

Christmas Observance in Ireland.

Christmas in Ireland, as in every Christian country, is a time of gladness and rejoicing. The Irish heart, too, always warm and kind, overflows during the holy season with good nature and hospitality. In every city, town and village, enthusiastic preparations are made for the coming of the great festival. Indeed, the atmosphere of Christmas prevails for days before its arrival; nor is the happy excitement of the people soon lost when Christmas has gone.

The young people gather holly, string leaves together, and with the mistletoe decorate their homes. The good Irish mothers, helped by their dark-eyed colleens, prepare the ingredients that make up the big plum pudding which will be carried to the dinner table Christmas Day. In the homes of the well-to-do, the Christmas dinner is a family reunion. The boys are home from college, and the girls from convent, and father and mother, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces join hands in a happy family gathering.

In many parts of Ireland midnight Mass is celebrated. Whoever has been present at one of these Masses will never forget the wonderful faith and simple devotion of the Celtic people. Immense multitudes attend these midnight Masses. It is a pretty sight on an early Christmas morning to see the crowds of people

wending their way over the hills or through the lanes to the Christmas Mass. After Mass the congregation gather around the crib, and on bended knees make their heart's offering and adoration. Every church in Ireland, no matter how poor or secluded, has a crib. Sometimes these cribs are not very artistic, but nevertheless they are always surrounded by believing hearts. In Dublin many of the churches erect very costly and artistic cribs. The beautiful churches of the Passionists and Oblate Fathers have in past years brought visitors from far and near to see the wonderfully life-like and beautiful representations of the stable and the new-born Saviour.

But while the song of the angels in that far-away long ago is being re-echoed in the hearts of the Irish people at home, millions of her exiled children are thinking of Ireland on distant shores. Nothing so easily awakens in the hearts of these Irish exiles such tender memories of home and kindred as the thought of Christmas in Ireland. It recalls a picture of that dear old Homeland and Motherland, with its green mountains rising so proudly above the storm-tossed billows. In thought the exile sees once more old scenes, and old friends. He hears the bells of Ireland's greatest cathedrals, abbey, and churches pealing throughout the length and breadth of the Isle of Saints. From the ancient City of Armagh he hears the bells of the national cathedral of St. Patrick. Amid the historic hills of Donegal he listens to the chiming of

St. Eunan's, Letterkenny. Over the ramparts and walls of Derry comes a sweet message from the bells of St. Eugene's Cathedral. Across the green fields of Monaghan are heard the peal of bells from the magnificent cathedral of St. McCartan. Down the bay of Dublin the breezes bear the deep rich tones of the chimes of old St. Patrick's, accompanied by the music of a hundred bells from the Irish metropolis. The bells of St. Mel's, Longford, and St. Mary's, Kilkenny, proclaim the Christmas tidings through the midland plains. Along the beautiful River Lee the world-famous Shannon bells are softly playing the Christmas hymn. Near by, the bells of St. Finbar's, Cork, are telling joyful news to the southern rebel. And from above the heights of Queenstown Harbor the bells of St. Colman's magnificent new cathedral are sending far out on the western sea a greeting to Ireland's exiled sons and daughters.

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Irish, Irish, Every one.

John Hurley, of Litchfield, a student of Gaelic etymological history, after years of research in regard to the derivation of the names of Shakespeare, has concluded that he was an Irishman. He says that the name of Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, is of Irish origin, and that early in the fourteenth century a Lord Arden was a member of the Irish Parliament.

Virgil, the great poet, Hurley says, was born 70 B.C. and was undoubtedly of Irish origin in name because he was connected with one of the most remarkable historical events recorded in the history of Ireland. Fearghail (in Latin Virgil), now Farrell, the Irish astronomer who discovered that the earth was round in the eighth century, was a cousin of the great St. Virgilius, Bishop of Salzburg, in Germany. Both were Irish, and related to the Irish King Fearghail, also known as Virgil, and Fearghail, as he was known in the different languages. Virgil, the Latin poet, was neither Roman nor Latin, but by adoption, and belonged to an Irish settlement.

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King to Visit Ireland.

