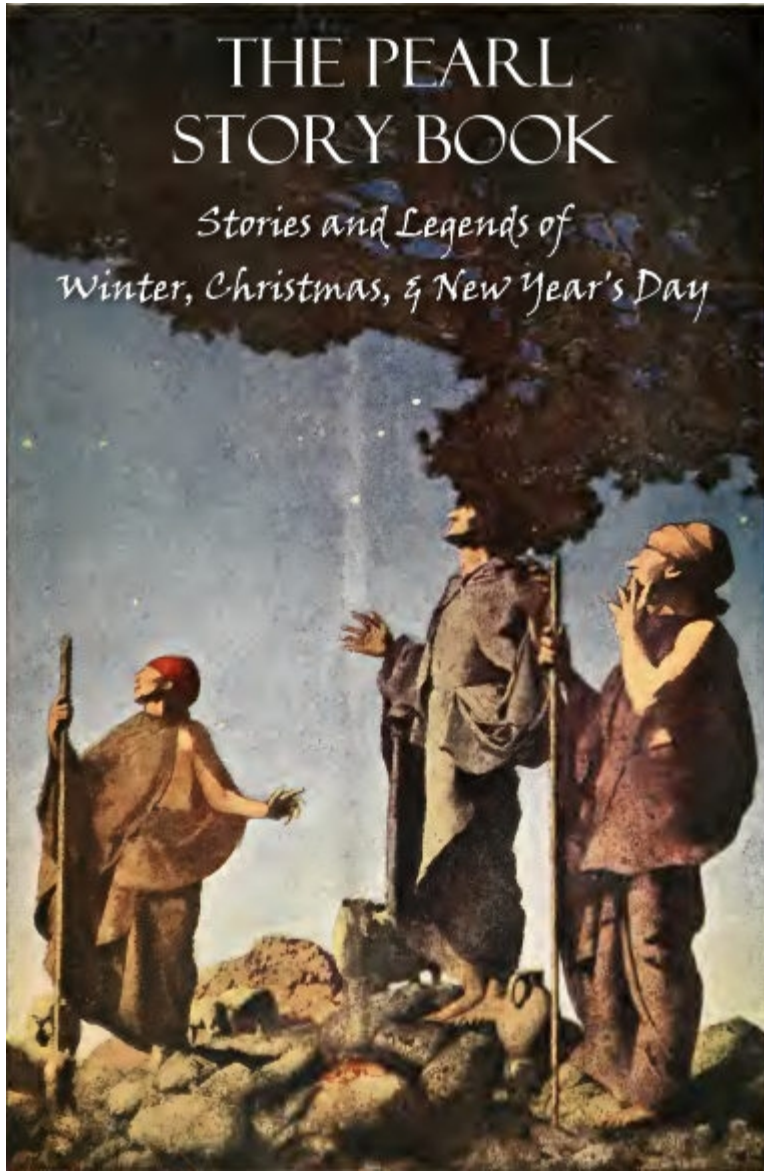


THE PEARL STORY BOOK

*Stories and Legends of
Winter, Christmas, & New Year's Day*



THE PEARL STORY BOOK

Stories and Legends of
Winter,
Christmas,
and New Year's Day

COMPILED BY
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

WINTER STORIES AND LEGENDS

Winter (selection) James Russell Lowell
The Ice King (Indian legend) Eleanor L. Skinner
A Song of the Snow (poem) Madison Cawein
King Frost and King Winter (adapted) Margaret T. Canby
The Snowstorm (poem) Ralph Waldo Emerson
The First Winter (Iroquois legend) W. W. Canfield
Snow Song (poem) Frank Dempster Sherman
The Snow Maiden (Russian legend. Translated from the French) Eleanor L. Skinner
The Frost King (poem) Mary Mapes Dodge
King Winter's Harvest Selected
Old King Winter (poem) Anna E. Skinner
Sheltering Wings Harriet Louise Jerome
Snowflakes (selection) Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
The Snow-Image Nathaniel Hawthorne

WINTER WOODS

The First Snow-Fall James Russell Lowell
The Voice of the Pine Trees (Japanese legend) Frank Hadland Davis
The Pine Tree Maiden (Indian legend) Ada M. Skinner
The Holly Janet Harvey Kelman
The Fable of the Three Elms (poem) Margaret E. Sangster, Jr.
The Pine and the Willow Mine Morishima
Why the Wild Rabbits Are White in Winter (Algonquin legend retold) Eleanor L. Skinner
The Yew Janet Harvey Kelman
How the Pine Tree Did Some Good Samuel W. Duffield
A Wonderful Weaver (poem) George Cooper
The Pine and the Flax Albrekt Segerstedt
The Fir Tree (poem) Edith M. Thomas
Why Bruin Has a Stumpy Tail (Norwegian legend) Eleanor L. Skinner
Pines and Firs Mrs. Dyson
Who Loves the Trees Best? (poem) Selected

CHRISTMAS EVERYWHERE

A Christmas Song Phillips Brooks
The Shepherd Maiden's Gift (Eastern legend) Eleanor L. Skinner
Christmas Gifts Laura E. Richards
Silver Bells (poem) Hamish Hendry
The Animals' Christmas Tree John P. Peters
A Christmas Carol Christina Rossetti
Holly Ada M. Marzials
The Willow Man (poem) Juliana Horatia Ewing

The Ivy Green (selection) Charles Dickens
Legend of St. Nicholas Amy Steedman
Christmas Bells (selection) Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
A Night With Santa Claus Anna R. Annan
A Child's Thought About Santa Claus (poem) Sydney Dayre
Charity in a Cottage Jean Ingelow
The Waits (poem) Margaret Deland
Where Love Is There God Is Also (adapted) Leo Tolstoi
God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen Dinah Mulock Craik

THE GLAD NEW YEAR

The Glad New Year (poem) Mary Mapes Dodge
The Bad Little Goblin's New Year Mary Stewart
Selection Robert Herrick
The Queen of the Year (poem) Edna Dean Proctor
The New Year's Bell Andrea Hofer Proudfoot
The New Year Selected
The Child and the Year (poem) Celia Thaxter
A Masque of the Days Charles Lamb
Ring Out, Wild Bells (poem) Alfred Tennyson

MIDWINTER

The Bells (selection) Edgar Allen Poe
A January Thaw Dallas Lore Sharp
The Snow Man Hans Christian Andersen
The Happy Prince Oscar Wilde
The Legend of King Wenceslaus (adapted) John Mason Neale
Midwinter (poem) John Townsend Trowbridge

WHEN WINTER AND SPRING MET

Old Winter (poem) Thomas Noel
The Snowball That Didn't Melt Jay T. Stocking
Gau-wi-di-ne and Go-hay (Iroquois legend retold) Eleanor L. Skinner
Naming the Winds (Indian legend retold) Ada M. Skinner
North Wind's Frolic (translated) Montgomery Maze
The Months: A Pageant (adapted) Christina Rossetti
Prince Winter Carl Ewald
How Spring and Winter Met (poem) Edith M. Thomas

INTRODUCTION

"Once upon a time," in the winter season suggests happy, young faces grouped about a blazing fire. A heavy snowstorm promises plenty of sport for tomorrow, but at present the cosiness indoors is very attractive, especially now that the evening story hour is at hand. And while the story-teller is slowly choosing his subjects he hears the children's impatient whispers of "The Snow Man," "Prince Winter," "The Legend of Holly," "The Animals' Christmas Tree."

Silence! The story-teller turns his eyes from the glowing fire to the faces of his eager audience. He is ready to begin.

Each season of the year opens a treasury of suggestion for stories. In the beauty and wonder of nature are excellent themes for tales which quicken children's interest in the promise of joyous springtime, in the rich pageantry of ripening summer, in the blessings of generous autumn, and in the merry cheer of grim old winter.

The Pearl Story Book is the fourth volume in a series of nature books each of which emphasizes the interest and beauty characteristic of a particular season. The central theme of this volume is winter, "snow-wrapped and holly-decked."

WINTER STORIES AND LEGENDS

WINTER

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand summers old;
On open wold and hill-top bleak
It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek.
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare;
The little brook heard it and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him winter-proof;
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined his arches and matched his beams;
Slender and clear were his crystal spars
As the lashes of light that trim the stars:
He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight.

James Russell Lowell.

THE ICE KING

(Indian Legend)

Once upon a time there was an Indian village built on the bank of a wide river. During the spring, summer, and autumn the people were very happy. There was plenty of fuel and game in the deep woods; the river afforded excellent fish. But the Indians dreaded the months when the Ice King reigned.

One winter the weather was terribly cold and the people suffered severely. The Ice King called forth the keen wind from the northern

sky, and piled the snowdrifts so high in the forests that it was most difficult to supply the wigwams with game. He covered the river with ice so thick that the Indians feared it would never melt.

"When will the Ice King leave us?" they asked each other. "We shall all perish if he continues his cruel reign."

At last signs of spring encouraged the stricken people. The great snowdrifts in the forests disappeared and the ice on the river broke into large pieces. All of these floated downstream except one huge cake which lodged on the bank very near the village. And when the Indians saw that the spring sunshine did not melt this great mass of ice they were puzzled and anxious.

"It is the roof of the Ice King's lodge," they said. "We shall never enjoy warm weather while he dwells near us. Have we no brave who is willing to do battle with this winter tyrant?"

At last, a courageous young hunter armed himself with a huge club and went forth to see if he could shatter the glittering frozen mass and rid the village of the giant who dwelt beneath it. With all his strength he struck the ice roof blow upon blow, crying out, "Begone, O cruel Ice King! Your time is past! Begone!"

Finally, there was a deafening noise like the crashing of forest trees when the lightning strikes, and the huge ice cake split into several pieces.

"Begone!" cried the young brave, as he struggled with each great lump of ice until he pushed it from the bank and tumbled it into the river below.

And when the mighty task was finished the white figure of the Ice King stood before the Indian brave.

"You have ruined my lodge," said the giant.

"The winter season is past," answered the brave. "Begone!"

"After several moons I shall return to stay," threatened the Ice King. Then he stalked away toward the North.

The people were very happy when they knew that the young brave had conquered the giant; but their joy was somewhat dampened when they heard about the threatened return of the Ice King.

"I shall prepare for his return and do battle with him again," declared the Indian conqueror.

This promise comforted the people somewhat, but still they thought of the coming winter with dread.

During the autumn the hunter built near the river a strong wigwam and stored therein abundant fuel and dried game. He filled many bags made of skin, with oil, which he procured from the animals he killed. Also, he was well supplied with fur rugs, blankets, and warm clothes.

At last the winter season came. The cold north wind blew unceasingly, the snow piled high around the wigwams; ice several feet thick covered the river.

"The Ice King has come," said the Indians. "If he keeps his threat to stay among us we shall surely perish."

One bitter cold day the young Indian who had prepared well for the severe weather sat in his wigwam near a blazing fire. Suddenly, a strong gust of wind tore aside the bear skin which protected the doorway and into the lodge stalked the Ice King. His freezing breath filled the place and dampened the fire. He took a seat opposite the Indian brave who said, "Welcome, Ice King."

"I've come to stay," answered the giant.

The Indian shivered with cold at the sudden change of temperature in his wigwam, but he rose and brought more logs to the fire. Also, he opened one of his bags of oil and poured the contents on the great pieces of wood. The flames soon caught the oil-soaked logs and a roaring fire crackled and blazed in the wigwam. More and more fuel the young brave piled on his fire until finally the frosty cold air was changed to summer heat.

The Ice King shifted his seat away from the glowing fire. Farther and farther away he pushed until he sat with his back against the wall of the wigwam. As he moved he seemed to grow smaller and weaker. The icy

feathers of his headgear drooped about his forehead and great drops of sweat covered his face. But still the Indian brave piled fuel on the blazing fire.

"Spare me, O hunter," cried the Ice King.

But to the words of the giant the young Indian was deaf. He opened another bag of oil and poured it on the logs.

"Have mercy, I beg you!" pleaded the Ice King. He rose and staggered toward the door.

"You have conquered me," he said in a weak voice. "I will depart. Twice you have won a victory over me. I give up my hope of reigning continually among your people. My season shall last during three moons, only."

He staggered out of the wigwam and stalked wearily away. Since that day the giant Ice King has not tried to reign throughout the year.

A SONG OF THE SNOW

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter dawn,
When the air is still and the clouds are gone,
And the snow lies deep on hill and lawn,
 And the old clock ticks, "'Tis time! 'Tis time!"
And the household rises with many a yawn
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter dawn!
 Sing, Ho!

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter sky
When the last star closes its icy eye
And deep in the road the snow-drifts lie,
 And the old clock ticks, "'Tis late! 'Tis late!"
And the flame on the hearth leaps red--leaps high
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter sky!
 Sing, Ho!

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter morn
When the snow makes ghostly the wayside thorn,
And hills of pearl are the shocks of corn,
 And the old clock ticks, "Tick-tock; tick-tock;"
And the goodman bustles about the barn
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter morn!
 Sing, Ho!

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter day,
When ermine capped are the stocks of hay,
And the wood-smoke pillars the air with gray,
 And the old clock ticks, "To work! To work!"
And the goodwife sings as she churns away
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter day!
 Sing, Ho!

Madison Cawein.

KING FROST AND KING WINTER

Margaret T. Canby

King Winter lives in a very strong palace near the cold North Pole; it is built of great blocks of thick ice, and all around it stand high, pointed icebergs, and cross, white bears keep guard at the gate. He has many little fairy servants to do his bidding and they are like their master, cross and spiteful, and seldom do any kind actions, so that few are found who love them. King Winter is rich and powerful, but he keeps all his wealth so tightly locked up that it does no one any good; and what is worse, he often tries to get the treasures of other persons, to add to the store in his money chests.

One day when this selfish old king was walking through the woods he saw the leaves thickly covered with gold and precious stones, which had been spread upon them by King Frost, to make the trees more beautiful and give pleasure to all who saw them. But looking at them did not satisfy King Winter; he wanted to have the gold for his own, and he made up his mind to get it, somehow. Back he went to his palace

to call his servants home to do this new work. As soon as he reached the gate, he blew a loud, shrill note on his horn and in a few minutes his odd little fairies came flying in at the windows and doors and stood before him quietly waiting their commands. The king ordered some to go out into the forest, at nightfall, armed with canes and clubs, and beat off all the gold and ruby leaves; and he told others to take strong bags, and gather up all the treasure, and bring it to him.

"If that silly King Frost does not think any more of gold and precious stones than to waste them on trees I shall teach him better," said the old king.

The fairies promised to obey him, and as soon as night came, off they rushed to the forest, and a terrible noise they made, flying from one beautiful tree to another, banging and beating the leaves off. Branches were cracking and falling on all sides, and leaves were flying about, while the sound of shouting and laughing and screaming told all who heard it that the spiteful winter fairies were at some mischief. The other fairies followed, and gathered up the poor shattered leaves, cramming them into the great bags they had brought, and taking them to King Winter's palace as fast as they were filled.

This work was kept up nearly all night and when morning came, the magic forest of many-colored leaves was changed into a dreary place. Bare trees stretched their long brown branches around and seemed to shiver in the cold wind and to sigh for the beautiful dress of shining leaves so rudely torn from them.

King Winter was very much pleased, as one great sack after another was tugged in by the fairies and when morning came he called his servants together and said, "You have all worked well, my fairies, and have saved much treasure from being wasted; I will now open these bags and show you the gold. Each of you shall have a share."

The king took up the sack nearest to him, their surprise, when out rushed a great heap of brown leaves, which flew all over the floor and half choked them with dust! When the king saw this he growled with rage and looked at the fairies with a dark frown on his face. They begged him to look at the next sack, but when he did so, it, too, was full of brown leaves, instead of gold and precious stones. This was too much for King Winter's patience. He tossed the bags one by one out of the palace window, and would have tossed the unlucky fairies after

them, had not some of the bravest ones knelt down and asked for mercy, telling him they had obeyed his orders, and, if King Frost had taken back his treasure, they were not to blame.

This turned their master's anger against King Frost, and very angry and fierce he was. He gnashed his great teeth with rage and rushed up and down in his palace, until it shook again. At last he made up his mind to go out that night, break down King Frost's beautiful palace, and take away all his riches.

When night came, he started out with all his fairies. Some were armed with the clubs they had beaten off the leaves with, and others had lumps of ice to throw at their enemy; but the king had been so angry all day that he had not told them what to do; also, he had left their sharp spears locked up. He wrapped himself in his great white cloak of swan's down in order that he might look very grand, and so they went on their way.

King Frost lived on the other side of the wood, and he had heard all the noise made by the winter fairies in spoiling the trees and had seen the next morning the mischief they had done. It made him very sorry to find the beautiful leaves all knocked off and taken away, and he determined to punish King Winter by going to attack his palace that night. He spent the day making ready and dressing himself and his servants in shining coats of ice-armour and giving each one several spears and darts of ice tipped with sharp diamond points. They looked like brave little soldiers.

The two groups of fairies met in the midst of the great wood. After some words between the kings, their servants fell to blows and a great battle they had. The winter fairies fought with their clubs and threw lumps of ice at the frost fairies; but their clubs were weak from being used so roughly the night before and soon broke; and when their ice-balls were all thrown away they could find no more. But King Frost had armed his servants well, and they threw their icy darts among the winter fairies. The trees, too, seemed to fight on the Frost King's side. The bare twigs pulled their hair and the branches ripped their ice clothes wherever they could. So the winter fairies had the worst of it and at last started off at full speed and rushed through the woods, never stopping till they reached the palace, and shut themselves in--leaving their king, who was too proud to run, all alone with King Frost and his fairies. You may be sure they were not very

merciful to him. They began to pull his cloak, calling out, "Give us your cloak to keep our trees warm. You stole their pretty leaves; you must give us your cloak."

Now this was a magic cloak and had been given to King Winter by the Queen of the fairies, so when he felt them pulling at it, he wrapped it tightly about him, and began to run. After him flew the frost fairies, pulling and plucking at his great white cloak, snatching out a bit here and a bit there and laughing and shouting while King Winter howled and roared and rushed along, not knowing where he went. On they flew up and down the wood in and out among the trees,--their way marked by the scattered bits of white down from King Winter's cloak. When day began King Winter found himself near his own palace. He dashed his tattered cloak to the ground and rushed through the gate, shaking his fist at King Frost.

He and his fairies took the cloak. As they went home through the woods they hung beautiful wreaths of white down on all the trees and also trimmed the branches with their broken spears and darts, which shone like silver in the sunlight, and made the woods look as bright almost, as before it had been robbed of its golden and ruby leaves. Even the ground was covered with shining darts and white feathers. Every one thought it very beautiful, and no one could tell how it happened.
(_Adapted._)

THE SNOWSTORM

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, and river, and the heaven,
And veils the farmhouse at the garden's end,
The sled and traveler stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, inclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come, see the north wind's masonry.

Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage, naught cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
A swanlike form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Mauger the farmer's sighs; and at the gate
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone--
Built in an age, the mad wind's night work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

Ralph Waldo Emerson.

THE FIRST WINTER

(Iroquois Legend)

There was a time when the days were always of the same length, and it was always summer. The red men lived continually in the smile of the Great Spirit and were happy. But there arose a chief who was so powerful that he at last declared himself mightier than the Great Spirit, and taught his brothers to go forth to the plain and mock him. They would call upon the Great Spirit to come and fight with them or would challenge him to take away the crop of growing corn or drive the game from the woods. They would say he was an unkind father to keep himself and their dead brothers in the Happy Hunting Grounds, where the red men could hunt forever without weariness.

They laughed at their old men who had feared for so many moons to reproach the Great Spirit for his unfair treatment of the Indians who

were compelled to hunt and fish for game for their wives and children, while their own women had to plant the corn and harvest it.

"In the Happy Hunting Grounds," they said, "the Great Spirit feeds our brothers and their wives and does not let any foes or dangers come upon them, but here he lets us go hungry many times. If he is as great as you have said, why does he not take care of his children here?"

Then the Great Spirit told them he would turn his smiling face away from them, so that they should have no more light and warmth and they must build fires in the forest if they would see.

But the red men laughed and taunted him, telling him that he had followed one trail so long that he could not get out of it, but would have to come every day and give them light and heat as usual. Then they would dance and make faces at him and taunt him with his helplessness.

In a few days the quick eyes of some of the red men saw in the morning the face of the Great Spirit appear where it was not wont to appear, but they were silent, fearing the jibes of their brothers. Finally, duller eyes noticed the change, and alarm and consternation spread among the people. Each day brought less and less of the Great Spirit's smile and his countenance was often hidden by dark clouds, while terrible storms beat upon the frightened faces turned in appeal toward the heavens. The strong braves and warriors became as women; the old men covered their heads with skins and starved in the forests; while the women in their lodges crooned the low, mournful wail of the death song. Frosts and snows came upon an unsheltered and stricken race, and many of them perished.

Then the Great Spirit, who had almost removed his face from the sight of men, had pity and told them he would come back. Day after day the few that remained alive watched with joy the return of the sun. They sang in praise of the approaching summer and once more hailed with thankfulness the first blades of growing corn as it burst from the ground. The Great Spirit told his children that every year, as a punishment for the insults they had given their Father, they should feel for a season the might of the power they had mocked; and they murmured not, but bowed their heads in meekness.

SNOW SONG

Over valley, over hill,
Hark, the shepherd piping shrill,
Driving all the white flock forth,
From the far folds of the north.

Blow, wind, blow,
Weird melodies you play,
Following your flocks that go
Across the world today.

Hither, thither, up and down,
Every highway of the town,
Huddling close the white flocks all
Gather at the shepherd's call.

Blow, wind, blow,
Upon your pipes of joy,
All your sheep the flakes of snow
And you their shepherd boy.

Frank Dempster Sherman.

THE SNOW MAIDEN

(Russian Legend)

Once upon a time there lived a peasant named Ivan and his wife, Marie. They were very sad because they had no children. One cold winter day the peasant and his wife sat near a window in their cottage and watched the village children playing in the snow. The little ones were busily at work making a beautiful snow maiden.

Ivan turned to his wife and said, "What a good time the children are

having. See, they are making a beautiful snow maiden. Come, let us go into the garden and amuse ourselves in the same way. We will make a pretty little snow image."

They went into the garden which lay back of their cottage.

"My husband," said Marie, "we have no children, what do you say to our making for ourselves a child of snow?"

"A very good idea!" said the husband. And he at once began to mold the form of a little body, with tiny feet and hands. His wife made a small head and set it upon the shoulders of the snow image.

A man who passed by the garden stopped for a moment and looked at the peasants who were so strangely occupied. After a moment's silence he said to them, "May God help you."

"Thank you," said Ivan.

"God's blessing, indeed, is always good," nodded Marie.

"What are you making?" asked the stranger.

Ivan looked up and said, "We are making a little snow maiden." Then he went on with his work, forming the nose, chin, and eyes.

In a few moments the snow child was finished, and Ivan looked at her in great admiration. Suddenly, he noticed that the mouth and eyes opened, the cheeks and lips took on a rosy hue, and in a few moments the astonished peasant saw standing before him a living child.

"Who are you?" he asked, filled with wonder at seeing a little girl instead of a snow image.

"I am Snow White, your little daughter," said the child. Then she threw her arms lovingly around the man and his wife, who both began to cry for joy.

The delighted parents took Snow White into the cottage, and before long the news ran through the village that a little daughter had come to live with Ivan and Marie.

Of course the village children came to play with Snow White. She was such a charming little girl, with a very white skin, eyes as blue as the sky, and lovely golden hair. To be sure, her cheeks were not so rosy as those of her companions, but she was so bright and gentle that everyone loved her very much indeed.

The winter passed very quickly and Snow White grew so fast that by the time the trees were veiled in the green buds of spring she was as tall as a girl of twelve or thirteen years.

During the winter months the snow maiden had been very joyous and happy, but when the mild, warm days of spring came she seemed sad and low-spirited. Her mother, Marie, noticed the change and said to her, "My dear little girl, why are you sad? Tell me, are you ill?"

"No, mother, dear, I am not ill," said Snow White. But she no longer seemed to enjoy playing out of doors with the other children; she stayed very quietly in the cottage.

One lovely spring day the village children came to the cottage and called out, "Come, Snow White! Come! We are going into the woods to gather wild flowers. Come with us."

"Yes, do go, my dear!" said mother Marie. "Go with your little friends and gather spring flowers. I'm sure you'll enjoy the outing."

Away went the happy children to the woods. They gathered the lovely wild flowers and made them into bouquets and coronets, and when the afternoon sun began to sink in the western sky they built a big bonfire. Gayly they sang little songs, merrily dancing around the bright, crackling blaze.

"Let each one dance alone," called out one of the little girls.

"Snow White, watch us for a little while, and then you, too, will know how to dance alone."

Away whirled the happy little children, dancing freely round and round the bonfire. In a little while Snow White joined them.

When the gay little people were out of breath and the dancing grew slower and slower, some one called out, "Where is Snow White?"

"Snow White, where are you?" shouted the other children, but nowhere could they find their little companion.

They ran home and told Ivan and Marie that Snow White had disappeared while dancing round the bonfire. The villagers made a thorough search for the little maiden, but they never found her, for while she was dancing around the bonfire she had slowly changed into a little white vapour and had flown away toward the sky, where she changed into a delicate snowflake.

THE FROST KING

Oho! have you seen the Frost King,
A-marching up the hill?
His hoary face is stern and pale,
His touch is icy chill.
He sends the birdlings to the South,
He bids the brooks be still;
Yet not in wrath or cruelty
He marches up the hill.

He will often rest at noontime,
To see the sunbeams play;
And flash his spears of icicles,
Or let them melt away.
He'll toss the snowflakes in the air,
Nor let them go nor stay;
Then hold his breath while swift they fall,
That coasting boys may play.

He'll touch the brooks and rivers wide,
That skating crowds may shout;
He'll make the people far and near
Remember he's about.
He'll send his nimble, frosty Jack--
Without a shade of doubt--
To do all kinds of merry pranks,

And call the children out;

He'll sit upon the whitened fields,
And reach his icy hand
O'er houses where the sudden cold
Folks cannot understand.
The very moon, that ventures forth
From clouds so soft and grand,
Will stare to see the stiffened look
That settles o'er the land.

And so the Frost King o'er the hills,
And o'er the startled plain,
Will come and go from year to year
Till Earth grows young again--
Till Time himself shall cease to be,
Till gone are hill and plain:
Whenever Winter comes to stay,
The hoary King shall reign.

Mary Mapes Dodge.

KING WINTER'S HARVEST

King Winter sat upon his iceberg throne, and waving his scepter, a huge icicle, called for all the Snow Fairies and Frost Fairies to draw near, as he wished to see them.

"Tell me, Snow Fairies," said King Winter, "what have you been doing of late; have you made anybody happy by your work?"

"Oh, yes," they all said at once, "we had the jolliest time last night putting white dresses on the trees, white spreads over the grasses, white caps on all the fence posts, and making things look so strange that when the children came out in the morning they just shouted and laughed, and soon threw so much snow over each other that they were dressed in white, too, and seemed Snow Fairies like ourselves. They, too, wanted to make curious canes, castles, and other things with the

snow as we had done. Sleds were brought out and when the sleighbells commenced their music it seemed that everybody was made glad by our work."

"Well done," said King Winter, "now away to your work again."

In a twinkling the Snow Fairies were up in a purple cloud-boat throwing a shower of snowflake kisses down to King Winter to thank him for giving them work to do.

"Now, Frost Fairies," said King Winter, turning to a glittering band who wore some of his own jewels, "what have you done to make anybody glad?"

"We have made pictures upon the windows and hung your jewels upon the trees for the people to look at, and covered the skating ponds," said Jack Frost, the leader.

"That is good," said King Winter. "You and the Snow Fairies seem to be making the world glad now, but pretty soon we must leave the work, and the good sunbeams will put our things away; they will hide the snowballs, and crack the skating ponds so that the ice may float downstream. Now I would like to make something that will keep long after we are gone away. Queen Summer is gone but her harvest of hay and grain is in the barns. Queen Autumn is gone but her harvest of apples and potatoes is in the cellars; now I want to leave a harvest, too."

"But the sunbeams are away most of the time now," said Jack Frost. "Can anything grow without them?"

"My harvest will grow best without them," said King Winter, "and I'll just hang up a thick cloud curtain and ask them to play upon the other side while my harvest grows. Mr. North Wind will help, and if all you Frost Fairies do your liveliest work my harvest will soon be ready."

North Wind soon came with bags of cold air which he scattered hither and thither, while the Frost Fairies carried it into every track and corner, wondering all the while what the harvest would be. But after two days' work they found out; for horses were hitched to sleds and men started for the lakes and rivers, saying, "The ice has frozen so thick that it is a fine time to fill the ice-houses." Saws and poles

were carried along, and soon huge blocks of ice were finding places upon the sleds ready for a ride to some ice-house where they would be packed so securely in sawdust that King Winter's harvest would keep through the very hottest weather.

"Then the ice-men can play that they are we," said a Frost Fairy, "scattering cold all about to make people glad."

OLD KING WINTER

Old King Winter's on his throne
In robes of ermine white;
The crown of jewels on his head
Now glitters bright with light.

The little flakes of snow and hail,
And tiny pearls of sleet,
Are with the wild winds dancing
All round his magic feet.

His beard is white, his cheeks are red,
His heart is filled with cheer;
His season's best some people say;
The best of all the year.

Anna E. Skinner.

SHELTERING WINGS

Harriet Louise Jerome

It was intensely cold. Heavy sleds creaked as they scraped over the jeweled sounding board of dry, unyielding snow; the signs above shop doors shrieked and groaned as they swung helplessly to and fro; and

the clear, keen air seemed frozen into sharp little crystalline needles that stabbed every living thing that must be out in it. The streets were almost forsaken in mid-afternoon. Business men hurried from shelter to shelter; every dog remained at home; not a bird was to be seen or heard. The sparrows had been forced to hide themselves in crevices and holes; the doves found protected corners and huddled together as best they could; many birds were frozen to death.

A dozen or more doves were gathered close under the cornice of the piazza of a certain house, trying with little success to keep warm. Some small sparrows, disturbed and driven from the cozy place they had chosen, saw the doves and came flying across the piazza.

"Dear doves," chirped the sparrows, "won't you let us nestle near you? Your bodies look so large and warm."

"But your coats are frosted with cold. We cannot let you come near us, for we are almost frozen now," murmured the doves sadly.

"But we are perishing."

"So are we."

"It looks so warm near your broad wings, gentle doves. Oh, let us come! We are so little, and so very, very cold!"

"Come," cooed a dove at last, and a trembling little sparrow fluttered close and nestled under the broad white wing.

"Come," cooed another dove, and another little sparrow found comfort.

"Come! Come!" echoed another warm-hearted bird, and another, until at last more than half the doves were sheltering small, shivering sparrows beneath their own half-frozen wings.

"My sisters, you are very foolish," said the other doves. "You mean well, but why do you risk your own beautiful lives to give life to worthless sparrows?"

"Ah! they were so small, and so very, very cold," murmured the doves. "Many of us will perish this cruel night; while we have life let us share its meager warmth with those in bitter need."

Colder and colder grew the day. The sun went down behind the clouds suffused with soft and radiant beauty, but more fiercely and relentlessly swept the wind around the house where the doves and sparrows waited for death.

An hour after sunset a man came up to the house and strode across the piazza. As the door of the house closed heavily behind him, a little child watching from the window saw something jarred from the cornice fall heavily to the piazza floor.

"Oh, papa," she cried in surprise, "a poor frozen dove has fallen on our porch!"

When he stepped out to pick up the fallen dove the father saw the others under the cornice. They were no longer able to move or to utter a cry, so he brought them in and placed them in a room where they might slowly revive. Soon more than half of the doves could coo gratefully, and raise their stiffened wings. Then out from beneath the wing of each revived dove fluttered a living sparrow.

"Look, papa!" cried the child. "Each dove that has come to life was holding a poor little sparrow close to her heart."

They gently raised the wings of the doves that could not be revived. Not one had a sparrow beneath it.

