

A CHRISTMAS IDYLL.

(By Bertha M. Clay)

"W

ERE DONE, sir!" said the chauffeur. "The snow's coming down thicker than ever, and I'm afraid of running into the sea."

"I always thought that you were fond of a tight place, Alec," his master answered, good-naturedly. "But there's no denying that we are in a fix!"

A great gust of wind carried a shower of salt spray into their faces, and the breakers thundered almost at their feet.

"You see, sir, I'm on strange ground," Alec grumbled.

"And I haven't been to Hurstlees since I was a mere boy. I know that we used to ride along the sea road from Brightdale for ten or twelve miles. There should be a windmill somewhere near."

The automobile lapped into the first of a series of snowdrifts that ribbed the way, and finally came to a dead stop.

Gerald Armitage got down, and floundered to a low stone wall which ran parallel with the road.

"Bring the lantern, Alec."

He inspected the way, blinked at his man through the whirling snow, and growled:

"The wall ends here, so that we've left the mill a good mile behind us. I haven't forgotten the old landmarks. Now, what's to be done?"

"I haven't a notion, sir. We shall be snowed up in an hour, if we ain't drowned. If the tide's still coming in the waves will be over us before long!"

Armitage laughed heartily. "Poor old Alec! This is going to be a remarkable Christmas Eve, and I like something out of the common at the festive season. At any other time I should feel like kicking myself!"

He reflected for a minute, then said: "We've left the village of Brightdale a full mile and a half away and there's nothing between us and Hurstlees but an old mansion called the Grange. The grounds used to begin where this wall ends, so that we should be within a couple of hundred yards of the house. Follow me, Alec."

Alec cast a despairing glance at the half-buried motor car, and trudged after his young master. He had been anticipating roasting Christmas Eve at Hurstlees, and this was the result.

However, Gerald Armitage was not at fault this time. Flashing the lantern before him, he turned into an avenue of stunted trees, and was soon standing at the front door of a big rambling house.

"There ain't a glimmer of light anywhere," gasped Alec, wiping the snow from his smarting eyes.

Armitage grasped the door-knocker and struck half a dozen fierce blows with it, remarking: "If the house is unoccupied, Alec, we must break into it!"

But the door was cautiously opened about an inch, and a man's gruff voice demanded their business.

"If it's Madam Bell you wish to see, she's gone away for the holidays, and won't be back for weeks. And what are you doing with that lantern? Carol singers? Oh, go away!"

But Armitage pushed past him, and Alec was a very close second, followed by a cloud of whirling snowflakes.

"Don't be alarmed, sir," Armitage said. "By Jove! this is the worst night I ever experienced. My motor is stuck in the snow, and we merely want shelter until the morning."

The man sputtered something, looking at the intruders from head to toe, and motioned them to follow him. He led the way into a large, old-fashioned kitchen, wherein the leaping flames of a huge fire were making music in the cavernous chimney.

"Take off your overcoats," he said, surlily. "You're running pools of water everywhere."

"I'm sorry," Armitage's blue eyes twinkled mischievously.

"You'll be sorry when the matron finds you here!"

"Then let us hope that the she-dragon will not descend upon us until we are fortified with a good draught of your warm ale. It smells uncommonly nice, yonder outhouse. Alec, and if the gentleman will provide us with a mop you can clean up the mess. Nothing like an old sailor in emergencies."

"You're welcome to the ale, but please remember that my wife is no she-dragon!"

Just then there were sounds of girlish laughter and inconsequent little squeals in the hall, and a rush of pattering feet; then the kitchen door was unceremoniously thrown open, and Armitage retreated to the outhouse with Alec. A very good-looking and a very reproachful young woman had invaded the kitchen, with five younger girls at her heels.

"Six o'clock, Curtis, and no lights! We want to put up the holly now!"

Curtis looked conscience-stricken. "The lamps are trimmed, Miss Fane, but I declare I forgot all about the holly. It'll have to wait till morning now, as there's two feet of snow on the ground, and a regular blizzard raging. Hark! You can hear it."

"Yes, I can hear it," answered the young lady, indignantly; "and I am very angry with you. But these children shall not be disappointed, even if I have to cut the holly myself."

