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### WHO IS SANTA CLAUS?

Who is this grand old man, adored by every one, and where was he born? The answer to this question is not easy, for Santa Claus was born ages ago, and he has been so busy ever since that he has never taken the time to study his family tree. One thing he knows, and that is he has many names. Canadian children call him Santa Claus, the little Dutch folk, St. Nicholas, the French, Pere Noel, and the Germans, Prince Ruprecht or Kris Kringle, but they all mean the same thing.

The story of his birth is told in old legends. The Italian story is that his name was Saint Nicholas, and he was a bishop in the fourth century. He had a great deal of money, but he was so good to poor people, and especially to children, that he gave it away as fast as he got it. There are many tales about his good deeds, but perhaps the most interesting one is how he brought back to life three children who had been killed. In Italy he was known as a tall man, dressed in white robes and wearing a crown. But the happy Dutch did not think of this kind man that way. To the Dutch people he appeared as short-legged and fat, and well wrapped up in furs. He was accompanied by a black slave who carried a bag full of sweets and presents. St. Nicholas carried a birch rod with him and asked the children who had been good and who had been bad. If they were good he gave them nuts, crackers and fruit, but if they had been bad he gave them a flogging. The children put their wooden sabots in the fireplace so that he could put some more presents in these on going out.

In Russia he was worshipped in the same way, but he showed up as a tall person, wearing the vestments of a bishop.

man, wearing a fur coat, carrying a staff, and holding a bag of sweets. In Germany he was at first considered as an advance courier of the Christkind, distributing first of the angel child's gifts, and promising a visit of the Christ child on Christmas eve when he heard that the children were good. In some of the small places he appeared grotesquely, sometimes in goat's head and horns, like a goat, or in a stick and two lights in his mouth. The old story says that Santa Claus, Nicholas, Necht R. Precht, or whatever his name is, comes in wearing a white sheet and holding a stick in his hand. He tells the children to pray, and if they disobey he flogs them, but if they give him presents plenty of apples and nuts.

The Italian children believed in their patron saint, but they worshipped his wife instead. Her name is La Befana, and they pay as much homage to her as the children do to the patron saint. St. Nicholas is not good looking, for he is supposed by the legend to be more than ten thousand years old. The legend says that when the three wise men were about to pass her window, she refused to go to the window and see them. She saw her mistake when it was too late, and has tried to repent by making the children happy on her birthday which falls on January 5th. She is supposed to be

Santa Claus' wife, and when she is not busy helping him she is in Italy getting ready for her yearly celebration, when she gives the children fruit, toys and candies. She is also known in Russia, and a great many children believe in Mrs. instead of Mr. Santa Claus. There she is called Babouska, and the story tells that she is so kind because she is repenting for her sins.

When the Dutch came over to America they brought with them their stories of their patron saint and their Christmas celebrations. And the children commenced to hang up their stockings instead of putting wooden shoes into the open fireplace. Their saint was the same kind, jovial man, excepting that he came with reindeer instead of driving horses as he did in Holland. The German children told their stories of the Christ child who sent his servant to inquire into their behaviour and to distribute their presents. There was not a great deal of difference in the stories, and so the day of December 25th was taken as the date of Santa Claus' appearance. In France it was the angel child who came every year to bless the children and to remember them with some small gift. Afterwards he had so much to do that he sent his servant, Pere Noel, which is the Santa Claus of the French and Dutch children, to help him distribute his gifts and to tell them that he will come to bless them before the New Year.

Though Santa Claus has a large sleigh and two splendid horses or reindeer, according to the countries he visits, he has such long distances to cover that he cannot appear in all the countries on the same day. Santa Claus was born in Holland, or rather, the Dutch children first found him. But he is a great traveller and goes to all countries, where he has many shops and thousands of men and women working for him. He goes to all the forests of Germany, especially to the Black Forest, and he gets thousands of trees. Then he takes a fast steamer to Canada, and by the time he lands in Kingston he is pretty well tired out. He always brings one or more servants with him, and he has so many homes to visit that only a few of the children get to see him. He hurries around and does his work as fast as he can.

He then catches another steamer bound for France, where the children are awaiting their Pere Noel. Sometimes he is so late that the children have to celebrate their Christmas and New Year together. But his journey is not yet ended, for he goes back once more to Russia, especially into the interior, where he has not yet been. But he is the friend of all the children and must therefore extend his journey into farthest Norway and even into Iceland. While he is so busy looking after the children of the north, his wife is looking after the children of the south in Italy, Spain and Greece. At dark on the eve of Epiphany, the Befana begins. The open squares are crowded with trees of all sizes, wax figures of the Christ child, candles and toys, while the air resounds with the music of whistles, horns and carols. When these celebrations are finished, Santa Claus and his wife go off for a short holiday, nobody knows exactly where. It is said that they have been seen in the high mountains of Swit-

zerland, enjoying the winter sports. Wherever they enjoy their holiday it is short, for as soon as they are rested they commence their work of preparing for the next visit to all the children in every country.

### DAY OF DAYS FOR THE KIDDIES

Above all other holidays, Christmas is children's day. If possible, they should be made happy on that day. But they should not be permitted to be selfishly so. In times past there has been a tendency on the part of many of us to give too many gifts, and too expensive ones, to our children. We have been wasteful. We should not love our children less—indeed we would show greater love—by being careful what we give them. Too many toys incline children to be both wasteful and destructive. When the youngsters are left to invent some of their playthings, their imaginations are developed, and they become more capable of doing things for themselves and taking care of themselves.

