# Ashtabula Telegraph.

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## ST. NICHOLAS.

"Ho! THERE at the wicket, who pounds at the door?
Such a din in Olympus was ne'er heard before—
I would a sep—get ye gone—I'm ailing, I'm sick,
What the deuce—there again—who is calling Saint Nick?"

"Arouse ye! Arouse ye! It's dawning again—
The star that once beamed over Bethlehem's plain—
The star of the Magi that shone on the morn
When earth's adored Saviour, the Christ-child was born!"

"Ho! Ho! Is it so? Then I'll up and away
As soon as the Goblins can harness my sleigh."

Then he roared such a laugh as he sprang out of bed,
It startled the stars in the sky overhead,
And they winked at each other as much as to say,
There is something gone wrong and Old Nick is to pay.

It took but a moment to jump in his boots,
To wrap himself up in the best of fur suits,
To run to the closet and drag out his pack,
Which he swung with a chuckle across his broad back;
Then off to the stable he dashed through the snow,
Where the reindeer were prancing, all ready to go.
He was up in a jiffy, and cracking his whip,
With a "Hi, there! my hearties!" he led the reins slip.

Straight down through the welkin they sped like the light
Without pause or turn to the left or the right;
The clouds dragged their skirts to get off of the track,
The winds shrank alarmed—all quite taken aback;
E'en the moon drew in haste a veil over her face
So quick cracked the whip and so fast was the pace.
And he pealed out a laugh so jocund and gay
That Aurora woke up long before it was day;
Oh, never such sleigh-ride was ridden before
As that of St. Nick with his rich Christmas store!
Far down in the distance Earth rolled fast asleep,
Dark night having wrapped it in silence so deep
That the children, tucked close in their snug little beds,
Whence nothing peeped out save their cherub heads,
Were dreaming of fairies, of frolic and fun,
And other stern facts of a life just begun.

It was three by the clock, when out on the roof
The tinkle of sleigh-bells and taps of a hoof
Made their little hearts bound and flashed round the Earth
A smile such as welcomed the Lamb at its birth;
But they woke not. Oh, no! Old Nick is so sly
He fastens a padlock on each prying eye.

With a "Whoa, there, my pretties," he stops with a jerk,
Lights his pipe, swings his pack, then away to his work
Over steeples and house-tops, in windows, down flues,
So fleet, you would think he had wings to his shoes.
In pantries he peeps and through bedrooms he whisks,
Now kissing the babies, now pinching the girls,
Filling up all their stockings with goodies and toys,
Nor forgetting the switch, always left for bad boys.
Then on to the play-rooms to plant the great trees,
Which groan with dolls and drums with such exquisite ease.

What a jolly fat fellow! so little and spry,
With round dimpled cheeks and a fine dashing eye,
Hair jeweled with hailstone, and such a red nose,
It lights up the pathway wherever he goes!
Then his rich, merry laugh—ah! never, I fear,
Will music so sweet again gladden the year!

But time flies apace. Even now a faint ray
Struggles up through the East as the Herald of day;
The winds wake in protest and scatter the snow;
Now, listen! the signal! I hear the cock crow.

"Ho, ho!" cries Old Nick, with his cheeriest warning,
"Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good morning!"

—*Edward C. Hancock.*

## THE BELLS OF CONNYVILLE.

### A CHRISTMAS STORY.

ON a beautiful summer's afternoon, more than fifty years ago, the good people of Connyville hung a chime of bells in the ivy-mantled belfry of St. John's Church; and after the good parish minister had preached a sermon appropriate to the occasion, it was voted, as their sexton was growing feeble, that Ezra Potts should in future be intrusted with the care of the little church and the ringing of the fine musical bells that had just been hung in the belfry. So Ezra Potts was made sexton, and though thirty years had passed away since the day the chimes were hung, yet he still performed the simple duties of his long-continued office.

He had grown to be nearly fifty-nine years old, and though his dark hair was tinged with silver, his step was firm and light and his strong frame was still unbent. He was a sturdy fellow, this Ezra Potts, with a broad, smooth, genial face—a good and merry heart will smooth over a sight of wrinkles—and his eyes were as brimful of mirth as they could be. In fact, this Ezra Potts was as good a man as you often meet, and the children all loved him dearly and called him Father Potts, and the older folks all loved him, too, and would shake the honest hand and speak to him as Brother Potts.

Yes, he was nearly fifty-nine the Christmas eve he lighted his lantern and left his cosy cottage to go up the hill through the snow to chime the bells, as was the custom on every Christmas eve since the bells first came to Connyville. He was very happy that night as he walked up the village street, past the shop windows gay with toys and bric-a-brac, and merry with the groups of children gathered 'round to feast their eyes and chatter with their boisterous tongues, for he had in mind the happiness abroad that night and the joy that would be awakened with the children in the morning. Besides, he had bought his wife a new gown and a large-print Bible, which he knew would please her very much, and a little lame girl down the street would find a well-filled stocking beside her bed in the morning, and she would guess that Father Potts put it there.

