GOOD STORIES.

PART III.

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GOOD STORIES.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE BARON:

A RATHER REMARKABLE FAIRY TALE.

ONCE upon a time,—fairy tales always begin with once upon a time, you know,—once upon a time there lived in a fine old castle on the Rhine a certain Baron von Schrochlofleschshofflinger. You won't find it an easy name to pronounce; in fact, the Baron never tried it himself but once, and then he was laid up for two days afterwards; so in future we'll merely call him "The Baron," for shortness, particularly as he was rather a dumpy man. After having heard his name, you won't be surprised when I tell you that he was an exceedingly bad character. For a German baron, he was considered enormously rich; a hundred and fifty pounds a year wouldn't be thought much over here; but still it will buy a good deal of sausage, which, with wine grown on the estate, formed the chief sustenance of the Baron and his family. Now you'll hardly believe that, notwithstanding he was the possessor of this princely revenue, the Baron was not satisfied, but oppressed and ground down his unfortunate tenants to the very last penny he could possibly squeeze out of them. In all his exactions he was seconded and encouraged by his steward, Klootz, an old rascal who took a malicious pleasure in his master's cruelty, and who chuckled and rubbed his hands with the greatest apparent enjoyment when any of the poor landholders couldn't pay their rent, or afforded him any opportunity for oppression. Not content with making the poor tenants pay double value for the land they rented, the Baron was in
the habit of going round every now and then to their houses, and ordering anything he took a fancy to, from a fat pig to a pretty daughter, to be sent up to the castle. The pretty daughter was made parlor-maid, but as she had nothing a year, and to find herself, it was n't what would be considered by careful mothers an eligible situation. The fat pig became sausage, of course. Things went on from bad to worse, till at the time of our story, between the alternate squeezings of the Baron and his steward, the poor tenants had very little left to squeeze out of them. The fat pigs and the pretty daughters had nearly all found their way up to the castle, and there was little else to take. The only help the poor fellows had, was the Baron's only daughter, Lady Bertha, who always had a kind word, and frequently something more substantial, for them, when her father was not in the way. Now, I'm not going to describe Bertha, for the simple reason that if I did, you would imagine that she was the fairy I'm going to tell you about, and she is n't. However, I don't mind giving you a few outlines. In the first place, she was exceedingly tiny—the nicest girls, the real lovable little pets, always are tiny—and she had long silken black hair, and a dear, dimpled little face, full of love and mischief. Now, then, fill up the outline with the details of the nicest and prettiest girl you know, and you'll have a slight idea of her. On second thoughts, I don't believe you will, for your portrait wouldn't be half good enough; however, it'll be near enough for you. Well, the Baron's daughter being all your fancy painted her, and a trifle more, was naturally much distressed at the goings on of her unamiable parent, and tried her best to make amends for her father's harshness. She generally managed that a good many pounds of the sausage should find their way back to the owners of the original pig; and when the Baron tried to squeeze the hand of the pretty parlor-maid, which he occasionally did after dinner, Bertha had only to say, in a tone of mild remonstrance, "Pa!" and pa dropped the hand like a hot potato, and stared very hard the other way, instantly. Bad as the disreputable old Baron was, he had a respect for the goodness and purity of his child. Like the lion, tamed by the charm of Una's innocence, the rough old rascal seemed to lose in her presence half his rudeness; and though he used awful language to her sometimes (I dare say even Una's lion roared occasionally) he was more tractable with her than with any other living being. Her presence operated as a moral restraint upon him, which possibly was the reason that he never stayed down stairs after dinner, but always retired to a favorite turret, where he could get comfortably tipsy, which, I regret to say, he had got so in the way of doing every afternoon, that I believe he would have felt unwell without.

The hour of the Baron's afternoon symposium was the time selected by Bertha for her errands of charity. Once he was fairly settled down to his second bottle, off went Bertha, with her maid beside her carrying a basket to bestow a meal on some of the poor tenants, among whom she was always received with blessings. At first these excursions had been undertaken solely from charitable motives, and Bertha thought herself plentifully repaid in the love and thanks of her grateful pensioners. Of late, however, another cause had led her to take even stronger interest in her walks, and occasionally to come in with brighter eyes and a rosier cheek than the gratitude of the poor tenants had been wont to produce. The fact is, some months before the time of our story, Bertha had noticed in her walks a young artist, who seemed to be fated to be invariably sketching points of interest in the road she had to take. There was one particular tree, exactly in the path which led from the castle gate, which he had sketched from at least four points of view, and Bertha began to wonder what there could be so very particular about it. At last, just as Carl von Sempach had begun to consider where on earth he could sketch the tree from next, and to ponder seriously upon the feasibility of climbing up into it, and taking it from that point of view, a trifling accident occurred which gave him the opportunity of making Bertha's acquaintance, which I don't mind stating, confidentially, was the very thing he had been waiting for. It so chanced, that on one particular afternoon the maid, either through awkwardness or possibly through looking more at the handsome painter than the ground she was walking on, stom-
The acquaintance thus commenced was not suffered to drop; and handsome Carl and our good little Bertha were fairly over head and ears in love, and had begun to have serious thoughts of a cottage in a wood, et cetera, when their felicity was disturbed by their being accidentally met, in one of their walks, by the Baron. Of course the Baron, being himself so thorough an aristocrat, had higher views for his daughter than marrying her to a "beggarly artist," and accordingly he stamped and swore, and threatened Carl with summary punishment with all sorts of weapons, from heavy boots to blunderbusses, if ever he ventured near the premises again. This was unpleasant; but I fear it did not quite put a stop to the young people's interviews, though it made them less frequent and more secret than before.

Now, I'm quite aware this wasn't at all proper, and that no properly regulated young lady would ever have had meetings with a young man her papa didn't approve of. But then it's just possible Bertha mightn't have been a properly regulated young lady; I only know she was a dear little pet, worth twenty model young ladies, and that she loved Carl very dearly. And then consider what a dreadful old tyrant of a papa she had! My dear girl, it's not the slightest use your looking so provokingly correct; it's my deliberate belief that if you had been in her shoes (they'd have been at least three sizes too small for you; but that does not matter) you would have done precisely the same.

Such was the state of things on Christmas Eve in the year—stay! fairy tales never have a year to them; so, on second thoughts, I would n't tell the date if I knew,—but I don't. Such was the state of things, however, on the particular 24th of December to which our story refers,—only, if anything, rather more so. The Baron had got up in the morning in an exceedingly bad temper; and those about him had felt its effects all through the day. His two favorite wolf-hounds, Lutzow and Teufel, had received so many kicks from the Baron's heavy boots that they hardly knew at which end their tails were; and even Klootz himself scarcely dared to approach his master. In the middle of the day two of the principal tenants came to say that they were unprepared with their rent, and to beg for a little delay. The poor fellows represented that their families were starving, and entreated for mercy; but the Baron was only too glad that he had at last found so fair an excuse for venting his ill humor. He loaded the unhappy defaulters with every abusive epithet he could devise (and being called names in German is no joke, I can tell you); and, lastly, he swore by everything he could think of that, if their rent was not paid on the morrow, themselves and their families should be turned out of doors to sleep on the snow, which was then many inches deep on the ground. They still continued to beg for mercy, till the Baron became so exasperated that he determined to kick them out of the castle himself. He pursued them for that purpose as far as the outer door, when fresh fuel was added to his anger. Carl, who, as I have hinted, still managed, notwithstanding the paternal prohibition, to see fair Bertha occasionally, and had come to wish her a merry Christmas, chanced at this identical moment to be saying good by at the door, above which, in accordance with immemorial usage, a huge bush of mistletoe was suspended. What they were doing under it at the moment of the Baron's appearance I never knew exactly; but his wrath was tremendous! I regret to say that his language was unparliamentary in the extreme. He swore till he was n'auve in the face; and if he had not providentially been seized with a fit of coughing, and sat down in the coal-scuttle—mistaking it for a three-legged stool—it is impossible to say to what lengths his feelings might have carried him. Carl and Bertha picked him up, rather black behind, but otherwise not much the worse for his accident. In fact, having sworn a little more, and Carl having left the castle, he appeared rather better. After having endured so many and various emotions, it is hardly to be wondered at that the Baron required some consolation; so, after having changed his tr—s—rs, he took himself off to
his favorite turret, to allay by copious potations the irritation of his mind. Bottle after bottle was emptied, and pipe after pipe was filled and smoked. The fine old Burgundy was gradually getting into the Baron’s head; and altogether he was beginning to feel more comfortable. The shades of the winter afternoon had deepened into the evening twilight, made dimmer still by the aromatic clouds that came, with dignified deliberation, from the Baron’s lips, and curled and floated up to the carved ceiling of the turret, where they spread themselves into a dim canopy, which every successive cloud brought lower and lower. The fire which had been piled up mountain-high earlier in the afternoon, and had flamed and roared to its heart’s content ever since, had now got to that state — the perfection of a fire to a lazy man — when it requires no poking or attention of any kind, but just burns itself hollow, and then tumbles down, and blazes jovially for a little time, and then settles down to a genial glow, and gets hollow and tumbles in again. The Baron’s fire was just in this delightful da capo condition, most favorable of all to the enjoyment of the dolce far niente. For a little while it would glow and kindle quietly, making strange faces to itself, and building fantastic castles in the depths of its red recesses, and then the castles would come down with a crash, and the faces disappear, and a bright flame spring up and lick lovingly the sides of the old chimney; and the carved heads of improbable men and impossible women, hewn so deftly round the panels of the old oak wardrobe opposite, in which the Baron’s choicest vintages were deposited, were lit up by the flickering light, and seemed to nod and wink at the fire in return, with the familiarity of old acquaintances.

Some such fancy as this was disporting itself in the Baron’s brain; and he was gazing at the old oak carving accordingly, and emitting huge volumes of smoke with reflective slowness, when a clatter among the bottles on the table caused him to turn his head to ascertain the cause. The Baron was by no means a nervous man; however, the sight that met his eyes when he turned round did take away his presence of mind a little; and he was obliged to take four distinct puffs before he had sufficiently regained his equi-

librium to inquire, “Who the — Pickwick — are you?” (The Baron said “Dickens,” but as that is a naughty word we will substitute “Pickwick,” which is equally expressive, and not so wrong.) Let me see; where was I? O yes. “Who the Pickwick are you?”

Now, before I allow the Baron’s visitor to answer the question, perhaps I had better give a slight description of his personal appearance. If this was n’t a true story, I should have liked to have made him a model of manly beauty; but a regard for veracity compels me to confess that he was not what would be generally considered handsome; that is, not in figure, for his face was by no means unpleasing. His body was in size and shape not very unlike a huge plum-pudding, and was clothed in a bright-green tightly-fitting doublet with red holly berries for buttons. His limbs were long and slender in proportion to his stature, which was not more than three feet or so. His head was encircled by a crown of holly and mistletoe. The round red berries sparkled amid his hair, which was silver-white, and shone out in cheerful harmony with his rosy jovial face. And that face! it would have done one good to look at it. In spite of the silver hair, and an occasional wrinkle beneath the merry laughing eyes, it seemed brimming over with perpetual youth. The mouth, well garnished with teeth, white and sound, which seemed as if they could do ample justice to holiday cheer, was ever open with a beaming genial smile, expanding now and then into hearty jovial laughter. Fun and good-fellowship were in every feature. The owner of the face was, at the moment when the Baron first perceived him, comfortably seated upon the top of the large tobacco-jar on the table, nursing his left leg. The Baron’s somewhat abrupt inquiry did not appear to irritate him; on the contrary, he seemed rather amused than otherwise.

“You don’t ask prettily, old gentleman,” he replied; “but I don’t mind telling you, for all that. I’m King Christmas.”

“Eh?” said the Baron.

“Aha!” said the goblin. Of course you’ve guessed he was a goblin.

“And pray what’s your business here?” said the Baron.
"Don't be crusty with a fellow," replied the goblin. "I merely looked in to wish you the compliments of the season. Talking of crust, by the way, what sort of a tap is it you're drinking?" So saying, he took up a flask of the Baron's very best and poured out about half a glass. Having held the glass first to one side and then the other, winked at it twice, sniffed it, and gone through the remainder of the pantomime in which connoisseurs indulge, he drank it with great deliberation, and smacked his lips scientifically.

"Hum! Johannisberg! and not so very bad — for you. But I tell you what it is, Baron, you'll have to bring out better stuff than this when I put my legs on your mahogany."

"Well, you are a cool fish," said the Baron. "However, you're rather a joke, so now you're here we may as well enjoy ourselves. Smoke?"

"Not anything you're likely to offer me!"

"Confound your impudence!" roared the Baron, with a horribly complicated oath. "That tobacco's as good as any in all Rhine-land."

"That's a nasty cough you've got, Baron. Don't excite yourself, my dear boy; I dare say you speak according to your lights. I don't mean Vesuvians, you know, but your opportunities for knowing anything about it. Try a weed out of my case, and I expect you'll alter your opinion."

The Baron took the proffered case, and selected a cigar. Not a word was spoken till it was half consumed, when the Baron took it for the first time from his lips, and said gently, with the air of a man communicating an important discovery in the strictest confidence, "Das ist gut!"

"Thought you'd say so," said the visitor. "And now, as you like the cigar, I should like you to try a thimbleful of what I call wine. I must warn you, though, that it is rather potent, and may produce effects you are not accustomed to."

"Bother that, if it's as good as the weed," said the Baron; "I haven't taken my usual quantity by four bottles yet."

"Well, don't say I didn't warn you, that's all. I don't think you'll find it unpleasant, though it is rather strong when you're not accustomed to it." So saying, the goblin produced from some mysterious pocket a black big-bellied bottle, crusted apparently with the dust of ages. It did strike the Baron as peculiar, that the bottle, when once produced, appeared nearly as big round as the goblin himself; but he was not the sort of man to stick at trifles, and he pushed forward his glass to be filled just as composedly as if the potion had been shipped by Sandeman, and paid duty in the most commonplace way.

The glass was filled and emptied, but the Baron uttered not his opinion. Not in words, at least, but he pushed forward his glass to
be filled again in a manner that sufficiently bespoke his approval.

"Aha, you smile!" said the goblin. And it was a positive fact; the Baron was smiling; a thing he had n’t been known to do in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. "That’s the stuff to make your hair curl, is n’t it?"

"I believe you, my b-o-o-o-y!" The Baron brought out this earnest expression of implicit confidence with true Paul Bedford unction. "It warms one - here!"

Knowing the character of the man, one would have expected him to put his hand upon his stomach. But he did n’t; he laid it upon his heart.

"The spell begins to operate, I see," said the goblin. "Have another glass."

The Baron had another glass, and another after that. The smile on his face expanded into an expression of such geniality that the whole character of his countenance was changed, and his own mother would n’t have known him.

I doubt myself- inasmuch as she died when he was exactly a year and three months old- whether she would have recognized him under any circumstances; but I merely wish to express that he was changed almost beyond recognition.

"Upon my word," said the Baron, at length, "I feel so light I almost think I could dance a hornpipe. I used to once, I know. Shall I try?"

"Well, if you ask my advice," replied the goblin, "I should say, decidedly don’t. ‘Barkis is willin’,’ I dare say, but trousers are weak, and you might split ‘em."

"Hang it all," said the Baron, "so I might; I didn’t think of that. But still I feel as if I must do something juvenile!"

"Ah! that’s the effect of your change of nature," said the goblin. "Never mind, I’ll give you plenty to do, presently."

"Change of nature! what do you mean, you old conundrum?" said the Baron.

"You’re another," said the goblin. "But never mind. What I mean is just this. What you are now feeling is the natural conse-}

quence of my magic wine, which has changed you into a fairy. That’s what’s the matter, sir."

"A fairy! me!" exclaimed the Baron. "Get out; I’m too fat."

"Fat! O, that’s nothing. We shall put you in regular training, and you’ll soon be slim enough to creep into a lady’s stocking. Not that you’ll be called upon to do anything of the sort; but I’m merely giving you an idea of your future figure."

"No, no," said the Baron; "me thin! that’s too ridiculous. Why, that’s worse than being a fairy. You don’t mean it, though, do you? I do feel rather peculiar."

"I do, indeed," said the visitor. "You don’t dislike it, do you?"

"Well no, I can’t say I do, entirely. It’s queer, though, I feel so uncommon friendly. I feel as if I should like to shake hands, or pat somebody on the back."

"Ah!" said the goblin, "I know how it is. Rum feeling, when you’re not accustomed to it. But come; finish that glass, for we must be off. We’ve got a precious deal to do before morning, I can tell you. Are you ready?"

"All right," said the Baron. "I’m just in the humor to make a night of it."

"Come along, then," said the goblin.

They proceeded for a short time in silence along the corridors of the old castle. They carried no candle, but the Baron noticed that everything seemed perfectly light wherever they stood, but relapsed into darkness as soon as they had passed by. The goblin spoke first.

"I say, Baron, you’ve been an uncommon old brute in your time, now, have n’t you?"

"H’m," said the Baron, reflectively, "I don’t know. Well, yes, I rather think I have."

"How jolly miserable you’ve been making those two young people, you old sinner! You know who I mean."

"Eh, what? You know that, too?" said the Baron.

"Know it; of course I do. Why bless your heart, I know everything, my dear boy. But you have made yourself an old pig in that quarter, considerably. Ain’t you blushing, you hard-hearted old monster?"
“Don’t know, I’m sure,” said the Baron, scratching his nose, as if that was where he expected to feel it. I believe I have treated them badly, though, now I come to think of it.”

At this moment they reached the door of Bertha’s chamber. The door opened of itself at their approach.

“Come along,” said the goblin, “you won’t wake her. Now, old flinty-heart, look there.”

The sight that met the Baron’s view was one that few fathers could have beheld without affectionate emotion. Under ordinary circumstances, however, the Baron would not have felt at all sentimental on the subject, but to-night something made him view things in quite a different light to that he was accustomed to. I shouldn’t like to make affidavit of the fact, but it’s my positive impression that he sighed.

Now, my dear reader — particularly if a gentleman — don’t imagine I’m going to indulge your impertinent curiosity with an elaborate description of the sacred details of a lady’s sleeping apartment. You’re not a fairy, you know, and I don’t see that it can possibly matter to you whether fair Bertha’s dainty little bottines were tidily placed on the chair by her bedside, or thrown carelessly, as they had been taken of, upon the hearth-rug, where her favorite spaniel reposed, warming his nose in his sleep before the last smouldering embers of the decaying fire; or whether her crinoline, but if she did wear a crinoline, what can that possibly matter, sir? All I shall tell you is, that everything looked snug and comfortable; but somehow, any place got that look when Bertha was in it. And now a word about the jewel in the casket, — pet Bertha herself. Really, I’m at a loss to describe her. How do you look when you’re asleep? Well, it was n’t like that; not a bit! Fancy a sweet girl face, the cheek faintly flushed with a soft warm tint, like the blush in the heart of the opening rose, and made brighter by the contrast of the snowy pillow on which it rested; dark silken hair, curling and clustering lovingly over the tiniest of tiny ears, and the softest, whitest neck that ever mortal maiden was blessed with; long silken eyelashes, fringing lids only less beautiful than the dear earnest eyes they cover. Fancy all this, and fancy, too, if you can, the expression of perfect goodness and purity that lit up the sweet features of the slumbering maiden with a beauty almost angelic, and you will see what the Baron saw that night. Not quite all, however, for the Baron’s vision paused not at the bedside before him, but had passed on from the face of the sleeping maiden to another face as lovely, that of the young wife, Bertha’s mother, who had, years before, taken her angel beauty to the angels.

The goblin spoke to the Baron’s thought. “Wonderfully like her, is she not, Baron?” The Baron slowly inclined his head.

“You made her very happy, did n’t you?” The tone in which the goblin spoke was harsh and mocking. “A faithful husband, tender and true! She must have been a happy wife, eh, Baron?”

The Baron’s head had sunk upon his bosom. Old recollections were thronging into his awakened memory. Solemn vows to love and cherish, somewhat strangely kept. Memories of bitter words, and savage oaths, showered at a quiet, uncomplaining figure, without one word in reply. And last, the memory of a fit of drunken passion, and a hasty blow struck with a heavy hand; and then of three months fading away; and last, of her last prayer, — for her baby and him.

“A good husband makes a good father, Baron. No wonder you are somewhat chary of rashly intrusting to a suitor the happiness of a sweet flower like this. Poor child! it is hard, though, that she must think no more of him she loves so dearly. See! she is weeping even in her dreams. But you have good reasons, no doubt. Young Carl is wild, perhaps, or drinks, or gambles, eh? What! none of these? Perhaps he is wayward and uncertain, and you fear that the honeyed words of courtship might turn to bitter sayings in matrimony. They do, sometimes, eh, Baron? By all means guard her from such a fate as that. Poor tender flower! Or who knows, worse than that, Baron! Hard words break no bones, they say, but angry men are quick, and a blow is soon struck, eh?”

The goblin had drawn nearer and nearer, and laid his hand upon the Baron’s arm, and the last words were literally hissed into his
ear. The Baron's frame swayed to and fro under the violence of his emotions. At last, with a cry of agony, he dashed his hands upon his forehead. The veins were swollen up like thick cords, and his voice was almost inarticulate in its unnatural hoarseness.

"Torturer, release me! Let me go, let me go and do something to forget the past; or I shall go mad or die!"

He rushed out of the room and paced wildly down the corridor, the goblin following him. At last, as they came near the outer door of the castle, which opened of itself as they reached it, the spirit spoke:

"This way, Baron, this way; I told you there was work for us to do before morning, you know."

"Work!" exclaimed the Baron, absently, passing his fingers through his tangled hair; "yes, work! the harder and the rougher the better; anything to make me forget."

The two stepped out into the court-yard, and the Baron shivered, though, as it seemed, unconsciously, at the breath of the frosty midnight air. The snow lay deep on the ground, and the Baron's heavy boots sank into it with a crisp, crushing sound at every tread. He was bareheaded, but seemed unconscious of the fact, and tramped on, as if utterly indifferent to anything but his own thoughts. At last, as a blast of the night-wind, keener than ordinary, swept over him, he seemed for the first time to feel the chill. His teeth chattered, and he muttered, "Cold, very cold."

"Ay, Baron," said the goblin, "it is cold, even to us, who are healthy and strong, and warmed with wine. Colder still, though, to those who are hungry and half-naked, and have to sleep on the snow."

"Sleep? snow?" said the Baron. "Who sleeps on the snow? why, I would n't let my dogs be out on such a night as this."

"Your dogs, no!" said the goblin; "I spoke of meaner animals, — your wretched tenants. Did you not order yesterday that Wilhelm and Friedrich, if they did not pay their rent to-morrow, should be turned out to sleep on the snow? a snug bed for the little ones, and a nice white coverlet, eh? Ha! ha! twenty florins or so

Is no great matter, is it? I'm afraid their chance is small, nevertheless. Come and see."

The Baron hung his head. A few minutes brought them to the first of the poor dwellings, which they entered noiselessly. The fireless grate, the carpetless floor, the broken window-panes, all gave sufficient testimony to the want and misery of the occupants. In one corner lay sleeping a man, a woman, and three children, and nestled to each other for the warmth which their ragged coverlet could not afford. In the man the Baron recognized his tenant, Wilhelm, one of those who had been with him to beg for indulgence on the previous day. The keen features, and bones almost starting through the pallid skin, showed how heavily the hand of hunger had been laid upon all. The cold night-wind moaned and whistled through the many flaws in the ill-glazed, ill-thatched tenement, and rustled over the sleepers, who shivered even in their sleep.

"Ha, Baron," said the goblin, "Death is breathing in their faces even now, you see; it is hardly worth while to lay them to sleep in the snow, is it? They would sleep a little sounder, that's all."

The Baron shuddered, and then, hastily pulling the warm coat from his own shoulders, he spread it over the sleepers.

"Oho!" said the goblin, "bravely done, Baron! By all means keep them warm to-night, they'll enjoy the snow more to-morrow, you know."

Strange to say, the Baron, instead of feeling chilled when he had removed his coat, felt a strange glow of warmth spread from the region of the heart over his entire frame. The goblin's continual allusions to his former intention, which he had by this time totally relinquished, hurt him, and he said, rather pathetically, "Don't talk of that again, good goblin, I'd rather sleep on the snow myself."

"Eh! what?" said the goblin, "you don't mean to say you're sorry? Then what do you say to making these poor people comfortable?"

"With all my heart," said the Baron, "if we had only anything to do it with."
"You leave that to me," said the goblin, "your brother fairies are not far off, you may be sure."

As he spoke he clapped his hands thrice, and before the third clap had died away, the poor cottage was swarming with tiny figures, whom the Baron rightly conjectured to be the fairies themselves.

Now you may not be aware (the Baron wasn't until that night) that there are among the fairies trades and professions, just as with ordinary mortals. However, there they were each with the accompaniments of his or her particular business, and to it they went manfully. A fairy glazier put in new panes to the shattered windows, fairy carpenters replaced the doors upon their hinges, and fairy painters, with inconceivable celerity, made cupboards and closets as fresh as paint could make them; one fairy housemaid laid and lit a roaring fire, while another dusted and rubbed chairs and tables to a miraculous degree of brightness; a fairy butler uncorked bottles of fairy wine, and a fairy cook laid out a repast of most tempting appearance. The Baron, hearing a tapping above him, cast his eyes upwards and beheld a fairy slater rapidly repairing a hole in the roof; and when he bent them down again, they fell on a fairy doctor mixing a cordial for the sleepers. Nay, there was even a fairy parson, who, not having any present employment, contented himself with rubbing his hands and looking pleasant, probably waiting till somebody might want to be christened or married.

Every trade, every profession or occupation, appeared, without exception, to be represented; nay, we beg pardon, with one exception only, for the Baron used to say, when afterwards relating his experiences to bachelor friends, "You may believe me or not, sir, there was every mortal business under the sun, but devil a bit of a lawyer."

The Baron could not long remain inactive. He was rapidly seized with a violent desire to do something to help, which manifested itself in insane attempts to assist everybody at once. At last, after having taken all the skin off his knuckles in attempting to hammer in nails in aid of the carpenters, and then nearly tumbling over a fairy housemaid, whose broom he was offering to carry, he gave it up as a bad job, and stood aside with his friend the goblin. He was just about to inquire how it was that the poor occupants of the house were not awakened by so much din, when a fairy Sam Slick, who had been examining the cottager's old clock, with a view to a thorough repair, touched some spring within it, and it made the usual purr preparatory to striking. When lo and behold, at the very first stroke, cottage, goblin, fairies, and all disappeared into utter darkness, and the Baron found himself in his turret-chamber, rubbing his toe, which he had just hit with considerable force against the fender. As he was only in his slippers, the concussion was unpleasant, and the Baron rubbed his toe for a good while. After he had finished with his toe, he rubbed his nose, and finally, with a countenance of deep reflection, scratched the bump of something or other at the top of his head. The old clock on the stairs was striking three, and the fire had gone out. The Baron reflected for a short time longer, and finally decided that he had better go to bed, which he did accordingly.

The morning dawned upon the very ideal, as far as weather was concerned, of a Christmas Day. A bright winter sun shone out just vividly enough to make everything look genial and pleasant, and yet not with sufficient warmth to mar the pure unbroken surface of the crisp white snow, which lay like a never-ending white lawn upon the ground, and glittered in myriad silver flakes upon the leaves of the sturdy evergreens. I'm afraid the Baron had not had a very good night; at any rate, I know that he was wide-awake at an hour long before his usual time of rising. He lay first on one side, and then on the other, and then, by way of variety, turned on his back, with his magenta nose pointing perpendicularly towards the ceiling; but it was all of no use. Do what he would, he couldn't get to sleep, and at last, not long after daybreak, he tumbled out of bed, and proceeded to dress. Even after he was out of bed his fidgetiness continued. It did not strike him, until after he had got one boot on, that it would be a more natural proceeding to put his stockings on first; after which he caught himself in the
act of trying to put his trousers on over his head; (which, I may mention for the information of lady readers, who, of course, cannot be expected to know anything about such matters, is not the mode most generally adopted.) In a word, the Baron's mind was evidently preoccupied; his whole air was that of a man who felt a strong impulse to do something or other, but could not quite make up his mind to it. At last, however, the good impulse conquered, and this wicked old Baron, in the stillness of the calm bright Christmas morning, went down upon his knees and prayed. Stiff were his knees and slow his tongue, for neither had done such work for many a long day past; but I have read in the Book, of the joy of the angels over a repenting sinner. There needs not much eloquence to pray the Publican's Prayer, and who shall say but there was gladness in heaven that Christmas morning?

The Baron's appearance down stairs at such an early hour occasioned quite a commotion. Nor were the domestics reassured when the Baron ordered a bullock to be killed and jointed instantly, and all the available provisions in the larder, including sausage, to be packed up in baskets, with a good store of his own peculiar wine. One ancient retainer was heard to declare, with much pathos, that he feared master had gone "off his head." However, "off his head" or not, they knew the Baron must be obeyed, and in an exceedingly short space of time he sallied forth, accompanied by three servants carrying the baskets, and wondering what in the name of fortune their master would do next. He stopped at the cottage of Wilhelm, which he had visited with the goblin on the previous night. The labors of the fairies did not seem to have produced much lasting benefit, for the appearance of everything around was as wretched as could be. The poor family thought that the Baron had come himself to turn them out of house and home; and the poor children huddled up timidly to their mother, for protection, while the father attempted some words of entreaty for mercy. The pale, pinched features of the group, and their looks of dread and wretchedness, were too much for the Baron. "Eh! what! what do you mean, confound you? Turn you out! Of course not:
many an act of petty tyranny on the part of the steward, thought
they could not do better than follow their master's example, which
they did to such good purpose, that when the unfortunate Klootz
did escape from the cottage at last, I don't believe he could have had any as sacré left.

After having executed this little act of poetical justice, the Baron
and his servants visited the other cottages, in all of which they were
received with dread, and dismissed with blessings. Having com-
pleted his tour of charity, the Baron returned home to breakfast,
feeling more really contented than he had done for many a long
year. He found Bertha, who had not risen when he started, in a
considerable state of anxiety as to what he could possibly have been
doing. In answer to her inquiries he told her, with a roughness he
was far from feeling, to "mind her own business." The gentle eyes
filled with tears at the harshness of the reply; perceiving which, the
Baron was beyond measure distressed, and chucked her under the
chin in what was meant to be a very conciliatory manner. "Eh!
what, my pretty? tears? No, surely. Bertha must forgive her
old father. I didn't mean it, you know, my pet; and yet, on second
thoughts, yes I did, too." Bertha's face was overcast again. "My
little girl thinks she has no business anywhere, eh! Is that it?
Well, then, my pet, suppose you make it your business to write a
note to young Carl von Sempach, and say I'm afraid I was rather
rude to him yesterday, but if he'll look over it, and come and take
a snug family dinner and a slice of the pudding with us to-day —
"Why, pa, you don't mean — yes, I do really believe you do —"
The Baron's eyes were winking nineteen to the dozen. "Why, you
dear, dear, dear old pa!" And, at the imminent risk of upsetting
the breakfast-table, Bertha rushed at the Baron, and flinging two
soft white arms about his neck, kissed him,— O, how she did kiss
him! I shouldn't have thought, myself; she could possibly have
had any left for Carl; but I dare say Bertha attended to his inter-
ests in that respect somehow.

Well, Carl came to dinner, and the Baron was, not many years
after, promoted to the dignity of a grandpapa, and a very jolly old
grandpapa he made. Is that all you wanted to know?

