

VARIOUS

OUR BOYS

Various
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Various Our Boys / Entertaining Stories by Popular Authors

The Cat-tail Arrow

BY CLARA DOTY BATES

Little Sammie made a bow,
Well indeed he loved to whittle,
Shaped it like the half of O—
How he could I scarcely know,
For his fingers were so little.
As he whittled came a sigh:
"If I only had an arrow;
Something light enough to fly
To the tree-tops or the sky!
Then I'd have such fun tomorrow."

Then he thought of all the slim
Things that grow—the hazel bushes,
Willow branches, poplars trim—
And yet nothing suited him
Till he chanced to think of rushes.
He knew well a quiet pool
Where he always paused a minute
On his way to district school,
Just to see the waters cool
And his own bright face within it.

There the cat-tails thickly grew,
With their heads so brown and furry;
They were straight and slender too,
Plenty strong enough he knew,
And he sought them in a hurry.
Such an arrow as he wrought—
Almost passed a boy's believing.
When he drew the bow-string taut,
Out of sight and quick as thought
Up it went, the blue air cleaving.

Who was Sammie, would you know?
It was grandpa—he was little
Nearly eighty years ago;

But 'tis no doubt as fine a bow
As the best he still could whittle.

HE COULDN'T SAY NO

It was sad and it was strange!
He just was full of knowledge,
His studies swept the whole broad range
Of High School and of College;
He read in Greek and Latin too,
Loud Sanscrit he could utter,
But one small thing he couldn't do
That comes as pat to me and you
As eating bread and butter:
He couldn't say "No!" He couldn't say "No!"
I'm sorry to say it was really so!
He'd diddle, and dawdle, and stutter, but oh!
When it came to the point he could never say "No!"

Geometry he knew by rote,
Like any Harvard Proctor;
He'd sing a fugue out, note by note;
Knew Physics like a Doctor;
He spoke in German and in French;
Knew each Botanic table;
But one small word that you'll agree
Comes pat enough to you and me,
To speak he was not able:
For he couldn't say "No!" He couldn't say "No!"
'Tis dreadful, of course, but 'twas really so.
He'd diddle, and dawdle, and stutter, but oh!
When it came to the point he could never say "No!"

And he could fence, and swim, and float,
And use the gloves with ease too,
Could play base ball, and row a boat,
And hang on a trapeze too;
His temper was beyond rebuke,
And nothing made him lose it;
His strength was something quite superb,
But what's the use of having nerve
If one can never use it?
He couldn't say "No!" He couldn't say "No!"
If one asked him to come, if one asked him to go,
He'd diddle, and dawdle, and stutter, but oh!
When it came to the point he could never say "No!"

When he was but a little lad,
In life's small ways progressing,
He fell into this habit bad

Of always acquiescing;
'Twas such an amiable trait,
To friend as well as stranger,
That half unconsciously at last
The custom held him hard and fast
Before he knew the danger,
And he couldn't say "No!" He couldn't say "No!"
To his prospects you see 'twas a terrible blow.
He'd diddle, and dawdle, and stutter, but oh!
When it came to the point he could never say "No!"

And so for all his weary days
The best of chances failed him;
He lived in strange and troublous ways
And never knew what ailed him;
He'd go to skate when ice was thin;
He'd join in deeds unlawful,
He'd lend his name to worthless notes,
He'd speculate in stocks and oats;
'Twas positively awful,
For he couldn't say "No!" He couldn't say "No!"
He would veer like a weather-cock turning so slow;
He'd diddle, and dawdle, and stutter, but oh!
When it came to the point he could never say "No!"

Then boys and girls who hear my song,
Pray heed its theme alarming:
Be good, be wise, be kind, be strong—
These traits are always charming,
But all your learning, all your skill
With well-trained brain and muscle,
Might just as well be left alone,
If you can't cultivate backbone
To help you in life's tussle,
And learn to say "No!" Yes, learn to say "No!"
Or you'll fall from the heights to the rapids below!
You may waver, and falter, and tremble, but oh!
When your conscience requires it, be sure and shout "No!"

M.E.B.

THE CHRISTMAS MONKS

All children have wondered unceasingly from their very first Christmas up to their very last Christmas, where the Christmas presents come from. It is very easy to say that Santa Claus brought them. All well regulated people know that, of course; about the reindeer, and the sledge, and the pack crammed with toys, the chimney, and all the rest of it—that is all true, of course, and everybody knows about it; but that is not the question which puzzles. What children want to know is, where do these Christmas presents come from in the first place? Where does Santa Claus get them? Well, the answer to that is, *In the garden of the Christmas Monks*. This has not been known until very lately; that is, it has not been known till very lately except in the immediate vicinity of the Christmas Monks. There, of course, it has been known for ages. It is rather an out-of-the-way place; and that accounts for our never hearing of it before.

