

WHEREVER Christmas is celebrated the occasion is invested with more or less of a religious character, but usage and surroundings have much to do with the festive observance of the day. Here, wealth and fashion have somewhat changed the occasion. People go to church less and give more expensive gifts. Years ago the day was simple, joyful and picturesque—a time of home-comings, love-making, pardons and prayers. The stockings were hung; the children appeared with a great hurrah to find three or four bright pennies, candies, a few raisins, a rosy-cheeked apple. It was a children's jubilee, with roast turkey, mince pies, blind man's buff, and puss in the corner. The practice of making presents was little known. Farther back our Puritan forefathers considered all frivolities pagan mummeries, and attempted to uproot the too-lavish pleasure of the Yule-tide of merry Old England.

There, as here, the new order of things has not banished the children's joy of hanging up the stocking. There, too, old superstitions prevail. The Yule log, the cedar, barrel, the mistletoe, the lighting of the Christmas fire, the candles, the carols are still part of an occasion when the nobility display splendid munificence. You still find the plum pudding, the holly, the snapdragons, the bear's head decorated with rosemary. The Canadians are in harmony with these customs, and at St. John, New Brunswick, distinctive features prevail. There is sleigh riding, hockey on the frozen lakes, and curling matches. After dinner, sumptuous gifts are distributed from a ship, the masts reaching to the ceiling, thus taking the place of the Christmas tree. A jolly old mariner is hailed as "St. Nicholas," and he unloads his cargo. After a feast, the older people dance their favorite "Sir Roger" with old-time steps and vigor. In Peru there is a great church festival. Bishops and chorists, gorgeously clad, bearing tapers, carrying images bedecked with jewels. A safe heads the procession, and into it the people drop their offerings.

In some countries Santa Claus is accompanied by an evil spirit which attends to naughty boys and girls. In Germany and Austria "Christ Kindechen" flies down from heaven with gifts for good children, while the hobgoblin, "Krampus," creeps up to the bedside of bad ones and leaves a switch. In Belgium the children fill their shoes with hay and vegetables for Santa Claus's horse, and in the morning find presents instead. In Bohemia men dressed as Santa Claus and the evil spirit, Rupprecht, go about rewarding good and punishing bad juveniles. In Italy and Spain, Epiphany takes the place of Christmas, and in Russia Santa Claus is the chief saint of the Greek churches.

In Poland Christmas is the season of "the little star." They have the little star tree, little star carols, little star presents. It begins after the twelfth night, January 6, with the appearance of the first star. Then comes the little star supper, the breaking of the wafer, when wrongs are forgiven, quarrels forgotten. A hay manger is under the table—a memorial token. All the presents are hidden, and the children search for them, singing Gregorian chants. A show with marionettes follows, a survival of sacred drama of the middle ages. In Central America this same idea is executed by out-of-door tableaux, portraying religious scenes.

Ireland's warm-hearted peasantry have a most attractive Christmas feast, lasting two weeks. They visit each other, greeting are exchanged, and courtships contracted for the following shrove-tide. They make the "Christmas mold," or huge long candle; the bog deal block is fired, the door flung open for friend, enemy and mendicant, and "eased mille failte" (a thousand times welcome) includes everybody. Steaming bowls of punch, stirring poteen and merry roasting fill in the time.

Naturally enough, Christmas is the great fete day at Bethlehem. At midnight a procession starts with candles, headed by a patriarch bearing the divine child in a manger on a silken cushion, rose-colored and gold-embroidered, under which is a straw bed with thorns. He proceeds to the spot where Jesus was born, chanting the story of the nativity, and places the child on a silver star. All Bethlehem watches with lighted candles, commemorating the occasion which at that hour is in the minds and hearts of many millions of Christendom.

OLD LIVERPOOL BEN.

It was the afternoon of New Year's Day, and that morning the American clipper ship Fayal, bound from Boston to Hio, had crossed the "line," and now lay becalmed on a glassy sea, innocent of so much as a "cat's paw" as far as eye could see.

There were thirty-two of a crew on the old Fayal, besides "Miss Marie," the Captain's child, a dear little tot of 6, the acknowledged sovereign of every man on board and the brightest ray of sunshine that ever gladdened the hearts of those hardened old salts who had cast loose from all home ties so many years ago, that children were to them beings little short of mythical. But a year before, Marie's mother had died on the passage home from Calcutta. She had mar-

ried Capt. Gleason against the wishes of her family and they had cast her off. When she died, he, too proud to ask her family to care for the child, and having no relatives, had taken upon himself the task of rearing the child, and her whole life had been spent on board ship.

