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Democratic Watchman.

BY P. GRAY MEEK.

GOD REST YOU MERRY GENTLEMEN.

God rest you merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day,
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray.

In Bethlehem, in Jewry,
This blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger,
Upon this blessed morn;
The which His Mother Mary,
Did nothing take in scorn.

From God our Heavenly Father,
A blessed Angel came;
And unto certain Shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by Name.

"Fear not then," said the Angel,
"Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour
Of a pure Virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in Him
From Satan's power and might."

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
The Son of God to find.

And when they came to Bethlehem
Where our dear Saviour lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His Mother Mary kneeling down
Unto the Lord did pray.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface.

COMING BACK TO CHRISTMAS.

In the twilight chimney smoke went up, coal-stoves showed red through home windows, thick, slow snow fell—differently. All differently. Front gates slammed with a meaning as if they knew what had just passad their curly iron posts. At horse-blocks sleigh-bells ceased jingling with significant abruptness, as if with some real reason for the sleigh's stopping. In back dooryards stately clothes-reels turned themselves as in the knowledge that their flapping pieces had been washed out, rubbed out, wrung out—however the household phrased it—for an occasion more than mortal. Country dooryards, country streets, the very faces of the bird-houses peering over lattices, lay in the soft hold of Christmas eve, as if the spirit of Christmas were a spirit indeed, to which even homely things are sweetly sensible.

A little child, a boy of seven, sat on a gate-post of the house that was usually home, but for the time seemed no home at all. For some last offices of Christmas his mother had that afternoon gone to the city—that obscure place to which the child had never yet penetrated and which he associated with long trousers and gold watches and automobiles and other prerogatives of the time when he should be grown up . . . so early are children infected with the love of *things*! . . . His mother had said that she would be back on the local at six o'clock; that he might play on the pond until that hour; that the key would be under the mat if he wanted it, or he might wait for her, for those few minutes, in the front yard. The little boy leaving the pond shortly after the whistle blew, had run all the way home, taken one look at the dark house through whose sitting-room window the coal-stove glowed like an angry eye, and had climbed up on the gate-post to wait.

A strange man, coming toward him up the road from the drawbridge, brought back to the child what he had heard his mother say to a neighbor that morning:

"I s'pose Grant Willet's to be let out to-day?"

And the woman had answered:

"I s'pose he is. Let loose on folks, and him without any place to belong. I s'pose he'll put right for this town, anyway."

The child thrilled deliciously as he saw the man coming. If he were Grant Willet! Grant Willet why, seven years before the child was born—and the child had been born for seven years—had been arrested in the city in a strike, had attacked the policeman, and, for resisting an officer, had been sentenced to fourteen years in a reform school.

"And him," the village had observed, sorrowfully, "having grown up right in our face and eyes. *Does* it seem possible?"

The stranger was coming on looking, so to say, the village in the face, examining each of the houses with a kind of friendly interest. He was youngish, huge, with thick hair and brows, and the eyes of a man who has lived forever. Oh, the child thought, if it *should* be Grant Willet . . . and he should whip out a bow and arrow and a bowie-knife and brandish them all by the front gate!

"Hello, little one," said the man.

Next best to a bowie-knife was this—to have the stranger stopping to speak to him. He freely forgave the way of address the stranger chose. An outlaw, it may have run obscurely through his thought, may have privileges.

"Hello!" the child returned.

"I bet you don't know what tomorrow is," advanced the stranger.

"Betcheido," replied the child.

"What?" the man asked.

For all answer the child smiled—a delicious, one-sided, curved smile, that made his face adorable. After it he turned away his head.

"Say it," the man encouraged him.

The tip of the child's tongue worked at his red mouth's corner, and he lifted one shoulder and shook his head.

"Go on," coaxed the man. "What's its name?"

"My mamma's gone to the city to buy things for it," volunteered the child then, all at once. "She's gone there. She's gone there. She's coming home on the six."

"Oh," said the man, "on the six. Well, the six is in," he added. "I was on it—to the draw."

"Maybe she'll come," said the boy, patiently.

"Hadn't you better go in the house?" suggested the man. "Aren't you cold? Or are you locked out?"

The child shook his head. The key was, he explained, under the mat—the "right side end of it," he elaborated.

