

# CHRISTMAS GREETINGS



## Santa Claus Is

By ELDON PATTERSON

Just as truly as love is, Santa Claus is. Santa Claus is a personified sentiment—he is a reality.

We speak and learn and teach of a God whom the world has never seen except in Christ Jesus, yet His existence is manifest in everything. He is a reality.

Santa Claus need not exist in physical form to be comprehensible—his spirit is endowed and devolved upon millions of willing personifications, who in the spirit in which old Santa himself would shower blessings, shower them for him.

It isn't a lie to tell the children Santa is coming; it isn't even a "white" lie—Santa Claus is coming!

He may be the father, mother, brother or a stranger, but the sentiment of Santa Claus is upon him. He is Santa Claus.

He is the expression of that which otherwise would indeed be a myth or cease to exist; He is the action of a world-old thought; He is the physical component of Love, Charity and Pity.

Santa Claus is Love made tangible. He is not one, but many, and it takes all the flesh and blood Santa Clauses of all the world combined to make the one big Santa Claus whom the children know and worship and whom we symbolize in great form—the wondrous figure whose smile invites the face with its never waning smile invites the confidence of the universe.

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## FIESTA IN MEXICO

How Christmas Is Celebrated Across the Rio Grande.

Religious Services and Festivities Mingled for Nine Days—Breaking the Pinyata Takes Place of Christmas Tree for Children.

Nellie Rust Jones.

THE Christmas season in Mexico, like all Christian lands, is the happiest time of the year, but it takes on more of the nature of the ancient customs, in that land of romance and sunshine, than it does perhaps in any other country. At least there is nothing approaching it in the western part of the world. The holiday season begins nine days before Christmas and winds up with "Twelfth Night."

All solemn feasts in the Roman Catholic church are preceded by "novenas" or special church services. The Christmas celebration is semi-religious, beginning on the sixteenth of December, or nine months before Christmas, and is repeated every night until Christmas eve. This is called "las posadas" and commemorates the eight successive, but unsuccessful days of search for an "inn" or place of rest in Bethlehem, by the Holy Family when they had gone up to Nazareth to pay their taxes in the city where they belonged as lineal descendants of David.

Day after day Saint Joseph and the Holy Mother asked in vain for admittance to some "meson" or place of retirement, only to be refused admittance everywhere.

In vain did she plead her great necessity, the inns were already crowded and there was no room for the pilgrims, so they were repeatedly turned away.

On the night of the sixteenth of December bands of from five to one hundred gather together at some one's house and start on the rounds of visiting the houses of their friends. These bands are supposed to represent the three wise men seeking the infant saviour and the Holy Family seeking shelter. The origin of this quaint custom has been lost since the Spanish conquest. It is called "pidiendo posadas"—asking shelter—and at every house they are all invited in, offered wine and food and after some argument they are "offered the house."

They finally depart and go on to the next house only to repeat the previous performance.

During the visit one-half of the company go outside the house and form in a solemn procession, the other half remaining inside and each carries a lighted candle. The leaders bear a small lighted shrine in which are the images of the "Santos peregrinos"—holy pilgrims, Joseph and Mary. They slowly march back and forth in front of the house or around the "patio," chanting the litany to Saint Mary in a high minor key; then they stop at the door and knocking ask for admittance. There are about twelve verses for this which are chanted first by those outside asking admittance, then answered by those on the inside refusing to open the door, and the denial of the personality of the Holy Family.

After the pleading petition and curt refusal those within are finally convinced that they who ask for their hospitality are really the Holy Pilgrims, when they open wide the doors and bid them enter: "Enter, holy pilgrims, honor my poor mansion," etc.

The "pilgrims" then enter, the images are placed in a small grotto which has been especially prepared for the purpose; a lighted candle or bright-light is held above by some one in a manner to represent the star of Bethlehem; some person present, either priest or layman, leads in the Ave Marias, short prayers are said, more hymns sung and the religious features for that night are at an end, and at once the festivities of the night begin which usually last until nearly morning.

On Christmas eve the same program is followed except that an image of the Holy Child, lying naked in a small manger filled with straw, is carried between the godfather and godmother, who have been appointed by the hostess to this great honor, and singing the litany and other hymns they proceed as on previous evenings until at 7:30 they begin singing the song of the "noche-buena" or Christmas night. Then follow Ave Marias, glorias, litany to the "Nino Dios" or God-child, when the image is placed in the grotto prepared for the reception, where it remains till the end of the holiday season.

Groups of friends and relatives combine for these posadas, a different

family taking it each night until the rounds are made by Christmas eve. The Christmas tree is unknown to the Mexican child, but the religious ceremony is always followed by the breaking of the "pinyata." If the Christmas tree is joy itself to the American child, the "pinyata" means even more to the humble Mexican child.

