Fixing The Christmas Date.

[Jewish Paper.]

Christmas day was not always been kept on a fixed date, for at first it was as much a movable feast as Easter and was celebrated by the eastern churches in April and May. This yearly commemoration of Christ's birth was first kept about the year 98, and it was ordered to be held as a solemn feast by Pope Telesphorus about 137. It is curious that the birth of Christ and the day of the birth should have offered an opportunity for a diversity of opinion, which has placed it in every month of the year. The Egyptian Christians held that it fell in January, according to the old style of reckoning. Russia, which still adheres to the old style, has her Christmas festival in January. Wagenseil insists on the birth having occurred in February; Bochard in March, and several authors, quoted by Clement of Alexandria, in April. Other learned men have placed it in May. Epiphanius speaks of some who placed it in June, and of others who held that it happened in July. Wagenseil, not being quite sure as to February being the right month, suggested that it might be August; Lightfoot places it on September 15; Scaliger and others in October; others, again, in November; and in Latin and Protestant churches in December. At one period December 6 was declared to be the proper anniversary, and the feast was solemnized at Cyprus on that day as early as the fourth century. For two or three centuries the eastern church kept Christmas day on January 6, and it was only after a considerable lapse of time that a general agreement was arrived at to fix it in favor of December 25. Townsend says that the date generally admitted as that on which the Savior became incarnate is April, A. D. 4. As to the commemoration of Christ's death, which is kept on Good Friday, it was made a movable feast because of its dependence on Easter, the day of the commemoration of Christ's resurrection, the former being held three days before the latter. The proper time for the celebration of Easter has occasioned no little controversy. The great mass of the eastern Christians celebrated Easter on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month or moon, considering it to be the equivalent of the Jewish Passover. The council of Arles, in 314, decreed that the day of keeping this festival should be the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the March moon; and the council of Nice, in 325, confirmed this decision. But, owing to the intricate calculations this rule rendered necessary, disagreements as to the time of celebration still continued and the Roman Method was not established in France till 800, and in Britain and Ireland till about 800. The correction of the calendar by Gregory XIII, in 1584, permanently fixed the first Sunday after the full moon immediately following March 21 as the true day for observing this festival.

Literary Notes.

The complete novel in *Lippincott's Magazine* for March, "A Soldier's Secret," by Captain Charles King has a very recent theme—the Sioux out of 1890. In the Journalist Series, Mr. A. E. Watrous ably handles "The Newspaper-Man as a Confidant." In the Athletic Series, the mysteries of "Horsemanship and Polo" are revealed by Mr. Foxhall Keene. Under the heading "One Hundred Miles an Hour," Mr. Chas. H. Deacon, of the Reading Railroad, discusses the facts and possibilities of railway speed, and upsets the popular notion that a faster rate necessarily means increased danger. Certain facts about "Rebuilding the Navy" are set forth by Mr. Harry P. Mawson. The article is liberally illustrated. Mr. C. H. Herford, an English scholar who has given special attention to the Sagas and their reproduction in modern literature, gives an account of "Ibsen's Earlier Work," and especially his "grand and lurid drama," "The Vikings in Helgeland." The projected "Independent Theatre" is explained in two papers by Edward Fuller and James L. Ford. Mr. Robert Timsol writes about "Getting There," mingled with certain humors of the editorial den. The department "As It Seems" considers Mr. Thomas Hardy's last novel, Mrs. Terhune's Virginia tale, and sundry other matters. There is a short story by Miss M. G. McClelland, and a brief sketch by Lillian A. North. The poetry of the number is by Anne Reeve Aldrich, S. Decatur Smith, Jr., Prof. Clinton Scollard, Ruth Johnston, and Nora C. Franklin.

There is a [illegible] table at Delmonico's. It is the round one in the angle formed by Twenty-sixth street and Fifth avenue. A certain number of men made up their minds to take turns watching it every night. Whoever gives a dinner at that table suffers misfortune. His guests are ridiculously late, a waiter plays the fool kicking over a champagne pail or something else goes wrong.

London has a haunted box in Drury Lane theater. Every one in the opposite box sees in it one more person than the flesh and blood persons actually there. The haunt at the haunted Delmonico table is not a severe one, but it brings New York up to date. The haunt leaves unless the man who takes the table is unconscious of it.—Arthur Brisbane in New York World.

The Best Laid Plans, Etc.

