

A CHRISTMAS FOLLY

BY HOMESPUN.

Mrs. Diantha Wood was the best little housekeeper for miles around.

Now Mrs. Diantha may have had her faults—who has not? But so charming was she from the crown of her well-shaped head to the sole of her No. 4 shoe, that every one—husband, family, Jew, Gentile, bond and free—was under the spell of her laughing good humor. She was the friend, sister and confidante to the whole community.

Some one once ventured to ask a citizen of the town the question: "Who runs this town anyway?"

The answer was prompt and final: "The Bishop and Mrs. Diantha Wood."

"Howsomever," as Mrs. Wood's mother remarked when the satire was repeated to her, "there ain't many towns in Zion that's better managed."

There was a Mr. Wood, and his first name was James E. Although some wag of the town had once addressed an invitation to "Mr. and Mrs. Diantha Wood," yet everyone knew perfectly well that Mr. James E. Wood was a force and power to be reckoned with very ostensibly. And the authorities of the Church knew his worth quite well and they had appointed him to one of the highest positions in the State.

The stake of Woodstock was one of the most distant outposts of our dear Zion. Pioneer in every sense of the word.

Some one rises up to ask me where Woodstock is located? My dear, imaginative and literal friend, this is a Christmas folly! And you are to see your friends with gowns and wigs on, set in scenes of pasteboard and tulle. Please to hold thy peace and let the masque go on!

Pioneer was certainly the word for Woodstock!

Mrs. Diantha lived in a three-roomed log cabin which stood in the principal street—but stay, if I remember correctly, there was but one street in the town. However, that one street boasted of quite a number of log-houses, chief of which was that belonging to Mrs. Diantha.

The tiny little woman endeavored to satisfy her love for the beautiful with the fashioning of rheumatic chairs and lounges from sawed-out barrels and improvised dry-goods boxes.

And it was a cozy retreat, that sitting room!

In the center was a small table (dry-goods box) so cunningly draped with bright-colored cretonne that it became an artistic pedestal for the one large handsome vase which had been permitted to travel with them clear from the distant Utah home.

And the vase as well as the windows all glowed and shimmered with the brilliant geraniums, fuchsias, and nasturtiums of the winter growth, while in the summer, the wild daisies, bluebells and foxgloves filled every corner of the spacious room with fragrance and beauty.

Couches, stiff in manufacture, merrily draped and festooned with the cretonne while pillows piled in luxurious confusion, bore evidence of Mrs. Diantha's taste, and her thrifty care for the great brood of ducks which quacked and waddled in the distant barn yard.

The sewing machine was a part of this pioneer parlor's furnishings, and whenever not in use, it was carefully and tastily draped in graceful folds.

Now this sitting room was the pride of Mrs. Diantha's heart. It was the ethical embodiment for the whole colony of the beauty and culture of distant civilization.

The shrewd little sermons which were sometimes preached in the Relief societies and Y. L. M. I. A. by Mrs. Diantha, in order, cleanliness, beauty in the home and such, would fall utterly to the ground without this definite and practical illustration of all her teachings.

And so dainty little Mistress Diantha Junior was always on her best behavior when she was permitted to take the clean, hemmed duster in her own little white hand and to dust the whole of the sacred precincts.

With what reverent care did she whisk about the ancient ornaments on the "reverend what-not" which stood in the corner. For the picture frames she took a chair from the kitchen, placed a newspaper upon it, and then rose steadily and grandly upon her pedestal to flick the dust from the gilt frames of the few really good etchings and engravings.

Before the organ the little girl bowed as before a veritable shrine. Every knob and crook and angle and twist and don't they make a bewildering lot on organs—was scrupulously wiped and polished.

Charles, the twelve-year-old boy, carefully wiped and scraped his feet before bringing into the sitting room the great spiky, plucky "chucks" which were to burn in the roomy grate.

While even baby Tom, with his mother's merry and beautiful grey eyes, would peep roughly in and say: "My feet is all clean, mamma, may I come in?"

