OLD TIME CHRISTMAS

HOW DINNER WAS SERVED IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Boar's Head, With Rosemary, Brought In to the Music of Trumpets—Roasted Peacock the Pride of the Feast—Barbarous Appetites of Brave Knights and Fair Ladies.

It was a gay scene—that great hall, where the yule log was blazing in the immense fireplace, big enough for two whole oxen to be roasted therein; the high rafters festooned with branches of holly, holme, laurel and ivy; the wide portal crowned with mistletoe, and the tables, which was literally a board of board, all of oak and polished till they shone, stretching the whole length of the room, 160 feet.

Twelve o'clock has just struck, and the household is mustering in the magnificent hall, it being "covering time," or the hour for preparing the tables for dinner. The steward, in his gown, a most important looking personage, is standing at the uppermost part of the hall, surrounded by most of the chief officers. The table is neatly covered with a purple velvet cloth, saltcellars and trenchers, under the supervision of the usher of the hall.

The yeomen of the ewery and pantry, conducted by the yeoman usher, then enter the dining chamber. As they pass through the door they bow reverentially, and they do the same upon approaching the table. They then lay down at the side of each trencher a knife "hafted with silver" and a spoon. No forks are laid, for those convenient articles have not yet been invented. Next in succession comes the yeoman of the cellar, who dresses the sideboard with wines, flagons, drinking cups and such vessels as are consigned to his care. The yeoman of the butlery follows him, and brings up beer and ale, and arranges the pewter pots, jugs, and so forth, on the sideboard.

The dinner time has now fully arrived, and the steward's command is taken by a gentleman usher, who knocks respectfully at the door of the state chamber and summons King Richard and his nobles and guests to dinner. In they come, dressed in their court attire, the king and his lords in magnificent long green colored velvet tunics, silken hosiery and red leather boots, with very long points; the pretty girl queen, Anne of Bohemia, and her ladies in particolored kirtles of white and blue, cotehardies edged with fur, and their hair done up in a gold fret or cone of network.

When the guests were assembled and seated, the king and queen occupying a dais above the others, the trumpets sounded, and a band of musicians entered the hall. The server followed them, bearing upon a huge golden platter a boar's head dressed with sweet rosemary and rose leaves.

The boar's head, with a great golden pippin placed between its tusks, is then placed upon the table, where it is served with mustard sauce, and the Christmas dinner begins. No napkins or forks are used, and brave knights and noble ladies wipe their greasy hands upon the tablecloth and throw the discarded bones and pickings upon the floor.

Besides the famous boar's head, the first course consists of roasted beef joints, pigs roasted, venison with frumenty (a curious concoction of boiled wheat and eggs seasoned with sugar and spices), broth of pork and onions, custard and a subtlety, the latter being an ornamental dish representing a ship, a castle or a human being, just as the taste of the cook dictated.

The second course is introduced by the bringing in of a peacock with all its gay plumage on and its whole body covered with leaf of gold. A singular dish, was it not? Like the subtlety, it must be intended merely for an ornamental dish. Not at all. It was a real dish to eat. The peacock was stuffed with all manner of spices and sweet herbs, thoroughly roasted, basted with yolk of egg, served with plenty of gravy, and was considered the greatest delicacy of the Christmas feast.

It was something of a task, as you may imagine, to prepare this bird of Juno for the table. The skin was carefully removed before it was baked, and then, when it was taken from the oven and cooled, the skin was sewed on again dexterously, not so much as a feather being ruffled. It was carried to the table on a silver basin, with a lighted piece of cotton, which had been saturated in alcohol, placed in its beak. No part of the dinner was so eagerly anticipated as this, and all manner of vows were pledged over the beautiful bird. The chronicles of the middle ages record many of these vows.

Joints of meat or fish, all manner of fowls, roasted or boiled capons, hams, pies of carp, tongues, mutton pies and plum puddings followed in due order, and these were displaced by a dish of jelly, fruits and another subtlety. There were but few vegetables to accompany the various dishes of meat and fowl.

After the solid food was disposed of, wine and ale were drank in profuse quantities. One wonders how they could eat and drink so much. People had barbarous appetites in those days, and a lady of rank would swallow two or three tankards of ale at a single meal.

This dinner on that long ago Christmas day lasted two hours. In the evening there was more feasting, and the historian amazes us by the vast enumeration of swine, oxen, sheep, pigs, hares, kids and fowls slaughtered and the tons of ale and wine drank. England was merry England then, and rude license and boisterous cheer characterized the Yuletide festival. Yet doubtless we who eat our Christmas dinner with much less form and noise enjoy ourselves as truly. Certainly, we have more refinement than those fair ladies and gallant knights, who greased their fingers and soiled the tablecloth eating the boar's head and the stuffed peacock and the frumenty at that Christmas dinner of the fourteenth century.

