

BILL ARP'S LETTER

Some History Arent the Ancient Origin of Christmas Festival.

DIFFICULTIES IN ESTABLISHING DATE

Old Father Time Experienced Hard Time in Finally Getting His Calendar on Straight.

Nearly sixteen hundred years have passed since Christmas was first celebrated by Christians. During all these long centuries they have not failed to meet somewhere and pay reverence to the day that somehow was chosen as the birth of the Savior. It is not at all certain that the 25th of December was His birthday, but that does not matter much, so that Christian people observe some day and show their gratitude. Indeed, the Greeks and the Russians still celebrate the 5th of January and call it Christmas, for they have never yet adopted the new calendar established by Pope Gregory XIII in the year 1582. Now, it is important for the young people and many of the old ones to know that for nearly sixteen centuries old Father Time had been gaining a little every year on the exact time that it takes the earth to go around the sun. This gain had amounted to about twelve days, so the pope, who was a great and wise man, issued his mandate that time should be set back, and it was set back. All the Roman Catholic countries conformed at once to the new date, but the Protestant countries were jealous of the pope, and so Germany would not conform until the year 1700. Great Britain and Ireland refused to conform until the year 1752, and the American colonies put it off a few years later. Greece and Russia have not conformed yet, but they will. They are getting tired of having to put two dates to all their letters and commercial transactions with other countries. When General Young was our consul at St. Petersburg all his letters that were written home had two dates that were twelve days apart. One he marked "N. S." for new style, and the other "O. S." for old style. England had to abandon another measure of time, for until about two hundred years ago the new year began on the 25th of March. Some countries began it on Easter day. I tell you, my young friends, old Father Time has had a perplexing problem to keep his calendar straight. The day used to begin at 6 o'clock in the morning. The week began on Monday. The Jews had twelve lunar months of twenty-eight days, and every third year had thirteen to make up for lost time. For centuries there were only ten months in the year among the Greeks and Romans, and February had thirty-six days just like all the other months. But popes and emperors ruled the civilized world, and changed the measures of time to suit their own whims. Pope Gregory was a scholar, a mathematician and a promoter of public education, and he knew that the calendar was wrong, and was getting more so every year. It was a bold stroke of power, but he was backed by all the great astronomers of Europe, and he set the clock back, and it stands.

But what about Christmas? It has to be written about every time it comes around, for there is a new generation of young people coming on every year, and they must be taught to know as much as those who are older. This is the most important event that ever happened in the history of the world, and every man and woman and every boy and girl who can read should be as familiar with it as they are with the spelling book. The word "mass" does not literally mean birth. It means "dismissed," and came into use because after any service in the Roman Catholic church the priest would say the congregation is now dismissed. In Latin, it is "mass." Hence, there was high mass and low mass and candle mass and Michael mass and Christmas—a dismissal and benediction after worship.

For two or three centuries after Christ His followers had so many ups and downs they could not establish holy days or feasts or festivals. Some emperors were kind and tolerant and some were cruel and persecuted them. During the reign of the Emperor Diocletian the Christians of Rome determined to celebrate Christmas in their own church where they had been permitted to worship, but Diocletian had taken a great dislike to them, and after the church was full he sent soldiers there and locked the doors and set fire to the building and burned them all alive—men, women and children. The wretch died soon after, but it was many years before Christians dared to celebrate Christmas again. This was about the year 310. But the utmost efforts of kings and emperors to extinguish Christianity failed. The more

martyrs the more Christians. They seemed to thrive on persecution, and hence it was said that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Just think how much we have to be thankful for in this age and in this land of religious liberty. No martyrs, no persecutions, no inquisition, but every man and woman can worship God according to their own conscience, with none to molest or make them afraid. The turrets and spires of beautiful churches adorn our land in every city, town and village, and are a silent guarantee of good will and protection to every stranger that comes.

