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Title: Harper's Young People, December 20, 1881

Author: Various

Release date: November 24, 2015 [EBook #50545]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Annie R. McGuire

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE, DECEMBER 20, 1881 ***

SHAMRUCK; OR, THE CHRISTMAS PANNIERS.
MISTRESS SANTA CLAUS.
A PERFECT CHRISTMAS.
THE MAGIC CLOCK;

[Pg 113]

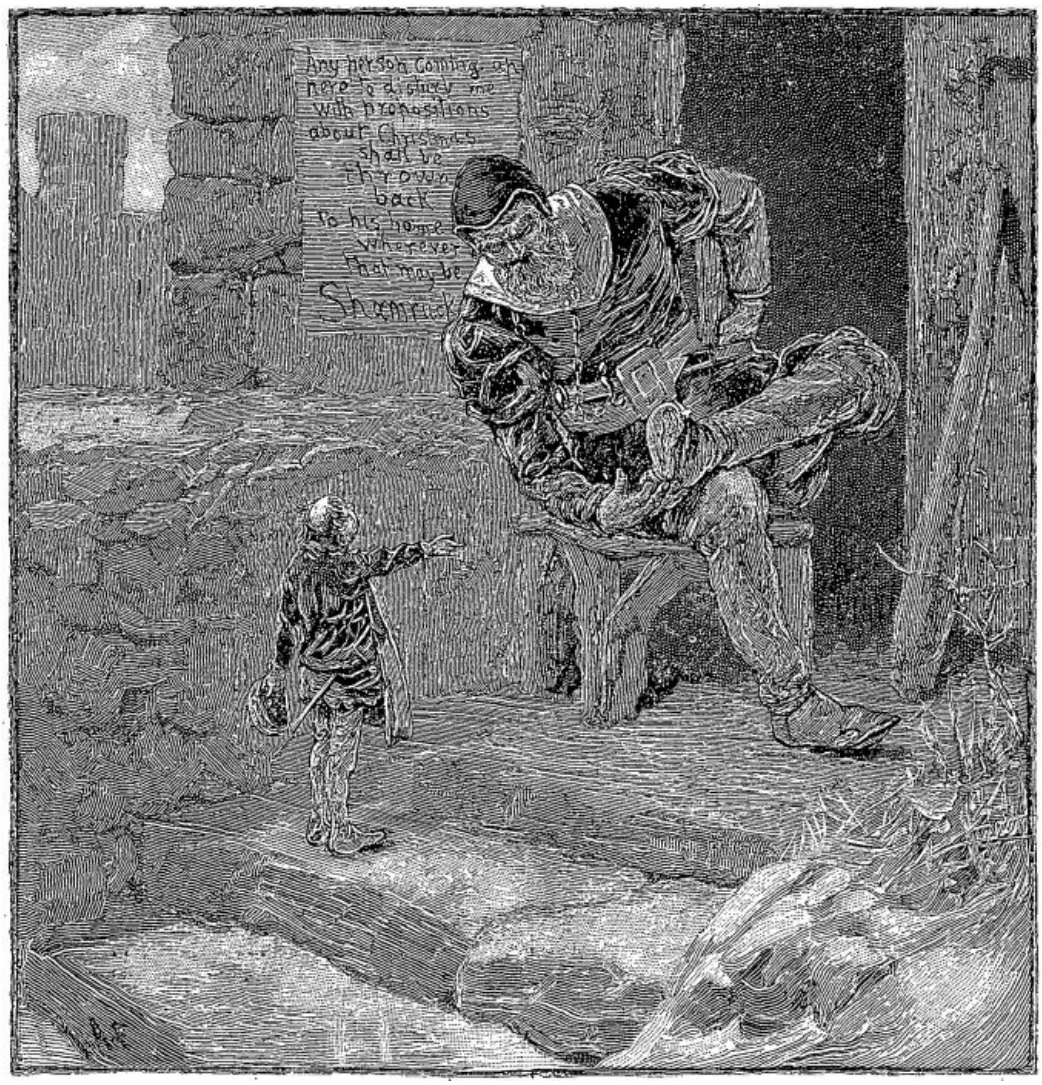
VOL. III.—NO. 112.

Tuesday, December 20, 1881.

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

PRICE FOUR CENTS.

$1.50 per Year, in Advance.



"'YES,' HE SAID, 'I DO WANT A NEW PAIR.'"

[Pg 114]

NOTICE.—*The Serial Story, Post-office Box, and Exchanges, omitted from our Christmas Number, will be resumed next week.*

HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE, 4 cents a week; $1.50 per year.

SHAMRUCK; OR, THE CHRISTMAS PANNIERS.

BY FRANK R. STOCKTON.

There was once a gloomy old giant named Shamruck. His castle was on a hill not far from a great city, in which dwelt the King of the country. Everybody knew Shamruck. He was not a dangerous giant, and no one feared him; but it may also be said that he never cared to do any one the slightest service. About Christmas-time Shamruck always seemed more quiet and melancholy than usual, and more anxious to be alone. Nothing could ever induce him to remain in his castle during the holiday-time. He did not wish to see nor hear the happiness and gayety of the people, and always went away a day or two before Christmas, and did not return until all the festivities were over.

At the time of this story, Christmas was drawing near, and the King had been thinking a great deal about Shamruck. It disturbed him that any one in his kingdom, especially the very largest person in it, should not be cheerful and happy at the joyous Christmas-time. He therefore determined to make a grand effort to induce Shamruck to stay at home and join in the general festivities. "If he does it once, he will do it always," said the old King to himself. "He hasn't the least idea how happy we are. I will go and see him myself."

The way up the hill to Shamruck's castle was very steep and rugged, and so the court engineers made a road up to the castle door, and along this road the sixteen royal piebald horses easily drew the royal carriage. The King went in to see Shamruck. He had a long talk with him, but it was of no use. The giant would not consent to remain in the neighborhood during Christmas. He was not even willing to stay long enough for any one to wish him "Merry Christmas." "If I did that," said the grim old fellow, "I wouldn't go away at all."

Quite disappointed, the King came out, and rode back to his palace. But this monarch did not give up his plan. He thought that although he had not succeeded, some other person might; and so he ordered a proclamation to be made that whoever should prevail upon Shamruck to remain at home until some of the citizens wished him "Merry Christmas" should be allowed to give away the Christmas panniers.

The Christmas panniers were two great wicker baskets, filled with valuable presents, and given by the King every Christmas to the most deserving person in his dominions. The panniers were put on the back of a mule, and driven on Christmas morning to the door of the deserving person. The King proposed this year, as the greatest prize he could set before any of his subjects, to forego his delightful privilege of giving away the panniers in favor of that person who should make Shamruck hear, for the first time in his life, a "Merry Christmas."

This proclamation set all the people in a ferment. Everybody wished to gain the prize, and everybody began to devise some plan by which to do it. It was now Monday, and as Christmas came on the following Saturday, there was no time to be lost. All day Tuesday great people and common people thronged to the giant's castle to try to persuade him to change his mind about going away at Christmas-time. Some of these the giant listened to, some he laughed at, and some he told to go home. About noon he put up a placard in front of his castle, and shut the great door. The placard read thus:

> "Any person coming up here to disturb me with propositions about Christmas, shall be thrown back to his home, wherever that may be.
>
> SHAMRUCK."

After this nobody knocked at the giant's door.

About a dozen miles from Shamruck's castle there lived two young giants. They had heard of the King's proclamation. They laughed when they heard of the placard on Shamruck's castle. "He can't throw us anywhere," they said. "We are nearly as powerful as he is. If we want to make him stay at home, all we have to do is to do it. If he attempts to go away, we will just take hold of him, and show him that two giants are better than one."

The next day the two young giants met Shamruck taking a walk by a river-bank not far from his castle. They went up to him and spoke to him very civilly.

"Shamruck," they said, "the King desires that you will stay at home this Christmas, and we have undertaken to carry out his wishes. So you must go back to your castle, and stay there until Saturday morning."

"Suppose I don't do it?" said Shamruck.

"Then we will take you back," said the young giants.

"Very well, then, I don't do it," remarked Shamruck.

Upon this, one of the young giants took hold of Shamruck by the right shoulder, while the other took him by the left, and they endeavored to turn him around. If you have ever tried to twist a lamp-post, you will know how hard it was to turn Shamruck around. The two young giants could not do it. Shamruck let them try for a little while, and then turning suddenly, he took one of them by his belt and the back of his neck and hurled him heels over head into the middle of the river. He then caught the other fellow by his collar. The young giant, very much frightened, seized hold of a small tree, to which he held with all his might and main. Shamruck paid no attention to this, but gave him such a tremendous jerk that the tree came up by the roots, and both it and the giant went splash into the river.

Shamruck then continued his walk, and the two young giants came out of the river, and went home, with their minds firmly made up that they would never again try to make Shamruck do anything he did not wish to.

There was a little shoemaker in the city who thought he had a very good idea. He went boldly up to the castle, and found Shamruck sitting in his front door.

"You needn't throw me back to my home. I have come only to ask you to let me make you a pair of new boots. You will want them if you are going on a journey."

The giant looked at his boots, which were very old and worn. "Yes," he said, "I do want a new pair. How long will it take you to make them?"

"They can be done Friday night," said the shoemaker.

"That won't do," said Shamruck, "for I shall want to wear them at least a day, so as to make them easy before I begin my journey."

"Very well, you shall have them to-morrow night."

At the appointed time the boots were done, and each was carried by four shoemakers up to the giant's castle. Shamruck thought they were very well made boots.

"There is a good deal of iron about the heels," he said.

"Yes," replied the shoemaker; "you won't want them to wear out very soon, if you are going to travel in them."

