

SUPPLEMENT.

CHRISTMAS.

Hail, Holy Season, of good will
Forgotten not be every ill.
That through the long year,
Rejoice to brotherhood hath wrought,
And be we all by Christmas taught,
And by all feelings dost.

With all our fellows, faults to bear,
Since their infirmities we share,
So this our motto be,
To love and to be loved,
And each to each example set,
Of Christmas unity.

CHRISTMAS, with all its joyous and happy associations and thoughts, comes upon us once more; and, amid the bustle and din of life, our minds turn from the solid realities of this matter-of-fact world to contemplate the brighter and warmer things of social life. To young and old, rich and poor, this most welcome and festive of all seasons of the year, brings a feeling of gladness and rejoicing, which neither time nor circumstances can control or affect. This festive infant in the cradle, learns to lap its welcome to old Santa Claus, whose advent it anticipates as one of the great events in its eventful existence; and, as the wondering senses of the eager little toddlers of more ripening years drink in the story of a "Nativity in the Manger," and the "First Christmas morn on the Hills of Bethlehem," their hearts are filled anew with delight. Truly, the "tidings of great joy bring, their glad tidings of peace to all people. The very air seems to partake of the general tone of crispness and cheerfulness, as it echoes the merry shouts of romping school-children and pleasant salutations of those more advanced in life. Everyone seems possessed with a new vigor; and all hard thoughts and unmeaning feelings, are as effectually hidden away as the dark earth beneath the gleaming snow.

What a host of sweet recollections are awakened within us, on each return of this happy time, as we look backward to the seasons of years gone by; when, at home, perhaps, as boys, we gathered around the old family hearth, listening with rapt attention to the husky tones of the old-time story teller, or, as we joined with whole soul in the frolics of Christmas Eve under the holy and mischievous.

How distinctly now we seem to hear once more the welcome sound of the village church bell, ringing out its summons to worshipers on the clear frosty air of Christmas morning. The church, decked with holly and evergreen, the pews, the choir, the anthem, even—all troop up before us in succession, and passing for a moment upon them, as a child upon a broken toy, we turn away at last with a sigh.

It is our intention, with the present number, to review in a brief way, a few of the

Customs and Observances

which are peculiar to this period of the year, and to inquire into the origin and cause of many of the customs that have linked themselves so inseparably to it. It is already familiar to our readers, we only crave their indulgence in the matter, hoping that they may still find some item of interest, or at least a reference, which may recall some of those incidents connected with the past that ever touch a tender chord in the human heart.

From time immemorial, amongst not only the most ancient but even the most modern nations, custom has surrounded the winter solstice with many solemn and peculiar religious rites and ceremonies. Of these most noticeable in point of importance is the

Festival of the Romans, the Saturnalia. The festival, which began about the middle of December, and continued many days, during which time general license was given to jollity and mirth of every description.

Child, we go back through the long traces of intervening centuries to the time when Rome was in the zenith of her splendor and magnificence, and drop into the old city, on one of the gala days of this festival, to see a sight which would meet one eye, as would a description. Wandering their way through the gayly decorated streets for pastimes, arrayed in holiday garb, the busy multitude with many a good-natured jest and friendly taunt, jostle each other in all directions as they push along toward their various destinations. Here we see a humbly plodding laborer, laden with a bundle of firewood, his coarse tunic rubbing against the fine folds of the lofty perizonia; then a venerable senator, or a dignified consul, in a purple robe, and passing in haughty familiarity by a company of bondsmen, who do not even hesitate, in some instances, to play a practical joke on him (for one of the characteristics of the festival was the utter abolition of the distinction between the master and the slave). All are equal in the eyes of the festival, and the usual distinctions between the rich and the poor, the noble and the low, the free and the slave, are all forgotten. The streets are filled with the shouts of the gladiators, the athletic contests, sham battles, &c.

