

Bright Ideas Christmas Traditions

Prayer To The Child Jesus

A Christmas Story By PRUNELLA GAY.

Pamela looked at the little gold watch on her wrist. It was a perfect little timepiece, eight-sided, with tiny little blue hands and figures.

"She regarded it steadily for some minutes, but she was not looking at the time. A bright idea had suddenly struck her.

"Olive," she said to her office companion, "I'm going to raffle my watch.

"Raffle your watch?" gasped the amazed Olive. "Raffle Gerald's present to you? You must be mad."

"Even lunatics have bright ideas sometimes," replied Pamela gaily. "But they often get them into trouble."

"Don't be silly, Olive. This is the brightest idea I've struck. You see, I'm desperately hard up, but I must go to Bournemouth this Christmas to meet Gerald's people.

"That means clothes and fares and presents. But where's the money coming from? Simple, my dear Olive. I just raffle my watch. It's ten to one the person who wins it won't want it, so I buy it back for a couple of pounds and I'm still probably a couple of pounds in pocket."

Her words sunk slowly into Olive's head. "Gosh, that is a bright idea. . . . but supposing the tenth person wins it?"

"Nothing venture, nothing win. I take a chance on that."

Among such a large firm as Parkinsell's, tickets at a shilling a time sold well. It was nearly Christmas, bonuses to the staff were due and the spirit of goodwill was already abounding.

Only one person hesitated to buy a ticket and that was Miss Cramm, secretary to Mr. Jamieson (better known as 'Jamie'), the departmental manager.

"But, Pamela, I've no use for a watch. I've got two already," she argued.

"Then you're due for a third, Crammie. Listen, I'll make a bargain with you. If you win it I'll buy it back for a couple of pounds. It don't really want to part with it."

"O.K., Pamela, you win. Give me No. 17, my lucky number."

Back in her own office once more, Pamela announced proudly: "Olive, I've five pounds seventeen. Dear old 'Jamie' bought five tickets. His wife must be in need of a watch."

"The Christmas place next day and much to Pamela's dismay Mr. Jamieson won it. For the first time in her life Pamela realised that one of her bright ideas had gone wrong and she was near in tears when the merry welcome from him never even offered to sell it back again."

Meanwhile in Bournemouth Gerald Waterson, eligible and good-looking bachelor, was dreaming of a girl in London to whom he had given a little gold watch with the words "Think of me every minute of the day."

It was those words that were ringing in the ears of a rather sad Pamela when she met Gerald at Bournemouth on Christmas Eve, but the merry welcome from him people the log fire and the gay decorations soon brought back her usual high spirits, and on Christmas Day she was the life of the party.

Her card tricks and conjuring feats aroused everybody, and her suggestions for round games and charades poured forth with never-ending variety.

"You're full of bright ideas, my dear," declared Mrs. Waterson with genuine appreciation.

"Sometimes they go wrong," replied Pamela a little wistfully as she remembered the raffled watch. "Now for the Grand Dance," announced Gerald's father.

"May I?" asked Gerald, and Pamela and he danced together. The "spot" was beneath the mistletoe. That meant a kiss as well as the prize for Pamela, who, with Gerald, happened to be beneath it when the music stopped.

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated, The bird of dawn singeth all night long; And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad; The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike, No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm; So hallow'd and so gracious is the time. —Hamlet.

The growth of Christmas tradition and legend has never ceased since the Fifth Century, when the birth of Christ was first generally celebrated. Each nation has had its own native customs and has added those of other countries as well as abstracting and modifying until the complex ritual of our traditional Christmas has grown up.

The little children of the world have possessed many miraculous virtues; they called it "All-Heal." The Scandinavians dedicated it to their Goddess of Love, Friga, whence probably arises the custom of kissing under the mistletoe. The superstitious believe that a maiden who is not kissed under the mistletoe will not marry during the ensuing year.

The Christmas tree, decorated with its glittering tinsel and shining lights, is a more recent addition to the custom of tradition, probably originating in Germany, although one tradition has it that the Christmas tree had its origin in Egypt at a period long before the Christian era.

The palm tree is supposed to put forth a branch every month and a spray of this tree with 12 shoots on it was used in Egypt at the time of the winter solstice as a sign of the year completed. German writers mention the Christmas tree as early as 1605.

Prince Albert, the German duke, the first to introduce the Christmas tree as early as 1840. The health of friends in the spiced wine drunk at Christmas time in medieval days. It was a spiced and sweetened drink served in huge bowls with roasted apples floating in it.

These old customs and others have survived although time has brought changes in them. And so it is that at Christmas quaint customs are followed by a composite of lore, legend and tradition from many lands, indicative by this very fact of the universality of the Christmas spirit. "On Earth peace, good-will toward men."

Immortal Mistletoe The use of mistletoe comes to us from the Druids, who believed from its immortality that the plant possessed many miraculous virtues; they called it "All-Heal." The Scandinavians dedicated it to their Goddess of Love, Friga, whence probably arises the custom of kissing under the mistletoe. The superstitious believe that a maiden who is not kissed under the mistletoe will not marry during the ensuing year.

