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Christmas Time.

Heap on more wood!—the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer:

* * * * * * * * *

And well our Christmas sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious right
Gave honor to the holy night:
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung:
That only night, in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, undergoing, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

The fire, with well dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue coated serving man;
Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green garbed ranger tell
How, when, and where, the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassel round in good brown bowls
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide, her savory goose.
Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery.
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made;
But, oh! what maskers richly dight
Can boast of bosoms half so light?
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mirriest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the mirriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

—Sir Walter Scott.

YES, OR NO.

Terrible weather—quite an old fashioned Christmas—the snow falling fast, in flakes as large as dimes, and an icy, penetrating wind sweeping across the country, with a fierce determination to have its own way. Everybody said it was the coldest winter ever known; but that is the annual saying.

At the Elms, the seat of a country gentleman, in one of the Northern States, a large party had assembled to spend the Christmas holidays. Mr. Fowler, the owner of the Elms, was a man of both taste and liberality, and enjoyed nothing better than to gather his friends around him. He was a widower, with one child—Lucilla, a sparkling, sprightly girl of nineteen or twenty.

The party consisted of several friends and neighbors of Mr. Fowler, and their wives and daughters. There was, of course, a proportionate assembly of young men, and among them a certain Captain Wilfred Herbert, a great admirer of Lucilla's, without, as yet, having actually declared himself. It needed not much discernment, however, to perceive that he was devotedly attached to the young lady, while she on her part was not indifferent to him.

But just let me tell you a word about Lucilla. She was one of those dear, bewitching creatures that will make you think that you are a very nice sort of a fellow, and that you are just the kind of a man that she always admired; then, without any perceptible effort, will cause you to suppose that you are a great blundering thing that astonishes himself by his own conceit in supposing that he, for a moment, could compare himself with her; but underneath all this, there was a woman's nature that could be loving, and even sincere. Now her father, who, strange to say, could not read young ladies like a book, seeing only a coquette in his charming daughter, was much pleased by the preference paid her by the handsome young officer, who came of an excellent family, and in addition to his profession, had an ample private fortune, and, in his parental solicitude, was desirous of seeing her happily settled with some deserving and eligible young man. Mr. Fowler himself was verging on seventy years, having married late in life.

It was about midday and the scene in the grounds of the Elms was animated and striking. They were of great extent, and in summer most beautifully laid out. Now, however, their beauties were veiled beneath a waste of snow. The immense elms, yews and cedars which skirted the lawn, so extensive as almost to resemble the open space in a park, were weighed down by fantastically shaped conglomeration of snow, and the lawn itself was a vast sheet of white, reminding one as much of Siberia, and its sable and mink hunters, than of an American landscape, and a party of American ladies and gentlemen.

The guests of Mr. Fowler—some thirty in number—seemed to be enjoying themselves amazingly. Some of the young men had, for the amusement of the ladies, contrived to make a huge figure of snow, and they and their fair companions were now engaged in pelting the giant with snowballs. Others had rigged out, Russian fashion, some pretty little sleighs, which, drawn by three ponies adorned by small silver bells, and each capable of containing two persons, afforded an opportunity for flirting not to be lost by young people snowed up in a country house. Most of the young ladies were clothed in fur suits from head to foot, while the gentlemen, in fur caps and jackets, contributed their share to a very picturesque tableau. The tinkling of the sleigh bells, and the merry shouts of the party engaged in pelting the snow giant, formed a most pleasing accompaniment to the hilarity of the scene.

Miss Fowler, who had been sleighing in turn with half the young men of the party, while Captain Herbert stood apart, gnawing his tawney mustache, and eyeing her with ill concealed vexation, had left the merry throng for one moment to confer with her father on some matter of domestic economy.

Very pretty and piquant looked Lucilla Fowler, muffled in a suit of rich sables, her black eyes twinkling like those of a squirrel and her nose displaying just the faintest suspicion of red in the frosty air. She laughed, chatted, mimicked and flirted outrageously.

"You will have to take care what you are about, Lucilla, pet," whispered Mr. Fowler to his daughter, warningly, "or Herbert will 'cry off.'"

"He has never been 'on' yet, papa," returned she, tossing her head indignantly. "He has never asked me, and if he did, I should say 'No.'"

"Oh, pooh! pooh!!" said the old gentleman, good humoredly. "Tell that to some one else, Lucilla; it won't go down with me."

And he turned away from his daughter and began talking to some brother landed proprietor about the scarcity of beets and seeds, and the prices fat bullocks were fetching at the country town.

Captain Wilfred Herbert, who had been watching an opportunity, marched up to Lucilla, a cloud on his handsome face.

"Will you sleigh with me now, Miss Fowler? I think it's my turn."

