

SANTA CLAUS IN PORTO RICO.

CHRISTMAS in Spain is a religious festival rather than a social one. It was so originally in Porto Rico, but the population has been influenced partly by the spirit of the new world and partly by the many American merchants who reside in the cities and who exert an influence much greater than the numbers would seem to warrant.

The churches welcome the day with chimes which begin at midnight and last until the midnight of the next day. What with one church beginning ten minutes too soon and another ten minutes too late and a third at the right moment, what with bells which ring every fifteen minutes and bell ringers who under some ancient custom will sound the great bells every half hour, the air is filled with music which never seems to end.

If you are near a campanile the effect is not altogether pleasant on account of the volume of sound striking the ear with too much force, but in a public square several hundred yards from the nearest belfry, where trees



A DAUGHTER PLAYS ON THE GUITAR, and buildings break the sound waves, or in suburbs on the hillside the effect is unspeakably delightful.

Pleasurtest of all is it when you are sitting in the inner court or quadrigle of a Porto Rican home. Around you on four sides the house rises above you, and in the grounds or in great tubs and porcelain pots rich flowers, graceful vines and restful trees afford shade, color and perfume. The sound of the bells descends from the air above very much like a benediction. You sit in an easy chair, and servants bring you tea or steaming coffee, sweetmeats and biscuits, confectons and cigarettes, while a daughter or son plays ancient songs or dances upon a mandolin or guitar.

The churches are crowded; so are the clubs and most of the places of recreation. Every vehicle is in use, and here and there can be seen young men and women trying to imitate English models. Some of the people of the mountain districts carry out many of their early superstitions in regard to Christmas. They hang over the doors of their houses boughs of trees which are supposed to possess charms and often conduct marriage ceremonies under great canopies made of these charmed trees.

A great many wild flowers are in bloom at Christmastide, and these are worn by children of the mountain districts in wreaths and garlands about their heads, necks and waists. The Christmas giving is sadly missing in our new possessions. The churches hold no Christmas tree, and there are few charitable societies to give feasts. However, one hospital for old people and orphans in Ponce gives a Christmas fete, and the inmates have a good meal and receive warm clothing, medicines and other needful gifts.

The American occupation has brought extra Christmas cheer to the people of the island. The American residents celebrate the day in good American fashion, and, best of all, they put money into circulation and give zest to industry and business.

When Shepherds Watched by Night.
Some historians contend that the shepherds could not have watched by night on the Bethlehem plains in December, it being a period of great inclemency. In answer to this a well known student says: "Bethlehem is not a cold region. The mercury usually stands all the month of December at 46 degrees. Corn is sown during this time, and grass and herbs spring up after the rains, so that the Arabs drive their flocks down from the mountains into the plains. The most delicate never make fires till about the end of November, and some pass the whole winter without them. From these facts I think it is established without doubt that our Saviour was born on the 25th day of December, the day which the church throughout the world has unified to celebrate in honor of Christ's coming in the flesh."—Washington Star.

The Most Popular Christmas Poem.
The most popular Christmas poem ever written for children was that familiar to the world, beginning:

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house—
The poem was written by a very learned man, Dr. Clement Clarke Moore, a profound Greek and Hebrew scholar. He was a professor in the General Theological seminary in this city. He was born in 1779 and died in 1863.—New York Globe.

THE IRON REINDEER

I'M up to date, and, be it said,
I certainly this year
Shall break and burn the ancient
sled
And cook the ancient deer.
Those things are out of date for me;
They're now a shattered dream.
Oh, I'm as happy as can be
About my brand new scheme.



FULL soon across the boundless plain,
Beneath the Christmas stars,
I'm going to travel on my train
Made up of baggage cars,
And they'll be simply stuffed with
toys
And other precious things
For little girls and little boys
For whom I spread my wings.

OH, yes, in jigttime, down the track
I'll gayly glide along,
From home across the land and back
To fill all hearts with song.
And to my agent at each town
I'll toss a bundle great
Each artless child with joy to crown
And make it heart elate.

WILL run along on schedule time,
Through wind swept drifts of snow.
My bell shall be the Christmas chime



Christmas in the Colonies.
Twas the merry Christmas season, and the palms swung in the breeze
Of the lovely hot December in an island over seas,
And a meditative maiden of the kind
called Philippine
Sat and gazed, with pensive visage, on the sultry winter scene.