They are made of large or small "Ollas" (jars of pottery), gaily decorated with colored paper and tinsel to represent some figure, either grotesque or pretty. One may buy a bride, clown, baby, goose, swan, pineapple, or anything the fancy has dictated in the making, and at any price from fifty centavos to twenty-five pesos. The jars are entirely concealed in their fancy coverings, with a stout rope around the top to suspend them from the ceiling. A little brown boy will trot along by your side and carry your pinyata home for you for a few cents, no matter how heavy it is.

Thereafter they are filled with nuts, candies, raisins, small oranges, bananas, dates, pieces of sugar-cane and a few small simple toys as, dolls or animals; the pinyata is hung ready for use. The servants and their children are permitted to come in and share the fun, no distinction of class being made at this time.

One after another of the company are blindfolded and allowed three strikes each at the pinyata with a heavy cane as it hangs, suspended from the ceiling. When it is finally broken and the contents tumble to the floor of the "patio" there is a grand scramble for the good things that have fallen out, and each person is permitted to keep whatever he or she can get hold of first. Woe unto the poor child who is timid and slower than the others, she is liable to get very little indeed.

After the pinyata the servants retire, a more or less elaborate supper is served, according to the station of the host; favors are distributed, usually some odd little figures of china or music, filled with candy; dancing and bague followed until a late hour. Wine or cognac is plentiful, but very few become intoxicated. The churches celebrate these "fiestas," leaving out, of course, the social features. On Christmas eve at midnight is celebrated the mass, when the image of the holy child is carried through the cathedral by the high dignitaries of the church, and the people are allowed to kiss the toes of the sacred infant to show their adoration, after which it is placed in the grotto followed by the litanies, etc. After the mass is celebrated the bells ring joyously and noisily and one knows that another Christmas day is at hand.

No one gets up early on Christmas morning except the devout women who in their black dresses and with their black mantillas over their heads attend the ten o'clock mass.

A visit to the booths or "puestos" during the holiday season is full of interest as well as surprises to the foreigner in a Mexican city. The sight of these queer and varied looking booths going up on the side of the street adjoining the sidewalk on two sides of the alameda or park is the first indication of the approaching holidays. Each booth is erected by the humble merchant who is to occupy it, according to his own fancy, and as they do not conform to any rules or regulations as to size or shape, they are a queer jumble of gaily lighted "puestos."

There one can buy jumping-jacks for two cents; clay dolls for two to four cents; beautiful and curious pottery, made from the identical aztec and totec designs for from twenty to fifty cents; beautiful baskets of imperishable weaves and color and every size and shape from twenty-five cents to one peso; clay figures of men and women with bits of bright calico fashioned into clothes; figures of ungainly looking animals shaped like nothing ever seen before, sacred images, jewelry, clever whistles, rattles, "electric sparklers," fireworks of all description, delicious candied fruits, conserves, in fact anything and everything is to be found at the "puestos." The Mexicans are especially clever at making candied fruits.

All day and until midnight great throngs of people crowd and push each other, good naturedly, going and coming, crowding the walks in front of the booths almost to suffocation, making their purchases, visiting, laughing and talking. But at midnight, when there is no possibility of more sales the merchants spread their blankets on the mats or "petates," blow out their torch lights, drop down their one window in front and all crawl into the one bed, or roll up in their single blankets, and crawl under the rude counter and go to sleep. No one thinks of going home, in fact some of them are regular nomads and have no fixed home.

One by one the lights go out and the tropical moon looks coldly down on one of the strangest little groups in the world.

## CHRISTMAS OF OLD

It Was a Boisterously Gay and Glad Time.

Animating Spirit of Holiday Is Same as One Hundred Years Ago and as Will Be in Future.

THE protest of the grandpas and grandpas that Christmas in these days is different from what it was back in 1840 is doubtless true enough in respect to methods and details of ushering in the morn and celebrating the day, but in essentials probably the change is not so great as it seems. What grandpa and grandpa have in mind is that the old-time simplicity pertaining to the great festal day has given way to innovations that are more fanciful and elaborate. The gift that comes in a gilt-bordered box, tied in pink ribbons, probably is opened with as much expectant thrill, however, as the exploration of the olden-time stocking occasioned.

We get little glimpses here and there in the colonial chronicles of Maryland and the old-time Maryland Christmas of the rural before-the-war Christmas. Always the Christmas feast has been a great event in the social life of the state. It has been a day of family reunions from colonial days down to now. A Maryland Christmas feast of the olden time is aptly described in that classic phrase "the table fairly groaned under the burden of the viands." Sumptuous plenty was the first law of the olden Christmas feast. It wasn't so much on the decorative settings; it didn't make a specialty of fancy salads, but there was nothing to be desired in way of substantial.

