

WINTRY WRINKLES.

Oh, the happy boy is flopping
Down the hill with his new sled,
While the humble tramp is chopping
Kindling wood out in the shed;
And the ruffed,
Muffled, stuffed
Chicklet pecks the frozen corn,
And the golden,
Molden, older,
Brandy's looked for ev'ry morn.
The fragile maid is skating
On the pond behind the mill,
The sparrow's masticating
Frozen crumbs upon the sill;
And the bawling,
Sprawling, crawling
Infant's wrapped in fannel's hot,
While the zealing,
Ever-healing
Goose grease stands beside the cot.
The suburbanite is skipping
To his snow-becovered lair,
And old Boreas is slipping
Merry snowflakes through the air;
And the creeping,
Leaping, sleeping
Trolley car hops through the mush,
While the rosy,
Always-dozy
Butcher's boy slops through the stush.
These wintry scenes I fancy
As I'm snuggled in my bed
Concealed so that you can't see
E'en the baldness of my head
And the dashing,
Clashing, smashing
Hallstones rhyme on my pane,
While I coolly,
Honest-truly
Dream that summer's here again.

A CHRISTMAS VISION.

Abraham Columbus was worried.
"Daddy, Crismus is comin', and I want a doll baby with a yeller coat on."
It was the first faint whisper of the coming storm. But she was little, and she was a girl, so it was easy to ignore her small, plaintive voice.
"Daddy, Crismus is comin'."
Abraham Columbus looked up from his work and glared. He was engaged upon a corn shuck collar for mule wear, and was sitting flat upon his cabin floor, half buried in a pile of musty smelling shucks. As he thrust his gray head and great round spectacles through the oval collar, he looked tremendously imposing.
"I bin lookin' for it! Patsy fuses and now you, Mr. Sandy. Torrectly the whole kit and bilin' of you'll be yelpin' 'Daddy, Crismus is comin'.'
"Daddy, Crismus is comin'."
It was like a faint echo of his own sonorous growl. This time from the open doorway.
"An' they got er whole raft er fire crackers down ' Mr. Bryan's sto'—from the fire place.
"An' snakes at riggles like they wuz live"—from the doorway.
"Betsy's got a doll wid a yeller coat"—from Patsy.
"An'—An'—An'" in full chorus.
Abraham dropped his ball of twine to clap his hands to both ears. He was tender hearted and generous, but "Whar were the use of studyin' 'bout Crismus with cotton down to five cents?" He groaned once or twice and then resumed his most awe-inspiring voice:
"I hev made up my mind not to stan a bit er foolshness this year. I puts up with too much all the time. Ef you don't shet up you'll ketch goras, chil-lun, you will indeed. I hev made up my mind fumly. The fus one that sez 'Crismus' to me, under this roof, is goin' 't get a lam'bastin', an' that's the word wid the bark on it. Bring me some mo' shucks, Sandy."
Sandy drew his ten bare toes out of the ashes and brought the shucks.
"A jumplin' jack an' er red waggin'," he sighed in audible soliloquy, as he dumped the shucks down on the floor.
"Ef you don't want me to make a jumplin' jack out er you, you jus' get out of my reach, Alexander Columbus, that is all I desires to remark on this occasion, less'n it is to repeat that the fus one that sez Crismus to me will get a lam'bastin'."
The door was darkened by a commanding figure enveloped in a long ulster of ancient date. It was Mrs. Columbus just back from a trip to Bryan's Crossroads store. She was a woman of unfailing energy. Just now she was fairly brimming over with it. The sap of the season was rising. She glanced down at the shuck platter as she untied her bonnet strings.
"Well, ol' man, Crismus is comin'."
Abraham dropped his head in spiritless surrender.
"Yes, Morier. 'Cordin' to the almanac it jus' two days off."
"Bryan's kid in a big Crismus stock."
"Yes, Morier. An' I bin lookin' it over."
"These are mighty hard times, Morier. Cotton down to five cents a pound."
Mrs. Columbus was bustling about the cabin, hanging up the ancient ulster, sweeping the shucks into a more compact stack about Abram's shoulder, flinging chips on the fire, dispatching Sandy for the greens and Jake for the sweet-potato pump, all with positively cyclonic force and rapidity that left every one breathless but herself.
"An' while the chillun is out of hearin' 'Abum, I want er well lay down the law. I want you to go to Bryan's sto' now, the things is all picked over."
Abram spread appealing hands outward to prove the emptiness of his pockets.
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Mrs. Columbus was a remarkable woman. She would have been pronounced so in any era of the world. She never wasted words in idle argument, and she never permitted her remarks to be side-tracked.
