

THE CHURCH WHERE THE MANGER STOOD

The Oldest Christian Church in Christendom at Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, Palestine, Dec. 25.—Christmas spent on the spot where Christ was born is the privilege not extended to the majority of the citizens of the United States. Even those who could afford it do not seem to fancy the idea—they prefer the more worldly pleasures centralized on the Christmas tree and turkey in their own home.

Imagine Christmas spent in the oldest church in Christendom where the followers of three religions assemble to sing the praises of Him who died for men, guarded meanwhile by the soldiers of the sultan of Turkey, representing a fourth religion.

This church of St. Mary, or the Church of the Nativity as it is called, is said to be erected over the grotto where the Christ child opened his eyes more than 1900 years ago, according to our western calendar.

The followers of the Roman Catholic, Green Catholic and Armenian churches believe the church to be erected over the site of the original stable in the cave where the Savior was born. The Protestants, while they may doubt this, have never claimed any other site to be the authentic birthplace, and so the grotto in the Church of the Nativity has been accepted practically universally.

The early Christians erected an oratory over the grotto of the Nativity and Adrain razed it and had erected a statue to Adonis. Helen in turn destroyed the statue and with Constantine built the original Church of the Nativity.

Since that time, centuries ago, Christian princes have commemorated events by adding to the church, until it has spread to enormous proportions. The original building still stands, time-defying.

Its very walls cause the mind to revert through the centuries to the time of Abraham, when individual parts of the edifice are said to have seen their share of history-making. This at least is what the devout say to the tourist.

They tell that some of the columns are from Solomon's temple; that some of the slabs over which tourists' feet have wandered carelessly were trod by the feet of Him whose birth the world celebrates today.

Greek, Roman and Syrian converts have sung the praises of the Master within the walls of the church for centuries and centuries. Christmas has been celebrated here by the victorious Crusaders under Godfrey of Bouillon, Robert of Flanders and other men of might who carried the cross on their shields and the word of God on the points of their long swords.

It was in the old church on Christmas day in 1101 that Baldwin I, protector of the holy sepulchre and baron of Jerusalem, was crowned. Often ransacked and battered by armies of different religion, the old church retains its mark of individuality. Grim, sturdy and threatening, as a fortress, its entrances are barricaded even to this day, a grim reminder of the eventful past.

Although the walls have withstood the ravages of time, the interior decorations, draperies and curtains have been replaced time and again by fac-similes of the original hangings, even as the hooded monks have replaced those of their brethren who have faded away.

The church is built in the form of a cross, and in the nave are the 48 pillars, some of which are said to have been taken from the temple of Solomon, supporting the arched roof, in the ceiling of which are some of the cedars of Lebanon.

Marking the spot where the Star of Bethlehem is said to have come to a standstill while guiding the wise men is a star, sunk in the floor before the main altar.

Strangest of all the strange things the traveler sees in Bethlehem and in this wondrous church is the triple celebration of Christmas in the grotto of the Nativity, which is inside the walls of the church. To the west Christmas comes on December 25, and so it does here to the Latins, who on this day celebrate the greatest event in history with all the splendor the church of Rome is capable of.

Twelve days after the celebration, the Greek church calendar recognizes Christmas and the day is celebrated with pomp and worship after the ritual of that religion.

