One Small Boy's Christmas.

The small boy looked at the Christmas tree,
And, straining his eager eyes to see,
Says he:
"Now I wonder just what they have got for me.

"By Gee!
There's a bully old pair of nickelled skates,
The size of which clearly indicates
That they're meant for a boy of about my size—
If I get them I'll draw a prize.

"Then over there is a dandy drum,
Which I'm rather led to believe will come
My way, and a printing-press and type I see,
Which would be just about the thing for me.

"That clipper sled looks mighty fine,
And I shouldn't wonder if that were mine,
And I'm rather inclined to think, from the looks
Of things, that I'll get that box of books.

"And the shotgun up there behind the tree
I'm mighty sure is designed for me;
And the camera and the ba-seball bat
Are coming to me, I'll bet my hat."

BUT,

The camera went to another boy
And loaded him up with peaceful joy,
While the case of type and the printing press
Filled his cousin Tom with happiness;
And the nickelled skates, his brother Jim
Remarked, with a grin, belonged to him,
And the dandy drum and the clipper sled
Were both designed for his cousin Ned.
But when the small boy sadly saw
The shotgun go he dropped his jaw,
And doleful, indeed, became his looks
When he lost his grip on the box of books,
While the thing that simply knocked him flat
Was the fact he missed the baseball bat.

AND

All that gladdened the small boy's life
Was a candy-bag and a new jack knife.

ENVOY:

To the boys who have read this jingle through:
Let's hope that this small boy wasn't you!

Is Marriage a Failure?

Because the cake is not always light,
Nor the seasoned soup exactly right,
Because at the coffee some husbands rail
Tell me, friends—Does cooking fail?

Because sometimes our friends grow cold—
Full many a friendship's knell has tolled,
And its rosy hues grown ashy pale—
Listen again—Does friendship fail?

Because one mother is wicked or weak,
Though a child in vain should sympathy seek,
And home and children naught avail,
Answer me this—Does mother love fail?

"Why, no!" you say, "the cook is in fault,
Not enough soda or too much salt;
And trusty friends the false outweigh,
Neither cooking nor friendship fails," you say.

"And mother-love is the land's one hope,
Naught with its grandeur and power can cope.
If one selfish mother you've found to-day,
Still mother-love does not fail," you say.

"Is marriage a failure?" now I ask,
The answer has proved a world-wide task,
But can we not find in marriage-marred lives
Selfish husbands, incompetent wives?

The husbands and wives are the failures, you see,
Truly love-tuned hearts give harmony,
Two souls united, no dark secrets veiled,
Then who would ask, "Has marriage failed?"

—*Frances Burton Clark.*

TWO BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

A Christmas Story from the Land of the Harem.

It is a noteworthy fact that, in whatever distant country you may be placed, the return of Christmas always brings with it recollections of home and friends and happy Christmas cheer. Our hero found it so in dreamy Turkey.

Winter in Constantinople wears anything but a smiling face. It has nothing of the splendor of a northern climate, and lacks altogether the exalted stillness of snow-covered fields, creamy hills, and deeply buried forests. It has the character of an abortive spring that can scarcely resist the temptation to relapse into wet winter. But there are occasional intervals during which a mild, blue firmament covers the residence of the Sultans, the minarets and mosque-domes glitter and sparkle, and the waters of the Golden Horn ripple lovingly at the feet of evergreen hills, reflecting with dazzling effect the lovely blue overhead.

It was such a day, in the middle of December, 1879, while lounging in the reading-room of the German Club at Pera, that I met a former acquaintance, a young physician, of whom I had for some time lost sight, though I knew that he had not left Constantinople.

Dr. Otto Franzeen was an interesting man. Tall and slender of stature, his rosy face was remarkable for a pair of large, calm, brown eyes that contrasted surprisingly with his light-blonde hair and golden-blonde beard. But what characterized the man was the mystic calm of his manner and the paucity of his words. He spoke but little, went about alone, and his social relations with the foreign residents of the capital of the Ottoman empire were as limited as courtesy would permit.

