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Vol. 5, No. 2

The LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bulletin

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1970



CHRISTMAS ARGOSY - 1879

A search of the Catlin House for material on which to base a holiday bulletin turned up an ancient, dog-eared booklet published by The Scranton Republican Steam Printing House and Book Bindery in 1879.

Named the "Christmas Argosy," it had not very much to do with Christmas and was more of a literary magazine in the style of that era and apparently was published at Yuletide because it was considered a propitious time for its introduction. It is subtitled "A Scranton Annual."

The "annual" was printed on vermilion faced stock with cover and back page got up by a compositor in the printing shop so far as can be made out by the writer. Whoever did it used a number of stock cuts, known in the trade as "dingbats," including within fancy borders cuts of a monkey descending a tasseled rope, a butterfly, a crane, a rabbit under a plant, a fantastically clothed frog snapping at a spider, an owl and last, but not least, Santa Claus with a pair of reindeer being "guided without any lines" like our well-known sweetheart, the mule in the mines.

The back cover is a full page advertisement for Samter's, the Square-dealing Clothier, which is almost as fancifully decorated as the front cover and among other things pictures a circular fan with a view of a swan, birds, and a pagoda.

Contents of the annual may be described as eclectic. First is a Christmas poem, part of which is reproduced on the center of this page. It runs to five verses some of which have an allusion to Christmas. Our readers are presented with a fair sample. Other contents sound like good reading, however, it turns out that many pages of the magazine are missing - somebody has torn out the most interesting parts. Included in the contents are: "Jonathan Gripp" - A Romance of Razorville; "Humors of Evolution"; "The Sea Bird" - A Poem; "Two Songs, with a Pause Between" - A Honesdale Romance; "Old



CHRISTMAS + MORN.

BY STELLA OF LACKAWANNA.



ROM your slumbers, dull world! hear the bells' merry clangor!
Up, up from your pillow! again breaks the morn,
That out-burst, long ago, from the east, glory-lighted,
Where, low in a manger, the Christ-child was born:
Rend the shackles that bind you! The haze, just o'er-lapping
Yon far stretch of forest, drifts slowly away;
While the sun climbs the cloudland, and leans grandly over,
To fling benedictions of joy o'er the day.

Keep no longer your silence, oh! echoless valleys—
Low-lying, and lonely, where summer hath been,
But, where summer not now dares a foot 'mid the whiteness—
But give back responses, again and again,
To the silver-voiced bells, ringing out the sweet story
So old, yet so new, of the Bethlehem-born,
That the children arouse from their dreams on the hill-side,
And clap their young hands at the heralded morn.

Memories" - A Poem; "A Christmas Reverie" - A Poem; "On the Ither Side o' Tweed" - Scotch Ballad; "Early Days on the Lackawanna" - By Dr. Hollister; "The Golden Message" - A Story by Susan E. Dickinson; "Our Little Sweethearts" - A Story of the Loves of Little Folks; "The Crowbar Brigade" - An Irish Eviction Scene; "Scranton - Past, Present, and Future" By Hon. Lewis Pugh; "Scandinavian Song"; "The Engineer's Story" - From Anna E. Dickinson's "Ragged Register"; "The Gem of the East" - A Study of Damascus; "The Czar's Dream" - A Poem; and last of all, two pages of "Editorial Drift" which critically examine a number of literary and artistic endeavors.

Editors were John E. Barrett and Frank P. Woodward and under their names appears the Latin motto or poem, "Astra Castra, Numen Lumen," translation not supplied.

As stated, the booklet, which promised so much of interest, turned out to be in reality a fragment; however, the person who despoiled the pages left the advertisements pretty well intact - and they present much of the flavor of Christmas in Scranton in 1879.

For example: "The Oldest Grocery House in Scranton is that occupied by F. P. PRICE at No. 305 Lackawanna Avenue and never during its history have goods been sold at such low prices as they are now. This has been brought about by the fact that he has no credit department, etc."

"Megargel, Connell & Co., Wholesale Grocers and Proprietors of The Scranton Steam Coffee and Spice Mills, would call attention to our process of cooling coffee, done by cold air instead of water, etc."

