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Editor and Proprietor.

Business Directory.

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SUCCESSOR TO

J. F. UREN, M. D. C. M.

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MEMBER BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, ETC.

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EYE, EAR, THROAT AND NOSE.

Corner Woolwich and Baker Streets.
GUELPH.

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GEORGETOWN, ONTARIO

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Account Books of all kinds made to order periodicals of every description carefully bound, ruling neatly and promptly done

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ISSUER OF MARRIAGE LICENSES.

Private Office. No witnesses required. Issued at residence in the evening.

Free Press Office, ACTON

WM HEMSTREET,
LICENSED AUCTIONEER

For the Counties of Wellington and Halton Orders left at the Free Press office, Acton, or at my residence in Acton, will be promptly attended to Terms Reasonable.

Also money to loan on the most favorable same, and at the lowest rates of interest, in sums of $500 and upwards.

SUBSCRIBED STOCK CAPITAL $186,000.

THE WELLINGTON MUTUAL FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY.
Established 1840.

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INSURANCE on Cash and Mutual plan. Any communications forwarded to my address, Box 202, or telephone 56, will be promptly attended to.

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LUMBER, LATH SHINLES AND WOOD.

DRESSED LUMBER, ROUGH LUMBER, LATH, SHINGLES AND STOVE WOOD OF ALL KINDS

KEPT CONSTANTLY ON HAND.

James Brown.

Terms Cash.

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Games,	Toys of all Kinds,
Waggons	Sleds
Rocking Horses	Doll's Carriages
A. B. C. Blocks	Building Blocks
Working Bags and Boxes	Etc., Etc., Etc.

The wise woman will go straight to Day's Bookstore to select her Xmas presents. (They will be reserved for her on payment of a small deposit.) The store is full of fine new goods and Day's low prices win every time.

DAY'S BOOKSTORE
GUELPH.

DRY GOODS CHEAP.

MERCHANTS BANK OF CANADA

Capital $6,000,000
Rest 2,600,000

A GENERAL BANKING BUSINESS TRANSACTED.

Interest at most favorable current rates allowed on Savings Bank accounts and Deposit Receipts.

Letters of Credit issued available in all parts of the world.

Special attention given to Farmers' Business.

MONEY ORDERS.
FOR ANY SUM UP TO $50.

Payable at any banking point in Canada outside of the Yukon Territory, may now be procured at the Bank Counter without any delay.

ACTON BRANCH
Y. H. WALLACE, Manager.

WHEN YOU WANT
FLOUR
—and—
OATMEAL
GET OUR
EVERTON AND EDEN MILLS BRAND

The best in the market.
All wide-awake dealers use it.
Extra quality—prices right.

HENRY HORTOP.

—ACTON—
LIVERY
—AND—
BUS LINE

The undersigned respectfully solicits the patronage of the public, and informs them that

Well Equipped and Stylish Rigs can at ways be Secured

At his stables. A comfortable bus meets all trains between 10 a.m. and 6.10 p.m. Careful attention given to every order The wants of Commercial Travellers fully met.

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PRINTING FRAMES.
4 x 5 and Cabinet, 25 cents.

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Ten-year maturity shares are paid Monthly Instalments of 50c. per share for 120 months, when payments cease—$60.00 aid in—maturity value $100.00.

Money to loan at 5% straight loan or repayable in monthly instalments on application to

R. J. McNabb,
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WANTED.—Capable, reliable person in every county to represent large company of solid financial reputation; $900 per year, payable weekly; $3 per day absolutely sure and all expenses straight, bona-fide, definite salary no commission; salary paid each Saturday and expense money advanced each week. STAN FORD HOUSE, 1 Dearborn St., Chicago.

—THE—
TRADERS' BANK OF CANADA

Capital paid up, $1,000,000
Assets Over $9,000,000.

Guelph Branch
(NEXT DOOR TO POSTOFFICE)

Savings Bank Department
HIGHEST CURRENT RATE OF INTEREST paid on sums deposited of $1 and upwards. Interest allowed from date of deposit to date of withdrawal paid or compounded half yearly.

