

SNOW CROWNED AGE.

All to myself I think of you,
Think of the things we used to do,
Think of the things we used to say,
Think of each happy yesterday,
Sometimes I sigh, and sometimes I smile,
But keep each happy golden while
All to myself.

The old ladies sat in the "boudoir" on Christmas Eve with great satisfaction. This year the decorative scheme was "poppies and daisies" in contradistinction to "wild roses" of last year. "Such a nice change" was the verdict, and Nurse, who really wasn't a nurse, except in the sense that she tended her old charges, was privately considered a marvel of inventive and productive genius. Of course the room was miles above the adjoining work-room, which had a mere festooning of wistaria with lamp shades to correspond. "Our shades" were a really wonderful combination of alternative frills of scarlet and white. "It represents the flowers, you see Ma'am."

The finishing touch was supplied by the sprays of artificial holly pinned in each new shoulder shawl, brought by the "toffee lady" who visited weekly and sang hymns, good soul, to the accompaniment of the sucking of the aforesaid dainty.

The very old, God help them, are akin to the very young and the "Institution" does not give much scope for the imagination or outlook.

Christmas Day therefore with them is the Day of days—when the officials forget to be official—when the order, "thus far shalt thou go, and no further," is suspended—when one can demand twice, or even three times of succulent pork and rich plum pudding at dinner, and low be it spoken, lest our teetotal friends should object, a bottle of ale supplied by the neighbouring brewery—when one is waited upon and one's plate changed by exalted personages no less than Guardians and the Master and Matron—when one may make exciting pilgrimages into forbidden spheres and visit old cronies who were once our daily companions but whom we have "lost awhile"—when in the evening one may sit up to the lurid hour of ten p.m. to a sing-song which has no apparent ending because so much hidden talent comes to light on that occasion only—when one wears a paper cap and eats more food, and creeps sleepily to bed feeling like ordinary folk.

No wonder therefore that the "old ladies" for the most part were lost in delightful anticipation in the boudoir—which it should be explained was the special room provided for those who had arrived at their "last lap" and in which a vacancy was greatly coveted by those who had grown very weary with the race for life. There were comfortable couches and easy chairs for aching old backs, pretty curtains, flowers on the table and a smiling "Nurse."

Altogether "not too bad" as the slogan of the moment has it. Mrs. Brown a shrunken old figure almost lost in the depth of a vast armchair surveys the room with condescending tolerance.

Her approaching ninth decade has left her undaunted, and unbroken in spirit.

She pities you, with your limited experience, from the bottom of her soul.

What if the old lady in the next chair who was formerly a ballet dancer can still do her "steps" till nurse has to intervene to prevent sudden syncope. What of it? Pooh! Was not she, Mrs. Brown, attached to diplomatic circles? Has she not travelled all over the world? Does she not remember —? Has not a no less person than — spoken to her?

Well to the great and lowly comes bed-time and there is

not much to distinguish the troop of old ladies in grey shawls who seek oblivion in the firelit dormitory, and soon all that is apparent are the twelve grey heads of twelve old women (no longer "ladies") on the pillows fast asleep.

But don't imagine for a moment that the matter ends there!

Strange happenings are taking place in the dancing firelight. For the centre of the ward is full of strangers. What is this fluttering diaphanous figure that comes pirouetting down the ward blowing airy kisses from white finger-tips? What is she doing bowing right and left? Whence came the roses lying at her feet which she picks up with a blush and a sly glance to the extreme left?

Mrs. Jones's bed is empty and only her night cap indicates the recent occupation.

In the other corner is another strange thing. A trim bright-eyed maid is laying out a lovely dress on Mrs. Brown's bed, she is fingering beautiful lace with skilful touch, and is proudly *parley voing* with some unseen outlandish furriner.

Who is this gypsy in a cotton frock lifting her glowing face to an invisible companion who is wooing her not wisely but too well? The old pedlar woman who usually sits in the corner by the fire is missing also!

This tragic lass with despairing eyes? Old Mary's eyes had something in them reminiscent of past tragedy.

By the fireside sits a little dumpy figure contentedly rocking something with her foot.

Is it the former existence of little Mrs. Robinson who is never weary of telling of the best of 'usbands who died of pewmonia and left her with "nine."

Another corner of the room has become a brightly lighted shop and a young girl, with covetous eyes, is riveted by its attractions. Could mumbling Hannah ever have even faintly resembled her?

For on Christmas Eve we live once again in the past whether it be sad or joyous. Our true selves are something which is not apparent, so that when Christmas morning came all that Nurse saw was the same old heads on the snowy pillows and there was nothing to make her suspect the presence of ballets, or furrin places, or garish streets, or tragedy, or simple domestic joy. So she just called out in her cheery way, "Good morning ladies. A Happy Christmas to you! and here's a cup of tea each for a treat."

"Ain't she kind? A Happy Christmas, Nurse dear, and the same to all!"

H. H.

HEALTH EXHIBITION [AND CONGRESS.]

The Council of the Royal Sanitary Institute has accepted the invitation of the Sheffield City Council to hold its fortieth Congress and Health Exhibition at Sheffield from July 13th to 20th, 1929.

HOW TO PRESERVE CHILDREN.

Take two or more children of the runabout age. If they are bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked youngsters, so much the better.

Tuck them into bed early—and leave for twelve hours of quiet, restful sleep. Windows wide open.

In the morning, dress them lightly and set at a table in the brightest, cheeriest corner of the breakfast room.

To each child, add the following: one small cup of orange juice; one steaming dish of delicious nut-brown "whole-wheat" cereal, several slices of crisp whole-wheat toast, one glass of milk.

Remove the children to a grassy lot. Add a kite, some toys and mix thoroughly.

Cover all over with a blue sky and leave in the sun until brown.—*Weekly Bulletin, New Mexico Bureau of Public Health.*

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