



Christmas in Bethlehem! What memories, what sacred traditions the words evoke! Where else can the feast of Christmas be so sublime and divine? Where else can mortal feel himself so near to his God?

Bethlehem is always crowded with strange folk from every part of the world on Christmas Eve. They come—the pilgrims of piety or curiosity—along the romantic and singular route from Jerusalem, and spend the night in the holy ceremonies, departing the next day.

The smart merchant from New York City shows the Russian landlord from the Volga or the Montenegrin with his belt filled with ancient daggers and pistols. The Turkish soldiers keep order with perfect good humor and with a certain contemptuous indifference which is apt to tell a little upon the nerve of pious Occidentals, when they observe it for the first time.

The Church of the Nativity is the goal of all the pilgrims. Certainly this is the most interesting place in Holy Land. There all the divergent Christian factions meet at a common source and there they learn tolerance and respect for each other.

The Emperor Hadrian, in the course of the second century, is said to have surrounded the place where stood the



THE LATIN PATRIARCH CONDUCTING THE FRENCH CONSUL TO THE GROTTO OF THE NATIVITY.

stable of the nativity with a wood sacred to Adonis, and even had the worship of Venus publicly celebrated there. Two centuries later the pious Helena raised a church, and of the ancient stable of course nothing absolutely authentic remains.

Nothing is more singular in Holy Land than the entrance to the sanctuary of the Nativity. At the end of the straggling hamlet the street spreads out into an oblong square which opens out an esplanade covered with great stone flags. This is the "atrium" of the ancient basilica, in the middle of which stood the baptismal cisterns for the ablutions which the Christians of old were required to practise before entering a church. A mass of white tombs walls in one side of the esplanade; on the other arises a high wall which might belong to convent or prison. A few windows dot the wall here and there, but there are no signs of any door.

After a little search one finds a black hole, like the entrance to a cavern, and presently he sees people creeping into it, almost on all fours. Now and then the gallant Oriental on guard will offer his hand to a lady to help her down. That is the principal entrance to the sanctuary of the Nativity. Doors were suppressed in the days when Mahomedan intolerance was greater than it is now, and when it was necessary to wall up doors and to allow communication only with the upper stories, as the monks in Mount Sinai do nowadays. Gradually there grew up around this basilica a colony composed of the three principal sects, the orthodox Catholics, the Greeks, and the Armenians, and convents were built in such numbers that they overshadowed the church.

The interior, however, still reserves its ancient form. Once out of the gloomy entrance, one finds himself in a great hall traversed by four colonnades and surmounted by a modern roof, the beams of which appear.

Here and there, at the bases of huge red monoliths, crowned with Corinthian capitals, in a framework of old mosaic on a gold background, people are kneeling or sitting squatted on their haunches; soldiers of the Sultan are peacefully patching their shabby uniforms, women are nursing their babes, Franciscan and Greek monks

tiful monoliths to ornament a palace at Cairo. But a serpent came out and bit the first workman who laid a pickax at the columns, and the rest of the workmen refused to work.

Passing two sleepy Turkish soldiers whose guns are leaned against the wall, the pilgrim descends by circular steps to a door which opens upon a narrower staircase, at the foot of which one finds two more Turkish soldiers, in gala uniform with rifles on their shoulders.

In the Manger.

On the left is a niche lighted by a great number of hanging lamps. Beneath them sparkles a great silver star, fixed in the pavement, on which is the inscription:

Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.

We are in the sacred stable. "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary." It is a grotto to-day, but the credite say that for thousands of years grottoes have served for stables in Palestine.

The splendid gallery which extends for some distance, glistening with marble and light, scarcely recalls the poverty and humility in which the Savior was born. Everything is in marble here, even the margin of the miraculous well which sprang into existence to slake the thirst of the Holy Family.

All the sects have harmonized in the decoration of the grotto, but they are not to be trusted to agree so well in the church. The presence of the Turkish soldiers is a proof of this. Latins, Greeks, and Armenians have their boundaries well defined in the body of the church, and at Bethlehem they are prone to quarrel. There have been battles in which much blood has been shed. Each lamp in the grotto is

marked with the name of the sect to which it belongs.