"Oh, I don't know about anybody's 'turn.' I was half engaged to Mr. Fitzgerald. Besides, I really think I've had enough of sleighing for one day."

"Just for ten minutes, pleaded the young officer.

"No, I think not," returned the willful beauty, who, like other beauties, having hooked her fish, delighted in the torment she put him to. "It becomes fatiguing after awhile."

"Well, then, shall we join the snowballers?"

"Oh, dear, no! When last I saw them, poor Fi-fe-fum had lost his nose, his ears, both arms, and everything else. There would be no fun in pelting at the stump now. One might as well throw at the trunk of a tree."

"Oh, Lucilla," said he, earnestly, "what makes you treat me in this manner?"

"In what manner?" asked the little coquette, affecting supreme unconsciousness.

"You will neither sleigh with me nor join the snowballing party, though I have asked you a dozen times; yet you have joined nearly all the other fellows in both pastimes."

"Have I, really? Well the other 'fellows,' as you call them, are all particularly pleasant, agreeable young men."

"Am I not pleasant to you, then?"

"Not just now. You really look like some melo-dramatic tyrant. Besides, you don't expect me to praise you to your face?"

"Lucilla," said the young man, with such passionate energy that it startled her, "why torture me thus? Don't you know that I love you with all my heart and soul?"

Yes, she knew it well, and her heart beat fast with joy and triumph; but the demon of coquetry had possession of her, and she answered, though in a softer tone:

"Really, I had never thought about it."

"Think about it now, then," continued the young officer, speaking rapidly, and in tones of deep emotion; "think about it now, dearest. I do love you, and think your father will approve of it. Will you be my wife? Say 'yes'!"

But Lucilla, though she had given her heart in return for Wilfred Herbert's, was not to be carried by a storm in this provoking way, and she said:

"No."

"You cannot mean it," exclaimed Herbert, in great agitation.

"Why not?" replied Lucilla; but even as she spoke she repented. "Why not? Can I not choose whom I please?"

"You love some one else," said the young man, moodily.

Lucilla gave him one little bit of comfort:

"No, I do not," she said, honestly.

"Thank Heaven for that! But won't you answer me, Lucilla?"

"Not now," she said, wavering. Then her woman's heart wished to surrender, and she added, with a tremulous sigh: "What if I say 'No,' again?"

Foolish young captain, he might have seen that this was a wish on the young lady's part to capitulate; but he did not. He replied, firmly:

"No woman shall ever say 'No' to me twice."

This roused all the pride in Lucilla's nature; it was almost a repulse.

"Good morning, Captain Herbert," she said, as she turned indignantly away. "I have some business to transact with Mrs. Knox, the housekeeper."

And she walked rapidly toward the house, leaving the young man half sorry, half triumphant.

"I have affronted her," he thought, looking after her. "But I am sure she loves me." And with a lightened heart he joined the other visitors on the lawn.

All through the evening, Lucilla maintained a distant coldness toward the young officer that made him feel exceedingly uneasy. If her heart had been touched by his avowal of the afternoon, it was evident her pride was deeply offended. She would neither dance with him nor sing with him as usual. And when it became absolutely necessary to reply to any remark made by him, she did so with the barest possible civility. Lucilla herself was far from comfortable, and she availed herself of the plea of a headache to excuse herself to her guests and retire to her own room.

Her maid, Dorcas, was arranging the young lady's hair for the night, when a low tap at the door was heard, and one of the under housemaids presented her with a note.

"From Captain Herbert, please ma'am, and I was to beg for an answer before you went to bed."

"What coolness," thought Lucilla, but she said: "Did you tell Captain Herbert I had gone to bed, Mary?"

"Oh, yes, please ma'am," said the girl, with an arch smile; "but he said it was of great importance."

"Very well; you may go, Mary. I will give Dorcas a note to give to Captain Herbert's servant."

And Mary departed.

With a beating heart and heightened color, Lucille opened the note. It ran thus:

"DEAR LUCILLA—I cannot rest until you answer me. Forgive me if I spoke like a coxcomb this afternoon. Give me an answer, I entreat. Will you have me? Write simply 'Yes,' or 'No.'"

Lucilla, with compressed lips, took up a pen and ink and wrote on a single slip of paper "No," then twisted it into a note and gave it to Dorcas.

"Deliver this to Captain Herbert's servant immediately," she said.

And Dorcas left the room, after bidding her mistress good night.

