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The Millheim Journal.

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The Week Before Christmas.

'Tis the week before Christmas,
And all in the house
Are plotting and planning
As sly as a mouse.

Strange bundles are smuggled
Inside, unaware,
And hidden away with
The greatest of care.

The children with secrets
They're burning to tell,
And in an excitement
That nothing can quell,

Are hourly asking
How many more days
Before it is Christmas,
With cheeks all ablaze.

The old folks, as eager,
The fever have caught,
And crowd in the places
Where presents are bought.

To them Merry Christmas
Is sweeter we know,
Than when their own stockings
Were filled long ago.

'Way up from the kitchen
Spiced odors arise
Of genuine, home-made,
Delicious mince-pies,

Just stuffed full of raisins
As big and as round
As little Jack Horner
So happily found.

The long winter nights
All much longer appear,
For who can sleep soundly
With Christmas so near.

And now, for the stockings!
No tot's tiny hose
Can hold half of the treasures
Kriss Kringle bestows;

So mamma's great big ones
Are got with delight,
All ready to hang up
On Santa Claus' night.

Now, Christmas is near! and
St. Nick in his sleigh,
Behind his swift reindeers,
Is flying this way.

He's now on the snow-clouds,
He'll be at your gate;
Prepare for his coming—
There's no time to wait.

TED'S CHRISTMAS.

A Good Story For Some Parents to Read.

"THEY'RE going to have a Christmas tree, an' nuts an' candy, and *ice cream!*" and little Nan's eyes stuck out with the delights of imagination.

"My! Won't that be jolly?" Ted was the next speaker, and in the excitement of the moment he forgot himself so far as to emit a small, faint whistle.

"Stop that noise over there," said a stern voice, the owner of which looked out from behind the folds of the evening paper with a frown. Joseph Rexford was homely enough, taken at his best, but with an ugly frown added, he was terrific, though probably not aware of it, for people seldom get before a glass to make up ugly faces.

"They were only talking a little about Christmas," said Mrs. Rexford, timidly; the wives of such men are invariably timid, or else, in very bravado of despair, intolerable scolds, and Mrs. Rexford could never be that.

She would have been the sunniest and sweetest of little women, had she not been clapped under a bushel by Joseph Rexford at a very early stage in their married life, and, as might be supposed she was pretty nearly extinguished by this time.

"Christmas!" he growled contemptuously. "All nonsense and folly, they'd better be tendin' to their rethmetic or a shellin' them seeds. I had to work evenin's when I was their age, an' had'nt no time to be hatchin' up foolery."

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," gently remonstrated the wife. "They're not too old to enjoy a little recreation, Joseph, and I wish we could give them a little Christmas treat." She wondered at her own boldness, for she did not often venture within reach of the lion's claws, or, in other words, her husband's displeasure.

He looked at her in astonishment; he supposed he had her subdued, and the idea that she would propose anything that he had just put his foot on as "foolery," shocked him.

"Mrs. Rexford," and his voice was a bit of condensed harshness, "I thought you knew my mind on sech triflin' years ago, and I want you to understand once and for all, I won't have it," and the big foot came down on the uncarpeted floor with a snap. "And you young ones, stop your snivelin' over there, or I'll give you something to snivel about," and the mighty potentate glared over in the corner where little Nan was struggling with a sob of mingled terror and disappointment, for at her mother's kind words it seemed so easy to have just a little bit of Christmas, at least.

"Darn him" whispered Ted, clinching his fists, and shaking them at the household monarch, who had again wrapped himself in his newspaper. "I'll run away, see if I don't, an' I'll have a Christmas tree every day when I get big."

His jacket would have needed no further dusting for months to come, if the parent could have seen the belligerent action, but, fortunately, the paper was not transparent, and Mr. Rexford was deep in an article on the Irish question.

He looked up presently; he had the complacent feelings of the bulldog, who comes up uppermost in the fight, and could look upon his vanquished subjects with amiable condescension. "I guess those Britishers 'll find they can't always abuse them poor Irishers," he said. "They'll find out sooner or later, that it don't pay to aller play the tyrant."

Mrs. Rexford received the information with a proper degree of humility, and only a subdued "hm-m-m," escaped her lips, but she thought to herself that it would not be necessary to cross the ocean to find a tyrant, if one were urgently needed and wondered rebelliously if it was always going to pay him to assume the character he so deprecated to his British neighbors.