The Convent of the Christmas Monks is a most charmingly picturesque pile of old buildings; there are towers and turrets, and peaked roofs and arches, and everything which could possibly be thought of in the architectural line, to make a convent picturesque. It is built of graystone; but it is only once in a while that you can see the graystone, for the walls are almost completely covered with mistletoe and ivy and evergreen. There are the most delicious little arched windows with diamond panes peeping out from the mistletoe and evergreen, and always at all times of the year, a little Christmas wreath of ivy and holly-berries is suspended in the centre of every window. Over all the doors, which are likewise arched, are Christmas garlands, and over the main entrance *Merry Christmas* in evergreen letters.

The Christmas Monks are a jolly brethren; the robes of their order are white, gilded with green garlands, and they never are seen out at any time of the year without Christmas wreaths on their heads. Every morning they file in a long procession into the chapel to sing a Christmas carol; and every evening they ring a Christmas chime on the convent bells. They eat roast turkey and plum pudding and mince-pie for dinner all the year round; and always carry what is left in baskets trimmed with evergreen to the poor people. There are always wax candles lighted and set in every window of the convent at nightfall; and when the people in the country about get uncommonly blue and down-hearted, they always go for a cure to look at the Convent of the Christmas Monks after the candles are lighted and the chimes are ringing. It brings to mind things which never fail to cheer them.

But the principal thing about the Convent of the Christmas Monks is the garden; for that is where the Christmas presents grow. This garden extends over a large number of acres, and is divided into different departments, just as we divide our flower and vegetable gardens; one bed for onions, one for cabbages, and one for phlox, and one for verbenas, etc.

Every spring the Christmas Monks go out to sow the Christmas-present seeds after they have ploughed the ground and made it all ready.

There is one enormous bed devoted to rocking-horses. The rocking-horse seed is curious enough; just little bits of rocking-horses so small that they can only be seen through a very, very powerful microscope. The Monks drop these at quite a distance from each other, so that they will not interfere while growing; then they cover them up neatly with earth, and put up a sign-post with "Rocking-horses" on it in evergreen letters. Just so with the penny-trumpet seed, and the toy-furniture seed, the skate-seed, the sled-seed, and all the others.

Perhaps the prettiest, and most interesting part of the garden, is that devoted to wax dolls. There are other beds for the commoner dolls—for the rag dolls, and the china dolls, and the rubber dolls, but of course wax dolls would look much handsomer growing. Wax dolls have to be planted quite early in the season; for they need a good start before the sun is very high. The seeds are the loveliest bits of microscopic dolls imaginable. The Monks sow them pretty close together, and they begin to come up by the middle of May. There is first just a little glimmer of gold, or flaxen, or black, or

brown, as the case may be, above the soil. Then the snowy foreheads appear, and the blue eyes, and the black eyes, and, later on, all those enchanting little heads are out of the ground, and are nodding and winking and smiling to each other the whole extent of the field; with their pinky cheeks and sparkling eyes and curly hair there is nothing so pretty as these little wax doll heads peeping out of the earth. Gradually, more and more of them come to light, and finally by Christmas they are all ready to gather. There they stand, swaying to and fro, and dancing lightly on their slender feet which are connected with the ground, each by a tiny green stem; their dresses of pink, or blue, or white—for their dresses grow with them—flutter in the air. Just about the prettiest sight in the world is the bed of wax dolls in the garden of the Christmas Monks at Christmas time. Of course ever since this convent and garden were established (and that was so long ago that the wisest man can find no books about it) their glories have attracted a vast deal of admiration and curiosity from the young people in the surrounding country; but as the garden is enclosed on all sides by an immensely thick and high hedge, which no boy could climb, or peep over, they could only judge of the garden by the fruits which were parceled out to them on Christmas-day.

You can judge, then, of the sensation among the young folks, and older ones, for that matter, when one evening there appeared hung upon a conspicuous place in the garden-hedge, a broad strip of white cloth trimmed with evergreen and printed with the following notice in evergreen letters:

"Wanted—By the Christmas Monks, two *good* boys to assist in garden work. Applicants will be examined by Fathers Anselmus and Ambrose, in the convent refectory, on April 10th."

This notice was hung out about five o'clock in the evening, some time in the early part of February. By noon the street was so full of boys staring at it with their mouths wide open, so as to see better, that the king was obliged to send his bodyguard before him to clear the way with brooms, when he wanted to pass on his way from his chamber of state to his palace.

There was not a boy in the country but looked upon this position as the height of human felicity. To work all the year in that wonderful garden, and see those wonderful things growing! and without doubt any body who worked there could have all the toys he wanted, just as a boy who works in a candy-shop always has all the candy he wants!

But the great difficulty, of course, was about the degree of goodness requisite to pass the examination. The boys in this country were no worse than the boys in other countries, but there were not many of them that would not have done a little differently if he had only known beforehand of the advertisement of the Christmas Monks. However, they made the most of the time remaining, and were so good all over the kingdom that a very millennium seemed dawning. The school teachers used their ferrules for fire wood, and the king ordered all the birch trees cut down and exported, as he thought there would be no more call for them in his own realm.