Now, I'll leave it to you, my candid reader—the reader is always assumed to be candid or kind, you know, although I could never imagine why—however, I'll leave it to you if it wasn't a trying thing for Mrs. Diantha, with her exquisitely neat ways, and her well-trained children; with all her New England conscience and the president of the Relief society's responsibilities to have her husband afflicted with the habit of throwing his things down a most any where?

It is true that years of gentle brain-molding on the same spot of grey brain-matter had induced in her good husband a dim consciousness that his clothes ought to be hung up somewhere, but the somewhere tried Mrs. Diantha almost as much as the nowhere.

The treasured sitting room was Mr. Wood's favorite retreat. Small wonder that Mrs. Diantha rejoiced mightily that her dear ones enjoyed the fruits of her womanly toil. It was for them she toiled!

Whenever Mr. Wood came into the house, he at once felt the "bung-up-and-put-away" atmosphere which permeated every corner thereof, and in obedience to a dim half-forgotten exhortation, he at once pulled off his hat, and hung it on a convenient picture frame. Overshoes were set neatly on the machine step or on a handy chair. Up goes the overcoat on the projecting knob of the tall organ—and Mr. Wood sits down at his desk in the corner utterly oblivious to everything but business.

Enter Mrs. Wood! She sees and sighs. But mother says, even years of patient, "Oh, Jannie, dear, your coat and hat have a place in the bedroom rack or on the kitchen hooks!" has failed to produce anything more than, "Oh, yes, Dian, I forgot! Leave them there now; I'll put them in there next time."

And of course Mrs. Diantha took them down and lays out them away. "Little daughter," said Mrs. Diantha to her small counterpart, "I fear mamma is going to nag if something don't happen."

"What do you want to happen?" said old-fashioned and practical Diantha.

"I don't just know, but we'll see." Then after a pause:

"Yes, I must see what I can see!" "What can you see, mamma?" "I can see the keys of the kitchen on your dear little white nose, dearie, where you've rubbed it while blacking the kitchen stove."

Upon which the little girl hurried away to look in the mirror and wash away the soot afterwards from her pearly white nose.

It was very near Christmas-time, and although there was no snow in this far-away stake, still everybody was busy preparing for the happy holiday.

"My dear," said Mr. Wood, entering the house late one evening, "I shall have to go to Aliburg and take the team, too, between this and Christmas."

"Oh, James!" was all his wife replied. "It can't be helped, Diantha; I hate to go. But duty must be obeyed."

"It seems to me, James, you think only of your duty, never of yourself, and rarely of your family. We owe some duties to ourselves."

"Diantha, there is not three pounds of salt in this town. It was not discovered till this very hour. You know, I've got the only team that can be spared from the ditch, and every man is engaged in necessary and vital labor. Besides that, the land entries for that west piece of town must be attended to this week, and there are a dozen other almost as important reasons. Shall I stay home?"

"Go on, dear. I did not mean to discourage you, for I know your noble, God-fearing efforts to build up the country to which we have been called. But we miss you so, and you are away so much, and you work so hard."

"Never mind, my girl. Better wear out than rust out. Get my things put together. And is there anything you need?"

"Oh yes; there is! I want some beans. We have a few supplies this winter and I need beans. Don't forget them, James, you must be sure that you get them, for we need them."

Hurried preparations went forward! "I will get home Christmas eve, Diantha. So have a hot supper ready!"

"Sure, papa! But remember—beans! Just one bean."

There are turnips I know. But there's not what they seem. Black or white, the bean's my delight. I will be happy with just one bean!"

She sang, with a lachrymose drawing of her syllables and a dramatic and operatic twist and twirl of the various notes.

"O, gracious, Diantha, I'm not going to forget."

"Of course not, thou paragon of husbands, for I'm going to sing it into your memory."

"Just one bean!"—she carolled and trilled as she packed clothes and luncheon away in the big spring wagon.

"Going to ride horseback, papa?" she asked, as the hired man drove the team around, and Charles led his father's horse out saddled and bridled.

"Yes, I thought so, then I will have the horse to do my errands with while Sam is loading up supplies; and I will get home, too, an hour or so earlier."

"Don't forget to bring Santa Claus home with you."