The giant went into his great hall and put the boots on; and then the shoemaker told him to stand up while he and his assistants buckled the boots around the ankles. While the seven assistants

were buckling the boots very tightly, the wily shoemaker went behind the giant, and putting great screws in plates of iron he had set in the heels of the boots, he screwed them firmly to the oaken floor.

When all this was done, the shoemakers retired to some distance, and the giant attempted to take a step.

"What is the matter?—what is the matter?" he roared. "I can not move my feet."

"You needn't try to do it," said the shoemaker, who stood by the open door. "Your heels are screwed fast to the floor, and those buckles are all padlocked. You can't get loose."

"And what do you expect me to do?" shouted Shamruck. [Pg 115]

"I intend you to stay there until Saturday morning," said the shoemaker, "when the people can come and wish you a 'Merry Christmas.' Then, if you'll promise not to hurt me, I'll unlock your buckles and unscrew your heels."

"I must stay here, must I?" roared Shamruck. And with that he jerked up his right foot with such force that the great oaken plank to which the heel was screwed came crashing and splintering with it. At this the eight shoemakers dashed out of the front door and ran down the hill. The giant now pulled up the other foot, plank and all. Then he sat down and cut the straps of his boots, and taking them off he unscrewed the heels from the planks.

"With new buckles and straps," he said, "these will be good boots, and if ever I catch that shoemaker, I will pay him for them."

The shoemaker was very much frightened, but he was a stubborn little fellow, and would not easily give up his purpose of winning the Christmas panniers. "There is no use of trying force on that giant," he said, "and everybody knows by this time that he can't be persuaded to do what he don't want to do. There is nothing left but to have him enchanted or bewitched. This very night I will go to see the fairies."

In a wood not very far from the city there lived a colony of fairies. The shoemaker knew the grassy glade, and he went directly to it. He had scarcely reached it when he met a fairy tripping along quietly by herself.

"How now, poor man?" exclaimed the fairy. "What brought you here?"

"Why do you think I am a poor man?" asked the shoemaker, very respectfully.

"I know very well," replied the fairy, "that you would not have come here at night if you had not needed something very much indeed. What is it?"

The shoemaker told her all about Shamruck, and the King's wishes, and how he and others had failed to detain the giant. Then he besought her to help him.

"And what are you going to do with the panniers when you get them?" asked the fairy.

"I shall give them to the most deserving person I know," he answered, with a little chuckle. "A very worthy fellow indeed."

The fairy understood him. "I do not care a bit," she said, "about benefiting you, for I am not at all certain you deserve it, but I think the King is quite right in wishing Shamruck to spend Christmas with the rest of the people, and I have a great mind to try and see what I can do to bring the thing about."

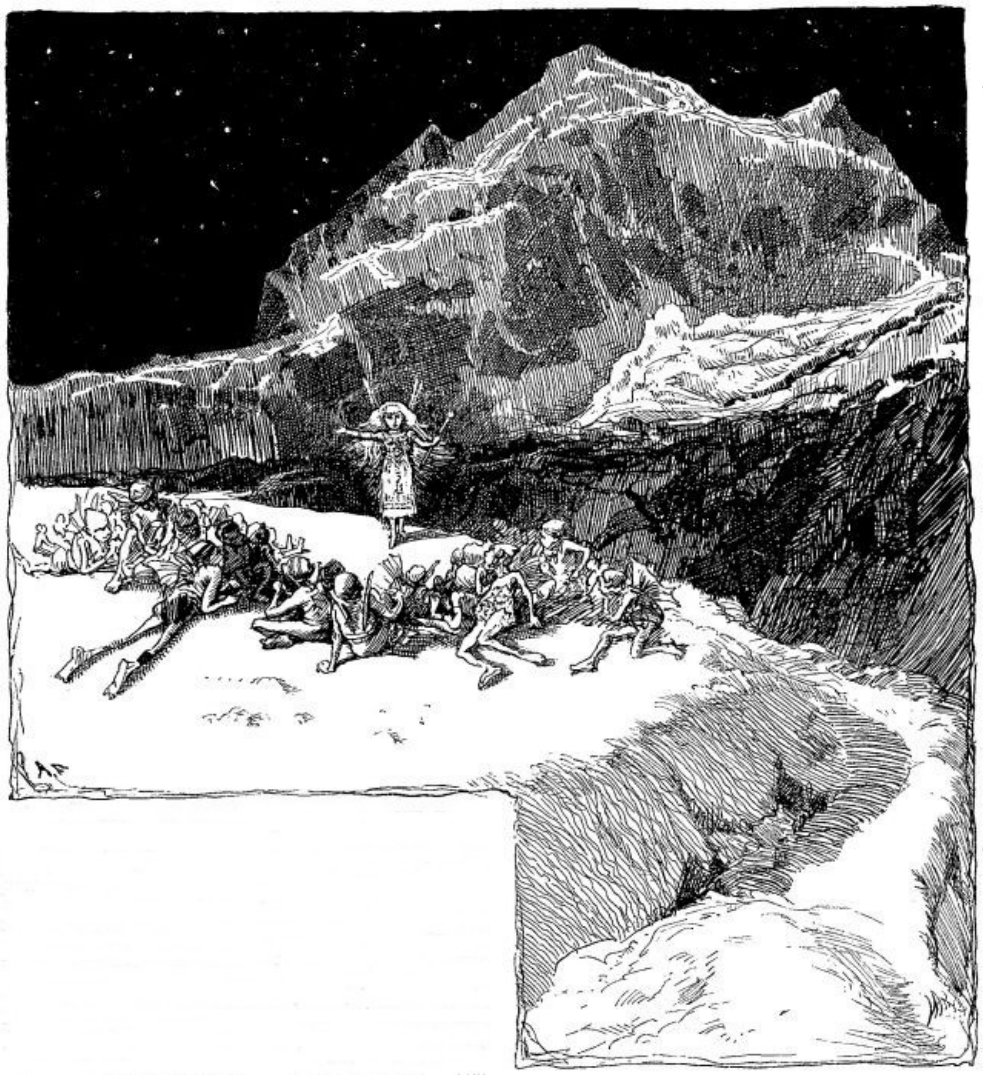
"But if you succeed," said the shoemaker. "I must have the credit of the affair, for if I had not come here to-night you never would have done anything at all."

"That is very true," returned the fairy. "I should not have thought of it."

After a few minutes' reflection the fairy told the shoemaker that she had a plan which she thought was a good one. "And if I succeed," she said, "what will you do for me? Will you make me a pair of slippers?"

The shoemaker laughed as he looked at her tiny feet. "I'll do that," he said, "whether you succeed or not."

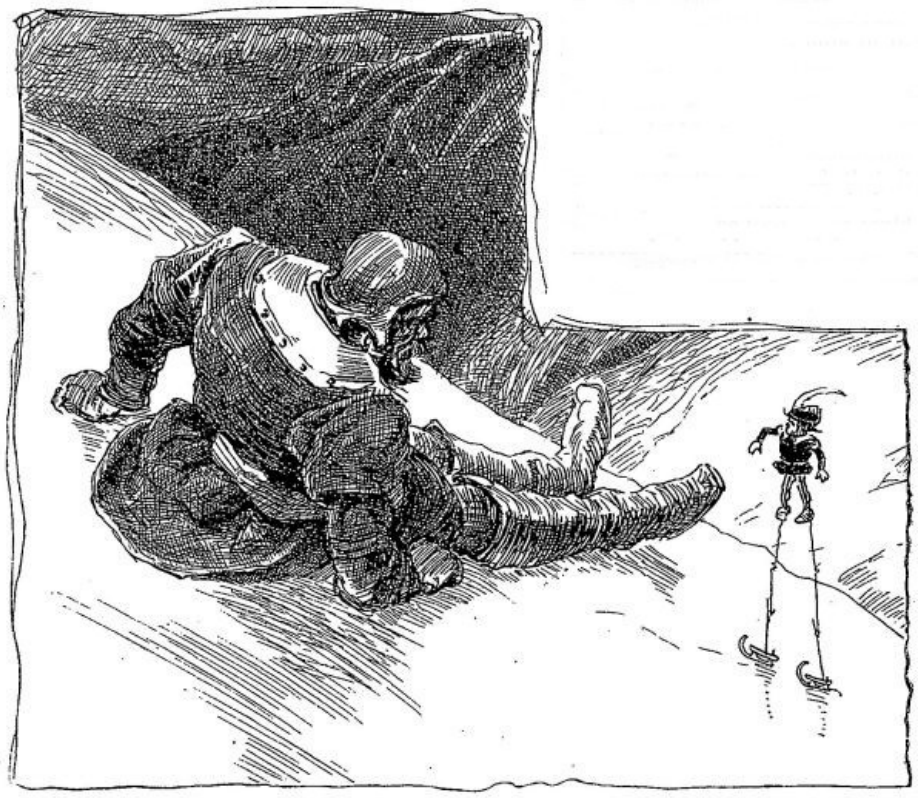
"Very well," said the fairy. "Take my measure."



"SHE GATHERED THOSE LITTLE BEINGS ABOUT HER."

The fairy then went away as fast as she could to the top of a cold mountain, where the ice imps dwelt. She gathered these little beings about her, and when she had told them what she wanted them to do, every ice imp waved his diamond cap in the air, and vowed he would go to work that very instant.

The next morning Shamruck got up and went out to look for his cow. Somehow he had a good deal of trouble in finding her. He could hear the tinkle of her bell, but it came from some very tall reeds and rushes, and he could not see her. At last, hearing the bell close to his feet, he stooped down that he might the better find the cow.



