

CHRISTMAS LIKE IT USED TO BE



CHRISTMAS like it used to be! That's the thing would gladden me. Kith and kin from far and near Joining in the Christmas cheer.

Oh, the laughing girls and boys!
Oh, the feasting and the joys!
Wouldn't it be good to see
Christmas like it used to be?

Christmas like it used to be—
Snow a-bending bush and tree,
Bells a-jingling down the lane;
Cousins John and Jim and Jane,
Sue and Kate and all the rest
Dressed-up in their Sunday best,
Coming to that world of gloe—
Christmas like it used to be.

Christmas like it used to be—
Been a long, long time since we
Wished (when Santa Claus should come),
You a doll and I a drum,
You a book and I a sled,
Strong and swift and painted red;
Oh that day of jubilee!
Christmas like it used to be.

Christmas like it used to be.
It is still as glad and free,
And as fair and full of truth,
To the clearer eyes of youth.
Could we gladly glimpse it through
Eyes our children's children do
In their joy-time we would see
Christmas like it used to be.
—Nixon Waterman, in Elliott's Magazine.

A Christmas Wedding

EVERYBODY knew that old Mrs. Moon was "plumb set" against Tom White. They also knew that Tom was determined to marry Clarissy Moon. The views of Clarissy herself were locked in the breast of that maiden and no one, not even her grandmother, could draw them forth. She listened to the old lady's diatribes against Tom, just as she listened to Tom's ardent wooing and said nothing.

Mrs. Moon, her unmarried daughter and Clarissy lived in a tiny cabin at the foot of the Little Backbone, a very pleasant place in summer, though that season was brief enough in a region which is described by its denizens as having "nine months winter and three months cool weather" each year. In winter the cabin was not a pleasant place of abode. Not only did the snow drift high about it, but the playful winds entered through the crevices which Mrs. Moon was always intending to have filled up and never did. It was lonely in winter, too; not even the most persistent suitor could find his way to it frequently when the trail was obliterated by snow drifts and when night came early and suddenly, too, in the shade of the mountains.

Clarissy was thinking of these things, as she stood at the cabin door one afternoon in the middle of December. It was rather a cool place for meditations, but her Aunt Phoebe was on what her mother was wont to call a "high," and any place was preferable to her immediate vicinity at such a time. Aunt Phoebe's temper, never very sweet, had ill withstood the strain of prolonged spinsterhood, and she vented her maidenly disappointment on the nearest objects, her mother and Clarissy, who were quite innocent in the matter.

"Seems if I ain't please her, no-how," Clarissy was saying to herself. "I can't bear that air bothersome Tom White, but he's better'n what she is, anyhow. Sposn' I was t' give him er sign t' come 'n' talk t' me er-while!" As she hesitated she heard Aunt Phoebe's shrill tones still raised to danger pitch in the cabin. Drawing off the red handkerchief which was knotted coquettishly about her dark hair, she ran down the path and drawing down a branch of the young oak which stood alone, she deftly tied the streamer to it. The handkerchief was Tom's gift and he had begged her to use it as a signal whenever she desired his company. It was the first time she had made use of it, and as she tied it she was assuring herself that she "didn't care er mite fer that great, awkward fellow," but, in spite of that fact, her cheeks rivalled the handkerchief in color. Yielding to a sudden impulse she scurried into the cabin regardless of Aunt Phoebe's tongue.

"I'll peek out'n the window an' watch fer him," she thought, "an' I'll let him cool his heels a bit waitin', before I go out. Anyhow, I ain't promised nothing by tying that handkerchief up there."

Clarissy had the sharp ears of the mountaineer and soon she heard steps coming along the trail and finally into the clearing, but she never moved, save to see that her grandmother was dozing in the chimney corner and Aunt Phoebe absorbed with her quilt

pieces. The latter had passed from the active to the passive stage of her ebullitions and was now sulking.

The steps approached nearer and nearer. "Ef that old stupid ain't comin' in yere, after all," Clarissy thought. "Well, granny'll send him off with a flea in his ear if he does, that's all!" and she assumed an air of elaborate indifference.

"Hello, thar!" called a masculine voice scarcely audible to Clarissy for the beating of her heart. She made no move and the call was repeated.

"Ain't ye got no manners, t' let company wait out there that a way," her aunt said, sharply, and poor Clarissy went flying to the door.

