

BENEATH MISTLETOE

Kissing Custom So Old No One Knows When It Started.

Branches With Greatest Number of Berries Favored, as Kiss Must Be Given for Each Berry Plucked.

According to Scandinavian mythology, Loki, the god of evil, was the sworn enemy of Baldur, the god of light, and tried by every means in his power to kill him, but failed because he was invulnerable to everything that came from the earth, air, fire or water.

Loki at last conceived the idea that the mistletoe, springing from neither, would serve his purpose and, having an arrow made from the wood he helped Hodi, the blind god of darkness, to aim it, and Baldur fell dead—shot through the heart.

All the gods and goddesses prayed for his restoration to life, and when the prayer was granted it was decreed that the mistletoe should nevermore have power to do harm unless it touched the earth, and the goddess of love was appointed to guard it.

Some legends claim that the goddess kissed all who passed under the plant as a token that it was no longer a weapon of death, but a symbol of love, while others assert that she extracted a kiss from each as a propitiation, or the bough should be allowed to work harm.

Another reason for the kissing privilege conferred by the plant is said to be that a lovely maiden preferred death to the kisses of an amorous old monk who pursued her, and her prayers for deliverance were answered by transforming her into a mistletoe branch and placing her in a tree.

Kiss For Each Berry.

The custom of "kissing beneath the mistletoe" is so old that no one knows when it originated; but when young people are found selecting the branches that have the berries on, it is fair to suppose that they know a kiss must be given for each berry plucked and that the ceremony is never complete until every berry is off the branch.

There was once a common, though mistaken, belief that the mistletoe grew on oak trees only, but that was so far from true that the Druids, who held the oak as absolutely sacred because they believed it to represent the One Supreme God, deemed the mistletoe doubly sacred if found on one, and carefully guarded it until the sixth day after the first new moon of each year.

When this time arrived, priests robed in spotless white, surrounded the tree and held solemn ceremonies, among which was the sacrifice of two white bulls.

After the ceremonies a priest robed in spotless white ascended the tree, and with a golden knife cut the mistletoe and let it fall onto a white cloth held by other priests.

The branches were then formally blessed and divided among the people, who believed the sprays given them to have miraculous power.

Called "All-Heal" Plant.

The common belief in the efficacy of the plant was such that it was called "all-heal" but according to an old legend, a certain lover searched many days for a specimen growing on an oak tree, that he might secure its branches for the cure of his betrothed, who was sick unto death, but when he found it he touched the sap, while cutting the branches, and fell dead near the tree, indicating that the sap was a deadly poison.

Another legend accounts for the fact that the plant is a parasite by the story that the mistletoe, originally grew as a tree, and that the cross on which Christ was crucified was made from mistletoe wood, after which it was accused and condemned to never more grow as a tree but to exist as a parasite, killing every living thing to which it became attached.

The plant thrives in America from New Jersey southward and westward, and those who know it only as a part of Christmas decorations can have little idea of how it overruns trees to the extent of being a nuisance.

Christmas Smiles.

But Christmas is not only the milestone of another year, moving us to thoughts of self-examination—it is a season, from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy. A man dissatisfied with his endeavors is a man tempted to sadness. And in the midst of winter, when his life runs lowest and he is reminded of the empty chairs of his beloved, it is well that he should be condemned to this fashion of the smiling face.—Stevenson.

Anticipated Pleasure.

"I don't believe the approach of Christmas brings you a single joyous anticipation," said the sweet young thing.

"Don't, eh?" replied the savage bachelor. "Listen to my secret. That youngster on the third floor is sure to get a tin trumpet for a present."

"Yes." "Then he will get careless and leave it on the hall floor. And then I shall step on it with both feet. Don't you call that a joyous anticipation?"

Bethlehem's Star Undimmed.

Bethlehem's star shines more brightly today than it did when the first Christmas anthem sent its joyous greeting to all sons of men.

First Christmas Observance

The first Christmas celebrated inside a house on the American continent was on December 25, 1618. Our Puritan ancestors finished their first house at Plymouth, Mass., having spent more than a month in wandering about in search of a place of settlement. The company was divided into 19 families, and to each person was assigned a lot for house and garden. It was not a very cheerful Christmas for the Puritans. All of them could not be accommodated inside the house, so that some of them were left out in the cold, but the religious features of the day were not forgotten, and it may be said that the Babe of Bethlehem was prayed to and sung to in a most fervent manner.

MAKE IT A MERRY CHRISTMAS

Cause Others to Be Happy and Feel the Joy of Sacrifice—All in the Front Ranks.

