

Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 1, December 25, 1841 eBook

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Page 1

HOW MR. CHOKEPEAR KEEPS A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Mr. CHOKEPEAR is, to the finger-nails, a respectable man. The tax-gatherer was never known to call at his door a second time for the same rate; he takes the sacrament two or three times a year, and has in his cellar the oldest port in the parish. He has more than once subscribed to the fund for the conversion of the Jews; and, as a proof of his devotion to the interests of the established church, it was he who started the subscription to present the excellent Doctor MANNAMOUTH with a superb silver tea-pot, cream-jug, and spoons. He did this, as he has often proudly declared, to show to the infidel world that there were some men in the parish who were true Christians. He has acquired a profound respect for Sir *Peter Laurie*, since the alderman's judgments upon "the starving villains who would fly in the face of their Maker;" and, having a very comfortable balance at his banker's, considers all despair very weak, very foolish, and very sinful. He, however, blesses himself that for such miscreants there is Newgate; and more—there is Sir *Peter Laurie*.

Mr. CHOKEPEAR loves Christmas! Yes, he is an Englishman, and he will tell you that he loves to keep Christmas-day in the true old English fashion. How does he keep it?

It is eight o'clock, and Mr. CHOKEPEAR rises from his goose-down. He dresses himself, says his short morning thanksgiving, and being an economist of time, unconsciously polishes his gold watch-chain the while. He descends to the breakfast parlour, and receives from lips of ice, the wishes of a happy Christmas, pronounced by sons and daughters, to whom, as he himself declares, he is "the best of fathers"—the most indulgent of men.

The church-bell tolls, and the CHOKEPEARS, prepare for worship. What meekness, what self-abasement sits on the Christian face of *Tobias CHOKEPEAR* as he walks up the aisle to his cosey pew; where the woman, with turned key and hopes of Christmas half-crown lighting her withered face, sinks a curtsy as she lets "the miserable sinner" in; having carefully pre-arranged the soft cushions and hassocks for the said sinner, his wife, his sons, and daughters. The female CHOKEPEARS with half the produce of a Canadian winter's hunting in their tippets, muffs, and dresses, and with their noses, like pens stained with red ink,—prepare themselves to receive the religious blessings of the day. They then venture to look around the church, and recognising CHOKEPEARS of kindred nature, though not of name, in pews—(none of course among the *most* "miserable sinners" on the bare benches)—they smile a bland salutation, and—but hush! the service is about to begin.

And now will *Tobias CHOKEPEAR* perform the religious duties of a Christian! Look at him, how he feeds upon every syllable of the minister. He turns the Prayer-book familiarly, as if it were his bank account, and, in a moment, lights upon the prayers set



apart for the day. With what a composed, assured face he listens to the decalogue—how firm his voice in the responses—and though the effrontery of scandal avows that he shifts somewhat from Mrs. CHOKEPEAR'S eye at the mention of "the maid-servant"—we do not believe it.



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It is thus CHOKEPEAR begins his Christmas-day. He comes to celebrate the event of the Incarnation of all goodness; to return “his most humble and hearty thanks” for the glory that Providence has vouchsafed to him in making him a Christian. He—Tobias CHOKEPEAR—might have been born a Gentoo! Gracious powers! he might have been doomed to trim the lamps in the Temple of Juggernaut—he might have come into this world to sweep the marble of the Mosque at Mecca—he might have been a faquir, with iron and wooden pins “stuck in his mortified bare flesh”—he might, we shudder to think upon the probability, have brandished his club as a New Zealander; and his stomach, in a state of heathen darkness to the humanising beauties of goose and apple-sauce, might, with unblest appetite, have fed upon the flesh of his enemies. He might, as a Laplander, have driven a sledge, and fed upon walrus-blubber; and now is he an Englishman—a Christian—a carriage holder, and an eater of venison!