Advances made to responsible farmers on their own names at the lowest current rates.

No charge made for collecting sales notes if payable in Guelph.

A general banking business transacted.

E. F. B. JOHNSTON,
Manager.

Bond & Co.,
GUELPH,
FOR
Mechanics Tools.

"Starrett Tools are THE Tools. They are guaranteed accurate. Our stock includes Micrometers, Calipers, Thread Gauges, Hacksaws, Combination Squares, Centre Gauges Rules, etc.

Special Tools procured on short notice—Enquiries promptly attended to.

Our prices are always right.

JOHN M. BOND & CO.
HARDWARE
GUELPH.

New Cutters

Season—1901-1902.

JUST IN.

All bargains. Common Leated Terms Cash or on Time

Also Robes, Blankets, Rugs, Rubber Aprons, Whips, Halters, Tie Straps, Etc. All at special prices.

Geo. J. Thorp
Opposite Market
GUELPH.

Acton Pump Works
Main Street, Acton.

If you are in need of a good Pump, either in wood or iron, come to Acton Pump Works.

—Cisterns Made—
—All Repairs Promptly Attended to—
—Wells Cleaned—

THE
CHICAGO AERMOTOR

Is acknowledged the lightest running and best windmill manufactured. I am agent for this district. Call and investigate before you buy.

T. EBBAGE,
Main Street, Acton.

J. A. SPEIGHT & CO.
Willow St. Acton.

Undertakers
—and—
Furniture Dealers.

Undertaking in all its branches attended to promptly and quietly.

Furniture—New Stock. Sure to please our customers.

Our prices are low.

W. BARBER & BROS.
Paper Makers
Georgetown, Ontario.

BOOK.
NEWS.
COLORED
PAPERS

JOHN R. BARBER

Excelsior Bakery and Grocery.

In addition to our daily supply of first-class Bread, Cakes, Buns, Etc., of our own manufacture, we are now supplying Fresh Oysters of the best brands.

Our Oyster Parlor

is now open and patrons will find their orders filled with entire satisfaction.

A larger stock of Groceries and Provisions than ever before, and the public know our prices are always reasonable.

T. STATHAM & SON
MAIN ST. ACTON.

Poetry.

SINCE A LITTLE GIRL'S IN TOWN.

He used to jest and scoff
At men who wasted coal
On painted toys and dolls,
And all the "other trash"
The christmas season brings—
He called them fools and worse, and oh
He grieved to think man acted so—
But a little girl arrived in town
About two years ago!

I've often heard him say
Ignoble things because
Men made their children think
There was a Santa Claus—
He called it fol de rol
And sometimes something worse, but, oh,
Men often change their minds, you know—
A little girl arrived in town
About two years ago!

I saw him yesterday,
He had a Christmas tree;
His pockets bulged with "trash,"
His face was full of glee,
And he's to play the part
Of Santa Claus—he told me so—
He is the joy God's favored know,
A little girl arrived in town,
About two years ago!

—*N. K. Kiser.*

THE KING.

There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer!
And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the Virgin's sweet boy,
Is the Lord of the earth.
Ay, the star rains its fire, and the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

In the light of that star
Lie the ages impaled;
And that song from afar
Has swept over the world;
Every heart is adame, and the beautiful sing,
In the homes of the nations, that Jesus is King!

—*J. G. Holland.*

Select Family Reading.

Rentings Christmas.

BY ANNIE HAMILTON DONNELL.

THE Christmas display at the store was an inovation. It created a wave of excitement that inundated Tagg's End. All day long, after the wonderful counter was undressed to the public, a steady little stream of wide-eyed children flowed in at the great glass doors, circled slowly, round the Christmas counter and flowed out again. It was not allowed to stop flowing entirely for fear of damming up. There was a perpetual freshet of children at Tagg's End.

