

THE DENISON REVIEW.

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SIXTEEN PAGES A WEEK—PART ONE.

DENISON, IOWA, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1898.

VOLUME XXXIII NO. 104.

HOW CHRISTMAS DAY WAS CELEBRATED.

Never before in the history of Denison was Christmas greeted with such glad hearts and happy faces, never before were our people more lavish in their gifts to loved ones, never before were such efforts made to give the children a happy joyous time. Saturday and Sunday were almost perfect winter days, and all day long on Saturday the shops were filled with Christmas buyers, mysterious packages were being delivered all over the city and being hidden away in closet and garret to await the ushering in of Christmas.

All of our churches outdid themselves in their preparations for giving the little ones a feast, and for the more solemn observances of Christmas Day and the REVIEW has with the kindly assistance of pastors and teachers, prepared an outline of the manner in which the day was celebrated by the various churches.

The Presbyterian Christmas.

The Presbyterian Sunday school had an old fashioned Christmas tree on Saturday evening with the accompaniment of Santa Clause and jingling bells. The beautiful Evergreen tree with its large and graceful branches quite filled the spacious choir-loft and was made resplendent by its variegated decorations and brilliantly lighted up by numerous electric arcs, the electrical work being done by Messrs. Bradley and Glenn. The church was filled at an early hour, the program being in charge of Mr. Sears McHenry. Christmas songs were sung merrily by the children in unison and by classes, with a fine solo by Miss Ida Luney.

Sabbath morning the pastor preached on "Christ the Light of the World"—(John 1:9)—treating of the Incarnation and the three-fold revelation of the world through nature, through man and through the Incarnation itself.

The anthem—"Father, O Hear Us," was admirably rendered by the choir in addition to Christmas hymns.

In the evening a Christmas concert was given with the following program:

- Address—Childhood Memories of Christmas in Germany . . . Prof. VonCoelln
 - Reading—Old Christmas Comes but Once a Year . . . Mrs. Philbrook
 - Recitation—The Swan Note . . . John Klinker
 - Recitation—The First New England Christmas—A. Stewart
 - Recitation—How Christmas Came to Rocket . . . Edith Luney
 - Reading—One Christmas Centuries Ago—Mrs. Jennie Luney
- The musical selections were finely rendered. In addition to the hymns a Solo—"The Star of Bethlehem" . . . Mrs. Philbrook
- Anthem—"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day, with duet part by Mrs. Bradley and Mr. Sears McHenry.
- Anthem—"The New Born King, with solo part by Miss Cook
- The church was filled by an audience that expressed their appreciation of the merit and pleasing character of the concert as a fitting close of Christmas Day services and worship.

What the Baptists Did.

Our Baptist friends were greatly disappointed in not having their church building ready for Christmas festivities. They made the best of things, however, and tried to be more joyous in thinking of the handsome enlarged edifice they are soon to occupy. They had a fine forest tree wrapped with cotton until it looked like snow, and loaded down with presents. Mr. E. S. Plimpton, who has presided over more than a quarter of a century of Christmas trees was right in his element. To many his presence was a reminder of Denison's younger days and brought to mind many happy scenes. The tree was very handsome and we warrant that in no church were the youngsters happier and their singing more joyous than they were in the crowded city hall. The following is the program of the exercises as they were carried out:

The city hall while of immense convenience in our otherwise homeless condition was, as on other occasions, inadequate for our Christmas services. To participate in the Christmas morning services a goodly company assembled in the hall. Devotions suited to the season were expressed in appropriate praise and petition. The Christmas solo was rendered by Miss Nettie Capin.

The pastor's discourse centred about the Christ—(Gal. IV, 4)—being the basis of his remarks. The time of Christ's coming; the manner of His coming, and the results of His coming were enlarged upon. It was shown that in the fullness of spiritual need and in the fullness of historical preparation Christ came, and owing to the similarity of natures in God and man—the essential difference being expressed by finite and infinite—Christ, from the bosom of the Father, did not have so far to come as it has sometimes been supposed. A glance at the pivotal blessings of His coming and a plea for their hearty endorsement and practical acceptance closed the sermon of the morning.

In the evening the Baptist Junior Union gave a program at the city hall. The center of the room was reserved for the Juniors, who assembled in the small adjoining room. On either side and at the back were seated the parents and friends interested in the endeavors of our youthful members. After the organist, Miss Nettie Kelly, had played a few strains of the processional hymn, "Emmanuel," the children began to sing and march to their seats. They numbered about forty in all and formed quite a little army. After scripture reading by Orpha Marshall, prayer by Mr. E. S. Plimpton and a talk by the pastor, the children proceeded with their program which consisted of recitations and songs appropriate for a Christmas and a Sabbath evening service.

The first recitation was a acrostic "Christmas" by nine children. Nine large letters were prepared, covered with green material, and when on the platform each child held his letter so that the word Christmas was formed. The children had each learned a verse beginning with his letter, and when all had recited the Union sang again the chorus of "Emmanuel"—

"Tis Christmas, glad Christmas,
O tell the joyful tidings,
Today is born in Bethlehem
Emmanuel."