This was the more singular, as Dr. Franzeen had, during his year's sojourn at Constantinople, acquired high repute among the foreign residents as a physician, without apparently any exertion on his own part, for he was smiled on by fortune in his efforts at cures; wherever he went sickness seemed to take its departure and health its place, so that people acquired a confidence in his ability that bordered on superstition. Of course, efforts were not lacking to allure the handsome young German, popular and money-making, and with such bright prospects, into the family circles, and especially into such as contained marriageable daughters. Clever and artistic traps were laid for him, and the daughters of millionaires, of whom there are not a few at Pera, sighed at him with but little effort at disguise. To this mixed society, on the border-land between Europe and Asia, Dr. Franzeen fulfilled all the demands of courtesy and good breeding—more than that, no prudent father, no scheming mother, no jovial brother, no lovely, lovable and rich daughter could lead him. The discharge of his social duties was simply the mechanical observance of unavoidable forms.

The young Dr. Franzeen seemed to live only for his profession and his lonely walks; but Love is a sharp-eyed god, or a blind one, according to circumstances, and it was reserved for the energy and slyness of the daughter of a Levantine banker, who was mortally in love with the blond doctor, to discover that he frequented the house of a young widow living in strict retirement, and that he had passed several very long evenings there. The lady, a native of Sweden, Mrs. Flora Carlson by name, was the possessor of a large fortune and was remarkably handsome; but she was all but hated by the Europeans because of the studied reserve which she maintained toward the society of Pera.

All this I had known of my countryman before we struck up an acquaintance. I saw him first in the reading-room in Pera, which he frequented, and we entered into conversation. The talk rambled through a variety of topics, but presently it became more personal.

"It is singular," he continued, after we had exchanged a few confidences, "that people here look on a man as though he were a child. They would guide each of my steps, and would absolutely lead me in the path to fortune and happiness. I am under surveillance by day and by night, and I believe the colony enters all my movements in a ledger. In this respect the Turks are different," he continued after a few seconds; "they call for my services, but as soon as I am out of their houses, I am dead as far as they are concerned."

"Then you also have practice among the Mahometans?" I asked, somewhat surprised, knowing that European doctors are only called to attend Turkish families in very exceptional cases, and then generally only very old men and such as have lived in Constantinople many years and are married.

"Yes," he replied, "I have more calls to Turks than to Europeans. My practice is extending with the former."

"No doubt a paying practice," I ventured.

"Very, but difficult," he replied in his uncommunicative manner; "the women I am expected to treat when covered by the veil, and that is impossible. I declare my inability to help them under such circumstances, and that is generally effective. With groans and sighs the veil is removed, and what it had hidden would in most cases better have remained covered."

"In most cases, but not in all?" I interrupted.

"No, not in all," he said pensively; "for the greatest beauty here I saw unveiled. She was a slave," he added, and into his eyes there came a peculiar light.

He fixed his eyes thoughtfully on the ground, and his slender, nervous hand played excitedly with a paper-cutter. The expression of his face had suddenly become so singular that I felt a great desire to hear more of that slave-girl. But from this time he relapsed into his wonted thoughtful silence. All my efforts to learn more failed.

After that meeting, weeks passed without my seeing the singular man again. Then we met again on several occasions, but I took care not to put any question to him or exhibit a desire to learn anything he did not volunteer to impart, and by degrees we became excellent acquaintances. But I myself knew absolutely nothing of my friend, except that he had been a practising physician in Berlin, had fought a duel and severely wounded his opponent, an officer, had fled to Greece and had then come here a year since.

One day Dr. Franzeen asked me whether I knew where he could obtain a Spinoza translated into German. I happened to have the volume he needed and gave him the book. After a few days he confided to me that the book was destined to be read by a lady, a highly cultivated widow, who now desired to form my acquaintance, and had commissioned him to present me to her

In a house fitted up in the Pompeian style, with the finest taste, though plainly and with a certain colorless severity, I found a magnificently formed woman, with an intellectual face and great black eyes—clear, dark, fiery and deep—that possessed rare powers of fascination. I envied my friend and feared for him at the same time, for this was a woman who might bring the most exquisite joy or the most exquisite pain to the man who falls within her magic sphere.

She greeted me simply and cordially. We talked on a wide variety of topics, and I admired the profound knowledge and the conversational powers she displayed. And withal she was truly womanly.

