Christmas Facts and Fancies

By JOHN DICKINSON SHERMAN

THREE WISE MEN, as everyone knows, paid homage to Jesus at his birth. Their story is told in part thus in the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem,

Saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East and are come to worship him.

When Herod the King had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet.

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, are not the least among the princes of Judea; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the Wise Men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasure, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

These Three Wise Men were named Melchior, Kasper and Balthazar. They are sometimes called the "Three Kings of Cologne." Their bones are said to rest in the cathedral of Cologne. This is the finest specimen of Gothic architecture in Europe and its building took more than 600 years—1248 to 1880. Anyway, skulls purporting to be theirs were exhibited as late as the Eighteenth century. To touch them was to be healed. An old prayer charm reads:

> Ye three holy kings,
> Jasper, Melchior and Balthazar,
> Pray for us now
> And in the hour of death.

Holy tradition supplemented this account by adding a fourth wise man. And the story of this fourth wise man is one for us all to keep in mind at Christmas time.

This fourth wise man started with the other three to make the journey to Jerusalem and pay homage to the new-born King. But he never reached the manger where lay the child. Instead he sacrificed his life to render service. Nevertheless before he died he was granted a vision of the Christ. Henry Van Dyke's "The Story of the Other Wise Man" tells the tradition most excellently well:

Detained by his efforts to save a dying stranger, Artaban becomes separated from his companions. He, therefore, seeks the Christ alone, traveling from place to place, feeding the hungry as he goes, clothing the naked, nursing the sick, comforting the oppressed.

One after another he spends for others the precious gifts which he had hoped to offer to the Christ. At last he surrenders his one remaining pearl in order to ransom a tormented slave girl.

Struck on the temple by a falling tile, he lies bleeding and breathless. But he hears a Voice commending him.

Unable to believe the testimony of his own ears, the Other Wise Man murmurs:

"Not so, my Lord! For when saw I Thee an hungered and fed Thee? Or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw I Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and clothed Thee? When saw I Thee sick and in prison and came unto Thee? Three-and-thirty years have I looked after Thee; but I have never seen Thy face, nor ministered to Thee my King."

But the Voice replies:

"Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, thou hast done it unto me."

Is it hard to imagine the Fourth Wise Man responding on earth at Christmas time with a message to all mankind? Certainly he has a message well worth delivering. And certainly it is a message well worth listening to. For from his experience he could say to us:

"You have served God only as you have served men."

The Christian citizen should be serving God in relation to his home, his community and his nation. There are those who are serving God by trying to improve the conditions under which their less privileged fellows live and work, by trying to bring more of Justice, beauty, peace and love into the life of the world. It is to be feared that most of us fall far short here. But he is a poor Christian and a poor citizen indeed who, having, can pass Christmas without doing something in keeping with the day for those who have not.

Everywhere in our modern Twentieth century life we meet the very people whom Jesus painted in living words 2000 years ago—the prodigal son, who "came to himself"; the elder brother, who "was angry and would not go in"; the priest and the Levite, who "passed by on the other side"; the good Samaritan, who "was moved with compassion"; the Pharisee, who thanked God that he was "not as other men are"; the publican, who cried "God be merciful unto me, a sinner!"

At Christmas time, if at no other, it is well for us to be the publican and the good Samaritan.

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Without Christmas tree, holly and mistletoe Christmas would seem strange indeed to most Americans. The balsam fir is most used for Christmas trees, but doubtless almost any kind of evergreen can be used in an emergency. And some of the municipal and community center Christmas trees nowadays are of great size, especially when they are set up outdoors.

The photograph of the Christmas tree reproduced herewith is worth studying as something quite out of the ordinary in several respects. In the first place, in the original photograph three separate exposures of the plate were made—the first for the building and its lights; the second for the Christmas tree and its lights; and the third for the moon. Each exposure varied in length to suit the different degrees of brilliance.

