

Nicholas, Saint Nicholas, or Santa Claus, as we know him. This kindly saint was no legendary character. He lived about 300 A.D., and was a noted Bishop of Asia Minor. He was looked upon as the patron saint of generosity because of his liberality.

Three daughters of a poor nobleman could not marry as advantageously as they should because their father could give them no dowry. But one night one of the daughters found in her room a purse, shaped like a stocking, filled with gold, evidently thrown in the window by someone from without. The next night the second daughter found a purse in her room, and on the third night the father-caught Saint Nicholas in the act of throwing the third purse in the window.

From that story originated the custom of hanging up the stockings on Christmas Eve. Thereafter the young girls at the convent school would hang their stockings on the door of the Mother Superior's room on Saint Nicholas' night. On the following morning they would be found filled with gifts and dainties, and a little hint from Saint Nicholas as to the appearance and character of their future husbands.

Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of Russia, and his festival used to be celebrated earlier in December than the 25th, but now his name is synonymous with Christmas festivities. In parts of Europe he is known as "Peisnichol," or Nicolaus with the fur, because he is supposed to be clad in furs from head to foot.

The idea of St. Nicholas travelling in a sleigh drawn by reindeer originated in the cold Northern countries. The reindeer were the swiftest animals known, and they must needs fly like the wind to carry

Saint Nick the rounds of the world in a night.

VENERATION OF THE HOLLY.

Christmas is never Christmas without the holly wreath and the mistletoe. Christians venerated this holy or holy tree, because to them the little thorny leaves and red berries made in a wreath typified the crown of thorns and the bloody drops. Doubtless they introduced this solemn reminder at the joyous festival in order not to forget the sacredness of the occasion in the general festivities.

The mistle bush, mistletoe—or mistletoe, as we know it—owes its use as a festal decoration to pagan times. According to the Scandinavian legend, Baldur, the most beloved of all the gods, had a premonition that death impended. Whereupon, his mother, Frigga, besought everything that was begotten of earth, air, fire, or water to swear not to harm her son.

But in her request she overlooked the insignificant little mistletoe. Loki, the god of destruction, disguised as an old woman, visited Frigga, and, learning of her oversight, hurried back to where the gods were assembled. There they were amusing themselves by hurling all manner of missiles at Baldur, and all were turned aside. But Loki with an arrow made of mistletoe, pierced Baldur's heart.

In reparation, the mistletoe was given to Frigga to do as she saw fit, provided it touched not earth. And she, to show that she bore no ill will, hung it up, and everyone who passed under it received a kiss as a token that, instead of hatred and jealousy, the mistletoe now stood for love

and forgiveness.

THE SPELL OF THE MISTLETOE.

Among the Celtic nations the mistletoe was an object of veneration, and at the festival of the winter solstice the Prince of the Druids himself cut a bough of it. The people were assembled, and then were led to the woods by the priests, who drove in advance of the company two snow-white bullocks. When the oak tree was found which bore the mistletoe, the plant was cut with a golden sickle, and the bullocks sacrificed.

At present it is the custom for the young men to carry out the doctrine taught by the Scandinavian myth and print a smacking kiss on the lips of any maiden thoughtless enough to stand beneath the suspended mistletoe bough. But for every such kiss one of the white berries of the mistletoe must be removed, and when all the berries have been kissed away the spell is broken.

THE MEANING OF THE SPIRED PUDDING AND PIES.

Almost as important as the gift giving and gift receiving on Christmas Day is the feast of dainties spread on that festal occasion. But even the Christmas dinner has its origin in the dim, distant past. Feasts were always the accompaniment of any festival. In Egypt, at the winter solstice, every family killed and ate a goose as a religious observance.

In the hieroglyphic language of the Egyptians, the figure of a goose was the word "child." The people had noticed that the goose was remarkable for the way in which it protected its young, hence it was looked upon as the symbol of great

love—that love which is willing to sacrifice itself for the object of its affection. This trait was also believed to belong to the god they worshipped, so the Egyptians celebrated this festival by killing and eating a goose.

