

# The Columbus Journal.

VOLUME XXVI.—NUMBER 37.

COLUMBUS, NEBRASKA, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1895.

WHOLE NUMBER 1,337.

## IN ARCTIC REGIONS.

### A CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL AMID ICE AND SNOW.

How the Members of the Peary Expedition Passed the Day—Tearing the Eskimo American Houses—Leath to Get the Dinner Table.

**M**RS. PEARY, who spent so many tedious months with her husband in the Arctic regions, was determined that the holidays should not pass her by unnoticed; and, though she was living in the most primitive fashion, with a frozen world all about her, she made hearty though simple preparation for festivity.

They spent, she says, a day in decorating the interior of their Arctic home for the Christmas and New Year festivities. In the larger of the two rooms the ceiling was draped with red mosquito netting. Wire candelabra and candleholders were placed in all the corners and along the walls. Two large United States flags were crossed at one end of the room, and a silk sledge bag was put up on the opposite corner.

I gave the boys new cretans for curtains for their bunks, and we decorated the photographs of our dear ones at home with red, white and blue ribbons. We spent the evening in playing rummy and dominoes, and at midnight Mr. Peary and I retired to our room to open some letters, boxes and parcels given us by kind friends, and marked: "To be opened Christmas eve at midnight."

On Christmas day we had what we termed the jolliest Christmas dinner ever eaten in the Arctic regions, and then we invited our faithful natives to a dinner cooked by us and served at our table, with our dishes. I thought it would be as much fun for us to see them eat with knife, fork and spoon as it would be for them to do it.

After our meal had been cleared away, the table was set again, and the Eskimos were called in. We had nicknames for all of them, and it was the "Villain" who was put at the head of the table, and told that he must serve the company just as he had seen Mr. Peary do it.

The "Daisy" took his place at the foot of the table, and her duty was to pour the tea. The "Young Husband" and "Misfortune" sat on one side, while "Tiresome" and the "White Man" sat opposite.

It was amusing to see these queer-looking creatures.

Looking dressed entirely in the skins of animals, and to pick it out of the dish with his fork. He was immediately reproved by the Villain, who made him pass his mess pan to him, and then helped him to what he thought he ought to have, reserving, however, the choice piece for himself.

They chattered and laughed and seemed to enjoy themselves very much. Both women had their babies in the hoods on their backs, but this did not hinder them in the least. Although at times the noise was great the little ones slept through it all. The Daisy watched the cups very carefully, and as soon as she spied an empty one, she would say:

"Etude cafee? Nahme? Cafee peuk? (More coffee? No? The coffee is good.) Finally at ten o'clock the big lamp was put out, and we told them it was time to go to sleep, and that they must go home, which they reluctantly did.

Meat for the Minister. A popular minister in Fifeshire, in the good old times, used at Christmas to be inundated with hampers filled with good things. On one occasion an enormous turkey was sent to him by the thoughtful kindness of a neighboring farmer; but as the minister's family had already provided for the Christmas dinner, the bird was sent to the market and sold.

A passer-by, seeing this fine specimen of poultry, said, "What a splendid turkey! Just the thing for the minister's Christmas dinner." To the minister it was again sent.

The provident wife sent it again to the market, and sold it again for a handsome sum.

Another friend, similarly struck with the splendid proportions of the turkey, purchased it, and sent it to the minister. The good woman, not wishing to fly in the face of Providence, said at last:

"It is clear that the Lord means us to have this turkey," and with the approval of the family, it formed part of the Christmas dinner.

Christmas Customs. One custom that has come to us from across the sea is that of hanging up stockings on Christmas Eve. Little children are taught that St. Nicholas brings in gifts to them through the windows, and it is supposed this custom started from a tradition that St. Nicholas used to throw purses of money in through the windows of poor maidens, so that they might have marriage portions.

Hovison, in his sketches of Upper Canada, says that he met once at midnight on a beautiful moonlight Christmas Eve an Indian, who was softly creeping along on the ground. Upon being questioned, the Indian mentioned to him to be silent, and said: "We watch to see the deer kneed; this is Christmas night, and all the deer fall upon their knees to the Great Spirit and he up."



**I**T was a stormy Christmas Eve, and the little town of Tromsø was completely enveloped in the craine mantle of mid-winter. Snow had been falling all day, and as the night approached, large flakes were still being driven hither and thither by the furious wind, which howled and roared in the chimneys, shook the carefully closed windows, and died away in the distance like the last despairing wail of a lost soul.

