

Virgin Gives Birth
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)
wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said unto one another, Let us now go and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe, lying in a manger.
And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.
And all they that heard it wondered at these things which were told them, by the shepherds.
But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.
And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)
out of gen-u-line plastic and never touched by human hands. But back then Christmas was an event, it was something that really mattered. And you knew

then what it really meant having a family . . .
She took to scouring antique shops, turning over all the old outcast objects with a frown of puzzled concentration. But nothing seemed right until one day she found it. She was standing at the back of the dustiest, darkest shop she had visited yet and flipping through a pile of old pictures stacked against the wall, and there it was: the frame was scarred, the glass dirty—but it was an engraving, done around the turn of the century, showing the town as it had been then, still small and comfortable. It was a winter scene, snow on the ground, and its very central feature was St. Bartholomew's all decked out in holly wreaths for Christmas. She bore the old engraving off in triumph, and it gave her exquisite happiness to buy it a new frame paying more than she could really afford from her baby sitting money and wrap it with her own hands.
How happy Mr. O'Brien would be!
But now he was gone. The gift stood useless on the floor while Beth wept. He would never know of the surprise she had planned for him.
A movement by the doorway caught her attention. Sister Catherine Marie stood there watching her with a worried look.
"Sister!" she cried. He's dead!"
"Yes, Beth, I'm sorry for you."
"It—it's—so sad!" she blurted, flinging herself into the nun's arms. Sister Catherine Marie held her, stroking her hair. Af-

ter a while she spoke.
"I know how you feel, dear. You were so very close to him"

Traveler's Pack
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)
called Hans lived. He began telling Jack about the money he'd made helping people carry their Christmas bundles.
AROUND THE BEND
Jack started to walk quickly away and soon came to a bend in the road. There on the edge sat a frail old man with a long white beard and a rough brown hood pulled down over his face. He was shivering and his hands were blue from the cold, for his clothing was thin and poor. Beside him was a bulging sack that was much too heavy for him.
When he saw Jack he called in a weak, trembling voice. "Afy boy, will you help an old man to carry his burden?"
"Indeed I will, good sir," came the ready answer. "Just wait a minute while I unfasten this bundle of sticks and I'll load your pack on top of it."
The old man raised his hands and looked up to heaven. "Dear Lord, be praised," he murmured. "I had almost despaired."
Jack was strong but it gave him all he could do to carry the huge pack as well as his own burden. He almost staggered under its weight but all he said was, "Where did you want it taken?"
"Go right ahead," answered the traveler, "and when we reach the place I shall tell you and give you my blessing."
"I was on my way to the village to sell this wood," explained the boy, "but I think I'd better leave it home and come back

later."
So Jack plodded forward with the old man beside him until they reached the little house where he lived. "Come and rest by the fire," said Jack with his kind smile. "Mother will fix you a hot drink to warm you while I unload my wood. I'll gladly carry you pack to your journey's end, for it's Christmas time when all should help their neighbors."
"My journey ends here," said the traveler, following Jack into the house and putting his sack on the table. "This heavy pack which you so gladly carried when all else refused, belongs to you, my son."
Jack was too surprised to say anything. His little brothers and sisters came running to see what was in the big pack and his mother put down her work and stared.
The traveler untied the pack and all sorts of wonderful things came tumbling out. There was a marvelous goose, the largest and plumpest they had ever seen. There were leaves of fine white bread, such as they had never tasted. There were quantities of other good foods and fruits and nuts and sweetmeats. There were toys for the children and warm woolen clothes. And down in the bottom of the great sack was a bag of gold.
Now the traveler flung back his hood, revealing a noble face and dark eyes shining with love and goodness. "Bishop Nicholas!" cried out Jack's mother as she

tell on her knees. The children gasped as they recognized Bishop Nicholas of Myra. He was well known as a saintly generous man who went throughout the land, giving gifts and help to people in need.
All the children knelt and the Bishop gave them his blessing. "Each year at Christmas time I distribute gifts for the Christ Child's sake," he explained. "This year I decided to test the good will of those who receive them. You alone, my son," he said to Jack, "proved worthy."
THE FANCIFUL MISLETOE
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)
magic embodied goodness, evil long life, fertility, friendship, happiness—and 'come kiss me.' And these are only some! There was no end to the power the ancients thought mistletoe possessed.
We, in our age, know mistletoe is a parasite which attaches itself to the branch of a tree. But the Druids, a religious sect who lived in Great Britain 200 years before the birth of Christ, imagined it to be a part of the oak, their most sacred tree, and they held it holy. To the simple minds of these ancients it seemed to have a magical power. Did not mistletoe remain green and bear fruit in the winter months, when all nature had died? Because mistletoe was "life triumphant over death" the Druids saw in

