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Statisticians agree that the population of the world averages 109 women to every man.

Millions of men in India live, marry and rear apparently happy children upon an income which, even when the wife works, is rarely above fifty cents a week.

According to the Florida Times-Union, another branch of industry is befalling its ruin by the rapid increase in the use of the bicycle. That is the walking-stick trade. We may next expect to hear similar complaints from the manufacturers of crutches and wooden legs.

A Chicago clerk recently threw a book agent forcibly out of his office, after refusing to take the man's card in to his employer, and was justified by the judge before whom he was tried for assault, who established as Chicago law the theory that such forcible measures in dealing with book agents were justifiable.

Here is a great truth poetically expressed in Profitable Advertising: The wheels of true love never run along a rougher course than does the business of the man who would succeed in the world and never to his aid does all that most successful plan of advertising spring and fall and ever when he can.

Says Harper's Weekly: Pursuant to a resolution of the last Congress, the Philadelphia mint is to begin to make experiments with new metals and combinations of metals to determine whether any improvement can be made in our present copper and nickel coinage. It may give us aluminum cents in place of the copper pieces now in use, and possibly a new species of five-cent piece, made entirely of nickel, or perhaps half of nickel and half of copper. There is so slight a suggestion of copper in the present five-cent piece that it is a surprise to read that seventy-five per cent of it is copper and only twenty-five per cent nickel. The present coin contains ninety-five per cent of copper, two per cent of tin, and three per cent of zinc. The objection is made to it that it is hard to distinguish by feeling between a cent and a silver ten-cent piece.

There are many new things in the bicycle line offered for 1897. Every up-to-date manufacturer will introduce new attachments and alleged improvements in the details of his machine, while the clever inventor has been more than busy with his strange and wondrous devices. In the great mass of inventions there are some few things of real value. The construction of bicycles to order is yet in its infancy, but it is a growing industry, and thousands of devices which will never become general will be utilized by individuals. The most radical departure in 1897 will be an increase in the dimensions of pneumatic tires. The average tires are now from one and a half to one and three-quarters inches wide. Tires in 1897 will reach a width of two and a half inches. Wheels thus equipped will look awkward at first, but the safety itself was gained in its day, when contrasted with the high wheel. The wide tire is safer than those now in use. It reduces the likelihood of side slips on damp roads, which is really the cause of four out of five cycling accidents.

A bombshell has been thrown into European politics in the form of a statement in Prince Bismarck's official paper, the Hamburger Nachrichten, to the effect that within a year after the organization of the Triple Alliance he arranged a secret treaty with Russia by which Germany was to hold aloof if Russia was attacked by Austria, and Russia was to hold aloof if Germany was attacked by France. The abrogation of the treaty was coincident with Prince Bismarck's sudden retirement from office, and Count Caprivi, who succeeded him, refused to indorse it. Alexander III, indignant over this, immediately turned to France, and the result was the present Franco-Russian alliance. These general facts are not new, at least to the diplomatic bodies, but the publishing of them just now has created a great deal of stir. How serious a stir is evident from the fact that immediately there was talk of bringing the newspaper to trial for publishing state secrets. The Nachrichten retorted that if they pushed too hard it would tell all that it knew, especially in connection with the Prince's degradation from office. The talk of trial ceased immediately, and Emperor William thought best to write a personal letter to Emperor Francis Joseph in regard to the matter, assuring him of Germany's loyalty to Austria, and Count Herbert Bismarck made haste to declare that the matter appeared without his knowledge or consent.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

Hark! upon the calm, still, midnight Comes the sound of pealing bells! Far away their echo sounding, O'er the hills, and o'er the dells. Over all, heaven's canopy Stars that shine with brilliant light; Underneath the snowy hillside, Glistening through the starry night.

"I've got news for you," ventured Susan, eyeing her doubtfully. "Who do you suppose is going to get married?" "I'm sure I dunno," replied Patience, absent. She was feeling disappointed at not seeing May. "Well, it's Squire Willard, an' he's going to marry a widdler woman from Lincolnton, with two grownup daughters. What do you think of that?" "I s'pose he's got a right to," said Patience defiantly, but her fingers were trembling and she bent her head still lower over her work.

PATIENCE'S CHRISTMAS.