Colder and fiercer swept the wind without, cutting and more piercing grew the frozen, crystalline needles of air, but each dove that had sheltered a frost-coated sparrow beneath her own shivering wings lived to rejoice in the glowing gladsome sunshine of the days to come.

SNOWFLAKES

Out of the Bosom of the Air,
Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken,
Over the woodlands brown and bare,
Over the harvest-fields forsaken,

Silent, and soft, and slow,
Descends the snow.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

THE SNOW-IMAGE

Nathaniel Hawthorne

One afternoon of a cold winter's day, when the sun shone forth with chilly brightness, after a long storm, two children asked leave of their mother to run out and play in the new-fallen snow.

The elder child was a little girl, whom, because she was of a tender and modest disposition, and was thought to be very beautiful, her parents, and other people who were familiar with her, used to call Violet.

But her brother was known by the title of Peony, on account of the ruddiness of his broad and round little phiz, which made everybody think of sunshine and great scarlet flowers.

"Yes, Violet--yes, my little Peony," said their kind mother; "you may go out and play in the new snow."

Forth sallied the two children, with a hop-skip-and-jump, that carried them at once into the very heart of a huge snow-drift, whence Violet emerged like a snow bunting, while little Peony floundered out with his round face in full bloom.

Then what a merry time they had! To look at them, frolicking in the wintry garden, you would have thought that the dark and pitiless storm had been sent for no other purpose but to provide a new plaything for Violet and Peony; and that they themselves had been created, as the snowbirds were, to take delight only in the tempest and in the white mantle which it spread over the earth.

At last, when they had frosted one another all over with handfuls of

snow, Violet, after laughing heartily at little Peony's figure, was struck with a new idea.

"You look exactly like a snow-image, Peony," said she, "if your cheeks were not so red. And that puts me in mind! Let us make an image out of snow--an image of a little girl--and it shall be our sister, and shall run about and play with us all winter long. Won't it be nice?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Peony, as plainly as he could speak, for he was but a little boy. "That will be nice! And mamma shall see it."

"Yes," answered Violet; "mamma shall see the new little girl. But she must not make her come into the warm parlour, for, you know, our little snow-sister will not love the warmth."

And forthwith the children began this great business of making a snow-image that should run about; while their mother, who was knitting at the window and overheard some of their talk, could not help smiling at the gravity with which they set about it. They really seemed to imagine that there would be no difficulty whatever in creating a live little girl out of the snow.

Indeed, it was an exceedingly pleasant sight--those bright little souls at their task! Moreover, it was really wonderful to observe how knowingly and skillfully they managed the matter. Violet assumed the chief direction, and told Peony what to do, while, with her own delicate fingers, she shaped out all the nicer parts of the snow-figure.

It seemed, in fact, not so much to be made by the children, as to grow up under their hands, while they were playing and prattling about it. Their mother was quite surprised at this, and the longer she looked, the more and more surprised she grew.

Now, for a few moments, there was a busy and earnest but indistinct hum of the two children's voices, as Violet and Peony wrought together with one happy consent. Violet still seemed to be the guiding spirit, while Peony acted rather as a labourer and brought her the snow from far and near. And yet the little urchin evidently had a proper understanding of the matter, too.

"Peony, Peony!" cried Violet; for her brother was at the other side of

the garden. "Bring me those light wreaths of snow that have rested on the lower branches of the pear-tree. You can clamber on the snow-drift, Peony, and reach them easily. I must have them to make some ringlets for our snow-sister's head!"

"Here they are, Violet!" answered the little boy. "Take care you do not break them. Well done! Well done! How pretty!"

"Does she not look sweet?" said Violet, with a very satisfied tone; "and now we must have some little shining bits of ice to make the brightness of her eyes. She is not finished yet. Mamma will see how very beautiful she is; but papa will say, 'Tush! nonsense! come in out of the cold!'"

"Let us call mamma to look out," said Peony; and then he shouted, "Mamma! mamma!! mamma!!! Look out and see what a nice 'ittle girl we are making!"

"What a nice playmate she will be for us all winter long!" said Violet. "I hope papa will not be afraid of her giving us a cold! Sha'n't you love her dearly, Peony?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Peony. "And I will hug her and she shall sit down close by me and drink some of my warm milk."

"Oh, no, Peony!" answered Violet, with grave wisdom. "That will not do at all. Warm milk will not be wholesome for our little snow-sister. Little snow-people like her eat nothing but icicles. No, no, Peony; we must not give her anything warm to drink!"

There was a minute or two of silence; for Peony, whose short legs were never weary, had gone again to the other side of the garden. All of a sudden, Violet cried out, loudly and joyfully, "Look here, Peony! Come quickly! A light has been shining on her cheek out of that rose-coloured cloud! And the colour does not go away! Is not that beautiful?"

"Yes, it is beau-ti-ful," answered Peony, pronouncing the three syllables with deliberate accuracy. "O Violet, only look at her hair! It is all like gold!"

"Oh, certainly," said Violet, as if it were very much a matter of

course. "That colour, you know, comes from the golden clouds that we see up there in the sky. She is almost finished now. But her lips must be made very red, redder than her cheeks. Perhaps, Peony, it will make them red if we both kiss them!"

Accordingly, the mother heard two smart little smacks, as if both her children were kissing the snow-image on its frozen mouth. But, as this did not seem to make the lips quite red enough, Violet next proposed that the snow-child should be invited to kiss Peony's scarlet cheek.

"Come, 'ittle snow-sister, kiss me!" cried Peony.

"There! she has kissed you," added Violet, "and now her lips are very red. And she blushed a little, too!"

"Oh, what a cold kiss!" cried Peony.

Just then, there came a breeze of the pure west wind sweeping through the garden and rattling the parlour-windows. It sounded so wintry cold, that the mother was about to tap on the window-pane with her thimble finger, to summon the two children in, when they both cried out to her with one voice:

"Mamma! mamma! We have finished our little snow-sister, and she is running about the garden with us!"

"What imaginative little beings my children are!" thought the mother, putting the last few stitches into Peony's frock. "And it is strange, too, that they make me almost as much a child as they themselves are! I can hardly help believing now that the snow-image has really come to life!"

"Dear mamma!" cried Violet, "pray look out and see what a sweet playmate we have!"

The mother, being thus entreated, could no longer delay to look forth from the window. The sun was now gone out of the sky, leaving, however, a rich inheritance of his brightness among those purple and golden clouds which make the sunsets of winter so magnificent.

But there was not the slightest gleam or dazzle, either on the window or on the snow; so that the good lady could look all over the garden, and see everything and everybody in it. And what do you think she saw

there? Violet and Peony, of course, her own two darling children.

Ah, but whom or what did she see besides? Why, if you will believe me, there was a small figure of a girl, dressed all in white, with rose-tinged cheeks and ringlets of golden hue, playing about the garden with the two children!

A stranger though she was, the child seemed to be on as familiar terms with Violet and Peony, and they with her, as if all the three had been playmates during the whole of their little lives. The mother thought to herself that it must certainly be the daughter of one of the neighbours, and that, seeing Violet and Peony in the garden, the child had run across the street to play with them.

So this kind lady went to the door, intending to invite the little runaway into her comfortable parlour; for, now that the sunshine was withdrawn, the atmosphere out of doors was already growing very cold.

But, after opening the house-door, she stood an instant on the threshold, hesitating whether she ought to ask the child to come in, or whether she should even speak to her. Indeed, she almost doubted whether it were a real child, after all, or only a light wreath of the new-fallen snow, blown hither and thither about the garden by the intensely cold west wind.

There was certainly something very singular in the aspect of the little stranger. Among all the children of the neighbourhood the lady could remember no such face, with its pure white and delicate rose-colour, and the golden ringlets tossing about the forehead and cheeks.

And as for her dress, which was entirely of white, and fluttering in the breeze, it was such as no reasonable woman would put upon a little girl when sending her out to play in the depth of winter. It made this kind and careful mother shiver only to look at those small feet, with nothing in the world on them except a very thin pair of white slippers.

Nevertheless, airily as she was clad, the child seemed to feel not the slightest inconvenience from the cold, but danced so lightly over the snow that the tips of her toes left hardly a print in its surface; while Violet could but just keep pace with her, and Peony's short legs

compelled him to lag behind.

All this while, the mother stood on the threshold, wondering how a little girl could look so much like a flying snow-drift, or how a snow-drift could look so very like a little girl.

She called Violet and whispered to her.

"Violet, my darling, what is this child's name?" asked she. "Does she live near us?"

"Why, dearest mamma," answered Violet, laughing to think that her mother did not comprehend so very plain an affair, "this is our little snow-sister whom we have just been making!"

"Yes, dear mamma," cried Peony, running to his mother, and looking up simply into her face. "This is our snow-image! Is it not a nice 'ittle child?"

"Violet," said her mother, greatly perplexed, "tell me the truth, without any jest. Who is this little girl?"

"My darling mamma," answered Violet, looking seriously into her mother's face, surprised that she should need any further explanation, "I have told you truly who she is. It is our little snow-image which Peony and I have been making. Peony will tell you so, as well as I."

"Yes, mamma," declared Peony, with much gravity in his crimson little phiz, "this is 'ittle snow-child. Is not she a nice one? But, mamma, her hand is, oh, so very cold!"

While mamma still hesitated what to think and what to do, the street-gate was thrown open, and the father of Violet and Peony appeared, wrapped in a pilot-cloth sack, with a fur cap drawn down over his ears, and the thickest of gloves upon his hands.

Mr. Lindsey was a middle-aged man, with a weary and yet a happy look in his wind-flushed and frost-pinched face, as if he had been busy all day long, and was glad to get back to his quiet home. His eyes brightened at the sight of his wife and children, although he could not help uttering a word or two of surprise at finding the whole family in the open air, on so bleak a day, and after sunset, too.

He soon perceived the little white stranger, sporting to and fro in the garden, like a dancing snow-wreath and the flock of snowbirds fluttering about her head.

"Pray, what little girl may this be?" inquired this very sensible man. "Surely her mother must be crazy, to let her go out in such bitter weather as it has been today, with only that flimsy white gown and those thin slippers!"

"My dear husband," said his wife, "I know no more about the little thing than you do. Some neighbour's child, I suppose. Our Violet and Peony," she added, laughing at herself for repeating so absurd a story, "insist that she is nothing but a snow-image which they have been busy about in the garden, almost all the afternoon."

As she said this, the mother glanced her eyes toward the spot where the children's snow-image had been made. What was her surprise on perceiving that there was not the slightest trace of so much labour!--no image at all!--no piled-up heap of snow!--nothing whatever, save the prints of little footsteps around a vacant space!

"This is very strange!" said she.

"What is strange, dear mother?" asked Violet. "Dear father, do not you see how it is? This is our snow-image, which Peony and I have made, because we wanted another playmate. Did not we, Peony?"

"Yes, papa," said crimson Peony. "This is our 'ittle snow-sister. Is she not beau-ti-ful? But she gave me such a cold kiss!"

"Pooh, nonsense, children!" cried their good honest father, who had a plain, sensible way of looking at matters. "Do not tell me of making live figures out of snow. Come, wife; this little stranger must not stay out in the bleak air a moment longer. We will bring her into the parlour; and you shall give her a supper of warm bread and milk, and make her as comfortable as you can."

So saying, this honest and very kind-hearted man was going toward the little damsel, with the best intentions in the world. But Violet and Peony, each seizing their father by the hand, earnestly besought him not to make her come in.

"Nonsense, children, nonsense, nonsense!" cried the father, half-vexed, half-laughing. "Run into the house, this moment! It is too late to play any longer now. I must take care of this little girl immediately, or she will catch her death of cold."

And so, with a most benevolent smile, this very well-meaning gentleman took the snow-child by the hand and led her toward the house.

She followed him, droopingly and reluctant, for all the glow and sparkle were gone out of her figure; and, whereas just before she had resembled a bright, frosty, star-gemmed evening, with a crimson gleam on the cold horizon, she now looked as dull and languid as a thaw.

As kind Mr. Lindsey led her up the steps of the door, Violet and Peony looked into his face, their eyes full of tears which froze before they could run down their cheeks, and again entreated him not to bring their snow-image into the house.

"Not bring her in!" exclaimed the kind-hearted man. "Why, you are crazy, my little Violet!--quite crazy, my small Peony! She is so cold already that her hand has almost frozen mine, in spite of my thick gloves. Would you have her freeze to death?"

His wife, as he came up the steps, had been taking another long, earnest gaze at the little white stranger. She hardly knew whether it was a dream or no; but she could not help fancying that she saw the delicate print of Violet's fingers on the child's neck. It looked just as if, while Violet was shaping out the image, she had given it a gentle pat with her hand, and had neglected to smooth the impression quite away.

"After all, husband," said the mother, "after all, she does look strangely like a snow-image! I do believe she is made of snow!"

A puff of the west wind blew against the snow-child, and again she sparkled like a star.

"Snow!" repeated good Mr. Lindsey, drawing the reluctant guest over his hospitable threshold. "No wonder she looks like snow. She is half frozen, poor little thing! But a good fire will put everything to rights."

This common-sensible man placed the snow-child on the hearth-rug, right in front of the hissing and fuming stove.

"Now she will be comfortable!" cried Mr. Lindsey, rubbing his hands and looking about him, with the pleasantest smile you ever saw. "Make yourself at home, my child."

Sad, sad and drooping, looked the little white maiden as she stood on the hearth-rug, with the hot blast of the stove striking through her like a pestilence. Once she threw a glance toward the window, and caught a glimpse, through its red curtains, of the snow-covered roofs and the stars glimmering frostily, and all the delicious intensity of the cold night. The bleak wind rattled the window-panes as if it were summoning her to come forth. But there stood the snow-child, drooping, before the hot stove!

But the common-sensible man saw nothing amiss.

"Come, wife," said he, "let her have a pair of thick stockings and a woolen shawl or blanket directly; and tell Dora to give her some warm supper as soon as the milk boils. You, Violet and Peony, amuse your little friend. She is out of spirits, you see, at finding herself in a strange place. For my part, I will go around among the neighbours and find out where she belongs."

The mother, meanwhile, had gone in search of the shawl and stockings. Without heeding the remonstrance of his two children, who still kept murmuring that their little snow-sister did not love the warmth, good Mr. Lindsey took his departure, shutting the parlour door carefully behind him.

Turning up the collar of his sack over his ears, he emerged from the house, and had barely reached the street-gate, when he was recalled by the screams of Violet and Peony and the rapping of a thimble against the parlour window.

"Husband! husband!" cried his wife, showing her horror-stricken face through the window panes. "There is no need of going for the child's parents!"

"We told you so, father!" screamed Violet and Peony, as he re-entered

the parlour. "You would bring her in; and now our poor--dear--beau-ti-ful little snow-sister is thawed!"

And their own sweet little faces were already dissolved in tears; so that their father, seeing what strange things occasionally happen in this every-day world, felt not a little anxious lest his children might be going to thaw too. In the utmost perplexity, he demanded an explanation of his wife. She could only reply that, being summoned to the parlour by cries of Violet and Peony, she found no trace of the little white maiden, unless it were the remains of a heap of snow, which, while she was gazing at it, melted quite away upon the hearth-rug.

"And there you see all that is left of it!" added she, pointing to a pool of water, in front of the stove.

"Yes, father," said Violet, looking reproachfully at him through her tears, "there is all that is left of our dear little snow-sister!"

"Naughty father!" cried Peony, stamping his foot, and--I shudder to say--shaking his little fist at the common-sensible man. "We told you how it would be! What for did you bring her in?"

And the stove, through the isinglass of its door, seemed to glare at good Mr. Lindsey, like a red-eyed demon, triumphing in the mischief which it had done! (_Abridged._)

WINTER WOODS

THE FIRST SNOW-FALL

The snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

James Russell Lowell.

THE VOICE OF THE PINE TREES

(Japanese Legend)

"And all the while
The voice of the breeze
As it blows through the firs
That grow old together
Will yield us delight."

In ancient days there lived a fisherman and his wife, and little daughter Matsue. There was nothing that Matsue loved to do more than to sit under the great pine tree. She was particularly fond of the pine needles that never seemed tired of falling to the ground. With these she fashioned a beautiful dress and sash, saying, "I will not wear these pine clothes until my wedding day."

One day while Matsue was sitting under the pine tree, she sang the following song:

"No one so callous but he heaves a sigh
When o'er his head the withered cherry flowers
Come fluttering down. Who knows?--the spring's soft showers
May be but tears shed by the sorrowing sky."

While thus she sang Teogo stood on the steep shore of Sumiyoshi watching the flight of a heron. Up, up, it went into the blue sky, and Teogo saw it fly over the village where the fishfolk and their daughter lived.

Now Teogo was a youth who dearly loved adventure and he thought it would be very delightful to swim across the sea and discover the land over which the heron had flown. So one morning he dived into the sea and swam so hard and so long that the poor fellow found the waves spinning and dancing and saw the great sky bend down and try to touch him. Then he lay unconscious on the water; but the waves were kind to him after all, for they pressed him on and on till he was washed up at the very place where Matsue sat under the pine tree.

Matsue carefully dragged Teogo underneath its sheltering branches, and then set him down upon a couch of pine needles, where he soon regained consciousness and warmly thanked Matsue for her kindness.

Teogo did not go back to his own country, for, after a few happy months had gone by, he married Matsue and on her wedding morn she wore her dress and sash of pine needles.

When Matsue's parents died her loss only seemed to make her love for Teogo the more. The older they grew the more they loved each other. Every night when the moon shone, they went hand in hand to the pine tree and with their little rake they made a couch for the morrow.

One night the great silver face of the moon peered through the branches of the pine tree and looked in vain for the two sitting together on a couch of pine needles. Their little rakes lay side by side and still the moon waited for the slow steps of these pine tree lovers. But that night they did not come. They had gone home to an everlasting place on the River of Souls.

They had loved so well and so splendidly, in old age as well as in youth, that their souls were allowed to come back again and wander round the pine tree that had listened to their love for so many years.

When the moon is full they whisper and laugh and sing and draw the pine needles together, while the sea sings softly upon the shore:

"The dawn is near
And the hoar-frost falls
On the fir tree twigs;
But its leaves dark green
Suffer no change.
Morning and evening

Beneath its shade
The leaves are swept away,
Yet they never fail.
True it is
That these fir trees
Shed not all their leaves;
Their verdure remains fresh
For ages long,
As the Masaka's trailing vine;
Even amongst evergreen trees--
The emblem of unchangeableness--
Exalted is their fame
As a symbol to the end of time.
The fame of the fir trees that
Have grown old together."

THE PINE TREE MAIDEN

(Indian Legend)

In an Indian village which stood near the Big Sea Water lived a beautiful little girl whose name was Leelinau. Her chief delight was to wander among the pine trees of a sacred grove which bordered the great waters. Here she passed many hours watching the sunlight dance on the stems of the tall trees and listening to the soft music of the wind as it came up from the sea and played in the forest.

The child's desire to spend so much of her time alone in the grove made her little companions regard her with awe, and they sometimes whispered together about the meaning of her strange journeys to the deep woods.

"Leelinau goes to the forest to play with the Puckwudjinies. She dances with the fairy folk and talks to them in their own language," said the Indian children when they saw the little girl's figure hurrying toward the grove of pine trees.

Leelinau's parents took little notice of her strange attraction for

the lonely forest. They thought it was a childish fancy which would vanish in a few years. But the little girl grew into a beautiful slender maiden and still she visited her retreat with increasing delight.

"When Leelinau goes to the forest the air is filled with the sweetest perfume and the trees nod their feathery plumes in welcome to her," whispered the youths and maidens of the village. "Some say she calls the pine trees by name and they answer her in a strange language which she understands."

One day it happened that an Indian hunter, who was a mighty chief, passed through the sacred grove. There, leaning against her favourite tree, a stately pine, he saw Leelinau, a dark-haired maiden marvellously beautiful. In a few days the chief sought her parents and laid before them rich gifts, saying that he wished to make the forest maiden his bride.

To the surprise of all the people in the village Leelinau took no joy in her approaching marriage to the great chief. To be sure, she made no complaint, for she was an obedient daughter. But each day, when she returned from her accustomed journey to the forest, she was sad and thoughtful. Sometimes she stood before her father's tepee and looked with wistful eyes toward her beloved grove.

At last the day arrived on which the great chief would claim her for his bride. The forest maiden dressed herself in her beautiful wedding robe and took her usual walk into the forest. Her parents were not surprised that she should wish to take a farewell look at the grove where she had spent so many happy hours, and which she was about to leave, for the great chief lived many miles away.

When she reached the forest she hastened to her beautiful pine tree. Clinging to the trunk she wept bitterly and whispered the story of her coming marriage to a war chief from whom her heart shrank in fear. When she had finished there was a soft rustling in the branches overhead and a voice said: "Leelinau! Leelinau! thou art my beloved! Wilt thou stay in the forest and be my bride?"

And she answered, "I will never leave my pine tree lover."

The sun stood high above the sacred grove and Leelinau had not

returned to her father's lodge. Friends were sent to bring her to the village but they came back with the report that the maiden was not in the forest. The great chief and his warriors searched far and wide for the lost maiden. She had disappeared so completely that the keenest-eyed Indians could discover no trace of her. The chief departed without his bride and for a year no tidings of Leelinau came to the village.

It happened one calm evening when the sun was sinking into the Big Sea Water, that an Indian youth in a birch bark canoe was swiftly skimming along toward the shore bordered by the sacred grove. There, standing near the deep forest, was a familiar figure. It was Leelinau, the lost maiden. In his surprise and joy the youth shouted to her and she waved her hand to him in recognition. Then he noticed that she was not alone. By her side stood a handsome brave with a green plume standing high on his head. With all his might the young Indian quickened the speed of his canoe and in a few moments he sprang ashore. But where were Leelinau and the young brave! They had disappeared and not a trace of them was to be found on the lonely shore or in the forest.

The youth returned to the village and told his story. Reverently the people bowed their heads and whispered, "Leelinau will never come back to us. She is the bride of her favourite pine tree."

THE HOLLY

Janet Harvey Kelman

The Holly is our most important evergreen, and is so well known that it scarcely needs any description. It has flourished in this country as long as the Oak, and is often found growing under tall trees in the crowded forests, as well as in the open glades, where lawns of fine grass are to be found.

People say that the Holly, or Holm tree, as it is often called, is the greenwood tree spoken of by Shakespeare, and that under its bushy shelter Robin Hood and his merry men held their meetings in the open

glades of Sherwood Forest. Sometimes it is called the Holly tree, because from the oldest time of which we have any record its boughs have been used to deck our shrines and churches, and in some parts of England the country people in December speak of gathering Christmas, which is the name they give to the Holly, or Holy tree. It is this evergreen which we oftenest use at Christmas-tide to decorate our churches, and very lovely the dark green sprays, with their coral berries, look when twined round the grey stone pillars.

The Holly is looked upon as a second-rate forest tree. It is never very large, and it usually appears as a thick, tall bush, with many branches reaching almost to the ground. Sometimes you find it with a slender, bare trunk, clothed with pale grey bark, and if you look closely at this bark you will see that it is covered with curious black markings, as if some strange writing had been traced on it with a heavy black pen.

This writing is the work of a tiny plant which makes its home on the Holly stem and spreads in this strange way.

The bark of the young Holly shoots and boughs is pale green and quite smooth.

The tree requires little sunshine, and it seems to keep all it gets as every leaf is highly polished and reflects the light like a mirror. These leaves grow closely on every branch; they are placed alternately on each side of the twigs, and are oval, with the edges so much waved that the leaves will not lie flat, but curl on each side of the centre rib.

The prickly leaves which grow low down on the tree have sharp spines along the waved edges, and a very sharp spine always grows at the point of the leaf. But the upper branches are clothed with blunt leaves which have no spines along the edges; instead there is a pale yellow line round each leaf, and there is a single blunt spine at the point.

Sheep and deer are very fond of eating the tough, leathery leaves of the Holly, and it is believed that the tree clothes its lower branches in prickly leaves to protect itself from these greedy enemies.

Country people tell you that if branches of smooth Holly are the first

to be brought into the house at Christmas-time, then the wife will be head of the house all the next year, but if the prickly boughs enter first, then the husband will be ruler.

The Holly leaves hang on the tree several years, and after they fall they lie a long time on the ground before the damp soaks through their leathery skin and makes them decay. You will find Holly leaves from which all the green part of the leaf has disappeared, leaving a beautiful skeleton leaf of grey fibre, which is still perfect in every vein and rib.

The flowers of the Holly bloom in May. They appear in small crowded clusters between the leaf stalk and the twig, and each flower is a delicate pale pink on the outside, but is pure white within. There is a calyx cup edged with four green points, and inside this cup stands a long white tube, with four white petals at the top. There are four yellow-headed stamens, and a tiny seed-vessel is hidden inside the flower tube. Sometimes all these parts will be found complete in a single flower; sometimes there will be flowers on the same branch which have stamens and no seed-vessel, and others which have seed-vessels and no stamens. Perhaps you will find a whole tree on which not a single seed flower grows. This tree may be laden with lovely white flowers in spring, but it will bear no berries in winter. You must have both stamen flowers and seed flowers if the tree is to produce any fruit.

As summer passes, the seed-vessels, which have had stamen dust scattered over them, become small green berries and these berries turn yellow and then change into a deep red, the colour of coral or sealing wax. The berries cluster round the green stalk, and most beautiful they are among the glossy dark leaves. Inside each berry there are four little fruit stones containing seeds, and the birds love to eat these red berries, which are full of mealy pulp; but remember that children must never eat the Holly berries, as they are poisonous except for the birds.

You will find that if the Holly tree has a good crop of berries this winter there will not be many the following year; the tree seems to require a year's rest before it can produce a second large crop.

There are some Holly trees with leaves which are shaded with pale yellow or white-variegated Hollies, we call them. These are greatly prized for

planting in gardens, where the bushes with different-coloured leaves lend much beauty when all the trees are bare in winter.

The wood of the Holly is too small to be of much use. It is white and very hard, and when stained black it is largely used instead of ebony, which is scarce and expensive. The black handles of many of our silver teapots are made of stained Holly wood, and the slender branches are good for making walking-sticks and coachmen's whips.

THE FABLE OF THE THREE ELMS

The North Wind spoke to three sturdy elms,
And, "Now you are dead!" said he;
"I have blown a blast till the snow whirled past,
And withered your leaves, and see:
You are brown and old and your boughs are cold!"
And he sneered at the elm trees three.

The first elm spoke in a hollow tone
(For the snow lay deep and white,)
"You think we are dead, North Wind?" he said,
"Why we sleep--as you sleep at night.
Beneath the snow lie my sturdy roots,
They grip on the friendly earth,
And I rest--till another year!" said he,
And he shook with a noisy mirth.

The second elm laughed a hearty laugh,
And, "North Wind," he cried in glee,
"Beneath my bark glows a living spark,
The sap of a healthy tree;
My boughs are bare and my leaves are gone,
But--what have I to fear?
For the winter time is my time of rest
And I sleep till another year!"

The third elm spoke and his voice was sweet,
And kind as the summery sea;

"Oh, Wind!" he said, "we are far from spring--
The God in whose hand we be
Looks down, with love, from the winter sky,
And sends us His sun to cheer;
If we had no snow there would be no spring--
We rest till another year!"

The three elms rocked in the stinging blast,
And under the heavy snow
Their roots were warm from the raging storm,
And safe from the winds that blow.
They smiled in their hearts and their leafless boughs
Spread over the frosty way;
For they knew that the God of forest trees
Would watch through each winter day.

The North Wind uttered a frosty sigh,
As the snow blew far and free;
And his weary eyes sought the winter skies,
And, "Mighty is God!" said he.
"To die or live are His gifts to give!"
And he smiled at the elm trees three.

Margaret E. Sangster, Jr.

THE PINE AND THE WILLOW

(Japanese Tale)

Mine Morishima

In a beautiful large garden, among many kinds of trees and shrubs,
there stood a tall fine Pine tree, and near to him, and almost as
tall, a graceful Willow.

One dark winter morning the wind blew hard and the clouds showed that
a storm was coming soon.

The Pine felt lonesome, as little children often do and thought he would talk to the Willow. So he said, "Friend Willow, your branches are trembling. I am sorry for you, for I know you are afraid of the storm that is coming. I wish you were like me. I am so strong nothing can hurt me. The frost cannot change the colour of my leaves nor the wind blow them off; occasionally, some old ones may fall on the ground, but there are always new ones to take their places--and I am the only tree in this large garden that is always fresh and bright. As for you, dear Willow, your branches all hang down, you have no leaves now and, as you are neither strong nor pretty and shake in such a little wind, of what good are you to yourself, or to any one else?"

"Dear Pine," the Willow answered, "I do not tremble with fear, for I am not afraid, but God made me so that the wind would move my branches very easily, and that I should not have leaves in the winter time. By and by I shall have delicate green leaves and blossoms, and I thank Him for giving me a beautiful summer dress, even though I go bare in cold weather. It must be very beautiful to be strong and handsome, as you are, and I am happy in having so good a friend."

While they were talking the wind had grown much stronger, and now the rain came pouring down. The Pine stood up angrily against the wind, scolding with a hin, hin, hin, while the Willow bent and swayed to and fro and all the other trees bowed their heads.

Then the Pine said, "Willow, why do you not push this rude wind away instead of yielding to him; you are cowardly to let him abuse you so, when you might resist him, as I do."

Then the Willow answered, "There are many ways to keep oneself from harm, and I do not like to resist any one with force."

The Pine was vexed at the Willow and would say no more, but battled with the wind he could no longer hold back. Then his branches were torn and his top broken off; they fell to the ground and the proud tree was a sad sight.

But the Willow bent her branches and yielded to the wind, and so was unhurt.

The next morning, when the rain had ceased and the sun shone brightly, the owner of the garden came out to see how his trees had stood the

storm. When he saw the broken Pine he thought it was too bad to have a broken tree in his fine garden, so he ordered the gardener to move the Pine into the back yard.

After a time, spring came, and the Willow put forth her lovely green leaves and every one who passed looked at the graceful tree and said, "How beautiful she is, how gentle she seems!"

The little birds built their nests in her branches, and soon baby birds came, which made the tree very happy. The butterflies danced around in the sunshine and all summer little children loved to play in the shade of the drooping Willow.

And when the Pine peeped in from the back yard, and saw how happy and beautiful the Willow was, and how the children, the birds, and the butterflies loved to play about her, he thought, "If only I had been less proud of my own strength, then might I, too, be standing in that beautiful garden with my crown of leaves, and with young life all about me."

WHY THE WILD RABBITS ARE WHITE IN WINTER

(Algonquin Legend)

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Long ago Wild Rabbit of the Northland wore a brown fur coat, throughout the year. Today, when the long winter months come, Wild Rabbit changes his coat of brown to one that is the colour of the snow. And this is how the change happened.

Wild Rabbit could not defend himself from his many foes. Almost all the animals,--foxes of all kinds, wildcats, wolves, wolverines, weasels, and ermine hunted Wild Rabbit for food. Then there were the fierce birds,--the eagles, hawks, and owls--that were always on the lookout for rabbits, young or old. The result was that with this war

continually waged against them, the poor rabbits had a hard time of it, especially in winter. They found it very difficult to hide themselves when the leaves were off the trees and the ground was covered with snow.

In those days of long ago the animals used to have a large council. There was a great father at the head of each kind of animal and bird, and these leaders used to meet and talk about the welfare of their kind. There was always peace and friendship among them while at the council. They appointed a king and he presided as chief. All the animals that had troubles or grievances had a right to come and speak about them at the council, and if it were possible, all wrongs were remedied.

Sometimes queer things were said. At one council the bear found great fault with the fox who had deceived him and had caused him to lose his beautiful tail by telling him to go and catch fish with it in a big crack in the ice. The bear sat fishing so long that the crack froze up solidly and, to save his life, the bear had to break off his tail.

But all the things they talked about were not so funny as the bear's complaint. They had their troubles and dangers and they discussed various plans for improving their condition; also, they considered how they could best defeat the skill and cleverness of the human hunters.

