

What the Bells say at Christmas.

Hark! hear the bells,
Whose music tells
Of Christmas joy, as sinks and swells
Each sound that sings
Of happy things.
This birthday of the King of kings.
Lo! on this day,
The glad bells say,
In Bethlehem, far, far away,
And long ago,
In manger low,
Was born the Christ who loved thee so.

A radiant star
Shone bright and far
Above the plains where shepherds were,
And led the way,
That Christmas day,
To where the young child Jesus lay.

O glorious morn
When Christ was born
Among the garnered wheat and corn;
O happy place
Where his dear face
First shed the sunshine of its grace!

Above the plain
A heavenly strain
Of music rang; and its refrain
Is ringing still
O'er heights and hills,
"Be peace on earth, to men good-will."

Rejoice to-day,
The glad bells say;
Put all the cares that vex away;
Let Christmas cheer
Find welcome here,
And bless this best day of the year.

To Christ, thy King,
As tribute bring
Thy heart, and let the offering
With love be sweet,
As at His feet
Thy lips its grateful vows repeat.

Rejoice and sing,
The glad bells ring,
In honor of the world's dear King;
Let love increase;
May discord cease,
All hail, all hail, thou Prince of Peace!

The World-Christmas.

Christmas is coming — it has come! and Christendom hails its advent. In truth, it is the former that has made the latter, and universal homage is due. Catholic and Protestant, Greek and unbelieving Jew, unite in the general celebration. It touches the heart of humanity, and makes all the world akin. The earth may well rejoice at the coming of its Lord.

"With joy we'll celebrate His birth,
And every nation tribute bring;
While age to age shall tell His worth,
Till round the world His praises ring."

Christmas has a warm place in the heart and home of our English ancestors. 'Merry England' is no misnomer at this time of the year. The celebration begins with a glowing fire on the hearth, and the great Yule-log. Grand dinners are given, at which the boar's head has historic place. The family is gathered together in the old homestead, which is decorated with ivy, holly and mistletoe. The churches are festooned with wreaths, green boughs and bright berries. All classes and conditions greet the glad day, and the proverb, 'busy as an English Christmas oven,' has a literal verification.

All hail with uncontrolled delight
And generous voice, the happy night
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down."

Throughout the British kingdom and provinces, kindred customs obtain. In Ireland there are torch-light processions and midnight mass, while games and frolic amuse by day. In the Scotch Highlands, feasting and drinking run mad riot.

GERMANY.

Holidays reach their climax at the Christmas Festival in the German Fatherland. The festivities are prolonged for weeks, culminating on the natal day. Who that have witnessed the scene in the imperial capital of United Germany can ever forget it? For a month preceding, the streets and squares have been lined with booths. The peasants have come in from all the surrounding country. Here is the festive tree, by the myriads, of every size and price. And there is every imaginable article of trade or manufacture, with the never-to-be-forgotten *peppercuchen*, their national gingerbread, without which there could be no Christmas. The holiday tree cheers every home, from palace to cottage. The royal family enter into the sport of the occasion, and it permeates and sweetens universal society. Asylum and hospital, work-house and prison, share in the joyous event. Christmas cheers each saddened heart. And the tree is not barren. It is laden with gifts, from young to old, from old to young, ornamental, useful, while, as by the dear Lord, none are passed by. Nor is the religious forgotten in the social. For successive days appropriate services are held in crowded churches. The interest centers in the Royal Cathedral, in which is the world-famous *Domchor* (not *Damchor*, as once upon a time a printer's devil, true to his name, profanely interpreted it for the writer). This cathedral choir, composed chiefly of

boys, is one of the three foremost choirs of the world. Their rendering of the scenes of the nativity seem well-nigh angelic. The chorus of thousands of German voices, like the multitude of the heavenly hosts over the heads of the astonished shepherds, makes the occasion indescribable. The memory thrills the soul to this day. Long may the genial, Christly Christmas be preserved to the German Fatherland!

