

MS 695/5/4/11

SOUVENIR NUMBER

THE CLARION



X'MAS 1944

STALAG 344 GERMANY



The sixth War Christmas is with us, and for a large number the fifth in captivity.

With our separation from home, our thoughts turn now, more than at any other time, to loved ones, and we can be sure that they, so widely scattered throughout the world, remember us through thoughts and prayers.

Our good wishes for the Festive Season have been sent far and wide, and it now remains for us to wish each other all the joy possible this Christmastide, and every good wish for the New Year.

S. SHERRIFF, R. S. M.

Camp Leader



Good Bye 1944

We do not regret the passing of 1944. For any captive, Time is just a necessary evil — something to be consumed as quickly and as pleasantly as possible, until the great day of release arrives.

But if we can look upon our life here in the necessary detached manner, we find that we have, at least, a few highspots — times when we forget that we are Prisoners of War and lose ourselves in the interest of the moment.

The past year has brought many innovations, designed to pass the time more pleasantly for us. Many people have worked hard making the necessary arrangements, and for that we should like to say "Thank you". Nor must we forget the various Relief Organisations, such as the Red Cross Societies and the Y.M.C.A. To them we owe a debt that can only be appreciated by those who have been Ps.O.W. themselves.

Sport of all kinds has never been so freely indulged in as during the past year, both by players and spectators. The standard of shows in the Gaiety Theatre has never been so high, while during the course of the year the theatre itself has progressed from a barrack room with a stage in it to a tiered auditorium with an orchestra pit. Many concert parties have been formed. Gramophone recitals have been given, either over the outside loudspeakers or in the theatre via the amplifier. Numerous lectures and talks have all helped to make life more pleasant and interesting for us.

Nor for some, at any rate, has the year been entirely unprofitable. The Stalag School has over a thousand regular students on its rolls, and more than 300 of these have sat for examinations during the year.

We shall all have our memories of Stalag 344 when we sit round the Christmas fire in years to come. Psychologists tell us that it is a human tendency to remember the pleasant things easier than the unpleasant ones. We shall probably remember our highspots — the Carnivals; the show in the theatre that particularly appealed to us; the football and cricket; the exhilarating swim in the lake "somewhere in Oberschlesien"; the little kindnesses from men we hardly knew; and, so far not a memory but an anticipation, the day the war finishes.

If, as of course we shall, we remember a few of the unpleasant incidents, they will have been blunted by time, and may appear more in the nature of comedy, rather than the hardships and irritations they were.

So when, at the close of December 31, 1944, we lie on our bunks waiting for sleep, we can look back on the passing of another year of Stalag life, with all its highspots and 'lowspots'. No doubt, before sleep finally claims us, we shall have wandered back down the years to happier times before the war. And as we eventually drowse off, we shall be buoyed up by one of the greatest gifts of Nature — Hope.



The Facts of Life

YOU'VE ALL read at some time or other those frightfully interesting articles full of statistics, where various things are placed end to end, side by side, upside down and so on, and as this is a souvenir number the Editor prevailed upon me to give you a few facts of this Stalag.

First, let us consider the ordinary English Red Cross parcel. This measures 12" × 7" × 5". In the days when the issue was one parcel per man per week, the parcels given out weekly in the Stalag, if placed end to end, would stretch a distance of 1³/₄ miles. If you were clever enough to pile them all one on top of the other, you would have a tower practically a mile high.

Now let us consider cigarettes. On the present scale of issue, i.e. 25 per man per week, the cigarettes issued each week in the Stalag, placed end to end of course, would reach 10 miles.

Before we leave this end to end business, let us take the case of the masts which support the electric lighting wires. There are just over 200 of these dotted round the Camp, and placed end to end they would reach about a mile. Rather insignificant, you think. I agree. But consider! If you could obtain the requisite two men and a sharp crosscut saw, in a little over a fortnight, working day and night, they could saw this mile up into over 10,000 lengths of 6", and would then have enough wood to boil over 100,000 dixies of water. Perhaps it's just as well that we can't place the masts end to end.

Take the dismal question of washing. Just supposing that every man in the Stalag decided to wash his clothes on the same day, and hang them on the same line, this line would have to be 14 miles long.

When we receive English parcels, 3,000 gallons of tea are drunk daily in the Camp. When the issue is Canadian parcels, for tea read coffee.

Are you a soup carrier? If so, while carrying the soup you are working at

By the Stalag Statistician

the rate of about one-sixth horsepower. If you are unfortunate enough to live in Block I, in one week you and your mate will have used enough energy to light seven 100 watt electric lamps at full brilliancy for over an hour. Unfortunately we have yet to discover a method of converting your energy into electric power.