Lucilla loved Wilfred Herbert, but her stern pride would not permit her to yield. She was determined to punish him for his dictatorial ways and his presumption of that afternoon. What! was he to be captain over the citadel before it had yielded? Lucilla, be it remembered, was an only and spoiled child, and had been used to having her slightest whim consulted. Who was Wilfred Herbert, that he should presume to constitute himself her master? Her heart told her that he was the man who could subdue her willfulness, but her pride refused to submit to the yoke. Suddenly she remembered young Herbert's words of that afternoon: "No woman shall say 'No' to me twice," and she had said "No" twice. At least she had said it once and now she had written it. Good heavens! she had lost him then. Lucilla grew pale and sick at the thought. She rose up in her bed with a motion as if she would meet Dorcas.

At last she knew she loved Wilfred Herbert. Not submit to him, indeed! Why, it would be her joy to recognize his right to demand of her a return for the love he bore her. Lucilla Fowler had been hitherto a willful, impetuous girl. Suddenly she had become transformed into a loving, submissive woman. Beatrice's words:

"And Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand,"

rose to her mind, and the spoiled beauty and coquette, overwhelmed with shame for her own willfulness, opened her eyes to her own faults, clearly and without disguise, and sinking back in despair on her pillow, burst into a passion of tears.

Lucilla scarcely slept all that night; but when Dorcas came in the morning with the hot water and the intimation that it was nine o'clock, she felt almost ashamed lest her maid should remark her heavy eyes and haggard appearance.

"Please, ma'am, I'm very sorry," began Dorcas, penitently, "but I forgot all about it."

"Forgot all about what?" asked Lucilla, listlessly.

"The note, ma'am, for Captain Herbert. It's Christmas time, you see," pleaded the lady's maid, apologetically; "and when I left your room last night, ma'am, to take it to the captain, I met Mrs. Knox, the housekeeper, in the corridor, and she told me there was a hot curry of turkey, and mince pies, and elder wines, and I don't know what else, ready in her room, and asked me to go down; and so—and so—and—hee—hee, ma'am"—here Dorcas put her apron to her eyes, and began to sob; "I forgot all about the letter, ma'am, till this morning," she continued; "but when I went up to the captain's room, just now, he was up and gone out. Oh, ma'am, I do hope it ain't no consequence."

A light broke on Lucilla.

"Where is the note now, then?" she asked, joyfully.

"Here, ma'am." And Dorcas drew it from her bosom. Lucilla seized it, while she almost screamed:

"Oh, you good girl! You dear, good girl!" Dorcas started back in amazement. What, no scolding? Had her mistress gone out of her senses!

"You may have that purple merino of mine, if you like, Dorcas," pursued Miss Fowler, "and that nice warm jacket. I shan't wear it again."

Then a light broke in upon Dorcas' brightened mind also.

"Oh!" said Miss Pert to herself, "some lovers' quarrel, I guess, and she's altered her mind, and she's glad he ain't got her note. Ah!"

But the wary lady's maid kept her ideas to herself, and thanking her mistress delightedly, proceeded to assist her to make her toilet.

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When Wilfred Herbert took his seat at the breakfast table, he was in a state of terrible suspension and uncertainty, and utterly unable to account for Lucilla's radiant demeanor. Was she glad to be rid of him? Had his note been delivered to her? If so, how was it that he received no answer? He tormented himself with these questions till everybody remarked his absence of mind. He helped his next fair neighbor to deviled kidneys instead of game pie, and electrified the housekeeper, who presided over the tea and coffee, by asking for more sugar in his cup of coffee, when he had already taken five lumps.

Mr. Fowler rallied the young officer on his absence of mind, and suggested that where his treasure was, there it was to be presumed his heart was also.

The young ladies asked him if he "had his considering cap on," while one acute damsel suggested that perhaps Captain H. was entangled in the fowler's snare.

Breakfast over, Lucilla, anxious to make amends, and too happy to care much about overleaping the conventional fence of maidenly propriety, advanced toward the young officer.

"You have not had your answer yet, Captain Herbert," she said; "if you can come with me two minutes into the conservatory, you shall have it now."

Bewildered, but tumultuously happy, the captain followed Lucilla into the place specified.

She came to the point at once, without any beating about the bush.

"I wrote you last night," she said, placing in his hand the note which Dorcas had returned to her.

Wilfred Herbert turned it over with a puzzled look. There was the one anxious little word "No."

"What does this mean?" he asked, doubtfully.

"It means," answered Lucilla, blushing and smiling at the same time:

"No," I answered you, last night;
"Yes," this morning, sir, I say.
Colors viewed by candlelight
Do not look the same by day.

Then, like a good, honest girl as she was, she told him the whole story.

"Dorcas ought to be pensioned," he said, rapturously. "You do love me, then, darling, after all?"

"Yes," replied Lucilla, blushing, "although I have both said and written "No."

"Never mind, Lucie, dearest, sweetest, best," said the young man, taking her in his arms unrepulsed, "you know two negatives make an affirmative."

A French Commune.

