

The Polk County News.

Three Cents the Copy.

INDEPENDENCE IN ALL THINGS.

Subscription Price, \$1.00 Per Year in Advance.

VOL. XIV.

COLUMBUS, N. C., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1908.

NO. 33.

THE CHRIST CHILD'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

By MAY C. RINGWOLT.

HE, with her sweet young enthusiasm, told them of the first Christmas of the Christ Child—cradled in the manger because there was no room in the inn; of the Christmas carol of peace and good will sung by the angels to the shepherds watching their flocks by night.



Clarice's face was rapt; her eyes shone. Of all the teachers in the Sunday-school, none was so lovely as her own Miss Maud. She was certain that the Christmas angels had the same shining yellow hair. Did they

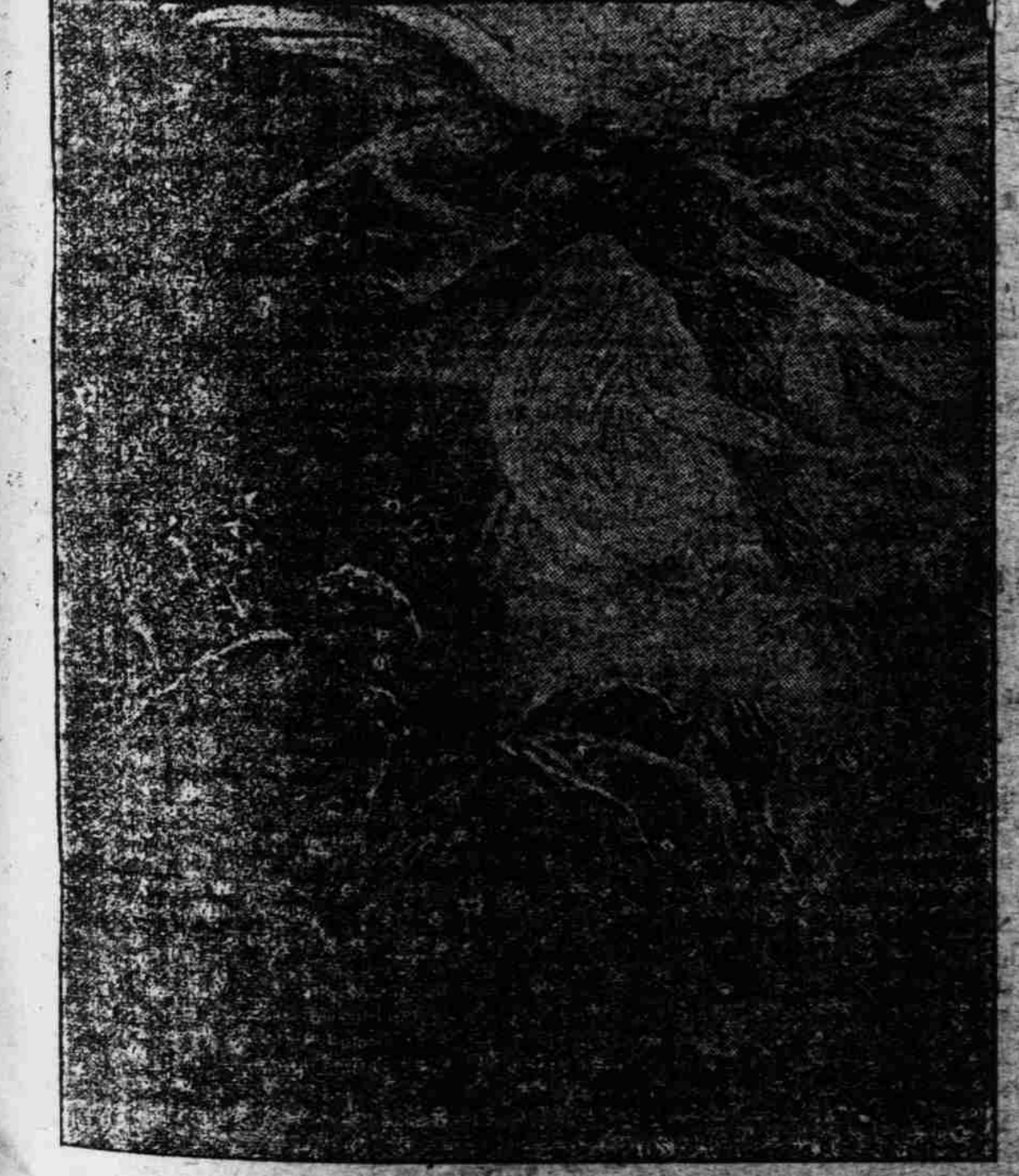


wear those fascinating gold hairpins, too? One was slipping out from the soft tuff over Miss Maud's left ear. If only she dared tell her! But that morning she had asked the wistful privilege of holding Miss Maud's muff—a rich sable with a beautiful bunch of violets fastened to it—and there was no courage left for further intimate speech. Suddenly the spell was broken, and Clarice turned with angry jerk from the object of her worship, and fiercely scowled at an inoffensive little girl seated beside her.

"Excuse me," meekly apologized Agnes, the new scholar.

Clarice drew her light blue silk skirts away from the dingy brown cashmere touching them; held herself very straight; and, with a superb dignity, sniffed the violets on the muff. "And now, my dears," said Miss Maud, "as you know, Wednesday will be another birthday of the Christ Child, and who wants every one here to give him a present—just as you would give a present to your own little brother on his birthday at home." She smiled radiantly. "Do you wonder how you can do that when the Christ Child has become a King in Heaven? I'll tell you. He left in his place all the poor little girls and boys in this big world, and told us that in giving to them we give to Him. Not far away is a great hos-

