

CHRISTMAS TIDE

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS: How Christians Have Imported Pagan Customs into Their Celebrations . . .

In "ye olden time" the holidays were ushered in on Christmas eve, and until Twelfth Night, known familiarly as the day of the Magi or Little Christmas, nothing was done, nothing was thought, save fun, revelry and feasting, while the watchword to all was eat, drink and make merry.

If we trace the origin of our modern Christmas we find that from time immemorial it was celebrated with religious worship and social gaiety of all kinds, just as it is now; and that many of the festive practices, the beautiful customs which characterize the occasion, are derived from age long antecedents of the coming of the Redeemer, and from peoples who knew naught of the true God.

The Worship of the Sun.
Among all the pagan races of antiquity there seems to have been a universal tendency to worship the sun at this season, just as there was at the change of the other seasons, he was regarded by them as the giver of light and life, and the visible manifestation of a supreme Deity, and when the shortest day of the gloomy winter had passed, and he began his return course, bringing warmth and the reanimation of all that was dead, there was general rejoicing everywhere.

The Christian Festival.
The dedication of the 25th of December for commemorating the birth of Christ dates back to the fourth century. Previously it had been the most movable of the church feast days, and confounded by some with the Epiphany; by others with the feast of Tabernacles, held in September, while more of the Christians celebrated the event in March, about the time of the Passover, and still more as late as April or May. The actual date of the Nativity could not be learned with any degree of accuracy, as the evidence regarding it was traditional and likewise conflicting, and confused, so, after a conference of the theologians of the East and West, for the sake of uniformity, it was thought best to settle upon one particular day, and after all, it was the event, not the date of its occurrence, which was celebrated. This agreement was the result of an inquiry brought about by the earnest solicitations of St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, to Julius I, who granted an order for an investigation to be made concerning the right day. The chief grounds for the final decision was the information obtained from the tables of the censors in the archives of Rome.

Thus the Christians from a very early period observed the Christmas festival at this special time of the year, which made it coincident with the one held by the heathen in honor of the winter solstice in honor of the sun, and from this it is easy to see how the heathen and Christian observances became inseparably mingled.

The Saturnalia.
The Romans worshipped the sun under one of the characters attributed to Saturn, father of the gods, and the feast was called Saturnalia. Historians and antiquarians seem unable to discover the origin of this festival, but the Romans derived it from the Grecians, as they did many other of their customs, and it is not improbable that it was instituted in some rude period of antiquity and by other races previous to its advent into Greece.

It was the favorite recreation of paganism and was marked by a universal license and merry-making. Slaves were by the time being free and recognized as the equals of their masters, with whom they were permitted to dine as guests, to converse with, and what was perhaps more relished by this miserable class, to tell their impertinent owners of their faults to their face, treat them as menials and punish them for the misdemeanors of which they might be guilty, as they themselves were punished for similar offences. No one was allowed to be angry, and he who was put upon and made sport of, if he loved his comfort, would be the first to laugh.

All the city was in the wildest commotion; business was suspended, and none were at work but the cooks and confectioners who prepared the gorgeous feasts; houses were gayly decorated with laurel and evergreens, and presents passed between parents and friends after the same fashion customary to-day, while the children invoked Saturn, as they now do the good old Santa Clause. Games and amusements of all sorts were indulged in by the citizens; music and dancing was heard and seen on every hand, and the very air rang with shouts and laughter, and the flowing bowl was a part of the Saturnalia, as if now reigns in a myriad of different forms in the festivities of Christmas, and glasses of every size were ready for all to drink as often and as much as they liked.

The Scandinavian Festival.
In the bleak north, where the woe-

ther at this season was bitterly cold and the world enveloped in a mantle of snow, as was of the present imagine the ideal Christmas ought to be, the ceremonies were more rude and barbarous than those of sunnier climes, but none the less beautiful, and of that quaint and picturesque nature which has rendered them charming to succeeding and more civilized generations. Fires were kindled in and out of doors, and great blocks of wood blazed in honor of Odin and Thor, who in the Scandinavian mythology represented the sun. In the Irish legends it is called Mithr, derived from the Persian Mithras, while to the Phoeni-



They saw his star in the east.

clians it was known by the appellation of Bel or Baal, a name which they afterwards carried to the shores of Britain, where the strange rites to this god became firmly rooted.

The Yule Log.
The burning of the Yule log, a name taken from the Jul or Yule feast of the ancient Goth and Saxons, was one of the most important ceremonies on Christmas eve, and one of the most highly favored of the Pagan practice to be later on grafted upon the Christian festival.