"Impossible, Miss Fane! Then he endeavored to make mysterious signs, and approaching the young lady, whispered, "Here got some visitors, and—"

"Yes, I quite understand," was the scornful rejoinder. "Beer drinking old sailors from the village, like yourself. Of all men, I think sailors are the most disreputable! The idea of Christmas eve without holly is unbearable, and we are determined to have some—eh, girls?"

With this Miss Fane took up one of the tall lamps ranged on a long table set against the wall, and bore it to a sitting-room.

Armitage emerged from the darkness of the outhouse with very mixed feel-

ings. He had no doubt that he had beheld the most perfect example of womanhood that the universe held, and he was equally certain that Curtis was a villain. Alec, however, was smarting under the lash of the young lady's tongue. Both he and his masters were sailors; indeed, Gerald Armitage had a right to the title of captain, but, having resigned from the service, he preferred to drop it.

"Look here, Curtis," he said, severely. "I want to know about things. My man and I have served under the naval ensign, and we have heard our calling impugned. I am Captain Armitage, and this is Petty Officer Alec Fraser—both late of H. M. S. Tiger."

Curtis rose from his chair and saluted. "This being Christmas time, sir," he said, "I've had much to do. There's only one servant left in the place. Perhaps you know that it is a ladies' school—the Grange school—principal, Madame Bell. My wife is the matron, and I'm the man that's kicked from pillar to post by a parcel of women. Your health, Captain." He raised the mug to his lips, and nodded at Alec.

"I've had a handsome young lady," questioned Armitage, his heart jumping.

"Oh, that's only Miss Fane, the head teacher, and the kid—I beg your pardon—the young girls are the children of officers on foreign service. Miss Fane always remains at the school through the holidays because she has nowhere else to go." Then he added: "I think her father was killed in South Africa. Anyway, he was a major-general."

Armitage was interested, and his electric energy immediately manifested itself.

"Get your overalls, Curtis, a couple of storm lanterns, and a saw. The holly must be got—a cartload of it! The girls shall not be disappointed."

His inspiration appeared to give him infinite pleasure. Alec put on his overalls again, and was soon following Curtis through the howling wind and the blinding snow to a patch of woodland behind the Grange. Vigorous hands cut the holly and piled it up in the outhouse. Then several young men were made to the automobile, and trunks and packages removed therefrom, and Curtis finally assisted in coupling the machine with a sheet of copper.

"This means," Armitage explained, as Curtis surveyed the heterogeneous heap in the kitchen, "that I am going to spend Christmas at the Grange school! You know that we can't go a yard further. I was on my way to General Wild's place, at Hurstlees. The general is my uncle, and most of these parcels contain presents for my young cousins. As they will be too late to be of use at Hurstlees—there are children here!"

Curtis grasped the humor of the situation, and went in quest of the matron. The fact of Armitage being a nephew of General Wild's set all spectacles at rest, for two of the general's daughters were pupils at the Grange school. Rooms were prepared, and within half an hour Armitage was making himself presentable, his thoughts very full of Miss Fane. Then he sighed, and muttered:

"Certainly am in a dreadful pickle!"

When he went down to the drawing-room Miss Fane was waiting to receive him, and he discovered that both Curtis and his wife had minutely detailed his story. This saved further explanations, and they were soon laughing and talking like old friends.

"This must be a great disappointment to you, Mr. Armitage," she said.

"On the other hand, it is a delightful surprise," Miss Fane said.

She flushed before his ardent gaze, and thought what a fine big fellow he was.

"Oh, I think you are disposed to talk nonsense now," she said, bluntly. "I haven't thanked you for the holly yet."

"No; hadn't we better begin the decorations? And as I shall be obliged to stay here for a day or two, there are the presents to adjudge upon when the girls have gone to bed. There are books and dolls, bonbons and crackers, and the usual things that ladies buy for girls. My sister made the collection."

"Poor little cousins!" laughed the governess. "Mabel and Bertha Wild are pupils of mine, and I am sure that I have heard them speak of you, Mr. Armitage."

His face grew hot. "She knows all about it," he thought, savagely.

