecle to weep, and most of us have forgotten how to laugh, and we crush down all emotion as if we were ashamed of it. I am like the rest of my world. I have never talked about myself, and yet to-night I have a fancy to tell you a bit of my life. It will help you to understand—when I am gone. If I tire you, stop me, a man is generally a bore when he talks about himself."

Alaire reached up and turned out the single jet of gas that was burning. "It is better talking in the dark," he said, but I knew the exquisite chivalry of the man. He would not read what was written in the open book of the colonel's face. What he told us we would know; no more.

There was a long pause. "You will understand," he said, slowly, "that it is not easy for me to talk of this thing. Of course, as the cynical French proverb has it, there was a woman in the row."

"I remember," said Alaire, "that I remember the Christmas story—Alicia. My neighbor, while I was a child, failed, and I remember that a snowflake fell on her forehead. Finally he had the grace to die, and left her penniless to face the world alone. Nothing on earth," said the colonel slowly, "is so sad to me as a gentle woman, used to the refinements and elegancies of life, who finds her independence on her own exertions. Of course, of course often they find the real problem but at

UNDER THE MISTLETOE.



Who stands under the mistletoe
May be kissed, the poets say.
"Now's your chance," cries the little one,
"Sister's under the mistletoe now."

blue gown, and some pale winter roses were on her breast.

"Well," and the colonel laughed un-mirthfully, "the tale is soon told. I loved her from the first moment I ever saw her. I went back to college with my head filled full of fancies about her, graduated and came home to settle down to the peaceful life of a Kentucky farmer. By and by Alicia promised to be my wife, and for six months I lived in a fool's paradise. 'Wait,' her father said; 'you are both too young to marry,' and so I waited on patiently enough. Every day was so pressed down and running over with joy that I had no need to hurry.

"Did you ever think," asked the colonel suddenly, "that a great love is like a strong light held close to the eyes? It blinds one to everything else, and sometimes it is the selfishest thing on earth. Afterwards I knew that Alicia never really loved me. That I, slow of thought and speech, with no grace of manner or person, was never the one to have filled her ideal or touched her fancy. In promising to marry me she had been swept away by the strength of my passion. And I poured out such a wealth of love on her that I never noticed she gave nothing in return. She let me love her—that was enough.

"That Christmas, Walton, a college mate of mine, came to spend the holidays with me. He was a showy, brilliant young fellow, but one whom I had never fancied, and his coming was entirely accidental. He happened to be in that part of the State and dropped in to see me. You know how such things happen. Of course he met Alicia. They sang together and danced together, and all at once my pensive little darling blossomed out into a brilliant woman, and still I suspected nothing. I loved her too well; I was too loyal to be jealous. She seemed happy in Walton's company, and so I pressed him to stay, and he lingered on for weeks and weeks.

"After a while Walton went away, and I could not but notice a kind of fear, constant, aversion, I don't know what, that had come upon Alicia. Then one day, in a little burst of petulant, unreasoning wrath about some trifle, she turned upon me and told me the whole bitter truth—that she had never really loved me—that her heart was given to Walton, and she hated me because I stood between her and him.

"Of course one cannot bind a woman to one when she wishes to be free. I was not cur enough to whine, but I went to Europe for a bit, and when I came back settled in the city. I couldn't go back there. She had changed the world for me.

"Alicia and Walton were soon married, and it turned out most unfortunately. He broke her heart by every refinement of cruelty; he wasted her fortune, neglected and ordered her, and through it all she loved him still. God knows a woman's ideals die hard!

"Finally he had the grace to die, and left her penniless to face the world alone. Nothing on earth," said the colonel slowly, "is so sad to me as a gentle woman, used to the refinements and elegancies of life, who finds her independence on her own exertions. Of course, of course often they find the real problem but at

what agony of body and soul no one can know. Alicia was like the rest. She had the inexact knowledge of the ordinary girls boarding school, but she could not have stood the examination to have taught the a b c's in a public school. She had a sweet voice and a sympathetic touch in music, but that isn't what the young ladies who 'render' pieces want to know nowadays. She could paint and draw a little, but you know the whole dreary story. Nothing that would count in these days when the world must have value received for what it pays, and yet she must earn her bread. She tried the usual things—boarders—but she who had been used to entertaining with a lavish hospitality did not know how to make every economy tell, and so that was a failure. First one thing and then another she tried. Everything was a failure, and then she lost courage and threw down her arms, a poor little vanquished warrior in the battle of life.

"Then she drifted to this city, found a poor room, and has lived—if anyone may call such existence living—by selling or pawning the remnants she had left of the finery of other days.

