A CHRISTMAS BALLAD.

BY MARY A. DENISON.

"Dear Nelly: Come the night before,
On merry Christmas eve,
For we're to have a household,
As you can well believe.
There's Cousin Will expected
From countries over the sea;
What wonderful things he'll bring us
To put on the Christmas tree!

"Mamma wrote to Grandpa Martin
For a well-grown pine or fir,
And he said he would send a 'Martin box'
Especially for her;
But he won't forget us children,
He never did at least;
I only wish he could be here
To share in our Christmas feast.

"We are all so very busy
Getting our presents done;
You can't think what I am making
Of all things under the sun—
I mean for your special pleasure;
I can tell you about the rest,
For Netty and Carry and Hatty
Are doing their very best.

"I've made an embroidered apron,
And tatted a lovely set,
Worked a pair of elegant slippers,
And a collar and cuffs for Net;
For papa a yard-long watch chain
With beads of gold and black;
And a pair of crimson wristers
And pretty blue neck-tie for Jack.

"You should see us girls together
After our lessons are over,
Up in the old-time nursery,
Busy as bees in clover;
Busy with needles as nailers,
Talking and laughing and humming,
And building such glorious castles
Against the time of your coming.

"There are so many aunts and cousins!
And the tree is to be so fine!
And we always get something we wish for,
I wonder what gifts will be mine?
I almost think I can guess, though,
For papa has measured the wall,
And perhaps it will be a piano:
I want that the most of all.

"Don't laugh at my funny grammar;
You know it is Christmas time,
And when I'm so wild and happy
The sense runs away with the rhyme.
Netty longs for a set of garnets,
And Net for a watch and chain,
And Jack will be quite delighted
With a dainty rosewood cane.

"And Carry is almost certain
Of furs, a beautiful set.
I'm sure we ought to be thankful
For anything that we get.
So on Christmas eve you must be here,
For our tree will be loaded down,
And we look for a glorious frolic
With cousins from city and town.

"I wish every soul the world over
Could be happy at Christmas time;
So with a kiss and good wishes
I close my letter in rhyme.
P. S.—We have made up ten dollars
To send to Widow Brown—
A poor soul with three pretty children
Who lives far away down town."

"The fire is out, and the ashes
Are cold as my heart is cold;
I hope my babies are dreaming
As I stitch fold after fold;
They talk of the happy Christmas—
Dear Christ, oh! teach me to bear
The sad, sad lot of the hopeless,
That my soul may not despair.

"Dear little Ned and Harry!
They wanted a ball and top;
'I saw such pretty ones, mamma!'
Said Ned, 'in the fancy shop.
Won't you get us a tree for Christmas?
If it's just as small as can be,
As small as my little finger,
Still you must get us a tree.'

"Dear hearts! and so near is the Christmas,
And I toil so hard for bread!
And he who made holiday sunshine
Is lying low with the dead;
I'll search for the rich man's gleanings,
The crumbs that fall heedlessly,
And I'll weave a little gay garland
And call it a Christmas tree.

"And I'll hang it full of good wishes—
But oh! If I had a doll
For Bess, and a top for Neddy,
And for Harry a bright, red ball!
Alas! for the tears are falling,
This work is too costly by far,
The flash of a bitter tear-drop
Its wondrous sheen would mar.

"'Tis for limbs so daintily covered!
While my poor babies weep
When the cold gets under their patches,
And smile only when they sleep.
I wish I could die to-morrow
And take my babies away,
We'd have such a Christmas in heaven!
Such a glorious Christmas day!

"But no; through the cold and hunger
We still must wearily plod,
We must think that others are happy,
And trust—if we can—in God.
If we can—I am wicked to say it—
A letter! how strange there should be
In all this wide city a creature
To write a letter to me!

"Dear Lord! why here's money—ten dollars!
'Ten dollars for Christmas,' signed 'friend!'
Ten dollars for gifts for the babies!
Oh, darlings! ten dollars to spend!
And we'll have a dinner for Christmas,
And shoes for the baby so woe;
And coals for the fire, and, bless them,
For my darlings a Christmas tree.

"Oh! dear hearts so true and tender!
I wish you could see into mine,
And know that your sweet gift has kindled
A love that is almost divine.
I wish I could thank you—yes, kneeling
Close at your very feet,
And my little ones all beside me
Their innocent thanks to repeat.

"You may whiten O cold ashes!
For I see in your midst a flame
Kindled by some good Christian,
I wish I but knew the name.
You may cover the windows, O frost king!
You may sleep, my babies, in peace,
For my heart is as warm as the sunshine,
And my faith has found release
From the cold, and life hate, and the terror,
Into the blessed light,
And I wait with a new, sweet longing
For the coming of Christmas night."

—*Hearth and Home.*

MY CHRISTMAS BALL.