HOLLAND.

We boastfully speak of 'beating the Dutch,' but this is not easily done in the matter of Christmas. In this amphibious land the social is separated in time and celebration from the religious. St. Nicholas claims the former, and his is the day of all days. St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus, is the patron saint of the old Amsterdam. In this ancient and best preserved of European medieval cities, with streets of water floating a noiseless commerce, that sweeps by the antique gabled houses which reveal the opulence of two hundred years ago, there are many and strange customs, of which those in connection with this memorable personage are first and chief. The sixth of December is the day to which the Dutch, both old and young, look forward with greatest expectancy, and from which they date the minor events of the year. St. Nicholas now mounts his throne. His episcopal form greets one's eyes everywhere,—in the shop-window, on the street, in the home,—and his name greets the ear from ten thousand mellifluous Dutch tongues. The thoroughfares are crowded, shopkeepers are busy and happy. Bakers are taxed to the utmost. Great vans thunder through the streets, laden with gift bundles and boxes of every shape and size. It is a time for the universal giving and receiving of presents, in which the children have the lion's share. The gifts are anonymous, but every well-instructed child knows that St. Nicholas is at the bottom of it all. There is the omnipresent St. Nicholas cake, rich with almonds, and stamped with the image of the saint, with crown and scepter, with the national windmill and countless other devices. Characteristic of the day is the 'letters-banquette.' They are made of the rich almond cake, and are the initial letters of one's name, and each a foot in length. It is received by all, and even the Dutch school-boy is satiated. Varied presents come to all, high and low, rich and poor, old and young. A family known to the writer received two hundred, and the share of the little ten year old Anna was thirty-eight. What child does not envy the Dutch on St. Nicholas day? What a great heart and liberal hand has Santa Claus! He dives over these high house-tops, and the children do not dare to speak, even in a whisper, near the chimney, lest the Saint overhear in passing. The hilarity of St. Nicholas day is innocent and tumultuous. Christmas Day proper, the 25th of December, is observed religiously. Without the distraction of the social and festive, the services are eminently appropriate and suggest ivy, conducive to the great spiritual purpose of the appointed day. The separation tends vastly to religious results.

ITALY.

In Italy, and all Catholic countries, Christmas ceremonies are of a like nature. Rome leads the way. At midnight the gurg of the great fort of St. Angelo fire a salute, the multitude swarm to the midnight mass, minstrels play before the shrines of the Madonna, processions bear the infant-cradle, while the day following is given up to mirth and gifts.

AMERICA.

Our own country, with its mongrel population, has a mongrel Christmas. It partakes of the nature of the different nationalities. It is a price-less boon that the stranger has brought to these bald, Puritan shores the joyous festivities of this joyous day. Our Dutch ancestors carried with them St. Nicholas, and taught us to hang our stockings in the chimney-corner.

"In hopes that St. Nicholas
Soon would be there."

The German Fatherland has given us the genial tree, growing in favor with all the people. The English Motherland ushers in 'green Christmas,' with plum-pudding and athletic games. Whatever be the national associations, all hail the auspicious day. But may Bethlehem ne'er be forgotten or overshadowed. It was Bethlehem, that was 'least among the cities of Judah,' which has made a world-Christmas possible. On Christmas eve a procession of various races and faiths marches through the Empress Helena's Church of the Nativity, with lighted torches, descends the stone steps leading from the chancel into a grotto, or chapel, and halts before a silver altar in the marble pavement, around which is written, *Hic, de Virgine Maria, Christus natus est* ('Here Christ was born of the Virgin Mary'). The shout ceases, the Archbishop of Jerusalem takes the image of a child