"Well," said the man, "I'm sorry you don't know what day tomorrow is." He hesitated, looking at the child. "Merry Christmas!" he said, abruptly, and moved away swiftly.

But still the imp of perversity seemed in the child, an expression, perhaps, of his shyness at thought of who this stranger might be; so he merely met the man's waiting look, and smiled, and watched him go down the street and was torn with remorse that he had not talked with him while he might.

The sight of Down-Town caught savagely at the stranger as he turned away from the child in the dusk. It all looked so absurdly as it had looked twenty years before.

There was Hoard's meat-market with evergreen stuck under the turkey's wings, just visible through the frost of the panes. There was the Messer drug-store, with red and green globes glowing and, outside, a cigar-stand Indian with a wreath of holly on his feathers. There was the Everly home bakery with pink mosquito-netting in the window and cocoanut-cakes with pink-sugar lettering. He stooped to read what the cakes said. "Merry Christmas," the letters spelled.

"Merry Christmas," the man thought. "Merry Christmas. The cakes, now, look as if they meant it. . . . ."

He kept on looking at the words. Somehow the scattered holiday signs of the day seemed all to be concentrated in the pink-sugar lettering. He almost felt as if the greeting were to him, but the feeling was lost in the impersonal repetition on cake after cake. He found himself looking inside the bakery with undefined wistfulness. It was like a great, homely pantry, with its bread and doughnuts and cookies, a pantry with a welcome for everybody. It seemed as if the place must say "Merry Christmas" spontaneously to any one who opened the door.

The man suddenly opened the bakery door, whose swinging released a sharp bell that summoned Mrs. Everly from the back room. She came hurrying, as if she had left a hundred things unfrosted. But neither the shop nor Mrs. Everly said Merry Christmas. The man looked at her intently and seemed to be waiting for something.

"Good evening," she said briskly. "What's wanted?"

"What's wanted?" the man repeated, and looked about the store and then stood and looked down at her hands. When she repeated her inquiry he realized that he had been trying to see the finger whose tip was gone and which once had held him spellbound as she measured and cut and tied.

"Excuse me," he stammered. "I wanted to know—I want to ask you—the hotel. Is it on this street?"

"Just a block on," said Mrs. Everly, with her professional patience. "At the corner, on this side. You can't miss it."

Already she was edging toward the back room, but he lingered.

"You've got great doings in the town tomorrow, I s'pose," he said.

"That's what's hurrying me now," she replied pointedly, and nodded, and might have turned her back. But it occurred to the man that he had acted unwarrantably in intruding on her time, and then making no purchase. He had had no occasion to use money for a long time, and there was in his pocket a bit, drawn that day, that had long been accumulating to his credit.

"Let me have one of the little cakes in the window," he said.

She went to do his bidding, lifting up the little cake as casually as if it bore no special import, and she was more concerned about the frosting than the message. She took her pay, returned the change, said her thanks and did not meet his eye—all as if the night were any night and the cake were any cake. He took it and went out. And, as he passed the window,

"Well," he observed, "*you* said it if she wouldn't."

He deliberately tried Messer's drug-store next. There the ceiling was hung thickly with cut paper which swayed in the draught from the door. Young Messer was alone in the store, tying red paper bows about huge bottles of perfume.

"Evenin'," said he, flicking a loop of the lasc bow.

"Evening," said the man, and stood for a moment patiently watching the adjustment. "Nice evening?" He put it doubtfully, when the bow was finished—spread for a huge, smiling mouth below the face-like stopper.

"Why, yes," said young Messer, frankly. "It *is*. It is that."

"Promises a bright day tomorrow," said the man, suggestively, and waited, smiling a little. But it seemed not even then to occur to the clerk that he might say anything about that tomorrow—for example, a wish to a stranger.

"I ain't had time to look out, though," said young Messer, frankly, "It's been so busy with us today. What can I do for you?"

That question again. . . The man looked at him for a minute. "Don't you know?" he said, half to himself.

Young Messer winked shrewdly. "I do, I bet," he said. "You've gone and left somebody till the last minute that you want to send a present to. And you want me to tell you what to get. Ain't that it?"