"Yesterday I was on the street, and in crossing a crowded corner I was so jostled against a poor woman who clutched in her hand a piece of money that it fell on the pavement and rolled under the feet of the passers-by. I stooped to pick it up, and when I put it in her hand I looked straight in the eyes of Alicia.

"'Jack!' she said, faintly, and I answered, 'Alicia!'

We could not speak there, and I almost lifted her in a cab that was standing by the curb, and by and by she told me what I have been telling you. She was half starved, friendless and homeless and cold, and she told me with a little smile more pitiful than any tears could have been, that she had determined to end a life that had in it nothing but sorrow and want and degradation.

"For me," said the colonel, softly, "there has never been but one woman in the world. I gave her my whole love when my heart was young, and it has never faltered. So I asked her there, in her poor room, to be my wife, as I had asked her years before, and when she pointed to her poor withered face and spoke of the years of sorrow she had caused me she would have knelt at my feet.

"'How could I have ever slighted such love,' she wept; 'how could I—how could I!'

"We are going to be married to-morrow," said the colonel, "and I am going to take her back to Kentucky for a while, back to where the blue grass will be soft about her poor feet that have wandered homeless through the city. My God, men, think how hard the streets of a city are to a homeless woman! Back to where the eyes that have been sear'd looking into the hard face of poverty shall see nothing but the pitying smile of nature; back to peace and quiet and rest, where she will forget the world, and maybe there I shall win the love I missed so many years ago."

I reached out in silence and took the colonel's hand, and Alaire lit a match, and all at once the room flamed into sudden brilliancy.

"And now," said the colonel, "give me a Christmas toast before you go. 'My Old Kentucky Home,' God bless it. Standing, please!"

EARLY FEASTINGS.

The Puritans would not hear of Plum Pudding.

The plum pudding that years of use had made sacred to Christmas, was a sweet morsel dear to epicurean memory, but never to be mentioned in a community where a Puritanic rage awoke at the mere mention of anything connected with that "impious Holiday of Anti-Christ."

And in those days of privation England's crown would have been as easy an attainment for her runaway subjects as the rich ingredients for composing the historic delicacy.

But private store of raisins and Zante currants and small boxes of citron began to accumulate in the little corner wallcupboards, where the frugal housewives kept the treasures sent them from friends in the mother country. When church and courts sanctioned some modest feasting, a pudding was compounded, in such houses as could afford it, and considered by flippant youthful partakers to be one of the chief privileges of Thanksgiving Day.

A whole chapter might be written about the plum pudding of old England, but poets and historians have made it sufficiently famous, and our attention, as loyal Americans, may well be given to the almost pathetic efforts of the colonists to imitate it with such ingredients as their slender resources allowed. An early letter from a colonist says:

"Although we have not as yet known physical starvation, yet so seldom have dainties been on our board that it was some admiration to us when the goodwife of one of our number made a fine pudding from meal supplied by the Indians and the abundant berries (whortleberries) that grow like small plums on straight wild bushes."

There is another record, or tradition, of a pudding that was sacred to Thanksgiving Day a few years later, when store ships more regularly crossed to exchange the supplies of an older civilization for such things as the settlers could obtain from the Indians, or manufacture among themselves. Probably the pudding has been changed in some respects to suit the present day, but in the main the recipe remains as it was handed down, and all the descendants of one noble Puritan family serve it invariably at their Thanksgiving dinners. Slices an inch in thickness are cut from a loaf of home-made bread and spread generously with butter. One of them is laid in the bottom of a three-quart tin pail and then dotted with twelve raisins as impartially arranged as possible. Another slice laps this, and in its turn receives its allotment of raisins. Slice after slice is thus laid on till the whole loaf is in the pail, into which is then poured a custard mixture, made by adding twelve beaten eggs and a flavoring of salt to a quart of milk. In the morning the pail tightly covered, with its contents undisturbed, is plunged into a great kettle of hot water hanging upon a crane over the huge wood fire, and there left to boil for four hours or till time for the homogeneous boulder-like form that the compound had resolved into, to be slid out upon a dish and served at "the sweet end of dinner," with a sweet sauce made tasty with clovers cinnamon and mace.

The pudding is palatable enough to please any one, but when it was first in use the bread was undoubtedly made of rye or Indian corn, and there must have been many times when the supply of raisins running short, the perplexed cooks had to substitute dried berries for the raisins. It is a question, too, if the generous number of eggs had not to be lessened sometimes.

WATCHING FOR SANTA CLAUS.

