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SANTA CLAUS IS UNKNOWN IN GERMANY

(Continued from Page 9)
 At Christmas and you shall always have abundance.
 Long before this legend originated the fir-tree was a symbol of eternal spring with the pagan Germans who admired its ever-green in the midst of wintry snow and ice, and took it as a sign of eternal life immersed in the seeming death of nature. At the same time mythology played an important part with these conceptions in so far as trees generally stood as emblems of the universe for the old Germanic tribes; their roots were seen reaching deep below the earth's surface, while the lofty tops towered high up to the sky.
 The tradition of the old German Yule Feast which signified the battle between winter and summer, between light and darkness, entered as another element into the later German conception of Christmas. This feast was celebrated on winter solstice day which was considered as the birthday of Freir, the Sun-God. For the early Christian missionaries on German soil it was easy enough to assimilate these traditions. From then on the Sun-God no longer was the center of popular veneration, nor did the winter solstice primarily convey the thought of the coming of Spring. The light of the world had now come on earth. The eternal sun of Christianity had risen. "O, how wonderful acted Providence that on that day on which the Sun was born, Christ should be born," says an old medieval script.
 The holy, silent night however always remained the center of the high mystic recurrence in all Germanic rituals. The vision of the Star of Bethlehem would not harmonize with bright day-light. The apparition of the Angels bringing the glad tidings to the shepherds on the hill is reported by St. Luke to have taken place in the midst of a sky-clear, oriental winter night. So the Germans still like to associate all that is dear to them in the Holy Child with Christmas Eve rather than with Christmas morning.
Light in The Darkness
 The glittering ornaments on the tree, the silvery star on its top, the garlands of multicolored paper and red and white candles on its branches, all that is meant to symbolize the light in the darkness which came from heaven upon earth. The decorated Christmas tree dates back only as far as the seventeenth century. Since then it has conquered the whole world, but the Germans still claim it as the traditional symbol of their national Christmas spirit. The Weihnachts, the hallowed night, remains the real culmination of the family-feast and represents all that is sacred to their hearts on Christmas Eve. The Carols, the gifts for the children and the real human joy of Christmas come on the eve of the feast itself, and going to Church the next morning to many means but the crowning of the events of the preceding Holy Night.
 Because German Christmas roots so deeply in the home, it has not yet become customary to keep illuminated trees on the front lawns of the houses. Not even Community Christmas trees have become popular after they had been introduced from America in recent years. In some parts of the country the Protestant churches arrange services on Christmas Eve, and of course, the decorated fir-trees are omnipresent in public meeting places, restaurants and hospitals. But otherwise the celebration remains a family affair, centered around the family tree whose shining lights are supposed to warm the heart spiritually just as the light of faith in the Midnight Masses in the Catholic Churches.
 Evergreens, holly, ivy and the mistletoe never have been able to displace the tree as the favorite symbol of German Christmas although branches of the fir-tree are widely used for the decoration of the houses during the holy season. And then, of course, there is no plum pudding, as in England. But plenty of other cookies are available, Nuremberg ginger breads, all kinds of fritters, and doughnuts of every imaginable description, also loaf-shaped currant cakes, a specialty of Dresden in Saxony. Those weeks when mother spends hours in the kitchen to prove her skill in baking cinnamon rolls and butter twists and honey cracknels are tense with expectation and anticipated Yule time joy.
 Christmas shopping presents no different aspects in Germany than anywhere else in the world, except that the three last Sundays of Advent are called Copper, Silvery and Golden Sundays respectively which are meant to be encouraging, if not always justified predictions as far as the shopkeepers are concerned. Santa Claus, as was said before, is mostly conspicuous by his absence and Knight Rupert or the

Foreigners Allowed Yuletrees In Russia

While the most stringent of police regulations prohibited the sale of any kind of a Christmas tree to a citizen, the Government of Soviet Russia made a special concession to foreigners last Christmas and permitted florist shops to handle trees exclusively for their purchase. However, the trees cost \$25 a piece, and, if the foreigner could afford this stiff price, he was hard put to provide it with appropriate decorations, which are very scarce in that country.

While the small foreign colony in Moscow made preparations for their own observance of Christmas last year, newspapers published announcements from the All-Union Goddess Society scheduling anti-Christmas meetings and lectures in various cities for December 25.

CHRISTMAS TREES POPULARITY
 Any doubt that one might have about the popularity of the Christmas tree in the United States is dispelled by the fact that nearly 1,000,000 spruce Christmas trees were reported to have been shipped into New York City alone five days before last Christmas.

Christ Child Himself takes his place in the displays of the big department stores and the colorful Christmas fairs. But one considerable difference in custom there is, at least between Germany and America: Gifts, believe it or not, are not wrapped up over here! They are nicely displayed unwrapped on a decorated table right close to the Christmas tree or even under the tree itself. An exception is made in the northern parts of Germany where a strange custom still prevails from olden times, called Julkapp.

A small gift is carefully wrapped up in an enormous package or box which is usually delivered at the door by an unexpected messenger some time after the peak of the family celebration is over. Often the package will just be thrown at the front door, with as much clatter as possible and with no trace left of the mysterious donor. Afterwards the almost endless unwrapping which may cause embarrassments and surprises galore affords merriment for the whole family.

For the children, of course, the gifts must be a surprise. Father and mother keep them hidden until Christmas Eve, and when the door is opened to the room where the tree stands lighted in all its glory, the youngsters are easily overwhelmed by the sudden fulfillment of many a secret dream. Afterwards they may retire and sleep happily keeping their dolls or their new stockings, or horse tenderly embraced or close at hand all through Christmas night.

Quaint Country Customs
 In the country regions some older traditions are still preserved, here and there.

In Thuringia it used to be a Christmas custom to carry a lighted candle into a darkened room in order to find out whether the carrier's shadow showed plainly his or her head! Accordingly the person in question would live or die in the following year. Another method for the same purpose was to set up as many small salt heaps as there were people in the house. Whose heap would collapse during Christmas night, would die the coming year. Less gruesome is the attempt of those maidens who choose Christmas Day to pick a log from the wood piles in their back yards to establish whether their future sweethearts are going to be straight-built or crook-shouldered. It is easily understood that it makes a lot of difference which log one picks!

In other regions the women are accustomed to step out into their gardens just after midnight on Christmas day and to throw the crumbs of Christmas Eve's supper table over the roots of the fruit trees, convinced that such wizardly fertilizing will have most beneficial effects at harvest time.

There are no Christmas cards in Germany, at least not as a mass institution to the extent customary in America.

The German Christmas is the most extended single holiday in existence. Not only for the school children, mind you, but for more or less everybody, except perhaps street car conductors or telephone operators. The holiday begins with Christmas Eve in the early afternoon. That's half a day. Then comes Christmas Day. Then the "second Christmas Day." When, for instance, December 24 falls on a Thursday, half of that day and the three following days are full holidays throughout Germany with all shops closed and holiday schedules prevailing for business and civil services generally. Fortunately, New Year's Eve is close by, and hardly anybody will be in a serious mood between those two dates. From Christmas to New Year is the off-season par excellence of Germany, with politics banned and peaceful leisure prevailing everywhere, as a blessed gift of the Christkind.

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