UNDER THE MISTLETOE! TO THEIR CHEEKS THE WARM BLOOD FLIES
AS INTO HER EYES LOOK HIS, BUT—THERE ARE OTHER EYES.

Christmas in the country forty years ago was a different affair from what it is now. I never think of Christmas in those days without thinking of a lovely winter day, bright with sunshine, and snow everywhere; large drifts, through which the horses floundered as they drew the stout sled, on which was the wagon-bed filled with hay, and covered with blankets and buffalo-robes, where we cuddled down, as we rode merrily away to spend Christmas at grandpa's. We could hardly wait till the horses stopped, so eager were we to wish grandpa a merry Christmas; but he was generally ahead of us with his greeting of "Christmas gift." That entitled him to a present instead of us; but a kiss all around was usually the way we paid off our indebtedness, while some striped sticks of peppermint candy, laid up for the occasion, were given us. Our aunts, uncles and cousins came next for their share of good wishes and merry jokes.

A bright fire burned in the fireplace, and there, suspended by a stout string from the ceiling, was a great turkey packed full of dressing, and sending forth a most delicious odor as it turned round and round, gradually browning before the fire, the juice dripping into a great pan on the brick hearth; and from this pan grandma occasionally dipped the juice with a huge iron spoon and poured it over the crisp sides of the turkey. Other preparations were going on meanwhile in the kitchen, where a cooking stove held the place of honor, as cooking-stoves were very rare in those days. The neighbors had come miles to see it, and express their fears as to the probability of its "blowing up." This cook-stove, however, was not equal to cooking such a large turkey in its small oven. A coffee-boiler sent out an odor of coffee strong

A BRIGHT FIRE BURNED.

and fragrant, while a long table covered with snowy linen (the work of grandma's own hands) stood at the farther end of the long kitchen.

As soon as the turkey was pronounced done and the gravy made in the dripping-pan, the chairs were placed near the table and we were called to dinner. No one was left to wait, and such a merry time! After grandpa had asked a blessing on the food, he carved the turkey and supplied our waiting plates bountifully with any piece we wished, together with all manner of good things in the way of vegetables. A rice pudding with plenty of raisins, pumpkin pies and rosy-cheeked apples served for dessert, and our only sorrow was that we could eat so little. After dinner we children played games in the kitchen, around the fireplace that was used when there was no fire in the cook stove. Here we popped corn, cracked nuts, told fairy stories and played blind-man's buff while the older ones "visited" in the "keepin'-room" until the time came to return home.

Bizzley—"You must dislike Newcomb very much." Grizzly—"I hate him as fiercely as a barber hates a bald headed man with a full beard."—Truth.

The Childlike Mind.

Christmas is not only the mile mark of another year moving us to thought of self-examination, it is a season, from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy. A man dissatisfied with his endeavors is a man tempted to sadness. And in the midst of the winter, when his life runs lowest and he is reminded of the empty chairs of his beloved, it is well he should be condemned to this fashion of the smiling face. Noble disappointment, noble self-denial are not to be admired, not even to be pardoned, if they bring bitterness. It is one thing to enter the Kingdom of Heaven maim; another to maim yourself and stay without. And the Kingdom of Heaven is like the child-like, of those who are easy to please, who love and who give pleasure. Mighty men of their hands, the smiters and the builders and the judges, have lived long and done sternly, and yet preserved this lovely character; and among our carpet interests and two-penny concerns, the shame were indelible if we should lose it.—From a Christmas Sermon by Robert Louis Stevenson.

From every spire on Christmas eve,
The Christmas bells ring clearly out
Their message of good will and peace,
With many a call and silver shout.
For faithful hearts, the angels' song
Still echoes in the frosty air,
And by the altar low they bow
In adoration and in prayer.

A thousand blessed mem'ries throng,
The stars are holy signs to them,
And from the eyes of every child
Looks forth the Babe of Bethlehem.
But there are others, not like these,
Whose brows are sad, whose hopes are crossed,
To whom the season brings no cheer,
And life's most gracious charm is lost.