"I haven't seen my cousins for years," he assured her, "and was obeying a command from the general when this unfortunate accident befell me."

As the girls were waiting in an agony of suspense in another room, Armitage hastened matters by introducing himself as the deputy of Father Christmas, and was soon upon excellent terms with them. For a full hour they were busy with the holly and the evergreens, and the merriment was fast and furious. The final treat was a plate supper, including mince-pie, and then to bed to dream of the delights of a real Christmas.

In the seclusion of his own room Gerald Armitage took a letter from his pocketbook, and appeared to be much perturbed while reading it. He flung it upon the table, snatched it up again, and read:

"My Dear Gerald—I must insist that you pay Alice a little more attention; indeed, I should like to see you married at no distant date. You have both, I should imagine, reached the age of discretion. I wish you to spend Christmas with us, when this matter can be finally settled. Alice is most anxious, too, and is writing. Your affectionate uncle,

"George Wild."

"I obeyed willingly enough," Armitage reflected, "up to a certain point. I cannot marry Alice Wild since I have seen Miss Fane. Oh! why did I drift into that idiotic engagement? I had no belief in love, until now!"

Next morning he rose early. He had had a dreadful dream. He drew the

window curtains aside, and eagerly looked out. No, there had not been a rapid thaw—indeed, it was still snowing. It was not yet 6 o'clock, but he heard steadily steps in the passages, and laughter and joyful little shouts. The girls were finding his Christmas gifts!

He remembered that he had an engagement ring in his pocket for Alice Wild. He had come fully prepared to have matters settled out of hand, but now—He shivered, and wondered if he were a dis honorable villain!

He was the first in the breakfast room, and was rather dismayed to see where the few of which were addressed to Miss Lesley Fane. Letters meant a postman, and a postman meant a clear road. He learnt afterward that Curtis had fetched the mail from Brightdale postoffice, but could not have done so had not the heavy seas partially melted the snow during the night.

A merry party assembled at the breakfast table and later Miss Fane appeared dressed for church. To Armitage she seemed absolutely perfect, at a packet trimmed with cheer. She wore a bunch of red berries at her throat, and there was a bit of the same color in her hat. At least, that was all that he could make of it. Her dark eyes were dancing with health, pleasure and mischief as she held out her hand to him, saying:

"You are going on to Hurstlees now, I suppose, Mr. Armitage? We may not meet again, and you have been so kind."

He took the hand and pressed it warmly, and it seemed to give him an electric shock.

"As the road to Brightdale is the only one open, Miss Fane, I should like to accompany you to church. I must send a telegram to the general. My motor won't be usable for about a week. I am going to spend my Christmas here—unless you prefer otherwise."

"It is a matter of indifference to me, Mr. Armitage. What nonsense you do talk!"

"She turned away, and he followed.

"You don't mind if I walk with you?" he said presently.

"I can't help myself, it seems!"

"There is my automobile," Armitage next remarked. "I must have it removed to a place of safety."

The sky was now clear and blue, but the dazzling sunshine gave no warmth. An ideal Christmas day, everybody said, and the bells were telling the old sweet story. Armitage seemed to be living in a new and beautiful world. He listened to the preacher's voice like a man in a dream; he heard the singing of the choir, and himself joined in the adoration. Once twice he glanced at the girl beside him, and the magnetism of his eyes compelled her to meet his gaze, each morning when a smile, Armitage knew that he was hopelessly in love.

"I haven't sent my wire yet," he said, when the service was over.

Miss Fane directed him to a telegraph office, and waited in the church porch while he despatched the message. When he came back she was talking to two girls and a tall fair young man. The young fellow was named Harry Infield, and the girls were his sisters. They blushed in true country fashion when introduced to Armitage, but were decidedly pretty and well bred.

Young Infield was talking about a select little skating party. They lived at the Mill House, and had a fine pond, so it was arranged that they should meet there the next morning.

Armitage never forgot the walk home, nor the Christmas dinner, nor the romps with the schoolgirls; and the end of the day was only spoiled by the appearance of young Infield, who endeavored to monopolize Miss Fane.