It was close upon the holidays, but the fact would have been scarcely noticeable, if it had not been for the holiday goods at the store. That reminded every one of Christmas, of course. At Tagg's End people needed reminding—Christmas to them was only another Sunday, when the Works shut down and the men lounged about all day, smoking. There had never been a "merry" to a Tagg's End Christmas In that week in December there were always two Sundays,—that was all.

At the very targest end, as Jeff said, of all Tagg's End, in the smallest, the leanest the barest cottage of all, lived the Ludlows, big and little,—mostly little. Jeff was the housekeeper, and went about the small rooms, unsexed and untiring, in his trailing calico apron. It was Jeff who said "go," to the other little Ludlows and they went, or "come," and they came. That was why they all appealed to him now.

"Please, Jeffy, please," Cornwallis pleaded.

"Just once, Jeffy. Once is such a teenty little!" Polly Patience murmured wistfully. And the Kidsies—how the Kidsies clamored in his ears! But Jeff was firm. He shook a floury finger far down the line of little faces sternly.

"Not one step without me!" he said with quiet decision. "I've told you so before—you hadn't ought to ask."

"But this is a Cris'mas reason—that's why, Jeffy."

"An' some o' the beautiful things may be gone if we wait—oh, Jeffy, just s'posin' I"

"An' oh dear, it's most forever'n ever till you get the work done!"

"Then fly round, why don't you, an' help a man?" laughed Jeff cheerily. Jeff referred to himself always as a man, and, kitchen apron notwithstanding, the title belonged to him. Two little graves came between him and eight-year-old Cornwallis, and then followed little Polly Patience and the Kidsies Jeff fathered and mothered them all for the father, who had no time, and the pale, suffering mother who had no strength. It was Jeff who kept them nice and tidy and gentle-mannered,—who heard their prayers at night and got their breakfasts in the morning,—who patched them and comforted them and scolded them. It was Jeff who would not allow them to mingle with the other Tagg's End children or hang about the Store, as the others did. Even to-day, when there was that splendid mysterious Christmas counter waiting to be seen, they must stay until he could go with them to see it. He would not hear to their going alone.

So all day they waited. Jeff finished up his work and stole into mother's room and sat a little while with her. It was one of her dreadful days, and the finger-prints of pain were terribly distinct on her sweet, white face. She could not talk very much. Jeff sat and stroked her fingers with his little hard brown hands, as it comforted her to have him do. It was of Christmas they were both thinking.

"Jeffy."

"Yes, I know,—don't say it. No, I haven't said anything to Daddy about the children's Christmas,—not yet. I—I guess I will to-night, mother."

"When he gets home from work," she supplemented feebly. Jeff did not answer. A troubled look had settled down like a dark cloud on his face.

"And, Jeffy—"

"Yes, mother."

"You think he'll like the ties, don't you? And you won't forget the list of things? Polly Patience's doll and—"

"Hh, mother, don't try to say them. I know every one—my yes! You needn't think I'd forget anything." And Jeff smiled bravely into the white, eager face.

"We've never had a Christmas here before—and I've set my heart so, Jeffy. I lie here and dream about it, you can't think how it helps."

"No, mother." How could anybody realize that even the beautiful thought of a Christmas at last for the children could "help" such suffering as this? Jeff set his teeth together hard and registered a resolve that the Christmas should come. But how? Had not he and Daddy each wrestled over the hard problem hopelessly? If Daddy had not lost his place at the Works—but mother did not know that. They had kept it from her so carefully, with all its attendant pinchings and economizings. Day after day, at six in the morning and at six at night, had haggard-faced Daddy gone whistling out and come whistling, tramping home. The patient hunt for other work in the interim between factory bells had been in vain, and surely and slowly the tiny hoard of his savings had dwindled. How well Jeff knew it! But his mother did not know.

