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Poetry.

THE SWIFT MESSENGER.

O Ariel, tricky and jainty,
You spirit of finest air,
That was given the first man Adam
The breath of his mouth to bear;
Well suited the pair in Eden,
Your happy, wandering will:
But the world is wider and sadder,
And you are a trifle still.

O Hermes, with winged sandals,
O teacher of tongues and arts;
That came to the craving nations
As the "word" grew in their hearts;
Unbarred the gates of learning
To stores for the people's need,
And teaching the cloistered bookmen
To write for the world to read.

O Pegasus, the white earth over,
O Hermes, whose feet are wings;
Before you the darkness lightens,
Behold you the desert sings.
But the world sings faster and faster,
And blessing must strive with ban,
And where shall we find a swifter
To carry the world of man?

On him in the latter stages
(And his signals all are dumb)
The train of the thundering ages,
The ends of the world are come.
Forth on the wild steed horses
He rides to the last day;
But whom shall he send before him,
And who shall prepare his way?

His cry came up to the Watcher
That sits on for the help of men,
And he said, "I must send another,
Or the world must halt again."
So he sought in the host of spirits
The spirit that swiftest ran,
And "Go," he said to the Lightning,
"And carry the words of man."

Harper's Magazine for January.

Interesting Tale.

Ben Hollander's "New Year's."

BY PERLE LAY.

How are you Father and Mother and all?
What a rush of the gusty storm swept in
at the door with the cheery voice!
Benny's come! Benny's come! I shouted
half a dozen pairs of hands gave glad confirmation
to the statement. It was wonderful
how the dark dining room lightened
and brightened in a minute. Let us see how many
there were to be glad of the new year's arrival.

Over in the corner near the small fireplace,
sat a crippled father, with one stiffened leg
extended upon a low footstool. Certainly a
pleasant smile suddenly kindled his drawn
features, and was answered by a glad gleam
on the face of the sad-eyed, patient, low-d
mother who held a great rollicking, year old
baby. Then there were Ned and Johnny
who were eight-year old twins; Maggie and
Elsie, the brown and blue-eyed sisters; Billy,
a rogue of a curly pate, and a Mollie, a puffy
who manifested her pleasure in her own fashion,
by purring with all her might, on the bit
of rug before the stove.

Yes, everybody in the room was evidently
glad to see Ben, and the boy's face was radiant
with his responding gladness as he shut out
the breath of the storm, and turned to catch
up the nearest child in his strong arms.

Poor Ben! what a comfort he was to all of
them, and yet his life was very barren of joy
for himself, save that which grew from his
noble, generous, Christian heart. People
pitied him every day as they saw him in the
streets, with his low stooped figure, his unna-
turally broad shoulders and the great hump
between them, for Ben was deformed. In
his little boyhood he had fallen from a high
window, and from that time, though sturdy
and strength came to him, beauty and
grace were forever withdrawn until "mortality
shall put on immortality." I say they had
withdrawn, but they had not left his eyes,
which were Ben's only physical beauty.

These were large, and dark, and brilliant,
though perhaps, indeed, if he had not carried
so great and good a heart within him, even
his eyes would not have glowed with so steady
a light.

But Ben bore his lot with the spirit of
Christ, and the loveliness that was denied his
outer man seemed to have become the portion
of his soul in double measure.

Within the last few years his father had be-
come hopelessly lame and disabled from labor
by rheumatism, and the support of the large
family now fell largely upon this oldest boy.

He took up his burden right bravely, and
struggled on hopefully.

To day was New Year's day. The time
had been, when it had been a little festive day
with the family, but poverty is a very practi-
cal teacher, and no toy or candy bag had as
yet found out the little children, in the low
dark tenement that gave them shelter. Be-
side, a pitiless storm had been falling all day,
so they had been kept closely within doors,
and could not have even the pitiful excitement
of a holiday look at the toy shop windows.

