

THE ROANOKE NEWS.

JOHN W. SLEDGE, PROPRIETOR.

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NO. 36.

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AND
MUSCLES.

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CHRISTMAS EVE.

All the air with love is laden,
Where the Yule logs glow and flame,
Happily youth and youthful maiden,
Softly chant the Master's name.
Now, if there be any sad ones,
And their tears are dried,
Now, if there be thoughtless glad ones,
Be that gladness purified.
For the bells of peace are ringing,
Mingling with the bells of cheer,
Earth and Heaven join in singing
Of the glories yet to be.

Seek the boughs, so green and fragrant,
Let the waxen tapers dance,
Have a hope for justice, for a saint,
Christ of every circumstance!
Pile the leaping fagots higher,
Let the wide-mouthed chimneys roar,
Clash the cymbals, twang the lyre,
Angels wait at every door.
Soft the Day of Peace is breaking;
Blacken the day of all the year,
And sweet Plenty, want o'ertaking,
Spreads a feast of love and cheer.

A Bogus Santa Claus.

On the evening before Christmas, in the year of grace 1894, Mr. Rufus Bell created a mild sensation at his home by arriving with a parcel of huge dimensions. He made sure that none of the children were about the house before he entered and, when he had crossed the threshold he immediately concealed the mysterious bundle in a closet and locked the door upon it.

By Will Mason.

"We are always acquiring information," interrupted Mrs. Bell, serenely, turning to the younger lady, "as a school-teacher you must have studied juvenile human nature, and you must have been shocked by the fact that children cease to believe in the good old stories of Santa Claus and his reindeer almost as soon as they are able to walk; in fact, I have heard you comment upon this sad truth. What is Christmas to a child, if the child doesn't believe in Santa Claus? Where are all the romance and poetry of the season? My own children are skeptical when I tell them the charming legend of Kris Kringle; I have undertaken to convince them that there is a Santa Claus; I have decided to let them see Santa Claus in person."

This announcement naturally pleased the ladies; and their excitement was quite intense when Mr. Bell produced a bundle from the closet and opened it, producing a lot of ancient furs and a bearskin hat that had probably been used by a drum major of the town band; to please the ladies he donned his costume at once, and they voted him a perfect Santa Claus, as he certainly was.

"Now," he said, when he had resumed his ordinary raiment, "I don't think it quite fair to reserve this entertainment for our own children exclusively, so I have invited a few good little boys and girls of the neighborhood; and Mr. and Mrs. Brewster will be here, and young Mr. Moon; I have let them into the secret. You will tell the children to hang round in the north room, and in their bosoms tell them you have reason to believe that they may see Santa Claus if they sit up and keep perfectly still; at the proper time I'll ascend the roof and slide down the chimney; it is just large enough for the purpose. And I guess that's all."

During the balance of the evening, until nine o'clock, there was a great deal of active preparation in progress in the Bell mansion; the north room was tidied, and a semi-circle of chairs drawn up to the expected guests, who began to arrive at the stipulated time. Mr. Bell was in a fine frenzy of excitement; he declared to his wife, in a whisper, that he felt like a boy again, and she replied that she was ten years

THE SAME OLD CAKE.

younger than she was before he unfolded his delicious scheme. By half-past nine all the guests, large and small, were in their places; Mr. Moon, a young man who had been studying law for two years, and who hoped soon to be admitted to the bar, sat next to Miss Rose, upon whose hand he had serious designs, and his efforts to appear at ease were amusing and instructive; Mr. Brewster, who was small and timid looking, nestled beside his wife, who was massive and had a bass voice; silence brooded over the hall until Mr. Bell, who was given to speeches, went into another attitude, and said:

"Children, I have heard that you don't believe there is a Santa Claus? You have formed the unworthy idea that your parents and friends fill your stockings on Christmas eve, and that good old fur-clothed Santa is a myth. Now, I have here a letter from Santa."

(Great excitement among the children.)

