

...to see if you could unravel
 dis- yar doyment—dar it am, har it ar."
 —she held toward him a slip of paper—
 "an yo reads ritin, boy, Josephus Kia-
 phus, read dat ar to yo po-stracted ole
 momy, chile, Road!" she added, hold-
 ing a luck forefinger impressively up.
 The boy looked at the paper, blinked
 hard, and slowly deciphered it.
 To JOHN ADAMS, Merchant Tailor,
 For one pair broadcloth trousers, \$30.00
 " silk vest 10.00
 " fine broadcloth coat 40.00
 Total \$70.00
 By order of Sam Dickson, for Hon. P.
 T. Chesterton.
 The boy looked up at his mother, his



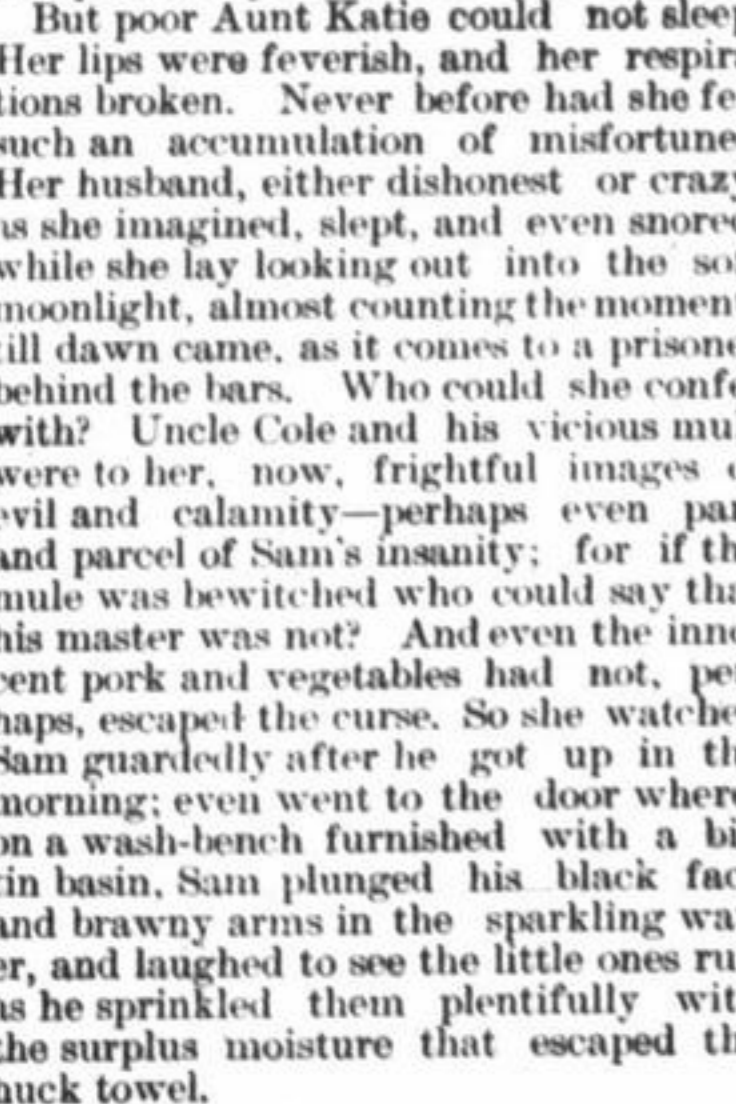
mouth open. She stood in amaze, the
 candle-grease running on pillow and
 quilt, an expression of terror making her
 face a bronze green.

"Boy, yo daddy is los his min—he
 foged somethin!" she exclaimed with
 agonized emphasis. "He's gone done
 got a suit of clothes for his good-for-
 nothin sof, an put de master's name to
 de bill. Seventy dollars. Good Lawd!
 he isn't wuf seventy-five cents to his
 name."

"Wish I could git one," muttered the
 boy. "Better put dat away back in
 dad's pocket, momy; he'll be powful mad
 if he knows yo is got it, an meebly he'll
 kill us all!"

"Ise lookin fer de wms," said his
 mother resignedly, her voice even with
 the calm of utter despair. "Ise got pas
 de wondrin now, an I lets things take
 dar courses. Ony I low nex time de
 minister comes har, as he does onct in
 two months on de circus, I'll fess all my
 triles ter him. Yo can git yo Christmas-
 tree an put on what things de chillun
 has made, togedder wid dem strings of
 pop-corns, an de chiny angel, an de
 roses made outen beets, an Ida's doll
 what done duty fer de las Christmas, an
 make it look nice an fixy fer de chillens,
 but I low yo momy's heart are broke,
 an dis is de las Christmas she'll eber see
 eny comfort in dis yer agonizing world.
 Dar's bin two Christmases ob gloom, an
 dis'll be de las!"—with which prophetic
 speech she left the room to darkness and
 Josephus Kiaphus to troubled slumber.