A French agricultural paper gives an interesting account of a remote garden commune called Roscoff, in Brittany, where immense quantities of vegetables are raised for the French and English markets on land now valued at from $1,000 to $1,400 an acre, which tradition asserts was reclaimed from the sea. During 1875 some 12,887 tons of vegetables, valued at $290,000, left the port. Besides this, immense quantities are sent off by rail from Morlaix, whither they are conveyed in old fashioned lumbering carts, for in most respects the Roscoffians are still very primitive. The principal articles grown are potatoes, onions, artichokes, and brocoli. The temperature in winter rarely does any of these harm. Scarcely any manure is used but that of marine plants known as goemons.

The Winter and the Poor.

The *Christian Intelligencer* has taken up the cause of the poor, most appropriately at this season. It says: At no time have these unfortunates been so largely re-enforced as they have this year by persons who belong to the industrious laboring and artisan class, who are masters of some calling and who are able and willing to work. Merchants have reduced the number of their clerks, factories are running on half time or have stopped work, building has almost entirely ceased; and as a result wherever we turn we see a score of men waiting to do one man's work, and thousands cannot procure the privilege to labor at any expenditure of effort or solicitation.

Discharged.

Four hundred employees of the United States bureau of engraving and printing at Washington were discharged—nearly one-half the force of the entire bureau. About two-thirds of them were women, many of them being press-girls who have been employed by the printer individually. These discharges are due to the recent action of the government in giving the work of printing revenue stamps to the bank note companies instead of to the engraving and printing bureau.

THE POSITION IN MEXICO.

How Matters Stand as Nearly as Can be Ascertained.

The position of affairs in Mexico is somewhat intricate, and possesses a remarkable difficulty in the way of being easily understood. In the year 1871, Juarez and Diaz were the rival presidential candidates, and Diaz was defeated. Juarez died in office, and was succeeded by Chief Justice Lerdo. When Lerdo's term of office expired he became a candidate for a second term. Whether he was elected or not is a disputed point. He claimed that he was and assumed the office.

Judge Iglesias, as chief justice of the supreme court, was the person designated by the last edition of the constitution to become president in case of a vacancy in that office. He declared that Lerdo was not elected, and that he illegally held the position. There being no president elected the judge himself assumed to be president and assumed the reins of power, being sustained by all the clergy.

Diaz, who was defeated first by Juarez in 1871 and had been waiting ever since for an emergency, now said that it was not worth while to bother about his personal claims. All he wanted was to secure the triumph of his friend, Iglesias, and to that end he would command the Iglesiastical army. His assistance was accepted, and he marched to the attack of the capital. With his success we are already familiar. President Lerdo ran away, but was caught and locked up. His general, Escobedo, was executed. Diaz entered Mexico and announced that he was the only genuine Mexican president, all others, including Lerdo and Iglesias, being impostors unworthy of the slightest attention.

This is now the actual condition of affairs in Mexico, Diaz being president. What Lerdo and Iglesias propose to do about it, the future alone can disclose.

A Wife's Last Letter.

Last August Eliza Ebelin left the house of her parents at Gibson Station, I. T., and fled to Denison, Tex., where she married a telegraph operator named T. G. Small against the wish of her father. She lived happily with him for two months, when he left her and went in search of employment. About the latter part of September he secured the position of night operator on the Missouri Pacific railroad at Washington. She heard where he was and went there to meet him. He learned of her coming and ran off. She returned to Sedalia, Mo. She arrayed herself in her bridal robes, took poison, and lay down and died with the last letter she had received from her husband clasped in her hand. In a large blank book was the following, directed to her husband:

The last act of my life, I say, George, I die for you. George, darling, why did your heart freeze against me, when you thought so much of me a short time since? We were so happy together, and now so miserable. Why do you deny me, George? You can deny me to the ears of men, but you cannot deny me to God. When death takes charge of your body, where will your soul be, George? Only think of this unforgiving deed I commit for you. Keep the ring on your hand, where I placed it. Let it never be removed from the hand that I have kissed so many times. When the glitter shines, think of Lida; when you meet a happy face, think of Lida; when you see one in distress, think of Lida; when you ever love another, think of Lida; and as long as you live, think of Lida, and when you come to die, then think of Lida. Never take another girl from her home and bring her to death. George, I would have forgiven you for your cold neglect of me, but you would not stand and see my face. George, my heart was true to you, and my affection for you as true as the snow that falls, and will be until the angel of cold death kisses my lips, which is but a few moments away. You will never forget me, George, dear, and never have reason to flee again. I am no more. I die with your last letter in my hand, and don't want them to take it away from me. I want this letter to go to the grave with me. Farewell, George, darling; I love you now! You have murdered Lida, and yet I love you! George, you are my husband; you know you are. I go to the grave that you may live. Will you drop one loving tear for me?

