MERRY CHRISTMAS.

The Crowning Festival of the Whole Year.

Some of its Time-honored Customs which are Still in Vogue, and Some which have Fallen into Neglect.

> When Christ was born of Mary free, When Christ was born of Many ...
> In Bethlehem, that fair citie,
> Angels sang there with mirth and giee,
> In Excelsis Gloria!

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright, To them appearing with great light, Who said:—"God's son is born this night. In Excelsis Gloria

This King is come to save mankind, As in Scripture truths we find, Therefore this song have we in mind,

In Electria Gloria Thou, dear Lord, of Thy great grace, Grant us the bliss to see Thy face, That we may sing to Thy solace, In Recelsi

In Excelsia Gloria!

Christmas Day, the Christ Child's Birth-day, that season of rejoicing, of merry making, of gift giving, of feasting, of gladness of heart, and of peace and good-will to all classes and conditions of men, is agaiz upon us. Another evening and another dawn will see us fairly launched on its great sea of hap-

The season is not only a time for rejoicing, but is also a time for conveying joy. To fully observe Christmas, we must endeavor to make others happy as much as we strive to minister to our own enjoyment; and let all remember, while in the height of their refoicing, that there are many human beings who are not highly favored in this world's goods, who know no merry Christmas, no happy New Year. Towards such let the purse, as well as the heartstrings, be loosened, and you will have the pleasure of feeling that the true spirit of Christmas has been in you—namely, giving as it has been given.

It is pre-eminently becoming that the day which saw the great gift of God to man-the Christ-child should be observed in a joyous manner, and by the giving of gifts from man to man. May the day still be kept from age to age in the right spirit, and let us never forget, in the accumulation of new observances, its high and holy origin.

The Source of the Christmas Festlylties. Considering that Christmas is pre-eminently a Christian festival, it would seem strange that many of the customs peculiar to the day are to be traced back to heathenish sources for their origin. When the different European nations were first converted to Christianity, it was found that the rites peculiar to their former faith had taken such hold upon the popular heart, that it was almost impossible to prevent their continued observance. The early missionaries, therefore, made the best of this circumstance by engrafting on the ancient ceremonies and superstitions of their converts the principles of the new faith which they had accepted, thus rendering the transition less sudden and less obnoxious.

This was particularly the case with respect to Christmas in Great Britain, from which country we have borrowed nearly all of our own methods of observing it. The origin of the principal ceremonies was the Saturnalia of the Romans.

At different times, to the peculiarities of the Saturnalia were added the weird rites of the Druids and the grim observances of the Saxon mythology; and from this odd mingling of Pagan ceremonials sprang the Christmas festivities of our forefathers. Among such may be noticed the peculiar customs and observances of the olden times, the bringing in and lighting of the Yule log, the hanging of the mistletoe, the decoration with evergreens, the boar's head, the carols and waits, and many merry fireside The History of Christmas.

Having received the countenance of the Church, and being based on customs which were revered by the common people. Christmas continued down to the Reformation to be celebrated throughout the Christian world with great rejolcing. When the Protestant sects sprang into existence, this great festival, in common with many others on the Roman calendar, retained its place among the customs of the Lutheran and Anglican Churches; but by the adherents of Calvin it was rejected in toto, as with, ont any warrant in Scripture. It was to the prevalence of this spirit among the Puritan settlers of

New England that we owe the origin of our national festival of Thanksgiving. As Scotland was the country in which the Calvinistic doctrines became most prevalent, it was there that the clergy made the most determined efforts to de away with the observance of the obnoxious festival. The result of this course is the absence, even at the present day, of anything in the way of festivity on Christmas, except in the Highlands and the county of Forfar. But even in the Calvinistic Lowlands the tendency to rejoicing at the close of the year is so irrepressible that New Year's Day and the preceding evening, known as Hogmanay, are seasons of general jollification. In this country, while Christmas was formerly regarded by the Presbyterians with as much aversion as it is by those of their belief in the Old World, it has at last come to be observed by them generally, but merely as a season of festivity, without partaking of any sanctioned religious char-

