

THE ROANOKE NEWS.

ESTABLISHED IN 1866.

A NEWSPAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

Terms of Subscription--\$1.50 Per Annum

VOL. LIV.

WELDON, N. C., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1919.

NO. 33

Children Cry for Fletcher's

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WELDON, N. C.

Telling the Story of His Life



One Christmas Eve

by RALPH HAMILTON

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The shades of the pretty home were pulled down and the gloom of dusk was alleviated by one light only in the room where the mourning dentists, Harold Bruce and his wife, Laura, sat. They were awaiting the arrival of a taxicab ordered in time to reach an evening train for the South. Both were somber-faced and wearied of men. They had not spoken for some time, for it was a situation where words meant nothing. The wife never lifted her tear-stained eyes, the husband wore a set expression upon his face as though exerting the utmost will power to repress the poignant emotion which consumed him.

Without joyous shouts echoed, the sound of merry sleigh bells tinkled the air with Christmas eve fervor, and the contrast of this long-anticipated holiday presentation with what they had hoped and planned for, wrenched their souls to the point of anguish. Their lives desolated beyond repair, poignant memories ever present, they scarce dared to rest their glance upon the portraits of two smiling, happy faces looking down from a heavily framed picture, for only that morning they had received the terrible news that the originals, their only children, Don, aged six, and Rita, two years his junior, had been victims, with many others, of a disaster by cyclone and flood that had devastated the district where they had their winter home in Florida.

All they knew was that the pretty bungalow and many others, with their occupants, had been swept away, and hundreds were said to have perished, and no word had been received as to the fate of their two little ones, nor of Rhoda Marsh, who had them in charge. Rhoda Marsh had come into their thoughts almost as frequently as little Rita and her brother. Each recalled that it was a Christmas eve 16 years

Jewel of worth and constancy. Both my wife and myself realize what we owe to this poor wife who has endeavored herself to us as though she were our own daughter.

Doctor Merritt proved his expressed sentiments by very often visiting the Bruce home after that. The children loved him and he would drop in for an hour or two and play with them and talk with Rhoda and listen to her singing at the piano, for music with Rhoda was her one great passion. There never was a visit on his part that Rhoda did not greet him with a beautiful, tender flush upon her fair, expressive face, and one night her kindly benefactors indulged in playful banterage when she accompanied Doctor Merritt to the door.

"Doctor Merritt has become quite a beau—eh, Rhoda?" intimated Mr. Bruce.

"Three times in a week," spoke Mrs. Bruce. "Rhoda dear, he is a loyal chevalier."

"Please don't," pleaded Rhoda, looking serious, shy and embarrassed. "He is only a great good friend to all of us, and he has so encouraged my singing that it has made me more anxious than ever to please him."

Early in November Mrs. Bruce, the children and herself went to the Florida winter home where the family spent four months of the year. There were anticipated happy days in the pretty bungalow when Mr. Bruce should join them later on. It was just two weeks before Christmas when Mrs. Bruce decided to take a trip North and remain with her husband until the holidays, when he would be ready to accompany her to Fair Villa. It was a few days after her coming that her husband said to her: "Laura, Doctor Merritt has fairly impugned the house evenings since you went away. I met him today and told him of our plans, and he was especially pressing in his inquiries about Rhoda. I presume he will be here this evening to ask you about Rhoda," but the young physician did not subscribe as expected, and the next day the Bruces understood that he had left the city.

It was two days before Christmas when the dreadful news came of the disaster in the South. Fair Villa had been practically swept off the map; their winter home had been carried away by the raging waters. Rhoda's contained vague and distracting details. They had no reason to hope that their loved ones had escaped the general fate of those who were living among the former residents of the little inland town. They were now ready to go South and seek a trace of their two little children and of Rhoda, in whose they had so trustfully left them in charge.