There stood, not Tom, but Amos Purdy, a near neighbor, as neighbors go in a thinly settled country, and a widower of two months' standing who had dropped in once or twice of late. He entered now with a sheepish air which to anyone less preoccupied than Clarissy would have proved that he was on courting bent. He took a chair near the door and where he shut out Clarissy's view of the window.

"Right cold day," he ventured, addressing Aunt Phoebe.

"Well, I guess ye can't 'xpect much else, with Christmas only two weeks off," was the ungracious reply.

"Yep, that's so," the visitor responded. Then he relaxed into an embarrassed silence, during which he, with apparent unconsciousness, stared Clarissy out of countenance.

"Ole Zeb White killed er bear last Chuesday," was his next remark, still addressed to Aunt Phoebe. "Biggest one this year, he says. Them Whites is awful liars, though, an' I can't promise ef he tells th' truth er not." "Them Whites is a bad stock," Mrs. Moon broke in, suddenly; "one of 'em filled our ole cow full of shot when I was a gal, pretendin' like he thought she was er bear. An' all the satisfaction pap got was puttin' er load o' shot into him, and pretendin' like he thought he was er buck!" She chuckled at the remembrance.

"That air Tom White's goin' t' see Tiny Koontz," remarked the guest. "I seen 'em walkin' last Sunday. Reckon they'll be gittin' married

garding herself, which chimed pleasantly with her own opinions on the subject. She giggled mightily, and assured her mother that she "wouldn't look at that ole silly, no, not fer nothing!" But she was mightily pleased, as anyone could see.

In her anger against Tom, Clarissy forgot all about Amos and his red apples, and, indeed, she attached no importance to the offer, anyhow. She, too, was very gay that evening, for she felt that her grandmother's sharp eyes were on her, and she would have died rather than display her futile rage against her faithless lover. She assured herself over and over again that she never cared a straw for Tom, but the fact that she had sent for him and that he had answered her signal only to carry off the present he had given her to take it to another rankled in her breast.

Heavy snow fell the next day and a cold kept her close in the cabin for a week. Amos was the only visitor during that time, and when he came he brought a substantial offering of venison and a brace of rabbits, gifts by no means to be despised, and which Mrs. Moon received most graciously. Aunt Phoebe's eyes shone, but she kept them on the ground in maidenly modesty and was very reserved and coy in her manner. It never occurred to either her mother or herself that Clarissy was the object of Amos' evident intentions.

"I plum got t' have somebody t' keep house fer me soon," the guest remarked. "I ain't much of a cook myself, an' there's lots o' good meat spollin' at th' cabin now fer want o' a woman t' look after it. I was er good husband t' my woman while she was livin'," he concluded.

"So ye was, Amos," Mrs. Moon agreed, eagerly; "I always said so." She was overjoyed at the idea of giving up her daughter; she thought delightedly of the quiet life she could lead with only Clarissy. "An', now that air Tom White's out'n th' way, I'll git t' keep her a long time," she reasoned, complacently, as she listened to the visitor's account of what he intended to do for his wife when he married again.

"An' talkin' erbout marryin'; I guess Tom White an' Tiny Koontz'll be gittin' married a Christmas. I seen her with a red handkercher he give her th' las' time I was over there," he went on.



AND CAME FACE TO FACE WITH TOM.

soon. Seems s'f they'd be a lot of marryin' round yere before long. Er man ain' worth much nowadays 'less he's got a wife."

Clarissy had turned pale at the bit of news. She rose now, on pretense of getting more wood for the fire and went outside. Aunt Phoebe had suddenly become gracious and the sound of her voice followed the girl as she ran along the trail to the tree which held her token.

"He ain't goin' t' think I want 'im," she panted, he can go t' his Tiny Koontz, ef he wants to. I don't want 'im—great awkward thing!" She dashed away a tear, as she did so, and saw that the handkerchief no longer fluttered from the branch. Nervously she searched the ground to see if the wind had carried it into a clump of bushes. But no handkerchief was there! Tom had evidently come and gone, without trying to attract her attention.

"An' he's taken th' handkercher t' that air Tiny Koontz!" she said. Then, with head held high, she marched back, meeting Amos face to face, as he came down the path.

