

CHRISTMAS DAY The World Around

Christmas day is, above all other days, the festival of hope, wrote Dean Farrar. On that blessed day the thoughts of millions all over the habitable globe, from the huts of the Eskimos to the kraals of the Kafirs, and from the torrid zone down to the wigwams of the Patagonians and the stormy Antarctic isles, will turn to Bethlehem and to the Christ-Child. All will be glad to think how to us is born in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And why? Because even the dimmest and vaguest conception of Christmas will show that this commemorates an infinitude of love and infinitude of hope. It tells that man is not a worthless atom; but that he is dear to God; that there is an infinite value and preciousness in this, our mortal life.

Christmas is the gladdest festival of the year. People talk of holiday making, but this one season fairly radiates gladness. There is around it, as it were, a halo, or atmosphere of joy. From the time when we were tiny children, before we knew the meaning of work, when every day was a play day, we looked forward to Christmas as a magic occasion. And now we are grown up, we still look forward to Christmas. There is the excitement of the mutual exchange of gifts, the exhilaration of the winter festivities, the pleasure of family reunions, the inspiring sense of holiday.

In some of the old Belgian towns a beautiful spectacle may be seen on Christmas Eve. Amid the sounds of drum, cornet, cymbal and a whole orchestra of instruments, with the soft chanting of old carols, a long, gaily decked procession marches through the principal streets; children of all ages, each division dressed in its special color—white, blue, pink or yellow—and all bearing some badge or emblem, or grasping some bright ribbon attached to various objects.

The Germans have a truly childlike love for Christmas. The spirit of Kris Kringle animates the hearts of rich and poor; faults and foibles are covered with a kindly mantle, and mirth and jollity reign. Every family wants a Christmas tree, of course, but if too poor to get a tree, a bough will give them just as much pleasure, and if not a bough, then a twig will do very well. It is a home festival, and the gifts, however small, are pretty sure to be love gifts. All through the land there is mirth and laughter and the spirit of Christmas, and we feel that here the holiday retains the charm it once had when we were little ones. In the distribution of gifts everyone is remembered, usually with only a trifle, but it is beautiful as expressing remembrance. There is a general caring for the poor. Rich families care for poor families individually, and choose gifts which will be of real value to them.

Ancient Christmas customs are passing away in the larger cities of Russia, but in some of the remoter provinces of the empire the old-fashioned form lingers. Once upon a time the festival seemed to be devoted to the amusement of young girls, nor is this practice entirely obsolete. The house of some wealthy family was chosen for the place of festivities, in order that there might be no lack of "good cheer." Of course, these festivities were only indulged in by the rich. The poor never gained admittance to them, except occasionally as maskers or mummers.

From time immemorial it has been the custom in Roumania, at Christmas, to bless the Danube. Formerly a scaffolding was erected on the frozen river, and on this was a large cross of ice; but owing to the extraordinary number of people who presented themselves, the ice frequently gave way, and many were drowned. The ceremony now takes place on the bank of the Danube. The people, in recognition of the occasion, wear turbans of colored paper and carry long, white wands. These people, who are dressed to represent Pontius Pilate, Herod and other religious characters, go from place to place singing hymns, which are almost similar to our own Christmas carols. At the appointed hour of the ceremony, the notabilities arrive in professional order, accompanied by the priests. The service lasts half an hour, at the close of which the ice is broken and a small wooden cross is thrown into the water. Hundreds of people rush in after it, and the person who is successful in recovering it is considered very lucky.

Christmas in the West Indies is a very jovial, rollicking affair—at least in the estimation of the darkies. The great feature of the season is the series of masquerades or mystery plays enacted by strolling negro performers. They are quite an imposing lot of men, with a good ear for music, and as you watch their antics you might easily imagine that, instead of being in a civilized British colony, you were back in the heart of Africa, assisting at some savage death dance or other heathen rite.

Christmas is celebrated in Sweden to an extent unknown in our country, and the celebration is not over until Jan. 13, or "twentieth day Yule." At every farmer's house there is erected, in the middle of the yard, a pole, to the top of which is bound a large, full sheaf of grain. Not a peasant in Sweden will sit down to a Christmas dinner within doors, until he has first raised aloft a Christmas dinner for the birds in the cold and snow without.