How much Ben had been thinking of them
all at home, while the long hours of the stormy
day had found him sorting coal, down in the
cold warehouse of rich Mr. Prince! Not a
very exhilarating fashion of celebrating New
Year's, certainly. Ben's heart felt a sort of
swollen and unaccounted, as he went through
the snow in the morning, but by and by, up
through the disappointment, little blooms of
heart's ease began to thrust themselves. A
bright idea dawned upon him, that quite re-
conciled him to the dreary labor.

The dear, kind fellow had been devising
some little surprises for them all at home.
Poor ones they were, to be sure, but up where
the true reckonings are made, they were counted
as great gifts.

Well, mother, said the boy, as he took the
bag from her sewing room, when he had taken
off his patched and grimy overcoat, you are
so awfully tired I know.

Father, how's the lame leg, to night? I've
thought of you all lots, to day. I did think
Mr. Prince might have given us all some
holiday, seeing it's New Year's. But he is al-
ways thinking about money, you know, and
said when Sam Skinner went ask for us all, if
we might have a rest, Oh, yes, if you can af-
ford to lose a day's wages out of the week.
Work before play. No work no pay. So
we all turned to it again, since we couldn't
any of us bear to lose a part of our wages.

But evening did come, at last, and I decid-
ed that if I must work on a holiday, it should
not be for nothing, and we would have an ex-
tra good supper.

Father, don't you think you'd relish a bit
of a nice steak? And mother, here's a glass
of a cup of the very finest chocolate. Here,
Ned, hold the baby, while I stir the
fire and put on the tea-kettle.

Ben's enthusiasm stirred the zeal of Maggie
and Elsie, who in a trice had the old fashioned
square table in the middle of the room, and
gained the mother's consent that it be read
with the cloth, but worn linen table-cloth, sole
remaining representative of the store of shin-
ing linen that had in the prosperous days been
the pride of Mrs. Hollander's house-keeping
heart.

Oh! how the small dark kitchen glowed
with the love light and cheer that this plain,
hump backed boy brought with him! Benny
was a perfect cordial in the whole house.
His mother's heart blessed him all the day long.

My dear boy, she said, how tired you must
be! as the boy's active fingers turned the
steak to keep it from burning.

Well, some mother, but I'm going to have
a good time, now, riskless. Girls, is the bread
ready? You'll find a nice slice of butter on
the closet shelf.

Now for the salt and pepper, and then
there's as nice a steak as a king need eat!

Elsie, set up the chairs. Father, I'll help
your lame leg, shall I?

Now all sit down, and I will hold the baby.
I want you to have the comfort of one un-
interrupted supper, mother.

So they all sat down. Rather a crowded
table, full to be sure, but such a happy set
of boys and girls as one does not see every day.

Isn't any wonder that the tears stood in
Benny's eyes while his father asked the bless-
ing? I think not.

Oh! oh! oh! said Billy, who happened to
be the first one who turned over his plate.
Oh my! here's a pair of reins! Where did
they come from? Red, white and blue!

Splendid! Now I can play horse, like every-
thing! Say, Ben, I know you put 'em there!
You're always doing nice things.

By this time, there was a grand chorus of
exclamations, for every child's plate had been
reminded, and Benny was overwhelmed
with such an avalanche of gratitude and hois-
terous joy, as might have crushed him, had he
not possessed very strong shoulders.

Ned and Johnny, who always wanted just
the same thing, had each a bright red pair of
mittens, and Elsie and Maggie found joy in
their hats in the possession of two paper
dolls, with lovely frocks and hats and cloaks.

To complete the matter, Ben produced from
his pocket a bright tin rattle, which he suc-
ceeded at last in inserting between baby's fat
fingers.

Oh! what a splendid, splendid supper! And
what a glorious time every way they did
have that evening. I never can begin to tell
you, so I won't try.

After the supper dishes were washed, Ben
had a bag of chestnuts to roast, that he,
thoughtful brother that he always was, had
been saving up for weeks against this very
evening. Then came an ear of corn to pop

in the iron spider, and poor papa, taught his
aching nerves and muscles patience for the
pleasure of his children, while Ben led off in
a hearty game of "Blind Man's Buff."