At one of the council meetings, when the rabbit's turn to be heard came, he said that his people were nearly all destroyed, that the rest of the world seemed to be combined against his race and they were killing them by day and night, in summer and winter. Also, he declared that the rabbits had little power to fight against enemies, and, therefore, his people were almost discouraged, but they had sent him to the council to see if the members could suggest any remedy or plan to save the rabbit race from complete destruction.

While the rabbit was speaking the wolverine winked at the wildcat, while the fox, although he tried to look solemn, could not keep his mouth from watering as he thought of the many rabbits he intended to eat.

Thus it can be seen that the rabbit did not get much sympathy from his enemies in the council. But his friends,--the moose, the reindeer, and the mountain goat--stood up in the meeting and spoke out bravely

for their little friend. Indeed, they told the animals that had laughed at the little rabbit's sad story that if they continued to kill all the rabbits they could find there would soon be none left. Then these cruel animals would be the greatest sufferers, for what else could they find to eat in sufficient numbers to keep them alive, if the rabbits were all gone?

This thought sobered the thoughtless animals at first but they soon resumed their mocking at the poor little rabbit and his story. As they happened to be in the majority, the council refused to do anything in the matter.

When the moose heard the decision of the council he was very sorry for his poor little brother rabbit. He lowered his head and told the rabbit to jump on one of his flat horns. The moose then carried him some distance away from the council and said, "There is no hope for you here. Most of the animals live on you and so they will not do anything that will make it more difficult for you to be caught than it now is. Your only hope is to go to Manabozho, and see what he can do for you. His name was once Manabush, which means Great Rabbit, so I am sure he will be your friend because I think he is a distant relative of yours."

Away sped the rabbit along the route described by the moose, who had lately found out where Manabozho was stopping.

The rabbit was such a timid creature that, when he came near to Manabozho, he was much afraid that he would not be welcomed. However, his case was desperate, and although his heart was thumping with fear he hurried along to have the matter decided as soon as possible.

To his great joy he found Manabozho in the best humour and the little creature was received most kindly. The great Master saw how weary the little rabbit was after the long journey so he made the little fellow rest on some fragrant grass in the sunshine. Then Manabozho went out and brought in some of the choicest things in his garden for the rabbit.

"Tell me all your troubles, little brother," said Manabozho. "Also, tell me about the council meeting."

The rabbit repeated his story and told all about the treatment he had

received at the council.

When the Great Master heard how unjustly the little rabbit had been treated he grew very angry and said, "And that is the way they treated little brother rabbit at the council we have given them, is it? And they know we expect them to give the smallest and weakest the same kind of justice as they offer the biggest and strongest! It is high time for some one to report the council news to me if such unfair meetings take place. Look out, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wolverine, and Mr. Wildcat, for if I take you in hand you'll be sorry little brother rabbit was obliged to come to Manabozho for help."

The Great Master had worked himself up into such a furious temper that the rabbit was frightened almost to death. But when Manabozho saw this he laughed and said, "I'm sorry to have frightened you, little brother. But I was so very angry with those animals for ill-treating you that I forgot myself. And now tell me what you wish me to do for you?"

After a long talk about the matter it was decided that there should be two great changes made. First, the eyes of the rabbit should be so increased in power that in the future they would be able to see by night as well as by day. Second, in all the Northland where much snow falls during many months of the year the rabbits of that region should change their coats for the winter season into a beautiful white colour like the snow.

And the rabbits of the Northland now have a much better time than they had formerly. In their soft white coats they can glide away from their enemies, or they can sometimes escape notice by remaining perfectly still on the white earth. (_Adapted._)

THE YEW

Janet Harvey Kelman

Once upon a time a discontented Yew tree grew in a wood. Other trees, it thought, had larger and more beautiful leaves which fluttered in

the breeze and became red and brown and yellow in the sunshine, and the Yew tree pined because the fairies had given it such an unattractive dress. One morning the sunshine disclosed that all its green leaves had changed into leaves made of gold, and the heart of the Yew tree danced with happiness. But some robbers, as they stole through the forest, were attracted by the glitter, and stripped off every golden leaf. Again the tree bemoaned its fate, and next day the sun shone on leaves of purest crystal. "How beautiful!" thought the tree; "see how I sparkle!" But a hailstorm burst from the clouds, and the sparkling leaves lay shivered on the grass. Once more the good fairies tried to comfort the unhappy tree. Smooth broad leaves covered its branches, and the Yew tree flaunted these gay banners in the wind. But, alas, a flock of goats came by and ate of the fresh young leaves "a million and ten." "Give me back again my old dress," sobbed the Yew, "for I see that it was best." And ever since its leaves remain unchanging, and it wears the sombre dress which covered its boughs in the days when King William landed from Normandy on our shores, and the swineherd tended his pigs in the great forests which covered so much of Merry England.

HOW THE PINE TREE DID SOME GOOD

Samuel W. Duffield

It was a long narrow valley where the Pine Tree stood, and perhaps if you want to look for it you might find it there today. For pine trees live a long time, and this one was not very old.

The valley was quite barren. Nothing grew there but a few scrubby bushes; and, to tell the truth, it was about as desolate a place as you can well imagine. Far up over it hung the great, snowy caps of the Rocky Mountains, where the clouds played hide and seek all day, and chased each other merrily across the snow. There was a little stream, too, that gathered itself up among the snows and came running down the side of the mountain; but for all that the valley was very dreary.

Once in a while there went a large grey rabbit, hopping among the sagebushes; but look as far as you could you would find no more

inhabitants. Poor, solitary little valley, with not even a cottonwood down by the stream, and hardly enough grass to furnish three oxen with a meal! Poor, barren little valley lying always for half the day in the shadow of those tall cliffs--burning under the summer sun, heaped high with the winter snows--lying there year after year without a friend! Yes, it had two friends, though they could do it but little good, for they were two pine trees. The one nearest the mountain, hanging quite out of reach in a cleft of the rock, was an old, gnarled tree, which had stood there for a hundred years. The other was younger, with bright green foliage, summer and winter. It curled up the ends of its branches, as if it would like to have you understand that it was a very fine, hardy fellow, even if it wasn't as old as its father up there in the cleft of the rock.

Now the young Pine Tree grew very lonesome at times, and was glad to talk with any persons who came along, and they were few, I can tell you. Occasionally, it would look lovingly up to the father pine, and wonder if it could make him hear what it said. It would rustle its branches and shout by the hour, but the father pine heard him only once, and then the words were so mixed with falling snow that it was really impossible to say what they meant.

So the Pine Tree was very lonesome and no wonder. "I wish I knew of what good I am," he said to the grey rabbit one day. "I wish I knew,--I wish I knew," and he rustled his branches until they all seemed to say, "Wish I knew--wish I knew."

"O pshaw!" said the rabbit, "I wouldn't concern myself much about that. Some day you'll find out."

"But do tell me," persisted the Pine Tree, "of what good you think I am."

"Well," answered the rabbit, sitting up on her hind paws and washing her face with her front ones, in order that company shouldn't see her unless she looked trim and tidy--"well," said the rabbit, "I can't exactly say myself what it is. If you don't help one, you help another--and that's right enough, isn't it? As for me, I take care of my family. I hop around among the sagebushes and get their breakfast and dinner and supper. I have plenty to do, I assure you, and you must really excuse me now, for I have to be off."

"I wish I was a hare," muttered the Pine Tree to himself, "I think I could do some good then, for I should have a family to support, but I know I can't now."

Then he called across to the little stream and asked the same question of him. And the stream rippled along, and danced in the sunshine, and answered him. "I go on errands for the big mountain all day. I carried one of your cones not long ago to a point of land twenty miles off, and there now is a pine tree that looks just like you. But I must run along, I am so busy. I can't tell you of what good you are. You must wait and see." And the little stream danced on.

"I wish I were a stream," thought the Pine Tree. "Anything but being tied down to this spot for years. That is unfair. The rabbit can run around, and so can the stream; but I must stand still forever. I wish I were dead."

By and by the summer passed into autumn, and the autumn into winter, and the snowflakes began to fall.

"Halloo!" said the first one, all in a flutter, as she dropped on the Pine Tree. But he shook her off, and she fell still farther down on the ground. The Pine Tree was getting very churlish and cross lately.

However, the snow didn't stop for all that and very soon there was a white robe over all the narrow valley. The Pine Tree had no one to talk with now. The stream had covered himself in with ice and snow, and wasn't to be seen.

The hare had to hop around very industriously to get enough for her children to eat; and the sagebushes were always low-minded fellows and couldn't begin to keep up a ten-minutes' conversation.

At last there came a solitary figure across the valley, making its way straight for the Pine Tree. It was a lame mule, which had been left behind from some wagon-train. He dragged himself slowly on till he reached the tree. Now the Pine, in shaking off the snow, had shaken down some cones as well, and they lay on the snow. These the mule picked up and began to eat.

"Heigh ho!" said the tree, "I never knew those things were fit to eat before."

"Didn't you?" replied the mule. "Why I have lived on these things, as you call them, ever since I left the wagons. I am going back on the Oregon Trail, and I sha'n't see you again. Accept my thanks for breakfast. Good-bye."

And he moved off to the other end of the valley and disappeared among the rocks.

"Well!" exclaimed the Pine Tree. "That's something, at all events." And he shook down a number of cones on the snow. He was really happier than he had ever been before,--and with good reason, too.

After a while there appeared three people. They were a family of Indians,--a father, a mother, and a little child. They, too, went straight to the tree.

"We'll stay here," said the father, looking across at the snow-covered bed of the stream and up at the Pine Tree. He was very poorly clothed, this Indian. He and his wife and the child had on dresses of hare-skins, and they possessed nothing more of any account, except bow and arrows, and a stick with a net on the end. They had no lodge poles, and not even a dog. They were very miserable and hungry. The man threw down his bow and arrows not far from the tree. Then he began to clear away the snow in a circle and to pull up the sagebushes. These he and the woman built into a round, low hut, and then they lighted a fire within it. While it was beginning to burn the man went to the stream and broke a hole in the ice. Tying a string to his arrow, he shot a fish which came up to breathe, and, after putting it on the coals, they all ate it half-raw. They never noticed the Pine Tree, though he scattered down at least a dozen more cones.

At last night came on, cold and cheerless. The wind blew savagely through the valleys, and howled at the Pine Tree, for they were old enemies. Oh, it was a bitter night, but finally the morning broke! More snow had fallen and heaped up against the hut so that you could hardly tell that it was there. The stream had frozen tighter than before and the man could not break a hole in the ice again. The sagebushes were all hid by the drifts, and the Indians could find none to burn.

Then they turned to the Pine Tree. How glad he was to help them! They

gathered up the cones and roasted the seeds on the fire. They cut branches from the tree and burned them, and so kept up the warmth in their hut.

The Pine Tree began to find himself useful, and he told the hare so one morning when she came along. But she saw the Indian's hut, and did not stop to reply. She had put on her winter coat of white, yet the Indian had seen her in spite of all her care. He followed her over the snow with his net, and caught her among the drifts. Poor Pine Tree! She was almost his only friend, and when he saw her eaten and her skin taken for the child's mantle, he was very sorrowful, you may be sure. He saw that if the Indians stayed there, he, too, would have to die, for they would in time burn off all his branches, and use all his cones; but he was doing good at last, and he was content.

Day after day passed by,--some bleak, some warm,--and the winter moved slowly along. The Indians only went from their hut to the Pine Tree now. He gave them fire and food, and the snow was their drink. He was smaller than before, for many branches were gone, but he was happier than ever.

One day the sun came out more warmly, and it seemed as if spring was near. The Indian man broke a hole in the ice, and got more fish. The Indian woman caught a rabbit. The Indian child gathered sagebushes from under the fast-melting snow and made a hotter fire to cook the feast. And they did feast, and then they went away.

The Pine Tree had found out his mission. He had helped to save three lives.

In the summer there came along a band of explorers, and one, the botanist of the party, stopped beside our Pine Tree:

"This," said he in his big words, "is the *Pinus Monophyllus*, otherwise known as the Bread Pine." He looked at the deserted hut and passed his hand over his forehead.

"How strange it is," said he. "This Pine Tree must have kept a whole family from cold and starvation last winter. There are very few of us who have done as much good as that." And when he went away, he waved his hand to the tree and thanked God in his heart that it grew there. And the Bread Pine waved his branches in return, and said to himself

as he gazed after the departing band: "I will never complain again, for I have found out what a pleasant thing it is to do good, and I know now that every one in his lifetime can do a little of it."

A WONDERFUL WEAVER

There's a wonderful weaver
High up in the air,
And he weaves a white mantle
For cold earth to wear.
With the wind for his shuttle,
The cloud for his loom,
How he weaves, how he weaves,
In the light, in the gloom.

Oh, with finest of laces,
He decks bush and tree;
On the bare, flinty meadows
A cover lays he.
Then a quaint cap he places
On pillar and post,
And he changes the pump
To a grim, silent ghost.

But this wonderful weaver
Grows weary at last;
And the shuttle lies idle
That once flew so fast.
Then the sun peeps abroad
On the work that is done;
And he smiles: "I'll unravel
It all, just for fun."

George Cooper.

THE PINE AND THE FLAX

Albrekt Segerstedt

Just where a forest ended grew a pine tree taller and more beautiful than all the others in the forest. Far away could be seen its feathery round crown, whose soft branches waved so gracefully when the wind blew across the plain.

At the foot of the pine tree the fields of grain began.

Here the farmer sowed seeds of many kinds, but the flax was sowed nearest the pine. It came up beautiful and even, and the pine thought a great deal of the slender green thing.

The flax stalk raised itself higher and higher, and near the close of summer it bore a little blue helmet on his head.

"Thou art so beautiful!" said the tall pine.

The flax bowed itself low, but raised again so gracefully that it looked like a billowy sea.

The pine and the flax often talked to each other and became great friends.

"What folly!" said the other forest trees to the pine. "Do not have anything to do with the flax; it is so weak. Choose the tall spruce or the birch tree. They are strong."

But the pine would not desert the flax.

The thistle and other small plants talked to the flax.

"You are crazy to think of the lofty pine. It does not trouble itself about you. It is tall and proud. Children of a size play best together. Think of the bush and vine and content yourself."

"I shall trust the pine," replied the flax. "It is honourable and faithful and I am fond of it."

So the pine and the flax remained friends.

Time passed and the flax was pulled up and made into ropes and cloth. The pine was felled and its trunk carried to the city. But the pine and flax did not forget each other, though neither knew where the other was.

A large, beautiful ship was launched upon the water. On this the pine tree was erected as a mast, and on the highest part waved a flag.

Then came a great white sail to help the mast carry the proud ship forward. It wrapped itself around the mast, spread itself out like a great wing, and caught the wind on its wide curve.

The sail had been woven of linen that grew as flax out in the field on the edge of the wood. And the two friends had met again.

Clasping each other faithfully, out over the foaming billows they went to new lands. It was life, it was pleasure to go on united as friends.

The winds took a message back to the forest.

"Who would have believed it?" said the spruce and the birch.

THE FIR TREE

O singing Wind
Searching field and wood,
Cans't thou find
Aught that's sweet or good--
Flowers, to kiss awake,
Or dewy grass, to shake,
Or feathered seed
Aloft to speed?

Replies the wind:
"I cannot find
Flowers, to kiss awake,

Or dewy grass to shake,
Or feathered seed
Aloft to speed;
Yet I meet
Something sweet,
When the scented fir,--
Balsam-breathing fir--
In my flight I stir."

Edith M. Thomas.

WHY BRUIN HAS A STUMPY TAIL

(Norwegian Legend)

Once upon a time a sly fox lived in a deep forest which bordered a river. One fine winter day he was lying in the sun near a brush heap with his eyes closed, and he was thinking: "It has been several days since I had a dainty supper. How I should enjoy a fine large fish this evening. I'll slip over to the edge of the forest and watch the fishermen as they go home with their day's catch. Perhaps good luck will do something for me."

Now one old man had caught a very fine lot of fish of all sizes. Indeed, he had so many that he was obliged to hire a cart in which to carry them home. He was driving along slowly when suddenly he noticed a red fox crouched under the bush near the road. He stopped his horse, jumped down from the cart, and carefully crept near the spot where he had seen Master Reynard. The fox did not open his eyes nor move a muscle.

"Well," said the old fisherman, "I do believe he is dead! What a fine coat he has. I will take him home and give him to my wife for a present." He lifted the fox and put him into the cart among the fish. The old man then mounted to his seat and drove merrily on, thinking how pleased his wife would be with the fine fish and the fox. When they were well on their way, the sly fox threw one fish after another out of the cart until all lay scattered along on the road; then he

slipped out of the cart.

When the old man reached his cottage, he called out to his wife, "Come and see the fine fish I caught to-day. And I have brought you a beautiful gift, also."

His wife hurried to the cart and said, "Where are the fish, my husband, and where is my present?"

"Why, there in the cart," he replied.

"In the cart!" exclaimed his wife. "Why, there is nothing here; neither fish nor present, so far as I can see."

The old man looked and to his great surprise and disappointment he discovered that what his wife said was true.

Meanwhile, the sly fox had gathered up the fish and had taken them to the forest in order to enjoy a fine supper. Presently he heard a pleasant voice saying, "Good evening, Brother Reynard."

He looked up and saw his friend Bruin. "Oh, good evening to you," answered the fox. "I have been fishing to-day, and, as you see, luck certainly attended me."

"It did, indeed," answered the bear. "Could you not spare me one fish? I should consider the gift a great favor."

"Oh," answered the fox, "why don't you go fishing yourself? I assure you when one becomes a fisherman, he thoroughly enjoys the fruits of patience."

"Go fishing, my friend," said Bruin, in astonishment. "That is impossible. I know nothing about catching fish, I assure you."

"Pooh, it is very easy, especially in the winter time when ice nearly covers the river. Let me tell you what to do. Make a hole in the ice and stick your tail down into it. Hold it there just as long as you can and keep saying, 'Come, little fish; come, big fish.' Don't mind if the tail smarts a little; that only means that you have a bite, and I assure you the longer you hold it there the more fish you will catch. Then all at once, out with your tail. Give a strong pull

sideways, then upward, and you'll have enough fish to last you several days. But mind you, follow my directions closely."

"Oh, my friend, I am very grateful for your kind information," said Bruin, and off he went to the river where he proceeded to follow Master Fox's directions.

In a short time sly Reynard passed by, and when he saw Bruin patiently sitting on the ice with his tail in a hole, he laughed until his sides ached. He said, wickedly, under his breath: "A clear sky, a clear sky! Bruin's tail will freeze, Bruin's tail will freeze."

"What did you say, my friend?" asked the bear.

"Oh, I was making a wish," replied the fox.

All night long Bruin sat there, fishing patiently. Then he decided to go home. How very heavy his tail felt. He thought to himself that all the fish in the river must be fastened there. In a little while the women of the village came to get water from the river, and when they saw the bear, they called out at the top of their voices: "Come, come! A bear, a bear! Kill him! Kill him!"

The men came quickly with great sticks in their hands. Poor Bruin gave a short pull sideways and his tail snapped off short. He made off to the woods as fast as he could go, but to this day he goes about with a stumpy tail.

PINES AND FIRS

Mrs. Dyson

Pines and firs! Who knows the difference between a pine and a fir! These trees are first cousins; they often dwell together in our woods; they are evergreen; they have narrow, pointed leaves; and they bear cones, and so we often call them all firs, as if they were brothers. This may satisfy strangers and passers-by who only turn their heads and say: "Ah! a fir wood," but it will not be sufficient for the

friends of the trees. Pines and firs are as different as oaks and beeches; and who would not be ashamed to take a beech for an oak!

A fir is the shape of a church steeple or a spear-head about to cleave the sky. The lowermost branches come out in a ring and spread out straight and stiff like the spokes of a wheel. Above this whorl is another of shorter branches still, and so on, till the top ring is quite a little one round a pointed shoot. The little shoots fork out on each side of the big branches, and like them are set closely with leaves. These shoots do not point up to the sky nor down to the earth; they spread out flat, so that the branch looks like a huge fern.

Pines begin to grow like firs; but as they shoot up side by side in the woods, their lower branches drop off for want of air and sunshine, and their upper branches spread out wider. A fir is a pyramid with a pointed top; but a full-grown pine has a flat top, and often a tall, bare trunk, so that it looks like a great umbrella. A famous Roman writer, Pliny, said that the smoke of a volcano was like a pine tree. The smoke shoots up in a great pillar from the mouth of the fiery mountain, and then spreads itself out in a black cap.

You have often amused yourselves with finding pictures in the clouds. Have you seen a pillar of mist rise up from the horizon, the meeting line of the earth and sky, and then lose itself in a soft cloud? The country people in some parts of Europe call this cloud-form Abraham's tree or Adam's tree, because it is so like a pine tree. When the clouds break up into the soft, white, fleecy ripples that we call a mackerel sky, they say, "We shall have wind, for Adam's tree is putting forth leaves."

The pine trees dress themselves in long, blue-green, rounded needles set in bundles of two, three, or more, bristling out all round their branches; but the fir trees wear short, narrow, flat leaves of a yellow-green colour, set singly each one by itself. These fir leaves come out all round the stem just as pine leaves do, but they are parted down the middle as we sometimes part our hair, so that they spread out flat in two thick rows.

Mr. Ruskin calls the pines and firs and their relations the builders with the sword, because of their narrow, pointed leaves, and the broad-leaved trees he calls the builders with the shield. The trees of the sword stand erect on the hills like armed soldiers prepared for

war; while the trees of the shield spread themselves in the valleys to shelter the fields and pastures.

Why do these mountain trees have such narrow leaves? Can you find out a reason? Perhaps this is one: when the great, strong wind is raging with all his force, he will not suffer any resistance but breaks down everything that tries to stay him in his course; if he meets broad leaves and heavy branches, he hurls them out of his way, but he just whistles through the slender leaves and branches of the pines and firs, and scarcely knows they are there.

When you gather the cones in the wood, you may know at once whether they have fallen from pine trees or from fir trees. A pine cone looks like a single piece of carved solid wood until it opens, and then each hard scale shows a thick, square head; but the fir cones are made of broad, papery scales, with thin edges laid neatly one over the other.

Now you will never have any difficulty in knowing the pines from the firs, even in the far distance--colour, form, dress, fruit, all are different.

How is it we make a mistake, and call the Scotch pine by the name of Scotch fir? Perhaps it is because this tree is the only one of the great pine and fir family that is a real native of Britain. Our stay-at-home ancestors who lived above three hundred years ago never saw a real fir, and so their one pine had to represent all its relations. They knew it perhaps better than we do, for in their days there were many forests that have since been cut down to make room for houses and gardens and fields.

Sometimes when you have been walking over the moorland you have run to gather some bright yellow moss, and have suddenly found your foot sinking into wet, black mud, and you have heard stories of men and horses sucked down by just such dreadful slime. Hundreds of years ago forests stood where now lie these dangerous bogs, and the trees and shrubs rotting and decaying in the wet have changed into black, brown swamps. Many bogs have been drained, and the trunks of pine trees have been found in them standing as they grew. In one bog in Yorkshire pine trees were found sawn across and left to lie and rot. Who felled these trees which have been lying there hundreds of years? Can we tell? Yes; for among the trees are scattered axe-heads and Roman coins, and we are able to picture the old story of the place. There was once a

forest there, and the ancient Britons hid themselves in its shelter, and the Romans cut down the trees to drive them from their hiding-place.

There are two common kinds of firs which you will find in the woods. One is the spruce fir, a very prim and proper tree, with slightly curving branches turned up at the tips. It looks as if the branches had been all cut to a pattern, and their length and the distances between them carefully measured. When you have been washed and brushed and pulled and straightened, and had every hair and bow set in its proper place, so that you look particularly trim and neat, you sometimes laugh and call one another spruce, like the spruce fir.

Some people think the name "spruce" means the pruce, or Prussian tree; others say it means the sprouting tree, the tree that sprouts at the ends of its branches. In some countries these bright-green sprouts are cut off and made into a kind of beer called spruce beer.

The spruce fir is at home on the high mountains of Europe where it often grows one hundred and fifty feet high. You long for the time when you will be taken to Switzerland to see the snow-capped Alps. Then standing out against the white snow and the glittering ice rivers you will see the dark spruce forests. This fir is also at home in Norway and the cold lands of the North, and so we call it the Norway Spruce to distinguish it from other kinds of spruce fir that grow in America. In Norway many old men and women earn a living by gathering and selling in the markets pieces of fir for the people to strew on the graves as we do flowers.

What sort of cones has the spruce? Can you find some in the fir wood? They are five or six inches long and perhaps two inches thick. You will see them hanging from the ends of the upper branches, and perhaps you may find some empty ones on the ground. Look at them. Those thin scales are very different from the tough walls of the pine cone: each one is shaped off to a point, and this point is divided into two sharp teeth.

Perhaps when you are looking for the cones, you will find growing fast to the branches among the leaves some fanciful things that look like little cones. These are very gay; every scale has a border of crimson velvet and a green spine in the middle of its back, like a little tusk. If you open them you will find some brown, soft things inside.

Do you know what they are? Perhaps, if you have not already made friends with the real cone, you will think these are seeds; but some of you are growing wise, and know that you have intruded into a little nest of insects. If you tie a net round the branch and keep watch, you may see them come out. Their mother pierced a hole in a brown bud last autumn and laid her eggs there; then when the buds burst in spring the lower leaves grew fast together and made this comfortable house, and those green tusks you see are the leaf points.

But what is the other kind of fir that grows in our wood? It is rather like the spruce in shape, but it is not quite so stiff and prim and proper, and underneath each little leaf there are two silver lines, and so we call this the silver fir. You may always know it from the spruce by these silver lines. Each stiff little leaf has its edges rolled under as if ready for hemming, and there is a thick green rib down the middle of the under side, so the silver lining just peeps out in single streaks between the rib and the hems.

The spring tufts of the Norway spruce are of a bright yellow-green; those of the silver fir are paler and softer in tint, more like the primrose. When the sulphur butterfly lights on them we lose sight of him, so he flits from one to another, feeling quite safe, and keeping carefully away from those dark old leaves where he would be pounced upon at once.

The silver fir does not let its cones hang down; it holds them proudly erect on its branches; like little towers often eight inches high. We wonder how such slender twigs can hold up such large cones. They look like hairy giants, for their scales do not end in two little teeth, but in a long point which turns back and bends downwards.

The silver fir does not like quite such cold places as the spruce and the Scotch pine; it dwells lower down the mountain sides, and is at home in Central Europe.

All the pines and firs, like the Scotch pine, have those wonderful pipes and reservoirs of sticky turpentine juice inside their bark, but each kind of fir has its own way of making its stores, and so we get different kinds of resin and turpentine and balsams from different trees.

It is these stores of resin that make the pine wood burn so brightly.

The Highland chief needed no gas for his great illuminations; he had only to call his followers to hold up branches of blazing pine. It is not very wise to light a picnic fire in a pine or fir wood, for sometimes a few sparks will set a whole forest in flames.

Fir -- _fire_: how much alike these two words are! Do you think they must have some connection with one another? Were the first fires made of fir wood? or was this tree called fir because it made such good fires? These words are so old that we can only guess their history.

Those of you who like pretty things have often fingered admiringly some bright, shining necklace of amber beads. The pieces of amber from which those beads were cut were picked up on the shores of the Baltic Sea, and it is supposed that once upon a time some great pines or firs dropped their gummy juice and this hardened into these beautiful transparent stones.

Pines and firs are some of our greatest tree givers. They seem never tired of giving. Can you think of anything that is made of pine or fir wood? Perhaps you remember hearing that the seats or panels or ceilings in your school or church were of the wood of an American pine called the pitch pine. But common fir wood has a name of its own. Who has not heard of _deal_? A _deal_ is a part or portion, and so we talk of a great deal of something meaning a large portion. Our fir wood comes in great quantities from Norway and Germany, where it is first cut and sawn into planks. Each plank is a _deal_--that is, a portion of the wood. It has been easy to leave out the article and call the wood _deal_.

Our white deal comes from the firs, chiefly from the Norway spruce. The darker-coloured deal is the gift of the Scotch pine.

How can the great trees be carried from the mountain-tops, do you suppose? The streams are the carriers; they float the great trunks down to the rivers, where they are tied together in great rafts and floated on again to their new home, or to the seaport from which they can be shipped to foreign lands. Sometimes when the nearest stream is at a long distance from the trees, a wooden slide is made to it. In the winter, water is poured down the slide, and when it freezes the trees easily shoot down the slippery way to the stream. Oh, what fun it must be! You would like to be there to see. In the year 1810, when all Europe was at war with the great Emperor Napoleon, the deal

traffic on the Baltic Sea was stopped. What was to be done? Near the Lake of Lucerne there is a high mountain, called Mont Pilate, covered with great forests of pine and fir. If these could only be cut down and brought to the lake, they could easily be floated down the Rhine to the sea. So a tremendous slide was made from Mont Pilate to the lake. It was six feet broad, and from three to six feet deep, and eight miles long, and twenty-five thousand pine trees were used in making it. When water had been poured down and had frozen, the great trunks were started one at a time. Away they shot, and reached the lake, eight miles off, in six minutes, and in wet weather, when the slide was very slippery, they were only three minutes on the way.

Look at the deal planks on the floor of your room. Do you see those dark knots? They show you where once branches sprang out of the trunk. Many of these decayed and dropped off while quite young, and a little store of juice prepared for the branch gathered into the knot and turned it brown and dark. You will often find the knots in pairs, showing you how the branches grew opposite one another.

These long straight lines in the plank that we call the grain show the rings of wood made by the pine tree year by year.

How astonished you would be if suddenly out of that plank a great insect were to creep and spread out its wings. This sometimes happens, to the alarm of the people in the room, but only when the wood is new and has been used too soon, before it was properly dried and seasoned. The insect looks very formidable, for it has a long, pointed weapon at the end of its body, but it is quite harmless. It is called the giant sirex, and it looks something like a wasp or hornet. With its weapon it pierces holes in the pine tree bark and lays its eggs there. The grubs eat great tunnels in the trunk, and when they are full grown they creep nearly to the outside, and there wait till they are changed and their wings are ready before they creep out. Sometimes while they wait the tree is cut down and then they are either sawn in two or left inside the plank.

We often see young fir trees in a very strange place, bearing wonderful fruit of gold and silver shining lights, and glittering toys.

"The fir tree stood
In a beautiful room;

A hundred tapers
Dispelled the gloom.

All decked with gold and silver was he,
And lilies and roses so fair to see.
Hurrah for the fir tree, the Christmas tree;
A prince in all the forests is he!

The little children
With merry shout
Came crowding, clustering
Round about.

Brighter and rounder grew their eyes,
And they gazed at the fir in glad surprise.
Hurrah for the fir tree, the Christmas tree;
A prince in all the forests is he!"

WHO LOVES THE TREES BEST?

Who loves trees best?
"I," said the spring,
"Their leaves so beautiful
To them I bring."

Who loves the trees best?
"I," summer said,
"I give them blossoms,
White, yellow, red."

Who loves the trees best?
"I," said the fall,
"I give luscious fruits,
Bright tints to all!"

Who loves the trees best?
"I love them best,"
Harsh winter answered,

"I give them rest."

CHRISTMAS EVERYWHERE

A CHRISTMAS SONG

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!
Christmas in lands of fir tree and pine;
Christmas in lands of palm tree and vine,
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemn and white;
Christmas where cornfields lie sunny and bright;
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Christmas where children are hopeful and gay;
Christmas where old men are patient and grey;
Christmas where peace like a dove in its flight,
Broods over brave men in the thick of the fight;
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night.

Phillips Brooks.

THE SHEPHERD MAIDEN'S GIFT

(Eastern Legend)

In the quiet midnight, peace brooded over the fields where the shepherds were watching their flocks. The tinkling of sheepbells, the bleating of lambs, and the barking of watchdogs had gradually ceased. Around a large campfire several shepherds lay resting, for they had had a long, hard day. Each had beside him a strong shepherd's crook and a stout club ready for use in case any lurking danger threatened

the beloved flocks.

Not far away from the campfire a shepherd maiden lay sleeping in the rude shelter of a rocky cave. All day long she had helped her father guard the sheep, and when darkness fell over the fields and hills, she was glad to lie down in her snug bed made of the fleecy skins of kids and lambs.

