

XMAS DECORATIONS

GREENS AND FLOWERS OF MANY VARIETIES USED.

Both the Northland and the Southland Contribute Each Their Share of Holiday Beauty—Holly and the Pine.

Far behind we are leaving the bare, unbrightened Christmas of Puritanism, are making this holiday our greatest one. Of comparatively recent date is this change, of decidedly recent date, the general custom in America of the lavish use of special decorations in honor of Christmas.

The south has long followed the customs of Merrie England in the matter of bringing in from wood and field the beautiful Christmas greens with which to give home and church



THE HOLLY.

festive air; but from the pine lands of Maine to the mistletoe haunts of California, from the creeping ground-pines of northern Wisconsin to the high parasite greens down in Hawaii, we all have learned how to keep Christmas. Poor indeed is the house that does not show Christmas wreath in the window, hang holly over the picture of some beloved absent one, sport a bit of mischief-proving mistletoe.

Once the housewife was concerned only with the gifts for her brood; now a most important part of the preparation is the Christmas decorations. But in both city and village we have goodly store to choose from. The markets are overflowing; greatest strides have been made in the "Christmas greens" industry. Such opportunity as we have to make house and church beautiful. First of all, of course, is the tree, and this we may buy very reasonably, the best of all a fragrant, symmetrical, strong balsam fir; then we shall want yards and yards of ground-pine, to loop about chandelier, to wreath from corner to corner, to drape about pictures; holly with its greenest of green and reddest of red, is indispensable, and we select many branches; the mistletoe we get in smaller quantities, but pay much attention to quality, want little twigs thick with waxen berries. Then the house would not be complete, according to present notions, unless there were some of the wonderful Christmas blossoms; and we buy both potted plant and cut flowers. A house full of fragrant pines and blossoms makes an ideal Christmas atmosphere, bespeaks rugged winter beauty, and sweet summer promise.

Probably even middle-aged people of the day think the Christmas tree



THE MISTLETOE.

has been common here for many, many years; but in reality it is hardly 30 years since we adopted this feature of the day. Half a century ago it was only foreigners that made use of it, children of Americans knowing it only as a pleasant myth. And England in the second quarter of the last century considered the tree still a German institution, as not yet fully belonging to her; to-day the English-speaking nations vie with the Germans in love for the tree.

It is illustrative of the manner in which big things grow from the smallest of beginnings, the building up of the Christmas tree industry in America. "Country Life in America" tells the story of its birth: "About 20 years ago a number of duck hunters cruising along the coasts of Maine noticed the millions of young balsam firs which grew along the shores, and the brilliant idea occurred to one member of the party that these symmetrical evergreens would make excellent Christmas trees. . . . When the New York yachtman offered to buy a few shiploads of young firs, the honest Maine farmers thought he was joking. But when the city man

opened his purse and showed the color of his money, they fell to with a will. The first venture proved a success, and others hurried into the business. Ten years later nearly the whole coast of Maine was stripped of firs, and the business moved inland. The trade has grown until now over 1,000,000 Christmas trees are sold every year in New York and New England, of which two-thirds come from Maine alone."

Ground-pine, so pretty and so much procurable for a little money, comes from the northern lake region. Wisconsin sends forth yearly something like 200 tons. It is feared this decoration may in the course of a few years become very scarce, it being necessary to pull the plant up by the roots in gathering the greens. The gay holly, more popular than the ground-pine, comes, at least the best of it, from the two states of Delaware and Maryland. There is some importation of English holly and mistletoe, but not a great deal.

People in Atlanta, Ga., do not have to buy their mistletoe, the city authorities are glad to give it away in wagon loads. It is a parasite that disfigures the trees on which it grows, appearing in bunches from one to three feet across. When detached from the shade trees in Atlanta, anyone that cares for it may come and cart it away.

Because of its magic, rather than decorative qualities—though the graceful waxen clusters have a certain beauty of their own—it is not bought in large quantities. Nevertheless, we are said to use about 10,000 pounds of it at Christmas time. And when we call to mind all the magic that can be worked by a single sprig, think of the conjuring done by 10,000 pounds! Anyone caught under the mistletoe must pay forfeit of a kiss. And if an unmarried (but still marriageable) woman, place a bit of mistletoe over a door, the first man walking under it at once falls under her spell. If she disapprove of him, she may let him go, but he is unable to make freedom for himself.

