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and

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"Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas Tonight"

EVERYWHERE? In the hearts of Christians on the eve of this great Festival is the thought of a world in the throes of preparation for war, and nations in armed conflict. Spain gasps in death struggle of suicidal warfare where stately cathedrals have proclaimed Christ for centuries. China trembles under the cruel destruction of her neighbor, Japan, while missionaries and native converts face death bravely. We see the devastating strength of brute force and the apparent triumph of evil.

As we celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace in a land at peace with the world, let us have in our minds and hearts those who "keep Christmas" tonight under fire of bursting shells. Little children and weary men and women, suffering, cold and hungry, but with peace in their hearts and love for fellow man, dwell tonight in the shadow of death. To them the Christ Child is much more a reality than to those who dwell in a security dearly won, and who forget the meaning of Christmas.

Two thousand years ago a powerful king sought to make his name immortal by a career of blood. But today Herod "the Great" is remembered only because he lived when Jesus was born, and "sought to kill the young child."

Later, the followers of Jesus won the hard and cruel Roman Empire to His teachings through their joyful lives lived in the shadow of death under the cruellest persecution the world had ever seen.

The same forces are in conflict—world leaders furthering their ambitions through war, and helpless thousands who can do naught but their bidding. Has Christian America the enlightened desire to turn this tide of destruction? The answer still lies in the cradle of the Babe of Bethlehem.

"Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in."

Christmas Customs and their Significance

ONCE again Christmas is at hand and we shall bestow gifts, trim trees, bring in holly for decoration, stand beneath the mistletoe and hang up our stockings. We always go through these rituals, but how many of know why?

Of course, this observance is to commemorate Christ's birth, and December twenty-fifth has been chosen for the celebration. There is no historical or Biblical record, however, of the exact day of Christ's nativity, but historians and astronomers have agreed that it was around the time of the year when the days were shortest. The early Christians celebrated the birth of our Saviour all the way from December 16 to January 6. It was during the reign of the Christian emperor, Constantine, in the fourth century, that the ceremonial reverence of Christmas on December twenty-fifth became an established custom. So we observe Christmas by going through a routine of customs. Yet each rite has grown out of some ancient practice, belief, superstition or legend.

The exchanging of gifts is probably the most common custom among us. Christmas would indeed lose its radiant warmth and spirit of love were we not generous givers and joyous recipients of presents. We all know that the exchange of gifts has a religious significance based on the act of the three Wise Men or Magi when they presented the Babe in the manger with treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Santa Claus has changed greatly since the first St. Nicholas. The story of St. Nicholas is a beautiful legend which runs as follows: During the reign of Caesar a man named Nicholas lived in the land of Armeon. He was a miserly rich man who had vast lands and herds of cattle and sheep. When he went to Bethlehem to pay his taxes, he dressed as a bagger in order to escape being taxed the full amount. Arriving in Bethlehem, he was too stingy to pay for a room in the inn, and was sent to the stable. The Christ Child was born in that stable, and when the Magi visited Him, Nicholas watched them present their treasures to the Child. He was divinely touched by the sight, and his soul was transformed from love of avarice to love of giving. Kneeling down before the Babe, he cried, "My King! my King will I serve Thee, and Thee only."

A tiny hand bestowed a blessing on Nicholas, and from outside rang the heavenly echo of the celestial chorus: "On earth peace, to men good will." Then Nicholas drew from his garb a gold piece and placed it with the gifts of the Magi.

The next morning, after Nicholas had paid his full share of taxes, he went to the market place and saw there many children. Filled with compassion for the children of poor parents, he loaded his donkey with presents and distributed them from house to house.

Scenes and Persons in the Current News



1—Vice President John N. Garner as he returned from a Pennsylvania hunting lodge with a 125-pound, four-point buck. 2—Chinese civilian carrying a wounded Chinese soldier into the French concession in Shanghai. 3—Mr. and Mrs. Ernest A. Simpson as they sailed for England following American honeymoon. Mr. Simpson is the former husband of the duchess of Windsor.

Some of the children asked him his name. "I am Nicholas of Armeon," he replied.

"Hail, St. Nicholas!" rang the cry.

Thus he became St. Nicholas, the dispenser of gifts, and the custom grew in Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, and England that St. Nicholas would visit the children on Christmas.

The tradition of hanging up our stockings on Christmas Eve is closely associated with St. Nicholas. It is said at one time St. Nicholas wanted to help a poor but proud nobleman. After thinking how he might help the man without hurting his pride, he climbed to the roof of his home and dropped some coins down the chimney. The money happened to light in the man's stockings, which he had hung by the fireplace to dry. Since the nobleman considered this to be of supernatural origin, it is reasonable to believe that other people imitated him in hanging up their stockings to receive coins. Out of this legend grew the custom of hanging up stockings on Christmas Eve for St. Nicholas or for Santa Claus to fill.

