

Gummings consented, with all their hearts, to occupy the gaping vacancy. The famous beauties carried out such a raid, and bore off such spoil as only Irish beauties have twice in half a century wrested from close-listed British hands. They reached the toppling summit of their ambition, until the blood-royal alone defied the witchery of their sway; the strawberry leaves, bangles next to the sceptre, were again and again laid at their feet miming to conquest. Verily, the Duke who claimed the wide moors and parks of Clydesdale, and the proud peaks of Goat-fell; and great Macallummore, the Lord of the Isles, submitted to wear the same flowery chains. The Gummings were the true queens of society. To them both wealth and rank went a begging in their time, as they themselves had gone a begging to Peg Wollington. Both sisters became famous women of quality. One sister was twice a duchess. Luckier (yes, lucky is the word we play upon), Luckier lasses never entered London without a penny!

Sally Fortescue returned to the big house of Deanston as she had left it. The Squire could not resist a hurrah of glee, though he affected to shake his white head wrathfully. The Squire's lady lectured her soundly, but she held her child to her bosom, and from that moment she renounced the spectacles which she had lately assumed and which bestowed so peculiarly precise and pedantic an air on her comely, matronly face. Sally bloomed on a while light-hearted, but soon grew seldat, and became the only stay of her parents. There was a Shane O'Dyer, one of the rank crop of gentlemen-farmers, who rode and danced for a time after Sally, but he was only a gentleman-farmer, of some third cousin of a proprietor. In one of the first eruptions of the rebellion his stack-yard was burnt, his cattle houghed, his hedges broken down, his cabin laid open to the wind and weather. He never recovered the injury; for he was not a man of educated faculties and disciplined resources, but only upright and honest, frank and kind, and a mighty hunter. The match was not to be dreamt of then, though Sally was so gentle a girl, and young O'Dyer so manly and fond, and possibly the brightest young man in these quarters. It was believed the young girl took the loss to heart, although not so much as he did. Indeed the young farmer, ruined now beyond redemption, rode a little more desperately than before, swang from side to side in his saddle with weakness, sat shivering in his wet clothes in the tumble-down house, began to burn and melt away with fever, crept as often as he could to the hillock which commanded a view of the big house of Deanston, and died one fine day in his prime. There was nothing seen on Sally, except that her bloom went off at once and altogether; she who had been so sweet a woman in her blushes was ever after a sweet white-faced woman, who had laid up her brocade in lavender, and only wore sprigged poplins and muslins on Sundays and Saturdays.

Peg Wollington had run her course, her meteor course. Alas, alas! so near the sun the one day; so far off in the blackness of darkness the next. Her generous impulses, her kindly acts were all blurred

and obliterated, like stars behind inky clouds, in the progress of a life flighty and erring, and degenerating often into riot and brutality. But Peg's faithful light did not leap out in the murky night. The poor soul stopped short in her godless, unrighteous career; she suddenly cried out that she saw the broad way and the pit to which it led, and felt her self sinking to destruction. But she had also a glimpse of the narrow road mounting up to the heights still open to her. How awful it was for her light, dancing feet to retrace the long and weary waste thick set with thorns! What mocking voices and malignant faces tortured her on the backward journey she could have told; but she grasped the rod and bent upon the staff; and sincere, meek and, shame-faced in her great repentance, surely she crossed the gulf, forded the stream, and reached the shore. One old, old acquaintance, reading of Peg Wollington's conversion and repentance in the idle gossip of a stray newspaper of the day, knelt down on her saint's knees, and thanked God for it in her saint's humility and gladness.

In the cracked city of Paris, not yet mended after the French Revolution, two English beauties divided the enthusiasm of a French audience. One of them was but a Bristol crystal, a paltry *parceme*, a vulgar city dame, to whom the charmed circle of Almack's was closed. The other was but an Irish diamond: but then it was an Irish diamond of the first water; and think what this diamond felt to be compared by the shallow French to the Bristol stone lacquered in Brummagem! a diamond that had given back the courtliest rays, whose lustre was the perfection of refinement, and whose sensitiveness to impressions was rather increased by the fact that it was a doubtful diamond, and not an assured diamond of the mines of Golconda. And the showy-tasted, rapidly-deciding French had not the discrimination to perceive the difference, indeed preferred the fatter, fairer sprightlier of the two ladies or diamonds. They say the other died of it, the diamond! This lucky Gunning died of mortification and spite, if it was not of the effects of the paint with which she had taken pains to plastering and daubing the fading face once so radiant in its bloom. I see her in the dressing-closet whimpering or scolding, and laying on the poison till she sinks back under one of the attacks of faintness which overcome her. I see her in the theatre or opera engaged in the wretched battle, biting her lips and writhing as if stung, beneath her outward calm, when the superannated marquis or puppy prince is paraded in the box of the exulting rival. I see her in a moment brought face to face with a grinning skeleton; her stagger and shrick fill my eyes and ears. I dare look no longer. Oh, mean and miserable death, tragic in its meanness since it is the dismissal of the slighted, degraded soul into an unknown region of retribution!

