

# JOLLY OLD ST. NICK



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## Celebrating Christmas

By ANNA DEMING GRAU

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**W**E SHALL have to go farther back than the Christian era to find the source of Christmas celebration, for we borrowed it from the nations existing long before the coming of the Christ Child.

Christmas came from early Egyptian civilization, from the Teutonic barbarians, or the pagan Greek and Roman nations—or perhaps from all of them.

But in the days of the early Christians Christmas ceased to be observed merely as a day of merrymaking and feasting. They celebrated it as a day of good will and kindness, the bestowing of gifts, and a time of peace, but they considered it a holy festival and too filled with solemnity and sacred joy to be made a time of hilarity and boisterous jollity.

That the very date is uncertain makes little real difference. In those



early days of the Christians they thought it following the heathenish customs to observe birthdays. We cannot wonder at this when we remember that every god and goddess, every noted man, and every animal considered sacred, must each have a special day of feasting and festivity. It is not strange that they should have come to a time when they put the whole custom aside, and celebrated none at all, not even the birthday of the Child of Bethlehem.

It was not until four hundred years later, not until Christianity had triumphed and become a recognized factor in the world, that they even began to question the real date of Christ's birth.

The Western empire had accepted December 25 as the date, and the Eastern churches celebrated January 6, while other dates from September 29 to May 20 were observed, and each of these with some good reason for its selection. It was Pope Julius who finally settled the controversy by accepting the ruling of the Western church and established December 25, and by the middle of the Fourth century this date was generally recognized. In the pagan nations this had been the time when a festival of joy took place, because it was then that

the sun was supposed to begin to recede from the equator.

They celebrated the 21st of December by all manner of licentious revels and heathen debauchery, and even after the coming of Christianity it was centuries before these pagan customs and practices were eliminated. And it was not until after the Middle Ages that the meaning and the significance of the season began to dawn upon the minds and hearts of men.

In old England Christmas became a time of feasting, drinking and hilarious merrymaking—not a very advanced conception, but a step beyond the pagan idea. Later the spirit of Puritanism began to influence English customs and public zeal ran so high that all gayety and all festivity came to be considered sinful.

All observances of special days were declared designed by the "devil,"



and the famous Roundhead parliament set aside the celebration of Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide.

For twelve years no special days were observed in England, and when they were once more taken back into favor the result was what might have been expected, for the Christmas season became a time of feasting, drinking, dancing and wild revel, lasting for twelve days and nights. The lord of manor came into existence—this was the chosen master of festivities, into whose hands the keys of the house were given and whose word was law while the revel lasted. The days and nights were full of "all manner of hilarity, and a most wild and merrier time was had," we are told.

At first only the royal households had these lords of merriment, but the custom spread until almost every household had its ruler of the season's revels. But gradually, as time passed, these wild celebrations gave place to festivals none the less joyous, but more befitting the season.

The ceremony of bringing in the Yule log was observed, of decorating the house with holly and mistletoe,



the lighted candles in the window, and the midnight singing of carols.

Still later Christmas became a day marked by bountiful dinners given to the poor by rich landowners, rather than merely a time of feasting and merrymaking.

And slowly the real Christmas spirit is coming more and more into the hearts of humanity, as we grow each year to better understand the song the angels sang that starlit night on the Judean hills. And "on earth peace, good will to men," means more with each recurring year—a we open our hearts to the Child of Bethlehem.

## The Song of Christmas

By JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

CHANT me a rhyme of Christmas—And though it is filled with laughter, let it be pure and strong.

Sing of the hearts brimmed over with the story of the day—Of the echo of childish voices that will not die away.

Of the blare of the tasseled bugle, and of the timeless clatter and beat of the drum that throbs to muster squadrons of scampering feet.

But, O, let your voice fall fainter, till, blent with a minor tone, You temper your song with the beauty of the pity Christ has shown.

And sing one verse for the voiceless; and yet ere the song be done, A verse for the ears that hear not, and a verse for the sightless one.

For though it be time for singing a merry Christmas glee, Let a low, sweet voice of pathos run through the melody.

## CHRISTMAS SPIRIT MAKES CHRISTMAS

**I**T WAS Christmas morning; the ground was covered with snow, just right for a real Christmas. It was early morning and the Gaylord household was astir.

