[*Written for the Christmas Number.*]

JIM'S INVENTION.

YES, Jim's of a powerful inwentive turn o' mind, ef I do say hit, as shouldn't," placidly remarked Eliza Bates to her bosom friend and neighbor, Melissy Turner.

"An' that ain't all, either. That boy's wuth more in a hoss trade than me an' his pa put together; he's a natchul born trader, Jim is. But, *Tim!*" Her disgust was made manifest by a vigorous pull at the pants she was patching. "Law, M'lissy! sometimes I don't believe that boy's any kin ter me, he's so monstrous slow about things. But him an' Jim's twins, an' I reckon Jim got more'n his share o' sense; he allus *wuz* bigger."

"'Tain't no reflection on you or his pa, Lize. I 'low *Jim's* the likeliest boy in these parts, an' Tim ain't got his growth yit," consolingly replied Mrs. Turner. "He 'pears ter be kinder stunted, but he'll come out, jest like a hicker-nut after ther first hard frost. He's jest waitin' fer his time."

"Well, he's mighty slow about hit," grumbled Mrs. Bates. Looking up suddenly, she asked: "Ever hear about Jim's last trade? You never? Well, well! that's queer, seein' as how everybody make so much fun o' ole Phœnix — that's ther hoss what he traded fer — leastwise, that's what Jim named him after ther fire."

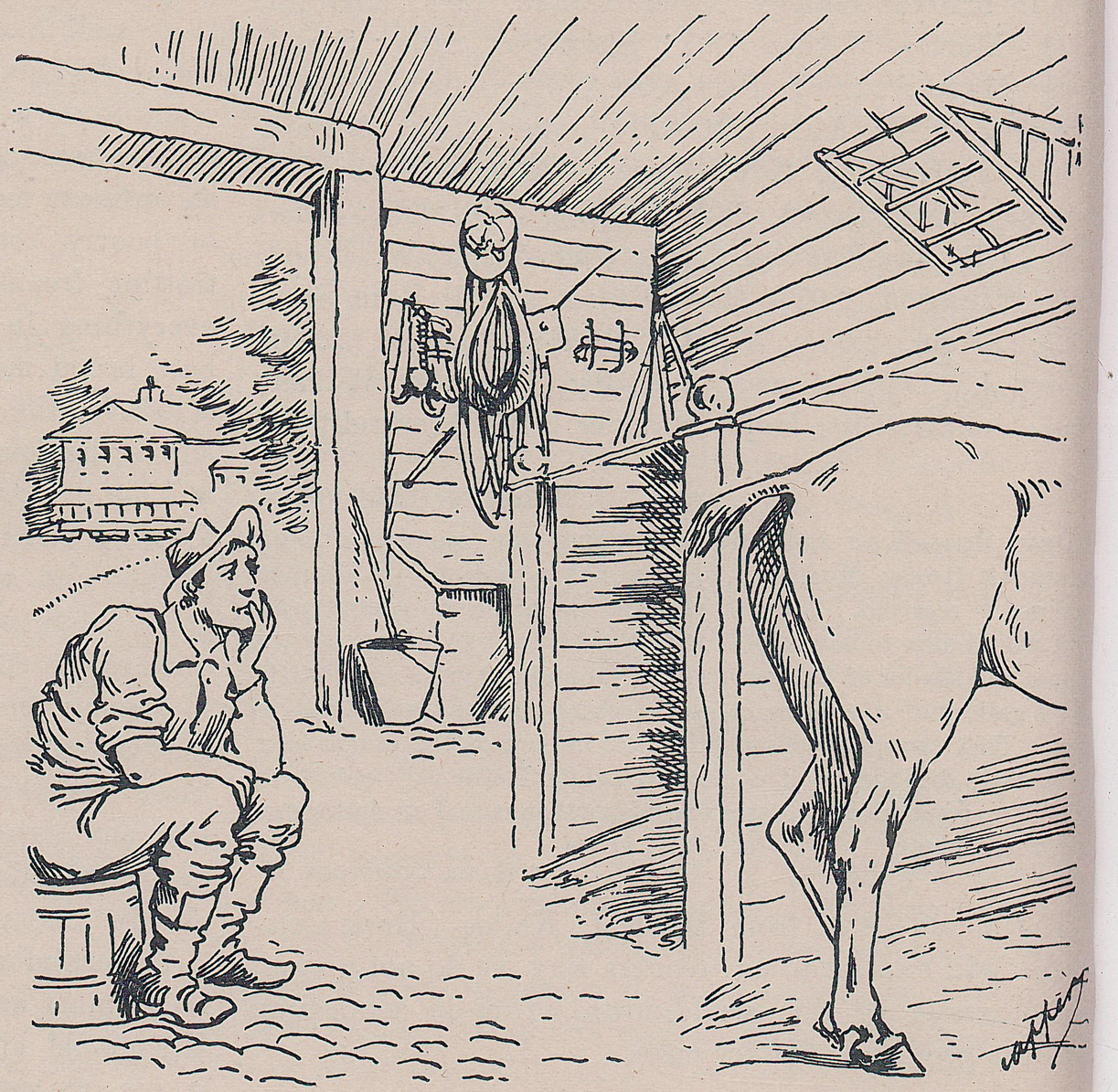
Melissy Turner drew her chair nearer to Mrs. Bates, and rocked to and fro upon the carpetless floor, punctuating the pauses in the story with a liberal pinch of snuff.

