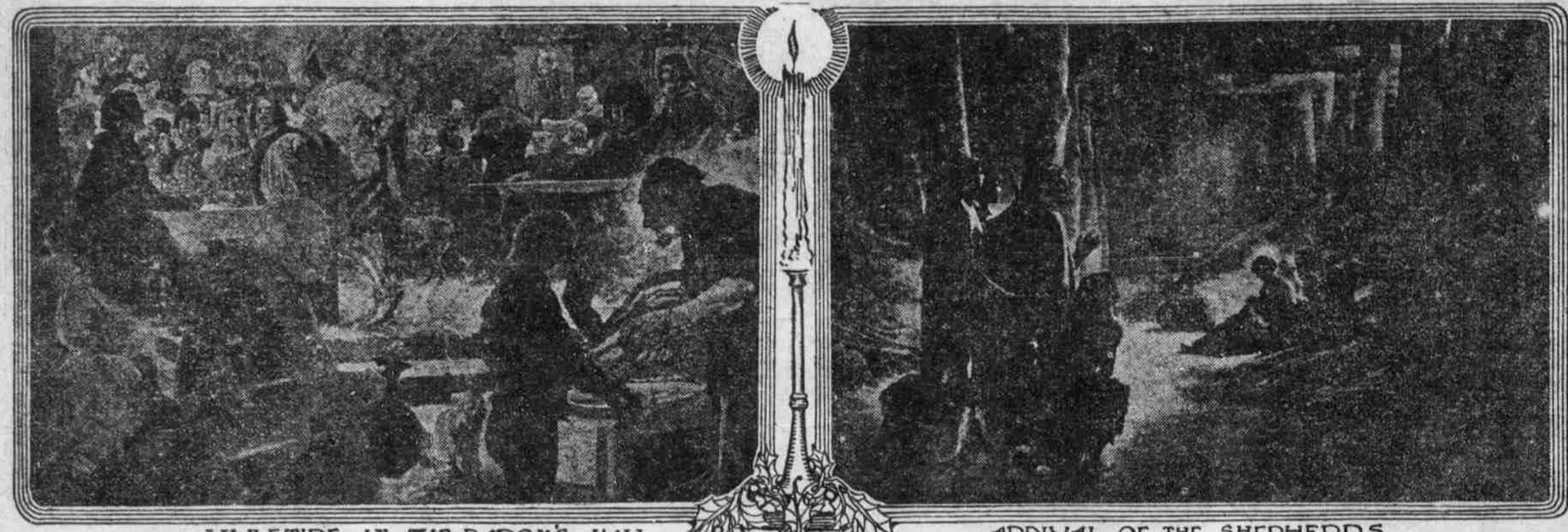


# How Christmas Grew to be what it is Today

Charles Phillips

# Waiting for the Messiah and a New Christmas.

Henry Lytton



YULETIDE IN THE BARON'S HALL

ARRIVAL OF THE SHEPHERDS

**G**UNGEET the prophet held up his hand.

A sudden cry smote the chilly air, the red edge of the sun creeping behind the snow cap of Everest seemed to the multitude a reflection on the scythe which Gungeet held in his hand, reddened with the blood of the Ranees' first born, which had been offered as a propitiatory sacrifice to the Sun God. It was mid-winter—the winter solstice—and the sun rays were so feeble that the sun worshippers were sore afraid that unless the blood of a royal prince was shed for absorption by their weakening god the world would pass into darkness and all would die.

As the sun rose higher in the heavens the multitude of worshippers exchanged gifts, and on the crags and high places of the Mount of Ghoom, which is above Darjiling, in the Himalayas, goats were sacrificed to the sun god, who was hailed by the multitude as a newborn babe, refreshed and renewed with the blood of their princeling offering.

For thousands of years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth this drama was enacted in the mountains of India and the tradition was carried by the merchants into Persia, Egypt and China to become later part of the Pagan saturnalia of the Romans and the Druids.

For two centuries of the Christian era there is no indisputable evidence of any celebration of Christ's birth. The primitive Christians, like sensible opportunists, made fit the festival of the "Light of All Nations," borrowing from the east, the birthplace of all religions, the birthday of the sun god, which was held by the Romans (on the day when light got the better of darkness, and the days began to get longer) as a great festival, in celebration of "the birthday of the unconquered sun."

