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CHRISTMAS LEGENDRY.

son-The Quaint Carols and Psalms-The Superstitions and Custems. The recurrence of the annual festival of festials, Christmas, brings forcibly to mind the

sany quaint legends, superstitions, and cusoms which, in all ages and in every country, ave attached themselves in a particular maper to this particular feast day of the Christian hurch. Probably no other day which has ever een generally observed has more old, peculiar ssociations connected with it, and certainly hose of other seasons do not begin to be of the ame interest either to antiquarians or to the

eople generally. The most conspicuous legends are connected irectly with the birth of our Saviour. It has en a common tradition that Christ was born bout the middle of the night. The custom in man Catholic countries of ushering in Christas day by the celebration of three masses, one midnight, the second at early dawn, and the ird in the morning, dates from the sixth cenry. The day was considered in the double ght of a holy commemoration and a cheerful stival, and was accordingly distinguished by votion, by vacation from business, and by erriment. During the middle ages it was lebrated by the gay fantastic spectacle of

amatic mysteries and moralities performed personages in grotesque masks and ngular costumes. Scenery usually reprented an infant in a cradle, surrounded by the irgin Mary and St. Joseph, by bull's head, nerubs, eastern magi, and manifold ornaments. ne custom of singing canticles at Christmas, alled carols, which recalled the songs of the epherds at the birth of Christ, dates from the ne when the common people ceased to unerstand Latin. The bishops and the lower ergy often joined with the populace in carollg, and the songs were often enlivened by inces and by the music of tambours, guitars, olins, and organs. Fathers, mothers, sons, d daughters mingled together in the ance: if in the night, each bearing in

s hand a lighted wax taper. Many dections have been made of there ive mediaval carols which filled the ours of nocturnal masses, and which somemes took the place of psalms in the churches. perhaps the oldest of these collections only single leaf remains, containing two carols, eserved in the Bodleian library, in a volume "Christmasse Carolles," printed by Wynkin Worde in 1521. Davies Gilbert published a lume of "Ancient Christmas Carols," with tunes to which they were formerly sung in giand, and William Sandys made a more mplete collection (London, 1833). The carols

the Welsh are especially celebrated, and eir Lffyr Carolan (Book of Carols) contains and their Blodeugerdd Cymru (Authology of ales) contains 48. The German carols were flected by Weinhold (Gratz, 1853), and one of e best of the many editions of French carols was published at Poictiers in 1824. ring the last days preceding Christmas it is ll the custom for Calabrian minstrels to deend from the mountains to Naples and Rome. luting the shrines of the virgin mother with eir wild music, under the poetical notion of eering her until the birth-time of her infant the approaching Christmas. In a picture of e nativity by Raphael he has introduced a epherd at the door playing on a sort of bagpe. Preparatory to Christmas the bells are ng at dead midnight throughout England and e continent; and after the solemn celebration the mass, for which the churches in France

d Italy are magnificently adorned, it is used the revellers to partake of a collation (reillon), that they may be better able to sustain e fatigues of the night. The carols themselves mainly had reference to me custom connected with the season, or me fact relating to the nativity itself. One of e best known of the ancient ones is the Boar's Head Carol," which was sung on the rival of one of the great Christmas dishes, the used boar's head, in the great dining hall of e English castle, convent, college, or private welling. In Queen's College, Oxford, the cusom is still kept up. There is a tradition that it priginated at this college in commemoration of eading Aristotle, being suddenly attacked by

he valor of a student, who, while on a walk a furious wild boar, rammed the volume into he throat of the aggressor, crying Gracum est ill he had fairly choked the beast to death. It was long observed in the Christmas festivities of the Inns of Court. At Queen's College the poar's head is brought in on a large dish by the chief cook, preceded by a band of trumpeters, nd followed by a procession of all the rehiners belonging to the college. The following a correct copy of the words of the carol, half Latin, halfold English, taken from a collection f Christmas carols, printed by Wynkyn de Worde (1521): -

"Caput apri differo. Reddens landes Domino The bore's heed in hande bring I With garlands gay and rosemary; I pray you all synge merely, Qui estis in convivio. "The bore's heed, I understande, is the chefe servyce of this lande. Loke where ever it be fande, To these other stanzas have been added at dif-

erent times. The quaint and almost monotone ousic to the carol is well known. From "The Christmas Prince," London, 1607, appears that another poetical effusion was used at St. John the Baptist's College, Oxon, on similar occasion. The professors and stu-

lents in the great hall rose to their feet when the ferocious head made its appearance, and chanted a ditty which concluded as follows:-

"Then sett down the swineyard, The foe to the vineyard, Let Bacchus crowne his fall; Let this boare's head and mustard Stand for pigg, goose, and custard.