A less lovable nature than hers would have been spoiled by all the petting and devotion shown by all about her, but she was always the same cheery, bright, happy little fairy, and in her presence, the Captain, a quiet, almost morose, man,



whose life, the mate afterward told me, had been darkened by the loss of his wife, was a changed being, and many a time had some poor sailor escaped punishment that would surely have been inflicted had it not been for the kindly interference of Miss Marie. Her supreme favorite on board was "Liverpool Ben," a rough, weather-beaten old tar, who for forty-five



years had sailed in ships and waters of all kinds and countries, but was still active and alert, and could go aloft with the youngest of us.

Little Marie had found a way into his withered old heart the first week out, and

a good part of Ben's watch below was spent in making fancy lanyards and doll hammocks for his little sweetheart, or sitting on the main hatch, telling her marvelous tales of old ocean and the inhabitants thereof.

On this particular New Year's afternoon of which I speak, the two were seated at the foot of the mainmast, his sweet, gray, unkempt locks forming a snowy pretty foil to her golden curls, as, with her sunny head nestled upon the shoulder of his fresh, clean Crimean shirt, worn only on state occasions, she listened with rapt attention to a stirring tale of a beautiful lady taken prisoner by pirates, and rescued by a man-of-war, with Ben as commander, he having been notified of the beautiful lady's captive condition by a friendly flying-fish that had come on board in the dead of night for the express purpose of telling Ben all about it. The Captain had gone below for his usual after-dinner nap, leaving the deck in charge of the Mate, who was leaning against the weather-mizen rigging, lost in dreams, probably of home and New Year's of his boyhood days. Overhead the sky was clear as a bell, not a cloud in sight from horizon to horizon, and the entire crew seemed to have taken on, as if by contagion, the air of lethargy that prevailed on all sides. I had snugly ensconced myself, unknown to Ben and the baby, behind the mainmast and fallen into a doze.

How long I slept I know not, but suddenly I was startled from my slumbers by the ship's heeling over and the mate's hoarse voice issuing orders to call out the watch to shorten sail. In five minutes the sky, so lately clear and smiling, was black as night. Forerunners of what was to follow came in short, quick puffs of wind and sprits of rain. Light hailbursts were let go and the yards came clattering down by the run. No time to furl. If we could get the sails closed up we would do well. The squall was now almost on us, and unless we could manage to get the ship's head off before it, we knew that we would soon be in a tight place.

men all of them, whose whole lives had been spent facing danger and peril, any one of whom would have gladly risked his life to save the baby. But they were helpless. Between the ship and Ben lay a network of ropes and spars grinding against each other, through which it had been foolhardiness for any man to try to pass. The ropes about the deck were hopelessly mixed up, as they washed about the flooded deck.

The lightning flashes now had become so frequent as to be almost continuous. The Captain was frantic. All thought for the safety of the ship had passed from our minds; our one object now was to rescue Ben and the baby. Something washing about the deck struck my leg and I stooped to cast it clear of me. It was the log reel, torn loose no doubt from its track on the mainmast, when the squall first struck us. As I saw it a thought struck me. Grasping the end of the log line in one hand, with the other I threw the reel clear of the wreck, at the same time shouting to Ben to grasp it. And even as I shouted another thought passed across my mind. That slender, half-rotten line would never bear the strain of two bodies being hauled through those angry waters. I was ashamed to warn Ben of this, but he needed no warning. By the next flash we could see Ben casting a bow-line about Marie's shoulders. Then came a faint cry from leeward, nearly drowned by the rushing of waters and crumpling of timber.

"Lay aft men, and haul in." Twenty hands had the line in as many seconds, and carrying it aft where it would be clear of the wreckage, we hauled in. Poor wee Marie, white as a spirit, save for a crimson stain upon her marble forehead where some cruel spur had struck our baby a severe blow, her eyes closed, and her poor bruised fingers clutching the line with a grip; when we lifted her over the rail we scarcely dared hope that it was not too late that aid had come. The Captain, clasping the tiny, inanimate form to his breast, bore her to

A CHRISTMAS DANCE.

CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL IN THE MOUNTAINS.

The Affair Consists of Dancing with Pump Mountain Lassies, a Bounteous Supper, with Lots of Pumpkin, and a Game of Snap.

