

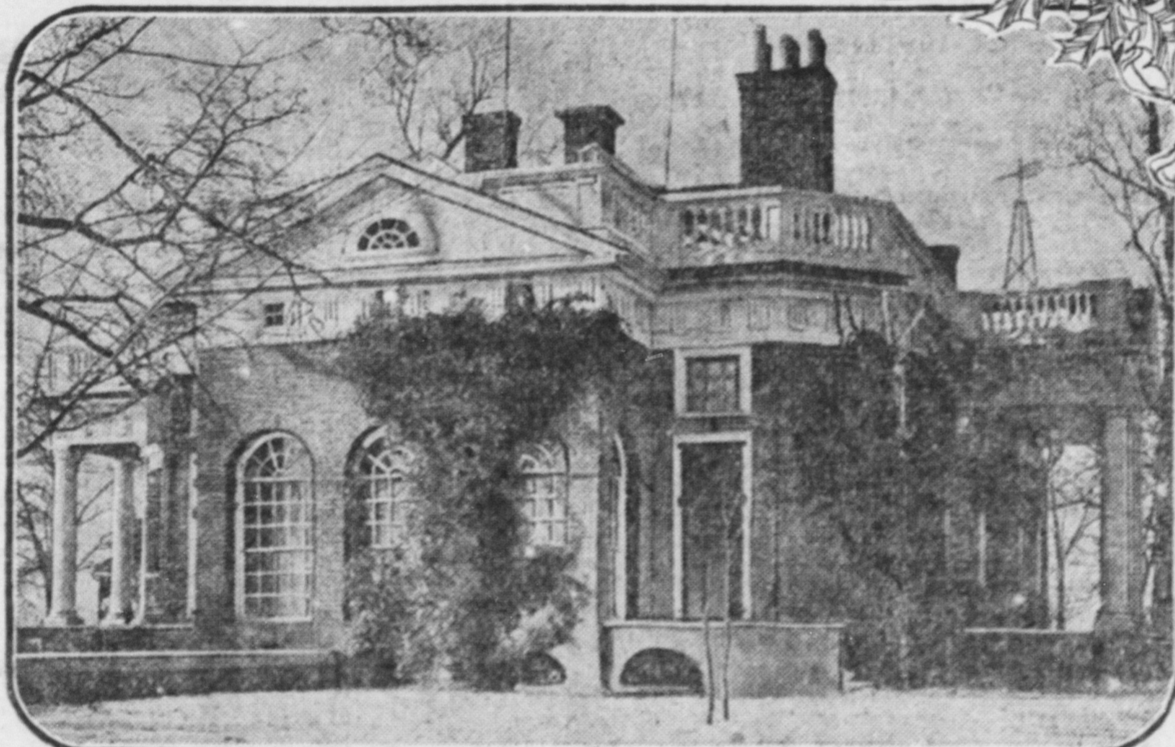


# YULETIDE IN "OLE VIRGINNY"

By J. M. BELL

How folks in the tidewater section of state that mothers presidents celebrate during Christmas season. Some of the spirit of Merrie England 150 years ago pervades that part of America today,

DRESSING PORK FOR CHRISTMAS



A FAMOUS OLD VIRGINIA MANSION

THE visitor to an old plantation in tidewater Virginia, at Christmas time will no doubt be agreeably surprised to find that many of the old customs survive and are regularly observed, not only on the large plantations, but on the smaller farms, and even in the negro quarters. So all get their full measure of gifts and turkey.

Perhaps the first sign of Christmas is the killing of the fat hogs, which have taken on flesh rapidly since they were put up and hardened on good, sound ear corn. Hog-killing time means a generous supply of "fresh," in other words sausage, spareribs, chine, cheese-souse, pig's feet, and, of course, that fresh pork ham baked during Christmas week. This is flanked by a baked ham two years old and sugar-cured. It will all furnish mighty good eating for visitors who drop in for a little while, but have not time to stay to the regular dinner.

Those who have spent years on a tidewater Virginia, plantation know just what hog-killing time means to host and hostess. All through the countryside, from the humblest negro holding to the largest river estate, preparation for Christmas begins with hog-killing time, for then the corn is gathered, the woodpile is ready, and farm work in general is in such condition that all are in pretty good shape for the holidays.

