



CHRISTMAS AS A SCIENCE

IN THESE latter days, when every branch of human activity has been systematized and we are brought, whether we like it or not, under the spell of scientific management of the smallest business, what is more natural than that we should now be obliged to accept the scientific management of Christmas?

Christmas as a science! How our grandfathers would have gasped at the idea! In their time Christmas was a spontaneous holiday. Christmas eve they hung their stockings on the mantelpiece in full confidence that Santa Claus could find his way through a six-inch stovepipe. Then there was the Christmas tree, with a grandfather to distribute the gifts and a strong force of uncles and aunts to maintain peace among the cousins. And there was skating in the afternoon with the choicest sort of meles to give the finishing touch to the day.

There was no need of science there; it would, in fact, have spoiled the whole thing. But now the spirit of Christmas has changed. We still have our Christmas trees, subject to the regulations of the fire department, but we are really slaves of our Christmas shopping list. From Thanksgiving to Christmas most of us live in an atmosphere of deepening gloom. We have continually hanging over us that dreadful problem of what would be the best thing to give So-and-so, and when we have made a selection our hearts sink at the awful thought that, perhaps, What's-his-name may give the same thing.

It is to relieve this situation as much as possible that science has been called in to our aid. Of course, even science has not yet been able to prevent two people from sending the same gift to one person. But it has been able to display unusual gifts and a larger number of them for our consideration, so that it will be easier to select a present which we may be quite sure another person would not think of. And the greatest advantage of scientific Christmas shopping is the increased speed with which the ordeal may be gone through.

There are two things which have brought about this result. The first is the establishment of exhibits of gifts for children in the schools of the large cities of the country. And the second is the scientific arrangement of gifts for sale in the shops and department stores. On one floor we have a department devoted entirely to toys and other gifts for children; in another place presents particularly suited to men; and elsewhere sections for women and boys and girls. It is all the direct result of the card index and the filing cabinet. You look under the particular heading you wish and you find displayed before you a vast quantity of suitable gifts to choose from.

The object of the school exhibits is not so much to save mothers labor, worthy object though that might be. Nor is it to display the latest and most ingenious products of the toy market. Child welfare is the primary purpose, and there we have another side of the scientific Christmas. It is to save the children from being deluged at the Christmas season with inartistic, unhygienic and useless gifts. Aesthetic and hygienic are words that loom up larger in the vocabulary of the present than that of the past.

And so, although Noah's ark will remain Noah's ark to the end of the world, no twentieth century youngster whose family attends one of these exhibits will feel constrained to suck the paint off Shem, Ham or Japhet. For, lo and behold, they are entirely innocent of the familiar red and green and blue of that unsanitary century we have left behind. The sons of the patriarch and all the animals that "went in two by two" are of reasonably hygienic white wood.

By the same token, dolls will be dolls. For here again the scientific Christmas has produced a change to a more esthetic and hygienic product. Instead of the big rag doll, whose features have been kissed into obliteration by several generations of children, there is a stockinet successor, equally unbreakable, far more beautiful, and absolutely impervious to washing.

For older children one finds marvelous all-wood dolls, again embodying the three important virtues. They are unbreakable, washable and artistic. Their naturalness is evident at a glance, and the visitor is not surprised to learn that they are reproductions of American children modeled by American artists.

And yet, the thought rises, will modern Dorothys and Nancys love these charming creations one whit more than their mothers and grandmothers loved the china and wax dollies who preceded them? There was Henrietta, a gorgeous Parisian, you may remember, whose pink and white loveliness is still a happy memory. Poor Henrietta! She died the victim of a bad small brother who tried the effect of midsummer heat upon her waxen complexion. Then there was Juliet, she of real brown hair that combed and a warm brunette complexion, and a host of others who may have had untold attractions. But you must put them out of your mind in this scientific age. Real hair harbors horrible microbes and complexions do not digest well in small stomachs.

Then there are other suggestions which are the result of the practicality of our time. Housekeeping furnishings, for example, such as tea sets in pewter, cooking utensils in granite and metal, an ironing board and iron which can really be used, and an iron cookstove upon which things can be cooked. In the matter of musical toys, science has gone even further. The pianos for the child of today are marvelous instruments. Alas for the prestige of the tinkly toy of a generation gone by! These have from two to three octaves of the chromatic scale and are accurately tuned "to concert pitch."