Bedtime came, and Ted and Nan, with little Jane, crept off toward their beds. No cheerful, "good-night' papa," with the kiss which sweetens slumber, and ushers the children into a happy dreamland. Mr. Rexford's soul would have recoiled at such sentimental doings, children being in his eyes neccessary evils, from which to extract the greatest amount of work with the least amount of love and money.

The mother rose, lamp in hand, and followed them softly; she helped them undress with soft, gentle touches, and then drew them to her side for their evening prayer. Little Nan, ten years of age, was just at the point of tears, and when she came to the phrase in her simple prayer: "God bless papa and mama," her voice broke into a muffled sob. It was so hard to pray for the father, who apparantly loved them so little.

"Hush, darling," said Mrs. Rexford, almost in tears herself, as she drew the quivering little form to her heart; perhaps mama will find a way yet."

Ted was thirteen, and in his rebellious feelings ommitted the customary phrase from his prayer entirely. "The mean old thing," he muttered angrily. "I'd like to lick him."

"Hush, dears," she said, gently, "father doesn't mean to be unkind.'

"What does he do it for, then?" demanded the boy, and the mother's lips were shut, for she had no adequate reply for such a pertinent question.

All this was done in whispers, and a familiar voice broke in upon the conversation at this juncture: "Going to stay in there all night Jane?" And hastily tucking them into their beds, with loving kisses on the little grieved lips, she left them hurriedly to the gentle comforter, sleep, which seldom refuses to come to healthy childhood.

This was two weeks before Christmas and a week went by, and Mrs. Rexford saw no possible way to fulfill the hope she had cherished of making it a pleasant day for the children. She could get up a good dinner. Mr. Rexford was fond of a good dinners himself, but with his stern face at the table, the children would be obliged to sit like dummies, and eat in selpulchral silence for the father was a firm believer in the doctrine that 'children should be seen, not heard," and allowed no frivolous chattering at meal-time.

She had been putting away surreptitious balls of butter and dozens of eggs, in the hope of being able to smuggle a few little trifles quietly into their stockings, but her heart was heavy with a sense of her inability to make the holiday such a one as she would like.

"Jane," said Mr. Rexford, coming in from the village with an envelope in his hand, "I don't know what ever you'll do, but I'll have to leave ye for a while.

"What is it, Mr. Rexford?" she asked in surprise; it was very seldom either duty or pleasure took him from home.

"Why John's dead, an' they telegraphed me to come and 'tend the funeral, an' I s'pose it's my dooty to go."

"Of course it is, Joseph," replied the wife, "and I'll get along all right. Billy Grant will come over and do the chores."

John was Mr. Rexford's brother, another branch of the Rexford family tree, which, though not as gnarled and knotty as Joseph himself, still bore enough resemblance to prove their relationship beyond a doubt.

There has been as much of a repressed and undemonstrative affection between them as could be expected, and this combined with a sense of duty procured his absence from home at this opportune moment for the children.

Such an event had only occurred once or twice in their life time before; oases in the dreary desert of their experience, which were looked back with delight.

"How long shall you be gone, Mr. Rexford?" asked the wife. She could not mourn for the brother-in-law whom she had never seen but once, and whose attitude then had not been such as to inspire affection, and a faint hope was springing up in her heart that for once the children could have a holiday worthy of the name.

"Ten days anyhow, mebbe two weeks," he answered. "The widder'll expect me to settle up his affairs more or less."

Ted looked at Nan with a grimance of unutterable delight; if the father had seen it, it is doubtful whether duty even could have urged him from home, certainly not without administering a spanking all around.

"Get my things ready as soon as you can," he resumed, "for I want to catch the three o'clock train, sure, and you, Ted, get the hoss harnessed so'st to take me to the depot."

"Yess'r," replied Ted; no danger but that Ted would do his share, and be on time too.

Nan was on hand, like a Jack-in-the-box, to spring at every call, and bring the soap and the towel, the blacking-brush and whisk broom, for Joseph Rexford loved to be waited on, and his toilet for a journey long or short, was the signal for a series of gymnastics participated in by the whole family.

Half-past two came, and Doll was at the door, and Ted, with a very unbecoming shade of happiness on his countenance, held the reins.

