

The Spirit of Christmas



Columbine.

ON the left, just past the weather hen's nest, and not more than two steps from the box where they keep the cuckoo, there is the long bed where roses bloom all the year round. And they grow like this so that Columbine may always have one to stick in her hair, and that odd, mocking, soft-hearted cynic Pierrot may pull one now and again to twiddle between his teeth.

If you know the way, and the Cheshire cat will let you, you walk down the garden path, past the butterfly lime, and arrive at the nearest little cottage in Olympus.

Now this is the dwelling place of the Harlequin set—Harlequin, Columbine, Clown and Pantaloon. It is one cottage in a little colony on the lower slopes of Mount Olympus (where the high gods dwell: Jupiter and the like), and is most important because it contains the oldest inhabitants.

The Clerk of the Weather lives a little higher up. The Four Queens and Kings live in a square of pagoda-like houses, and are waited upon by the Knaves. Pierrot and Pierrette live in romantic seclusion by a pool in a tumble-down place covered with blue roses. And away behind the fields of stars where the flocks of clouds graze, there is another village where the Seven Princesses live, and the Third Son and an Ogre, and a Talking Rabbit, and all those peculiar and beautiful people who are entangled in our minds with the memories of night nurseries, and the scent of our mothers who bent over us in wonderful toilettes, and told us to go to sleep, or they'd be late for dinner.

When it gets to be about Christmas there is a sort of aroma of excitement on the lower slopes of Olympus, and, especially in the house where Harlequin lives—a delicious sense of something exciting happening.

Columbine opens the lid of the well that looks down onto the world, and there comes up a murmur of children's voices, and you can hear the quaintest things being said about the hanging up of stockings, and about Santa Claus and the likely width of chimneys, and the running power of reindeer. And there is a tremendous rustle of colored paper, and a great run on almonds and raisins, and quite respectable citizens stand in front of shop windows gazing at dolls and dolls gaze back at them, so that the citizens go back forty years at a rush, and the rush is so great sometimes that they get tears in their eyes; for memory is quicker than motor cars, and the road it travels is often dark and broken.

So Columbine leaves the top of the well open all day and all night, and all the people in her cottage sleep with their windows open, so that the sweetly laden air comes up and gives them wonderful dreams. It does more than that. It waves the branches of the Christmas tree that grows at the bottom of the garden, near the sausage frames, and very soon candles begin to bud on its branches.

Now when the candles begin to get ripe, which happens at the same time that geese and turkeys hang in rows in shops and grow rosettes all over them, Harlequin takes an old, oaken pipe from a cupboard under the stairs, and they all sit round while he puts it to his lips and blows.

As he plays, dreams come to them of their ancient days, for Harlequin is first cousin to Mercury, and wears a black mask to hide the light of his face when he visits Columbine, who is Psyche, the Soul; the Clown is Momus, the Spirit of Laughter; and Pantaloon is Charon, who has that grim work of ferrying the souls over the Styx.

There's an odd link of memories and of things held all through the centuries, but the most charming is this: Columbine is a flower-like person, and there is a flower called Columbine, and it is so called because it is like four doves with outspread wings, and the French dove is colombe, and the dove is the symbol of the soul. So the world is never allowed to forget beautiful things, even if the burden of history is borne on the back of a flower. And the god-like glow and glitter of Mercury's limbs still shows in the glistening sequins on Harlequin's clothes, part-colored as they have always been, to show how he covered his nakedness with rags.

All this, beautified by the essence of Time, like things put away in a cedar chest, comes back when Harlequin blows on his pipe that air the shepherds learnt in Greece from Pan.

The next night Clown will take out another kind of pipe, a long churchwarden of white clay, and fill it with tobacco, and then as the fragrant clouds roll up into the rafters, memories come of all the great people of the Harlequins they play down in the world, all inspired by them, and they see the figure of Turlington, who was the first clown, and invented the very clothes they now wear, hand in hand with Grimaldi, that great clown. And they seem to see all the great Italian Harlequins, and the dainty French Columbines, and the old dandies of fifteenth-century Venice whose clothes Pantaloon wears.

