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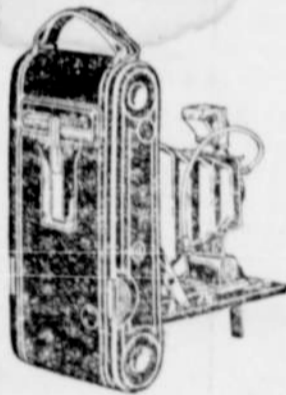
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**Christmas and Motherhood**

By the Rev. Dr. C. De Witt Calmage

ON that Christmas night God honored motherhood. The angels on their wings might have brought an infant Saviour to Bethlehem without Mary's being there at all. But, no; motherhood for all time was to be consecrated, and one of the tenderest relations was to be the maternal relation and one of the sweetest words "mother." In all ages God has honored good motherhood. In a great audience, most of whom were Christians, I asked that all those who had been blessed with Christian mothers arise, and almost the entire assemblage stood.

**Christmas Joy.**

Only once in the year the whole world stands still to celebrate the advent of a life. Only Jesus of Nazareth claims this worldwide, undying remembrance.

**Mystery of the Incarnation.**

For the sun to fall from its sphere and be degraded into a wandering atom, for an angel to be turned out from heaven and be converted into a fly or a worm, had not been such abasement, for they were but creatures before, and so they would abide still, though in an inferior rank. But for the infinite, glorious Creator of all things to become a creature is a mystery exceeding all human understanding.—John Flavel.

**His Humble Life.**

We hear now and then an inscription that Christianity is a religion for the rich, invented perhaps by the rich to keep down the poor. But would a Saviour imagined by the rich be born of a poor woman in a stable? Would he associate, not only with the "sons of the soil," but even be kith and kin of theirs, follow a trade, dwell among them his whole life long? No, indeed.

**OUR CHRISTMAS TREE.**

Owes Origin Perhaps to Luther's Attempt to Illustrate Stars to Family.

Our Christmas tree, which is a feature of most public Christmas eve celebrations and in many homes, is comparatively new in Christendom, but it springs from some very ancient customs. The Egyptians regarded the date palm as an emblem of immortality and of the starlit firmament and at the time of the winter solstice decked their houses with its branches. It was held by them to be "a symbol of life," triumphant over death, and therefore of perennial life in the renewal of each bounteous year. Other trees have been endowed with the same significance in other countries. A Scandinavian myth speaks of a "service tree" sprung from the blood drenched soil where two lovers had been killed by violence. During the Christmas season mystic lights which no wind could extinguish were often seen flaming in its branches.

A later explanation of the Christmas tree dates back to Martin Luther and tells of him attempting to describe to his family the beauties of a snow covered forest under a starry sky. Unable to make them comprehend satisfactorily, he went into the garden, cut a small fir tree and set it up in the nursery with its branches covered with lighted candles.

**Their Heavenly Vision.**

On the northeast side of Bethlehem is a deep valley, the bottom and sides of which afford rich and abundant pasturage for sheep and cattle. During the night in which Mary's child was born the shepherds of Bethlehem, with their flocks, occupied this valley. Not a sound broke upon the stillness of nature except the low voiced conversation of the shepherds as they sat in groups and cheered the hours of watching with simple dialogue or rustic story. While they were thus employed, not dreaming of the vision that was about to break upon their senses.

Such music sweet Their hearts and ears did greet As never was by mortal fingers struck.

And immediately an angel of the Lord came to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them in the presence of this heavenly glory the simple shepherds were struck dumb with surprise and fear. They knew not what the heavenly vision meant until in soothing tones the angel said to them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And before the wondering shepherds could recover their self possession there suddenly

Surrounded their sight A globe of circular light, That with long beams the shamed face of night arrayed.

The beamed cherubim And winged seraphim Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed. Harping in loud and solemn choir, With unexpressive notes to heaven's newborn heir.

Such music, as 'tis said, Before was never made Since when of old the songs of morning sung.

While the Creator great His constellations set And the well balanced world on hinges hung

And cast the dark foundations deep And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

—Milton.

**DICKENS AND CHRISTMAS.**

To English Author We Owe the Familiar Type of Yuletide Story.

