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An Old Christmas Song.

God rest you, merry gentle folks!
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we had gone astray.
Oh, tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day!

The Little People.

A dreary place would be this earth,
Were there no little people in it;
The song of life would lose its mirth,
Were there no children to begin it;

No little forms, like buds to grow,
And make the admiring heart surrender;
No little hands on breast and brow,
To keep the thrilling love-chords tender.

The sterner souls would grow more stern,
Unfeeling nature more inhuman;
And man to stoic coldness turn,
And woman would be less than woman.

Life's song, indeed, would lose its charm,
Were there no babies to begin it;
A doleful place this world would be,
Were there no little people in it.

Christmas Carols.

The children sung a song this Christmas morning,
Mellow and clear, outside my chamber door,
Waking me softly from my pleasant dreaming
Of unforgotten Christmas Days of yore.

Sweetly they sung, my neighbor's happy children,
Two merry girls and one glad-hearted boy,
Repeating oft their song's rejoicing burden,
"On Christmas morn the angels sing for joy!"

Sweetly they sung; but, ah! their cheerful voices
Broke up my soul's deep founts of hidden woe;
And pressing down my face against the pillow,
I let the bitter torrent overflow.

Missing the little child that warbled softly
Two years ago to-day a song like this,
And when the joyful melody was ended,
Held up her sweet mouth for a Christmas kiss.

Only one Christmas Eve my fair-eyed darling
Lisped of dear Santa Claus her dreams among;
Only one Christmas morn, white-robed and joyful,
Lifted her clear voice in a Christmas song.

I see her little figure standing tiptoe,
To hang her dainty stocking on the wall,
Oh, sinless heart! Oh, perfect faith of childhood,
Believing everything and trusting all!

Peace, aching heart! Oh, let me trust entirely,
With faith and strength that nothing can destroy,
That my sweet baby is among the angels,
Who, on this Christmas morning, sing for joy!

NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL.

A STORY FOR CHRISTMAS.

The good wife of Deacon Gilbert, knew how to keep Christmas, and when Nancy Sykes came in to help bake the pies, she was gladly welcomed.

"I guess it's just as well for you that I didn't come any earlier," replied the strange woman, in the most oracular tone. "I *guess* 'tis;" and Nancy removed the white woolen hood and warm striped shawl, and then, with arms akimbo, surveyed the field. "Well, now, what do you want done first—them front chambers attended to, or them pies put together? It don't make no kind of difference to me what I start at."

"I think you had better take hold of the pies first. But, Nancy, what do you mean by saying that you guess it is as well for us that you didn't come any earlier? You have worried me dreadfully." And the lines came into Mrs. Gilbert's face, plainly showing what an easy matter it would be to furrow the still young-looking countenance, were affliction to walk into her family.

"Law!" replied Nancy, "don't mind me. The fact is, I hain't been minding my own business this morning, by no means. If I had been, I should a got here by eight o'clock certain. Where's Molly?"

"She's in the keeping-room, sewing on her dress. I haven't laid eyes on her since breakfast. She's trying to get the dress done for to-morrow."

Nancy opened the door and walked straight into the general sitting-room, where Mrs. Gilbert assumed that her daughter was.

"I don't see nothing of her," said Nancy, with a strange click in her voice, which the fond mother noticed in an instant.

"Then she must be upstairs. What do you want of her, Nancy?"

"Call her now, and see if she answers you," persisted the spooky-looking woman.

"But, Nancy, if you know where she is, why don't you tell me, and not frighten me to death in this way?"

"Wal, if you must know, you must; but after I've told you, don't blame me. Your daughter has been down in the deacon's shed, on the salt marsh, all the morning, with a strange feller!"

"Strange feller!" repeated Mrs. Gilbert, in tones of the deepest distress.

"Strange feller?" roared the deacon, who had come upon them unawares.

"Great guns! Deacon Gilbert, how you scared me!" said Nancy, jumping half way across the room.

"What does all this mean?" inquired the paternal parent, in the greatest anxiety.

"The Lord knows!" answered *materfamilias* trembling from head to foot "Nancy, how did you come to know that it was our Molly, on the marsh?"

"How do I come to know that I am talking to Deacon Gilbert and his wife?" answered Nancy, with true philosophy. "Principally, because I've knowed you for some time, and couldn't very well be mistaken. You see, I was straighening things up to home, previous to leaving for my day's work, when, who should I see but Molly, with her red hood and black and white shawl, running across the meadow as fast as she could leg it. Just afore that, I heard the car-whistle, and, by George! it a feller—a tall, straight, black-haired strange feller—didn't hop over Squire Pearce's fence, for all the world just as if he was acquainted, and in a minute I'll be frittered if they didn't run together and kiss each other. You needn't shake your heads now; I tell you I seed it with these eyes—and they never lied to me yet. But the worst is to come."