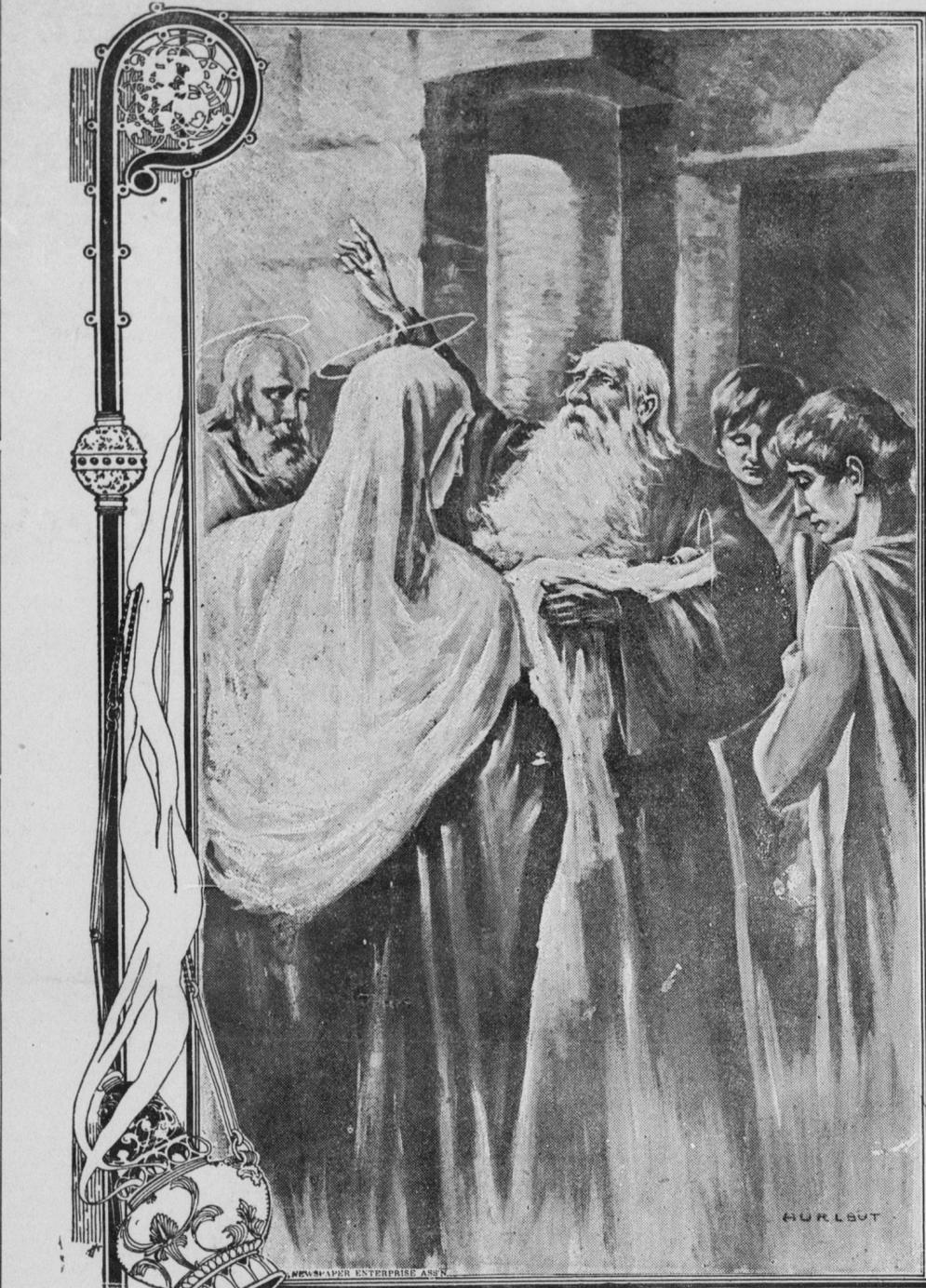
Again 12 days pass, when the Armenian church celebrates the birth in a fitting manner. Nowhere else under the sun do three religions hold services and sing the praises of Him who died for men in one edifice.

It would be next to impossible for the followers of three religions, as different as are the three here represented, to meet in one place, even to glorify Christ, without trouble resulting, as it has resulted so often here.

To prevent a repetition of the bloody battles that have desecrated this holy of holies, the sultan of Turkey has established a garrison in Bethlehem to guard the one during the services from the attacks of the other two.

As the Christmas season approaches, the garrison is added to from the troops in Jerusalem. On the different Christmas days the fest-topped soldiers of Mohammed fill the church and line the road approaching it from Jerusalem, to prevent rioting. The Latin as he chants the mass must be protected from the Armenians and Greeks, the Greek must be protected from the Latin and Armenian and the Armenian must be protected from the Latin and Greek.

To guard the manger, said to be the identical one in which the child was born, two Turkish soldiers stand guard day and night. Think of it—Mohammedans standing guard over one of the most precious



TO SIMEON, AN AGED AN DEVOUT MAN OF JERUSALEM, IT WAS REVEALED BY THE HOLY GHOST THAT HE SHOULD NOT DIE BEFORE HE HAD SEEN THE LORD'S CHRIST. WHEN JESUS' PARENTS CARRIED THE BABE TO THE TEMPLE, SIMEON TOOK THE INFANT IN HIS ARMS AND BLESSED GOD AND SAID: "LORD, NOW LETTEST THOU THY SERVANT DEPART IN PEACE, * * * FOR MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THY SALVATION."

CHRISTMAS AT WHITE HOUSE

No Outsiders Will be With the President's Family—Many Presents for All

WASHINGTON, Dec. 25.—A glimpse of the present Christmas in the White House may be gained by a consideration of the observance of the great day there a year ago. They have said at the home of the president that there is to be no change in the program. It can, therefore, be set down that there is a joyous family party in prospect, with presents in abundance for every member of the big household. No outsiders, not even intimate friends, will be invited to share in the celebration over the bounty of Santa Claus. It will be as much a family affair as though the Roosevelts lived on a farm, snow-bound and miles from any neighbor, instead of a mansion at which an army of people feel free to call on any other day. There will be no Christmas tree. The president's objection to that form of celebration has never been made known. Some folks have expressed the belief that it is because he does not approve of the destruction of trees, but it is only a guess. He has not discussed the subject. There is also an absence of decorations in the White House. There are some flowers and Christmas greens, but nothing like an elaborate decoration of the house is attempted. That is because of a desire to avoid display and to have the observance of the day as simple and homelike as possible.