And where do you suppose this unusual photograph was taken? Why, at the annual Christmas celebration in Yosemite valley, Yosemite National park, California. Most people think that all the national parks are closed in the winter time. Well, they are not. Rocky Mountain National park in Colorado has a carnival of winter sports in February. Mount Rainier National park in Washington has winter sports and a ski tournament as late as July. And Yosemite is open the year 'round. And Yosemite's Christmas celebration includes a fat, jolly, fur-clad Santa Claus who drives up in the old-fashioned way in his sleigh and distributes his gifts to the village children.

But that isn't all about this unusual picture. What kind of a tree do you suppose the Christmas tree is? You could not guess if your Christmas gift depended upon your guess. That's because it is the only one of its kind in the whole world.

This Christmas tree is nothing less than a living Sequoia tree. The Sequoia (Sequoia gigantea) is the oldest and biggest living thing in the world. Some of the biggest and oldest of them are 35 feet in diameter and at least 5,000 years old. So you see none of these Big Trees in Sequoia and Yosemite national parks were not even middle-aged when Christ was born in Bethlehem.

This particular Sequoia Christmas tree was planted in 1890. From a seedling it has grown to a height of more than 90 feet. A thousand years from now it will probably be nearly 300 feet tall and have a diameter of 15 or 20 feet.

One wonders if there will be a similar Christmas celebration in Yosemite valley then—a thousand years from now. Why not? Christmas will still be celebrated then—if the world endures. And our nineteen national parks have been set apart by congress as public playgrounds for the people forever. So, if the United States of America endures, why not a Christmas celebration in Yosemite A. D. 2022? All that seems to be necessary is the planting of a Sequoia seedling every thirty years or so.

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Christmas and mince pie! Nobody ought to have to tell anybody that Christmas is the time for mince pie. Why, the two go together—just like Thanksgiving and pumpkin pie and the Fourth of July and spring lamb and green peas. The first mince pie of the winter should grace the Christmas board; any housewife who gives her family even a taste of one before Christmas day should go without a new Easter hat—that's the punishment to fit the crime. And any man who eats mince pie at a restaurant or at his club before Christmas day should go without mince pie all winter.

However, if he should his punishment would likely fit the crime. For nowadays the making of mince pies is largely a lost art. The ordinary restaurant mince pie is nothing but minced fruit.

There is a saying that every really good woman cook must have a temper. Maybe. Certainly she should be nice and plump—as if she ate her own mince pies and thrived on them. And it's easy to tell by watching a woman make mince pies whether or not they're going to be a success. If she goes at it, you know, as if it were sort of a religious rite—as if the fate of the nation hung on her work—why, all is well.

"Pies like mother used to make!" Tenderloin of beef and Northern Spy apples and real cider and everything else to correspond: Maybe mother used to bake her pies a dozen at a time and set them away in a cold store room to freeze. Maybe mother got her mince meat ready and set it aside in a big stone jar to ripen. It doesn't make any difference. They were real mince pies when they got to the Christmas dinner. The looks of them! The smell of them! The taste of them! Yum, yum! There's a memory a fellow can carry with him to his grave.

Do you remember Izaak Walton's friend Dr. Boteler and his famous appreciation of the strawberry? Well, it's quite evident the good doctor never sat down to last the right kind of a Christmas dinner or he would have ignored the strawberry as unworthy of his cleverness and would have said instead that doubtless God could have inspired some heaven-born cook to make a more appropriate dessert for December 25 than mince pie but that doubtless God never did.

Uncle Samta Claus

By Christopher G. Hazard

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"TELL us a story, Uncle Peter," said the children as they climbed over their uncle's relative on Christmas eve. "A story!" repeated Uncle Peter, affecting surprise, but willing to draw upon his inexhaustible stock; "such here you ever heard of Uncle Santa Claus?" "Oh, you mean Uncle Santa Claus!" exclaimed Jack. "No, I don't," said Uncle Peter; "I mean the old man with the plug hat, the blue swallowtail coat, the striped trousers, the old man with eyes like stars and a smile that never comes off excepting when somebody is treading on somebody's toes; the old man with the striped flag, whose headquarters is up in Arcadia; the biggest Santa Claus there is." "All right, then," conceded the children. "Tell us about him."

