Orange County Observer.

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ANNIE AND WILLIE'S PRAYER.

[illegible] before Christmas; "Good-
[illegible] said.
[illegible] Willie had crept into bed:
[illegible] tears on their pillows and tears
[illegible] bosom was heavy with sighs,
[illegible] their stern father's command
[illegible] retire precisely at seven
[illegible] night; for they troubled him
[illegible] more awkward of than ever be-
[illegible] thought this delusion a
[illegible] "Santa Claus" ever had
[illegible] if this he should cover
[illegible] down chimneys with
[illegible] each year.
[illegible] as to why two little heads
[illegible] on their soft, downy
[illegible] the clock on the steeple
[illegible] been spoken by either till
[illegible] from the blanket did
[illegible] "Dear Annie, is you fast
[illegible] Willie," a sweet voice
[illegible] in vain, for I can't shut my
[illegible] it makes me so sorry because
[illegible] and there is no Santa Claus;
[illegible] there is, and it can't be de-
[illegible] every year before mamma
[illegible] been thinking that she used
[illegible] would hear everything mamma
[illegible] said.
[illegible] she asked him to send Santa
[illegible] Claus here
[illegible] stocks full of presents he brought
[illegible] every year.
[illegible] said that we pray dest as mamma
[illegible] then,
[illegible] Him to send him with presents
[illegible] thinking so, too," and without a
[illegible] more
[illegible] little feet bounded out on the
[illegible] little knees the soft carpet
[illegible] they hands were clasped close to
[illegible] Willie, you know we must firmly be-
[illegible] presents we ask for we're sure to
[illegible] receive.
[illegible] wait just as still till I say amen,
[illegible] and God will know that you turn
[illegible] come then
[illegible] look down on my brother and
[illegible] the favor we're asking of
[illegible] a pocket full of pictures, a ring,
[illegible] too, too, that shuts with a
[illegible] dear Jesus, and cause him to
[illegible] Claus loves us as much even
[illegible] he got frightful and angry again
[illegible] the Willie and Angie, and all
[illegible] bless, let Santa Claus come down
[illegible] night,
[illegible] as some presents before it is
[illegible] light.
[illegible] should drive me a bright little
[illegible] some other nice things
[illegible] lot of candy, a book and a toy
[illegible] then, Dessie, I'll be a good boy,
[illegible] prayers being ended, they raised up
[illegible] heads,
[illegible] hearts light and cheerful again
[illegible] at their beds;
[illegible] soon lost in slumber both
[illegible] and deep,
[illegible] fairies in dreamland were roaming
[illegible] in sleep.

[illegible] and the little French clock had
[illegible] ten
[illegible] father had thought of his children
[illegible] again;
[illegible] now to hear Annie's half-smothered
[illegible] sighs,
[illegible] the nightgowns standing in Willie's
[illegible] eyes.
[illegible] with my darlings," he murmured
[illegible] half aloud,
[illegible] I was troublesome to-day, I'm
[illegible] have sent them to early
[illegible] to-day has gone down on
[illegible] they'd forgot their troubles
[illegible] pinched them the thirsty asked
[illegible] make sure I'll steal up to the
[illegible] be harsh to my darlings be-
[illegible] fully as smile the stars
[illegible] their dear heart beats of
[illegible] kiss papa draws forth the
[illegible] grave promise falls sweet on
[illegible] I've forgotten," said he
[illegible] I was a child to have a Christ-
[illegible] harshness, he inwardly
[illegible] prayer and I sleep in
[illegible] the stairs and softly
[illegible] slippers and stole down stairs
[illegible] and boots and was out
[illegible] in the cold where snow-
[illegible] a wonderful "Santa Claus"
[illegible] for he'd passed it the day be-
[illegible]