And so you are welcome all." The "Porkington M8." furnishes a suggestive picture of a Christmas dinner in the early part

of the fifteenth century:-God bred, alle, and wyin, dare I welle say. The boare's hede with mustard armyd see gay, Furmante to pottage with wennissun fyne, and the hombuls of the dow, and all that ever commes in: appons I-bake, with pesys of the roow,

leysons of corrons, with odyre spysis moo. "Juvenilia," by George Wither (1662), makes he earliest allusion to the modern system of lecoration. The first and fifth verses are quoted below:-

"So, now is come our joyfulst feast; Let every man be joily; Each room with ivy leaves is drest, And every post with holly.

"Now, all our neighbor's chimnies smoke, And Christmas blocks are burning; Their ovens they with bak'd meals choke, And all their spits are turning."

A carol from the Sloane MSS, has the following introduction and stanzas: -

Theologians and metaphysicians have found the doctrine of redemption a fruitful theme for discussion and hair-splitting. The ideas in the following curious stanzas are probably new to some modern dogmatic cavillers on knotty points of religion. The lines are from the Cot-

festival falls on certain days. Here is the prophecy, and a gloomy one it is: -

"Yf Crystmas day on the Saterday falle.
That wynter ys to be dredden alle;
Hyt shall so full of grete tempeste,
That nyt shall sie bothe man and neste;
Fruite and come shall fayle grete won, And olde folke dyen many on. Whate woman that day of chylde travayle,

According to the same manuscript there is also a prophecy connected with the occurrence of the day upon Sunday. This applies directly to the festival this year. The prophecy is not quite so bad as that for Saturday, it being peculiarly lucky in many particulars. The weather-wise and the almanac-makers will do well to follow its weather suggestions when making their conjectures. Here it is: -

"Lordinges, I warne you at beforne. Yel that day that Cryste was borne, Fall uppon a Sunday; That wynter shall be good per fay. But grete wyndes alofte shalle, That somer shall be fayre and dry; By kynde skylle, whythowtyn lesse, Throw all londes shalbe peas, Whate chylde that day borne be, A great lord he shalbe

'the better the day the better the deed.' A belief was long current that at midnight on Christmas eve cattle in their stalls fell down on their knees in adoration of their infant Saviour in the same manner as the legend reports them to have done in the stable of Bethlehem. A bard of the fifteenth century perpetrates an

> 'In a cracche was that chylde layde: Wyth joye and blisse;

A beautiful phase in popular superstition is that which represents a complete prostration of the powers of darkness as taking place at this season. Chanticleer is then supposed to crow all night long, and by his vigilance to scare away all malignant spirits. The idea is incomparably expressed by Shakespeare, who puts it in the mouth of "Marcellus": -

"It faded at the crowing of the cock; Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated, The bird of dawning singeth all night long;

And then they say no spirit can walk abroad," etc. Among the revels of the Christmas season were the so-called feasts of fools and of asses, grotesque saturnalia, which were sometimes termed "December libertles," in which everything serious was burlesqued, inferiors personifying their superiors, great man becoming froliesome, and which illustrate the proneness of man to occasionally reverse the order of society and ridicule its decencies. In the Protestant district of Germany and the north of Europe Christmas is often called the "children's festival," and Christmas eye is devoted to giving presents, and especially between parents and children, and brothers and sisters, by means of the so-called Christmas tree. A large yew bough is erected, lighted with tapers, and hung with manifold gifts, sweetmeats, apples, nuts, playthings, and ornaments. Each of these is marked with the name of the persons for whom it was intended, but not with the name of the donor, and when the whole family party is assembled, the presents are distributed around the room according to their labels, amid joyful acclamations and congratulations. A more sober scene succeeds, for the mother takes this occasion to say privately to the daughters, and the father to the sons, what has been observed most praiseworthy and what most faulty in their conduct. Formerly, and still in some of the smaller villages of North Germany, the presents made by all the parents were sent to some one person, who, in high buskins, a white robe, a mask, and enormous flax wig, becoming the bugbear of children known as Knecht Rupert, goes from house to house, is received by the parents with great pomp and reverence, calls for the children, and bestows the intended gift upon them according to the character which he hears from the parents after severe inquiries. A beautiful poem of Hebel, Christ-Baum, celebrates the German ceremonies on Christmas eve. It is an old Swedish tradition, preserved in the history of Olaus, archbishop of Upsal, that at the festival of Christmas the men living