As we follow them, we occasionally meet on the streets—perhaps a chariot, grotesquely dressed, with mask and wig, furiously driving a pair of galley-decked jockeys, the sound of the chariot wheels almost drowned by the glee of the crowd. At each turn we are confronted with some new impersonation of ridiculousness and so the fun goes on.

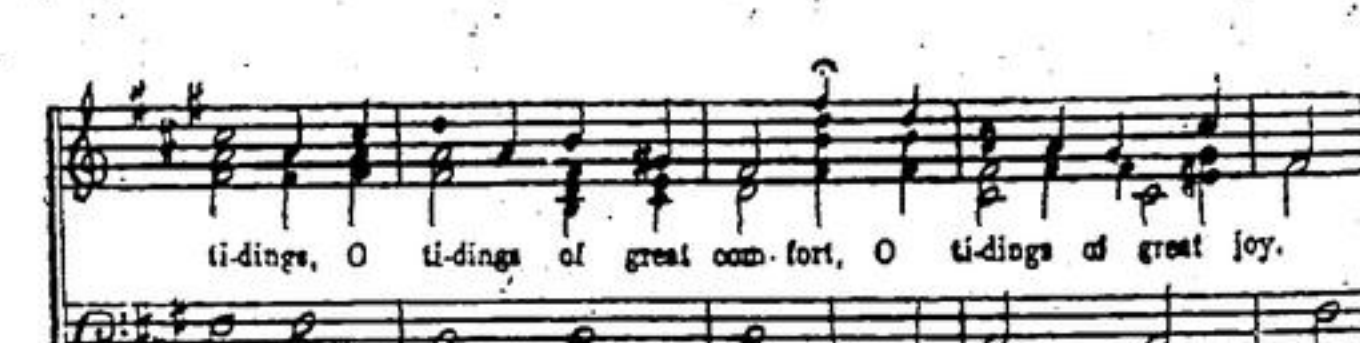
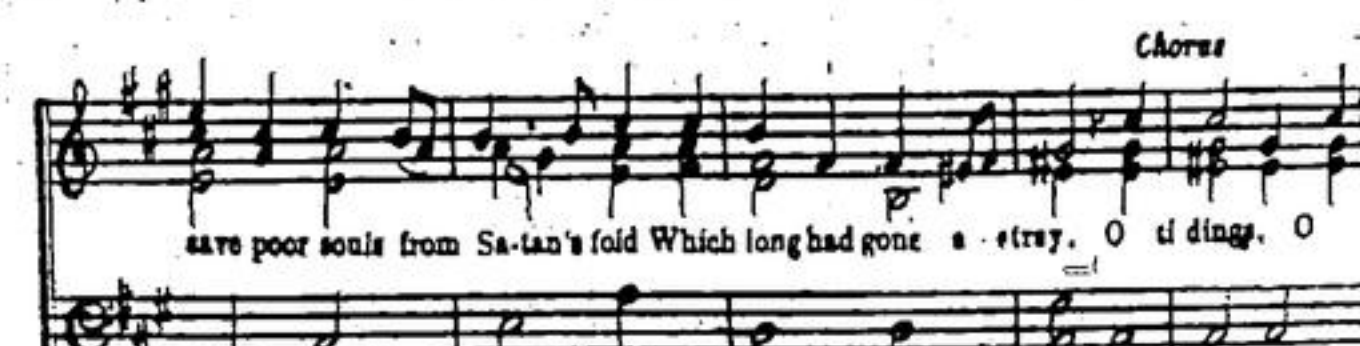
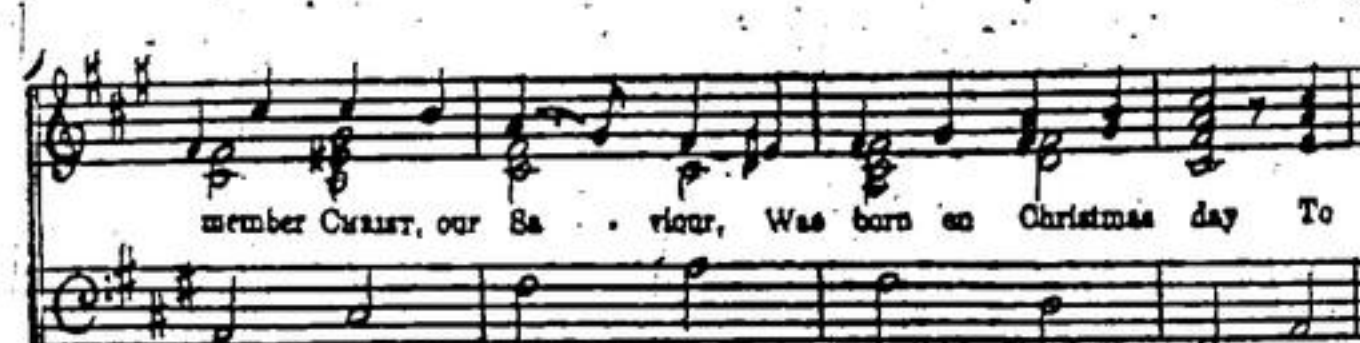
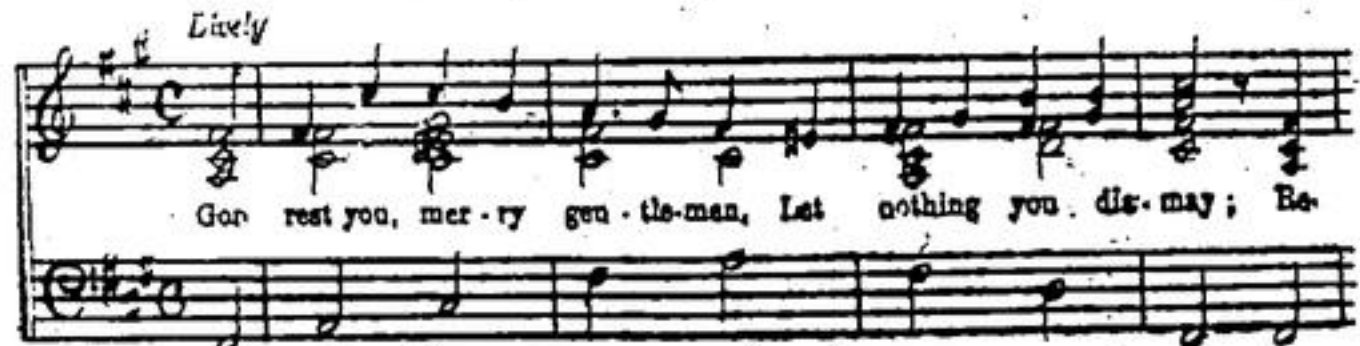
Such, then was the *Saturnalia* held in honor of Saturn the god of Time; and thus was the waning existence of the dying year brought to a close in those "brave days of old."