Mr. Smartchap (who thinks he sees the opportunity of his life)—Happy New Year, Mr. Hardhardt! I have noticed, however, that business has been very dull lately.

Employer—Yes, it has.

Mr. Smartchap—And your profits have been greatly reduced, with no immediate prospect of improvement.

Mr. Hardhardt—That is true.

Mr. Smartchap—I have therefore come to you to ask that you reduce my salary.

Mr. Hardhardt (in a hurried whisper to his secretary)—Humor the poor fellow while I go and telephone to the insane asylum.—New York Weekly.

Rhinoceroses with Two Horns.

Several species of rhinoceroses, now extinct and only found in a fossil state, used to exist which had no horns at all. The name, meaning as it does "horned nose," is rather a misnomer in their case. Several kinds of rhinoceros in Africa have two horns, one behind the other, but the extinct rhinoceros, known as the diceratherium, had a pair of horns on its nose side by side.

The Age of Responsibility.

In relation to the question of responsibility, according to the French criminal law, there does not appear to be any age at which a child is absolutely exempt from punishment. If an offense be committed under the age of sixteen, and it be found to have been committed "without discernment," the offender is to be acquitted; but, according to circumstances, he is to be returned to his relatives or placed in a house of correction, to be brought up there and detained for any number of years not exceeding his twentieth. By the criminal code of the German empire a person cannot be criminally prosecuted for any offense committed before he has completed his twelfth year.

In his "History of the Criminal Law of England" Sir James Stephen expresses himself as follows: "By English law children under seven are absolutely exempt from punishment, and from seven to fourteen there is a presumption that they are not possessed of the degree of knowledge essential to criminality, though this presumption may be rebutted by proof to the contrary. Like most other presumptions of law, this rule is practically inoperative, or at all events operates seldom and capriciously.

"My own opinion is that the age of complete irresponsibility should be raised, say, to twelve except in the case of a few specially atrocious crimes, and that it should be succeeded by complete responsibility." This definite expression of opinion by an authority of such eminence and experience must carry great weight.—London Lancet.

Hunting Hares.

There do not seem to be as many hares now as there used to be when I was a boy. Then the "old fields" and branch bottoms used to be full of them. They were peculiarly our game; I mean we used to consider that they belonged to us boys. They were rather scorned by the "gentlemen," by which was meant the grown up gentlemen, who shot partridges over the pointers, and only picked up a hare when she got in their way, and the negroes used to catch them in traps or "gums," which were traps made of hollow gum tree logs. But we boys were the hare hunters. They were our property from childhood, just as much as we considered as Bruno and Don, the beautiful crack pointers with their brown eyes and setter ears and coats, were "the gentlemen's."

The negroes used to set traps all the fall and winter and we, with the natural tendency of boys to imitate whatever is wild and primitive, used to set traps also. To tell the truth, however, the hares appeared to have a way of going into the negroes' traps rather than into ours, and the former caught many to our one.—Thomas Nelson Page in St. Nicholas.

Walking as a Cure for Insomnia.

I do not believe that any man, not down sick, needs to suffer from sleeplessness who will walk prudently, regularly and sufficiently. I have found it a sovereign cure. The only trouble is that walking makes me sleep too long and too soundly. A good many years ago, some hours after the close of a day on which I had done an extra amount of tramping, I arrived at my destination and speedily sought my couch. I did not wake until the morning sun was shining brightly; and then it was to discover that I was in the midst of the utmost confusion. The windows had been driven in, and broken glass and twigs were scattered all about my room.

There had been a fearful storm in the night, a portion of the roof over me had been carried away, trees had been uprooted, chimneys overturned, and everybody had deserted the house except myself, and I had been as totally forgotten as I was oblivious.—Belford's Magazine.

His Care in Drawing.

Stothard, an English painter, was noted for his certainty of hand. An anecdote related by Leslie, a brother artist, shows how he acquired the sureness that gave him fame.

Stothard was showing some early drawings from the antique, made while he was a student of the academy. They were begun and finished with pen and ink only, and Leslie remarked that "they looked like beautiful line engravings."

"I adopted this plan," replied Stothard, "because, as I could not alter a line, it obliged me to think before I touched the paper."—Exchange.

Not the Merrimac, but the Virginia.