About Klootz? Well, Klootz got over the kicking, but he was
dismissed from the Baron's service; and on examination of his
accounts, it was discovered that he had been in the habit of rob-
ing the Baron of nearly a third of his yearly income, which he
had to refund; and with the money he was thus compelled to dis-
gorge the Baron built new cottages for his tenants, and new-
stocked their farms. Nor was he the poorer in the end, for his
tenants worked with the energy of gratitude, and he was soon many
times richer than when the goblin visited him on that Christmas Eve.

And was the goblin ever explained? Certainly not. How dare
you have the impertinence to suppose such a thing? An empty
bottle, covered with cobwebs, was found the next morning in the
turret-chamber, which the Baron at first imagined must be the bot-
tle from which the goblin produced his magic wine; but as it was
found, on examination, to be labelled "Old Jamaica Rum," of course
that could not have had anything to do with it. However it was,
the Baron never thoroughly enjoyed any other wine after it; and
as he did not thenceforth get drunk, on an average, more than two
nights a week, or swear more than about eight oaths a day, I think
King Christmas may be considered to have thoroughly reformed
him. And he always maintained, to the day of his death, that he
was changed into a fairy, and became exceedingly angry if contra-
dicted.

Who doesn't believe in fairies after this? I only hope King
Christmas may make a few more good fairies this year, to brighten
the homes of the poor with the light of Christmas charity. Truly
we need not look far for almsmen. Cold and hunger, disease and
death, are around us at all times; but at no time do they press
more heavily on the poor than at this jovial Christmas season.
Shall we shut out, in our mirth and jollity, the cry of the hungry
poor? or shall we not rather remember, in the midst of our happy
family circles, round our well-filled tables, and before our blazing
fires, that our brothers are starving -out in the cold, and that the
Christmas song of the angels was "Good-will to men"?
A CHRISTMAS STORY.

SOME time in the year 1856 a family named Yarrow moved into the neighborhood where I then lived, and rented a small house with a bit of ground attached to it, on one of the rich bottom-farms lying along the eastern shore of the Ohio. The mother, two or three children, and their dog Ready made up the quiet household: not one to attract notice from any cause. People soon knew Martha Yarrow,—all that was in her. She was Western and farm-born; whatever Nature had given her of good or bad, therefore, thrust itself out at once with pungent directness.

The family supported themselves by selling their poultry and vegetables to the hucksters, leading an eventless life enough, until the change occurred, some five years after they came into the neighborhood, of which I am going to tell you.

I called it a Christmas Story, not so much because it happened on a Christmas, as because the meaning of it seemed suited to that day; and I thought, too, that nobody grows tired of Christmas stories, especially if he chance to have been born in one of those families where the day is kept in the old fashion: it roots itself so deep, that memory, in whatever quaint superstition, or homely affection for mother or brother, or unreasoning trust in God, may outlive our childhood, and underlie our older years. And surely that is as just, as wise a thing,—to strip off for a child the smirched trading-dress of one day at least, and send it down through the long procession of the years with its true face bared, to waken in him a live sense of man's love and God's love. Some one, perhaps, had done this for this woman, Mrs. Yarrow, long ago; for, let the months before and after be bare as they chose, she kept this...
day of Christmas with a feverish anxiety, more eager than her children even to make every moment warm and throb with pleasure, and enjoying them herself, to their last breath, with the whole zest of a nervous, strong-blooded nature. Yet she may have had another reason for it.

The evening before the Christmas of which we write she had gone out to the well with her son before closing the house for the night.

"There's no danger of thaw before morning, Jem?"—looking anxiously up into the night, as they rested the bucket on the curb.

"Thaw! there's a woman's notion for you! Why, the very crow is frozen out of the cocks yonder!"—stretching his arms, and clapping his hollow chest, as if he were six feet high. "No, we'll not have a thaw, little woman."

The children often called her that, in a fond, protecting way; but it sounded most oddly from Jem, he was such a weak, swaggering sparrow of a little chap. He stretched his hands as high as he could reach up to her hips, and smoothed her linsey dress down; if it had been her face, the touch could not have been more tender.

"You don't think of the luck we always have. Why, it could n't rain on Christmas for you or me, mother!"

She laughed, nodding several times.

"Well, that is sure, Jem," stopping to look into the lean, emphatic little face, and to pass her hand over the tow-colored hair.

Somehow, the bond between mother and son was curiously strong to-night. It was always so on Christmas. At other times they were much like two children in companionship, but Christmas never came without bringing a vague sense of cowering close together as though some danger stood near them. There was something half fierce, now, in the way she caressed his face.

"Come on with the bucket, brother," she said, cheerfully, stamping the clogging snow from her shoes, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking over the white stretch to the black line of hills chopping the east. "More like a hail-gust than rain. But I was
afraid of that, you see," as they went up the path. "There's an old saying, that trouble always comes with rain. And it did in my life — to me —"

She was talking to herself. Jem whistled, pretending not to hear; but he peered sharply into her face, with the relish which all sickly, premature children have for a mystery or pain. Very seldom was there hint of either about Martha Yarrow. She was an Ohio woman, small-boned, muscular, with healthy, quick blood, not a scrofulous, ill-tempered drop in her veins; in her brain only a very few and obstinate opinions, may be, but all of them lying open to the sight of anybody who cared to know them. Not long ago, she had been a pretty, bouncing country-belle: now, she was a hard-working housewife; a Whig, because all the Clarks (her own family) were Whigs: going to the Baptist church, with no clear ideas about close communion or immersion, because she had married a country parson. With a consciousness that she had borne a heavier pain in her life than most women, and ought to feel scourged and sad, she did cry out with such feeling sometimes, — but with a keen, natural relish for apple-butter parings, or fair-days, or a neighbor dropping in to tea, or anything that would give the children and herself a chance to joke and laugh, and be like other people again. Between the two feelings, her temper was odd and uncertain enough. But in this December air, now, her still rounded cheek grew red, her breast heaved, her eyes sparkled, glad as a child would be, simply because it was cold and Christmas was coming; while the child Jem, with his tougher, less sappy animal nature, jogged gravely beside her, head and eyes down. As for her everyday life, nobody's fires burned, nobody's windows shone like Martha Yarrow's; not a pound of butter went to market with the creamy, clovery taste her fingers worked into hers. She put a flavor, an elastic spring, into every bit of work she did, making it play. The very nervousness of the woman, her sudden fits of laughter and tears, impressed you as the effervescence of a zest of life which began at her birth. Nobody ever got to the end, or expected to get to the end, of her stories and scraps of old songs. Then, every day some new plan, keeping the whole house awake and alive; when Tom's birthday came, a surprise-feast of raspberries and cake; when Jem's new trousers were produced, they had been made up overnight, a dead secret, ten shining dimes in the pocket, fresh from the mint; even the penny string of blue beads for Catty, bought of Sims the peddler, was hid under her plate, and made quite a jollification of that supper. You may be sure, the five years just gone in that house had been short and merry and cosey enough for the children. Before that— Here Jem's memory flagged: he had been a baby then; Catty just born; yet, somehow, he never thought of that unknown time without the furtive, keen glance into his mother's face, and a frightened choking in the heart under his puny chest. Somewhere, back yonder, or in the years coming, some vague horror waited for him to fight. To-night, (always at Christmas, although then the glow and comfort of all days reached its heat,) this unaccountable dread was on the boy; why, he never knew. It might be that under the hurry and preparation of Martha Yarrow on that day some deeper meaning did lie, which his instinct had discerned: more probably, however, it was but the sickly vagary of a child grown old too fast.

They hurried along the path now to reach the house and shut the night outside, for every moment the cold and dark were growing heavier; the snow rasping under their feet, as its crust cracked: overhead, the sky-air frozen thin and gray, holding dead a low, watery half-moon; now and then a more earthy, thicker gust breaking sharply round the hill, taking their breath. It was only a step, however, and Tom was holding the house-door open, letting a ruddy light stream out, and with a savory smell of supper. Tom halloed, and that blue-eyed pudge of a Catty pounded on the window with her fat little fist. How hot the fire glowed! Somehow all Christmas seemed waiting in there. It was time to hurry along. Even Ready came out, shaking his shaggy old sides impatiently in the snow, and began to dog them, snapping at Jem's heels. Like most old people, he liked his ease, and was apt to be out of sorts, if meals were kept waiting. Ready's whims always made Martha laugh as
GOOD STORIES.

She did when she was a young girl: they knew each other then, long before Jem was born.

"Come on, old Truepenny," she said, going in.

There was comfort. Nothing in that house, from the red woollen curtains to the bright poker, which did not have its part to play for Christmas. Nothing that did not say "Christmas," from Catty's eyes to the very supper-table. Of course I don't mean the Christmas dinner, when I say supper. Tom could have told you. Somewhere in his paunchy little body he kept a perpetual bill of fare, checked off or unchecked. He based and stayed his mind now on preparations in the pantry. Something solid there! A haunch of venison, mince-meat, winter succotash, a roasted peahen,—and that is the top and crown of Nature's efforts in the way of fowls. For suppers,—pish! However, Tom ate with the rest. Mother was hungry; so they were very leisurely, and joked and laughed to that extent that even Catty was uproarious when they were through. Then Jem fell to work at the great coals, and battered them into a rousing fire.

"I'll go and fasten the shutters," said Tom.

Martha Yarrow's back was to the window. She turned sharply. The sickly white moon lighted up the snow-waste out there; some one might be out in those frozen fields,—some one who was coming home,—who had been gone for years,—years. Jem was watching her.

"Leave the windows alone, Tom," he said. "It won't hurt the night to see my fire."

He pulled his cricket close up to her, and took her hand to pet. It was cold, and her teeth chattered. However, they were all so snug and close together, and Christmas, that great warm-hearted day, was so near upon them, as full of love and hearty, warm enjoyment as the living God could send it, that its breath filled all their hearts; and presently Martha Yarrow's face was brighter than Catty's. They were noisy and busy enough. The programme for to-morrow was to make out; that put all heads to work to plan: the stockings to be opened, and dinner, and may be a visit to the menagerie in the afternoon. That was Martha's surprise, and she was not disappointed in the applause it brought. It made the tears come to her eyes, an hour after, when she was going to bed, remembering it.

"It takes such a little thing to make them happy," she said to herself,—"or me, either," with a somewhat silly face.

She tried to thank God for giving them so much, but only sobbed. After the confusion about the show was over, and Catty had been wakened into a vague jungle of tigers and lions and Shetland ponies, and put to sleep again, they subsided enough to remember the winding-up of the day. Quiet that was to be; the children from Shag's Point were coming up, some half-dozen in all, for their share of Christmas. Poorer than the Yarrows, you understand? though but a little: in fact, there were not many steps farther down; peahens and cranberries were not for every day. Well, to-morrow evening Jem would tell them the story of the Stable and the Child, and how that the Child was with us yet, if we could only see. Jem was always his mother's spokesman, and put the meaning of Christmas into words: she never talked of such things. Yet they always watched her face, when they spoke of them,—watched it now, and looked, as she did, into the little room beyond the kitchen where they sat, their eyes growing still and brighter. There might have been a tinge of the savage or the Frenchman in Martha Yarrow's nature, she had so strong a propensity to make real, apparent to the senses, what few ideas she had, even her religion. A good skill to do it, too. The recess out of the kitchen was only a small closet, but, with the aid of a softly tinted curtain or two, and the nebulous light of a concealed lamp, she had contrived to give it an air of distance and reserve. Within were green wreaths hung over the whitewashed walls, and an altar-shaped little white table, covered with heaps of crimson leaves and bright berries, such as grow in the snow; only a few flowers, but enough to fill the air with fragrance; the children's Christmas gifts, and wax-lights burning before a picture, the child Jesus, looking down on them with a smile as glad as their own. A thoroughly real person to the boys,
this Christ for childhood; for she built the little altar before this picture on all their holidays: something in the woman herself needing the story of the Stable and the Child. If she were doing a healthier work on the souls of that morbid Jem and glutton Tom than could a thousand after-sermons, she did not know it: never guessed, either, when they absorbed day by day hardly enough the force of her tough-muscled endurance and wholesome laugh, that she prepared the way of the Lord and made His paths straight. Yet what matter who knew?

But to go on with our story. There were times — once or twice to-night, for instance — when she ceased doing even her unconscious work. Assuredly, somewhere back in her life, something had gone amiss with this silly, helpful creature, and left a taint on her brain. The hearty, pretty smile would go suddenly from her face, something foreign looking out of it, instead, as if a pestilent thought had got into her soul; she would rise 'uneasily, going to the window, looking out, her forehead leaning on the glass, her body twitching weakly. One would think from her face she saw some work in the world which God had forgotten. Whatever hurt her, it was the one word which her garrulous lips never hinted. Once to-night she spoke more plainly than Jem had ever known her to do in all his life. It was after the children had gone to bed, which they did, shouting and singing, and playing circus-riders over the pillows, their mother leaning her elbows on the foot-board, laughing, in the mean time. Jem got up, after the others were asleep, and stole after her, in his little flannel drawers, back to the kitchen.

By the window, as he had feared, the woollen sock which she was knitting for Tom in her hand, the yarn all tangled and broken. Ready was by her knees, winking sleepily. The old dog was growing surly with his years, as we said; Jem remembered when he used to romp and tussle with him, but that was long ago: he lay in the chimney-corner always now, growling at Martha herself even, if her singing or laugh disturbed his nap. But when these strange moods came on her, Jem noticed that the yellow old beast seemed conscious of it sooner than any one beside, crept up to her, stood by her: that she clung to him, not to her children. He was licking her hand now, his red eye, drowsy though it was, watching her as if danger were nigh. A dog you would not slight. Inside of his hot-headedness and courage there was that reserved look in his eyes, which some men and brutes have, that says they have a life of their own to live separate from yours, and they know it. The boy crept up jealously, thrust his numb fingers into his mother's hand. She started, looking down.

"It grows into a clear winter's night, Jemmy," trying to speak carelessly.

So they stood looking out together. The fire had burned down into a great bed of flameless coals, the kitchen glowed warm and red, throwing out even a patch of ruddy light on the snow-covered yard without. A cold, but comfortable home-look out there; the bit of garden, fences, cow-house, pump, heaped with the snow; old Dolly asleep in her stable: Jem wrapped himself in his mother's skirt with a sudden relish of warm snugness. What made her pull at Ready's neck with such nervous jerks? She saw nothing beyond? Jem stood on tiptoe, peering out. There was no hint of the hail-storm they had prophesied, in the night: the moon stood lower now in the sky, filling the air with a yellow, frosty brilliance. Yet something strangely cold, dead, unfamiliar, in the night yonder, chilled him. Neither sound nor motion there; hills, river, and fields, distinct, sharply cut in pallor, but ghost-like: it made him afraid. There seemed to be no end of them; the hills to the north ran low, and beyond them he could see more blue and cold and distance, going on, — who could tell where? to the eternal ice and snow it might be. She felt it, he knew. The boy was frightened, tried to pull her back to the fire, when something he saw outside made him stop suddenly. Shag's Hill, the nearest of the ledge to the house, is a low, narrow cone, with a sharp rim against the sky; the moon had sunk half behind it, lighting the surface of drifted snow which faced them. Across this there suddenly fell a long, uncertain shadow, which belonged neither to bush nor tree: it
might be the flicker of a cloud; or a man, passing across the top of the hill, would make it. It was nothing; some of the coal-diggers from the Point going home; he pulled at her petticoat again.

"Come to the fire, dear," he said, looking up.

Her whole face and neck were hot; she laughed and trembled as if some spasm were upon her.

"Do you see?" she cried, trying to force the window open.

"O Jemmy, it might be! it might!"

Jem was used to his other's unaccountable whims of mood. Ready, however, startled him. The dog pricked up his ears, sniffed the air once or twice, then, after a grave pause of a minute, with a sharp howl, such as Jem had not heard him give for years, dashed through the kitchen into the wash-shed and out across the fields. Martha Yarrow turned away from the window, and leaned her head against the dresser-shelves: standing quite still, only that she clutched Jem's hand. The clock ticked noisily as a half-hour went by; the fire burned lower and dark. The dog came back at last, dragging his feet heavily, came up close to her, and crouched down with a half-human moan. After a long time he got up, went out into the wash-kitchen in a spiritless way, and did not return again that night. She did not move. It seemed a long time to the child before she turned, her face wet with tears, and took him up in her arms, chafing his cold feet.

"It could not be! I knew that, Jemmy. I wasn't a fool. But I thought — O Pet, I've waited such a long while!"

He patted her cheeks, soothing her, — the more effectually, perhaps, that he did not know what troubled her.

"Why, it's Christmas, mother," he said.

"I know that. You see, I thought," her eyes fastened on his in an appealing sort of way, "that, being Christmas, if there should be any lost body wandering out on the fields that God had forgotten — What then?" all the blood gone from her face. "Why, what then, Jem? No home, no one to say to him, Here's home, here's wife and children a-waiting to love you, — O, sick with waiting to love you!" No one to say that, Jem. And him wandering out in the cold, going quick back to the mouth of hell, not knowing how God loved him."

"If there is such a one," Jem said, steadily, though his lip trembled, "God will let him know."

"There is no such one," sharply. "There is no one yonder but knows his home, and is nearer to his God than you or I, James Yarrow."

The boy made no reply, — sat on her knees looking earnestly into the fire. He had more nearly guessed her secret than she knew, — near enough to know how to comfort her. After a while, when she was quiet, he turned and put his thin arms about her neck, smiling.

"Take me into your bed, mother. I'm so cold! Let me into old Catty's place this once."

She nodded, pleased, and putting him to bed, soon followed him. When she held him snugly in her arms, the replenished fire making hot, flickering shadows from the next room, he whispered, —

"Next Christmas, mother! Only one year more!"

Again the quick shiver of her body; but this time her breath was gentle, a soft light in her eyes.

"Well, and then, my son?"

"Why, some one else then will call me son. How long he has been gone, dear! so long that I never saw him since I was a bit of a baby."

"Five years. Yes. Well, dear?" anxiously.

Her eyes were shut, he stroked the lids softly, thinking how moist and red her lips were: never as beautiful a face as the little mother's; for so Jem, feeling quite grown up in his heart, called her there.

"Well, then, no more trouble, but somebody to take care of us all the time. Whenever I see a preacher, now, I think of father," — stopping abruptly, with that anxious, incisive look so sad to see on a child's face.

She did not reply at first; then, —

No. 3.
“He preached God’s word as he knew it,” she said, dryly.
“And whenever I hear of a good, brave man, I think, ‘That’s like father!’”

Her eyes opened now.
“That’s true, Jemmy! God knows that’s true! So proud my boy will be of his father!”

She did not say anything more, but began playing with his hair, her mouth unsteady, and a bashful, dreamy smile in her eyes. She looked very young and girlish in the mellow light.

“He’s not coarse like me, Jem,” she said at last. “Even more like a woman in some ways. He always came nearer to you children, for instance; I mind how you always used to creep away from me close to him at night. He hates noise, Stephen does, and mean, scraping ways, such as we’re used to, being poor. My boy’ll mind that? We’ll keep anything shabby out of his sight, when he comes back.”

“I’ll mind,” said Jem, dryly. “But—Well, no matter. We’re to try and be like him, Tom and I? I understand.”

She drew down her head suddenly into the pillow. Jem had been growing sleepy, but he started wide awake now, trying to see her face: the pretty pink color his questions had brought was gone from it.

“Did you speak, mother?”

No answer.

“I said we are to be men like him, Tom and I, if we can?”

He knew he had touched her to the quick somehow; his heart beat thick with the old childish terror, as he waited for her answer.

“Yes, you are to try, my son.”

Martha Yarrow’s frivolous chirruping voice was altered, with meaning in it he never had heard before, as if her answer came out of some depth where God had faced her soul, and forced it to speak truth. But when, after that, the boy, curious to know more, went on with his questions, she quieted him gravely, kissed him good night, and turned over, to sleep, he concluded from her regular breathing. However, when Jem, after a while, began to snore, she got up

and went to the kitchen-fire, kneeling down on the stone hearth: her head was on fire, and her body cold.

“So they shall be like him!” she whispered, with a fierce, built look, as if by her wife’s trust in him she defied the whole world.

“I have kept my word. I’ve tried to make his sons what God made him in the beginning.”

That was true; she had kept her word. Five years ago, when the great scandal came on the church in , and their minister was tried for forgery, and sentenced to six years’ imprisonment in the penitentiary, the first letter his wife wrote to him there had these words: “For the boys, my husband, they never shall know of this thing. They shall know you as God and I do, Stephen. I’ll make them men like you, if I can: except in your religion: for I believe, before God, the Devil taught you that.”

When the man read that in his cell, a dry, quiet smile came over his face. He had not expected such a keen opinion from his shallow easy-going wife: he did not think there was so much insight in her.

“It’s a deep sounding you give, Martha, true or not,” folding up the letter. “And so the boys will never know?” going back to his solitary cobbling, for they were making a shoemaker of him.

If there were any remorse under his quiet, or impatience at fate, or gnawing homesickness, he did not show it. That was the last letter or message that came from his wife. The friends of other prisoners were admitted to visit them, but no one ever asked to see him; the five years went by; every day the same bar of sunlight struck across his bench, and glittered on the point of his awl, gray in winter, yellow in summer; but no day brought a word or sign from the outer world but that. The man grew thin, mere skin and bone; but then he was scrofulous. He asked no questions, ceased at last to look up, when the jailer brought his meals, to see if he carried a letter. Sometimes, when he used to stand chafing his stubbly chin in the evening at the slit cut in the stones for his window, looking at the red brick chimney-pot, he could see over the
GOOD STORIES.

penitentiary-wall, it seemed like something of outer life, and he would mutter, “She said the boys would never know.” Once, too, a year or two after that, when the jailer came into “quiet Stevy’s” cell, (for so he nicknamed him,) Yarrow came up and took him by the coat-buttons, looking up and gabbling something about Martha and the little chaps in a maudlin sort of way,—then, with a silly laugh, lay down on his pallet.

“I never felt sorry for the little whiffet before,” said the fat jailer, when he came out. “He’s so close; but it’s a cursed shame in his people to give him the go-by that way,—there!”

But when he went back an hour or two after, he found he had gained no ground with Stevy; he was dry, silent as ever: he had come to himself, meanwhile, and shivered with disgust at the fear that any madness had made him commit himself to this mass of flesh.

“Mortised with the sacred garlic,” he muttered, with the usual dry twinkle in his eyes.

Ben caught the last word.

“It’s a good yarb, garlic,” he said, confusedly. “Uses it on hot coals mostly, under broilin’ steaks. Well, good night,—he’s a queer chap, though,” after he had gone out,—“beyond me.”

Five years being gone, Martha Yarrow, sitting by her fire to-night, could only repeat the words of her letter. She had taken out a daguerrotype of her husband, and was looking at it. He was a small man; young; dressed in a suit of rusty black, with a certain subdued, credulous, incomplete air about him, like a man forced at birth into some iron mould of circumstance, and whose own proper muscles and soul had never had a chance of air to grow. A homely, saddened, uncouthly shaped face,—one that would be sure to go snubbed and unread through the world, to find at last some woman who would know its latent meaning, and worship it with the heat of passion which this country-girl had given. Withal, a cheerful, quizzical smile on the lips. Poor Martha’s eyes filled, the moment she looked at that; and so she went back to her first years of married life, full of keen, relishing enjoyment, all coming from him, qui-

STEPHEN YARROW.
How would he come back to her? In all these years, silence. Who would bring him back? Who? They were keen enough to put him in,—but who would stay with him, to say, "You've slipped, boy, but stand up again"? Who would hold out a kind hand at the gate, when he came out, with "Here's a place, Yarrow. Here's home, and love, and God waiting; try another chance"? Who would do that? No wonder she looked out that night, thinking there was some work forgotten.

Martha sat there until dawn came, moving only to replenish the fire lest the children should take cold. In all her life she never forgot that night. Some furious instinct seemed at work within her, goading her to be up and doing. What should she do? Why should she disquiet herself? Her husband was safe asleep in his cell. Yet all night long she could not keep her soul back from crying to God to save him in his deadly peril, to bring him there at once to her, to the children. When morning broke, cold and sweet-breathed, russet clouds, dyed with the latent crimson day, thronging up from behind the hills, she tried to thrust down all the pains of the night as moody fancies. They did not go. She bathed herself, woke the children, laughed and romped with them (for their year's holiday should not be damped) ; but the cold, unsufferable weight within dragged her physically down. Trifles without, too, beset her with vague fears. Ready was gone; for years he had not left the house at night. The children began to look with uneasy eyes at her face: she would betray all. She kept her fingers thrust in the breast of her wrapper to touch the case of the picture: she could hold herself quiet so. How cold and unmeaning the light was that day to her! and every tick of the clock seemed to beat straight on her brain. So the morning crept by. She grew so sure,—without reason,—that it was the last day of waiting, that, when the children went out to build their snow-man, she sat down on Jem's chest, shivering and dizzy; when the snow cracked under a step outside, afraid to turn her head,—thinking he would be standing in the door, with the old patient smile on his mouth, and his hand out. But he did not come.

About half a mile on the other side of Shag's Hill there is a hotel, off from the road, looking like an overgrown Swiss chalet. Not a country-tavern by any means. Starr, a New York caterer, keeps it, as a sort of boarding-house for a few wealthy Pittsburg families in summer; however, if you should stop there at any time of the year, you would be sure of a delicate croquette and a fair glass of wine. Usually, Starr and his family are the only occupants in winter; but on this Christmas eve there were lights in two of the upper rooms. M. Soulé, the Mobile financier, so well known through the West, with his family, had occupied them for about a week; this evening, too, a Mr. Frazier from St. Louis was at the house: there was a collision of trains near Beaver, and he had left the other passengers and come over to Starr's, intending to go on horseback up to Pittsburg in the morning. An old acquaintance of the Soulés, apparently; he had dined with them that evening, and when Starr went up about ten o'clock to know if M. Soulé wished to go out running in the morning, he found the old man still standing with his back to the fire, talking sharply of the Little Miami Railroad shares then beginning to go up. "A thorough old Shylock," thought Starr, waiting, scanning the acrid, wizened face with its protruding black eyes, the dried-up figure in a baggy suit of blue, a white collar turned down nearly to the shoulders, and the gray hair knotted in a queue. He looked at the landlord, scowling at the interruption; M. Soulé, on the contrary, spoke heartily, as if suddenly relieved of a bore.

"Of course, of course, Starr; I'll be off by four. I'll saddle my own horse,—no need to disturb any of your people; let them sleep on Christmas at least, poor devils. The partridges about here are really worth tasting," turning to Frazier, "and Starr tells me of a mythical deer back in the hills. You see," with a bow, "it will not be possible for me to breakfast with you. I'll see you at Pittsburg about those shares,—say, on Monday."

"Yes," buttoning his coat, with a furtive glance of contempt at Soulé's burly figure and eager face. Was this the far-famed Nimrod of the money-hunt? "I'll say to Pryor you had other game on hand to-day."
“Other game,—yes,” with a sudden gravity,—pushing his hair back and looking in the fire, while the old man made his formal adieus to his wife. They lasted some time, for Madame Soulé was a courteously little body, with all her quiet.

“I must make an early start, too,” said Frazier, turning again. “Glad of the chance to take a bracing ride. Banks closed to-morrow, so no time’s lost, eh? Well, good night, Soule,” perceiving that the other did not see his outstretched hand; “don’t come down; good night”; and so shuffled down the stairs.

“Pah!” said Soule, with a breath of relief. “His blood’s like water. He never owed a dollar, and never gave one away.”

The usual genial laugh came back to his face, as he turned to Madame Soulé and began to romp with the baby lying in her lap. He was a tall man, about six feet high; with a handsome face, red hair, a frank blue eye, and a natural, genuine laugh. Whatever else history may record of him, a man of generous blood and sensitive instincts. His subdued dress, quiet voice, suited him, were indigenous to his nature, not assumed: even Starr could see that. Starr used afterwards, when they became the country’s gossip, to talk of the little traits in these people, showing the purity of their refinement. To this day he believes in them. How unostentatious their kindness was: the delicate, scentless air that hung about them: the fresh flowers, always near. “Eating with iron forks, an’ not a word,—my silver being packed; their underclothes like gossamer, outside plainer than mine. Bah! I know the real stuff, when I see it, I hope. No sham there!”

When the baby was tired of its romp, Madame Soulé hushed it to sleep. She was the quietest nurse ever lived,—the quietest woman,—one whom you scarce noted when with her, and forgot as soon as you left the room. Nature had made her up with its most faint, few lines, and palest coloring. Soulé, however, had found out the delicate beauty, and all else that lay beneath. There was a passionate fierceness sometimes in his look at her, and a something else stranger,—such an expression as a dog gives his master. She never talked but to him.
having used him. Push him back into the old slough. He can make a decent living there, cobbling, I know. Be generous, John," with a keen glance of the pale brown eyes. "If you succeed in this thing to-morrow, take him with us out of the United States. There is trouble coming here. Give him a chance for education,—to know something of the world he lives in,—to catch one or two free breaths before he dies. He has been the man in the iron cage, since his birth, it seems to me."

She got up as she spoke, rang the bell, and gave the baby to its nurse, wrapping it up in a blanket or two. When she turned, her husband was standing on the hearth-rug, a half-laugh in his eyes. "Judith!"

"What is it?"

"The plain meaning of all this is, that there is no one who can do this foul job to-morrow but Stephen Yarrow, and for my sake it must be done; ergo — Well, well! You do love me, child!"

Her eyes filled with sudden tears; she caught hold of his arm, and clung to it. "I do love you, God knows! What is Stephen Yarrow to me, soul or body? Don't be harsh with me, John!"

"Harsh? No, Judith," stroking the colorless curls gently; looking back, thinking she had done much for him; he would humor her whim, not behave like a beast to her. But his brother — It would be better for Stephen in the end. Certainly. Yet he sighed: a womanish, unable sigh.

A year or two afterwards, (for I am not writing of a fictitious character,) this man's frauds were discovered. They were larger and more uniformly successful than any that had ever been perpetrated in the States, but there was about them a subtle, dogged daring that did not belong to Yarrow's character, and shrewd people who had known them began to talk of this shadow of a woman who went about with him,—a quadroon, they said,—and hinted strongly that it was she who had been the vital power of the partnership, and Yarrow but the well-chosen tool. There are no means of knowing the truth of the conjecture, for Yarrow escaped: she followed him, but is dead, so their secret is safe. Fraud, however, was but one half of his story. Soulé gave like a prince,—secretly, with a woman-like, anxious helpfulness, a passionate eagerness, as if the pain or want of a human being were insufferable to him. In this he was alone: the woman had no share in it. She was as cold, impervious to the suffering of others as nothing but a snake or a selfish woman can be: whatever muddy human feeling did ooze from her brain was for this man only. And yet, when we think of it, she was, as they guessed, a quadroon: may be, under the low, wax-skinned forehead that Yarrow's fingers were patting that night, there might have been a revengeful consciousness of the wrongs of her race that justified to her the harm she did. It is likely: the coarsest negroes argue in that way. God help them! At any rate, we shall come closest to Christ's rule of justice in trying to find a sore heart behind the vicious fingers of the woman.

While the two stood in the pleasant light of the warm room waiting for him, Stephen Yarrow came towards the house across the fields. It was his shadow that his wife and Jem saw crossing Shag's Hill. He was a free man now,—by virtue of his nickname, "quiet Stevy," in part. — It startled him as much as the jailer, when his release was sent in a year before the time, "in consideration of his uniform good conduct." The truth was, that M. Soulé took an interest in the poor wretch, and had said a few words in his favor to the Governor at a dinner-party the other evening, so the release was signed the next day. Soulé had called to see the man when he came to Pittsburg, and spent an hour or two in his cell. The next morning he was free to go, but he had stayed a week longer, making a pair of red morocco shoes for the jailer's little girl,—idling over them: when they were done, tying them on, himself, with a wonderful bow-knot, and looking anxiously in her clean Dutch face to see if she were pleased.

