

Christmas Eve.

Dream, little child! The shadows fall.
Over the land the mystic veil
That hides the morrow from our eyes
Is swaying in the starlight pale.
Dream, little child! 'Tis Christmas eve.
Dream while the magic hours glide by.
Each wind that blows the snowflakes wild
Is laden with sweet mystery.



Dream, little child! The glowing coals
Are painting pictures on the wall.
Out from the quivering shadows there
You almost hear the thrilling call
Of "Merry Christmas, little maid!
I hope I've brought your heart's desire,"
And Santa's shadow just above
Grows lifelike by the leaping fire.

Dream, little child! The Christmas air
Is glowing with your visions bright,
And all the joys tomorrow holds
Are shining on the page of night.
Dream, little child! And may the years
To you their richest treasures leave,
And may all happy dreams prove real
That come to you this Christmas eve!

Christmas Morning



Christmas Don'ts.
Don't try to pay debts or return obligations in your Christmas giving.
Don't give trashy things. Many an attic could tell strange stories about Christmas presents.
Don't make presents which your friends will not know what to do with and which would merely encumber the home.

The Joy of Christmas.
Religion is not an austere thing. It is all joy the moment we hear the Christmas angels chorusing until we swing into glory to the music of the redeemed throng about the throne. The service of Christ is gladness and peace. He means that his every disciple should live in a perpetual Christmas.

BORN ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Some Famous People Who First Saw the Light on or About Dec. 25.

There is some uncertainty about the year and date of the birth of Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross and famous philanthropist, who died this year, more than ninety years old, but it is generally believed that she was born on Christmas day in 1820 or 1821.

Lord John Morley, the celebrated British author and statesman, Gladstone's lieutenant and secretary of state for India in the Asquith cabinet, was born on Christmas eve, Dec. 24, 1838. Seven years later to the day King George I of Greece first saw the light.

Lord Marcus Beresford, brother of the famous British admiral, was a Christmas day baby, as were also Lady Grey Egerton and the Countess of Rothes, one of the survivors of the wreck of the Titanic.

Among those who were born on Dec. 26, "just too late for Christmas dinner," were Admiral George Dewey, the Earl of Leicester, Sir James Linton, the painter; the Duchess of Leeds, Sir James Rankin, member of the British parliament, and James D. Stephens, representative from California in the American congress.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE TOILERS OF THE SEA

LANDLUBBERS that you are, did you ever reflect that there is a world where Christmas is as meaningful a day as the 24th or 26th of December? Did you ever think far enough beyond the spicy vapors of your own plum pudding to realize that the seafaring folk were living their Christmas day as if they knew naught of its fame? They do know what it means, however, as well as ever do you, but winds lash and waves thump on the 25th as on every other day, and it's a foolish sailor man who counts on turkey or holly berries. The chances are he'll see little of them.

Christmas is disabbling enough to come in the very beginning of the maddest weather, and the weather never gives way one inch. The pilot boat and the life savers make pathetic little attempts at holding hold day, but ten to one they will be nothing more than attempts. If the sea chooses to make merry in its own way the sea commands and must be obeyed.

The captains of the life saving stations along the beach try each year to celebrate with their men. A turkey is always brought to the headquarters and a good meal prepared around it as a star attraction. But anywhere from drumsticks to nuts and raisins may come the signal from the coast guard. Perhaps a crab fishing boat has capsized; perhaps it is a big ship going down—the result is the same. The Christmas turkey is left to grow cold, the mince pie is forgotten, and it's off to launch the lifeboat and then to the oars and away. Night or day the summons may come. If at night there are a flashing of lights on the beach and a light, man against storm, in the blackness of the surf.

On the lightship provision is made for a good dinner, but there the pleasure ends. Day and night the ship rides at anchor ten miles off shore. Always the clanging of the fog bell is heard and the lights are watched, and break in the monotony there is none, save for a better bill of fare than usual and an extra glass of grog, then back to the bell and the lights again, and men forget what Christmas celebrated or that it was celebrated at all.