But amidst all this gayety and his own happiness there was something that troubled him, and a sigh escaped his lips, and involuntarily he walked slower as he ascended the hill to ring St. John's bell; and as he wended on his busy thoughts were drifting ten years back, when his daughter Kitty was seventeen—a bright, pretty girl she was, petite in figure, and with a fascinating grace in manner that made her a favorite with all the good people of Connyville. He, Ezra, loved that girl with all his great might and mind; she was such a winsome creature it would have been hard, indeed, for anybody to do otherwise; but if he loved her too fondly he was rebuked, God knows, and bitterly, too.

As the modest little bells of that quiet village, Kitty had many suitors, for the right sort of a girl will turn the heads of half the swains in any village; but the most favored one was Ephraim Bates, a reputable young farmer of sterling qualities, whom Ezra loved as he would have loved his son, and after a varied courtship of little ups-and-downs, for they had their quarrels and reconciliations which go to make up the spicy sum of human love affairs, he, in the early spring-time, in his bashful, awkward way, asked for her hand, which she—she loved to tease the fellow—granted him, after keeping him in agony for a month waiting for her answer, when she could have told him on the spot he might have it if he wanted. They were very happy till June came, with its balmy air and fragrant blossoms, for with it came a wild, handsome fellow up from the city down by the sea to while away his time among the hills and trout brooks of Connyville. Now he found Kitty out and made her acquaintance; and a brilliant, well-mannered fellow such as he was just the sort to turn the head of a simple-hearted girl like Kitty, who knew but little of the life beyond her native village, or of the artifices of handsome, reckless men.

Ezra noticed the change in her with pained anxiety, but he held his tongue, hoping the young man would soon quit the place, and that Kitty would as soon forget him. Ephraim was madly jealous of such ardent devotion to his betrothed, and one evening when he had come down from his farm on the hill to call on Kitty he said, in his blunt way, "Kitty, this young man from the city is growing too familiar with you. I must insist on having it stopped."

"What a silly, nonsensical boy you are," laughed Kitty in the gayest manner possible, as though it was the very funniest thing in the world.

"Maybe I am," he said with a sorrowful sigh. "But you are not treating me as I ought to be treated, as you would want to be treated."

"How do you want to be treated?" she asked, coaxingly.

"Just as you would want me to treat you," he replied. "Now suppose," and he fixed himself as if he was about making a great and valid point, "I should run half my time with Susie Phelps or Sally Brown, how would you like that?"

"How would I like that?" she cried, laughing in the heartiest and most provoking manner. "Oh, I should enjoy that so much! And it would be such fun! And—oh, dear! Ephraim Bates and Susie Phelps. But, Eph—" she was very sober and very ironical—"you couldn't do such a thing were you to try a life-time. I am the only pretty girl," and she tossed her head and looked very vain, "who ever had a particle of sympathy for overgrown Ephraim Bates."

Ephraim was stung deeply by these words, for they were cruel words for her to speak. Besides, he, like other men, had some conceit, and he believed he could have wooed and won old 'Squire Phelps's daughter as successfully as he had wooed and won Kitty Potts.

"Kitty," he said, harshly, "after engaging yourself to me I am sure you have no right to allow any gentleman to be so devoted to you as this strange fellow is. Again I must insist on its being stopped."

Kitty knew as well as anybody he was right, and it galled her to be told of it, especially by Ephraim. But for the world she wouldn't let him know it galled her.

"Oh, what a queer boy you are, Eph!" she answered, pleasantly, and then added, with a keen touch of sarcasm, "Don't you know, Sonnie, that if I were confined exclusively to you for male society I should get so sick and so tired of you I should never, never want to see you again as long as I live!"

Had Ephraim been a shrewd observer of character, especially of female character, he would not have allowed himself to be greatly aggravated, for he would have known that it pleased Kitty best to have him so.

"Kitty," he said, sharply, "you don't love me—you can't love me if you speak as you think."

"Oh, dear!" cried Kitty, bursting into another fit of laughing, "what a silly, silly boy! Did I ever tell you, did I ever tell anybody, I loved you? Now be honest, Eph, did I?"

"Didn't you promise you would marry me?" he asked, sternly.

"No, I didn't," she retorted, sharply. "I may have told you something—I presume I did—that led you to believe I might, some time, do such a foolish thing, but never in my life have I told you I loved you. But what has that to do with it, anyway?"

"What has that to do with it?" he cried, fiercely. "Does not that promise imply you love me?"

"Oh, dear, no!" she retorted, with a languid unconcern. "It don't imply anything, only that I promised a silly fellow something I hadn't ought to. That's all."

"Are you in earnest?" he cried.

"Never was more so," she answered.

"Then we will break our engagement, and you, Kitty Potts, will rue the day it was broken."

"Suit yourself," she said, carelessly, and tossing their engagement ring to the floor, Ephraim picked it up and left the house.