As was the feast so were the Christmas festivities in general. It was gay and glad, boisterously gay and glad, with romps and games which have gone out of fashion along with two-course, table-groaning dinners. But the animating spirit of Christmas is the same now as it was 100 years hence as now. Which is but to say: Youth is ever the same; the new things are but the old things in altered outward guise.

## A CHRISTMAS HOUSE PARTY

Skating, Coasting and Sleighing Good Country Pastime While City Offers Sight-Seeing, Music.

A house party at Christmas affords the young people of the family a chance to be gay and cheery for a week-end or more. The charm of a house party is in the bringing together of congenial guests who spend several days with their hosts. When the girls and boys return from college or boarding school for the holidays they often bring with them as guests classmates whose homes are too remote to make it worth while for them to take a long and expensive journey for the recess. The girl and the boy who hail from the west and attend an eastern school of learning, may be forced to spend a homesick holiday if no comrade tenders an invitation to join a family group.

Outdoor sports, skating, coasting, tobogganing and sleigh riding are the pastimes of the country, while the city offers sight-seeing, music and the other diversions. The long evenings at home, the little parties invited to meet the visitors, and the whole merry and swiftly passing time make a Christmas house-party one of the gala seasons of the year. The house-keeper finds that her provision for the table must be ample. Her pies and cakes disappear like magic, for young people are noted for good appetites. Tableaux, charades and conundrums are among the amusements appropriate to such a party. Story-telling around the fire with the lights turned down, if the tales are of ghosts and spooks, is sure to be a favorite feature of the festivity.

## A CHRISTMAS SONG.

Oh, Christmas is a jolly time,  
When forests hang with snow,  
And other forests hang with toys,  
And lovely Yule-logs glow!

And Christmas is a solemn time  
Because, beneath the Star,  
The first great Christmas gift was given  
To all men, near and far.

But not alone at Christmas time  
Come holiday and cheer,  
For one who loves a little child  
Hath Christmas all the year.  
—Flora Evelyn Pratt.

## Christmas Atmosphere.

Christmas! Why the very word kindles thoughts of good will in our hearts, it seems to bring forth our best and natural instincts—the manliness of man—a desire to make the world happier. There's something noble and inspiring in the very atmosphere of "Christmas."

## CHRISTMAS GAMES FOR THE CHILDREN

Many Forms of Merrymaking for the Little Folks' Holiday Party.

By ADELE MENDEL.

"At Christmas play and make good cheer for Christmas comes but once a year." At Christmas time the children are bubbling over with the spirit of the season and the grown folks' thoughts turn to the little ones' fun and amusement at no time more than at the happy Yule Tide.

With a little thought and preparation a children's Christmas party may be made such a joyous affair that its happy memories will linger with the young folks for many years.

Here are some entertaining games that will solve a problem for the perplexed mother who perhaps is wondering "What shall I have the children play at the party?" For when she sends her "Come to my Christmas party" invitations, she knows that a successful children's party means something more than just "ice cream and cake."

These games will appeal to all the children—the timid little girl, who is inclined to shrink in the corner, as well as the big boy, who usually occupies "the center of the stage."

**Santa Claus' Reins.**  
This game is very exciting. Three pieces of white tape, each about an inch wide, and the length of the room, are held at one end by three children. Three others are given pairs of scissors and at a signal the players cut the tape in half lengthwise. The one who first reaches the opposite end of the tape is the winner of that heat. The different winners contest until the champion is declared. Boys and girls, you know, love racing competitions of all kinds and this race is one that probably they never played before.

**Magie Music.**  
Although this is a game that perhaps the mothers and fathers played when they went to kindergarten, it still causes much laughter and is always successful.

One child leaves the room and the others decide upon something for him to do on his return. The musician regulates his playing, and the child must guide his actions according to the loudness or softness of the music. It is astonishing what different tasks are accomplished after a little practice, and the children's cries of "let me go out next" prove their enjoyment of "Magie Music."

**Guessing Holly Berries.**  
For this game the child must put on his "thinking cap." Hold a large spray of holly in your hand and allow the children to look at it for a few minutes. Then tell them to write their estimate of the number of holly berries on the branch. You might take a chrysanthemum also and ask them to guess how many petals in the flower. Great interest is shown when the petals are counted.

**A Christmas Doll.**  
The idea of this game is to see who can make the prettiest doll out of a long smooth potato, two pieces of pretty colored tissue paper, some small sticks for legs and arms, and some pins. Or if you would rather pass clothes pins and let the children fashion dolls out of them, that will also answer the purpose.

Place all the dolls in a row when completed, and have the children vote for their favorite one. You will be surprised to see what ingenious results the clever little fingers produce.

**A Noisy Game.**  
Yes, it is noisy, but the children have an idea that "the more noise, the more fun," and what mother cares if "the roof comes down" at a Christmas party?

