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Italy's Christmas Religious, Especially in Rome

(Photograph Record.)
Notwithstanding the dire poverty of the greater part of the Italian people, they bring to the observance of Christmas greater fervor and devotion than any other people in Christendom; for in Italy Christmas is altogether a spiritual feast. These thrifty people live in the past—these traditions so hallowed as to remain forever in their minds and hearts, making them glow with all the pious devotion of the early Christian times.
The anniversary of the Saviour's birth was first commemorated in the Catacombs, from whose gloomy depths the bright star of Bethlehem was visible only to the eyes of faith. Here in the subterranean quarries the first group of martyrs of the Church were gathered, while above them the golden palaces of the Roman rulers were being held in the grip of vice as hideous as their own meetings were holy.
A RELIGIOUS CELEBRATION.
In the homes of the simple Italian people, the burning Yule log is unknown. Neither have they our Santa Claus nor our Christmas tree to supplement the festival of gifts and good wishes. With the advent of Christmas, the religious zeal of the Italian people seems to be renewed and many of their customs and observances within the period of the Epiphany are intensely religious, commemorating as they do the different events in the birth of Christ in such a manner as to preserve this most beautiful holiday unscathed and immortal—the sweetest breath in the atmosphere of Christianity. In Italy, Christmas is in very truth the Feast of the Cradle, for the reason that in every house, no matter how humble, there is a representation of the mystery of Bethlehem. While we Americans in a special manner decorate our homes with holly, evergreens and flowers, the Italians represent by means of a crib, a statue and some straw, the first event in the redemption of the world—the birth of the Saviour of mankind. In some of the houses, this idea is gorgeously and elaborately enacted. The people go to visit their friends and acquaintances, exchanging holiday greetings and dropping down on their knees in prayer before the shrines of the Infant Saviour.
There are several churches in Rome especially dedicated to the Virgin Mother and her Son, where the people are faithfully reproduced. One of these is the beautiful Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, which the faithful believe contains a part of the real crib in which the Virgin Mother soothed the slumbers of the Divine Babe. This relic is venerated by thousands on Christmas Day.
On the eve of Christmas, while the redoubtable Santa Claus is distributing gifts from Christmas trees and filling the stockings of his little American favorites with toys and good things, the little Italian children are listening to the chanting and singing of the shepherds, who have forsaken their pastoral duties in the Sabine hills to participate in the celebration of the Nativity. These shepherds, clad in the skins of sheep and picturesquely attired about the head and feet, remind one of the pictures of John the Baptist and his followers as they wander through the streets, solemnly chanting their hymns. While in Rome, these strange-looking men are the guests of the city, and are everywhere shown the greatest respect and consideration by the citizens.
From as early as 3 o'clock Christmas morning until noon, the greater portion of the Italian people are gathered in the large basilicas of Rome attentively and devoutly assisting at solemn high mass celebrated by the cardinals and archbishops. The music, under the direction of the best Italian masters, is inspiring, choirs, composed entirely of male voices, render the stately Gregorian chant. The canons in the sanctuary choir sing in responses. The service ends, one is reluctant seemingly to leave the joyous notes of heaven, echoing with the joyous notes of God's choir, for the emptiness of the world, unsatisfying world without. Until a person has been privileged with the chance of just opinion of the inspiring beauty of the Italian church music, as exemplified in the Gregorian chant.
THE PAPAL HIGH MASS.
The Pope, assisted by the cardinals and archbishops and attended by his chamberlains and canons, and in the presence of over 50,000 people, celebrates the solemn Papal Christmas Mass, which for overpowering grandeur surpasses every other service of the Catholic Church. At the stroke of 11, the immense organ announces the beginning of the long procession of the cardinals, archbishops and monsignori, resplendent in the investiture of their different ranks, the host of knights, protonotaries and ambassadors—all attendant upon a figure clad in spotless white and mounted with the gorgeous vestment of his high station. This is Pope Pius X, the successor of St. Peter and the head of the Church Militant. All is solemn and impressive from the time when the Pope ascends his throne to robe for the mass until at the end when he makes the sign of the cross and the 50,000 people kneel to receive his blessing. "Benedictus omnipotens Deus, Pater, et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus. Amen."