"Good-by, papa; good-by, good-by," and Mr. Wood jumped on his horse, his round body and his long-bearded, good-humored face giving him the appearance of a second jolly German Christmas Saint, as he rode merrily clattering out of the yard.

"Just one—bean," sang both mother and daughter gaily, as he faded forth on his way.

"Now, children, we must pitch in and get everything done for our own Christmas and then help everybody in the whole neighborhood who needs our assistance."

Mrs. Diantha and her husband had both been practical jokers in their younger days. She had been deceived in February once, by her husband sticking lucifer leaves with soap onto the rose bushes.

She had retorted by sewing up his shirt sleeves and legs, which he had to unpick while she was at R. S. meeting. Numberless jokes had been perpetrated in the days gone by; and so, after her husband's departure, Mrs. Diantha set her wits to work to devise some plan that would cure her beloved lord and master of his careless habit of hanging his clothing about in the sitting room.

Meanwhile her little lord rode on, and he, too, was meditating on the feasibility of some plan which would demonstrate to his wife that his memory was as good as a calendar. He had small use for reminders; he just liked to do a thing or forget it as seemed him best, and he wanted his wife to see the matter from his own point of view.

The days slipped by, and the day of Mr. Wood's return was at hand.

"Mother, can I dust the sitting-room to-day?" asked small Diantha.

"No, my pet! Mamma is going to do that herself, and I am going to make a surprise just for papa only. I will therefore keep the key of the room in my pocket, dearie. You know there's the Christmas tree to trim."

All the afternoon, Mrs. W. worked in the sitting room. After the sweeping and dusting were complete, small Diantha wondered why on earth her mother seemed to enjoy all her papa's trunks and drawers and carry everything in the front room.

But she asked no questions; she knew it would be useless. And, too, she was sure she would be in for any fun there might be going. So she went on stoking raisins and popping corn, assisted by her big brother, Charles, and hindered by her small brother, Tommy.

At last Charles burst into the house with: "Here comes papa down the road, here comes papa!"

Down went playthings and raisins and things, and out came mother and children, running joyfully to the big gates to welcome "dear papa home on Christmas Eve."

"Home again, home sweet home," sang his wife as she held up her face for a kiss.

"Come in, come in," and leading the way, Mrs. Diantha opened the front door, and gently pushed her husband into the sitting-room, while she deftly drew the children away to unharness the horse and to help her put on the supper.

What a sight met the astonished gaze of the good man of the house. The room was certainly decorated, and so was the Christmas tree! But what on earth were the decorations? He gave one swift, comprehensive glance—then sank, utterly collapsed into a chair.

Dangling from the picture frames, suspended from the organ hung every pair of pantaloons he owned. Every bit of coat and his new ones, too, stood in solemn procession on machine top, table and chairs. Neckties, collars, suspenders, socks, handkerchiefs and sundry unmentionables hung and festooned whatnot window curtains, and even the tree was gaily trimmed with these and his shaving utensils. His underwear yawned at him from the tree and from every convenient hook; while his overalls and cow-boots all occupied places of honor and preferment.

"Dearie," chirped his wife, coming into the room in her gayest, most nonchalant manner, "Why are you so quiet?"

An expression not adapted to proper usage burst from his pale lips; and casting himself, as it were, helplessly on the lounge, he feebly held out to her a large, well-secured paper package.

"What is that?" asked Mrs. Diantha. "It's your coat of fire," she ejaculated as she sized it from his nervous hand, and rapidly began untying the string.

Paper after paper, string after string! The nervous eyes of her husband raised just enough to watch the last unwrapping!

It was—Oh, my friends—just one little black bean!

THE FLIGHT OF THE ANGELS.

[By J. G. WEAVER.]

Prize Winning Poem in the "Deseret News" Christmas Competition—Award of \$25.00 Made by a Special Committee Consisting of John Nicholson, Orson F. Whitney and Prof. J. H. Paul.

I.

Down from the silent north she flew,
From the land where the lichens grow;
Where the white bears roam,
And the ocean's foam
Is as white as the fields of snow.

Down from the land of the weary night,
And the land of the nightless day;
Where the eagle's nest
On the iceberg's crest,
And the young seals sport and play.

