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## CHRISTMAS NUMBERS.

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The Christmas Numbers arrive, as usual, over a month ahead of their time, so that the difficulty nowadays is to find seasonable reading at Christmas time. But perhaps the chief joy of Christmas, as of so many other things, is in anticipation; and the long-drawn delights of the Christmas annuals may serve to while away weeks of long evenings. Here, for example, is the Christmas "Sphere," packed with good things from paint-brush and pen. The two double-page illustrations in colour both have the seasonable note—one a Dickens reminiscence (David Copperfield's journey to London) by E. Malania; the other a fine winter picture—"Grassington Bridge"—by A. Reginald Smith. There are some charming illustrations of the Paston Letters, to which Mr. George Morrow adds an extra couple of humorous pages. Other well-known artists represented in these pages are F. Cadogan Cowper, L. Campbell Taylor, Edmund J. Sullivan, and Charles E. and H. M. Brock.

The "Illustrated London News" makes the customary obeisance to Christmas on its cover ("a village churchyard in winter, with the congregation coming out after evening service"), and there is the Imperial note in the coloured supplement, "The Motherland." Legend plays a large part in the contents, with three coloured page illustrations of fairy tales by Felix de Gray, and Miss Eleanor Brickdale represented by four "Legends of the Flowers." Other artist contributors to the number are Philip de Laszlo (in a two-page picture entitled "The Inspiration," but surely better described by its original title, "The Drawing Lesson"), G. A. Barlangue, Jules Alexis Muenier (both Salon pictures), Alexandre Rzewuski, Kay Nielsen, E. J. Detmold, etc. There are stories by Herbert Shaw, Blasco Ibanez, Edna Ferber, and Holloway Horn.

"The Sketch" never fails to strike the note of brightness, and offers many glowing pages of entertainment. There are eight pages of delightful colour by E. H. Shepard in illustration of old French verses; and for the rest we have Lewis Baumer, Suzanne Lagneau, James Clark, and René Bull among others. The stories include a characteristic one by Stacy Aumonier, "Madame Fatality."

"Pears' Annual" relies largely on the "Christmas Stories" of Dickens, of which it reproduces "The Seven Poor Travellers," "The Poor Relation's Story," and "The Holly Tree," all illustrated by E. H. Shepard. Mr. E. V. Lucas meditates on "The First Christmas"; Mr. Milne gives another of his delightful nursery verses, "Dinkie"; and there is a story by the late W. K. Clifford. The number is, as usual, beautifully produced, with some fine plates in colour.

"Holly Leaves" ("Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News") is an agreeable amalgam of romance and humour. W. H. Barribal, Lewis Baumer, René Bull, Wilmot Lunt, and Bert Thomas are among the pictorial artists in the one category, and Harry Rountree, Heath Robinson, Frank Dadd, G. L. Stampa, and Will Owen in the other. There are stories by Percival Gibbon, H. de Vere Stacpoole, Baroness Hutten, Owen Oliver, and Blasco Ibanez.

"Truth's" Christmas Number is as topical as usual, though one suspects it has been a little embarrassed by the sudden change of Government. The idea is a "New Wembley," which exhibits, among other things, a Palace of Government, in which are displayed samples of the handiwork of recent Ministries; a Temple of Spooks, in which "The Other Side" of the Empire is illustrated; and a display of "Crook Industries." In the new Rodeo the Red Cow of Socialism takes a prominent part.