

THE KING OF DAYS.

CHRISTMAS AND THE ORIGIN OF MANY OBSERVANCES.

How the Date was Fixed—Festivities Derived From Old Customs—The Decoration of Churches and Dwellings.

We have no means of determining the exact date of the Saviour's nativity. The statement that the date was preserved in the public archives at Rome, though asserted by some of the early fathers, is not now generally credited.

For the first three centuries Christmas was one of the most movable of all religious festivals. The eastern church observed the 6th of January as the anniversary of Christ's birth.

Many of our most familiar Christmas usages are derived from the old heathen festivals which Christmas replaced.

The yule log or log—the great stick of timber placed in olden times upon the Christmas fire—was derived from the Saxon feast of Jul or Yul, at which a similar piece of timber gave the principal fire and the principal light.

The custom of decorating churches, dwellings and places of business with evergreens, holly, laurel, bays and mistletoe at the Christmas season is a perpetuation of an observance of the old British Druids, whose belief it was that kindly sylvan spirits sought these ornaments of living green, and hovered near them, untouched and unharmed by nipping frost, until the death of winter.

Those same old Druids attached much importance to the mistletoe, investing it with a peculiarly hallowed and mystic character. They regarded it as an emblem of love, and believed that it typified the beneficent feelings of their gods toward mankind.

We are also indebted to the Druids for the Christmas game of "snap dragon," which is played, as every one knows, by trying to snatch raisins from blazing brandy in an otherwise dark room.

Insect Life calls attention to two recently observed instances where insects have gnawed metal. One was the case of lead pipe, cut through by a bug that was actually found engaged at its work on the metal.

Six Hundred Thieves at Supper. A very curious supper, which has been widely discussed, was that given in London on a recent night by the Salvation Army to six hundred professional thieves.

Probably one of the most generally known of the old Christmas observances, next to the giving of presents, is the singing of the Christmas carols. These were feasted then, royally at his expense throughout the whole of Christmas week.

each man to carry off as much meat as he could impale and bear away upon his dagger.

That royal old Blue Beard, Henry VIII., well understood the noble art of keeping Christmas. He usually celebrated it at Greenwich and Richmond with the most elaborate entertainments, such as masques and tournaments.

In the primitive church Christmas day was preceded by an evening vigil, and hence our Christmas eve of the present time, which in the associations that cluster around it in its sports and pastimes, its ancient memories and even in its devotions has ever been in all ages second only to Christmas itself.

METROPOLIS OF BRAZIL.

City of Rio de Janeiro, Where the Revolution Occurred.

The revolution with which Brazil was ablaze for several months culminated in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the metropolis of the country. This city is one of the most beautiful in all South America.

This bay of Rio de Janeiro compels the admiration of every traveler, says a distinguished one of it. It has again and again entered and quitted the Bay of Rio de Janeiro when the billows were surging and when the calm mantled the deep, and whether in the purple light of a tropic morning, in the garish moon, or in the too brief twilight of that Southern clime, it has always presented to me new glories and new charms.

The city of Rio de Janeiro, or San Sebastian, is at once the commercial emporium and the political capital of Brazil. Its position and scenery and internal developments render it a metropolis worthy of the great country.

Rio's streets are noted for their narrowness. Many of the principal ones are exceedingly well paved. The houses seldom exceed three or four stories, but are higher than those of a similar number of stories in this city.

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Bugs That Eat Metal.

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Six Hundred Thieves at Supper.

A very curious supper, which has been widely discussed, was that given in London on a recent night by the Salvation Army to six hundred professional thieves. The table was laid in the hall in Oxford street and the guests were furnished with an excellent meal of meat, vegetables, plum cake and pudding with tea and coffee.

ment, for it surely tells its own story, is furnished in the case of one of these "honored guests" who picked a pocket outside the hall and was marched off to the police station instead of going to supper. Perhaps in his case, though, the individual displayed a too careless regard for his surroundings, or it may be that the "crook" in question took pride in the pursuit of his profession and wanted to show that his skill could surmount more than ordinary difficulties, and at the crucial moment his nerve failed, he bungled and was lost.

Sterilized Milk.

The true value of sterilized milk is just beginning to be generally realized, and the importance attached to its use for children and invalids has greatly been emphasized by scientific bodies and medical experts.

Protection From Furnace Heat.

The protection of workmen from furnace heat, as practised at the Mendon and Scherwin iron works in Westphalia, is said to be by means of a rectangular iron screen hung from an overhead rail, which can be made to cover the whole working side of the furnace, or can be pushed aside when not required, or when it interferes with the work going on.

Flowers in the Window.

In riding through the agricultural towns and villages of New England, flowers may be seen in many windows; indeed, in some places nearly every house exhibits these signs of refinement and contentment.

Pepsin.

The pepsin sold in the drug stores is the veritable product of an animal stomach, and generally of the stomach of the hog. One factory in New York has the oldest method of preparing the article that ever entered into the human mind.

SOMEWHAT STRANGE.

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

Queer Episodes and Thrilling Adventures Which Show that Truth is Stranger than Fiction.

