

their days and months), two white bulls never before yoked, were led to the place. The priest, clothed in white, ascended the tree and cut off the mistletoe with a sickle of gold never used for any other purpose, while the fragments as they fell were carefully caught on a white cloth. Thus devoutly procuring the mistletoe, addressing the revered plant a universal remedy, with mystical ceremonies and jubilant pageantry, the Druids carried it to their principal grove where the religious feast and sacrifices to the Supreme Deity were made. Then, the mistletoe having been distributed among the congregation, or else made into a potation of which each one present took a sip, the priests chanted a prayer that the gods would prosper these people to whom they had already granted this precious medicine plant.

The mistletoe was used by the Romans in religious ceremonies; Virgil speaks of its 'golden leaves,' and in the Welsh language it is sometimes called 'the tree of pure gold.' The followers of Zoroaster gave it credit for some very peculiar virtues, and in the Scandinavian myths it appears as an object of superstition. In Sweden sanitary amulets are still made of mistletoe twigs, and the plant is supposed to be a specific against epilepsy. Mistletoe is a symbol of life-giving forces, because it is one of the lightning-plants of the old Aryan mythology.

The word 'mistletoe' has descended from an old English root referring to its alien position and appearance as a parasite. Kissing under the 'mistletoe' may have reference to the ancient belief—there was a tradition that the maid who was not kissed under a bough of mistletoe at Christmas would not be married until the following year. The young people took good care that it should be hung with plenty of berries, for the ceremony under was not duly performed if a berry was not plucked off with each kiss, and consequently the supply of berries determined the number of kisses.

The Druids only venerated the mistletoe that grew on the oaks; at present it is found so rarely upon that kind of a tree as to have suggested the thought that in its rarity lies the reason why the old sorcerers insisted that the oak's mistletoe was alone endowed with virtue, on the principle that things uncommon are more easily invested with sacred and mysterious character. When no mistletoe at all could be found upon the oaks of a neighborhood, great calamities were portended, for it was thought that the gods had purposely withheld this sign of their favor. Any disturbance of this plant would be a sacrilege fearfully punished.

The common mistletoe (*viscum album*), with its pearly berries, is gathered from the hawthorn, the old apple tree, the lime, the fir, and from other trees. On account of the scarcity of this parasite, of late years, efforts have been made to propagate it. This is done by cleaning off the bark under the joint of a young tree with the moistened thumb, and then pressing the glutinous berry on the cleaned place till it adheres to the bark; it will begin to show growth in about fifteen months.

On Christmas even, at the time the Yule log was brought in and lighted with the last year's brand, it was customary to decorate the windows of every house, in cottage and hall, with bay, laurel, ivy and holly leaves.

'Lo! now is come our joyfulest feast;
Let every man be jolly.
Each room with ivy leaves is drest,
And every post with holly.'

An English gypsy told Charles D. Leland the reason for using evergreens at Christmas. It is this: 'The ivy, and holly, and pine tree never told a word where our Saviour was hiding himself, and so they keep alive and look green all the year. But the ash, like the oak, told of him and where he was hiding, so they remain dead through the winter. And so we gypsies always burn an ash fire every great day.'

The carols which were sung all through the Christmas season, were of two kinds, scriptural and convivial; the first was sung morning and evening until the twelfth day, and the latter at the feasts and carouses.

It was the childlike faith of the Middle Ages that all created things were in sympathy with the Nativity; the cocks crew, the bees in their hives made a more melodious noise, and the cattle in their stalls went down on their knees. In the western part of Devonshire, at twelve o'clock at night on Christmas eve, the oxen in their stalls were always on their knees, as in an attitude of devotion, and making 'a cruel moan like Christian creatures.'

The requisites for good Christmas fare were a blazing in the hall, brawn, pudding and sauce, and mustard with all beef, mutton and pork, shred or mince pies, pigs, veal, goose, capon, turkey, cheese, apples, and nuts with jolly carols.