Poor Kitty burst into tears when he had gone, for she never supposed their quarrel would result in such a manner. She thought, however, like all previous quarrels, it would end happily; so she soon cheered up and gave herself no further trouble, but flirted more boldly with her wild and handsome suitor.

In the past Ephraim had been in the habit of walking with her to church on the pleasant Sabbath evenings; and ever before they had reconciled their little difficulties on that day. Sunday came, but Ephraim came not with it, and the scalding tears started from her eyes, and she reproached herself bitterly for her cruel words, and would have fallen at his feet and pleaded for his forgiveness, for she loved him with all her sorrowing heart.

She walked to church alone that night, where she saw Ephraim with 'Squire Phelps's pretty daughter Susie, and, poor foolish girl! she swore revenge on Ephraim Bates, and the next night it was executed. In the morning it was noised abroad that Kitty Potts had gone away with the wild, handsome fellow, and was married to him in the city out by the sea.

It was near a death-blow to Ezra. For days and weeks he lingered between life and death with a raging fever in his head. But he mended slowly, and when he could go about his work again he seemed almost as strong as he was in other days, but his heart—ah, no! the great wound was not healed yet. From that terrible day he never spoke her name, and every villager forbore to mention it in his presence. She had written him for forgiveness; but some things there are men are not divine enough to forgive, and Ezra set his heart hard against forgiving the cruel wrong Kitty had done her family and her betrothed. She never wrote him after that; but more than a year afterward he heard that her reckless husband, tiring of her charms and beauty, had abandoned her and left her alone and friendless in the great unmerciful city down by the sea.

But Father Potts cheered himself up and wended his way up the hill, and opened the great door of St. John's, and climbed the belfry stairs, and chimed the fine musical bells that sounded merrier and more musical than ever, for it seemed to Ezra and it seemed to all the villagers, that the bells rang sweeter in the Christmas times. But hearts are gayer then, and life is brighter then, and the star glimmers in the East again and makes Heaven seem nearer and dearer.

Presently Father Potts put on his coat, shut the belfry door, came down the stairs and opened the great door to go out into the street; but just as he was about stepping from the threshold the light from the lantern fell upon a bundle lying on the topmost step.

"Oh, my!" he cried, holding his lantern above his head and bending down that he might more distinctly see the object, "Oh, my! what now? A present maybe for my wife, ho, ho, or for me, ho, ho! Who'd a thought that Ezra Potts, sexton, 'd find a present on old St. John's steps? Nobody I swear! Here I've been attending this old stone church for more'n thirty years, and tonight I've a present for me or for my wife, ho, ho!" And Ezra laughed and shook himself, and bent close to and laid his hand on the bundle.

"A Christmas turkey," he cried, slapping his sides, "Oh, a good fat Christmas turkey, ho, ho! A fine fat turkey for Christmas, ha, ha! Won't my wife—oh, won't my wife be glad when she sees this!" and he laid hold of the bundle, and stepping back into the church he placed it on a cushion and began undoing it. He first unwrapped a coarse, heavy shawl, wondering who would send a turkey done up in such a fashion, and then he unrolled a blanket fine and white, and then he jumped half out his senses and cried:

"Oh, Lord! Oh, my Lord!" and then he gasped for want of breath, and put his hands together and looked half frightened, half pleased, as he stood beside the bundle that he supposed held only a fine, fat Christmas turkey.

"Oh!, my goodness! oh, my soul! It's a baby! a little live baby, as sure as I'm born. O-oh, my, my—oh, my Lord!" and Ezra Potts held his dim light very close to the sleeping infant's face, and bent his face very close to it, that he might not be mistaken and find it a turkey after all.

"It's a real live baby!" he cried again. "Oh, my soul! oh, my wife! won't she, oh, won't she be glad? Won't Ezra Potts be glad, too? Won't Ezra Potts and wife be glad together? Oh, dear! a real live baby. Oh, dear! O-oh dear!" And Father Potts fell upon his knees, half laughing, half crying, as he bent very close to the babe.

"Oh, my wife, my beloved wife, our daughter's come back to us just as she came to us at first! on Christmas-eve, too. Oh, my! to Ezra Potts and wife a daughter, ho, ho!" And Ezra shook himself very hard again, and his eyes glistened with tears, although he tried hard to push them back.

"The good Lord sent her!" he cried, winding the fine white flannel around the babe. "Yes, the good Lord sent her, and He knowed just where to send her—bless His name—and Ezra Potts and wife sha'n't disappoint the Lord, neither. Oh, my soul! what a Christmas present! a present straight to Ezra Potts and wife from the Lord. Oh, what a sexton is Ezra Potts! What a blessed sexton, what a lucky sexton! To Ezra Potts and wife—" and he laughed so hard again he couldn't for his life have added "daughter;" and tying up the coarse, heavy shawl he caught up his lantern and scrambled up the belfry stairs, and rang the bells again like five great furies.