Do you know that elderly gentlemen in the World smell that magic tobacco, or something like it, and they forget their paunches, or their bald heads, and they sit and dream of the time they went to their first pantomime? Was it "Cinderella," or "Beauty and the Beast"? Or was it that splendid thing "Mother Goose," or that entrancing production "The Yellow Dwarf"?

Such things are conjured up by just that one pipe of tobacco smoked in the cottage on Olympus, and on that night a gentle breeze blows up through the well, laden with the poignant, eternal memories of childhood, and the candles on the Christmas tree are

all ready to be lighted. They are so ready that when Pantaloon looks out of his window before making up his face for the day he sees that the candles have burst into flame-flowers in the night.

Then Columbine takes out a pipe, and she puts some magic soap into nectar and stirs it round with the bowl of the pipe until frothy suds appear. And then she blows bubbles that float up and out of the window until they reach the Christmas tree, when they turn into great, glittering glass balls, all sorts of colors, and show pictures of the world all colored and shining.

The children in the World look up and think they see Harlequin and Columbine floating down as gently as feathers, but they don't say so because their elders would only tell them it was the clouds. But it is Harlequin and Columbine, and Pantaloon and Clown follow soon after, bringing the tree with them.

Now their work begins, own job and hers. Clown the laughter spring up in and ripple as barley field Harlequin to for common appear beau- and a penny wealth of the Pantaloon to stirring up old memories in dull people, so that uncles must remember all their nephews in remembering when they were nephews themselves, and had a peculiar hunger at Christmas.

Columbine is awfully practical. Her sentiment extends from the joy of watching the making of baby-clothes to the pleasure of remembering to put nice soap in the spare rooms. It is she who sees that children get the right presents, and when they don't it is not her fault, but the fault of some stupid person in a shop.

It is she who suggests the secret delight of keeping presents hidden at the bottom of the wardrobe; and it is she who suggests the secret delight of peering at children when they are asleep.



Pierrette.

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of the good old times! Holly and mistletoe and robins, and church bells sounding over the snow. And hampers all packed to be sent away, and plenty to eat at home.

And then Columbine steals up to the windows, and taps them with the rose from her hair, and she whispers:

"Open, open to me all you who have no children and no friends and no hope, and I will be the warm, nestling thing you covet for your frozen hearts, and you shall feel my soft cheek against yours till the tears come and your heart takes life again. You shall give joy to other people's children. And if you have no friends who have children, are there not a thousand, thousand children who have no friends? Go to them, and give them all you can, and you will be rewarded almost more than you can bear, for there is a link between those who suffer. Are there not some you have forgotten or neglected? This lonely man, that lonely woman whom you have left uncared for, perhaps for years. Put on your hat and your coat, and put your heart on your sleeve, so that all may know your errand."

To see her pleading before black, sombre houses where a thin light shines under a blind; to see her face pressed against the window of some big mansion where a man or a woman sits alone with hearts like stone; to see her tears as she essays to melt an aching heart is to see something so touching and beautiful that one almost wonders the doors and windows are not instantly opened to admit the spirit of love she begs for so pitifully.

"Look at yourselves. Messieurs et Mesdames Importance, and remember the funny little things you used to be when you bit at coral and bells, and wore bibs, and thought everybody in the world had enough to eat; when you hated to go to bed early, and crept downstairs in your nightgowns to listen over the bannisters to the voices in the dining room; when no jam for tea was a tragedy. And when your mother's knee was the throne of justice and mercy, for you buried your head there with her hand in your hair, and forgot to be afraid of the dark."

