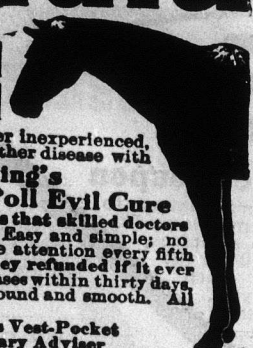


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In Lighter vein.

A Christmas Dance in Dixie.

Step wid de banjo an' glide wid de fiddle,
Turn wid you right han's an' pass down de middle;
Fu' Christmas is comin', it's right on de way,
An' dey's houahs to dance 'fo' de break o' de day.

What ef de win' is a taihin' an' whistlin'?
Look at dat fiah how hit's spittin' an' bristlin'!
Heat in de ashes an' heat in de cinders;
Mistah Fros' kin des look thoo de windahs.

Heat up the toddy an' pas' de wa'm glasses,
Don't stop to shivah at blowin's an' blas'es,
Keep on de kittle an' keep it a-hummin'.
Lat all an' drink all, dey's lots mo' a-comin'.

Look hyeah, Maria, don't open dat oven,
Want all dese people a-pushin' an' shovin'?

Res' from de dance? yes, you done catch dat odah,
Mammy done catch it, an' law! hit nigh flo'd huh;
'Possum is monst'ous fu' mekin' folks fin' it!
Come, draw yo' cheers up, I's sho I do' min' it.

Eat up dem critters, you men folks an' wimmens,
'Possums ain't skace w'en dey's lots o' pu'simmons.

Mr. Bush as Santa Claus.

"This here Christmas coming round pretty mid'ling reg'lar every year," said Mr. Milo Bush, "always put me in mind of a feller I knowed back in Ontario when I was a young man. Like liest fool in the province—he was, I mean. Biggest fool I ever seen. Dutcher was his name—Jerry Dutcher. He wasn't one of these here amateur fools that just work at it for fun, but a reg'lar professional fool. Didn't know enough to ache when he was hurt. Couldn't 'a' scratched a match on a grindstun—not if he tried."

"Well, this Jerry got it into his head that he was good-looking. Thought he was a reg'lar Ap' Heller—whoever he was. Got a notion the women was all thinking about him. Finally he acchooly got soft on the same gal I was sort o' shinning up to. I was some weak them days myself, or I wouldn't 'a' been took in by that gal. Evenchooly I seen throo that gal. One Christmas old Uncle Peleg Twigger, who was the father of the gal, give a sort of a shindy, and asked in we neighbors. I went, and so did this here Jerry, and a passel of other folks, mostly fools. The gal, Jerusha, was there making bigger fools of most of 'em. Us younger people indulged in various pastimes of a more or less intellectional character, such as hunt-the-slipper, Copenhagen, and sich, while the more elderly folks played old sledge and drunk hard cider in the kitchen. This Jerry was all the time getting betwixt me and Jerusha in his fool way—a-curling up his moustache and a-striking attitudes. Old St. Hooker finally struck up with fiddle music, and we danced—tripped the light bombastic toe, was what Jerry said. I could 'a' knocked him down. And mostly he tripped it with Jerusha, too—he got four dances and I got one.

"Then the next thing on the program-me was the distribution of the Christmas presents. In the past they'd had a tree, but no, that wouldn't do for Jerusha this time. To tell the truth, that gal was just about as foolish as Jerry. I didn't see it then, but I seen it later. Woman, thy name is flattery, observes the poet—and he hit it pretty near right.

"No, nothing would do for Jerusha this time but a Sandy Claus—reg'lar live tomfool, with a pack and whiskers, a-playing he was Sandy Claus. 'Mr. Bush,' says Jerusha, a-purring like a Maltese cat—'Mr. Bush' will you honor us by being Sandy Claus?' 'Sartenly,' says I; 'it is yours to command; just like that, I says, beginning to catch on to Jerry's ways.

"Well, they got me my pack and my whiskers, and I put 'em on, and then says Jerusha, 'You will find a ladder outside to get up to the chimbley with.' 'Wot,' says I, 'have I got to come down the Jim-fizzled chimbley?' 'Of course,' says she; 'all Sandy Clauses do. The fire is out. Our chimbley is large. It is all for the children, you know, Mr. Bush. Don't you love children, Mr. Bush?' 'Yes,' says I—just like that—'yes, jig-wiggle 'em, I love children, but I'm no chimbley-swab.' Then that there Jerry Dutcher come up, his elbows sticking out, and says he: 'Is yer Sandy Claus baky, Miss Jerusha? Let me be yer Sandy Claus. I love to make happy the little innocent children.' Then I goes out into the night, ready to back down into a volcainer.

