

invisible music was forgotten. Again were the glasses filled, a toast complimentary to Christmas was given, and all were joining in it, when once more the melody burst upon the ear, with notes familiar to every heart. Expectation seemed to become now almost painful; but again did the mysterious sounds die away, leaving us to wonder and to doubt.

Once more was a toast attempted, but with the like result; the spirit of harmony was determined to spoil our wine-bibbing by the wonder he excited. Finally, our host was called upon for a speech. He rose with some hesitation, professed himself quite unused to public speaking, indeed, he never attempted a speech without being interrupted at its very commencement; just as he said this, a slight sound, as of the giving way of a spring was heard, and up *through* the table, directly in front of the speaker, flew a little rough wooden box, as unlike anything of fairy workmanship as you can imagine. Oh! the surprise of all present. The speech was fairly ended, but in its place were many a gibe and jeer upon the coarse box which had so rudely interrupted him. But on its top was a letter addressed to our host, and sealed with St. Nicholas' *crest*. It was opened, and he read:—

All is not gold that glitters here
As every day can prove,
And one may oft a diamond wear,
Yet have no heart to love.

And so beneath a russet gown
A noble heart may beat,
All outward graces may have flown,
But not affection's seat.

Then my good friend reject me not
Tho' shabby I may look;
I may have Cinderella's lot,
And take the course she took.

My cocoa rind you may remove
And peep beneath my shell;
If I should something better prove,
For you it may be well.

The box was opened, and found to contain only a smaller one, upon which glowed the flowers of summer, painted by some rare hand. In this was another letter having the same *crest*, and which read thus:—

I pass the noble homes of earth,
And rest me at this cottage hearth;
In this bright spot content must dwell
If outward signs the truth can tell.

The old and young are mingled here,
With sunny smile, and memory's tear,
To cheer and soften each may act,
Nor from the other aught detract.

A welcome day of all the year
Is this that binds your faith and cheer,
Parents, children, husband, wife,
And friends, to sanction social life.

A Christmas carol well may come
From this sweet spot, and happy home,
The master spirit, who leads now,
Deserves a chaplet for his brow.

My parting words I now address,
To him who loves his home to bless.
"Courage, friend! and through all time,
Strive to make your life sublime."

Signed,

SANTA CLAUS.

These lines gave rise to much comment and pleasant remark on St. Nicholas' newly developed character of poet and adviser; but attention soon returned to the box, and our host resumed his examination of it. Led by curiosity, to ascertain, if possible, how it so mysteriously appeared before him, he cut a silken cord which confined it; when lo, and behold! a yawning cavity presented itself to all the astonished lookers-on. Cavity, did I say? Aye, but a cavity well filled. St. Nick, in return for the kind wishes showered upon him, had filled it with gifts for young and old, the grey haired sire, and youthful guests; gifts not rich and costly, but graceful and appropriate. You can hardly imagine the intense interest which awaited the opening of each packet, as the seal was broken, or the cord untied, and the paper unrolled. On some were the mysterious words—"Not to be opened till you return home." On one was a record of a touching little circumstance, a deed of generosity and self-sacrifice, of two little girls, which St. Nick had witnessed and thus recorded.

Oh! how was this good old patron Saint blessed. I am sure he did not make his own Germans, the children of his fondest love, any happier on this blessed night, than were the delighted guests, and happy family circle at B— Cottage.

In such sport, you may well judge, the hours flew swiftly by, and it was not till the brazen tongue of the town clock had uttered with its harsh disordant note, "One,"—that we bade adieu to the pleasant household—and returned home to dream that the days of miracles had not yet quite departed. I am sure I need make no apology for giving you this long account of our Christmas *fête*, but it only leaves me room to add the kind regards of

Yours,