

THE STORY OF THE NATIVITY

This story was told to their teacher, Anthony Walsh, by the children of the Inkameep Indian Reservation, which is situated in the beautiful Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. The story grew as each child, varying in age from six to fourteen, made its contribution. Thus it represents their ideas of the details of the Nativity had it taken place among their own people instead of in Palestine. We reproduce it in part because we think it very lovely.

The Great Chief who ruled them all had sent messengers to all his people while Mary was on a visit to say that he had so many that he wanted to find out just how many there were. So the messengers told them that they were to go to the Head Meeting Place of the Tribe and put their marks down on sheets of birch bark and paint the signs with red ochre. It was now winter and Joseph felt sorry about having to take Mary because she was now so weak. He started a little earlier than the remainder of the tribe, because he had to go slowly on account of Mary. They took with them her two pets, Top-kan, a young coyote puppy, and Kots-se-we-ha, her little chipmunk.

When they had reached the great lake where all the people were gathered, they found the lodges crowded and there was not even any room in the shelters. Joseph felt very hurt but he tried to be cheerful, and told Mary to rest under a tree and he would soon find her a quiet place. He then covered her over with fur robes and searched until he found a little cave. There he carried Mary and went out to get some fir boughs and sage brush for a bed.

While he was gone a deer and her faun came down from the hills and coming into the cave stood by Mary and breathed on her to keep her warm. Then some jack-rabbits left their home under the wild rose bushes and sat at her feet which made her feel cosy. Soon afterwards a flock of chick-a-dees came flying in, and perching on some pieces of rock, sang their cheerful songs to comfort her. When Joseph returned and saw how kind the creatures had been to his dear wife he no longer felt sad but thanked God for His kindness in sending him such good friends in his trouble.

The night became clear with many stars and right over the cave there shone the brightest star that has ever been seen in the valley. The animals and birds seeing how tired both Mary and Joseph looked did some tricks to make them feel happier. The rabbits pretended that they were clowns as they jumped about and danced on their hind legs and then on their front ones, at the same time wagging their long ears, while the birds swooped and soared, as they sang in the sweet-

est way that they could.

When the hour of midnight drew near all of them formed a wall between the man Joseph and the maid Mary, just at the hour the owl hooted twelve times and the cry of a baby was heard; and all the inhabitants of the cave bent their heads to be grouch. Then in the heavens a number of Men with wings sang their songs of praise, while the winged drummers kept up a roll of drums.

Joseph then rose and helped Mary wash the baby. They wrapped Him in the softest doe skins and tied Him to His beautiful cradle-board, which they had spent many hours making as lovely as they knew how. When they stood Him up for all to see, all the creatures, both feathered and furred, made their own special noise of happiness. Although the Baby was so tiny, He was God, so He gave them all a lovely smile to show how pleased He was.

Sometime later footsteps were heard coming across the snow. The visiting creatures ran swiftly to the back of the cave. But Top-kan and Kots-se-we-ah were used to menfolk so they just sat down, one on each side of the Baby, and waited for the visitors. Joseph went outside and asked the newcomers who they were and what they wanted. They told him that after they had put their marks on the birch bark they had returned to their camp to look after their children's pets and see that no harm came to them. There was a young mountain sheep, black bear cubs, gray squirrels and some sick birds that had not been able to fly to the warm south. The men went on to say that they had been sleeping around a fire under the trees when they awoke to hear singing. The heavens were full of Men with Wings, who told them that a Great Chief had been born in a cave near the lake. These men of the Air had also said that they would look after the pets and stay with them until the men returned.

Joseph let the men come in one at a time. They knelt and looked down on the beautiful Baby, and though they did not speak out loud they told Him all that was in their hearts. The youngest man, who was a cripple, then went up and put his pet brown mouse on the corner of the cradle. It stood up on its hind legs, tucked its front feet under its chin and bowed to the Baby. Then it crawled into the lacing near the feet of the Baby, curled up and went to sleep. The oldest man had brought the prettiest of mountain lambs and laid it at Mary's feet. Then, each in turn, went up and shook hands with Mary. After they had warmed themselves at the fire and Joseph had made them some Indian tea, they bowed their heads and left.



