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Our Little People.

A dreary place would be this earth
Were there no little people in it;
The song of life would lose its mirth,
Were there no children to begin it.

No little forms like buds to grow,
And make the admiring heart surrender;
No little hands on breast and brow
To keep the thrilling love-chords tender.

The sterner soul would grow more stern,
Unfeeling nature more inhuman,
And man to stoic coldness turn,
And woman would be less than woman.

Life's song, indeed, would lose its charm.
Were there no babies to begin it;
A doleful place this world would be.
Were there no little people in it.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

A Night in a Dispensary.

The snow lay thickly over the ground and upon the house-tops—*would* be a very nice way to commence my Christmas story. But as fiction must have a coloring of truth, it would be absurd of me to utter so false a statement as the above—at least as far as *our* town is concerned. We have seen very little of the article for some time past, and then only in diluted form, which would not be pleasant to introduce into a story. It would seem as if old King Christmas had sold a large quantity to theater managers, and had but a small pile left, which he must use economically. However, this subject of the snow is open to discussion. Meanwhile, I shall go on to state that on last Christmas day it fell to my lot to be on duty at the North-east Dispensary, in the good old town of L——. I was then surgeon to that institution, having two most agreeable gentlemen as my colleagues. Christmas morning! The sky was blue, the sun was bright, air was keen, the gound was hard—in fact, the weather was beautiful for the time of year.

'Just the morning,' cried Dobbs, 'for a nice long walk, which will brace us up, and give us an appetite for the goose on Jack Doose's table!'

'Yes,' said Buryhan, throwing himself into a military attitude, to which he was partial, and putting up his rimless eyeglass to look at me; 'and I hope Alf Adams won't have too much work while we are away.'

Alf Adams, the reader's humble servant, smiled a smile seldom to be observed. Silently he watched his companions muffle themselves in overcoats of alarming dimensions, and being ready, disappear for the remainder of the day and evening. I stood at the window, watching the stream of human beings gaily trooping along. The bells of the various churches pealed forth: but their merry music, instead of making my he rt full of joy, only drove me half wild to think I was fastened up in that gloomy place, while my own family were living and making merry not quite half a mile from me, and I dare not go to see them! No surgeon could be got for love or money to take my place for half an hour. One thing might have enlivened the hours: I had a present of a turkey, sent me from the Green Isle, which, with a small plum pudding, was to be my dinner. So I had invited Jack Byrden to help me to eat it. But, alas! my bosom friend and school-fellow could not muster courage to enter my den on such a day. So I sat down to my solitary meal, railing at the whole world, and particularly at that smart young man, Jack Bayden, I believe I was very ill-tempered over my dinner. The turkey was pretty good, but the servant had a look on her face of pity for me and satisfaction for herself as to the good things in the kitchen. I therefore concluded she had been drinking.

The pudding was brought in, but what was my horror to find it smelt of brandy! Fully half a glass of brandy had been put upon it! Now, I ask any one, had that girl any right to act thus to me, when she knew very well that I was a perfect teetotaller? Her reason was found out afterwards—I blamed the poor girl for half a glass—when in three days a bill for *six* glasses was presented from a neighboring public house! Of course the servant declared she had put all the brandy on the pudding, which was about the size of my two fists; and I assure you, ladies, they are but small. After my lonely dinner I drew the large arm chair to the fire, which I stirred into a blaze, and lighting my pipe (for I smoke, if I don't drink) I began gazing abstractedly at the picture of the grandfather of a late surgeon to the institution, which had not been removed from over ther chimney-board. But the grim old patriarch seemed to enjoy my discomfort so much that I started up in disgust, and once more sought the window. Here they go, the merry crowd, laughing and chattering, although every nose was in danger of frostbite.

Four wedding coaches dashed past, lest they be late for the church, but I also saw one which went slowly along, and it recalled the lines of a very sentimental friend, who once wrote an "Ode to Christmas:"

"The wedding coach was busy,
And the hearse was busy, too."

I was about to moralize on this point, when the porter, dressed in his Sunday suit, knocked, to say there was a case in the surgery. I went down to find a nice young man in 'delirium tremens,' who requested a draught, and glad I was to get him out, lest he might do me an injury; for persons in his state have a peculiar way of polishing one off if the chance presents itself.