There are stairways to the grotto, one belonging to the Latins, the other to the Greeks. Not long ago the Armenians tried to enlarge their territory in the church. They spread a carpet on the flags belonging to them. Next day the carpet had encroached a little on the rival territory; the next still more. The other sects saw the trick, and in the night cut the carpet in pieces.

France Presides.

When Christmas comes at Bethlehem the French Consul is in his glory. France is the protectress of the Holy

places and of the Oriental Catholics, and all governments in France careenously to France. This privilege was confirmed to France in 1882 by the Congress of Berlin. The old ceremonial, established by ordinances of Louis XV., has been strictly maintained. The local clergy pays royal honors to the Consul of France. When he is installed a Te Deum is chanted.

In the processions at Bethlehem, at the Holy Sepulchre and elsewhere the blue cushion on which he is to kneel is carried before the Consul. On Christmas Eve the French Consul comes from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to take part in the ceremonies of the sacred festival. The Turkish authorities place at his disposition a detachment of cavalry and two officers, who escort him with drawn swords. Surrounded by his eight cavasses, on horseback, in their handsome Levantine costumes, and by his consular staff, and accompanied by the superiors of the convents and by the pilgrims, he makes a sensation as he arrives on the esplanade. The sheiks of Bethlehem go out to meet him, flourishing their guns, and welcome him in. There is a reception at convent, and the Turkish band sometimes play the "Marseillaise."

The Latin patriarch then arrives, and at 10 o'clock at night a pontifical mass is celebrated in the church. The sumptuous ornaments worn by the patriarch, and his assistants on these occasions were presented by the late Marshal MacMahon, in the name of the French Republic.

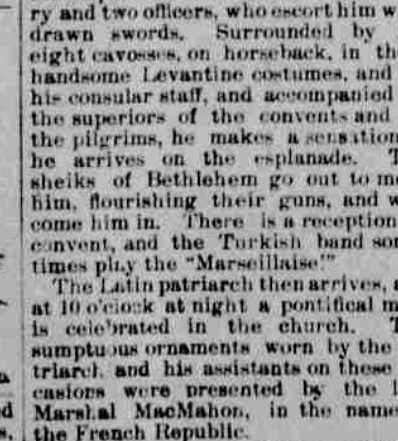
The first ceremony ends at midnight. A long procession, brilliant with tapers, then descends into the grotto of the Nativity. The patriarch carries in his arms a waxen image of the child Jesus, reclining upon pink silken cushions embroidered in gold.

Before the niche of the manger the patriarch hands the "bambino" to one of his deacons, and then recites the Evangel of the Nativity according to St. Luke. Until two in the morning

the psalms and songs continue, and are finished by a Te Deum. All Bethlehem wakes the whole night long and camps, by the light of tapers, around the immense church. The spectacle is merry and picturesque when dawn breaks over this extemporized camp. Such are Christmas Eve and Christmas Morn at Bethlehem.



Fuller Brins—Say, buddy, I'm Sassy Claus. See? Somebody stole my clo's an' reindeer. Jus' give me a nickel an' I'll give yer twocent as many things nex' Christmas.—Jude



There is a legend that a "Sultan of Egypt" once tried to carry off the beas-

CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY.

Where the Holiday Is Always Enthusiastically Observed.

CHRISTMAS preparations go on no less vigorously in the country than they do in town, but they are less evident there. Nevertheless the spirit of Christmas is abroad there as well as in town.

There are great excursions in addition to the woods for running cedar or ground pine, for spruce and fir trees, for branches of hemlock, cedar and pine. In some lucky neighborhoods the holly grows, and sometimes the mistletoe, with its mystic, poetical associations, is to be found. Often the little church must be adorned for the great feast day, and this cannot be done, as in the city, by hands of paid professional decorators. In the country it must be a labor of love, and busy hands must work early and late to make the trimming of the church attractive.