"Now, not a single package on that tree touched until I get the turkey in the oven."

This from the busy Mother Gaylord as she hurriedly poked into the already over-stuffed turkey one more spoon of dressing.

"All right, old dear," shouted Hugh, the eldest of the three sons—"a tree wouldn't be a tree, nor a gift a gift without you."

"Thank you, son," said mother as she dried her hands and joined the boys. "Father is sorry, I know, to miss all this joy with us—but business first. That largest package is from him. His letter said possibly he couldn't be here for a month."

"Well, mother, let's save the tree until he does come, and not touch a package, for a tree is not a tree, nor is a gift a gift with Dad away."

A familiar step was heard; the bell rang and in stepped Dad, shouting "Merry Christmas to all! My package not opened yet! By Jol! Glad I'm just in time."

Four voices in unison: "How did you get here?" "Blew in?" asked Mother.

"Well, I guess I did. Christmas couldn't be Christmas without you four, so I came by airplane. Golly! the turkey smells good; let's open our packages."

The tree was truly a tree; the packages were sure-enough gifts; the turkey was honest-to-goodness turkey and Christmas was perfect, too for the whole family was assembled with true love in their hearts for each other and Christ was in the midst. Emily Barks Adams

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# IN MESSAGE TO CONGRESS PRESIDENT URGES ECONOMY

### Coolidge Says Strict Federal Economy Will Enable Tax Cut Later—Urges Farm Aid—Raps League, But Favors World Court.

President Coolidge advised Congress in his annual message that perhaps the most important work it could do at its present session would be to practice such economy as to make possible a reduction of taxes for the next fiscal year.

"The Government can do more to remedy the economic ills of the people by a system of rigid economy in public expenditure," he said, "than can be accomplished through any other action."

Although stressing economy Mr. Coolidge presented a wide range of other recommendations, some new and others reiterated of proposals made a year ago in his first annual message.

#### Favors World Court.

Most of these related to domestic affairs, but the President went in to the field of international relations to renew his plea for American adherence to the Permanent Court of International Justice; to declare the United States not to be disposed to join the League of Nations; the appeal for support by public authorities and private citizens for the European reparations settlement plan, and to repeat his declaration of opposition to cancellation by the United States of the debts owed the Country by foreign nations.

#### Two new pronouncements marked the President's discussion of foreign affairs. One touched on reduction of world armaments, and the other had reference to the outlawing of war.

#### Defers Call For Parley.

"It has been and is my expectation that we might hopefully approach other great powers for further conference on this subject as soon as the carrying out of the present reparation plan as the established and settled policy of Europe has created a favorable opportunity," he said, with regard to armament reduction. "But on account of proposals which have already been made by other Governments for a European conference, it will be necessary to wait to see what the outcome of their actions may be. I should not wish to propose or have representatives attend a conference which would contemplate commitments opposed to the freedom of action we desire to maintain unimpaired with respect to our purely domestic policies."

#### Proposals to outlaw aggressive warfare, the President asserted; should be carefully studied and sympathetically viewed.

#### Urges Cut in Expenses

Combining discussion of tax revision with his statement on economy, the Executive said that if Congress at this session kept within the budget he had presented "it will then be possible to have a moderate amount of tax reduction and all the tax reform that the Congress may wish for during the next fiscal year." He declared publication of income tax payments to be "detrimental to the public welfare and bound to decrease public revenues," and urged the repeal of that section of the Revenue Act.

#### Aside from his declarations relative to economy and taxation, the outstanding recommendations on domestic affairs made by the President included:

Enactment of such legislative remedies for agricultural ills as are worked out by the recently-appointed agricultural commission and exertion of all efforts "by government activity and by private agencies to restore and maintain agriculture to a complete normal relationship with other industries."

Passage immediately of pending legislation based on the reports of the Reclamation Fact-Finding Commission "for the proper relief of those needing extension of time in which to meet their payments on irrigated land, and for additional amendments and reforms of our Reclamation Laws."

Amplification of these portions of the Transportation Act contemplating consolidation of railroads into larger systems to promote more expeditious action by "affording a period for voluntary proposals to the commission (Interstate Commerce Commission) and in supplying Governmental pressure to secure action after the expiration of such a period."