The children lie in the fire-glow warm,
Watching for Santa, and wishing so hard,
With bright heads resting on each little arm,
And eyes ashine in a fixed regard—
Oh, no! they're not a bit sleepy at all,
As they watch and wait for Santa Claus' call.

But Santa knows they are watching for him,
So he laughs to himself, and slyly waits
Till their eyelids droop, and sleep takes them.

Off into Dreamland, and locks his gates,
And leaves them in charge of the fairy light,
Who leads them out in the morning light.

Now Santa Claus comes to the little black row
Of stockings that hang in the chimney nook,
And isn't it funny that he should know
Which wants a doll, skates, sled or book?
Then his lightened peak to his shoulder flings,
And off again as the wild wind sings.

When the stars are gone, and the sun peeps out,
There is heard the patter of little feet;
The children rush in with a joyous shout—
The stockings are emptied—Oh, bright and sweet
Are the happy faces and voices gay
And hearts a-ale merry on Christmas Day!

Without, the frost-winged breezes blow
Across the world, above below,
And the rose in every cheek is stirred
With the dewy kiss of each snow-flake bird.

Within, the cheerful Yule log fire
Brims with music's high desire,
Sheds light and cheer below, above,
Bespeaking the warmth of homely love.

A single sunflower stalk at Burns,
Kan., carried the unprecedented number
of 233 blooms at one time.

Millions Who Do Not Celebrate Christmas.

There are millions upon millions of people in the world who will not celebrate Christmas, and there are other millions to whom Christmas is objectionable.

Take the followers of Mohammed, for instance. They are divided into forty or fifty different sects, among which are the Nousay-rie-yeh. There are about 50,000 of them, and they believe in transmigration of the soul. They believe that men's souls pass after death into the bodies of animals. For them the story of the birth and life of Christ has no charms.

Then there are the Druses, who profess to have knowledge that God has visited the world 234 times, but they do not believe in Christ. For them Christmas has no significance.

It is equally disregarded by Buddhists, Japanese, Chinese, Brahmins and Mohammedans. "There is no God but Allah," says the Mohammedan, "and Mohammed is his prophet." Mohammed's followers also have curious notions in regard to the fate of unbelievers' children. Some believe that these children act as the servants of the faithful in paradise, and Mohammed is recorded as saying on one occasion to his wife:

"If I though dearest, I can make thee hear their cries in Hades."
Other Mohammedan authorities, however, dissent from this view, and one of them boldly says: "I know that Allah will not torment those who have not committed any sin."

Even Christmas Had No Terrors.

And it came to pass that the Meek-Eyed Youth looked upon the Glorious Girl while her cheeks were red, and he spake unto her, saying: "Fairer creature upon earth, wilt thou be my beauteous bride?"

And the Glorious Girl made swift answer, saying: "Not, O Reginald! not until you have given me positive proof that you love me."

And the face of the Glorious Girl was even as the wild lily of the untrodden forest for coyness, but her voice was like unto the tax collector's for firmness.

And the Meek-Eyed Youth looked him far away into the henceforth, for a great fear was with him, and in his wailing woe he was fain to end it all.

And it came to pass that in that darkest moment a great light dawned upon him, and he spake unto the Glorious Girl, saying: "Lest, peradventure, thou misunderstand me, again do I say, be my beauteous bride. As for proof that I love thee, fair one, let me draw your attention to the fact that Christmas is scarce four weeks hence—dost want more proof?"

And straightway the Glorious Girl nestled close to his more or less manly breast, and even as she nestled she spake, saying: "Thou art indeed brave. Most men would have waited till after Christmas; but you—ouch! You mustn't muss my hair, dear!"—Baltimore News.

Christmas Morning.



"Good morning, Mr. Gander! A cool morning."

"Yes; I'm all covered with goose-pimples."

It Was No Inducement.

"If you are good," remarked the new nurse in a Boston family to her three-year-old charge, "Santa Claus will give you something nice on Christmas."

"You will have to talk about Santa Claus to younger persons," replied the child. "I know that he is a mythical personage."—Judge.

A Change in the Date.

Dillingham—"I think Christmas ought to be held on the twenty-sixth of December."

Wilberforce—"Why?"
Dillingham—"Because now that it is held on the twenty-fifth the twenty-sixth finds people about tired to death."

Galle.

Dix—"If my wife asks you my brand of cigars between now and Christmas, tell her these, and say—"
Dealer—"Yes."
Dix—"Don't charge her over a dollar a box; I'll pay the balance."

At Christmas.

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Across the world, above below,
And the rose in every cheek is stirred
With the dewy kiss of each snow-flake bird.