THE ANGEL AND THE SHEPHERDS.



And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.

Albert Edelheit.

ing what a lucky girl she was to have two lively legs, and a straight strong back.

Agnes remembered the time, before dear father's death, when they lived in a cunning cottage of their own on a pretty avenue, but now mother said she had only one room at the top of a gloomy house on a forlorn back street. Still, as her feet clattered up the dark, uncarpeted stairs, her heart was full of happiness because she had reached home at last—for even one room is home when mother is there.

"Oh, mother," exclaimed Agnes, "I've so much to tell you!" And cuddled in mother's lap, an arm about her neck, a hand patting her cheek, Agnes sweetly prattled of the Christ Child of old, and how His birthday was to be kept by giving presents to poor, sick little children left in His place. "And, mother," she cried, "I'm going to give a doll just like my own dear Peggy! Do you think mother dear—if I sewed, too, you know—you could get the dollie dressed in time?"

The smile faded from mother's lips, and the arm about her girlie trembled. "My dear little Agnes," she murmured, with a catch in her voice, "mother is so sorry to disappoint you." She paused, then bravely went on. "Agnes has grown to be such a little woman that mother is going to explain everything to her. You know, dear, for three whole weeks mother had no work to do."

"Yes," chimed in Agnes, gaily, "and it was just beautiful! We took long walks, and, in the evening, instead of the stupid sewing, you told me the loveliest stories!"

"But, love," explained mother, with a sad smile, "when there is no work there is no pay—no money to buy



