

The Mountaineer

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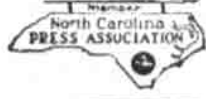
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1939

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Luke 2:8-16

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT

It is not merely because men forget the meaning of Christmas night that they obscure it and overlay it with pomp and ceremonies. It is because human hearts have not opened to take in the greatness of it.

Of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we know little. We know that she must have had a concept of God which transcended that of her contemporaries; and we know that she was akin to her cousin Elisabeth, could confide in her, and tell her something of her great vision of the fatherhood of God, tell her of the Saviour that was coming to bless and save the world.

But of nearly all else in regard to Mary we are ignorant. We see, for a moment, flashed across the page of history, the gem-like story; we see the mother raising the babe in her arms to show the wondering shepherds; and then we see her fade into silence and into obscurity, emerging only a few times into the blazing radiance surrounding her son.

Yet it is this trembling picture that holds our imaginations at Christmas-time. However little men may understand of the happenings on that Christmas night, they feel that here is something greater than themselves. Their hearts begin to melt a little in compassion for suffering; they forget, even if only for a moment, their selfishness, their persecution of others, their hardness; they get a glimpse of some holy world into which they have stumblingly strayed.

There in that dark stable, with the gentle animals shifting quietly in their rude stalls amongst the straw, the mother's vision of God as the Father of man was translated into terms computable by mankind.

What is our lesson today? Is it that only in gentleness and affection can we reach the peace of that night? "On earth peace," sang the angels; and on earth peace came, as it comes today, to any who will receive it. The road to peace is not easy. Even Mary, traveling the long rough road from Nazareth to Bethlehem, could not have found it easy; but her vision sustained her. We can see the light of that journey and follow it.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

The first Christmas was heralded with songs from the lips of angels. Since that time, music has played an important part in the observance of the occasion, and the annual community sing here Sunday is in keeping with that blessed event of 1940 years ago.

LETTERS TO SANTA CLAUS

The hardest task of the year for the staff of The Mountaineer is handling and publishing hundreds and hundreds of letters to Santa Claus.

Although a difficult undertaking, the entire force gets a thrill out of the work, and would not miss it for anything.

Many of the letters have to be pored over. Keen and understanding eyes have to decode many of them, and often, several people pass on one word before it goes into cold type.

Nothing instills in an adult the true spirit of Christmas quicker than a child, and the thoughts of a child in a letter to Santa Claus are so real, so genuine, that it rekindles the spark of childhood enthusiasm in any of us.

The entire force of this newspaper enjoys handling the hundreds of letters, and if you are one who finds it difficult to get the spirit of Christmas, we will gladly call you in about the first of next December, and share with you the joys we get in acting as Santa's secretary.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

There was a trumpet in the heavens and the star burned red upon the road to Damascus. But in the stable the child lay like another, small and red, without the golden halo or glory or any other mark of his royalty upon him, and whimpering a little as the cock hailed in the lonely dawn. The animals in the adjoining stalls stamped and sighed, quite undiminful of their nearness to the babe. The mother slept, with no other beatitude upon her face but the tired peace and gladness of those who have given birth. Watching beside them, the father nodded. And the shepherds who trudged in from the fields were very tired men, haggard and unkept. Weary, too, and travel-stained were the three old men who came riding in from the east, for the road from Medea is a very long road, and travel by camel is slow and dusty travel.

In some such fashion, at least, we like to think of the scene. Men have delighted for two thousand years to exalt the kingly state of the Child and the Man, to set Him about with pageantry and purple and fine linen. And with that we have no quarrel, for this story is a story of a thousand facets—a sort of figuration of all the yearning and striving for beauty in the spirit of man. But before everything else it is the story of the beauty of the simple and the humble—the essential marvel and glory of the common life of our humanity. And the day we celebrate as His birthday is before everything else the day upon which we fall back most fully into the simple and humble spirit and give ourselves up to the homely, gentle sentiments which bind us together.

Many streams of tradition come together in this day, indeed. Men of the western world celebrate it or some day approximate to it for long centuries before the Child was born—in gladness of the fact that the sun was returning again from the south and that our common mother, the earth, was about to enter once more upon the cycle of Spring and Summer and Autumn, of flowering and ripening and harvest. And though we have forgotten much of that, particularly we who dwell in cities, yet something of the old aboriginal gladness for the returning miracle perhaps still rises up from the secret depths of our minds to make a part of our sentiment on the day.

