

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

AN INSTITUTION OVER THIRTY CENTURIES OLD.

Holy Trees in the Roman Saturnalia  
-The Druidical Sacred Tree-Symbolism of the Glass Globes and Candles  
-Survival of Pagan Worship.

First Tree in America.

AMONG the queer relics of a great antiquity is the Christmas tree. The very name of this object, familiar as it is at Christmas time, indicates a Christian origin, but there is no doubt whatever that the customs connected with the Christmas tree, together with the tree itself, were a part of the Druidical religion perhaps thousands of years before our era. The Druid religion was a curious combination of nature, sun and fire worship. Nature was adored in the oak, which, in North Europe was the sturdiest, largest and strongest member of the plant world; the sun was worshipped because it gave light and heat and brought life to all the world; fire was worshipped because it was not only the warming and comforting element, but also, when unbridled, a demon to be dreaded. Thus, the Druidical ceremonies and worship comprised a combination of rites, some undoubtedly a growth of the chimæra and country which the peoples devoted to this form of religion inhabited. The great festival of the year was at the midwinter season, when the sun, after sinking low in the southern skies, began to return toward the north and to bring with it renewed life to the Northern Hemisphere. The date was, approximately, about the time of our Christmas, the third or fourth week in December. At the beginning of the last week in the last month the sun is at its lowest point, and from that time the days begin to lengthen and, little by little, the ice king loosens his grip and retires to his



PACKING FOR SHIPMENT.

own regions in the north. Then begin the rejoicings at the sun's return. In Italy the festival took the name of the Saturnalia, a season of the wildest license. One of the favorite observances of the Saturnalia season, as well as of the Druidical festival at midwinter, was the setting up of a tree, frequently ornamented with rude decorations; around this in the public squares of every city in Southern Europe circles of men, women and children danced and shouted. To the Druids the oak was a sacred tree; to the gay dwellers in the sub-tropical countries of the South the green tree of the Saturnalia was merely the emblem of the returning life and foliage of the summer.

Long before the time of Christ, among the Celts of France, England and the British Islands, at the midwinter festival a tree decorated with bits of gay cloth and bright polished metal was carried in procession. Generally it was an oak, but whatever its species, it was honored as a symbol and was set up in the Druidical circles, portions of which still remain at

to the exact date of the birth of Christ. The 25th of December was not fixed until about 500 years after that event, and the impossibility of determining accurately by tradition a date 500 years before will easily be appreciated. The festival itself was observed, it is said, as early as the end of the first century, but with no agreement as to the date; in some places the feast occurring as early as the 21st of December, and in others as late as the middle of January. The efforts of the Christian preachers and teachers finally succeeded in supplanting the Saturnalia with the Christmas rejoicings. The tree around which the people had danced was converted into a Christmas tree; the bonfires which the rabble had lighted, and which the priests had adored as symbols of the devouring element, were made to throw their cheerful light in honor of the Child of Bethlehem; the decorations which were hung upon the branches of the oak took the form of crosses and crowns and globes of bright metal.

Long after the Christian era began, the yule tree, or yule log, remained an institution among the Germanic tribes. As already stated, the midwinter tree was burned at the conclusion of the festival, and a trace of this ceremony is still seen in the yule log, which, in country districts of England, is dragged in by half a dozen sturdy yokels and thrown back to the hearth to furnish a basis for the winter's fire. The ashes and charred coals of the midwinter tree were formerly gathered to use in incantations, being deemed to possess supernatural qualities, and even in this century bits of charcoal from the yule log are treasured by English country girls and boys on account of some superstitious fancies connected with these bits of sacred wood. Even the songs of the Saturnalia, in a modified form, have come down to the present day.

The midwinter tree, modified from its pagan uses, became the Christmas tree, and even in its ornaments and decorations may be found a symbolism not so deeply hidden that it cannot be easily detected. The linked chains of gilt paper were once so many emblems of eternity; the glass globes and gilded balls were emblems of the sun and moon; the little cake images were once figures of the saints; more anciently still were little idols fashioned of wheat dough and baked hard in an oven; the tiny candles, without which no Christmas tree could be a Christmas tree, are a reminiscence of the days when every sun and fire worshiper carried with him to the great annual festival his torch or candle, and when the sacred fire was lighted, in the round tower or on the altar of the Druids, the light was passed from torch to torch until the entire circle was ablaze. In court, in camp and in cloister in Germany, France and Italy the Christmas tree was an institution for hundreds upon hundreds of years.

The tree most commonly used in England is the holly or holy tree, so called because, producing its berries forward in the Christmas season and remaining green throughout the winter, it is, in popular superstition, associated with the greatest of Christmas festivals.