"And he says that he will arrive here at ten o'clock, coming down the chimney which you see before you. I must leave you for awhile, as I must keep watch outside; but you must all be quiet and keep your seats, or Santa Claus may become angry, and refuse to enter."

Ten o'clock was announced by the fall clock in the adjoining room, and the mellow chimings of that ancient time-piece had scarcely died away before the children heard other sounds. Up overhead there was a violent scratching and tearing, as though a party should endeavor was trying to climb the roof, and they distinctly heard the silvery tinkling of bells, and some of them believed that they could make out the grinding of the sleigh runners on the slings. It was a moment of awful excitement; Johnnie Bell, who had never quailed in danger's stormy hour, did not try to conceal the cold perspiration that stood on his forehead; Amelia Grimm, whose

everybody crowded about Mr. Bell, his whole future was at stake, and reflected that all's fair in love and war. There was a stern, cold silence for a minute or two. Meanwhile the vibrations of Santa's legs became demerol and spasmodic, and his muffled groans betokened extreme exhaustion.

"Wretch!" cried the young lady, at last, "rescue my uncle! You shall have the reward you ask."

The wretch bowed with noble grace and a moment later was on the roof, with a rope in his hand; he led the rope down the chimney, and called to Santa Claus to grasp it and bang on. Santa did so, and toiled upward while Mr. Moon, peering after 15 minutes of distressing work, Santa emerged from the chimney, a poor, battered, old man, with a red nose and a white beard.

Mr. Moon assisted him to the ground and into the house, where the children and the other guests crowded about him and laughed; for children always will laugh when they ought to weep.

When Mr. Bell was recovered sufficiently, he leaned against the back of a chair—he was too weak for an attitude—and said:

"Children, if you tell about this around town, I'll have you all arrested and sent to the penitentiary for life. And you, Johnnie, that titter I'll make you sail a card of green wood. I want you all to go home and tell your parents that Santa Claus is the biggest hoax of the 19th century, and I'll guarantee every word you say."

By careful nursing Mr. Bell was restored to his normal health in a few days, and his first act was to have the old chimney taken down.

One day in March Mr. Moon led his bride to the altar; he held his head high and his eye sparkled. After the ceremony there was a dinner at Mr. Bell's residence, and Mr. Bell himself was radiant with good humor and hospitality. He called the young couple aside, and indulged in an attitude and a speech:

"My beloved, after 15 minutes of distressing work, I see you radiant to your sunlight plumpness upon the waters. There are blue skies overhead, and—er—the robin rebreasts are twittering on the boughs. But dear days of tempest and storm may come; rolling waves may threaten your bark, and then remember that if you need a helping hand, you may call upon Rufus Bell."

Mr. Moon looked dreamily out of the window.

"May I ask a favor of you now?" he asked.

"A hundred of them, my dear boy."

"Well, I see it's growing, and there's enough on the snow to make sleighing. Will you lend me your reindeer and sled for awhile?"

Santa Claus's stockings.

Said Santa Claus on Christmas eve, in 1894, good, fat legs, they've turned the hose on me.

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS.

By JOHN MAHIN.

What profound emotions of gratitude should swell up in every human heart at the mention of this now well-known universal holiday! But it is to be feared that the vast majority of those who observe it have no true conception of its meaning. Even many of those whose idea of it is that it is a time to bestow and receive gifts do not fully comprehend what is meant by this hallowed and common custom.

Christmas not only commemorates the birth of Christ, who gave His life as a ransom for a sinful world, but it also commemorates the gift of God to man, who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Paul tells us that salvation "is the gift of God," from whom, as

James says, is "every good and perfect gift." Paul also declares in writing to the Ephesians that when Christ accepted upon His life "the curse of the law" and gave gifts unto men.

What are some of these gifts which are thus typified and intended to be commemorated by the custom of gift-giving in Christmas-tide? "Peace on earth, good will to men," is the boon it brings to mankind as a whole.

