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**THE SEASON'S LORE.**  
SOME OLD YULE TIDE CUSTOMS.

Christmas Festivities in Ancient Days  
—Carol Singing—The Wassail—Games and Gambols.

"At Christmas play, and makes good cheer,  
For Christmas comes but once a year."

So sang good Tom Tusser, the quaint old English farmer-poet and rhyming autobiographer, three hundred years ago; and his homely counsel was but an echo of the feelings with which our forefathers welcomed the merry Christmas tide. Those were merry days indeed—days of feasting and jollity, mirth and festivity; when the sole business of men seems to have been to eat, drink and be merry; when the huge logs blazed and crackled on the hearth, and the sparkling, wreathing flames went roaring up the wide-mouthed chimney; when the long oaken tables groined beneath the abundance of good things; when the great hall of the baronial castle resounded with the tumultuous joy of servants and dependents, who partook of the generous hospitality of their lord, amusing him and his family and his friends with their sports and gambols. Then the period of time extending from Christmas Eve to Candlemas, especially the twelve first days, was an uninterrupted round of entertainments and merry makings of all sorts. Walls, pictures, candlesticks, bedposts and dishes were embowered in festive holly and bay. No knight or baron in the land but kept open house for all comers, freely providing them with beef, beer, bread and other viands in abundance.

"Then opened wide the baron's hall  
To wassail, tenant, serf and all;  
Folwer laid his rod of rule aside,  
And ceremony doffed his pride."

There is a peculiar charm in contemplating the pleasant ways of those old times, and

amid the customs and superstitions which once clustered round the hallowed season of Christmas. We like to think that then people were more social, joyous and open-hearted than at the present time; that they enjoyed life roughly, but heartily and vigorously, while modern refinement, planning off the little roughnesses of men and subjecting the whole world to one system of rules, has given rise to more dissipation, as it has lessened the solid enjoyment of former times. And then, perchance, laboring under the enchantment which the distance of many years lends to those old Christmas festivities, will vent our feelings in an enthusiastic eulogy of the "good old times."

Two of the most popular observances connected with the Christmas holidays were the hanging up of the mistletoe and the bringing in and placing on the hearth of the ponderous Yule-log. The mistletoe, as is well-known, was regarded in the religion of the Druids with the greatest veneration, and solemn ceremonies were anciently connected with the cutting of the parasite, which was done at the winter solstice. The people went in procession to the forest, the bards leading, chanting a song, then a herald, then three Druids with implements, then the prince of the Druids accompanied by the multitude. Mounting an oak, the chief Druid cut the mistletoe with a golden sickle and presented it to his brethren, who received it very respectfully. It was then cut into sprays and on the first of the new year distributed among the people. On Christmas eve boughs of the plant were hung from the ceiling of the kitchen, and whatever female chanced to stand

BENEATH THE VERDANT ARCH,  
were she a girl or a grown lady, the young man present was entitled to implant on her cheek a kiss. This custom probably had its origin in the fact that the pearl white berries of the mistletoe were regarded by the Druids as symbolic of purity and were associated by them with the rights of marriage.

The cutting of the Yule-block was the most joyous of the ceremonies on Christmas eve in feudal times. A massive piece of wood was selected, frequently the rugged root of a tree, and as it was being drawn in from the forest, the wayfarer reverently lifted his hat as it passed. Then with rejoicing merriment, it was brought into the great hall or kitchen. Herriek sings:

"Come, bring with a noise,  
My Merrick, morrie boys,  
The Christmas log to the fire;  
While my good dame, she  
Bids ye all be true,  
And drink to your hearts' desiring."

Each of the family used, in turn, to sit on the log, sing a Yule-song, and drink to a merry Christmas and a happy New Year; after Yule-cakes, with the figure of the Infant Jesus impressed upon them, were distributed. When tired of the sports, the party gathered round the log

and indulged in quieter amusements; some engaged in conversation; some went to cards; while some sang carols. Others would gather round the lord of the mansion, who sat in a large-backed oaken arm-chair near the fire, and heard him recount the traditional tales of the village and stories of ghosts and witches, while the dimly glowing embers shed their spectral light athwart the circle of eager countenances, and "the pattering sleet on the casement beat, and the blast was hoarsely blowing." The half-consumed block, its purpose served on Christmas Eve was

CAREFULLY PRESERVED  
till next Christmas, and then the new log was lit with the charred remains of its predecessor:

"Part must be kept wherewith to tend  
The Christmas log next year;  
And where 'tis safely kept, the fiend  
Can do no mischief there."