The mass is ended, the doors are opened and the great piazza is thronged with the outpouring crowd.
So absorbed is the stranger in the magnificent service, the music and the lights that he is apt to forget to marvel at the grandeur and overpowering magnificence of the great basilica, which of course is unappreciated in so many instances. He forgets that the scene of this inspiring Christmas worship was at one time the site of the Circus Nero, and that it marks the burial place of St. Peter and rests a stupendous monument to the faith of this great martyr, who was crucified head downward on

CHRISTKINDEL Christmas on the 'Holy Ghost' Farm.

(From the German, by W. Israehvogel. Translated by Louise Waring, for the Evening Post.)
The autumn had been unusually long and beautiful; even the second Sunday in Advent was still mild. The Frau Bauerin of the Holy Ghost Farm had deemed it wise to take one more outing before winter should set in in earnest, and had walked down into the valley to attend mass. On her way back she found the heat so oppressive that she took off her heavy jacket. Suddenly towards evening an icy wind began to whistle through the pine tops, driving cloud upon cloud until the distant hills were covered with a greenish, misty veil. The following morning a leaden sky hung colorless over the valley. At last the snow began to fall with pitiless fury; the storm shook the giant trees and made them groan.
In the night the storm had abated, the stars came out trimmantly, and it turned icy cold; the sun came climbing over the mountains, the scene was one of dazzling, shimmering beauty, the snow reflecting a sea of prismatic colors. On the farm everything was life and bustle; in spite of the Sabbath, all hands, young and old, were put to work, even the Frau Bauerin took a shovel and began to open a path leading to the barn. All the snow must be cleared away before the freeze—which was sure to come—should set it; the winding road leading down into the valley must be opened in order to make an easy descent to church for the midnight mass.
The Frau Bauerin had that morning got up in the very best of humor; she scolded the servants and found fault with everything. Old Randel, a half-deaf woman, who ate the bread of charity at the farm, and who had just come over from a neighboring village, muttered as she seated herself behind the green-tiled stove and began to spin: "Ugh! she must have got out of bed left foot first."
On seeing old Randel, the Bauerin began to rummage in a large heavy oaken linen chest. Her heart was wont to beat with pride at the sight of these snowy homespun treasures, tied with red tapes, and piled in stacks; but this day her heart was waddy.
The Frau Bauerin was of medium height, plump and natty, an energetic step, and bright intelligent eyes. "You here, Randel?" she said, while taking out a pile of sheets.
"What are you doing?" mumbled the old woman, somewhat startled, for she feared that her turn for a scolding had come.
"Did you not have a dream-book?" asked the Bauerin, without turning.
"Why? Have you had a dream?" answered Randel, dropping the thread she was spinning.
"Yes, something very strange."
"Nonsense! Tell me what it was." This was a fine morsel for old Randel, and the thought of something natty animated her stolid countenance.
The Bauerin put down her pile of sheets and came nearer the stove. "I know your teeth are not strong enough to bite iron, and yet I dreamed that while biting into a piece of black bread two of them dropped out."
Old Randel shook her head ominously, and said: "Teeth? Two teeth? I fear this forbodes evil."
"Go fetch me the dream book," urged the other.
Randel rose clumsily and went out. The Bauerin, half-frightened and half-defiantly, while her eyes wandered restlessly around the rooms, muttered, "I was afraid it meant no good; something awful is going to happen to me."
Then her thoughts travelled across the valley to the opposite hillside, where, in an old little house, lived her only daughter, Resi. It was for this child that the rebus widow had up to this time remained obdurate to many a worthy suitor, fearing that by a second marriage the property might be jeopardized. All these points had been fully weighed in the widow's thrifty mind. But one day, Wastl, a handsome young wheelwright, came to work on the farm, and all was over; a few days sufficed to shatter all the hopes she had cherished for her child's future. Resi declared she would have Wastl, or none other, and her head being as strong as her mother's, the latter had to yield—that is, she said: "If you cannot give him up, then marry him; but hence forth you and I part."