"You see," Mrs. Bates resumed, "Jedge Hackett went off ter Lexington an' come back with a race hoss that could beat anything trottin' you ever see, an' Jim jest natchully *itched* ter git up behind ther critter an' drive him in a race. Come fair time, Jedge 'lowed Jim might drive ther roan, ef he'd be keerful; an' ef you'll believe me, M'lissy, that boy didn't sleep none fer three weeks, thinkin' 'bout that race. Win hit? Well, I reckon he did! An' he druv that hoss at all ther fairs that year; an' he jest took ther cake every time. That whole endurin' winter Jim set aroun' stedyin' 'bout somethin', and do what we would, me nor his pa couldn't git him ter peartin' up an' look like hisself. I wuz mighty feerd Jim had got a *call*, fer he looked jest like my brother Bill did afore he died."

"What d' you reckon that boy wuz thinkin' an' stedyin' about all that time?" She paused impressively, but the problem was too deep for Melissy to solve, so she slowly shook her head and continued to rock.

"I'll tell you," triumphantly continued Mrs. Bates. "He wuz stedyin' up a hoss trade, and that hoss wuz Jedge Hackett's roan race hoss, Clipper. One mornin' Jim hooked up his two mules his pa give him, ter ther wagon what he traded ther blind mare fer, an' druv off ter trade with ther Jedge. Terreckly he come back, lookin' clean beat out, an' said ther Jedge jest laughed at him and 'lowed Clipper wuz wuth more'n *six* pairs o' mules. Ef Providence hadn't been on Jim's side, I believe ther boy would a died, jest from grievin' 'bout losin' that hoss trade. Jim's got a sight o' pride."

"But that very same night, Jedge Hackett's stable caught on fire, an' burned clean down, an' he lost every hoss in hit, savin' Clipper — Phœnix, that now is, — an' he wouldn't a had him ef hit hadn't a been fer Jim.



"Jim, air you inventin'?"
"I air," says Jim.

Ther Jedge wuz standin' there, tryin' ter git some o' ther hands ter go in an' untie ther critters, what wuz hollerin' jest like folks, but nobody wanted ter git burned up fer a few hosses an' mules, till Jim come. Well, he jest walked inter that burning stable, an' blindfolded Clipper an' led him out. But jest as he got ter ther door, ther fool hoss run right back inter his stall. Then ther Jedge