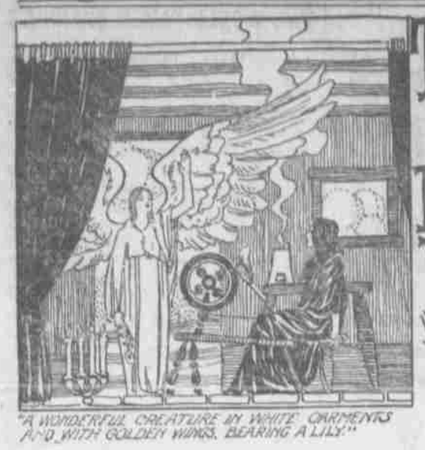


"A WONDERFUL CREATURE IN WHITE GARMENTS AND WITH GOLDEN WINGS, BEARING A LILY."

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS PLAY EVER WRITTEN

SOFT and low, melodious, penetrating, the tones of a bell break the stillness that has fallen upon the little audience. Cowled monks step noiselessly to the sides of a wooden stage and draw the curtains. Lighted candles shine brightly in contrast to the darkened amphitheater. A great robed figure, august and majestic, wearing a triple crown, moves to the fore. He is attended by a court who sing and dance and toss up censers until he lifts his hand. They they fall mute and the silence spreads instantly to the people below, who had stirred and leaned forward in the intensity of their interest when the curtain parted disclosing the magnificent scene. It is a Miracle play—the first Christmas play—and it is singed in the cathedral of a medieval town in northern England. The great robed figure is the representation of God Himself. The singers are attendant angels. The scene is—heaven.

God speaks. In sonorous Latin is disclosed the order of creation and God's will toward man. Monotonously the words roll forth, and almost endlessly it seems to the awed listeners. But at last it does end and there follows a strange interruption, ludicrous, almost sacrilegious. An ugly creature, clad in goatskins and with two ram's horns on its head, capers forward, a clown, a buffoon. With strange grimaces and sinister contortions it asks and receives leave to become a curse and a plague upon men, then it departs as it came, grotesque and out of place, disappearing beneath the stage—the devil going down to hell. An organ peals from out the half gloom, the angels dance and sing and toss their censers and the first scene closes as it opened.

Outside the cathedral the old town is deserted, its streets snow-covered and silent. All its inhabitants, the visitors within its gates and the people from far and near around it are gathered within the cathedral to witness the first Christmas play. It is a solemn occasion; one meant to convey its impressiveness and teach its lesson for a distinct purpose. The cathedral is only part finished and the artisans and craftsmen who are completing it will draw from tonight's production of the Miracles inspiration for their work of decorating and carving and building.

From far lands and near these workmen have gathered. Skilled men from across the seas have been hired and brought here to exercise their skillfulness. Others have come because of their love for the art they represent, anxious for an opportunity to let it speak in the scrolls and figures and images of this sacred place. Still others are there from a sense of religious duty, and yet others to do penance for their sins by manual labor in such a cause.

All these sit within the cathedral. With them are the people of the town, the hinds and yokels of the surrounding hills, the tradesmen and craftsmen of the little village, together with their wives and sweethearts. Little children are there, half-frightened at times, then merry, and again saddened by the pathos they scarcely understand. It is a typical crowd of the time and the season, but such an one as was never before gathered, for Christmas has hitherto been celebrated differently in Merry England.