Of the presents last year there was no end. The president has thousands of friends. So have the other members of the family. The prevailing spirit of good will at this season seems to be emphasized and increased when one's friends include the children of the president. The character of the gifts received last year has been concealed as a family secret. The number of them was rendered plain enough by the procession of messengers that came to the White House during the two weeks before Christmas. There could be no doubt as to the contents of the mysterious looking packages addressed to the president, Mrs. Roosevelt and the children. It can be said, however, that the most acceptable gift to the boys last year was a fully equipped electric railway that was set up in the nursery. There were dozens of the usual Christmas toys for the little ones and elaborate presents for the older members of the family. Miss Alice is said to have received many valuable articles of jewelry. Archie contributed probably the most interesting feature of the day's celebration. He had secretly installed a little Christmas tree in a clothes closet, and the White House electrician had placed in the branches a number of tiny incandescent lamps. After the distribution of presents, Archie led the family to the hidden tree with its brilliant lights and gaudy decorations. The members of the family were, of course, delighted and greatly surprised. Christmas packages that have arrived during the past two weeks have been stowed away in the library. This morning the family will assemble in the room, and there will be a grand distribution. The morning will be spent in helping the little ones with their toys. There will be a big Christmas dinner. The turkey for this feast is sent every year by a Mr. Voss, a resident of Rhode Island. In the afternoon there may be a visit to the home of Mrs. Cowles, the sister of Mrs. Roosevelt. There will certainly be a drive through the parks. The children will retire early, while the president and Mrs. Roosevelt will entertain a party of friends at dinner.

CHRISTMAS IN THE FOREIGN LEGATIONS AT WASHINGTON

Some Come From the Lands Where the Christ-Child Is Not Known

WASHINGTON, Dec. 25.—Santa Claus triumphant is to be seen at his best at the embassies and legations in this city. Here, as elsewhere, his toddling subjects rule, and that their sway is absolute is proved by the way they force the rich and great of all nations, regardless of religion, to honor their patron saint. There are 38 of these homes of distinguished foreigners who are here as the representatives of their governments. They represent all of the great countries of the world and many of the small ones. They come from all parts of the globe. They are white, black, brown and yellow. There are Christians and heathen among them. They bring here the customs of all the great races under the sun. Some come from lands where Christmas is unheard of; where seasons of good cheer and of the giving of presents occur, if at all, at other periods of the year than December. In all of these legations, however, where there are small children, Christmas is added to the festivals appearing in the native calendars. The little autocrats soon learn of the great day and force its observance. And so it comes that Christmas trees with their twinkling lights and burdens of gifts, dolls and toys and all that goes to delight the child's heart may be found in the homes of all these foreigners. General Wu, the former Chinese minister, made this concession to Christianity for the happiness of his youngsters. He has departed, but there are other children in the legation and elaborate plans for the recognition of their rights have

been made this year. The lucky children in the French embassy have two days of joy. In France St. Nicholas, attended by little saints dressed in furs and carrying packs, makes the rounds of all the houses on December 6. He leaves gifts for the good children of the French embassy are good, of course, and switches for the bad. The children so they were favored with presents on December 6, and will get a whole lot more this morning. French children range their shoes in the chimney place on Christmas eve. Gifts are brought to the Haitian legation by the infant Jesus. There can be no doubt of that, for one moment a youngster of the household, almost bursting with excitement, declared that he had seen the holy child leaving them. The Russian Christmas comes 12 days after December 25. In the absence of children only the Russian day is observed. It is a time of reunions, festivity and the exchange of gifts. In the South American legations the day is a solemn religious festival. Mass is celebrated at midnight on Christmas eve. The place of honor in the house is given to the manger, or nacimiento, representing the birth of Christ. There are figures of the shepherds and wise men in wax grouped around the infant Jesus. Christmas trees and gifts also figure in the celebration. At the Mexican embassy a jar filled with nuts and bonbons is suspended from the back porch. Various members of the family, blindfolded, strike at the jar with a long stick. When one finally breaks it all engage in a scramble in the shower of sweets. Then a basket filled with gifts is passed around. There is a great tree at the Austrian embassy in honor of Miss Mela, almost 5 years old, who proudly proclaims herself an American girl. As was the case last year, all the little ones of the diplomatic corps, about 50 in number, have been invited to see the wonderful tree. Great feasts, in which native delicacies secured for the occasion form the most prominent feature, are served at all the legations on Christmas day.