Finally, we come to a rather more intricate problem. If a man boils a dixie on a blower in three minutes, he will have turned the wheel about 300 times. He will have transferred enough air through the grating to fill over 150 bicycle tyres. The energy he used while turning, plus the heat energy derived from the fuel, plus the latent energy in the uncombusted gases, together with the potential energy of the residue of the fuel in the grate, would have run the *Flying Scotsman* for —

[Sorry, blokes. The Stalag Statistician has just stabbed himself with his slide rule. — Ed.]



The dismal question of washing

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Ghosts

By R. S. HOLCROFT

CHRISTMAS, more than any other season, is popularly regarded as a proper time to tell ghost stories, and to argue on the subject of their existence. I believe in ghosts. I have had one or two experiences of them, but before recounting them would like to present a reasonable theory for their existence.

Most of us have encountered personalities that influence us to our good. We don't use the same language to our Mothers as we do to our "muckers". In some cases that influence persists apart from the personality. For instance, a man may stop swearing at his mucker when thinking of his Mother, whether she be alive or dead. If you follow this and admit it, then you must allow the same for bad influences, and that is what I believe a ghost to be.

Entering a church, one steps softly, lowers one's voice, and feels reverent and slightly awed, because hundreds of people for many years have thought good and reverent thoughts there, and have affected the atmosphere of the edifice with "good" emanations.

This is a step further in the "good influence" theory, and the converse is obvious. A place where foul and evil thoughts have bred and have been strong enough to leave an atmosphere of evil behind them, becomes the haunted house, and human imagination will embroider chains and flowing garments onto those things which can be sensed there.

A Manor house, about 400 years old, in Essex, in which I lived for some years, was haunted. Sometimes at night one could hear footsteps, which crossed a broad landing and came to a halt just outside my bedroom door. They were quite loud, such as would be caused by booted feet, and the boards creaked as if beneath material pressure.

A second instance: During the last war a block of offices in London became tenanted by women clerks, among whom was a relative of mine. It was sometimes necessary for a girl to

remain behind on "overtime". Almost invariably two would stay, as company for each other, because one lone girl felt uneasy and unreasonably frightened.

My cousin's turn arrived, and spurning such ideas she refused the proffered company of a companion and remained alone. Before long a feeling of slight discomfort manifested itself. This feeling persisted and increased into a certainty that something foul and malignant was about her. Eventually, unable to bear the horror longer, she left the building. Complaints from the girls led to an investigation of the building, and it was discovered that many years before, previous to its use for offices, it had been the private residence of a man of independent means. He had occupied his time in decoying inexperienced country girls to his house, where he raped and murdered them. He was subsequently tried and convicted on many charges and met his just fate at the hands of the common hangman. The atmosphere he created in his surroundings lay dormant through years of occupation by men, but was revived on the re-introduction of women to the place, whose ex-owner's mind had been obsessed with evil thoughts concerning them.



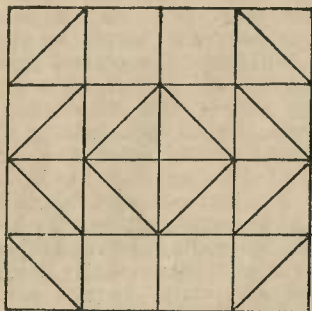
"He was shot down last night!"

Brush up your Brains

A few Teasers

1. Divide 45 into four parts, so that when you add 2 to the first part, subtract 2 from the second part, multiply the third part by 2, and divide the fourth by 2, the answer in every case is the same.

2. The following diagram is composed of a considerable number of squares. You are asked to count how many there are:-



3. A snail climbs up the side of a wall. It manages to rise three feet every day, but, during each night, it is unfortunate enough to slide down two feet. If the wall is twenty feet high, how long does it take to reach the top?

4. What is it that a woman wears that her husband never sees?

5. A father is five times as old as his son. In five years' time he will be only three times as old. What are their respective ages now?

6. Can you find the catch in this?: One evening, twelve travellers arrived at a small hotel where there were only eleven bedrooms. Each of them wanted a separate room. The hotel proprietor was the only person who did not seem put out. "It's quite all right," he said; "will the first two gentlemen just step into Room No. 1 for a minute, please?" Then he took the third man into Room 2, the fourth into Room 3, and so on until the eleventh man was conducted into Room 10. At this point, he went

back to the two men he had left together, and escorted one of them to Room 11. And, of course, everybody was satisfied. Obviously there is a catch somewhere, but *where*?

7. There were two Americans standing on London Bridge. One was the father of the other's son. What relation were they to each other?

8. A man was invited to visit a friend who lived in the wilds of Derbyshire. The friend wrote: "Take the 10.0 a.m. train, which arrives at Buxton at 1.0 p.m., and I will send the car to meet you."