Of all Chinese festivals that of New Year's day is the greatest. Being a peculiarly contradictory race, the Chinese do not reckon time by the sun, as we do in America, but by the moon, so that the Chinese New Year's day may come at any time between the middle of January and the middle of February. When the time approaches, creditors are happy, for by the last day of the old year all debts must be paid. The Chinaman who cannot pay up must hide his head until the festival is over. Another preparation is a general washing up. Household belongings and personal attire are put through a severe course of soap and water in order that the new year may be begun with cleanliness.

A French Canadian New Year's custom now nearly obsolete was that known as La Quete de l'Enfant Jesus—the collection for the infant Jesus. This collection was managed by the parish priest, who was driven round among his parishioners by the senior church warden or the beadle. The gifts that he thus gathered "for the love of the infant Jesus" on the festival of the circumcision were distributed among the poor. Intimacy connected with this was another practice of collecting alms for the poor, known as La Guignole or La Ignotee.

New Year's, not Christmas, is the French day of days. Cards, flowers and bonbons are exchanged in profusion, and visits are made. The gay breakfast over, the children, the youth and those of the family in the prime of life make ready to pay visits. They start forth with pockets and hands filled with remembrances.

TALKING DOLLS.

Latest Production of the Clever German Toy-makers.
One of the most striking of the new Christmas toys takes the shape of a real talking doll. In the past dolly's vocabulary has been limited to such phrases as "Da-da" or "Ma-ma," sounds produced by a reed and a pair of bellows. All that

COMING OF THE NEW YEAR.

New Year, I look straight in your eyes,
Our ways and our interests blend;
You may be a foe in disguise,
But I shall believe you a friend.
We get what we give in our measure—
We cannot give pain and get pleasure;
I give you good will and good cheer,
And you must return it, New Year.

We get what we give in this life,
Tho' often the giver indeed
Waits long upon doubting and strife;
Ere proving the truth of his creed;
But somewhere, some way, and forever,
Reward is the meed of endeavor;
And if I am really worth while,
New Year, you will give me your smile.

You hide in your mystical band
No "luck" that I cannot control
If I trust my own courage and stand
On the infinite strength of my soul.
Man hides in his brain and his spirit
A power that is godlike, or near it;
And he who has measured his force
Can govern events in their course.

You come with a crown on your brow,
New Year, without blemish or spot;
Yet you, and not I, sir, must bow,
For Time is the servant of Thought.
Whatever you bring me of trouble
Shall turn into good, and then double,
If my spirit looks up without fear
To the Source that you came from, New Year.
—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

A Christmas Surprise Party.
By Hope Darling.

CARL STEWARD stepped from the train at Farmington. It was early evening. The snow lay fresh and untrodden on the village streets, although the storm had ceased, and bright stars were beginning to gem the sky. "Back again," and the middle-aged man drew himself erect. "Twenty years since I left Farmington. Ah! I am another person. The heartick boy of that day has nothing to do with Carl Steward, successful banker and man of business." Several residence streets lay between him and the business part of the town. As he was threading his way along the narrow board walk he came face to face with a slender woman. It was in the circle of flickering light cast by a kerosene lamp that the two met. One glance into the thin, dark face framed by snow-

They had loved each other with a boy's and a girl's idealizing love. The Christmas of twenty years before was to have been their wedding day. A fortnight before the appointed time the lovers had quarreled. It was Jerry Carpenter, Rachel's brother-in-law, who made the trouble. The next day both Carl and Rachel knew that Carpenter had lied, but each was too proud to make the first overture. A week later Carl left Farmington.

After parting with Miss West, Carl rambled around the old town for an hour before he sought an interview with his lawyer. As he ascended the steps leading to that man's office he said to himself, "I thought I had forgotten. She has, but there has never been any one else for either of us."

The lawyer, Ronald Morgan, proceeded at once to give his employer the details of the proposed purchase. To Carl's surprise he found that it was Rachel's old home that was offered for sale. Her brother-in-law held a mortgage upon it, and he was urging her to sign it over to him. Rachel had for years been subject to the tyranny of her sister's family. In a fit of desperation she had sought Mr. Morgan, asking if he could not find a purchaser for her.

