

## Greetings of the National Council

The National Council of the Polish YMCA extends to all leaders and members of the Association throughout the universe, and to all our friends, the heartiest greetings for a happy Christmas.

## "Why I Value the Polish YMCA"

One of the members of the Polish Parliament, a well-known doctor living in Poznań, told us the following little story:

"For some time I looked after a boy whose material situation was bad enough to make angels weep. He had long suffered from a badly inflamed leg, and often being hungry and having no decent living conditions, the general effect was extremely unfavorable. Finally he fell into a state of great moral depression and was a figure moving one to compassion."

"It so happened that I lost sight of the boy. He disappeared somewhere and for several months did not come to see me. After about half a year he again turned up, and immediately my attention was caught by his quite different appearance; plainly but decently dressed, looking much healthier, and with a smile on his face. What a curious metamorphosis, I thought."

"Having examined the boy, and finding great improvement in the state of his health, I asked what was the cause of such visibly good results. He explained that he had become a member of the Polish YMCA and that the new sphere in which he found himself had such advantageous effect on his life. He showed me with pride the badge of the Association shining in his buttonhole."

"I must affirm", said the doctor, "that I stood far off from the Polish YMCA. I had heard much about its activities but had never interested myself more closely in it. The facts of which I have spoken caused me to become an enthusiastic believer in the Association, which gives such actual, visible proofs of the results of its work."

An encouraging report.



## Christmas in Poland

In Poland Christmas is a home and church holiday of specially sacred traditions. A Catholic country, in all the churches during the night of December 24th divine service is held, "Pasterka". Crowds of people fill the houses of worship, church bells ring, and the beautiful traditional carols proclaiming the birth of the Son of God resound on the air.

The chief of the Christmas celebrations in Polish homes is the meal on the evening of December 24th, begun when the first star appears in the heavens. Before sitting down to this meal a wafer which has been blessed by the Church is broken and shared among the family and members of the household, while good wishes are exchanged.

There is probably not a single Polish home, even the poorest, in which during Christmas one could not find a Christmas tree, even though it be only a branch of one; or a home where the traditional carols are not sung. Then there is the picturesque custom of boys attiring themselves as the Three Wise Men, or walking in a group carrying a large colored star, one of the boys being dressed as a bear or wolf, going from house to house singing carols, playing on fiddles, pipes, etc., and carrying a small booth exhibiting the scene of the Nativity.

During the Christmas season special efforts are made to give a happier moment to the poor, and above all to poor children. Various institutions and organizations arrange teas or dinners for them, offer them pleasant gifts and articles of clothing. The Polish YMCA takes part in this custom and before Christmas makes appeals for money and clothing to be used for these helpless and often hopeless ones, bringing a ray of light into their lives, and by this evidence of thought and care in many instances giving them fresh energy and hope for the future.

Christmas in Poland is picturesque and beautiful. It comes at a time when the entire country is under an abundant cover of downy silver snow. The muffled thuds of the hooves of horses drawing sleighs is heard in the villages and small towns, and the sleigh-bells ring out merrily. In the large towns many-colored lights throw their brilliance over the white carpet of snow, while through unshaded windows glisten the Christmas trees adorned with candles, toys, colored candies and honey-cakes. From town dwellings, country houses, from the palaces of the wealthy as from the cottages of the poor, flows the same glad song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"

## The Winter Season

We stand in face of the full winter season, in Poland offering splendid opportunities for all kinds of winter sports, which are indeed very popular here. With the appearance of the first snow crowds of people both young and older travel to the mountain resorts. Probably the best known of these places, not only to Poles but also to tourists from all Europe and to many from overseas, are Zakopane and Krynica in the Carpathian Mountains. During the winter months one continually sees on the railroad stations, in trains, in automobiles, afoot, figures warmly wrapped in winter sport clothes carrying skis, sleds, or ice-skates.

Great success attends the winter camps in Poland, which are organized during the Christmas holidays for young and old by various institutions. The Polish YMCA also conducts camps of this kind and year by year systematically expands this camp program.

Winter is also the great season for large and small game hunting. Numerous tourists from European countries and America are drawn to Poland each year during the months of December to April by the ideal conditions for winter sports and hunting.

## Home

The general director of the Polish YMCA, Mr. Paul Super, has returned to Poland after a stay of five months in the United States. While in America Mr. Super visited over 20 of the larger cities and delivered 54 lectures, some of which were broadcasted.

Mr. and Mrs. Super, who returned to Poland on one of the new Polish boats, the MS. "Batory" arriving at the port of Gdynia, were heartily welcomed there and in Warsaw by representative authorities of the Polish YMCA and by numerous Polish friends. They report the "Batory" as a highly satisfactory ship with excellent food, efficient service, competent and pleasant officers.



It is great riches to have the hundreds of friends Mrs. Super and I are happy in possessing, to many of whom this little bulletin goes each month. It carries to them once more our hearty Christmas greetings and our thanks to the many who during our stay in England and America showed Mrs. Super and me kindness.