"Praise the Lord!" he cried, tugging on the ropes like a mad man, "for His mercy endureth forever. To Ezra Potts, sexton, and Dorothy, his wife—oh, my soul!" and he pulled more madly than before, which brought the grave-digger, who lived in the small red house just behind the church, into the belfry. There isn't a bit of doubt that he believed the sexton crazy, for, besides ringing the bells like mad, his coat and hat were off and his long gray hair was flying over his head and face.

"Praise the Lord!" yelled Ezra. "Praise the Lord—to Ezra Potts, sexton of old St. John's, and Dorothy, his beloved wife, a daughter." And on went the mad, musical bells, and speechless stood the grave-digger, as he watched the sexton while he rang the Christmas chimes as they had never rung before.

"A daughter, I tell you, Corney! A little live daughter to Ezra Potts, sexton, and Dorothy, his wife!" and letting go the ropes he donned his coat and hat in an instant, and grasping the grave-digger's hand he hurried him down the stairs at a great rate.

"See that, Corney—see that there!" cried Ezra, when he had unrolled the infant. "Ain't that a Christmas present, Corney, ain't it, though?" and he slapped the grave-digger hard on the back, who looked more stupefied than ever.

"To Ezra Potts and wife, I tell you, Corney—I tell you a live daughter!" He put his hands on Corney's shoulder and shook him with all his strength, which aroused the grave-digger so much he bent over a trifle that he might more plainly see the sweet, placid face of the sleeping infant.

Corney was a very slow fellow. His business was a slow one, for, as the people of Connyville were usually a long-lived, tenacious set, grave-digging was not a driving business at any time. But, finding his petrified tongue, he said,

"Wa'al, I du declar'! Whar did you cum by that air chick?"

"To Ezra and Dorothy Potts from the Lord," solemnly answered the sexton.

"'Tis, heigh?" said Corney. "Wa'al, I kinder reckon as how I wouldn't want the Lord to bring many sich critters to me."

"Ah," said Ezra, shaking his fingers, and taking his bundle tenderly in his arms, "don't be scared, Corney, He knows into what fold to send His little lost lambs. Oh, my soul, yes! He knows where to send 'em—to Ezra Potts and wife, ho, ho!" And locking the great door he hurried off into the village.

"Here comes Father Potts," cried a band of youngsters on a street corner, as Ezra came in sight. "Have you got anything for us?" they shouted.

"Ho, ho!" he cried, merrily, "not a thing—it's a baby for my wife."

"A baby for your wife?" they all shouted with boisterous glee. "A baby for your wife. Hurrah for Father Potts's baby!" But none of them could believe that Father Potts really had a baby in the queer-looking bundle he was carrying.

"Can't we please see your baby?" asked a little girl, shyly.

"Why, bless your heart—bless my heart—bless everybody's heart!—come right along and have a look—all of you come and have a look. My soul! come and have a look, all of you." And they all scampered along and hurrahed for Father Potts and his baby, and for Mother Potts and her baby; and every fresh recruit that joined the merry rabble hurrahed as loud and became as wild as any of them. Tradesmen left their shops and customers to see what under the sun the matter was, and customers rushed to the doors that they, too, might see the goings on; and all the quiet village knew good Father Potts had found a baby on the granite steps of old St. John's, and all the quiet village went wild with Father Potts.

By the time he had reached the door of his cosy cottage the infant had awakened and began crying, which made the children shout the louder, for beyond a doubt Father Potts had a real live baby; and Mrs. Potts, hearing such an uncommon racket, hastened to the door to discover its cause.

"Oh, my beloved!" cried Ezra. "My wife and happiness! I've such a present for you—O-oh such a present!" and as the score of children came trooping in, Mrs. Potts thought her husband and half the village had lost their heads, and she was so astonished at such strange proceedings that for a minute she could not have uttered a word to save herself.

"What have you got, Ezra?" she cried, when she could find her tongue.

"A baby, a baby, a live baby!" shouted the little rabble.

"What baby—whose baby?" she asked, looking first at one and then at another of the group, and scarce believing her own ears.

"Ours!" shouted Ezra. "To Ezra Potts, sexton, and Dorothy, his beloved wife, a daughter." And he laughed, and the children laughed, and Mrs. Potts laughed in spite of herself, and undoing the bundle she took out the nicest, sweetest little baby anybody ever did see, which made the children laugh and clap their hands and think that Father Potts had found the most wonderful child in the world.

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Potts, "what a—why, what a dear little creature! Whose can it be, Ezra?"

"Ours!" answered Ezra, solemnly.

"Yours!" cried the children, who had gathered close around it, as children always gather around when there is anything to be seen.

"How, Ezra? Tell me something—anything that will relieve me, for the suspense is really awful."

