

New Canadians Observe Native Christmas Rites

Feasts Of Fifty Nationalities In Canada Present Many Old Dishes

The spirit of Christmas is universal, particularly in Canada; for the population of Canada is not made up entirely of Canadians. Thousands of people from every corner of the world have come to live in this great country and in doing so have brought with them many of their ancient customs.

Most of these customs fade out and die with the influence of western civilization. But not so at Christmas time. It is the one time of the year that these many nationalities, whose descendants will hold in their hands the future of Canada, can celebrate the rites and customs of their native countries—and eat their own loved dishes.

There are some fifty different nationalities throughout the length and breadth of Canada, each with their own peculiar feast. In the Italian homes there will be macaroni and spaghetti and the famous sweet cakes or briches, which are often eaten as a part of the regular Christmas menu.

Another feature of the Italian feast is the Semolina soup. The basis of this delicious soup is half a pint of cornmeal, boiled for one hour in a quart of white stock, preferably chicken stock, to which are later added mushrooms, salt pepper and a teaspoonful of nutmeg. The mixture is strained and a quart of cream is mixed in with two well beaten eggs and added to the chicken stock when the mixture is boiling. It is then covered with Parmesan cheese and croutons, and served in bowls. It makes a very delicious soup.

The English Dinner

Now let us see what the English people are eating. If they are out from the Old Country only a short time they will serve roast beef instead of turkey. Perhaps it will be prepared not in our American style but in the ancient English style of broiling on a spit and garnishing with vegetables. And when the first two or three courses are over, in from the kitchen will come the plum pudding blazing with burning brandy. (Our United States readers will here heave a heavy sigh.) On the table occupying a place of honor will be the wassail bowl, hallowed by tradition.

Man Must Still Pray

(By Ellis V. Kuhns, Minister of
First Congregational Church, Pueblo,
Colorado.)

In writing to a friend, Thomas Carlyle declared, "Prayer is, and remains, the native and deepest impulse of the soul of man." The culture of prayer is a natural procedure, for in one way or another man has always prayed, and always will. Man is a "praying animal." There have been communities without modern forms of government, without schools, without libraries, without many of the things we associate with modern community life, but never a community without its places of prayer.

The speed with which our world has been changed by science has precipitated many difficulties. Not so long ago man seemed to live in a more stable world; one in which he knew that what took place last year would likely take place in much the same way this year. In time of drought he prayed for rain, and when threatened with pestilence he cried to God for healing. Now that science has created the steamboat, telephone, airplane, radio and unmeasured enlightenment man has experienced a change from his former world, in which he was so utterly dependent upon God, to one in which his control over nature has so vastly increased that he now feels a great degree of independence of divine power. His prayer for rain is answered by irrigation

A dish with the mysterious name of Boullabaise, is a feature of the Roumanian celebration. Into this dish go half a pint of each shrimp, and lobster, crab, bluefish and halibut, minced and seasoned, boiled and strained and added to half a pint of fresh vegetable essence. Spices of every description are added and a star of toast and wise men cut from macaroni are sprinkled on the top. They remain just long enough to cook and the famous dish is ready.

Germans Big Eaters

The Germans seem to be the big eaters at the Christmas feast. They have enough courses to keep an army of waiters busy for an entire afternoon. They will have a large and very plump goose, boiled slowly and stuffed with apples, dried fruits of every conceivable description, raisins, dates, figs, apricots and peaches, all highly spiced and mixed with butter. The bird is browned in a quick oven and served with mashed potatoes, sauer krautspiced beer and cucumbers. Many dried fish precede the goose, while a very important part of the banquet is the platter of braised veal and mushrooms. Cake and coffee follow, and of course a German Christmas feast would not be complete without a stein or two of beer.

A Hard Christmas

This year, more than ever before, there will be thousands who can enjoy no feast; thousands who have enjoyed such a feast in past years, but on whom fate has played a dastardly trick, depriving them of their living. There will be hardships and disappointments; sorrows and tears. It will be harder this year than ever before for that old phrase, "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men" to ring out in sincerity.

But this year more than ever, those who can be giving to charitable organizations to help the unfortunate; to make Christmas as real as possible to those who are in no position to enjoy it.

If you have not given something no matter how small, to some one more needy than you, then yours will be a very sorry Christmas indeed. For is not Christmas the celebration of the Birthday of Him who gave His life that we might live?

and his prayer for healing is answered by diagnosis and medical skill. What has he now to pray for? But our difficulties lie deeper still. Since the opening of the present century there has been much critical analysis of the Bible as to its inspiration, authorship and date of writing. This so-called higher criticism naturally confused many people in their attitude toward the Bible. The teaching of the church and the person of Jesus Christ did not escape the critical mind of the scholar in his bold search for truth and facts. Organized religion seemed to be receiving the "coup de grace." For the shallow minded this was true. But the devout believer could still cling to his faith and offer his prayer even though many of his props were gone.

