



SNOW FLOWERS.

and these also keep at the same angle from each other as did each in the other larger and longer arms. With unerring certainty and with the greatest mathematical accuracy these minute atoms of snow arrange themselves into these crystals, always at the same angle, yet presenting an almost endless variety of combinations.

"The force of gravitation is a very simple affair," says Professor Tyndall, "compared to the forces which bring matter into crystals in this marvellously unerring and exquisite manner." And he thoughtfully and eloquently adds, "It is worth pausing to think what wonderful work is going on in the atmosphere during the formation and descent of every snow-shower. What building power is brought into play! And how imperfect seem the productions of human minds and hands when compared with these formed by the blind forces of nature! But who ventures to call the forces of nature blind? . . . The blindness is ours; and what we really ought to say and confess is that our powers are absolutely unable to comprehend either the origin or the end of the operations of nature."

Ah, there, this great man shows his weakness! If he had studied the Bible with half the zeal and care that he has science, he would not have written that last sentence. The devout Bible-reader, even the smallest child in our Sunday-schools, could teach this man, so learned in the wisdom of this world, that God is the author and origin of nature and of all things, and that the "end of all these operations" is to show forth to the universe the wisdom, beneficence, and glory of the Creator.

Snow is mentioned about twenty-five times in the Bible. It is not as common to see snow in the lands where the books of the Bible were written as in our country. The leprosy of Miriam and of Gehazi was compared to snow (Num. 12. 10; 2 Kings 5. 27). The purity of him whom the Lord washes is likened to it (Psalm 51. 7; Isa. 1. 18); and the raiment of Christ at his transformation is said to have been white as snow (Matt. 28. 3; Mark 9. 3).

Sir Humphrey Davy saw a machine in Germany which compressed air under a column of water two hundred and sixty feet high. When the stop-cock was opened allowing air to escape, it was discovered that under this immense pressure all the vapour in the compressed air had been frozen, and flew out from the tube as a shower of snow. The pipe from which the air escaped was also heard with fine icicles.

The whiteness of the snow is due to the reflection of the light from the faces of these minute crystals. Ice when ground fine takes on a similar whiteness. Ice is formed in still water, such as you find on a lake, into six-pointed crystals, closely resembling the crystals of snow. When the ice is ground these minute crystals appear, reflecting the light and turning into a white colour. And so in winter, as in summer, this wonderful world of ours is covered with the most delicately formed flowers; and it would be difficult to prove that the winter blossoms which come to us in such plentiful snow-storms—"showers of flowers"—are less beautiful than those which spring from the earth. Both are made by the same infinite Hand that shaped the worlds around us.

POETRY OF THE NEW YEAR.

THE OLD GOING OUT AND THE NEW COMING IN.

The New Year! What a poem in the very words! Beneath the many-hued arch of its fancies the past and the present unite, and the future beckons onward. What a flood of years have swept along the channel of time since the heart of man first sighed to the regular of a dying year—first hailed the new guest at the door! Down through the corridors of centuries, flooded with the music of the human heart, deep as the diapasons of eternity, we touch the tragedy of the New Year—its joys, its sorrows, its tears, its laughter, its heart-beats of memory, its rainbow of love, its flowers, and its snow. To many it is the twilight of morn; to many it is the shadow of eve—the bud that flowers—the star that shines but yields no light—the purpose without the fruitage.

At the altar of the New Year, lit up with bright tapers of the past and the smiling horizon of the future, the soul kneels in loving homage—a vassal to the sceptre of memory, a captive bound to the chariot wheels of hope. Since last we touched the threshold of the New Year, life has sung its way into each bud and flower, and found expression in the tonic sol-fa of the grove. The cypress sky has swept the sere leaf, psalm-like, to its grave; and every tree, in mantle white, with bowed head, murmurs a prayer for the departed dead. It seems but yesterday we welcomed with kindly word and friendly cheer the year we have entombed:

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

How swift they go,
Life's many years,
With their winds of woe
And their storms of tears,
And their darkest of nights, whose shadowy slopes
Are lit with the flashes of starriest hopes,
And their sunshiny days, in whose calm heaven loom
The clouds of the tempest—the shadows of gloom!

