

## CHRISTMAS.

Christmas bells ring in family reunion! The rail trains crowded with children coming home. The poultry fed, as never since they were born, stand wondering at the farmer's generosity. The markets are full of massacred barnyards. The great table will be spread and crowded with two or three or four generations. Plant the fork astride the breast-bone, and with skillful twich, that we could never learn, give to all the hungry lookers-on a specimen of holiday anatomy. Florence is disposed to soar, give her the wing. The boy is fond of music, give him the drumstick. The minister is dining with you, give him the parson's nose. May the joy reach from grandfather, who is so terribly old that he can hardly find the way to his plate, down to the baby in the high chair, who with one smart pull of the table-cloth upsets the gravy into the cranberry. Send from your table a liberal portion to the poor, some of the white meat as well as the dark, not confining your generosity to gizzards and scraps. Do not, as in some families, keep a plate and a chair for those who are dead and gone. Your holiday feast would be but poor fare for them: they are at a better banquet in the skies. Let the whole land be full of chime and carol. Let bells, silver and brazen, take their sweetest voice, and the towers of Christendom rain music.—*Brooklyn Magazine*.

## THE FINGER RING.

Of all the ornaments with which vanity, superstition and affection have decorated the human form, few have more curious bits of history than the finger ring. From the earliest times the ring has been a favourite ornament, and the reason for this general preference shown for it over other articles of jewellery are numerous and cogent. Ornaments whose place is on some portion of the apparel, or in the hair, must be laid aside with the clothing or head-dress; are thus easily lost and often not at once missed. Pins, brooches, buckles, clasps, buttons, all sooner or later become defective in some part, and are liable to escape from an owner unconscious of the defect in the mechanism. The links of a necklace in time become worn, and the article is taken off to be mended, the spring or other fastening of a bracelet is easily broken; and the bracelet vanishes. With regard to ornaments fastened to parts of the savage body, mutilation is necessary; the ear must be bored, the nose pierced, the cheeks or lips be slit, and, even after these surgical operations are completed, the articles used for adornment are generally inconvenient, and sometimes by their weight of construction are extremely painful. In striking contrast with the decorations worn on the clothing, in the hair, round the neck and arms, or pendant from the ears, lips and nose, is the finger ring, the model of convenience. It is seldom lost, for it need not be taken off; requires no preparatory mutilation of the body, is not painful, is always in view, a perpetual reminder, either of the giver or of the purpose for which it is worn. The popularity of the ring must, therefore, be in large measure due to its convenience, and that this good quality was early learned may be inferred from the Hebrew tradition, which attributes the invention of this ornament to Tubal Cain, the "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron."—*Popular Science Monthly*.

## UNCHANGED FLORENTINE TRAITS.

If we take some of these characters of "Romola," and look for their counterparts in another art, with a little patience we shall find them all. Ghirlandajo will show us many of them—he who—if he did not paint the walls of Florence as he wished, portrayed the world that moved within those walls. In the choir of Santa Maria Novella the artist painted the stories of the blessed Virgin and St. John the Baptist; but he has taken his pictures from contemporary life; he has painted his friends and neighbours, not idealized into cold abstractions, but real men and women, with keen, subtle faces, acute and critical, but not unkindly, sharpened by shop-keeping and the *tramontana*, but ennobled by wide culture, and capable of kindling into enthusiasm. Many of them are ugly in line and modelling, with an occasional quite abnormal development of cheeks and chin, bony and flaccid at once. But intellect can do much to beautify the most ill-favoured. Each of these figures is a definite personality, clearly and distinctly marked, invaluable to the student of history, with no softening of lines or angles—a portrait straight from life. Here we are face to face with the old Florentines.

Half the streets of Florence are named for the great families. They have held history and romance—tragedies of blows in the earlier centuries, of poison in the latter,—and have sheltered the kindly family life Pandolfino tells of in his "Del Governo." The famous families of Florence were long lived. To-day, at the Martelli Palace, you visit the statues which Donatello gave to a Martelli of the fifteenth century; it is by the courtesy of a Buonarroti that the relics in the house of Michael Angelo are shown; the Strozzi, the Pazzi and many others are seen daily about the streets of the city; and in Santa Croce the tomb of a Coppioni—a Gina Capponi, like his great ancestor—is white and shining in the marble of a recent date. —*E. W. Blashfield, in Scribner's Magazine for December*.

## HOUSE PLANTS.

The way house plants thrive on the dregs of coffee left at breakfast is admiration. Bowker itself hardly turns out stronger leafage or such thick bloom. The grounds are a good mulch on the top of the soil, but a little care must be given not to let them sour and get musty in coolish, damp weather.

