

A SONG OF JOY.

Christmas bells ring in gladness,
 Ring "Peace on earth, good will to men."
 Bells ring in gladness,
 For Christmas lights the earth again.

Let every heart in sweet communion,
 Let friends and loved ones be united now,
 Let friends and loved ones be united now,
 Together at Christ's altar bow.

Let old and young repeat the story
 Of our first Christmas, and the star
 That guided with the heavenly glory
 The wise men journeying after.

Seek the gift that God has given,
 The Star to light us on life's way,
 For the first time, give praise to Heaven,
 For the our holy holiday.

THE First Christmas Gifts AND Their Signification.

GOLD.

OLD is the oldest and most useful of the metals. We cannot tell when man first discovered gold and made it into ornaments and coin. Damascus, the oldest city in the world, knew and valued it; Egypt and Etruria counted it precious. Abraham was rich, not only in the patriarchal form of cattle, but "in silver, and in gold." The Israelites, in their flight from Pharaoh, "borrowed" the golden treasures of their oppressors. Later, they made a golden calf, which has passed into a synonym for wealth worship. Gold was largely used in the tabernacle, and the directions given to Moses show a mercy-seat covered with pure gold, golden candlesticks, golden basins, and vestments with golden threads. The Temple built by Solomon was a maze of golden splendor, at which the world marveled; and the Romans of a later century were sustained during the obstinate siege of Jerusalem by the thought of the glittering plunder reputed to be collected in the Holy of Holies. It is related that at the surrender of the doomed city the innermost room was found empty; but on the Arch of Titus at Rome are still to be seen the carvings portraying the wonderful seven-branched candlesticks of gold looted from the Temple, and presented to Caesar. St. John, in his vision, beheld the new city with streets of gold. Pure gold was always used as a term of purity. There was little gold in the land of the Jews; it came from Sheba, Arabia, Ophir, Africa, and India. The common people never touched gold, and saw it only in temples and palaces. Gold was a gift for monarchs alone. The wise men brought the Child gold because "He was born King of the Jews."

FRANKINCENSE.

HIS was pure white resin, obtained from the bark of a tree found in India and Arabia. When an incision was made in the trunk, a white liquid was obtained, which presently hardened into a kind of vegetable material, brittle, glittering, and of a bitter taste. When burnt the perfume was delicate and delightful. Made of the very life-blood of rare trees, the frankincense symbolized to the Eastern mind the essence of holiness and purity. Its burning was an act of worship and reverence to God. As it burnt the worshiper prayed, and so the frankincense came to be the emblem of prayer and worship. Every service in the Hebrew sanctuaries was accompanied by the burning of incense, and as the smoke rose and the scent was wafted the people realized that their prayers were also ascending to Heaven. The Magi gave gold to the King; the frankincense was adoration and worship to God.

MYRRH.

MYRRH was the congealed life-sap of a valuable tree, brittle, transparent, or yellow in color, with a strong odor, and a bitter, warm taste. It exudes from the tree, without cutting, in small drops like tears, at first oily, but afterwards drying and hardening on the bark. If the tree is wounded, the myrrh is increased. Ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Jewish, Greek and Roman merchants dealt in it. Jacob ordered his sons to carry to the Prime Minister of Egypt "a little balm, honey, spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds." When the Saviour was dying He was offered "wine mingled with myrrh." Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes for the embalment. It was often used with frankincense in worship, but more frequently as a perfume, fumigant or medicine. It was the symbol of humanity, and given to the Christ as an emblem of His manhood and suffering.

The Mistletoe Bough.

Many a merry heart is light,
 Many a rosy cheek is seen,
 When the green of the berries white,
 Set in the cluster of sprigs green.

What is the use of the mistletoe,
 When the green of the berries white,
 Set in the cluster of sprigs green,
 For a kiss.—Modern Toast.



ALL HONOR THE DAY.