Suddenly a light filled the cave and wakened the maiden. Thinking it was daybreak, she sprang up, stepped to the rude doorway, and pushed aside the curtain of goatskin.

"What has happened?" she whispered.

The fields and hills were flooded with light. The group of shepherds were standing close together, gazing intently at the luminous eastern sky. A moment later she saw them fall on their knees in worship. There in the entrance of her rude shelter, she, too, knelt and prayed. Clearly she saw the shining angel appear and in the peaceful stillness of the night she heard these words:

"Be not afraid; for, behold, I bring good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign unto you: ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel many, many others. Together they lifted up their voices in praise and sang,

"Glory to God in the highest,
Peace on earth
Good will toward men."

When the sweet music died away, the maiden rose to her feet and joined the shepherds.

"I saw the angel, Father, and heard the singing," she whispered.

"Christ, the Lord, is born," answered her father.

"Let us hasten to Bethlehem and see the Heavenly Child who fulfills

the promise of God," said one of the shepherds.

"Shall we leave our flocks?" asked another. But the question was not answered.

"Come, let us see what gifts we have to carry to the Christ-child," said the shepherd who first saw the light in the sky.

In a few moments these simple-hearted men were ready to start across the fields and over the low hills to Bethlehem. Very humble gifts they had to offer, but their hearts were filled with joy and wonder.

Standing near the entrance to the cave the shepherd maiden could see the outline of the group of men making their way to the city of David. "They are going to see the Christ-child," she said to herself, "a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

How she would love to see the Heavenly Child! A deep longing to behold the little new-born King seized her. She would follow the shepherds to Bethlehem. One glimpse at the Christ-child would fill her heart with joy.

Away over the star-lit fields and hills she started. Not once did she falter, although the way was long and some of the hillsides were hard to climb.

Finally, she saw the shepherds pass in the gate of the city of Bethlehem.

"I came to see the Christ-child," she said to a group of people who stood whispering together. They looked at her in astonishment.

"I am following the shepherds," she added.

"They have gone to the inn," was the answer.

When she reached the inn she was directed to a cave near, which served as a stable.

There through the entrance she saw the shepherds lay their humble presents at Mary's feet and then kneel in solemn adoration.

"I have brought nothing to offer," whispered the maiden, looking wistfully into the rude shelter. "I cannot go in without a gift--a little gift for the Christ-child."

Tears of disappointment filled her eyes. Slowly she turned to leave the place. But after she had taken a few steps she stopped and burst into sobs. How could she go away without a glimpse of the Heavenly Child? Then, as she stood weeping, a marvelous thing happened. An angel appeared beside her and said:

"Lo, here at thy feet is a gift for the Christ-child."

Then she saw growing near her, slender stems covered with delicate green leaves and bearing lovely flowers.

The maiden did not stop to wonder. Here was a gift fit to offer the little Saviour. With trembling joy she gathered the Christmas roses and stepped lightly into the humble house where the little babe lay smiling in his mother's arms. In Mary's lap the maiden laid her gift of flowers, and, with radiant face, she knelt and filled her heart with the glorious vision.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Laura E. Richards

"Mother," said Jack, "may I have some money to buy Christmas presents with?"

"Dear," said his mother, "I have no money. We are very poor, and I can hardly buy enough food for us all."

Jack hung his head; if he had not been ten the tears would have come to his eyes, but he was ten.

"All the other boys give presents!" he said.

"So shall you!" said his mother. "All presents are not bought with

money. The best boy that ever lived was as poor as we are, and yet He was always giving."

"Who was He," asked Jack; "and what did He give?"

"This is His birthday," said the mother. "He was the good Jesus. He was born in a stable, and He lived in a poor working-man's house. He never had a penny of His own, yet he gave twelve good gifts every day. Would you like to try His way?"

"Yes!" cried Jack.

So his mother told him this and that; and soon after Jack started out, dressed in his best suit, to give his presents.

First, he went to Aunt Jane's house. She was old and lame, and she did not like boys.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Merry Christmas!" said Jack. "May I stay for an hour and help you?"

"Humph!" said Aunt Jane. "Want to keep you out of mischief, do they? Well, you may bring in some wood."

"Shall I split some kindling, too?" asked Jack.

"If you know how," said Aunt Jane. "I can't have you cutting your foot and messing my clean shed all up."

Jack found some fresh pine wood and a bright hatchet, and he split up a great pile of kindling and thought it fun. He stacked it neatly, and then brought in a pail of fresh water and filled the kettle.

"What else can I do?" he asked. "There are twenty minutes more."

"Humph!" said Aunt Jane. "You might feed the pig."

Jack fed the pig, who thanked him in his own way.

"Ten minutes more!" he said. "What shall I do now?"

"Humph!" said Aunt Jane. "You may sit down and tell me why you came."

"It is a Christmas present!" said Jack. "I am giving hours for presents. I had twelve, but I gave one to mother, and another one was gone before I knew I had it. This hour was your present."

"Humph!" said Aunt Jane. She hobbled to the cupboard and took out a small round pie that smelt very good. "Here!" she said. "This is your present, and I thank you for mine. Come again, will you?"

"Indeed I will," said Jack, "and thank you for the pie!"

Next Jack went and read for an hour to old Mr. Green, who was blind. He read a book about the sea, and they both liked it very much, so the hour went quickly. Then it was time to help mother get dinner, and then time to eat it; that took two hours, and Aunt Jane's pie was wonderful. Then Jack took the Smith baby for a ride in its carriage, as Mrs. Smith was ill, and they met its grandfather, who filled Jack's pockets with candy and popcorn and invited him to a Christmas tree that night.

Next Jack went to see Willy Brown, who had been ill for a long time and could not leave his bed. Willy was very glad to see him; they played a game, and then each told the other a story, and before Jack knew it the clock struck six.

"Oh!" cried Jack. "You have had two!"

"Two what?" asked Willy.

"Two hours!" said Jack; and he told Willy about the presents he was giving. "I am glad I gave you two," he said, "and I would give you three, but I must go and help mother."

"Oh, dear!" said Willy. "I thank you very much, Jack. I have had a perfectly great time; but I have nothing to give you."

Jack laughed. "Why, don't you see?" he cried; "you have given me just the same thing. I have had a great time, too."

"Mother," said Jack, as he was going to bed, "I have had a splendid Christmas, but I wish I had had something to give you besides the

hours."

"My darling," said his mother, "you have given me the best gift of all--yourself!"

SILVER BELLS

Across the snow the Silver Bells
Come near and yet more near;
Each Day and Night, each Night and Day
They tinkle soft and clear.

'Tis Father Christmas on his way
Across the winter Snows;
While on his sleigh the Silver Bells
Keep chiming as he goes.

I listen for them in the Night,
I listen all the Day,
I think these merry Silver Bells
Are long, long on the way!

Hamish Hendry.

THE ANIMALS' CHRISTMAS TREE

John P. Peters

Once upon a time the animals decided to have a Christmas tree, and this was how it came about: The swifts and the swallows in the chimneys in the country houses, awakened from their sleep by joy and laughter, had stolen down and peeped in upon scenes of happiness, the center of which was always an evergreen tree covered with wonderful fruit, bright balls of many colours, and sparkling threads of gold and

silver, lying like beautiful frost-work among the green fir needles. A sweet, fairy-like figure of a Christ Child or an angel rested high among the branches, and underneath the tree were dolls and sleds and skates and drums and toys of every sort, and furs and gloves and tippets, ribbons and handkerchiefs, and all the things that boys and girls need and like; and all about this tree were gathered always little children with faces--oh! so full of wonderment and expectation, changing to radiant, sparkling merriment as toys and candies were taken off the tree or from underneath its boughs and distributed among them.

The swifts and swallows told their feathered friends all about it, and they told others, both birds and animals, until at last it began to be rumoured through all the animal world that on one day in the year the children of men were made wonderfully happy by means of some sort of festival which they held about a fir tree from the forest. Now, of course, the tame animals and the house animals, the dogs and the cats and the mice, knew something more about this festival. But then, they did not exchange visits with the wild animals, because they felt themselves above them.

They were always trying to be like men and women, you know, putting on airs and pretending to know everything; but, after all, they were animals and could not help making friendships now and then with the wild creatures, especially when the men and women were not there. And when they were asked about the Christmas tree, they told still more wonderful stories than the swifts and the swallows from the chimneys had told, for some of them had taken part in these festivals, and some had even received presents from the tree, just like the children.

They said that the tree was called a Christmas tree, because that strange fruit and that wonderful frosting came on it only in the Christmas time, and that the Christmas time was the time when men and women and little children, too, were always kind and good and loving, and gave things to one another; and they said, moreover, that on the Christmas tree grew the things which every one wanted, and which would make them happy, and that it was so, because in the Christmas time everyone was trying to make everyone else happy and to think of what other people would like. This they said was what they had seen and heard told about Christmas trees. They did not quite understand why it was so, but they knew that the Christmas tree, when rightly made, brought the Christmas spirit, and they had heard men say that the

Christmas spirit was the great thing, and that that was what made everyone happy.

Well, the long and the short of it was that the animals talked of it in their dens and on their roosts, in the fields, and in the forests, wild beasts and tame alike--the cows and the horses in their stalls, the sheep in their fold, the doves in their cotes and the poultry in the poultry-yard, until all agreed that a Christmas tree would be a grand thing for the wild and tame alike. Like the men, they, too, would have a tree of their very own. But how to do it?

Then the lion called a meeting of all the creatures, wild and tame; for you know the lion is king of beasts and when he calls they all must come. You know, too, that before and during and after these animal congresses there is a royal peace. The lamb can come to the meeting and sit down by the wolf, and the wolf dare not touch him; the dove may perch on the bough between the hawk and the owl and neither will harm him, when the great king of beasts has summoned them all together to take counsel. But you know all about the rules of the animals, for you have read them in books, and you have seen the pictures: how the lion sits on his throne with a crown on one side of his head, and all the other creatures gather about--the elephant, and giraffe, the hippopotamus, the buffalo, wolves and tigers and leopards, foxes and deer, goats and sheep, monkeys and orang-outangs, parrots and robins and turkeys and swans and storks and eagles and frogs and lizards and alligators, and all the rest besides.

Then, when the lion had called the meeting to order, the swifts and the swallows told what they had seen, and a fat little pug-dog, with a ribbon and a silver bell about his neck, wheezed out a story of a Christmas tree that he had seen, and how a silver bell had grown on that tree for him and a whole box of the best sweets he had ever dreamed of while he lay comfortably snoozing on his cushion before the fire. And a Persian cat, with her hair turned the wrong way, mewed out her story of a Christmas tree that she had attended, and told how there was a white mouse made of cream cheese for her creeping about beneath the branches.

Then the monkeys chattered and the elephants trumpeted, the horses neighed, the hyenas laughed, and each in his own way argued for a Christmas tree and told what he would do to help make it.

The elephant would go into the forest, and choose the tree and pull it up. The buffaloes would drag it in. The giraffe would fix the ornaments on the higher limbs, because its neck was long. The monkeys would scramble up where the giraffe could not reach. The squirrels could run out on the slender twigs and help the monkeys. The birds would fly about and get the golden threads and put them on the tree with their beaks. The fire-flies would hide themselves among the branches and sparkle like diamonds, and the glow-worms promised to help the fire-flies by playing candles, if someone would lift them up and put them on the branches. The parrots and paroquets and other birds of gay plumage would give feathers to hang among the branches, and the humming-birds promised to flutter in and out among the twigs, and the sheep to give white wool to lie like snow among the boughs.

Then the parrots screeched and the peacocks screamed with delight, and you and I never could have told whether anybody voted aye or nay; but the lion knew; and the owl, for he was clerk, set it down in the minutes, as the lion bade him, that all the birds and beasts would do their part. So each planned what he could do. Even the little beetle, who makes great balls of earth, thought that if he could only once see one of those gay balls that grow on the children's Christmas tree, he might make some for the animals' tree. Different birds and beasts told of the oranges and apples and holly-berries and who knows what they could get and hang upon the tree. You see the animals came from many places, and then, too, they could send the carrier pigeons to go and bring fruit and berries, and who knows what besides, from oh, so far away, because the carrier pigeons can fly through the air no one knows how fast or how far.

Well, I cannot tell you everything that each one was going to do, but if you will go and get your Noah's ark and take the animals out one by one, then you surely will think it out for yourself, for you have all the animals there.

And so they arranged how they would ornament the tree, and the next thing was to decide what presents should be hung on the tree or put beneath its boughs, for each one must have his present. Well, after much discussion in roars, and bellows, crows and croaks, lows and screams and bleats, and baas and grunts, and all the other sounds of birds and beast language, it was voted that each might choose the present he wished hung on the tree. The clerkly owl should call their names one by one, and each might declare his choice. So they began.

The parrots and the macaws thought that they would like oranges and bananas and such things, which would look so pretty on the tree, too; and so they were arranged for. The robins and the cedar birds chose cherries; the the partridges, partridge berries, the squirrels, the red and grey and black, nuts and apples and pears. The monkeys said the popcorn strings would do for them, and the cats and dogs, remembering the Christmas gift which the pug-dog and Persian cat had told about, asked for tiny mice made of cream cheese or chocolate. By and by it came the pig's turn to tell his choice. "Grunt, grunt!" said the pig, "I want a nice pail of swill hung on the very lowest bough of all."

"Ugh!" said the black leopard, so sleek and so clean.

"Faugh!" said the gazelle, with his dainty sense of smell.

"Neigh!" said the horse, so daintily groomed.

"What!" roared the lion, "what's that you want?"

"A pail of swill," grunted the pig. "Each one has chosen what he wants, and I have a right to choose what I want."

"But," roared the lion, "each one has chosen something beautiful to make the tree a joy to all."

"Grunt, grunt," said the pig. "The parrots and macaws are going to have oranges and bananas, and the robins and the cedar birds red cherries, the partridges, their berries, the squirrels, nuts and apples and pears, the dog and the cat, their cream and chocolate mice. They all have what they want to eat. Grunt, grunt," said he; "I will have what I want to eat, too, and what I want is a pail of swill."

Now, you see it had been voted, as I told you, that each should have what he wanted hung on the tree for him, and so the lion could not help himself. If the pig chose swill, swill he must have, and angrily he had to roar: "If the pig wants swill, a pail of swill he must have, hung on the lowest bough of the tree!"

Then the wolf's wicked eyes gleamed, for his turn was next, and he said: "If the pig has swill because he wants swill to eat, I must have what I want to eat, and I want a tender lamb, six months old." And at

that all the lambs and the sheep bleated and baaed.

"Ha, ha!" barked the fox; "then I want a turkey!" And the turkeys gobbled in fear.

"And I," said the tiger, "want a yearling calf." And the cows and the calves lowed in horror.

"And I," said the owl, the clerk, "I want a plump dove."

"And I," said the hawk, "will take a rabbit."

"And I," said the leopard, "want a deer or a gazelle."

Then all was fear and uproar. The hares and rabbits scuttled into the grass; the gazelles and the deer bounded away; the sheep and the cattle crowded close together; the small birds rose in the air in flocks; and the Christmas tree was like to have come to grief and ended, not in Christmas joy, but in fear and hatred and terror.

Then a little lamb stepped out and bleated: "Ah! king lion, it would be very sad if all the animals should lose their Christmas tree, for the very thought of that tree has brought us closer together, and here we were, wild and tame, fierce and timid, met together as friends; and oh! king lion, rather than there should not be a tree, they may take me and hang me on it. Let them not take the turkeys and gazelles and the calves and the rabbits and all the rest that they have chosen. Let the tigers and leopards, and wolves and foxes and eagles, and hawks and owls and all their kind be content that their Christmas present shall be a lamb; and so we may come together again and have our happy Christmas tree, and each have what he wishes."

"But," said the lion, "what will you have? If you give yourself, then you will have no Christmas present."

"Yes," said the lamb, "I, too, shall have what I want, for I shall have brought them all together again, and made each one happy."

Then a dove fluttered down from a tree and landed on the ground beside the lamb, and very timidly and softly she cooed: "Take me, too, king lion, as the present for the owls and the hawks, and the weasels and minks, because for them a lamb is too big. I am the best present for

them. Take me, king lion!"

Then the lion roared: "See what the lamb and the dove have done! My food, oh, tigers and leopards and wolves and eagles and all your kind, is like your food; but I would rather eat nothing from our Christmas tree than take this lamb or dove for my present."

Then all the beasts kept still, because the lion roared so loud and angrily, and the birds that were flying away settled on the branches of the trees, and the gazelles stopped their running and turned their heads to listen, and the rabbits peeped out through the grass and brush where they had hid. Then the lion turned to the pig, and roared:

"See this lamb and this dove! Are you not ashamed for what you have done? You have spoiled all our happiness. Will you take back your choice, you pig, or do you wish to ruin our Christmas tree?"

"Grunt, grunt," said the pig, "it is my right. I want something good. I don't care for your lambs and your doves. I want my swill!"

Then the lion roared again: "Have all chosen?" and all answered, "Yes."

"Then," said the lion, "it is my choice."

And all said: "It is."

"I love fat and tender pigs. I choose a pig for my Christmas gift," roared the lion.

Did you ever hear a pig squeal? Oh, how that pig squealed then! And he got up on his fat little legs and tried to run away, but all the animals gathered around in a ring and the hyenas laughed, and the jackals cried, and the dogs and the wolves and the foxes headed him off and hunted the poor pig back again. Then, when the pig found that he could not run away, he lay down on his back with his feet in the air and squealed with all his might: "Oh, I don't want the swill; oh, I don't want the swill! I take it all back! I don't want anything!"

But at first no one heard him, because all were talking at once in their own way--barking and growling and roaring and chattering; but by and by the lion saw that the pig was squealing something, so he roared

for silence, and then they all heard the pig squeal out that he did not want any swill. And the lion roared aloud: "You have heard. Has the owl recorded that the pig will have no swill?"

"Yes," said the owl.

"Then," said the lion, "record that the lion wants no pig."

Then the tiger growled: "And I want no calf," and one by one the leopard and the eagle, the wolf and the fox, the hawk and owl, and all their kind, took back their votes.

And so it came about that the animals did have a Christmas tree after all; but instead of hanging lambs and doves upon the tree, they agreed that they could hang little images of lambs and doves, and other birds and animals, too, perhaps. And by and by the custom spread until the humans came to hang the same little images on their trees, too, and when you see a little figure of a lamb or a dove on the Christmas tree, you may know that it is all because the lamb and the dove, by their unselfishness, saved the animals from strife; for neither thought what he wanted from the tree, but each was ready to give himself for the others, so that they might not fight and kill one another at the Christmas time.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

The Shepherds had an Angel,
The Wise Men had a star,
But what have I, a little child,
To guide me home from far,
Where glad stars sing together
And singing angels are?

Those Shepherds through the lonely night
Sat watching by their sheep,
Until they saw the heavenly host
Who neither tire nor sleep,
All singing "Glory, glory,"

In festival they keep.

The Wise Men left their country
To journey morn by morn,
With gold and frankincense and myrrh,
Because the Lord was born:
God sent a star to guide them
And sent a dream to warn.

My life is like their journey,
Their star is like God's book;
I must be like those good Wise Men
With heavenward heart and look:
But shall I give no gifts to God?--
What precious gifts they took!

Christina Rossetti.

HOLLY

Ada M. Marzials

Highty-tighty, Paradighty,
Cloth'ed all in green.
The King could not read it
No more could the Queen.
They sent for a Wise Man out of the East,
Who said it had horns but was not a beast.

(_Old Riddle._)

There was once upon a time a very war-like kingdom where they had never heard of Christmas. The men spent all their days fighting, and the women spent _their_ days in urging the warriors to further deeds of valour.

This had gone on for a very long time, and no one had ever yet said that he was tired of it. There was but one person in the whole kingdom

who had openly declared that war was hateful, but as she was only the Youngest Princess nobody paid any heed to her.

Then came a time, just before our Christmas Day, when the King was preparing a great campaign against a far-off country. He called together his Council of War--grave old warriors, dressed completely in armour.

"My friends," said he, "we are about to wage war on the distant kingdoms of Zowega. Up till this time the people of that country have been our very good friends, but as we have now conquered all our enemies, there seems no one but our friends left to fight, and of these the King of the Zowegians is chief.

"You will remember that his youngest son, Prince Moldo, spent some of his boyhood at our court in order to gain instruction in feats of arms, and that the Prince left us to travel over the world. A few months ago his father sent word to me that the Prince had returned home, bringing with him the news of a Pearl of Great Price, which contained the Secret of Happiness. It is this Pearl which I have made the excuse for war, for I have demanded it in payment for the services that we rendered to Prince Moldo. In my message I have said that if the Pearl, and the Secret which it contains, are not brought and revealed to us here within the next five days, our troops will descend upon the kingdom of Zowega and wipe it off the face of the earth."

Loud and long cheered the Council at the speech of their King, as, indeed, was their duty, though in their hearts of hearts they had no wish to fight against the King of the Zowegians, who was their very good friend. The Queen and the Princesses smiled graciously upon them, all save the Youngest Princess, who had been Prince Moldo's playfellow. She disgraced herself by bursting into passionate tears, and was forthwith ordered out of the Council Hall.

At the end of five days the Council once more assembled to await the arrival of the messenger with the answer from the King of Zowega.

The day was bright and cold, and there was snow on the ground. The King and Queen were wrapped in thick fur cloaks. The Princesses were all assembled, too, even the Youngest, who was dressed in ermine and looked as pale as death.

It was Christmas Eve, but there were no Christmas trees preparing and no presents. No one was thinking of hanging his stockings up. The Hall was not decorated, neither were the churches; indeed, there were no churches to decorate, for, as you remember, the people in this kingdom knew nothing about Christmas.

The Council sat and waited in the big bare Hall.

At last the great doors were flung open, there was a blast of trumpets, and the messenger appeared.

He was tall and fair, and held himself proudly. His eyes were bright and shining and there was a smile upon his face. He was completely dressed in bright green and the Council noted with astonishment that he was without armour of any kind. He wore neither breastplate, shield nor helmet; he had neither sword by his side, nor spurs on his feet. He was bare-headed, and in his right hand he carried something green, horny and prickly, with little red dots on it.

Looking neither to the right nor to the left, he walked with firm and steady step up the long Hall between the rows of armed warriors.

As he passed the Youngest Princess she blushed deeply, but he did not seem to notice her.

When he reached the throne he bowed low before the King and Queen, and laid the prickly object on the table before them.

"Your Majesty," said he in a clear, ringing voice. "From the King of Zowega, greeting! He sends you this token. It is the symbol of the Secret of Happiness."

The King stared, so did the Queen.

They had expected a Pearl of Great Price, accompanied by a scroll on which was written the Secret of Happiness, and the King of Zowega had sent them this!

Amid dead silence the King took the token up in his hands in order to examine it more carefully.

He dropped it hastily, for it pricked him, and little drops of blood were seen starting from his hand.

"Highty-tighty!" said he. "'Tis surely some kind of beast and a symbol of war, for it pricked me right smartly. Truly the King of Zowega deals in riddles which I for one cannot read! Take it, my dear," added he to the Queen and pointing to the token; "perchance your quick wits may be able to understand this mystery."

She picked up the token and examined it carefully.

It rather resembled the branch of a tree, but the leaves were thick and resisting and edged with very sharp spikes, and there was on it a cluster of round, bright red objects like tiny balls. But even as it had pricked the King so did it prick her, and she dropped it hastily into the lap of the Eldest Princess, who was sitting beside her.

"Paradighty!" exclaimed the Queen in her own language. "It is certainly a beast. See, it has horns!" and she pointed to the spikes.

"But I certainly cannot read the riddle--if riddle it be."

Then it was passed to all the Princesses in turn, but they could not read the token any more than could the King and Queen. At last it reached the Youngest Princess, and, though it pricked her little hands sorely, she took it up tenderly and kissed it.

"'Tis a token of love," said she.

The messenger turned his shining eyes full upon her.

"The Princess has read the riddle of the token aright," said he, and he stepped forward as though to kiss her hand.

"Stay!" said the King imperiously springing to his feet. "A token of love, forsooth! But I sent the King of Zowega a Declaration of War! What does he mean by sending me a token of love? The Princess must certainly be mistaken--and as for you," he continued, turning fiercely to the messenger, "you shall be marched off to prison until we have had time to consult with our Wise Men as to the real meaning of this extraordinary token."

So there and then the messenger was marched off to spend the night in prison, and all the Wise Men in the kingdom were bidden to appear in the Council Chamber the very next day, especially one very old Wise Man from the East who was reputed to be wiser than all the others put together.

The next day, of course, was Christmas Day, but, as these people had never heard of Christmas, there were no bells ringing, no carols were sung, and there was neither holly, ivy nor mistletoe upon the walls.

Slowly and painfully the Wise Men began to arrive.

They were all dressed alike, in black flowing robes, and on their heads they wore long pointed black caps covered with weird devices.

The very old Wise Man from the East wore a red pointed cap, but in all other respects was dressed just like the others.

They assembled round a large circular table at one end of the Hall. In the middle of the table was placed the token.

At the other end of the Hall were gathered the warriors, and above them on a double throne sat the King and Queen with the Princesses grouped on either side of the dais.

The Wise Men examined the token in silence.

"'Tis a curious beast," said one of them at last.

"Of a new and quite unheard-of species," said another.

"It has neither legs nor tail," said a third.

"Yet it has a number of globular red eyes," said a fourth.

"And it certainly has horns," said a fifth.

And so said they all, until it came to the turn of the very old Wise Man from the East.

He looked long at the token.

"It has horns," said he at last, "but it is not a beast."

"Not a beast!" said they, one to the other.

"But what is it then?"

"It is a token of love," said he.

"Highly-tightly," interrupted the King. "Read us then the full meaning of the token."

"I cannot," said the very old Wise Man; "but let the youth be brought hither who carried it. He will be able to explain it more fully than I."

"Paradightly!" said the Queen in her own language. "Why did we not think of that before! Fetch him back again at once!"

So two of the warriors fetched the youth from prison, and he was soon standing before the Assembly, with his head held as high and his eyes as bright and shining as before.

"Read us the token!" commanded the King.

The youth bowed low. "The Princess read it aright yesterday. It is a token of love."

"Explain yourself!" said the King. "How can a beast with horns be a token of love?"

The youth drew himself up to his full height.

"It is not a beast," said he. "It is the branch of a holly-tree. On this day of the year, which in my country we call Christmas Day, our people decorate their houses with branches of this holly or holy tree as a token of love and peace and good-will. This is the message that I have brought to you--a message that we in our country know very well, but which you have never heard before."

The King and the Warriors, the Wise Men, the Queen and Princesses all listened to his words in silence.

When he had ended there was a long pause.

"And in what particular way does your message affect us?" said the King at last.

"Thus, your Majesty," answered the youth, approaching the Youngest Princess and taking both her hands in his, "on this day I, Prince Moldo, would have peace and good-will between my kingdom and your kingdom; and I would seal it for ever by taking the Youngest Princess home with me as my bride. You, O King, recognized me not, for I have much changed since I lived here with her for playfellow, but in all my wanderings I found a Pearl of no greater price than this, and I would proclaim to all the world that the Secret of Happiness is Love."

So on that very Christmas Day they were married, amid great rejoicings, and war ceased throughout the kingdom. And on every Christmas Day for ever after, the people of that country decorated their houses with holly, the symbol of love and peace and good-will, and wished each other a Merry Christmas, even as I do now to you.

THE WILLOW MAN

There once was a Willow, and he was very old,
And all his leaves fell off from him, and left him in the cold;
But ere the rude winter could buffet him with snow,
There grew upon his hoary head a crop of Mistletoe.

All wrinkled and furrowed was this old Willow's skin
His taper fingers trembled, and his arms were very thin;
Two round eyes and hollow, that stared but did not see,
And sprawling feet that never walked, had this most ancient tree.

A Dame who dwelt a-near was the only one who knew
That every year upon his head the Christmas berries grew;
And when the Dame cut them, she said--it was her whim--
"A merry Christmas to you, Sir," _and left a bit for him_.

"Oh, Granny dear, tell us," the children cried, "where we

May find the shining mistletoe that grows upon the tree?"
At length the Dame told them, but cautioned them to mind
To greet the willow civilly, _and leave a bit behind_.

"Who cares," said the children, "for this old Willow-man?
We'll take the Mistletoe, and he may catch us if he can."
With rage the ancient Willow shakes in every limb,
For they have taken all, and _have not left a bit for him_.

Then bright gleamed the holly, the Christmas berries shone
But in the wintry wind, without the Willow-man did moan:
"Ungrateful, and wasteful! the mystic Mistletoe
A hundred years hath grown on me, but never more shall grow."

A year soon passed by, and the children came once more,
But not a sprig of Mistletoe the aged Willow bore.
Each slender spray pointed; he mocked them in his glee,
And chuckled in his wooden heart, that ancient Willow-tree.

O children, who gather the spoils of wood and wold,
From selfish greed and wilful waste your little hands withhold.
Though fair things be common, this moral bear in mind,
"Pick thankfully and modestly, _and leave a bit behind_."

Juliana Horatia Ewing.

THE IVY GREEN

Oh, a dainty plant is the ivy green,
That creepeth o'er ruins old!
Of right choice food are his meals, I ween,
In his cell so lone and cold.
The wall must be crumbled, the stone decayed
To pleasure his dainty whim;
And the mouldering dust that years have made,
Is a merry meal for him.
Creeping where no life is seen,
A rare old plant is the ivy green.

Charles Dickens.

LEGEND OF SAINT NICHOLAS

Amy Steedman

Of all the saints that little children love is there any to compare with Santa Claus? The very sound of his name has magic in it, and calls up visions of well-filled stockings, with the presents we particularly want peeping over the top, or hanging out at the side, too big to go into the largest sock. Besides, there is something so mysterious and exciting about Santa Claus, for no one seems to have ever seen him. But we picture him to ourselves as an old man with a white beard, whose favourite way of coming into our rooms is down the chimney, bringing gifts for the good children and punishments for the bad.

Yet this Santa Claus, in whose name the presents come to us at Christmas time, is a very real saint, and we can learn a great deal about him, only we must remember that his true name is Saint Nicholas. Perhaps the little children, who used to talk of him long ago, found Saint Nicholas too difficult to say, and so called him their dear Santa Claus. But we learn, as we grow older, that Nicholas is his true name, and that he is a real person who lived long years ago, far away in the East.

The father and mother of Nicholas were noble and very rich, but what they wanted most of all was to have a son. They were Christians, so they prayed to God for many years that He would give them their hearts' desire; and when at last Nicholas was born, they were the happiest people in the world.

They thought there was no one like their boy; and indeed, he was wiser and better than most children, and never gave them a moment's trouble. But alas, while he was still a child, a terrible plague swept over the country, and his father and mother died, leaving him quite alone.

All the great riches which his father had possessed were left to Nicholas, and among other things he inherited three bars of gold. These golden bars were his greatest treasure, and he thought more of them than all the other riches he possessed.

Now in the town where Nicholas lived there dwelt a nobleman with three daughters. They had once been very rich, but great misfortunes had overtaken the father, and now they were all so poor they had scarcely enough to live upon.

At last a day came when there was not even bread enough to eat, and the daughters said to their father:

"Let us go into the streets and beg, or do anything to get a little money, that we may not starve."

But the father answered:

"Not to-night. I cannot bear to think of it. Wait at least until to-morrow. Something may happen to save my daughters from such disgrace."

Now, just as they were talking together, Nicholas happened to be passing, and as the window was open he heard all that the poor father said. It seemed terrible to think that a noble family should be so poor and actually in want of bread, and Nicholas tried to plan how it would be possible to help them. He knew they would be much too proud to take money from him, so he had to think of some other way. Then he remembered his golden bars, and that very night he took one of them and went secretly to the nobleman's house, hoping to give the treasure without letting the father or daughters know who brought it.

To his joy Nicholas discovered that a little window had been left open, and by standing on tiptoe he could reach it. So he lifted the golden bar and slipped it through the window, never waiting to hear what became of it, in case any one should see him. (And now do you see the reason why the visits of Santa Claus are so mysterious?)