"You can get me a pa'r er fine shoes. I ain't had but one pa'r out er this year's crap, an' five yards a green serge for a bas'. Bryan ought to throw in the trimmin's. An' Patsy's goin' to have a doll an' a tea set of the skies fall—a tin one'll do; Sandy wants a jumplin' jack and some firecrackers. An' Jake wants a red waggin. I see one this mornin' hangin' in the sto' winder. You kin bring a bundle er crackers for him, too."
Mrs. Columbus knelt to blow the fire into greater vitality with her strong lungs. Abraham looked at her broad back furtively.
"Is that all, Morier?" Then he groaned.
"That's all, Ab'um, an' I think I'm lettin' you off easy. Sister Sallie's goin' to have—what you groanin' 'bout, Ab'um?"
"Toothache, Morier; mighty bad. But I ain't got no money to have it pulled out. Times is awful hard. I is jus' got to grin an' b'ar it. But don't say 'Crismus' to me, I baigs of you."
Maria arose in her might with a generally inflated aspect, perhaps from her recent lung exercise. She towered loftily over the little shuck-environed man on the floor.
"Ab'um Columbus, we won't waste er breath talkin'. I needs all mine 't keep green-wood fires fum goin' out. I done tol' you what me an' the chillun wants fur 'Crismus. That toothache er yours comes roun' as reg'lar as 'Crismus does. That's the balsam apple on the climbly piece an' some raw cotton stickin' in the jamb."
Only two more nights before Christmas. Two nights of mental and physical agony to Abraham Columbus. He never could refer to them in after years without chattering teeth.
Why he should have waked up that night at the hour when "graveyards yawn" he could never tell. His habit was to sleep peacefully from dusk to dawn. But wake up he did to see standing at the foot of his bed a tall, white-winged object emitting a faint phosphorescent glow, to hear a solemn command laid upon him in a sepulchral voice. The words burned themselves into his terrified brain.
"An' Moses appeared unto Ab'um in a dream, and sayeth, arise and do the biddin' of thy wife, ef thou wouldst live long in the land and prosper."
The faint light came closer. The white wings fanned his clammy forehead. He flung himself backward upon the bed and drew the covering tight over his starting eyeballs. Sandy was snoring by his side. Maria had declined the risk of being kept awake all night by a tooth that only ached at Christmas times.
Once again the white-winged visitants, once again the sepulchral adjuration to arise and do the bidding of his wife, and then Christmas dawned bright and sparkling.
Abraham demanded an early break fast. His mule, respectful in a new shuck collar, was saddled and hitched to the rack by the time the coffee pot was on the table. Mrs. Columbus beamed sympathetically on her husband.
"Goin' to the tooth puller, Abum?"
"Not this mornin', Morier."
"Goin' ridin', Abum?"
Abraham cast a haggard glance across the table at her, then swallowed his coffee at a gulp. "Yes, Morier."
"Which way, Abum?"
"Out to Bryan's sto', Morier."
"Well, don't be gone too long. I done stuff a fat pullet, an' made some sweet tato pies for dinner, s'long as we couldn't 'ford nothin' better for 'Crismus."
But Bryan's store was ten miles away. The roads were heavy. The crowds at the store were jolly. Bryan's whiskey was good, and it flowed freely. Not even the fear of meeting on the lonely ride homeward the white-winged spook that had frightened him into unearthing his treasure gourd could start Abraham home before the setting sun and the departing crowds rebuked him. And then his progress was slow, for the burden of his Christmas shopping was heavy upon him. Maria's five yards of green serge for a basque and pair of fine shoes made a bulky paper parcel. The pasteboard box containing Patsy's doll and tea set refused to be pocketed; Jake's red express wagon was slung over one shoulder, and Sandy's jumping jack and snake wriggled harmoniously together among the fire-crackers. Nothing had been forgotten. Not even the spook!
The stuff pullet was filling the cabin with savory odors, and the sweet potato pies were shining in varnished splendor under the lighted lamp when Abraham opened the door and stood staggering under his burdens. His entrance was impetuous. His utterance rather thick.
"M—M—Morier, Crismus done 'er."
"I see it is, Abum, and—so is you."
Mrs. Columbus smiled inscrutably as she helped her husband to unload, mentally deciding "hat."
"The ol' white crane wings had served her one good turn, sure."
Infantile Deduction.
"I guess paw hasn't got much money this year," said little brother.
"What makes you think so?" asked little sister.
"Cause he was telling me that it wasn't right to impose on Santa Claus just because the old feller was good natured."
Bryan's pig is the chef d'oeuvre at Christmas dinners in China.

