

WHY THE SEXTON RANG FOR CHRISTMAS

By A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK

HE bells were not going to be rung that Christmas. Bargle, the sexton, had said so. "I don't have no strangers tinklin' w'ay bells, Mr. Edwards," he protested. "I've rung 'em over 50 year, an' if I ain't eal to it this Christmas—hy, let 'em do without for once, th' s' all!"

"Seems a pity, though, Bargle, don't you think?" The vicar spoke persuasively. He was young and diffident and new to Peridale, and the sexton was crotchety and opinionated. The last vicar had slipped into an easy habit of deferring to his long experience, and this had made him arrogant. "It is a fine old custom, Bargle—"

"There'll be the chimes at the parish church over the hill yonder," Bargle interrupted, testily; "they sound here in the village quite plain, an' folks must make the best o' that an' be thankful."

There was a deal of grumbling about it in the village; Bargle knew that, and took a morbid pride in feeling that he was having his own way. People were blating that his ailments were imaginary, that his rheumatism was merely another name for his crabbed perversity, and an excuse for his increasing indolence.

As he sat smoking and ruminating, his thoughts traveled along that bleak



"WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, YOUNG MASTERS?"

road to the church, and back into blither old Christmases when he had toiled robustly, with his assistant, high up in the crazy tower, and they had kept the three bells swinging and pealing joyously from eight o'clock till midnight, with short rests between whistles, and one long rest when steaming hot coffee and toast had been carried up the narrow, steep stairs to them by a homely, cheery little woman, who was his wife, and a merry-eyed, winsome maid, who was their daughter Alice.

But that had happened for the last time—how many Christmases ago?

Why, already eight winters had snowed over that mound in the churchyard. And this was the fourth year since Alice had deserted him in his loneliness, and he had set himself to forget her.

He had not forgotten yet, though; nor forgiven her.

In defiance of his imperative behests, she had married the ne'er-do-well son of a tradesman in the town yonder, and they had come away to London. She had written to him thrice, but he burned her first letter and returned the others unopened, and, if he had not forgotten her, her name was never on his lips.

At length, a few months ago, the village heard that her husband was dead. She had written to a neighbor saying she and her baby were destitute, and begging that she would intercede and ask her father to forgive her and let her come home.

But Bargle, mindful of his dignity, hardened himself, and, resenting this intimation as an impertinence, curtly advised the peace-maker not to meddle in his business again; hot words passed between them, and she flung off in such a whirl of indignation that her reply to Alice apparently scared the girl from attempting any further overtures.

Absorbed as he was in these regretful reveries, a sudden sound broke in upon him, and he started, glancing round dazedly and wondering whether he had been asleep.

But not—as he listened, breathless, the sound was repeated; a single, deep clang of the church bell.

No wind was stirring, and he had the keys of the belfry, yet—it was no trick of his imagination, dull as that of a tenor, another dull clang echoed down the night; and presently another, like the booming of a funeral knell.

With a chill creeping up his spine, the gray, gaunt old man recalled a legend that the belfry was haunted by the ghost of a man who had wronged a friend, and, in a fit of remorse, had flung himself from the tower on some forgotten Christmas; Bargle had known folks who spoke of hearing the bell toll mysteriously on Christmas eves before he was born, but he had not half believed them, and had never heard it himself—until now.

That was it sounding again! He was no coward nor superstitious, and a swift, irresistible impulse seized and drove him to fathom this strange opening.

His very excitement braced him and new strength into his limbs. He took a lantern, and, helping his legs with a stout stick, made his way up the tower, and the youth assisted him in his duties.

"Hear you bell, Anns?" he quavered.

"Mr. Bargle," and Bargle was to have his hearing this year. "Who be it oop there, I'm your coat on smartly, lad."

Silent, and quaking with cold or nervousness, they moved noiselessly over the muffling snow, turned the wall of the church, and Bargle grimly leading, filed in through the creaking lych gate.

The narrow path between the graves brought them to the porch, and here Bargle, who entered first, stopped, fumbling for his keys, and suddenly held the lantern lower with a husky cry of alarm.

In the glimmering light of the lantern, a man lay huddled close to the church door, with a child rolled in a shawl, and clasped tightly in her arms.

"Alice!" faltered the old man, "Alice!"

He hung himself on his knees beside her, crying out, clasping her cold hands, and appealing wildly and helplessly to those who were with him, for she lay as still and unresponsive as if she were dead.

They took the child, which woke and whimpered, and dispatched Amos with it to the nearest cottage.

"Till 'em to light a fire," said one of the men; "an' got you on, lad, an' get the doctor there against we come."