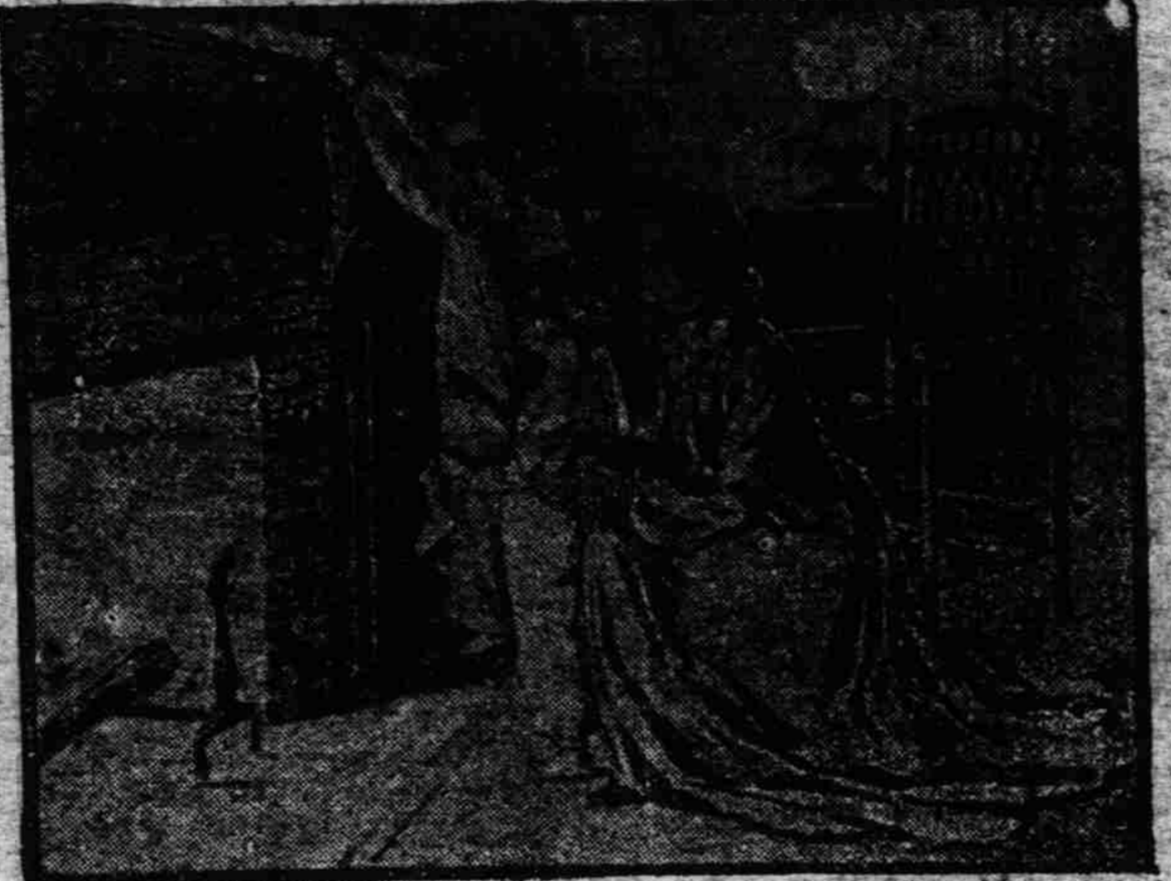
The door softly opened, and a little brown shadow of a girl with a small pink object hugged to her breast slipped timidly in. For a moment Agnes stood dazed, as if she had suddenly entered fairyland, for the bare walls of the room were festooned with heavy ropes of Christmas greens, the shades at the windows were drawn, and all the chandeliers brilliantly lighted, while above the awaiting manger shone a glorious electric star. Then, ashamed of being so late, she hurriedly tiptoed to her place, the vacant seat beside Clarice.

Clarice met her with a cold stare, but the gaze of Agnes' eyes never reached the unkind little girl's face, for it rested in fascinated awe upon a vision of beauty in Clarice's arms. It was a doll such as fairies might dream of. She had dark, clustering curls, and magnificent brown eyes. Her cheeks glowed with color, and there was the cunningest dimple in her round chin. She was dressed in claret velvet trimmed in white silk, and wore a claret velvet poke bonnet with white silk strings and an exquisite white plume gracefully touching the brown curls on the right side. And best of all, she had a necklace of gold beads, and gold bead bracelets dangling over her hands.

"Oh," murmured Agnes, "won't your little hospital girl be pleased?"

"My little hospital girl!" scornfully whispered back Clarice. "You don't suppose I'd give my best doll away! Here's my present!"—she held

HANGING THE STOCKING.



anything to eat nor coal to keep us warm.

"We ate every day, though, mother dear, and most generally always we had a fire."

"Yes, dear, because a kind man let us have all that we needed, and trusted mother to pay for it when she got work again. So, you see, Agnes, the money that mother is making now does not really belong to us, but every cent must go to pay our debts."

A small head solemnly nodded. "It hurts mother very much not to give her darling any Christmas toys nor let her girlie's kind heart have its wish about the dollie for the poor sick little child at the hospital, but Agnes will try to be a good little girl about it, won't she?"

The arms about mother's neck tightened their hold, but Agnes' mouth twitched, and she had to blink very hard to keep back the tears. If she had no present to lay in the Christmas manger, how would the Christ Child know that she loved Him? "Of course," she argued to herself, "I could explain in my prayers that I had nothing to give."

But had she nothing? Her face suddenly crimsoned, and a great lump choked her little throat. There was Peggy herself!

Without speaking, she got down from mother's lap, and darted across the room to her little bed. There, propped up by a pillow, sat Peggy in a stiff pink calico dress. The curls had all been combed out of Peggy's straggling hair; the roses half long ago faded from her cheeks; and in a sad accident Perry had parted company with the end of her nose.