Her streaming hair, like fleecy clouds,
Her robes like the cloudbanks, white,
On the northern wind
Streamed out behind,
As southward she winged her flight.

Beneath her ever, away, away,
Fair landscapes met her sight;
And the blushing flowers
Through the noontide hours,
Smiled in the sun's warm light.

She passed and the flowerets fell asleep,
And the wild birds ceased their song;
And the leaves turned brown
And rustled down,
While the winds moaned loud and long.

And soon from the heavens, cold and white,
The fleecy snowflakes fell;
With a mantle so fair,
From the wintry air,
They covered the meadow and dell.

The mad-cap play of the woodland rills—
The rhythm of the river's song,
Like the notes in the nest
Of birds ere they rest,
Became hushed as she passed along.

Then the frost crept up to the homes of men,
And the hearths glowed warm and bright;
While the children play,
At the close of day,
And the bells ring out delight.

But onward she sped, nor stayed her flight
O'er mountain and sea or plain,
Till she sank to rest
On the gentle breast
Of the spirit of the southern main.

II.

Far in the east, where the soft sunbeams linger
With a mellowing light over altars divine,
Where gently and lightly, time's e'er changing finger
Touches each scent, nor defaces a line;

Or breaks not a spell that for ages and ages
Has hallowed the spot to humanity's breast;
Where music had birth, and history's pages
Tell of deeds that are dark and of love that is best.

'Twas here there arose on her outstretching pinions,
An angel of light and an angel of love,
And prepared for her flight over strife's wild dominions,
With a smile on her lips as she soared far above.

Clothed with the rainbow, the olives entwining
Her love-lighted brow and her soft flowing hair,
She passed o'er the earth, e'en the bright sun outshining,
As gentle as love and as silent as prayer.

And e'er as she passed, brother clasped hands with brother,
And fierce-visaged war to his caves skulked away;
And discord and hate knew their wild reign was over,
And vanished like shadows at break of the day.

The light laugh of maidens, and childhood's sweet prattle,
The troth plight of lovers, the dance and the song,
Replaced among men the deep clangors of battle;
And earth smiled with joy as she floated along.

And tears dried away, and hearts that were breaking
Forgot all their sorrow and leapt as of yore,
And friends long dissevered, their anger forsaking,
Were loving and kind to each other once more.

And o'er the wide lands the song of the reaper
Was heard as he gathered in plenty at last;
And joy that was stronger and broader and deeper,
Was left on the earth when the angel had passed.

III.

Far, far in the west
Where the sun's kisses rest,
As day-time is passing away,
And the lingering sheen
Of the ocean is seen

Caressing dream islands so fair and so green,
And shores where the soft zephyrs play,
From a flower-strewn retreat,
Where the bird voices sweet
Fill dreamland with music and song;

Where the cloud isles above
Rest o'er islands of love,
As light on her nest rests the soft brooding dove,
While the moments fly lightly along;

There an angel of light
Spread her pinions so bright,
And swift thro' the quivering air,
She passed on her way,
Like the rippling play
Of the light-shafts that dart from the goddess of day,
When the morning is breaking so fair.

And o'er the wide earth
No heart was left dearth
Of a joy that her presence could bring.
From her bounteous hand,
There spread o'er the land

Gifts glorious and free as the flowers on a strand,
When they wake at the kisses of spring,
And hearts that were sad,
In her presence grew glad,
And souls that were selfish and cold,
In the magical light

Of this angel bright,
Lost forever the crust that had bound them so tight,
And were gentle and kind as of old.

From this angel so blest,
To the weary came rest;
To the lowly and poor came delight;
To the anguish she gave
Balm to soothe and to save;
And the shackles fell off from the wrists of the slave,
Where'er she directed her flight.

IV.

From the land of the south, from the region of flowers,
When the mocking bird sings thro' the long dreamy hours,
Where the ocean enamored caresses the strand,
And summer forever reigns over the land;

Where the breezes are soft as the breath of a child,
And the lingering light of the sun's beams are mild,
As slowly and gently it sinks to the West,
Unwilling to part with the land it has blest.