"What a comfortable thing a holiday is to us tired-out idea-inserters! There's a compound worthy of a German philosopher. I wish Christmas came six times a year; don't you, Patience? Why, Patience—sister Patience—you cannot surely be asleep? My first evening home, too, of all evenings! Patience! wake up, I say, Patience!"

"What wouldst thou with me, Adelaide?"

"Is that a question from Shakspeare, you sepulchral female?"

"No—Kotzebue. Didst never see 'The Stranger?'"

"I should like to see a stranger just now—one that would make himself agreeable. I feel restless; I want to talk, and I do believe you are half asleep again. Patience, such somnolency must surely be a symptom of approaching illness—brain disease or typhoid fever most likely. It isn't natural; it's lethargic."

"Leth—what? Say that again, please. I could not take the whole word in at once."

"Patience, don't be provoking. Talk to me a little, please; I want to be amused. And you have not told me one syllable of news. Any new scholars coming after the holidays?"

"Two—Teesie Wilson's little sister and—"

"Teesie Wilson! That child is well named. What a torment the little wretch is! Confess now—don't your fingers often ache to give her a good cuffing?"

"Sometimes. Then Rosie Gray is coming back, and I have the promise of two more—Mrs. Ralston's oldest girls. The school will be full again when they come, and I think matters look very fairly altogether. And you? How are you getting on, Addie?"

"Oh, very well. The children tease sometimes, but Mrs. Jamieson is very kind, and always upholds my authority. And then the girls are really fond of me, and the whole family made me such pretty presents. I must show them to you as soon as my trunk arrives."

We were alone in the world, we two sisters—Patience Carr, the schoolmistress, and I, Adelaide, the governess. Ten years before we had known the extreme of luxury—a house in a fashionable quarter of New York, horses, carriages, servants, French dresses and diamonds for Patience, broad sashes, worked muslins and velvet suits for me. That was when Antarctic Mail was selling at 130, and Richard Carr, our father, was considered one of the shrewdest and most successful of Wall street speculators. Then, one bright day, Antarctic Mail took a downward leap, and carried my father's fortune with it; his reason followed, and in the end, his life. So one morning, a woman and a child (Patience and I) set forth into the world to seek, not our fortunes, but our daily bread. There was a difference of twelve years between Patience and myself—years that were expressed by a neat row of five little graves with elegantly carved tombstones out at Greenwood, where our brothers and sisters slept a calm slumber that no depreciation in Antarctic Mail had power to disturb. Our mother had died when I was only two years old; she, too, had gone where Wall street ceases from troubling, and the bulls and bears are at rest. So Patience took care of me for six long years, and then I, being eighteen, went forth to win my own bread as a governess.

I cannot say that the usual adventures which novel writers describe as befalling every young woman, whether attractive or otherwise, who goes out as a governess, ever happened to me. No handsome youth, the only son of the family in which I taught English, French, the rudiments of German, music and drawing, ever fell at my feet and besought permission to remove me to a more congenial sphere. I found out no dark and deadly mysteries, no hidden maniac or undiscovered crimes; nor was I ever subjected to a series of petty slights and injuries from narrow-minded *meres de famille*. I was usually very well treated and fairly paid, so I never had a chance of posing myself either as a victim or a heroine of romance. At the time of which I write I was indeed as pleasantly situated as it is possible for a governess to be. My employers were cultivated, kind-hearted people, my eldest pupils intelligent, well-brought-up girls, and the rest of the children not more unruly or tormenting than healthy children, especially boys, are apt to be. So that particular Christmas eve of which I write found me very much inclined to enjoy my holiday, and fully prepared to enter into all the little festivities of the season which might fall to my share.

"We are to have roast turkey for dinner to-morrow," remarked Patience after a brief silence.

"*Gourmande, va!*"

"And what do you say to a matinee as a pleasant method of passing the day?"

"You know I love a play above all things. Where shall we go?—to Wallack's? Booth's? the Fifth Avenue?"

"Choose for yourself, Addie; you are company, you know. There is the newspaper on the table."

I sat down to pore over the advertisements with as much eagerness and excitement as though my twenty-two years had been suddenly diminished by ten at the very least. At last I looked up: "Patience!"

"Well, dear?"

"Don't you wish that something would happen to us, as often happens in plays?—that is, don't you wish that some unknown relative or rich old uncle would make his appearance and shower untold wealth upon us?"

"I am sure we are very comfortable now. And what is the use of wishing such things?"

"Not much use, only some amusement. Castles in the air are very easily erected, and cost nothing for bricks, mortar or laborers' hire."

"Yes, but when they tumble down, as they invariably do, you may chance to get a rap on the head from some of the flying timbers. Best stay on terra firma, Addie."

