

THE FIRST OF CHRISTMAS

Beneath the blue Judean sky
Three crowned kings swift-
ly strode,
Each with his gift fast fixed
A star that brightly glowed.
They wandered o'er the chilly plain,
With feet wearied by long and deep-
snowed paths upon spars,
And costly gifts they bore,
Soft raiment, jewels rich and rare,
And ornaments subtle sweet,
They carried in their hands to lay
Him to His royal feet.
They heard as on such music pour
As o'er the cooling mortal ear—
The organ chanting of praise and deep-
sphere calling upon spheres,
Lower and lower wove the star
Within the azure air.
Then crowned kings trembled at the sight,
And followed swiftly where
It hung above a stable shed,
With rapt attention they
Where, housed with lowly herds, they
found
The mother and her Child.
Three crowned kings fell upon their knees
With meekly reverent cry:
They knew Him by the line of brow,
The glory on His face.
Lo! he has found Him whom we sought:
We know Him by the line of brow,
But how to kneel this lowly place?
How to adore and gaze a shrine?
They spread their costly treasures there
With rapt attention they
And there the Christ mass first was said
For Him the one in three.
And even as that Christmas eve,
Long centuries ago,
We seek Him whom the three kings sought,
We have not far to go.
For where the poor and needy are,
The weary come and weak,
We find Him whom the kings foretold,
The King whom nations seek,
And who do both His Christmas feast
With rapt attention they
Lo! he who sold His Christmas King
Partaking with them there.
—Later Ocean.

TO SPEND CHRISTMAS,

INVITED me to spend Christmas with 'em, eh? said old Mr. Knott, pausing in his task of soldering a new tin bot-
tom into a super-annuated was a h boiler. "Well, it's the first one of our relations as has ever took so much trouble as that for us, eh, old woman?"

"Mrs. Knott, who was a silent, philosophical sort of a woman, tolled away in her kitchen, scouring up the rusty pots and kettles which Hezekiah brought home, cleaned the shabby suits that were given in exchange for fresh tinware and crockery, and presided over the sort of second-hand store, which, after awhile, Hezekiah set up by way of disposing of his surplus wares. And in time people got into the way of going to 'Knott's place' for cheap goods, second-hand articles, and all manner of odds and ends. Prices were always reasonable there—the articles were varied and unique—and there is no one who likes better to save money than your average country farmer.

The Baptist minister had surrounded himself with the "I-am-better-than-thou" atmosphere, the storekeeper had undoubtedly the advantage of gentility, but it is questionable whether after all, Hezekiah was not the happier of the three. Day after day he was on the road. He knew the orchard where the reddest apples grew, the copes where bubbled out the clearest springs, the shadowy thickets where the brown-coated chestnuts rattled down at the touch of the earliest frosts.

In his quaint way he studied Nature, and rejoiced in her mysteries, and cared little that he was outlived by his kith and kin. And those were not altogether wrong who declared that he shouted "Ra-a-gs—old ra-a-gs—bottles and tin-a-ware!" all the louder when he came past the stiff lilac bushes of the parsonage garden, and trudged beneath the shadow of the country store where his brother practiced the great principles of "exchange and barter."

But Jonathan, the only son of the old man's only sister, had always surreptitiously delighted in the mysterious contents of the basement where these second-hand goods were packed away. He had helped his uncle tinker up the old clocks, mend the battered tea-kettles and saucers, and sort out from the rag-heaps all that promised to be capable of some rejuvenation. When he married the district school teacher, however, Hezekiah shook his head doubtfully.

"We've seen the last of Jonathan now," says he. "Mary Mix'll be a deal too genteel to let him associate 'long of us any more."

But here on the top of all this came the invitation to the first Christmas dinner in the young couple's new home.

It had not, however, been sent without some discussion. "What! Mary had exclaimed. "Invite the old rag-and-bottle man?" "He's the jolliest old chap you ever knew, Mate," pleaded the bridegroom. "And Aunt Viney's a regular brick. I wish you could see the big ginger cookies she used to bake for me."

"But if they come, Uncle William and Uncle John will keep away," argued Mary.

"Let 'em," was the curt reply. "Uncle William's the best of the lot, according to my way of thinking."

So Mary acquiesced in her husband's wishes, and the invitation was duly written and dispatched.

"It's rather a joke, you an' me bein' invited out, old woman," said Hezekiah. "We'll go, sha'n't us? He'll we anything fit to wear?"

"I guess we can make out," said Mrs. Knott.