in the cold northern parts are suddenly and

strangely metamorposed into wolves; and that

a huge multitude of them meet together at an

appointed place during the night, and rage

so flercely against mapkind and other crea-

attacks than ever they do from natural wolves. Christmas has always been at once a religious, domestic, and merry-making festival in England, equally for every rank and age. The revels used to begin on Christmas eve, and continued often till Candlemas (February 2), every day being a holiday till Twelfth-night (January 6). In the houses of the nobles a "lord of misrule," or "abbot of unreason," was appointed, whose office was to "make the rarest pastimes, to delight the beholder," and whose dominion lasted from "All-hollow eve" (October 31) till Candlemas day. The larder was filled with capons, hens, turkeys, geese, ducks, beef, mutton, pork, ples, puddings, nuts, plums, sugar,

The following selection and what follows it in the original, from Scott's "Marmion," gives

"On Christmas-eve the bells were rung: On Christmas-eve the mass was sung; That only night, in all the year, Saw the stoled priest the chalice bear. Then opened wide the baron's hall To vessal, tenant, serf, and all: Power laid his rod of rule aside, And ceremony doffed his pride. The heir, with roses in his shoes, That night might village partner choose. All hailed, with uncontrolled delight And general voice, the happy night Twas Christmas told the merriest tale; A Christmas gambol oft would cheer A poor man's heart through half the year."

had set his foot in Britain, or St. Augustine had preached Christianity to the men of Kent. They are simply Christian teachings grafted on heathen rites. No festival is more amalgamated in this way than Christmas, the festivities of which, originally derived from the Roman Saturnalia, were afterwards intermingled with the ceremonies of the Druids, and, subsequently, facts admirably, and at the same time show the joyous character of the festival, as well as the peculiarly perverted plety which surrounded it in remote ages.

It was the practice of our ancestors to lay aside the charred remains of the Yule log wherewith to kindle its successor. The preservation of last year's Christmas log was, in their belief, a most effectual security to the house against fire. Further, it was regarded as a sign of ill luck if a squinting person entered the hall when the log was burning; and a similarly evil omen was exhibited in the arrival of a barefooted person; but the direct calamities of all certainly followed if a flat-footed woman made her ap-

The common custom of decking the houses an old belief that sylvan spirits might flock to Christmas evergreen, though at the two universities of the college chapels are decked with

present time. Near Raleigh there is a valley tival. The last memorable appointment of a lord of misrule was in 1627, when he had come to be denominated "a grand captaine of mischiefe.

The institution of the festival itself in honor of the birth of a Saviour is attributed by the decretal letters to Pope Telesphorus, who died A. D. 138. At first it was the most movable of the Christian festive days, often celebrated by the Eastern churches in the months of April and May. In the fourth century the urgency of St. Cyril of Jerusalem obtained from Pope Julius I an order for an investigation to be made concerning the day of Christ's nativity. The result of inquiry by the theologians of the East and the West was an agreement upon the 25th of December. The chief grounds for the decision were the tables of the censors in the archives of Rome; and although, in the opinion of some of the fathers, there was not authentic proof of the identification of the day, yet the decision was uniformly accepted, and from that time nativity has been celebrated throughout the Church on the same day. In England the Christmas season began on Christmas and continued for a fortnight, until Tweltth day, which was formerly celebrated with greater ceremony than the beginning of the season and consequently became the old Christmas Day (Epiphany). Now the first day, or the 25th of December, is the most generally observed.

The respectable Samuel Pepys in his diary makes several notes about Christmas as he did about everything else that came within his knowledge. The following is not the least amusing entry in that quaint and curious

Christmas day (1865.)—To church in the morning, and then saw a wedding in the church, which I have not seen many a day; and the young people so merry one with another, and strange to see what delight we man led people have to see these poor fools decoyed in our condition, every man and woman gazing and smiling at them.

date of 1668 we have the following melancholy entry:-"To dinner alone with my wife, who, poor wretch, sat undressed all day till 10 at night, altering and lacing of a noble petticoat; while I by her making the boy read to me the 'Life of Julius Casar' and 'Des Cartes' Book of

It is sincerely hoped that none of our readers will be obliged to pass the present Christmas day in the manner described, leaving out of the question the impropriety of altering "noble petticoats," or reading lives of Julius Casar on a Sunday.

