

nature. So it is with Christmas. Christians in the Middle Ages thought that they were keeping the actual birthday of the Saviour, as they thought when they went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem that they saw the identical spots where the scenes of His Passion had been enacted and the Sepulchre in which He had been laid. We know that the day of Christ's birth is totally uncertain. Clement of Alexandria, a Father of the second century, speaks of those who affected to assign the day as "over curious," and his confession of ignorance is decisive. All attempts to settle the point by reference to historical landmarks, to ecclesiastical tradition, or to the shepherd's calendar are vain. Probably the time of the winter solstice, the birthday of the year, was fixed on for the nativity of the Sun of Righteousness. The old Latin hymns seem almost to admit as much by coupling the coming of the Saviour with the return of light. Not only the day of Christ's birth but the year is uncertain, and the French Revolutionists had that fact upon their side when, proceeding to regenerate chronology as well as society, they substituted for the Christian era that of the enthronement of Reason, personified by a prostitute, on the altar of Nôtre Dame. Nevertheless, we let this article of the mediæval calendar stand, and still on the traditional day celebrate the birth of Christianity and of all that Christianity has brought with it to society, to the home, and to the heart. Even those who in this critical and sceptical age have ceased to be Christians in name may celebrate the festival of humanity. For they can hardly deny that it was with Christianity that the