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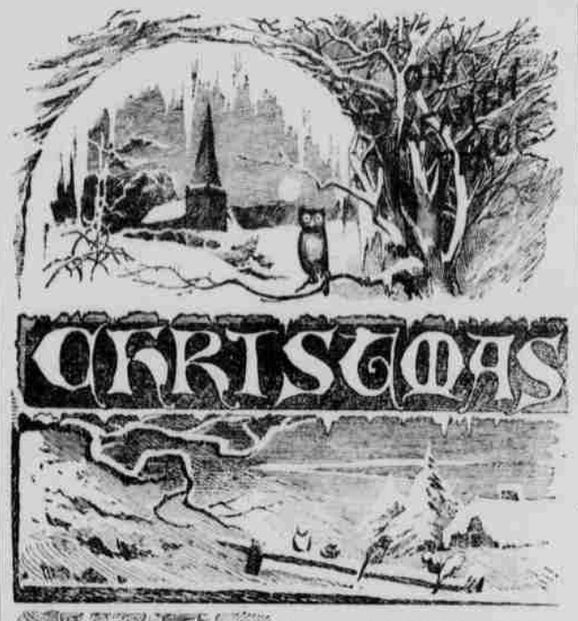


CHRISTMAS is here;
Winds whistle shrill,
Icy and chill,
Little care we;
Little we fear
Weather without,
Sheltered about
The mahogany tree.
—Tom Hood.

"LONG AFORE I KNOWED."

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

This delicious poem of the Hoosier poet is here presented, with due apologies to Judge, which first printed it:

Jes' a little bit o' fiddle
I reckoned still—
Ust to almost cry for Christmas, like a youngster will.
Fourth of July's well fur to—New Year's ain't a smell!—
Easter Sunday—circus day—jes' all dead in the shell!
Lordy, thought at night, you boys to set around and hear
The old folks talk t'mentory of about Christmas eve and cheer.
And "Santy" shootin' round the roof, all wrapped in furs and furs—
Long afore
I knowed who
"Santy Claus" was!

Fit to split, and set up later a week or two at least!
Couldn't hardly keep awake nor couldn't git to bed!
Little sisters on the fire, and Mother setin' near
Darnin' socks and rockin' in the shaky rocking chair!
Pap gap, and wonder where it was the money went!
And wouldn't talk his frosted hosts, and spill his liniment!
And we sidesaddle dough-boys when the clock 'ud white and hoot—
Long afore
I knowed who
"Santy Claus" was!

Size the fireplace, and throw here "Old Santy" could!
Manage to move down the counterfeits, like they said he would!
Wishin' that I could hide and see him—confident what he'd bring!
Er he kickered a leather boy, fer he knew mighty well
But I let on I was asleep, and I'd lie and let the bed
Turnin' to put one on the bed, and say, "Look a here, my lad!
Here's my pocketfull fer you!" and I'd—all good boys do!—
Long afore
I knowed who
"Santa Claus" was.

Wishin' that you was true about him as it 'peared to be—
Truth made out o' lies like that isn't good enough fer me.
Wishin' I still sqr as easily fer I could jes' go wild
Over bangin' up my stockin' fer the little child
Christin' is my boy to-day, and I'm—well, I'm—well I'm "Boss" them stockings and "Old Santy" that use boss to be!
I'm half sorry for this little sweetheart of his—
Long afore
She knows who
"Santy Claus" is!

Xmas Greetings.

A mayd yee sweete,
A byrd yee meete,
And plentye of holyday cheere,
Olde friends we'll meete
And with hand clappe greete,
For Xmas now is here.

Beautiful and right it is that gifts and good wishes should fill the air like snow flakes at Christmas tide. And beautiful is the year in its coming and in its going—most beautiful and blessed because it is always the Year of Our Lord.

Here is an old Scotch verse concerning Christmas:

Yule's come, and Yule's gone,
An' we has feasted weel;
Sae Jock wants to his drill again,
An' Jennie to her wheel.

CONSUMPTION SURELY CURED.

TO THE EDITOR.—Please inform your readers that I have a positive remedy for the above named disease. By its timely use thousands of hopeless cases have been permanently cured. I shall be glad to send two bottles of my remedy FREE to any of your readers who have consumption if they will send me their express and postoffice address. Respectfully,

T. A. SLOCUM, M. C.
oct 25 1 yr. 181 Pearl st. New York.

Big stock of overcoats which must be sold. M. P. Hart.