Next morning Alec Fraser gravely informed his master that there was no further excuse for staying at the Grange. He had overhauled the automobile, and if the sea road was blocked the other roads were not.

"Quite out of the question, Alec. We dare not upset the General on boxing day. Wait until to-morrow."

Alec looked grave. "He's smitten with that bit of a school miss, he reflects, quickly, "and has clean forgot his cousin."

The skating party was not a success. Both the weather and the ice were splendid, but Armitage found no pleasure in the exclusive society of the Infield girls, pretty and charming as they were. Their brother was professing to teach Miss Fane some sort of grotesque figure skating, and in the end succeeded in hurting her ankle. She had to be taken back to the Grange in a cab, and there was general confusion and dismay. Armitage had spoken sharply to Harry Infield, and the latter demanded to know by what right he interfered. When he answered "Every right!" the young fellow's face became almost livid, and he responded savagely: "We shall see about that!"

This message of assault was overheard by Miss Fane, and while her face reddened, a laugh of distastefulness crept into her dark eyes.

In the evening she was helped down stairs to a couch in the sitting room, and Armitage arranged her pillows and drew the couch nearer to the fire.

"Now what shall I do to amuse you?" he said. "I can play the violin, and sing after a fashion. Most sailors can sing, you know."

"I would rather be quiet, thank you, Mr. Armitage."

"Would you rather be alone?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes, I would rather be alone."

"But this must be my last evening here. I can make no more excuses." He spoke almost despairingly.

"You oughtn't to have made any at all. You are not acting as an English gentleman should."

"Good heavens! What do you mean, Miss Fane?" he cried.

"I am only a girl, but I can understand. You are beginning to care for me in a way, and you are trying to make me care for you. I have heard that it is a common form of amusement among

sailors. But I consider it cowardly in the extreme!"

She spoke with spirit, but there were tears of anger and mortification in her eyes.

For a moment Armitage was dumb-founded; then he knelt at her feet.

"Please go away," she pleaded, "or I shall hear you down." What would Madame Bell say if she knew of your conduct and of mine? And she is sure to hear something about it. The matron has told me not half an hour since that I am not acting discreetly."

"Miss Fane—Lesley, darling, can't you see that I am madly in love with you?" Armitage said. "I have known you just two days, and yet you are dearer to me than anything else in the world now."

She covered her face with her hands. "I cannot—I will not listen. How dare you say such things—you, an engaged man! I did not know it until this morning. Harry Infield told me—his sisters are friendly with Miss Alice Wild, to whom you have been engaged for years." She turned upon him wrathfully. "Now, the best thing you can do is to go. Surely you must be satisfied with the ruin you have wrought!"

Gerald Armitage was staggered. He paced to and fro, his arms folded across his chest.

"I could thrash that young Infield puppy," he thought. "And yet he may have believed himself justified in exposing my chest."

He came to a halt again, and said determinedly: "The engagement was none of my making, Miss Fane, and you may understand how much I care for Alice Wild, when I assure you that I haven't seen her for three years. I hardly know how the affair came about. It was, I think, suggested by the general to my mater as being a good idea, and I offered no opposition. Until now all women were pretty much alike to me."

There was a short silence. "Are you aware that you are intruding in this house—that you are presuming upon the absence of its mistress, and insulting me?" the girl said, tearfully.

"I'm doing nothing of the kind, Lesley," he retorted. "I love you, I worship you, and want you to be my wife. To-morrow I will explain the situation to my uncle and cousin; and in any event, I cannot marry Alice now."

"Miss Wild has a voice in the matter. Manlike, you utterly ignore that. Your coolness is blood-curdling. You would throw off the lady who has been engaged to you for years, just to suit the fancy of a moment? How do you know that she is not as fond of you as I am?"

"As you are," he supplemented.

"I said nothing of the kind; in fact, I doubt you very much now."

"You appear to believe every evil thing of me imaginable. Young Infield has been poisoning your mind against me because he fancies himself in love with you."

Miss Fane's face grew hot again. "That overgrown boy!" she exclaimed, scornfully; whereat Armitage laughed, albeit he felt rather dismal.