To the genius of Charles Dickens was due the familiar type of Christmas story. The pioneer of all Christmas numbers was "A Christmas Carol." Thackeray called that tale of Old Scrooge and Tiny Tim a "national benefit." More than that, "A Christmas Carol" was an international benefit, carrying its burden of happiness across the Atlantic and disseminating its cheerfulness in every community in the United States. Millions of readers have smiled through their tears in the seventy-three years that the world has been the richer and better for having "A Christmas Carol."

Dickens wrote the story at the end of 1843 to relieve himself of the financial embarrassments produced by his rather lavish housekeeping. He was disappointed in the pecuniary returns. He received less than \$4,000 from the sale in its original edition. This is attributed to the very expensive form in which it was published. Four other Christmas books which followed, being gilded with "The Chimes," were much more profitable. Then in later years the Christmas numbers of Household Words, to which the "Christmas Stories" were contributed, sometimes reached a sale of 300,000 copies.

In the end Dickens had little reason to complain of the rewards of his efforts in opening up the rich vein of Christmas fiction. He was acknowledged the supreme master in that field. Thackeray published Christmas books, but wisely refrained from attempting anything similar to "A Christmas Carol" or "The Chimes." In their own way, however, "Rebecca and Rowena," an unapproached masterpiece of literary burlesque, and "The Rose and the Ring," a delightful story for children, which retains its charm for their elders, are no less matchless than the two principal Christmas books by Dickens.

**WHAT SHE WANTED.**

Santa Claus Brought Black Sarah's Gift, Despite Her Advancing Years.

Dr. Anna Howard Shaw's instance of an ideal Christmas gift is connected with her colored maid, a girl of fifteen when she entered her service. At the approach of Christmas Miss Shaw told her of the habit of each member of the family to write out a long and absurd list for the benefit of Santa Claus advising him of all manner of things that would be welcome and keeping it conspicuous so that the old gentleman might do what he could. But Sarah timidly explained that it would be impossible for her to do anything of the sort.

"Oh, try," said Miss Shaw. "There are certainly things you want, and you'll be sure to get something on that list."

But black Sarah said she only wanted one thing and "wanted it bad." She could not tell it, because every one would laugh at her. When she was assured that all smiles would be omitted, Sarah confided her longing for a doll with real hair and eyes. She had owned rag dolls and other substitutes but never a real doll, and, in spite of her advancing years, Sarah thought she would be happy if she could hold one that was like very own.

When on Christmas day a large and lovely dolly with remarkable hair and eyes was put into her arms Sarah held it against her heart and fairly sobbed for joy. Thereafter for two years every Thursday on her "day out" Sarah carried her doll proudly on her arm.

**TWELVE DAYS OF YULE.**

Observation Not Confined to Dec. 25 a Century Ago.

The New England custom during the early years of the nineteenth century was to observe Christmas from Dec. 25 to Jan. 5, the twelve days being generally given up to receiving and returning family visits. Contemporary with this custom was the belief, inculcated in the minds of the children, that if they would visit the cow stables at midnight of Christmas eve they would see the cattle kneel before the mangers.

A poem of the twelve days shows the gift for the first day of Christmas to be a parrot on a juniper tree instead of a "partridge on a pear tree." The verse for the twelfth day, which embodied the entire list of days and "gifts," was as follows:

"The twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me twelve young shooting, eleven bears chasing, ten men hunting, nine fiddlers playing, eight ladies dancing, seven swans swimming, six chests of linen, five gold rings, four coffee bowls, three French hens, two turtle doves and a parrot on a juniper tree."—John Rodemeyer, Jr., in New York Sun.

**Real Christmas.**

Real Christmas can only be had by thinking Christmas thoughts and by giving gifts of cheer. A cheerful smile and greeting on Christmas morning mean far more than the costliest gift ever given.

**The Old Masters and Christmas.**  
 The wonderful paintings of the Nativity that rejoice all beauty loving souls have one curious characteristic that probably escapes the ordinary admirer of the old masters. This is that, although the divine and human figures are wonderfully and elaborately represented, the humble animals are never forgotten in the picture. From the sixth to the sixteenth century a picture of the Nativity was not complete unless the ox and the ass were introduced into the scene, and in some very early works the animals kneel in homage to their Maker.

