The Centre Reporter, Millheim, Pa.

WITH

W^{M.} FICHTHORN

Reporter. Q. W. FOOTE, Editor and Publisher. Millheim, Friday, Mar. 12.

Terms-\$1.25 Per Annum.

Christmas at Maplewood.

BY EMMA GARRISON JONES.

It was mid-winter down at Maplewood Farm; the hills white with snow, and the branches of the giant elms, that stood guard round the old farm house, brown and bare. The afternoon upon which our little story opens was in Decembor-a clear, crisp afternoon with a cloudless sky, and a low, dazzling sun, dropping down all too soon behind the dark pine ridge that belted the western horizon.

Squire Marvin and his boys were down in the hollow gathering uppinefaggots; the old roan mare standing meditatively in the sunshine, while they heaped the wagon with the rich I'm just from Miss Herkamp's but resingus wood. At home, in the kitchen, Mrs. Marvin and Lizzie and cleaning, and I might as well o' were elbow deep in cakes and pumpkinpies.

'Bring me that spice in the lefthand corner of the blue chest, Lizzie,' Mrs. Marvin was saying; 'and a few more of the golden pippins; we must get about the mince pies now-father wouldn't think it was Christmas if he had no mince-pies,'

But just as Lizzie was going out to do her errand, she was stopped in the doorway by a visitor. Cousin Simon from Sleepy Hollow, a young giant standing six feet in his boots. He had come to town with a sleigh full of skins and furs, and just dropped in to say that his father and all his relatives to be there. mother wanted them all down at Sleepy Hollow on Christmas-day. The old man had taken a fancy to gather all his living relations together on that day, and treat them to the Hastings' this morning. biggest kind of a dinner.

'You'll not fail to come over now, the young man urged at parting. fire; but as Miss Pamelia delivered 'Father's set his heart on having you all together-'twill be the last time he says; and the old lady's making wonderfull preparations, I tell you. We shall have a gav time ;and John's coming home, too I forgot to mention that John's coming home, Lizzie.

Lizzie overturned the spices she was pounding, and grew rosy red to the very roots of her pretty brown hair; then bridling and shaking down that same pretty hair with a conquettish toss of the head.

'Well, what if he is ?' she responded Cousin Simon winked knowingly as

Susie. If it's true, I think it's rale he pinched her cheek

of it wrankled in her heart like a she fell to sewing, singing all the thorn. But she made up her mind while as blithe as a bird. Never did to go to Sleepy Hollow with the rest, the Maplewood hissl listen to sweetand in the excitement of getting up er melody. Of course it was a little appropriate apparal she half forgot dull to spend her Christmas allalone, her vexation. Her dress was exqui- and be cheated out of her visit; but site-an all wool merino of the richest she did not care a straw about John and warmest crimson, trimmed with -not she.

But when the day began to wane, sparkling bugles and dainty lace, and a comb set with pearls to keep back and the bright, Christmas sun hung her silken treses. When the last low above the gloomy pine-ridge; stitch was set, she put them away in when the shadows gathered in the the great oaken chest; and the silly old sitting-room, and the crickets bechild would creep up a dozen times a gan to chirp beneath the hearth day, and raise the heavy lid to feast poor little Lizzie grew terribly loneher eyes on their beauty. ly. Her work was all done; she Christmas-eve came at last. The had put up the chickens and fed her great double-horse sleigh was drawn pigeons; and now she could do up before the door, ready to make a nothing but sit before the great log sharp start for Sleepy Hollow en the fire and think. For a few moments morrow. Just before the clear, win- she etruggled against these thoughts, try sunset, Miss Pamelia dropped in. but they would come. She could see 'I, ve been running round all the af- the great hall at Sleepy Hollow, the

ternoon,' she said, seating herself in roaring fires, and the long Christmas the best arm-chair, and putting on table. with its brown turkeys and her heavy shoes before the fire, 'wish- huge plum-puddings; and all her ing my neighbors a merry Christmas; young cousins, so gay and happy. and couldn't think of slighting you, Would they miss her? Would any Miss Marvin, thought I shouldn't one call her name? Of course not. death o' cold. The snow's as slick as He had forgotten the days when he butter, and the wind cuts like a knife. used to call her his 'darling.' The retrospect was too trying, the they're all heels over head a cooking

