

# CHRISTMAS AS A TOKEN OF THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY.

## The Quaint Christmas Customs of New Mexico

"CHRISTMAS"—every one should know the meaning of the word, yet how few ever think of it. Christmas, "the mass of Christ"—how often, one might ask, is the day thought of as primarily one for the religious celebration of the anniversary of the Saviour's birth?

It cannot be said that the religious significance of the day has been forgotten; only in modern times a new method has come about for celebrating it. Tradition, that jealous guardian of the past, has kept careful watch over the day. In fact, Christmas day now is such a sweet confusion of conflicting traditions and historical associations that it is hard to distinguish the pagan from the Christian in the original sources of those forms and festivities and beliefs that attach to the 25th of December as it is celebrated today.

Few people, when they behold the feasting and giftmaking and merriment of this season, are aware that a great many of the festivities and social customs of this holiday time are almost wholly derived from pagan or heathen institutions, essentially Christian as the spirit of modern Christmastide may be.

Just at this season of the year the Romans had their saturnalia, which were holidays devoted to boisterous

frost nipped knees among the frozen hills of long ago provided ample reason for thanksgiving and merrymaking.

Up to the fourth century the eastern church recognized the 6th day of January, long known as "Little Christmas," as the time for celebrating both the birth and the baptism of the Christ Child. The great majority of the civilized world, however, has long since unquestioningly accepted the 25th of December, as established by the Roman church, as the day of the Saviour's birth. Since this has been done a skeptic historian or two has attempted to shake the popular belief in this date. But through all the changing centuries man has not allowed the day to change, and it will be a bold iconoclast indeed who would today attempt to take away from the world its firm belief in the accuracy of Christmas day.

It is well known that in Palestine from the middle of December to the middle of February there is a comparatively dry season between the early and the later winter rains, and during this season it was the custom for shepherds to tend their flocks on the plains of Bethlehem. These shepherds it must have been who, 20 centuries ago, saw the new star in the east.

While the church, after the birth of

a holy and beneficent plant, as in fact its colloquial name today of "all heal" still shows, and it was customary to distribute it among the people as something which would guard and protect them during the following 12 months before the next ceremony took place.

But when Christianity became the

the year they were made use of on the day of the anniversary of the birth of Christ. In this the pagan Druid custom and the imported Teutonic custom of putting up the Christmas tree were combined, and green became the popular emblem at Christmastide.

The most beautiful and the most

fill all the world at Christmastide, found their first inspiration on that sweet morning when the angels sang together over the birth of the Holy Child in a humble Judean manger. The spirit of the pagan has been lost in the spirit of the Christian, and the most beloved festivities of the world's greatest and most enduring holy day.

Gift making is the feature of our modern Christmas. Such a practice is full of beautiful significance when one turns back to the gospel according to St. Matthew and reads the old familiar lines about the wise men who came out of the east:

"And they came into the house, and saw the young Child with Mary, his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and, opening their treasures, they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh."

It seems strange nowadays to think of those first Christmas presents and the conditions under which they were given. And it is worth noting that there was a special significance in each thing presented to the Christ Child. They were gifts such as in olden times were usually offered to a king. To the eastern mind of the time gold was the most precious substance in the world.

The Mexicans in the old settlements of New Mexico celebrate Christmas in the most picturesque style. A Christmas at "Old Albuquerque" is like a leaf from the past when the Spaniards held the southwest. The customs of the earliest settlers on this continent have been transmitted through generations, and the picture remains the same, though the characters change. "Old Albuquerque," or "Old Town," is about two miles east of the new Albuquerque, or the "American town." They are as distinct in population and as unlike in appearance as if they were a thousand miles apart. The dividing line is like that of the mingling of rivers of different colored waters. Americans rarely visit the "old town," except on celebration days. The Christmas feast, as it is termed, lasts two or three days, during which there are cocking mains, horse racing, monte and other games, and a fandango each night. On the day preceding Christmas the old town is crowded with visitors from the nearby Mexican settlements, who have arrived early for the round of sports. The stakes are not inconsiderable, and all kinds of games are in full blast—monte, chus (roulette) and chuck-a-luck. The Mexican dealer wears a wide, bell-crowned hat braided with silver and a buckskin jacket, also braided, but more elaborately. He wears a large red sash which supports his pantaloons, and protruding from the sash is the inevitable dagger. The tables are well patronized by men, boys and women. The women are in festive gowns, and, while they are not bet as large sums, they make more noise over their losses. They either accuse the dealers of swindling

want to rob a train or slope with one of the pretty señoritas. This latter naturally arouses the blood of the Mexican, and he brings his bowie knife into action. The orchestra consists of a violin, guitar and a steel triangle. The dances, to an American, are complicated. The figures are pretty, executed with apparent ease, and the steps are graceful and in time with the music. Every "square" dance has in it more or less waltzing.