"You dear!" whispered Agnes. Her lips formed a determined line. How could she have thought of giving Peggy up! What would she do all day without a dollie to play with? What would she do at night without a dollie to sleep on the pillow beside her? But how disappointed her sick little girl at the hospital would be Christmas morning when all the other children had lovely presents, and she found that she had been left out? Agnes stooped over the bed, gathered Peggy in her arms, and pressed her to her aching heart.

It was the day before Christmas, and the children had sung all but their last carol when they were to sing as they marched to the manger and laid down their gifts one by one.

out a box of jack-straws—Lady Lucie and I simply stopped in." She airily tossed her head. "We're on our way to a Christmas Eve party."

"Form in line, my dears," interrupted Miss Maud, briskly. "Yes, our class comes last, but you must sing all the time we're marching."

The children's voices caroled joyously as the procession pressed forward, but one little singer was mute. She was the last in the line, a little brown shadow of a girl with a small pink object hugged to her breast. Miss Maud stood by the manger, now heaped with all sorts of playthings, and nodded and smiled as each member of her class approached. Puzzled, she watched Agnes pause, look at the manger with frightened eyes, and hesitate. Then she saw the small pink object lifted to the child's lips, and heard the sound of a smacking kiss of farewell before trembling hands laid a doll with straggly hair, faded cheeks and a broken nose among the new toys.

"Why, my dear," cried Miss Maud, putting her arms about Agnes, "what is the matter?"

"A great sob shook the tiny figure. "Tell me all about it," comforted Miss Maud.

And Agnes brokenly confided the whole story. But as she explained how mother's money belonged to somebody else, and how she had nothing to give the Christ Child except her only doll, neither of them noticed a little listener who drew nearer and nearer.

"No, no," cried Agnes, "I wouldn't take her back. I want the little hospital girl to have her—she'll prelate Peggy's crippled nose, won't she?" Agnes forced a smile through her tears. "Only," she faltered, "it will be so—so lonesome without any dollie."

Something tugged at Miss Maud's skirts. She turned, and with a start of surprise, looked down into Clarice's eager face.

"I've lots more at home, you know," she whispered. And, laying Lady Lucie in Agnes' astonished arms, Clarice ran after her chum, Anabel.—The Interior.

MEETING OF CONGRESS

Congressional Summary.
The business of both houses of Congress was confined largely to listening to the reading of the President's annual message but in addition a few bills were introduced both in the Senate and the House and in the House a number of bills was sent to conference, among them being one providing for a new immigration station in Boston.

In addition, the Speaker announced the appointment of Mr. Higgins, of Connecticut, to a place on the committee on the judiciary, in place of Mr. Littlefield and of Mr. Martin to a place on the committee on Indian affairs in place of Mr. Parker, deceased.

For the first time during the present Congress there was a call of the committees of the House but no measure was reported by any of them.

The miscellaneous work of the Senate consisted in the main of the references in executive session of about 1,500 recess nominations, which were sent to the Senate by the President, and the adoption of resolutions of regret on account of the death of members of the House who have passed away since the adjournment last May. The Senate adjourned for the day at 2 o'clock and the House at 2:35.

Census Bill Passed.
For nearly five hours the House of Representatives considered the bill providing for the taking of the thirteenth and subsequent decennial censuses, and passed it without material change. From the very outset of the debate it became evident that the progress of the measure toward passage would be impeded.

Pensions in Senate.
The session of the Senate was chiefly devoted to the formal presentation of departmental reports and the introduction of bills. The reports have been made public from time to time and the bills numbering 352 were chiefly for the granting of pensions.

Saturday's Session.
The House of Representatives Saturday was in its old-time form. No particular programme had been mapped out, but under a call of committees several measures in which the members were especially interested, and in some cases vitally concerned, were considered. With few exceptions they engendered the liveliest sort of debate, and it was disclosed that the forces for or against them were fully lined up for the fray. Parliamentary tactics were freely resorted to, with the result that five times the roll was called.

The first rangle occurred on a resolution fixing the boundary line between the States of Colorado, Oklahoma and New Mexico, which was agreed to by a majority but not without two roll calls. The House then by a decisive vote refused to further consider the bill providing for a temporary settlement of disputes between employers and employes.

Next turning attention to the bill providing for the protection of aliens in the United States the subject was thrashed out at length. The measure had rough sailing and it was passed by a slim majority after the roll had been called twice.

Mr. and Mrs. Taft Given Reception.
Washington, Special.—President-elect and Mrs. William H. Taft were tendered a reception by Miss Mabel Boardman, a Washington society leader, at her home on Dupont circle. The function was one of the most notable of the season, and among the guest were a large number of the representative persons of the Capital's official, diplomatic and social circles.