"And I'll tell ye what," said Hezekiah, "we won't be beat in manners, not by nobody. We'll send a Christmas present to the bride. There's that old cast-iron wood-stove that I bought at Hound's Hollow, and now leaned back against the door-way, satisfied with the result of her efforts.

"Tell that to the marines," was the comment of her incredulous husband.

There was no denying that the different branches of the Knott family had been sorely scandalized when Hezekiah boldly bought a horse and cart and went into the rag-and-bottle business, instead of preaching the gospel, like his elder brother, or accepting a clerkship in a village store, like the younger one.

"I hadn't brains like Bill, nor capitol like John," said this black sheep of the Knotts. "And allays liked bein' in the open air. And, arter all, there ain't so much difference between sellin' wares out of a waggin', and handlin' 'em across the counter, is there?"

The Baptist minister looked stead-

fastly the other way when the sound-
ing of divers and sundry bells an-
nounced the coming of the tin-
medic wagon; the budding merchant
desired his wife to have nothing
whatever to do with Hezekiah's help-
mate, in a social point of view, but
the shrewd New-Englander only
smiled and shrugged his shoulders.
"I'm gettin' my livin' away,"

Hezekiah brought home, cleaned the shabby suits that were given in exchange for fresh tinware and crockery, and presided over the sort of second-hand store, which, after awhile, Hezekiah set up by way of disposing of his surplus wares. And in time people got into the way of going to "Knott's place" for cheap goods, second-hand articles, and all manner of odds and ends. Prices were always reasonable there—the articles were varied and unique—and there is no one who likes better to save money than your average country farmer.

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"We are so glad to welcome you here," said she. "A merry, merry Christmas, aunt and uncle."

"Hullo!" said Knott, looking around him. "So you started the fire, did ye?"

"Yes, Uncle Kiah," said Jonathan, "I started it. Do you suppose I

"You've burned up your Christmas present."

wanted to give my relatives a cold welcome, eh?"

Uncle Kiah clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth. "Dunno nothin' about that," said he. "All I know is that you've burned up your Christmas present, disobeying orders this sort o'way."

"Uncle, what do you mean?" cried Mary.

Uncle Kiah stamped around the room and tore his hair in an ecstasy of rage.

"The fools ain't all dead yet!" said he; "that's plain enough. I'd laid out to give you and your wife here a hundred-dollar bond for a Christmas gift—and I packed it into the old stove-pipe, with a lot of waste-paper to make sure there shouldn't be no mistake about your gettin' it, and so it's gone up chimney, with the rest of the sparks and smoke!"

Jonathan grew lividly pale. Mary uttered a little shriek of dismay. For a moment the Christmas glow seemed to have faded out of all their hearts.

For a moment only, however, Aunt Viney came promptly to the rescue. "You're right there, Hezekiah Knott," said she. "The fools ain't all dead, so long's you're left alive; for nobody but a fool would ha' thought of tuckin' hundred-dollar bonds up into the elber of an old stove-pipe. And it's lucky for you and these young folks here that I happened to want a little waste paper to wrap round this 'ere old china in my basket, and took the guffin' outen the stove-pipe—ain't it row?"

She extended the basket to Mary Knott. Old Hezekiah pounced upon it like a starved cat on a mouse, and dragged the paper wrapping forth.

"Here it is now—the very hundred-dollar bond!" he shrieked, waving it triumphantly above his head. "A merry Christmas! Hooryay, Jonathan!—a merry Christmas! Old woman, to his wife, 'you're the sensiblest of the lot!'"

And so they all sat down to the first Christmas dinner that Mary Knott had ever cooked—with bright faces and joyful hearts.

"Uncle," said Jonathan, "how shall Mary and I ever thank you for your generous present?"

"Don't say nothin' more about it," said Uncle Kiah. "You're the only

one of our relations as ever invited us to spend Christmas—and I guess we can afford to make you a present; eh, old woman?"

And Aunt Viney smiled a broad ascent.—Young Ladies' Bazar

A UNIQUE feature of the late campaign was recorded in Idaho, where one citizen wagged his wife against three mules. The lady was somewhat aggrieved. She averred that to put her up against three mules was a reflection that her womanhood would not permit her to overlook; that by a fair valuation she was worth any four mules that ever kicked in Idaho, a position wherein public sentiment sustained her, and the bet was declared off.

WALTER BESANT has laid aside his novels for a time and is working on a one-act comedy. The average novelist never feels so like the farmer who was trying to plow with dogs as when he endeavors to put his characters upon the stage and make them talk and move so as to suit a dramatic manager.

