

The New Christmas

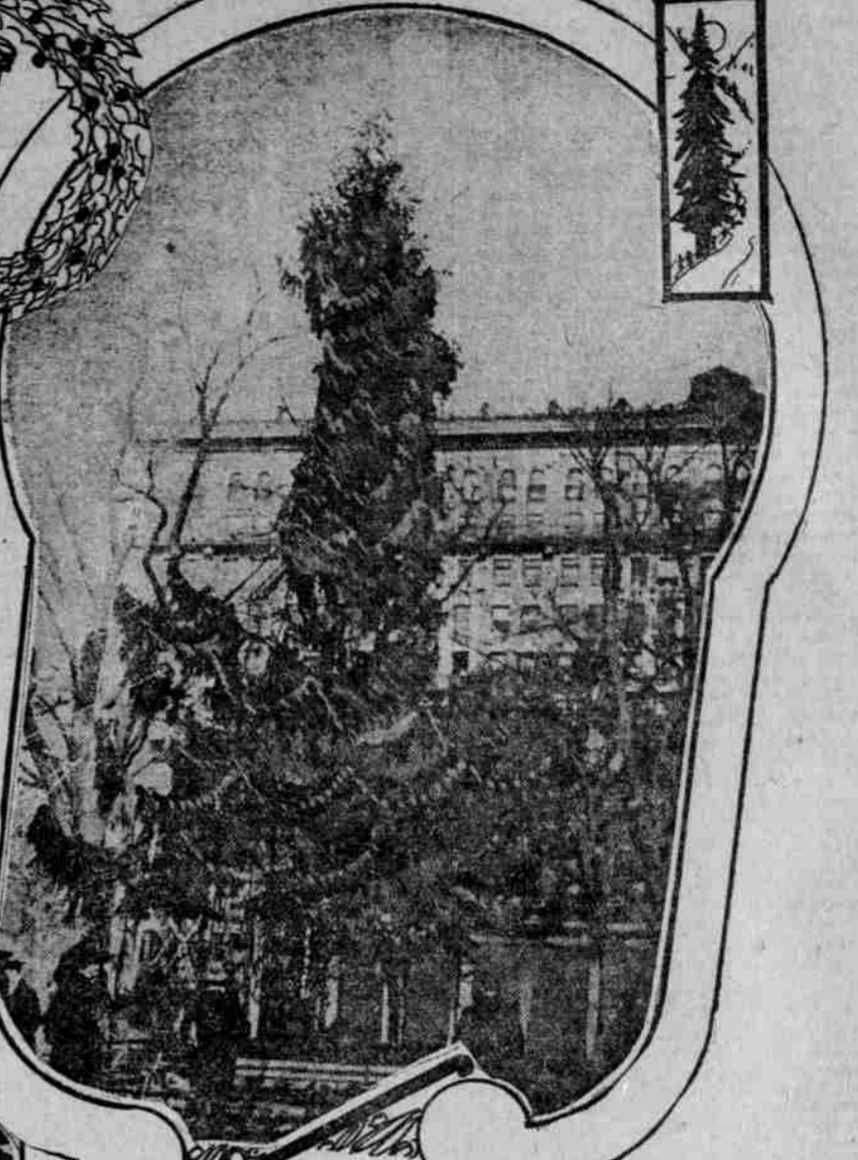
Public Christmas Trees — Caroling — Boy Scouts.



Independence Square to Try the New Christmas



Boy Scouts as Aids to Santa Claus.



First Municipal Christmas Tree in New York

THERE are brand new elements that will enter into the celebration of the Christmas which will blaze forth next Wednesday night from coast to coast and will require a week for the waning.

In scores of great cities will appear the municipal Christmas tree; a thing unknown until last year. In hundreds of smaller towns will appear the custom of wandering bands of carolers for these, also, have been tried out and have found a new place among seasonable revels.

The Boy Scout has made his appearance as the Mercury of the Christmas givers and wherever there are presents to be distributed to the poor he is doing the major part of the work.

