

Christmas Customs of the Countries Now at War

Though the Nations Are in the Grip of War, Effort Will Be Made to Observe Old Christmas Rites — In Germany Christmas Is the Great Day of the Year. The Serbian Badnyak. Christmas Celebrations in the Sultan's Domain — Russian Christmas Eve Ceremony — In Bulgaria and Belgium — Poles Believe Christ Returns to Earth as a Little Babe on Christmas Eve. Midnight Masses — In France and Italy. Christmas in Austria.

THROUGHOUT the warring countries of Europe the Christmas season will necessarily be but an attempt at merrymaking. The Yuletide's approach only tends to bring home more keenly to the hearts of the people of the warring lands the hideousness of the brutal conflict and the mockery of "Peace on earth, good will toward men."

But, reports state, all of the warring nations, with the exception of Turkey, are striving to bring some semblance at least of the usual Christmas happiness and good cheer to the men at the front, the unfortunates interned in prison camps and the sick and dying sufferers on their cots of pain in the hospitals.

In Europe the loving hearts of the women at home are guiding their busy hands, and the children's little fingers, to form the multitude of gifts which reports state are soon to be dispatched to the different armies in time for Christmas, as was done last year. When a lull comes in the fighting the men will be permitted to feast and be as merry as they can; and each will celebrate the day, as far as possible, according to the customs of his own land.

Of all the countries now at war perhaps none makes more of the Christmas festivities than does the German nation. Many months in advance the German hausfrau and little maid busily ply their needles so that each one in the family, and near friends as well, may be remembered with a handmade gift when the great day comes, when the locked and bolted Christmas room is at last opened and the splendid tree is seen in all the glory of myriads of tiny tapers, glistening balls, festoons of shimmering tinsel, and its branches laden with toys and bonbons, an dthe "pfefferkuchen" so dear to the children.

The "pfefferkuchen" is a spicy cake, made in all shapes, but usually in circles. Figure lights, or stars with a hole in the center, that they may be easily fastened to the tree. These Christmas cakes are made by the German bakers in three classes, of differing quality and cost, so that even the poorest children may have a few pennings and purchase them.

The "kringle" is a transparent sugar candy, and the sweet almond paste known as "bubecker marzipan" are both sure to be found on the German Christmas tree, no matter what its size. If the good hausfrau can manage to supply them. A figure, usually of angel or fairy, tops the tree, and on small tables, or on the floor, the laden boughs are heaped up great piles of daintily wrapped presents neatly inscribed with the name of each member of the family.

No one is forgotten. Even the German children of tender years delight to give their parents presents. Bologna sausage-making. Funny little Christmas cards painted with astonishingly brilliant flowers and landscapes, while the older children copy appropriate verses in their quaintly formed writing.

Christmas cards are now known and in general use the world over, but the first one originated in London, in the year 1845. In that year the Rev. Edward Bradley, author of "Verdant Green," had a printer make him some holiday cards from his own design, to send to his friends. Two years later the Newcastle printer put out a number of cards which sold at 2 pence, 4 cents, each. One was recently sold in London for £250, or \$1,250.



THERE IS MUCH CEREMONY IN A POLISH CHRISTMAS



CURIOUS SERBIAN CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS OF CUTTING A TREE FOR THE BADNYAK



MAXIMILIAN PLATZ, THE SCENE OF MANY CHRISTMAS MORNING MASSES IN VIENNA

flavor of their old pagan practices, their very word for Christmas being "Bojich," which means "The Little God." As in ancient times the Serbs sacrificed a pig to the sun god, so today in every Serbian home roast pig should be the principal Christmas dish.

Christmas eve is known among the Serbs as "Badny Dan," or the day of the old Badnyak, who is some sort of a divinity connected with the young Holch of Christmas day. Very early in the morning two of the family's strong young men, attended by the younger boys, make their way to the forest, where, after having crossed themselves three times, as is the usual custom among the Greek Church followers, they select a tree which is to be known as the Badny. Before setting out they have provided with a supply of grain, wheat kernels being used many times in the ceremonies which mark their queer rites.

Greeting the tree with the words, "Happy Badny! day to you!" one of the young men throws a handful of wheat upon it, while the other carefully piles his ax. Great care must be taken in chopping down the tree, for it must fall toward the east, exactly at the moment the sun goes red. The first chip that falls is carefully preserved by one of the children and brought home with the Badny, which is always cut being the most precious.