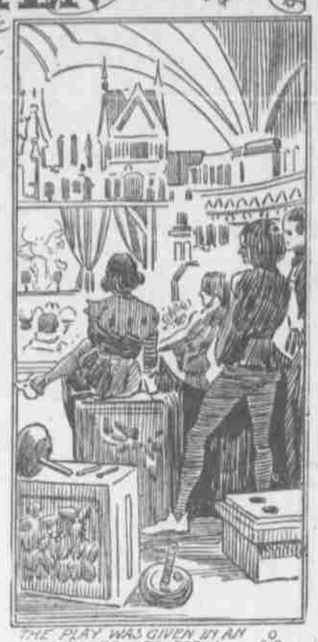
For days the preparations for the Miracle play have gone forward. About the partly finished cathedral there has been no sound of hammer or chisel or knife. In place of the workmen busy about the building have been monks decorating the interior with holly boughs and yew and Christmas green. The stage has been put in place, the curtain arranged and the trappings gotten into working order. It was pioneer work, and to our modern eyes it would seem strangely crude, but in that time it was destined to be a marvel for many days to come.

Somewhat of the grotesque again appears in the second act of the Christmas play, but it is short, the first two being chiefly preludes to that which is of the greatest interest and most pertinent to the season—scenes portraying the coming of Christ. The second act tells of the Fall. It is tedious, but thought by the monks to be necessary for the setting of the real story that is to be told.

Finally, the curtain is drawn for the third, and by the dim rays of a lamp Mary is disclosed, in her humble cottage, spinning. She sings as she works and all is quiet and peaceful. Suddenly the light on the stage increases, a rustling is heard and a wonderful creature in white garments and with golden wings appears, bearing a lily and crying, "Ave Maria, Gratia Plena!" Timid and confused, Mary rises but does not answer. Gabriel comforts her and sings about his glad message. Then Mary kneels and gives thanks to God and the angel disappears, leaving the room half darkened again. Clearly and joyfully there sounds through the church the voice of Mary singing the "Magnificat," while from the audience come the sounds of women weeping as the curtain falls.

Next is shown a shepherds' camp in the hills of Judea. It is wonderfully realistic, a fact which the countrymen present acknowledge in low murmurs of appreciation. Real sheep are bleating in the fold and the shepherds lounge about talking of the day's work. The simplest things of their life engross them—the death of a lamb, the whereabouts of a sheep that has disappeared.

As their talk ceases and they fall asleep, soft notes issue from the hidden organ. The stage is darkened now and the scene, with the dying melodies echoing through the cathedral, most impressive. Then a ray of



THE PLAY WAS GIVEN BY AN UNFINISHED CATHEDRAL

light breaks and grows in splendor across the stage and Gabriel is seen, on a platform so arranged that he appears to be in the clouds. The shepherds awake, frightened and confused, sheltering their eyes from the brilliant light. But Gabriel heartens them by waving his lily and calling upon them to be of good cheer, and then suddenly a choir of angels gather about him, singing "Gloria in Excelsis," and the shepherds fall down and worship. Still kneeling as Gabriel and his heavenly choir disappear, the shepherds chant a familiar carol, partly in Latin, partly in English, and the chords of the organ sound again, soft and low and distant, while the voices of the people take up the melody down in the body of the church.

When the curtain is again drawn there is shown the stable at Bethlehem, the star shining above it. Mary is there, kneeling, and Joseph leans upon his staff. Before the ox and the ass is the manger, and in it, on the straw, clothed in jeweled robes, lies the child Jesus. The shepherds have followed the star and bow in dumb show while solemn music is chanted from a distance.

Then enters a magnificent array—the three kings come to do worship to the new-born Prince of Peace. As the chant dies down the roll of drums and the shrill of fifes and trumpets announce the royal cortege and the kings pass in stately review, each doing his obeisance to the child in its lowly cradle, each presenting it with some costly gift, each laying his crown at the feet of the Savior. Then the royal figures and their retainers join the humble shepherds, kneeling and worshiping in silence. Soft and low, then rising higher, comes again the melody of the distant angel choir, then it diminishes and dies away as the curtain closes and the lights go out.

So ended the first Christmas play ever written.

Odd News From Big Cities

Stories of Strange Happenings in the Metropolitan Towns

The Pursuit of the Tricky Smuggler

NEW YORK.—What is the psychology of the smuggler? Is he actuated by greed? Does he love the game for its excitement? Does he look upon the government as so impersonal a thing that to steal from it is not a sin? Is the rich man instinctively a greater smuggler than the poor man, and is the American a greater sinner than his alien brother?

