

# "Root Prints It Better"

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## Christmas in Other Countries

**I**N MOST of the civilized countries around the world every boy and girl celebrates Christmas. The familiar and homelike customs are very similar in English-speaking lands, but in other countries there is much that is strange to those who are used to a New World Christmas.

Perhaps if an American boy were to spend Christmas away from the dear home festivities he might best enjoy the Russian celebration. There is one feature of the Christmas observance in the czar's domain which is apt to strike one very favorably, and that is the great length of the holiday season. Christmas covers two whole weeks, and for fourteen days, from December 24 until January 8, there is one long line of holidays. For a fortnight books and pencils are laid aside and the school-room doors are closed. Neither do people work. Everybody has a long, memorable, happy holiday. The streets are very bright and gay and the store windows are bewilderingly beautiful with holiday goods, though it is to be feared that this year, if present conditions maintain, there will be little joy or celebration in the Little Father's empire and little cause for rejoicing on the part of his poor, oppressed people.

In the large Russian cities the Christmas sunshines glows radiantly on the snow-covered streets and buildings. The air is crisp, cold and invigorating. The happy crowds pass along the thoroughfares dressed in fur coats and caps, snow boots and sheepskin, and in the national gait attire of the various races—the Tartars, Cossacks, Armenians and Russians.

The streets present the appearance of a great international fair, for there are brilliant displays, side shows and booths. The Gostinoi Door is the great bazaar of St. Petersburg. At Christmas time it resembles the interior of a dense forest.

Thousands of Christmas trees are brought here every year to go into the homes of the people. It is good to record that there is not a home so poor in Russia but that the children may have the happiness of a Christmas tree. If for some reason there is no tree at home for the children there is certain to be one at the school or association. The favorite decorations seen on the trees in the humbler homes are bright paper flowers, rainbow-hued glass beads and goodies.

### Pleasure of the Christmas Tree.

In Russia the pleasure of the Christmas tree is not limited to one or two evenings. The glowing tree shines out brilliantly every night during the two weeks, and each night there is a party for old or young. In the city the resplendent trees give great enjoyment to the eager Russian children. But the most wonderful sight is seen in the country on the large estates, when a tree is decorated and lighted just as it stands in the center of a bit of woods. The scene is very impressive. The village children, who are invited guests, gather about wild with delight, to get the presents and dainties from the wonderful, sparkling, outstretched branches of the tree.

In Germany, too, there is no holiday on the calendar so great as Christmas. And it is the children's festival, also. Christmas in Germany is very much like Christmas in America. Many of our Christmas customs came from there. Germany gave us the Christmas tree, and it is the center of all the Christmas doings for the German children.

It is the chief pleasure of the German fathers and mothers to prepare the Christmas tree. This is usually done in a room closed to the children. There is great mystery about it all. Everyone in the house has his secrets for weeks before Christmas.

The children of the Sunday schools of the Evangelical churches in Italy sometimes have trees, however, though there are not many of them as yet. The branches are laden with yellow oranges, with silver balls, and with strings of gilt paper. The lighted candles are usually of the three national colors of Italy—red, white and green. This family festival of Christmas eve is the chief delight of Italian children. There are fish, nuts, cakes, fruit or vegetables for old and young. On the next day the Christmas dinner is enjoyed, the chief dishes being capon and pangallo, a sort of nut-and-fruit cake.

### Christmas in France.

Very few American boys and girls would care to spend the Christmas holidays in France, where no one pays much attention to Christmas and where no presents are exchanged. The children who have no "home with a little h—" in France and who are being reared in the convents, often have some beautiful Christmas ceremonies, the spirit of which might well be introduced into other lands. For weeks before Christmas the convent children begin to prepare for the convent celebration. The crib with the Christ child is the chief center of attraction, and the reward of good behavior is the privilege of helping to make the crib. A gold straw is laid for each kind act and for each day well spent. The highest reward of merit is the privilege of laying the wax figure in the crib. The children of the poor are always kept in mind by the convent child. It is the custom to get ready presents of fruit, necessities, clothing, etc., for these "unfortunate children of God." When the children re-

