

Merry Christmas 1930



After Santa's Visit



Christmas Music

HERE was Christmas music everywhere. The pines were singing softly to themselves. It seemed as though they sang great long notes filled with melody.

Blue, curling smoke could be seen from the chimneys of houses, and great old trunks of trees made crackling sounds. It was a world of white and dark patches, of lights and shades and of the sounds of the wind and the ice-coated trees.

It seemed like a background of music to Frances and Floyd as they walked up beyond the town to the woods to gather Christmas greens.

They wanted a great many greens. The house expected them. Every picture wanted its spray of green behind it, every window wanted its wreath, and the house wanted its big tree, and its little one for the center of the dining room table.

"You're coming to Christmas dinner, you know," Frances told Floyd.

"Yes, your mother did ask me. It was so good of her. Of course it will be my first Christmas away from home, but we never celebrated Christmas much at our house. Not the way you seem to do."

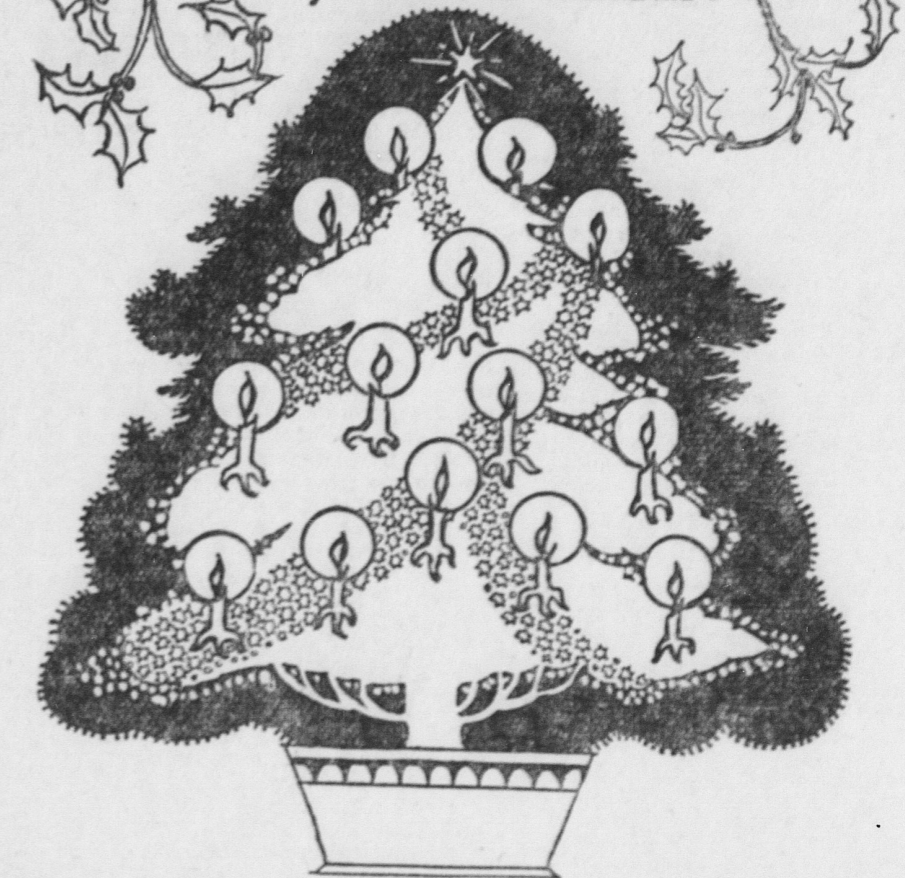
"Why I never knew people to celebrate Christmas as you do—and there are no young children in your house."

"We've always done it that way," Frances answered. "Mother always has Christmas celebrated as though every one of us was a child."

"Maybe it's what keeps us feeling so young and merry all the time."

The TRUTH ABOUT SAINT NICHOLAS

by A. W. CALLISEN



FOR hundreds of years children everywhere have loved Santa Claus. And no wonder, for Santa Claus is a real person, as real as Captain John Smith, General Grant, or our beloved George Washington, only his real name was Saint Nicholas.

Ages ago the Germans called him Sankt Niclaus, which their children turned into Sankt Claus—the Santa Claus of today.

Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children, was a Greek who lived in Asia Minor about sixteen hundred years ago, and his life was so spotless and his good works so enduring that he is even now beloved in all lands. Many churches have been named for him.

The parents of Saint Nicholas were rich and respected and lived in a city called Patara at the southwest corner of Asia Minor. Long they dwelt together, childless, but at length their prayers were answered and the little son Nicholas was sent to cheer their loneliness. It is said that from the very first he was the wonder of all friends and neighbors, so different was he from other children of his age.

At school he was one of the brightest and best scholars, and so great was his love for the church, and so anxious was he to serve Christ, his master in all things, that his father and mother willingly allowed him to study for the priesthood. Thus it came that he was sent to the home of his uncle, Bishop Nicholas of Patara, under whose loving care he was instructed in all the wisdom of the church as known in that day.

And now we come to the story of how Nicholas, from the kindness of his heart, first brought gifts to children while they lay asleep. It so happened that in the city there dwelt a very good and learned man with his three young daughters. This man had at one time been very rich, but by taking bad advice from one he thought his friend, lost all his wealth. Now he was bitterly poor, and as he was too proud to beg, the family had no longer a crust of bread to eat. Good Nicholas heard of this and his kind heart was greatly troubled. So he filled a purse with gold and went by night to the poor man's house though he had no idea how he should deliver his gift without being seen. The moon was shining brightly and by its light he saw a trellis which was built against the house for a grapevine to grow upon. This he climbed, and peeping through the window saw the three hungry children asleep on their bed, their cheeks still wet with tears. It made his heart ache to see their distress and tears came into his own eyes. Gently dropping the purse of gold on the floor he climbed again to the ground.