In the old feudal days the bringing in and placing of the giant log on the hearth of the wide chimney in the baronial hall was the gladdest incident of the 12 days' frolic. This log, destined to crackle a welcome and good cheer to all comers, was hauled in great glee and triumph, each wayfarer who chanced to be near, raised his hat, for he knew it was full of fair promises, and that the flames that leaped from it would consume all old grudges, while the spirit of anger and revenge, nurtured possibly for years, would die out as did its charred embers. It was thought, too, that a piece of the log taken out before being entirely burnt and kept, would preserve the house from fire during the ensuing year, and when the anniversary came again, the new Yule was lit with the blackened remains of its predecessor.

The Christmas Candle.
As an accompaniment to the Yule log, there was to be found in every household a monstrous taper called the Yule or Christmas candle, which was lighted early on Xmas eve and left burning all night in honor of the coming of the Saviour, or as the old country people quaintly put it, "to light the Saviour into the world." This candle could never be too big, and much rivalry existed amongst housewives everywhere as to who should have the largest specimen of the candle-maker's art, and the one most beautifully moulded and decorated. Each night while the holidays lasted the huge taper was lit and stood upon the table at supper, to add an extra grace to the brightly adorned, heavily laden board; all during the evening it burned, to smile upon the gayeties that followed, for in the homes of rich and poor, prince and peasant, until after Twelfth Night, neither man, woman or child dreamed of aught else but having fun.

The Mistletoe Bough.
In the lapse of time many of these beautiful customs have lost much of their traditional interest and primitive popularity, but there is one, however, which has never declined in public favor, and seems destined to retain its hold upon the affections of the people—the hanging up of the mistletoe, which so many pleasant memories cluster. This custom is not a Christian institution; indeed, the mistletoe has been excluded from church decoration on account of its pagan associations, and we derive it from our ancient

Celtic ancestors, in whose religion it was regarded with the utmost veneration, particularly when it grew upon the oak—which is seldom supposed by them to be the favorite tree of their divinity, Tutanus.

When the eagerly awaited winter festival arrived the Druids went forth, attended by great pomp, to gather the mystic evergreen, that, in addition to the religious reverence in which it was held, was believed to possess wonderful curative properties and prove a safeguard against evil of all sorts. Two white bulls were carried along in the procession, and when the oak was reached upon which the plant twined they were bound to its trunk, and the chief Druid, robed

All in Spotless White, as symbolic of purity, ascended the tree, and with a golden sickle cut the vine. As it fell it was caught in the gown of a similarly-garbed priest, who stood beneath ready to receive it. When the cutting was over the two bulls were sacrificed, and not unskillful human victims also were immolated in this strange worship of false gods. Then followed various festive ceremonies indicative of the joy they experienced over the advent of the annual feast of the sun.

The mistletoe thus gathered was then divided into small portions and distributed amongst the people, who took it home and hung it up in the

entrances of their dwellings, hoping thereby to propitiate the gods, while furnishing the sylvan spirits, whom they imagined rested amidst the boughs, a shelter from the bitter winter winds until spring.

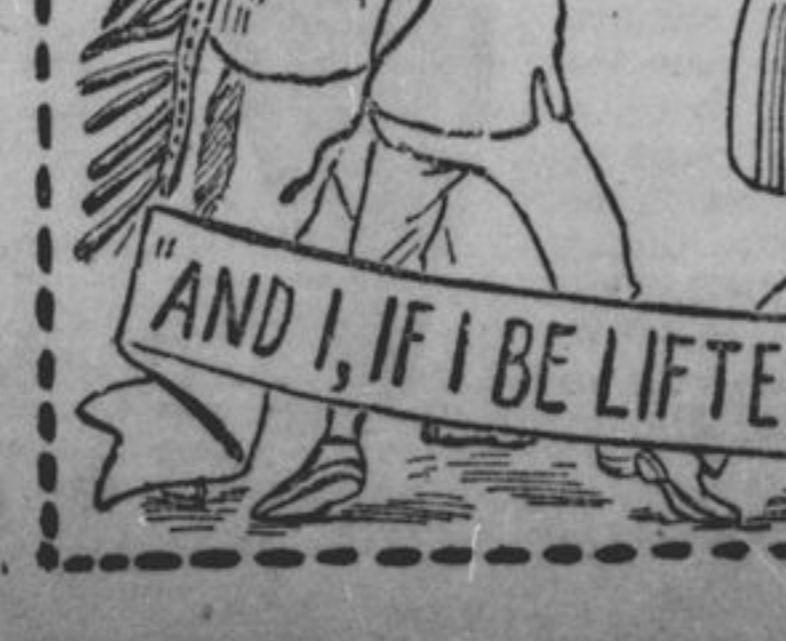
YULE TIDE OF OUR ANCESTORS

The Yule Doughs or Doos, were kind of Christmas cake, found of old in many parts of Northern Europe. They were especially for distribution among the young people. In shape they were a rough imitation of a human figure of varying lengths, from six to twelve inches, with raisins for nose and eyes. Presumably these figures were intended to represent the infant Saviour.