But the day is most of all the day of childhood—of the breathless, believing wonder of the small ones for whom all things are possible. And our pleasure in their pleasure and our remembering of our own childhood—all the Christmases we have known. The smiling pleasure of our mothers and fathers before us, and the smiling pleasure of all the fathers and mothers everywhere.

And all the gentle, kindly, everyday services all the tired hands of the world continually render to those who come after them. The things that make us one with another and with the holy family in the stable that long ago morning.

SOME "DON'TS" FOR A SAFE CHRISTMAS

Here are a few "don'ts" for a safe and Merry Christmas recommended by safety authorities:

Don't give small children toys involving alcohol, kerosene or gasoline engines. They may tip over and set the house on fire.

Don't permit small children to run electrical toys without the supervision of an adult.

Don't wear inflammable costumes, especially Santa Claus beards, without fireproofing them.

Don't use inflammable ornaments and evergreen decorations together.

Don't use candles or light extra fires, without being extremely careful, especially with candles.

Don't permit small children to use toy movie projectors without using safety film which burns slowly.



Those who edit, write, print and mail The Mountaineer for the fifty-three issues a year, send individual greetings to our growing list of readers; and running true to form the force uses "shop talk" to express themselves.

W. Curtis Russ, Editor—"To the readers and advertisers of The Waynesville Mountaineer—I send my heartiest wishes, along with my appreciation for your cooperation during the past year. May the true spirit of Christmas touch you and yours, and bring to you that deep satisfaction that comes at this season from the joy of making others happy.

J. T. Bridges, linotype operator—"For 48 years I have been setting type for The Mountaineer. For 48 Holiday Seasons I have set type Wishing You A Merry Christmas, and while thoughts and the words are old, the feeling is heartfelt when I say I hope this Yuletide Season will be your very happiest."

Hilda Way Gwyn, Associate Editor—"May this Christmas be a 'special edition' of happiness for you and may the good things that come your way in the year ahead 'make headline news' in your life."

Roy Blackwell, compositor—"I trust that when everything is 'assembled' that you will find joy and merriment in every 'column' of the year."

Corinne Wagenfeld, Bookkeeper and proof reader—"May this Christmas bring untold happiness, with nothing but the decorations in 'the red' and may the 'copy' of your Yuletide need no 'corrections'."

Winston Davis, pressman—"May your 'impression' of the Holiday Season be neither too 'dark' nor too 'light' but will come through with a 'gloss' and the 'right side up'."

M. T. Bridges, foreman of mechanical department—"I trust that everything is 'all set' for a joyous Christmas Season, and that good luck, good fortune and good health will run as smooth as our new big press, and that you'll never have a 'deadline' for much happiness."

Ralph Price, stertype—"As I 'cast' about for an expression for this season, I would have the joys 'high' enough and throughout the year the surface would be 'smooth'."

Adge Smyre, janitor—"I am making a 'clean-sweep' in wishing for you lots of good luck and the best kind of Christmas."

The Christmas Days Of A Haywood Boy

By TOM P. JIMISON
 The Charlotte News

Santa Claus is powerful real to me. I first knew him back in the Haywood hills, up where the heavenly planets get so friendly with earth that the stars seem to get tangled in the branches of the trees on the summits of Big Balsam, Crabtree Bald, Rock Face and Cove Creek Mountains. But I have also found Saint Nick far up in the great Rockies of the Northwest, on the plains of Texas, in the swamps of the deep South, and down by the surging sea. He is swift as light, as benign as the sun, as universal as love. He is found wherever goodwill is found.

From away back yander, in fact, ever since I quit wear'n' hippin's, I have hung my sock in the chimney jamb on the night before Christmas to receive the bounty of good St. Nick. And nary a time has he failed me. I mind that there was one Christmas back yander in the happy hitherto when my woolen socks were so perforated with holes that they wouldn't have held an orange. In fact I was forced to wear toe-rags (a device unknown and unused by this pert generation) to keep my pedal extremities from getting frostbitten. Well, I jes' driv' a nail in the edge of the fireboard and tied up one of my brogans. Next morning it had in it the customary orange, apple and four sticks of striped candy. And hard by was a nickle package of firecrackers with which to make merry.

Of course that all seems pitiful small to the youngsters of today, to the urchins who gets sleds, wagons, electric trains, skates, and even automobiles. But, shucks, I had no need of sich largesse. Ma made plenty of sweet cakes and pies, cooked up some domineckers, and had vittles which would tempt the palate of a king. Then I had calves to break, colts to ride, a gun to shoot, and game roosters to fight. The elders had a few swigs of peartenin', and Christmas really meant sump'n.