Well she knew that on the morrow all her
folks would celebrate,
Place a palm tree in the parlor, hang
their anklets o'er the grate.
On the heaped up Christmas table, groaning
with its load, there'd be
Appetizing bird's nest truffles and ba-
nana fricassees.

"Let me see," she murmured softly; "fa-
ther 'll get his string of beads,
Blue and yellow. I am certain they're the
very kind he needs.
For his old ones looked quite shocking,
though he never seemed to care,
And his new set's quite the swellest thing
a gentleman can wear.

"And for mamma there's the nose ring
that I bought on Thursday week,
With the handsome whalebone stickpin
for insertion in the cheek,
And little brother's boomerang! He'll be
immensely pleased.
That or a bamboo jumping jack are the
things for which he's teased.

"And as for me, I only hope they've got
just what I want for me.
Just one or two nice costumes made of
genuine coral bead.
A toe ring would be lovely, and a piece
of copper wire
To wear around the instep make up all
that I desire.

"Except, of course, some other things that
every girl receives.
Such as various kinds of dresses made of
silk, crepe, ripened leaves.
For surely," said the maiden as she
smiled a scornful smile.
"I'm not like those American girls who
always think of style."

—Chicago Record-Herald.

A Timely Caution.

Don't give any one bri-bac or pictures unless you are morally sure you know his taste. Presents which are displayed are apt to be a great strain on the affections. No matter how the receiver may hate them, he must either them and deface his rooms with them or insult the giver. Now, a book, for instance, even if the receiver doesn't like it and doesn't want it, can be tucked away among other books and forgotten, but an ugly vase we have always with us—at least till we can smash it.

A New Excuse.

One of the men in a large pottery took two or three days' holiday now and again, and when he came back, on being asked what was wrong, he said he had been away burying his grandmother.

He did this two or three times, and then he thought he had better change his excuse, so, on being asked the next time, he replied:

"Well, my brother, the sailor, is at home just now, and he is so used to the sound of the waves that I had to lash pailfuls of water on the window all night before he could sleep, and then I had to sleep during the day."—London Mail.



That sets all hearts aglow.
And I shall call, and not in vain,
While stockingward I head
My mile a minute flying train,
"The Christmas Limited."



THE train's made up. Already I
Am getting up the steam,
While piling in the cars sky high
The gifts of which you dream.
With joy I stand upon my head
And shout both far and near,
"Goodby unto the ancient sled—
All hail the iron deer!"
—R. K. Munkittrick in Success.

SANTA CLAUS A STRANGER.

He is Officially Unknown to Uncle Sam's Mail Agents.

The postoffice department does not know Santa Claus. The old saint has no official existence so far as Uncle Sam's mail agents are concerned. This is due entirely to the fact that Santa Claus lives everywhere at the same time instead of having a single local habitation like other people. It is very sad, but it cannot be helped. Letters which children address to Santa Claus or Kris Kringle must go straight to the dead letter office.

Some time ago an effort on behalf of the children was made to induce the postoffice department to permit postmasters to open all letters addressed to Santa Claus and turn them over to the parents of the child correspondent or to some local organization having a Christmas fund to spend, but the attorney general for the department rendered an adverse decision, holding as follows:

If postmasters were granted authority to open all such letters and select those which they thought proper to deliver to persons applying for them, there would be difficulty for the department not to discriminate in favor of some of which contain inclosures of value, and give us an excuse for such action the authority being by the department.

The department's legal adviser also was of the opinion that, if permission were granted to deliver such letters to benevolent societies and individuals, it would be difficult for the department not to discriminate in favor of some of which contain inclosures of value, and give us an excuse for such action the authority being by the department.

Candles For Christmas.
Christmas candlemakers are busy for many months in the year. It would be impossible to estimate how many hundreds of thousands of dozens of pretty little colored wax candles are required for Christmas trees all over Europe and America. There are also candles for church decoration at Christmastide. Whereas the Christmas tree tapers are, some of them, so tiny as to require seventy-two to make a pound, the great altar shafts of pure beeswax will sometimes stand six feet and weigh forty pounds apiece.—Tit-Bits.

