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More stimulants give only fictitious help and are followed by a reaction that leaves one worse than before.

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The King

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Christmas on the Sea of Marmora

By Demetra Kenneth Brown.



WONDER whether Christmas to a child of the West can mean as much as it did to us Greek children of the East, living on the island of Prinkipo in Turkey, or at least as it did to me. Even as I recall it now there comes a thrill to my heart and a lump in my throat.

We used to fast for several weeks before Christmas, though if any one had asked me I should have said that we had not eaten meat for months. The house had been cleaned from top to bottom, till the windows shone like diamonds, and the unpainted wooden floors were white from much scrubbing, and even the ikons had been taken from their ikonostases and washed with vinegar and water.

At last, when it seemed as if time would never move on, Christmas was actually at hand. Even my little Turkish slave, Kamile—although she had not been fasting—caught the infection, and joyfully announced to me that the prophet was going to be born. (Christ is second only to Mahomet with the Mussulmans.)

The wonderful Christmas eve began the festivities. It was generally cold weather. "Gyro trigyro ta christoug-hena"—"round about Christmas"—as the saying is, the winter begins; but cold and desolate as was the weather, and brown and bare the landscape, all was illumined by the marvel of Christ's birth about to take place, for to our youthful imaginations this was no mere anniversary, but an actual occurrence every year.

From the public ovens had come all the cakes and tarts that looked so good but were not to be tasted until tomorrow, because they were made with butter, which like meat, eggs, and fish, was prohibited to us during the time of fasting. As soon as dusk came the houses everywhere were lighted up, while the excitement became so intense that we walked about on tiptoe, and hardly dared to speak.

Presently, from afar, we began to hear weird music, and my heart nearly suffocated me with its beating. "They are coming!" I shouted, "oh! please, they are coming!"

For an hour I had been ready for them, and now I rushed down to the big hall where they would appear. There I sat on a high chair, surrounded with packages of eatables, and in my lap I held a box, which, as I remember it, contained inexhaustible thousands of small coins. The music came ever nearer, till it stopped at the door, and a boyish voice asked, "Na ta poume?" ("Shall we say it?")

The door to the big hall swung open, and five or six little boys came in. They were the Christmas troubadours, fantastically dressed, and carrying odd, home-made musical instruments: the *drabouka*, which is an earthenware drum, beaten at both ends; a kind of reed pipe, moved in front of the mouth like a harmonica; and a rude zither. The biggest of the troubadours carried a lantern, and a bag on the end of a stick.

"Good-evening," they said. Too excited to speak, I waved my hands at them. Then they began to sing the legend of Christ, while I joined in, at first timidly, then, exalted, with all my might. When they were through, they came to me, and some kissed my hand as I put into their bags one of the packages of eatables, and gave each of them a penny from my fathomless box of coin.

As soon as they had gone I began to strain my ears for the sound of others. Presently I again heard music on the air, and then a second band appeared, to go through the same performance, with the same words to the same little monotonous tune. This kept up for

several hours, and by bed-time I was in a religious fervor that nothing less than martyrdom would have assuaged.

It was a long time before I could get to sleep, yet before daybreak I was awake again, for the streets were filled with the clangor of iron on iron, as men ran along beating one iron bar with another to awaken everybody to go to church. The church bells also were ringing with a certain cadence used only for great festivities. I sprang out of bed and was dressed by lamp-light, putting on my very best clothes, a new gown made for the occasion, with new shoes, new stockings, and a new hat; for besides being Christmas day it was also one of the four communion days of the Eastern Church.

A man servant carried me on his shoulder to church, bearing a lantern in one hand, the streets boasting no municipal lighting. Behind the family the servants all followed in silence, the click-click of their wooden galoshes being the only sound. We were all too excited and overwhelmed with joy to speak.

The church was beautifully decorated with laurel leaves, and illumined by the light of a thousand candles in their chandeliers of prismatic glass. We entered crossing ourselves, and bought a few slender candles, which we lighted before the ikon of St. Nicholas, our patron saint; for each family has its patron saint, and you grow up in the atmosphere of special love and reverence for that one. Thus every one who came into the church lighted his candle.

The service was long, but the Gregorian chanting, the priests dressed in their festival garments, woven of gold and silver thread, with their long curls floating over their shoulders, and all the rest of the rich ceremonial, so took hold of our senses that we stood during the entire service with no feeling of fatigue.

On such a festal day as this the priests entered the church from one door of the altar, carrying on their heads the vessels of the communion; and, preceded by torch-bearers and incense-bearers, who walk backward, they made the round of the church, amid low singing. After the torch and incense-bearers had passed, I, together with several other delicate children, was laid at full length on the marble floor, in order that the priests might step over us and that their garments might brush us. After this procession the word went around that Christ was born; and friends embraced each other, while enemies shook hands and forgave each other in the name of the Divine Child.

The long service ended with the communion, and then we trooped out of the church. By this time it was nearly daybreak, and we could almost see our way without the lanterns. At each of the five doors of the church the bakers were waiting with their delicious hot wares, called *simitia*, like big bracelets, crisp and full of caraway seeds. I bought as many of them as I could string on my arm. I had to give two of them to each of the servants. As they took them from me, they kissed me and said, "M— Child just born help you to grow up into a good woman."

At home a nice chicken broth awaited me, and I partook of it with the gusto which my long abstinence from the taste of meat had given me. Then I hopped back into bed for rest and sleep, in order to be fresh for the next service at ten o'clock.

When I woke up I had lost some of my excitement, but this state of mind did not last long after getting to church, where we were told most eloquently of Christ's life and His teachings. I was so moved that I resolved never again to do a single naughty thing and made up my mind to become an apostle, when I grew up, and to go about teaching Christianity.

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