It is plain that all these thoughts—called up by the eloquence of Doctor MANNAMOUTH, who preaches on the occasion—are busy in the bosom of CHOKEPEAR; and he sits on his soft cushion, with his eyelids declined, swelling and melting with gratitude for his blissful condition. Yes; he feels the glorious prerogative of his birth—the exquisite beauty of his religion. He ought to feel himself a happy man; and, glancing round his handsomely-appointed pew—he *does*.

“A sweet discourse—a very sweet discourse,” says CHOKEPEAR to several respectable acquaintance, as the organ plays the congregation out; and CHOKEPEAR looks round about him airily, contentedly; as though his conscience was as unseared as the green holly that decorates the pews; as though his heart was fresh, and red, and spotless as its berries.

Well, the religious ceremonies of the day being duly observed, CHOKEPEAR resolves to enjoy Christmas in the true old English fashion. Oh! ye gods, that bless the larders of the respectable,—what a dinner! The board is enough to give Plenty a plethora, and the whole house is odoriferous as the airs of Araby. And then, what delightful evidences of old observing friendship on the table! There is a turkey—“only a little lower” than an ostrich—despatched all the way from an acquaintance in Norfolk, to smoke a Christmas salutation to good Mr. CHOKEPEAR. Another county sends a goose—another pheasants—another brawn; and CHOKEPEAR, with his eye half slumbering in delight upon the gifts, inwardly avows that the friendship of friends really well to do is a fine, a noble thing.

The dinner passes off most admirably. Not one single culinary accident has marred a single dish. The pudding is delicious; the custards are something better than manna—the mince pies a conglomeration of ambrosial sweets. And then the Port! Mr. CHOKEPEAR smacks his lips like a whip, and gazes on the bee’s wing, as *Herschell* would gaze upon a new-found star, “swimming in the blue profound.” Mr. CHOKEPEAR wishes all a merry Christmas, and tosses off the wine, its flavour by no means injured

by the declared conviction of the drinker, that “there isn’t such another glass in the parish!”



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The evening comes on. Cards, snap-dragons, quadrilles, country-dances, with a hundred devices to make people eat and drink, send night into morning; and it may be at six or seven on the twenty-sixth of December, our friend CHOKEPEAR, a little mellow, but not at all too mellow for the season, returns to his sheets, and when he rises declares that he has passed a very merry Christmas. If the human animal were all stomach—all one large paunch—we should agree with CHOKEPEAR that he *had* passed a merry Christmas: but was it the Christmas of a good man or a Christian? Let us see.

We have said all CHOKEPEAR'S daughters dined with him. We forgot: one was absent. Some seven years ago she married a poorer husband, and poverty was his only, but certainly his sufficient fault; and her father vowed that she should never again cross his threshold. The Christian keeps his word. He has been to church to celebrate the event which preached to all men mutual love and mutual forgiveness, and he comes home, and with rancour in his heart—keeps a merry Christmas!

We have briefly touched upon the banquet spread before CHOKEPEAR. There is a poor debtor of his in Horsemonger-lane prison—a debtor to the amount of at least a hundred shillings. Does *he* dine on Christmas-day? Oh! yes; Mr. CHOKEPEAR will read in *The Times* of Monday how the under-marshal served to each prisoner a pound of beef, a slice of pudding, and a pint of porter! The man might have spent the day in freedom with his wife and children; but Mr. CHOKEPEAR in his pew thought not of his debtor, and the creditor at least—kept a merry Christmas!

How many shivering wretches pass CHOKEPEAR'S door! How many, with the wintry air biting their naked limbs, and freezing within them the very springs of human hope! In CHOKEPEAR'S house there are, it may be, a dozen coats, nay, a hundred articles of cast-off dress, flung aside for the moth—piles of stuff and flannel, that would at this season wrap the limbs of the wretched in comparative Elysium. Does Mr. CHOKEPEAR, the respectable, the Christian CHOKEPEAR, order these (to him unnecessary) things to be given to the naked? He thinks not of them; for he wears fleecy hosiery next his skin, and being in all things dressed in defiance of the season—keeps a merry Christmas.