"I hate blue stockings," she remarked, "who only study in order to boast of their knowledge. As for me, I want to be able to analyze the phenomena of life, and to this end I need science and art. My past life, which was a glittering desert, and my present status, confirmed me in this predilection—I might say, they compel it. What else shall I do? How utilize my leisure? I have nothing to care for, and live isolated from all mankind, mostly by my own choice. Were I a woman who was loved and returned that love, then probably I would live only for my husband as wife and housekeeper, which I regard as the highest and noblest destiny of woman." And with these words she gave my friend a quick glance, full of fire.

My visit came to an end all too soon. I parted from this extraordinary woman with feelings of admiration, and the relations of my friend to her began to burden my heart. She loved him—but he? Silently he took his leave of her that evening, apparently lost in deep and heavy thought.

After that evening he disappeared, as was occasionally his custom. I met him nowhere, and even the widow failed to see him. That lady, it is true, answered my inquiries after our mutual friend with a calm voice and careless manner, but her face was more pale than usual, her eyes were surrounded by dark rings, and her features bore the expression of suffering. For a month I could not get sight of my friend. He developed a really wonderful talent to avoid meeting me, for he still went his professional rounds with regularity, but despite all my pains and artifices I failed to meet him either on the street or in places he was wont to frequent.

Nevertheless the air was full of rumors about him, one of which was to the effect that he was a frequent visitor at the house of a pacha's widow, and that he was infatuated with one of her slaves. Although the institution of slavery, and above all the slave trade, is officially abolished in Constantinople, in reality slavery exists to-day just as it did a hundred years since, but it must not show itself in public. For this there is good reason, since the Turkish household could not exist without female slaves. No Turkish woman, no Turkish girl, who would pass for respectable, may appear unveiled before a man; even the lord of the household must, when he enters the house, give the warning cry "Desdur!" (take care) that all women present, not his wives or daughters, may take refuge behind the veil and leave the house. Being thus encumbered they cannot perform the household work, hence the slave is a necessity, for she is a non-Mahometan—a mere thing—and may appear before any man without the veil. Should she rise to the dignity of a wife, she is at once invested with the veil, and she is thenceforward governed by the same moral and social code as the others.

The education of those slaves who are only luxuries constitutes a profession that is exercised chiefly by widows, but often also by the wives of high officials. The children are purchased from people of Caucasian blood; high prices are paid for a 5-year-old handsome and intelligent-looking girl; she receives a careful education and instruction in the languages, music and dancing, as well as in some of the arts, if she display any talent in that direction. Arrived at a proper age, the girl is sold into a rich and aristocratic family, in which the virtuous, highly educated, physically and intellectually developed girl occupies a most anomalous position. She waits upon visitors, entertains them, and is an article of luxury just as are, in our elegant drawing-rooms, the paintings of celebrated masters. Such a slave cannot be bought for less than $6,000. Not infrequently these young women marry men in high station, and some have even become the mothers of sultans.

Such a speculative educational institution was possessed by the widow of Essouf Pacha, and Dr. Franzeen had been selected by her as physician to the house. This was most unusual, but of five of her pupils who had lain prostrate with typhus fever, he had saved all. From that time the Turkish lady placed unlimited confidence in the young physician, and he paid regular visits in a house which otherwise was open only to the richest Mahometan buyers.

The rumor led me to think. Why did he hide himself from me? Why avoid the handsome widow, who, he must have known, loved him? There might be some truth in the rumor, although in one respect it must needs be false—one cannot court a slave. It is an impossibility for such a girl to follow the bent of her inclinations, for she is the property of her educator, and should she attempt flight the authorities would come to the aid of her owner, would find and return her to slavery, and should her lover and abductor be a foreigner whose legal punishment might cause diplomatic trouble, he would surely and silently disappear, never to be seen again. Hence there could be no thought of courtship in this case. But one way of getting possession of such a girl was open to a foreigner—to buy her, and as he is not permitted to keep a slave or a mistress, to marry her.

I knew my friend to be without means, nor had he been able to accumulate much money doing his one year's sojourn in Pera. How then could he indulge such idle fancies? It is true Dr. Franzeen was a peculiar man, that I knew right well; but foolish he was not. In all his undertakings he had a clear, attainable end in view; and yet I was much disturbed by his conduct for the past few weeks.

One day—I was just reading my home-paper in the German club-room—a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and looking up I was surprised to see the lost one standing at my side. He looked thin and worn, and his attitude was less elastic than formerly.