"Kiss the gentleman, Meg," growled Ben. "Where's yer manners?"

Stephen drew back sharply. The innocent baby! who lived out-of-doors! Ben must have forgotten who he was: a thief, belong-
ing to this cell. They were going to let him out; but what difference did that make? His thin face grew wet with perspiration, as he walked away. Why, his very fingers had felt too impure to him, as he tied on her shoes. He went away an hour after, only nodding good by to Ben, looking down with an odd grin at the clothes he had asked the jailer to buy for him. Ben had chosen a greenish coat and trousers and yellow waistcoat. He did not shake hands with him. Ben had been mixing hog-food, and the marks were on his fingers. This was yesterday; he was going now to meet his brother, as he requested. Well, what else was there for him to do?

He did not look up often, as he plodded over the fields: when he did, it hurt him somehow, this terrible wastefulness, this boundless unused air, and stretch of room. It even pained his weakened eyes: so long the oblong slip of clay running from the cell to the wall had been his share, and the yellow patch of sky and brick chimney-top beyond. For so many thousands, too, no more. But they were thieves, foul, like him. Pure men this was for. Stephen looked like an old man now, in spite of Ben's party-colored rigging: stooped and lean, his step slouched: his head almost bald under the old fur cap. Something in the sharpened face, too, looked as if more than eyesight had been palsied in these years of utter solitude: the brain was dulled with sluggishly gnawing over and over the few animal ideas they leave for prisoners' souls,—or, as probably, thoroughly imbruted by them. Soulé thought the latter.

When the convict had finished his dull walk, he sat down on the wooden staircase that led to his brother's rooms for half an hour, slowly rubbing his legs, conscious of nothing but some flesh-pain, apparently,—and when he did enter the chamber, bowed as indifferently to Soulé and his wife as though they had parted carelessly yesterday. His brother glanced at the woman: one look would certainly be enough for her. Poor Stephen's power? If it ever had been, its essence was long since exhaled; there was nothing in his whole nature now but the stalest dregs, surely? Perhaps she thought differently: she looked at the man keenly, and then gave a quick, warning glance to her husband, as she sat down to her sewing. Soulé did not heed it as he usually did: he was choked and sick to see what a wreck his brother really was. God help us! to think of the time when Stephen and he were boys together, and this was the end of it!

"Come to the fire, old fellow!" he said, huskily. "You're blue with cold. We used to have snows like this at home, eh?"

The man passed the lady with the quaint, shy bow that used to be habitual with him towards women (he still used it to the jailer's wife), and held his hands over the blaze. His brother followed him: his wife had never seen him so nervous or excited: he stood close to the convict, smoothing his coat on the shoulder, taking off his cap.

"Why, why! this cloth's too thin, even for summer; I—O, Stephen, these are hard times,—hard! But I mean to do something for you, God knows. Sit down, sit down, you're tired, boy," turning off, going to the window, his hands behind him,—coming back again." "We're going to help you, Judith and I."

Soulé did not see the look which the convict shot at the woman, when he spoke these words; but she did,—and knew, that, however her husband might contrive to deceive himself, he never would his brother. If Stephen Yarrow's soul went down to any deeper depth to-night, it would be conscious in its going. What manner of man was he? What was his wife, or long-ago home, or his old God, now, to him? It mattered to them: for, if he were not a tool, they were ruined. She stitched quietly at her soft floss and flannel. Soulé was sincere; let him explain what his wish was, himself; it would be wiser for her to be silent; this man, she remembered, had eyes that never understood a lie.

Yarrow did not sit down; his brother stood close, leaning his unsteady hand upon his arm.

"I knew you would not fail me, Stephen. To-morrow will be a turning-point in both our lives. Circumstances have conspired to help me in my plan."

He began to stammer. The other looked at him quietly, inquiringly.
"You remember what I told you on Tuesday?" more hastily. "I have dealt heavily in stocks lately; it needs one blow more, and our future is secure for life. Yours and mine, I mean,—yours and mine, Stephen. This paper old Frazier carries,—he is going to New York with it. If I can keep it out of the market for a week, my speculation is assured,—I can realize half a million, at least. Frazier is an old man, weak: he crosses the Narrows to-morrow morning on horseback."

He stopped abruptly, playing with a shell on the mantel-shelf. "I understand," in a dry voice; "you want him robbed; and my hands came at the right nick of time."

"Pish! you use coarse words. A man's brain must be distempered to call that robbery; the paper, as I said, is neither money nor its equivalent."

There was a silence of some moments. "I must have it," his eye growing fierce. "You could take it and leave the man unhurt; I could have done it myself, but he's an old man, I want him left unhurt. If I had done it,—Well," chewing his lips, "it would not have been convenient for him to have gone on with that story. He knows me. Is the affair quite plain now?"

Yarrow nodded slowly, looking in the fire. "If I were not strong enough to-morrow, what then?"

"I will be with you,—near. I must have the paper. He is an old Shylock, after all," with a desperate carelessness. "His soul would not weigh heavily against me, if it were let out."

Yarrow passed his hand over his face; it was colorless. Yet he looked bewildered. The bare thought of murder was not clear to him yet. "Drink some wine, Stephen," said his brother, pouring out a goblet for himself. "I carry my own drinking-apparatus. This Sherry—"

Yarrow tasted it, and put down the glass. "I was cheated in it, eh?"

"Yes, you were."

"Your palate was always keener than mine. I—"

His mouth looked blue and cold under his whiskers; then they both stood vacantly silent, while the woman sewed. "Tut! we will look at the matter practically, as business-men," said Soulé at last, affecting a gruff, hearty tone, and walking about,—but was silent there.

The convict did not answer. No sound but the rough wind without blowing the drifted snow and pebbles from the asphalt roof against the frosted panes, and the angry fire of bitumen within breaking into clefts of blue and scarlet flame, thrusting its jets of fierce light out from its cage; impatient, it may be, of this convict, this sickly, shrivelled bit of humanity standing there; wondering the nauseated life in his nostrils or soul claimed yet its share of God's breath. Society had taken the man like a root torn out of native, unceasing soil, kept it in a damp cellar, hid out the breath and light. If after a while it withered away, whose fault was it? If there were no hand now to plant it again, do you look for it to grow rotten, or not? One would have said Soulé was a root that had been planted in fat, loamy ground, to look at him. There was a healthy, liberal, lazy life for you! Yet the winter sky looked gray and dumb when he passed the window, and the firelight broke fiercest against his bluff figure going to and fro. No matter; something there that would have warmed your heart to him: something genial, careless, big-natured, from the loose red hair to the indolent, portly stride. Who knows? A comfortable, true-hearted, merry clergyman,—a jolly farmer, with open house, and a bit of good racing-stock in the stable,—if bigotry in his boyhood, and this woman, had not crossed him. They had crossed him: there was not an atom of unpolluted nature left: you saw the taint in every syllable he spoke. Fresh and malignant to-night, when this tempted soul hung in the balance. "We're letting the matter slip too long. Something must be decided upon. Stephen!" nervously, "wake up! You have forgotten our subject, I think."

"No," the bald head raised out of the coat-collar in which it had sunk. "Go on."
Sould looked at him perplexed a moment. Was he dulled, or had he learned in those years to shut in looks and thoughts closer prisoners than himself?

"It is a mere question of time," he said, a little composed. "Frazier is an agent: shall this money accrue to me or to his employers? I have risked all on it. I must have it at any cost."

"At any cost?"

"At any," boldly. "Is it any easier for me to talk of that chance than you, Stephen?"

"No, John. Your hands are clean," with an exhausted look. "I know that. You had a kind Irish heart. What money you made with one hand you flung away with the other."

Sould blushed like a woman.

"No matter," beating some dust off his boot. "But for Frazier, I've talked that over with Judith, and I don't value human life as you do: it may have been my residence in the South. It matters little how a man dies, so he lives right. This Frazier, if he dies to defend his package, would do a nobler deed than in any of his dime-scraping days. For me, my part is not robbery. The paper is neither specie nor a draft."

His tongue swung fluently now, for it had convinced himself. "There is but a night left to decide. What will you do, Stephen?"

He put his hand on the green coat with its gaudy buttons, and leaned against his brother as they used to go arms over shoulders to school. Sould's big throat was full of tears; he had never felt so full of sorrowful pity as in this the foulest purpose of his life.

"This is the last night."

"I know that. I have been waiting for it all my life."
getting ready for Christmas! children and happy wives! Soule understood.

"I don't say I can bring you back what you have lost, Stephen. I offer you the best I can. Your're not an old man,—barely thirty: you must have years to acquire fresh bone and muscle. Set your brain to work, meanwhile. Give it a chance."

"It never had one," said the convict, with a queer, faint smile. "Hillo! that looks like old times!" brightening up. "No, it never had. Do you think I forget our alley-house with its three rooms? the carpentering by day, and the arithmetic by night? the sweltering, sultry Sunday mornings in church, and the afternoons sniffling over the catechism among the rain-butts in the back-yard? Do you remember the preachers, the travelling agents, that put up with us? how they snarled at other churches, and helped themselves out of the shop, as if to be a man of God implied a mean beggar? I don't say my father was a hypocrite when he made you a colporteur, and so one of them; but—"

He paused. Even in this frothy-brained fellow, his religion or his doubt lay deeper than all. His face grew dark. "I tell you, if there is one thing I loathe, it is the God and His day that were taught to me when I was a child: joyless, hard, cruel. Fire—humph!—and brimstone for all but a few hundred. I remember. Well, I don't know yet if there is any better," with a vague look. "A man shifts for himself in the next chance as well as now, I suppose. Did you believe what you preached, Stephen?" with an abrupt change. "God! how you used to writhe under it at first!"

"They forced me into it," said Yarrow. "I was only a boy. You remember that I was only a boy,—just out of the shop. The more uneducated a man was in our church-pulpit then, the better. I knew nothing, John," appealingly. "When I preached about foreordination and hell-fire, it was in coarse slang: I knew that. I used to think there might be a different God and books and another life farther out in the world, if I could only get at it. I never was strong, and they had forced me into it; and when you came to me to help you with your plan, I wanted to get out, and—"
happened, the fire in its square frame; and thinking only of that, as the mind always drowsily absorbs the nearest trifle after a spasm of pain. A bed of pale red coals now, furred over with white and pearl-colored ashes. It was a long time since he had seen any open fire,—years, he believed. Where was it that there had been a fire just like that, with the ashes like moss over the heat,—and on a night in winter, too, the wind rattling the panes? Where was it? While Sould stood waiting for his answer, his mind was drifting back, like that of a man in his dotage, through its dull, muddy thoughts, after that one silly memory. He struck on it at last. A year or two after he was married. In the bedroom. Martha was sitting by the fire, with the old yellow dog beside her: she was trying to ride the baby on his neck,—he was the clumsiest brute! He came in and stopped to see the fun; he noticed the fire then, how cosey and warm it all was: outside it was hailing, a gust shaking the house. He had been doing a bit of carpentering,—he did like to go back to the old trade! This was a wicker chair for the baby,—he had made it in the stable for a surprise: the girl always liked surprises and such nonsense. He put it down with a flourish, and he remembered how she laughed, and Ready growled, and how he and she both got on their knees to seat the youngster in, and tie him with his bandanna handkerchief. So silly that all was! When they were on the floor there, and had Master Jem fastened in, he remembered how she suddenly turned, and put her arms about his neck, as shyly as when they were first married, and kissed him. "Only God knows how good you are to me, Stephen," she said. There were tears in her eyes,—Yarrow passed his hand over his forehead. Did ever a thought come into your mind like a fresh, clean air into a stove-heated, foul room? or like the first hearty, living call of Greatheart through the dungeons of Giant Despair?

"You do not answer me, Stephen?" said his brother. "You will go with me?"

Yarrow's head was more erect, his eyes less glazed.

"It may be. The chance for me's over in the world, I think. I may as well serve you. And yet—"
"It is your only chance," said Sould, roughly, as he followed him to the door.

He was a ruined man, if he were balked in this.

"You do not know how the world meets a returned felon, Stephen; you —"

"Let me go," feebly, putting his hand up to his chin in the old fashion.

"I think I know that. I — I've thought of that a good deal. But it seemed to me as if there might be a chance"; and so, without a word of farewell, went stumbling down the stairs.

He had given a wistful look at the fire, as he turned away. Perhaps that would comfort him. God surely has "many voices in the world, and none of them is without its signification."

An hour before dawn, Yarrow found the place in which he had appointed to meet his brother. The night had been dark, hailing at intervals; he had gone tramping up and down the hills and stubble-fields, through snow and half-frozen mud-gullies, hardly conscious of what he did. The night seemed long to him now, looking back. He found a burnt sycamore stump and got up on it, shivered a while, felt his shirt, which was wet to the skin, then took off his shoes and cleared the lumps of slush out of them. There was something horrible to him in this unbroken silence and dark and wet cold; he had been in his hot cell so long, the frost stung him differently from other men, the icy thaw was wetter. It was a narrow cut in the hills where he was, a bridle-road leading back and running zigzag for some miles until it returned to the railroad track. A lonely, unfrequented place; Frazier would take this by-path; Sould had chosen it well to meet him. There was a rickety bridge crossing a hill-stream a few rods beyond. Yarrow pushed the dripping cap off his forehead and looked around. No light nor life on any side: even in the heavens yawned that breathless, uncolored silence that precedes a winter's dawn. He could see the Ohio through the gulley: why, it used to be a broad, full-breasted river, glancing all over with light, loaded with steamers and rafts going down to the Mississippi. He had gone down once, rafting, with lumber, and a jolly three weeks' float they had of it. Now it was a solid, shapeless mass of blocks of ice and mud. Winter? yes, but the world was altered somehow; the very river seemed struck with death. His teeth chattered; he began to try to rub some warmth into his rheumatic legs and arms; tried to bring back the fancy of last night about Martha and the fire. But that was a long way off: there were all these years' mastering memories to fade it out, you know, and besides, a diseased habit of desponding. The world was wide to him, covering out from a cell: where were Martha and the little chaps lost in it? John said they were dead. Where should he turn now? There was an anguish pain in his spine that blinded him; since yesterday he had eaten nothing, — he had no money to buy a meal; he was a felon, — who would give him work? "There's some things certain in the world," he muttered.

"That was silly last night,—silly. And yet,—if there could have been a chance!"

He looked up steadily into the sickly, discolored sky: nothing there but the fog from these swamps. He had not wished so much that he could hear of Martha and the children, when he looked up, as of something else that he needed more. Even the foulest and most careless soul that God ever made has some moments when it grows homesick, conscious of the awful vacuum below its life, the Eternal Arm not being there. Yarrow was neither foul nor careless. All his life, most in those years in the prison, he had been hungry for Something to rest on, to own him. Sometimes, when his evil behavior had seemed vilest to him, he had felt himself trembling on the verge of a great forgiveness. But he could see so little of the sky in the cell there,—only that three-cornered patch: he had a fancy, that, if once he were out in the world that He made, — in the free air, — that, if there were a God, he would find Him out. He had not found Him.

He sat on the stump awhile, his hands over his eyes, then got down slowly, buttoning his soggy waistcoat and coat.
"I don't see as there's a chance," he said, dully. "I was a fool to think there was any better God than the one that—" digging his toe into the frozen pools. "It's all ruled. I'm not one of the elect."

That was all. After that, he stood waiting for his brother.

"I'll help him. He's the best I know."

Even the faint sigh choked before it rose to his lips,—both manhood and hope were so dead with insanity; yet a life's failure went in it.

While he stood waiting, Martha Yarrow sat by her kitchen-fire crying to God to help him; but He knew what things were needed before she asked Him.

Sould, with his gun and game-bag, had been coursing over the hills three miles back, since four o'clock. He had bagged a squirrel or two, enough to suffice for his morning's work, and now, his piece unloaded, came stealthily towards the place of rendezvous. He had little hope that Stephen would help him: he had made up his mind to go through the affair alone.

If he did it, that involved —Pah! what was in a word? Men died every day. He had quite resolved: Judith and he had talked the matter over all night. But if Frazier were a younger man, and could fight for it! Perhaps he was armed: Sould's face flashed: he stooped and broke the trigger of his gun, and then went on with a much less heavy step. They would be more even now. He wanted to reach the bridge by dawn, and meet his brother.

If he refused to help him, he would send him away, and wait for Frazier alone. About nine o'clock he might expect him.

So Christmas morning came to all of them, the day when, a long time ago, One who had made a good happy world came back to find and save that which was lost in it. In these few hundred years had He forgotten the way of finding?

Stephen Yarrow had fallen into an uneasy doze by the road-side. He had done with thinking, when he said, "I'll go with John." The way through life seemed to open clear, exactly the same as it had been before. There was an end of it. There might have been a chance, but there was none. He drowsed off into a brutish slumber. Something like a kiss woke him. It was only the morning air. A clear, sweet-breathed dawn, as we said, that seemed somehow to have caught a scent of far-off harvest-farms, in lands where it was not winter. Warm brown clouds yonder with a glow like wine in them, the splendor of the coming day hinting of itself through.

"I must have slept," said Yarrow, taking off his cap to shake it dry.

There were a thousand shining points on the dingy fur. He rubbed his heavy eyes and looked about him. The misty rime of the night had frozen on hills and woods and river,—frosted the whole earth in one glittering, delicate sheath. The first level bar of sunlight put into the nostrils of the dead world of the night before the breath of life. Once in a lifetime, maybe, the sight meets a man's eyes which Yarrow saw that morning. The very clear blue of the air thrilled with electric vigor; from the rounded rose-colored summits
of the western hills to the tiniest ice-cased grass-spear at his feet; the land flashed back unnumbered soft and splendid dyes to heaven; the hemlock-forests near had grouped themselves into glittering temples, mosques, churches, whatever form in which men have tried to please God by worshipping Him; the smoke from the distant village floated up in a constant silver and violet vapor like an incense-breath. Neither was it a dead morning. The far-off tinkle of cow-bells reached him now and then, and the cheery crow from one farm-yard to another, even children's voices calling, and at last, a slow, sweet chime of church-bells.

"They told me it was Christmas morning," he said, pulling off the old cap again.

Yarrow's chin had sunk on his breast, as his eager eyes drank all this morning in. He breathed short and quick, like a child before whom some incredible pleasure flashes open.

"Well," with a long breath, putting on his cap, "I didn't think of aught like this, yonder. God help us!"

He didn't know why he smiled or rubbed his hands cheerfully. His sleep had refreshed him, maybe. But it seemed as if the great beauty and tenderness of the world were for him, this morning,—as if some great Power stretched out its arms to him, and spoke through it.

"I'll not be silly again," straightening himself, and buttoning his coat; but before the words were spoken his head had sunk again, and he stood quiet.

Something in all this brought Martha and the little chaps before him, he did not know why, but his heart ached with a sharper pain than ever, that made his eyes wet with tears.

"If there should be a chance!" —lifting his hands to the deep of blue in the east.

This was the free air in which he used to think he could find God.

"What if it were true that He was there,—loving, not hating, taking care of Martha, and—"

He stopped, catching the word.
"If there's danger, I'll not leave you to meet it alone, my friend," fumbling in his breast for a weapon.

Yarrow stamped impatiently.

"Put spurs to your horse!" — wiping his mouth; "it will be yet too late!"

Frazier gave a glance at his face, and obeyed him. A moment more, and he was out of sight. Yarrow watched him, and then slowly turned, and raised his head. Soulé had come down, and was standing close beside him, leaning on his gun. It was the last time the brothers ever faced each other, and their natures, as God made them, came out bare in that look: Yarrow's, under all, was the tougher-fibred of the two. John's eyes fell.

"Stephen, this will hurt me."

"I thought it was well done,"

"Well, well! you have chosen," — after a pause.

"Good by."

"Good by, boy."

They held each other's hands for a minute; then Soulé turned off, and strode down the hill. He loosened his cravat as he went, and took a long breath of relief.

"It was a vile job! But" — his face much troubled. But his wife heard the story without a word, nor ever alluded to it afterwards. She was human, like the rest of us.

A moment after he was gone, a curious change took place in the convict, a reaction, — the excitement being gone. The pain and exposure and hunger had room to tell now on body and soul. He stretched himself out on a drift of snow, drunken with sleep, yet every nerve quivering and conscious, trying to catch another echo of Soulé's step. He was his brother; he was all he had; it was terrible to be thus alone in the world: going back to the time when they worked in the shop together. He raised his head even, and called him, — "Jack!" — once or twice, as he used to then. It was too late. Such a generous, bull-headed fellow he was then, taking his own way, and being led at last. He was gone now, and forever. He was all he had.

The day was out broadly now, — a thorough winter's day, cold and clear, the frosty air sending a glow through your blood. It sent none into Yarrow's thinned veins: he was too far gone with all these many years. The place, as I said, was a lonely one, niched between hills, yet near enough main roads for him to hear sounds from them: people calling to each other, about Christmas often; carriages rolling by; great Conestoga wagons, with their dozens of tinkling bells, and the driver singing; dogs and children chasing each other through the snow. The big world was awake and busy and glad, but it passed him by.

"For this man that might have been it has as much use as for a bit of cold victuals thrown into the street. And the worst is," with a bitter smile, "I know it, to my heart's core."

The morning passed by, as he lay there, growing colder, his brain duller.

"I did not think this coat was so thin," he would mutter, as he tried to pull it over him.

If he got up, where should he go? What use, eh? It was warmer in the snow than walking about. Conscious at last only of a metallic taste in his mouth, a weakness creeping closer to his heart every moment, and a dull wonder if there could yet be a chance. It seemed very far away now. And Martha and the little chaps, — O, well! Some hours may have passed as he lay there, and sleep came; for I fancy it was a dream that brought the final sharp thought into his brain. He dragged himself up on one elbow, the old queer smile on his lips.

"I will try," he said.

It took him some time to make his way out into the main road, but he did it at last, straightening his wet hair under the old cap.

"It's so like a dog to die that way! I'll try, just once, how the world looks when I face it."

He sat down outside of a blacksmith's forge, the only building in sight, on the pump-trough, and looked wearily about. His head fell now and then on his breast from weakness.
"It won't be a very long trial. I'll not beg for food, and I'm not equal to much work just now,"—with the same grim half-smile.

No one was in sight but the blacksmith and some crony, looking over a newspaper, inside. They nodded, when they saw him, and said,—

"Hillo!"

"Hillo!" said Yarrow.

Then they went on with their paper. That was the only sound for a long time. Some farmers passed after a while, giving him good-morning, in country fashion. A trifle, but it was warm, heart-some; he had put the world on trial, you know, and he was not very far from death. Men more soured than Yarrow have been surprised to find it was God's world, with God's own heart, warm and kindly, speaking through every human heart in it, if they touched them right. About noon, the blacksmith's children brought him his dinner in a tin bucket, leaving it inside. When they came out, one freckled baby-girl came up to Yarrow.

"Tie my shoe," she said, putting up one foot, peremptorily. "Are you hungry?" looking at him curiously, after he had done it, at the same time holding up a warm seed-cake she was eating to his mouth. He was ashamed that the spicy smile tempted him to take it. He put it away, and seated her on his foot.

"Let me ride you plough-boy fashion," he said, trotting her gently for a minute.

Her father passed them.

"You must pardon me," said Yarrow, with a bow. "I used to ride my boy so, and—"

"Eh? Yes. Sudy's a good girl. You've lost your little boy, now?" looking in Yarrow's face.

"Yes, I've lost him."

The blacksmith stood silent a moment, then went in. Soon after a tall man rode up on a gray horse; it had cast a shoe, and while the smith went to work within, the rider sat down by Yarrow on the trough, and began to talk of the weather, politics, etc., in a quiet, pleasant way, making a joke now and then. He had a thin face, with a scruffy fringe of yellow hair and whisker about it, and a gray, penetrating eye. The shoe was on presently, and mounting, with a touch of his hat to Yarrow, he rode off. The convict hesitated a moment, then called to him.

"I have a word to say to you," coming up, and putting his hand on the horse's mane.

The man glanced at him, then jumped down.

"Well, my friend?"

"You're a clergyman?"

"Yes."

"So was I once. If you had known, just now, that I was a felon two days ago released from the penitentiary, what would you have said to me? Guilty, when I went in, remember. A thief."

The man was silent, looking in Yarrow's face. Then he put his hand on his arm.

"Shall I tell you?"

"Go on."

"I would have said, that, if ever you preach God's truth again, you will have learned a deeper lesson than I."

If he meant to startle the man's soul into life, he had done it. He a teacher, who hardly knew if that good God lived!

"Let me go," he cried, breaking loose from the other's hand.

"No. I can help you. For God's sake tell me who you are."

But Yarrow left him, and went down the road, hiding when he tried to pursue him,—sitting close behind a pile of lumber. He was there when found: so tired that the last hour and the last years began to seem like dreams. Something cold roused him, nozzling at his throat. An old yellow dog, its eyes burning.

"Why, Ready," he said, faintly, "have you come?"

"Come home," said the dog's eyes, speaking out what the whole day had tried to say: "they're waiting for you; they've been waiting always; home's there, and love's there, and the good God's there, and it's Christmas day. Come home!"

Yarrow struggled up, and put his arms about the dog's neck:
kissed him with all the hunger for love smothered in these many years.

"He don’t know I’m a thief,” he thought.

Ready bit angrily at coat and trousers.

"Be a man, and come home.”

Yarrow understood. He caught his breath, as he went along, holding by the fence now and then.

"It’s the chance!” he said. “And Martha! It’s Martha and the little chaps!”

But he was not sure. He was yet so near to the place where it would have been forever too late. If Ready saw that with his wary eye, turned nolond then, as he trotted before, — if he had any terror in his dumb soul (or whatever you choose to call it), or any mad joy, or desire to go clean daft with rollicking in the snow at what he had done, he put it off to another season, and kept a stern face on his captive. But Yarrow watched it; it was the first home-face of them all.

"Be a man,” it said. “Let the thief go. Home’s before you, and love, and years of hard work for the God you did not know.”

So they went on together. They came at last to the house,—home. He grew blind then, and stopped at the gate; but the dog went slower, and waited for him to follow, pushed the door open softly, and, when he went in, laid down in his old place, and put his paws over his face.

When Martha Yarrow heard the step at last, she got up. But seeing how it was with him, she only put her arms quietly about his neck, and said,—

“I’ve waited so long, my husband!”

That was all.

He lay in his old bed that evening; he made her open the door, feeling strong enough to look at them now, Jem and Tom and Catty, in the warm, well-lighted room, with all its little Christmas gayeties. They had known many happy holidays, but none like this: coming in on tiptoe to look at the white, sad face on the pillow, and to say, under their breath, “It’s father.” They had waited so long for him. When he heard them, the closed eyes always opened anxiously, and looked at them: kind eyes, full of a more tender, wishful love than even mother’s. They came in only now and then, but Martha he would not let go from him, held her hand all day. Ready had made his way up on the bed and lay over his feet.

“That’s right, old Truepenny!” he said.

They laughed at that: he had not forgotten the old name. When Martha looked at the old yellow dog, she felt her eyes fill with tears.

"God did not want a messenger," she thought: as if He ever did!

That evening, while he lay with her head on his breast, as she sat by the bed, he watched the boys a long time.

"Martha,” he said, at last, “you said that they should never know. Did you keep your word?”

“I kept it, Stephen.”

He was quiet a long while after that, and then he said,—

“Some day I will tell them. It’s all clearer to me now. If ever I find the good God, I’ll preach Him to my boys out of my own life. They’ll not love me less.”

He did not talk much that day; even to her he could not say that which was in his heart; but it seemed to him there was One who heard and understood, — looking out, after all was quiet that night, into the far depth of the silent sky, and going over his whole wretched life down to that bitterest word of all, as if he had found a hearer more patient, more tender than either wife or child.

"Is there any use to try?” he cried. “I was a thief.”

Then, in the silence, came to him the memory of the old question,—

“Hath no man condemned thee?”

He put his hands over his face:—

“No man, Lord!”

And the answer came for all time:—

“Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more.”

No. 3.
A FAMILY CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY.

The evening shades were falling on the little town of B—; but not as they did every day: slowly, lingeringly, and a little melancholily,—not like this in the least,—night was settling down eagerly, almost anxiously, just as if she were trying to envelop earth in her dark folds a few minutes sooner even than in her custom in those long December evenings. This eagerness was duly rewarded,—it grew darker and darker every second, and that on holy, merry, happy Christmas eve is surely the main point. ... And now it was perfectly dark,—as dark at all events as the snow would permit, which, with its soft, dazzling whiteness, covered the streets and roofs. Gradually lights appeared behind the windows, on which glittering flowers of ice were tracing their first leaves. In some houses the Christmas-trees were being lighted. Ah! how the ice-flowers glisten in the cheerful glare,—almost like real flowers, when the morning dew hangs on them, and the radiant summer sun is reflected from every drop! How the snow on the window-sills scintillates, as if it were strewn with diamond dust!

To the number of those houses which lighted their Christmas tapers at this early hour,—the town-clocks had just struck a quarter of six,—the respectable house of the firm of J. C. Halwig and Company, wholesale and retail dealers in colonial produce, did not belong. In it the Christmas-tree was not even completely dressed. While J. C. Halwig and Company, with the assistance of six blue-handed and blue-nosed youths, were doing a lively retail business in the front part of the store, selling sugar and coffee, cinnamon and rice, chocolate, raisins, and all the savory ingredients belonging to a good punch, Miss Rosaura Halwig, in the large back sitting-room, was diligently busying herself with hanging gilt nuts and apples, sugar-dolls and paper-baskets on a stately Christmas-tree.

Miss Rosaura Halwig is Mr. J. C. Halwig's sister, and the stepsister-in-law of his partner, Tobias Maeslein. Mr. Tobias had had an own sister, the late Mrs. J. C. Halwig, who closed her earthly accounts ten years ago, leaving on the hands of her partner by marriage a charming balance of eleven years: Else, or as the name reads in the church register, — Elisabeth Halwig.

We shall leave J. C. Halwig and Company and the six clerks undisturbed for the present. They have their hands full of work, doing justice to the purchasers before closing the store,—the latter, in honor of to-night's celebration, closing an hour earlier than usual. For this exception the six clerks were indebted to "Uncle Tob,"—this being the appellation to which Mr. Tobias Maeslein's name has been abbreviated in the house as well as among its wide-spread acquaintance,—to his face and behind his back, just as it happened. Mr. Tobias did by no means take it amiss, when occasionally an "Uncle Tob" was thrown into his face; although, from sheer respect to the individual and his position, it might more properly have been aimed at his broad back.

Let us enter the sitting-room; we know we shall find Miss Rosaura here, occupied with the trimming and dressing of the Christmas-tree.

The authority of the church register justifies us in recording, that exactly forty years ago,—a few weeks surely making no essential difference in so long a space of time,—the infant Rosaura Georgina Amanda Halwig, was born, baptized immediately, as is customary in cases where the infant's death is apprehended, and entered upon the records of that important book.

Miss Rosaura's age may therefore be easily guessed, without our having committed the slightest indiscretion in that respect,—it is the church register that has told it.