The plum pudding as a dish in the Christmas feast, has its meaning. The number and richness of its ingredients represented the rich gifts which the kings laid at the feet of the child Jesus.

In earlier days the mince pie, then a great pastry dish, filled with forced meat and fruits, was made box-shaped, to typify the manger in which the Child had lain.—"Golden Penny."

I Will Abide.

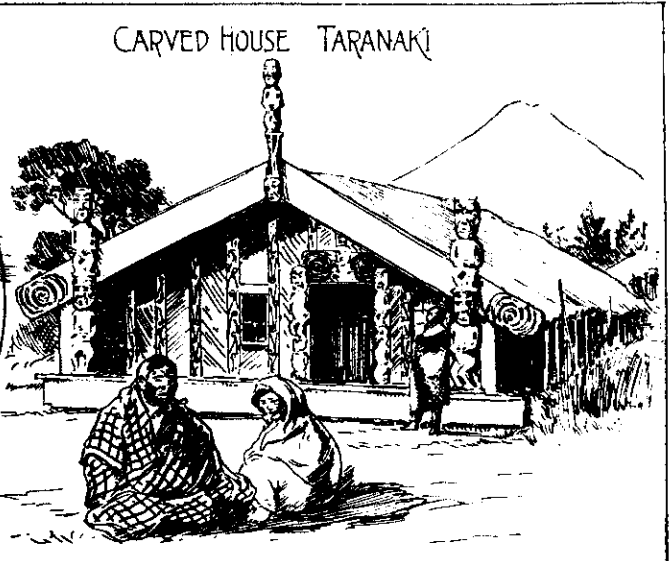
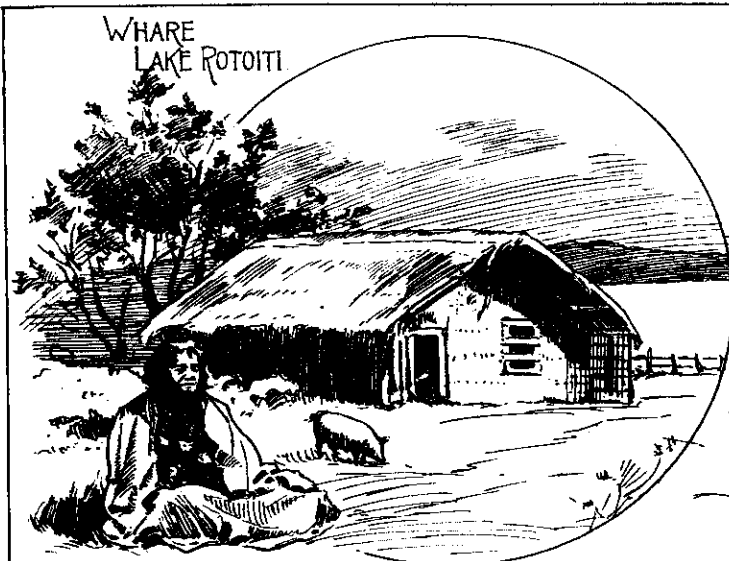
Among so many, can He care?
Can special love be everywhere?
A myriad homes—a myriad ways—
And God's eye over every place?

Over; but in? The world is full;
A grand omnipotence must rule;
But is there life that doth abide
With mine own, living side by side?

So many, and so wide abroad,
Can any heart have all of God?
From the great spaces, vague and dim,
May one small household gather Him?

I asked, my soul bethought of this,
In just that every place of His
Where He hath put and keepeth you,
God hath no other thing to do.

—Adeline Whitney.



SOME NEW ZEALAND DWELLINGS.



ACCOMODATION HOUSE
WEST COAST



GUMDIGGERS HUT
KAIPARA