"Oh, Nancy!" groaned Mrs. Gilbert.

"Oh, Nancy!" echoed the deacon.

"After they had stood a minute, and looked at each other, that feller just grabbed Molly in his arms, for all the world as if she had been a bag of feathers, and run with her into the shed. There, now, you have got as much as I know."

Just then the front door, at the extremity of the long country hall, softly opened, and a young girl, apparently about eighteen, noiselessly entered.

"There, what did I tell you?" said Nancy, in a sepulchral whisper.

"Go to your work, both of you!" said the deacon; "and don't either of you open your mouths to Molly on this subject till I give the signal. I shall manage this business in my own way."

"Don't be hard with the child, John," whispered the fond mother, her usually bright face suffused with tears.

"Dry your eyes, and go about your work as usual. We can't expect to always get along without trouble, any more than our neighbors."

Poor dear Mrs. Gilbert! Her heart was as heavy as lead. What could be more horrible than the thought of her darling little Molly in the arms of a "strange feller"? There was no way that even her loving, motherly heart could account for the circumstance, save by the admission of great deceit and great wickedness on the part of her daughter.

"Been out neighboring?" inquired the deacon, in tones that he unsuccessfully tried to make commonplace, as the beautiful girl entered, rosy and happy with her brisk morning walk.

"Not exactly neighboring," replied Molly, with a joyous, rippling laugh. "It's most too early in the morning to make calls."

"I am interested, Molly, in everybody's going pretty nigh straight," said the deacon, patting the soft, velvety cheek. "Up to this time, I have never had any trouble with my children. They have always been honest and straightforward—have grown up in the fear of the Lord——"

"I never grew up in the fear of the Lord, father, and I don't believe the rest d.d. If I feared God, I shouldn't care anything about Him," interrupted Molly, her fine eyes aglow with feeling. "'Perfect love casts out all fear,' Deacon John Gilbert; and have you read the Bible all these years, and not found that out?"

"Then, you love the Lord, Molly?" inquired the deacon, his eyes filling in spite of himself.

"Well, I *guess* I love Him," she answered; "and in all my life I never loved as I love this morning."

"The Lord, Molly?"

"Yes, of course the Lord; and you, and ma, and the dear boys—God bless them!—and Sister Belle, and Sue, and their darling babies; and everybody in the whole world, that tormenting old Nancy Sykes included."

Deacon Gilbert laughed—he couldn't help it! but his face clouded again—he couldn't help that either—as he said:

"You would never deceive your father and mother, Molly—never do anything to bring reproach upon the family, would you?"

"Why, father!" replied Molly, in open-eyed astonishment; and then, as if a light had suddenly broken in upon her bewildered brain, stopped short for a moment, with one little finger on her rosy lips, and, while her eyes danced with fire, said in a whisper: "Nance is out there, isn't she?" pointing to the kitchen.

"Yes, she is there," answered the deacon, with a groan.

"I thought as much, and she hasn't been here long, either—the old busybody! I'll be blessed if I love her as much as I thought I did. Now, Deacon John Gilbert, look your daughter Mary square in the face, and speak right straight in meeting, and tell her truly whether she looks as if she had been doing anything that she ought to be ashamed of."

"No, she does not," quickly responded the deacon.

"Well, then, will you trust her till to-morrow—and stop worrying?"

"Yes, I will; but your mother, child—how shall I manage her?"

"Tell her you are satisfied, and if that don't do, then she must fret—that's all. I never in my life have given either of you reason to think so meanly of me as this; I wish Nancy Sykes was walking the streets of New Jerusalem, the old marplot!"

Deacon Gilbert kissed the rosy upturned cheek, and made for the kitchen. Nancy was up to her elbows in pie-crust, while Mrs. Gilbert, looking more forlorn than ever before in her life, threw stick after stick of crackling maple into the huge country oven.

"There, mother," said the deacon, putting his hand affectionately on her shoulder, "don't pile in any more. If you do, you'll have the house on fire, certain. Molly's all right. I've just been talking with her, and I'm sure on't."

"Who was the strange fellow she had down in the marsh?" inquired Mrs. Gilbert, her face lighting up a little.

"Yes, who was he? that's the question," put in Nancy, very much to the deacon's disgust.

