

The LEGEND of the MISTLETOE



A kiss beneath the ancient Yule decoration has a sacred significance, and mistletoe can indeed be a remedy for an ailing heart.

By HARGIS EARLYWINE

Ancients deemed it a symbol of eternity.



CHRISTMAS GAMBOLES, OR A KISS UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

An 18th century English engraving, from the Print Collection of the New York Public Library.

OF ALL customs associated with Christmas festivities, none has an older origin than the kiss beneath the mistletoe. In the Eastern world in which Christianity arose, the kiss was early associated with sacred rites. The ancient Arabians made their devotions to their gods with kisses. In Roman Empire, too, the kiss indicated the sentiments of reverence and respect. We know the sentiment among the Hebrews of the Old Testament regarding the kiss: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine," it is exclaimed in the Song of Solo-

MISTLETOE has been called the "tree thief" because it is a parasite living entirely off such trees as oaks, apples, poplars, willows, mountain-ash, maples. The wax-like berries that form amidst its pale grayish-green leaves are eaten by birds in winter, and the birds are responsible for the plant's propagation. The sawing is effected by the bird wiping its beak, to which the seeds may adhere, against the bark of the tree on which it has alighted. A heavy growth of mistletoe will inevitably weaken a host tree and cause its death.

mon. Yes, the kiss has been associated for centuries with the highest forms of love: of mother for child, father for son, brother for brother, sister for sister.

It was natural for the kiss to become associated in ancient times with the mistletoe. In the darkest, barest days of winter, the fragrance of pine, hemlock and spruce, the green leaves of the mistletoe, symbolized to persons the continuity of life. Where was there a more appropriate place to express an affection for a fellow being than under the symbol of eternity?

In the Druidic religion of the early Britons, the mis-

tletoe was regarded with veneration, particularly so when found growing on the oak—the favorite tree of their divinity, Tutana, or sun god. The greatest festival of the year was celebrated in his honor at the time of the winter-solstice. As this sacred anniversary approached, the ancient Britons, led by their priests, the Druids, went forth with pomp and rejoicing to gather the mistletoe which, in addition to the religious reverence with which it was regarded, had wondrous medicinal powers attributed to it.

A brew of mistletoe was believed to promote fertility in the barren. A mis-

tletoe poultice was applied to wounds. Mistletoe tea was drunk for poisoning, for cure for "the falling sickness" (epilepsy). Old formularies indicate that as late as the 18th century doctors in England and the Netherlands accepted this belief in mistletoe as a treatment for epilepsy. The medical practices of Europe were not the only ones who had a regard for mistletoe as a curative agent; the first visitors from the Old World to the New World found that they received mistletoe as a relief for toothache. It is known now that there was basis for the ancient belief in the medical powers of the plant. A new drug called Protuberatin, which has had some use in the treatment of high blood pressure, is derived from the mistletoe plant.

The mistletoe gathered in the rites of the Druids was divided into small portions and distributed among the people who hung the sprays over the entrances to their dwellings as a propitiation and shelter to the sylvan deities during the season of frost and cold. These rites in connection with the mistletoe, were retained throughout the Roman dominion in Britain, and also for a long period under the sovereignty of the Jutes, Saxons, and Angles.

The mistletoe was similarly regarded reverently among early Scandinavians. To them, too, the kiss had a sacred significance.

Eventually the hanging of the mistletoe became an accepted part of the Christian celebration of Christmas in the Western World, along with the Christmas tree and the kiss of benevolence and affection.

The great Renaissance Dutch philosopher Erasmus (the story of whose family is told in the classic old novel by Charles Reade, "The Cloister and the Hearth"), remarked that when he visited England in the 15th century, kissing was a widely practiced and general form of greeting. Upon arrival at a house, the visitor kissed his host, his hostess, all their daughters

and sons, and even the household pets, dogs, cats, et al! Other contemporary chroniclers indicate that in Tudor times the mistletoe had an established association with the offering or snatching of kisses. "The contact of the lips in the kiss is an inspired discovery and development of the Western World," it is asserted by an anthropologist, William J. Fiedling,

and who would disagree? The kiss, sacred or profane, has inspired some of the most memorable poetry in English literature. Such as Byron's:

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth and love,
And beauty, all concentrated like rays
Into one focus kindled from above,
Such kisses belong to the early days.



