

A CHRISTMAS TOBOGGAN

By MANDA L. CROCKER

IN a sheltered cleft on the mountain side where the scraggy pines made polite obeisance to their bare-headed neighbors, the Half-way house had stood, a harbinger of comfort for a score of years.

And now, though the old stage lay rotting in the valley and the traveler thundered along by rail beneath its very foundations, the friendly gables seemed beckoning to imaginary guests.

To-night, too, the pine branches crackled merrily on the wide hearth, as if the snubs of a progressive public were not worth minding, lighting up the long, low room in the gloaming of the Christmas Eve.

Two women conversed in tender monotone in the cheery illumination, and the elder was saying: "The paper cannot be found and, of course, the property goes to your Uncle Hermon."

The other rose wearily from her place before the fire and stood leaning her head against the black old-fashioned mantel.

"Then uncle really intends taking our home away from us?" she said, interrogatively, looking down into the patient mother face.

"Certainly, my daughter," came the reply in cheerful resignation, "and he expects to take possession soon, too. But your father always made much of the Christmas time and, for his sake, we will keep the day gladly, you know."

"Yes, I know," and the girl turned away toward the next room, tucking up her sleeves with little gingerly thrusts as she went.

The brace of partridges Brother Ned had snared the day before made a pretty picture as they waited, plump and round, for the last turn of the skewer. After they were ready for the morrow's roasting the tall, queenly girl went over to the open doorway a moment to contemplate the picturesque landscape she had loved all her life.

"Even the scrubby oaks are restful up here," she mused, "and I don't see



"Who Cares for His Charity?"

how I am to bring myself to be turned out like a beggar!"

Making a sudden dash at her eyes with her handkerchief, she resumed: "Of course, if mother is bent on having a sunny Christmas in the face of it all, why, I won't be shadowy."

Hearing a cheery whistle outside she continued: "Ned doesn't care about it—boys don't. O yes" (correcting the uncharitable thought), "he does care, but not as I do."

The mother rocked to and fro before the fragrant blaze, humming an old refrain. The dusk gathered gloomily in the corners of the room while the dancing light glinted along the smoky rafters as if eager to dispel all thought of loneliness.

Mrs. Cameron glanced upward. In the years gone, when the rafters were not so smoky and the dear old rooms not so dingy as now, the Half-way house was the social hub of the mountain side. But now—

A sturdy lad of 12 years came bustling in with his arms full of holly and his pockets full of mail.

"The road down to the village is as smooth as glass," he said, brushing the snowflakes from his clothes on to the bright hearth. "Horses will have to be sharp shod to make the slide tomorrow, I know."

Handing some letters to his mother, he began to plan for a "jolly good time" the next day, while he separated the sprays of the glossy evergreen.

Attracted by his festive manner, his sister volunteered to help, and fell to sorting the crimson clusters for decorating the table and brightening up the rooms on the morrow.

"Of course he can't care much," she whispered, rebelliously, watching the satisfaction shining on the boyish face.

"We'll have popcorn and chestnuts,

Hermon never meant that I

cried Ned, "Everything," repeated "AVE" "*****" "Putting the precious document away

bitterly, "and then by and by" "carefully, she went downstairs with a

nothing." "queer little smile triumphant on her

patient face.

The physician and Hermon's family

had arrived and the wife was saying:

"We went right on tobogganing down

to the uneven road at the lower turning.

Then the cutter went to pieces

against a tree and we were upset, but

not hurt."

She ended with a hysterical laugh,

as she looked toward the white-faced

husband.

"Stunned a considerable, bruised a

bit, but fairly ready for his Christmas

dinner," said the doctor as he took his

leave.

In the kitchen Edith surveyed the

brace of partridges and wondered if

there was "enough to go round." But

while she cogitated the Fultons came

in with a bountiful dinner.

"We planned for company," laughed

jolly Mrs. Fulton, "and we're bound to

have it, even if we meet them half-

way." And soon the Christmas cheer

filled the lonely old rooms.

In the midst of the merry Christmas

dinner Prudence Cameron looked

at the

document

and

thought

of

the

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of

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and

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uncle

Hermon.

"It's a veritable toboggan," ex-

claimed Hermon Cameron's wife as

the fine team cantered up the treacher-

ous "slide." "Really I am afraid of

an accident."

"Fudge, Mrs. Faintheart; what can

happen?" laughed her husband, gayly,

as he cracked his whip over the sleek

bays.

Truly, it did not seem possible for

anything to happen out of harmony

with the lovely holiday. Nevertheless,

a few minutes later the serenity of

the day was all broken up for the

Camersons. Frightened at something

by the roadside, the horses became

unmanageable and, in a twinkling,

becoming detached from the sleigh,

ran wildly around the upper turning,

throwing Mr. Cameron heavily to the

ground.

The impetus of the accident sent the

vehicle spinning down the glassy in-

cline, its occupants perfectly helpless

to stay their mad flight.

The Fultons, startled to see a run-

away team dash into their grounds,

ran out to recognize it as that of their

friend, Cameron, and in a short time

they were bending solicitously over

the unlucky man who, prone on the

Christmas snow, was moaning uncon-

sciously.

"We will take him up to the wid-

ow's," said Mr. Fulton, glancing in the

direction of the friendly gables, "while

you go for the doctor," addressing his

son, "and then we will look for the

rest of them."

Prudence Cameron prepared a couch

for her unfortunate brother-in-law,

with a queer sensation tugging at her

heartstrings. He had meant to stop,

but not in this manner. Surely there

was a Providence in it.

"Here are some papers we picked

up," said Mr. Fulton, laying a roll in

the widow's hand. "They must belong

to him. Examine them and see. I

haven't my glasses with me."

