

THE CHRISTMAS CHEER

BOAR'S HEAD, ONCE PRINCIPAL DISH, NOW OBSOLETE.

Great Revels of Our Saxon Forefathers—Various Dishes and Viands Which They Used.

Boston letter: How shallow is the modern palate and how degenerated the digestive organs of the modern epicure compared with those of the mighty trenchers who graced the festive boards of old.

The Christmas dinner de reguer now consists of roast beef, turkey, perhaps venison, vegetables and a little pastry. Wine may or may not play a part in the economy of the table, and the dissipation of an after dinner cigar may round off what we would consider a regular Christmas banquet. Of course pumpkin pie, mince pie and plum pudding are very essential features of the modern holiday meal.

This is the modern evolution of the Yuletide feast which our forefathers were wont to stretch out over the goodly tenure of twelve days.

The boar's head plays a very small part at the modern Christmas table, but in the old time English and German celebrations it figured as the principal dish.

"The boar's head in hand bring I, With garlands gay and rosemary, I pray you all syngre merely, Qui estes in convivis."

The boar's head was the most distinguished of Christmas dishes and there are many carols yet surviving in its honor. The dish though "the chief service in the land"—probably as old as the Saxons, was the principal entree at all big feasts as well as that of Christmas.

Brawn was another favorite dish and figured largely at the Inns of Court revels, where it was generally washed down by some old malvesie, bastard or muscadel.

The salmon was also a favorite dish for the Christmas feast.

"Lastly, the salmon, King of fish, Fills with good cheer the Christmas dish."

The old English drank heavily at their Christmas feast which often savored little of piety. They drank their hipocras, ale, mead and claret, celebrating the holiday with great festivity.

As Inigo says: "Your Dane, Your German, and good wag-bellied Hollander, are nothing to your English."

The talent was probably inherited from the Saxons, for their kings had wine, mead, cider, ale, pigment and morat to which the Normans added claret, garhiofilac and hipocras. Morat was made from honey and mulberries; claret, pigment, hipocras and garhiofilac (so-called from the groffe or cloves contained in it) were different preparations of wine mixed with honey and spices. Hipocras was particularly indispensable at the great feast.

Salmon pies and peacock were also necessary delicacies of the Christmas board.

The particulars of the Christmas feast are thus humorously dilated upon by an old poet:

"They sewed up salmon, venison and wild boars, By hundreds and by dozens and by scores,

Hogsheds of honey, kilderkins of mustard, Mutton, and fatted beeves and bacon swine,

Heron and bitterns, peacock, swan and bustard, Teal, mallard, pigeons, widgons, and, in fine,

Plum-puddings, pancakes, apple pies and custard, And therewithal they drank goodly Gascon wine,

With mead, and ale, and cider of our own, For porter, punch, and negus were not known."

The wassail bowl figured largely at these Christmas feasts. The early Saxons, among other anticipated joys of a future state, believed that they would quaff mead and ale from the skulls of their enemies, while feasting from the great boar Serguer.

The wassail bowl is believed to have been especially a Saxon institution. The first of which we have record was an elegantly mounted skull filled with mead, which Rowena, the beautiful daughter of Hengist, presented to the British King Vortigern with a bowl of wine, saluting him with "Lord King Wass-hell," to which he answered, as he was directed, "Drinc hell," saluting her after his own fashion as his eyes devoured her charms. The contents of the wassail cup were ale or cider, to which sugar toast and roast craps were added.

The followers of Odin and Thor drank largely in honor of their pagan deities; and, when converted, still continued their potations, but in honor of the Virgin Mary, the apostles and the saints. The early missionaries were compelled to submit to the substitution, being unable to abolish the practice, which later degenerated into drinking the healths of other people, to the great detriment of our own.

From the earliest ages the cup bearer has been one of the principal courtiers in the royal palace.

But eating and drinking were not the only amusements at these early Christmas feasts. The days of festivity were ribald nonsense making, the Feast of Asses and Feast of Fools being religiously kept. These were what ultimately developed into the mummers plays. They consisted mainly of young men going about in female attire or skins of beasts, and with these pranks there was occasionally much vice and debauchery connected. All sorts of buffooneries and abominations were permitted at these representations;

mock anthems and services were sung; an ass, covered with rich priestly robes, ferlor provender, provided from time to time with inferior provender, people dancing around him and praying in all sorts of impurities.