Columbine has her own very particular work, and she calls it in her mind Secret Delights. She calls it that because she delights in making up odd names for emotions, as, for instance, when she pointed out two lovers to me one day in the spring, who were seated under a hedge, yellow-flushed with primroses; they were holding hands and looking at the hills beyond just as if some wonderful thing was about to come over the hills to tell them what their feelings meant. And the peace was so great and the moment so held that the World seemed to have stopped breathing, and something superhuman to have poured out a cup of stillness. And she called it Liquid Velvet. A Liquid Velvet moment. And I understood.

It is Columbine who watches that beautiful comedy of the newly married, who steal about their house hand-in-hand, fearful of waking the very new servants, fearful of creaking the boards as they gaze enraptured on the very new furniture, looking with joy on the very new pots and pans in the kitchen, turning the electric lights up and down all over the place to see the effect in their new bedroom. And he has a dreadful brooch for her hidden where he keeps his razors; and she has knitted him a tie he will have to wear. But it is all perfectly beautiful.

Someone wrote the other day that people who read are more interested, nowadays, in business than in love, and I'm so sorry for that man. He is more blind than I thought anybody could be. Business may be the means to an end, but Love is the beginning and the end. And it is just at this season that Love makes business; hence the shops full of gifts. Imagine a poet writing:

"Cent. per cent. the moon is rising,
Watch the stocks upon the bank;
Rubber shares are too surprising,
Speculators are surmising
Who the deuce they have to thank!"

No one can get a heartbeat out of that, and whatever your business man says, he knows he gets all the good in his life out of heartbeats.

So this Christmas Spirit creeps about the world, mocked at, scorned, but alive yet. And you who feel these things may one night see this quaint quartet at work, perhaps for a second at the corner of your street, perhaps just vanishing down the drive, or moving swiftly down a country lane. And you may say wonderingly: "It is a cobweb, a moth, and the branch of a tree, and the starlight makes them look like—like something I remember."

But I tell you who they are—Harlequin, Columbine, Clown and Pantaloon. And if you hear a child's laugh ring out suddenly, and it brings a new, quick emotion, one of them has conquered you!

The spirit of Christmas doesn't cling to presents in proportion to their cost—unless you are very rich; and if you are very rich the voice of the jeweler and of the furrier and of the motor car maker will seem to you as wise as the word of a happy poor man, though he were a philosopher.

Simple and genuine and glad—strike these notes and the chimes will be very melodiously for you and for those whom you try to make happy. And remember, you can't feign Christmas without being caught as an impostor, both by your own conscience and by the feelings of those about you. The very value of Christmas is that it puts the genuineness of everybody to an unerring test.



Harlequin.

STATE BAPTISTS CLOSE SESSION

WILL PETITION LEGISLATURE FOR SIX MONTHS PUBLIC TERM.

HAVE PROFITABLE MEETING

Some Statistics Showing Growth of Denominations in Various Lines.—Much Work Was Done.—Last Day Was Marked By Two Features.

Goldboro.—The eighty-second annual session of the North Carolina Baptist Convention, representing 250,000 members of 2,200 churches scattered from the mountain to the sea, finished its work several days ago, and adjourned to meet in Shelby in 1913. The closing prayer was offered by Rev. J. D. Huffman, one of the few remaining pioneers of the early days of Baptistic struggle.

The last day was marked by two features. The convention petitioned the legislature to increase the public school appropriation, and urged that all public schools be open at least six months. Then the convention placed itself on record as opposed to continuing to allow the International Sunday School Committee to select the Sunday school lessons of the Southern Baptist Sunday school.

The Woman's Missionary Union reported to the convention that during the year the offerings of the women's societies had been as follows:

Foreign missions, \$15,133.29; home missions, \$9,086.32; state missions, \$8,609.42; Louisville Training School, \$748.07; Margaret Home, \$168.08; Sunday school board, \$192.04; expense fund, \$484.78; total, \$34,422. The report also gives a comparative statement of the work each year since the organization of the Woman's Missionary Union.