HOW PAPA CAUGHT THE BURGLAR.



1. Papa—Well, 'his will tickle Willie to death.



2. Papa (awakening in the middle of the night)—Hark! What noise was that? I guess I'll go downstairs and—



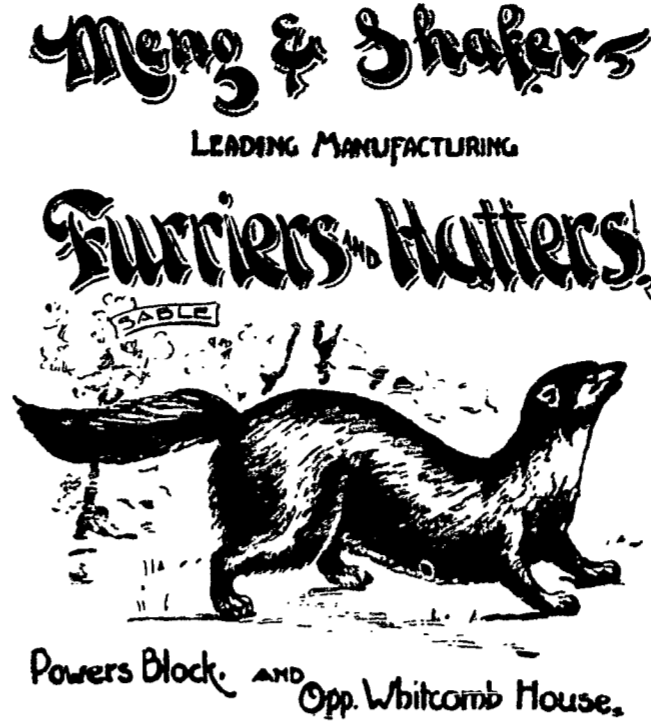
3. Well, I've got you, anyway.

Cause for Thanks.

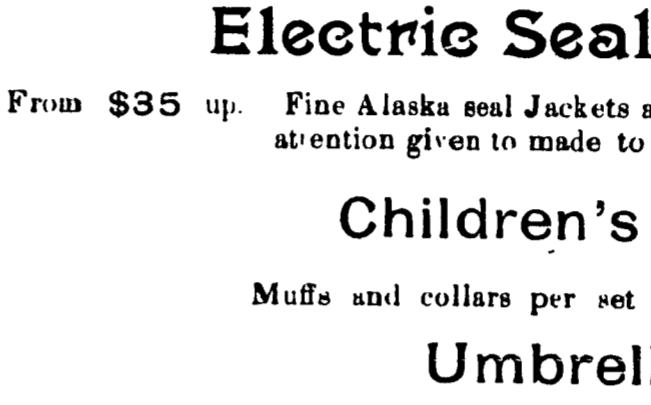
"How is Rawhide Jim, the stage-driver, getting along?" inquired the editor of the Clarion on Christmas Day. "I understand that he went through a very painful experience yesterday."
"Yes," replied Alkali Ike. "He had three grass widows in the stage when he started out from Rocket City, an' he thought they acted like they were tired of their single-blessedness an' had designs on him. Accordin', he drove all the way with the four mules layin' right out straight an' him pourin' the whip to 'em with both hands. He was so agitated that he never knew when he lost off a couple of the mailbags on the way an' ran over a buckboard with two tourists in it, an' tore the whole outfit. Easterners an' all, durn near to atoms. He jest kept his head turned back toward the widows ready to abandon the stage at the first hostile movement on the part of the ladies, till he twisted his fool neck so that when he finally clumb down from the stage at the end of the journey he walked backward. Now the business men are cussin' him for losin' their mail, the postmaster is after him for neglect of duty, the tourists are talkin' of havin' him arrested for assault with intent to kill, the owners of the buckboard wants damages, an' the widows were so flattered by his continual notice that they have sent for him to call on 'em. Dr. Slade is tryin' to straighten his neck, an' not knowin' which direction he had twisted it around from in the first place, twisted it still further the wrong way till it sorter locked an' stuck fast, an' now won't turn in either direction."
"Well, well! This will be a painful Christmas for him!"
"Wal, yes; but from his pint of view it hain't as bad as it might have been. He's the thankfulest man in town today. He says that but for the smile of Providence one of them widows might jest as well have been the wife that he left back yonder in the States when he sorter hopped out between days some three years ago."