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GREETING CARDS

The custom of sending greeting cards is perhaps the youngest member in the family of Christmas traditions, although the ideal was expressed by the Excelsis Deo of the angels.

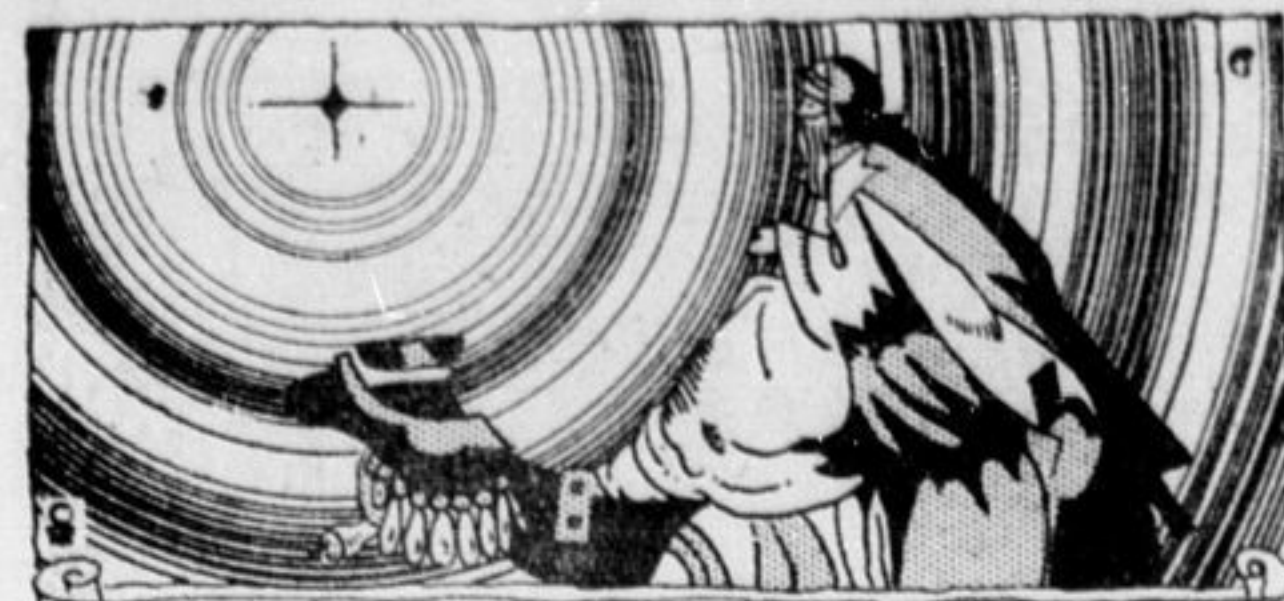
Until authorities at the British museum recently discovered a drawing depicting four scenes of holiday celebration—early Victorian style—dated 1842, J. C. Horsley was accredited with having created the first commercial Christmas card in 1843.

In 1842 creation was an elaborate affair. Drawn by W. M. Edgley, it includes scenes of a dinner party—featuring the plum pudding, a group of carol singers, a crowd watching a Punch and Judy show, a panel of silkhatted and cane-toting ice skaters, dancers doing a Roger de Coverly—the Victorian Conga—and evidence that the poor must not be forgotten.

It is impossible to say whether or not Mr. Horsley was aware of Edgley's masterpiece but Horsley had a friend and thereby hangs the tale. Sir Henry Cole, a man with many friends, was confronted by the task of sending them a cheery holiday greeting. The quill pens in use a century ago sputtered and were irritating, so Sir Henry spoke to Horsley about the matter. Horsley, a member of the Royal Academy in London, was agreeably impressed and turned out an appropriate design inscribed simply "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You."

Edgley and Horsley made beginnings. According to research authorities the custom was taken up in America about 30 years later during the 1870's when Louis Prang, a Boston lithographer printed a catalogue of Christmas cards.

No matter whether the greeting is the elaborate descendant of Edgley's drawing or a simple good wish offered in friendship as worked out by Sir Henry and Horsley, or the glorious echo of the angels' enunciation, send that Christmas card to the boy in the service—and to his loved ones keeping faith at home.—



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