

LATE CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON.

The glad, glad bells of morning, the laughter at the dawn—
The lustre of the children's eyes is due to look upon—
But, O, the best of Christmas—the best day of them all—
Is when the lazy freight makes pictures on the wall,
And I may sit in silence and give myself the boon
Of going back to boyhood, late Christmas afternoon.

Here I shall fall to musing of pictures in the grate—
There, eager for my summons the host of boysdays wait,
And in and out a-marching I'll see them come and go
With hands waved high in welcome—the boys I used to know;
And there, if I am patient, 'twill be for me to see,
As one sees in a mirror, the boy I used to be!

Out of the swaying shadows will rise the long ago,
The sleigh-bells' tinkle-tinkle, the soft kiss of the snow,
The white sea of the meadow, where the pranking winds will lift
The long sweep of the billow foamed up in drift on drift,
And crisp across the valley will come a bell-sweet tune
To set me nodding, nodding, late Christmas afternoon.

Late afternoon, in Christmas! The twilight soothing in
And with these my visions of glad days that have been!
For I shall dream and wander down un-forgotten ways,
My eager arms enfolding all of my yesterdays
Without the mellow echoes of blended chime and hymn;
Within, the bygone voices in murmurs far and dim.

O, mine the gift of fancy, and mine this magic chair,
And mine the dim procession of Christ-masses that were!
I ask no richer token of love on Christmas Day
Than this which comes unbidden, than this which will not stay
This wealth of recollections that vanish overnight,
The dreamland of the shadows, late Christmas afternoon.

—W. D. Nesbit, in Harper's Weekly.

A Christmas Bridal
BY ETTA W. PIERCE.

A GIRL stood at the door, with a red shawl pinned across her bosom, and in a shrill voice sang:

"Carol, brothers, carol; carol joyfully.
Carol the good tidings; carol merrily,
And pray a glad some Christmas
For all good Christian men.
Carol, brothers, carol,
Christmas comes again."

"In heaven's name, who is that creature?" said Cedric.
His easy chair, pushed into the bow window, commanded a view of the garden walk and the singer. His crutch leaned against the wall beside him; his blond head rested languidly upon a crimson silk cushion.

"I haven't an idea," I answered, as I put the last touches to the Christmas pine above the high carved mantel. "A tramp, evidently. Do you like the effect of Christmas roses in silver bowls, Cedric?"

"Arrange your roses in silver bowls, or in iron-bound buckets, just as you like, Beth," answered Cedric, peevishly. "I hate weddings—they are even worse than burials. Cannot you see that you are all riding, roughshod, over my heart?"

He raised himself on the arm of his chair and looked out at the figure before the door. The bleak December wind was blowing through the girl's thin gown. Her face, which bore traces of beauty, was livid now with cold, and perhaps illness.

"She is the image of despair!" he cried. "I feel a fellowship with her! Go, Beth, bring her in—give her meat and drink, and whatever else you may have at your marriage feast."

Cedric was the most unreasonable of human beings. I was always afraid of him when he was in his dark moods. I ran out of the room.

But a third person had heard the singer, and, as I reached the hall, lo! there was Jacquita, gliding down the shining, shallow stair—Jacquita, with her dusky hair and creamy skin and great Southern eyes—she whose bridal had filled our old Plymouth house with bustle and expectation.

For years we had been classmates in a young ladies' school. She was of the hot South, I of the cold North. Yet we loved each other devotedly. Proud was I when, at the end of our school days, Jacquita came, an honored guest, to the old house overlooking the gray waste of Plymouth Bay—proud was I when all hearts went down before her there, and that gallant sailor, Captain Dacre Holme, hastened to lay himself and his future at her feet; and, alas! sad was I when I found that she had also made wild havoc of my poor crippled Cedric's peace.

