

# MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.

## CHRISTMAS LORE AND CUSTOMS

looked down from the red hilltops upon the desolate scene below. They saw in the center of the city nothing but ash heaps and shattered walls. Only the churches and the town hall were left standing. It was impossible to locate the business streets under the mass of debris left by the falling walls. On the back streets and outskirts just 450 dwellings by actual count had been spared, and many of these had been badly damaged by shells.

And this was all that was left of Atlanta, the pride of the Confederacy, when her people returned and began their preparations for Christmas. The citizens crowded into every available house and shanty, and then came a hard struggle for fuel and food. The weather was intensely cold, and old people and delicate women and children had to walk two miles to the woods, and carry or drag home whatever they could find in the shape of firewood.

Horses, mules and negroes were too few in number to be of any material assistance. Several enterprising traders started small stores and sold flour, meal, sugar, coffee and bacon at tremendous prices. People paid \$800 for a barrel of flour and

bluster, feasting, drinking and horse play were the chief features of the old-time English Christmas. Gift-making existed as it had for many previous centuries, but that was merely an incidental feature and not nearly so important as the work of the pompous butler, upon whom devolved the responsibility of carrying into the dining-hall the great bear's head. What a bleak Christmas it would be nowadays if gift-making were secondary to bringing in a bear's head!

The old-time Christmas began a week before the arrival of the day, just as the shoppers of today rush out with fat purses to lure the holiday bargain. But purchasing gifts did not bother the heads or weary the bodies of the old world folk.

The gathering of the holly and mistletoe for the decoration of house and church was their initial task, and it was performed by the village or masses, headed by brave pipers and fiddlers, who filled the forests with the joyful melodies of Christmaside. It was the ragans who first used holly and mistletoe for observances, and the practice was adopted by the early Christian churches. The Greeks and Romans also used them in their religious ceremonies, as did the Druids and the Celtic and Gothic nations. So the young maid of to-day who stands alluringly under a sprig of mistletoe may be satisfied in knowing that she is following the precedent of centuries.

In Druidical times the simple peasants flocked in crowds to join the processions, in which the Druidical priests were the foremost actors. The train was headed by the bardic singing canticles and hymns. A herald preceded three Druids, furnished with implements for the purpose of cutting the mystic plant—upright hatches of brass, tied to staves, and which followed the prince or chief of the Druids, accompanied by all his flock and followers. The chief mounted the oak, with a golden sickle detaching the mistletoe, and presenting it to the priest, who received and held the branches away with deep reverence. On the first day of the year, the branches, after resting on the Druidical altars in the interval, were distributed among the people as a sacred and holy plant, the Druids crying, "The mistletoe for the new year."

Many were the superstitions attaching to the mistletoe. Among the latter day charms associated with it, when suspended in a bunch in the servants' hall, was the traditional and favorite observance of kissing the maids under its branches; the superstition prevailing that the maiden who missed being heartily kissed under her mistletoe at Christmas would forfeit her chance of early matrimony, and certainly not be married in the ensuing twelve months.

A medieval observance which always followed the gathering of holly and mistletoe was the cutting and hauling home of the Yule log. The favorite Yule log was a cross-grained block of elm, or the rugged root of a tree of fantastic and grotesque form, and this was drawn home to the kitchen, or great hall, with the same merry-making that attended the gathering of the holly. Before the evening event of kindling the Christmas log from the charred remains of its predecessor of the year before, there were sports in plenty to be performed.

Formerly the members of the family and guests sat in the open on the Yule log, the throne of the master of the revels; sang a Yule song and drank to a merry Christmas and happy New Year. As part of their feast, Yule dough or Yule cakes were consumed. These bore impressed figures in the form of an image; sometimes they were made in the form of an infant; nor was the manger overlooked.

