The Spokane Press.

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Published Every Evening Except Sunday by The Press Publishing Co.

SCRIPPS-McRAE PRESS SERVICE.

One cent per copy, six cents per week, twenty-five cents per month or $3 per year, delivered by carrier. No free copies.

316 Front Ave.

Telephone Main 375.

Entered at Spokane, Wash., as second-class matter.

CHARLES A. DANA ENDORSED SANTA CLAUS.

Once upon a time a very dear little girl wrote to the editor of the New York Sun, and asked him if there was a Santa Claus.

She was troubled. Grown folks had looked wise and told this midget, whose name was Virginia O'Hanlon, that the Santa Claus idea was very well for babies, but she was getting to be a big girl, and it was time that she put childish nonsense away with her dolls.

They didn't know that the child feeling always lives in the hearts of some of the grandest women in the world; that there are women who keep their dolls and love them even after they are mothers of flesh and blood babies. Those are mothers who believe in Santa Claus, and all the good things that add joy to life.

Who shall say that they are less wise than a few ministers, who insist that Santa Claus is a myth, and should have no standing in their churches?

Is it possible that there are ministers who will believe in only that which they can see, and would deliberately take from the children an idea that measures its age by centuries, and has made so much joy and love and human sunshine for children, and for men and women, that it has become a world blessing?

Charles A. Dana was a big, broad, strong man, the last man in the world to encourage an idea that smacked of deceit.

He was a lover of children to the day of his death, and he believed that anything that made happiness and smiles couldn't be bad, but must be good.

And this very wise man sat down and wrote these things to little Virginia O'Hanlon:

"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 your life its highest beauty and joy.

"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 ever saw 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 there are unseen or 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 agony 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."

SANTA CLAUS BANISHED FROM CHURCHES.

The Ministers' union at Hamilton, O., has put a ban upon Santa Claus, holding him to be a theatrical imposture, which their consciences will no longer permit them to give countenance. The jolly old fellow, with his good cheer and merrymaking, is banished from these ministers' churches.

It is quite possible that these ministers have mistaken sluggish livers for consciences.

It is quite possible, too, that Santa Claus, with his sweet traditions, redolent of brotherly love, charity and the impartial love of the Universal Father of us all, has done more for the promition of real religion than have all the preachers in the world.

Take Santa Claus and the spirit, sentiments and emotions he stands for out of the world for a single generation, and the true message of Christ would become incomprehensible to the indifferent human mind.

Too many ministers of the gospel belong to that large class who look upon religion as the means merely by which one secures the eternal salvation of his own soul.

Any meaning beyond that is blank to them.

Real, blood-warm, heart-deep sympathy with and love of humanity, such as is represented and aroused by Santa Claus at Christmas time—the sacrifice without hope of credit, the giving for the mere sake of the mutual joy of giver and recipient—are all an "imposture" in the mind of that narrow incarnate selfishness which seeks in religion only the salvation of its own little soul.

Santa Claus may be an "imposture," but the joy he brings to millions of little hearts is genuine.

And the cheer and uplift he gives to older ones, who through surreptitious giving may eliminate all taint of selfishness, is genuine, too.

The world can not afford to lose either.

KISSING IN OSHKOSH.

A jury at Oshkosh, Wis., has given a verdict of $500 to Miss Ida Zacher, who sued a wealthy mill owner, because he kissed her three times without asking.

Is this to be taken as indication that in Oshkosh it is customary to ask a girl before kissing her?

If so, the price set by this jury upon the Oshkosh kisses is outrageously high. The kiss that is to be got by asking is worth far less than that.

It would be interesting to the world in general to know just how the Oshkosh girl expects to be asked. Is the request and the response required to be so definite that no opportunity is left for the play of instinct, intuition or telepathy? Is the request to be made in writing, or will a verbal one do?

It is related that the Indian, in his native romanticism, made his first advances by approaching the young squaw of his choice, looking her in the eye, raising one hand with one finger raised and then slowly bringing another finger alongside the first. If the girl laid one of her own fingers beside her nose, it meant willingness. If she ran away, the other meaning was equally clear.

For aught known to the contrary, this system may still survive in the social circles of Oshkosh.

KING GEORGE.

ATHENS, Dec. 24.—King George received many congratulations today on the occasion of his fifty-seventh birthday. Messages were received from the various courts of Europe testifying to the general esteem in which the King of Greece is held. Minister Jackson, who arrived from Berlin last week, called in person and paid his respects to the king.

BOYS SAY THEY ARE HELD UP AND ROBBED.

