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LETTER FROM BILKINS.

He and Mrs. Bilkins Had a Great Time Shopping—Spends a Day in Raleigh With Small Results—Bob, the Family Buggy Mule, and His Smart Ways.

Correspondence of The Enterprise.

Me an' Betsy air erbout ready fer Christmas. Leastwise Betsy iz, fer she iz the whole thing when hit comes ter hollerdays an' picknicks.

Betsy begun ter talk Christmas two months ergo, an' hez bin ter town "a-shoppin'" several times. She axed me awl erbout whut ter buy fer me an' herself an' fer the children. But I played the dummy an' tole her ter count me out. Still she kept on talkin' an' gittin' my opin-yuns. Sez I, "Betsy, my time iz awl taken up with the farm an' with my justis ov the peece court. You go ter town an' shop till you git tired, an' I'll try ter raise enough ter foot the bill by borrowin', beggin', or stealin'."

She sed I was a powerful gude husband, but she couldn't go ter town by herself. "Why?" sez I. She 'lowed she was afared ter drive old Bob ter town an' awl them trains an' street cars an' ortermobills runnin' an' scootin' every way you kin look.

"That iz awl rite, my dear," sez I. "I'll have a little talk with old Bob an' tell him that the trains an' street cars are jist plain everyday affairs an' that they won't hurt him purvided he don't git run over by them, an' he will know awl erbout the game then an' take you through same az a flyin' macheen."

But she wasn't satisfied and sed I must go an' drive old Bob.

"Awl rite," sez I, "I'll go an' do the drivin' an' go 'round an' see my ole friend, Col. Graham Haywood, while you air shoppin'."

I ain't never afraid when a woman goes shoppin', so far az money iz concerned, fer they never spend much then. But wait till they decide ter buy then you kin hev a chill.

The nite before we went ter town Betsy talked till erway late. She sed she would git Mary a new hat, Sarahann a new coat, Jennie a new pair ov shoes. Then she sed she would git Annie a doll, an' cloth ter make Flora a new dress.

"Thar you go, now," sez I, "fixin' up the gals an' sayin' nothin' erbout the boys. I reckon you air goin' ter let Santy Claus bring sumthin' fer the boys."

She sed: "No, I wuz cummin' ter them purty soon. We will hev to git Jimmy a new gun, for he iz sot on that, Willie needs a new hat, Sam order hev a suit ov clothes. Az fer the four small ones, Edwin, Jethro, Arthur an' Felix, they will be satisfied with firecrackers, toys, candy an' fruit."

"Awl rite," sez I, "let's git a little sleep an' start ter town early."

The next mornin' I hitched up ole Bob an' we left the chaps in charge of Mrs. Benson, a nabor woman, ter keep them from burnin' up the house an' things before we could git back. Az we rode erlong, Betsy wuz mity quiet, but I wuzn't surprised, fer when a woman iz goin' shoppin' she iz allers nervous an' exsited. "Git erlong," sez I ter Bob, "we air goin' a-shoppin'." An' Bob knowed every wurd I sed, fer he hez bin one ov the family fer fifteen year. They ain't a

better or smarter mule than Bob in sixteen States. If I hed hitched him ter the buggy an' tole him ter go ter town an' be powerful keerful, he would hev made the trip on skedule time.

I driv up in front ov the market an' dumped Betsy out an' tole her ter shop from one end ov the town ter the other. I went an' put Bob up at the stable an' spent the day with several ov my ole friends. That wuz erbout nine in the mornin'.

Betsy started off at a twenty-mile gait fer a dry goods store. I didn't see her enymore til erbout four in the afternoon. She wuz eround on Martin street then an' hed two little bundles in her hand. She sez: "Zeke, I am so tired I can't hardly walk," an' she looked like she wuzzent walkin' more than a mile a week when I first seed her.

"Well, air you ready ter go out ter the poor house?" sez I.

She 'lowed, "Yes, bring Bob an' the buggy an' I'll wate rite here."

"Whar iz the bundles?" sez I. "let me drive eround an' git them."

She sez: "I hev got everything rite here."

I hev bin married long ernuff not ter ax too menny questions, so I went after Bob an' the buggy.

On the way home I ventured ter ax if she got everythin' she went after, an' if it wuz awl in them two little bundles?

She sed, "Yes, I looked an' looked, an' went shoppin' from one place ter another, but only bought a spool ov thred and three yards ov purple ribbon. I'll hev to cum back sum day an' finish shoppin'."

"Get up Bob," sez I, "we air in fer at least two more trips ter Raleigh before Christmas, fer Mrs. Bilkins didn't go ter town ter buy ennything—she wuz jist out shoppin'."

Bob struck er brisk trot an' I seed him sorter wink one eye an' smile, fer Bob hez bin at our house a long time an' understands everything that iz sed, espeshually everything erbout shoppin'.

Merry Christmas ter awl!
ZEKE BILKINS.

The Italian King's Jest.

The king spends the holiday according to his humor. Last Christmas Day he took a cab at a public stand, and as he drove, chatted with the cabman, who discussed his sovereign in a free-and-easy and perhaps not altogether complimentary way. By and by the king told him to drive to the palace, where he ordered an officer to pay the man and note his number. When cabby learned who his fare was he whipped away without his money and in great fright, which was in no wise lessened when the next day he was summoned to appear at a police station. To his relief and joy he was informed that as he had expressed a wish that the vehicle he drove were his own, his majesty had decided to present him with a new cab, a horse and some money to start him in business.—Woman's Home Companion for December.