She had stuck to her word these two years. The last time that had not was at church, some three months before. Resi had made a timid attempt to speak to her mother, but the latter had coolly turned her back. Even the kind old parish priest's exhortations were fruitless. In vain he urged the stern woman to forgive her child. She would not acknowledge to herself how cruelly she suffered through this separation. At times when the natural, tenderer instincts struggled to assert themselves, she would sigh then mercilessly by sheer force of her iron will.
That day at church Resi had looked ailing, so pale and thin, with dark rings under her eyes. She never was a strong child. What if she were suffering from deprivation—now at this time when she needed special care! Old Rachel had to be a mother.
Randel returned, bringing a much-worn little book, and, leisurely turning over its tattered and begrimed pages, she read, or rather spelled, a number of words beginning with "T." "I have it here it is—'tooth'!" "Give me the book, and watching it from the corner of her eye, she read: "Tooth—to lose a tooth denotes a death in the family." She turned pale and the book dropped from her hands.
Old Randel sat with her hands in her lap, shaking her head and looking as pale as the Bauerin, while she dreamily repeated: "A death in the family." After a pause she added: "God forbid that it should be—!" she stopped suddenly.
"What?" asked Bauerin, who had partly regained her usual composure. "I partly regained her usual composure. I mean Resi," answered the Bauerin in an angry tone. "Hush!" cried the Bauerin in an angry tone. "I don't care what the dream-book says. The other night when I

Sentiments For Christmas

At Christmas play and make good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year.
—Tusser.
Blow, bugles of battle, the marches of peace;
East, west, north and south let the long quarrel cease;
Sing the song of great joy that the angels began,
Sing of glory to God and of good will to man!
Hark! joining in chorus
The heavens bend o'er us!
The dark night is ending and dawn has begun.
—Whittier.
At Christmas-tide the open hand
Scatters its bounty o'er sea and land,
And none are left to grieve alone,
For love is heaven and claims its own.
—Margaret Sangster.
Hail to the King of Bethlehem,
Who weathered in his diadem
The yellow crocus for the gem
Of his authority.
—Longfellow.
In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me,
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free.
—Julia Ward Howe.
Christ—the one great Word
Worth all languages in earth or Heaven.
—Bailey.
Heap on more wood! The wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
—Sir Walter Scott.
No trumpet blast profaned
The hour in which the Prince of Peace was born;
No bloody streamlet stained
Earth's silver rivers on that sacred morn;
But o'er the peaceful plain,
The war-horse drew the peasant's loaded wain.
—William Cullen Bryant.
Why should I wish you "Merry Christmas?"
My wish can bring no joy—or yours.
Joy ever comes unsought,
dream that my forest was on fire, nothing happened, though the dream-book had it that this means the loss of all his possessions." With that she gave one a possession.
"What a defiance!" said she under the book a kick and sent it under the table. But this defiance neither silenced old Randel nor did it quiet the rebellious beating of her heart.
After dinner the Bauerin opened a chest from which she took her Sunday jacket, with its costly silver lace. Randel still sat behind the stove, where she usually took a nap after her frugal but substantial meal, but on this occasion she felt no desire to sleep. She kept watching the Bauerin out of the corner of her eye.
"What if it should be Resi after all?" she crooned.
The Bauerin opened her mouth to utter an unavailing retort, but remained silent.
"I mean that you are taking a great responsibility, Resi is your child—and to think that it might be—"
"Don't bother me!" almost yelled the Bauerin. "I mean to do as I like, and will not be dictated to. I don't want to hear anything about her or him. I didn't drive them off, now let them lie on the bed they made for themselves."
Randel muttered timidly: "I was only thinking of the consequences; the awful remorse and reproaches in case you were too late. Wastl is a fine fellow, and a bit; and if I live to be a hundred, I'll give his hands in deprecation and raising her hands in deprecation and coming forward. "Don't say things which you may have to repent for the rest of your life."
The Bauerin stared at Randel, then, nodding her head, she said: "You are right, one should not say such things."
