

tians of every shade of belief unite in honoring the occasion, yet every country and every people impart to their observance of it certain distinguishing features, which harmonize with and are the outgrowth of the national characteristics. To the traveler in foreign lands nothing presents itself of greater interest than the different methods of celebrating Christmas in different countries.

The English Christmas is, perhaps, the richest of all in that hearty hospitality and merriment, and that profusion of substantial good cheer which our people, like their British cousins, so closely associate with the occasion. The old English Christmas, as it was celebrated centuries ago in the great halls of the feudal barons, may be best known from the pages of Sir Walter Scott, who frequently describes it, and who in his poem of "Marmion" admirably sums it all up in a few words when he says:

"England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale.
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man's heart through half the year."

"The December liberties," as the wild gambols, pranks and masquerades of Christmas time were called; the famous Christmas dinner of the barons, with its dish of boar's head borne upon a massive silver platter in great state the whole length of the immense banqueting hall by the major domo of the household, attended by a large number of servants and vassals; the "murmuring" or masquerading; the singing of Christmas carols; the playing at snap-dragon, hot cockles and all the other Christmas sports and games presided over by a specially appointed officer of the household, called the Lord of Misrule or the Abbot of Unreason—all these and countless other features of the old English Christmas, Scott, that wonderful "Wizard of the North," has described as only he could do it.

The modern English Christmas found its apostle in Dickens, who in his vivid word pictures has most clearly and accurately portrayed its every light and shadow. The wild abandon of its predecessor of centuries ago has been somewhat restrained, but within the limit of becoming mirth there is still no merrier Christmas. It is a strange fact, however, that in England, the day after Christmas, or "Boxing Day" as it is called, is a day of even greater festivity among the working classes than Christmas Day itself. It derives its name from the "Christmas Boxes" or donations of Christmas

spending money which are collected on that day by letter carriers, milkmen, butchers' boys, and other equally useful members of society.

The Spanish Christmas is largely an out-door celebration, as I found while residing in the city of Seville some years ago. The Spaniards, like the French, are much in the streets at all times, and even more than usual during the Christmas season. For more than three weeks before Christmas the magnificent cathedral of Santa Maria de la Sede, as well as the noble churches of San Juan de la Palma, Santa Catalina and Santa Maria la Blanca are crowded to repletion with devout worshipers every morning at the mass which is sung daily throughout the year. As Boxing Day is to the English so is *Noche Buena* to the Spaniards. The words literally mean "the good night," but they are also used in Spain to designate Christmas eve, which is even more joyously celebrated than Christmas Day itself. Then the whole city seems to have turned out *en masse* into the thoroughfares and the great public squares of the Plaza del Triunfo, the Plaza Nueva, the Plaza Del Duque, and the Plaza de la Constitucion.

Even the most unlucky pedestrian in all the great throng—he who has lost a loosely fitting hat or has had his pocket picked (Spanish pick-pockets are the most expert of all artists in their line), or whose ribs have been bruised or his corns trodden upon—even he must find some alleviation of his misfortunes and misery in contemplating the scene that meets his gaze on Christmas eve in any of the plazas named. Numerous flaming torches throw a rich crimson glare upon the winning brilliancy of jellies, artfully heightened by a light placed behind them to display their transparency, red festoons of *chorios* (sausages), *jamon*es (hams), both salt and sweet, a thousand dainty combinations of hog, fruit and sugar, luckless capons, fleeing upon past misfortunes, and fatted turkeys lying in fetters among aromatic heaps of apples, figs, oranges, lemons, and countless other delicious fruits displayed by hundreds of vendors who have converted the plazas into temporary fair grounds.

There is the kaleidoscopic mingling and changing of sex, nationality, costume and language. The angry remonstrances of buyers against the exactions of vendors; the joyous shouts of countless children; the music of street bands and your own ejaculations of pain, as some big fellow plants himself on your favorite

toe, form the obligato accompaniment to the brilliant scene presented by the Spanish Christmas eve.

The Italian Christmas presents many features identical with the Spanish, and the scenes enacted in the streets of Florence during the Christmas season closely resemble those of Seville. Italy pays great attention to the Christmas decoration of the churches, and I have found it more elaborate than that of any other country. On Christmas eve young men and women assemble at the churches and aid in their decoration, a collation being served to them after midnight mass. The devout Italians have a poetic idea that to cheer and encourage the Virgin through the pangs of maternity they must play upon instruments and sing before her shrines on Christmas eve.

The German Christmas has supplied us with two of our best known Christmas customs—hanging up stockings and attaching gifts to sprigs of pine called Christmas trees. From the German Christmas also come Santa Claus and Kris Kingle. The latter is a corruption of Christ Kindlin or Christ Child, of whom they have the beautiful fable that with His own hands He places Christmas toys and sweetmeats in the stockings of good children, while those of bad ones receive nothing but a small birch rod placed in them by one Pelsnichol—literally "Nicholas with the fur," that is, St. Nicholas dressed in fur. It is a rare sight in a German household on Christmas morning to see the expression of abject misery on the face of some poor little wight who, having been disobedient or otherwise naughty on Christmas eve, finds only a birch rod in his stocking instead of bon bons and playthings. The dread of getting the rod from old Pelsnichol on Christmas keeps many a German child in order all the year.

There is no country in the world where Christmas is better observed than in Mexico, as I found during my long residence in the Mexican capital. There, as in Spain, the *Noche Buena* or Christmas eve is an occasion scarcely secondary to the *Nos Navidad* (Christmas) itself. The streets and plazas are thronged. Of all the shop windows so gay and brilliant in their holiday attire, none are so bright as the confectioner's. Nowhere is the confectioner's art carried to greater perfection. The window of every large confectionery in Mexico is a revelation, crowded as it is with cakes of such an elaborate character as are never seen in our own country, many of them consisting of numerous alter-