

## The Christmas Glow.

BY CHARLES H. CRANDALL.  
I.

How well it is that the Christmas-tide  
Comes not when valleys are decked with pride,  
When birds are joyous and fields are gay,  
But comes when the year is sad and gray;  
When the cold wind cuts the wanderer's cheek,  
And makes the boughs in the forest creak!

Ah, sad would the winter be,  
And dreary for you and me,  
Were it not for the Christmas glow  
That shines on the fields of snow!

## II.

Twine bright leaves for the summer-time past,  
But the crown of the year is at the last,  
When its passion is ended, its rest begun,  
And there's no bale in the low, bright sun;  
While over the snow floats the evergreen's breath  
Like a spirit triumphant over death.

Then while we gladly give,  
Each Christmas that we live,  
We'll keep in memory always  
The wondrous gift of Christmas day.

## III.

Then wreath the holly and laurel green,  
And let the mistletoe be seen  
Where nuts are cracked before the blaze,  
And children in the embers gaze;  
While rosy apples heaped up high  
And all good cheer is standing by.

Right gladly greet the timid knock!  
A mendicant one may not mock,  
For in this humble mask  
The Saviour now doth ask.

## IV.

Remember the manger so cold and bare,  
The breath of kine in the chilly air,  
And think how the Child, that shivering lay,  
Doth warm the hearts of the world to-day!  
The great white star that bent to earth  
Kindled the Yule log on each hearth.

Sweet on the morning air  
Rose the fair young mother's prayer,  
And the stars and the shepherds sang,  
And the round, blue heavens rang!

## V.

Then, children, wake, and your carols sing,  
And thoughts as sweet as your faces bring,  
For hearts would freeze like the old, old year,  
If the children did not bring them cheer;  
For he who would the Kingdom win  
Must be "as a child" to enter in.

Then glad shall the winter be—  
Each winter that we see—  
While the beautiful Christmas glow  
Shall shine o'er the fields of snow!

## How the Tree Saved the Town.

## CHRISTMAS IN HOLLAND.

BY FRED. MYRON COLBY.

HOLLAND, sunk below the sea-level, and defended by its dykes against the mad waves of the German Ocean, is the queerest little country in Europe; and Haarlem, on the river Spaarne, is one of the queerest and quaintest of Dutch cities. Its picturesque buildings and narrow streets still speak of the wars and tumults of the Middle Ages. Wars were frequent then, and each one seems to have left its scar or its heraldry on the city's livery.

Three hundred and seventeen years ago this December, the city lay in leaguer. An army of thirty thousand Spaniards, led by the cruel Duke of Alva, besieged the place, which was defended by about four thousand men—Dutchmen and Germans. The Spaniards had inundated in blood the ruins of two cities—Zutphen and Naarden; but these horrors, instead of intimidating the courageous defenders of Haarlem, only inspired them with new ardour.

At the end of the first month's siege, the city still resisted firmly, and the thirty thousand men encamped beneath its walls began to doubt if they should ever win it by force, and resolved to resort to stratagem.

Christmas eve, 1572, was chill and dark and wintry. The snow lay to the depth of several inches; and the wind, which sweeps without obstacle over the plains of Holland, blew sharply. The Spanish camp lay silent and in darkness—not even the midnight mass seemed to put the people in motion. In the city, however, there were many houses lighted.

The German soldiers had brought from the fatherland the custom now generally observed throughout Christendom of lighting a tree in the evening, and hanging it full of gifts, to be distributed among the various members of the family; and as these auxiliaries were quartered in private houses, not a few of the citizens had introduced the novel feature in connection with the other Christmas rites.

One of these houses was situated near the gate called St. John, and a little behind the ramparts. It was owned and occupied by Arnold Van Merk, a citizen of note, and a prominent officer in the forces of the city. Domiciled under his roof was a German officer, Captain Karl, and several soldiers, besides his own family, which consisted of his wife and six children.

Van Merk's house was one of the highest in the city. From the upper story one could look out upon the ramparts, and above them over the camp of the Spaniards, and to the flat country beyond. The window of this room was of that large style which may still be seen in Dutch houses, and through which, by means of a pulley and cord, provisions and merchandise are raised to the roof chambers. Ordinarily it was secured by large and heavy shutters. Without this window the tree could not have saved the town.

