

PLEASANT FLOWERS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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Johnny's Observations on Christmas Eve.

BY CHARLES LOVE BENJAMIN.

Somehow I can't understand
What the teacher said to-day,
About the seasons and the way
That the earth is tilted, and
How the days keep getting short,—
Short and shorter in the fall,—
Till (she said) the winter brought
Us the shortest days of all.

That stumps me—that's what it does!
The shortest days I ever saw
Came this summer, when I was
Camping out at Colton's. Pshaw!
Talk about those days being long,
Why, they went by like a streak!
Forty of 'em (or I'm wrong)
Wouldn't really make a week.

And now, she says the days are short;
She made a diagram to show
Just how it was; I s'pose I ought
To understand—but all I know,
To-morrow holidays begin;
To-morrow Christmas'll be here;
But I'm sure to-day has been
The longest day in all the year!
—St. Nicholas.

MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

"I never saw anything so dreadful!" cried Belle, in despair. "Blocked in by snow! Who knows how long we shall stay here? Hours! Days! Long enough to be too late for Cousin Ellen's wedding. What does she mean being married in mid-winter? Why didn't we start a week sooner, while the weather was good?"

"Worst of all, we shall miss seeing her," said Tom. "She will sail for England, Saturday, and then off to India. I felt pretty fine over being an attendant at a wedding, and having a cousin going to India for a missionary, but I don't feel so fine now that we are snow-blocked from seeing her off. She will see monkeys every day, and no doubt ride on elephants, and I wanted her to be sure and send me India stamps."

"Nothing ever goes right," moaned Belle. "This was my first chance of being a bridesmaid, and here I am to miss it."

"Make the best of it," said Uncle Fred. "There isn't any best," said Tom and Belle.

"If there is no best in it for you, you can help to make the best of it for other people," said their uncle. "We are by no means the worst-off ones on this train. We are in a sleeper; food and beds are provided; I feel sorry for some poor people—people with children in the common car; they have no beds; I fear their provisions will run out, and that they have not enough wraps. They are nice German people."

"They can buy at the buffet," said Tom.

"The buffet is very dear, and no doubt they have but little money. Before long I shall go and see how they fare."

"To-morrow will be day before Christmas," cried Belle. "Suppose we are shut up in this car till then—even until Christmas Day. Oh! won't that be horrid?"

"It may happen, as it is now eight o'clock in the evening, the storm increasing, and the wires down," said Uncle Fred.

The next day found the train entirely blockaded by snow. However, a little talk with Uncle Fred prevented the hearts of Tom and Belle from being storm-bound by ill-temper. They visited the German people in the next car and proceeded to "make the best of it."

The quick eyes of Belle noted that the provision baskets were nearly empty. She and Fred consulted together in high glee and proposed to receive contributions from the lunch boxes and buffet in the sleeper and "make a Christmas party" for the half-dozen rosy little Germans. The party was laid in the car where the Germans were, the conductor and porters aiding preparations very heartily. After the party, the Germans proposed to treat the sleeper-car passengers to a concert, and a fine concert it was, with lovely Christmas carols. Good-fellowship now prevailed, and a lady who had a section near Belle suggested that the brakemen should be asked to bring a Christmas tree from the woods not far off; that this tree should be dressed or the little Germans.

"We can, I am sure, find ribbons, kerchiefs, little nick-nacks, and toys and books among us, and there are some picture-books belonging to a train-boy which I will buy."

the waiting," said Belle to Tom. "Did you?"

"I had a real good time, as soon as we began to make the best of it," said Tom.

CHRISTMAS TIDINGS.

The tidings which were announced on the first Christmas morn are ever new and full of inspiration. That song which the angels chanted was one which should never grow old and which shall never be forgotten. It matters not where man is found, he ever stops to hear the tidings of joy which were first sung on the morning of Christ's birth, but which seem to become more inspiring as the ages roll along. There never has been a time when the tidings of the first Christmas were not a matter of amazement. As the shepherds were astonished at the news, so vast multitudes are still astonished at the plan of salvation. These tidings of great joy have filled the world with goodness and happiness.

Never before had such news been heard among men. Never before had men the pleasure of knowing that the promised one of Israel had come. But here when the angel sang, "I bring you good tidings of joy," it was a truth never to be forgotten and a season ever full of interest to every one. The whole world now has part in the celebration of that event. It seems all men and nations

HIS FIRST OPPORTUNITY.

Seize ordinary opportunities and make them extraordinary. "The best men," says E. H. Chapin, "are not those who have waited for chances, but who have taken them, besieged the chance, conquered the chance, and made ch. . . the servitor."

A story which is not new is well told in *The Youth's Companion* by George Cary Eggleston.

A large company had been invited to a banquet at the mansion of Signor Fallero, in France; and just before the hour the confectioner, who had been making a large ornament for the table, sent word that he had spoiled it.

"If you will let me try, I think I can make something that will do," said a boy who had been employed as a scullion.

"You!" exclaimed the head servant in great astonishment; "and who are you?"

"I am Antonio Canova, the grandson of Pisano, the stonecutter," replied the pale-faced little fellow.

"And, pray, what can you do?" asked the major-domo.

"I can make something that will do for the middle of the table, if you'll let me try."

The servant was at his wits' end, so he told Antonio to go ahead and see what he could do. Calling for some butter, the scullion quickly moulded a large, crouching lion.