Within, the cheerful Yule log fire
Brims with music's high desire,
Sheds light and cheer below, above,
Bespeaking the warmth of homely love.

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QUEER OLD NATURE.

"Why is it," asked the wondering child, (Sweet, simple little thing),
"That the foolish tree puts on its clothes
When the sun shines in the Spring,
And then when chilly Autumn comes
And the winds of Winter blow,
Why does it stand out there, all bare,
In the frost and sleet and snow?"

"Wise Nature has arranged it thus,"
I told the little one,
"The rustling leaves can only live
Beneath a smiling sun;
The tree that, in the Summer time,
Makes shady bowers for you
Must have its rest, therefore it stands
Asleep the Winter through."

She sat in silence for a while
And gazed far into space,
And lines of thought and trouble came
To mar her childish face:
And so, at last, she turned and said;
"I'm sorry for the tree,
And glad that Nature wasn't left
To fix things up for me!"
—S. E. Kiser, in "Cleveland Leader."

HUMOROUS.

Papa (to mamma)—It is wonderful
what becomes of all the pins made!
The Baby (suddenly)—Wow! Yow!
"Where did you learn French?"
asked the Parisian. "From a native,"
proudly replied the tourist. "Ah! a
native of what?"

"Homer, of course, was merely a
wandering minstrel," "Yes. With
his genius for military description he
would have made a fine war correspond-
ent."

"Before a man is thirty he falls in
love with every pretty girl he looks
at." "Yes?" "And after he is thirty
he falls in love with every pretty girl
who looks at him."

Willie—Ma, can people leave parts
of themselves in different places? Ma
—No; don't be ridiculous. Willie—
Well, Mr. Jiggs said he was going to
Arizona for his lungs.

Crimsonbeak—These weather clerks
are very uncertain. Yeast—What
makes you think so? Crimsonbeak—
Why, one of them said yesterday, it
would rain, and it did.

Fuddy—You consider Harriman a
very funny fellow? Daddy—The wit-
tiest man I ever knew? He can keep
a company of Englishmen in a brown
study an entire evening.

One of the things which makes the
Klondike so popular is the fact that
no citizen can say to another, "You
don't cut any ice in this." Or "Is
this hot enough for you?"

Plankington—I understand that you
had to go to law about that property
that was left you. Have you a smart
lawyer? Bloomfield—You bet I have.
He owns the property now.

Rev. Goodwin (sympathetically)—Ah,
Mr. Heavyloss, we don't know what
a blessing our wives are until they are
laid silent in the tomb. Mr. Heavy-
loss—Yes—silence is a great blessing.

Be warned, dear children, by the
fate of the Boston baseball player who
has been sent to jail for four months
for stealing a kiss. Probably this
young man began his downward career
by stealing a base.

"I have noticed," said the Cheer ul
Idiot, "that a man takes much more
satisfaction in the knowledge that he
has made an ass of himself than he
does in knowing that others have made
a monkey of him."

Miss Margaret Hoggley (of Chic-
ago, to her sister in a London drawing
room)—See here, Mabel; sisterly love
is sisterly love, but if you address me
as "Mag" again in the presence of
Lord Lovens I'll cut loose when we
get home to our rooms at the hotel.

"What! no telephone?" asked one
of the regular callers at the drug
store. "Why did you have it taken
out?" "Most of the people in the
neighborhood got to using it to order
drugs from other stores. I guess I
can grasp a business idea once in a
while."

A municipal judge has before him a
culprit. "What are you here for?"
"Picking pockets." "You're an honest
man to admit it. I'll let you off
with \$20 fine. The thief can only
find \$16. 'Here!' exclaims the judge,
who arrested this man?" "I did,"
says Officer Mulcahey, standing up.
"Well, take him out in the crowd till
he gets the other \$4."

"I don't like that man Parker's
way. He is always so positive about
everything. These positive people
are very disagreeable—never give
other people credit for having any
sense at all."

"Why don't you just bring proofs
some time when he is so positive and
show him where he is in error. A
few doses of that kind will cure him."
"I've tried it."

"Well, didn't it have any effect?"
"No; made him worse. You see, it
always turned out that he was right,
after all."—Cleveland Leader.

The Spider's Thread.

An eminent naturalist says that
every thread of what we call the
spider's web is made up of about 5000
separate fibers. If a pound of this
thread were required it would occupy
nearly 28,000 spiders a full year to
furnish it. The author of this state-
ment does not inform us how long the
thread would be, but it is safe to say
that it would reach several times
around the universal world.