

**Baby in Church.**

Aunt Nellie had fashioned a dainty thing,  
Of humberg and ribbon and lace,  
And mamma had said, as she settled it  
"round  
Our beautiful baby's face,  
Where the dimples play and the laughter  
lies  
Like sunbeams hid in her violet eyes—  
"If the day is pleasant and baby is good,  
She may go to the church and wear her  
new hood"

Then Ben, aged six, began to tell,  
In elder-brotherly way.  
How very, very good she must be,  
If she went to church next day.  
He told of the church, the choir and the  
crowd,  
And the man up in front who talked so  
loud;  
But she must not talk, nor laugh, nor  
sing,  
But just sit as quiet as anything.

And so, on a beautiful Sabbath in May,  
When the fruit buds burst into flowers,  
(There wasn't a blossom on bush or tree  
So fair as this blossom of ours),  
And all in her white dress, dainty and  
new,  
Our baby sat in the family pew;  
The grand, sweet music, the reverent air,  
The solemn hush and the voice of prayer,  
Filled all her baby soul with awe,  
As she sat in her little place,  
And the holy look that the angels wear  
Seemed pictured upon her face.  
And the sweet words uttered so long ago  
Came into my mind with a rhythmic  
flow:

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven,"  
said he,  
And I knew that he spake of such as she.  
The sweet-voiced organ pealed forth  
again,  
The collection box came round,  
And baby dropped her penny in,  
And smiled at the chinking sound.  
Alone in the choir Aunt Nellie stood,  
Waiting the close of the soft prelude,  
To begin her solo. High and strong  
She struck the first note; clear and  
long.

She held it, and all were charmed but  
one,  
Who, with all the might she had,  
Sprang to her little feet and cried:  
"Aunt Nellie, you's being bad!"  
The audience smiled, the minister  
coughed,  
The little boys in the corner laughed,  
The tenor-man shook like an aspen leaf,  
And hid his face in his handkerchief.  
And poor Aunt Nellie never could tell  
How she finished that terrible strain,  
but says that nothing on earth would  
tempt  
Her to go through the scene again.  
So we have decided perhaps 'tis best,  
For her sake, ours, and all the rest,  
That we wait, maybe, for a year or two,  
Ere our baby re-enter the family pew.  
—Independent.

**THE PRATT BABY.**

BY SYDNEY DAYRE

"What's to be done with the Pratt  
baby?"  
That was the question which was stir-  
ring the small village. Answers of  
various kinds were attempted.  
"Mis' Peters says she'd be glad to—"  
"But she couldn't, with her poor  
health?"  
"Mis' Bates might."  
"But she won't?"  
"Mis' Lane's got her hands full  
a'ready."  
"Mis' Dr. Miller hasn't a thing to pre-  
vent her doin' it."  
"Not a chick nor a child—"  
"And plenty of money."  
But with all the cleverness displayed  
in fitting duties for other people, the  
Pratt baby remained homeless, although  
kindly looked upon as a sort of village  
protege.  
Its father had been run over and killed  
a month after its birth. The mother  
took it hard and wilted out of life, so  
that by the time the baby was eight  
months old it looked out on a world in  
which it was absolutely without posses-  
sion, yet with eyes as bright and blue  
and cheeks as fair and rosy as if it had  
been the child of an empress—perhaps  
more so.  
For the present the baby was "staying  
on" in the family of Mrs. Garvey, in  
whose house Mrs. Pratt had rented a  
small room. Mrs. Garvey had six chil-  
dren of her own, but there was still  
room in it for another.  
"A blessin' 'twould bring to anybody,  
the sweet cratur! wid its eyes laughin'  
and dancin' at ye the day long. An  
it's meself would niver let it out of the  
house but for havin' nobody to stay wid  
it when I'm out washin'."

During such absences Billy Garvey was  
detailed as nurse, an arrangement which  
suted the small boy well, for he hated  
school and loved the baby. It was his  
care day and night. Billy knew no joy  
greater than lay in the touch of its  
clinging little hands and its merry laugh  
as he performed for its amusement every  
antic known to boys.