The day seemed endless. The Bauerin wandered aimlessly through the house unable to settle down to any work. She tried to persuade herself that her dreams and dream-books might after all be liable to mistakes, but at heart she felt that by fear which nothing but certainty can allay. Would might ever come? Resi and Wastl would surely be at midnight mass, and that she would see with her own eyes that all her fears were groundless. At last it grew dark, but the evening passed slowly. Just before midnight the sound of distant church bells came floating through the clear, starry night. The Bauerin hastily turned her coat and preceded by the two farm-hands carrying pine torches in spite of the clear light of the crescent moon—this being an old-time custom—they started down the mountain through frozen snow, which cracked and crunched under their hobnailed shoes. On reentering the church she entered hurriedly. At every step she met familiar faces which she had not seen for many a day, but she was nervous, and did not stop to talk with any one. She scanned closely every new, but neither Resi nor Wastl was to be seen. It was still early, and she hoped they might only be late. Yet her heart beat tumultuously. The sound of a bell announced the beginning of the service. The priest, clad in his golden vestments, came out of the sacristy and mass began—and Resi still not there! Once more her eyes searched each pew and bench. Her heart was in her throat, and a great big fear came over her that, after all, the dream-book might have spoken the truth. This sensible woman suddenly became transformed.
"Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis," chanted the priest. "Gloria in excelsis Deo," repeated the choir. The Bauerin smote her breast and repeated: "Yes, and on earth peace, good will towards men." She knew the words by heart; she had sung them often; she and the other young girls of the village—oh, so many, many years ago! So many changes had I taken place in all that time. Only one

The music of jingling bells,
And my pulses thrill, and my heart beats high.
For I now what the sound foretells:
My glad lips utter but one refrain—
Over and over they say—
"The children are coming, are coming home,
And to-morrow is Christmas day!"
Their final challenge found me out,
When Christmas came, with mantling snow.
Why should an eager lover doubt
The message of the mistletoe?
For all the aid of Yuletide cheer
That brought this happy thing to pass,
I'll burn a candle all the year,
Before your shrine, Saint Nicholas,
Robert Gilbert Welsh.
You are coming, Christmas, laden with
affection's store, to show
That God's custom of old kindness is not
yet in dust laid low;
At this time of reconciling, at this time
to festering dear,
May the present light and gladness slay
the memory of the tear!
If children of a larger growth
Could have a Christmas tree
From Father Time, one gift alone
Would be enough for me—
Let others take the gems and gold,
And trifles light and vain,
But give me back my old belief
In Santa Claus again!
If there be good in that I wrought,
Thy hand compelled it, Master, Thine;
Where I have failed to meet Thy thought,
I know, through Thee, the blame is
mine.
—Rudyard Kipling.
CHRISTMAS.
And well our Christmas sires of old
Lov'd when the year its course had
roll'd,
And brought by the Christmas back
again.
With all its hospitable train,
Domestic and religious rite,
Gave honor to the holy night
On Christmas eve the bells were rung.
—Sir Walter Scott.
ed cradle, its little chubby fists tightly
pressed against its face—the future
master of Holy Ghost Farm.
SOME PRACTICAL GIFTS.
Consider gloves.
How about veil?
Sachets are acceptable.
Handbags are always good.
Blanket bathrobes look "to the good."
Little watches are fine, "if they go."
There's the standby handkerchief.
Pretty stockings are likely to please.
Material for a blouse or a dress may do.
A pair of spats to match a suit may be just the thing.
Cutlery and table linen very often please the housekeeper.
Personal remembrances are usually most attractive however.
FOOTGEAR GIFTS.
They're in favor.
And there's great range.
They begin with mere mules.
They end with riding boots.
Mules are in leather, silk and lace.
Mules are composed of vamps and soles.
For bedroom wear the mules are convenient.
In evening slippers the satin sorts are in the lead.
Evening slippers of satin or kid may be daintily embroidered.
In case one's satin slippers match, they should surely match exactly.
Pumps and the various ties are also among the shoes sure to be acceptable.
Walking boots, buttoned or laced, of studee, or of kid, with patent leather vamps, are standbys.
SAFE GIFTS.
A plant.
Box of bonbons.
A bunch of roses.
The latest in novels.
Subscription to good magazine.
One of the classics, well bound.
Tickets to the opera or the theatre.
Tickets to lectures on subject that is congenial.
A calendar in a decoration suitable to the recipient.