But Christmas has had no good time in coming down to us through the ages. In some countries it was made a frolic—a bacchanalian revel. The gay and the dissipated danced to the music of silly and profane carols and desecrated the day with wine and irreverent song. This desecration got to be so universal, and so shameful that many good Christians ceased to celebrate it. The Puritans refused to observe it and so did the people of Scotland. The Scotch do not observe it now. Well, it is a desecration even here, for it is made a day of thoughtless feasting and frolic instead of a day of thankfulness. Christmas trees and gifts to the children are very proper and gifts to the poor are especially so, but all the day long our gratitude to God for His goodness should be uppermost in the minds of all intelligent people. The children, of course, we must humor to their innocent faith in Santa Claus and his reindeer, for he is supposed to be a great and good old man who loves them and is wonderfully rich. His Russian name is St. Nicholas and his Dutch name is Kriss Kringle, and for fifteen hundred years he has been known as the patron saint of all good children. He is no myth, but was a veritable bishop in his day, and was not only devoted to little children, but took pleasure in helping young men and maidens mate and marry. The mistletoe feature of Christmas came down from him, it is said, and if a young man and maiden will plight their troth, that is, become engaged on Christmas day while standing under a mistletoe bough, they will never forsake their loves nor be divorced.

This is enough for me to write about Christmas. The books have many pretty stories and poems about this ever memorable day. The most beautiful and impressive of them all is the one written by Clement C. Moore, beginning "Twas the night before Christmas." The next best is by a Virginia lady, "Kate Festicus." Her maiden name was Neely, but she, for some reason, swapped it off for some outlandish, jaw-breaking name that I don't understand. Her poem is an exquisite gem. The last verse says:

"Let none unchristmased go,
Let none from any door
Unwarmed, unfed,
No kind word said,
Helpless be turned away
For their own sake we pray."

That is the best part of Christmas—making others happy—and if I was a law-maker I would make the whole week a holiday and give a good dinner to the poor and even to the prisoners in jail. And nobody should dun anybody or write a dunning letter to disturb his tranquility. I received one this morning. The clans have begun to gather at the family mansion and the maternal ancestor is happy, and 'trips her light fantastic toes all over the house. It does not cost anything to run Christmas at our house, for the children bring their rations with them, and one of the far-away boys writes: "Hire another servant or two at my expense. I don't want daddy to have to bring in wood and coal any more, and I want a Sunday dinner every day in the week."—Bill Arp, in Atlanta Constitution.

Arrangements have been completed for the purchase of about 435 acres south of Indianapolis, Ind., on which new factories are to be located. One hundred and twenty acres of the tract are to be divided into twenty-four factory sites, and the remainder into building lots for employees. Ten factories are to be the nucleus around which others will gather. The promoters of the plan will give a guarantee bond for \$60,000 that they will have not less than ten factories, employing not less than 2,000 hands, in active operation on or before December 31, 1902.

A well-known insurance statistician of America states that the death rate of persons under twenty years, and especially young children, is greater in the United States than in most European countries; but that after middle-age Americans live longer.

The Island of Java, about 673 miles in length and 125 miles in width, and located only three degrees off the equator, has the distinguishing position of supplying practically all the cinchona bark from which the world's supply of quinine is made. There are about 25,000 acres of this island used in growing cinchona.

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON

The Eminent Divine's Sunday Discourse.

Subject: The Merciful Interpretation of Human Behavior—Follow the Divine Leading—We Will Not Pass This Way Again, So Do Your Good Now.

WASHINGTON, D. C.—This discourse is a most unusual presentation of things that take place in many lives, and Dr. Talmage pleads for merciful interpretation of human behavior. The text is Joshua iii, 4, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore."

In December, 1880, I waded the River Jordan, and, although the current was strong, I was able to bear up against it, but in the time of spring freshet, when the snows on Mount Lebanon melt, nothing but a miracle would enable any one to cross this river. It was at the dangerous springtime that Joshua and the officers of his army uttered the words of my text to the people who were in a few hours to cross the Jordan. About that crossing we say but little, because on a previous occasion we discoursed concerning that piling up of the waters into crystal barricade. We only speak of the march to the brink of the river. No stranger thing has ever occurred in all history.

The ark of the covenant was a brilliant chest of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, on the top of which were two winged figures facing each other. It was five feet long and three feet wide. Poles were thrust through the rings at the side, and by these poles the ark was lifted. This splendid box was to be carried three-quarters of a mile ahead of the hosts of Israel on the way to the crossing. That distance between the box and the advancing thousands must be kept because of reverence. There was a sanctity in that divine symbol that they must observe by keeping three-quarters of a mile away. They must watch that glittering box and follow; otherwise they would lose their way and not arrive at the right place for crossing. They had never been there before, and they must be guided. For that reason Joshua utters the words of my text, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." And the subordinate officers at the head of the regiments repeated it, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore."

