



Christmas Season Brings Happiness To Thousands

BY JAMES C. RAIT.

No day in all the year fills the heart of each one with such joy, such happiness and such tendencies as Christmas. Our fire of generous impulses burns at its highest. For one day in the 365 we feel toward our fellow-men as we should; everywhere the "Peace on earth, good-will to men" rings out.

Though some people today feel that we are losing the proper vision of Christmas and that it is fast depreciating into a mere commercial affair, an affair of give and take, and the giving for the sake of receiving, yet Christmas is still a hallowed day, even if we but consider the pure pleasure this day brings to the thousands of children throughout the land, and the comfort it brings to those who are not so fortunate or are not blessed with much of the comforts this earth has to offer—even, I say, if we but consider these two features of this day, it more than overbalances any commercialism that may have entered into it, for this pleasure, this comfort, this pity is given in honor of Him whose birthday it is.

Synonymous with Christmas is Santa Claus, the friend of little children, and if we older people would only let him, he would be the friend of grown-ups as well. I shudder to think of the terrible catastrophe were Santa Claus to suddenly cease to exist. Think of the acute disappointment to the thousands upon thousands of little children who look for him eagerly for months before his scheduled day. Imagine their disappointment on Christmas morning when their requests to Santa did not materialize and you will agree with me that it would be a dreadful calamity to the human race.

Santa Claus exists. Some who read this might say, "But you know there is no Santa Claus." You're wrong; there is a Santa Claus. He lives just as surely as the love of a mother for her child lives, just as surely as the devotion of the patriot, as the zeal of the martyr. Yes, it's impossible to see Santa Claus, but that does not prove his non-existence. We cannot see any of the virtues, but we know they live and no greater virtue exists than that which brings happiness to the children of the world.

Santa Claus. Where did the name

come from? Back in the third century there was born in Panthera, a town in Syria, Asia Minor, a boy who became a priest at an early age. This boy eventually became bishop of Myra, and was later known as Saint Nicholas, the most popular saint in all Christendom. It is said of St. Nicholas that in passing an inn he entered, went into the cellar, stood before a tub in which were the dismembered bodies of three boys whom the robber innkeeper had murdered, and called them back to life. Thus St. Nicholas has always been the patron saint of all school boys.

Another story of St. Nicholas deals with his generosity. St. Nicholas, being born of wealthy parents, eventually possessed great wealth, and in his home town, Panthera, lived a rich noble who had lost all his money. This noble had three daughters of marriageable age, but lack of money for their dowries had kept them in "single blessedness."

Covers Entire Globe.

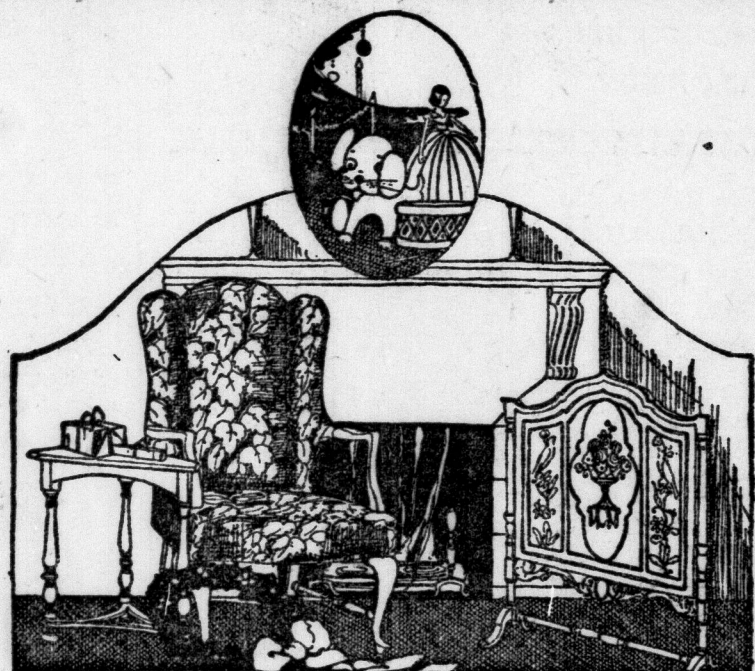
St. Nicholas, who heard of this, threw a well-filled purse of money through an open casement at the noble's home. This purse took his eldest daughter off his hands. On two other occasions further purses were thrown through convenient open windows, and so the three daughters were married and lived happy ever after.

Trees Become Popular.

More homes every year are having their gaily-decorated fir trees on which are hung the gifts for each member of the family. It might be interesting to learn that we are indebted to Germany for this important feature of this season. While the origin goes away back to the days of Egypt, the Christmas tree as we know it is of more recent date. In the city of Strasburg, during the sixteenth century, the practice as we have it now was quite common. About two hundred years later the custom spread along the Rhine, and in the nineteenth century it became a common practice in Germany. It was, however, until the beginning of the twentieth century that its practice became universal. A few years has made it the most popular of all Christmas customs, so that today it has been adopted throughout the entire Christian world, having about thrown into the discard the old custom of the stocking in which we used to take so much delight when we were youngsters not so many years ago.

I have rambled on, saying little

about what Christmas really represents, as most of us know the story of the manger. What I have endeavored to do is to answer the question my boys have asked me over and over again during the last few weeks. And if your children are also seeking the truth as to the reality of their Christmas friend, I hope you will strive to correct the false notion of those who think they know better, and say with assurance, "Yes, there is a Santa Claus."



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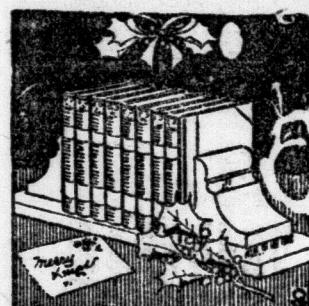
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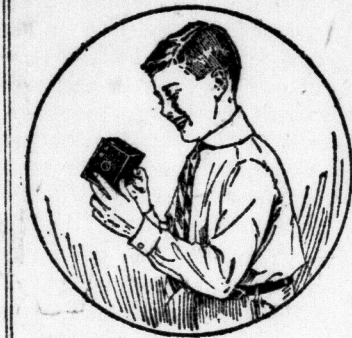
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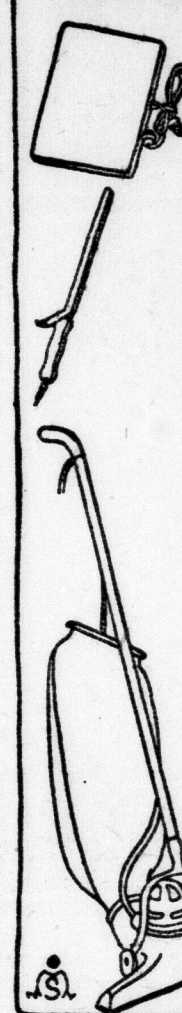


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