

LATE CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON.

The glad, glad bells of morning, the laughter at the dawn!
The lustre of the children's eyes is fine to look upon—
But, O, the best of Christmas—the best day of them all—
Is when the busy 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 boydays 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 and 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 me 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 Christmas-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 oversoon,
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 fung 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.

"Here is a Christmas gift for you, poor girl," said Jacquita, and she held out the gold piece.

A wicked look flashed into the wayfarer's face. She took the money, spat on it, fung it on the ground. Then, seeing my rising wrath, she snatched it again and slipped it into her pocket.

"For luck!" she mumbled, in apology for her strange action, and then added, curtly, reluctantly, "Thank you, miss."

"Have you traveled far?" asked Jacquita.

"A good bit," replied the girl.

"And where are you going now?"

"To find my man," sullenly. "He promised to marry me, but he went away—he didn't keep his word—I'm looking for him."

I led the girl to the kitchen and directed the servants to provide for her needs. I went away soon after to dress Jacquita for her bridal. Guests came trooping in and filled the house. Under an arch of Christmas pine, with the mellow wax lights shining lovingly upon her, Jacquita, in tulle and lace and satin, stood by the side of her bronzed young viking, and took the vows which 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."

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.

"In heaven's name, what has happened, Jacquita?" cried Cedric, wildly.

She held out her hands; they were red with blood. Her white lips moved; we heard her say:

"Down there, at the base of the hill, near the station, in the shadow of the trees, she was waiting for us—the girl who sang the Christmas carol at the door. I saw her by the light of the carriage lamps. Something bright was shining in her hand. She wrenched open the carriage door—she glared in on us. She hurled a terrible accusation at him—at Dacre—my husband. Then she fired, and he fell back dead. Look at my hands! This blood is his! They are bringing him after me—my husband—dead!"

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 surfnan, and in one shuddering scream his soul passed into the night.

I stood in the bow window of the 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



"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 fung 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."

"Where," he asked, quickly, "is the girl that sang the Christmas carol at the door? Was she warmed 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 foot-steps!"

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

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 terrible 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 surfnen know employed for his resuscitation. Only once, however, did the wild eyes of the boy open, and then they chanced to fall upon Cedric, who had hurried to the scene of the disaster, and was standing

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

The Dawn of Christmas.

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.

GETTING READY FOR A HOT TIME.



Popular Science.

Paper Shavings for Beds.

In several places in Prussia, experiments are being made with a somewhat novel material for soldiers' beds, namely, shavings of paper about three centimetres broad and several hundred metres long. These are stuffed into bags on which the soldiers lie. They are said to be more comfortable than straw and more springy. Straw beds, moreover, must be changed every six months. These new beds of paper shavings need changing only once in two or three years.

Farming by Night.

In order to demonstrate that, if necessary, agricultural operations can be carried out day and night continuously with gasoline motor, an interesting trial was recently carried out in England on a farm near Biggleswade. A field was illuminated by acetylene gas, and two 6-foot mowers were attached to an Ivel gasoline tractor. Under these conditions fifteen acres were cut in the short time of 3 hours 35 minutes.

New Active Volcano in Nevada.

A volcano throwing off molten lava has been discovered in Nevada. The volcano is in Rye Patch, Humboldt County. Although that section has been traversed for years the crater has just been found. The men were in search of cattle when they came on the stream of lava, and, tracing it to its source, found the volcano.

One of the largest and most famous trees in England is the Cowthorpe oak, thus named from the town wherein it stands. It is gradually decaying and disappearing, although it still puts forth green leaves every year. Like other giant trees in a state of decay, its trunk seems to be sinking into the ground. About 200 years ago it was 78 feet in girth at the ground level, and 80 feet high. Now it is but little more than 54 feet in girth at the ground, and only 37 feet high.

China is so well suited by natural conditions for the production of silk that even the most antiquated and unscientific methods cannot deprive her of the first rank in that industry. In Japan everything connected with the silk business is scientifically regulated. No silkworm is allowed to hatch unless the egg has passed a scientific inspection. The mulberry trees are cultivated on scientific principles. Similar methods are pursued in other countries where silk is produced. But in China these things are almost entirely disregarded, and yet China keeps near the head in production. Her undeveloped resources in this industry are so enormous that Mr. Anderson, our consul at Amoy, predicts that when China adopts modern methods she will give a new turn to the silk business of the world.

Qualified to Practice.

When the late Secretary Hay was crossing the Atlantic in 1895 on his way to Paris to serve as secretary of legation he told the following anecdote to one of his fellow travelers. On applying for admission to the bar of Illinois he was summoned to appear before a committee of prominent Chicago lawyers to be examined as to his qualifications.

He went to the place appointed and found the committee assembled; but for a long time they took no notice of the young candidate, but continued talking vigorously together on various subjects. At last one of the lawyers, turning to him, said:

"Mr. Hay, what would you do if a client should come to you with such a case as this?" and proceeded to describe very elaborately a complicated legal case.

"I should ask for a retaining fee of fifty dollars," promptly replied Mr. Hay, "and tell him to call to-morrow."

"Mr. Hay, you are admitted," said the gentleman, and with a hearty laugh from all present the proceedings closed.

Very Forgetful.



Clergyman—I'd like to pay a fitting tribute to your husband's memory.
Widow—He didn't have any memory; he couldn't remember to mail a letter.

Social Problems.

Lumber Yard Lem—I hain't seen Weary Willie around lately.
Seven-League Saunders—No; he's disguised himself as a college professor an' livin' in one o' dem. He's goin' to write a magazine article on 'deir lives an' habits.'—Puck.