



Christmas In Ritual and Tradition, Christian and Pagan: A candid exposition on the true basis for the Christmas traditions.

Clement A. Miles

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Christmas--how many images the word calls up: we think of carol-singers and holly-decked churches where people hymn in time-honored strains the Birth of the Divine Child; of frost and snow, and, in contrast, of warm hearths and homes bright with light and color, very fortresses against the cold; of feasting and revelry, of greetings and gifts exchanged; and lastly of vaguely superstitious customs, relics of long ago, performed perhaps out of respect for use and wont, or merely in jest, or with a deliberate attempt to throw ourselves back into the past, to reenter for a moment the mental childhood of the race. These are a few of the pictures that rise pell-mell in the minds of English folk at the mention of Christmas; how many other scenes would come before us if we could realize what the festival means to men of other nations. Yet even these will suggest what hardly needs saying, that Christmas is something far more complex than a Church holy-day alone, that the celebration of the Birth of Jesus, deep and touching as is its appeal to those who hold the faith of the Incarnation, is but one of many elements that have entered into the great winter festival. In the following pages I shall try to present a picture, sketchy and inadequate though it must be, of what Christmas is and has been to the peoples of Europe, and to show as far as possible the various elements that have gone into its make-up. Most people have a vague impression that these are largely pagan, but comparatively few have any idea of the process by which the heathen elements have become mingled with that which is obviously Christian, and equal obscurity prevails as to the nature and meaning of the non-Christian customs. The subject is vast, and has not been thoroughly explored as yet, but the labors of historians and folklorists have made certain conclusions probable, and have produced hypotheses of great interest and fascination.

THE CHRISTIAN FEAST

CHRISTMAS POETRY

CHRISTMAS IN LITURGY AND POPULAR DEVOTION

CHRISTMAS DRAMA

PAGAN SURVIVALS

PRE-CHRISTIAN WINTER FESTIVALS

ALL HALLOW TIDE TO MARTINMAS

ST. CLEMENT TO ST. THOMAS

CHRISTMAS EVE AND THE TWELVE DAYS

THE YULE LOG

THE CHRISTMAS-TREE, DECORATIONS, AND GIFTS

CHRISTMAS FEASTING AND SACRIFICIAL SURVIVALS

MASKING, THE MUMMERS' PLAY, THE FEAST OF FOOLS, AND THE BOY BISHOP

ST. STEPHEN'S, ST. JOHN'S, AND HOLY INNOCENTS' DAYS

NEW YEAR'S DAY

CONCLUSION

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