Cold and cheerless as the night was out of doors, in the mansion of the Van Merks there were warmth and comfort. There was nothing present to remind one of the siege and its horrors save the armour and the arms hanging upon the walls, and the packages of lint scattered around. In almost every house in Haarlem the women made lint to bind the wounds of their brave brothers.

Van Merk and his guest, Captain Karl, came home very late. They were officers of the night, and had been the round of the city, finding everything in good order, and the enemy quiet. At their own door they were halted, and asked for the countersign.

"Holland, Orange, and Liberty."

And with these words the two men entered the great house. It was one of Captain Karl's own German soldiers who was standing on guard; and several others were busying themselves in getting ready the mystic tree, which was placed in the upper chamber of the mansion. Although it was midnight, the Van Merk children were sitting up, impatiently waiting the summons which was to reveal to them the glories of this wonderful tree. Karl had promised them a grand surprise—and children never forget promises.

"All is ready," came the signal down the stairway.

"Follow me, then," cried Captain Karl.

Up three flights of stairs they mounted, the older folks walking gravely behind; the younger ones, eager and impatient, in advance. What a marvelous sight it was to their wondering eyes! In the middle of the great room stood the tree, a lofty fir, blazing with light, and decorated with a glorious array of costly gifts. The illumination dazzled

them. Never before had the star, the shepherds, the angels, and the Holy Child in the manger, seemed so real.

The children clapped their hands and cried for joy. They dared not approach the tree. It seemed a sacrilege to touch the branches, so brilliant, so mystic, so wonderful, with their load of precious things. Even the old soldiers were affected by the sight. To the joy of a festival was added that other joy still more sweet, of feeling themselves true brethren, united by a common peril and a common love.

Captain Karl led his young companions, one by one, to the tree, and took the gifts from the branches.

It was in the midst of this merriment that a terrible shout arose from the street below. Then fierce war-cries were heard, and the clashing of swords. They knew what it meant in a moment. Their blanched lips gave utterance to two words—"The Spaniards!" and then the men grasped their swords, and prepared to sell their lives dearly.

The enemy was indeed at hand. In the darkness and silence of the winter night they had scaled the wall, murdered two of the sentinels, and, before the third could give the alarm, hundreds of Spanish men-at-arms were on the ramparts, and other hundreds were following them. The city seemed lost. The atrocities of Zutphen and Naarden were to be repeated unless a miracle was interposed.

It was at this moment that Captain Karl, as if inspired, suddenly dashed open the shutters of the great window, and threw upon the crowded Spaniards the blaze from those hundred lighted candles on the Christmas-tree.

So suddenly and so unexpectedly did those fires burst out upon the darkness, that the Spaniards imagined they had fallen into a snare. This belief was strengthened by seeing the armed soldiers standing in the midst of the illuminated room, clad in armour, and with weapons glittering in the light.

A panic seized them; and without pausing to investigate they drew back, and hastened down the ramparts in headlong confusion. The first arrived stumbled over the last; and numbers rolled, pell-mell, into the trenches. In a few seconds the wall was clear; the lighted tree shone upon a frightened multitude flying in disorder toward the camp.

Three hundred years have passed since that Christmas night, but the story of that first Christmas-tree is not forgotten. It lives in the nation's history; while at every fireside in Haarlem, when the Christmas-tide comes round, is the story told of how the city was saved in the olden time by Captain Karl's Christmas-tree. And if you were there to-day you would be told the story, and pointed to the city's arms and motto, which are these: A branching fir-tree, decorated and blazing with burning tapers, with the German legend "Ein Feste Burg," the words with which Luther began his famous hymn—

"A mighty fortress is our God."

Writing to a young girl on her birthday, the late Dr. Robertson said:—"By being always humble you will be always young. Humility is a 'little child.' This is Christ's picture of it. But Pride is old—as old as that old Serpent the Devil. If you indulge in pride you'll make the pretty face of your soul old and wrinkled in no time. And Faith, too, is a 'little child,' and makes you and keeps you always young; and Hope is young; and Love is young, and Joy is young, and Generosity is young; but Sin is an ugly old hag. And so I hope that you will be dressed afresh to-day in the beauties of holiness, and baptized afresh into the dew of youth."