In one of the most miserable houses of a wretched street, in the worst quarter of the town, a woman by the dim light of a flickering candle watched beside the sick-bed of her last remaining child. She was weeping bitterly, but strove to stifle her sob for fear of disturbing the fitful slumbers of the sufferer.

As the furious tempest shook the dilapidated tenement, she trembled as if she already felt the dread presence of the Grim Reaper. No Christmas feast blazed on the miserable hearth, the happy voices of laughing children and kind friends had for long been stilled, and the cold, sorrow, and poverty which reigned within seemed but a counterpart of the desolation without.

Behold the lowly and the bed of the sick child, who lay in the short cough and labored breathing of the child, who at last, suddenly awaking, raised herself on her elbow, and looked across the room, where, as in a vision, she again beheld the Christmas trees of her earlier years, with their accompaniments of holly, mistletoe, toys and golden stars, gleaming amid the darkness of that somber room. She was a young girl of twelve or fourteen years of age, and the sweet, pale face, although in the last stage of emaciation, still retained traces of delicate youthful beauty.

With her dying voice she still continued to talk of the fete-days of long ago, when she was a rosy, healthy little child, and her brothers and sisters, Eric, John, Anton, Hilda and Bertha, danced around her with their pretty Christmas offerings, when her father danced her on his knee, and her mother sang sweet lullabies by her cradle. Those days seemed far away. Eric and her father had perished in a shipwreck; then, one by one, the others had followed, till death had left behind only the dreary sisters, sickness and misery, as the sole companions of the widow and her child.

The vivid remembrance of past happiness had brought a strange light into Greta's eyes, and soon these childish reminiscences gave place to hope. She spoke of the spring which would bring back the birds and flowers, and in giving life to all else would surely not entirely forget herself.

"You know, mother, the doctor said that, when the roses came, my sufferings would be over. Will the roses come in bloom?"

"I have seen some already," replied the mother; "the governor's wife and daughter had them in their hair when I saw them get into the carriage, but those roses, I think, only grow in the hot-houses of the rich."

There was silence, broken only by Greta's short sobs, all at once carried away by one solitary fancy, such as so often haunts the brain of the sick, she began to talk again about the roses, to pine sorrowfully for their possession, and by alternate beseeching, coaxing and commanding she at last induced her mother to go out in search of some for her.

The poor woman left the bedside possessed with the one desire of pacifying her child, and traversed the streets with weary steps, debating in her mind what excuse she would make on her return for not having procured that which she felt was eagerly beyond her reach. With bowed head and sorrowful heart she kept repeating to herself the words of the physician, so full of hope for Greta: "At the coming of the first roses she would suffer no more; and well as she guessed the mournful meaning of the prophecy, she could not help

being inspired for an instant by that spirit of hope which buoyed up her child. Quickening her steps, she took the road as if by a sudden inspiration toward the governor's house, hesitated as she reached the brilliantly lighted mansion, but at last, taking courage, knocked timidly at the door, which was immediately opened by a man-servant.

"What do you want, my good woman?"

"To speak to Madame Paterson."

"I cannot disturb madame at such an hour of the night."

"Oh! I implore you, let me see her!"

"The servant reproved the poor mother, and was about to shut the door in her face when Madame Paterson and her daughter, with roses in their hair and on their bosoms, crossed the hall, paused to question the servant, and then approached the widow, who briefly and tearfully told her pathetic story.

"O, madame! O, madame! I implore you to give me one rose, only one, for my dying child! God, who gave His son for the redemption of the world, will reward you."

Madame Paterson shrugged her shoulders with a mocking laugh, and passed on. Her daughter, the brilliant Edele, remarked that her father did not buy roses for their weight in gold, to throw them away upon street beggars. The door closed, and the woman turned toward her home. On passing the Church of Sainte-Britta, she perceived the clergyman's wife walking large bouquets of roses on the altar, full blown blooms of rich red, as well as branches of exquisite buds of blush, orange and pink.

The lady formed a sweet picture as she bent over and arranged the floral treasures sent her by a rich parishioner of her husband's. Her blue eyes sparkled with delight, and her voice was soft and silvery. She was the mother of six lovely children, and the widow felt that she would surely pity her in her bitter grief. Full of these hopeful thoughts, she entered the church, approached the altar, and preferred her modest request for one rose wherewith to gladden the eyes of her dying child.