Inside the house the poor father sat sorrowfully watching, while his children slept. He wondered if there was any hope for them anywhere, and he prayed earnestly that heaven would send help. Suddenly something fell at his feet, and to his amazement and joy, he found it

was a bar of pure gold.

"My child," he cried, as he showed his eldest daughter the shining gold, "God has heard my prayer and has sent this from heaven. Now we shall have enough and to spare. Call your sisters that we may rejoice together, and I will go instantly and change this treasure."

The precious golden bar was soon sold to a money-changer, who gave so much for it that the family were able to live in comfort and have all that they needed. And not only was there enough to live upon, but so much was over that the father gave his eldest daughter a large dowry, and very soon she was happily married.

When Nicholas saw how much happiness his golden bar had brought to the poor nobleman he determined that the second daughter should have a dowry too. So he went as before and found the little window again open, and was able to throw in the second golden bar as he had done the first. This time the father was dreaming happily, and did not find the treasure until he awoke in the morning. Soon afterwards the second daughter had her dowry and was married too.

The father now began to think that, after all, it was not usual for golden bars to fall from heaven, and he wondered if by any chance human hands had placed them in his room. The more he thought of it the stranger it seemed, and he made up his mind to keep watch every night, in case another golden bar should be sent as a portion for his youngest daughter.

And so when Nicholas went the third time and dropped the last bar through the little window, the father came quickly out, and before Nicholas had time to hide, caught him by his cloak.

"O Nicholas," he cried, "is it thou who hast helped us in our need? Why didst thou hide thyself?" And then he fell on his knees and began to kiss the hands that had helped him so graciously.

But Nicholas bade him stand up and give thanks to God instead, warning him to tell no one the story of the golden bars.

This was only one of the many kind acts Nicholas loved to do, and it was no wonder that he was beloved by all who knew him.

Soon afterwards Nicholas made up his mind to enter God's service as a priest. He longed above all things to leave the world and live as a hermit in the desert, but God came to him in a vision and told him he must stay in the crowded cities and do his work among the people. Still his desire to see the deserts and the hermits who lived there was so great that he went off on a journey to Egypt and the Holy Land. But remembering what God had bade him do he did not stay there but returned to his own country.

On the way home a terrific storm arose, and it seemed as if the ship he was in must be lost. The sailors could do nothing, and great waves dashed over the deck, filling the ship with water. But just as all had given up hope, Nicholas knelt and prayed to God to save them, and immediately a calm fell upon the angry sea. The winds sank to rest and the waves ceased to lash the sides of the ship so that they sailed smoothly on, and all danger passed.

Thus Nicholas returned home in safety, and went to live in the city of Myra. His ways were so quiet and humble that no one knew much about him, until it came to pass one day that the Archbishop of Myra died. Then all the priests met to choose another archbishop, and it was made known to them by a sign from heaven that the first man who should enter the church next morning should be the bishop whom God had chosen.

Now Nicholas used to spend most of his nights in prayer and always went very early to church, so next morning just as the sun was rising and the bells began to ring for the early mass, he was seen coming up to the church door and was the first to enter. As he knelt down quietly to say his prayers as usual, what was his surprise to meet a company of priests who hailed him as their new archbishop, chosen by God to be their leader and guide. So Nicholas was made Archbishop of Myra to the joy of all in the city who knew and loved him.

Not long after this there was great trouble in the town of Myra, for the harvests of that country had failed and a terrible famine swept over the land. Nicholas, as a good bishop should, felt the suffering of his people as if it were his own, and did all he could to help them.

He knew that they must have corn or they would die, so he went to the harbour where two ships lay filled with grain, and asked the captains

if they would sell him their cargo. They told the bishop they would willingly do so, but it was already sold to merchants of another country and they dared not sell it over again.

"Take no thought of that," said Nicholas, "only sell me some of thy corn for my starving people, and I promise thee that there shall be nought wanting when thou shalt arrive at thy journey's end."

The captains believed in the bishop's promise and gave him as much corn as he asked. And behold! when they came to deliver their cargo to the owners, there was not a bag lacking.

There are many stories told about the good bishop. Like his Master, he ever went about doing good; and when he died, there were a great many legends told about him, for the people loved to believe that their bishop still cared for them and would come to their aid. We do not know if all these legends are true, but they show how much Saint Nicholas was loved and honoured even after his death, and how every one believed in his power to help them.

Here is one of the stories which all children who love Saint Nicholas will like to hear.

There was once a nobleman who had no children and who longed for a son above everything else in the world. Night and day he prayed to Saint Nicholas that he would grant him his request, and at last a son was born. He was a beautiful child, and the father was so delighted and so grateful to the saint who had listened to his prayers that, every year on the child's birthday, he made a great feast in honour of Saint Nicholas and a grand service was held in the church.

Now the Evil One grew angry each year when this happened, for it made many people go to church and honour the good saint, neither of which things pleased the Evil One at all. So each year he tried to think of some plan that would put an end to these rejoicings, and he decided at last that if only he could do some evil to the child the parents would blame Saint Nicholas and all would be well.

It happened just then to be the boy's sixth birthday and a greater feast than ever was being held. It was late in the afternoon, and the gardener and porter and all the servants were away keeping holiday, too. So no one noticed a curious-looking pilgrim who came and sat

close to the great iron gates which led into the courtyard. He had on the ordinary robe of a poor pilgrim, but the hood was drawn so far over his face that nothing but a dark shadow could be seen inside. And indeed that was as well, for this pilgrim was a demon in disguise, and his wicked, black face would have frightened any one who saw it. He could not enter the courtyard for the great gates were always kept locked, and, as you know, the porter was away that day, feasting with all the other servants.

But, before very long, the little boy grew weary of his birthday feast, and, having had all he wanted he begged to be allowed to go to play in the garden. His parents knew that the gardener always looked after him there, so they told him he might go. They forgot that the gardener was not there just then.

The child played happily alone for some time and then wandered into the courtyard, and looking out of the gate saw a poor pilgrim resting there.

"What are you doing here?" asked the child, "and why do you sit so still?"

"I am a poor pilgrim," answered the demon, trying to make his harsh voice sound as gentle as possible, "and I have come all the way from Rome. I am resting here because I am so weary and footsore and have had nothing to eat all day."

"I will let you in, and take you to my father," said the child; "this is my birthday, and no one must go hungry to-day."

But the demon pretended he was too weak to walk, and begged the boy to bring some food out to him.

Then the child ran back to the banquet hall in a great hurry and said to his father:

"O father, there is a poor pilgrim from Rome sitting outside our gate, and he is so hungry, may I take him some of my birthday feast?"

The father was very pleased to think that his little son should care for the poor and wish to be kind, so he willingly gave his permission and told one of the servants to give the child all that he wanted.

Then as the demon sat eating the good things he began to question the boy and tried to find out all that he could about him.

"Do you often play in the garden?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said the child. "I play there whenever I may, for in the midst of the lawn there is a beautiful fountain, and the gardener makes me boats to sail on the water."

"Will he make you one to-day?" asked the demon quickly.

"He is not here to-day," answered the child, "for this is a holiday for every one and I am quite alone."

Then the demon rose to his feet slowly and said he felt so much better after the good food that he thought he could walk a little and would like very much to come in and see the beautiful garden and the fountain he had heard about.

So the child climbed up and with great difficulty drew back the bolts. The great gates swung open and the demon walked in.

As they went along together towards the fountain the child held out his little hand to lead the pilgrim, but even the demon shrunk from touching anything so pure and innocent, and folded his arms under his robe, so that the child could only hold by a fold of his cloak.

"What strange kind of feet you have," said the child as they walked along; "they look as if they belonged to an animal."

"Yes, they are curious," said the demon, "but it is just the way they are made."

Then the child began to notice the demon's hands, which were even more curious than his feet, and just like paws of a bear. But he was too courteous to say anything about them, when he had already mentioned the feet.

Just then they came to the fountain, and with a sudden movement the demon threw back his hood and showed his dreadful face. And before the child could scream he was seized by those hairy hands and thrown

into the water.

But just at that moment the gardener was returning to his work and saw from a distance what had happened. He ran as fast as he could, but he only got to the fountain in time to see the demon vanish, while the child's body was floating on the water. Very quickly he drew him out, and carried him, all dripping wet, up to the castle, where they tried to bring him back to life. But, alas! it all seemed of no use; he neither moved nor breathed, and the day that had begun with such rejoicing, ended in the bitterest woe. The poor parents were heart-broken, but they did not quite lose hope and prayed earnestly to Saint Nicholas who had given them the child, that he would restore their boy to them again.

As they prayed by the side of the little bed where the body of the child lay, they thought something moved, and to their joy and surprise the boy opened his eyes and sat up, and in a short time was as well as ever.

They asked him eagerly what had happened, and he told them all about the pilgrim with the queer feet and hands, who had gone with him to the fountain and had then thrown back his hood and shown his terrible face. After that he could remember nothing until he found himself in a beautiful garden, where the loveliest flowers grew. There were lilies like white stars, and roses far more beautiful than any he had ever seen in his own garden, and the leaves of the trees shone like silver and gold. It was all so beautiful that for a while he forgot his home, and when he did remember and tried to find his way back, he grew bewildered and did not know in what direction to turn. As he was looking about, an old man came down the garden path and smiled so kindly upon him that he trusted him at once. This old man was dressed in the robes of a bishop, and had a long white beard and the sweetest old face the child had ever seen.

"Art thou searching for the way home?" the old man asked. "Dost thou wish to leave this beautiful garden and go back to thy father and mother?"

"I want to go home," said the child, with a sob in his voice, "but I cannot find the way, and I am, oh, so tired of searching for it."

Then the old man stooped down and lifted him in his arms, and the

child laid his head on the old man's shoulder, and, weary with his wandering, fell fast asleep and remembered nothing more till he woke up in his own little bed.

Then the parents knew that Saint Nicholas had heard their prayers and had gone to fetch the child from the Heavenly Garden and brought him back to them.

So they were more grateful to the good saint than ever, and they loved and honoured him even more than they had done before; which was all the reward the demon got for his wicked doings.

That is one of the many stories told after the death of Saint Nicholas, and it ever helped and comforted his people to think that, though they could no longer see him he would love and protect them still.

Young maidens in need of help remembered the story of the golden bars and felt sure the good saint would not let them want. Sailors tossing on the stormy waves thought of that storm which had sunk to rest at the prayer of Saint Nicholas. Poor prisoners with no one to take their part were comforted by the thought of those other prisoners whom he had saved. And little children perhaps have remembered him most of all, for when the happy Christmas time draws near, who is so much in their thoughts as Saint Nicholas, or Santa Claus, as they call him? Perhaps they are a little inclined to think of him as some good magician who comes to fill their stockings with gifts, but they should never forget that he was the kind bishop who, in olden days, loved to make the little ones happy. There are some who think that even now he watches over and protects little children, and for that reason he is called their patron saint.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

A NIGHT WITH SANTA CLAUS

Anna R. Annan

Not very long ago, and not far from here, lived a little boy named Bobby Morgan. Now I must tell at once how Bobby looked, else how will you know him if you meet him in the street? Blue-eyed was Rob, and fair-haired, and pug-nosed--just the sweetest trifle, his mother said.

Well, the day before Christmas, Rob thought it would be a fine thing to run down Main Street and see what was going on. After dinner his mother put on his fur cap and bright scarf, and filled his pockets with crackers and cookies. She told him to be very polite to Santa Claus if he should happen to meet him.

Off he trotted, merry as a cricket, with now a skip and now a slide. At every corner he held his breath, half expecting to run into Santa himself. Nothing of the sort happened, however, and he soon found himself before the gay windows of a toy shop.

There he saw a spring hobby-horse, as large as a Shetland pony, all saddled and bridled, too,--lacking nothing but a rider. Rob pressed his nose against the glass, and tried to imagine the feelings of a boy in that saddle. He must have stood there all day, had not a ragged little fellow pulled his coat. "Wouldn't you jist like that popgun?" he piped.

"Catch me looking at popguns!" said Rob shortly. But when he saw how tattered the boy's jacket was he said more softly, "P'r'raps you'd like a cooky."

"Try me wunst!" said the shrill little voice.

There was a queer lump in Rob's throat as he emptied one pocket of its

cakes and thrust them into the dirty, eager hands. Then he marched down the street without so much as glancing at that glorious steed again.

Brighter and brighter grew the windows, more and more full of toys. At last our boy stood, with open eyes and mouth, before a great store lighted from top to bottom, for it was growing dark. Rob came near taking off his cap and saying, "How do you do, sir?"

To whom, you ask. Why, to an image of Santa Claus, the size of life, holding a Christmas tree filled with wonderful fruit.

Soon a happy thought struck Rob. "Surely this must be Santa Claus's own store, where he comes to fill his basket with toys! What if I were to hide there and wait for him?"

As I said, he was a brave little chap, and he walked straight into the store with the stream of big people. Everybody was busy. No one had time to look at our mite of a Rob. He tried in vain to find a quiet corner, till he caught sight of some winding stairs that led up to the next story. He crept up, scarcely daring to breathe.

What a fairyland! Toys everywhere! Oceans of toys! Nothing but toys, excepting one happy little boy. Think of fifty great rocking-horses in a pile; of whole flocks of woolly sheep and curly dogs with the real bark in them; stacks of drums; regiments of soldiers armed to the teeth; companies of firemen drawing their hose carts; no end of wheelbarrows and velocipedes!

Rob screwed his knuckles into his eyes, as a gentle hint that they had better not play him any tricks, and then stared with might and main.

Suddenly Rob thought he heard a footstep on the stairs. Fearing to be caught, he hid behind a baby-wagon. No one came, however, and as he felt rather hungry, he took out the remaining cakes and had a fine supper.

Why didn't Santa Claus come?

Rob was really getting sleepy. He stretched out his tired legs, and, turning one of the woolly sheep on its side, pillowed his curly head upon it. It was so nice to lie there, looking up at the ceiling hung

with toys, and with the faint hum of voices in his ears. The blue eyes grew more and more heavy. Rob was fast asleep.

Midnight! The bells rang loud and clear, as if they had great news to tell the world. What noise is that besides the bells? And look, oh, look! Who is that striding up the room with a great basket on his back? He has stolen his coat from a polar bear, and his cap, too, I declare! His boots are of red leather and reach to his knees. His coat and cap are trimmed with wreaths of holly, bright with scarlet berries.

Good sir, let us see your face--why! that is the best part of him,--so round, and so ruddy, such twinkling eyes, and such a merry look about those dimples! But see his long white beard; can he be old?

Oh, very, very old. Over nineteen hundred years. Is that not a long life, little ones? But he has a young heart, this dear old man, and a kind one. Can you guess his name? "Hurrah for Santa Claus!" Right--the very one.

He put his basket down near Robby, and with his back turned to him shook the snow from his fur coat. Some of the flakes fell on Rob's face and roused him from his sleep. Opening his eyes, he saw the white figure, but did not stir nor cry out, lest the vision should vanish.

But bless his big heart! He had no idea of vanishing till his night's work was done. He took a large book from his pocket, opened to the first page, and looked at it very closely.

"Tommy Turner," was written at the top, and just below was a little map--yes, there was Tommy's heart mapped out like a country. Part of the land was marked good, part of it bad. Here and there were little flags to point out places where battles had been fought during the year. Some of them were black and some white; wherever a good feeling had won the fight there was a white one.

"Tommy Turner," said Santa Claus aloud, "six white flags, three black ones. That leaves only three presents for Tommy; but we must see what can be done for him."

So he bustled among the toys, and soon had a ball, a horse, and a Noah's ark tied up in a parcel, which he tossed into the basket.

Name after name was read off, some of them belonging to Rob's playmates, and you may be sure that the little boy listened with his heart in his mouth.

"Robby Morgan!" said Santa Claus.

In his excitement that small lad nearly upset the cart, but Santa did not notice it.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven"--Rob's breath came very short--"whites!"

He almost clapped his hands.

"One, two, three, blacks! Now I wonder what that little chap would like--here's a drum, a box of tools, a knife, a menagerie. If he hadn't run away from school that day and then told a lie about it I'd give him a rocking-horse."

Rob groaned in anguish of spirit.

"But, bless him! he's a fine little fellow, and perhaps he will do better next year if I give him the horse."

That was too much for our boy. With a "Hurrah!" he jumped up and turned a somersault right at Santa Claus's feet.

"Stars and stripes!" cried Santa. "What's this?"

"Come along, I'll show you the one!" cried Rob.

Santa Claus allowed himself to be led off to the pile of horses. You may believe that Rob's sharp eyes soon picked out the one with the longest tail and the thickest mane.

"Well, he beats all the boys that ever I saw! What shall I do with the little spy?"

"Oh, dear Santa Claus," cried Robby, hugging the red boots, "do just take me along with you. I'll stick tight when you slide down the chimney."

"Yes, I guess you will stick tight--in the chimney, my little man."

"I mean to your back," half sobbed Rob.

Santa Claus can't bear to see little folks in trouble, so he took the boy into his arms, and asked where he wanted to go.

"To Tommy Turner's, and, oh, you know, that boy in the awful old jacket that likes popguns," was the breathless reply.

Of course he knew him, for he knows every boy and girl in Christendom; so a popgun was added to the medley of toys. Santa Claus then strapped Rob and the basket on his back. He next crept through an open window to a ladder he had placed there, down which he ran as nimbly as a squirrel. The reindeer before the sledge were in a hurry to be off, and tinkled their silver bells right merrily. An instant more and they were snugly tucked up in the white robes; an instant more and they were flying like the wind over the snow.

Ah! Tommy's home. Santa Claus sprang out, placed the light ladder against the house, and before Rob could wink a good fair wink they were on the roof, making for the chimney. Whether it swallowed him, or he swallowed it, is still a puzzle to Robby.

Tommy lay sleeping in his little bed and dreaming of a merry Christmas. His rosy mouth was puckered into something between a whistle and a smile. Rob longed to give him a friendly punch, but Santa Claus shook his head. They filled his stocking and hurried away, for empty little stockings the world over were waiting for that generous hand.

On they sped again, never stopping until they came to a wretched little hovel. A black pipe instead of a chimney was sticking through the roof.

Rob thought, "Now I guess he'll have to give it up." But no, he softly pushed the door open and stepped in.

On a ragged cot lay the urchin to whom Robby had given the cookies. One of them, half eaten, was still clutched in his hand. Santa Claus gently opened the other little fist and put the popgun into it.

"Give him my drum," whispered Rob, and Santa Claus, without a word, placed it near the rumped head.

How swiftly they flew under the bright stars! How sweetly rang the bells!

When Santa Claus reined up at Robby's door he found his little comrade fast asleep. He laid him tenderly in his crib, and drew off a stocking, which he filled with the smaller toys. The rocking-horse he placed close to the crib, that Rob might mount him on Christmas morning.

A kiss, and he was gone.

P.S.--Rob's mother says it was all a dream, but he declares that "It's true as Fourth of July!" I prefer to take his word for it.

A CHILD'S THOUGHTS ABOUT SANTA CLAUS

What do you think my grandmother said,
Telling Christmas stories to me
To-night, when I went and coaxed and coaxed
With my head and arms upon her knee?

She thinks--she really told me so--
That good Mr. Santa Claus, long ago,
Was as old and grey as he is to-day,
Going around with his loaded sleigh.

She thinks he's driven through frost and snow
For a hundred, yes, a thousand times or so,
With jingling bells and a bag of toys--
Ho, ho! for good girls and boys,
With a carol gay,
Crying, "Clear the way,
For a rollicking, merry Christmas day!"
Grandmother knows almost everything--

All that I ask her she can tell;
Rivers and towns in geography,
And the hardest words she can always spell.
But the wisest ones, sometimes, they say,
Mistake--and even grandmother may.

If Santa Claus never had been a boy
How would he always know so well
What all the boys are longing for
On Christmas day? Can grandmother tell?

Why does he take the shiny rings,
The baby houses, the dolls with curls,
The little locket and other such things
Never to boys, but always to girls?

Why does he take the skates and all
The bats and balls, and arrows and bows,
And trumpets and drums, and guns--hurrah!
To the boys? I wonder if grandmother knows?

But there's one thing that doesn't seem right--
If Santa Claus was a boy at play
And hung up his stocking on Christmas night,
Who filled it for him on Christmas day?

Sydney Dayre.

CHARITY IN A COTTAGE

Jean Ingelow

The charity of the rich is much to be commended; but how beautiful is
the charity of the poor!

Call to mind the coldest day you ever experienced. Think of the bitter
wind and driving snow; think how you shook and shivered--how the sharp
white particles were driven up against your face--how, within doors,

the carpets were lifted like billows along the floors, the wind howled and moaned in the chimneys, windows cracked, doors rattled, and every now and then heavy lumps of snow came thundering down with a dull weight from the roof.

Now hear my story.

In one of the broad, open plains of Lincolnshire, there is a long reedy sheet of water, a favourite resort of wild ducks. At its northern extremity stand two mud cottages, old, and out of repair.

One bitter, bitter night, when the snow lay three feet deep on the ground, and a cutting east wind was driving it about, and whistling in the dry frozen reeds by the water's edge, and swinging the bare willow trees till their branches swept the ice, an old woman sat spinning in one of these cottages before a moderately cheerful fire. Her kettle was singing on the coals, she had a reed candle, or home-made rushlight, on her table, but the full moon shone in, and was the brighter light of the two. These two cottages were far from any road, or any other habitation; the old woman was, therefore, surprised, in an old northern song, by a sudden knock at the door.

It was loud and impatient, not like the knock of her neighbours in the other cottage; but the door was bolted, and the old woman rose, and shuffling to the window, looked out and saw a shivering figure, apparently that of a youth.

"Trampers!" said the old woman, sententiously, "tramping folks be not wanted here." So saying she went back to the fire without deigning to answer the door.

The youth upon this tried the door, and called to her to beg admittance. She heard him rap the snow from his shoes against her lintel, and again knock as if he thought she was deaf, and he should surely gain admittance if he could make her hear.

The old woman, surprised at his audacity, went to the casement and with all the pride of possession, opened it and inquired his business.

"Good woman," the stranger began, "I only want a seat at your fire."

"Nay," said the old woman, giving effect to her words by her uncouth

dialect, "thou'll get no shelter here; I've nought to give to beggars--a dirty, wet critter," she continued wrathfully, slamming to the window. "It's a wonder where he found any water, too, seeing it freeze so hard a body can get none for the kettle, saving what's broken up with a hatchet."

The stranger turned very hastily from her door and waded through the deep snow towards the other cottage. The bitter wind helped to drive him towards it. It looked no less poor than the first; and when he had tried the door and found it bolted and fast, his heart sank within him. His hand was so numbed with cold that he had made scarcely any noise; he tried again.

A rush candle was burning within and a matronly looking woman sat before the fire. She held an infant in her arms and had dropped asleep; but his third knock aroused her, and wrapping her apron round the child, she opened the door a very little way, and demanded what he wanted.

"Good woman," the youth began, "I have had the misfortune to fall in the water this bitter night, and I am so numbed I can scarcely walk."

The woman gave him a sudden earnest look and then sighed.

"Come in," she said; "thou art so nigh the size of my Jem, I thought at first it was him come home from sea."

The youth stepped across the threshold, trembling with cold and wet; and no wonder, for his clothes were completely encased in wet mud, and the water dripped from them with every step he took on the sanded floor.

"Thou art in a sorry plight," said the woman, "and it be two miles to the nighest house; come and kneel down afore the fire; thy teeth chatter so pitifully I can scarce bear to hear them."

She looked at him more attentively and saw that he was a mere boy, not more than sixteen years of age. Her motherly heart was touched for him. "Art hungry?" she asked, turning to the table. "Thou art wet to the skin. What hast been doing?"

"Shooting wild ducks," said the boy.

"Oh," said the hostess, "thou art one of the keeper's boys, then, I reckon?"

He followed the direction of her eyes, and saw two portions of bread set upon the table, with a small piece of bacon on each.

"My master be very late," she observed, for charity did not make her use elegant language, and by her master she meant her husband; "but thou art welcome to my bit and sup, for I was waiting for him. Maybe it will put a little warmth in thee to eat and drink." So saying, she placed before him her own share of the supper.

"Thank you," said the boy; "but I am so wet I am making quite a pool before your fire with the drippings from my clothes."

"Aye, they are wet indeed," said the woman, and rising again she went to an old box, in which she began to search, and presently came to the fire with a perfectly clean check shirt in her hand and a tolerably good suit of clothes.

"There," said she, showing them with no small pride, "these be my master's Sunday clothes, and if thou wilt be very careful of them I'll let thee wear them till thine be dry." She then explained that she was going to put her "bairn" to bed, and proceeded up a ladder into the room above, leaving the boy to array himself in these respectable garments.

When she had come down her guest had dressed himself in the labourer's clothes; he had had time to warm himself, and he was eating and drinking with hungry relish. He had thrown his muddy clothes in a heap upon the floor. As she looked at him she said:

"Ah, lad, lad, I doubt that head been under water: thy poor mother would have been sorely frightened if she could have seen thee a while ago."

"Yes," said the boy; and in imagination the cottage dame saw this same mother, a careworn, hard-working creature like herself; while the youthful guest saw in imagination a beautiful and courtly lady; and both saw the same love, the same anxiety, the same terror, at sight of a lonely boy struggling in the moonlight through breaking ice, with no

one to help him, catching at the frozen reeds, and then creeping up, shivering and benumbed, to a cottage door.

But, even as she stooped, the woman forgot her imagination, for she had taken a waistcoat into her hands, such as had never passed between them before; a gold pencil-case dropped from the pocket; and on the floor amidst a heap of mud that covered the outer garments, lay a white shirt sleeve, so white, indeed, and so fine, that she thought it could hardly be worn by a squire!

She glanced from the clothes to the owner. He had thrown down his cap, and his fair curly hair and broad forehead convinced her that he was of gentle birth; but while she hesitated to sit down, he placed a chair for her, and said with boyish frankness:

"I say, what a lonely place this is! If you had not let me in, the water would have frozen me before I reached home. Catch me duck-shooting again by myself!"

"It's very cold sport that, sir," said the woman.

The young gentleman assented most readily, and asked if he might stir the fire.

"And welcome, sir," said the woman.

She felt a curiosity to know who he was, and he partly satisfied her by remarking that he was staying at Deen Hall, a house about five miles off, adding that in the morning he had broken a hole in the ice very near the decoy, but it iced over so fast, that in the dusk he had missed it, and fallen in, for it would not bear him. He had made some landmarks, and taken every proper precaution, but he supposed the sport had excited him so much that in the moonlight he had passed them by.

He then told her of his attempt to get shelter in the other cottage.

"Sir," said the woman, "if you had said you were a gentleman----"

The boy laughed. "I don't think I knew it, my good woman," he replied, "my senses were so benumbed; for I was some time struggling at the water's edge among the broken ice, and then I believe I was nearly an

hour creeping up to your cottage door. I remember it all rather indistinctly, but as soon as I had felt the fire and eaten something I was a different creature."

As they still talked, the husband came in; and while he was eating his supper it was agreed that he should walk to Deen Hall, and let its inmates know of the gentleman's safety. When he was gone the woman made up the fire with all the coal that remained to the poor household, and crept up to bed, leaving her guest to lie down and rest before it.

In the grey dawn the labourer returned, with a servant leading a horse, and bringing a fresh suit of clothes.

The young man took his leave with many thanks, slipping three half-crowns into the woman's hand, probably all the money he had about him. And I must not forget to mention that he kissed the baby; for when she tells the story, the mother always adverts to that circumstance with great pride, adding that her child, being as "clean as wax, was quite fit to be kissed by anybody."

"Misses," said her husband, as they stood in the doorway looking after their guest, "who dost think that be?"

"I don't know," answered the misses.

"Then I'll just tell thee; that be young Lord W----; so thou mayest be a proud woman; thou sits and talks with lords, and then asks them to supper--ha, ha!"

So saying, her master shouldered his spade and went his way, leaving her clinking the three half-crowns in her hand, and considering what she should do with them.

Her neighbour from the other cottage presently stepped in, and when she heard the tale and saw the money her heart was ready to break with envy and jealousy.

"Oh, to think that good luck should have come to her door, and she should have been so foolish as to turn it away! Seven shillings and sixpence for a morsel of food and a night's shelter--why it was nearly a week's wages!"

So there, as they both supposed, the matter ended, and the next week the frost was sharper than ever. Sheep were frozen in the fenny field and poultry on their perches, but the good woman had walked to the nearest town and bought a blanket. It was a welcome addition to their bed covering, and it was many a long year since they had been so comfortable.

But it chanced one day at noon that, looking out at her casement she spied three young gentlemen skating along the ice towards her cottage. They sprang on to the bank, took off their skates, and made for her door. The young nobleman, for he was one of the three, informed her that he had had such a severe cold he could not come to see her before. "He spoke as free and pleasantly," she said, in telling the story, "as if I had been a lady, and no less, and then he brought a parcel out of his pocket, saying, 'I have been over to B---- and brought you a book for a keepsake, and I hope you will accept it;' and then they all talked as pretty as could be for a matter of ten minutes, and went away. So I waited till my master came home, and we opened the parcel, and there was a fine Bible inside, all over gold and red morocco, and my name and his name written inside; and, bless him, a ten-pound note doubled down over the names. I'm sure, when I thought he was a poor forlorn creature, he was kindly welcome. So my master laid out part of the money in tools, and we rented a garden; and he goes over on market days to sell what we grow, so now, thank God, we want for nothing."

This is how she generally concludes the little history, never failing to add that the young lord kissed her baby.

But I have not yet told you what I thought the best part of the story. When this poor Christian woman was asked what had induced her to take in a perfect stranger and trust him with the best clothing her home afforded, she answered simply, "Well, I saw him shivering and shaking, so I thought, thou shalt come in here, for the sake of Him that had not where to lay His head."

The old woman in the other cottage may open her door every night of her future life to some forlorn beggar, but it is all but certain that she will never open it to a nobleman in disguise!

Let us do good, not to receive more good in return, but as evidence of

gratitude for what has been already bestowed. In a few words, let it be "all for love and nothing for reward."

"The most excellent gift is charity."

THE WAITS

At the break of Christmas Day,
Through the frosty starlight ringing,
Faint and sweet and far away,
Comes the sound of children, singing,
Chanting, singing,
"Cease to mourn,
For Christ is born,
Peace and joy to all men bringing!"

Careless that the chill winds blow,
Growing stronger, sweeter, clearer,
Noiseless footfalls in the snow
Bring the happy voices nearer;
Hear them singing,
"Winter's drear,
But Christ is here,
Mirth and gladness with Him bringing!"

"Merry Christmas!" hear them say,
As the East is growing lighter;
"May the joy of Christmas Day
Make your whole year gladder, brighter!"
Join their singing,
"To each home
Our Christ has come,
All love's treasures with Him bringing!"

Margaret Deland.

WHERE LOVE IS THERE GOD IS ALSO

Leo Tolstoi

Martuin, the shoemaker, lived in a city of Russia. His house was a little basement room with one window. Through this window he used to watch the people walking past. He was so far below the street that from his bench he could see only the feet of the passers-by but he knew them all by their boots. Nearly every pair of boots in the neighbourhood had been in his hands once and again. Some he would half sole, and some he would patch, some he would stitch around, and occasionally he would also put on new uppers. "Ah," he would say to himself, "there goes the baker. That was a fine piece of leather." Martuin always had plenty to do because he was a faithful workman, used good materials, and always finished an order as early as he promised it.

In the evening when his work was done he would light his little oil lamp, take his book down from the shelf and begin to read. He had but one book, a Bible, and as he read he thought of the wonderful Christ-child. "Ah," he cried one night, "if He would only come to me and be my guest. If He should come, I wonder how I should receive Him." Martuin rested his head upon his hands and dozed. "Martuin," a voice seemed suddenly to sound in his ears.

He started from his sleep. "Who is here?" He looked around but there was no one.

Again he fell into a doze. Suddenly he plainly heard, "Martuin, ah, Martuin! Look to-morrow on the street. I am coming."