Through these agencies Christmas is taking on a new tone. It is becoming more of a public function participated in by the organized public and less the chimney corner celebration of the family. Not that the home Christmas is being done away with, but that the celebration which reaches "the lonesome poor and rich," that is participated in by the church, charity organizations, the municipality, is forging to the front all over the country.

Official Christmas Trees.

The biggest thing in this movement is the municipal Christmas tree. Last year it broke forth for the first time. Mrs. E. D. Herrshoff, of New York City, was the woman of inspiration and vision who in the East organized the idea. She communicated her plan to her friends, it was taken up by the press and finally by the city authorities. New York decided to have its first municipal Christmas tree.

Madison Square was selected as the point at which the first tree should be set up. One from the mountains 50 feet tall was ordered. It was laboriously put in place, elaborately hung with decorations, dazzlingly illuminated with electric lights.

To these trappings of human were added a sitting down of Nature's snow, which scattered countless crystals in all the branches of this small park which feels the tread of more feet in a year than any other 10 acres of ground in the world.

At sundown the chimes burst forth from the lofty heights of Metropolitan tower near by. They were taken up by the fashionable churches of nearby Fifth avenue, echoed by the ancient edifices of old Washington Square, the solemn cathedrals of Little Italy on the upper East Side.

Soon trumpets appeared at the different entrances of the square sounding the fanfare from "Parafal." From the church of Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst poured forth the fittest choir in all

New York to lead the caroling. As the strains of "Silly Night" broke upon the air there filled into the park the lonely ones from all the metropolitan millions. From sundown until midnight himself stood sponsor for it. The tree was set up on historic Boston Common, made to blaze with light and again were the snows of heaven sifted down upon it as a benediction. The mayor presided over the celebration. A choir of large proportions had been gathered together and trained into harmony. Under its lead the trees "the lonesome poor and rich," that is participated in by the church, charity organizations, the municipality, is forging to the front all over the country.

No sooner had Mrs. Herrshoff announced her idea of a celebration of Christmas than the idea was taken up in Boston. Mayor John F. Fitzgerald himself stood sponsor for it. The tree was set up on historic Boston Common, made to blaze with light and again were the snows of heaven sifted down upon it as a benediction. The mayor presided over the celebration. A choir of large proportions had been gathered together and trained into harmony. Under its lead the trees "the lonesome poor and rich," that is participated in by the church, charity organizations, the municipality, is forging to the front all over the country.

The Idea Spreads Rapidly.

And this year the municipal Christmas tree is to be set up in scores of cities from coast to coast. In Washington, in the Nation's capital, a great tree is to be erected in the eclipse back of the White House and in the shadow of the Washington monument. The President may view the celebration from his back porch. Local authorities, members of Congress, men high in authority in the Government departments, are back of the movement. It is intended as an institution that is to be established and maintained for the future.

To Madison Square, Boston Common, the White House lot, is to be added a celebration on even more historic grounds. In old Independence Square in Philadelphia, that plot of ground which holds the hall in which was written and signed the Declaration of Independence, is to be set up the Municipal Christmas tree.

The lights from it will twinkle in the windows through which flew the files that bit the calves of Thomas Jefferson and drove him in impatience to hurrying the signers. In the belfry of this historic building, above the cracked old Liberty Bell, will be stationed a score of trombones who will send forth the call for the unleashing of the Christmas joy hounds.

The Mayor of the city will touch the button that will cause the huge star to blaze forth at the top of the tree. A thousand trained voices will lead in the singing of the carols. Each evening throughout the week the tree will be illuminated and the best band in the City of Brotherly Love will dispense music. The great chorus will assemble again on New Year Eve and will sing the New Year in Chicago, Baltimore, Pittsburgh and a score of other cities are arranging similar celebrations. The idea of the celebration beneath the open sky goes back to the double origin of the use of the tree as a figure in Christmas festivities. The Druids of Old England met beneath the trees to worship and celebrate occasions of religious joy and the custom comes in part from them. The Saxons of Germany are probably more directly responsible for it, and its story might well be recited on such an occasion as this.

There have always been a few carolers around on Christmas eve who have announced in song the joy of the occasion, but, during the last few years, the caroler is becoming a harbinger of the season in many localities and is winning great popularity. As such he is bringing a new element into Christmas that is promising a big development.

