

Catholic Courier

seems to be a fear of retaliation of some sort. But if our cause has reason back of it, and can be shown as violating the rights of others in no way, why should we fear? In a democracy the ballot is in a way sacred, since it is the means of advancing and safeguarding the rights of man, which are sacred. Our appearing to be furtive about the ballot and our right and duty to use it to protect or further our interests within reason, has done its share in giving the impression that we plot secretly.

Perhaps we American Catholics still believe that we do not exactly belong here. So long as we are doubtful about it, so long will others be, too. And so long will we suffer in their respect. Is it not time we recovered from our inferiority complex? We have frequent elections in America. Why? For the sake of good government. We select our representatives with that tremendously important thought in mind. And how? Through ballots.

The only time an American with his form of government should be loath to bring up the matter of ballots is when he feels that his cause cannot endure the light of reason. There are various ways of giving encouragement. At first glance, certain ways may appear to discourage, but which upon examination are found to encourage. We rule through representatives. Our representatives need to know our will. Once known, they are responsive to it in proportion to its strength and extent and the force of reason back of it. But they expect to be shown.

Back to Washington comes a representative with his pockets bulging with newspaper clippings. He brings them to the White House, or shows them to his fellow representatives. They represent a demand. About this demand, strong groups have rallied. Speeches are being made, letters written in favor of it. It appears a fair demand. Under the circumstances, he wants to be shown. He is shown. And thus encouraged, he finds it easier to do the right thing. In the event of criticism, he has been furnished with an alibi, if you wish to put it that way. Forceful constituents have done his service. Such services are done daily by our officials at Washington, from the President down.

When the Catholic Press, or the Knights of Columbus, or any other group of Catholics, does such service, it stands a good chance of being considered a disservice by some who, we fear, are not fully aware of peaceful working at Washington.

It can scarcely be too strongly stated that no representatives presenting their claims at the National Capital can reasonably hope for favorable action unless evidence has first been presented of intense interest and activity in behalf of the demand on the part of those back home.

Something of the sort may have been in the minds of the American Bishops composing the Administrative Committee of the National Catholic Welfare Conference when last May they laid in the course of a statement of the Mexican situation.

"We the Administrative Committee, National Catholic Welfare Conference, will further spread the knowledge of the facts with regard to Mexico at the present time. We will continue to urge our people to express individually and corporately their petition to our Government that, in the role of the good neighbor, it use its good offices with the Mexican Government to restore religious liberty to its fifteen million citizens."

JOHN E. MASSETH.

TOLD YOU SO'S

Why do we remember some things and forget others? Why, too, does the inconsequential stick, while events of importance fade from memory. In any event, we've had recent occasion to recall a certain football game witnessed some twelve years ago. It was Syracuse versus Colgate, and in the particular play that stands out in memory, a boy named Baird was faked out of position. Right end for Colgate, he thought the play was around his left end. He went over to help in stopping the play. To his surprise, however, the play went around his end. The triplay lost the game for Colgate. In describing it, a football strategist said that Baird had been "sucked in."

It was back in October that we started trying to tell our Washington diplomats things—and with more than a whisper. But they wouldn't listen. And now they find themselves "sucked in." And are they unhappy about it? So unhappy and so disheartened that, according to Paul Mallon, Washington correspondent, "You have never heard diplomats use such language as the top New Deal set used here when they first heard about the Anglo-French peace plan."

They hadn't realized, though we had generously told them, Italy's position—allowed to go to war and so committed to see it through, faced, too, with pressing economic needs and, in case of withdrawal, with real danger of internal blow-up. We had told them that consequently Mussolini was in no mood to be bluff'd. We had warned them of the fall purpose of the Italian death squad of the air. They wouldn't listen. But John Bull must have got wind of our information. Anyway, he acted, and so there they are, our super-idealistic Washington diplomats, out on a limb!

In behalf of Britain, it should be considered that while Britain and Italy were fighting, it was Germany that attempted to gobble Central Europe. Japan might pick a scrap with Russia, or go in for further carry-over in China.

At the writing, word comes from Gen. Chiang Kai-shek, XV of the League, provided that it be brought into the world, it is too good to be true. It is too good to be true. It is too good to be true. It is too good to be true.

Current Comment

THE COMING OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE TO AMERICA

By E. F. Kenkel

The advent of the Christmas tree even in its native land, Germany, is still somewhat in doubt. While Christmas trees and boughs of the fir and the pine were customary there a long time back, the first known Christmas tree, erected in a home and decorated with tinsel and ornaments, was observed at Strasburg in Alsace by a traveler in 1822. But this tree was not as yet illuminated by candles. However, a private, used as a Christmas tree in the castle of the elector of Hanover in 1800, did carry tapers. But it was not until a century later, the Christmas tree, glowing with light, became popular in Germany. From this country the custom spread, until it is now universal.

