

FROM NODDING CHURCH—A HOMILETIC STUDY.

A few Sundays ago while on a visit to Le Reve, I attended service at the Nodding church, and had the inestimable privilege of hearing a discourse from that able divine, Rev. Dr. Prosy. Dr. Prosy is well known as a great and scholarly preacher; and as I do not often have an opportunity of hearing him, I took pretty full notes of his very elaborate discourse.

The "preliminary services" as they are usually called, were not such as I am accustomed to. There was no choir. The preacher announced a hymn, and read it slowly and deliberately. I was particularly struck with the appropriateness of the opening line.

"How tedious and tasteless the hours."

The tune was "raised" by a brother whose style of singing was admirably fitted to the sentiment expressed in the line just quoted, and the whole tone of the "preliminaries" was in excellent keeping, and full of what the critics call "repose."

The prayer was very quiet; and I was struck with the absence of anything like the haste or hurry which too often mars the effect of this solemn service.

Dr. Prosy arose and very deliberately announced as his text that old and familiar passage which we had all learned on our mother's lap:

Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb
And pulled out a plum.

And said, "What a good boy am I!" Dr. Prosy then proceeded as follows: "Before entering upon the discussion of the very important transaction set forth in my text, it is necessary that I should notice the several recensions of the text itself; for there are, on the part of the most scholarly critics, some considerable divergences as to the original form."

"One school of critics are disposed to substitute the name Johnny (otherwise written Johnny) for the name Jack, which we find in our version. It is scarcely necessary for us to go into any elaborate discussion of the question as between Johnny and John; for it is obvious to any tolerably careful student that there is no essential difference between the two forms; and the best philologists are agreed that they are both affectionate diminutives of the original name, John. Careful philological investigation has also settled the meaning of this name John; and it is now generally agreed among scholars that the name has, in its Hebrew form the same meaning as the Greek name Theodore, that is to say, 'Gift of God.'"

"The school of critics who contend for Johnny (alias Johnny) have pointed out a few manuscripts in which the text reads:

"Little Johnny Horner
Sitting in a corner;"

and they hold, not without reason, that this recension is more euphonious and melodious. Still, we must beware of being misled by this circumstance; for it is one of the fundamental laws of the great science of text criticism that a copyist is much more likely to lengthen than to abbreviate his text; and especially in this case when he seems to see now the text may be improved, in sense or in sound, by some slight additions. Now we have before us a case in point. No ear, not utterly destitute of every trace of meter, music and melody, can fail to perceive that

"Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner,"

is bald and harsh as compared with "Little Johnny Horner Sitting in a corner;" and though on a momentous question like this I would not dare to dogmatize, still, after a principle has been firmly established under the labors of such scholars as Bentley and Mill and Lachman, and Griesbach and Tregelles and Scrivener and Tischendorf and Westcott and Hort, I am constrained to decide in the favor of the shorter recension. The longer is evidently an embellishment by a later hand.

"In the third line of our text, 'And pulled out a plum,' there are some doubts as to the word 'pulled'; as there are some few, though not very ancient manuscripts, which read 'picked for pulled.' Picked, however, has a decided preponderance of external evidence in its favor, and, therefore, it is not necessary for us to go into the question of the diplomatic evidence, however interesting that might be.

"Once more: In the last line, 'And said what a good boy am I,' (common version, following textus receptus), the authorities are by no means agreed on the word 'good.' Not a few codices, and some of no mean antiquity, have 'brave'; others read 'nice,' and one 'smart.' Upon the whole, the better opinion seems to be that the textus receptus is right, and hence we have retained 'good.'"

"Having now settled the purity of the text, I will proceed to the presentation and discussion of the great facts which it sets before us."

"The text is a brief epic poem; that is to say, a poem which depicts and celebrates the thoughts, the actions, feelings, aspirations—in a word, the character—of a hero. Our first and main business, then, is with the hero himself and

"He is called 'little.'"

"We cannot doubt that the poet

really meant to apply the adjective 'little' to the hero. Widely as the manuscripts differ on other matters which we have already noticed, there is a perfectly unanimous consensus of all extant codices on this point. No codex, ancient or modern, uncial or cursive, is without the word 'little.' And yet the question of the actual and historical diminutiveness of the late Mister (or Master) Horner is by no means settled. For, in the first place, we are to remember that we are dealing with poetry; and it would be utterly unreasonable to interpret poetry by the canons of prosaic history.