"O mamma, come quick!" cried little Bess, who had never before seen her small brother do anything but crawl. "Come quick, mamma! Baby is standing on his hind legs."—Pacific Unitarian.

Christmas in Other Lands.

The original entertainment was given by a Sunday-school teacher to her class of boys and girls, and was intended to instruct as well as amuse. The children were old enough to have some idea of geography.

Soon after they reached the teacher's home, she conducted them into a room decorated to represent Norway. Here they were greeted in a most cordial manner by a maiden dressed in the costume of Norway, who told them the story of Christmas in that country, which is called Yule-peace instead of Christmas, and is celebrated by feasting—all quarrels are made up. She spoke of the preparations made by the mothers, the way the gifts are distributed from the tree, how the birds are remembered with bunches of wheat placed outside the window on poles, and that all animals are given extra portions of supper, how strangers are treated on Yule-peace day. After the story, little girls in the native costumes of Norway appeared from among the pine trees with trays of dainty sandwiches.

Then they went into another room where many dainty articles from Holland were displayed in a very artistic manner. After a hearty welcome from a maiden in the typical Dutch costume, some time was spent looking at the pretty things before she began the story of how the Dutch people keep Christmas—as a holy day; do not work. Among other things she told them that Dutch children think Santa Claus comes driving a white horse instead of reindeer, and they clean their wooden shoes, and fill them with hay and oats for the white horse. Here ice-cream was served in little wooden shoes with flags of the country stuck in them like sails.

They next visited Denmark. Here was a pretty Christmas tree with dainty gifts for each one. A young lady in the native dress told how Christmas is celebrated there. Especially interesting to the boys and girls was that part of the story that the children of Denmark do not know about Santa Claus, but "Nisson," a little old man who is a Brownie, and supposed to live under the ground takes his place.

The idea is a beautiful one, and might be elaborated on for an entertainment for a Sunday-school. It was really talks on the way Christmas was observed in other countries, which were told in such an interesting, fascinating manner that they were heartily enjoyed by the children, who begged to be told about Christmas in other countries than the ones mentioned.—The Pilgrim.

Sacrifice is the Spirit of Christmas.

A curious thing comes to my mind concerning which I have a word to say, and that is apropos of honesty. No one has a right to give away anything except what may be in excess of the just demands upon the income. The butcher, the baker, the dry goods man needs his money as surely as does the enthusiastic woman eager to make a pretty gift, or the lover to bestow upon his sweetheart what he knows is her heart's desire. Successful Christmas giving should mean self-sacrifice, and it is often a greater sacrifice to deny one's self

the privilege of expenditure than to do just what one has in mind. I believe that from the nursery days this theory should be inculcated, and as the coming to this world of our blessed Lord was one great act of sacrifice, so in planning for our Christmas gifts, each child in the family should be encouraged to something of self-sacrifice in the gathering together of the money for his gifts. I like to picture the old-fashioned Virginia home, where round the library table through the fall months the children of the household and the kinsfolk and acquaintances who might be within the doors, busied themselves in the preparation of dainty nothings which should carry on Christmas morn the sweet words of loving remembrance. This is a great contrast to a pretty woman's thought who came into my office a year ago on the 27th day of December and showed me \$50 worth of lace and a sunburst of diamonds, which she wore at her throat, and said, "I am sure you are glad, Dr. Smith, that I have these things, but I would not have had them except that I was clever enough to put your bill under the paper of my bottom drawer, and Mr. X thinks it has not been sent." Can you conceive of any graver dishonesty than was this? A trick upon the man whom she had vowed to honor as her husband—a trick upon the doctor who had been of service. And yet that woman said she had a happy Christmas. Where was her conscience?

The Perfect Pun.

A perfect pun makes good sense both ways; the edges meet with a click like the blades of a sharp pair of shears. Sometimes the very thoughts fit tight together in antagonistic identity, as when the man said of the temperance exhorter that he would be a good fellow if he would only let drink alone; or when Disraeli (if it was he) wrote to the youth who had sent him a first novel, "I thank you very much. I shall lose no time in reading it;" or as when a man, seeing a poor piece of carpentry, said: "That chicken coop looks as if some man had made it himself." Exquisite perverse literalness of thought! And the same absolute punning, the very self-destruction of a proposition, was the old death thrust at a poor poet by the friend who said: "His poetry will be read when Shakespeare and Homer are forgotten." It was a fine, doubled-edged blade of speech until some crude fellow—Heine, I think—sharpened it to a wire edge by adding, "and not till then"—a banality that dulled its perfection forever.—J. A. Macy, in the Atlantic.

"O, papa," Marie, "do you know the meaning of Christian names? 'William' means good. I wonder what 'Arthur' means?" And the girl blushed, O so prettily! Papa put on his severest aspect. "I hope Arthur means business," was the reply.

It is supremacy, not precedence, that we ask for the Bible; it is contrast, as well as resemblance, that we must feel compelled to insist on. The Bible is stamped with speciality of origin and an immeasurable distance separates it from all competitors.—W. E. Gladstone.