brave little heart gave way, and sliding down to the floor, she buried her spared myself the trouble o'going, for face in the cushions of the old armchair, and let the tears, that had been making her poor head ache and

throb all day, flow like April rain 'They never was much, them Herk- The yellow Christmas sun dropped lower and lower; the little brown set; and many be the mouthful they've | birds went twittering home to the eat in our house when my poor father | hedges ; it would soon be night-and was alive. Ah, me ! Christmas was then, what a jolly time at Sleepy Christmas then. Why, Miss Marvin Hollow! How gaily Susie would if you'll b'lieve me, my father had dance, in her handsome blue silk, more for one night's handlings round costlier and prettier by far than her than some folks have for their whole poor little merino lying up in the

Christmas; but I s'pose you'll have a great oak chest. There came a merry burst of sleighbells on the frosty air-But Lizzie did not hearken. Soon after a step upon the porch-Dick's, of course he was bringing in the morning wood. his will ?' By-the-by, Lizzie, John's but presently a strong arm raised the come home-I saw him up at Miss drooping little figure, and, sobbing and startled, Lizzie looked up into a

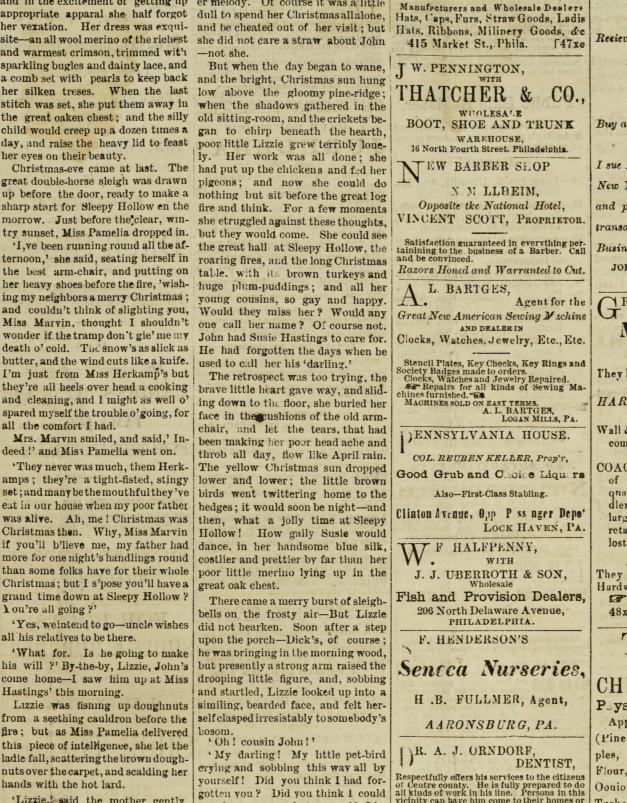
Lizzie was fishing up doughnuts similing, bearded face, and felt herfrom a seething cauldron before the self clasped irresistably to somebody's bosom 'Oh! cousin John!' 'My darling! My little pet-bird crying and sobbing this way all by

yourself! Did you think I had forgotten you? Did you think I could ever love any one but yourself, Liz-

zie? Lizzie straightened herself, cheeks and eyes blazing-her heart as proud as it was tender.

' But you didn't----' she began. 'No buts in the question,' he continued; not a word until you hear