I laughed, and bent again over my paper. But the momentous question of the Christmas matinee once settled and the newspaper thrown aside, my thoughts reverted to my airy castles, and instinctively I began to rear them again. We were both silent. Patience leaned back, half asleep, in her rocking-chair, whilst I sat on a low seat at her feet and gazed dreamily into the glowing coals of the grate. I saw myself a lively, laughing child again, flying down the broad staircase of our Fifth avenue mansion in embroidered muslin and floating silk sash, *en route* for some childish party or other; and then I remembered a certain dinner-party which my father had once given, and how I, peeping slyly through the chink of the dining-room door, had thought privately that Sister Patience, in her mauve silk and pearls, was the prettiest lady there. Poor, dear Patience! the prettiest still remained, though the silk and the pearls were things of the past. Suddenly a thought struck me, a recollection of an odd story told me in those far-off days. I would wake patience up, and she would tell me all about it. So I faced round and looked up into the fair, placid face that showed so sweet and calm in the ruddy fire-glow.

"Patience, once and for all, you *shall* wake up and talk to me, or I shall go straight back to Mrs. Jamieson's to-morrow morning. You hurt my feelings by treating my arrival so soporifically."

"Do they feed you on minced dictionary at Mrs. Jamieson's?" queried my much-put-upon sister, opening her eyes in a very languid manner. "You do use such very long words."

"I think *you* must have been going to several classical concerts lately. You look as though you had scarcely recovered from a severe attack of Opuses in X minor."

"I was not asleep, child; I was only thinking."

"Stop thinking through your nose, then; it is a very bad habit for a lady to indulge in."

"Well, I am wide awake enough now for anything. What is it you want me to do?"

"I want you to tell me a story. Is there not a queer one extant about an old uncle of ours and a precious stone?"

"Our grand-uncle—yes. Did you never hear about Stephen Carr, our father's uncle, and how oddly his fortune disappeared?"

"Long ago, when I was a very little child, I suppose, for my remembrances of the affair is as vague and uncertain as possible. There was something about a voyage to Europe, and a lost jewel, but I recollect nothing definite. I want you to tell me all about it. Begin at the very beginning, please. Come, now, I'm all ready to listen. Once upon a time—"

"Well," said Patience, gazing at the coals as though trying to read there the commencement of her narrative, "you must remember that our father's family was not far from being a very aristocratic one, at least on our grandfather's side, for there is no better blood in New York State than that of our grandmother. She was a Miss Van Lorten."

"You remind me of that woman in 'Hard Times,' 'whose mother was a Powler.' Go on."

"I will not unless you promise not to interrupt me. Where was I? O, yes! Our grandfather had an only brother, an old bachelor, who was by trade not exactly a jeweler, but a diamond-broker—I think they call such a person—a man who buys and sells precious stones. He used to go abroad once or twice a year for the purpose of visiting pawnbrokers' establishments and second-hand dealers in search of gems that might be cheaply purchased, as well as for the usual transactions of his business. He was a grave, taciturn man, and never discussed his affairs with anyone, not even with our grandfather, to whom he was much attached. His picture used to hang in the old Carr mansion—a heavy-browed, close-lipped, stern-looking face, with nothing genial or communicative about it.

"Now, as regards the curious part of the story, remember I only speak from hearsay. I tell the tale as it came to me from the lips of our grandmother when I was quite a child; and the old family servants also were fond of discussing this rather mysterious family legend; but since our grandmother's death and the breaking up of the old establishment (all of which happened when I was about nine years old) I have heard scarcely anything about it, except a few words which my father once let fall on the subject. But I heard the story so often in my childhood that it made a deep impression on my memory.

"One year—about forty years ago, I should think, somewhere between 1830 and '35—my grand-uncle set out on his annual pilgrimage to Europe. He took with him all his disposable funds, varying by report from twenty to forty thousand dollars, but probably nearer the former sum than the latter. Before he sailed he signified to our grandfather his intention of making a somewhat extended tour, and also gave him to understand that he contemplated making a purchase of unusual importance and magnitude. If he had been a little more explicit much trouble might have been saved, but it was never his way to talk much over his affairs with any one.

"He sailed early in the spring, and reached the Old World in safety. I have seen some of the letters he wrote during that last journey—all brief, curt epistles, telling little but the state of his health, the place from whence he was writing, and the probable date of his departure for another point. The last country to which he went was Holland. He stayed some time at Amsterdam, and then went to Rotterdam, where he remained several weeks; but, as usual, his letters contained no intelligence respecting his business transactions. At length word was received of his approaching return. He took passage direct from Rotterdam in a sailing vessel, but he was not destined to reach home alive. The cholera broke out on board of the ship before she had been many days out of sight of land, and Stephen Carr was one of its earliest victims. It was supposed that the virulence of the disorder, and its speedy termination, prevented him from making known anything respecting his property. He was accustomed always to travel with his precious merchandise carefully concealed in nooks and corners among his baggage; and on this last voyage his purchases must have been of unusual value, and were either stolen or so carefully concealed that they were never discovered. Nor have they ever been found from that day to this."