made to represent the infant Jesus, and places it in the silver star. Every head is bowed, a few words are sung, then the image is laid in the marble manger, which covers the traditional spot of the historic manger, and the ceremony ends. But the spirit of the event may be observed everywhere. Parents, as of the commandments, should teach it to their children; and they should talk of it when they sit in the house, when they lie down and when they rise up, on the memorable day. 'When thy son asketh thee, What mean these ceremonies?' a ready answer should be given. Christmas festivities were borrowed in part from heathen feasts; these consisted of feasting, rioting, and sensual indulgence. The mere festive Christmas is heathenism. Christianity has a *Christ* in its observance. All Christendom should bow its head before this gift of gifts from the King of kings. Not only angel but human voices should swell the universal psalm of praise: filling earth and sky, louder than they: 'UNTO US IS BORN THIS DAY, IN THE CITY OF DAVID, A SAVIOUR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD.'—Gideon Draper, D. D.

"Count Up Yer Marcies, Zekel."

It must be confessed that Deacon Lawson was in an unusual frame of mind this Thanksgiving morning. He had started the fire at four o'clock, a full hour earlier than usual, and bustled about until quiet Mrs. Lawson caught his uneasiness, and hastened her preparations for breakfast. But the deacon could not eat.

Can't ye put up a basket of pies an' fixin' fur the Ellises? he asked, pushing back from the breakfast table. I'm actooly a feared they hain't much in the house fur dinner.

Mrs. Lawson looked at the deacon in wide-eyed wonder. Was he sick? She never knew him to change his mind before. She had wanted to send some things over yesterday, but the deacon had peremptorily forbidden it. Crops had been smaller than usual, and the deacon felt proportionally poorer. He stood by the table and watched his wife as she packed the basket.

Guess ye might as well put in that chicken pie—we shan't need it overmuch with turkey; and fill up the chinks with yer seedcakes, now.

It must be 'cause Deacon Elkins is away, and he's got to lead the meetin', thought Mrs. Lawson as she watched her husband drive out of the yard. Then she returned to her morning work, singing one of her favorite hymns. A load was taken from her mind with the heavily-laden basket. She had not finished her preparations for dinner when the deacon returned.

Be ye goin' to the service? he inquired anxiously.

Of course I am, replied Mrs. Lawson. What would folks say not to see me, the deacon's wife there? It's few enough chances we have for worship, anyhow.

I wish Deacon Elkins had stayed to hum. I do sartin! exclaimed the deacon, fidgeting uneasily in his chair. I don't feel equal to it, no how.

Then why don't you hunt up some one to preach regular? inquired his wife.

The deacon could endure it no longer. He jumped up and left the room, slamming the door behind him, and strode off to the barn. An hour passed by, then another. Mrs. Lawson had finished her work and had dressed for the day. The huge turkey was roasting in the oven. Ten o'clock, half past ten, quarter of eleven, and no deacon appeared. It was well that Mrs. Lawson, was acquainted with his eccentricities, having patiently borne with them for the last thirty years. She put on her bonnet and shawl, and sat down by the window. Five minutes of eleven—at that instant the deacon drove up to the door. Mrs. Lawson hurried out; the deacon snapped his whip, and they were off.

The service was to be held in the school-house, a half mile distant. There had been a flourishing church here years before; but the leading members had moved away, some had died, and it became almost impossible to support a pastor. Finally, as a climax to 'their misfortunes,' the church and parsonage had been destroyed by fire. The two deacons had regarded this as a final catastrophe, and had not tried to revive the interest of the people. Fast Day and Thanksgiving Day were all observed, and occasionally a traveling minister would speak to them upon the Sabbath.

This Thanksgiving service was a special trial to our good deacon. His friend and co-worker had gone away for a week, leaving him with all the responsibility. Yet even this did not account for his uneasiness of the morning. This had disappeared before he reached the school-house door.

The room was almost full. Mrs. Lawson slipped into a seat by the door between two of her neighbors. The deacon, looking neither to the right nor left, marched down to the

platform. He gave out a hymn which was sung with a will, after which he called on another brother to lead in prayer.