Then the two lifted the woman between them, and the old man, tremulously, distractedly, leading with the lantern, carried her with what speed they could in the direction that Amos had taken.

And every minute still the bell reiterated its heavy, monotonous clang, though, for the nonce, they had almost ceased to be aware of it; Bargle had become indifferent to it altogether, and only gradually awoke to it again as he sat holding his daughter's hand, watching the life rekindle in her eyes, and listening to her feeble whisperings.

"It is a long way from the station," she was telling him, satisfied with the forgiveness she could read in his every tone and look; "and when I got as far as the church I was so tired and faint—and I fancied about that time to-night you would be there, in the belfry, so I went to the church, but the door was locked, and—"

Bargle turned to a touch on his shoulder.

"The vicar is waiting, with several others in the next room," said the doctor. "They want the key of the belfry, but I think you had better go with them; you are talking to my patient more than is good for her. Come!"

Bargle hesitated a moment, then stooped to kiss the pale face on the pillow, and submissively obeyed.

Up the steep, narrow stone stairway of the belfry tower, up, and up, and up they clattered, one after the other, till at last they streamed in across the hollow-sounding floor of the belfry, and there through the ceiling the three ropes dangled in the shadowy emptiness, moved by no visible agency; and yet, even as the palpitating little group paused, the iron clang boomed again close above them.

"Some one's up in the bell chamber," said Bargle, dubiously.

By right of his office and of his familiarity with the place, Bargle mounted first with his lantern, the others trailing up after him. In a twinkling, he had jerked the trapdoor open, and stepping into the bell chamber, peered eagerly around, and was startled by a vision of two white faces peering from the shadow of one of the bells.

"Why!" he ejaculated, "what are you doing here, young masters?"

For he recognized them instantly as the Squire's two sons, down at Peridale for a holiday.

"They came forward shivering, but evidently bent on showing that they were unperturbed.

"It's all right, Bargle," cried the older of them; "you have been a long time coming."

"But why are you here, James?" inquired the vicar, reprovingly.

"O, we nipped out after we'd gone up to bed, sir," said the boy, "and came to ring the bells."

"But I've got the keys," muttered Bargle.

"We crawled through the belfry window."

"There was no need to come so high as this, though—"

"No. It was too early to begin when we got here, so we came up to see what it was like in here; and all in a jiffy the trapdoor slammed down and the candle blew out, and we'd left the matches below. We couldn't feel where the trap was in the dark, but we found one of the bells—" He faltered, shuddering reminiscently, but added, forcing a laugh: "It's your fault really, Bargle. If you hadn't said you wouldn't ring the bells—no bells at Christmas!—never heard of such a thing!—we shouldn't have come."

"If you hadn't come, young masters—"

Bargle stopped as if his words choked him. He thought of the white face he had lying on the pillow, and could not believe it was by mere accident or by human hands only that the warning bell had summoned him there in time.

"Amos!" he cried, sharply, motioning to his assistant; "get these down, lad. It's more'n time we was makin' a start!"

OIL CENTER GOING WEST.

Territory Across Mississippi Produces More Than That in East According to Statistics.

Washington.—According to a report issued by the geological survey, the total output of crude petroleum in the United States in 1904 was 117,963,421 barrels. The total value was \$101,170,466. The gain over the production of 1903 was 16,602,084 barrels in quantity and \$6,476,416 in value.

For the first time the quantity of oil produced west of the Mississippi river was greater than that produced east of the river. New pools were discovered in Texas, California, Kansas, Indian territory and Oklahoma, and many extensions were made to the old fields.

The report says all indications point to an increase in the production of petroleum in the United States for a series of years.

The increased demand for petroleum in this country is attributed to the use of that article in automobiles.

NOTICE.

After December the First all work will be collected for when delivered. I will do a cash business after that date.

J. F. KENDRICK.

Wanted.

An order for a pair of White Wyandottes. Can give you stock now from the celebrated Fishel and Duston strains. Better than ever. Pair \$2.50; Trio \$3.50.

T. F. WITTEN,
Wittens Wills, Va.

The Missouri Pacific Railway Company.

St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railway Company.

LESS THAN HALF RATE FOR ROUND TRIP.

To points in the West and Southwest, Nov. 7th and 21st, Dec. 5th and 19th, 1905, via Missouri Pacific Iron Mountain System.

Tickets bear final return limit of twenty-one days from date of sale, also liberal stop-overs both on going and return trip, thus affording an excellent opportunity of visiting the territory that is now attracting the attention of the Home-seeker and Investor.

