

The Baton

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FRANK DAMROSCH, Director

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"R. S. V. P." A CHRISTMAS ROMANCE*

*When winter nights grow long,
And winds without grow cold,
We sit in a ring 'round a warm wood-fire,
And listen to stories old!*

What images are called up by the words, "'Twas the night before Christmas!" We think of distant bells, of frost and snow, and in contrast, of warm holly-decked homes fragrant with the odor of balsam; we feel at once the tense hush of expectancy, of restrained excitement in anticipation of feasting, revelry, and the exchange of gifts.

Sit with us in spirit this Christmas Eve around a great fireplace where Yule logs give forth a crackling warmth and fitful radiance making discernible the faces of other guests—men and women of many lands and many faiths. A strange gathering and, stranger still, the tales they tell.

"Curious, is it not, that early pagan influence is traceable in many of the customs used

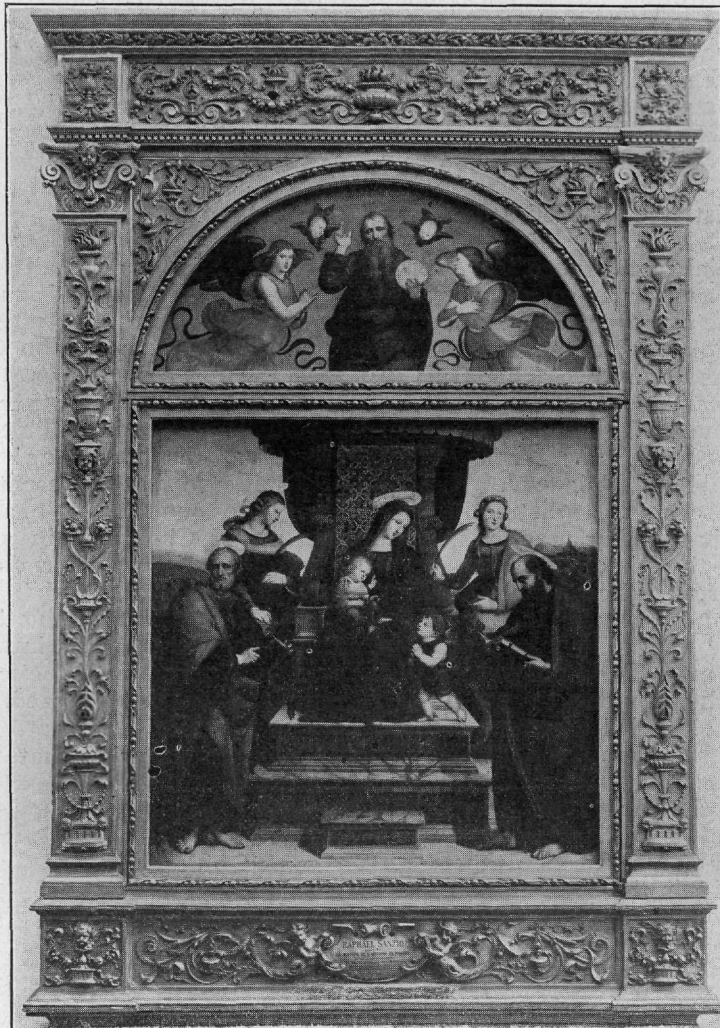
in celebrating a religious festival?" The speaker was undistinguishable in the shadow.

"This very Yule log is derived from an ancient usage," responded another. Indicating the open

fire, he continued, "our Scandinavian forefathers burned the Yule log in celebration of the sun, or the new light, when it first appeared after the long dark winter. It was called the 'Feast of Light.' When the Christian missionaries wished to associate their teaching with customs already understood, they explained the birth of Christ as the coming of the Light of the World. In this way light continued to be the symbol of the season and still remains with us, even to the placing of lighted candles on our Christmas trees."

"Where do we get this idea of a Christmas tree?" inquired a timid person in the corner.

"It is the supreme symbol of Christmas in Germany," replied one who seemed to



Raphael's "Colonna Madonna"
(See Page 10)

*(A Series of Interviews—See Footnote Page 18)

know. "They have a religious feeling for their Weinachtsbaum, as it is called. It may come down from some dim ancestral worship of the trees of the wood."

"Or what is even more likely," suggested one versed in ancient literature, "it may date from the old Roman custom in the fourth century of decking houses with laurels and green trees at the *Kalends* of January (New Year's Day). At that time the impulse to give and to spend seized everyone, according to an account written by the famous sophist, Libanius. A stream of presents poured itself out on all sides. The highroads and footpaths were covered with processions of laden men and beasts. The *Kalends* festival banished all that was connected with toil and allowed men to give themselves to undisturbed enjoyment, to feasting and to revelry."

"In England," ventured another, "the Christmas tree appeared first about 1840, I think, when Queen Victoria had one, and the fashion spread until it became completely naturalized. It is essentially a home institution, but it appears also in churches. In Germany, where the Christmas tree first flourished, the graves of the dead are decked on Christmas Eve with holly and mistletoe and a little Christmas tree with gleaming lights—a touching token of remembrance, an attempt, perhaps, to give the departed a share in the brightness of the festival."

"Why holly and mistletoe?" asked a doubting Thomas.

"They have a special significance," answered a kindly voice. "In winter when all plant-life is apparently dead, the evergreens symbolize the abiding life and the holly, mistletoe and ivy are especially cherished as actually bearing fruit in the winter time. In certain European countries the mistletoe is believed to possess powers of averting misfortune and healing sickness. This idea comes from an old Druid legend. Kissing beneath the mistletoe seems to be distinctly English, though a somewhat similar practice is used in Lower Austria and the Rhaetian Alps. Holly is supposed to be sacred; it keeps away witches who hate the thorns and it is used in Britain for divination—put under the pillow by one who desires prophetic dreams. Holly has been called the men's plant, ivy the women's."

"Oh! What is that?" cried a feminine voice in alarm at a wailing sound in the chimney.

"Perhaps a Christmas ghost," exclaimed another. "I have heard that no time is so charged with the supernatural as Christmas Eve. A superstition exists that animals have the power of speech—that at midnight all cattle and oxen rise in their stalls to commemorate the birth in the manger. It is also a widespread idea that at midnight on the same eve, all water turns to wine."

"How near twelve o'clock is it?" asked one wearied of American Prohibition!

"According to the people of various nations, all sorts of uncanny things are supposed to occur," continued the other. "It is in many places

a time for auguries—the whole season of the 'Twelve Days,' as the period between Christmas Eve and Epiphany is called, seems full of this tradition."

"Why should this be?" questioned a nervous individual.

"Another relic of paganism linked to the winter season of darkness, howling winds, raging snowstorms, when men may have thought they saw and heard dread things."

"Something like our New Year's celebration," said another. "Charms, omens, and good wishes play a large part in the festivities of January 1st and the evening preceding; the idea rests, I believe, on the principle that a good beginning makes a good ending, that as the first day is, so will the rest be. The use of things to make noises on New Year's Eve originated with the theory of thus scaring away evil spirits."

"What about 'the eats'?" came as a sudden discord in the placid harmonies of the conversation. "Isn't this spirit of Christmas linked up with the notion of feasting?" added the earthly one. "Consider, for instance, the case of the turkey!"

The air became filled with exclamations. "But we do not have turkey in my country," "What about the wassail bowl," "A special Christmas cake—," "Oh, did you ever hear of the —," "Yes, at the *Sucrerie*?" "You've never tasted anything like—," until out of the confusion came the voice of the hostess.

"Enter the human element," an excellent suggestion. Suppose we all have some good old-fashioned egg nog and fruit cake." There was a stir of approval. "And then, while thus indulging in conviviality on Christmas Eve," pursued the hostess, "let us hear how the festival is being celebrated in other parts of the world."

"Oh, how wonderful!" ejaculated a feminine creature of the "thrill" age!

"I am sure that represented in our little gathering are enough nationalities to give us a glimpse of Christmas in almost every country where it is observed, provided everyone will be good enough to respond."

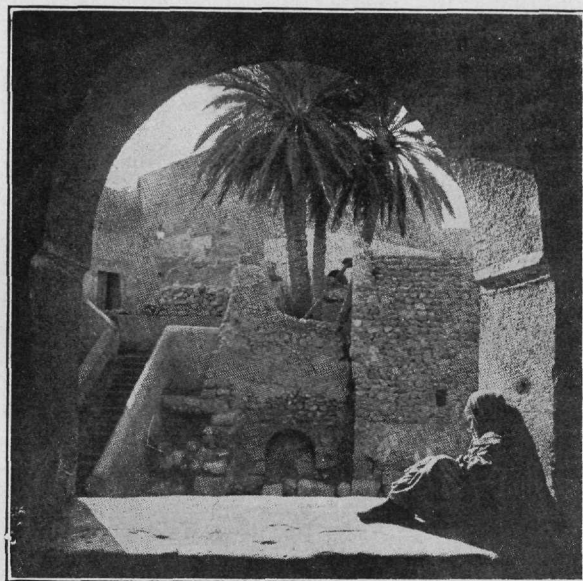
As a servant placed another log on the fire, it flared up with greater intensity enabling us to perceive that many of the faces in the semi-circle were familiar. We realized, also, that we were in the presence of the great. With added interest we awaited eagerly what was to be disclosed.

"Well, 'R.S.V.P.' everybody! There is romance in our midst! Where shall we begin," continued the hostess. "If **Dr. Damrosch** can be persuaded to waive formality in favor of his pipe, I am certain it will induce reminiscences of the country from which we got our delightful tradition of the Christmas tree."