The first Christmas tree in America was decorated and lighted up in New Amsterdam when Manhattan Island was a colony of the Dutch. The honest Dutchmen, even in the New World, could not forget the pleasant associations connected with the season, and it is recorded that on the first Christmas passed by the Dutch colonists on this side the Atlantic they cut down a cedar, took it into the church, and, with such means as were at hand, decorated and lighted it, hanging upon its branches presents from the Governor and his lady to every member of the colony. The tree was never in favor among the Puritans of New England, however, until after the beginning of the present century. They imagined that in some way not very clear to their own minds it savored of papacy, and that for them was enough to cause its rejection. As has been said, the Christmas tree is the representation of many hands, and often, too, of the products of many lands. The tree is cut down by the ax of the farmer and forwarded to market by the monopolists who control the railway traffic of the country. The cut and gilt paper with which it is decorated formerly

SOUVENIR 1898 CALENDAR

JANUARY.							JULY.						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31					29	30	31				
FEBRUARY.							AUGUST.						
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29							29	30	31				
MARCH.							SEPTEMBER.						
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APRIL.							OCTOBER.						
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MAY.							NOVEMBER.						
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JUNE.							DECEMBER.						
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29	30						29	30					

or our own factories, the jewelry may be made from gold brought from the Transvaal, Australia, or Colorado; the diamonds may come from Kimberley, India or Brazil, the rubies from Siam, the sapphires from Burmah, and the pearls have been brought up by dark-faced divers off the coast of Ceylon.

The Christmas tree is thus more than a fanciful reminder of the day and season. It is an historical institution recalling customs which years ago became obsolete and a religion which has been dead for many centuries. It is a beautiful token of the season and a reminiscence of ages so remote as to have left no written trace. There is no danger that the world will forget or ignore it. An institution which can last for thirty centuries at least is probably good for thirty more.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

The Message to the Judean Shepherds the Best Ever Given Mortal Man. No better tidings were ever given to mortal man, writes Evangelist Dwight L. Moody in the Ladies' Home Journal, than that first Gospel message delivered to the humble shepherds on the Judean hills. There must have been a special solemnity about that night. Above, the heavens were resplendent with the glory of God, and even the elements seemed to appreciate the benediction of "peace and good-will toward men." A holy quiet rested on the scene. The noise and tumult of the overcrowded streets in the distant city at last were stilled, and one by one the lights below them disappeared.

In the realms of another world those who had long looked for the promised redemption gave down upon the scene. Prophet and law-giver, king and leader all look toward the One who shall make the atonement for their transgressions. And as the shepherds watched and waited for the morn I imagine that their thoughts and conversation were on heavenly things. It may have been that they were talking over the strange rumors which they had heard regarding the son that was born to Zacharias, and how it had been prophesied that he was to become the "Prophet of the Highest." At least, their thoughts and conversation that night must have been on things above, for God reveals His best gifts to those "whose minds are stayed on Him." "The time is at hand," I can imagine one saying, "the Messiah will soon be here to save us from our enemies." "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee," exclaims another. And thus as they rejoice among themselves there suddenly bursts upon their sight the glorious light of the other world; midnight gloom is transformed into midday brightness, and there appears before them the Angel of the Lord. He proclaims the deliverance for which this world had so long yearned. With exultant shout the choir of heaven chants again the Gospel message, that first and glorious carol song. And as the full meaning of the vision was realized what thrill of love and joy must have filled their souls. How their hearts must have burned within them as they hastened to worship their Savior King in His lowly abode at Bethlehem.

Gifts for Women.

Women's wants, if measured by their belongings, would seem to be almost innumerable, and of a kind which require constant renewing and replacing. Woman's interests and occupations require a greater number of small things for their equipment than do those of men, and Christmas gifts for them are, therefore, more easily prepared. Women's belongings have the further advantage of being useful as well as beautiful. Men are always pleased with simple gifts, and are usually embarrassed when presented with expensive articles of any sort. The value to them of a gift is, as it should be with all persons, in proportion to its simplicity and usefulness and out of proportion to its cost.

THE WANING YEAR.

O O R, lingering old year, how slow, You're trudging along with your capful of snow; Your youth, I remember, was gladsome and gay, You capered, and frolicked, and danced all the day.

But you became older as Sol rolled along, He chastened your spirit, and mellowed your song. You blest us, you plagued us, you furnished us cheer, Deceitful, capricious, yet lovely old year.

And here's your last milestone, you're passing from view, Your record, we know, will be faithful and true. When "weighed in the balance," may we stand clear, Triumphantly greeting heaven's jubilee year.

Farewell, fading year! All hail to the new, We'll shun every folly, and virtue pursue; Each day as it passes some mission of love Shall lessen earth's woe, and place treasure above. —Western Rural.

CHRISTMAS IN THE STORES.

Toy Counters Surrounded by Little Folks an Interesting Sight.