The first historical account of the celebration of Christmas day is connected with the persecutor, Diocletian, who, when holding court at Nicomedia, about 300 A. D., on learning that a multitude of Christians were assembled in the city to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, ordered the church doors to be closed and the building to be set ablaze, so that all the worshippers perished in the flames. Diocletian was possessed of the most terrible of all heresies, that moral forces can be put down by physical ones, Christianity by fire and sword, but his successor, Julian, in the next generation, when Diocletian had done his worst, and done it thoroughly, had to admit that all was in vain. He may not, in fact, have said, "Thou hast conquered, Oh, Gallilean!" though Julian proved it.

Early in the thirteenth century the Christian church sanctioned feasting on Christmas day by removing the obligation of observing abstinence whenever that festival should fall on a Friday. By abstinence is meant that flesh meat shall not be indulged in, and as every Friday throughout the year was a day specially marked for such mortification, Christians must, indeed, have been somewhat cheerless when the feast was in reality more than a fast by reason of its occurrence on a Friday. That, however, is quite forgotten by present-day observers; and for close on 700 years

A Christmas Tableau.

Many years ago, says an old legend, there lived in a mysterious region a band of Christian monks whose life duty it was to plant seeds and grow crops of toys for Santa Claus to distribute. These monks dressed in white gowns and wore Christmas wreaths about their heads.

From this tradition a Christmas pantomime could be devised. A clever person can make many additions. Arrange stage as a beautiful garden, and place small Christmas trees here and there. On these trees dolls and other toys appear to be growing. While music is played softly the curtain rises, disclosing the monks working in the garden. In the distance is heard the muffled sound of sleigh bells. Santa Claus enters, bows reverently to the monks, shows his empty pack, which they slowly fill from the laden trees.

The music continues, the curtain falls, then rises, disclosing Santa Claus only, who distributes the gifts to the children of the Sunday school.

The monks can be personated by older boys or girls.

Christmas day has been observed by even the most piously inclined as the occasion for indulging in good cheer.

In "Merry England" the festival is made a thoroughly enjoyable one, though the days have changed somewhat since Dickens rode through the streets of London and told of the scenes of Christmas joy he witnessed in the lamplit streets. Nowadays electricity has taken the place of gas and lamplight, and instead of the slow, wheezy horse vehicles of Dickens' day the streets of Merry England are traversed by electric and oil motor carriages. But the good, old-fashioned dinner prevails, and from king to commoner all go to the place each calls home to eat well-made soup, goose or turkey, potatoes, sprouts, mince pies and Christmas pudding.

"Stille Nache, heilige nacht," has been sung in Germany for many untold Christmases beneath the illuminated pine tree, and its population of sixty-five millions will enjoy their gingerbread and honey cakes.

In Denmark Christmas is a most important and beautiful festival. Despite all other changes, it preserves its old character, and is universally celebrated among rich and poor.

In Russia the spirit of St. Nicholas is rampant, and the streets of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Riga and other centers are alive with silvery-belled drochias, all bearing happy muscovites exchanging calls and bearing each other presents, which are opened at sweet-laden tables shrouded in vapor from the steaming samovars.

In New York City there will be millions of conspiracies to surprise the children, for with our polyglot peoples no nation realizes to the extent the United States does the inner meaning for the world of the festivals of the Christ child. Here, more than anywhere else in the world, the spirit of Christmas invites our own happiness in seeking that of others, and in the accomplishment of good will toward men we know we yearly replant the rose that blossomed in the snow of the first Christmas night.

**T**HE idea of a new coming of Christ today is an influence, if not an obsession with countless millions of people in all parts of the world.

With all Christians it is a thrilling thought, or a devout wish. With some it is a faith and a prophecy. The Adventists, under their various denominations—Evangelical, Advent Christians, Seventh Day, Life and Advent Union and others—look for Christ's return at a nearly date within the present age, according to the same Hebrew prophecies which forecast his birth at Bethlehem of Judea. There are in the United States alone 2,544 Adventist churches, with an aggregate of 100,000 communicants.

The Jews expect a Messiah yet to come. The Behaists, or "Truth-Knowers," whose cult, a modern offshoot of Mohammedanism, has made remarkable headway in Europe and America during the past decade or two, believe that the re-incarnation of the Master has already taken place in our time. Their priests and propagandists declare it their mission to make known to the world the glad tidings that Beha Ullah, the head of their faith, who dwells in the flesh at Acre in Syria, is none other than Jesus Christ re-incarnated and come again to earth in fulfillment of the ancient prophecies.