When the time for the examination drew near, there were two boys whom every one thought would obtain the situation, although some of the other boys had lingering hopes for themselves; if only the Monks would examine them on the last six weeks, they thought they might pass. Still all the older people had decided in their minds that the Monks would choose these two boys. One was the Prince, the king's oldest son; and the other was a poor boy named Peter. The Prince was no better than the other boys; indeed, to tell the truth, he was not so good; in fact, was the biggest rogue in the whole country; but all the lords and the ladies, and all the people who admired the lords and ladies, said it was their solemn belief that the Prince was the best boy in the whole kingdom; and they were prepared to give in their testimony, one and all, to that effect to the Christmas Monks.

Peter was really and truly such a good boy that there was no excuse for saying he was not. His father and mother were poor people; and Peter worked every minute out of school hours to help them along. Then he had a sweet little crippled sister whom he was never tired of caring for. Then, too, he contrived to find time to do lots of little kindnesses for other people. He always studied his lessons faithfully, and never ran away from school. Peter was such a good boy, and so modest and

unsuspicious that he was good, that everybody loved him. He had not the least idea that he could get the place with the Christmas Monks, but the Prince was sure of it.

When the examination day came all the boys from far and near, with their hair neatly brushed and parted, and dressed in their best clothes, flocked into the convent. Many of their relatives and friends went with them to witness the examination.

The refectory of the convent, where they assembled, was a very large hall with a delicious smell of roast turkey and plum pudding in it. All the little boys sniffed, and their mouths watered.

The two fathers who were to examine the boys were perched up in a high pulpit so profusely trimmed with evergreen that it looked like a bird's nest; they were remarkably pleasant-looking men, and their eyes twinkled merrily under their Christmas wreaths. Father Anselmus was a little the taller of the two, and Father Ambrose was a little the broader; and that was about all the difference between them in looks.

The little boys all stood up in a row, their friends stationed themselves in good places, and the examination began.

Then if one had been placed beside the entrance to the convent, he would have seen one after another, a crestfallen little boy with his arm lifted up and crooked, and his face hidden in it, come out and walk forlornly away. He had failed to pass.

The two fathers found out that this boy had robbed birds' nests, and this one stolen apples. And one after another they walked disconsolately away till there were only two boys left: the Prince and Peter.

"Now, your Highness," said Father Anselmus, who always took the lead in the questions, "are you a good boy?"

"O holy Father!" exclaimed all the people—there were a good many fine folks from the court present. "He is such a good boy! such a wonderful boy! We never knew him to do a wrong thing in his sweet life."

"I don't suppose he ever robbed a bird's nest?" said Father Ambrose a little doubtfully.

"No, no!" chorused the people.

"Nor tormented a kitten?"

"No, no, no!" cried they all.

At last everybody being so confident that here could be no reasonable fault found with the Prince, he was pronounced competent to enter upon the Monks' service. Peter they knew a great deal about before—indeed, a glance at his face was enough to satisfy any one of his goodness; for he did look more like one of the boy angels in the altar-piece than anything else. So after a few questions, they accepted him also; and the people went home and left the two boys with the Christmas Monks.

The next morning Peter was obliged to lay aside his homespun coat, and the Prince his velvet tunic, and both were dressed in some little white robes with evergreen girdles like the Monks. Then the Prince was set to sowing Noah's ark seed, and Peter picture-book seed. Up and down they went scattering the seed. Peter sang a little psalm to himself, but the Prince grumbled because they had not given him gold-watch or gem seed to plant instead of the toy which he had outgrown long ago. By noon Peter had planted all his picture-books, and fastened up the card to mark them on the pole; but the Prince had dawdled so his work was not half done.

"We are going to have a trial with this boy," said the Monks to each other; "we shall have to set him a penance at once, or we cannot manage him at all."

So the Prince had to go without his dinner, and kneel on dried peas in the chapel all the afternoon. The next day he finished his Noah's Arks meekly; but the next day he rebelled again and had to go the whole length of the field where they planted jewsharps, on his knees. And so it was about every other day for the whole year.

One of the brothers had to be set apart in a meditating cell to invent new penances; for they had used up all on their list before the Prince had been with them three months.

The Prince became dreadfully tired of his convent life, and if he could have brought it about would have run away. Peter, on the contrary, had never been so happy in his life. He worked like a bee, and the pleasure he took in seeing the lovely things he had planted come up, was unbounded, and the Christmas carols and chimes delighted his soul. Then, too, he had never fared so well in his life. He could never remember the time before when he had been a whole week without being hungry. He sent his wages every month to his parents; and he never ceased to wonder at the discontent of the Prince.