Just then Mrs. Lawson started in alarm. She had forgotten to bring the volume of sermons from which they had, the evening before, selected an appropriate one. What a predicament they were in! She was sure the deacon couldn't think of a thing to say. She wondered if she ought to send little Salma Tucker back to the house for it. At that moment the deacon arose, and began to speak. His face was pale, his eyes were flashing with suppressed excitement.

Brethren and friends, he began, his voice trembling with emotion, I meant to have read ye a first-class sermon to-day, but it's been borne in on my mind that I had better tell ye my experience for the last twenty-four hours. The Lord has appeared to me, and showed me what I really was. Perhaps ye'll think it's a queer thing to say Thanksgiving Day, but I've never felt so small an' mean in my life as I do to-day. An' I thank the Lord for it. Ye all know that crops hain't been first-rate this year, an' I thought I must pull in somewhere, an', of course, I wasn't goin' to pinch myself, so I thought I'd give up somethin' else, where I shouldn't feel it. Wal, I did, no matter what it was; I should be ashamed to tell ye; but when I got down to read over the discourse that I'd chosen fur ye to-day, the words stuck in my throat. I went to bed, but I couldn't sleep, an' the Lord seemed to come close an' hold a reckonin' with me.

Count up yer marcies, 'Zekel.' He seemed to say. Count up yer marcies, 'Zekel.' An' then I thought of the things I had to be thankful fur. Why, what I'd lost in one way was made up in another. What if the oats didn't more'n half fill, it was made up in the hay; an' so it went. Then there was some special marcies, only I'd thought I'd kind of earned 'em.

The Lord jest opened my eyes, 'n' gave me a good lecture. I could see plainly that I'd been shirkin' my dooty, lettin' things get so here. We ought to have a church 'n' preacher of our own. Why, what does the word 'Thanksgivin' mean but givin' thanks? An' shall we give the Lord what costs us nothin', jest the leavings that we can't use?

I tell ye, I've had my eyes opened. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, the Good Book says. An, now, let's each of us count up our marcies, an, then give accordin'.

Perhaps we should get enough to hire a preacher fur a year. Squire Haskell, let's hear your ideas. The deacon sat down, and wiped the perspiration from his face. It had been hard for him to speak of his failings. The ball was set rolling, however, and all were willing to give it a push. The usual hour of service lengthened to two—such a service as the little town of Deweyburg had never known. At its close a subscription paper was drawn up. The deacon's quaintly put advice, Count up yer marcies, headed the paper.

What matter if the turkey was done to a crisp, and dinner itself was an hour later? Not one of the little company would have missed Deacon Lawson's forceful remarks. All through the village the report of the deacon's words spread like wildfire, and aroused an unusual interest.

Count up yer marcies, 'Zekel,' came to be their watchword, and each gave as the Lord had prospered him. Those who could not spare money gave timber or work. Even the children gave their hoarded pennies toward a new church.

When spring came, it did not take long to complete the church. The first Sabbath in July it was dedicated. A young minister offered to stay a year for a very small salary.

I declare, wife, every time I count up my marcies, I feel like giving more and more! exclaimed the deacon. I believe we can do it yet.

Do it? Of course they could, and did! Count up yer marcies, 'Zekel,' with the remembrance of the deacon's quaint but forceful remarks, tidied them over many a hard place, and enabled them to make many improvements.

An' it all began with that Thanksgiving dinner for the Ellises, remarked Mrs. Lawson for perhaps the twentieth time.—WILLAMETTA J. PRESTON, in *Congregationalist*.

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1880.....	141,402.81.	911,132.93.	3,881,478.09
1882.....	254,841.73.	1,073,577.94.	5,849,889.1
1884.....	278,378.65.	1,274,397.24.	6,844,404.04
1885.....	319,987.05.	1,411,004.38.	7,030,878.77
1886.....	373,500.31.	1,573,027.10.	9,413,358.07
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God bless the little
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