Mr. Ben Greet, of the Ben Greet Company, lives in a little village on Long Island. Some years back he and his neighbors organized a band of carolers and went forth on Christmas eve, clad in scarlet coats and bearing lanterns. They trooped up one street and down another and sang their carols under the windows of all the village. In many places they were welcomed and often joined by the villagers visited, and so their numbers grew. In other places window shades were slammed down in their faces and blind drawn. But that was in the past. Today the institution of caroling on Christmas eve is established, the carolers are everywhere welcome and their visitations looked forward to.

In the town of Burlington, N. J., stands the old church of St. Mary. In that church, with the choir as a nu-

clus, has been developed a lusty band of carolers. They wait in the church on Christmas eve until the toll of midnight announces the arrival of that time when the first ward went forth that the Christ was born. Then the carolers go forth and beneath every friendly window of the town they sing the "Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will Toward Men."

From such sources has the idea of the smaller towns where men know one another. All the people gather in the various churches and hold the old-fashioned Christmas tree celebration. Then the various choirs are coming to the idea of leading the congregation forth that the stay-at-homes of the neighborhood may yet get a touch of the spirit of the season.

The idea is spreading like wildfire and is forming a part of the new Christmas. Boston, however, has taken the custom and the ancient Beacon Hill district now furnishes each season its bands of carolers who troop abroad for the night singing.

Boy Scouts and Christmas.

Another element that is being extensively introduced into the celebration of Christmas is the Boy Scout. This very handy youngster is being found to fill a place for which there has long been need. He is becoming the messenger boy of the distributors of charity, the unofficial guardian of the Christmas crowds, the handy man wherever Santa Claus appears.

Whoever an organized charity asks the public to contribute food or clothing, or Christmas toys and baskets, there is a vast array of detail work to be done. No one can perform all these tasks like an organized corps of boys. They turn out on foot and on bicycles. Baskets that may not otherwise be brought to headquarters will be called for by these young aids in the public good.

When the time for distribution arrives the needy poor report in great numbers for their share of Christmas things that have been given by people who have something to spare and who are made happy in sharing their good fortune. In such an assemblage there is need of much care in distribution. Some are over-timid and will get nothing unless encouraged. Some are greedy and seek to get more than their share. The packages are innumerable and many hands are needed. Certain of the deserving may not come to headquarters and their packages must be taken to them. A squad of 50 Boy Scouts can handle situations of this sort as could no other organization.

The Boy Scout as an aid in handling crowds has demonstrated his usefulness on many occasions during the past year. The most important of such occasions was when, on the fourth of March, he lent such material aid to the police of Washington in handling the great crowds that assembled in Washington to see President Wilson inaugurated.

Madison Square around the first municipal Christmas tree last year there were 200 well-organized Boy Scouts there to assist the police and to render first aid in case of accident or illness. The same was true of the celebrations elsewhere and in all the cities the Boy Scouts are asked for their work during the coming celebrations. (Copyright, 1913, by W. A. DuPuy.)

The Herald Angels

A Christmas Story by Richard D. Shelton

THE nursery rang with the child-like voices.

"Hark, the herald angels sing—"

"That's too high. Wait a minute!"

"Hark, the herald—"

"That's better. Now, Seraphina! Now, Thad!"

"Hark, the herald angels sing— Glory to the new-born King—"

"Seraphina, can't you take that piece of candy out of Thad's mouth? He nearly choked himself just then. You can have it back, Thad, when you've sung two verses. Don't be such a baby! Now, good and loud!"

"Hark, the herald angels sing—"

Schuyler bellowed lustily and beat time with a drumstick; Seraphina sang with much fervor, and many false notes; while little Thad followed the tune manfully, and substituted a "la-la-la" when the words proved elusive to his four-year-old memory.

The second verse brought to a successful issue, Schuyler dismissed the chorus and turned to the door.

"You see if you can't teach Thad the words of that second verse while I go downstairs and get some joss-sticks for the censer," he told Seraphina.