"Well," said Uncle Peter, the last of a hands full lighted now and is doing all he can to keep the barge of stories "afloat" is so busy with selections, arrangements, there are so many hands to shake, so many out for the same that he is almost distracted. He is working hard at his task of making America truly prosperous, happy, contented, prosperous, happy, Christmasy nation."

"I'm glad I'm one of his American children," said Agnes, when Uncle Peter had concluded, with which sentiment all the rest agreed.

A little cloud of doubt had crossed on the Christmas sky however, as

"I'm Glad I'm One," Said Agnes.

Uncle Peter had spoken of Uncle Santa's business in far countries. Edith voiced it when she wanted to know if it would be of any use for them to expect anything that Christmas whether or not they were to hang up their stockings. "You'll get your food in it if you do," said George. "No, she won't," said Uncle Peter; "I have had a special delivery letter from Uncle Santa, saying that he has had his eye on this house for the last twelvemonth, and that this will be one of his stopping places because from it so much of service for others has been going out. He says that you are his gardeners and that you have planted so many seeds of kindness that a lot of beautiful things will be sure to come up. That is always the way, he says; in fact, it is the way in which he got rich himself."

This was a very pleasant assurance for the children. It made them think of a happy mistake that one of them had made when they were having war gardens all over the town: A certain Mr. Rose had been appointed by the mayor as inspector of gardens for the whole place, and one day Betty pointed him out to a friend with whom she was walking. "There goes Mr. Rose," she said; "he's an expector of gardens!"

When the children had been reminded of Mr. Rose they also remembered what Betty had done at their last Christmas party; stalking heavily and pompously down the room, she had said: "I'm Mr. Atlas, who holds up the world." So one of them stood on tiptoe, threw back her head and threw out her arms and said: "I'm Uncle Santa Claus, who holds up the world." "Well, 'ogre!'" cried Uncle Peter; "that's just it!"

There wasn't any disappointment in the house the next morning. "Did you get all that you wanted?" asked Uncle Peter. "Yes," said Mary. "Were you at all disappointed?" "No," said Mary. When Mary said "Goodness," her mother said, "You shouldn't say 'goodness,' Mary." "Gracious!" said Mary. But Mary was too excited to have a care for her expressions. In describing the situation afterwards she said: "I was in a perfect stupor of excitement."

Uncle Peter had a present, too. After all the rest had been made happy Agnes brought out a parcel, and when Uncle Peter opened it there were too big books that told over again the story of all that America had stood for and accomplished. This made him very glad indeed, and he asked them to write his name on the fly leaf and to say that it was from his Young Americans.

A Christmas Letter.

If you feel unable to give a valuable present to the woman who has done so much for you, write her either a Christmas or New Year letter expressing in your finest manner your appreciation of her kindness on so many occasions. Time, thought and care spent upon such a note will be well worth while and will probably mean more to her than anything you can buy.—Grit.

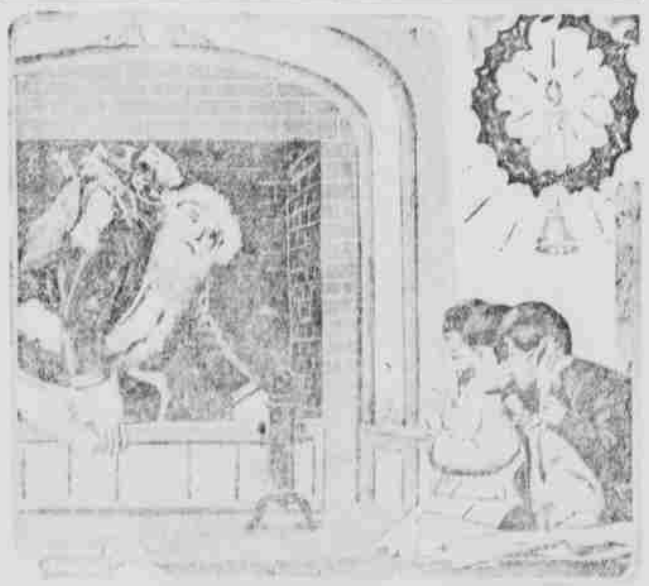
Candied Oranges.