There never was a Confederate ironclad or any other ironclad named Merrimac. The Confederate ram was the Virginia always. She was constructed upon the hulk of an old United States frigate called the Merrimac. Why people should go on calling the Virginia the Merrimac we cannot see. History and fact—not always synonymous—agree in this case. The Confederate ironclad was the Virginia, not the Merrimac.

Soldier Ants.

Amongst ants there is much the same division of labor as among bees and a more complicated series of individuals, for we find not only the neuters, which perform all the working functions of the hive, the males and the queens, but we have in some species a special class known as soldier ants, which have wonderfully powerful heads and jaws, and perform no other duties than to defend the formicary and make war.—Boston Transcript.

The frog, owing to its peculiar structure, cannot breathe with the mouth open, and if it were forcibly kept open the creature would die of suffocation.

Removing Evergreens.

Successful Transplanting of Pines, Hemlocks and Arbor Vitae from the Woods.

Among the various kinds of work which may be performed during the comparative leisure of winter is the removal of evergreens from the borders of woods and wild groves. The Country Gentleman says:

We have transplanted large numbers of white pines, hemlocks and arbor vitae of various heights, from two feet to twelve feet, in the depth of winter, without losing one in ten. Two neighbors drove ten miles to mild weather for trees of the white pine to flank their door yards and shelter their cattle grounds. The ground was slightly frozen beneath the snow. One of them brought twelve and the other fifty, the trees averaging five feet in height. The first mentioned

WHITE PINE SUCCESSFULLY REMOVED.

were saved all and they grew well; the other lost forty per cent of his fifty. One took special care to lift a heavy ball or cake of earth with the roots, the other tore the roots out by main force, with no soil on them.

The same treatment applied to young hemlocks and to trees of other size gave a like result. The ball of earth must be large and heavy enough to hold the tree upright when set on the surface of the ground. The best locality is always among the margin of swamps, where a flat cake of earth is easily secured, the roots spreading out horizontally in a loose network and holding the soil, as in the cut showing a tree ten feet high. On hard upland smaller trees must be taken, as the roots run deeper, and a smaller ball of earth is necessary. Trees thus brought to the ground, where they are wanted to remain, have been set down on the surface of the ground and suffered to remain till the ground thawed in the spring without any detriment. It must be observed that this method applies only to trees in the borders of woods and swamps. Those raised in nurseries, where they have been several times transplanted, do not require all this care.

A Remarkable Orchid.

H. F. Knorr, of San Francisco, is said to have paid $1,100 for an orchid of which only one other specimen exists in America. They were found by Sander in the great forest along the Upper Congo. This orchid is a double one, with pale purple outer and darker inner petals, and within these again a small shaped flower of a blue black hue. The entire flower is six inches in diameter and has received the name of "Gigas superba."

Oleanders in Winter.

"Oleanders do best if kept in the dark a portion of the year, and this is the best time. They should be cut back after flowering, but at no other time, as the next crop of blossoms is produced on growth of the preceding year. Plants should not be allowed to grow ill shaped. Ten or three months is the length of time given my oleanders for rest," writes a Pennsylvania correspondent in The American Garden.

Floral Directions.

Don't try to train smilax on a trellis. Provide a small cord for it to cling to and it will twine and run up slowly.

For hard wooded plants of slow growth a little bone dust stirred into the soil in the pot is an excellent stimulant and fertilizer.

One of the easiest bits of foliage to grow in the sitting room is Tradescantia, or Wandering Jew. A few slips stuck into a pot will root and grow very rapidly.

Sponge the dust off your ivies and all waxy leaved plants at least once a week. It improves their appearance wonderfully and helps to keep the plant healthy.

The California Fruit Grower emphasizes the fact that carefully selected fruit seeds will produce the best stocks upon which to bud or work orchard varieties. You cannot expect to get the greatest vitality and vigor of growth from poor, half matured seeds.

Thick leaved plants, such as oleander, orange, ivy, etc., should be watched for the first appearance of scale insects, which should be brushed off with a toothbrush, taking care to remove every scale, if possible, for if any are left they will multiply.

Camellias are essentially greenhouse plants, and seldom bloom well with ordinary house treatment. They need careful attention and a well regulated temperature. Too dry an atmosphere will cause the buds to drop, as will either too great or too small a supply of water.

His Fortune to Unborn Heirs.