"You'll find out soon enough," he replied, trying to be good-natured, and determined upon keeping the fact of his own ignorance to himself.

"I don't believe he knows any more about it than you do, Mrs. Gilbert," put in Nancy. "If you'd a seen what I saw with my own eyes, you wouldn't be so easy hoodwinked. Lord! the blindness of these fathers is something terrible to think on."

"Nancy Sykes, keep to your pies, and mind your own business. I am entirely competent to attend to my own household. When I want any information or advice from you, I'll ask for it," answered the deacon, entirely forgetting what the Bible says about a soft answer turning away wrath, etc.

Molly Gilbert was as gay as a lark all day. She sang over her work, keeping out of Nancy Sykes's way as much as possible; and to tell the truth, she saw very little of her mother. Nancy's influence was potent, and notwithstanding the fact of the deacon's apparent satisfaction, the thought would make Mrs. Gilbert miserable, that Nancy had seen this performance with her own eyes, and that the deacon didn't contradict the story.

"Heavens and earth, Mrs. Gilbert, how can that gal sing?" inquired Nancy, at least half a dozen times that day, as Molly's bird-like tones resounded through the old kitchen; and the miserable mother replied that she was sure she couldn't tell.

Christmas dawned, clear and cold. Long before daylight the inmates of the Gilbert mansion were astir—Nancy having remained over in order to be on hand early in the morning. The first train was to bring the sons and daughters, and their little ones, home. A magnificent breakfast was prepared, and at the appointed time they came trooping in. Such shouting and laughing, such capering, such yells of enthusiastic delight, never were heard in one house—never!

"All here but Tom!" said Mrs. Gilbert, with a sigh.

Tom was the youngest son, and hadn't been home for a year.

"Will he be here by the next train, ma?" they all shouted, in chorus; and the mother tried to appear like her old self. The event of yesterday still weighed heavily on her mind, and the children all noticed that something was the matter.

Suddenly the strains of music were heard in the front yard.

"Oh! come hear, grandma! and see this poor old hand-organ man, and this little girl playing the tambourine," said Minnie, the oldest grandchild. And in a moment every member of the household stood by the window, listening to the entrancing strains of "Yankee Doodle."

"I'll bet five cents them two ragmuffins will be asked in to breakfast!" said Nancy to herself, with a shake of her funny head.

Sure enough, after a few tunes had been played, the deacon proceeded to the yard, and formally invited the musicians to the kitchen. They were immediately surrounded by a gay group. Every imaginable question was asked them! but they were so unmistakably foreign, that not the least satisfaction could be derived.

"Let 'em eat their breakfast!" said the deacon in a tone of authority. Some way, Mrs. Gilbert acted very strangely. She seemed unable to take her eyes from the old man, apparently so busy with his bacon and eggs that he had no thoughts of his surroundings. Every moment brought her a step or two nearer, and by-and-by everybody was astonished at seeing the lady draw a chair to the side of the hungry man, then, after one sharp glance, tear off the false whiskers which had consisted his chief disguise, and with one yell of "Tom! Tom!" fell into a pair of outstretched arms. The little tambourine-player jumped nearly to the ceiling, and removed her mask and false frizzy hair, threw them squarely into Nancy Sykes's face, who stood the picture of open-mouthed wonder.

"That's the strange fellow, you old tattling busybody! My own brother. See that you don't forget to watch the shed on the marshafter this. Nancy Sykes, I want to love everybody; but I am free to confess that I haven't the slightest hankering in the world for you."

One whole day Tom Gilbert had remained at a neighbor's house, just for the sake of getting up this bit of fun, which Nancy Sykes had almost interrupted.

A mother's love was first to pierce the disguise, but a father's faith in the integrity of his child was this time the most powerful.

Dangerous Fooling.

Croton oil is dangerous thing to trifle with. So thinks the proprietor of the Milwaukee House at Manistee, Michigan. This gentleman desired to give an oyster supper to a few friends, and so the guests were invited and the oysters put upon the fire to be stewed. Now a certain lady in the house wished to play a joke upon the company, and so she sent to the drug store for a quantity of croton oil. Being furnished with a quarter of an ounce, she instructed the servant girl to mix it with the oysters. Meanwhile the company, while waiting for the oysters, were having a right merry time of it. At last the oysters were brought on, in which the croton oil had been mingled. In obedience to the injunction to "take it hot," a large amount of the "beverage" was quickly swallowed. The effect was magical. It was a moving scene that followed. The celebrated "Retreat of the Ten Thousand," which has been the standard on retrograde movements for more than two thousand years, or Bonaparte's retreat from Moscow could bear no comparison to the movement to the rear that immediately ensued. The party had "struck ile" in paying quantities. But it was at once evident that all who had partaken were in imminent danger of death, and prompt medical aid alone prevented a fatal termination. The consternation of the perpetrators of this malicious joke can be imagined, and it is even greater, now that legal proceedings are threatened by the injured parties.