What was truthfully said of the ancient Israelites may be truthfully said of us. We are making our first and last journey through this world. It is possible, as some of my good friends believe, that this world will be corrected and improved and purified and glorified and emparadised as to climate and soil and character until it shall become a heaven for the ransomed, but I do not think it. I have an idea that heaven is already built somewhere. Our departed friends could not wait until this world is fixed up for stately and angelic residence. Having once gone out of the world, I do not think we will come back, except as ministering spirits to help those who remain in the earthly struggle or perhaps to look at the wondrous spectacle of a burning planet.

But, leaving that theory aside, we are very sure that we are for the first time walking the earthly pilgrimage. "Ye have not passed this way before." Every minute is a new minute, every hour a new hour, every century a new century. Other folks have gone over the same road we are traveling, but it is our first trip. New experiences, new temptations, new sorrows, new joys. That is the reason so many lose their way. They meet some one on the road of life and ask for direction, and wrong direction is given. We have all been perplexed by misdirection after asking the way to some place we wished to visit. Some one said to us, "Take the first road to the right and, having gone a mile on that road, take the first road on the left, and you will soon reach your destination." We took the advice, but our informant forgot a turn in the road or forgot one of the roads leading to the left, and we took the wrong road and were lost in the woods, and night came on, and we were put to great irritation and trouble.

The fact is, I blame no one for making lifetime mistakes. I pity them instead of blaming them. There are so many wrong roads, but only one right one. You cannot in midlife draw upon your youthful experiences for wisdom, for midlife is so entirely different from youth. You cannot in old age draw upon midlife experiences, for the two stages of existence are so diverse. What is wisdom for one man to do would be folly for another to undertake. A man of nerve and pluck is not qualified to advise a man timid and shrinking. An achievement that would be easy for you might be impossible for me. Human advice is ordinarily of little value. People review their own successes or failures and then tell us what is best for us to do, not realizing that our circumstances are different, our temperaments are different, our physical and mental and moral capacities different. Most of the great mistakes that have been made have been made under human advisement.

So, also, it may be said to every nation, "Ye have not passed this way before." Our own republic is going through novel experiences. Could wisest statesmen twenty years ago have prophesied present conditions? Every President, every Congress, has new crises to meet and new questions to settle. So prophecies made about conditions in this country fifty years from now may turn out as far untrue as the prophecies made fifty years ago by the greatest of American statesmen when he declared on yonder Capitol hill that it was unwise to think of civilization or prosperity the other side of the Rocky Mountains, and according to his belief the Pacific coast would be the perpetual abode of barbarians and mountain lions, and we must not think of annexing those forbidding regions.

Many prophecies in regard to our nation failed and many prophecies concerning its future will fail, because it is traveling a new road. Every step it takes on that road is a novelty. The opinion of a Monroe or a Jefferson in the far past is not of as much value as the opinion of our wisest men now. How could men know in 1823 what it would be best for this nation to do in 1901? It is belittling as well as unwise for our statesmen, who are quite equal to the statesmen of the past and who have, in addition to the natural talents of their predecessors, attainments in knowledge that were impossible in any decade but our own, to depend on advice of men who have been dead three-quarters of a century. In all other things the world has advanced. Can it be that in statesmanship it has gone back, and that this opening of the twentieth century must consult the opening of the nineteenth century? "Ye have not passed this way before."

Yes, our entire world is on a new pathway. It may be swinging in the same old orbit as when by the hand of the Almighty immensity was sprinkled with worlds, but it has been rocked with earthquakes and scorched with volcanic fires and whelmed with tidal waves and wrought upon by climatic changes—cities

sunk, and islands lifted, and mountains avalanche into valleys.

So it is another world than that which was first started in the solar system. Yet it is all the time changing and will keep changing until the hour of its demolition. Of this beautiful world, this hallowed world, this glorious world, it may be said, "Ye have not passed this way before."

What is the practical use of this subject? Instead of putting so much stress upon human advice and instead of asking of the past what we ought to do, follow the divine leading as the men of Joshua followed the golden hided chest of acacia, which was the symbol of the divine presence.