"It must be the taxi," spoke Mr. Bruce, arising with a sigh from his painful reverie as the doorbell rang but he crossed the outer threshold to come face to face with Doctor Merritt. The manner and words of the latter were jarring to the bruised sensibilities of the bereaved father, for the young physician was radiant of face. His eyes suggested a fervent exaltation as he greeted Mr. Bruce with riotous embrace and waved his hand gaily to Mrs. Bruce, who had followed her husband into the hallway.

"A glad and merry Christmas to both of you!" hailed Doctor Merritt jubilantly.

"You haven't heard?" spoke Mr. Bruce in a low, reproachful tone.

"Why, what do you mean?" questioned Doctor Merritt.

"The disaster at Fair Villa—the children."

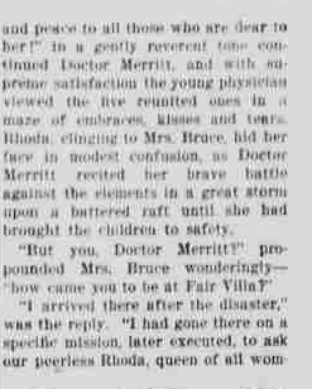
"Why, bless you!" fairly shouted the doctor—"they are right here!"

Harold Bruce wavered against the wall for support. Mrs. Bruce uttered a wild scream. Across the threshold from the porch rushed little Rita and her brother. Joy, delight, ecstasy mitigated the shock of what at first stunned the frantic parents as an appearance from the dead.

"And last, but not least, she whose mission in life seemed ever to be to bring healing and happiness, and love, and peace to all those who are dear to her!" in a gently reverent tone continued Doctor Merritt, and with supreme satisfaction the young physician viewed the life reunited ones in a maze of embraces, kisses and tears. Rhoda, clinging to Mrs. Bruce, hid her face in modest confusion, as Doctor Merritt recited her brave battle against the elements in a great storm upon a battered raft until she had brought the children to safety.

"But you, Doctor Merritt!" pro- nounced Mrs. Bruce, wonderingly—"how came you to be at Fair Villa?"

"I arrived there after the disaster," was the reply. "I had gone there on a specific mission. Later executed, to ask our peerless Rhoda, queen of all wom-



He Covered It With Kisses.

asked, to become my wife," and as Rhoda extended her hand he covered it with kisses and pressed it to his happy, happy heart.

"If there was a mistake here I would march you two promptly under it!" threatened Mrs. Bruce, immersed in thrilling joy and gratitude.

"There shall be one before Christmas morning arrives!" cried Doctor Merritt in tones that rang out like a cheer. "Come, Bruce, you and I on a hunt for Santa Claus and the choicest gift's he can bestow. Oh! nowhere in the world, and never to any others, has there come a happier, merrier Christmas than the one we shall celebrate!"



Both Were Somber-Faced and Wearied of Mien.

back when Harold Bruce had come home from the funeral of his mother, bringing with him a wistful-eyed, sad-faced wife of a girl.

"Laura," he said to his wife, "this is Rhoda Marsh, a poor orphan child whom my mother adopted, who has given her the tenderest care to the last hour of her life and was a blessing to her old age. She is left without a home. Should we give her one?"

"We should, and we shall," came the quick reply, as Mrs. Bruce gazed into the earnest, longing eyes of the girl of fourteen, and read there truth and innocence and a soulful appeal to all that was maternal and sympathizing in her nature.

It proved to be a wise and fortuitous choice. As the children came along Rhoda proved to them a true and loving sister, nurse and friend.

Then came a test of the fidelity and self-sacrifice of the girl just merging into young womanhood. Both of the children were taken down with a dangerous contagious malady. The house was quarantined. Rhoda braved the perils of infection. Day and night she was the constant attendant of Don and Rita. She found no sure a loving place in the hearts of those she had benefited, that her eyes beamed with joy and happiness whenever she was in their presence.

The physician who attended the children was Ailton Merritt. He had entered the profession the protégé of a wealthy man, and had acquired a clientele of prominence and a large income. It was when the little ones were convalescent that he had come to Mr. Bruce, who was a close personal friend.

"Bruce," he said, "I cannot find words to express my admiration and respect, yet, and something deeper, for that sweet little heroine, Rhoda, whose studious care of the children, far more than my ministrations, is responsible for their recovery."