O tiny Babe in Bethlehem's crib, With chubby, hallowed Hands, And eyes that see adown the years Our war-torn, troubled lands, O raise those blessed Hands and grant That warfare here may cease; See not our sinful, hardened hearts, Forgive and give us Peace. ELIZABETH ELLIOTT

Christmas Customs

Until James I ascended the throne the chief Yuletide dish was a boar's head, but James hated pork, and English courtiers who wished to retain his favor were obliged to abandon their favorite dainty and seek a substitute. They were fortunate to find one ready to hand in the turkey, which had been introduced during the sixteenth century and had already attained considerable favor at minor festivities.

The first English collection of Christmas carols was published in 1521. The Christmas custom of "bringing in the boar's head" dates back to the Druids, whose deity, Freya, the goddess of peace and plenty, rode a golden boar.

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 6th, when the Wise Men brought their gifts to the baby Jesus.

"Noel" is the French equivalent for the word "Christmas." The old folks and the youngsters join In play and merry jest, Or in the singing of the songs That crowd the Christmas Day. But still to hearts whose love and faith Because the Mem'ries that they bring Are like a golden ray Luminating all the happy hours That crowd the Christmas Day.

My Christmas Gift Gay Christmas thoughts crept o'er my placid mind And left with me fond memories of the past. With brief veracity they chased me back To other days, scenes of another kind. Could I a wish express and would it be A gift of holly or December gems? The lapis lazuli and turquoise blue Or gift of that cool silver on the tree? Intrinsic gold came of modern skill The lure of thousands and the pride of Kings, Inciting to the eye my heart strings yield Yield to a dull emotion void of thrill. All these, and more could any gift outshine Save where warm sentiment outlives the dress. My choice again is in the dreamy past. Give me a Christmas day of olden time. Gay Christmas thoughts crept o'er my placid mind And left with me fond memories of the past. —D. A. LOUISE BIRCH

Those Happy Hours CHRISTMAS The old folks and the youngsters join In play and merry jest, Or in the singing of the songs That crowd the Christmas Day. But still to hearts whose love and faith Because the Mem'ries that they bring Are like a golden ray Luminating all the happy hours That crowd the Christmas Day. Far, far away is Bethlehem, And years are long and dim Since Mary held the holy Child And angels sang to Him, But still to hearts whose love and faith Make room for Christ in them. He come again, the Child from God To find His Bethlehem. —W. Russell Bowie

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CHRISTMAS CAROLS

The word carol was originally a term for a dance, or for songs intermingled with dancing. Afterwards, it came to signify festive songs, particularly such as were sung at Christmas.

In England the practice of singing Christmas carols was widely spread as early as the fifteenth century, to which date belong many of the carols printed in the collections of Ritson, Wright and Sandys. Some of these ancient carols—"Cherry Tree Carol," the "Carol of St. Stephen" and others—preserve curious legends that have descended from a remote past. Unfortunately, many of the traditional carols are not extant in early manuscript copies, and were greatly corrupted when they found their way into print.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a Birmingham publisher, T. Bloomer, did good service by issuing (in broadside form) all the carols that came to his notice. The first printed collection of carols came from the press of Wynkyn de orde in 1521. A unique fragment of it is extant, containing the famous "Boar's Head Carol" which is still sung at Queen's College, Oxford, on Christmas Day.

Another collection, of which

only a fragment has come down, printed by Richard Kile, appeared about 1550. In Ravenscroft's Melismata (1611) is found the carol "Remember O thou Man" with musical accompaniment; and there are well-known carols of a somewhat later date among the Roxburghe Ballads.

Besides the sacred carols that were sung in the open air there were jovial carols that were sung at Christmas feasts. A small black-letter collection of these pieces was published in 1642, another in 1661, another is undated, and a fourth appeared in 1688. These collections, which are of the highest quality, contain curious specimens of the songs that were sung by shepherds and ploughmen at Christmas in farm houses.

The Puritans did their best to discourage carol singing; but the practice revived at the Restoration, and continued throughout the eighteenth century. Hone, writing early in the nineteenth century, predicted that in the course of a few years Christmas carols would be heard no more. His prediction has not been fulfilled; but for some time past it has been a growing practice to sing carols in churches instead of in the open air, and the quaint carols of old days are in consequence falling out of remembrance.

Christmas Jokes

Clerk: "Is it a tie for a gentleman you require, madam?" Lady (shopping at Christmas): "Oh, no, it's for my husband."

Customer (heatedly): "Do you know there was a fly in the Christmas cake I bought the other day? I want you to exchange it for another."

Shopkeeper: "Certainly, madam. If you return the fly I will give you a currant in its place."

Father: "I hope you liked your Christmas dinner, Tommy. Did you not all you wanted?" Tommy (choked): "I should say not, dad."

"Because if I'd had all I wanted, I should have eaten up a Christmas pudding, a turkey, two ducks, ten sausages, eighteen apples, two pounds of nuts, five pears, sixteen oranges, three pounds of dates, two pounds of prunes and a dozen bottles of ginger ale."

"The dreams you most deeply cherish. The hopes you would have come true. May the Christmas season in passing Leave as a gift for you."

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