Instead of taking the 10.0 a.m., the man caught a train which left at 9.0 a.m. He found himself at Buxton at 12.0 noon. He knew the road, so decided to walk to meet the car. He walked at a constant speed of 4 m.p.h. After a time he met the car, which was on its way to the station to pick him up. The chauffeur turned the car round, the man got in, and he duly arrived at his friend's house. The friend said "You are early. I didn't expect you for 20 minutes."

Ignoring time spent in turning the car, etc., can you work out the speed of the car?

Solutions on back page



"Who is this man Culbertson, anyway?"

Shepherds' Watch

LOFTY O'DAY, and Tiny Shaw always had been at loggerheads. Their temperaments were of totally different types.

O'Day was long, slim and happy-go-lucky. He was not exactly handsome, but nevertheless the merry smile, always hovering upon his lips, made one enjoy every moment of his company.

Tiny, on the other hand, was small and tubby. He was extremely handsome, but lacked the ability to make friends owing to his very pessimistic nature. As already stated, they were not friends, and as is usually the case they were thrown together on innumerable occasions.

They had enlisted in one of His Majesty's Regiments of Foot early in 1915. They had from that moment come into constant contact with one another. Fatigues — Guards — Picquets invariably they were together.

Things did not come to a head until they both fell in love with the same girl!

Mary Lovett, a pretty, golden-haired lass from Stirling, was attracted by the qualities of both men. She unknowingly fought a battle within herself over a handsome face and a merry one. Eventually the smile won. Of course, this did not increase Tiny's affection for Lofty O'Day.

They were serving in the trenches, in the winter of 1916, when Lofty announced his coming marriage with Mary Lovett.

It was then that Tiny decided to murder O'Day. His plan was clear. They had been detailed for No. 5 Post in Piccadilly Circus on the next day. To get there, they had to pass along Charing Cross Road. Now he, Tiny, was familiar with this particular trench, known as Charing Cross Road, as he had already been along it on two occasions. He knew that 60 yards from No. 5 Post the trench became very shallow, and that at this point a tall man's head would protrude above ground level.

Now, Tiny reasoned, Lofty would

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Short story by WILLIAM K. WALKER

expect me to tell him when we come to the shallow portion of the trench, and if I omit to do so, and keep his attention for the period that we pass the last 60 yards, then the Jerry sniper would be presented with a target that he could not possibly miss.

On the following morning, Lofty and Tiny made their way over frozen, mudded Charing Cross Road. Lofty was surprised by Tiny's amiability towards him, and his willingness to converse. He forgot all about the notoriously dreaded 60 yards, and, to Tiny's satisfaction, he entered the last lap with his head a perfect target for the enemy.

In vain Tiny waited for the sharp staccato report of the sniper's rifle. In vain he waited to see Lofty's long, lank form pitch forward lifeless to the frozen earth. Yard by yard — foot by foot, the distance between them and safety decreased. Then they were within the seclusion of No. 5 Post.

"Notice how quiet it's been for the last two or three minutes?" asked Lofty. "I haven't heard a rifle shot."

"Yes, it's very quiet, isn't it?" replied Tiny.

"Funny. I can't make it out," went on Lofty. Suddenly he asked "What's the time, Tiny?"

Tiny looked at his watch. "Four minutes past twelve."

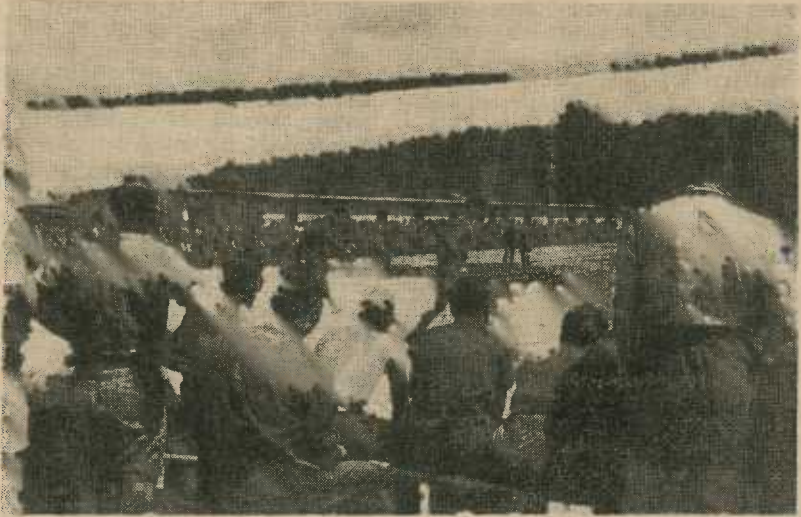
Next second his hand was gripped inside the strong clasp of Lofty's, and he heard the words "A Merry Christmas, old man!" as his hand was firmly wrung.