"How was it known that he had brought anything of importance?"

"Grandfather went to Holland expressly to trace out some indication of the whereabouts of his brother's missing fortune. He found that the whole of the large amount of money which Stephen Carr had taken abroad with him had been drawn out on one day about a week before he sailed for home. He also discovered that he had had dealings with a man named Nicholas Leerjen, a dealer in bric-a-brac and jewelry, who had a shop on the Boompjes; but this Leerjen, on being interrogated, sturdily denied that any transaction of importance had ever taken place between himself and Mr. Carr, who had bought from him, he averred, nothing but an antique silver salver, which he described minutely; and as such a salver had been found among the effects of the deceased, there seemed no reason to doubt to the Dutchman's word. So, after spending some weeks in fruitless inquiries and investigations, our grandfather was forced to return home no wiser and no richer than when he had set out.

"Now comes the strangest part of this strange story. A short time after grandfather's return home, which was very speedily accomplished, the vessel became in being an American clipper and the winds favorable all the way, he was awakened one night by my grandmother, who declared she heard some one breaking into the house. My grandfather listened, and was soon convinced that her suspicions were correct; so he threw on a dressing-gown, loaded his pistols, and softly unbarring his door slipped stealthily out into the passage. He heard footsteps proceeding up the stairs to an upper room which had been his brother's. He followed with noiseless tread, and on reaching the door of the apartment, he saw, by the faint glimmer of a dark-lantern, a man on his knees before Stephen Carr's trunk (which still contained all the articles which had been brought from abroad), and engaged in forcing the lock. Some sound which he made attracted the attention of the robber, who sprang up and rushed upon him; but our grandfather, who was not easily thrown off his guard, presented his pistol full at his advancing assailant, fired, and the man fell to the ground."

"Was he killed outright?"

"Unfortunately, yes; the bullet had passed through his head. I say unfortunately, as with him died the last hope of discovering the missing property; for on examination the would-be robber proved to be no other than Nicholas Leerjen, the Dutch shopkeeper."

"And his motive? What could have been his reason for committing such a crime?"

"Do you not see," said Patience, "that our grand-uncle must have purchased from him some exceedingly valuable gems, and that he, being apprised by my grandfather's inquiries that the whereabouts of this purchase was unknown, and being also probably aware of its place of concealment, had made a desperate attempt to gain possession of it?"

"I see. I wonder what really did become of it?"

"Father came to the conclusion that it must have been stolen from his brother's trunk on board ship, after his death. But he always kept the trunk and its contents very carefully, and enjoined on me to do the same, though it has been ransacked again and again, and every article it contains thoroughly examined."

"And where is it now?"

"Up stairs in the little third-story back room. Don't you remember it—a middle-sized sole-leather trunk, with 'S. C.' marked on it?"

"I tell you what, Patience," I said, springing up, "I mean to have a look at the contents of that trunk early to-morrow morning."

"What nonsense, Addie! Don't I tell you that everything in it has been thoroughly examined hundreds of times?"

"Well, then, it will do no hurt to examine them the several hundred-and-oneth time. But was not that a ring at the bell? Yes, indeed! Here comes *my* trunk, Patience. I wait to show you my Christmas gifts, and I have knit you such a pretty shawl." And in the unpacking and examination of my little treasures the remainder of the evening passed swiftly away, and there was no further question of Stephen Carr or the lost jewels. But I had not relinquished my purpose, and as soon as the breakfast things were put away the next morning, I assailed Patience anew: "Where is the key of Stephen Carr's trunk? I know you mean to be closeted with Norah for an hour at least superintending the stuffing of that turkey; so, unless you wish me to die of *ennui* during your absence, you might as well let me amuse myself after my own fashion."

"Curiosity, thy name is—Adelaide Carr!" laughed Patience, as she went to her desk to look for the key. "Here it is. And put on a shawl, Addie; there is no fire in the room, and I do not want you to catch cold."

"And if I find the fortune?"

"Bring it down stairs and show it to me; that is, if it is not too heavy for you to carry."

