

was carried to an extravagant length; the gifts presented were of great value, and an exact descriptive inventory of them was made every year in a roll, which was signed by the Queen herself and the proper officers. We find in an old book an accurate transcript of five of these rolls. The Earl of Leicester's New Year's gifts exceeded those of any other nobleman in costliness and elaborate workmanship.—In the reign of James I, many gifts were continued, but the ornamental articles presented were few, and of but small value. In Paris the custom of giving presents is still observed; and New Year's Day there commences at an early hour by the interchange of visits, presents, and bon-bons. In visiting and in gossiping the morning is passed; a dinner is given by some members of the family to all the rest; and the evening concludes, like Christmas Day, with cards, dancing, or any amusement that may be preferred.

The etiquette of New Year's calls is observed throughout the various cities of the United States and Canada. It is not customary for New Year's receptions to begin before eleven in the morning. Ladies generally receive their friends in full reception costume, trained dresses, and with their hair dressed as for an evening or dinner party. The Christmas evergreens are left on the walls; and to them are added fresh flowers, more or less rare and costly, according to the style of entertainment. Refreshments are spread in the back parlor or dining room, and the lady of the house accompanies her guests to the refreshment tables. When a gentleman calls he remains but a few minutes. Hat in hand he enters the parlor, shakes hands with the lady of the house, bows to the persons who may be present, lingers a few minutes, and then passes to the refreshment room. Returning, he bows to, or shakes hands with his hostess, and retires to make way for others. The refreshment table is a very nice point. Some ladies furnish what would be considered a sumptuous ball supper; but of late years it has been considered unnecessary to serve any but the lightest viands. In some houses, in New York, the rooms are darkened, and gas supplies the place of daylight, but this extravagance is not indulged in here.

A CAROL OF THE KINGS.

It is chronicled in an old Armenian myth, that the wise men of the East were none other than the three sons of Noe, and that they were raised from the dead to represent, and to do homage for all mankind, in the cave at Bethlehem! Other legends are also told: one, that these patriarch-princes of the Flood did not ever die, but were rapt away into Enoch's Paradise, and were thence recalled to begin the solemn gesture of world-wide worship to the King-born Child! Another saying holds, that when their days were full, these arkite fathers fell asleep, and were laid at rest in a cavern of Ararat, until Messiah was born, and that then an angel aroused them from the slumber of ages to bow down and to hail, as the heralds of many nations, the awful child. Be this as it may,—whether the mystic magi were Sem, Cham, and Japhet, in their first or second existence, under their own names, or those of other men; or, whether they were three long-descended and royal sages from the loins of the land of Balaam,—one thing has been delivered to me for very record. The supernatural shape of clustering orbs, which was embodied suddenly from surrounding light, and framed to be the beacon of that westward-way, was and is the Southern Cross! It was not a solitary signal-fire, but a miraculous constellation: a pentacle of stars, whereof two shone for the transome and three for the stock, and which went above and before the travelers, day and night, radiantly, until it came and stood over where the young child lay!—And then? What then? Must those faithful orbs dissolve and die? Shall the gleaming trophy fall? Nay—not so. When it had fulfilled the piety of its first-born office, it arose, and, amid the vassalage of every stellar and material law, it moved, onward and on, obedient to the impulse of God the Trinity, journeying evermore towards the south, until th it starry image arrived in the predestined sphere of future and perpetual abode, to bend, as to this day it bends, above the peaceful sea, in everlasting memorial of the child Jesus, the Southern Cross!