"If you insist," smiled the Director good-naturedly, taking a tobacco pouch from his pocket. As he thoughtfully filled the beloved pipe, everyone settled into the mood of the occasion. After a few contented puffs, he fixed his gaze on the dancing flames and began:

The German "Weinacht"

"The Christmas season begins with St. Nicholas Day, December 6th. That evening the children sit with the mother awaiting the arrival of St. Nicholas with the Christ-child. Heavy footsteps are heard in the corridor followed by a heavy knock. As the door is opened St. Nicholas stumbles and falls (a necessary part of the proceedings). Out of his bag spill apples, nuts and other goodies all over the floor. St. Nicholas pretends he is very angry and shaking his big club at the children, he asks the mother whether the children have been good throughout the year. If not, they must in punishment jump over his club. The children, who ordinarily would like



Palestine, the land of the first Christmas

nothing better than such a 'stunt,' tremble at the mere suggestion under these circumstances. If the children are good, they sing a song or recite a poem in quavering tones. The Christ-child, though represented as a little boy dressed in white, is always impersonated, strange to say, by a little girl! The Christ-child carries a basket of sweets which he distributes and, pronouncing a blessing on the children of the house, departs with St. Nicholas.

"Then follow the elaborate preparations for real Christmas, which in Germany is celebrated on Christmas Eve or *Weinacht* (Sacred Night) as it is called. The girls are engaged in making cross-stitch embroidery on silver canvas and the boys learn poems or something which will show how anxious they are to please their parents. For weeks beforehand everyone is busy making decorations for the prospective tree; nuts and apples are gilded and silvered; chains of gold and silver paper are cut out, and chains of glazed paper in bright colors—really beautiful things.

"Two weeks before Christmas in the big market place in front of the City Hall, booths are put

up where small tradespeople sell attractive, gaudy and delightfully quaint things for the poorer people. Another square in the town is devoted exclusively to selling Christmas trees (not every variety of evergreen as here) only fir balsams, which are cultivated on big plantations.

"For a week prior to the great occasion, the parlor doors are kept locked—the children not permitted to enter. There are mysterious sounds and a delicious odor of fir balsam. If it is possible for a family to raise the money, the Christmas tree must be big enough to extend from floor to ceiling. At the tip top is fastened a flag of 'rustle gold,' which is brass rolled out so thin that the slightest breath makes it whisper.

"After sundown Christmas Eve, the family assembles in the adjoining room. The father and mother go in to light the candles. There is hushed expectancy outside—the sound of a march is heard—the folding doors open—an hundred candles cast their radiance on the scene. Around the great lighted tree, long tables and benches are arranged on all sides of the room, where have been placed the presents for the family, guests and servants. The gifts are not wrapped in tissue paper as in America, but displayed to the best advantage to catch the eye of the beholder. Great ingenuity and taste is exercised to attractively exhibit the things. Even necessities and new clothes which have been needed for sometime past are saved to acquire additional glory under the tree.

"Before anyone approaches they stand *en masse*, the little children in the front row and the tallest of the grown-ups in the rear, so all may obtain a full view of the tree. Then they intone the beautiful old songs, '*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*,' and '*Oh Tannenbaum*.' The parents take the children to their appointed places and show them their presents. At first there is awed silence when the children's eyes are as big as saucers. The reaction is tumultuous when they become absorbed in playing with dolls, railroad trains, magic lanterns, etc.

"After the children have been tucked in bed to dream of the all-embracing Santa Claus, the older folks gather around the supper table where hot punch and other drinks, and cakes associated with Christmas are provided. Of course, a plate of *lebkuchen* in the shapes of animals and men has already appeared at each place among the presents but there is another cake baked in a big loaf for supper which is called *stollen*. Another requisite for Christmas Eve is a sort of almond paste named *marzipan*.

"But let Dr. Goetschius add to this picture of Christmas the details I may have forgotten," concluded Dr. Damrosch.

* * *

"I might refer to the observance of Christmas in South Germany," said Dr. Goetschius, "which I have witnessed many times. Although Germany as a whole consists of a number of different provinces, whose inhabitants naturally dif-

fer considerably from those of each other, there is one dominant psychic attribute that is common to them all, and is distinctive of German character. That attribute is called, in their language, '*Gemüt*'; and it is well nigh impossible to find an equivalent word in English, or any other language, because that precise quality does not seem to exist in other nationalities, and so there is no word for it.

"The nearest equivalent is probably *sentiment*; but *Gemüt* means much more than that. It is an infinitely sweet, altruistic, warm-hearted attribute of the soul, whose roots are struck deep in the soil of *Home*.

"Something closely akin to it dwells in the nature of the English, as is attested by many a thoroughly delightful passage in the Christmas Carols and Pickwick Papers by Charles Dickens. And I am sure it is present, though not confessed, in the heart of all true Americans, despite our reputation for absorbing materialism, and rather reckless independence.

"This trait of character is the true basis of the Germans' attitude and demeanor in their observance of Christmas. They are not actuated by the religious bearing of the festival, as the birthday of Christ. They, like we, give more emphasis to Saint Nicholas (our Santa Claus) than to the Christ-child.

"In Germany, Christmas is preeminently a *home* festival, and if outsiders are invited to share it, it is from the overflowing love of good-fellowship.

"They must have their Christmas tree; and it must be 'trimmed' till its boughs bend, with candies, nuts (with a coating of gold or silver leaf), apples, cookies, and all sorts of gleaming artificial ornaments, many of which are now familiar to us, having come to us from them. Yes, and candles—to shed light and warmth.

"And the children sing their beautiful '*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*' and await, with mingled feelings of joyful and fearful expectation, the boisterous entrance of Saint Nicholas, who questions them in a gruff voice as to their past conduct, and generally tempers his wrathful admonitions with ultimate gifts of goodies from his ample pack.

"'Good will on earth' prevails, and everyone, young and old, beams with happiness on Christmas Eve; with a genuine human joy; an infinite wealth of good-fellowship, born of their precious soul-attribute—*Gemüt*."

* * *

"May I suggest, without seeming to contradict," intervened **Mr. Carl Friedberg**, "that the German Christmas, in common with the other European countries, does emphasize to a degree the religious element?" Turning to the others, Mr. Friedberg added, "Some of you probably know the convent of Maria Laach, where one of the most magnificent midnight masses is held. The music is all of a very early period such as Palestrina and the old masters. There is also a rendition of the Beethoven *Missa Solemnis*.

"Have you ever seen the procession of nuns and monks preceded by acolytes bearing aloft large candles? The effect in the dark night against the white snow is most impressive. The procession goes around the grounds and all through the church.

"As for the celebration in the homes, it is much the same as here, with the exception of one thing. You do not sing so much. During the season the Germans sing not only Christmas songs, but also all their folk-songs, of which they have a great number.

"Almost every home has a replica of the manger, together with the figures of the Three Wise Men, and the shepherds. Of course, they have all kinds of sweets and goodies, including the cake made of raisins which is called '*Christ-cake*.'

"I spent one of my Christmases at the Spanish Court, when the present ruler was but a child. The little monarch had me entertain him with a Viennese waltz and as recompense His Royal Highness conferred on me the honor of Knight of the Order Isabella Catolica, which entitles the recipient to use, if he wishes, the title '*Cavalier*.'"

"Can Mr. Salzedo tell us of Christmas in Spain, perhaps? Your first name is Spanish, I believe," he added, turning to the harpist.

The French "Noël"

"Yes, but I was born in France," replied **Mr. Salzedo**. "However, I shall be delighted to speak of our *Noël*, which in France is more a musical than religious festival. As you say in America, the weeks before Christmas are filled with preparations for gift giving and feasting—but in France preparations are made in the churches; the populace gather to enjoy the wonderful music. This, in all its beauty is but a prelude to the '*Messe de Minuit*' (at midnight). The churches engage the best possible soloists for the occasion, performing works of old masters—few of which are of later date than 1800. The organists are always exceptionally fine musicians — (Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Dupré, Bonnet, etc.) and beautiful improvisations are a result. Everyone, no matter what creed or belief, attends the midnight Mass —after the customary Christmas theatre party.

"At the conclusion of the services the families go home to the proverbial supper—with *pâté de foie gras*, champagne and oysters as the essential features. These three are of great importance to the identity of the Christmas supper.

"For the children, Christmas means wooden shoes placed in neat rows in the chimney places—they are filled with goodies in the morning." The speaker flicked the ashes of his cigarette into the fire. "**Mme. Albro**," he said, turning to the French teacher of the Institute, "will you not honor us with your impression of our *Noël*?"

* * *

"Well, I think it is perhaps not generally understood or appreciated how great a difference



"The First Christmas Eve"—Drawn by Robert Norton

exists in the meaning and more particularly in the celebration of Christmas here and in France. In this country, it has developed a celebration that is expressed in the exchange of gifts and frequently to an extravagant extent, so that the holiday spirit is emphasized and somewhat eclipses the religious significance of the day. But in France it is more of a church festival; and yet after the most beautiful midnight masses, celebrated in all the churches, are over, people of a certain social standing, rush to the fashionable hotels and restaurants, and enjoy a supper called 'Réveillon,' where champagne wine flows like water. . . .

"The Santa Claus feature exists only for very small children who on Christmas Eve, put their shoes, instead of their stockings, in the chimney place in the hope and belief that '*Le petit Jésus*' will bring the desired gifts. Very seldom, do you see Christmas trees in a private family (they do not know what they miss!)

"So it will be noticed that what people see and feel here as the holiday spirit, two or three weeks before the event, is almost unknown in France in this connection.

"But the celebration of the '*Jour de l'An*' (first day of the year) takes on the character of a gay holiday with exchange of gifts and the long continued custom of social calls. On that day, everybody (even strangers on the street) greets each other with these few words,

'Bonne Année! Bonne Santé!'"

* * *

"Very much the same as our French student, Jacqueline de Moor, told me one day," Beatrice Klünter's bobbed head nodded emphatically.

"The French do not make the same occasion of Christmas Day as do the other people. To them it is a day more for the family. Nevertheless, on Christmas Eve they all go to church—that is all the older people do. The service is so arranged that at midnight everyone is partaking of the communion. This takes place both in the big cities and in the provinces. The churches are beautifully decorated with greens and the

most glorious music is provided, as Mr. Salzedo has already mentioned. After the service there is revelry and feasting.