The report of Secretary Middleton shows the Baptists now have 64 associations. In membership the West Chowan still leads, having 11,975 members, Chowan next with 10,341. There are now 2,006 white Baptist churches in the state, a gain of 53 over last year.

The total membership of these churches, except 38 not reporting, is 237,139.

The following are the half-dozen associations making the largest per capita contributions:

The Central leads with \$1.75; the Pee Dee at \$1.72 and the Roanoke at \$1.71 are not far behind. The Piedmont reached \$1.55; the Buncombe \$1.35; the Mecklenburg Cabarrus, \$1.33.

President Durham, announced the following appointments:

Foreign missions, J. C. Turner, W. R. L. Smith; home missions, J. H. Foster, A. C. Hamby; state missions, I. M. Mercer, J. J. Hart; Sunday schools, G. T. Stephenson, C. J. D. Parker; Biblical Recorder, R. L. Gay, A. E. Brown; ministerial education, J. D. Harte, T. H. King; temperance, B. Bruce White, John A. Oates; women's work, Joel S. Snider, W. F. Staley; obituary, Rev. C. W. Scarborough.

The president appointed Dr. W. R. Cullom to arrange for the program of the pastors' conference next year.

Two Bodies Do Not Want Union.

There was a conference in progress at Raleigh between the members of the state board of agriculture, the trustees of the A. & M. College, the board of directors of the college, and the legislative committee from the 1911 legislature, considering the interests of the college, and the department of agriculture, as involved in the proposed merger of the two institutions for the sake of economy and efficiency. This proceeding is under the Dowd act of the last legislature, which directed a special committee, headed by the president of the senate, Hon. W. C. Newland, to investigate and recommend to the 1913 legislature as to this matter.

Farmers' Institutes in State.

Director T. B. Parker's report to the state board of agriculture on the farmers' institute division of the department, of which he is the director, shows that for the year there were 236 regular farmers' institutes and 231 institutes for women held in all parts of the state. And in addition 35 special railroad institutes and other special meetings. The attendance on all these institutes was 50,190. North Carolina stands first in the United States for attendance on institutes for women.

Henderson Poultry Association.

Henderson County Poultry Association, which has just closed, was the means of interesting poultry fanciers throughout the county to such an extent that 300 birds were exhibited. This was the second show of the association, and although it was a fine exhibition of the county's product, it is believed that the show would have been much better than it was had it not been for the disagreeable weather. A number of cash prizes were given and the business interests contributed any valuable articles.

PROTECT NATIONAL FORESTS

Some Extracts From Secretary Wilson's Annual Report of Interest to North Carolina.

Raleigh.—A special from Washington states that in the annual report for this year, which came out recently Secretary Wilson of the department of agriculture, had the following to say about the Weeks forestry law, under which North Carolina and other Southern mountain lands are being purchased:

"The maintenance and administration of the national forests in the West having demonstrated the importance of protection of forest lands as a means of conserving and promoting water flow, the department for a number of years past urged upon Congress the advisability of the acquisition of timbered lands in the East as a means of conserving and promoting the navigability of navigable streams in the Eastern states where the government has never owned lands. Especial attention was called to the rapid disappearance under wasteful methods of large areas of timber on the watersheds of important navigable streams and contiguous to the Appalachian Mountain range. The recommendations of the department culminated in the act of March 1, 1911, commonly known as the Weeks Forestry Law, under which the secretary of agriculture is authorized to examine, locate, and recommend for purchase such lands as, in his judgment, may be necessary for the regulation of the flow of navigable streams, and to report the results of such examinations to a commission created by the act and designated the National Forest Reservation Commission.

Upon the approval of the purchase by the commission the secretary is authorized to purchase the lands for the United States and thereafter to organize them into national forests, to be administered, with certain limitations, as other national forests are administered. An appropriation of \$13,000,000 was made for purposes of the act, and active operations were commenced immediately upon its approval.

