

The Herald

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Editor & Publisher

Entered as second-class matter September 8, 1906,
at the post office at Monmouth, Oregon, under the
Act of March 3, 1879.

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY

Subscription Rates

One year . . . \$1.50
Six months . . . 75 cts
Three months . . . 50 cts

Monmouth, Oregon.

FRIDAY, DEC. 22, 1916.



Monmouth Meditations

The sympathy of Monmouth people is extended to Prof. Gentle in his illness and all will be glad to see him out again.

Despite the blockaded streets Monmouth merchants have had a good Christmas business. But all will rejoice when the bars are lifted.

While the wholesaler continues to be a hard thing to get around, Monmouth merchants appear to be doing their best to lower the cost of living. To buy reasonably, buy in Monmouth.

Judging from the sentiments expressed at the school board meeting in Dallas Saturday the proposal to eliminate the county school supervisor is one that was easier to promise than it will be to perform.

A holiday reminder that was passed out this week to 500 citizens of Monmouth and the surrounding country was a calendar, a very pretty one, furnished with the compliments of the merchants of this city. The calendar is in colors and is ornamental, being the picture of a farm maiden who is feeding carrots to a thoroughbred horse.

It is an inspiration to listen to the trained singing of the Normal student body under the guidance of Miss Hoham. The latter is so interested in her work that she is willing to go to extra pains to accommodate the cause. She has volunteered to teach the people who attend Parent-Teacher meetings and this should increase the interest and attendance during the coming months.

Christmas not only calls to mind the birth of the Nazarene who gave an assurance of new life to men, but it observes also the ending of the old year and the birth of the new. Although, according to the calendar, the new year does not begin until January 1st, it really begins on the 21st of December for that is the date when the process of shortening hours ends and the days begin to grow longer again.

Talk of peace in Europe, which was but a mere whisper at the time Ford took his peace ship to Norway, has now gradually increased in volume until now peace has not only been proposed by one of the warring sides but its terms are being discussed on both sides of the controversy. It is universally conceded that the one big obstacle that lies in the road to peace is the belief on one side that the other side is not to be trusted to abide by agreements entered into. The assurance of future peace is the one big object desired and appearances are that the struggle will end in a combination that will enforce its own agreements.

The power of suggestion is frequently demonstrated and the fact that the thoughts of a man, constantly persisted in, become a part of his character is capable of positive proof. A great many people

have it so constantly in their minds that taxes are high that they become obsessed with the notion, whereas the truth is that in proportion to the accepted valuation, taxes in Oregon are not as high as in many eastern states. One of our exchanges recently complained that his subscribers were not loyal, that they were stopping their subscriptions, whereas he had done wonderful things, etc., to get their taxes reduced for them. This publisher was merely reaping what he had sown. He had persuaded his subscribers that they were taxed into poverty, that they were very hard up and could not afford even the necessities, yet he complains when they took him at his word and set about correcting the condition.

The Christmas spirit finds many forms of development outside the family circle, but nevertheless its greatest interest and activity is within that circle. Christmas is a time when to the wanderer, be it ever so humble, comes the thought of home. But not always.

Two years ago the meditator had as a fellow workman, a tramp printer. It was in Southern California, which at this time of the year is a paradise not only for the tourist but for his more humble fellow, the tramp. The travelling printer man, the gentleman who has stuck type in the office of the New York Tribune or in the governments little exponent of the art preservative of arts, is conspicuous among them. The travelling printer is not only a connoisseur of the nectar they distill in Peoria and in Kentucky, but he is particularly keen for exerting himself where the climatic conditions are favorable to his open air habits. He is a fresh air crank and provided he has something warm swishing around under his ribs, he would as soon sleep under the sad and silent stars as under any other sort of a covering.

In the summer he saunters through the north, working when he is compelled to and refreshing himself whenever the opportunity offers. In the winter he seeks the southland with the bob-o-links and soon becomes a geographical authority.

The particular tourist printer spoken of was named McGonnigle. Mac was the way he expected to be addressed. Stooped and a little seedy he nevertheless was well preserved for a man of fifty-eight. His hair was white and his long gray mustache was inclined to be unmanageable. He frequently took out a pocket comb and used it to make the perverse hairs slant east and west, but they inclined to the south and sooner or later became a screen for his mouth.

For a tramp Mac was a model of cleanliness and neatness. He arranged a covering of heavy wrapping paper to keep his hat dry in a vagrant shower that came upon us one evening, and when he did not need his overcoat he wrapped it up in paper that it would not get dusty in its travels.

He carried a small hand bag with him and in it were his printer tools; rules, tweezers, a stick, etc. He also had a modest set of camp equipment; a diminutive frying pan and a ditto coffee pot, a silver plated knife and fork and spoon, and a sharpened case knife. Also he had a small sewing outfit. The wonder was that he could carry the whole of it in so small a hand bag.

He had come up to Arlington from Corona and found us working on a church directory, which was a job large enough to provide a few days work for himself. On the last lap of his journey he had passed the camp of Jim Jeffries, the pugilist, and the latter's brother. These gentlemen were out after grouse but had concluded to make it a souse instead. They were lying dead to the world and Mac laughed softly as he bragged that he had passed by without swiping anything that belonged to them. He was not garrulous but as we worked along, with the aid of a question here and there, he told much of his story.

He was a man of family and had at least two married daughters. Also a wife of whom he did not care

to talk much. He had worked east and west and of course had had a whirl at the government printing office. He had crossed the continental divide several times. Sometimes he paid his fare and sometimes he didn't have the price. He had a constitutional aversion to enriching the railroads anyway. He had never worked much in the south. He didn't fancy the niggers. He told of different towns he had worked in in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Kansas. Different towns on the route he had mentally marked with a red circle. He could get a brief job in any of them any time he called. For twenty years the longest job he had held was a little over a year at Ventura, Calif. But it got to have too much sameness about it and he moved on.

Oregon? Yes, he had worked in Oregon and Washington. Bandon? Sure, he stuck ten point on the Recorder all one day, the hardest day's work he had ever done. He walked in to the Coos country from Roseburg and went out by way of Crescent City.

So we talked on. The old man was setting ads and incidental to his other work the meditator was being entertained with a few pages of human experience and was acquiring more knowledge of the printing art. For these men often pick up valuable ideas in their travels and more than one of the craft who collects moss at home acknowledges debt of wider knowledge from the wanderer.

But the directory had an end that was approaching and the old man was getting uneasy. He had been located a whole week in one place and like the war horse he scented something new further on the trail. He was impatient to be gone.

All the philosophy you can dig up would have it that at this man's time of life he naturally would seek a quiet spot and plan the remainder of his days with some permanence. Not he. He was anxious to see how the shops of Los Angeles looked in the Christmas season. We were in a dry town and possibly he wanted to smell some of the beer soaked corners of San Bernardino again. As the time grew on he was impatient to get what was coming to him and be gone. Invitations to stay only made him more impatient. He left us on Christmas eve. With a few dollars in his pocket he was as excited and interested over his preparations to depart as a boy starting out on his first long journey. He packed his grip, arranged his overcoat and surprised us by breaking into song:

"Maxwilton's braes are bonny when early falls the dew."

His voice quavered a little on some of the high notes but it indicated familiarity with that sort of work, and the quality was considerably beyond the ordinary. So, on Christmas eve, with the light from the houses he passed shining through rings of holly, with the notes of Annie Laurie echoing in his wake, this man, who had no home and apparently did not want one, strode off into the darkness.

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