The next morning the poor man rejoiced greatly when his daughters brought him the purse of gold, and for a time the family's troubles were at an end.

When the money was at last all spent, Nicholas again climbed the trellis by night and dropped a second purse, and later a third. You can fancy how astonished the poor man was at this unexpected help, and after the second purse he determined to watch for the generous giver. This he did and the third time caught Nicholas in the very act. The poor man fell upon his knees and thanked him with tears for his act of mercy, but Nicholas earnestly begged him never to tell who had befriended him.

Nature Provides Things That Make Nice Presents

The birch, when it gets too big for its clothes, cracks the bark a few layers at a time, and the wind pulls off long, thin streamers of exquisite tints of silvery white or dusky brown, from which boxes and baskets may be fashioned for Christmas which are out of the ordinary. Rustic looking place cards may be made for the friend who gives unique luncheons, says Nature Magazine. The camper friends might find napkin rings made of it convenient. The locust thorn which is found in the Middle West makes a good still-to-letto, in fact, it is sharper than one made of silver. You can make it a bit more decorative by having a silver band fitted to it by the local jeweler on which initials may be engraved.

HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS



CHRISTMAS TREE LAND

by MARJORIE BROOKS SHEPPARD

IT WAS early evening and the air was frosty in the forest. The full moon shed a white light over everything and the gay little frost-stars twinkled on every bush.

Only the trees seemed alive; they stood sentinel-like, quiet guardsmen. The huge out-of-shape spruce on the right seemed to be the authority. To him the others all looked for wisdom. He had seen many, many winters come and go, he had been buffeted by the great North Wind until he was twisted and bent, he had felt the cold strike so deeply into his heart that he groaned every time a breeze swayed his branches. But still he survived, the greatest, the most powerful of the trees there.

Suddenly the winter silence was broken as a light wind rustled through the forest and the old tree shook himself awake. With the sound all the other trees bent toward him alertly. "Today," said the old tree solemnly, "is the first day of December."

The pine trees, both big and small, sighed in unison. Neither December nor any other month meant anything special to them. But the half-grown spruces were attentive at once. They were wise in the ways of the forest and they knew that the oldest spruce could be relied upon to keep in touch with the seasons. They knew perfectly well what his announcement meant and they waved their branches about merrily. Only the baby trees failed to understand and join in the glee with the others. Even the very beautiful, perfectly-shaped, large trees were moved to delighted expectancy.

"The first day of December," repeated the very littlest baby spruce. "What does that mean?"

"Sh," cautioned the pines, and the

other trees nodded warningly. It did not do to interrupt when the old spruce spoke.

But the old spruce was kind, he did not mind a bit. "It means," he said, "that exactly twenty-five days from today is Christmas."

"Christmas?" again queried the littlest baby spruce. "What is that?"

Patience! the old spruce replied. "Listen, and I'll tell you the story. In nearly all the Christian countries of the world one of the symbols of this day called Christmas is the Christmas tree. Now this Christmas tree is a plain evergreen tree, just like one of us, and on it are hung brightly colored ornaments, sparkling garlands and gayly wrapped gifts. So much happiness and peace does this tree bring that to be chosen for this purpose, whether it be for the richest or humblest home, is indeed a great honor.

"Sometime soon, almost any day now, men will come into the forest and picking out the best, will take them away. Then the adventure begins. First the chosen ones will be tightly and very carefully rolled up and the branches tied to keep them from getting broken, and then they will be sent many, many miles away, probably to a great city. In that city they will be just as carefully unrolled and then stood up so that people may see.

"On Christmas eve they are set up in the homes of those who have chosen them and late that night the loving hands of one who loves the children will decorate them."

The pine trees sighed sorrowfully. "They never choose us," they said.

"No, nor us," whispered the birches sadly.

The half-grown spruces and firs drew themselves up proudly. "We are pretty sure to be taken," said the

most graceful of these. "Look at us, all our branches are graduated so that they make a nice point on which to place a star. We all have straight trunks, too. We'll be taken, that's sure."

The littlest baby spruce had another question to ask the old tree, one about which he was not very clear: "Why weren't you ever taken?" he said.

"Sh!" warned the tall pines once more. They were very much afraid that the feelings of the old tree might be hurt.

"Because," answered the old tree sadly, "I wasn't beautiful enough. I've never been straight like the rest of you and who would want a gnarled old thing like me to dress with bright ornaments? But I don't mind. I know there are a great many others to do their share toward spreading happiness so I am content to stay in the forest."

The littlest baby spruce was silent and all of a sudden he looked up, startled, as the big fir towering above his head began to speak. "I, too, may go this season," he said with pride, "now that community Christmas trees are getting so popular; even ones as big as I get a chance."

"Oh, my, oh, my!" wailed the littlest baby spruce. "Suppose I'm not chosen! Maybe they won't want such tiny ones!"

"Come now, never mind, don't worry," soothed the old tree. "The houses are so small nowadays that a great many people have to have table Christmas trees. Perhaps you'll be one of those. But I think we've talked enough for now. Let us all go to sleep, it's getting late. Tomorrow they may come to look us over and we must look our best."

So perfect silence once more fell over Christmas Tree Land. The full moon, now low on the horizon, shed a light over everything and the gay little frost-stars still twinkled on every bush. Everything was in readiness and waiting for Christmas.

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England Halted Christmas
For twelve years, from 1644, Christmas was not kept in England. The Puritans, deeming it a pagan festival, passed an act of parliament abolishing it, and directing that December 25th should be a day of fasting and repentance. Charles II. restored Christmas.

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