One minute later, at 12.05 hours, the guns opened up again.

Coincidence

Pte. Ernest Canale, of Montrose, Scotland, serving with the Black Watch in Italy, went into the Allied Office in Rome to ask advice on how to trace his sister, Anita, last heard of at the start of the war when she was in Italy visiting her granny. Ernest was told to try the next room, where he found Anita working for the Allied Administration.

Stalag Souvenirs



Still the favourite game

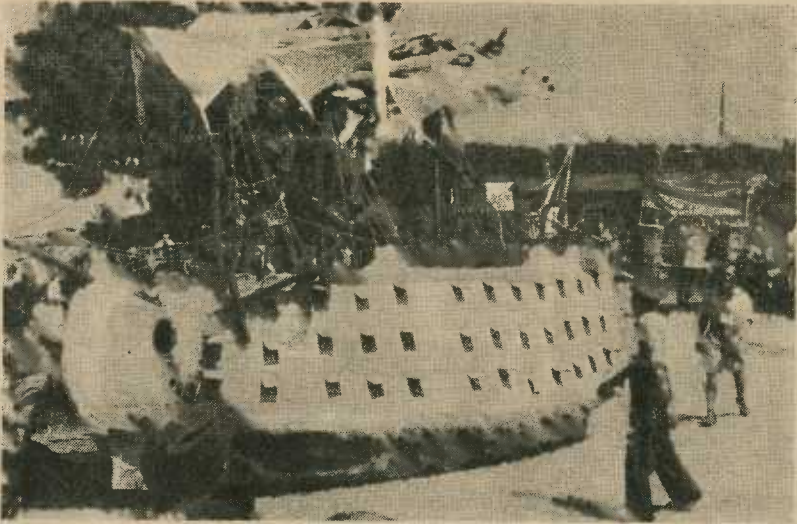


Test Match



Stalag L

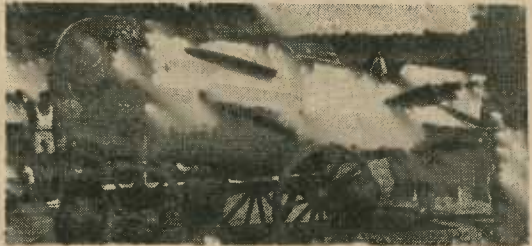
Pictures of 1944



The Galleon — Whitsun Carnival



Heads, Tails or Ones?



"Things To Come" — August Carnival

do

Christmas or X-mas?

By a Padre

We use x in algebra to represent the unknown quantity, don't we? Do we use Xmas as an abbreviation in the same way? And keep Xmas, we know not why? Or do we remember that the "X" is short for Christ, and that we keep Christmas because of Christ?

Some-one has said "History consists not only of events, but of events plus meaning." Things don't just *happen*; they happen for reasons, *because* of some thing or idea. And at Christmas we think of an event — the birth of a Child in Bethlehem — but let us also remember that that birth happened for very special reasons. It happened because, as S. John's Gospel says, "God so loved the world." He loved it, the human race that is, so that He gave His only begotten Son.

We know there is a vast difference between a man's making a table and begetting a child. In the one case he works on materials *outside* himself — in the other he gives from *within* himself. And a child comes which we say is his "offspring". The child is not "made" by him; it comes "from" him. And it takes his nature. We say a boy is "a chip of the old block."

Now Christianity teaches that before ever the World began, before the dawn of Time, Jesus was in existence, having been "begotten of the Father" and having the nature of the Father. That is, He has eternally been in a relationship with the Father quite different from that of a created human being. He was and is "the Son of God" — and was and is "of one nature with the Father" — that is, He was and is God. As the Nicene Creed has it, He was "God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God." And then, wonder of wonders; He came into this world, appeared in human flesh and form, was born of the Virgin Mary in great humility at Bethlehem. Why? Because God loved the world; because God desired we should worship and serve Him in knowledge of His love. We know the love of God, because Jesus came. He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And

He came also that through Him we might be reconciled to God and have eternal life with God.

These things are perhaps a little difficult, but we must do some thinking. And that is the Christian Faith and that is why Christians keep Christmas as a time of rejoicing; in glad thankfulness for that wonderful birth which has split all history in two — B.C. and A.D. I'm afraid there are too many people today who take the rejoicing while forgetting the reason. Such a holy-day ought to be a holiday — but people make it a holiday and forget that it is firstly a holy day.

So I say, "Rejoice by all means. Make the very best of things — your Christmas as merry for yourselves and your mates as it can be. But amidst it all, don't forget to pause and think of the reasons for it all. Don't forget to thank God for the birth of His Son. Don't forget to thank and praise God that 'He has spoken to us in His Son', that in the words of S. John again, 'The word was made flesh and dwelt among us'."