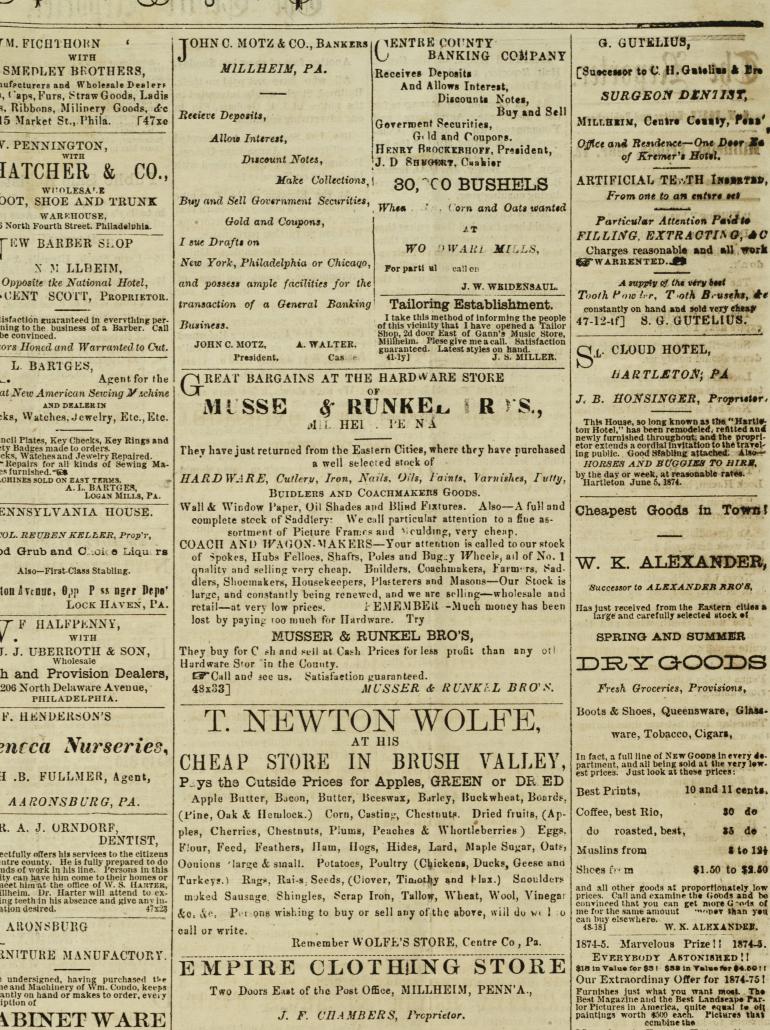
me. I did not write to you because this morning, and it's beginning to I wished to leave you entirely free, be buzzed about that he's sparking to see if you would stand the test of CABINET WARE ance and not forget me. I wrote



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'Nothing at all, little coz,' he replied, teasingly, 'only I thought you might care to know. If you don't, however, I think Susie Hastings will.

I must drive by and drop her the news. Good by."

Lizzie compressed her lips, and went on pounding her spices. What did she care? Cousin John and she to Susie. had been play-fellows, and schoolher; he brought her the reddest apples, and the largest nuts; and drew her not need her mother's warning. Her on his sled in winter; and swam the lake to get her water-lilies in summer years they attended the same singing she was utterly indifferent to cousin school and sat in the same pew at John. Church. Engaged, lookers-on pronounced them; but for all their with her face buried in the pillow, intimacy, no love-word had yet she gave way to her grief, and wept passed between them.

When Johk left home, to read law in a distant town, his last visit was to Maplewood, and he left a plain gold ring with Lizzie as a keepsake; - and through the dreary months of made her cheeks bloom with delight; | awaiting his wife. but down in her hidden heart was a

ure. John had not written one line go-please let me stay.' te her during his absense-she did written to Susie Hastings, that was then she drew the drooping form to what stung her, and to the very quick, her bosom, and kissed her in silence, Susie Hastings, as she conducted her GEORGE A. HUSS, too. Miss Pamelia Perkins, this turned and left her too. Miss Pamelia Perkins, this turned and left her. village gossip, was the bearer of this delectable information.

'Well, Lizzie,' she said, one day, flouncing in, and taking out her roll her stay, and ask no more questions of knitting-work, 'when did you hear now,' replied his wife. from John ?'

'and he was doing well.' 'He don't write to you, then ?' I

thought you corresponded, in course, being as you kept company so long.' Lizzie vouchsafed no answer. She ing back the hot tears that well-nigh went on.

'Susie Hastings had a letter on employment, just then, being the only "Johnny died of scarlet fever, little

Lizzie asked no questions relative tidied up the kitchen, swept and dust- shouldn't wonder if mother or I'd be to the matter, but the remembrance ed every room in the house, and then ' the next to go,"

mean in him after keepin' company with Lizzie so long-I know it makes her feel bad.

all the comfort I had.