"They grow so slow," the Prince would say, wrinkling up his handsome forehead. "I expected to have a bushful of new toys every month; and not one have I had yet. And these stingy old Monks say I can only have my usual Christmas share anyway, nor can I pick them out myself. I never saw such a stupid place to stay in my life. I want to have my velvet tunic on and go home to the palace and ride on my white pony with the silver tail, and hear them all tell me how charming I am." Then the Prince would crook his arm and put his head on it and cry.

Peter pitied him, and tried to comfort him, but it was not of much use, for the Prince got angry because he was not discontented as well as himself.

Two weeks before Christmas everything in the garden was nearly ready to be picked. Some few things needed a little more December sun, but everything looked perfect. Some of the Jack-in-the-boxes would not pop out quite quick enough, and some of the jumping-Jacks were hardly as limber as they might be as yet; that was all. As it was so near Christmas the Monks were engaged in their holy exercises in the chapel for the greater part of the time, and only went over the garden once a day to see if everything was all right.

The Prince and Peter were obliged to be there all the time. There was plenty of work for them to do; for once in a while something would blow over, and then there were the penny-trumpets to keep in tune; and that was a vast sight of work.

One morning the Prince was at one end of the garden straightening up some wooden soldiers which had toppled over, and Peter was in the wax doll bed dusting the dolls. All of a sudden he heard a sweet little voice: "O, Peter!" He thought at first one of the dolls was talking, but they could not say anything but papa and mamma; and had the merest apologies for voices anyway. "Here I am, Peter!" and there was a little pull at his sleeve. There was his little sister. She was not any taller than the dolls around her, and looked uncommonly like the prettiest, pinkest-cheeked, yellowest-haired ones; so it was no wonder that Peter did not see her at first. She stood there poising herself on her crutches, poor little thing, and smiling lovingly up at Peter.

"Oh, you darling!" cried Peter, catching her up in his arms. "How did you get in here?"

"I stole in behind one of the Monks," said she. "I saw him going up the street past our house, and I ran out and kept behind him all the way. When he opened the gate I whisked in too, and then I followed him into the garden. I've been here with the dollies ever since."

"Well," said poor Peter, "I don't see what I am going to do with you, now you are here. I can't let you out again; and I don't know what the Monks will say."

"Oh, I know!" cried the little girl gayly. "I'll stay out here in the garden. I can sleep in one of those beautiful dolls' cradles over there; and you can bring me something to eat."

"But the Monks come out every morning to look over the garden, and they'll be sure to find you," said her brother, anxiously.

"No, I'll hide! O Peter, here is a place where there isn't any doll!"

"Yes; that doll did not come up."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do! I'll just stand here in this place where the doll didn't come up, and nobody can tell the difference."

"Well, I don't know but you can do that," said Peter, although he was still ill at ease. He was so good a boy he was very much afraid of doing wrong, and offending his kind friends the Monks; at the same time he could not help being glad to see his dear little sister.

He smuggled some food out to her, and she played merrily about him all day; and at night he tucked her into one of the dolls' cradles with lace pillows and quilt of rose-colored silk.

The next morning when the Monks were going the rounds, the father who inspected the wax doll bed was a bit nearsighted, and he never noticed the difference between the dolls and Peter's little sister, who swung herself on her crutches, and looked just as much like a wax doll as she possibly could. So the two were delighted with the success of their plan.

They went on thus for a few days, and Peter could not help being happy with his darling little sister, although at the same time he could not help worrying for fear he was doing wrong.

Something else happened now, which made him worry still more; the Prince ran away. He had been watching for a long time for an opportunity to possess himself of a certain long ladder made of twisted evergreen ropes, which the Monks kept locked up in the toolhouse. Lately, by some oversight, the toolhouse had been left unlocked one day, and the Prince got the ladder. It was the latter part of the afternoon, and the Christmas Monks were all in the chapel practicing Christmas carols. The Prince found a very large hamper, and picked as many Christmas presents for himself as he could stuff into it; then he put the ladder against the high gate in front of the convent, and climbed up, dragging the hamper after him. When he reached the top of the gate, which was quite broad, he sat down to rest for a moment before pulling the ladder up so as to drop it on the other side.

He gave his feet a little triumphant kick as he looked back at his prison, and down slid the evergreen ladder! The Prince lost his balance, and would inevitably have broken his neck if he had not clung desperately to the hamper which hung over on the convent side of the fence; and as it was just the same weight as the Prince, it kept him suspended on the other.

He screamed with all the force of his royal lungs; was heard by a party of noblemen who were galloping up the street; was rescued, and carried in state to the palace. But he was obliged to drop the hamper of presents, for with it all the ingenuity of the noblemen could not rescue him as speedily as it was necessary they should.

When the good Monks discovered the escape of the Prince they were greatly grieved, for they had tried their best to do well by him; and poor Peter could with difficulty be comforted. He had been very fond of the Prince, although the latter had done little except torment him for the whole year; but Peter had a way of being fond of folks.