But when and where was the Christmas tree first introduced in our country? Mr. Camille Schneider, an Alsatian, writing in 1922 in German, "The Christmas Tree and its Homeland, the Alsace," declares the Christmas of 1811 to have witnessed the first Christmas tree in the United States.

American received the first tree via the Alsace. An Alsatian family, as we have learned from private letters installed it in their living-room as an external proof of their homelike feeling for the Alsace. Very soon the tree illuminated also the rooms of non-Germans in America.

The opinion is, however, untenable, although the particular family, to which Mrs. Schneider refers, may have planted the first Christmas tree in a certain locality of our country, we are positive that the custom had been received in the home of many a German-American family a number of years prior to Christmas 1811.

While there was no Christmas tree to be had in Chicago in 1854, according to family traditions upon which we are able to draw, it was possible to obtain one in the same city a year or two later. And especially in German Forty-eighthers, in such cities as Wisconsin, where fir and pine were common, did not neglect to make the best of the opportunity to establish in their homes, soon after their coming to America, a custom so dear to them as that of the Christmas tree. Hence, early in the sixties the custom was already quite general. Ornaments, molded out of sugar by confectioners and popular in Germany a hundred years ago, were, to our knowledge, to be found in German bakeries in such cities as Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Louis over seventy years ago.

Our contentions are borne out by a remarkable incident, the planting of a Christmas tree, bearing in mind and ending, in Mexico, by an officer of the United States Army, while serving in the 2d Cavalry Volunteer Infantry during the Mexican War. Writing from "Camp at Acqua Nueva, 17 miles W. of Saltillo, Mexico, on December 25, 1846, Lieut. Adolph Engelmann, member of a distinguished family of German patriots at Belleville, told his parents:

"In the foothills enroute are many evergreens which gave us the idea of a Christmas tree. I got some four, sugar and apple trees, and a couple of young cedars, a couple of young firs, in the company made some right good cookies and we decorated the tree. I wish you could have seen it. The entire regiment gathered around to admire it and the mules and horse coats hung on it for special gifts. This young soldier, whose 'Mexican War Letters, 1846-47' were published in the January issue, 1924, Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society."

It is hardly probable Lieut. Engelmann should have observed the custom, if he did, and taken it to his parents without offering any further explanation of his action, had the "Latin farmers" of St. Clair County, Illinois, among whom the Engelmanns were of the most cultured and respected not previously fostered a Christmas tree in their new home since their coming to America, around 1833. But however that may be, Adolph Engelmann's letter first bears the assertion that the first Christmas tree was installed in America in 1861.

A recent number of the "Nova Letter of Canadian Events," issued by the Canadian Government Information Bureau at Ottawa, reveals to what extent the custom prevails in our country today. The article declares: "Christmas trees will soon be in season again, and Canada expects to ship nearly four million of them to the United States this year to help decorate the homes of American families and to spread Christmas cheer in the hearts of Canadians. In addition, it is estimated that anywhere from 500,000 to a million Canadian homes are adorned during the Yuletide season with trees from Canadian woodlands." Last year, it is added, our country is said to have imported 3,851,439 Christmas trees from Canada at a cost of \$175,200.

To such an extent has a custom, the religious and cultural influence of which no one will deny, attained economic importance in America. However, let the spirit of the Christmas tree be a blessing in a nation of the kind that we live in, which has given a birth and sustenance to the Christmas tree.

STRANGE BUT TRUE Catholic Facts But Little Known

By M. J. MURRAY

Illustration of the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Barcelona, Spain, with text describing its construction and architectural details. Includes a portrait of a man and a small illustration of a building.

