The Children's Festival

By E. V. Lucas

Christmas, most of us remark somewhere about mid-December, "comes once a year, and when it comes it brings good cheer"; but do we ever ask ourselves how long it has been making this annual and enkindling visitation? At the first reaction the answer would be, 'Ever since the death of the Founder of the Feast"; but that would be wrong, for the evolution of Christmas as we know it seems to have been very gradual.

The actual date of Christ's birth was indeed not fixed for many years. Various dates were suggested as more appropriate than December 25. In the year 243, for example, a Latin tract was issued maintaining that March 28 was the true natal day. Spring, the author pointed out, had then begun; the world was new; the equinox prevailed; the moon was full. It also happened to be a Wednesday, and it was on the Wednesday of the first week of all that the sun and the moon were created; and was not Christ the Son of Righteousness?

But in spite of all this ingenious special pleading December 25 won. Some of the Early Fathers were against any commemoration of it even then; Origen for one, protested. But by the fourth century the celebration of Christ Mass on December 25 was becoming general. Yet not until the year 534 did the Romans make it a dies non, or bank holiday, as we in England would say now. In Britain for centuries it was New Year's Day as well as Christ Mass and was a season of joviality until in 1644 the Puritans killed it. With the Merry Monarch's return the old high spirits came in again, never to be much impaired.

Another problem is the meteorology of Christmas. At some period it must have been cold, snowy, frosty, a midwinter festival, or how could there be such a persistent tradition to that effect? In America, I believe, such bracing Christmases are habitual; but I can assure you that in England Christmas has become a very different season. Christmas with us is now usually mild and moist; while winter proper, such as it is, does not set in until January or later, and it often goes on long enough to spoil the spring. It has even been known, the spoil-sport that it is, to encroach on the summer.

I want just as eagerly to know when the old snowy Christmas went out as when the new humid Christmas came in. All data on which our conception of the old Christmas is founded have been provided either by painters or writers; and it is possible to look upon both as addicted to those symmetrical dreams wherein the wish is father to the thought. But altogether—and your own Washington Irving is by no means the least of them—they have set up a wonderful and very cordial tradition. In the artists' pictures there is always snow; in the Christmas cards there is always snow, and before some one discovered that minute particles of glass were deleterious to the operatives there used even to be frost that actually sparkled. In the stories there is always snow; in Pickwick, at Dingley Dell, there was ice for Mr. Winkle to fall to skate on. Santa Claus has immemorially arrived in a sledge drawn by reindeer; Father Christmas's fur coat is covered with flakes. But—I speak only for England—I wonder was Christmas ever cold? Did snow ever fall at that time? Was there skating or sliding?

My two visits to America having been in the summer, I have no notion how Christmas is considered there, how it compares as a popular festival with Thanksgiving Day or the Fourth of July. But I shall always consider a little book by John Burroughs, called Winter Sunshine, one of the best works on the open air ever written. Long perusal of other American books chiefly novels, has taught me that the sacrifice of a turkey is as necessary to the pious celebration of Thanksgiving as of our Christmas; but what I do not know is whether you slay another Turkey for Christmas too. Nor do I know whether Americans say, as so many people in England do, that they personally dread Christmas because it is so full of ghosts—and more than ever now after the war,—but that "for the sake of the children" it must be kept up. For, "after all, we add, "it is the children's festival, isn't it?" Do you say that(I wonder?

It is with us a geniune sentiment, but it does not express the whole truth, for, although we may dread Christmas and honestly wish it over, yet we value it as the one day in the year when families unite. The children may serve as a pretext; but their elders, for all the heartaches, are not sorry for the occasion.

SECRETARY TO PRINCE

Sir Godfrey Thomas, private secretary to the Prince of Wales, with Lady Thomas, as he left Canada for home after a two-months' vacation.

ANDY FIX-IT

For several weeks before Christmas everybody in Andy's family was busy making little gifts. His sisters, Nancy and Nell, made pretty little sachets, bags, cushions, handkerchiefs, slipper holders, doll dresses and al sorts of dainty things. His brother Tom made book-ends and no end of attractive and useful things with his scroll saw and tool chest. And their mother would hurriedly hide her work when she heard them coming in from school, for nobody must know what she was making. Mother's gifts were to be a surprise for everybody.