Avoiding Temptation.

Hammert—Styngham has never bought a Christmas tree for his children.

Calahan—Probably he is afraid of temptation.

Hammert—Temptation?
Calahan—I mean that he is afraid that if he did buy a tree he would be tempted to buy something to hang on it.—Town and Country.

THE TERROR'S CHRISTMAS.

Turkeys Were \$17 Each During the Siege of Paris.

When the Christmas day of 1870 dawned upon Paris the city had been in the iron grip of the German investment for about three months. The winter was a bitterly cold one, the thermometer registering 10 degrees below freezing point on Christmas morning. The Seine was frozen over.

The poor's daily rations were a few ounces of horseflesh and a piece of repulsive looking black bread.

By Dec. 25 food prices had reached their highest point since the beginning of the siege. On Nov. 13 a pound of butter fetched \$14 and a rabbit \$3.50. By Dec. 19 rabbits had risen to \$5, a box of sardines brought \$2.50 and eggs 25 cents apiece. For one's Christmas dinner one could buy a goose for \$10 or a turkey for \$17. Pigeons were \$3 each, and a small fowl could be obtained for \$3. Ham was \$1.50 a pound.

As for vegetables, carrots and turnips were 4 cents each, and a bushel of potatoes cost \$6.25. There was hardly any milk in Paris, and the little there was had to be preserved for the sick and wounded. However, there were oceans of wine, and the wineshops did a roaring trade.

For some time before Christmas the starving people had been feeding on cats, rats and dogs until by Dec. 25 a dish of cat's flesh was hardly obtainable. Dog was 60 cents a pound, and fine rats fetched 14 cents each. Many domestic pets were killed for food. "Poor Azor!" said a humorous citizen as he finished a stew made from his favorite dog. "How he would have enjoyed these bones!"

With true Parisian light heartedness the citizens tried to make the best of things, and the cafes and restaurants were almost their normal aspect. At half past 10, however, an order of Trochu closed every shop and cafe, and by 11 o'clock Paris had gone to bed.

The midnight mass of Christmas eve was celebrated as usual in the churches, which were crowded with praying, weeping women. Newspapers appeared as usual, some of them containing glowing accounts of perfectly imaginary French successes. The satirical sheets were even more bitter and venomous than at other times and published scathing caricatures. Some showed the fallen emperor, Napoleon III, as a sheoeball at King William's boots, or as a beggar with his pockets turned inside out, or as a traitor handing over France to murderers, or as a thief making off with millions of the nation's money. Others depicted Julius Favre in tears and pocketing Bismarck's gold and Trochu handing over the keys of Paris to a Prussian in exchange for a bag of gold. In all the idea of Parisians that France had been betrayed by those who ought to have protected her was prevalent.

So at this season of peace and good will suffering Paris was nearly at her last gasp. Owing to the tenacity of her rulers and citizens, however, her agony was to be prolonged for some weeks longer, as it was not until February that the negotiations for a capitulation began.

Christmas With Stevenson.

Passengers aboard the steamship Lubeck unexpectedly spent Christmas at sea in the year 1890, but the fact that Robert Louis Stevenson, the famous story writer, was among them made that a most memorable holiday. The Lubeck was en route from Australia to Samoa. She broke a shaft and limped along several days under sail. "Mr. Stevenson," says the captain in relating the incident, "cheered everybody up by telling funny stories that were better, coming offhand from his lips, than most literary men could write if they worked over them for weeks. He knew, too, that it was only a question of a short time before he would die of consumption and that he could never again go home for more than a brief visit. It was simply wonderful what a difference that one man made among the passengers, and I guess almost all of us would gladly spend the time to make port under sail, with machinery disabled, if we could have a Stevenson aboard."

A Polish Custom.

Peasant lads in the villages of Poland have a pretty Christmas custom which affords great delight not only to themselves, but to the other villagers. This is called the procession of the star. At Christmas time the boys make a large hollow star, two or three feet between points, lighted from the interior. This is carried aloft at the end of a pole or staff. It symbolizes the star of Bethlehem. The three wise men of the East—Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar—are impersonated by boys. Others in the party bear a little puppet show cabinet, in which are performed the drama of the Nativity and other Scripture incidents appropriate to the occasion. From house to house around the village the procession trudges in the snow at night singing carols, and the villagers present the boys with small coins as Christmas gifts.

