

CHRISTMAS PIE

Father Christmas is on his way! At snow-covered Santa Claus village - up at the North Pole - a Pathé cameraman meets up with the world's oldest favourite - new again every year. Today, old Santa's workshop is humming with activity. Inside, everything goes like clockwork, as an army of fairies put the finishing touches to more toys than you've ever dreamed of.

Off Santa Claus' assembly line roll the finished jobs that have been ordered from all over the world. And the world is laying on a gala reception for the bearded man from the North Pole. London streets become a fairy crescent of light, as Britain gets that Xmas feeling. In city store and village shop, austerity goes with the wind. Bigger, better, and dearer toys than ever lead a parade of Xmas cheer, brilliance and spectacle - not seen for many a year.

There are toys to suit everyone's taste - if not the pocket. Here's one for a barrowboy's daughter - to teach her the trade. And here, something for Ivan in Moscow - eager to blow raspberries like his elders.

There is so much to choose from and, whether you are six or sixty, the glamour of toytown is something one can never outgrow.

Sudden jar to joy comes with the "expert-only" sign on toys like these.

Yes, there's magic in the air! In countless street markets there is everything this side of heaven. There are even balloons that won't go bang.

In the poultry world, too, there is magic in the air. At the National Poultry Show at Olympia, more than 4,000 feathered friends give a preview of what's in store for the meal of the year.

Prospects of a juicy turkey look pretty good, say the breeders. And to prove their point, they gave this one the first prize. That's what happens to all good birds. Yes, to you too!

There's more than magic in the air at Gosport. Here - in a big naval messroom - the spirit of Xmas (the festival of the family) - comes to life. Two hundred naval ratings from H.M.S. Dolphin take on a family role to make it come true for less fortunate youngsters - 600 orphans from all parts of Hampshire.

The sailors have thought of everything and, once again, the Navy shows that it has a big, open heart.

Joining in the magic is music, from Central Hall, Westminster. There, nearly 3,000 boys and girls put on a carollers' festival - with no fear of being reported to the local watch committee.

Although world events show little of the Xmas spirit, the realities of the nation's economy are thrown overboard, when it comes to giving. For presents are as much a Xmas fare as turkey, mistletoe and holly. And exclusive Bond Street is no different from a provincial toy fair. What keeps them apart is the small matter of money. So if you want something for your mother-in-law, this isn't the place for you. For the price marks here have almost as many noughts on them as a footballer's transfer fee. For example, a cigar and cigarette case - rather out of the ordinary - 12 guineas.

For a mere £200 - this set of pipes - a different one for each day of the week.

For the smart girl - a set for the handbag. It's a cigarette case, compact, lighter and watch, all in one. Price - held on! - £1, 600.

Something cheaper? For £4.80, here is another combination for the handbag. If your bank balance won't stand the strain, you won't do your shopping here, but amid the bustle of the not-so-select. For the rush, the crowds, the shoving and pushing mean Xmas, too, whether you just send a card, or go in for celebrating in a big way. The eager expectancy, the hurried preparations for the day of days - they are all part of this hour of happiness - the hour that brings the greatest of childhood moments.

And so that the fairer sex is not forgotten, the benevolent Board of Trade has dug into its Xmas stocking and brought up - wonder of wonders - nylons. Not enough to satisfy everyone, but it's a step in the right direction.

Through the gloom of a strife-torn world shines the spirit that throughout the ages has made men glad. Burning brightly in this age, dark with conflict, it makes equals of us all and sheds its message of hope to all mankind.

If you still don't believe in Santa Claus, there is still time to change your mind. With a million stops ahead of them, Santa's reindeer are taking him on his way. Get ready, kids of all ages! Father Christmas is coming!