

DECEMBER.

SONNET BY HENRY PRINCE.

The year's last born—in snowy diadem—
 "GOOD-WILL TO MEN" upon his banner borne,—
 Those blessed ethereal words which burst that morn
 From hosts angelic over Bethlehem.
 When CHRIST THE BORN appeared upon the earth.
 In lowly manger at the crowded inn.
 And humble shepherds, longing, hasten'd in
 O'erjoy'd with tidings of a SAVIOUR'S birth.
 And even as Time's mighty cycles roll.
 The Soldiers of the Cross with joy remember
 That wondrous STAR that glorified DECEMBER.
 And brought SWEET PEACE for every living soul.
 Its light resistless, spreading, yet shall glow
 Triumphant o'er the world and Satan's overthrow.

THE
GOLD OF CHICKAREE.

BY

SUSAN and ANNA WARNER.

AUTHORS OF

"WIDE, WIDE WORLD," and "DOLLARS AND
CENTS," "WYCH HAZEL," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE.

"Let us see how much of that article we are refusing just now," said Dane dryly, taking a still more easy position and turning over the notes in his hand. "No. 1, Mrs. Schornstein's reception. I can see that from here. Crowds, gaslights, twelve inches standing room for one's body, one's mind in the condition of Noah's dove when the waters were upon the earth!—Mrs. Levee—German." As I do not dance, and as you do not, what should we do, duchess?—Mrs. Post: that will be repetition of Mrs. Levee's, only the rooms will be dressed with flowers; but we can see flowers any day in a greenhouse and by daylight, and without the necessity of waiting up to them.—Brampton Foulard. Ah, that is a variety! Science and literature trying to play puss in the corner, while Fashions sweep over the floor and catches their feet in their train. I know Mrs. Brampton's receptions; they are such a thorough 'Durcheinander' that if you by chance see anything there you want, you can't get it; not get at it.—Southgate: the point there is supper; but it is a point you cannot reach without ardent exertion. I never liked that sort of exertion.—Borsch: music. And the music will be fearful. I would rather drive round Central Park till it is over.—Wallings: cards and supper and dancing.—What do you say, Hazel? It is all one story. The pleasure is to seek."

"I was not thinking of my own pleasure. I am not in a going-out mood. But suppose, pleasure to other people."

"We will give them all we can, consistently with higher interests. But our directions are,—When you make a feast, call not thy rich neighbours.—You see, it is bad economy to take what would give a year's pleasure to a hundred people, and use it to give merely a languid moment's satisfaction to a dozen or two."

"You mean," said Hazel studying the point, "at least I should mean,—that the care and the cost should be kept for people whose lives are hard and empty."

Dane was silent a minute. "Hazel," said he gently, "do you dislike to have Prim come for a few days?"

Hazel paused. "Don't be unkind," she said. "Once when a little mouse jumped out of a dish, nobody could ever get it back again."

"It would be a great pleasure to Prim. I think we could bear it for a week, even with Mrs. Coles' Hey."

"I dare say you can.—And if I cannot, you will never know," said Wych Hazel with a laugh. "So the way is clear."

"I know Prudentia wants to consult a physician here. So I will write at once to Prim—and you will give Mrs. Bywank her orders about the care of Heibert! And tell her, Wych, that Arthur will be at Chickaree a good deal also, till we come home."

Hazel wrought her fingers into a knot of peculiar ingenuity, at thought of Mrs. Coles, but other remark made none.

A few days more brought the dreaded invasion. The ladies came of course; and as it fell out, Hazel had to receive them alone. Dane being down town at his business; for Prim and her sister arrived at midday, having found it good to spend a night on the road. The state of joyous delight in which they were, might go far to justify Rollo in having given the invitation: Prim was beaming, and Mrs. Coles proudly exultant. To be received into such an establishment; to be at home there; and without a cent of expense! Visions of pleasure filled the minds of both sisters; but very unlike; for while Prudentia dreamed of visits and shops, Prim thought of sitting beside Dane again, and at his own fireside.

The luncheon which Hazel dispensed to them, could not fail in such a mood to be greatly enjoyed; and talk flowed freely. Prudentia, being a guest, felt herself on vantage ground and a good deal more unrestrained than usual. She was in a patronizing mood generally. But Prim was grateful.

