

Christmas Customs

Written for The Western Home Monthly. By W. R. Gilbert.

AT THE present time when the Lords, good and indifferent, are being calumniated, it may be as well to turn to the carol singers who, of old, sang their praises at Christmastide, and what could be more appropriate at this, should-be-happy season of the year? Jeremy Taylor justly observes that the oldest Christmas carol is the song of the angels on the birth of our Saviour "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will toward men," while one of the oldest of native English carols is to be found in an Anglo Norman manuscript, preserved in the British Museum, from which I may quote several of the translated stanzas:

"Now, Lordlings, listen to our ditty,
Strangers coming from afar,
Let poor minstrels move and pity,
Give us welcome, soothe our care:
In this mansion as they tell us
Christmas wassail keeps today,
And as King and all good fellows
Reigns with uncontrolled sway.

"Lordlings, grant not your protection
To a base unworthy crew,
But cherish with a kind affection
Men that are loyal, good and true.

Chase from your hospitable dwelling
Swinish souls that ever crave:
Virtue they can ne'er excel in,
Gluttons never can be brave."

One of the earliest of the Christmas carols proper is that of "The Boar's Head," which is still sung every Christmas Day at Queen's College, Oxford, while the head itself—soused and decorated—is borne to the principal table in the hall with great state and solemnity: just as at Scottish festivals a Haggis is carried aloft to the sound of the pipes. It was printed in 1521 by Wynkyn de Worde in his "Christmase Carolles," and thus runs:

"The bore's heade in hande bring I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary,
I pray you all synge merrilie
Qui estis in convivio.

"The bore's head I understand
Is the chief service in this land
Loke wherever it be fande
Servite eum cantio.

"Be gladde, lords, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordayne our stewards
To chere you all this Christmase
The bore's head with mustarde."

But the festive spirit of Christmas was better expressed more than a century and a half later in a carol which appeared in "Poor Robin's Almanac" for 1695:

Now thrice welcome Christmas
Which brings some good cheer
Minced pies and plum porridge,
Good ale and strong beer:
With pie, goose and capon;
The best that may be
So well does the weather
And our stomachs agree.

Observe how the chimneys
Do smook all about,
The cooks are providing
For dinner, no doubt,
But those on whose tables
No victuals appear
O, may they keep Lent
All the rest of the year.

The sour-faced Puritans did their best to discourage carol-singing; but the practice revived at the Restoration and fantastic carols of old days are, in consequence, falling out of remembrance, nor do our lugubrious "waits" do much to revive the very pretty canticles of the olden time, seeing that their nocturnal minstrelsy is mainly taken from our hymn books, and is now less inspired by piety than by "filthy lucre." In

ancient times "waits" meant watchmen—they were minstrels just attached to the King's Court, who sounded the watch every night and paraded the streets to prevent depredations. In London the waits are relics of the musicians attached to the City Corporation under that denomination, and they had a cognizance or badge on the arm. Writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hone says, that "preparatory to Christmas the bellman of every parish in London rang the bell at dead midnight, that the worthy masters and mistresses may listen, and be assured by his vocal intonation that he is reading a copy of verses in praise of their several virtues, especially their liberality, and when the festival is over he calls with his bill and hopes to be remembered."

"What O' the Night"

But these practices of the "waits" or watchmen were not confined to London. They were general all over the country. For example at the good town of Bungay, in Suffolk, the watch of the year 1823—eight years after Waterloo—circulated the following sheet headed by the representation of one of them with a lantern in one hand and a bludgeon in the other: A copy of Christmas verses presented to the Inhabitants of Bungay, by their humble Servants the late Watchmen, John Pye and John Tye—which rather

\$125 REWARD

Here are two advertisements, "A" and "B." Which do you consider the best advertisement? and why do you consider it the best advertisement? For the four best answers to these two questions we will award four prizes, no person to receive more than one prize, as follows: First prize, Ideal Brass Bed, complete with Ideal Box Spring and Mattress, retail value, \$60. Second prize, Ideal Iron Bed, complete with Spring and Mattress, retail value, \$35.00. Third prize, Ideal Crib or (option) Ideal Folding Couch, retail value \$20.00. Fourth prize, Ideal Brass Hat Rack, retail value, \$10.00.