The Newfoundland Fishermen.

The fisherman's first care, at the close of the fishing season, is to deliver his fish to the merchant, or "planter," who has advanced him supplies. The middle man, who stands between the merchant and fisherman, is absurdly enough called a "planter" here, though he has nothing whatever to do with the cultivation of the soil. The name has probably clung to this class since the time when all colonies were called "plantations," and all leading men in them were called "planters." The fisherman loads a small coaster with the dried codfish, and in this craft it is delivered at the wharf of the merchant in St. John's, or elsewhere. It is first sorted into three qualities—"merchantable," "Madeira" and "dun;" and then packed in huge heaps in the merchant's stores to await exportation.

The fisherman now gets his account, and if a balance remains after paying for the supplies advanced to him, he purchases his Winter's stock of flour, pork, biscuit, molasses and tea. Should the season be bad and his catch small he finds himself in debt, and unless the merchant gives him enough to subsist on during the Winter on credit, he and his family are left in a starving condition to struggle through the long Winter as they can. The bulk of the fishermen get all their supplies on credit, and of course have to pay from 50 to 70 per cent. above cash prices. This is the great curse of the poor men—this credit system. It keeps them constantly in debt, and poor; it undermines their industry, for how can men be expected to work heartily to pay off old scores; it tempts them to extravagance and dishonesty.

A CHEAP CHURN POWER.—A stranger inquired of the Farmer's Club for information as to the best and cheapest power for churning where a small dairy is kept. A wind-mill, he said, was too costly, and a dog-power is usually too expensive at the prices asked, and it is too expensive to keep a large dog just to do the churning. S. E. Tood, said the most economical power for a small dairy is a large horizontal wheel, built like an old-fashioned dog-power, driven by a large sheep. (Sneers and laughter.) Why, Mr. Chairman, this is nothing new. I have in mind a great many dairy men who keep a large sheep tethered in the door yard, or in the lawn, for no other purpose than to drive the churn. The animal never runs away like a dog; it is always fat, ready for the slaughter-house, and it yields a large fleece of wool; so that, instead of being a nuisance or an expense, like a dog, the churn power is a source of satisfactory revenue.

What Becomes of the Boys?

The streets are full of them—a howling, yelling, dirty, disagreeable crew, ringing at doorbells and running away again, shrieking into open windows, rattling blinds, startling horses, smoking cigar-ends, delivered over to all manner of unseemliness and indecorum. To hear brief snatches of their conversation in passing (says the Boston *Transcript*), one would consider that at the tender age of seven or thereabouts they were all fit for the blackest crimes, and ripe for the gallows. The police reports mention a boy arrested here and there, and the institutions for young offenders are never, we believe, suspended for the want of patronage; but their returns do not account for a hundredth part of the horde of boys that are suddenly summoned to the scene by any excitement. More boys turned up one day recently, at a moment's notice, to give chase to an unfortunate pig who found himself by some accident in the street, than could have been accommodated in all the State institutions. On this occasion, we are happy to say, the boys were routed, for the pig turned upon them with a severe aspect, and they fled. It was a very big pig.

Assuming, therefore, that a small proportion of the boys that infest the streets are suppressed by the beneficient action of a wise government, the question is what becomes of the rest? How do they pass the interval before emerging, as they must—for these must be the same individuals, at an advanced age—into the full-grown man who pass decorously along the streets, fulfill every duty of society, and at proper periods conscientiously cast their votes for the wrong candidate? Does it comes upon them suddenly to stop howling and whistling and butting up against people? Does a *gamin*, in a single night, cast off his gaminity, and rise the next morning ready and able to touch his hat to a lady, to step aside for her to pass, to ignore runaway pigs, and give over tearing down posters, and to assume the general good manners which characterize, as a whole, the grown-up population of our streets?

"Boys will be boys." It is evident, however, that at some period they may cease to be boys, and at some further advanced period they begin to be men. Few have actually seen the tadpole casting off its attributes and putting on those of the frog. As we never hear of horrible cataclysms by which the whole race of boys has perished by its own depravity, and as on the other hand there always seem to be plenty of men, intelligent, well informed, decorous, and dignified, to carry on the machinery of society, we must infer that some process of purification and enlightenment goes on in darkness and secrecy. Nothing but this conviction, in face of the lack of manners of the typical street-boy, can give us any hope for the race.

