

"Le Bretagne"

Leon's Christmas Home Coming

By W. A. FRAZER

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It was two o'clock when Le Bretagne spread her white sails and crept out toward the eastern sky. It was six when the gray wall of the sea rose and blotted out the ship as though she had gone to the bottom.

Then the dark figure which had been outlined against the crimson of the big, red setting sun turned wearily and crept over the sands towards Arichat—it was Marie, returning to her newly widowed home.

"Leon said he would come at the time of Christmas, so why should I fear?" she kept muttering, "and Leon will keep his word in life or death. Even if I'm dead, Marie, he said, joking me, 'I will come to thee at Christmas.'" On the farther side of L'Isle Madam the sea was moaning as Marie reached her cottage.

One month had gone—one month of the loveliest weather—ideal weather for the fishing, the old wives said, only they used a stronger word than "ideal" to express their satisfaction. It was just 34 days since the gray wall of water had risen between Marie and her Leon. There was no mistaking the day, for she had just drawn a line through the date, the nineteenth of October. Not for a moment had Marie slumbered that night. The sea had gone to rest with a sigh, a sigh of utter weariness, as though the wind had called it to battle to the death; only the sea heard the challenge, the sea and Marie—she knew.

The calm that rested over everything was awful; it was as though all life had gone out of the world. And so it was when the green sky that

over and over again, out of the choking fullness of her heart, "Holy Mother, save my Leon." The awful solemnity of the scene touched their rough hearts, and hats were doffed, and heads bowed, as the young wife prayed to her God in that living gale.

And then, as if in mockery of all things human, a mighty wave, mightier than any of its fellows, and following in the wake of two scarcely less mighty, broke over the Bretagne, and buried her beneath its many tons of foam-lashed water. The vessel swayed, trembled and disappeared before their very eyes.

Two men were holding Marie now. "I will go to him! He is calling me!" she shrieked. "O, God! will no one save him?"

The bronzed faces of the fisher-folk were turned away each from the other. The salt spray was on their beards, but in their eyes was that of which they were ashamed.

Then they led her back to the house, the little house that Leon had taken her to only a few weeks ago. And two of them watched into the gray of the morning, for 'neath old skins the fishers' hearts are warm.

That was the third night, and still she slept not. The storm was dying now, and moaning, together they passed away—the fury of grief and the rage of the storm. And for that day, and for many days the great grief had broken her mind.

Storm and sunshine, day in and day out, she sat down on the beach, and questioned the passers as to how many days to Christmas till her Leon would come home; for had he not said that he would come at Christmas, at the glad time of the year, and was not his word as the law among the fisher-folk, it was so true? And did she not pray every night to the Holy Mother to intercede for her, and bring her Leon home? And the masses that had been said for Leon, were they not to bring him home, too?

Poor little Marie, her mind, which was like unto a child's, could not understand that the mass which Father Dupre had said, had been to take him to that other home; for the good father had said mass for the repose of the souls of the men lying out there in Le Bretagne.

And then a wonderful thing happened. Many days after, at the time of Christmas, again the cry of Le Bretagne rang through the streets of Arichat; and again was there much of horror in the cry, for though the sea was calm now, there was Le Bretagne slowly sailing into port; and was not Le Bretagne at the bottom of the sea, and all hands drowned?

Small wonder that the bronzed faces were blanched now, as the fisher-folk lined up on the sand, as they had on that day two moons before.

"What sorcery is this?" they asked each other. It was Le Bretagne, they knew her as they knew their own houses. Spirit hands were sailing her, for on her decks no one moved.

A solemn hush settled down upon them; few spoke, and when they did it was with bated breath. What evil was this? for good it could not be.

'Twas Marie who had first seen the ship. Had her prayers worked this magic?

Nearer and nearer the dread ship came, until but a short way out from the shore she stopped, and swung to an anchor. Invisible hands had anchored her, for there was the cable right enough, running out from her bow, as she lifted lazily to the long ground swell.

"Take me to my Leon," Marie pleaded of the awe-struck fishermen, "he is calling me. Do you not see that his boats are washed away?"

Shamed by the presence of the women, four stout fishermen brought up a boat, and, taking Marie with them, rowed off to the ship that was like a phantom.