Mistletoe on Apple Trees.

The growth of the mistletoe on oak is now of very rare occurrence, but it flourishes luxuriantly in many parts of England on the apple trees.

Hurry Up Santa Claus!
Yander Mistah Chris'mus,
Loafin' long de way.
"He slowed than a railroad"—
Dat what chillun say.
Dey wants 'im fer ter hurry up
An' pass de time er day.
Dreamin' bout de come' er de Chris'mus!
—Atlanta Constitution.

OUR CHRISTMAS ON THE PLAINS

I NEVER shall forget our Christmas dinner in a construction camp in the year 1900, said a former Coloradoan. We were building a reservoir out on the plains about ten miles east of Pueblo. We had 150 men on the job, all white men.

The poor's daily rations were a few ounces of horseflesh and a piece of repulsive looking black bread.

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As for vegetables, carrots and turnips were 4 cents each, and a bushel of potatoes cost \$6.25. There was hardly any milk in Paris, and the little there was had to be preserved for the sick and wounded.

We had a poor cook on the job and couldn't seem to find any other. As a result there had been men leaving every day and constant grumbling all the fall, and it came to a head Christmas day.

It was a beautiful, bright Colorado Christmas. The men were to work in the morning, have a turkey dinner at noon and lay off in the afternoon. The old man had bought three pounds of turkey per man—450 pounds. The birds had come out the day before.

About ten minutes after noon I heard a kind of an angry roar outside. I never heard anything like it before, and it made me jump. It meant trouble of some kind. I hurried out and saw a surging mob at the door of the cook tent. The men were all shaking their fists in the air and yelling with one steady, hoarse, prolonged yell. I went around behind the tent and slipped in. There stood the cook raging, fighting drunk, brandishing a meat ax and emitting a steady stream of profanity. In front of him surged the mob, just out of reach of the meat ax, crazy mad. I didn't blame them. They had come off work with their mouths all made up for turkey, and not a table was set, not a spark of fire in the stove and 450 pounds of turkey scattered over the section of alkali plain which formed the floor.

The battle was short. The men ran in behind the cook, tripped him and the minute he was down had a rope around him. "Hang him, hang him!" they roared and started off with him to the meat pole.

In all my life I never was so scared as I was that day. I didn't care in the least whether the man was hanged, drowned or died in his bed. Yet civilization rose up in me, and I knew I had to save him. I ran like a deer to get around the crowd and reach the meat pole first, and all the while I



BRANDISHING A MEAT AX.

I ran I was cursing the cook. When they got to the meat pole they found me on a box facing them with a gun. "What do you want?" they roared. "Get quiet," said I.

Those in front called out, "Shut up!" When they were still I said: "Boys, I'm sorry this thing has happened. It's my fault for not watching this fool closer. But we can wash those keys and have a good dinner yet if some of you'll turn in and help me. They aren't hurt any. As for this scum of a cook, I don't care any more about him than you do. But I'm in charge here and I can't let him be hanged. You can go ahead and hang him if you want to, but you'll have to kill me first. Now go ahead."

I waited, but no one stirred. There were plenty of guns in the crowd, but no one was ready to undertake the job of killing me. I gave them only a minute to think. Then I said to the man that held the rope, "Untie him." He did it. "Get out of here," I said to the cook. The fellow got up, white as death with fear.

Then I turned to the men and asked if there were any who had ever done any cooking who would help me. Half a dozen volunteered. We washed the turkeys and put them on to boil. I never worked over anything in my life as I did that Christmas dinner. The men were still silent and sullen, and I didn't know but they'd hang me if the dinner didn't suit them. I tried desperately to remember all the cooking I'd ever seen my mother do, and thanked God when I found that one of the men could make pies and another soda biscuit. About 5 o'clock we had the best dinner the camp could turn out, boiled turkey, boiled potatoes, canned squash, canned corn, canned peaches, dried apple pie, hot biscuit and coffee.—New York Press.

Partial Cure.

"I fear you are a victim of the drink habit."

"You misjudge me. Lack of the price cured me of the drink habit long ago. It's merely the thirst that bothers me now."—Philadelphia Ledger.

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