

A CHRISTMAS BELL.

IT WASN'T a very big bell, but roomy enough for the bell. For it swung way out to the breezes when it had anything to tell.

An' often it seemed ter sing for me, when I pulled ther worn old rope. A soundin' some holy message that was full uv blessed hope.

An' its tones was sweet an' soft like as a woman's when she tries To hush the wee ones cuddlin' down, an' close their sleepy eyes.

Yes! Tender as some soft lullaby that mother used to sing.

'T would make er boy uv me again, to hear the ol' bell ring.

On Christmas we wuz wedded, an' 'twas then the bell was hung. I recollect how full uv joy it sounded when it rung.

So many things it said to us so clear an' sweet an' strong.

Like er heavenly benediction on our path way all er long.

An' Susan whispered soft, "Amen!" ez if 'twas sayin' er grace.

Smilin' so sweet up in my eyes as the snow-flakes kissed her face.

An' "peace on earth, good will to men," the echoes seemed to bring.

Just like the song of Bethlehem, to hear the ol' bell ring.

The golden cross a-shinin' on the steeple up so high.

Was like a holy finger pointin' upward toward the sky.

An' one by one the stars peeped out, a-gleamin' through the night.

Ez though Almighty meant each man to hev er beacon light.

The bell tower seemed hallowed, as a place midway between.

The earth below an' heaven above, where angels come unseen;

An' when they whispered to the secrets that they bring.

I pulled ther rope, an' what they spoke I heered the ol' bell ring.

An' so through all the passin' years a friend without alloy.

I shared with me my burdens, my sorrows an' my joy.

Almos' a livin' thing it seemed, a-swingin' in to and fro.

With me a-pullin' on the rope an' standin' in just below.

An' such a heap uv comfort then it sounded to me there.

I hed to climb up every night the little whinin' stair.

Just so that I might teck it; and, oh! it seemed to bring.

Me purty nigh to Heaven, to hear the ol' bell ring.

-Walter S. Stranahan, in Chicago News.

A WOLF'S CHRISTMAS.

AIN' partridge huntin', be ye?" Hiram Hull asked, as he poured four pounds of No. 6 shot from the scoop of the scales into one of the conical packages that our shot used to be done up in by storekeepers before the era of paper bags.

"Well, no, not exactly huntin'," I answered with the view to the possible need of excuses for an empty bag. "I'm going over to Bradley's to spend Christmas, and didn't know but I might see a partridge." It would have been "stuck up" to call our best game bird "partridge," and no one would have recognized it under the name of "ruffed grouse."

"You hain't goin' to hoof it over the mountain?" he asked, with the end of the string between his teeth as he wound the package with a frugal allowance of packthread. I nodded an affirmation while I silently admired his thrifty habit of putting the few spilled pellets into the box of unsold shot.

"Wal, then, ye'd better let me put ye up a pound or two o' buckshot."

"No, sir," I said, in a tone expressive of reproof for the suggestion. "I've no use for buckshot this time of year," for the close time for deer began with the month.

"Of course not, but you'd want something bigger'n number sixes if the wolves get after ye," said Hiram, making a persuasive dip into the box of buckshot.

"Wolves," said I, contemptuously; "why, there hain't been a wolf around here for 20 years."

"Wal, there is, now, a pack o' seven, anyway, an' mebbe more. Why, hain't you heard? Amos Barker seen 'em full tilt after a deer an' counted 'em, seven of 'em. His man at was helpin' of him on his coalin' job said there was 13, but Amos reckoned he see double or counted some of 'em twice, an' there's lots o' folks 'at's heard 'em. There's wolves hain'tin' the maountain, you may depend. Better le' me weigh you about a couple o' pound."

"No, I guess it won't pay to carry any extra weight on that chance," I said, admiring the storekeeper's cunning attempt to sell me something I did not want. "But you may put up that small doll and that jack-in-the-box for me. They're light and they'll tickle Billy's two little shavers. Then put up a half dozen crackers and a bit of cheese for lunch, fill my tobacco box, and let me have an extra pipe, and I'll be off. I want to make the trip by daylight."

"I hope ye will, I raly do. I wouldn't want to have you get ketchin' in the dark on the maountain. So you're goin' right over to Bradley's, be ye?" he continued, as he shuffled about behind the counter to put up the articles for me, and then began rummaging in a drawer of odds and ends. "Now, I wonder if you wouldn't just as lives take him a pair o' bullet molds 'at Aaron Clark left here for him, last spring. I guess it was. Hiram found the molds after a short

search, and, slipping them into my pocket with the other articles, I retired to my bachelor quarters over Miss Diantha Gridley's tailor shop, where, after transferring the shot to a spring-top pouch, and filling my flask with better powder than Hiram sold, and exchanging my leather boots for a pair of sheepskin boots tanned with the wool on, which were then the most approved winter footgear, with my double gun on my shoulder to lighten my steps, I set forth on the ten-mile tramp.