**That Christmas Gobbler.**

Two weeks before Christmas, the turkey gobbler (generally one of the year's raising) is singled out from the flock, put up in a slatted coop in the back yard, fed on shelled corn till he is in proper condition, killed the day before Christmas, hung up on the north side of the porch and next day, when cooked in the old-time kitchen by an old-time negro "kitchen queen," forms the piece-de-resistance for the big dinner. The Christmas menu rejoices in roast turkey stuffed with oysters, bread crumbs, etc. A sugar-cured ham (from one to two years old), crisp celery, Irish and sweet potatoes (the latter candied), salsify and spinach (all grown in the home "yard," macaroni, and, of course, cranberry sauce for the turkey. The dessert consists of jelly (plenty of wine for seasoning), blanc munge, both white and chocolate, meringues, fruits, such as Malaga grapes, rasy-cheeked apples, bananas and oranges. Wine is served at table and a toddy of whisky, sugar and water, with a dash of nutmeg, will most likely be taken by the gentlemen beforehand at the side-board. Roquefort cheese and coffee end the feast.

This menu is indicative of a typical plantation dinner; others will be in proportion to the taste and means of the diners, but it can be safely asserted that nowhere would a guest or a stranger sit down to a meager feast on this day, for even the negroes have prepared most liberally for the great occasion.

**Christmas Decorations.**

The good old custom of decorating the houses for Christmas still obtains, and the generous supply of holly, running cedar and pine, growing in the Virginia woods, is used. Mansion, farmhouse and cottage are all decorated. Mantels, halls, and even bedrooms are witnesses to the season of jollity. Family portraits of ancestors, now long laid at rest, are honored with a wreath of green and the red berries of the holly, a Christmas greeting from the stern caucus.

What are the social customs that emphasize this season in Tidewater, Virginia? On Christmas morning a glass of egg-nog or toddy is taken by the gentlemen as they go into breakfast. After this meal, the company will separate. It is possible that some of the party will go to the Colonial church in the neighborhood for morning service. The ancient brick edifice will always have been decorated by loving hands for this season. Wreaths of evergreen intertwine on walls, chancel and pulpit.

The morning service over, the congregation exchange Christmas greetings outside. Some presents are taken to church for neighbors who live at a distance; happy, inexpensive recollections of the season, but appreciatively indicative of the momentous occasion. Back from church, home folks and guests are ready for dinner.

**Hunting Parties.**

The east Virginians have ever shown a penchant for hunting, and chasing the fox behind a good pack of hounds has always been a sport par excellence. This sport still exists in the country districts, and in spite of wire fences, now almost

universal, you will hear the baying of the hounds and the cheering of the mounted hunters as they pursue the crafty fox through fields and woods on a Christmas morning.

The Christmas dinner is more or less a formal function and it is likely that the family and the guests will be in place when the blessing is asked by the host. Even the arrangements of the hunt will not make the men overlook the time-honored custom of being in place when the stuffed gobbler is served.

**The Country Dance.**

In the evening all join in the old-time country dance. The very name suggests quadrilles, lancers, two-steps, waltzes and even, perhaps, the schottish. These delightful recreations, still observed, come from the "mother country," and have flourished in east Virginia for three centuries.

Nothing is more joyous than a Christmas dance on a Virginia plantation, where observance of the season is inherited, where the servants are negroes, the fiddlers are negroes and thoroughly familiar with the dear old dance music so fondly remembered by those of ante bellum days. Invitations have brought out the countryside, whose social position deserves the courtesy. The "great house" is decorated with all the evergreens of the season. Bright fires are burning and the servants are on hand to wait on the "wite fokes."

The night is a starry one, and a rime of frost has settled over the landscape. Outside there is a rumble of vehicles over the slightly frozen road leading to the house, buggies, carriages, perhaps a four-mule wagon, with its gay crowd of young people, the black jehi guiding his team and coming in a rapid trot. There may be one or two automobiles.