A few days after the Prince ran away, and the day before the one on which the Christmas presents were to be gathered, the nearsighted father went out into the wax doll field again; but this time he had his spectacles on, and could see just as well as any one, and even a little better. Peter's little sister was swinging herself on her crutches, in the place where the wax doll did not come up, tipping her little face up, and smiling just like the dolls around her.

"Why, what is this!" said the father. "*Hoc credam!* I thought that wax doll did not come up. Can my eyes deceive me? *non verum est!* There is a doll there—and what a doll! on crutches, and in poor, homely gear!"

Then the nearsighted father put out his hand toward Peter's little sister. She jumped—she could not help it, and the holy father jumped too; the Christmas wreath actually tumbled off his head.

"It is a miracle!" exclaimed he when he could speak; "the little girl is alive! *parra puella viva est.* I will pick her and take her to the brethren, and we will pay her the honors she is entitled to."

Then the good father put on his Christmas wreath, for he dare not venture before his abbot without it, picked up Peter's little sister, who was trembling in all her little bones, and carried her into the chapel, where the Monks were just assembling to sing another carol. He went right up to the Christmas abbot, who was seated in a splendid chair, and looked like a king.

"Most holy abbot," said the nearsighted father, holding out Peter's little sister, "behold a miracle, *vide miraculum!* Thou wilt remember that there was one wax doll planted which did not come up. Behold, in her place I have found this doll on crutches, which is—alive!"

"Let me see her!" said the abbot; and all the other Monks crowded around, opening their mouths just like the little boys around the notice, in order to see better.

"*Verum est*," said the abbot. "It is verily a miracle."

"Rather a lame miracle," said the brother who had charge of the funny picture-books and the toy monkeys; they rather threw his mind off its level of sobriety, and he was apt to make frivolous speeches unbecoming a monk.

The abbot gave him a reproving glance, and the brother, who was the leach of the convent, came forward. "Let me look at the miracle, most holy abbot," said he. He took up Peter's sister, and looked carefully at the small, twisted ankle. "I think I can cure this with my herbs and simples," said he.

"But I don't know," said the abbot doubtfully. "I never heard of curing a miracle."

"If it is not lawful, my humble power will not suffice to cure it," said the father who was the leach.

"True," said the abbot; "take her, then, and exercise thy healing art upon her, and we will go on with our Christmas devotions, for which we should now feel all the more zeal."

So the father took away Peter's little sister, who was still too frightened to speak.

The Christmas Monk was a wonderful doctor, for by Christmas eve the little girl was completely cured of her lameness. This may seem incredible, but it was owing in great part to the herbs and simples, which are of a species that our doctors have no knowledge of; and also to a wonderful lotion which has never been advertised on our fences.

Peter of course heard the talk about the miracle, and knew at once what it meant. He was almost heartbroken to think he was deceiving the Monks so, but at the same time he did not dare to confess the truth for fear they would put a penance upon his sister, and he could not bear to think of her having to kneel upon dried peas.

He worked hard picking Christmas presents, and hid his unhappiness as best he could. On Christmas eve he was called into the chapel. The Christmas Monks were all assembled there. The walls were covered with green garlands and boughs and sprays of holly berries, and branches of wax lights were gleaming brightly amongst them. The altar and the picture of the Blessed Child behind it were so bright as to almost dazzle one; and right up in the midst of it, in a lovely white dress, all wreaths and jewels, in a little chair with a canopy woven of green branches over it, sat Peter's little sister.

And there were all the Christmas Monks in their white robes and wreaths, going up in a long procession, with their hands full of the very showiest Christmas presents to offer them to her!

But when they reached her and held out the lovely presents—the first was an enchanting wax doll, the biggest beauty in the whole garden—instead of reaching out her hands for them, she just drew back, and said in her little sweet, piping voice: "Please, I ain't a millacle, I'm only Peter's little sister."

"Peter?" said the abbot; "the Peter who works in our garden?"

"Yes," said the little sister.

Now here was a fine opportunity for a whole convent full of monks to look foolish—filing up in procession with their hands full of gifts to offer to a miracle, and finding there was no miracle, but only Peter's little sister.

But the abbot of the Christmas Monks had always maintained that there were two ways of looking at all things; if any object was not what you wanted it to be in one light, that there was another light in which it would be sure to meet your views.

So now he brought this philosophy to bear.

"This little girl did not come up in the place of the wax doll, and she is not a miracle in that light," said he; "but look at her in another light and she is a miracle—do you not see?"

They all looked at her, the darling little girl, the very meaning and sweetness of all Christmas in her loving, trusting, innocent face.

"Yes," said all the Christmas Monks, "she is a miracle." And they all laid their beautiful Christmas presents down before her.

Peter was so delighted he hardly knew himself; and, oh! the joy there was when he led his little sister home on Christmas-day, and showed all the wonderful presents.

The Christmas Monks always retained Peter in their employ—in fact he is in their employ to this day. And his parents, and his little sister who was entirely cured of her lameness, have never wanted for anything.