After all was done, came the quiet family
prayers, and the "Our Father," and "Now-I-
lay-me" of the children, followed by the soft,
sweet child slumbers, that come alike to rich
and poor.

Oh rare Ben Hollander! God bless you!
many a heavy millionaire has not learned the
first lesson of Christly living, as have you, in
your few, young, over-burdened years!

Verily, "the cup of cold water in the name
of a disciple shall in no wise lose its reward."

The Leopard of the Air.

"One morning I heard a strange cry up in
the air. I look, and what do I see?—what
do I see yonder up in the sky? An eagle.
But what kind of an eagle? for it appears to
me so much larger than any eagle I have ever
met with before. As I asked this, my men
exclaimed, It is a gunnison; the leopard of
the air; the bird that feeds on gazelles, goats,
and monkeys; the bird that is in so difficult
of any to find and to kill. Yes, said Quer-
lauren; in my younger days I remember that
my wife and myself were on our plantation,
with some of our slaves, and one day we heard
the cries of a baby, and saw a child carried
up into the sky by one of these gunnisons—
The baby had been laid on the ground, and
the gunnison, whose eyes never miss any-
thing, and which had not been noticed soaring
above our heads, pounced on its prey, and
then laughed at us as he rose and flew to a
distant part of the forest. Then Quer-lauren
showed me a fetchingly made of two huge
claws of this bird. What tremendous things
those talons were! how deep they could go
into the flesh!

Then came wonderful stories of the very
great strength of the bird.

The people were afraid of them, and were
compelled to be very careful of their babies.
These great eagles do not feed on fowl; they
are too small game for them. Monkeys are
what they like best; they can watch them as
they float over the tops of the trees of the for-
est; but sometimes the monkeys get the bet-
ter of them.

People had better not try to get hold of the
gunnison's young if they want to keep their
sight, said Gambo; for, as sure as we live, the
old bird will pounce upon the man that touch-
es its young.

For a long time I had heard the people talk-
ing of the gunnison, but had never yet had
a glimpse of one.

Now looking up again, I saw several of them
How high they were! At times they would
appear to be quite still in the air; at other
times they would soar. They were so high
that I do not see how they could possibly see
their prey; everything must have been in a haze
to them; monkeys, of course, could not be seen.
They were, no doubt, amusing themselves, and
I wonder if they tried to see how near they
could go to the sun. Some at times flew so
high that I lost sight of them.

In the afternoon I thought I would ramble
round. I took a double barreled smooth-bore
gun, and loaded one side with a bullet in case
I should see large game; the other barrel I
loaded with shot No. 2. Then I carefully
plunged into the woods till I reached the banks
of a little stream and there I heard the cry of
the mo-di (Colobus Satanas) which is one
of the largest monkeys of these forests. From
their shrill cries, I thought there must be
at least half a dozen together. I was indeed
glad that I had one barrel loaded with big shot.
If the monkeys were not too far off, I would
be able to get a shot, and kill one.

I advanced very cautiously until I got quite
near to them. I could see their big bodies
long tails, and long jet black shining hair.
What handsome beasts they were! what a
nice looking moff their skins would make?

Just as I was considering which of them I
would fire at, I saw some big thing, like a sha-
dow, suddenly come down upon the tree. Then
I heard the flapping of heavy wings, and al-
so the death cry of a poor monkey. Then I saw
a huge bird, with a breast spotted somewhat
like a leopard, raise itself slowly into the air,
carrying the monkey in its powerful, fingered
claws. The claws of one leg were fast in
the upper part of the neck of the monkey;
so deep were they in the flesh that they were
completely buried, and a few drops of blood
fell on the leaves below. The other leg had
its claws quite deep into the back of the mon-
key. The left leg was kept higher than the
right, and I could see that the great strength
of the bird was used at that time to keep the
neck, and also the back, of the victim from
moving. The bird rose higher and higher,
the monkey's tail awayed to and fro, and then
both disappeared. It was a gunnison. Its
prey was, no doubt, taken to some big tree
where it could be devoured.