"Again; The latest modern investigation has pretty clearly established the conclusion that the poem was written by a mother; and the weight of the evidence points to an Oriental writer; that is to say, a writer who lived at, or in the vicinity of that great Eastern city, Boston. Now, to interpret Oriental poetry (written too by a mother), as if it were simple history, is to violate the very first principles of sound hermeneutics, as held by all the greatest critics, from Lessing to Carlyle. We know how prone mothers are to belittle what they love. This tendency seems to be inherent in human nature; and, indeed, it is, in one form or another, the basis of those words which we call diminutives: 'Birdie,' 'doggie,' 'piggy,' and even 'Johnnie,' are examples under this great law. On this point I am not speculating, but am simply stating a principle well known to all scholars. The modern, mighty, marvelous, magnificent science of language, born in the brain of Grimm, nursed and nurtured by the herculean labors of Bopp and Pott, adorned by the genius of Max Muller, and beautified and popularized by our own Whitney, has clearly established this great law of human speech. Under such circumstances



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as these I would be the last to dogmatize as to the question of the real personal dimensions of our hero. But

2. "He sat in a corner."

"On this point, too, all our authorities, ancient and modern, are at one. Upon the whole, I am inclined to regard the statement as historical, and, as the question is an interesting one, I will proceed to give my reasons:

I hold that the corner was the most natural place for a boy to sit when he was regaling himself with a pie, and especially a Christmas pie, because:

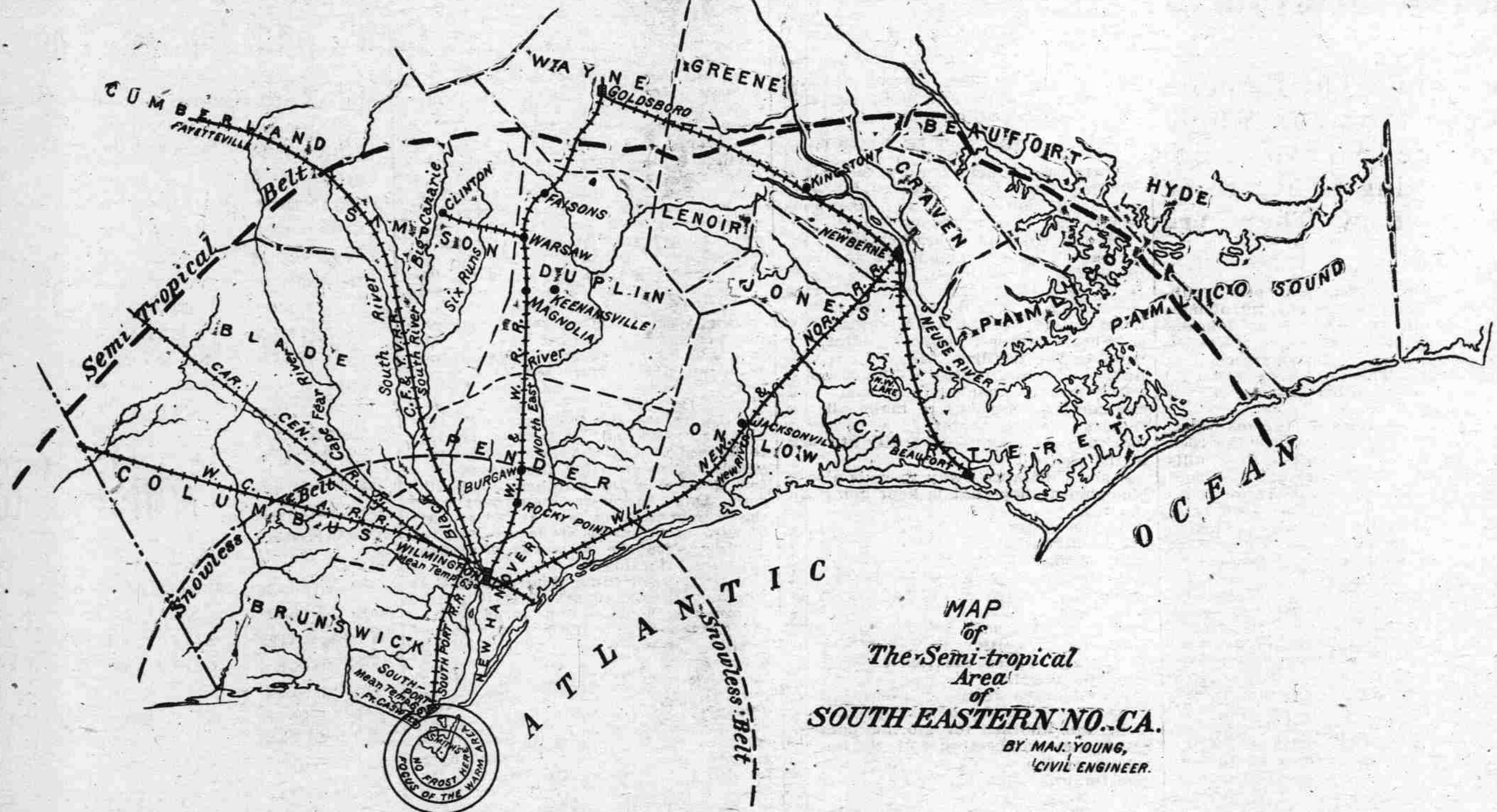
1. It is the snuggest place in winter.
2. It is the position from which he would be least likely to be displaced to give his seat to older persons coming into the room.
3. It is the place where he would be safest from the intrusion of that household pet (or pest) the felis domestica, vulgarly called cat, whose propensities in the direction of purloining rich food are too well known to require further comment."

