

A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

The air was still o'er Bethlehem's plain.
As if the great night held its breath,
When life eternal came to reign
Over a world of death.

All nature felt a thrill divine
When burst that meteor on the night,
Which, pointing to the Savior's shrine,
Proclaimed the new-born light.

Light to the shepherds and the star
Gilded their silent midnight fold;
Light to the wise men from afar,
Bearing their gifts of gold.

Light to a realm of sin and grief;
Light to a world in all its needs;
The light of life—a new belief
Rising o'er fallen creeds.

Light on a tangled path of thorns,
Though leading to a martyr's throne;
A light to guide till Christ returns
In glory to His own.

There still it shines, while far abroad
The Christmas choir sings now, as then:
"Glory, glory unto our God!
Peace and good will to men!"
T. BUCHANAN READ.

THE SNOW FLOWER OF THE SIERRAS.

A Christmas Story.

On the crest of the Sierra Nevada Range, amid eternal winter, there appears a gorgeous blood-red plant, massed with startling brilliancy against pallid banks of snow. In size and shape, the cloud-flower resembles a hyacinth, but the leaves and stem, as well as the blossoms, are of one vivid crimson hue. Unlike the Alpine flower, of hardy stem and straw-like texture, this plant is succulent and ruddy, but it is a phantom formed of ice and fire. Plucked from its cold bed, it drips its life away in your hand, and in a few moments all the fire and color is gone in icy tears, and there remains only a wet, shapeless, colorless film.

The traveler up the Sierras, hears of the strange blossom from returning wayfarers, long before he reaches the heights where it blossoms. No care is able to transplant or even to carry to the lowlands the unique flower. On the altars of the upper air it is laid, where no other flower-shape is found, and he who would see it, must go to that shrine of icy splendor.

In early times, the fire-flower, as it was called, was counted miraculous by the pious few who, on missions of mercy, crossed the icy peaks. More than a hundred years ago, when English, Dutch and French formed a sparse border of civilization on our Eastern coast, the dark-eyed Spaniard entered Amer-

upon the windy summit of the range, there lived, once on a time, my guide told me, a maiden, dazzling and pure as the stars.

It was July when we stood there, but the snows that had drifted over the hearth were unmelted, and the wind roared through the crevices with an angry grief. What the place must have been when winter buried it could scarcely be imagined.

The father of the beautiful girl whose home this had been, had perched his habitation on this crag, not altogether by chance, for in summer he acted as guide to tourists in the Yosemite, and in winter, on his snow shoes, carried mail and messages to scattered cabins and settlements. Silent Jack—so he was known—was a mystery, even among those hidden and mysterious men who find a refuge in the mountain gulches. He was a misanthrope, who had taken the youngest of his four children and fled, leaving their mother and her complainings and struck out, in vindictive sullenness, for the wilderness and peace. The child, he swore, should grow up in quiet, if nothing more. If from the glance of the little girl's dark eyes he turned in thought, sometimes to other dark eyes like them, which in his early manhood had been lode-stars of destiny; if the fond name, "father," brought to his remembrance other children who had lisped the same dear word, none knew. He mentioned his old life to no one. He spoke of his wife and children but once during the years of his stay on the mountain.

Silent Jack was not an unlettered or vicious man. He taught and cared for the child of his love with morose and pathetic devotion. He taught the little one of God—strange teacher of the word. The Bible was her spelling-book, her geography and story-book;—for the rest she had the grand solitude, the stars near by, and the blossoms in the snow-bank of her home. The miners and trappers of the slope called her, with instinctive homage of man to the beautifying and pure, the Snow Flower of the Sierras. She was to them the object of adoration, as the namesake flower, to the early devotees. Whispers of the divinity shined in the mountain snows, floated downward along the paths of semi-civilization. Stories of a maiden somewhere, either in cloud, or snow, lithe, brilliant and innocent; strong as the mountain pine, blooming as the mountain flowers, pure as the mountain air, with eyes clear as dew-drops, and voice like the rich gurgling mountain brook.

Before the swarming tourists began pilgrimages Yosemiteward the Snow Flower of the Sierras had brimmed her soul with its beauty. She had seen her pretty eyes looking up at her from Mirror Lake; South Dome had answered her, when she questioned; the Merced

crushed jewels, opal and sapphire, and emerald. El Capitan lifted his white plume among the army about him. The exquisite Bridal Veil swept in frosty tissue down the white-robed cliff. The Cathedral Spire rose crystal clear into the blue sky, and on Cloud's Rest, the white drifting nimbus of the sky caressed their sister snowdrifts of the peaks. The great pines of the valley were cones of amethyst; the very air was set with dazzling jewel points, and the pure solitudes pulsed with imprisoned sparks of heavenly fire.