One of the many anecdotes of the late Dr. Leidy, the anatomist is to the following effect, says the Philadelphia Record. The doctor had heard of two petrified bodies being accidentally discovered in an ancient graveyard down town.

The Clifton Bridge by Bristol has long been regarded as the great suicide bridge of England, and on a recent week its thirty-second victim. It is curious how any man can want to take his life from such a spot, as the scenery of the surrounding country is exquisitely beautiful; but the attraction, of course, is that the bridge, which is a suspension one, is very high and the valley below is exceedingly rocky.

WILLIAM HAMILTON GIBSON, who is a trained observer of plants and animals, satisfied himself some time ago that a rooster makes the flapping noise that accompanies his crowing by striking his wings together over his back.

At the next assizes in London the trial of a new kind of thief promises to be interesting. Their method was to visit unoccupied houses in the outskirts of the city in the day time.

One of the queerest superstitions that ever entered the human head is that of finding the body of a drowned man by means of his shirt. Last spring a man was drowned in the river in front of the East St. Louis levee.

There is a most remarkable swapping horse jockey in Belfast, Me., named 'Lije' Walter, says a local paper. Just to give his boy an idea how to get along in the world 'Lije' started away from home one day on foot nothing in his pocket but a jackknife.

Why Do We Worry?

Any one who is eager to make a family record for old age must learn to stop worrying. He should let nothing prey on his mind. When troubles loom up ahead and while the shadows grow larger and creep nearer he can lose five years from the latter end of his life just by fretting about the impending calamity.

Mr. J. E. DIXON records in the Victoria Naturalist a curious fact which came under his own observation. During a ramble along the Kooyong Creek, Oakleigh, he was somewhat surprised to see a specimen of the ring-tailed opossum hanging, as he thought, by her claws, to a sharp-pointed limb of a gum-tree.

two young ones almost old enough to leave her.

E. A. BOYER, of Michigan City, Ind., is the owner of a Jersey cow, which recently gave birth to five calves, two males and three females. They all appear healthy and strong and are doing nicely.

A POOLISH fox was caught in a very odd way in Gastonbury, Conn., recently. He had a very long and bushy tail, and, maybe, was extremely vain of it, for he swished it from side to side instead of trailing it along the ground.

FLANK BIECH, a farmer of Decatur County, Ind., has presented a petition to the County Commissioners to have the stone monument, erected in that county last spring to mark the center of population of the United States, moved two and a half feet toward his house.

An electric light wire touched the vest of the janitor of the Chelsea Flats, in New York City, while he was leaning over to adjust it, and a strange experience resulted. The wire burnt a hole in his vest, caused in contact with his watch, gave him a slight shock, burnt several small holes in the case, causing the globules of gold to drop in the case, and some on the floor, and so magnetized the works of the watch that they are worthless.

SOMETIMES in his sleep a man in Dundee, N. Y., gets out of bed and wanders away from home. He has struck upon the ingenious expedient of having alongside his bed an easy-moving treadmill.

It is June last a tree on the farm of Mortimer Hamilton, in Jackson County, Ind., was blown down and pressed into the earth a large snapping turtle.

THE Rev. Mr. Whittaker of Machias, Me., while out for deer, got lost, and wandered in the woods for two days without food or shelter. Just before he was about to give up, he saw a large herd of deer.

CHINESE ingenuity seems equal to every emergency. A man-of-war attacked a Chinese junk engaged in illegal traffic, and was eager to capture the crew alive.

Spruce Gum Gone From Vermont.

It is said that genuine spruce gum has almost entirely disappeared from Vermont, which used to produce it in great quantities. This is owing to the great increase of saw and pulp mills, and partly to forest fires.

But the gum-picker is still a picturesque figure in the Green Mountain State. The most famous one is Alonzo K. Babop, of Woodford. In winter, carrying a bag slung over his shoulder, Bishop roams all over the Green Mountains examining spruce trees.

VERMONTERS who have made new homes for themselves in the West consume a great deal of the pure article, which is sent to them by friends through the mails. The Ohio and Michigan branches of the Olin family, who recently held their annual reunion in Bennington, bought up all the spruce gum in town.

Well-paid Base-ball Players.

Who wouldn't be a star base-ball player, especially a pitcher? remarked festive George Rich the other day as he read of Rustie's engagement by the Chicago Association Club at \$5,000 per annum for three years.

But is worry? that makes the trouble a real one and leaves us weaker for every shock that follows. The Argosy. The work of twenty-five days will support a family for one year in Madagascar.

BRUN FACED THE MUSIC.

Lured to Death by the Bass Horn of a Brass Band.

George Griswold, who lives on the Loyalock Creek, a mile and a half north of Forksville, Tenn., plays the bass horn in the Forksville brass band. On a recent Saturday evening, Griswold tucked his big horn under his arm and strode down to Forkville to practice with the other members of the village organization.

As Harper drew near Griswold gave another blast, and the bear started off again. Griswold told Harper in a whisper how the bear had been acting, and Harper began to look around for something with which to tackle the bear when he came toward the fence the next time.

THE bear appeared to be determined to find out what kind of a machine the big brass thing was, for he slouched toward it in a bee line, and he didn't turn his head to either side as he neared it.

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Punishing Naval Cadets.

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