State Lutheran Synod Ends.

The North Carolina Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod held its sessions at Kings Mountain, the guest of the St. Matthew's church, Rev. C. R. Bell, pastor. This body represents a constituency of 80 congregations in the western portion of the state, and its business sessions were largely occupied with the consideration of local home mission work. The officers elected for the ensuing year are: President, Rev. M. L. Pence; secretary, Rev. W. D. Wise; treasurer, Rev. J. F. Deal. Very animated and timely discussions were held on the appointed topics: "Lutheran Practices Determined by Christian Faith," and "Lutheran Literature in the Home."

The State Fishery Convention.

The North Carolina Fisheries convention met recently in Washington and was largely attended by delegates from all over the state. The convention was called to order in the city hall, by the president, George N. Ives, of New Bern, and the opening prayer was made by Rev. H. J. Searight. The delegates were welcomed to the city by the mayor of the city, Collin H. Harding. The response was made by the president of the association, George N. Ives. The object of the meeting was stated by Joseph Hyde Pratt, the state geologist. The other principal speakers of the meeting were A. W. Graham and Dr. H. F. Moore.

North Carolina New Enterprises.

Two charters were issued from the office of the secretary of state. The Royal and Borden Company, a partnership of George C. Royall and John L. Borden, of Goldsboro, changes to a company, authorizes itself to \$100,000 and pays in 28,000. Besides Messrs. Royall and Borden, J. D. Harden owns a large share. The company is chartered in Goldsboro but has a local business in Raleigh. The National Coöperation Company, with H. A. Plunkett, W. C. Waters, A. M. Rea, J. W. Biddle and others starts a business at New Bern.

To Be Aycock County.

The executive committee of the new county proposition voted several days ago to unanimously change the name from Piedmont to Aycock county in honor of the late Governor Chas. B. Aycock. Governor Aycock was among the first advocates of the new county and gave practical services to the movement. He made the first fight for it before the legislature, and would have made the second had he lived. The meeting was enthusiastic and active operations will begin at once.

May Carry Case To Court.

Present indications are that a controversy between the city of Statesville and the county board of education will be threshed out in the courts, the case being similar to one which went through the courts in Asheville recently. The board of education will bring suit against the city for the collection of fines and forfeitures alleged to be due the school fund from the municipal court. The school board claims that it is entitled to \$600 collected during Mayor Caldwell's administration.



Merry Christmas to YOU!



Pierrot.

There are Pagan Saints who find Arcadia everywhere. Pan pipes as much in the crowded city as on Mount Ida when the sun is high. And Columbine finds roses where the world sees thorns; and Harlequin finds magic in motor buses; and Pantaloon digs away for pleasant memories in the most unlikely places, and finds them bright and clean, and as good as new.

These half-gods of mine (and yours) come down at Christmas to correct the bilious attitude of the rest of the year. They come to sow those seeds that grow to flow-still innocent eaters in the hearts. They come to give a man instead of a the being that the bus-weighs more timent had up his stock-mas Eve, and feels like to but a hole in it in the morning.

And when it is dark these four quaint figures fit through the country, city, town and village like conspirators, Harlequin tapping doors and windows with his magic wand. "Open, open!" he cries to the Spirit of Christmas. "Let the rich uncle reward his needy nephew, and the unforgiving father his repentant son. Mothers, forget to be jealous of your elder daughter's growing beauty. Children, forget your spite and naughtiness. Let's be old-fashioned. Let's believe in ghosts. I'll tell you ghost-stories, stories of yourselves when you were children and played Pirates on the stairs."

And Clown says as he taps on the doors with his red-hot poker: "Open, open, you old grousers! And let the Spirit of Fun come into this house. Romp a bit, and lose your twopenny dignity, for pompous stiffness makes the gods laugh."

Pantaloon, taking his turn, taps with his walking-stick, and says: "Open, open, and let in the flood of memories



Clown.



Pantaloon.