[At this point of the sermon I somehow lost consciousness, and recovered only in time catch the following peroration.]

"But my brethren, the greatest heroes are only human, and our hero evidently had his defects. Whether he called himself 'nice' or 'brave,' or 'smart,' or 'good' (and I am inclined to adopt the last adjective), in any case, his tendency to self praise is painfully manifest. Beware of ambition! Never indulge in too lofty an estimate of your own capacities. In the language of the immortal Bard of Avon:

I charge thee fling away ambition;
By that sin fell the angels, how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?"

J. C. HIDDEN,
Richmond, Va.



MAP OF COUNTRY SURROUNDING WILMINGTON. THE SEMI-TROPICAL SECTION.

The above map indicates the semi-tropical area of South-Eastern North Carolina. The semi-tropic of the section is produced by the proximity of the Gulf Stream.

The circular lines indicate the focus of the warm area at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, and is frostless. Smith's Island, 5,000 acres, at the mouth of the River, has a luxuriant growth of the Palmetto. The semi-circle, designated as the snowless belt, includes a territory almost free from snowfall. Only three or four snow falls have occurred within this territory in thirty years. The territory indicated by the broken lines as a semi-tropical belt, produces many of the semi-tropical plants, and has become the great truck garden section of Eastern North Carolina. It is estimated that over a million dollars worth of vegetables and fruits are annually shipped from this market to the North. The coast along this map has been described by Professor W. C. Kerr, Geologist, as a little spot of Florida in North Carolina.

The mean temperature of Wilmington is 50 degrees; Mobile 52 degrees; Nicolasi, Sicily, 51 degrees. The mean humidity of Wilmington is 57, Charlotte, N. C., 78, New Orleans 85. The mean seasonable temperature of Wilmington is, spring 63, summer 78, autumn, 64, winter 48.

The port of Wilmington is the best port on the Atlantic coast south of Norfolk. It is nearer by a direct line to Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis and other Western Cities than any other City on the Atlantic seaboard by at least 100 to 150 miles. The nearest points across the Continent between any two ports is between Wilmington and San Francisco. It has a depth on the bar of 24 feet, and a depth in the river from bar to city of 21 feet.

The lands surrounding Wilmington are adaptable to the production of fruits and vegetables, strawberries, lettuce, and celery. All vegetables and root crops are raised profitably. On one day in this season the shipments in the neighborhood of Wilmington of strawberries aggregated in value \$72,000 00, being 1,200 crates.

It is connected by steam and sail transportation to all parts of the world. It has five railroads running to the city, affording us railroad facilities with all interior points. It is the headquarters of the Atlantic Coast Line. The Seaboard Air Line maintains offices here.

The city is situated on seven hills; the death rate is abnormally low. It suffers from no malignant diseases. It has a population of about 25,000, about equally divided between the races. All denominations, Protestant, Jew and Romanist, have their churches here.

It has an admirable system of public schools. It lies within six miles of the ocean, with delightful ocean and suburban resorts. It is an important port of import and export. Its imports consist chiefly of kaimit and West India products. Its exports are chiefly of lumber, cotton and naval stores. Its factories consist of fertilizing works, cotton mills, lumber mills, oil mills, and other manufacturing enterprises. It has splendid advantages for manufacturing—labor and fuel are abundant and cheap; crude supplies are advantageously obtained. It is the cheapest port in the South.

Cipher Messages.

(Washington Star.)
When by chance an official key to one of the regular cipher codes used in the government service is purposely or accidentally divulged it is, of course, necessary to revise the code and issue new cipher books to all those entrusted with them. Three of the executive departments have regular secret cipher systems—the state, war and navy departments. All the details concerning these codes are shrouded in the deepest secrecy. Only trusted officials are allowed to possess the keys. The navy department has claimed that its code cannot possibly be solved by any one not holding a key. The state department not long ago adopted the navy department's cipher; hence officers in the two services may understand each other in this occult language. The war department employs its own cipher.

