

GOLDEN MISTLETOE.

THE WONDERFUL TREE IN A BEAUTIFUL GROVE.

Legends of the Gloomy Vale and Death of Balder the Beautiful—Ancients Believed That Trees Could Feel Pain—Roman and Greek Mythology.

Und grun des Lebens goldner Baum.
—Faust.

The sacred books of the Buddhists grove that in the early days of their religion a question which deeply agitated the minds of the learned was whether or not the trees had souls, says a writer in the Philadelphia Ledger. The controversy raged strongly, for the belief was widespread that in injuring or mutilating a tree proportionate pain was inflicted on its spirit's nature.

The same idea creeps out again and again in Greek and Roman mythology, and the folklore of every country and people in Europe is full of it, and at such seasons as Christmas these primitive customs are actually practiced.

The numerous German and English songs and offerings to the apple trees are still heard and seen on every Christmas. Ovid in his "Metamorphoses" tells the beautiful story of Erichon's impious attack on the grove of Ceres and how the Greek dryads and hamadryads had their lives linked to a tree, and as "this withers and dies they themselves fall away and cease to be. Any injury to bough or twig is felt as a wound, and a wholesale hewing down puts an end to them at once. A cry of anguish escapes them when the cruel ax comes near."

It was this established belief that produced such lines as:

Loud through the air resounds the woodman's stroke,
When, lo! a voice breaks from the groaning oak.

Spare, spare my life, a trembling virgin spare!
Oh, listen to the hamadryad's prayer!
No longer let this fearful ax resound.
Preserve the tree to which my life is bound.
See, from the bark my blood is torn to flow.
I faint, I sink, I perish from your blow.

Accepting, then, this prevalent faith in the actual life and soul of the trees, we must pass on to the subjects on hand—the golden bough or mistletoe—the classic gloomy vale and its locality, wherein the legend of Balder the Beautiful and his death by the mistletoe shaft are in touch with the ancient doctrines of tree worship.

It is often stated that Virgil gave this name of the golden bough to the mistletoe, whereas he only compares it with the mistletoe.

In the sixth book of the "Æneid" he tells us how two doves, guiding Æneas to the gloomy vale, in whose depth grew the golden bough, alighted upon a tree "whence shone a flickering gleam of gold. As in the woods in winter cold, the mistletoe—a plant not native to its tree—is green with fresh leaves and twines its yellow berries about the boles. Such seemed upon the shady oak the leafy gold, so rustled in the gentle breeze the golden leaf." Virgil does not say it is the mistletoe, and yet what else? Its identification is perfect.

The poet locates the gloomy vale in the neighborhood of Lake Avernus, but Italian tradition, as recorded by Servius, points to the grove of Nemi, Aricia. Now the story of this Arician grove is embodied in Macaulay's lines:

The still, glassy lake that sleeps
Beneath Aricia's trees—
Those trees in whose dim shadow
The ghostly priest doth reign.
The priest who slew the slayer
And shall himself be slain.

In days of antiquity in this beautiful grove grew a wonderful tree, round which a prowling figure, sword in hand, seemed to be constantly expectant of an attack from some enemy. Yet he was the priest of the grove, and, by the order of his office, he would some day be killed by the claimant who wished to succeed him. To gain his position he had slain his predecessor, and, in course of time, must himself be slain. Such is a brief context of Strabo's version. The branches of the tree might not be broken, except by a runaway slave. This bough gave him the right to challenge the priest, and, if successful, to assume the title of "king of the wood." Tradition tells that this was the bough which Æneas plucked before he journeyed to the lower world.

In the familiar story from Norse mythology of Balder the Beautiful we recall the facts that he first dreamed and had great foreboding of evil, yet he belonged neither to earth nor heaven. His fellow gods, anxious to protect him, took an oath from fire, air, earth and water, stones, trees and plants, sickness and poison, birds, creeping things and four footed beasts that they should not injure Balder.

Being thus invulnerable, the gods amused themselves by throwing stones and logs at him. Then Loki, the mischief maker, discovered that east of Walhalla grew the mistletoe "that seemed too young and innocent to swear." Pulling it, he placed a branch in blind Hodur's hands, who threw and struck Balder dead. Then his body was placed on his great ship Ringhorn, the funeral pyre was lit, his faithful wife, Nanna—whose tears had fallen on the fatal branch and been turned into pearly berries—and his warhorse were burned with him as the ship drifted away toward the northern sky edge.

Now, when we recall that the sacred sacrificial fires were kindled periodically, we can read plainly and clearly the myth of Balder. He was the tree spirit, the beautiful sacred oak, which could not be injured or wounded by the axes



or weapons of mortals. But the oak must be cut down for the sacred fire, and only in its heart life—the mistletoe—could it be wounded. When it was plucked, the mighty tree tottered and fell.

A Christmas Workshop.

A simple and pretty arrangement for a workshop is to take one yard of china silk and cut off just enough of the length of the material to cover two double pieces of circular pasteboard the size of a small tea plate. Place two and two together, like a pocket pin cushion, having previously gathered each end of the silk on to the wrong side of the board in the form of a long bolster case, sewed together to within a quarter of a yard of the center, which is left open, and after overstretching the two edges of the cardboard ornament each with a full loop of wide satin ribbon, on one side finishing off with a stylish bow of the same. When held together by the loops, the center falls in a soft puff, which is very effective and will hold any amount of wanted work.

National flowers have been adopted in various countries, as follows: Greece, violet; Canada, sugar maple; Egypt, lotus; England, rose; France, flower-de-luce; Germany, cornflower; Ireland, shamrock; Italy, lily; Prussia, thistle; Saxony, nigelletoe; Scotland, thistle; Spain, pomegranate; Wales, leek.

The very peculiar theory has of late been propounded that all women who partake to any extent of malt drinks have large feet. The women of Holland, Germany and even England are quoted as examples, while the women of the wine countries—France, Spain and Italy—are, on the other hand, famed for their small and shapely feet.

A trip between London and Paris was recently made in 6 hours and 32 minutes. From London to Dover, 78.84 miles, took 1 hour and 22 minutes; the passage of the channel, 25 miles, took 1 hour and 15 minutes, and the run from Calais to Paris, 184½ miles, was made in 8 hours and 44 minutes, an average of 56.6 miles, excluding stops.

The title and position of cardinal is the highest dignity in the Roman Catholic church next to the pope. Cardinals are divided into three classes—cardinal bishops, 60; cardinal priests, and 14 cardinal deacons.

J. E. Gore, writing of the solar system, says that "astronomically large as the solar system absolutely is, compared with the size of our own earth, it is compared with the size of the visible universe, merely as a drop in the ocean."

The ancient Greeks, to secure resonance without the use of woodwork, placed under the seats of their theaters earthen pots, with the mouth turned toward the stage, the vibrating mass of air in these serving to re-enforce the sound.

By the slaughter of elephants in Africa an annual profit of some \$1,000,000 is realized. If the elephants, instead of being left a prey to the hunter, were tamed, they would bring an annual profit of some \$118,000,000, according to authorities.

The death of a monarch is a most important event in the history of a nation, and is usually celebrated by a public funeral. The funeral of a monarch is a most important event in the history of a nation, and is usually celebrated by a public funeral.

The first experts of cotton from this country was in 1793, in which year a bag was sent from Charleston to Liverpool, while it was sent from Philadelphia and New York.

Every great city has a large number of bridges, and it is a common sight to see a large number of bridges in a city. The bridges of a city are a common sight to see a large number of bridges in a city.

The largest of the world's great cities is London, which has a population of over 5,000,000. London is a great city, and is one of the most important cities in the world.