

PROMOTIONS
FROM THE
CHILDREN'S
TABLE

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CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

In 1492
Columbus sailed the ocean blue,
the Admiral of the Ocean Sea
discovering the New World,
proving once and for all
that the world was round,
not flat

yada yada yada . . .

NOT!

Columbus,

or Colon,

or whatever his name

actually was

(there is not even agreement on that simple detail),
was not a crusader against ignorance and superstition
as is popularly believed and taught,

but rather,

if anything,

a crusader for those 'virtues'
Educated people,
which certainly included anyone Columbus tried to wheedle money from,
knew that the earth was not flat
and also knew the approximate distance
from the west coast of Europe to the east coast of Asia,
a distance about four times greater than Columbus had reckoned,
and,
when the time came
(wheedling successful),
provisioned for
Of
course,
no one had reckoned the existence of the Americas
But his third or fourth voyage,
having
decimated the populations of several densely populated islands,
even someone as dense as Columbus
knew that he had stumbled onto something new to Europeans,
and
he has henceforth been hailed as a 'Great Discoverer',
proving
once again it's better to be lucky than good

THOMAS JEFFERSON

There is no one in historical memory
with a greater chasm between word and action,
between the idea of him and the actuality:

the profile in political courage
who fled with his tail between his legs
when the war got too close for comfort;

the slaveholder most famous for
his sloganeering for freedom for all,
even as he had children who were born slaves
(their mother Sally Hemings,
was the unacknowledged half-sister
of Jefferson's late wife,
their relationship having started
when Sally was fifteen,
the coverup starting simultaneously,
with that year, 1788, being the only year
in a *forty-three year period*
for which there is no correspondence extant,
the plentiful circumstantial evidence
always ignored by the hagiographers:
that Sally *never* had a child
except when Jefferson had been in her presence
nine months beforehand;
that *Sally came home from France,*
pregnant,
even though she would have been free
had she remained in France;
that several of their children were 'allowed'
to run away from Monticello with impunity,
and two others were formally freed in Jefferson's will;
until
the day came that DNA proved the truth);

the proponent of limited government
who vastly exceeded his powers
when he doubled the size of the country
by receiving stolen property;

the man who used the partisan press
to slander his political enemies
yet imprisoned those who so attacked him;

the man of goodwill
who would go so far to destroy a political enemy
as to actually try the man for treason;

the man entrusted with enforcing the law
who defied that law when it ordered him
to appear at the aforementioned trial;

the democrat who arranged his succession
as though he were a king;

and
the proponent of fiscal responsibility
who live his post-public years
as a debtor
with no intention of re-payment

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S APPLESEED

Two hundred children's books can't be wrong,
can they?

Well . . .

He was born,

in the old-fashioned manner,
near the cold coast of the Atlantic Ocean
in the year before the Revolution;
that much is certain
(his birth certificate is duly recorded)

And

he next turns up at age eighteen,
wandering in a snow-covered wilderness
(probably going both ways uphill),

until he,

MacGyver-like,

makes snowshoes out of a tree not normally used for such

And

then he turns up all over the country
(even in places he never visited),

until

he dies sometime in March 1845 in Indiana,

though

he is reported to have things after his death as well

With most facts up for grabs,
let's rescue him from Disneyfication
with the Top Ten Reasons to place him at the adult table:

10. he was of his time,
as all are of their time
(until time travel can be conclusively proved)
9. he practiced what he preached
(the threat of a good example
is rare in any era)
8. he lived a life of non-violence,
turning
the other cheek at a time
when that sentiment was even less practiced
7. he delighted in projecting an image
of loafing and laziness at a time
when those were considered to be sins
6. he traveled extensively,
but
never established a permanent place,
where his countrymen also traveled extensively
but only in search of their niches
5. he disdained the straining for wealth
where his countrymen believed in the gospel of money
even during Great Awakenings

4. he lived simply and without seeking approval
where his countrymen craved the countenance of their fellow citizens
3. he preached the gospel of green
(imagine the faith involved in planting a tree,
especially near the end of one's life)
2. he never married,
when that was even more the norm,
planting his seed in the ground
instead of in a woman

And

the Number One Reason to sit him at the adult table:

1. The trees he planted were by seed,
not by grafting,
and
apples grown from seed weren't considered especially edible,
they were used for making hard cider
He was an apostle of alcohol,
a nineteenth century Timothy Leary

HELEN KELLER

She is at the children's table literally and figuratively,
forever frozen for most folks at age seven
having just learned to say the word water
in what was wrongly considered a miracle,
made the butt of a thousand jokes,
but
not allowed to grow much older,
though
she did write a popular autobiography
published in her early twenties
while she was a student at the sex-segregated section of Harvard
And, if she is thought of at all as an adult,
it is as the benevolent lecturer on the fact of herself,
or,
as an international goodwill ambassador
putting America's best face forward
And
what is most buried by such treatment are her political views
Having,
through her unfortunate illness,
escaped
being one more Scarlett O'Hara,
she
would espouse equality,
sending a sizeable check
to the NAACP,
having a letter printed in the organization's paper
"Ashamed in my very soul
I behold in my own beloved south-land
the tears of those who are oppressed"

And

she was (gasp!) a Socialist,
having earned the badge of honor of being investigated
by the FBI and military intelligence
“Every modern war has had its root in exploitation”
“we hear fear advanced as an argument for armament”
“The few who profit from the labor of the masses
want to organize the workers into an army
which will protect the interests of the capitalists”
“Be no dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction
Be heroes in an army of construction”
“Our worst foes are

ignorance,

poverty,

and

the unconscious cruelty of our commercial society”

And,

even before women had the vote,
she recognized the futility of the franchise

“We vote?

What does that mean?

It means that we choose between two bodies
of real,

though not avowed,

autocrats”

And

she was patronized and put down for such statements,
not being engaged in debate because of her disability

“It would be difficult to imagine
anything more fatuous and stupid
than the attitude of the press toward
anything I say on public affairs”

And

when the editor of *The Brooklyn Eagle*
was especially fatuous, she fired back

“Oh, ridiculous *Brooklyn Eagle*”

“The *Eagle* and I are at war”

The editor had of course said she was blind and deaf
(must have previously been an investigative reporter)

and she:

"When it fights back, let it fight fair"

"I cannot see or hear

I can read"

"If the editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle* should read"

"he might be a wiser man,

and

make a better newspaper"

"If I ever contribute" "the book that I . . . dream of

I know what I shall name it:

Industrial Blindness and Social Deafness"

And

the biggest taboo of all,

the fact that she was a sexual being,

having

come close to marriage on one occasion

(a marriage which would have run afoul

of eugenics-inspired laws that prohibited her;

in the irony of ironies,

she had spoken in favor of eugenics)

"All the . . . instincts and desires of the heart,

which

neither physical disabilities nor suppression can subdue,

leap up within me"

Now she was not perfect,

and

wrote and said things I don't agree with

(like everyone else who ever lived;

I'm not sure I agree with everything I've ever said)

But the defining characteristic of the adult table

is that perfection is not required,

and

she deserves to be engaged on the same terms

as any other adult.

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