They Read But Don't Pay.

"It not unfrequently occurs, when persons are asked if they will subscribe for a local newspaper, or if they already take it, that they reply—'No, but neighbor B. takes it, and *I have the reading of it every week.*' They are *benefitted every week* by the toils, perplexities, and expenditures of those who receive nothing from them in return."

The above truth, clipped from an exchange, should be copied and re-copied in every country paper, until the trouble is abated. The publisher of a newspaper, depending, as he does in a measure, upon his subscription list for support, naturally expects each family who desire to read his paper to subscribe for it if they can afford it. Subscribers themselves, as well as publishers, find the newspaper borrower a first-class nuisance, for he often borrows it as the owner is about to read it, retains it at certain times when he misses it, and too often, if he returns it at all, the paper is in such a condition that no one of nice sensibilities would care to read it. We would suggest that in towns where the nuisance has become intolerable, the publisher print, when requested, or stamp in large letters above the heading, "Subscribers not permitted to lend this paper," or, "This edition not for borrowers." The idea would take with subscribers, and prove a gentle hint to the meanest of all misery-makers.—*Advertisers' Gazette.*

SUPERSTITION.—The following story is reported from a village near Ilchester, in Somerset, England: A well-to-do farmer, who has always borne the reputation of a shrewd man of business, a few weeks since had the misfortune to find a strange fatality among his heard of cows. A veterinary surgeon was called in, and every precaution taken, and the remainder of the herd were in a fair way to recover, when suddenly the farmer became suspicious, and insisted that he and his cows had been "overlooked," and immediately sought out a "wise woman" residing in an adjacent town. Acting upon the advice of the old hag, the farmer returned home, and shortly encircled with a faggot the last bullock that died, ignited the pile, and burnt the carcase, an incantation being pronounced over the burning beast. The remainder of the herd recovered, and their recovery is of course attributed by the farmer and his simple-minded neighbors, not to the skill of the veterinary surgeon, but to the success of the wierd ceremonial prescribed by the fortune-teller.

BEE-KEEPERS' CONVENTION.—In the Convention of the North American Bee-Keepers' Association, Mr. Hosmer, of Jaynesville, Minnesota, made the following challenge: He has 118 stocks of bees, and offers to sell 108 stocks at $15 per stock, on condition that if he fails to obtain 10,000 pounds of honey from the remaining ten stocks during the season of 1872 he forfeits the price of the 108 stocks he proposes to sell. A resolution was adopted recommending the appointment of an apiarian professor in each agricultural college on the continent. The convention adjourned to meet in Indianapolis on the first Wednesday in December, 1872.

WHO but one that had been there could have given expression to this scandalous bit of realistic cynicism? "Now is the time to rally to the festive donation party. A donation party is a cheerful gathering, where a poor clergyman's flock overwhelm him with dead watch-pockets and eat up about $112 worth of his Winter provisions."

Under the Mistletoe.

Dickens, in Pickwick Papers, gives us a most interesting description of a Christmas scene. What reader can take in the story as told below, without a cheer of enthusiam over Christmas and its joys. Says the author:

From the centre of the ceiling of the kitchen, old Wardle had just suspended, with his own hands, a huge branch of mistletoe, and this same branch of mistletoe instantaneously gave rise to a scene of general and most delightful struggling and confusion; in the midst of which, Mr. Pickwick, with a gallantry that would have done honor to a descendant of Lady Tollimglower herself, took the old lady by the hand, led her beneath the mystic branch, and saluted her in all courtesy and decorum. The old lady submitted to this piece of practical politeness with all the dignity which befitted so important and serious a solemnity, but the younger ladies, not being so thoroughly imbued with a superstitious veneration for the custom; or imagining that the value of a salute is very much enhanced if it cost a little trouble to obtain it; screamed and struggled, and ran into corners, and threatened and remonstrated, and did everything but leave the room, until some of the less adventurous gentlemen were on the point of desisting, when they all at once found it useless to resist any longer, and submitted to be kissed with a good grace. Mr. Winkle kissed the young lady with the black eyes, and Mr. Snodgrass kissed Emily, and Mr. Weller, not being particular about the form of being under the mistletoe, kissed Emma and the other female servants, just as he caught them. As to the poor relations, they kissed everybody, not excepting the plainer portions of the young-lady visitors, who, in their excessive confusion, ran right under the mistletoe, as soon as it was hung up, without knowing it; Wardle stood with his back to the fire, surveying the whole scene, with the utmost satisfaction; and the fat boy took the opportunity of appropriating to his own use, and summarily devouring, a particularly fine mince-pie, that had been carefully put by, for somebody else.

