

Christmas, 1926



IE atmosphere in the kitchen is close and warm and fragrant. Dishes, pans and utensils are scattered all over the place. Flour dust is in the air. And so is the Christmas spirit! The most glorious dinner of the year is on the fire!

That Christmas is a time of gaiety and feasting is traditional. This account by some forgotten writer of long ago brings to mind the Christmas of yesterday and how it was celebrated:

"Now capons and hens, besides turkeys, geese and ducks, with beef and mutton—must all die; for in twelve days a multitude of people will not be fed with little. Now plums and spice, sugar and honey, square it among pies and broth. Now or never must music be in tune, for the young must dance and sing to get them a heat, while the aged sit by the fire."

The Christmas cookies, the iced cakes and gingerbread figures which are part of our Christmas goodies are survivals of the confectionery gifts presented to the senators of Rome in the early times. The cakes were in the forms of animals and humans. Later the cakes became more elaborate, and were adopted as Christmas cakes. In early England these cakes were very popular. They were given to the poor women who sang carols in the street, or who went from house to house with images of the Virgin and of Christ.

To put the "merry" in "Merry Christmas" today, the hostess must borrow a bit of old-fashioned revelry, add to it the flavor of steaming plum pudding and popcorn, sprinkle it well with a measure of good cheer, and serve with a sprig of mistletoe!

Not so long ago it was customary to have huge wreaths and laurel ropes drooping from every corner. Now a sprig of mistletoe and a bit of holly with its "berries like reddened pearls" are used for Christmas decoration. A custom delightfully old-fashioned is to have an untrimmed evergreen flanking the side of the front door outside the house.

Another old-fashioned custom, which is said to have been originated in Colonial days, is to include a tiny bit of mistletoe with the invitation. It is slipped into the envelope with the card "to carry the season's good tidings." It is really meant as a wish or omen for happiness and prosperity throughout the coming year.

Decorations for the Christmas table are not difficult to arrange. One may have a flat bowl of colored glass piled high with fruit. Or one may have a slender silver vase with a cluster of holly in it, or perhaps a lower vase with cut winter flowers. An old custom is to have a miniature tree in the center of the table bearing gifts or favors for the guests. Of course, can-

dles are used for illumination at the Christmas dinner, whether it be formal or informal, because they serve to carry out the Christmas tradition.

Many old superstitions still cling to the popular Christmas foods. To refuse a piece of mince pie at a Christmas dinner, for instance, means ill luck for the year. To eat apples at midnight on Christmas eve, however, is to enjoy great health during the year. If a loaf of bread is allowed to remain on the table after the Christmas eve celebration, there will be no lack of bread in the house for the next twelve months. According to the old tradition, "by all means you must have a plum pudding—a plum pudding grown rich and black and solid." Otherwise, it seems, you will lose a friend between this Christmas and next.

If you wish, you may have an English Christmas party, observing all the many English customs which have contributed to our own Christmas observances. The invitations are printed in Old English text. The house is decorated with mistletoe, holly, ivy. Wax tapers, in brass, iron, or pewter candlesticks add the proper touch in illumination. For the centerpiece a boar's head, made of dough, should be used. If it be made large enough it can be used to cover the little roast pig with the traditional apple in its mouth which constitutes the main course of the dinner.

At such a party the wassail cup must be passed around. Drinking the wassail is an old English custom. Dickens says:

"They sat down by the huge fire of blazing logs to a substantial supper, and a mighty bowl of wassail, something smaller than the ordinary wash-house copper, in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look, and a jolly sound that were perfectly irresistible."

Instead of containing the brew, ale, or steaming punch of the old-time wassail bowl, the cup at our modern

English dinner may contain any mild punch or soft drink that the hostess likes. It is passed around to carry out the old custom and to "wish cheer with the brimming cup."

After dinner the guests repair to the drawing room, which is illumined solely by candles and is decorated with mistletoe suspended from unexpected places. Here the famous old English games are played, old Christmas carols sung, and old Christmas stories related. If possible there should be a glowing yule log in the fireplace.

