

CHRISTMAS FEATURES

Interesting Facts About the Yule Log, the Giving of Presents, the Carols and the Custom of Decorating the Home at Yuletide

Christmas was first kept as a holy day in A. D. 108, but for three centuries it was the most movable of festivals. The date, Dec. 25, was selected in the fourth century by a council of theologians.

A life is the result of the rainy season in India, which makes it improbable that shepherds would be watching their flocks by night and that the stars would be visible. October is the month agreed upon by many investigators.

The Decorations.
The custom of decorating dwellings and churches with evergreens is a relic of paganism.

It was transmitted to the Middle Ages or today direct from the Druids of ancient Britain, who believed that if a house were watched with a holly or bay tree, the evil spirits would be repelled. These plants and holly leaves were by reason of their green color, which would also protect the dwelling from harm.

An Incident.
In its early days a religious celebration of Christmas centered into yearly with the pagan festivals of the winter solstice in Rome.

Of these the most popular and the most ancient was the Saturnalia. Making allowance for the increased Latin pronunciation, the fathers of the church deemed it wise to give Christians an opportunity to make merry no less than their heathen neighbors and established the celebration.

The Gifts.
Why should people make presents at Christmas? This is a question custom, subject to change, but what was its origin? Extended gifts to investigate the matter, studies the New Testament and explains the tradition that the exchange of gifts symbolizes the homage paid to the infant Jesus by the kings and wise men of the East.

But historians say that the early Christians exchanged gifts because their pagan neighbors did.

The Yule Log.
There is nothing Christian in the Yule log, which has always been a custom in these days of electric heat and "gas logs." It belonged to the Roman front of Jol, pronounced Yule.

The custom passed into Christian observance when the god Jol was forgotten and the harvest made their hearts big enough to accommodate the Yule log. Lighted on Christmas eve it was a sign of good luck if it continued to burn after dawn of Christmas day.

The Mistletoe Bough.
To the mistletoe bough our brethren ancestors attached the greatest importance. The forest yielded no more sacred emblem. The very oaks on which it grew were hallowed.

No significance belonged to mistletoe from any other tree than the oak, and it may be found on the fir, the pine and even the apple tree. The greatest possible cure with its pale berries symbolized the chalice of blessing of the gods and was a defense against evil.

The Carols.
Christmas carols were another invention of the early church to offset the joyous license of paganism. Some was an expression of rejoicing among the Romans.

Hence the making of these carols, simple in form, so that they might be sung by learned and ignorant. Such is the origin of the carols, which still linger in certain parts of England, of "carols" going from house to house on Christmas eve and singing carols.—New York World.

Christmas in the Orient.
It is a strange but significant fact that the natives of India—Hindus and Mohammedans—all celebrate the greatest day of the year, "Dussehra" (literally "great day"), thus unwittingly bearing testimony of the influence of the Babe of Bethlehem, the world's Redeemer. No one knows the origin of this Hindu festival. The Hindus have a great many festivals and celebrate the birthdays of several of their gods and goddesses, especially those who were the most famous, but no one of these days is called "the great day." Of course this expressive phrase in India is a constant argument in favor of Christianity. Christmas is indeed a great day in India. People begin preparing for it three months beforehand. Merchants send to London or Paris for dolls, toys, sweetmeats, Christmas cards and a great many other things. Native shopkeepers lay in a large supply of

saus, simonds and all sorts of material for cake and pastries; butter and eggs grow dearer and dearer. The entire abdomen and European banks are closed for the holidays; visits among friends there are very few foreigners in India who have relatives there are planned, and great preparations are made for the festive season.

The native people, of course, do not celebrate Christmas. They know that Christians do, however, and this simple fact, so constantly observed, causes them to think about the justice of Christianity. Many are led to ask "Who was Christ? What did he do? Why do the Christians observe his birthday?" These inquiries call forth various answers; discussion follows, and thus the whole nation, with its near millions of people, is thinking and talking about the world's Saviour.

The Dinner Table.
The Christmas dinner table should be appropriately and prettily decorated with evergreens, holly, a bunch of mistletoe hanging below the chandelier and sprays of wintergreen everywhere they can be tucked. Holly and Christmas hollyhocks seem to be the favorite flowers. Whenever dishes are served let them be of a rich, bright red, for that is a warm and glowing color, and especially fashionable this season. Branches of holly placed tastefully among the decorations of an apartment add much to its cheerful first day appearance.

Boiled Water in Ancient Times.
Now that the use of boiled drinking water has become common, it is interesting to be reminded that a similar method of purifying against disease was practiced in ancient times. Herodotus tells how Cyrus had his drinking water boiled and carried in silver vessels, and Pliny the elder relates that Nero had water-boiled and afterward cooled for drinking by placing it in glass flasks surrounded with snow.

Did Not Speak to His Servants.
On a clear and beautiful Sunday morning in a parish not far from Milwaukee a priest was pleased to see the presence at service of an unusually large number of the members of his congregation, and since he had been informed of considerable trouble in his flock, he could not find an opportunity to give those present a friendly, yet pointed, sermon on forbearance. He charged the men, particularly the married men, to be ever kind, courteous and considerate to women, to overlook all opportunities for trouble, to be good to them and solicitous of their welfare, and finished with a masterly peroration relating to conjugal decency on the part of his flock.

Shortly after he met an old and respected member of the church and said: "Michael, I was glad to see you at church Sunday. And how did you like the sermon?" "Well, father," the old man answered, "the language was beautiful, and the delivery was forceful, but, father, father, if you was only married about three months you'd tell a different story!"—Milwaukee Sentinel.

Tapioca.
This elegant and delicate starch is the product of a plant that is cultivated very extensively in the Malay peninsula, where its culture is almost entirely in the hands of the Chinese. The tubers of the plant (Manihot utilissima), which weigh on an average from 10 to 25 pounds, are first scraped and then carefully washed, after which they are reduced to a pulp by being passed between rollers. This pulp is carefully washed and shaken up with abundance of water until the fécule separates and passes through a very fine sieve into a tub placed beneath. The flour so obtained is repeatedly washed and then placed on mats and bleached by exposure to the sun and air. It is finally converted into the pasty tapioca of commerce by being placed in a crude shaped frame covered with canvas. It is slightly moistened and subjected to a rotary motion, by which means it is granulated. It is next dried in the sun and finally over the fire in an iron pan greased with vegetable tallow and is then ready for the market.

Difficult to Treat.
"Well, what is the matter with your husband?" the physician asked as he laid down his repair kit and removed his gloves. "Imaginary insomnia," replied Mrs. Fosdick. "Imaginary insomnia?" repeated the physician inquiringly. "That's what it is. He thinks he doesn't sleep at night, but he gets lots more sleep than I do."—Detroit Free Press.

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