Postman's Knock

An ordinary Stalag postcard has just had 16 months' leave.

On July 18, 1943, a W.O. in the R.A.F. Compound posted a card to a Canadian Squadron Leader, who was then stationed in England. There was no reply, but on November 18, 1944 the card itself arrived back here, marked "Return to Sender". It has twelve postmarks, plus various other hieroglyphics, and in addition to travelling round England appears to have made two trips across Canada.

Airmail

The following circular dated August 1944, has been received from the Swiss Legation acting as Protecting Power:-

"On behalf of the British Authorities we have pleasure in informing you that the airmail service from the United Kingdom to Lisbon for mail for Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees in German hands, has been resumed."

Savoury House

I shall never forget a Christmas
I spent
In a place called Savoury House.
Where I ate everything, including
the rent,
And the marzipan cat and the mouse.
For the walls were puddings of
various kinds,
Carlton and Colledge and York.
While custard served well as the
windows and blinds,
And the pictures were roast leg
of pork.
The floor was inlaid with bottles
of beer,
The ceiling with chocolate éclairs.
An angel food cake was a big
chiffonier,
And Boston cream pies were the stairs.
There were turkeys and geese and
saddles of lamb,
A library of onions and sage,
Where books had covers of sugar-
cured ham
And cranberry sauce by the page.
There was claret and port and
sherry and gin,
Cognac and vermouth, chianti.
While the kitchen was furnished
with broiled terrapin,
And a huge stilton cheese was
the pantry .
A comfortable lounge of capon fricassee
Had a long bar of kidney au gratin,

Doggerel and Doodles by C. CHAPMAN



While scalloped potatoes and
creamed broccoli
Were the chairs I occasionally sat on.
There were lobsters and crayfish,
prawns, shrimps and eels,
With salads and sauces and spices.
And I smoked big cigars, while in
between meals
I sampled a few almond ices.
The house was aglow with tomato puré,
From porter-house steaks it was
streaming.
When awaking, I found to my utter
dismay,
In a barrack room bunk I was dreaming.

These Schoolboys!

A census taker is a man who goes from house to house increasing the population.

An adult is a man that has stopped growing at both ends but not in the middle.

Heredity means if your grandfather didn't have any children, then your father probably wouldn't have had any, and neither would you, probably.

A mugwump is a bird that sits on the fence with its mug on one side and its wump on the other.

The clown in *As You Like It* was named Touchdown.

Hall-marked Howlers.

— and Caesar, stabbed with many wounds, felt them not. His chief wound was that of seeing his friend Brutus among the traitors, and so, dying, he gasped out the words "Tee Hee Brute."

Queen Elizabeth was the "Virgin Queen". As a queen she was a success.

Hargreaves invented an improved machine for spinning cotton threads. He called this a jenny in honour of his wife. Crompton also invented a similar machine. He called it a mule.

The spinal column is a long bunch of bones. The head sits on top and you sit on the bottom.

Kansas City, A.D. 1924

So it's Christmas Eve and I'm sitting at the corner table in Louie Galentoe's beanery, eating Italian spaghetti and meat rolls which I am very fond of. Outside is very bitter cold and not even fit for a doll with a mink coat. Number four meat roll is departing bound for my ulcerated stomach when I hears a big "Hello Goish".

I looks up from my racing form into eight eyes belonging to namely "Big Shot" Tony Spitivani, "Knuckles" Mahoney, Izzy "Dirtyshirt" Kaplan and "Juarez" Gonzalez, from the city by the same name.

My ticker is beating like a horse syringe of digitalis has been poured into me. They sit down sans (French) invitation and "Juarez" muscles in on my spaghetti and meat balls. Without further ado, Tony speaks as follows: "Goish (Gersh) me and the boys are thinking what it is Xmas and it is a very sentimental season, and we are wishing to donate a big basket of grub to the Robinson family who are very very poor and live in a shack by the river." I speaks and says it is a very noble gesture. "Yes," says Tony, "and we are wishing you to drive for us so we can keep our hands free in case of meeting such personalities as "Borscht" Levinson and Guts O'Brien and their boys from the South side."

I politely decline the invitation. Tony says "Goish you are making me angry."

By EDDIE GERSH
(with apologies to DAMON RUNYON)

I do not wish to make Tony angry as people what do find themselves at the bottom of the Missouri River with three slugs in them and the lower part of their body encased in a barrel of cement.