Ancient Christmas Sports and Customs. The gathering of the sacred mistletoe was among the great events of Christmas time with the ancient Britons and Druids, by whom the plant was held in great veneration, especially when found clinging to the oak. On this occasion a party of the people would sally forth with all the paraphernalia of rejoicing, the Draids or priests at their head, to gather the mysterious plant. On reaching the oak two white bulls were first secured to it, and then the chief Druid, arrayed in robes of white, to typify his purity, ascended the tree, and with a golden knife severed the sacred plant, which was caught in falling in the robe of another priest. The bulls, and in some instances human victims as well, were then sacrificed, after which the plants thus gathered were divided among the people and by them hung up in sprays over the entrances to their dwellings. Not only was the plant considered to possess the power to propitiate the sylvan deities during the season of trost and snow, but it was held to impart a healing influence to all who thus revered it.

This plant has not been introduced to any extent into the decoration of Christian churches, but where it can be easily obtained it has been used extensively in the adornment of private houses. At the present day it is extremely rare in England, and almost unknown in our own country. But it still nourishes in great luxuriance on the apple trees of Gloucestersnire and Worcestershire, where large quantities are cut during the Christmas season and forwarded to London and other important cities, to be used in the

decoration of houses and shops. One of the most enticing games of Christmas eye is connected with this plant. A branch of it is suspended from the wall or celling, and when one of the gentler sex passes under it, either purposely or by accident, she incurs the penalty of being kissed by any one of the less gentle specimens of humanity who covets the privilege. And if she be not kissed, it is generally believed that she will remain single

during the whole of the coming year. The decoration of churches and private houses with greens is among the oldest customs connected with the season. For churches, while it has been customary to employ hearly all the seasonable varieties of evergreens, the plants that are held in the highest favor in England are the holly, bay, rosemary, and laurel. The my is also used, but from its associations with Bacchus and the infernal orgies celebrated in his honor, it is generally considered undesirable. It is still the custom, however, at the two great English Universities to deck the windows of the college chapels with this plant. Cypress, also, is sometimes excluded on account of its funereal associations.

priate evergreens are but scantlly produced, the cedar, box, and pine are employed, from the necessities of the case.

For houses, every available shoot of green is pressed into service, although holly and lvy have usually the preference. In Oxfordshire, England, there was a peculiar penalty attached to the neglect of this ceremony. The maid-servant would request the man to furnish a supply of ivy for decorating the house; and if for any reason he did not comply, he was soon horrifled by the apparition of a pair of his breeches nailed up to the gateway.

The procession and lighting of the Yule log is another time-honored institution, though now mostly disused. A modified form, sadly shorn of the pomp and ceremony which formerly attended it, is still retained in some sections of England.

The ceremony of bringing in the Yule-log was conducted in the following manner:-The party repaired to the woods where the log lay, and having placed themselves in the harness, dragged it in triumph to the hall, each wayfarer raising his hat as it passed. Arriving there, they were greeted by the minstrels with a song.

The log was then rolled upon the ample hearth and ignited with a coal from the remnant of the Yule-log of the preceding year. This done, a candle of monstrous size was lighted, and then the Christmas party made themselves merry with music and

The festival of the winter solstice, as celebrated by the ancient Goths and Saxons, was termed Juni or Yule, by the latter of which terms Christmas is still known in the Scottish dialect. The term is most probably derived from the Gothic word giul or hiul, from which is derived the English "wheel," and which has the same significance. Juul, or Yule, is therefore supposed to signify the turning point of the year, a supposition which is confirmed by the fact that in the old clog almanaes the Yule-tide is designated by the device of a wheel,

Another of the ancient sports of Christmas was the procession of mummers or maskers, who were accustomed to array themselves in the most outlandish and fantastic costumes, combining all the oddities of men and brutes, and then make the round of the principal houses within their reach, to the intense delight of old and young. The ceremony was not strictly confined to the Chrismas season in old times, although it is at present, wherever practised in England. At Tenby, in South Wales, it is kept up for three weeks, every house in the town being visited. In Scotland, mumming or guising is performed at New Year, as are all the other festivities of the winter-solstice.

