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LEGENDS OF TREES.

SUPERSTITIONS FROM ANCIENT DAYS CONCERNING THEM.

The Oak, Holly, Mistletoe, Poplar, Mulberry, Fig, Bay and Rose Are Vegetable Growths that Are Rich in Associations—Old-Time Myths.

Christmas is the only holiday identified with certain vegetable growths—the holly, the mistletoe, and the Christmas tree. The veneration in which these are held goes back to a remote antiquity. There are, however, some strange and curious legends attaching to other products of the vegetable kingdom.

The oak tree is rich in associations, having been held sacred alike by the Hebrews, the Greeks and the Romans. The oak under which it is believed Abraham stood when the angels came announcing the birth of Isaac was long an object of veneration, and was said to be still in existence in the time of Constantine.

All the oaks in the grove of Dodona, in Epirus, were said to be gifted with prophecy. Some of the trees were cut down and hewn into timber to build the ship Argo. One of the myths states that Jupiter derived his power from the oak, and he taught men to live upon acorns, so they might become strong and wise, and to swear by the oak was a most solemn and binding form.

When returning from the infernal regions it is related that Hercules wore a wreath composed of poplar leaves. His brow being damp with perspiration, the inner side of the leaves, coming in contact with it, turned white, and the outerside of the leaves turned almost black from smoke. From this, it is said, came the silver-leaved poplar.

From the Arabians comes a story as to the origin of the yellow, for which there appears to be some foundation in the scriptures. David, after his marriage with Bathsheba, was one day playing on his harp, when two angles appeared and accused him of his great sin. For forty days and nights David shed tears of repentance. "From his tears flowed two streams, which ran from the chamber into the garden, and from them sprang two trees, one of which was the willow which incessantly weeps and mourns and the other the frankincense tree, which sheds big tears, each in remembrance of his repentance."

The ancients had a custom of making presents of dried figs and bay leaves on the first of the year, for the bay tree was considered good for the health. There are always to be found some bay leaves in the choicest packages of figs which come from abroad.

It was near a white mulberry tree that the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe met their tragic death; and the poor mulberry tree, being, it is said, sprinkled with their blood, forever after bore red fruit.

The holly is said to have come by its red berries in a similar way. Some of the gods, it is said, were diverting themselves one day by shooting at Blader, the god of mirth, after placing him against the holly. Loki, the god of envy, shot at him with an arrow tipped with mistletoe. A few drops of his blood spurted over the holly, consequently the berries are red, and the grief of the mistletoe was so intense that ever since her berries have been like teardrops.

Some traditions relate that the original color of the rose was white, says the New York Times, but that one day when the gods were feasting Cupid with his wing upset a bowl of nectar, which fell in a shower upon the earth, dyeing all the roses red. Another story tells that the goddess of flowers, upon finding the dead body of her favorite nymph, implored the gods to assist in changing her into a flower which should be the queen of flowers.

"In response to her request," says this legend, "Bacchus bathed the flower in nectar. Aurora caused her dew to fall thick upon it, refreshing its roots, while Apollo's beams shone with invigorating warmth. Flora crowned its stem with a diadem of bloom unsurpassed for beauty, and Vertumnus anointed it with perfumes from the Vale of Tempe."

SUN-BATH ON THE SIDEWALK.

An Invalid Learns Something About Human Curiosity.

An invalid who had been in the country for her health, and was ordered to continue the "fresh-air cure," even after she had returned to the city, describes in the Atlantic Monthly some of the amusing experiences which came to her through the unexpressed curiosity of the public. She took her place on the sidewalk, in the sun, with steamer-chair and rug, expecting to "live and let live." But she was destined to learn something about human nature before the day ended.

I am in the very act of seating myself, she says, when the attack begins. Two excited-looking women rush up to me. One of them begins with a volley of questions:

"What is the matter with her?" (I am supposed to be unable to speak for myself, and my friend is addressed.) "What ails her? Oh, what left her like this? Is it rheumatism? If it's rheumatism, I can tell you what to do. You take some vinegar and some salt, common salt, and you put in it some lye, just common lye, and you apply it. I have cured a great many people of rheumatism with this. There is a man who is a conductor on the railroad—I cured him; and he says if he ever has a twinge again, he will get in a tub of this."