Christmas!

Every year it comes and every year we love it and wonder why we haven't made the spirit of it last all through the year, writes Margaret Mott Gordon. Perhaps we do not have the time? But to what do we give our time? And why is it that at Christmas we all "take time" to do the many little thoughtful things that we have been postponing for months and months?

One of the things we seem to forget is that the more we give to others the more we have ourselves, and the more we have the capacity for giving. It is a wonderful thought and one that we should carry around with us all the time. For we always feel so tingling and joyous when we have made a sacrifice or see that we have really made someone else unusually happy.

This year for most of us is very different than any we have yet lived, because, even though we are not all actually on the firing line, we are there in our hearts and the thought cannot but give us a strange exultant feeling—to be in the front ranks, marching with the music!

After all, that is just what the spirit of Christmas is. During the Yuletide we are all in the front ranks and triumphantly moving forward, for we are thinking, not of ourselves, but of others. And that very sense which loves and therefore serves, which understands and therefore sacrifices, is the true spirit of Christmas. It is the real thrill of life. It is the greatest and most far-reaching emotion in the world, and just to know that we are capable of that feeling, even though it should come only once a year, would show that there is the right spirit within us, and with a little cultivation we might make it last all through the year.

BESTOWING GIFTS IN SECRET

Practice of Putting Out Shoes and Stockings Resulted From Plan of St. Nicholas.

Christmas stockings have come down to us from the good St. Nicholas, who was a saint of the fourth century of the Christian era and was born December 6, 342, in Lycia, Asia Minor. He was regarded as especially the patron saint of children, young girls and sailors. The Christmas stocking custom arose as follows:

It seems that St. Nicholas, who was the archbishop of Myra, lived in the same town with an impoverished nobleman who, because he had no portions to give his daughters and, indeed, no means with which to support them, was about to sell them into a life of sin. St. Nicholas, who was accustomed to dispense his large fortune in gifts of charity, resolved to rescue the young women. As he approached their house, wondering how he should proceed, the moon shone out and displayed an open window. Instantly St. Nicholas threw a purse of gold in at this window which, falling at the feet of the father of the girls, enabled him to portion his oldest daughter. The second time St. Nicholas visited the house he also was able to throw a purse of gold through an open window, thus providing for the portion of the second daughter. On the third visit the father, watching for his benefactor, cast himself at the feet of the saint and cried:

"Oh, St. Nicholas, servant of God, why seek to hide thyself?"

The saint made the father promise not to reveal his benefactions. From this habit of bestowing gifts in secret and under the cloak of night arose the practice of putting out shoes or stockings for the younger members of the family so that the good saint would be able to fill them without being spied on.

STAR-BEAMS.

While the stars of Christmas shine, Lighting the skies, Let only loving looks Beam from your eyes.

While the bells of Christmas ring, Joyous and clear, Gladly the poor and sad, For love's dear sake.

Give only loving gifts, And in love take; Gladly the poor and sad, For love's dear sake. —Chicago Daily News

Warmth and Smartness in Coats



Some people are stepping out of midwinter coats and turning their backs on cold weather to Journey South, and others are just stepping into them bound for the joys of winter sports in the frozen North. These are the firm believers in the tonic of the cold who have learned how to enjoy arctic weather. Then there are all the rest of us who intend to keep warm and aspire to look smart, whatever icy blasts may blow our way. We refuse to be shut in by the weather and require of midwinter coats warmth and smartness. And the demand is answered with coats and other garments of fur and of textiles that are as warm and rich as furs.

All over the country fur garments of one kind or another are the mode. These earliest coverings of the body remain the most desired and rich skins are rich skins, however made up. They are the inspiration of furriers. Here is a coat made of leopard skins with their incomparable natural markings of black in a gold background. It hangs straight and full from the shoulders, without a belt and has a wide cape collar of beaver and deep cuffs to match. The big collar may be rolled up about the neck and ears and the face snugged down in its warm softness until only the eyes are uncovered. Such a coat carries about sunshine and warmth and almost radiates them. It is fastened with three big tortoise-shell buttons and is three inches shorter than the skirt.

"Velour du nord" is the name of the regal fabric that makes the other coat. It is one of those thick, soft wool cloths that are as protecting and luxurious as a chamols skin, but heavier and softer than this. It is in a dark taupe color with wide cape collar of taupe-lynx fur and deep cuffs to match. It is bordered at the bottom with this fur. The collar can be turned up about the head and the hands find refuge in ample slit pockets. The belt is made of the velour.

