

OUR CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

In days when books were rare and readers few, the carol singer was a more important person than he is now.

God bless the rulers of this house With great prosperity, And many a merry Christmas.

ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

In friendly love and unity, For good St. Stephen's sake, Let us all this blessed day.

For God hath made you stewards here Upon the earth to dwell, He that gathereth for himself.

May every blessing from on high Attend each family dear, Long life, health, and prosperity.

ST. JOHN'S DAY.

The moon shines bright, the stars give light, A little before 'tis day; And hark! the bellman of the night.

Arise, arise! and let us sing Glad songs to hail the day, The Day that Christ our Heavenly King

HOLY INNOCENCE.

Now cruel Herod, with wrath and anger filled, Did order that all infants should be killed,

The first good joy our Mary had It was the joy of one; To see upon her breast

The next good joy our Mary had, It was the joy of two; To see her own Son Jesus,

The next good joy our Mary had, It was the joy of three; When that her own Son Jesus

The next good joy our Mary had, It was the joy of five; To see her own Son Jesus,

The next good joy our Mary had, It was the joy of six; To see her own Son Jesus

The next good joy our Mary had, It was the joy of seven; To see her own son Jesus

THE THREE SHIPS.

As I sat on a sunny bank, A sunny bank, a sunny bank, On Christmas Day in the morning.

And who should be with these three ships, With these three ships, these three ships,

Oh, he did whistle, she did sing, And all the bells on earth did ring,

latter, the fourteenth or fifteenth century, is among the Sloane MSS. in the British Museum.

"When Joseph was an old man, an old man was he, And the married Mary, the queen of Galilee."

An old version of the hymn well known in modernized form, "Christians, awake!

"Come, all you faithful Christians That dwell upon the earth, Come, celebrate the morning

"Behold the angel Gabriel, In Scripture it is said, Did with his holy message come

Another old carol is entitled "A Virgin most pure," from the opening words:

"A virgin most pure, as the prophets did tell, Should bring forth a son, and so it befel,

Then follows the quaint chorus repeated after each verse:

"Therefore, be merry, ay, therefore be merry, Rejoice, and be merry, set sorrow aside,

Th duty of liberality to the poor at Christmastide is forcibly enjoined in the old ballad of Dives and Lazarus,

"As it fell upon a day, Dives made a feast, And he invited all his friends,

CHRISTMAS DRAWING NEAR AT HAND. Christmas now is drawing near at hand, Serve the Lord and be at his command,

Remember, man, that thou art made of clay, And in this world thou hast not long to stay.

Down in the garden where flowers grow in ranks, Down on your bended knees and give the Lord thanks.

In the older carols which we have quoted will be noticed some fragments of ancient superstition and error,

A Patagonian Rum Dance. Some of the older men gathered around the camp, which was speedily tapped, and then, with great unction and solemnity

Presently a dance was organized. The men who took part in it were all specially painted for the occasion, and wore long feathers on their heads.

As the evening wore on, after vast quantities of meat had been consumed, and innumerable dances had been performed,

Two of these carols, "The Merry Gentlemen," and the "Joys," used to be the most popular of all. A version of the

PROGNOSTICATIONS.

The most common prognostications of which we have any record are the following:

The crowing of a hen at night: to dream of dead friends or kindred: to sweep the house at night: or to make a new opening

Boys are of evil omen when they accompany the Victim, but as they always do accompany it, it would seem as if no one who has received the Last Sacraments

Something supernatural is expected. Had the dying man when in health burned the yoke of a plow?

Perhaps he once, like care, killed a cat. If he delays his dying, the friends must call out his name in seven Litanies, or at least put his clothes out of doors.

In some cases he dies because the doctor has misunderstood his case and given him a wrong medicine; else Saints Cosmo and Damian

Somehow or other, he is dressed in white, and after he is dead his shroud is sewed tight. This pious work gains indulgences for those who perform it;

Sometimes, however, it is left in the grave-clothes to be buried with the corpse. In certain places the women

They have kept all these years to serve as their shroud. Seated or in bed, the corpse is always laid out: feet foremost to the door,

About the corpse bed stand lighted candles, or, however poor the family, at least one little oil lamp.

The hired mourners, "reputatrici," were once so numerous and costly as to demand legislative interference and municipal regulation.

On the 10th July, 1856, I was sailing very near to the spot where the Maelstrom is marked on our English maps,

and therefore looked for it on the detailed sailing charts and other Norwegian maps that were on board.

It was not to be found on any of them. I then asked the Captain as to its whereabouts, he having had much experience in these parts.

He told me that the only information he had ever been able to obtain concerning it had been obtained from English geography books

and the accounts of English passengers; that the fishermen who lived on the islands on each side of it knew nothing at all about it

in consequence of their ignorance of the English language. He was cruelly satirical.

There is a current between Lofotoden and Mosken (the position usually assigned to the fabulous vortex) known as Moskostrommen, one of the many tidal currents that run through the sounds

VARIETIES.

There is now an established religion in Japan, and missionaries are regarded as lawless curioists.