We regret not to be able to lay the fault of a description of Miss Rosaura's person to somebody else's account. But this worthy woman never having been pursued on a warrant of arrest, nor having
made a journey beyond the border of her native country, we are utterly unable to give a copy of an official description of her person. Our readers, however, shall not be deprived of it: we shall take such description and its attending responsibility upon ourselves. Here it is:

Age, known; figure, tall, slender, and bony; face, very small, not to say, scarcely any; nose, long, thin, and pointed; eyes, water-color; hair, sandy corkscrew curls; complexion, slightly grayish; a red spot on each cheekbone, resembling a forgotten autumn rose; beard, not entirely to be denied; heart, discernible, pretty good, even; profession, private artist; special characteristics, passionately anxiously to read the faces on the Corso,-in St. Peter's,—wandered on disappointedly,—mounted a narrow staircase leading to a large, bare-looking painter's atelier. It was Christmas eve there also,—no odoriferous pine-tree was shedding its brill

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And thus in her artistic capacity we found her to-night busying herself about the Christmas-tree. Miss Rosaura hung not a single gilt apple or silvered nut on the tree without having previously studied and consulted symmetry, effect of light, contrast, and refined taste. She was at the moment we entered making the third round of the tree, with a sugar chimney-sweep between her thumb and forefinger. Gravely she examined her work of decoration, in order to find, in keeping with the rules of art, a cosey green spot, in which that sweet man of the chimney would show to best advantage. On the fourth round, the black youngster was favored with an excellent look at the chimney-sweep and his two beauties. He was at the moment we entered making the third round of the tree, with a sugar chimney-sweep between her thumb and forefinger. Gravely she examined her work of decoration, in order to find, in keeping with the rules of art, a cosey green spot, in which that sweet man of the chimney would show to best advantage. On the fourth round, the black youngster was favored with an excellent look at the chimney-sweep and his two beauties. He reddened up to the very roots of her hair when she said, —

"Yes, aunt, it is very prettily arranged!"

"I am very sure it is, Else, and sure also that there is in the whole town not one tree as artistically dressed as that of J. C. Halwig and Company."

Else said nothing. She knitted busily on her little blue worsted stocking. She was just then at the toe, and time it was too, for the little stocking was to delight some poor child that very evening.

"Else, you seem to be thinking of Walter again. Child, you ought to be thankful that that ridiculous nonsense, as your father very correctly calls it, is over. Walter will never be a genuine
artist, or a great painter. He gave some promise when a boy, I
will not deny it; but he was always so terribly proud and self-
opinionated that he never followed my advice in drawing or
painting."

"My dear aunt, did not Walter receive the large gold medal at
the academy?" Here Else's knitting-needles clicked somewhat
louder than usual.

"Very possible, child, but that only tended to make him still
prouder. I shall never forget his behavior, on my showing him my
two playing kittens. I took that picture to be my very best.
And when, at the urgent request of our coffee-circle, I sent it to the ex-
shibition, it always attracted large crowds. The critics of our daily
press said literally: 'They are the most wonderful cats we have
ever seen!' Notwithstanding, my polite young nephew, when
spending his vacation with us, had the audacity to ask me whether
they were raccoons or guinea pigs,—a very impertinent question
that, Else!"

"But, aunt, even Uncle Tob, when he saw the picture for the first
time, said they were the most lifelike calves, and difficult to
tell whether they were land or sea calves!"

Else's eyes had assumed a somewhat angry twinkle, and her
voice sounded as sharply as that sweet voice could possibly sound.
She could not allow him, whom she loves above all the world,—who
is so sad, because they want to separate him from her,—to be slan-
dered with impunity; she felt bound to avenge him.

"Sea-calves, indeed!" said Aunt Rosaura, and her thin curls
became very much excited. "Uncle Tob is a great sea-calf him-
self, and a very wicked and impudent one at that. He is never-
happier than when he can annoy me!"

"He does not mean any harm, aunt; he is fond of teasing,
that is all. There beats no nobler heart than Uncle Tob's, and you
will see before long with what heart-felt kindness and benevolence
he deals out the presents to his twelve children."

"Hm! that may be. Else, he is kind enough to poor people,
and spends a good deal of money at Christmas; but I am just, even
towards my enemy; and ever since the affair of the sea-calves, I
cannot but look upon Uncle Tob as my enemy."

"And how kindly he always behaved towards Walter!"

"Yes, he has always upheld that boy, and that has been Walter's
misfortune. Else, Walter would certainly have given in, when
your father left that hopeful-nephew the choice of either becoming
an apprentice in the great firm of J. C. Halwig and Com-
pany, or of leaving forever the house which had been his home so
long!"

Clouds flitted across Else's lovely little face, and tears trickled
down upon the stocking in her hand.

We know from the description given above that Aunt Rosaura
was possessed of a pretty good heart. This heart made itself known
when the first tears glistened in Else's eyes.—It prompted its mis-
tress — its slave rather — to interrupt forthwith her round with a
robust little cupid in hand, whose entire costume consisted of two
gilt wings and a thread about the waist, to put her spare arms
round Else's neck, and to bend lower and lower the sandy cork-
screw curls, until the faded lips imprinted a hearty kiss on Else's
forehead. She then dried the tears that were escaping from those
dark-blue, innocent eyes, and whispered,—

"On merry Christmas eve, Else, we ought not to cry!"

"O aunt, do you believe that poor Walter can be cheerful on this
night, so far, far from home, and so lonely?"

Else sobbed so bitterly, she could hardly articulate these words.

"Child, you are thinking of him again, always and only of
him; he really does not deserve it! However, it is his own fault;
he might at this very moment stand warm and comfortable behind
your papa's counter, and this evening a betrothal might have taken
place: that boy has actually trampled his own happiness under
foot."

"But, aunt, he felt a higher calling in him than that of making
paper-bags and keeping books and accounts."

"Child, you talk as though it were my calling to make soups,
assort linen, and run about the house with a bunch of keys in
my belt... We have to sacrifice our inclinations for those we love.

Aunt Rosaura at this moment looked as imposing as we may imagine a priestess of virtue in the olden times to have looked.

Else remained silent; her sobs stifled her utterance.

"Else, you ought to be reasonable and forget Walter. Believe me, no man ever deserved that we should mourn and pine for him; for this reason alone have I remained single of my own free will. Else, you may believe me,—and I am—very, very—happy!"

But why trembled Aunt Rosaura's voice so perceptibly at this confession of her maid's happiness? why did her eyes assume a humid appearance? Was it possible that Aunt Rosaura, notwithstanding her present hatred of men, should in days gone by—many, many years ago—have dreamt the sweetest of all earthly dreams, and not be able to forget at this late hour, that, alas! it was only a dream?

We do not know; the church register gives no information on this point. It takes notice of similar dreams only, when four waking lips have softly whispered their "yes," "yes!" at the same time.

And quickly did the moist glitter in her eyes disappear again, and her voice resume its firm and self-conscious tone.

"But be merry now and cheerful, Else. Just guess what surprise I am preparing for you. Never mind, child, I will tell you,—you could not possibly guess it,—we are going to have another sitting after the holidays are over!"

O how frightened those blue, sparkling eyes turned upon Aunt Rosaura! how timidly the sweet voice exclaimed,—

"Aunt, you do not, cannot mean to—"

"Yes, Else, I shall take your likeness—"

"But you have painted me now seventeen times at least—"

"That does not average a likeness for every year of your age, yet! I trust, however, that we shall make the number full during this winter. One thing only troubles me, Else," she added, after a pause, "what costume am I to take you in?"

Else took up her stocking again very busily; her thoughts were just running up the narrow stairs of the house in Rome, leading to the atelier, when this fearful costume question drew her back: poor Else fell down the whole flight of stairs, and the knitting-needles made a louder noise than ever.

"Yes, Else, the costume is a matter of some difficulty, but I shall not despair of inventing an original eighteenth character-costume, since I have been successful seventeen times before now. And there is not a single house-dress, nay, not even a ball-dress, among them! Any one can paint those. Character and originality, however, are a primary condition with me; and without a costume there can be no character!"

Aunt Rosaura put her forefinger to the point of her nose and muttered pensively,—

"Angel child,—little beggar,—little gardener,—young shepherdess,—Tyrolese girl,—fisher girl,—Scotch girl,—mum,—we have had them all,—hm! it is by no means easy,—but stop! I have it. Else, I shall paint you as a water-nymph: long, white, flowing dress; dripping hair, with a wreath of reed and water-lilies in it; in your hand a charming little shell-trimmed bonnet; the painting will be an ideal so perfect—"

"That nobody will ever be able to recognize little Else Halwig in it!" broke in suddenly a merry voice, so close behind Aunt Rosaura, that the fright caused her to lose her balance on the chair and—fall into Uncle Tob's protecting arms.

Aunt Rosaura endeavored to free herself from the encircling arms of her tormenter, but found it no easy task.

"Mr. Maeuslein!"

A last effort, and Aunt Rosaura was free once more.

Stout Uncle Tobias, with his smiling, honest face, and slender Aunt Rosaura, with the air of a game-cock, were standing face to face.

"Apropos, auntie,—one must not pass over the water-nymph idea too hastily; upon my word, a colossal idea, worthy of your genius, and just the very thing for your peculiar style: water-
GOOD STORIES.

nymphs, — water-colors, — glorious, — inimitable! — you’ll hit the water to a charm; then add a few light milk-white and coffee-brown clouds on an indigo-blue sky, and — heaven and water of your wonderful creation are done!

Aunt Rosaura found the use of her tongue. “Ah! our worthy uncle is in the rosiest of humors for Christmas. I am infinitely obliged to him for those lectures on art, and fully convinced we can all of us learn a great deal from him, of which his artistic pieces of beetles and bugs are abundant evidence.”

Poor Aunt Rosaura tried to smile as irreproachably as she courteousied, but did not succeed half as well.

“Well, auntie, I have always said that you and I might inaugurate a new era of art. You in the watery parts, I in the plastic department. Auntie, auntie, if I were not old enough to be your grandpapa, I should not answer for the consequences!”

“My dear uncle,” said Else, while the merry large blue eyes turned upon him almost reproachfully from over her knitting, “this is Christmas eve! and,” added she, in a low tone of voice, “I want to whisper something into your ear.”

“Here I am, child, — let me hear all you have to say.”

“Uncle, dear; have you brought me any Christmas presents?”

“Presents! what kind of presents do you mean, Else?”

“Oh, you know well enough what I am longing for, — a letter, to begin with.”

“A letter, Else? how should such a thing come to me?”

“Uncle, that is very unkind of you, to plague me so,” — and her voice trembled in the effort of suppressing a sob.

That was too much for the kind-hearted old man, — his fat hands patted Else’s cheeks, and, drawing the burning face with the tearful eyes to his, he kissed her quivering lips tenderly, and said, —

“Do not be so sad, my darling; you are telling me yourself that this is merry Christmas eve, and all will yet be well.”

She smiled through tears, saying, —

“Then let me have my Christmas letter, uncle?”

“I have no letter for you, darling; upon my word, I have not!”

Then he must be sick, uncle, — sick among strangers! O what a gloomy, cheerless Christmas his must be!”

And poor Else gave a loud sob and hid her face on her uncle’s shoulder.

How the round, ruddy face of Uncle Tob twitched and worked! He had to set his teeth to keep down the glad tidings, which filled his heart almost to overflowing. He composed himself sufficiently to give vent to his feelings, without allowing the harbinger of joy to escape from his lips.

“No, Else, he is not sick. I assure you he is as well and lively as a squirrel, and not even alone among strangers. He is in good, merry company; I trust, — in the very merriest I know of, — ha, ha, ha! He would be a very foolish boy indeed, were he to feel sad this eve! I should never forgive him if he did not jump clear up to the ceiling this evening, — ha, ha!”

“Uncle, what is the matter with you? something has happened or is going to happen! tell me all, all about it, that’s a dear old uncle!”

“No, Else, nothing has happened, but something may, and will happen, something very joyful, — just the merriest thing for a Christmas eve: but if you love your old uncle, do not ask him any more questions; let him enjoy the pleasures of a surprise; you know, Else, I am passionately fond of surprises.”

“Putting frogs into a room, bugs in a nightcap, and roosters into a wardrobe, which will loudly crow at dead of night, — such are some of the humorous surprises of our Uncle Tobias,” Aunt Rosaura added, by way of parenthesis.

“Well meant at any rate, auntie, ah! here comes Papa Dorr; well, have my boys arrived?”

“At your service, my young master!” replied a gigantic old man, who stood in the door as straight as an arrow. He wore a gray sheep’s pelt, black knee-breeches and high duck-gaiters. His thick hair and the long full beard were white as snow, the eyebrows however still perfectly black. The whole appearance of the man had something of the giant about it. The hard, hairy
hand wanted but an uprooted pine-tree in it to make the old man
the very picture of the wild man in the fairy tale.

This man was the old porter of the firm,—Theodorich Hinke.

The Hinkes had for more than a hundred and thirty years been
the hereditary porters of the house of J. C. Halwig and Co. The
pig-skin covered account-books can prove it. How long the name
of Theodorich has been the hereditary appellative in the Hinke
family, we can, with our wonted scrupulousness in matters of this
kind, not distinctly assert. The church register, to which we al-
ways gladly refer, only goes back to the year 1723. During that
year died the wife of the Pastor loci, in whose opinion church-
records were only there to- furnish the very reverend wife of the
venerable pastor paper for wrapping sausages in, for lining flour-
barrels, and for other household uses. In 1729 we find in the
register the name of one Theodorich Hinke, a son born to a parent
of the same name.

That the frequency of the name of Theodorich might lead to
most inconvenient confusion, will be readily admitted. And this
confusion arose very often in the house of J. C. Halwig and Co.
since the porter's lodge, in the yard of the house, from time imme-
morial had never harbored less than three bearers of that name, at
least two of whom were porters in the colonial branch of the
firm.

Uncle Tobias first succeeded, on his being made a partner of the
firm, twenty years ago, in surmounting the difficulties connected
with the name Theodorich. At that time there were three Hinkes,
who answered to the sacred name,—No. 1, the sixty-five years
old porter; No. 2, the forty years old ditto; and No. 3, the seven
years old boy Theodorich Hinke, aspirant for the office of por-
ter and messenger for stray parcels and other trifles,—father, son,
and grandson.

After long and mature deliberation on the frequent mistakes and
irregularities engendered by the common name of the three, Uncle
Tob hit upon a happy expedient; he invented three abbreviations:
Theo,—Dorr,—Dorry,—according to their ages.

These names served their purpose for full twenty years, until
Dorry had grown up, married Else's playmate Christina,—com-
monly abbreviated into Stina,—and in course of time himself held
a sturdy young Theodorich over the baptismal font, who had Else,
Uncle Tob, Aunt Rosaura and great-grandfather Theo for god-
parents. At the christening dinner Uncle Tob rose, touched his
wine-glass with the back of his knife and said: "Assembled friends! We
rejoice at this moment in hearing the youngest Theodorich of
the family of the Hinkes exercise his infantile lungs, which seem
to warrant the greatest hopes for the future of the house of J. C.
Halwig and Co. Alas! he has one defect, his appellative, which
is a great impediment to the house, as experience has taught us.
I therefore propose to reduce young Theodorich to one third:—
and ask you to join me in drinking the health of little Rich."

General applause. Aunt Rosaura was the only one who listened
rather compassionately to the toast; she had by this time fallen
into the habit of looking down with compassion upon everything
Uncle Tob said or did. Besides her, in order to be very exact in
our statements, J. C. Halwig was another of the party who did not
join in the general mirth; but that was already a matter of course
in his case; J. C. Halwig had never been jubilant during his
whole lifetime; J. C. Halwig's cares about the wholesale and re-
tail business had never allowed him to be heartily merry for once
in the course of his natural existence: in fact, on this momentous
occasion he had only made his appearance for a short half hour at
Else's urgent request.

When Uncle Tob sounded his glass, J. C. Halwig muttered in an
undertone, "ridiculous!"—at the mention of the hopeful lungs,
"Silly!"—at that of the greatest hopes, "Nonsense!"

We have unfortunately to confess, that these were J. C. Halwig's
favorite exclamations, the true scale of his emotions.

At the words "reduce to one third," the "business" began to
think; when "Rich" was proposed, it thought: "In spite of his
ridiculous, silly, stupid nonsense, the partner is occasionally a very
practical man; it is a consideration indeed, to be able to save two thirds of the time in one single name, and Time is money."

After this digression we return to old Dorr, who, in spite of his sixty years, was still standing in military straightness before Uncle Tob.

"At your service, my young master," had said old Dorr, and now added, "The boys are in the back yard, snowballing."

"Very well, my ancient, I like to have them; like it a great deal better than see them hug the stove. There is no greater fun for a boy than snowballing, with the snow about two feet deep. Know all about it, let me tell you. Else, are your stockings ready? Glad to hear it; they shall keep those boys of mine warm all winter. And now let us go with Dorr and light the Christmas-tree."

Aunt Rosaura took from a side-table a parcel of shirts, Else counted a dozen blue worsted stockings into her apron, Uncle Tob took various large and small bundles on and under his arm, and made old Dorr carry a still greater number of voluminous, mysterious packages; and off they went along the corridor, across a large store-room, where casks and barrels and boxes were piled up almost to the ceiling, and where an appetizing odor of raisins and spices pervaded the air. They came to the last door, which Dorr opened, ushering them into a charming little kitchen. Everything in it shone and glittered,—the red tiles, with which it was paved, the red hearth-bricks, the numerous pots, cans, and pans,—in fact everything wore a holiday aspect; but the most radiant object of all was a round little woman with a sunshiny face, which latter glowed like the rising sun, owing to the blazing fire and the constant battle with the rebellious contents of the kettles. A coquettish little cap with pink bows seemed to be blown on her curly, lustrous golden hair, and a more tasteful, prettier white apron than hers, could not have been seen anywhere.

This good-natured, rosy, smiling little person was none else but Stina, Else's old playmate and Dorry's young wife.

"Good evening, Stina," said Uncle Tob,—"is your spice-beer ready?"

"A very good evening to you, Uncle Tob,—beg pardon, Mr. Mauenslein. The spice-beer will be ready in a moment. I only want to get all the strength of the cinnamon and ginger in it. Your humble servant, Miss Rosaura,—I feel greatly honored—heartily welcome, my dear Else, since you wish me to call you so still, although Dorry thinks that I ought to no longer. I must tell you, that I am somewhat angry at Dorry; he is off on a secret errand, and will not be back in time for the children's Christmas; would not even tell me, his wife, what it was all about,—only think of it! Else, he said: 'Stina, your heart is always on your tongue and too apt to run away with it.'"

The glib little tongue had to take breath at last; this moment Aunt Rosaura seized, to put in,—

"O how close it is here!" and she tried to make herself as small as she possibly could in order not to collide with stout Uncle Tob.

"Silly thing that I am, to keep the ladies and gentlemen standing in my kitchen all this time!" said Stina, while her eyes glided along the shining walls and kettles with a look of profound satisfaction. She then took down the largest jug, painted in Chinese pattern, of the richest blue, and poured in the fragrant, warm spice-beer, after which the whole procession moved from the kitchen to her parlor.

Near the stove on a huge leather-covered arm-chair sat an old, old man, his chin resting on his chest, fast asleep.

By his side stood a cradle with a slumbering infant resting in its capacious depths.

They are great-grandfather and great-grandson,—Theo and Rich Hinke,—an old and young child! Yes, old Theo, ensconced in his big chair like a dethroned, broken-down giant, had on his descent from the summit of life gradually gone back to the valley of childhood. His evening of life, like the rising moon of his great-grandson, was a hallowed dream.

Old Theo smiled in his sleep, the child began to stir in the cradle.
The old child instantly awoke, rocked the cradle, and sang in a low, tremulous voice,—

Little Hans sat in the chimney
Patch his little shoe,—
When came a little maiden
To see what Hans would do!"

and how happily the old man smiled. He took no notice of what was going on around him, not even of the visitors present.

"Merry Christmas, Papa Theo!" said Uncle Tob.

"Merry Christmas, my child!" grinned the old man, "is the tree lighted yet?"

"No, Papa Theo, not yet, but will be soon. What can we give you?"

"Nothing, my father in heaven has prepared a fine tree for me with beautiful things on it; when he wants his child to come, he will call me!"

And the eyes of the old man wore a pleased, contented look.

"Else, do look at your little godson, see how he has grown!" said Stina, taking little Rich from the cradle.

"Oh how pretty he is, Stina, and how knowingly he looks at me! Let me take him on my arm a while."

"And do you know, Else, the day after to-morrow he will have passed the fool's age!"

"Come now, Else and Stina," Uncle Tob interrupted them, "let us light up the tree,—quick,—lest the boys break the windows! Listen! there goes one snowball against the blind already. I shall, meanwhile, go down to the boys and pelt them in my style, and be back again in five minutes," and Uncle Tob left the room.

"Snowballing,—snowballing, that sounds pretty!" said Papa Theo, with a cheerful smile.

Else put her godson into the hands of his grandfather, and she and Stina both set up a merry laugh.

A prettier and droller sight could hardly be seen, than the old giant Dorr in his pelts, balancing the infant Rich on his broad, flat hands, evidently afraid of crushing him in his long, bony fingers,

until Stina took the child away from him, transferring it to Papa Theo's care. Both the children, the old and the young, were soon asleep again.

By this time some tapers were lighted on the tall tree, that stood boldly and commandingly in the centre of a long table. It was richly hung with red-cheeked apples, and hearts and dolls made of honey-cake dough: chains of nuts and raisins were festooned from branch to branch. On the white tablecloth in a wide circle there stood twelve plates, heaped up with apples, nuts, cake, and buns. Between them in rich profusion lay jackets, pants, vests, neckerchiefs, stockings, caps, slippers, writing books, pencils, flutes, trumpets, rattles, &c., &c.

Scarcely had Uncle Tob left the room, when Aunt Rosaura took another hurried turn round the table, depositing a neatly made shirt by each plate. "Stina, there is not a thread of cotton in them. I myself spun the flax; had it woven and cut the patterns. Else and I have made them with our own hands. These shirts will fit the boys nicely and make them comfortable.” Thereupon she pulled a large pannier from under the table and went round the table a last time, this time distributing neat-looking paper parcels, containing pounds of rice, with papers of cinnamon and sugar mixed, inside; pounds of prunes, half-pounds of sugar, coffee, and other dainties for poor folk, whom she wanted to have a treat once a year at least; but for worlds Aunt Rosaura would not have had Uncle Tob watching her just then. Not but what Aunt Rosaura had come by these colonial delicacies in a perfectly honest way: the books of J. C. Halvig and Co. would have been evidence that she had made extensive purchases that very afternoon of one of the boys in the shop, while Uncle Tob's back was turned, and had paid for them cash down. Aunt Rosaura would simply have felt sadly annoyed and ashamed, had Uncle Tob perceived that she had a heart, and a good heart at that.

Uncle Tob, after having brought the boys' play outdoors to an end, re-entered the bright warm room at the head of his twelve protégés, who ejaculated an "Ah!" of mute astonishment. He stepped up No. 3.
to each plate in turn, called out the name on each, which stood in bold relief in letters of sugar on the frosted cake. Else and Stina assisted him, and when all the presents were distributed, the boys had to sing a merry Christmas song, in which Uncle Tob, Else and Stina joined, and even old Theo's voice might dimly be heard. After that came the spice-beer and buns; and another song, and a dance round the tree brought this part of the evening's performance to a close, which performance had made sixteen hearts as happy as kindliness and Christian charity could make them. Uncle Tob, who by the way is three months younger than Aunt Rosaura, was perfectly beside himself with glee, and not only joined hands in the dance, but said to Else,—

"Else, dear, hold up your little head, you will have reason enough to be cheerful to-night; take your old uncle's word for it."

While the dance was at its liveliest, the performers had not noticed that the kitchen-door had been opened wide, and that gradually seven more faces had made their appearance, placing themselves in the open space in so artistic a manner, that all could see and be seen at once.

The first face on the right was a very old-looking, petulant, and bony one, with cold gray eyes, thick hair, thin pinched lips, and a quill behind the ear. That ear could scarcely be imagined without a quill. This face, as was plainly seen, was anything but a merry Christmas face. To it belonged a small, slender body in loose-fitting, black, shiny clothes, this lustre, alas! smelling strongly of linseed-oil and herring-brine.

Near this stern old face smiled a pretty, rosy, childish one, belonging exclusively to a frail, handsome boy, who looked barely older than ten years, but had been regularly confirmed, according to the rites of the church, the summer before. Besides these two there were yet to be seen a large red face with forepart of a round bald head, on which a dozen or two of carefully oiled hairs were symmetrically distributed,—a pale face, inclining pensively on one side,—a dapper face, with mustache and imperial, indicative of collars of the latest pattern, lilac gloves, cane and eyeglass on Sundays,—

a flaxen face, shining in the abundance of its own oily plumpness,—and lastly, a face of which no more could be said than that twelve of its kind make a dozen.

These seven faces, it will be easily guessed, belonged to the head of the firm of J. C. Halwig and Co. and his six "shoppies," — the "governor," as these six youths of fourteen to forty-four years were wont to call him, at their head, the men, as the "governor" called them in public, behind him.

"Ridiculous," said J. C. Halwig, on casting his first glance at the merry dance and the lighted Christmas-tree.

"Ridiculous," repeated the six "men" dutifully after him.

"Silly," J. C. Halwig intimated at the second glance, "to waste one's time and money on other people's children."

"Silly," murmured the sextett in moral indignation.

"Nonsense, this dancing with beggars' children and singing foolish songs!"

"Nonsense!" echoed, the six youths, almost upsetting each other in their zeal and devotion.

"All these lighted tapers, jackets, slippers, and, worse than all, these playthings and dainties, all preventives to money-making!" said the governor.

"Preventives to money-making!" repeated the six "shoppies."

This last was J. C. Halwig's fourth and favorite expression, which he put in at random. Ridiculous — silly — nonsense — he called everything not belonging to "business," according to kind and degree.

Outside of "business," J. C. H. loved but one single object in the world,—his little Else. Yes, he loved her even more dearly than might have been expected of so solid and practical a business man. But he loved her in the most practical way. His whole aim was to make her rich, or, as he called and understood it, happy. He would not easily deny his Else's slightest wish, even though it cost him a round sum of money; but first of all his critical business understanding had to sanction it as being "practical," or at least as "not unpractical."
On extraordinary occasions the father had complied with some of her requests, which the merchant and strict man of business had designated as being "ridiculous," as "silly," even; but the terrible verdict of "nonsense" once given, nothing more need be expected, even were all the doctors in the world to say to him: "You will break the dear little heart of your Else,—your only child!" The man of business would not have retracted his given verdict, and thus it happened—that—that poor Walter had to go out into the world. For all that, our little Else loved her father, with his cruel, calculating nature, dearly; she could not help it.

The dance was still going on, the singing continued. "Come along, brother; a Christmas-dance will not break down the old house of J. C. Halwig!" said Uncle Tob, in his most winning manner. "I,—and dance,—nonsense!"

"Well then, join us, you youngsters; Christmas comes but once a year!"

This was no sooner said, than the six buckram youths opened their mouths: "We,—and dance—" The mouths stood wide open, as though more was to follow, but sheer respect kept down the last word.

And the dancing and singing went merrily on, as merrily as a dozen happy boys could sing and dance,—old Theo and infant Rich sleeping the while.

All of a sudden J. C. Halwig had disappeared; even the "youngsters" had not seen him go; their eyes and ears were so completely wrapt up in what they saw and heard. The dapper-faced man had been the first to notice the absence of their chief. "He has disappeared!" whispered he, with the blandest smile of returned freedom. "He is gone!" fell in the chorus with a sound like the awakening from a nightmare. A strange radiance illumined the six faces near the kitchen door,—the most radiant among them was that of the flaxen-faced youth, owing to his natural happy propensities. They all joined in now, and a happy group they were, assembled round that Christmas-tree.

About an hour before the commencement of this jubilee, Dorry Hlinke and Uncle Tob sat in the dark office adjoining the family sitting-room, in which Else and Aunt Rosaura were decorating the tree,—the former's thoughts wandering to far-off Italy,—putting their heads together and conversing in an under-tone.

"It is agreed, then: you conduct him hither secretly and noiselessly, and don't breathe a single word to Stina; d'ye hear, Dorry? But mind! he has to sit perfectly still,—mustn't spoil my fun,—if time hangs heavily on him, let him look at my bugs and beetles,—had some fine additions while he was gone. The illumination is not of the brightest, but if he holds them up to the window, he can see enough. We might even push the curtain back an inch or two; that will give him some light. And another thing, Dorry, don't forget to give him a good hot glass of punch; the poor boy must have frozen stiff on the road!"

"Shall be attended to, Uncle . . . Mr. Mauslein, a jollier commission than this has never fallen to my lot in J. C. H. and Co.'s. You'll remember, how fond he and I always were of each other,—like own brothers. A dead herring shan't be more mute than J. Stina, I think, suspected something, and pressed me hard, I can tell you; but I let nothing out, and that is a good deal, considering,—is it not, Mr. Mauslein?"

After that Uncle Tob remained awhile in the dusky office, pacing up and down, his hands on his back. He was thinking of times past, when he held screaming little Else on his shoulders, calling her his little wife; when he walked with the two children, Walter and Else, through fields and woods, catching bugs and butterflies, or flying kites and making rabbit-houses with them. Uncle Tob remembered that he had often dreamt in those happy days—a foolish dream—that Else, his little wife, might some day call him by another name than Uncle Tob. Even J. C. H. had sometimes plainly hinted that it were by no means so very "unpractical" if his Else and—I hardly dare to write it down, but it must be—and stout Uncle Tob should be made one. Furthermore, did Uncle Tob remember a certain Christmas eve, it was just five years ago this
night, on which Else shed many hot tears, and he saw for the first time that the dream of his heart was after all only an uncle’s foolish dream. O, how it had pained him, — how he had suffered, — more than ever before in his life; but when Else began to sob bitterly, as though her little heart would break, he shook himself, brushed away the tears, embraced with Else and Walter, and said, tremblingly: “Rely upon our Heavenly Father above, and on your uncle Tob here, children; all, all will yet be well!” And then he ran off into the garden and wept. But in that same hour he pledged to himself the word of a man of honor, that Else’s eyes should one day, not very distant, glisten and sparkle happily, if it were to cost him the only bright dream of an old bachelor’s heart.

All this passed in Uncle Tob’s mind in the dark office; his eyes were moist. But when he felt a tear trickling down his cheek, he once more shook himself so powerfully, that the stove trembled with him, hastily wiped off the falling tear, as he had done five years ago, opened the glass-door leading into the sitting-room, and so terribly frightened Aunt Rosaura by his humorous manner, that she fell from the chair into his arms,—an incident which the reader will have hardly forgotten yet.

Dorry Hinke stole noiselessly out of the back gate. The moon shone brightly, it was bitter cold, and the young porter wrapped himself up warmly in pelts and fur-cap, with a heavy shawl round the neck, and good stout gloves on his strong hands. His young wife had strenuously insisted upon this, in spite of his iron constitution, that disdained to notice the existence of nerves, and knew a cold only by hearsay.

The snow cracked under his feet. The reflection of many Christmas-trees fell across his path. The street was crowded; people were running to and fro, carrying bundles of every imaginable size; they were for the most part men whom the cares of life had only at this late hour permitted to buy a few small presents for wife and child, and who were now taking them home to their firesides. Others were hurrying to the post-office to receive a letter or a present from their dear ones far away, others again to the railroad station to receive an expected Christmas guest.

Dorry also went to the railroad station, and there paced up and down the platform. The train would arrive in fifteen minutes. By the light of the lanterns we discover for the first time that Dorry must have a very respectable mustache; how else could the numerous little icicles have found a place under his nose? He was filled with expectant joy; that, together with his brisk walk up and down the platform, kept him warm. A railroad station is a highly entertaining place; there is always something of interest to be seen, more especially so on Christmas eve, every arriving train bringing more Christmas faces along with it.