For Undercoat or Southern Wear



Many demands are made of the latest sweaters—they must be cozy and pretty and they must not be bulky, to start with. They must be in line with the styles and at the same time—if they are to be successful—they must have attractive variations and original touches to give them distinction. Sweaters, as a part of the wardrobe, are as much a matter of course as shoes and stockings and variety is the spice that flavors them.

The last arrival in slip-over sweaters has made its entrance on fashion's stage, and its portrait appears to us for consideration in the picture above. This young aspirant for favor can hardly fail. It is closely knit and cozy—snug fitting and easy to get on, and it is dainty. One can imagine it in any of the flower-like, lively colors which are approved for spring or in the vivid "sweater tones" of color, or in the beige and gray shades if any one denies herself the privilege of colors that are bright. For in sweaters, young and old alike may indulge a fancy for live colors.

The pretty sweater above owes some of its charming effect to the fine lingerie blouse worn under it. The blouse is of batiste with frills of lace at the front, and its frilled turned-back collar simply froths over on the bright hue sweater, making the freshest and daintiest of vesties and neck-finishings. The blouse might be of net or

Julia Bottomley

Blouse Fad.

The tendency to elongate the front part of the blouse until it is almost like a small apron is one of the interesting style details this season. This is a curious notion, but one that is tremendously popular at present.

Black Satin, the Favorite.

Black satin is the winter season's favorite material for all purposes, with wool duvetyns, cashmere velours and velvets supporting its advance.

The KITCHEN CABINET

Love all, trust a few, Do wrong to none; be able for thine enemy Rather in power than use; and keep thy friend Under thy own life's key; be checked in silence. But never tax'd for speech. —Shakespeare.

A FEW ROYAL CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

The Christmas spirit may best be expressed to our friends by a gift appropriate and not too exacting upon one's resources. We are so apt to think that things common to us will be unappreciated by our friends. This is often the reason we have gifts so characterless that are unenjoyed and we burden our friends with gifts that are not desired.

When one is fortunate enough to live on a farm the gifts to town friends may represent the whole family. The father and boys may put a fowl or a brace of wild game, fruit and a few vegetables in the Christmas basket while mother and the girls will add a box of cookies, a glass or two of jelly, a plant, or a bit of needlework.

The present coming from the farm is not to be despised. A tiny Christmas tree taken from the woods and potted will be a most welcome gift to those who live away from growing things. A walk in the woods will disclose many a bit of green or color to decorate the gift basket. A tiny glass of jelly in a small basket to fit it, tied with a sprig of partridge berry or wintergreen, is such a welcome gift to the invalid. A quaint little jar filled with jam, tied up with a festive bow, is another.

A fern dish with a violet plant, hepatica and a little fern, will be a joy to a shut-in, especially if she has been a country girl.

Wild crabapple jelly is such a delicious one for the Christmas table, and may be made in quantities where the wild crab is plentiful.

A small jar of real farm butter or a box of hickory nut meats, a card or two of honey and a jar of mincemeat, are all suggestive gifts. A nice fat mince pie tied up in tissue with a spray of Christmas greens will be another most happy gift.

If one has an herb bed, a package of assorted herbs will find a warm place in the affections of the town house-keeper.

Honey cakes and boxes of farm-made doughnuts will make many hearts happy who have had to save on sugar this year. These are but a few of many suggestions which may be worked out, each adding a touch of originality to her gift and bringing unalloyed joy to the recipients.

THE BREAKFAST CEREAL.

In most homes, especially where there are children, the first meal of the day is begun with a dish of cereal, usually following a bit of fruit. Baked apple, or any fruit is a safe one to precede the children's cereal. Acid fruits, like grapefruit or oranges, if all sour, will cause digestive trouble if followed by a cereal with cream. Very often we have such a variety of cereals on the market these days that we need never have the same one too often. The average child or grown-up will eat well-cooked oatmeal oftener with enjoyment than any other breakfast food. Many of the cereals will be eaten with relish if served with fruit which would otherwise be refused. The daintiness of serving bears no small part in the manner of its reception.

When serving cream of wheat or any cooked cereal which molds well, pour into a hollow mold and serve filled with fruit of the season. Serve it at the table so that the eye may be charmed with its appearance. Such a dish, when served with cream and sugar, will be happily and quickly eaten.

For the early winter days, cornmeal mush, hominy and graham mush may be served, using any leftover for frying. If possible, have the corn freshly ground, using the whole kernel; it is so much more appetizing. Such cornmeal does not keep well, but if obtained fresh is far superior to the kiln-dried corn.