George, keep my trunk and clothing; that is all I have to leave to you. Take out all, and take care of them for the love you had for me; and in the blank book read the many words composed by my own lips and hands—your Lida. George, it is a hard battle between life and death, and I willingly prefer death rather than live without you. I am done with life, and now go down in prayer, and beg God to love you after I am dead. I now take my last drink. It is a glass of poison!

Kate Claxton's Escape.

Miss Claxton gives a thrilling account of her escape from the Brooklyn Theater, in which she says: There never was a braver man on earth than Studley. He stood by me cool and collected as the best man of the "Six Hundred," and kept the falling fire off me. When the flames swept down upon us and flight was imperative, and no good was to be done by staying, I gathered my woolen petticoat firmly in each hand, and fought the fire from me as I dashed through it. I stopped only once, and that was to seize poor Murdoch, and try to drag him off, but he was pulled away from me. Then I fought my way through with that woolen petticoat; it was my salvation. I either heard Maude Harrison in her room and got her out or met her at the door of it. Then I remembered the underground passage to the box office, and went for it, for the burning stage began to fall in upon us. The horror of the few minutes in that dark place—only wide enough for one to pass at a time—is indescribable; I knew that the door at the end was usually locked, and might be now; but the Good Providence that directs even the fall of the sparrow made a whim of mine the means of our escape. In the morning of that dreadful day—merely for fun—I had insisted upon having the door opening from the box office to this passageway unlocked, and I went through it to my dressing-room, instead of going round to the stage door. The key was reluctantly given to my agent, with many injunctions to lock the door behind him. He promised to do so, but dropped it in his pocket instead of putting it in the door on the inside, as he should have done. He says that his fingers were cold, and that went he put them into his pockets he vowed he wouldn't take them out for all the keys in Brooklyn. Those cold fingers, by God's mercy, saved all our lives, for after we had stumbled through that passage and up the stairs the door yielded and we tumbled into the box office. The smoke was suffocating.

The Sioux Treaty.

The Sioux commission has made its report to Secretary Chandler. By the terms of the agreement the Sioux surrender all claim to any country lying outside the boundaries of their permanent reserve as defined by the treaty of 1868, and to so much of said reserve as lies west of the one hundred and third meridian of longitude, and as is included between the north and south forks of the Cheyenne river, east of said meridian. The United States government thereby secures full possession of a tract of country which includes the Black Hills and is defined by natural boundaries. The Indians grant a right of way over their reservation for three roads from Missouri river to the ceded territory, the routes to be designated by the President. They also agree to receive all subsistence which may hereafter be furnished at such points on or near the Missouri river as the President may designate. The area ceded in the treaty is estimated at from ten to twelve thousand square miles.

The Spaniards in Cuba.

In the Spanish Cortes recently a leading member said, speaking of the Cuban matter: "Spain can do no more than what she has done. While soldiers were wanting here with whom to resist the different factions in arms against us, heavy contingents were sent to Cuba. Since the year 1868 we have sent there 111,380 men, of whom 73,000 have died there. What results have we obtained? If we believe the official reports and the news published by the government, these results have been satisfactory; if we believe the truth, the sole result has been heavy losses, as I will prove. The losses of the insurgents in the space of three years and a half were, according to the government reports, 128,000 killed and prisoners, and the surrenders 110,000, with a constant insurgent force of from 6,000 to 8,000. These 128,000 casualties prove either that the dispatches were incorrect, which I do not believe, or that the insurgents, after the fashion of the Ecija boys, are replaced as fast as they disappear. Either of these explanations deserves the attention of Congress."

The Ecija boys referred to above were a celebrated band of forty outlaws, who infested for a long while the roads in the vicinity of Ronda, in Andalusia. Troops were continually sent against them, and the officers in command of such troops invariably reported that they had killed sundry of the band. But as the band always kept up its effective force of forty men, *Los Ninos de Ecija* became a byword in Spain for false military reports.

Another member said: "This war in Cuba is abnormal in its character. The enemy lives in the bush as well as he would in his house. If one of their men should fall out exhausted on a march, in a few moments he is taken up and carefully tended. If one of our men gives out on a march, he is a dead man within a few minutes. They require no rations, because they live on what they gather in the woods. All, therefore, that they have to carry is their small supply of ammunition. By their spies they are kept informed of our every movement. They know the moment at which the rations which our troops must necessarily carry will give out, they lay in wait for them, they fall upon them, and although they may be repulsed, as our men are obliged to return to camp for provisions, it follows that we are always obliged to retreat with heavy encumbrances, consisting principally of our wounded. Then the enemy reforms and hangs upon our rear, so that although we may have been victorious in the fight, it is a very shady victory in the end. Judge, therefore, I repeat, whether our generals in command are not entitled to some excuse."

