



*Christmas Day.*—As at the New Year, the first caller on Christmas Day should be a dark-haired man to bring luck to the inmates during the holidays. The custom is observed partially in Chipping and the neighbourhood.

Holly with its red berries, and other evergreens, are in great request for decorating the windows of cottages, as well as in the dwellings of the higher born. Mistletoe is also obtained from Preston market to hang up in halls and kitchens and underneath its mystic branches the laughing girl bashfully submits to the merry licence of the customary kiss.

The parish church of Chipping is also decorated with evergreens, mistletoe and yew excepted.

Mince pies are everywhere made by those who can afford it, and eaten from Christmas to Candlemas.

Much card-playing used to take place at this time. Brag and the game of "Put" were most popular in the cottages of this neighbourhood, and much gambling once took place. It is very usual now to play for poultry, cocks and hens.

Young men dressed as mummers used to come up to the hall at this time and perform in the court-yard. On one occasion, as late as 1864, there were five men, one wearing a large wig, with a three-cornered hat, personating a doctor. He carried a small box supported by a strap in front, containing his medicines. The other four wore a sort of uniform—blue coats with gold lace and white trousers. These recited some doggerel verses, being a dialogue between St. George, the King of Egypt, attendants and the doctor. They fought among themselves with swords, resulting in all being killed except the doctor, who restored them to life through the efficacy of his pills.

A scanty substitute, this, for the elaborate performances formerly usual throughout the district, and maintained during the first thirty years of this century. Father Christmas, St. George, a Turkish knight, the dragon, and a doctor were the usual *dramatis personæ*. Sometimes the performance was limited to three—the king of Egypt and prince George, who engage in mortal combat, and the doctor, who cures the wounded prince. These representations are still occasionally given, but generally with little wit, and the traditional story is mostly forgotten.

Parties of young men, fantastically dressed, used likewise to come at this season as morris-dancers, and perform the ancient sword dance. This used to be a pretty sight when well performed, but the combined figures and sword exercises, of ancient origin, are now forgotten, and, when attempted, the entire exhibition is only a burlesque got up by those who have no knowledge of the old performances.