So after going thru seven red lites and four stop signs we arrive at the Robinson shack. We get out of the car and Tony is carrying the basket of grub (Tockey and everything). He is saying that the Robinsons' home is so poor that the mice have malnutrition and 80% of the fleas (latest Gollop's pool) are anemic. Inside is an old doll (mother), her husband (in bed with T.B.), Tiny Slim (11 years of age) and the daughter Susy Belle (who is easy on the peepers). They are all thanking us very loudly for the grub which will make a happy Xmas, especially for Tiny Slim.

Tony is very embarrassed and asks the old geezer how his T.B. is? The old geezer says that his cough is much better. Little Tiny Slim is kissing Tony on the hand (Imagine!) and saying "Thankyou mister, Merry Xmas everybody."

So we are in the car heading back for town, and Tony is saying "I am thinking I shall not bump off "Toledo" Watson after all tonite, as it is Xmas Eve," and says like Tiny Slim — "MERRY XMAS EVERYBODY."

Absent Friends

Gentlemen! raise your mugs, cups, tins and dixies, and drink a toast to the 857 Ps.O.W. who have been repatriated from this Camp during the year.

There were two exchanges of wounded and incapacitated men — one in May, the other in September.

Many men in the Camp have received letters from their former "muckers". A typical one, from L/Cpl. Z. J. Foley, a New Zealander, reads:-

"Great trip and what a reception! We were the first N.Z. repats to arrive in England. Brass hats, Mayor, two bands, etc. Red Cross wonderful. Then

fast night express to N.Z. reception area. Aussies, South Africans and New Zealanders have their own reception depots. The English lads were sent to their homes the same day they arrived . . . There is a big reception area here for all Kiwis in Germany, and that's official. A hearty reception awaits all."

A lady who lives next door to a repat writes to her P.O.W. husband:-

"Tom seems quite well, but he has a peculiar habit of making fires in the back garden."

If that's Tom's only peculiarity he's not doing so badly.

Christmas at Home

We invited various men in the Camp to write a few lines on a typical Christmas in their Homeland.

British Isles

The ingredients of our English Christmas Spirit are as various and yet as simple in their way as the ingredients of the Christmas Pudd., and although things have changed — we no longer burn Yule logs nor do we put meat in our mince meat — there is still a great deal of tradition left. We have our carols, some of them seven or eight hundred years old; we eat our pork pies for breakfast just as they had the boar's head in the 16th Century; we venerate the mistletoe, as our remotest ancestors the Druids did, (perhaps with an eye more utilitarian than mystical).

In our village we used to go with the "Waits" on Christmas Eve (unless we were at the dance) and after four or five stops, where the fifty or sixty of us would be invited in for a glass and a mince pie, it became a true wassail. We would be still abroad when the bells rang in the new day.

Christmas morning would be a visit to Church, followed hastily on the female part by last minute bastings of the turkey for dinner at one, and leisurely on the male part by a glass of sherry and a mince pie (or two), and then a tactful walk to keep out of the way.

We ate dinner, I suppose as most people do, surrounded by holly and Christmas cards — maybe our only glimpse of snow — making as much noise as was compatible with the Turkey and Pudd. business in hand. After dinner, presents — only as children did we open them at daybreak — a fine aroma of port and cigars, and a general inertia. We might perhaps go to football — nothing can make an Englishman forget his football.

Of recent years we have listened to the excellent B.B.C. Christmas Party (our own Christmas parties were never held on the 25th as this is essentially a family day). At 10 or 11 o'clock we went to a dance, at which everybody who was anybody would be present. And so home. The sky seems brighter than usual. Everybody seems in that

moment so good, so jolly. We have drunk deep of the milk of human kindness, and intoxicated with Christmas Spirit we stagger off to bed.

H. Chignell.



Canada

"Christmas comes but once a year", and every Canadian is aware of it. In fact, through the enterprising advertisements of one or more stores, he has been suddenly informed, probably on the hottest day so far recorded in summer, that he has so-and-so shopping days till Christmas.

As late fall arrives, Jack Canuck and his family prepare for Christmas. Towards the end of November the children are delighted to hear Santa Claus broadcasting from his toy-shop somewhere near 90°N, 0° (sponsored by one of the big stores). The hunt for suitable gifts reaches its peak when "Santa Claus is coming to town."

A colourful extravaganza takes place with all the Nursery Rhyme characters parading along the main streets (in Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg), followed by St. Nick himself atop a huge float complete with reindeer and sleigh. This may be a parade for the children, but it is a doubtful point as to who enjoys it more: the children, or the adults watching both parade and children.

In the home, Christmas trees, with their tinsel, candy canes and decorations have been put up, and Christmas wreaths, holly sprig, and mistletoe are hung about the house. To complete the picture, the necessary flurries of snow are required. Do not be misled by the caption "Canada, Our Lady of the Snows." In the last decade Eastern Canada has seen more green Christmases than white.