"You'll want some money, I s'pose?" said Mr. Rexford, graciously, for him, as he drew on his overcoat. "There's five dollars," and he passed the precious morsel out from a roll of greenbacks, gingerly; he was not a poor man by any means, and could have given her twenty-five just as easily.

"Yes, Joseph," she replied meekly, as she tucked away the bill; she did not intend he should ever see it again, or an exhaustive report of the uses made of it, either.

"Wall, good-bye, Jane," (he drew on his gloves) "don't let the young ones run over you while I'm gone."

"No, Joseph," she replied demurely, with an inward smile.

He went out; there was no silly demonstration of affection at parting. A kiss from those stern lips would have been an astonishment that the family would not have recovered from in a week, and, getting into the waiting sleigh, Old Doll moved away.

Nan turned a somersault; she was a fine, loving child, and would have been as happy as a lark, under favorable circumstances

"Oh, goody, goody, goody!" she exclaimed, in a glad soliloquy.

"Hush, Nannie," said the mother reprovingly, though in her secret heart she could not blame the child for the ebullition.

Ted returned in due time, and the departure was an assured thing, and the boy already held up his head with an accession of self-respect, as he took his place as man of the house. One week was only a short time to plan in, but judicious effort can accomplish much in even a week's time, and Mrs. Rexford's plans were chiefly in the line of a merry-making, such a one as they had never been allowed to have.

Her first move was a letter to a sister living twenty miles away, with an invitation to spend Christmas at her home.

A visit from Aunt Nan was a rare treat to the children at any time, one which they rarely enjoyed, however, for Aunt Nan and Joseph Rexford were not congenial spirits, she not being able to bottle up her indignant wrath when he exercised his peculiar gift of government in her presence; he not relishing her "meddlin'," as he designated her rather free use of her tongue on occasions, and so she wisely concluded that it was best to see as little of the domestic economy as possible, and kept away, to Mrs. Rexford's mingled grief and relief.

Teddy's heart, in the meantime, was filled with a great longing; he wanted to make the patient little mother, whom he loved with a tender, chivalrous devotion, a Christmas present.

In the thirteen years of his life he had no remembrance of her receiving a Christmas gift, and he was in a brown study the greater part of his time, planning and contriving some way to surprise her with a present, but as yet no way had opened.

"Harness Doll, Teddy, and we'll go to the village to-day," said the mother one morning. Teddy smiled knowingly as he hurried away to obey her request, and in a short time they were on their way. "Now you mustn't follow me around," she said with a smile, as they neared the village; Ted answered her with a knowing, yet longing look. He wanted to ask her for a bit of spending money for himself, yet fearing she would suspect, and knowing that she had little with which to carry out her own plans, he wisely forebode.

"I am going to the station to meet the ten o'clock train, Teddy," she said, as he was hitching Doll "and you may meet me there with the sleigh."

"Father isn't coming home, ishe?" said Ted, in consternation.

"No, dear," replied the mother, laughing at his alarm, "but I think there will be somebody there, and she darted into a dry-goods store, without explaining the mystery.

Ted went into another store to get warm and then amused himself wandering up and down the street, looking into the shop windows which were gay with Christmas goods, and think what he would buy if he had the means.

He spent fully twenty five dollars in this imaginary way, when he observed a stranger come out from one of the stores, and walk away briskly.

He had a pleasant face, and stepped off with the assured air of one who is accustomed to having the good things of this life.

It was a warm sunny day, and his heavy overcoat was thrown jauntly open, and, as he passed up the street he drew his handkerchief from an inside pocket, and blew his nose with a sonorous blast.

Ted was watching all this with interest, for the man's pleasant face had pleased his childish fancy, and as the handkerchief came out the boy saw another object fly out also and lodge in the dirty snow of the gutter, while the gentleman walked quickly on, quite unaware of his loss.

Ted's first thought was that it was only a piece of paper, and it did not occur to him to investigate the matter, but a second thought sent him flying to the spot, where, after some little search, he found a small package wrapped in white paper and decorated with an express label; there was evidently a small box within, and Ted ran as fast as his legs would carry him to restore it to the owner.

That jaunty gentleman was just getting into a handsome sleigh as Ted turned the corner, and away he went.

"Mister, mister," screamed Ted at the top of his voice, which the bells drowned, and then began a race—Ted running for dear life, the horses trotting along with no idea that they were pursued.