CONDITIONS: 1. Answers must be written on one side of paper only. 2. Answers must not exceed 200 words. 3. Must contain the full name and address of the writer. 4. Must contain the full name and address of his or her local furniture dealer. 5. All replies must be received at our offices on or before Dec. 10th and 6. Must be addressed according to the address and street number given in this advertisement. 7. All employees or friends of the employees of the Ideal Bedding Company, J. J. Gibbons, Limited, and the Western Home Monthly barred. The awards will be announced in the Canadian Home Journal, February 1913 number, and by postal to each contestant. The Judges will be W. P. Bennett, Managing Director The Ideal Bedding Co., Limited; J. J. Gibbons, J. J. Gibbons, Limited; W. G. Rook, Publisher of the Canadian Home Journal. SO GET BUSY. Write us in your opinion of both of these advertisements. It may win you a handsome prize for a Christmas present. The awards will be made on Dec 15th and the prizes despatched in time for Christmas. Address all correspondence

THE IDEAL BEDDING CO. LIMITED, 28 Jefferson Ave., Toronto

A

Wouldn't your husband be glad if

you said to him, "John, don't let's waste money on giving each other useless trifles for Christmas—let's buy something substantial for the home."

"I have been thinking how much I would like to fix up a spare bedroom, and I know where I can get the dearest little bed, spring and mattress you ever saw, for as low a price as \$35.00." Of course, he would be glad, and he would be delighted with your thoughtfulness.

The place to get such a dear little three-piece combination set is from any furniture dealer who handles the "Ideal" line of beds and bedding.

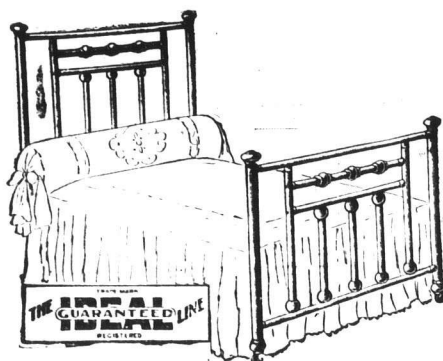
Before you buy any Christmas present you should certainly investigate these "Ideal" combination sets, consisting of an "Ideal" Bed, an "Ideal" Box Spring and an "Ideal" Mattress.

The set is something that will give you pleasure, not only for today, but for years on you will look back with pride and delight to the thoughtfulness which prompted you to buy this magnificent home present at the Christmas Season of 1912.

There is one thing to be careful of

Be sure you get an "Ideal" Bed, an "Ideal" Box Spring and an "Ideal" Mattress. There are imitations about, and while that may flatter us, if you happen to get one of them you will be disappointed.

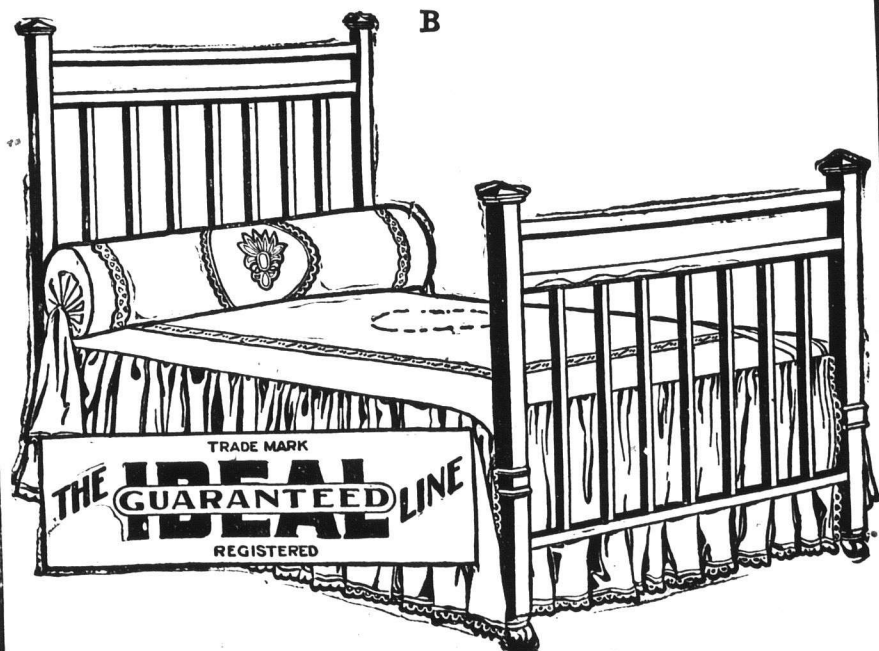
THE IDEAL BEDDING CO. LIMITED
28 JEFFERSON AVENUE, TORONTO



Wouldn't this beautiful "Ideal"

Bed look nice in your home? :: ::

B



THIS "IDEAL" BED

makes an ideal Christmas present. You and your husband couldn't combine and give each other any present that would give you both such pleasure and satisfaction.

You can get a complete outfit consisting of an "Ideal" Bed, Spring and Mattress from your local furniture dealer for \$35.00, but be sure to get an "Ideal" Bed. Otherwise you may be disappointed.

Make a point to ask your dealer his opinion of "Ideal" Beds.

THE IDEAL BEDDING CO. LIMITED
28 JEFFERSON AVENUE, TORONTO