"That girl looks sick and heartbroken," said Jacquita, as she stepped lightly down into the hall. She flung back the hall door. The eyes of the vagrant fell on her with an expression that I shall never forget. An unspeakable hatred and despair blended in the look.

made her his, and his only, till life should end.
Throughout the ceremony Cedric kept his chair and made no sign. She was married—she was Dacre's wife!
Then followed a hubbub of congratulations and farewells—a confusion of friendly tongues; and presently Jacquita, in a Paris traveling gown, with soft bands of fur about her throat, and eyes brimming with happiness, came and knelt by Cedric's chair.

"Good-by," she said, lifting her beautiful face to his reluctant gaze. "You may kiss me, Cedric, if you like."
"You belong to Dacre," he answered bitterly. "I do not want to kiss you. Good-by."
We saw them enter the carriage together—both young and beautiful and wildly happy. We flung the rice and shoes after them; the horses pranced down the drive; the guests departed, and Cedric and I were left alone.

Darkness had fallen. The wind tore wildly up and down the curving Plymouth shore; the bay was white with foam. I turned with a shiver to the leaping wood fire.
"What a dreadful night for a wedding journey!" I said.
In the red glow of the logs Cedric's face looked like gray stone.

"I like storms," he said, savagely. "That pair is too happy to know whether the sun is shining or a norther raging. Beth, sweep those flowers out of the room—their odor stifles me."

With the last word Jacquita reeled, and fell face downward on the floor. Then love for a moment conquered the infirmity of the flesh, for, regardless of the crutch which had been his constant support for months and years, Cedric leaped from his chair, and with a terrific cry rushed to the widowed bride, and knelt beside her.

Two years later, in a terrific winter storm, an English bark was wrecked on a neighboring beach.

Several bodies drifted ashore, and among them was a sailor, slender, young, beardless: When found by the patrol a little life still lingered in him. He was carried to the station among the rocks, and every means which surfmen know employed for his resuscitation. Only once, however, did the wild eyes of the boy open, and then they changed to fall upon Cedric, who had hurried to the scene of the disaster, and was standing with the life savers in the warm, brightly lighted station. What memories did the face of my brother conjure up before this stranger lad? He tried to clutch at Cedric's storm coat. My brother bent down and looked at him.

"Great heaven!" he cried. "This is no boy, but the woman who killed Dacre Holme!"
At this accusation the young sailor heaved himself up on the supporting arm of a surferman, and in one shuddering scream his soul passed into the night.

and I mean to love and cherish you till the end of my days."—People's Home Journal.

HIS CHRISTMAS SERMON.

An Aged Wayfarer Who Taught a Curate Contentment.

An English clergyman declares that the best Christmas sermon he ever heard was preached by a woman—and in three words!
"In my little parish, under the sweep of the Sussex downs," he says, "I was walking swiftly home one night buffeted about by the gray clouds of driving rain that the fierce south-wester swept landward from the sea when a poor, helpless, aged woman asked me for a trifle for a night's lodging."
"Curates are supposed always to be poor. It was Christmas time, and I had just parted with my last sixpence at a lonely hamlet where work was scarce. Still I could not leave my stranger in the street, so I asked her to come with me to my lodgings."

"She shambled along through the mud with her streaming clothes and clouted boots, and we entered my little room. My thoughtful landlady had made my table ready. A plate of hot toast was standing in the fender; the kettle sang vociferously, as if impatient to be used; in front of the fire stood my slippers and an easy chair.
"To my surprise, my poor, worn, hag-

FAITH IN SANTA CLAUS.

I used to watch for Santa Claus
With childish faith sublime,
And listen in the snowy night
To hear his sleigh bells chime.
Beside the door on Christmas eve
I put a truss of hay
To feed the prancing steeds
That sped him on his way.

I pictured him a jolly man
With beard of frosty white,
And cheeks so fat that when he laughed
They hid his eyes from sight;
A heart that overflowed with love
For little girls and boys,
And on his back a bulging pack,
Brimful of gorgeous toys.

If children of a larger growth
Could have a Christmas tree
From Father Time, one gift alone
Would be enough for me—
Let others take the gems and gold,
And trifles light and vain,
But give me back my old belief
In Santa Claus again!