So Patience disappeared laughing in the direction of the kitchen, and I hastened to put on my heavy cloth traveling sacque, and made the best of my way to the third-story back room—a little, dingy apartment used as a lumber-room, and half filled with old trunks, broken furniture, discarded pictures; in fact, all the rubbish which collects in old houses, and which, though considered too good to throw away, is usually mere useless lumber. An old picture, the portrait of some forgotten friend or distant relative of our parents or grandparents, leaned against the wall, and seemed to leer at me out of its eyes with a look of mockery and discouragement. An old high clock in the corner, jarred probably by my step on the door, started suddenly into a wheezy series of ticks, and then was silent again. The air of the shut-up room smote coldly on my senses, and chilled me despite my warm wrappings. Gathering my dress about me, I picked my way across the floor, avoiding sundry jagged nails and broken trunk-corners, and soon stood in front of the trunk marked "S. C." Stooping, I fitted the key to the lock; it turned slowly and creakingly, and with an eager yet trembling hand I flung back the lid. No sudden glow of gold or jewels flashed from the interior. A quantity of masculine habiliments, carefully folded, greeted my eyes, and a strong odor of camphor assailed my nose. That was all.

I took the things out one by one, unfolding each article as I did so, and scrutinizing it carefully. Old-fashioned shirts yellow as saffron; coats from which every vestige of the lining had been ripped in the search for the hidden wealth; trowsers with the pockets turned inside out; stockings not rolled in compact balls, but stretched out at full length—such were the uppermost things in the old trunk. Underneath lay a pair or two of boots, a small dressing-case covered with Russia leather, a small, flat work-box (containing two spools, one of black silk and one of white thread, a lump of wax scored by passing threads, a needle-book shaped like a butterfly, and a pair of scissors), and a writing-case, also covered with Russia leather. I took this last to the light, and carefully examined it in the vague hope that it might contain some fragment of writing, some entry in cypher perhaps, that might prove a clew to the mystery. Vain hope! The stained blotting-paper, the shabby pen-holder, the rusty pen-knife revealed nothing; and all written paper had been removed long ago, had there indeed ever been any. The dressing-case, the work-box were alike unfruitful of discoveries. The heels of the boots had been cut off and cut in pieces, and I found the fragments lying at the bottom of the trunk. And the trunk bottom itself had been split open and pried apart, in a search for a false compartment doubtless. Truly, careful searchers had been before me; where was the marvel if I failed to find anything?

Slowly and reluctantly I refolded and replaced the scattered garments in the trunk, laid the work-box, writing-case, and dressing-case on the top of them, closed the lid, turned the key, and putting it in my pocket, ran down stairs, resolved to forget old Stephen Carr and all his belongings.

The afternoon was spent, as we had planned, at the theater, and in the evening it was agreed that Patience should read aloud while I sewed. I had a piece of finery that needed renovating—a black cloth coat, the shabby fringe of which I was going to replace with fresh and new-fashioned fur trimming—and I was anxious to get it done that I might look my best at church the ensuing Sunday. I got out my work, and my good sister produced a thick, promising-looking novel.

"What have you got there, Patience? But stop. Before you begin can you lend me a piece of wax?

"I have not a bit in the house."

"How provoking! This black silk tangles and knots so when it is not waxed. Patience, there is a nice ball of wax up stairs in old Stephen Carr's work-box. Do you think his ghost would come after me were I to go up after it?"

"For three cents I will insure you against all ghosts."

"Done! I'll send you the three cents in the shape of a postage stamp in the very next letter I write you. Where's the candle? I have the trunk key still in my pocket."

So I went, and soon returned with the yellowish ball of thread-scored wax in my hand. Then we sat down, and for some time the work and the reading proceeded in a merry duet. At length, growing deeply interested in the fortunes and follies of the heroine, I let my sewing fall on my lap and sat with folded hands in a state of lazy enjoyment.

I was brought back to a sense of my duty by my scissors slipping from my lap and falling with a clatter to the floor. Patience still read on, while I, being rather conscience-stricken at my own indolence, strove noiselessly to collect my belongings. Work, scissors, thimble, spool, had all found their way to the ground during my temporary abstraction. I gathered them up, and prepared to go to work again. But where was the ball of wax? How stupid! It had rolled under the grate, and now lay in close proximity to two red-hot coals, sizzling a little from time to time, and decidedly lessened in size. I dislodged it with the poker, pulled it toward me, and endeavored to cleanse it from the ashes and to mold its softened bulk into shape again. But as I pressed the half-melted wax between my fingers they encountered a hard substance—something firm and with sharp edges—that resisted the pressure. My hands trembled with eagerness and nervous excitement as I stripped the waxen shell from this hard kernel. Patience's voice seemed to die away in the distance as I plied my scissors and my fingers in their hurried work. At last it was done; the hidden thing lay bare before me on my open palm. This was what I saw:

A stone resembling in size and shape the half of a good-sized hickory-nut, if the nut were divided transversely, cut into a few broad facets on top, and underneath cut into similar facets. Its shape was perfectly regular, its color a rich glowing crimson, or rather deep rose-red. I gazed at it in mute admiration and bewilderment for a moment; then I started to my feet, amazing Patience, who stopped reading and dropped her book as I cried out, in a state of almost frenzied excitement, "Patience, look! I have found this. What is it? Can it be——"

Quiet, calm, and unruffled as ever, my sister rose, looked steadily at the stone as it lay on my shaking palm, then took it in her own hand, and drew it lightly across the glass shade of the little clock that stood on the mantel piece. A sharp grating sound was heard, and when she took her hand away a long scratch was visible on the surface of the glass. She turned toward me then, and her voice had a sudden quiver and her cheek flushed with unwonted red as she answered: "It is a ruby—an enormous one. Adelaide, the missing fortune of Stephen Carr is found at last!"

