

Santa Claus

Of all Christmas customs the best known is also the most recent. Santa Claus is a modern improvement.. Saint Nicholas, it is not to be denied, is a fairly hoary figure and he has long been known as the patron saint of children. Just why is not clear. Practically nothing is known about the good saint except that he died Archbishop of Myra in the fourth century. There are one or two legends connecting him with a love and a compassion for young people, but there are also legends which cause him to be associated with sailors. He is also claimed as a patron by brigands, on account of an adventure which he is said to have had with a band of freebooters. Lastly, he is claimed by the profession of pawn brokers, and it is a fact that he is usually represented in mediaeval art with three golden balls in one outstretched hand.

A century or so ago it was the custom in Germany for all the parents in a town or village to send the presents they designed for their children to one chosen individual, who called at each house clad in a motley robe, a mask, and a huge flaxen wig. Knocking on the door, he called in a loud voice for all the good children to appear and receive the gifts which the Christ-child, the Christ-Kindlein, had sent them. This was the primeval Kris Kringle. Coleridge describes this custom, and records that the bad children had a rod left for their correction.

This is a sophisticated age. Very little credulity of a poetic kind remains in us. But the instinct to make merry and throw aside the cares of everyday life is still in us, and until that is gone Christmas will remain. By and by it may come to mean that all the world shall be made glad, not only for a day, but for the entire year of days.

The glories of Christmas half a century ago would no doubt seem poor and cheap to this generation, for life was simple, and devoid of show and glitter. The exchange of costly gifts was not so common as in this generation.

Legends of the Mistletoe

The custom of decorating homes with greenery comes to us direct from our pagan ancestors. Celtic or Teuton, who held their mid-winter festivities at the end of December. The holly and ivy were favored by the Saxons, and St. Augustine allowed his converts to retain the green garlands when the heathen feast of Yule became the holy feast of Christmas.

The mistletoe of the oak was held sacred by the Druids of Ireland. This white-berried plant was regarded as an evil thing by the ancient Norsemen, and the Scandinavian legend of the wicked mistletoe is told in the Norse mythology. The day-god of the Norsemen was called Baldur the Good, and he was beloved by gods and men. Baldur was tormented with dreams threatening him, and, according to the legend, his mother, Freya, resolved to take an oath of all animated things that they would not harm her son. She obtained assent from all save the mistletoe, which she deemed too insignificant to be feared. Her spell worked well. Baldur, though often put to the test, remained invulnerable. There was an evil power called Loki, who often sought to mar the happiness of the gods. He saw with jealous eye their sport, as each in turn hurled missiles at Baldur, and he resolved to find out the secret. So, changing himself into the form of a fair maiden, he hastened to Freya and related what he had seen. The goddess told him the secret of the matter.

'What!' exclaimed Loki, 'have all things sworn to spare Baldur?'

'All plants save one little plant called mistletoe,' she replied. 'I thought that too young and feeble to crave an oath from it.'

Then Loki flew joyfully away to the spot where the parasite grew. Returning, he resumed his own form to the gods. Observing one who was blind standing by himself, he asked, 'Why dost not thou throw something at Baldur?' 'Because,' said the god, 'I am blind and have nothing to throw.'

Loki placed the mistletoe in his hand, saying, 'I will direct thy arm.' Under the guidance of the evil god the plant was thrown. It pierced Baldur, and he fell down dead.

In ancient Ireland the Druid priests cut the mistletoe once a year with a golden sickle, and received the branches solemnly on white cloths. Then, of course, good luck for the year to come was assured, and witches—who were especially afraid of the mistletoe—didn't dare to show their ugly faces in any house guarded by a bit of the mystic plant.

A list of winners in the twelfth half-yearly Kozie Tea Cash Distribution appears elsewhere in this issue...

Take a half-holiday. Do not work on wash day. Lily Washing Tablets will do your washing in one-third the usual time. No rubbing, no drudgery; washing just a PLEASURE. Housewives of many years' standing emphatically endorse these

Domestic

By MAUREEN

To Soften Hard Water.

Rain water is the best for toilet purposes, but if this is unattainable use oatmeal to soften hard water. Make a small bag of coarse muslin, put half a teacupful of oatmeal into it, and tie the opening tightly round, but let the oatmeal lie loosely in the bag. Put this into a gallon of cold water, and let it soak for some hours before using.

Scorched Linen.

To restore scorched linen get two onions, peel and slice them, and extract the juice by squeezing or pounding. Cut up half an ounce of white soap, and add two ounces of fuller's earth; mix them with the onion juice and half a pint of vinegar. Boil this composition well, and spread it when cool over the scorched part of the linen, leaving it to dry thoroughly, and afterwards wash out the linen.

Renovating Ribbons.

Every neat woman appreciates the good effect of occasionally freshening up ribbons, velvets, feathers, and the smaller accessories of the toilet of the well-dressed. A simple way of renovating these things is to pass them over the top of a saucepan in the steam of clean boiling water. Ribbons, lace, crepe, etc., treated in this way become as fresh and crisp as when new. Feathers shaken in the steam, and then shaken in front of a fire to dry, will be as full and fluffy as when first bought.

To Clean Marble Washstands.

When marble tops of tables or washstands have become unsightly from marks made by the various bottles and requisites placed upon them, take two ounces of washing soda, one ounce of powdered pumice stone, and one ounce of powdered chalk. Pound together, and then pass through a sieve. Take some of the powder and make it into a paste with cold water; rub it well over the surface of the marble, and when all stains are removed wash well with soap and water, and the result will repay the labor expended.

Kitchen Hints.

Remove all black and grease from the outside of pans, as well as wash the inside, otherwise there is much loose soot to come off on hands and apron; also as the heat cannot penetrate so easily, time and fuel are wasted.

Remove all scraps from plates and dishes before placing them in water. Rub the worst of the grease off pans and dishes with some soft paper. This does afterwards for lighting fires, and the water used for washing does not become so hopelessly greasy or need changing so often. Wash all silver first. Stand the knives upright in a jug of warm soda water, so that the handles are not in the water, as this discolors and loosens them. Do not put the blades in very hot water, for the expansion of the steel will cause handles to crack.

Enamel and aluminium pans must never be washed with soda. A little salt or fine ash is better than sand to scour these with, as the grains of sand are sharp and scratch the surface.

Re-cooked Meat.

Meat, though a common, is also a costly, item, and quickly mounts up the household expenditure. Therefore it is necessary that it should be used to the greatest advantage. It is impossible to avoid having cold meat, which, in order to make variety, must be re-cooked. Many object to this kind of meat on account of its indigestibility and lack of nutriment, but these faults are usually the result of unskilful treatment. It is important to remember that twice-cooked meat loses some of its flavor and nutriment; therefore it must be very carefully seasoned, and whatever gravy or sauce is served with it should be made from the bones and rough pieces of the joint, so as to obtain all possible nourishment. These should be strained out of the gravy before the meat is put in. Meat placed in cold gravy or stock will have what little nourishment is left in drawn out, with the result that the meat will be tasteless; therefore meat that is to be re-warmed should be put into hot, but not boiling, liquid, because, if boiling, the meat will at once become hardened and tough. The most important rule of all, and the one most generally forgotten, is that re-cooked meat should be allowed to heat thoroughly, but never be allowed to simmer. It is owing to neglect of this rule that twice-cooked meat is so distasteful to many, and justly considered indigestible.

Maureen

LILY WASHING TABLETS

statements. Total cost of wash for family of ten, twopence.—J. HARRISON, Manufacturer, 184 Kilmore street, Christchurch.