

The Christmas Tree

How It Originated, How It Is Secured For the Market, and Some Interesting Legends of the Dim Past

By **WALTON WILLIAMS**

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THE Christmas tree goes so far back into the night of time that it is quite impossible to tell where or by whom it was first introduced. Almost every country has its legend claiming for its own the tree which bears such generous fruit. In Scandinavia it is said to have sprung from the "service tree," which germinated from soil soaked by the blood of two unfortunate lovers, a claim substantiated by the statement that at Christmastide inextinguishable lights gleamed from its green branches. In a French romance of the thirteenth century a great tree is described whose branches are covered with burning candles and on whose top is the vision of a child with a halo round his head, the tree and candles representing mankind and the child the infant Saviour.

A beautiful German story credits St. Winfred with giving the Christmas tree to the world. The story is illustrative of the gospel supplanting paganism. Before a group of converts St. Winfred felled a great oak which had been an object of the worship to the Druids. A fine young fir tree immediately appeared in its place, on seeing which St. Winfred said: "This lit-

other children. The doll noticed that he had great blue eyes, which seemed ever so large as he looked wonderingly at all that was going on. Then there came a knocking on the wall, and the children knew that it was a signal for them to get back to bed and not take cold, and back they scrambled, laughing and tumbling over one another, and covered themselves up.

Presently the father and mother came in and distributed the toys. The doll was for one of the girls, but the boy insisted on having it himself. Then when all were loaded with presents they carried them down to the breakfast room.

What a day it was! The children were racing about, playing with their toys, and people were coming in continually to see the presents, and the sun shone brightly on the snow outside, and the fire shone brightly within on the brass andirons and fender, and after dinner stories were told the children till they were all astonished by the number of wonderful things that happen. The boy with the light hair and blue eyes lay in his mother's arms, hugging the doll with her breast pressed against his, so that she could

on the mantel. "It's just as well; the world isn't all like this household."

"It's just as well," echoed the girl image. "Your beauty will not have to fade."

"I don't want to go," cried the doll mournfully. "I want to stay with my blue eyed boy. The world may be full of sadness, but there must be pleasure as well, for it is here."

There was something so plaintive in her voice that even the images refrained from any further remarks. The fire blazed hotter, and the wax, which had as yet only softened, began to melt. Something splattered on the floor. It was a drop of melted wax.

Oh, that her little boy would get up and move her back from the fire! But he slept on peacefully, and as she had no voice for real children she couldn't call to him.

So the doll felt that she was melting away. Drop by drop she fell on the floor. The room, with its rich hangings, the children sleeping, the firelight flickering, the shadows and, above all, the memory of her brief existence—for, after all, a doll can only exist—seemed to be gradually fading away. She sighed to think that she couldn't have been born with a soul, to be loved and go on loving forever; that she could not grow up like a real child to see the unfolding of all the wonderful things in the world, passing from one existence to another instead of going out altogether. Then she thought that she might never have been born at all, never have had the one glimpse of the happy household, the one Christmas the blue eyed boy and her single day of love. So she said: "I can't understand it. I will try not to murmur, but trust that it is all for the best."

And then—and then she awoke! The horror of melting had only been a dream. She had fallen asleep before the hot fire, but some kind hand had drawn the chair back, and in a few moments she was again clasped in the fond arms of her blue eyed boy.

CHRISTMAS IN MEXICO.

How the Day Is Celebrated in the Land of Dinz.

In Mexico Christmas eve is observed, as in Spain, with the Noche Buena. The streets and plazas are thronged with people. Of all the shop windows so gay and brilliant in their holiday attire none is so bright as the confectioner's. Nowhere is the confectioner's art carried to a greater perfection. At midnight of the Noche Buena all Mexico forsakes its pleasures and repairs to the Misa del Gallo, or mass of the cock, a high mass of the most imposing character, which, in every one of the magnificent temples reared by the Catholic church in the City of Mexico, is celebrated exactly at midnight on Christmas eve or morning to commemorate the Saviour's birth. All the churches have an augmented choir and a large orchestra specially engaged for the occasion. The mass is celebrated with every concomitant that can heighten its effect and grandeur.

Christmas Day in Russia.