"Yes," answered Mr. Bruce with genuine fervor in his tones, "she is a

Sleigh bells ring with merry jingle, church bells set the air a-ringing, while with there the door bell rings in a symphonied score. There's the sound of happy greeting as acquaintances are meeting; there's the thrill of Christmas festivity as the clocks tick and the children's merriment's shrieking, Phil's drum and life's not still; he makes an attempt to down but silly sounds of guns that outside roar. There's the squeak of Mollie's dolly, and the squeak of Dolly's spool, and the screams of laughter shy from this happy little four. But above all Christmas noises made by little girls and boys is one that better than all toys is more good cheer it holds in store. 'Tis the sound of mother's pickled' dings about out in the kitchen as she calls (she knows we're in'ishin') 'Come to dinner!' through the door.

Christ Is Born

by Louise F. Elmendorf

The world, late racked with pain through bloody paths, Has climbed its weary long-paths (calvary). Where millions died, as Christ that they might free, Others from wrong and black oppression's tears. Once more now through the world comes to our ears The song of all the ages, "Christ is born."

Mute tongued to notes of joy have been the bells, And only childhood and old age dared try To sing, so near the threatening battle sky. The song that told, though dulled by shrieking shells Whose bursting turned a thousand homes to hells, The wonder of the ages, "Christ is born."

Our faith in God has brought to us the good; War-weary lands have peace on earth again; And in the scarred and fire-purged hearts of men, Made sweet and strong by suffering of the soul, Through travail of a world once more made whole. Anew in human hearts the Christ is born.

Dear God, the Christmas songs are fraught with prayer That Thou wilt be with those whose tears still pay That we may have the glory of this day; That men may live their thanks, that lives may bear Eternal witness for Thee, everywhere Proclaiming that in us the Christ is born.

Changed His Mind. Doris—I thought you and George were going skating? Marjorie—So we were, but when he saw I had my hat trimmed with mistletoe he asked me to go for a walk.

Is There a Santa Claus?

Classic Answer of a New York Journalist Affirming a Little Girl's Belief

ONE of the finest things ever written about Christmas was the editorial printed 20 years ago by the New York Sun in answer to the earnest appeal of a little New York girl to be told whether Santa Claus really exists. Its author, Frank P. Church, was an accomplished journalist and wrote much on many subjects, but his fame will rest chiefly on this beautiful setting forth of an eternal truth. With Dr. Clement Clarke Moore's "A Visit From St. Nicholas," it is one of the great classics of the Christmas season.

The answer to the eternal question as printed in the Sun follows:

"We take pleasure in answering at once, and thus prominently, the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of the Sun:

"Dear Editor—I am eight years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in the Sun it's so. Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?'"

"WILMUNA O'BANLON, "115 West Ninety-first Street."

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours men is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be like a gross, would not be without it."

"There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance, to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

"Not believe in Santa Claus? You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men



A Greeting

Take a Christmas greeting simple, sweet and true, May your joys be many And your griefs be few.

Should Be Quarantined.

Many physicians believe that anyone who has a bad cold should be completely isolated to prevent other members of the family and associates from contracting the disease, as colds are about as catching as measles. One thing sure the sooner one risks himself of a cold the less the danger, and you will look a good while before you find a better medicine than Chamberlain's Cough Remedy to aid you in curing a cold.

Chamberlain's Tablets

These tablets are intended especially for indigestion and constipation. They tone up the stomach and enable it to perform its functions naturally. They act generally on the liver and bowels to a healthy condition. When you feel dull, sluggish and constipated give them a trial. You are certain to be pleased with their effect.

"Who Said There Ain't No Santa?"



Do You Enjoy Your Meals?

If you do not enjoy your meals your digestion is faulty. Eat moderately, especially of meats, masticate your food thoroughly. Let 5 hours elapse between meals and take one of Chamberlain's Tablets immediately after supper and you will soon find your meals to be a real pleasure.

CASTORIA

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