"Almost everybody goes to, or has a party, or stops at a restaurant for merry-making. In the restaurants in Paris convention is forgotten—the guests join with the performers in providing entertainment and everybody talks to everybody else. The spirit is more like that existing on the American 'New Year's Eve.' No one dreams of going home until around six or seven in the morning. Then they arouse the children, who have probably been wide awake long before this and the youngsters make a dash for their presents.

"The *Jour de l'An*, Mme. Albro has already described; the holiday spirit lasts throughout the entire month of January." Turning to Mr. Alexander Savine, she suggested, "I have heard that Christmas in Serbia is one of the most unique of all. If you're not too exhausted from opera rehearsals, won't you tell us about it, please?" She leaned forward eagerly.

Christmas in Serbia

"With pleasure," responded Mr. Savine of the invariable courtesy and patience. "For two days previous to December 24th we fast, that is, to the extent of the church orders which forbid the use of butter, milk, meat or pastry during a period of fasting. We may eat only things cooked with water, plain bread with honey, or salad without oil.

"At the hour of the Vesper Bells, five o'clock on Christmas Eve, the household assembles. The Yule logs are brought in and crossed together. As everyone crosses themselves and kneels before the fire, red wine is poured on the logs making the sign of the Cross with it.

"In the dining room straw has been strewn about the floor in remembrance of the fact that Christ was born in a manger. The table is decorated with fruits and a special 'Holy Cake' only to be eaten on Christmas Day. Straw is placed in a bowl, fruit, nuts and rice are put on it, and

in the center is the Holy Cake, a kind of fruit cake with powdered sugar on it; in the middle of the cake burns one large candle. The head of the house takes four nuts and throws one to the north corner of the room, then to the south corner, east corner and west corner—this action making a double Cross and he says at the same time, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.'

"A meal follows when the food provided consists of fish, soup, spaghettini covered with ground nuts mixed with vanilla and sugar, and the dessert is bread and honey (without butter) and coffee or tea (without milk). The family sits around the fire until the log burns through the middle and then all retire.

"Early Christmas morning, at four o'clock, we are awakened by a youth whom we call for that day '*Poloznik*,' meaning Little Man of the Fire. He is never older than ten years and is usually the child of the best friend of the house. The custom is derived from the idea that the arrival of the boy Christ brought joy to the house of Joseph and Mary—thus the coming of the *Poloznik* brings luck to the house.

"The *Poloznik* never comes empty-handed; he carries a bottle of holy water (signifying that the members of the house have been baptized Christians) and a coin and incense, typifying the three gifts of the Wise Men of Old. The hostess receives the boy on the threshold, throwing rice upon him to indicate there is plenty in the house. She gives him a hand-embroidered towel made of gauze; for months in advance these are made by housewives. These gifts are placed by the boy in a sort of 'hope chest' and in after years when he is married, they form a proud feature of his house.

"The *Poloznik* goes to the fireplace where the Yule logs are still burning. He moves the ashes aside and puts some straw on the fire so it will burn brighter. As he does so, he says, 'Radiant flames of the Christmas festival are greeting the house and blessings come from heaven.' At the same moment the men of the family, grouped outside, simultaneously shoot their rifles into the sky in salute that 'Christ is born.'

"The coin which the *Poloznik* brought is put in a special Christmas cake made from flour and water. It is called '*chestniza*.' At Christmas dinner the whole family takes hold of this cake and breaks it. The person who finds the coin in his piece is the lucky one.

"All attend the service of the Greek-Oriental Church. There are no evergreens and no present-giving until New Year's. At that time we celebrate the Baptism of Christ and all children are baptized."

"Most unique customs," exclaimed the hostess as Mr. Savine finished. Then after a pause, "I suppose the celebration in Italy, which is so linked up with religious tradition, is significant. Will you tell us of it, Miss Toledo?" It was the daughter of our Italian teacher thus addressed.

Christmas in Italy

"To give even a general idea of Christmas in Italy," she began, "it will be necessary to describe three different Christmases, one in each of the three main divisions: Northern, Central and Southern Italy, as each has its own individual way of celebrating Christmas, with characteristic customs. More often, some of these customs will be found common to Central and Southern Italy, due to the fact that in Northern Italy the influence of the Anglo-Saxon customs is felt more than in the other regions of Italy.

"In Southern Italy, as well as in some sections of Central Italy slightly north of Rome, Christmas is purely a religious festival, the custom of giving gifts at that time being in vogue only in the North, where the use of the Christmas tree has been well established. Southern Italy exchanges gifts mainly on All Saints Day, November 2nd, while Central Italy has Epiphany, January 6th, for that purpose. Santa Claus and his wife are known only to the North of Italy, as a general rule, though there are a number of families in Central Italy who are gradually celebrating Christmas in the Anglo-Saxon way.

"Throughout Italy, almost two or three weeks before Christmas Eve are given over to the preparation of the '*presepi*' or miniature reproductions of the manger at Bethlehem. These '*presepi*' have reached such artistic perfection in the provinces of Umbria, as to make them proverbial. The average '*presepio*' represents the Manger, with almost the exact number of figures (holy Family, Three Wise Men, etc.) mentioned in the Scriptures. In Sicily, particularly in the town of Caltagirone, the little terra cotta figures placed in the '*presepio*' are truly works of art.

"On Christmas Eve, it is the general rule for all bagpipe players to go from one house to another, playing their bagpipes and singing the '*novena*' which is a religious '*recitativo*' sung by one individual accompanied by bagpipe music and an occasional chorus. The '*novena*' may be heard throughout the night straight till dawn, particularly in the country. The bagpipe players come mostly from the mountains, and are dressed in knickerbockers, with a characteristic long tassel-cap that invariably marks some sort of musical rhythm. They return to their mountain homes immediately after Christmas is over.

"Food plays a most important part throughout the Christmas festivities; and in Southern Italy particularly at Naples, there is the special Christmas supper, consisting of fish, various kinds of cheese, and practically everything except meat. In this regard, it is interesting to note that a Neapolitan will incur all sorts of debts as long as every special dish for that Christmas supper is assured; the debts being payable any time thereafter. The most characteristic sight in Naples at that time is the Fish Market on Christmas Eve.

"Christmas Eve throughout Italy is spent playing cards, also '*lotto*' with the intermission be-

tween eleven thirty and two thirty a. m. for Midnight Mass. Inasmuch as this time of the year is the one great occasion for large family gatherings, it is not surprising that cards and the national game of 'lotto' should be the favorite method of spending the time between eating and praying on Christmas Eve.

"Midnight Mass in Italy on Christmas Eve is proverbial for its special music. It is peculiar to note that in Rome, the very centre of Catholicism, St. Peter's Cathedral, is closed to the public that night. There is a Midnight Mass celebrated in the Sistine Chapel, with music furnished by the Sistine Chorus, but that is only for the highest officials of the Clergy and, it is said, the immediate members of their families. However, two of the best churches in Rome have Midnight Mass open to the public (but the public must have admission cards): S. Luigi dei Francesi, and Santa Maria degli Angeli, the latter being the church where royal and the élite marriages are performed.



St. Peter's Cathedral from the Vatican garden, Rome

"Christmas Day is a riot of color: every village, town and city of Italy has its special 'piazza' or square, generally the largest or the one in the centre of the town, where an infinite variety of funny toys and unbelievable quantities of special Christmas sweets are sold. Christmas, I'm almost afraid to state, would not be Christmas in Italy for the younger generation, without the wonderful assortment of candy specialties. These consist of 'panforte' (something between the modern Christmas pudding and a glorified sponge-cake with raisins, etc.), *torron* (nougat) in the most exquisite flavors, sometimes known as 'torroncini' which are really small square or rectangular pieces of the nougat wrapped in tiny boxes; in addition to *panforte* and *torrone*, there is a large variety of fancy cakes, with pink, red, white and green icings, decorated with tiny sugar doves, babies, etc., all eatable of course, and greatest in importance there are the almond-paste and honey-sweets, in various fruit shapes, expensive, but absolutely necessary on that day of days.

"That, in brief, is Christmas in Italy, over three thousand miles away. But, for your information, all the tangible (particularly the eatable) things

characteristic of Italy's Christmas, may be seen, bought and tasted in many of the shops on Bleecker Street and its environs, as well as in 'Little Italy,' uptown in Harlem. English won't be necessary, as in some of those shops this language of ours is unknown. You are expected to know some Italian, but if you don't, whatever you wish to buy is in full view, and the sign language is universally known!"

* * *

"Yes, our student, Omino Bottega, mentioned the 'novena' as referring to any religious celebration or festival which takes nine days to complete." It was Beatrice Klunter who spoke again. "On Christmas Eve there is a grand celebration of the Eucharist at midnight in all the churches. In the cathedral of the town the service is most magnificent. A symphony orchestra and oratorio society under master direction, unite in rendering the carols and music used at this season. After the service the people go to their homes. There is served an elaborate meal—in fact a dinner. At the table one extra place is laid, as if for an expected guest. Food is provided just as if the guest had arrived and then burned at the hearth. This custom symbolizes the Advent of the Saviour.

"Days and days before the children have been busy learning little verses to recite at the Christmas Supper. This is their way of offering the greetings of the season to the heads of the family. Mr. Bottega, in telling of the custom, confessed that sometimes he had the verses hidden under his plate and he used to be so much abashed when the big moment arrived that the words burst out regardless of any meaning. The efforts of the tots were rewarded by gifts from the older members of the family."

Jugo-Slavia

"Somewhat similar is the Jugo-Slavian Christmas," ventured Mr. Svecenski. "We, too, emphasize the religious side. We do not hold the *Novena* but peasants come around and play the Christmas airs for which they are nicely rewarded either with food or coins.