NANNIE'S XMAS IN 1799.
BY JULES ADAMS POWELL.

IT was the day before Christmas. Dame Yarrow stood in the store-room doorway, gowned in a warm frock of gray wool homespun, over which was tied an ample white apron. Her white-capped head nodded as she counted the pies on the shelves.

"Fifteen pumpkin—fifteen mince—fifty custard cups and two plum puddings—eighty-two in all, not counting Nannie's three little turnovers. I think that will do for the holidays this year, though Brother John is coming with those ten boys and one little girl. How cold it is. There is surely a storm brewing, and I hope the folks will get here before it breaks."

The good woman turned the key in the lock, and a door blowing open just at that moment, at the other end of the passageway, she hurried off to close it and forgot about the key.

By 3 o'clock madame was robed in her pretty gray poplin with white kerchief crossed on her breast, and a dainty white lace cap on her brown curls, which would stray out from beneath the cap band, and which Papa Yarrow slyly pulled as he passed through the hall where sat his wife and little daughter in front of the blazing wood fire.

"All ready for company, Nancy mine?" He caught the little one up in his arms and kissed her on either cheek, continuing: "And mother, too? Why she looks as young as the day I saw her for the first time."
Farmer Yarrow put the little girl down, glanced at his wife, who, with drooping face, did not respond to his merry speech.

Her husband, noticing this, bent over her tenderly, with the words, "Yes, my wife, our life has been one of great happiness, married only by one sorrow. If he—our eldest child—our Henry—were alive to-day, he would be a brave lad of 17."

"John," for the first time his wife raised her head and looked into his face, her brown eyes filled with tears, "John, sometimes, methinks our boy may yet be alive. In the fight with the Indians, we were told that he was carried away by them, and even though the country about was searched by scouts and others, it might be that they saved his life, for he was but a baby—5 years old, and if there was a woman in that tribe surely she would have mother-heart enough to preserve the life of an innocent babe who had never done harm to any."

"Wife, wife, this is very wrong for you to hope for the return of one who has been so many years from us. I am sure that our son cannot be alive, or we would have heard of him in some way. Ah! I hear sleigh bells."

Catching Nannie up again, he turned toward the window, and coming up the driveway were seen three immense sledges drawn by strong horses and filled with merry faces, the owners of which were soon clambering out. The front door was thrown open, and Madame Yarrow's tears vanished in the hearty handshakings and embraces of sisters, cousins and aunts.

Even Great-grandmother Hartwell had come, for this year it was Mary Yarrow's Christmas feast, and all had come to make the old house ring with joy and laughter until after New Year.

That night a merry crowd sat down at the supper table. There was Brother John Hartwell, his wife and eleven children. There was Great-grandmother Hartwell and her daughter-in-law, Grandmother Hartwell. Mr. Yarrow's father and mother were present, as were also his two brothers and one sister with their wives, husband and children. In all there were thirty-three.

One night well wonder where all this goodly company were to sleep, but if you had gone into the great garret you would have ceased wondering, when you saw the trundle beds for the little ones. Of course, the very smallest babies slept in their mothers' rooms.

Christmas Eve the children were always allowed an extra half hour around the fireside to listen to the stories of their elders, while the corn popped and chestnuts burned black, or else hopped across the floor.

On this evening Nannie sat in her favorite place on Cousin Roderick's knee. Uncle Tom had just been saying that a few days previous he had heard that the Indians had been causing trouble for the farmers. They were stealing the hoarded corn and wheat, and in one instance, after taking the grain, they had set fire to the granary.

