

## PICCOLA.

Poor, sweet Piccola! Did you hear  
What happened to Piccola, children dear?  
'T is seldom Fortune such favor grants  
As fell to this little maid of France.

'T was Christmas-time, and her parents poor  
Could hardly drive the wolf from the door,  
Striving with poverty's patient pain  
Only to live till summer again.

No gifts for Piccola! Sad were they  
When dawned the morning of Christmas-day;  
Their little darling no joy might stir,  
St. Nicholas nothing would bring to her!

But Piccola never doubted at all  
That something beautiful must befall  
Every child upon Christmas-day,  
And so she slept till the dawn was gray.

And full of faith, when at last she woke,  
She stole to her shoe as the morning broke;  
Such sounds of gladness filled all the air,  
'T was plain St. Nicholas had been there!

In rushed Piccola sweet, half wild:  
Never was seen such a joyful child.  
"See what the good saint brought!" she cried,  
And mother and father must peep inside.

Now such a story who ever heard?  
There was a little shivering bird!  
A sparrow, that in at the window flew,  
Had crept into Piccola's tiny shoe!

"How good poor Piccola must have been!"  
She cried, as happy as any queen,  
While the starving sparrow she fed and warmed,  
And danced with rapture, she was so charmed.

Children, this story I tell to you,  
Of Piccola sweet and her bird, is true.  
In the far-off land of France, they say,  
Still do they live to this very day.

—Celia Thaxter.

## CURRENT EVENTS.

It is stated that Germany was to take possession of Christmas Island, in the middle of the Pacific ocean, on the fifth of this month, and establish a coaling station there. The report that there would also be a German coaling station established at Magellan Strait is denied.

The promoters of Ido, the new international language, are pursuing a different policy from that adopted in the case of Volapük and Esperanto. Instead of offering a complete language for acceptance, they are to develop one gradually; and to this end proposed new words and grammatical forms are discussed in their publications, and if approved are tentatively adopted for trial.

The Panama Canal tolls which are announced to go into effect as soon as the canal is opened are practically the same

as those that will take effect on the Suez Canal in January next. United States vessels engaged in the coastwise trade are to be exempted, unless in the meantime the new administration takes a favourable view of the British protest and decides to treat all alike. Even if the coasting vessels are required to pay the fees, it may be some years before the canal is self-supporting.

The Argentine government has employed a Japanese expert to promote the cultivation of rice, and is also taking measures to encourage cotton growers.

Storms and earthquakes have been more destructive than the civil war in Mexico during the last month; but there are still roving bands of rebels, and there have been rumours of new revolutionary plots in that unhappy portion of America. Central and South America seem to be unusually quiet. The long standing boundary dispute between Peru and Chili is approaching a settlement. In Santo Domingo, a provisional government has been established, with Archbishop Nouel as president.

The cost of the proposed improvements on the Welland Canal is estimated at fifty million dollars. If undertaken, it is probable that the work will begin next summer, and that five years will be needed to complete it.

Elaborate plans are being formed, chiefly in the United States, for the celebration of a hundred years of peace between our neighbours and us, to take place two years hence.

The supposition that the government steamer "Minto" was ice bound in Hudson Bay proved to be incorrect. She passed through the straits without difficulty.

The steamer "Arctic" will probably not go north again. She is to be used as a light ship on the St. Lawrence.

Final arrangements have been made for the construction of a railway and harbour at Blacksod Bay, Ireland, from which a line of fast ocean steamers will run to Canada.

The New Brunswick section of the Transcontinental Railway, from Moncton to Edmundston, is now open for traffic.

The immense floating dry dock built in England for the harbour of Montreal has been safely brought across the Atlantic and placed in position. It can lift from the water a ship of twenty-five thousand tons.

Over two hundred thousand immigrants came to Canada in the last seven months through the ocean ports, and more than one hundred thousand from the United States.

The National Conservation Congress of the United States, estimates that the destruction of certain birds costs that country in food values upwards of four hundred million dollars a year. Farmers and fruit-growers will be asked to consider the damage from insect pests that could be avoided by the protection of bird life.

By a new process now in use in Ontario, partially dried peat from the surface of a bog can be taken up as a powder by a suction fan collector, operating like a vacuum cleaner. The work can be done cheaply, and the peat dust promises to be a valuable fuel.

The power to operate fog signals and light in a new German light-house is controlled by electricity from the shore a mile and a quarter distant.

The wireless telegraph station at Neuen, in Germany, is said to be the most powerful in the world, its range being two thousand one hundred miles.