The natives say that the first thing the
gunnison does is to take out the eyes of the
monkeys they catch. But there must be a fear-
ful struggle, for if the monkey is seized at an
exact place on the neck, he can turn his head,

and he then inflicts a fearful bite on the breast
of the eagle, or on his neck or leg, which dis-
ables his most terrible enemy, and then both
falling meet their death.

I looked on without firing. The monkeys
seemed paralyzed with fear, when the eagle
came down upon them, and did not move un-
til after the bird of prey had taken one of their
number, and then decamped. When I look-
ed for them they had fled far away, unknown
to me of the forest. I was looking so intent-
ly at the eagle and its prey that for a while I
had forgotten the monkeys. I do not wonder
at it, for monkeys I could often see, but it is
only once in a great while that such a scene
as I witnessed could be seen by a man. It was
a sad and I wondered not that the natives
called the gunnison the leopard of the air.
As I write these lines, though several years
have passed away I see still before me that
big, powerful bird carrying its prey to some
unknown part of the forest.—PAUL DU
CHATELLE, in Harper's Magazine for January.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

It was customary among the Saxons to
dress their houses in green and give presents
at the feast of Yule. Gifts of money were
given by the Romans at the Paganalia, [The
name alludes to villages (pagi), a certain
number of who were appointed by the em-
peror, and in each an altar was raised for an-
nual sacrifices to their tutelary gods.] which oc-
curred near the beginning of the year; and the
coins were received in earthen pots or
boxes; hence the origin of the English Christ-
mas box, which is now the name for the pre-
sent which the box was formerly used to con-
tain. Santa Claus, who is supposed to visit
children on Christmas Eve, is the Dutch form
of the name of St. Nicholas, the patron saint
of children. According to medieval legend
he once saved the daughters of a noble man
from disgrace by throwing a mass of gold into
the house in the night time. Hence presents
were put into the shoes of children in the night
time on the Feast of St. Nicholas, which came
on the 6th of December; that they might sup-
pose them to be gifts of St. Nicholas. When
the modern stocking came into use, it was sub-
stituted for the shoe as a more convenient re-
ceptacle, and the custom has been continued on
Christmas day.

CHRISTMAS PIES.

Mince, or rather minced, pies not only per-
tain to this season, but should rightfully be
called Christmas pies. The custom of making
a pie of this kind at this season, was derived
from the presentation of paste images and
sweatments to the Fathers of the Vatican on
Christmas Eve. The origin of the latter cus-
tom was probably Pagan. In the middle
ages, the bakers at this season used to present
their customers with Yule dough in images of
baked paste. This custom has survived in our
New Year cakes, or cookies, as the Dutch
call them; the figures on which are probably
mere descendants and modifications of images
with Christian names, which themselves were
descendants and representatives of heathen
idols. With such tenacity do men cling to a
once well established popular custom. Minced
pies having this origin and significance it must
be admitted that Puritans were not quite so
narrow minded as they have seemed to be in
their refusal to eat them at Christmas time.
It is only within a generation that the Presby-
terian and Congregationalist descendant of the
Puritan of two centuries ago, has been per-
suaded to yield his principles and digestion to
the unbecomingly mercenary of the maker of
Christmas pies—profane, idolatrous and in-
digestible.

Marriage Shorn of Poetry.

The Rev. Mr. D., a Methodist Minister
stationed at Mendville, Pa., some years ago,
one evening received a note informing him
that a couple living in the suburbs of the city
desired to be united in the bonds of mari-
mony, and requested his services at 9 o'clock
in the morning. At the proper time he went
to the house designated. He inquired of a
young lady who was washing dishes if there
was a couple there who wished to be married.
She answered, "Yes, said she, blushing. John
will begin in a moment."

The minister was surprised to see no pre-
parations, and stepped to the door to view the
surroundings. Two men were hard at work
grinding scythes in the yard, and another, who
proved to be "John," was tending a cow and
calf. The young lady came to the door pret-
ty soon and shouted:

John, John, hurry up; the minister is
here.

