

races, being so intensely Christian, hold the mysteries of religion in great veneration, and, as they are a widely scattered people, some of their customs have been introduced into every land. The Christmas candle is one of the best known of Irish traditions. It is lighted and placed in the window, after being sprinkled three times with holy water. Each member of the family is likewise sprinkled, and all kneel to recite the rosary for deceased relatives. The idea of placing it in the window is to guide the Christ-Child on His way and to welcome him to their humble homes. This candle is never extinguished but is allowed to burn until the wick is consumed. The same custom prevails in Scotland and in Austria at the present day.

England was undoubtedly the country in which the Xmas spirit exercised most sway. In other lands the people were contented with the spiritual aspect of the feast, while England though not neglecting the spiritual, paid equal attention to the material. Legends and traditional stories were handed down from generation to generation by the light of the old 'Yule-Log,' as it was called. This log, which was usually the root of a large tree was introduced into the house with much ceremony to the sound of music. Each member of the family in turn stood on its center and sang the Yule-song. Another necessity was that it be lighted with a brand of the log from the preceding year, which was always carefully preserved for the purpose. Also, it must be lighted by one with clean hands, according to authority, but whether this was in the nature of a useful household hint to the domestics or to a moral of a higher kind is not known. As soon as it had commenced to burn properly, the other means of illumination were disposed of and the hospitality of the house was dispensed while song, jest, and story circled round. The object of this log appears to have been the sanctification of the roof-tree and a protection against those evil spirits over whom this season is in every way a triumph.

Another practice which outlived some of the others in "Merrie England" was the wassail bowl. This bowl which was properly bedecked with holly, was brought in immediately after the Yule-log was lighted and resembled the punch-bowl of the present day. Almost every family had its own favorite method of mixing the ingredients, although sometimes it was simply filled with ale.

At this time of the year, one could see English hospitality at its greatest perfection. Then the barriers erected by custom, birth, or wealth were broken down—squires and peasants mingled like brothers. Every home from the lordly mansion to the humble hut,