Still another was the Lord of Misrule of the olden time. This functionary, in a word, was the master of the Christmas Revels. We have the following account of the custom by Stow :- "In the feast of Christmas, there was in the King's house, wheresoever he lodged, a 'Lord of Misrule,' or Master of Merry Desports, and the like had ye in the house of every nobleman of honor or good worship, were he spiritual or temporal. The Mayor of London, and either of the Sheriffs, had their several Lords of Misrule, ever contending, without quarrel or offense, who should make the rarest pastime to delight the beholders. These lords beginning their rule at Allhallond Eve, continued the same till the morrow after the Feast of the Purification, commonly called Candlemas Day, in which space there were fine and subtle disguisings, masks, and mnmmeries, with playing at cards for counters, nayles, and points, in every house, more for pastimes than for game."

In the University of Cambridge this functionary, regularly elected from among the Masters of Arts, was termed Imperator, or Prafectus Ludorum, and his duties were not only to superintend the diversions of Christmas, but of the annual representation of the Latin plays by the students as well. A similar custom prevailed at Oxford.

In the Inns of Court in London, the Lord of Misrule reigned in great splendor, being surrounded by all the paraphernalia of royalty, including a lordkeeper and treasurer, a guard of honor, and two chaplains, who regularly preached before him in the Temple Church on Sunday. His sovereignty terminated on Twelfth-Day. In 1635, this mock-royal personage expended £2000 out of his own pocket, and in return received the | honor of knighthood at the nds of Charles 1.

As an illustration of the outrageous license enjoyed by these functionaries, we subjoin an extract from the "articles" by which the Right Worshipful Richard Evelyn, Esq., constituted Owen Flood, his trumpeter, the "Lord of Misrule of all good orders

during the twelve days:"-"I give free leave to the said Owen Flood to command all and every person or persons whatsoever, as well servants as others, to be at his command whensoever he shall sound his trumpet or music, and to do him good service, as though I were present myself, at their peril. I give full power and authority to his lordship to break up all locks, bolts, bars, doors, and latches, and to fling up all doors out of hinges to come at those who presume to disobey his lordship's commands. God save the King!"

The Lord of Misrule commenced his reign by absolving all his subjects from their wisdom, commanding them to retain just enough sense to know how to conduct themselves like fools,

Christmas Music.

A distinguishing feature of the "Merry Christmas" time is its music. In England there is a class of musicians who are termed "Christmas Waits," although it is not known whether the word originally denoted the music, the performers, or the instru ments upon which they played. As early as the year 1400 a company of "waits" was established at Exeter, concerning whom Rymer gives a long account, commencing as follows:-

"A wayte, that nightelye from Michelmas to Shreve Thorsdaye pipeths the watche withen this courte fower times; in the somere nightes ii tymes, and makethe bon gayte at every chambere-dore and office, as well for feare of pyckeres and pillers. He eateth in the halle with mynstrielles and takethe lyverye (allowance) at nighte a loffe, a galone of alle, etc."

From this account it would appear that, in the time of Edward II, the "waits" were pages of the court: but in later days they were merely minstrels, whose strains were heard only at Christmas time in England, and in Scotland-Christmas being there tabooed-at New Year. In London, at the present time, they perambulate the streets at night for two or three weeks before Christmas, performing the popular airs of the day on various wind instruments. Their labors cease on Christmas Eve. and soon after they call upon the inhabitants for their contributions.

