

# North American Notes and Queries

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## A FRENCH-CANADIAN CHRISTMAS

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CHRISTMAS in French Canada is still marked by a number of the old customs brought from Brittany by the early settlers of the country, and the time honored legends of "Noël" that were current three and a half centuries ago in the old home of the French Canadian colonists are repeated in an unchanged form by their descendants of the present day. The children are told on each succeeding Christmas Eve tales of miraculous occurrences, that legend from time immemorial had handed down in the French home of their ancestors. Domestic animals were supposed to have the gift of speech on Christmas Eve, as a memento of their presence in the stable in which Jesus Christ was born, and the little ones are now taken to church at Christmas time, even before they can walk or talk, to see the specially improvised grotto in the interior of the parish church, made to represent the stable of Bethlehem. There is the infant Christ lying in the manger, with Mary and Joseph near by ; but of infinitely more delight and importance to childish fancy, are the ox and the ass in the immediate foreground.

When the farmers in Brittany entered their stables on Christmas Eve in the early centuries of the Christian era, legend says that their cattle told them in doleful accents how they had been cruelly used, half-starved and ill-treated. On that night, too, the sands of the seashore, lofty mountain ridges and deep valleys opened out and revealed to the starry heavens treasures concealed in