Far away in a castle, high a palace in its pride of place by the western shores, surrounded by retainers more deferential and devoted than ever were Saxon subjects, a great duchess entertained an English scholar and his complacent *compagnon de voyage*. The great lady had wit enough to be affable to the great Englishman; but to the little Scotchman, even under her

own castle-roof, she condescended to show the cold shoulder. The great lady was so touchy that she could not bring herself to forget and forgive some frivolous offence of the meddling little man's. Thus the rose-leaf that nuzzled the cybarite's couch was matched by the triffl that could fret the petted mind of a great lady, whose story had gone like a fairy tale, whose destiny had equalled Cinderella's in splendour. Such pomp and such irritability, how grand, how irksome! I have said luckier lasses than the Gummings never entered London. Do you think their luck was so much worth having, after all, when the luckiest of the Gummings could not find enough magnanimity to pardon a foolish man's folly? Was this all their luck brought them to? Poor Lady Lechlure was so weak as to die of the pin pricks of vanity and another woman's triumph; and this great duchess showed a peevish face beneath the strawberry leaves, and carried an empty heart, in which rankled the smallest affront, though that heart beat within the state and dignity of proud castle-walls. Why, a meek and quiet spirit in a body clad in hoshden grey, with no better shelter than "a clay biggin," were, if not luckier, a thousandfold more blest.

In the heart of Ireland, away in the corner of a big, tickety house, dwindled down into the dwelling of an agent, whose family occupied it in part, a middle-aged, serene, dainty single woman was, without the least conscious assertion of authority or influence, looked up to and tended by the whole household. Although the least domineering of women, she relished her sweet, natural supremacy; liked dearly to confer favors in the shape of caudles and cakes, and shapes of frills and caps, and was not above receiving gifts in return; nor above stepping in next door to look wistfully round the old bare walls, to make much of and to be made much of, by her simple corial neighbors. In the sanctuary of her own two rooms, that old lady—the prettiest picture of faded gentility that I can think of—used to indulge herself sometime in turning over drawers and cabinets containing relics of the past. They were not worth it; her own antiquated brocade, the tarnished gilt buttons of the Squire, the soiled pearl hoop of the Squire's lady, the hunting whip which Shane O'Dyer gained at a hunting, match, and insisted on depositing at Deanston, and which his heirs had likewise decided on leaving at Deanston, because it was where Shane, poor fellow! would have wished it to remain. The articles were intrinsically valueless; the very associations which they recalled were little worth in themselves; but these were tender eyes that gazed on them, and the longer they gazed, the more loving, and yet the more contented and clear they became; for it does not so much matter that there have been foiled hopes and forlorn days here, when the future, with its fulfilment and its restoration, is close at the door. Nothing matters then, save that you have dealt fairly both by yourself and your brother in the old Italian saint's bargain; that you have taken heaven, and have not put him off with earth, but have sought that he should share with you in the portion infinite and eternal.

[Margaret Wollington was an actress whose society was highly valued by the

club of talent and fashion of the last century. One of the lovely Gummings was an ancestress of the Marquis of Lome. — Ed.]

CHRISTMAS ECHOES.

"How many families whose members have been dispersed and scattered, far and wide, in the restless struggles of life, are they re-united, and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and good-will, which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight, and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that the religious belief of the most civilized nations and the rude traditions of the roughest savages alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence provided for the blest and happy! How many old recollections, and how many dormant sympathies does Christmas time awaken." DICKENS.

Old Shakespeare quaintly tells us that :  
Some say that ere against that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrate,  
The bird of dawn singeth all night long;  
And then they say no spirit walks abroad;  
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike;  
No fairy tales, no witch hath power to charm;  
So hallowed and so gracious is the time!

The custom of singing carols at Christmas is very ancient. It is rightly observed by Jeremy Taylor, that "Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men," the song of the angels on the birth of the Saviour, was the first Christmas carol.

The earliest collection of Christmas carols supposed to have been published was printed in the year 1521.

The following chorus is from an ancient Anglo-Norman carol :

Hail father Christmas! hail to thee!  
Honor'd ever shalt thou be!  
All the sweets that love bestows,  
Endless pleasures wait on those  
Who like vassals brave and true,  
Give to Christmas homage due.

In ancient times a souse'd boar's head was borne to the principal table in the hall with great state and solemnity, as the first dish on Christmas day.

The boar's head in hande bring I,  
With garlands gay and rosemary,  
I pray you all syng merrily,

The above are the three first lines of a carol sung at this "chiefe serveyce," or on bringing in with great ceremony the boar's head.

Near Raleigh, in Nottinghamshire, there is a valley, said to have been caused by an earthquake several hundred years ago, which swallowed up a whole village together with the church. Formerly, it was the custom for people to assemble in this valley, on Christmas day to listen to the ringing of the bells beneath them. This, it was positively asserted might be heard by putting the ear to the ground and harkening attentively.

A MAN saw a ghost while walking along a lonely highway at midnight. The ghost stood exactly in the middle of the road, and the wayfarer, deciding to investigate, poked at it with his umbrella. The next instant he was knocked twenty feet into a mudhole. Moral: Never poke your back with an umbrella at a large white man when his back is turned.