After a child leaves the room, a proverb is chosen. One word of it is given to each child. If there are more children than words contained in the proverb, then two or more children are given the same word. When the child outside the room returns, a leader counts "One, two, three." At the "Three" all the children shout their given word. The child must guess the proverb.

**Santa Claus' Grab Bag.**  
On the invitation state that each child is to bring something to the party that he or she no longer cares for. This article is to be in a neatly wrapped and tied parcel, so as to hide its identity. It is placed in a large bag, on the child's arrival. Each child then draws a present from the bag. Upstarts of laughter follow the opening of the packages, which probably will consist of peculiar articles of all sizes and descriptions.

**A Christmas Mix-Up.**  
Provide the children with paper and pencil. Give them the following list of words pertaining to Christmas. You see the letters are all twisted. It is their interesting task to straight-

en them out.  
Key and list:

1. Christmas—Atschmsrl.
2. Reindeer—Drierece.
3. Sleigh—Ileghs.
4. Mistletoe—Etlosmtle.
5. Holly—Oyhl.
6. Plum Pudding—Upulmsudgn.
7. Santa Claus—Ascilmspd.
8. Candles—Lcdnea.
9. Stockings—Kocstisgn.
10. Jack Frost—Kcajtrfso.
11. Wreath—Trhwae.
12. Snowball—Owslabl.

**What Santa Claus Doesn't Like.**  
This is a simple and successful game. All the children are seated except one who says "Santa Claus doesn't like C's. What are you going to give him instead?" The first child replies with a word that does not contain a "C." For instance, "meat" would be a correct answer, but "rice" would not do. If a correct answer is not given by the time the leader counts "ten," a forfeit must be paid. And we all know the fun of redeeming the forfeits.

**A Peanut Race.**  
At one end of the room place two bowls of peanuts, and at the opposite end two empty bowls. Two children are each provided with a knife and a signal they place as many peanuts as they can on the blade of the knife, and carry it to the empty bowl with one hand. Depositing the peanuts, they return for more. Each child is allowed three minutes. A score is kept and the one who has the largest number of peanuts credited to his name wins the prize.

**Puzzle Pictures.**  
Pretty pictures taken from magazines, advertisements and discarded picture books are cut up into several pieces and placed into envelopes. A good idea is to write the same number on the back of the envelope and all pieces belonging to one puzzle, so that if a piece gets mixed with the others it can be readily returned to its own set.

Each child is handed a puzzle, and as soon as he succeeds in placing the pieces in their proper position he is given credit for it by the score keeper, and receives another puzzle to work with. The one who succeeds in putting together the most pictures in a stated time receives a well-earned prize.

**Snowballs.**  
This is an amusing game. Snowballs made of cotton batting and covered with white tissue paper and a small basket are required. The players stand about eight feet from the basket. The one who tosses the most balls into the basket is the prize winner. Each child might be given three snowballs to start with.

**A Christmas Spider Web.**  
Take as many balls of twine as there are children expected at the party. To one end of each ball attach a card bearing the child's name and to the other end an inexpensive gift. Twist the twine around the different objects in the room. Give each child the twine and card bearing his name. At a signal all begin to unwind the entangled web. Great is the fun and loud the exclamations when the young people arrive at the end of their string and find a gift awaiting them.

**A Pop Corn Party.**  
If you don't mind the "muss," and of course you won't, have a pop corn party. Have the children sit in a circle on the floor and provide each with a bowl of popcorn, a needle and some coarse white thread. Tell them that the one who strings the longest popcorn chain before the time is up will win the prize. Each youngster takes home his own string of corn.

**An Impromptu Entertainment.**  
When the children are tired of romping, let them sit on the floor in a circle and tell them you are going to have an entertainment, and that each child must do something to help make it a success. The youngsters will provide a variety of numbers for your impromptu program, from nursery rhymes to fancy dancing.

**Artists.**  
Bring in a good sized blackboard and have the children see who can draw the best Santa Claus. This will afford much pleasure for the little folks. (Copyright, 1912, by W. G. Chapman.)

**A Christmas Stocking.**  
It is not always the gift itself, but the way in which it is presented that commends itself particularly to the recipient. To the girl who thinks she is too old to hang up her stockings, send a pair of silk stockings, using one to fill, and roll up the other and stick it in the foot. The rest of the stocking should be filled with inexpensive trifles—a home-made jabot, tie or collar, a handkerchief, some candy, nuts, raisins, crab apples, a card or a calendar, perhaps some little kindly hints at her hobbies that will amuse her. Each of these articles should be wrapped separately in tissue paper and red ribbons, and the excitement of opening the mysterious small packages will often exceed the pleasure taken in one large gift that would have cost no more than the numerous small ones.

## THE BEST WAY



Mrs. Highson—What are you going to give your brother John this Christmas?