

and nice, and also that their salt is in good order, not hard or lumpy; it looks very bad to see a salt-cellar put on table again as it was taken off, without the salt being smoothed over. This can never happen where silver or plated salt-cellars are used, for to prevent mildew the salt should be emptied out of them after every meal, and they should be dusted out.

All glasses, whether on the sideboard or table, should be stood right way up.

Butter looks prettier on a luncheon-table made into different shapes. As doubtless many readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER have never been in a dairy, or seen butter made up, I think some may be glad to know how it is managed.

Have your butter pats (I think they are sometimes called "butter hands") very clean, throw them into quite boiling water for a second, take them out and dip them into cold water; use them immediately to make up your butter, dipping them into cold water now and then between making the little rolls with an ordinary pair of reeded pats. A great many different things can be made, such as shells, balls, twists, knots, &c. A bird's-nest in butter is very pretty, but to make one the butter must be quite hard. Proceed thus:—Put the butter into a small coarse wire sieve, press it through with a pat or a wooden spoon that you have scalded and dipped in cold water. As you press the butter through, move the sieve round in a circle the size of a nest, so as to make the butter fall like twigs, then press down the centre a little, and mould three or four small eggs with the backs of the pats; put them in the nest, and place some parsley on the dish all round the nest before sending to table.

Anything used for butter must be kept thoroughly clean, and then scalded and dipped in cold water before using; then, if lightly handled, no butter will adhere, so that there should be no waste in making these little shapes. If the butter is at all inclined to be soft, it is best to drop the pieces in cold water from the pats. If you wish to model butter with your hands, you must serve them in much the same way as the butter prints, by first putting them in hot water, then in cold.



What's in a Name?

In letters large upon the frame,
That visitors might see,
The painter placed his humble name:
O'Callaghan McGee.

And from Beërshaba to Dan,
The critics with a nod
Exclaimed: "This painting Irishman
Adores his native sod.

"His stout heart's patriotic flame
There's naught on earth can quell;
He takes no wild romantic name
To make his pictures sell!"

Then poets praised in sonnets neat
His stroke so bold and free;
No parlor wall was thought complete
That hadn't a McGee.

All patriots before McGee
Threw lavishly their gold;
His works in the Academy
Were very quickly sold.

His "Digging Clams at Barnegat,"
His "When the Morning Smiled,"
His "Seven Miles from Ararat,"
His "Portrait of a Child,"

Were purchased in a single day
And lauded as divine.—

That night as in his atelier
The artist sipped his wine,

And looked upon his gilded frames,
He grinned from ear to ear:—
"They little think my *real* name's
V. Stuyvesant De Vere!"

R. K. Munkittrick.



Holly and Mistletoe.

BY K. M. H.



HE Mistletoe and the Holly!
Yule-tide and St. Valentine's-
day! What a host of old leg-
ends and quaint customs do
the words recall! Upon the latter
day, as well as upon the Christmas
festival, the holly was always used as
a decoration in olden times.

The use of the mistletoe in the
decoration of churches and the practices of
St. Valentine's day afford singular instances of
that spirit of conciliation on the part of the
early fathers of the Christian church which
led them to ingraft upon the services of their
festival days some of the mythological cele-
brations of their pagan compatriots.

For ages the mistletoe was held in high re-
pute. The Greeks venerated it for its sup-
posed medical properties; Ovid and Virgil had
faith in its magic powers; the Magi gathered
it with religious ceremonies, and the Scandi-
navians dedicated it to their goddess Frigg,
the mother of Balder, although it was to her
the cause of the greatest woe. Balder the
Good had dreams presaging some great harm
about to befall him. He told the assembled
gods, who all expressed their earnest desire to
defend him. His mother, in her distress, ex-
acted an oath from Earth, Air, Fire, and Water
that they would not harm Balder. As a test
of the value of the oath, the gods stood Bal-
der in the midst of their hall and pelted him
with lances, stones, and swords, which fell

harmlessly away from him. But Loke, an evil
divinity, was present. Moved with wonder
and envy he set himself to discover the secret
of Balder's invulnerability. Transforming him-
self into an old woman, he waited upon Frigg,
and telling her how her son bore, unhurt, the
assaults of all the deities, he artfully wormed
himself into her confidence, and won from her
the desired information. For to his inquiry,
whether *all* things had promised not to harm
Balder, Frigg replied all things save the
mistletoe, and that was too feeble to hurt if it
would. Loke bade her adieu, and immediately
set himself to work to fashion an arrow of
mistletoe.