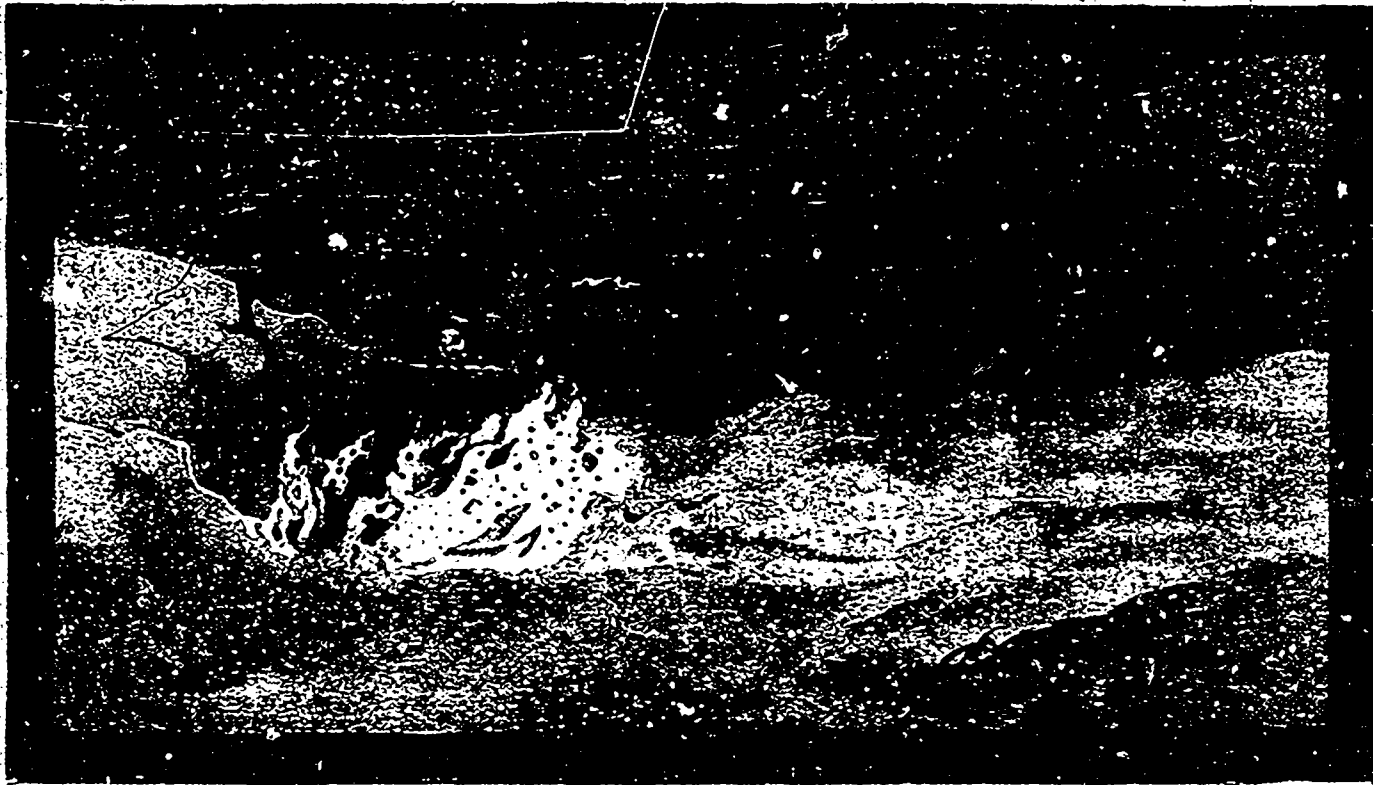
Dinner was announced, and many of the most noted merchants, princes, and noblemen of Venice were ushered into the large dining-room. Among them were skilled critics of art work. When their eyes fell upon the butter lion, they recognized it as a work of genius. They examined it long and carefully, and asked Signor Fallero what great sculptor had been persuaded to waste his skill upon a work in such a temporary material.

When the distinguished guests learned that the lion had been in a short time by a scullion, the dinner was turned into a feast in his

honour. The rich host declared that he would pay the boy's expenses under the best masters, and he kept his word; but Antonio was not spoiled by his good fortune. He remained at heart the same simple, earnest, faithful boy who had tried so hard to become a good stonecutter in the shop of Pisano.

Some may not have heard how the boy Antonio took advantage of this first great opportunity, but all know of Canova, one of the greatest sculptors of all time.—Our Sunday Afternoon.

And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas Day in the morning.
And all the angels in heaven shall sing
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the angels in heaven shall sing
On Christmas Day in the morning.
And all the souls on earth shall sing
On Christmas Day on Christmas Day;
And all the souls on earth shall sing
On Christmas Day in the morning.
—Old Carol.



THE SNOW PLOUGH.

Now there was great joy. The tree was brought, and some little purses, hastily constructed, held shining dollars for the porter, train-boy, and brakemen. The dreaded day flew by with wonderful quickness. At last the tree was ready, and then eager was the admiration.

"It is nearly as good as the wedding," cried Belle.

"Kind of missionary work, if we are not Cousin Ellen," said Tom.

"Truly making the best of it for ourselves and others," said Uncle Fred. "He who aideth his neighbour cheereth himself."

"Help at hand!" said the conductor, coming down the car just as the famous tree was stripped. "The snow-plough is in sight at last, with six engines to push it."

Then, as a grand treat, the conductor had the top of the car swept, and he and Uncle Fred helped Tom and Belle up to the "roof," where they could see the mighty snow-plough coming, snorting, smoking, flaming, panting, over the desolate white waste.

"I didn't mind it so much, after all—

are ready to do homage to the Prince of Peace and the Lord of Glory. When the Christmas time comes, many who never profess his name are glad they may share in the pleasures of the occasion. May all have a merry Christmas, and may these words be jewels to the soul.

Merry Christmas!
Remember the poor;
The Saviour has come!
Good tidings of great joy!
"Glory to God in the highest!"
"On earth peace, good will toward men!"

"Thanks be unto to God for his unspeakable gift!"
"Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee!"
"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth!"
"For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!"