1 ou're all going ?'

Mrs. Marvin smiled, and said.' In-

amps; they're a tight-fisted, stingy

grand time down at Sleepy Hollow ?

'Yes, we intend to go-uncle wishes

'What for. Is he going to make

this piece of intelligence, she let the

ladle fall, scattering the brown dough-

nuts over the carpet, and scalding her

'Lizzie,' said the mother, gently,

coming to her relief, 'let me finish

these and do you go and bind up your

hand; and then bring a glass of wine

and a bit of cake for Miss Pamelia."

melia proceeded to finish her gossip.

John was over at Squire Hastings

She obeyed in silence, and Miss Pa-

'Yes,' she continued, meditatively.

hands with the hot lard.

deed !' and Miss Pamelia went on.

'Don't worry yourself, Miss Pamelia,' said Mrs. Marvin, smilingly. 'John will be sure to do right-he and little nest of a cottage in the State. Lizzie are cousins, and will always be I should have been at Maplewood togood friends. I don't think Lizzie,s day, but I had pressing matters to much troubled about his attentions look after. And now, you precious,

mistrusting, jealous little darling, if She spoke the last sentence in rather mates, and fast friends in years gone a loud tone, that it might reach Liz- I had time, I'd kiss every brown curl by. John always made a pet out of zie's ear. She was just returning on your head. There, not a word, with the cake and wine ; but she did you are mine ; I wouldn't hear 'No,' if you were to say it. So hurry, now, they are waiting for us at Sleepy Holbrown eyes were bright and tearless, low. Run, and dress as fast as you and her lip wore a scornful curl, when he was a boy; and in riper which said plainer than words, that can, but nicely, too, dear-for you are to be a bride to.night.' Lizzie turned back in wide-eyed

> But that night, in her own room, wonder. 'Yes, a bride, darling; your father and mother are willing, and mine are and sobbed like a child.

,Mother !'

Her cheeks bloomed like blush-'Well, dear ?' The sleigh was at the door, the roses; but she ran up into her room, horses champing at their bits, and and diving into the great chest, sending out little rills of tinkling brought out the red merino, with its his absence, she had never once re- melody, in the early Christmas light. sparkling bugles and dainty laces, moved it from her finger. He was The boys were already seated, and and the little pearl comb that was to coming home now! The news had Squire Marvin was impatiently hold back the tresses from the fair,

ble woman, and John did not have 'Mother !' called Lizzie's voice, little thorn that spoiled all her pleas- plaintive and tremulous, 'I cannot to wait long. In a very few moments she was at his side, tucked Mrs. Marvin turned and looked for away in the buffalo robes, and the not mind that so much; but he had a moment at the sad, young face; horses were going like the wind. 'You little silly, you,' whispered

> up-stairs. 'You wanted to make a 'Where's Lizzie ?' questioned the bride of me, did you-you and Miss

Pamelia together? Bridemaid, that's Squire. 'Why don't she hurry ?' "She's not going-there, father, let my place, little one."

He looked puzzled a moment, then hoary grandsires and blooming cous-

'They had a letter at Sleepy Hollow nodd ng his head from side to side, he ins, cousin John received his bridelast week,' Lizzie answered, quietly, jumped into the sleigh and the horses and Christmas stars never looked pranced off, filling all the Maplewood down upon a fairer one.

vallies with a chime of bells. Lizzie closed her ears to the sound A family passing through Detroit with heoric determination ; and forc- lost their tom cat.

"Come, children," said the father. blinded her, she sat herself to work- huskily, as he turned to the wagon,

Thursday-I was there when it came. thing that could save her from break- Mary went with the whooping cough, He writes to her regular I believe.' ing down into absolute despair. She and now we've lost Sardimus! I

ness-you will not object ? '

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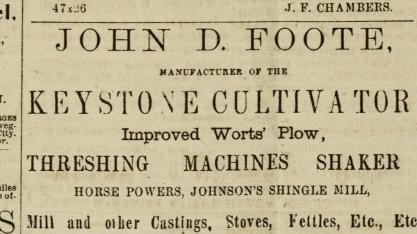
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