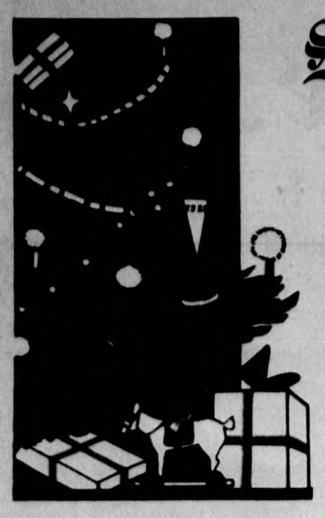


Santa Claus Keeps Favor

EVEN as the story of the Christ-Child never grows old, the custom of celebrating the Yuletide retains its interest and joy each succeeding December. St. Nicholas retains his popularity whether he is prophesied as descending upon the chimney (and just fancy the catastrophe that might befall the world if it became the fashion to build houses without chimneys) in a sleigh drawn by reindeer, or in an aeroplane. Tissue papers may drift the floor in red and white and green mounds and ribbons of scarlet and silver tangle the feet most hopelessly, but Mother smiles happily in the midst of chaos. Christmas Eve may mean nerve-throbbing, aching bodies and fagged minds, worn out with strenuous preparation, but Christmas finds the family indulging in bigger plans for next year.

Decorating the church with evergreen on Christmas Eve is as old as the hills. Polydore Vergil says that "Trimming of the Temples with bangynges, floures, boughes and garlondes was taken of the heathen people, which decked their idols and houses with such array." In old church calendars Christmas Eve is marked "Templa exornatur." However this may be, the greatest charm of Christmas is the decorated church, the power which makes man see beyond the bare walls of the church and which carries him back through the ages to worship with the shepherds at the manger cot in Bethlehem. Christmas without its religious observances, for all the feasting, gaiety and rejoicing, would long ago have passed away.

Christmas carols as they are known to-day are a literary inheritance handed down from an age when there existed neither popular songs nor drama. At fixed seasons of the year the British people used to congregate to sing simple ballads in which secular themes were close-mingled with religious. Of the store of popular poetry nothing now survives in actual use except the Christmas carols.

But in those old days the Christmas carols were only a portion of a larger collection of semi-religious songs, each group of which had its special association with the ecclesiastical year. Easter had its carols, so had Whitsun and May-day, and many other religious holy days. These were not part of the church service as they are to-day. They were mostly associated with those early dramatic representations—mystery plays.

The festival of the Christmastide is a heritage of the long ago, and the date of its origin is unknown. Traditions tell of celebrating in mid-winter with feasting and merriment in the days of antiquity. Perhaps the most widespread of all festive institutions is the Christmas tree. The present form of the tree decked in candles and hung with colored balls and images does not seem to date back prior to the seventeenth century. In England there is a legend of Joseph of Arimathaea which tells us that when the Saint settled at Glastonbury he planted his staff in the ground. It put forth leaves and blossomed every Christmas. The tree very likely is a survival of the older laurel decorations which were tied to the doorposts of houses.

Christmas is Christmas all the Wide World Over

CHRISTMAS the world over! Perhaps in some distant Yuletide the applied science of television will permit Canadian folk revelling in a sparkling, frosty merry-making the privilege of watching their New Zealand cousins celebrate. Pulses will quicken as one glimpses the picnic ever a feature of Christmas Day in New Zealand, and the Yuletide Camp where "little brown Maori fairies with flowing black locks, clad in national costume, with mat and string of beads, come out of the woods and dance festive poi and haka to the delight of the little white folk." Then will come the thrilling hour of dusk, when camp-fires gleam by the woodland streams to the delight of the Christmas campers.

A glance at Christmas celebration in India will also find campfires lighted. The tender pea chick will replace the famous Canadian turkey at dinner. Gaily attired Indian natives will bring their gifts and their greetings to the British officers, and much feasting will feature the merry-making in Bombay and Calcutta.

New South Wales, Australia, will present the gayest of scenes, with thousands of country people thronging the streets of the city, the cafes, the theatres and the races. In Melbourne a carnival shopping scene will reward the television fan, with festivity in abundance in swimming and picknicking, for it chances that in Australia Christmas Day falls in mid-summer.

"Looking-in" at Christmas in the Italian highlands will be rewarded with a charming picture, with the time-old custom followed with the peasants making offerings of fruit and flowers at the shrine of the Redeemer. Christmas airs, with blazing bonfires and fireworks, will arrest the attention as the Canadian views at long distance the celebration in Naples. In Norway a charming scene will be portrayed as the Norwegians provide a Christmas dinner for the birds.