"The children do not have a Santa Claus, but instead believe in the Christ-child who flies around rewarding all those who have been good throughout the year. Of course the naughty ones, too, receive gifts.

"Every family able to do so feeds and fattens a pig. This is done weeks before so as to have meat and sausages in readiness for the holidays. Such preparations go on for a long time before, because everything is made at home. One thinks especially of the fatted pig when partaking of soup and sandwiches in our Institute lunch-room!" There was a merry twinkle in Mr. Svecenski's eyes.

A Voice from Holland

Just then a merry "Hello everybody" was heard and on the threshold stood Mr. Willeke, snow still clinging to his overcoat.

"Ah, just in time to tell us your impressions of Christmas in Holland," exclaimed Mr. Damrosch.

Giving his hat and coat to an attendant, he answered, "The Dutch Christmas is exactly like the Belgian—absolutely no difference—ask Edouard!"

The younger Dethier being thus accosted, protested vigorously, whereupon Mr. Willeke pleaded fatigue from a concert and selecting a cigar from a humidor on the table, settled comfortably in an easy chair apparently delighted to have thus shifted the responsibility to other shoulders!

Christmas in Belgium

"Gaston, you describe it," insisted Mr. Edouard Dethier.

"But you have more recent memories of it," Mr. Gaston Dethier argued.

"Well, you start and I'll help you out," from the embarrassed Mr. Edouard.

"Christmas in Belgium is very much like other countries, I think. The most important feature is the Midnight Mass with its wonderful music. I used to be alto soloist of the choir of the Liège Cathedral when the composer, Jongen, was soprano soloist and we used to sing the Christmas music. After Mass there were delicious suppers at home with hot wine and a special kind of pancake."

"And do you remember the life-size animal cakes made at Dinand?" interrupted Mr. Edouard. "And that sort of waffle we always have at New Year's? And the billet-doux we laboriously penned on lace edged paper to our parents?"

"We do not give presents at Christmas," continued Mr. Gaston. "It is more the religious significance we emphasize."

"On December 6th, though," corrected Mr. Edouard, "the children have their innings. That is St. Nicholas Day, and oh, the toys! Such beautiful ones, real works of art, that are no longer made. And how frightened we always were when a gruff voice, supposedly that of Santa Claus, in the darkened hall, would demand to know whether we were good or bad children."

"I remember one Christmas when I was about eleven years old I was crazy for a pistol—a real one which was displayed in a shop window. My mother, however, protested because I already had three rifles (I had learned to shoot very young and adored it) and it would be dangerous for me to have the pistol. So I went every day and peered through the window at the coveted weapon. When the day for presents came, I couldn't help hoping it would be among them, even though I knew it was not to be. My mother noticed the disappointment with which I must have ungratefully regarded the many lovely gifts. When she saw the tears which involuntarily filled my eyes, she said, 'Why don't you look up?' Sure enough, there was the pistol hung from the chandelier and that, I think, was one of the hap-

piest moments of my life! With what intensity we feel the tragedies and joys of childhood.

"There was another Christmas a number of years later, the recollection of which always makes me laugh. You know the first act of *La Bohème*? It was just like that. Paul Kochanski and I were studying at the Conservatoire and living together in Brussels. Six or seven of us (all students) decided to have a Christmas dinner party—but unfortunately Christmas occurs near the last of the month. Allowances come on the first and somehow are spent very rapidly! We bought what food we could and carried it home under our arms that cold, snowy Christmas Eve. We had to have champagne to celebrate, of course, but we only could scrape up two francs after we had purchased the food. So—we got a quart bottle of champagne—it cost two francs—but—don't ask me how it tasted!

"Soon after Christmas that year, the Director of the Warsaw Grand Opera, who was like a second father to Paul Kochanski, sent a huge Christmas box containing 1500 Russian cigarettes, a marvelous fruit cake and so many other good things, we had another party in true Bohemian extravagance—eating it all up at once!

"Speaking of Russia. Can't someone tell us of Christmas there?" asked Mr. Edouard as he fitted a cigarette into the long Russian holder Kochanski had given him.

The Russian "Roshdestvo"

"The preliminary to the Russian Christmas, in contrast to the joyous celebrations in other lands, is a fast held on the day before Christmas." The speaker was Mr. Fonaroff. "No one, not even the children, take so much as a drop of water till six o'clock on the Eve. At that hour a fine meal is served. Before the cloth is laid, the table is spread with hay. The people sit around the table and each pulls a few strands. The fortunate ones drawing hay with the seeds still on, are supposed to have in store for them an especially prosperous year."

After the meal there is served a special dish called '*kutya*.' This is something like a plum pudding and can be of two varieties, dark and light. The dark is made of honey and barley; the light is made of rice and raisins. While the meal is in progress poor children come and sing under the window. As a reward for the entertainment provided, the kiddies are invited in and fed. So beautifully do they sing and the parts blend so perfectly that one would think them under master direction while as a matter of fact they are untrained.

Most of the people are so poor that Christmas trees, though not unknown, are rare. They do know a Christmas spirit equivalent to Santa Claus, whom they call *Moros Krasnu noss* (the translation of this is Frost Red Nose). The children pray to him for gifts and sometimes he comes and sometimes he doesn't!

"On the sixth of January the really big cele-

bration of the year takes place. The Greek Catholic clergy gorgeously garbed in lofty hats and robes of gold and silver cloth studded with precious jewels, march to the river. The acolytes robed with great elegance precede them bearing on high the images of saints. When they arrive at the river, which is frozen over, they march out to the middle, crack a hole in the ice, and dip the cross in. Thousands of people from the city follow the procession and upon the arrival at the river, every head, even those of the priests, is uncovered despite the extreme cold."

* * *

"To my mind, Christmas in Russia is celebrated much as it is here," Mr. Samoiloff took up the narrative. "The Greek Catholic does not differ radically from the Roman Catholic form of observance.

"Here we have our New Year's calls; Russia has her Christmas calls. It is a day of good cheer and open house. Every housewife takes great pains in keeping the board constantly load-



Jugo-Slavia—On this street is the house where Mr. Svecenski was born.

ed down with all sorts of delicacies. Visitors constantly come and go. Our friend, Ivan, after kissing his hostess' hand, has a glass of vodka and a sandwich here; a glass of vodka and some caviar there; a glass of vodka and some pickles further on. Next day he has a headache, to say the least!

"But Ivan finds it worth while. He repeats the performance next day, and the next. Meanwhile prohibition is forgotten. In the mornings young boys and girls, mostly boys, in masquerade, sing '*Slava*' (Praise!) in the vicinity of the richer homes. Several days before Christmas the aforementioned '*Kutyá*' are made, and sent to the neighbors as a Christmas gift."

* * *

"One of the students, Kostelanetz, who was recently pianist to the Petrograd Grand Opera House, told me some curious facts regarding this season in Russia." We recognized the voice of Maurice Popkin, another of those hard worked members of the Baton Editorial Board!

"Christmas in Russia," he said, "begins on the eve of January sixth, new style, thirteen days

after the old style; namely, the eve of January twenty-fourth. Thus, Christmas comes after New Year—an anomaly peculiar to Russia. For unlike Christmas, New Year's is not a Church holiday, and is not affected by the change from old to new.

"Christmas is known as *Rojdestvo*, 'The Day of the Nativity,' and celebrated much as it is done here. The trees are brought in on the tenth of December and sold in the streets of the villages. The day joyfully anticipated by the youngsters is not *Rojdestvo*, however, but *Krechanie* (The Christening) which falls on the nineteenth of January. This day is celebrated with rites much in the manner of our Hallowe'en. Predicting the future, especially in marital affairs, occupies much time and enthusiasm. There are many quaint and colorful customs. The shadows cast by partly-burned papers on the wall are regarded as very auspicious signs.

"Outside merry voices call to one another. Passersby, whether in troikas or as pedestrians, hail each other, and there is an interchange of names, so that if an Ivan calls to an Olga, Olga is sure to marry an Ivan that year! In the evening the air is filled with boys' singing.

"The Russian is an extremist by nature. His Christmas is not, as it is in this country, confined within the limits of twenty-four hours; it extends over a period of three weeks or more, finding its fuller expression in the country rather than in the town.

"Mr. Kostelanetz remembers more of the occasion in Petrograd where he lived. He spent only one Christmas out of the city, when he was at the estate of his uncle nearby. During his connection with the Opera Company, Christmas was not much observed, as life lacked the lustre and pomp of former years, on account of the ravages of revolution.

"We wish to be only happy and gay at Christmas though, and I am sure Mrs. Hough who spent student days in Vienna, can give us something in the nature of a Viennese waltz!"

Viennese Gaiety

"Vienna! Isn't there a world of art conjured up with that word?" It was the enthusiastic exclamation of Mrs. Hough.

"I remember a delightful Christmas party there. Picture amidst the frivolities of the Viennese Yule-tide festivities, eighteen young ladies studying Czerny with all their might yet happy in their exertions; for wasn't the landlady the kindest of creatures? She never once protested at so much scale-practicing! And weren't eighteen young men coming that evening in honor of the occasion? Eighteen young Doctors of Philosophy and of Medicine—a fitting symbolism of the femininity of Art and of the masculinity of Science!

"So the scene is laid in the parlor of a boarding house for girls (most of us were pupils of

(Continued on Page 13.)

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Mr. and Mrs. Felix Warburg Entertain

Following a dinner for the Trustees of the Institute of Musical Art at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Warburg at which business matters pertaining to the Institute were discussed, a reception was tendered to the members of the Auxiliary Society, the Faculty and Administrative Staff. The Warburg home at 1109 Fifth Avenue was a perfect setting for the occasion. A short musical program was provided by members of the Faculty in the persons of Carl Friedberg, George Meader (also of the Metropolitan Opera Company), and by Marie Roemat Rosanoff who played on the famous Stradivarius 'cello, recently acquired by Mr. Felix Warburg.

