

# FOR A JOYOUS AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON

## Mistletoe: Sacred Plant to Druids

Began Custom of "Kissing and Becoming Friends" Under Spray in Doorway

Mistletoe, the symbol of friendship, joy and peace at Christmas time, and used as part of our holiday decorations, is rich in tradition and legend.

The custom of "kissing and becoming friends" under a spray of mistletoe tied over the doorway or suspended from the ceiling can be traced back through the centuries to the days of the Druids. Even beyond that, the origin of the plant dates to the time of the ancient Greeks who used it in their ceremonies. Occasionally, mistletoe was found growing on an oak and because the oak was the most sacred of all trees, the Druids held it with special reverence.

### A SOLEMN CEREMONY

At the beginning of their year, they would go in solemn procession into the woods to seek the sacred plant, the discovery of which was announced with joyous shouts. A grass altar was then erected beneath the tree and inscribed with such divine titles as they deemed most powerful. On the sixth day of the moon, the Arch-Druid, clad in a white robe (the emblem of purity) climbed the tree and with a golden sickle cut off the mistletoe and dropped it into the folds of the white robes worn by other Druids. Two white bulls, or upon the most important occasions, human beings, were then sacrificed. After this the plants were dipped in water and blessed by the high priest and distributed among the people as a charm against witchcraft and disease.

## Own Festival Of Childhood

Christmas Time Should Be A Season of Unquestioning Good-Will, Shining Faith

It is at such a time as this with the grave issues and the serious tasks of war tending to eliminate to a large extent from the thinking and the life of the people of any nation involved (no matter how far from the actual scene of conflict) the comparatively unimportant things, that one realizes just how truly important to us is this festival of Christmas. There is apparent a general desire that Christmas be observed as ever.

Christmas will ever be a happy season, first because of its message, eternally important to mankind, a message which brings with it a sense of joy, a sense of security and of spiritual peace. It is as a child that one first learns to love Christmas, that one first learns the beautiful story of the Christ Child and one never quite loses that child-like feeling for this day, so deeply a part of life does it become.

### AND RETURN TO CHILDHOOD

Christmas is essentially a festival of childhood, a completely joyous festival in which fairy love also plays its part, with the good St. Nicholas helpful to interpret to child minds the spirit of unselfish love and good-will. But that does not mean it is only for the child in years.

The day has a strange power to bring people back at least in some degree to the child-like attitude towards fundamental things, the attitude of unquestioning good-will that looks for no reward, the attitude of innocence and of clear faith. One of the great boons of the Christmas season is this return to the attitude of childhood, even though not shirking the responsibilities of maturity, this going back to the essential simplicity that is the essence of all true greatness and at the basis of all lasting joy.

## Childermas, Dec. 28

Childermas or Holy Innocents' Day, on December 28th, is so named in Commemoration of the slaughter of infants ordered by Herod. It is supposed to be one of the unluckiest days in the calendar and in former times people were very careful not to enter into any undertaking on this day. To marry on Holy Innocents' was simply asking for trouble.

In the Middle Ages and long afterwards, processions of children were forbidden at Childermas, and eventually Henry VIII proclaimed in 1540 that all such processions were illegal. In some parts of Great Britain children were actually whipped on Childermas to remind them of what happened hundreds of years ago.

## Jig, Folk-Song In Old Quebec

This Is By Tradition The French-Canadian Farmer's Merry-making Season

They've dusted off the fiddle and rolled back the parlor rug in French-Canadian homes in the back concessions, for it's the season of jig and folk-song.

The Quebec farmer's merry-making season by tradition is the last week of the old year and the first week of the new, when winter has brought a lull in his hard work of squeezing a living from the soil.

Though the period is one of gaiety in the remote, snow-bound villages, always it starts with solemn celebration of midnight Mass in the parish church Christmas Eve.

Every resident of every parish turns out for the Mass with its blazing candles, the Christmas hymns and the sermon of the cure, in the little stone church that is the hub of rural French-Canadian life.

### REVELRY AFTER MASS

The revelry starts after Mass, once the farm folk have returned to their homes and piled wood high in shiny black stoves. There's the dancing and singing, little glassfuls and good things to eat from laden kitchen tables.

But in the village homes no presents are given Christmas Day. That's reserved for New Year's. And all the gifts are useful — a new fur cap for her husband, a coat for the wife. Her suits for the sons and dresses for the daughters.

