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The Willow Man

J.H. Ewing

There once was a Willow, and he was very old,
And all his leaves fell off from him, and left him in the cold;
But ere the rude winter could buffet him with snow,
There grew upon his hoary head a crop of Mistletoe.

All wrinkled and furrowed was this old Willow's skin,
His taper fingers trembled, and his arms were very thin;
Two round eyes and hollow, that stared but did not see,
And sprawling feet that never walked, had this most ancient tree.

A Dame who dwelt a-near was the only one who knew
That every year upon his head the Christmas berries grew;
And when the Dame cut them, she said—it was her whim—
"A merry Christmas to you, Sir," and left a bit for him.

"Oh, Granny dear, tell us," the children cried, "where we
May find the shining mistletoe that grows upon the tree?"
At length the Dame told them, but cautioned them to mind
To greet the willow civilly, and leave a bit behind.

"Who cares," said the children, "for this old Willow-man?
We'll take the Mistletoe, and he may catch us if he can."
With rage the ancient Willow shakes in every limb,
For they have taken all, and have not left a bit for him.



Then bright gleamed the holly, the Christmas berries shone,
But in the wintry wind, without, the Willow-man did moan:
"Ungrateful, and wasteful! the mystic Mistletoe
A hundred years hath grown on me, but never more shall grow."

A year soon passed by, and the children came once more,
But not a sprig of Mistletoe the aged Willow bore.
Each slender spray pointed; he mocked them in his glee,
And chuckled in his wooden heart, that ancient Willow-tree.

O children, who gather the spoils of wood and wold,
From selfish greed and wilful waste your little hands withhold.
Though fair things be common, this moral bear in mind,
"Pick thankfully and modestly, and leave a bit behind."

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