But all such marvels cost money and are not likely to avail much for the household where five or six must live on a small income. So it is good to discover a case containing a number of toys at a minimum price. Not one exceeds ten



cents in cost. It is surprising how many attractive things may be had for this money, and the hard-pressed, busy mother, doting grandma, conscientious aunt or inexperienced big cousin is very likely to find there the very thing to buy for Tommy or Ruth.

The scientific Christmas has only begun and before long we will have exhibits for people of all ages and both sexes. As it is, the department stores, by their scientific arrangement and the catalogues and lists of suitable gifts, classified according to ages, have done much toward making even shopping for men a simple matter.

This, however, is a very recent institution. In the old days, a woman went to the large shop, without the slightest idea of what she wanted to buy, and after ten minutes in the crowded, heated aisles, surrounded by thousands of elaborate, alluring, gaily colored possibilities with no apparent order or arrangement, bewilderment and not decision was her portion. Under such conditions, even the most conscientious of them seized the article nearest. She was at the mercy of the saleswoman because she did not know what she had better get or where she could get it.

But the woman's bewilderment was nothing to the man's. He didn't even make an attempt to shop; he simply bought.

But all these things are different now. You get a list of things which such-and-such a store has to offer for man, woman and child of any given age, with the floor on which it may be found indicated, and you have only to walk in calmly and deliberately and purchase it. It is literally an index of the peace and good will which you may wish to dispense. You do all your thinking beforehand and have an opportunity to remember that Mrs. So-and-So's library is furnished in red, and that a Kaiser Sinn vase would be more acceptable than a lamp.

Then when you have made your selection you may make your way to the store with a fairly calm and tranquil mind. Of course, it is crowded with a density which makes progress almost impossible, blazing hot with multitudinous lights and noisy with many clamoring voices, but all that can have no effect on you. You are a scientific shopper and know just what you are going to get and where you are going to get it. Science saves time, money and nerves.

There is another way in which Christmas has become a science and that is in the methods which the big shopkeeper employs to attract the crowds of holiday shoppers. Go into one of their establishments and you cannot fail to see it. They are aglow with light, bright with the colors of unnumbered fabrics and you hear far and near the clash of music from many instruments. That is simply to lure you in and once you are there you see at first nothing but a spectacle of confusion and a conflict of sounds that would make Babel lose caste as a synonym. But if you start to buy what you have come for you will find a remarkable state of order so far as the things offered for sale are concerned. It is not really a store; it's an exposition.

There isn't a man in the world who has a keener understanding of the human makeup than the big shopkeeper. He knows every string of the instrument and plays diligently upon them all. He lures people with advertisements which are wonder stories. He halts the passing crowd in the streets with a windowful of Christmas wax-works, and once they have come inside, whether with a purpose or out of mere curiosity, the machinery is there to hold them fast.

For weeks the designers, decorators, scene painters, dummymakers have been at work devising and constructing some sort of living pictures fraught with the spirit of the Christmas tale. There is the papier-mache church, still and beautiful, with snow-covered trees about it, light shining from the tall windows, men, women and children mounting to the portal, and from away in the inside sanctuary somewhere come the music of a mighty organ and voices singing Christmas carols.

It is expensive, but it impresses the people who enter the store. It is the idea of it all that the hearts of the shoppers be mellowed and the spirit be moved to buy more and still more for the holiday giving. That may seem a little "far-fetched" as you sit at home with a "krouch on" because something went wrong yesterday, or a man you thought was your friend went back on you, but get into one of those stores, where "you can't hear yourself think" of your troubles for the noise, and you will realize that it is really a very clever conception.

Up there before the eyes is an inspiring presentation of the great Unselfishness. And here before you, behind you and on either hand are the goods, just the things for all your kith and kin. It is the shopkeeper's plan that you shall buy while the spell is still on you, while the dim religious light beams out and the Christmas carols burden the air. And you do. You would be less than human if you didn't. You may not think that has anything to do with it, but it has. The shopkeeper would not go to all that expense, you may be sure, if he did not know what results it would bring him.

Even the small street fakery use their wits to sell all they can during the holidays. It is their harvest time of the whole year. And they select the spots on the sidewalks which will be most advantageous for sale of their particular wares. They invent innumerable little devices for the purpose of attracting crowds. They, too, are scientific.

The toyman chooses a spot where the greatest number of children will pass, and spends the day showing the workings of his clock-work vehicles with metallic horses and drivers, his fighting roosters and climbing monkeys, and his automatic animals full of plaintive voice. About the corners where most people pass are stationed the familiar men and women with baby rabbits and beribboned puppies of divers breeds. They know just how to make a woman imbued with the Christmas spirit take pity on the little animals on a cold day and buy them in order that they may have a comfortable home.

