

# Christmas "Over There" This Year

DEPTHS OF SACRIFICE REACHED SINCE FIRST EAGER THROB OF WAR SPIRIT IN EUROPE TWO YEARS AGO... FEW BRIGHT SPOTS RELIEVE GLOOMY PICTURE



**V**ICTORY may come and victory may go, but no future triumphs or defeats can ever soften for Europe the memory of this dark Christmas of 1916, the saddest she has ever known. Pride in the present and faith in the future sustain everyone of the warring peoples in their exaltation of sacrifice. But at Christmas—Christmas, the feast of the home and of the family—exaltation dies, and only sorrow, the sorrow of the bereft individual, remains, says the New York Sun.

It is a very different Christmas Europe is approaching this year from that of two years ago. Then the shock and excitement of the beginning of the war were still tingling. In England the question of munitions is today of no less importance to the popular mind than, two years ago, was the absorbing question of getting a plum pudding to every man in the trenches. There was still talk of the Kaiser's dining in Paris, and discussions as to which ruler should lead the triumphant allies in procession through Unter den Linden.

Victory seemed a much simpler matter than it does today. Everyone admitted then that victory would be bought only with sorrow and sacrifice. Now everyone knows, with the hard knowledge of experience, that victory will be bought only with sorrow heaped on sorrow and sacrifice heaped on sacrifice. It is this knowledge borne in on every home, however exalted or however humble, that makes the Christmas celebration of 1916 in Europe a solemn sacrament of sorrow.

Of all the warring peoples Christmas means the most to the Germans and on none will the sacrifice of the traditional customs of the day fall so heavily. There is no blood and iron in the German Christmas. There is instead a tender and appealing sentiment that is typical of all that is best in the German character. The whole world is indebted to Germany for the Christmas tree and for many of the most delightful of the Christmas stories and customs that Americans have adopted as their own. The German Christmas is a day for the home, the family and the children, with its every custom endeared by generations of tradition.

The real German Christmas celebration occurs on Christmas eve. About four o'clock the dinner is served, an elaborate and hearty feast, consisting of a long series of traditional dishes, all eaten in a state of wild excitement. During this meal the Kristkind makes its appearance. This figure is a curious product of sentiment and imagination, a queer combination of the Holy Child, the good fairy and our own Santa Claus. It is represented in the country district by a half-grown child made up as an angel, who goes from door to door calling for the good children, giving sweetmeats at one house and begging them at the next.

After dinner comes the great moment when the doors are opened into the Christmas room where the lighted tree has the place of honor. The tree is always placed near a window so that every passer-by can see and share it. A walk through the deserted residence streets of any German town at this hour on Christmas eve leaves a memory of Christmas cheer and spirit that can never be forgotten.

By nine o'clock the family is ready to eat again, a light supper including still more of the traditional Christmas dishes. Every one, rich or poor, has Nuremberg ginger cake, its shiny brown surface decorated with almonds and raisins, and with the word "Wihnachten" and the year worked out in pink and white frosting. Stollen, a sort of plum cake, and many sweet biscuits of various shapes and sizes, are all indispensable parts of this feast.

But this year, with a shortage of fats in her food supply so severe as to demand serious attention on the part of the government, there is in Germany no butter or milk for the Christmas cakes, no tallow or wax for the Christmas candles. To many people this little homely deprivation will bring a realization of the severities of war more vivid and more compelling than even the sight of the fast-growing graveyards. With two million new graves in the land, with dire necessity robbing her dearest holiday of its dearest symbols, no triumphs of arms can make this Christmas of 1916 anything but a sad and sorrowful feast in the homes of the German empire.

In Austria the Christmas celebrations are as varied as the races and religions that make up

that great loosely knit empire. Where the Greek church prevails the celebration occurs a fortnight later than ours; that is, on January 7. It is accompanied by feasting and by various local customs. The Slovaks of Bohemia and Moravia have curious Christmas usages in which superstition has entirely triumphed over religious significance.