Gentle reader, we wish you a merry Christmas; but to be truly, wisely merry, it must not be the Christmas of the CHOKEPEARS. That is the Christmas of the belly: keep you the Christmas of the heart. Give—give.

Q.

* * * * *



**COMMERCIAL PANIC.—RUMOURED STOPPAGE IN
THE CITY.**



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There is in the city a noted place for deposits, much resorted to by certain parties, who are in the habit of giving drafts upon it very freely, when applied to for payment. We regret to state that if the severity of the weather continues, a stoppage is expected in the quarter hinted at, and as the issues are at all times exceedingly copious, the worst results may be anticipated. Our readers will at once perceive that, in attributing such an effect as total stoppage to such a cause as continued frost, we can only point to one quarter which is in the habit of answering drafts; and, as further delicacy would be useless, we avow at once that *Aldgate Pump* is here alluded to. We understand that, as the customers are chiefly people of straw, it is intended to see what effect straw will have in averting the calamity. We were sorry to see the other day a very large *bill* upon a quarter hitherto so respectable. We are aware that its exposed condition gives every one a handle against it, and we are, therefore, the more circumspect in giving currency to every idle rumour. We should be no less sorry to see *Aldgate Pump* stop from external causes, than to know that it had been swamped by its own excessive issues. Though as yet quite above water, it is feared that it will soon be in *an-ice* predicament.

* * * * *

FASHIONABLE INTELLIGENCE.

Arrivals.—Jack Frost, from the North.

Departures.—Several members of the Swellmobocracy have, within the last few days, quitted Deptford for South Australia. The periods of their intended sojourn are various.

Changes.—Ned Morris has changed his collar, but continues his shirt for the present. Among the other changes we have to record one effected by Sam Smasher, of a counterfeit sovereign.

It is a remarkable fact that the weathercocks have recently changed their quarters, and have left the West in favour of the East: a predilection of astounding vulgarity.

Timothy Tomkins has had another splendid turn-out from his lodgings, the landlord having complained of want of punctuality in payments.

* * * * *

A LETTER FROM AN OLD FRIEND,

SHOWING HOW HE IS GETTING ON.

Clodpole, Dec. 23, 1841.



MY DEAR PUNCH,

Here I am, you see, keeping Christmas, and having no end of fun amongst the jolly innocent grubs that vegetate in these rural districts. All I regret is that you are not here. I would give a ten-pound note to see you, if I had it;—I would, indeed—so help me several strong men and a steam-engine!

We had a great night in London before I started, only I got rascally screwed: not exactly sewed up, you know but hit under the wing, so that I could not very well fly. I managed to break the window on the third-floor landing of my lodgings, and let my water-jug fall slap through the wash-hand basin upon a looking-glass that was lying face upwards underneath; but as I was off early in the morning it did not signify.

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The people down here are a queer lot; but I have hunted up two or three jolly cocks, and we contrive to keep the place alive between us. Of course, all the knockers came off the first night I arrived, and to-morrow we are going to climb out upon the roof of my abode, and make a tour along the tops of the neighbouring houses, putting turfs on the tops of all the practicable chimneys. Jack Randall—such a jolly chick! you must be introduced to him—has promised to tie a cord across the pavement at the corner, from the lamp-post to a door-scraper; and we have made a careful estimate that, out of every half-dozen people who pass, six will fall down, four cut their faces more or less arterially, and two contuse their foreheads. I, you may imagine, shall wait at home all the evening for the crippled ones, and Jack is to go halves in what I get for plastering them up. We may be so lucky as to procure a case of concussion—who knows? Jack is a real friend: he cannot be of much use to me in the way of recommendation, because the people here think he is a little wild; but as far as seriously injuring the parishioners goes, he declares he will lose no chance. He says he knows some gipsies on the common who have got scarlet-fever in their tent; and he is going to give them half-a-crown if they can bring it into the village, to be paid upon the breaking out of the first undoubted case. This will fag the Union doctor to death, who is my chief opponent, and I shall come in for some of the private patients.