At last the waiting children were rewarded, and Jeff marshalled them in an orderly little company down to the Store. It was just at tea-time and the Christmas counter was nearly deserted. They were allowed to loiter as much as they pleased, and even to touch, now and then, one of the wonderful toys. Jeff watched their wistful faces with an aching heart. Mother's list of presents for them kept repeating itself with obstinate recurrence in his head. The doll for Polly Patience, the game for Cornwallis—the blocks, the picture-books, the jumping jacks for the Kidsies. He could not forget anything in the list. And they were all over there on the counter, every one! Polly Patience was touching the doll now with her little reverent fingers, smoothing out the gaudy dress and adjusting the bit of tinsel sash around its waist. Jeff could see the mother-look in the little brown profile.

Then suddenly a dry sob sounded in this boy's throat—for Polly Patience had stepped to the staring, little face and shyly kissed it. Jeff strode down the aisle toward the door with a fierce stride. He was only fifteen, but it was a man's heart that ached in his breast.

"I'll be back in a minute," he called over his shoulder. "You children can stay an' look at things if you want to."

If they wanted to! As if they could not stay on and on forever! Round and round the wonderful counter they circled dizzily, but Polly Patience always came back to that one doll.

"Eh! She's asleep!—see, she's got her eyes shut up," she whispered; "I'm playin' she's my little girl and she's restin' now. She's all tired out—I shall let her sleep till I get ready to go home. I—I've named her. Wouldn't you like to know what her name is, Cornwallis? It's the most beautiful name of all, same as she's the most beautiful dolly."

Polly Patience crept close to Cornwallis and whispered the name softly into his ear.

"I've named her the Virgin Mary," Polly Patience said. "It's the beautifulest woman name I can think of."

Across the counter, the awed little Kidsies were hovering around a towering castle of pink and white blocks. Its turrets and steeples fascinated them.

"I see how they did make it—huh, I could do it myself!" cried the larger one, after a minute's study.

"Well, so could I, too,—anyway, 'cept just that longest chimley. I—it's a fact'ry; aln't it, Joey?"

"Yes—'course. But not our kind,—ol' smoky flag! I tell you what, Jessie, I spect this is the kind o' fact'ry they have in Heaven,—where the angels work, you know, all dressed up in nice clean white dresses."

"An' the fact'ry bells play tunes, an' the angels clap their hands they're so happy, Joey, an' there isn't any of the muvvers sick at home."

There was the sound of quick steps behind them, and down the narrow aisle between counters came Jeff. His face was a little brighter. He had thought out a possible way to bring mother's Christmas about. At any rate, he would try and see if it would work. Late the night before Christmas, just before shutting up,—that was the time to do it. To-morrow night he would come down, after the children were in bed, and lay the plan before Beth Barrows, the storekeeper. If Beth was only in good humor!

The children talked all the way home of the Christmas wonders and all the time after they got home. Polly Patience dreamed all night of the little Virgin Mary in the tinseled crimson dress, and woke up in the morning with the mother-look in her face again, and little, wistful, empty arms.

"Oh, I thought she b'longed! I had her right in my arms, and I thought she b'longed!" wailed the child softly on her lean little pillow. "I was just goin' to rock her to sleep. Oh, I wish I hadn't woke up!"

At nine o'clock that evening Jeff stole quietly away, down to the Store. It was clear moonlight, and the dismal little factory settlement lay pitilessly distinct before him. Even the moonlight could not soften Tagg's End. The gaunt Works loomed high and graceless into the soft air, and at their feet clustered all the poverty stricken homes. There was nothing anywhere that was beautiful or gentle, save the moonlight and the snow. But in the east the Christmas Star was shining.

Jeff waited about the Store until, one after another, the loungers had dropped away, and only he and Beth Barrows remained. Now was the time—but how the words stuck in his throat. He had not thought it would be quite so hard to say it.

He pulled himself together and plunged desperately in.

"Mr. Barrows, I want to—to rent some Christmas presents," he said hastily. I waited till the last thing, so you wouldn't be losing any chances to sell 'em. I knew there'd be losing any chances to sell 'em. I knew there'd be plenty of things left to-night." He glanced anxiously into the storekeeper's grizzled face, and then hurried on. "Just for one day, you know—just to-morrow. I thought I'd rent a Christmas *for* the children—there wasn't any other way, and mother's heart was set. I'll take splendid care of everything, Mr. Barrows—honest. I will! I'll wash the children's hands and dress 'em up clean, and make 'em play with the things easy. My, Polly Patience won't hardly breathe when she's holding the doll! You can't think how dreadful careful they'll all be, Mr. Barrows! And—and I'll pay the rent in advance."