But what was Andy going to make? That was the question. He had a fine chest of tools and knew how to use them, but strange to say he had never been interested in making things. He was very much interested, however, in putting things right and in repairing things. He was always mending something about the house or yard. So when his mother would ask one of the other children to fix something, they often said: "Oh, let Andy fix it." And his father, too, would sometimes say: "Let Andy fix it. He likes to tinker about and I am busy." So they got in the habit of calling him "Andy Fix-it." And Andy laughed for he thought it a great joke.

"Well, I can't mend an egg-beater and call that somebody's Christmas present," said Andy to himself as he sat trying to think of something to make.

"And why not?" a voice seemed to ask right inside him. "It would be different and it might make people just as happy as having something new given to them."

The idea was so strange and new that Andy had to turn several handsprings before he could go on with it. The more he thought of it the better it seemed. At last he gave a whoop and ran to the basement, where there was a pile of all sorts of things waiting to be repaired. Andy looked them over and put in a separate pile those that he thought he could mend.

Then he went on a tour of exploration about the house and made a list of the things he saw that needed fixing. It was surprising how many things he found that wanted a tack or a screw or a bit of wire or a drop of oil or a nut or a nail. The door of Nancy's doll house was hanging on one hinge. Nell's little chair needed a bit a glue. Tom's skates needed a nut. His mother's reading lamp had a screw missing. The pantry door squeaked. The washing machine needed oiling. Well, well, it was a long list!

Andy began by repairing the pile of things in the basement. When each article was repaired and cleaned and polished, he tied a card on it and placed it in an old trunk in the farthest corner. Then the last few days before Christmas he mended the objects about in the living rooms when no one was looking. People were too busy to miss a squeak in a door and to notice that a screw had been replaced, but they would notice these on Christmas morning. Andy was going to make sure of that.

Early on Christmas morning he slipped down stairs and put each of the mended articles in its proper place with a card attached which read: 'Christmas Greetings From Andy Fix-it." Then he put a similar card on Tom's skates where he had replaced a nut, on the doors that had squeaked, on Nancy's doll house door, on his mother's reading lamp where the screw had been missing, on everything in fact which he had repaired.

And Andy's Christmas gifts were as welcome as any received that day. Everybody was so happy to have their things in order again. But how they did laugh when they first discovered the droll little cards dotted all over the house, where Andy's clever fingers had made things right.

"It was a dear, sweet thought. And nothing could have made Mother happier," his mother told him with a big hug. 'The world needs lots of Andy Fix-its."

Mennonite's Back Tell of Hardships

Refugees From Paraguay Reach N.Y. on Way to Canada

New York.—Fleeing from pestilence, fever, and the possibilities of starvation in the unproductive farmlands of the Mennonite Colonies of Paraguay, were 18 additional Mennonite refugees, who arrived here recently aboard the Munson liner Western World. They narrated more tales of the hadships which have befallen some 2,000 members of their sect, who migrated from Canada two years ago with the hope of finding and developing extensive fertile acres in Paraguay.

Mrs. Emma Harder declared that she had lost her husband in the Mennonite colony. His death she attributed to mal-nutrition and malaria. She asserted that he had shared his money with the starving members of his sect, and recalled that she borrowed seven peos from William S. Grant, purser of the Western World, in order to defray the expenses of herself and her seven children, who returned with her by the liner. Before disembarking from the ship she was tendered a purse of $250, which the passengers had collected upon hearing of her plight from the purser. This sum will enable her to return to her friends in Canada.

The purser also collected $135 which was given to Anton Schroeder, another destitute Mennonite aboard the liner, who was borne to St. Mary's Hospital, Hoboken, suffering from a serious attack of malaria. Additional sums were supplied to the nine others.

"The least worn the soonest mended," as the lady of the revue remarked the other day.

Some husbands give their wives kisses by the bushel. Others are content with a "peck."

Sir J. Aird Heads Radio Commission

Will Investigate Merits of Private and National Broadcasting

TO TOUR ABROAD

Ottawa.—The appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the whole question of radio broadcasting in Canada was announced recently. It consists of Sir John Aird, Toronto, president of the Bank of Commerce as chairman; Charles A. Bowman, editor of the Ottawa Citizen, and Augustin Frigon, director of the Ecole Polytechnique of Montreal.

The Radio Commission appointed by the Government is to inquire particularly into the relative merits of broadcasting by privately owned stations or by stations operated on the basis of national ownership.

TRIP TO EUROPE.