The big front door is thrown open, a blaze of genial light welcomes the incoming guests, who shake hands with the host and hostess standing within the portals. Upstairs go the "gyris" to the "ladies' room," while the gentlemen go to the room assigned them. All is bustle and happy preparation for the coming dance.

Nine o'clock chimes from the timepiece on the parlor mantle. The lively bery of maidens are trooping down the broad stairs. What visions of loveliness are these highbred Virginia girls!—and they charge the very atmosphere with coquetry. Young gentlemen offer hurried requests for the dance. Then the real revelry begins with the fiddler's call of "Choose yo' pndinahs fo' de fus' quadrill."

**"Turkey in the Straw."**

There is a graceful sweep of skirts across the well-waxed floor, a clasp of hands as the couples fall in place. The scraping of violins to the tune of "Turkey in the Straw," and the head fiddler calls "foh-wo-fo." One dance follows another with short intermission, until supper is announced at 12 o'clock. Then the musicians play a march for the couples as they make their way to the big dining room.

Around the lengthened mahogany table is spread a feast fit for the gods. Cold turkey, turkey salad, pickled oysters, cold ham, celery, olives, beaten biscuit, thin-wafers, fruits, cake and black coffee. At 1:30 dancing is resumed. There

have been quip and jest around the hospitable board. Love affairs begun, and harmless jealousy can be easily discerned. The "lancers" is the next figure. A couple steals off after the set is over, a secluded lounge in the hall offers opportunity for the "sweet nothings," or maybe true love called forth by the propitious time and place.

The negro servants stand around the hall door and watch with fascinated gaze the many couples as they go through the dances. Happiness fairly gleams on their dark faces.

The night is waning, already the roosters have crowed for "three o'clock." From now on until "de break er day" the dancing keeps up, and when the first red streak appears on the horizon the violins play "Home, Sweet Home." It seems that the fiddlers fairly excel themselves as they draw their bows for this, the last waltz. The dancers swing to the steady rhythm of the music. The music ceases. The dance is over and one more old-time Virginia Christmas gathering is a memory. The host and hostess speed the parting guests, and presently the "great house" is quiet.

**The Customs Inherited.**

The customs inherited from English ancestors will never be forgotten in this section of "Ole Virginy," where the plantation owner was a very king, where the smaller farmers had their own peculiar pleasures, and where even the negroes (following the example of "de wite fokes") have always made merry in the Yuletide season, following the time-honored customs which have existed so long that like the common law, "the memory of man runneth not to the contrary."

Changes have taken place in this favored section, many of the oldest families have sold their ancestral homes and moved to the cities. The numerous well-known estates have passed into the hands of wealthy persons from the North and West, but in spite of changes, the spirit of Christmas animates the natives of all classes and is caught by the "strangers within the gates," for the Northern and Western folks that have settled and made their homes with us in nearly every case enter into the social life of the communities in which they reside, and during the holiday season join hands with the natives—all in humor for the week of frolicking.

**FISHERMEN SAVED MOOSE.**

A bull moose was seen lately, pursued by a bear, close to the town of Pineale in the state of Wyoming. Two men, fishing in Fayette lake early one morning, were greatly astonished to see him emerge from the timber at a high rate of speed and rush toward the water. A few seconds later, however, they were able to grasp the reason for this singular conduct, as a large black bear came into view at the same spot, but on beholding the men he at once took fright and made into the woods. After splashing round in the lake for some time the moose came out, blew the water from his nostrils and stood only a few yards away from the fishermen, eying them serenely. He was of unusual size and had a magnificent set of horns. He skirted the shore of the lake at a lels-urly gait for about a mile and then darted into the woods.

## TO PURIFY WATER

BLEACHING POWDER WILL KILL UNPLEASANT ODOR.

Not a Hard Task, Nor Expensive, to Remove Disagreeable Smell From the Contents of Cistern, Says Prof. Newman.

If the cistern water has a disagreeable odor it can be made sweet and usable by treating with bleaching powder, according to P. J. Newman, assistant professor of chemistry in the Kansas State Agricultural college.