Jeff fumbled in his pockets hurriedly, and drew out a few pieces of silver. But the storekeeper waved them back.

"Hold on," he said. "I ain't the right man to pay rents to.—The boss is the one. He's down here to-night collecting rents.—Mr. Tagg! I say, Mr. Tagg?"

And to Jeff's dismay, the ogre of Tagg's End emerged from an inner office. Andrew Tagg and rent 'days went together. The tall grim old man was seldom seen at other times.

"Mr. Tagg, sir, here is a young party as wants to pay his rent in advance. I know him—he's in his right mind, sir."

The storekeeper's dry chuckle rattled through the empty place. He, at least, was not afraid of Andrew Tagg.

"Eh! Eh! What's this? Explain yourself, boy," rumbled the old man in his throat. And poor Jeff stiffened himself for the occasion. His cherished little plan seemed tottering in ruins, for of course Andrew Tagg would not listed to it.

"I thought—that is, I mean"—began the boy, desperately,—"I'd like to rent a Christmas for the children. Just for the day—some little dolls and things. There wasn't any other way. Of course they won't 'belong', but the children can make believe they do. They're used to make-believing. And I had to think of a way—mother'd set her heart so. If daddy hadn't lost his place at the Works"—

"What did he lose his place for?" interrupted the old man gruffly.

"For being late to work. He was late for work four times, and then the overseer turned him off. But Daddy wasn't to blame—I'd have staid, too. When mother has those awful spells o' pain there isn't anybody but Daddy that can help her. He holds on to her hands. You wouldn't let go your wife's hands, would you, if she was suffering like that?" Jeff's flushed defiant face regarded the grim old face above it, challengingly. The horror that always crept into his face at the sight of his mother's terrible pain, hovered there now at the memory of it.

"But mother doesn't know," he added more quietly. "She thinks Daddy's at the Works right along. We keep things like that from mother. That's why she's set her heart on the children's Christmas. They never had one before, you see. Good night, Mr. Tagg—I must go home now, sir."

"Home?" roared the old man, "I thought you came after a Christmas! Go over there to the counter and take your pick. Rent? Well hand over your money. Now, then, Beth, go to work and do the things up for the boy.

Andrew Tagg strode to the Christmas counter himself and fumbled among the trinkets. He took up an odd looking box and turned a tiny crank at one end.

"Oh!" cried Jeff, as soft strains of music fell on his ears. "Oh, if mother could hear that! Could I—how much would the rent of that be for the whole Christmas day? I'll leave out half the other things—the children would rather I would. My, yes. I guess I know the children!"

"The rent of this is as much as all the other things put together. Go home and ask the children." Andrew Tagg said briefly.

Jeff hesitated but an instant. "No," he answered, "I don't need to go home. I'll take the music-box, sir. If the children were all standing in a row, right here, and I asked 'em "you?" and "you?" and "you?" clear down to Joey, don't you suppose I know what they'd all say? I guess I know the children!" Its mother needs a Christmas most—why, she could almost forget the pain while that box was playing! Of course it wouldn't be like belonging, but think of her having an easier day.—a whole day! Think of that will you! That'll be a Christmas!"

Jeff went away with the precious box hugged up in his arms. He was whistling jubilantly. That he had left the children's Christmas behind, after all, did not spoil his pleasure. Jeff "knew" the children. In the shabbiest of all the little houses, at the raggest end of all Tagg's End, it was the pitiful, patient little mother that counted most. Round her bed of terrible pain revolved the whole humble drama of Daddy's and Jeff's and the children's lives.

