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## Christmas Eve

From an exchange published on the day before Christmas we glean the following relative to the observation of Christmas Eve and the advent of the tree:

Tonight is Christmas Eve, the beginning of the greatest festival of all church festivals. In all parts of the world preparations will be concluded tonight for the fitting celebration of the birth of our Saviour tomorrow. The eves or virgils of the different ecclesiastical festivals of the Christmas year are, according to the strict letter of canonical rule, times of fasting and penance but as in the case of All Saints' Eve and of Christmas Eve, common custom has ignored and incontinently transformed them into seasons of mirth and jollity.

Perhaps nothing better can describe this than Sir Walter Scott does in "Marmion:"

On Christmas Eve the bells were rung;  
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung;  
That only night in all the year,  
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear,  
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;  
The hall was dressed with holly green;  
Forth to the wood did merry men go;  
to gather in the mistletoe."

Tonight in all parts of the world where Christmas is celebrated, and there are very few countries in which it is not, the Christmas tree will be set up in the home, the stockings will be hung by the fireplace, and the Christmas carols will be sung on the streets. The time and manner of introduction of the Christmas tree into any land is extremely indefinite; legends exist in many countries, which, though of no historical value, suggest at least the age of custom. In a French romance, as far back as the thirteenth century, the hero finds a gigantic tree whose branches are covered with burning candles, and on the top the vision of a child with a halo around his curly head. It was explained that the tree represents mankind, the child the Saviour and the candles good and bad human beings. By an old German legend, St. Winifred is made the deviser of the idea. In the midst of a crowd of converts, according to his story, he attempted to hew down an oak which had been the object to their druidic worship when a whirling wind passed over the forest, rending the giant tree from the ground, but leaving behind the ruin a young fir tree.

St. Winifred then said to the people:

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