The Christmas tree came into existence at the time of St. Boniface, the missionary among the German tribes. These tribes were pagan and at one time—it was one Christmas day about 1,300 years ago—they were offering a little boy as a sacrifice to their god, Thor, when St. Boniface came upon the scene. Just as the heathen priest, robed in snowy white robes, was about to fall the hammer over the child's head, St. Boniface stayed his hand, and cried to the people to cease their pagan worship. He told them the story of the birth of Christ, and, felling a fir tree, gave it to them, saying: "Take this for your Christmas tree, and each year, when the feast day arrives, set it up in your homes, and with joy and song celebrate the birthday of Christ."

The custom of placing lights on the tree is attributed to Martin Luther. The story goes that Luther was out walking one Christmas night and was filled with awe at the majestic splendor of the starry heavens. Upon arriving home, he placed some lighted candles on the branches of the Christmas tree, exclaiming to his wife: "This is like the Christmas sky."

The Druids, who were priests of the pagans, regarded the holly as the favorite tree of the fairies, and a superstition grew up regarding the good luck of holly. The early Christians were not exempt from superstition and picked up many of the customs and superstitions of the pagan tribes. Thus the early Christians decorated with holly on Christmas to bring good luck to the family, and holly has become the Christmas decoration through the ages.

The followers of paganism also attributed magic powers to the mistletoe, a parasite which grows on certain trees. It especially prefers the oak, and the Druids claimed that it was the soul of the oak, and immortal, because it remained green after the oak was dead. Therefore, it became a symbol of everlasting life, and was quite appropriate to hang in the home at Christmas time.

It was commonly hung under a door and people entering under exchanged kisses with the host and his family. From this custom grew another: young men had the privilege of kissing girls who were under the mistletoe, plucking each time a berry from the bush. When the berries were all plucked, the privilege ceased. Even today, it is regarded entirely legitimate to kiss anyone under the mistletoe.

The pagans performed a ceremony of building great fires in honor of the god, Thor. This was especially true of the ancient Scandinavians; and from this ancient rite developed the English custom of kindling the log at Yule-time (an old name for Christmas time).

The Yule log was brought into the house with great ceremony on Christmas Eve, laid in the fireplace and lighted with a brand of last year's log. Sometimes the burning log was accompanied by Christmas candles; but in the cottages the only light was from the ruddy blaze of the great wood fire. The log was to burn all night; if it went out, it was considered a sign of ill luck. The brand remaining from the Yule log was carefully put away to light the next year's Christmas fire.

The custom of keeping a candle burning through the eve of Christmas has of late diminished a great deal. Years ago, however, it was customary to place a thick, large candle in the window and keep it burning all night. We often read beautiful stories woven around the theme of the candle in the window.

LETTERS

EX-SLAVE THANKS LADIES FOR BOX

We gladly print the following letter from E. G. Siler, of an ex-slave of the Siler family, and a colored man who is regarded by both the white and colored people of the county.

Iota, N. C., Dec. 2
Editor Franklin Press:
Please allow me a small space

they did.

Very truly,
E. G. Siler.

KIND WORDS FROM EDITOR JETER

The Press acknowledges receipt of the following message of congratulation and greeting from F. H. Jeter, editor of press releases for the state department of extension work in agriculture and home economics of State college at Raleigh:

Dear Mr. Editor:

Another year has rolled around and again we have enjoyed our efforts at serving as your farm reporter here at State college.

Whether we have been any service to you may be a matter of debate but certainly you have done much to bring the facts of better farming to the great mass of rural people who read your paper. I was much interested in a statement made by one of our rural leaders the other day, when he said, "North Carolina farmers cannot help but be well informed about all the agricultural movements of the present day, when they are able to find this information in their weekly papers."

I don't think that either you or I could ask for a higher compliment than that.

All of this great governmental activity in agriculture should be but to help the farmer. An article on farming in a great metropolitan paper might give the writer much personal satisfaction and perhaps a fat check, but if the idea is to serve the farmers, we had better try to reach farmers.

And that's our aim here in this office. We want to reach that fellow who lives back there across the creek. He takes the weekly paper and reads it. If we can bring to him the latest available information on agriculture, he has the chance to use that information to his advantage and to the upbuilding of his community.

Therefore, again I thank you for the fine way in which you have cooperated with us during the past year and I wish for you and your readers a happy Christmas season, and the best of luck in 1932.

Yours very truly,
F. H. Jeter, Editor.

Broadway

By EFFIE WILSON

Frank Cabe made a business trip to Highlands Saturday.

Andy and Tom Wilson were in Franklin Wednesday on business.

We had bitter cold weather all last week, the thermometer registering below zero several times. This week has been almost like summer.

Blanche Wilson visited her grandmother Sunday.

Prileau Vinson was visiting in this section Sunday.

Frank Cabe was visiting over Andy Wilson's Sunday.

John Brown was in town recently.