"The Nay Aug House, at Dunmore. Nestling among the Trees is one of the cosiest hostleries in this Section of the State. The Genial Host, John Dekin, Understands how to cater to the Comforts of the Community. His CELLAR is Stocked with the FINEST WINES, and his LARDER with the GOOD CHEER OF LIFE.

In Summer's Heat or Winter's Snows, the NAY AUG HOUSE will be found a pleasant Retreat. It is just a pleasant drive from Scranton."

That is pretty attractive ad writing. Makes you want to spend a little time under its roof.

THE ARGOSY.

The editors in wishing their readers a "Merry Christmas," make bold to give their reasons for publishing THE ARGOSY. It is not an idea of yesterday, taking wings to-day, but has been contemplated for more than a year, with a view of making it a monthly rather than an annual visitor in the community. The importance of this thriving section of Pennsylvania; its enterprise and culture; its flourishing cities, towns and hamlets, and its historic valleys rife with the genius of romance, warrant the belief that the people will support a monthly magazine published in their midst by those who are in sympathy with the struggles of the past, the prosperity of the present and the hopes for the future of this great region. To preserve in substantial form the early traditions, poetry and romance of Northeastern Pennsylvania, to stimulate current thought to ennobling views of the topics of to-day and furnish mental enjoyment for old and young is a task in which the ARGOSY would cheerfully engage.

Should the people manifest a desire to have the magazine a regular visitor at their firesides, the projectors would take great pleasure in making it a monthly publication, and would spare no reasonable expense in making it instructive and interesting. For the present, however, it is a holiday wayfarer. Should it become a resident, it will invite criticism and criticize in turn. At this happy season, when there is a song in every heart, its only aim is to entertain, and if its pages contain anything to add to the joy of the joyful, or lighten the sorrows of the sad we shall be fully recompensed for whatever toil it may have cost.

THE EDITORS

Scranton, Christmas, 1879.

There are many other colorful advertisements for "choice perfumery"; "Blue Points and Maurice Cove Oysters"; newspapers; "Any Disease of the Eye"; "Lampman's Celebrated Hair Producer and Universal Neuralgia Cure"; Attorneys and Counselors-at-Law; The Hyde Park Photograph Gallery; Wyoming Seminary and Commercial College; Lackawanna Valley Bank; "John Jermyn, Special Lines of Black Cashmeres"; Lackawanna Iron and Coal Co.'s General Stores; McDonough and McHale, Practical Butchers;

Dr. J. S. Walden, Dentist; pianos and organs; Centennial Cream Crackers and Cakes; the "Happy Thought Range" and many others; but only two of the ads mention Christmas.

Morton's Grand Annual Display for Christmas mention toys, dolls, books, bibles, prayers, hymns, leather goods, Christmas cards, Bronze and Parian Marble Ware, fancy stationery and Walnut Wall Ornaments as possible Christmas Gifts, and The Academy of Music offered A Merry Christmas with Robson and Crane as the Two Dromios in Shakespeare's Immortal Comic Masterpiece, The Comedy of Errors.

Best of all is an advertising poem in seven verses entitled "The Man Who Won a Wife" who did so through buying his clothes from HINSELL, the Clothier. Unfortunately there isn't space to reproduce it.

Is there a complete copy of this most interesting magazine in existence?

If anybody knows of one, notify the Historical Society. — H.H.N.

AN INVITATION

The Society's Costume Committee invites volunteer seamstresses, with the necessary time available, to spend some of it at the Catlin House mending the beautiful old costumes in the Society's collection. A cup of tea or coffee is promised.

Call Mrs. James Peck, Chairman, at her home — 342-1280 or Miss Dorothea Mattes at the Catlin Home — 344-3841.

DECEMBER MEETING

A wonderful singing group known as "OPERA IV" — a division of the Catholic Choral Society under the leadership of Norbert Betti presented an enjoyable program of Christmas Carols at the December Meeting on Thursday Evening, December 10, at the Catlin House.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Because of ordinarily inhospitable weather, there will be no meeting of the Society in the month of January.

NEW MEMBER

William H. Pitman was the sole new member reported to the Bulletin by the Secretary.

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U.S. POSTAGE
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Permit No. 56
Scranton, Pa.

LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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232 MONROE AVENUE
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18510