But poor Aunt Katie could not sleep.
 Her lips were feverish, and her respira-
 tions broken. Never before had she felt
 such an accumulation of misfortunes.
 Her husband, either dishonest or crazy,
 as she imagined, slept, and even snored;
 while she lay looking out into the soft
 moonlight, almost counting the moments
 till dawn came, as it comes to a prisoner
 behind the bars. Who could she confer
 with? Uncle Cole and his vicious mule
 were to her, now, frightful images of
 evil and calamity—perhaps even part
 and parcel of Sam's insanity; for if the
 mule was bewitched who could say that
 his master was not? And even the inno-
 cent pork and vegetables had not, per-
 haps, escaped the curse. So she watched
 Sam guardedly after he got up in the
 morning; even went to the door where,
 on a wash-bench furnished with a big
 tin basin, Sam plunged his black face
 and brawny arms in the sparkling water,
 and laughed to see the little ones run
 as he sprinkled them plentifully with
 the surplus moisture that escaped the
 huck towel.



"Ise ony got to go once mo," he said,
 as they sat down to their breakfast of
 corn-bread and hominy, "an then won't
 we have a Christmas? Won't the ole
 folks at de big house hab sech a Chris-
 mas as dey never had befo in all dar
 natral born lives? Ky, yah, yah, yah!"
 which explosion set all the youngsters
 laughing, and then he was quiet for a
 while.

"Well, I'm off—you'll see me to-mor-
 row," said Sam, his face all one smile.
 "Keep yo' spicions to yo'self till then, 'n'
 then pick 'em over like a bar'l o' apples
 —thar won't be any good ones thar, yo'
 mind," and he was off.

Christmas came—a beautiful morning,
 with a light frost silencing all the grass
 and the old woods and the tops of the
 pine trees. Poor Aunt Katie, her eyes
 red with weeping, finished her work
 early and sat down, looking the picture
 of woe. Ida was preparing the younger
 children to go to the mansion, to call out
 the customary "Christmas gifts!"

"Yo go too, momy, an carry the big
 towel yo' made out o' de meal-bag, for
 Miss Carline," said Ida.

"Yes, I reckon I'll have to tote it
 along, but it's wid a sorrowful soul I goes,"
 said Aunt Katie, and she wrapped her
 present in a piece of paper, put on her
 best and loftiest turban, and followed
 the children.



The great noise was all alive with
 mirth and jollity. Uncle Cole was there
 with the gift of an immense cabbage for
 Mr. Chesterton, and the mule winked

gravily at Aunt Katie as she went round
 him at a safe distance, and then made a
 bolt for her, grabbing the well-patched
 skirt in his enormous mouth just as she
 was mounting the steps; and there he
 held her, screaming; till Uncle Cole
 came, whispered in Neptune's ear, and
 tried to soothe Aunt Katie, as the animal
 let go, with profuse apologies.

But Aunt Katie was not to be mollified
 in that way. In her fright she accused
 him of being the author of all her trou-
 bles; and even his satanic majesty him-
 self, without the usual master another
 dash at her and sent her to the top of the
 steps in a hurry.

All the household were assembled in
 the great porch, some of them drawn
 there by Aunt Katie's shrieks, when the
 gate opened and Sam appeared, a tall,
 fair youth leaning on his arm, pallid and
 trembling.

"T's ben meanin' to gib yo' a gift some-
 thing wuth while dis yar Christmas, lad-
 ies an gen'lemen," Sam began, grandly,
 with a comical wave of one brawny
 arm, "so har's young Mars Phillip Ches-
 ton, wha' you bin thought gose dead in
 de oshun two y'ars ago. Golly, but dis
 am a big day." It would take a more graph-
 ic pen than mine to depict the scene that

followed—the mother's wild, almost un-
 believable joy at the restoration of the
 son she had lost and was literally dying
 for, the father's ecstasy at the sudden
 sight of the boy he had sent away in an-
 ger, three years before, and had mourned
 as dead.

In the midst of all the rejoicing, it
 rushed an enormous cat, the veritable
 Portia they had missed, with this differ-
 ence, that the creature's fur was incan-
 dided, and instead of the marvelous ball
 of snow she had been, she was now all
 crimson, as she crouched like a big ball
 of fire at the feet of her mistress.

"Deed, Miss Carline, Josephus Kiaphus
 didn't go fer to do it," said Ida; "he
 trow de big bowl o' dye out de winder,
 and Portia were right dar, fas asleep;
 an he's tuck good car o' she ebbber
 sence, but the dye—he won't wash out."
 "Wouldn't she make a good advertise-
 ment?" asked Miss Joe, laughing till she
 cried.

Then Sam was called upon to tell his
 story; for the invalid son had been
 marched off into the parlor and placed
 upon a comfortable lounge, where his
 mother sat crooning and laughing and
 weeping by turns at his side.