This custom of preserving the log was regarded as of the highest importance, and the log was therefore carefully stored away in the cellar or other secure place of the house. If kept throughout the year, it was believed to insure the house against fire.

On Christmas morning, our ancestors were wont to be roused from their slumber by the melodious music of the wails and carol-singers. Waits were musicians who used to play by night in the streets. In very old times they were attached to the King's court, and their duty was to sound the watch every night and parade the streets in winter to prevent depredations.

"I hear along our street  
Pass the minstrel throng;  
Hark! they play so sweet,  
On their hautboys, Christmas songs!  
Let us by the fire,  
Ever higher,  
Sing them till the night expire."

One of the objects of these wandering musicians was the gathering of donations, which they distributed among the poor, though always expecting *imprimis* a black jack of ale and a Christmas pie for their personal consumption.

A magnificent dinner served on Christmas day was, of course, the leading feature, the grand central point of the holiday season in the olden time. And the chief dish, as well as the first—the *piece de resistance*—was a savory boar's head, decked with rosemary and holding with its teeth a lemon for its own seasoning, swimming in a sea of steaming gravy, and served on a platter of silver or gold—no baser metal was thought fit to hold the precious burden. The man who bore it in was preceded by pages carrying mustard. The entry of the head

was accompanied with flourish of trumpets and music of merry minstrelsy, while a carol was sung, in the burden of which all joined. We all remember the dear song:

"The boar's head in hand bring I  
With garlands and rosemary,  
I pray you all sing merrily,  
Quiescit in convicio.

"The boar's head, I understand,  
Is the chief service in this laude;  
Loke, wherever it be fande,  
Servit eum cantico."

The flesh of the peacock was likewise a favorite dish for a Christmas dinner. This was the ladies' bird; and it was customary for the prettiest of "the sex" to bring it on a salver to the sound of viols, the rest of the ladies following in stately procession. Salmon, too, were in great demand. Carew says:

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

Henry III, in his twenty-sixth year, directed the sheriff of Gloucester to cause twenty salmon to be bought for the King, and put into pies against Christmas. Beef, plum-puddings, turkeys, geese, capons and swans all figured in the holiday bill of fare. The well known minced, or Christmas pie, must not be forgotten—than which the pastry cooks' art boasts no greater triumph. It is of considerable antiquity and is referred to by many of the old writers. Its chief ingredients were neat's tongue, chickens, eggs, sugar, currants, lemon and orange peel, with various spices. A superstition still exists, that in as many different houses as one eats mince pie during Christmas, so many happy months will he have in the ensuing year; one has only, therefore, to perform the delectable operation in a different house each day from Christmas Day

TO TWELFTH-TIDE,  
and bring down upon his head a dozen months of bliss and prosperity.

Such a prodigality of viands demanded, as may be supposed, liberal portions of liquor for their proper digestion; and many were the bumpers of malvasia, bastard and muscadell that were sent brimming round the festive board. It may be expected that Christmas "broached the mightiest ale," and Christmas ale has, according, been famous from the earliest times.

"Bring us in good ale, bring us in good ale,  
For our blissed Lady's sake, bring us in good ale."

is a very old drinking cry. But by far the most important Christmas beverage, the drink *par excellence*, the fit concomitant of the boar's head, was the renowned wassail—a composition of toast and ale, spiced and sweetened, with roasted apples bobbing about the surface. It was mixture which might well cause the lips of a *bon vivant* to smack with gusto; and though the elements which formed it be known to us, the mystery of their skillful composition, like that of the famous sack of Falstaff, or like that of the brilliant colors wherewith the monks of old illuminated their missals, remains a subject for antiquarian research. The wassail-bowl was introduced with great ceremony and when the steward came in he chanted out three times: "Wassail, wassail, wassail!" which was answered by a song from the company. In some places it was customary for the bevy of young ladies to carry the bowl from door to door, singing an appropriate song the while, and expecting a small gift in return:

"Good dame, here at your door,  
Our wassail we bgin;  
We are all maidens poor,  
We pray now let us in  
With our wassail.