These questions surely must have occurred to everyone who has been watching the extraordinary recent happenings at the New York custom house; who has made note of the millionaires and their wives who have been caught red-handed in attempts to cheat the government in the most brazen fashion; who has read of the tremendous frauds upon the customs perpetrated by the sugar trust and other great importers.

Collector Loeb has imbued subordinates with the conviction that they are not paid their salaries to help folk cheat the government. Among passengers, at least, most of the smuggling in the old days was accomplished through collusion of subordinates in the customs service. The system steadily developed through many, many years, until the sophisticated traveler knew perfectly that a ten or twenty dollar bill, laid on the top tray of a trunk, would, when that trunk was opened on the dock, insure immunity from actual search, and that the money would be missing, later when the trunk was opened at hotel or home. A ten or twenty dollar bill so placed, in these days, would be like a spark to set a whole train of official powder burning—a train of powder which would lead to an explosion beyond doubt. It might blow the culprit into jail; it certainly would blow a heavy fine out of his pocket.

Dozens of explosions have occurred of late and it is, in a way, refreshing to run through the list of victims—although, of course, this also has its melancholy aspect. The rich smuggler gets no more mercy than the poor one—and the smuggler oftener is rich than poor.

"In numerical proportion do you catch as many smugglers among steerage passengers as among travelers in the first cabin?" the vigorous collector was asked.

"No," he said. "I don't believe we do."

"What is the psychology of that?"

"I—haven't thought it out," said he a little hesitantly. "It would be interesting, though. Perhaps the fact that one has money makes him nervier. That may be it."

"The average of human honesty is very high. Newspaper readers are likely to go wrong in thinking about that. You see there is no mention made in newspapers of the ten thousand passengers who come into this port and make completely honest declarations of their baggage; there is not the slightest comment on the one hundred thousand business men who continually import material without effort at evasion. Only the crooks whom we manage to detect attract attention. That's one trouble with this world. No reporter dashes down here with his pencil and his pad, his fingers eager to record the fact that no dishonesty has been discovered among the passengers of an incoming ship. 'Not a Smuggler Caught' would be a tiresome headline, possibly, to most newspaper readers."

"Are you getting all the smugglers nowadays?"

He answered without hesitation. "There is very little smuggling at this port which we do not discover. No; I don't believe we miss so very much."

Plundering a City's Philanthropists

PITTSBURG, PA.—"So-called 'Philanthropy' has become one of the leading crimes of Pittsburg—a crime to which we have found it necessary to apply heroic treatment."

Peter Pry Shevlin, a Pittsburg detective, who has been given the task of running down "Philanthropic crooks" in Pittsburg, made this remark:

"The good people of Pittsburg are virtually sandbagged each year out of more than enough to keep our poor in luxury," he continued, "and yet of each dollar given through the honest philanthropic promoter only about forty co of it reaches the point for which it was intended. As for the dishonest promoter who is now festing Pittsburg—well, he gets it and in most cases comes back w an expense account to collect—a collects it."

It has been proved that a man with a good suit of clothes and a good address can, by gaining an audience with some of the social leaders in Pittsburg and getting a name or so signed to a paper, start out and collect from $1,000 to $10,000 with little trouble. The amount of money he gets depends largely on the nature of the scheme.

The first of the alleged high-class philanthropic crooks to be taken in by the Pittsburg police through Shevlin's work is one named Silverman, who, it is alleged by the police, has already cleaned up $25,000 through the laxness of method in giving, by the rich of Pittsburg. Silverman has been in the toils in Pittsburg at least twenty times, but each time, until the present, he has been helped out by very rich relatives of his wife. Now the postal authorities have him.