At the close of the most prominent and hospitable don in the pueblo a "gran danza" is given. This is an invitation affair, but the invitations are freely given, the main object being to exclude curiosity seekers. The most fashionable Spanish dances constitute the programme, such as La Paloma (the Pigeon) and La Jota. This is a very popular dance, as it permits the senior to express his admiration for his fair partner in rhyme as they keep step to the delicious music. In soft, low tones he whispers into her more or less willing ear some love ditty which he has memorized, or, perhaps, worse still, some burning words of his own composition fresh from his heart. The señorita replies in verse, or something that passes for it, for they have all been studying up on love poetry. It is a pretty custom, and the poetry takes the place of much idle gossip. The orchestra is usually a violin, harp and two guitars—the harpists and guitarists being ladies, who are dressed in red or blue silk, with a wide silken scarf to match extending over the bust from the right shoulder to the left side. The ladies do not wear trains in dancing. The Mexicans are artistic and critical, and they like to see good dancing. They watch the movements of the feet, and when the figures are executed with unusual grace a hum of admiration rewards the señorita, and sometimes a couple are applauded with cries of "Eueno!" (Good).

In the meantime the youth of the pueblo have been busy in trying Judas Iscariot. This is an old custom and is always enacted on Christmas eve. A gallows has been built in front of the cathedral, a court organized and the effigy of the arch traitor, Judas Iscariot, is placed on trial for his life. It is a foregone conclusion that Judas will be convicted. Nevertheless counsel is appointed for him. The prosecution easily makes out its case, and Judas is condemned to be hanged. The prosecutor reads what purports to be the last will of Judas and then offers for sale to the highest bidder certain valuable articles supposed to have belonged to the late Iscariot. The order enlivens the auction with remarks on each article. The effects are then placed in a heap and burned. The stuffed effigy of the friendless Judas is dragged around the cathedral amid the gibes, hisses and imprecations of the court and spectators and finally is brought to the gallows and hanged without the benefit of clergy. When Judas has been officially pronounced quite dead, the remains are tied to the tail of a valueless donkey, and the effigy is set on fire. The frenzied donkey makes a circuit of the pueblo with the burning Judas at his heels, much to the amusement of the cruel populace, and finally the frightened animal takes to the woods, and neither it nor Judas, as a rule, is ever again seen.

Next morning, Christmas day, the entire pueblo turns out to early mass, and, a few hours later, to the usual Christmas services, when the church is prettily decorated and the music unusually excellent.

In the afternoon the programme of amusements is resumed.

J. M. SCANLAND.

### A CHRISTMAS CHANCE.

When the Christmas tree has palled, the stockings become a part of the past in which the mythical Santa Claus took a part and the displaying of gifts on the piano with the cards of givers attached becomes a hackneyed custom of declining interest, perhaps a change such as has been adopted successfully in some households may find favor in more. This idea is to hide the gifts. Father and mother do this part, while the other members of the family do the seeking. A letter, presumably from Santa Claus, appears on the mantel Christmas morning, and in it are discovered certain hints, carefully disguised, however, as to the whereabouts of the treasure. Of course, most unlikely places are elected.

In one family an innocent looking barrel of apples that had stood for a long time in the cellar was made to do duty as a gay deceiver, the layer of the apples on the top covering all sorts of gifts, from a typewriter to a tin horn. Again, it having been boasted by the youthful scion of the house that nothing could be hidden without his knowledge, his very bed was chosen, and the hiding done while he slept. His astonishment can be imagined when he learned that he had been lifted bodily in a sound slumber while all sorts of charming Christmas conceits found a resting place under his mattress. Once the dining room table was made to do duty by having a supplementary shelf built under it, in which the gifts were lying, while the young folks wandered everywhere else over the house, and at last sat down to breakfast hopelessly discouraged, despite the very pointed hints in the written guide that they found on the mantelpiece.