And there he found crowds on the same errand as he,
Making purchase of presents, with glad heart and free.
Nor stopped he until he had bought everything
From a box full of candy to a tiny gold ring.
Indeed, he kept adding so much to his store
That the various presents outnumbered a score;
Then homeward he turned with his holiday load,
And with Aunt Mary's aid in the nursery 'twas stowed.
Miss Dolly was seated beneath a pine tree,
By the side of a table spread out for a tea;
A writing desk then in the centre was laid,
And on it a ring for which Annie had prayed;
Four acrobats painted in yellow and red
Stood with a block house on a beautiful sled;
There were balls, dogs and horses, books pleasing to see
And birds of all colors were perched in the tree;
While Santa Claus, laughing, stood up in the top,
As if getting ready for more presents to drop.
And as the fond father the picture surveyed
He thought for his trouble he had amply been paid;
And he said to himself as he brushed off a tear,
"I'm happier to-night than I have been for a year.
I've enjoyed more true pleasure than ever before,
What care I if bank stock falls ten per cent. more?
Hereafter I'll make it a rule, I believe,
To have Santa Claus visit us each Christmas Eve."

So thinking he softly extinguished the light,
And tripped downstairs to retire for the night.
As soon as the beams of the bright morning sun
Put the darkness to flight and the stars one by one,
Four little blue eyes out of sleep opened wide,
And at the same moment the presents espied.
Then out of their beds they sprang with a bound,
The very gifts prayed for were all of them found;
They laughed and they cried in their innocent glee,
And shouted for papa to come quick and see
What presents old Santa Claus had brought in the night,
Just the things they had wanted, and left before light.

"And now," said Annie, in a voice soft and low,
"You'll believe there's a Santa Claus, papa, I know."
While dear little Willie climbed up on his knee,
Determined no secret between them should be;
And told, in soft whispers, how Annie had said,
That their dear, blessed mamma, so long ago dead,
Used to kneel down and pray by the side of her chair,
And that God, up in heaven, had answered her prayer!
"Then we got up and prayed just as well as we could,
And God answered our prayers; now wasn't He good?"
"I should say that He was! He sent you all these,
And knew just what presents my children would please.
Well, well, let him think so, the dear little elf,
I'would be cruel to tell him I did it, myself."

Blind father! who caused your stern heart to relent?
And the hasty word spoken so soon to repent?
'Twas the Being who bade you steal softly up stairs,
And made you His agent to answer their prayers.

—Sophia Peabody.

LEGEND OF THE MISTLETOE.

BY LOUISA M. ALCOTT.

LIGHT merrily blazed the yule log in the square open fire place, and the dark oak panels of the little room caught and threw back again in softer color the red light of the flames. The room was filled with the rosy glow, and black shadows danced in time to the flickering firelight on the floor and walls. At times the fierce wind outside blew down the chimney a shower of snow which fell with a sizzle upon the crackling log, but the flames only burned the brighter as though determined to outdo the Christmas storm, and the noise of the gale was lost in the merry splatter and crack of the fire.

Before the log sat a youth and maiden, and for a little time they sat in silence reading their future in the red coals, and though neither told the other of their dream each felt that their futures were the same. Suddenly the young man turned toward the girl. "I bought a bitter mistletoe to-day," he said; "do you know the origin of its use? Shall I tell you the story?"

She looked at him dreamily. "Yes," she answered, her lips scarcely moving.

"And will you promise not to interrupt?"

"Yes," was the low reply.

He laid the green spray with its crimson berries upon her brown curls, and bending near her began:

"Baldur, the son of Odin, the old Norse god, was called the third because of his kind and loving nature, and wherever he went among the gods or men he was received with the kiss of peace." The young man hesitated a moment, then he caught sight of the green spray that crowned the fair face of the girl and he was emboldened. "Like this," he whispered. He waited a moment and then seeing the brown eyes turned inquiringly toward him he continued, "But Baldur in his dreams was warned that his life was in peril, so he called the gods together and giving them the kiss of peace—the gods were numbered by the score," he explained, "and you promised not to interrupt. He told them of his fears and they resolved to do all in their power to prevent the calamity. Frigga, the wife of Odin, made all things on earth swear not to injure him, but she overlooked the mistletoe, which she thought too puny. She did not know its power as I do. All right, I'll continue. After this Baldur used to supply all the fun for the gods, who would throw all sorts of things at him and improve their aim because they knew he could not be harmed. And Baldur used to return a kiss for each blow, and if he got hit six times he would give six—like this. But Loki, that unpleasant fellow whom no one used to ever kiss, (like this) learned that the mistletoe had taken no oath, so he got a little spray and sharpened it and then went to watch the fun. There was an old blind god called Hodur who couldn't hit Baldur because he couldn't see him, and Loki went up to him and whispered, 'Don't you want to hit Baldur and get a kiss? (like this) and Hodur said 'Yep.' So Loki gave him the mistletoe and guided his throw and Baldur was pierced through and he fell dead and he couldn't kiss anybody any more, (like this) and everybody was stricken with sorrow. So after trying to get back his life they gave up the job and laid him on his ship, placed a spray of mistletoe over his head and all the Valkyr, a lot of pretty girls who used to be messenger boys for the gods, came and kissed him, like this—and this and that and why on Christmas eve anybody can kiss anybody else like this if they only have a spray of mistletoe over their head."

"What has Christmas Eve got to do with it?" asked the maiden, reaching for the spray in her hair. As she said it she started. "Oh, Tom!" she cried, "those berries are red! How could you make such a mistake? All your time wasted and——"

The young man looked perplexed. How had he failed, he wondered. The results of mistletoe could not have been different. He was about to ask when the girl started to her feet and like a frightened spirit passed through the portieres. Was she displeased, and was this her dismissal? As he pondered thus a hand threw aside the curtains and a face that paler even than the glowing coals looked shyly through.

"Tom," she faltered, "you know that holly didn't count—holly never does. It wasn't fair, so——I've got a piece of real mistletoe. Now tell me all about Baldur."—Munsey.

The Yule Log.

While the yule log burns upon the hearth
With joy and music and Christmas cheer,
A fire should smile in each home of
[illegible] children all the year round.
A flame is kindled in hearth and home,
And shines as well for brothers and sisters
Bright as good deeds which still grow on
When dim and cold the yule log dies.

We know not but it may know
A spark of true divinity
[illegible]
Forgetful, thankless, it may neglect,
Then kindle your love far and wide
Warmth to every happy hearth,
Pity symbols of the fame and love
That purify and bless the earth.

—Louisa M. Alcott.

SANTA CLAUS' MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRER.

Growth of American Christmas Customs.

America has welcomed and adopted the Christmas tree with cordial affection and treated it as if it were a product of her own inventive brain. Transplanted to the United States by the early Dutch settlers of New York and by the Germans who established themselves in Pennsylvania, it grew and flourished as it did in its native soil. Its advance was slow, but in 1830 the Christmas tree had become a fixed factor in the holiday celebrations, not only in families of direct German descent, but among that composite population called American. Small cedar trees were first used, and were called "Christmas bushes." They were decorated with rosy apples, paper flowers, a few small candles, gilded nuts and "Christmas cakes." This last confection seems to be entirely out of date. It took the form of small horses, dogs, cows, hearts and diamonds, and was a combination of flour and water paste and white and colored sugar frosting. Even by those who recall the Christmas cake with fondest recollection it is admitted to have been rather a delight to the eye than a joy to the palate or the digestion.

As years went on, and the young nation grew older and richer and the life of the people more luxurious and complex, the "Christmas bushes," with their paper flowers, and "Christmas cakes," developed into a tree, which is often an elaborate and expensive affair.

But it is not in civilized or Christian lands alone that this wonderful Christmas tree grows. Missionaries have planted it in China, in Japan, in India, Africa, in the islands of the sea, so that yellow, brown and black faces, as well as white, gaze up at it with delight.—New York Mail and Express.

Torturing the Tortoise.

The beautiful tortoise shell, from which combs and hairpins are made, is not, as is generally supposed, the shell proper from the turtle, but the scales which form its covering. The turtle whose shell is valued in commerce is the small variety known as the hawksbill, which is found on the coral islands of the Southern seas. During the night the turtles leave the water to deposit their eggs in the sand, and it is then that they are captured by the watchful turtle hunters. They are turned on their backs and left in this helpless condition until morning, when the work of loosening the scales begins. This is the repulsive part of the business. The turtles are not killed, as this would soon lead to their extermination.