The Midwinter

This mystic parasite requires no description to those who have any knowledge of Christmas in the Old Land, but lest there should be those who have not been so favor-

God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen.

His place of birth, a solemn angel tells
To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night:
They gladly hither hied, and by a choir
Of squadrons angelic, heard his coral tune.
—Milton's *Paradise Regained*.



In Bethlehem, in Jewry
This blessed babe was born,
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn;
The which his mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn.
Oh! Tidings, &c.

Fear not, then said the angel,
Let nothing you affright;
This day is born a Saviour
Of virtue, power and might;
So frequently to vanquish all
The friends of Satan's might.
Oh! Tidings, &c.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found him in a manger
Where oxen feed on hay.
His mother Mary kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray.
Oh! Tidings, &c.

From God our Heavenly Father,
A blessed angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God, our King.
Oh! Tidings, &c.

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks afeeling
In tempest, storm and wind,
To go and see this wonder
Which had so long been hid.
Oh! Tidings, &c.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All ye within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood,
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.
Oh! Tidings, &c.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Young Men's Christian Association, Toronto.

We extend to you a hearty invitation. Reading Rooms open from 8 a. m. to 10 p. m. every week day. Don't forget when you are in Toronto. You will be welcome. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also; the sea is His and He made it and His hand formed the dry land. Oh! come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. Psalm 95:3-6.

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able situated, a word or two might not be out of place. Amongst the dense oak forests of primitive B. Main, this plant flourishes in comparative luxuriance, festooning the trees with its sprightly foliage in mid-winter; and such was its abundance and rapidity of growth, in those days, that in many places, trees might be found so completely covered with it as almost to be hidden from sight.

Having reached the foot of some giant oak whereon grew the sacred plant two white bulls were immediately tied to its stout cords. Then the chief Druid clad in white, the emblem of purity, ascending the tree, cut with a golden knife the covered creeper, which, as it fell, was caught in the folds of sacred priest's robes. The bulls, and very often human victims, were then sacrificed, and great festivities followed.

In addition to being revered as a sacred plant, the mistletoe was said to possess many healing virtues, and to bring singular favor to those wearing it. The mistletoe was an important part in the celebrations of the middle ages, that time of all others, when the passion for plays and amusements was at its height. Although not so plentiful as in former days, large quantities of it are still cut annually and sent to London to grace the homes of rich and poor. The present custom of hanging it over the door, or over some other suitable place, under which the unwitting may pass and incur the penalty of being kissed, is already known to all. In many of the towns and hamlets of England it is kept up to such an extent that even over the windows of a store of some times fixed, to the discomfort of those of the fair sex who may chance to stop to examine the attractions placed within the window. We shall, however, pass on to notice another very old custom.

The Burning of the Yule Log.

This custom comes through our Scandinavian ancestors, who, at their feasts of Jule, at the winter solstice, were in the habit of kindling huge bon-fires in honor of their god Thor. In many parts of England it is still maintained, although it has entirely lost its original significance. Time gradually changed the form of this observance, and in the feudal times we find it so transformed as to be scarcely recognizable. Then, a huge log was drawn from its resting place in the woods by a large company of men and boys, amidst sounds of minstrelsy and general shouts of acclamation and rejoicing. All who chanced to pass, or who met the procession on its way to its destination, gravely uncovered their heads and gave exclamation to an expression of devout reverence. Having reached the baronial hall, it was placed on the hearth of the wide chimney, where it was ignited with the charred remains of the log of the previous year; and as the flames crackled and roared, casting their ruddy glow on the massive walls and lighting up the dark corners, the sports began. The baron, for the occasion, was displaced by a humble self, who did the honors of the evening in a right royal style. All fell to with a will, and the sports, carried over the midnight hour, lagged not until the gray dawn announced the birth of another day. And often that dawn revealed the sight of nobles, vassals, and all, heaped together in ridiculous incongruity amongst the rushes on the floor the prisoners of my Morpheus and strong all. In Devonshire, in later years, the custom of the Yule log was kept up. Having cut some ash sticks a few days previous, the farm hands go forth on Christmas Eve, and, gathering a bundle, haul it much after the same fashion as

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Christmas Eve in the Olden Time.