It was during the carving of the last turkey that the bells rang fiercely, for a fog was driving in past the heads, and lights were being enveloped in it. Two new men were among the crew, and they sprang, frightened, away from the table. The old sailors assured them that it was no trouble out of the ordinary, but they could not be induced to come back to the dinner. They are blase now and are laughing at other new men, but their companions have not forgotten to mention the dinner that they missed by gazing shudderingly into a winter fog and expecting the death of themselves or some one else every moment.

Christmas is a lottery to the pilots. No man of them knows when his turn is coming to guide a ship into port, and ships must be guided when it is their captain's will. Some of the pilots may have a snatch of the day at home in the midst of Santa Claus gossip and tin horns and stuffed stockings. Whoever the other pilots may be, they are on the water with a good dinner stowed away awaiting its opportunity, which may or may not come. If a ship is suddenly sighted, then never mind the dinner.

The life on the great steamers and sailing vessels is more systematic, and it is worth while to prepare for as much merriment as the homeliness of empty sea view will permit. There may be a Christmas tree and music and dancing; but, be you a seadog or a landlubber, it's all the same—you would rather be at home over a table that does not roll and spend a good Christmas with all its traditional nonsense.—San Francisco Call

WHEN WAS THE CHRIST CHILD BORN?

IT is not generally known that there is a grave question as to the actual date of Christ's birth.

For many centuries we have celebrated Christmas on Dec. 25 and have not troubled ourselves with chronological inquiries. That course is no doubt reasonable and proper, for the churches have sanctioned it.

As a matter of fact, few modern theologians and chronologists agree as to the date of the birth of the Saviour. What most of them agree in, however, is that it did not occur on Dec. 25.

A point on which there is still more unanimity is that Christ was not born in the year which we call 1 A. D. He was born at least four years earlier.

The present method of counting the years was introduced by the Roman abbot Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century and came into general use two centuries later, during the reign of Charlemagne. He placed the Nativity on Dec. 25, 754, A. U. C.—i. e., after the founding of Rome. Nearly all chronologists agree that he was wrong by about four years. Christ, according to them, was born 750 A. U. C., or 4 B. C., if not earlier.

Much evidence is offered in support of this. According to Matthew ii, 1, Christ was born in the days of King Herod I, or the Great, who died, according to Josephus, at Jericho A. U. C. 750, just before the Passover. This date has been verified by the astronomical calculations of the eclipse of the moon, which took place on March 13 in the year 750 A. U. C., a few days before Herod's death.

Allowing two months or more for the events between the birth of Christ and the murder of the innocents by Herod, the nativity must be put back at least to February or January, 750 A. U. C. or 4 B. C.

The star which guided the wise men has been brought into service in the attempt to fix the birth of Christ with scientific accuracy. Between 1603 and 1604 the great astronomer Kepler observed a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, which was made more luminous by the addition of Mars in the month of March, 1604. In the autumn of the same year he observed near the planets Saturn, Jupiter and Mars a new fixed star of uncommon brilliancy.

It was blazing and glittering "like the most beautiful and glorious torch ever seen when driven by a strong wind" and seemed to Kepler an "exceedingly wonderful work of God."

He thought that this phenomenon might lead to the determination of the date of Christ's birth. By careful calculation he ascertained that a similar conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, with the later addition of Mars and probably some extraordinary star, took place repeatedly between the years 747 and 748 A. U. C.

The discovery of Kepler was almost forgotten until the nineteenth century, when it was independently confirmed by several eminent astronomers, among them Schubert of St. Petersburg, Ideler and Bencke of Berlin and Pritchard of London.

The majority of theologians agree that the date of Christ's birth cannot be fixed accurately from the New Testament or from any other source.

A Perfect Christmas.
Let us try to imagine what a scene the world would present if all men the earth around could have and enjoy one perfect Christmas—one day in which the Christmas spirit should manifest itself in every human heart in all its happiest, truest, largest meaning. What a foretaste of the millennium such a day would be! What sorrows would be mitigated, what misery assuaged, what enmities, jealousies, bitternesses, would be buried never to be renewed! Such a Christmas even for one day would be a source of immeasurable blessing to the world. It could not fail to break the crust of human selfishness beyond restoration and set many springs of kindness and good will flowing, never to cease. While such a Christmas, even for a day, can exist only in the realm of dreams, it is within our power to make each recurring Christmas measurably like it by translating our wishes into deeds, by making the best of our means and opportunities to make life a little brighter and a little sweeter for those around us and a little nearer like the life we could truly wish for all mankind.—Leslie's Weekly.