Carl Steward stood up, a frown wrinkling his brow. "I remember the place, and am sure it will suit me. Offer all it is worth."

The next day Carl Steward went about among the villagers. Many remembered him, and many more had heard of the success that he had won in the outside world.

There were several interviews with Rachel. She spoke with reluctance of herself. "I suppose I am foolish, but I do not dare let Jerry and Hester know what I am doing," she said, a soft crimson flush coloring her cheeks.

"What will you do when you leave the old home?" Mr. Steward asked.

The flush faded, leaving her very pale. "I shall go away from Farmington, and try to find work."

Two days later Farmington was electrified. Carl Steward had issued invitations for a Christmas dinner party to be given at the hotel. Preparations were made on a more lavish scale than the village had ever seen.

The Carpenters and Miss West were invited. Rachel's sister said, "Course you won't go, Rachel. It wouldn't look well, after what happened 'twixt you an' Steward years ago. You ain't got nothin' to wear, neither. Sides, I want you to stay with the children."

Rachel made no reply. She settled the matter by going away early Christmas morning and not returning. Mrs. Carpenter did not again see her sister until they were both in the hotel parlor. The room was a bower of evergreens and holly. Mrs. Carpenter gave a gasp, and clutched her husband's arm. "For land's sake, Jerry, do look at Rachel!"

Miss West's slender figure was outlined against the screen of green boughs. She wore a soft gray silk, the full skirt trailing behind her.

"The dress she was to have been married to Carl Steward in!" Mrs. Carpenter gasped. "No, I ain't mistaken. I guess I know it, for Rachel an' I have quarreled 'bout it more'n a dozen times. Where'd she git the lace? It cost a mint o' money. Jerry, I'm goin' to find out 'bout this."

Mrs. Carpenter did find out. Before she could reach Rachel Mr. Steward had led her forward to where the minister was standing.

"Why, they're bein' married—really married!" Hester exclaimed. "Well, I never!"

Jerry was the first to recover from the surprise. He soon found an opportunity to say to Rachel, "You'd better sign the place over to me in the morning, Rachel. You'll be goin' off West an' forgittin' it." It was Rachel's husband who replied, "Morgan will pay you the money on the mortgage any time you wish. I am going to rebuild the house for Rachel a summer home. Nothing that money or love can procure is too good for my wife."—Farm and Fireside.

Two-Fold Benefits Derived from Making New Year Resolutions.

Notwithstanding the army of very wise and very cynical people who sneer at New Year's resolutions, I'm going to boldly announce myself here as one who believes in them. I do not hesitate to say that I have made them every year since I was old enough to think about such things, and I expect to keep it up as long as I live. Moreover, I want my girls to get into the same habit, for I consider it good and helpful. But, girls, don't take it up as a pastime, or confide in anyone who happens to be present. Be in earnest about it. Go away by yourself for a little while and examine your character honestly. Don't make excuses to yourself because there are flaws in it; don't attempt to lay the blame upon anyone else; don't console yourself with the thought that you are no worse than your neighbor. Shut out all the world, face your conscience bravely, and be honest with yourself, if only for a little half hour. It cannot help but do you good.

Character is something we build for ourselves. We, and we alone, are responsible for it. We have no right to assert that environment or hereditary influences prevent us from reaching our own ideals. There is nothing but our own moral laziness to prevent us from being what we really want to be.

The benefits arising from the making of New Year resolutions are twofold. It is good for us to acknowledge a fault and wish to overcome it; it is good for us to resolve to do better, even if the resolution is destined to be broken, for the soul lives on these breaths from the upper realms of life.—Minneapolis Housekeeper.

IF I WERE SANTA CLAUS.



If I were Santa Claus I'd bring
Each sighing maid a splendid ring,
And unto every child the toy
That represented deepest joy.

To each defeated candidate
Who sadly sits and mourns his fate
I'd give a public office where
He might hold down an easy chair.

To every tolling man I'd bring
The ease and riches of a King;
The unrequited lover then
Should never sigh in vain again.

The golfer, too, should have good cheer,
I'd stretch the season through the year,
So that where snow is spread to-day
He still might drive and scuff away.