Science did not stop here. The inner sanctum of man's private thinking has been forced to admit the scientific investigator. We know him as the Psychologist and we meekly submit while he dissects our mental life as a botanist would dissect a flower. He finally emerges from his merciless task with the doleful announcement that he finds no evidence of the soul.

Such a conclusion on the part of science can only be regarded as humorously unscientific. Our friend of high scholarship and beautiful character is a constant inspiration to our life, and yet in case of illness we will call a physician. Prayer is still the persistent, incurable habit of the race. In moments of crisis and tragedy the age-long impulse again makes itself felt, and the old cry breaks forth: "Oh, that I might find Him!"

There is a somewhat common attitude of "why pray?" Does not God know our needs before we ask? And is He not doing all He can for us without our asking? This is frequently found to be the position occupied by youth. It is an intelligent question and calls for a rational answer.

Assuming God to be all wise we must believe He knows our needs

before we ask. But will man know his own needs as well without approaching God in prayer as he will through the attitude and actual practice of prayer? And, further, can God nourish the soul of man with the spiritual life, of which He knows man stands in need, unless man voluntarily seeks the intimate fellowship of the Father and yields his spirit in a receptive mood for the divine blessing? In all his wisdom and power and love God cannot bestow upon His children blessings which are meaningless unless they are consciously received, and for which there is no desire or request.

This same question of "why pray?" is asked by those who say we live under the reign of the laws of the universe. Will praying cause God in any way to interrupt the operation of these laws to answer our prayer? While our knowledge of the laws of the universe, and their operation, is growing, we must admit that most likely it is still pathetically limited. In all probability there are a great many laws we know little or nothing about. We know very little about the interrelation of laws. Some are said to be physical and some spiritual. Who knows the exact difference, and the relation of one to the other? Can any one demonstrate that the "trustful attitude of faith and prayer has not healed a sick person after medical skill and of science had exhausted its skill?"

We may thoroughly appreciate the scientific enlightenment of our day without allowing our credulity to accept many of the far reaching and sweeping conclusions of many men of science.

The age long disposition and practice of prayer lift it above the plane of argument and discussion, and identify it as a relaxation of life's tensions, a natural turning of the soul toward God as the flower turns toward the sun. For multitudes prayer is the very breath of life, the sustaining strength which affords unquestionable assurance of the reality and presence of a loving heavenly Father.—The Congregationalist.



"What is that?" asked a would-be Christmas shopper.
"That," replied the stall-holder, scratching his head, "belongs to the Begonia family, I'm looking after it for 'em while they're away for Christmas."

A Wreath of HOLLY

By Blanche Tanner Dillin.

Holly and pine wreaths in the windows, Christmas greens and tinsel festoons in the shops—streams of shoppers with smiling faces and arms laden with gaily-wrapped parcels—all expressed the happy Christmas spirit.

A mother with a holly wreath in one hand and clasping the hand of a child with the other stopped as the child cried, "Mother, you dropped a piece of holly!"

"Never mind, my dear, we have plenty more," the mother replied as she hurried the child on. And the holly was crushed by the next one.

Nearly a man whose clothes bespoke luxury and ease picked up the little crushed thing and tried tenderly but in vain to smooth out the crumpled leaves. The childhood home of Carter Smith, now wealthy New York broker, had been surrounded by holly trees, with their waxy green leaves and bright red berries, like so many tiny Christmas lights, as he had liked to call them.

There were always garlands of ground pine through the spacious rooms of the old Southern home and holly wreaths in every window. Great fires of fragrant pine roared in the huge fireplaces, filling the rooms with dancing shadows and flickering lights.

Each Christmas morn one was awakened by a black head thrust into the room with the greeting "Cris'mas gif' Marse Carter," or who ever might be occupying that room. Then the kinfolk arriving all Christmas day with gifts. Then, too, the dances and parties all week until New Year's, were wonderful. That had been years ago, and the intervening years had been too full of other things to even think of those times. It was with shame that he remembered months had elapsed since he had written to his mother, who still lived in the old home. He must go back there some day—then the thought came, "why not go now?"

He thrust the holly into his pocket, hailed a taxi and sped to his hotel, ordered his servant to pack at once—secured train reservation—cancelled a house party engagement and was on the midnight train speeding South. In his heart was a song and tucked safely away in his suitcase was the sprig of holly.

A Christmas Carol

"Come" said Wardie, "a song—a Christmas song. I'll give you one, in default of a better."—"Pickwick Papers."

I care not for spring; on his fickle wing

Let the blossoms and buds be borne;

He woos them amain with his treacherous rain,

And he scatters them ere the morn

An inconstant elf, he knows not himself,

Or his own changing mind an hour,

He'll smile in your face, and, with wry grimace,

He'll wither your youngest flower.