When the first snow came Billy  
bundled up the baby and took it out on  
his sled. The baby and Billy both en-  
joyed this, though it had its drawbacks.  
If Billy rounded a corner swiftly the  
baby rolled off; if he started up suddenly  
the baby tipped over backwards. Con-  
sideration of these difficulties led to a  
bright thought on Billy's part. He  
nailed a soap box on the sled. This he  
filled with hay, and when he drew it out  
with his blue-eyed charge no child of  
an empress was ever lovelier or more  
tenderly smiled on, no charloter prouder  
than Billy.

Up and down the two or three short  
streets he trotted one mild afternoon.  
It was market day, and a number of  
farmers were in from the country. Billy  
varied his sport by hitching his sled to  
the backs of the sleighs, thus securing  
a ride for himself, mounted on a narrow  
ledge in front of the soap box. Quickly  
he sprang from one vehicle to another as  
they came and went, during which capers  
only the tender Providence which guards  
the helpless saved the baby's innocent  
life from being trampled out.

The short winter afternoon was clos-  
ing in—too soon, for neither Billy nor  
the baby were tired of the fun. Teams  
were scarcer, and after a ride behind a  
homeward-bound farmer, Billy quickly  
detached his sled and as quickly fastened  
it to one going the other way, with  
prospect of another spin. But disap-  
pointment waited, for just near the edge  
of the village the sleigh stopped.

Billy waited, for it was nearly at the  
foot of a long hill. His adroit scheme  
was to get himself hauled to the top of  
this and then take a run down, excited  
to a wild rate of speed by the delighted  
crows and shrieks of the baby.

The farmer stayed a long time, and  
Billy grew tired. Nothing but the pros-  
pect of this latest rush down the hill  
would have kept him. He saw some  
boys at play a little way back on the  
street, and went to see what they were  
doing.

And just in the unlucky moment when  
his attention was fully engaged, Farmer  
Crofts hurried out of the store and  
jumped into his box sleigh. His horses,  
with the sleigh, had been turned diag-  
onally toward the store; the baby in the  
soap box was just beyond range of his  
sight as he came. And in the gather-  
ing twilight no one chanced to see the  
precious morsel of a craft sailing along  
after the big sleigh, as the horses, tired  
of standing, sped, not up the hill as  
Billy had anticipated, but down another  
road winding out of sight at once.

With one glance Billy had seen the  
baby safe, with the next his scared eyes  
saw only vacancy before the store door.  
With a wild cry he dashed toward where  
he had left his treasure.

"My baby! Where's my baby? Bring  
him back—bring him back!"

But sleigh, soap box, and baby had  
melted completely into the shadows.  
Billy ran first up one road, then down  
the other, at last with a heart full of  
despairing misery carrying home his  
sorry tale.

He could not tell to whose sleigh he  
had tied the baby, could not tell in  
which direction it had gone, did not  
know how far it might go.

Quickly through the village ran the  
tragic news.

"Billy Garvey's lost the Pratt baby."  
Tears sprang to more than one pair  
of eyes.

"I—wisht I'd taken it."  
"I might 'a', just as well as not."  
"I was just thinkin' of it."  
"I would in a minute, if—"

But there were no conditions in the  
matter now, no prospect of a return of  
lost opportunity. The Pratt baby was  
lost, and the village mourned.

Farmer Crofts' horses stepped briskly  
along in the early evening. The in-  
creasing cold and steady motion made  
the baby drowsy, and like a sensible  
baby (he was one of the kind who al-  
ways seemed to do the right thing in  
the right time and place—perhaps that  
was his inheritance in lieu of any other)  
he cuddled down into the straw and  
went to sleep. The farmer did not  
know of the unusual attachment to his  
sleigh until he had put his horses in and  
was unloading it of things he had  
bought. Then he stumbled over the  
soap box and nearly fell, scattering  
bundles of groceries about.

"What's this?" Mr. Crofts lifted a  
lantern he had lighted. The baby held  
up his head and gave a little gurgle of  
pleasure at sight of the light.