The use of flowers adds to the beauty of the Christmas decorations, but never should we let go of the Christmas greens; they carry the traditions, bring up old memories, as no



THE POINSETTIA.

costly orchid or rose is able. A flower that displays with wondrous vividness the happy Christmas green and red, is the tropic blossom called by the name of poinsettia. It has a center of yellowish dots, radiating from which, in most graceful drooping lines, are gorgeous pointed leaves, more flaming than any leaf our autumn puts forth. The green leaves of the plant are vivid and polished, the whole very, very beautiful. The florists at the Christmas season sell both potted poinsettia and cut flowers, neither lasting many days, but most satisfying while they last.

Cineraria, with their lovely colors and texture of petals, are favorite potted blooms, and primroses vie with cyclamen for favor. Some dealers are now forcing lilacs for Christmas offerings, but they have not yet appeared in any quantities. Roses, it is needless to mention, are well liked, but the Christmas prices are pretty stiff.

Each year some novelty for decoration is introduced, and the florists' windows are filled with the old stand-bys side by side with the intrusive new blossom or leaf. Beautiful bronze and copper leaves, the galax, are making their way in the north; it is now liked to put a leaf or two with the Christmas package. They come from the highlands of the Carolinas, and the demand for them is providing considerable work for the idle mountaineers. When they arrive in good condition they are exquisite, and now the greatest care is being taken in the sorting and packing of the galax. The galax region is of wide extent, reaching from Georgia to Virginia. The richest leaf coloring does not appear until late in the year, until after the frosts. At the proper time, whole mountaineer families will turn out to harvest this beautiful crop, parents and the 10 or 12 children climbing about in search of the finest leaves. None with spot or tear will be accepted, and after home is reached there must be another sorting. Those that pass inspection are tied in bunches, so many to a bunch, and then taken to the local buyer. Here they are carefully packed in layers, moss between the layers, oiled papers on the sides of the cases, and sent on to the cities, reaching there with their woods bronze and gold but slightly lessened.

KATHERINE POPE.

Quaint Old Customs.

In the olden time the Yule log was always laid aside before it was burnt out, so that on the next Christmas day the new Yule log might be lighted with the charred remains of its predecessor.

SETTING THE CHRISTMAS DINNER TABLE

In serving the Christmas dinner the table should appeal to the eye, as well as to the stomach, and the hostess should look well to the setting of the festive board and the decorations. To be a model dinner, the hostess requires a perfectly appointed table, well cooked, tempting food, and the correct serving of the same.

In selecting her decorations she should consider the size of the table and the number of the guests. If the table be small every effort should be bent toward making it appear large and well filled. The favors can be of good size and the decorations numerous and of a nature that would look fussy upon a more sizable table. If the table be large and the guests numerous, the effort should be to make it look smaller. This is done by keeping it plain and by arranging the trimmings high. Avoid over-decoration. It is a nice practice to place a trifle at each plate in the way of a favor—a card bearing an inscription, a little basket of flowers, a rose, a pretty vinaigrette, a silver card case, or a date book, or a calendar for 1906.



A DAINTY CHRISTMAS DINNER TABLE.

ing a large table, for the plainer the better, providing there be a certain degree of prettiness.

Christmas dinners come late on Christmas day, whether it be a noon-day dinner, which is served at three o'clock, or a dinner at six. In either case, the light falls before the dinner is over, and there must be artificial light.

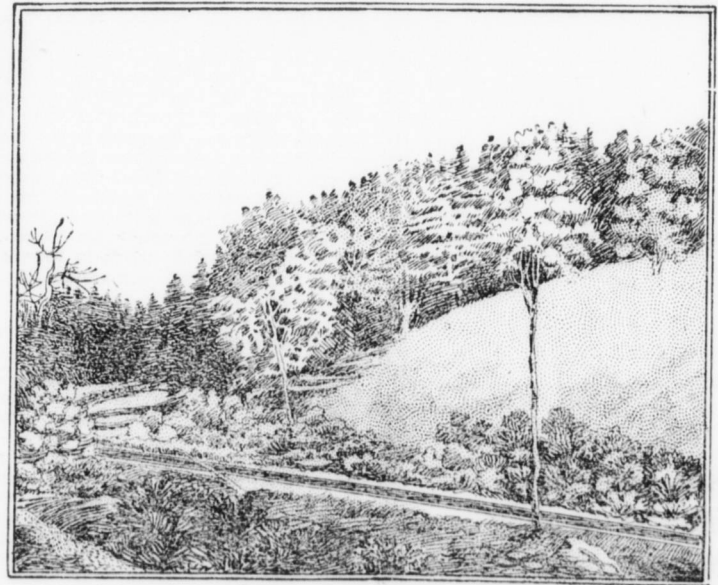
It is a pretty plan to set the table with candles and to light them in the middle of the dinner. A good time for this is when the turkey is taken off and the dessert brought in.