CHRISTMAS DINNER.

Gastronomic Suggestions Concerning the Observance of This Annual Festival.

Now good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both!

No other festival is so universally celebrated throughout Christendom as is Christmas, and no festival carries with it quite such a spirit of joyousness apart from its own inherent reasons for joyousness. Century after century poetry and art have been adding to the associations of the Christ child's day new and beautiful conceptions and associations more than making up for the gradual dropping off of the grosser traditions and delights of the Christmas of our early English ancestors, when "the mightiest ale was broached and the boar's head grimly stared" as the "wassail cup" went round.

But if there is less "wassail" the annual feast known as the Christmas dinner remains an interesting feature in the programme of the day's celebration.

There is less novelty in modern Christmas fare than in any other yearly feast except Thanksgiving. The time honored mince pie ranks first as standard Christmas dessert, although a real English plum pudding may take its place, when both are not provided. It is to the Saxons that we are indebted as the originators of the fruity mince pie. The Saxon kings and nobles always had a pie upon their Christmas tables, sometimes so large as to fill up the width of the board. These were often used as a means of presenting surprises in the way of gifts that were hidden underneath the crust. To such excess was the mince pie carried that Cromwell and his followers looked with horror upon it, and the Scotch and English Presbyterians adopted instead when they called plum porridge, and from this plum porridge was gradually evolved the English plum pudding, which today stands as the great rival of the mince pie.

In place of the boars head and stout sirloin, we long ago adopted that national bird, the turkey, which in the past few years has given way in some households to the goose.

For the housekeeper it is an agreeable fact that the preparation for the Christmas dinner can be made so long in advance. The apples for the mince pies, for instance, may early be selected for peeling, and the fatted heifer killed for suet and meat. This leaves the preparations that under any circumstances will pile up on the day approaches.

A standard receipt for mince pies: Select from the round three pounds of beef—it is best not to have it fat—and boil it in water enough to cover it. Smoked tongue is a valuable ingredient to add with half of the beef. Chop fine and mix with it three pounds of suet, four pounds of apples, four pounds stoned raisins, two pounds of currants, one pound of citron, a quarter of a pound each of lemon and orange peel, the juice of four oranges and four lemons, four pounds of coffee sugar, two grated nutmegs, a teaspoonful each of ground cloves, allspice, cinnamon, mace, pepper and two tablespoonfuls of salt, (see enough to season.)

The plum pudding may be made ready also in advance and await the glorious day. Here is a receipt which cannot be bettered: Stone a pound of raisins and pour on them a half gill of brandy. Lay on them two ounces of citron, and one each of candied orange and lemon peel, cloves, the grated rind and juice of one orange and one lemon, four ounces of blanched almonds, a pound of currants, a pound of suet chopped, a pound of coffee sugar, and the interior of a baker's loaf crumbled; mix well with grated nutmeg, a little cayenne and a teaspoonful of salt. Pour over a gill of sherry and set away in a cool place. Just before boiling the pudding add eight eggs and enough sweet cream to moisten it.

This is Mrs. Cleveland's receipt, and she says: "Now let all the young ladies of the house demand and in turn vigorously stir the fruity compound for good luck." Butter the water tight pudding mold, dust with flour, and pack the pudding in, allowing a couple of inches for the pudding to swell. Boil or steam for ten hours and do not open the mold until the pudding is ready to serve. Just before using boil again for two hours. Just before serving pour over it a glass of brandy or rum, set it on fire and send in blazing. The sauce is made of equal quantities of butter and sugar flavored with rum or brandy.

There is one thing we have not all learned, and that is, that heaven has not granted us stomachs according to our wealth. The rich man cannot eat more than the poor man because he is rich. For that reason there is no use of providing a menu so extensive that even a Christmas day appetite cannot compass it. As we look on this day old times and old friends turkey, cranberries and chicken salad are not to be elbowed out of the way by any new dishes or four and twenty courses. Here is an old fashioned Christmas day dinner.

Oyster Bisque.
Roast Turkey, Oyster Sauce.
Mashed Potatoes and Turnips.
Boiled Onions.
Celery. Cranberry Sauce. Pickles.
Roast Spare Ribs. Apple Sauce.
Baked Sweet Potatoes.
Plum Pudding.
Mince Pie. Pumpkin Pie.
Assorted Fruits and Nuts.
Confectionery
Coffee.