At the Poultry Show recently held at Amsterdam concurrently with the Agricultural exhibition one of the female birds

The Church of the Holy Ghost at Heidelberg is divided by a partition running lengthwise through it.

On the one side the service is Protestant and on the other Roman Catholic. The Elector Palatine in 1719, undertook to annex the Protestant part of the church; but the attempt was a failure.

Some interesting particulars have been given before the Social Science Congress concerning the extent to which excessive railway-rates are driving business from the Midlands to the ports.

No fewer than six important firms are said to be removing their manufactories from Birmingham to the sea-coast.

The oldest and largest tree in the world, so far as known, is a chestnut at the foot of Mount Etna.

It is hollow and large enough to admit two carriages driving abreast through it.

The circumference of the main trunk is two hundred and twelve feet.

The American Grizzly Giant, monarch of the Mariposa Grove, measures ninety-two feet.

The Yangtze-Kiang, or Blue River, of China, usually called the Ta-kiang, or Great River, rises in the high central plateau of Tibet.

It extends from 88° E to 122° E, covering its winding course a distance of some three thousand miles, of which two thousand miles are navigable.

The main stream is formed by three branches having their confluence in 94° E, 34° 50' N., where its breadth in the dry weather is seven hundred and fifty feet, and in the summer rains over a mile.

Its level here is thirteen thousand feet above the sea.

NEW ZEALAND MUTTON. — London takes an immense quantity of New Zealand mutton, and it is largely supplied even by the West-end butchers, without the knowledge of their customers.

The quality is excellent. The freezing arrangements are so far perfected that the London butcher can send to the large cold store rooms at the docks for as many carcasses as he requires,

with the certainty of being able in a couple of hours to furnish his customers with joints which they will be unable to distinguish from home-fatted mutton.

Buying these at fivepence per pound and retailing them at elevenpence, his motives for preferring them to animals bought at Islington at even sevenpence per pound are sufficiently obvious.

INTERMARRIAGE OF COUSINS. — The prevalent idea that the offspring of the intermarriage of first cousins are specially liable to be below the average intellectually and physically is not found to be sustained by good evidence.

Mr. G. H. Darwin, in a very carefully prepared paper, read before the Statistical Society, comes to the conclusion, as the result of close comparison of all the records available, that evidence will not enable anyone to say positively that the marriage of first cousins has any effect in the production of insanity or idiosyncrasy.

With respect to deaf mutes, there is no evidence whatever of any ill results accruing to the offspring in consequence of the consanguinity of their parents.

And again, "It tends to invalidate the high death-rate among the offspring of cousins." And once more, "the safest verdict seems to be that the charge against consanguineous marriages on this head is not proven."

Fighting Sleep With Tea. The practice of taking tea or coffee by students, in order to work at night; is downright madness, especially when preparing for an examination.

More than half of the cases of break-down, loss of memory, fainting, etc., which occur during severe examinations, and far more frequently than is commonly known, is due to this.

I frequently hear of promising students who have thus failed; and, on inquiry, have learned—in almost every instance—that the victim had previously drugged himself with tea or coffee.

Sleep is the rest of the brain; to rob the hard-worked brain of its necessary rest is cerebral suicide.

My old friend, the late Thomas Wright was a victim of this terrible folly. He undertook the translation of the life of Julius Cæsar, by Napoleon III., and to do it in a cruelly short time.

He fulfilled his contract by sitting up several nights successively by the aid of strong tea or coffee (I forget which). I saw him shortly afterward. In a few weeks he had aged alarmingly, and became quite bald, his brain gave way and he never recovered.

There was but little difference between his age and mine, and but for this dreadful cerebral strain, rendered possible only by the alkaloid (for otherwise he would have fallen asleep over his work, and thereby saved his life), he might still be amusing and instructing thousands of readers by fresh volumes.

Cremation in Scandinavia. Cremation is making way even in Scandinavia. The Swedes have long favored cremation, but hitherto their efforts to obtain from their authorities the sanction for building a crematorium at Stockholm have been unsuccessful.

At the last meeting of the Swedish Cremation Society, however, the President, Lieut-Gen. Klingenstein, announced that arrangements had been made with the Stockholm authorities for erecting a crematorium in one of the suburbs.

The place chosen is a high rocky plain to the north of the city, where a wide view is obtained of the surroundings.

A large plot of ground round the crematorium is to be laid out as a public park at the expense of the town. It is hardly likely to be a pleasant place when a crematorium is in progress, but it is a step in the right direction.

Blue Stocking. The origin of this name is traced to the literary society, composed of both sexes, and formed at Venice in the year 1400. Having existed up to the year 1590, it cropped up in Paris, and was especially patronized by lady savants.

The original societies distinguished their members by the wearing of blue stockings, which livery or badge was kept up on the birth of the branch in France, and afterward in England, where it was started by Mrs. Montague in 1780.

Miss Montague, afterward Countess of Cork, was the last survivor of the clique; she died in 1840, and the Blue Stocking Society became extinct.