He told the children it was best they should go away and come again on the morrow, when they could see the babe as much as they liked; so they scampered happily away, hurrahing for the new-found baby and the Pottses. And then Father Potts related to his anxious wife how he had discovered the child, and now he was very sure it was a Christmas present sent them from the Lord. Mrs. Potts was as joyous as her exuberant husband, and she laughed and chatted away to the little mite of humanity as gayly as a young mother would have done. And then they discovered, tied around its neck with a piece of ribbon, and hidden in its snowy bosom, a rumpled note, stained with tears, maybe, which Ezra, after putting on his glasses, read as follows:

"If you only knew how miserable, how wretched, I am, instead of showering curses upon me you would have pity for me—such pity as you never had before. If you only knew how hard—oh, how hard! it is for me to part with my darling babe, so much dearer to me than life ever was, then I know you would pity me, you would love my poor innocent babe as fondly as you would your own. Oh! I pray you for my sake, I pray you for Christ's sake, to take my little helpless child. I beseech you with all my broken heart, I beseech you with these scalding tears to keep my babe, to watch and tend and care for it just as you would your own, just as you did the little life that blessed you once, that made you happy once, long ago."

"Ezra, what is it she says about our little babe? Read that part over again."

"I beseech you with all my broken heart, I beseech you with these scalding tears to keep my babe, to watch and tend and care for it just as you would your own, just as you did the little life that blessed you once, that made you so happy once, long ago."

"Just as you did the little life that blessed you once, that made you so happy once, long ago," repeated Mrs. Potts, bending low to hide the falling tears. "Now go on, Ezra, and finish."

"There are others richer in purse than you with whom I might have left my child; but your great richness of heart, your tender sympathies, your love of God and man are riches I prize for my babe above the wicked, fascinating wealth of the world, which is so alluring, but oh! so unsatisfying. Oh, God! if my wretched life had been as spotless as yours; if the bleak winds of temptation had been as gentle to me as they have been to you; if Christ had tended me with that unfaltering care He tends the timid sparrow, my babe might be calmly sleeping now on this breast, so torn and tortured with ceaseless agony. Again I beseech you to keep my innocent darling, to care for it as you would, as you did your own; and though its parents may have sunk low down in the cruel eyes of this cold, wintry world, remember how He, born in a Bethlehem manger, gave you that blessed hope of redemption which makes your life so bright and glorious—and this little babe may grow to bless and comfort you when your years are many and your feet are trembling near the grave. Watch over her, I beseech you; guide her aright, I beseech you, and may Christ bless you; may Christ bless my baby as He has not blessed its

"SUFFERING MOTHER."

It was a very fortunate thing for Ezra Potts and wife that, just as he had finished reading, the babe began to worry and require the combined attention of the two joyful Pottses, for it would have been a most difficult matter for either of them to speak because of the tears that filled their eyes and the great lump that had risen in their throats. In a few minutes, however, sweet-looking Mrs. Potts, in her neat gray dress, frilled cap, and spectacles, and whose disposition, by the way, was every bit as amiable as her looks, said very slowly:

"I have thought, Ezra, ever since you came in, that maybe—maybe it was her child—our Kitty's baby."

"Pshaw!" cried Ezra, striking his foot very hard upon the floor and looking as savagely at his beloved wife Dorothy as it was possible for him to do. "Never talk such nonsense again. I wouldn't stand it; no, indeed, I wouldn't!"

"Perhaps I was wrong in speaking my mind, Ezra, but, somehow, I couldn't help it; and, Ezra, don't you think the baby looks a little—just a little—as she did when she was small?"

"Nonsense again!" cried the sexton, hitting the floor such a second rap with his foot that it fairly frightened the little creature in his wife's lap half out of all its little senses. "If you talk any more such infernal stuff I'll sling that bundle plumb into the street—mind you, plumb into the street."

"Why, Ezra!" cried his wife, "you know you wouldn't, would he, baby?" And she kissed it a half dozen times, and fondled it, and made a sight over it, and then held it up for Ezra to kiss, which the old fellow did.

"Well, Dorothy, you must make up your mind."

"My mind, Ezra?" she cried. "Make up mind about what?"

"About keeping it," he answered, pointing at the baby, with a very grave face, though he didn't feel grave—not a bit, good, clever old soul.

"Lord bless us!" cried Dorothy. "It was all made up just the minute you came in, for the Lord knew well enough where this little thing ought to come—of course He did."

"Oh, my Lord!" cried Ezra. "Oh, my soul, what a woman! My soul, what a wife and what a ha-bee! Yes, to Ezra Potts, sexton, and Dorothy, his wife—a daughter—praise the Lord, a daughter." And Ezra laughed and shook himself, and laughed and shook the cottage walls, and set Mrs. Potts to laughing; which, in spite of all they could do, set the tears a-rolling down their cheeks.

They must have been the happiest, jolliest folks in Connyville that night—or anywhere else, in fact. But by and by Mrs. Potts put the baby away to bed and made Ezra go and sleep in the company chamber, lest he would forget himself and crush the little creature. And, Mrs. Potts's word for it, he came to visit the bed no less than four times in the night to make himself sure the child had not been surreptitiously spirited away while his good wife slept.

