

Ernest sprang with joy from his resting couch, and, his mind surcharged with visions of past horrors, prepared to pass in the usual manner the day destined to usher in a night of crimes. The morning repast despatched, he again essayed the powers of his magic pencil; suddenly he flung the instrument from him with vehemence, and threw himself distractedly into a chair.

"What am I about to do?" he muttered; "resign all hopes of future happiness!—for what? For the purpose of rendering one person to death, another to crime, and a third to misery! This is terrible! I will not do it. My loved, my gentle, Elsi yet pants for my return to my native village, and I will return; in the days of my poverty we exchanged vows, which, in the hour of prosperity, shall be fulfilled. Ah! last night the magic pencil brought to my view the Signora Aloysia; let me now see whether it will not present me with the form of Elsi. Yes, I shall see how she is engaged, and perhaps, perhaps, find her praying for one who has so long forgotten her." Thus saying, he crossed the studio, and picked up his charmed pencil.

He passed it over the canvass, and anon there appeared the interior of an humble dwelling; in the fore-ground, engaged at a spinning-wheel, sat a fair young girl, just brightening into womanhood, the very *beau idéal* of laughing beauty mingled with sensibility. Near her sat a youth, who, with hurried gesture and anxious look, was evidently pleading a tale of love, while she, with smiles that seemed to mock his earnestness, evidently listened to the rustic with joyous and participating feelings.

"Oh horror!" shouted the painter, "what do I see? Elsi unfaithful? Ay, there she sits, while the very man whose addresses she has so often told me she hated pleads his cause of love, and is tacitly encouraged. This has decided me—Aloysia shall be mine—in my arms she will speedily forget the idiot Antonio."

The day is passed much in the same way in all parts of the civilized world. The poor labour—the wealthy idle—the young anticipate with glee—the old look back with regret—Death seizes on all alike! So passed that day in Florence; in the morning the grand and solemn service in the churches attracted the religious, whether so in fact, or merely in appearance; afterwards the gay and crowded streets delighted the idler; then came the siesta, full of charms to the indolent; while the varied delights of a bright Italian evening closed a day of mingled mirth and grief, laughter and weeping, life and death."

It was evening when the Count Aldini wended his way to the palazzo di Santo Giuliano; and, as he sought the most retired path, and with moody, half-concealed countenance, evaded the inquiring glance and recognition of those who knew him, strange thoughts flitted across his brain. "What a tangled web is human life!" he thought, as he reflected upon the events of his own past existence; and lo! a commentary presented itself. At the termination of the court which he was traversing were two houses in juxtaposition—from one came forth the sound of mandolins and of young clear voices singing love ditties—from the other issued the wail of sorrow, the sob of anguish, the gasp of despair! In the former house all was joy and merriment, for it was the anniversary of a young girl's birthday, and her companions had assembled round her and crowned her with flowers, and proclaimed her queen of the night: in the other habitation there were but two persons, and of those, one "slept the sleep which knows no waking;" the other was a female, about the same age as her more favoured neighbour. She had no flowers twined round her brow, but her long black hair hung negligently over her shoulders, as she knelt by the side of the dead, and mourned the loss of the only being who had ever loved her, of the only friend she had ever known.

"Life is indeed a tangled web!" repeated the Count Aldini, as he drew his gorgeous cloak closer around him, and, turning from the house of mourning, quickened his footsteps—"and he is most wise who grasps all offered benefits—little time is there to be wasted, truly." It is impossible to say what species of logic the count employed

to obtain that deduction—suffice it that he was that moment a most worthy disciple of his elderly friend.

To be continued.

ORATION ON THE NATIVITY.

BY GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

Jesus is begotten!—laud and glorify. He descends from heaven!—go forth to meet him. He stands upon the earth!—be ye exalted to the skies. Let the whole earth sing unto the Lord. Jesus is manifested in the flesh!—rejoice at once with joy and trembling: with trembling, by reason of thy transgression; with joy, by reason of thy hope. Who adores not Him, who existed from everlasting; or glorifies not Him, who through Eternity shall endure?

Again darkness is dispersed; again is light created; Egypt again is visited with darkness; Israel is again enlightened by the fire-girt pillar. Let the people who sit in the gloom of ignorance behold the resplendent beam of knowledge. The ancient things have passed away, and lo! all things are new. The letter recedes, the spirit abounds. The shadows flee away, and the substance enters. The anti-type of Melchisedec is come. Clap your hands ye nations! for 'unto us a Son is born, and unto us a Child is given, whose government shall be upon his shoulder.' Let John proclaim, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' I also will proclaim the potency of this wonderful day. The Incorporeal is invested with a form; the brightness of the Word is veiled; the Invisible is beheld; the Intangible is felt; the Everduring is born in time; the Son of God becometh the son of man. Let the Jews be scandalized; let the Gentiles scoff; let the heretics vexatiously dispute. Then will they believe, when they shall behold him returning to the skies; or, if not then, at least when they shall behold Him descending from on high, and sitting as their Judge!