His train was signalled at last, its eye of fire shining from a distance, as though conscious of the joyous load it carried homeward; the very whistle of the conductor sounded like a harmonious “Here we are at last!” People pushed and crowded towards the doors of the cars; the conductors were expeditious that eve, — they also wanted to go home; home! sweet, melodious sound, thrice blessed on Christmas eve!

“Merry Christmas to you!”

“Dorry, — Dorry, — my good old fellow, how are you?”

“Walter, — Mr. Walter, — Mr. Lorenz!”

How cordially they shook each other by the hand. Little was wanting, and Dorry would have embraced the young gentleman, had the honest porter deemed it to be quite proper and becoming to embrace so good-looking and stately a gentleman in a public railway station.

He took Walter’s baggage, a long, flat, wooden box, and led the way to their home.

“How is Else, Dorry?”

“Well and cheery; not quite as merry as formerly, but that is natural enough.”

“Heaven be praised, she is well! I have journeyed with a heavy heart. Uncle Tob wrote to me to come home immediately, without giving any reason or sending me a single word of love from her. Do you know what Uncle Tob can have meant?”
"No, Walter, I do not; but I warrant he means well. He is so merry to-day, so completely beside himself, that . . . . I have never seen him so!"

"Does Else know I am coming?"

"No, indeed; not a soul is suspecting it, not even Stina,"—and he looked triumphantly at the friend of his boyhood, as if he meant to say: Your Dorry is a hero,—has not even told his little wife what the secret is.

"And Uncle Halwig?"

"Just the same: money,—practical,—business,—ridiculous,—silly,—nonsense!"

Walter shook himself as if he wanted to shake off a load of gloomy thoughts that crowded upon him at those words.

They arrived at the house of J. C. H. and Co., the house of his boyhood’s home, which, when grown up to manhood, he had left with a heavy heart. Old times came back to him, when between oranges and clay-pipes and gigantic cigars in the shop-window he had looked into the gray, dismal face of his uncle, — a face that had grown grayer and more dismal still, since the day those lips had angrily said to him:—

"Artist—hm? Starving wretches,—nonsense,—silence!"

Dorry went in to reconnoitre; all was well. He led Walter in by the gateway, and into a small room, the office of J. C. Halwig and Company. That evening it was Uncle Tob’s exclusive property; he had put the key into his pocket.

Walter was alone in the small, dimly lighted office. He looked around him; on the walls hung Uncle Tob’s bugs and beetles; they were familiar acquaintances of former happy days. There stood the leather-covered, three-legged office-chair, that could be screwed up or down: it once was the favorite riding-horse of little Else and little Walter. On the desk stood the same black office almanac, indicating in large figures “24,” and over it the word “December.” What delight he and Else had taken in spelling the names of the months! Yonder wooden inkstand could tell of the boy’s fright, when he had upset it over Uncle Tob’s ledger,—
Christmas-table there stood a tree, the same as to-night, but its
tapers had burnt down.

At the round table sat Else — sweet little Else of sixteen—
weeping.

Near her, erect and stately, sat Aunt Rosaura, with angry eyes and
red spots on her emaciated cheeks. She held her dearly prized
“cat-picture” in her lap. It was remarkable, how quickly the ten-
derness of her water-gray eyes changed into the fierceness of a
lioness, when her glance turned from those innocent cats to guilty
Walter, who stood near the stove in an attitude of haughty reserve
and daring energy. Half an hour before Walter had committed the
darkest deed of his nineteen years old wicked life, and broken the
staff over those same kittens.

Uncle Tob stood by him holding his hand, looking as sleek and
rosy and kind as Walter knew him when a
child, but considerably
increased in rotundity, and, if that were possible, in kind-heartedness
and sympathy.

J. C. Halwig, lank and lean, and of the same grayish complexion as
formerly, paced hastily and excitedly up and down the room, then
stopped suddenly in front of Walter and sputtered angrily: “This fine
young gentleman, then, thinks himself too good to stand behind my
counter! Wants to become an artist? Ridiculous! Have I
then
thrown away my money and sent this young man for two entire years
—
to the most expensive commercial college in the

city, in order that he
might have a jolly
time there, learn how to make daubs, and imagine
himself a great painter?

Silly!”

“No, uncle,— no, — I cannot, — I will not!”

“Ungrateful boy! who has taken you, a fatherless and mother-
less orphan without a penny, into his house, and cared for and edu-
cated you like a father?”

“My mother’s brother has,— and I thank him for it from the
bottom of my heart.”

“And who are you, that you dare to oppose me now?”

“No longer a boy, that thoughtlessly does as he is bidden. I shall
never cease to feel grateful towards you; but
I
must henceforth
self-consciously walk the path which
I
think to be the right one.”

“Nonsense!— then go to your ruin and destruction; my house
and my hands are closed to you from this moment; I shall not know
you any more!”

Else uttered a piercing shriek.

“O father, — father! take back those words.” But J. C. Hal-
wig heard her not; he had rushed from the room, slamming the
door behind him. Aunt Rosaura followed after him, with her treas-
ured cats.

“Walter, my, yes, my Walter, you must, you shall not leave
me!” and Else threw her arms round Walter’s neck and sobbed long and loud.

That was the minute in which faded Uncle Tob’s one and only
happy life-dream.

“Walter,” he said, stifling his emotion, “stay at the Hinke’s
this night; I shall come and see you there; I have much, very
much to tell you, before you go.”
And he hastily left the room; the two young people were alone.
In the bitter grief of parting dawned the first rapture of a sweet, long-cherished love.

But his dream showed him still another picture. He stood looking into a large bare room. Painters' utensils were lying about on tables and chairs; on the easel stood a half-finished painting: "A morning in the Campagna."

It grew dark, night descended, he suddenly remembered it was Christmas,—holy Christmas eve. But no tree illumined and perfumed the dismal place, not even a lamp was to be seen! The large Italian moon shed her light upon a lonely youth, who sat by the window, his head in his hands, dreaming of his distant home.
The long, glossy curls, which had strayed over the dreamer's face, might have been seen to tremble; his heart had melted at the thought of home; and from under his locks the lips were heard to whisper, in the luminous stillness of that soft Italian night: "Else,—my beloved Else,—a merry, merry Christmas to you!"

Dream on, Walter! bear the burden of absence and solitude and home-longing but a little while longer; you shall soon wake to a joyous meeting and never-ending bliss, that more than your present reverie will resemble a dream,—the sweetest dream, indeed, you ever dreamt!

It is high time for us to return to Aunt Rosaura's Christmas-tree and the company assembled round it.

Our friends, the six clerks, stood at the table casting longing eyes at the numerous parcels, the high-colored silk handkerchiefs, and the various kinds of cakes on the plates before them. Their hands seemed to be magnetically attracted towards these presents, but were quickly drawn back whenever they felt the eye of the master of the house on them. He had taken his stand by the side of the smiling Rosaura, and wore an expression on his formidable countenance that plainly indicated it would be an intense relief to his pent-up feelings if he could but once exclaim,—
which heaved with emotions he could not master, and there Else could ease her overflowing heart.

Aunt Rosaura now approached with an air of intense anxiety. "O, there am I, and that is brother, and here the sister, whom God has taken from us, and there Else and Walter and Dorry, playing with Noah's ark; there stands the Christmas-tree, which I am supposed to have dressed; this is Uncle Tob's smiling, full-moon face . . . . and could Walter have painted such a picture? Walter, who could not even tell the difference between playing kittens and stupid guinea-pigs, — it cannot be, — nobody could make me believe it!"

"Yes, there is Else's mother!" muttered J. C. Halwig to himself, — his voice, usually so harsh, this time quivering lightly. "Well, what do you think, brother? He must be a pretty good artist who can paint such a picture, and touch even your heart!" Uncle Tob added in an under-tone. "O, Uncle Tob, that was a sad blunder! In an instant J. C. Halwig's emotion had subsided; the usual hard, wiry business-voice was heard to say: "Ridiculous, Tobias, — a preventive to money-making!"

"On the contrary, brother, an incentive of the best kind; just guess, how much the artist has been offered for that painting, if you please?"

J. C. H. gave a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders. "Cannot be much, I reckon! A mere trifle, that thing, a beggar's price, perhaps, — cheap as dirt."

Whence did Uncle Tob take the courage and dignity which he put into the words? "Hm! if the firm of J. C. Halwig and Company can afford to call twelve hundred thalers a mere trifle, I beg to be allowed to make the house my very best compliments!"

"Twelve hundred thalers, — black and white? Silly! We are not so easily taken in."

"That sum has not only been offered to the painter, but by him declined, because he will not sell the painting; he intends to give it away."

"The fool! give away money, so much money!" exclaimed J. C. H. in holy horror. Uncle Tob excelled himself that night in grandiloquence. "The artist does not mind a thousand thalers more or less like we poor currant princes! He has promised a copy at the same price to a Russian nobleman, who is completely infatuated with the picture."

"Tobias, how long does it take him to paint such a th ... such a picture, I mean?"

"About two months, I should think," Uncle Tob replied, mercilessly. "Two months! Why, that makes rising seven thousand thalers per annum, — an unheard-of sum!"

"Unheard-of sum!" repeated the chorus of the clerks. "Should you desire to give the artist a similar order, brother, he is not very far off."

"Walter, — my beloved Walter, — here!" Else stood there, deathly pale. Uncle Tob had to hold her, lest the violent shock should blow her down.

"Yes, Else, I thought to myself it would be a capital thing to celebrate your betrothal on holy Christmas eve, and of course we need the young lover for that particular purpose."

"Betrothal? Ridic . . . ."

J. C. H. had to swallow the remainder, for Else clung sobbing to his neck.

"O father! father! say no more; do not utter that terrible word!"

Strange, very strange! for the first time in his life J. C. Halwig left his most important word unfinished.

But the soft arms of little Else worked a still greater miracle: with an affectionate squeeze she dragged the ossified old business man down from the height of his cherished scale. Midways he made a faint attempt at taking another firm hold.

"The solid old house of J. C. Halwig, — celebrate a betrothal with an artist? Sil . . . ."
Another hug and J. C. H. had arrived on the lowermost round of the ladder.

"The old firm pass into the hands of strangers? Ridic. . . ."

Here Uncle Tob came to Else's assistance, and pulled his partner wholly down, whispering,

"As a matter of course Walter puts his savings into the business and becomes a silent partner; the firm is changed to J. C. Halwig, Maeuslein, and Company, and surely the future grandson will inherit the enterprising spirit of his grandfather!"

"Well, well! be it so, in Heaven's name! Amen!"

That word had never yet been heard to fall from those lips; he hardly knew himself how he came by it.

The six clerks stood there with open mouths and eyes.

And Else? — she blushed like a young rose; every drop of blood of that happy, fluttering heart had gone to the whirling little head.

Dorry cut most extraordinary grimaces, and pinched the pretty round arm of his wife: it was his way to express his joy.

But Stina little liked this tangible language of signs; she pushed his hand aside, and said: "I verily believe, you naughty creature are in the secret; I shall never forgive you for it!"

Dorry's honest face lighted up and nodded towards the office-window.

"Stina, — can't you guess it yet?" Meanwhile Uncle Tob and Else, hand in hand, approached the office-door, J. C. Halwig, Aunt Rosaura, Dorr, Dorry, and Stina following in their wake.

The six youths seized that auspicious moment to commence a close investigation of the contents of their paper parcels; their faces assumed a radiant look, especially that of the youngest, who found a bright ducat in his. "How my mother will rejoice, she has to work so hard to keep me in clothes,—O, how glad she 'll be!"

If anybody should at that moment have dared to question the solidity and liberality of J. C. H. and Co. he would have had a hard stand with those six boys.

They pulled out of the packages their new silk handkerchiefs, all neatly hemmed, and rushed also towards the office.
GOOD STORIES.

"Three cheers for the happy young couple, Miss Elisabeth Halwig and master Walter Lorenz, long may they live! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" fell in a chorus of nine cheery throats. "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

They were the voices of the clerks, who waved their silken handkerchiefs in boisterous glee, — and those of Stina, Dorr, and Dorry.

And now the solemn moment had arrived when Else and Walter, arm in arm, entered the brilliantly lighted sitting-room.

A merrier Christmas party could not have been seen in the whole town, perhaps not in the whole world.

Even J. C. H. could no longer suppress a cheerful smile; it was whispered among the clerks, that the governor had actually laughed twice and very nearly a third time.

On Aunt Rosaura's face alone a cloud was discernible. Her kind heart felt a pang at sight of her playing kittens, when moreover she could not but admit to herself, that Walter who had so keenly hurt her artistic sensibility had become a great painter after all. But this cloud was soon to be dispersed, even before the lights had burned low. Else had whispered something into Walter's ears. Smilingly he went up to Aunt Rosaura.

"My dear aunt, will you let me see to-morrow what you have painted during my absence? I see your playing kittens there, you have no doubt added similar pleasing compositions to your collection?"

Aunt Rosaura's face was beaming. Triumphantly, she looked up at Uncle Tob, who was putting a fresh supply of tapers on the tree; her look said plainly: Did you hear, old sceptic? this great artist knows how to distinguish white kittens from sea-calves, better than some people I know!"

Happy Aunt Rosaura!

Else and Walter retired into the window embrasure. They looked up to the starry Christmas sky, and will forever gladly and joyfully remember this thrice blessed Christmas eve.

THE CHRISTMAS BANQUET.

From the unpublished "Allegories of the Heart."

"I HAVE here attempted," said Roderick, unfolding a few sheets of manuscript, as he sat with Rosina and the sculptor in the summer-house, — "I have attempted to seize hold of a personage who glides past me, occasionally, in my walk through life. My former sad experience, as you know, has gifted me with some degree of insight into the gloomy mysteries of the human heart, through which I have wandered like one astray in a dark cavern, with his torch fast flickering to extinction. But this man, this class of men, is a hopeless puzzle."

"Well, but propound him," said the sculptor. "Let us have an idea of him, to begin with."

"Why, indeed," replied Roderick, "he is such a being as I could conceive you to carve out of marble, and some yet unrealized perfection of human science to endow with an exquisite mockery of intellect; but still there lacks the last inestimable touch of a divine Creator. He looks like a man; and, perchance, like a better specimen of man than you ordinarily meet. You might esteem him wise; he is capable of cultivation and refinement, and has at least an external conscience; but the demands that spirit makes upon spirit are precisely those to which he cannot respond. When at last you come close to him you find him chill and unsubstantial,—a mere vapor."

"I believe," said Rosina, "I have a glimmering idea of what you mean."

"Then be thankful," answered her husband, smiling; "but do not anticipate any further illumination from what I am about to read. I have here imagined such a man to be — what, probably,
he never is — conscious of the deficiency in his spiritual organization. Methinks the result would be a sense of cold unreality wherewith he would go shivering through the world, longing to exchange his load of ice for any burden of real grief that fate could fling upon a human being.”

Contenting himself with this preface, Roderick began to read.

In a certain old gentleman's last will and testament there appeared a bequest, which, as his final thought and deed, was singularly in keeping with a long life of melancholy eccentricity. He devised a considerable sum for establishing a fund, the interest of which was to be expended annually forever in preparing a Christmas Banquet for ten of the most miserable persons that could be found. It seemed not to be the testator's purpose to make these half a score of sad hearts merry, but to provide that the stern or fierce expression of human discontent should not be drowned, even for that one holy and joyful day, amid the acclamations of festal gratitude which all Christendom sends up. And he desired, likewise, to perpetuate his own remonstrance against the earthly course of Providence, and his sad and sour dissent from those systems of religion or philosophy which either find sunshine in the world or draw it down from heaven.

The task of inviting the guests, or of selecting among such as might advance their claims to partake of this dismal hospitality, was confided to the two trustees or stewards of the fund. These gentlemen, like their deceased friend, were sombre humorists, who made it their principal occupation to number the sable threads in the web of human life, and drop all the golden ones out of the reckoning. They performed their present office with integrity and judgment. The aspect of the assembled company, on the day of the first festival, might not, it is true, have satisfied every beholder that these were especially the individuals, chosen forth from all the world, whose griefs were worthy to stand as indicators of the mass of human suffering. Yet, after due consideration, it could not be disputed that here was a variety of hopeless discomfort, which, if it sometimes arose from causes apparently inadequate, was thereby only the shrewder imputation against the nature and mechanism of life.

The arrangements and decorations of the banquet were probably intended to signify that death in life which had been the testator's definition of existence. The hall, illuminated by torches, was hung round with curtains of deep and dusky purple, and adorned with branches of cypress and wreaths of artificial flowers, imitative of such as used to be strown over the dead. A sprig of parsley was laid by every plate. The main reservoir of wine was a sepulchral urn of silver, whence the liquor was distributed around the table in small vases, accurately copied from those which held the tears of ancient mourners. Neither had the stewards — if it were their taste that arranged these details — forgotten the fantasy of the old Egyptians, who seated a skeleton at every festive board, and mocked their own merriment with the imperturbable grin of a death's head. Such a fearful guest, shrouded in a black mantle, sat now at the head of the table. It was whispered, I know not with what truth, that the testator himself had once walked the visible world with the machinery of that same skeleton, and that it was one of the stipulations of his will, that he should thus be permitted to sit, from year to year, at the banquet which he had instituted. If so, it was perhaps covertly implied that he had cherished no hopes of bliss beyond the grave to compensate for the evils which he felt or imagined here. And if, in their bewildered conjectures as to the purpose of earthly existence, the banqueters should throw aside the veil, and cast an inquiring glance at this figure of death, as seeking thence the solution otherwise unattainable, the only reply would be a stare of the vacant eye caverns and a grin of the skeleton jaws. Such was the response that the dead man had fancied himself to receive when he asked of Death to solve the riddle of his life; and it was his desire to repeat it when the guests of his dismal hospitality should find themselves perplexed with the same question.

"What means that wreath?" asked several of the company, while viewing the decorations of the table.
They alluded to a wreath of cypress, which was held on high by a skeleton arm, protruding from within the black mantle.

"It is a crown," said one of the stewards, "not for the worthiest, but for the wofullest, when he shall prove his claim to it."

The guest earliest bidden to the festival was a man of soft and gentle character, who had not energy to struggle against the heavy despondency to which his temperament rendered him liable; and therefore, with nothing outwardly to excuse him from happiness, he had spent a life of quiet misery that made his blood torpid, and weighed upon his breath, and sat like a ponderous night-fiend upon every throb of his unresisting heart. His wretchedness seemed as deep as his original nature, if not identical with it. It was the misfortune of a second guest to cherish within his bosom a diseased heart, which had become so wretchedly sore that the continual and, unavoidable rubs of the world, the blow of an enemy, the careless jostle of a stranger, and even the faithful and loving touch of a friend, alike made ulcers in it. As is the habit of people thus afflicted, he found his chief employment in exhibiting these miserable sores to any who would give themselves the pain of viewing them. A third guest was a hypochondriac, whose imagination wrought necromancy in his outward and inward world, and caused him to see monstrous faces in the household fire, and dragons in the clouds of sunset, and fiends in the guise of beautiful women, and something ugly or wicked beneath all the pleasant surfaces of nature. His neighbor at table was one who, in his early youth, had trusted mankind too much, and hoped too highly in their behalf, and, in meeting with many disappointments, had become desperately soured. For several years back this misanthrope had employed himself in accumulating motives for hating and despising his race, such as murder, lust, treachery, ingratitude, faithlessness of trusted friends, instinctive vices of children, impurity of women, hidden guilt in men of saintlike aspect, and, in short, all manner of black realities that sought to decorate themselves with outward grace or glory. But at every atrocious fact that was added to his catalogue, at every increase of the sad knowledge which he spent his life to collect, the native impulses of the poor man's loving and confiding heart made him groan with anguish.

Next, with his heavy brow bent downward, there stole into the hall a man naturally earnest and impassioned, who, from his immemorial infancy, had felt the consciousness of a high message to the world; but, essaying to deliver it, had found either no voice or form of speech, or else no ears to listen. Therefore his whole life was a bitter questioning of himself,—"Why have not men acknowledged my mission? Am I not a self-deluding fool? What business have I on earth? Where is my grave?" Throughout the festival he quaffed frequent draughts from the sepulchral urn of wine, hoping thus to quench the celestial fire that tortured his own breast and could not benefit his race.

Then there entered, having flung away a ticket for a ball, a gay gallant of yesterday, who had found four or five wrinkles in his brow, and more gray hairs than he could well number on his head. Endowed with sense and feeling, he had nevertheless spent his youth in folly, but had reached at last that dreary point in life where Folly quits us of her own accord, leaving us to make friends with Wisdom if we can. Thus, cold and desolate, he had come to seek Wisdom at the banquet, and wondered if the skeleton were she. To eke out the company, the stewards had invited a distressed poet from his home in the almshouse, and a melancholy idiot from the street corner. The latter had just the glimmering of sense that was sufficient to make him conscious of a vacancy, which the poor fellow, all his life long, had mistily sought to fill up with intelligence, wandering up and down the streets, and groaning miserably because his attempts were ineffectual. The only lady in the hall was one who had fallen short of absolute and perfect beauty, merely by the trifling defect of a slight cast in her left eye. But this blemish, minute as it was, so shocked the pure ideal of her soul, rather than her vanity, that she passed her life in solitude, and veiled her countenance even from her own gaze. So the skeleton sat shrouded at one end of the table and this poor lady at the other.
One other guest remains to be described. He was a young man of smooth brow, fair cheek, and fashionable mien. So far as his exterior developed him, he might much more suitably have found a place at some merry Christmas table, than have been numbered among the blighted, fate-stricken, fancy-tortured set of ill-starred banqueters. Murmurs arose among the guests as they noted the glance of general scrutiny which the intruder threw over his companions. What had he to do among them? Why did not the skeleton of the dead founder of the feast unbend its rattling joints, arise, and motion the unwelcome stranger from the board?

"Shameful!" said the morbid man, while a new ulcer broke out in his heart. "He comes to mock us! — we shall be the jest of his tavern friends! — he will make a farce of our miseries, and bring it out upon the stage!"

"O, never mind him!" said the hypochondriac, smiling sourly. "He shall feast from yonder tureen of viper soup; and if there is a fricassee of scorpions on the table, pray let him have his share of it. For the dessert, he shall taste the apples of Sodom. Then, if he like our Christmas fare, let him return again next year!"

"Trouble him not," murmured the melancholy man, with gentleness. "What matters it whether the consciousness of misery come a few years sooner or later? If this youth deem himself happy now, yet let him sit with us for the sake of the wretchedness to come."

The poor idiot approached the young man with that mournful aspect of vacant inquiry which his face continually wore, and which caused people to say that he was always in search of his missing wits. After no little examination he touched the stranger's hand, but immediately drew back his own, shaking his head and shivering.

"Cold, cold, cold!" muttered the idiot.

The young man shivered too, and smiled.

"Gentlemen,—and you, madam," — said one of the stewards of the festival, "do not conceive so ill either of our caution or judgment, as to imagine that we have admitted this young stranger — Gervayse Hastings by name — without a full investigation and thoughtful balance of his claims. Trust me, not a guest at the table is better entitled to his seat."

The steward's guaranty was perforce satisfactory. The company, therefore, took their places, and addressed themselves to the serious business of the feast, but were soon disturbed by the hypochondriac, who thrust back his chair, complaining that a dish of stewed toads and vipers was set before him, and that there was green ditch-water in his cup of wine. This mistake being amended, he quietly resumed his seat. The wine, as it flowed freely from the sepulchral urn, seemed to come imbued with all gloomy inspirations; so that its influence was not to cheer, but either to sink the revellers into a deeper melancholy, or elevate their spirits to an enthusiasm of wretchedness. The conversation was various. They told sad stories about people who might have been worthy guests at such a festival as the present. They talked of grisly incidents in human history; of strange crimes, which, if truly considered, were but convulsions of agony; of some lives that had been altogether wretched, and of others, which, wearing a general semblance of happiness, had yet been deformed, sooner or later, by misfortune, as by the intrusion of a grim face at a banquet; of deathbed scenes, and what dark intimations might be gathered from the words of dying men; of suicide, and whether the more eligible mode were by halter, knife, poison, drowning, gradual starvation, or the fumes of charcoal. The majority of the guests, as is the custom with people thoroughly and profoundly sick at heart, were anxious to make their own woes the theme of discussion, and prove themselves most excellent in anguish. The misanthropist went deep into the philosophy of evil, and wandered about in the darkness, with now and then a gleam of discolored light hovering on ghastly shapes and horrid scenery. Many a miserable thought, such as men have stumbled upon from age to age, did he now rake up again, and gloat over it as an inestimable gem, a diamond, a treasure far preferable to those bright, spiritual revelations of a
better world, which are like precious stones from heaven's pavement. And then, amid his lore of wretchedness he hid his face and wept.

It was a festival at which the woful man of Uz might suitably have been a guest, together with all, in each succeeding age, who have tasted deepest of the bitterness of life. And be it said, too, that every son or daughter of woman, however favored with happy fortune, might, at one sad moment or another, have claimed the privilege of a stricken heart, to sit down at this table. But, throughout the feast, it was remarked that the young stranger, Gervayse Hastings, was unsuccessful in his attempts to catch its pervading spirit. At any deep, strong thought that found utterance, and which was torn out, as it were, from the saddest recesses of human consciousness, he looked mystified and bewildered; even more than the poor idiot, who seemed to grasp at such things with his earnest heart, and thus occasionally to comprehend them. The young man's conversation was of a colder and lighter kind, often brilliant, but lacking the powerful characteristics of a nature that had been developed by suffering.

"Sir," said the misanthropist, bluntly, in reply to some observation by Gervayse Hastings, "pray do not address me again. We have no right to talk together. Our minds have nothing in common. By what claim you appear at this banquet I cannot guess; but methinks, to a man who could say what you have just now said, my companions and myself must seem no more than shadows flickering on the wall. And precisely such a shadow are you to us."

The young man smiled and bowed, but, drawing himself back in his chair, he buttoned his coat over his breast, as if the banqueting hall were growing chill. Again the idiot fixed his melancholy stare upon the youth, and murmured, "Cold! cold! cold!"

The banquet drew to its conclusion, and the guests departed. Scarcely had they stepped across the threshold of the hall, when the scene that had there passed seemed like the vision of a sick fancy, or an exhalation from a stagnant heart. Now and then, however, during the year that ensued, these melancholy people caught glimpses of one another, transient, indeed, but enough to prove that they walked the earth with the ordinary allotment of reality. Sometimes a pair of them came face to face, while stealing through the evening twilight, enveloped in their sable cloaks. Sometimes they casually met in churchyards. Once, also, it happened that two of the dismal banqueters mutually started at recognizing each other in the noonday sunshine of a crowded street, stalking there like ghosts astray. Doubtless they wondered why the skeleton did not come abroad at noonday too.

But whenever the necessity of their affairs compelled these Christmas guests into the bustling world, they were sure to encounter the young man who had so unaccountably been admitted to the festival. They saw him among the gay and fortunate; they caught the sunny sparkle of his eye; they heard the light and careless tones of his voice, and muttered to themselves with such indignation as only the aristocracy of wretchedness could kindle,—"The traitor! The vile impostor! Providence, in its own good time, may give him a right to feast among us!" But the young man's unabashed eye dwelt upon their gloomy figures as they passed him, seeming to say, perchance with somewhat of a sneer, "First, know my secret! — then, measure your claims with mine!"

The step of Time stole onward, and soon brought merry Christmas round again with glad and solemn worship in the churches, and sports, games, festivals, and everywhere the bright face of Joy beside the household fire. Again likewise the ball, with its curtains of dusky purple, was illuminated by the death torches gleaming on the sepulchral decorations of the banquet. The veiled skeleton sat in state, lifting the cypress wreath above its head, as the guerdon of some guest illustrious in the qualifications which there claimed precedence. As the stewards deemed the world inexhaustible in misery, and were desirous of recognizing it in all its forms, they had not seen fit to reassemble the company of the former year. New faces now threw their gloom across the table.
There was a man of nice conscience, who bore a blood stain in his heart,—the death of a fellow-creature,—which, for his more exquisite torture, had chanced with such a peculiarity of circumstances, that he could not absolutely determine whether his will had entered into the deed or not. Therefore, his whole life was spent in the agony of an inward trial for murder, with a continual sifting of the details of his terrible calamity, until his mind had no longer any thought, nor his soul any emotion, disconnected with it. There was a mother, too,—a mother once, but a desolation now,—who, many years before, had gone out on a pleasure party, and, returning, found her infant smothered in its little bed. And ever since she has been tortured with the fantasy that her buried baby lay smothering in its coffin. Then there was an aged lady, who had lived from time immemorial with a constant tremor quivering through her frame. It was terrible to discern her dark shadow tremulous upon the wall; her lips, likewise, were tremulous; and the expression of her eye seemed to indicate that her soul was trembling too. Owing to the bewilderment and confusion which made almost a chaos of her intellect, it was impossible to discover what dire misfortune had thus shaken her nature to its depths; so that the stewards had admitted her to the table, not from any acquaintance with her history, but on the safe testimony of her miserable aspect. Some surprise was expressed at the presence of a bluff, red-faced gentleman, a certain Mr. Smith, who had evidently the fat of many a rich feast within him, and the habitual twinkle of whose eye betrayed a disposition to break forth into uproarious laughter for little cause or none. It turned out, however, that with the best possible flow of spirits, our poor friend was afflicted with a physical disease of the heart, which threatened instant death on the slightest cachinnatory indulgence, or even that titillation of the bodily frame produced by merry thoughts. In this dilemma he had sought admittance to the banquet, on the ostensible plea of his irksome and miserable state, but, in reality, with the hope of imbibing a life-preserving melancholy.

A married couple had been invited from a motive of bitter humor, it being well understood that they rendered each other unutterably miserable whenever they chanced to meet, and therefore must necessarily be fit associates at the festival. In contrast with these was another couple still unmarried, who had interchanged their hearts in early life, but had been divided by circumstances as impalpable as morning mist, and kept apart so long that their spirits now found it impossible to meet. Therefore, yearning for communion, yet shrinking from one another and choosing none beside, they felt themselves companionless in life, and looked upon eternity as a boundless desert. Next to the skeleton sat a mere son of earth,—a hunter of the Exchange,—a gatherer of shining dust,—a man whose life's record was in his ledger, and whose soul's prison-house the vaults of the bank where he kept his deposits. This person had been greatly perplexed at his invitation, deeming himself one of the most fortunate men in the city; but the stewards persisted in demanding his presence, assuring him that he had no conception how miserable he was.

And now appeared a figure which we must acknowledge as our acquaintance of the former festival. It was Gervayse Hastings, whose presence had then caused so much question and criticism, and who now took his place with the composure of one whose claims were satisfactory to himself and must needs be allowed by others. Yet his easy and unruffled face betrayed no sorrow. The well-skilled beholders gazed a moment into his eyes and shook their heads, to miss the unuttered sympathy—the countersign, never to be falsified—of those whose hearts are cavern mouths, through which they descend into a region of illimitable woe and recognize other wanderers there.

"Who is this youth?" asked the man with a blood stain on his conscience. "Surely he has never gone down into the depths! I know all the aspects of those who have passed through the dark valley. By what right is he among us?"

"Ah, it is a sinful thing to come hither without a sorrow," murmured the aged lady, in accents that partook of the eternal tremor which pervaded her whole being. "Depart young man! You
soul has never been shaken, and, therefore, I tremble so much the more to look at you."