Crossing the little river that turned the mills and forge of our village, and following the road as far as it ran in my direction, I held across the fields to the woods, before entering which I set my compass for my intended course.

When the backbone of the mountain was reached and my journey half accomplished, I had but one partridge, but there was a chance of more in the stretch of forest that lay before me, partial glimpses of which I now had through the stunted oaks, and pines that scantily clad the rocky ridge.

The weather was exceedingly mild for the season, a circumstance which proved very fortunate for me, and as I was quite comfortable in the warmth of the low midday sun, I gave my legs a good rest while I ate my lunch and lazily smoked and dreamed in the midst of the quietude.

There was not a sound to be heard above the constant murmur of the pines and the occasional rustle of an unfallen leaf withered, nor was a living thing to be seen but a mite of a winter wren exploring the intricacies of a fallen tree-top, and a few flies that were buzzing about the sunny side of a tree trunk.

As I began my way down the mountain a glance at the sun showed me we were likely to part company before my journey was ended. Half a mile further on, in an old charcoal clearing, I flushed a partridge, at which I took a snapshot that knocked a cloud of feathers out of the bird without retarding its flight; but I was sure it was hard hit, and began a diligent search where it had disappeared at the edge of the clearing.

Looking the ground over carefully, step by step, I had gone much further than one who does not know how far a mortally wounded grouse can fly would think it of any use to search, when I heard, far behind me, what I took to be the piteous howl of a lost hound.

I was wishing the poor fellow might find my track and come up to me, when the long-drawn, plaintive wail was repeated at a point so distant from the first that it was evident it could not have been uttered by the same animal, and presently it was taken up at another distant point.

Still groping over the ground in search of the dead bird, I wondered at so many hounds having gone astray

in diameter at the base of the trunk, which for ten feet up to the whorls of sturdy green boughs bristled with stubs of dead limbs that made convenient steps.

My gun was of German make, rigged with a sling, which till now I had always thought a useless appurtenance, but in this emergency it proved quite otherwise, when by slinging the gun over my back I got up, easily and quickly. None too quickly, for in two minutes the leaders of the pack were beneath me, and glaring up at me with cruel, hungry eyes, having evidently seen my ascent, for they were not at fault a moment.

Others came till there were seven in all, some circling about the tree, some sitting on their haunches and treading impatiently with their forefeet, like a dog waiting for a choice morsel, and licking their slavering chops; some gnawed at the trunk or made prodigious leaps at the lower branches.

I climbed to a secure and comfortable seat on a limb 20 feet from the ground, and, after getting my breath, and my nerves were a little settled, I tried the effect of a charge of No. 6 on one of the besiegers, as I got a tolerable fair aim at his uplifted muzzle through an opening. There was a yelp of surprise and pain, followed by a general commotion among the crew, and when the smoke had lifted above me I caught glimpses of the stung brute clawing his head with alternate forepaws.

I fired several times as opportunity offered, but desisted when it became evident that instead of driving off my assailants the sting of the small shot made them the more savagely persistent. I tried slugging the shot in a cartridge made of a bit of the lining of my coat, but it amounted to nothing. Bewailing the incredulity which had made me refuse the buckshot, I was at my wit's end how to raise the siege.

Perhaps my supply of provisions would last till the enemy was starved out, if the weather did not turn cold and freeze me on my roost, which was a prospect less agreeable than that of subsisting on raw partridge flesh.

Then it occurred to me to climb to the top and see if there was any chance of making alarm shots heard down in the settlements. Slinging my gun I began the ascent. But ten feet further up the pine came to an end, for there the whole top was broken off just above a whorl of stout branches onto which I climbed, but could get no outlook through the tree tops.

I filled and lighted my pipe, and, chancing to throw the unextinguished match onto the stub, which was broken about square across, and was at least a foot in diameter, it ignited a handful of dry pine needles that alighted there. The flame lasted but a moment, yet long enough to suggest the idea that

The bullets were much too small for the bore of my gun, therefore I put two in each barrel, with a light charge of shot, and descended to the lower branch, where I seated myself upon the one where I could get the clearest view of the ground.