The Usual Result.
"What do you want for Christmas this year, John?" asked his wife.
"I don't know," he replied.
"All right," she said. "I'll get you something for the house."

Why Christmas Should Be Spent at Home

IT is the fashion nowadays, alas, to cry down Christmas, and it is fast becoming a "can't be bothered with it" sort of day. It is looked upon as a nuisance because Christmas brings with it a necessary increase of expenditure in the form of tips and presents.

It is becoming more and more the fashion—fashion to be bothered—to take less notice of Christmas and spend it away from home where there will be "plenty of fun."

In the good old days spending Christmas anywhere but at home was never for one moment dreamed of. Preparations were made months beforehand. Geese and turkeys were fattened, plum puddings were made, prospective guests were borne in mind, and the girls of the home fell to thinking of new schemes for decorations. Now, could anything be more delightful than making Christmas plans at least two months beforehand so as to keep the festive season right royally? All this sort of thing kept the family together, for when the winter evenings brought them nearer and nearer to Christmas day it made them see how necessary each one was to the other in the way of helping and suggesting as regards presents for so-and-so, holly for this room and mistletoe for that. Gradually it dawned on every one how dear the home was to all and how still more precious were the parents and children to one another.

When Christmas day did come it was a time of perfect happiness, harmony and satisfaction to every guest and every member of the family. If Christmas is not spent at home what becomes of the family gathering, the delight of decorating, the care and thought the happy mother has expended on the cooking of the dinner and, to crown all, the praise of the Christmas pudding, which by the consent of one and all invariably is "the finest pudding I have ever eaten?" No praise of a Christmas pudding ever comes amiss to a housewife's heart, and if Christmas is not spent at home the dinner will fall flat. There is no family gathering, no noisy, good humored chaff, and there is not that subtle, indefinable something at work which binds the family closer together, heals up old sores, opens up new friendships and wipes away all bitterness, that is so marked a feature in a good, homely Christmas gathering.

There have been more reconciliations, more "divided houses" brought together again, more eyes made dim through a mist of happy tears at some difference or misunderstanding made clear by a Christmas gathering at home than at any other season or place.

Charles Dickens, the novelist of Christmas, who did more for Christmas than any one can ever guess, had had a slight difference with Thackeray. He met him on the steps of his club on Christmas morning, hesitated, then held out his hand, which Thackeray grasped with all the warmth of his great heart. Both men returned to their family gathering at home, feeling better and happier men.

Without a doubt a family gathering at this festive and joyful season knits the bond of love and good fellowship closer than at any other time. Old slights and hurts are forgotten; hard men of business relax and soften at the sight of the children who many a time have drawn out all that is best in them after it has lain dormant for years until they have forgotten they had a tender side to their nature at all. Yes, without a doubt home is the place for Christmas. "Oh, it will be so dull and uninteresting at home!" is often the cry. It will only be dull to those who make it so.

And if there is a vacant chair or two which, alas, can never be refilled dash away the silent tear and be thankful that you are spared to taste the joys of still another homely Christmas. Your example of spending the festive season will most assuredly instill the love of the yearly family gathering into the younger generation, who will emulate your ideas in future years. Poverty will be indebted to you for showing how to keep up a good old Christmas which was suffering from a slump in the twentieth century.

By all means, then, spend Christmas at home, decorate your house, remember the postman, the butcher, the servants and even your wife's or husband's relatives. However poor you are you can be rich in kind, thoughts and cheery words. When you sit down to the table—don't care whether it groans with turkey and plum pudding laid for twenty or thirty or whether it merely trembles under the weight of much scantier fare and places laid for only three or four—if your heart is in the right place you will say:

"Here's to a happy Christmas. Thank God we are at home!"—Pictorial Magazine.

An After Dirge.
Broke, broke, broke.
Of my hard earned "bones," oh, gee!
But it brings some relief to utter
The thoughts that occur to me.

