



PREPARING THE CHRISTMAS PUDDING.

**A Christmas Experience.**

An Accident in the Life of an Observing Traveler

Several winters ago I had arrived at Odessa from Asiatic Turkey. The unlucky yellow flag, hoisted by command of the visiting surgeon of the port, compelled the brig I was in to toss about in the roadstead for a week before it was admitted to the quarantine harbor. Then I was required to send my clothes for fumigation, and at the end of another week the authorities permitted me to land and take up my quarters in the lazaretto for 14 days more, "on suspicion of plague."



GUARDED BY TWO SOLDIERS.

The Odessa lazaretto is built in the form of a quadrangle. Each room is separated from its neighbor by a double wall, between which a sentinel takes his station to see that neighbors hold no communication with each other. There is a small courtyard in front of each room, and a double iron grating—

one row of grating a few feet before the other—keeps the prisoners from any personal contact with the outer world, represented by the surgeon and the chaplain. In the room adjoining mine were confined a Greek and a young woman, who passed a portion of their time in singing to the music of a guitar and occasionally a tambourine. Much of the rest was spent in eating, drinking and sleeping, to judge from the long intervals of silence. But there were noisy episodes which conveyed strong proofs that the lady could scold as well as sing, and sometimes the quarrels rose to a terrible pitch, a thump, followed by a scream, furnishing the climax. It was Christmas day. The snow fell heavily, deadening the sound of the church bells, which, through a broken pane, reminded me of the holy festival. I expected to hear my neighbors sing hymns. My own time was devoted to my books—the only relief to an enforced solitude.

Toward evening, while the guard slept, I distinctly heard the voice of the man Greek. He seemed to be growling rather than speaking, and in the intervals of his silence I heard the female sob. Not a very "merry Christmas," thought I. Sometimes one voice rose above the other. The one was shrill, the other loud and angry. Then there was a scuffle; then all was tranquil. Night had fallen, and I had hoped the parties had gone to sleep. But again the murmurs, the expostulations, the outbursts, disturbed my quiet. And now the woman became voluble, and spasmodic bursts of grief alone interrupted the torrent of her eloquence. Often the man called out what appeared to be "Silence!" adding a few words, none of which was distinct enough to be caught, in a minatory tone. Then came another struggle, words, bitter words, stifled cries, a heavy fall, a scream, silence again.

I could not sleep. What had been the issue of the last quarrel? Had the "peace and good will" taught by the Redeemer, whose natal day the outer Christian world was celebrating, ultimately prevailed, and were the recent antagonists illustrating the Horatian maxim that the falling out of lovers is the renewal of love? Or had the last fall so stunned the foe of the two individuals as to render the revival of either love or anger temporarily impossible?

I was not long in doubt. It was past midnight when I was awakened by dolorous cries and heavy sobs, vehement protestations and earnest apostrophes in the voice of the man. I knocked loudly at the wall to suggest silence. He evidently did not heed the knocking. I

called out in good Italian, "Be quiet!" It was of no avail. I roused up the guard and asked him what was the matter with the gentleman. My custodian suggested he was drunk. I could not, however, divest my mind of the idea that a deed of darkness had been perpetrated.

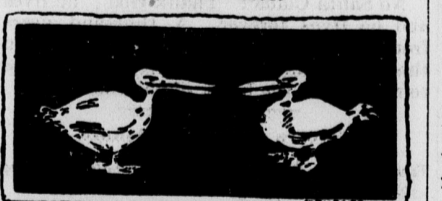
The night wore away. I could not sleep. I no longer heard the voice of the woman. Even the man's voice was hushed. But instead of the usual sounds my ear was assailed with knockings on the floor and a noise as of a saw or file at work. When the restaurateur came round in the morning to take orders for breakfast, I told him what I had heard and suggested that the lady might be ill and need medical aid. He went next door, but was sent away with the intimation that nothing was wanted. Two or three more days elapsed. The time had arrived for my release. On the very day indeed when I was to be emancipated my neighbors were also to be freed. I heard the officers arrive next door. Some words were uttered, followed by an altercation. Then the man cried bitterly. What could be the matter? More officers came. The man was fettered and taken away. Where was the woman? He had stabbed her in his anger, and under some absurd notion that her existence would be forgotten by the authorities he had taken up two planks and deposited the dead body of the poor girl beneath them. This explained the operations which followed upon the silence. When I was released, I saw my quondam neighbor sitting in a veranda of the place where I went to reclaim my fumigated apparel, guarded by two soldiers. He was a little old man of malignant aspect. I remembered having seen him at the harbor with a handsome young Greek whom I supposed to be his child. No one knew exactly what their relative position was. It was enough that he had shed her blood on Christmas night.

W. A. GILCHRIST.

**The Treating Habit.**

It was Pope Telesphorus, who died before the year 150 A. D., who instituted Christmas as a festival, though for some time it was irregularly held in December, April and May. But for centuries before there had been a feast of Yule among the northern nations whose great enjoyment was in drinking the wassail bowl or cup. Nothing gave them so much delight as indulgence in "carousing ale," especially at the season of short days when fighting was ended. It was likewise their custom at all their feasts "for the master of the house to fill a large bowl or pitcher, to drink out of it first himself, and then give to him that sat next, and so it went around." This may have been the origin of that popular American custom known as "treating." It is certain that upon our Christian observance of this glorious day have been ingrafted habits taken from rude and barbarous people.

**The Difference.**



First Goose—What's the difference between a Christmas turkey and a Christmas girl?  
Second Goose—I dunno.  
First Goose—Why, one is dressed to kill, and the other is killed to dress.