"Shall we take a walk?" he asked in a somewhat tremulous voice.

I declared my willingness, and we took the turn to the old bridge. For some time he walked silently by my side and I followed his example, when presently he exclaimed, excitedly:

"You are well known in financial circles here; do you know any one who would loan me 15,000 francs for a year? I would like to borrow that sum and pay the usual interest."

"Then, after all, the rumor is correct?" I could not help saying.

"What rumor?" he asked excitedly.

"That you are in love with a slave-girl."

"And if it were so?"

"I thought you had other aims and ambitions."

"I had deceived myself," he replied without looking up; "I was blinded by the soul, the originality, the depth and the importance of the lady; I was fascinated by her individuality. But now a great passion has taken possession of the whole man in me—it is true love itself. I am infatuated with a charming being, full of youth and fragrance; a being like a May-flower; the personification of youth; spring with all its spiritual and material charms. She is a slave-girl, it is true, a pupil of the widow of Essouf Pacha, but I am determined to buy this girl and make her my wife."

"Are you certain that your love is returned?" I asked.

"I fancy I can read love in her eyes—to speak of love I have as yet been unable, under the peculiar conditions that obtain in Turkish households. She casts down her eyes when I accost her, while the others look at me calmly; she blushes when I approach her, and her breathing is hurried; she trembles when I take her hand to feel her pulse, and she is always the first I see when I enter the house. If I discontinue my visits for a little while, she perceptibly revives on my return—that I have noticed."

"Have you, then, had an understanding with Mrs. Carlson?" I felt myself called upon to ask.

"That is impossible," he exclaimed excitedly; "what shall I tell her? What can I tell her? We are as good as betrothed. She is an extraordinary woman, remarkably handsome, rich, highly cultivated—but a certain something she lacked always; she never bewitched me, never drew me into such a delicious whirlpool of all my senses as does this quiet, youthful creature whom I have before my mind's eye wherever I am, who has taken possession of my entire being. With that lady I still possessed the power of thinking; here I am entirely without will."

"But as a man of honor you owe that lady an explanation," I ventured to remind him; "go bravely to Mrs. Carlson and tell her all."

"I cannot do it," he groaned.

"Then write her, at least."

"That would be cowardly; I could not bring myself to do it."

"Then you will come to grief, and you may besides bring ruin to two good, noble beings," said I, and parted in very bad humor from a man who could allow passion thus to unman him.

A few days after this meeting I received a letter from Mrs. Carlson, which ran as follows:

I am in need of a friendly service and have no one to whom I can apply for help. Your manner, your face inspire me with the courage to address you. Would you have the goodness to call on me at an early date? I rely on your knightliness.

FLORA CARLSON.

I hesitated not a moment to place myself at the disposition of the lady, took a carriage, and drove to her villa.

I found the beautiful widow looking yet more pale, and her eyes had a fixed, far-off expression, as though she had no concern with her immediate surroundings, but with something far away.

"Do not be surprised," said the lady, after she had thanked me for my readiness to serve her and my quick response to her call, "if I demand something unusual of you. Were it an ordinary matter I had not troubled you. You are the only friend of Dr. Franzeen, perhaps his confidant—then you know more than I can tell you. In that case you are also a dear confidant to me. I take that for granted, and in this capacity I invoke your good offices. Please"—and she made an heroic effort to maintain her composure, but her voice became almost inaudible—"go to the widow of Essouf Pacha and tell her you come as the messenger of Affarid Pacha—here is a card—and you wish to see Tenzile. You are a judge of men and women, I know. Observe the girl carefully, and report to me what you think of her appearance and how she impressed you. I need not tell you more," she concluded, giving utterance to the words with apparent effort; "I only wish to know how the girl looks, and have not the courage nor the strength to confront her."

This commission took me aghast. It seemed, then, she knew all. What was her object in sending me on this mission? Did she wish to become acquainted with her rival? How would that serve her? Did she desire to institute comparisons between that person and herself, and did she wish to be convinced of the possession of such superior charms on the side of the slave-girl, that the hope of successful rivalry would be vain; or did she hope that if the opposite were the case the man, charmed only by external appearances, would see his error and return to her? But the lady's character forbade her entertaining such thoughts or meditating such deeds. What, then, was her motive for this curious mission? Her feelings were too deeply involved for the gratification of ordinary curiosity; that was proved by the emotion and excitement she displayed when acquainting me with her wishes; still, she was a woman, and possibly these motives, connected, would guide her actions.