And ah! we pray,
With a grief so drear,
That the years may stay
When their graves are near;
Tho' the brows of to-morrow be radiant and bright,
With love and with beauty, with life and with light,
The dead hearts of yesterday, cold on the bier,
To the hearts that survive them are evermore dear.

For the heart so true
To each old year cleaves;
Tho' the hand of the New
Flowery garlands weaves.
But the flowers of the future, tho' fragrant and fair,
With the past's withered leaflets may never compare;
For dear is each dead leaf, and dearer each thorn,
In the wreaths which the brows of our past years have worn.

Yea! men will cling
With a love to the last,
And wildly fling
Their arms round their past,
As the vine that clings to the oak that falls,
As the ivy twines round the crumbled walls;
For the dust of the past some hearts higher prize
Than the stars that flash out from the future's bright skies.

And why not so?
The old, old years,
They knew and they know
All our hopes and fears;
We walked by their side, and we told them each grief,
And they kissed off our tears while they whispered relief;
And the stories of hearts that may not be revealed,
In the hearts of the dead years are buried and sealed.

Let the New Year sing
At the Old Year's grave;

Will the New Year bring
What the Old Year gave?
Ah! the Stranger-Year trips over the snows,
And his brow is wreathed with many a rose;
But how many thorns do the roses conceal
Which the roses, when withered, shall so soon reveal?

Let the New Year smile
When the Old Year dies;
In how short a while
Shall the smiles be sighs?
Yea! Stranger-Year, thou hast many a charm,
And thy face is fair and thy greeting warm;
But, dearer than thou—in his shroud of snows—
Is the furrowed face of the year that goes.

Yea, bright New Year,
O'er all the earth,
With song and cheer,
They will hail thy birth;
They will trust thy words in a single hour,
They will love thy face, they will laud thy power;
For the new has charms which the old has not,
And the stranger's face makes the friend's forgot.

Not so with the New Year. Its smiles may cheer our hearts and for a moment enthrall our thoughts, but the mirror of the past brings back the faces we loved of yore. Yea, we hear once more the pulse-beat of friendship's kindly heart; for the memory of love is deeper than the grave—it is an immortality stretching from earth to heaven—a Jacob's ladder, upon which ascend and descend bright cherubims of affection, whose stainless robes are woven in the loom of purest love. Standing in the vestibule of a New Year, my soul surveys the shores that accent the ocean of the past—the struggling swimmer, cast up by the cruel wave upon a pitiless rock—the white sail, bearing its cargo triumphant to the shore—the floating spar, that writes upon the waters its epic tale of woe.

Oh, friends of happy boyhood, whose memories are sweet to me as the breath of morning flowers! Ye whose feet have paced the metre of life's poem, and fell before the poetic moment of noontide had writ your names upon the scroll of fame! Ye dreamers of a summer glory, whose honoured hours ne'er brought the fruitage of an autumn-day! Ye I salute! I sit beside the Old Year. His pulse is slow, for plumed death stands waiting at the door:

DEATH AND LIFE.

Upon his couch the Old Year lay,
Death pressed his brow and hand,
A pilgrim year in mantle white
Was dreaming in the land;
Life's anxious heart stood mourning by,
And dropt a pitying tear
Upon the cold and snowy shroud
That wrapt the dear Old Year.

O Father Time! O archer swift!
Thy arrows are but days
Shot through the sky that spans our life,
Some fleck'd with golden rays—
Some clad in raiment dark and drear
That know no earthly light,
The sunshine of whose joys and hopes
Are quenched in sorrow's night.

A happy, jolly, good Old Year!
We'll miss thy heart and hand;
We knew thy form, we knew thy face,
Thy smile hath cheered the land.
Within thy folded arms we've dreamt,
With hopeful prayers and fears,
But now, alas! kind, good Old Year,
We bury thee with tears.