"IN A MOMENT A STRANGE FIGURE APPEARED BEFORE HIM."

Suddenly he felt himself moving. In an instant he was out from among the rushes, and he found that he was sliding down a long hill of ice as smooth as a polished slab of marble, and which extended a great distance, to what seemed the bottom of a deep ravine. The descent was very gradual, and the giant slid slowly down, but though he made every effort to do so, he found it impossible to stop. In a moment a strange figure appeared before him. It was a very small dwarf, about a foot high, mounted upon stilts four or five times longer than himself. On the end of each stilt was a little skate, and on these the dwarf was sliding backward down the hill.

"Hello!" said the little fellow. "How do you like it?"

"I don't like it at all," roared Shamruck. "What does it all mean?"

"It means that you are going to the bottom of this ravine," said the dwarf, throwing out his arms to steady himself. "I expect you'll go faster after you get well started, but you needn't be afraid. There's a pile of straw—four or five tons—at the bottom, and you'll go right into that."

"Who did this thing?" cried Shamruck.

"You'll find out when you get to the bottom," said the dwarf. "But there! did you see? I nearly went over."

"You'll break your neck directly," said the giant.

"No, I won't. Or at least I think I won't. But my stilts are very unsteady. They are made of skewers tied together with thread, and they are not stiff a bit, and the skates make them more shaky yet."

"What did you put them on for, you little idiot?" said the giant.

"I was bound to slide down with you," replied the dwarf, "and I wanted something to raise me up, so I could talk to you and hear you. You see, I want to tell the ice imps and the fairies what you say while you are sliding down."

"You can tell them," roared Shamruck, "that I said you were an impertinent little fool, and that I hoped you'd break your neck."

"There's nothing interesting in that," said the dwarf. "Can't you tell me what sort of sensations you have? Did any of your family ever—"

At this moment one of the stilts of the dwarf bent under him, the other flew forward, and the little fellow went sprawling on the ice.

Shamruck had not time to see what happened next. He was now moving very swiftly, and as he passed the struggling dwarf he tumbled over on his back, and so went on and on until he landed safely in the pile of straw at the bottom of the hill.

The giant floundered to his feet, and looked about him in dismay. He was in an enormous pit, three sides of which arose perpendicularly high above his head, while in front of him stretched upward the smooth and glittering ice hill. He knew it would be absurd for him to try to ascend this, and the steep walls were covered and glazed with ice, and impossible to climb.

He was greatly wondering how there happened to be such a place, how he happened to slide into it, and how he should ever get out of it, when he heard a little voice not far from his head. Turning around, he saw the fairy standing upon a slight projection on the wall.

"Are you hurt?" she said.

"No, I am not hurt," he roared; "but what is the meaning of this? Had you a hand in it?"

"Yes," she said; "I invented this pit and the hill, but it was the ice imps who carried out my plans."

"And what did you plan it for, you wicked little creature?" cried. Shamruck.

"I am not wicked," replied the fairy; "and I did it because I wanted to please the King, and to make you stay with him over Christmas, and I think I managed it very well. Some of us fairies took the bell from your cow, and we tinkled it before you until we led you to the very brink of the ice hill. Then you slid down, and were not hurt, and now you can't get away." [Pg 116]

"But what good will that do you and the King?" cried the giant. "I shall certainly not join him and his people at Christmas."

"You can't help it," said the fairy. "To-night the ice imps will build up the ice under you until you and your straw will be on the side of a very high hill. You will be in a smooth cleft or gully of ice, which will slope downward until it ends in one of the great parks outside of the city. You can't get out of the cleft, and are bound to slide down as soon as we are ready. Everybody will know what is going to happen, and the King and hundreds of people will be in the park. Then, early to-morrow morning, you will slide down among them, and everybody will bid you 'Merry Christmas.' What do you think of that plan? Giants and men can do nothing with you, but we little creatures can manage you, can't we?"

"You are a lot of little miscreants," said Shamruck, "and you can do a great deal of mischief when you try. I acknowledge that in this case you are more powerful than giants or men. But do you know what will happen if you carry out this plan?"

"What?" asked the fairy.

"I shall lose my temper, a thing I don't often do; but I know I shall do it if you play such a trick on

me as that."

"And what will happen then?" asked the fairy.

"Happen!" cried Shamruck. "I shall boil over with rage. If I find myself against my will among those people on Christmas-day, I shall be so wild with anger that I will trample them to death without mercy. There will not be many of them who will think it a merry Christmas."

"Do you really mean that?" asked the fairy.

"I certainly do," said Shamruck.

The little creature looked earnestly at the giant's stern face. "Shamruck," she cried, "if this plan of mine is to cause trouble and misery, I give it up instantly. I'll make the ice imps build the hill up under you, and the slide shall lead right down to your castle. If I do that, will you be satisfied, and will you hurt nobody?"

"If you do that," said Shamruck, "I will be satisfied, and will hurt nobody."

The fairy instantly left him, and it was not long before Shamruck felt that the pile of straw on which he was sitting was gradually rising in the air. Soon he was on a level with the surface of the earth. Then he rose higher and higher, until he sat upon the top of a small hill. Then before him gradually but swiftly appeared a long slope of smooth ice. Down this the pile of straw, with Shamruck on it, now rapidly began to slide, and it did not stop until he found himself at the back door of his castle. [Pg 117]

It was now late in the afternoon, and the giant laughed as he entered his castle and made ready for his journey.

"How ridiculous it is," he said to himself, "for these creatures to try to make me do what I don't want to!"

When he was ready to start, he opened the front door, but stopped suddenly as he saw something on the door-step. At first he did not perceive in the twilight what this object was, but stooping down, he saw it was a little girl.

"Child!" he cried, "what are you doing here? I almost trod upon you."

"I am terribly tired," the little girl said, "and I am as hungry as anything. I thought you'd be coming out after awhile."

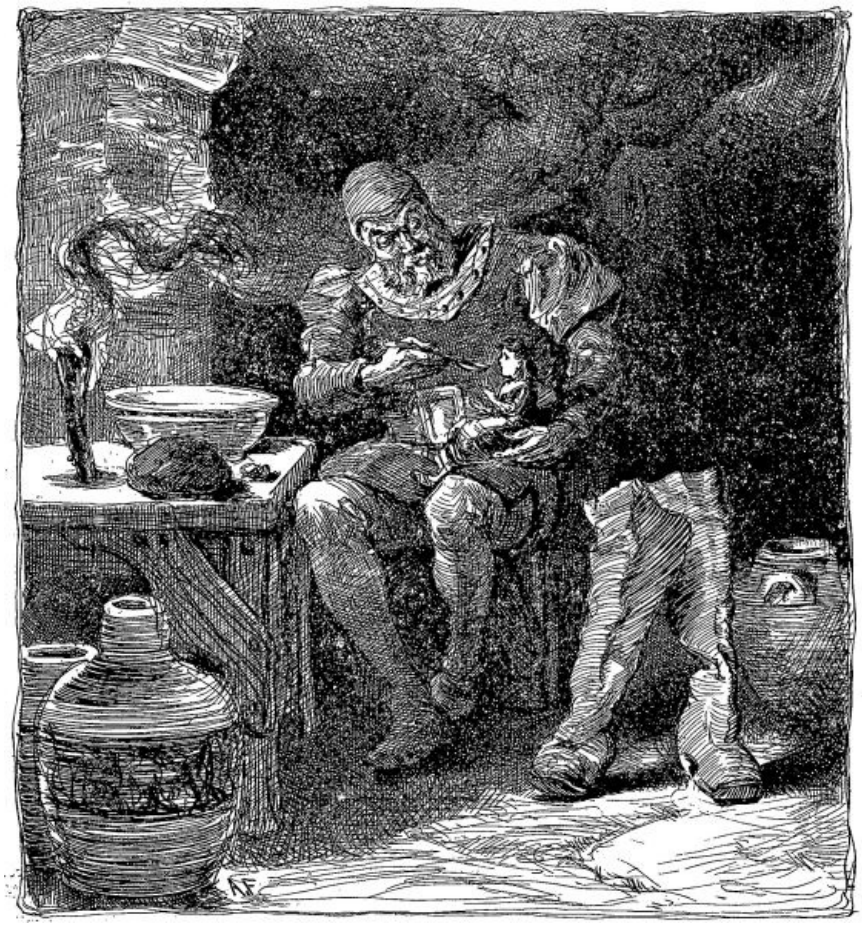
"Have you been here long?" asked Shamruck.

"A pretty good long while," said the little girl, "and I think I must have been asleep."

"If you are hungry," said the giant, "I can give you some milk. I have some left from my supper, and it is a pity to let it get sour."

The giant went back into his castle, and lighted a torch; then he took from a shelf an enormous bowl, with some milk in it. This, with a piece of bread, he put upon the table, and told the little girl to eat.

The child looked up at him with a troubled countenance, and Shamruck instantly perceived that it was impossible for her to help herself to any of the food. She could not reach the table even if she stood upon one of his big chairs. Besides this, the bowl was entirely too large for her to manage. So, taking one of his smallest spoons, he sat down, and took the little girl on his lap. Then he fed her with milk from the spoon, and gave her as large a piece of bread as she could hold in her hands.



"TAKING MILK FROM THE GIANT'S SPOON WAS LIKE DRINKING OUT OF A SOUP PLATE."

Taking milk from the giant's spoon was like drinking out of a soup plate; but the child was very hungry. She drank the milk and ate the bread, and felt happier and happier every moment. When she had had enough, she leaned back against the giant's hand, and looked at him with a little smile, and said, "It is ever so nice not to be hungry!"

"You poor little child," said Shamruck, "are you often hungry?"