HERE is no prettier sight to be seen anywhere than can be found around the toy counters in the big stores at the Christmas season. It is not in the toys, although some of them are marvelous enough to inspire rapt admiration, but in the groups of tiny people who surround these wonders that the charm lies. Big, bright, anxious eyes, yearning, chubby fingers and hearts so filled with longing that they are near to bursting for the possession of some certain china beauty with flowing bell locks or a rocking horse which gallops.

Little boys gaze with respectful wonderment on all the household things intended for their sisters' amusement, but it is at the sight of a martial soldier, a train of cars or a boat that can be sailed in the bath tub at home that their hearts beat faster. Girls always like dolls. They never can have too many. The increase of another doll in the little woman's family is treated precisely as the advent of a real baby in the mother's. While new and young it is tenderly cherished even to the detriment of older and better known children. But once the newness rubs off, and dolly's cheeks begin to fade and the crimp comes out of her hair, the youthful mother, like many an older one, decides that the baby is old enough now for her to go back to the rare virtues discovered in her first-born children. So you see the little woman can't have too many dolls. Only don't buy them too large. Eighteen inches is a good size, easy to carry. A child grows very tired of a doll big enough to be cumbersome. Child-

find far more pleasure, too, in dolls with movable eyes, hair that will brush and faces that can be washed. Above all else the clothes must come on and off. Wash dresses are generally liked most by children, because they can be done up. It is very funny the decided preference for certain complexions in the doll families. The boy dolls most children like to be brunettes; but nothing ever approaches the popularity of the blond girl doll. A great novelty this year is a doll that walks alone—not wheeled as some of the walking dolls have done in the past, but actually puts one foot after the other, and walks as naturally as though it were real flesh and blood.

Boys always did and always will like drums and things that make a noise. There are some wonderful rocking horses this year, with manes as glossy as silk and tails banded in the most approved style. A rubber frog, attached to the end of which is a bulb, that when pressed makes the frog jump, is something entirely new. And it is so real that it will answer in every respect naughty Tommy's feishish ambition to frighten his small sisters.

For boys there are any number of toys which have a bearing on architecture in all forms. Bridge building, house building, ship building and the laying of railroad tracks and the management of trains are all worthy of recommendation. The practical iron constructor, something entirely new this Christmas, will teach a boy important laws of nature and science. But so simply does he learn them that he is under the impression he is merely playing.

To designate all the other excellent toys for instruction would be impossible. Something new but not particularly attractive are the Brownie dolls. Like the negro babies, these new dolls are too unnatural to inspire much longing in the breasts of tiny mothers who take their doll children to their hearts. In games there are many new things. The game of Babb, which consists in driving small wooden pegs into certain holes by tapping on the under side with a small wooden mallet, is greatly in demand.

A Plan for Christmas Eve.

Some ancient religions, as those of the Greeks and Romans, furnished opportunities for man to relapse periodically into primitive impulse, allowing the natural, not the artificial, man to express himself. In our religion another opportunity once a year has been given us, when good-will may have all its way with us—good-will that is greater than all prudent restraints, all economic theories, all considerations of convenience.

And what an opportunity it is for us, who, in our intercourse with men, are so often hemmed in by conventionalities or controlled by self-consciousness! To revel in good-will! To have the church and state sustain us in it! To have custom and tradition give us their sanction! It is like getting one's childhood back again, or having health once more, or, after a city's bondage, feeling the freedom of the hills! What if in our generousities we make mistakes it takes time to remedy, if to-morrow we must retrench! What of anything, if good-will can reign with us for a day!

Then away, too, with discussions of the meet and appropriate—that poor gift may go to the poor and rich gifts to the well-to-do! In the good-will first sung by the angels to men there was the glad and sudden burst of unlooked-for joy, given fully, without conditions, without balancings, without questionings of deserts—a blessing to all, to the just and the unjust, the sinner and the saved.

It is in this spirit that a group of well-known men and women mean to work this Christmas eve. To the poorest and the neediest, to the hardest worked, they mean to carry beautiful gifts, retiring themselves quickly, as they came, so as to remain unknown. Their desire is to bring into the life of some poor suffering soul the glow and warmth that come of unexpected joy and fullness—unexpected, unearned and undeserved perhaps.

We measure so much we do for others. We weigh our best impulses against their deserts and our ideas of the appropriate. And yet the glad burst of that melodious message of good-will to all should teach us this one of God's ways might be ours by making our gifts as joyous outpourings, filling full of promise the lives of those who wait. So that, like the voices of those angels who sang, the gifts we bring may be as though they fell from heaven.—Harper's Bazar.

Christmas Entertainments.