Now, the screaming had subdued, and faces were in a glow, and curls in a tangle, and Mr. Pickwick, after kissing the old lady as before mentioned, was standing under the mistletoe, looking with a very pleased countenance on all that was passing around him, when the young lady with the black eyes, after a little whispering with the other young ladies, made a sudden dart forward, and putting her arm round Mr. Pickwick's neck, saluted him affectionately on the left cheek; and before Mr. Pickwick distinctly knew what was the matter, he was surrounded by the whole body, and kissed by every one of them.

It was a pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick in the centre of the group, now pulled this way, and then that, and first kissed on the chin, and then on the nose, and then on the spectacles; and to hear the peals of laughter which were raised on every side; but it was a still more pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick, blinded shortly afterwards with a silk handkerchief, falling up against the wall, and scrambling into corners, and going through all the mysteries of blind-mans' buff, with the utmost relish for the game, until at last he caught one of the poor relations, and then had to evade the blind-man himself, which he did with a nimbleness and agility that elicited the admiration and applause of all beholders. The poor relations caught the people who they thought would like it, and when the game flagged, got caught themselves. When they were all tired of blind-man's buff, there was a great game at snap-dragon, and when fingers enough were burned with that, and all the raisins were gone, they sat down by the huge fire of blazing logs to a substantial supper, and a mighty bowl of wassail, something smaller than an ordinary wash-house copper, in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look, and a jolly sound that were perfectly irrestible.

"This," said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him, "this is, indeed, comfort."

"Our invariable custom," replied Mr. Wardle. "Everybody sits down with us on Christmas eve, as you see them now—servants and all; and here we wait, until the clock strikes twelve, to usher Christmas in, and beguile the time with forfeits and old stories. Trundle, my boy, rake up the fire."

Up flew the bright sparks in myriads as the logs were stirred. The deep red blaze sent forth a rich glow, that penetrated into the furthest corners of the room, and cast its cheerful tint on every face.

WHO IS OLD.—A wise man will never rust out. As long as he can move or breathe he will be doing for himself, for his neighbor, or for posterity. Almost to the last hour of his life, Washington was at work; so were Young and Howard and Newton. The vigor of their lives never decayed. No rust marred their spirits. It is a foolish idea to suppose that we must lie down and die because we are old. Who is old? Not the man of energy, not the day laborer in science, art, or benevolence; but he only who suffers his energies to waste away, and the springs of life to become motionless; on whose hands the hours drag heavily, and to whom all things wear the garb of gloom. Is he old, should not be asked; but is he active?—can he breathe freely and move with agility? There are scores of gray-headed men we should prefer, in any important enterprise, to those young men who fear and tremble at approaching shadows, and turn pale at a lion in their path, at a harsh word or a frown.

A GOOD IDEA.—The heathen Chinee has one custom which might be introduced into other lands with good effect. It is usual to pay all debts at the commencement of each year, and as soon after the first of January as a householder is free from all demands he places over his door an emblem signifying that he has arrived at that exalted position; there is a commendable pride to put up this cabalistic at a very early day. This custom prevails throughout the Chinese Empire and among all classes of people, and he who posts the emblem the first week of the year, enjoys the confidence of the public, and establishes a good financial standing.

Tell not your secrets to your servant, for he will then be your master.

A Silk Reel.

At a recent fair in San Francisco, a small space in one of the galleries of the pavilion was devoted to silk, and this was occupied by a reel, the office of which was to unwind the fibres from the cocoons. This was of much interest, and while at work was the center of an admiring group of spectators. The cocoons, which look like large peanuts, are put into a vessel of boiling water, which stands in a small furnace, the furnace itself being set below or rather in front of a small table on a level with the operator as she sat in a low chair. The action of the hot water in a few minutes loosened the gum, that in their natural condition cements the fibres to be cocoon. This done, the girl, taking the brush in one hand, stirred the cocoons about with it until the requisite number of fibres were detached at their ends, and clinging to the brush. From this they were quickly brought together to form a thread, passed through a fixed guide or staple at the opposite edge of the table, from this through a staple on a reciprocating bar, and thence to the reel, which was revolved by the hand of a small boy. A second thread was formed in like manner, and in the same way connected with the reel.