Under the jutting crags of Andrew Tagg's eyebrows, the eyes that looked out into the moonlight after Jeff's retreating figure were softened and moist. The strong walls that shut in the lonely man's heart had been taken by storm. Here—right here in the sordid, unkempt Tagg's End—he had come upon pity and love and tenderness close akin to those of the Christmas Child himself.

On Christmas day, a messenger left an armful of bundles in Jeff's astonished arms. They held all the children's Christmas, twice multiplied, and the brief note that accompanied them said that "they all belonged!—that mother's music-box belonged!—that Daddy's old place at the Works "belonged" again!

"An' oh, little Virgin Mary, you b'long!" whispered Polly Patience in soft wonder. "I can love you an' kiss you an' rock you to sleep!"

And through all the joyful uproar and Christmassing stole the sweet, low strains of the music that was to soften mother's pain.

MAIL FOR SANTA CLAUS.

Some Strange Letters at Christmas Time.

Here is an address I never noticed until this year, said a postoffice clerk, sorting out some half a dozen letters with "Mr. Santa Claus, Joyland," on the envelopes. Variations were, "Mr. Santa Claus, Joyland Co., N. Y., 011 Happiness Ave.," and "Mr. Santa Claus, Toy and Candy Palace, Christmasville, Joyland."

Another child, perhaps of Hibernian ancestry, had addressed his petition to the Saint's residence in 'Fairyland,' Ireland." One young writer, with a somewhat hazy knowledge of geographical names, had sent his letter to "Mr. Saint Nickerlis, to the North Pole, Mexico." Another, with a belief in the power and influence of his nurse had addressed his missive to "79 Bedford Ave., Kear Meary," which, being deciphered, is found to mean Care of Mary.

"I'm sorry I can't allow you to open any of the letters. It's as much a criminal offense to tamper with them as with any other letters," said the clerk to a reporter of the Commercial Advertiser. There were however two postal cards and one open letter, which were fair specimens. The latter was a modest request for the relief of the more pressing wants of the writer. It read:

Dear Santa Claus—You say that good boys get the best presents. I have tried very hard to be a good boy. Will you please bring me a fire patrol, train of cars, a moo book, a game, box of tools, and a little sailboat, candy, oranges and nuts. Goodbye, dear old Santa Claus. We will expect you Christmas eve.

Dudley.

A few letters were evidently written under the direction of seniors of the family and dropped into the mailbox to please the children. Most of the letters were without stamps.

What becomes of the letters after they reach the dead letter office? Most of them are eventually destroyed, as the children sign only their first names, and there is no way of returning them.

ONE CHANCE LEFT.

"I know why you always sit up so late on Christmas eve, Miss Ordgall."

"And why do I, Freddy?"

"You think maybe you'll see Santa Claus and he'll ask you to marry him."

Distress after eating, belching and nausea between meals are symptoms of dyspepsia, which Hood's Sarsaparilla always cures.

THE HOLLY.

The Holly, oh, the Holly!
Green leaf, and berry red,
—the plant that thrives in winter,
When all the rest are fled,
When snows are on the ground,
And the skies are gray and drear,
The Holly comes at Christmastide,
And brings the Christmas cheer.
Sing the Mistletoe, the Ivy,
And the Holly—hush so gay,
That comes to us in winter,
No summer friends are they.

Give me the sturdy friendship
That will ever loyal hold,
And give me the hardy Holly,
That dares the winter's cold;
Oh, the roses bloom in June,
When the skies are bright and clear,
But the Holly comes at Christmastide,
The best time o' the ar-
Sing the Holly, and the Ivy,
And the merry Mistletoe,
That comes to us in winter,
When the fields are white with snow?

CHRISTMAS DAY.

The times are changed, the world grows old;
We have no more the age of gold.
Purchance it is decline; purchance
'Tis but the tokens of advance;
But nowadays we hold no more
That once good fellowship of yore.
It may be that the strain and stress
Of our mad times bring joylessness;
It may be that our feverish ways
Forget the old, good, genial ways.