Whereupon I seized my old cloth coat and flung it straightway into the fire: "I mean to have a seal-skin sacque before the new year is born. Don't look so astonished, Patience. I am not mad—only beside myself with joy." But my excitement died away as Patience bent her gentle head and whispered softly: "Let us give thanks to God."

Christmas Greens—The Glad-Time Decorations of Home.

We may suppose that the pressed leaves and the evergreens have been collected for the Christmas decorations, and that nothing remains now but to arrange them. For those unfortunate people who have not themselves brought the odor of the woods with the vines, and pressed the sunniness of the October days into the leaves, who go out to the corners of the city streets and buy the wreaths and crosses, and leave Maggie and Dennis to hang them in the windows just as the rest of the brown-stone block has them hung, we have nothing but commiseration. They can no more buy the charms of the Christmas greens than they can buy the love which is the heart of the Christmas gift. Let the heaps of glossy holly and delicate cedar wait for the eager hands of the mother, who has got no nearer view of the woods than those bring her for many long years, and who counts over her bits of change after the needed marketing is done to see what can be spared for those bright tokens of a loving Father's perennial goodness to cheer her tenement rooms. Let them lie at the corner-grocer's door to remind the father, whose Christmas will, this year, alas, be burdened with fears of January cold and a hard winter's hunger, that this is a better place to spend a litte money than at the groggery on the other side, and a tiny green wreath and cross will help to brighten a sad house for days and weeks.

But in many homes there are stores of gossamer clematis and clusters of bitter-sweet berries that were brought from the summer haunt, and are now to be contrasted with cedar and fir, with brilliant branches of maple leaves, with the rich yellows and browns of the oak and the graceful ferns. Over the windows and doors gorgeous groups of coloring can be easily placed by sewing the various sorts on to common palm-leaf fans, which can be fastened to the casing of the door and the cornice over the window. Strong cord, wound with evergreen, can be passed in graceful festoons from one to another, and, if there be a gas fixture in the center of the room, and the young people are not easily tired, the rope of green can be tastefully brought from the corners of the room to the center and coiled about the fixture, with care, however, to arrange it so that it shall not come over the flame and take fire. Then something of the best must be put in the windows to testify of good will to man. If there be such a blessing in the house as a white-haired grandfather and grandmother, give some of the choicest of the trimming to their room, and make it musical with loving words as the vines and branches are fastened there. Then gather up the fragments that nothing be lost, and take with your own hands some peace tokens to the basement, and, while you make the kitchen join the rest of the house in an external honoring of Christmas, strive to gladden the hearts of the busy workers there with some gleams of that blessed love which this joyous festival but feebly commemorates.

Eli in Love.

"Did you ever do anything in a state of indifference, Miss Julia?" I asked an old sweetheart of mine last night.

"Why, yes, certainly, Mr. Perkins—a good many times."

"What! did it with absolute, total indifference?"

"Yes; perfect, complete indifference, Eli."

"Well, Julia, my beloved," I said, taking her hand, "what is one thing you can do now with perfect indifference?"

"Why, listening to you, Eli!"

I postponed proposing.

A moment afterward, my beloved grasped my hand convulsively, looked in my face, and said:

"Eli, such devoted, warm-hearted men as you often make me feel very happy."

"How, darling?" I asked, too happy to live.

"Why, by keeping away from me, Eli!"

I haven't proposed yet.

The Weak Place.

Home can never be a thoroughly happy place while there are so few subjects of common interest between man and woman. It is owing to this that matrimonial engagements are entered into so rarely on the basis of any broad intellectual sympathy, such as might furnish some security for lasting affection, and so often at the bidding of impulses and fancies that do not outlive the honeymoon; and it is owing to the same cause that so very large a proportion of the lives of most husbands and wives is spent practically apart, with little or no knowledge on the part of either of the objects or aims that engross the greater portion of the other's thoughts and energies.

FARM AND HOME.

A SOLDIER on furlough, and just convalescent,
Sought a job to supply him with cash for the present
And promised a farmer to dig up a patch
Of potatoes with faithfulness, care, and dispatch.
A bottle of whisky his spirit to stir,
Was given to Bob as a sort of a spur;
Which bottle, with many a copious pull,
He emptied, and left the potato hill full,
While he with some difficulty held by a stump,
Saluting it oft with a staggering thump.
Some hours had elapsed; his employer returned,
And said, while his bosom indignantly burned,
"You insolent rascal—you slave of the jug—
Not a single potato, you sot, have you dug!"
"Po-ta-toes!" said Bob, with a stammering tongue,
"If you want your palatoes dug, fetch 'em along!"