At daybreak next morning Martuin woke, said his prayer, put his cabbage soup and gruel on to cook and sat down by the window to work. He worked hard but all the time he was thinking of the voice that he had heard. "Was it a dream," he said to himself, "or is He coming? Shall I really see Him to-day?" When anyone passed by in boots that he did not know he would bend down close to the window so that he could see the face as well as the boots.

By and by an old, old man came along; he carried a shovel. It was

Stephanwitch. Martuin knew him by his old felt boots. He was very poor and helped the house porter with all the hard work. Now he began to shovel away the snow from in front of Martuin's window. Martuin looked up eagerly.

"Pshaw," said Martuin, "old Stephanwitch is clearing away the snow and I imagined the Christ-child was coming to see me." He looked again. How old and feeble Stephanwitch looked.

"He is cold and weary," thought Martuin. "I will call him in and give him a cup of tea, the samovar must be boiling by now."

He laid down his awl, made the tea, and tapped on the window. "Come in and warm yourself," he said.

"May Christ reward you for this! My bones ache," said Stephanwitch.

Stephanwitch shook off the snow and tried to wipe his feet so as not to soil the floor, but he staggered from cold and weariness.

"Never mind that, I will clean it up. We are used to such things. Sit down and drink a cup of tea," said Martuin heartily.

Martuin filled two cups and handed one to Stephanwitch who drank it eagerly, turned it upside down, and began to express his thanks.

"Have some more?" said Martuin, refilling the cup.

"Are you expecting anyone?" asked Stephanwitch. "I see you keep turning to look on the street."

"I am ashamed to tell you whom I expect. I am, and I am not, expecting someone. You see, brother, I was reading about the Christ and how He walked on earth and I thought, 'If He came to me, should I know how to receive Him?' and I heard a voice, 'Be on the watch, I shall come to-morrow.' It is absurd, yet would you believe it, I am expecting Him, the Christ-child."

Stephanwitch shook his head but said nothing.

Martuin filled his guest's cup with hot tea and continued, "You see I have an idea He would come to the simple people. He picked out His

disciples from simple working people like us. Come, brother, have some more tea."

But Stephanwitch rose. "Thanks to you, Martuin, for treating me kindly and warming me, soul and body."

"You are welcome, brother, come again."

Stephanwitch departed. Martuin put away the dishes and sat down by the window to stitch on a patch. He kept looking out as he stitched.

Two soldiers passed by; one wore boots that Martuin had made; then the master of the next house; then a baker. Then there came a woman in woolen stockings and wooden shoes. Martuin looked up through the window. He saw she was a stranger poorly clad in shabby summer clothes. She had turned her back to the wind and was trying to shelter a little child who was crying.

Martuin went to the door and called out, "Why are you standing there in the cold? Come into my room where it is warm."

The woman was astonished when she saw the old, old man in his leather apron and big spectacles beckoning and calling to her, but she gladly followed him.

"There," said Martuin, "sit down near the stove and warm yourself." Then he brought out bread, poured out cabbage soup, and took up the pot with the gruel.

"Eat, eat," he said. "I will mind the little one. Tell me, why are you out in this bitter cold?"

"I am a soldier's wife, but my husband has been sent far away. We have used up our money and I went to-day for work but they told me to come again."

Martuin sighed. "Have you no warm clothes?"

"Ah, this is the time to wear them, but yesterday I sold my last warm shawl for food."

Martuin sighed. He went to the little cupboard and found an old coat.

"Take it," he said. "It is a poor thing, yet it may help you." He slipped some money into her hand and with this said, "Buy yourself a shawl and food till work shall be found."

"May Christ bless you!" she cried. "He must have sent me to you. It had grown so cold my little child would have frozen to death, but He, the Christ-child, led you to look through the window."

"Indeed He did," said Martuin, smiling.

The woman left. Martuin ate some sheki, washed the dishes, and sat down again by the window to work. A shadow darkened the window. Martuin looked up eagerly. It was only an acquaintance who lived a little further down the street. Again the window grew dark. This time Martuin saw that an old apple woman had stopped right in front of the window. She carried a basket with apples and over her shoulder she had a bag full of chips. One could see that the bag was heavy. She lowered it to the sidewalk and as she did so, she set the apples on a little post. A little boy with a torn cap darted up, picked an apple out of the basket and started to run but the old woman caught him, knocked off his cap, and seized him by the hair.

Martuin ran out in the cold. "Let him go, Babushka; forgive him for Christ's sake."

"I will forgive him so that he won't forget it till the new broom grows! I am going to take him to the police."

"Let him go, Babushka, let him go for Christ's sake. He will never do it again."

The old woman let him loose. The boy tried to run, but Martuin kept him back.

"Ask Babushka's forgiveness," he said, "and never do it again. I saw you take the apple."

With tears in his eyes the boy began to ask forgiveness.

"There, that's all right," said Martuin; "take the apple. I will pay for it."

"You ruin the good-for-nothings," said the old woman. "He should be well punished. He deserves it."

"Perhaps," answered Martuin, "but God forgives us though we deserve it not."

"Well, well," said the old woman, appeased, "after all it was but a childish trick." She started to lift the bag upon her shoulder.

"Let me take it," said the boy. "It is on my way."

Side by side they passed along the street, the boy carrying the bag and chattering to the old woman. Martuin turned and went back into the little room.

After sewing a little while it grew too dark to see. He lighted his little lamp, finished his piece of work, put it away, and took down his Bible. Suddenly he seemed to hear someone stepping around behind him. In the dark corner there seemed to be people standing. Then he heard a voice, "Martuin, ah, Martuin, did you not know me?"

"Who?" cried Martuin.

"It is I," replied the voice, and Stephanwitch stepped forth from the dark corner, smiled, and faded away like a little cloud.

"And this is I!" said the voice again, and from the dark corner stepped the woman and the child. The woman smiled, the child laughed, and then they, too, vanished.

"And this is I!" and the old woman and the boy stepped forward, smiled, and vanished. Then a light filled the little room and glowed about the figure of a Child and Martuin heard the words:

"For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in." And Martuin knew that the Christ-child had really come to him that Christmas-tide.

(_Adapted._)

GOD REST YE, MERRY GENTLEMEN

God rest ye, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

Dinah Mulock Craik.

THE GLAD NEW YEAR

THE GLAD NEW YEAR

It's coming, boys,
It's almost here.
It's coming, girls,
The grand New Year.

A year to be glad in,

Not to be sad in;
A year to live in,
To gain and give in.

A year for trying,
And not for sighing;
A year for striving
And healthy thriving.

It's coming, boys,
It's almost here.
It's coming, girls,
The grand New Year.

Mary Mapes Dodge.

THE BAD LITTLE GOBLIN'S NEW YEAR

Mary Stewart

Come, children dear, let's sit on the floor around the fire, so, and watch those golden flames dancing and leaping. You see that very gay one just springing up the chimney? I know a story about him, a New Year's story. Let's snuggle up closer and look into the fire. You see that piece of coal black wood, there at the end? There was a horrid little goblin once who was as black as that bit of wood. His clothes were all black, his round cap looked like a bit of coal, his pointed shoes were jet black, and his face was dark with dirt and an ugly scowling expression. Altogether he was a horrid looking goblin, and he was just as hateful as he looked. There wasn't a single person who liked him. The birds hated him because he would wait after dark when all the baby birds were cuddled down in the nest, fast asleep. Then he would pop up from under the nest where he had been hiding and cry, "Morning time, wake up!" and all the babies would cry, "Chirp, chirp, Daddy bring us our breakfast!" They opened their bills so wide that it took a long time to shut them and put the excited babies to sleep again. Once Blackie, that was the goblin's name, dropped a bit of twig down into a baby's open bill and the poor bird coughed so hard that he

kept the birds in the nests around awake all night. Blackie chuckled with glee and went scurrying off on another prank.

While the mother bunnies were asleep he painted the tiny white flags they wear under their tails with brown mud from the marsh. When morning-time really did come and the mother bunnies woke up and called to their children to follow them, the little bunnies couldn't see any white flags on their mothers' tails to follow, and all got lost in the long grass. It took the whole day to gather them together, and still longer to get those flags clean again.

Blackie jumped for joy. The mother bunnies would have liked to reach him with their sharp claws, but he was too quick for them.

Then Blackie found the holes where the squirrels had hidden their nuts for the winter. It had taken months to gather them, but Blackie waited until they were out hunting again, and he carried all the nuts away and hid them in the roots of an old tree where they would never think of looking!

That wasn't all! Blackie did one last thing so terrible that I don't like to tell you about it. He waited until a robin's nest was full of lovely blue eggs and the father bird was off in search of worms. Then he made such a rustling in the next tree that the mother bird flew off to see what it was, and while she was gone--Blackie danced upon the eggs until they were all broken!

That filled the timid wood creatures with fury. The birds, the rabbits, and the squirrels rushed upon the goblin and drove him before them. The birds pecked him with their beaks, and the squirrels and rabbits hopped after him with their claws outstretched. Away ran Blackie, really frightened at last, faster and faster until he reached the darkest part of the whole forest. There he jumped into a hole in a tree, curling himself up so tightly that his round cap touched his pointed shoes, and while he trembled with fear he heard the birds and bunnies and squirrels go tearing past, thinking that the wicked little goblin was still running ahead of them.

When they had all gone, Blackie peeked out of his hole. Oh, how terribly quiet it was! Not a bird chirped, not a squirrel or a rabbit or a woodchuck lived there. It was so quiet and so dark and so lonely that Blackie began to feel quite forlorn. "I would almost be polite to

a tree toad!" he thought, but not even a croak or a buzz or a rustle broke the stillness. The bad little goblin put his head down upon his black knees and went to sleep; there was nothing else to do!

The first sound which woke him up was, "Chop-chop!" He rubbed his eyes and peeked out. He saw woodcutters cutting down trees with their sharp axes. Then he saw them coming toward the tree where he was hiding. Shaking with terror, Blackie curled himself up into a tight ball. Chop-chop-crash! went the tree, and Blackie's head bumped hard against the top of his hole as, still inside it, he felt the tree fall to the ground. That was rather fun, and much excited he peeked out of a crack and watched the men fastening chains around the trees and loading them on wheels. His own tree went, too, and the next thing Blackie heard was saw-saw, as the tree was sawed into logs at a lumber yard. Again he rolled up tight, hoping the knives wouldn't cut him in two, and they didn't! He was still safe in his hole when his log was thrown with others, right down into a dark cellar. It was even drearier there than in the forest and Blackie began to long for some playfellows. "I wouldn't tease them. I'd just play with them nicely," he sighed, and two tears ran down his little black face, washing it almost clean.

Then Blackie heard a strange new sound. It was gayer than a squirrel's chatter, sweeter than a bird's song,--it was a child's laughter! Where did it come from? Blackie stopped crying and listened. It came again and the laughter of other children mingled with it. Blackie peeked out. There was no one in the cellar. He crept out and tiptoed up the stairs, in search of those laughing voices. Hiding in the shadows so that no one could see him, he passed through the kitchen and on into a room full of sunshine and children. He ran in and hid behind a curtain, peeking out curiously. In the center of the room stood a little golden-haired girl, the one whose laughter he had first heard. But as Blackie watched her with delight he saw her pucker up her face as though she were going to cry. "My dolly, my dear dolly, I can't find her!" she wailed. In a flash all the other boys and girls were searching under chairs and tables for the runaway dolly. They couldn't find her, but Blackie saw a pair of doll's feet poking out from under the sofa. He hopped swiftly across the floor, pulled the doll out by one leg and placed her on a chair beside the little girl.

"Oh, see, my doll's tum back!" she cried, hugging her with joy. "She went for a walk and came back again!" and taking the doll's two hands in hers she danced with her around the room. The other children

danced, too, and their laughter rang out again. "She went for a walk and came back all herself!" they cried.

Blackie thought he had never seen or heard anything so merry, it made him want to dance, also. Poor little black goblin whom the maid, if she had seen him, would have swept out of the room, mistaking him for a bit of coal!

But Blackie took care that no one did see him. Except, perhaps, the children, I don't know whether anyone ever saw him or not. He spent most of the time with them, and somehow they seemed to know that he was there and that he was their friend. Every evening when they had their supper they put a bowl of milk in front of the fire for him, and when they came in to breakfast the bowl was always empty. I don't know how Blackie drank it without being seen, for he still slept in his log in the cellar and was asleep as soon as the children's heads touched their pillows. The children's mother was puzzled over that empty bowl, but she might have guessed there was a friendly goblin in the house by the way lost things were always turning up.

"I can't find my thimble!" the mother would cry. "Come, children, and look for it!" On the floor, under the rug, in the flower pots, and on the tables hunted the children. But hiding behind the curtain Blackie had seen a bit of something gold shining through the tassels of the sofa. Quick as a flash, he pulled it out and placed it on the arm of the mother's chair. "Why, here it is!" she exclaimed. "How did it get there?" The children laughed and winked at each other, as though they understood, but how could they explain about the goblin to mother?

Their father was always looking for his spectacles. Mother, the children, and all the maids would be called in to help search. Before Blackie came they often searched for hours, but he always found them in a twinkling, in a book, perhaps, or under the fender, and would place them right in front of father. "Gracious, look here, there must be some magic around!" he would cry, and the children would jump up and down with glee! They knew all about the magic. They guessed that a little black goblin was also jumping with delight behind the curtain!

One morning,--it was New Year's Day,--Blackie slept longer than usual. He was curled up inside his log, so sound asleep that even the joggling of his home being carried upstairs didn't waken him. Then he

was turned upside down, and, opening his eyes, he peeked out of the crack and found that the log was about to be thrown onto the blazing fire! Crash! it went. How very warm it was, and then Blackie heard the children laughing. He poked his head out and saw them all sitting in front of the fire, watching the blaze. All around Blackie red and yellow flames were dancing, so gay, so golden, so happy that Blackie forgot to be frightened. "I want to be gay, too!" he cried. "I want to laugh with the children and dance with the flames." His log caught fire, blazed up and out sprang Blackie,--a little black goblin no longer!

Instead, he was the shiniest, most dancing golden flame that you ever saw! For a few moments he just danced up and down with delight, then, waving and bowing to the children, he cried, "Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" and sprang up the chimney. The children's glad voices echoed after him.

When he reached the top he saw a glorious sight. The sun shining on the snow and ice turned the world into a sparkling Fairy-land, and the sky was as blue as forget-me-nots, or Polly's eyes, or the very bluest thing you have ever seen. Blackie danced with the sunbeams over the glittering ice until he almost ran into a flock of little birds huddled down in the snow, too cold to fly. Their feathers were ruffled and they looked very miserable. "Come play with me!" he cried, dancing around them. He was so gay and so beautiful that they forgot the cold, and flew in circles around him. "Come and join us!" he cried to a group of rabbits who were hunched up upon the snow, half-frozen. They hopped along slowly toward him and then--they, too, forgot the cold while they played games with the golden goblin and the birds, until they were all as merry as the sunbeams. "Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" they called to each other, and to the twinkling flame goblin.

Then Blackie saw some squirrels curled up on the branches of a tree so miserable they couldn't even make-believe scamper. "What is the matter; do you want some nuts?" he cried. "Follow me!" And away he darted to the roots of the tree where, as a naughty little goblin, he had hidden their winter store. The squirrels followed slowly, but when they saw their treasure their eyes sparkled, their teeth chattered with delight, and they scampered back and forth from the tree root to their own holes, their paws full of nuts. They were as gay as Blackie himself. "Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" they cried to their gleaming friend, whom they never dreamed was the bad little goblin

they had chased away the autumn before!

So all day and for many days the goblin danced and sang and helped people and birds and the wood creatures. He twinkled as merrily in the sunshine out of doors as he did when he danced in the fire, warming the children and singing them songs.

"It's like Happy New Year every day when the goblin is here!" cried the children, dancing as gayly on the hearth rug as the sprite was dancing within the fire. "There he is now, do you see him? He is dancing and crackling and crying to all of us, 'Happy New Year, Happy New Year!'"

Let others looke for Pearle and Gold,
Tissues, or Tabbies manifold;
One only lock of that sweet Hay
Whereon the blessed Babie lay,
Or one poore Swadling-clout, shall be
The richest New-Yeere's Gift to me.

Robert Herrick.

THE QUEEN OF THE YEAR

When suns are low and nights are long
And winds bring wild alarms,
Through the darkness comes the Queen of the Year
In all her peerless charms,--
December, fair and holly-crowned,
With the Christ-child in her arms.

The maiden months are a stately train,
Veiled in the spotless snow,
Or decked with the bloom of Paradise
What time the roses blow,

Or wreathed with the vine and the yellow wheat
When the noons of harvest glow.

But, oh, the joy of the rolling year,
The queen with peerless charms,
Is she who comes through the waning light
To keep the world from harms,--
December, fair and holly-crowned,
With the Christ-child in her arms.

Edna Dean Proctor.

THE NEW YEAR'S BELL

Andrea Hofer Proudfoot

A-ring-a-ring, ring! A-ring-a-ring, ring!

"Brother Carl, wake up! wake up! Don't you hear the great bell? Father is ringing the New Year in, don't you hear it, little Carl? Wake up!"

Tangled-haired little Carl sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, and after a few winks opened them wide.

"Is it the wind, brother Hans, that sings so?"

"No, no! It is the great bell; don't you hear it ring? It is ringing for the New Year."

"Is father drawing the rope?" asked the little one.

"Of course he is, little Carl; he is waking up the whole world that every one may wish a 'Happy New Year.' Come, let us go to the window."

And the two little fellows crept out of their warm nest onto the cold floor, and over to the window in the gable.

"Oh, see, there is father's lantern in the steeple window!" cried

Carl.

It threw its light into the frosty night; the clear stars cut sharp holes in the sky, and the air was so cold it made everything glisten.

A-ring-a-ring, ring! clanged the great bell, and little Hans and Carl knew their father's arms were making it ring. The strokes were so strong that each one made little half-asleep Carl wink; and the stars seemed to wink back to him each time. He crept closer to Hans, and the two stood still with their arms about each other; the room was quite cold, but they did not mind it, for with each stroke the great bell seemed to ring more beautifully. It seemed so near them, as if ringing right in their ears, and the two little boys stood and listened with beating hearts.

"I saw dear father trim his lantern," whispered Hans. "He set it near the door before we went to bed, all ready to light when the clock struck twelve. Mother said to him as he put the lantern there, 'Ring the bell good and strong, dear father, for who knows but this year may bring the great blessing which the Christ-child promised!' We must watch for it, little Carl."

And the old bell seemed to speak louder and clearer to the little ones, as they eagerly listened for what it was telling.

"Father says the bell will never ring from the old tower again, for the new one is being built," said Hans. "And what do you think, brother Carl, our dear mother wept because the old steeple must be broken down, and the dear bell, that is even now a-ringing, must be put into another great tower to ring."

"Does the great bell know it, brother?"

"No, dear little Carl; but no matter where it is put it will always ring, and be glad to wake the village for the New Year."

"Will we go and say good-bye to the dear old bell, brother Hans?" whispered little Carl.

"Yes, brother mine; when it is day we will go, for it has rung so many times for us."

They crept out of the cold into their snug bed again, and the great strokes poured from the tower window long after the little curly heads were full of dreams.

"Wake up, brother Hans! there is the sun."

This time little Carl was the first to arise. Quickly they were both dressed, and, opening their door noiselessly, they went down the narrow stairs on tiptoe, and then out into the open air.

A swift wind was blowing. It swept over the bare bushes and whirled the snow into the children's faces, and filled their curly hair with flakes. But the sun was smiling down on them and said: "See what a beautiful day I brought for a New Year's gift to you!"

And the little ones passed through the church door, that was always open, and into the belfry tower. They knew the way, for father had so often taken them with him.

They came to the long, dark ladder-way; but they did not mind the dark--for they knew the bell was at the top, and they bravely began to climb.

Hans had wooden shoes, so he left them at the foot of the ladder. It is so much easier to climb a ladder with bare feet. Besides, he hardly felt the cold he was such a quick and lively little boy.

Carl went ahead that brother Hans might the more easily help him. They climbed, up and up, and the brave big brother talked merrily all the time, to keep little Carl from thinking of the long, long way. Up and up they went. It became darker and darker. Little Carl led on and on, and he was glad that Hans was behind him.

All at once a bright gleam of light greeted them from above, and they knew that soon they would be with the dear old bell.

Through the opening they crept, and there the great bell hung and they stood beneath it. Hans could just touch it, and he felt its long tongue and saw the shining marks on its sides where it had struck in clanging for many, many years.

It was very cold in the belfry. Little Carl tucked his hands under his

blouse and gazed at the bell, while Hans explained to him what made the music and the great tolling tones that came from it.

"The whole world loves the great bell, brother Carl," said Hans.
"Mother thinks that last night it rang in the great blessing which the Christ-child had promised."

"What did the little Christ-child promise, brother?"

"Don't you remember, little Carl? Mother told us that the Christ-child would send little children a beautiful gift; I think it must be the New Year that he has sent, for that is what the old bell brought to us last night."

And Hans lifted little Carl, and he kissed the beautiful bell on its great round lip, and the bell was still warm from its long ringing.

And they stood and looked at the bell quietly for a long time. And then they said, "Good-bye, dear great bell," and they went down the dark ladder again.

Hans put on his wooden shoes at the foot of the ladder, and with flying feet they crossed the church garden, and there stood the dear mother in the door looking for them. She had found their little bed empty, and was just starting out to find them.

"Dear Mother, we have been in the tower to thank the great bell for bringing the New Year," cried Hans.

"Did the Christ-child send it, Mother?" asked little Carl.

The mother stooped and put her arms about them and kissed them both. As she led them into the room she said, "Yes, my little ones, the Christ-child sends the New Year."

THE NEW YEAR

Snow-wrapped and holly-decked it comes,

To richest and to poorest homes.
Twelve jeweled months all set with days
Of priceless opportunities.
A silver moon, a golden sun,
With diamond stars when day is done;
Over all a sapphire sky
Where pearly clouds go floating by.

(_Selected._)

THE CHILD AND THE YEAR

Said the child to the youthful year:
"What hast thou in store for me,
O giver of beautiful gifts! what cheer,
What joy dost thou bring with thee?"

"My seasons four shall bring
Their treasures: the winter's snows,
The autumn's store, and the flowers of spring,
And the summer's perfect rose.

"All these and more shall be thine,
Dear child--but the last and best
Thyself must earn by a strife divine,
If thou wouldst be truly blest."

Celia Thaxter.

A MASQUE OF THE DAYS

Charles Lamb

The Old Year being dead, and the New Year coming of age, which he

does, by calendar law as soon as the breath is out of the old gentleman's body, nothing would serve the young spark, but he must give a dinner upon the occasion, to which all the Days in the year were invited. The Festivals, whom he deputed as his stewards, were mightily taken with the notion. They had been engaged time out of mind, they said, in providing mirth and good cheer for mortals below, and it was time they should have a taste of their own bounty.

It was stiffly debated among them whether the Fasts should be admitted. Some said the appearance of such lean, starved guests, with their mortified faces, would pervert the ends of the meeting. But the objection was overruled by Christmas Day, who had a design upon Ash Wednesday (as you shall hear), and a mighty desire to see how the old Domine would behave himself in his cups. Only the Vigils were requested to come with their lanterns to light the gentlefolk home at night.

All the Days came. Covers were provided for three hundred and sixty-five guests at the principal table; with an occasional knife and fork at the sideboard for the Twenty-ninth of February.

Cards of invitation had been issued. The carriers were the Hours; twelve little, merry, whirligig foot-pages that went all round and found out the person invited, with the exception of Easter Day, Shrove Tuesday, and a few such movables, who had lately shifted their quarters.

Well, they all met at last, foul Days, fine Days, all sorts of Days, and a rare din they made of it. There was nothing but "Hail, fellow Day! well met!" only Lady Day seemed a little scornful. Yet some said Twelfth Day cut her out, for she came all royal and glittering and Epiphanous. The rest came in green, some in white, but old Lent and his family were not yet out of mourning. Rainy Days came in dripping, and Sunshiny Days laughing. Wedding Day was there in marriage finery. Pay Day came late, and Doomsday sent word he might be expected.

April Fool took upon himself to marshal the guests, and May Day, with that sweetness peculiar to her, proposed the health of the host. This being done, the lordly New Year, from the upper end of the table, returned thanks. Ash Wednesday, being now called upon for a song, struck up a carol, which Christmas Day had taught him. Shrovetide, Lord Mayor's Day, and April Fool next joined in a glee, in which all

the Days, chiming in, made a merry burden.

All this while Valentine's Day kept courting pretty May, who sat next him, slipping amorous billet-doux under the table till the Dog Days began to be jealous and to bark and rage exceedingly.

At last the Days called for their cloaks and great-coats, and took their leave. Shortest Day went off in a deep black fog that wrapped the little gentleman all round. Two Vigils--so watchmen are called in Heaven--saw Christmas Day safe home; they had been used to the business before. Another Vigil--a stout, sturdy patrol, called the Eve of St. Christopher--seeing Ash Wednesday in a condition little better than he should be, e'en whipt him over his shoulders, pick-a-pack fashion, and he went floating home, singing:

"On the bat's back do I fly,"

and a number of old snatches besides. Longest Day set off westward in beautiful crimson and gold; the rest, some in one fashion, some in another; but Valentine and pretty May took their departure together in one of the prettiest silvery twilights a Lover's Day could wish to set in.

RING OUT, WILD BELLS

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Alfred Tennyson.

MIDWINTER

THE BELLS

Hear the sledges with the bells--
 Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
 How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
 In the icy air of night!
While the stars, that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
 With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
 From the bells, bells, bells--
 Bells, bells, bells--
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

Edgar Allen Poe.

A JANUARY THAW

Dallas Lore Sharp

It was the twenty-first of January--the dead of winter! The stubborn cold had had the out of doors under lock and key since Thanksgiving Day. We were having a hard winter, and the novelty of the thing was beginning to wear off--to us grown-ups anyhow, and to the birds and wild things which for weeks had found scant picking over the ice and snow. But I was snug enough in my upstairs study, when suddenly the door opened and four bebundled boys stood before me, with an axe, a

long-handled shovel, a basket, and, evidently, a big secret.

"Come on, father," they whispered (as if she hadn't heard them clomping with their kit through the house!), "it's mother's birthday to-morrow, and we're going after the flowers."

"Going to chop them down with the axe or dig them up with the shovel?" I asked. "Going to give her a nice bunch of frost-flowers? Better get the ice-saw then, for we'll need a big block of ice to stick their stems in."

"Hurry," they answered, dropping my hip-boots on the floor. "Here are your scuffs."

I hurried, and soon the five of us, in single file were out on the meadow, the dry snow squeaking under our feet, while the little winds, capering spitefully about us, blew the snow-dust into our faces or catching up the thin drifts sent them whirling like waltzing wraiths of dancers over the meadow's glittering floor.

I was beginning to warm up a little, but it was a numb, stiff world about us, and bleak and stark, a world all black and white, for there was not even blue overhead. The white underfoot ran off to meet the black of the woods, and the woods in turn stood dark against a sky so heavy with snow that it seemed to shut us into some vast snow cave. A crow flapping over drew a black pencil line across the picture--the one sign of life besides ourselves that we could see. Only small boys are likely to leave their firesides on such a day--only small boys, and those men who can't grow up. Yet never before, perhaps, had even they gone out on such a tramp with an axe, a shovel, and a basket, to pick flowers!

Suddenly one of the boys dashed off, crying: "Let's go see if the muskrats have gone to bed yet!" and, trailing after him, we made for a little mound that stood about three feet high out in the meadow, more like a big ant hill or a small, snow-piled haycock, than a lodge of any sort. Only a practiced eye could have seen it, and only a lover of bleak days would have known what might be alive in there.

We crept up softly and surrounded the lodge; then with the axe we struck the frozen, flinty roof several ringing blows. Instantly one-two-three muffled, splashy "plunks" were heard as three little

muskrats, frightened out of their naps and half out of their wits, plunged into the open water of their doorways from off their damp, but cosy couch.

It was a mean thing to do--but not very mean as wild animal life goes. And it did warm me up so, in spite of the chilly plunge the little sleepers took! Chilly to them? Not at all and that is why it warmed me. To hear the splash of water down under the two feet of ice and snow that sealed the meadow like a sheet of steel! To hear the sounds of stirring life, and to picture that snug, steaming bed on the top of a tough old tussock, with its open water-doors leading into freedom and plenty below! "Why, it won't be long before the arbutus is in bloom," I began to think. I looked at the axe and the shovel and said to myself, "Well, the boys may know what they are doing after all, though three muskrats do not make a spring."

We had cut back to our path, but had not gone ten paces along it before another boy was off to the left in the direction of a piece of maple swamp.

"He's going to see if 'Hairy' is in his hole," they informed me, and we all took after him. The "hole" was almost twenty-five feet up in a dead oak stub that had blown off and lodged against a live tree. The meadow had been bleak and wind-swept, but the swamp was naked and dead, filled with ice and touched with a most forbidding emptiness and stillness. I was getting cold again, when the boy ahead tapped lightly on the old stub, and at the empty hole appeared a head--a fierce black and white head, a sharp, long beak, a flashing eye--as "Hairy" came forth to fight for his castle. He was too wise a fighter to tackle all of us, however, so, slipping out, he spread his wings and galloped off with a loud, wild call that set all the swamp to ringing.

It was a thrilling, defiant challenge that set my blood to leaping again. Black and white, he was a part of the picture, but there was a scarlet band at the nape of his neck that, like his call, had fire in it and the warmth of life.

As his woodpecker shout went booming through the hollow halls of the swamp, it woke a blue jay who squalled back from a clump of pines, then wavering out into the open on curious wings--flashing ice-blue and snow-white wings--he dived into the covert of pines again; and

faint, as if from beyond the swamp, the cheep of chickadees! Here a little troop of them came to peep into the racket, curious but not excited, discussing the disturbance of the solemn swamp in that desultory, sewing-bee fashion of theirs, as if nipping off threads and squinting through needle-eyes between their running comment.

They, too, were grey and black, grey as the swamp beeches, black as the spotted bark of the birches. And how tiny! But----

"Here was this atom in full breath
Hurling defiance at vast death--
This scrap of valour just for play
Fronts the north wind in waistcoat grey."

And this, also, is what Emerson says he sings,

"Good day, good sir!
Fine afternoon, old passenger!
Happy to meet you in these places
Where January brings few faces."

And as I brought to mind the poet's lines, I forgot to shiver, and quite warmed up again to the idea of flowers, especially as one of the boys just then brought up a spray of green holly with a burning red berry on it!

We were tacking again to get back on our course, and had got into the edge of the swamp among the pines when the boy with the shovel began to study the ground and the trees with a searching eye, moving forward and back as if trying to find the location of something.

"Here it is," he said, and set in digging through the snow at the foot of a big pine. I knew what he was after. It was gold thread, and here was the only spot, in all the woods about, where we had ever found it--a spot not larger than the top of a dining-room table.

Soon we had a fistful of the delicate plants with their evergreen leaflets and long, golden thread-like roots, that mixed with the red and green of the partridge berry in a finger-bowl makes a cheerful little winter bouquet. And here with the gold thread, about the butt of the pine, was the partridge berry, too, the dainty vines strung with the beads which seemed to burn holes in the snow that had covered

and banked the tiny fires.

For this is all that the ice and snow had done. The winter had come with wind enough to blow out every flame in the maple tops, and with snow enough to smother every little fire in the peat bogs of the swamp; but peat fires are hard to put out, and here and everywhere the winter had only banked the fires of summer. Dig down through the snow ashes anywhere and the smouldering fires of life burst into blaze.

But the boy with the axe had gone on ahead. And we were off again after him, stopping to get a great armful of black alder branches that were literally aflame with red berries.

We were climbing a piny knoll when almost at our feet, jumping us nearly out of our skins, and warming the very roots of our hair, was a burrrr--burrrr--burrrr--burrrr--four big partridges--as if four big snow mines had exploded under us, hurling bunches of brown on graceful scaling wings over the dip of the hills!

On we went up over the knoll and down into a low bog where, in the summer, we gather high-bush blueberries, the boy with the axe leading the way and going straight across the ice toward the middle of the bog.