"Our wassail we do fill  
With apples and with spice;  
Then grant us your good will  
To taste here once or twice  
Of our good wassail."

Another of the interesting features of a Christmas in the olden times was the

varied assortment of games which were so heartily joined in by old and young, most of which have long since passed away. Chief among these merry pastimes was snap dragon. A quantity of raisins was thrown

INTO A LARGE BOWL  
and over them were poured spirits of wine, which were then ignited. The children were required to pick the raisins out of the flames and it may be imagined that it required some skillful "snapping" on their part to keep from burning their fingers. Then there was the old game of "hot coekles," a species of blind man's bluff, in which the person kneeling down, and being struck behind, was to guess who inflicted the blow.

A diversion which often caused much laughter was "Dun in the Mire." A log of wood was brought to the middle of the room; this was "Dun," or the cart-horse, and a cry was raised that he had stuck in the mire. Two of the company then advanced to draw him out. When unable to do so they called for further help, until finally joined in the game, when Dun was extricated. Not the least enjoyment arose from each person's sly efforts to let the log fall on his neighbor's toes.

Times change (says the poet) as well as people; and the ancient holiday usages have passed away with the stately castles and ample manorial domains around which they clustered. They harmonized with the dim hall, and the great, bare parlor, but are unsuited to the cheerful drawing-room or the cozy boudoir of today. But what though modern refinement has made havoc of those traditional customs, shearing them of their "pomp and circumstance," so that they be scarcely shadows of their former selves? Is not Christmas the same dear, good beneficent season as of old, and is not the spell which it exercises upon us as delightful as ever? Though the symbol of good cheer, the boar's head, be de-throned from its eminence, and have long ceased to crown the festive board; though the link of boon companionship, the wassail cup, "with its toasted healths and wishes," be banished from our tables; though external forms and decorations fade and fall into disuse, let not the spirit of Christmas escape from our hearts; let the laurel, emblematic of peace and good-will, be ever green within us, though it no longer decorate our parlors; and let us still hail the return of the season as the "kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time" that it is; "the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys." A glass of the generous kind and gentle reader, and here's a merry Christmas to you, and many happy returns.—Michael S. Hans, in *Catholic Mirror*.

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is an assertion popularly credited, because few stop to think that the poet who first made it was not a connoisseur in saluts.

"The man most man, with tenderest human heart,  
Is not his best, his best is God."

Such was Father Damien, gladly sacrificing home and country and life itself for a handful of poor lepers; yet yearning from his exile to the beloved mother and kindred, and suffering a keen pang as the poor lepers held their watched European mails brought no word from home.

THE IRISH CONTINGENT  
In the House of Commons—McCarthy's men and Parnell's described.

In the rank and file of McCarthy's followers there are many men of commanding ability, such as T. D. Sullivan (the author of "God Save Ireland"), John Barry, Dr. Tanner, Col. O'Sorman Mahon (57 years old), Justin H. McCarthy (a son of the chairman), Sir Thomas Henry Gratton Esmonde and J. F. X. O'Brien. The latter, by the way, was tried for "treason" in 1877, convicted and sentenced to death. This sentence was afterwards commuted and Mr. O'Brien spent some years in prison.

It must be conceded, however, that some bright and able men followed the lead of Mr. Parnell. Among these may be mentioned J. J. O'Kelly, the Redmond brothers (William and John), John O'Connor, known as "Ling John," the member for South Tipperary, Edmund Leamy and J. J. Clancy. O'Kelly is 45 years old, and a most remarkable man. Before he was 25 years old he was a soldier in the French army, fighting rebellious Arabs. Then he fought in Mexico with the French forces sent by Napoleon to Maximilian's aid. He was a prisoner in a Mexican prison in 1867. One night he escaped from his captors and made a thrilling flight in the direction of American territory. By way of New York he went to Spain and took part in the abortive rebellious rising in 1867. He again joined the French army to fight in the Franco-Prussian war. Then he came to New York, where he was a reporter on the *Herald*. That paper sent him to Cuba in 1875 when that unhappy island was red-hot with rebellion. In attempting to free the rebels he was captured by the forces of the Spaniards, who threatened to shoot him as a spy if he held communication with the insurgents. He accomplished his purpose, however, but was arrested and thrown into a dungeon by the Spaniards. On account of the ill of the place and his cruel treatment by his captors he nearly died. He was finally sent to Spain and then, through the united efforts of Generals Sikes, Sano Castelar and Isaac Butt was set at liberty. After that he went to Brazil and worked for the *Herald* as a correspondent all through that war. O'Kelly returned to Ireland in 1880 and began his Parliamentary career in that year. He is a fair speaker and a hard worker.

