

House Cleaning

Taking down the pictures,
Dusting off the wall—
Not at home this morning
Should there be a call—
Toast and eggs for breakfast—
Things turned upside down—
Wife and girl jawing—
Husband skips the towel,
Taking up the carpets—
Ducks and dust for lunch—
Boys, for asking questions,
Gets from ma a punch,
Washing off the windows—
Doors all open—wide—
She with pail and dust pan
Used to be my bride,
No fire in the furnace—
Bell goes on a ring—
"Cleaning house today, m'm,
First day of the spring,"
Night a doctor calling—
Wife done up in bed,
Husband scots for drug store,
Clerk asks who is dead,
Night reporter's item:
"Coroner had a ring
For a still found floating—
First one of the spring,"
Verdict of the jury—
Foreman, sly old mouse—
"Suicide from torment,
Caused by cleaning house."
—Chicago Herald

Miss Polly Wantacracker.

"She is the meanest girl I ever saw in my life," said Alice Hays.
"A regular little miser," added Mary Reynolds.
"Who is?" asked Jessie Ferguson, the new scholar.
"Why, that girl over there in the corner by the register nibbling away at a soda-cracker. She never brings anything but a cracker or two for her lunch, cause she's afraid, I suppose, that if she brought any goodies some of the girls might want her to go halves."
"We call her Miss Polly Wantacracker."
"What is her real name?" asked Jessie.
"Oh! her real name's Sally Burton. But Miss Polly Wantacracker is a much more suitable one according to our way of thinking."
"Perhaps she is poor and can't afford any goodies for her lunch," suggested Jessie, who was a sweet tempered, kind-hearted girl.
"Well if she's poor, I don't see how she can afford to come to such an expensive school as this and dress as nicely as she does."
"That dress she's got on (doesn't it fit horribly though?) is made of cloth that costs two dollars a yard. I saw some like it in my father's store last week. And she gets pocket-money every month from somebody. The letters come to Mrs. Blossom's care, and I've seen Miss Polly wantacracker open them and take money out."
"I peeped over her shoulder once," said Mary Reynolds, "and spied a five dollar bill. 'Aren't you going to treat?' says I. 'Not this time, says she with a perfectly sickening smile, and after that she never spend her letters in the school room. Look at her now. She's gleaning this way. Don't she look ashamed? She knows we're talking about her."
"Poor girl!" said Jessie; "to me she looks more grieved than ashamed. And isn't she pretty? I wish I had her lovely, blue eyes and curly hair. It curls naturally, that is plain to be—"
"Oh! there now," interrupted Alice Hays spitefully, "the girls won't think much of you if you are going to stand up for Miss Polly Wantacracker, I can tell you that."
"I shall stand up for her," declared Jessie, with sturdy Scotch self-assertion, "until I am convinced that she deserves the harsh things you say about her, no matter what the girls think. I like to judge people for myself, and I haven't been here long enough to form any decided opinion about anybody. Maybe in a month or so I'll find out whether Stella Burton is a regular little miser or not. And until I do I'm most certainly not going to take sides against her."
But when "a month or so" had passed Jessie reluctantly admitted that she had come to the conclusion that Alice and her friends were right. She had watched the daily nibbling of the crackers at lunch-time and had seen the reception of the monthly allowance. She had noticed the costly materials of which Stella's dress, cloak, hat, and even aprons were made, and had done much mortified by the girl's persistent refusals to share her—Jessie's—candies, cakes, or fruit.
"It's because she's afraid you might expect something in return," said Mary Reynolds, with a scornful toss of her head.
"When she first came here, six months ago, we told her that all the girls took it in turn to bring sweets for the class, and she turned as red as a beet and said, 'please leave me out. I can't afford it.'"
"I wonder what she is saving her money for!" Bella Smythe joined in. "Perhaps to buy a gold watch. But I'd do without a gold watch forever before I'd be such a stingy thing."
The Christmas holidays drew near, and the pupils of Blossom Academy started a subscription list for the purpose of raising the means with which to purchase for their principal and teachers some handsome gift. "I can contribute nothing," said Stella, when they laid it on her desk. "That's too bad," sneered Alice Hays. "We'll have to take up a contribution for you." And they did, and the next day at

