

EARTHQUAKE

Our good common mother, the earth, took her part in the Christmas celebrations after her own fashion. She sent the people of Long Beach, California, a little earthquake to put in their stockings - or make them quake in their stockings I should say. No damage to speak of, and no casualties, probably just a reminder that life is real and life is earnest and the grave is not the goal. A terrific quake is reported in a remote part of China also.

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But that short ten-second dance of the earth's crust in southern California is nothing to what is going on over in Hawaii. We've known that Mauna Loa has been on the rampage for nearly a month. Friends out there have written me that it was merely a grand spectacle. Planes flying full up, all the time, because it was so superb. But now it's getting serious. The stream of molten lava that has been pouring down the side of the mountain is approaching perilously near to the Wailuku River. From that river the town of Hilo, one of the principal places on the island of Hawaii proper, gets its water supply.

Out of all this we are now going to get the spectacle of

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an intensely modern and ingenious attempt of man to overcome this threatened act of God. They are going to use airplanes in an eleventh hour effort to save Hilo's waterworks. The planes are going to fly over the volcano with bombs weighing six hundred pounds each. These will be dropped on the streaming lava-covered side of the mountain. It's a desperate resource. But engineers have hopes that ~~they~~ by this means, though they can't stop Mauna Loa, they may be able to divert the deadly stream of molten lava so as to keep it away from the life-giving river of water.

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For European rulers this was a tough Christmas. Imagine having to talk to your subjects about 'peace on earth and good will to all men' when all around you sabres are rattling, munitions factories ~~are~~ working overtime and threats ill-disguised in diplomatic phraseology fly <sup>ing</sup> backwards and forwards from one foreign office to another.

His Britannic Majesty, King George solved the problem by congratulating his more than five hundred million subjects that, at least, there was peace among them throughout the world's seven continents. "It's good to think," said His Majesty, "that our family of peoples is at peace within itself; united in one desire, to be at peace with the rest of the world."

His Majesty avoided all comment on what his new Foreign Secretary may say to Mussolini, and what Mussolini's subjects have been saying about Captain Anthony Eden. Neither did he speak of the steel ring of allies that his statesmen are forging around the

kingdom of his brother sovereign, King Victor Emanuel <sup>whose</sup> ~~with~~ King George personally has always been warm friends - chummy.

One paragraph in the king's message to his people was implicit of the real link that still holds the British Empire

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together with all its conglomerated dominions: ~~It's~~ The paragraph in which King George declared:- "It's the personal link between me and my people which I value most. It binds us together in all our common joys and sorrows." And he continued:- "I feel this link now as I speak to you."

It was noticeable that the royal voice trembled somewhat as he delivered his greetings to the Empire on which the Sun Never Sets. He spoke from his study in his country place at Sandringham, the estate that was the favourite residence of his father, King Edward the Seventh. It <sup>has</sup> been noticeable of late that the royal family spends as little time as possible at Windsor Castle, <sup>which is</sup> an old, draughty, unsanitary, ~~and highly~~ uncomfortable, <sup>but</sup> ~~rest-~~ ~~ance:~~ <sup>highly picturesque residence.</sup>

For this occasion the British Broadcasting Company set up a microphone <sup>in</sup> ~~at~~ the king's studio for what was one of the greatest hookups in the history of radio. This message of King George's was the twenty-fifth of his reign, "the climax of his Jubilee Year," as he himself remarked.

CHRISTMAS FOLLOW KING GEORGE

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I never knew until today that we owe the cheery custom of the decorated and illuminated Christmas tree to King George's grandfather. We all <sup>— many at any rate —</sup> take it for granted that this jovial institution is a part of our own customs. But it seems that it originated in Germany. King George's grandfather, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, was, of course, a German. For quite a while after he married Queen Victoria he was pretty homesick at Windsor Castle and the other English royal residences. Most particularly he missed the elaborate Yuletide ~~the~~ festivities of his native land. <sup>It</sup> For centuries the Germans have been starting their celebration of the Feast of the Nativity on Christmas Eve. It is then that they light the tree and, still more important, distribute the presents. Humorous observers have suggested that they did this in order to leave December the Twenty-Fifth itself free for the more serious Teutonic business of eating and drinking. In a well appointed German household Christmas dinner begins at two o'clock in the afternoon and ends about four o'clock ~~in~~ on the

following morning.