The boy's legs did him good service, however, and at last he succeeded in attracting the attention of the driver. "What's this my lad?" he ssid kindly. "Want a ride?"

"N-n-no," panted Teddy, all out of breath "but you lost this sir, and I picked it up." and he held up the package.

"Well, well, did I ever," said the gentleman, hastily feeling in his pocket. "What a careless trick. And so you've pretty near run your legs off to catch me, eh!"

"I guess they're all whole yet, sir," replied Ted, with a smile, and yet puffing with the race.

He handed over the box, while the stranger took out a fat pocket book. "Christmas is coming, my boy, and may be you'll like an extra bit of surprise money," he said, good-naturedly, as he handed out a five dollar bill to the astonished child.

"Oh, sir, that's too much," and Ted offered it back, quite overwhelmed by such munificence.

"Well, I don't know about that," said the gentleman, "that box contains a watch worth two hundred dollars, by the time I had advertised it and paid a reward, it would have cost me double the amount besides the chances of my finding it again; so on the whole, I think I am rewarding you very moderately," and he buttoned his overcoat over box and pocket-book resolutely, and prepared to drive on.

A whole arena of Christmas presents danced through Ted's happy brain, as he thanked the generous gestleman for his gift, and they parted with mutual good feelings.

"If I had such a father as that," soliloquized the child, "what a good boy I'd be."

"If I had an honest, bright-faced boy like that," said the gentleman, "what a happy father I'd be."

Ted had never before kept a secret from his mother, and it was the hardest work to keep from telling his adventure, but secrets were flying in the air apparently and he held on to his with true Christmas tenacity.

He had suspected by this time who was coming on the train, and he was on time at the station with Doll; he also wisely concluded to wait a bit for her advice and assistance before spending his wealth.

Aunt Nan stepped off the train when it came in, looking rosier and jollier than ever, Ted thought, as she hugged him up close to her warm furs, and she had the fattest satchel and the heaviest basket he had ever lifted.

There was a perfect jubilee of welcome when the party reached home, and Aunt Nan took her namesake and little Jane into her warm embrace, to their complete surprise, for they had never dreamed of such a happy arrival. "The little dears," said Aunt Nan, as she and Mrs. Rexford made several mysterious trips to the barn returning with contraband bundles under their aprons, "they shall have one Christmas, if they never do another."

Such a merry-making the Rexford house had never witnessed before. Billy Grant had good-naturedly consented to go to the woods and cut a small evergreen, which was conveyed to the parlor secretly, and if it was not as brilliantly lighted and trimmed as it might have been, it was a wonderful tree, nevertheless hung with popcorn, apples and oranges and gifts, until the children were nearly wild with delight when they saw it.

A long pail, full of some mysterious compound, had been sitting in a tub in the woodshed carelessly covered over with a piece of carpet, and this was found to contain ice-cream, and after all the other things had been distributed, it came in, piled up in delicious masses of frozen sweetness, on Mrs. Rexford's best china saucers, together with the angels' food which Aunt Nan had baked that day.

Mrs. Rexford actually cried with surprised delight when Ted gave her a lovely plush work-box, the first gift he had ever been able to make her, and told his story of the kind gentleman and his gold watch. Poor thing! She had enjoyed little of merriment or gift-making since her marriage, and she enjoyed this, as only a kindly, cheerful heart, cramped into space far too small for it, can enjoy liberty and love freely expressed.

"Mother," said Ted, when at a late hour, Mrs. Rexford gathered her little flock together for their evening prayers, "it always seemed when I said 'Our Heavenly Father,' as if He was stern and cross just like father, but I think He must be good or He wouldn't a let us had such a lovely Christmas."

"Teddy, poor child," said Aunt Nan, and her kindly bright eyes were full of tears, "whatever comes dear boy, don't forget that whatever your earthly father may be your Heavenly Father is all tenderness and love toward you."

Before Mr. Rexford's return, all traces of the festivities were removed; he seemed quite softened by the scenes through which he had passed, and if he noticed any superfluous articles about the house and suspected their scource, he said nothing, and the children never forgot their one "Merry Christmas." MRS. F. M. HOWARD.

Bill Nye's Useful Suggestions.

I take the liberty once more of replying to a few queries through your valuable columns, says Bill Nye, in the New York *Evening World*.

Literateur, Vt.—No; skimmygillions is not a proper word to use at the table. I do not know what it means, but it will be better to use some other word in the place of it. Many other words are equally resonant and opaque without giving offense.