"Stay with us, ma petite amie," the fishermen pleaded with Marie. As well had they striven to check the ways of the wind.

How silent the ship was as the boat glided under her stern! Not a sound, not a voice; no movement, only the lap, lap, lap of the waters against her wooden sides.

The men crossed themselves as Dumont, the bravest fisherman in all Arichat, rose up, and, with blanched cheeks, caught his boat hook in Le Bretagne's rail.

How low she was in the water; as they stood up in their boat they could see across her deck—not across did they see, for half way they saw something which caused them to shudder, and beg of little Marie to stop in the boat.

But Marie had risen and seen, too, and with a cry that rang in the ears of those four men until their dying day, she sprang up the side of the ship, and stood on the slippery, slimy deck.

Her Leon was there, lashed to the mast. She threw herself upon his poor bloated form.

The four understood. Dumont looked down an open hatch: "Her salt is gone!" he exclaimed.

That brief sentence explained it all. She had gone to the fisheries loaded with salt. When the water had washed all the salt out of her hold, being a wooden ship, she had floated, dragging her one remaining anchor until it had caught in the good holding ground near the shore.

Gently they lifted Marie away from her dead lover.

Christmas had come to Marie. The Holy Mother had heard her prayer, and she was with Leon.

And every Christmas since, in Arichat, a mass is said for the repose of the soul of little Marie, and the lover who rose from the sea to come to her, even in death.

The Day of the Child

By Wilbur D. Nesbit

The tree shines with the candle glow,
The trinkets glitter jewel-wise,
And we would that our souls might know
The joy told in the children's eyes.
Such sheer delight as this of theirs—
A wondrous happiness it is!
And every word the message bears:
This is the children's day—and His!

Let us come, as the Wise Men came
Those nineteen centuries ago,
Led by the Star's eternal flame
That bade them rise and hasten on.
They brought rare frankincense and myrrh,
They brought rich gems and graven gold,
They knelt, adoring, near to Her,
And all their marvelings they told.

Aye, as those Men of long ago,
To-day we, too, may see the Star,
May see its mystic heavenly glow
Flash out o'er Childland fair and far;
And from our hands now fall the gifts
And we know why the Wise Men smiled
With gratefulness; and each heart lifts
Its chant of worship of the Child.

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THE CHRISTMAS OF TODAY

W HILE the ancient traditions of Christmas time have been handed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years the holiday has been so modernized and improved of late that naught save its ancient lore and customs remain. In this day of the old form of celebrating

the day is seldom seen. As the yule log vanished with the advent of the stove so the simple ways which amused the youngsters of yesterday have disappeared and in their stead comes to-day an endless line of mechanical devices. The dolls of to-day open and close their eyes and even speak; the toy steam train runs by real steam power; the miniature electric car is driven by real electricity; the toy animals and insects move about like real life. Now Christmas trees are purchased at the grocery store and are illuminated at night with tiny electric lights instead of candles. Instead of popcorn balls and cornucopias of candy the tree is decorated with gilt and tinsel ropes and stars. More automobile horns are heard now on Christmas day than sleigh bells. Steam heat and electric radiators take the place of open fires and plenty of money makes the day even more enjoyable than ever before.

Much Due to Electricity. Electricity, which has invaded every nook and cranny of life to-day, has assisted more than any one thing in modernizing the Christmas celebration. The electric cars hurry Christmas callers from house to house. On Christmas eve the buildings and

streets are ablaze with countless electric lights. Electric telephones and telegraph are wishing every one many happy returns of the day. The wireless carries "Merry Christmas" from ship to ship and the electric cable flashes the good will of governments around the earth.

The new electric ovens sizzle with the roasting turkey and the electric stove is rushed to prepare the many appetizing viands for which the day of feasts calls. Electric door-bells are jingling; electrical musical instruments furnish the music for the Christmas carols; the electric motors, which have worked so faithfully in preparing the many valuable presents of a thousand different varieties, are enjoying a day's rest after the hustling days of the holiday trade.