These thoughts ran through my brain while she was speaking to me.

"I shall endeavor to carry out your wishes," I replied, "though their fulfilment is not without difficulty, for one cannot well so describe another person that a third party shall see that person as she really is."

"You are a man and an artist," she replied, "and I shall hear the truth from you. With a woman, if she were the nicest judge of human nature in the world, and an artist besides, I should have my doubts. Beings of our sex judge only men rightly—at least as far as the effect—" She seemed to want to say something more, but broke off. "I can depend on you," she concluded abruptly.

Full of conflicting emotions, I returned to the city—to the Mahometan quarters.

The house of the Pacha's widow I found east of the Atmeidan, in one of the small side streets that branch out from that place; it differed in no respect from the rest of the Turkish houses—the same irregularly located windows with wooden bars, and the same red-painted oaken door, studded with great nails, with a massive knocker. Setting the latter in motion, the portal opened after some delay. I stepped into a small vestibule, which was partitioned in the middle by a wooden grating extending from floor to ceiling. Behind this wooden grating stood a black female servant, who demanded my business.

I explained to her my errand, and the negress disappeared. Presently she returned with a second, then came a third, and finally an elderly Frenchwoman, evidently a governess. Then ensued a long parley. The four ambassadresses came and went. At last a lady in European costume, with yellow, Turkish face and sharp black eyes, appeared behind the grating, subjected me to a searching scrutiny from between the bars, heard my mention of the Pacha's name, which was on the card I carried, looked at the Turkish words written on the card, and retired, after saying a few, to me, unintelligible words to one of the black servants. The wooden grating opened, and beckoning me to follow, the old negress ascended a narrow, dark, stone stairway. I groped my way up the steps and again found myself before a wooden grating; this was opened by the negress with a key that hung from a steel chain around her neck, and crossing a grotesquely decorated dark hall, following on the heels of my black guide, I reached a large room, also dark. The negress went to a window, lifted a heavy curtain to admit light, and invited me, by a gesture, to wait there.

I now had leisure to look around in the large space. It was impressive in its baldness. The walls were painted in a bluish oil-color, upon which were sketched at regular distances gaudy birds of paradise, rocking themselves on chains of roses. On the walls hung a few oil paintings, portraits of the Sultan and of the German and Austrian Emperors; three quite modern Parisian sofas, a great piano, and an enormous, gayly colored paper lantern, suspended from the ceiling, completed the furniture of the room.

The Turkish lady presently returned, accompanied by the Frenchwoman, and introduced herself as the mistress of the house. She spoke very faulty French, and the governess was probably to act as interpreter. I signified to the widow that I could speak Turkish quite passably. She smiled pleasantly, scrutinized me still more critically out of her coal-black eyes, and pointed to a sofa opposite her.

"You wish to see Tenzile?" began the widow, when we were seated.

"On commission," I hastened to say.

"Affarid Pacha wishes you to paint her portrait for a European lady who is much interested in the excellent girl."

I was somewhat taken aback over this unexpected investment with the painter's skill—I am a sculptor—but quickly adapted myself to the situation, and said, "I believe such is the fact."

"Well," resumed the Turkish widow, "Affarid Pacha has opened negotiations with me for Tenzile, whom he has known since her childhood. He is, as you are aware, thrifty; the sum for reimbursement of the outlays for her education seems to him too large, and he cannot make up his mind. It is quite contrary to our customs to paint the portrait of a young lady unless it be destined for our most exalted lord, the Sultan. However, I will make a special exception in favor of Affarid Pacha and his clientess. You shall be allowed to paint Tenzile's portrait, but I cannot permit you to set foot in our house, be it for so ever brief a period, more than twice."

She made a sign to the Frenchwoman, who left the room and returned with a girl in Turkish dress.

"This is Tenzile," said the widow.

The girl was loveliness itself, the incorporation of youth and beauty. There was in her personality something that moved the heart, yet ravished the senses; a slender, neat, yet full figure—such a figure as only an ancient Greek sculptor would succeed in copying and displaying as the apotheosis of the loveliest budding womanhood. The curly, undulating golden-blonde hair; dreamy, great black eyes; the finely curved, gently sloping nose; the oval face, with the faintest suspicion of yellow, with the full, sweet mouth, together completed the singular witchery of her appearance.