Then, too, the day before Christmas the Christmas tree, chosen and marked long before, must be cut and carried home with almost as much enthusiasm as attended, in old times, the bringing in of the Yule log. It is not only in the decoration department that the day before Christmas is a veritable hive of industry. The mince meat has been prepared days ago and has been ripening in a great stone crock in the cellar; but to-day the pies are to be made—pies of many kinds, as befits an American household. Crullers and doughnuts are to be mixed and fried, cranberry sauce to be compounded, the materials for the plum pudding to be prepared, cakes, jellies, blancmanges, tarts and other goodies brought to a state of perfection.

Outside of the kitchen there is an air of subdued mystery. There have been restrictions laid upon nearly every member of the family concerning his or her free access to some part of the house. The eldest boy, whose chief desire for months has been a bicycle, is warned to give the woodshed a wide berth. The closet in the guest chamber is forbidden ground to the mother, while none of the children are allowed to go near the linen-closet, where mamma has stored her gifts.

Everything in the house is in a state of shining cleanliness by the time the day falls. The house is fragrant with odors of spruce and pine and looks a very bower of greenery by the time that the tinkle of the sleigh bells is more probably the rattle of the wheels in these degenerate days—now does not always come for Christmas—announces the arrival of the guests.

From the city come the scattered members of the flock, who would travel any distance rather than miss assembling for Christmas under the home roof-tree. They come with laden arms and gay greetings, bringing in a rush of cold air and a fresh influx of the Christmas spirit. The church is full of stories about the trip in the train, of the country people and their parcels, of the children going home to grandfather's for Christmas, of the parties of young people eager for a day's skating or coasting, of the crowds of vehicles awaiting the travelers at the stations, of the merry greetings, of the spirit of love and good-will that seemed to brood over everything and everybody. After dinner comes the great event of the day—the children fondly believed Christmas eve was first devised—hang up the stockings. Then there is the repetition of the never-old always charming poem, "Twas the night before Christmas." This is followed by ancient conjectures as to how Santa Claus will manage his sleigh and reindeer if there is no snow on the ground, and then the little ones are tucked away and left "while visions of sugar-plums dance through their heads."

With the first break of dawn on Christmas morning there is a rustle of excitement through the house. Ghostly forms flit through the halls and happy voices shout "Merry Christmas" from door to door. Then come the hurried dressing, the jolly breakfast, the exchange of gifts and all the dear delights of the day of days. There is no sound outside to distract the attention from these joys. The solemn silence of the country in winter surrounds them on every side and makes sweeter the mirth and cheer within.

A Few Christmas Don'ts.

Don't give a bottle of perfume to a lady unless you are sure it is the sort she prefers.

Don't send a box of ruled writing paper to a newspaper correspondent; she would rather write on the paper in which the grocer does up his tea.

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From that time on she had no moment to herself. The presents were distributed, each pupil of the Sunday school was well remembered, and silent charity did there, as it does in the laced and flowered churches of the city, its silent mission of blessing. Time and again, as the girl passed here and there deftly directing her clumsy Mercurs, who carried common messages, she saw the black eyes of Eliza Raines; saw the lifted, proud face, and fancied she read some lesson of trouble. But she could not rise to the level of sympathy. She had lost so much to the gaudy woman, suffered so much at the shrine of the buxom beauty, that she could not quite bear the echo of that midnight mandate:

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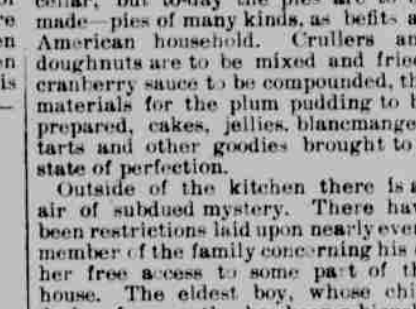
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The busy moments were over at last, and Nora turned a rain from the littered stage and passed into the dressing-room. There seemed no reason for it, but her heart was crowded full of most untimely sorrow. She came close to the cold window and tried to forget the tumult out there in the house, the ex-hausting heat, and the flavor not quite of the poem. But what was this on the window pane? Her name? She had not written her name. She had written—she had written "Ed Morrow" up there in the mellow soil of the Christmas frost. And here above it was her own—his in the fair, round lines of a girl's cigraphy, hers in the strong, rugged sweep of a man's swift hand. She turned with a start and a little scream, and there was Ed Morrow, with his arms about her and his lips on her brow—Ed Morrow, who said nothing, but comforted her with the slow, quiet pressure of his left hand, while he took up the tuning fork from the widow sill and swung a circle clear around both names, engraved on the frosty pane.