Christmas in the Philippines, or rather in the Island of Luzon, is one of the great days of the year. As state and church have been until recently inseparable there, all the religious festivals are matters of national celebration. Church processions are the pride and passion of the Filipinos, and at Christmas they bring together a great crowd, both as actors and spectators. Most brilliant are those which take place after sunset, when some thousands of persons carry lighted wax candles and the procession, composed of all the ecclesiastical functionaries and many of the civil officers, is sometimes more than a mile long.

At Christmas gorgeously-dressed images of the various objects of veneration form an important part of the ceremony. In one Christmas procession the jewels worn by an image of the Madonna exceeded \$25,000 in value.

Many bands of music accompany the procession, and a number of little girls prettily and fancifully dressed in white follow the sacred images, or the pallio of the Archbishop. Often the entire length of the procession on both sides is lined by bearers with blazing wax tapers, and the spectacle is like the procession in an Assyrian bas-relief.

In Hawaii, Christmas is celebrated with the usual solemn services in the churches, gifts and joyous celebrations at home. Nowhere is there a more cosmopolitan society than in Honolulu, and each colony of Caucasians vies with the other in its Christmas display.

The Germans, far away from their dear Fatherland, teach their children folklore stories of old Kris Kringle and his reindeer, and deck their Christmas trees with imitation snow and ice, to the great delight of the children of perpetual spring.

The English exiles bring from the Old Country their Yule logs and mistletoe, and they only need the crackle of the underbrush and the sound of the hunter's gun in the preserves to make them feel at home.

The Americans send for foxes from San Francisco, decorate their houses with the gorgeous foliage of the island, and feel that the Christmas spirit is there, no matter if they do take their afternoon constitutional among the tropical flowers and pluck their fruit after dinner from the trees in their own courtyards.

The Portuguese, the natives, even the Chinese and Japanese, all stop in their routine of great or petty traffic to acknowledge "Peace on earth, good will to men."

Holiday Requiem.



The Christmas waiters of old England, who were the first to sing carols or carols in the vulgar tongue on Christmas eve, were really chanting the dirge of Latin which hitherto had been for the common people the medium of religious song.

The First Christmas.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.—St. Luke, Chapter II.

Christmastide.

TIS Christmastide, the time of year when all the world is full of cheer. When hearts are filled with love to all. The sad and sick, the great and small.

Ring out, ye happy bells, proclaim Good tidings to the blind and lame, For He is come—the Prince of Peace Who loves the very least of these! —Glen Catherwood.

Christmas in the Mountains.

How should you like to keep Christmas in the mountain regions of the South? There all the ancient traditions concerning the Yule log are remembered and carried out even yet.

On Christmas night it crackles and blazes in the rude cabins of the negroes, and the little pickaninnies crouch around with heads almost up the chimney, toasting their toes and rolling their black eyes in anticipatory glee. This hearth fire is sometimes not permitted to die out until March.

THERE WAS A BABY BORN IN BETHLEHEM.

THERE was a baby born in Bethlehem. I know they say That this and that is doubt, and, for the rest, That learned men who surely should know best Explain how myths creep in, and followers' tales Confound the truth.

I know, but any way There was a baby born in Bethlehem Who lived and grew and loved and healed and taught.

And died, but not to me. When Christmas comes I see him smile arise, The gentle, the compassionate, the wise, Wiping Earth's tears away, stilling her strife, Calling, "My path is peace, my way a life!"

Christmas.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatted together, and a little child shall lead them.

This world has never, before or since, witnessed such a stupendous and unaccountable transformation in human character as took place at the coming of Christ.

The historians of the period labor in describing it.

In an incredibly short time the brutal amusements of the amphitheater, in which the Roman matrons while taking their supper were accustomed to regale themselves with gladiatorial combats and with the sight of lions tearing innocent women and children in pieces, shrunk abashed from human sight and passed forever away.

The slave, whose master had the power of life and death over him and who when he became old usually had him killed and fed to the fish in the lakes that adorned his villa, was found seated at the same table with his master and closer to him than a brother.

