

night under the watchful eye of a member of the household, in honour of the visiting Babe. We are all acquainted with the Christmas tree and its traditions, whose origin is claimed by both France and Germany.

In no country has there been more frivolity at Christmas time than in England. The spirit of the courts at this particular feast was magnificent. Young and old, rich and poor, were all welcome, and whatever distinction there may be at other times, all were equal on that day. Jocund guests filled the halls, and with minstrels, gleemen, harpers, pipe-players, jugglers and dancers around the big fires there was no limit to the merriment. In 1016 King Canute's celebration lasted for twelve days, but before the King entered into the medley he had presents sent to all the religious houses and comforts of the customary nature sent to all the poor who could not come. From the earliest days people looked to the wants of the poor, as at no other season of the year are they so keenly felt, and never was it known a stranger to be turned from the door. But when the refined Normans came to England the coarse voracity and drunkenness of their Saxon and Danish friends disappeared, and with banquets, delicate rather than abundant, and wines remarkable rather for their exquisite tastes than for their intoxicating powers, Christmas was celebrated.

If we tread the path of ages a remarkable fact reveals itself, that not only the birth of Christ took place on Christmas day, but that some of the most noted events of history occurred on its anniversary. Charlemagne, one of the greatest of Catholic laymen, was crowned Emperor of Rome on Christmas day. When Alfred the Great was in the midst of the Christmas festivity the Danes became masters of his kingdom. On Christmas day William the Conqueror was crowned King of England. King John I. signed the Magna Charta while the feast was in operation, and on Christmas day the first national parliament of England was summoned.

By a beautiful arrangement, also, derived from days of yore, the Christmas festival not only commemorates the announcement of the religion of peace and love, but it has been made the season of gathering together of family connections,—of calling back the children of a family who have launched forth in life and wandered widely asunder once more to sit around the sparkling yule-log,