As for the Prince, the courtiers were never tired of discussing and admiring his wonderful knowledge of physics which led to his adjusting the weight of the hamper of Christmas presents to his own so nicely that he could not fall. The Prince liked the talk and the admiration well enough, but he could not help, also, being a little glum; for he got no Christmas presents that year.

MARY E. WILKINS.

TEDDY AND THE ECHO

Teddy is out upon the lake;
His oars a softened click-clack make;
On all that water bright and blue,
His boat is the only one in view;
So, when he hears another oar
Click-clack along the farthest shore,
"Heigh-ho," he cries, "out for a row!
Echo is out! heigh-ho—heigh-ho!"
"Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!"
Sounds from the distance, faint and low.

Then Teddy whistles that he may hear
Her answering whistle, soft and clear;
Out of the greenwood, leafy, mute,
Pipes her mimicking, silver flute,
And, though her mellow measures are
Always behind him half a bar,
'Tis sweet to hear her falter so;
And Ted calls back, "Bravo, bravo!"
"Bravo, bravo!"
Comes from the distance, faint and low.

She laughs at trifles loud and long;
Splashes the water, sings a song;
Tells him everything she is told,
Saucy or tender, rough or bold;
One might think from the merry noise
That the quiet wood was full of boys,
Till Ted, grown tired, cries out, "Oh, no!
'Tis dinner time and I must go!"
"Must go? must go?"
Sighs from the distance, sad and low.

When Ted and his clatter are away,
Where does the little Echo stay?
Perched on a rock to watch for him?
Or keeping a lookout from some limb?
If he were to push his boat to land,
Would he find her footprint on the sand?
Or would she come to his blithe "hello,"
Red as a rose, or white as snow?
Ah no, ah no!
Never can Teddy see Echo!

MRS. CLARA DOTY BATES.

SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

Six merry stockings in the firelight,
Hanging by the chimney snug and tight:
Jolly, jolly red,
That belongs to Ted;
Daintiest blue,
That belongs to Sue;
Old brown fellow
Hanging long,
That belongs to Joe,
Big and strong;
Little, wee, pink mite
Covers Baby's toes—
Won't she pull it open
With funny little crows!
Sober, dark gray,
Quiet little mouse,
That belongs to Sybil
Of all the house;
One stocking left,
Whose should it be?
Why, that I'm sure
Must belong to me!
Well, so they hang, packed to the brim,
Swing, swing, swing, in the firelight dim.

'Twas the middle of the night.
Open flew my eyes;
I started up in bed,
And stared in surprise;
I rubbed my eyes, I rubbed my ears,
I saw the stockings swing, I heard the stockings sing;
Out in the firelight
Merry and bright,
Snug and tight,
Six were swinging,
Six were singing,
Like everything!
And the red, and the blue, and the brown, and the gray,
And the pink one, and mine, had it all their own way,
And no one could stop them—because, don't you see,
Nobody heard 'em—but just poor me!

"All day we carry toes,
To-night we carry candy;
Christmas comes once a year

Very nice and handy.
Run, run, race all day,
Mother mends us after play,
We don't care, life is gay,
Sing and swing, away, away!

"Boots and little tired shoes,
We kick 'em off in glee;
It's fun to hang up here
And Santa Claus to see.
Run, run, race all day,
Mother mends us after play,
We don't care, life is gay,
Sing and swing, away, away!

"To-morrow down we come,
The sweet things tumble out,
Then carrying toes again
We'll have to trot about.
Run, run, race all day,
Mother'll mend us after play,
We don't care, we'll swing so gay
While we can—away, away!"

MARGARET SIDNEY.

JOE LAMBERT'S FERRY

It was a thoroughly disagreeable March morning. The wind blew in sharp gusts from every quarter of the compass by turns. It seemed to take especial delight in rushing suddenly around corners and taking away the breath of anybody it could catch there coming from the opposite direction. The dust, too, filled people's eyes and noses and mouths, while the damp raw March air easily found its way through the best clothing, and turned boys' skins into pimply goose-flesh.

It was about as disagreeable a morning for going out as can be imagined; and yet everybody in the little Western river town who could get out went out and stayed out.

Men and women, boys and girls, and even little children, ran to the river-bank: and, once there, they stayed, with no thought, it seemed, of going back to their homes or their work.

The people of the town were wild with excitement, and everybody told everybody else what had happened, although everybody knew all about it already. Everybody, I mean, except Joe Lambert, and he had been so busy ever since daylight, sawing wood in Squire Grisard's woodshed, that he had neither seen nor heard anything at all. Joe was the poorest person in the town. He was the only boy there who really had no home and nobody to care for him. Three or four years before this March morning, Joe had been left an orphan, and being utterly destitute, he should have been sent to the poorhouse, or "bound out" to some person as a sort of servant. But Joe Lambert had refused to go to the poorhouse or to become a bound boy. He had declared his ability to take care of himself, and by working hard at odd jobs, sawing wood, rolling barrels on the wharf, picking apples or weeding onions as opportunity offered, he had managed to support himself "after a manner," as the village people said. That is to say, he generally got enough to eat, and some clothes to wear. He slept in a warehouse shed, the owner having given him leave to do so on condition that he would act as a sort of watchman on the premises.