I now realized how my friend could have become intoxicated by the breath of this child of a southern sun.

"The gentleman is to paint you, little daughter," explained the widow.

Tenzile made a graceful courtesy, and a lovely blush spread over her cheek.

"I am not very pretty," she began in good French; "I have a yellow face; my friends Serbe and Darie are much prettier."

Her voice was wonderfully elastic and sweet.

"The gentleman has a commission to paint you for a Frankish lady, Tenzile," the widow said; "he will only come twice, and you must, therefore, sit quite still," she added.

Tenzile bent her head in assent.

"It will not trouble you long," I said, addressing myself to the beautiful slave; "I shall only make a flying sketch to-day. However," I continued, turning to the widow again, "it is necessary that I should converse with the young lady, for thus the soul, which must speak out of the face, reveals itself to us, and I beg your consent to that end."

The Pacha's widow consented.

Taking out my notebook, which for the nonce served as a sketchbook, I sketched the outlines of the girl's face, meanwhile conversing with her on various topics. She showed a sharp intelligence and not uncommon knowledge, after the fashion of young, refined French women brought up in convents, and a childlike, affectionate heart. Me she observed thoughtfully and with curiosity. Her puzzled, earnest, innocent expression filled me with sadness, almost with pain. I could not bear to prolong the sitting. With deepest sympathy I took my leave from this girl, who, a creature of God like ourselves, was yet only a thing, with no control over her own fate—created to obey, unquestioning, the will of others.

I showed Mrs. Carlson—who, to judge from her expression, had waited for me impatiently—the sketch, and reported what I had seen, learned, felt and thought, as calmly, dispassionately, and objectively as possible. She remained speechless while I spoke, then suddenly caught my hand, bent over it, and kissed it before I could draw it away; hot tears were on it when I did; then burying her face in her handkerchief, she hurried from the room.

Sad at heart, I left the villa and walked home, wondering what was to come out of all this chaos.

I turned my steps toward the house of my friend. He was out; had left his lodgings but a few minutes before. But I found there a note addressed to me that was just to have been sent me; its contents suited my plans and purposes.

"'Dear friend," wrote Dr. Franzeen, "I feel very lonely. To-morrow will be Christmas; I hope you also have no engagement for the day. Shall we two forsaken ones spend the evening together in my quarters? I shall expect you if you do not at once decline the invitation."

The 24th of December proved to be a charming day; it is true the heavens were overcast, but through the enveloping fog there shone a gentle sunlight that invested everything with a dreamy aspect, the cupola-crowned houses of the great city, as well as the faded green hills and the gently murmuring waters.

I found my friend sitting at the piano, and was just in time to hear the last tones of a Beethoven sonata—he was a brilliant performer. Hearing me, he sprang up and greeted me, entirely unlike himself, with excitement and passionate warmth.

"If I had not that," and he pointed to his music, "I would have lost my reason ere this."

"Because you are parted from Flora?" I asked.

"Because I feel that I am acting irresponsibly toward that lady, and am facing an Oriental happiness—perhaps," replied, half-musingly, half-inquiringly.

"It is not yet too late to call a halt and atone for your fault," I put in.

"I cannot tear myself away from the dream of longing for that girl," he said with heavy breath; "it is only a dream; that I realize; for I shall be unable to raise the sum demanded in the short time left me, and I have found out, from the Pacha's widow herself, that various grandees of the city, among them Affarid Pacha, are suitors for the girl. She will be taken from me, my hopes and wishes are as naught, and yet I cannot give her up. But do you imagine," he continued painfully, "that the lady would hail me as a prodigal son? Then you have but a poor insight into her character; it is pure, refined and beaming like a diamond, but in ethical matter hard as that stone."

"The lady loves you," I asserted, "with the whole power of her noble, passionate soul."

"The less likely that she will lower herself by descending to my level."

"Do you believe you will be happy with the slave?" I now asked, involuntarily, in an earnest, weighty tone.

"If forever—that I do not know. But it would be an almost crushing happiness for years, and such years count an hundred-fold," he replied passionately; "and you cannot count the greatest happiness by years; they are really only moments—continuous happiness would kill. But I