The "looker-in" watching the festivities carried out in Ukraine will discover the homes the centre of merry-making on Christmas Eve. Many courses will mark the feast at the dinner hour and featuring strange dishes. In many homes the extra cover will be laid for the stranger, who, should he come knocking at the door that Christmas Eve, would be welcome at the table and no questions asked. It is an ancient but beautiful legend that tells how the Christ-Child wanders through the town on this night of nights, and to the Ukrainian home the stranger may represent the Holy Babe. Irresistible will prove the temptation to take a peek at Christmas festivity in Switzerland, where the gay, sparkling tree will be found in the poorest of homes, and Father Christmas with his generous pack of toys a welcome visitor.

Bethlehem the Site of Christ's Birth

THOUGH it is contrary to what most people will expect a Christmas spent at the birthplace of Christ is really the greatest disappointment imaginable. Bethlehem is the one place in the whole world where the festival is commemorated in a setting of threatening crowds and armed guards.

The Church of the Nativity, by common consent admitted to be the authentic site of Christ's birth, looks more like a formidable fortress than a Christian church. The dark, massive walls, with small, heavily barred windows, standing in a roughly paved square, suggests durance vile rather than religious peace. The only doorway is a small hole in the great thickness of the wall, so low that one has to stoop to pass through. There is no spire or dome; only an ugly looking bell, badly projecting from the medieval masonry which looks incapaole of ringing out glad tidings.

On Christmas Eve great crowds come from Jerusalem and the surrounding villages to attend the midnight-mass held in the Roman Catholic part of the Church, the rest of the building being reserved for the Greeks and Armenians who hold their Christmas on a different date.

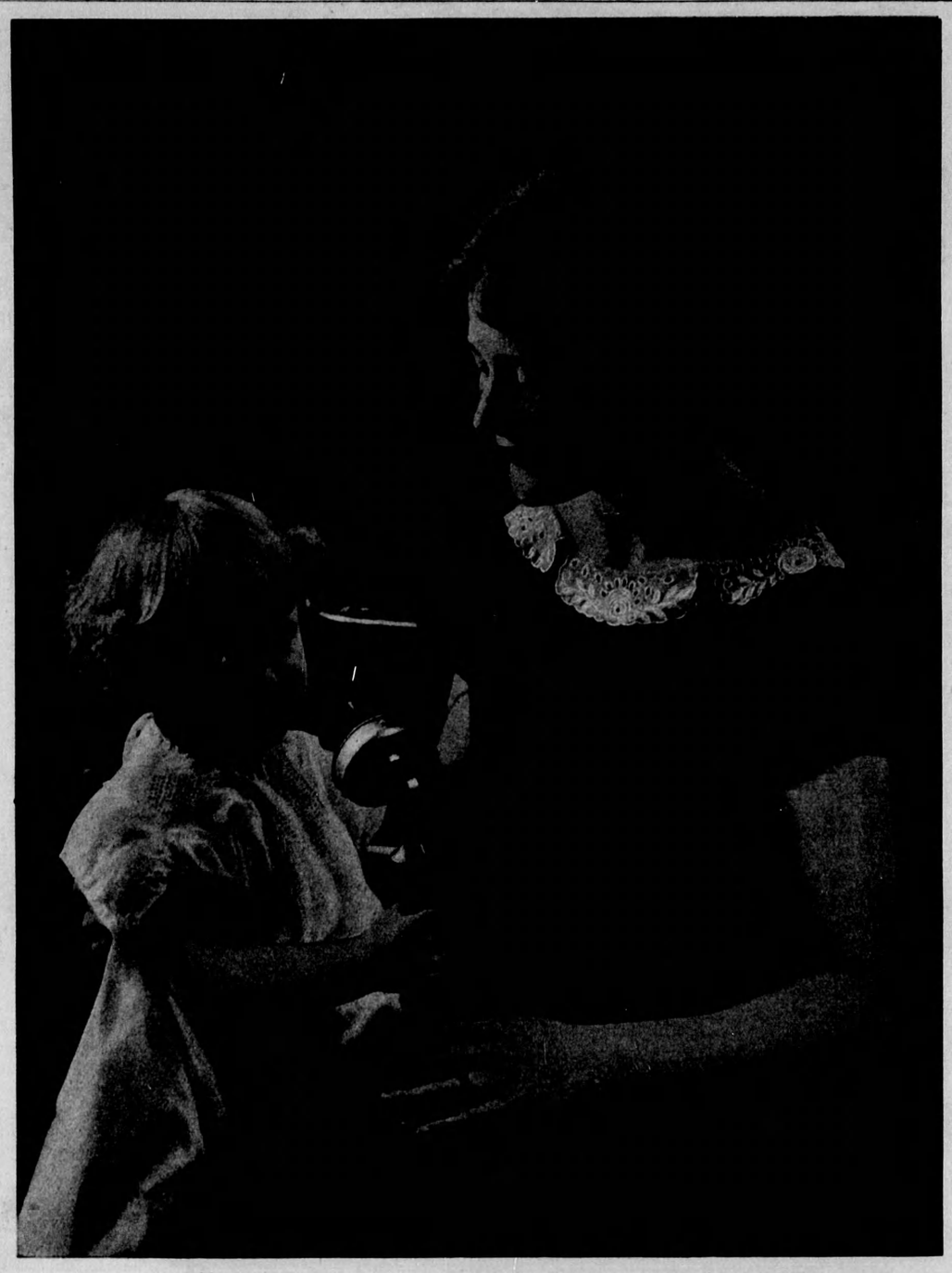
The interior of the church which rather resembles an enclosed market with great pillars and huge flagstones, presents a cold and cheerless scene. A surging Eastern mob besieges the building, pushing and fighting for places, while the aisles are guarded by police with gleaming bayonets to prevent disturbances between religious factions.