They are fastened by pegs to the ground in their natural position and a mass of dry leaves lit upon their backs. The heat is not great enough to injure the shell, but merely to cause it to separate at the joints. A large blade, very similar to a chemist's spatula, is then inserted horizontally between the laminæ, which are gently pried from the back. Great care must be taken not to injure the shell by too much heat, and yet it is not forced off until it is fully prepared for separation by a sufficient amount of warmth.

The operation is the extreme of cruelty, and many turtles do not survive it.

A Misunderstanding.

"I notice Jenks doesn't speak to you. What's the matter?"

"I can't help it. I started to talk to him about Christmas decorations the other day, and he thought I referred to the black eyes he got in a broil with a mutual friend recently."

QUIPS FOR CHRISTMAS.

Good Santa Claus may well know wild, and pay out on a strike, if every woman, man and child insist they want a bike.—Judge.

Buy up the Christmas books liberally, and next year the authors will get royalties enough to dine at a restaurant.—Atlanta Constitution.

"Papa," said Tommy, "do you think Santa Claus would be offended if I put a note into the chimney and told him in which toy store they kept the best fire engines?"—Harper's Bazar.

Mrs. Sumatra—"I do wish I could get my husband to swear off smoking for a while." Mrs. Stogie—"Why don't you give him a box of cigars for Christmas?"—Philadelphia North American.

He—"I mean to give you an elegant engagement ring, and we'll call it your Christmas present." She—"I'm not to be outdone in generosity. I'll give it right back again."—Detroit Free Press.

"Mamie got a diamond ring for her Christmas." "How did she get it?" "Hung up her stocking." "Jack, of course?" "But how did Jack get it?" "Hung up his watch."—Illustrated Monthly.

First Newsboy—"Goin' to hang up your stockin' Christmas Eve?" Second Newsboy—"Nix." First Newsboy—"Better do it. You might get 'em filled." Second Newsboy—"They're filled now." First Newsboy—"What with?" Second Newsboy—"Holes."—Cleveland Leader.

The approaching Christmas was under discussion in a Belbeield household. "What would you like Santa Claus to bring, little girl?" asked the papa of his small daughter. "I would like him to bring Christmas some one," replied the maiden.—Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

"What are you going to give George for Christmas?" "Well, I thought I'd work him something, but I'm so mad at what he said that I don't feel like giving him a thing." "What did he say?" "He said he hoped I wouldn't spoil my eyes and rack my brain trying to make him a present." "Well, that was all right, wasn't it?" "Then he added that I could buy something so much better and cheaper. I'm angry enough to go and get that toilet table set for him that I have wanted so long."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The Yule Log.

In some parts of Germany the Yule log is placed on the hearth on Christmas Eve, and, if possible, kept burning for two or three days. Then a piece of it is laid aside for the purpose of lighting the next year's log and of guarding the household from harm. Pieces of the wood charred, but not quite burnt out in the Christmas fire, are also placed under the family bed in some German villages to avert the dreaded lightning stroke, which appears in this relation to be the type of fire in its evil aspect, in contradistinction from the solar orb, the representative of beneficent light and warmth. The custom of burning a Yule log for three days and nights in each homestead is almost certainly a survival from the oblation once offered to the sun at the winter solstice.

Three centuries after the Christian era sun worship was still maintained in Brittany, and in Normandy, not more than a hundred years ago, the Druid fire was extinguished on December 24, and the Christmas log was ignited by the aid of a flame procured from the lamp burning in the neighboring church. This fact affords a curious instance of the peaceable transference of respect and reverence from the sacred fire of a purely heathen creed to the ecclesiastical lights of Christendom. When the pagan rites for procuring unsullied fire were forbidden, or fell into desuetude, the ideas to which they owed their origin and development, instead of perishing, continued to exist more or less perfectly, by attaching themselves to images and ceremonies having no direct association with them.—Gentleman's Magazine.

A Letter From Ted.

[illegible] I want a sled
[illegible] and nice
[illegible] a boy
A lot of snow and ice.