Both of the Redmonds are brainy and forceful men, and both of them of no mean abilities. Both have been heard in New York. One of the Redmonds' notable supporters is William A. Macdonald, a blind Protestant clergyman, who represents the Osborn division of Queen's County.

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The longest word in the Welsh language has, after a long period of oblivion, been once more exhumed. It is Llanfairpwllgwynglgobryogogochyngollegwylletantilligogogoch. This awful word of 79 letters and 22 syllables is the name of a village in Wales.

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(Liquid)  
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**Channing's Sarsaparilla,**  
It is a Grand HEALTH RESTORER.  
Will cure the worst form of skin disease; will cure Rheumatism; will cure Salt Rheum.  
Large Bottles, \$1.00.

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Father Laurent's Funeral.  
The funeral of the late Father Laurent, Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Toronto, took place on Tuesday of last week. The attendance of the clergy and laity was very large a considerable number of Protestants proving by their presence the high esteem in which the deceased was held. The Archbishop of Kingston and the Bishop of Peterboro were present and among the clergy present were Bishop O'Mahoney, Dean McCann, Vicar-General Rooney, Dean Cassidy and many others. Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Peterboro. The deacon was Vicar-General Laurent, of Lindsay, and the sub-deacon, Rev. Father Laboreaux, of Penetanguishene. Archbishop Walsh, and was attended by Rev. Father Dougherty, S.J., of Guelph and Rev. Dr. Kilroy, of Stratford. Rev. Father Land was master of ceremonies. The panegyric was delivered by the Very Rev. Vicar-General Rooney who spoke in terms of the highest eulogy of the work of the deceased. His Grace the Archbishop also spoke briefly. In the

course of his remarks he said: "We have suffered a great loss, humanly speaking, but in the eyes of faith the death of a good priest is not a loss; it is a gain to him, and most likely also a gain to those he has left behind, for no doubt, the charity of such a soul in glory would be but invested with a still greater interest in the welfare of those he loved." The city corporation of Toronto was officially represented by a deputation headed by the mayor.

FATHER DAMIEN.  
A Charming Sketch of the Beloved Martyr of Molokai.

A charming sketch of Father Damien by Bartle Teeling is giving by the American Catholic Quarterly in a recent issue. It fills in the outlines drawn by Charles Warren Stoddard, Edward Clifford, and other writers, Catholic and Protestant, to whom his life and sacrifice were an inspiration; and is especially touching and beautiful for the lifelike untold details of his martyrdom. The future martyr was a hearty out-door sportsman—who would skate for hours in the frost and fog, risking serious accidents in his reckless pranks on the ice. He loved to play with the sheep on the common, to work in the fields or at any sort of manual labor. He grew up large, strong, handsome and courageous. "Big Damien" was his professor at Levein called him, when his unlooked-for vocation to the religious life and the priesthood drew him away from his beloved village life and sports, and the dear family circle at Fremoloo.

His robust physique and engaging presence proved to be among his best missionary equipments. He was a fine rider, and an expert swimmer; he could carry a load alone while would have been heavy for three or four men of the healthy aborigines of the Sandwich Islands; he helped the poor lepers build their houses as well as their chapels; he made the coffin and dug the graves. And this brisley and energetic, and as a part of the higher duty to the souls of his afflicted flock.

He was "ardent and swift like the wind or the fire," said the natives.

He married many converts. Nearly all the non-Catholics asked, when death was at hand, for the strong, brave Catholic priest.

Another trait of Father Damien—his affection for his family brought out touchingly in Mr. Teeling's memoir.

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The Transfer books will be closed from the 10th to the 31st December next, both days inclusive.  
By order of the Board,  
H. BARBEAU, Manager.  
Montreal, 20th November, 1890.

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