Thanksgiving Day in the West.

A Western paper, discussing Thanksgiving day, says it is not a success outside of New England and the Middle States. It adds: You may succeed in raising a brook trout in a stream that flows from an artesian well, if you give it care and liver enough to eat. It will look like a trout such as you used to catch up in the mountains of New Hampshire, but when you come to eat it you will find that it tastes as insipid as a sucker caught in a muddy, shallow lake in the month of August. Apples will grow in China, but their taste is between that of a white turnip and a piece of basswood. It is much the same with a Thanksgiving dinner eaten south of Long Island sound and west of the Hudson river. The turkey, pudding and pastry look all right, but they are sadly wanting in seasoning, and no addition from the castor or spice box will give them the requisite flavor. The cook is not to blame. She had not the requisite conditions for success.

Houses in the West, especially, are not adapted to celebrating a Thanksgiving in. There are too many rooms, and none of them are large enough. Few of them have been occupied by more than one generation, and it is impossible to have a first-class Thanksgiving in a new house. As a rule they are warmed by furnaces or air-tight stoves, while Thanksgiving calls for open fires, with wood to feed them. A brick oven is necessary to cook a Thanksgiving dinner properly, and no Western house has one. Most houses in the West were built to sell, or trade, or to put a mortgage on. Such houses were never designed to celebrate Thanksgiving in. A house for this purpose should be built for a family mansion, and used as such as generation succeeds generation. Not less than three generations, and four is a better number, should sit down to a Thanksgiving dinner. Unfortunately for celebrating Thanksgiving in the West, the people are chiefly young folks. There is no one to tell how much better they had things seventy or eighty years ago; no one to sing revolutionary ballads, or to tell stories of the early Presidents.

Temperance in Madagascar.

Mention has been made of the temperance reform movement inaugurated by the queen of Madagascar. The following is a copy of her singular edict: "I, Ranovalomanjaka, by the grace of God and will of my people queen of Madagascar, defender of the laws of my kingdom, and this is what I have to say to you, my subjects: God has given me this land and kingdom, and concerning the rum, oh, my subjects, you and I have agreed that it shall not be sold in Antananarivo, or in the district in which it was agreed it should not be sold (Querina, the central province). Therefore I remind you of this again, because the rum does harm to your wives and children, makes foolish the wise, makes more foolish the foolish, and causes people not to fear the laws of the kingdom, and especially makes them guilty before God. All this shows the rum to be a bad thing to have in Antananarivo, for at night (under its influence) people go about with clubs and fight, and they fight each other without cause, and they stone each other; therefore, why do you love it, oh, my people? But I tell you that trade in good things, by which you can earn money, makes me very glad indeed, oh, my people. This, then, is what I say to you, oh, my people: If you trade in rum, or employ people to trade in it, here in Antananarivo, or in the district spoken of above, then, according to the laws which were made formerly, I consider you to be guilty, because I am not ashamed to make laws in my kingdom which shall do you good. Therefore, I tell you that if there are people who break my laws, then I must punish them. Is not this so, oh, my people, say? Ranovalomanjaka, queen of Madagascar, August 8, 1876."

Disasters in Theaters.

While the Brooklyn Theater calamity is pre-eminently the most terrible the United States has ever been called on to bewail in the number of its victims, and in the horror of their fate, in Europe it has been exceeded by the burning of a playhouse in Amsterdam, in 1772, when 800 people were killed; by the destruction of the Saragossa Theater in Spain, in the same year, when 1,000 people perished; by the destruction of the Palais Royal in Paris, 1781, when 500 people were burned; and by the fall and consequent conflagration of the Cafe D'Istria Theater in Italy, by which disaster over 1,000 men and women lost their lives in 1794.

OUT OF WORK.

What are the Mechanics of the Great Cities to Do this Winter?

A newspaper reporter had a talk with an intelligent carpenter, of New York city, who is an old trades unionist, and well known among mechanics. He said: "I could take you to the homes of hundreds of mechanics in this city and show you sights that would convince you at once of the great want that prevails among the workingmen. You would see scanty furniture, rooms almost bare, children but poorly clad, a wife anxious looking and sad, a workman out of employment and not knowing how he is to support his family. You would see at a glance that poverty was there. It is not difficult to tell, on going into the few rooms occupied by a workingman's family, whether there is comfort or want. I know myself dozens of families who have sold the best part of their furniture and who have parted with whatever clothing or little valuables they possessed. How else could they have lived? I have now been out of work myself over five months, and though an unmarried man I have found it a pretty tough time. I can too well understand how so many mechanics have gone to Blackwell's island for a shelter for the winter. When there is so great destitution so early in the season it can be easily imagined how terrible will be the suffering during the next three or four months. I cannot conjecture how the workingmen are to find shelter for themselves and their families while this dullness in trade continues. I know how it has been with a number of them so far as the landlords are concerned. Notwithstanding the well known condition of affairs in business, and the fact especially that the men are idle through no fault of their own, the landlords have been inexorable in demanding rents.