My eye was keen for signs, and soon I saw he was heading for a sweet-pepper bush with a broken branch. My eye took in another bush off a little to the right with a broken branch. The boy with the axe walked up to the broken sweet-pepper bush and drew a line on the ice between it and the bush off on the right, pacing along this line till he got the middle; then he started at right angles from it and paced off a line to a clump of cat-tails sticking up through the ice of the flooded bog. Halfway back on this line he stopped, threw off his coat and began to chop a hole about two feet square in the ice. Removing the block while I looked on, he rolled up his sleeve and reached down the length of his arm through the icy water.

"Give me the shovel," he said, "it's down here," and with a few deep, dexterous cuts soon brought to the surface a beautiful cluster of pitcher plants, the strange, almost uncanny leaves filled with muddy water, but every pitcher of them intact, shaped and veined and tinted by a master potter's hand.

We wrapped it all carefully in newspapers, and put it in the basket, starting back with our bouquet as cheerful and as full of joy in the season as we could possibly have been in June.

No, I did not say that we love January as much as we love June. January here in New England is a mixture of rheumatism, chillblains, frozen water pipes, mittens, overshoes, blocked trains, and automobile troubles by the hoodsful, whereas any automobile will run in June. I have not room in this essay to tell all that June is; besides, this is a story of January.

What I was saying is that we started home all abloom with our pitcher plants, and gold thread, and partridge berry, and holly, and black alder, all aglow inside with our vigorous tramp, with the grey, grave beauty of the landscape, with the stern joy of meeting and beating the cold, and with the signs of life--of the cosy muskrats in their lodge beneath the ice cap on the meadow; with the hairy woodpecker in his deep, warm hole in the heart of the tree; with the red-warm berries in our basket; with the chirping, the conquering chickadee accompanying us and singing--

"For well the soul, if stout within,
Can arm impregnably the skin;
And polar frost my form defied
Made of the air that blows outside."

And actually as we came over the bleak meadow one of the boys said he thought he heard a song sparrow singing; and I thought the pussywillows by the brook had opened a little since we passed them coming out; and we all declared the weather had changed, and that there were signs of a break-up. But the thermometer stood at fifteen above zero when we got home--one degree colder than when we started! So we concluded that the January thaw must have come off inside of us; and if the colour of the four glowing faces is any sign, that was the correct reading of the weather.

THE SNOW MAN

Hans Christian Andersen

"It is so wonderfully cold that my whole body crackles!" said the Snow Man. "This is a kind of wind that can blow life into one; and how the gleaming one up yonder is staring at me." That was the sun he meant, which was just about to set. "It shall not make me wink--I shall manage to keep the pieces."

He had two triangular pieces of tile in his head instead of eyes. His mouth was made of an old rake, and consequently was furnished with teeth.

He had been born amid the joyous shouts of the boys, and welcomed by the sound of sledge bells and the slashing of whips.

The sun went down, and the full moon rose, round, large, clear, and beautiful in the blue air.

"There it comes again from the other side," said the Snow Man. He intended to say the sun is showing himself again.

"Ah! I have cured him of staring. Now let him hang up there and shine, that I may see myself. If I only knew how I could manage to move from this place, I should like so much to move. If I could, I would slide along yonder on the ice, just as I see the boys slide; but I don't understand it; I don't know how to run."

"Away! away!" barked the old Yard Dog. He was quite hoarse, and could not pronounce the genuine "Bow, wow." He had got the hoarseness from the time when he was an indoor dog, and lay by the fire. "The sun will teach you to run! I saw that last winter in your predecessor, and before that in his predecessor. Away! away! and away they all go."

"I don't understand you, comrade," said the Snow Man.

"That thing up yonder is to teach me to run?" He meant the moon. "Yes, it comes creeping from the other side."

"You know nothing at all," retorted the Yard Dog. "But then you've only just been patched up. What you see yonder is the moon, and the one that went before the sun. It will come again to-morrow, and will teach you to run down into the ditch by the wall. We shall soon have a

change of weather; I can feel that in my left hind leg, for it pricks and pains me; the weather is going to change."

"I don't understand him," said the Snow Man; "but I have a feeling that he's talking about something disagreeable. The one who stared so just now, and whom he called the sun, is not my friend. I can feel that."

"Away! Away!" barked the Yard Dog. "They told me I was a pretty little fellow: then I used to lie in a chair covered with velvet, up in master's house, and sit in the lap of the mistress of all. They used to kiss my nose, and wipe my paws with an embroidered handkerchief. I was called 'Ami--dear Ami--sweet Ami----.' But afterward I grew too big for them, and they gave me away to the housekeeper. So I came to live in the basement story. You can look into that from where you are standing, and you can see into the room where I was master; for I was master at the housekeeper's. It was certainly a smaller place than upstairs, but I was more comfortable and was not continually taken hold of and pulled about by children as I had been. I received just as much good food as ever, and even better. I had my own cushion, and there was a stove, the finest thing in the world at this season. I went under the stove, and could lie down quite beneath it. Ah! I will sometimes dream of that stove. Away! Away!"

"Does a stove look so beautiful?" asked the Snow Man. "Is it at all like me?"

"It's just the reverse of you. It's as black as a crow, and has a long neck and a brazen drum. It eats firewood, so that the fire spurts out of its mouth. One must keep at its side or under it, and there one is very comfortable. You can see it through the window from where you stand."

And the Snow Man looked and saw a bright, polished thing, with a brazen drum, and the fire gleamed from the lower part of it. The Snow Man felt quite strangely; an odd emotion came over him; he knew not what it meant, and could not account for it, but all people who are not men know the feeling.

"And why did you leave her?" asked the Snow Man, for it seemed to him that the stove must be of the female sex.

"How could you quit such a comfortable place?"

"I was obliged," replied the Yard Dog. "They turned me out of doors, and chained me up here. I had bitten the youngest young master in the leg, because he kicked away the bone I was gnawing. 'Bone for bone,' I thought. They took that very much amiss, and from that time I have been fastened to a chain and have lost my voice. Don't you hear how hoarse I am? Away! away! I can't talk any more like other dogs. Away! away! That was the end of the affair."

But the Snow Man was no longer listening at him. He was looking in at the housekeeper's basement lodging, into the room where the stove stood on its four legs, just the same size as the Snow Man himself.

"What a strange crackling within me!" he said. "Shall I ever get in there? It is an innocent wish, and our innocent wishes are certain to be fulfilled. I must go in there and lean against her, even if I have to break through the window."

"You'll never get in there," said the Yard Dog; "and if you approach the stove you'll melt away--away!"

"I am as good as gone," replied the Snow Man. "I think I am breaking up."

The whole day the Snow Man stood looking in through the window. In the twilight hour the room became still more inviting; from the stove came a mild gleam, not like the sun nor like the moon; it was only as the stove can glow when he has something to eat. When the room door opened the flame started out of his mouth; this was a habit the stove had. The flame fell distinctly on the white face of the Snow Man, and gleamed red upon his bosom.

"I can endure it no longer," said he. "How beautiful it looks when it stretches out its tongue!"

The night was long; but it did not appear long to the Snow Man, who stood there lost in his own charming reflections, crackling with the cold.

In the morning the window-panes of the basement lodging were covered with ice. They bore the most beautiful ice flowers that any snow man

could desire; but they concealed the stove, which he pictured to himself as a lovely female. It crackled and whistled in him and around him; it was just the kind of frosty weather a snow man must thoroughly enjoy.

But he did not enjoy it; and, indeed, how could he enjoy himself when he was stove-sick?

"That's a terrible disease for a Snow Man," said the Yard Dog. "I have suffered from it myself, but I got over it. Away! away!" he barked; and he added, "the weather is going to change."

And the weather did change; it began to thaw. The warmth increased, and the Snow Man decreased. He made no complaint--and that's an infallible sign.

One morning he broke down. And, behold, where he had stood, something like a broomstick remained sticking up out of the ground. It was the pole around which the boys had built him up.

"Ah! now I can understand why he had such an intense longing," said the Yard Dog. "Why, there's a shovel for cleaning out the stove-rake in his body, and that's what moved within him. Now he has got over that, too. Away, away!"

And soon they had got over the winter.

"Away! away!" barked the hoarse Yard Dog. And nobody thought any more of the Snow Man.

THE HAPPY PRINCE

Oscar Wilde

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt. He was very much admired, indeed.

"He is as beautiful as a weathercock," remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic taste. "Only not quite so useful," he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

"Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?" asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon.

"The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything."

"I am glad there is some one in the world who is quite happy," muttered a disappointed man, as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

"He looks just like an angel," said the charity children, as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks and their clean white pinafores.

"How do you know?" said Mathematical Master. "You have never seen one."

"Ah! but we have in our dreams," answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

"Shall I love you?" said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

"It is a ridiculous attachment," twittered the other Swallows, "she has no money, and far too many relations"; and, indeed, the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came, they all flew away.

After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his

lady-love. "She has no conversation," he said, "and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind." And, certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtsies.

"I admit that she is domestic," he continued, "but I love traveling, and my wife, consequently, should love traveling, also."

"Will you come away with me?" he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

"You have been trifling with me," he cried. "I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!" and he flew away.

All day long he flew, and at night-time he arrived at the city. "Where shall I put up?" he said; "I hope the town has made preparations."

Then he saw the statue on the tall column. "I will put up there," he cried; "it is a fine position with plenty of fresh air." So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

"I have a golden bedroom," he said softly to himself, as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was putting his head under his wing a large drop of water fell on him. "What a curious thing!" he cried, "there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness."

Then another drop fell.

"What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?" he said. "I must look for a good chimney-pot," and he determined to fly away.

But before he had opened his wings a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw--Ah! what did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

"Who are you?" he said.

"I am the Happy Prince."

"Why are you weeping then?" asked the Swallow; "you have quite drenched me."

"When I was alive and had a human heart," answered the statue, "I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy, indeed, I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead, yet I cannot choose but weep."

"What, is he not solid gold?" said the Swallow to himself. He was too polite to make any personal remarks out loud.

"Far away," continued the statue in a low, musical voice, "far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move."

"I am waited for in Egypt," said the Swallow. "My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus-flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not

stay with me for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty and the mother so sad."

"I don't think I like boys," answered the Swallow. "Last summer, when I was staying on the river, there were two rude boys, the miller's sons, who were always throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course; we swallows fly far too well for that, and, besides, I come of a family famous for its agility; but still, it was a mark of disrespect."

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry. "It is very cold here," he said; "but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger."

"Thank you, little Swallow," said the Prince.

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince's sword, and flew away with it in his beak over the roofs of the town.

He passed by the cathedral tower, where the white marble angels were sculptured. He passed by the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl came out on the balcony with her lover. "How wonderful the stars are," he said to her, "and how wonderful is the power of love!" "I hope my dress will be ready in time for the State-ball," she answered. "I have ordered passion-flowers to be embroidered on it; but the seamstresses are so lazy."

He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman's thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. "How cool I feel," said the boy, "I must be getting better," and he sank into a delicious slumber.

Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done. "It is curious," he remarked, "but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold."

"That is because you have done a good action," said the Prince. And

the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.

When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath. "What a remarkable phenomenon," said the professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. "A swallow in winter!" And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Everyone quoted it; it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

"To-night I go to Egypt," said the Swallow, and he was in high spirits at the prospect. He visited all the public monuments, and sat a long time on top of the church steeple. Wherever he went, Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, "What a distinguished stranger!" so he enjoyed himself very much.

When the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. "Have you any commissions for Egypt?" he cried. "I am just starting."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer?"

"I am waited for in Egypt," answered the Swallow. "To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions came down to the water's edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theater, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint."

"I will wait with you one night longer," said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. "Shall I take him another ruby?"

"Alas! I have no ruby now," said the Prince; "my eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought out of India a thousand years ago.

"Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweller, and buy food and firewood, and finish his play."

"Dear Prince," said the Swallow, "I cannot do that."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

So the Swallow plucked out the Prince's eye, and flew away to the student's garret. It was easy enough to get in, as there was a hole in the roof. Through this he darted, and came into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird's wings, and when he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets.

"I am beginning to be appreciated," he cried; "this is from some great admirer. Now I can finish my play," and he looked quite happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour. He sat on the mast of a large vessel and watched the sailors hauling big chests out of the hold with ropes. "Heave a-hoy!" they shouted, as each chest came up: "I am going to Egypt!" cried the Swallow, but nobody minded, and when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince.

"I am come to bid you good-bye," he cried.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer?"

"It is winter," answered the Swallow, "and the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm-trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than a rose, and the sapphire shall be as blue as the great sea."

"In the square below," said the Happy Prince, "there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her, and her father will not beat her."

"I will stay with you one night longer," said the Swallow, "but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

So he plucked out the Prince's other eye and darted down with it. He swooped past the match-girl, and slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand. "What a lovely bit of glass," cried the little girl; and she ran home, laughing.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. "You are blind now," he said, "so I will stay with you always."

"No, little Swallow," said the poor Prince, "you must go away to Egypt."

"I will stay with you always," said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet.

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile and catch gold-fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great, green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large, flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

"Dear little Swallow," said the Prince, "you tell me of marvelous things, but more marvelous than anything is the suffering of men and

women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there."

So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into the dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another's arms to try and keep themselves warm.

"How hungry we are!" they said.

"You must not lie here," shouted the watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.

Then he flew back and told the Prince what he had seen.

"I am covered with fine gold!" said the Prince, "you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy."

Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the gold he brought to the poor, and the children's faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. "We have bread now!" they cried.

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles, like crystal daggers, hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice.

The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince; he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker's door when the baker was not looking, and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings.

But at last he knew he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince's shoulder once more.

"Good-bye, dear Prince!" he murmured. "Will you let me kiss your

hand?"

"I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow," said the Prince. "You have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips; for I love you."

"It is not to Egypt that I am going," said the Swallow. "I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?"

And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet. At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost.

Early the next morning the Mayor was walking in the square below in company with the Town Councillors. As they passed the column he looked up at the statue. "Dear me! how shabby the Happy Prince looks!" he said.

"How shabby, indeed!" cried the Town Councillors, who always agreed with the Mayor, and they went up to look at it.

"The ruby has fallen out of his sword, his eyes are gone, and he is golden no longer," said the Mayor; "in fact, he is little better than a beggar!"

"Little better than a beggar," said the Town Councillors. "And here is actually a dead bird at his feet!" continued the Mayor. "We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here." And the Town Clerk made a note of the suggestion.

So they pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. "As he is no longer beautiful, he is no longer useful," said the Art Professor at the University.

Then they melted the statue in a furnace, and the Mayor held a meeting of the Corporation to decide what was to be done with the metal. "We must have another statue, of course," he said, "and it shall be a statue of myself."

"Of myself," said each of the Town Councillors, and they quarreled.

"What a strange thing!" said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. "This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away." So they threw it on a dust-heap where the dead swallow was also lying.

"Bring me the two most precious things in the city," said God to one of His angels; and the angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird.

"You have rightly chosen," said God, "for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me."

THE LEGEND OF KING WENCESLAUS

(A Legend of Mercy)

"Good King Wenceslaus looked out
On the Feast of Saint Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep and crisp and even."

King Wenceslaus sat in his palace. He had been watching from the narrow window of the turret chamber where he was, the sunset as its glory hung for a moment in the western clouds, and then died away over the blue hills. Calm and cold was the brightness. A freezing haze came over the face of the land. The moon brightened towards the southwest and the leafless trees in the castle gardens and the quaint turret and spires of the castle itself threw clear dark shadows on the unspotted snow.

Still the king looked out upon the scene before him. The ground sloped down from the castle towards the forest. Here and there on the side of the hill a few bushes grey with moss broke the unvaried sheet of white. And as the king turned his eye in that direction a poor man came up to these bushes and pulled something from them.

"Come hither, page," called the king. One of the servants of the

palace entered in answer to the king's call. "Come, my good Otto; come stand by me. Do you see yonder poor man on the hillside? Step down to him and learn who he is and where he dwells and what he is doing. Bring me word at once."

Otto went forth on his errand while the good king watched him go down the hill. Meanwhile, the frost grew more and more intense and an east wind blew from the black mountains. The snow became more crisp and the air more clear. In a few moments the messenger was back.

"Well, who is he?"

"Sire," said Otto, "it is Rudolph, the swineherd,--he that lives down by the Brunweis. Fire he has none, nor food, and he was gathering a few sticks where he might find them, lest, as he says, all his family perish with the cold. It is a most bitter night, Sire."

"This should have been better looked to," said the king. "A grievous fault it is that it has not been done. But it shall be amended now. Go to the ewery, Otto, and fetch some provisions of the best.

"Bring me flesh and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them hither."

"Is your Majesty going forth?" asked Otto in surprise.

"Yes, to the Brunweis, and you shall go with me. When you have everything ready meet me at the wood-stacks by the little chapel. Come, be speedy."

"I pray you, Sire, do not venture out yourself. Let some of the men-at-arms go forth. It is a freezing wind and the place is a good league hence."

"Nevertheless, I go," said the king. "Go with me, if you will, Otto; if not, stay. I can carry the food myself."

"God forbid, Sire, that I should let you go alone. But I pray you be persuaded."

"Not in this," said King Wenceslaus. "Meet me then where I said, and not a word to any one besides."

The noblemen of the court were in the palace hall, where a mighty fire went roaring up the chimney and the shadows played and danced on the steep sides of the dark roof. Gayly they laughed and lightly they talked. And as they threw fresh logs into the great chimney-place one said to another that so bitter a wind had never before been known in the land. But in the midst of that freezing night the king went forth.

"Page and Monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather."

The king had put on no extra clothing to shelter himself from the nipping air; for he would feel with the poor that he might feel for them. On his shoulders he bore a heap of logs for the swineherd's fire. He stepped briskly on while Otto followed with the provisions. He had imitated his master and had gone out in his common garments. On the two trudged together, over the crisp snow, across fields, by lanes where the hedge trees were heavy with their white burden, past the pool, over the stile where the rime clustered thick by the wood, and on out upon the moor where the snow lay yet more unbroken and where the wind seemed to nip one's very heart.

Still King Wenceslaus went on and still Otto followed. The king thought it but little to go forth into the frost and snow, remembering Him who came into the cold night of this world of ours; he disdained not, a king, to go to the beggar, for had not the King of King's visited slaves? He grudged not, a king, to carry logs on his shoulders, for had not the Kings of Kings borne heavier burdens for his sake?

But at each step Otto's courage and zeal failed. He tried to hold out with a good heart. For very shame he did not wish to do less than his master. How could he turn back, while the king held on his way? But when they came forth on the white, bleak moor, he cried out with a faint heart:

"My liege, I cannot go on. The wind freezes my very blood. Pray you, let us return."

"Seems it so much?" asked the king. "Follow me on still. Only tread in my footsteps and you will proceed more easily."

The servant knew that his master spoke not at random. He carefully looked for the footsteps of the king. He set his own feet in the print of his master's.

"In the master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed."

And so great was the fire of love that kindled in the heart of the king that, as the servant trod in his steps, he gained life and heat. Otto felt not the wind; he heeded not the frost; for the master's footprints glowed as with holy fire and zealously he followed the king on his errand of mercy.

MIDWINTER

The speckled sky is dim with snow,
The light flakes falter and fall slow;
Athwart the hill-top, rapt and pale,
Silently drops a silvery veil;
And all the valley is shut in
By flickering curtains grey and thin.

But cheerily the chickadee
Singeth to me on fence and tree;
The snow sails round him as he sings,
White as the down of angels' wings.

I watch the snowflakes as they fall
On bank and briar and broken wall;
Over the orchard, waste and brown,
All noiselessly they settle down,
Tipping the apple-boughs, and each

Light quivering twig of plum and peach.

On turf and curb and bower-roof
The snowstorm spreads its ivory woof;
It paves with pearl the garden walk;
And lovingly round tattered stalk
And shivering stem, its magic weaves
A mantle fair as lily-leaves.

The hooded beehive small and low,
Stands like a maiden in the snow;
And the old door-slab is half hid
Under an alabaster lid.

All day it snows; the sheeted post
Gleams in the dimness like a ghost;
All day the blasted oak has stood
A muffled wizard of the wood;
Garland and airy cap adorn
The sumach and the wayside thorn,
And clustering spangles lodge and shine
In the dark tresses of the pine.

The ragged bramble dwarfed and old,
Shrinks like a beggar in the cold;
In surplice white the cedar stands,
And blesses him with priestly hands.

Still cheerily the chickadee
Singeth to me on fence and tree:
But in my inmost ear is heard
The music of a holier bird;
And heavenly thoughts as soft and white
As snowflakes on my soul alight,
Clothing with love my lonely heart,
Healing with peace each bruised part,
Till all my being seems to be
Transfigured by their purity.

John Townsend Trowbridge.

WHEN WINTER AND SPRING MET

OLD WINTER

Old Winter sad, in snow yclad
Is making a doleful din;
But let him howl till he crack his jowl,
We will not let him in.

Ay, let him lift from the billowy drift
His hoary, haggard form,
And scowling stand, with his wrinkled hand
Outstretching to the storm.

And let his weird and sleety beard
Stream loose upon the blast,
And, rustling, chime to the tinkling rime
From his bald head falling fast.

Let his baleful breath shed blight and death
On herb and flower and tree;
And brooks and ponds in crystal bonds
Bind fast, but what care we?

Thomas Noel.

THE SNOWBALL THAT DIDN'T MELT

Jay T. Stocking

"Biff!
Flick!

Swat!
Smack!
Biff, biff!
Flick, flick!
Swat, swat!
Smack, smack!"

It was a fine day in midwinter. The sun was just warm and bright enough to make the snow pack easily. The boys in the neighbourhood were having the liveliest kind of a snowball fight. So that is why there was this--

"Biff!
Flick!
Swat!
Smack!"

And this--

"Biff, biff!
Flick, flick!
Swat, swat!
Smack, smack!"

Everything ends some time. So this snowball fight did. One side or the other won,--I have forgotten which. The boys at the little brown-shingled house, where the fight took place, became very busy making balls for the next day's battle. You could hear the "pat--pat, pat--pat," as they rounded and packed the snowballs in their cold, red hands.

When they became quite satisfied that they had enough on hand for a lively battle they piled the balls up in a neat pyramid just under the edge of the veranda and went off to look for something new to do.

Then the snowballs fell to talking,--_if it is true_ that snowballs talk.

"I wonder what they are going to do with us," said the top one. "I know what I'd _like_ to do. I'd like to hit the nose of that rough, freckle-faced boy who hit the nose of the boy who made me."

"I know what I'd like," said the second. "I'd like to go right through the window of Old Grampy's house. Wouldn't he sputter!"

"Oh! What's the fun in teasing a poor old man?" said another. "I'll tell you what I'd like. I'd like to hit the minister right in the middle of the back and see what he would do."

"Hit the minister in the back!" said a lively-looking chap down in the middle of the pile. "Be a sport! I'd like to knock the policeman's hat off and see him chase the boy that threw me. That would be fun."

It was, you see, a very bold and mischievous lot of balls, if one may judge from their big talk. And so it was probably well for the peace of the neighbourhood that the evening had scarcely fallen when, through a sudden change in the weather, snow, too, began to fall. All night long the snow fell, thicker and faster, thicker and faster. The wind rose and piled it in stacks. The house was banked to the windows, the veranda was heaped up high. The snowballs were buried deep,--so deep that the boys forgot them. It was spring before the thick covering of snow was melted enough so that they could see the light of day.

It was a long time after this, when there came a day which meant much for at least one of that heap of snowballs.

The sun was bright and hot; the grass was beginning to show green. The snow had all gone except in a few places on the cold side of the houses and under veranda edges. The snowballs were still piled neatly in the pyramid but they looked as if they might tumble down almost any minute. Although it was cool in their shady spot, every one of them was perspiring and several of them looked thin and pale. I fancy they had felt the heat, for all their lives they had been accustomed to a cooler climate.

As they were busy mopping their brows and sighing for cooler weather they heard a sound, between a sigh and a faint moan. They heard it again and again. It was above their heads, out on the lawn, and not far away. It seemed to be in or around a shrub or bush, with a tall slender stem and a branching top.

"What's that?" asked several of the balls at once.

They stopped talking, and sighing, and listened. And as they did so, they could hear words very distinctly, though they were not nearly so loud as a whisper.

"Snowball, Snowball, come up here!
My head is hot, my throat feels queer:
I'm going to faint, I surely fear.
Won't some cool snowball come up here?"

"Who are you?" asked Snowball Number One, who sat at the tiptop of the pile. "Where are you and what is your name?"

"I'm Life-of-the-Bush,
In the bush I dwell;
I know not my name,
And so I can't tell."

"I can't see you," said Number One, as he looked intently up at the branches.

"You can't?" said the Bush,
"Then you must be blind.
I'm right up here,--
But never mind."

The voice trailed off weakly; then they heard it again:

"I'm going to faint, I really fear.
Won't some kind snowball come up here?"

"But you are up so high. How can one get there? We have neither a ladder nor wings and we do not know how to climb." Number One did most of the talking; he was nearest the bush.

"I'll tell you how," said Life-of-the-Bush, stopping his rhyme and talking plainly and simply and sensibly. "Just roll down the slope on the lawn to the foot of this bush. Make yourself as small as small can be, creep down into the ground, and take an elevator, which is always running, and you will come directly up to me." The talking ceased, and the snowballs began to look at each other rather uneasily.

"I can't go," said Number Two, who was in the second row from the

top. "I always tan terribly in the sun. It's a long way down to the foot of the bush, and I should be brown as a berry before I got half way."

"I can't go, either," said Number Three, by his side. "I don't tan, but I freckle, and freckles look dreadful on my fair complexion."

"I'm sorry I can't go," said Number Four, from his place in the corner of the third row. "But I feel the heat terribly. My clothes are all sticking to me now."

"It's simply out of the question for me," said a big fat snowball down near the ground. "I know I'd melt before I got there. There isn't much left of me now."

Number One was one of the fairest snowballs of the bunch, but he was not afraid of freckles or tan. He was also one of the smallest of the lot. He looked down to the foot of the bush. It seemed a long way. The sun was certainly burning hot. He was not at all sure that he would live long enough in that sun to reach the bush. But some one should keep Life-of-the-Bush from fainting and he would try.

He turned a quick somersault off the pile down to the ground.

At just that moment something disturbed the whole pile and every ball in it tumbled down and out into the sun.

As soon as Number One touched the ground, he began to roll over, and over, and over, as fast as ever he could. It didn't take him more than a minute to reach the foot of the bush. He remembered what Life-of-the-Bush had said, made himself just as small as small could be, crept down into the ground close to the stem and took the elevator, which seemed to be running all the time.

It took quite a while to go up, but finally the elevator paused just long enough for him to get out. He found himself in a cool, rambling house, that seemed to be almost all long, narrow halls. They ran this way and that way and every--which--way. At one end of each hall, where the buds were opening, there were windows with green shades. Everything was very clean and sweet. Right in the middle of the house he found Life-of-the-Bush. He gave her a drink of water, which he had carried in his water-proof pocket and not only kept her from fainting

but made her as lively and well and happy as ever.

Life-of-the-Bush thanked the snowball a thousand times and gave him the freedom of her beautiful house.

"Now that you are here," she said, "perhaps you will stay a while and help me build my house a little bigger. I must build leaves, and buds and branches and bark. I need your help."

The snowball stayed and helped. He found it very exciting work. He worked all day and all night, ran here and there, and never stopped for meals. He packed buds and unfolded them; he pushed out the leaves and built out the ends of branches; he made bark, pressed it till it was hard and coloured it grey.

Day after day he worked at his tasks as if they gave him the greatest joy in the world. But now and then Life-of-the-Bush saw him gazing out of the window, as if he were a bit homesick, to get out of doors again.

"Stay with me a little longer," she said, "to help me build my blossoms, and then I will send you out of doors on a beautiful errand to stay as long as your heart desires."

So Snowball stayed and helped Life-of-the-Bush build her blossoms. Basket after basket of white stuff, as white as snowflakes but ever so much smaller, he carried out to the ends of the branches. Jar after jar of perfume he carried, too, until the blossoms were quite complete.

Then one evening--it was the last of May, or early June--Life-of-the-Bush called him.

"To-morrow," she said, "there is to be a great Garden Festival. A prize is to be given for the most original and beautiful blossom. All the flowers of the season will be here in the garden. You have been a good friend and a faithful helper. For reward, you may go to the Festival and stay as long as your heart desires."

"But how shall I go?" queried the snowball.

"Right out through the end of one of my branches," said

Life-of-the-Bush.

"But I shall fall off," said the snowball.

"I'll tie you on with a stout string, so that not even the wind can blow you off."

"But it's hot outside. I shall melt."

"O, no. I've changed you so the hottest sun cannot melt you."

"But how can I get out through the end of the branch?" asked the snowball, who could not get it through his head that he could really get out to the end of a branch and stay there all day and not fall off or melt.

"Make yourself very small, just as small as when you came up to me and you can go out as easily as you run along these halls," said Life-of-the-Bush.

The snowball became quite excited. The Festival was to begin very early in the morning. Besides he wanted to see, if he could, what had become of the other snowballs. So he decided that he would go out on the branch that night, while it was dark, and be there for the whole day's fun.

So he made himself very small, ran along the hall, crept out through a tiny green door and found himself tied securely to a swaying branch. The air was cool and sweet. He didn't melt, as he half-feared he might, and he didn't fall off. He looked around. Yes, this was the very bush he had seen before, but it was greener now. Morning came and the great Festival. The garden was full of flowers and folks.

There were lilacs and lilies of shades manifold
There were daisies, and daffodils, yellow as gold.
There were pansies, and peonies, red, white and pink,
And every such flower of which you can think.

You ought to have heard the "Ah's!" and the "Oh's!"
Of all the fine people in all their fine clothes.
You ought to have seen that wonderful sight,
For no rhyme of mine can describe it half right.

People went from bush to bush and from flower to flower. They could not for the life of them tell which blossom they thought most beautiful and original.

The judges wandered about uncertainly with the ribbons in their pockets not knowing to what plant or bush to tie them.

The snowball grew very much interested, not to say excited, to see what blossom would finally win the prize.

He noticed that groups of people continually stopped before the bush on which he hung. Apparently they admired it. He soon discovered that they were looking at him and was quite embarrassed.

"Look!" he kept hearing them say. "See this snowball,--and it doesn't melt! Why, it's growing on the bush; it's a blossom!" That was the first that he knew that Life-of-the-Bush had changed him from a snowball into a flower snowball. Of course he became very happy and twice as excited.

Indeed, he could hardly breathe from excitement, when the judges came over, in a group, to where he grew. They looked at him and at the bush. Apparently they had never seen blossoms of this kind before.

"I never saw such a big, round, white blossom before," he heard one of them say, as he drew a blue ribbon from his pocket and tied it to the stem on which he hung. He knew and soon, of course, everybody knew that the "Snowball Bush" had won the prize. His heart beat so fast that he thought he was growing red in the face. Perhaps he was melting! But he wasn't, for he heard a girl say just then, as she passed, "How white and cool it looks!"

Snowball Number One had often wondered what had happened to his friends, the other snowballs. One reason why he had been anxious to get out of the bush was to find out, if he could, what had become of them all. But the doings of the day had driven all thought of them out of his busy head.

Now, as the people began to leave the garden, and excitement grew less, he remembered and looked about him. Here was the yard in which the boys made him. There was the very place under the edge of the

veranda where he had spent the winter and where they had all stood that spring morning when Life-of-the-Bush called to them. There was the place, almost under him, where he knew they had all tumbled down the moment he left them. But not a trace of a snowball could be seen.

Of course not! They had all disappeared long ago, the very day, indeed, in which they tumbled down. Before noon the hot sun had melted them, every one, and carried them away, tan and freckles and all, and no one ever heard of them again.

Number One, who ran right out into the sun, was the only snowball that didn't melt.