Diocesan Recordings

THE CHRISTMAS season IS A TIME for JOY AND peace FOR CHARITY towards ALL MEN. WHEN WE read OF WARS and RUMORS of war THROUGHOUT the WORLD— WHEN WE hear THAT PEOPLE WILL NOT be BUDGED from THEIR practices WHICH include UNFAIR treatment OF EMPLOYEES OR EMPLOYERS FAILING to FULFILL obligations TO THOSE who HIRE them OR apathy IS SHOWN to THOSE in distress OR out-of-work AND PRESIDENTS ARE DAMNED to PROTESTS against NEIGHBORS who PERSECUTE neighbors OR THERE are THOSE WHO advocate MEROY MURDER AND OTHERS who BELIEVE birth PREVENTION can BE anything but IMMORAL and HARMFUL and NATIONS PERSECUTE men BECAUSE of THEIR religion AND THERE ARE citizens WHO PLAN to OVERTHROW all AUTHORIZED GOVERNMENT BY force of arms AND GOVERNORS WILL NOT permit BUNDS FOR CHILDREN of RELIGIOUS public SCHOOLS AND WHEN COMING sessions OF CONGRESS AND STATE LEGISLATURES WILL BE flooded WITH measures INDICAL to ALL the common-sense PRINCIPLES for WHICH the CHURCH stands AND HAS always STOOD. IT IS difficult TO NOTE the POSSIBILITIES FOR PEACE WHICH EVER at CHRISTMAS time OPPORTUNITY IS given TO APPEAL STRONGLY to THE PRINCE OF PEACE MAY ALL who ARE ABLE RECEIVE the SACRAMENTS and OFFER special PRAYERS that PEACE embracing WILL descend UPON men of GOOD WILL. TO influence THEIR minds and BEARTS for BETTER understanding FOR MORE CHARITABLE CONSIDERATION of NEIGHBOR whether NEXT DOOR or NEXT NATION THEN MAY all MEN AND you, AND YOU, the BLESSED CHRISTMAS WE WISH FOR all.

THE LIBRARY SIGN POST

The director and librarians of the Catholic Evidence Library join in praying that all its patrons may possess the full joy of this holy Christmas-tide. For all of us to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, there can be nothing but deepest gladness in the soul. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

Spiritual Thoughts

There is no devotion more fitting for sanctifying a soul than meditation on the Passion of Christ. Therefore meditate every day on the Passion if you would advance in the love of God. St. Bonaventure

THE CATHOLIC EVIDENCE LIBRARY RECOMMENDS

- THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST. By Msgr. Fidton J. Sheen. The latest and perhaps the finest work of this gifted American priest who is challenging the respect of sincerely intelligent people throughout the world appropriate reading for the holy season at hand.
- THE WOODCARVER OF TYROL. By Rev. Edmund A. Walsh, S. J. The kind of story that haunts the memory like a great love or a great deed of sacrifice: the Library is proud to present this beautiful short story to the Rochester reading public.
- THE SACRAMENT OF DUTY. By Rev. Joseph McSorley, C. S. P. Most helpful and graciously-written essays on such topics as Cheerfulness, Duty, Open-Mindedness, Progress in Prayer, Soul Blindness—keyed to the pitch of the average man and woman of sincere intelligence.
- SUNSHINE AND SAINTS. By Daisy H. Moseley. Characterized by a reviewer in the Commonwealth as "most notable for the depth of its spiritual feeling." There is great need for such a book which re-tells the lives of some favorite saints with simple beauty and dramatic power.
- N. B. The Library will not be opened on Christmas.

CATHOLIC EVIDENCE

DO YOU MIND IF WE ASK OUR MOTHER? Do you mind, dear non-Catholic neighbor, if, in extending to you our heartiest Christmas greetings, we make mention of the little maiden-mother of Jesus, with-out whom, we think, the picture of that first Christmas morn would be incomplete? On the eighth day of this very month the Catholic Church throughout the world celebrated that stupendous honor conferred by God on the mother of Christ—the Immaculate Conception—a doctrine so fitting and so logical that we Catholics wonder why it is so little understood by many sincere folk of other creeds. What true Christian does not subscribe with all his faith to the mystery of the Virgin Birth, although no human mind can comprehend it? Is it then so preposterous to believe that the mother of our Divine Saviour was further honored by another act of God, which made her free even from original sin from the very instant of her conception in her mother's womb? "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!" This doctrine is part of the total Deposit of Faith, in the possession of the Church since the first Pentecost Sunday. On December 8th, 1854, Pope Pius IX defined it as such officially that the Faithful might understand it and know it to be one of God's own truths. Mary, miraculously full of grace from her conception to her death! Mary, God's most highly honored creature, both on earth and in heaven! Mary, your mother and ours. Bequeathed to us by the dying Jesus, Mary, now sitting at His Sacred Feet, yearning for our love, listening for our petitions! Do you mind then, dear non-Catholic neighbor, if we ask our heavenly mother to implore her beloved Son to give to you and us this Christmas day, and every other day, what He knows to be best for us, and that we all shall be given enough human wisdom to have faith in His infinite wisdom? "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!" Catholic Information Society of Northville, Pa.