There is never more drunkenness in L——than on Christmas day; not only because it is a day of rejoicing, but because so many take pledges not to drink from a given time 'till Christmas day.' So I expected to have plenty of cases about twelve o'clock that night, when friendship would have had time to merge into hostility, with broken heads as the result.

During the afternoon I had cases dropping in of various sorts. But I was called out to visit one person, whose state was most pitiable. A female lying on an old, dirty sack, weak and ill; two children playing about the floor of the squalid room. Where was your 'merry Christmas' for that poor mother? Her husband dead; she too ill to work; phthisis hurrying her away ere the year went out. Two shillings a week, forsooth, from the parish, and this a 'merry Christmas!' No matter, the children will be sent to the industrial schools, and their mother, quietly reposing in her parish coffin, will 'have a happy New Year,' and never feel sorrow more.

Once more in my sitting-room. The shades of evening have deepened; the wind begins to sigh round the house, down the chimney, and through the keyholes; so I have the gas lit, the fire stirred up again, and order tea.

Just as I was beginning my evening meal the door opened softly, then there was a pause, as if some one was examining me through the space formed by the hinges.

'Come in!' I cried.

A face appeared at the door, and the eyes having examined the room generally, and me particularly, the remainder of the body followed, and then I saw the form of a man I had twice met before.

Staring at me in a wild manner he said, 'How do? Don't you know me? Don't you remember me telling you that I should come to tea some evening? your man down stairs wasn't going to let me in; but I gave him a farthing rolled up in paper, and said I was a most particular friend of yours. He will think I gave him a sovereign.'

At this the being uttered a series of horrid chuckles, and rolled his eyes about in a most alarming manner.

The first time I met this person was at an hotel, where he was capering about, singing and reciting, and then going round the room with his hat for coppers. I was told by a gentleman that he was a harmless lunatic.

The second time I met him I was hurrying along on business. With the most unfortunate want of forethought I nodded to him and passed on. In a second he was by my side, and, tapping me smartly with his forefinger, cried:

'Do you know me, sir?'

'Yes,' I answered, smiling, and attempting to walk away: but preventing me, he said:

'What's my name?'

'Richey,' I said, with a half frown; but his antics made me smile, for he kept skipping about from one side of me to the other.

'You're a medical man, I think,' then said he; 'and I have seen you go into the North-east Dispensary; now I am a medical man also.

This I knew to be untrue. And upon giving him a look which conveyed my doubt, he quickly added. 'That is, I am a chemist; I am at present in the literary line, and I assure I am heartily sick of it.' These last words given with an emphasis. Now I knew what his literary line was. If going about the hotels with six old—very old—Bradshaw's Railway Guides, and offering them for sale, as belonging to the present month, is anything in the 'literary line,' then he was in that business.

'I must go now,' said I, feeling that the eyes of the passers-by were on me; 'I have a most important case to attend.'

'Very well,' he answered. Then taking off his hat, and holding it toward me, said, 'Will you 'toss me,' to see if I shall give you a penny, or you give me one, for I want a glass of——'

'Oh, here's a penny for you!' I cried; 'good-bye.'

'Will you take me home to tea with you?' he persisted.

'No,' I cried. 'Perhaps I'll see you to-morrow.' For I wished to leave him, as quite a crowd of giggling persons had collected.

'No,' he murmured, in a melancholy manner, as if he had been deceived in that way before; 'no, not to-morrow; do not say 'to-morrow,' but I shall come to tea some evening—to tea some evening.'

And now, this Christmas evening, he came to fulfill his promise, which had never been exacted from him by me.

'Richey'—for this was the name he went by—was below the middle height, but evidently very strong and active; indeed, it struck me that I should not like to have a tussle with him. He had the most extraordinary talent for imitation; indeed he appeared to be constantly imitating somebody. His general accent was that of a 'heavy swell' to be seen on a concert-room stage. But it would change, as the ideas passed through his mind, to imitations of Toole, Buckstone, and local [illegible]. As he spoke he threw himself into most strange and ludicrous attitudes.

As he stood before me I noticed a parcel under his arm. I could not understand what it was. He kept taking it from under his arm and putting it into his hat, then taking it from that and returning it to its original position.