That three-quarters of a mile distance between the ark or sacred box and the front column of Joshua's troops mightily impresses me. It was a forcible way of teaching reverence for the Almighty. They needed to learn that lesson of reverence, as we all need to learn it. Irreverence has cursed all nations, and none more than our own. Irreverence in the use of God's name. Hear you it not on the streets and in social groups, and is not a profane word sometimes thought necessary to point justice? Irreverence for the Scriptures, the phraseology of the Bible often introduced into the most frivolous conversation and made mirth provoking. Irreverence for the oath in courtroom or custom house or legislative hall by the conventional and mechanical mode of its administration. Irreverence for the holy Sabbath by the way it is broken in pleasure excursion and carousal. Irreverence on the part of children for their parents, insolence being substituted for obedience. Irreverence for rulers, which induces vile cartoons and assassination. Irreverence in church during prayer, measuring off song and sermon by cold, artistic or literary criticism, and in prayer time neither bowing the head nor bending the knee nor standing as one does in the presence of earthly ruler, thus showing more respect for a man than for the King of kings. We ask not for genuflections or circumflexions or prostrations, but when prayer is offered let us either bow the head or bend the knee or let us in some way prove that we are not indifferent.

No one has come to midlife who has not been stung of ingratitude. On the battlefield of Alma in 1854 a wounded Russian was crying in anguish of thirst for water. Captain Eddington, of the English Army, ran to him and gave him drink. As the captain was running by to join his regiment the wounded soldier shot him. Almost all languages have proverbs setting forth this perversity. English proverb, "Bring up a raven and it will pick out your eyes." Arabic proverb, "Eat the present and break the dish." Italian proverb, "The ass, after having drunk, gives a kick to the bucket." An old proverb says, "If God were to be so complacent as to carry us on His back to Rome, we would not thank Him for His pains if He did not also set us down in an easy chair." You will never be happy in this world if you do not do all the good you can and look for no responsive gratitude. All the damage I did a man who is my enemy was to take him from a position where he received \$700 a year salary into a position where he has ever since received \$2500 a year. He never forgave me, but has pursued me with penitential ever since. The worst enemy you ever had is the man you introduced and favored and helped. But be not disturbed or even irritated. You are no better than your Lord.

If the world had had any thankful appreciation of His coming it would have filled that Bethlehem caravansary with flowers, which bloom there clear on into the December month, and Herod, instead of attempting His death, would have sent a chariot to fetch the infant to the palace, and the oyer and terminer of Pilate's courtroom would have pronounced Him not guilty, and instead of a cross and a crown of thorns it would have been a coronation, with all the mighty ones of the earth kneeling at the foot of His throne.

But closely allied is the other fact which we hinted at in the opening—that we will not pass this way again. This is our only opportunity for doing certain things that ought to be done. On all sides there are griefs we ought to solace, hunger we ought to feed, cold that we ought to warm, kind words that we ought to speak, generous deeds we ought to perform. All that you and I do toward making this world better and happier we must do very soon or never do at all. Joshua and his troops never came back over the way they were marching toward the crossing of the Jordan. The impress of the sandal or the bare feet of each soldier showed in what direction he was going, but never did the impress of the sandal of any one of them show that he had returned. We are all facing eternity to come. There is no retreat. Alertness and fidelity would not be so important if we could truthfully say: "I will be back here again. The things I neglect now I will do the next time I come. I will be reincarnated, and I will resume my earthly obligations. Having then more knowledge than I have now, I will discharge my earthly duties better than I can now discharge them. I do not give solemn farewell to these obligations and opportunities, but a smiling and cheery good-bye until I see them again." No, we cannot say that. There will be no new and corrected edition of the volume of our earthly life. After we make exit from the stage at the close of the fifth act we cannot re-enter.

How many millions of people have lived and died I know not, but of all the human race who have gone only seven persons that I now think of have returned, the son of the widow at Zarephath, the young man of Nain, the ruler's daughter, Tabitha, Eutychus, Lazarus and Christ. Among all the ages to come I do not suppose there will be one more who will return to this life, having once left it.

At this point I ask you to notice the fact that my text does not call attention to the crossing of the Jordan, but to the way leading thereto. We all think much of our crossing of the Jordan when the march of our life is ended, but put too little emphasis on the way that leads to the crossing. What you and I need most to care about is the direction of the road we are traveling. We need have no fear of the crossing if we come to it in the right way. In other words, we need not care about death if our life has been what it ought to be. We will die right if we live right.

What an absurdity it would have been for Joshua and his men to have asked each other questions like these: "How can we cross the Jordan if we get there? Will not the water be too deep to allow us to wade? Will we not all be so saturated that we may lose our lives by exposure? How many of us can swim? Had we better not wait until the annual freshet has subsided?" No such folly did they commit. They were chiefly anxious about the way that they had "not passed before" and were ignorant of and to keep their eyes on the golden covered acacia box, wing mounted, which was the ark of the covenant.

