

by suppositions or fanciful ideas of damage.—
Monetary Times.

The Mistletoe.

This mystic parasite has figured in history for ages past. According to Pliny the ancient Druids held it in sacred reverence when found growing upon certain species of the oak family, and great virtues were attributed to it. They used it in their banquets and sacrifices, and called it according to Pliny, "omnia sanatem," which, interpreted into the language of the patent medicine advertisements, would be "all heal." They used great ceremony in gathering it. First, two white bulls, whose horns were then for the first time bound, were led under the tree, when the priest selected for the purpose, clothed in white robes, ascended the tree and cut the mistletoe with a golden sickle, and the green boughs were caught upon a white mantle that had been previously consecrated by appropriate ceremonies. After these ceremonies they slew their victims, praying God to prosper His gifts unto whom he has given them.

In all the legend of the past there are none so little known and so interesting as those of the Scandinavian nations of Northern Europe. In these legends the mistletoe figures as having furnished Hoder, the blind god, with the subtle poison with which he painted the arrow with which he slew the great sun-god, Baldur.

The name itself comes to us honestly from our ancient progenitors, the Anglo-Saxons, who called it the *mistletan*, from *tan*, a twig, and *mistal*, which meant dark, gloomy, mysterious, foggy, or conveyed an idea of that sort which we cannot well define in the present form of the English language, because as people become enlightened the words that conveyed one idea to the superstitious mind have been retained in form but convey quite a different idea to the minds of the enlightened posterity of the people who coined the words.

But the *Southern Lumberman* does not propose to lead its readers into the realms of mythology or archæology, but simply wishes to call their attention to few facts of minor importance that are appropriate to the coming Christmas holiday. We want to call their attention once in a year to a mystic parasite common to a great many forests in the south as well as to most orchard trees. Very few people have ever paid any attention whatever to it, and we will wager a coconut, to be paid promptly on New Year's day, that not one in ten of the most experienced lumberman among them can name the trees upon which the mistletoe is never found.

There are seventy-six known species of mistletoe, but it is claimed that the true mistletoe grows only in England. It has for a thousand years been in demand as a Christian decoration and it is understood and agreed that the lad who steals a kiss from any lass "under the mistletoe" is a thief whose sins are forgiven by foreordination. For this reason a large quantity of mistletoe is now imported every year from England, by society people of the eastern cities, to be used in Christmas festivities. There is no tariff duty imposed on its importa-

tion, and Harper's Monthly, in the "Drawer," December has a highly humorous but instructive article on the subject, the tendency of which leads to the enquiry: Why does not South furnish all the mistletoe needed without importing it from abroad? The only excuse is that the mistletoe of the south is not the genuine *Viscum Album*! Good gracious! The world thought at one time that the South could not grow cotton, and it took many years to convince the Irish flax growers of our ability to do so. Now incredible as it may seem, we grow more than fifty of the seventy-five varieties of the mistletoe, in sufficient quantities to furnish all the young people of the world. Why should we not build up a shipping trade in mistletoe with our northern and eastern people. Ours looks just like the English mistletoe, only it is prettier and we have it in greater variety and abundance, for be it known that nearly all the mistletoe imported from England comes from the apple orchards of Normandy! Suppose our mistletoe is not just the real *viscum Album* of the old Druids, it is just as lucky and fortunate. And, besides, there is not a girl in the world, not even in Boston, who, after having been kissed "under the mistletoe," is going to take the trouble to look up the botany to see whether the article was the true *viscum Album* or a Southern variety—not often. The subject offers food for thought and the promise of a lucrative trade to intelligent enterprise.—*Southern Lumberman.*

Substantial Business Revival.

The liberal trade movement in this city of the preceding fortnight has been continued throughout the current week. The jobbing houses handling seasonable goods are agreeably surprised at the number and size of their daily orders, and the universal promptness with which merchants are paying their bills. Advances from manufacturing centres, with scarce an exception, represent reduced stocks of goods on hand, and some leading lines were sold several weeks in advance of production. The increase in the price of steel rails is one of the marked evidences of the business revival. Six months ago they could be bought in the open market for \$26 a ton, and it was charged that sales had been made for \$25 and \$25.50 a ton. The latest price, established a few days ago, is \$35 a ton. The rise is not less than 35 per cent in the course of four or five months. While this increase in prices has been accruing, the league of the mills to reduce production has been relaxed to permit the additional amount of 250,000 tons of rails to be added to the production. It is said that this entire increased production will be absorbed in railroad construction before April 1, 1886, and a further addition to the output will probably be made by joint agreement between the mill owners. So that the entire amount of the steel rail product for 1886 will be 1,000,000 tons, or an amount sufficient to lay 10,000 miles of track. It is not supposed that this extent of new lines of railroad is to be built next year. Doubtless fully a third of the new steel rails will be used to relay track now composed of iron rails. The railroad epochs may be studied with interest

and instruction. In 1880 and 1881 railroads were built everywhere, and far exceeded the demand of the country and transportation. Lines were run into the wheat country, into the pine woods and into the iron districts of the Northwest. Competing lines laid their tracks wherever a route, however unpromising as to an immediate yield of commodities to be carried by rail, could be found. Overproduction occurred in railroads as in everything else. There were more railroads built than could possibly pay operating expenses. Many companies became bankrupt, and even the strong solvent companies were compelled to borrow money to pay dividends, and to finally cut dividends down or suspend them altogether. The men employed in railroad building were then discharged, and became an idle class. Railroad materials became a drug in the market and could not be sold at any price. This was one great cause of the depression in labor and trade that has prevailed during the past two years. The revival has now come. The natural development of the country into which the new lines were built a few years ago has made them productive railroad property, and the companies that built them are recovering from the embarrassment their construction caused. But a new epoch of railroad construction is opening. The same excess of production may occur, to be followed by a similar period of reaction and general depression in business. It would be far better, however, to "go slow," so as to produce no reaction, and in order that a steady though less rapid rate of onward progress may be realized.

The iron situation, generally, continues to improve. A striking illustration of the change in the market for pig iron during the last three months of the year is presented in the last monthly furnace statement, which shows that there were in blast on the 1st of December 94 anthracite and 89 bituminous furnaces. On the 1st of October there were but 75 anthracite and 88 bituminous. The total capacity per week was 26,816 tons anthracite and 49,790 tons bituminous on December 1st, against 20,419 tons and 43,234 tons respectively, three months previous. This demonstrates, that to keep pace with the increased demand, production has been enlarged to the extent of fully 100,000 tons in three months. Coupling this fact with the general testimony of furnace agents that their surplus stocks are not more than one-tenth part of what they were six months ago, it is clear that, while some recent statements as to the improvement in prices may have been rather overdrawn, the increase in the volume of business has not been overstated.

In the east, west and south there has been a general improvement in the steel and iron industries, and a fair distribution of goods, suitable for the season, and the year is drawing to a close with a satisfactory trade in all branches of the manufacturing industry.—*Chicago Journal of Commerce.*

Branding.

The St. Louis convention would have done good work by stating that the branding of cat-