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YULE IS TIME FOR CUSTOMS

As the world grows smaller, Christmas observances in different countries grow more similar. Santa Claus in red suit and white beard drives his reindeer-drawn sleigh to North, Central and South America and to many other countries as well.

In fact, when the first explorer lands of Mars, he shouldn't be too surprised to discover that Santa, and even Rudolph, got there. Sharing of Christmas customs, however, only serves to point up the fact that this is a holiday for everyone, and a holiday which draws ideas from all lands and times, uniting them in both religious and secular observances of the season.

In Mexico—

Celebrating the posada is a Mexican custom focused on the Nativity.

"Posada" means "lodging" or "inn," and for the nine "posada" days from December 16-25, churches, hotels, social groups and families throughout Mexico act out the story of the nativity.

A procession of pilgrims comes to the place where the celebration is scheduled. They carry clay figures of Mary and Joseph, and they seek shelter from the "innkeepers" within.

At first the innkeepers refuse, then they admit the pilgrims to feast and rejoice. Figures representing Mary and Joseph are placed in a replica of the manger. On Christmas Eve, the figure representing Jesus is added.

In Holland—

Gift-giving season in Holland traditionally begins on December 5 and is called "Strooivand" or "strewing night." Children place their shoes by the fireplace, filled with carrots and hay for St. Nicholas' horse—in the expectation that on the morrow the shoes will contain candy, fruit and toys.

In Scotland—

Christmas feast favorites in Scotland include shortbread, a rich cake or cookie, and haggis, a kind of pudding. New Years Eve, or Hog-

manay, is the principal day for gifts and greetings when children go singing from house to house, in hopes of a treat. New Year's visits are paid—and it's customary for the visitors to bring along a pocketful of coal.

In Portugal—

Christmas is the occasion for a family celebration among the Portuguese. Families gather on Christmas Eve for dinner at the home of the oldest living relative. After the children have gone to bed, a crib or creche is placed before the fireplace, and around it are grouped the children's shoes which serve the same function as Christmas stockings.

Remembers Bethlehem

"O Little Town of Bethlehem," a U.S. carol, was written by Episcopal Bishop Phillips Brooks in 1868, while he was rector of Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia.

On a trip to the Holy Land two years earlier, he had seen the "little town of Bethlehem" on Christmas Eve, and the vivid memory of this scene later led to the writing of the carol.

Pay no attention to what critics say. There has never been set up a statue in honor of a critic.

It is in loving—not in being loved—
The heart is blest;
It is in giving—not in seeking gifts—
We find our quest.

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