The wolves greeted my reappearance with a chorus of savage yelps as they gathered eagerly beneath me, snapping and snarling, each struggling for the nearest place that he might be first at the expected feast. One grizzled old fellow, the patriarch of the tribe, who had curled himself up in the fallen tree-top, to bide his downfall, now had his philosophical patience overcome and limped forth from his lair, snaking around the outskirts of the crowd with his hungry eyes constantly upon me. The largest and strongest of the pack kept the position directly under me, now springing upward more than his length, then tumbling back upon his mates that crowded beneath him, now standing upright on his hinder feet and pawing the air and snapping his fanged jaws viciously. While he was in this posture I fired one barrel straight into his mouth.

The recoil almost unseated me, but I recovered myself with no greater mishap than losing the toys out of my pocket. The big wolf made no motion but to sink in a lifeless heap with the back of his head blown out. The others scattered a little, but presently returned, sniffing at their dead comrade and lapping his blood. Poor Dolly got a cruel bite from one that spoiled her beauty forever. Another nosing jack-in-the-box unhooked the lid, whereupon the little imp filled his snout, and I could not help laughing at the fright it gave the great cowardly brute.

I fired the second barrel at the old grandfather as he warily skulked past, beyond the others, and the charge broke his back. He writhed about, biting the wound a moment, and then, dragging his paralyzed hinder parts, crawled out of sight. The others were getting somewhat shy, but plucked up courage during the cessation of hostilities, while I reloaded, and then came close under me again.

A third shot killed one nearly outright, and the fourth broke the shoulder of another as he ran. He retreated to a safe distance and amused himself with his wound, while the unhurt survivors stood off, now regarding curiously their dead and wounded companions, now me, with growing respect, and evidently doubting whether it was worth their while to continue any longer in my neighborhood.

When my gun was reloaded I settled the question for them with two shots. The first one bore such a hole in the belly of one that his entrails dragged upon the ground, and the second struck another so sharply that he stood not on the order of his going, but made off in all speed in company with his unscathed comrade, while the fellow with the broken shoulder hobbled after them, and the other poor wretch tried to follow them, turning now and again to bite his own entrails, entangling his feet and catching on stubs and stones.

Evening was already deepening the forest shadows, and I had little time to spare in mercy to the merciless brute, but when I got to the ground I hastily loaded my gun and finished him with a shot in the head.

Then, picking up the toys and taking my course by the compass and the evening star, I held forward at such speed as the rough and darkening way would permit. Fortunately, the almost full moon was well up in the clear sky, and I had little difficulty in finding my way down the mountain and reached Bradley's before their early bedtime.

Little Molly Bradley prized the doll all the more for the scars which proved her hairbreadth escape, and her brother looked upon the jack-in-the-box that had scared a wolf as a hero as doughty as Jack the Giant Killer.

Their father seemed to doubt my story till I led him to the scene of my adventure the next morning, and showed him the four wolves, for we found the broken-backed patriarch after a short search.

When we returned with the pelts the Christmas dinner was ready for us, no mean part of it being the partridges, much more nicely cooked by Mrs. Bradley than I could have done it on the tree stump had I been obliged to.

When I went home the next day there was a full pouch of buckshot in my pocket, but I found no use for it.—Rowland Robinson, in Chicago Inter Ocean.

LIKES MARRIED LIFE

Matrimony Has Not Proved a Failure for Mrs. Smith.

Missouri Woman, Though Only Fifty-Five Years Old, Has Had Seven Husbands—Satisfied with Her Ventures.

Mrs. B. D. Smith, of Humansville, Mo., asserts that marriage is not a failure. She ought to know, as she has been married seven times. Despite her 55 years Mrs. Smith is still youthful and handsome. She has lately married again, and the newly wedded couple are living in a little cottage owned by Mrs. Smith's aged mother.

"I have often thought," said Mrs. Smith to a Chicago Inter Ocean reporter, "that I could forever set at rest that old, old problem: 'Is marriage a failure?' I would most positively assert that it is not a failure. I have had seven husbands and buried five of them. One ran away with another woman, the other, Brother Smith, will be at home in a moment; he is out attending to the cow now."

"Tell you something about my life? Well, there is not much to tell, but I'll try it. I am a little confused about dates. You see, I had so many husbands and so many things happened that I can hardly be very exact."

"I have known Brother Smith—you see, I call him brother from force of habit—all my life. He was and is my pastor. How long was he engaged to me? Why, bless your soul, one day. We knew each other all our life—all my life, I mean. He came over to see me Sunday night and we talked it up. We were married on Tuesday."

