

onymous with Christmas, especially in Scotland and among the Norse peoples. It also is Scandinavian in origin. They regarded the winter solstice as the turning point of the year—the beginning of renewed life, and the activity of the powers of nature, and hence Yule, which signifies "the turning" was closely associated with the festivals of the gods, who were, after all, only symbolical personifications of the powers of nature. The custom of burning the Yule-log is taken from the Danes and Norwegians. In fact, through the Middle Ages, and down to the period of the Reformation, every mark of rejoicing given to Christmas was engrafted on the Pagan rites of Yule.

The use of the mistletoe at Christmas-time is a relic of the old heathen worship of the Druids, whose sacred tree was the oak, from the Latin term for which they took their name (drus—an oak.)

Sir Walter Scott, in his beautiful metrical romance of "Marmion," describes a custom which is peculiar to Christmas, when he says:

"On Christmas Eve the bells were rung,  
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung.  
That only night, in all the year,  
Saw the stole'd priest the chalice rear."

In the ancient Roman use, three masses were provided for Christmas Day, one for the dead of night, one for the early morning, and one for the day; and, from very primitive days, it has been universally held that only at midnight on Christmas eve is the Eucharist to be celebrated after Sunset. Evening celebrations have not early authority to warrant them, and, in very many English dioceses are strictly forbidden—save on Christmas eve.

So much for customs that are peculiar to Christmas time. Many, as we have shown, are heathen in their origin; but, as now followed, they are quite innocent and harmless, and in no way conflict with the religious aspect of the season. They serve to give a tone to our social life, without which Christmas would not be Christmas as we have always known it.

"And still around these good old times

We hang like friends full loth to part;  
We listen to the simple rhymes  
Which somehow sink into our heart,  
Half musical, half melancholy,  
Like childish smiles that still are holy,  
A masquer's face dimmed with a tear,

For Christmas comes but once a year."

We cannot close these few simple remarks without another quotation from Scott:—

"Heap on more wood! the wind is chill,  
But let it whistle as it will,  
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.  
Each age has deemed the new born year  
The fittest time for festive cheer;  
And well our Christian sires of old  
Loved when the year its course had rolled  
And brought blithe Christmas back again,  
With all its hospitable train.  
Domestic and religious rite  
Gave honor to the Holy night . . .  
All hailed with uncontrolled delight  
And general voice, the happy night  
That to the cottage, as the crown,  
Brought tidings of salvation down."

#### CHRISTMAS CHARITY.

"Good will toward men" is the all-pervading sentiment of Christmastide. It is the time to bury unkind thoughts and petty jealousies. It is the season for loving deeds and kind remembrances, a day of general amnesty, a time to forgive and forget, and with a mantle of Christlike charity to cover the follies and frailties of our fellows.

The sentiment of common brotherhood should predominate. It is a sentiment that does not lessen the tender ties of friendship, but broadens and ennobles its possessor. The man who confines his Christmas charity to his own family circle misses the purest and holiest pleasures of the day.

The custom of giving Christmas presents is said to have originated on all pilgrimages and visits. Thus in the Oriental practice of bearing gifts the wise men of the East laid gifts at the feet of the infant Christ. With us the custom has, or should have, a higher and nobler significance.

The act of charity or the testimonial of friendship and esteem should be entirely spontaneous. To bestow gifts with the hope of return or reward or to propitiate friendship or interest, is to masquerade selfishness in the guise of generosity.

The Oriental idea of charity was reciprocal, to exchange benefits for favors expected. Christ inaugurated a nobler system, the principle of brotherly love—"Peace on earth, good will toward men."

#### CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

Ecclesiologists are not altogether agreed as to when Christmas began first to be observed in the Church. The general impression seems to be that in very early days, probably as early as the end of the second century, a general festival of the manifestation was kept, in which were blended together the ideas that enter into the festivals of Epiphany as well as Christmas. Since the middle of the 4th century, however, the two festivals have been separated; although even now it may be said that the one is a sequel to, or completion of the other.

From primitive days, hymns peculiar to this season have been in use in the churches; Christmas carols, properly so called, were introduced in the twelfth century by St. Francis of Assisi. These were simply sacred ballads, rude in form, yet often striking in character, and it is generally a recognized fact, that the use of these carols did more than anything else to keep alive, among the masses of the people, a belief in the doctrine of the Incarnation. Carols, like secular ballads, belong to the childhood and youth of a people, hence their sweet simplicity. There is no attempt at lofty ideas and fine language—"Men" simply, "spiced in numbers, for the numbers came"

The name "carol" originally was a term applied to a dance, or a song sung to a dance; afterwards it came to mean any festive song and eventually the meaning got to be narrowed down to a Christmas song. In France, to mean any festive song. In France, "noels," as they were called were common at an early date. In England the practice of carol-singing only goes back to the 15th century. The first English carols, in a collected form, came from the press of Wynkyn de Worde, in 1521. When the Puritans came to have power in the land, they discouraged the use of carols; they even went so far in their sanctimonious bigotry, as to forbid the celebration of Christmas-tide. In Scotland this was carried to great extremes, as we learn from a work of the period. Mr. John Hamilton, in his "Facile Traict'sz" says: "The ministers of Scotland, in contempt of the other holy days observed by England, cause their wives and servants to spin in open sight of the people upon Yule day; and their affectionate auditors constrain their tenants, to yoke their ploughs on Yule day, in contempt of Christ's nativity,—which our Lord has not left unpunished,—for their oxen