In her own room Mrs. Cameron

looked the papers over. "Of course

they're his," she mused, unrolling the

grimy outer wrapper. Unfolding the

inside paper she read: "I hereby give

and bequeath the Half-way house to

my sister-in-law, Prudence Cameron,

and—"

She read no further. Down at the

bottom of the instrument was the

peculiar chirography of her injured brother-

in-law.

"It was never lost!" she exclaimed,

and

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The Prince of Peace

At His Name Every Knee Shall Bow and Every Tongue Confess

EVERY country of earth offers an apotheosis in the person of some great man who distinguished himself in some great crisis in its affairs. Switzerland idolizes William Tell, Russia her Peter the Great, Prussia her Frederick the Great, France her Napoleon, Italy her Garibaldi, England her Alfred the Great and the United States her Washington.

It is food for reflection that in the selections of heroes and in hero worship it is an invariable rule, not a single exception being known in all history, that choice is made of one who has crowned his life with deeds done in battle. By and through the flash of the sword alone has immortality of fame been won by mortals.

The scimitar of Mohammed and not his Koran conquered Arabia, Armenia and the Balkans. Moses was a law-giver, but he also was a mighty warrior and led his followers on from one victory to another. It is he and Joshua and David and John Hyrcanus, all 'atrepid soldiers, who have made glorious the history of the Jewish people. The history of Mohammedanism is written in blood and Omar and Saladin stand out prominent in its records. So with other nations. Deeds, deeds only, and these calling for great holocausts of human lives, to make imperishable some individual name.

Christmas day offers an anomaly, however, in the history of men who have lived and wrought wonders. The Christ was a man of peace, deploring war. What is yet more strange, He is glorified through His words and not through His deeds. The Heavenly voice said to the simple shepherd on the plains of Bethlehem: "Behold! I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all the people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." And the accompanying choir with ineffable melody sang the refrain: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace."

The Christ-birth and the Christ-life stand forth the opposite of all other great lives that have filled pages in earth's history. Born of humble parentage in a stable, amid the lowing of kine and the raucous complaining of discontented cattle, reared in the far-away bleak hills of Galilee, engaged daily in sawing logs into boards, or planing the latter into smoothness, He steps forth suddenly, at the age of 28, as a teacher of righteousness. Not among strangers, but in the midst of His own people, He appeared, and they were astounded at the profundity of His knowledge. As though to persuade themselves that they were not mistaken as to His identity, they asked of one another: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

His life work was brief, but four short years! Compare this with the years spent by other illuminati of earth in perpetuating their fame. Without use of money, or influence, or numbers, and without courting favor

of the rich and powerful, He went about from town to town preaching His gospel of peace and love. Those who gathered to Him were poor men—fishermen, publicans, small farmers or herdsmen, rather.

The waters of the sea of Judea were but little stirred by His presence. So little was His presence felt that no contemporaneous historian of His time, outside of His immediate followers, makes any reference to His life or His works. Josephus, a voluminous and very just historian, ignores Him utterly. No record has been found at Rome of His death, so little impression did it make upon the mind of Pilate.

True it is that He healed sick men, cleansed lepers, raised the dead and cast out devils. But these were subordinate and incidental only to His life-work, which was that of proclaiming a new gospel—that men should love one another. He made no parade of miracle-working. It was only when the suffering were brought into His presence that He made exercise of His divine power in healing.

He died the most shameful, disgraceful death known to His generation. In His extremity He was deserted even by His most devoted followers. He trod the wine-press of agony alone.

Yet this Man of Sorrows has conquered the world. Other illustrious men lived out their little day and all that remains of them is the memory of their deeds. They sought to build up material kingdoms; Christ's realm is in the hearts of men. His teachings have survived the overthrow of a thousand kingdoms of earth. His words to-day are as potent to sway men as when they came burning from His lips. All the higher civilization of earth yields Him reverence and homage.

Age but serves to strengthen the might of His power and to confirm the promise of the prophecy: "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess."

WILLIAM ROSSER COBBE.

HIS CHRISTMAS HOPE.



"Whatcher goin' to git for Christmas?"

"Par promised me a lickin', but I've prayed Santa Claus ter make him fer git it."

POWER OF A SONG.

A Christmas Eve Chorus That Has Become Famous in the History of the World.

Mr. Louis C. Elson in his book on the music of America recalls the tradition of the Marienlied as for centuries it has been sung at two o'clock on Christmas morning in Goldberg, Germany.

It was at the time of the "Black Death," in 1353. One of the greatest pestilences recorded in history had swept over every country in the Old World, claiming its dead by scores of thousands. Men fled in terror from their fellow men, in awful fear of their breath or touch, and for weeks sustained a strange, weird seige in solitude. Neighbor turned against neighbor. Families shut themselves up in their own houses, and denied entrance to all outsiders, and as the pestilence spread, members of the same family turned against one another. In their terrible fear men became like wild beasts, refusing even the cup of cold water and the simplest service through dread of contamination.

So it continued until Christmas eve, when one man in Goldberg, believing himself the only inhabitant of the city left alive, and feeling, perhaps, that life was not worth saving at the cost of such isolation, unbarred his door at dead of night and went forth into the air. Alone he stood in the midst of desolation, but the memories of the past thronged upon him. He knew that it was Christmas, and as he recalled other Christmases, with their sacred joys and their festivity, he lifted up his voice in the song:

"To us this day is born a Child,
God with us!

His mother is a virgin mild,
God with us!
God with us! Against us who dare be?"

Through a barred door came another voice in response to his own, and then the door was flung wide, and a man joined him in the street and sang with him. Together they marched through the town, giving