Of course, each person can formulate an individual scheme of hiding, according to the furnishing and resources of the house. The novelty of this plan will prove its certain recommendation to those who have tired just a wee bit of the regulation Christmas celebration.

### KRUGER'S SONS AND GRANDSON.

It is said that President Kruger has sent seven sons and 50 grandsons into the Boer army to fight the English in addition to taking the field himself. Fritz Eloff, his great-grandson, bears the courtesy title of "lieutenant" in spite of the fact that he is only 4 years old. The little fellow is passionately fond of guns and horses and looks forward to the day when he can march and fight beside his father, Captain Saral Eloff, who is one of the officers in command of the fortifications at Johannesburg. "Lieutenant" Fritz has been popular alike with the English and the Boers in the Transvaal capital.

### JOHANNESBURG.

Johannesburg is a boom town, but, unlike most cities of like character, it is solidly and permanently built, many of the residences being veritable palaces of granite and marble that would do credit to any of our American cities.

I.  
The gods of old have come and gone,  
Faiths crumbled into dust, and died;  
But He dies not, O Christmas Dawn,  
Who gave the world its Christmastide!

II.  
Oh, He dies not, nor shall He die  
When all our false gods are forgot,  
If we remember, you and I,  
The sweet and gentle life He sought!

hilarity in honor of the mythical king Saturn, who was later deified. Saturn was supposed to have ruled over the golden age, that time looked back upon by the Romans as a period of universal peace and happiness.

These games and rituals of the saturnalia took place every year, beginning on the 17th of December and lasting at first three and then later seven days, which would, of course, carry them through to that evening which is our Christmas eve.

During the saturnalia there was not only general jollification, but, it must be confessed, a great deal of wine was consumed by the Roman populace, and much of the merrymaking descended to rioting. All the usual order of things was upset. Slaves sat at table with their masters, menials were allowed to make jests with or at their superiors, and it was a rule that the wealthy and highborn should wait upon their servants. No one was supposed to take the most outrageous conduct seriously, and no one lost his temper whatever the joke or jest might be. Wine and song and laughter ruled the empire on those days of primitive merrymaking, for it was, in short, an era of good feeling among all people, just as Christmas day, in a more refined sense, is among ourselves. What is still more remarkable was that little clay images, or, in other words, dolls, and even toys, were presented by Roman parents to their children. During saturnalia week nobody was so foolish as to work, preparations being made weeks beforehand for the lengthened festivities.

Historians have been able to trace without much difficulty this December celebration of the Romans back to the land of the Greeks, where, in fact, the Romans seem to have got all that was best in their civilization. In truth it goes back to still older peoples, and there is no means of ascertaining today just how early in the childhood of the world the traditions embodied in our annual merrymaking first originated. From as far back as our knowledge goes both the Celts and the Teutons honored the same season as did the Romans and with much the same festivities. It is generally accepted that the reason for this may be attributed to the time of the winter solstice occurring just when it did, when all nomad and ill housed people were ready to rejoice

Christ, did not discourage the old pagan festivities that by a peculiar coincidence fell about the time of the birthday of the Founder of their religion, they took advantage of the coincidence and in time merged the two. Perhaps this will in a degree explain the strange confusion of pagan and Christian customs in the modern Christmas. The church encouraged the old social customs of the season, simply giving them a turn in a new direction and introducing little by little the religious idea.

Some of the results of this strange combination, especially during the middle ages, were very curious and puzzling. For instance, just as, during the Roman saturnalia, servants were permitted to assume for a brief period authority over their masters, it became the custom in England, following out the same lines, to allow the populace on Innocent's day—Dec. 28—to take possession of the churches and enact most curious mummeries therein. The world should be thankful for the birth of this custom, for it was out of these ludicrous moralities and miracle plays that the modern English drama has evolved. The ever popular Punch and Judy will give some idea of what those medieval performances were like, though the modern spectator who witnesses a performance of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" would never realize that such a creation was a lineal descendant of Punch and his garrulous wife. Such, however, is the truth.