My surgery is not very well stocked at present, but I shall write to Ansell and Hawke after Christmas. I have got a pickle-bottle full of liquorice-powder, which has brought me in a good deal already, and assisted to perform several wonderful cures. I administer it in powders, two drachms in six, to be taken morning, noon, and night; and it appears to be a valuable medicine for young practitioners, as you may give a large dose, without producing any very serious effects. Somebody was insane enough to send to me the other night for a pill and draught; and if Jack Randall had not been there, I should have been regularly stumped, having nothing but Epsom salts. He cut a glorious calomel pill out of pipeclay, and then we concocted a black-draught of salts and bottled stout, with a little patent boot-polish. Next day, the patient finding himself worse, sent for me, and I am trying the exhibition of linseed-meal and rose-pink in small doses, under which treatment he is gradually recovering. It has since struck me that a minute portion of sulphuric acid enters into the composition of the polish, possibly causing the indisposition which he describes “as if he was tied all up in a double-knot, and pulled tight.”



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I have had one case of fracture in the leg of Mrs. Finkey's Italian greyhound, which Jack threw a flower-pot at in the dark the other night. I tied it up in two splints cut out of a clothes-peg in a manner which I stated to be the most popular at the Hotel Dieu at Paris; and the old girl was so pleased that she has asked me to keep Christmas-day at her house, where she burns the Yule log, makes a bowl of wassail, and all manner of games. We are going to bore a hole in the Yule log with an old trephine, and ram it chuck-full of gunpowder; and Jack's little brother is to catch six or seven frogs, under pain of a severe licking, which are to be put into one of the vegetable dishes. The old girl has her two nieces home for the holidays—devilish handsome, larky girls—so we have determined to take some mistletoe, and give a practical demonstration of the action of the *orbicularis oris* and *levatoris labiae superioris et inferioris*. If either of them have got any tin, I shall try and get all right with them; but if the brads don't flourish I shall leave it alone, for a wife is just the worst piece of furniture a fellow can bring into his house, especially if he inclines to conviviality; although to be sure a medical man ought to consider her as part of his stock in trade, to be taken at a fair valuation amidst his stopple-bottles, mortars, measures, and pill-rollers.

If business does not tumble in well, in the course of a few weeks, we have another plan in view; but I only wish to resort to it on emergency, in case we should be found out. The railway passes at the bottom of my garden, and Jack thinks, with a few pieces of board, he can contrive to run the engine and tender off the line, which is upon a tolerably high embankment. I need not tell you all this is in strict confidence; and if the plan does not jib, which is not very probable, will bring lots of grist to the mill. I have put the engineer and stoker at a sure guinea a head for the inquest; and the concussions in the second class will be of unknown value. If practicable, I mean to have an elderly gentleman "who must not be moved under any consideration;" so I shall get him into my house for the term of his indisposition, which may possibly be a very long one. I can give him up my own bedroom, and sleep myself in an old harpsichord, which I bought cheap at a sale, and disembowelled into a species of deceptive bed. I think the hint might put "people about to marry" up to a dodge in the way of spare beds. Everybody now sees through the old chiffonier and wardrobe turn-up impositions, but the grand piano would beat them; only it should be kept locked, for fear any one given to harmony might commence playing a fantasia on the bolster.



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Our parishioners have very little idea of the Cider-cellars and Coal-hole, both of which places they take in their literal sense. I think that, with Jack's assistance, we can establish something of the kind at the Swan, which is the principal inn. Should it not succeed, I shall turn my attention to getting up a literary and scientific institution, and give a lecture. I have not yet settled on what subject, but Jack votes for Astronomy, for two reasons: firstly, because the room is dark nearly all the time; and secondly, because you can smug in some pots of half-and-half behind the transparent orrery. He says the dissolving views in London put him up to the value of a dark exhibition. We also think we can manage a concert, which will be sure of a good attendance if we say it is for some parish charity. Jack has volunteered a solo on the cornet-a-piston: he has never tried the instrument, but he says he is sure he can play it, as it looks remarkably easy hanging up in the windows of the music-shops. He thinks one might drill the children and get up the Macbeth music.