Detective Shevlin went to arrest him some days since. The detective grabbed Silverman, put his stenographers out of the offices, locked the rooms, and proceeded with the indignant Silverman to the police station, where he registered as a "philanthropic promoter."

Shevlin then rushed back to open up the rooms and get what data he could from the books. In his absence the mail carrier had come to the office of Silverman, and not being able to gain entrance, had shoved under the doors letters containing checks to the amount of more than $1,000. And this from but one trip of the mailman!

The police claim Silverman is but one of the gang that has been in the habit of collecting an aggregate of $1,000,000 per year out of rich people in Pittsburg on the "charity game," then not turning over anything, or at least a small percentage, to charity.

All Betting Now Illegal in New York

ALBANY, N. Y.—All of the several laws prohibiting betting of every character in the state of New York are now in effect. These laws were originally aimed solely at racing, but amendments and changes were made until now it is hazardous to offer to make a wager by word of mouth. While there can be no wager unless there are two persons to the transaction, but if the offer is made and accepted, though no money be passed, the law is violated.

Directors and managers of race tracks are made liable for any violations that may occur within their grounds. Just as long as the blame was not fixed on them directly they were willing to race, and those desiring to bet on the races could find ways of their own to evade the law. The fixing of the liability on the race track directors themselves put things in an entirely different light.

The laws apparently leave no loop hole and several of the poolrooms and handbook men, who have done a thriving business in New York, have put up the shutters and others have intimated that they will make no further fight for a play when it may mean arrest and a jail term. If any plan has been devised to evade the law it is not generally known. Of course there are many who will continue to bet as they have before, but the handbook men are looking for new customers. There is fear and trembling all along the line.

Though horse racing is a favorite medium for bettors, there is another sport that will feel the effects of the new law. It is boxing. At all of the club affairs there has been plenty of bets made on the result, and it has been the custom to make them openly. Now it will have to be done under cover, and then in violation of the law. "Orally or otherwise," as the law reads, puts up the bars just about as tightly as could be imagined.

Bent Pin Upsets Dignity of the Court

ST. LOUIS.—Judge William Jefferson Pollard of the Dayton street police court is sore as a result of the action of an undiscovered enemy who wounded his dignity and nether limbs by inserting a bent pin into his anatomy while he was sitting on the bench.

The bent pin was fastened in a board underneath the desk under which he stretched his legs.

The judge, after hearing a case on trial, started to cross his legs, preliminary to launching his judicial dictum, when an explosive "Ouch!" from the judicial lips startled the crowded courtroom and stopped the proceedings.

The judge quickly uncrossed his legs and tenderly rubbed the right one, while a pained and indignant expression possessed his features. He stooped underneath the desk and arose a moment later with a bent pin in his hands, which he held up for inspection.

"This thing has to stop!" he thundered. "This is not the first time I have been similarly outraged, and if it is not stopped I will demand a searching police investigation. I have a very strong suspicion of the identity of the person responsible for it, and I propose to make it hot for him if my suspicions are confirmed."

Judge Pollard would not tell who it is he suspects of the joke. He says he is not thin skinned, but he does draw the line at such pointed attacks.

PERFUME FAVORED BY QUEENS

Royal Family of England Remain Faithful to "Ess Bouquet"—Czarina is Fond of White Violet.

Queen Mary is not a lover of perfume. She uses eau de cologne occasionally, but avoids scents as much as possible. A west end chemist told the writer recently that neither is Queen Alexandra very fond of perfumes, although she remains faithful to the "Ess Bouquet," which has been in use by the royal family of England since 1822. This perfume is composed of amber mixed with the essences of roses, violets, jasmine, orange flowers and lavender.

On the other hand the Czarina is passionately fond of perfume. Her apartments in the royal palace are daily sprayed with essences of lilac, jasmine, and white violet. Her Majesty's favorite essence is violet, and for several weeks in the early spring hundreds of women and girls may be seen at Grasse gathering the blossoms from which the Czarina's perfume is made. The finished product is tested, bottle by bottle, at the St. Petersburg Academy of Chemistry before being sent to the imperial store.

