

SANTA'S NO ONE-NIGHT SHOW

Christmas Candles Have Been Used By Many People

It would be astonishing, indeed, if no candles appeared in homes throughout the nation on Christmas Eve. The legend which surrounds the custom is believed to have started in Ireland.

There on Christmas Eve a large candle was burned which could be snuffed out only by one named Mary. As the Irish put it: "Who knows, on some Christmas Eve, Jesus and Mary and Joseph may come again, not to Palestine but to the Holy Isle on the farthest edge of Europe?"

Their first use for Christmas is not recorded in the annals of any nation, but that the "Christ Child Candle", burned in the window on Christmas Eve is, according to an old legend, placed there to light His way if He makes an earthly visitation and atonement for the night of His birth when there was no room for Him.

Also among the legends is one about bayberry candles burned on Christmas. During the early history of our country, animal fats were relatively scarce. The branches of the bayberry shrub were covered with wax-giving berries and children were given the task of gathering the berries when candles had to be made so that the animal fats could be conserved.

According to tradition, one who burned a bayberry candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, would have long life and a happy one.

An old verse reads: "To learn you luck for the year they say, Burn a bayberry dip on Christmas day. If the flame burns bright and the light shines clear, Good luck will be yours throughout the year."

ing of January 5, for the convenience of La Befana, an old woman dressed in rags and riding a broom-stick who comes with ashes for the bad, gifts for the good.

Shoes are put out in Spain, too, but it's the Three Kings or the Three Wise Men who arrive in the dark hours of January 5 to distribute toys and goodies after the small fry, weary of dancing to tambourines and singing Nativity songs, are sound asleep.



In Holland, St. Nicholas visits the Dutch children with his little servant, Black Pete.

Many a Canadian child, settling down in bed on Christmas Eve, will wonder anxiously—like generations of small fry before him—how Santa Claus and his reindeer can possibly circle the globe in one short night, and how he can manage to slide down the chimney of every child in the world in the few hours between stocking hanging and wake-up time.

Junior Canada, as well as answerless parents, can relax. Santa's task isn't quite so formidable as it seems. This jolly old saint who gladdens the heart of children at the Yule season is a creature of many guises, and his is not a one-night show. He has, in fact, from December 6 to January 6 to make his benevolent rounds. Among the first children visited by the gift-giver are the youngsters of Holland and Belgium. They reach their peak of excitement in the first few days of December, in anticipation of the feast day of St. Nicholas.

By Anne Larsen
duct of each child during the foregoing year.
His arrival is announced by a shower of sweets on a clean sheet that has previously been spread in readiness upon the floor. As the children scramble for the treats, he enters, accompanied by his little servant, Black Pete, who holds a sack and a rod for the naughty.
After delivering warnings or praises, according to the individual, Santa takes his leave, promising to return when infant eyes are closed fast in sleep.
This he does leaving gifts in the wooden shoes that have been set out carefully on window sill or hearthstone, and taking care to remove the straw and carrots that thoughtful children have left in their footwear for St. Nick's hungry white horse.
In France, too, gifts are left in shoes, except in this country it is Petit Noel (the Christ Child), or Bonhomme Noel (Father Christmas), who rewards deserving little ones. In the small villages, children carry little candle-lighted creches through the streets.

King Richard's Christmas Feasts

Once upon a medieval Yuletide, King Richard III of England celebrated at Litchfield—and during the festivities 2,000 oxen and 200 tons of wine were consumed.

Of course, the jadal set-up provided the great lords with the wherewithal for magnificence—the lords received gifts from their tenants and kings received gifts from their nobles; and the graduated scale for giving and receiving was as well ascertained as the quiddam honorarium of any barrister or physician.

Queen Elizabeth received a large part of her wardrobe as gifts from her courtiers, and if the quality or quantity were not satisfactory, the donors were unceremoniously informed of the situation.

When Henry III entertained a thousand knights, peers, and assorted nobles who came to attend the Yuletide marriage of the Princess Margaret, His Majesty received a royal Christmas gift of 2,700 pounds, plus 600 fat oxen from the Archbishop of York.