It was also a medieval custom in England to establish at Yuletide a "lord of misrule," appointed to conduct the revels in castle or country house or at court. Every one was expected to pay a sort of mock homage to this merry monarch of misconduct. This, too, was not without its similarity to the traditions of the Roman saturnalia, when, for the time being, the servant became the master and the plebeian the monarch.

It is interesting to trace back the custom of decorating houses with greens at Christmas. Like most of our Christmas customs in America, it was adopted from the English. Even in quite recent times, for instance, mistletoe was carried to the altar of York cathedral on Christmas eve. This mistletoe, as is now well known, was first used by the early Druids, who held the

plant as possessing a certain religious significance. The old Druid priests made a great and elaborate ceremony of cutting the mistletoe from the oak trees about the end of the month of each December. They regarded it as

established religion of the land the church forbade people to display any evergreens at the same time that pagans did so. Accordingly, instead of putting up bays and laurel and pine and greens of all sorts at the end of

commendable Christmas customs, however, are those which are strictly and fundamentally Christian. The good will toward man, the spirit of benevolence and generosity, the kind heartedness and love which now

It was the metal of kings and high priests.

Frankincense was equally symbolic. It was known throughout India and Arabia and the Holy Land as the emblem of prayer. It was a costly perfume, drawn from a rare tree, and when the mass filled the little birth chamber at Bethlehem with the sweet fragrance of this precious substance it was in a spirit of profound adoration.

Equally appropriate was the gift of myrrh. Myrrh was a substance of ancient use and was burned in the temples during the sacred rites of worship. Myrrh is a sort of balsam obtained from the bark of a tree—the "tear drops of a wounded tree." In ancient times it was used as a medicine and a funeral odor, and also, on account of its pungent odor, as a perfume. At times, too, it was made use of in embalming the dead. Like frankincense, it was a rare and costly substance, and a gift such as might appropriately be presented to a king.

So these mysterious wise men came and made their gifts and departed again. On Christmas morning they rode silently over the hills to Bethlehem, and we are told, after offering their gifts and adoration, "departed into their own country another way."

It is, today, a beautiful story for our workaday world to remember when busied men and women and children go about on Christmas morning exchanging greetings and gifts. And so long as that story is remembered and Christmas day is observed the world will continue to be a Christian world.

### THURMAN L. ELTON.

**SOUTH AFRICAN STATIONS.**  
The traveler on the Cape Colony railroad wonders when he comes to a station that there is no sign of the town or village from which the station takes its name. An old timer in the country will tell him that the village is from five to seven miles from the railroad station. This is the case in scores of places, and the railroad engineers when surveying for the road even went out of the way to locate the depot miles away from any town. It is a common assertion in Cape Colony that this was done through the influence of the contractors, who are said to have made a large pile by the action of the engineers. Whether this is true or not the writer

or cry, and sometimes they offer violence. The dealers do swindle, moreover, using waxed cards at monte and a secret spring at the roulette wheel, by which they can make the little marble stop short of the winning point. The stakes are not inconsiderable, and all kinds of games are in full blast—monte, chus (roulette) and chuck-a-luck. The Mexican dealer wears a wide, bell-crowned hat braided with silver and a buckskin jacket, also braided, but more elaborately. He wears a large red sash which supports his pantaloons, and protruding from the sash is the inevitable dagger. The tables are well patronized by men, boys and women. The women are in festive gowns, and, while they are not bet as large sums, they make more noise over their losses. They either accuse the dealers of swindling

The cocking mains are always largely attended, women and boys forming a large part of the unselect audience. The pit is arranged in amphitheater style, the admittance price ranging from 10 cents to 25 cents for choice seats. When the stakes are not inconsiderable, and all kinds of games are in full blast—monte, chus (roulette) and chuck-a-luck. The Mexican dealer wears a wide, bell-crowned hat braided with silver and a buckskin jacket, also braided, but more elaborately. He wears a large red sash which supports his pantaloons, and protruding from the sash is the inevitable dagger. The tables are well patronized by men, boys and women. The women are in festive gowns, and, while they are not bet as large sums, they make more noise over their losses. They either accuse the dealers of swindling

In the evening there is a "gran fandango" at one of the public houses—a garden saloon where mescal and pulque are sold. A fandango is a free for all dance and is generally attended by the

townspeople and visitors. The fandango is usually orderly unless there is a rowdy attendance from the "American town." They are not experienced in drinking pulque and mescal, and a few drinks are enough to make them

he is a millionaire, owns the largest individual interest in the Calumet and Hecla and other companies and the largest private library and best collection of paintings in Michigan.