Dr. Frank Damrosch addressed the members of the Auxiliary Society and extended an invitation to them to visit the Institute more frequently to see the work of the school in progress. The Director spoke also to the members of the Faculty who joined him in enthusiastic applause for the host and hostess who had made possible the delightful auspices under which all were thus enabled to meet. Supper was served which brought the evening to a close.

"THE PRINCE OF PAINTERS"

Raphael Sanzio is synonymous with the title. His is one of the greatest names of the Italian High Renaissance of the 16th century. He and Michael Angelo are the two artists by whom the monumental works at the Vatican in Rome were executed. Perhaps we think of Raphael more in connection with the famous Madonnas. This would associate him with Christmas above all other painters. To those who are unable to travel to Florence where most of his masterpieces on this subject are enshrined, or to Dresden, the home of his most famous Sistine Madonna, an opportunity presents itself to see one fine example of his genius by visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art in this city.

Above a wide staircase opposite the Fifth Avenue entrance, a single beautiful painting of rich colors attracts the eye. This is the Colonna Madonna, the work of Raphael himself, a reproduction of which appears on the front page of this Christmas issue of the Baton.

The Madonna di San Antonio as this picture is also called, was ordered by the nuns of the Convent of St. Anthony of Padua at Perugia. It was begun in 1504 and completed in 1505, after the artist's visit to Florence. He was then twenty-two years of age. The painting is known as the Colonna altarpiece because it was in the possession of the Colonna family from shortly after 1677, when it was sold by the nuns, until 1802. Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan made a gift of it to the Metropolitan Museum in 1916.

The Virgin in red dress and a mantle of blue-black dotted with gold, sits on a raised throne backed with a cloth of crimson and gold and under a circular canopy with green hangings; the child seated on her knee, is dressed in white and blesses the infant St. John, who wears a camel-skin and red tunic; in the foreground stand the two apostles, St. Peter at the left, in a dark blue robe and brown mantle with the gold and silver keys of Heaven and Hell, and St. Paul at the right, in a black and red mantle, leaning on his sword; back of St. Peter is St. Catherine of Alexandria, wearing a dark purple dress and green cloak, her right hand resting on the wheel upon which she was martyred; back of St. Paul is St. Cecilia in green with a light gray cloak, and with the palm of martyrdom, the book of wisdom, and her attribute of a crown of pink and white roses. In the lunette above, God the Father is blessing, and on each side of him are an adoring angel and a cherub's head.

The next installment of the **Opera Series**, the joint work of Leslie Fairchild and Herbert Fields, will appear in the January issue.

The **Question Column** has been deferred until January to make space for Christmas material.

ILLITERATURE



to mister santy claws
north pole
iceland
dear sir

i'm only a little music bug but i got nerves
the same as anywon else with an artistic temper-
ment sew please bring me a pear of noiseproof
ear muffs size 1/10—i cant stand the strain of
sew much uproar—mister sofines uproar class
meats hear mornings afternoons & also nites
now—theirs no piece a tail—the person what rote
home suite home never tried the institute witch
is my home—anyhow it has a chimny big enuf
for you too get down

* * *

were you ever interviewed—everybody around
here of lately has been interviewed about cris-
mass—they forgot all about me though sew i
decided to interview my animal friends who mite
no sumthing about this seasoning of the year
& hear is my article—

i called up your stable on the raydio & had
a talk with the raindeers what pull your slay—
they sed as how they liked crismass because its
the only time in the year they get any exersize—
i guess walter camp hasn't been up your way
yet with the dayly 12

* * *

then i went up to the bronx sue to call on a
camel who is desended from the camel what car-
ried one of the wize men of old—he sed the
climate of the bronx dint agree with him & his
idea of america was won peanut after another—
also that heed soon be out of practise in going
7 days on won drink of water as water is all
we have hear nothing else but

i stopped too sea the sheaps wile their-thinking
they mite be related to the oridginal flocks in the
holly land—they sed they dint no any *shepards*
as the name of there keeper is *patrick o'reilly*

* * *

i gotta communicashun from the mouse who
is supposed never to be stirring the nite before
crismas—he sed its there big feast because its
the only time everything gets left around loose
—mice offen get colik from the die in the stock-
ings they nibble though—he suggested that white
wons be hung up this year to save there being
overstimulated from sew much coffee in the
present color of hoses

* * *

their is a fluffy pomeranian dog what lives near
& she told me she dreded crismass as peeple
make such a fuss over her—put big silly red rib-
bon bows onto her & feed her two much candy—
sew bring her a pickle mister santy cluas a
nice sower won

* * *

i was krawling around a newstand the other
day & i stumbled over these items in a mag-
azine—maybe they'll cheer you up in your busy
season

the needle in the haystack continues to baffle
mankind but the pine needle on the parlor car-
pet has no secretiveness whatever at this time
of year

* * *

in these days of cramped city quarters the
boy who asks for a saxaphone stands a better
chance with santy than one who wants a big
drum

* * *

the perfect givers: the wife who gives her
husband a new fir neckpeace & he gives her a
hundred perfectos

* * *

judging from the color of your costume mister
santy are you a dangerous *red*
axidentally yrs

nigma

the music bug

p s—please bring the editor sum 48 our days—i
herd her menshun wanting them

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

By *Frank Damrosch*

II.

Conditions as They Exist Today

In order to determine the degree to which musical culture has developed in America, we must take into consideration not only the most advanced exponents such as are found in our large cities in the shape of symphony orchestras, choral societies, operas and string quartettes, all of which exert their influence upon a comparatively small percentage of the entire population, but the conditions which obtain in the smaller communities: cities of the second class, towns and villages. To these should be added the large contingents in the great cities which, in spite of their opportunities, fail to rise from their low level of musical understanding and appreciation.

Here, as well as in the small communities, we find that people like music well enough—most people are “fond of music”—but it touches them superficially, appealing rather to the senses than to the feelings. A jazzy or jiggy tune, a sentimental song, no matter how maudlin in text or commonplace the melody, will give them pleasurable sensations. It would be a mistake, however, to generalize this condition to include all the people who have had few opportunities to cultivate the spiritual and intellectual sides of life, for even among the poorest there are those who respond quickly to beautiful and noble influences.

In other words, the capacity to respond to and appreciate beauty is either natural and inborn or can be developed only by an education which tends to develop the spiritual and mental status of the individual.

As long as people are content to lead an animal existence, caring only for the satisfaction of their bodily needs plus such extraneous adornments as their surplus money will buy (and this includes a very numerous class of well-to-do and even rich people) they will not respond easily to the higher refining influences of true art.

It would be a discouraging situation, considering that this class of people still forms a large majority of the population, were it not for the fact that this majority has been greatly reduced in the past fifty years. Beginning with Lowell Mason's efforts in the Public Schools of Boston to introduce good music and to teach children to sing from notes and continuing in the pioneer work of Theodore Thomas, Dr. Leopold Damrosch, Col. Higginson and other famous leaders and patrons of music, the culture of this art has spread across the continent until now there is scarcely a village which has not its Woman's Music Club, its choral society or band.

And yet there is something lacking, something which most of the older nations of Europe possess and which, with all our present agencies and opportunities, we have as yet failed to at-

tain, namely, to have music as much a part of our lives as is our speech.

Listen to the song of the Russian, the Serbian, the Bohemian, Italian, Austrian, Swiss, German, Scandinavian, Irish, Scotch, etc., etc., and each reflects accurately the character, yes, almost the history of the people who sing them. They sing and play the things the heart teaches them. It is part of themselves. Succeeding generations express their feelings in terms of music, because ordinary language fails. They are the songs which they hear first in the cradle and which accompany them throughout their lives to the grave. They typify to them all that is characteristic of their home-life, their environment, their occupations and their pride of race.

Now compare these songs (and remember they are the songs of the “common people”) with the stupid, vulgar, artificial songs, promulgated by vulgar music-hall singers and echoed all over the land by the mass of our people.

On the one hand, beauty of melody, on the other ugliness; here genuine feeling, there maudlin sentimentality; here originality, there stupid reiteration of hackneyed tunes and rhythms.

And if these people in Europe are more truly musical in the mass than we in America, it is due to these folksongs which not only have become part of their lives, but which have inspired their great musicians to the present day with their noblest artworks.

Can we ever hope to fill this want in our musical equipment, inasmuch as the day for the creation of folksongs is past? For the railroad, the steamship, the telegraph and airship are factors inimical to the homogeneous development of race, from which alone the folksong can spring.

Yes, there is a way, though not the old way. We are not a homogeneous people, but a mixed one. Each admixture contributes more or less valuable qualities to the body of citizens as a whole. The most valuable are often latent, because of the necessity of meeting immediate needs. For one hundred and fifty years we have been hard at work not only in developing a great continent but in trying to demonstrate to the whole world that the theory of democratic government is not merely a beautiful dream, but a potent reality and that it tends to uplift and ennoble the citizen because of the responsibility it places on his shoulders. That our experiment has not as yet proved uniformly successful is no argument against the validity of its form of government, for, in spite of mistakes and failures, our country has given noble proof of the stability of its institutions and the inviolability of the principles upon which it is founded.

It is our business, however, to discover the weak spots which have led to our mistakes and chief among these must be reckoned the inade-

quacy of the education of the children who are to become the future citizens constituting the future government of the United States.

I have no stone to cast at our Public Schools insofar as the instruction in the usual school subjects is concerned. Nor do I believe that religious instruction would be either desirable or helpful in view of the great variety of religious beliefs represented in our schools. But the development of the child's spiritual qualities should not be neglected, for it is these qualities which will direct his course through life. If they are allowed to lie dormant, the purely material physical or mental qualities will prevail and these are liable to lead to egotism and bad citizenship.

And this awakening of the spirit to love what is good and true, beautiful and noble, is best accomplished through actual doing of the things which are good and beautiful and therefore music, rightly introduced into the child's education, will perform a valuable share in the making of the good citizen.