"Well, I am blessed!" Mr. Crofts  
held the lantern closer, then jerked it  
away as two small balls of bands made  
a clutch for it. Then he put into an-  
other shape his exclamation, the truth  
contained in which he so little realized:

"Well—if I ain't blessed!"  
A look of blank bewilderment came  
over his face.

"How did you git here?"  
If baby and soap box had fallen from  
the skies it could not have been a greater  
surprise. His surprise was none the less  
when he saw a string and realized how  
his unexpected visitor had come. What  
was he to do?

"Well, seein' you be here, I s'pose you  
can't be left out in the cold."

Not knowing what else to do, he  
picked up sled, soap box, and baby, and  
carried them into the house.

"Here, Marlin," he said, setting his  
burden on the kitchen floor, "look what  
somebody's sent you."

Mrs. Crofts gazed in amazement, then  
in displeasure.

"Jacob, what do you mean? You  
don't mean that you've let somebody put  
something on you—"

"No, indeed, I don't. You may get  
as mad as you like with somebody, but  
not with me. That sled was hitched  
onto the back of the sleigh, and came  
all the way from Bentley."

"Well, I declare! A little mite like  
that out in the cold. But you see how  
'tis—a game of somebody's to put that  
child on us. They'll be fooled, though."

"Yes. I'll take it over to the poor-  
house to-morrow. They can look for it  
there if they want it."

"They won't look for it. Well," as  
small grunts and sniffs arose from the  
box, "seein' it's here, I s'pose we can't  
let it starve."

"Anyhow, it's a purty little creatur."

The baby had by this time, after much  
winking and blinking, accustomed his  
eyes to the lighted room, and was now  
giving signs of being restless. As Mrs.  
Crofts approached him with much the  
look with which she would have regarded  
a stray kitten (she not liking cats), he,  
being accustomed to go to everybody,  
held out his hands with a look of gra-  
cious readiness to be pleased if well  
treated.

"Well, it is kind o' bright."

The baby took eagerly the warm milk  
brought for him, then settled back into  
Mrs. Crofts' arms with a look of perfect  
content with the existing state of things.  
Mrs. Crofts laughed.

"I can't set here holdin' a baby. You  
take him while I set things on."

She held him while the meal was  
eaten, then again passed him over to  
the farmer. Baby made a dash for the  
bushy, half gray whiskers, burying his  
laughing, dimpled face among them with  
crows and coos, which plainly invited a  
game of romps of the baby order. This  
was, however, soon over.

"He's goin' to sleep."

There was something pathetic in the  
peaceful trust with which the lids closed  
over the blue eyes as the pressure of the  
small head became heavier on the arm.  
It went to the heart of the Pratt baby's  
new caretakers.

"It's a cold day, Jacob," said Mrs.  
Crofts the next morning. "I've got a  
conscience, if I am set agen' bein' put  
on, and I don't like the idee of that little  
creatur' takin' a long ride such a day.  
To-morrow 'll be milder, maybe."

To-morrow was milder, but Mrs. Crofts  
remarked:

"A day or two won't make no differ-  
ence, now he's here."

On the third day a boy rushed into  
the house with a cry:

"Oh, my baby! I've found you—ain't  
I? How came I ever to let you git  
away from me."

And the Pratt baby pulled Billy's hair  
and poked into his eyes and rubbed his  
pink cheeks against the freckled ones  
with such little crows and squeals of de-  
light as brought a distinct pang of  
jealousy to Mrs. Crofts' heart.

"Is he your'n?" she asked Billy.

"Yes. Leastways—I mean—he's the  
Pratt baby. He lives to my house. I've  
come fer him. The sled's right here.  
I'll soon fix him up." Setting the baby  
on the floor, Billy made a rush to the  
sled and soon brought in the soap box.

"Stop," said Mrs. Crofts, as Billy spied  
the small hood hanging on a nail, "if  
that baby's got to ride into Bentley to-  
day he ain't goin' in a soap box.  
Jacob," she called into the back yard,  
"I want you to hitch up and drive into  
Bentley. This boy's come fo. the baby.  
Says it's his'n," with a little quiver in  
her voice, "and if he's to go he's got to  
go comfortable."