The Queen Mother of Spain uses as perfume eau d'espagne, manufactured in Madrid, and also obtains a perfume for her toilet from Paris. Its composition is a secret which the perfumer only half discloses. "It is made," he says, "of rosewater, cocoanut oil, and—the rest is a mystery."

The young Queen of Holland is a great believer in the virtues of eau de cologne; while "Carmen Sylvia," Queen of Roumania, uses a special perfume made from the finest herbs, which she says "is the best tonic for the skin she has yet discovered."

How It Happened.

He was limping down the street with one arm in a sling and both eyes in mourning.

"What's the matter?" queried a friend. "Automobile accident?"

"No," replied the other, sadly. "I met a man who couldn't take a joke."

His Means.

"You are charged with vagrancy, prisoner at the bar."

"What's dat, judge?"

"Vagrancy? Why, you have no visible means of support."

"Huh! Heah's mah wife, judge; Mary, is you visible."

GIVE HER ANOTHER.

Fondpar—You say baby swallowed a spoon? Did it hurt her?

Mrs. Fondpar—I'm afraid so; she hasn't been able to stir since!

MAN WHO HELPS HIS BROTHER

His "Boys" Call Him the "General Adviser Without Pay"—He Is Partial to None.

When a man loves to live he usually can go among men who care little whether they live or not and do good. Such a man is Augustus E. Vaughan, immaculate of dress and of heart venerable in years and usefulness, whom one may see almost any day either on Boston Common or at the Young Men's Christian Union.

His specialty is helping his fallen and discouraged brother, whether he be a cigarette smoking boy or a rum-sodden and disheartened derelict of a man. His creed is cheerfulness and his passion is books.

Often one may see him, tall and straight, faultlessly attired in a frock coat, with his flowing white beard and his long and carefully trimmed white locks, standing with or sitting beside some ragged and unkempt victim of circumstances who has sought the only place where the police will not tell him to move on, the Common, and then one is sure to be struck by the contrast. Many a man he has met there has later become as clean of body and heart as himself, and all through his infectious good nature and brotherly comraderie.

Among the younger men with whom this old young man of 75 unceasingly labors he is known as "the general adviser without pay," and he is as interested in their ambitions as they can be, and so youthful is he in their presence that he is always one of them.

Mr. Vaughan is not engaged in active business this summer, but he comes to Boston every day, rain or shine, to talk with his "boys," as he calls them. Some of these have never before known a real friend. He is highly educated, and counts among his friends many college presidents and professors.

He was born in Middleboro, nearly seventy-five years ago, and traces his lineage back to Peregrine White of Mayflower fame.

"I love to live," said he to me, "and I want to help 'the boys' to enjoy living, too."

Sense of Taste.

From a series of experiments recently made at the University of Kansas it is evident that the average person can taste the bitter of quinine when one part is dissolved in 52,000 parts of water. Salt was detected in water when one part to 640 of the liquid was used. Sugar could be tasted in 228 parts of water and common soda in 48. In nearly all cases women could detect a smaller quantity than men.

A Long Chance.

"I took a long chance when I asked her to marry me."

"She rejected you, eh?"

"No, that was the long chance I took. She accepted me."

The girl in the silk stockings never gets her skirts muddy.

The Shadow of the Christmas Tree

THE CHRISTMAS festival has long been a beautiful one. The celebration of the natal day of the Prophet of Peace is fitting, and its sacred significance to the nations shows no signs of abatement. The period of glad tidings to the children properly quickens the hearts of adults at the sight of happy, guileless childhood in the midst of its simple pleasures, surrounded on all sides by the memorials of their tenderest affections. The joys of childhood are now the joys of all. It is the Christmastide!