There are few housewives that need any assistance in preparing any of these good things, so comment is restrained. If a more elaborate and modern menu is required we may offer a word. For example, the procession of the feast will be:

Oysters.
Portage à la reine.
Fried smelts, Sauce Tartan.
Scolloped Lobster.
Roast Turkey, stuffed with Chestnuts.
Roast Venison, Currant Jelly.
Mashed Potatoes. Sweet Potatoes. Sweet Corn.
Celery. Cranberries. Relishes.
Asparagus, White Sauce.
Roman Punch.
Roast Chicken or Duck, with Lettuce Salad, French Dressing.
Plum Pudding.
Mince Pie. Neapolitan Pudding.
Fruit. Nuts. Bonbons. Salted Almonds.
Roquefort Cheese.
Black Coffee.

Miss Corson suggests at the Christmas dinner the old game of snap dragon. Some raisins are laid on a large shallow bowl or platter. A tablespoonful of brandy, alcohol, or any spirit is poured over them and lighted—the sport is to catch a raisin from the midst of the flames without burning the fingers. But don't, oh, don't catch your lace ruffles afire and rob the merry day in pain.

Today.

O night of sighing! O night
Destitute of any lighting!
The sweet heavens had worn its light
To cast the [illegible] away;
And [illegible] the earth.
Tender sphere of dark and dark,
Amongst whose [illegible] watchful eyes always
Not feel beside the light.

It was so long ago!
But God was [illegible] then;
And, as with that sweet overflow,
Our souls [illegible] [illegible]
Take, Lord, these cards and notes,
Oh, make them [illegible] for eyes,
Speak—"Unto you a child is born,"
Today—today! today! —Jean Ingelow.

HILLSFORD'S HERMIT.

A CHRISTMAS STORY, NOT AFTER THE DISCKENS PATTERN.

HILLSFORD is a pretty little village on a river as pure as truth to the heart of the inspiring valley, with mountains walling it in north and south. At the time I write of it had all the requisites of a thriving town, including a population which despised with self satisfaction. The very comfortable commodity was so dense and universal that it fairly covered the place like a fog.

Hillsford's most remarkable citizen was a hermit, an unknown and eccentric individual, who lived in a cabin high up on the North mountain, and was known as "Old Weaver." In valley, while the foliage was [illegible] abundant, his small dwelling could be seen from the village, a little speck of crude architecture, the smoke from which [illegible] into the very sky. It was pointed out to visitors, who once told, with all hues of time, of the hermit, his civilization defying habit and unpolished appearance.

But it was difficult to endorse the man himself. He came down to the village at intervals, at indeed, and then carried only low on a little paper some simple necessities and departed without holding speech with anybody. He now appeared had tried to drink from the privacy of his home without avail. They had been repaired with looks and gestures which inspired fear and helped to confirm the opinion that "Old Weaver was crazy and had better be let alone."

And surely no man in his right mind could live the life he lived. His hair and whiskers seemed to be part of the prevailing fashion to dispense trimming, and his clothes were a legend all dewed garments. He rarely spoke to all, but when he did his words were [illegible] from itself.

[illegible] they [illegible] near his cabin sometimes found him sitting outside reading the books and occupation from which they could not easily divert him.

This caused some to decide that he was "a religious crank," and helped to dissipate the idea that he had committed some horrible crime. Hillsford was full of wonder about the hermit's past life and [illegible] but as there was absolutely no way of finding out it was [illegible] to remain in total ignorance. All it knew about him was that several years before the time I speak of he had arrived in the village, purchased a piece of land on the top of the mountain, reared a cabin and became a hermit of solitude perfectly incomprehensible to the people of the valley.

At last they usually settled down to the belief that "Old Weaver had been crossed in love." Everybody knew that love, if it did not turn absolutely crazy people, could upset people completely. This gave him exceptional interest in the eyes of the young and sentimental, although the most incredible stories, there could not picture him as having ever been a passenger capable of inspiring the divine lunacy.

Never were they fully sensible of his value as a romantic figure until after he had been "written up" for a New York journal. A newspaper correspondent, on his summer vacation, wandered into Hillsford, and, of course, soon heard about the hermit, since he was all there was outside of the usual and uninteresting in the place. He at once spun out a column and a half of solid nonpareil, mostly speculation, tinged with sentiment, about the eccentric chase.

This had a good result. It dignified the old man in the mind of the Hillsfordians. It lifted him from the rank of a crazy old mountaineer to an eccentric hermit, with extraordinary sentimental possibilities behind him.

