

the Druids: whenever enemies met under the mistletoe in the forest, they had to lay down their arms and observe a truce until the next day. From this comes the custom of hanging a ball of mistletoe from the ceiling and exchanging kisses under it as a sign of friendship and goodwill.

In the 18th Century, the exchanging of kisses between a man and a woman was adopted as a promise to marry. At Christmas a young lady standing under a ball of mistletoe cannot refuse to be kissed. The kiss could mean deep romance, lasting friendship and goodwill. It was believed that if the girl remained unknissed, she cannot expect to marry the following year.

About the mistletoe plant

Mistletoe is a partial parasite, a "hemiparasite." As a parasitic plant, it grows on the branches or trunk of a tree and actually sends out roots that penetrate into the tree and take up nutrients. It is also capable for growing on its own, producing its own food by photosynthesis.

There are two types of mistletoe. The European mistletoe (*Viscum album*) is a green shrub with small, yellow flowers and white, sticky berries which are considered poisonous. It commonly seen on apple trees, and sometimes on oak trees. The rarer oak mistletoe was greatly venerated by the ancient Celts and Germans and used as a ceremonial plant by early Europeans. The mistletoe found in North America (*Phoradendron flavescens*) grows as a parasite on trees from New Jersey to Florida.