"My seven husbands were all engaged but a short time, and I now have—let me see—16 or 18 stepchildren. And they all love me. Whenever they are married I give them a wedding dinner and set them up in housekeeping. There are three sets of them, too. They come to see me, and whenever my husbands die they always offer me a home."

"I knew my first husband, Mr. Vice, a year. Mr. Milligan six months. Mr.



"YOU'RE FIVE MINUTES LATE."

De Priest I knew 18 months, but we were engaged only three weeks. Mr. Crozier I knew four years and was engaged to him but two months. Mr. Dougherty I knew a week.

"Nef I knew nine months, but we sparked only three months. We lived together only six months.

"Yes, I have had a good many offers, but I always know what I'm doing, and when I make up my mind, I don't believe in delay. I just go ahead and get the thing over with. You see, Nef turned out bad, but it wasn't my fault. I made him a good wife."

Mrs. Smith was born in Caldwell county, Miss., November 12, 1843, and raised in Harrison county. At the age of 15 years she married George H. Vice, December 25, 1858. They lived together five years, when he was killed while on picket guard as the first sergeant of troop M, First Arkansas cavalry. They had one child, now Mrs. Sam White, also living with her second husband, and who has several children—two of them married.

In less than a year, on October 10, 1864, she married William De Priest. They had two children, both boys, Allen and Albert, and after six years of married life De Priest died of spinal trouble.

Her next husband was Francis Milligan, and she married him January 13, 1870. They had two children, a boy and a girl, both living. Milligan died of typhoid fever October 27, 1883.

She became Mrs. James Neff April 3, 1886, and, as told, her husband disappeared six months later. She secured a divorce in 1887 at Bolivar, Mo., and the same day married Jacob Crozier.

A peculiar fact about her marriage to Neff was that she was at the same time engaged to marry a man named Doyle, who lives near Humansville. She set the day, April 3, and made up her mind to marry whoever came first. Neff was the lucky man, and just as the minister, her present husband, pronounced them man and wife Doyle rushed up, breathless, with the license in his hand. Neff laughed aloud, and the new Mrs. Neff smiled as she said:

"You're just five minutes too late."

She has been sorry ever since she didn't take Doyle. He is living in St. Clair county, Mo., now, is wealthy and has got over his disappointment.

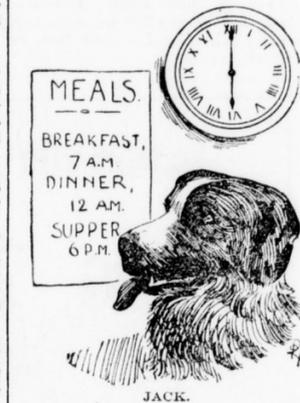
Statistics About Judges.

Massachusetts is the only state in the union in which the judges are appointed to hold their office during good behavior. There are seven states in which the judges are appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the senate or of the council, five in which they are elected by the legislature, and 33 in which they are elected by the people.

WISE BROOKLYN DOG.

Jack Knows the Time of Day and Hustles for His Meals Systematically and Cleverly.

Jack of Cummings' mill is described as a remarkable dog. Cummings' mill is in eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, and Jack was born there while the saws were buzzing and the big wheels were revolving. He is half mastiff, half water spaniel, and is a very handsome animal. His extraordinary intelligence is displayed in many ways, but its greatest development is manifested in the procuring of three square meals per diem for Jack, except on Sunday, when he is content with two. As Jack



is only 14 months old, great things are expected of him in future. He is of no expense whatever to Mr. Cummings, the mill owner. He hustles for himself and does it systematically and successfully. The moment the mill engine begins to whistle at seven o'clock in the morning Jack gets up, gives himself a shake, emits one short yelp and trots off to the house of Mrs. Moss, who lives three or four doors from the mill. Arrived there, he seats himself and gazes earnestly at the gate as if awaiting a coming event. He is seldom disappointed, for usually in less than a minute Mrs. Moss emerges from the rear of the house with a basket of bones which are soon cracking between Jack's splendid white teeth.

At noon the whistle sounds once more and this time Jack hies him to the house of Mr. Burger, an old grand army man, but he does not stop outside the gate. He enters and scratches at the back door until duly served with his noontide meal. At six o'clock he sallies forth for the third time and descends to the cellar of Mrs. Norton's house, three blocks away, where he finds a plate of good things prepared for him.

And now comes the most extraordinary phase of Jack's intellectual character. The mill whistle does not blow on Sunday, and yet at just after seven, as usual, he is in front of Mrs. Moss' gate with the usual expectancy in his eye. Only on Sunday, so it is solemnly declared, he never yelps.