From shores ever verdant and scenes ever fair,
There floated away on the soft, rosy air
An angel of beauty, of joy, and of love,
With a message that came from the regions above.

With a voice that was sweet as a birdnote in air,
Or the murmurs that fall from an infant at prayer,
She bade the down-hearted forget every care,
And painted bright smiles on the lips of despair.

She opened sad eyes that were blinded with tears,
Till they gazed far away thro' the gathering years,
And knew, that tho' bitter and cruel the past—
There was surcease from pain—there was heaven at last.

To souls that were groping in darkness and dread,
She opened foray the thick clouds o'erhead,
And thro' them they gazed, while no tear dimmed the sight,
On heaven's bright fields with enraptured delight.

V.

In adoration then, these angels four,
Over a manger bent, their journeys o'er.
There, in the opening of the new-born day,
The Prince of Light, the Prince of Glory lay.

She from the north—angel of death and life;
She from the east—angel of peace from strife;
She from the west—angel of charity;
Of hope and faith, from the fair south came she.

All were the servants of the sweet Babe, that lay
Within His manger-bed on that first Christmas day.

11 months and 16 days? Is not that same date with the year 1899? And if that means 1899, and 16 days complete it means 1899 complete, and 16 days complete, which I claim. The obvious and plain meaning of 12-16-1899 is the sixteenth day of the twelfth month of the 1899th year; if the year is finished then the 12 months are completed; neither of the 16 days can be maintained; hence the argument for the year must fall with the other, and the twentieth century begins January 1, 1901.

A. L. BOOTH.

FLAMMARION'S VIEWS.

The following interesting argument is from the Chicago Record:

An authoritative answer to the all-absorbing question when the new century begins has just been given by M. Camille Flammarion, an astronomer and author. An authoritative answer since this is a subject on which he is peculiarly fitted to speak with authority. Chronology and astronomy are closely allied, and being an astronomer M. Flammarion is especially well qualified to grapple with any problem the solution of which depends on a right understanding of chronology.

From his statement, which covers the ground thoroughly, the following passages are taken:

"If we look back at the past we will find documents in the years 1792, 1899, 1899, in which this subject was discussed, and a century hence, in 1999, our descendants will be discussing the same old subject. A century ago the discussions were unusually lively, and the extended edition of the 'Dear God, in What Century Are We Living?' This very question we of today are again asking."

"Francisque Sarcey, the distinguished critic, says that the date will be the dawn of the twentieth century. He is mistaken. The dawn of the twentieth century will not come in 1900, even though we constantly hear that the expiration of 1900 will commemorate the birth of the new century. On the contrary, it will commemorate the end of a century. The year 1900 will be the dawn and the dawn will not begin until after midnight."

"This seemingly difficult problem is really very easy of solution. A dozen consists of twelve units. The number 12 is a part of the dozen. One dozen consists of one hundred units, and the number 100 is a part thereof. Now, it is clear that there never was a year 1899, for the year 1899 was No. 1, the tenth year of the first century, and the hundredth year of the first century was the year 100."

"What has led many persons astray has probably been the change in the first two figures of the year, as we see in the case of 1799-1800 or 1899-1900. A sudden change, however, is made when 9 becomes 10, or when 9 becomes 100. If any one gives me one hundred cents I have a dollar, but the hundredth cent is just as necessary to my first dollar as the ninetieth. My hundred and first cent is the beginning of my second dollar. The hundredth is, in fact, a necessary portion of the dollar."

"In like manner the hundredth year belongs to the century which is dying. Exactly, therefore, at midnight of Dec. 31, 1900, will the hour glass of the nineteenth century run out and at the next moment the twentieth century will start on its career."

M. Flammarion then touches on another most interesting question.

"We know now when, but do we know where, the new century will begin?" he asks. "Will it begin exactly at midnight in Paris, London, New York or Jerusalem? Exactly at midnight in every country is the answer. Yes, but when it is midnight in Paris it is a. m. in Vienna. Will the Austrians then begin the century before the French? Certainly they will. And this brings up the timely question, What country will be the first to greet the new century?"