Oh, well for the beautiful gifts
As they rest in a fair array!
Oh, well for the haunting thought
That intrudes, Does the whole thing pay?

And the giving still goes on
As it has in the years gone by.
But the last of the merry holidays
Brings again the same old cry:

Broke, broke, broke!
Not a single cent, oh, gee!
And the dough that I spent for the Christmas gifts
Will never come back to me —Judge

CHRISTMAS REUNIONS.

How many families whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide in the restless struggles of life are on this day reunited and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual good will which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that the religious belief of the most civilized nations and the rude traditions of the roughest savages alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence provided for the best and happy! How many old recollections and how many dormant sympathies does Christmas time awaken! —Charles Dickens

THE LEGEND OF THE MISTLETOE.

THE hanging of the mistletoe at this coming Christmaside invites the usual tour across the mystic, musty pages of the past. This branch of the holiday's decoration treasures within it sweets that to the young people are most tempting. It was the same ten centuries ago, and so it will be for centuries to come.

While their lordships were waiting And their lordships were debating There were other gonnations going on It is hardly worth while stating That acoustic oscillating Baptized that British Christmas before dawn

The sacredness of the mistletoe has always been respected, particularly by the Britons and the Scandinavians. It was a part of the religion of the druids, and they regarded it with the utmost veneration, but restricted their worship of it to the plant when found growing on the oak. The oak was the favorite tree of their divinity, Tutane, which the books say appears to have been the same as the Phoenician god Baal, or the sun, was prayed to under different names by the early pagans. At the period of the winter solstice, which was about Christmas time, a great festival was celebrated in honor of Tutane. When this anniversary arrived the Britons, accompanied by their priests, the druids, went forth with glorious pomp and jollity to gather the mistletoe, which they believed to possess wonderful curative powers. With them they took two white bulls and sometimes human beings to be sacrificed.

Upon finding the oak with the mistletoe clinging to it the chief druid, clad in white, the emblem of purity, ascended the tree and with a golden knife cut the vine. As it fell it was caught in the folds of the robe of another priest. Then the bulls and sometimes the humans were offered to Tutane, and various festivities followed. The mistletoe thus gathered was cut into small portions and distributed among the people, who hung it over the entrances to their dwellings to notify the sylvan deities that they were welcome to shelter during the season of frost and cold.

These rites were retained throughout the Roman dominion in Britain and for a long while under the Jules, Saxons and Angles.

The most beautiful legend regarding the mistletoe and the one from which it derives its mystic powers is of Scandinavian origin. Balder, the god of poetry and eloquence and second son of Odin and Freja, had a dream in which it was intimated that he would be killed in battle. He communicated this dream to his mother, who was very fond of him, and she, to protect him, invoked the powers of nature—fire, earth, air and water—as well as animals and plants and obtained an oath from them that they would do Balder no hurt. With his invulnerability assured, as he thought, he entered the combats of the gods and was very successful in slaying all who came forward to engage him. They struck him with their arrows, but he plucked them out and derided his antagonists as they fell mortally wounded before him.

It was about time for Loke, his arch enemy, to challenge him or suffer the ignominy of cowardice, but Loke was a schemer.

He disguised himself as an old woman and, determining to discover the secret of Balder's immunity from death, called upon Freja. He addressed the mother with complimentary remarks upon the valor and good fortune of her son, and the goddess replied that her son was safe from harm, as all the productions of the world had sworn not to injure him. Loke was very much discouraged and was about to go away when Freja added that there was one plant she did not conjure because of its insignificance. With well feigned indifference Loke inquired the name of it, and Freja said it was the mistletoe.

The designing Loke procured a shoot of the mistletoe, made an arrow of it and then sought the assembly of the gods. There he met the blind Heda and concluded that the humiliation of Balder's family would be more complete if Balder should be killed by a sightless god. So he asked Heda, "Why do you not contend with the arrows of Balder?" Heda replied that he was blind and unsupplied with arrows, whereupon Loke gave him the mistletoe arrow and said, "Balder is in front of thee." Heda shot, and Balder fell pierced and slain.—Cincinnati Enquirer.