"His soul shaken! No; I'll answer for it," said bluff Mr. Smith, pressing his hand upon his heart and making himself as melancholy as he could, for fear of a fatal explosion of laughter. "I know the lad well: he has as fair prospects as any young man about town, and has no more right among us miserable creatures than the child unborn. He never was miserable and probably never will be!"

"Our honored guests," interposed the stewards, "pray have patience with us, and believe, at least, that our deep veneration for the sacredness of this solemnity would preclude any wilful violation of it. Receive this young man to your table. It may not be too much to say, that no guest here would exchange his own heart for the one— that beats within that youthful bosom!"

"I'd call it a bargain, and gladly too," muttered Mr. Smith, with a perplexing mixture of sadness and mirthful conceit. "A plague upon their nonsense! My own heart is the only really miserable one in the company; it will certainly be the death of me at last!"

Nevertheless, as on the former occasion, the judgment of the stewards being without appeal, the company sat down. The obnoxious guest made no more attempt to obtrude his conversation on those about him, but appeared to listen to the table-talk with peculiar assiduity, as if some inestimable secret, otherwise beyond his reach, might be conveyed in a casual word. And in truth, to those who could understand and value it, there was rich matter in the upgushings and outpourings of these initiated souls to whom sorrow had been a talisman, admitting them into spiritual depths which no other spell can open. Sometimes out of the midst of densest gloom there flashed a momentary radiance, pure as crystal, bright as the flame of stars, and shedding such a glow upon the mysteries of life that the guests were ready to exclaim, "Surely the riddle is on the point of being solved!" At such illuminated intervals the saddest mourners felt it to be revealed that mortal griefs are but shadowy and external; no more than the sable robes voluminously shrouding a certain divine reality, and thus indicating what might otherwise be altogether invisible to mortal eye.

"Just now," remarked the trembling old woman, "I seemed to see beyond the outside. And then my everlasting tremor passed away!"

"Would that I could dwell always in these momentary gleams of light!" said the man of stricken conscience. "Then the blood-stain in my heart would be washed clean away."

This strain of conversation appeared so unintelligibly absurd to good Mr. Smith, that he burst into precisely the fit of laughter which his physicians had warned him against, as likely to prove instantaneously fatal. In effect, he fell back in his chair a corpse, with a broad grin upon his face, while his ghost, perchance, remained beside it bewildered at its unpremeditated exit. This catastrophe of course broke up the festival.

"How is this? You do not tremble!" observed the tremulous old woman to Gervayse Hastings, who was gazing at the dead man with singular intentness. "Is it not awful to see him so suddenly vanish out of the midst of life, this man of flesh and blood, whose earthly nature was so warm and strong? There is a never-ending tremor in my soul, but it trembles aresh at this! And you are calm!"

"Would that he could teach me somewhat!" said Gervayse Hastings, drawing a long breath. "Men pass before me like shadows on the wall; their actions, passions, feelings are flickerings of the light, and then they vanish! Neither the corpse, nor yonder skeleton, nor this old woman's everlasting tremor, can give me what I seek."

And then the company departed.

We cannot linger to narrate, in such detail, more circumstances of these singular festivals, which, in accordance with the founder's will, continued to be kept with the regularity of an established institution. In process of time the stewards adopted the custom of inviting, from far and near, those individuals whose misfortunes
were prominent above other men's, and whose mental and moral development might, therefore, be supposed to possess a corresponding interest. The exiled noble of the French Revolution, and the broken soldier of the Empire, were alike represented at the table. Fallen monarchs, wandering about the earth, have found places at that forlorn and miserable feast. The statesman, when his party flung him off, might, if he chose it, be once more a great man for the space of a single banquet. Aaron Burr's name appears on the record at a period when his ruin the profoundest and most striking, with more of moral circumstance in it than that of almost any other man — was complete in his lonely age. Stephen Girard, when his wealth weighed upon him like a mountain, once sought admittance of his own accord. It is not probable, however, that these men had any lesson to teach in the lore of discontent and misery which might not equally well have been studied in the common walks of life. Illustrious unfortunates attract a wider sympathy, not because their griefs are more intense, but because, being set on lofty pedestals, they the better serve mankind as instances and bywords of calamity.

It concerns our present purpose to say that, at each successive festival, Gervayse Hastings showed his face, gradually changing from the smooth beauty of his youth to the thoughtful comeliness of manhood, and thence to the bald, impressive dignity of age. He was the only individual invariably present. Yet on every occasion there were murmurs, both from those who knew his character and position, and from those whose hearts shrank back as denying his companionship in their mystic fraternity.

"Who is this impassive man?" had been asked a hundred times.

"Has he suffered? Has he sinned? There are no traces of either. Then wherefore is he here?"

"You must inquire of the stewards or of himself," was the constant reply. "We seem to know him well here in our city, and know nothing of him but what is creditable and fortunate. Yet hither he comes, year after year, to this gloomy banquet, and sits among the guests like a marble statue. Ask yonder skeleton, perhaps that may solve the riddle!"

It was in truth a wonder. The life of Gervayse Hastings was not merely a prosperous, but a brilliant one. Everything had gone well with him. He was wealthy, far beyond the expenditure that was required to habits of magnificence, a taste of rare purity and cultivation, a love of travel, a scholar's instinct to collect a splendid library, and, moreover, what seemed a magnificent liberality to the distressed. He had sought happiness, and not vainly, if a lovely and tender wife, and children of fair promise, could insure it. He had, besides, ascended above the limit which separates the obscure from the distinguished, and had won a stainless reputation in affairs of the widest public importance. Not that he was a popular character, or had within him the mysterious attributes which are essential to that species of success. To the public he was a cold abstraction, wholly destitute of those rich hues of personality, that living warmth, and the peculiar faculty of stamping his own heart's impression on a multitude of hearts by which the people recognize their favorites. And it must be owned that, after his most intimate associates had done their best to know him thoroughly, and love him warmly, they were startled to find how little hold he had upon their affections. They approved, they admired, but still, in those moments when the human spirit most craves reality, they shrank back from Gervayse Hastings as powerless to give them what they sought. It was the feeling of distrustful regret with which we should draw back the hand after extending it, in an illusive twilight, to grasp the hand of a shadow upon the wall.

As the superficial fervency of youth decayed, this peculiar effect of Gervayse Hastings's character grew more perceptible. His children, when he extended his arms, came coldly to his knees, but never climbed them of their own accord. His wife wept secretly, and almost adjudged herself a criminal because she shivered in the chill of his bosom. He, too, occasionally appeared not unconscious of the chillness of his moral atmosphere, and willing, if it might be so, to warm himself at a kindly fire. But age stole onward and benumbed him more and more. As the hoarfrost began to gather on him his wife went to her grave, and was doubtless warmer there;
his children either died or were scattered to different homes of their own; and old Gervayse Hastings, unscathed by grief, alone, but needing no companionship, continued his steady walk through life, and still on every Christmas day attended at the dismal banquet. His privilege as a guest had become prescriptive now. Had he claimed the head of the table, even the skeleton would have been ejected from its seat.

Finally, at the merry Christmas tide, when he had numbered fourscore years complete, this pale, high-browed, marble-featured old man once more entered the long-frequented hall, with the same impassive aspect that had called forth so much dissatisfied remark at his first attendance. Time, except in matters merely external, had done nothing for him, either of good or evil. As he took his place he threw a calm, inquiring glance around the table, as if to ascertain whether any guest had yet appeared, after so many unsuccessful banquets, who might impart to him the mystery,—the deep, warm secret,—the life within the life,—which, whether manifested in joy or sorrow, is what gives substance to a world of shadows.

"My friends," said Gervayse Hastings, assuming a position which his long conversance with the festival caused to appear natural, "you are welcome! I drink to you all this cup of sepulchral wine."

The guests replied courteously, but still in a manner that proved them unable to receive the old man as a member of their sad fraternity. It may be well to give the reader an idea of the present company at the banquet.

One was formerly a clergyman, enthusiastic in his profession, and apparently of the genuine dynasty of those old puritan divines whose faith in their calling, and stern exercise of it, had placed them among the mighty of the earth. But yielding to the speculative tendency of the age, he had gone astray from the firm foundation of an ancient faith, and wandered into a cloud region, where everything was misty and deceptive, ever mocking him with a semblance of reality, but still dissolving when he flung himself upon it for support and rest. His instinct and early training demanded something steadfast; but, looking forward, he beheld vapors piled on vapors, and behind him an impassable gulf between the man of yesterday and to-day, on the borders of which he paced to and fro, sometimes wringing his hands in agony, and often making his own woe a theme of scornful merriment. This surely was a miserable man. Next, there was a theorist,—one of a numerous tribe, although he deemed himself unique since the creation,—a theorist, who had conceived a plan by which all the wretchedness of earth, moral and physical, might be done away, and the bliss of the millennium at once accomplished. But, the incredulity of mankind debarring him from action, he was smitten with as much grief as if the whole mass of woe which he was denied the opportunity to remedy were crowded into his own bosom. A plain old man in black attracted much of the company's notice, on the supposition that he was no other than Father Miller, who, it seemed, had given himself up to despair at the tedious delay of the final conflagration. Then there was a man distinguished for native pride and obstinacy, who, a little while before, had possessed immense wealth, and held the control of a vast moneyed interest which he had wielded in the same spirit as a despotic monarch would wield the power of his empire, carrying on a tremendous moral warfare, the roar and tremor of which was felt at every fireside in the land. At length came a crushing ruin,—a total overthrow of fortune, power, and character,—the effect of which on his imperious, and, in many respects, noble and lofty nature, might have entitled him to a place, not merely at our festival, but among the peers of Pandemonium.

There was a modern philanthropist, who had become so deeply sensible of the calamities of thousands and millions of his fellow-creatures, and of the impracticableness of any general measures for their relief, that he had no heart to do what little good lay immediately within his power, but contented himself with being miserable for sympathy. Near him sat a gentleman in a predicament hitherto unprecedented, but of which the present epoch probably affords numerous examples. Ever since he was of capacity to read a newspaper
this person had prided himself on his consistent adherence to one political party, but, in the confusion of these latter days, had got bewildered and knew not whereabouts his party was. This wretched condition, so morally desolate and disheartening to a man who has long accustomed himself to merge his individuality in the mass of a great body, can only be conceived by such as have experienced it. His next companion was a popular orator who had lost his voice, and—as it was pretty much all that he had to lose—had fallen into a state of hopeless melancholy. The table was likewise graced by two of the gentler sex,—one, a half-starved, consumptive seamstress, the representative of thousands just as wretched; the other, a woman of unemployed energy, who found herself in the world with nothing to achieve, nothing to enjoy, and nothing even to suffer. She had, therefore, driven herself to the verge of madness by dark brooding over the wrongs of her sex, and its exclusion from a proper field of action. The roll of guests being thus complete, a side-table had been set for three or four disappointed office seekers, with hearts as sick as death, whom the stewards had admitted partly because their calamities really entitled them to entrance here, and partly that they were in especial need of a good dinner. There was likewise a homeless dog, with his tail between his legs, licking up the crumbs and gnawing the fragments of the feast,—such a melancholy cur as one sometimes sees about the streets without a master, and willing to follow the first that will accept his service.

In their own way these were as wretched a set of people as ever had assembled at the festival. There they sat, with the veiled skeleton of the founder holding aloft the cypress wreath, at one end of the table, and at the other, wrapped in furs, the withered figure of Gervayse Hastings, stately, calm, and cold, impressing the company with awe, yet so little interesting their sympathy that he might have vanished into thin air without their once exclaiming, "Whither is he gone?"

"Sir," said the philanthropist, addressing the old man, "you have been so long a guest at this annual festival, and have thus been conversant with so many varieties of human affliction, that, not improbably, you have thence derived some great and important lessons. How blessed were your lot could you reveal a secret by which all this mass of woe might be removed!"

"I know of but one misfortune," answered Gervayse Hastings, quietly, "and that is my own."

"Your own!" rejoined the philanthropist. "And looking back on your serene and prosperous life, how can you claim to be the sole unfortunate of the human race?"

"You will not understand it," replied Gervayse Hastings, feebly, and with a singular inefficiency of pronunciation, and sometimes putting one word for another. "None have understood it,—not even those who experience the like. It is a chillness,—a want of earnestness,—a feeling as if what should be my heart were a thing of vapor,—a haunting perception of unreality! Thus seeming to possess all that other men have,—all that men aim at,—I have really possessed nothing, neither joy nor griefs. All things, all persons,—as was truly said to me at this table long and long ago,—have been like shadows flickering on the wall. It was so with my wife and children,—with those who seemed my friends: it is so with yourselves, whom I see now before me. Neither have I myself any real existence, but am a shadow like the rest."

"And how is it with your views of a future life?" inquired the speculative clergyman.

"Worse than with you," said the old man, in a hollow and feeble tone; "for I cannot conceive it earnestly enough to feel either hope or fear. Mine,—mine is the wretchedness! This cold heart,—this unreal life! Ah! it grows colder still."

It so chanced that at this juncture the decayed ligaments of the skeleton gave way, and the dry bones fell together in a heap, thus causing the dusty wreath of cypress to drop upon the table. The attention of the company being thus diverted for a single instant from Gervayse Hastings, they perceived, on turning again towards him, that the old man had undergone a change. His shadow had ceased to flicker on the wall.
“Well, Rosina, what is your criticism?” asked Roderick, as he rolled up the manuscript.

“Frankly, your success is by no means complete,” replied she. “It is true, I have an idea of the character you endeavor to describe; but it is rather by dint of my own thought than your expression.”

“That is unavoidable,” observed the sculptor, because the characteristics are all negative. If Gervayse Hastings could have imbibed one human grief at the gloomy banquet, the task of describing him would have been infinitely easier. Of such persons—and we do meet with these moral monsters now and then—it is difficult to conceive how they came to exist here, or what there is in them capable of existence hereafter. They seem to be on the outside of everything; and nothing wearies the soul more than an attempt to comprehend them within its grasp.”

THREE OF A TRADE;

OR, RED LITTLE KRISS KRINGLE.

THE city was muffled in snow, and looked as calm and pale and stately as a queen in her ermine robes. It was night, and the tinkling of innumerable sleigh-bells made the frosty air musical. The sleighs themselves sped silently through the streets, painted blackly against the white snow as they passed, like so many phantoms winging their way to a festival on the Brocken Mountains.

It was late, for the corner groceries were shut. The last draught of poison had been drained over the counter. The last victim had staggered home to his trembling wife. The red, unwholesome light that flared over the door had been extinguished, and the bar-keeper was snoring in his bed behind the flour-barrels.

In the bleak shelter afforded by the projecting wooden awning of one of the corner groceries in Greenwich Street, close to where that thoroughfare nears the river, and huddled up against the side of the large coal-bin that stood hasped and padlocked on one side of the entrance, two little figures were visible in the dim glimmer of the night. Two little children they were, sitting with their cold arms embracing each other, their chill cheeks pressed together, and their large, weary eyes looking out hungrily into the blank street.

Down by the wharves they saw the tall, slender masts of ships piercing the sky like the serried lances of some band of gigantic Cossacks. Among the black hulls, a few late lights still shone, and the air rang occasionally with the voice of a drunken sailor, who, from some friendly door-step, where he had involuntarily cast anchor, chanted his experiences of a young West Indian lady of color, who rejoiced in the horticultural name of Nancy Banana.
Presently a mystic music seemed to fall from the arched skies upon the city. It was the chimes from old Trinity ringing the Old Year out and the New Year in. (The thrilling notes of the changes following each other in measured flow, vibrated through the air like music made by the feet of marching angels. They jubilantly seemed to scale the slope of heaven. The wild melodious clangor floated over the great silent city. Myriads of aerial Moors, clashing their cymbals, seemed to march over the house-tops.) The clock was trembling on the stroke of twelve, and Time had one foot already in the territories of the New Year.

"Tip, listen to the bells," said one of the two children, that were huddled beneath the grocery awning, (peaking in a faint, though clear voice, like a bell heard in a fog,) "listen. It is time for Kriss Kringle to come."

Tip's cold little lips opened, and nothing issued therefrom but a low, plaintive "I'm hungry, Binnie."

"So am I," said Binnie, with a sort of far-off cheeriness, as if his heart was at a considerable distance, and could communicate only very faintly. "But, let us wait. Perhaps Kriss Kringle will bring us something nice. What would you like most, Tip?"

"Coffee and cakes wouldn't be bad," said Tip, hesitatingly, as if rather afraid of the consequences if he allowed his imagination to run away with him.

"Or a plate of roast beef, rare, with potatoes and peach pie," suggested the more reckless Binnie, "just such as mother used to give us on Sunday. Poor mother!"

"What are we going to do to-morrow, Binnie, to get some money?"

"Shovel snow off the stoops," answered Binnie, resolutely. "We'll go into Union Square early, and ask all around at the houses whether they want the sidewalk cleared. Some of 'em are sure to give us a quarter; we might make fifty cents, and then wouldn't we have a time!"

"When we were living in the country with mother what fun we used to have on New Year's," said poor little Tip, creeping up closer to Binnie, with a shiver, for the night was getting very cold, and a few large snow-flakes commenced falling straight down from the fleecy sky, white as the manna that fell in the desert, but alas! not so nutritious.

"O golly! yes. What a good mother she was to us, and what things we used to find in the old stocking that she gave us to hang up! Kriss Kringle don't come to us any more now that she's dead. I wonder if he really used to come down the chimney, Tip, or if 't was only make believe."

"I don't know," said Tip, "I watched ever so many nights, but somehow I always fell asleep just before he came, and then the things got into the stocking. I used to dream, though, that I saw him. A little man with a red coat all covered with gold lace, and a long feather in his cap and a little sword by his side. And he used to smile at me, and say, 'Tip, will you be a good boy if I put something into the stocking for you?' and then I used to promise, and when I had promised I used to hear music sounding all through the house, a great deal finer than the music we heard when we went to the circus, Binnie; and then Kriss Kringle would take off his hat to me, and make a jump, and go clean up the chimney out of sight, like a red cricket. Ah! how cold it is, Binnie, and how hungry I am. Tell us a story."

The wind arose in the north, and came down upon the city with a savage howl. The heavy snow-flakes fled before him into every angle and nook, like terrified white birds trying to hide themselves from some vast-winged, screaming falcon. They thrust themselves into the crevices of the windows, and between the slats of the window-blinds; they got under the sills of the doors. They left the centre of the streets, and flew madly into the gutters; they huddled themselves into the dark corner where Tip and Binnie were cowering, ran up the legs of their ragged trousers and slid down between their frail shirt-collars and their cold little necks. It was a fierce, biting, scratching wind of prey, and poor Binnie and Tip felt his talons digging into their flesh.

Just as the pair of vagrants had drawn closer together, and Bin-
nie was trying to stop his teeth — which began to chatter — from biting in two the thread of the story that the patient little fellow was about to tell his brother, they heard a faint cry, something between a moan and a whistle, sounding close to them. Looking out into the dim twilight they beheld a dwarfish figure standing on the sidewalk, moaning and waving its arms. It seemed to be a little man about two feet high, clad in a red coat, covered with gold lace, and wearing a little cap, in which was stuck a long feather, that was bent nearly horizontal by the wind. A tiny sword, about the length of a lead-pencil, dangled at his side.

"O, Binnie," whispered Tip, "it's Kriss Kringle come again. I know him. He used to look exactly like that in my dream. I ain't afraid of him. Are you?"

"Not a bit," answered Binnie. "He looks a nice little chap. I hope he has brought us something."

The little man on the sidewalk seemed very uneasy. He waved his long arms continually, took off his little cap every now and then with a quick jerk, as if he were making a series of abbreviated bows to the two little vagrants, and then hopped about, moaning the same shrill and extraordinary moan.

"Binnie, I think he's cold; let us ask him to come and lie down with us and warm himself," said Tip. "You know, in all the fairy books, if you treat a fairy well, he's sure to give you three wishes."

Whatever Binnie may have thought of the suggestion of warming anything by putting it close to two such little icicles as himself and his brother, the latter part of the speech seemed to strike him as containing a felicitous idea. So, bracing his chattering teeth as well as he could, he said —

"Kriss Kringle, will you come and lie down with us, and we will warm you?"

The little red-coated man made no reply to this hospitable invitation, but danced, and shivered, and moaned, and doffed his tiny cap many times in succession.

"Come, Kriss Kringle," continued Binnie, beckoning to the dwarf, "come in out of the snow."

"Maybe he don't speak English, Binnie," suggested the imaginative Tip.

This was a new view of the case, and Binnie began to consider within himself whether, by some inspiration of the moment, he might not suddenly master the particular foreign tongue with which their new friend was acquainted, when, suddenly, the little man made a swift leap and landed right in Tip's lap.

"Why, Binnie!" cried Tip, "it's not Kriss Kringle after all, it's only a monkey!"

Sure enough it was a monkey: a poor shivering little Brazilian, with pleading eyes and soft, silky hands, and a countenance that seemed to tell of a life of sorrow. A bit of broken chain dangling from a belt round his waist told his story. The eternal organ in the street; the black-bearded, heartless Italian; the little switch that scored his back at home; the cruel pinches to induce politeness, when wondering schoolboys proffered their hoarded coppers; the melancholy pantomime of sprightly gratitude which was taught with blows, and performed in fear and trembling. Poor little runaway! Poor little vagrant! He seemed to know that he had found brothers in misfortune when he thrust his timid, silky paw in Binnie's hand, and laid his little hairy face against Tip's bosom.

The children vied with each other in attentions to the poor little wanderer. I do believe that if Tip had an apple or a chestnut at that moment, hungry as he was, he would have given it to his red little Kriss Kringle. The boys placed him between them, and tried to snuggle him up in their tattered clothes. He clung to them as if he really loved them. His little hand found its way into Tip's shirt-bosom,—if that collection of discolored tatters which he wore beneath his jacket could be called a shirt,—and laid just over his heart. The poor vagrants kissed and fondled their pet; and, God help them! were almost happy for the time.

Meanwhile the snow drifted and drifted right under the shed where the vagrants lay. It began to pile itself up about them on all sides, and it clung to every projection of their persons.
The air grew colder and colder. The wind swooped at them under the shed—still, like the wide-winged, shrieking falcon,—as if it would take them up in its talons and bear them away to its bleak nest to feed its unfledged tempests. Closer and closer the three houseless creatures drew together, until a great drowsiness fell upon them, and the sough of the storm sounded farther and farther off, and sleep and snow covered them.

Then a dream came to Binnie and Tip. Red little Kriss Kringle jumped up suddenly from his rest in their bosom, clad in the brightest finery. A wondrous white egret's plume waved in his cap, and he wore a breastplate of diamonds. His red coat was redder than the blossoms of the wild Lobelia, and his sword was hilted with gold. Then he said to the boys, "Boys, ye have been very kind to me, and sheltered me when it was cold, so now ye shall come with me to the sweet land of the South, where ye shall idle in the sunshine for ever and ever!"

Then he led them down to the wharf near by, where, moored among the black hulls of the ships, they found a beautiful golden boat, so bright with many-colored flags that it seemed as if her tall masts had swept the rainbows from the sky. Fairy music sounded as the sails were set, and they sailed and sailed and sailed until they landed on the sweet Southern shore.

There they found strange trees with leaves of satin and fruits of gold. Wonderful birds shot like stars from bough to bough. The rivers sang like musical instruments. From the limbs of the trees trailed brilliant tapestries of orchideous flowers, which, with their roots in the air, sucked the sunlight into their secret veins, until their blossoms were covered with the splendor of Day.

Here red little Kriss Kringle led them to the foot of a huge tree covered with white flowers, and made them lie down while he fed them with fruits of a magical flavor. The sun shone cheerfully on their heads. The birds sang their pleasant songs. The huge tree rained its white blossoms on them, as they dropped off to sleep, weary with delight, until they reposed beneath a coverlet of scented snow.

When the first day of the New Year dawned, and the grocer's boy came from his bed behind the flour-barrels to take down the shutters, he saw a mound of snow close by the side of the coal-bin. He brought the shovel to take it away, and the first stroke disclosed the three little vagrants lying stark and stiff, enfolded in each other's arms.
ADVENTURES OF A NEW YEAR’S EVE:

OR, THE BUCKLE OF DIAMONDS.

I.

MOTHER KATE, the watchman’s wife, at nine o’clock on New Year’s eve opened her little window, and put out her head into the night air. The snow was reddened by the light from the window as it fell in silent heavy flakes upon the street. She observed the crowds of happy people, hurrying to and fro from the brilliantly lighted shops with presents, or pouring out of the various inns and coffee-houses, and going to the dances and other entertainments with which the New Year is married to the Old in joy and pleasure. But when a few cold flakes had lighted on her nose she drew back her head, closed the window, and said to her husband, “Gottlieb, stay at home, and let Philip watch for thee to-night; for the snow comes as fast as it can from heaven, and thou knowest the cold does thy old bones no good. The streets will be gay to-night. There seems dancing and feasting in every house, masqueraders are going about, and Philip will enjoy the sport.”

Old Gottlieb nodded his assent. "I am willing, Kate," he said. "My barometer, the old wound above my knee, has given me warning the last two days of a change of weather. It is only right that my son should aid me in a service to which he will be my successor."

We must give the reader to understand, that old Gottlieb had been a sergeant of cavalry in one of the king’s regiments, until he was made a cripple for life by a musket ball, as he was the first mounting the walls of a hostile fort in a battle for his fatherland. The officer who commanded the attack received the cross of honor on the battle-field for his heroism, and was advanced in the service;
while Gottlieb was fain to creep homewards on a pair of crutches. From pity they made him a schoolmaster, for he was intelligent, liked to read, and wrote a good hand. But when the school increased they took it away from him to provide for a young man who could do none of these as well as he, merely because he was a godson of one of the trustees. However, they promoted Gottlieb to the post of watchman, with the reversion of it to his son Philip, who had in the mean time bound himself to a gardener. It was only the good housewifery of Mistress Katharine, and the extreme moderation of old Gottlieb, that enabled them to live happily on the little they possessed. Philip gave his services to the gardener for his board and lodging, but he occasionally received very fine presents when he carried home flowers to the rich people of the town. He was a fresh, handsome young fellow, of six-and-twenty. Noble ladies often gave him sundry extra dollars for his fine looks, a thing they would never have thought of doing for an ugly face. Mrs. Kate had already put on her cloak to go to the gardener's house to fetch her son, when he entered the apartment.

"Father," said Philip, giving a hand to both father and mother, "it's snowing, and the snow won't do you much good. I'll take the watch to-night, and you can get to bed."

"You're a good boy," said old Gottlieb.

"And then I've been thinking," continued Philip, "that as to-morrow is New Year's day, I may come and dine with you and make myself happy. Mother perhaps has no joint in the kitchen, and—"

"No," interrupted the mother, "we've no joint, but then we have a pound and a half of venison; with potatoes for a relish, and a little rice with laurel leaves for a soup, and two flasks of beer to drink. Only come, Philip, for we shall live finely to-morrow! Next week we may do better, for the New Year's gifts will be coming in, and Gottlieb's share will be something! O, we shall live grandly!"

"Well, so much the better, dear mother," said Philip; "but have you paid the rent of the cottage yet?"
Old Gottlieb shrugged his shoulders.

Philip laid a purse upon the table.

"There are two-and-twenty dollars that I have saved. I can do very well without them; take them for a New Year's gift, and then we can all three enter on the new year without a debt or a care. God grant that we may end it in health and happiness. Heaven in its goodness will provide for both you and me!"

Tears came into Mother Katharine's eyes as she kissed her son; old Gottlieb said, "Philip, you are the prop and stay of our old age. Continue to be honest and good, and to love your parents, so will a blessing rest on you. I can give you nothing for a New Year's gift, but a prayer that you may keep your heart pure and true, - this is in your power, - you will be rich enough, - for a clear conscience is a heaven in itself."

So said old Gottlieb, and then he wrote down in an account-book the sum of two-and-twenty dollars that his son had given him.

"All that you have cost me in childhood is now nearly paid up. Your savings amount to three hundred and seventeen dollars which I have received."

"Three hundred and seventeen dollars!" cried Mistress Katharine, in the greatest amazement, - and then turning to Philip with a voice full of tenderness, "Ah, Philip," she said, "thou grievest me. Child of my heart! Yes, indeed thou dost. Hast thou saved that money for thyself thou might have bought some land with it, and started as gardener on thy own account, and married Rose. Now that is impossible. But take comfort, Philip. We are old, and thou wilt not have to support us long."

"Mother," exclaimed Philip, and he frowned a little, "what are you thinking of? Rose is dear to me as my life, but I would give up a hundred Roses rather than desert you and my father. I should never find any other parents in this world but you, but there are plenty of Roses, although I would have none but Mrs. Bittner's Rose, were there even ten thousand others."

"You are right, Philip," said Gottlieb; "loving and marrying are not in the commandments, - but to honor your father and mother is a duty and commandment. To give up strong passions and inclinations for the happiness of your parents is the truest gratitude of a son. It will gain you the blessing from above: it will make you rich in your own heart."

"If it were only not too long for Rose to wait," said Mrs. Katharine, "or if you could give up the engagement altogether! For Rose is a pretty girl, that can't be denied; and though she is poor, there will be no want of wooers. She is virtuous and understands housekeeping."

"Never fear, mother," replied Philip; "Rose has solemnly sworn to marry no man but me; and that is sufficient. Her mother has nothing to object to me. And if I was in business and had money enough to keep a wife with, Rose would be my wife to-morrow. The only annoyance we have is, that her mother will not let us meet so often as we wish. She says frequent meetings do no good; but I differ from her, and so does Rose, - for we think meeting often does us both a great deal of good. And we have agreed to meet to-night, at twelve o'clock, at the great door of St. Gregory's church, for Rose is bringing in the year at a friend's house; and I am to take her home."

In the midst of such conversation the clock of the neighboring tower struck three quarters, and Philip took his father's great-coat from the warm stove where Katharine had carefully laid it, wrapped himself in it, and taking the lantern and staff, and wishing his parents good night, proceeded to his post.

PHILIP stalked majestically through the snow-covered streets of the capital, where as many people were still visible as in the middle of the day. Carriages were rattling in all directions, the houses were all brilliantly lighted. Our watchman enjoyed the scene, he sang his verses at ten o'clock, and blew his horn lustily in the neighborhood of St. Gregory's church, with many a thought on Rose, No. 3.
who was then with her friend. "Now, she hears me," he said to himself; "now she thinks on me, and forgets the scene around her. I hope she won't fail me at twelve o'clock at the church door." And when he had gone his round, he always returned to the dear house and looked up at the lighted window. Sometimes he saw female figures, and his heart beat quick at the sight; sometimes he fancied he saw Rose herself; and sometimes he studied the long shadows thrown on the wall or the ceiling to discover which of them was Rose's, and to fancy what she was doing. It was certainly not a very pleasant employment to stand in frost and snow and look up at a window; but what care lovers for frost and snow? Watchmen are as fiery and romantic lovers as ever were the knights of ancient ballads.

He only felt the effects of the frost when, at eleven o'clock, he had to set out upon his round. His teeth chattered with cold; he could scarcely call the hour or sound his horn. He would willingly have gone into a beer-house to warm himself at the fire. As he was pacing through a lonely by-street, he met a man with a black half-mask on his face, enveloped in a fire-colored silken mantle, and wearing on his head a magnificent hat turned up at one side, and fantastically ornamented with a number of high and waving plumes. Philip endeavored to escape the mask, but in vain. The stranger blocked up his path and said, "Ha! thou art a fine fellow; I like thy phiz amazingly. Where are you going, eh? I say, where are you going?"

"To Mary Street," replied Philip. "I am going to call the hour there."

