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When a group of Royal Engineers sailed from Gravesend to Victoria, British Columbia in 1858 aboard the ship Thames City, whilst on route they produced a weekly paper entitled "The Emigrant Soldiers' Gazette and Cape Horn Chronicle." Further information about this is to be found in the Spring 2011 Quarterdeck.

The issue on Saturday 25th December 1858 was circulated just prior to reaching the Falkland Islands with the following leading item:

Another great anniversary has come round, with its heap of associations, and the recollections of happy hours spent with pleasant companions, that possess such a charm for us all and remind us so forcibly of dear old England.

Christmas time – with its visions of roast beef and plum pudding, - holly and mistletoe, - Christmas trees and Christmas presents – prize turkeys and prize geese, - clowns and pantomimes, - cheerful firesides and happy faces, - cold noses and hot grog.

Christmas – the time that the school-boy looks forward to as the jolliest of the whole year, when he can sit down to eat with the certainty of rising from the table with the loss of at least the three lower buttons of his trowsers, - when he can kiss his pretty cousin under the mistletoe, and, emboldened by sundry glasses of wine, even extend his caresses to the shy little housemaid, causing both young ladies to blush incessantly for at least a week afterwards, and to declare (although they really like it very much) that he is a "nasty rude fellow."

Christmas time, - when diminutive boys make slides on the pavement to entrap weary old gentlemen with blue noses and still bluer spectacles, and take a malicious delight in pelting policemen from round corners or behind lamp-posts with snow-balls so hard as to cause temporary aberration of intellect on the part of the policemen in question, and enable their tormentors to escape with impunity.

Christmas time, - when "cabbies" stand at the corners of the streets, beating a tattoo with their hands and feet to keep themselves warm, watching their own breath as it assumes all sorts of fantastic shapes in the cold frosty air, and growling inwardly, as the foot passengers pass on heedless of their importunities, preferring the healthy air and exercise to the close and stuffy feeling of a hackney cab.

Christmas eve, - when boys go about singing Christmas carols from house to house and from street to street; boys so small that, as they huddle round your door to keep one another warm, the only fear is that, in the squeeze, one of them might get jammed in the key-hole or the letter box, but who nevertheless contrive to amass small fortunes, and forthwith proceed to invest them, not in "Three per cents," but in mince pies, sausage rolls and ginger pop at the shop round the corner.

Christmas time, - when the butcher's boy has a pitched battle with the chimney sweeper's boy, in consequence of your having given the former 2s. and the latter 2s 6d, as a Christmas box, thereby causing the "blackamoor" to chaff "greasy" to an extent that injures his sensitive feelings.

Christmas Day, - when in England, even the poorest of the poor are, we hope, enabled to have a better dinner than they have had for some time before, and to derive warmth and comfort from hot soup and a good fire, and when all, both rich and poor, manage, in spite of the cold, to enjoy themselves more than on any other day in the year.



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