An artist sketching the picturesque groups of mountaineers, heard of "the girl up yonder"—a girl whose dully haunts were where the clouds and silence wander, a maiden who was seated beside the moon, while the stars twinkled like fireflies about her.

In time he found her. Never flower before bloomed like this snow-flower beneath his gaze.

Snows can not smother passion, or stars stir the pulses like the light in nearer eyes. To this ardent poetic soul, with its disregard of fitness, of constancy, or duty, or happiness beyond the present hour, the snowflower gave her life. He had found beauty, he worshipped it. The humble eye is satisfied forever with the shabby print of a Madonna on the wall, but new pictures replace the old on the easel of the artist. His search is always for beauty; having fixed one face upon the canvas his eyes rove for a brighter cheek and sunnier hair.

But, for the time, she was his angel. Disregarding the world, society, friends; forgetting education, style, culture—all that he would at another time remember—he took her from the heights where she had been the companion of nature, to show her to a groveling, putrid world.

Alas! Snowflower of the Sierras! Alas, that fatal name—that pure and fatal name—flower of the snows!

Did Fate christen thee, child of the upper air? Hast never seen the beautiful sunflower drained of its rosy beauty, by ice-dripping tears? Dost thou not know that the plant of the clouds has never been transplanted to lower fields?

The father talked wildly to the wayfarers who came now and then to lift his latch-string for a night's shelter by the cabin fire. He repeated, in wretchedness, that retribution had overtaken him. As cruelly as he had fled from the wife of his youth, his girl had gone from him. Not all his love or care could prevent her from giving the blow which fate had reserved for him. Muttering, or silent and glowering, the weeks and months found him, until at last he disappeared from his home and was lost forever to human view.

This is the story the guide told me as we stood by the fireless hearth of that deserted home.

She died, poor girl—died of a broken heart.

For those who dwell in lowlands, the roses bloom; for creeping things there are the mosses and the violets. Each plane in life has its own corresponding, recompensing loveliness. Let him who lives in rose-thickets be content, nor seek to pluck the blossoms of the crags; nor he who roams the snows think to keep in its freshness the rose that nature left in warmer climes.

She died, so the story runs, on Christmas Eve. Many years ago at Christmas time, in the dazzling radiance of a moonlight night, wanderers on the snow slopes saw a phantom gliding on pearly snowshoes over the glittering peaks. She was shrouded in white, and out of her pale face her eyes gleamed like midnight stars. From mountain to mountain she wandered, and her hands were full of blood-red blossoms, that she kissed with lips as cold as they.

Every year since her earth life ended the dead girl revisits her early home. On those fields of snow, fit for an angel's feet, before the Christmas morn breaks in the East, this unforgetting spirit walks on high. Sometimes she is seen muffled in clouds; sometimes the blossoms in her hands make ruddy patches in the wintry sky. Her voice is heard in the wailing songs of the restless winds, and the fall of her snowshoes echoes like silver sleet down the mountain side.

That the Divine Jesus, whose birthday we celebrate, brings holy thoughts to men by devout means is not unlike. Whatever makes men lift their eyes raises the soul; whether the sweep of wings that startled the shepherds, or the dying color on the distant cloud, turns the face upward to the gaze of God.

Lo, not unmet is it that at the time when, of old, the angel-heralded Christ-child came, all along the sides of the solemn Sierras, the lowly, the lonely, the wretched, the wicked, gaze upward, for the form of the pure maiden, who loves and haunts the snow-range of the air.

Children are told to be good that they may see the beautiful lady who was taken from her home on high, treated so cruelly, and killed by wicked men. And at midnight, along the western peaks, eyes dim, patient or bleared look upward into the lonely night for the sweet spirit form of the "Snow Flower of the Sierras."

THE FLIGHT OF SOULS.

Like the rise and set of the starry host
Earth's myriads come and go;
But whence we speed through the infinite
spaces—
Speed as the light, and leave no traces—
And what the calm on the pale cold faces,
And whether we pass to our shining places
By far celestial isle and coast,
O Lord, we may not know.

In the hush of the holy Christmas tide
I think of the flight of souls;
And over the doubts our faith denying,
The prayers and tears that bewail the dying,
The heart's wild sorrow, the fruitless sighing,
For forms beloved in the lone, gray, lying,
Sweet as it rang by Bethlehem's side
The song of the angels rolls.