The service at each plate for an informal family dinner consists of a plate, a large dinner napkin, folded square, a water tumbler, two knives—one steel knife and one butter spreader—and two forks, one shorter than the other; also two teaspoons.

At unusually formal dinners bread and butter is not served, and so the "butter spreader" can be done away with. The matter of individual salts and peppers depends upon the custom of the household. It is perfectly good form to have them on the table, and if it is the family custom to do so, they need not be dispensed with on Christmas day.

Let the table be set in the family manner, and then go about the de-

WHERE THE KENTUCKY HOLLY GROWS



WHERE KENTUCKY HOLLY GROWS.

Have you ever stopped to consider where all the holly and laurel, so popular for decorating the homes during the Christmas season, come from? Comparatively few persons to whom this question might be put would be able to answer it.

A great quantity of it comes from Kentucky. During practically the entire month of December the mountaineers of eastern Kentucky, with their wives and children, are busy gathering the boughs of holly, with their pretty red berries, and it is shipped to dealers in all the principal cities throughout the country. As a rule it takes all the help available to supply the enormous demand.

The holly of eastern Kentucky is the finest in the world. It is the most perfect green and is usually loaded down with the beautiful red berries. At the same time it is the most difficult to gather, for the reason that the little trees grow in the most inaccessible places. Sometimes a tree will have only two or three good boughs on it, the others being scant of foliage and of inferior color, and the trade demands that the boughs shall be full, fresh and studded with berries. The native mountain boys are invaluable to the shippers of holly. They climb the trees like squirrels, run out on the limbs and bend them down to the ground, where the women and children hold them and strip them of their green boughs.

Great difficulty is experienced by the shippers in getting the holly to the shipping point after it has been cut and crated, for at this time of year the mountain roads are almost impassable for heavy teams. The boxes of holly are often brought to the station by small boys on crude sleds made by their own hands.

To the average mountaineer the holly is not a thing of beauty, and as for decorating their houses for Christmas, such a thing is not to be thought of.

CHRISTMAS GIVING

IT IS GENERAL AMONG ALL CLASSES IN AMERICA.

The Rich as a Rule Give Generously of Their Vast Means—Vast Sums Sent to Europe by Emigrants.

Christmastide is the time of good cheer. The time when, with a natural impulse, the millionaire, banker, broker, merchant and the wage worker remember their less fortunate brother man. The man who would undertake even to approximate the millions given away at this time of year would set himself an impossible task, but the following information may aid one to form some idea.

The present-day custom of employers of giving money gifts to their employees undoubtedly had its origin among bankers and brokers; but it has gradually spread until now the employer who does not distribute Christmas envelopes to make glad the men and women who work for him is the exception that proves the rule.

In New York's financial center, Wall street, the year 1901 is still well remembered for the great sums of money given by the financiers, bankers and brokers to their thousands of employees; it was the record year for good cheer. For instance, it is a well-known fact that the firm of J. P. Morgan & Co. gave to its employees alone upward of half a million dollars. Every clerk received an amount equivalent to his year's salary, while the heads of departments had checks amounting from \$5,000 to \$20,000 handed to them with the firm's best wishes for a "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

But while the gifts have not been so large since, no man who finds his living in Wall street suffers for want of generosity on the part of his employer at this season. For years, no matter what the condition of the market, one well-known broker has given \$100 in gold to each of his office boys, twice that sum to a few of the clerks, and \$500 to the rest, the telegraphers



THE MILLIONAIRE'S TIME OF CHAUNTY.

and all others in his employ. All told, this broker drops something like \$10,000 into the Christmas box.

Although wage-earners in other parts of trade probably, as a rule, do not fare as well as this, few there are who are entirely forgotten.

A certain big department store in one of the eastern cities has given each of its 2,000 odd employees five dollars apiece for several years past. The amount is not graded according to the employee's position and importance. The members of the firm take the ground that they give the five-dollar bills simply as a reminder of the good will they bear their workers, and so the head of the silk department is not entitled to a gift one tithe bigger than that received by the humblest package wrapper in the store.