It will consult with the provincial governments and also visit the United States, England and France, although it is not anticipated that this will take very long. The commission will be able to report during the session of Parliament. In Canada 60 per cent. of the radio sets in operation are urban, and 40 per cent. rural. There are 68 broadcasting plants licensed by the Minister of Marine. Thirty-two provide an intermittent service of low power of purely local operation.

The commission will inquire specially into the following questions:

1—The establishment of one or more groups of high-powered broadcasting stations operating as private enterprises with the receipt of a government subsidy.

2—The establishment and operation of such a system of stations to be owned and financed by the Dominion Government.

3—The establishment and operation of stations by Provincial Governments.

Seek New Wheat Grading Process

Saskatchewan Growers Want Present Visual Test Abandoned

Kipling, Sask.—Abandonment of the present visual test and the institution of a new process of grading wheat based upon protein values was recommended by witnesses representing the agricultural interests of southeast Saskatchewan who appeared before the Saskatchewan Royal Grain Commission, in its initial provincial session.

The farmers' representatives, who were selected to represent the district at a convention held recently also recommended absolute abandonment of mixing in every form and the establishment of some additional grades, viz, four frosted or five rusted, to take care of grain too good for grade No. 5 and not quite good enough for No. 4.

Witnesses testified that in this section the milling value of this year's crop is very high, that is the protein quality, but grades are low because of appearances and "off-weight" and color. Several swore they knew, by tests as well as fact, that local millers are making a fine quality of flour out of number six. This mill product is sold in this territory.

Thomas Porter, of Kelso, testified that the grain growers feel very strongly over the manner in which their grain is degraded, as he termed it, by lake-head mixing houses.

"This is our wheat. It goes into the private terminals without our consent and is mixed without our permission and the mixers extort a huge revenue from that source," said Mr. Porter. "Then it goes overseas and it is not the same grain we delivered at the lake-head. The ultimate buyer won't pay the price that he would have paid had it been the same wheat that started from our farm, then the price he is willing to pay is the Liverpool quotation and that quotation on our degraded wheat overseas comes back to Canada and sets the level of prices in turn that the wheat here is sold for, minus the cost of delivery at Liverpool It is an endless chain and vicious circle with the farmer getting the worst of it and the mixing house owners alone of all concerned reaping rich profits."

Chinese Student is Hanged in England

Manchester, Eng.—Chung Vi Miao, Chinese law student from New York, was executed at Strangeways jail for the murder of his bride, Wai Sheung-Miao. The young woman was found strangled to death in a wood near Keswick, England, last June shortly after their arrival on a honeymoon tour.

Most men are quick to embrace an opportunity—when it's wearing frills.

The Nativity

(The two Phophets come in:)

1st Prophet
Sir, now is the time come,
And the date thereof run
Of his Nativity.

2nd Prophet
Yet I beseech you heartily,
That ye would show me how
That this strange novelty
Were brought unto you?

1st Prophet
This other night so cold,
Hereby upon a wold,
Shepherds watching their fold
In the night so far,
To them appeared a star,
And ever it drew them near,
Which star they did behold,
Brighter they say a thousand fold
Than the sun so clear
In his midday sphere;
And they these tidings told.

2nd Prophet
What, secretly?

1st Prophet
Na, na, hardily,
They made there of no council,
For they sang as loud,
As ever they could,
Praising the king of Israel.

2nd Prophet
Yet do I marvel,
In what pile or castle,
These hardsmen did him see.

1st Prophet
Neither in halls, nor yet in bowers,
Born would he not be,
Neither in castles, nor yet in towtrs,
That seemly were to see,
But at his Father's will,
The prophecy to fulfil,
Betwixt an ox and an ass
Jesu this king born he was;
Heaven he bring us till!

2nd Prophet
Sir, ah! but when these shepherds had seen him there,
To what place did they repair?

1st Prophet
Forth they went, and glad they were;
Going they did sing,
With mirth and solace, they made good cheer,
For joy of that new tiding,
And after as I heard them tell,
He rewarded them full well
He granted them heaven therein to dwell,
In are they gone with joy and mirth,
And their song is Noel.
(There the Prophets go forth.)
—From the Coventry Play, Fifteenth Century.

Many a woman doesn't know what trouble is till she has married the man of her choice.

Coolness can be caused by hot words.

THE HURRICANE IN ENGLAND

Wave breaking over the pier at Bri[illegible] that battered the coast from Land's End to Dover and spread ruin over the southern half of England.