And the peace of God—thy peace—descends
As the strain floats high and free;
And, all my fears to the darkness throwing,
I know that the stars the azure strewing,
And the souls, like a river ceaseless flowing,
Forever and ever to Thee are going—
To the love that life and death attends,
And the glory that is to be!

EDNA DEAN PROCTOR.

Christmas Customs.

Christmas is a festival that seems to be more particularly the property of children than any other; not that everybody does not join in the celebration with all their hearts, but that children, in honor perhaps of Him who became a child, are given the chief part in its pleasures.

In Cornwall on Christmas eve, the children are all allowed to sit up till midnight, and to have a taste of cider, too; and in Devonshire they go, with their father and all the family and friends, out in the orchard with cider and a cake, placing the latter in the crotch of one of the branches, and throwing the other over the tree. This is evidently the relic of an old pagan rite, bearing every appearance of the ancient sacrifice, a sacrifice to propitiate the tree to continue its fruitfulness, although, why it should be offered on Christmas eve is not explained.

Indeed, there are many heathen customs that have been grafted upon our way of keeping Christmas. This will be understood when it is remembered that the early Christian fathers found it hard to keep their flocks from joining in the Pagan ceremonies at times of good-feeling and jollity. They therefore wisely made their own ceremonies conform to the same occasion, so that if their people must celebrate, they could be celebrating Christian facts. Thus the old Roman Saturnalia, a time of great merry-making, to speak mildly, coming at this season of the year, the early fathers thought best to harmonize it with their Christmas festivities.

From the Saturnalia are descended the "Mummers," a band of people who go about in masks, in England, and enact some rude play before the doors. Whatever this play was in the days of the Saturnalia, in the Christian days it has usually been the story of St. George and the Dragon,—old Father Christmas, crowned with holly and carrying a wassail bowl, introducing St. George, a Turkish knight, a huge scaly dragon, and a doctor to bind up the wounds; to all of whom the children at the window are delighted to throw their half-pennies.

Again in Great Britain the priests of the new religion borrowed from the Druids, for their Christmas use, the observance of the winter solstice with great solemnity, and allowed also some of the customs of the ancient Saxons to be absorbed. Thus from the Druids we have the mistletoe, and from the Saxons the Yule log.

There is cheer and hospitality about the Yule log which it warms one to think of. In the places where such a thing is really burned, when it is cut and dragged along to be placed on the hearth, and lighted from the embers of last year's log, put away for that purpose, every wayfarer raises his hat to it as it goes along, it means so much.

From what the "Waits," another accompaniment of Christmas, dear to English children, have descended is not certainly ascertained; but there was a company of "Waits" as early as the year 1400, and it is understood that they were then strolling players on hautboys and other wind instruments; and that is all they are to-day.

The one purely Christian observance in all these glad, gay ceremonies is the "Carols." The singers have a picturesqueness as the glimmer of their lanterns illumines them by fits, and starts in the darkness on the snow, and their voices have a sweetness half stolen from their songs. The "Carols" are sung now all over the European continent, and in England usually by a portion of the church choir on Christmas eve, and often on Christmas mornings, by certain of the children of the parish. In the early ages the bishops sang them among their clergy.

In all these things children have their share, being the principal ones to enjoy them; while with the "Mummers" a little girl goes, having no other part than that of carrying a branch of Christmas green. The Christmas tree, which is the most positive feature of children's Christmas nowadays, was not much known, if at all, among the English-speaking children till after the good Prince Albert came to England.

The very fact that Christmas means a rite celebrating the day of Christ's birth gives children an especial claim upon the day which belongs to the Holy Child, and one of the appellations of whose patron saint is Kriss Kringle, which means the Christ Child.

LAND OFFICE.

GOVERNMENT

LANDS,

AND

CHEAP RAILROAD

LANDS.

Griggs County, Dak.

Settlers located. Final proofs made and money furnished. Railroad lands purchased and money furnished in part. Contest cases tried and determined. Money loaned on chattel security. "The early bird catches the worm."

IVER JACOBSON,

ATTORNEY AT LAW,

BUNELL AVENUE, COOPERSTOWN,

GRIGGS COUNTY, D. T.

Nervous Exhaustion, Premature Decay, Loss of Manhood.
An 80-page Cloth-bound Book of Advice to Young or Middle-aged Men, with prescriptions for Self-treatment by a Regular Physician.
SENT FREE on receipt of two three-cent stamps.
T. WILLIAMS & CO., MILWAUKEE, WIS.