This is where we must begin, not only to help in building up a better citizenship, but in trying to make America musical in its truest sense. For with the conviction that our country is not only the richest, the most active and progressive in the world, but that it also leads in all matters representing the highest and truest civilization, assuring "justice to all and malice toward none," we will find the poet and the musician who will find the right words and the right time to voice the feelings of a united and homogeneous, truly American citizenship.

(To be continued)

"R. S. V. P."

A Christmas Romance

(Continued from Page 9.)

Leschetizky), a long table running diagonally through the room, so that it would fit—how they succeeded in getting it in Heaven only knows! Outside it is snowing, as it should on Christmas, and as it usually doesn't!

"Enter the young men with blue noses and red cheeks; they are all Americans. If you were to look on, like Scrooge at the Christmas feast, you would see food quickly appear and as rapidly disappear; it is not to be trifled with; the bracing air, which penetrates the walls (thanks to the rattling windows), forbids that; there go cold meats; Viennese sweets follow; whipped cream has a like fate—whipped cream, which is spread lavishly on everything in Vienna—yes, from sweets to meats practically!

"Finally, there is an end to feasting; the board is removed; the room cleared. There now remain the dances—but the music! All being zealous to dance, and none to play, we conceive a brilliant plan; borrowing her partner's great-coat, one girl quickly vanishes into the night, to return the next instant with—of all things!—

a hurdy-gurdy, a real hurdy-gurdy; the kind that usually has a real Italian and a real monkey attached.

"On with the dance! Everybody dances, including the hurdy-gurdy. Strapped to the shoulders of one of the young men, played by his partner, it goes bobbing about the room, every inch of it agitated by a new animation. It was not exactly in tune; but then it played—*Strauss waltzes!* It did not administer the dance rhythms with the same precision as a Paul Whiteman's band; a gyrating hand-organ is not conducive to a steady tempo, especially when operated by a gyrating young lady, and a gyrating young man. Such irregularities were the cause of a great deal of hilarity.



"A Christmas Party"—Drawn by Frank Hunter

"Let us say a year passes; or perhaps two; time is as nothing to youth, a youth of eighteen (blessed age!) Christmas again; the kindly Spirit takes us to Sophiensalle where a fancy dress ball is in progress. No hurdy-gurdy here; instead, a suaver interpretation of Strauss charms our ears as the sight of so many costumed couples fascinates our eyes. You look in vain for us under the resplendent apparel; yet we are there in various costumes. And that elderly figure pleasantly garbed in a rich peasant's habit is none other than the famous Leschetizky.

"An old man with a long white beard approaches him. Leschetizky holds out his hand. The soothsayer, for such is he of the flowing beard, regards it and says with meaning, 'The ruhme ist da!' ('your fame is there!'). Leschetizky must surmise it to be either a clever guess as to his identity or if not—well, he, Leschetizky is already famous! He has no need for prophecies.

"The music ceases. There is a great rush towards the walls. For a moment the floor is clear. Then there follows a scraping as chairs

are dragged forward and placed in rows. The dancers are seated and a hush steals over the audience.

"The orchestra tunes up. The conductor's baton is poised for the up-beat. There follows what sounds like the opening theme of *Pagliacci*. But something seems to have gone wrong with the bassoons. And the piccolos are not behaving right. You say you have a feeling of being turned upside down? Of being dragged down by your hair and pulled up by your bootstraps? Of course! It is *Pagliacci* in contrary motion. How absurd! The effect is hilarious.

"What fun we did have in those student days," Mrs. Hough finished wistfully.

Pausing to select a bon-bon from a red satin box being passed around, Mrs. Hough added, "Over there in the shadow is someone who I am sure can give us a glimpse into colorful Poland." Her glance indicated Miss Naimska.

"Boze Narodzenie" in Poland

"Christmas in Poland marks the beginning of a real holiday," responded Miss Naimska. "Christmas Eve is the time of most of the celebrating. There is a huge supper. Custom demands there be nine different kinds of fish—cooked in nine different ways. If the family finances do not permit such a vast outlay—there must be at least three kinds. The fish forms the biggest part of the menu. Hay and straw are scattered about the house—stacks of it placed in the corners and under the tables, to commemorate the Nativity.

"After supper there is an immense tree with gifts for the children and servants. This is the cause of quite a bit of excitement for the children are allowed to only smell the tree from outside the room and not see it until Christmas Eve. At twelve o'clock is mass. It is the occasion of uniting the country and city. The peasant lassies in their colorful national costumes make it a gay social affair when they can meet people. The trees and roads are all snow-covered and the tinkle of sleigh-bells mingled with the laughter of many happy voices—creates a spirit which none but Christmas time could invoke. At church the services are quite long and all sing the Christmas carols.

"It is considered that there are at least two days immediately following Christmas when enjoyment is to be had. They are called the first and second days of Christmas. During the whole celebration grievances are forgotten and family reunions take place where relations may be strained during the year. January 6th is 'Three Kings' Day,' a continuation of the holiday festivities. It is a celebration in remembrance of the three wise men, Casper, Melchoir and Balthazar, who brought gifts to the Christ-child. The initials of these three wise men are put on doors as a hope of happiness to come. The period between Christmas and January 6th is a real holiday and as a proof of that, the peasants have a

superstition that if they wash during that holiday some member of the family will die.

"It is the custom to go to the theatre New Year's Eve for old tradition has it that to be happy the first hour of the year is to be happy all year," she finished.

There was a lull during which someone inquired about Christmas on other continents.

"Oh, yes! two of our students told me a lot about their homes. One of them, Nicholas Ballanta-Taylor, comes from Africa, and the other, Walter Dunbar, from South America." It was the cheery voice of Vida Miller, one of the Baton Bards!

Christmas in Africa

"Nicholas Ballanta-Taylor described to me the customs of the season in Sierra Leone, his home in West Africa," continued Vida Miller. "During this season one's interest is centered on various sports which form the principal attractions. These sports are all of *Yoruba* (African) origin and have for their purpose the demonstration of physical strength, and proficiency in dancing and performing other interesting feats. The most important of these is the '*Agun*' which employs masked characters; the word translated literally means the play or dance of the underworld. The performers are not only masked but speak in a foreign tongue.

"The next in importance is the *mamak parah*, in which the principal actor performs his feats of strength on two long poles—hence the name. Another interesting one is the *Oumoi* which means the Fire Dance. Time would not allow me to describe this fully. In all of these there are orchestras in attendance, consisting of about six or eight *Kalanje* (xylophones), some stringed instruments like the violin, two or more flutes called *Balanje*, and three or four drums.

"Apart from attendance at these sports, some people go holiday making to the seaside or the mountains. The children, on the other hand, assemble at the marketplace and engage in various activities to their own satisfaction. Very little of interest can be said to take place on Christmas Day, all the activities beginning on December 26th and lasting for a week."

Santa Claus Among the Palm Trees of South America

"In British Guiana the Christmas season lasts for almost a month," Dunbar told me. "Before the holiday—elaborate celluloid Christmas greeting cards are exchanged. Weeks before, crowds of masqueraders travel from house to house spreading good cheer with their singing of Christmas carols—usually accompanied by a band. As for the housewives—the coming of the holiday season means great preparation for the feast on Christmas day. Even a month before, it is said—they begin to gather eggs for the enormous cakes to be baked. It is a time when special effort is put forth for elaborate entertainment and

festivity, for the workers from the gold and diamond mines, leave the mines for the only time during the whole year to visit their families.

"On Christmas morning the family must go to five o'clock mass—for Christmas day would not be well begun if the family neglected to go to church. At home, after church, the children receive their presents in a rather unique way. A huge stocking is hung behind a door, typifying Santa Claus, and in it are the presents for the youngsters. Grown folks do not exchange gifts, for it is considered as the time for the children's pleasure. A Christmas tree is used in the homes of the more wealthy with the amount of trimming determined by the finances of that particular family.

"During the morning the military band parades the street playing Christmas Carols, amid the popping and exploding of fireworks, due to the presence in Guiana of many Chinese who celebrate the season in that way. It is sort of a combination of our Fourth of July and Hallowe'en with all of the noise and gaily costumed figures in the streets.

"Then comes the greatest event of all—the Christmas dinner. Borne high is the stuffed roast pig—a potato stuck in his mouth. The dinner is the height of culinary achievements, with all kinds of delicious vegetables and a luscious rich fruit cake.

"Snow is unknown in British Guiana. Unlike our northern Christmas, there is an abundance of tropical flowers and foliage at this season."

Buddhism

"Would you be interested to hear of similar customs in Japan?" There was a murmur of assent and Yoshie Fuzawa, our Japanese student, continued:

"Christmas is celebrated as the birthday of Christianity; in the same manner the Buddhists celebrate the birthday of Buddha. However, the day belongs only to the older people and they spend it in the temple, sipping sweet tea, as this is the only time when tea is served sweet. Outside there is a street fair in progress and the decorations are colorful lanterns and cherry blossoms.

"The Japanese New Year takes place at the same time as yours. The preparations begin days in advance, because there is no manual work done on the holidays. All the people dress in their very best. They send cards of greeting to all their friends and pay calls. Of greatest importance is the breakfast served on New Year's morning. Every member of the family must be present and despite the early hour dons his most stunning garb.

"The women remain home throughout the day to receive callers. It is most improper for ladies to go out at all on New Year's Day. They may safely venture out on the third.

"On one of the days a magnificent display of fireworks takes place. At this time, the Japanese play a significant game called '*Utagaruta*' (*uta-*

poem, *garuta*-card. The name is so difficult to pronounce that they sometimes use the words '*Hyakunin Isshu*' instead. The game is thrilling to say the least, and oh! what a test of one's wits. There are several groups of people seated on the floor, each having a certain number of cards before him. On each card is a part of one of the classical 'One Hundred Poems.' One individual reads the poems and as the players discover the corresponding verse on any card, they all make a wild dash for it, even though it be on the other side of the room. Exciting? I should say so. This national game aids the development of romance between the boys and girls. It provides one of the very few occasions on which they meet.