Unexpectedly to himself the man caught at that. He had not bought a Christmas present for anybody in—years.

"I guess you've about hit it," and stared around the store.

"Brush and comb?" said the clerk practically. "Nice box of expensive soap? Manicure set—we got a fine line o' manicure goods in plush boxes. Is it for man, woman, or child?" he inquired.

"It's for a child," said tbe man suddenly.

"I might of known," the clerk observed. "I'm a family man myself. How's this?" he wondered, bringing up a felt lamb from glass-case depths.

The man examined the lamb critically and shook his head. He examined critically a dozen objects which the clerk offered, and he discarded them all. He squeezed bears and elephants, and decided against the quality of their tones. Was it a boy or a girl, the clerk wanted to know. It was, it appeared then, a boy. How old a boy? About seven or eight, the man thought. And when at length he had selected a box of paints, he abruptly indicated one of the huge bottles of perfume. He would take one of those. And at this the clerk surprisingly winked again,as one who should convey his understanding that a Christmas of gifts for children was all very well, but *he* knew there were others to be considered—women, now. . . . The man only partly grasped the significance of the wink, but he felt its unmistakable fellowship, and he winked, too.

When the parcels were brought to him he took them from the clerk and looked at him half expectantly.

"Nice Christmas weather," the man observed.

"Rosy," said young Messer, holding the door for him. "Rosy." But it just happened that it did not occur to the youth to wish the man a merry Christmas. That was a wish to be made exclusively to young ladies, the lad's impression may have run.

"No Christmas nonsense about *him*," said the man to himself outside. "No, sir. Nothing but Christmas trade."

He had not meant to go into Hoard's meat-market. But the door stood open to let out a farmer with some crates, and because his eye fell on old Joe Hoard chopping meat at the block the man went in. And when he stepped on the saw-dust covered floor and breathed the cold, suet-smelling air of the place he went over to Joe Hoard and stood close beside him.

"Give me five cents' worth of sage," he said.

With no more than a perfunctory glance old Hoard complied. His clumsy fingers tied the tiny package and took the coin. Then, as the man lingered, he raised his head.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know," returned the man, quizzically. "What else is there usually—on a night of this stamp!"

The butcher grunted. "Double work and no idlin'," he said and went off to answer the teleprone.

The man went on through the snow with the paints and the perfume and the package of sage in his hands. He put the sage to his nose and the pungent odor brought with it thronging remembrances. He had no idea of buying sage, only he had been so many times to Hoard's for five cents' worth of sage for dressing . . . he could smell the Christmas turkey-dressing now. Old Hoard not to know him! Not to remember the time that he had sent him home carrying a rope of bologna sausage so long that he had held both hands above his childish head so that the sausage ends should escape the earth. He could hear old Hoard's laughter yet. And now the old man had no remembrance—the village had no remembrance. And had no Christmas greeting, it seemed, for a stranger. He stood on the curb, looking at the few hurrying figures in the little street. The essential cruelty of Christmas gripped him like a new wrong. Everybody for himself and for those who were dear to him and for children and for the poor. He was not a child or a beggar, and he was dear to nobody now. So, it appeared, Christmas, too, had cast him out.

Across the street was a store whose glass was unfrosted, whose gas-lights were many, whose look was that of silent welcome. He crossed to it. This was Benjamin Thatcher's grocery and general goods store. In the window were a pyramid of oranges, a pile of mixed candy, and a little barrel so as to pour forth nuts. He remembered how every Christmas in the old days these had taken the place of the turnips and cabbages, the tobacco and dates and canned goods of times less momentous. Beyond the rows of hams—he remembered how Benjamin had always hung a row of hams at the back of his window and how they all swung when the door was slammed—beyond the hams and the bunch of bananas he caught a glimpse of Benjamin himself putting more wood in the stove and using his burnt coat-flap for a holder.

"My word," the man thought, "he hasn't got a holder yet."

He opened the door and went in. Benjamin Thatcher came forward, rubbing soot from his hand. The store was cheery and warm, a half-barrel of holly stood among the apple-barrels and the odor of apples and coffee was in the air.

The man looked along the rows of spice and tea boxes, the open fronts of the fancy-cracker cases, the shelves of gay cans. It was all as he remembered. He turned to the shelf above the cheese. There stood the jars of striped candy, lemon and peppermint, hoarhound and licorice, and burnt almonds and colt's foot.

