THIS most widely-observed holiday of . modern times is not the oldest of Christian festivals. The keeping of Epiphany preceeded observance of Christmas. Dec. 25 was made a church feast about 336 A.D.

Various historians have set the time of the actual birth of Jesus to dates corresponding to our present January 6, March 25, May 20, April 19 or 20, November 17, etc. Christmas has been celebrated on more than one hundred different days of the year.

Adoption of December 25 was favored in the early church because it corresponded to the Roman Saturnalia or celebration of the winter solstice. Its establishment assisted in conversion of the observance of the pagan festival into a Christian occasion.

Pope Gregory I, surnamed the Great, enjoined missionaries not to destroy such pagan customs as were innocent and could be woven into the fabric of Christian ceremony. All the festivities of the winter solstice were absorbed in the observance of Christmas Day in the course of time. The Romans practised exchanging gifts at the Saturnalia. Pagans decked their halls with evergreens, holly and mistletoe in Druid times. These green plants re naturally regarded with awe in an otherwise bare winter season.

THE traditional figure known as Santa 4. Claus, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, etc., among various peoples is traced back to Nicholas, the son of a merchant named Epiphanes in the town of Patara, near the port of Myra on the Mediterranean. Nicholas entered the church and became bishop of Myra, in the 4th century, and a notable public bene-

He personified the Christian injunction, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" to an unusual extent in an age when the biggest robber was king, and Robin Hood was a hero because he gave back

the poor some of the loot. His fame spread till he became established in European hearts as special protector of children, travelers and merchants. It was believed that he presented gifts to good persons while they slept. By the 15th century it was the general custom in the Netherlands to present gifts on the eve of St. Nicholas' day in the calendar of saints: December 6. The first Dutch colonists in America

An early representation of St. Nicholas, 'Santa Claus'.

overseas. Settlers who followed the Dutch into the Hudson River valley were infected by the jolly good time the Dutch had each December. They adopted the December 6 gift tradition but could not pronounce the Dutch Sant Nikolaas as the Dutch did: it came out Santa Claus.

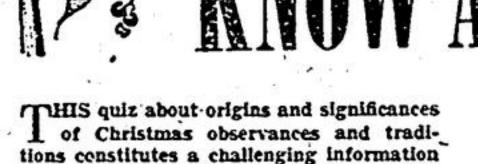
carried the custom

According to tradition, St. Nicholas, was lean and ascetic. In the American mind he came to resemble the good Dutch burghers. This impression took form permanently through the poem, A Visit from St. Nicholas, and the drawings of Thomas Nast, the German immigrant who was the most famous cartoonist in the U.S. in the 1860's and 1870's.

FEW persons acquainted with the first O. verse and chouns of John Pierpont's Jingle Bells have any knowledge of the second and third of its three verses, which

> A day or two ago I thought I'd take a ride, And soon Miss Fannic Bright Was seated by my side. The horse was lean and lank; Misfortune seem'd his lot; . He got into a drifted bank, And ice, we got up-sot.

Now the ground is white; Go it while you're young; Take the girls to-night, And sing this sleighing song. Just get a bob-tail'd bay, Tico-forty for his speed; Then hitch him to an open sleigh, And crack! you'll take the lead.



test for an individual. With a quiz-master presiding, it can be an interesting Yule party diversion. Read all of the questions here and try to answer them before looking at the numbered answers given elsewhere in the page.

- 1. Is Christmas the oldest of Christian festivals? 2. Who was the original "Santa Claus"?,
- 3. How many verses has "Jingle Bells"?
- 4. What is the source of the Yule log tradi-

tion?

By Hargis Earlywine

- 5. What is the derivation of the word 'Christ-
- 6. From where did the custom of kissing under the mistletoe come?
- 7. What people were the first to have Christmas trees?
- 8. What Christians made observance of Christmas illegal? 9. How is the apple used to "tell a fortune"
- at Christmas?
- 10. What celebrated English and French ruler had his coronation on Christmas?
- 11. From whom did the Christmas poinsettia get its name?
- 12. Who were the Three Wise Men of the New Testament story of the First Christmas?
- 13. Some beloved Christmas songs were actually written on Christmas Eve or Christ-
- mas Day. Can you name one? 14. About how old is the carol, "Adeste
- Fideles"? 15. What saint was responsible for making the 'creche' a customary Christmas shrine?
- 16. What is the origin of the word 'carol'?

Christ. At different periods it has been spelled . Crystmasse, Crestenmas, Kyrsomas, Xtemas, Chrystmesse and other ways. Xmas, thus spelled as an abbreviation for Christmas, had its origin centuries ago in the fact that the Greek letter chi was written as X. This letter was also the initial of the name

CHRISTMAS signifies Christ's Mass.

Christos. Many people naturally identify the X as representing the Cross. THE origin of kissing under the mistle-U. toe goes back to Babylonian times, when mistletoe was the sacred plant of Mylitta, goddess of love and beauty, and the kiss was a rite in her honor. In the early Christian church it was customary to bestow the "kiss

of peace" These two symbols became inter-

woven in the custom of kissing under the

mistletoe at Christmas time.

O. meaning the festival of the Nativity of

WILLIAM, the Duke of Normandy 10. WILLIAM, the Duke of Normandy who conquered England in 1066, was formally crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day the same year. The enthronement was accompanied by tragic carnage.

