

happier days when his faith in St. Nicholas had been supreme and his enjoyment of the festivities was not marred by worldly care. It is truly the season when the bonds of friendship bridge the gulf made and widened by the afflictions and troubles of the year gone by. At other seasons we derive much of our pleasure from the beauties of nature—the spring brings us a promise which the summer fulfills with its variegated colors, and in the fall, we gaze with wonder at the grandeur of summer's fading glories,—but winter with its snow, ice, and leafless trees is forbidding without the spirit of Christmas.

Primarily, the feast was a spiritual one and gave rise to many beautiful ceremonies. In Rome, the Nativity of Our Lord is enacted annually with an attention to detail and a magnificence nowhere else equalled. The very surroundings, the volumes of light and incense, the beautiful strains of music, the presence of the dignitaries of the Church in such numbers, the multitude of people, are enough to awe and inspire even an infidel with the sacredness of the time.

The Belgians hold a procession on Christmas Eve in which the female part of the population takes the most prominent part. Very small boys with exceptional beauty are dressed to resemble the Christ-Child leading a lamb, St. John the Baptist, and other great saints. This procession is preceded by children who scatter flowers and squares of colored paper in such profusion that the roughly-paved road is soon hidden. Now, too, one is able to glimpse relics and other valuables belonging to the churches which are well-nigh inaccessible at any other time of the year. The coloring and grouping gives a marvellous effect; the girls are divided into platoons or groups, which has its distinctive color, each group accompanying some banner or relic carried by one of their number. To this ribbons are attached, one for each girl. The chanting of these hundreds of voices pierced occasionally by the shrill treble of the children, makes this ceremony very impressive.

Other countries have similar processions, as Peru, where statues and portraits are carried about until midnight when all go to the church and attend the services. The Russians also parade but theirs borders more on the material than the spiritual. Whenever this immense body of people passes the home of one of the nobility coppers are thrown to them as a token of good-will. Xmas hymns and carols are sung lustily all along the line of march.

Ireland and Scotland whose people are sprung from Celtic stock, have done much towards making this feast universal. Both