"To my knowledge workingmen have already shifted two or three times from tenement houses, having been put out by landlords on account of not being able to pay. How long this method of procuring rooms to live in will continue I know not, but this I do know, that the number of the houseless will be increased by thousands if the landlords choose to demand the rent. It can do the landlords very little good in the end to act so mercilessly, for the tenants coming in will be just as poor as those going out, and cannot pay in advance. By leniency and generous dealings these property owners would make more money in the end. However, so far this season they will not see the matter in this light. But I tell you, and I tell what I know to be the undercurrent of feeling among thousands of the idle mechanics, that the workingmen of this city are not going to starve this winter, nor are they going to be shelterless and see their children dying of cold and hunger either in almshouses or in the streets. Patience ceases to be a virtue at some point, and the workingmen of this city have exhibited for over three years an exercise of that virtue unparalleled in the history of great commercial cities. It will be a terrible day for New York when the workingmen grow desperate. But what is it that drives men to desperation if it is not hunger? Is it not plain that unless some relief comes to the men and their families there will be at the very least during the next three months 100,000 human beings—workingmen, their wives and children—daily without bread? Suppose that relief comes, will it come in such a way that the men will not be humiliated to the lowest in accepting it? Will they be thrown it to make them feel that they must at once consider themselves to be paupers? This would be bad.

"The class of men now idle are not the same that needed so much the great help they got a couple of winters ago. The necessity now strikes in among the families of men who, but a few years since, were well to do and had comfortable homes; who were sturdy and independent, and were proud of their usefulness in the community. I feel persuaded that when the wealthy come to the conclusion that it is good to help the unfortunate mechanics, the appreciation of that help would be vastly increased if, as far as possible, the workingmen were themselves allowed to be the judges of where it was most needed, and were the dispensers to each other of such tickets or orders for food as the money bestowed would warrant. I know that this trust would not be abused by the men, and that they themselves would be the first to expose any attempt at fraud. It would be easy to arrange the details that would secure this. If twenty wealthy men in the community gave $5,000 each the $100,000 so obtained would go a long way toward relief at this time. If the worst continued other wealthy men might supplement that amount with as much as was needed. I come down to figures, because it is either money or starvation now; all hope of work is gone. There is no prospect of getting through the winter without something of this sort being done. The ordinary charity of the approaching season could not at all meet the distress which now prevails, because it would not reach the persons of whom I have been speaking."

Business Before Congress.

A very large number of bills are before the United States Congress which were left over from the last session, but it is not probable that one-fourth of them will be acted upon. The calendar of the Senate shows that 212 bills are pending before that body, besides a number of resolutions. Seventy-four of the bills now before the Senate have been passed by the House, and 138 are Senate bills, many of them being of minor importance. The calendar of the House of Representatives shows that there are forty-two bills of a public nature, and 231 of a private character pending before that body.

Among the bills of importance before this Senate are the three bills amendatory of the Pacific railroad acts.

The bill to equalize the bounties of soldiers who served in the late war, which passed the House last session, also stands upon the Senate calendar, having been reported favorably from the committee on military affairs. This bill passed two years ago, on the last day of the session, but did not become a law. The vote upon its passage in the Senate resulted in a tie, and the late Vice-President Wilson gave the deciding vote in the affirmative.

The bill reducing the salary of the President of the United States from $50,000 to $25,000 per annum passed last session, and was vetoed by the President.

The House last session passed a bill to repeal the Bankrupt law, and the Senate committee on the judiciary reported it back without amendment, but also reported a bill providing for the appointment of a commission to investigate the operation of the several statutes in relation to bankruptcy, and to recommend legislation thereon. This bill has never been considered by the Senate, but still occupies a place on the calendar.

POLAR PECULIARITIES.—It is well known that the spot at which the ships of the Arctic expedition wintered was so far north that they lost all advantage during their long night of 140 days of the aurora borealis. Apparently they got behind not the north wind, but the polar light. This, however, was not altogether unexpected, but what was a surprise to most on the expedition was that by way of compensation they got nothing but full moons.

The Late Speaker Kerr.

