

The Most Wonderful Man in the History of the World

In the Christmas Woman's Home Companion appears an extraordinary account of the birth of Christ, written by Washington Gladden. The story is told with completeness and reality—just as one might relate the story of the birth of Lincoln or any other great man.

Joseph and Mary were young people who lived in Nazareth of Galilee which is sixty miles north of Bethlehem. They had to go to Bethlehem because it was the city in which their family belonged and the Roman emperor who was making a great census in his empire required every family to be enrolled in its native place.

So Joseph and Mary had come, in the middle of the winter, to this old town of Bethlehem. It was a long journey for those days and those roads, far more wearisome than a trip to Denver or Minneapolis would be for people on the Hudson or the Connecticut. If they traveled by the principal road, as doubtless they did, we know exactly the route they followed—across the great plain of Esdraelon, over the mountains of Samaria and the hill country of Judea to the great city of Jerusalem, then southward about six miles, from that city of Bethlehem.

Now let Dr. Gladden proceed with his narrative:

"Whether Joseph or Mary had ever visited Bethlehem before, we do not know.

"The first thing to do was to find a place where they could abide in Bethlehem, and this was not an easy task. The little town seems to have been full of people who had come perhaps upon the same errand that brought them. You can imagine how it would be if all the descendants of all the families that once lived in one of the old New England hill towns—in Litchfield, say, or Deerfield, or Leominster—if all the descendants of all these families in all parts of the country were ordered to go back there and register.

"So it was at Bethlehem. Very little dependence was placed on inns or hotels by travelers in those days. There were few places of public entertainment. Every private family gladly received and kindly cared for such pilgrims as chanced to pass through their neighborhood.

"But no matter how hospitable men may be, when their houses are full to overflowing they can take no more guests, and this was the condition in which Joseph and Mary found the homes in Bethlehem. To the inn they made their way; but the inn was simply a shelter—a shed enclosing a court, with no furniture and no other provision for the comfort of the traveler than the stone walls and the roof which protected him from the storm. Here upon the bare floor he could spread his rugs for sleep; here he could partake of the food that he had brought in his haversack; and his beast could be left secure in the court within the building.

"Such were the inns, or khans, of the East when Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem. But even such cold comfort as this was not for them. This bare shelter was so crowded that there was no room for them then. The only place they could find was in the stable, and this, as seems probable, was a kind of cave or excavation in the side of the rock, near the inn.

"It has been believed from the earliest day that the place where Jesus was born was a cave under a sheltering rock. This story was current among His followers not a hundred years after His death, and there is no reason to doubt its truth. It was perhaps some such place as the pioneers in Minnesota and Dakota used to call a 'dugout'—a shelter, partly underground, where man and beast together were sometimes forced to find protection from the wintry cold. This was the best entertainment Joseph and Mary could find in Bethlehem; and here it was that the wonderful Babe was born, and found His cradle in a manger.

"Thus it was that the life which was and is the Light of Men began here on the earth. Doubtless this was the greatest moment in the world's history. Could anyone who looked on this Babe as He lay in the manger have dreamed of the place He would fill, of the changes He would bring, of the kingdom He would establish in the world? Could anyone there have guessed that nineteen centuries from that day five hundred millions of the human race would be calling themselves by His name, and more than

half the earth's population would be reckoning their years from the day of His birth; that every seventh day millions on millions of human voices would be lifted up in song to Him in churches and Sunday schools and missions all round the world; that the noblest music the world ever would hear would be music celebrating the birth, the life, and the death of this little Babe; that the highest and purest art of all time would be that in which the story was told of the young Child and His mother; that the noblest architecture the world would ever see would be that which prepared a shrine for the worship of this Babe of Bethlehem; that His birthday would be kept all over the world as a day for giving gifts and sharing pleasures, and that it would be the happiest day of all the days of the whole round year?

"No; none of us could have conceived of such a history as that to whose beginnings we look back on Christmas Day. There has been no parallel to it in the annals of the centuries. The facts which I have recited give some indication of the place that He has won in the thought and affection of mankind; but there are those of us who believe that the greatness of His dominion is yet to be achieved; for it is only within a generation that the real nature of His kingdom has begun to take possession of American thought. The world is now at last beginning to see what Christianity means; that it really proposes to shape the whole of human society here and now according to its law of good will; that it calls us to supplant strife by co-operation, and suspicion by sympathy; to make the spirit of Christmas the law of every day in the year. It has taken the world a long, long time to get hold of the real meaning of Christ's life and teachings and death, but it begins to dawn upon us in these first years of the twentieth century; and when the Christian church learns to put the emphasis where it belongs, His kingdom will come, and His will be done in earth as in heaven."—Nashville Democrat.