The Theosophists, whose "Universal Brotherhood" was founded by Mme. Blavatsky in 1875, with headquarters at Adyar, Madras, India, believe the incarnate appearance of Christ in this world to be imminent at the present moment. They believe that the Jesus of our faith, even now incarnate but not manifested to man, will take a new body, manifest himself visibly and lead mankind in the evolution of a higher civilization, an epoch of Christian socialism in which wisdom and compassion will make a true brotherhood of man at a time

within the lives of the younger people of the present generation.

The above enumeration includes only a few of the world-wide sects and creeds that either look for a new birth of Christ, or believe that such a reincarnation has already, and recently, taken place. The idea, more or less definitely formulated, animates an incalculable number of smaller communities and individuals not taken account of here.

And it is a significant fact that, however widely at variance their theories and grounds of faith may be, all these millions of Adventists meet on common ground in the popular belief that this present age reproduces, in the world's cycles, the Augustan age of old Rome, with its over-ripe and decadent civilization and accompanying spiritual unrest.

The earthly scene is set for some new and awesome act in the drama of Eternity.

The Scriptures of old and the signs of the times today, thoughtful men point out, alike warn us that the hour of fate is at hand. Christians have done their best and their worst to the Church of God for now over eighteen centuries, and she stands today a mournful exhibition of their devastating work. Broken and divided into hundreds of warring sects, she no longer hears the voice that inspired the early church. Truly it is time to expect that the Lord will himself arise and come to rebuild the spiritual Zion and restore the waste places of the spiritual Jerusalem. Although we "know not the day or the hour," yet the time when the Lord's coming is at hand is not altogether hidden from us. The signs which are to precede and usher in his coming are plainly and abundantly set forth in Scripture, and we are exhorted to watch for them and know that the time is near. All these predicted signs in the social, moral, political, civil, ecclesiastical and spiritual spheres, declare the Adventists, are now either fulfilled or fulfilling.

All the ecclesiastical prophecies of Christ's second coming rest on the same foundation—namely, the fulfillment of previous Biblical prophecies and the assumption that this indicates further fulfillments yet to come. It is claimed that inasmuch as the birth of Christ was foretold (Isaiah vii, 14), and that the birth should take place in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah v, 2), and the several other prophecies concerning a Messiah (Isaiah liii, 8-9; Psalms xvi, 10), all came to pass precisely at the time and in the manner prescribed, that the fourth prophecy, relating to the second appearance of the Messiah, demands expectant belief.

In the New Testament the third and fourth chapters of Second Timothy and the twenty-fourth of St. Matthew are regarded by many as forecasting the present condition of Christendom. We are living in the divided state of the decadent Roman Empire. The nations are torn with strife and contention, and are supporting millions of men in arms in anticipation of vast wars in the near future. Such was the condition of the world at the time of Christ's first coming. "In the last days, perilous times shall come;" men were to depart from the faith and go in devious ways. Atheism, infidelity, socialism and anarchy have risen in a great wave that is eating at the very foundations of our religious, political and social life.

In the way of physical portents it is estimated that there have been more earthquakes within the last century or so than in all previous times in the recorded history of the world.

What do these signs of the times, heavenly and earthly phenomena, political and religious upheavals, mean? To the Adventists they mean that Christ is coming again, and soon.

## The Mistletoe.

Some of the names by which this plant was called are "misselden," or more commonly, "missel."

This plant was venerated by the pagans of Greece and Rome. There is reference to the mistletoe in the works of Virgil, in the Edda and in Celtic legends.

Druids collected it with great solemnity. The Prince of Druids cut it with a golden sickle.

Ancient Britons revered only that mistletoe which grew up on the oak trees.

The white berries which bring a blush to the fortunate maiden's cheek, give the quick mirror the right to kiss any person caught under the mistletoe bough. Its charm is against the evils of a lonely, single life.

## An Appeal to Santa Claus



Hi there, Mister Santa Claus,  
Hiking through the sky,  
Careful lest you break the laws  
Speeding swiftly by.  
Better give your car a rest  
In its onward flight,  
Come down here and be my guest  
Just for Christmas night.

I'll show you a thing or two  
You'll do well to see;  
Little people—not a few—  
Waiting wistfully;  
Hoping you will not forget  
They are waiting there,  
Doomed, I fear, but to regret  
In the frosty air.

Cheery lot of little souls  
You would find them all  
If, in seeking out your goals,  
You should pause to call.  
There they stand all in a row,  
Wondering what's the hitch;  
Wondering why it is you go  
Solely 'mongst the rich.