Christmas entertainments in the church, cantatas give an opportunity for the children to take part. Such entertainments should be given early in the evening, and care should be taken to avoid exciting the vanity and self-consciousness of the young participants. Wise mothers object to their children's coming into such publicity, and in order to meet their objections a skilled and sensible leader should be secured—one who will teach the children their parts without unnecessary demands upon their play time, who will regulate the tempers and allay the passions which are sure to be aroused unless the small people are well guarded. First of all impress upon them that they are to consider the pleasure of others, not their own, and that selfishness can have no part in Christmas pleasures. The decorations and other accompaniments must be suited to the place.

"MERRY CHRISTMAS, MOTHER EARTH!"



It was twilight by the river—we prepared to cross the flood— We knew the meed of danger, a night of toll and blood. Calm silence permeated every line and every rank As we mustered for our country on the river's arduous bank Above the troubled waters no stragling moon rays gleam— We saw the foeman's watchfires blaze beyond the gloomy stream.

'Twas brilliant, fateful, fearful—it seemed a hope forlorn— No sound of drum or trumpet or fife or bugle horn— We knew our desperate enemies, we knew the marcher's power, We knew the dreadful crisis—our country's We dreaded not the waters—feared not the Delaware— None cared for death or danger, for Washington was there.

It was midnight on the river and fiercely cold the frost— Upon the icy waters our feeble barks were tossed; Ferried o'er the treacherous waves mid lebbies small and large— And tolled away the live-long night with ferryboat and barge— And ere the sunbeams flashed again in hopeful ranks we stood To march upon the Hessians' camp—to strike the men of blood.

Still, silent, calm and resolute, we crossed the dangerous wave, To reach the base invaders—America to save— 'Twas Christmas night and memory brought the messenger divine, As we saw our blazing campfires of the soldiers from the Rhine— The mercenaries bought for hire to crush our country down— Then we breathed a vow for liberty and vengeance on the crown.

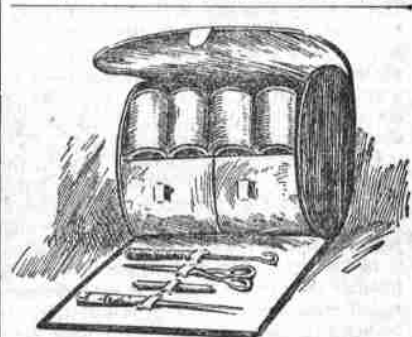
Our cannon broke the silence—confusion to the foe— Our columns marched to triumph mid drifting sleet and snow, And then our hearts beat high with hope, the word to "charge" was given, One blow for home and liberty, humanity and heaven— The Hessians roused from slumber—from dreams of war and spoils— To find themselves surrounded and in the freedom's toils.

A glorious Christmas night! My boys, let cheers of triumph ring! Oh! dash the waves across the sea to England's despot king, And tell the ruthless tyrant his scepter never more shall rule Columbia's shore, Shall oppress a free-born people or rule Columbia's shore, And Trenton, glorious Trenton, that name shall ever be a watchword for the free. —Charles J. Beattie.

GIFT FOR A BACHELOR.

The Presentation of a "Housewife" May Make His Heart Glad.

The heart of a bachelor who is far from home and friends may be made glad by the presentation of a simple "housewife" or bachelor's companion. This is by no means so helpful or attractive as a real wife, but in the absence of the genuine article the bachelor will be delighted to have the imitation at hand when buttons come off or clothes rip. The housewife may be made of bronze leather, of kid, of linen, of cretonne or of silk for the outside, which is all in one piece. Use a stiff interlining and a lining of some durable material. On the large fly ribbon or tape furnishes a place for scissors, etc.;



A HOUSEWIFE.

above this is a long cushion with a slip for a thimble, and resting upon this a spool of silk and one of thread, both white and black, fastened by ribbons run through them and stitched at the ends. The two outer ends are shaped with cardboard and the edges are bound with ribbon. The fastening is effected by means of a button and loop. If plain linen is used a monogram may be embroidered on the outside.

Didn't Get It.

Freddie—I want a watch for Christmas. Colewigger—You are rather young to have a watch. Freddie—I'm as old as the little boy next door, and he can take his watch all to pieces.—New York Journal.

A Phenomenon.

When Christmas comes with merry pace The small boy is a peach; His stomach is the resting place Of everything in reach. —Judge.



BOHEMIAN GLASS-BLOWERS MAKING THE GLOBES.

Stonehenge and many other parts of Great Britain and Ireland, and was adored as a symbol of life, and finally consigned to the flames, a huge pile of wood being placed around it and set on fire. Where there was a round tower, the tree was burned in this artificial furnace, but otherwise the great bonfire was the center of attraction and around its glowing flames the people capered and rejoiced. The chronologists have never agreed as

came from Germany and France, but is now made in this country. The glass bulbs, emblems of the sun and moon, form a very important item of industry in several large glass factories in Bohemia, and, being hand-painted and packed with great care, give employment to hundreds of women and children in the great centers of the glass trade. The presents hung upon its branches may represent all parts of the globe. The dolls may come from Germany, the knives from England