"It seems almost like Chickaree, Hazel," said the latter, "to see you sitting there. And have you all these rooms to yourself? How delightful! What beautiful rooms!"

"But so high up!" her sister remarked. "I am surprised that Dane did not get you rooms on the first floor, Hazel!"

The young mistress of the "rooms" it may be noted, was a trifle grand and stately to-day, and in a particularly unapproachable dress.

"Yes!" she said calmly. "I think one's friends very often surprise one."

"I know they do," said Primrose. "I wonder why they do. Other people never surprise one so much."

"And how does Dane behave, in his new character?" Mrs. Coles went on, sipping her cup of tea with great satisfaction.

"Mr. Rollo is quite well, thank you."

"To be quite well—with him—used to mean, that he had his own way," said the lady blandly, but with a peculiar look over the table. "Dear me! how delicious this tea is. You don't get such at our little country shops.—Does it mean the same thing still? Do you let him have his way as much as he likes?"

"Did you never dare cross him in the old time?" said Wych Hazel with one of her mild looks of astonishment.

"I dared," said Mrs. Coles with a smile. "O yes, I dared, but I was the only one. I always wondered how it would be with his wife."

Nobody enlightened her, and the talk passed on to other subjects. The truce held till the ladies left the table. Then began an examination in detail of the various articles in the room which did not come strictly under the head of furniture; and indeed they were somewhat tempting. For the walls were hung with engravings, there were one or two niches of marble and bronze, and a number of small useful things which were at the same time made to be beautiful as well. Primrose sat down to study a fine copy of the "Shadow of the Cross."

"Do these pictures all belong to the house?" Mrs. Coles asked.

"None of them," Wych Hazel answered, standing behind Prim's chair.

"But what a quantity! Have Dane and you been picking all these up?"

"Picking up—choosing—what you will."

"My dear!"

There were a good deal of unspoken thoughts half uttered in the exclamation, and Mrs. Coles then went on.—"But why don't he have them in better frames? These are very common, it seems to me."

"You think they do not suit the pictures?"

"The pictures are valuable, are they not?—Dane would not have them, I know, if they were not worth a lot of money; and the frames—my dear, just look at the frames; little slips of wood frames, or passepartouts; nothing better. There is not a gilt one here."

"No," said Wych Hazel. "Look, Prim, how well the plain dark wood sets off this old cathedral."

"My dear! can't you think gold would set it off better?" But there, she changed the subject. "Have you been very gay lately, Hazel?"

Hazel's thoughts were fast getting into a flight. She answered rather absently,—"I? No."

"Did you go to Mrs. Schornstein's reception?"

"No, Mrs. Coles."

"Weren't you invited?"

"O yes," said Wych Hazel, facing round now. "I was invited. And I have been invited everywhere else. And I have stood at home. Now I shall have the honour of surprising you."

"My dear!"—said Mrs. Coles, thinking that it was not the first time. "Prim had a letter from Kitty that told us about the Schornstein's reception, and we thought to be sure you would be there. Why didn't you go there, and everywhere else?"

Wych Hazel knit her brows, but then she laughed. "Prim is so glad, that she forgets to be curious," she said. "And Mrs. Coles is so curious that she forgets to be glad. Why should I have gone?—there, or anywhere if you please?"

"My dear!—Society."

"Yes, ma'am!" said Wych Hazel, meekly waiting for particulars.

"You will offend Society."

"Shall I? But suppose I have not time to keep Society in good humour?"

"My dear, that won't do. A honeymoon is all very well; but at this rate you will lose all your friends."

"That would seem to indicate that my friends can do without me. Very mortifying, if true."

"But Hazel, every one knows it is true in Society. If you do not let yourself be seen, people will not keep you in mind."

Wych Hazel stood thinking. Not in the least of Mrs. Coles, but of what her words called up. So thoughtfully deep in some questions of her own, that for a minute she forgot to answer her questioner.

"Maybe Dane is willing people should forget you," the lady went on chuckling. "He has got what he wants—that is enough."

But here Hazel made a vigorous diversion, and insisted that her guests should go and be down until it was near time for dinner. Then she herself stepped into her carriage and went out to think.

CHAPTER XXX.

A TRAVELLING CLOCK.