### ENDS WITH EPIPHANY

The farmer's holiday ends with a round of visiting and gatherings on the Feast of the Epiphany. After that it's back to work — time to start threshing grain sheaves stacked in the barns since the autumn.

## A Decorated Tree Serves Two Aims

If Set Outdoors at Holiday Time—Lends Air of Gay Festivity and Provides Food Source for Birds

In decorating the outdoor Christmas tree for holiday festivities, home-lovers might consider combining artistry with usefulness by having the tree also serve as a source of food for the birds. Decorations which cover both these points may be made by scooping out a drying half orange and then filling it with melted suet to which have been added sugar or honey and one or more of the following ingredients: sunflower seeds, millet, hemp, coarse cornmeal, oatmeal, chopped nuts, chopped raw peanuts, bread or cake crumbs and peanut butter.

### STRINGS OF CRANBERRIES

Brightly painted halves of English walnut shells, scooped clean, fastened to a string or wire and filled with a combination of two or more of the above ingredients also make pretty decorations. The same filling may be used in pine cones after they have been expanded by placing near the heat.

Strings of cranberries, popcorn and raisins used as garlands, as well as pieces of apple fastened to branches, all lend color and relish.

## Christmas Windows

Night roofs lie stiffly, row on row;  
The songless earth is black,  
And yet these honey squares of glow  
Spread joy across my track.

The muffled street is widely  
As chilling snow-whirls dart,  
But lighted windows, Christmas-  
wreathed,  
Sing carols in my heart.  
—Alan Creighton, in  
"The Crucible".



## The Christ Child



(15th Century "Nativity" by Francesco di Pietra Santa, Rome)

And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel

of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them,

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,  
"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

## 'Twas The Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there.  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,  
While visions of sugarplums danced through their heads,  
Mama in her kerchief and I in my cap  
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap;  
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow  
Gave the lustre of midday to objects below,  
When what to my wondering eyes should appear  
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,  
With a little old driver so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment it must be Saint Nick.  
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,  
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name:  
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer! and Vixen!  
On, Comet! on, Cupid, on, Donner and Blitzen!  
To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!  
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"  
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
When they meet with an obstacle mount to the sky,  
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew,  
With a sleigh full of toys and Saint Nicholas too.  
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof—  
As I drew in my head and was turning around,  
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.  
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,

And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.  
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,  
And he looked like a pedlar just opening his pack;  
His eyes — how they twinkled!  
His dimples, how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses; his nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up in a bow,  
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;  
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;  
He had a broad face and a little round belly,  
That shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly.  
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself;  
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head  
Soon gave me to know I had scraped up enough money to get a turkey or a goose for the Christmas dinner and how to go about carving the festive bird so that all "minority" claims are satisfied and without any embarrassing incident due to awkward manipulation of the carving instruments.

## Plum Porridge

The original plum-pudding was known as "plum porridge." It was always the first course at the Christmas dinner.

Plum porridge had the place of honor at the Yuletide banquet of George III. One can hardly imagine Farmer George's favorite dish appealing to the modern palate, for it was compounded of boiled beef or mutton, brown bread, raisins, currants, prunes, mace, and gingerbread.



## Christmas Turkey: How to Carve It

All Minority Claims in the Family Must Be Satisfied—Here Are Some Points

Two big problems face paterfamilias at this time: How to scrape up enough money to get a turkey or a goose for the Christmas dinner and how to go about carving the festive bird so that all "minority" claims are satisfied and without any embarrassing incident due to awkward manipulation of the carving instruments.

Carving the turkey is quite an easy matter, says a chef in giving explicit instructions on the proper procedure, if one goes about it the right way, especially a very large turkey, for the breast suffices for a number of persons when carefully carved. When this is not sufficient, the tops of the wings, holding it firmly with a fork and then the legs severed and carved should be served.

### SMALLER BIRD, GREATER CARE

A smaller bird of lesser proportions requires greater care. Here the advice is to insert the fork firmly in the breast of the bird, and downwards between the body and thigh. Turn upwards to sever the legs. Keep the fork in the breast while the wings are carved off, cutting widely to keep the shape of the wings. If the bird is fairly large the breast should be carved; otherwise it should be sep-

arated from the back by cutting the ribs. The breast should be cut across into halves, and the legs should be cut lengthwise. Then turn the bird right over and dislocate the back with a knife.

To obtain the delicate dark meat around the side bones, the thigh joint sockets should be removed, while the bones on either side are cut off. Carve the foremeat across in thin slices and cut the apron across if the bird is stuffed.