Perhaps you would prefer a German dinner with all its pretty customs. Use for a centerpiece a miniature representation of the Nativity, and have a tiny Kwis Kringle or a small, decorated Christmas tree at each place. Have gifts packed and marked with the names of the persons for whom each is intended, and then hide them throughout the house. After dinner start your guests off on a search for these treasures, which they exchange among themselves as the packages are found, until each guest has his own. This is an old German custom, and is always good fun, especially if the guests are young people.

Another variety of Christmas dinner carries out all the traditions of the Druids. There should be a crackling fire in the fireplace. Sprigs of mistletoe should be distributed generously. For dinner provide a jolly feast, nuts and apples and all good things to eat. And after this repast there should be dancing, music and entertainment.

The Scandinavian Christmas dinner could be made most delightful. The menu may be the same as for any ordinary Christmas dinner—turkey, roast meats, mince pie, apple fritters, nuts, raisins, apples—whatever one likes. In addition there should be a huge Christmas tree in the drawing room hung with colored balls of glass and made beautiful with tiny lighted candles—or, to be up-to-date—with electric lights. There would be gifts on the tree for each guest, and in each package a card bearing some delightful bit of wisdom or cheer from the old Scandinavian writings. And of course, there would be the yule log, a great roaring fire, and perhaps the host, in the part of Thor, would quote interesting bits of Scandinavian mythology.

Whatever form the Christmas entertainment takes, it must be free of formality. There must be plenty of good cheer and fun; the day is given over to rejoicing. For generations it has been customary to play favorite old games on this day and to make merry with one's family and friends.

As Dickens has Mr. Wardle say to Mr. Pickwick: "Everybody sits down with us on Christmas eve, as you see them now—servants and all; and here we wait until the clock strikes twelve, to usher Christmas in, and while the time away with forfeits and old stories. Trundle, my boy, rake up the fire!"

THE GIFT OF GOD

CHRISTMAS would be strange to most of us if there were no gifts. It was the infinite gift of God to us in the person of His only Son that made the first Christmas for our world. If we have not accepted this gift we have not yet learned the meaning of Christmas.—Herald and Presbyter.

ROAD BUILDING

UNIFORM LAWS ARE BIG NEED

Highways of the United States must be constructed with a view to protecting the lives of the people and not merely to provide a temporary means of transportation over highly congested routes, according to Herbert Hoover, secretary of commerce, in a statement made public recently by the American Road Builders' association. Mr. Hoover said that uniform traffic regulations throughout the United States and Canada are necessary.

"Uniform laws by the states are necessary to check the terrific toll in life and property that reckless auto driving levies annually in America," Secretary Hoover declared. "The activity of the American Road Builders' association in securing such regulations should be supported by the entire country along the lines recommended by the national conference on street and highway safety."

Mr. Hoover said that property loss as a result of accidents in this country in the past 12 months has been in excess of \$600,000,000, and the loss of life enormous.

"When we had but three people in a township," said Mr. Hoover, "they did not require traffic rules to keep their elbows out of each other's ribs, but when we get a million in a community somebody has to tell them how to move or they will run over each other. Roads must be constructed wide enough and numerous enough to handle them."

"Probably the man who invented the automobile was innocent of any intention to quadruple the nation's traffic problems. He did not expect to turn 20,000,000 high speed engines running heater-skitter over our streets and highways; he did not expect one-half of the whole adult population would claim to know how to drive them with safety and skill."

The situation makes a uniform traffic code a necessity. Mr. Hoover was invited to take part in the traffic conferences to be held at the 1927 convention of the American Road Builders' association, to be held in Chicago during Good Roads week next January. At that time highway authorities of international note will address highway engineers, contractors and officials from all parts of the continent. More than 40,000 are expected at the convention.

Japan Is Preparing to Improve Its Highways

The automobile division of the Department of Commerce is informed through cable dispatches that the home department in Japan has decided upon a tentative construction program for the improvement of highways, particularly for motor traffic, the cost of which is estimated to be about yen 100,000,000, which amount is to be spread over a period of about ten years.

The Japanese government will contribute toward the fund approximately yen 50,000,000, the remainder to be supplied by the prefectures and cities benefiting.

An investigation conducted in connection with the decision indicated that there are now about 53,000 miles of highways in Japan, of which 14,500 have been recommended as main roads for motor vehicles, and it is this mileage which will first be placed in condition for motor traffic.