"Nearly always," said the little girl. "It didn't use to be quite so bad when mother was with me, but it was pretty bad even then."

"Where is your mother?" asked the giant.

"She is tired to death," said the little girl.

"Really and truly?" exclaimed Shamruck.

"Yes, and they buried her," said the child.

Shamruck did not say anything for a few moments, and then he asked, "Did you come here to spend Christmas?"

"Christmas?" said the child, drowsily. "Is it anywhere near Christmas?"

"Why, yes," said the giant. "Don't you know that?"

"No," replied the little girl, "I had forgotten all about it. I used to remember when Christmas came, but for the last two or three years mother told me I had better try to forget it. I did try, but I found it right hard to forget Christmas. I always remembered it a little until this time." [Pg 118]

"Poor child!" thought the giant. "It must be very hard to be obliged to forget Christmas when you want to remember it. Now, as for me, I'd be very glad to forget it if these people would only let me. But I must be going. Little girl," he said aloud, "wouldn't you like to take a nap?"

The little girl did not answer, for she was already taking a nap. She had thrown herself back upon the giant's knee, and was sleeping soundly. Shamruck looked down upon her and smiled.

"She must be very tired," he said to himself. "I'll put her down in the middle of my bed." But when he attempted to take her in his hands, the child turned over and looked so troubled at having her sleep disturbed that Shamruck let her lie where she was. "She will wake up after a while," he said, "and then I'll put her in my bed." But the little girl slept soundly a long time, and Shamruck sat and looked at her, and thought what a pity it was that there should be such creatures in the world as himself and this little girl who could not enjoy Christmas when it came. "It should not come at all," he thought, "when it only makes us feel how lonely and miserable we are." Once again he tried to move the little girl, but she turned over with such an impatient gesture, and such a troubled look upon her sleeping face, that he could not bear to disturb her.

After a while he heard, through the open door, a clock striking in the city. "I wonder what time it is?" he said to himself. "I must be off before daylight."

It was not long after this that he heard the voices of people coming up the hill. It was past twelve o'clock, and a large party of the citizens, who had staid up late to see Christmas come in, had noticed the light in the giant's castle, and had come up the hill to see if he was really there. They entered the hall, and were astonished to see him sitting by his table. With one accord they took off their hats and shouted: "Merry Christmas! merry Christmas, Shamruck! A merry, merry Christmas to you!"

Other people now came running up the hill, and entered the castle, and everybody shouted, "Merry Christmas!" over and over again.

At first Shamruck sat, utterly bewildered, looking at the people, and listening to this strange greeting. Then he leaned forward, and shouted, "It isn't Christmas yet."

The little girl, who had been awakened by the noise, sat up on his knee, and looked as much astonished as he was himself.

"It *is* Christmas," cried the people; "it struck twelve o'clock half an hour ago."

"THE KING, WHEN HE HEARD OF IT, JUMPED OUT OF BED."

People were still coming up the hill, and the good news had been passed from mouth to mouth until it reached the city. The King, when he heard of it, jumped out of bed, and ordered his coach and sixteen piebald horses. They were speedily ready, and then he went galloping up the hill to the castle.

"Shamruck," he cried, as he ran into the great hall, "you must stay with us now all day, and join in our festivities. You promised to do that if you ever staid long enough for anybody to wish you a 'Merry Christmas.'"

"Yes," said the giant, "I promised that, and I suppose I must stay."

Shamruck, first having turned the empty bowl upside down on the floor for the King to sit upon, now told all that occurred to him in the last few days, and how it had happened that he was still at home.

"Little girl," said the King, "the Christmas panniers are yours, and in the morning you shall know everything about them. You shall now come with me to my palace, and the Queen will have you washed and dressed suitably for Christmas."

The festivities in the city began soon after breakfast. The little girl was the heroine of the day. The Christmas panniers were presented to her amid great cheering and rejoicing, and the King told her all about them.

"If I am to give the panniers away," she said. "I shall give them to Shamruck, for he is the best person I know."

It was not very polite to say this before the King, and some of the courtiers smiled a little; but his Majesty said, "You have made a good choice." And he patted her on the head.

Then, turning to his treasurer, he said: "If these panniers are to go to Shamruck, you must hasten to empty them of their contents. The giant will not want the pretty knickknacks and costly ornaments they contain. Put the panniers on the back of the stoutest mule in the stables, and fill them with gold and silver coin."

This was speedily done, and the stout mule had scarcely staggered into the great square in which the court and the people were assembled, when Shamruck approached. He was late; but messengers who had been sent up to see what detained him had reported that he had not answered to their calls, but looking through the cracks of the door, they had seen him mending his clothes. So nothing was said to him about his tardiness; and although he looked rather shabby among the people in their holiday clothes, nobody cared for that. He was cheered and welcomed as no one had ever been welcomed before in that great city. When he was told that the panniers were his, he stood still for a minute, and said not a word. Then he turned to the King, and said,

"I will not take the panniers unless I can also have the little girl."

"Will you go to him?" asked the King of the child.

"Indeed I will!" said she. "He is kind and good, and his cow gives the best milk I ever tasted."

Then Shamruck gently took up the child and kissed her. It was one of the largest kisses any little girl ever had, but she was not frightened a bit.

The Christmas festivities lasted all day, and far into the night, and when they were over, Shamruck declared that he had never had the least idea what a joyful day was this great holiday, and the little girl told the King that no matter what happened, she never could forget Christmas again.

Shamruck did not want a mule. He took the panniers in one hand and the little girl in the other, and went up to his castle, a great crowd of people accompanying him, and singing carols as they walked. In a day or two pleasant rooms were fitted up for the little girl in the castle, and the giant provided her with teachers and good companions, and she grew up to be a fair and happy woman. As for Shamruck, he was never gloomy again, and ever afterward Christmas-time was to him the most joyful season of all the year.

The little shoemaker had a weary time trying to make the fairy slippers. He had not imagined it could be such a difficult task. He could never shave any leather thin enough; he could never get any thread or waxed-ends fine enough; and his fingers were all too big to handle such tiny things. He worked in his spare time, as he had said he would; but as he had always given himself a good deal of spare time, he had to work a good deal on the slippers. Before long he began to dislike them so much that he gave more attention to his regular business, so as to have as little spare time as possible, and he soon became a prosperous man. The fairy slippers were never finished, but the little shoemaker made all the boots for the giant Shamruck, and all the shoes for the little girl, and he charged them nothing at all.

MISTRESS SANTA CLAUS.

[Pg 119]

BY MARGARET EYTINGE.

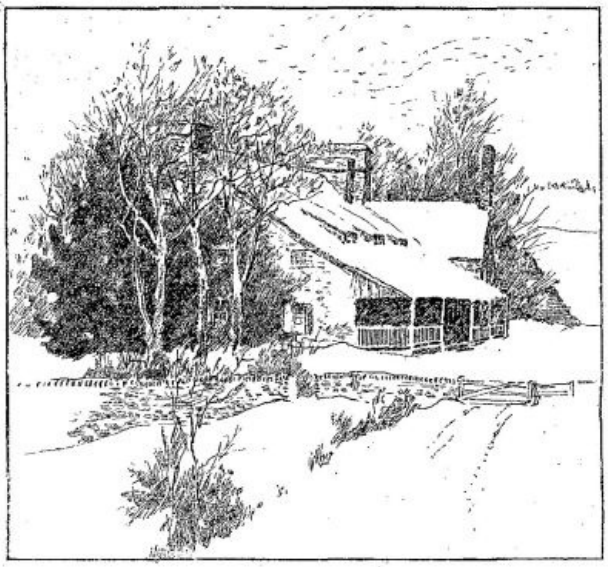
Much you have heard about old Santa Claus,
But naught, I think, of his good-natured wife,
And I must tell you of her, dears, because
In sweet'ning life for you she spends her life.
She's small and plump, her eyes are brown and bright,
And in a cave she lives that's full of toys,
Where, with her servant-elves, from morn till night
She's busy working for the girls and boys.
Yes, quite three hundred days out of the year
Never a single idle hour have they,
For well they know there would be many a tear
Should sugar-plums fall short on Christmas-day.
And oh! and oh! the sugar-plums!
Some brown, some red, and some as white
As snow-flakes when they first alight;
Some holding grapes, some holding cherries,
Some bits of orange, some strawberries,
Some tasting like a peach or rose,
And some that dainty nuts inclose:
Some filled with cream, and some with spice,
And all so very, very nice.
And oh! and oh! the sugar-plums!
Those funny, funny little elves,
They cram the boxes and the drums,
The bags, the baskets, and the shelves;
They heap them high upon the floor,
In closets pack them two miles long,
And when there is no room for more
They sing a jolly elfish song;
And pretty Mistress Santa Claus,
With sugar sticking to her thumbs
And tiny fingers, laughs aloud
To think of that great eager crowd
Of smiling girls and smiling boys
Awaiting for her husband's toys.
And oh! and oh! the sugar-plums!
And now, sweethearts, when merry Christmas comes,
And you greet Santa's gifts with loud applause,
Remember who sent you the sugar-plums,
And give one cheer for Mistress Santa Claus.

A PERFECT CHRISTMAS.

BY WILLIAM O. STODDARD.

CHAPTER I.

There was not a larger house in all the valley than Grandfather Vrooman's. It was old and comfortable, and seemed to lie sound asleep, with a snow blanket all over its roof.



"IT SEEMED TO LIE SOUND ASLEEP, WITH A SNOW BLANKET ALL OVER ITS ROOF."

Nothing short of a real old-fashioned Christmas could wake up such a house as that.

Christmas was coming!