During the coronation service, the Archbishop of Canterbury asked William for his pledge that his rule would be upright and a righteous one. Solemnly William gave his promise. The Archbishop then turned to the congregation of nobles and asked them if they in their turn would accept William as their rightful king.

The formal response was too unanimous. The defeated Saxons rose as one man to accept William, and the sudden movement upset the Norman soldiers. They mistook it as a signal for an attack on their king, and they



. dition is not known. It was a Teutonic custom in ancient times to worship Odin's sacred oak. When the missionary Boniface went from England to Germany, he persuaded the people to substitute for the oak an ever-

green tree in honor of the Christ Child. There were pines and cedars in the Holy Land in the time of Jesus' childhood. The cedars of Lebanon furnished a timber much prized in the construction of palaces and

THE origin of the Christmas tree tra- temples. They supplied masts for ships.

The use of Christmas trees was confined to the Rhine country until about 1700. The tradition crossed the Atlantic with Hessian mercenaries during the American War of Independence and was carried on by German settlers. Elaborately decorated Christmas trees were to be found in other homes after Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria, gave favor to the custom. This (1) is a drawing from Victorian times.

The placement of trinkets upon Christmas trees had its forerunner in the practice of the Romans of hanging little masks of Bacchus upon pines and vines to induce fertility. Other people also decked trees and poles with foods and gifts at Saturnalia and corresponding occasions as offerings to the gods of fertility.

In ancient Egypt, it was the custom to decorate the houses with branches or small trees of the date palm at the winter solstice. The palm was the symbol of life triumphant over

ON May 11, 1659, the governing body of O. Massachusetts Bay colony accepted with satisfaction the enactment of a statute, "Whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either forbcaring of labor, feasting or in any way, as a festival,

shall be fined five shillings." This law, which remained on the statute books for more than 200 years, reflected the feeling at that time among the Puritans of England who were responsible for observance of Christmas being outlawed by Parliament in 1644. The Puritans denounced festive observance of religious occasions as superstitious and unscriptural. In England this feeling abated before long but the opposition to Christmas remained strong in Scotland till

well into the 19th century. In several States in the U.S. now it's illegal. to interfere purposely with a child's belief in Santa Claus.

APPLES and other fruits of trees nat-To urally figured importantly in old pagan customs. In parts of Europe at Yuletide apples are pared and the peeling, taken off in one spiral, is thrown over the left shoulder. Tradition has it that the peeling will form the initial of the person whom the parer is destined to marry.

and William undertook to make amends, the Abbey was filled with dead and wounded, and outside many homes were pillaged and fired.

THE poinsettia got its name as a re-I do sult of its being brought to the attention of botanists and commercial plant growers in 1828 by Joel Robert Poinsett, U.S. Minister to Mexico from 1825-29. He noticed the striking beauty of its scarlet and green

leaf, and the fact that it usually came into blossom about Christmastime. Poinsett, a botanist as well as a diplomat, brought specimens of the plant back with him to this country, and he and fellow experimenters soon. learned that the flower would thrive in subtropical parts of the United States. Poinsett collected natural history specimens during his travels in foreign countries, enriching the flora of native South Carolina and country. He is remembered chiefly for the Christmas flower which bears his name.

THE Three Wise Men were Balthazar, Melchior and Gaspar, who are supposed to have been the rulers of tribes descended from Ham, Shem and Japheth, or the kings of Nubia, Tarsus and Chaldea. They also are sometimes said to have represented. respectively, youth, middle-age and old-age. Of the gifts which they brought, the gold denoted the Christ Child's kingship, the myrrh signified His mortality and the frankincense His divinity.

THE words 10. of O Little Town of Bethlehem were written by the Rev. Phillips Brooks (right), young pastor of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church at Philadelphia, on Christmas Eve, 1868, and given to Lewis H. Redner, organist of the church, for a musical setting. Red-

Phillips Brooks

ner said the music came to him that night in a dream. The beautiful hymn, Silent Night, was similarly written at the last minute for Christmas presentation in church by Rev. Joseph Mohr, a Roman Catholic priest at Oberndorf, Austria, in 1818. .It was set to music by the organist of the church, Francis X. Gruber. Charles Wesley's Hark! the Herald Angels Sing was inspired by his hearing church bells in London on Christmas morning, 1739. Henry: Wadsworth Longfellow's I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day was inspired by bells and carols at Cambridge, Mass. on Dec. 25, 1863.

THE origin of Adeste Fideles, per-14. haps the best known of all carols, is lost in the dust of centuries. About all that is certain is that by the middle of the eighteenth century Roman Catholic congregations were hearing it at Midnight Mass on Christmas Day. Missionaries have translated it into more than 100 languages and dialects. One of the best known translations into English runs:

> O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem; Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels: O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above; "Glory to God

In the highest": O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be glory given; Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing:

> O come; let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

ST. FRANCIS of Assisi is said to I do have made the first "creche" or crim now found during the Christmas season in hundreds of churches and as a domestic shrine in many homes.



THE custom of burning a specially cho-4. sen and prepared log at festival time goes back into antiquity when fire and the sun were held in special reverence. It was be-

lieved that evil would not descend upon households where the Yule log had been properly burned. Above, observing the custom in the English countryside in the 19th century.



THE word "carol" itself came into 10. the English language comparatively late in the Middle Ages. Originally, it meant a dance in a ring while singing. This old

woodcut shows child carolers making the rounds in an English town on Christmas morning a century ago. God Rest You Merry

Gentlemen was a popular carol then.