It is turning very cold to-night, and I think will turn to a frost. Jack has thrown some water on the pavement before my door; and should it freeze, I have given strict orders to my old housekeeper not to strew any ashes, or sand, or sawdust, or any similar rubbish about. People's bones are very brittle in frosty weather, and this may bring a job. I hope it will.

If, in your London rambles, as you seem to be everywhere at once, you pitch upon Manhug, Rapp, or Jones, give my love to them, and tell them to keep their powder dry, and not to think of practising in the country, which is after all a species of social suicide. And with the best compliments of the season to yourself, and "through the medium of the columns of your valuable journal" to your readers, believe me to remain,

My dear old bean,

Yours very considerably,

JOSEPH MUFF.

* * * * *

THE SECRET SORROW.

Oh! let me from the festive board
To thee, my mother, flee;
And be my secret sorrow shared
By thee—by only thee!

In vain they spread the glitt'ring store,
The rich repast, in vain;



Let others seek enjoyment there,
To me 'tis only pain.

There *was* a word of kind advice—
A whisper, soft and low;
But oh! that *one* resistless smile!
Alas! why was it so?

No blame, no blame, my mother dear,
Do I impute to *you*.
But since I ate that currant tart
I don't know what to do!

* * * * *

[Illustration]

PUNCH'S POSTSCRIPT.

MR. AUGUSTUS SWIVEL, (*Professor of the Drum and Mouth-organ, and Stage-Manager to PUNCH'S Theatre,*)



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LOQUITUR.

[Illustration: P]PATRONS OF "PUNCH,"—LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

We has dropped the curtain and rowled up the baize on the first half-annivel performance of "PUNCH." The pleasing task now dewolves upon me, on behoof of the Lessee and the whole strength off the Puppets, to come forrard and acknowledge the liberal showers of applause and 'apence what a generous and enlightened British public has powered upon the performances and pitched into our goss. Steamilated by this St. Swiffin's of success, the Lessee fearlessly launches his bark upon the high road of public favor, and enters his Theaytre for the grand steeple-chase of general approbation.

Ourn hasn't been a bed of roses. We've had our rivals and our troubles. We came out as a great hint, and everybody took us.

First and foremost, the great Juggeler in Printing-house Square, walks in like the Sheriff and takes our comic effects.

Then the Black Doctor, as blowed the bellows to the late ministerial organ, starts a fantoccini and collars our dialect.

Then, the unhappy wight what acts as dry-nuss to his *Grandmother*, finding his writing on the pavement with red and white chalk and sentiment, won't friz,—gives over appealing to the sympathies, kidnaps our comic offspring, and (as our brother dramatist Muster Sheridan says) disfigures 'em to make 'em look like his own.

Then, the whole biling of our other hoppositioners who puts their shoulders together, to "hoist up a donkey," tries to ornament their werry vulgar exhibitions with our vitticisms.

Now this was cruel, deceitful condick on the part of the juggeler,—a side wind blow from the organ,—didn't show much of the milk of human kindness with the chalk; and as for the ass,—but no,—brotherly love is our weakness, and we throws a veil over the donkey.

During the recess the exterior of the Theaytre will be re-decorated by Muster Phiz; and the first artists in pen, ink, black-lead, and box-wood, has been secured to see if any improvements *can* be made in the interior.

I have the honor to inform you that we shall commence our next campaign on January 1, 1842, with renewed henergy, all the old-established wooden heads, and several new hands.



And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of "PUNCH," the Puppets, the Properrieters, and the Orchestra (which is myself), I most respectfully touches my hat, and wishes you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. *Au rewoir.*

[Illustration]

* * * * *