The boisterous care free revel which constituted the highest form of enjoyment to the earlmas continued abridgement to celebrating until heads in England Germany had taken to the great tone of it. The seed of it was sown by the drunkard who round up all the signs of having uncurbed debauchery and the most of the Yule tide deceleration of the former times. The ivy was sacred to Bacchus (Dionysos) represented as surrounded with thyrus rounded with gleed it with laurel crowns of their lent itself readily to the purposes of the Christmas feast.

The mistletoe was an object of veneration among the pagan ancestors in very early times. They believe it was ferred to by the descent of the religious ceremonies of the Romans: This branch appears to have been the mistletoe of the oak, now of a great many trees.

By the Celts, nation and the Druids it was held sacred, they attributing qualities to it. On account of its medicinal virtues they called it guid hell. They preferred and used exclusively the mistletoe of the oak.

Vallancey says they held the plant sacred because the berries as well as the leaves came in clusters of three united into one stalk, a number which they held sacred, but on the mistletoe leaves come in pairs only.

The Gothic nations all attributed exallities to the mistletoe and it was the cause of the death of their deity Balder. It came about this way: Frigga, when she adjured all the other plants, fire, water, reptiles, birds, metals, earth, and metals, earth, sea and plants not to do him any hurt, unfortunately neglected to exact any pledge from the mistletoe, consid-



VIRGIN AND CHILD.

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CHRISTMAS CHIMES.

CHRISTIAN SENTIMENT KEEPS PACE WITH PROGRESS.

Prehistoric Civilizations Had to Crumble Away Because There Was No Spiritual Side

New York letter: The first Christmas of the Twentieth Century dawned auspiciously for the world.

Peace on earth and good will toward men appears to be as near to its realization as at any time during the past century.

Guerrilla warfare in South Africa and in the Philippines are the only clouds upon the otherwise peaceful horizon if we forget the little revolution going on in the two small republics to the south of us which are all the time more or less engaged in such bellicose demonstrations. Progress throughout the world seems to be making rapid strides and particularly does it seem that the advance manifest everywhere is a corollary to the march of Christianity.

In spite of the set back to the missions caused by the Boxer movement in China the sun will not rise upon any land the coming Christmas morning where it will fail to lighten the spire of a Christian church or mission.

As a national festival Christmas seems to be continually gaining ground in the esteem and feelings of modern nations. The years as they roll by only seem to crystallize and hallow the sentiment which sustains it.

Some of the primitive customs connected with the great holiday may be dying out but the spirit which they perpetuate has grown stronger with the years.

Each Christmas the country breezes wait to more ears the glad sound of the church bells, bearing the refrain of Christmas hope—that glorious clangor which as Kingsley describes awoke an echo "in the calm of the wild fowl on the moor."

Not alone had the Jewish prophets foretold this Messianic epoch, but the seers of the far east had divined the advent of a Great Prophet on earth, and even the Chinese Emperor Min acting under the advice of his astrologers had sent an embassy to meet him. Had that embassy ever reached Judea the history of the world's civilization might have been reversed. China today would have been the center of Christian progress and modern enlightenment while the west would gradually have been drawing inspirations from her instead of being the leader as she is today.

Christmas day therefore is a celebration which all who are enjoying the benefits of civilization can enjoy heartily whatever their religious preference or prejudices may be.

The changes of the Christmas bells are an inspiration to aspirations that would have been dumb today had they never sounded, although it is doubtful if the day we celebrate is anywhere near to being the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Christian celebration seems rather to have adapted itself to the date of the great yearly Pagan celebration, timed upon the return of the "fiery sun wheel" from which the Celts and Goths believed they could trace the personal movements and interferences on earth of their leading deities, Odin, Berchta and others.

Almost all the heathen nations regarded the winter solstice as a most important event of the year, it being the point of renewed life and activity of the powers of nature and of the gods, who were originally only the symbolical personification of these.