Joe Lambert alone of all the villagers knew nothing of what had happened; and of course Joe Lambert did not count for anything in the estimation of people who had houses to live in. The only reason I have gone out of the way to make an exception of so unimportant a person is, that I think Joe did count for something on that particular March day at least.

When he finished the pile of wood that he had to saw, and went to the house to get his money, he found nobody there. Going down the street he found the town empty, and, looking down a cross street, he saw the crowds that had gathered on the river-bank, thus learning at last that something unusual had occurred. Of course he ran to the river to learn what it was.

When he got there he learned that Noah Martin the fisherman who was also the ferryman between the village and its neighbor on the other side of the river, had been drowned during the early morning in a foolish attempt to row his ferry skiff across the stream. The ice which had blocked the river for two months, had begun to move on the day before, and Martin with his wife and baby—a child about a year old—were on the other side of the river at the time. Early on that morning there had been a temporary gorging of the ice about a mile above the town, and, taking advantage of the comparatively free channel, Martin had tried to cross with his wife and child, in his boat.

The gorge had broken up almost immediately, as the river was rising rapidly, and Martin's boat had been caught and crushed in the ice. Martin had been drowned, but his wife, with her child in her arms, had clung to the wreck of the skiff, and had been carried by the current to a little low-lying island just in front of the town.

What had happened was of less importance, however, than what people saw must happen. The poor woman and baby out there on the island, drenched as they had been in the icy water, must soon die with cold, and, moreover, the island was now nearly under water, while the great stream was rising rapidly. It was evident that within an hour or two the water would sweep over the whole surface of the island, and the great fields of ice would of course carry the woman and child to a terrible death.

Many wild suggestions were made for their rescue, but none that gave the least hope of success. It was simply impossible to launch a boat. The vast fields of ice, two or three feet in thickness, and from twenty feet to a hundred yards in breadth, were crushing and grinding down the river at the rate of four or five miles an hour, turning and twisting about, sometimes jamming their edges together with so great a force that one would lap over another, and sometimes drifting apart and leaving wide open spaces between for a moment or two. One might as well go upon such a river in an egg shell as in the stoutest row-boat ever built.

The poor woman with her babe could be seen from the shore, standing there alone on the rapidly narrowing strip of island. Her voice could not reach the people on the bank, but when she held her poor little baby toward them in mute appeal for help, the mothers there understood her agony.

There was nothing to be done, however. Human sympathy was given freely, but human help was out of the question. Everybody on the river-shore was agreed in that opinion. Everybody, that is to say, except Joe Lambert. He had been so long in the habit of finding ways to help himself under difficulties, that he did not easily make up his mind to think any case hopeless.

No sooner did Joe clearly understand how matters stood than he ran away from the crowd, nobody paying any attention to what he did. Half an hour later somebody cried out: "Look there! Who's that, and what's he going to do?" pointing up the stream.

Looking in that direction, the people saw some one three quarters of a mile away standing on a floating field of ice in the river. He had a large farm-basket strapped upon his shoulders, while in his hands he held a plank.

As the ice-field upon which he stood neared another, the youth ran forward, threw his plank down, making a bridge of it, and crossed to the farther field. Then picking up his plank, he waited for a chance to repeat the process.

As he thus drifted down the river, every eye was strained in his direction. Presently some one cried out: "It's Joe Lambert; and he's trying to cross to the island!"

There was a shout as the people understood the nature of Joe's heroic attempt, and then a hush as its extreme danger became apparent.

Joe had laid his plans wisely and well, but it seemed impossible that he could succeed. His purpose was, with the aid of the plank to cross from one ice-field to another until he should reach the island; but as that would require a good deal of time, and the ice was moving down stream pretty rapidly, it was necessary to start at a point above the town. Joe had gone about a mile up the river before going on the ice, and when first seen from the town he had already reached the channel.

After that first shout a whisper might have been heard in the crowd on the bank. The heroism of the poor boy's attempt awed the spectators, and the momentary expectation that he would disappear forever amid the crushing ice-fields, made them hold their breath in anxiety and terror.

His greatest danger was from the smaller cakes of ice. When it became necessary for him to step upon one of these, his weight was sufficient to make it tilt, and his footing was very insecure. After awhile as he was nearing the island, he came into a large collection of these smaller ice-cakes. For awhile he waited, hoping that a larger field would drift near him; but after a minute's delay he saw that he was rapidly floating past the island, and that he must either trust himself to the treacherous broken ice, or fail in his attempt to save the woman and child.