The coming of Christ was the manifestation of God to men. There is no full revelation of God anywhere save in His incarnated Son. He is the fullness of the God-head bodily. Christ was the Son of Man, in Him we mark the fulfillment of all human capabilities. By Him is reconciliation of sinful man and an offended God. Faith in Christ crucified—the gift of infinity to man—is the secret of salvation from the consequences of sin. The gift of everlasting life is to be had for the taking.

Christmas, as a commemoration of the birth of Christ, who most perfectly manifested the divine nature, would be meaningless. True, He taught grand lessons of love and duty, and of self-sacrifice for the good of others, but the sublime efficacy of all these teachings was His sufferings and death on the cross on account of the sins of mankind. This has been aptly called the tragedy of the world—a tragedy in which every human soul has an interest, because it provides for human wants a boon in Christ, a fountain for uncleanliness, redemption from sin, and a joy forever.

These personal and spiritual gifts are not the only advantages that have been conferred upon mankind by the coming of Him whose birth is celebrated as Christmas. The world as a whole has had an uplift in direct ratio as the lessons of His life and death have been revealed to it. Genuine and helpful civilization was born.

The sign of the triple cross is not, as Emerson in his book makes it, the emblem of superstition, hate and cruelty, which he transposes to telegraph poles labeled "for the use of man," but the emblem, typifying Christianity, ever precedes enlightenment, invention and all that tends to human progress and human happiness. The later culture, representing the Christian church as a power with a mission, has been the bright light of Christian truth and thus penetrating the dark recesses of ignorance, tyranny and superstition, which are dispelled before her, while the emblems of civilization, the railroad train, the telegraph, the church, the school-house and the busy city follow her; this culture, I say, tells a truthful story of human progress. The most progressive, most enlightened, intelligent and strongest nations of to-day, with the most of happiness among their people, are the Christian nations.

Mr. Christmas, the greatest statesman of his or any other age, lately said: "Talk about the questions of the day; there is but one question, and that is the gospel. It can and will correct everything needing correction. All men at the head of great movements are Christian men. During the many years I was in the cabinet I was brought into association with 60 master minds, and all but five of them were Christians. My only hope for the world is in bringing the human mind into contact with divine revelation." How important, then, is that in commemorating Christmas we should have a true conception of what it means!

THE GOBBLER'S INNING.

Jimmy—There, now, dat looks bully; I hope he'll take de hint an' put some new stockings dere fore he do anything else.—N. Y. World.

Something for the Boy.

Office Boy—Are you going to give me anything for Christmas?
Boss—O, yes; a few errands to do.—Detroit Free Press.

USEFUL PRESENT.

By FRANK B. WELCH.

Caleb Crimmins was as sweet on Debby Dunder as a bumble bee on honey-suckles. That was a well understood fact among the young folks of Highbury, a back-country village of the middle west; and although Caleb had the reputation of being very "meek," he was known in a number of instances to have "opened his heart" and his purse—slightly—in demonstration of that fact.

And when Caleb Crimmins "went down into his jeans" (in the mellow flow of the village tongue wagers) it meant that return might be expected on the board in short order. That is to say, "folks was expert" of a invite to the wedding "fore long."

It pained Caleb intensely when he thought of the rapid succession of birthdays, Christmases and money-taking holidays with which the year was crowded, and he resolved that but few of them should elapse before he had the knot tied hard and fast with Miss Debby; and when they would go "kinder slow on the gash-blamed spendin' business," Debby was not at all extraneous in her notions of gift-giving, but she did think it was no more than right that she should be remembered occasionally with some tangible demonstration of affection.

Christmas was at hand, and Caleb was in the throes of a job of guessing what

to get for Debby. "There's no farnal much nonsense 'bout Christmas presents," said he, "that a fellow don't know what to git." But he held to his established rule that it should be "something useful and unexpected." But what Debby needed most, that was the perplexing question.