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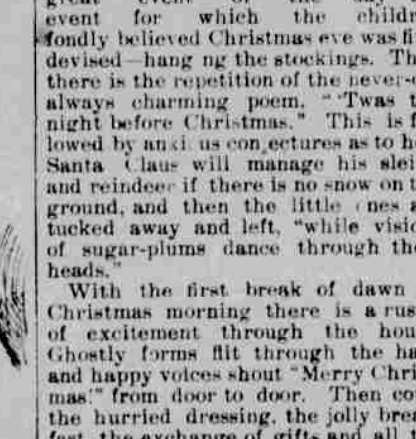
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NORA'S VICTORY.



Turkeys Come High.

Uncle Zab—Turkeys com' high dis year. Brother Wayback—Yes, dey's high, but we's wize to hab 'em.



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THE NIGHT OF THE STAR.

Not in pillared palace tall,
With its tapestries of gold,
But within a stable's stall:
In the meekness manifold:
Not in pomp of proud estate,
Came the child of our delight,
Known to shepherds, watching late,
In the silence of the night.

Yet on all the anxious earth
Never such a birth had been!
Never a momentous birth
That could mean so much to men!
All the stars of death were shorn
When the child of our delight
Came, and Life and Hope were born
In the silence of the night.

Following the wandering star,
Wise men brought unto His feet
Precious favors from afar,
Incense and frankincense sweet,
(What things precious shall we bear
To the child of our delight,
Praying that he find them fair,
In the silence of the night?)

Now the sound of trumpets blown,
And the thundering heard afar,
From glad steeples make it known
Of the shining of the star!
He the banners bright unfurled
To the Lord of our delight,
In the gladness of the world,
In the glory of the night!

A. W. HELLAW.

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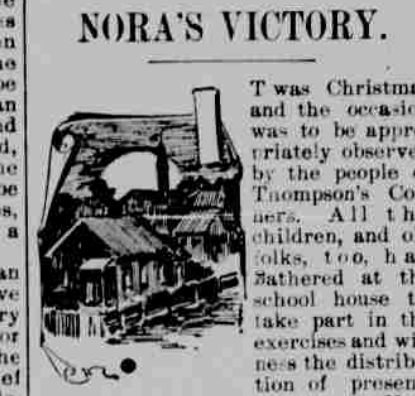
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There are great excursions in addition to the woods for running cedar or ground pine, for spruce and fir trees, for branches of hemlock, cedar and pine. In some lucky neighborhoods the holly grows, and sometimes the mistletoe, with its mystic, poetical associations, is to be found. Often the little church must be adorned for the great feast day, and this cannot be done, as in the city, by hands of paid professional decorators. In the country it must be a labor of love, and busy hands must work early and late to make the trimming of the church attractive.

Then, too, the day before Christmas the Christmas tree, chosen and marked long before, must be cut and carried home with almost as much enthusiasm as attended, in old times, the bringing in of the Yule log. It is not only in the decoration department that the day before Christmas is a veritable hive of industry. The mince meat has been prepared days ago and has been ripening in a great stone crock in the cellar; but to-day the pies are to be made—pies of many kinds, as befits an American household. Crullers and doughnuts are to be mixed and fried, cranberry sauce to be compounded, the materials for the plum pudding to be prepared, cakes, jellies, blancmanges, tarts and other goodies brought to a state of perfection.

Outside of the kitchen there is an air of subdued mystery. There have been restrictions laid upon nearly every member of the family concerning his or her free access to some part of the house. The eldest boy, whose chief desire for months has been a bicycle, is warned to give the woodshed a wide berth. The closet in the guest chamber is forbidden ground to the mother, while none of the children are allowed to go near the linen-closet, where mamma has stored her gifts.