When the morning came—goodness, what a morning that is to be remembered!—it was such a time as was never known before or since in that house. In the first place, the good old parish minister came clattering in before they had eaten breakfast and begged they would excuse his haste and the absence of his neckerchief, but he must see that child. Sakes alive! they'd excuse anything of him that morning, and he must needs stay and have some breakfast and offer thanks afterward, for Ezra said that on that occasion thanks must be offered by one more thorough in the business than himself; he wanted it done up brown, he said—the curious fellow.

Then came the children trooping back again, bringing little presents and things; and soon afterward came all sorts of older people bringing larger presents and other things; and they all made so much of the babe and declared it was the most wonderful little creature anybody ever did see in that part of the world, or anywhere else. And the good minister over in the corner said it all reminded him of that beautiful scene in the stable of Bethlehem, when the wise men came and gave their gifts to our new-born Christ. He wanted to know, too, if all of them could teach by example the great lesson of forgiveness He taught; if all could forgive their repentant debtors as He forgives us our debts. And Ezra, laying his hand on the good minister's, said, with streaming eyes, "Praise the Lord, yes!"

But such presents! Rattleboxes, whistles, all sorts of dolls, wooden horses and candy dogs, and a red soldier with a blue gun, and a real gem of a cradle from old Isaac's, the cabinet-maker, and 'Squire Phelps gave it a hundred dollars in sterling silver. Everybody was so happy, too. If each resident of Connyville had had just such a baby given them they wouldn't have been one bit happier. No, indeed!

After all had looked at the baby, and taken it in their arms and kissed and talked to it to their heart's content—the baby, by the way, being in the best of humor and seeming to enjoy it all—it was taken up to old St. John's Church to be christened. That church had never known such a festival like that before. The village girls had brought all the flowers the town afforded, and fairly filled the chancel full; the evergreens were so profuse it seemed as if one had somehow strayed into a fairy's grove; and the bells chimed their merriest, and the organ pealed its loudest, and the choir sang their sweetest, and it was surely a joyful Christmas morning for all the happy village folk.

What do you think they named that little girl? Christmas! Funny, wasn't it? though ever afterward she was known as Crissy.

When the service was fairly over with the good parish minister took Ezra off one side and asked of him—he wanted to make sure of it—if his heart was really full of unfeigned forgiveness for all who had done evil against him, and if he had peace and good-will in his heart for everybody, which brought the tears to Ezra's eyes and made his voice tremble as he cried, "Yes, yes, Lord helping me!"

"Can you forgive even your wayward Kitty?" the minister asked, the tears springing to his eyes and his voice trembling, too.

Ezra broke right down at this and sobbed as though the flood-gates of his heart were broken, as though he was sobbing for joy instead of anguish. If he would forgive the wayward, repentant girl and stretch out his arms and bid her come home again, how much more Christ-like would be the greatness of his heart, how much happier would be his Christmas-day!

"Everything," Ezra murmured, in a broken voice; "I can forgive everything."

"Amen!" cried the minister. "What a merry Christmas this is going to be!" And he had to wipe his eyes very hard again to keep the tears from rolling down his cheeks.

And then the minister led Father Potts, and good Mother Potts with little Crissy, into the vestry where—yes, their daughter Kitty is in there, and they must be left alone a little while.

Poor repentant, wayward child! she has come to be taken back into the fold again. The rugged mountain paths of life are very bleak and dreary, and home is warm and bright and loving, and she wandered back again to be sheltered, and loved, and forgiven.

In a little while they all came out of the vestry, and, getting into 'Squire Phelps's great, comfortable sleigh that was waiting for them at the door, they went straight up to his large, well-furnished house and had the greatest jollification that was ever heard of in that town. And such a Christmas dinner! Well, you may be sure it was a big one, for when the company was all mustered Mrs. Phelps must needs send over to neighbor Brown's and borrow just a dozen plates to make up the sixty that were needed to set the table with.

Ephraim Bates! Oh, yes, he was there, clear, honest fellow! He had forgiven Kitty long ago, and was biding his time with patience when she would come home again—he knew she would ere long, and he could wait—and when their love would be made new and more enduring, for the great crucible through which it had passed had cleansed and purified it.

But Ezra Potts was happiest of them all. Ah, if on each Christmas morning men would forgive all their repentant debtors as He forgives us our debts, how much brighter, merrier the day would be, not only to him who is forgiven, but also to him who forgives! Ezra Potts will tell you that, and Ezra Potts knows.

It was told afterward how the good parish minister—bless his dear old heart!—brought all this happiness about; how he brought Kitty and her babe up from the great city by the sea; how he had her bundle the little creature up and lay it on the granite steps of old St. John's, that Ezra might find it there when he had chimed the merry bells of Yule—Ezra did not know that she had a babe, though the old fellow knew the minute he put his eyes on it that it was Kitty's, the likeness was so perfect—for the parish minister—and bless his heart again!—had strong faith the little child would lead them back, and in very pleasant places, too.—*Buffalo Express.*

A LITTLE daughter of a man in Portland, Me., while combing her hair before a mirror, the other day, brushed a gas-jet with her hand. In an instant the celluloid comb was in flames, and the child's hand and cheek were severely burned. The comb was consumed as quickly as a piece of paper would have been.