Useful Christmas Presents. Year by year it grows more the custom to make Christmas presents just as useful as possible. While expense is not considered so material as it used to be it is important that the gifts should be useful as well as ornamental. This is as it should be. Here again electricity finds a useful field. The development of the electric heating and cooking devices has added a host of valuable and useful things which are always acceptable Christmas gifts. The electric chafing dish, electric shaving mug and electric coffee percolator will be numbered among the most conspicuous of useful Christmas presents. The electrical list also contains electric flat irons, electric cookers, luminous radiators, massage machines, hair dryers, curling iron heaters, water heaters, tea kettles, baby milk warmer and a number of other useful things, not to mention the electric toys.

This year will see less money wasted for useless trinkets than ever before.



Christmas Decorations.

Let the house be bright and cheerful at Christmas, with plenty of holly and mistletoe distributed throughout. If there is a chandelier in the dining-room have it hung with evergreens and holly, and from that carry long ropes of greens to each corner of the room, thus forming a canopy for the table. Fasten wreaths at all the windows. Red and green is most appropriate for the Christmas table. In the center place a bowl filled with red carnations surrounded with holly, and four single candles in silver or glass sticks with scarlet shades to further carry out the bright and cheering color scheme. At each place have a miniature Christmas tree to which place cards are tied with narrow, red ribbon. If preferred the centerpiece may also be a tree of a larger size. Boxes representing Santa Claus and filled with bonbons make appropriate souvenirs, for the possession of a "sweet tooth" is by no means confined to the extremely juvenile.

Gifts from Wall Paper.

Get a sample book of wall paper, which can be had for the asking when the season is over. For a waste paper, basket cut a pattern six inches at the top, tapering to four inches at the bottom, and 12 inches high, which is a good size for a lady's desk. Cut four sections from cardboard and a square 4x4 inches for the bottom. Cover the outside of each piece with a pretty design of the wall paper, cutting the pieces a little larger than cardboard, pasting the edges on to the wrong side, use a contrasting color for the inside, plain paper is prettier and cut just the size of the section. Punch holes near the top and bottom of each piece and two on each side of the bottom piece, near corner; tie the pieces together with baby ribbon, it requiring about three yards. One can make different sizes, small ones for hair receivers or with a little pad in bottom for jewelry, also glove and handkerchief boxes. Cover empty thread boxes and fill with home-made candy.

CHRISTMAS and CIVILIZATION

CHRISTMAS again celebrates the nativity of the founder of the Christian faith, and the inauguration of the new year. The heart yields to the prevailing spirit and sentiment, despite intellectual dissent. Not to observe, in some forms, the Christmas festival is felt to do violence to the best instincts of humanity. This holiday eclipses all other birthdays, as the sun makes the electric light to cast a shadow. At this season a large majority find delight in giving. It gives occasion for springs of human kindness and good will to flow. It challenges the charge that man is innately and persistently selfish. More than is believed practice the truth that is more blessed to give than to receive.

Christmas is the festival of children and women. Christ's conception of childhood and youth and his treatment of women made it possible for them to commemorate his birthday with joy and gladness. At the outset of his career he foretold the regency of the cradle and the glory of the woman. Christmas celebrates the birth of a child to whom the world owes the progress of 1,900 years, and whose work will endure so long as earth shall continue and influence other worlds.

NINETEEN centuries ago a peasant woman of Judea in a stable gave birth to a child destined to do the greatest possible work—to free all women from bondage and all children from slavery—the evils which disgraced past ages. Jesus' influence upon humanity as a child, a man, a teacher and as a Saviour, as one who put the eternal right of man above all established customs and precedents, is the greatest inheritance of the human race. The king of the Jews has become the king of the world. A Hebrew mind with no racial bias is now ruling the nations. The spirit of the Christ most deeply moves modern life and thought. His name has passed over our institutions and his mind has penetrated into our social and domestic existence. The inspiration of true liberty and education, the benediction of the beautiful, the elevation of letters, literature and morals are ascribed to him.