Under the mistletoe in the gas-light era, a drawing from Harper's Monthly Magazine in 1873. (New York Library).

DO-IT-YOURSELF FANS FAVOR **TOOLS** FOR CHRISTMAS

"YOU JUST CAN'T BEAT — A GOOD TOOL FOR HIS WORKSHOP"

Let us show you how to say, "MERRY CHRISTMAS MISTER" With Gifts That Will Be Appreciated!

Plenty of Parking Space For Your Convenience

OPEN TO 9 P.M. MON. TO FRIDAY — SAT. TO 6 P.M.

KINSLOW SALES
BUILDERS SUPPLIES

No. 7 Hwy. 1 Mile West ACTON Phone 751312

Message Hatched

Somewhere a Hen Can Write

GRANT'S RADIATOR SHOP
SPECIALISTS IN ALL TYPES OF RADIATOR SERVICE

Repairs • Recoring Boiling

TRUCKS — TRACTORS
CARS — CAR HEATERS

QUICK EFFICIENT SERVICE
Free Pickup and Delivery
Phone 85 Acton - Collect
252 Queen St. E. Acton, Ont.

The Acton Free Press.

Eighty Fourth Year, No. 25 ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1958 Second Section.

Nearly 350 Children, Parents Enjoy Cartoons, Santa's Visit

Nearly 350 children and parents were on hand Sunday last in the Roxy Theatre to enjoy cartoons and greet Santa Claus when the Holy Name Society sponsored the annual Christmas party for St. Joseph's church.

Gathering at the church hall the children, 250 in number, marched to the theatre under the supervision of four Jesuit Brothers, from Guelph. Parents met them at the theatre.

Films shown

After the showing of a few films C. Paul, on behalf of the party, presented the four Jesuit Brothers with a gift as a token of appreciation for their assistance.

Santa Claus made his entrance at the front of the theatre stage following the balance of the cartoons. Assisted by Dave Gordon

he called out the names of children from babies in arms to grade eight school children and handed out gifts to each child.

Father V. J. Morgan was present for the occasion and exchanged gifts with Santa during the program.

The Catholic Women's League spent many hours packing bags and wrapping presents prior to the Christmas party.



NO TIME FOR SANTA! Johnny Timmings, son of Mr. and Mrs. Don Timmings of Acton is interested only in the parcel he has received during St. Joseph's Church Christmas Party last Sunday. Father V. J. Morgan, Pastor of the church, chuckles heartily in the background as Santa copes with the children. Sponsored by the Holy Name Society, the party was held in the Roxy Theatre. The Catholic Women's League packed the bags for the children.

it's Happy Gifting Time!

Give the gift that stores a lifetime of treasured memories!

Kodak Gift Outfits

YOU ARE ALWAYS SURE TO PLEASE WITH A GIFT OF **CHOCOLATES**

We have a complete assortment of MOIR'S - ROWNTREE'S NEILSON'S - CADBURY'S BOXED CHOCOLATES \$1.00 TO \$8.00

KODAK FILM ALWAYS ACCEPTABLE AND SURE TO PLEASE Black and White and Color

Watson's Dairy Bar
RESTAURANT
MILL ST. ACTON PHONE 14

We also have — CIGARETTES • CIGARS • PIPES • TOBACCOS — as Gifts for Smokers

WATCH FOR THE GRAND OPENING OF **KINS**

NOTICE
GARBAGE COLLECTION DAYS over Christmas and New Years will be as following

MONDAY, DECEMBER 22nd
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24th
MONDAY, DECEMBER 29th
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31st

Holiday **TURKEYS**

Lorraine Farm TURKEYS

HENS 12 to 15 lbs. Avg. 59c
TOMS 18 to 24 lbs. Avg. 53c

-- also --
GEESE - DUCKS
LARGE CHICKENS

BRADLEY'S Meat Market