Unless Santa Claus and the Simpsons and the Hopkinses should forget the day of the month, they would all be there at waking-up time to-morrow morning.

"Jane," said Grandmother Vrooman, that afternoon, to her daughter, Mrs. Hardy, who lived with her—"Jane, I've got 'em all fixed now just where they're going to sleep, and I've made up a bed on the floor in the store-room."

"Why, mother, who's that for?"

"You wait and see, after they get here, and we've counted 'em."

"Anyhow there's cookies enough, and doughnuts."

"And the pies, Jane."

"And I'm glad Liph gathered such piles of butternuts."

"Oh, mother," exclaimed little Sue, "I gathered as many as he did, and beech-nuts, and hickory-nuts, and—"

"So you did, Sue; but I wonder if two turkeys'll go round, with only one pair of chickens?"

"Mother," said Mrs. Hardy, "the plum-pudding?"

"Yes, but all those children! I do hope they'll get here to-night in time for me to know where I'm going to put 'em."

At that very minute, away up the north road, two miles nearer town, there was a sort of dot on the white road. If you were far enough away from it, it looked like a black dot, and did not seem to move. The nearer you came to it the funnier it looked, and the more it seemed to be trudging along with an immense amount of small energy. Very small indeed, for anybody close up to it would have seen that it was a five-year-old boy in a queer little suit of gray trimmed with red. He had on a warm gray cap, and right in the middle of the front of it were worked a pair of letters —"O. A."—but there was nobody with the gray dot to explain that those two letters stood for "Orphan Asylum." No, nor to tell how easy it was for a boy of five years old, with all the head under his gray cap full of Christmas ideas, to turn the wrong corner where the roads crossed south of the great Orphan Asylum building. That was what he had done, and he had walked on and on, wondering why the big building did not come in sight, until his small legs were getting tired, and his brave, bright little black eyes were all but ready for a crying spell.

Just as he got thoroughly discouraged he came to the edge of the woods, where there stood a wood sleigh with two horses in front of it, drawn close to the road-side, and heaped with great green boughs and branches.

"The sleigh's pretty nigh full, grandfather," sang out a clear boyish voice beyond the fence, and a very much older one seemed to go right on talking.

"Your grandmother, Liph, she always did make the best mince-pies, and she can stuff a turkey better'n any one I know."

"Grandfather, do you s'pose they'll all come?"

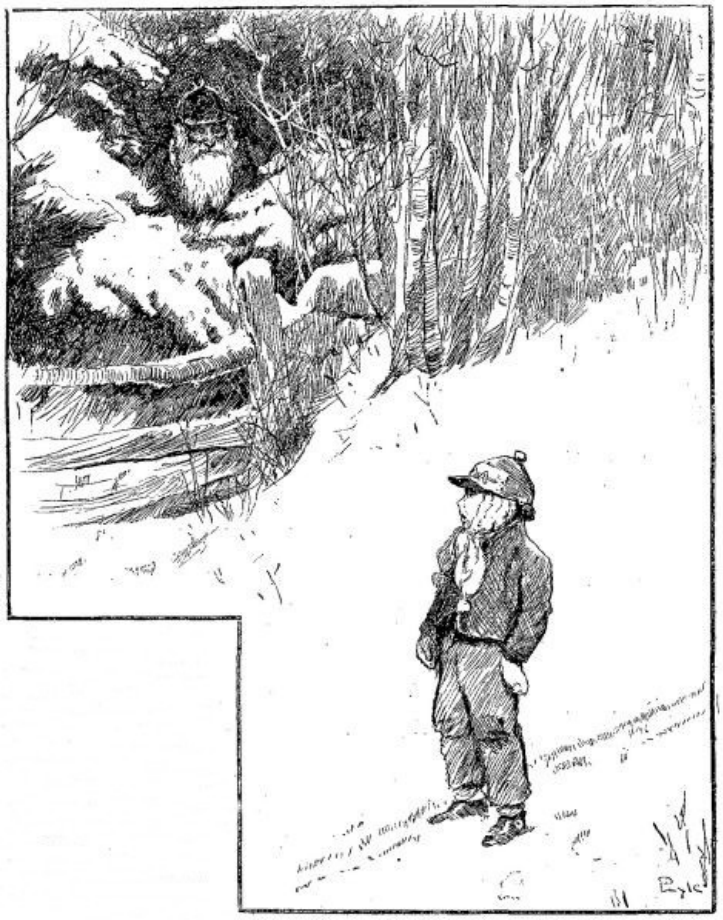
"Guess they will. That there spruce'll do for the Christmas tree. Your grandmother said we must fetch a big one."

"That's a whopper. But will Joe Simpson and Bob Hopkins be bigger'n they were last summer?"

"Guess they've grown a little. They'll grow this time, if they eat all their grandmother'll want 'em to. Hullo, Liph, who's that out there in the road?"

"Guess it's a boy."

"I declare if it isn't one of them little gray mites from the 'sylum! 'Way out here! I say, bub."



"I'M BIJAH."

"I'm Bijah."

There was a scared look in the black eyes, for they had never seen anything quite like Grandfather Vrooman when he pushed his face out between the branches.

The trees all looked as if they had beards of snow, but none had a longer or whiter one than Liph's grandfather.

"Bijah," said he, "did you know Christmas was coming?"

"Be here to-morrow," piped the dot in gray, "and we're going to have turkey."

"You don't say! Just you wait until I cut a tree down, and I'll come out and hear all about it."

"Is your name Santa Claus?"

"Did you hear that, Liph? The little chap's miles from home, and I don't believe he knows it."

"Is that your sleigh?"

"Yes, Bijah, that's my sleigh."

"Those ain't reindeers, and you're bigger'n you used to be."

"Hear that, Liph?"

Bijah had not a doubt in the world but that he had discovered Santa Claus in the very act of getting ready for Christmas, and his black eyes were growing bigger every minute, until Liph began to climb over the fence. Then he set off on a run as fast as his legs could carry him.

"Hold on," shouted Liph. "We won't hurt you."

"Let him go," said Grandfather Vrooman. "He's on the road to our house. We'll pick him up."

"Where could we put him?"

"Took me for Santa Claus, I declare! Liph, this here tree'll just suit your grandmother."

It was a splendid young spruce-tree, with wide-reaching boughs at less than two feet from the snow level. Grandfather Vrooman worked his way carefully in until he could reach the trunk with saw and axe, and then there was a sharp bit of work for him and Liph to get that "Christmas tree" stowed safely on the top of the sleigh load. [Pg 120]

"Now for home, Liph. Your grandmother'll cut into one of them new pies for you when you get there."

"Look!" shouted Liph, "that little fellow's waiting for us at the top of the hill."

The hill was not a high one, and the road led right over it, and there on the summit stood Bijah.

"I'm so tired and hungry," he said to himself, "and there comes old Santa Claus, sleigh and all."

He was getting colder, too, now he was standing still, and when Grandfather Vrooman came along the road, walking in front of the sleigh, while Liph perched among the evergreens and

drove, there seemed to be something warm about him.

It was not so much his high fur hat, or his tremendous overcoat, or his long white beard, or the way he smiled, but something in the sound of his voice almost drove the frost out of Bijah's nose.

"Well, my little man, don't you want to come to my house and get some pie?"

"Yes, sir."

Bijah could not think of one other word he wanted to say, and he mustered all the courage he had not to cry when Grandfather Vrooman picked him up, as if he had been a kitten, and perched him by the side of Liph among the evergreens.

"DO YOU LIVE WITH SANTA CLAUS IN HIS OWN HOUSE?"

On he went, and Bijah did not answer a single one of Liph's questions for five long minutes. Then he turned his black eyes full on his driver, and asked, "Do you live with Santa Claus in his own house?" [Pg 121]

"Yes, sir-ee," responded Liph, with a great chuckle of fun; but all he had to do the rest of the way home was to spin yarns for Bijah about the way they lived at the house where all the Christmas came from.

When they got there, Liph's father and the hired man and Grandfather Vrooman were ready to lift off that Christmas tree, and carry it through the front door and hall, and set it up in the "dark room" at the end of the hall. That ought to have been the nicest room in the house, for it was right in the middle, but there were no windows in it. There were doors in every direction, however, and in the centre of the ceiling was a "scuttle hole" more than two feet square, with a wooden lid on it.

"John," said Grandfather Vrooman to Mr. Hardy, "we'll hoist the top of the tree through the hole. You go up and open the scuttle. Hitch the top good and strong. There'll be lots of things to hang on them branches."

Liph's father hurried up stairs to open the scuttle, and that gave Grandfather Vrooman a chance to think of Bijah. "Where is he, Liph?"

"Oh, he's all right. Grandmother's got him. She and mother caught him before he got into the house. He tried to run away, too."

Bijah's short legs had been too tired to carry him very fast, and Grandmother Vrooman and Mrs. Hardy had caught him before he got back to the gate.

The way they laughed about it gave him a great deal of courage, and he never cried when they took him by his red little hands; one on each side, and walked him into the house.

"Jane," said grandmother, "what will we do with him? The house'll be choke, jam, packed full, and there isn't an extra bed."

"Father found him in the snow somewhere. Just like him. But what a rosy little dot he is!"

"Are you Santa Claus's wives?" asked Bijah, with a quiver of his lip in spite of himself.

"WITH A PLATE OF MINCE-PIE IN HIS LAP, AND BUSH, THE BIG HOUSE-DOG, SITTING BESIDE HIM."

How they did chuckle while they tried to answer that question! All they made clear to Bijah was that the place for him was in a big chair before the sitting-room fire-place, with a plate of mince-pie in his lap, and Bush, the big house-dog, sitting beside him.