To whom that story, old and sweet,
Is but a fable at the best;
The Christmas music mocks their ears,
And life has naught of joy or rest.
Oh! for an angel's voice to pierce
The clouds of grief that o'er them rise,
The mists of doubt and unbelief
That veil the blue of Christmas skies.

That they, at last, may see the light
Which shines from Bethlehem and unfolds
For Christ the treasures of their hearts
Richer than spicery or gold.
Hope of the ages, draw Thou near,
Till all the earth shall own Thy sway,
And when Thou reign'st in every heart,
It will indeed be Christmas day.

—Eleanor A. Hunter.

The King Smiled.

King Rooster—"Redcomb!"
Redcomb—"Yes, sire."
K. R.—"What is the cause of this unusual excitement in the court?"
R.—"'Tis the preparations for the usual Christmas feast, sire."
K. R.—"The annual feast?"
R.—"Yes, sire."
K. R. (anxiously)—"Are we in any immediate danger?"
R.—"No, sire. It is only the females and young males."
K. R.—"And those 'up-to-date' hens who have been the pest of the court lately with their attempts to imitate me, are they included?"
R.—"All, sire."
K. R.—"Excellent! Perhaps this may serve to teach them that they only deceive themselves by their egotism; that no matter how loud they crow, the world still regards them as hens."—O. A. C.

Reliable Data About California.

An American geography printed in 1812 contains this interesting information: "California is a wild and almost unknown land, covered throughout the year by dense fogs, as damp as they are unhealthy. On the northern shores live anthropophagi and in the interior are active volcanoes and vast plains of shifting snow, which sometimes shoot up columns to inconceivable heights." The book adds that some of these statements would seem incredible were they not so well authenticated by trustworthy travelers.

OLD TIME CUSTOMS.

By Winona Butler.

There is no brighter fact in history than Christmas. The golden thread of its influence can be traced through nearly nineteen centuries. On the first Christmas morning the angels sang: "Peace on earth, good will to men." The glad refrain has been repeated each Christmas season in every Christian land, though the character of the music varies greatly.

Our ancestors were in the habit of forming companies which went from house to house, singing Christmas carols in the streets. These beautiful carols would break the stillness of the winter night or early Christmas morning, making a most delightful beginning to the merry day.

But these holy jubilees had as rivals the mingling instruments of those wandering spirits of harmony—the "Waits." One author writes: "Many and many a time have we been awakened by the melody of the Waits, and have lain and listened to their wild music, its solemn swells and 'dying falls,' kept musical by the distance and made holy by the time, till we could have fancied that the morning stars were again singing as of old they 'sang together for joy,' and that the sounds of their far anthem came floating to the earth."

The German children probably believe more firmly in Kriss Kringle, or Santa Claus, than do the children of any other nation. Germany is the birthplace of Kriss Kringle, and the wonderland of fable and poetry. German children are taught to love the Christ-child. In many parts of the country it is the custom, on the morning before Christmas, to let a figure representing the Christ-child wave past the window of the room where the little ones sleep. Half awake only, in the gray of the morning they see this little child-figure flit dimly past, and they go to sleep again in the blissful consciousness that the Christ-child has not forgotten them, and that they will have an abundance of presents around the tree in the evening.

A beautiful custom in Norway and Sweden is the Christmas feeding of birds. Bunches of oats are placed on the roofs of houses, on fences and trees. Cartloads of sheaves are brought into town for this purpose, and both rich and poor buy and place them everywhere. The sentiment is that a man must be very poor indeed if he cannot spare a farthing to feed the little birds on Christmas day. In many of the valleys and mountain dales of the countries watch is kept during the whole of the night, and all are merry; candles are kept burning at the windows, and the people flock to church at four o'clock in the morning, each carrying a torch.

In some districts, immediately after the service, everyone hurries from church, either on foot or in sleighs, for there is an old saying that he who gets home first will have his crop first harvested. At this holiday season the peasants dance on straw, and the peasant girls throw straws at the timbered roof of the hall, and for every one that sticks in a crack a lover will come courting during the year.