* * *

It was often said that Weaver would be found starved or frozen to death some time. Some cry winter there was talk of "looking after him," for there is authority, but it ended in talk, as he was not exactly the kind of man to dictate to.

In the vernacular of Simpson's grocery, he was "a hard one to tackle."

In the beginning of the hermit's last winter on the mountain some hunters, driven by cold to his cabin, entered and found him moaning on his rude couch. They spread the news in Hillsford, and "the authorities" conferred together and decided that it was time to act. But what should they do with him? Nobody could go up to his lodge on the mountain to take care of him, his wretched dwelling contained no comforts. And nobody wanted to take him into his home. There was the county house, where all paupers were sent, but that was near the county seat, seven miles away.

They who were most outspoken in the matter of having him "looked after" and who owned the largest and most comfortable houses, "hemmed and hawed" when it came to a question of taking him in. Some one, in a moment of humane feeling, suggested that the seven miles' journey to the poorhouse might prove dangerous to the sick man, and might even throw serious blame on those who became responsible for it.

However, after much thought and more talk had been put upon the subject, the poorhouse faction prevailed, and the fiat went forth that Old Weaver must be taken charge of by the county, willing or unwilling.

The expedition set forth the next morning. It was principally composed of "the authorities," otherwise hard headed and determined personages, with that degree of humanity as peculiar to the class known as "prominent citizens." A heavy snow lay upon the ground, and the mountain roads were undrawn. A big sled, generously supplied with straw and lunch baskets, was made ready.

The departure of this humane capturing expedition was a spectacle. The pedestrian loafers gazed upon the imposing spectacle with envy in their hearts, though they chewed the pulse philosophically roundly. The people in the room of Simpson's drug store were all outside waving their hats and holding other demonstrations of good will and interest. The varn spinners at Simpson's grocery held their tobacco firmly between their teeth and their hands in their trousers pockets as the sled went by. This was their manner of expressing a very warm interest. Women watched from dooryards, windows and porches as women always do, and a swarm of enthusiastic small boys hung on to the sled until driven back when half a mile out of town.

The philanthropists reached Weaver's cabin late in the day, after digging their way through great snowdrifts. All this heroic exertion made them feel more dominant in spirit than ever. The very first sight of the hermit, close beside the sound of authorities, delivered as it was by the most dishevelled of the town men, had been by the appearance of the other prominent citizens who became panged too.

There was no hesitation.

The expression of decision on the marshal's face deepened as he began to beat upon the door with both fists and kick it with the thick soles of his tremendous boots.

Still there was no answer.

While they were pondering about whether it was time to use the axe or not the closed shutter of the hermit's single window opened, revealing his haggard face, in which blazed a pair of eyes whose scathing lightning fairly annihilated the prominent citizens.

"What do you want?" he asked, after a moment of disconcerting silence, as they stood, wordless, under the spell of his unspoken anger.

"We heard you were sick," said the marshal.

"Well?"

"We knew you would need help," said the justice of the peace, "and so came to try to do some thing for you."

"You have put yourselves to unnecessary trouble. I want nothing."

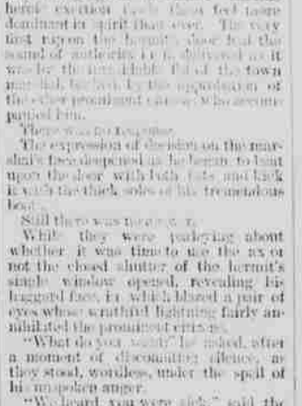
"But our duty as citizens will not allow us to let a fellow being suffer," said Deacon White.

"Your first duty is to mind your own business," said the hermit.

"Hoss! Dr. Horsely, who will help you right off, if you will let us in," said Mr. Snell, a prominent citizen. The doctor stood, pillow, medicine case in hand, the rigidity of the secular's code preventing his doing any trumpeting on his own account.

"When I am weary of life I shall send for Dr. Horsely. Until then he must excuse me," returned the hermit, with something like merriment dancing in his wild eyes.

The doctor colored under this deadly insult, feeling it the more because the earth was not fresh over his two last patients. The officers feared chances of their authority was the clearly understood signal for a concerted rally of the rescuers. Instinctively they drew nearer together, and one said:



MOANING ON HIS RUDE COUCH.

"Come, come, Weaver, this is no way to do. We are here in the friendliest spirit, and are sincerely anxious to have you taken care of. You are a sick man. You ought not to be alone as you are."

