

# South-Jersey Republican

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Prepared by J. B. BULL, JR., at his residence, 201 Main St., LOUISVILLE, KY.

## A Trip to Dakota.

NO. 1.

MR. EDITOR:—I had not till this fall, for many years, made an extended trip Westward. It will not do to say to the West, for at points which would seem to us undoubtedly Western, the residents do not like to be called Western people, and along the line beyond, "the West" is moving on so rapidly, that you can scarcely find it. But this fall I took a trip toward the West, going about half way across the continent; and as it had great interest to me, some account of it may interest a few of our readers whose plodding home duties, like mine, make such excursions rare occurrences. I was greatly interested by the strides the country has made since I last went west, by the improvements which had been introduced railroad service. The writer well remembers seeing, in early childhood, the start of a relative's family to what was then the far West. They were leaving New York City to go to Illinois. Two large covered wagons were drawn up before the door, one loaded with bedding, cooking utensils, and stores for their long journey of some six weeks; and into the other, father, mother, children and colored servant woman arranged themselves for their long ride. This was nearly seventy years ago. Their route lay, for a large part of it, through unbroken forests, without roads or bridges. There was no such place as Chicago—there was no settlement on the spot. One of the old French forts stood there alone. Western New York even, was a wilderness. Now for the contrast. Our journey of eighteen hundred miles was in its whole length made through a settled country, with its improvements and cultivation. And as to the methods of travel, they have changed entirely since seventy years ago. The old stage coach has had its day, and given place to rails; every year new facilities are added on the rail. At Jersey City we took a palace sleeping car, which carried us to Chicago without change—with no necessity for leaving the car in twenty-five hours. A wonderful speed to be kept up for so long a distance, and wonderful indeed when compared with the six weeks of long ago, for probably about the same distance. We had with us our hotel car, and instead of making a stop for meals, waiting a good part of the "twenty minutes for dinner" before getting served, and then bolting food for fear that "All aboard" should be cried, and the eaters be left, we could when we got ready, step across into the hotel car, sit down at a table, call for what we want, and eat at our leisure. This is a great improvement over even a very few years ago, and a great contrast indeed to the trip of seventy years ago, when our friends must have stopped for meals, unpacked, gathered fuel, made a fire, and cooked their meals by the way side or in the woods. The sleeping car arrangements are too well known even on short routes to need description. But now-a-days, on long routes, one need not stop either to eat or sleep. There are however some drawbacks to dining while in rapid motion. It is a little like dining on board ship in rough water. The management of soup and coffee require a little care and deftness. Thus the passing from car to car while the train is running at high speed is not without discomfort and even risk. One of my party was severely bruised while crossing the platforms. It was a little amusing to see, at the West, the advertisements of railroads not running hotel cars. They set out their advantages in dining-rooms on terra firma, without cinders and dust in the food, without jolting. Our caterer showed us through the kitchen, pantry, store-rooms, etc., on the car. They were marvels of compactness, completeness, and tidiness. He professed to be able to lay in stores to victual the train for two weeks.

Of course one's notice on a long route, is especially attracted to the prominent places on the line; and one is struck with wonder at the West, at the great, active, populous cities planted where

not very long ago it was all a wilderness. The great city of Chicago, solidly and elegantly built, and looking as if it might have taken centuries to make it what it is, was just begun when the writer was married. St. Paul and Minneapolis, now large cities, were insignificant places ten years ago. There is a noticeable difference between those places and the older cities. Their citizens begin by building fine rows and residences, and they are truly elegant cities, beautiful and refined homes being a distinguishing feature in their character. The idea formerly common—that everything at the west, including manners of the people is coarse and common, is quickly dispelled by a visit. People live in the same elegance and refinement in towns at the west that is enjoyed at the East, and everywhere even on farms, you meet cultivated people from the city. In the Eastern states, in farming sections, you find the people nearly all "countrybred" for generations back. But at the West there have been no generations back. The present generation is the first, and they come from all directions and bring every variety of character; but many come from city life.

My visit was to the valley of the Red River of the North—a river peculiar in that it is almost the only river in the United States running north. Where is there another except the St. John's River, Florida? In this far Northern latitude there is a disadvantage in the mouth of the Red River being much further north than its source. The snow and ice on its head waters melt before the river breaks up at its mouth, to give vent to the accumulation of water and disastrous freshets sometimes are the result. The river is so winding that while its course is north, there is much more of its length running east and west than north; and the length of the river is four or five times as great as the distance from source to mouth in a beeline.

I began intending to give your farmer readers some items about farming in Dakota, but I have occupied all my time and space in getting there, and must stop. If you desire I will do what I intended in a later issue of your paper.

JERSEYMAN.