Madame Nellie, although by no means devoid of kindly feeling, was proud in her own way, and had determined that Sainte-Britta should be the best decorated church in the town. In what she mistook for pious enthusiasm, she forgot to gladden the eyes of her dying child. Edele, remarking that her father did not buy roses for their weight in gold, to throw them away upon street beggars. The door closed, and the woman turned toward her home. On passing the Church of Sainte-Britta, she perceived the clergyman's wife walking large bouquets of roses on the altar, full blown blooms of rich red, as well as branches of exquisite buds of blush, orange and pink.

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Stopping down, she scraped away the snow with her hand. Yes, there were leaves, large and lustrous, under which she found a few green blossoms, some full blown, others in bud, but all pale, small and without color, perfume or beauty.

"Ah!" thought she, "as there were no roses to be procured, these little flowers are heard the pain of knowing that there are hearts so cold and hard that no woe of others can soften them, and who care for no sorrows except their own!"

As she hastened onward, the deep-toned bell struck the hour of midnight and the joyous Christmas chimes broke on her ear. Kneeling reverently on the snowy ground, the mother's heart went up in gratitude, and she prayed the All-Merciful One to look with pitying eyes on her sweet and cherished Greta, pressing the humble flowers to her bosom. In another moment, she had risen and passed onward with her treasure.

As she drew back the curtain to offer the dark leaves and little green blossoms to her darling, she made a discovery which startled her. They had given place to large, exquisite white blossoms tinged with a delicate pink.

"Roses!" cried Greta, "O, mother, who gave them to you?"

"It was a Christmas present," replied the astonished mother.

At the sight of these lovely Christmas roses, the dying girl bowed her head, and softly kissed each precious blossom. Then she fell back on her pillow with a sigh. "The light that was never on land or sea" came into the beautiful blue eyes, and her lips half-opened with a radiant smile. The prophecy of the doctor was fulfilled. The roses had appeared, and her sufferings were ended. Her pure young spirit had passed upward in one ecstatic burst of love and thanksgiving.

Since that time (long ago) the plant which grows under the hedges, because the snows of winter, has continued to produce beautiful white blossoms and retained the name of "The Christmas Rose," which was given to it by the good women of Tromsø.

St. Nicholas. All hailed, with uncontrolled delight and general voice, the happy sight that to the cottage as the crown Brought tidings of salvation down.

The Yule Log. A custom at one time prevalent in England, and still observed in some of the northern districts of the old country, is that of placing an immense log of wood—sometimes the root of a great tree—in the wide chimney-place. This log is often called the yule log, and it was on Christmas Eve that it was put on the wide hearth. Around it would gather the entire family, and its entrance was the occasion of a great deal of ceremony. There was music and rejoicing, while the one authorized to light it was obliged to have clean hands.

It was always lighted with a brand left over from the log of the previous year, which had been carefully preserved for the purpose. A poet sings of it in this way:

With the law-rever's brand Light the bonfire of the earth, and no primrose nor violet would be seen for months. Thus sorrowfully musing, she continued her walk, and in a few minutes would have reached her miserable home, when by the light of her lantern she saw a few green leaves peeping from the foot of a hedge which enclosed a garden in the neighborhood.

Feast of Tabernacles with evergreens and flowers. The laurel was used at the earliest times of the Romans as a decoration for all joyful occasions, and is significant of peace and victory.

In some places it is customary to throw branches of laurel on the Christmas fire and watch for omens while the leaves curl and crackle in the heat and flame.

The evergreen tree is a symbol used as the Revival of Nature, which astronomically signifies the return of the Sun. Hung with lights and offerings, the tree has for centuries been one of the principal characteristics of Christmas.

The Yule Log. "Silas," said Mrs. Ulogue, wiping her tear-dimmed eye with the corner of heringham apron, "this is the anniversary of the day our son William disappeared from home after you reprimanded him for staying out late of nights playing pool or something."

"Yes," assented her husband, sharpening the carver preparatory to dissecting a nicely browned turkey. "It is exactly ten years since he went away, and without just cause, too."

"But don't you think you were a little hard on him, Silas? It was only o'clock in the morning when he came home, and boys will be boys."

"He made a mistake in going away," replied Silas, clipping off a wing: "an I guess no one knows that better than William by this time."