## Wassail Bowl

Hot Spicy Drinks Belong in the Holiday Season

Drinks that warm the heart and take the chill off the night belong to the Christmas season. Try these simple and satisfying beverages to the tune of traditional Christmas carols.

### HOT CIDER PUNCH

(Serves 12)

Two pieces stick cinnamon, 1 tablespoon whole cloves, 1/2 gallon sweet cider, 1/2 cup sugar, 1/4 teaspoon salt, lemon peel. Place spices in a bag and add to cider with sugar and salt. Bring slowly to boiling point. Cool. Remove spice bag. Just before serving, reheat until very hot. Serve with piece of lemon peel in each glass.

### MULLED GRAPE JUICE

One pint grape juice, 1 pint water, 6 egg yolks, 1/2 pound sugar, 1/3 teaspoon grated nutmeg, 6 egg whites. Bring grape juice and water to boil. Beat egg yolks well and add sugar and nutmeg. Beat egg whites to a froth and stir into egg-yolk mixture. Hold boiling grapejuice and water high above bowl and pour slowly into eggs, stirring constantly. Pour this mixture from one pitcher to another until thoroughly mixed. Serve hot or cold.

### SPICED TEA

Six teaspoons black tea leaves, 6 cups boiling water, 6 slices lemon, 3 teaspoons whole cloves, 6 sticks of cinnamon, sugar to taste. Use 6 glasses. In bottom of each glass place sugar and a slice of lemon studded with cloves. In a tea kettle, pour boiling water over the tea leaves and stand for 5 minutes. Then pour the hot strong tea into glasses and stir with cinnamon stick.

## Legends From Fifth Century

Many Traditions of This Season Are Traceable Back to the Time of the Romans

The growth of Christmas tradition and legend has never ceased since the Fifth Century, when the birth of Christ was first generally celebrated. Each nation has had its own native customs and has added those of other countries as well as subtracting and modifying until the complex ritual of our traditional Christmas has grown up, perhaps with less religious observance than could be wished, but with a holiness of a sort in the universal happiness and feeling of good-will.

### SANTA CLAUS

Santa Claus, for example, the deity of the child and the symbol of the adult, bears the name he does in Canada because this is the British version of the Dutch Saint Nicholas. The original Saint Nicholas was Bishop of Smyrna during the Diocletian persecutions and after his death became the patron of little children, merchants, sailors, travelers, thieves, pawnbrokers and maiden ladies. The gifts that this kindly soul brings find their origin in a legend about him which tells how he gave dowries to three daughters of a poor tradesman, whence grew the custom of hanging up the stockings of little children on the Eve of St. Nicholas on December 5, the custom later being transferred to Christmas. The exchange of gifts between persons arises from the gifts of the Three Wise Men.

### CHRISTMAS TREE STORY

The Christmas Tree, decorated with its glittering tinsel and shining lights, is a more recent addition to the stock of tradition, probably originating in Germany.

### HOLLY AND BERRIES

Holly with its thorns and blood-red berries its thought to symbolize the crown of thorns worn by the Saviour; another belief is that the use of holly comes from the pagans.

Wassail bowl, so named from the Saxon "wæs hæl" (lit. "be in health," according to our "to your health"), carried by the children singing carols, owes its origin to the custom of drinking the health of friends in the spiced wine drunk at Christmas time in mediaeval days. It was a spiced and sweetened drink served in huge bowls with roasted apples floating in it.

### Cattle in the Stall

I hold no place of high import,  
Where roars the thronging mart—  
One of the little ones on earth  
I do my humble part.  
With fork and pail and stable broom  
As evening shadows fall  
In common tasks I tend for Him  
The cattle in the stall.

I love the knotted dark along  
The heavy rough-beamed roof,  
The cleanly crackle of the straw  
Beneath the shifted hoof;  
The woken chorus of content  
That drones from wall to wall—  
Because I love for His dear sake  
The cattle in the stall.

For since of old a stable knew  
That wondrous Baby's birth,  
Methinks He loves the cattle best  
Of all the beasts of earth.  
Their kind eyes gave Him welcome there—  
They heard His first faint call—  
Oh, proud am I to tend for Him  
The cattle in the stall!

Now comes once more the glorious night,  
The Christmas of the year!  
They watch in reverence and awe  
The miracle draw near.  
The Child Divine is born again—  
His love is over all—  
It rests in benediction on  
The cattle in the stall!

—Nina Moore Jamieson.