"Enchanting!" answered the mask. "I'll hear thee: I'll go with thee. Come along! thou foolish fellow, and let me hear thee, and mind thou singest well, for I am a good judge. Canst thou sing me a jovial song?"

Philip saw that his companion was of high rank and a little tipsy, and answered, "I sing better over a glass of wine in a warm room, than when up to my waist in snow."

They had now reached Mary Street, and Philip sang, and blew the horn.

"Ha! that's but a poor performance," exclaimed the mask who had accompanied him thither. "Give me the horn! I shall blow so well, that you'll half die with delight."

Philip yielded to the mask's wishes, and let him sing the verses and blow. For four or five times all was done as if the stranger had been a watchman all his life. He dilated most eloquently on the joys of such an occupation, and was so inexhaustible in his own praises, that he made Philip laugh at his extravagance. His spirits evidently owed no small share of their elevation to an extra glass of wine.

"I'll tell you what, my treasure, I've a great fancy to be a watchman myself for an hour or two. If I don't do it now, I shall never arrive at that honor in the course of my life. Give me your great-coat and wide-brimmed hat, and take my domino. Go into a beer-house and take a bottle at my expense; and when you have finished it, come again and give me back my masking-gear. You shall have a couple of dollars for your trouble. What do you think, my treasure?"

But Philip did not like this arrangement. At last, however, at the solicitations of the mask, he capitulated as they entered a dark lane. Philip was half frozen; a warm drink would do him good, and so would a warm fire. He agreed for one half hour to give up his watchmanship, which would be till twelve o'clock. Exactly at that time the stranger was to come to the great door of St. Gregory's and give back the great-coat, horn, and staff, taking back his own silk mantle, hat, and domino. Philip also told him the four streets in which he was to call the hour. The mask was in raptures.

"Treasure of my heart, I could kiss thee if thou wert not a dirty, miserable fellow! But thou shalt have naught to regret if thou art at the church at twelve, for I will give thee money for a supper then. Joy! I am a watchman!" The mask looked a watchman to the life, while Philip was completely disguised with the half-mask tied over his face, the bonnet, ornamented with a buckle of brilliants, on his head, and the red silk mantle thrown around him. When he saw his companion commence his walk, he began to fear that the
young gentleman might compromise the dignity of the watchman. He therefore addressed him once more, and said: —

"I hope you will not abuse my good nature and do any mischief, or misbehave in any way, as it may cost me the situation."

"Hallo!" answered the stranger. "What are you talking about? Do you think I don't know my duty? Off with you this moment, or I'll let you feel the weight of my staff. But come to St. Gregory's church and give me back my clothes at twelve o'clock. Good by. This is glorious fun!"

The new guardian of the streets walked onward with all the dignity becoming his office, while Philip hurried to a neighboring tavern.

III.

As he was passing the door of the Royal palace, he was laid hold of by a person in a mask who had alighted from a carriage. Philip turned round, and in a low whispering voice asked what the stranger wanted.

"My gracious lord," answered the mask, "in your reverie you have passed the door. Will your Royal Highness —"

"What? Royal Highness?" said Philip, laughing. "I am no highness. What put that in your head?"

The mask bowed respectfully, and pointed to the brilliant buckle in Philip's hat. "I ask your pardon if I have betrayed your disguise. But, in whatever character you assume, your noble bearing will betray you. Will you condescend to lead the way? Does your Highness intend to dance?"

"I? To dance?" replied Philip. "No, — you see I have boots on."

"To play, then?" inquired the mask.

"Still less. I have brought no money with me," said the assistant watchman.

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the mask. "Command my purse, — all that I possess is at your service!" Saying this, he forced a full purse into Philip's hand.

"But do you know who I am?" inquired Philip, and rejected the purse.

The mask whispered with a bow of profound obeisance, — His Royal Highness, Prince Julian."

At this moment Philip heard his deputy in an adjoining street calling the hour very distinctly, and he now became aware of his metamorphosis. Prince Julian, who was well known in the capital as an amiable, wild, and good-hearted young man, had been the person with whom he had changed his clothes. "Now, then," thought Philip, "as he enacts the watchman so well, I will not shame his rank; I'll see if, for one half hour, I can't be the prince. If I make any mistake, he has himself to blame for it." He wrapped the red silken mantle closer round him, took the offered purse, put it in his pocket, and said, — "Who are you, mask? I will return your gold to-morrow."

"I am the Chamberlain Pilzou."

"Good, — lead the way, — I'll follow." The chamberlain obeyed, and tripped up the marble stairs, Philip coming close behind him. They entered an immense hall, lighted by a thousand tapers and dazzling chandeliers, which were reflected by brilliant mirrors. A confused crowd of maskers jostled each other, sultans, Tyrolese, harlequins, knights in armor, nuns, goddesses, satyrs, monks, Jews, Medes, and Persians. Philip for a while was abashed and blinded. Such splendor he had never dreamt of. In the middle of the hall the dance was carried on by hundreds of people to the music of a full band. Philip, whom the heat of the apartment recovered from his frozen state, was so bewildered with the scene that he could scarcely nod his head as different masks addressed him, some confidentially, others deferentially.

"Will you go to the hazard table?" whispered the Chamberlain, who stood beside him, and who Philip now saw was dressed as a Brahmin.

"Let me get unthawed first," answered Philip; "I am an icicle at present."

"A glass of warm punch?" inquired the Brahmin, and led him
into the refreshment-room. The pseudo-prince did not wait for a second invitation, but emptied one glass after the other in short time. The punch was good, and it spread its genial warmth through Philip's veins.

"How is it you don't dance to-night, Brahmin?" he asked of his companion, when they returned into the hall. The Brahmin sighed, and shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no pleasure now in the dance. Gayety is distasteful to me. The only person I care to dance with,—the Countess Bonau,—I thought she loved me; our families offered no objection,—but all at once she broke with me." His voice trembled as he spoke.

"How?" said Philip, "I never heard of such a thing."

"You never heard of it?" repeated the other, "the whole city rings with it. The quarrel happened a fortnight ago, and she will not allow me to justify myself, but has sent back three letters I wrote to her, unopened. She is a declared enemy of the Baroness Reizenthal, and had made me promise to drop her acquaintance. But, think how unfortunate I was! When the Queen-mother made the hunting party to Freudenwald, she appointed me cavalier to the Baroness. What could I do? It was impossible to refuse. On the very birthday of the adorable Bonau I was obliged to set out. . . . She heard of it. . . . She put no trust in my heart!"

"Well, then, Brahmin, take advantage of the present moment. The new year makes up all quarrels. Is the Countess here?"

"Do you not see her over there,—the Carmelite on the left of the third pillar beside the two black dominos. She has laid aside her mask. Ah, Prince! your intercession would —" 

Philip thought: now I can do a good work! and, as the punch had inspired him, he walked directly to the Carmelite. The Countess Bonau looked at him for some time seriously, and with flushed cheeks, as he sat down beside her. She was a beautiful girl; yet Philip remained persuaded that Rose was a thousand times more beautiful.

"Countess," he said,—and became embarrassed when he met her clear bright eye fixed upon him.

"Prince," said the Countess, "an hour ago you were somewhat too bold."

"Fair Countess, I am therefore at this present moment the more quiet."

"So much the better. I shall not, then, be obliged to keep out of your way."

"Fair lady, allow me to ask one question. Have you put on a nun's gown to do penance for your sins?"

"I have nothing to do penance for."

"But you have, Countess! — your cruelties,—your injustice to the poor Brahmin yonder, who seems neglected by his God and all the world!"

The beautiful Carmelite cast down her eyes, and appeared uneasy.

"And do you know, fair Countess, that in the Freudenwald affair the Chamberlain is as innocent as I am?"

"As you, Prince?" said the Countess, frowning,—"what did you tell me an hour ago?"

"You are right, dear Countess, I was too bold. You said so yourself. But now I declare to you the Chamberlain was obliged to go to Freudenwald by command of the Queen-mother,—against his will was obliged to be cavalier to the hated Reizenthal —"

"Hated — by him?" — interrupted the Countess, with a bitter and sneering laugh.

"Yes,—he hates,—he despises the Baroness. Believe me, he scarcely treated her with civility, and incurred the Royal displeasure by so doing. I know it; and it was for your sake. You are the only person he loves,—to you he offers his hand, his heart,—and you! — you reject him!"

"How comes it, Prince, that you intercede so warmly for Pilzon? You did not do so formerly."

"That was because I did not know him, and still less the sad state into which you have thrown him by your behavior. I swear to you he is innocent,—you have nothing to forgive in him,—he has much to forgive in you."
"Hush!" whispered the Carmelite, "we are watched here; away from this." She replaced her mask, stood up, and placing her arm within that of the supposed Prince, they crossed the hall and entered a side-room. The Countess uttered many bitter complaints against the Chamberlain, but they were the complaints of jealous love. The Countess was in tears, when the tender Brahmin soon after came timidly into the apartment. There was a deep silence among the three. Philip, not knowing how to conclude his intercession better, led the Brahmin to the Carmelite, and joined their hands together, without saying a word, and left them to fate. He himself returned into the hall.

IV.

Here he was hastily addressed by a Mameluke,—"I'm glad I have met you, Domino. Is the Rose-girl in the side-room?" The Mameluke rushed into it, but returned in a moment evidently disappointed. "One word alone with you, Domino," he said, and led Philip into a window recess in a retired part of the hall.

"What do you want?" asked Philip.

"I beseech you," replied the Mameluke, in a subdued yet terrible voice, "where is the Rose-girl?"

"What is the Rose-girl to me?"

"But to me she is everything!" answered the Mameluke, whose suppressed voice and agitated demeanor showed that a fearful struggle was going on within. "To me she is everything. She is—my wife. You make me wretched, Prince! I conjure you drive me not to madness. Think of my wife no more?"

"With all my heart," answered Philip, dryly; "what have I to do with your wife?"

"O, Prince, Prince!" exclaimed the Mameluke, "I have made a resolve which I shall execute if it cost me my life. Do not seek to deceive me a moment longer. I have discovered everything. Here! look at this! 'tis a note my false wife slipt into your hand, and which you dropped in the crowd, without having read."

Philip took the note. 'Twas written in pencil, and in a fine delicate hand,—"Change your mask. Everybody knows you. My husband watches you. He does not know me. If you obey me I will reward you."

"Hem!" muttered Philip. "As I live, this was not written to me. I don't trouble my head about your wife."

"Death and fury, Prince! do not drive me mad! Do you know who it is that speaks to you? I am the Marshal Blankenswerd. Your advances to my wife are not unknown to me, ever since the last route at the palace."

"My Lord Marshal," answered Philip, "excuse me for saying that jealousy has blinded you. If you knew me well, you would not think of accusing me of such folly. I give you my word of honor I will never trouble your wife."

"Are you in earnest, Prince?"

"Entirely."

"Give me a proof of this?"

"Whatever you require."

"I know you have hindered her until now from going with me to visit her relations in Poland. Will you persuade her to do so now?"

"With all my heart, if you desire it."

"Yes, yes! and your Royal Highness will prevent inconceivable and unavoidable misery."

The Mameluke continued for some time, sometimes begging and praying, and sometimes threatening so furiously, that Philip feared he might make a scene before the whole assembly that would not have suited him precisely. He therefore quit him as soon as possible. Scarcely had he lost himself in the crowd, when a female, closely wrapped in deep mourning, tapped him familiarly on the arm, and whispered:

"Butterfly, whither away? Have you no pity for the disconsolate widow?"

Philip answered very politely, "Beautiful widows find no lack of comforters. May I venture to include myself amongst them?"
“Why are you so disobedient? and why have you not changed your mask?” said the widow, while she led him aside, that they might speak more freely. “Do you really fancy, Prince, that every one here does not know who you are?”

“They are very much mistaken in me, I assure you,” replied Philip.

“No, indeed,” answered the widow, “they know you very well, and if you do not immediately change your apparel, I shall not speak to you again the whole evening: I have no desire to give my husband an opportunity of making a scene.”

By this Philip discovered who he was talking with. “You were the beautiful Rose-girl; are your roses withered so soon?”

“What is there that does not wither? not the constancy of man? I saw you when you slipt off with the Carmelite. Acknowledge your inconstancy,—you can deny it no longer.”

“Hem,”—answered Philip, dryly, “accuse me if you will, I can return the accusation.”

“How,—pretty butterfly?”

“Why, for instance, there is not a more constant man alive than the Marshal.”

“There is not indeed!—and I am wrong, very wrong to have listened to you so long. I reproached myself enough, but he has unfortunately discovered our flirtation.”

“Since the last route at Court, fair widow—”

“Where you were so unguarded and particular,—pretty butterfly!”

“Let us repair the mischief. Let us part. I honor the Marshal, and, for my part, do not like to give him pain.”

The widow looked at him for some time in speechless amazement.

“If you have indeed any regard for me,” continued Philip, “you will go with the Marshal to Poland, to visit your relations. ’Tis better that we should not meet so often. A beautiful woman is beautiful,—but a pure and virtuous woman is more beautiful still.”

“Prince!” cried the astonished widow, “are you really in earnest? Have you ever loved me, or have you all along deceived?”

“Look you,” answered Philip, “I am a tempter of a peculiar kind. I search constantly among women to find truth and virtue, and ’tis but seldom that I encounter them. Only the true and virtuous can keep me constant,—therefore I am true to none; but no! I will not lie,—there is one that keeps me in her chains,—I am sorry, fair widow, that that one,—is not you!”

“You are in a strange mood to-night, Prince,” answered the widow, and the trembling of her voice and heaving of her bosom showed the working of her mind.

“No,” answered Philip, “I am in as rational a mood to-night as I ever was in my life. I wish only to repair an injury; I have promised to your husband to do so.”

“How!” exclaimed the widow, in a voice of terror, “you have discovered all to the Marshal?”

“Not everything,” answered Philip, “only what I knew.”

“The widow wrung her hands in the extremity of agitation, and at last said, “Where is my husband?”

Philip pointed to the Mameluke, who at this moment approached them with slow steps.

“Prince,” said the widow, in a tone of inexpressible rage,—

“Prince,—you may be forgiven this, but not from me! I never dreamt that the heart of man could be so deceitful,—but you are unworthy of a thought. You are an impostor! My husband in the dress of a barbarian is a prince; you in the dress of a prince are a barbarian. In this world you see me no more!”

With these words she turned proudly away from him, and going up to the Mameluke, they left the hall in deep and earnest conversation. Philip laughed quietly, and said to himself, “My substitute, the watchman, must look to it, for I do not play my part badly; I only hope when he returns he will proceed as I have begun.”

He went up to the dancers, and was delighted to see the beautiful Carmelite standing up in a set with the overjoyed Brahmin. No
sooner did the latter perceive him, than he kissed his hand to him, and in dumb show gave him to understand in what a blessed state he was. Philip thought, "'T is a pity I am not to be prince all my lifetime. The people would be satisfied then; to be a prince is the easiest thing in the world. He can do more with a single word than a lawyer with a four hours' speech. Yes! if I were a prince, my beautiful Rose would be—lost to me forever. No! I would not be a prince." He now looked at the clock, and saw 't was half past eleven. The Mameluke hurried up to him and gave him a paper. "Prince," he exclaimed, "I could fall at your feet and thank you in the very dust; I am reconciled to my wife. You have broken her heart; but it is better that it should be so. We leave for Poland this very night, and there we shall fix our home. Farewell! I shall be ready, whenever your Royal Highness requires me, to pour out my last drop of blood in your service. My gratitude is eternal. Farewell!"

"Stay!" said Philip to the Marshal, who was hurrying away, "what am I to do with this paper?"

"O, that,—'t is the amount of my loss to your Highness last week at hazard. I had nearly forgotten it; but before my departure I must clear my debts. I have endorsed it on the back." With these words the Marshal disappeared.

PHILIP opened the paper, and read in it an order for five thousand dollars. He put it in his pocket, and thought, "Well, it's a pity that I'm not a prince." Some one whispered in his ear,—"Your Royal Highness, we are both discovered; I shall blow my brains out."

Philip turned round in amazement, and saw a negro at his side. "What do you want, mask?" he asked, in an unconcerned tone. "I am Colonel Kalt," whispered the negro. "The Marshal's wife has been chattering to Duke Herman, and he has been breathing fire and fury against us both."

"He is quite welcome," answered Philip. "But the king will hear it all," sighed the negro. "This very night I may be arrested and carried to a dungeon; I'll sooner hang myself."

"No need of that," said Philip. "What! am I to be made infamous for my whole life? I am lost, I tell you. The Duke will demand entire satisfaction. His back is black and blue yet with the marks of the cudgelling I gave him. I am lost, and the baker's daughter, too! I'll jump from the bridge and drown myself at once!"

"God forbid!" answered Philip; "what have you and the baker's daughter to do with it?"

"Your Royal Highness banter me, and I am in despair!—I humbly beseech you to give me two minutes' private conversation."

Philip followed the negro into a small boudoir dimly lighted up with a few candles. The negro threw himself on a sofa, quite overcome, and groaned aloud. Philip found some sandwiches and wine on the table, and helped himself with great relish.

"I wonder your Royal Highness can be so cool on hearing this cursed story. If that rascally Salmoni was here who acted the conjurer, he might save us by some contrivance, for the fellow was a bunch of tricks. As it is, he has slipped out of the scrape."

"So much the better," interrupted Philip, replenishing his glass; "since he has got out of the way, we can throw all the blame on his shoulders."

"How can we do that? The Duke, I tell you, knows that you, and I, and the Marshal's wife, and the baker's daughter, were all in the plot together, to take advantage of his superstition. He knows that it was you that engaged Salmoni to play the conjurer; that it was I that instructed the baker's daughter (with whom he is in love) how to inveigle him into the snare; that it was I that enacted the ghost, that knocked him down, and cudgelled him till he roared again. If I had only not carried the joke too far, but I wished to cool his love a little for my sweetheart. 'T was a devilish business. I'll take poison."
GOOD STORIES.

"Rather swallow a glass of wine,—'tis delicious," said Philip, taking another tart at the same time. "For to tell you the truth, my friend, I think you are rather a white-livered sort of rogue for a colonel, to think of hanging, drowning, shooting, and poisoning yourself about such a ridiculous story as that. One of these modes would be too much, but as to all the four—nonsense. I tell you that at this moment I don't know what to make out of your tale."

"Your Royal Highness have pity on me, my brain is turned. The Duke's page, an old friend of mine, has told me this very moment, that the Marshal's wife, inspired by the devil, went up to the Duke, and told him that the trick played on him at the baker's house was planned by Prince Julian, who opposed his marriage with his sister; that the spirit he saw was myself, sent by the Princess to be a witness of his superstition; that your Highness was a witness of his descent into the pit after hidden gold, and of his promise to make the baker's daughter his mistress, and also to make her one of the nobility immediately after his marriage with the Princess. 'Do not hope to gain the Princess. It is useless for you to try' were the last words of the Marshal's wife to the Duke."

"And a pretty story it is," muttered Philip; "why, behavior like that would be a disgrace to the meanest of the people. I declare there is no end to these deviltries."

"Yes indeed. 'Tis impossible to behave more meanly than the Marshal's lady. The woman must be a fury. My gracious lord, save me from destruction."

"Where is the Duke?" asked Philip.

"The page told me he started up on hearing the story, and said, 'I will go to the king.' And if he tells the story to the king in his own way——"

"Is the king here, then?"

"O yes, he is at play in the next room with the Archbishop and the Minister of Police."

Philip walked with long steps through the boudoir. The case required consideration.
"I am greatly obliged to you," replied Philip; "what is your business just now? But be quick."

"May I venture to speak of the house of Abraham Levi?"

"As much as you like."

"They have applied to me about the fifty thousand dollars which you owe them, and threaten to apply to the king. And you remember your promise to his Majesty when last he paid your debts."

"Can't the people wait?" asked Philip.

"No more than the Brothers, goldsmiths, who demand their seventy-five thousand dollars."

"It is all one to me. If the people won't wait for their money, I must—"

"No hasty resolution, my gracious Lord! I have it, in my power to make everything comfortable, if—"

"Well, if what?"

"If you will honor me by listening to me one moment. I hope to have no difficulty in redeeming all your debts. The house of Abraham Levi has bought up immense quantities of corn, so that the price is very much raised. A decree against importation will raise it three or four per cent higher. By giving Abraham Levi the monopoly, the business will be arranged. The house erases your debt, and pays off your seventy-five thousand dollars to the goldsmiths, and I give you over the receipts. But everything depends on my continuing for another year at the head of the Finance. If Baron Griefensack succeeds in ejecting me from the ministry, I shall be unable to serve your Royal Highness as I could wish.

"If Barons will leave the party of Griefensack, our point is gained. For me, it is a matter of perfect indifference whether I remain in office or not. I sigh for repose. But for your Royal Highness, it is a matter of great moment. If I have not the mixing of the pack, I lose the game."

Philip for some time did not know what answer to make. At last, while the Finance Minister, in expectation of his reply, took a pinch out of his snuff-box set with jewels, Philip said:—

"If I rightly understand you, Sir Count, you would starve the country a little in order to pay my debts. Consider, sir, what misery you will cause. And will the king consent to it?"

"If I remain in office, I will answer for that, my gracious Lord! When the price of corn rises, the king will, of course, think of permitting importation, and prevent exportation by levying heavy imposts. The permission to do so is given to the house of Abraham Levi, and they export as much as they choose. But as I said before, if Griefensack gets the helm nothing can be done. For the first year he would be obliged to attend strictly to his duty, in order to be able afterwards to feather his nest at the expense of the country. He must first make sure of his ground. He is dreadfully grasping!"

"A pretty project," answered Philip; "and how long do you think a finance minister must be in office before he can lay his shears on the flock to get wool enough for himself and me?"

"0, if he has his wits about him, he may manage it in a year."

"Then the king ought to be counselled to change his finance minister every twelve months, if he wishes to be faithfully and honorably served."

"I hope, your Royal Highness, that since I have had the Exchequer, the king and court have been faithfully served."

"I believe you, Count, and the poor people believe you still more. Already they scarcely know how to pay their rates and taxes. You should treat us with a little more consideration, Count."

"Us!—don't I do everything for the court?"

"No! I mean the people. You should have a little more consideration for them."

"I appreciate what your Royal Highness says; but I serve the king and the court, the people are not to be considered. The country is his private property, and the people are only useful to him as increasing the value of his land. But this is no time to discuss the old story about the interests of the people. I beg your Royal Highness's answer to my propositions. Shall I have the No. 3.
honor to discharge your debts on the above specified conditions?"

"Answer, — no, — never, never! at the expense of hundreds and thousands of starving families."

"But, your Royal Highness, if in addition to the clearance of your debts, I make the house of Abraham Levi present you with fifty thousand dollars in hard cash? I think it may afford you that sum. The house will gain so much by the operation, that —"

"Perhaps it may be able to give you also a mark of its regard."

"Your Highness is pleased to jest with me. I gain nothing by the affair. My whole object is to obtain the protection of your Royal Highness."

"You are very polite!"

"I may hope then, Prince?"

"Count, I will do my duty; do you yours."

"My duty is to be of service to you. To-morrow I shall send for Abraham, and conclude the arrangement with him. I shall have the honor to present your Royal Highness with the receipt for all your debts, besides the gift of fifty thousand dollars."

"Go, I want to hear no more of it."

"And your Royal Highness will honor me with your favor? For unless I am in the Ministry, it is impossible for me to deal with Abraham Levi so as —"

"I wish to Heaven you and your ministry and Abraham Levi were all three on the Blocksberg! I tell you what, unless you lower the price of corn, and take away the monopoly from that infernal Jew, I’ll go this moment and reveal your villany to the king, and get you and Abraham Levi banished from the country. See to it, — I’ll keep my word!" Philip turned away in a rage, and proceeded into the dancing-room, leaving the Minister of Finance petrified with amazement.

"When does your Royal Highness require the carriage?" whispered a stout little Dutch merchant in a bobbed wig.

"Not at all," answered Philip.

"T is after half past eleven, and the beautiful singer expects you. She will tire of waiting."

"Let her sing something to cheer her."

"How, Prince? Have you changed your mind? Would you leave the captivating Rollina in the lurch, and throw away the golden opportunity you have been sighing for two months? The letter you sent to-day, enclosing the diamond watch, did wonders. The proud but fragile beauty surrenders. This morning you were in raptures, and now you are as cold as ice! What is the cause of the change?"

"That is my business, not yours," said Philip.

"I had your orders to join you at half past eleven. Perhaps you have other engagements?"

"Perhaps."

"A petit souper with the Countess Born? She is not present here; at least among all the masks I can’t trace her out. I should know her among a thousand by that graceful walk and her peculiar way of carrying her little head, — eh, Prince?"

"Well, but if it were so, there would be no necessity for making you my confidant, would there?"

"I will take the hint, and be silent. But won’t you at any rate send to the Signora Rollina to let her know you are not coming?"

"If I have sighed for her for two months, she had better sigh a month or two for me. I sha’n’t go near her."

"So that beautiful necklace which you sent her for a new year’s present was all for nothing?"

"As far as I am concerned."

"Will you break with her entirely?"

"There is nothing between us to break, that I know of."
"Well, then, since you speak so plainly, I may tell you something which you perhaps know already. Your love to the Signora has hitherto kept me silent; but now that you have altered your mind about her, I can no longer keep the secret from you. You are deceived."

"By whom?"

"By the artful singer. She would divide her favors between your Royal Highness and a Jew."

"A Jew?"

"Yes! with the son of Abraham Levi."

"Is that rascal everywhere?"

"So your Highness did not know it; but I am telling you the exact truth: if it were not for your Royal Highness, she would be his mistress. I am only sorry you gave her that watch."

"I don't regret it at all."

"The jade deserves to be whipped."

"Few people meet their deserts," answered Philip."

"Too true, too true, your Royal Highness. For instance, I have discovered a girl,—O Prince, there is not such another in this city or in the whole world! Few have seen this angel. Pooh! Rosalina is nothing to her. Listen,—a girl tall and slender as a palm-tree,—with a complexion like the red glow of evening upon snow,—eyes like sunbeams,—rich golden tresses,—in short, the most beautiful creature I ever beheld,—a Venus,—a goddess in rustic attire. Your Highness, we must give her chase."

"A peasant girl?—"

"A mere rustic; but then you must see her yourself, and you will love her. But my descriptions are nothing. Imagine the embodiment of all that you can conceive most charming,—add to that, artlessness, grace, and innocence. But the difficulty is to catch sight of her. She seldom leaves her mother. I know her seat in church, and have watched her for many Sundays past, as she walked with her mother to the Elm-Gate. I have ascertained that a handsome young fellow, a gardener, is making court to her. He can't marry her, for he is a poor devil, and she has nothing. The mother is the widow of a poor weaver."

"And the mother's name is?—"

"Widow Bittsier, in Milk Street; and the daughter, fairest of flowers, is in fact called Rose."

Philip's blood boiled at the sound of the beloved name. His first inclination was to knock the communicative Dutchman down. He restrained himself, however, and only asked,—

"Are you the devil himself?"

"'Tis good news, is it not? I have taken some steps in the matter already, but you must see her first. But perhaps such a pearl has not altogether escaped your keen observation? Do you know her?"

"Intimately."

"So much the better. Have I been too lavish of my praises? You confess their truth? She sha'n't escape us. We must go together to the widow; you must play the philanthropist. You have heard of the widow's poverty, and must insist on relieving it. You take an interest in the good woman; enter into her misfortunes; leave a small present at each visit, and by this means become acquainted with Rose. The rest follows of course. The gardener can be easily got out of the way, or perhaps a dozen or two dollars slipped quietly into his hand may—"

"I'll throttle you—"

"If the gardener makes a fuss?" interposed the Dutchman."

"Leave me to settle this matter. I'll get him kidnapped, and sent to the army to fight for his country. In the mean time you get possession of the field; for the girl has a peasant's attachment for the fellow, and it will not be easy to get the nonsense out of her head, which she has been taught by the canaille. But I will give her some lessons, and then—"

"I'll break your neck."

"Your Highness is too good. But if your Highness would use your interest with the king to procure me the chamberlain's key—"

"I wish I could procure you—"

"O, don't flatter me, your Highness. Had I only known you
thought so much of her beauty, she would have been yours long
ago.”

“Not a word more,” cried the enraged Philip in a smothered
voice; for he dared not speak aloud, he was so surrounded
by maskers, who were listening, dancing, talking, as they passed him,
and he might have betrayed himself: “not a word more!”

“No, there will be more than words. Deeds shall show my sin-
cerity. You may advance. You are wont to conquer. The out-
posts will be easily taken. The gardener I will manage, and the
mother will range herself under your gilded banners. Then the
fortress will be won!”

“Sir, if you venture,” said Philip, who now could hardly contain
himself. It was with great difficulty he refrained from open vio-
lence, and he clutched the arm of the Dutchman with the force of
a vice.

“Your Highness, for Heaven’s sake, moderate your joy. I
shall scream, — you are mashing my arm!”

“If you venture to go near that innocent girl, I will demolish
every bone in your body.”

“Good, good,” screamed the Dutchman, in intense pain; “only
let go my arm.”

“If I find you anywhere near Milk Street, I’ll dash your miser-
able brains out. So look to it.”

The Dutchman seemed almost stupefied; trembling he said,—
“May it please your Highness, I could not imagine you really
loved the girl as it seems you do.”

“I love her! I will own it before the whole world!”

“And are loved in return?”

“That’s none of your business. Never mention her name to me
again. Do not even think of her, it would be a stain upon her
purity. Now you know what I think. Be off!”

Philip twirled the unfortunate Dutchman round as he let go his
arm, and that worthy gentleman slunk out of the hall.

ADVENTURES OF A NEW YEAR’S EVE.

In the mean time Philip’s substitute supported his character of
watchman on the snow-covered streets. It is scarcely necessary to
say, that this was none other than Prince Julian, who had taken a
notion to join the watch,—his head being crazed by the fire of the
sweet wine. He attended to the directions left by Philip, and went
his rounds, and called the hour with great decorum, except that,
instead of the usual watchman’s verses, he favored the public with
rhymes of his own. He was cogitating a new stanza, when the
doors of a house beside him opened, and a well wrapped up girl
beckoned to him, and ran into the shadow of the house.

The Prince left his stanza half-finished, and followed the appar-
ition. A soft hand grasped his in the darkness, and a voice whis-
pered,—

“Good evening, dear Philip. Speak low, that nobody may hear
us. I have only got away from the company for one moment, to
speak to you as you passed. Are you happy to see me?”

“Blest as a god, my angel! who could be otherwise than happy
by thy side?”

“I’ve some good news for you, Philip. You must sup at our
house to-morrow evening. My mother has allowed me to ask you.
You’ll come?”

“For the whole evening, and as many more as you wish. Would
we might be together till the end of the world! ’t would be a life
fit for gods!”

“Listen, Philip; in half an hour I shall be at St. Gregory’s. I
shall expect you there. You won’t fail me? Don’t keep me wait-
ing long,—we shall have a walk together. Go now,—we may be
discovered.” She tried to go, but Julian held her back and threw
his arms round her.

“What, wilt thou leave me so coldly?” he said, and tried to
press a kiss upon her lips.

Rose did not know what to think of this boldness, for Philip had
always been modest, and never dared more than kiss her hand, except once, when her mother had forbidden their meeting again. They had then exchanged their first kiss in great sorrow and in great love, but never since then. She struggled to free herself, but Julian held her firm, till at last she had to buy her liberty by submitting to the kiss, and begged him to go. But Julian seemed not at all inclined to move.

"What! go? I'm not such a fool as that comes to! You think I love my horn better than you? No, indeed!"