Of course the Christmas dinner was the leading feature of the day, and the big andower was expected to maintain all of his tenants and neighbors from day-break to midnight. The first dish to be placed on the table was the bear's head, and great state and ceremony marked this service. Musicians and trumpeters led the procession, in which there were huntsmen with long spears and pages with drawn swords. Carols were intoned as the procession moved into the dining-room and psalms were chanted, for in some ingenious way the olden time people connected the bear's head religiously with the celebration of the Holy Nativity.

### ONE CHRISTMAS IN ATLANTA.

How It Was Observed by the Confederates After Sherman's Siege.

HEN Sherman laid Atlanta in ashes in November, 1864, and started on his march to the sea, very few families were left in the ruined city. The inhabitants who had left during the siege seized the first opportunity of returning to their old homes. For weeks after the departure of the Federals the refugees straggled in every day. They came in ox carts, on horseback and on foot, bringing such provisions as they were able to carry. Every railway leading out of Atlanta had been torn up for many miles, and the wrecked city was almost inaccessible. The armies had destroyed every tree and fence for two miles around and firewood and coal were not to be had at any price. The returning Atlantans were old men, boys, women and girls. The able-bodied young men were all at the front. These people saw a gloomy spectacle when they crossed the dismantled fortifications and

### SANTA CLAUS—"OH, RING OFF AND LET'S GO HOME."



\$30 for a pound of coffee. Other things were equally high.

Some of the citizens had plenty of Confederate money and they were able to pay any price for what they needed, but there were hundreds of families whose fathers and husbands were in the army, and these would have starved but for the thoughtful kindness of their more fortunate neighbors. Perhaps a few starved or froze to death. Nobody knows. There were no newspaper reporters in those days taking notes in that metropolis of smoking ruins.

Christmas Day dawned with a blood red sun glaring through the hazy atmosphere. It was a dreary holiday for the little ones. There were no toys, no candy and fruit, and very few presents were made. If a family succeeded in keeping up a good fire all day it was considered a piece of good fortune. A baked hen for dinner was a luxury, but there was not a turkey within fifteen miles.

The children made the best of it with their outdoor games, and a small supply of corn whiskey enabled some of the citizens to get through the day with a show of festive cheer. The wounded and sick soldiers were thought of and provided for first. The Southern people never forgot their boys in gray, and it was a point of honor with every man, woman and child to divide their last dollar or their last crust with the men who followed Lee and Johnston.

The streets, or rather, the pathways, between the ash heaps, were filled with men and boys who put on the appearance of jollity, but the old men who laughed and joked the loudest were wondering how their sons fared that day in their camps in far-off Virginia.

Was there ever such a Christmas Day on this continent? It may be a blessed thing that men forget such dark chapters in their history. There are to-day wealthy and happy people in Atlanta, living in fine mansions, who shivered in rags over a few embers in little huts made of scraps of old tin roofing on that never-to-be-forgotten Christmas just after the siege.

### The Church Christmas Tree.

"The Christmas tree should be a spruce or fir if possible, with full and regular boughs," says Mrs. Lyman Abbott, writing of "Christmas in the Church," in the Ladies' Home Journal. "The dressing of it is a matter of taste. But for the danger attending it every one would wish to have the tree brilliant with lighted candles. In city churches electric lights may

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be used with good effect. In an account of a German Christmas tree, written by S. T. Coleridge, it is said that the great yew branch was fastened to the wall, adorned with candles, and when the candles had burned down and the needles of the yew began to sputter and the delight of the children was unbounded. It was apparently the intention that the branch should burn as a culmination of the enjoyment. But that is not desirable now, so every precaution should be taken to avoid it. A pan of water should stand near, and at least two tall persons should be provided with a pair of tongs, upon the ends of which wet sponges are securely fastened. A small blaze can in this manner be immediately quenched."

### Decorations.

The use of holly and mistletoe, the plants sacred to Christmas, is now very general, and as they are abundant in our markets, as well as cheap, every household may be made bright with them. In parlors and sitting rooms, wreaths, crowns and festoons can be arranged over mantels and windows, as well as hung from lamps and over pictures.