Assuming again his own form he rejoined
the assembly of the gods, and found them still
at their sport; but looking round he saw one
standing aloof, the blind Hoder (god of dark-
ness). Him Loke entreated to join him in
doing honor to the son of Frigg, and placing
the arrow in his hand guided his arm. The
mistletoe flew with fatal accuracy, and pierc-
ing Balder through and through, laid him
lifeless before the horror-stricken gods.

Now did all nature mourn bitterly for the
Sun god, and at the entreaty of his mother
messengers of dignity set out for the realms of
Hel (goddess of the unseen world) to beg her
to restore Balder to the earth. This Hel con-
sented to do, if it should be shown that *all*
things mourned for him. Then every created
thing wept, even the trees drooping their
boughs in token of sorrow. But Loke refused
to shed a tear. In their indignation the gods
fell upon him as the cause of the world's sor-
row, and bound him fast in a cavern, there to
remain in chains, and, says Scandinavian
mythology, the earthquake is caused by his
struggle to break these chains. Till the
regeneration, the renewal of the whole earth,
must Balder remain absent from the world.

Among the Druids the mistletoe was held in
the highest veneration. They had a peculiar
reverence for the number three, and the fact
of the berries and leaves of the mistletoe grow-
ing in triads was sufficient to proclaim it a
sacred plant, by which their god Tutanés set
his seal upon the oak. The great Druidical
solemnities took place at the commencement
of the New Year, and at that time the mistletoe
was cut with great ceremony. Five days after
the new moon the Druids went in stately pro-
cession into the forest, and raised an altar of
grass beneath the finest mistletoe-bearing oak,
and with a golden instrument removed the
sacred plant. The inferior priests stood below
with a white cloth into which it was dropped,
great care being taken to let none fall upon
the ground, as that would be an omen of mis-
fortune to the land. The Druids in their white
vestments then descending from the oak, pro-
ceeded to sacrifice two white bulls, who had
been previously tied to the tree, and the mistle-
toe, after being dipped in pure water, was dis-
tributed among the people, who cherished it as
a protection from witchcraft and an antidote
to poison.

The peasants of Holstein call the mistletoe
the specter branch, because they believe that
it renders spirits visible to men, and even
causes them to speak at command.

At one time we are told, it was the custom

on Christmas eve to carry mistletoe to the high altar of the cathedral of York, "and proclaim a public and universal liberty to all sorts of inferior, and even wicked people, at the gate of the city, toward the four quarters of heaven."

The Poet Gay writes thus of the use of the mistletoe in the decoration of churches :

"When rosemary and bays, the poet's crown,
Are bawled in frequent cries through all the town,
Then judge the festival of Christmas near,
Christmas the joyous period of the year :
Now with bright holly all the temple strew,
With laurel green and sacred mistletoe."

When the time-honored custom of kissing under the mistletoe began, is wrapt in obscurity, but it was probably the cause of the banishment of the mistletoe from the decoration of churches, and of its being used only in convivial assemblages. An English poet gives us a pretty stanza on this subject.

"Under the mistletoe, pearly and green,
Meet the kind lips of the young and the old ;
Glowing as though they had never been cold
Mingle the spirits that long have been twain—
Leaves of the olive branch twined with it still,
While breathings of hope fill the loud carol strain.
Yet why should this holy and festival mirth
In the reign of the Christmas-tide only be found ?
Hang up love's mistletoe over the earth,
And let us kiss under it all the year round."

St. Valentine's day, according to Ben Jonson, shared the holly with Christmas. He says :

"Get some fresh hay there to lay under foot,
Some holly and ivy to make fine the posts,
Is't not Saint Valentine's day ?"

In Kent it was the custom for the girls to burn a holly boy on St. Valentine's-day, and for the boys to return the compliment by likewise sacrificing an ivy girl. Very few memorials remain of Saint Valentine. He seems to have been a gentle, benignant bishop, with a tongue marvelously persuasive among his pagan neighbors. He met with a martyr's fate on a 14th of February, probably about 270, being first beaten with clubs and then beheaded. Pope Julius erected a church to his memory, which for a long time gave the name of Porta Valentine to the gate since known as the Porta del Popolo. In vain do we endeavor to discover any affinity between Bishop Valentine and the customs by which his memory has been preserved and honored. That same spirit of conciliation already referred to as characteristic of the early Christian priesthood toward the pagan world was the cause of this singular transformation of a saint's day. The Festival of the Lupercalia, in which the Romans did honor to Pan and Juno, not only with the banquet, the dance, and the drama, but by a peculiar ceremony, was altered into the Festival of St. Valentine. The ceremony alluded to was one in which the young men drew from a box billets inscribed with the names of maidens, each bachelor devoting himself for twelve months to the lady falling to his lot. This love lottery was retained as a part of the day's observances. In later days an attempt was made by St. Francis de Sales to alter this custom. He endeavored to substitute saintly names for those of earthly maidens; each youthful aspirant being expected to strive during the year to imitate the special excellence of the saint whose name he drew; but this reformation was of short duration, and the young men soon re-

turned with renewed ardor to the primitive custom, to the great satisfaction of their lady friends. We find these customs in high favor in England at a very early date. The Monk of Burg bears witness that year after year men had

"An u-nance in this region
To look and serche Cupid's Kalendere,
And chose their choice by grete affection."