A Regular "Shindig."

It was an odd fancy that possessed us, writes Will Allen Droomgoole, in the Utica Globe, that of seeing Christmas in the mountains. Accordingly Christmas Eve found us, Joe and me, in the Cumberlands, with the snow coming down in soft, drowsy drops. We were heartily received by a mountaineer who mistook us for hunters and bade us welcome to his home.

"Nobody here but the ole 'oman an' me an' our gals, them two ye see milkin' the cows ez you uns come along the big road. Likely gals they air, an' mostly stiddy, but they hev got a tetch o' Chris'mus in the bones right now, ter be shore. Bester be thinkin' about the day uv weath' the judgment, an' the lake ez burns with fire an' brimstone, I say."

Christmas in their bones; so then it comes the Christ-time, on the mountains as well as in the valley. But how? Fire-crackers? Santa Claus? Turkey gobblers? A revival of religion, or how? We soon learned that the blessed myth of babyhood was unknown in the mountains. Santa Claus had never heard of the little tow-heads in the Cumberlands. There would be a dance, however—and when Jim Walker rode over on a mule to invite "our gals" to "the shindig that night at Walker's Ford," our minds were quite made up. We determined to make two of the "gals" invited.

It was not yet 4 o'clock when the "gals," Sally and Edie, climbed up into the wagon, and Joe and I climbed after them, and we set out to the shindig at the Ford. We "tuk up" five others on the road, to say nothing of "Clumbus," the young man in a crazy little suit of store clothes that seemed to be as old as the mountain itself.

We reached the Ford at sunset. We



were not the first by any means. The sound of a fiddle, tortured into a jumpy kind of melody, the noise of shuffling feet, together with the monotonous call to "swing!" all told us that the frolic was well begun. As we drew up before a rude cabin tucked away in a nest of cedar trees by the roadside, through the low door the light streamed with cheery welcome, broken now and then by the tall figure of some gaunt mountaineer following the mazes of the dance. The yard around the cabin was full of furniture—beds, chairs, tubs, spinning wheel, and even a little boy, crouching in the wind, half filled with soft, white snow. The household goods had been removed to make way for the dancers. The room was literally packed with people. They jostled and crowded, joked and danced. The spindle figure of the fiddler moved dexterously in and out among the dancers as he walked up and down, playing, prompting and sometimes dancing to avoid the crush. Our host met us at the door.

"Come in," he called, "come in—Chris'mus don't come but one't a year." We were soon "swinging" the mountain girls as vehemently as the rest of the boys. How the girls did dance! Their arms were bowed, as if they meant to fly. One shoulder was lifted and they edged up, sideways, to their partners, like little bantams preparing for a tussle. They danced quietly, too, so far as the feet were concerned. It was the boys who did the kicking and jumping and shouting. The girls were solemn little nuns, who left "the heft of the work" to their pretty arms and shoulders.

Soon came supper. In the center of the table stood the little brown jug, filled with cider, and it was surrounded by pumpkin. There was pumpkin stewed, "punkin pie," "punkin butter," "punkin custard" and something "our gal" Sally passed to me in a yellow bowl which, when asked what it might be, she told me was "jest punkin." There was cabbage, too, winter cabbage dug out of its grave in the "suller," and corn bread, stewed beans and pound cake eaten with "sassa."

And there was dried apple pie and honey, buttermilk, and something in a broken-nosed pitcher which the girls, and the "mammy cow's milk," and which I discovered to be boiled custard



plentifully loaded with apple brandy.

After supper we had a game of "snap" while the fiddler rested. Snap consisted of two couples and a good deal of kissing. One couple took a stand in the center of the room, facing each other, with arms extended and the hands of the young lady securely clasped in the hands of the young man opposite. It was necessary the clasp should be firm to insure against the cyclonic attack of the second couple, who were expected to perform about this pair. The performance was simple and terrific. A plump little mountain lass sidled up to her "fellow" and saucily snapped her fingers in his face. A challenge. Before the stupid cat rally from, or for, the attack, the girl is off, darting around the couple in the center of the room with the big fellow who was snapped in full chase. If he catches her—a kiss. If he doesn't catch her—she never stops until he does—

so there is sure to be a kiss. Refreshing, I thought, feeling secure as a looker-on in Vienna, when suddenly something went off directly before my nose, and as soon as the smoke cleared away sufficiently I discovered "our gal" Sally, cavorting around the hand-locked couple, and some one called to me that I had "been snapped." Snapped by Sally! I rose to the occasion—but the occasion was beyond me. Round and round went Sally, and around went I—"away went Gilpin." Suddenly my foot slipped, and down with a whack I came upon the punchbowl, while the flying Sally passed over me like a streak of runaway lightning. There was loud laughter, the kiss was declared forfeited, and Sally and I "locked hands" and stood our turn "in the middle" for the other snappers to exercise themselves upon.