recess Stella was pre-occupied most ceremoniously with a paper bag of cheap crackers. Not a word did she say when it was poised in her lap, but when school was over Mary Reynolds, whose way lay in the same direction as hers for a block or two, saw her hand the bag to the poor old woman who kept a small penit stand up the corner. "Did you ever see such coolness!" said the girls in chorus when they heard of it. And answered themselves, "Never!" in another chorus.
Well, the holidays passed. School was to begin again upon the 3rd of January, and on the evening of the 24 Mrs. Blossom, the principal, gave a welcome back New Year party to her scholars and their near relations. Stella came with the rest, in a delicate lavender silk polonaise, looped over a dark purple velvet skirt, and embroidered with bunches of lovely purple pansies, a bunch of real ones serving for a breast-pin, and another serving, by contrast, her golden hair look still more golden.
"How sweet she looks," whispered Jessie Ferguson to Bella Smythe.
"Who?" answered that young lady.
"Oh! Miss Polly Wantacracker. I must confess I don't see any sweetness about her. I'm going to sit beside her at the supper table and see if she only eats crackers then. And she did. She sat on one side of Stella and Mary Reynolds on the other, and while eating from the heap of dainties on their own plate they kept a sharp look out on the heap on hers. She ate very slowly, but, one by one, cake, molasses, bunch of grapes, almonds, raisins quickly disappeared.
"She never ate them," whispered Bella to her cousin Caroline, who sat next to her. "She's eaten nothing but some macaroons and her ice-cream. They're gone into her pocket. We've got her now. Come to the dressing room when she starts for home and you'll see some fun. Pass the word to the other girls." So when Stella started for the dressing-room, a short time after supper, she was followed by nearly all her school-mates. And when she stopped to draw on her overshoes she found herself seized on the right by Bella Smythe and on the left by Alice Hays, while Mary Reynolds sought-for and found the pocket in her skirt, and in the pocket were cake, the molasses, the grapes and the almonds and raisins that had been served to her at the supper table. "Oh for shame Miss Polly Wantacracker!" burst from the lookers-on. "They are mine," said Stella, defiantly. "I did not steal them. They were given to me and I have a right to do with them as I please."
"For shame!" said the girls again. And "no ladylike girl would do such a thing," added Bella Smythe. "Dressed in a silk and velvet too," said her cousin Caroline. "With a gold chain and locket, and getting \$5 a month spending-money," said Alice Hays.
Stella looked from one scornful face to another; the tears came to her eyes, but she forced them back and with trembling lips she turned to Alice and said: "Your carriage will be here for you in a few moments, will it not, Miss Hays?"
"It will, Miss Polly Wantacracker. And what then?" was the reply.
"Will you take me to my home in it? And—"
"Well, if that isn't sublime coolness," interrupted Alice.
"And will you take," Stella went on not noticing the interruption, "Miss Smythe, Miss Reynolds and Jessie Ferguson with us if they will go?"
"Indeed, I'll go," exclaimed Jessie, springing to the girl's side. "And I'm sure Mary and Bella will too. Girls you must. I feel that we have misjudged Stella, and that now she is offering us a chance to do her justice. And in what better way could we—could any one—begin the New Year than by setting right, as far as possible, the wrong of the old?"
There was no resisting this appeal. And when a few moments after some one called out "Miss Hays' carriage!" away went five girls to stop in a little less than half an hour before the door of a neat, brick house in a pleasant old-fashioned street.
There they got out of the carriage and Stella led them in at the front door and up the stairs until they reached the attic, where she softly pushed open the door of a low-ceilinged room and an old woman sitting in a rocking chair by a tiny stove, started out of a doze to welcome her. "Dearest's been as good as gold ever since—she began, and then stopped suddenly and stared in surprise at the unexpected visitors. "Thank you, Auntie Brown. Come girls," said Stella. And following her to the bed in the corner they saw the sweetest, prettiest, little girl sleeping there that ever went to dreamland. "What a darling!" exclaimed they. "Who is she?" "My sister," answered Stella proudly. "And she has no one to take care of her but me, except Auntie Brown, who lives on the floor below, and is kind enough to look after her a little when I am obliged to be away. And now I will tell you how we live. A very distant relation of mine (I have no near relations but Dearie) owns our