Veritas.—Rub the gummy side of postage stamps on your hair a few times and it will prevent their sticking together in your pocket or purse. There is just oil enough in the hair to coat over the adhesive properties of the stamps and prevent their adhesion. A friend of mine who has hair tells me that this is the case.

Simmons, Philadelphia.—Yes if you are the sternographer of a prominent man, and act as his private secretary, you are perfectly correct in signing your employer's name, "per Simmons." It is not only etiquette, but it is euphonious.

Lalla Rookh, Tampa, Fla., writes to know what he "should do to become a fluent writer and correspondent?"

To become a fluent writer there is no better method, perhaps, than to hold the pen lightly between the thumb and forefinger, allowing it to rest on the first joint of the middle or large finger. Let the arm rest easily on the fleshy portion of the forearm, with the penholder pointing about due west. Sit erect, think a few thoughts, then clothe them in such language as you feel that in your circumstances you can afford. In clothing a thought, do not put so much expense upon one particular garment that the idea will have to go before the public in its shirt sleeves. In other words, make your clothing business harmonious and consistent.

'WITNESS,' said a lawyer, in the police court the other day, 'you speak of Mr. being well off. Is he worth $5,000?'

'No, sah.

'Two thousand?'

'No, sah; hain't worf $25.'

'Then how is he well off?'

'Got a wife who s'ports de hull fam'ly sah.'

MILE-STONES.

Events That Mark the Beginning of Epochs in the World's History-Christmas-Its Origin and Associations.

Old Father Time has got his mile-stones. The first one of which we have any account is the seventh day—the Sabbath, and that came down to us from Mount Sinai. The Jews had another one—the seventh year, a year of feast for the land, in which they were forbidden to plow or to hoe, to reap or to sow. And there was another, called the year of jubilee—the fifteenth year in which the slaves were set free and the lands were restored to those who had sold them. We hear now of leases for ninetynine years, but with the Jews all sales or leases expired the forty-nineth, or year of jubilee. There was great rejoicing when the time came for the children or the grandchildren to get back the old homestead of their ancestors.

But the most popular and important of all mile-stones is the anniversary of the birth of Christ. It is very common everywhere to celebrate birthdays. Americans make a big fuss over Washington's birthday because he is called the Father of His Country. Most every family makes a little fuss over the birthday of the parents or children. They don't toot horns or pop firecrackers, but they have an extra good dinner and fix up some little present as a pleasant surprise. The 4th of July was the birth of a nation and so the nation always celebarted that day. But Christmas belongs to all civilized countries. It is ablessed heritage and belongs to all alike—the rich and the poor, the bon and the free, the King and his subject.

Christians began to observe Christmas about fifteen hundred years ago. In course of time the young people rather lost sight of the sacredness of the day and made it a day of feasting and frolic. They sang songs because it was that the shepherds sang songs at Bethlehem. They made presents to one another because the wise men from the East brought presents to the young child and its mother.

The Roman Catholic church has observed this celebration for centuries and the church of England took them and so did the Protestants of Germany and other countries. In a great printing of the Nativity, by Raphael, there is seen a Shepherd at the door playing a bagpipe. The Tyrolese who live on the mountain slopes of Italy come down to the valleys on Christmas eve. They come caroling sweet songs and playing on musical instruments. There used to be many curious superstitions about Christmas. It is beleived that an ox and an ass that were near when the Saviour was born bent their knee in devotion, and so the people believed that all the domestic animals went to prayer on Christmas night. They believed that when the rooster crowed for midnight all the wizzards and witches and hobgoblins and evil spirits fled away from the habitation of man and hid in hollow trees and caves and deserted houses for twelve days.

Mr. Carlyle said that every nation should have a hero and should worship him—not as a God or in place of the true God, but the next thing to it. He says it cements the people together and makes them proud of their country and content with their goverment. This hero may be real or imaginary, but the people must believe that he fought for them or died for them or was the founder of their institutions or their religion. The ancient Norsemen had Odin and Thor for their heroes. The Persians had their genii and their fairies; the Hindoos their rakshar; the Greeks and Romans their wonderful gods and goddesses such as Jupiter and Luna and Hercules and Vulcan and Neptune. The more enlightened a people becomes, the more sublime are their superstitions. The uncivilized Indians are mystified, and can only "see God in clouds and hear him in the winds." The native Africans have crocodiles and serpents and owls for their gods. Some of them of a higher grade set their faith in foxes and rabbits and jaybirds. Down South the good negroes used to tell the white children stories at night about the tar baby, and the bear and the bee tree, and foxes and wolves, but the bad negroes told us about witches and ghosts and Jack o'latteons and rawhead and bloody bones, and we would listen until we didn't dare to look round, and we wouldn't have gone from their cabins to the "big house" alone for a world full of gold.

