

Farmers' Champion

Successor to Indianoma Champion

Vol. 3

ELGIN, OKLAHOMA, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1912

No. 9



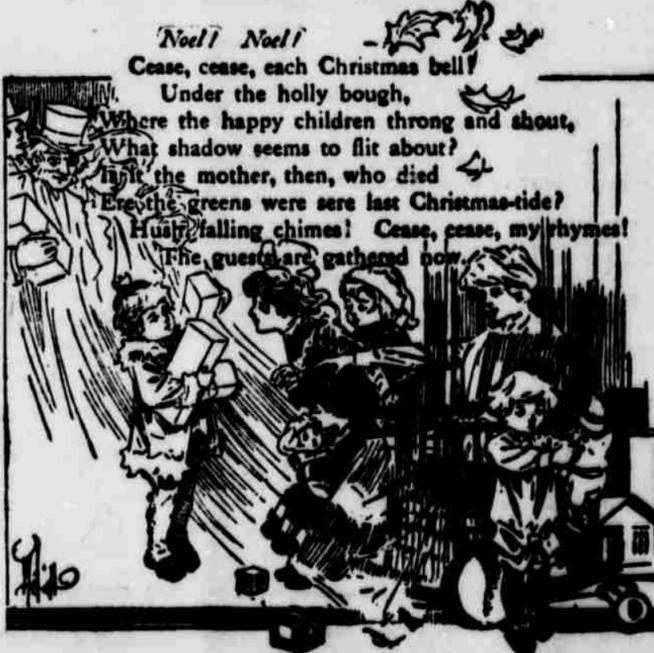
Guests At The Yule

Edmund
Clarence
Stedman



NOEL! NOEL!
Thus sounds each Christmas bell
Across the winter snow,
But what are the little footprints all
That mark the path from the churchyard wall?
They are those of the children who tonight
From sleep by the Christmas bells are wakened;
They ring sweetly, chimes! Soft, soft, my rhymes!
Their beds are under the snow.

Noel! Noel!
Carols each Christmas bell
What are the wraiths that meet
That gather near the window-pane
Where the winter frost all day has lain?
They are soulless elves, who vain would peep
Within, and laugh at our Christmas cheer,
Ring fleetly, chimes! Swift, swift, my rhymes!
They are made of the mocking mist



Merry Christmas



Christmas Legends

Around the season of the Coming of Love as a little Child there have sprung legends and beliefs, like blossoms in a gracious climate, which testify with subtlety to the depth of the appeal of the birth of Christ. Here divinely spiritual symbolism and those sweet human tenderness and pathos appear, and, blended, they evidence the world's belief that this was both Son of Man and Son of God.

An Irish legend tells that, on Christmas eve, the Christ-Child wanders out in the darkness and cold, and the peasants still put lighted candles in their windows to guide the sacred little feet, that they may not stumble on their way to their homes. And in Hungary the people go yet further in their tenderness for the Child, they spread feasts and leave their doors open that He may enter at His will, while throughout Christendom there is a belief that no evil can touch any child who is born on Christmas eve.

The legend which tells how the very hay which lined the manger in which the Holy Babe was laid put forth living red blossoms at midwinter at the touch of the Babe's body could only have arisen from belief in the renewal of life through the Lord of Life.

Holy Thorn.

It is not so many centuries ago since there was that holy thorn at Glastonbury which blossomed every Christmas, and, so ran the legend, had come ever since St. Joseph of Arimathea, having come as an apostle to Britain, and, landing at Glastonbury, had stuck his staff of dry hawthorn into the soil, commanding it to put forth leaves and blossoms. This the staff straightway did, and thereby was the king converted to the Christian faith, the faith which preached life from death.

The holy thorn of Glastonbury flourished during the centuries until the civil wars. During those it was uprooted; but several persons had had trees growing from cuttings from the original tree, and those continued to bloom at the Christ-season, just as their parent, which had grown from St. Joseph's staff, had bloomed. And about the middle of the 18th century it was recorded in the Gentleman's Magazine how the famous holy thorn would not deign to recognize the new style calendar, which had then come into force but would persist in blossoming as of old on old Christmas day!

In those days the anniversary of the advent of the Babe had certainly meant more to the common people than merely a time for feasting and revelry, for giving and receiving; it had been also a season for holy observances, for they refused to go to church on New Christmas day, the holy thorn not being then in blossom. So serious became the trouble that the clergy found it prudent to announce that Old Christmas day should also be kept sacred as before. Only another story of men's weak, superstitious minds? True, perhaps; but they are better who evidence some spiritual weakness than those who wallow in the wholly material, and when we cease to be careful of the cup and the platter, we become not ever careful of their contents.

Christmas Rose.

NOTHER of those spiritual parables is the legend of the Christmas rose, and it tells how good things, fit for giving, spring up ready to the hand who earnestly desires to give to the Child. It is said that a certain maiden of Bethlehem was so poor that she had nothing to give to the Babe to whom kings brought wealth from afar, and, as she stood, longing and mourning, and angel appeared to her, saying: "Look at thy feet, beneath the snow," and lo! on obeying the maiden found that a new flower had miraculously sprung up and blossomed at her needs. Every since then, runs this story, this exquisite flower, with its snowy petals just touched by suggestions of pinkish bloom, is to be found at this season; and, indeed, its half-closed eyes are like children of love and its fragrance is a perfume of the Babe of spotless innocence. "Whose heart was the vessel of love."

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