

The King's Christmas Gifts

They range from shawls to postage stamps, but our Royal Family prefer home-made presents.

by Arthur Nettleton

Among the gifts received by King George this Yuletide will be a number of lampreys. Like the blackbirds in the nursery rhyme, they will be baked into a pie, since this is the form prescribed for this unique Christmas present.

The pie is presented by the city of Gloucester, England, and although the reason for the custom is not definitely known, it is believed to relate to some favour granted to the city by a royal personage centuries ago.

It is said that in return for the favour, an obligation of some kind had to be imposed upon the citizens, and an annual gift of lampreys was chosen because these eel-like fishes are hard to procure at Christmas.

Nevertheless, the Gloucester authorities have since never failed to meet their obligation to successive Sovereigns.

About Yuletide, the King also expects to receive six Kashmir shawls, hand-made and beautiful in texture and design, from India. They come each year from the ruler of Kashmir, and are in the nature of a "due" to His Majesty as Emperor of India. Other Indian potentates make gifts to the Throne at Christmas, and in every case the presents are exquisite examples of Indian art.

Originally, such gifts were retained for use in the royal palaces in Britain, but in recent years it has become customary for them to be handed on to close friends of the Royal Family, or to retiring members of the household staffs.

Queen Goes Shopping

Royalty's attitude towards Christmas presents has changed in other ways, too. Not so very many years ago, all the Yuletide shopping of our Royal Family was done in the palaces. Leading stores were asked to send representatives with a selection of goods, so that a choice might be made.

In Queen Victoria's time, the approach of the Christmas season was a period when hosts of tradespeople visited Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, each specially summoned and armed with samples and catalogues.

Changes began to occur during the reign of King George V. Queen Mary was the first British Queen to "go shopping" in the fullest sense. She declared that the system operating in the past restricted her choice, and she started paying visits to shops herself—chiefly to antique dealers' and jewellers' establishments.

She stated that in this way she was better able to select personal Christmas gifts for her friends. Today, the increasing demands of public activities do not allow Queen Elizabeth much time for shopping and representatives still visit the palaces with Christmas gifts. But the newer idea continues to be preferred whenever it can be adopted, and so far as Queen Mary is concerned, antique dealers still receive her personal patronage.

Queen Elizabeth finds it necessary to start her Yuletide shopping in August, her relatives being very numerous. A list of them is drawn up, and gift-buying progresses steadily until the middle of December.

This Year's Gifts

Carlin presents are ordered from organizations and enterprises in which Her Majesty is specially interested. In this way a double purpose is served; the Queen gets the things she desires, and the same time, Needlework guides, for example, have been helped in that manner. It is stated that up to £3,000 is spent on Christmas presents by King George and Queen Elizabeth each year, that estimate may be exceeded for royal gifts are not immune from the increased prices applying today, nor are they exempt from the Government tax on luxury goods.

In consequence, rather more presents given by the Royal Family are likely to be home-made, particularly those given by Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. The gifts will lose none of their value for this reason; on the contrary, they will be prized all the more.

On some occasions in the past, Queen Elizabeth has given water-colour pictures to her close friends at Yuletide—pictures by herself in her teens. She executed a considerable number of Scottish scenes when she lived at Glamis Castle, and though she treasures these paintings highly, she has presented a number of them at Christmas-time.

Secret Choice

Our Royal Family's Christmas gift programme is something of a joint affair. Hints and tips, about articles which individual members covet, are passed on secretly. News about where these things can be obtained is similarly exchanged.

In conversation last year, King George casually remarked that his collection of Empire postage stamps lacked a certain important but rather rare specimen. His remarks gave the Duchess of Gloucester an idea for a Christmas gift.

The help of other members of the Royal Family was enlisted, and due course a dealer was found who had a good example of the missing stamp in stock. It was given to the surprised King at Christmas, by the Duchess.

One Yuletide gift custom associated with our Royal Family, and which it is hoped the coming year will enable to be revived on something like its old-time scale, is the annual Christmas tree erected at Sandringham. A huge Christmas tree from the estate is set up in the servants' hall, and is loaded with gifts for everyone.

On Christmas Eve, the King and Queen, together with all the other members of the Royal Family who have come to Sandringham, attend the distribution. They assist in removing the presents and hand them personally to the recipients.



Christmas Masquerade by C.C. CUDNEY

Michael Parker slid into his Santa Claus suit with a groan. It had been a long, hard day and the stretch from seven o'clock to nine remained before the big department store would close.

Seated on his throne, he glanced resignedly down the long line approaching him. It was then that he saw her. The sight made him choke with emotion and his voice trembled when he spoke to the youngsters. Her turn came at last, and he took her on his knee as he had done the others. "What's your name, little girl?" he asked in his gruffest voice.

"Marianne Parker," she answered softly. "What would you like for Christmas?" The answer was given instantly. "A doll and a carriage and . . . uh . . . skates." Marianne hesitated and poked a finger in Santa's padded stomach. " . . . is it real?" she asked.