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND.

The Miraculous Walking Stick of St. Joseph Took Root and Blossomed.

There is a legend interesting in connection with the custom of extending festivities from Christmas to Twelfth day, or Epiphany. According to tradition, St. Joseph, while passing through the town of Glastonbury, rested on a hillside. His walking stick of dry hawthorn he thrust into the earth, when it immediately took root and the next day blossomed. Every year thereafter it blossomed on Christmas day, which was Jan. 6, old style. This thorn tree had two trunks and grew to an immense size. Many similar instances related of [illegible] credence.

[illegible] Queen Elizabeth's time a Puritan [illegible] to root out the superstitious [illegible] hewed down the large trunk, but when he attacked the other [illegible] miraculously prevented from [illegible] his task. His ax slipped [illegible] obviously, and a chip [illegible] put out one of his eyes. The severed trunk lay for years attached to the earth by a mere fragment [illegible] it grew and flourished. Even when it was taken away and thrown into a ditch it continued to blossom, while the standing trunk, all cut and mutilated near the roots, spread out its branches in a great circle and blossomed luxuriantly.

A long time afterward the second trunk was cut down, but the shoots from it were said to be growing in many places, claiming to be the Glastonbury thorn. It is recorded that when the change of style was made in 1752 people were greatly perplexed, wondering on which day the Glastonbury thorn would blossom. A great crowd collected on Dec. 25, N. S., and find[illegible] no blossoms watched the tree until Jan. 6, the old Christmas day, when it bloomed as usual. To allay the excitement this caused the old day was observed for a while in many places.—New York Journal.

Christmas Greens For the Churches.

The most popular method for Christmas church decoration just now is to have a number of gothic designs in wood, which can be worked out very easily with evergreen leaves and holly, producing an excellent effect. These frames have the advantage of lasting from year to year. Wire frames of different shapes and sizes are also used to some extent and prove very desirable because of their lightness, a large cross, heart or anchor of wire frame frequently going in places where a similar article worked on wood could not be placed. The scarlet berried holly, the dark green and shining leaved ivy, green bloom pots of evergreen shrubs and the red Virginian creeper have all been utilized latterly for decorating the churches. Inscriptions by means of holly berries or in colored immortelles are also made, the latter being preferred, because some of the berries used at Christmas are poisonous, and children pick them up when they fall to the ground. Very thin lines of delicate looking green are carried from aisle to side so as to intersect each other in squares, and the crossed trellis work thus formed is dotted with flowers.—Brooklyn Citizen.

The Holly and the Ivy.

From the earliest times green boughs have been associated as one of the outward expressions of joy, and repeatedly in the Bible do we find allusions to them, notably in Nehemiah, where we read, "Go forth unto the mount and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches," to make booths thereof, and "there was very great gladness." Decorations may thus be claimed as decidedly Scriptural in their origin. The popular evergreens are rosemary, bay, laurel, holly and ivy, and in folklore we have many and frequent allusions to all of these. The hellebore, or Christmas rose, and the Christmas thorn, which flowers about this season, along with laurestina and arbutus, are freely used in English decorations. A very quaint poem tells of the claims of the ivy and holly for precedence. Popular opinion places the holly inside and the ivy outside a dwelling.—Selected.

Jocular Christmas Gifts.

It will increase the joy and jollity of Christmas morning exceedingly if the children find that their elders have entered into the spirit of the time to such a degree that stockings of all conceivable sizes and shapes bulge with strange contents over the fireplace. The more amusing the gifts tucked away in toe and heel, the more uproarious will be the mirth before breakfast. The old trick of wrapping up a pair of cuff buttons in multitudinous papers until the gift forms a bundle as big as a pot-de will never fail to excite interest and enthusiasm. A jack in the box put in the stocking of a staid father of a family has been known to cause reminiscent chuckles of glee through a whole day, and the most amusing thing that Mark Twain ever said would pale in effect before the amusement caused by the mother's drawing a cream whip from her stocking.—Exchange.

Kriss Kringle In Germany.