Whole wheat fresh from the field or granary makes most wholesome and nutritive breakfast food. It must be soaked over night and cooked for half a day to soften the grain. A fireless cooker or double boiler makes the best cooking utensil, as it needs slow cooking at a low temperature. Sliced fried apples with oatmeal is a good combination. A spoonful of sliced peaches or one of fresh berries with any cereal served at the side of the dish, is another.

The leftover breakfast food need not be wasted, as it improves almost any muffin, gem or popover when added to the mixture before baking.

Experience teaches us what fools we have been, but unfortunately it doesn't prevent us from repeating.

EMERGENCY DISHES.

A most delicious pie which may be quickly prepared, providing you have the cooked prunes, is the following: Bake a good rich shell and fill it with stewed, chopped prunes, topped with whipped cream sweetened and flavored. Canned fruit of various kinds may take the place of the prunes, but these make an especially good pie.

Cabbage Salad.—Put a small cabbage head through the meat chopper. Mince a 2-inch square of salt pork in small cubes and fry a golden brown. Pour the boiling hot fat with half of the browned bits of pork over the cabbage with a small shredded onion (the onion may be put through the chopper with the cabbage); stir and mix well; add plenty of salt and a few dashes of cayenne pepper. In the frying pan heat enough vinegar to moisten the salad; pour this over the cabbage boiling hot. Set in the warming oven until ready to serve.

Tomatoes With Corn.—Stew down a pint of tomatoes with one minced onion and a sprig of parsley; season well and put in layers in a baking dish with canned corn. Cover with buttered crumbs and bake until well browned.

Fifteen-Minute Pudding.—Just before dishing up the dinner put on the following pudding to cook: It will be ready to serve in plenty of time for the dessert: Take one cupful of sifted flour, a little salt and a teaspoonful of baking powder; mix well and add enough rich milk to make a drop batter. Butter individual molds or cups, drop in a spoonful of the batter, then a spoonful of canned cherries or strawberries (any juicy fruit); top with another spoonful of batter, set the cups into a pan of boiling water, cover and cook on the top of the stove fifteen minutes. Do not raise the cover while cooking. Serve with sweetened cream or cream and sugar. They are light, tender and delicate when carefully boiled.

Onions and Cheese.—Take a dish of cooked onions, place in layers in a buttered baking dish with white sauce and cheese. Bake until well heated through. Use a rich cream cheese, as otherwise the cheese will cook stringy.

Know the true value of time; snatch, seize and enjoy every moment of it. No idleness, no laziness, no procrastination; never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.—Chesterfield.

DAINTY SWEETS.

A good finish for a heavy meal is some light and dainty sweet which will neither overtax or burden the digestion. One feels unsatisfied with a fine meal if it is not finished with some kind of a dessert. This need not take elaborate preparation or expensive combinations, in fact the simpler the better for young or old.

Cream puffs filled with any desired filling, a bit of ice cream or whipped cream stirred with a spoonful of jam for flavor. Many fillings will occur to suit the taste. Chocolate, or caramel filling is liked, as well as maple. Junket lends itself to various flavors and combinations. A small glass of junket may follow a hearty dinner with no feeling of having eaten too much. A tasty little hurry-up dessert may be prepared by placing chocolate creams on small round crackers, set in the oven until the chocolate is melted and served with coffee.

Graham crackers spread with jelly and decorated with two marshmallows then put into the oven to brown and puff are well liked for another sweet cracker.

A few dates or figs stuffed with a bit of fondant or simply rolled in sugar or stuffed with a nut or two makes a most delightful dessert well relished by all who have a sweet tooth.

Cinnamon Cream Tarts.—Beat a teaspoonful of butter with half a cupful of powdered sugar and half a teaspoonful of cinnamon in a bowl. Place half a dozen split crackers hollow side up in a baking pan, drop a spoonful of this mixture in each and bake in a hot oven for two minutes.

If food of peanut butter serve some squares of sweet chocolate sandwich fashion for the young folks' dessert. This is a most nutritive food and would do for a luncheon when taking a long tramp, as it takes but little space to carry.

Junket.—Warm a pint of milk to the luke-warm stage, add a junket tablet dissolved in a teaspoonful of cold water. Flavor and sweeten to taste, stirring until well blended. Pour into sherbet cups and let stand in a warm room until the junket is set. Serve with sweetened whipped cream or a spoonful of marshmallow cream on top of each cup.

Nellie Maxwell