But now receive, with gratitude, this gift of the conception. Leap and exult, if not like John in the womb, at least like David at the resting of the ark. Respect that enrolment by which thou hast been registered in the heavens; and venerate that birth by which thou hast been freed from the chains of thy nativity. Honour lowly Bethlehem, for it hath restored thee unto Paradise: revere that manger, through which, when devoid of knowledge, thou wert nourished by the Word. Move on, in concert with the star; and with the Magi present thine offerings,—gold, and myrrh, and frankincense; as unto a King, as unto a God, as unto him who died for thee. Glorify with the shepherds; join the dance of angels, and swell the chorus of archangels! Let there be an harmonious concelebration of the earthly and supramundane powers! Let one circumstance connected with his birth excite thy loathing and exprobaton;—the murder of the infants by command of Herod: and yet, thou shouldst reverence this also; regarding it as an oblation of those whose age was the age of Jesus; the forerunner of that novel sacrifice. Does he flee unto Egypt? Eagerly participate his flight: it is an ennobling thing to flee with Jesus in his persecution. Does he linger in Egypt? Summon him from thence, by adoring him even there. Pass blamelessly through every age of Christ, and through all his virtues. Be purified as becometh his disciple; be circumcised in heart; rend the veil of thine earthly generation. Teach in the temple, and drive from thence the traffickers in sacred things. Consent to be stoned, if it be needful: thou shalt escape thy persecutors, and shalt pass securely through the midst, as did thy Saviour; for the Word was not stoned. If thou shouldst be brought before Herod, answer not. He will respect thy silence more than the protracted speech of others. If like Christ, thou shouldst be scourged, be emulous of the sufferings which yet remained. Since thou hast tasted of sin, thou must taste the gall and must drink the vinegar. Seek to be spit upon, to be stricken, to be buffeted; submit to be crowned with thorns,—the sharp trials attendant on a life of holiness. Be invested with the scarlet robe; receive the reed in thine hand; and he scoffingly adored by those who deride the truth. At last, be crucified with him;

die with him; be buried with him; that with him thou mayest arise; with him mayest be glorified; with him mayest reign; beholding God in all his majesty; adored and glorified in a Trinity of persons.—*An Extract.*

CHRISTMAS.

BY WASHINGTON IRVING.

Of all the old festivals, that of Christmas awakens the strongest and most heart-felt associations. There is a tone of sacred and solemn feeling, that blends with our conviviality, and lifts the spirit to a state of hallowed and elevated enjoyment. The services of the church about this season are extremely tender and inspiring. They dwell on the beautiful story of the origin of our faith, and the pastoral scenes that accompanied its announcement. They gradually increase in fervour and pathos during the season of Advent, until they break forth in full jubilee on the morning that brought peace and good-will to men.

It is a beautiful arrangement, also, derived from days of yore, that this festival, which commemorates the announcement of the religion of peace and love, has been made the season for gathering together of family connexions, and drawing closer again those bands of kindred hearts, which the cares and pleasures and sorrows of the world are continually operating to cast loose; of calling back the children of a family who have launched forth in life, and wandered widely asunder, once more to assemble about the paternal hearth, that rallying place of the affections, there to grow young and loving again among the endearing mementos of childhood.

There is something in the very season of the year, that gives a charm to the festivity of Christmas. At other times we derive a great portion of our pleasures from the beauties of nature. Our feelings sally forth, and dissipate themselves over the sunny landscape, and we "live abroad and every where." The song of the bird, the murmur of the stream, the breathing fragrance of spring, the soft voluptuousness of summer, the golden pomp of autumn, earth, with its mantle of refreshing green, and heaven, with its deep, delicious blue, and its cloudy magnificence, all fill us with mute but exquisite delight, and we revel in the luxury of mere sensation. But in the depth of winter, when Nature lies despoiled of every charm, and wrapped in her shroud of sheeted snow, we turn for our gratifications to moral sources. The dreariness and desolation of the landscape, the short, gloomy days, and darksome nights, while they circumscribe our wanderings, shut in our feelings, also, from rambling abroad, and make us more keenly disposed for the pleasures of the social circle. Our thoughts are more concentrated; our friendly sympathies more aroused. We feel more sensibly the charm of each other's society, and are brought more closely together by dependence on each other for enjoyment. Heart calleth unto heart, and we draw our pleasures from the deep wells of living kindness, which lie in the deep recesses of our bosoms, and which, when resorted to, furnish forth the pure element of domestic felicity. The pitchy gloom without makes hearts dilate on entering the room filled with the glow and warmth of the evening fire. The ruddy blaze diffuses an artificial summer and sunshine through the room, and lights up each countenance into a kindlier welcome. Where does the honest face of hospitality expand into a broader and more cordial smile—where is the shy glance of love more sweetly eloquent—than by the winter fire-side? And, as the hollow blast of wintry wind rushes through the hall, claps the distant door, whistles about the casement, and rumbles down the chimney, what can be more grateful than that feeling of sober and sheltered security, with which we look round upon the comfortable chamber, and the scene of domestic hilarity?

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MATRIMONY.—No women ought to be permitted to enter upon the duties of conubiality without being able to make a shirt, mend a coat, sent a pair of unwhisperables, bake a loaf of bread, roast a joint of meat, broil a steak, make a pudding, and manufacture frocks for little responsibilities.