Throughout the German fatherland prevails the belief in the Kristkindlein, or Christ child, who rewards with gifts the faithful children who love their parents and believe in God. On Christmas eve each household assembles at dinner, and when the candles are lit the father of the family watches the shadows on the wall, for if any one should have his or her shadow obscured by [illegible] another object it is to be unlucky. If the children sit down in odd numbers, that is also unlucky, and it will not do to fill up the number with either strangers or near relatives. Dinner being over, the children retire into a dark room and guess at the presents they are to receive. Soon the parents open the door and say, "The Christ child has visited you," upon which the children come forth to gaze upon their [illegible] Christmas tree.—New York [illegible]

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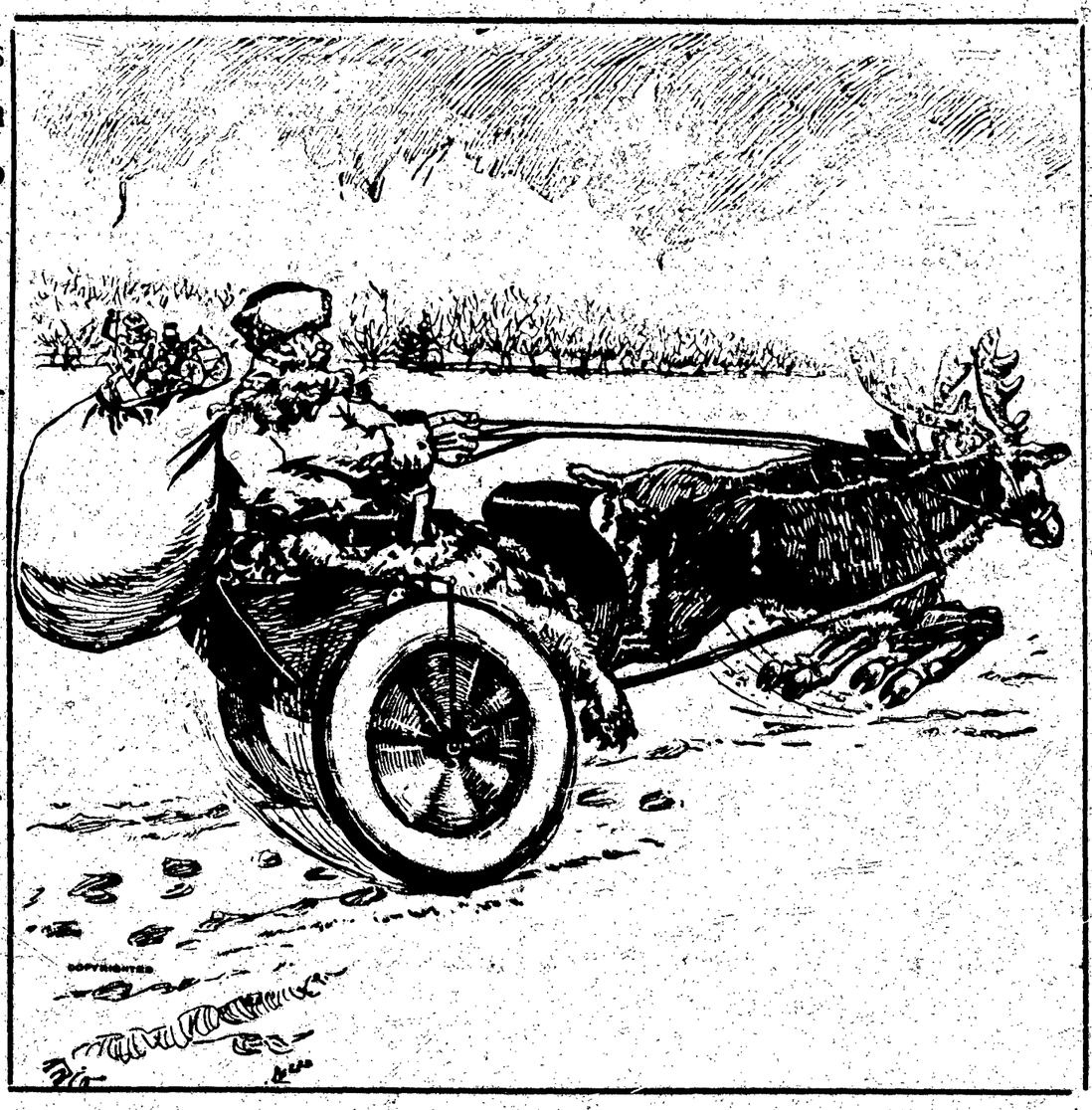

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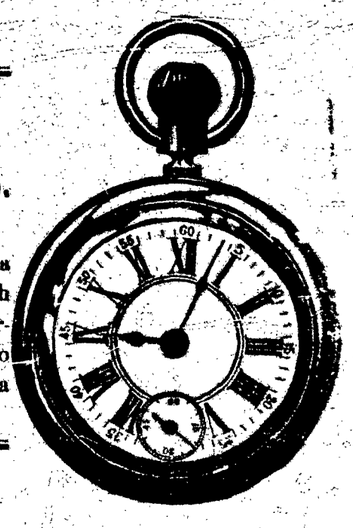
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