In old English times, at the close of the church services it was customary for the clerk in loud and emphatic tones to wish all the congregation a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. In those good old times an English gentleman would throw open his hall at daybreak to all his tenants and neighbors. Beer, blackjacks, toast and cheese were plentiful. The great sausage must be boiled by sunrise, or else two young men must take the cook by the arms and run her around the market place till she is ashamed of her laziness.

The "Yule log" is a great log of wood, sometimes the root of a tree, brought into the house with great ceremony on Christmas Eve, laid in the fireplace and lighted with the brand of last year's log. While it lasted there was great drinking, singing and telling of tales. Sometimes it was accompanied by Christmas candles, but in the cottages the only light was from the ruddy blaze of the great wood fire. The Yule log was to burn all night; if it went out, it was considered a sign of ill-luck.

The Christmas dinner was the central feature of all the gay festivities. The table was literally loaded with good cheer. The boar's head held the place of honor and was a lordly affair, brought in by the butler, attended by a servant on either side with a large wax light. The head was carried on a silver dish, the tusks piercing bright-red apples, while between them an orange was laid, the whole graced with an abundance of sauce. When this, "the rarest dish in all the land," was placed at the head of the table, one of the company sang a carol suited to the great occasion.

The Christmas peacocks were also gorgeous, the bird being flayed, roasted and then sewed up again in all the splendor of its brilliant feathers, a piece of cotton saturated with spirits being placed within the gilded beak to burn while the carver was at work.

Still more curious was the ancient peacock pie, the bird being covered by the crust, save that on one side appeared his plumed crest, while from the other side protruded the gorgeous, spreading tail.

Mince pies were called Christmas or December pies, as the old rhyme went—

"Treason's in a December pie
And death within the pot."

They date back to 1596.

The classical plum pudding must be added to the list of good things, though, sad to relate, it was really plum porridge, and not pudding, as we have always believed.

An old poem says—

"And those that hardly all the year
Had bread to eat or clothes to wear,
Will have both clothes and dainty fare,
And all the day be merry."

The leader of all the merry-making was called the Lord of Misrule or Abbott of Unreason. The wardrobes at halls and manor houses were often laid under contribution to furnish fantastic disguises.

Snap Dragon was one of the favorite sports. Raisins were placed in a large shallow dish and brandy poured over the fruit and ignited. The lights in the room were extinguished, and in the weird glare the players attempted to pick the raisins out of the flaming dish:

"Here he comes with flaming bowl—
Doesn't he mean to take his toll?
Snip, snap dragon.
Take care you don't take too much,
Be not greedy in your clutch,
Snip, snap dragon."

But in 1652, the question of Christmas was brought up in parliament. They decided it was not in harmony with the scriptures; pronounced it "anti-Christmasse" and abolished it. So the jolly Lord of Misrule became an outlaw, and the old picturesque Christmas faded away with the severity of the Puritan atmosphere; but with the nineteenth century came a revival. The new Christmas was merry, but quieter. What it lost in noise and frolic, it made up in cheerfulness and good will; and now, remembering the message of that first Christmas morning, we hail the merry Christmas day with—

"Peace on earth,
Good will to men."

Gifts for Women and Men.

"Women's wants, if measured by their belongings, would seem to be almost innumerable, and of a kind which require constant renewing and replacing," writes Frances E. Lanigan telling of appropriate Christmas gifts for women and for men. "Woman's interests and occupations require a greater number of small things for their equipment than do those of men, and Christmas gifts for them are, therefore, more easily prepared. Women's belongings have the further advantage of being useful as well as beautiful. Men are always pleased with simple gifts, and are usually embarrassed when presented with expensive articles of any sort. The value to them of a gift is, as it should be with all persons, in proportion to its simplicity and usefulness and out of proportion to its cost."

Life's a short summer; man a flower.—Dr. Johnson.

When the Bells Were Ringing.

BY SHIRLEY WYNNE.