If I were Santa Claus I'd bring
The poet rhymes for everything;
The word that's now so hard to find
Should come directly to his mind.

The days should all be glad and bright
For every one who longs to write,
I'd straightaway bring to him or her
A kind and eager publisher.

To every chorus girl I'd bring
The sweet ability to sing;
And every babe that squalls at night,
Should have the food that gives delight.

Then joy should seek the widow's soul,
I'd fill her empty bin with coal,
And at the gay and brilliant ball
No girl should languish near the wall.

If I were Santa Claus I'd bring
Contentment to the sorrowing,
And servant-girls should evermore
Line up at every kitchen door.

CHRISTMAS TREES.

From Time Immemorial Part of the Holiday Celebration.

FROM time immemorial a tree has been a part of the Christmas celebration. It may be seen outside the traditional manger in the missals and early paintings of the preaphaelite Italian school. In the tree or near it are seen angels in flowing robes singing out of a scroll of illuminated paper the "Peace on Earth and Good Will Toward Men" or "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!"

The correct German Christmas-tree always has an angel or a Christkind on the topmost branch, with a tinsel star at the end of a staff, like a pantomime fairy, and if the tree belongs to a very orthodox family there is usually at its foot a small toy group representing the Saviour's birth in the stable at Bethlehem.

The lights on the tree are said to be of Jewish origin. In the ninth month of the Jewish year, corresponding nearly to our December, and on the twenty-fifth day, the Jews celebrated the feast of dedication of their temple. It had been desecrated on that day by Antiochus. It was dedicated by Judas Maccabeus, and then, according to the Jewish legend, sufficient oil was found in the temple to last for the seven branched candlestick for seven days, and it would have taken seven days to prepare new oil. Accordingly the Jews were wont on the 25th of Kisleu in every house to light a candle, on the next day two, and so on till on the seventh and last day of the feast seven candles twinkled in every house.

It is not easy to fix the exact date of the Nativity, but it fell most probably on the last day of Kisleu, when every Jewish house in Bethlehem and Jerusalem was twinkling with lights. It is worthy of notice that the German name for Christmas is Feihnacht (the night of dedication), as though it were associated with this feast. The Greeks also call Christmas the feast of lights, and, indeed, this was also the name given to the dedication festival, Chanuka, by the Jews.—New York Mail and Express.

Russian Idea of Santa Claus.



Jan. 7 is Christmas in Russia, where the calendar is of the "old style"; that is, about two weeks behind that in use in this country. This picture represents Santa Claus, or Kris Kringle, according to the Russian idea, in the attire of a priest of the Greek church, the national church of Russia, of which the Czar is the head.

A LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS.



is to be changed, and dolly will be able to say quite a number of nice things and carry on little conversations of a hundred words or more and, if necessary, sing the very latest song.

The idea comes from Germany and is really an adaptation of the principle upon which the gramophone is based. Briefly it is this: Secreted somewhere in the doll's interior will be a tiny disk machine, which will carry a record about two inches in diameter. When the doll has been made presentable and feels equal to taking part in the conversation her little nurse will simply have to place a disk in a crevice somewhere in dolly's back, an operation as simple as putting a penny in a slot, and the doll will do the rest. Two dolls, with suitable records, may easily be made to carry on quite intelligent conversations.—London Daily News.

"Made known your wants for Christmas yet?"

"Sure. Asked the forty-seven friends who sent me suspenders last year to send trousers to match them this."—Cincinnati Times-Star.

white hair, and Carl Steward stopped. "It must be—it is Rachel West!"

The woman's look of perplexity was suddenly merged into one of delight. "I am Rachel West, and you—you are Carl Steward."

He held out his hand. "Are you still Rachel West, after all these years? And do you live here?"

His matter-of-fact tone steadied the woman. She replied, "I am still Rachel West, and I live in the old home of my parents. You remember my sister, Hester Carpenter? She and her family live with me. And you? You have won success and happiness in that western city?"

"I have won—money." There was a note of bitterness in his voice. "Twenty years since I went away. I have always planned to come back and build a home here. A foolish idea for a man who is alone in the world, is it not? A lawyer here with whom I have been corresponding wrote me that a piece of property he thought would suit me could be obtained, so I came on at once."

He and Rachel had grown up together.