"Christmas gift" was the customary greet-

ing in Haywood, and still is. We exchanged simple gifts, but neither for show nor for hope of reward did we do this. It was for the sheer joy of the thing. Santa Claus, by his benevolence in fetching us a few simple presents from his store in the frozen North, made us all feel kindly toward the whole world. Any unfortunate family in the community was deluged with backbones and spareribs, fruit and candy, middlin' meat for seasoning garden sass, and the head of the family was given a few swigs of good mountain rattlesnake milk to make him feel rich and important. Them was great times, brethren.

Yes, 'tis Christmas up in the Great Smokies, and the youngsters are a-havin' a heap of fun. Some of the oldsters will have headaches and some of the young 'uns will have the belly-ache from too much imbibing and too much gormandizing, but, thunderation, Christmas comes but once a year. And regardless of toddies and eggnogs, made of peartenin' which was manufactured from sunkist apples and homegrown corn, and biled in a copper still away back in the lonesome coves where the whing-whangs flap their phosphorescent wings while whangdoodles mourn for their firstborn, when the shadows of eventide have grown into black night, paterfamilias will call the members of the household about the hearth where roars a great log fire, will read again the story of the Babe in the manger, and will reverently and sincerely ask that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob guard the home and guide their own stumbling feet. For up there in the big hills they have seen His star in the East.

Yea, brethren, I believe in Santa Claus, and the pair of socks that I borrowed from a friend hang in the chimney corner as I pen these lines. Santa will fill 'em, and I shall keep the faith which I learned as early as I learned, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Both were learned at my mother's knee, and she was always right. Christmas gift!

The Voice OF THE People

(Continued from page 1)

state of excitement, that on this day I can see one of Claus' legs (that I saw so often in my imagination) as he climbed up the chimney. I went back to report. Sister was so sure that she decided to get up and have a peep, but she waked the who slept in the room, and tumbled out of bed, and went to quiet down for the rest of the night."

Mrs. W. L. McCracken—"Member getting up in the night after Santa Claus had 'come gone' and finding my way to the mantel piece, where the stockings were hung. I knew the position of my stocking, and crackle and feel of the packages in the stockings were a great thrill. I crept but I was satisfied that Santa Claus really come."

L. M. Richeson—"My first collection of Christmas was taken about four years ago. I took part in a Sunday School Christmas program and on Santa Claus, who arrived just before the exercises, I got so that I forgot the piece I was to say."

Mrs. E. J. Robeson—"The first Christmas I remember with first recollection with Christmas I think of the happiness of Christmas stockings which were filled with small inexpensive gifts. I recall that old Uncle, a former slave, came to the house as he did to some other in the family, and fired off what he called a Christmas gun. He always gave a toast, 'Happy may you live, may you prosper, and when die, Heaven be your dwelling.' I recall quite clearly that the Christmas I can remember Santa Claus brought me a china doll which my brother Nathan had broken with a hammer. I took the hammer and broke the doll's head and was grieved to tears over it."

Dr. R. P. Walker—"The first recollection I have of Christmas is my father visiting my mother and me the first thing after we got up bed, before breakfast."

Fred Yearout—"The first I can remember about Christmas is going to town to see Santa Claus. He was much larger than he is today. I remember he picked me up and gave me a pound of horhound stick candy, a ular brand of the day."

Hester Anne Withers—"My first recollection is that everything was ropy and peeping through banister I remember seeing candles, and everything glowing and exciting."

Alvin Ward—"I remember a knife—absolutely the finest in the world—two hours before Santa Claus had brought it to me."

Elizabeth Henry—"My first collection of Christmas was not written. I was afraid to write. I did not write my letter that Santa Claus would take to our house."

Mrs. J. C. Rose—"I remember looking up at the stars in the night sky from my bedroom window and wondering if Santa could see the same stars. I had a china doll that Santa brought me, and how much she gave me after Christmas. My older sister dressed me."

Mrs. Harry Roth—"I think the first recollection is of my father full of sugar plums, stick candy and an orange. It was the stockings I had out over the fire. I had any presents I don't remember them, it was the sugar that impressed me so much."

W. C. Allen—"My first recollection of Christmas was a dreary one if I remember correctly. I was four years old. Christmas morning about 11 o'clock, dark and a cold falling. I ran out doors to see if I could see old Santa Claus. I was in his chariot, being tied up in his harness, and away for 'they' had told me he was climbing up the chimney. There was a pond of water at the back door. I forgot about the water and plunged into it. I was wet all over. I got back into the house in time to dry off before the sock with Santa Claus was handed me."