This is the season when the limits of usefulness are unmargined. No errand of mercy is neglected—sympathy blankets the unlovely forms of envy and hate. Human-kind is sweet and gentle. And yet who could believe that somewhere in the sun of this apparently universal joy there is a cloud of sorrow far larger than a man's hand? Even so it is. Ah! you say you do not wish to discover it? Perhaps not; but it is discovered by multitudes whose lives it darkens with deeper gloom from year to year. It—can you believe it?—is the shadow of the Christmas tree!

Is it possible that the beautiful tree around whose branches dance the joyous feet of beaming children is responsible for aught else than happiness? Come with me here to the forest and ask the tiny, hungering, shivering forms crouching among the blackened stumps and rotting branches of the spruces, pines and cedars. Ask the chickadees, kinglets, crossbills, waxwings and other forest rangers among our birds what cheer on Christmas day. If inclined to complain they could tell you of desecrated home trees, stolen granaries, devastated shelters, their only proof from the terrible rigors of the awful winter nights, of the increasing hardships pressing upon them from all sides, and the gradual but sure depletion of their tribes. The birds may tell you of a thoughtless lack of mercy.

Ask the lover of trees and he will tell you of the early passing of these his favorites of the woods. He will wonder how it can be possible unwit-

tingly to strike down the growth of twenty years—these trees are very slow growers—and the prospective beauty of a century or more, for the very questionable enjoyment of their dying hours for a day or a week, even when decorated with gifts and gaudy tinsel. He will tell you, perhaps, that at one time the use of these evergreens was the expression of a genuine sentiment by those who loved them, but that now cupidity for easy dollars alone prompts their being trafficked in. He will not fail to tell you of the utter disregard for and appreciation of tree life that has taken hold of the lives of city children as a result of the method pursued in the holiday season. He may say that a trip to the woods or the planting of a tree is an entirely wholesome way of providing a Christmas tree. Giving the birds a luncheon by the children will not be costly, and a real Christmas tree for the birds will make all happy.

He may ask if you believe the Creator is pleased with the terrible sacrifice in His name.

The practical farmer will tell you without the need of questioning that a very valuable line of timber is destroyed in the Christmas tree business, and that every particle of it goes to waste. His story of floods and drought, connected very properly in his mind with the disappearance of our forests, and his annual loss, adds still to the size of the cloud and relates it directly with the very children who are momentarily delighted with the glitter of the Christmas tree.

Does it not look then as if when we celebrate the birth of the Prophet of Peace we are at the same time warring thoughtlessly but needlessly on His creatures? Does it not seem clear that while we are endeavoring to create beauty in the home and church we are in reality working a vast devastation out of doors? Does it not appeal to you as being true that formerly the Christmas tree was used to decorate the home, school and church, whereas today we are making it but a peg on which to hang artificial decorations? How does the spirit of Arbor day comport with the Christmas tree traffic? From the economic standpoint as related to posterity can we afford to continue this vast Christmas tree custom?

The Crawling Stone Lake

Indians Hold That Its Floating Rock Was Once the Throne of the Great Spirit.

In the northern part of Wisconsin is a large lake whose waters abound in fish. In this lake there is also a great rock which floats about in its waters. This rock is held by the Chippewa Indians as a sacred monument to the great Manito.

Stories are told generation after generation that this great rock was at one time the throne of the great spirit. Here he sat and ruled the people, the animals of the forest around and the fishes of the waters of this lake. As time went by this rock was gradually being worn away and the great spirit had to go to a new home.

Every summer the Indians hold dances near the place where the rock stands. This they do to celebrate the time when the Manito took his leave. They bring food and tobacco and place them on the rock so if the great spirit does not get enough to eat in the other world he comes down and gets the food that is placed by his former subjects.

No white man is allowed to catch fish in this lake, for the fish were put there by the great spirit for the Indians only. The rock floats about, being pushed by the waves, hence the name, "Crawling Stone Lake."