

When I reached the old school-house a merry sight met my gaze. A snow-ball fight was in progress, and right merrily the balls were flying in all directions. As I watched the children playing I could not but wish that I was a child again, and could join in the game with all the zest of my youthful days. While meditating thus a stinging rap on my cheek brought me to my senses, and as the snow ran down my neck I began to think that even snow-balling had its drawbacks. Looking around to see who had caused my discomfort, I found the offender to be a great red-faced, grinning school boy, who, no doubt, noticing my dreamy expression, had thought me a good target, and as I learned afterward found his surmise had been but too true. However, I walked on and came to the old mill pond. There was one place without snow, for the thin sheet of ice had not been able to sustain the load, and the stream was running as merrily as ever.

As I looked up over the hills I could see here and there hosts of children, who, in all the eagerness of the first snow storm, had come out to coast, and were vainly struggling to make their sleds go through the thick snow.

At last I came to the grave-yard, and although the day was waning wandered in. The setting sun lit up the western windows of the old church, and as I looked at the surrounding graves, so pure and clear in their white coverings, I could not but wonder how soon their purity would be stained from its contact with our earth. Thinking thus, I wended my way homeward, intending to take another walk on the morrow.

A CHRISTMAS AT SEA.

It was Christmas eve.

A merry group was seated around the cheerful grate, cracking nuts, and listening to Christmas stories told by each in turn. After the children had each told a tale they asked Uncle Jack to tell them one of his adventures on the sea; for Uncle Jack was a sailor and it was not often that he spent a Christmas at home.

Well children, he began, I was just thinking what a different Christmas this is in contrast to the one I spent last year. We were on our way from Liverpool to Cape Colony and the night before Christmas we sat on deck the greater part of the evening watching the stars glittering overhead and, perhaps, at times busy with our own thoughts of the morrow, for we all remembered some such time spent with friends who perhaps, if not dead, are far away in distant lands. The wind was fair and the ship speeding along at the rate of ten knots an hour.

We stayed on deck until every sound had ceased, and the only sound that broke the stillness was the measured tread of the sentinel as he passed up and down the quarter deck.

Christmas morning we were up early enjoying the freshness of the air. The ship looked very neat and clean and the sailors had put on their best suits in honor of the day. After breakfast, the crew assembled forward where reading and prayer were offered by the captain.

Everything passed in order until ten o'clock, when the man at the wheel called out "A sail ahead on the starboard bow." We could just discern her in the distance, but by the aid of the glasses we could tell she was a sailing vessel and coming towards us. We noticed as we drew nearer to her that she did not seem to be heading for any particular place and her bow was turned first one way and then another.

About half-past eleven we were within hail of her and we ran up our signals but we did not get any reply, and furthermore could not see any one on deck, even the man at the wheel was missing. Thinking this very strange we changed the course of our vessel and approached a little closer.

After a close inspection we arrived at the conclusion that she had been abandoned, but for what reason we could

not determine, so resolved to go on board. Accordingly we lowered our largest boat and the captain, and mate, with four of the sailors started for the vessel. When they got quite near they called but receiving no answer they went on board. She was a ship of about twelve hundred tons and loaded with lumber. They investigated and found that reports had been made in the log book only the day before, and with no account of bad weather. One of the boats was gone but for what reason no one knew. After a careful investigation they came on board again, and as nothing could be done, we proceeded on our way.

The Christmas dinner was kept waiting for us but for once a Christmas dinner was left untasted; and our thoughts were busy trying to fathom the reason of this uncanny scene we had witnessed. About four o'clock we were out of sight of the seeming phantom of the morning.

When we arrived at Cape Colony we reported our adventure but to no avail, for no one knew of a vessel by the name and tonnage. We once heard a report that a dismasted bark had been passed with no signs of life on board, but whether it was the same one is hard to tell.

As time passed on I ceased to dwell on the matter, but still, at times, I often wonder what became of our ocean phantom.

Musical Column.

SHORT SKETCH OF PIANO-FORTE MUSIC ITS COMPOSERS.

BY EUTERPE.

The piano-forte was derived from the harpsichord and the clarichord. The first piano of which we have any knowledge was made in Florence, Italy, about the year 1700.

The instrument was the result of efforts to improve the harpsichord. The need of something of the kind was felt everywhere. The harpsichord and the clarichord had one thing in common with the piano-forte, i. e., metallic strings stretched horizontally in a frame over a sounding board, and were played by means of keys. The strings of the harpsichord were snapped with crows' quills, and those of the clarichord were set in motion by means of a push from a small brass wedge set in the end of the keys. The clarichord required great delicacy of touch, and was, in the hands of an artist, a very expressive instrument.

In the early part of the eighteenth century the clarichord and harpsichord had reached the limit of their development. The great musicians at first condemned the piano-forte. Bach spoke of it as being heavy in touch and weak in the treble. Mozart, to the end of his life, was a harpsichord player rather than a pianist. Toward the end of the century great improvements were made in the construction of the piano-forte, and by the beginning of the present century the harpsichord and clarichord were driven forever out of use.

Music may be divided into periods. In the first, known as the classical period, we have polyphonic music, which was written for the harpsichord and clarichord. The greatest composer of this style were J. S. Bach, Haendel and Scarlatti. The first classical period closed during the year of Bach's death, 1750.

During the second classical period the sonata form was developed by C. P. E. Bach, Haydn and Mozart, but Beethoven raised it to the highest significance as a work of art. Beethoven's two greatest contemporaries were Von Weber and Franz Schubert.

Next we have the Romantic period. The most important writers of this time being Mendelssohn, sometimes known as the kid-gloved composer, Chopin and Schumann