Napoleon said that all men were cowards by night, but it was those old negroes that made us so, and our generation has never recovered from it. Christmas was a great season for negroes in slavery times. It was a feast and a frolic for a whole week—and their children were just as good as the white children then and all frolicked together.

But at this joyous season there should be nothing but love and kindness and good will. For twelve days, if not more, let envy and hate malice and selfishness all be banished to caves and the wilderness.

Then a rich and merry Christmas to the rich.

And a bright and happy Christmas to the poor.

So their hearts are joyous it doesn't matter which

Has the fine velvet carpet on the floor.

For riches bring a trouble when they come.

And money leaves a pain when it goes;

But everybody now should have a little sum

To brighten up the year at its close.

BILL ARP.

RICH AND MISERABLE.

Death of an Eccentric and Mysterious New Jersey Hermit.

The death recently of Thomas Foster of Shamong township, Burlington County, N. J., furnishes the people of Mount Holly and neighboring villages something further to wonder at and discuss, says the New York *World*. Foster was seventy years old, and was known to his neighbors as "The Hermit of the Pines." For fifty years he had lived alone in the primitive little log house in which he died, and for a great part of the time was known to be a miser. Hence little surprise was manifested by those who found in an old chest in his cabin bills and gold and silver coins to a large amount.

When Foster, then a prepossessing youth of twenty, appeared in Shamong township half a century ago and took up his abode in the little cabin with his dogs and books, the people wondered. He possessed an excellent scholastic education and polished manners, and soon had many friends among his rural neighbors. Why he had fled from cities and buried himself in that out-of-the-way place he never told, but little by little a story was woven for him, in time-worn motive of disappointed love was made fit to his case, and he ceased to be an object of interest. Then it came to be noised about that Foster was a miser. The country people fell away from him, and he secluded himself more and more until he was almost forgotten. Surrounded by his dogs, his mind buried in his books, with which the cabin was plentifully supplied, days would sometimes pass without his stirring abroad.

The howling of a dog attracted some farmers to the little log hut, and there they found the hermit dangerously ill. Accordingly the overseer of the poor of Medford visited the cabin for the purpose of removing the old man to the almshouse.

'Take me to the almshouse?' he almost shouted. 'Never! I have money to pay for taking care of me here, and here are the keys to that chest. Open it and you will find what I say is true.'

When the chest was opened, sure enough, there was the money as he had said. The gold was neatly packed away in little bags. The notes were crisp and clean, though of the issue of old State concerns long since become national banks. Foster obstinately refused to have a nurse, saying: "The nurse would eat so much." Just before the end came he raised himself on his elbow, motioned convulsively toward the old chest and fell back dead. The cabin and the miser's effects were taken in charge by the authorites. It is thought that there may be more money secreted about the old structure

An effort will be made to find his relatives in Philadelphia, from which city it is said he came to the pines.

LOVERS IN LOVER'S WALK.

Charming Picture of a Virginia Courtship by the New York Times' Artist, H. J. W. V.

There are two kinds of proposals common to the Lover's Walk at Sulphur Springs. They are the proposal serious and the proposal jocular. The latter is also serious, but in a diplomatic approach to the subject, intended to serve as a way of retreat if the overture is not well received. According to the account of one young lady, whose invitations to promenade have created destruction in her stock of shoe leather and whose invitations to trot in harness have been in proportion, the proposal jocular is as follows:

Having discussed the weather, the german of the night before, the german that is to be, and any other subjects saliently of service, and having, as they say in Kentucky, grown "nodger and nodger," the young man begins, in an off-hand way:

'Looka hyere, Miss Mamie, has enny feller been a proposin' t' you this season?'

'Why?'

'Why, I reckon somebody'd orter give you a chance,'

'I reckon somebody will if I want him to.'

'Oh, then there is a somebody.'

