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TALES, ESSAYS, AND REVIEWS.

NOTES ON CHRISTMAS—ITS ANCIENT OBSERVANCE, &c.

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That the birth of Jesus Christ, the deliverer of the human race, and the mysterious link connecting the transcendent and incomprehensible attributes of Deity with human sympathies and affections, should be considered the most glorious event that ever happened, and the most worthy of being reverently and joyously commemorated, is a proposition that must commend itself to the heart and reason of every one of His followers who aspires to walk in His footsteps and share in those inestimable benefits which His death has secured to mankind.

A question, however, which has been long and eagerly agitated, is here brought forward: Is the 25th of December really the day on which our Saviour first showed himself in human form in the manger at Bethlehem? The evidence which we possess regarding the date is not only traditional, but likewise conflicting and confused. In the earliest periods at which we have any record of the observance of Christmas, we find that some communities of Christians celebrated the festival on the first or sixth of January; others on the 29th of March, the time of the Jewish Passover; while others, it is said, observed it on the 29th of September, or Feast of Tabernacles. There can be no doubt, however, that long before the reign of Constantine, in the fourth century, the season of the New Year had been adopted as the period for celebrating the Nativity, though a difference in this respect existed in the practice of the Eastern and Western Churches, the former observing the sixth of January, and the latter the 25th of December. The custom of the Western Church at last prevailed, and both of the ecclesiastical bodies agreed to hold the anniversary on the same day. The fixing of the date