It is hardly necessary to describe the bright and joyous scene in every home, rich or poor, on Christmas morning, as the gifts are opened; the relief that Santa Claus has really been and left the gift for which he was asked; the shirt and tie (which really

DOES suit) which Dad wanted; the new electric refrigerator that Mother had been hoping for - trust the old man to be practical.

Christmas dinner is the same as in most places of the world, with its turkey and trimmings and Christmas cake and pudding. After dinner Johnnie is out with his new skates; Molly and Jean are trying to dodge trees on their new skis at the nearest hill; Dad has retired to a well-earned (he thinks) sleep.

In the evening, in small towns or villages, there is a Christmas Festival to attend. In the cities the family car is out making the rounds of the many friends, or there is the Theatre for those who like it. And so ends the day.

May it be added that the foregoing will have as many variations as there are people across the Dominion.

Murray Brown.



Australia

Quite naturally, many old English customs are carried on in Australia, and no occasion there is celebrated with as much enthusiasm as that of Christmas. However, rightly or wrongly, I feel that the English type of Christmas was never evolved to suit Australian weather conditions.

The giving of presents is a charming idea but, unfortunately, people will leave the procuring of them until the last moment. What should be a pleasure becomes, for an Australian, an uncomfortable task, for his gifts must be purchased in a street that is overburdened with people who are in turn overburdened with children and other Christmas paraphernalia at a time when the temperature is rarely less than 95°. Too often has my heart with every atom of sincerity it possesses gone out to the poor creatures who bravely masquerade as Father Christmas outside large department stores in Australian capital cities. I am certain that St. Christopher himself would agree that befurred scarlet suits, high boots and whiskers were designed for climates where the thermometer's ambitious mercury isn't nearly as successful as it is in Australia.

One other thing in my opinion which

Australians could well reorganise is the traditional English Christmas dinner. After emerging, drenched with perspiration, from a courageous expedition through a pile of ridiculously hot roast things, to forage through a mountainous slice of agonizingly hot Christmas pudding rather makes the joybells of Christmas a cracked note for me.

Do not think, however, that Australians do not experience a White Christmas. They do — white hot!

Arthur Nichol.



New Zealand

A wary bird is the Kiwi. In our Empire Zoo maybe he's not as lordly as the Lion, or as agile with his tail as the Kangaroo, or as nimble as the Springbok — but he's a wary bird all the same.

He cocks his head as he goes about and sees a lot. And so it is with him at Christmas time — the season of big eating. He's equal to the occasion. Under fern and in the moss on the bark and 'neath rocks he's in the know as to where the fattest grubs have been hibernating. And at the right time — the Festive Day — he picks a bit from here and a bit from there and he finishes up the day fine and comfortable. And that's the way of it in the land of the Kiwi.

If the weather is fine and warm as it usually is about December 25, New Zealanders eat their Christmas fare on the beaches, away up on hill faces or down a shady gully. Usually they eat cool delicacies in keeping with the weather. Of course, if the season chooses to come in unsettled and not too warm, then the inherent English in us exerts itself and we hunt three-pences in the best Yuletide spirit. But even if there are differences in the menu and in the place of eating, the emphasis is on "Peace and Goodwill towards men."

Owen Thomson.



South Africa

Blue skies, a blazing summer sun and outdoor activity are characteristics of the Christmas season in South Africa. One hears, in a round-about way, of people who actually *dream* of snow during this time.

Hundreds of families from the hinterland and inland centres flock to the coastal towns for their Christmas holidays. Hotel accomodation becomes acute. Reunions are held on the farms of distant-dwelling relations and friends. House parties of twenty or more are quite common.

Christmas Eve in Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal, presents a scene typical of the larger towns. Rainbow-lit streets, swirling with pedestrians; late shopping; dances at every hotel and hall worthy of the name. Drifting confetti, fluttering streamers, swaying lanterns. An uncommon feature — jingling through the streets at a loping jog-trot is a troop of young native boys in self-made costumes. Their leader carries a drum, and some of them flutes and whistles. They parade for hours, collecting pennies here, silver there.

Christmas Day — staring shop fronts, a few tar patches gleaming in the heat of the streets. and, as dusk comes, the street lights flash on and the stars appear one by one. For most, another memory.

W. Friend.



U.S.A.

Mr. and Mrs. Yank with the connivance of all the Yank relatives have been feverishly preparing Christmas "for the little Yanks" (or so they avow). Presents have been wrapped and hidden, the tree procured, tinsel, balls, ornaments — everything.

Christmas Eve arrives. The little Yanks are sent to bed early after first hanging their stockings (with Ma's and Pa's) over the fireplace. Of course, the little Yanks go quietly to sleep — OH YEAH?