This is the great day of the year when the peasant appeases all the invisible world of spirits. On the afternoon of Christmas eve the whole household marches in solemn procession to the stables and cow houses carrying bread, salt and beans. These are offered to the animals with certain hallowed words, and great is the dismay if any cow or chicken is indifferent to the offering. Returning to the house, the parents sprinkle all their unmarried daughters with water sweetened with honey, thus insuring them honest, good-tempered husbands. The entire family then sip of silvovitzka, a strong native liquor distilled from plums. A small quantity of this is then poured on the floor to conciliate such other spirits as may have been overlooked. Everyone then falls on the Christmas feast without ceremony.

But this year war has reached out to the remote districts and blighted even such simple Christmas celebrations as this. The men of the families are all gone. Only the very young and the very old remain. There will be no kine to bless. All have long since gone to supply the army. There will be no Christmas feasting, for food was long ago reduced to the smallest quantity that will sustain life. And every day, in every village, the list of the widowed and orphaned grows longer and longer.

Vienna is known as a gay, light-hearted city. Its Christmas observance is ordinarily a happy combination of religious ceremony and Teutonic good cheer. But this year the brilliant midnight masses will be attended by black-robed mourners and there will be no good cheer in Vienna.

The Christmas celebration in all the countries where the Greek orthodox church prevails are much the same. As the holiday itself is preceded by a severe fast the Christmas feast takes on a highly important character. In many parts of Russia, especially in the cities, the gift-hung Christmas tree has been borrowed from the Germans, while a pudding of rice and raisins is the feature of the Christmas eve feast. From this feast has now been taken its crowning glory, the vodka bottle.

In only one other part of Europe has the heel of war pressed so hard as in Russian Poland; in only one other place has the land been so utterly devastated by fierce and continued fighting; in only one other place will the season of peace and good will be such a bitter mockery as to the hunted and starving Poles.

And this is in Serbia, poor, brave, beaten Serbia, with its whole population, an entire people, fugitive before hated and terribly feared invaders. During three years Serbia has been swept by three wars, the present one so relentless and so overwhelming as literally to wipe out the ordinary relationship of the people to life. They have ceased to have homes; they have ceased to possess property; they must burrow in the earth for shelter and forage for their uncertain food like wild animals. With her army making a heroic and desperate struggle, with her people dying with their spirit yet unbroken, the birthday of the Prince of Peace will not be celebrated this year in Serbia.

The sorrows of Belgium this year as compared with last are more of the spirit than of the flesh. The voice of Christmas, of peace and good will does not speak very loud to a captive people. With its army terribly decimated, its beloved king all but driven out of his own country, with its daily life subject to the scrutiny and the control of a stern captor, there is no room in Belgium for any of the old light-hearted Christmas spirit that used to show itself in crowded churches for midnight masses and gay all-night supper parties. Belgium waits as all Europe waits for the end of the war—waits with faith and hope and a determination as grim as it must be silent.

Happily the physical condition of the stricken people is better than last year. There is not the frightful confusion, the separation of families, the pitiful terror and want that went with the flight before the invaders. All relief measures are organized. Belgium is no happier this year than last, but she is less cold and hungry.

If the Belgian people ever again have a united Christmas they will find themselves with many new

holiday ideas. A tree twinkled in every place that housed a German last year, and though the Belgians will not allow their Christmas to be Germanized, yet the trees appealed to them mightily. Certainly the Christmas tree will be much more common henceforth in Belgium whether the Germans stay there or not.

Thousands of refugees waiting in England until their country is redeemed will bring back with them many ideas of the English holiday.

Until the marriage of Queen Victoria to the prince consort, Christmas in England was chiefly a day of churchgoing, of merrymaking and of mighty feasting. The prince brought with him from his German home the customs of the Christmas tree and of gift giving. The latter has never become as firmly entrenched in England as it is here, but a lighted tree loaded with decorations and presents is established as a part of every English celebration. Christmas decorations of holly and mistletoe, the ceremony of the Yule log and many of the traditional Christmas dishes, notably the plum pudding, are all owed to English custom.