"Well," he said at last, "I will say good-night, and I promise not to speak to you again until I can do so as a free man. My conduct does look bad from the point of view of one who doesn't know the real facts. And when I come back, Lesley—you don't mind me calling you Lesley, do you?"

"And when I come back will you be a little kinder to me?" he persisted.

"Perhaps!"

Armitage gazed at her rapturously for a spell, and was just turning away when there came a thunderous knocking on the door and he heard the following voice of General Wild.

He had negotiated many difficult problems in his day, and he had been in a good many tight places, but this—

"My uncle!" he explained to Miss Fane, and he saw her face pale and her eyes dilate. This nerved him. He nodded reassuredly to her and went out.

"So!" roared the irate general, "this is the specimen of honorable gentleman you are! I suppose that the other young woman is in there." He indicated the door of the sitting-room with his stick. "Broken-down motor-car—storms—snowdrifts—yes! I've had the whole story from a gentleman, sir, and you haven't the grace to look ashamed."

"A gentleman!" sneered Armitage; "a boy named Infield. I can see his monkey-face peeping through yonder door-way now. No, I am not ashamed. My engagement to Alice was a cut-and-dried affair of your manufacture, and you can go hang, sir, if Alice—"

But the general flung a note in his face. "This is from my daughter, sir, and when you have read it I shall know how to act."

With these words, and a threatening look, he stomped out of the house.

Armitage opened the letter, and read the following in the light of the hall lamp:

"My Dear Gerald—I am so glad that you have kicked over the traces. Whatever could children know about the responsibilities of an engagement and marriage? I was preparing to face the general and you, because I am in love with somebody, and somebody is in love with me, but you helped me out of a difficulty just in the nick of time. I am sure that Miss Lesley Fane and I shall be great chums.—Your affectionate cousin,

"Alice Wild."

Gerald nearly shouted "Hurrah!" He ran back to the sitting-room, and read the precious letter aloud; then he handed it to Miss Fane so that she could read it for herself.

"Are you satisfied now, darling?" he asked.

Her eyes grew misty, and her face softened. "You may kiss me," she whispered, turning rosy red. "I have been unjust towards you, Gerald, but it was only because I had lost my heart to you."

He dived into his pocket and produced the engagement ring he had bought for Alice Wild.

"The last of my Christmas presents, proof of the truth and sacredness of a real Christmas Idyll!"

LIFE.

Our share of night to bear,
Our share of morning;
Our blank in bliss to fill,
Our blank in scoring.

Here a star and there a star,
Some lose their way.
Here a mist and there a mist,
Afterwards—Glad!

—Emily Dickinson.

Heart of Gold

(Frances M. L. S. Christmas number.)

This is the story as I was told it:

It was curious to find myself in the drawing-room so late at night. It was still more curious to find myself face to face with George Howard after all these years, and to feel that the old compelling power which his affection gave him over me was stronger than ever, but more unobtainable.

"I want you," he was saying. "To come and pay some visits."

The absurdity of the request made me laugh. But he just turned round and walked towards the door. Immediately I found myself following him, as if drawn by an irresistible magnetic thread, out into the darkness of the night. We trudged through slush-covered streets until we reached a small square—a square where the houses were old and dilapidated, the road paper-strewn, and where the few miserable trees seemed to give offense to the keen north wind.

I had seen the square many years before, and knew it was in Islington; the house before which we at last stopped also seemed vaguely familiar. My companion then spoke for the first time since we left my house.

"I want you," he said, "to look into the small back room of this house; tell me what you see."

I was going to laugh again when I realized that by some strange clairvoyant power I was in a staid, sparsely-furnished room. I told my companion what I saw: A young, pretty girl in a very shabby dress was cooking a soup for her brother over the fire; another girl, looking wretchedly ill, sat propped up in pillows on a low chair near. The girl who was cooking held the spoon with which she had been stirring the dish raised threateningly in her hands as she said in mock tragic tones: "Not another word, or I shall let this delicious confection burn." But the sick girl continued: "I know you are going without proper food yourself so that I may have the nourishment the doctor ordered. I must go to the hospital, Mabel. Mabel hasn't had a sleep, and started coughing and jesting, until at last the sick girl became bright again."