On reaching the house the mother of the family comes out, bringing a small flat wheat cake of unleavened flour called "pogacha," which she breaks on the longer Badny, the logs being left outside the house each side of the door. The whole day is spent in making preparations for the following day, the women baking cakes shaped like sheep, pigs and chickens, and other good things, while the men folks get a fat pig ready for roasting. Just at sunset one of the men is given new woolen gloves, to go out and bring in the Badnyak.

As he passes the threshold the mother of the family throws at him a handful of wheat from a bowl in which she has kept all day the chip brought her in the morning. The young man greets all present. And then, in many remote parts of the country, the father drinks a glass of wine to the health of the Badnyak, and pours wine on the log. It is considered most important that the great log be kept brightly burning all night. When the log is lighted, the young folks run out and fire off guns or pistols, and when the roast pig is done that fact also is announced to the popping of "earrings."

The first visitor in every Serbian home on Christmas morning must be a neighbor's son, who arrives very early, armed with a glove full of wheat. At his knock the door is opened and he merely throws the grain at the corners of the fire and into the corners of the room, saying: "Christ is born!" To which the house mother replies by throwing wheat on him, while all join in exclaiming: "He is born indeed!"

Taking up a heavy shovel, the Christmas guest strikes the Badnyak with sharp blows, which make the sparks fly, while he pronounces good wishes for each of the family, the cowboys, horses, sheep, bees and fields. Having kissed his host, he falls on his knees and kisses the end of the Badnyak. It always is placed on the fire so that one end protrudes into the room. The "Polznik" crosses himself in number of times and then places a small coin on the log as his Christmas gift.

An amusing part of the ceremony is the custom of pulling out the chair



IN ITALY, ANGELS AND PIEE-PLAYERS SOLICIT ALMS FOR CHARITY



RUSSIAN CEREMONY OF THE VEIL D WOMEN AND THE ARDENT SWANS ON CHRISTMAS EVE



BRITISH SHIP CAPTAIN'S BUY THEIR CHRISTMAS TURKEYS IN THE OPEN ROMANIAN MARKETS



ON CHRISTMAS EVE IN GERMANY

her lover to her own home, where her father takes charge of the regular betrothal.

In Italy, in the Val di Rose, Italian highlands, for centuries there has been the quaint and pretty custom, at Christmas, of making votive offerings at the shrines of the Redeemer of fruit and flowers, by the peasants, each garbed in the picturesque dress of his own district. In upper Lombardy, particularly, musicians visit the shrines and, accompanied by little children dressed as angels, make a tour of the villages and towns, collecting alms, which are distributed later to the poor as gifts from the Christ Child.

In times of peace in Austria-Hungary the mention of Christmas brings an anticipatory light of welcome to the eyes of patrician and peasant alike. It is an occasion for joy and sprightly commemoration in that Catholic country. It is a time for carnivals, public celebrations, innumerable masses, musicals and wine parties.

But in war time it is vastly different. Public functions are discontinued by tacit agreement, public dancing is prohibited and the people of the middle classes devote their holiday to modest home pleasures and the solace of church worship. Only the very rich, who have not really felt the pinch of war, usher in the birthday of our Savior with the former joviality common to the dual monarchy.

Picture the home of a wealthy Viennese family on Christmas eve. Bright lights are burning in every room. In the air is the aroma of cooking fowl. Gay voices ring back and forth through spacious halls. Guests are arriving, sweeping layers of fine snow from their great fur coats and shouting greetings to their friends. It is Christmas eve and every one must be happy.

In one room stands a giant pine tree, its highest branch bending over at the ceiling, the better to display a gorgeous creation of "Krischkichen" or Santa Claus, as we know the patron saint of children. Upon all the other limbs of the tree, weighing them down almost to the point of breaking, are good things of every description—cookies, candies molded into odd shapes, tightly wrapped bundles that hint of mysterious contents, etc. Under the tree are piled many more gifts, carefully wrap-

ped to deceive inquisitive eyes while arousing curiosity.

A servant in evening dress form a stately procession and gather about the table, quivering under its burden of boiled turkey, baked game, mountains of mashed white potatoes, other vegetables, costly wines of every description—and a few slices of war bread. Jokes are passed and puns exchanged anent the war bread, which is barely tasted and passed by for whiter and more edible cakes baked attractively.