THE annual crop of flax-seed in this country is estimated at 3,000,000 bushels.

## More Help on the Farm.

THE fact that thousands of farmers are troubled at the end of the season to find money to pay hired help is not conclusive proof that they have hired too much. One fact in farming is never conclusive of anything. It needs to be compared with many others before we can begin to decide what it means. In the case of farmers who can not provide money to pay hired help, the fact may, and in many cases does, mean that they have hired too little. It used to be the rule that the successful farmer must do most of the work on his farm, either directly himself or by the unpaid help of his sons. Benjamin Franklin put this idea very tersely in the well-known couplet of poor Richard,

"He who by the plow would thrive,
Himself must either hold or drive."

The saying is still true, with this addition: No farmer ever achieves great success by his own labor alone. The ability to make profitable use of the labor of others is quite as important for a farmer as for the manager of any other kind of business.

The farm is really a workshop. Its gains are less than those of other manufacturing industries, because it is exposed to fewer risks of loss. The farm requires more careful management; but the principles necessary for success are the same as in other vocations. By those principles production must be pushed just so long as it can be done at a profit. The farmers who usually make the most money are market gardeners, and one reason is that they employ most labor. There is little profit in the kind of farming that needs little labor. Usually the man who goes at farming with the intention of doing nothing except what his own hands can accomplish will not make more than a bare living, and the larger the farm the worse position he will be in. Profit does not come from the number of acres; but from capital and labor applied to them. In most cases the labor of the owner of land is vastly more important in directing the labor of others than for what he himself can do. If a farmer finds this not to be the case, it is pretty good evidence that he has mistaken his calling.

There are on every farm many odd jobs left undone from year to year for lack of money or lack of help, the doing of which would give more profit than all the ordinary farm work done in a year. Sometimes it will be a piece of underdraining, sometimes the improvement of waste ground covered by bushes or weeds. The ordinary rule among good farmers is that underdraining will pay for itself in three crops—often two. Yet men who call themselves farmers neglect or decline investments that will pay thirty-three to fifty per cent., because they are afraid to hire the necessary labor. Or if they do the work, they do it gradually, extending it over a series of years, and suffering from poor crops when they should be rejoicing in good ones. No good business man would decline a safe investment paying thirty-three per cent. yearly profit; and a farmer who does this is clearly not a good business man.

It requires a good deal of executive ability to manage a large farm, and direct a large force of laborers; and it is the lack of this which causes so much disappointment in farming. The great secret of success is to be always even with or ahead of work, and never to leave work undone that will pay a profit for doing. This requires capital as well as labor, and lack of capital is the most common cause of failure. Most farmers are more or less in debt, and this prevents them from hiring needed help, and from doing many things that it would pay them well to do. The farmers who have money succeed in making more. Those who are in debt lose more than the interest they have to pay, because unable to command ready capital or to do the things which most conduce to profitable farming.—*Wm. J. Fowler, in Examiner and Chronicle.*

## Fresh Air in the Bed-Room.

How much air can be safely admitted into a sleeping or living-room is a common question. Rather, it should be considered, how rapidly air can be admitted, without injury or risk, and at how low a temperature. We can not have too much fresh air, so long as we are warm enough, and are not exposed to draughts. What is a draught? It is a swift current of air, at a temperature lower than the body, which robs either the whole body, or an exposed part, of its heat, so rapidly as to disturb the equilibrium of our circulation and give us cold. Young and healthy persons can habituate themselves to sleeping in even a strong draught, as from an open window, if they cover themselves, in cold weather, with an abundance of bedclothes. But those who have been long accustomed to being sheltered from the outer air by sleeping in warmed and nearly or quite shut-up rooms, are too susceptible to cold to bear a direct draught of cold air. Persons over seventy years of age, moreover, with lower vitality than in their youth, will not bear a low temperature, even in the air they breathe. Like hot-house plants, they may be killed by a winter night's chill and must be protected by warmth at all times. As a rule we may say that, except for the most robust, the air which enters at night into a sleeping chamber should, in cold weather, be admitted gradually only by cracks or moderate openings; or should have its force broken by some interposed obstacle, as a curtain, etc., to avert its blowing immediately upon a sleeper in his bed. The ancient fashion, however, of of having bed-curtains, which exclude almost all the air, has rightly become almost obsolete. No wonder that people dream horrid dreams, and wake in the morning wearied rather than refreshed, when they sleep in rooms sealed up tightly on every side; breathing over and over again their own breaths, which grow more poisonous with every hour of the night.—*American Health Primer.*

## Watch Out for Dry Murrain.

THE danger to which cattle are subject when first taken from green feed and turned into a field of cornstalks dying from dry murrain should not be lost sight of, as the present severe weather is the most favorable possible to produce death from such cause. The sudden change from moderate autumn to cold winter weather, and a hasty filling of the stomach with dry husks when the digestive organs have only been accustomed to deal with green food, and the dread which cattle have of drinking, until they become accustomed to it, ice-cold water in sufficient quantity to thoroughly moisten the mass, is the cause of an occasional victim of this severe and generally fatal ailment.