Peel and break into sections, not allowing the juice to exude. Make a sirup in the proportion of one pound good granulated sugar to one pint of water and let it boil until it will harden in water. Take from the fire and dip the orange carpels in the sirup, using a candy dipper or two-tined fork. Drain on a fine sieve placed over a platter so that the sirup will not be wasted.

Christmas Stockings.

Christmas stockings, according to the family breadwinner, not only grow larger but multiply at a rapid rate.

HE CLIMBED RIGHT DOWN THE CHIMNEY



Jacque's Christmas

By Eleanor E. King

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A BLIZZARD was howling. Little curling pieces of snow were being blown in whirls around corners and down the street. Huddled down in his coat stood a newsboy of some eight or nine years. His face was drawn with the cold and he beat his hands against his sides to keep them warm.

Last-minute Christmas shoppers, hurrying along to get their various errands done, gave no thought to the little fellow who pestered them with his papers. He could to have known better when they had so many things to think about.

"Yeh, all the news—the latest news. Won't cha buy one, mister? I only have a couple more." He looked up pleadingly into the face of a passer by.

"Sorry, sonny," smiled the man—"so sorry, but I'm now that I probably won't ever get a chance to read—so busy," and he hurried along his way.

The rush of pedestrians subsided a moment. The boy stopped out a young woman, as he said: "She looks kind. I'll try her."

"Yeh—all the latest news—just out—won't cha buy one, please, lady? I only have a few."

She opened her purse and started to hunt for the money.

"I've just got to sell these papers out early tonight, 'cause it's my last chance to buy that doll. You know, my little sister, they say, isn't very well, and the only thing she says she wants is an orange for Christmas, but I know better." He paused for breath. "She wants a doll, but she thinks she can't ask for it 'cause we haven't money for dolls. I have, though," he said promptly. "I've been watching

She Opened Her Purse.

a doll in one of the windows here. I'm going by tonight and get it."

"What is your name, son?"

"Jacques and my sister's—ma petite soeur—Marthe."

"Zshack?—What a queer—"

"No; it isn't," he said, anticipating what she was going to say. "My mother is French. Those names are beautiful—to us," he added after a pause.

"Where do you live, Jacques?"

"Sixty-nine Kensington Square. Top floor, back two rooms. I've got that down pat now, haven't I?"

"Yes, you won't get lost right soon," she replied as she put her arm around him and gave him a gentle tap on the shoulder. "Merry Christmas, Jacques," and she was on her way. She stopped a little way down the street, however, and turned on.

Another half hour found Jacques hugging an orange and a little doll under his coat as he trudged along home. When he opened the door a little voice started chanting: "Come, Jacques, Come Jacques—you're late tonight."

"Yes, Marthe," replied Jacques. "I was talking to Santa on the corner and he said he was awfully busy. He doubted if he would get all around this year."

"Oh!" said Marthe in a disappointed tone.

Jacques' mother was sewing busily, upon a garment she was intent upon finishing. Tomorrow was Christmas, and no sewing was going to be left over to bother her.

Marthe's bedtime came, and Jacques fixed his presents in readiness for

His Mother Was Just as Excited as He.

the morrow. He had found a Christmas tree branch in the street, and this he made into a little tree under which he placed his gifts.