Choosing the best of the floes, he laid his plank and passed across successfully. In the next passage, however, the cake tilted up, and Joe Lambert went down into the water! A shudder passed through the crowd on shore.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed some tender-hearted spectator; "it is all over with him now."

"No; look, look!" shouted another. "He's trying to climb upon the ice. Hurrah! he's on his feet again!" With that the whole company of spectators shouted for joy.

Joe had managed to regain his plank as well as to climb upon a cake of ice before the fields around could crush him, and now moving cautiously, he made his way, little by little toward the island.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! he's there at last!" shouted the people on the shore.

"But will he get back again?" was the question each one asked himself a moment later.

Having reached the island, Joe very well knew that the more difficult part of his task was still before him, for it was one thing for an active boy to work his way over floating ice, and quite another to carry a child and lead a woman upon a similar journey.

But Joe Lambert was quick-witted and "long-headed," as well as brave, and he meant to do all that he could to save these poor creatures for whom he had risked his life so heroically. Taking out his knife he made the woman cut her skirts off at the knees, so that she might walk and leap more freely. Then placing the baby in the basket which was strapped upon his back, he cautioned the woman against giving way to fright, and instructed her carefully about the method of crossing.

On the return journey Joe was able to avoid one great risk. As it was not necessary to land at any particular point, time was of little consequence, and hence when no large field of ice was at hand, he could wait for one to approach, without attempting to make use of the smaller ones. Leading the woman wherever that was necessary, he slowly made his way toward shore, drifting down the river, of course, while all the people of the town marched along the bank.

When at last Joe leaped ashore in company with the woman, and bearing her babe in the basket on his back, the people seemed ready to trample upon each other in their eagerness to shake hands with their hero.

Their hero was barely able to stand, however. Drenched as he had been in the icy river, the sharp March wind had chilled him to the marrow, and one of the village doctors speedily lifted him into his carriage which he had brought for that purpose, and drove rapidly away, while the other physician took charge of Mrs. Martin and the baby.

Joe was a strong, healthy fellow, and under the doctor's treatment of hot brandy and vigorous rubbing with coarse towels, he soon warmed. Then he wanted to saw enough wood for the doctor to pay for his treatment, and thereupon the doctor threatened to poison him if he should ever venture to mention pay to him again.

Naturally enough the village people talked of nothing but Joe Lambert's heroic deed, and the feeling was general that they had never done their duty toward the poor orphan boy. There was an eager wish to help him now, and many offers were made to him; but these all took the form of charity, and Joe would not accept charity at all. Four years earlier, as I have already said, he had refused to go to the poorhouse or to be "bound out," declaring that he could take care of himself; and when some thoughtless person had said in his hearing that he would have to live on charity, Joe's reply had been:

"I'll never eat a mouthful in this town that I haven't worked for if I starve." And he had kept his word. Now that he was fifteen years old he was not willing to begin receiving charity even in the form of a reward for his good deed.

One day when some of the most prominent men of the village were talking to him on the subject Joe said:

"I don't want anything except a chance to work, but I'll tell you what you may do for me if you will. Now that poor Martin is dead the ferry privilege will be to lease again, I'd like to get it for a good long term. Maybe I can make something out of it by being always ready to row people across, and I may even be able to put on something better than a skiff after awhile. I'll pay the village what Martin paid."

The gentlemen were glad enough of a chance to do Joe even this small favor, and there was no difficulty in the way. The authorities gladly granted Joe a lease of the ferry privilege for twenty years, at twenty dollars a year rent, which was the rate Martin had paid.

At first Joe rowed people back and forth, saving what money he got very carefully. This was all that could be required of him, but it occurred to Joe that if he had a ferry boat big enough, a good many horses and cattle and a good deal of freight would be sent across the river, for he was a "long-headed" fellow as I have said.

One day a chance offered, and he bought for twenty-five dollars a large old wood boat, which was simply a square barge forty feet long and fifteen feet wide, with bevelled bow and stern, made to hold cord wood for the steamboats. With his own hands he laid a stout deck on this, and, with the assistance of a man whom he hired for that purpose, he constructed a pair of paddle wheels. By that time Joe was out of money, and work on the boat was suspended for awhile. When he had accumulated a little more money, he bought a horse power, and placed it in the middle of his boat, connecting it with the shaft of his wheels. Then he made a rudder and helm, and his horse-boat was ready for use. It had cost him about a hundred dollars besides his own labor upon it, but it would carry live stock and freight as well as passengers, and so the business of the ferry rapidly increased, and Joe began to put a little money away in the bank.

After awhile a railroad was built into the village, and then a second one came. A year later another railroad was opened on the other side of the river, and all the passengers who came to one village by rail had to be ferried across the river in order to continue their journey by the railroads there. The horse-boat was too small and too slow for the business, and Joe Lambert had to buy two steam ferry-boats to take its place. These cost more money than he had, but, as the owner of the ferry privilege, his credit was good, and the boats soon paid for themselves, while Joe's bank account grew again.

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