For the Christmas dinner table, a large bowl of holly leaves, with the scarlet and white berries, makes a beautiful center piece; while tiny bunches of holly laid at each plate brighten the table wonderfully. Cakes may be ornamented with candy designs of holly, while leeks may be molded and colored in the same style. If in remote localities it is not possible to obtain holly and mistletoe, green of some other variety should be procured. All-over greens, such as pine and cedar, can be utilized, and bittersweet and Indian arrow berries arranged with these can be made into beautiful decorations. When

### LEFT HIS WATCH.

THE wife had a good general knowledge of and experience in office work.

They rented a suite of cheap rooms, and then followed days and days of weary seeking, almost a house-house canvass of the downtown district, leaving applications wherever the managers would permit.

"We can't give you any encouragement in these times; we are not taking on any new men. Our business will not warrant keeping all of our old employees after the holiday season is over. Your references are all right, and if times were different," etc.

And when Sunday came there was scurrying for stationery and for stamps out of the thin purse to answer "ads." But one day was like another, with its trudging, trying and waiting.

### IMES were hard in the country as well as in the great cities.

A couple married but a few years, who had lost everything through illness and misfortune, decided to remove to Chicago before winter set in to try to secure some sort of employment that would yield a living.

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### Sanbo's Christmas Pudding.

The purse became empty and the meals scanty, and the rent due; and after the first month the furnace sent up little heat and the landlady's "Good morning" was frigid. They wore shabbier clothes, and their steps grew heavier as their faces grew less hopeful. One night the husband came home without his cuff buttons, and next morning wore a pair of his wife's, but there was steak and coffee for supper. In a few days he left his watch downtown and wore an old-fashioned silver one that had been his father's; and then they decided they could get along without that, too. And there was nothing more to pawn. The man several years before had helped a lawyer out of a tight place, loaning him small sums several times. He dropped in to see him and asked him for a dollar or two. The lawyer stepped out to get the money and forgot to come back.

The wife had packed two pieces of rare French bric-a-brac in her trunk, and if she could sell them—in a great city there were always people who were glad to get hold of artistic curios, if you could find the right people.

The pieces of china were worth from \$50 to \$100, but husband and wife agreed to part with them for \$25 if a purchaser could be found. A curio dealer downtown offered her \$1.50. The wife next started to visit houses on a fashionable boulevard; and was either denied admittance by a haughty servant or a supercilious dame refused even to look at the pieces—the



### HE world is full of mystery. Which no one understands. What is before our eyes we see. The work of unseen hands. But when we and when a day or two is wrought. Escapes the grasp of human thought.

There was a time when we were not, And there will be again. When we must cease and be forgot, With all our joy and pain—

Like the wind, or like the snow That fell a thousand years ago.

We live as if we should not die. But when we die, we die. For if we knew that death was nigh, We would not have it back in sight. We would not have it back in sight. We would not have it back in sight. We would not have it back in sight.

If death to each man in his turn Is coming soon or late, Be sure the soldier's unconcern, And his courageous fate. Better to perish in the strife Than to preserve the coward's life.

New Year, if you were bringing youth, As you are bringing age, I would not have it back in youth, I have no strength to wage Last battles over and over; Bury your dead, O memory!

You can bring nothing will surprise, And nothing will dismay, No tears again in these old eyes, No darkness in my night. You might bring light and smiles instead If you could give me back my dead.

I have beheld your kin, New Year, Full fifty times, and none That was so happy and so dear, I wept when it was done, I wish should weep when years depart, And leave the ashes in your ear.

Good-by, since you are gone, Old Year, And my past life, good-by! I shed no tear upon your bier, For it is well to die. New Year, your work will be my best— What can an old man want but rest?— Richard Henry Stoddard.

### CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY.

Forty Years Ago It Was Observed Differently from What It Is Now.