The singing of Christmas carols is another custom which has long prevailed in England. The Christmas carol is as old as the festival itself, and in the primitive days of the Church it was customary for the bishop, surrounded by his clergy, to take part in this simple and beautiful ceremony. In those times the carol was purely religious, but it afterwards became more secularized, and has been sung in the streets,

We hear no real Christmas carols in our own country, save once in a great while, when sung as a hymn by some Sunday School in their public Christmas exercises.

A specimen of the secular carol is found in the song which in aucient times was sung at the bringing in of the boar's head-one of the great Christmas

The ceremony of "Bringing in the Boar's Head" in these carly days was attended with great pomp and ceremony. It was the first and foremost dish upon the Christmas table of the fendal chieftains, and was served in a manner strictly in accordance with the boisterous customs of the day. Trumpets were nourished jubilantly, and the minstrels sang their merriest strams, as the "sewer" strode into the banquet-hall, at the head of a procession of stately lords and dames. Then, advancing to the table, he chanted the boar's head carol, the words and music of which are well known.

As time advanced the dish came into some disrepute; and when Parliament, during the Commonwealth, endeavored to extinguish Christmas by statute, the boar's head became a thing of the past. In some corners of England, however, the ceremony of bringing in this dish yet lingers; while at Queen's College, Oxford, it is still an established institution.

Christmas Dishes, Aucient and Modern. The dish that ranked next to the boar's head in

ancient times was the peacock. This vainglorious bird was considered a rare treas, and was served in a corresponding style.

glittering plumage, the bird was roasted whole, and then recommitted to his original covering; the beak, and frequently the whole body, was then covered with gold-leaf, and sometimes a piece of cotton, dipped in spirits and ignited, was placed in his bill. Within the bird reposed spices and herbs, and without was a plentiful supply of mutten gravy and the yolk of eggs.

The lady-guest of noblest birth or most bewitching beauty was selected to bear this royal dish into the hall; and following her, to the sound of music, came the rest of the dames, in the order of their

Sometimes, however, the peacock was served in a pie, at one end of which his crest appeared, while at the other protruded the gorgeous feathers of his tail. But the dish that has an irresistible charm for the Englishman, all over the world, is his Christmas pudding. This affair is of quite modern origin, although it had its progenitor in the plum-porridge of ancient days. This last was so highly esteemed that it was always served with the first course. Into this composition entered the broth of beef or mutten, thickened with brown bread; and, when half boiled, with a further admixture of raisins, prunes, currants, cloves, ginger, and mace.

The plum-pudding, to which the delectable porridge has given place, is so well known that no enumeration of its ingredients is necessary in this

Next in order to puddings and porridge come the Christmas or mince pies, and of these the Englishman is not permitted to make a monopoly, although he is entitled to the high honor of their invention. As early as 1596 Christmas pies were popular under the title of "mutton pies." At a later period neat's tongue took the place of mutton, the remaining ingredients being nearly the same as at present. So highly esteemed at one time were these Christmas ples that a watch was always set upon them, to forestall the depredations of thieves.

Christmas Superstitions. No other season in the year-no other festival in the calentar-is accompanied by so many singular fancies and actual superstitions as Christmas. One of the most ancient and curious of these was that concerning the crowing of the cocks.

Silent during the hours of darkness throughout the rest of the year, it was believed in olden times that "this bird of dawning" crowed from the setting of the sun on Christmas eve to its rising on Christmas morn. Shakespeare has noticed this superstition and turned it to good account in one of the ghost scenes of Hamlet. It was also believed that no spirits or fairies walked the earth at that time.

In old times there was a prejudice among the people of Scotland against spinning on Christmas day, they believing that it was nothing less than sacrilege to be so engaged. The Calvinistic preachers, overflowing with anti-Christmas prejudices, took especial pains to rid their flocks of this idea.