The will of Michael Reilly, the Wheeling millionaire, is the most remarkable document of the kind ever made in the state of West Virginia, if not in the country. By its terms his last surviving grandchild must die before the estate can be touched, and then it must be divided among his grandchildren's descendants only. As the youngest of the grandchildren is but six months old, and the family is known for its longevity, the prospects for a division of the property within the next seventy-five years are remote.—The Washington Post.

Miss Sterling, of New Orleans, is conductor of a large orchestra. She is a young and charming woman.

Dr. Edward McGlynn's [illegible] principles of [illegible] supporters is a rule one for all mankind to adopt. It is this, "Always maintain cheerfulness, as that is the essence of true religion."

We have a very good beginning of a navy and it could give some of the countries a good tussle now, but four years will be required to complete the plans already laid out and put it in really first class condition.

The officers who have the task of transforming the Indian into a cavalry soldier have progressed with its education to the point where he gets up before breakfast and curries his own horse. Having been induced to do that it is believed he can be made to do anything.

Why not make our small money coins of aluminum or at least some of its cheaper alloys? This has been proposed and experiments made looking to this end. Small lightweight, bright coins would be a great improvement on the present unclean and poisonous copper coins.

Without making any fuss about it or putting the fact into our papers, the ladies of the cooperative colony at Kaweah, in California, have inaugurated a dress reform of their own. One day fifteen women suddenly sprung the thing on their husbands and neighbors by coming out in short skirts reaching to a few inches below the knee with leggings or knickers. A blouse waist completed the upper visible portion of the costume. The ladies continue to wear the innovation, and other women are adopting it too. Some of the foolish sisters wear it at home on account of the comfort and convenience but are not yet strong-minded enough to appear upon the street in it.

The best part of the education that is going now to be put before children is the manual training. It would not be well to overload the public school department with manual training colleges, but private benevolence must in time supply perfectly equipped industrial schools in every state and large city. It is the best use to which the rich persons who wishes to perpetuate his name can put his money. We have had enough poor lawyers and doctors in this land. We need now an army of strong, brave young people thoroughly trained in hand and brain, ready to take tools and show the United States ahead in every art and science, mechanical or otherwise, that is known to mankind. Then the finest delicate machinery, the finest textile fabrics, pottery, art works and even fire clay will not have to be imported, always imported, from Europe.

It is a good world this, after all. If it were not, then little Merto Peterson, a blue eyed child of fifty years, could never have crossed the Atlantic ocean and come from Sweden in charge of no one but herself to join her father in Philadelphia. Her mother died when she was a babe, and her father came to America to make his fortune. As soon as he got a little money he sent for the child, and the brave creature did not hesitate to start alone. It was the confidence of childhood and innocence, and to the credit of mankind it is not always betrayed. Merto spoke not a word of English either, and the only information the immigration officers at New York could get about her was contained in an envelope which she carried sealed in her pocket. This envelope held also a little money to be used in case of need, and thus the child crossed the great sea under the guidance of the good spirits that reside in human breasts.

Being Good to the Poor.

"He was good to the poor," is what the people whom he aided declare with one voice of the late Cardinal Manning. These words should be his epitaph. He was good to the poor. Besides giving of his means to them as long as he lived, he also helped them to the far higher and better way of being good to the poor. He looked profoundly into questions of labor and capital, and used his powers of heart and brain to place them beyond the necessity of porish or unstable aid.

The only way to really help a poverty stricken person is to put him upon his own feet and enable him to work for his living. Those who give money to street beggars do more harm than good. So do those who bestow food and clothing indiscriminately upon all who ask it. The doctrine that it is a religious duty to give to every creature that asks has filled some parts of Europe with lazy beggars that swarm like flies and eat out the substance of the country.

The ragged creature who pursues street begging for a vocation has sometimes a flourishing bank account, built solely on the weak and sentimental pity of the thoughtless. The true doctrine is that nobody is entitled to a living who does not in one way or another earn it. If the impudent and willing street beggar will not work for his living, let him die. The world will be better off without him.

There are organizations that will take all the charity one has to bestow and see that it reaches the worthy poor. All to hide over immediate necessities ought to be forthcoming, but in every case the unworthy ought to be made to work or starve. The true helper of the poor will be he who can in some way find work for them to do which the community needs to have done.

Lieutenant Peary and his hibernating party up in Greenland have one advantage at least over most of their fellow men at home. They can stay in bed as long as they please without being missed.

The Egyptian fellah is apparently the worst taxed man in the world. Even on the palm tree, which gives him food and shelter, he pays fifty cents a year.

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