CHRISTMAS in the country forty years ago was a different affair from what it is now, says a writer. Christmas time all is dark and silent and gloomy if the great house across the street. There are no Christmas wreaths in the windows, no ray of light comes from behind the closely drawn blinds, no childish voice is heard within the house. There is no bright and beautiful tree, but on the spot on which the tree stood last year there is something white and as beautiful in its silk and satin and velvet finish as the skill and wealth of man can make it. But the sight of it brought a chill to the hearts of those who saw it carried into the house on Christmas eve, and when the eyes of the mother and father fell upon it their hearts bled anew.

The passersby who saw the bands of white fluttering from the knob of the door of the house across the street went on to their own humbler houses thanking God that their own little ones were left to them, no matter how little of wealth or beauty there might be in their homes.

The poorest house in which there was the laugh of children was so much less desolate than the great mansion across the street in which the child's laugh was never still. It added to the melody of Paradise that Christmas morning. It rang out clear and sweet across the jasper sky. It had gone through the great Beautiful and into a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

### Christmas Carols.

Christmas gifts of coal and flour are in order all this month.—Philadelphia Ledger.

That man never lived who had any influence over his wife the week before Christmas.—Atchison Globe.

Small boys with an eye to the future are willing to wear stockings many sizes too big for them.—Philadelphia Record.

People with bad habits might ease up on them a little before New Year's for the purpose of learning whether it will pay to swear off.—Cedar Rapids Gazette.

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Wife—I think I will surprise you with the purchase of a watch to wear Christmas. Husband—It will be an acceptable gift, and I shall wear it with pleasure. Wife—Oh, but the one I shall buy would be a lady's watch, suitable for me to carry.—Boston Budget.

Her father had said it could never be. They both sat in the parlor—also in tears. After long searching and a desperate effort she found her voice. Then, in despairing tones, she cried: "Oh, Chas'ley! If we must part, let us wait till after Christmas!"—Philadelphia North American.

### Boy Wanted.

Excuse me, pray, I've just stepped in a moment for to say I'm likely to be overworked this coming Christmas day. There are so many children in this great big world of ours, I am afraid the work ahead will overtax my powers. So I would ask the little lads to whom this message comes: Those only who believe in me—with whom I'm always chummy. If there's not one among 'em all to whom I could be a joy. On Christmas morn to come and be old Santa's errand boy.—Harper's Bazar.

### Christmas Eve on the Reservation.

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### A NEW YEAR'S SONG.

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### BROADACRE'S CHRISTMAS.

As Christmas play and make good cheer, For Christmas comes but once a year.—Old Rhyme.

HISTMAS comes but once a year. Well, gosh all fish-ook! who 'At has the Christmas bills to pay 'id ever ask for two Or three or four, or any more 'an what we have today? There may be gum! I ain't built that-a-way.

I've got to git a sled for Ned and buy a doll for Nan, And books and toys and lots of joys for little crippled Dan. Fer he can't go about, you know, like other boys, and run, And that is why we all must try to help him have his fun.

And 'Liza—how these girls come up!—she don't want dolls no more. She's got a beau—it can't be no—a clerkin' in a store; But after all, she's 'bout as tall as was her mother when We fell in love—we're in it yet—loos deeper now than then.

And so a year 'at didn't bring a Christmas, 'Id be about the saddest thing a mortal man could see. Fer we would miss the Christmas blues because there's bills to pay? There may be some, but say, by gum! I ain't built that-a-way.—Nixon Waterman.

### ACROSS THE STREET.

The Change that Came with Another Christmas Time.

A S T Christmas the house across the street from mine was the brightest and gayest of all in the block. There were beautiful Christmas wreaths in every window and the whole house was aglow. The shades were thrown up high and the soft lace curtains parted wide. The tree in the great parlor of the house across the street was larger and had costlier presents on it than any other tree in the town. And most of the presents were for the little girl in the white dress and the big pink sash who could be seen from the street dancing around the tree, the happiest, sweetest little maiden in all the world and the light and life and joy of the house across the street.

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