Four boys reported to the police last night that they were robbed by the brakemen on the Spokane Falls & Northern railroad when near Deer Park on their way from Northport to this city.

Juneau, Alaska.—The grand jury has indicted every gambler in Juneau, Douglas and Skagway and gambling is at a standstill.

Society Lady Caught Stealing a Pair of Shoes.

The shoplifters' harvest time is here and that class of people in Spokane, as well as elsewhere, are plying their occupation with a spirit deserving of a better cause.

Little is heard in public of the work of the shoplifter for the reason that the merchants prefer to settle with them personally rather than to notify the officers and make the affairs public. One reason for this is that the dealers do not care to have it known that their customers are of that class, and then there is more chance of getting their money or the goods back in a personal interview than by having the parties arrested and locked up.

The manager of one of Spokane's largest stores said last evening that the amount of petty thieving by customers was something surprising. And they will take anything they can get their hands on, too, whether it is something they need or not.

"I know half a dozen people," said the manager, "who are among the most highly respected families of the city who are habitual shoplifters. They do not steal because they need to, for they are able to pay for everything they want, but it seems to be a sort of second nature to them. We, of course, know them and when one comes into the store every clerk is at once on the watch and yet they manage to get away with something."

"Today noon," continued the manager, "a woman was detected in placing a pair of shoes under her cloak. The clerk who witnessed the act accused her of it and was called down hard by the woman for daring to accuse her of stealing, but he was insistent and she finally removed the shoes from their hiding place. She was compelled to pay for them and was then told that her presence in that store hereafter is not desired."

At another of the big stores five detectives are employed during the holiday season and yet, the proprietor told the reporter, that the petty thieving was constantly going on.

There is hardly a store in the city, especially where smal larticles are displayed on the counters and within reach, that does not suffer to a considerable extent i nthis way. And yet, with all the thieving in vogue, there have been but two cases in which the offenders have been taken into court during the present holiday season.

As a rule the shoplifters are females, but occasionally a man is caught in the act. The experienced clerk can tell instantly in many cases when a person is a shoplifter by the peculiar gleam of the eye or the cunning, watchful expression of the face, and when these are noted every move of the customer is watched.

It often occurs that a customer is known to the floorwalker as a suspicious person. In many places a system of mental telegraph signals is employed and before the person can ply the profession every clerk is watching carefully. But with all the devices for detecing the shoplifter the large stores are losers from this cause daily.

WHERE NONE SAVE THE TITLED MAY SKATE.

A LONDON ICE PALACE WHICH IS ALMOST AS EXCLUSIVE AS BUCKINGHAM PALACE ITSELF—SUNDAY AFTERNOON IS THE MOST POPULAR TIME FOR SWELLDOM'S SPORT.

THE SWELLEST SKATING RINK IN ENGLAND.

LONDON, Dec. 24.—Lords, ladies and gentlefolk of the British aristocracy are learning to take their "pleasure pleasantly" on the glary surface of an artificial ice rink, and they have gone in for the sport quite "fiercely." Sunday is the favorite day of amusement among the elect.

Next to Buckingham palace itself, in exclusiveness, is the skating palace in Argyll st., West end. You can't get in unless you are a newspaper correspondent with a pass or a prince of a reigning house. Even honorary membership is limited to ambassadors, charges d'affaires and other distinguished persons, but very few of them are tolerated.

Her grace, the duchess of Bedford, is the chairman of the membership committee, which consists of four lords, two ladies, one honorable and several esquires, and it takes but two black balls to bar out a prospective member. The blackballing is done mercilessly. So could anything be more splendidly exclusive?

Once inside, everything is a dream of luxury and comfort; soft carpets, gleaming lights, dreamy music, eggshell china cups, gold-laced attendants, ice of the best, skates of the best, skaters of the best—everything of the best.

It is delightfully exhilarating. There is the pleasant whir-r-r from the ice; a keen, tingling whiff of clean, cold air comes up from below, for you must keep off the ice yourself if you are only a spectator, and watch things from the balcony. The breath of the skaters comes up like steam from a silver kettle; there is noise, laughter, a gabble of happy conversation, color and the graceful rhythm of the poetry of motion. There you see "the glass of fashion and the mold of form."

Society is really, truly enjoying itself—letting itself go, politely, yes, splendidly. Society is falling down, beautifully. And getting up—as only society can get up, with more grace than the untitled could ever dream of.

The orchestra in the balcony plays a dreamy waltz, and the expert skaters try a measure on the ice, some well, some indifferently, and some disastrously.

After the waltz there is an interesting display of figure skating by the instructors, and some of the daring pupils even attempt it.