'Wouldn't you like to know?'

'I would that. Thar ain't, now, is there? You're jest a funnin'.'

She looks coyly away, with an amusing smile.

'He ain't no better lookin' than I am, is he?'

She thoughtfully and critically answers that there ain't no choice.

'Cos I reckon I might do some talkin' myself ef thar was any chance.'

He does or does not as she pulls the strings. The Southern young man is not slow, but he is no match for his keen companion.

The proposal serious is the result of perhaps a week of tender companionship. The young man, whose feelings have gradually become too much for him, eats his morning hominy in a very abstracted way, with frequent turnings to see if she has arrived at her place at the table. After breakfast he walks the piazza in a somewhat uneasy state, his mental concentration interfering somewhat with his digestion. About this period in his entanglement she is very likely to be occupied with some other gentleman, having detected the signs of imminent explosion on his part. He rushes boldly in, however, and she, after going over a multitude of engagements, finally believes that she can walk just a little while with him that afternoon. They walk. No sooner have they turned the corner by the cottage than he says:

'I've been wantin' to see you very much, Miss Margie, all th' afternoon. I—I've something very particular I'd like to say to you, Miss Margie.

'Indeed!' she says. She is very much surprised. She is the most surprised girl, apparently, in the whole state of West Virginia.

'When I come down hyere,' he begins. Then he halts. 'I—a—I've known a good many young ladies, Miss Margie, and a—the a—the matter I was goin' to speak to you about——.' He is quite confused.

There is a small thick silence for a moment as they stroll idly along, while a small green frog jumps nimbly out of the way, confident that in the preoccupation of the pair he is likely to be stepped on.

'What I was goin' to say,' he resumes, clearing his throat, 'is—ah—that I've been thinkin' that every, that is, that all young people ought to marry young. Did—ah—did you ever feel that-away, Miss Margie?'

Miss Margie dosen't know. She has suddenly grown miles away from him in her silence. He makes a plunge.

'D'you think you could like a feller like me, Miss Margie—well enough to marry him, I mean?'

'Oh' says Miss Margie, greatly taken aback. 'Maw says I'm too young to marry. She wouldn't hear to it. Don't you—don't you think that sulphur water's horrid stuff?'

Her ideas concerning sulphur water are a little vague just then, but he manages to agree and to make inquiries concerning her intentions regarding the ball that evening. The conversation then grows halting and awkward, and they shortly return. She breathes a sigh of relief as she smiles good-by, and he wildly goes in search of some small and secretive darkey, whom he hires to kick him thoroughly, not being able to perform that office for mimself, and naturally desiring something of the kind to relieve his overwrought feelings.

Explosion of a Bird.

Newton Tabor was digging a well at Pilot Point, Tex. To blast out the rock he used dynamite enclosed in small metalic capsules. In the course of his operations he deposited an open box of these dangerous capsules at the foot of a tree near where he was working. A ladder leaning against the tree reached up to a mockingbird's nest containing a young brood. His ten-year-old son, Dick, with a couple of the capsules in his hand, ascended the ladder, and, discovering the young birds with distended mouths, boy-like dropped the capsules, one at a time, in one bird's mouth. They forthwith disappeared in the bird's craw. This rendered the bird uncomfortable, and in a struggle for relief it fell from the nest. Upon striking the ground an explosion occurred which tore up the earth, dumped a quantity of the loose dirt and the fragments of rock piled around into the well, and came near killing Mr. Tabor, who was working down below. The boy fell from the ladder and was badly hurt, suffering the fracture of some bones. This shows what a boy will do when he gets a chance.

The New Year.

Only a garland of withered leaves;
Only the wail of the wind, that grieves
Over the dying year.
Sadly we listen our hearts are full,
As we stand on the year's dim verge to cull
All memories sweet and dear.

As the sunset's flush in the western skies
Deepens in splendor as daylight dies,
So the glow of the holy-tide
Touches with lingering tender grace
The fading smile on the old year's face—
The face it has glorified.

Under the garland of withered leaves,
Lulled by the wail of the wind that grieves,
Is sleeping spring's fairy train:
And gayly its ladder of stars there climbs
The musical peal of the new year's chimes,
Bringing hope to our hearts again.

The Old and the New.

One year more is quickly numbered
With the ages of the past,
And we scarcely heed the moments
As they pass us by so fast.