This Christmas would be a good time to begin teaching children unselfishness and the joy of giving. Many a poor mother is struggling to provide food and shelter for her children and has nothing to give them from Santa Claus. The children of such mothers are going to have wide, tear-stained eyes. They are going to crave the joy of a Christmas day that may not be theirs. Let us not forget the spirit for which Christmas stands. It is to give freely, to do service to mankind. Let us give love. Let us give sympathetic understanding. Let us give ourselves. He lives most who lives for others. And he who shall have made a child happy on Christmas morning will have done a service in his name.

Miss Jane Hervey, who is now in this country for the purpose of opening an aviation school, was the first French woman to earn a brevet or aviation pilot's license. She was captain of the 47th air squadron and was engaged in instruction work throughout the war. At a recent meeting held in New York at which representatives of fifteen nations were present, the Medical Women's International Association was formed for the purpose of making possible the international exchange of ideas by women physicians.

### PEACE ON EARTH; GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN

Let us rejoice this year in the arrival of the Christmas Spirit, for it has brought to us the joyful ending of the great world struggle, and there breathes over our Canadian homes the atmosphere of "Peace on Earth; Good Will Toward Men." Let us hope that this Christmas may be remembered as the dawn of a new era—that it may mark the starting point of a new age in the world's history—an age whose greatest achievement will be the permanent establishment of the world on the foundations of "Peace on Earth; Good Will Toward Men."

### YE OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS FEAST

When the Druids gathered the mistletoe, two bulls were sacrificed each winter, and as a reminder of this the ancient Britons ate beef. Long ago has this significance died out, but nevertheless beef is the English Christmas meat. Charles II. knighted the loin of beef at a Christmas feast because he relished the dish so much after returning from the hunt.

Quoth Charies, "Odd's fish; a noble dish, Ay, noble made by me! By kingly right I dub thee knight—Sir Loin henceforward be."

Wassail was originally a pledge drunk between friends. The component parts of good cheer were ale, vinegar, nutmeg and apples, which were roasted hot, and sizzled in the ale.

The wassail bowl was often of heavy silver and a feature of the Christmas festivities, often ornamented with ribbons and sprays of rosemary. "That's for remembrance." The peacock also held an important place in the old Christmas feast. It was brought in, not by the servants, but by the most distinguished lady guest, who bore it into the banquet hall to the sound of music, the rest of the ladies following. The peacock was prepared by first carefully stripping the skin off without disturbing the plumage. The bird was then stuffed with spices and sweet herbs. The peacock was anciently in demand for banquets, served as a pie with the plumed crest appearing at one end, while at the other the tail in all its splendor. Over this dish the knight-errant swore to take any perilous enterprise; thus originated the oath, "By cock and pie."

A dish of great antiquity is the boar's head, which was to be found in all bills of fare for coronations and other festivities. In medieval England it was a custom to commence all great Christmas festivities with a solemn ceremony, bringing in the great boar's head as the initial dish. The head was wreathed with rosemary and laurel, and a lemon, symbol of plenty, was placed in the mouth.

In Herlick's time it was customary to set a watch on the pie the night before Christmas. By some it is presumed, on account of the Oriental ingredients which enter into its composition, to have reference to the offerings made by the Wise Men of the East.

A current superstition was, as many nice pies as you eat at Christmas so many happy months you will have.

### Christmas Boxes.

Christmas boxes in the early days of Christianity were boxes placed in churches for pious charities and opened on Christmas Day. Later on apprentices began to carry round a box to their master's customers for small gratuities. Whence arose the present custom of Christmas box giving.

Miss Edna Williams of New York city holds a unique position in the moving picture film world as manager of the export department for one of the largest film distributing agencies in the world. There are perhaps not more than six people qualified to hold a like position, and so other wo-

### WHY HOLLY IS ALWAYS USED AS A CHRISTMAS DECORATION

Legends About Holly Run Back to the Most Ancient Times—It Was Dedicated to Saturn. Holly has its place in the legends and at one time many carols were composed in its honor.

European peasants think that a sprig of holly which has been used in church decorations will bring luck to the house, so when the evergreens are removed they beg for a spray. Holly used for decorating houses must, on the other hand, be burned after Jan. 1, or ill-luck will follow.

In some parts of England, as in Ireland, girls, seek omens from burn-

ing the Christmas decorations, and say the more noise they make and the brighter they blaze up the warmer is the affection of their lovers. In some places it is considered unlucky to burn the Christmas decorations, and they are thrown away instead. The holly tree was dedicated to Saturn and was said to have many healing virtues.

A pretty legend is handed down about the first Christmas tree. When Ansgarius preached the "White Christ" to the Vikings of the north the Lord sent his three messengers, Faith, Hope and Love, to help find the first tree. They were to seek one that should be as high as hope, as wide as love and that bore the sign of the Cross on every bough; so they chose

the balsam-fir, as it met their requirements better than any other tree in the forests.

It was usual at Roman weddings to present the bride with a wreath of holly, significant of the warmest congratulations.

In India and Persia the followers of Zoroaster, the founder of fire worship, soaked pieces of holly bark in water and threw the infusion in the faces of the newly-born babies, believing this will ensure them prosperity and safety in this world.

An internal combustion locomotive of 1,000 horse-power that uses trade oil fuel is hauling passenger trains experimentally on a European rail road.

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