"I hasn't much to tell, Mars Ches'ton,"
 said Sam, twisting his old hat, "cept dat
 one day I meets a ghost outside Eden's
 woods, an de ghost he knows me, ar
 asks to be took car ob, kase he wouldn't
 go home, as he wor ragged, an lame, ar
 sick."

"Well, I tuck de ghost—case I didn't
 b'lieve twar raad—to a little cabin in Eder
 wood, an you knows, sir, I's a bit ob a
 doctor, an I goes to gittin yar's an things,
 an boum up his leg, an I begs an implores
 him to let me tell de folks, to make 'em
 hoppy; but no, he jist make me take an
 oath dat I wouldn't let a libin soul know
 ob it, or see him, tell he wor well—or
 dead. An he did look like death tryin
 to grab him, sho; but I jest sticks to him
 tell I'd a-cured his leg an got him up,
 walkin'."

"Lawd! but didn't he tell a story! I
 leave dat part to him—bout how he wor
 sated when de ship go down. But I
 coax an I pray him on my knees to be
 bring har on Christmas Day in de mawn-
 in, for a sort o' gift to de hull family, and
 fer to begin all ober agin; but he'd clat
 he couldn't—he wor too proud to go back.
 "Den I tell him how his mudder wor
 heart-broke, an sick, an dyin, meebly, an
 dat foteh him; if nothin else won't foteh
 a man, de name of his mudder will."
 "An I took it on myself to order a suit
 of new clothes, kase I knowed yo'd foot
 de bill—an har it am, wid my humble
 sorer dat I done neglec my work; but you
 knows what fer, now."

"Noble fellow!" said Mr. Chesterton,
 and he could hardly say it for the tears.
 "I'd pay a hundred such bills as this,
 Sam, for the sake of seeing my poor lost
 boy again. I was rash to send him off—
 but God knows I didn't think he'd take
 it so in earnest!"

He held out his hand. "Sam, I thank
 you from my heart for saving my boy,
 and it shall be worth your while. It's
 my turn to make you a Christmas gift,
 which I shall do by making out free pa-
 pers for you and your wife, this very
 day."

All this time Aunt Katie had been sit-
 ting on the top step, her face buried in
 her apron, neither moving nor speaking;
 but when, clear above all other voices,
 she heard what the master said, and the
 wild applause that followed, she gave
 one spring and fell down at Sam's feet.

"Seems if everybody hev faith in my
 Sam but me," she sobbed. "Oh, Sam,
 fergive yo disrepentant ole wife!"

At this moving sight Uncle Cole's mule
 made for her again; but the ole man was
 "at the hellem," as he expressed it, and
 held the creature back.



Sam was the hero of the plantation
 that day. It seemed as if there could
 hardly be enough done for his pleasure;
 and at the various festivals his was the
 central figure. Poor, pale Mrs. Chester-
 ton actually fell upon his neck, and
 thanked him with sobs and tears.
 It is, perhaps, needless to say that Sam
 still stayed on, built a better cabin, and
 made his family more comfortable. In

process of time the war soured, and
 Phillip was old enough and stout enough
 then to handle a musket. He and Sam
 fought through the war without receiv-
 ing a wound, and after it was all over
 both went North, where many of Mrs.
 Chesterton's relatives lived. Nearly all
 the parties are alive to-day; and not a
 Christmas comes that Sam is not held in
 loving remembrance, and "Sam's Christ-
 mas" referred to with smiles and tears.

WALSH & STEACY HAS GONE TO HIS FATHER'S,
 and the spirit-mule may be seen roaming
 in the fields of the old Cedar Belt plan-
 tation, quietly feeding—but no one dares
 to use him since the old man died.—
 Mary A. Dennison, in *Demore's Monthly*
Magazine.

CHRISTMAS FAIRIES.



The study of fairies is interesting and
 to some people costly. Such a one is the
 foregoing illustration—the fairy of the
 sealskin. We do not think that boys
 fall in love with Christmas fairies of this
 kind to the extent they used to, for the
 youth of to-day is grimly skeptical of
 fairies who cannot be happy unless
 decked with gorgeous and costly fabrics.



The good fairy is not only the pet of
 her companions but the light of her
 humble home, and the sole stay of a
 blind father, a bed-ridden mother and
 half a dozen, more or less, helpless
 brothers and sisters. We fear, however,
 she is, in a great measure, a creation
 due to literary exigencies, and the ne-
 cessity of writing up to pretty but in-
 accurate wood cuts intended for Christmas
 numbers.



Juvenile fairies are familiar to every
 one. The golden gates will soon swing
 open and gladden many children's hearts
 as the myriads of favors are distributed.



The old-time fairy of the footlights en-
 joyed the distinction of a gilt pole with
 a star on the end. The modern Chris-
 mas fairy is arrayed and equipped in far
 more varied fashion.



Young '88: Sorry to kick you over,
 old man, but you see your time's up.
 You have the satisfaction, however, of
 knowing what '89 will do for me.

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