"Each family places a pine, a bamboo, and a plum branch outside the entrance and keeps it there for fifteen days. Then it is taken away and the holiday season has ended. The Japanese try to make the day of New Years as perfect as possible, because they believe that the rest of the year will be just as that one day—hence that one must be ideal."

Judaism

"It is very interesting to note that according to several authorities the only festivities held by the Jews at this time of year are those occasioned by the Feast of Hanukkah." Again the indefatigable little Miss Kluenter supplied the information and we decided no one could have escaped her persistent interviewing! More power to her! She proceeded as follows:

"There was a period, about two thousand years ago, when the Greeks tried to Hellenize everything—even Judea. They had even set up images of gods and goddesses in Jewish temples. The people of Judea were writhing under their bonds when along came a little band of revolutionists headed by Judas Maccabeus. What a sorry sight met their eyes, when they gazed upon the temple of Solomon. A struggle ensued and the pagans were vanquished. The desecration practiced by the Greeks necessitated the reconsecration of the Temple. When the time came for Judas to perform the ceremony, there was left but one flask of pure oil bearing the priestly signature, after the ravages. It was a measure that would last for only one day, but marvelous to tell, it served for eight, by which time the new oil had been prepared. The story is immortalized as the 'Feast of Lights,' the name given to the Hanukkah festival. The ceremony of kindling lights begins with lighting one on the first night, two on the second night and so on till the eighth and last night is reached. The ceremonial symbolizes the victory—Jew over Pagan.

"This year 'Hanukkah' began on December second and ended at sundown December ninth. It is a period of good will and gifts are exchanged, just as in our Christmas spirit.

"Don't you think we are getting far afield and

neglecting the country from which we Americans received most of our Christmas traditions?"

"Mr. Friskin, that means it's your turn next," said the hostess.

Merrie England

"Scotland is my native land, you know," replied Mr. Friskin, "and there in the days of my youth, New Year's Day took much the same place as Christmas did in England. There is merriment suitable to the occasion while on Christmas Day some of the shops are wide open and business continues as usual. Latterly, however, there has been a gradual change in favor of the celebration of Christmas.

"In England, about a week before Christmas, a group of men called 'waits', go around the town in the dead of night, perhaps at two or three in the morning, playing airs particularly characteristic of the English church. They play carols on brass instruments, such as, 'God rest ye merry gentlemen' and 'Hark, the herald angels sing.' At this time of year in England, the weather is cold and frosty and this makes the music especially effective. This obtains more particularly in the suburban districts where the home folk are. In the cities the people are too busy to celebrate so far ahead. The 'waits' take their name from the fact that formerly a kind of old night watchman and a sort of town musician went about the streets doing this before Christmas.

"When a gentleman farmer is entertaining friends over the holidays, some of the tenantry come in to serenade the visitors with music suitable to the Christmas season. Cheese, bread and cider are given them as a reward for the entertainment. On such occasions hilarity reigns supreme and conventionality is laid aside for the moment.

"The church choirs, a few nights before Christmas and on the Eve, go out dressed in their surplices carrying lanterns, and halt at the corners of the streets, more especially near the homes of the parishioners and serenade them with music of a religious nature. They are invited inside to partake of a little refreshment before visiting another community.

"The Anglican church, the established church, holds a midnight celebration of the Eucharist on Christmas Eve. The children do not go to that service, but as usual retire early, leaving their stockings on the chair in the chimney corner.

"The next morning, the great thing is to await the postman with the Christmas greeting cards. There is a lot of excitement. The day is reserved as a rule for family gatherings. They make a special event of the dinner which takes place in the afternoon, a little later than usual—about four o'clock. The national dish on such a day is *roast beef*, but they can have turkey or goose.

Little individual mince pies are served. What amuses both young and old, is the lighting up of the plum pudding. Brandy is poured over it and the head of the family puts a match to it. The object is to get it on one's plate while still burning, which is a difficult feat. After this is served, dessert, meaning fruit to the British, and nuts, with either port or sherry is had. While the dessert is in progress, snappers are passed to each containing a fancy hat, and each one puts his on with glee. After that, music and games are indulged in, and as may be imagined, the time passes rapidly and the day ends all too soon.

"The day after Christmas is called Boxing Day and is a general holiday. The name is derived from the fact that the tradesmen,—policemen, postmen, etc., come around for their Christmas remembrances. The day is given over to parties and merriment and is spent in the same way as the preceding day.

"On New Year's Eve, there is held a watch-night service. The Old Year is rung out and the New Year rung in. The stock exchange is closed on that day, but otherwise business goes on as usual.

"Mr. Richardson, you can't escape. Help me out. You can describe the English Christmas," and Mr. Friskin adjusted a log with the fire tongs.

"From a musical point of view, the present day Christmas in England is very similar to the American," replied Mr. Richardson graciously. "The music in some of the churches is very good, in others—not so good. In olden times, however, there were wonderful doings. I was not there myself to hear, but we can gain a good idea of what used to happen in some country churches a hundred years ago from Washington Irving's description in 'The Sketch Book' of his experiences in the village of Bracebridge on Christmas Day. I happen to have a copy with me, here it is," he added, taking a small volume from his pocket. Finding the page, he read aloud:

"During service, Master Simon stood up in the pew, and repeated the responses very audibly; evincing that kind of ceremonious devotion punctually observed by a gentleman of the old school, and a man of old family connections. I observed, too, that he turned over the leaves of a folio prayer-book with something of a flourish; possibly to show off an enormous seal ring which enriched one of his fingers, and which had the look of a family relic. But he was evidently most solicitous about the musical part of the service, keeping his eye fixed intently on the choir, and beating time with much gesticulation and emphasis.

"The orchestra was in a small gallery, and presented a most whimsical grouping of heads, piled one above the other, among which I particularly noticed that of the village tailor, a pale fellow with a retreating forehead and chin, who played on the clarinet, and seemed to have blown his face to a point; and there was another, a short puffy man, stooping and labouring at a bass viol, so as to show nothing but the top of a round bald head, like the egg of an ostrich. There were two or three pretty faces among the female singers, to which the keen air of a frosty morning had given a bright rosy tint; but the gentlemen choristers had evidently been chosen, like old Cremona fiddles, more for tone than looks; and as several had to sing from the same

book there was clusterings of odd physiognomies, not unlike those groups of cherubs we sometimes see on country tombstones.

"The usual services of the choir were managed tolerably well, the vocal parts generally lagging a little behind the instrumental, and some loitering fiddler now and then making up for lost time by travelling over a passage with prodigious celerity, and clearing more bars than the keenest fox-hunter to be in at the death. But the great trial was an anthem that had been prepared and arranged by Master Simon, and on which he had founded great expectations. Unluckily, there was a blunder at the very outset; the musicians became flurried; Master Simon was in a fever; everything went on lamely and irregularly until they came to a chorus



"A Christmas Carol"—Drawn by Frank Hunter

beginning, 'Now let us sing with one accord,' which seemed to be a signal for parting company: all became discord and confusion; each shifted for himself, and got to the end as well, or, rather, as soon as he could, excepting one old chorister in a pair of horn spectacles, bestriding and pinching a long sonorous nose; who, happening to stand a little apart, and being wrapped up in his own melody, kept on a quavering course, wriggling his head, ogling his book, and winding all up by a nasal solo of at least three bars duration."

Our Own Christmas

When the laughter subsided, the hostess addressed **Mr. W. J. Henderson**. "As an American author, do tell us of a representative Christmas in this country.

"My dear, I always spend Christmas in an Opera House listening to bad singers and trying to think of nice things to say about them in the newspaper!"

Not even another glass of egg nogg could tempt Mr. Henderson to dissertate on Christmas beyond that point. "Can't somebody describe a real characteristic Christmas in the U. S.?" urged the hostess.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed one whose voice had the delightful inflection of **Miss Augustin's**.

A Creole Christmas

"The people of French descent in Louisiana have their chief celebration on New Year's day. Christmas is celebrated by going to Midnight Mass (all the Creoles—French and Spanish settlers of Louisiana—are Catholics). There is a solemn and impressive Mass. After Mass we go back home for the '*Reveillon*' (a feast which takes place in the night, principally Christmas Eve.) There is *Gambo Filé*, a sort of thick soup, and other things. The children hang up their stockings on the mantelpiece. Our big presents are given to us on New Year's morning. However, many charming and good things fill the stockings.

"On Christmas morning, after the excitement caused by the gifts of Santa Claus ('*Papa Noël*' as we call him) there is a big, copious breakfast. The creole dishes for breakfast are '*Griclades*' (veal cooked with tomatoes) and '*Calas*' (hot rice cakes) and very strong coffee, very black. In the afternoon we go to the French Opera House. This all occurs in New Orleans.

"On the plantations, however, there is no midnight Mass, or very seldom. We used to go to the '*Sucrerie*,' the 'Sugar House,' for the *Reveillon*,—the ladies in full evening dress,—the sugar house dimly lighted by lamps. On the old-fashioned plantations where the 'Open Kettle' system for making sugar is still in vogue, a huge punch is made with hot sugar cane juice and lots of whiskey. It must be very hot and very strong. The colored servants and field servants are all present and furnish music for dancing. During the time of slavery, before the Civil War, the slaves were given a big ball of their own and there they danced the '*Bamboula*' and other African dances," concluded Miss Augustin.

"You make me quite envious!" It was the unmistakably perfect diction of **Mme. Baldwin!** "During all the years of my professional career as singer, I never dared look upon the fatted calf or, rather, the stuffed turkey. I could never eat Christmas dinner. A singer must be in good voice. So the Christmas season meant little or nothing to me except extra work—endless rehearsals for church services and 'Messiah' performances.