Michael Parker had no answer to this and she looked up into his face. Suddenly she burst into tears. He longed to tear off his fake whiskers and tell her that everything would be all right now. But instead he said, "What's the matter, Marianne?"

"I want my daddy to come home," she sobbed. "I want that more than a doll or anything else." "Well, that's a pretty large order," said Santa, "but I'll see what I can do. On the brisk night air Michael Parker regretted having fought with Wilson. The incident was etched across his memory, as it had a thousand times in the past . . . weeks. After months of studying and planning, he had gone to Wilson, the plant manager with a sense that was surefire for speeding up plane production. Wilson was brusque. "You stick to your engineering," he said. "I'll worry about production."

After telling Wilson, among other things, that he was the plant's biggest bottleneck, Parker went home. Bitter and restless, he had gone away three weeks ago, telling Elsie,

"Letty," he said, "it's Larry!"

her knight had wearied of waiting. Now she was going shopping for a family that had never been hers except in her thoughts. A plain little girl with pigtails and freckles, and a sturdy small boy with pudgy hands and round expectant eyes.

She wondered what Larry Haines was doing. Poor Larry! She wished she might have said "yes" to his persistent wooing. The girl with whom he had run off had not bothered to make a decent home for herself. Finally they had moved from town and Miss Letty had quite lost track of them.

Recalling that she had come to town to pretend, she made a frenzied dash to the toy department. She began to buy recklessly, getting into the spirit of the game.

"I'll find someone to give them to," she thought. Maybe I can borrow a couple of children from an orphanage just for Christmas.

On the way home she stopped to buy a tree and some bright decorations. At the grocer's she gave orders and made the man behind the counter's eyes nearly pop out of his head.

Leaving the store behind, loneliness swept over her. The house would be dark when she got home. Maybe the fire would be out, too. She hurried into the house at dusk. Somebody was there waiting for her on the front veranda of the rambling old mansion. She hastened her steps. A man stepped forward out of the shadows, a child clinging to each hand.

"Letty," he said, "it's Larry!" "Land sakes!" she exclaimed. "You gave me a turn. Come in out of the cold!"

She hustled them indoors, and turned to take a good look as she switched on the lights. It was indeed Larry, older and grayer, but she seemed to know him. "I haven't got much, Letty," he began, "but whatever I've got is yours if you want it."

Still holding the small figure in her arms, she rose to open the door to the kitchen. The house radiated warmth and good cheer. "Fine," she said gently. "Welcome home, children. We'll have baths and supper, and then we'll trim the tree."

Larry's eyes caressed her. "Maybe, if I could get the license we could be married before I go off."

"Maybe we could," Letty murmured, "at Christmas."

"Many's the time I've dreamed of seeing you like that," he said, reaching for one of her hands. She noticed how thin he was. How thin the children were, too, and how inadequate their clothing. "I haven't got much, Letty," he began, "but whatever I've got is yours if you want it."

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Gifts Of Gold by KARIN ASBRAND

"Even today, as in days of old, we are sometimes blessed with gifts of gold."

Miss Letty read the inscription over a life-size picture of the manger scene.

The sight of bright tinsel decorations, the sound of carols, and the smell of holly and fir on the crisp air between stores filled her with a nostalgia that almost un-nerved her.

She had intended to shed twenty years of her life like a worn cloak, forgetting that she had spent her best days making a heaven on earth for her crippled mother so that

her knight had wearied of waiting. Now she was going shopping for a family that had never been hers except in her thoughts. A plain little girl with pigtails and freckles, and a sturdy small boy with pudgy hands and round expectant eyes.

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CARILLON

From gray tower's sleep Wild sounds leap: Bells! Swinging, crying, Ringing, flying Bells! Over the meadows green and sweet, Bells! Over the market and the street, Bells.

From gray tower's sleep Wild sounds leap: Bells! Flying, swinging, Crying, ringing Bells!

HUGE YULE LOG FIRE ONCE THOUGHT TO WARD OFF EVIL

Centuries ago huge fires were built in the great baronial halls in England on Christmas Eve and ser-