Suggestions for Xmas Gifts.

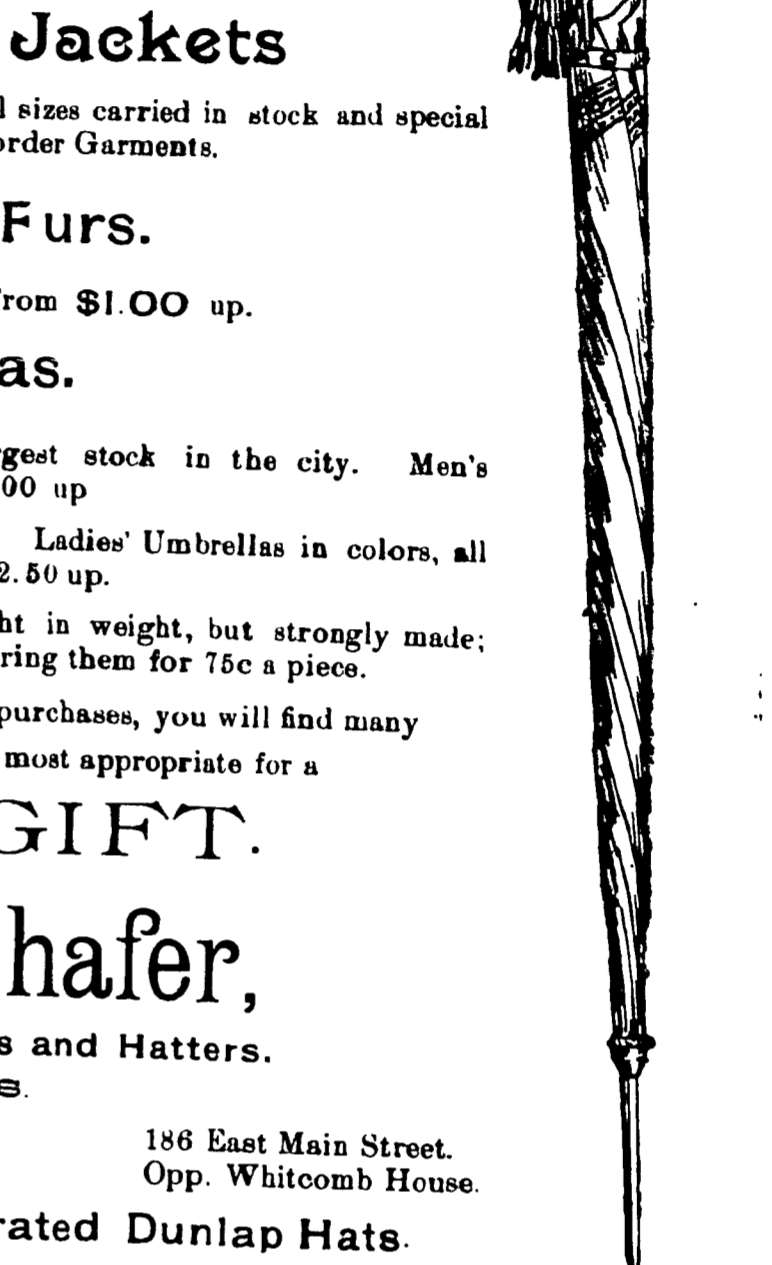


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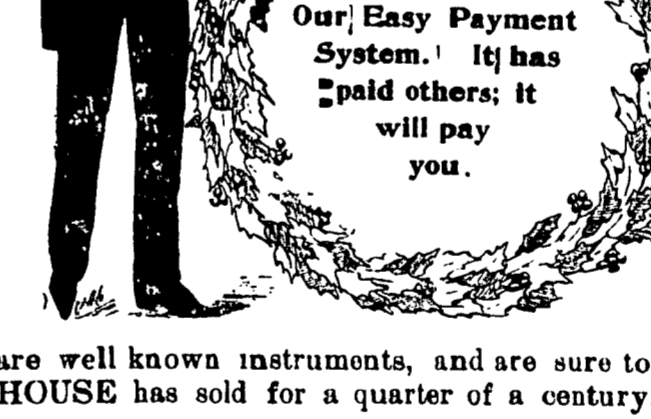


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