John leaped the fence and rushed to the
house; the girl wiped her hands on her apron,
and after joining hands said they were ready.
The minister proceeded, and had just got
through questioning the young man when the
old lady rushed into the room, shouting:

John, John, you didn't turn the cow away
from the calf!

He let go his sweetheart's hand instantly,
and rushed into the barnyard, put the old cow

through the bars, and then returned to the
house, again took his position, when the re-
mainder of the ceremony was performed. The
minister went on his way, John to the hay-
field, and the lady resumed her dish-washing.

MORAL NURSERY RHYMES.—A practical
parent objects to the silliness of our nursery
rhymes, for the reason that the doggerel is
read to the children by the absence of a prac-
tical moral purpose, and as introducing infants
to the realities of life through an utterly er-
roneous medium. They are taught to believe
in a world peopled by Little Bo Peeps and
Gooey Gooey Gander, instead of a world
of New York Central, Erie, Northwestern
Preferred, etc., etc. It is proposed, therefore,
to accommodate the teaching of the nursery to
the requirements of the age, to invest Child-
ren's Rhymes with a moral purpose. Instead,
for example, of the blind wonderment as to
the nature of astronomical bodies inculcated
in that feeble poem commencing, "Twinkle,
twinkle, little star," let the child be indoctrin-
ated into the recent investigations of science.
Thus:

Winkles, Winkles, solar star,
I obtain of what you are,
When unto the noonday sky
I the spectroscopic apply;
For the spectrum renders clear
Gaps within your atmosphere,
Also so luminous the star,
Which your rays yield, solar star.

Then, again, there is the gastronomic career
of Little Jack Horner, which indicates glu-
tony. It is practicable that this fictitious hero
should familiarize the child with the principles
of the Dietetics:

Stu lions John Horner,
In the second declension did spy
How nouns there are some
Which ending in "i" are
Do not make their plural in "i."

The episode of Jack and Jill is valueless as
an educational medium. But it might be
made to illustrate the arguments of a certain
school of economists:

Jack and Jill
Have studied M.L.L.,
And all that sage has taught too,
Now both promote
Jill's claim to vote,
As every good girl ought to.

Even the pleasures of life have their duties,
and the child needs to be instructed in the po-
lite relaxation of society. The unmeaning
jingle of "Hee diddle diddle" might be invest-
ed with some utility by a social king:

I did an idyl on Jachin's hills
At a classical soiree of June,
While jolly dogs laughed at themes from Spohr,
And longed for a popular tune.

And the importance of securing a good
party, of rejecting the eligible candidates, and
of modifying flirtations by a strict regard to
future, might be impressed upon the female
mind at an early age in the following moral:

Little Miss Muffet
Sat at a buffet
Eating a boxen sugar;
A younger son spied her;
And eloped up beside her,
But she properly frowned him away.

—EDITOR'S DRAWER, in Harper's Magazine.

Letter from a young man to a distinguished
Judge of Probate:—

Sir:—
My father departed this life not long hence,
leaving a decent wife and five fatherless
children. He died testate and his estate is
likely to prove insolvent. I was left sole ex-
ecutor, and being told that you was Judge of
Probate, apply to you for letters of conde-
mnation.

Your obt. Servant,
J. FERRISMAN."

HOW TO MAKE A MISTAKE.—First catch
your Miss and then take her.

A farmer's son had for a long time been
ostentatiously studying Latin in a popular ac-
ademy. The farmer not being satisfied with the
course of the young hopeful, recalled him from
the school, and placing him beside one day,
thus addressed him:

Now, Joseph, here is a fork, and there is a
heap of manure, and a cart; what do you call
them in Latin?

Forkibus, cartibus et manuribus, said Joe.
Well now, said the old man, if you do not
take that forkibus pretty quick, and pitch
that manuribus into that cartibus, I will break
your Latin backibus.

Joseph went to workibus forthwithibus.

"Boy," said a middle-aged lady, "I want to go
to Dyer Street." "Well, ma'am," said the boy,
"why don't you go there, then?"

We lose things that are certain, while we pur-
sue others that are dubious.

Never cross a bridge before you come to it; this
will save half the troubles of life.