Impatient girls had a custom for St. Valentine's-day. They would write their lovers' names on slips of paper, inclosing them in balls of clay, and place them in the bottom of a vessel filled with water. Whichever name rose to the surface was considered prophetic of the one who should on the morrow appear as their Valentine. Another method of divination was to take five bay-leaves, pin four of them to the corner of the pillow, and the fifth in the middle. If the girl then dreamed of her favored lover she might depend on being his wife before the year was over.

There were sundry different ways of choosing a Valentine, but common custom seemed to have decreed that the first person of the opposite sex met on the morning of St. Valentine's-day was thereby marked out as the year's Valentine. As a faithful Valentine was required to maintain the beauty and virtue of his lady, to escort her to all merry-makings, and to execute all her commands, it was very desirable that the right individuals should meet each other, and, doubtless, there was plenty of watching at early dawn by anxious lovers. A favorite method of choosing a Valentine was by the St. Valentine lottery. The name of a young man and woman were rolled up together and drawn by lot. Then came what was called the relieving of the Valentines, consisting of the young man's claiming his Valentine with a kiss, placing her name on his sleeve or bosom, and giving afterward a ball or treat in her honor.

In some localities in England St. Valentine's-day seems to have been a time for the giving of anonymous presents. As soon as it was dark packages would be carried about the streets in a mysterious manner. A ring at the door bell would be heard, then rapidly retreating steps. Inside all were on the *qui vive*. A rush to the door was made, and the package seized and borne off to be examined. All sorts of presents went flying about in this way, always anonymous, but sure to bear the initials G. M. V. (Good-morrow, Valentine).

These old customs have shared the fate of many another sport and pastime of young England's "merrie days," and even the word Valentine has now lost its significance, and is understood to mean the rhyming letter, usually of compliment or affection, which is the sole surviving relic of old St. Valentine's day. The custom of sending valentines once became nearly obsolete, but it has been revived, and seems now to be fairly established. It is one of those pleasant links with former times which we would not willingly let die, and so, with Charles Lamb, we will wish a hearty good-morrow to all faithful lovers who are not too wise to despise old legends, and to honor, though it be in this singularly incongruous manner, the memory of good Bishop Valentine.



New Year in Japan.

BY LYDIA M. MILLARD.



HERE are a great many beautiful things to be seen in our store windows during the holidays, but I should like very much to walk with some of my young friends through the streets of Japan, on the 6th of February, the day before their New-Year, which comes a little later than ours. Everything is being cleaned up and brightened, from the slate-colored tiles of the low roofs, and the gallery in the upper story looking out upon the street, to the matting covering the lower floor. The mats are made white as snow, with rice powder. The beautiful screens between the walls of the rooms are taken down, and all the beautiful birds, trees, and flowers, painted on their gold ground, are brightened and look like new. If you walk near the bridge of Nippon, the heart of the city, you'll see the sidewalks almost covered with matting, screens, bronze, and porcelain, which are to be cleaned and put back in their places again. In the houses of the rich, you'll see coolies or porters putting everything in order. They are full of fun, tumbling down stairs, stumbling over footstools, or tossing one of their lazy companions up in a blanket.

Over some of the doors, you'll see pine or bamboo trees, bound together at the top with rice-straw garlands, and adorned with oranges and gilded paper. Long straw bands, inwoven with fir branches and ferns, ornament the roofs, and walls, and balconies. The temples and fountains and ships are adorned in the same way with firs and ferns. The streets are crowded with country and city people. The peasant's horses are almost weighed down with bamboo and fir twigs. Everybody carries an umbrella, and the men and women carry their baggage on the back of their neck, wrapped in oil paper. Your ears are almost deafened with the noise of little trumpets, tambourines, and whistles, little flageolets and Dan's pipes. Every storekeeper wants to sell as many as he can; so he whistles and blows his trumpets, and strikes his tambourines, and makes all the little bells jingle as long and as hard as he can. The children try them too, and tease their mothers to buy some of the curious little bears and monkeys,