In the counties of Cornwall and Devon, in England, it was long believed, and it is probable that the notion still lingers there and in other out-of-the-way places, that at 12 o'clock the cattle in their stalls would fall upon their knees and make "a cruel moan, like Christian creatures." It was the custom throughout England to deposit

in some secure place the charred remains of the Yule log, from which to light its successor on the ensuing Christmas. And it was believed that the preservation of this remnant would unfailingly secure the house against fire throughout the coming

So, too, if a person who was troubled with a squint should chance to enter the hall while the log was burning, the omen was considered unpropitious. A like idea attended the arrival of a person with bare feet, more especially when that person happened to be a flat-footed woman.

If a person unluckily snuffed out a candle, his or her pairing with one of the opposite sex during the coming year was a thing not to be thought of; unless, indeed, a spark should remain, from which the candle could be rekindled by blowing on it. So it was believed that bread baked on Christmas Eve would never mould; and when Christmas fell on a Sunday, good luck awaited every one, while the reverse was the case when the festival happened on a

Christmus Presents.

The crowning glory of the Christmas season is the Christmas gift. It is in the expectation of this that the young hearts of every Christian household beat high and wild with hope for many weeks. And not alone by them are the amenities of the holiday season thus looked forward to with eager longing. Sad, indeed, is the lot of him or her for whom, on Christmas morn, there is not at hand some token, however slight, of the remembrance of relatives and friends. Such a one is virtually an outcast, a being who has no place at the Christmas board or around the Christmas hearth.

Closely connected with Christmas gifts are Christmas charities. While the former passes only from relative to relative, or from friend to friend, the latter embrace all humanity, and have special reference to the poor. In almost all Christian lands it has been the custom for the rich to furnish the poor in their neighborhood with a substantial Christmas dinner, in addition to the bestowing of various other favors on that great holiday. So, too. in the public corrective institutions, it is usual for the corrupted and impoverished elements of the population to be treated to a feast that does not shame the day. These occasions afford faint glimmers of that bright and joyous life which throughout the rest of the year is unknown to the subjects of poverty and crime.

The Christmas Tree. The great feature of the Christmas festival in Germany is the Christmas tree. This beautiful custom is almost universal in this country, although in England it was quite unknown until within the last quarter of a century. In Germany it is a very ancient custom, and had its origin in all probability in some of the mediaval pageants which were so popular on the Continent. The tree is usually of fir, although both birch and yew are used. The Christmas tree is there always illuminated, the smaller gifts dangling from the boughs, while the more bulky ones are deposited around it on the table. In the Cathelic sections of Germany, the Christ-child, from whom the gifts are alleged to come, is frequently personated by a person robed in white, and bearing a crown and wings of gilt. But this feature, being considered irreverent on account of the deceit which it involves is said to be falling into disuse.

Our Christmas tree is usually of pine or cedar, and copies substantially after the German model, though probably as a rule not quite so elaborate.

Christmas in the United Ptates. It is scarcely necessary for us to dwell at any length upon the special observance of Christmas in our own country. Our people are, perhaps, not quite so boisterous as were their English ancestors, not entirely given up to that reckless abandon which is still a marked characteristic of the festival as celebrated in our Mother Country. And yet, we believe that, outside of New England, where the old Calvinistic leaven is not yet extinct, it is the happiest, the gayest, and the joillest sesson of the year.

Many of the churches are handsomely decorated. and services appropriate to the occasion are held on Christmas morning. The remainder of the day, as well as the preceding evening, and, as a general thing, the entire week between Christmas and New Year, is given up to social enjoyment, especially on the part of the children. The principal charm which the occasion has for them, however, is that of the Christmas gift. The chimney is the favorite channel through which the presents reach them, and Kriss-Kingle is the patron saint to whom they are taught to ascribe the unbounded generosity of which they are the happy recipients. In many families the Christmas tree is preferred to the stocking, and in many others both are called into requi-

And now, having given the principal facts about the history and observance of the Christmas anniversary, we close by giving to every kind reader and, of necessity, firm friend of THE EVENING TELEGRAPH, the time honored and beautiful compliments of the SCAROD-A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW HOLIDAY GOODS.1

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Leah per original character. Miss BATEMAN

Leah her original character......Miss BATEMAN
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