The Christmas greens man with his huge boxes of holly and mistletoe, and—more power and less glucose to him—the candy man and something like ten thousand others display their wares from all sides, entice the passing throngs with a hundred little devices appeal to their sympathy and turn peace and good will into hard cash. To both buyer and seller, from the biggest to the smallest, Christmas has become a science.

From ancient days Christmas trees, lighted with candles, were used in the chancels of English churches. But it has been put on record that the introduction of the modern Christmas trees into England was due to the late duchess of Kent, grandmother to King Edward VII, who was credited with having brought the custom from Germany for the amusement of Queen Victoria when a little girl at Kensington palace.

The Christmas tree by 1846 was undoubtedly established at Windsor; indeed, at that period a perfect plantation appears to have sprung up in the drawing room of the castle. In the newspapers of the time it is recorded that after dinner, at which the principal dish was a noble baron of beef weighing 260 pounds, that occupied many hours in roasting, and at which the band of the Scots Fusiliers discouraged such popular airs as Auber's "Bronze Horse" and selections from "Norma," the queen and the prince, with the royal suite, retired to the drawing room, where, on tables, were gracefully displayed "several imitation fir trees upwards of six feet in height, from the branches of which were suspended a variety of French bonbons and numerous elegant presents for the royal visitors and suites." The trees, we further learn, were brilliantly illuminated with wax tapers judiciously placed among the leaves.

It is not certain, however, that the custom had not been in use for centuries in rural parts of Great Britain.

Many an awe-stricken group has waited in the chill air to see the cattle fall upon their knees in adoration at twelve o'clock, the hour when Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes. An honest old Cornwall, England, man, who lived at St. Stephen's Downs, near Launceston, said, towards the close of the eighteenth century, that he once, with some others, made a trial of the superstition. Watching several oxen in their stalls at twelve o'clock at night on the 24th of December, they observed the two oldest oxen only to fall down upon their knees "and make a cruel moan, like Christian creatures."

There is an old print in the British museum in which the oxen in the stable near the Virgin and Child are represented upon their knees, as if in suppliant posture. This graphic representation is, perhaps, the origin of the foregoing superstitious notion.

But more curious than all is an addition to this superstition, to the effect that the brute creation unanimously refused to acknowledge the change of style, from old to new, under the calendar, though on old Christmas day not only would the bees sing their welcome song but the oxen and asses would kneel in their stalls in token of homage. It was also said that to spin on Christmas day caused cattle to go mad and lame.

SOME PEOPLE DO.

"Did I understand you to say that Willoughby enjoys canned prunes?" asked the man who was slightly deaf.

"No," answered the friend; "I said 'canned tunes.' There's no accounting for tastes."

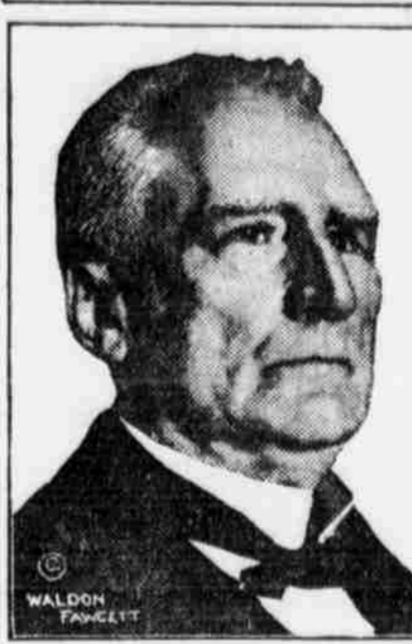
DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW.

"When we were first married you used to admire my clothes, but you only frown at them now."

"But, my dear, your father paid for the clothes you wore when we were first married."

In the PUBLIC EYE

MOSBY ON THE WAR



"If I was there with 10,000 Cosacks and some of my old officers who served under me in our war, I'd break up all communication between the German army and Berlin, and I would run William back to his capital in a hurry."

This was the statement made by Col. John S. Mosby, late of the Confederate army and leader of Mosby's men, who caused so much trouble for the Union army during the Civil war. The venerable warrior lives in Washington, and is eighty-one years of age. Although his hair is white as snow and he is a little deaf, he is by no means feeble. He is now engaged in writing his memoirs and hopes to complete the volume in about six months.

"The communication of an army is its vulnerable point," he continued. "If I was over there in Europe I would do on a large scale what I accomplished on a smaller scale in the Shenandoah valley, when I cut off General Sheridan's communication. I had only three hundred men with me at that time."