VIGOROUS HEALTH FOR MEN

PROF. HARRIS' PASTILLE
A Radical Cure FOR SPERMATORRHEA AND IMPOTENCY.
Tested for over 5 years by use in thousands of cases.
Free TRIAL PACKAGE.
SEND ADDRESS
HARRIS REMEDY CO., Mfg. Chemists,
306 1/2 North 10th St., St. Louis, Mo.
ONE MONTH'S TREATMENT, \$3; 2 MONTHS \$5; 3 MONTHS, \$7

HARRIS REMEDY CO., ST. LOUIS
Mfg. Chemists and Sole Prop's of
PROF. HARRIS' PASTILLE REMEDY
Young Men and others who suffer from Nervous and Physical Debility, Premature Exhaustion, and their many gloomy consequences, are quickened and cured.
The Remedy is put up in boxes, No. 1 (lasting a month), \$2; No. 2 (enough to effect a cure, unless in severe cases), \$5; No. 3 (lasting three months), \$7. Sent by mail in plain wrapper.
Directions for using accompany each box. Pamphlet describing this disease and mode of cure sent on application.

Consult Dr. BUTTS
Dr. L. B. BUTTS, SUCCESSOR TO DR. J. C. HARRIS, in Diseases of the Blood, Skin and Nerves, Scrofula, Rheumatism, and Venereal Affections. Scientific treatment; safe and sure remedies. Infirmites Treated. Call or write for list of questions to be answered by those desiring treatment by mail.
(Persons suffering from E. future should send their address and insure something to their advantage. It is not a treat.)
Address Dr. C. L. LARLEY, Pres't and Physician in Charge Central Med. & Surg. Institute, 92 1/2 Locust St., St. Louis, Mo. Successor to Dr. Butts' Dispensary. Established 50 Years

FREE! RELIABLE SELF-CURE.
A favorite prescription of one of the most noted and successful specialists in the U.S. (now retired) for the cure of **Nervous Debility, Lost Manhood, Premature Decay, and Every Scrofula** explained developed free. Druggists can fill it.
Address DR. WARD & CO. Louisiana, Mo.

WRIGHT'S INDIAN LIVER VEGETABLE PILLS
Secure Healthy action to the Liver and relieve all bilious troubles.
Purely Vegetable; No Opiate. Price 25c. All Druggists



ica by its Western way, and marked his march along the Pacific slope not by forts, but churches, with which their shrines and alters yet stand in decaying grandeur amid gardens of olive and palm. From these outposts, guarded by the sacred cross, missionary fathers in the robes and sandals of the Franciscans, penetrated inland, carrying good will to the savages of the New World. It is said that one of those devoted brothers, seeing on the white summit of a mountain the red snow-flower of the Sierras, sprinkling the snowy field like drops of blood, fell on his knees in wondering adoration, and called the mountain "Sangre de Cristo," the Mount of the Blood of Christ. This brother died in the wilderness, and it is told that the crucifix which dropped from his lifeless hand was transformed into a marvel among the clouds. For, far lifted above mortal, or wing of bird, towers a great cross of snow against a mountain side known as the "Mount of the Holy Cross."

River had sung its story of mercy to her while yet she was a child.
At length the trail crossed the range near the cabin, and during the brief summer equestrians appeared on the summit, going down toward the valley. From her hidden post she saw the world's people pause, with full hearts and brimming eyes, on Inspiration Point, whence is taken the first look into Yosemite. She saw pilgrims stand dumb before El Capitan—that mile-wide tablet of smooth, white marble, set in the walls of nature's temple. She saw heads bared before the thunderous three-thousand-foot falls of the Yosemite. She saw, and understood.
But none who see the valley in summer time gain its full magnificence. One must live with it to grow into the vastness and solitude of its grandest grandeur. The mountain maiden, with the oxygen of the air flaring in her cheeks and lighting her eyes, skinned on her snow shoes over billows treacherous as the waves of the sea, and was given ideal pictures.
For the solitary blooms the desert rose; for the solitary are upreared the mountain snows. The best of everything is seen in the company only of God. In solitude we are closed with the Most High, and whether leaf thicket or ice cavern, it is the place of worship and joy. Therefore, the heart of the maiden was stirred deepest, when on a winter's day, alone in the vast white universe, she peered from Glacier Point, into the frozen crater of jewels. Then the valley shone in a white splendor that its summer worshippers can never see. Down the walls the falls hung dumb and motionless, suspended by an unseen hand, trailing miles of