For some reason or other, five dollars has come to be looked on, outside of banking and financial circles, as about the right sum to be given to employees. Inquiry among office workers in the sky-scrapers and the sales-people in the retail and wholesale stores has substantiated this statement.

But many a firm does not limit its Christmas box contributions to those who work for it directly. This is particularly true of concerns with offices in the skyscrapers. The elevator men, the superintendent, the window cleaners, the scrub women, all are taken care of. And the amount of money they get is a caution. In one of the lesser skyscrapers of New York the three elevator men, when they counted up their gifts on last Christmas eve, found that they had received a little over \$100 apiece. These men had put up a box, artistically painted with holly designs, in each elevator. Quite a lot of small change was dropped into them, but more was given them direct by the tenants, in sums varying from \$1 to \$25.

The Christmas pickings of this trio are small, though, when compared with that of the men who run elevators in the great office buildings that have several thousand tenants in each of several hundred, as in the trio's case.

Another class of men which reaps a harvest during Christmas week is the waiters. In the down-town restaurants of New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, where only lunch is served, the waiter who does not clear \$75 over and above his usual perquisites feels sure that there is no "good will toward men" on earth. Yet his holiday tips would be regarded

as a mere pittance by the dignified automaton who attends to the stomach's wants in the swell hotels up town. Five and ten-dollar bills come his way in a seemingly never-ending stream. For your millionaire at dinner around the mellow season finds the chief aid to good digestion in making happy those who wait on him. Waiters who ought to know, declare that it is not uncommon for a waiter in such a place as the Waldorf-Astoria to come out \$300 and \$400 and even \$500 ahead during holiday week.

Another contribution of generous proportions put into the Christmas box is that for dinners to the poor. Hundreds of dinners of this character are given on Christmas day throughout this broad land—dinners with turkey and cranberry sauce and pie and ice cream, and all the good things associated with the day. And these good things cost money—turkey at 25



THE ELEVATOR MAN'S OPPORTUNITY.

cents a pound, and the other delicacies in proportion.

Last year the Salvation Army fed 300,000 poor in our large cities, and over \$100,000 was collected for his purpose by means of the army's pot, now a familiar sight at this season to every dweller in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and other cities. Amounts varying from one cent to \$500 are dropped into the pots. So many pennies are contributed in New York and Chicago that machines are employed in counting them.

Many millionaires there are also who are noted for their gifts at this time of the year to cheer the poor. A big wholesale poultry dealer in New York has had one of the country's leading millionaires for a regular customer for the last six Christmases, and each season he places an order for 500 turkeys—\$1,200 for this one item alone. John E. Andrus, mayor of Yonkers, N. Y., and owner of \$90,000,000 worth of property, gives away more than a quarter of a million dollars to charity every year, and by far the greatest part of this fortune is distributed at this season. The poor of Yonkers always have a merry Christmas, because of Mr. Andrus. Last year he sent out 1,200 dinners and gifts by the wagonload for the children.

In this connection we must also take into consideration the money sent to Europe by Uncle Sam's new citizens just before Christmas. It has amounted to about \$2,000,000 yearly since 1900. The Christmas boats of 1903, the last sailing on December 12, and the last on the 19th, carried to the old country 161,603 post office money orders valued at \$1,896,295.23, besides many thousands of dollars in registered letters. Of these money orders \$1,331, calling for \$830,638.18, went to Great Britain. Thirty-two



SENDING MONEY TO EUROPE.

thousand seven hundred and fifteen Germans were made happy by the receipt of \$284,328.94 among them.

Though less than 6,000 Italians sent money gifts to relatives and friends, the average value of each gift was thirty-three and a third dollars; while the 81,000 Englishmen who remembered their old associates did so to the extent of something under ten dollars apiece. The Hungarians sent the most generous gifts, each averaging \$19. Then came the Russians, \$17.50, with the Austrians next, a few cents less than \$17. The Germans sent the smallest gifts, \$8.50, they being the only ones below the English.

The Italian, with his plebeian and mud-covered clothes, may seem anything but sentimental and warm-hearted when he is passed on the street, but the figures prove that at least at one season of the year he leads all of our new citizens in dispensing Christmas cheer across seas, where, but for the immigrants' contribution in the Christmas box, the day would be a cheerless one indeed for many a family.

Big Candles Costly.

The largest Christmas candles made are nearly six feet high, weigh about 40 pounds, are of pure white beeswax and cost \$25 apiece.

St. Nick This Time.

King Dollar isn't so much in it right now as our good St. Nickel is.