THE MASSACHUSETTS DOG LAW.

In Massachusetts the tax on dogs is two dollars per year for male dogs and five dollars on females. When sheep are destroyed by dogs, the owner of the dogs, if known, and the fact of killing proven, is obliged to pay the damages in full; otherwise, judgment is made from the fund raised by the general dog tax, so that in any event the owner of the sheep is sure of his recompense. The law is proving satisfactory to the generality of sheep owners.

AN EASY ICE HOUSE.

It is suggested that, by filling suitably constructed sheet-iron vessels to the depth of a foot an inch with water, it will soon freeze, even when the temperature is but little below the freezing point, and that by repeating the addition of water as the first portions become frozen, blocks of the clearest ice, six inches thick, may be formed during a night; and when the temperature by day is suitable, a single laborer will be able to fill a large ice-house in a short time. By pouring water which has been cooled in the vessels nearly to the freezing point over the ice after it has been packed, at suitable intervals, when the temperature of the air is below the freezing point, a compact mass of ice may be formed of more value for use than a much larger quantity loosely packed. Even in winters favorable to the production of ice, the above method may be found the most convenient and the cheapest for filling the ice-houses.

CARE OF STOCK.

Animals should be studiously protected, but only in thoroughly ventilated stables. Their food should be given four or five times during the twenty-four hours, so that none of it need be refused because it is "mussed" or soiled. Many farmers whose experience has been varied prefer this plan, thinking it more economical, and more serviceable to the animals than feeding only two or three times a day. For horses and neat stock, place lumps of rock salt in the mangers. Food must be varied to suit the kind and condition of animals. He who would prosper as a stock breeder or dairyman, cannot learn too much of the animal economy. Comfortable stables save food, and very materially assist in maintaining animals in a good condition. Cleansing the hide and frequent rubbing will promote health. It has become quite a common practice with some farmers to curry and rub down their neat stock, and we trust it may become universal.

A WORD OF ADVICE.

Be industrious. The world is already burdened by loafers, idlers, and non-producers, all of whom have to be supported by those who work. Begin early to teach your children the value of labor and industry. Make your calculations to be busy and usefully employed as long as you live. The idea of living the first half of one's life under double pressure, and then, after getting a competence, retiring from all active life and living easy upon the interest of the capital acquired, is the height of folly. It is contrary to nature, and must work disastrously both to the body and the mind. Be industrious at some paying branch of your business, and earn money, that you may have money to use as well as to keep.

As we look around among the farmers of our acquaintance, we see many who spend most of their rainy days and evenings at the village stores or post-office, discussing the weather, the crop prospects, the general news of the village, and sometimes a little politics.

As a general rule, one had better be at home attending to the plans or details of his business, or reading books or papers that would teach more valuable lessons than can be learned at the corner grocery or village postoffice.—*New England Farmer.*

WINDOWS IN HORSE-STABLES.

A German paper states some curious facts relating to the position of windows in horse-stables, and their power to affect the eyes of horses. In one instance the horses of a farmer—fine animals, celebrated for their excellent condition—were kept in as table lighted only by a small window at one side. When light was needed for work, the door was temporarily left open; the result was that nearly all of these animals had eyes of unequal strength, and in time a number of them become blind on the side toward the window.

Strong light directed in the horses' faces has been found to weaken the sight. The worst position of all for a stable window is in front of the horses and much higher than their heads. An officer had bought a perfectly sound mare from a gentleman whose stable was lighted by windows at the rear of the stalls. The animal was sound and perfectly satisfactory. After three months she became suddenly "ground shy"; on examining her eyes they were found directed upward, and this was explained by the fact that the windows of the officer's stable were situated above the head of the stalls, the eyes being generally drawn in that direction. She was removed to another stall, where the light was admitted from all sides, and in three months' time the difficulty had disappeared.

Household Hints.

WATERPROOFING COMPOUND.

This compound is prepared by melting paraffine and adding gradually a suitable drying oil, stirring well to insure intimate mixture; it is then poured into molds the shape of brick or blocks and allowed to cool. The fabric to be rendered waterproof is rubbed over with a block of the compound, warming the rubbing face gently if the atmosphere is cold, and then iron the cloth with a warm iron or passing it between hot rollers. The application of this compound to leather and textile and felted fabrics is said to give excellent results, as, although it renders the cloth thoroughly waterproof, it is not impervious to air.

WHAT SHALL WE HAVE FOR BREAKFAST?

