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Halcyon days! Today is the beginning of the "halcyon days" of tradition and legend. They begin one week before and end one week after the winter solstice. This period of the year was so called by the ancients because the halcyon bird, or kingfisher, was supposed to breed at this time of the year, and built its nest so that it floated on the open sea. During the nesting time the birds were supposed to charm the waves to quiet, and sailors then boldly ventured out to sea. Dryden refers to the legend as follows:

"Amidst our arms as quiet you should be
As halcyons brooding on a winter's sea."