The great trouble with house plants, greater than errors in watering, is letting the pots be exposed to the sun. The fibrous roots grow to the side of the pot, and these are baked in full sunshine, trebly hot, coming through glass, which condenses its rays; the root tips are soon

killed. The whole ball of earth is baked over and over daily, and yet people wonder why they don't succeed with house plants. Shade the sides of the pot always, either by plunging in a box of sand, moss, coco fibre or ashes, or place a thin board on edge across the front of the plant shelf, that will come almost to the top of the pots. Let the plants have the sun, but shade the pots. A good way to screen them is to set each pot in one or two sizes or more larger, filling the space with moss or sand.

The best gardeners say that the porous common pots are not so good for house plants as those glazed or painted outside. The reason is that evaporation is constant from the side of the porous pots, and the roots are not only drier but colder for it. —*Pick's Magazine for December*.

## WHILE TO BETHLEHEM WE ARE GOING.

While to Bethlehem we are going,

Tell me now, to cheer the road,

Tell me why this lovely infant

Quitted His divine abode?

"From that world to bring to this

Peace, which, of all earthly blisses,

Is the brightest, purest bliss."

Wherefore from His throne exalted

Came He to earth to dwell;

All His pomp a humble manger,

All His court a narrow cell?

"From that world to bring to this

Peace, which, of all earthly blisses,

Is the brightest, purest bliss."

Why did He, the Lord Eternal,

Mortal pilgrim deign to be—

He who fashioned for His glory

Boundless immortality?

"From that world to bring to this

Peace, which, of all earthly blisses,

Is the brightest, purest bliss."

Well, then, let us haste to Bethlehem;

Thither let us haste and rest;

For of all heaven's gifts, the sweetest,

Sure, is peace—the sweetest, best,

—Translated by Sir John Bourging

## SAVONAROLA'S TRIUMPH.

There are in the world few grander buildings than that citadel of Florentine liberty, the Palazzo Vecchio; it is an embodiment of militant beauty in stone. In earlier times the scene of so much that was noble and base, it became in the fifteenth century the place of Savonarola's triumph and agony. For there in the vast hall of that great council he so laboured to secure, he set a whole people to work at a fever heat of enthusiasm, with Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci among the workers, that an asylum might be created, a refuge and an appeal to the many against the injustice of the few. The Medici changed the place; the arch-patrons of art destroyed the designs of Angelo and Leonardo, setting up the clumsy statues of Leo and the dukes, and the ceilings of Vasari, celebrating Cosimo;—they wanted no unpleasant souvenir of the great council. But the centuries have seen "the Medicean stamp outworn," and have placed the statue of the mighty monk in the middle of his hall.

The story of "Romola" leaves us with a sense of sadness and defeat. Savonarola died mute and unjustified; his his friends and disciples robbed, murdered, and driven into exile; his life's work undone; and the kingdom of God he had laboured to found shaken to its foundations. But only a few years after, under a Medicean pope, he is solemnly rehabilitated by the Church—the historians estimate him at his true value, devotees make pilgrimages to his cell, Fra Bartolommeo paints him as the patron saint of his order, and Raphael places him in a frescoed Paradise among a glorious company of prophets and sages. To-day, in an Italy that does not love monks, Ferrara raises his statue before the castle of the Estensi; and in Florence, in the vastness of the great council-hall, is his colossal image. Many changes have come to his beloved city; but she is faithful to his memory, and those who do not reverence the priest honour the patriot who withstood tyrants, and loved liberty.—*E. H. Blashfield, in the Christmas number of Scribner's Magazine*.

CROUCH HILL congregation thankfully acknowledge that the four years of Dr. Murphy's ministry have been rich in blessing to them. In bidding him farewell they presented him with seventeen volumes of Ruskin's works.

THE Rev. William Logan, M.A., of Lanark, has taken a new departure in order to reach the working classes by starting a series of special Sabbath afternoon services at which short evangelistic addresses are given and Sankey's hymns sung. The experiment is highly successful, as is evidenced by the large and interested audiences of men and women.

THE Rev. William Burnet, of Half-Morton, Dumfriesshire, of which parish he has been minister for forty-four years, died suddenly on a recent Sunday. He was out on Saturday and expected to preach the following day as usual, but was taken ill over night and died in a short time. He had never been incapacitated by sickness during the whole of his ministry for a single Sunday. Mr. Burnet took a prominent part in the Church courts.

THE Rev. Dr. Cameron Lees officiated at the baptism of the infant princess in the drawing-room of Balmoral. The simple order of the Church of Scotland was observed, the Queen holding her grandchild while the ceremony was performed. The names given were Victoria Eugenie Julia Ena. The company present included all the servants on the estates and a number of the tenantry, while the Madrigal Choir from Aberdeen performed the choral part of the service.

## British and Foreign.

MRS. CRAIK, author of "John Halifax, Gentleman," was a life-long abstainer and wore the blue ribbon.

THE Rev. C. C. Macdonald, of St. Clement's Parish, has been re-elected president of the Aberdeen Radical Association.

