



CHRISTMAS IN OTHER LANDS

Christmas is a religious holiday - celebrated annually throughout the world. Everywhere people abound in delightful customs and ceremonies, but regardless of the many traditions, we have a common focus - the birth of Christ. We are all familiar with the celebration of Christmas in America, where everyone looks forward to a bright and joyous season, but how is Christmas celebrated in other lands?

GERMANY: Christmas is truly a children's holiday and the youngsters become kings and queens of their household for the day. Kris Kringle visits each house and gives the well behaved - gifts and the bad - birch rods. They gather around and rock cradle as they sing.

ENGLAND: Most of our customs were transmitted from England. They celebrate with card sending, bell ringing, carol singing, yule log, holly wreaths and mistletoe.

FRANCE: Every home displays a hand-made manger scene. The children do not receive gifts until January 6, when they are delivered by "Father Christmas". Good children receive gifts; bad children get switches.

ITALY: A tree is built on three poles in the garden and is set afire to warm the Infant Son. The flames are kept burning by bay, olive, myrtle and laurel branches which visitors have brought. Men dressed as shepherds stop at each flaming tree and play carols on their bagpipes.

POLAND: Straw is placed on tables in the homes. The head of the family gives a prayer and shares a wafer, that has been blessed by the priest, with the rest of the family.

HOLLAND: Christmas is celebrated on St Nicholas' Day. Children fill wooden shoes with food for St. Nick, who replaces it with toys and candy.

(Cont'd on Page 2)