O hearer, stop bothering about your exit from sublunary scenes! By the grace of God get your heart right and then go

ahead. If the Lord takes care of you clear on to the bank on this side of the river, I think you can trust Him to take you from bank to bank, from the willows on this side the stream to the palms on the other side, from the last kiss of sorrowing ones on this side to the welcome, saintly, cherubic, seraphic, deific on the other side.

One Easter morning Massena, the Marshal of France appeared with 15,000 armed men on the heights above the town of Feldkirch. There were no arms to defend the town, and the inhabitants were wild with terror. Then the old dean of the church cried out: "My brothers, this is Easter day! We have been depending on our own strength, and that fails. Let us turn to God. Ring the bells and have service as usual." Then the bells rang out sweetly and mightily from the church towers of Feldkirch, and the people thronged to the houses of prayer for worship. The sound of the bells made the enemy think that the Austrian army had come in to save the place, and Massena and his 15,000 soldiers retreated. By the time the bells had stopped ringing there was not one soldier in sight. So put your trust in God, and when hosts of troubles and temptations march for your overthrow ring all the bells of hope and faith and Christian triumph, and the threatening perils of your life will fall back, and your deliverance will be celebrated all up and down the skies. The God who led you through the way you never passed before will be with you at all the crossings.

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PROMINENT PEOPLE

General Baden-Powell has returned to South Africa.

Senator W. A. Clark, of Montana, is said to have paid \$300,000 for the Preyer collection of pictures in Vienna.

Charles M. Schwab, President of the United States Steel Corporation, intends to make a three months' visit to Europe shortly.

Edwin Charles Madden, the Third Assistant Postmaster-General, is a native of Michigan. It is said that his great-great-uncle was Lord Nelson, the hero of Trafalgar.

Among the title bearers not destitute of other honors is Lord Kinnaird, of England, who is not only an authority on football, but a duly ordained preacher of the Established Church.

Professor Alexander Agassiz is in charge of an expedition to the Maldiv Islands in the Indian Ocean, which has recently been sent from the Agassiz Museum at Harvard University.

Professor F. F. Mertens, of Russia, who has just returned home from a visit to America, says the thing that impressed him most in this country was the National Library at Washington.

Former Senator Peffer, of Kansas, has prepared a topical index of all the debates in Congress up to 1861, and proposes to make the work complete to the present time, and will try to sell to Congress the result of his labors.

Miss Lisi Carlotta Cipriani, the first woman to take the doctor's degree at the University of Paris, has been selected to take charge of the new course in medieval literature literature at the University of Chicago. She is a Florentine.

Mrs. C. N. Whitman owns the largest ranch of any woman in the world. It is located near Tascosa, Texas, and is called the "L. S." ranch, from Lucien Scott, its first owner. The ranch is thirty miles square and hundreds of sawboys are employed upon it.

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NEWSY CLEANINGS

Two of Chicago's aldermen are blind. Co-education on American lines is growing in popularity in England.

An unnamed Philadelphian has given \$1000 to the library at Freeport, Me.

Governor Otero, of New Mexico, pleads for statehood in his annual report.

The Oriental Hotel, in Yokohama, the handsomest in Japan, has been destroyed by fire.

A Russian officer is at Kieff seeking \$4,000,000 reported buried there in the monastery.

Officials in the Chinese Court are said to be more rapacious than ever, demanding fees for every courtesy.

Some of the Missourians and many Southerners urge that Missouri should no longer be classed as a Southern State.

Peru is sadly in need of a new coinage system. According to a lately published report, eggs are the only circulating medium in one province.

The Canadian Pacific Railroad has surveyed a new route across Maine, which will provide a through line from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Germany sent only 505,152 immigrants to the United States in the years 1890-1900, whereas in the preceding decade the number was 1,452,970.

In the list of diseases reported as accountable for deaths among the soldiers in the Philippines, it is shown that more men succumbed to dysentery than to any other malady.

It is officially estimated that if the waters in our Western States now unused were utilized for irrigation purposes, a population of 80,000,000 more could be sustained in those States.

Philadelphia has in its treasury more than \$75,000 belonging to persons who never called for it when their bonds matured and became payable, or who left uncollected coupons on their bonds.