'Eightyseven, so old but honored,
Shares his predecessors' fate;
Yields his throne to youth and beauty.
Welcome to thee, 'Eightyeight!

A Famous Confederate General.

Gen. Longstreet is writing a book on the war, says a letter from Gainsville, Ga. As he finishes a chapter he sends the manuscript to Washington to have all dates and figures verified from the official records. 'I expect both sides to pitch into me,' he says, 'and I am taking time to be certain of my statements.'

There is little doubt both sides 'will pitch into him' if he writes as he talks. Frankness is one of the General's strong characteristics. But no element of recklessness enters into the operation of his mind. He is outspoken but deliberate. His life since the war has been such as to relieve him of prejudice in favor of the side he fought on. He is 'out of politics entirely,' to quote his own language, and out of affiliation with his old army associates. But at the same time there is no trace of disappointment, of malice, of bitterness in his manner. Under such conditions he sits down to write his narrative of the war. And it will be history.

Having led the life of a soldier from the time he entered West Point up to the time the states seceded, Longstreet stepped into almost the highest position at the very outset of the civil war, and he saw hard and continuous service to the end. It was Longstreet's corps which, on the second of the three day's fighting on and about Chickamauga, jumped from the cars on which they had come all the way from Virginia, 15,000 strong, and rushed into battle from Ringgold, enabling Bragg to drive Rosecrans back on Chattanooga.

It was Longstreet's corps that covered the retreat of Lee at Gettysburg. It was Longstreet everywhere in Virginia, from Bull Run to the end, and then at Appomattox Longstreet was the one selected by Lee as the ranking officer to go and arrange the preliminaries of surrender.

The moist atmosphere of New Orleans gave Gen. Longstreet the rheumatism, which was aggravated a good deal probably by a bad wound received in the storming of Chapultepec. Since he came to Gainsville his health has improved. He is a busy man at 66. A short distance out of 'the metropolis of northeast Georgia,' as the city is called, the general has a farm of one hundred acres, with a large old-fashioned mansion. The house stands on an elevation in the midst of trees and shrubbery. From the upper gallery there is a grand view of mountain scenery, Kennesaw and a dozen other wooded peaks being in view. The general's farming is confined mainly to the care of a vineyard of scuppernongs, and other varieties of grapes, to which he gives a good deal of personal attention.

Gainsville is a popular summer resort for the gulf states. The altitude insures a right temperature which often sends the new-comer prowling around at 2 o'clock in the morning for more bed-clothes.

There are iron and sulphur springs scattered through the mountains. People who have ills, and people who imagine they have, summer here for the waters. Some years ago a Minnesota man came down here and built a large hotel, the General furnishing some of the capital. The property fell into the general's hands in the course of time. He has usually rented it. This year he opened it, and has had a great colony of summer boarders from the low country to look after. A son attends to the details, but the general comes in from his vineyard every day to see that his guests are comfortable.

At the battle of the Wilderness a ball tore through his right shoulder, and the wound left the arm partially paralyzed. For a long time after the war he could only write by moving his whole arm for each stroke of the pen, and even then had to assist the stiffened member with his left hand. Concluding that this would never do, he set to work to learn to write with his left hand, and now does all his extensive correspondence and literary work in that way.

He looks his improved health. His face is ruddy. His eyes are bright and he walks firmly. The long, heavy whiskers are as white as snow. His publishers have put him under injunctions not to talk about the contents of the book.

One Cent.

It is almost impossible to attach any importance to one cent, but at the same time it is a very important coin at times, says an exchange. It will take a circular to California and it will make you madder than a hatter and a March hare combined when you go to pay your fare on a horse-car and find that you have but four cents and a ten dollar bill. One cent is very small, but when it is added to the rate of interest you receive on a stock, it possesses a stern, magnificent grandeur that carries you away like a strain of music. The penny, it seems, was made to put on church plates; and, although a man may say it amounts to nothing, he will strike matches and lift mats and crawl about in the straw of a horse-car to find the one he drops. It is so small a coin that you have to take off your glove to take hold of it in your pocket, and yet it is so large that when the baby swallows it, the chances of the baby's living are sometimes not worth a cent. Although one cent is less than ten cents, yet one cent is a great deal larger than a dime. Many a man has gone thirsty all day with four cents in his pocket. For the want of that one cent the four were as useless as the eleven men on a jury who are held out against by one.