Alone, alone in the crowded street,
Alone on New Year's night,
Barefoot and wet with the blinding sleet,
Pale 'neath the red lamplight,
A little match girl through the crowd
Raises a feeble cry
While the New Year bells are chiming loud,
"Matches! Oh, will you buy?"

Gay, bright-eyed, smiling children pass;
They laugh and sing and dance and run—
They all have happy homes; alas!
But this heroine has none!
Alone, alone in the busy street
She cowers on a doorstep nigh
While the New Year bells are chiming sweet,
Still pleading, "Will you buy?"

Hungry and ragged and blue with cold—
The wind blows keen and loud—
Her frozen fingers can scarely hold
The matches to the crowd.
And still, as faster falls the sleet,
More piteous grows the cry
While the New Year bells are chiming sweet,
"Oh, will you—will you buy?"

No more alone in the moonrise gray,
With face so wan and white;
The little match girl has gone away
To a happy home tonight;
For an angel came through the crowded street,
Hushing the tempest wild,
While the New Year bells chimed loud and sweet,
And bore away the child!

CHRISTMAS bells are ringing,
Ringing glad and gay,
Voices sweet are singing
Songs of Christmas Day.
Heart, what joyous music,
For thy part dost bring?
Hast thou filled sad places
With love's carolling?

Christmas bells are ringing,
Heart, what gift of thine
Marks the day's sweet meaning
Purposes divine?
How dost tell the story
Of the heavenly birth
With its streaming glory
Filling all the earth?

Christmas bells are ringing,
Ringing joyfully,
Heart, a holy helper
Thou thyself must be;
Thou must follow, follow
Him who is the way—
Be love's advent angel
Bringing Christmas Day.

LEGEND OF THE MAGI

The legend of the Wise Men of the East, or as they are styled in the original Greek, "the three Magi," became, under monkish influence, one of the most popular during the middle ages. The Scripture nowhere informs us that these individuals were kings, or their number restricted to three. The legend converts the magi into kings, gives their names and a minute account of their stature and the nature of their gifts. Melchior, we are thus told, was king of Nubie, the smallest man of the triad, and he gave the Savior a gift of gold. Balthazar was king of Chaldea, and he offered incense; he was a man of ordinary stature. But the third, Jasper, king of Tarshish, was of high stature, "a black Ethiope," and he gave myrrh. All came with "many rich ornaments belonging to king's array, and with a multitude of people to do homage to the Savior, then a little child 13 days old."

The barbaric pomp involved in this legend made it a favorite with artists during the middle ages. The picture of "The Offering of the Magi," which we publish, is from a circular plate of silver chased in high relief and partly gilt, which is supposed to have formed the center of a morse or large brooch, used to fasten the decorated cope of an ecclesiastic in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

The Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, found what she considered the burial place of the three kings, and their remains were removed to Constantinople and interred in the church of St. Sophia. Later they were removed to the Cathedral of Milan, and in the twelfth century to Cologne, where they still lie, in a magnificent reliquary, enriched with gems and enamels. These relics are enveloped in velvet and decorated with embroidery and jewels, so that only the upper part of each skull is seen.

OFFERING OF THE MAGIS.

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT.

One of the greatest blessings that Christmastide brings to us is the Christmas spirit—the fulfilment to the letter of the Christian law embodied in the Golden Rule.

This is not invariably the case, but it is fortunately the rule in a great number of cases. For a little while—a month—during the Christmas season, we are turned away from all spirit of avarice and selfishness. From the tiny toddler, who has for the first time begun to realize her responsibilities as a member of the family, to the grandmother in her snowy kerchief and cap, we are all plotting and planning for others. Going to the greatest pains to conceal all our doings in order that our gifts may be genuine surprises.

If we are members of Christian churches, we have the poor with us at this season, as at no other. We think out their needs. It has been the rule in Christian churches of late years to devote the offerings of the Christmas tree to the mission school. Loving hands of King's Daughters go about and gather all manner of gifts for those who are less fortunate, for those to whom Christmas otherwise brings only empty larders and threadbare clothing. The most sordid among us, like Old Scrooge, is sure finally to have an awakening of his better nature, to find a drawing at his heart strings more powerful than the tight drawn strings of the money bags.