The sport goes on till 5 o'clock, when men with their hand-plows come onto the ice and shave the surface down smooth, and then the machine which makes the artificial ice gets in its work for the evening's fun. Meanwhile society goes home to tea.

The Passing of the Locomotive Fireman.

"Each advance in an industry implies the discarding or superseding of older methods and appliances for those better and more economical, and brings corresponding increase in the application and use of the process in which the improvement has been made," said an old railroader to a Press reporter last night.

"The stage coach was replaced by the locomotive, now the steam locomotive is threatened by the electric locomotive.

"When the use of fuel on a locomotive becomes unnecessary," he continued, "then the fireman is a thing of the past. Here the introduction of the mechanical stokers, whereby the labor of handling coal is performed by machinery, enables one man to take the place of several in the older methods.

"The change from coal to oil on several large lines reduced the labor of the fireman but increased the strain on the brain. The firing of an oil burner requires a man of talent and an active and trustworthy man.

"In firing a coal burner there is a knack of keeping up steam with a small amount of coal and a trained fireman can not be replaced. His presence is felt at the end of the month when the fuel bills are compared against each engine and each fireman," he continued reminiscently.

"The same with an oil burner, the fireman is required to furnish a gradual stream of oil into the spray, which, if not properly attended to, will result in the immediate dropping off in steam and in some cases results in the total loss of fire between stations, causing the engine to give up its train.

"The improvements call for men of better training and, while the firemen have served their purpose and will continue to do so, yet the passing of their occupation is to be among the general changes in the industrial processes."

ASHKABAD EARTHQUAKES CONTINUE FATAL RESULTS.

ASHKABAD, Russian Turkestan, Dec. 24.—The number of victims of the recent earthquake will reach 4000. The shocks continue with increasing violence.

MABINI'S RELEASE.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24.—It is semi-officially understood that the war department stands ready to comply with the request of the anti-imperialist movement that Apolibaro Mabini, Aguinaldo's former secretary of state, shall be released unconditionally from exile and captivity. Mabini still refuses to take the oath of allegiance.

Strong Men Hunger for a Bite of Candy.

"Did yon know that there were candy fiends as well as slaves to dope?" asked a prominent purveyor of sweets of The Press man this morning.

"Well, it's a fact, and it'll surprise you to know that the worst victims are not women either.

"That white-haired old man who just went out must have his nibble at French candy or he can't sleep at night, so he tells me.

"Every walk of life has its candy fiends, women and men, and they are not simply folks with a sweet tooth, but people to whom a certain amount of sweets is an acute necessity.

"The doctors approve of the use of good candy and the practice even with the fiends has no bad aftereffects, of course, but it did look undignified to me when I first went into the business to have staid business men, dapper clerks and gray-beards coming in every day or so for their half pound of chocolates, their bonbons or their French confections. But I understood the mania after a while.

"No, indeed," he concluded, shutting the showcase door with a snap, "the ladies are not the heaviest consumers of candy by any means."

GIVES COAL AWAY.

YONKERS, N. Y., Dec. 24.—It would take more than a Christmas stocking to hold the presents which John E. Andrus, the wealthy medicine manufacturer, will give away tomorrow. Mr. Andrus has undertaken to supply a Christmas dinner to every poor family in Yonkers and also a barrel of coal wherewith to cook it. All sections of the city have been visited by his special agents and if anyone is left unprovided for it will not be because of negligence on the part of the philanthropist.

MINING.

State Mining Inspector Martin Jacobs of Idaho estimates the mineral production in Idaho for 1902 at $10,924,371.83.

The Victory-Triumph mine on Sophie mountain, near Rossland, B. C., will soon be operated again. It has been closed for four years. It is also proposed to install a high-grade stamp mill.

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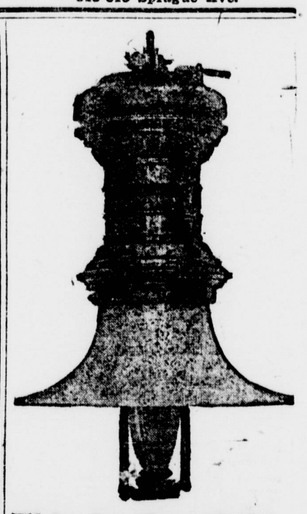

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3:45 P. M.	EXPRESS—For Farmington, Colfax, Pullman, Moscow, Lewiston, Portland, San Francisco, Baker City all points EAST.	
	EXPRESS—From all points EAST, Baker City, San Francisco, Portland, Colfax, Garfield and Farmington.	9:55 A. M.

*Except Sunday.
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