the perked evergreen an actual spirit and used it in observing winter solstice—the shortest day of the year—to ensure the return of vegetation to the land.
The annual cutting of the sacred plant was an occasion of great solemnity. A stately procession of white-robed priests led by the Arch-Druid would walk in the forest until an oak heavy with mistletoe was found. Then, armed with a golden sickle, the Arch-Druid climbed into the tree and cut the plant, catching the sprays in his flowing robes. For it is a deeply rooted superstition that mistletoe must never touch the earth. Throughout the solstice festival, the mistletoe was offered on the altar of the gods; and the priests distributed tiny sprigs among the people as good luck charms.
IN CHRISTIAN TIMES
When Christianity came to the world, the early church adapted a number of pagan customs to fit Christian concepts but it never sanctioned the use of mistletoe in churches. This was not due to any antipathy to the natural plant itself, but on account of the superstitious sentiments which were bound up with it. Even to this day mistletoe is rarely used as a decoration for altars.
There was, however, one exception to the ecclesiastical ban. At the Cathedral of York in England just prior to the Reformation a large bundle of mistletoe was brought to the sanctuary each year at Christmas and sol-

emly placed on the altar by a priest. Father Francis X. Weiser S.J., an authority on Christian customs, explains this rite. "The plant that the Druids had called 'All-heal' was used as a symbol of Christ, the Divine Healer of nations."
No restriction was placed on the use of mistletoe in the home where it continues to be a cherished symbol of friendship and good will. However, because of the church ban, to some mistletoe signaled evil. It became the subject of calamitous legends. One tale revealed it to be the "forbidden fruit" of the Garden of Eden. Another claimed it had begun its existence as a handsome forest tree but became a dwarf plant through shame of having allowed itself to be used for the making of the cross of Calvary. Shakespeare remembered its connection with Christ's cross, for in "Titus Andronicus," you'll recall, he had Tamara speak of "the baleful mistletoe."
LEGENDS
Mistletoe legends, like folk music, have been handed down from generation to generation to become part of every nation's tradition. In France, peasants continue to wear an amulet of mistletoe. It wards off harm, they'll tell you. In parts of England the Christmas bunch is burned on Twelfth Night, lest all the young men and women who have kissed under it never marry. In the Tyrol, a dividing rod of mistletoe wood can detect buried treasure. Here in America

the hunter snaps a twig from the first mistletoe bough he comes upon and sticks it in his cap for luck.
Modern medicine has put mistletoe into proper perspective. The time was when it supposedly cured any ailment. Herbalists prescribed extracts made from the plant for the treatment of poison, battle wounds, warts, ulcers, epilepsy. The American Indian chewed it to get rid of toothache. His wife drank a tea made of it to ease child birth. Although a drug: derived from mistletoe, known as Protoveratrin, has been used recently to relieve high blood pressure and some 200 medical reports deal with the pharmacology of the plant, most medical authorities are inclined to feel that mistletoe's medicinal power is pure superstition.
Also, scientific advancement has recognized the plant as a damaging pest. Like the Greek flatterers of old who bore the title "parasite," mistletoe "sits at the table of another." Common hosts to the plant are the oak, ash, sycamore, sour gum, laurel, black cherry, red maple and cedar.
Mistletoe depends on its host tree for vital minerals and water and to get these nutrients it sends suckers into the wood, depriving the tree of necessities. Of course, a moderate growth of mistletoe doesn't seriously harm a tree; but when the growth gets out of hand, as it does sometimes, it may weaken the tree



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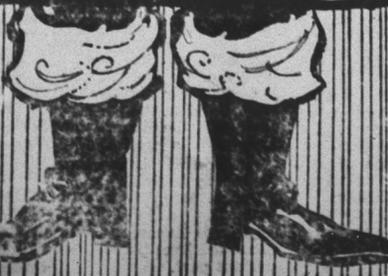
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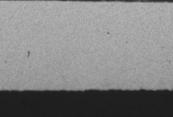
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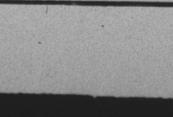
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