"Do you see Mabel's heart?" said my companion.

"Yes," I replied; "it is extraordinary. But as she stands looking towards her friend her heart is quite visible. It is like crystal, and beautiful rose-colored rays shine from it and brighten everywhere she stands."

"We shall now move on," said my companion.

The next house we stood before I recognized at once as a boarding house in Bedford Square, with pretensions to smartness. Here I saw a drawing-room, a bright room, but with a tawdry, artificial atmosphere.

Sitting on a sofa were a man and a woman, both about twenty-five years of age. The man was saying: "I cannot understand it. Two years ago all the attention was on my part, because my health was so bad; now you think only of money." The woman answered: "We cannot live on dreams, and if you really cared for me you would try and write something to make money. I am sure you have more brains than James Thorne, and he is making three thousand a year." "Do you remember," said the man, dreamily, "when we were first engaged, we spent all our time planning a little home in the country; our only gold was to be that which came with the sun's morning rays, our only amusement to watch the face of Nature as it smiled softly in spring, gleamed gloriously in summer, or became sad and leaved in autumn?" "Yes," interrupted the woman in an irritated voice, "and have nothing to eat but dwdrop soup or distilled rainbow."

"Do you see her heart?" again asked my companion.

"Yes," I replied, "it is darker in color than the girl's, and it is tinged with yellow."

"The touch of gold," he muttered, sadly.

In what seemed to me less than a minute of time we were in a wide Kensington street. I knew before we reached it that I should be called upon to visit No. 45.

The first person I saw in a charming room—a boudoir evidently, from its pale blue silk-covered walls—was a handsome man, short of stature. There was a strength and grip about his chin and jaw, and bright, keen, brown eyes and a hooked nose that proclaimed his Jewish blood. He was rubbing his hands rapidly together, the palms emitting a crisp, crackling sound. It was not until he began to talk that I knew he was not alone. Then I saw a tall, graceful woman, wearing a magnificent dress of deep red velvet, standing by the mantelpiece. She remained gazing in tired abstraction at the fire, even while she answered the man's remarks, and her voice sounded unpleasantly mechanical as she said: "Yes, I think it was the most successful night we have ever had; every one came, even Lady Dacre. I saw you talking business with Lord Hadford and Mr. Thomas. I suppose it is settled that they join the board?" "They took the suggestion like sugar," replied the man. Then, after some further talk which was all about the influence of money, he said: "Don't you think it was a mistake to have had Ferraris to play? No one has ever heard of him." "But he plays so delightfully," said the woman, "and he asked me to let him come, as it might mean the beginning of a craze for him."

"Her heart," I said to my companion as we left the dark street, "was so curious to look at; there seemed to be a few streaks of red bright as the rubies on her neck, and all the rest yellow."

And he replied, "I knew it. The gold has dried up nearly all the life-blood."

I felt very sad for the woman, and thinking of her kept me from noticing whether we were going. I was brought back to consciousness by my companion's voice. We were in Park Lane. The night had become so dark I could only distinguish indistinct outlines of a large mansion; but, as before, its walls soon gave up their secret to me. I was in a bedroom of great luxury. From the gold toilet appointments, with their jeweled monogram, to white satin and guipure lace coverlet on the bed, everything told a tale of Croesus-like wealth. The fire and a deeply shaded lamp gave just light enough to the huge room to enable me to distinguish a woman asleep on the bed. Her features, apart from

the immobility of sleep, had the hardness of carved stone; and the lips and eyes, commonly supposed downwards with curves of habit, glared at me. As I was searching for some reason for my visitation to the luxurious room my companion said in whispered, sibilant tones, "I will tell you something about her. In a waste paper basket in the next room, money, spoons, parquetry, and no. of charities torn up without being glanced at; on her escritoire you would see an addressed letter dictated to her secretary before she went to bed. It contains a stinging and insulting reprimand and refusal to an old friend, who in direct need had asked for a trifling loan of money. In a dress chest is a motor coat bought to-day for five hundred pounds, and a gown which cost two hundred. And yet the bells are beginning to peal out peace on earth to men of good-will. But look at the woman's heart."

As I looked I heard a bitter, mocking laugh from George Howard.