ILLINOIS INCIDENTS.

SOBER OR STARTLING, FAITHFULLY RECORDED.

Sweet Charity's Opportunity at Decatur—Boy Killed by a Train—Little Girl Burned to Death—The Same Old Shell Game Works Again.

From Far and Near.

The business portion of Decatur was wiped out by fire. Loss, \$12,000; insurance, \$6,000. The cause was a defective fuse.

GRACE, the 3-year-old child of J. D. Samuels, a Cartersville lumber dealer, was burned to death, her clothes catching fire at a grate.

AT Springfield, a 10-year-old son of Gustav Nelson attempted to board a moving freight train, fell, and was crushed to death.

AT Jacksonville by a largely attended reception was given at the gymnasium building of the Illinois College to Dr. Bradley, the new President, and his wife.

JOHN W. HALLENBACK, President of the Auburn Park Bank, and Postmaster of Auburn, is listed among the missing. An investigation of the bank's affairs and the postoffice is now going on.

AN aged man named Roderick Crisp, living near Mounds, died in his chair. The same day his wife, after coming in from the barn-yard, fell down and expired. The old couple were the parents of ten children, but lived alone.

THE auditor of public accounts has issued a permit to S. R. Putnam, James Mahan, H. T. Goddard, James R. Parkinson, L. Risley, and William Seitz, Jr., to organize the Western Savings Bank at Mount Carmel, with a capital of \$250,000.

THE Finance Committee of the Rockford City Council recommends an increase in the Mayor's salary from \$600 to \$1,200. The Mayor is the president of a new fire engine; the erection of a garage crematory; and also a new ten-room school-house.

AT the Armitage Avenue School in Chicago one of the primary teachers named. Instantly there was a panic among the little ones, and before it was quieted it involved the entire school. Seventy-five children were injured, but none fatally.

THE funeral of Charles S. Brett, who died in St. Louis, was held at Rockford, Ill. The Rev. Mr. Brett, who delivered an address, and a large number of students from the school were present. Six classmates acted as pallbearers. The floral tributes were profuse.

THE Governor has issued a requisition for M. Harry Caldwell, under arrest at Buffalo, N. Y., and wanted at Quincy for embezzling \$4,300 from F. C. Lockwood & Co.; also a requisition for L. Dewitt, wanted in Chicago for larceny and under arrest at Mark Center, Ohio.

AT Decatur, two sisters, Beti and Landie Long, aged respectively 17 and 22, died the same night, one of consumption and the other of typhoid fever. The family is in destitute circumstances, and the children are in a very dangerous ill. Beside the mother, people gave the bodies proper interment.

THE Rockford plumbers engaged in a fight were fined in sums ranging from \$5 to \$40. Samuel Goodwin was immediately re-arrested on a State warrant for using a knife during the melee. Neither the boss nor the journeymen are willing to make concessions, and there is likely to be more trouble.

THREE men, a walnut shell, and a pea played a short engagement at Chicago in the Hall of the State. The result was a loss for the pea. The walnut shell and the pea were the victors.

A THREE days' session of the State Grange was held at Springfield. Attendance about 200—rather light. The increase of membership for the year is 1,751, in ten new granges. The Treasurer had in hand Dec. 1, 1901, \$3,551.22, receipts, \$3,378.32; expenditures, \$3,155.34; now in the treasury, \$3,634.70. An animated discussion of the best methods of marketing products for profit resulted in nothing new. Grand Master Thompson favored free mail delivery in the country, the anti-option bill, and the pure food bill. The following officers were elected: President, B. H. Groom, of Springfield; Vice-President, Mrs. Hattie Olmstead, La Salle County; Directors, A. J. Newman, Coles County; Alexander Keady, McLean County; J. P. Smith, St. Clair County.

MARY MORRISON, of Ramsey, was thrown from a coal cart and received severe injuries.

RUSSELL B. DIGGERS, of Milwaukee, and Miss Blanche Jackson, of Harvard, were married.

BROGERS secured \$200 worth of goods at Litter & Conn's and J. H. Litter's stores in Chicago, and fled to the mountains.

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Compound Oxygen—Its Mode of Action and Results. Is the title of a book of 200 pages, published by Drs. Sarkey & Paalen, which gives to the physician full information as to this remarkable curative agent, and a record of surprising cures in a wide range of chronic cases—many of them after being abandoned to die by other physicians. Will be mailed to any address on application.

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THE GREAT BLOOD AND LIVER PURIFIER. Is the best Spring Remedy, builds you up and gives you a new power of endurance without medicine.

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