They would deem at bit of cheer,  
Tiny though it be,  
Sign that, when the Yule is here  
With its songs of glee.  
They were not forgotten; sign  
Sent them from above  
They were heirs to a divine  
Thoughtfulness and Love.

Leave the wealthy to their own!  
They don't need your care.  
Let your loving smile atone  
For the cupboard bare.  
Seek the children of the poor,  
Make their need your cause,  
And you'll make your wreaths secure,  
Mister Santa Claus.  
—John Kendrick Bangs in Harper's Weekly.



## A FEDERAL HEALTH BOARD.

It is gratifying to note that the bill for the creation of a federal health board will not be allowed to pass without a protest. Reports of organized resistance come from all parts of the country, and it may be that the opposition will soon be sufficiently solidified to defeat a project that promises infinite mischief for the community, and suffering and injustice for the individual.

The proposal is based upon those specious claims that are notoriously hard to controvert. If a federal health board were to confine its activities to the promulgation of salutary advice upon hygienic matters, to the abatement of quackery, and to the purity of drugs, it might be possible to say much in its favor, although it would still be difficult to say that such an organization is needed. But we know that it will attempt to do far more than this, seeing that its adherents have loudly proclaimed their intentions. Indeed, there is no secrecy about them. It is confidently expected that the board will consist of advocates of one school of medicine only and that the methods of that school will be not only recommended, but enforced upon the nation. Indeed a board that was in any way representative of the medical profession as a whole would be stultified by its own disagreements. Outside the domain of simple hygiene, for which we need no federal board at all, there is no single point of medical practice upon which allopaths, homeopaths, eclectics and osteopaths could be in unison. Any board that could be devised by the wit of man must be composed of representatives of one school only, and this means that all other schools are branded as of an inferior caste, even though nothing worse happened to them. And something worse would happen to them. If we are to establish a school of medicine, if we are to assert that the government of the United States favors one variety of practice more than others, why not establish also a sect of religion and bestow special authorities upon Baptists, Methodists and Episcopalians? An established school of religious conjecture seems somewhat less objectionable than an established sect of pseudo-scientific conjecture.

Those who suppose that a federal board of health would have no concern with individual rights are likely to find themselves undeceived. It is for the purpose of interfering with individual rights that the proposal has been made. We need no special knowledge of conditions to be aware that what may be called unorthodox methods of healing have made sad inroads into the orthodox. Homeopathy claims a vast number of adherents who are just as well educated and just as intelligent as those who adhere to the older school. Osteopathy, eclecticism, and half a dozen other methods of practice are certainly not losing ground. Beyond them is the vast and increasing army of those who may be classed under the general and vague name of mental healers. Those who are addicted to any of these forms of unorthodoxy need have no doubt as to the purposes of the federal health board. Those purposes are to make it difficult for them to follow their particular fads and fancies, to lead them, and if necessary to drive them, from medical unorthodoxy to medical orthodoxy.

Now the Argonaut holds no brief for any of the excesses and the superstitions connected with the care of the body in which this age is so rife. But it does feel concerned for the preservation of human liberty and for the rights of the individual to doctor himself in any way he pleases so long as he does not indubitably threaten the health of the community. He may take large doses or small ones, or no doses at all; he may be massaged, anointed with oil, or prayed over, just as the whim of the moment may dictate, and probably it makes no particle of difference which he does. But he has the right to choose, just as he chooses the color of his necktie or the character of his underclothing. It is not a matter in which any wise government will seek to interfere. This is precisely the liberty that the health board intends to take from him. Orthodox medicine, conscious of its losses, is trying to buttress itself by federal statute, to exalt allopathy to the status of a privileged caste, and to create an established school of medicine just as some other countries have allowed themselves to create an established school of religion. It is for the common sense of the community to rebuke that effort and to repel an unwarranted invasion upon elementary human rights.—San Francisco Argonaut.

## A Drain of the Company.

On his way home from the theater, where he had seen a performance of "Othello," Bobby was unusually quiet. "Didn't you enjoy the play," his grandfather asked "last."

"Oh, yes, very much," replied Bobby. "But, grandpapa, there's one thing I don't quite understand. Does the black man kill a lady every night?"—Youth's Companion.

## Natural Deduction.

"Papa, are lawyers always bad-tempered?"

"No, daughter; why do you ask that?"

"Because I read so much in the papers about their cross-examinations."

## Kindred Spirits.

"Lady," said Plodding Pete, "I ain't a square meal in two days."

"Well," said the resolute woman, as she turned the dog loose, "neither has Towser, so I know you'll excuse him."