"How shall I stand it?" she was saying to herself, as the wheels rolled smoothly on. "How shall I ever bear six more days! Oh

how could he ask them!—how could he, how could he!—They come right in between and put him ten miles away. My pleasure should have come first.—It is not fair."

But here a troublesome question presented itself: what is "fair"—from people who have everything, to those who have not! And then one of the new maxims which Hazel had but lately learned to love came softly in.

"Use hospitality one to another"—so it ran. But how! "Without grudging."

"And I have grudged every minute since she came!" thought Hazel, her hands folded over her. "Well, I did not want her.—No, but Dane did. Of course,—yes,—I must 'use hospitality' for him. But I do think, just now, he might have been content with me!—But by and by he could not give them this pleasure.—Well, they needn't have it!"

"Without grudging!"—"without grudging!"—either time or trouble or one's own pleasure. Wych Hazel drew a long sigh. Then the words began again.

"Charity seeketh not her own."—"Heareth all things."—"Endureth all things."

Wych Hazel pulled the check string and turned towards home. "Resolved," she said to herself: "first, that Dane was extremely unreasonable to ask them. Second, that that is none of my business. Third, that I will do everything for them I can. If I keep them on the go, they won't know how I feel! But there came in another message.

"Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." So it must be heart work, after all! Wych Hazel sighed a little as she went off to dress; and Rollo saw a thoughtful face opposite him at table, and got none of the shy dainty looks to which he was accustomed. Under the commenting eyes of Mrs. Coles, Hazel felt as if she could not look at him at all!

Nevertheless that was not a bad evening. For when two people are beaming with pleasure and through your means, a little reflection of the pleasure, at least, falls upon you. And Mrs. Coles and Prim were in a state of ecstasy; a fullness of satisfaction which at the moment left nothing to be wished for. It was not the same in the two. Mrs. Coles feeling herself for the time *bien placée* and foreseeing varieties of social and other delights attainable in such circumstances; but Prim was happy in being with Dane again. They had plenty to talk about all the evening; for there was much to tell about things in the Hollow, and Arthur's reports, and Prim's use of the money she had found in her new secretary; and Dr. Maryland's delight in his new books, and how the new carpet on the library made the old place look a different thing; also there was some laughing pleasant chatter about Prim's trunk. It was funny to see how both the ladies sat with their faces turned towards Dane three-quarters of the time; Prudentia possibly with a desire to propitiate, Primrose forgetting everything else in the moment's pleasure of seeing him; and both of them being a little unconsciously shy towards Hazel. However, the evening rolled off well; and also the next day was filled with business which left no leisure for spars.

The evening brought leisure. But Dane was a shield for Hazel whenever he was present. Nothing of Mrs. Coles' could touch her; it was sure to be caught midway, shambled, and turned back, before even Hazel's battle-axe could have a chance at it. He was gay and hospitable all the while; making Prim very happy, and even Mrs. Coles too. The latter lady was on her good behaviour. Nevertheless, she could not quite lose her opportunity. Nature is stronger than policy.

"Hazel tells us you have been very schish, and not taken her anywhere all these weeks," Dane, she remarked bridling, with her peculiar smooth manner of insinuating a charge or a criticism.

"Yes," said Dane carelessly. "You see, we have really had so many people to attend to."

"But Hazel did not speak of your going anywhere?"

"Take my report of the matter, and let Hazel's alone."

"Well, she certainly is right in one thing; you did not go to Mrs. Schornstein's reception?"

"She is right; we did not."

"Nor the ball at Mrs. Powder's?"

"True; we did not."

"Don't you think you ought?"

"If we had thought we ought, I suppose we should have gone," said Dane, with a manner of lazy indifference which sometimes came over him.

"But my dear! These are things one owes to Society."

"I believe I never understood what is meant by my obligations to society," said Dane.

"What has society done, that we should be in debt to it?"

"Why! said Mrs. Coles with a burdened breath, "you should remember what is due to your position."

"What is my position?"

"Do, Prue, let him alone!" said Primrose.

"Do you think he doesn't know what he is about?"

"He does not seem to know his position," said his sister. "Why you and your wife ought to be leaders of society, Dane."

"I have no objection," said Rollo imperturbably. "I will lead society—if society will follow me."

"But if you want to lead society, you must please society," said Mrs. Coles.

"That is assuming that you know which way I want society to go."

