The Democratic Advocate.

Sentinel 2

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Wm. F. Derr | Wm. F. Derr | Wm. F. Derr | Wm. F. Derr

THE MODEL STORE NEWS

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All are Welcome.

18 99

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All the new pretty shades of women's fine Kid Gloves, with new stitching, 2 clasps or hooks, which ever you prefer. "Our Model" is the best glove ever put on the market at the price, **$1;** all shades and black. "The Melrose" real Kid Glovves, in sewed or glace, lovely new shades, at **$1.50.**

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☞Four doors East of his former Office. Can be seen or reached in the evening by telphone at Eldersburg until October 1st. au5

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

This is to give notice that the subscribers have obtained from the Orphans' Court of Carroll county, in Maryland, letters of administration on the Personal Estate of

CORDELIA J. FISCEL,

late of Carroll county, deceased. All persons having claims against the deceased are hereby warned to exhibit the same, with the vouchers thereof legally authenticated, to the subscribers, on or before the 11th day of June, 1900; they may otherwise by law be excluded from all benefit of said estate.

Given under our hands this 6th day of November, 1899.

EPHRAIM FISCEL,
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nov11 4t Administrators.

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Seasonable Story.

THE CHRIST CHILD.

Florence Marryat in Philadelphia (Pa.) Ledger.

The old man and woman sat staring at each other in silent despair. Outside, the landscape was one uninterrupted sheet of white. The snow had fallen with little cessation during the last few days, and the north wind had driven it in places to the depth of several feet. Even the narrow path that led to the wicket gate of the little cottage was almost impassable, by reason of it, for Robert Hazel's strength was unequal to clearing it away; he was nearly 70, and his hands were knotted and gnarled with rheumatism. His companion, but a few years younger than himself, was still more feeble and almost as incapaciated for action. She had been a pretty girl once, and was a sweet looking old woman now, but her features were pinched from want, and her limbs shivering with the cold. There was no fire in the grate, and no wood to kindle one with; the cupboard was empty—there was nothing in the cottage either to eat or drink.

"I suppose," said the old woman in a tremulous voice, "that there is no help for it, master, and that it must be!"

"It shall never be, whilst I have the power to take your life and my own!" replied her husband sternly.

"Why! whatever do you mean, my man?"

He left his seat and came and sat on an old settle by her side, where he could touch her hand.

"I mean just this, my woman," he said kindly. "I swore years and years agone that I would die sooner than go to the union, and I meant what I said!"

"But what can we do else, Robin," she asked, with piteous eyes fixed upon his fine old face. "Neither of us can work, and we're a'most starved with cold and hunger. What's before us but the union? Oh! deary, deary me," she continued, "to think we've brought a son and daughter into the world and neither of them can t save us from this!"

"Listen to me, my woman," said Hazel. "It isn't fair of us even to think of coming back upon our children. The poor things can't do more than keep themselves. What can Patty do—with ten pounds a year wages, and got to keep herself in decent clothing into the bargain? And as for Joe, why he's been the best of boys, as you know well; but he works hard enough to support his wife and little ones, and a man can't be expected to do more. I'm sure he must have sorely missed that sovereign he sent us last Easter, and p'raps it was wrong of him to send it; for you remember what the Scripture says—that a man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife?"

"Ah! I'm sure our Joe would never have left us, if he had known what we was a going to suffer for want of him!"

"Perhaps not," replied her husband; "but what's done can't be undone, and it's better to make an end of it, once and forever!"

"But how, Robin?" demanded the old woman in a frightened voice.

There was something in her tone which recalled the past to him, and he remembered how, when she was a timid, blue eyed girl, she used to fly to him for protection against every fancied danger. He put with some difficulty his stiffened arm round her bent body, and inclined his grizzled beard a little nearer to her face.

"We've been man and wife, Mary, now for over forty years," he said, "and you know that during that time I've worked for you and yours to the best of my power."

"Aye! that you have, Robin, my man, she cried. "You've been a good husband and a good father, and the Lord will reward you for it! And for more than forty years we've slept on the same piller, and never lay down at night with a hard word atween us, have us now?" she added, forgetting the pain of labor in the sweetness of love.

"Yes, yes! but that's all over now. They don't let husbands and wives see each other except at meals, when they gets their skilly in the work'us over the hill there."

"They'll go to part us?" exclaimed his wife in horror.

"Aye! that they will, Mary, if they gets the chance. They'll make us live out the rest of our lives pining for each other's company. You'll never make me a good hot cup of tea again, not yet darn up my old socks, nor rub me for the rheumatics."