At any rate, His Highness, Queen Victoria's Prince Consort, decided to enliven the royal Christmas. Of course his slightest wish was law to the devoted Queen. So he sent all the way to the Black Forest for a fir tree which was set up in Windsor Castle. That started a new practice throughout the Queen's dominions, which quickly spread to us. At least so I am told by a curious student who has been investigating Christmas customs.

The two essentially American features of our celebrations over here are the good old turkey and the poem which begins "T'was the Night Before Christmas." I suppose many of you have heard it a dozen or more times during the last few days. But few of us know who wrote the verses. It was a New Yorker named Clement Clark Moore, who wrote it for his children in eighteen hundred and twenty-two. It is based on an old Knickerbocker Dutch legend that Author Moore remembered from his own boyhood. If you had been downtown in New York last night, you would have seen thousands of youngsters gathering at the Chapel of the Intercession and marching to the grave of Clement Clark Moore, in the churchyard of Old Trinity.

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The war news today is that the calendar played a sorry trick on Premier Mussolini's soldiers at the front. Like the rest of the world they had their share of celebrating Christmas boxes from home, Molto Vino and plenty of good eats. The big war planes of the army instead of carrying bombs to the enemy were used to carry cheer to the soldiers. This by order of the new Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Badoglio.

But to their astonishment many of the fighting divisions found their turkey seasoned with a plentiful sauce of hot lead. The soldiers of the Lion of Judah evidently were of no mind to celebrate Christmas. They peppered the invaders just as though it were April First.

To the Italians this seemed an especially dirty trick. In a loud chorus they complained:- "What sort of Christians are these that they do such things on Christmas Day? The answer is that to the Ethiopians, although many of them are Christians, this is not Christmas Day. It isn't even December the Twenty-Fifth. What's more this isn't even the year 1935. The subject<sup>6</sup> of the Negus still use the old Julian calendar. Consequently this is

the Year 1928, Leap Year, and thirteen more days until Christmas.

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The Christian Ethiops will celebrate the Feast of the Nativity *on what*  
*to us is*  
~~on~~ January Seventh. That will give the Duce's boys a ~~chance~~ chance  
to retaliate if they feel like it.



CHINA

A tale of mystery from the Far East. In far-off Shanghai a man lies dead, murdered. And so far we don't really know why.

The murdered man was a bit of a potentate, his name Tang Yu Jen. He was formerly a member of the Chinese government, Vice Minister of Railways. Of course the natural tendency would be to connect this crime with the political upheavals in the North, the latest Japanese invasion. <sup>And</sup> It does have a remote connection because this ex-Vice Minister of Railways was known to have been in sympathy with Japanese expansion in the North. At the same time it is difficult for observers to discover in what way his death would be of use to any party. Killing a former member of the government will certainly place no obstacle in the path of the Japanese invasion.

Mr. Tang Yu Jen lived at the French concession in Shanghai. There the three assassins broke in. And each of them emptied revolvers into his body, then escaping with ease.

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Probably the mystery will be cleared up in the morning paper. At present it is somewhat baffling. Significantly enough no arrests have been made.

WESTOVER

One of the nicest Christmas presents I heard of was that received by one of Uncle Sam's Officers. I ~~am~~ mean, of course, Brigadier-General Oscar Westover, who <sup>you probably know</sup> succeeds to the job of his old chief, Benny Foulois, as head of the Army's Air Corps, <sup>- mentioned last night. Well, today</sup> ~~and~~ I hear that the staff and personnel of the Air Corps consider that appointment a nice Christmas present to themselves. For in General Westover they have as their Chief an old-time flier with a long record of skill and achievement. General Westover is proficient, not only in ~~the~~ heavier-than-air, but <sup>also</sup> in the lighter-than-air branches of aeronautics. He holds four ratings: Airplane pilot, airplane observer, airship pilot, and balloon observer. Though he's a West Point man, he's also a ranker. He enlisted in the Engineers and won his Cadetship at the point from the ranks.

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Among his achievements was winning the National Elimination Free Balloon Race in nineteen hundred and twenty-two. He has been at various times Assistant Executive in the Bureau of Aircraft Production, Commanding Officer at Langley Field,

Instructor-in-Chief in the Air Corps sub-section of the General Staff School, assistant to General Foulis and head of the Air Mail activities of the Army. He served in the Philippines, in Alaska, and with General Pershing in Mexico. For two years he was Professor of Drawing at West Point. They say he's not only a draftsman but a bit of an artist.