Cousin Rod saw the look of terror in the eyes of some of the little ones, and interrupted with the words, "Well, now, Aunt Mary, wouldn't it be a great joke if these hungry Reds should get into your store-room and carry off all those pies and puddings I know you have there for to-morrow?"
"Are they really so hungry, Cousin Rod?" asked a little voice from his lap.
"Yes, dear, an Indian is always ready to eat one out of house and home."

into an unfastened window, stood transfixed with fear at the figure before him, but for the moment only, when, with a sort of grunt, the man moved toward the pantry door.
Nannie, beneath her breath, whispered, "It's a Indian, an' he's come for my turnovers. Cousin Rod said he might."
She was frightened and stood very still while the other fumbled with the lock, which soon yielded, and when Nannie saw the man was really inside the pantry, she turned and almost flew back to her father's room, where, standing on tiptoe, she whispered in his ear, "Father! Father! A Indian is down in the store-room, stealin' my turnovers! Come quick, father!"

He did "go quick," and arrived just in time to close the door of the store-room, and turn the key in its lock.
There was a pause, then a pounding on the door. Hastily pushing a heavy table against it, Mr. Yarrow returned to his room; dressed, and calling two other male members of the household, they all marched to the store-room well armed, and without much trouble, soon overpowered the thief, who proved to be an Indian, and who mumbled something that sounded like broken English.

They carried him out to the smoke-house, which was built of stone, and had a heavy iron door. The three men watched nearby the rest of the night.

At breakfast on this Christmas morning, Father Yarrow told the story of the previous night, and Nannie had her full share of caresses and praise from aunts, uncles and cousins alike.

Then there was a clamor from the youngsters to "see the prisoner," so after breakfast they all went forth to the temporary jail, Dame Yarrow among the others.

The great doors were pushed back, and lying on the floor was the Indian, asleep. But was it an Indian? Instead of the straight black hair, his was brown and curly.

Dame Yarrow gave one look, then turned to her husband, with extended hands, and the cry, "Oh, John, it is he!" fell fainting into his arms.

The lad was awakened and taken to the house. He spoke English brokenly, but could give no account of his former life, before he became one of a tribe of half-friendly Indians.

He explained his being in the store-room by telling his hearers that his tribe of Indians that was encamped several miles above, on the river bank, had been living on what they could steal from the whites.

He had been sent out on this night, and sealing a window open in the back of the Yarrow homestead he determined to crawl in and view the premises.

Mrs. Yarrow knelt before him and gazing searchingly into his eyes, which were blue, asked over and over, "Don't you know me, Harry, darling? I am your mother." But he could not be made to understand. He begged leave to return to the tribe, saying he would come back again with information.

This the men were inclined to believe a trick to get away, but when Mrs. Yarrow pleaded for him they let him go.

All idea of church-going was abandoned, for the first time on Christmas Day in the life of any member in that household, and dinner awaited at the bidding of madame until the return of the youth. He was seen coming up the walk at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and with him was an old Indian.

The following tale they all listened to with great interest:
"In the great Indian fight of twelve years before, the little captured boy was taken to the Indian encampment, and given to the care of a young squaw, the favorite wife of the chief of the tribe.

"One day she overheard the chiefs talking about the white man's child. They said he had brought misfortune to the Indians, as they had lost several battles since he had been with them, so they had decided that the innocent child should die.

"The squaw had learned to love the little one. That night she arose, and taking him in her strong arms she carried him away to another tribe of Indians, who were bitter enemies of her own, and, in order to save the boy's life, she told the chief of a deep-laid scheme that her tribe had planned for attacking them.

"She asked them to take the child and keep him, till perhaps, some day, he would be restored to his 'white tribe.'"
The old Indian was well rewarded with a load of wheat and corn to carry home on a hand sled.

Then the long-lost Harry Yarrow was made to understand that this was his home, and that he was to remain there.
The Christmas dinner did not suffer that night for want of attention, but before they partook of it, Farmer Yarrow, with his arm about his son, thanked God for this greatest of all His blessings.—Home Monthly.

NOTHING FOR FREDDIE GREEN.

Freddie Green he said 'at Santa Claus was 'at a fake an' he laid awake in bed to find out for sure, an' when Santa Claus come in with a whole lots of things he hollied right out loud to 'Get a hair-cut' to Santa Claus, an' Santa Claus 'st picked up everything 'at he was going to leave an' turned out the 'lectric light an' Freddie Green didn't get nothing! Pa says Freddie Green hain't got no manners—an' 'at's the reason.