His influence upon the centuries is as clearly marked as the currents of the Gulf Stream bringing verdure and beauty to inhospitable shores, light to those in darkness, and making the wilderness blossom as the rose. Innumerable poems, dramas and songs have been developed through his teaching. Art taxes itself fitly to portray his life, architecture struggles to build temples suitable for his worship. Universities, colleges, schools, and all systems of education attempt to realize his estimate of the dignity and worth of childhood. "Government itself," said Gladstone, "is but the translation of the teachings of Jesus Christ into human laws and institutions." His thoughts and ideas toll like a giant for man's progress. The single historic vine in Santa Barbara carried to California by a priest has changed all the industries of that land, so Christ's ideas carry energies for civilizing worlds. "As the sun upon the horizon rolls forward, pouring forth warmth out of its invisible urns, so we perceive an atmosphere of hope and joy has been poured over the continent out of the heart of Christ and those who loved him." The world celebrates at Christmas the advent of this wonderful being. It looks reverently upon the face of him, the feeble infant in the manger, and upon other children to whom he gave so much.

C HILDREN and Christmas are the factors of civilization. Edmund Burke defined civilization as "the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion in a life lived in the presence of man and God." The beauty, purity, humility, faith, helplessness and the promise of chil-

dren educate the parents in affection and gentleness, and through them the community. The spring whence civilization flows is the Babe of Mary, and the babe in every home. The Christmas spirit incarnated in deeds of kindness, of self-forgetfulness, love, mutual helpfulness, is the secret of Christian civilization.

It will inoculate all the world with that purpose to do justice and deal kindly with our fellows. Christianity has been defined as "a beautiful civilization slowly journeying across the earth." It is the only civilization worthy to be named. It presents ideals, with the power to realize them.

T HERE were individuals who reflected ideal virtues in other periods, but were unable to multiply themselves, dying like Beatrice, who took her beauty, as they carried their moral excellences away with them. The first Christmas dawned on a world of selfishness and sin, and dark with folly and cruelty. There was beauty for the few, slavery, poverty and starvation for the many, death for the unwelcome child and degradation for woman. There were 375,000 paupers in a population of 1,000,000 in Rome. It was a period of intellectual chaos, moral and social desolation, and individual hopelessness. Into this gloom came the star of Bethlehem, beaming light, hope and sympathy. The contrast between the manger birth and the Christmas morn that will dawn this week with its carols, songs, gifts, joy and gladness, is the most striking contrast earth's history holds.

With that first Christmas childhood became sweet and sacred, woman was crowned queen of the heart, and home, the slave made free, the ignorant, poor and wretched found education, shelter, and sympathy, and the joy of generosity became contagious. As the sun rises earlier and lingers longer than yesterday so the spirit of Christmas will usher in the golden age of happiness and good will. In the great picture of Coreggio the light on the face of the babe lends a glow to shepherd and wise men. The Christmas spirit lends a glow to all the instruments and forces of society.

W HILE humanity falls below the ideal, the effort to practice it is not wholly nugatory. The "drift of the world is upward." The people are climbing. Interest in children is increasing. Woman is coming to her own. Labor is entering the reward of work. War is becoming unpopular. Racial prejudice will hide in shame. The Christ spirit is victorious. God's good will becomes triumphant in home, street and legislative hall. The triumph of the past dictate new struggles for the future. When Pericles gave his oration over the Athenian dead, pointing to the graves, the great orator said: "Their silence is eloquent; These heroes ask us to go and live for the city for which they died." Thus past achievements pledge us to fresh fidelity. Christmas asks us to lend the impulse of a new love to home, school, street and city; to be a friend of the friendless, a benefactor to some dumb beast or deserted child, to be voice for the dumb, eyes for the blind, springs of water for the thirsty, trees of shade for the weary, food for the hungry, refuge for the smitten.

Be an angel of mercy, bringing "peace on earth and good will toward men," and thus hasten a Christmas which will not simply come to-morrow, but will stay all the year.

Christmas Salad. For a Christmas salad select the largest and brightest red apples, and cut a deep slice from each at the stem end. Scoop out the pulp; drop both the covers and apples into cold water and leave them until needed. Cut crisp celery into small pieces with one-third the quantity of English walnuts or pecans broken; mix with very stiff mayonnaise. Wipe and polish each apple and fill with the salad, fitting each cover carefully, and set on a bed of crisp lettuce leaves just before serving.

A Christmas Carol

THE night was darker than ever before
(So dark is sin),
When the Great Love came to the stable door
And entered in,
And laid Himself in the breath of kine
And the warmth of hay,
And whispered to the Star to shine
And to break, the day.
—Alice Sewell.