"Give me ten cent's worth of bull's-eyes," said the man.

Benjamin opened a bag by breathing in it, according to his custom, filled it and took his payment. But the man seemed in no haste to be gone. He stood looking at the shelf of striped candy and at the glass case on the counter beneath it, at its gum and chocolate drops—the kind that are shaped like little fool's caps—at its chocolate mice and motto peppermints. He was seeing himself with two cents to spend and his nose flattened against the glass of the case while he decided. Close to the case was a barrel of cranberries. The man tasted them. And he knew again the raw, long unfamiliar taste something in him spoke. It spoke to Benjamin Thatcher because he was human and he happened to be there.

"Merry Christmas!" said the man.

Of most of the cries which we face in the lives of others we remain forever ignorant, and their rare moments pass at the mercy of our fancy, our impression, our prejudice, our mood. So Benjamin Thatcher was ignorant now.

"I won't do it," he replied, testily. "I'm blamed if I will. It's bad enough to have to bleat that all day long to-morrow without beginning previous. Anything more I can do for you?"

The man looked at him steadily.

"Anything more you can do for me!" he repeated. "What more can any man do for another that's been living a dog's life and has got a hankering to hear a decent word? What more can you do for me—what more can anybody do for anybody than to mean Merry Christmas at them? Say Merry Christmas, damn you!" said the man, and suddenly took Benjamin Thatcher by the throat.

The grocer's look of pure surprise was grotesque.

"Well—seeing you're *that* fierce about it," Benjamin articulated, his fingers on the other man's hand.

"Not like that!" said the man, and shook him slightly. "Say it, and say it as if you meant it or I'll choke the life out of you!"

"You leggo my wind-pipe then," uttered Benjamin, not without dignity.

The man complied, drew back, waited. Benjamin, frowning, felt of his neck.

"Merry Christmas," he said, sullenly.

"Not that way!" repeated the man. "Say it as if you meant it *right*—from you to me."

Benjamin faced him angrily.

"Who are you that I should be wishing you merry Christmases?" he inquired, irritably. "How do I know—"

The man cut him short.

"I'm made some like a human being, ain't I?" he observed, grimly. "I say to you as one human being says to another, 'Merry Christmas,' I say. Now what do you say back?"

He went a step nearer to Benjamin. Benjamin was little, and he looked up at the man standing over him, at his brown face under the mass of straight, graying hair, and at his brown bare throat; and when he looked in this stranger's eyes he saw there no threat, only something strong, that men like him obeyed.

"Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. Mer-ry Christmas," said Benjamin. "Is three times about enough?"

"I won't press you for more," said the stranger pleasantly, and leaned against an apple-barrel and regarded the ruffled little man.

Then the stranger's eye fell on something at the grocer's elbow. It was a counter on which were displayed certain articles intended as Christmas gifts, but now lying in that all forlorn state of the unbought on Christmas eve, a state which causes even red rubber balls and toy steam-engines to develop a look of having faces, and they sad. There were a lot of these gifts, and they were all for children. All for young children, say, under ten. Many of them were for boys. At these articles the stranger looked, and what he had begun by sheer chance in the other two stores it occurred to him to finish by design; and in his face the feeling, the wish, and then the intention came to expression.

"I'll have some of the toys," he said. "Half a dozen of 'em. For a boy about seven or eight. Oh, any of 'em. The engine, and the band, and one of the baseballs—and a couple of the games." Benjamin bustled. Whether this stranger really wanted these things or was purchasing them from compunction, this mattered nothing. It was, in any case, the *amende honorable*, and the dealer in him did his patron's bidding with deference.

The man watched him quizzically and when his parcel was ready.

"Still giving coffee-berries to the children, Benjamin?" he asked, surprisingly, "to show your good-will? Or does an occasional peppermint escape you now in your mellow old age?"

For the first time Benjamin Thatcher met the man's look squarely.

"Who do you think you are, anyway?" the grocer demanded, uncertainly.

Then the stranger laughed, heartily, not unmusically, not without bitterness. And when he laughed his face became mellow, with a kind of merry understanding, without a touch of impudence.