The friends that gathered round thy knee
We'll meet, alas! no more;
They've left the household of our days,
And closed the iron door.
Life beams anew—with other light
We seek our path to find;
Nor seek in vain, with torch in hand,
The path we left behind.

Another year hath robbed itself
And started on its way;
With staff of hope and raiment bright
It ushers in the day.
The bells are ringing thro' the land,
All hearts are filled with cheer;
"The Old is dead!"—"Long live the New!"

The glad, the bright New Year!
Ring in the joys of happy home,
The mirth, the love, the glee;
Ring in sweet peace to all mankind,
Ring till all hearts are free.
O cherub year! O white-robed child!
Baptized in hope above;
We pray thee bless with heavenly smile,
The hearts and homes we love!

THE TRAIN BOY.

He had done several little errands for the gentleman in the Pullman car, and as the man got off he slipped a dollar into his hand.

"I like your looks, Jimmie," he said kindly. "Now, remember that you can make yourself whatever you wish. I don't mean by that that you may become a Vanderbilt, if you desire, or be President of the United States; but I do mean that you can be something better yet—a Christian man. Don't forget that."

It was ten years later before the two men met again. Then Jimmie had just been made conductor on an important road, and in one of the passengers he recognized his old-time friend. The gentleman had changed but little in the ten years just passed, but it was hard to persuade him that the fine-looking young conductor was the ragged train boy of whom he still retained a faint remembrance.

"But I certainly am he," Jimmie asserted energetically, "and I've always wanted to tell you how much your words and your kindness did for me. I'd been getting into low company, and growing sort o' wild and reckless; but your words just haunted me, and I got to wondering if that kind of thing paid. I concluded that I'd rather grow up a Christian man, as you said, than a drunken loafer; so I just stopped short and commenced over in dead earnest."

"And that was all the result of a few sentences forgotten as soon as uttered," said the gentleman thoughtfully. "It just shows what a mighty power for weal or woe our chance words may be, and how we ought to guard them"—Classmate.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

JANUARY 10, 1897.

The childhood of John the Baptist.—Luke 1. 80.

A NOTABLE MAN.

This whole chapter is replete with interest. The events preceding the birth of the Baptist are such as can only be designated most wonderful. Zacharias, his father, was a priest, but he was dumb for some time before the birth of his son. Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, was cousin to Mary, the mother of Jesus. John was the forerunner of Jesus, and was designated in prophecy as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

HIS DUTIES.

The "forerunner" was one who went before royalty to prepare the way for the coming of royalty. Thus John Baptist went before Christ, and proclaimed his coming, and preached, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Isaiah prophesied of John Baptist, and all his predictions received a marvellous fulfillment. Read the prophecies as found in Isaiah 40, and compare them with the life of the Baptist as recorded in the Gospels, and you will see the truth of this statement.

HIS MANNER OF LIFE.

Verse 80. He was strong in spirit, his strength increased with his years, and was thus being fitted for the duties which would shortly devolve upon him. His home was not one of luxury. He lived in a wilderness, that is, a country not remarkable for its fertility, where the art of man had not been brought into use. The air was pure, the food of the plainest description, all which were calculated to develop a rugged character, or one who could endure hardship.

ENTERING UPON HIS DUTIES.

"Till the day of his showing unto Israel." In the olden times priests were not initiated into office until they were thirty years of age. This is what is meant by the phrase now under consideration. All these years he was undergoing the necessary preparation. God would have no servant of his engage in holy duties until he had been prepared. No doubt the time would be well spent by John in meditation and prayer.

Should not this teach the church an important lesson? Whatever office any of us may be called to fill, we should seek to obtain the best qualification possible for the office, and study to become a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.

She—"The man I marry must be only a little lower than the angels."
He (suddenly flopping)—"Here I am on my knees, a little lower than one of them."
He got her