Killed by Electric Shock.
Yorkville, Special.—Mr. W. F. Downs, a native of Fort Mill, and for the past three or four years head machinist at the Tavora Cotton Mill at this place, was instantly killed by an electrical current. The electrical current which is furnished by the Southern Power Company, had failed and Superintendent Ramsour and Mr. Downs were searching for the trouble. The switch had been opened and Downs placed his hand on a wire he supposed dead but it proved not to be and he fell back lifeless.

The Evacuation of Cuba.
Washington, Special.—At the War Department the first details regarding the withdrawal from Cuba of the American army of pacification, which has been on duty there since the fall of 1906, were made known. The movements of the troops will begin on January 1st and will be completed by April 1st.

BAD EXPLOSION AT PANAMA

Results in a Number of People Losing Their Lives

SCENES OF GREAT EXCITEMENT

Premature Explosion of an Enormous Blast of Powder Near Colon Claimed Ten Dead and Fifty Injured.

Colon, By Cable.—A giant blast of dynamite, already prepared for firing, was prematurely exploded in the workings at Bas Obispo Saturday. Ten men were killed and fifty injured. It may be that others have been killed, for debris is piled up in all directions.

Bas Obispo cut is about 30 miles from Colon, and the shock of the explosion was distinctly felt here, as in addition to that in the blast, 22 tons of dynamite was exploded.

Numerous reports are current as to the cause of the accident but the official version from Culebra, which gives an estimate of ten killed and fifty wounded, states that during the loading of the last hole of the blast the dynamite in this cutting was discharged, and the remaining 22 tons were exploded by concussion.

The holes had not been connected electrically as the discharge of the blast was set for 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The last hole was being loaded under the supervision of one of the most efficient powder men in the employ of the commission.

A passenger train had just passed when the explosion occurred, but it was not in any way damaged.

The majority of the victims are Spaniards. Relief trains were sent to the scene of the disaster and one which returned here several hours later brought back the report that 45 of the injured had been sent to Ancon Hospital.

The officials on the train stated that eleven dead had been found while many others in the gang of 120 who were employed in the cut were missing.

It was also reported by the trainmen that the explosion was due to a passing steam shovel, which hooked the wire leading to the immense charge of dynamite. Whether or not this was the cause of the accident, a steam shovel and crew, which happened to be on the scene were practically buried under the mass of rock and earth thrown up.

Gangs were soon searching for the dead and assisting the wounded. Electric lights were set up and at night steam shovels were at work removing the tons upon tons of debris. Many of the men have been seriously injured, some of them probably fatally.

Tradition has it that the Panama Railroad cost one human life for every mile, what with accidents, insurrections and disease, and the construction of the canal has not gone along without exacting its toll.

There have been a number of accidents in the last two years, chief among which was the premature explosion of dynamite at Pedro Miguel in June, 1907, which resulted in the death of seven men and the injury of a number of others.

The Dead Total Fourteen.

Colon, By Cable.—The explosion Sunday at Bas Obispo of 21 tons of dynamite blast was the most serious accident in connection with the building of the Panama canal since the United States took control. A thorough investigation with a view to fixing the responsibility has been ordered and already officials are taking evidence.

Crooked Wisconsin Banker Sentenced.
Milwaukee, Wis., Special.—John F. Schulte, aged 38, former paying teller of the First National Bank of Racine, was sentenced to five years at Fort Leavenworth by Judge Quarles. Schulte embezzled \$15,000, pleaded guilty and asked for leniency. Five years is the minimum penalty. Schulte was arrested at Cleveland on July 7.

Mail Carrier Badly Hurt.
Spartanburg, Special.—Jesse L. Wood, a well known letter carrier, was thrown from his buggy early Sunday morning and seriously injured. The horse Mr. Wood was driving took fright on east Main street, just in front of the First Presbyterian church. He was thrown violently to the sidewalk and knocked unconscious. When taken to his home it was discovered that three of his ribs had been broken and one of his shoulders terribly injured. He is threatened with pneumonia, which makes his condition trebly worse.

For Family of Two.
Oyster Soup, Ghervins, Roast Duck, Apple and Celery Salad, Potatoes, Scallops, and Grated Onion Squash, Plum Pudding, Hard Sauce, Jaconerie, Oranges, Grapes, Coffee.