All danger of this sort may be avoided by allowing the cattle the run of the corn-field but part of the day at a time, giving them as much salt as they will take in order to provoke thirst, and free access to plenty of water, to be kept up until they are accustomed to the surroundings.—*Burlington Hawkeye.*

## Our Young Folks.

### MY TREE.

Which [illegible]
Answer [illegible]
Is it the [illegible] way?
Is it the [illegible]
That for [illegible]
The gre[illegible]
Or the [illegible] and
has [illegible]

Is it the [illegible]
With its [illegible] and?
Ah, no! The tree that I love best,
It holds and blossoms not with the rest,
No summer sun on its fruit has smiled,
But ice and snow are around it piled;
But still it will bloom and bear fruit for me,
My winter bloomer! my Christmas-tree!

Its blossoms are candles, all shining gay,
And it bears its fruit in the queerest way!
All tied by ribbons to everything,
Big and little, and little and big,
Dolls and trumpets, and balls and bats,
Horses and monkeys, and dogs and cats,
Drums and whistles, and guns and whips,
Crying babies and flying ships;
Every conceivable kind of box,
With all conceivable kinds of locks;
Tigers and elephants swinging in air,
Singular fruit for a tree to bear!
But so it blooms and bears fruit for me,
My winter bloomer! my Christmas-tree!

Elm and linden may both be fair,
But they have no elephants swinging in air;
Ash and maple may gracefully grow,
But they have no fifes nor whistles to blow:
The oak may be king of the forest wide,
But he has no parcels with ribbons tied,
No guns, no rifles, no books, no boats,
No pigs, no lions, no cows, no goats,
No dolls, no cradles, no skates, no tops,
Nor oranges, candy, or lollipops;
Nothing that's pretty, and nothing that's good,
But leaves and acorns, and bark and wood.
So the tree of all others that's best to me
Is my winter bloomer! my Christmas-tree!

—*Laura E. Richards, in Youth's Companion.*

## TONI'S CHRISTMAS.

"NOW, TEDDIE, be a good boy, there's a darling, and, little Clover, don't tease Daisy. Please let mamma go away to church and know that you are all sweet and lovely and clean as new little pennies to-night."

Splash went one little body into the bath-tub, and splash went another, and again a third; and then, like so many roses after a shower, out they came dripping, and laughing and screaming with glee. The little mother was kept busy enough, for it was Christmas-eve, and the carols and anthems were to be rehearsed for the last time, and Mrs. Morton's clear soprano voice could not be spared. Indeed, her voice was all that kept Teddie and Clover and Daisy in their neat little box of a house, for their father, a brave fireman, had been killed more than two years before at a fearful fire, and since then their mother had striven hard to maintain her little family by sewing and singing, and doing what ever work her slender hands could accomplish which would bring in food and clothing for her children.

"Be good, Teddie," repeated Daisy, after her mother, as she shook out her little wet curls at him, and Clover solemnly raised his finger at his bigger brother, with the warning:

"Remember Santa Claus comes to-night."

"Yes, and the stockings must be hung up," said Ted, who forthwith proceeded to attend to that important duty.

"There! how do they look?—one brown, that's mine; one blue, that's Clover's; and one red, that's Daisy's." They were pinned fast to the fender with many pins and much care.

"But, mamma," said Clover, "the stove's in the way. Santa Claus can't get down with that big black thing stopping the chimney."

"Oh, the fire will go out by and by, and then he may creep through the stove-pipe and out of the door."

"He'll be awful dirty, then," said Daisy.

"Well, 'he was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot, and his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot,' so that is to be expected. But really, dear children, you must jump into your beds, and let me tuck you up; it is time for me to go."

Very quickly the rosy little faces were nestling in the pillows, and Mrs. Morton, after kissing them, put out the lamp and left them to their slumbers. Hastily putting on her cloak and bonnet, she paused at the door of her sitting room to see if the fire was safe. The room was dark but for the gleaming stove, the chairs and table were all in order, and in one corner, under a covering of paper, was the little tree she had decked in odd moments to delight the eyes of her children. She could not afford wax candles, so the morning was to bring the tree as well as the other gifts. Sure that all was in readiness, she tripped down the stairs, locked her door and sped over the snow to the church, the two tall towers of which stood out against the starry sky.

As she entered the church, her mind full of her duties and her heart tender with thoughts of her children, she thought she saw a dusky little object crouching in the angle made by the towers; but she was already late, and had no time to linger. Up she went to the choir, which was full of light, but the body of the church was dark. Without any words, she took up her sheet of music and began to sing. Never had the carols and anthems seemed so sweet to her, and her voice rose clear and pure as a bird's. The organist paused to listen, and her companions turned satisfied glances upon her; but she went on unconsciously, as a bird does until the burden of its theme is finished, and its exultant strains are lost in silence. They went over the whole Church service, the glorious *Te Deum*, the *