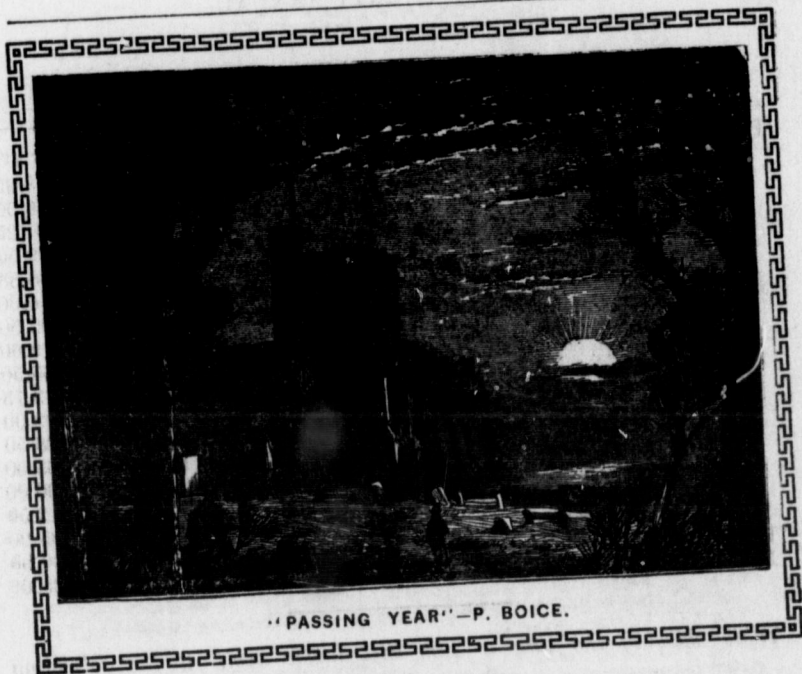




"PASSING YEAR"—P. BOICE.

DECEMBER.

As in the three preceding months it derives its name from the place which it held in the old calendars. It was called by the Saxons Winter monath or Winter month; afterwards, after their conversion to Christianity, Heligh—holy month, from the anniversary of our Saviour's birth occurring within it.

FESTIVALS.

ADVENT SUNDAY, 3rd December. Meaning the arrival or commencement of the ecclesiastical year with particular reference to the celebration of the birth of Christ, exactly four weeks later.

CONCEPTION DAY, 8th December. Conception of the Virgin Mary. A festival of the Church of Rome held in commemoration of the doctrine of the Immaculate conception, meaning conception without the ordinary course of nature. It was long an open question with the Church, but since 1854 has formed an essential article in the Roman Catholic belief.

CHRISTMAS DAY, 25th December. The greatest of all festivals being held in commemoration of the birth of Christ. It is strange that with so prominent an event there should have been a doubt as to the proper day for its observation. But so it was. By the early Christians it was held on the first, and particularly by the Eastern Church, on the 6th of January; and by others on the 29th of March or Jewish Passover. Since the middle of the 4th century both eastern and western branches of the C. Church have accepted the 25th of December for its observation. The day needs no remarks, much less the preceding eve or vigil.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, 27th December. The last of the Apostles, and the only one who died a natural death. It was customary to drink on this day hallowed wine, which secured the drinkers from all danger of poison.