

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., December 19, 1924.

FAMOUS POEM, "TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS."

Immortal verses, written more than one hundred years ago, would not have delighted countless little girls and boys if young woman hadn't copied them.

More than one hundred years ago Dr. Clement Clarke Moore, of New York sat down and composed for his children a poem that will live as long as there are childish hearts that thrill in expectancy on "the night before Christmas." Dr. Moore, who was then the greatest Hebrew scholar in this country, called the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas."

A young woman who was visiting the Moores when the poem was written copied the verses in her album. Greatly to the chagrin of its scholarly author, the poem was published in the Troy Sentinel the following year and soon afterward attained widespread popularity. Realizing the joy that the poem brought to countless children, Dr. Moore let his indignation die. Today his fame as the compiler of a Hebrew lexicon has been forgotten. Those to whom he taught Greek and Hebrew while serving as a professor in the General Theological Seminary are mostly dust. But on account of his little poem thousands of children gather around his grave each Christmas Eve in Trinity cemetery, West Fifty-fifth street and the Hudson, New York, and place holly wreaths thereon.

A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS.

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap;
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the luster of midday to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name;
"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Dunder and Blitzen
To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away, all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew,
With a sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas, too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! His dimples—how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle;
But I heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

Frosted Creams for Christmas.

One cupful sugar, 1 cupful sorghum, 1 cupful of warm water, 3 cupful of butter or lard, 4 cupfuls flour, 1 teaspoonful soda, 2 teaspoonful baking powder.

Raisins and nuts may be added. Cream, sugar and shortening; then warm water; add sorghum with soda, well mixed; add flour and baking powder, nuts and raisins. Bake in a dripping pan; frost and cut in squares.

THE LITTLE CHRIST-CHILD.

There was cheer at the inn, with windows allight,
But no room to offer a child that night.—
The little Christ-child, so tender and small;
They made him a couch in the cows' rough stall.
They covered him there in the manger's straw;
Only the humble cattle saw.
Warmth in the village, cheer at the inn,
And the straw in the manger scant and thin;
But angels sang on a hill near by,
And a gold star rose in the winter sky;
His mother pillowed him on her arm,
And the little sleeper was glad and warm.
Hundreds and hundreds of years have gone,
And still the angels are singing on;
Still the light of that lovely star
Over the world-hills shines afar;
Still into hearts where love is bright
The Christ-child enters on Christmas night!

IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?

Dear Editor: I am 8 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?
VIRGINIA O'HANLON.

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 man 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 of 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 our life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. 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 to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not; but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives; and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia; nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the hearts of children.—Frank Church in the New York Sun.

Any Educational Value in Cross-Word Puzzles?

Cross-word puzzles are a good diversion, but have little or no educational value, according to faculty members at The Pennsylvania State College, who were asked if there is any benefit to students in attempting solutions of such puzzles.

"I find that children who are just at the point where they normally expand their vocabularies receive great benefit through solving the cross-word puzzles," says Dr. Will Grant Chambers, dean of the school of education, which turns out school and college teachers at Penn State.

The college psychology specialists are of the opinion that the cross-word puzzle solution craze that has swept the country gives only diversion to the average adult. Many college students fill in leisure moments solving the puzzles daily, and some of them enjoy making up their own puzzles, chiefly those with humorous words or definitions.—Ex.

Two Thousand Auto Licenses Suspended in 1924.

Licenses of almost 2,000 motorcar drivers have been revoked or suspended during 1924, the State Highway Department announced recently, and the names of 812 other persons have

been placed on the department blacklist. Driving while intoxicated constitutes the most numerous class of motor law violation. In one week, recently, sixteen persons were intoxicated and fifty-nine others lost their licenses for committing a similar violation.



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