Another pleasing part of the program was a recitation

by Clara Wells entitled "The Beautiful Star," the organ playing softly while she spoke, and at the end of each verse the Junior's sang:

"Star, star, beautiful star,
Pilgrims weary we are,
To Jesus, to Jesus
We follow thee from afar."

There were many other pleasing numbers, among which was a duet by Garnet and Russell Norman.

At the close, the congregation arose and sang "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," which was followed by the benediction. Miss Ida Craft presided and Mrs. F. W. Bateson conducted the singing. The Junior Union is less than two months old, having been organized the first Sunday in November. The meetings are held every Sabbath afternoon at 3:30 o'clock, and we have had a large attendance. Three classes have been formed according to age so that the studies pursued may be profitable and comprehensible to all. The older class, where the ages range from thirteen to sixteen years, the three branches of the Christian Culture Course are studied—the "Bible Reader's Course," the "Sacred Literature Course," and the "Conquest Missionary Course." The children are thoroughly interested in the work of the Union, and enthusiastic in all its undertakings. Their program of Sunday evening was kindly commented on and much appreciated by those who witnessed it and the Juniors feel assured that they have the helpful interest and hearty support of all who have become in any degree acquainted with them. With this encouragement and the realization that our organization has also the approval of Him on whose birthday we rendered our first program, we begin the new year glad and thankful for the past, happy and hopeful for the future.

How the Methodists Celebrated.

The Methodists were fortunate in obtaining the finest and most graceful evergreen it has ever been our pleasure to see. It almost seemed as if the Creator had specially designed it to fill the hearts of the Methodist boys and girls of Denison with joy and gladness. The decorations were simple but served to effectually set off the beauty of the graceful dark green branches. Evergreen boughs hung from the chandeliers and graced the walls. On the branches of the tree hung oranges and bags of candy—the best that could be purchased—and all around and underneath was a still more plentiful supply. The opening selections by the choir were rendered in a very pleasing manner, and were appropriate to the occasion. The program was a good one, and as each number was called out by Supt. Van Ness in his usual happy manner, the children went through their different parts in a way which reflected great credit upon themselves and their teachers. After the carrying out of the program the Superintendent called the different classes forward and each member, both old and young, was given an orange and bag of candy as a remembrance. If for any reason a member of the school was not present the teacher was instructed to see that he was given an orange and candy. It was a pleasure to watch the little folks walking up to get their share of good things, their bright countenances shown forth and made one feel that it was indeed a merry and happy Christmas.

Last Sunday being the anniversary of the birth of Christ Rev. IlgenFritz preached sermons fitted to the occasion. The morning sermon was based on the text "What Think ye of Christ?" from Matt. 23, 43. The following brief synopsis will indicate the thought of the discourse.

The speaker dwelt upon the growing recognition of Christmas as a festive occasion, indicative of an enlarged view of Christ in regard to His person and work. Dr. Emil G. Hirsch, rabbi of Lina Temple, Chicago, was quoted as showing the growing sentiment in favor of Christ. "There never lived a better Jew than Jesus. The Jews did not crucify Jesus, at least the Jews of the people did not. They had no reason to crucify Him. Rome had him crucified as a conspirator against her dominion over Jerusalem. There may have been Jews who took part in his crucifixion, but there are bad and traitorous men among all peoples. So we may celebrate His birthday. No one has revolutionized humanity as much as Jesus. We of the liberal church of Jews have no reason to protest at the name of Jesus. The name of Him made it possible for a daughter religion to conquer the World. We Jews are religion poor and race proud. I would have the Jews enter into the spirit of this day as a day of peace on earth and good will toward men."

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ was then dwelt upon in word pictures, setting forth the announcement to the shepherds on the plains of Judea, the angel choir following the announcement singing "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men;" the place of His birth, Bethlehem, the manger, the cradle, the animal creation as the first worshippers; then followed a description of the three wise men coming from the East with "gold, frankincense and myrrh," as His worshippers. The religious expectancy on the part of the nations of that day was emphasized. Not only on the fast of the Hebrew people, but proofs were cited wherein the Chinese, Persians, Greeks and Latins had stronger longings for a great deliverer.

The following points were given as suggesting the 19th century view of Christ, all of which views were proven by Scripture.

1. Jesus Christ was a man.
2. Jesus Christ was Divine.
3. Jesus Christ was God-man.

This is the only and highest conception of Christ possible to the faith of man, and this is the view of Him held by the church to-day.

A number of poetic selections were employed throughout the sermon which gave force as well as beauty to the discourse.

The musical selections rendered by the choir during the day needs more than passing notice. The choir consisted of the following: Sopranos, Mesdames B. J. Sibbert and C. L. Voss; Altos, Misses Sarah Temple and Florence Kirkup; Tenor, B. J. Sibbert; Basses, Messrs. J. I. Gibson, A. Hill and

Prof. Van Ness; Organist, Mrs. W. C. Van Ness. The following constituted the special selections: Anthems, "Calm on the Listening Ear of Night," by Parks; "Hark, Hark, my Soul," by Shelley; Quartet, "Glory to God in the Highest," by Simper; Solo by Mrs. B. J. Sibbert, "The Golden Threshold" violin obligato and organ accompaniments.