Smiles and nods and the strangers have gone; I begin to realize what I am doing. Nurse-maids who have children

out for an airing discuss me in the soothing tones supposed to be adapted to infant ears, and in the midst of my reading I hear murmurs: "Yes, yes, a lady out taking the sun. Nice sun for the lady. Will do the lady good."

Homeless dogs and friendless children shelter themselves about my chair to rest. I am of great use to organ-grinders, acting as the nucleus of a quickly gathering crowd. I serve as an intelligence office, and receive constant inquiries as to where people live, whether I know any one who would like to hire a servant, and whether I know of servants who wish to hire.

I also had an offer of work. A negro man addressed me: "Yuh mus' excuse me, lady, fuh speakin' tuh yuh. I axes yuh pardon, but I been a-lookin' fuh somebody lak yuh. I wan' tuh ax whether yoh would lak tuh teach somebody—o' cose tuh be paid somethin' ev'ry week. It's my wife. She can't read, and I want tuh to lun."

Small boys seem not to accept the situation, perhaps because they are the frankest of mortals. I hear them across the street, saying: "Come on, let's go over and look at her."

One day I was examined by two, and heard surprised voices: "Is it a lady?" A long pause, and then, with still great surprise, "Ye-es!" At another time I had my arms under my cape, and I heard from a pair of urchins, in awe-struck tones, "She ain't got no hands!"

One day two little fellows sat down on the steps by me, and one ventured to speak:

"Lady, what's the matter with yer? Can't ye walk? Got both yer feet cut off?" This time I questioned them in return, and upon my asking why they were not in school, one glibly replied: "I have to work. Got to help my mother."

"Do you work?" "Yes'm," he said, proudly, and handed me a paper on which was written, "Please help my mother to pay her rent. God will help you. God bless you!"

My remarks concerning this kind of work quickly ended the curiosity about myself.



S. R. Crockett writes to his publishers concerning his latest novel, "The Firebrand": "For the purposes of 'The Firebrand' I lived romantically among the ex-brigands, actual smugglers and other fine fellows in the utmost Pyrenees and Sierras of Moncayo."

The name of the heroine of Anne Scarlett, Mary Imlay Taylor's latest novel, was a pure invention of the author. Yet, strange to say, Miss Taylor has received a letter from an actual Anne Scarlett living in Newark, N. J., who naturally expresses a lively interest in the origin of the title.

A book will soon be published by John Lane called "Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends," by Constance Hill. It will give a picture of Jane Austen's daily life in her different homes, and thus make us realize the influences that affected her as a writer—for we take it for granted that many readers are interested in Jane Austen.

Timely advice is given in an exchange as to buying so-called juvenile books. Because a book is labeled "juvenile" it does not follow that it is a proper book for children. These books should be examined, unless well known, for very often they contain matter that is not really intended for young readers. Buyers of such books should take nothing for granted from the titles of books intended for sons and daughters.

Every one hears of the "list of best selling books," but who ever heard of a list of books that have never left the shelves? The Public Library of Lincoln, England, gives the names of such books. The number is not large, only 35 out of the 10,538 volumes in the library can boast that the dust on them has never been disturbed. Not a single novel, however stupid, can claim this unenviable distinction. Works of theology and history lead all the rest in this sleep of the unread.

Is there anything new under the sun? Attention being called to the fact in one of Maurice Hewlett's "New Canterbury Tales," that the sex of a girl disguised as a boy is discovered by throwing an apple in her lap; the Academy asks Mr. Hewlett if he is aware that the same incident is used in "Huckleberry Finn," then the New York Times comes and says that Charles Reade used it in "Cloister and the Hearth," and finally some one else suggests that the incident was used long before Charles Reade's time—but this is back far enough for us.

Old Religious Books.

The dispersal of the religious orders in Paris has been followed by the appearance of a large number of religious books in the boxes of the dealers on the Quai d'Orsay. Here they jostle with Voltaire, under the shadow of his statue, and with ditties of the "cafe concert." These books principally come from the Carmelites' library, in the Rue de Valenciennes, which was dispersed two months ago, when the order turned its back upon France at the bidding of an inhospitable host. Some of the books are very old, dating back 200 or 300 years. The signatures of their pious owners are pale and rusty on pages that have turned yellow with age.—New York Tribune.

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