In the United States House of Representatives Mr. Cox, of New York, spoke of the late Speaker Kerr as follows: Mr. Cox stated that, when by Mr. Kerr's death bed, he asked him whether he was ready to meet the terrors of death, the answer was, that death had no terrors for him. He believed (Mr. Cox said) that a just life on earth would give him his reward. What, he asked, did Mr. Kerr believe in regard to the great future? His faith was in his works; his religion was to be honest; he believed that his integrity and conscience were the sum of pure, undefiled religion. He did not accept the dogmas of the church, or any church; he did not accept all that was written or said about the Savior; but he did make the teachings of Christ a model for his own life. He believed in that old creed of creeds, the loveliness of perfect deeds. With him *laborare* was *orare;* work was his *orison*. And when he left to pass gently through the portals to the other world it seemed as if nothing incarnate was left of him. He was a devotee of the peculiar class of philosophers known as Positivists.

Mr. Cox related Mr. Kerr's late conversation with his son, in which he told him that he had nothing to leave him but his good name, and to guard that as he would guard his mother's honor, to live as he had lived, to pay all his debts if his estate warranted it without leaving his mother penniless, and if not, to pay them as far as he could, and then to go to his creditors, tell them the truth, and pledge his honor to wipe out the indebtedness. The national flag in the hall, now draped in honor of Mr. Kerr, was an omen painfully suggestive of the condition of the country, and it was to be regretted that Mr. Kerr was not alive to give his counsel in this time of solicitude and anxiety, because he loved the whole country and loved the States as a unit.

Farms and Wages in California.

Our attention, says a San Francisco paper, has been called to the number of farms and of agriculturists or persons engaged in farm labor in the Union and in California, and we find that though the farms have on the average three times as many acres in this State, there are fewer laborers to each farm. The nation has 2,659,000 farms and 5,922,000 farmers, while our State has 23,000 farms and 47,000 farmers. Ohio, Connecticut and Nebraska have about the same proportion as California, or two agriculturists for each farm; while New York, Pennsylvania and Illinois have three for two farms, and Alabama and Georgia have four for one farm. The larger average size of the California farm is caused by the fact that 2,700,000 acres out of 6,200,000 acres inclosed are used for pastures of wild grass, and that on account of the dry character and light, clean soil of most of the farms, a man can cultivate a larger area than in the moist, weedy and heavy soils of the Atlantic States. There has been no notable change in the rate of wages in California for several years. Mechanics get from $2 to $5 per day, unskilled white male laborers from $1 to $3, and Chinamen from sixty cents to $1, without board. Masons, plasterers and plumbers receive from $4 to $5 per day; carpenters, blacksmiths and wagonmakers, from $3 to $4; servant girls for general housework, $15 to $25 per month; farm laborers, from $25 to $30 per month in winter, and from $30 to $50 in summer, with board. Miners get $3.50 to $4 per day, and surface laborers at mines $2.50 to $3, without board. The same work is done for half as much on the Atlantic slope and Australia, and one-third in Europe, and provisions generally are cheaper in California.

The United States Supreme Court.

The Albany *Law Journal* opposes any amendment of the Constitution which shall provide for the canvassing of the electoral votes by the supreme court of the United States, for reasons which certainly have a great deal of force. It says: At present the supreme court stands high in the respect of the people, and every one has confidence in the purity of the motives influencing its members. But let it be brought into the conflicts of politics, whether as an arbitrator or otherwise, and the high regard which is felt for it will no longer remain. No matter how pure and exalted the individual, the moment he becomes involved in a contest for public office he is charged with every kind of wrong, and whether the charges be true or false they have the effect to stain his reputation, and no vindication will completely efface the stain. If the supreme court takes part in politics, those not satisfied with its decision will impeach the motives leading to such decision, and many will be led to believe that proper motives did not influence it. Then, too, the temptation to do wrong will often be very great, and there is danger that it may some time be strong enough to influence even our highest tribunal, and if such should be the case we would be well on the way toward a destruction of constitutional government. We have a court of last resort above the shadow of suspicion. Let us keep it so.

The Burning of the Richmond Theater.

The Richmond Theater was burned in the month of December, like the Brooklyn Theater, but the day after Christmas. Richmond had then only 10,000 inhabitants, but there were six hundred people at the play. The points of the tragedy were much like those of the present one. A chandelier set the scenery on fire, the stage mechanics became panic stricken, the flames burst upon the audience, and there was only one door for escape, and the windows were very high. Sixty-one persons were published next morning as dead, and in all about one hundred perished, among them many fashionable ladies and children, the governor of the State, the president of the bank, and members of such families as Mayo, Venable, Botts, Braston, Gallego, Page, Coutts, Nelson, Marshall, Stevenson, Clay, Griffin and Greenhow. A slave, Gilbert Hunt, personally rescued twelve ladies by catching them in his arms. "He obtained his freedom," wrote the annalist of the city.

Remarkable Cure of Croup.

A remarkable cure of a case of membranous croup in New Haven, Conn., in a little boy two years and nine months old, is reported. The child seemed certain to die and a surgical operation was decided upon. A h