"One Christmas season I was awakened at midnight by the telephone. It proved to be a long distance call from Boston; Carl Cerrahn, director of the Handel and Haydn Society, was on the wire. He wanted me to sing in a performance of the 'Messiah' next day, Christmas Eve. I arrived in Boston at 6:30 p. m., ate supper, dressed, fussed with the score all at the same time in my dressing room at the hotel and was in the theatre at 7:30.

"After the concert I returned to New York the same night, sang in the Christmas service next morning and left town in the afternoon for a performance elsewhere. My bag was kept packed at this season of the year.

"I never had any fun until after New Year's and

I never even had time to acknowledge gifts until about Easter! **George Wedge**, you can sympathize," Mme. Baldwin turned to that gentleman.

"Indeed I can," he replied, rather dolefully. "I never had a Christmas tree, even. There was no opportunity to celebrate at home—only to rehearse Christmas music and perform it."

"**Mr. Kneisel!**" ejaculated the hostess. "You've been keeping so quiet in that dark corner, I didn't know you were here until you dropped your match box just now. What about Christmas in your native Roumania?"

The Bohemians' Club Festivites

"At my home in Bucharest, Christmas is about the same. The city resembles Paris or Brussels—the language is French. We have a Christmas tree and exchange presents. There is snow and we enjoy sleigh rides. After Christmas there is a Carnival.

"We are going to perform Saint Saëns 'Carnival of Animals' this Christmas season at the Bohemians' Club. The players will be in the animal costumes except the pianist whom the composer designates as beast, just as he is! Sixteen years ago Moriz Rosenthal was present at dinner at Lüchow's. Joseffy, Goldmark, Herzog and I were there; we discussed the possibility of a musicians' club. In a speech, Rosenthal said he hoped upon his return to America to find a powerful organization of the kind. This is the first time he has been back since then, so on December 29th a dinner will be given in his honor at the Biltmore by the now flourishing Bohemians' Club, the only society of its kind in the world.

"I like Christmas," confessed Mr. Kneisel. "We always have a tree which I take a large part in trimming. One year I invited a friend to help who insisted on sparing me by doing all the work himself. I was as jealous as a boy, so now no friends are asked to assist!"

New York in Holiday Attire

"There is quite a Christmas atmosphere to material New York, don't you think so?" The hostess directed the remark at everyone in general. "The shop windows are marvels of beauty—displays that tempt every last cent from one! Did you ever ride down Fifth Avenue and back, enjoying our city from the top of a bus? Try it some afternoon at dusk when the lights begin to brighten—the endless tangle of traffic—the hurrying throngs—windows with dazzling artistic wares, form a kaleidoscope of color. Such homely things as typewriters and electrical attachments become alluring when placed in a miniature snow scene or glimpsed through a fascinating design of holly and mistletoe. As soon as the Salvation Army Lassies appear at subway entrances with their red kettles and tinkling bells the air is charged with Christmas. Then Christmas trees line the curb and one would not be surprised to meet Santa himself along the street."

Almost upon the mention of his name sleigh bells were heard outside and a warning whistle indicated that the jolly old patron saint of the season was waiting to take the guests to their respective homes. Amid the excitement of good-byes there were many greetings extended to readers of The Baton through the hostess who is also the Editor. All piled into the sleigh—snow enveloped the earth but the sky had cleared and the stars shone brilliantly. Santa Claus was the last to wave farewell.

*"He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle;
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight:
'Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!'"*



THE CHRISTMAS ROMANCE

The material for the foregoing article was written in story form by *Dorothy Crowthers* who also interviewed Dr. Damrosch, Mr. Savine, Messrs. Gaston and Edouard Dethier, Mme. Baldwin and Mr. Kneisel. She acknowledges with grateful appreciation the cooperation of those who made the article possible. This enlarged issue of the paper is The Baton's Christmas gift to its readers!

Dr. Goetschius, Mme. Albro, Miss Toledo, Dr. Richardson and Miss Augustin very kindly wrote their own portions of the article.

Beatrice Klunter wrote from interviews the conversations of Mr. Friedberg, Mr. Svecenski, Mr. Willeke, Mr. Fonaroff, and Mr. Friskin.

Vida Miller wrote from interviews, the conversations of Mr. Salzedo and Miss Naimska.

Maurice Popkin wrote from interviews, the conversations of Mr. Samoiloff and Mrs. Hough.

(Names mentioned in the order they appear in the article.)

Introductory facts found in "Christmas in Ritual and Tradition" by *Clement A. Miles*.

THE SONG OF A TREE

By *Alice Miller*

*Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

—*Joyce Kilmer.*

From the depths of a forest they took me,
From the song of the swirling winds;
From the soft white snows,
And the moon that goes
A'drifting, above the pines.

To the heart of a town they brought me
And decked me with tinsel gay
That with glad surprise
I might brighten the eyes
Of a child, on Christmas Day.

And I, who was king of a forest,
So strong, and free, and wild;
Will die content
My life well spent
For the joy of a little Child.

EPILOGUE

The play is done; the curtain drops,
Slow falling, to the prompter's bell:
A moment yet the actor stops,
And looks around to say farewell.
It is an irksome word and task;
And when he's laughed and said his say
He shows as he removes the mask,
A face that's anything but gay.

One word, ere yet the evening ends,
Let's close it with a parting rhyme,
And pledge a hand to all young friends,
As fits the merry Christmas time.
On life's wide scene, you, too, have parts;
That Fate ere long shall bid you play;
Good night! with honest gentle hearts
A kindly greeting go away!

So each shall mourn in life's advance,
Dear hopes, dear friends, untimely killed;
Shall grieve for many a forfeit chance,
A longing passion unfulfilled.
Amen: whatever Fate be sent,—
Pray God the heart may kindly glow,
Although the head with cares be bent,
And whitened with the winter snow.

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let young and old accept their part,
And bow before the Awful Will,
And bear it with an honest heart.
Who misses, or who wins the prize?
Go, lose or conquer as you can.
But if you fail, or if you rise,
Be each, pray God, a gentleman,

A gentleman, or old or young:
(Bear kindly with my humble lays.)
The sacred chorus first was sung
Upon the first of Christmas days.
The shepherds heard it overhead—
The joyful angels raised it then:
Glory to Heaven on high, it said,
And peace on earth to gentle men.

My song, save this, is little worth;
I lay the weary pen aside,
And wish you health, and love, and mirth,
As fits the solemn Christmas tide,
As fits the holy Christmas birth,
Be this, good friends, our carol still—
Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,
To men of gentle will.

—Thackeray, "Christmas Stories."

THE ORCHESTRAS

Students are urged to watch the bulletins of concerts by the New York Symphony and Philharmonic Societies. Many interesting programs are constantly taking place. During the holidays, avail yourselves of the opportunities to hear good concerts.

THE NEW YORK SYMPHONY

Walter Damrosch will perform for the first time in New York de Falla's Three Spanish Dances from "Le Tricorne" at the concert of the New York Symphony Or-

chestra in Aeolian all, Sunday afternoon, December 23, when Lionel Tertis, viola, will be heard as the soloist, playing Bach's Chaconne for the Violin for the first time in New York on the viola, and Dale's Romance for Viola with Orchestra.

* * *

Paderewski will appear both as soloist composer with the New York Symphony Orchestra under Walter Damrosch in Carnegie Hall, Thursday afternoon and Friday evening, December 27 and 28. Mr. Paderewski will play his own Concerto in A minor for Piano with Orchestra and Mr. Damrosch will conduct Mr. Paderewski's Symphony in B minor.

* * *

The New York Symphony Orchestra will be heard in the third concert of the Young People's series in Carnegie Hall, December 29, for which Walter Damrosch has arranged an appropriate Christmas program.

* * *

Other dates for this orchestra's concerts will be January 4th, 10th and 11th at Carnegie Hall.

THE PHILHARMONIC

The Philharmonic Orchestra, under the leadership of Willem Van Hoogstraten, will inaugurate its season of Metropolitan Opera House concerts Sunday afternoon, December 16th, when a Tchaikovsky program will be played.

* * *

On Monday evening, December 17th, at Carnegie Hall, the Philharmonic Orchestra will give the third of its Students' Concerts under the direction of Mr. Van Hoogstraten. As usual, the program has been arranged chronologically. The numbers listed for performance are Bach's Brandenburg Concerto, No. 3 in G major, Haydn's "Military" Symphony, Beethoven's Coriolanus Overture, the Nocturne and Scherzo from Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream" music and Brahms' Academic Festival Overture. The fourth Students Concert will take place at Carnegie Hall on New Year's Eve.

* * *

The first Membership Concert this season of the Philharmonic Society will take place at the Grand Ball Room of the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria on Friday Evening, December 21, when a program of light music will be played by the Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Willem Van Hoogstraten. The program will include the Weber-Weingartner "Invitation to the Dance," the Boccherini "Minuet," Sibelius' "Valse Triste," the Liszt-Lenau "Mephisto Waltz," Tchaikovsky's Italian Caprice and the Overture to Johann Strauss' "Die Fledermaus."

* * *

There will be other Philharmonic Concerts at Carnegie Hall on December 27th, 28th, 30th and 31st, January 5th, 10th, and 11th.

Note: The recent interesting offerings of both orchestras will be reviewed in the next issue of the Baton.

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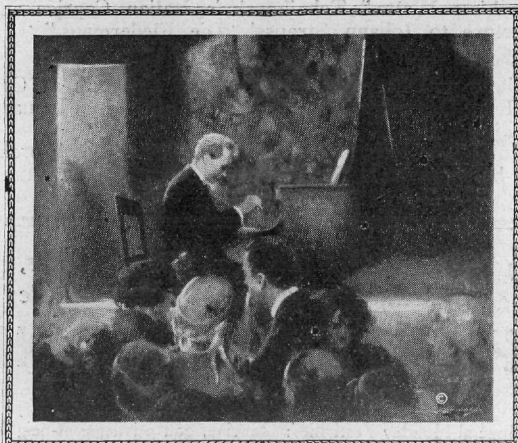
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