Schuyler Van Brunt was working under difficulties. Dr. Post had told him of the old English custom of singing carols in the streets on Christmas morning. It had taken a strong hold on the boy's fertile imagination—so strong a hold that he had planned to smuggle Seraphina and Thad from the house, when Christmas came, and to sing a carol out-of-doors in true English fashion.

Then, just when he needed Dr. Post's advice most, there had been some vague trouble between the doctor and Aunt Margaret. Aunt Margaret no longer wore the diamond ring on the third finger of her left hand, and Dr. Post came no more to the house. It was very disconcerting. Schuyler wanted to ask Dr. Post a score of questions about the carols,

little Thad's clothes. Then Schuyler crept noiselessly to the hall below and returned with coats and hats and mittens. When they had bundled themselves, each donned a "surplice." At the last moment Schuyler bethought him of the brilliant cord on his father's bathrobe, and at the imminent peril of denting it he slipped on his father's bathrobe, and at the imminent peril of denting it he slipped on his father's bathrobe, and at the imminent peril of denting it he slipped on his father's bathrobe.

"Come on!" he whispered, and led the way down the wide stairs.

With a caution worthy of better things he shot the bolts and opened the front door. The three grotesque figures stole silently out and stood on the stoop in the cold Christmas dawn. The air was still and biting; the silence of the "trous appalling." Seraphina's mind reverted to the luxury of the bed she had just quitted.

"O-o-oh!" she chattered. "It's cold—aw-awful cold to be out in your nightgown!"

Schuyler snorted scornfully.

"Haven't you got enough on underneath it?" he demanded angrily, and Seraphina was silenced.

"O-o-oh!" echoed little Thad, and then, evidently thinking the sooner he caroled the sooner he would be back in the house, he began in his piping voice:

"Hark, er herald dangle!"

Schuyler thrust a hand over his mouth.

"Shut up!" he said disgustedly. "Do you want Elsa to come out and sneak us back into the house? Come on, now!"

He led the way down the steps and around the corner, where he paused to light the joss-stick in the tomato can. When they started again, little Thad tripped on his nightgown surplice and went sprawling into the gutter. He was rescued, howling; but not until he had been promised unlimited candy could the march be taken up again.

"Who you going to sing your carol to?" demanded the practical Seraphina.

"Ninny! To no one in particular," said Schuyler.

robe. The three strangely garbed figures met his astonished gaze.

"Good Lord! What have we here?" he gasped.

"We're herald angels," piped little Thad.

"We're Christmas carolers," corrected Schuyler with much dignity.

"I'm frozen," chattered Seraphina.

The doctor made a heroic effort to maintain his gravity.

"Come in; come in and get warm," he said. "Merry Christmas to you!"

They had filed up the steps into the warm wide hall, the tomato can sending out its reek of burning joss-stick.

"I would like to ask if carolers generally wear surplices and carry censers?"

The doctor's eyes twinkled.

"The best I ever heard did," he said gravely.

At that moment the telephone bell whirred wildly, and this is what they heard the doctor say:

"Hello! Yes, this is Dr. Post talking. He lingered affectionately on the word—'Y-e-e-a. Now don't be alarmed. They are not lost. In fact, they're here with me this minute. Yes, they're here with me this minute. No, don't trouble to send Elsa; I'll send them home in the car' at all. Goodbye! Oh, Margaret, merry Christmas! Perhaps, if you don't mind, I'll drive over with them. Thanka. Goodbye!"

Half an hour later a carriage drew up before the Van Brunt house and from it emerged Schuyler, Seraphina, Thad and Dr. Post. Mrs. Van Brunt and Aunt Margaret met the cavalcade at the door.

"Oh! Oh!" said Mrs. Van Brunt, gathering the three strange little figures in her arms, while Years of merriment ran down her face.

Dr. Post had turned to Margaret.

"I thought I'd come with the herald angels," he said laughingly, "and let them plead 'peace on earth and mercy mild' for me."

Her eyes softened. A hesitating smile trembled on her lips a moment uncertainly, the next moment with no uncertainty whatever. And then he knew that the herald angels had accomplished an unwitting mission. (Copyright, 1913.)