The cripple and the malformed men in the streets of Athens, whom it had been customary for centuries to pelt with stones whenever they showed themselves, became objects of the tenderest sympathy. In cities which had been devastated by the plague, so that the nearest relatives forsook each other and fled—so Neander tells us—the Christians remained behind and carried the festering corpses of the victims on their own shoulders to burial. For the first time in the history of the world hospitals were opened for the sick. Men committed suicide rather than become soldiers and kill their fellow men.

Stranger than all this, misers who had toiled half a century to accumulate wealth and who loved their gold better than their lives conceived an aversion for it, gathered it together and threw it down in front of the needy, and with suffused eyes invited them to help themselves. Some of them traveled 500 miles to where their lands were located that they might sell them out and use the proceeds in this way.

It would be impossible on any natural principles to account for such a marvelous and widespread change in human nature. The only visible cause was the circulation from mouth to mouth of the story of the virtues, the persecutions and the cruel death of Christ, but this story was no more in Rome than a story told in this country about a good man in a foreign land who had been killed by mob. The only rational explanation of the transformation is the one given by the New Testament writers, who declare that an unearthly spiritual influence accompanied this story wherever it was told.

It is as a relic of the great tidal wave of brotherly love that our modern Christmas observances are most significant and proper. The anniversary of Christ's birth is unknown. The church decided to celebrate it on the winter solstice, and blundered, so that the day is historically the anniversary of nothing whatever. Never mind, it is the conventional celebration of the most blessed event in all history. It is a holy memento of the advent of humanity into man.

The only possible way of celebrating such a day is by a demonstration of universal gladness and good will, and this is the way in which it has been celebrated from the beginning. The day should be something like the Jewish jubilee year, when all property reverted, all wrongs were forgiven, all debts were canceled, all slaves were freed and society turned over a new leaf.

Let everybody shed his selfishness to-day and do everything in his power to produce a smile if not joy and thankfulness in every one about him.

A Merry Christmas.



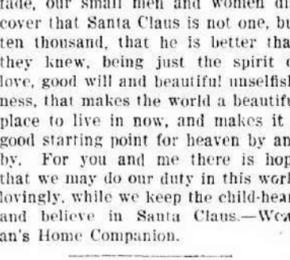
ABOUT SANTA CLAUS.

I write myself down as one who still believes in Santa Claus. Don't you? Are you one of those very literal folk who have their doubts whether they ought to let their children cling to the beautiful old myth? My dear, wherever you are, come sit down by me, and let me reason with you.

Without imagination, without dreams, without poetry, this old world of ours would be a very wearisome place. Its road would be steeper than it is—much like sleighing over bare ground would our progress be, as compared with sleighing over deep, hard-packed snow.

The poetic myth of the old saint, with his reindeer and his jingling bells and his bulging pack of toys and bonbons, has charmed a thousand generations. The stockings hung by the chimney on Christmas eve; the children staying awake until sleep pounces on them like a strong man armed; the presents filling them from top to toe in the morning; the rush of the bare feet hurrying fast across the floor; the merry uproar; the bubbling laughter; the shouts of joy—the whole of this family pageant belongs to dear Santa Claus. We owe it to him. Gradually, as the golden mists of childhood clear before the sun, and the "trailing clouds of glory" fade, our small men and women discover that Santa Claus is not one, but ten thousand, that he is better than they knew, being just the spirit of love, good will and beautiful unselfishness, that makes the world a beautiful place to live in now, and makes it a good starting point for heaven by and by. For you and me there is hope that we may do our duty in this world lovingly, while we keep the child-heart and believe in Santa Claus.—Woman's Home Companion.

Memory.



The fun is all over; the whole house is quiet; His thoughts by the fire in his chamber run riot. He thinks of the happiest time of his life— Of the heart-broken day when he lost his young wife— And finds that the wealth of her memory still Breathes the Spirit of Christmas, of "Peace and Good-will."

They marched solemnly and soberly to church on Christmas morning the same as on any other day, and not one exchanged with another a "Merry Christmas."

A Double Christmas.