"Oh! it will break my heart!" cried the old woman.

"Wouldn't it be better to go away together, Mary, to some place where no one can part us, and where we shall be free from all pain and hunger and dread of the union for evermore."

"Yes, sure, if there is such a place; but you frighten me when you talk like that, Robin! There's something strange in your eye as I never saw before, and which makes me think of your oath! But you'd never hurt me, my man, I'm sure of that!"

"No, not for worlds! There's never been a time since I fust courted you that I wouldn't have laid down my life for your'n. But my life's already over. My strength has gone from me and I can't lift my hand to get you even a bit of bread! If folks would be a little patient with me, I might still do a little work in gardening and such like, but they're all so quick nowadays, and want everything finished in a hurry, and I can't hurry any more, my woman. I have pains all over my poor limbs."

"It's the want of a good fire and a good meal," said Mary, weeping. "My bonny Robin, as was the strongest man for miles round—it's cruel to see you come down to such a pitch."

"Well, you see, my dearie, I'm no good in the world, and there's none as we can justly call upon to help us, so the sooner we're out of it the better for all of us. But I couldn't go and leave you behind, Mary. We've been too long together for that. If I go, you must come along of me."

"Where to, Robin?" she inquired trembling.

"Ah! that's more than I can tell you, my lass; but, anyways, we'll go together. Don't look at me like that, Mary; it's nothing that will hurt you, only a little drink as will put you into a beautiful dreamless sleep and make you forget all your troubles."

"Where is it?" she asked, guessing what her husband meant.

He drew a small vial from his pocket.

"I've had it by me for weeks," he said, as he held it up to view. "I saw what was coming on us, and I determined neither you nor I should spend our Christmas in the union. No, no; we'll spend it in Heaven, my woman, and it couldn't have been long fust, anyway."

"But Robin," said the old woman in an uncertain voice, "will it be in Heaven? Is it right, think ye, to go there before the Lord has called us?"

"Do you think He wants us to stay here, starving and frozen? Why, if we don't drink this or go to the work'us, you'll be dead of cold afore the morning, Mary."

"Yes, I expect so," she answered in a meek voice.

"Well, then, I won't wait to see it!" exclaimed the man roughly. "If you won't come along of me, I'll take the whole lot and go myself, and you can shovel my body out in the snow; for if you let those workhouse authorities give me a pauper funeral, I'll never rest quiet in my grave, but rise up again and haunt you!"

"Robin, Robin! Don't!" cried the terrified woman, as she hid her face in her hands. In a minute he was bending over her and soothing her.

"You'll go with me, Mary, won't you?" he whispered; "for if not, it'll be the fust time in over forty years that you've held back when I led the way."

"Of course I'll come, too, Robin," she answered. "Why, what should I do without my man, as has been all the world to me for so long? But give me a little time to prepare myself, for it's a new thought to me. To go into His presence so soon and before He's called us! Ah, Robin, if He's angered at fust, you'll tell Him, won't ye, that I did it because you asked me and I couldn't stay here alone without you? And it won't hurt much, you say?" she continued, eyeing the vial wistfully, as if it would explode in her face like a bomb.

"Hurt much! It won't hurt at all, I tell you. It's what the ladies take to make them sleep sometimes, but when the dose is big enough, you don't wake again, which is a blessing! It's what the chemist chaps call laudanum. Don't you mind, you had some once for the toothache?"

"Aye, and it will take us to heaven. That's strange; but if you say so it must be true. I should have liked to kiss my Joe and my Patty fust, though. They'll be main sorry when they hear what we've gone and done."

"They ought to be more sorry to see us dragging out our last days in the union," doggedly persisted her husband, "though I thought Patty made pretty light of it when I told her there was nothing else for us last Thursday. Young people don't know what old people feel. What's death to us is play to them."

"But they've been good children to us, Robin. Do you mind the day when our Joe was born, and you laughed at me for being so proud at having a son, and I told you he'd be working for us when we was past work? Aye, but his heart would be sad today if he knew that we should never see another Christmas morn. And Patty, too—she was a main pretty little thing, with her curly head and her big blue eyes. You used to say you never wanted a better lad than she, and you was just as cockered over her as I was over my boy. I suppose we couldn't put this off, just for a day or two, my man, till I had kissed my Joe and my Patty again?" said the old woman, wistfully.

"And where should we be tomorrer if we did?" demanded Hazel; "dining in the union! No, my woman; I won't force you to go with me, but I takes my journey before nightfull—alone or together."