"Well, what do you propose to do with me?"

"Why, why—take you where you will be properly cared for, of course," answered Justice McCrackem.

"Now, that is kind, I admit," said the hermit, and he looked at them with a strange, amused expression in his eyes. Believing that they were gaining ground, they grew bolder.

"You wo wish to be kind. We can't let you pass up here, you know."

"Well, where do you propose to take me?"

"Now, look, why, you see, Weaver—you see Hillsford has no hospital—and——"

"But you have fixed upon some place for me, I presume?" questioned the hermit, in the tone of one about to surrender.

"Yes," spoke up another. "We thought we would take you to Johnstown."

"Ah, that's the county seat, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And the county house is near there, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's a good enough place for any one who wants to go there. I don't. Now it is time for you to leave," and he shut the window.

The besiegers conferred together and again began to beat upon the door. Feeling more courageous when Weaver's wild eyes were not on them they called to him that he must consent to go with them, or they would take him by force.

The window opened once more and revealed the gaunt form of the hermit grasping a shotgun. Instinctively the attacking party fell back a few paces.

The hermit spoke: "I will blow the head off any man who again lays a hand upon my door. I am in my own house, on my own ground, and there is not law enough in the republic to permit you to enter and lay a hand on a man who is neither criminal nor pauper. Had you come here proffering private charity I should have resented it, but I should have respected you. As it is I will kill you like dogs if you trouble me a moment more." And he pointed the gun at them in a way that was convincing.

Grumblingly they moved away. "He's right," said the justice, who had a mortal fear of firearms; "he's not a pauper. He owns this ground and he owns the house. If he won't come with us willingly we shall have to let him alone."

"He's as crazy as a bite," piped up two or three others, anxious to cover up their chagrin.

"He ought to be confined as a dangerous lunatic," said the doctor, in whose bosom still rankled Weaver's poisoned arrow.

They reached Hillsford in a crestfallen frame of mind, all agreeing that the hermit might die a dozen times over before they would "put themselves out" to do anything for him again.

Two weeks later, when the weather was bitter cold, Bobby Hart, a sturdy 12-year-old, rushed into his father's sitting room one afternoon, bursting with news. "Old Weaver's in town," he panted.

His mother looked up from her sewing machine with interest. Like everybody else in Hillsford she knew the history of the fruitless efforts of the hermit's cabin.

"Yes, he's been carted down, too—out of his head, and is lying on the floor in the back part of Hunt's grocery. They're going to send him to the poorhouse at Johnstown."

"Not in this terrible weather," said Mrs. Hart, looking alarmed.

"Yes, it is cold. There's no place here for him, there."

"Why, he's just a poor old sick man in all Hillsford. We can't do a thing like that, Bobby, I am sure."

"Oh, but I heard Judge Markle and Deacon White and all of them say so. It's settled."

"I WILL KILL YOU LIKE DOGS."

"Perhaps not," said Mrs. Hart as she began to put on her bonnet and cloak. She was, perhaps, the poorest person of refinement and education in the town and the most benevolent. She was a widow, whose only income were a boy of 12 and a girl of 9 years. By sewing almost night and day she managed to keep the wolf out of sight.

Accompanied by Bobby she went over to Hunt's to see the hermit, and at once knew that he was sick unto death. As the sled which was to transport him to Johnstown drew up at the door Mrs. Hart touched the arm of Judge Russell, who seemed to be clothed with more authority just then than any of the other "prominent citizens" who hovered about, and said:

"I will take care of Weaver if you will send him to my house. He is a very sick man, already greatly exhausted by his journey down the mountain. The drive to Johnstown might kill him."

"Really, Mrs. Hart, you're always doing too much for others. Young Dr. Clay was in here, but age, and he said the old fellow oughtn't to be moved so far. But you'd better think twice before you take him. He'll be an awful charge."

"I know that," she answered; "but I will take him and do the best I can for him." So the hermit was put upon the sled and delivered at Mrs. Hart's like a bale of merchandise. The widow's unselfishness kindled a temporary flame of the same nature in other breasts, and for the moment volunteer help was plenty. She took advantage of some of this to get her patient bathed and barbered and put to bed in a comfortable Christian way.

Then began for her weeks of care, work and anxiety. The sewing machine was silent, with the unpleasant consequence of less money. Contributions to the comfort of the sick man fell away as time passed and the affair became an old story. Young Dr. Clay alone remained faithful. The others, some of them had dwindled down to advice. All to all Mrs. Hart had "a hard pull of it."

