

The Christmas Tree

E. J. Zavitz, O.A.C., Guelph

MOST Canadians have experienced the youthful pleasure of tramping out to find the Christmas tree. Through the snow and even the storm we have trudged to find a suitable tree in which Santa Claus could hang the gifts. Full of anticipation, this has been one of the most pleasant incidents of the Christmas season.

In those youthful days a small evergreen, like the walnuts and hickory nuts of the locality, seemed common property. To-day in older Ontario the ideal tree is almost extinct, and the small boy of the rural district has a great problem to find the Christmas tree of his dreams. The city children miss the pleasure of helping to cut and bring home the tree, but wake on Christmas morning to find one which has been delivered with the groceries the night before.

The Christmas tree seems to have been of German origin, and there to-day it has a more prominent place in the season's festivities than in any other country. Here in America many families use the gaily decorated tree in the distribution of gifts. Other devices have been introduced, as Santa Claus coming in with a loaded pack upon his shoulders, or a mysterious pie is opened and the gifts taken from it. In Germany, every family, however poor, must have a tree. These are not always large, and they vary in decorations according to the taste or financial condition of the home in which they are found. No presents are placed on the tree, for they destroy the beauty and grace of its appearance. These are placed on a table near at hand. There are always candles which, on Christmas eve, are lighted as the family gathers around. The trees are usually kept through Christmas week, and if they are small may be seen placed on a table near the window of the home.

The Christmas tree idea has been enlarged in Canada so that, in many churches, the Sunday school department holds an entertainment, the chief feature of which is the distribution of gifts from a very large Christmas tree. The tree in this case is a very large Norway or native spruce.

While the Christmas tree exists in England, the holly, ivy, laurel and mistletoe are favorite decorations for the Christmas season. This custom of decking the houses and churches with evergreens is derived from ancient Druid practices. It was thought that the sylvan spirits would flock to the evergreens till the cold season had passed.

By the middle of December, in Canada, the city dealers begin to display

their stock of Christmas evergreens. These consist of white cedar, juniper, spruce, balsam and hemlock. These trees are sold in sizes ranging from five feet to even 20 feet in height. Along with the trees or a little later comes other decorative material as club moss, ferns, holly and mistletoe. Of our native evergreens, the spruce and balsam make the best Christmas trees, as their branches are regular and formal. The cedar, juniper and hemlock are better for pulling apart to make wreaths and other hanging decorations.

owners in the vicinity of large towns and cities. Nurserymen in the United States are growing evergreens for Christmas purposes at a nice profit. Why not plant some of the waste portions of the land with evergreens as an investment? Marketable trees can be grown in from 6 to 10 years. The prices are going to advance, especially for well formed, symmetrical trees.

Some sentimentalists have condemned the cutting of Christmas trees as wanton destruction of forest growth. This is a mistaken attitude. Let every



The Wonderful Doings of Santa Claus

The demand for Christmas trees and decorative material has developed a business which has assumed an important character. Long before Christmas, trainloads of evergreens are being shipped into the larger centres. To-day the well-shaped tree of 6 or 10 feet in size is becoming scarce. Complaints are heard that the material is too expensive to be used as in days gone by. The trees of best quality, which grew near shipping points, are exhausted, and dealers have to bear the cost of longer hauls.

Here is an opportunity for land-

home have a Christmas tree. No better use of a tree can be found than in giving the child a heritage which meant so much to us. It is part of the birth-right of childhood, and should be denied to none. Blessed is the man who still holds the memories of Santa Claus and of Christmas customs as worth while!

Sprays of the common barberry may be used for Christmas decorations. The drooping clusters of scarlet berries are effective in any scheme of ornamentation that may be proposed for the home, the church or the hall.