"I don't look to see the war last more than six months. It is such a tremendous affair that it will break down of its own weight."

"What do you think of the war as compared with our Civil war?" Colonel Mosby was asked.

"They are making no progress in Europe. We made progress every day on one side or the other. As near as I can determine they are simply killing. The tide does not ebb and flow a single bit. We advanced or retreated and were not in the struggle simply to kill. And with how much humanity on both sides our war was conducted! It presents the greatest contrast."

TUMULTY IS NEUTRAL

Serious international difficulties were barely avoided at the White House the other day. Gus Karger, Oswald Schuette and Louis Garthe, representing the right wing of the German forces in Washington, bore down on the executive offices, and, with glaring countenances, shoved at Secretary Tumulty a story, reprinted in various newspapers, that he has been singing "It's a Long Way to Tipperary," the popular song of the English soldiers are singing in the trenches confronting the Germans in France.



Hastily reading the article, Mr. Tumulty's real Irish went high in the air for a few minutes. The outcome of it was that he had never even heard the "Tipperary" song; that he wouldn't have sung it if he had, because he has tried hard to promote President Wilson's request that every American take a neutral stand in the present war. He admitted that he did know "Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?" and at rare intervals hummed it, but his favorite song is "We Take Our Hats Off to You, Mr. Wilson."

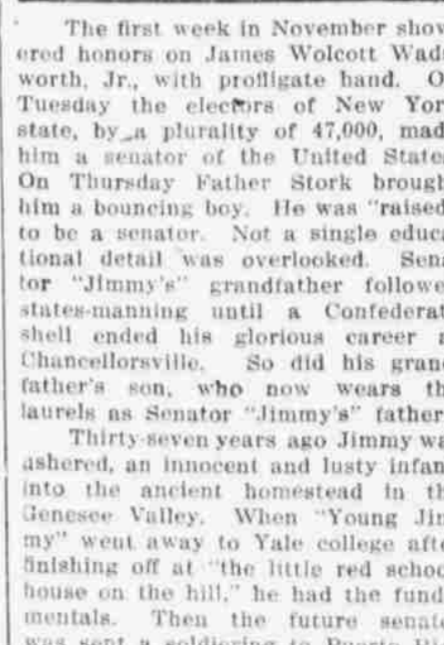
MASTER OF SALONS IN TRENCHES



Paul Poirer, the master of salons, as he is distinguished in his beloved Paris, and commander in chief of fashion, as he is known to the world at large, has thrown aside the silken subtleties of smart mode creation and taken up the rifle and the pick in the defense of his country. He is no soldier by mere courtesy—holding a clerical job, for instance, at the safe distance of official headquarters—but a grimy infantryman, whose hands, shaped to the deft designing of things of beauty to drape the form of woman, are now devoted to digging trenches, throwing up fortifications, when they are not pulling a trigger on the firing line. In the meanwhile his costly establishment, the paradise of fashion for millionaire maid and matron, is given over to the making of military wear. The entire celebrated Martine Salon is possessed by the grim spirit of war.

"The great establishment of Poirer," writes a recent visitor, "except for the gallant work it is doing for the soldiers, might as well be closed. The purple and pink stripes, the flaunting Bakst motifs, the rose-bud carpets, the green walls, the mural decorations of riotous colors and forms, the dull folds of curtains, which cut off fitting spaces, are not obscured from your leisurely study by the intrusion of any other visitor."

LUCKY MR. WADSWORTH



The first week in November showed honors on James Wolcott Wadsworth, Jr., with profligate hand. On Tuesday the electors of New York state, by a plurality of 47,000, made him a senator of the United States. On Thursday Father Stork brought him a bouncing boy. He was "raised" to be a senator. Not a single educational detail was overlooked. Senator "Jimmy's" grandfather followed states-manning until a Confederate shell ended his glorious career at Chancellorsville. So did his grandfather's son, who now wears the laurels as Senator "Jimmy's" father.

Thirty-seven years ago Jimmy was ushered, an innocent and lusty infant, into the ancient homestead in the Genesee Valley. When "Young Jimmy" went away to Yale college after finishing off at "the little red schoolhouse on the hill," he had the fundamentals. Then the future senator was sent a soldiering to Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American war in 1898, and later was given six months exercise against the kris artists in the Philippines.

While studying national politics at Washington he married the daughter of the late John Hay, and thereby became the brother-in-law of Payne Whitney and a nephew-in-law of Oliver Payne, the Ohio oil magnate. In 1904 he was elected to the New York assembly.