Canada Asked to Join Parley on Liquor Issue

Washington Seeks Conference on the Suppression of Drink Export

Ottawa—The United States has asked Canada for a conference to consider an extension of the border agreement of 1924, for the purpose of more effectually suppressing the liquor traffic between the two countries. Although reports have been circulated to the effect that Canada is being asked to prohibit the export of liquor, or else refuse clearances to liquor cargoes obviously destined for the United States ports, these reports are only guesses, responsible officials here declare.

William Phillips, United States Minister to Ottawa, has been in informal communication with the Prime Minister, who is also Minister of External Affairs, and his suggestions are now before the Government in Council, but nothing has been made public as yet.

It would simplify the situation so far as the United States is concerned if all export liquor trade was stopped. But such a drastic step could only come through an act of the Canadian Parliament, as at present such export is entirely legal.

The liquor, it is asserted, is not only made here, but sold, delivered and paid for here, and the purchaser assumes whatever risk is attached to attempted shipment across the border. This valued for the last 12 months at nearly $28,000,000. A large proportion of it as whisky destined for the United States. While Parliament may think fit to do a neighborly act and prohibit exports be argued that there is no such provision in the law of Great Britain, France or other cuntries, which are exporters. No reply to the suggested conference has been sent as yet, but Canada is expected to agree to it.

The chief provisions of the treaty as it now stands is for the notification of clearances of liquor-laden vessels and the refusal of clearances, ostensibly to foreign countries, of motorboats which obviously could not weather the conditions of the high seas.

The First Christmas Box

While we all use the phrase Christmas box a hundred times at this season of the year, few are aware of its origin.

It was, in the first place, a real box, or, rather, a jar of earthenware in which those who received tips stored them for the Christmas holiday.

In a dictionary of the year 1585 we find Christmas box defined as "a mony box made of potter's clay wherein boyes put their mony to keepe, such as they hang in shoppes on toward Christmas.

The famous Bishop Hall mentions these boxes in one of his sermons, saying that it was "a shame for a rich Christian to be like a Christmas box that receives all, but nothing can be got out till it be broken n pieces."

Air Mail Service to Pacific Coast

Experiment Will Be Tried at End of Present Month and Service Will be Extended if Test Proves Successful

Montreal—An air mail service between Montreal and Vancouver is promised by the postal authorities if an experiment they contemplate carrying out from December 19 to 29 proves successful, Victor Gaudet, postmaster for the district of Montreal, told members of the Chamber of Commerce recently. The inauguration of such a service between here and the Pacific Coast would take 24 hours off the time now required to deliver mail to Vancouver.

Mr. Gaudet emphasized the intention of the Federal Government to use this service as a factor in bringing all parts of the Dominion into closer communication. The Government had committed itself to a policy of providing an air mail service to settlements which are practically cut off from outside communication during the winter months, he said.

The speaker contrasted the difference in the manner mail is delivered to the Island of Anticosti and Seven Islands since the air mail service has been introduced. Formerly, these sections of the country had to be served by dog teams, which took 15 days to cover the distance an airplane completes in a few hours.

Starts December 19

Starting December 19, the authorities will give temporarily an air mail service from Winnipeg to Regina; from Regina to Calgary, and from Calgary to Edmonton via Saskatoon. In this manner a letter mailed here before 10 o'clock on Monday, leaves for Toronto by plane at 11.15 a.m., and is in Winnipeg by train on Wednesday morning. A half hour later it leaves for Regina by air and is there before noon. It reaches Calgary at 4.15 p.m. and is in Edmonton an hour later. A saving of 24 hours results.

As regards the international mail service which commenced on October 1, Mr. Gaudet is unable as yet to produce figures, but at present it is being more extensively used by the inhabitants of the United States than of Canada.

American Penetration

La Presse (Ind.) It is no more holiday nor a little visit of goodwill that Mr. Hoover has gone to make in South America. The new President has gone to get information on the spot and at first-hand about the advantages and economic resources of a continent, the commercial relations of which the United States have assumed an ever-growing importance since the war. . . We must not lose sight of the fact that these very precious advantages have been obtained chiefly to the detriment of Latin-America itself and also of other nations, principally Britain and Germany, during the War of 1914-1918. Our neighbors, therefore, have not much justification to claim that they got of the great European struggle. Their economic gains in South America stand as proof to the contrary.