THE Penny Savings Bank in connection with Free St. Mary's, Govan, of which Mr. Howie is pastor, had last year 13,879 transactions.

SIREAN congregation, Newtonards, of which Professor Martin was pastor, has chosen Mr. John Forbes, LL.D., licentiate, to be his successor.

MR. HUGH WADDELL HOGG, who is going to Egypt under the auspices of the American Missionary Society, was ordained by Edinburgh U.P. Presbytery lately.

THE Rev. R. M'Cheyne Edgar retires from the editorship of the *Presbyterian Churchman*, and will be succeeded by another Dublin minister, Rev. J. L. Morrow.

DURING the past year the cottage in which Burns was born was visited by 19,226 pilgrims. On one day in June, out of 250 visitors, four-fifths were from the United States.

A PLEBISCITE at Montreux, arranged by a committee which included a hotel-keeper and a spirit merchant, shows 1,022 in favour of prohibition, 417 against and 175 neutral.

THE Rev. John Noble, of Lairg, has received a call to Hope Street Free Gaelic Church, Glasgow, which has been signed by 698 members and adherents, and sustained by the Presbytery.

LORD GIFFORD'S bequest of \$125,000 to Edinburgh University for the foundation of a lectureship on Natural Theology, has been accepted and a lecturer will be appointed shortly.

THE Melbourne *Presbyterian* says it would be a wise move for the Scots Church to renew its invitation to Mr. Barclay, of Montreal, since a little impatience might prevail upon him to come.

NEWINGTON Free Church, Edinburgh, after being renovated at a cost of \$5,000, was reopened on a recent Sabbath. Professor Laidlaw, Dr. Landels and Mr. Mitchell, of Kirkcaldy, were the preachers.

THE Rev. Daniel M'Laren, of Carlisle, formerly of Lady Glenorchy's Church, Edinburgh, died lately in his fifty-sixth year. His brother, the late minister of Fraserburgh, died suddenly in August at Stornoway.

THE Rev. Alexander Gregory, M.A., the energetic young minister of the West Church, Wooler, has been appointed missionary in Amoy, China. He has also been asked to be colleague to Dr. Saphir, of London. It is understood he has decided to go to China.

THE action by Rev. Mr. Hastie against Mr. Steele, elder, the well-known Calcutta merchant, has been settled by the latter withdrawing all imputations on Mr. Hastie's character and paying \$1,500 of expenses. The case was under appeal to the House of Lords.

THE Federal Assembly of the Australian Presbyterian Church has resolved to signalize the centennial year of the British possession of Australia by some great evangelistic work. Steps are to be taken to get all Christian Churches to join in this mode of celebrating the century.

THE Rev. Dr. Stewart, of Leghorn, who has been in failing health for a number of years, died recently in that city. A Disruption minister ordained in 1837, he was Moderator of Assembly in 1874, and he will be long remembered as having taken a foremost part in the great work of evangelizing Italy.

SIR PETER COATS laid the memorial stone of the nearly-completely church which he has erected in the city of Algiers, using a trowel presented by Sir Alexander M'Kenzie. On a recent Sunday the church was opened, and Dr. Young, of Glasgow, is to occupy the pulpit during the winter.

MR. M'LAGAN, M.P., states that 10,000,000 gallons less whiskey was drunk in Scotland in the ten years following the passing of the Forbes Mackenzie Act than in the ten preceding. He holds that the best home rule we can have is to give full control of the liquor traffic to the people of the three kingdoms.

THE congregation of Cadzow Parish Church, Hamilton, have resolved to oppose the translation of their pastor to Fraserburgh, and his opponents in the latter place are hoping that this may be the means of saving them from the anxieties and troubles of contesting his settlement through the various Church courts.

THE Irish Presbyterian Church supports a training college at Puerto Santa Maria, Spain, where native converts are prepared for the work of the mission in that country. Rev. Wm. Moore, the principal, makes an appeal for help. Most of the students are of the humbler classes, and unable to support themselves.

THE Rev. Dr. Donald Macleod, of Glasgow, conducted the services in St. Paul's, Galashiels, on a recent Sunday, when a special effort was made to clear off the debt on the church amounting to \$3,500. This was more than realized, the collection reaching \$4,518. St. Paul's was built a few years ago at a cost of \$90,000, all of which has been raised raised by the freewill offerings of the congregation. Dr. Glasgow, so well known as an author, is the pastor.

THE funeral of the Rev. Herbert Bell, of Aberdeen, whose tragic death was recorded, took place in Canonbie Churchyard, Dumfriesshire. It was largely attended, and the shops in the town were closed as a mark of respect to his memory. He was a native of Langholm. Mr. Bell had profound sympathy with the poor, and was a vigorous advocate of radical measures for the amelioration of their condition, urging a root and branch reform in the land system to prevent overcrowding the large cities. He leaves four children.