A Christmas Tree.

I am a tree, a Christmas tree, how merry do I feel, to think of what I need to be, it makes me fairly reel with laughter to reflect that I have grown since I had come from Nature's haunts beneath the sky, to bear up Johnny's drum; to carry candy on my back, and popcorn balls galore, and many another fine kink-knick from Santa Claus' store. With candles I am lighted up; with presents loaded down, and so to me fill up the cup, and toast me through the town. This is my day of all the days, I tremble with delight, and every branch within me sways, for I am doing right. 'Tis true my load is heavier than when, a gay young twig, I fluttered with my brother fir, and thought myself quite big. But no one knows what happiness, my sisters and my brothers, can be obtained unsought, unless gals' done some good to others. And so although a heavy load I'm bearing up to-day, I feel so good that I'll be blessed! I'd like to float away to some land where there is no past, and where the children will never leave me. This is my day, for Christmas last forever and forever!

—Tom Masson, in Life.

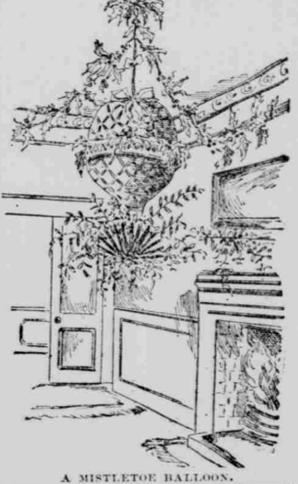
HOLLY IN DECORATION.

Its Plump Red Berries Make a Beautiful Christmas Adornment.

A picturesque shrub especially useful at this time of the year is the holly, with its tough and shining spinous leaves and its pretty little full, round berries. It is the only plant appropriate to this happy period that relieves the dead green and monotonous white of the nonflowering plants and vines supposed to belong to Christmas and the days that follow Epiphany. Like the mistletoe, most of the holly exposed for sale in American markets comes from Great Britain, although some species of the plant grow in the Southern States.

The commercial holly, however, is cut in Scotland and sent here in bags. It is most valuable to work up in combination with laurel, ivy, and mistletoe, into wreaths, anchors, stars, crowns, and other ecclesiastical designs, while for running decorations, that is long festoons and great swags of green, a few of the bright red berries wound in at regular intervals heightens the effect and relieves the eye.

The favorite manner of arranging holly for sale is to make it up into some one of the numerous designs appropriate to



the day and the season, and thus most of the plant offered this year is fashioned. Holly is not so expensive as the mistletoe, and is more hardy and lasting. It has no tradition connected with it, however, and thus loses its sentimental value. But to the decorator, the artist, the florist, and the dealer it is one of the best, most ornate, and suggestive plants for use at home or in public places that can be selected at this season.

A Christmas Fruit Cake.

Cream together one pound of brown sugar and one pound of butter, writes Frances E. Lanigan, in a practical article on "Christmas Cakes and Candies" in the Ladies' Home Journal. Beat the yolks and white of ten eggs separately. Add the yolks with one pound of seeded raisins, one pound of currants, and half a pound of sliced citron, one-third of an ounce each of ground cinnamon and nutmeg, and one-quarter ounce each of ground mace and cloves, also one pound of flour that has been slightly browned. Add the whites of the eggs. Mix and beat well. Turn into a mold and bake for five hours in a moderate oven. Before using, ice and decorate with candied fruit.

Equipped.

"Are you ready to meet that solemn event in every man's existence, the new year?" asked the meditative man. "You bet I am," replied his flippant friend. "I have more material for swearing off than I ever had before in my life." —Washington Star.

Resolutions.

Oh, those New Year resolutions that we made with holy awe. How they melted like the snowbanks in a January thaw! How the man who broke his meerschaum and vowed to smoke no more. Now smokes an old 2-cent pipe behind the cellar door.

Unlike Him.

Cora—I was so surprised when Mr. de Jinks called to pay the compliments of the season. Merritt—No wonder. That's the only thing I ever knew him to pay.—Judge.