"It's Santa Claus's dog," said Bijah to himself; "but his house isn't as big as the 'sylum." [Pg 122]

Chapter II.

There were fire-places in every room on the ground-floor of Grandfather Vrooman's house, and some kind of a stove in more than half the rooms up stairs.

There were blazing fires on every hearth down stairs, and Liph got hold of Bijah after a while, and made him and Bush go around with him to help poke them up. Bijah had never seen a fire-place before, and it was a great wonder to him, but Bush sat down in front of each fire and barked at it.

It was getting dark when they reached the great front parlor, and the fire-place there was wonderful.

"Woof, woof, woof," barked Bush.

Bijah stood still in the door while Liph went near enough to give that fire a poke, and he could hear Grandfather Vrooman away back in the sitting-room:

"Now, my dear, we'll stick him away somewhere. Put him in one of the stockings, and hang him up."

"That's me," groaned Bijah. "He's going to make a present of me to somebody. Oh dear! I wish I could run away."

But he could not, for there was Liph and there was Bush, and it was getting dark.

"Now, my dear," went on grandfather, "I'll just light up, and then I'll go and meet that train. I'll bring Prue and her folks, and Pat'll meet the other, and bring Ellen and hers. Won't the old house be full this time!"

"He's caught some more somewhere," whispered Bijah to himself. "I wonder who'll get 'em? Who'll get me?"

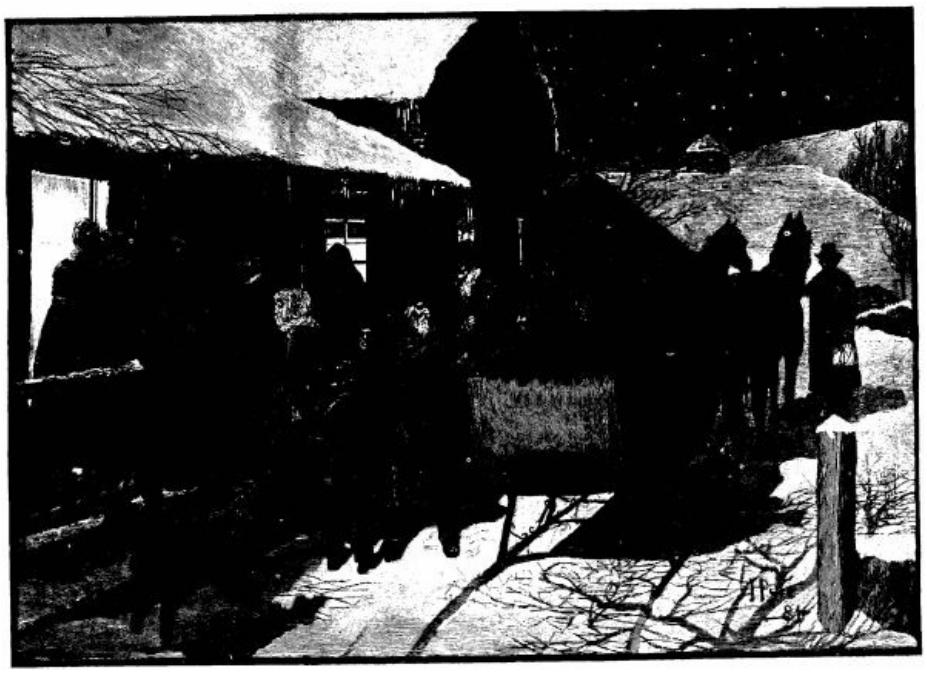
That was an awful question, but Liph and Bush all but ran against him just then, and he heard grandmother say:

"You'll have to stick candles on the window-sills. I can't spare any lamps for up stairs."

"But, my dear, it's got to be lit up—every room of it. I want 'em to know Christmas is coming."

"That's what they were all saying at the 'sylum this morning," thought Bijah, "and here I am, right where it's coming to."

So he was, and he and Liph and Bush watched them finish setting the supper table, till suddenly Bush gave a great bark and sprang away toward the front door. Grandfather Vrooman had hardly been gone from the house an hour, but here he was, back again.



"WHAT A RACKET THEY MADE AT THE GATE."

Jingle, jingle, jingle. How the sleigh-bells did dance as that great load of young folk came down the road, and what a racket they made at the gate, and how Bush, and Liph, and grandmother, and the rest did help them!

"He's caught 'em all," said Bijah; "but they ain't scared a bit."

No one would have thought so if they had seen Mrs. Prue Hopkins and her husband and her six children follow Grandfather Vrooman into the house.

They were hardly there, and some of them had their things on yet, when there came another great jingle, and ever so much talking and laughter down the other road.

"He's caught some more. Some are little and some are big. I wonder who'll get the baby?"

Bush was making himself hoarse, and had to be spoken to by Mr. Hardy, while Mrs. Simpson tried to unmix her children from the Hopkinses long enough to be sure none of them had dropped out of the sleigh on the road.

Then Liph set to work to introduce his cousins to Bijah, and Bush came and stood by his new friend in gray, to see that it was properly done.

"Where'd you come from?" asked Joe Simpson.

"'Sylum," said Bijah. "Where'd he catch you?"

"Catch what?" said Joe, but Liph managed to choke off the chuckle he was going into, and to shout out:

"Why, Joe, we found him in the road to-day. He thinks grandfather's old Santa Claus, and this house is Christmas."

"So I am—so it is," said Grandfather Vrooman.

"We'll make him hang up his stocking with all the rest to-night." [Pg 123]

Bijah could not feel scared at all with so many children around him, and he was used to being among a crowd of them. Still, it was hard to feel at home after supper, and he might have had a blue time of it if it hadn't been for Liph and Bush. It had somehow got into Bush's mind that the dot in gray was under his protection, and he followed Bijah from one corner to another.

All the doors into the "dark room" were open, and it was the lightest room in the house, with its big fire on the hearth and all the lamps that were taken in after supper; but there was not one thing hanging on the Christmas tree until Grandfather Vrooman exclaimed:

"Now for stockings! It's getting late, children. I must have you all in bed before long."

"Stockings?"

They all knew what that meant, and so did Bijah, but it was wonderful how many that tree had to carry. Bob Hopkins insisted on hanging two pairs for himself, and Thad Simpson was begging his mother for a second pair, when Liph Hardy came in from the kitchen with a great, long, empty grain bag.

"What in the world is that for?" asked grandmother, perfectly astonished. "Why, child, what do you mean by bringing that thing in here?"

"One big stocking for grandfather. Let's hang it up, boys. Maybe Santa Claus'll come and fill it."

There was no end of fun over Grandfather Vrooman's grain-bag stocking, that was all leg and no foot, but Uncle Hiram Simpson took it and fastened it strongly to a branch in the middle of the tree. It was close to the trunk, and was almost hidden; but Liph saw Uncle Hiram wink at Aunt

Ellen, and he knew there was fun of some kind that he had not thought of.

Grandmother Vrooman had been so busy with all those children from the moment they came into the house that she had almost lost her anxiety; but it came back to her now all of a sudden.

"Sakes alive! Jane," she said to Mrs. Hardy, "every last one of 'em's got to be in bed before we can do a thing with the stockings."

Bijah heard her, for he was just beyond the dining-room door, with a cruller in each hand, and it made him shiver all over.

"I wish I was in the 'sylum. No, I don't either; but I kind o' wish I was."

Bijah was a very small boy, and he had not seen much of the world, but his ideas were almost as clear as those of the other children and Grandmother Vrooman for the next fifteen minutes. The way the Simpson and Hopkins families got mixed up, with Liph and Sue Hardy to help them, was something wonderful. Old Bush wandered from room to room after them, wagging his tail and whining.

"Mother," exclaimed Mrs. Hardy at last, "the bed you made on the floor in the store-room!"

"Just the thing for him. All the rest go in pairs, I'll put that poor little dear right in there."

So she did, and not one of her own grandchildren was tucked in warmer than was Bijah. He did not kick the bedclothes off next minute, either, and he was the only child in the house of whom that could be said. Grandfather Vrooman paid a visit of inspection all around from room to room, and Bush went with him. It took him a good while. When he came to the store-room and looked in, Bijah's tired eyes were already closed as tight as were the fingers of the little hand on the coverlet, which was still grasping a cruller.

He was fast asleep, but Grandfather Vrooman was not; and yet, when Bush looked up at him, the old man's eyes were shut too, and there was a stir in his thick white beard as if his lips were moving.

Things got pretty still after a while, and then there began a steady procession in and out of the "dark room" which was not dark.

Boxes went in, and bundles, and these were opened and untied, and their contents spread out and looked at and distributed. It was no wonder Grandfather Vrooman's big sleigh had been so full, and the one Pat had driven, when they brought the Hopkins and Simpson families from the north and south railway stations.

"GRANDFATHER CAME IN WITH A BACK-LOAD OF SLEDS."

Grandfather himself went away out to the barn once for something he said he had hidden there, and while he was gone Aunt Ellen Simpson and Uncle Hiram slipped a package into the grain [Pg 124] bag, and grandmother handed Uncle Hiram another to slip in on top of it, and Uncle John Hardy and Uncle Martin Hopkins each handed him another, and the bag was almost half full, but you could not see it from outside; and then they all winked at each other when grandfather came in with a back-load of sleds. Grandmother may have thought she knew what they were winking about, but she didn't, for Uncle Hiram whispered to Aunt Ellen:

"I'm glad it's a big stocking. One'll do for both of 'em."

It was late when they all went to bed, and there was so much fire in the fire-place they were half afraid to leave it, but Grandfather Vrooman said it was of no use to try and cover it up, and the room would be warm in the morning.