But it is a sadder and wiser England that approaches Christmas this year. Hundreds of thousands of young Englishmen have died to make her so. Today every Londoner has had a graphic lesson in what a powerful and resourceful enemy can do even in a "right little, tight little island." As a further object lesson, England will pay for the raisins for her plum puddings something like 200 per cent more than she did last year. The war with Turkey has done that to her.

England has had other black Christmases, but they were farther away from home. The Christmas of 1899 in South Africa was one that she does not like to recall, while the terrible Christmas of 1854, the Christmas of the Crimean war, when, as a writer of the day put it, "Thanks to General Muddle, things are about as bad as they can be," was always a bitter memory to that generation.

The year 1916 has not been a good year for England, and she knows it. The knowledge has shattered her complacency and has strengthened her determination. But she is not happy about it and her Christmas celebration will be a chastened feast.

Christmas in the Latin countries has always been more of a religious festival than a home celebration. In Italy it is more customary to exchange presents at New Year's than at Christmas. Lighted trees are frequently seen, but they are the luxury of the prosperous and not the habit of the people. The day before Christmas is more of an occasion than the day itself.

In the cities of southern Italy booths are erected in certain streets, as before Easter, for the sale of odds and ends and sweetmeats; wheeled traffic is barred and the people promenade slowly up and down, exchanging greetings. Midnight mass is said in all the churches. In the churches, too, are exposed the famous cribs, or presepi, representing scenes of the birth and infancy of Jesus. The beginning of this custom is ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi.

Christmas eve is the great feast of the season in France. In the provinces it is celebrated with processions in the streets, which were originally religious in character, but which have become profaned by the gayety of the maskers. In Normandy and in Provence there are elaborate puppet shows of scenes in the life of the infant Christ. All the street gayety terminates after mass in feasts in all the homes.

In Paris there are Christmas booths set up in many of the boulevards. This year they will be devoted to the sale of comforts for the soldiers.

Paris knows better than anyone just how black a wartime Christmas can be. She has never forgotten the Christmas of 1870. For ninety-eight days the Germans had battered at the city. Every sortie had failed miserably. The final bombardment was inevitable. On Christmas eve 900 men froze to death in the trenches just outside the city.

Better, it seems, than any of the other nations did France realize from the beginning what this present war would mean and, realizing, she consecrated herself utterly. She has made every sacrifice, great and small, even to giving up the crusty rolls and light white bread that are as the breath in her nostrils. When a Frenchman, every Frenchman, eats without complaint a grayish bread made of a mixture of wheat and rice and entirely lacking in golden crust, he has indeed an exalted spirit. It is a small thing, perhaps, but it is enormously significant.

Last Christmas was a solemn festival in France. A million gifts, gifts of wool, were sent to the men in the trenches. Every soldier had a glass of champagne. But there was no merrymaking. Masses were said at open-air altars erected back of the battle lines. In the old church at Thann in Alsace a French Christmas was celebrated for the first time in forty-four years. But it was a celebration of prayer, not of rejoicing.

This year, at least, midnight masses will be said in the churches of Paris, but afterward there will be no gayety in the streets as in former years, no dancing pierrots and harlequins leading the maskers, no brilliant round of restaurant suppers, the beloved revelion of the Parisian.

So Paris on Christmas eve will go home through darkened streets with a prayer in her heart for all those who have died for France and for all those who must yet die.

## IN THE LIMELIGHT

### ORLEANS ALWAYS A FLIRT



Cablegrams telling of the intention of the duke of Orleans to seek annulment of his marriage to Archduchess Maria Dorothea, who left him long ago on account of his fondness for other women, recall a well-founded story of the duke's flirtation in this country more than 20 years ago.

In the early nineties the duke and his younger brother were brought to America by their father the Comte de Paris. They were handsome, high-strung young fellows, out for adventure and romance. When en route from Norfolk to Richmond on a river steamer both young men were attracted by the beauty of two Richmond girls, the Misses Bullington, who were aboard the boat. One of the girls was a dainty blonde, the other a vivacious brunette.

