



Instead of a Tree, the French Set Up

A Tiny Manger Scene

by Gay Starrak

THE creche, a pictured story of the Nativity, is used as the Christmas tree is used, to glorify that night of nights, Christmas Eve.

In a small Italian town, St. Francis of Assisi created this scenic representation of the Holy Night at Bethlehem. It was used for the first time 712 years ago in this little town in Italy, to teach and inspire those simple folk who could not read.

Arising in Italy in the thirteenth century, the idea soon spread to other countries, and by the end of the fifteenth century it was established as a custom in England, France, Germany, Spain and many other European countries.

The first Nativity scenes were composed of only a few essential characters: the Infant Jesus, Mary, Joseph, an ox, an ass and possibly one or two sheep. Great care was given to dressing the figures, which were clothed in the finest of silks. The early scenes were noted for their sweetness and simplicity. Sometimes a scene was depicted of shepherds in the field with their flocks around them. Though originally used in churches, its use soon spread to domestic groups.

DURING the fifteenth century the creche underwent a notable change. It passed from the primitive and simple to the elaborate and ornate. Additional personages were added to the original characters; also various animals, such as camels, elephants and leopards, were included in the scenes. Even the setting was sometimes changed. Instead of the manger, shops and buildings sometimes formed the background.

Displays were the work of great artists and were especially elaborate in

large churches. One of the most beautiful creches of this period was made by Charles III, king of Naples. It is now

Sparkle Is Stylish in

Holiday Clothes for Houses

by Betty Shoemaker

STRANGE as it seems, Christmas did not originate in Christianity. It was first a pagan holiday called Saturnalia, which was a celebration of the coming of longer days.



Holly

touches that made modern Christmas decorations different from those of the old Saturnalia.

You may decorate your house both outside and in. The out-of-doors decorations may be very simple and still very effective. A small lighted tree is lovely.

Red candles, placed in saucers filled with sand, or red lamps in candlestick holders (from the ten-cent store) may be put in the front windows of the house. Six or seven tall candles may also be grouped on a foundation of evergreen branches placed on a stand in the window. Two such tables would give a nicely balanced effect. And please leave the shades up!



A Wreath



A Candle

in a historical museum near Naples. The University of Kansas owns one of the finest displays in the United States.

This custom died out in many countries, but it is now being revived. Recently it has taken root on our side of the globe. Since much imagination enters into the assembling of these scenes, there are no two alike. It is not the space nor the spending of money that make the creche successful, but the ingenuity and art of the builder. Some artists use exquisite pottery figures, others use wood, cork or plaster of paris.

THE purely reverent has not always been the theme. Gaily painted figures, angels with polka dot wings, kings with whiskers and full array, combine humor with reverence. Other carved figures are brilliantly colored and mounted on a music box which plays "Silent Night, Holy Night." A beautiful effect may be obtained by a star whose rays light up the tiny Gothic figures.

Creches make simple and effective mantel and table decorations for the Christmas season. They may also be built near or around the base of the tree to bring a touch of the real Christmas spirit.

Wreaths for the door may be made of holly, or from Irish hemlock, Irish juniper, spruce and rosemary evergreens. A double wire circle, six inch frame, may be used as a base. Pine cones may be woven into the wreath, and red oilcloth used for the bows, since snow and rain leaves it crisp.

Instead of the large wreath on the door, a silhouette of a Christmas tree may be made of beaverboard and painted, then Christmas tree lights put on it. Another unusual tree may be made of ten small wreaths, wired together. The trunk of this tree is made of beaverboard covered with smilax. This may be used for the front window or door.

Christmas may mean a lofty tree trimmed in red and silver, but sometimes there isn't

much room for a large tree. A clever expression of Christmas is found in the miniature tree, trimmed with the smallest balls that can be found, and covered

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A Tree