Other cakes of different kinds baked only at this season were to be found in many places. In Cornwall, for instance, each family baked a quantity of currant cakes on Xmas eve, on the top of each of which the dough was pulled up to form a sort of head-piece called "the Christmas." A special cake was made for each member of the household, but when eating time came each one tasted a little of everybody else's cake.

Yule babies is the term applied to the sweetmeats given the juveniles of Alnwick, at Yuletide. A character called Baby Cake is found in Ben Jonson's "Masque of Christmas," but this we are told, refers to the Twelfth Night cake.

An Ancient Custom.
Jul, or Yule, was anciently the name



"I bring you good tidings of great joy."



given by the Goths and Saxons to the festive period occurring at the winter solstice; thus the name Yule has come down to us through the Scotch and English, and it still obtains among all English speaking nations. The most commonly heard expression in connection with it is the Yule Log. This burning of the Yule log, or log, originated with the very old Christmas custom (with them partaking rather more of the nature of a ceremony), among the Scandinavians of the burning of huge bonfires in honor of their god Thor at their feast of Jul, occurring at the winter solstice.

In England the bringing in and burning of the Yule log on Christmas eve still survives in some localities, with more or less of its original picturesqueness. Of old this custom was attended by much ceremony and festivity. A log was chosen, usually a very massive and rugged piece of oak. Then was begun a sort of triumphal procession with it to its resting place in the hall. Each passer by was expected to uncover his head to it, there was much merriment and shouting, and upon its reaching the entrance to the hall, if there were family minstrels, they greeted it with music and song. If there were no minstrels then the members of the family in turn performed this office. Yule doughs were eaten, vassal bowls were drained and an endless round of Yule games were played.

After these amusements palled the kindling of the log began. This was always done with a portion of the Yule log of the Christmas previous, which had been carefully preserved for the purpose. Security from fire was supposed to accrue to the house from the saving of last year's log. Woe betide, too, if during the burning of the Yule log a barefooted or flat-footed or spouting person should come in, as this meant the worst kind of bad luck.

The Christmas or Yule candle, a candle of huge proportions, was always burned on the supper table on these occasions as a sort of accompaniment to the Yule log. The Yule log, with accompanying festivities of various kinds, is also a prominent feature of the Christmas celebrations in Provence, where it is called the "Cachoflo," and among the Servians.

Wassal Bowl.
The wassal bowl, which in days gone by played such a prominent part in Yuletide celebrations, was in the beginning just a toast or pledge drunk between friends. The word wassal is from the Anglo-Saxon, "was hal," meaning "be whole," "be well," or, as in modern usage, "here's to your health." No medieval English Yule celebration but had its wassal bowl with well-spiced contents. It was the centre of the board not only then, but on New Year's day.

The drink it contained was composed of good ale, sugar, nutmeg, and roasted apples—crab apples being frequently used instead of the larger kind. This brew was also known as "lamb's wool."

While the gentry were regaling themselves indoors the young women of the poorer classes went round from house to house with gaily decorated wassal bowls, singing carols called "wassal songs." For this, of course, they expected gratuities.

Christmas in Other Countries
The Christmas feeding of the birds is prevalent in many of the provinces of Norway and Sweden. Bunches of oats are placed on the roofs of houses, on trees and fences, for them to feed upon. Two or three days before, cartloads of sheaves are brought into town for this purpose. Both rich and poor buy and place

them everywhere. Every poor man and every head of a family has saved a penny or two, or even one farthing, to buy a bunch of oats for the birds to have their Christmas. On this day, on many farms, the dear old horse, the young colt, the cattle, the sheep, the goats, and even the pig, get double the usual amount of food, given them. It is a beautiful custom and speaks well for the natural goodness of heart of the Scandinavians.

Some Don'ts for Christmas

Don't forget X-mas is the day to bow to individuality. Never buy things for the whole family, therefore.
Don't repent yourself. Don't give to others this year what they did to you last. That is very bad taste.
Don't buy father, brothers or husbands ties, slippers or pipes. Choose rather something they will not wear out and will appeal to their taste.
Don't give your mother a "useful" gift, unless you are too poor for aught ornamental. She may be "getting on," but she still loves pretty trinkets.
Don't decide not to give at all be-



cause you cannot give handsomely. Good will is the watchword, and good sense will help you to choose lovely gifts for little money.
Making presents literally with your own fair (or tanned) hands doubles the value literally and sentimentally very often. Busy times are these to every one, and the stores overflow with things that require small outlay.
Don't miss book departments. There never was such a harvest of books, at astonishingly low prices, as now.

