

# CHRISTMAS in the FATHERLAND

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## A Christmas Day with Napoleon

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EMPEROR AND EMPRESS OF GERMANY



THE KAISERIN AND HER TWO CHILDREN, PRINCESS LOUISE AND PRINCE JOACHIM.



GERMAN CHRISTMAS NUMMERS

**W**ERE told that the German surrounds his Christmas with more of an element of mysticism than does he of any other nation. It is probably a survival of the far back days when his painted ancestors celebrated their mysterious rites, at Christmas, under their dark groves of forest oaks. In nearly every district of the fatherland there still remains the quaintest and queerest of Christmas customs, whose origin is lost in the hoariest antiquity. They have all in the process of time assumed a Christian character, more or less burlesque, but the folk-lore will tell you that they date from the days of Wotan and Freya.

The peasants of Silesia and the woodmen of the Black Forest, and the hills-men of Bavaria, happily know nothing of the origin of the queer pranks they play at Christmas; they only know that they have been handed down by their fathers, and that they in turn will hand down the immemorial customs to their children.

In Germany the old custom of mumming is still kept up. From house to house these mummers go. The shepherds, especially, are entertaining. They are the comic men of the troupe who, in a half grotesque and half serious way, represent the events of the nativity.

There was a famous company of Christmas mummers, a couple of years ago in Bavaria, with a magnificent looking first shepherd, who never wearied of poking fun at the minister of finance.

After these roving villagers have recited their farago of nonsense, or it may be their

lines of surpassing beauty, before a person's house they are generally rewarded for their pains with gifts of lard, bacon and eggs.

But with all the mysticism and ultra sentimental ways of regarding Christmas the German never forgets it is eminently a season of good cheer. Pork in every form and beer usually take the place of roast beef, turkey, and stronger drinks. Then they also have the boar's head with a lemon impaled between its grinning tusks. Of course this delicacy dates back to Wotan's day. Tradition says Wotan was fond of the boar's head, but it is not easy to see where the lemon comes in, as the god was certainly not familiar with this tart fruit. In Brandenburg and the Uckermark any pig's head will do (the stock of boar's heads would not hold out), and round this animal's head are garnishings of sausage and green cabbage.

Silesia is a province which has especially earned a reputation for succulent dishes. Some of the most renowned of German gastronomic authorities have lent additional luster to the place by being born there. At Christmas time the dish most in request among the Silesians is a smoked pig's head with baked fruit packed in it, and also generously spread over the whole dish. This dainty rejoices in the name of Himmelsreich (the kingdom of heaven).

In North Germany the pig's head is not as prominent as in the south. Here there is more miscellaneous Christmas eating, hearty enough, but altogether in variance with American tastes. Cakes of all sizes and shapes are also baked and eaten, and some of these have a toughness of gutta-percha and a hardness of granite. These cakes take the form of Knecht

Ruprecht, or Nikolaus, angels and other Christmas novelties. Some of these are favored with honey, some with pepper, but all are of such consistency that no ordinary grown-up person could enjoy a surfeit of them and survive the feast. Only children seem to be able to eat these konigbucken and live.

Thuringia boasts of another curious Christmas delicacy which only the initiated can truly appreciate, this is boiled snet dumplings and herrings. One cannot be blamed for asking, why this mixture? Was the herring also favored by Wotan?

The herring, as a Christmas dainty, is also favored throughout Saxony, but there takes the form of a salad, and is eaten with smoked pork, and a delicate kind of sauerkraut, in which caraway seeds are prominent. The Saxony peasant's Christmas table is invariably decked with these dishes on Christmas eve, and remains thus spread out during the night. His idea in doing this is that angels, possibly weary of nectar and ambrosia, may condescend to visit his humble abode while he sleeps and regale themselves with Saxon smoked beef and herring salad.

It is interesting to watch the transformation of a German village at Christmas from its usually treeless appearance into a town laid in a forest of firs. Wagon loads of these resin-scented trees are sent from the hills of Thuringia, the Hartz and Silesia, and are put up in even rows in the streets and squares of the town. There is nothing like it in any other country. For a fortnight before the great feast these long avenues of "Tannen" are crowded with eager purchasers, men, women and children of all ages, and of every station in life. The great desire of each is to get a symmetrical tree, and as few trees are literally perfect in shape, it is the business of the tree merchant to supply branches and thus give the tree the desired roundness.

It is the tree that is the attraction of every German home from the kaiser's palace down to the humblest peasant's hut, and around it

the German's best and kindest thoughts center. The tree is not for the German simply a convenient cluster of mere boughs on which to stick candles and hang presents. It stands for the most sacred and most dread of all trees, the one once erected on Mount Calvary, and thus becomes the sign and seal of his Christian faith.