After capering about the room, looking at the pictures, he suddenly stopped short to ask me in a whisper, with mock alarm, if 'the gentlemen over the chimney-board was my father.'

Then taking off his hat, in an assumed attitude of humility, he held out his clasped hands, muttering his awe and respect for 'such a noble person—such a forehead—mouth—nose—such eyes, &c.'

'Well,' thought I, 'this fellow begins to amuse me;' I felt rather glad he came.

So I pulled the bell rope for another cup, and when it came I asked him, rather pleasantly, to draw over his chair.

I may here remark that while the servant was in the room he sat down very quietly, his large, staring eyes fixed on her face with a look of intense admiration for her beauty, always keeping the mysterious package, however, vacillating between his armpit and hat. As soon as she left the room, he began imitating the 'Artful Dodger,' when he gives his dislocating twist of the head, and glanced at the door.

'Do you know, I like girls. No matter what their station be. I fell in love with a nice young lady once. We met, 'twas in a bar; but the manager's eye was upon me. He discovered that I was trying to 'toss her' for a glass of ale, so—he! he! kicked me out! He did!'

He changed his subject so quickly, that I soon was obliged to become dumb, with the exception of a monosyllable now and then.

Thus some hours passed merrily. At length he jumped up and skipped round the room. Suddenly stopping at the sideboard, he opened it quickly to see if anything was inside. Immediately he dived his hand in and skipped round the room with a bottle of Debbs' whisky in his hand. This had been a Christmas present to Dobbs. What would Dobbs say? Of course he would say that I had broken the pledge with it! Oh, it must be rescued! But, no, I could not persuade my volatile visitor to put it down—force would be dangerous. So I leaned back helplessly in the chair.

'Now, sir,' cried he, knocking off the head of the bottle, and pouring out a quantity into a tumbler taking from the sideboard, "I shall drink your health! A toast to my most noble friends, which are yourself and our noble grandfather over the chimney-board! Here's to him, as the old year going out; and here's to you, the New Year coming in.' Here he rambled off into a lot of nonsense. The whisky soon began to fire his brain. Just then the portor called me down to a case. To him I mentioned that I had a queer fellow up stairs, and that if I pulled the bell rope he was to come up at once—not that I feared danger, but there was no knowing what might happen. I came up the stairs to my room with a full determination to get rid of my strange friend as quickly and quietly as possible. When I entered I found him dressed with the table-cloth round his shoulders, hanging like a toga. His eyes were like blazing coals as he stole toward the door, turned the key, and removed it from the lock. 'Now,' cried he, 'I shall tell you who I really am. I am the Evil Spirit of Chrismas; Long have I roamed the earth, and until now I have not had one victim. The time has at length arrived. This shall indeed be a 'merry Christmas' to me.'

I laughed, and said, 'Very well acted, indeed.'

'Acted? I am in earnest!'

Here he produced, to my alarm, a long dissecting-knife, which he had taken from a case (for we kept those instruments up stairs.) I saw that the drink had carried away what little sense the wretched man ever had, but I thought a bold front would quiet him. So I laughed, and said, 'Now, my dear sir, do sit down, and——'

'Never! Blood I must have!'

'The bell,' I thought, and turning quickly. Good heavens!—*the bell-rope was out high up!* I felt faint; but with an effort I rallied; and snatching up the poker, I cried, 'Look here! if you don't stop this nonsense instantly I shall smash you with this!'

The maniac roared with fiendish laughter as he cried, 'I am a spirit! your weapon will go through me as through air!'

There he stood, glaring on me, a remorseless maniac.

Oh! how I prayed that the door-bell might ring, and that the porter might announce a patient. How sweet would be the sound—like angel-melody to my heart! But no; cases were but few at present. Oh, that I had told John to follow after me!

'Prepare! Thy doom is come!' cried the madman, as he drew toward me. I stood behind a chair, with the poker firmly clutched in my left hand. Suddenly he rushed at me, catching my blow upon his arm, and seizing me by the throat. Fortunately I caught the wrist of the arm that held the knife—that long, sharp instrument glittering in the gaslight. I raised my voice, and cried, 'Help! Help!' But the wind, which had now risen to a storm, drowned my voice; besides, in that long, rambling house I could only be heard outside the door. The maniac at length got a firm hold of my throat; but just before he did so I gave one loud, piercing shriek of 'Murder!' Then my eyes seemed forced out of my head; my brain was on fire; the membranes of my ears seemed bursting; and—I remembered no more!