"That's what I don't know any more," he said. "I thought I was a human, but you folks in this town have been giving me to understand different. Merry Christmas!"

"Well!" said Benjamin." Merry Christmas! And if you feel like that about it—a happy New Year, too! But—"

"Oh, you needn't go that far, Benjamin Thatcher!" said the man, and shut the door, and left all the hams swinging.

The stranger retraced his steps along the little street. And now not only the look of Down-Town and all the little near lying homes and the quiet, hand-in-hand manner of the little lawns seized upon the man, but that for which they stood came upon him in the old heart-breaking way: the way that for years had stood by his cot waiting for his waking in the night. . . He had missed it all. It was too late now to begin again, and he had missed it all. And then the old, burning resentment seized him; for the thing that had cut him off from it all was, he thought, a thing that might have been the impulse of a hundred thousand better men. Only—between the doing and the not-doing lay something that had failed him. It would have taken, he said to himself, so little to have saved him. A little more controlled living by somebody, a little better inheritance for him, a little more strength in himself, and, finally, when the catastrophe came, a wise administration of his "punishment"—a decent training back to an understanding of citizenship, to the nature of oeing, perhaps, instead of his mere brute paying of a physical penalty. Body and spirit surged with anger and revolt. What was the use, what was the use of a world with its great mass of men like him, cast out by the society that didn't know how to train them to belong to itself? There were hundreds of thousands like him to whom the uses of the little street were forfeit. What was the meaning of a world in which this could be true? What was there that could ever set things right? . . Something of this went through him in a flood of feeling as the little street spoke to him without his knowing what it said, but only recognizing its immemorial voices. . .

But in it all he went clinging to one thought of warmth. For he was saying to himself:

"I don't believe his mother came in on the local. She'd have had time to get down there from the station if I'd had time to walk from the draw. And if the key is under the mat. . ."

It was almost dark now, and he hurried on, trying to peer ahead to see if the gate-post bore its little sentinel. He had not gone. The sentinel, to tell the truth, had no great liking for going in the house alone in the dark. So he sat there, kicking his feet against the post and waiting.

"*What!*" said the man when he saw him—and someway the men knew how to be surprised in the way that a child loves to have occasioned surprise. "Hasn't she come yet?"

"Nope," said the child, with importance at being a figure in something puzzling. "She ain't come yet. Ain't it a long time?"

"A very long time," the man said. "How much longer will you wait?"

The child stared. "Why, I got to wait till she comes," he said in astonishment. "She's my *mother*."

"I see," said the man. "Well, now, look here. She hasn't come on the six. The express don't get in till eight, does it?—it didn't use to. Well, now, didn't you say the key is under the mat?"

The child nodded with that emptying of the face of expression which leaves wonder lying there naked.

"Well," said the man, "I've bought a few things here that I don't know as I *really* want. What do you say to our going in your house and seeing what's in these packages?"

The boy gave that sound that is,among all possible sounds, one of the most delightful—a child's little squeak of anticipation. He slipped from the post, lost his balance, gathered hmself up, and ran up the path.

"Come on!" he called. "I know how to open the door!"

Inside, the coal-stove glowed red and warm, and the little sitting-room looked used and lived in daily. The man tumbled the things in a deep chair,found and struck a light, and, the child throwing off his own coat, he did so, too. The man's clothes were cheap and new, but he was scrupulously clean, and with his hat off, the thick hair did not conceal the splendid head, the fine, full forehead. As he turned, the child was balancing at the table and holding up one foot.

"It's bucklesticks," he explained. "It's got a crook in."

The man, as if he understood that so big a little man would not wish to be taken on a knee, himself knelt and drew off the overshoe. Then he looked up at the boy standing before him, his hair going out at the back where his cap had made it rough.

"Shake," said the man.

The child obediently put out his hand, but he did not look at the man; his eyes went past the man's face to the deep chair filled with packages.

"Now then," the man assented, and arose and drew a chair where he could watch best, "begin. And if you want 'em they're all for you. Christmas has started now—remember that!"