"Ah! never alone, Robin, never alone!" cried his wife, as she put up her withered hand and stroked his rugged cheek. He was only a common laborer, and had been so all his life, but he kissed the withered palm as it touched his mouth.

"I was only thinking," continued Mary, "that the Lord might help us if He would. I remember a pretty tale I read a long while since, in which two poor people, just like you and me, was sitting before a bare table, and didn't know where to turn to get food or firing, when the door suddenly opened and a beautiful child stood on the threshold and waved his hand, and directly the table was covered with smoking meats and loaves of bread and a fire sprung up in the grate. And it was the Christ Child, Robin, who had heard their prayer and come to answer it Himself."

"That there was a Papish story, Mary," said Hazel, frowning, "and all rubbish. You might tell that for youself. You've been praying to the Lord I know, all along to relieve us for you're a good woman and believe in such things, but He hasn't done it, you see, nor will He neither, for there ain't no miracles in these days. The table's bare and the cupboard's empty, and the union stands a-frowning on that there hill ready for us if we haven't the sense to look after ourselves."

At that moment a sudden gust of wind blew the rickety door of the cottage open, and there on the threshold stood a boy child, whom the old people had never seen before. His curly head was bare, save for a wreath of Christmas roses twined in his golden curls. His dress seemed, to their purblind eyes, to consist of some white woolen material, but his rosy arms were bare. He did not speak, but stood there, pointing with one hand towards the hill on which stood the workhouse, of which they had so great a dread. Both the man and the woman were awed, and Mary was the only one who found her voice.

"It is the Christ Child," she said, in tones of deepest solemnity. Robin glanced intuitively toward the bare table, but no viands had made their appearance thereon. Mary crept almost fearfully towards the little child, who turned at her approach and fled, and by the time she had crawled to the door no trace of him was to be seen; only his little footmarks were left behind in the thick snow.

"What are we to do now?" she said to her husband, when their first astonishment had waned.

"I don't understand what you mean," he replied.

"It was the Christ Child," she said, "and he pointed toward the union. He has come to teach us our duty, my man, We may be cold and hungry and miserable, but we are not forsaken. This is a message from heaven. It means that we are to be brave, not cowardly; that we are to pass our Christmas in the union, not in heaven, and that if we do the best that lies before us, God will protect our future as He has our past. Come, Robin, my man, you have never turned a deaf ear to my pleadings for over forty years, listen to me now. Pluck up your courage and come with me along the path which leads to the union. I know it's hard, but we've got something to do for Him as has taken care of us for so many years, and I feel convinced that if we follow the Christ Child something will happen to show us He is right."

The old man, who had been somewhat awed by the apparition they thought they had seen, yielded at last to his wife's entreaties, and, putting on their poor outdoor clothing, the aged couple, clingly closely to each other, stepped out into the snow covered road, and commenced with slow and feeble steps to walk towards the workhouse, to which an order for admittance had been granted them some days before. They were very sad the while, and so weak from hunger and cold that they had hardly thought they should have strength to reach their destination. The extreme cold, indeed, seemed to have affected Mary's head, for she prattled on, as if they were going for a pleasure stroll in the height of summer, instead of nearly falling every second step they took. But her old husband kept up bravely, though every now and then he felt if the vial of laudanum were safe in his coat pocket. "We shall pass Ladymead on our way," prattled the old woman. "I wonder if Patty has any idea we are going to the union today, and if she will run out and give us a kiss. I mind when we passed Ladymead one day last summer, that I thought it the prettiest little place I had ever seen; and it made me think of our Joe and how, when he was a lad, he longed to be a farmer, until his godfather, Mr. Wilkins, came to see us and offered to prentice him to the boot trade. Aye, but I fancy poor Joe can't like sitting in a shop in Lunnon all day and never seeing the country from one year's end to another. Ladymead is all set in fields, and with the barns and granaries close agen the house, and a sweet dairy. Patty is a lucky gal to get a place there. She seems main happy, too, and says her missus won't let her work too hard. Well, poor child, all her life is afore her, and all ours is behind us—but we mustn't grumble, Robin. We've had our day, and a very pleasant day it has been, too; and now the winter's come, with the frost and snow around us, and we oughter be thankful that there's a shelter ready for us, though it ain't, maybe, all we should choose. I think that's the message the Christ Child came to bring us, anyway!"

As she was babbling on they dragged their weary limbs past the farm where their daughter had lately found a new service, and, to their delight, there she stood at the outer gate, heedless of the cold wind or the snow, on the lookout for her parents on their way to the union. As she ran to meet them Hazel thought with an inward grumble that she might have seemed a little more sympathetic, with the terrible journey they were bent upon.