In certain parts of Russia the children at Christmas eve begin playing pranks that are as odd as they are amusing. Chief among their drolleries is that of disguising themselves as animals and in the assumed costume of wild beasts disporting themselves through the neighborhood. As many skins as possible are secured, and in these the leading boys are clad. Wolves, bears, ostriches even, are represented. All of the boys gather in one party, those who are not posing as brutes forming a train for the escort and display of the pseudo menagerie. Some act as keepers, holding their disguised companions in check, while others startle the quiet of the night by rude strains drawn from harsh and primitive musical instruments. Torches are borne, and in the fitful light, opposed by black shadows, the scene is at once grotesque and vivid.

A Thoughtful Husband.

What is more touching at the holiday season than to see an old man planning a pleasant surprise for his aged wife?

"It's tryin' ter raise money enough ter git my wife a new dress for Christmas, sah," said Uncle Ebony to Mr. Featherstone.

"Ah, I see. You want me to give you some chores to do, uh-cle, eh?"

"Well, no, sah. I t'ought perhaps you could git de old lady a job at washin', sah!"

Christmas Presents.

The giving of presents on Christmas day undoubtedly owes its origin to a general idea to carry into practice the biblical mandate, "Peace on earth; good will to men." At first the great lords made presents to their retainers, and the season was marked by universal charity. By degrees the practice of Christmas giving spread until now everybody gives his or her friends presents.

Why Tommy Is Doing Penance.

Grandma—Are you looking forward to your Christmas dinner, Tommy?

Tommy—Yep, grandma, but not so much as Johnny Jones.

Grandma—Why so, Thomas?

Tommy—His grandma died last week, and he'll get all her Christmas turkey.

Changing Countenance.

He changed countenance rapidly. Slipping on his face the Santa Claus mask, he made a triumphant entry into the parlor with the bundle of toys.

The Past Versus the Present.

Oh, Christmas time is coming fast. So cheer up, girls; be pleasant. And shake the fellow with the past. For that one with the present.

CHRISTMAS AT SANDRINGHAM

How the Royal Family of Great Britain Celebrates.

The royal family of Great Britain keeps up Christmas at Sandringham in a right royal and old-fashioned way. Tasteful decorations with holly and mistletoe abound everywhere. Every one comes down to the dining room, where breakfast is taken en famille. Every one has presents for some one else. All the servants and tenants are remembered, so that there are many happy hearts on Christmas morning. Substantial joints, geese and turkeys, with other good things, have a delightful way of turning up at the very houses where they are most wanted.

After breakfast the royal family and guests and the ladies and gentlemen of the household go on a tour of inspection to view the decorations, and then, provided the weather is fine, they walk to church, which, of course, has been tastefully adorned in appropriate and approved Christmas fashion. On the entry of the king and queen the congregation rises—that is the only formality observed. The king's domestic chaplain takes the service—a bright choral service, with Christmas hymns and an anthem.

Then comes luncheon—which is the children's dinner—attended by the king and queen and other members of the family. The Christmas pudding is brought in, blazing up merrily, to the intense delight of the little princes and princesses.

The late afternoon is the most exciting time for the juniors. The doors of a certain room have been kept rigorously fastened since the previous evening, her majesty and other members of her family having duly dressed a large Christmas tree therein. The door is opened, and the whole party troops in, while the royal children evince the greatest delight at the Christmas tree ablaze with lights and weighed down with presents. Afterward all sorts of games are entered into with a heartiness and zest that must surely appeal to every one.

Dinner comes along at 8:45, to which all guests staying in the house and many of the household are invited by the king. The king and queen and guests assemble in the drawing room first, and then a procession is formed, led, of course, by their majesties, who are followed in order of precedence by the others. The tables are laid in the grand salon. The guests are seated at small oval tables, the king and queen sitting opposite each other at one, and are waited on by special footmen. Boar's head, baron of beef and plum pudding are the staple dishes of the royal Christmas dinner.

After dinner there may be a dance or a command performance in the state ballroom, the walls of which are decorated by gorgeous Indian trophies presented to his majesty when he visited that country.—Pictorial Magazine.

The Universal Desire.

She was superbly dressed in the pinnacle of fashion and would have been beautiful but for a certain stern, businesslike expression that rather marred the sweetness of her face.

First looking up and down, she darted swiftly into a narrow passageway and was soon knocking at a door emblazoned with the legend: "Signor Ono Margerino, Clairvoyant, Future Foretold."