Also on sale daily up to April 30th, 1906, round trip Winter Tourist tickets to certain Texas destinations, Mexico, New Mexico and Colorado at greatly reduced rates, with final return limit of June 1, 1906.

For descriptive literature and further information, address

H. C. Townsend, G. P. & T. A.,
St. Louis, Mo.
A. A. Gallagher, D. P. A.,
419 Walnut St., Cincinnati, O.

NOTICE.

All persons are hereby notified not to trespass on these lands by riding or walking hunting or cutting upon the said premises of the land.

Benjamin Read,
Pocahontas, Va.
Oct. 10 1905.

WEDDING INVITATIONS, Calling Cards, etc.,

(Engraved or Printed)
Latest Styles, Moderate Prices.
Call, or write
NEWS, Tazewell, Va.

Wanted.

Prof. Fedor de Martens,
(Distinguished Russian Jurist and Expert on International Law.)

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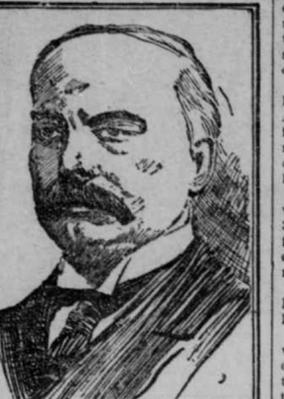
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(Distinguished Russian Jurist and Expert on International Law.)



HAMILTON FISHEL
(Assistant Treasurer of United States May Succeed Shaw.)



SAMUEL GOMPERS



EDWARD H. CONGER



CAPT. BOUGUIN,
(French Military Officer convicted as Russian Spy by Japs.)



QUEEN MARGHERITA
(She expects to visit the United States this fall.)

BEGAN ON A STREET CAR.

Just Culminated in Marriage—Love Found a Way.

Grand Rapids, Mich.—Love will find a way. It's a trite old saying, but eternally true. Henry J. Heystek, head of the big wholesale paints and wallpaper firm of Heystek & Canfield, and Miss Anna Weiss, bookkeeper and daughter of a poor family, have again proved the saying.

Every morning Heystek, on his way to work, saw a good-looking girl on the Wealthy avenue car. He found out who she was, but there was no mutual acquaintance to introduce them, and Miss Weiss was not the sort of girl to become acquainted without the formalities.

Despairing of being able to meet her, Heystek sent her a big box of American Beauties on Christmas, hoping that in some manner the flowers might lead to an acquaintance. They did not, for Miss Weiss hadn't the least idea who sent them.

Just after New Year's his firm advertised for a bookkeeper. There were 300 applicants. Miss Weiss, dissatisfied with the place she had held, was one. Her letter was among the last received.

"This is the girl for us," said Heystek to his partner, and she was hired.

With the object of his affections working side by side with him he did not have courage enough to speak to her of the roses and actually left the city for a month for fear she might recognize him as the one who had signed: "An unknown street car admirer," to the note sent with the flowers.

On his return he began to walk home with the girl at lunch hour, and within two months had proposed. The marriage occurred a few days ago.

STRAW HAT GREW THIS HAIR

Dr. J. Conger Bryan Startles New Yorkers with a Summery Top-Piece.

New York.—Here is the newest Moses of them all. He speaks to all bald-headed men.

He would lead them back to the happy land where hair grows in abundance on domes of thought that to-day are innocent of other decoration than a fine polish.

He thinks the human race is fast approaching a permanent state of hairless wretchedness. At the present rate of departure there will be nothing but a race of men with shiny polls in another generation or two, if this prophet be right.

He says every man in the civilized world, himself excepted, is mouthing fast.

This Moses is Dr. J. Conger Bryan, of this city. He has a radical cure for baldness, and in order to show the benefits of it he goes about the streets of the city every day with a remedy in plain sight. It is a straw hat. He playfully refers to it sometimes as "the cow's breakfast." When Dr. Bryan meets a doubter he promptly dons his summery top-piece, displays a thick head of hair that is fast turning white and says proudly:

"My straw hat grew this hair and I can prove it."

Dr. Bryan believes his remedy for baldness should be worn the year round. When the mercury crawls down around the zero mark Dr. Bryan promises to make Fifth avenue and Broadway sit up and take notice of him this winter. Even now he attracts attention from the derby-hatted populace as he strolls along the streets.

REDWOOD GIANT WON'T DIE

Young Trees Grow from Monarch Felled Several Months Ago by Woodman.

Ukiah, Cal.—A redwood tree that refuses to die even after it has been cut down is a phenomenon that has been discovered by Frank Brown, of Philie, on his timber claim.