As the reel revolved, the fibres were drawn or unwound from the cocoons, which danced about in the boiling water, united in the two threads, and conducted to the reel upon which they were distributed by the vibratory movement of the bar previously mentioned. The two threads, in passing to the reel, were made to cross each other at an angle of about twenty degrees. This was the distinguishing characteristic of the new invention, and the advantage claimed for it is that the two threads, in rubbing upon each other as they pass to the reel, cause the gum to strike the fibres more closely together and consequently secure a smoother and finer thread. After certain lengths of the thread were wound upon the reel its motion was stopped, the threads were severed from it, and the two skeins of raw silk, bright-yellow or lighter colored according to the original tinge of the cocoons, were slipped from its ends. The peculiar skill required from the attendant is shown in keeping the threads continuous as the fibres wind off and leave the cocoons, it being necessary to add the fibre from a new cocoon at the instant the fibre from the previous one is exhausted. The fibres are of course too fine to be seen at the distance of more than a very few inches, and while the operator was attending to her work it seemed as if her fingers were flying in the weaving of an invisible web.

Ball Dresses.

White tulle dresses are the favorite ball attire this season, says a New York fashion journal. These thin fabrics have regular trained skirts and tunic. The lower skirt is from sixty-five to seventy inches long behind, and about five yards wide. The foundation of this skirt is white taffeta silk, and the tulle garniture covers it completely. Two such dresses, prepared for the Duke's ball at the Academy of Music, are worthy of description. The first, made for a Russian lady of distinction, has a wide fringed silk flounce underneath each of the pleated tulle flounces; a silk ruche covered with tulle is the heading for each flounce. The tulle over-skirt is caught up with sprays of acacia blossoms, and the bertha is tulle folds and a fringe of acacias. The second, similarly made, is entirely without flowers, and is draped with many small bows of white faille simply fringed on the edges. The sash is not ribbon, but is three-quarters of a width of silk, the edges fringed slightly, and draped to fall on each side. Some beautiful French dresses, imported for balls, are of tulle, faille, and crape combined. The short skirt usually white, is formed of alternate ruffles of pleated tulle and scantily gathered crape. The train, is of faille, bordered with ruffles of the same, trimmed with crape and tulle folds. Sevres blue, pale rose, and flesh-colored trains are shown. The low round corsage is of faille, with a pleated tulle bertha.

The South American Plague.

The plague which recently destroyed 60,000 of the 180,000 inhabitants of Buenos Ayres, is said to have originated in the following way: Some Paraguayans last year, were found, on landing at Asuncion, to be suffering from yellow fever. Many of the cases proved fatal. The foul state of the city, and exhausted condition of the Paraguayans after the sufferings of the war, were peculiarly provocative of pestilence, and speedily a fever broke out which the physicians declared to be "bilious itcheroid." Hundreds perished, and thousands fled to the country districts. The disease next spread to Corrientes, and there it made fearful ravages, one-fourth of the inhabitants perishing, including many of the physicians and apothecaries. From Corrientes the malady spread to Buenos Ayres, a filthy city which steamed like a dunghill whenever a hot sun shone out after a shower of rain. So honeycombed is the city with old wells, that it sometimes happens that a lady falls through her parlor floor into an unfilled well under the carpet. The water of the river Plata was so thoroughly poisoned by filth that the dead fish covered the roadstead and river; yet this was the water which the inhabitants of Buenos Ayres had to drink. The air was foul and sickening; the water was corrupted; the earth was reeking with abomination. The plague found the place ripe for the harvest of death. The people contemplate changing to a more healthy site.

COMBUSTION OF COAL DUST.—An enormous amount of coal in the form of dust and small fragments is every year wasted in our coal mines; and although many propositions have been made to utilize it by consolidating it into bricks, it has been found that the expense of this is greater than that attendant upon the extraction of large coal, and consequently the waste has still continued. It has been ascertained, however, that by taking fine coal dust and placing it in a furnace, with the exact quantity of air which is requisite to effect the combustion of the coal, a mass of flame is obtained of the highest temperature, which does its work effectually, and emits no smoke whatever from the chimney. The results promised from this method of using fuel are so striking as almost to render it probable that when dust can not be obtained, the coal itself will be reduced to powder for the purpose before being placed in the furnace.

Facts and Fancies.

Why does a sculptor die the most horriole of deaths? He makes up faces and busts.

Garments of beauty may cover, they can never impart worth to an abandoned character.

Motto for railway directors—Never mind passengers; it's freight that makes the car go.