Christmas morning dawned brightly in the little French home. Jacques' surprise was complete, for Marthe went into raptures over the tree and her presents. She alternately hugged and kissed her doll, keeping up a constant chatter to it in French. The orange and a few other presents that she had found under the tree she put on the shelf, so that she could admire them while she rocked her doll.

Jacques had had his surprise, too—"Give and it shall be given unto you"—for his two packets under the tree had grown to be six or seven.

"Mother," he said, "I think I will have to try my new mittens and see exactly how warm they are." So saying, he slipped into his coat and pushed on the door. What ailed it? Was it frozen shut, stuck, or what was the matter?

With his mother's help the door was opened. To their surprise they found that a huge pile of packages had been the cause of their trouble.

Jacques gave a cry of delight as he pounced upon the bundles. His mother was just as excited as he, as she helped carry in the stuff.

Then followed one of the happiest hours the family had ever known—whole two-dozen oranges and all sorts of wholesome food. Jacques' mother fairly wept with joy.

Santa remembered us after all, mother," said little Jacques, "and he left this note on one of my presents. Look, mother, it says—

"'I hope you will always be as thoughtful of your sister, Jacques. A Merry Christmas and a Bright and Happy New Year.

"'SANTA CLAUS.'"

Filling for Tart Shells.

A good filling for tart shells, made from left-over pie crust, can be made of shredded pineapple, sweetened, topped with stiffly beaten white of an egg.

USE OF THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Custom Comes From Sunny Italy Where Poor First Used Long Knitted Purses.

THE custom of hanging up stockings on Christmas Eve comes to us from a land far across the ocean — from sunny Italy.

In the city of Padua, long ago, good old St. Nicholas used to go about the streets after dark and throw through the windows of the homes of the poor people long knitted purses, tied at both ends, and containing much needed coins. These purses were made of yarn, and when untied looked not unlike a footless stocking.

Finally, as time went on, the poor people, hoping thus to remind the more fortunate of their needs, used to hang these empty purses out of the windows on the night before Christmas, so that a gift might be placed in them.

In the north country, where the weather is cold at Christmas time, the purses were hung by the chimney place in the hope that St. Nicholas would drop his offering down the chimney.

When the purses went out of fashion stockings as the thing most like them were used in their stead, and that is why we today still observe the practice and the custom.

We're Sure She Can.

"Well, Princessa, did Santa Claus fill your stocking?"

"Not literally, of course, but he left me a dozen perfectly stunning pairs which I am confident of being able to fill myself."

ARE IN CONSTANT FEAR OF DEATH

Incident Shows Dread and Suspicion That Is Part of the Lives of South American Rulers.

The proverb of the crown and the uneasy head might well be twisted to apply to a Central American president. Certainly the president of Honduras that Mr. J. H. Curle describes in "This World of Ours" could not have felt at his ease for very long; there was too much revolution and intrigue for that.

Once, says Mr. Curle, there was a banquet at Tecucigalpa, the capital. The man who happened to be president on that day attended it and sat next to the consul of the United States. In the midst of the banquet the electric light failed, and the room was plunged into darkness. Fearing a plot, the president sprang to his feet, but the consul seized his arm. "Sit down!" he whispered. "It is safer."

The light returned a few moments later. The consul was sitting calmly in his chair; beside him sat the president, wiping the sweat from his brow; every other man in the room was on his feet, guarding himself with drawn revolver.—Youth's Companion.

Libraries.

The word library is taken from the Latin word "liber," a book. The oldest library of which any record is available was discovered in Assyria a few years ago and consists of Babylonian books inscribed on clay tablets, supposed to have been prepared for public instruction about 650 B. C. It is said that Pisistratus founded a library at Athens about 537 B. C., although there is no clear evidence of the fact. Strabo says that Aristotle was the first known collector of a library, which he bequeathed to Theophrastus 322 B. C., and this library at length found its way to Rome.