

Celtic tongue, Christmas Eve is called the Night of Mary, for Christendom always associates the Mother with her Divine Son. In Germany it is known as *Weihnachten*, or the Holy Night, for holy indeed was the night that heard the angels singing, "Peace on earth to men of good will." In Basque it is called *Eguberi*, or the New Day, for it witnessed the coming of Him who was to make all things new. In Portugal, it is called *Pascoa do Natal*, and on it is commemorated the appearance of the Son of Justice, through His birth by a woman.

Rembrandt, Raphael and Correggio have employed their skill and labour in the representation of the Nativity, although each of these great painters has treated it in a manner consonant with his own peculiar genius.

Rembrandt pictures Gabriel, with the armies of the angelic host, rending the heavens in majesty, while the affrighted cattle flee in different directions, and the shepherds fall prostrate in adoration. In Raphael's paintings the angels scatter flowers which bloom only in heaven. Sometimes the Divine Infant lies on a white napkin, sometimes on the bare turf, sometimes on a sheaf of wheat, to denote that it is the Bread of Life, and often is He represented with His finger on His lip to signify "*Verbum caro factum est*—" that the Eternal Word, begotten before the ages, had become flesh. Sometimes He is sleeping peacefully in the crib and is covered, save where St. Joseph—who is always represented as an old man leaning on a staff—holds up one corner to allow the Shepherds or Magi to see the Divine Child. Most generally the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph are represented kneeling before Him Who is their God.

Christmas is ever recognised as the season of good will, peace, charity and reconciliation. In the northern countries it has always been associated with the mistletoe, and churches and houses have been decorated with holly and evergreens, while the boar's head has been carried in procession, and roast beef and plum pudding consumed. The waifs have sung Christmas anthems, and Kris Kingle has brought presents to the young folks. In the Isle of Man the peasants bring tapers, and sing joy-

ful carols; the Flemish shepherds bring sheep, eggs, and milk, and present them to the Church; in Italy the pious people construct cribs; and in Germany the peasants used to go round knocking at the doors with mallets, in remembrance of the impatience of the spirits detained in prison before Christ's birth, who were impatient for deliverance. The day was sometimes called *Anklopfer's Day*, (Knockers' Day), from this custom.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

There never was a more dreary day, in the dreariest winter, than that which set in the midst of a huge snow-drift; over the little town of Kilshane, on a Christmas-eve forty years ago. As our readers may be looking out for the place in which we lay the scene of this "o'er true tale," it may be as well to tell them, without further preface, that Kilshane is not the name by which the post office authorities know the locality of which we write, and from whose familiar archives of tradition we draw our story. But, nevertheless, Kilshane is name enough to our memory for the humble capital of an Irish mountain district, situated in the bosom of a pleasant valley, sheltered on the four quarters by great hills, which rise above like giant guardians who sentinel its repose. Once in the year it had its fair, when the streets were crowded with the big-boned, large-horned and fine-skinned cattle, known among the dealers as cows of the "real ould native breed" which have become superseded almost completely since by the more shapely, less servicable, and unhealthy stock come of Devon pastures and Hereford sweeps. Once in the year there gathered within its precincts, to the eminent danger of everybody, and the great profit of their owners, mountain raherries, and unbroken elbs, interspersed with worn-out garrans, whose great recommendation, at the instance of their strange looking grooms—if grooms they can be called who never groomed the brutes—seemed to be the desperate agility with which they used their hind legs, and flung them out at anything