"Maybe so, but I had a strange dream about our absent boy last night, and something tells me that he is coming home, and I have put an extra plate on the table, at the place where he always sat. But hark! Some one has entered the gate. It is—It is our son William! A mother's instinct is never wrong. Yes—I recognize his footsteps. Oh, we shall have a real merry Christmas once more!"

And Mrs. Ulogue, trembling like an aspen, sprang from her seat and quickly opened the door. A rough-bearded, seedy-looking man stood on the threshold.

"Oh, William, my son," cried Mrs. Ulogue, throwing her arms around the stranger and almost dragging him into the house, "you have come home at last. I knew you would. This is indeed a merry Christmas."

## XMAS DECORATIONS.

### We Have Copied the Customs of Non-Christian Countries.

Among the varieties of the early Druids there was a superstition that the houses should be decorated with evergreens in December, in order that the Sylvan spirits might enter them and thus be kept free from the blast of the cold North wind and the frost, until a milder season renew the foliage of their usual haunts. The Christmas tree is really from Egypt, where the palm tree puts forth a branch every month, and where a spray of this tree with twelve shoots on it, was used in Egypt at the time of the Winter solstice, as a symbol of the year completed.

Who does not know the poem beginning The mistletoe hung in the castle hall, The holly branch shone on the old oak wall.

Years ago over every man's door in England hung a sprig of mistletoe at this season. There still hovers a mystic charm about the mistletoe, and many a girl now, with a thrill of expectancy, places a branch of it under the chandelier or over the door. According to a former belief, when a girl is caught and kissed under a mistletoe a berry must be plucked off with each kiss, and when the berries have all been plucked the privilege ceases.

Among the ancient Britons the mistletoe that grows on the oak tree was the kind held in favor. Because of its heathen origin it is not used often in church decorations, a fact which is referred to by Washington Irving in his "Bracebridge Hall," where he has the learned parson rebuke the unlearned clerk for this very thing.

In Germany and Scandinavia the holly or holly tree is called Christ's thorn, because it puts forth its berries at Christmas time, and therefore is especially fitted for church decorations. With its glossy, dark leaves and bright red berries, it is an attractive decoration for the house.

The Jews used to decorate at their

Tabby's Christmas. It was early Christmas morning, and the streets were empty. A boy with a big turkey knocked at the kitchen door of a large, pleasant house, and while he was talking with the cook, a cold, homeless little Tabby Tiptoe slipped in between his heels so softly that nobody saw her. "Good!" she thought, "Now I can get warm!"

She padded lightly up-stairs on her little velvet paws, and found herself in a snug and cozy room. A bright fire snapped in the grate, and beside it hung a small stocking, crammed full from top to toe.

Tabby was so pleased with her warm quarters that she turned a somersault on the soft rug. Then she played that the toe of the stocking was a mouse. She caught it with her sharp claws, and gave it a little nip.

But the stocking was overloaded already, and down it came on the hearth. The checkers and dominoes and sugar-plums rolled to every-side.

Poor Tabby just had time to hide in the empty stocking before Neddy rushed into the room.

"Why, mamma!" he called, "Santa Claus must have dropped my stocking! Then he put his hand into it. 'A live kitten!' he shouted again. 'Oh, how did Santa Claus know? That was just what I wanted!'"

And indeed, of all his pretty presents, Neddy liked little pussy best.

The Christmas Tree. Only a star! a shining star! More glorious than our planets are. But watched by wistful eyes and bright, And longing hearts, that wondrous night.

Only a manger, shadow-throwed, That to some public inn belonged. Where sweet breathed cattle quietly For midnight slumber bent the knee.

Only the light of tapers small, That on two tender faces fall, Two tender faces—one divine— That still through all the centuries shine.

From palace walls, from thrones of gold, From churches, shrines, cathedrals old, Where the grand masters of their art Wrought faithfully with hand and heart.

Only a babe! in whose small hand Is seen no sceptre of command, But at whose name, with Freedom's sword, Move the great armies of the Lord.

Only a cross! but 'oh, what light Shines from God's throne on Calvary's height! His birth, His life, the angels see, Written on every Christmas tree.

Woman Ahead Again. The Boston Globe tells about a man who has been shoeing horses for fifty-seven years. This is remarkable, of course, but there is a woman up in Vermont who began shoeing hens seventy years ago.