Pictures of antiques and Sargent

Hark! the Herald Angels.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angel host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Whose adoring angels sing,
"Peace on earth, to man good will."
Bid the trembling soul be still,
Christ on earth has come to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hail! the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Peace!
Hail! the Sun of righteousness!
Life and light to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Charles Wesley.

panels, framed in dull black, are artistic in the extreme, and cost very little. Tapestry panel pictures, set in black frames, are quaint and inexpensive for lovers of the house beautiful.
Unless you know the fads of your acquaintances don't buy them freaky gifts. A plaster dog to a girl who detests the real animal would be ill chosen.
Cushions "go" with colleagues; so do rugs, silk blankets, gun-metal military brushes and—all men like books.

The Yule Log.
Oh, the Yule log snapped and sparkled
Till the red flame quivered high,
Steeping wall and roof and rafters
In its rich and vivid dye.
And around the bowl of wassal
Ran a soft, incessant chime,
'Twas the greybeards clinking glasses
To the joy of Christmas time.

Oh, the dance waxed mad and merry
With the light heels overhead,
Hunk across and down the middle
Went the gayly measured tread,
While "Away with Melancholy"
Squeaked the fiddles, and the air
Sweet a stir of riddle o'er us
As we sat beneath the stair.
Oh, the sweet and subtle magic
That at work within the heart
Drew us tenderly together,
Held us, tremulous, apart!
Why, we thought our lips were touch-
ing.
Just for love—we did not know
It was all because above us
Hung a bough of mistletoe.
—Anon.

Christmas Greeting.
Sing a song of Christmas!
Pockets full of gold;
Plums and cakes for stockings,
More than they can hold,
Pudding in the great pot,
Turkey on the spit,
Merry faces round the fire—
Sorrow! Not a bit!

Woffenden fell
The feeling which
do so was a curd
ed to him after
even at that time
something uncom-
pen. The girl at
the carpeted wa-
carriage. Her at-
the doorway to
the commission-
leaning upon his
the pavement. It
upon the carriage
denly what a W-
vaguely anticipa-
dark figure sprang
shadows, and a
throat; something
like a streak of
light flashed up-
would certainly
Woffenden. He w-
not wholly unpre-
of that sort, and
ly not paralyzed
swept what a W-
that a single st-
him to seize the
grasp of iron. T-
been attacked by
cover himself
had struck the
heartily. The W-
head, but gre-
and fell upon his
released from W-
his convulsive sta-
black into the
There was a rust-
but it was too l-
expecting another
moved from the en-
commissionaire, a
man, was not a
man who had man-
across the roadwa-
dons which fringe
The commissionaire
leaved him. Just
a soft tone of v-
had opened the en-
standing at his s-
"Is anyone hurt?"
"No one," he an-
ore. The man had
Mr. Seldin stoop-
away some grey a-
his coat. Then he
from his ticket-po-
cigarette which he
his fingers. He
steady. The wick-
taken thirty sec-
"It was probab-
remarked motion-
renew her place."
"I am not a
you, sir. Lord
Have?" he asked.
"But for your inter-
might really have
sent me to offer a
a soft tone of v-
opportunity of ex-
At present you v-
hurry. I am not
I share an antip-
he: a row of
He stepped into
a farewell bow,
once. Woffenden
ter it with his h-
the embankment
faint sound of h-

CHAPS
The Warn-
The coupe bring-
ing lights and no-
ed the corner and
three young men
together upon the
were out of sight
such a meeting, h-
er, they would ha-
club, smoked a fi-
guaged in the in-
apollinaris. Has-
took scandalous
Denham would be
latest art gossip, a
have supplied the
tion. To-night no
pass. Any such
enough for three
desire to be alone
gather a little av-
ment or to
general or to
renewed as the
had happened. The
something about a
professional work
in the morning pa-
the half-apologetic
was grinning as
the surrealist
into his night cab,
bore certainly less
Grove of Denham
room, and departed
with a flourish, which
was a relief.
"You always w-
Woffenden he ex-
Woffenden laughe
He was thinking t-
it was, had seldom
friction.
"Remember, thou-
od, leaning over th-
It is not always
the first trick who
He cab driver who
was left alone, fr-
prised, but on the
"Those fellows w-
bit," he said to
never knew Denham
You may go home,
but to his coachman.
Woffenden starte-
ward, filled with
having added rich
experiences. W-
the embankment
had the stars were
there was no dou-
had obtained what
epicurean turn of
sinec and subtle l-
quired a new sens-
got it with regar-
Denham, he was a
hard, indeed. For
felt even the men-
thrilling. He had
a life which was
coming monotonous
with buoyant steps
lightheartedness.
half such a bad pic-
like that!
Suddenly he came
stop. He never qui-
etinct it was what
with more than a
into the face of t-