A stranger visiting the German colonies of our great cities would think his almanac needed resetting, for on the evening of December 5th, thousands of little stockings are hung up with the same careful clothes-pinning and heart of hope as on the authentic Christmas eve. St. Nicholas eve it is that the "Fatherland" exiles are celebrating. Just as early as any children ever get up, those that are paying honor to the gift-saint tumble out of bed, and find their stockings well weighed with fruit and candies and apfelkuchen. The naughty child that has been a trial to its parents in previous weeks is rather likely to find his stocking laden with coal. It is a hint that a second gift-season is at hand, and that it would be well to fall into line with the good children. And the good children are encouraged to a renewed and severer virtue for the days between their present reward and the fuller holiday that is coming.—Country Life in America.

Enterprising.



In Malago you can buy your Christmas candies at your door. For the candyman, in snowy cap and apron goes through the street crying his wares.

Hidden Christmas Bells.

Near Raleigh, Nottinghamshire, Eng., there is a valley said to be caused by an earthquake several hundred years ago, and it is now usual for old people, on Christmas morning, to tell the children to go to the valley, stoop down, and hear the bells ringing merrily in the ruins of the church hidden away in the ground.

At Kilgrinol, near Blackpool, there is a common belief that the bells of a hidden church may be heard by any one who bends his ear to the ground at Christmas.

In Berwickshire it was at one time a popular belief that bells could be heard ringing in the ground on Christmas eve, and in some parts of England miners have been heard to say that bells could be heard merrily pealing in the most distant parts of the mine during the festive season.

Love at Christmas

by Nora Ahesson.

Standing beneath the Christmas tree
 I have hands down gifts for you and me;
 I have heart whose core the arrow stings,
 A pair of linked posy-rings,
 A red flower like a trumpet-note
 To warm the darkness of my coat;
 And pearls that round your white throat met,
 The sorrow of the seas forget.

The tree is hung with glittering toys
 To win the eyes of girls and boys,
 A charger and drum, and top, and ball
 And ne'er a heart-ache midst them all.
 There's wedding-bells whose golden chime
 Shall ring for us at snowdrop-time;
 A diamond circlet for your hand,
 For me a little plain gold band
 Whereby, before the crocus shows,
 It'll make you mine, my Christmas Rose.

—Illustrated London News.

OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS.

The observation of Christmas to-day is a very different celebration from that known to our forefathers. Indeed, if one of the latter were permitted to visit once again at Christmas time the land of his adoption or birth, he would find it difficult to recognize, among the present-day gayeties, any of the features which gave Christmas its significance in his day.

Many old-time observations have passed and new ones have replaced them; no longer do the Puritans go to church gun in hand, keeping a sharp lookout for treacherous red men lurking behind the trees of the forest through which they were oftentimes obliged to pass, digging a path as they went through great snow heaps.

These hardy settlers of Massachusetts brought with them memories of happy days spent in the Mother country, before they were persecuted on account of their radical religious views; and although few of them had forgotten the gay scenes which were enacted in England at Christmas time, none tried to bring into favor such rejoicings in the new country.

They marched solemnly and soberly to church on Christmas morning the same as on any other day, and not one exchanged with another a "Merry Christmas."

There were no signs of feasting or merrymaking of any description, nor was there any music added to the church service. Apparently, "Merry Christmas" was a forgotten expression. Landing as they did on the 21st of December, most of these passengers of the Mayflower were busily engaged in building log houses or searching for food on the 25th, 1620, their first Christmas day in America.

For many years succeeding their landing, Pilgrims and Puritans eschewed all thought of Christmas festivities, but not so the Colonial Cavalier.

In Virginia at Christmas time he introduced all the Old World revels and gayeties with added force and freedom. In the South, Christmas was indeed a gala day. Very little attention was paid to the church service, although that, too, formed a certain part of the celebration. These two great forces contributed to the making of the Anglo-American character.

Christmas day in the Southern colonies in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was indeed a merry one. They ate, drank, danced and bade each other be of good cheer; gathered around blazing Yule log fires; told stories of life among the English gentry which nearly every one remembered so vividly and regretted mournfully; exchanged a few gifts, although the custom was by no means general; fought duels; followed the hounds and lived a day of fun in general.

Who'll Buy?