The door opened.

"Where is the signor?" she nervously demanded.

"In bed, mum."

"Horrors! What's the matter with him?"

"Nervous prostration, brought on by overwork."

"Overwork?"

"Yes, mum. Since September he's been busy peerin' into de future fer people wot wanted ter know de value uv Christmas presents dey wuz goin' to get so's they'd know how much ter spend on theirs."

Stiffing a shriek of despair, she sped away on the hunt for some other clairvoyant.—New York Herald.

The Animals At Christmas

SAID Santa Claus, "'Tis Christmas eve (The animals looked pleasant), And each of you will now receive His yearly Christmas present. But I'd be glad if every guest Would mention what he'd like the best."

The Tapir said: "That pleases me. I'll state succinctly, therefore, If I may be so bold and free— The only thing I care for Would be those matches on the shelf, With which I'd like to light myself."

His wish was granted. Then up spake A timid little Adder: "Sir, but a trifle it will take To make my Christmas gladder; A slate and pencil, if you please, Would let me do my sums with ease."

The Reindeer said: "You may believe I'd be a happy fellow If I were sure I would receive A good sized umberfellow; And also I'd like four goshes, Es and a rubber mackintosh."

The Pig a fountain pen desired; The Cow in horns requested; The Horse, for a new hat acquired, His gratitude attested. The Caterpillar said: "I am Proud of my caterpillarism."

So all of them were gay and glad, And they were happy, very; They liked the presents that they had And waxed exceedingly merry. Dear humans, at your Christmas feasts, Pray take a lesson from the beasts.

Carolyn Wells in Reader.

Local news on every page.

A Doll's Christmas

.....By **LAWTON JOHNSON**

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A Quaint Tale of Life in the Nursery When Little Boys and Girls Are All Sound Asleep

ONE Christmas eve a wax doll sat on a chair in a pretty room in which a number of children were in bed. A fire was burning on the hearth. Stockings were hanging to the mantel to be filled with toys for the children who were sleeping soundly, doubtless dreaming of what they were to receive in the morning. The face of one of them, a delicate, fair haired boy, was turned toward the doll, and she did not tire looking at it, for the face, though pale and thin, was very delicately molded.

On the mantel were two figures in porcelain. One was a boy in an old fashioned coat and knee breeches, with a sash around his waist and a cocked hat and feather. His right hand was thrust into his coat in front, and he looked like a figure of Napoleon. The other was a girl, with a short dress and a sailor hat. Her head was poised one side, and she looked very well satisfied with herself. Indeed, she was very pretty.

"How do you do?" said the girl image to the doll. "Don't you think this a pleasant room?"

"Indeed it is, but I've not see many. I was only born"— She paused to

The Greeks also call Christmas the Feast of Lights.

The Romans in their saturnalia decorated trees with images of Roman gods as well as with candles and burned Yule logs in honor of these gods. The early Christians, however, frowned upon all such pagan adjuncts to the Christmas celebration. With them the Feast of the Nativity was the extreme of solemnity, and they were as much opposed to Christmas trees and lights, music and laughter, as were the Puritans.

The first authentic account of the Christmas tree is not recorded until the sixteenth century. It appears in a German manuscript, and, as the Germans responded least to Latin influences of all the nations which fell heir to the Roman empire's lands, to them rather than to the Romans must be ascribed the honor of introducing it. It was the marriage of Queen Victoria to a German prince which brought the modern Christmas tree to England, and a German immigrant started the custom in America. The first Christmas tree in France was lighted in the Tuileries in 1840 by the Duchess Helena. To view the great heaps of Christ-



TAKING HOME THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

tie tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace, for your houses are built of fir. It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven. Let it be called the tree of the Christ Child. Gather about it, not in the wild-wood, but in your homes. There it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts."

Many Germans hold that Martin Luther first conceived the Christmas tree. One of the most popular of German engravings represents him sitting in the bosom of his family, with a lighted Christmas tree on the table before him. Luther was traveling alone one Christmas eve. The snow covered country and the trees gleaming at every point with the reflected light of the winter moon made upon the great reformer the deepest impression. Going home, he went into the garden and, cutting a little fir tree, brought it into the nursery, put some candles on its branches and lighted them to reproduce the effect of the beautiful moonlit trees in the forest.

