

Christmas Trees Good for Something

By Martha Banning Thomas

MR. MINCY, like old Scrooge, said he did not believe in Christmas. He said it was all bunk, which is the modern term for humbug (Scrooge's own word for it). Mr. Mincy was sixty-three years old and had never expended a cent of money or a drop of kindness where it wouldn't bring in a fine return. That was business. And business was all that Mr. Mincy cared for.

Once, however, business took Mr. Mincy to a far outpost in the Canadian woods. He found himself on the 24th of December trying to get transportation back to a tiny village from where he could take a train. The only person who could take him was a man who said he was on his way to get a Christmas tree for the kids.

"Christmas tree!" snorted Mr. Mincy. "Never heard of such foolishness!" But he finally had to go. Much time was squandered on selecting and cutting down the tree. Mr. Mincy raged. Finally they were ready to start on. The road was extremely rough, the hills steep, the car old and dilapidated.

They came to the steepest hill of all. One side a sheer rise of cliff; on the other a drop to a deep gully. "Brakes won't hold on this," declared the driver, "hardly dare to go down."

Mr. Mincy was almost violent in his remarks.

At last a means was devised of holding the car back on the steep grade. The Christmas tree was lashed to the rear, lengthwise. It dragged on the ground and its weight and branches served to keep the car from crashing down the hill at a dangerous speed.

"You see," said one of the men in a slow drawl, "Christmas trees are some good after all!"

Mr. Mincy was obliged to admit they were . . . but it was like pulling teeth to drag the acknowledgment from him.

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Go shopping in an easy chair! !
Read the news, big news found there

The Nobel Prizes

The Nobel prizes were instituted by Alfred Bernhard Nobel (1833-1896) the Swedish inventor of dynamite, blasting, gelatine and smokeless powder. His fortune amounted to about \$5,000,000. With it he established a foundation from which, since 1901, have been awarded international prizes for the most important discoveries in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, for the most remarkable book of an idealistic tendency and for the greatest service to peace during the year. The judges are the Swedish Academy of Science, the Stockholm Faculty of Medicine, the Swedish Academy of Literature and a committee of the Norwegian storting or parliament. The prize amounts to a little more than \$40,000. All the prizes are not necessarily awarded each year, but only when a work of sufficient importance is accomplished.

Saint's Body Found in Wall

Why nuns of the convent of San Salvatore, in Caltagirone, Sicily, held a mysterious festival every August for 130 years has been revealed by workmen. Each year the church was illuminated and people all over the countryside heard merry bells, but the nuns never divulged the reason for their rejoicing. A chance blow of the workers' pickaxes opened a space in the wall in which was the body of the Roman virgin Gaudenzia who was tortured and martyred during the persecution of the Christians 1,400 years ago. A short time before the French revolution the body of Saint Gaudenzia was taken from Italy to the church. Fearing revolutionists would desecrate the body it was hidden in the walls and the hiding place kept secret. It was in a perfect state of preservation when found.—Montreal Herald.

Peacock's Gorgeous Tail

The gorgeous tail of a peacock, like the wings of most butterflies, has no color made into dyes. The brilliant color scheme, explains a writer, is merely the concentrated effect of myriads of miniature rainbows. The surfaces of a peacock's feathers and a butterfly's wings are covered with millions of tiny prisms. The rays of white light from the sun passing through them are broken up into the seven colors of the spectrum, and it is the blending of these before they excite the nerves which control sight that produces the mental picture of a peacock or a butterfly. Just as no two people see precisely the same color scheme in one rainbow, so the color pattern of a peacock or a butterfly is different to every person who sees them.

The Battle of Navarino

Greek independence and the decadence of the Turkish empire can almost be dated from the battle of Navarino in 1827. Here a combined fleet of British, French, and Russian warships defeated the Egyptian and Turkish navies. Prior to this time Admiral Codrington of Great Britain assisted by Rear Admirals De Rigny and Heiden of France and Russia had attempted to enforce an armistice between Greece and Turkey, but failed through the refusal of the Turks to agree. Then a small boat of H. M. S. Dartmouth was fired on by the Turks. Action at once became general and three-fourths of the enemy vessels were sunk or disabled by Codrington's ships.

Pearl Fishers Have No

Fear of Hungry Sharks

Fifty thousand naked men diving for pearls in shark-infested waters form the nucleus of an industry upon which depends the existence of about two million people, observes Tit-Bits Magazine.

Unfortunately most of these men, encumbered by old debts to the show-owners, make a mere pittance, but it is a lucrative trade for many, and for the ruling sheiks on the Persian coast an important source of income. Each sheikdom sends its quota of ships, and each fleet, under an "admiral" in the biggest dhow, sets sail after a ceremony of prayer.

Nearly half a million men are engaged in one way or another, and four times that number depend ultimately on prices offered by merchants in Paris, London and New York. Each dhow carries from 24 to 35 divers, who go over the side naked, with a basket slung about their necks. When their breath is exhausted they are pulled up by rope-men. Normally the sharks do not molest them.

The scene of this picturesque spectacle is the Bahrain pearl banks of the Bahrain islands, a British protectorate in the Persian gulf. The gulf pearl markets are little coffee-shops or rooms in thick-walled Arab houses, and though transactions run to thousands of pounds the merchants look poor, carrying their pearls in pieces of rag which they produce from the folds of their voluminous garments.



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