#### Would Revise Rail Act.

Amendment of the labor sections of the Transportation Act so as to embody a plan "which while retaining the practice of systematic collective bargaining with conciliation and voluntary arbitration of labor differences, could also provide simplicity in relations and more direct local responsibility of employes and managers" and at

#### Southern Railway After City Road.

Cincinnati—The Southern Railway system, through its president, Fairfax Harrison, has submitted a definite proposal for the purchase of the Cincinnati Southern railway from the city of Cincinnati, it was learned.

Mr. Harrison, in a letter to the trustees of the Cincinnati Southern railway, said the Southern would invite negotiations leading to the absorption of the only municipally owned railroad in the world. The letter gave no specific plan outlining the possibility of consummating the transaction.

#### Brazil Suspends Visas.

Tokyo.—The Brazilian consul has notified the Japanese government that he has been instructed to suspend the grant of visas for intending emigrants to Brazil. The foreign office, taken by surprise, has instructed the Japanese minister to Brazil to make a report on the matter immediately.

Mr. Akamatsu, chief of the immigration section of the foreign office, said: "If this notice heralds an exclusion policy against Japanese, the situation presents itself in a decidedly serious aspect to the Japanese nation."

the same time recognize that the public "has a right to be heard when there is danger that the Nation may suffer great injury through interruption of operations because of labor disputes."

Such action as will maintain "the policy of constantly working toward the full treaty strength of the Navy."

Enactment of legislation changing the new Immigration Law so as to make the administrative features "a little more humane for the purpose of permitting those already here a greater latitude in securing admission of members of their own families."

#### Divide Shipping Duties.

Transfer of the Emergency Fleet Corporation of "the whole responsibility of operation of the fleet and other property, leaving to the Shipping Board solely the duty of determining certain major policies, which require deliberative action."

Sale or long-time lease of Muscle Shoals to private interests "under rigid guarantees of commercial nitrogen production at reasonable prices for agricultural use" with a sub-committee of the Senate and House Agricultural Committees empowered to conduct negotiations with the private interests.

Development of flood control on such rivers as the Mississippi, and Colorado, of inland waterway transportation, of navigation from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic by way of the St. Lawrence River, and of improvements generally to harbors on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts.

Acquisition of the Cape Cod Canal by the Federal Government.

#### Favors Electoral Reforms.

Extension of the national laws governing the choice of members of Congress "to include appropriate representation of the respective parties at the ballot box and equality of representation on the various registration boards wherever they exist."

Transfer to the Civil Service of first, second and third-class postmasters, and "without covering in the present membership the field force of prohibition enforcement."

Enactment of legislation reorganizing the Governmental Departments.

The President also commended to the attention of Congress the legislative program of the American Legion; urged that steps be taken to accord to the negroes "their full Constitutional rights; that they should be protected from all of these impositions to which from the position they naturally fall a prey, especially from the crime of lynching," recommended prompt payment of the French spoliation claims; approved certain changes in court procedure to hasten the administration of justice; suggested establishment of Federal reformatories for young men and women and first offenders; and of a National Police Bureau; and asked for suitable recognition to the world fliers.

#### Questions Rate Section.

He opposed procedure under Section 23 or preferential rate provision of the Merchant Marine Act "until Congress can reconsider the entire question in the light of the experience that has developed since its enactment," and also opposed inauguration of any new valuation of railroad property until the results of the present valuation are known and can be considered.

Noting that the Constitution provides that the President shall report to Congress on the state of the Union, Mr. Coolidge said "the present state of the Union . . . is such that it may be regarded with encouragement and satisfaction by every American."

#### Problems Are Economic.

"Our domestic problems are for the most part economic," he added. "We have our enormous debt to pay and we are paying it. We have the high cost of Government to diminish and we are diminishing it. We have a heavy burden of taxation to reduce and we are reducing it."

The Nation, he said, has definitely relinquished "the old standard of dealing with other countries by terror and force and is definitely committed to the new standard of dealing with them through friendship and understanding."

"I shall resist any attempt to resort to the old methods and the old standards," he added. "I am especially solicitous that foreign nations should comprehend the candor and sincerity with which we have adopted this position."

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