Each official initiated into the mysteries of the official cryptograph is a custodian of a sacred cipher book, which is a key, or dictionary, showing the letters of the alphabet and elementary mathematical characters with their equivalents. Each cipher book is printed under the surveillance of a trusted government official, and care is taken that no proof sheets or loose pages shall fall into the hands of those not entitled to them. Each book is numbered and registered. The official to whom it is entrusted must lock it in his safe when it is not in use. It should be sealed with wax, that not even an inferior in the custodian's office may have access to it without the latter's knowledge.

Telegrams from representatives of the state, war and navy departments in foreign countries must be transmitted over the great transoceanic cables and inland commercial telegraph lines. Our government, of course, maintains no official wire across the ocean. Cipher telegrams and cablegrams, just as would ordinary dispatches, come into the departments after having gone through the mill, but are not intelligible to any of the operators who handle them.

On the face it seems discourteous for a government's representatives, while enjoying the hospitality and protection of another nation, to be given a secret alphabet in which to gossip about their hosts with the home government. It would, however, be disastrous to our diplomatic representatives and military attaches, and the correspondence between them and Washington, become public property both here and abroad before being executed or considered.

In the war and navy departments the official cipher codes prescribed for these branches of the military service are not to be generally used except in cases of war, although our state navy attaches abroad may use them in reporting military intelligence, if they desire.

The army cipher code is in charge of the chief signal officer, General A. W. Greely. At the school of instruction in military signaling, at Fort Myer, Kan., recruits who enter the signal service are instructed in all of the cipher and signal codes likely to be used in an actual campaign. The course includes cryptography, or the science of cipher reading, and the classes are required to both devise and practice original cipher codes until they become skillful both in deciphering and enciphering them. They must practice the Morse telegraph system until able to transmit and receive thirty-five words per minute.

According to the army's excellent signaling system, cipher dispatches cannot only be sent between the field and headquarters by the new field telegraph and telephone systems, but by flags and heliographs, by day, or by searchlights, heliographs, rockets and bombs at night.

FUN.

"I saw a man today who had no hands play a piano."

"That's nothing! We've got a girl down in our flat who has no voice and who sings!"—Yonkers Statesman.

Mabel (studying her lesson)—"Papa, what is the definition of volubility?"

Mabel's Father—"My child, volubility is a distinguishing feature of your mother when, on account of urgent business affairs, I don't happen to reach home until after 2 o'clock in the morning."—Baltimore News.

Wilkins—"Such idioms as 'Between the devil and the deep sea,' though very expressive, are not exactly up-to-date." Simpson—"They're not? Well, how would you improve on the one you quoted, for instance?" Wilkins—"Well, I think a more modern plan would be to say, 'Between the trolley car and the scorching.'"—Puck.

Daughter—"Yes, I've graduated, but now I must inform myself in psychology, philology, bibliography, and practical mothering."

Practical Mother—"Stop right where you are. I have arranged for you a thorough course in roastology, bolology, stitchology, darnology, patchology and general domestic hustology. Now get on your working clothes."—Detroit Free Press.

"Alas!" groaned the young man: "I never thought you would treat me in such a Fitzsimmons manner."

"What have I done?" she asked, anxiously.

"Hit me straight over the heart," he gurgled.

But in this case the one who was knocked out got the prize.—Philadelphia North American.

"Have you any defense?" asked the judge.

"Certainly," replied the bicyclist. "The man very foolishly tried to cross the street and I naturally ran him down."

"It's a difficult case to pass upon," said the judge, thoughtfully. "Of course you are blameless, but I don't know whether to call it a case of justifiable homicide or suicide."—Chicago Post.

Left Behind—During the first month of Della's service in her new place there was nothing but praise for her good qualities. But one evening the mistress, entering the kitchen suddenly, discovered the traditional "cousin" hidden in one of the closets. "How is this, Della—a man here?" "Troth, ma'am, I don't know what to make up 'im. 'Shure he must have been forgotten by the cook that was here before."—Brooklyn Life.

John Farrow has made application for appointment as collector of customs at Norfolk, Va.

The supreme court has denied the petition for a re-hearing in the Trans-Missouri Freight Association case.

At Tallahassee, the ballot for United States senator Monday was: Chipley 33, Stockton 23, Raney 15, Hocker 3, scattering 2.

The democrats of the senate held a caucus Monday to consider the report of the committee which filled the vacancies in the senate committees. The report was adopted. The arrangement will go into effect tomorrow.