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the Old-Time Legends of the Christmas Sea-"Nowel el el el el el el el el el el-Mary was gret with Gabriel." "Mary moder, meke and mylde Fro schame and synne that ye us schyllde, For gret on grownd ye gon with childe; Gabriel nuncico. "Mary moder, be not a-dred, Thesu is in your body bred, And of your bryst he will be fed; Cum pudoris lilio." Nowel or Noel, it must be remembered, has nearly the same significance as the verb "to carol." A bard of about the same time as Chaucer has written a long carol or hymn in what is for these days a very peculiar style. The manuscript is still preserved. After methodically rhyming twenty stanzas of perfectly unique theology, he addresses the sacred babe in the following pathetic strain, and thus winds up his hymn:— "Lullay! Lullay! lytil chyld, qwy wepy thou so sore? And art thou bothin God and man? quat woldyst thou be more? So blessed be the tyme!"

ton MSS .:-"Of womanhede, lo! thre degres there be,
Widowhede, wedlocke, and verginnitie;
Widowhede clamed heaven, her title is this,
By oppressions that mekelle suffereth she;
And vergins clame by chastite alone;
Then God thought a woman should set them at one;
A wedlock by generation heaven bites shall be

A wedlocke by generacion, heaven hires shald be, And cease the strife; For Marie was maden, widowe, and wife." In an age of abject superstition, when the air was densely populated with spirits, when the commonest occurrences of every-day existence were regarded as omens, and when lucky days were absolute facts, it is but natural that great importance should be attached to the particular day of the week on which Christmas happened. Accordingly, in the Harleian MSS, there is a doggerel poem containing a number of weatherwise and personal predictions of what shall happen during the subsequent years when the

They shall be borne in grete perelle:
And chyldren that be borne that day,
Within halfe a year they shall dye, par fay.
The somer than shall wete ryghte ylle:
Yf thou awghte stele, hyt shall the spylle:
Thou dyest yf sekenes take the."

And good tyme all thyngs to don, But he that stelvth he shalbe founde sone, The prophecy is evidently on the principle of

amusing variation of the bellef in the following unique stanza: -

Both oxe and asse with him playde,

tures not fierce by nature, that the inhabitants of that country suffer more from their and honey. The Italians have the following proverb:—"He has more business than English ovens at Christmas." The tensnts were entertained at the hall, and the lord of the manor and his family encourged every art conducive to

the Christmas eve picture exactly: -

That to the cottage, as the crown, Brought tidings of salvation down. England was merry England when Old Christmas brought his sports again. 'Twas Christmas broach'd the mightiest ale;

Many of the Christmas customs had the r origin far beyond the time when Julius Cæsar with the grim mythology of the Saxons and Normans. The quaint old carols illustrate these

and churches at Christmas with evergreens is derived from ancient Druid practices. It was the evergreens, and remain unnipped by frost till the milder season. The holly, ivy, rosemary, bays, laurel, and mistletoe furnished the favorite trimmings, which were not removed till Candlemas. Chaplets of these were also worn about the head, a practice to which the phrase to "kiss under the rose," to "whisper under the mistletce," are allusions. In old church calenders Christmas eve is marked Templa exornantur (adorn the temples). Holly and ivy still remain in England this most esteemed

It is said that there was a famous hawthorn in the church-yard of Glastonbury Abbey, which always budded on the 24th and blossomed on the 25th of December. After the change of style it was observed that it blossomed on January 5, which would have been Christmas day O. S. It is said that slips from this thorn are preserved which blossom on January 5th to the said to have been caused centuries ago by an earthquake, which swallowed up a whole village and church. It was formerly a custom for people to assemble here on Christmas morning to listen to the ringing of the bells of the church beneath them. The Christmas celebrations in England have lost their primitive boisterous character, the gambols and carols are nearly gone by, and family reunions and evergreen trimmings are all that remain of the various rough merriments which used to mark the fes-

A longer note is made for Christmas, 1692, but it is of no especial futerest. For the same