Thus closed a day of hallowed memories, precious thoughts and everything calculated to stimulate to higher endeavor and holier life.

At St. Rose of Lima.

Christmas festivities among our Catholic friends began at 6 o'clock on Christmas eve. This was a treat for the little folks and the sisters had the matter in charge. The tree, a fine evergreen, was beautifully decorated and loaded down with the presents brought in by loving friends. Mr. M. Griffin was the jolly Santa Claus and he made lots of fun for the youngsters. The program was exceedingly well carried out. Owing to lack of space we are obliged to omit it.

As on Christmas eve the Catholics were the first to begin so they were again on Christmas day, for in the darkness of the early morning the church was crowded with devotees. The singing was by a trained chorus of young children and was very pretty. One hundred and fifty members of the congregation partook of the holy communion at the early mass.

The high mass at 10:30 was largely attended. Seventeen children partook of their first communion. The musical part of the service was exceedingly well rendered. Concone's Mass in F, was sung by the full choir, composed as follows: Mrs. A. J. Stohl, Soloist; Basses, P. E. C. Lally, Hugh McGuire; Sopranos, A. White, M. Kavanaugh, E. Griffin, May Connolly; Altos, M. Lally, Stacia Denaby, L. McGuire; Tenors, Frank Fee, M. Griffin.

Rev. Father M. J. Farrelly preached a very appropriate and instructive sermon, calling attention to the fact that Christ's birth was the central event in the World's history. Everything prior to that time pointed to Christ's coming and everything since has reverted to it. Christ has been the greatest ruler of men, the power of other rulers has lasted a few years at best, but Christ's power has strengthened as the centuries roll into eternity. The birth of Christ in Bethlehem causes all to pause. The unbeliever is surprised at the stir and the joy, and asks: What does it all mean? The Christian pauses too, why should he not be glad, and go, in spirit at least, to Bethlehem and adore.

The circumstances of Christ's birth are in keeping with his greatness, his wisdom, his goodness. The poverty, humiliation, and suffering which attended it were fitting contrasts to the character of the great event. Are riches to be exchanged for poverty or robes of royalty to be exchanged for rags and wretchedness? Are magnificence and splendor to be exchanged for sorrow and tears? Yes. This is no vain paradox, and you must admit that while there were a few things grand and surprising—sudden bursts of light piercing the darkness of the night; Angels talking with the Shepherds, heavenly choirs resounding through the air, a miraculous star leading the wise men of the East to Bethlehem, there was a mysterious something about the poverty, humiliation and suffering in which the Savior was born that make a profound impression upon the hearts of men. The whole scene is painted with the Divine hand. It is the attribute of Divinity to produce grand and extraordinary results from mean and trifling causes. Who would think of thus describing it "You shall find the infant wrapt in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger?" This language is from heaven, it is simple, it is a prosaic statement of the grandest, the most magnificent event in the history of the world. The Savior needs nothing of this world's greatness, needed none of the rags that man prepares for man. The circumstances of his birth were in keeping with his greatness.

The circumstances were in keeping with his wisdom. St. Paul says: "The foolishness of God is wiser than all the wisdom of men." How can you explain this alarming text if not by the mystery of the manger? What do you behold at Bethlehem today—A God who weeps, a God who suffers, incarnate wisdom wrapt in swaddling clothes. It was in keeping with his wisdom to be born in poverty, humiliation and suffering, that he might remedy, moderate, and annihilate the pride, the pleasure, and the pomp that had taken possession of the hearts of men. Father Farrelly developed these ideas and called on men of pride to look at the humble scene. What is better calculated to destroy one's pride. Oh you men of pride behold your God and your Savior in the most humble condition, in the foul smelling stable, to teach you this evil of pride. Among these stupid animals, to teach you the enormity of the brutal passions which control your hearts. Wrapt in swaddling bands to teach you the evil of the sins which bind your souls.

The circumstances in keeping with his goodness. Goodness and mercy brought Him down to earth from heaven. Could anything be more comfortable to the goodness of God than to be born of a mortal woman as we are? Could he have contracted a more intimate union with our race than to become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone? Thus we can understand the words of the Apostle St. John. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us and we saw his glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father."

He came to heal all afflictions and sorrows; St. Paul says: "We have a high priest in Heaven who has compassion on our afflictions and who is competent to give this invitation to all men." "Come to me all ye that labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh thee." No matter how much joy and happiness we have in this world some time or other our hearts are pierced by sorrow and if we are true followers of Christ we cheerfully accept his invitation.

God is so holy, so awful that man could never approach him in all his glory. Through his goodness he became one of us so that we might not, like the Israelites of old, fear to look towards the holy mountain. He became as us the true Emmanuel living with us, speaking to us, teaching us the way to Heaven by word and example. It was a dark night at Bethlehem, but from the pallet of straw there shone a light that has enlightened the world, dazzled, confused and confounded the Pharisees and the Sadducees, driven out devils, and healed all disease. A light with power over Hell and death; that established a religion that is dedicated to the True and Loving God, a religion loved and admired the world over wherever the story of Bethlehem has been told and its practical lessons learned.