Let the summer sun to his bright home run,

He shall never be sought up me;

When he's dimmed by a cloud I can laugh aloud,

And care not how sulky he be;

For his darling child is the madness wild,

That sports in fiercer fever's train;

And when love is too strong, it don't last long.

As many have found to their pain.

A mild harvest night, by the tranquil light

Of the modest and gentle moon,

Has a far sweeter sheen for me, I ween,

Than the broad and unblushing noon.

But every leaf awakens my grief,

As it lieth beneath the tree;

So let autumn air be never so fair,

It by no means agrees with me.

But my song I troll out, for Christmas stout,

The hearty, the true, and the bold;

A bumper I drain and with might and main

Give three cheers for this Christmas old.

We'll usher him in with a merry din

That shall gladden his joyous heart

And we'll keep him up, while there's a bite or sup,

And in fellowship good we'll part.

In his fine honest pride, he scorns to hide

One jot off his hardweather scars;

There's no disgrace, for there's much the same trace

On the cheeks of our bravest tars,

Then again I sing till the roof doth ring,

And it echoes from wall to wall—

To the stout old wight, fair welcome tonight

As the King of the seasons all!

Fine Old Christmas

In an immortal passage in "The Mill on the Floss" George Eliot personified the Christmas spirit of her day. That spirit has not changed with the changing years, as a re-reading of the passage referred to will make clear to all our readers:

Fine old Christmas, with the snowy hair and ruddy face had done his duty that year in the noblest fashion, and had set off his rich gifts of warmth and color with all the heightening contrast of frost and snow.

Snow lay on the croft and river-bank in undulations softer than the limbs of infancy; it lay with the neatest finished border on every sloping roof, making the dark-red gables stand out with a new depth of colour; it weighed heavy on the laurels and fir trees, till it fell from them with a shuddering sound; it clothed the rough turnip field with whiteness, and made the sheep look like dark blotches; the gates were all blocked up with the sloping drifts, and here and there a dis-regarded four-footed beast stood as if petrified in unrecumbent sadness; there was no gleam, no shadow, for the heavens, too, were one still, pale cloud—no sound or motion in anything but the dark river that flowed and moaned like an unresting sorrow. But old Christmas smiled as he laid this cruel-seeming spell on the out-door world, for he meant to light up home with new brightness, to deepen all the richness of in-door colour, and give a keener edge of delight to the warm fragrance of food; he meant to prepare a sweet imprisonment that would strengthen the primitive fellowship of kindred, and make the sunshine of familiar human faces as welcome as the hidden daystar.

His kindness fell but hardly on the homeless—fell but hardly on the home where the hearth was not very warm, and where the food had little fragrance; where the human faces had no sunshine in them, but rather the leaden, blank-eyed gaze of unexpected want. But the fine old season meant well; and if he has not learnt the secret how to bless men impartially, it is because his father Time, with ever unrelenting purpose, still hides that secret in his own mighty, slow-beating heart.

Baby Dolls are Adorable

The baby dolls are quite the most adorable of all. They come in triplet, twin or single additions and they are as real looking as it would seem possible to make them.—Wallace's Farmer.

'Twas the Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar plums danced through their heads, Mama in her kerchief and I in my cap

Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap; When out on the lawn there arose such a chatter

I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash,

Tore open the shutters and threw up the ash, The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow

Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below. When what to my wondering eyes should appear

But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer, With a little old driver so lively and quick.

I knew in a moment that it must be Saint Nick. More rapid than eagles his courses they came,

And he whistled and shouted and called them by name. "Now, Dasher! now, Dancer, now Prancer! and Vixen!

On Comet! on Cupid! on Wonder and Blitzen! To the top of the porch. To the top of the wall!

Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!" As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,

When they meet with an obstacle mount to the sky, So up to the house top the coursers they flew,

With a sleigh full of toys and Saint Nicholas too. And then in twinkling I heard on the roof

The prancing and pawing of each little hoof— As I drew in my head and was turning around,

Down the chimney Saint Nicholas came with a bound. He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,

And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot. A bundle of toys he had slung on his back,

And he looked like a pedlar just opening his pack; His eyes—how they twinkled! His dimples, how merry!

His cheeks were like roses; his nose like a cherry! His droll little mouth was drawn up in a bow,

And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow; The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,

And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath; He had a broad face and a little round belly,

That shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly. He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf.

And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself; A wink of his eye and a twist of his head

Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread; He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work

And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk. And laying his finger aside of his nose

And giving a nod up the chimney he rose. He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,

And away they all flew like the down of a thistle; But I heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight,

"Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."



Woman as Santa Claus

The little children of Italy do not have a Santa Claus. Instead La Befana, a kindly, homely old woman comes, bringing them presents the night before Epiphany, January 6, when the Wise Men brought their gifts to the baby Jesus.



Kindness at Christmas

The kindness you do at Christmas is peculiarly blessed, so do all you possibly can. But you mustn't mention your good deeds or the spell is broken.