When they got up stairs, the children must all have been asleep, for there was not a sound from any room, and the older people went to bed on tiptoe, and they had tried hard to not so much as whisper on the stairs.

Oh, how beautiful the country was when the gray dawn came next morning!—white and still in the dim and slowly growing light.

So still! But the stillest place was the one Bijah woke up in. He could not guess where he was at first, but he lay awhile and remembered.

"Santa Claus's house, and they're all real good. He's going to give me to somebody as soon as it's Christmas."

He got up very quickly and looked around him. It was not dark in the store-room, for there was a great square hole in the middle of the floor, and a glow of dull red light came up through it which almost made Bijah feel afraid.

There was his little gray suit of clothes, cap and all, close by his bed on the floor, and he put them on faster than he ever had done it before.

"Where's my other stocking?"

He searched and searched, but it was of no use, and he said, "I can't run away in the snow with a bare foot."

"HE CRAWLED FORWARD, AND LOOKED DOWN THROUGH THE SCUTTLE HOLE."

He had been getting braver and braver, now he was wide awake, and he crawled forward and looked down through the scuttle hole. He knew that room in a minute, but he had to look twice before he knew the tree.

"Ever so many stockings! And they're all full. Look at those sleds! Oh my!"

Whichever way he looked, he saw something wonderful, and he began to get excited.

"I can climb down. It's just like going down stairs."

It was just about as safe and easy, with all those branches under him, and all he had to do was to sit on one, and get ready to sit on the next one below him. He got about half way down, and there was the grain bag, with its mouth wide open. Just beyond it on the same bough, but further out, there hung a very small stocking indeed.

"That's mine!" exclaimed Bijah. "It's cram full, too. They've borrowed it, after all theirs were full. I want it to put on now, but I can't reach it out there."

Just then he began to hear noises up stairs, and other noises in the rooms below—shouts and stamping, and people calling to one another—and he could not make out what they were saying.

"Oh dear! they're coming. Santa Claus is coming. Christmas is coming. What'll I do?"

Bijah was scared; but there was the wide mouth of Grandfather Vrooman's grain-bag "stocking," and almost before Bijah knew what he was doing he had slipped in.

Poor Bijah! The moment he was in he discovered that he could not climb out. He tried hard, but there was nothing on the sides of the bag for his feet to climb on. Next moment, too, he wanted to crouch down as low as he could, for all the noise seemed to be coming nearer.

So it was, indeed, and at the head of it were grandfather and grandmother and the other grown-up people, trying to keep back the boys and girls until they should all be gathered.

"Where's Bijah?" asked grandfather, after he had counted twice around, and was sure about the rest.

"Bijah!" exclaimed Liph. "Why, I looked in the store-room; he isn't there."

"Hope the little chap didn't get scared and run away."

"Dear me—through the snow!" exclaimed grandmother.

"Of course not," said Aunt Jane. "He's around somewhere. Let's let the children in. They're all here." [Pg 125]

"Steady, now!" said grandfather, as he swung open the door into the "dark room." "Don't touch anything till we all get in. Stand around the tree."

He himself stepped right in front of it, and he looked more like a great, tall old Santa Claus than ever as he stood there. The children's eyes were opening wider and wider as they slipped around in a sort of very impatient circle; but grandfather's own eyes shut for a moment, as they had a habit of doing sometimes, and his white beard was all of a tremble. It was only for a moment, but when he looked around again, he said:

"Now, children, wait. Which of you can tell me what Child it was that came into the world on the first Christmas morning?"

They had not been quite ready to answer a question that came so suddenly, and before any of them could speak, a clear, sweet little voice came right out of the middle of the tree:

"I know. And the shepherds found Him in a manger, and His mother was with Him. He sent down after my mother last summer."

"Bijah!" exclaimed grandfather, but grandmother was already pushing aside the boughs, and now they all could see him. Only his curly head and his little shoulders showed above the grain bag, and Uncle Hiram shouted:

"Father Vrooman, he is in your stocking! Who could have put him there!"

"I think I know," said grandfather, in a very low, husky kind of voice; but all the Simpsons and Hopkinses and Hardys broke loose at that very moment, and it took them till breakfast-time to compare with each other the things they found in their stockings, and all the other wonderful fruits of that splendid Christmas tree.

Bijah was lifted out of the bag, and he got his stocking on after it was empty. For some reason he couldn't guess why all the grown-up people kissed him, and grandfather made him sit next to him at breakfast.

That was a great breakfast, and it took ever so long to eat it, but it was hardly over before [Pg 126] grandmother followed grandfather into the hall, and they heard her say,

"Now, husband, what are you wrapping up so for, just to go to the barn?"

"Barn? Why, my dear, I'm going to town. I told Pat to have the team ready."

"To town? Why, husband—"

"Mother, there'll be stores open to-day. I can buy cords of toys and candy and things. When I get to the Orphan Asylum, to tell 'em what has become of Bijah, and why he won't ever come back there again, I'm going to have enough to go around among the rest of 'em—I am, if it takes the price of a cow."

"Give 'em something for me."

Uncle Hiram heard it, and he shouted, "And for me," and Uncle John followed, and all the rest, till the children caught it up, and there was a contribution made by every stocking which had hung on that Christmas tree. They all gave just as fast as they understood what it was for, and the last one to fully understand was Bijah.

"You ain't going to take me?"

His lip quivered a little.

"No, Bijah, not unless you want to go. Wouldn't you rather stay here?"

"Course I would."

That was not all, for both his hands were out, holding up the store of things which had come to him that morning, and he added, "Take 'em."

Something was the matter again with Grandfather Vrooman's beard, but he told Bijah he would get plenty of other things in town.

"Keep 'em, Bijah. Good-by, all of you. I'll be back in time for dinner. Children, you and Bush must be kind to Bijah. He came to us on Christmas morning, and he has come to stay."

Bush and the children did their part, and so did all the rest, and so did Bijah, and so it was a perfect Christmas.

THE MAGIC CLOCK;

OR,

THE REWARD OF INDUSTRY.

A Trick Pantomime for Children.

BY G. B. BARTLETT.

The Farmer,	afterward	the miserly King.	
His Wife Jane,	"	the Old Woman with the Broom.	
Polly,	"	Little Miss Muffit	}
Mabel,	"	Cinderella	} The Farmer's
Margaret,	"	Bopeep	} Daughters.

Isabel,	"	A Beggar	}
Willie,	"	A Beggar.	
Robin, a Servant,	"	the Prince.	
Jack,	"	the Insatiate Hen	} The Farmer's
Tom,	"	the Spider	} Sons.
The Fairy, disguised as a poor Old Woman.			

One small boy is concealed in the chimney, and another under the table.

The clock, fire-place, table, fowl, etc., are fully explained, so that they can be easily prepared by children.

This pantomime, can be acted in any room with a simple curtain, or in a large hall. Lively music adds to the spirit of the performers, and enables them to give directions to each other without being heard.

SCENE.

The farmer's kitchen, a fire-place at the right, with a crane from which a kettle hangs, with great logs which rest on high brass andirons. A tall old-fashioned clock case stands against the back wall, nearly in front of which is a large table covered with a white cloth, and set for supper. At the left is a small table, over which hangs a mirror. Six chairs and two stools, a rocking-chair, broom, and dishes, are also needed. The tanner sits at the right of the fire, counting money from a leather bag. His wife sits in the rocking-chair, knitting.

Mabel is employed in brushing the hearth. The proud daughter Isabel is trimming a showy hat; as she adds new decorations to it, she contemplates her face in the mirror, and tries it on with evident delight, occasionally walking about the room, and appealing for admiration.

Polly is cooking the Christmas supper, and often swings forward the long crane, from which an iron pot hangs over the fire, adding a little salt from time to time. The idle Margaret reclines in a low chair; her sewing has fallen from her listless hands, which lie idly in her lap, and she seems to be careless of all around her. Jack sits by the fire, and is constantly eating from the contents of his pockets, which are full of nuts, apples, cakes, and candy.

ACTION.

Willie enters, struts about the room with a profusion of low bows, of which little notice is taken by any one but the farmer's wife, who shakes his hand, and gives him a cordial welcome. She leads him toward Isabel, who rises, makes him a low courtesy, taking hold of her dress with both hands, to do which she lays the hat in a chair. Willie seems struck with the courtesy, and imitates it so clumsily that all laugh. In his confusion he sits down on the hat, and jumps up quickly. Isabel picks up the hat, which is crushed flat, and tries in vain to restore it to shape; then claps it on Willie's head as if to try the effect, while he sits in a very stiff attitude in imitation of a milliner's block.

Robin then enters, rubbing his hands as if suffering from the cold; he approaches the fire to warm them; the farmer looks scornfully at him, and motions him away; he seems ashamed, and retreats to the back of the room, and sits on a stool beside Willie, who laughs and upsets the stool with his foot. Robin sits heavily down upon the floor, and in falling hits Willie's foot, who falls forward. Isabel laughs, but Mabel runs to his aid, forgetting her dusty hands, which cover his coat with ashes, as he clumsily regains his seat.

Robin rises, and nearly sits down upon Tom, a small boy who has picked up the stool, and is lying across it. Tom crawls away just in time, and tries to wake up Margaret, tangles his mother's yarn about his feet, and seems intent upon mischief. The farmer rises as if angry at being disturbed, but Mabel goes toward him, as if apologizing for the accident; then runs to the door as a knock is heard. A poor old woman enters, and asks alms from each, begging money from the farmer, who refuses, and points to the door, which motion all follow in turn, except Robin and Mabel. Jack pretends to give her an apple, which he holds near her lips, but withdraws it as she is about to taste, and crowds it into his own mouth; then claps his hands as if he had done a clever action. The old woman next tries to lift the lid off the kettle, but Polly resists, and pushes her away so hastily that she burns her fingers, and begins to cry. Mabel and Robin try to comfort her, and [Pg 127] Mabel takes a cake from Jack, and hands it to the old woman, who eats it as if she was very hungry. Jack begins to cry for his cake, and Mabel motions that he has plenty more, but he shakes his head and cries again. A great cake then comes from the chimney, strikes Jack on the head, and fastens around his neck like a gigantic old-fashioned doughnut with a hole through the centre.