When the children have tired of even their new possessions (and how soon the new becomes old) and it is too early for the sandman to pay his nightly visit, try this simple amusement: Suspend a wreath of holly or evergreen from a doorway and give to each child an equal quantity of nuts, paper-wrapped candies or favors that will stand handling, then see who can throw the most articles through the wreath into a basket placed to catch them. Give a simple reward to add zest to the game.

In the same manner the game of "twos" is conducted. Take a large napkin or piece of stout paper. Place a lot of nuts or hard candies in the center. Let a child take hold of each corner and give three vigorous tosses, singing:

"Goodies, goodies, dance, my Christmas goodies  
Up they go, down they go; dance, my Christmas goodies."

Then there will be a lively scrimmage to see who can recover the most.

These little devices will make a jolly ending to the happiest day in the year for the children. Put them to bed with pretty songs ringing in their ears.

"Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night—  
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemly and white,  
Christmas where the cornfields lie sunny and bright,  
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!"

APOLÉON BONA-PARTE, the "Child of Destiny," as he called himself, had yet a good deal of his destiny uncompleted, when, on Christmas eve, in the year 1800, he sent messengers forth to announce his intention of paying a visit to the Paris opera house that night.

He was now first consul, to which position he had been elected in November, 1799. "My reign began from the day I was made consul," he declared years afterwards, and in that phrase he accurately described his power.

Installed already at the Tuileries with his beloved Josephine, he lived in regal state and exercised little less than despotic sway. Seven years before he was an unknown artillery officer. Now he was the most prominent man in Europe, proclaimed the savior of his country, and practically dictator. What events he had crowded into those seven years! The English had been driven from Toulon in 1793; he had suppressed the Paris insurrection of 1795; he had gone through his first victorious campaign in Italy, in 1796-7; had made his vigorous attempt to conquer Egypt, in 1798-9; and now was back again in France.

It was Christmas eve, however; the time when pleasures are expected to be indulged in, and Napoleon liked to show himself to the people in public places, for popularity was ever dear to him. So he would go to the opera that night.

He sat in an apartment overlooking the Tuileries gardens awaiting the arrival of Fouché, the minister of police, who had been sent for to take his instructions. Josephine, to whom he had been married since 1796, had just left him, and he was alone when Fouché was announced.

"You have nothing further to report?" said Napoleon, his keen gaze fixed on the minister.

"Nothing."

"No new conspiracies?"

"None."

"And the old ones?"

"Well under surveillance. I am ready to strike at the necessary moment."

"Ah, M. le Ministre, your vigilance gives them the opportunity of striking the first blow. This is not a soldier's way. You are only clever in watching plots; I want a man who can crush them at their inception. Fouché, you must strike now. Every suspect must go to prison. My death is desired by all the fanatical Royalists, Vendéans and Chouans in Paris, and Fouché has to stamp these conspiracies out. If Fouché does not, Napoleon will."

"First consul, you are safe," was all that Fouché replied.

"Safe or not," said Napoleon, impatiently, "I look to you to guard my life, and with that life the destinies of France. I shall visit the opera within an hour. You know your duty."

"Consider it done," and with that the famous police functionary departed.

Napoleon, who had been working hard all day and was tired, now fell asleep. When Josephine came in, dressed for the opera, she had the greatest difficulty in rousing him from the sound sleep into which he had fallen.

"Come, the carriage is waiting," she said.

"Let it be sent back," he said, drowsily. "I have changed my mind; I had rather not go to the opera to-night."

In the end Josephine prevailed, and they went to the carriage, accompanied by Lannes and Bessières.

In the carriage Napoleon fell asleep again, and, as he afterwards related, began to dream of the danger he had run years before in crossing the Tagliamento during a flood by torchlight.

No attempt was made to awaken him, but just as they reached the corner of the Rue Nicaise a loud explosion was heard, and the first consul awoke with a sudden start.

"We are blown up!" he cried.

But death by assassination was not to be his destiny. An infernal machine of a most destructive character, prepared by St. Regent, had exploded, just a second too late to effect its deadly purpose. Although Napoleon escaped, 20 persons were killed and 53 wounded.

He ordered the coachman to drive on, and a few minutes later he and Josephine entered the opera and proceeded to their box. The house cheered again and again. Napoleon bowed in apparent calm. But he did not remain in the theater long. After an anxious look around at the audience, he turned to reassure Josephine, who was almost fainting with terror, and they returned to the Tuileries.

Here he was met by Fouché, upon whom he turned with a fierce and contemptuous anger.

"I will see to this business myself," he cried with bitterness. "France shall be purged of these ruffians. It is not a question of my life, but of social order and public morality."

Within a few weeks all the leading conspirators were executed, and 133 other persons were seized, and, without trial, transported to French Guiana.