James Lloyd, a prosperous old citizen of Troup county, Georgia, was photographed recently in the midst of a group of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, numbering 57.

Seven grandchildren were unable to be present at the family union.

It is said that General Sir Redvers Buller carried with him to South Africa the British flag which was hoisted at Pretoria in 1881. Another British flag—the one which was hoisted after Majuba—was buried in Pretoria beneath a tombstone on which is inscribed the single word "Resurgam."

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### MEN YOU SHOULD KNOW.

Theodore Crosby of Canandaigua, N. Y., has been a voter for 76 years. Mr. Crosby claims he is a descendant of Alfred the Great. One of his ancestors settled at Cape Cod in 1630.

Professor R. L. Garner, the famous student of monkey language, is about to undertake another and much larger

journey to Africa, which he predicts will be the most successful for his theory yet made.

Leopold, count of Than-Hohenstein, an Austrian nobleman who enlisted as a private in the United States army, has been made a second lieutenant and assigned to duty with the Forty-

sixth volunteer infantry. He accompanies that regiment to the Philippines. Ex-Senator John H. Reagan, the sole survivor of Jefferson Davis' cabinet, and the orator at the recent unveiling of the Davis statue at Richmond, is 81 years old, but is still in good health and active in politics. He is at the head of the Texas state railway commission.

He was born in Tennessee, and as a mere lad walked all the way to his present home. Finley F. Dunne, George Ade and Will Payne, whose works have attracted much favorable attention, are Chicago newspaper men. All three began their newspaper work on the Chicago News. Mr. Ade is now on the Chicago Record. Mr. Payne is editor of The Economist, and Mr. Dunne, who scored

such a success with his Dooley papers, is the managing editor of the Chicago Evening Journal.

At Belleville, Kan., a circus changed its line of parade in order that two sick boys might look out of the window and see the procession go by.

Not many years ago J. N. Wright of Detroit was a miner. Then he rose to the place of superintendent. Today

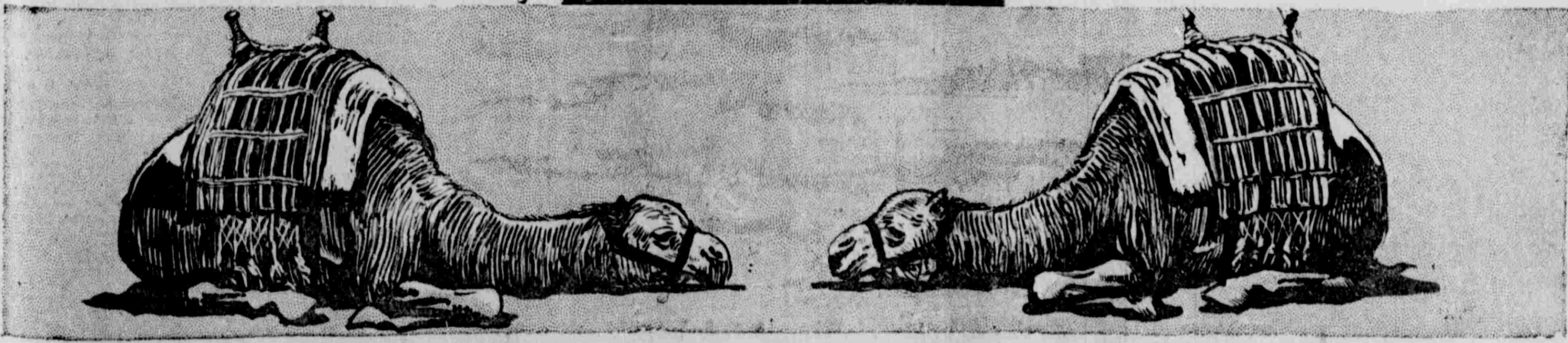
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at the return of the sun and the lengthening of the days once more. It stood for the beginning of the renewal of life and activity in all things of nature and the return of more comfortable days when less danger of long fasts and

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