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OF GENERAL INTEREST

CHRISTMAS, NINETEEN-TWENTY

The First Genuine Christmas in Eight Years

Four years ago this month Christmas was celebrated, but not very joyfully, and only in America and three or four other countries. You remember that the World War was furiously raging in 1916; that we were still neutral, yet questioning ourselves as to when we would enter the greatest conflict in the history of the world. In 1917, even fewer countries entered into Christmas festivities; a war-stricken world felt no Christmas joy while the Hun was knocking down the barriers of civilization. Our minds turned to the boys in the trenches, and we sent thousands of Christmas boxes "over there" Two million men and boys were clothed in khaki, residing in camps and cantonments spread all over the continental United States. They spent their Christmas in dreary barracks, in colder tents, some under Southern skies, more under the cold, azure canopy of the Northern heavens. The great majority were unable to be at home for the holidays, so they, too, had to be considered. In truth, the Christmas of 1917 was not a time for costly presents, extravagant buying, or hilarious celebration.

December, 1918, found the world freed from the threat of the Hun—that fact alone being sufficient cause for joy throughout the civilized countries. The feeling of oppression and depression disappeared, giving place to one of relief, but not of light-heartedness. Christmas came too soon that year, for the Armistice had not been signed more than six weeks, and many a home was saddened by the absence, for eternity, of brother, son, sweetheart, or father. Christmas cheer did permeate into every section of the country; we were not engaged overseas quite long enough to suffer an unusually heavy list of casual-

ties. Nevertheless the different nations were not ready to return to the old-fashioned Christmas. And the profiteer, with his merciless gouging, was still boosting his prices.

Last year there were many causes for the lack of proper observance of this festival, this holiday which has been handed down from generation to generation with its mythical and traditional stories and customs. The world had not yet recovered from the four years of carnage and destruction; the mind of the people was not yet in the spiritual mood which one associates with the birthday of Christ. Reaction, which history tells us follows all wars, had set in—people were participating in a forced gaiety after their long period of inhibition. Wages and salaries had almost reached their peak; money was inflated so that high wages were essential in order to meet the continual rise in the cost of living. People were buying on an extravagant scale—it was a seller's market. Under such conditions, Christmas could not naturally be observed in the true Christmas fashion.

The year nineteen-twenty is now almost gone, and we still find the world undergoing its much needed reconstruction. Four years is a long time—it is not much in the life of a child, but think what four years means in the life of an adult! The first half of 1920 was a continuation of 1919; prices kept rising, higher wages were in demand, profiteering was the usual thing. A few wise persons began to prepare for the inevitable reaction in the economic world, and a few heeded the old maxim, "In time of plenty, prepare for famine." Early Fall brought symptoms of the expected change—prices were reduced, noticeably

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I Didn't Know That—Did You?

Origin of "Uncle Sam"

In the war of 1812, between this country and Great Britain, Robert Anderson, of New York, purchased in Troy, N. Y., a large amount of pork for the American Army. It was inspected by Samuel Wilson, who was popularly known as "Uncle Sam." The barrels of pork were marked "E. A., U. S." the lettering being done by a facetious employee of Mr. Wilson. When asked by fellow-workmen the meaning of the mark (for letters U. S., for United States, were then almost entirely new to them), he said he did not know, unless it meant "Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam," alluding to Uncle Sam Wilson. The joke took among the workmen, and rapidly gained favor, until it penetrated and was recognized in every part of the country.

It is related of an English monarch, very fond of a loin of beef, that on a day a particularly fine piece was being served him he was fain to draw out his sword and in the manner of con-forth be nominated in my kingdom!"

"O loin of beef, thou art worthy the name Sir Loin, and so shalt thou henceforth be nominated in my kingdom!"

Or take the word "panic," now generally used in connection with the stock market. It is a far cry from Wall Street to Pan of old Hellas. This god of nature, horned and cloven-footed, was said to lurk in forest fastnesses, that he might pounce for sport on passers-by to see them start affrighted at his appearance. So one who thought he had beheld an apparition was said to have had a panic.

The strongest wind ever measured instrumentally was one of one hundred and eighty-six miles an hour, recorded by the anemometer on Mount Washington, in the White Mountains, January 11,

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