It is true that a child's eagerness for possession does not always affect us as being the menace that it is, as being the fatherhood of the man's unwarranted love for things. And this is because what fires the child is not so much the love for things, as such, as the love of magic. A tied-up parcel bears the connotation of the unknown. It holds all mystery. It is an adventure. It is to the child at once the essence and the outermost border of romance. He enters upon it as upon some little star.

So the child enterned now. The paints, the cake, the ball, the bottle of perfume, the games, each was to him experience ecstatic. Until it was unwrapped the man had forgotten the bottle of perfume and with "That's a Christmas present for you to give your mother," he placed it on the table, and the child had hung over the bottle, enchanted. With every gift he flashed up to the stranger the child-look of mingled joy and disbelief in reality,a look that goes to the head and flows in the veins of the one who has occasioned it. The moment is as old as the world, a precious intimacy. The watcher knows that the toys will be broken, that essentially it is not the objects that the child craves—only the sorcery of surprise.

And the comments. . . "Paints! And two little dishes. And three brushes. And two cakes of red—and red is the very nicest. . . A engine! With wheels that *go round*. And a *ringing* bell to it. And a place to put *truly* coal. And a man that comes *out* of his box. . . A ball! Oh, I *wanted* a hard one. I only had a wound-up-rags one all my life. . ." And so on with, when it came to the bull's-eyes, just one rapturous, understanding glance, and then a cheek extravagantly protruded.

The man watched the child. And now that he was alone, and himself unwatched, with no need for defense or initiative, his face had the mellowness of its own look of laughter, and his eyes were deep and filled with a kind of pensiveness and wonder. His face was fine of feature,the skin was fine of texture, there was fineness about the way he moved. But in the ineffective mouth, the loose hands, there was symbol of that which somehow had let him lose his contact with life. The very fineness that might have given him expression had, undirected, been his undoing. For he was a man somehow undone—this was to be known by his utter relaxation, the relaxation of dejection, and by the passionate wistfulness with which he watched the child.

When the last package was unwrapped, when the things had been gone over and over, the child stood up and turned shyly toward him. The man, elbows on knees, was leaning forward looking at

[Continued on page 4, Col. 6.]

SPAWLS FROM THE KEYSTONE.

—It takes 1,600 pounds of bread each day at the Huntingdon reformatory and each Saturday 128 dozen ginger cakes are baked.

—The postoffice at Pine Flats, Clearfield county, has been discontinued and patrons are being served on a rural delivery route from Garman's Mills.

—Johnstown's Hallow'en celebration committee has just had its accounts audited. The expense of the big time was $2,175.16 and the committee has a balance of $799.67 on hand.

—Newberry chicken thieves seem to be plying the trade "just for the fun of the thing." Many of the chickens are not taken away, but simply cut down the back and left lying dead.

—Cresson borough is to pay 17½ cents per 1,000 gallons for water, instead of 10 cents, as formerly. The council has accepted the 75 per cent. raise and consumers will likely pay the bills.

—The Lewistown shirt factory wants operatives; the knitting factory and silk mill are running full time and the holiday vacation of these workers will be cut to the two feast days.

—Bertha Shultz, aged eleven years, cut her throat a few days ago at her home in Benton. She fell down stairs with a piece of earthenware in her hand. It broke and cut a three-inch gash, which is likely to prove fatal.

—Burgess H. C. W. Patterson, of Saltsburg, recently had returned to him a pocket book which he lost on Hallowe'en. It had been dropped into the outside postoffice box during the night. All the valuable papers it contained were intact, but of the $80 in cash, $30 were missing.

—Lycoming county commissioners have revoked a franchise granted the Williamsport Passenger Railway company for a right of way across the Third street bridge. The franchise had been available for five years, but the bridge hadn't materialized and the commissioners were not pleased at the delay.

—The mines of the Pennsylvania Coal and Coke company at Bens Creek, on the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, have been closed temporarily, owing to the shortage of cars. About 700 miners are thrown out of employment. The mines had been working on half time previously, for the same reason.

—W. T. Huntington, of Lycoming county, set out 1,000 peach trees last spring in the regular way and 100 by the use of dynamite. The latter, in comparison, have grown nearly twice as fast as the others. Mr. Huntington intends to plant 500 more trees in the spring. He says he will use dynamite to dig the holes.