"Oh, father and mother," she exclaimed, cheerily. "I've been on the lookout for you ever so long. I thought you would be passing in the morning. But you stayed to have some dinner, I s'pose."

"Aye, my gal," replied the old woman, "we had some arrangements to make, and so we didn't start till afternoon. But it's bitter cold and we must be getting on, for we've better than a mile to go yet."

"No, no," cried Patty, "you must go no further tonight. My—my mistress says you must turn in to Ladymead and have some tea with me, and stay over tomorrow for your Christmas dinner."

"Aye, but that's kind," said Robin.

"She wouldn't hear of your spending Christmas in the union, and no more would I," continued Patty, "so give me your arm, mother, and we'll soon have you beside a nice warm fire."

It was about time, for poor Mary Hazel was half dead with fatigue and cold. In a few minutes their daughter had the old couple seated beside a splendid fire in a wide old fashioned kitchen grate, and was plying them with big cups of hot tea and plates of bread and butter and fresh eggs from the farm.

"We have very few eggs now," said Patty, laughing, as she placed them before them, "but I saved these expressly for my dear father and mother. I wish I could have saved you the walk here, too, but there was nothing to send for you or—or the mistress of the farm would have let me have it at once."

"But, my dear daughter," said Mary, who was revived by a little food, "you mustn't take advantage of your missus's kindness. You are quite sure she will not be displeased at our taking tea with you."

"Displeased? Why, mother, she has made me watch for you ever since 12 o'clock. We hoped you would be here to dinner. Out father is falling asleep. He is tired, poor dear, and so are you. I should think the best thing for you both was bed, and then you will be nice and fresh tomorrow to spend a happy Christmas Day."

"Ah! Patty, you forgets there's nothing but the union afore us," replied her mother in a plaintive tone, "but there, I won't be ungrateful. But, as you say, my dear, I think your father would be glad of his bed, for he's spent a trying day if ever man did."

Patty thereupon led the way to an airy, comfortably furnished bedroom, with a large, luxurious feather bed for the old people to nestle into, and a bright fire burning on the hearth.

"Oh, ain't this lovely?" exclaimed Mrs. Hazel, as she took a survey of the apartment, "but you musn't make too much of us, Patty, for it will make the difference all the harder to bear. Well, my man," she continued, when her daughter had left them alone, "the Blessed Christ Child has brought us one more happy Christman day, at all events, hasn't He?"

"Seems so," said the old man, who, between the cold he had been subjected to and the hearty meal he had consumed, was almost too sleepy to reply.

"And you won't say nothing against Papish stories again, will you?" pleaded his wife. But Hazel had curled himself round in the feather bed and was already sunk in sleep.

The old woman—his sweetheart of over forty years—crept in beside him, and laid her hands upon his. They were old and faded and crippled, but the freshness of their mutual love, his tenderness for her and her trust in him, was pathetic in its simplicity.

They slept till late in the morning. No one came to disturb them, though Mary thought once that she heard a footstep creep about the room, and had an indistinct remembrance of a form bending over the bed, but she was utterly weak and wornout, and Nature was taking her revenge by closely sealing the eyelids of both her husband and herself. Not even the cock crowing that went on under their window as soon as the day had dawned served to disturb their rest, and it was not till nearly 11 o'clock that Mrs. Hazel woke to the consciousness that some one stood in the room. As soon as she had opened her eyes she shook her husband's shoulder.

"Wake up, Robin," she exclaimed "Look! See! The Christ Child has come to us again!"

At those words the last cobwebs were swept from Hazel's eyes, and he started up in bed by the side of his wife. She was right. There on the threashold of the open door, stood the same child who had visited them in their cottage the day before. The wreath of snowy Christmas roses was still upon his broad open brow, but he was now clad in white linen, and his look of uncertainty had disappeared.

"Danfather, danmother, is 'oo velly well?" he exclaimed. "I'se bringed 'oo a lubly bit of holly for Christmas. Foder said I was to bring it for 'oo!"

"Robin, my man, who—what can it be?" cried Mary, in a voice of mingled fear and pleasure.

"I'm sure I can't tell you my woman! Who are you, my little feller?" he continued, addressing the child, when a tall, stalwart form appeared beside it, and came forward with outstretched hand. It was that of their son Joe.

"Joe—my Joe!" cried the old mother, folding her first born in a close embrace.

"My boy! Is it possible?" exclaimed the old man.

"Yes, dear mother and father, it is I, and I hope you will forgive me for having played a little trick upon you. I have only been in Lillyvale a week, and I did not know, till I met Patty, of the straits you were in, and when I did, I thought I should so much like to give you a happy surprise on Christmas Day!"