school building, and it is through some arrangement between Mrs. Blossom and him that I am being educated there. And I study very hard, as you all know, for I believe the better education a person has the better her chance of succeeding in the world. And besides his kind lessons in this way, my father sends \$5 a month. That \$5 just pays my room, and the dollar and a half that I earn a week by knitting wooden baby shoes and soles for a store near by, is all the other money I have. My clothes are made (I make them myself), and that's the reason they fit so badly, Miss Hays) from the wardrobe of my dear mother, who became very poor before she died, and could leave me nothing else. The gold chain and locket she gave to Dearie. Dearie was two years old when mamma left us; she is four now; and during the two years she has been all mine I have tried to make her life happy. To-night I told her that I was going to see Santa Claus—I could give her nothing but a cheap doll for her Christmas—and that I would bring her from him some goodies—"
"Don't say another word, don't say another word," cried Miss Hays, "What young wretches we have been."
"Why didn't you tell us before?" asked Bella Smythe.
"Because I thought it would seem too much like begging, you are so well off, compared to me. Besides, I have never really wanted for anything; but as for Dearie, she's one of the merriest children in the world, and thinks her sister Miss Polly Wantacracker—"
"Don't! don't!" begged her listeners. "Please let all that be forgotten. And do, we beg of you, let us four girls be aunts, cousins, grandmothers, or something, to Dearie from this day forth."
"Bless her heart she's awake," said Jessie.
And the little one tossed the curls out of her eyes—raised her head from the pillow—sat up in bed—looked grave from one to another with big, blue, wondering eyes, and then lisped in a sweet, chirpy, baby voice, "How do, babies; me wish you a happy New Year."
A War Memory.
In 1862, while General Hindman was commanding the Confederate forces at Little Rock, a piece of strategy, which should not be left unrecorded, was practiced by a "Gentleman in Gray." Hindman only had a few thousand ill-armed troops, and when he heard that the Federal General, Curtis, stationed at Helena, was preparing to move on Little Rock, he sent for Colonel Robert Newton, chief of staff, and said:
"Look here, Bob. I understand that Curtis, with thirty five or forty thousand is preparing to march on us. You very readily understand that we cannot entertain so much company."
"Can't we send out and borrow from the neighbors?" Newton suggested.
"Not very well, and besides, I think that the visitors would prove to be troublesome. My idea is to send them word not to come. Now let us put our heads together in regard to the best means of making known our wishes," and after earnest deliberation they decided to arrange a mail, ostensibly for different persons, but really for Gen. Curtis.
One letter was addressed to the Confederate Secretary of War. "I do not like to make complaints," the communication ran, "but circumstances compel me to call your attention to certain shortcomings of General Beauregard. Several weeks ago, he promised to send me forty thousand stands of arms and thirty pieces of artillery, but instead, he has only sent me twenty-five thousand stands of arms and twenty pieces of artillery. This even counting the stores we have received from Texas, is not enough for the proper equipment of my troops. I contemplate moving into Missouri."
Then followed a number of letters from soldiers. One soldier, in a letter to his wife, said: "We have about forty thousand troops here, and although they are not all quite armed, yet I think that within a few days we will all be ready for business." Another soldier writing to his father, said that Hindman had at least fifty thousand soldiers, and still another made a different statement, and, of course, to give the communications the finishing touch of genuineness.
"Now," said Hindman, "the idea is to deliver these to Curtis in a manner that will make him glad of their reception."
"I think," replied an officer, "that I've got a man in my command who is the very individual for such an undertaking. I'll send him up."
Pretty soon a tall, slim young fellow reported for duty.
"What is your name?"
"Walter Scott."
"Well, my literary friend," said Newton, "we want you to start out from here with a lot of mail, with a view to taking it across the Mississippi river. Federal scouts are numerous between here and there and we want to know if the mail you start out with is not likely to fall into the possession of the enemy?"
Scott winked slyly and replied: "Sure to be captured."
"This is a dangerous undertaking."