With similar assistance, whether exhorted or given in the spirit of

generosity appropriate to the season, His Majesty could well afford to give Christmas feasts for the poor like the one given in Westminster Hall in 1243, which lasted a week.

Striving to outdo his predecessors and give his successors something to shoot at, Henry VIII kept one Yuletide at which the cost of gold cloth that was used amounted to 600 pounds alone. He had tents erected and artificial gardens plotted within the spacious hall of his palace. Knights came out of the tents to joust in tournaments and fantastically dressed dancers, covered from head to foot with gay ribbon streamers, emerged from the gardens to entertain the guests.

Preparation for the feasting on such occasions is perfectly appalling to epicures of the 20th century—and can only be vaguely comprehended by considering that Richard II normally employed 2,000 cooks to prepare food for the 10,000 persons who dined—irrespective of special feasting—at his expense every day.

Letters To 'Santa Claus' Come From World Over

Postoffice officials in Santa Claus, Ind., are accustomed to overloaded sacks of mail during the pre-Christmas rush. Senders want their cards and gifts stamped with the famous Santa Claus postmark, plus thousands of wistful letters "Santa Claus, Santa Claus, Ind."

And, then there is the annual crop of "Santa Claus" letters written by youngsters in far away places who haven't heard about Santa's permanent address in Indiana, U.S.A. At least a dozen versions of the time honored note-in-the-bottle story find their way into metropolitan newspapers every year.

The notes, sealed in small bottles and securely tied to Christmas trees, are discovered by Christmas tree dealers, housewives, and even enlisted men in naval centers and military barracks; they come from places like Rensou, a village in New Brunswick, Canada, boasting a total population of 83 inhabitants.

The notes range from the wistful to the desperate, requesting such things as a mamma doll, a sled, a sweater, or a pair of over-shoes.

A Real Christmas After All

(By Dorothy Boys Killian)

"This household is in in for a lean Christmas, all right," Bill Robinson said bitterly to his wife who had just come into the living room, dressed for marketing. Seated in an easy chair, he looked disgustedly down at his still-banded leg stretch out straight on an ottoman.

Margaret leaned over and brushed her cheek against his. "You're enough for us to see you getting well again, honey. When I first saw you after that auto accident I was plumb scared for your life." Bill squeezed her hand. "You're



"What a swell bunch of fellows," he managed to say.

a brick, dear. But we can't expect our three- and five-year-old offspring to understand that doctor and hospital bills have completely stripped us. Why can't even afford a tree, let alone presents."

Margaret was quiet for a second. Then she stood up and, turning toward the door, said, "Speaking of the children, Bill, they're out in the kitchen with their water colors, and the two little Johnson girls are with them. Mrs. Johnson had some last minute shopping to do, and I knew you wouldn't mind watching them answered. "That's the least I can do after the neighborly way they treated us through all this mess."

"I'll try to be home before your Cub Scout group descends upon you. Seven lively boys are a terrific handful, I know."

Voices from the kitchen broke into the silence. Judy Johnson was saying excitedly, "I think I'm going to get a doll buggy."

Back came his own little Margie's answer. "I'm going to get a doll house."

"How do you know?" "Oh, because I asked for one for my birthday last summer, and Daddy smiled and said probably one would come at Christmas."

"Bill winced. It had been so easy, promising things for six months ahead. Just then he heard Mrs. Johnson's hearty voice at the kitchen door. "Where's Mr. Robinson? I have something here for him."

"Oh, a Christmas tree!" The shrill voice of a child exclaimed. Mrs. Johnson was laughing as she appeared at the living room door. "Did you hear, Bill? Yes, I went shopping for our tree, and picked up one for you folks at the same time. It isn't so very tall, but it's big enough to cheer you all up."

Mrs. Johnson went on talking to cover Bill's embarrassment. "I'll take all the youngsters over to my house for awhile." And she was gone.

"Some neighbor!" Bill glowered. "Still," his face clouded over. "That tree may only point up the lack of much under it—"

A loud commotion at the front door drew his attention. "Come or in, the door's not locked," he called, recognizing the voices of his Cub Scouts.