At last the hermit became convalescent. Finding himself in a home where refinement and kindness prevailed, he fell into the ways of its inmates as naturally as if he had been accustomed to civilization all his life. He talked genially and charmingly, and seemed possessed of as much information as any man of the world. Clad in his right mind and conventional clothes, he lost his character of hermit entirely. Many of the signs of age, too, had disappeared under the good offices of the tailor and the barber. He did not look a day over 45.

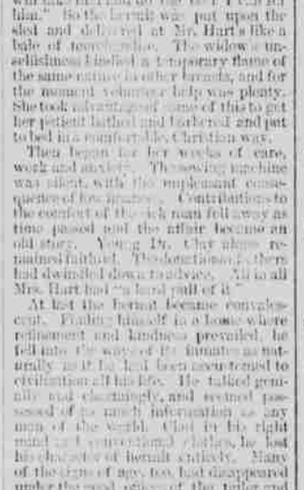
He was quite well now, but he showed no disposition to return to his cave-savage life, notwithstanding the entreaties of Mrs. Hart. Some blame.

* * *

Christmas was almost at hand. Hillsford was busy buying its presents and getting up its festivities. At Mrs. Hart's the preparations were on a scale so simple that they were almost pathetic.

Two days before Christmas the town had something new to talk about. A middle aged gentleman and lady of the upper class, apparently, arrived at the Hillsford hotel and asked for Weaver. While they rested and dined, they were regaled with the story of the hermit's great change, the ineffectual attempt to send him to the poorhouse, the widow Hart's interference and everything. Then they were piloted to the Hart door, and for two days afterward, although the town was almost eaten up by curiosity, it could find out nothing at all about them.

It got the whole story on Christmas from The Weekly Chronicle.



THEIR CHRISTMAS GIFT.

Our readers will be surprised and gratified to learn that Mrs. Caroline Hart was married night before last to Mr. Vincent H. Weaver, of New York. The ceremony took place at the bride's home at 8 o'clock. The groom's sister, Mrs. C. P. Stevenson, and her husband, also of New York, and two or three of the bride's closest friends were the only guests.

Mrs. Hart, now Mrs. Weaver, as everybody knows, is one of the most highly respected ladies of Hillsford. Although far from rich, she has been philanthropic to an extraordinary degree.

Every one knows how Weaver, the hermit, fell sick one day early in the winter when he came into town to buy some supplies, and Mrs. Hart had him removed to her cottage to prevent his being taken to the county house at Johnstown. Did not until recently did any one know that Hermit Weaver the hermit and Vincent H. Weaver the celebrated author were one and the same.

As has been generally known [illegible] had been the victim of some cruelty at [illegible] hands, and for this reason had deserted [illegible] society of his fellow men. We learn from [illegible] authority that this discussion was [illegible]. He lived in his mountain cabin [illegible] devote himself to the work of writing [illegible] without the risk of being [illegible] of the thousand distractions which [illegible] his life in the city. His character [illegible] was assumed to protect him [illegible]

Mr. Weaver really did not live [illegible] lodge half the time he was supposed to be [illegible] for months together, he would [illegible] with the wife and [illegible] the proceeds of [illegible] his solitary cabin.

Recently he is, to be sure, [illegible] to Mrs. Hart he put $[illegible] in her [illegible] substantial form. You know the rest [illegible] some open each of her two children. He married [illegible] because her independence before the question of marriage was discussed, and he considered herself entitled to all he could do for her for inviting him to her home, thereby saving his life when he was at death's door.

This is a true love match, without doubt. Their Christmas gift is the very best in Santa Claus' pack. It is labeled "Love," and comprehends the better part of earth and a portion of heaven.

Mr. Weaver wrote a final [illegible] in his cabin on the mountain the other day, and wrote across it in big letters, "It is not good for man to be alone." Mr. and Mrs. Weaver will build a splendid home here for their summer home, and will spend their winters in New York. They left yesterday to finish the season there. We wish them every happiness under the sun.

This startling piece of news caused many an eye to protrude when it was read. "I always thought that Mrs. Hart was a designing thing. Hm; oh, really. I'll warrant she knew that Weaver was a rich man or she never would have taken him in," said a woman who, only a month before, had expressed the fear that the widow would have old Weaver on her hands for life.

GERTRUDE GARRISON.

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