A lady writing to the Chicago *Evening Journal* says:

I esteem no one thing more essential to the success of farmers than that of having breakfast well and properly prepared. By proper forethought in making allowance for the next breakfast in cooking the dinner, the accompanying list can be prepared by an active housekeeper in half an hour. Of course, if potatoes and meat are to be cooked, they must be ready over night, coffee ground, etc., to spare the vexation of uncomfortable haste in arranging the breakfast. Coffee is supposed to be served at each meal, that being our usual breakfast beverage, although chocolate, tea or water may be substituted, if desired. The kinds of meat may be varied with the season, to include fowls, fresh fish, mutton or whatever is procurable or desirable; and similar variations may be made in the fruits. No breadstuffs appear in the lists, as it is assumed that bread, buckwheat, Graham or Indian meal cakes will be served each morning, according to season or preference.

Breakfast Lists—The articles in parentheses refer to the different seasons:

Sunday—Baked potatoes; roast beef from previous dinner, set in the oven until hot; stewed apple (pie-plant); rice pudding.

Monday—Potatoes from previous dinner, cut in slices and heated or warmed over by dropping in hot fat, like crullers; roast pork, cold; cucumber pickles (cut cabbage); raspberries, fresh or canned.

Tuesday—Boiled potatoes; salt mackerel; chopped tomato pickle (lettuce); pie, apple pie, pie-plant or cherry.

Wednesday—Baked potatoes; broiled beef; tomatoes, canned or fresh; stewed apples, strawberries, cherries, etc.

Thursday—Codfish; boiled potatoes; cucumber pickles (martynias, etc.); canned plums, baked pears.

Friday—Broiled ham and poached eggs; apples, stewed or baked; rice pudding.

Saturday—Potatoes, warmed over by slicing in just water enough to keep from burning, to which add butter and seasoning; broiled steak; chopped tomato pickle; cherries, canned or fresh, blackberries, grapes, etc.

Shooting the Abductors of Charley Ross.

On the morning of the 13th of December, two burglars named Mosier and Douglass, while in the act of robbing the house of Judge Van Brunt, in the suburbs of New York, were shot and killed by Mr. Rulef Van Brunt and his son. One of them made a dying confession, to the effect that he was concerned in the abduction of little Charley Ross. Mr. Van Brunt thus relates to a New York reporter the circumstances of the killing:

At 2 o'clock the alarm bell rung and startled me from my sleep. I told my wife to call my son, as I thought there was something the matter in Judge Van Brunt's house. I told my son to look around, when I heard the alarm strike, and see if everything was all right. He took a lantern and went for Scott, a workman around the place. They went over to the Judge's house, and they saw a light in one of the windows. My son came back and asked for a gun. My son wanted me to take a gun and come over with them. I said, "I do not feel able to go," and he said, "You had better come; there is some one in the Judge's house." I then took a gun and went out with them. I crept up to the window, and, by peeping in, I saw the heads of two desperate looking fellows. They were moving about by the light of a dim lantern. I saw them go into the butler's pantry and tumble things around there a little, and then they went up-stairs. I said, "William, now let's go for them. You have got the keys; open the door." He turned the key in the door, and immediately we heard the burglars coming down-stairs. They went into the dining-room, and there I saw the flickering of a match. I saw two objects soon appearing from the cellar-trap. They were the heads of two men stooping down. I could have shot them on the spot. "Stand," I shouted, and the word had scarcely left my mouth when two pistol shots came for me. I fired at one of the dark objects, and he hollered. I felt that he had been struck. They started to run. The one who was shot caught on the cellar door to steady himself. The other fellow ran. I shouted to him to stand. He wouldn't, and I pulled the trigger on him. He "hollered." They both started for the gate, and we all blazed away at them. The young burglar fell first in front of my house and the other by the Judge's gate. The young fellow died at half-past 5 o'clock. I saw that he was dying, and I told him if he had anything to say he had better say it at once, as he was going to die. The servant girl came up at this time and said, "It's just good for you." He groaned out, "Oh, madam, I have been a very wicked man."

A NEW YORK hotel-keeper says this has been a most disastrous year on hotels. At least a dozen proprietors have failed, and hardly one has made anything. He thinks two millions would not cover the losses sustained by landlords in the last fourteen months.

PROBABLY no one disease is the cause of so much bodily misery and unhappiness (and the disease is almost universal among the American people) as dyspepsia. Its causes are many and various, lying chiefly in the habits of our people. The remedy is simple and effectual. Use Dr. Wishart's Great American Dyspepsia Pills. They never fail to cure.

FEARFUL—the amount of money thrown away in not buying shoes protected by SILVER TIPS. Parents, be wise and insist that your shoe dealer should keep them.

NATURAL slippers—Eels.

Wishart's

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For Sale by all Druggists and Storekeepers.