A NOTED INDIAN SLAYER.

A MONTANA MAN HAS MADE FORTY REDSKINS BITE THE DUST.

He Killed Seven in a Single Combat and Five in Another—Hates All Indians Because a Favorite Brother Was Slain by Them—Wiry Lewis Wetzel Caught.

"Lewis Wetzel, who lived in the western part of Virginia, became noted as an Indian fighter previous to and during the Revolutionary War," remarked an old timer, who was in a reminiscent mood yesterday. "He was a large, wiry, athletic man, who became an Indian hunter because Indians had killed all his nearest kindred in their raids into the settlements of western Virginia. He possessed a frame that it seemed impossible to tire, and he was considered the best shot with a rifle in all that country. He killed Indians out of pure revenge, and he not only killed them when on the warpath, but whenever he could engage with them. He could load his rifle running, and, therefore, was a dangerous antagonist. He was one of the few men of the West who could fire at the edge of a knife and cut the bullet in two every time at a distance of ten yards. He enjoyed his prowess, and when in the settlements he was a companionable man, but hunting Indians he was morose and disagreeable, and much preferred to be alone. It is said that he even killed Indian women and children, and it is well known that he killed Indians who were ambassadors to the whites on peaceful errands. If he ever saw an Indian that he did not kill it has not been recorded. In the upper Ohio River country his name has been handed down from father to son and many exploits have been told of him which never appeared in print. There is a county in West Virginia named after him, and romances have been written whose heroes have his character.

"Montana has a man now living whose career has been something like that of Wetzel. He has not probably killed as many Indians, but that has not been his fault. He is said to have slain at least forty redskins, and he has not been particular what tribe they belonged to or where they were. He has taken as great risks in killing Indians as Wetzel ever did. The reason of his hatred for the whole Indian race was the killing of a favorite brother in a family of seven or eight boys by Piegans. He was a good shot, and used a Winchester rifle instead of the old muzzle-loading flint lock rifle that Wetzel carried. He is David Warcham, of Fergus County.

"I have heard accounts of but two of the battles, but no doubt a history of others would be just as interesting. He encountered five bucks, evidently on the warpath, or a horse stealing expedition. He had not been with him, but he went home, which was not far off, and returned without. He sought a good spot and began firing. The Indians made fight, but he dropped them so fast that two started to run away, but he was too swift for them even, and every one was killed.

"Another time he and a pilgrim were camping out, and in the night the Indians stole both their horses. They followed the Indians, who evidently did not expect a visit from them. They crept up close to the camp and found the horses tied at the camp. Warcham's horse was a pet, and whinnied when it scented its master, so the Indians did not awake, and both horses were taken away. They could not get their own saddles, but got two old Indian saddles, [illegible] being better than riding bare back. Then they stampeded the Indian horses, and drove them toward Fort Benton. Passing a [illegible] camp, Warcham told his companion to hurry along with the horses as fast as he could and he would wait for the Indians, seven in number, who, they had seen coming afar off. He concealed himself as well as he could and awaited their coming. When the battle was over the seven Indians had become good Indians, and Warcham had not a single scratch. After resting his horse he overtook his companion, who was nearly scared to death and almost worn out with the old saddle. They reaped, not fearing any danger, and rode leisurely into Fort Benton, where they sold their stock and remained until they had recruited. It is related that neither was able to sit down for a week after arriving in the town.

"Warcham, even to this day, when he sees an Indian, fires up, gnashes his teeth, and regrets that he has not his gun with him. He has never killed any women or children, but those who know him best are certain that few Indians have ever met him on the plains and gone away alive. He is now in the vigor of life, between forty-five and fifty years old, and is regarded by all his neighbors as one of the state's best citizens. But he can't conceal, and doesn't try to conceal, his extreme hatred of all Indians."—Helena (Montana) Independent.

A Stamp That Represents $1000.

Of the 250 United States stamps which have been issued, par values have ranged from one cent to $5000. Five dollars is the highest value among postage stamps, but newspaper stamps reach the hundred dollar mark, while a revenue stamp may represent $5000.