The woman had no heart; a large, shapeless lump of gold had taken the place of the throbbing organ of life and love. Suddenly I realized that this mockery of a heart was mine, and it became so weighty that it dragged me down—down into such dark and murky depths that I called to George to save me; but he only laughed louder, and the sad contentment of his eyes was so terrible that I preferred the black horror which was closing in around me.

I awoke. On my bed was the satin and lace coverlet, from my table gleamed ornaments in gold, on the writing table beyond I knew there were the two letters, and in a dress chest hung my new gown of a hoarse was mine, and I had once been the girl who gave up her lunch to buy meat to make soup for a sick friend! The bells were now really ringing out "Peace on earth to men of good-will." With their chimes there seemed to mingle the cries of hundreds of little children who were without bread in this snow-clad city!

Did the spirit of George Howard really take pity on me and show me the hardening process of gold in these scenes from my life? Who can tell?

Far away from the noise of cities, in a little village whose straggling white cottages reach to the sea shore, there may be seen a marble monument erected to the memory of a woman who had left Fashion's broad thoroughfare to live amongst the poor as a helper and a friend. The only inscription on the stone is:

"SHE HAD A HEART OF GOLD."

The Alphabet's Christmas Tree.

The Alphabet a meeting held
As Christmas eve the night
And voted each a gift to bring
To please the children dear.

"They try so hard," the letters said,
"To learn us by our names;
We'll give them presents, every one,
Of candy, bells and games."

So Christmas eve they one and all
Came bringing gifts and cheer,
Their presents large and presents small
To hang upon the tree.

A brought an apple, round and red,
And B a bouncing ball;
While C a bag of candy gave—
Enough to feed them all.

D carried in his arms a doll
With shining curls and hair,
And E, a cotton elephant,
Came bringing with great care.

F had a fan from far Japan,
A G a funny game,
H brought a hobby-horse,
A racer of great fame.

I held an ink stand in his hand,
A useful thing for school,
J waved on high a jumping-jack,
Ait painted black and red.

K thought a kite the proper thing;
A lamb L held aloft;
M's present was a little ruff
Of fur so warm and soft.

N proudly bore a Noah's ark,
Filled up with every kind of queer,
O took that yellow oranges
Would bring the best of cheer.

"A purse," said P, "will look so well
Up there upon the tree,"
Q brought a quilt for baby's crib—
A thoughtful gift was he.

R gave a pretty ruby ring,
With sparkling stones and glow;
S dragged along a brand-new sled
To coast upon the snow.

Loody upon a trumpet blew
The valiant letter T,
U held a strange umbrella up,
Unfurled for all to see.

A dainty vase G's gift appeared,
Of crystal glass so clear;
"A wish," said Hvely W.,
"Is handy to have near."

But X's present was so large
He sent it by express,
And what was in it no one knew,
Although they tried to guess.

Y had a raven painted yacht
With every part complete,
Z bore a zither, "which," he said,
"Would furnish music sweet."

How merrily the children danced
Around the tree next day,
While safe within the roomer all
The little letters lay!

GIFT WRAPPING.

A wonderful Indian tokus is of golden tissue.

A sensational one is a scarlet turban, with a high black aigrette pinned on with large diamond buttons.

It is important.

It is even necessary.

It must look well, of course.

Who fancies a gift in slovenly guise? Carelessly done up parcels are often lost.

A wobbly pasteboard box is not suitable.

Mussy paper of poor quality is also unsuitable.

A few sheets of good wrapping paper do not cost much, yet save wrapping paper from one's purchases.

An average pasteboard box may be broken by stamping.

And it isn't enough that the outer wrapping be creditable.

Let the gift be folded, prettiest side foremost when it is opened.

Holly red ribbon should tie the gift both ways with knots of the ribbon.

Invariably the sender's address should be plainly written up in the left-hand corner.

If all the oft-repeated rules regarding the sending of mail matter were heeded, instead of 40,000 dead letters a day, the dead letter office would be as dead as its name indicates.

A medical journal wisely announces that you shouldn't go to sleep on an empty stomach. Perhaps it means to insinuate that you should sleep on your back.

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