The host rises and pronounces his blessing over bowed heads, ending with a prayer for the success of Austrian arms and the long life of the emperor. Always do they mention the revered Franz Josef in tones of love and loyalty. The feast is on.

Ere the last gift has been removed from the tree the clock has struck midnight and sleepy, happy children are sent to bed with their nurses, to arise for early mass in Maximilian Platz. The older folks, reaching the acme of joy, retire to the largest room in the home and dance well on into the morning hours, many proceeding directly from the feast to masses in progress. This is Christmas eve celebrated among the rich of Austria-Hungary, even in wartime—a joyous round of feasting, drinking, gift dispensing and dancing.

It is a long cry from the rich to the poor, and as the visitor wades through the snow across stubble fields toward a faint lamp glow in the home of a Hungarian peasant he feels the contrast keenly. At a crossroads stands a wayside shrine. Snow has fallen upon its tiny roof, but the shrine is untouched. Kneeling in a half circle before it in the snow are a dozen or more peasants, mostly women and children. None of them are wearing their varicolored, gaudy holiday dresses, and in their faces is a look of worry and grief. They are praying diligently, and now and then one raises her arms and voices in an outburst of pleading that strikes

as sympathetic chord among the others who respond in unison:

"Oh, God, give us peace!"

Finally they rise and leave, singly and in groups, retiring to their homes with bowed heads, the children stumbling through the snow with faces too sober for little ones on Christmas eve—snowy Christmas eve, when Santa Claus can travel best.

A mother and two children enter their home, carrying two rooms, one for cooking and eating, the other for sleeping. In one corner of the bedroom stands a cradle decorated with cheap bits of dyed rags, homemade paper dolls and an occasional glass ball. There are some tin spoons, a present or two wrapped in coarse brown paper, and over all hangs the Madonna of the Virgin Mary, of veal, coffee and war bread, of which the little family partakes in silence. At one conclusion of the meal the mother, with a slight shrug of her shoulders and a cast of her hands, motions the children to the bedroom, while she lingers to gaze dry-eyed upon a faded photograph of her husband in his first military uniform. At last she rises and silently removes the presents from the tree, standing by while her tiny dren's black eyes sparkle and their tiny fingers prattle over the cheap gifts.

It is not yet 10 o'clock when the time has come for bed. The little family kneel before the tree in the uncertain light of the lamp and the mother's earnest voice pleads for peace in the shabby home:

"Oh, God, we pray you to care for our father and husband, the enemy that him from the bullets of the enemy that he may return to us again. For we need him. Amen."

Condition of the Indians and Aleuts of Alaska

THE Indians of Alaska and the Aleuts are children of nature and dependents of the nation in a way, and their condition gives concern to the government authorities, whose duty it is to protect them and to aid them in the ways of progress. The them in the ways of progress. The southern Alaska, from Yakutat to Ketchikan, and, while their ancestors were like the Aleuts, they are today vastly different in looks, language and habits. The Aleuts live on the islands in the western Alaska, along the coast of the Alaska peninsula, and as far north as the Pribilof Islands and Bristol Bay. E. Lester James, then deputy commissioner of fisheries, in a report on his investigations, said that nothing in Alaska interested him more or appealed to him more than the Indians and the Aleuts, from the fact that their lives, surrounded by conditions new and distasteful to them, are being made more unfortunate each day. The white man, he said, has come into their territory in many cases infringing on their prior and just rights. The saloon, he said, prevails in whatever lands the white man settles, and has had, it is charged, more to do with the undoing and ruin of the Indian than all the other causes put together, and where saloons are not to be found, liquor is smuggled in the guise of pay and bribes.

The Indians and the Aleuts were at one time physically and mentally strong, but the influences that have surrounded them for the past fifty years have done little to encourage them in any way, and in many localities they are on a very low plane. Because of the saloons and the liquor traffic made for unnumbered generations before the coming of strangers among them, it is said that they have now become a class independent, lazy and unreliable. The white man, it is charged, has done little to encourage the uplift and is largely to blame for the demoralized condition of mind and body of the native.

Last season there were about 4,000 Indians and Aleuts employed in the canning and fishing industry of Alaska. That is about one-third of the total number of natives living on the coast of Alaska, or about one-eighth of the entire number of the whole territory, but with those natives who at times are willing to work there are many labor troubles.