## CHRISTMAS.

The custom of keeping Christmas is of very ancient origin, some authorities placing it as early as the second century. While this observance is not of divine appointment, nor enjoined in the New Testament, it has nevertheless come to be universal in all lands which we call Christian. It is of all the holidays the one most identified with the social and family life of the people. While in all Roman Catholic countries it is more particularly a religious feast, among Protestant nations, everywhere, it is kept chiefly as a holiday which introduces a season of mirth and festivity. Among all classes, however, it is the children's grand jubilee, and its keynote everywhere is joy. While many of its customs are in imitation of heathen rites, such as the trimming of houses and churches with evergreens, lighting of tapers, the yule log, and giving of presents, they are harmless in their influence. It is fitting that once a year all people everywhere should celebrate with tokens of delight the greatest event in the history of our race—the advent of the world's Saviour,—and make it an occasion of joy, of feasting, of thanksgiving, and of distributing gifts in imitation of the infinite love of God in his gift to the world of his only begotten Son.

With joy we'll celebrate his birth,  
And every nation tribute bring,  
While angels to his praise sing,  
And all the world his praises sing.

In England, perhaps, of all countries, Christmas is observed most heartily, and in the greatest variety of ways. On Christmas eve a glowing fire is built on the hearth, and the ceremony of rolling in a great log, called the yule log, begins the celebration. The festivities last until the log is nearly consumed. In many parts, grand dinners are given in the great halls of the houses of the nobility, to which the tenants and domestics are all invited. It is, too, the great day for family gatherings in England. The children come together in the old homestead, which is decorated with ivy, holly, and mistletoe. One of the common customs, called "under the mistletoe," is looked forward to by all the young folks with great anticipations

of pleasure. A branch of mistletoe is hung in the centre of the room, and as long as the berries hang upon it, the lover may kiss his sweetheart whenever he can catch her under it, till the last berry is plucked. The churches, too, are festooned with wreaths and decorated with green boughs and bright berries. But the Christmas dinner is the greatest event in all the land. Abundant provision is made; yet it is never complete without the far-famed plum-pudding.

In Ireland and Scotland, as well as in most of the British provinces, the customs are very much the same as in England, varied chiefly by the history and habits of the people. The midnight mass in Ireland, attended by a torch-light procession, is very impressive. Dancing and open air games amuse the peasantry on Christmas-day.

In the Scotch highlands the day is devoted to feasting and drinking, ball playing and open-air games.

In the Protestant districts of Germany and the north of Europe, Christmas is often called The Children's Festival, and Christmas Eve is devoted to giving presents. Here the Christmas trees had its origin and is universally employed. A tree cheers every home; from the palace to the hut. None are so poor but what they can have a tree, and none so proud and great that they despise it. It stands with its cheering light in asylums, and hospitals, poor-houses and prisons. A large yew bough is erected in one of the parlors, lighted with tapers and hung with manifold gifts, sweetmeats, apples, nuts, toys and bright ornaments. Every member of the family, from the eldest to the youngest, is remembered. A more sober scene follows the distribution of the presents, for the mother takes this occasion to say to the daughters, privately, and the father to the sons, what has been observed most praise-worthy and what most blame-worthy in their conduct. Formerly, and still in some of the villages of North Germany, the presents made by all the parents are sent to some one person, who, in high buskins, white robes, a mask and an enormous wig of flax, becoming the hugar of the children, and known as Knecht Rupert, goes from house to house, is received by the family with great pomp and reverence, calls for the children, and bestows the intended gifts upon them according to the character which he hears from the parents with severe questioning.

In Rome, of course, the centre of all interest is to be found for all Catholic countries. At midnight the guns of the great fort of St. Angelo fire a salute, to announce that the greatest anniversary which the Church celebrates has returned. At once the streets are filled with people hurrying to the midnight mass, which is held with great pomp and splendor in the churches. Minstrels go about the streets, playing before the shrines of the Madonnas. Then the great procession forms to bear the cradle to the chapel of Santa Croce, after which the populace return to their homes.

In Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland, the day before Christmas is observed strictly as a religious fast. No meat is eaten, but toward evening, when the first star appears, the tables are lighted and the great banquet is spread, and all partake with appetites sharpened by the fast. At twelve o'clock guns are fired, drums are beat about the streets and every sort of noise is made until mass begins.

In Turkey, Servia, Roumania, Greece, Russia, and parts of Austria, where the Greek Church holds sway, the feast of Lent comes just before Christmas, otherwise the ceremonies are much the same as the above.

In our own country, containing a mixed population derived chiefly from European countries, it is not strange that we have mixtures and modifications and important changes and additions which the inventive Yankee genius have made peculiarly American. Our Dutch ancestors brought us St. Nicholas and taught us to hang our stockings in the chimney corner.

"In hopes that Saint Nicholas  
Some would be there."

Our German fathers gave us our Christmas tree, and our English mothers taught us to make much of great dinners, using occasionally the plum-pudding to be sure, but never quite able to coax us to substitute it altogether for that New England invention, pumpkin pie. Our best custom, which brings with it the happiest Christmas, is to seek by self-denial and thoughtful attention, to give joy to the poor, the needy, the sick, and the sorrowing. In learning that it is more blessed to give than to receive, we shall more fully realize the good tidings of great joy, which the coming of Bethlehem's Babe brought among men.

Monday night's heavy explosion near Jersey City proved to be at the Seacaus Powder-works.

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