ceive their Christmas boxes on Christmas eve the first gift taken from these is placed in the basket for the poor. After the solemn midnight mass on Christmas eve, which all the children attend, they are given something to eat, and then they all return to bed to sleep till late on Christmas morning. A hard time looking for his usual place to enter the houses, for in Cuba the houses are built without any chimneys. There is a midnight feast on Christmas eve, but children have no part in it. The pleasures of Christmas gifts are reserved till "King's day," January 6. This day is celebrated in commemoration of the visit of the wise men of the east, who brought their offerings to the infant Saviour. It is at "King's day," and not at Christmas, that the Cuban children hang up their stockings and place their shoes when they go to bed the night before.

### As a Religious Holiday.

The American boy would probably feel very much at home in either Russia, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Norway or Sweden at Christmas. In these north countries the customs are very like those of the homeland. But in the southern European nations, where Christmas is more a religious than a home festival, he would find the holiday very different from ours.

This is especially true of Italy. Italian children do not hang up their stockings at Christmas, or have a Christmas tree. On Christmas morning they are taken by their mothers to the churches. There they are called on to recite hymns of praise to the Madonna and Child in the "Presepio," which is a representation of the stable of Bethlehem where Christ was born. Within the rocky cavern are wax images often as large as life, of the Madonna and Child, of Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men, and images of animals.

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## On Christ's Nativity

This is the month, and this the happy hour,  
When the Son of Heaven's Eternal King,  
Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born,  
Our great redemption from above did bring:  
For so the holy sages once did sing,  
That He our deadly forfeit should release,  
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

### Story of the Bishop's Ring

(Continued from Page Four.)

"Haven't you stolen the bishop's most precious possession?" cried Barnes, with a sudden rush of irritation.

"Perhaps I have," answered the culprit, shaking his head moodily.

"No 'perhaps' about it," retorted Barnes. "Then I'm under arrest!"

"Most assuredly."

"What about the girl?" asked the prisoner.

"Your confederate? She'll have to go with us, too."

Half an hour later the curious quartet were on a train returning to New York.

They reached the city before dusk and proceeded to the bishop's house. The prelate was engaged and they had to wait a few minutes. Barnes turned to the young man.

"Let me have the ring," he demanded. He clenched his teeth.

"Not on your life!"

"But you admit it's in your possession?"

"Certainly. What object could I have in denying it now?"

"Well, you're a cool one," exclaimed the chief, eyeing him admiringly.

A servant came to announce that the bishop would see them in the library.

Barnes and his prisoner started for the room. Clancy and the girl remained in the dimly lighted parlor. The prelate, who was seated at his desk, arose in some agitation as the two men entered.

"My dear Barnes, I hope—"

"One minute, bishop," interrupted Barnes. "We've got our man all right, and he's convicting himself. A minute ago he admitted that he had your ring."

The prisoner rose up.

"I didn't admit anything of the kind," "Why," cried Barnes, wrathfully, "you told me with your own lips that you had the ring."

"Yes," smiled the young man, "and I have the ring, but not the bishop's ring."

"The gentleman is correct," said the bishop, with some little show of agitation. "He couldn't possibly have my ring, because I have it myself."

"You!" exclaimed the chief.

"Yes; when I arrived home this morning I found the ring inside my waistcoat, where it slipped from off my finger while I was mopping my head with my handkerchief. It would be humorous, if it were not for the humiliation to which it has subjected this young man."

"But he posed as a customs inspector," persisted Barnes.

"Not at all," rejoined the bishop. "That was pure assumption on my part. He merely showed me all the attention and courtesy that one gentleman should show another."

## The Wise Shopper

You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear; Tomorrow I would shopping go—the Christmas time is near. I want to shop while stocks are full—the struggling crowds I fear. So wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear. —Cleveland Plain Dealer.

## On Christ's Nativity

Afford a present to the Infant God?  
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,  
To welcome Him to this His new abode,  
Now while the Heavens, by the sun's beams untrod,  
Hath look no print of the approaching light,  
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

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## For Gifts

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The girl's attractive face was framed in and emphasized by the