Rebuilding of Ancient Highway Being Planned

Helped by congressional appropriation, there is to be rebuilding of the highways between Tucson and Ajo, most of the way across the Papago Indian reservation. This will afford an alternative route to the coast, materially shorter than that by way of Phoenix. A path-finding car of the Automobile club of Arizona recently made the 130 miles between Ajo and Tucson, finding 50 miles to be desert, though no sand or steep grades. The balance on either end is good road. Water is to be had at only a few points.

Good Roads Facts

Henceforth, civilization can be no better than its highways.

The national parks, seven in the United States and three in Canada, are now linked together by improved highways.

The Arizona highway department has taken consideration of the pedestrian on the roadway and has made official recommendation that he walk on the left side.

FARM POULTRY

SANITATION PAYS CHICKEN RAISERS

Illinois farmers, who took big strides toward more profitable pork production by adopting swine sanitation, are now finding that sanitation pays just as well around the chicken lot as it does with pigs. To further the idea, poultry specialists of the college of agriculture, University of Illinois mapped out a workable system of poultry sanitation and already many chicken raisers of the state are profiting as a result of it.

There's the case of B. A. Barker, a Grundy county farmer, for instance, who took up the poultry sanitation idea and thereby put a stop to the heavy losses which he had been taking as a result of tapeworms and other poultry parasites and diseases. In connection with the sanitation system, Barker yarded his old hens for the first time this past year and as a result the egg production of the flock was more uniform throughout the summer than it had been in previous years, due to the fact that the hens were uniformly fed. Under this plan they always had access to mash but were not allowed to overeat on grain. Barker has co-operated with the agricultural college in its poultry flock record project for three years.

In putting the poultry sanitation plan into practice on his farm, Barker had his flock tested for tuberculosis. It also was pronounced free of bacillary white diarrhea, one of the worst of the many chick diseases. The old yard where most of the chicks had been raised before was turned into a garden and the chicks this past year raised on fresh ground which was sown to oats and rape. During the summer the rape provided shade as well as green feed. A movable brooder house was used.

C. H. Wilke, a McLean county farmer, is another Illinois poultryman who has profited as a result of following a definite system of poultry sanitation.

Wilke, who is co-operating with the extension service of the agricultural college in keeping records on his chickens, took off a hatch of 437 chicks in March and placed them on clean ground where no chicks had ever been raised before. The ground happened to be in a corn field. In line with the sanitation system which he was practicing, Wilke used movable brooder houses. No signs of disease showed up in these chicks throughout the entire season and 190 pullets were taken from the bunch and placed in winter quarters. They were plump and ready to lay.

Wilke's experiences with a batch of April chickens which were raised the old way are a striking contrast to the results which he obtained under the sanitation plan. There were 1,332 chicks in the hatch that came off in April. They were raised in old chicken yards where hens had run before and where chicks had been raised in previous years. The result was that one disease alone, coccidiosis, wiped out 25 per cent of the chicks. Roup followed as a result of the weakened condition of the stock.

Feeding Soaked Bread Is Dangerous Practice

There is danger in feeding soaked bread to poultry, according to a writer in an exchange. Soaked bread, he says, is one of the worst things one can feed poultry, either young or old, as usually fed, but there is a way of feeding stale bread that transforms it into one of the best and cheapest poultry foods.

To do this cut the bread into slices and dry it over a stove or in the oven, until it is dry enough to crack; put the bread in a pail, or stout box, and chop it up with a spade.

When ready to feed, put a quantity of this in a pail, cover with hot water and pour water off in about one minute; then mix in enough mash so that it will crumble. For summer or winter feeding this cannot be beaten as an egg or flesh producer. The finer particles of bread left in the bottom of the box when chopping up the bread make an excellent food for small chicks and may be fed dry.

High Egg Production

In cold, severe mid-winter weather the winter-egg man gives attention to keeping his poultry house properly ventilated, as he knows from past experience that cold temperature and moist atmosphere do not go well with winter egg production. Too frequently, as cold weather comes, the poultryman begins to close the windows at night and pull down the curtains, which all goes to make matters worse, and causes marked decrease in egg flow.