It is not safe to make gifts connected with a person's specialty.
Christmas Fears.
I have no fears.
I have no fears.
So save your point.
And save your eyes.
I do not wear
For waistcoats gay.
Embroidered in
A dainty way.
Suspenders I
Am forced to wear.
But don't forget
Me, No. 1 pair.
Of a goodly stack.
But if you buy 'em,
Buy 'em black.
Dear friends of mine,
I beg you note,
On yellow gloves
I never do,
An ink well is
A thing, I'm sure,
The lack of which
I can endure.
Of match safes
I have three or four
I could not carry
Any more;
And certainly I'm
Fearing that
Someone will send
A green patch hat.
COMPARISON.
"Those Kentucky feuds are terrible affairs," said the New Yorker.
"Yes," replied the Louisville man, "but their manifestation are only occasional and they don't give the police any more real trouble than a taxicab strike."

THE CHRISTMAS FEAST.

The people having performed the duty of their faith, now as zealously proceed to satisfy the craving of their appetites with dishes the names of which have a strange sound to American ears. Their dinners present a menu as varied as their celebrations. The Christmas feast of the average Italian consists of nearly every sample of the Latin culinary art. Breads, vegetables, fowl, meats, fish, soups, macaroni, oily salads, cakes with formidable ingredients, fruits, wines and liquors—in fact, everything that goes to appease the reasonable hunger of the hardy Roman's well-developed appetite.
Dinner over, the city swarms with excursionists and sight-seers. The public parks and promenades are crowded with citizens in gala attire. The most favored of the resorts in this regard are the Corso and the Via Nazionale, and it is with difficulty that one makes his way along. For a few centesimi the service of a carriage—of which there are said to be 10,000 in Rome—may be enlisted, and one may drive to the Pincio, along the Appian Way, with its 145 miles of level pavement, or to the Gianiculum, with its cackling geese, that commemorate the saving of Rome, and with its howling waters to immortalize the name of Romulus, its founder.
Rome was not made in a day, but it seems to be the popular fallacy that it can be done in a day, and on no other day in the year are the historic and artistic interests so eagerly sought as on Christmas.
The real Christmas for the Italian children comes on the eve of the Epiphany, 12 days after Christmas. At this time presents are exchanged as in our own country. Then, too, "Befana," the Italian Santa Claus, visits the good children with toys and sweets, and the bad ones with ashes and letters of reprimand and warning. About this mysterious "Befana" there are no such pleasant traditions to make the name of Santa Claus so dear to American boys and girls; for the "Befana" is contemplated by the Italian child with the greatest fear and awe. The Befana is supposed to be a tall, dark woman, with white in appearance, who has the power to work terrible misfortunes upon the bad children of the land, and unfortunate, indeed, is the boy or girl that has incurred her displeasure. It is needless to add that the Italian parents cultivate in the hearts of their children a wholesome fear for this terrible old woman to bring about their best behavior, in which event they see to it that "Befana" does not fail to reward them in good measure.
On the twelfth day after Christmas, the feast of the Epiphany, long booths are erected in different parts of the city. These are decorated with bright and gaudy draperies, and are filled with every conceivable kind of toys. Horns may be purchased for a few cents. Horns with awful squeaks, clay bells and strident whistles are operated with all the energy of the thousands of grown-ups and children, who crowd the streets and vie with one another in creating the din and the uproar.
The festival ends, and Rome—virulent, powerful, decadent, religious Rome—assumes her mantle of queenly gravity and moves as quietly as before. The sun shines on, brightly; the fair blue skies remain as blue, and the goldfinch sings always its sweet song, while Rome, the Eternal City, continues still, the religious, artistic and historic magnet of the world.
A New Malady.
It was Christmas Day, and the candy lion had been waiting—oh, so patiently—for Mary to finish her dinner. Much against her baby wishes had she been obliged to swallow the last of her bread. When her mother insisted on her finishing her milk the small face looked up in desperation as she liped, "Mozzer, if I eat any more food I will be humpback in my stomach, like grandpa!"—Lippincott's.
BABY'S TREE.
"It is the baby's Christmas tree," The parents proudly boast; But who stands round and gazes at it And talks about it most?