Religious antagonism is so bitter that should a Greek or Armenian priest set foot on a carpet belonging to the Latins, or vice versa, it is enough to cause a riot possibly ending in bloodshed. So jealous is each church of its particular bounds that at the border line the wall hangings are even pinned back to prevent them swinging over foreign ground.

At midnight there is a procession to the chapel of the Manger, where, down two small flights of steps in a small lamp-lit crypt, is the famous "Star of Bethlehem" marking the actual spot where Christ is said to have been born. This is in a small recess of the wall over which stands an altar shared by all three churches, each contributing its share of dimly burning lamps; here in the holiest spot of all Christendom a sentry stands by day and night to preserve religious peace.

Close by is a small ledge on which the manger is said to have rested but the manger itself is now locked up in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. It is only on the lonely hillside of Judea where dwells the peaceful shepherd with his flocks that the true atmosphere of the first Christmas is to be found.

The peasants of many European countries share the legend that animals are conscious when Christmas Eve comes round. Many of the country folk believe that at midnight sheep awake and march in procession and the cattle kneel in their stalls.



Santa On the Line

"Is that you, Santa Claus?"

"Yes, and you are little Marjorie Brown."

"What, Santa! do you know my name?"

"Yes, and I know your voice, too. Oh, yes, I know you, Marjorie, very well, and I have seen you asleep in your bed."

"Aren't you wonderful, Santa, to know so much? May I tell you what I'd like you to bring me on Christmas Eve? Yes? Well, I'd like you to bring me a big dollie an' a carriage for it, an' a set of doll's furniture an' dishes, an' an'——"

"Stop a moment, Marjorie; I know everything you would like, but have you been a good girl?"

"Oh, yes; you can ask Mumsy if I haven't; she is sitting right here."

"Never mind now, Marjorie I know you always tell the truth. So I'll bring you just what you want. Good-bye, Marjorie."

"Oh thank you, Santa Claus, you are so good. Good-bye."

Priceville General Store

To all our many customers and friends we wish a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

KARSTEDT BRCS.
PRICEVILLE :-: ONTARIO

Saugeen River Fox Ranch

The Age-Old Wish

We wish our many customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We thank them for their past patronage and trust we can be of further service to them.

C. M. Heron
General Store :-: MAXWELL

Think of all the best wishes you can make for yourself this Christmas--then double them—and you will have some idea of what a very, very Merry Christmas we wish you!

F. PINDER
Baker & Caterer :-: FLESHERTON

Greetings-

We wish all our friends and customers Health, Happiness and Prosperity in the year 1929.

May this Xmas be a joyous one for you.

Miss M. Cook
MERCHANT :-: CEYLON

Had we the words of a great poet at our command, we could say nothing more sincere than the simple "Merry Christmas" wish which we greet you this Yuletide.

H. B. Poole
General Store :-: MAXWELL