The appointment of a new chief in Uncle Sam's Army Air Corps is a matter of great moment, not only to the men of that corps but to everybody interested in aviation, and indirectly to every man, woman and boy of us nephews of Uncle Sam. The succession of General Westover to this job arouses <sup>a few</sup> ~~considerable~~ brave expectations. As a friend of mine phrased it, "Oscar Westover is a man of proven courage as a flier and a soldier." Said this friend, "We are hoping also that he will ~~also~~ have courage as an administrator, technological courage."

And my friend continues. "There's a tendency among Army Officers to look upon aviation as being mature. It is nothing of the sort. As an art, as a science, and an industry

it is still an infant. Therefore, it is a prime need of America, not only for her self-defense but for the development of aviation in general, That the head of the Army Air Corps shall be a man of vision and of moral as well as physical courage."

And there's good reason to hope that General Westover is such a man.

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## GOLD

How's the skating out your way? So far as I can remember this is the first Christmas in a long long while that gave us a chance to work off the effects of the turkey, plum pudding and mince pie on skates. That is, those of us who live in the East and South of Maine. Unless the snow promised by the weather man spoils the ice there ought to be good sport for several days to come.

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But the water in the lakes and ponds isn't the only thing that's frozen just now. A serious and spectacular phenomenon is the freezing of a huge volume of the world's gold supply. And it's Uncle Sam who has done it. Financial sharks tell us that it's a grave and threatening ~~xxx~~ condition. Unless the remedy is found, one effect will be to diminish America's international trade to the vanishing point.

This is a consequence of the gold policy of the administration. The hoard of the precious metal now locked up in Uncle Sams Treasury is simply gigantic. Moreover, it's growing all the time. The effect has been to congest the world's commeree. We can't sell goods abroad unles's foreign

countries have gold with which to pay for them. So it's easy to see why the accumulation of bullion and specie in Washington acts as a boomerang on us.

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That, the experts say, is one prime reason for Secretary Morgenthau's purchasing of silver. Buying silver in the London market is the only substantial way of transferring some of our huge gold surplus to other countries. Incidentally, the price of the white metal continues to drop. At a fraction of less than fifty cents an ounce the price of silver today is lower than it has been in more than twelve months. That means it fell four cents in less than a week.

MORRO CASTLE

Here's an echo of a great tragedy, but with a silver lining. It comes from Washington. It means that the horror of the Morro Castle disaster will have one after-effect to benefit all travellers. Uncle Sam's new regulations to bring about safety at sea will go into effect next week. So we learn from Uncle Sam's Department of Commerce.

The new laws mean fire drills at least once a week, with all the passengers taking part. Also, every ship must have proper steering apparatus for emergencies. Crews to be drilled so that no emergency can take them unawares. Strict rules for detecting and preventing fires, and so forth. In short, the Government is seeing to it in earnest that we get a real break when we go down to the sea in ships.



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Can you picture Santa Claus being homesick on Christmas Day? Well, it's true, and literally. I'm not talking about the mythical Santa Claus, but the real article. He's a clergyman, the Reverend Santa Claus of Marshall, Missouri. He's been paying his first visit to New York. He laid aside his clerical ~~h~~ vestments, fastened his collar in front instead of at the back, and set out to take in the sights of Little Old Gotham, though he neither smokes nor drinks. They tell me he had a swell time the other night, hobnobbing with Bugs Baer, Bob Ripley, Jack Dempsey, and Mrs. Dempsey.

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In case you want to know what Santa Claus is like, he's a man of Frank and simple manners, speaks with a slow drawl characteristic of the State of "Show Me" and uses the rich and picturesque colloquialisms of these parts. Preaching isn't his only vocation. In fact he puts in most of his time working as a plumber and on his farm.

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For a while he enjoyed New York. Incidentally, he <sup>found</sup>~~thought~~ the stories of the city's wickedness ~~were~~ vastly exaggerated. But, though he had a good time, he got fed up, homesick, wanted to go back to the farm in Missouri. And back he went. What's more, he sacrificed four hundred dollars to do it. His agent had just

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obtained for him a two-day engagement at two hundred dollars a day to appear in public. "But," said the Reverend Santa Claus of the you-gotta-show-me-state of Missouri, "show me -- a railroad ticket, show me the way to get out of here."

And so say I - show me the way out of here. And,--

SO LONG UNTIL TOMORROW.