"But I do not understand. Have you come to live in Lillyvale, Joe?"

"Yes, father; not only that, but as the master of Ladymead. That is my great surprise for you. My godfather, Mr. Wilkins, died about a month ago, and was good enough to leave me £500 in his will; so the first thing I thought of was to rent Ladymead Farm and turn my back on London forever. And when I arrived here and Patty told me how badly you and mother were getting on, I was gladder than ever that my godfather had thought of me in his will."

"Aye, aye, it's a good thing for you, my son, and it'll make your mother and me glad to think of your happiness and prosperity. But it's all up with us, my lad. We're too old and feeble to work any more, and we wouldn't be a burden on any one, least of all you, with a family to support; and so we've made up our minds to go into the union. I was sorely against it at fust, but your mother is wiser than I, and she's persuaded me as it's the right thing to do, and so I'm most reconciled to the idea!"

"And do you s'pose that I'd keep my wife and children at Ladymead wanting for nothing, whilst my dear parents was in the work'us?" cried Joe, indignantly. "What do you take me for? Why, who was it as bringed me up from a baby and had me taught my trade, and well nigh starved theirselves sometimes to keep my sister and me well fed? Do you s'pose I can forget all that? No, father! I don't live at Ladymead Farm unless you and mother live here, too. Besides, I wants you—what does a London shoemaker know about farming, do you think? I hardly know a cabbage from a tater! But father can put me up to everything, and help me a bit in the gardening, too, if I'm not mistaken."

"Oh, yes, Joe?" said the old man with trembling eagerness. "I can garden a bit still, if people would have a little patience with me, and not want too much hurry, for my hands is terribly crippled with the rheumatics, you see, and my sight is not as good as it was; still, I'm not quite useless, my boy. Oh, no, indeed? If it were for you and yourn, you'd find I can get through a goodish bit of work in a day, I know!"

"And then we shall want mother in the dairy—just to show my wife. A nice gal she is, as I'm sure you'll say, and she's called Mary the same as yourself, mother, which was the first reason I took her, I think. But she's a duffer at country ways. It couldn't be expected otherwise when she's been in London all her life. But Patty and mother will help her a bit, and we'll all be as happy together as a lot of sandboys!"

"Robin," said Mary suddenly, turning round to her husband and hiding her face in his breast, "let me cry a bit, there's a good man, or my heart will burst."

"Seems to me as if I'd like to have a bit of a cry myself, Mary," replied her husband," for it's all too wonderful to be true."

"Nonsense! We can't have no crying here—and on Christmas Day, too!" exclaimed a merry voice, as Patty, with her sister-in-law and a cluster of little children, burst into the room. "Why, father and mother, you haven't spoken to Mollie yet, and here are your granchildren come to kiss you and bid you welcome!" and as she spoke she lifted a bonny boy upon the bed. It was the Christ Child.

"Joe, who is that?" exclaimed his mother.

"Why that's my boy—my only son—my little Robin, named for father there, and ever so anxious to see his granddad. But you mustn't spoil him, mother, for he's a handful, and wants a deal of looking after. Fancy what the young rascal did yesterday, when we were all busy arranging the farm house; runned away by himself with only that wreath of white and green that patty made him on his head, right through all the snow, and never come back for an hour or more. There was his mother, sure that he would never be found again, and me and the farm hand shouting over the place as loud as we could bawl, when in comes my young master as cool as a cucumber, and says he's been trying to find his granddad and grandmammy. But he says he won't do it again. He's never seen such a fall of snow before, and he thought it was sugar till he tasted it, and since then he's been trying to take in his little sisters and cram their mouths full of it. He is a handful, I can tell you," concluded the proud father, with his eyes fixed lovingly on his son and heir.

"Now, Joe, if you's done talking of that boy, you'd better let father and mother get up and dress theirselves, for I expect they must be about ready for their breakfast, considering it's past 11. Why, you'll never be able to eat no Christmas dinner at this rate," Patty continued, addressing her parents, "and that would break Mollie's heart and mine, for we're preparing it all ourselves. Come along children; come along, Mollie and Joe; and Mother and Father, your breakfast will be ready for you as soon as you're ready for it.

And laughing and talking, the merry party filed out of the room.

The old couple turned and faced each other with solemn, wondering eyes.

"Robin," said Mary presently, "maybe it was the Christ Child, after all, as put it in his little heart to visit us and save us from ourselves."

"You are right, my woman," replied the old man "It was the Christ Child, and this is His own day. Let us rise and worship Him."