DETERIORATION UNDER MONOPOLY

The advocates of the trust system have persistently claimed that efficiency and monopoly go hand in hand, but a non-partisan student of the trust question knows that monopoly is maintained at the expense of efficiency. Louis D. Brandeis tells the people of Boston that monopoly is responsible for New England's wretched railway service. In a statement recently issued, Mr. Brandeis says:

"President Mellen, of the New Haven line can properly be held responsible for many grave defects in management, but the existing evils are not due to the errors or omissions of one man. These evils are due to the adoption by the company of a policy inevitably prejudicial to the interests both of the commonwealth and of the company itself—the fatal policy of monopoly.

"We are reaping now merely the inevitable fruits of that monopoly. Mr. Mellen's energy and restlessness have no doubt accelerated the process of the relative deterioration in New England transportation, and no doubt others might have exhibited more graciousness and patience in action, but no person filling his position could have prevented the inevitable evil consequences of the suppression of substantially all competition in transportation in New England."

Mr. Brandeis criticized the stockholders who "supinely acquiesced in the action of their directors," who supported the monopolistic policy which, he alleged, had been the real source of trouble and friction with the public. Then he pointed out what he said had been the result of that monopoly of transportation.

"Every New Englander must be conscious of the great deterioration in transportation service, to which we had been subjected during the last few years—the period in which in many other parts of the country transportation service has improved, as in other activities we have properly improved during the past decade.

"The omnipresent fact today is increasing cost of living. Our transportation situation is a partial explanation of this increase in the cost of living.

"When the proposals of the merger were made we used to hear much about improvements that were coming; about economies that resulted. On the contrary every change has tended to shift

the burden from the railroad and increase the burden of the community.

"What the railroad has called introducing economies has been merely curtailing of service, and at the same time there have been important increases in railroad fares and in rates. Just a year after the legislature, on Governor Draper's recommendations, passed the railroad holding company act, and legalized the New Haven's control of the Boston and Maine, both systems raised our passenger rates, adding more than \$1,500,000 to their revenue, and adding just that much to the burden of the traveling public and during this same period there have been many increases of freight rates.

"But the burden of the people has not been so much from increased fares and rates as much diminished service. They yielded to the New Haven's demand for the control of the Boston and Maine under the promise that it would result in greatly improved service, and, instead of improvement, has come constant deterioration. A little over a year ago we heard of the appointment by the New Haven of an efficiency committee to go over the Boston and Maine lines. The efficiency committee proved to be an ax committee for its main work was to reduce the number of employes and to cut down expenses, although at that time, as since, the business on the road has been constantly increasing.

"Almost immediately after the New Haven took control of the management of the Boston and Maine, Vice President Barr urged upon the superintendents economies, but that was not enough. This so-called efficiency committee, instead of improving service, was directed to cut off every expense, to cut out 'everything that can be dispensed with that means money,' and not to be 'deterred by anything unless satisfied that the service would be seriously interfered with.'

"It was not a question of giving good service, but a question of cutting down expenses. Men were discharged, trains were taken off, and the threat was held over those remaining in the employ of the railroad company that unless the operating expenses were reduced 'a horrible cut in all salaries' would result.

"The huge expenditures made by the New Haven system in purchasing at exorbitant prices railroads, trolleys and steamships to suppress competition have so weakened the financial condition of the New Haven that, on the one hand it has felt itself unable to provide the money required by a rapidly growing business, and, on the other hand, it has, in its efforts to economize, denied to the public that service to which it is entitled, and by reducing its operating force, while its business was increasing, has put upon its employes a strain which some recent wrecks show that they were unable to bear.

"However averse we may be to government ownership and whatever disposition may be made of the Boston and Maine after it has been acquired by the commonwealth, there now is no way through which the needed improvement in our transportation conditions can be procured except through the exercise by the commonwealth of its reserved right to take away the Boston and Maine from the control of the New Haven."

IN A NUT SHELL

Here is a sermon in a nutshell, printed in the Milwaukee Journal: "Yes, I shot her! Yesterday I was mad; stark, staring mad. I was filled with whisky. Yesterday I wanted her to die. Today I want her to live. I hope she recovers. Yes, I know now that she loved me. I found it out one minute after I shot her. As she lay upon the floor she called to me:

"Don't shoot again. I am going to die now. Won't you kiss me before I die?"

"I knew then that she loved me, but the whisky in me made me hate her. I kissed her lips and then I left the house. My mind is in a haze as to the rest."—Statement of Hugo Bartelt to Capt. John T. Sullivan.

Although Mrs. Bartelt was somewhat improved, her condition was still critical, and little hope was entertained for her recovery.

NOT YET

The Jacksonville (Fla.) Times-Union "spins a web, infernally fine," when it says: "Reference to Woodrow Wilson as president-elect is premature. He is not yet president-elect. He has only been nominated by the people for election by the electoral college."

Well, he is a great deal more "president-elect" than the democrats have had for some time, so they will be pardoned for being a bit premature.