

HAPPY DAYS

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CHRISTMAS DREAMS.

This strange-looking picture combines a great variety of objects. In the first place we have the blessed star of Bethlehem, then the lovely angel figure who seems to be singing the immortal song, "Glory to God in the highest," and another angel bending over the sleeping children in their cot, dreaming no doubt of their fine Christmas tree in the foreground with its strange fruit of Christmas toys and burning candles.

FATHER CHRISTMAS.

No one who has read of the Christmas festivities of Old England can overlook the yule log, whose cheery blaze has enlivened so many English hearths. A heathen custom gave rise to this practice also. About the same period that we keep our great festival, the pagans used to celebrate "Yule-tide," or welcome to the new year. The word "yule" means festival of the sun. Those who helped to carry the yule-log were considered safe from the power of spells, and those who sat round the merry fire made up quarrels and were at peace. Twigs from the log, kept during the year, were believed to be safeguards against charms.

In early times



CHRISTMAS DREAMS

Christmas-tide was marked by much rejoicing and revelry. A man, who was styled "Lord of Misrule," was chosen to superintend the festivities. He would take up his abode in the house of a great lord, where he was followed by a numerous train, whom he ruled as king. Perhaps these revelries reached their highest pitch in the reign of Edward the Sixth.

We must not forget the feasts of this season. A boar's head is still seen on the Queen's table at Christmas. In olden days this dish, crowned with rosemary, was received by the guests with great respect, all standing when it was brought in.

The custom of carol-singing is thought to date back as far as the second century. The word "carol" means a song of joy. In Holland we find, in addition to carol-singing, the pretty custom of carrying from door to door a star representing that which once guided the Magi. Those who gaze on the star give the young men who bear it alms for the poor.

As we thus glance at the various ways in which men in all circumstances have celebrated the birthday of the Son of God, do we not see that there is a blessed bond] of sympathy amongst them all, a bond between the