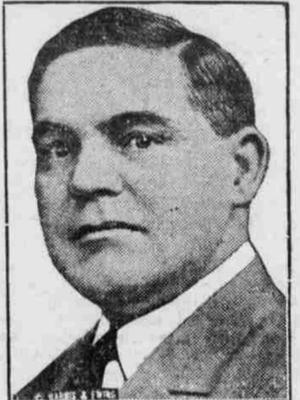
They soon suspected the distinguished young aristocrats desired to meet them, and cleverly encouraged the wish, but the stern old Comte de Paris kept a keen eye on his sons and prevented the meeting between them and the bewitching daughters of Virginia. A reporter for a Richmond newspaper who happened to be aboard the boat knew the girls and arranged with them to bring the duke and his brother for a call at their home in Richmond that evening.

The distinguished visitors took rooms at the old Lexington hotel. A problem was to get the count to sleep so the party could slip out for the evening. Finally when he was tucked away the trio took a cab, called on the girls and returned to the hotel before midnight.

One of the young men stumbled just across the hall from the old count's rooms, and he appeared in the doorway as his sons were attempting to sneak into their apartments. He took them to Washington that night.

### LOOKS LIKE JIM JEFFRIES

Mr. "Wild Bill" Gordon, one of the representatives in congress from Cleveland, O., impresses one and all with his resemblance to a certain large, two-fisted man who once figured prominently in the public prints, to wit: Mr. James J. Jeffries. And they do say that the resemblance does not stop with mere looks, either. The story is that when Bill Gordon was a young chap out in Oak Harbor, O., where he was brought up, he was regarded as a person of much prominence in the fisty way.



One night Gordon made a little run over to Toledo to take in a boxing tournament. The hefty young man who won the championship of the evening was obliged to lick three other able-bodied men, one after the other, and this was a task that entailed some little fatigue. Just when the champion thought his work was over for the evening, a large, well-knit man arose in the audience and declared that he was prepared to knock the eternal smithereens out of the winner right then and there, without fear, favor or failure.

Now, the proposition appealed to young Bill Gordon as unsportsmanlike in the extreme. So he arose and said that while he didn't think the three-time winner should be asked to fight again, yet he didn't wish to see the volunteer disappointed. If the man was going to have his evening spoiled unless he got into a fight, he, Gordon, would accommodate him. And the word that has been handed down from those who were present is that the things nineteen-year-old Bill Gordon did to his adversary were entirely satisfactory to one and all, with the sole exception of Mr. Adversary himself.

### AUSTRALIA'S BIG MAN



At once the biggest small man and the smallest big man whom Australian public life has produced, Hon. William Morris Hughes, prime minister of Australia, is one of the potent creative forces of the British empire.

He is a mere handful of a man, weighing little over 100 pounds. He has been a life-long martyr to dyspepsia. But for 50 years his mind has been overcoming matter. Above all things he is a fighter, a fierce, tenacious, bolsterous, dandy fighter. Opponents carry his scars to their graves. He possesses a turn of sarcasm, a mastery of mordant rillery, a command of barbed words which bite like corrosive sublimate.

A spontaneous oratory is his. "Hughes is up" has always been a rallying cry in the federal parliament. To natural gifts he has added the artifice born of a study of the speeches and style of the world's most famous

speakers. There is a lambent wit behind his forcible, incisive and carefully selected language, which sets him apart from his political contemporaries.

### RUSSIAN CHIEF OF STAFF

Gen. Michel Alexieff, Nicholas II's chief of staff, and, next to the emperor, responsible for operations along the whole Russian front, is the son of a preacher and a self-made man. He is at the top because he put himself there by hard work.



When the emperor assumed command of the army and General Alexieff went to work with him the czar and his chief of staff always lunched together at the czar's quarters. The lunches naturally were of a more or less formal nature, ending up with coffee and smokes and the inevitable conversations, in all consulting about an hour and a half.

General Alexieff stood this for some days, but it was apparent he was getting more and more ill at ease. Finally one day he went to the czar. "Sire," he said, "I realize it is impossible to cut the lunch shorter. But I am losing a lot of time every day. Permit me to lunch with my officers, at their mess. I will be very grateful."

The emperor laughed. "Of course, it shall be as you wish, general," he said, recognizing by his knowledge of his officers' personalities, the general's motive. And from that day on the chief ate with his men.