In her "Abandoning an Adopted Farm," Miss Kate Sanborn tells of her annoyance at being besieged by agents, reporters, and curiosity seekers. She says: "I was so perpetually harrassed that I dreaded to see a stranger approach with an air of business. The other day I was just starting out for a drive when I noticed the usual stranger hurrying on. Putting my head out of the carriage I said, in a petulant and weary tone: 'Do you want to see me?' The young man stopped, smiled and replied courteously: 'It gives me pleasure to look at you, madam, but I was going further on.'"

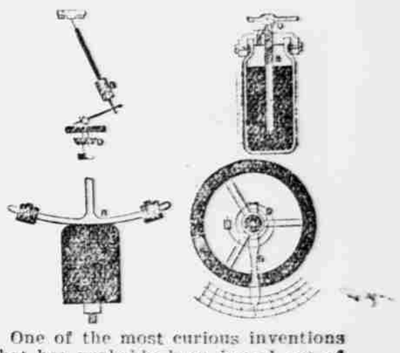
Iowa Patent Office Report.

Des Moines, Dec. 15, '97.—Six (6) applications prepared in our office and filed and prosecuted by us in the U. S. Patent Office at Washington, have been allowed to Iowa inventions (but not yet issued) as follows: To O. A. Rogers, of West Union, for a duplex stay for buck-saw. To R. G. Rider, of Mt. Ayr, for a nut lock specially adapted for railway rail joints, and for bolts in bridges. A double elbow shaped key is used and is concealed and protected when its inner end engages and locks the nut. To J. R. Braden, of Rowan, for a tree-protector, made of woven wire adapted to be adjusted to trees varying in diameter and detachably fastened and provided with a top of bibulous material to be saturated with tar or other adhesive matter. To H. R. Gregory and R. H. Ratton of Prescott for an adjustable straw stacker and threshing machine attachment adapted for elevating straw to different heights and conveying it in different directions relative to the thresher. An undivided half is assigned to C. H. Dicks of Des Moines.

Thomas G. and J. Ralph Orwig,
Solicitors of Patents.

The absence of meteors which astronomers deemed possible this year, at about November 13 and 14, does not appear to have been observed anywhere in Europe or America, although the weather was unfavorable, and there are still a few remote observations to hear from. The failure, however, affords no reason for supposing that the great displays of 1899 and 1900, to which this would have been merely a preliminary, will not occur on schedule time.

Curious Invention.



One of the most curious inventions that has probably been issued out of the United States Patent office, was granted last week to a Scotchman. The invention embodies a process of obtaining useful products from silk worms. All those desiring free information as to the laws of patents may obtain the same in addressing Sues & Co., registered patent lawyers, Bee Building, Omaha, Neb.

A smart Chicago operator advertised that he had discovered a process by which old and rancid butter could be made over as good as new, but that he could only handle large quantities. Some dealers sent him samples to try and in return received perfectly fresh creamery butter. Then they sent agents all over the state, bought heavily and sent the stuff to him. To their consternation he declined to operate on it, but offered to buy it at a small figure, much less than they had paid for it, and as, in the open market it would be graded as axle grease, they were obliged to let him have it.

A Good Thing.

The Royal Publishing Company, of Richmond, Virginia, are offering exceptionally favorable contracts to live workers. They want men and women of good character, and allow liberal weekly salaries and expenses. A line addressed to them may lay before you a proposition that will be as surprising as it is gratifying.

In Montenegro they say on Christmas eve: "Tonight earth is blended with paradise."

If Chinese children do not obey their parents, and the latter whip them to death, the law has no punishment for them, as obedience to parents is the cardinal virtue.

The hollies on Black Hill, near Church-Stretton in Shropshire, are claimed to be 1,000 years old. Many of their trunks are fourteen feet in diameter a foot above ground.

The primitive Anglo-Saxon name for Christmas was also Modra-neht—Mother's Night.