"Yes, I know, but they help are the mail. Just give me what I want and I assure you that everything will work well."
"What do you want?"
"The facts, more to the command and a pair of saddle-bags."
"All right. Report within an hour."
When Scott reported at the appointed time, a swift horse and a pair of saddle-bags were in readiness.
Nothing was heard of Scott for several days. At length the following dispatch dated at Brownsville, Prairie county, Ark., was received:
"Major General Hindman—I regret to say that the saddle-bags and contents have fallen into the hands of the enemy and that I barely escaped with my life. I will report in person as soon as possible."
A few days afterwards he arrived at headquarters. He walked in with a dejected air, as though he would surely be court-martialed on account of failure to discharge his duty. Newton called him into an adjoining room, and closing the door, asked:
"Well, how did the scheme work?"
"Like a charm. I was riding along the road, and in turning a thickly wooded point I suddenly came upon a body of Federal cavalry. I wheeled, and the several well-mounted men always in the van of a cavalry command, pursued me firing, it seemed, at every jump. I leaped forward in my flight, and my saddle-bags waked from under me until at last they tumbled off. I made a fruitless effort to grab them, and looked as though I was shocked at their loss. This practically ended the pursuit."
The first intimation that the ruse had been successful was the following paragraph in the *Memphis Bulletin*:
"When last heard from Hindman, with a large body of troops, was marching toward Missouri. We are credibly informed that General Curtis will soon be upon him."
Scott's career was of short duration. He was court-martialed, on a charge of horse-stealing, while in General Dandridge McKee's command, and shot.—*Arkansas Traveler.*
A Well Kept Secret.
AN INVOLUNTARY MURDER THAT WAS NOT KNOWN FOR FORTY YEARS.
Between forty and fifty years ago an old log church stood on the south Commons in Allegheny City. It was then in the open country. Adjoining and belonging to the church was a graveyard, fronting on the public road.
About daybreak one morning in 1840 a farmer who on his way to Pittsburgh with a load of dressed meat, heard sounds issuing from the graveyard, as if some one was knocking a box to pieces with an ax. He climbed the fence and stole along in the direction of the sounds. He had gone but a short distance when he found a man engaged in robbing a grave. He had been so absorbed in his work that he had not heard the approach of his discoverer, and he was in the act of lifting the body from the coffin when he heard the footsteps of the farmer. The grave was that of a prominent young woman who had been buried the day before.
The farmer was so filled with horror and indignation at the crime, that before the man could spring out, he seized a club that lay near, and dealt the robber a powerful blow on the head. The man fell into the grave and neither uttered a sound nor moved after falling. The farmer became alarmed. Dropping into the grave himself, he raised the man's body. The grave robber was none other than the sexton of the church, a man standing high in the community. He was dead.
The farmer hurried back home, and telling his relations what had occurred, he at once left the State. Only five persons ever knew the secret of the graveyard tragedy besides the living principal. Who found the body of the sexton dead in the grave was not positively known by them, but as it was given out by his family that he died suddenly, and no investigation was ever made, they supposed that the body must have been discovered by some one of the family before its position was known to any one else. The sexton's family soon afterward moved away. His slayer went to an Ohio town, where he married and grew into prominence and wealth. He died last week. His secret was never divulged, and even his wife and children lived in ignorance of it. The secret at the time of his death, was in the keeping of two persons alone, the other three having died. One of these persons a leading clergyman of Allegheny. The other is the writer's informant, a resident of the oil regions. He says that the death of the principal in the graveyard tragedy has released him from all pledge of secrecy. He refuses to reveal the names, but affirms that the story is true in every particular.—*Bradford Special to New York Sun.*
A character is fatally defective that so grand that it cannot stoop to the ordinary courtesies and duties of daily life without any sense of degradation or effort.—*Baptist Weekly.*
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