

ing, a quick knock fell upon the door, and his mother, rising to answer it, found before her a miner begrimed with the dusky marks of his trade, his shoes bearing evidence of a muddy walk. The workmen had all left the mine, he said, except Jacob, who remained to finish a piece of work, and would not return until dark, and would therefore reach the bridge over Black Creek alone; which bridge would probably be gone before he reached it, as the swollen waters were rapidly carrying off the timbers when they crossed. He had come by to tell her, that she might send Andrew to bring him around by the other road. Andrew, taking up the bow, said:

"I will leave this as I go by, mother, and get my money from Hendrick."

"Indeed, no, Andrew," replied his mother anxiously; "you will not more than have time now to tell your father before he starts;" and, so saying, left the room, while Andrew stood a moment, reasoning with himself.

"I will only stay a moment," he said, and taking up his bow again ran out.

His way lay along the edge of the ridges that rose steep and bleak out of the Black Forest. Down among its rocks he could hear the roaring of the torrents, that had been mere brooks in the morning, dashing their way among the pines; and he thought of one of them, whose heaving waters were pushing against its little bridge, and thought how fearful to step in the darkness on its tottering planks that would let one into the cold black waters.

He had reached Hendrick's gate, and, with the roar of the torrent still in his ears, ran in. Once comfortably established before his friend's fire, he forgot the growing darkness and the lonely miner on his way through the Forest. For Jacob, having done his work at last, braving the fierce wind and whistling a Christmas carol to cheer the lonely darkness, took his way to the creek; and, ignorant that all save a single timber or two were gone, stepped from the bank of shelving stones into the flood. Jacob Flint's was not the only cry of distress that night that reached the ears of the good wood-cutter on the other side, nor the only one that his stalwart arm brought across the stream, and after that his neighbors used to call him "St. Christopher." A sorrowful Christmas it was for the Flints—spent at Jacob's bedside, and it was not until the wood-hyacinths were again springing along the Forest, that he was enabled once more to take his way to the mines. It was a very hard year for them; nearly all the little they possessed went to pay necessary outlays, and when

Christmas was again approaching, there was no thought of merry-making. None thought of this so often as poor Andrew, who shed many bitter tears, although he knew his parents had forgiven his sin; for they had seen with thankful hearts the repentance that showed itself in acts of self-denial that were fast conquering self, and proving itself victorious over indolence.

Ever since winter set in, Andrew had been laboring to fill the little blue bag again, that had been emptied for so sad a reason; but the small pieces fell in at great intervals, and, for two weeks, rain, snow and storm had shut him in, and no coins dropped in the bag, or brought nearer the fulfilment of his desire to buy a Christmas dinner. He was lying awake the night before Christmas eve, when he overheard his father and mother talking together beside the fire.

"I do wish," Jacob said, "that we could have a merry Christmas and invite the wood-cutter and his family over, poor things! they know so little about pleasure, but—" he added with a sigh, that his wife echoed—"we can't think of it. If the wood-cutter was just able, as he used to be, to carry holly and misletoe to town with his wood, he could make something, for the storms have been so violent that none have been carried to town for Christmas decorations, and it is in great demand, I hear."

Andrew fell to thinking, and, at last, to sleep, though not so soundly but that he was awake next morning before a soul was astir, and wrapped in his old great-coat was off to the woods. He did not wonder that little of Christmas green had been gathered, for deep snow covered the earth, and the same cold burden weighed heavily on the tree branches; and as he struck boldly through the forest, shivering at the cold solitude around him, sudden gusts of wind would whirl the eddies of blinding snow into his face and almost make him falter; but he would keep on, and a few hours later saw him trudging back towards the city, bent under the weight of holly and misletoe; but few voices that day, beside his own, chanted the misletoe-seller's song along the streets, but right gleefully did he sing:

"Buy my berries! buy my berries! here is holly red as cherries,  
Rough and thorny as the season, hotter than all trees that grow;  
For, according to the story, prickly leaves, like these before ye,  
Round the Saviour's brow were circled, eighteen hundred years ago.