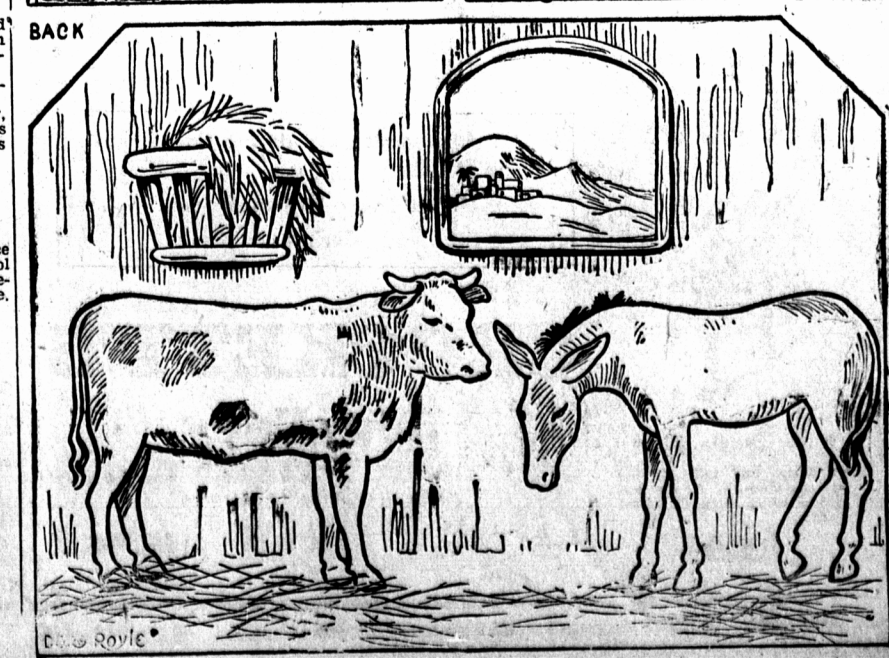
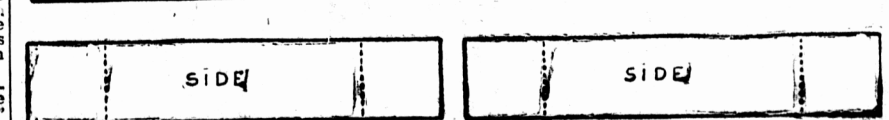
vants brought in a log that was to burn throughout the Christmas feasting. It was customary to save a brand from each year's fire to light the next one with. If the log was properly burned it was believed that the devil was powerless to

do any mischief to the household. One story has it that stockings were originally hung by fireplaces burning Yule logs in order to absorb the odor of the burning wood and thus give the wearer protection from evil.

A STAND-UP CRIB

Pretty Christmas Cut-Out—Easy To Make

Here is a stand-up model of the Christmas Crib which you can make and colour yourself. Cut out the two pictures and the two strips marked SIDE, and paste them all on cardboard. When they are quite dry cut them from the cardboard and colour the pictures with either paints or crayons, using perhaps, grey or brown for the shepherds' clothes, blue for the Virgin Mary and white for St. Joseph. For the flesh parts use a mixture of yellow ochre and red. The outside posts should be dark brown, leaving the snow on the roof white. The picture marked BACK, which is the inside of the stable, should be painted a dark colour, but try to get an effect of starlight through the window by using a watery blue. The cow and the ass may be painted brown and grey, and the hay yellow. When you have finished painting, and your colours are dry, cut away the background in the picture of the Mother and Child, leaving the figures standing out so that you can see behind them. After this has been done cut out the strips marked SIDE and bend the end parts towards you at the dotted lines. Paste these bent bits to the backs of both pictures in the position pointed to by the arrows, so that the model stands up. To make the Crib seem even more realistic, you can put real straw inside and in front of the model.



BOYS

"What would you like for Christmas?"

his wife, that he was out to get a real job.

But no one would take him without a release. As the days passed and he longed intensely to be with his family again but pride would not let him risk failure. Finally, funds running low, he took the job as Santa Claus for the Christmas holidays.

Snow was beginning to fall. Last minute shoppers were thinning out. He walked aimlessly among them, wondering where he could go, knowing that the night of all nights, was out of the question.

Suddenly he remembered the words of a child who had sat on his knee that afternoon. When Michael, as Santa Claus, had asked him what he wanted for Christmas he had replied, "it doesn't matter. Even Christmas doesn't seem to matter any more. I just came here to keep up my mom's spirit." He paused. "There won't be any real Christmas for me until my pop comes home. He's in Africa, you know."

All at once Michael Parker realized that he, not Wilson, was the bottleneck in his arms he murmured, "I've come back the same as I left—a fool, a complete fool!" "Well, not a complete fool," she countered with a smile. "Wilson telegraphed. He wants to know if you can be in Monday morning to supervise the setting up of your new system."

"But how did you know that I'd be here?"

Marianne ran out from her bedroom and threw her arms around his waist. "I told Mother," she announced.

An amused twinkle came into Michael Parker's eyes. "Oh, I see. I suppose you asked Santa Claus to send me home?"

"Well, that's strange. That's exactly what happened." Marianne giggled. "Daddy," she said, "the next time you try to fool anyone you had better cover up that funny little mole between your eyes. I could tell that anywhere."

Hark: The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King, Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled; Join the triumph of the skies, Joyful, all ye nations rise, With the angels host proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Chorus: Hark! the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King.

LOUD WELCOME Spanish settlers brought the custom of hanging Christmas with firecrackers and bonfires. The procedure that surrounds northerners in Louisiana.



Merry Christmas!

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