But thanks to one persistent spark,
Unrest and haste and care and dark
Not yet shall strip our aging heart
Of all its old congenial art.
Aye, thanks to that still logical day,
We shall forget and make our way
With dance and frolic, friends and rhyme,
Back through the grim ages to the time
When "laughter, holding both his sides,"
Turned all man's days to Christmastides.

—*Arthur J. Stringer.*

A PRAYER ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

Mama—Now, Willy, say your prayers.

Willy—Santa Claus won't get here before I get through, will he?

Mama—No. Now begin.

Willy—Spose he's comin' now?

Mama—Perhaps. Now say your prayers.

Willy—Oh—h'm! Now I lay me—Say, if he should forget our number?

Mama—Now, begin again.

Willy—But we've moved since last Christmas.

Mama—Never mind, dear; he knows where we live.

Willy—Now I lay me down to sleep.—But I ain't a goin' to sleep; I'm goin' to lie awake so's I can see him when he comes.

Mama—But you must say your prayers just the same.

Willy—I don't see why, when I ain't goin' to sleep.

Mama—Because you must—that's enough.

Willy—Oh—h'm! Now I lay me down to sleep: I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die—Say Mama, if I should die would Santy Claus come just the same?

Mama—Yes, child. Now go on.

Willy—Who would get all the things if I should die?

Mama—Oh never mind, you are not going to die.

Willy—But I'll die sometime, won't I?

Mama—Don't ask any more questions. Now begin.

Willy—Must I begin all over again?

Mama—No; begin where you left off.

Willy—Where did I leave off?

Mama—"If I die."

Willy—But you ain't a-goin to die, Mama?

Mama—No—but that's where you begin.

Willy—If I should die before I wake—Say, Mama, if I should die after I wake, would it be the same.

Mama—I guess so. Now finish your prayer.

Willy—Well, Santy Claus wouldn't come, then; would he, Mama?

Mama—Certainly! Now go on.

Willy—Will he be here pretty soon?

Mama—He won't be here at all if you don't hurry and finish your prayer.

Willy—I've got it most said, ain't I?

Mama—Yes. Now go on.

Willy—If I should die before I wake—Say, Mama, would Santy Claus come right in here if he heard me saying my prayer.

Mama—No; he would wait till you were through. Now, then.

Willy—Would he peek in?

Mama—I guess so. Now hurry!

Willy—If I should die befor I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take—Mama, do you s'pose he'll forget anything?

Mama—No. Now hurry and and finish your prayer; it's very late!

Willy—I did finish it, didn't I? I'm through.

Mama—No; you forgot to say "Amen."

Willy—Does Santa Claus say his prayer, too?

Mama—Always, dear.

Willy—Who helps him say it; his Mama?

Mama—I guess, likely. Now say "Amen."

Willy—Oh—h'm! A-men! Mama will you see Santy Claus?

Mama—Yes.

Willy—Tell him not to forget anything.

Mama—Yes, dear. Good-night.

Willy—Say, Mama, I fought I heard somepin?

Mama—I guess not. Good-night!

Willy—Say, Mama! Mama! Didn't you fought you heard somepin?

(Exit Mama in hot haste.)

THE ORIGINAL SANTA CLAUS.

St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children was Bishop of Myra and died about A. D. 326. He was fond of children and young people, and many charitable deeds are recorded of him. He is the recognized patron of the Christmas season, but Santa Claus, or Knecht Rupert, is a product of Germany, where it was formerly the custom of the parents of a village to put all the presents designed for their children into the hands of a man who, disguised in long robes, a mask and a monstrous wig, went from house to house, rapped, was admitted, and severely questioned the parents as to the behavior of the little ones during the past year, judiciously leading the questioning up to a point where the intended present could be appropriately introduced. The fiction of his descent through the chimney accounted for his absence when the annual round of this masked personage ceased to be made.

HARD LUCK.

Johnny Hug—Why, what are you crying about, Willy?

Willy Centiped—Boo-hoo! I hung up my stockings and Santa Claus only put presents in thirty-nine of 'em! Boo-hoo!