On Christmas Eve the bells were rung:
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung:
That only night, in all the year,
The staid priest the chalice rear.
The daisied donned her little shawl:
The hall was dressed with holly green:
To the wood did merry men go:
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all:
Power and his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose.
The lord, undress'd, in a simple gown,
The vulgar game of "poet and peer."
All hallowed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night.
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide:
The huge hall-table's calico face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace.
Now then upon its massive board,
No mark to pierce the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brew,
By old blue-coated serving men.
Then the grim bear's head frowned on high,
Crowned with bay and rosemary.
Well can the green garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where the monster fell:
What dog before his death he tort,
And all the bawling of the horde.
The wassail round in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trove.
Then the huge stink-roast, hard by
Frum-porridge stood, and Christmas-pret:
Nor failed Old Scotland to produce,
A frugal high-side, her savory goose.
Then came the merry masquers in:
And a coroll roared with blithesome din:
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a merry note, and strong.
Who late may in their mummery see
Traces of ancient mystery:
Whom the masquerade supplied,
And snatched cheeks the vision made:
But oh! what masquerade, richly dight,
Can boast of bowens half so light!
England was merry England, when the evening
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale:
A Christmas gambol could cheer
The poor man's heart the night of the year.
—Scott's "Marmion."

described above in connection with the yule log. Games, such as jumping in sacks, diving in water for apples, jumping at bread and treacle, followed—another custom peculiar to the same locality, as well as many others, consisted as follows: The farmer and his friends having partaken of hot cakes and cider, repaired to the orchard, where one having deposited a cake in the fork of the principal apple-tree, and thrown cider over the latter, the men and boys, the women and girls shouting—

Bear blue apples and pears now,
Be rufus, bawls, sarkus,
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

This was considered sufficient to ensure a bounteous harvest of fruit for the ensuing year, and to effectually ward off all depredations of witches, fairies, and other spirits.

The Christmas Tree.

is of German origin, and still holds a high place in that land where Christmas is honored as a high day. The tree is arranged by the senior members of the family in the best room of the house, which is kept locked until the important evening arrives, when the door is thrown open. As the eager juveniles troop in, and behold the huge tree shrouded with many tapers, and loaded with little trinkets and presents, such as only children know how to prize, exclamations of delight break forth on every side. The children, also, are in the habit of saving their money for weeks, in order to purchase gifts for their parents. These are concealed until Christmas morning, when they are brought forth; and gladdening the sight of parents and children as they experience the truth of the saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Our modern

Santa Claus

a corruption, of course, of St. Nicholas, is also a German institution, although many of its characteristic features are innovations on the original introduced by the New England settlers. In the former country, the heads of families often on Christmas Eve, after selecting a present for each child as his or her character suggested, sought out some old man in the neighborhood, who, all dressed up with white robe and fur, fax wig, buckskin, etc., came next morning and, to the amazement of the youngsters, presented each with "the very thing he was looking for." As we have said before, the old gentleman who performs the same work in this land, under the well-known cognomen of St. Nick, has had many additions to his outfit in the shape of a handsome cutter, a team of fleet reindeer, etc., and as he goes his yearly rounds, silent and unseen, save by those who are kept awake by the effects of too heavy a supper, no person on earth is for the time being so popular. But we shall leave our friends with this jolly little old fellow without a further introduction, for we are sure there are none who do not recognize him as one of the first of their childhood's acquaintances.

Our Modern Christmas.

We have followed, then, in a hurried way, one or two of the innumerable observances which have been kept up from time to time during this period of the year by people who knew nothing of the circumstances connected with the important event in the history of the world which occurred nearly nineteen centuries ago. We shall now speak of Christmas in the connection which gives to it its importance and significance in the eyes of the present age. Although formerly set apart as a time for fasting and prayer by the early church, it slowly assumed a different character, and now many look to it as a season for eating and drinking. And why, in consideration of the import of the message brought by the angelic host on the first Christmas morn that the world ever saw, should not the heart be merry and voice utter words of gladness?

Is it meet to clothe our words with sadness and our countenance with sorrow and gravity, and afflict our bodies when "tidings of great joy" are brought to us? At the present day in some parts of Europe, such undue solemnity, and austere gravity is given to this anniversary that the children are not allowed to indulge in anything approaching to merriment, while anything bordering on hilarity at such a time would be regarded as almost sacrilege. Is it any wonder that children born under such circumstances should lose many of the lessons which such a celebration should bring, or worse than that, grow up to despise the doctrines of One, the anniversary of whose