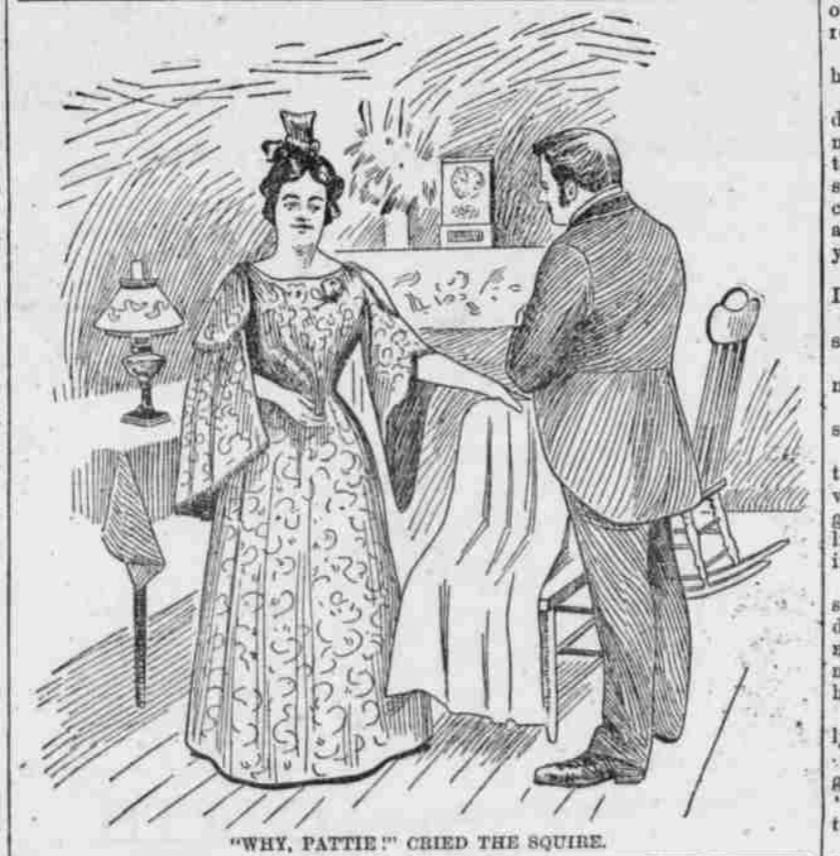
"EAR me!" chirped Miss Patience Cummings, "I can't seem to sense it that it's so near Christmas." "Well, I guess you would if you had as much to do as I have," snapped her sister-in-law. "But some folks can always take things easy." "I don't think you need talk like that, Susan," returned Patience. "I'm always willing to help, an' I calculate to pay my way."



and the sound of voices in animated conversation that Susan had a visitor. After awhile the caller departed and Susan came into the sitting room in a state of repressed excitement. "Don't you think May Barrow's been here?" she exclaimed. "I want to know," said Patience, in pleased surprise. "I'd like to have seen May myself. Why didn't you bring her in here?"

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caused her to build some delightful airy castles, who can wonder or blame her, even if she had passed her thirty-sixth birthday and was "old enough to know better." So it is not surprising that Miss Patience worked buttonholes and felled seams on little Jim's new suit with a heavy heart for the remainder of the day.

Christmas Day passed uneventfully. There was the usual turkey and plum pudding, and little else to remind one that it was a holiday. The members of the family were reserving themselves for evening, when they were going to Lincolnton to attend a Christmas festival held in the church, the principal feature of which was a Christmas tree.

Patience had never seen one and would have enjoyed going, but there wasn't room for her in the sleigh, and besides it never seemed to occur to her brother or his wife that the "old maid" could be interested in any sort of amusement.

Lighting a candle she went up to her little room under the eaves. She put the light down on an old-fashioned mahogany bureau, and opening her closet door, took down her two and only highly prized silk gowns.

WHEN THE STAR SHONE.

'Twas the Signal for Bethlehem's First Christmas. Two thousand years ago, less four, witnessed one of the most remarkable epochs ever known to secular history, and the most remarkable period of which spiritual man has ever conceived.

Each department of the Government was organized and directed by the Emperor himself, and this is important because it was by the decree of Augustus himself that the prophet's words were verified and the Christ born in the town of David. The circumstances were these: By an official order a census of the territory of Palestine was called for, and to that end from every part of the province the inhabitants looked themselves, according to the Jewish custom, to the town from which they claimed their origin.

They arrived in Bethlehem in the afternoon and found the little city crowded with a host of people bound on a mission similar to their own. Every caravaner was filled. The very streets were thronged with people seeking accommodation, and after repeated efforts to obtain quarters in the city proper, which numbered at that time only about 3000 inhabitants, and was, therefore, unprepared for any emergency of this sort, the footsore wanderers struck out into the country.

It was understood that any guests who should provide their own bit of carpet as a protection against the damp and would be content and satisfied with the bundle of straw which served as a bed. These were the surroundings of the Virgin Mother on the night of the advent of the Son of God.

Small Bobbie was a greedy boy, so 'neath the mantle shelf He laid an iron trap to catch Old Santa Claus himself.

THE AWAKENING.

A sun-shaft flies from the Day's bent bow And stirs the notes in the morning air, It sets the heel of the Night aglow, And glides the gloss Of the looks that toss Over the pillow, white and fair.

Nothing is more discouraging than unappreciated sarcasm.—L. G. Teacher—"Now, Tommy, tell me what remaining animals are?" Tommy—"Them what chews their cubs."

Artist—"I flatter myself this last picture of mine is an excellent one." Another Artist—"My dear fellow, you don't flatter yourself half as much as you flatter the picture."—Roxbury Gazette.

Our Enormous Mustard Crop. This country is now growing a larger part of the mustard put up in England as well as in this country. said a commercial man, "and California is raising the larger part of it. The mustard seed has just been harvested in California and probably will run up to 10,000,000 pounds, or 1,000,000 tons more than the crop of 1895. The seed is kept six months before being ground. The brown seed has the best flavor and greatest pungency, while the yellow produces the most oil. The English mustard packers have made the yellow the most fashionable, however, and as a result there are ten pounds of yellow produced for every pound of the brown, though the brown is stronger and better in every respect. Probably one-half of the English mustard that is used in this country grew in California, though it was ground and packed in England. French mustard is the same as our mustard, the seed being soaked in vinegar, properly spiced, for twenty-four hours before it is ground."—Washington Star.

A Cobbler's Queer Cribber. An ingenious Yankee cobbler is plying his trade at Atlantic, Me., in a queer crib. He has built a scow with a house on it which he uses as a work shop. During the summer he sails from one place to another doing shoe making; in the winter he puts the whole arrangement on runners and has it hauled to convenient places.