**Reminder of an Old Custom.**

Hundreds of old country people, especially of Irish birth, will remember the Christmas candle which is lighted and placed in the window at midnight of Christmas eve and allowed to burn there on the successive nights until it is all consumed. It is one of the most interesting of all the customs associated with the religious celebration of the Christian festival. It is symbolic, of course, of the "Light of the World," but some hold that with the mistletoe, the holly and the festive practices of the season it goes back to Druid or pagan origin and is derived from some olden symbolism of the returning warmth of the sun. However this may be, it is not generally known that the custom has been preserved in Canada to this day by a few old country people, comparatively speaking, to whom Christmas would not bear its holy message without the tall wax candle shining in their window.

Blow, bugles of battle, the marches of peace!  
East, west, north and south let the long quarrel cease.  
Sing the song of great joy that the angels began.  
Sing of glory to God and of good will to man.  
Again at Christmas did we weave  
The holy round the Christmas hearth.  
The silent snow possessed the earth.  
—Tennyson.

**Christ Child Legends.**

Beasts and Birds Have a Prominent Place in Christmas Lore.

The story of the hunting of the wren in the Isle of Man every Christmas is well known. She is known as Our Lady's hen, God's chicken, Christ's bird, because she was present at Christ's birth, brought moss and feathers to cover the Holy Babe and made a nest in his cradle.

In France the cuckoo was believed to have flown from a Christmas log.

A Latin poem of the middle ages tells that the crossbill hatches her eggs at Christmas and her young birds fly off in their full plumage at Easter.

The Mohammedans have many legends of Isa, or Jesus. One tells that when he was 7 years old he and his companions made birds and beasts of clay, and Isa proved his superiority by making his fly and walk as he commanded.

In the Tyrol they say the ravens used to have snow white plumage, but one day Jesus wanted to drink at a stream, and they splashed and so befouled the water that he could not, so he said, "Ungrateful birds, you are proud of your snow white feathers, but they shall become black and remain so until the judgment day."

A Russian legend tells that the horse flesh is considered unclean because when Christ lay in his manger the horse ate the hay from under his bed, but the ox would not and brought back on his horns to replace what the horse ate.

The Britons believe that the ox and the ass talk together between 11 and 13 o'clock every Christmas eve.

In Germany the cattle kneel in their stalls at that hour. Another version says they stand up.

The ass and the cow are sacred because they breathed upon the Holy Babe in his stall.

The ass is the most sure footed of animals because he carried the holy family to Egypt by night. He has had a cross on his back ever since.

Old women used to sprinkle holy water on the ass and the cow to drive away disease.

Bees are said to buzz in their hives at the exact hour of our Saviour's birth.

In north Germany the version of the man in the moon is thus told: One Christmas eve a peasant greatly desired cabbage, but as he had none in his own garden he stole from his neighbor. Just as he filled his basket the Christ Child rode by on his white horse and said, "Because thou has stolen on Christmas eve thou shalt sit in the moon with thy cabbage basket." And there he still sits.—Philadelphia Ledger.

**Christmas Giving.**

A Custom That Comes From the Three Wise Men Who Followed the Star.

Of course you need not be told of the origin of presenting gifts at this season of the year. The three wise men who followed the star until it remained stationary over the stable in Bethlehem, and who, entering the hovel wherein were the cow and the ass, knelt down before the beautiful Babe in the manger, placed before him presents of myrrh, frankincense and gold. Their example is the example that you follow today, 1,895 years after the Magi made obeisance to the Child Jesus, and when you place presents before the little ones who are made in the image of the Divine Babe you are doing what was done by the eastern kings, but remember that to carry out their example to the full the babes in the mangers, the little ones in hovels, must not be forgotten.

Most of our Christmas customs come from the German. Kris Kringle is a legendary myth whose origin is involved in much doubt. Formerly in the small villages of Germany the presents made by all the parents were sent to some one person, who, in high buskins, a white robe, a mask and an enormous flax wig, and known as Knecht Rupert, went from house to house. He was received by the parents with great reverence, and, calling for the children, presented the gifts to them according to the accounts of their conduct received from the parents. It appears as highly probable that this custom gave rise to our present innumerable legends about Santa Claus.—Philadelphia Times.

**Christmas Weather.**

In a note following some quotations regarding Christmas and winter weather the author of an old London publication says, "These prognostics of weather, etc., I look upon as altogether uncer-tain, and were they narrowly observed would as often miss as hit." Besides being quoted as above the proverb is varied as follows: "A hot May makes a fat churchyard" and "A green winter makes a fat churchyard." To the latter proverb is added this note, "This proverb was sufficiently confuted in the year 1667, when the winter was very mild, and yet no mortality or epidemical disease ensued the summer or autumn following."—Philadelphia Ledger.

**Christmas.**

Beep on more wood.  
The wind is chill,  
But, let it whistle as it will,  
We'll keep our merry Christmas still.  
—Walter Scott.

Lo! now is come our joyful feast!  
Let every man be jolly.  
Each room with ivy leaves is dressed  
And every post with holly.  
—Withers.

For little children everywhere  
A joyous season still we make.  
We bring our precious gifts to them,  
Even for the dear child Jesus' sake.  
—Phoebe Cary.

Blow, bugles of battle, the marches of peace!  
East, west, north and south let the long quarrel cease.  
Sing the song of great joy that the angels began.  
Sing of glory to God and of good will to man.  
—Whittier.

Again at Christmas did we weave  
The holy round the Christmas hearth.  
The silent snow possessed the earth.  
—Tennyson.

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