* * * * * *

When I revived I found myself in bed, with Buryhan and Dobbs standing by me.

'All right, old boy!' cried Dobbs; 'you are better now.'

At first I thought I had been dreaming; but as the remembrance came back in all its horrors, I shudderingly asked 'How did I escape?'

'Dobbs and I came home earlier than usual,' Buryhan replied. 'When we came in the porter told us you had a queer fellow with you, and mentioned what you had said to him. We hurried up stairs, tried the door, but found it fastened. We then heard your cry of 'murder!' So, without more ado, we burst open the door—and, by Jove! we were only just in time, as the madman was turning you round to drive the knife into your heart! However, he is safe enough now. By this time he is lying in the padded chamber of the workhouse."

I pressed both their hands, and the tears silently rolled down my cheeks. Since then I have been very select in my company; and whenever I see a man of eccentric character I feel a cold shudder creeping through my anatomy as I remember the horrors of that 'Christmas in a Dispensary.'—*Dr. Salucas in London Society.*

A tourist, who did the Colorado mountains last fall, says he got as ravenous as a raven among the ravines, and sat down in one of the gorgeous gorges and gorged himself.

Editorial Amenities.

In individul life, it is patent to ordinary observation, that a bellicose disposition is usually the accompaniment of a raw and untrained youth. A boy, with large muscular development and small brain, cannot help being a bully unless restrained by education. He will be tyrannical to his inferiors, insolent to his superiors, and his chief delight will consist in standing at corners, hurling offensive epithets at his fellows, and, if they retort, punishing them with his fists for their temerity.

In journalism we think we discern traces of the same universal law. Education, with all its chastening and refining tendencies, often fails to repress natural ferocity. A tyro, when he ascends the editorial tripod, feels an irresistible itching and inclination to "pitch into somebody," especially into his rival contemporary. When we find that one newspaper writer has published his neighbor as a "sneak," a "skunk," a "toad," a "pot-bellied bloat," we know that journal is yet in its adolescent period. We know that writer, though he may thrust with a rusty bodkin, can not wield a flashing scimetar of Damascus steel. We know the society that applauds such utterances is raw and primitive. We smell the prairie flowers, or rather we see prismatically, a phantasmagoria of miasmatic swamps, slimy alligators, and coatless men sitting on barrels in corner groceries shaking with the chills.

But notwithstanding the difficulties incident to the pursuit, men must not turn bees, and wound themselves or their fellows with their stings. Solomon says in substance that he who overcometh his own spirit is greater than a conqueror of walled cities. Moreover, editors who value reputation should remember that often a single utterance reveals a man's antecedents and gives the gauge of his education and social organization. Dr. Holmes contends that even such innocent expressions as "prime," "fast-rate," a "superior piece of goods," a "gent in a flowered vest," are final. They blast the lineage of him or her who utters them, for generations, up and down. Editors should never forget they are the oracles of the people, and it will never do to let the people see that their Delphic Apollo is made of common clay.

Many of the abusive personalities that disgrace American journalism doubtless spring from a mistaken notion as to what constitutes wit and humor. All Americans appreciate humor, but unfortunately all American writers are not humorous. Wit is a delicate light that plays around the moors of thought and surprises by unexpected flashes. Humor is wit, with kerosene thrown upon it to make a brighter light, that may be seen and comprehended by common understandings. Both contribute to pleasure, and through mirth lighten toil. Humor, however, in America, is more than an amusement, it is an effective political agent. A late writer in the *London Spectator* admits that he knows of no more striking difference between English and American society than the political power which, on our side of the Atlantic, Humor appears to exercise over the masses of the people.

Probably the most witty newspaper editor who ever wrote in the United States, was George D. Prentice, of the *Louisville Journal*, but while he often worried his contemporaries, he never, we believe, indulged in vulgar abuse. He fenced with a sharp rapier, but it was fencing, not stabbing. Taglioni pirouetting on the stage is a picture of beauty, but an awkward lout dancing on his partner's corns, is quite another thing.