"Prue, you can't lead Duke," said Primrose laughing. "Don't you know that?"

Mrs. Coles looked puzzled and stayed her questions. Rollo was putting some engravings into their frames, and in intervals of the work displaying them to the admiration of herself and Prim. Prim's enjoyment of them was very hearty; Mrs. Coles looked on with a divided and impatient, as well as curious mind. By and by she broke forth again.

"Have you taken Hazel to hear Sacchi-sussi, the new prima donna?"

"No."

"I cannot find that you have done anything! Well, tell me one thing, and I'll forgive you; are you and your wife going to give a grand entertainment by and by, and ask all these people you have been slighting? Of course I do not mean *here*; you could not do it here; but at home; by and by, at Chickaree. Will you do that?"

"I see one difficulty in the way," said Dane, adjusting and arranging a lovely photograph of Ischl, and speaking with a negligent regard of the other subject in hand which greatly provoked his mentor.

"What can that difficulty be? You have everything—"

"One thing more, that you have reckoned. I have the poor, and the main, and the halt and the blind to look after."

"What has that to do with the point?"

"Prior claim;—that is all."

"But you have rich neighbors too."

"Yes. But they are not in so much need of me."

"My dear Dane! you are absurd!"

"Prove it!"—said Dane quietly, laying Ischl out of his hands and taking up another photograph, beautifully executed, of Monteverde's marble "Genius of Franklin." This so excited Primrose's interest and curiosity, that Mrs. Coles for a little while could not get in a word. She sat no doubt mentally cursing the hearts, and photograph which had come to multiply the fruits of them.

"Dane," she began with restrained impatience as soon as she saw a chance, "why cannot you attend to the rich, as well as to the poor?"

"For the way you want me to attend to the rich, time fails. And money. And I may add, strength."

"You and Hazel have no end of money," said Mrs. Coles impatiently.

"It will not do all we want it to do, with the best economy."

Mrs. Coles was silent a minute, remembering her two silks, one of which she had on at this very time, and how handsome they were; and her thought glanced to Prim's trunk, and the new secretaries, and the library carpet. She spoke with a somewhat lowered tone.

"Won't you ask anybody to your house, Dane, if he happens to be rich?"

"Not unless I have some other reason for asking him.—Heibert went off today, Hazel,—Dane added with a change of tone."

"But, Dane," Mrs. Coles said despairingly, "you are flying in the face of society."

"Mistaken, Prue; my face is turned in quite another direction," said Dane with a slight glance at his wife which conveyed very merry and sweet intelligence. He had just received a small parcel from Byron, and was unrolling it in his hands; which also drew Mrs. Coles' attention and stopped the flow of her arguments. When the last fold of soft paper came off, there appeared a tiny clock so tiny that at first nobody understood what it was; but as Dane set it upon the mantelpiece it struck the hour. The notes were like silver bells, so liquid, clear and musical, that there was a general exclamation of delight.

"My dear Dane! what is that?" exclaimed his interlocutor.

"Hazel's travelling clock."

"Hazel's travelling clock!—Where is she going?"

"Wherever I go," said Dane coolly.

"But where are you going? I thought your hands were full with your mills."

"Just now they are rather full."

"Won't they be full a long time, Duke?" said Primrose.

"Perhaps. But when I get things in order, then I shall go, if I can."

"Where asked Mrs. Coles."

"In general—to see the midnight sun—and the moonlight on Milan."

"You have been there before."

"Just why I want to go there again," said Rollo, while his eye came furtively over to Wych Hazel with a sparkle in it. And he went on—

"I know a little lake in the Bavarian mountains. It lies in the midst of the tall stems of ancient forest trees. The water is so clear that you can see the small stones at the bottom, sixty feet down. Above the lake and above the tops of the trees, your eye can reach the mountain walls of rock towering thousands of feet up, bearing their everlasting snow fields. Then if you look down, you see in the water the reflection of a cross that stands on the summit of one of the mountains; the Zug-spitze. And the whole little lake, to use the expression of an enthusiastic German, is 'as green as the dewdrop on a lettuce leaf.'"

"My dear Dane!" said Mrs. Coles in bewilderment. "Where is it?"

"In Bavaria."

"That's in Germany, isn't it? Have you ever been there?"

"How else should I know how green it is?"