LAST PROSE OF SUMMERS

Would A Martian Like Christmas?

By ED SUMMERS

In storybooks, the towheaded child clammers into its grandfather's lap by hunching itself up in the old man's beard and asks in a piping voice, "What is Christmas, Grandpa?"; and the grandfather, rubbing his aching whiskers, clears his throat and takes full advantage of his young audience by delivering a full-blown philosophical oration, possibly with political overtones.

About Christmas

We do not fit into this picture because of several inconsistencies; we are no more towheaded than we are a grandfather (we are not complaining); but we would like to talk about Christmas.

What Would A Martian Think?

Suppose the proverbial little green Martian landed on this planet tomorrow and stayed on a spell. What would he think of the phenomenon we call Christmas?

A lot depends on where his flying winged ship lands. If he arrived in Moscow he might decide the Russians were in the throes of battle with some invisible enemy of the state; in darkest Africa he might never know there was a Christmas; in this country... In this Country

In this country he would observe that everyone was exhorting everyone else to dissipate a large fraction of their total income among as many other persons as possible. He would see the country's forests brought in doors and later set out and burned. He would note a certain temporary restraining influence, comparatively speaking, on the country's musical tastes, and watch the frequent assembly of segments of the population in large buildings ornamented with crossed sticks.

To See The 'Family'

He would see men and women suddenly break their customary patterns of existence to make long and uncomfortable trips to see briefly a "family"—in quotes because Martians most likely haven't got families. He would be amazed at the ubiquity of little, be whiskered old men in red and white suits and black boots and the sudden attention directed to a deformed (or alcoholic) reindeer with a red nose. He'd Be Puzzled

This is quite a lot for one Martian to see and understand in one visit. If our Martians returned next year with a hundred like him to observe our peculiarities, they would still be disturbed and puzzled. They might go home and write in a Martian scientific journal about the irrational behavior of the beings on their sister planet.

We need not go to Mars to find criticism of Christmas. We have Martians here who apparently cannot go home, or at least prefer to publish in earthly books and magazines.

What He Didn't See

What the Martians, both there and here, fail to understand and see is something most of us take for granted about Christmas. We take for granted the emotional experiences which make December 25 become Christmas and not simply another celebrity's birthday. We take for granted the springy step, the keen anticipation, the easy comradeship, the enriched satisfaction of spiritual enrichment that are Christmas no matter who or where we are. If a person does not find these things on the 25th of December, he has been deprived of Christmas.

A Word To Martians

The little green Martian went home deprived of Christmas. The domestic Martians, however, have an advantage over him—they are not little or green; in fact, they are enough like the rest of us to enjoy Christmas, if they try.

It is Christmas time. Tonight or tomorrow morning all of you—including the Martians—are going home. My last words to you this year are for the Martians: go home—forget what planet you are from—and have a Merry Christmas. See you next year.