In selecting a tree for cutting into shakes a few months ago he felled a monarch of the forest more than 200 feet tall and about eight feet in diameter at the base. On returning to the tree recently to put his shingle crew to work he was surprised to see several fresh limbs. Investigation proved that the limbs were small trees that were growing out of the fallen monster. Besides those that had attained considerable growth, several others were peeping through the bark.

Another peculiarity about the tree is that the shingles cut from it have no sap in them and are as light as the seasons' product. This is the first case on record where a redwood severed from the stump has begun new growth.

Must Needs We a Family.

According to a decision of Justice Robert P. Wyatt of Mahanoy City, Pa., a mother-in-law is entitled to a home with her son-in-law who, he said, is duly bound to provide for her.

Mrs. Marcia Rink had her son-in-law, Louis Peshink arraigned before the justice for ejecting her from his home against the pleadings of Mrs. Peshink, the woman's daughter. Peshink was fined five dollars and ordered to provide his mother-in-law a home under his own roof.

Lincoln Letter Brings \$100.

A letter written by Abraham Lincoln in 1841, relating to political affairs in Illinois, one of a number of autographs collected by Mrs. George M. Moulton, of Chicago, and sold at auction in New York, brought \$100. An autograph poem signed by James Russell Lowell brought \$23. A one page letter signed, but not written, by George Washington, February 20, 1790, sold for 77c.

Nothing the Matter with Kansas.

"What's the matter with Kansas?" Of the 105 counties in Kansas, says the Kansas City Journal, 44 are without a pauper, 25 have no poorhouses, 37 have not a single person in jail and 37 have not a criminal case on the docket. There's evidently less than ever "the matter with Kansas."

Our Real Need.

A Cleveland justice of the peace has been sent to the workhouse for collecting illegal fees. This country will never be able to achieve real greatness until it does away entirely with its justices of the peace.

Monkton, Vt.—A black

terrorized the inhabitants for more than a week in a fair-sized tomcat, and was that hunters followed and his skin now hangs in Thomas Sheehan, who never except in a circus, until he one.

Bruin first made his appearance some time ago. It was in the early part that he was first seen by some children, who ran to their homes to tell the story. Mark Thompson started after the animal and found him rummaging in a neighbor's garbage tub. Just as Thompson was drawing a bead, Bruin turned and charged the man, who fled.

Bruin became more bold as the days went by, and one afternoon made his appearance at the kitchen door of Mr. Sheehan's house. Mrs. Sheehan was cooking, and the odor passing through the open door probably attracted the bear. Sleeping beneath the stove was "Phil," the cat, an animal famous in the town because of its many victories over dogs. When Bruin thrust his nose through the door, Phil rushed from his resting place, and with fur erect on end, spat and growled. Bruin advanced a trifle and then Phil gave a leap, landing squarely on the intruder's head. This was too much for the bear and he turned and ran, with Phil clinging on, continuing to dig his claws into the bear's hide.

Attracted by the cries of his wife, Mr. Sheehan, with two farm hands, went in pursuit of the bear and after a half hour's chase killed him.

The animal weighed over 400 pounds and Mr. Sheehan not only sold the meat, but will also get a good-sized bounty from the state. He intends to have the skin made into a rug.

WASHINGTON MAN DECLARES THERE ARE 21,053,179 SWARING MEN IN THE COUNTRY.

Washington, D. C.—"Just look at this!" exclaimed the man who has weakness for statistics, pushing to one side a big volume of census reports, a bulletin from the bureau of education, and a pile of copies of a religious publication, "In this country are 21,053,179 male persons who swear."

"How do you figure that out?" asked the patient listener.

"It's easy enough," replied the man of many figures. "All you need is to be able to read, add, subtract, divide and multiply."

"According to a table in this volume the male population of the United States in 1900 was 29,659,242. From the source I learn that there are 21,329,819 men of voting age. At least four-sevenths of these I believe from careful observation are addicted to the use of profane language upon occasion. In other words, 12,188,468 men of 21 or older swear, at least occasionally."

"Deducting the number of males of voting age from the total male population we have left 17,729,423 boys. Very nearly 50 per cent. of the schoolboys and fully 100 per cent. of the office boys—the whole number conservatively estimated at 8,864,711—cuss. Add this figure to that representing the men who are profane and we have the grand total I quoted in the beginning."

"I didn't gather these figures in any haphazard fashion," he continued. "I travel extensively and observe closely. In the last two years, particularly, I have made a special study of men who swear, their environment, their habits of life, their general character."

"It's deplorable," ventured his listener. "And the women—how about them?"

"God bless 'em, I hoped you wouldn't bring them into this game," came the reply.

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