A Hint. Let's try while we're repeating The dear old-fashioned greeting, To add a kind, unselfish act, And make the wish a blessed fact.

SOME CHRISTMAS WAITS. "I wish you a merry Christmas! Let's try while we're repeating The dear old-fashioned greeting, To add a kind, unselfish act, And make the wish a blessed fact.

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Aunt—So Xmas Day is your birthday, Harold. What are you going to have? Harold—Well, mamma said I can have either a party or a Xmas-tree. Aunt—And which do you choose? Harold—Oh, a party, of course—because I can't hang girls on a tree.

"Scuse me, ma'am," returned the stranger, struggling to free himself from the affectionate embrace of the woman. "Me name's not William, an' I ain't nobody's son. My parents passed in their checks afore I had time to get on speakin' terms with 'em, an' I'm a wanderin' orphan."

"Me name's Henry Tenyson Nages, but me parids call me 'Skinny the Tramp' for short. But I sees how you've got a vacant cheer at the festive board, an' I don't mind bein' your son pro tem, as the Latin shars sez, especially as I left home without dinin'."

"Here, Tige," called Silas, opening a door leading into the kitchen; and as a dog as large as a new-born calf sprang into the room, Skinny the Tramp made a hasty exit. As he passed through the yard he absent-mindedly picked up a new latchet, which he sold at the next village for the price of five beers.

So the tramp had a merry Christmas after all.

It was the afternoon before Christmas, and the air was full of big, feathery snowflakes. Ted and Trudie stood at the window, watching them, and Baby Belle sat on the floor, thumping her rattle dolefully.

"How do you s'pose Santa Claus can get here in such a storm?" asked Trudie, and which Ted's bright face flouled over.

"Fook!" he said bravely, "this isn't much of a storm. I could go out in it myself as well as not."

"Could you, dear?" asked his mother, anxiously. She had been watching the storm herself, and with a troubled face. "I'm afraid papa won't get home before to-morrow, and I want some things from the store to-night. Do you think you could go with your sled, Teddy?"

"Why, yes," cried Teddy, delighted to get out, and in a few minutes he was ready to start, looking like a little Santa Claus in his funny little red coat and fur cap. The box on his sled had fixed for Baby Belle to ride in was just the thing for parcels.

The storekeeper's eyes twinkled when he read mamma's note, and he wrote a little note himself to his wife about it. "I can't attend to you right away," he said to Teddy, "would you mind running over to my house with this note to Mrs. Briggs for me?"

Teddy was an obliging little boy, and he and Mrs. Briggs had some crullers and cracked hickory nuts together to pay for his tramp through the snow. When he got back to the store all the bundles were tucked away in the sled box and covered with this brown paper, so the snow couldn't get through.

"Hard night for Santa Claus to get round," said the storekeeper, pinching the boy's red cheek. "Do you s'pose you'll see him at your house?"

"I hope so," answered Ted, "but I've never been able to see him."

"I saw him once," said Mr. Briggs soberly; "when he was a little boy about your size. He looked a great deal like you."

Everybody laughed at that, and Ted laughed, too, though he didn't know what it was all about.

It was harder going home than it had been coming to the store, but Ted struggled on bravely, knowing every inch of the way.

The snow came falling thicker and faster, and that night when his mother tucked him in bed he couldn't help saying: "I'm afraid Santa can't get here, and then Trudie will be so disappointed."

But his mother laughed and kissed him cheerfully. "Don't worry, dear; Santa won't mind this little storm."

And sure enough when morning came the three little stockings hanging by the chimney were stuffed as full as they could hold, although the snow was piled up over the fences and against the windows and doors. There were candies and nuts and raisins and great big sweet oranges, and queer little toys, such as Mr. Briggs kept at his store. "So Santa Claus did come!" called Trudie gleefully.

Ted looked thoughtfully for a minute; his eyes began to dance; then he whispered to his mother: "I believe I know what Mr. Briggs meant—but I shan't tell Trudie."

Christmas Carols. To have the dawn of Christmas Day ushered in with carols and sweet music is an observance still in existence. The origin of carols is supposed to have been the song which the angels sang at the birth of the Saviour of the world—the Gloria in Excelsis—the first one ever sung, and by a heavenly host. Although the source of many Glorias, not one has ever accompanied the glorious one sung in the fields near Bethlehem about twenty centuries ago.

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