—At the State capitol in Harrisburg on Monday two Patton concerns filed notice of increase of debt, as follows: Patton Clay company, $150,000 to $200,000, and George S. Good Fire Brick company, $100,000. The Clearfield Sewer Pipe company, Clearfield, also filed notice of increase of debt to the extent of $100,000.

—Ethel Sergeant, a 16-year-old Northumberland girl stepped out on the back porch at her home, an unknown man jumped out from behind a fruit tree, fired at her and disappeared. Her wound is not serious, but she is suffering from the shock. The man is thought to be one who has been frightening people by looking in their windows.

—Coroner Potter, of Mifflin county, issued a statement absolving the railroad company from any blame for the accident which caused the death of Isaac Dreese. Mr. Dreese was crossing the tracks at a point some distance from the public crossing and therefore was a trespasser. The practice of crossing at this place has been common.

—The length of a cat's tail was the cause of a fire alarm at Williamsport a few evenings ago. Mrs. Lewis Henry was dressing when her pet cat came purring around. Tabby jumped on the dresser, and was about to jump off when her tail struck the lamp, throwing it to the floor. It exploded, but neighbors came to the rescue and little damage resulted.

—Mrs. Theressa Roessner, widow of the man for whose murder John Keeler was found guilty in last week's Clearfield county court, died recently at her home in Clearfield. She had, only a short time before the murder, come home from a Philadelphia hospital, enfeebled by a serious operation and the shock of her husband's tragic death is supposed to have hastened her own.

—The new Cresson State sanatorium for tuberculosis will be opened December 26th, according to notice sent out by Dr. Samuel G. Dixon, commissioner of health. This sanatorium is the highest inhabited point in the State and yet easily accessible to the main line of travel east and west. The new institution will accommodate 360 patients; one half of this number will be advanced cases.

—Charles Johnson, a farmer living at Seven Kitchens, was driving to Sunbury a few days ago, when he heard the trot of an animal behind his wagon. He turned out to let the team pass, but nobody passed. Then he looked around and saw a large black bear contentedly eating potatoes from a sack it had torn open. Mr. Johnson hadn't any gun, so he let the bear continue its luncheon undisturbed. After a time it dropped back and disappeared in the woods.

—The thirty-third annual session of the Pennsylvania State Educational association, which will be held at Harrisburg during Christmas week, will bring to that city some of the most noted educators of the country. The meetings which will be held during December 26, 27 and 28, will consist of the general sessions and the departmental meetings of city and borough superintendents, county superintendents, High school, college and normal school, graded school, ungraded school and child table.

—J. S. Stewart, of the National hotel, Mifflin, town, went to his refrigerator in the gray dawn and found a man helping himself. He hit the intruder a blow that made him easy handling for the policeman who took him to jail. As he answered the description of the man who had held up and robbed Miss Minerva Snook, at Lewistown Junction. Miss Snook was sent for, but was met at Mifflin with a message that the man had disappeared. The sheriff "didn't know" whether or not any of his prisoners had escaped.

—Accompanied by his wife and twenty-four children, Alexander Friss, a farmer, residing five miles from the Wind Gap road, drove to Pittsburgh Saturday, a distance of twenty-five miles in two wagons, to do his Christmas shopping. It was the first visit of the children to that city. When they left for home it was easily seen that "dad" Friss was a good spender. Friss is 60 years of age while his wife is 64. Mrs. Friss has given birth to five pairs of twins, two sets of triplets and eleven other children. Three have died in the last three years. "Dad" Friss believes in the simple-life theory, and that is the reason he refused to allow his children to pay a visit to the wicked city until this time.

—A peculiarly sad accidental death occurred at New Derry a few nights ago. Emanuel Wilson, of Leechburg, went to visit his blind brother, W. M. Wilson, at New Derry. The two were in Latrobe and went home late in the evening, on the way meeting and talking in a friendly way with George and Lee Miller and Charles Peterson, close neighbors. There was no oil in the lamp when they reached the blind brother's home and he started to get some of his neighbors. His visiting brother started after him and they stood in the road, discussing the possibility of getting oil elsewhere, the mission not having been successful. Suddenly there was the report of a gun and the visitor fell dead in the road. Neighbors were aroused and the three above named were arrested. Peterson, who is charged with the shooting, claims it was accidental.