"Mighty purty red cheeks ye got, Clarissy," he remarked; "when I git er another wife she's got t' have red cheeks, I tell ye. Say, d'ye like red apples? I'll fetch ye some when I come this here way agin; you look in that air holler stump, an' ye'll find 'em."

"I jest plum despise red apples, an' I plum despise you, too, Amos Purdy." And she fled to the cabin before the astonished guest had time to make reply.

To her surprise, Aunt Phoebe was in especially good humor. Her mother had been throwing out some very plain hints as to the intentions of Amos re-

Nothing was said to Clarissy, who was regarded as a child by her elders, and she, in her intense preoccupation, failed to notice that the preparations for Christmas were on a much more elaborate scale than usual. She was in a sort of a daze, sometimes determined to marry Amos in order to convince Tom that she cared nothing for him; at others, determined to die before she did such a thing.

Fortunately for her, Aunt Phoebe wanted a quantity of ground pine and red berries with which to adorn the cabin, and as Clarissy knew the sheltered spots where they were likely to be found she was sent out in quest of them. In her anxiety to be alone she made the quest a prolonged one. Amos wisely absented himself from the cabin, a fact which puzzled Mrs. Moon and her daughter not a little. Clarissy gave this fact not a thought; she was quite in ignorance of the fact that Amos was supposed to be the victim of her aunt's bow and spear, and was only thankful to have him out of the way while she wrestled with her problem.

All too soon, it was Christmas eve, and Clarissy went forth for a last load of pine, with which the cabin was already gay. Late in the afternoon, she sat down a moment with her load, still pondering upon the subject which never left her mind. She was in no hurry to return home, for her aunt had gone to the store at the cross roads to make a few purchases and she knew that her grandmother would be dozing and unconscious of the flight of time.

As she sat there, Clarissy let the big tears roll unchecked down her cheeks. It seemed to her now that Tom had left her for another, he had become the one object for which she cared.

"Well, I'll take Amos," she said, proudly, "an' then nobody 'll know Tom left me fer Tiny Koontz!" As she spoke, she rose from the stump on which she was sitting and came face to face with Tom—Tom pale and haggard, and with a gun over his shoulder, which added to the wildness of his appearance. Clarissy trembled so that she could scarcely stand, but she put on a brave smile.

"That you, Tom," she said. "I—I mus' wish ye well, you 'n' Tiny. When ye goin' t' git married—to-morrow?" Tom put down his gun. "Me 'n' who?" he demanded, fiercely.

Clarissy's anger grew at the evasion. "You 'n' Tiny Koontz," she responded. "Amos Purdy, he tole me how you 'n' her was goin' t' get married to-morrow night."

"Amos Purdy tole ye that?" "Yes, he did; and ye needn't to deny it—I don't care!" All the girl's fierce pride was in arms. "I—I only put th' red handkerchief on th' tree that day because—"

"Because ye wanted t' make er fool er me!" Tom cried, hotly. "Ye had took it down agin' fore I could git there, an' ye give it t' Amos Purdy; he showed it t' me. An' he tole me you 'n' him was goin' t' get married a Christmas, an' ye didn't want no more sight o' me! I only wish I'd had my gun that day, an'—"

"Oh, Tom! Tom!" Clarissy and the ground pine were all tangled up in his arms, and Clarissy was crying for pure joy.

"But I tell ye one thing, Clarissy," Tom said, later, "that ole coon did see me with Tiny Koontz that day. I was giving her a message from Wait Thomas over at th' sawmill. Him 'n' her's goin' t' git married soon's he gets back."

When Clarissy at last started for home Tom went with her to tell her grandmother that he meant to marry her granddaughter on the following day, with her consent or without it.

"For I ain' goin' t' take no more chances!" Tom affirmed.

Luckily, Aunt Phoebe had not returned when they reached the cabin, and the story was poured out to Mrs. Moon alone. Her dislike for Tom melted away before the idea of Clarissy's marrying Amos, on whom Phoebe had set her heart, and leaving her to bear the brunt of that damsel's rage.

"Tell ye what you do," she said, finally. "You 'n' Tom git ready t' git married to-morrow night an' jest leave Amos t' me when he comes!"

Tom stood out for a personal interview with Amos first, but he was overruled. Just what Mrs. Moon said to that worthy during the few minutes' private talk they had no one ever knew! She said it so convincingly, however, that there was a double wedding in the cabin that Christmas night, and Aunt Phoebe never knew that she was second choice.—Eliza Armstrong, in Banner of Gold.

