

**THE BOOK OF CHRISTMAS: DESCRIPTIVE  
OF THE CUSTOMS, CEREMONIES,  
TRADITIONS, SUPERSTITIONS, FUN,  
FEELING, AND FESTIVITIES OF THE  
CHRISTMAS SEASON**

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The Book of Christmas: descriptive of the customs, ceremonies, traditions, superstitions, fun, feeling, and festivities of the Christmas season by Thomas K. Hervey

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**THOMAS K. HERVEY**

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BY THOMAS K. HERVEY.

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## P R E F A C E .

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AMONGST the number of elegant publications which issue from the press, at this festival period of the year,—and are prepared for the express amusement of this particular season, it is matter of some surprise that no one of them should have undertaken to illustrate the festival itself, and give some account of the season which they are so designed to embellish. The number of popular observances by which this time is marked, and the peculiar character of the revels which enliven it—with the fact that their practice is known to almost all, and their full meaning and origin to comparatively few—might, naturally, have suggested to the literary purveyors for the period that a work which should give a full, detailed, and connected history of this festival, its ceremonies and traditions, would form as agreeable a literary gift as could be planned for this epoch of gifts,—and would, besides, have a permanent and useful interest, which should take it out of the class of ephemera, and give it a value, at all seasons.

It is under this impression that the present work has been undertaken by its publisher;—and the editor has availed himself of every source of information which occurred to him, as likely to aid him in rendering it complete. In order to give anything like an entire view of the subject, it was necessary, at times, to go more into antiquarian details than may be approved of by the general reader;—

whilst the wish to preserve a popular tone, induced the editor occasionally to restrict himself in those more elaborate inquiries, into which another class of readers would willingly have followed him. It has, of course, been his object to steer as fair a middle course between these extremes as he could ;—sacrificing nothing that was essential to the full elucidation of the subject,—and not dwelling unnecessarily, after that object was attained, on any of the dryer details, which might have failed to interest the general reader.

The subject is a very full one ;—and the materials, though very loosely scattered about, are very copious. It was found absolutely necessary, therefore, to limit the present volume to a review of the festival and its observances, as they exist in *England*—only occasionally adverting to the practices of other countries, where they throw immediate light on the customs of this.

If, then, our readers shall be amused or instructed by our gossip, at the winter fire, we hope to meet them in the fields, and upon the hills, amongst the flowers of spring and the fruits of autumn ;—to dance with them beneath the May-pole, and join them in the merry revels of the Harvest-home.

The Editor cannot suffer himself to omit this opportunity of acknowledging his obligations to Mr. CROFTON CROCKER, for some very valuable assistance.

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