

The origin of Santa Claus depends on which country's story you choose to adopt. Santa Claus comes from the Dutch words "Sinter Klaas", which is what they call their favorite saint, St. Nicholas.

Last Christmas Day Reminiscences of a Christmas spent with the British Expeditionary Force in France

Another Christmas is upon us, and with it comes the reminiscences of the past - the far-off happy days when the wish of "peace on earth, good will to men" was no mere phrase - no empty expression. It is characteristic of the Christmas Festival that one's thoughts turn melancholy to the absent friends, and that the warmth and glow of the Yule-log fire furnish vivid pictures of bygone incidents.

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I remember distinctly Christmas Day in 1916! We were then serving in France, and the fortunes of war had favored us, in that our Division had been relieved from the trenches about a week before, and we had shaken the mud of the Somme off our feet for a period.

We were billeted in a quaint little French village, that had never seen Colonial soldiers before, and the peasantry looked askance as we marched along the poplar-bordered road, but the cheerful, honest smiles of the Newfoundlanders soon reassured them, and a few hours later I saw several groups of the boys in various kitchens having "cafe au lait," while gray-haired dames and gesticulating "mademoiselles" hovered around in feverish hospitality.

The announcement that we would be out of the line for Christmas was gladsome tidings, and immediately arrangements commenced for celebrating the Festival in right good spirit. Major Bernard rode into a town several kilometers distant, and secured a large number of turkeys, and Captain Nangle undertook the

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Christmas is the most important holiday in the American year. Although it is a Christian festival day – the very term "Christmas" simply meaning "Christ's mass" – it has become over the years as secular a festival as any other.

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management of a joint officers' dinner - the first and only occasion that the Battalion Officers were enabled to dine together. The Christmas festivities of the Newfoundlanders in France looked promising!

A keen crisp air and a dull sky greeted the eye on Christmas morning!

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Services were held and the beautiful story of Noel extolled from the pulpit of the old village church, while a sympathetic representation of quiet peasantry gazed in religious awe at the impassive figures of the khaki-clad worshippers. Several "Poilu" on leave, in their French-blue uniforms, lent a tinge of color to an impressive scene.

At twelve-thirty dinner-calls went, and the men lined the broken-down houses where the "cookers" were located. There was a generous ration of real English ale for each soldier, oranges and chocolates, and cake besides. All the officers were present with their companies, and later they repaired to the billets where the turkeys were carved and the vegetables issued. Never have I seen such a cheery scene out of the line - there was a realization of the Christmas spirit predominating, and these well-kept barns, with their carpet of straw, had never before held such a merry throng, or a braver body of men. The good cheer, the hearty laughter, the buzz of conversation, the applause that greeted the arrival of the Xmas mail - a happy finale to an excellent meal - is present with me as I write!

At seven-thirty in the evening the officers began to gather at headquarters mess for dinner. A warm blaze of light flashed from the windows of the Chateau and brightened the pathway leading through

the plots of dead and withered plants to the leaf-covered portico. A huge fire blazed in the big open grate that formed a conspicuous object in the long, oak-stained room. Candles in profusion were burning everywhere. Captain Raley's gram-o-phone whirred tunefully in a corner and the light flashed on cut glass and silver, produced from some secret recess in this ancient French home. There was a hearty welcome for each officer as he arrived, and his particular friends chipped him merrily until it was time to sit to the table.

The menu showed excellent taste, and a variety of dishes that was truly remarkable for active service. The environment was delightful; all military formalities were dropped for the occasion, the Colonel exchanged jests with the youngest subaltern, and the "Padres" became "boys" in the real sense of the word. "Noel" had struck the right note, and the snow white streets of St. John's and the joy-bells with their merry peal did not seem so far away!

The toast of "The King" was loyally honored, and seldom has it been drunk with greater dignity or deeper feeling. The impromptu speeches that accompanied the port showed a great depth of thought, and a stern realization of the duties of the Regiment, and they brought out a surprising array of eloquence and humor.

At midnight the National Anthem concluded proceedings, and the happy gathering left to take up the duties of the morrow. Overhead a clear cold moon bathed the village roads with a pale blue light, and the thought crossed our minds that just such a heavenly orb rode in the sky over the homes of our dear ones many hundreds of miles away, and we knew that the Yule-tide wish that we sent across the divide from our inmost souls had found a responsive chord in every loved one on the rock-bound coast!