"Who'd 'a' thought anybody'd ever be  
wantin' the poor little chap?" The  
farmer's surprise was complete when  
his wife appeared wrapped for the ride  
with the baby in her arms.

"I'm goin' to see him safe with them

that has the right to him," she said,  
firmly. Adding, with some severity:  
"And that won't let him go cavortin'  
over the country in a soap box or a  
winter day."

Billy wilted at this, but was sustained  
by his joy in the recovery of the baby,  
comforting himself by little pokes at the  
soft bundle covered up in Mrs. Crofts'  
arms, to make sure it was safe there.

Its warmth reached the innermost re-  
cesses of her heart—a pain with it at  
thought of the lonely house to which  
she would go back without it. It had  
been but a few hours in which the  
strange, unlooked-for, unwelcomed visi-  
tant had been under her roof, and yet  
day and night the little presence had  
borne a growing sweetness. How its  
baby voice had filled the silent home to  
which she shrank from returning!

The return of the baby was heralded  
by triumphant shouts from Billy.

"He's back! He's back! I've found  
him! We've got him!"

Men came to the store doors to listen,  
and women ran out of small houses with  
shawls over their heads. A small crowd  
had gathered by the time Mrs. Garvey's  
door was reached.

It was Billy's intention to snatch the  
baby and rush in with a wild whoop.  
But Mrs. Crofts held on to it and walked  
with dignity into the house.

Mrs. Garvey seized the baby and wept  
over it a torrent of Irish fondling, while  
the other women waited their turn for  
a hug, as a babel of tongues arose.

"I'm willin' to say I'm ready to take  
that blessed baby—"

"I'd decided to do that myself—"

"—I'm able to do well by him, and—"

"—I was with his mother to the last,  
and I've the best right—"

Mrs. Crofts looked about on the  
clamouring women.

"Which of you is the mother of this  
child?" she asked.

A blank silence for a moment, broken  
by Mrs. Garvey.

"It's meself would have been glad  
enough to take the darlint when there  
was no one else to do it, but for—"

"I'm ready to do it now—"

"I can give him a good home."

"Well," Mrs. Crofts arose, and with  
an authoritative air took the baby from  
the hands of the woman who just then  
chanced to be caressing it, "this baby  
came to me, all unbeknown, ridin' by  
itself in the winter night. If the Lord  
didn't send him I'd like to know why.  
If anybody else wanted to care for him  
it's a pity they didn't find it out before.  
I'm goin' to take him home and keep  
him, and if the town authorities wants  
to interfere they'll know where to come  
for him."

She strode toward the door, but stop-  
ped at sound of loud sobs from Billy, her  
face softening into a beaming smile.

"You come and see him whenever you  
want. He's to be your'n yet, all the  
same."

The town authorities never saw fit to  
find fault with the home which Billy  
had found for the Pratt baby.—Christian  
Advocate.

**The Boyless Town.**

A cross old woman of long ago,  
Declared that she hated noise;  
The town would be so pleasant, you  
know,

If only there were no boys."

She scolded and fretted about it till  
Her eyes grew as heavy as lead,  
And then, of a sudden, the town grew  
still,

For all the boys had fled.

And all through the long and dusty  
street

'here wasn't a boy in view;  
The baseball lot, where they used to  
meet,

Was a sight to make one blue;  
The grass was growing on every base,  
And the paths that the runners made,  
For there wasn't a soul in all the place

Who knew how the game was played.

The cherries rotted, and went to waste—  
There was no one to climb the trees;

And nobody had a single taste,  
Save only the birds and bees.

There wasn't a messenger boy, not one,  
To speed as such messengers can;

If people wanted their errands done,  
They sent for a messenger man.

There was little, I ween, of frolic and  
noise.

There was less of cheer and mirth:  
The sad old town, since it lacked its  
boys,

Was the dreariest place on earth.  
The poor old woman began to weep,  
Then woke with a sudden scream;

"Dear me!" she cried, "I have been  
asleep;

And, oh, what a horrid dream!"

—Author Unknown.