Everything in the house is in a state of shining cleanliness by the time the day falls. The house is fragrant with odors of spruce and pine and looks a very bower of greenery by the time that the tinkle of the sleigh bells is more probably the rattle of the wheels in these degenerate days—now does not always come for Christmas—announces the arrival of the guests.

From the city come the scattered members of the flock, who would travel any distance rather than miss assembling for Christmas under the home roof-tree. They come with laden arms and gay greetings, bringing in a rush of cold air and a fresh influx of the Christmas spirit. The church is full of stories about the trip in the train, of the country people and their parcels, of the children going home to grandfather's for Christmas, of the parties of young people eager for a day's skating or coasting, of the crowds of vehicles awaiting the travelers at the stations, of the merry greetings, of the spirit of love and good-will that seemed to brood over everything and everybody. After dinner comes the great event of the day—the children fondly believed Christmas eve was first devised—hang up the stockings. Then there is the repetition of the never-old always charming poem, "Twas the night before Christmas." This is followed by ancient conjectures as to how Santa Claus will manage his sleigh and reindeer if there is no snow on the ground, and then the little ones are tucked away and left "while visions of sugar-plums dance through their heads."

With the first break of dawn on Christmas morning there is a rustle of excitement through the house. Ghostly forms flit through the halls and happy voices shout "Merry Christmas" from door to door. Then come the hurried dressing, the jolly breakfast, the exchange of gifts and all the dear delights of the day of days. There is no sound outside to distract the attention from these joys. The solemn silence of the country in winter surrounds them on every side and makes sweeter the mirth and cheer within.

A Few Christmas Don'ts.

Don't give a bottle of perfume to a lady unless you are sure it is the sort she prefers.

Don't send a box of ruled writing paper to a newspaper correspondent; she would rather write on the paper in which the grocer does up his tea.

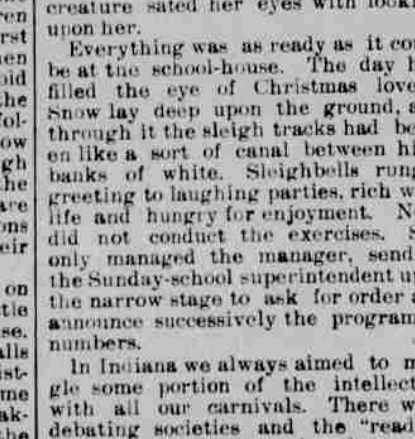
Don't give a cookery book to your washerwoman; she would much rather have the ingredients.

Don't give a new pair of ill-fitting gloves, or a just-bought fan that you find you don't like, to people who try to think will appreciate these things. They won't appreciate them.—Good Housekeeping.

Talking Through His Hat.

In a manger, laid so lowly,
Came the Prince of Peace to earth;
While a choir of angels holy
Sang to celebrate his birth.

She tried to forget the man out there beyond the curtain; tried to join her heart with the swinging rhythm of the carol; tried to think of that elder, better time when a still and stary night like this brought the era of love, not the season of pain. She was in the far, chill corner of the room, for the moment alone. The whole busy house was behind her. Before was the frost-painted window, which curtained the outer night and hid the glow from her brimming eyes. She was as distant from all familiar scenes as Jude's plains were distant from this humble celebration of their Christmas birth. And she wrote his



name with the use of her tuning fork on the thick, white frost of the window pane.

Almost instantly the song was ended. The curtain fell with the slow, obedient movement of tyros' curtains everywhere, and the children rushed from the narrow stage to seats by their parents in the crowded house. Then came the evening's great event. Draperies which reached from the ceiling were parted and drawn aside, revealing the Christmas tree. It was Nora's work, and she knew the whirlwind of cheering down there in the house held something of compliment to her. It was noisy and rude; she knew that. But she knew as well that her labor was rewarded, for she had added an hour of enjoyment to scores of lives.