And, again, as it is the war veteran's custom to take only two meals on Sunday, breakfast and a six o'clock dinner, Jack never gives him a call on that day, but is on time at Mrs. Norton's at five o'clock, when she partakes of her Sunday evening meal, her week day dinner being at six p. m.

Now, as Jack does not carry a watch, the question naturally arises, how does he know the time, even to the minute? Of course he is aware it is Sunday, seeing that the whistle doesn't blow, also that on the Sabbath Mr. Burger has no meal at noon while Mrs. Norton's dinner is at five instead of six o'clock, but how does he know that it is five o'clock?

ROSES AS WEAPONS.

First Drugged His Victims and Then Robbed Them of Their Money and Valuables.

A man and his two sisters were recently made the victims of a thief whose weapons were only roses.

They were seated in a railway car traveling through Germany when at one of the stops an elegantly dressed,



THE POLITE STRANGER.

thickly veiled woman entered the carriage, carrying a superb bouquet of roses.

When the train started the stranger dropped her roses. He picked them up for her, and, thanking him charmingly, she asked him to keep one. Then, turning to his companions, she graciously offered each of them a few of the flowers.

Naturally the courtesy was accepted, and the next thing of which the travelers were conscious was that the train had arrived at Berlin; that their veiled companion had disappeared and that all of their money and valuables had gone with her.

Of course, the roses had been drugged. The police have discovered that the criminal is a young man, and that he has conducted a number of daring robberies in similar fashion.

One must admit that it is the refinement of robbery, and, if one must be robbed at all, the rose method is preferable to sandbagging or garroting.



THE LEADERS OF THE PACK WERE BENEATH ME.

that day, when, just as I found my bird lying belly up, stone dead, I also came upon something that gave me a startling enlightenment.

The fallen leaves and the soil were torn and furrowed and stones and patches of moss were overturned, in evidence of a desperate struggle, the result of which was plainly shown by the antlered skull and scattered bones of a deer and a mat of coarse gray hair trodden into the mold.

Hiram's wolves were no harmless creatures of the imagination, but savage realities, and a chill ran down my back as I realized the probability that the pack was now rallying on my trail. I did not doubt that I had heard their voices.

I took my bearings and went forward at my best pace with far less thought of hunting than the fear of being hunted. Thus I went on for half an hour hearing nothing but the snapping of twigs and swish of branches made by my own rapid progress, till a clamor of jays broke out 40 rods in my rear. As it drew near it was mingled with the rustle and patter of many swift feet. I was near the crest of one of the ledges, that ridge crosswise the long westerly incline of the mountainside and, looking backward down the slope, I saw two wolves break through the undergrowth of whortleberry bushes and had glimpses of others behind them.

My next look was for a tree that could be climbed, and I was fortunate in discovering one close at hand a low branching one of more than two feet

fire enough might be built here to roast small bits of the partridge, and close upon this followed another, which gave me hope of deliverance.

There was the bullet mold in my pocket, and if I could but manage to turn my paltry shot into a dozen good solid balls I would soon rid myself of the wolves. As I was refilling my pipe with a view of stimulating invention my tobacco box gave me a clew to a solution of the problem. It was an old-fashioned steel box with a hinged cover and square corners that would serve as a spout to pour melted lead from.

I transferred the tobacco to a pocket, made a cut of a small green limb firmly on to the open cover for a handle, and had what promised to be a serviceable smelting ladle. Then, reaching out, I gathered some dry twigs and bits of branches, and I soon had a small fire burning in the center of the stub. When it was well going I held the improvised ladle, with a couple ounces of shot in it, over the hottest place, and, after some patient waiting, had the satisfaction of seeing the separate pellets become a little puddle of molten lead. I managed to pour most of it into the mold and got three good bullets the first smelting, but lost one, which fell to the ground.

Better luck attended three more successive trials, which gave me 13 bullets, making 15 in all, which I thought might answer my purpose, and I whipped out the fire with a green branch.

It was now near sundown, so there was no time to be lost if I was to get away by daylight.

CHRISTMAS CATECHISM.



Do you see the boy?
I see the boy.
Do you see the boy's glad smile?
I see the boy's glad smile.
Why does the boy seem so happy?
The boy has just made out a list of what he wants Santa Claus to bring him, and given it to papa.
Can you pick out the boy's papa?
You bet I can.
How can you pick him out?
By his sad and sorrowful face.—Chicago Post.