

of Albion had attracted the Roman legions to the shores of Britain, a custom prevailed amongst the aborigines of the island in connection with a sacred anniversary held about the close of each year, which has not even yet lost its significance. When the important day arrived, the native Bretons accompanied by their priests, the Druids, went forth in great pomp to gather the mystic parasite. They revered the mistleto as a sacred plant which possessed healing virtues, and which brought singular favor to those wearing it. We may be wrong in ascribing to the Roman Saturnalia the origin of the 25th of December as the day fixed for the observance of the Nativity of our Saviour, but there can be no mistake in asserting that many of the beliefs and usages of our German ancestors, and also of the Romans, touching this great festival, passed from heathenism to Christianity, and have partly survived to the present day. Let scholars continue their ingenious attempts to fix the precise day and month when the Saviour of mankind was born ; as for us, we are satisfied to keep *one* day in memory of the Nativity, and the 25th of December which has been observed by Christian communities for so many centuries is certainly as good as a day in October, January, April or May, since it seems impossible at present to arrive at any certain conclusion as to the actual and precise date of the event.

It would be rather interesting to notice the various kinds of festivities with which the recurrence of Christmas has been celebrated, both in heathen and Christian countries, with a view of marking the gradual changes which the spread of Christianity and the consequent advance of civilization have effected in the method of observing that eventful season. At present we can only glance at this entertaining subject. The Roman Saturnalia has already been mentioned as a time when general license was granted to amusements of every description. During this festive season there was an utter abolition of all distinctions between the usually widely separated castes. The homely *pleb* in his coarse tunic was then permitted to approach the lofty patrician in his fine *toga* and offer his festive greetings. The high and low with many a good-natured jest and friendly taunt wended their way through the gaily decorated streets or passages of the Imperial city towards the chief centres of amusement and attraction ; whether to the *forum*, where the votaries of fashion, the wealth and renown of the city gathered to gossip and compare notes, or to the Circus Maximus, or Campus Martius where are held the great chariot races, the athletic contests, sham battles, etc. Such were the pleasures that attended the greatest of the Roman festivals, many of them indeed of such a cruel nature as to disgrace the character of the Romans as a civilized people. We have also referred to the gathering of the mistleto among the Britons at this season. Many games of a varied nature were also introduced from time to time, one of which was the Tournament or Joust. It was held within an enclosed space called the lists. Ladies and nobles sat