"The rain water as it comes from the roof is laden with micro-organisms, which under the right temperature conditions, grow and multiply," said Professor Newman. "When summer rains are allowed to run into the cistern this ideal temperature is soon reached and the development of these organisms proceeds rapidly. The unpleasant odor is due mainly to the life processes and decay of the bacteria."

Bleaching powder, or calcium hypochlorite, can be purchased in any drug store at from 20 to 30 cents a pound. One-third to one-fourth of a pound is sufficient to treat 50 to 100 barrels of water.

The powder as it comes from the store is placed in a pail or any convenient receptacle, which is then filled with water. The mixture is stirred for a few minutes until no more of the powder will dissolve, and is allowed to settle. The mixture is then poured into the cistern.

Some of the powder will remain undissolved in the bottom of the pail. Pour in more water and repeat the process as many times as may be necessary to dissolve all the powder. Where possible it is preferable to agitate the water in the cistern while the bleaching mixture is being poured in. When used in the proportion indicated the powder is not in sufficient quantity to make the water unfit for use, nor is it dangerous in any way. It acts simply as a deodorizer and a germicide.

**Jellied Veal.**

One of the most delicate of all meat dishes, and one that could tempt the most dainty appetite, is jellied veal. This calls for a shin of veal. In order,ing it stipulate that you want the bone well cracked. Put it all in a large kettle and just cover with water. Let it boil slowly till the meat falls from the bone. Strain off the liquor and set the meat and the liquor aside to cool. When this has occurred chop the meat very fine and add a little pepper, salt and vinegar to the liquor. Now pour this over the chopped meat, mix and pour into a dish that has been lined with slices of hard-boiled eggs. The loaf should be allowed to harden for about twenty-four hours before being served. It should then be turned on a platter and garnished with lemons or olives.

**Potted Ox Tongue.**

One pound of cold cooked ox tongue, six tablespoonsful of butter or fat from tongue, ground mace, made mustard, one teaspoonful of mushroom catsup, red pepper.

Crop tongue fine and put it in a basin with the butter or fat from the tongue, if any is left; season to taste. Rub the mixture, after it has been well pounded, through a fine sieve. Press into small pots, cover with clarified butter or lard; keep in a cool place.

**Beef and French Beans.**

Pepper and salt about three pounds of brisket, put it in a stew pan with two ounces of butter and three sliced onions. Cover the pan and fry gently for 20 minutes. Then add one-half pint of water and two pounds of French beans (cut). Stew gently for four hours. Mix one tablespoonful of flour and one tablespoonful of brown sugar with a small cupful of vinegar and add this to the stew 20 minutes before serving.

**Boiled Dressing for Cabbage.**

Beat the yolks of three eggs, one-half teaspoonful of mustard, two tablespoonfuls of sugar, one-half teaspoonful of salt. Add three tablespoonfuls of butter and five tablespoonfuls of vinegar. Stir all together and cook in a double boiler until it is thick and creamy. Cool before putting it on the cabbage. Have the cabbage shredded very fine, with an onion and red or green pepper.

**Sour Cream Cocoa Cake.**

Two eggs, beaten light, cup white sugar, little salt, one-half cupful thick sour cream with one-half teaspoonful soda; stirred in till it foams, two teaspoonfuls of cocoa, one of vanilla, cup and half (large) of pastry flour, and one-half (small) of cream of tartar, in flour. A dessert spoonful of elder vinegar, last thing before putting in pan. Bake in hot-too-hot oven about thirty-five minutes.

**Squab for the Invalid.**

A squab cooked according to these directions won't harm the sick stomach. Clean the squab, split it open, lay on a thickly buttered pan and sprinkle over with salt and pepper. Cover with another buttered pan and steam until tender. Serve plain or with hot brown sauce.

**To Improve Mustard.**

Add a little drop of salad oil to mustard when it is being made. Not only will it improve the taste, but it will keep it fresh for days.



Green's August Flower

Most men think they need a cocktail or a drink when their stomach is out of order and they "feel bad" with nervous indigestion, or constipation. What they really do need is two or three doses of "AUGUST FLOWER" which quickly restores the stomach, cleansing the whole system generally.

Squeezed. Jimmie Flirt—Ah, excuse me, but is this seat engaged? Vera Coy—No, sir, but I am!

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