Jack seems much pleased, and tries to taste his new collar, but finds it impossible to get his teeth

into it. The farmer begins to scold at the old woman, and lays down his purse upon the settle, in order to push her out, when the purse flies up the chimney, and hangs just out of his reach. He jumps for it, and it begins dancing up and down. All the rest except Mabel and Robin chase the old woman round the room, led by the farmer's wife, who secures a broom, and tries to strike her. The old woman rushes from side to side, and Mabel opens the clock, into which she springs, and is concealed in a moment. The farmer makes a frantic leap for his money bag, and knocks over the kettle. Jack and Tom jump about violently as if scalded, while Mabel picks up the fowl, places it upon the table, and persuades her father to come to supper. Robin places chairs, and all sit down.

The clock strikes, and as the farmer turns around, he sees instead of the face of the clock, that of a pretty little girl with blonde hair. He calls the attention of the rest of his family to this change, but when they look the clock face alone appears. The farmer seems very much astonished, and puts on his spectacles, when he again beholds the sweet face, which disappears as soon as he has called the attention of the family.

They resume their meal. As the farmer attempts to cut up the fowl, it lifts itself up and gives a loud crow. The farmer drops his knife in fear and trembling, but is encouraged by Jack, who expresses in pantomime that he is very hungry. The farmer makes a second attempt, at which the fowl leaps from the table and disappears up the chimney. The farmer and his wife rush out of the room in eager haste, followed by all the family.

The clock case opens and shows a beautiful fairy, who waves her wand in the air five times, and transforms the whole family into Mother Goose personages. The farmer returns dressed in a long red robe with a huge crown on his head, and personates the King who spends all his time counting out his money. This he constantly does, taking it from a large bag; and as soon as he has counted all the pieces, he puts his hand up to his crown, trying in vain to lift it off, as if it made his head ache; then he begins again to count over and over his tiresome money.

The farmer's wife comes in next as the old woman with the broom. She rushes about, raising a great dust, and then jumps up and down, brushing the ceiling of the room, as if trying to brush the cobwebs from the sky.

Isabel then flaunts into the room, followed by Willie, taking long strides, and seeming full of vanity, turning their heads from side to side as if lost in admiration of themselves. The others all laugh at the sight, for they have become the beggars, and are flaunting about in rags and tags, which they are as proud of as if they were dressed in velvet gowns.

Margaret enters next as little Bopeep, groping around in search of her lost sheep; she sometimes leans upon her crook with her left hand, and points off eagerly with her right, and finally throws herself into her chair and goes to sleep.

Polly appears as little Miss Muffit, eating curds and whey from a large bowl which she carries in her left hand; she draws a stool toward the fire-place, and sits down. Tom, as the spider, rushes out from under the table and sits down beside her, at which Polly drops the bowl and spoon in fright. She then rushes round the room three times, pursued by the spider.

Jack then enters as the insatiate hen, who eats more victuals than threescore men; he rushes around the room, and seems wholly unsatisfied with all he can devour. Mabel is changed into Cinderella, and sits by the fire in a dejected attitude, upon which the fairy comes down from the clock, and calls her attention to the Prince, Robin, whose rough frock flies away up the chimney, and he kneels before her as a Prince in gorgeous raiment. Mabel's old robe then disappears in the same manner. Robin fits a glass slipper upon her foot, which makes her dance with delight. He leads her to the upper end of the room toward the King her father, who is so overcome by her beauty that he forgets his avarice, and bestows the whole of the money upon her.

The happy pair, followed by the King, then march around the room to each of the personages, and the old woman sweeps a path before them, as if eager to make their way pleasant and easy. The beggars seem to forget their pride, and their ragged dresses fly away up the chimney, and they appear neatly clad. The fairy touches the spider with her wand; he stands upright, offers his arm to Miss Muffit, and they join the procession.

The fairy then enters the clock, which marches twice around the room followed by all the characters, and then resumes its place. All join in a grand reel; the King, taking the old woman for his partner, stands opposite Cinderella and the Prince, who take the head of the set. The two repentant beggars take one side, with Miss Muffit and the spider opposite. They dance all hands round, then the first lady promenades around the set outside, followed by her partner, who then joins her, and all promenade together around once. The ladies then go forward into the centre, and the gentlemen turn them into place with their right hand, and then turn corners with the left, after which they go into the centre again and form basket, go once around, divide in front, and march forward in the same position. The gentlemen raise their hands, and the ladies go forward alone, the gentlemen march after, and turn them into place. The hen then wakes Bopeep, and all form a semicircle, with the Prince and Cinderella in the centre. The clock then advances and takes up its position behind them, bowing to each in turn. The fairy springs forward into the centre of the group, and after waltzing around, stops in the centre, and all salute as the curtain falls.

COSTUMES.

The farmer has a plain brown suit, over which he throws a loose robe of Turkey red cloth,

trimmed with ermine. This ermine is made of white cotton flannel, with black marks drawn upon it with charcoal. He also wears a crown made of gilt paper. His money bag has a black linen thread fastened to the top, one end of which is in the hand of the boy concealed in the chimney.

The farmer's wife has a plain black dress with white kerchief, and a high cap on which a neat front of white tow or yarn is fastened in the centre, so that the ends can be pulled out quickly when she assumes her second part. For this she wears a red skirt under the black, and ties a long red cloak over her shoulders, the cape of which she draws over her cap.

Polly wears a long-sleeved checked apron, which covers her next dress. This is made of bright cretonne tucked over a gay skirt. The waist is long and pointed, with a high ruff of white.

Mabel wears a dark skirt and loose white waist, under which is a pretty silk dress with long train, and a square-necked waist trimmed with wax beads. She changes the black dress for a ragged loose robe, and when first transformed to Cinderella sits in the chimney-corner while the thread is hooked on to the robe by which it can be drawn up chimney.

Margaret has a bright skirt and loose waist over her Bopeep dress, which is composed of a skirt of blue cambric with a red waist, the flaps of which are cut in squares, which as well as the skirt are trimmed with yellow braid. Under the work which lies in her lap is a straw hat trimmed with flowers.

Isabel may wear the most showy dress which can be found.

Willie has a black dress-coat, which can easily be made by sewing tails on a jacket. He can have white pantaloons, and ruffles of white paper on his shirt, a showy neck-tie, and white hat. Both he and Isabel for their next dress have long robes, which may be water-proof cloaks covered with rags of every color.

Robin wears a long farmer's frock over his Prince's dress, which may be made of satteen for less than one dollar by an ingenious girl. It consists of a loose pink body, and blue trunks, or knee-breeches, with a cape of blue from the shoulders, each garment trimmed with long points of the opposite color. Pink stockings, and lace collar and cuffs, and pink and white bows on the shoes complete the costume. He has a small slipper covered with glass beads for Cinderella.

Jack and Tom appear in shabby boy's dress at first, and their next dresses are put on over them. The hen is made of a long garment like a shirt, one half of brown cambric, the other half of yellow, and the sleeves of large size are sewed up at the ends. It is drawn over the boy's head so that the brown part covers his back, his feet go into the sleeves, and then his hands also, with which he grasps his knees. A cap of brown cambric, with a red comb, and marked with eyes, is drawn over the head and pinned to the robe, and the ends are tied in a bunch opposite.

The spider has a suit of snuff-brown cambric, the feet and arms of which are sewed up like bags; on his back is fastened a pointed stuffed bag, and a false leg cut from brown pasteboard is fastened to each side; he runs on all fours at first, and shakes his head, which is enveloped in a cambric bag ornamented with two curved horns, and points of yellow cloth are sewed upon the back and around the legs. He hides under the table until it is time to appear.

The fairy is dressed in white tarlatan, trimmed with tinsel, over which she has a long cloak with a hood, into which white hair is sewed. She has a cane, and bends forward. [Pg 128]

PROPERTIES.

The clock is a frame seven feet high, two feet wide, with a door in front, all made of thin strips of wood covered with brown cambric, dull side out; the face, painted on pasteboard with movable hands, slides up and down in a groove, and is kept in place by a button at the bottom. A high stool is hidden inside, on which the fairy climbs when she shows her own face. She has her hand directly under the clock's face, so that she can push it instantly into place. Straps are arranged at the height of the fairy's shoulders, by which she can walk forward with the clock. There are hinges near the top, so it can bow forward, and also a bell which will strike. The fire-place is a large box three feet high, with the upper portion taken off. Boards, painted a dull red, with lines representing bricks, are slanted from the front and sides to the ceiling. Turkey red cloth is nailed at the top of the box inside, which is drawn tight by the logs which lie on the andirons. The effect of fire is produced by a lamp behind the red cloth, and pieces of red gelatine pasted on the logs.

A small boy, concealed by the chimney, holds four threads, to which the articles to be drawn up are fastened. The fowl is hooked on to the thread by Jack. A real fowl may be used, which is elevated by a wire thrust through the table by the boy, who also imitates the crowing; or a good chicken can be made of paper. Any table will do in which a hole can be made; there must be one also through the tin dish. The cake is made of brown cambric. The action should be distinctly marked, and keep time with the music, and all performers should bow as the curtain falls.

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