Hustle and bustle fill the house as the tree is dragged into the living room, furniture moved, and the tree set up. Pa and any guests or relatives spending Christmas then sit them down to decorate the tree while Ma keeps a sharp eye on the Yanklets. The tree finished and all the major presents set out, the living room is locked until tomorrow. Then Pa fills the stockings with little things. Small toys, candy, and maybe a cheap wrist-watch for the youngsters, a bracelet for Mrs.

Yank, \$10 in a new wallet for nephew Will. Finally, the stage being set, the adults go to bed, Ma first slipping the braces and cufflinks into Pa's stocking.

"Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse"!!? The little Yanks make a surreptitious reconnaissance to examine the stocking contents. Unable to penetrate to the living room they retire excitedly to bed. — Peace —

Five a.m. The Yanklets make a new attack, starting by rushing from room to room, waking everyone to wish them a Merry Christmas. The attack is successful. The family rises (reluctantly) Ma puts some coffee on. Pa unlocks the living-room. Everyone opens their gifts amid happy confusion and cries of ecstasy. Ma calls that breakfast is ready, about six a.m. It is eaten, reluctantly by young Yanks anxious to get back to their new toys, and gladly by the seniors who anticipate a couple more hours sleep.

The kids get a snack around ten — if they can be found. Ma and her helpers work furiously to have dinner ready by two. The turkey's roasting, pots astewing. Pa gets out the Christmas Spirits.

Christmas Dinner at two with ALL the trimmings. Roast Turkey with stuffing and pan-roasted sweet potatoes, two or three vegetables etc. etc., plum pudding soured in brandy and set alight — everything.

By four o'clock even the most voracious has been satisfied and drugged digestive silence pervades for a couple of hours.

With nightfall, the tree is lit, the lights are dimmed, the eggnog is served in little cups, Aunt Agatha sits down at the piano and the good old Christmas Carols roll forth upon the crisp white Christmas night. All the old favourites and everyone sings. The eggnog is replenished. The youngsters stagger off to bed — dead tired. All good things must end. The eggnog is gone; voices are weary. Sleep embraces all. As silence settles on the snow-blanketed earth, stars twinkle, and another American Christmas marches into history.

Paul Armstrong.

Cover Competition

The Judging Committee, headed by Padre Welshman, the Chairman of the Stalag Art Club, awarded the first prize of 300 cigarettes to Tpr. H. Bennett, P.O.W. No. 31656, for the cover which appears on this issue. Tpr. Bennett is a patient in the Lazarett.

The second prize of 200 cigarettes went to B.S.M. Turner, P.O.W. No. 31778, of Block IX.

The standard of entries was remarkably high, and we should like to thank all competitors for their interest and support.

Owing to the unforeseen delay in receiving the last issue of *The Clarion*, men on Working Parties had no

opportunity of entering this competition. We apologise to them, and to avoid any such future happenings we announce now a

Spring Cover Competition

Sizes and other details are as given in *The Clarion*, No. 16, but in this case the cover should embody the words "The Clarion, Spring Number 1945, Stalag 344, Germany." Where possible line drawings in ink, with no halftone shading, should be submitted.

Entries must be received here not later than March 31, 1945.

Prizes will be announced later.

Brush up your Brains Solutions

1. The first part is 8 (add 2, it equals 10). The second part is 12 (subtract 2, it equals 10). The third part is 5 (multiply by 2, it equals 10). The fourth part is 20 (divide by 2, it equals 10). And 8, 12, 5, and 20 add up to 45.

2. There are 16 small squares, 9 composed of four small squares, 4 composed of nine small squares, 1 diamond square in the centre, and 1 large square including the whole of the figure. Total 31.

3. The answer is 18 days. Over one day and one night the snail climbs only 1 foot. At the end of 17 days it is 17 feet up. On the eighteenth day it climbs 3 feet and reaches the top.

4. Widow's weeds.

5. Easy if you know algebra. If son's present age is x years, father's present age is $5x$. In five years, son will be $x + 5$, and father $5x + 5$. Equation is $5x + 5 = 3(x + 5)$, and $x = 5$. There-

fore the son's present age is 5 years, and the father's 25.

6. What about traveller No. 12? He is never mentioned during the host's wanderings.

7. They were man and wife.

8. The man was 20 minutes early at the house. This is the time the car saved by not having to go all the way to the station. Therefore, from the point where the car met the man to the station *and back* would have taken the car 20 minutes. In this case the car was 10 minutes run from the station. Now the car should have reached the station at 1.0 o'clock, to pick up the man, so the time when it met the man on the road was 12.50 p.m. The man had been walking from 12.00 to 12.50, that is 50 minutes. In these fifty minutes he had walked the distance that the car would have travelled in 10 minutes. Therefore the speed of the car is five times that of the man — 20 m.p.h