It was indeed a 'gracious time,' and as we read of the revels and ceremonies and fond foolish beliefs of Christmas-past, we might regret what we have lost in this tamer and less picturesque age, if we did not know that never before in history was Christmas kept so truly and heartily in the spirit of the day as it is now. We have dropped a good many rude and some pretty customs, but we have gained a broadening spirit of almost universal charity, a feeling of real brotherly love, and nearer the divine intention, perhaps none the less real that it is held in check a good deal during the rest of the year. I believe that every year at Christmas time the windows of heaven open wider than ever before, and more men and women hear the song—

'Glory to God in the highest.'

Post Office Crusade

'A NOBLE WORK.'

It was very kind of that Toronto paper to refer so pleasantly to the Post-Office Crusade. An article, almost similar, appeared in the Ottawa 'Evening Journal.' In both there is a mistake. Montreal, not Cocanada, had the pleasure of originating the post-office crusade and the 'Northern Messenger' carried the tidings to India from Canada. It is well to bear this in mind.

Many thanks are due to a kind correspondent in Winnipeg for \$1.00, also to a good 'Friend' at St. Thomas, Ont., for \$1.00. This money has all been paid to the 'Witness' office, and only two names now remain to be filled in with subscriptions—two names of students sent by a young native, who asks our prayers that he 'may help to awaken India.'

Miss Susie Sorabji, of Poona, India, who was lately in Montreal gives this greeting

to the Post-Office Crusade:—'I am in full sympathy with your noble work.' She says that India is to be won for Christ finally by the natives of India; how important, then, that we do all we can to hold up their hands by spreading pure and beautiful words to help them.

Miss Sorabji very kindly, too, asked me to meet her so that we could talk over the Crusade, but I was unable to do so. She is one of seven sisters, whose native mother, a high-caste lady, was consecrated to missions and education. Men laughed at her, but she said, 'If God is with me I will succeed,' and so she did, for now there are schools for girls under her care in different sections of India where conversion to Christ is the aim along with a good education. One of the sisters is a lawyer, a graduate of Oxford; another is studying in England with a view to becoming a doctor among her own people. The Miss Sorabji who visited Montreal is a very bright and attractive young woman, extremely graceful in her bearing, and her dress was picturesque and becoming. She is an eloquent speaker and made a plea for India's women and widows with a fervor that touched all who heard her.

Not long ago a very prettily written letter arrived from Miss Mary Hannay, expressing gratitude for the 'Northern Messenger' which some boy or girl in Canada mails to her. She says she enjoys it so much, and always gives it away to some one else after she reads it. I think that it is a little boy who is the kind one who deserves these prettily expressed thanks. I trust he may see this notice and feel repaid for his faithfulness.

I hope the whole contingent will be encouraged to keep 'always at it,' and some glad day there will be a 'well done' for everyone. Faithfully, Margaret E. Cole, 112 Irvine avenue, Westmount, Que.

P. S.—In January a number of the subscriptions to India will be out. If our 'Messengers' are to continue to carry glad tidings for us we will want to consult our tenth-boxes. Among your Christmas-giving please remember what Miss Sorabji, a native lady, calls our 'noble work.'

Christmas Bells

Dear are the sounds of the Christmas chimes

In the land of the ivied towers,
And they welcome the dearest of festival times

In this Western world of ours!
Bright on the holly and mistletoe bough
The English firelight falls,
And bright are the wreathed evergreens now

That gladden our own home walls.

And hark! the first sweet note that tells

The welcome of the Christmas bells.

They are ringing to-night through the Norway firs,

And across the Swedish fells,
And the Cuban palm-tree dreamily stirs
To the sound of those Christmas bells!

They ring where the Indian Ganges rolls
Its flood through the rice-fields wide;
They swell the far hymns of the Laps and Poles,

To the praise of the Crucified.

Sweeter than tones of the ocean's shells,

Mingle the chimes of the Christmas bells.

The years come not back that have circled away

With the past of the Eastern land,
When He plucked the corn on the Sabbath day,

And healed the withered hand;
But the bells shall join in joyous chime

For the One who walked the sea,
And ring again for the better time
Of the Christ that is to be!