Caleb was to take Debby to the "Christmas doin'" at the village church, where there was to be a tree for the young folks, and he thought it would be the proper paper to hang his present on the tree with the others, and have it handed out publicly, to show that he was up and doing with the rest of them. And so it came to pass that among the good things hanging on the tree was a sealed envelope marked, "Merry Christmas to Deborah Dunder, from Mr. Caleb Crimmins." This the minister, who officiated as distributor, took down, and, with some sly remarks on its supposed contents, called upon the young lady to come forward and receive it.

As Debby passed up the aisle she was greeted on either side by her young friends, who eagerly inquired: "What is it, Debby? Open it and let us see!"

With burning cheeks she took the mysterious envelope and returned to her seat beside the smiling donor, who advised her to open it. This she did and found within nothing but a slip of paper with some writing on it. She read the words, and blushing still more deeply, crumpled the paper in her hand; then, turning to Caleb in an agitated manner, she said:

"Mr. Crimmins, we will go home, right off."

Caleb forthwith conducted Debby to her home, where she bade him a frigid "good night, Mr. Crimmins," and left him to sneak off to his own abode, with a sort of "wish I hadn't" feeling rankling in his system.

The match was broken off short then, and there, and it was some time before the why and wherefore were known to the wondering friends of both. When the secret did leak out a broad grin overspread the face of all Highbury, and no wonder. Caleb's Christmas present to Debby was an order on the village dentist for "four dollars' worth of pullin' and fillin'."

A TIP TO SANTA CLAUS.

DEAR SANTA, IF YOU CAN GET MY STOCKING JUST PUT IT ON MY FEET.

When Italy was sick, we gave her Castoria.

When she was Child, she cried for Castoria.

When she became Miss, she clung to Castoria.

When she had Children, she gave them Castoria.

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TWO CHRISTMAS GIFTS AND A TRAMP.

By ALICE DODGETT.

It was Christmas eve and the Dodgetts sat by the fire, discussing the probability that they would receive presents of greater value than they had sent to their poor relatives, and as good as they had sent to their rich ones.

"Oh, what a night it is," said Mrs. Dodgett, "but it is just as well, for we shall have no callers, and I'm really not fit to be seen."

"You certainly are not," candidly answered Mr. Dodgett, "it's a mystery what you have done with all the money you have gotten for dress. Now, I can go nowhere for lack of a decent dress suit."

Instead of replying warmly, Mrs. Dodgett only smiled mysteriously. At that moment the maid entered, saying: "Please, ma'am, a tramp at the back door begging for clothes."

"Tell him to go away and be quick about it," said Mr. Dodgett, who was suffering from neuralgia and disappointment that his wife would not quarrel.

"Don't leave him alone in the kitchen," said Mrs. Dodgett; "he is most likely a sneak thief."

"Charitable, that remark," granted her husband.

"Yes," she replied, absently, "by the way, dear Mr. Blanche has given his wife another senkkin. I shall have to cut her, for I can't visit her any longer in my old wrap. It's one comfort, though, that she selected it herself; something is surely wrong with it." Looking anxiously at her husband, she saw a half smile on his face.

"It's a cold night for that poor wretch to be out half dead," he said. "I'll see if he is gone," she returned, and both left the room by different doors.

Soon they were both back with half pleased, half shame-faced looks.

"It's Christmas eve, after all," said he.

"Yes, we should be charitable to-day of all days."

"Mhm! I gave that poor wretch my dress suit which was too shabby to wear. I had to hunt for it, too; it was—"

"And I gave him your old overcoat; it—"

"Which overcoat?"

"The black one; you—"

"You did, eh? Well, you were too smart for once! In the pocket of that coat was concealed the money I had saved to buy a sealskin for your Christmas gift. Say, why did you hide my dress suit in your wardrobe?"

Both had risen, looking very pale.

"You got that dress suit from my wardrobe, did you? Well, it was a new one I had gotten for your Christmas gift, Silas Dodgett!"

Two minutes later Mrs. Dodgett was in strong hysterics on the hearth rug, while the meekest man in town was vainly searching for a tramp with a new dress suit and an ill-revered coat.

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