Epitaph on a blind wood sawyer:—"While none ever saw him see, thousands have seen him saw."

A Boston paper is informed that in some parts of California the people use graps skins to cover umbrellas.

Lent comes so early this year that all the gaities will be very much hurried up after the beginning of the year.

The last method of announcing an engagement is for the happy pair to leave their cards together at all their friends.

Some very elegant mantles have just appeared made of camel's hair and bordered with the fur of the silver fox or of sable.

A lady in Quebec was so afflicted at the sudden death of her husband that she wept herself perfectly blind in two weeks thereafter.

A Louisiana engineer was acquited of neglect in running over a man, because "the grass on the track grew so high as to obscure the person."

Parton is ungracious enough to remark that many American ladies, were they sentenced to be hanged to-morrow, would ask as their first question, "Have I a hanging dress?"

Of Roman Catholic bishops there are in the United States 126; of priests, 3,871; of churches, 4,259; of chapels and stations, 1,700. The membership is variously estimated at from 2,500,000 to 5,500,000.

A young lady was recently sent by express from California to Maryland. The messenger who had her in charge was so pleased with his freight that he offered to carry it back and forth all the time at his own expense.

A gentleman of New York, recently went to Europe for the purpose of being married to an American lady residing with her parents in Dresden, but on his arrival was informed that she had eloped the week before with a Polish Count.

A suicidal Iowan called on the druggist for arsenic, went home and was soon in the agonies of dissolution before the family. Conceive his disappointment when the apothecary dropped in and told him that the deadly potion was chalk.

The Philadelphia *Press* of the 1st instant says: "It is stated on good authority that one of our greatest Philadelphia manufacturing establishments has entered into a contract to supply the Russian government with five hundred locomotives."

A "poek" on the seasons thus sublimely relieves himself:

December's come, and now the breezes
Howl among the lifdess treeces;
Now the boy with ragged trowses
Shivering homeward drives the cowses;
His boots are old, and torn his clothes is,
And bless my soul, how blue his nose is.

John Thompson, of Milwaukee, had a quarrel with his wife the other day, and, like poor Rip Van Winkle, was driven out of the house. His parting words to his enraged spouse were: "You have banished me from your home, and hereafter I must lead a life of shame or perish."

Dr. Brown courted a lady unsuccessfully for many years, during which time he every day drank her health; but, being observed at last to omit the custom, a gentleman said—"Come doctor, your old toast." "Excuse me, "as I cannot make her Brown, I'll toast her no longer."

A Baby Convict.

A correspondent writing from the Indiana Northern prison, tells the annexed incident: While we were sitting in the office of this prison this morning, a large, stout man entered with a small cadaverous little boy, rigidly handcuffed, and presented him to the warden as a new convict. Even to the officials of the prison the sight was more than disgusting. The poor little consumptive-eyed child stood with his hands pinioned together as if he was scared nearly out of his wits, and before the matter of his commitment was made known the clerk exclaimed: "My Lord! sir, what do you want done with that little boy!" Of course, the officer who brought him was only performing an official duty, and we cannot blame him, but when a little boy only eleven years of age is sent up to a place like this, for petit larceny, and that, too, from the capital of the State, where you have an orphan asylum and a Young Men's Christian Association, and many other professedly redeeming societies, even the humanity of this prison-house turns pale before such a scene. The handcuffs were at once taken off the poor little fatherless child, and the kind-hearted warden said to him: "Come, bub, come along with me." The little fellow started to follow, while his eyes filled with tears, and the great door of the prison, in a moment hid him from our sight.

SOUTHERN ENTERPRISE.—A southern newspaper says that the immense Tredgar Iron Works at Richmond, Va., are in a more flourishing condition than at any time since their establishment. They cover eight acres, employ thirteen hundred men, and have to be kept in operation day and night to supply the orders which are pouring in from all parts of the country. In the manufacture of coal freight-cars they do the heaviest business in the United States. Only a few days ago the company received an order for a thousand cars for the Midland and Oswego R.R. of New York; fifty for the Dutchess and Columbia Railroad, in the same state; one hundred and fifty for the Cheaspeake and Ohio Railroad, and other smaller orders, from twenty-five to one hundred, amounting in the aggregate to between two and three thousand. The stock of the company is owned chiefly by citizens of Richmond. One million of dollars capital is employed.

A MOTION for a new trial in the Medlicott case, at Lawrence, Kansas, was overruled. The prisoner, Dr. Medlicott, was thereupon sentenced to be hanged on the 26th of January.

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