We notice with gratification a growing disposition among the reputable members of the American Press to abandon personal vituperation, and we trust they will not forget it during the fever of the coming Presidential campaign. The editor of the *Newell Times* some time since proclaimed, "It is far more noble and becoming to try to build up the interests of our new and beautiful country, than to pick flaws with our contemporaries. Hence we bury the hatchet, and shall engage in no more newspaper controversies—our space can be used for a better purpose." At the recent Franklin statue banquet in New York, one of the toasts was, "The Press—while its conductors owe to each other *the courtesy and charity of true gentlemen*, they owe to the public the diffusion of knowledge founded upon truth. It is not enough that men mean well, it becomes them to do well." The President of the Pennsylvania State Editorial Convention congratulates his brethren on the marked improvement in their manners of late years, and says: "There is no reason why editors should engage in personal abuse of each other because they differ in politics. They ought rather to cultivate the kindliest relations with each other." These are golden sentiments, worthy to be inscribed on every publisher's standard, and—

"Thus drifting afar to the dim vaulted caves,
Where life and its ventures are laid,
The dreamers who gaze while we battle the waves
May see us in sunshine or shade;
Yet, true to our course though our shadow grow dark
We'll trim our broad sail as before,
And stand by the rudder that governs the bark,
Nor ask how we look from the shore."

[*Am. Journal of Ad. Index.*]

Bluff Biffkins and the Agentess.

I was picking my teeth on the Fifth Avenue Hotel steps, after eating a twenty cent dinner over in Third Avenue, as is my custom of an afternoon. There came by a rakish craft. She scuded along under a closely reefed bustle and tolerably bare poles. The wind was a nor'-nor'-wester, and struck her aft, making fearful havoc with her canvas. She wore the new style of metal garters with gilt clasps. I will take my oath, you observe, of that. She signaled me with her eye, and I bore down upon her. I had thrown about seven words when she interrupted me by yanking a big book out of her bustle, or somewhere. "Here is something,' she warbled, 'which I'd like to show you. It is called the history of Christianity in the Fejee Islands, by the Rev. Peter Partridge. It is illustrated by ten thousand pictures, just engraved by the old masters, and bound with calf skin. It is the greatest work ever written. You can't afford to be without it. Children cry for it. The price is only seven dollars. I will put your name down and—'

'False woman!' I shrieked, 'away! You have deceived a poor, weak, trusting man. You are a book agent. Beware, woman, although unmarried, I will defend myself to the death!'

Then I fled.

But the creature, you comprehend, was like the itch, or a bad conscience, or a washer-woman's bill—not to be so easily got rid of. She dogged my footsteps like a divorce detective. She hovered over me like an avenging spirit. She laid for me when I went to my meals, interviewed me at my office, and bored me at every point. Life seemed a burden.

I disguised myself as a hackman, as an organ grinder, as a minister—put myself in the most humiliating positions, you observe—but it wasn't any use. Be sure that female wickedness found me out. At last I meandered down by the sad sea waves, and was happy for a time. Days sped by—at fifteen or twenty dollars each—and I was beginning to forget the book agent.

One evening I wandered on the sanded beach in the mellow moonlight. I suppose that is the correct Long Branch thing to do. I met a lovely creature in white tulle, or cotton sheeting, or something. I took her for a moonbeam at first, you comprehend, and my heart bounded with admiration. I flirted with the ethereal apparition, and we sat on a damp rock very close together. My arm got around her waist, and we were having a nice, comfortable time. You possible know how it is yourself.

'Fair stranger,' I murmured, 'dost love thus to squat on the primeval rock, and commune with nature?'

She said she did.

'Couldst thou leave the allurements of art, and live always amidst the flowers and trees of the moonbeams?'

She said she could.

'Why so silent?' I asked, softly pressing her hand. 'Dost aught disturb the harmony of thy soul—is anything but admiration for this scene in thy heart?'

She said there was.

'Here is something,' she broke out, pulling out a ten-pound volume from somewhere, 'that I'd like to show you. It is called the History of Christianity in the—'

I recognized her. She was that infernal book agent. With a wild shriek, I tore myself away. A sudden horror overwhelmed my soul, and an ocean of disgust drowned out forever all admiration of female divinities, who all seemed but demons in disguise. I am yet a bachelor.