



"Blessing the Geese."

Charles J. Tabor

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Christmas.—About the year 1825 the children used to go round from house to house at Baldon just before Christmas, and beg for evergreens, apples, or pence, singing the following words :

Holly and ivy,
Mistletoe bough,
Give me an apple,
And I'll go now.
Give me another
For my little brother,
And I'll go home,
And tell father and mother. (Christmas, 1901).

PERCY MANNING.

"BLESSING THE GESE."

A lady correspondent writes me :

"Some twenty years ago I was residing about two miles from Epping, Essex. One morning while standing at my window I saw a flock of goslings come out of a lane, driven by an old woman who was dressed in the style of the pictures of 'Old Mother Goose.' She drove them to a piece of grass at the side of the road, and walked up and down in front of them, spreading her arms over them and bowing first one way and then the other, at the same time saying some words which I could not catch, but they evidently formed some kind of incantation. I asked my maid (a country girl) if she knew what the old woman was doing. 'Oh, yes,' the girl said, 'that is old Mother Jenkins; she is blessing Farmer R—'s geese.' I asked her what she meant, and was told that when a flock of goslings came to a certain age the owner always sends for Mother Jenkins, otherwise they would never prosper. The girl assured me all the breeders of geese patronised this old woman, who was paid a fee for her services, and that she made the principal part of her living in this way. 'Now,' said my maid, 'they will grow strong and flourish.' I ought to add that the old woman held a kind of wand in her hand, which she waved over the geese whilst muttering her incantation."

Another lady, resident at Saffron Walden at about the time mentioned, and well acquainted with other parts of the county, says she has never heard of this practice.

CHARLES J. TABOR.