Antiquarians connect the Christmas tree with the great tree Yggdrasil of Norse mythology or with the pine trees of the Roman saturnalia, the pagan forerunner of our Christmas. Others look to the ancient Egyptians as originators of the idea. These men were wont to decorate their houses at the time of the winter solstice with branches of the date palm, emblems of immortality and of the starry firmament. In medieval times there was a tradition that a child invented an illuminated tree. Candles were used by the Jews in their Feast of Lights, which was celebrated at this season.

hear his heart beat, and she wondered why there was no such beating in her own heart. This was the happiest moment she had ever known. She was only a day old, but something told her that nothing in the world could ever make her happier.

When the children went upstairs the boy insisted on keeping the doll by him till he got into bed, when his mother persuaded him to part with it till morning. She placed it on a chair before the fire where he could see it till he should go to sleep and the first thing on awakening in the morning.

When the children were all asleep, the doll looked up from the chair at the images on the mantel. She was too happy to go to sleep.

"What a lovely day I have had," she said.

"Just wait," replied the boy image. "Till you have been knocked about the world awhile and you'll see." He looked as wise as an owl.

"I think it very nice," said the girl image, "so long as you are young and pretty, but I don't like the idea of getting old and cracked, perhaps having my arms or legs broken off."

The wind was rising without, and suddenly the fire blazed with a cheerful warmth. It was very pleasant for awhile, but presently it seemed to be too hot. The doll thought she began to feel a softening in her feet. She didn't know what it meant, but it frightened her. It extended to her legs; then she felt it in her arms and at last in her face and neck. A lot of wax fell down on the coals, and the fire blazed higher, hotter than ever. The doll felt herself melting away.

"You're going," said the boy figure



WRITING TO DEAR OLD SANTA CLAUS.

think again when she was born, but couldn't remember, so she said instead, "Isn't it a beautiful world?"

"Do you think so?" said the boy. "My sister and I have had a hard time getting into it. We were baked in a furnace, and it was so hot."

"Well, don't tell me about it," interrupted the doll. "I'd rather hear about pleasant places."

The figures told her a great many things, but the girl was very vain of her beauty, and the boy was taken up with what he knew about the world, of which the doll knew nothing at all, so she didn't listen long, but fell asleep while they were talking.

Suddenly she awoke with a start. What was that noise in the chimney? She had scarcely time to think about it when out on the hearth popped a little figure in fur. He unstrapped a pack; he carried and filled all the stockings with toys. Then he jumped back into the chimney and was gone in a twinkling. This set the doll to wondering more than ever.

Everything was again silent except the clock, which ticked very loud. There were the children asleep in bed, the little pale faced boy with his head resting on his arm, the girl image on the mantel with her head on one side thinking how pretty she was and the boy thinking how much he knew about the world. The doll soon went to sleep again.

In the morning she was awakened by a shouting. The children were running about in their night clothes, taking their toys from their stockings and chattering like monkeys. The fair haired boy sat up in bed and looked on, for he was too delicate to get up like the

mas trees which line the market streets of our big cities just before the holidays. No one would fancy that scarcely a tree could be left standing of the un-murmuring hemlocks which constituted Longfellow's forest primeval. Every hard timber state in the Union is entitled upon by Santa Claus for its tribute of redolent balsam that he may have plenty of places on which to hang his presents.

There is only one true Christmas tree—the balsam fir. The hemlock proper has branches too drooping and flexible to hold a great weight of Christmas gifts, and the spruce, while otherwise suitable, lacks the spicy odor of the balsam. This is fortunate, for the tree most prized for Christmas purposes is utterly despised by the lumbermen. Before the Christmas tree industry began the fir lands of Maine were actually exempted from taxation as worthless. Now they are worth from \$10 to \$15 an acre.

The Christmas tree cutters begin work early, usually about the middle of October. While some of the men are cutting others follow them and drag the trees to the nearest open space where they are bunched and tied so that they will not come apart in shipping. At the nearest depot they are loaded on cars, 2,500 trees to the car. The men receive \$1.50 a day and board. It takes seven men working five weeks to get out three carloads.

The Christmas tree output depends a good deal on the weather. With an open fall, when the trees are easy to get at, the crop will be much larger than when the snow falls early and heavily. If the snow melts and then freezes on the branches it makes them brittle and they break to pieces.