**Christmas Plum Pudding**

WE are all inclined to think that plum pudding is the oldest and most historic Christmas dish, but as a matter of fact the first time it made its appearance in its present form was in 1675. Before that the Yuletide festival was celebrated with plum porridge, a dish that must have required the digestion of an ostrich. First beef or mutton was boiled in a thick broth, to which brown bread was added. When half cooked, raisins, currants, prunes, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger and any other condiments that were to hand were put in and the whole was boiled and boiled to a pulp.

The present day plum pudding had its origin in England, but in the reign of Louis XVIII, a French version, known as "plumbating," made its appearance. It was very like its English cousin, but was lightened by the addition of bread-crumbs, more eggs and a rice flour, which were used instead of the enormous quantity of suet that was required by the earlier recipes.

**A Better Scheme.**

She—What did you think of our scheme for Christmas decoration—holly leaves over laurel?

He—Well, I should have preferred mistletoe over yew.

**THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE.**

It Reached the Blind of Sight and Should Touch the "Blind of Heart."

One Christmas eve a lady was walking in the city of Berlin enjoying the pretty sights. She stopped to look at a large window where was laid out the lovely stable in Bethlehem.

Before the window stood two little girls, their faces beaming, with pictures, while they talked to another little girl behind them around whom they had their arms. This dear child was quite blind and to her poor sightless eyes the pretty window told no story.

But the loving little friends told the blind child of the rude stable, the hay, the cows and the sheep, the sweet mother beside the manger in which the Christ child was sleeping, the open door through which the wondering shepherds were coming, and the bright star above which shed a soft, silvery light over all, and the wise men with rich gifts for the little sleeping babe, who was the Son of God, our Saviour.

The little blind girl listened till her face grew happy, and she clasped her hands together, saying again and again, "Ah, that is beautiful!"

There are those who have blind hearts, instead of blind eyes, because they do not know the blessed story, says S. E. Bull.

**The Russian Christmas.**

The Russian Christmas is divided into three days—one devoted to Christ, one to his mother and one for her forefathers.

**CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS.**

Making the Cake Was What Interested Kate Langley Boshers Most.

My earliest and most vivid recollection of Christmas preparations is that of perching myself on the end of the dining room table, feet at first dangling over, and watching with awed and eager eyes the many and mysterious boxes and bundles and bowls and spoons and various other things that were put upon it, says Kate Langley Boshers in the New York Times. But as interest and excitement grew, with a thrilling sense of things happening that were delicious and unusual, I would crawl forward until near the middle of the table, and, craning my neck that no movement of my mother's hand, the cook's hand or the nurse's hand escape me, in breathless delight and an occasional swipe of something I was not invited to share, I would sit the entire morning until the work was done.

In the air was the tangle of mystery and anticipation. Everybody helped, and for days there went on the making of mincemeat, of fruit cakes, pound-cakes, citron-cakes, tea cakes cut in fantastic shapes beyond resistance to thieving little fingers, and, oh the thrill of it! Will it ever come again?

For the fruit cakes the raisins had to be seeded, the currants washed, the citron cut in pieces of proper size and all other ingredients prepared in advance of the mixing, and the mixing in exact proportions was always done by my mother.

**Christmas Tree in a Bank.**

Employees of a large trust company in New York celebrated Christmas with a Christmas party in the banking rooms of the institution. There was a large Christmas tree in the lobby. Members of the employees' club, their wives and the women employees of the bank were invited. Two orchestras played and there was a distribution of presents. In many large city department stores the employees have Christmas celebrations with a tree, a Santa Claus, distribution of gifts, etc., just before Christmas.

**Swans For the Christmas Table.**

The swan as a dinner dish has been seen on English tables within comparatively recent times. "Up till a century or so ago," according to F. W. Hackwood, "swans were prepared for the table in and around Norwich. The young birds were put up to fatten in August, given as much barley as they would eat, and by November they were in prime condition. If kept longer they began to fall off, losing flesh and fat and the meat becoming darker in color."

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