"The bore of that there chimbley was not large, but by slipping my pack up on the back of my neck, and colding my whiskers and holding 'em under

my chin, I managed to get started. Soot got in my eyes, and I was forced to omit many remarks which would have fit the occasion for fear it would also get in my mouth. Them remarks I said inwardly, however, and they applied to the chimbley, the idiot Jerry, the gal, and the happy, innocent children which I loved.

"I calculated that I'd gone rooting and scraping down that hole about five hundred feet, when I stopped a-straddle of something. I felt about, and found it to be an iron rod, which seemed to 'a' been put in by the man wot built the thing to hold the sides together. I h'isted up, but my pack was ketcher. I tried to swing over, like a man getting off of hossback, but there wasn't room. My whiskers had come unpacked and were wiped up over my face mostly, but I could not get my hands up to brush them down. The voice of the happy, innocent children which I loved came to my ears. The distant strains of the fiddle floated up. I could hear Jerry and Jerusha talking gayly. My feeling, repressed too long, burst out. Opening my mouth, regardless of both soot and artificial hair, I spoke my mind freely as becomes a man.

"My remarks attracted the attention of all, and I heard the women removing the children from the room before I could say more. Then I heard Jerusha looking up the chimbley. 'I can see Mr. Bush's legs,' says she. 'Then he himself must be near,' says Jerry. 'Be you stuck?' calls old Mrs. Twigger. 'Wot did I say?' says I. 'I would dislike to repeat wot you said,' says she. Then they all began to talk. 'We must rescue him,' sez Jerusha; 'the children are waiting for their presents.' 'Wot can we do?' says ole St. 'I suggest pushing of him down somehow,' says Jerry. 'Couldn't we drop something on him from the top of the chimbley—say an anvil?' They all said no. 'Then,' says Jerry, 'why not h'ist him up? Wot do you say to a keg of powder in the fireplace? Let us blow the young man who was so anxious to be Sandy Claus out the top of the chimbley like a billing volcainer.' Then they shut the idgit up, and brought a crowbar, and after reaching up and measuring with a long stick and locating me they all went upstairs and began to dig throo the bricks where I was. 'Let me wield the bar which shall liberate a hero,' says Jerry, and they let him. 'Be careful; do not overdo,' I heard Jerusha saying to him. 'A brave and an innocent man is imprisoned—shall I spare my muscle?' says Jerry. 'By-and-bye he got a hole throo. By-and-bye around and, seeing my chance, did not spare my muscle, but kicked him off the jaw like a mule, knocking him off the chair he was standing on, pretending it was a mistake, as I backed out of the hole. He struck the floor, and Jerusha rushed up. 'Alas, my Jeremiah,' shrieks she; 'dead, dead! Alas!' 'No,' says I, 'but he will be when I get clear out,' my head still in the chimbley. Jerry got up, with a little blood on his mouth where I'd kicked him. 'Wot! Heavings, my Jeremiah bleeds!' screams Jerusha. 'He will die! Yes, yes, he will die!' and she faints in his arms. Just then her father comes in, 'Wot's short-sighted from the cider. Wot's holding my darter that way for?' says he. 'She is fainted,' says Jerry. 'Besides, we're going to be married, you know.' 'That's wot you be,' says the old man. 'Here, Squire, marry 'em!' 'But the gal is in a faint,' says the Squire. 'I have recovered,' says Jerusha, firm as a rock. So the Squire married 'em right there, with me all out of the chimbley except my pack, which wouldn't come throo the hole, so I hung with my toes a foot from the floor dooring the bootiful and impressive ceremony. Then Jerusha looks up, and says she, 'Mr. Bush, if ver face was clean, mebbey you might be allowed to kiss the bride.' Then I kicked at Jerry again, but missed him, and they cut me down, and I went home, thinking to myself wot a blessed thing is a happy Christmas."

Christmas Nervous Prostration.

A new kind of Christmas nervous prostration was given by an old colored man who lately called at a physician's office.

"You say your wife is verry sick with nervous prostration?" asked the physician.

"Deed she is!" was the emphatic reply. "She's been mighty bad for some time, sah."

"Has she been working too hard?"

"No, sah, not dat. Yo' see we had a fine tu'key Christmas, a noble, bi-bird it was, sah, en my wife she done et nearly de whole bird; then she et a whole minch pie, en two pounds of candy aftarward, sah, en her nervous system ain't been right since, sah."

Her Own Eyes Good Enough for Him.

A little Scotch boy's grandmother was packing his luncheon for him to take to school one morning. Suddenly looking up in the old lady's face, he said:

"Grandmother, does yer specs magnify?"

"A little, my child," she answered.

"Aweel, then," said the boy. "I wad juist like it if ye wad tak' them aff when ye're packin' my loonch."