GAU-WI-DI-NE AND GO-HAY, WINTER AND SPRING

(Iroquois Legend)

The snow mountain lifted its head close to the sky; the clouds wrapped around it their floating drifts which held the winter's hail and snowfalls, and with scorn it defied the sunlight which crept over its height, slow and shivering on its way to the valleys.

Close at the foot of the mountain, an old man had built him a lodge "for a time," said he, as he packed it around with great blocks of ice. Within he stored piles of wood and corn and dried meat and fish. No person, animal, nor bird could enter this lodge, only North Wind, the only friend the old man had. Whenever strong and lusty North Wind passed the lodge he would scream "ugh-e-e-e, ugh-e-e-e," as with a blast of his blusterings he passed over the earth.

But North Wind came only seldom to the lodge. He was too busy searching the corners of the earth and driving the snow and the hail, but when he had wandered far and was in need of advice, he would visit the lodge to smoke and counsel with the old man about the next snowfall, before journeying to his home in the north sky; and they would sit by the fire which blazed and glowed yet could not warm them.

The old man's bushy whiskers were heavy with the icicles which clung

to them, and when the blazing fire flared its lights, illuminating them with the warm hues of the summer sunset, he would rave as he struck them down, and glare with rage as they fell snapping and crackling at his feet.

One night, as together they sat smoking and dozing before the fire, a strange feeling of fear came over them, the air seemed growing warmer and the ice began to melt. Said North Wind:

"I wonder what warm thing is coming, the snow seems vanishing and sinking lower in the earth." But the old man cared not, and was silent. He knew his lodge was strong, and he chuckled with scorn as he bade North Wind abandon his fears and depart for his home. But North Wind went drifting the fast-falling snow higher on the mountain until it groaned under its heavy burden, and scolding and blasting, his voice gradually died away. Still the old man remained silent and moved not, but, lost in thought, sat looking into the fire, when there came a loud knock at his door. "Some foolish breath of North Wind is wandering," thought he, and he heeded it not.

Again came the rapping, but swifter and louder, and a pleading voice begged to come in.

Still the old man remained silent, and, drawing nearer to the fire, quieted himself for sleep; but the rapping continued, louder, fiercer, and increased his anger. "Who dares approach the door of my lodge?" he shrieked. "You are not North Wind, who alone can enter here. Begone! no refuge here for trifling winds; go back to your home in the sky." But, as he spoke, the strong bar securing the door fell from its fastening, the door swung open and a stalwart young warrior stood before him shaking the snow from his shoulders as he noiselessly closed the door.

Safe within the lodge, the warrior heeded not the old man's anger, but with a cheerful greeting drew close to the fire, extending his hands to its ruddy blaze, when a glow as of summer illumined the lodge. But the kindly greeting and the glowing light served only to incense the old man, and rising in rage, he ordered the warrior to depart.

"Go!" he exclaimed. "I know you not. You have entered my lodge and you bring a strange light. Why have you forced my lodge door? You are young, and youth has no need of my fire. When I enter my lodge, all

the earth sleeps. You are strong, with the glow of sunshine on your face. Long ago I buried the sunshine beneath the snowdrifts. Go! you have no place here.

"Your eyes bear the gleam of the summer stars. North Wind blew out the summer star-lights moons ago. Your eyes dazzle my lodge, your breath does not smoke in chill vapour, but comes from your lips soft and warm; it will melt my lodge. You have no place here.

"Your hair so soft and fine, streaming back like the night shades, will weave my lodge into tangles. You have no place here.

"Your shoulders are bare and white as the snowdrifts. You have no furs to cover them; depart from my lodge. See, as you sit by my fire, how it draws away from you. Depart, I say, from my lodge!"

But the young warrior only smiled, and asked that he might remain to fill his pipe; and they sat down by the fire. Then the old man became garrulous and began to boast of his great powers.

"I am powerful and strong," said he. "I send North Wind to blow all over the earth and its waters stop to listen to his voice as he freezes them fast asleep. When I touch the sky the snow hurries down and the hunters hide by their lodge fires; the birds fly scared, and the animals creep to their caves. When I lay my hand on the land, I harden it still as the rocks; nothing can forbid me nor loosen my fetters. You, young warrior, though you shine like the Sun, you have no power. Go! I give you a chance to escape me, but I could blow my breath and fold around you a mist which would turn you to ice forever!

"I am not a friend to the Sun, who grows pale and cold and flees to the Southland when I come; yet I see his glance in your face, where no winter shadows hide. My North Wind will soon return; he hates the summer and will bind fast its hands. You fear me not, and smile because you know me not. Young man, listen. I am Gau-wi-di-ne, Winter! Now fear me and depart. Pass from my lodge and go out to the wind."

But the young warrior moved not; he only smiled as he refilled the pipe for the trembling old man, saying, "Here, take your pipe; it will soothe you and make you stronger for a little while longer;" and he packed the o-yan-kwa[A] deep and hard in the pipe.

[A] Indian tobacco.

Said the warrior, "Now you must smoke for me, smoke for Youth and Spring! I fear not your boasting; you are aged and slow while I am young and strong. I hear the voice of South Wind. Your North Wind hears, and Spirit of the Winds is hurrying him back to his home. Wrap you up warm while yet the snowdrifts cover the earth path, and flee to your lodge in the north sky. I am here now, and you shall know me. I, too, am powerful!

"When I lift my hand, the sky opens wide and I waken the sleeping Sun, which follows me warm and glad. I touch the earth and it grows soft and gentle, and breathes strong and swift as my South Wind ploughs under the snows to loosen your grasp. The trees in the forest welcome my voice and send out their buds to my hand. When my breezes blow my long hair to the clouds, they send down gentle showers that whisper to the grasses to grow.

"I came not to tarry long in my peace talk with you, but to smoke with you and warn you that the sun is waiting for me to open its door. You and the North Wind have built your lodge strong, but each wind, the North and the East, and the West, and the South, has its time for the earth. Now South Wind is calling me; return you to your big lodge in the sky. Travel quick on your way that you may not fall in the path of the Sun. See! It is now sending down its arrows broad and strong!"

The old man saw and trembled. He seemed fading smaller, and grown too weak to speak, could only whisper, "Young warrior, who are you?"

In a voice that breathed soft as the breath of wild blossoms, he answered: "I am Go-hay, Spring! I have come to rule, and my lodge now covers the earth! I have talked to your mountain and it has heard; I have called the South Wind and it is near; the Sun is awake from its winter sleep and summons me quick and loud. Your North Wind has fled to his north sky; you are late in following. You have lingered too long over your peace pipe and its smoke now floats far away. Haste while yet there is time that you may lose not your trail."

And Go-hay began singing the Sun song as he opened the door of the lodge. Hovering above it was a great bird, whose wings seemed blown by a strong wind, and while Go-hay continued to sing, it flew down to the lodge and folding Gau-wi-di-ne to its breast, slowly winged away to

the north, and when the Sun lifted its head in the east it beheld the bird disappearing behind the far-away sky. The Sun glanced down where Gau-wi-di-ne had built his lodge, whose fire had burned but could not warm, and a bed of young blossoms lifted their heads to the touch of its beams.

Where the wood and the corn and the dried meat and fish had been heaped, a young tree was leafing, and a blue bird was trying its wings for a nest. And the great ice mountain had melted to a swift running river which sped through the valley bearing its message of the springtime.

Gau-wi-di-ne had passed his time, and Go-hay reigned over the earth!

NAMING THE WINDS

(Indian Legend)

Ga-oh the great master of the winds decided to choose his helpers from the animals of the earth. He blew a strong blast that shook the rocks and hills and when his reverberating call had ceased its thunderous echoes he opened the north gate wide across the sky and called Ya-o-gah, the Bear.

Lumbering over the mountains as he pushed them from his path, Ya-o-gah, the bulky bear, who had battled the boisterous winds as he came, took his place at Ga-oh's gate and waited the mission of his call. Said Ga-oh, "Ya-o-gah, you are strong; you can freeze the waters with your cold breath; in your broad arms you can carry the wild tempests, and clasp the whole earth when I bid you destroy. I will place you in my far North, there to watch the herd of my winter winds when I loose them in the sky. You shall be North Wind. Enter your home." And the bear lowered his head for the leash with which Ga-oh bound him, and submissively took his place in the north sky.

In a gentler voice Ga-oh called Ne-o-ga, the Fawn, and a soft breeze as of the summer crept over the sky; the air grew fragrant with the odour of flowers, and there were voices as of babbling brooks telling

the secrets of the summer to the tune of birds, as Ne-o-ga came proudly lifting her head.

Said Ga-oh, "You walk with the summer sun, and know all its paths; you are gentle, and kind as the sunbeam, and will rule my flock of the summer winds in peace. You shall be the South Wind. Bend your head while I leash you to the sky, for you are swift, and might return from me to the earth." And the gentle Fawn followed Ga-oh to his great gate which opens the south sky.

Again Ga-oh trumpeted a shrill blast, and all the sky seemed threatening; an ugly darkness crept into the clouds that sent them whirling in circles of confusion. A quarrelsome, shrieking voice snarled through the air, and with a sound as of great claws tearing the heavens into rifts, Da-jo-ji, the Panther, sprang to the gate.

Said Ga-oh, "You are ugly, and fierce, and can fight the strong storms; you can climb the high mountains, and tear down the forests; you can carry the whirlwind on your strong back, and toss the great sea waves high in the air, and snarl at the tempests if they stray from my gate. You shall be the West Wind. Go to the west sky, where even the Sun will hurry to hide when you howl your warning to the night." And Da-jo-ji, dragging his leash as he stealthily crept along, followed Ga-oh to the furthest west sky.

Yet Ga-oh rested not. The earth was flat, and in each of its four corners he must have an assistant. One corner yet remained, and again Ga-oh's strong blast shook the earth. And there arose a moan like the calling of a lost mate; the sky shivered in a cold rain; the whole earth clouded in mist; a crackling sound as of great horns crashing through the forest trees dinned the air, and O-yan-do-ne, the Moose, stood stamping his hoofs at the gate.

Said Ga-oh, as he strung a strong leash around his neck, "Your breath blows the mist, and can lead the cold rains; your horns spread wide, and can push back the forests to widen the path for my storms as with your swift hoofs you race with my winds. You shall be the East Wind, and blow your breath to chill the young clouds as they float through the sky." Said Ga-oh as he led him to the east sky, "Here you shall dwell forevermore."

Thus, with his assistants, does Ga-oh control his storms. And although

he must ever remain in his sky lodge, his will is supreme, and his faithful assistants will obey!

NORTH WIND'S FROLIC

In a large, airy castle on the borders of a country far away, lived the King of the Winds with his four children, North Wind, South Wind, East Wind, and West Wind. They were a happy family, for the four children were always making merry with the old Wind King.

North Wind, however, was a boisterous fellow, forever causing disorder even in their play.

One summer day North Wind said that he was going out of the castle for a frolic.

"Go," called out the King, "but be careful, North Wind, what you do. Your pranks are all very well while you are in the castle here, but out in the world they may do great harm."

"Woo--oo--oo----," was all the King heard in answer, and away blustered North Wind out of the castle to the garden near by.

The roses and lilies were just in bloom, and the ripe peaches hung on the trees ready to be picked.

"Woo--oo--oo----," cried the North Wind in his loudest voice, and in a moment the rose petals were scattered all over the ground, the lilies were broken from their stems, and the ripe peaches dropped down right into the mud.

In the fields he caused even greater damage. He broke the wheat stems, threw the unripe apples about. He tore the leaves from their branches and tossed them about in the air in all directions. Indeed, one old tree he completely uprooted.

The people could stand it no longer. They went to the King of the Winds, who, in his castle had control over the coming and going of all

the Winds, and told him what the wicked North Wind had done and how the garden and fields had suffered from the misery he had caused them.

"I will summon North Wind," said his father. "He shall answer for all this."

When North Wind appeared, the King repeated what the people had said. "Is this true, North Wind?" he asked.

North Wind could not deny it, for the devastated garden and fields lay before every one's eyes.

"Why did you do it?" asked the King.

"Oh," answered North Wind, "I didn't mean it wickedly. I wanted to play with the roses and the lilies and the peaches--and all the rest. I didn't think I would do them any harm."

"I see," said the King. "If you are such a clumsy fellow, then I do not dare to let you out for a frolic again. I must keep you a prisoner in the castle the whole summer. In the winter, when there are no more flowers and fruit, you may go out and be as boisterous as you like. I see you are fit only for the time of ice and snow and not for flowers and fruit."

THE MONTHS: A PAGEANT

Christina Rossetti

Boys

January

March

July

August

October

December

Girls

February
April
May
June
September
November

Robin Redbreast; Lambs and Sheep; Nightingale and Nestlings;
various Flowers, Fruits, etc.

SCENE:--_A Cottage with its grounds._

(_A room in a large comfortable cottage; a fire burning on the hearth;
a table on which the breakfast things have been left standing. JANUARY
discovered seated by the fire._)

JANUARY

Cold the day and cold the drifted snow,
Dim the day until the cold dark night.

(_Stirs the fire_)

Crackle, sparkle, faggot; embers glow:
Some one may be plodding through the snow
Longing for a light,
For the light that you and I can show.
If no one else should come,
Here Robin Redbreast's welcome to a crumb,
And never troublesome:
Robin, why don't you come and fetch your crumb?

Here's butter for my hunch of bread,
And sugar for your crumb;
Here's room upon the hearthrug,
If you'll only come.

In your scarlet waistcoat,
With your keen bright eye,
Where are you loitering?

Wings were made to fly!

Make haste to breakfast,
Come and fetch your crumb,
For I'm as glad to see you
As you are glad to come.

(Two Robin Redbreasts are seen tapping with their beaks at the lattice, which JANUARY opens. The birds flutter in, hop about the floor, and peck up the crumbs and sugar thrown to them. They have scarcely finished their meal when a knock is heard at the door. JANUARY hangs a guard in front of the fire, and opens to FEBRUARY, who appears with a bunch of snowdrops in her hand.)

Good-morrow, sister.

FEBRUARY

Brother, joy to you!
I've brought some snowdrops; only just a few,
But quite enough to prove the world awake,
Cheerful and hopeful in the frosty dew
And for the pale sun's sake.

(She hands a few of her snowdrops to JANUARY, who retires into the background. While FEBRUARY stands arranging the remaining snowdrops in a glass of water on the window-sill, a soft butting and bleating are heard outside. She opens the door, and sees one foremost lamb with other sheep and lambs bleating and crowding towards her.)

O you, you little wonder, come--come in,
You wonderful, you woolly soft white lamb:
You panting mother ewe, come too,
And lead that tottering twin
Safe in:
Bring all your bleating kith and kin,
Except the horny ram.

(FEBRUARY opens a second door in the background, and the little flock files through into a warm and sheltered compartment out of sight.)

The lambkin tottering in its walk

With just a fleece to wear;
The snowdrop drooping on its stalk
So slender,--
Snowdrop and lamb, a pretty pair,
Braving the cold for our delight,
Both white
Both tender.

(_ A rattling of doors and windows; branches seen without, tossing
violently to and fro. _)

How the doors rattle, and the branches sway!
Here brother March comes whirling on his way
With winds that eddy and sing:--

(_ She turns the handle of the door, which bursts open, and discloses
MARCH hastening up, both hands full of violets and anemones. _)

Come, show me what you bring;
For I have said my say, fulfilled my day,
And must away.

MARCH

(_ Stopping short on the threshold _)

I blow an arouse
Through the world's wide house
To quicken the torpid earth;
Grappling I fling
Each feeble thing,
But bring strong life to the birth.
I wrestle and frown,
And topple down;
I wrench, I rend, I uproot;
Yet the violet
Is born where I set
The sole of my flying foot.

(_ Hands violet and anemones to FEBRUARY, who retires into the
background. _)

And in my wake
Frail wind-flowers quake,
And the catkins promise fruit.
I drive ocean ashore
With rush and roar,
And he cannot say me nay:
My harpstrings all
Are the forests tall,
Making music when I play.

(_ Before MARCH has done speaking, a voice is heard approaching accompanied by a twittering of birds. APRIL comes along singing, and stands outside and out of sight to finish her song. _)

APRIL

(_ Outside _)

Pretty little three
Sparrows in a tree,
Light upon the wing;
Though you cannot sing
You can chirp of Spring:
Chirp of Spring to me,
Sparrows, from your tree.

Never mind the showers,
Chirp about the flowers
While you build a nest:
Straws from east and west,
Feathers from your breast,
Make the snuggest bowers
In a world of flowers.

(_ Appearing at the open door _)

Good-morrow and good-bye: if others fly,
Of all the flying months you're the most flying.

MARCH

You're hope and sweetness, April.

APRIL

I've a rainbow in my showers
And a lapful of flowers,
And these dear nestlings aged three hours;
 And here's their mother sitting;
 Their father's merely flitting
To find their breakfast somewhere in my bowers.

(_ As she speaks APRIL shows MARCH her apron full of flowers and nest full of birds. MARCH wanders away into the grounds. APRIL, without entering the cottage, hangs over the hungry nestlings watching them. MAY arrives unperceived by APRIL, and gives her a kiss. APRIL starts and looks round._)

Ah, May, good-morrow, May, and so good-bye.

MAY

That's just your way, sweet April, smile and sigh:
Your sorrow's half in fun,
Begun and done
And turned to joy while twenty seconds run.
I've gathered flowers all as I came along,
At every step a flower
Fed by your last bright shower,--

(_ She divides an armful of all sorts of flowers with APRIL, who strolls away through the garden._)

And gathering flowers I listened to the song
Of every bird in bower.

Here are my buds of lily and rose,
 And here's my namesake blossom may;
 And from a watery spot
 See here forget-me-not,
 With all that blows
 To-day.

(_ JUNE appears at the further end of the garden, coming slowly

towards MAY, who, seeing her, exclaims: _)

Surely you're come too early, sister June.

JUNE

Indeed I feel as if I came too soon
To round your young May moon
And set the world a-gasping at my noon.
Yet come I must. So here are strawberries
Sun-flushed and sweet, as many as you please;
And here are full-blown roses by the score,
More roses, and yet more.

(_MAY, eating strawberries, withdraws among the flower beds. JUNE seats herself in the shadow of a laburnum._)

Or if I'm lulled by note of bird and bee,
Or lulled by noontide's silence deep,
I need but nestle down beneath my tree
And drop asleep.

(_JUNE falls asleep; and is not awakened by the voice of JULY, who, behind the scenes, is heard, half singing, half calling._)

JULY

(_Behind the scenes_)

Blue flags, yellow flags, flags all freckled,
Which will you take? yellow, blue, speckled!

Take which you will, speckled, blue, yellow,
Each in its way has not a fellow.

(_Enter JULY, a basket of many-coloured irises slung upon his shoulders, a bunch of ripe grass in one hand, and a plate piled full of peaches balanced upon the other. He steals up to JUNE, and tickles her with the grass. She wakes._)

JUNE

What, here already?

JULY

Nay, my tryst is kept;
The longest day slipped by you while you slept.
I've brought you one curved pyramid of bloom,

(_Hands her the plate_)

Not flowers but peaches, gathered where the bees,
As downy, bask and boom
In sunshine and in gloom of trees.
But get you in, a storm is at my heels;
The whirlwind whistles and wheels,
Lightning flashes and thunder peals,
Flying and following hard upon my heels.

(_JUNE takes shelter in a thickly-woven arbour_)

The roar of a storm sweeps up
From the east to the lurid west,
The darkening sky, like a cup,
Is filled with rain to the brink;
The sky is purple and fire,
Blackness and noise and unrest;
The earth, parched with desire
Opens her mouth to drink.
Have done with thunder and fire,
O sky with the rainbow crest;
O earth, have done with desire,
Drink, and drink deep, and rest.

(_Enter AUGUST, carrying a sheaf made up of different kinds of grain._)

Hail, brother August, flushed and warm
And scathless from my storm,
Your hands are full of corn, I see,
As full as hands can be:
And earth and air both smell as sweet as balm
In their recovered calm,

And that they owe to me.

(_JULY retires into a shrubbery_)

AUGUST

Wheat sways heavy, oats are airy,
Barley bows a graceful head,
Short and small shoots up canary,
Each of these is some one's bread;
Bread for man or bread for beast,
Or, at very least,
A bird's savoury feast.

(_AUGUST descries SEPTEMBER toiling across the lawn_)

My harvest home is ended; and I spy
September drawing nigh,
With the first thought of Autumn in her eye,
And the first sigh
Of Autumn wind among her locks that fly.

(_SEPTEMBER arrives, carrying upon her head a basket heaped high with fruit_)

SEPTEMBER

Unload me, brother. I have brought a few
Plums and these pears for you,
A dozen kinds of apples, one or two
Melons, some figs all bursting through
Their skins, and pearled with dew
These damsons violet-blue.

(_While SEPTEMBER is speaking, AUGUST lifts the basket to the ground, selects various fruits, and withdraws slowly along the gravel walk, eating a pear as he goes._)

My song is half a sigh
Because my green leaves die;
Sweet are my fruits, but all my leaves are dying;
And well may Autumn sigh,

And well may I
Who watch the sere leaves flying.

(_OCTOBER enters briskly, some leafy twigs bearing different sorts of nuts in one hand, and a long ripe hop-bine trailing after him from the other. A dahlia is stuck in his buttonhole. _)

OCTOBER

Nay, cheer up, sister. Life is not quite over,
Even if the year has done with corn and clover,
With flowers and leaves; besides, in fact, it's true
Some leaves remain and some flowers too.
For me and you.
Now see my crops:

(_Offering his produce to SEPTEMBER_)

I've brought you nuts and hops;
And when the leaf drops, why, the walnut drops.

(_OCTOBER wreathes the hop-bine about SEPTEMBER'S neck, and gives her the nut twigs. They enter the cottage together, but without shutting the door. She steps into the background; he advances to the hearth, removes the guard, stirs up the smouldering fire, and arranges several chestnuts ready to roast. _)

Crack your first nut and light your first fire,
Roast your first chestnut crisp on the bar;
Make the logs sparkle, stir the blaze higher,
Logs are cheery as sun or as star,
Logs we can find wherever we are.
Spring one soft day will open the leaves,
Spring one bright day will lure back the flowers;
Never fancy my whistling wind grieves,
Never fancy I've tears in my showers:
Dance, nights and days! and dance on, my hours!

(_Sees NOVEMBER approaching_)

Here comes my youngest sister, looking dim
And grim

With dismal ways.
What cheer, November?

NOVEMBER

(_Entering and shutting the door_)

Nought have I to bring,
Tramping a-chill and shivering,
Except these pine cones for a blaze,--
Except a fog which follows,
And stuffs up all the hollows,--
Except a hoar frost here and there,--
Except some shooting stars
Which dart their luminous cars
Trackless and noiseless through the keen night air.

(_OCTOBER, shrugging his shoulders, withdraws into the background,
while NOVEMBER throws her pine cones on the fire, and sits down
listlessly._)

The earth lies asleep, grown tired
Of all that's high or deep;
There's nought desired and nought required
Save a sleep.
I rock the cradle of the earth,
I lull her with a sigh;
And know that she will wake to mirth
By and by.

(_Through the window DECEMBER is seen running and leaping in the
direction of the door. He knocks._)

Ah, here's my youngest brother come at last:

(_Calls out without rising._)

Come in, December.

(_He opens the door and enters, loaded with evergreens in berry,
etc._)

Come, and shut the door,
For now it's snowing fast;
It snows, and will snow more and more;
Don't let it drift in on the floor.
But you, you're all aglow; how can you be
Rosy and warm and smiling in the cold?

DECEMBER

Nay, no closed doors for me,
But open doors and open hearts and glee
To welcome young and old.

Dimmest and brightest month am I;
My short days end, my lengthening days begin;
What matters more or less sun in the sky,
When all is sun within?

(_ He begins making a wreath as he sings _)

Ivy and privet dark as night,
I weave with hips and haws a cheerful show,
And holly for a beauty and delight,
And milky mistletoe.

While high above them all I set
Yew twigs and Christmas roses pure and pale;
Then Spring her snowdrop and her violet
May keep, so sweet and frail;

May keep each merry singing bird,
Of all her happy birds that singing build:
For I've a carol which some shepherds heard
Once in a wintry field.

(_ While DECEMBER concludes his song all the other Months troop in from the garden, or advance out of the background. The Twelve join hands in a circle, and begin dancing round to a stately measure as the curtain falls. _)

(_ Abridged. _)

PRINCE WINTER

Carl Ewald

The Prince of Winter sat on the mountains: an old man with white hair and beard. His naked breast was shaggy, shaggy his legs and hands. He looked strong and wild with cold stern eyes.

But he was not angry as when Spring drove him from the valley and when Autumn did not go quickly enough. He looked out over the kingdom calmly for he knew that it was his. And, when he found anything dead or empty or desolate, he plucked at his great white beard and gave a harsh and satisfied laugh.

But all that lived in the land was struck with terror when it looked into his cold eyes.

The trees shook in their thick bark, and the bushes struck their branches together in consternation. The mouse became quite snow-blind, when she peeped outside the door; the stag looked mournfully over the white meadow.

"My muzzle can still break thro' the ice, when I drink," he said. "I can still scrape the snow to one side and find a tuft of grass. But, if things go on like this for another week, then it's all up with me."

The crow and the chaffinch and the sparrow and the tit had quite lost their voices. They thought of the other birds, who had departed in time, and they who remained knew not where to turn in their distress. At last they set out in a row to carry their humble greeting to the new lord of the land.

"Here come your birds, O mightiest of all Princes!" said the crow and stood and marked time in the white snow. "The others left the country as soon as you announced your coming, but we have remained to submit us to your sway. Now be a gracious lord to us and grant us food."

"We bow before Your Highness!" said the chaffinch.

"We have so longed for you," said the tit, and he put his head on one side.

And the sparrow said the same as the others, in a tone of deep respect.

But the Prince of Winter laughed at them disdainfully.

"Ha, you time-serving birds! In Summer's time you amused yourselves merrily, in Autumn's, you ate yourselves stout and fat; and as soon as Spring strikes up you will dance to his piping like the others. I hate you and your screaming and squalling and the trees you hop about in. You are all here to defy me and I shall do for you if I can." Then he rose in all his strength.

"I have my own birds and now you shall see them."

He clapped his hands and sang:

"Wee snow-birds, white snow-birds,
White snow-birds, wee snow-birds,
Through fields skim along!
To jubilant Spring I grudge music of no birds,
To Summer, no song.

"Come, Winter's mute messengers,
Swift birds and slow birds,
White snow-birds, wee snow-birds,
Till the valley be soft as down for your nestling
Of numberless ice-eggs by frosty rims spanned!
Now rushing, now resting,
White snow-birds, wee snow-birds,
Skim soft thro' the land!"

And Winter's birds came.

Suddenly, it darkened, and the air became full of little black specks, which descended and turned into great white snow-flakes.

They fell over the ground in an endless multitude. There was now not a blade of grass, nor yet a stone to be seen: everything was smooth and

soft and white. Only the trees stood out high in the air and the river flowed black thro' the meadow.

"I know how to crush you," said the Prince of Winter.

And, when evening came, he told the wind to go down. Then the waves became small and still, Winter stared at them with his cold eyes, and the ice built its bridge from bank to bank. In vain the waves tried to hum Spring's song. There was no strength in their voices.

Next morning there was nothing left to the river but a narrow channel; and, when one more night had passed, the bridge was finished. Again the Prince of Winter called for his white birds; and soon the carpet was drawn over the river till it was no longer possible to see where land began or water ended.

But the trees stood boldly out of the deep snow, the firs had kept all their leaves and were so green that it was quite shocking to behold. Wherever they stood, they were a protection against the frost and a shelter against the snow; and the chaffinch and the other small birds found refuge under their roofs.

The Prince of Winter looked at them angrily.

"If I could but break you!" he said. "You stand in the midst of my kingdom keeping guard for Summer and you give shelter to the birds who disturb the peace of my land. If only I had snow enough to bury you!"

But the trees stood strong under Winter's wrath and waved their long branches.

"You have taken from us what you can," they said. "Farther than that you cannot go. We will wait calmly for better times."

When they had said this Winter suddenly set eyes upon tiny little buds round about the twigs. He saw the little brown mice trip out for a run in the snow and disappear again into their snug parlours before his eyes. He heard the hedgehog snoring in the hedge; and the crows kept on screaming in his ears. Through his own ice he saw the noses of the frogs stick up from the bottom of the pond.

"Am I the master or not?" he shouted. He tore at his beard with both hands.

He heard the anemones breathe peacefully and lightly in the mould; he heard thousands of grubs bore deep into the wood of the trees as cheerfully as though Summer were in the land. He saw the bees crawl about in their busy hive and share the honey they had collected in summer, and have a happy time. He saw the bat in the hollow tree, the worm deep in the ground; and, wherever he turned, he saw millions of eggs and grubs and chrysalides, well guarded and waiting confidently for him to go away.

He stamped on the ground and shouted in his loud, hoarse voice:

"Roar forth, mine anger, roar, and rouse,
What breathes below earth's girder!
By thousands slay them!"

He shouted it over the land.

The ice broke and split into long cracks. It sounded like thunder from the bottom of the river.

Then the storm broke loose. The gale roared so that you could hear the trees fall crashing in the forest. The ice was split in two and the huge floes heaped up into towering icebergs. The snow fell and drifted over meadow and hill; sky and earth were blended into one. It was piercingly cold, and where the snow had been blown away the ground was hard as stone.

The Prince of Winter stood in the valley and looked upon all this with content. He went into the forest, where the snow was frozen to windward right up to the tips of the smooth beech-trunks; but in the boughs of the fir-trees it lay so thick that they were weighted right down to the ground.

"You may be Summer's servants," he said, "but still you have to resign yourselves to wearing my livery. And now the sun shall shine on you; and I will have a glorious day."

He bade the sun come out and he came.

He rode over a bright blue sky, and all that was still alive in the valley raised itself towards him for warmth.

"Call Spring back to the valleys! Give us Summer again!"

The sun gleamed upon the hoar-frost but could not melt it; he stared down at the snow, but could not thaw it. The valley lay silent.

"That's how I like to see the land," said Winter.

The Prince of Winter sat on his mountain throne again and surveyed his kingdom and was glad. His great cold eyes stared, while he growled in his beard.

Proud of speed and hard of hand,
A cruel lord to follow,
Winter locks up sea and land,
Blocks up every hollow.

Summer coaxes, sweet and bland,
Flowers in soft vigour,
At Winter's harsh and grim command
They die of ruthless rigour.

Short and cold is Winter's Day,
Long and worse night's hours,
Few birds languish in his pay
And yet fewer flowers.

The days wore on and Winter reigned over the land.

The little brown mice had eaten their last nut; the hedgehog was hungry and the crows were nearly giving in.

Then suddenly there came the sound of singing.

Play up! Play soon,
Keep time! Keep time!
Ye wavelets blue and tender,
Keep time! Keep time!
Burst ice and rime
In equinoctial splendor.

Up leaped Winter and stared with his hands over his brows.

Down below in the valley stood the Prince of Spring, young and straight in his green garb, with the lute slung over his shoulder. His long hair waved in the wind and his face was soft and round, his mouth was ever smiling and his eyes were dreamy and moist.

HOW SPRING AND WINTER MET

The Winter and the Spring were met:
The Winter threw a fleecy net,
And caught the young Spring over night.
He put to sleep the budding tree
Within a cloister dim and white;
And the little golden crocus flower,
That comes too early for the bee,
He hid away from sunrise hour.
The brook was conscious of his power
And lost its trick of babbling words.

But Spring awoke, despite his craft,
And out of windows looked and laughed.

At first he set to sing all birds,
With twittering voices small and clear,
And bade them say they felt no grief
To find the snow and mildewed leaf
Heaped up in nests they built last year.
Then found a crystal alcove high
The bluebird carolled to the sky.
The robin whistled cheer, good cheer!
The sparrow rung his matin bells,
And far away in reedy dells
The quail a friendly greeting sent.
Then was the stifled pine not loth
To shuffle off the dull white sloth;
Then leaped the brook by icy stair,

And snapped his fetters as he went;
The sun shone out most full and fair,
And Winter rose and struck his tent.

Edith M. Thomas.

T H E E N D

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