In Spain many a Christmas dinner goes to town on six legs.

Christmas Superstitions.

There are many Christmas superstitions, long held as articles of faith that are to be recalled, says Country Life in America. How that oxen kneel in their stalls at midnight on Christmas eve, in adoration of the Nativity, and for one hour have the power of speech—for that one hour, too, the lost spirits have rest. Judas sleeps, Herod ceases to clank his chains, the daughter of Herodias may pause in the dance, in which she is condemned to spin forever, and Pilate's ghost ceases its wanderings on Mount Pilatus. It was believed, too, that the sound of church bells could be heard wherever a church had stood, though no trace remain, and that, on that pregnant night, one sleeping in a manger would see his future in a vision.

HONOR ST. NICHOLAS.

St. Nicholas is not only the patron saint of Russia, but he is greatly honored in the charming little valley in the Salzkammergut, where the Ischl and the Traun rivers unite. Indeed, Ischl once went by the name of St. Nikola. This is the season of St. Nicholas, for Santa Claus is a corruption of the name introduced into England from America. In the Ischl valley the feast of St. Nicholas is a typical holiday, and at this time for three days there is an assemblage of booths along the Wierstrasse forming quite a market. In the shop windows are seen numerous images and pictures of the benevolent saint and his companion, the Grampus, with his switch and chain—a most formidable and threatening-looking object—to scare the hearts of naughty children. The evening before St. Nicholas' day the good saint and his terrifying companion are actually seen walking about the streets and enter some of the houses. When Ischl was inhabited by the Romans it went by the name of "Iscola," because of the number of fish found there, and some people connect this fact with the legend of St. Nicholas and the fish. The church is dedicated to him, and the interior is beautifully painted with illustrations from his life by a celebrated Tyrolean painter named Mader. A population of hardy and thrifty peasants inhabit the surrounding country and throng into the town on Sundays and holidays in their picturesque costumes.

His Christmas Wish.



Oh, sweetheart, if you only knew
 That at this Yuletide season
 I'd so much rather have just you
 Than stuff so out of reason.

Please cut the fancy pillows out,
 The bric-a-brac and best;
 Pray, let me read the answer to
 My question in your eyes!
 Bertha Reynolds McDonald in The Sunday Magazine.

Christmas Giving.

Where any uncertainty exists let us give as a token of love, or friendship, or human kindness, something that, while expressing these things, will at least be harmless. Let it be something that does not last—that brings the meaning and vanishes—something that never will know the indignity of the top shelf of the spare room closet!

A knock at a friend's door on Christmas morning and the clasp of a hand do this. A growing plant does it. Yes, the loaf of bread, the jug of wine—but, most of all, thou beside me, singing in the wilderness—the personal revelation does it. Suppose a letter came on Christmas morning to say—not "you are perfectly dear to have sent me a spoil box" but "I want you to know that your patience, or courage, or tenderness, during this last year, will help me to live more bravely and courageously and lovingly this next year."

What a Christmas present the receipt of such a letter would be to any one of us; how we would take heart to live ourselves! What a Christmas present for any one of us to send to the human heart that has given us courage for the burden and heat of the day!—Harper's Babar.

Holy Bells.



In rural Austria bells are rung on Christmas eve to keep the evil spirits away while the Christ child passes.

Wassailing Trees.

Very curious is the custom still practiced in Devonshire and one or two other localities, when the farmer, with his family and friends, after partaking together of hot cakes and cider (the cake being dipped in the liquor previous to its consumption), proceed to the orchard, one of the party bearing hot cake and cider as an offering to the principal apple-tree. The cake is formally deposited on the fork of the tree, and the cider thrown over the latter, the men firing off guns and pistols, and the women and girls shouting:

"Bear blue, apples and pears now,
 Barn fulls, bag fulls, sack fulls,
 Hurr! Hurr! Hurr! Hurr!"

A similar libation of spiced ale used to be sprinkled on the orchards and meadows in Norfolk, and only a few years back a ceremony of the same sort was witnessed in the neighborhood of the New Forest in Hampshire.—Woman's Home Companion.