A whirlwind of blue-clad boys swept into the room, their eyes sparkling with happy mischief. "Oh, Mr. Robinson," the smallest one shrieked. "We've just finished all the—"

"We've been working after school every day at my house, making toys for your children," a second Cub barked in. "You should see—a doll house for Margie, and a doll bed and a kitchen cupboard!"

"And for little Bill, guess what!" The smallest boy couldn't keep quiet. "A wooden sled, and a garage for his little cars and some big blocks, all sanded and waxed and everything!"

Bill tossed his head to get rid of the drops of mist in the corners of his eyes. "What a swell bunch of fellows," he managed to say. "But why—"

"Why not?" the biggest Cub said happily. "You're the one who taught us how to use tools in the first place, aren't you? And besides, we just like to see you and Margie, suddenly, embarrassed."

"Well, fellows," Bill said, after a deep breath. "I certainly didn't think so a while ago, but this is going to be one of the happiest Christmases of my life!"

CURRIER AND IVES CARDS

Commercial production of Christmas cards in the United States began about 1835 with the founding and developing of the partnership of Currier and Ives in New York.

For more than a century American painters have aided the industry by painting Christmas themes on order or by selling reproduction rights to art which is now conservatively estimated as worth \$10,000,000 annually.

The favorite Nativity theme is represented by hundreds of interpretations. Winter scenes are next in popularity, some of them dating back to the Puritans of New England, the German forests whence St. Nicholas emerged, and even to the Druids of pre-Christian England.

Lucia Day Starts Christmas Season In Swedish Custom

(By Maud McCurdy Welch)

Meredith Harris, known as Merry, sat at her desk in the big insurance office and fought back the tears.

A voice startled her. "Why are you here working? Are you crying?"

It was Hugh Mallory, the agency head. Merry said, "Just finishing up. Everybody's in such a hurry."

"It's Christmas Eve. Let everything go," Hugh started to his office. Merry's eyes followed his tall figure. She liked him very much.

He turned back. "You didn't tell me why you were crying."

"It's nothing. My sister and her family have gone to California. I guess I...I'm lonely."

"That may be my good luck," he said surprisingly.

He was alone, too, he explained. His sister-in-law who had looked after his little daughter since the death of his wife four years ago, had left unexpectedly. His Aunt Amanda was still with them, but she was getting old. There was no one to do the things to make a little girl happy. Would Meredith help him?

It took them three hours to finish shopping. At seven o'clock, Hugh's luxurious car turned on the drive of an imposing house.

A little girl sat in a big chair looking lonely. She held out her arms and cried a little. "We're not going to have a Christmas tree or anything."

Hugh Mallory swung his little daughter up in his arms. "Oh, yes, we are." He put her down. "This is Miss Meredith Harris. She's going to see to everything."

Christmas Eve had ever had the most beautiful tree. But Merry's gift was best of all. A beautiful Siamese kitten.

After the presents had been distributed, Merry and Dee sat in a big chair. Dee stroking the kitten's head. "How did you know I wanted a kitten more'n anything?"

"Because I was a little girl once myself."

Hugh went uptown on an errand in the later afternoon. Soon after a handsome woman in rich furs and jewels came in.

"Aunt Hilda, you...came back?" "Yes, Dee, I know my duty, even if your father and I..." Hilda broke off, staring at Mary. "Who's this?"

"It's Miss Merry Christmas... that's what I call her. She fixed my beautiful tree, did everything." Hilda looked at Merry coldly. "You can go now. And take that cat with you. They're full of germs."

"No...No!" Dee cried in anguish. But Hilda tore the cat from her, thrust it in Merry's arms. The next thing Merry had been ushered out the front door.

She went to her small apartment, sat down in a chintz chair, holding the kitten. "Well, after all, it was fun even if it is over," she confessed tearfully to the cat.

But it wasn't over. Two hours later Hugh Mallory knocked on her door. "I hunted through a hundred office files for your address and I found you at last." Merry was flushed. "Your sister-



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