From that time on she had no moment to herself. The presents were distributed, each pupil of the Sunday school was well remembered, and silent charity did there, as it does in the laced and flowered churches of the city, its silent mission of blessing. Time and again, as the girl passed here and there deftly directing her clumsy Mercurs, who carried common messages, she saw the black eyes of Eliza Raines; saw the lifted, proud face, and fancied she read some lesson of trouble. But she could not rise to the level of sympathy. She had lost so much to the gaudy woman, suffered so much at the shrine of the buxom beauty, that she could not quite bear the echo of that midnight mandate:

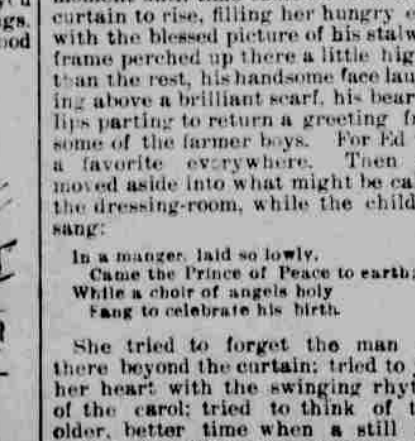
"Be on earth."

Fortunately, as she saw, moment after moment, with a woman's swift vision, that rising cloud of disappointment in her rival's countenance, she thought it was because no present had been bestowed. Never thinking that Eliza might be mourning a thrall's enfranchisement, Nora almost came to the point where she wished some present might be found on the sending branch of this woman whose Christmas was surely not a season of joy. But that brought with it the fear that such a present might mean too much. And every strange parcel handed up to the Superintendent that he might read the name of the favored mortal, gave Nora the happiest pain. How easy for Ed to have humbled her and exalted Eliza by the simple device of sending to the tree a wide silk handkerchief, a box of candies or a toilet case?

The busy moments were over at last, and Nora turned a rain from the littered stage and passed into the dressing-room. There seemed no reason for it, but her heart was crowded full of most untimely sorrow. She came close to the cold window and tried to forget the tumult out there in the house, the ex-hausting heat, and the flavor not quite of the poem. But what was this on the window pane? Her name? She had not written her name. She had written—she had written "Ed Morrow" up there in the mellow soil of the Christmas frost. And here above it was her own—his in the fair, round lines of a girl's cigraphy, hers in the strong, rugged sweep of a man's swift hand. She turned with a start and a little scream, and there was Ed Morrow, with his arms about her and his lips on her brow—Ed Morrow, who said nothing, but comforted her with the slow, quiet pressure of his left hand, while he took up the tuning fork from the widow sill and swung a circle clear around both names, engraved on the frosty pane.

Nora had down in an instant from the last day of the Christian year quite to its first, then back again. And on the way she gathered something of the spirit which had always armed her. "What made you write my name above yours, Ed?" she asked, as she stood alone before him. "Because it belongs there," said the young man quickly. "Let's commence to-night and never quarrel any more."

That was their compact and they passed together out through the house, trading swift compliments with a hundred friends, till they reached the door. There, just as they stepped from the battered threshold to the creaking snow, a woman turned upon them, flashing a face that was rich in its beauty but marred by its hate. "I wish you much joy," she said, with jealous bitterness. It was Eliza Raines.



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THE POSTMAN.

the postman, the postman,
They keep our hearts agog,
More popular than most men,
As steadily they jog.
They bring us joy and sorrow,
They bring us peace and pain;
But we are glad to-morrow
To welcome them again.

Her form behind the shutter
The pretty girl installs;
Her heart is in a flutter,
Wheeler the postman calls.
And if her lover's mischievous
Does not arrive in time,
The wretched letter-carrier
Feels guilty of a crime!

He brings us bills that make us
Feel very, very blue,
And swaggers invitations
To "swell" receptions, too,
Sometimes a check of value
From publishers not blind,
But often the pious
Respectfully declined.

The time of Merry Christmas
Is bound to make him sad,
For loaded like a wagon,
He's very nearly mad.
The packages he handles
Are quite sufficient cause,
No reindeer carry him
About the country roads.
This modern Santa Claus!
It may be but a fancy,
But I shouldn't think,
I own,
Somnambulist postmen
Were ever, ever known,
And in a postman's baby
Would ever deem it right,
To make his weary father
Treat with it half the night!