"But then it is n't right, Philip."

"Not right? why not, my beauty? there is nothing against kissing in the ten commandments."

"Why, if we could marry, perhaps you might,—but you know very well we can't marry, and —"

"Not marry! why not? You can marry me any day you like."

"Philip! why will you talk such folly? You know we must not think of such a thing."

"But I think very seriously about it,—if you would consent."

"You are unkind to speak thus. Ah, Philip, I had a dream last night."

"A dream,—what was it?"

"You had won a prize in the lottery; we were both so happy! You had bought a beautiful garden, handsomer than any in the city. It was a little Paradise of flowers,—and there were large beds of vegetables, and the trees were laden with fruit. And when I awoke, Philip, I felt so wretched,—I wished I had not dreamed such a happy dream. You've nothing in the lottery, Philip, have you? Have you really won anything? The drawing took place to-day."

"How much must I have gained to win you too?"

"Ah, Philip, if you had only gained a thousand dollars, you might buy such a pretty garden!"

"A thousand dollars! And what if it were more?"

"Ah, Philip,—what is it true? is it really? Don't deceive me! 't will be worse than the dream. You had a ticket! and you've won!—own it! own it!"

"All you can wish for."

Rose flung her arms around his neck in the extremity of her joy, and kissed him.

"More than the thousand dollars? and will they pay you the whole?"

Her kiss made the Prince forget to answer. It was so strange to hold a pretty form in his arms, receive its caresses, and to know they were not meant for him.

"Answer me, answer me!" cried Rose, impatiently. "Will they give you all that money?"

"They've done it already,—and if it will add to your happiness, I'll hand it to you this moment."

"What! have you got it with you?"

The Prince took out his purse, which he had filled with money in expectation of some play.

"Take it and weigh it, my girl," he said, placing it in her hand and kissing her again. "This then makes you mine!"

"O not this,—nor all the gold in the world, if you were not my own dear Philip!"

"And how if I had given you twice as much as all this money, and yet were not your own dear Philip?"

"I would fling the purse at your feet, and make you a very polite courtesy," said Rose.

A door now opened; the light streamed down upon the steps, and the laughing voices of girls were heard. Rose whispered,—

"In half an hour, at St. Gregory's," and ran up the steps, leaving the Prince in the darkness. Disconcerted by the suddenness of the parting, and his curiosity excited by his ignorance of the name of his new acquaintance, and not even having had a full view of her face, he consoled himself with the rendezvous at St. Gregory's church-door. This he resolved to keep, though it was evident that all the tenderness which had been bestowed on him was intended for his friend the watchman.
IX.

The interview with Rose, or the coldness of the night, increased the effect of the wine to such an extent that the mischievous propensities of the young Prince got the upper hand of him. Standing amidst a crowd of people, in the middle of the street, he blew so lustily on his horn that the women screamed, and the men gasped with fear. He called the hour, and then shouted, at the top of his lungs,—

"The business of our lovely state
Is stricken by the hand of fate,
Even our maids, both light and brown,
Can find no sale in all the town;
They deck themselves with all their arts,
But no one buys their worn-out hearts."

"Shame! shame!" cried several female voices from the window, at the end of this complimentary effusion, which, however, was crowned with a loud laugh from the men. "Bravo, watchman," cried some; "encore! encore!" shouted others. "How dare you, fellow, insult ladies in the open street?" growled a young lieutenant, who had a very pretty girl on his arm.

"Mr. Lieutenant," answered a miller, "unfortunately watchmen always tell the truth, and the lady on your arm is a proof of it. Ha! young jade, do you know me? do you know who I am? Is it right for a betrothed bride to be gadding at night about the streets? To-morrow your mother shall hear of this. I'll have nothing more to do with you!"

The girl hid her face, and nudged the young officer to lead her away. But the lieutenant, like a brave soldier, scorned to retreat from the miller, and determined to keep the field. He therefore made use of a full round of oaths, which were returned with interest, and a sabre was finally resorted to, with some flourishes; but two Spanish cudgels were threateningly held over the head of the lieutenant by a couple of stout townsmen, while one of them, who was a broad-shouldered beer-brewer, cried,—"Don't make any more fuss about the piece of goods beside you,—she ain't worth it. The miller's a good fellow, and what he says is true, and the watchman's right, too. A plain tradesman can hardly venture to marry now. All the women wish to marry above their station. Instead of darning stockings, they read romances,—instead of working in the kitchen, they run after comedies and concerts. Their houses are dirty, and they are walking out, dressed like princesses: all they bring a husband as a dowry, are handsome dresses, lace ribbons, intrigues, romances, and idleness! Sir, I speak from experience; I should have married long since, if girls were not spoilt."

The spectators laughed heartily, and the lieutenant slowly put back his sword, saying, peevishly, "It's a little too much to be obliged to hear a sermon from the canaille."

"What? Canaille!" cried a smith, who held the second cudgel. "Do you call those canaille who feed you noble idlers by duties and taxes? Your licentiousness is the cause of our domestic discord, and noble ladies would not have so much cause to mourn if you had learned both to pray and to work."

Several young officers had gathered together already, and so had some mechanics; and the boys, in the mean time, threw snowballs among both parties, that their share in the fun might not be lost. The first ball hit the noble lieutenant on the nose, and thinking it an attack from the canaille, he raised his sabre. The fight began.

The Prince, who had laughed amazingly at the first commencement of the uproar, had betaken himself to another region, and felt quite unconcerned as to the result. In the course of his wanderings, he came to the palace of Count Bodenlos, the Minister of Finance, with whom, as Philip had discovered at the masquerade, the Prince was not on the best terms. The Countess had a large party. Julian saw the lighted windows, and still feeling poetically disposed, he planted himself opposite the balcony, and blew a peal on his horn. Several ladies and gentlemen opened the shutters, because they had nothing better to do, and listened to what he should say.

"Watchman," cried one of them, "sing us a New Year's greeting!"
This invitation brought a fresh accession of the Countess’s party to the windows. Julian called the hour in the usual manner, and sang, loud enough to be distinctly heard inside,—

“Ye who groan with heavy debts,
And swift approaching failure frets,
Pray the Lord that he this hour
May raise you to some place of power;
And while the nation wants and suffers,
Fill your own from the people’s coffers.”

“Outrageous!” screamed the lady of the Minister,—“who is the insolent wretch that dares such an insult?”

“Pleashe your exshelfenshy,” answered Julian, imitating the Jewish dialect in voice and manner, “I vash only intendsh to shing you a pretty shong. I am de Shew Abraham Levi, vell known at dish court. Your ladyship knowsh me ver’ well.”

“How dare you tell such a lie, you villain?” exclaimed a voice, trembling with rage, at one of the windows, “how dare you say you are Abraham Levi! I am Abraham Levi! You are a cheat!”

“Call the police!” cried the Countess. “Have that man arrested!”

At these words the party confusedly withdrew from the windows. Nor did the Prince remain where he was, but quickly effected his escape through a cross street. A crowd of servants rushed out of the palace, led by the Secretaries of the Finance, and commenced a search for the offender. “We have him!” cried some, as the rest eagerly approached. It was in fact the real guardian of the night, who was carefully perambulating his beat, in innocent unconsciousness of any offence. In spite of all he could say, he was disarmed and carried off to the watch-house, and charged with causing a disturbance by singing libellous songs. The officer of the police shook his head at the unaccountable event, and said,—“We have already one watchman in custody, whose verses about some girl caused a very serious affray between the town’s-people and the garrison.”

The prisoner would confess to nothing, but swore prodigiously at the tipsy young people who had disturbed him in the fulfilment of his duty. One of the secretaries of the Finance repeated the whole verse to him. The soldiers standing about laughed aloud, but the ancient watchman swore with tears in his eyes that he had never thought of such a thing. While the examination was going on, and one of the secretaries of the Finance Minister began to be doubtful whether the poor watchman was really in fault or not, an uproar was heard outside, and loud cries of “Watch, Watch!”

The guard rushed out, and in a few minutes the Field-Marshal entered the office, accompanied by the captain of the guards on duty. “Have that scoundrel locked up tight,” said the Marshal, pointing behind him,—and two soldiers brought in a watchman, whom they held close prisoner, and whom they had disarmed of his staff and horn.

“Are the watchmen gone all mad to-night?” exclaimed the chief of police.

“I’ll have the rascal punished for his infamous verses,” said the Field-Marshal angrily.

“Your excellency,” exclaimed the trembling watchman, as true as I live, I never made a verse in my born days.”

“Silence, knave,” roared the Marshal. “I’ll have you hanged for them! And if you contradict me again, I’ll cut you in two on the spot.”

The police officer respectfully observed to the Field-Marshal that there must be some poetical epidemic among the watchmen, for three had been brought before him within the last quarter of an hour, accused of the same offence.

“Gentlemen,” said the Marshal to the officers who had accompanied him, “since the scoundrel refuses to confess, it will be necessary to take down from your remembrance, the words of his atrocious libel. Let them be written down while you still recollect them. Come, who can say them?”

The officer of police wrote to the dictation of the gentlemen who remembered the whole verses between them;—
"On empty head a flaunting feather,
A long queue tied with tape and leather;
Padded breast and waist so little,
Make the soldier to a tittle;
By cards and dance, and dissipation,
He's sure to win a Marshal's station."

"Do you deny, you rascal," cried the Field-Marshal, to the terrified watchman,—"do you deny that you sung these infamous lines as I was coming out of my house?"

"They may sing it who like, it was not me," said the watchman.

"Why did you run away, then, when you saw me?"

"I did not run away."

"What?" said the two officers who had accompanied the Marshal,—"not run away? Were you not out of breath when at last we laid hold of you there by the market?"

"Yes, but it was with fright at being so ferociously attacked. I am trembling yet in every limb."

"Lock the obstinate dog up till the morning,"—said the Marshal,—"he will come to his senses by that time!" With these words the wrathful dignitary went away.

These incidents had set the whole police force of the city on the qui vive. In the next ten minutes two more watchmen were brought to the office on similar charges with the others. One was accused of singing a libel under the window of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in which it was insinuated that there were no affairs to which he was more foreign than those of his own department. The other had sung some verses before the door of the Bishop's palace, informing him that the "lights of the church" were by no means deficient in tallow, but gave a great deal more smoke than illumination. The Prince, who had wrought the poor watchmen all this woe, was always lucky enough to escape, and grew bolder and bolder with every new attempt. The affair was talked of everywhere. The Minister of Police, who was at cards with the king, was informed of the insurrection among the hitherto peaceful watchmen, and as a proof of it, some of the verses were given to him in writing. The king laughed very heartily at the doggerel verse about the miserable police who were always putting their noses into other people's family affairs, but could never smell anything amiss in their own, and were therefore lawful game, and ordered the next poetical watchman who should be taken to be brought before him. He broke up the card-table, for he saw that the Minister of Police had lost his good-humor.

X.

In the dancing-hall next to the card-room Philip had looked at his watch, and discovered that the time of his appointment with Rose at St. Gregory's had nearly come. He was by no means sorry at the prospect of giving back his silk mantle and plumed bonnet to his substitute, for he began to find high life not quite to his taste. As he was going to the door, the negro once more came up to him, and whispered, "Your Highness, Duke Herrman is seeking for you everywhere." Philip shook his head impatiently and hurried out, followed by the negro. When they got to the ante-chamber, the negro cried out, "By Heaven, here comes the Duke!"—and slipped back into the hall.

A tall black mask walked fiercely up to Philip, and said, "Stay a moment, sir,—I've a word or two to say to you,—I've been seeking for you long."

"Quick then," said Philip, "for I have no time to lose."

"I would not waste a moment, sir,—I have sought you long enough; you owe me satisfaction, you have injured me infamously."

"Not that I am aware of."

"You don't know me, perhaps," said the Duke, lifting up his mask,—"now that you see me, your own conscience will save me any more words. I demand satisfaction. You and the cursed Saloni have deceived me!"

"I know nothing about it," said Philip.

"You got up that shameful scene in the cellar of the baker's daughter. It was at your instigation that Colonel Kalt made an assault upon me with a cudgel."
"There's not a word of truth in what you say."

"What?—you deny it? The Lady Blankenswerd, the Marshal's lady, was an eyewitness of it all, and she has told me every circumstance."

"She has told your Grace a fancy tale,—I have had nothing to do with it,—if you made an ass of yourself in a baker's cellar, that was your own fault."

"I ask, once more, will you give me satisfaction? If not, I will expose you. Follow me instantly to the king. You shall either fight with me, or—go to his Majesty."

Philip was nonplussed. "Your Grace," he said, "I have no wish either to fight with you, or to go to the king."

This was indeed the truth, for he was afraid he should be obliged to unmask, and would be punished, of course, for the part he had played. He therefore tried to get off by every means, and watched the door to seize a favorable moment for effecting his escape. The Duke, on the other hand, observed the uneasiness of the prince (as he thought him), and waxed more valorous every minute. At last he seized poor Philip by the arm, and was dragging him into the hall.

"What do you want with me?" said Philip, sorely frightened, and shook off the Duke.

"To the king. He shall hear how shamefully you insult a guest at his court."

"Very good," replied Philip, who saw no hope of escape, except by continuing the character of the Prince. "Very good. Come, then, I am ready. By good luck I happen to have the agreement with me between you and the baker's daughter, in which you promise—"

"Nonsense! stuff!" answered the Duke, "that was only a piece of fun, which may be allowed surely with a baker's daughter. Show it if you like, I will explain all that."

But it appeared that the Duke was not quite so sure of the explanation, for he no longer urged Philip to go before the king. He, however, insisted more earnestly than ever on getting into his carriage, and going that moment—Heaven knows where—to decide the matter with sword and pistol,—an arrangement which did not suit our watchman at all. Philip pointed out the danger and consequences of such a proceeding, but the Duke overruled all objections. He had made every preparation, and when it was over he would leave the city that same night.

"If you are not the greatest coward in Europe, you will follow me to the carriage—Prince!"

"I—am—no—Prince, "—at last stuttered Philip, now driven to extremities.

"You are! Everybody recognized you at the ball,—I know you by your hat. You sha'nt escape me."

Philip lifted up his mask, and showed the Duke his face.

"Now, then, am I a prince?"

Duke Herrman, when he saw the countenance of a man he had never seen before, started back, and stood gazing as if he had been petrified. To have revealed his secrets to a perfect stranger! 'T was horrible beyond conception! But before he had recovered from his surprise, Philip had opened the door and effected his escape.

XI.

The moment he found himself at liberty he took off his hat and feathers, and wrapping them in his silk mantle, rushed through the streets towards St. Gregory's, carrying them under his arm. There stood Rose already, in a corner of the high church door, expecting his arrival.

"Ah Philip, dear Philip," she said, pressing his hand, "how happy you have made me! how lucky we are! I was very uneasy to get away from my friend's house, and I have been waiting here this quarter of an hour, but never cared for the frost and snow,—my happiness was so great: I am so glad you're come back."

"And I too, dear Rose, thank God that I have got back to you. May the eagles fly away with these trinkum-trankums of great No. 3.
people. But I'll tell you some other time of the scenes I've had. Tell me now, my darling, how you are, and whether you love me still!"

"Ah! Philip, you've become a great man now, and it would be better to ask if you still care anything for me."

"Thunder! How came you to know so soon that I've been a great man?"

"Why you told me yourself. Ah! Philip, Philip, I only hope you won't be proud, now that you've grown so rich. I am but a poor girl, and not good enough for you now,—and I have been thinking, Philip, if you forsake me, I would rather have had you continue a poor gardener. I should fret myself to death if you forsake me."

"What are you talking about, Rose? 'T is true that for one half hour I have been a prince; 't was but a joke, and I want no more of such jokes in my life. Now I am a watchman again, and as poor as ever. To be sure I have five thousand dollars in my pocket, that I got from a Mameluke,—that would make us rich, but unfortunately they don't belong to me!"

"You're speaking nonsense, Philip," said Rose, giving him the purse of gold that the Prince had given her,—"Here, take back your money, 't is too heavy for my bag."

"What should I do with all this gold? Where did you get it, Rose?"

"You won it in the lottery, Philip."

"What! have I won? and they told me at the office my number was not yet out,—I had hoped and wished that it might come to give us a setting up in the world,—but gardener Redman said to me as I went a second time towards the office, 'Poor Philip,—a blank'—Huzza! I have won! Now I will buy a large garden and marry you. How much is it?"

"Are you crazy, Philip, or have you drunk too much? You must know better than I can tell you how much it is. I only looked at it quietly under the table at my friend's, and was frightened to see so many glittering coins, all of gold, Philip. Ah! then I thought, no wonder Philip was so impertinent,—for, you know, you were very impertinent, Philip,—but I can't blame you for it. O, I could throw my own arms round your neck and cry for joy."

"Rose, if you will do it I shall make no objections. But there's some misunderstanding here. Who was it that gave you this money, and told you it was my prize in the lottery? I have my ticket safe in my drawer at home, and nobody has asked me for it."

"Ah! Philip, don't play your jokes on me! you yourself told me it half an hour ago, and gave me the purse with your own hand."

"Rose,—try to recollect yourself. This morning I saw you at mass, and we agreed to meet here to-night, but since that time I have not seen you for an instant."

"No, except half an hour ago, when I saw you at Steinman's door. But what is that bundle under your arm? why are you without a hat this cold night? Philip! Philip! be careful. All that gold may turn your brain. You've been in some tavern, Philip, and have drunk more than you should. But tell me, what is in the bundle? Why,—here's a woman's silk gown. —Philip, —Philip, where have you been?"

"Certainly not with you half an hour ago; you want to play tricks on me, I fancy. Where have you got that money, I should like to know?"

"Answer me first, Philip, where you got that woman's gown. Where have you been, sir?"

They were both impatient for explanations, both a little jealous, and finally began to quarrel.

XII.

But as this was a lover's quarrel, it ended as lover's quarrels invariably do. When Rose took out her white pocket-handkerchief, put it to her beautiful eyes, and turned away her head as the sighs burst forth from her breast, this sole argument proved instantly that
she was in the right, and Philip decidedly in the wrong. He confessed he was to blame for everything, and told her that he had been at a masked ball, and that his bundle was not a silk gown, but a man's mantle and a hat and feathers. And now he had to undergo a rigid examination. Every maiden knows that a masked ball is a dangerous maze for unprotected hearts. It is like plunging into a whelming sea of dangers, and you will be drowned if you are not a good swimmer. Rose did not consider Philip the best swimmer in the world, — it is difficult to say why. He denied having danced, but when she asked him he could not deny having talked with some feminine masks. He related the whole story to her, yet would constantly add: "The ladies were of high rank, and they took me for another." Rose doubted him a little, but she suppressed her resentment until he said they took him for Prince Julian. Then she shook her little head, and still more when she heard that Prince Julian was transformed into a watchman while Philip was at the ball. But he smothered her doubts by saying that in a few minutes the Prince would appear at St. Gregory's church, and exchange his watch-coat for the mask.

Rose, in return, related all her adventure: but when she came to the incident of the kiss —

"Hold there!" cried Philip; "I did n't kiss you, nor, I am sure, did you kiss me in return."

"I am sure 't was intended for you, then," replied Rose, whilst her lover rubbed his hair down, for fear it should stand on end.

"If 't was not you," continued Rose, anxiously, "I will believe all that you have been telling me."

But as she went on in her story a light seemed to break in on her, and she exclaimed, "And after all, I do not believe it was Prince Julian in your coat!"

Philip was certain it was, and cried: "The rascal! He stole my kisses,— now I understand! That's the reason why he wanted to take my place and gave me his mask!" And now the stories he had heard at the masquerade came into Philip's head. He asked if anybody had called at her mother's to offer her money, — if any gentleman was much about Milk Street; if she saw any one watching her at church; but to all his questions her answers were so satisfactory, that it was impossible to doubt of her total ignorance of all the machinations of the rascally courtiers. He warned her against all the advances of philanthropical and compassionate princes, — and Rose warned him against the dangers of a masked ball and adventures with ladies of rank by which many young men have been made unhappy, — and as everything was now forgiven, in consideration of the kiss not having been wilfully bestowed, he was on the point of claiming for himself the one of which he had been cheated, when his designs were interrupted by an unexpected incident. A man out of breath with his rapid flight, rushed against them. By the great coat, staff, and horn, Philip recognized his deputy. He, on the other hand, snatched at the silk cloak and hat.

"Ah! sir," said Philip, "here are your things. I would not change places with you again in this world. I should be no gainer by the operation."

"Quick! quick!" cried the prince, and threw the watchman's apparel on the snow, and fastened on his mask, hat, and cloak. Philip returned to his old beaver and coat, and took up the lantern and staff. Rose had shrunk back into the door.

"I promised thee a dole, comrade,— but, it's a positive fact,— I have not got my purse."

"I've got it here," said Philip, and held it out to him. "You gave it to my intended there; but, please your Highness, I must forbid all presents in that quarter."

"Comrade, keep what you've got, and be off as quick as you can. You are not safe here."

The Prince was flying off as he spoke, but Philip held him by the mantle.

"One thing, my Lord, we have to settle —"

"Run! Watchman! I tell you. They're in search of you."

"I have nothing to run for. But your purse, here —"

"Keep it, I tell you. Fly! if you can run."
"And a billet of Marshal Blankenswerd's for five thousand dollars —"

"Ha! What the plague do you know about Marshal Blankenswerd?"

"He said it was a gambling debt he owed you. He and his lady start to-night for their estates in Poland."

"Are you mad? how do you know that? Who gave you the message for me?"

"And, your Highness, the Minister of Finance will pay all your debts to Abraham Levi and others if you will use your influence with the king to keep him in office."

"Watchman! you've been tampering with Old Nick."

"But I rejected the offer."

"You rejected the offer of the Minister?"

"Yes, your Highness. And, moreover, I have entirely reconciled the Baroness Bonau with the Chamberlain Pilzou."

"Which of us two is a fool?"

"Another thing, your Highness,—Signora Rolliina is a bad woman. I have heard of some love affairs of hers. You are deceived, I therefore thought her not worthy of your attentions, and put off the meeting to-night at her house."

"Signora Rolliina! how did you come to hear of her?"

"Another thing,—Duke Herrman is terribly enraged about that business in the cellar. He is going to complain of you to the king."

"The Duke! Who told you about that?"

"Himself. You are not secure yet,—but I don't think he'll go to the king, for I threatened him with his agreement with the baker's daughter. But he wants to fight you; be on your guard."

"Once for all,—do you know how the Duke was informed of all this?"

"Through the Marshal's wife. She told all, and confessed she had acted the witch in the ghost-raising."

The Prince took Philip by the arm. "My good fellow," he said, "you are no watchman." He turned his face towards a lamp, and started when he saw the face of this strange man.

"Are you possessed by Satan, or... Who are you?" said Julian, who had now become quite sober.

"I am Philip Stark, the gardener, son of old Gottlieb Stark, the watchman," said Philip, quietly.

"Lay hold on him! That's the man!" cried many voices, and Philip, Rose, and Julian saw themselves surrounded by six lusty servants of the police. Rose screamed, Philip took her hand, and told her not to be alarmed. The Prince clapped his hand on Philip's shoulder:—

"'Tis a stupid business," he said, "and you should have escaped when I told you. But don't be frightened, there shall no harm befall you."

"That's to be seen," said one of the captors. "In the mean time he must come along with us."

"Where to?" inquired Philip; "I am doing my duty. I am watchman of this beat."

"That's the reason we take you. Come."

The Prince stepped forward. "Let the man go, good people," he said, and searched in all his pockets for his purse. As he found it nowhere, he was going to whisper to Philip to give it him, but the police tore them apart, and one of them shouted,—"On! We can't stop to talk here."

"The masked fellow must go with us, too, he is suspicious looking."

"Not so," exclaimed Philip, "you are in search of the watchman. Here I am, if you choose to answer for taking me from my duty. But let this gentleman go."

"We don't want any lessons from you in our duty," replied the sergeant; "march! all of them!"

"The damsel, too?" asked Philip, "you don't want her surely?"

"No, she may go; but we must see her face, and take down her name and residence, it may be of use."
“She is the daughter of widow Bittner,” said Philip; and was not a little enraged when the whole party took Rose to a lamp, and gazed on her tearful face.

“Go home, Rose, and don’t be alarmed on my account,” said Philip, trying to comfort her, “my conscience is clear.”

But Rose sobbed so as to move even the policemen to pity her. The Prince, availing himself of the opportunity, attempted to spring out of his captor’s hands, but one of the men was a better jumper than he, and put an obstacle in his way.

“Hallo!” cried the sergeant, “this fellow’s conscience is not quite so clear; — hold him firm, — march!”

“Whither?” said the Prince.

“Directly to the Minister of Police.”

“Listen,” said the Prince, seriously but affably, for he did not like the turn affairs were taking, as he was anxious to keep his watchman-frolic concealed.

“I have nothing to do with this business. I belong to the court. If you venture to force me to go with you, you will be sorry for it when you are feasting on bread and water to-morrow in prison.”

“For Heaven’s sake, let the gentleman go,” cried Philip; “I give you my word he is a great lord, and will make you repent your conduct. He is — ”

“Hush; be silent,” interrupted Julian, “tell no human being who I am. Whatever happens, keep my name a secret. Do you hear? an entire secret from every one!”

“We do our duty,” said the sergeant, “and nobody can punish us for that; you may go to a prison yourself; — we have often had fellows speak as high, and threaten as fiercely, — forward!”

“Men! take advice, he is a distinguished man at court.”

“If it were a king himself he should go with us. He is a suspicious character, and we must do our duty.”

While the contest about the Prince went on, a carriage with eight horses, and outriders bearing flambeaux, drove past the church.

“Stop!” said a voice from the carriage, as it was passing the crowd of policemen, who had the Prince in custody.

The carriage stopped. The door flew open, and a gentleman with a brilliant star on the breast of his surcoat, leaped out. He pushed through the party, and examined the Prince from head to foot.

“I thought,” he said, “I knew the bird by his feathers. Mask, who are you?”

Julian was taken by surprise, for in the inquirer he recognized Duke Herrman.

“Answer me,” roared Herrman, in a voice of thunder.

Julian shook his head and made signs to the Duke to desist, but he pressed the question home upon him, being determined to know who it was he had accosted at the masquerade. He asked the policemen. They stood with heads uncovered, and told him they had orders to bring the watchman instantly before the Minister of Police, for he had been singing wicked verses, — they had heard some of them. That the mask had given himself out as some great lord of the court, but that they believed that to be a false pretence, and therefore considered it their duty to take him into custody.

“The man is not of the court,” answered the Duke, “take my word for that. He insinuated himself clandestinely into the ball, and passed himself off for Prince Julian. I forced him to unmask, and detected the impostor, but he escaped me. I have informed the Lord Chamberlain, — off with him to the palace! You have made a fine prize!”

With these words the Duke strode back to his carriage, and once more urging them not to let the villains escape, gave orders to drive on.

The Prince saw no chance left. To reveal himself now would be to make his night’s adventures the talk of the whole city. He thought it better to disclose his incognito to the Chamberlain, or the Minister of Police. “Since it must be so, come on then,” he said; and the party marched forward, keeping a firm hand on the two prisoners.
PHILIP was not sure whether he was bewitched, or whether the whole business was not a dream, for it was a night such as he had never passed before in his life. He had nothing to blame himself for except that he had changed clothes with the Prince, and then, whether he would or no, been forced to support his character. He felt pretty safe, for it was the princely watchman who had been at fault, and he saw no occasion for his being committed. His heart beat, however, when they came to the palace. His coat, horn, and staff were taken from him. Julian spoke a few words to a young nobleman, and immediately the policemen were sent away: the Prince ascended the stairs, and Philip had to follow.

"Fear nothing," said Julian, and left him. Philip was taken to a little ante-room, where he had to wait a good while. At last one of the royal grooms came to him, and said, "Come this way, the king will see you."

Philip was distracted with fear. His knees shook so that he could hardly walk. He was led into a splendid chamber. The old king was sitting at a table, and laughing long and loud; near him stood Prince Julian without a mask. Besides these there was nobody in the room.

The king looked at Philip with a good-humored expression. "Tell me all—without missing a syllable—that you have done to-night."

Philip took courage from the condescension of the old king, and told the whole story from beginning to end. He had the good sense, however, to conceal all he had heard among the courtiers that could turn to the prejudice of the Prince. The king laughed again and again, and at last took two gold pieces from his pocket, and gave them to Philip. "Here, my son, take these, but say not a word of your night's adventures. Await your trial, no harm shall come of it to you. Now go, my friend, and remember what I have told you."

Philip knelt down at the king's feet and kissed his hand, as he stammered some words of thanks. When he arose, and was leaving the room, Prince Julian said, "I beseech your Majesty to allow the young man to wait a few minutes outside. I have some compensation to make to him for the inconvenience he has suffered."

The king, smiling, nodded his assent, and Philip left the apartment.

"Prince!" said the king, holding up his forefinger in a threatening manner to his son, "'tis well for you that you told me nothing but the truth. For this time I must pardon your wild scrape, but if such a thing happens again you will offend me. There will be no excuse for you. I must take Duke Herrman in hand myself. I shall not be sorry if we can get quit of him. As to the ministers of Finance and Police, I must have further proofs of what you say. Go now, and give some present to the gardener. He has shown more discretion in your character than you have in his."

The Prince took leave of the king, and having changed his dress in an ante-room, sent for Philip to go to his palace with him; there he made him go over—word for word—all that had occurred. When Philip had finished his narrative, the Prince clapt him on the shoulder, and said, "Philip, listen! You're a sensible fellow. I can confide in you, and I am satisfied with you. What you have done in my name with the Chamberlain Pilzou, the Countess Bonau, the Marshal and his wife, Colonel Kalt, and the Minister of Finance—I will maintain—as if I had done it myself. But, on the other hand, you must take all the blame of my doings with the horn and staff. As a penalty for your verses, you shall lose your office of watchman. You shall be my head-gardener from this date; and have charge of my two gardens at Heimleben and Quellenthal. The money I gave your bride she shall keep as her marriage portion,—and I give you the order of Marshal Blankenswerd for five thousand dollars, as a mark of my regard. Go, now; be faithful and true!"

Who could be happier than Philip? lie almost flew to Rose's house. She had not yet gone to bed, but sat with her mother be-
side a table, and was weeping. He threw the purse on the table, and said, "Rose, there is thy dowry! and here are five thousand dollars, which are mine! As a watchman I have transgressed, and shall therefore lose my father's situation; but the day after to-morrow I shall go, as head-gardener of Prince Julian, to Heimleben. And you, mother, and Rose, must go with me. My father and mother also. I can support you all. Huzza! — God send all good people such a happy New Year!"

Mother Bittner hardly knew whether to believe Philip or not, notwithstanding she saw the gold. But when he told her how it had all happened — though with some reservations — she wept with joy, embraced him, laid her daughter on his breast, and then danced about the room in a perfect ecstasy. "Do thy father and mother know this, Philip?" she said. And when he answered no, she cried: "Rose, kindle the fire, put over the water, and make some coffee for all of us." She then wrapped herself in her little woollen shawl and left the house.

But Rose lay on Philip's breast, and forgot all about the wood and water. And there she yet lay when Mother Bittner returned with old Gottlieb and Mother Katharine. They surrounded their children and blessed them. Mother Bittner saw if she wanted coffee, she would be obliged to cook it herself.

Philip lost his situation as watchman. Rose became his wife in two weeks, their parents went with them to ——, but this does not belong to the adventures of a New Year's Eve, a night more ruinous to the Minister of Finance than any one else; neither have we heard of any more pranks by the wild Prince Julian.