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Let Us Ask Him In

Into Bethlehem one Winter's night
Came a Virgin, pure, and sweet;
Joseph was there, with Mary, too,
That night on the snow-filled street.

They stood at the door of the Inn and knocked,
And asked for shelter there;
But they were told there was no room,
That they must go elsewhere.

The night was bitter cold, indeed,
The winds blew raw and chill;
So Mary could not journey far,
As She was very ill.

At last, within a manger low,
She found a bed of hay,
And on that humble bed our Lord
Was born on Christmas Day.

Oh! is it not a shame that He,
The Shepherd of the fold,
Was refused the shelter of the inn
On that bleak night and cold?

He knocks at our heart's door each day,
And asks for shelter there;
Shall we refuse to take Him in?
Shall we send Him elsewhere?

Oh! let us listen for His knock
At our hearts, so stained with sin,
And let us not send Him away,
But let us ask Him in.

—JOHN A. TWAMBLEY,
79 Beacon Street.

Old Christmas Customs Abroad

Although many of the picturesque old customs associated with Christmas are in the process of disappearing, some of them still linger on in the rural districts of Europe, while others are being adapted to more modern modes of observing the great Christian festival.

Gifts, music, light, are all characteristic of Christmas from the Gospel days onwards, and in some cases the Christian symbolic meaning of the season has been thrown, like a spiritual cloak, over more ancient customs in the country places of the Old World, these old customs are associated with the parish festivities and rustic merriment which followed the religious ceremonies on the great feasts of the Church.

Poor Went "A-Mumping"
In many of the villages of England preparations for Christmas began early—on St. Thomas' Day, when poor people went "a-gooding" or "a-mumping," visiting the more fortunate people of the country side and begging some small gift, such as corn, apples, or money, with which they made some attempt to observe the holiday.

It is of interest to note that our modern Christmas carol singers date back to, and perhaps beyond, these poor people who used to go "a-mumping." The custom of carol singing is now usually confined to little boys who, on Christmas eve and perhaps the few evenings preceding, sing carols and hymns by the door-steps of their neighbors until the lanced-for gifts in the form of candy or money are forthcoming, or they are invited within to join the family circle about the crib or Christmas tree.

Another Old Custom
Another old custom in England

was connected with the "Advent Images," sometimes called "vessel-cups," which were carried from house to house, being small open boxes decorated with evergreens containing little images representing Our Lord or the Infant Jesus and His Mother. These were shown by the children to grown-up people, who were expected to make some small gift. If one was so unfortunate as not to have seen an "Advent Image" during the Christmas season, he was regarded as most-unlucky, so much so that there was an old proverb in Northern England: "As unlucky as the man who has seen no 'Advent Images'."

Yule Log Important
While carrying the images, the children sang traditional verse, in which the master, mistress, and children of the house were blessed. This was called "singing of vessel-cups," or was called, both words being a corruption of Anglo-Saxon "wæsc hæl," or good health.
Also in olden England, the men and boys hauled into the house a huge Yule-log to be lighted on Christmas Eve to burn till Twelfth-night, or Epiphany, around which the family of the minor and the people of the village gathered to celebrate with singing, gifts, and religious exercises, the benevolent spirit of Christmas. A classic description of such a scene about the Yule-log has been given us by Washington Irving.

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Christmas Pie, Served in London, Big Curiosity

Probably the biggest Christmas pie on record is that which is said to have been prepared by Sir Henry Grey's household when Sir Henry was spending Christmas in London in 1770. Among the contents of the pie were four geese, two turkeys, two rabbits, four wild ducks, two woodcocks, two snipe, seven blackbirds, six plovers and two hens' tongues.
Contemporary records described the pie as "a very great curiosity," but there is no indication of the number of guests who set down to eat it or of what became of them. The pie was "cut in circumference" and was "filled with a case and four wheels to facilitate its use."

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The veil which covers the face of fatality is woven by the hand of mercy. —Bulwer Lytton.

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