Not That Kind.

"You know what is said about casting your bread upon the waters," said the man with the subscription paper. "After many days it will come back to you."

"Not the kind our cook makes," responded the other man. "It would sink to the bottom like a stone."—Chicago Tribune.

His Opinion.

Papa—What is the matter with the steam engine, Johnny?
Johnny—I don't know; but it won't go. Papa, I think Santa Claus got stuck on that steam engine.—Puck.

SCHOOL AND CHURCH.

Colby is the first Maine college to publish a collection of college stories. Mr. H. C. Libby has collected stories from Colby men who have won fame in the literary world.

Harvard college, which was founded by Rev. John Harvard, in 1636, and which graduated its first class in 1642, is the first as well as the oldest college in the United States.

Andorra, a little republic in the Pyrenees, has marked the end of the century by opening its public schools to girls for the first time. The French government contributes \$200 to the schools' support.

A notice was recently posted in a West Kensington (London) church announcing that five pews were for sale. And, according to the notice, one of the advantages of these pews is that the contribution plate is not passed to them.

The seventy-sixth annual report of the New York Bible society, just issued, shows another year of earnest work, during which nearly 40,000 volumes of the Scriptures have been placed in the hands of immigrants arriving at this port, the sailors in the harbor, and churches, missions and families in the city.

There is to be no backward step in Christian missions in China. The church is ready to obey the command to "preach the Gospel to every creature," undismayed by persecution or other discouragement. It is subject for congratulation that the most able and far-seeing men of our own country, who have had experience in the orient and are competent to speak, are unanimous in the opinion that missions cannot be abandoned unless we are prepared also to abandon commerce and diplomacy.

RUSSIA ENTERS THIBET.

Czar Has Established Diplomatic Relations with the Dalai Lama.

Is the evil of mystery that has hung so long over the land of Thibet and its lamas to be at last swept aside and Lhasa to be entered in the itinerary of the commercial traveler for Manchester textiles? It would certainly seem so from the recent statement of a correspondent.

He says: "For the moment we frankly admit that Russia, in her secret, stealthy way, has stolen a march upon us and scored a point. The government of India, by its ostentatious neglect of all questions beyond the northern frontier of the peninsula, has contributed to Russia's success. When it allowed its agent at Kashgar, George Macartney, to be completely overshadowed by the Russian consul general, Mr. Petrovsky, it might have known that Russia would never rest satisfied until her influence was supreme throughout Chinese Turkestan, and from the time of Gen. Prejevalsky she has never concealed her ambition to pierce the Thibetan mystery.

Confident in the security supposed to be conferred by the Himalayas the government of India has remained indifferent to the schemes imputed to Russia; now that they have made a step in the direction of realization it may, perhaps, see reason to review the situation."

Eighteen months ago an accredited Russian mission entered Lhasa, says the London Express. This is not altogether so extraordinary as the result, for "so supreme and secluded a potentate as the dalai lama" has been induced to send a return mission, which was recently presented to the czar at Livadia.

The writer, after summing up the dangers of allowing Russia to get a firm footing thus on our Indian frontier, concludes: "The success of Russia in establishing some sort of diplomatic relations with the dalai lama reveals all its perilous possibilities at a flash. We are not going to allow an Abyssinia to be created at the gates of Bengal, or the failure of Hunza to be obliterated in a triumph at Lhasa." And with this most thinking people will agree.

Facts About the World's Growth.

According to scientists the limit of the earth's capacity to support human life will be reached when its population is 6,000,000,000, or four times as much as its present estimated number. As the earth doubles her children every 140 years, it is easy to calculate that in 280 years, or in the year 2180, there will positively be no room for more, and, unless by that time there are facilities for emigrating to other planets, some serious steps will have to be taken to restrict the growth of our numbers. If by any chance it should be possible to surmount the difficulty of support, and if the population continues to increase at present rates, a more difficult problem still will have to be faced a thousand years or so later, in the year 3160. For by that year—which, happily, none of us may see—the earth's brood will have grown to such proportions that every square yard of solid ground will have its population of three persons, each inhabitant of the earth being thus strictly limited to three square feet of land for all purposes of support and domicile.—People's Home Journal.