One of the greatest difficulties with which the early Christian Fathers had to contend was the tendency of the people at the early celebrations of Christmas to mingle with them the old pagan rites and ritual. In order to effectively counteract these influences the liturgy was devised and dramatic representations of the birth of Christ and the leading events of his life were introduced.

In this manner came up the manger songs and a vast collection of carols and dramas dealing with the birth of Christ, some of which subsequently degenerated into farces and fool's play. From these also originated at a later date the custom of providing Christ or Christmas trees for the children, which laden with reciprocal gifts, including special meats and dishes, Christmas rolls, cakes, currant-loaves, dumplings etc. In this way Christmas became a festival for all, for young and old, rich and poor and high and low.

The modern celebration of Christmas is a vast curtailment of the old Yuletide observances which lasted from the winter solstice, December 25th to January 5th, the feast occupying twelve nights, in which profoundly superstitious rites mingled with the most remarkable orgies.

The comparison between the observance of the old pagan feast, with its dreaded competition of the proposed action of the gods and its terrifying belief in their power to work evil from which there was appeal, and the simple Christmas celebration of the present day, filled with the cheerful hopefulness which a reliance in the power of the Saviour has given us, is one which tells its own story and echoes the beautiful sentiment breathed out in the resonant voices of the Christmas bells.

LINDLEY FORSTER, D.D.

Chicago has a boy of 4 who has already secured his claim to go thundering down the ages. He smokes black cigars, which will probably ruin his health, but is compensated for this by getting his name in the newspapers for about a week or two.

Herbert C. Hoover is one of the highest salaried men of his years in the industrial world. At the age of 29 he is in receipt of \$33,000 annually for his services as a mining expert.

DIVORCES IN MAINE.

An Increase of More Than 43 Per Cent in Last Decade.

New York Sun: The report of the state register of vital statistics, just issued, shows that the number of divorces granted by the Maine courts has grown from 552 in 1892 to 790 for the last year, an increase of 43.11 per cent. In nearly two-thirds of the cases the basis of the suit is given as either cruel and abusive treatment or desertion. It is declared that the charges of desertion are made in many instances with the collusion of both parties to the suit, and the same is true of the allegations of cruel and abusive treatment.

The laws of the state are very liberal in the matter of divorces, and, apparently, their interpretation by the courts is gradually growing more advantageous to persons seeking freedom from matrimonial ties upon trivial grounds. The statistics for the last year show that only 71 suits were successful in which adultery was alleged. In this number the husband was the libellant 46 times and the wife 25 times. Out of the whole number of divorces granted the wife was the libellant 579 times and the husband only 211 times.

The complaints alleging extreme cruelty numbered only four, and in each instance the complainant was a woman. This charge is set up only when it is possible to prove personal violence, blows upon the body, and actual injury. Intoxication was alleged in 94 suits, of which only five were brought against wives.

For some time the growth in the number of divorces has been apparent, and the legislature has been asked to make the divorce laws more stringent. According to lawyers the divorce laws of Maine are as liberal as those of any state in the union, with one or two exceptions.

Mamma Was Long-Winded.

Mother—Another time you must interrupt me when I am talking to visitors, Willie.

Willie—But, mother, by the time you'd finished I should have forgotten what I wanted to say!—Detroit Free Press.

Mr. Beresford Greathead has just arrived in Southampton, England, after making a tour of the world on foot, consuming more than six years in the journey.

No Plan Needed.

Herald and Presbyter: The bridge-builder with Stonewall Jackson's army was a rare character, if the following story be true:

The Union soldiers, retreating from the valley of Virginia, burned a bridge over the Shenandoah.

Jackson, who wanted to pursue, sent for his old bridge-builder, "Sir," said Jackson, "you must keep men at work all day and all night, and finish that bridge by tomorrow morning. My engineer shall give you a plan."

Old Miles saluted and withdrew. Early the next morning the general sent for Miles again. "Well, sir," said Jackson, "did the engineer give you the plan for the bridge?"

"General," said the old man, slowly, "the bridge is done. I don't know whether the picture is or not."