King Edward is to pay a visit to Ireland early in the spring, landing at Cork, instead of at Dublin, and will tour in the southern counties making brief stays at various country houses before going to Dublin where he will make his headquarters at the Viceregal Lodge, in Phoenix Park. The lodge is already being subjected to extensive alterations, decoration and furnishing in preparation for the stay there, which is

expected to extend three weeks. The King, while at Dublin, will not be in any sense of the word the guest of the Viceroy, but will be under his own roof at the Viceregal Lodge, which is being turned over by Lord Aberdeen.

There can be a difference of opinion on most subjects, but there is only one opinion as to the reliability of Mother Gray's Worm Expeller. It is a safe, sure and effective.



Midnight Mass in the Penal Days in Ireland.

Christmas and Penitence.

Joy and good cheer are so closely associated with Christmas that the thought of human sinfulness casts no shadow over the blessed day. Then it is pre-eminently the children's day, and childhood is our sweet synonym for innocence.

None who think at all in Christian fashion but go to Gethsemane and Calvary before they dare to seek the empty tomb of the Risen Saviour; and the cross is with us still on Easter day, albeit wreathed with flowers.

Yet it is not according to the spirit of the Church to forget the preparation of penitence for Christmas. The discipline of Advent is milder than that of Lent, but it means self-denial still, and the remembrance of our human frailties. The season, the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, is opened with Christ's solemn prophecy of His second coming, the last judgment, and its dismal portents. Coming with hearts, penance-cleansed to the crib to com-

memorate the first meek entrance of the world's redeemer into His own creation, we shall have naught to fear against the day of doom. Douglas Hyde has made a lovely Christmas play, "The Nativity," which is the story of two women who were harsh to the young Virgin and St. Joseph on their way way to Bethlehem. The one refused the travellers a night's lodging for fear of her husband, who was a rough man, but on their pleading finally consented to let Mary rest in the barn where the flax was kept. The gentle Virgin repaid this grudging hospitality with a miracle of healing, but the travellers were on their way again before the woman was able to make amends.

But the other, with no excuse but native niggardiness, refused the tender Maiden a taste of the abundant fruit she craved. Repentance finally falls on both, and they meet before the closed doors of the stable of Bethlehem. Hardly have they exchanged their sorrowful confessions when from the west approach the shepherds and from the east the kings. St. Joseph opens the doors

to the guests, and makes known to them that the Child in the manger is the King of the World, and Mary Mother, adoring her Baby, whispers: "He is the Son of God."

Then as the shepherds give their lowly gifts; and the kings their gold and frankincense and myrrh, the two women, feeling that there is no forgiveness for their sin, are fain to steal away and hide themselves in the earth. But Mary Mother, rising up, with hands outstretched, stays their flight.

"Come over here," she says, "Come to this cradle. The Son of God is in this cradle, and His cradle is nothing but a manger. But yet He is the King of the World. There is a welcome for the whole world coming to this cradle, but it is those that are asking forgiveness will get the greatest welcome."

The tender story comes home to every heart as Christmas draws nigh. It is not being sinners which will exclude us from the sweet presence of the Child and the Mother, but the refusal to repent of the sin and atone for it.—The Pilot.

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Christmas During the Reign of Terror.

It was during the year 1793 the revolution was filling every city and village of France with bloodshed and terror. Christmas might have come, and the inhabitants of small towns in Brittany had determined to have their Christmas Mass. Their churches had been desecrated, so they were forced to prepare a barn in which to offer the Holy Sacrifice. They covered the sides with fine linen and decorated them with shining holly berries. A rustic table was used for an altar, and two rosin torches, set in iron candlesticks, were placed upon each side of the crucifix.

Here, at midnight, came priest and people, in fear and trembling, to celebrate the mystery of God made man. Like the shepherds, they came to worship in a stable, the Divine Babe of Bethlehem. Death would be the penalty of their act if they were discovered, but this did not

appal them. The venerable priest was a confessor of the faith. Only a few days before he had been delivered up to the executioner, but by a miracle, as it were, he had been saved from death. Amid tears and sobbing the Holy Sacrifice went on and at the Communion every one approached the altar to receive his Saviour and his God, and thus carrying Him in their heroic hearts, they returned to their homes rejoicing and ready to die for Him if it was His holy will. "I have celebrated this holy feast," said one who was present at this midnight Mass, "in the lofty Cathedrals of Europe, and even under the dome of St. Peter's, but never has the Holy Sacrifice been to me so solemn or made so deep an impression upon me, as that Christmas Mass in a stable."

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