"When the clocks in New York indicate that it is midnight of Dec. 31, 1900, it is already 5 o'clock in the morning of Jan. 1, 1901, in Paris. At 1 o'clock at San Francisco, 5 o'clock in Tokyo and 12 o'clock (noon) of Jan. 1, 1901, on the island of St. Paul, in the Indian ocean."

"If, instead of going east, we go with lightning speed westward from New York we shall find it 11 o'clock in the evening in Chicago, 9 o'clock in San Francisco, 6 o'clock in Honolulu, 3:30 o'clock in the Philippines and noon at Dec. 31, 1900, on the island of St. Paul. This island, as any one can see by looking at a map, is exactly opposite New York, or, in other words, its distance from the south pole is precisely the same as that of New York from the north pole."

"When it is midnight with us it is noon there, but the question is, Is the noon of the next day or of the preceding one? To sailors this is a matter of some importance, as their captains have to decide whether they gain or lose a day's wages when they arrive at this point."

"Those who will have the honor of according the first greeting to the new century for the reason that it will actually begin there before it begins elsewhere are the Russians in Kamchatka, the Japanese in Tokyo and on the island of Yezo, the inhabitants of the Philippines, of New Guinea and of the Solomon Islands, and the island of the New Hebrides, the French in New Caledonia and the inhabitants of New Zealand and of the little island of Chatham, in the Pacific ocean."

"Let every one, however, remember distinctly that the twentieth century will begin in every country at midnight of Dec. 31, 1900. The Asiatics will begin to enjoy it before Europeans and Americans before Americans. No one, not even the richest man in New York, can obtain the privilege of being the very first to greet it—that is, unless he is willing to travel to the distant island of Chatham and join the handful of inhabitants in singing a psalm of welcome to the new century."

TO SAVE LEAKING SHIPS.

On the occasion of a ship springing a leak, her pumps are set to work to get the water out as fast as it comes in. Instead of this, it is suggested by a writer in the American Machinist that air pumps be used to force air into the leaky compartment, and thus to force the water back through the hole where it entered. There is, it is claimed, a means of expelling water as the filled compartments wonder that to render it airtight is not put forward engineering skill has not put forward the plan; simply to close the hatch of the flooded compartment, to force air into the water out by forcing air in, nor the water out by the slightest difference would it be all right. The difference would be large the hole might be in the bottom, as the water would be expelled and kept out on the same principle as the old-fashioned diving bell.

THE HANGING COMMITTEE.

There's the trumpet and the blocks; Where on earth are Tommy's socks? This won't hold 'em in there. No! the cant of that monstrous egg into Nellie's stocking leg. Hush, I think they're wild. Awake, do be still, for goodness' sake. Annie's got the biggest doll; That will never do at all. Stand the bicycle down there; Put the toll box on the chair. They'll be all awfully down. Hang mine up? Why, hang mine up? You're as daff as you can be. Why, I'm ever so good-natured. Hang mine up for you, you'll? Kiss me, John; yes, yes, I will!

WHEN DOES IT BEGIN?

Further Light on the Twentieth Century Discussion.

To the Editor:

Provo City, Utah, Dec. 19, 1899.

The question of the time when the 20th century begins seems to be causing considerable discussion among both

learned and unlearned, and both sides bring forth arguments in support of their positions, which, when read and heard by a great many people, tend to confuse rather than to settle their minds. Inasmuch, however, as the question is still disputed the following may not be amiss:

First of all, let it be observed that it is really a question of how the dates during the first year of the Christian era were or ought to be designated; that being settled the fixing of all subsequent dates, and the beginning of centuries will naturally follow.

In your issue of the 18th you have a communication from two of the professors in the leading State educational institution, which you designate as "unmathematical reasoning," because they say that the twentieth century begins on the first of January 1900. I see no escape from their conclusion, provided

their premises are correct. If the first year of the Christian era should be written A. D. or A. D. O. then the nineteenth centuries will be complete on the 31st of the present month. But the conclusion leads to insuperable difficulties. I am at a loss how to designate the first year without using the term "first" which is the ordinal number corresponding to the cardinal number 1; what is the ordinal number for the cardinal 0? Has it ever been heard or thought of?

We began the year 1, 1896; then was not the year 1896 the