

Santa Claus and the Mouse.

By EMILIE POULSSON.

One Christmas eve, when Santa Claus
Came to a certain house,
To fill the children's stockings there,
He found a little mouse.

"A merry Christmas, little friend,"
Said Santa, good and kind.
"The same to you, sir, said the mouse:
"I thought you wouldn't mind

"If I should stay awake tonight
And watch you for a while."
"You're very welcome, little mouse,"
Said Santa, with a smile.

And then he filled the stockings up
Before the mouse could wink—
From toe to top, from top to toe,
There wasn't left a chink.

"Now, they won't hold another thing,"
Said Santa Claus, with pride.
A twinkle came to the mouse's eyes
But humbly he replied:

"It's not polite to contradict—
Your pardon I implore—
But in the fullest stocking there
I could put one thing more."

"Oh, ho!" laughed Santa, "silly mouse.
Don't I know how to pack?
By filling stockings all these years,
I should have learned the knack."

And then he took the stocking down
From where it hung so high,
And said: "Now put in one thing more;
I give you leave to try."

The mouseie chuckled to himself,
And then he softly stole
Right to the stocking's crowded toe
And gnawed a little hole.

"Now, if you please, good Santa Claus,
I've put in one thing more;
For you will own that little hole
Was not in there before."

How Santa Claus did laugh and laugh!
And then he gayly spoke:
"Well! you shall have a Christmas cheese
For that nice little joke."

If you don't think this story true,
Why! I can show to you
The *very* stocking with the hole
The little mouse gnawed through.
Selected from "In the Child's World."

Christmas Decorations and Legends.

December was called by the Saxons the winter month, or holy month, in honor of Christmas.

The use of flowers and green trees and boughs for decoration is as old as the human race. The Jews decorated their tabernacles and homes with branches and leaves of the olive, pine, myrtle and palm. The holly is popular for decoration on account of its dark, glossy leaves, and red berries. The Canadian or Winter Holly (*Ilex verticillata*) is so called because its beautiful scarlet berries resemble those of the English Holly, and remain on the bush during the early winter, although its leaves fall off in November.)

The spruce and fir are used for Christmas trees and decorations. The juniper used to be held in reverence, it is said, owing to the legend that it once saved the life of the Virgin and the child Jesus. The story is as follows:

When the Holy Family were fleeing from the soldiers of King Herod, the brooms and chick-peas began to rustle, thus betraying the whereabouts of the fugitives. Fortunately Mary was near a juniper; the tree opened its branches like arms, and enclosed the Virgin and the Child, affording them a safe hiding place. She gave the juniper a special blessing; hence its use at Christmas time.

The Christmas tree, laden with gifts and glittering with light, is of German origin. In the pagan days of Germany, the people believed that the universe was supported by a huge pine tree, whose roots extended deep in the earth, and whose branches were high among the shining stars. When the Germans became Christians, they could not bear to give up their dear old tree, so they made the pine a symbol of the new-born Saviour.

In the very early days of England the oak was considered a sacred tree. Since the mistletoe grew upon it, that was supposed to be sacred, too, and when the old Druidical priests found a vine they cut it with a golden knife, and let it fall upon a white cloth, on which it was carried from the forest to the town. The old veneration is commemorated in the custom of fastening a sprig of mistletoe to a doorway or chandelier, so that every maiden who passes beneath must pay the penalty with a kiss.

Our Saxon ancestors also held the mistletoe in awe. According to their bible, Balder, the most beautiful and dearly beloved of all their Gods, was killed by a bough of mistletoe, which was hurled at him in play, by the blind God Hoder (the darkness). Balder came back to them in the spring-time again.

Now after a long time had elapsed the Christian Bible took the place of the old bible of these Saxons. They continued their religious festivals as before, but they were not held to celebrate the return of Balder, but the birth of the Saviour. Balder was the sun—that is he was the physical *light* of the world. Jesus was the Saviour—the spiritual light of the world.