"Where," he asked, quickly, "is the girl that sang the Christmas carol at the door? Was she warned and fed, as I directed?"

"Yes. Cook set her a good dinner, and when we were rushing about, too busy to notice, she just slipped off, without a word of thanks to anybody. Under her plate, cook found a gold piece."

"Why, that must have been the money which Jacquita gave her! How very odd! Evidently the girl had a soul above gold pieces," said Cedric.

I drew a stool to Cedric's side, and sat down in the light of the blazing brands. An oppressive hush had fallen on the house. The riot of wind and sea alone disturbed us. Cedric's eyes were fixed on the red core of the fire—his heart, as I well knew, was following after the bridal carriage and its freight of happiness and hope.

"She will go with him around the world, Beth!" he groaned. "More than once I have heard her say that she was a bad sailor—that she cared nothing for the sea; but her love for Dacre has changed all that. And but for an accident, Beth—a blow from an iron hoof—a mere trifle—I would have won her, in spite of a hundred Dacres—yes, but for that I might have been in his place this night!"

It was his one bitter, constantly recurring thought. I stroked his white, fevered hand, which he had laid on my shoulder.

"By this time they have reached the station, Beth—perhaps they are on the train, whirling farther and farther from us—Listen! There is some one coming up the walk, I say—I hear footsteps!"

It chanced that no one had thought to lock the main door of the house after the departure of our guests. Now we heard it open violently. There was a rush through the hall. A hand flung aside the curtain at the parlor threshold. Cedric uttered a sharp cry, and made as if to rise from his chair, for there, before our astonished eyes, stood Jacquita, the bride of an hour, her traveling dress all stained and disordered, and powdered with the snow that was beginning to fall, her face like the face of one who had looked on some ghastly thing, and frozen with the horror of it.

parlor, peering out into the darkness, when Cedric returned from the station. The lantern in his hand shone brightly; his erect figure advanced sturdily through the tempest of wind and snow. He had grown hardy and strong in the last year. His crutch was now a thing of the past; of the injury only a slight limp remained.

As his familiar halting step reached the door Jacquita sprang up from the hearth, where she had been feeding the fire with dry pine cones, and flew to meet Cedric. For three months she had been his happy wife.

"Oh," she cried, in alarm, "how grave and strange you look, Cedric! Something has happened!"
He dashed down the lantern and pressed her to his heart with passionate tenderness.

"Tell me," he said, huskily, "do you love me, Jacquita? Does the past seem to you like a nightmare dream?"
"Yes," she faltered; "oh, yes, yes!"
"Then you shall know the truth. That girl is lying dead at the station. She came ashore from a wreck, disguised as a sailor. Don't tremble, darling—you must forget that portion of your life altogether. You are mine, now—mine!"

gand companion raised her dripping hands and burst into tears with the words, "Oh, what luxury!"
"That was the best Christmas sermon I ever heard, and the only one I have never forgotten."—Youth's Companion.

Yule Tide Problems.
Hunting for a Christmas present
For each blooming friend you know
Is a task that's far from pleasant
When your funds are running low.
It is hard to make selections
That with joy all hearts will thrill
When you've got to make twelve sections
Of a lone ten-dollar bill.

People's wants are so extensive
That they fill you with despair,
They all hope for gifts expensive,
They don't know how ill they'll fare!
If you have a lot of money,
Buying presents is great sport,
But it's anything but funny
When your bank account is short.

"Man Wants but Little"
"Made known your wants for Christmas yet?"
"Sure. Asked the forty-seven friends who sent me suspenders last year to send trousers to match them this."—Cincinnati Times-Star.

GETTING READY FOR A HOT TIME.



Christmas day begins in the middle of the Pacific ocean, and there is where Santa Claus starts and ends his great and only journey of the year.