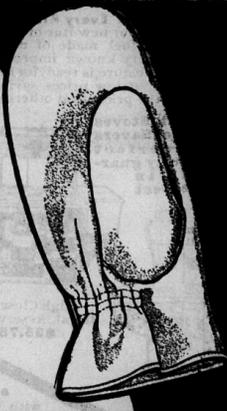


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A YOUNG GIRL CAN RUN IT!

The First Christmas Tree.
 By JAMES M. VOSS.

It is difficult to trace the origin of the Christmas tree and almost every mythologist has a little different manner in explaining why the evergreen was chosen for this great festival day. A Scandinavian legend tells of the "service tree," which sprung from the blood-soaked earth where two lovers were killed by violence, and that mysterious lights, which the wind could not extinguish, were seen at Christmas in the tops of the forest trees. In old Egypt there was a common custom of decorating the houses at the time of the winter solstice with branches of the date palm. The date palm was the emblem of immortality and also of the star-lit firmament. This tree puts forth a shoot every month and a branch of it containing twelve shoots was a symbol of the year completed. It has also been suggested that this may be a revival of the pine trees of the Roman Saturnalia, a December feast, during which pines were decorated with images of Bacchus. The most plausible explanation, however, is that its earlier significance arose from the pagan worship of trees, and that later, Christian ideals gave a loftier meaning to its use. When the apostles preached the gospel in pagan lands, instead of interdicting the idolatrous feasts they permitted such festivals as were not intrinsically sinful, but sought to change their idolatrous nature by giving a Christian interpretation to the various rites and ceremonies. Thus, when Pope Gregory I sent St. Augustine to convert Saxon England in 596, he directed him to make the change of religion, so far as ceremonies were concerned, as gradual as possible, that the people might not be startled. The Saxons called the feast of the midwinter solstice Yule, and on that occasion the Druids went in solemn procession to cut the mistletoe from the sacred oak tree. This ceremony, an old chronicle tells us, took place "on the sixth day of the moon nearest the new year." The evergreen, which they call all-heal, was afterwards sold at a high price to their credulous followers. The people signified their joy at the cutting of the magic mistletoe by feasting on roasted oxen and by dancing. In the December following St. Augustine's arrival he permitted his converts to join in the feasting, but forbade them mingling with pagans in the dance, and judging from his success in planting the faith, it was probably but a short time ere he had weaned them from their barbaric orgies to a saner celebration of the great Christian festival occurring in the same month. An old German legend makes St. Winiired the inventor of the idea. In the midst of a crowd of convers he is said to have been hewing down a great oak which had formerly been the object of Druidic veneration. As he chopped a whirlwind passed over the forest and tore the tree from its foundation. Behind it stood a young fir, unharmed, pointing its spire toward the stars. The priest dropping his axe, turned to the people and said: "This young 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 upwards to heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ-Child; gather about it, not in the wood, but in your own homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness. Some writers on ancient customs tell us that among the early pagan superstitions of the Germans was the belief that the world was a great tree whose top flourished in Paradise and furnished food to a goat upon whose milk fallen heroes restored themselves. This tale was well-known in Germany long after the introduction of Christianity, and much of its symbolic character was transferred to the celebration of the birth of Christ "the resurrection and the life." The evergreen is a fitting emblem of eternal spring; the burning lights suggest Him who is the light of the world; and the gifts remind us of the priceless gift of God to humanity—the Saviour. The Christmas tree, in its present style of usage, can be traced back only as far as the sixteenth century. During the middle ages it appeared at Strassburg. For 200 years the fashion maintained itself along the Rhine. Suddenly, at the beginning of this century, it spread all over Germany, and fifty years later had conquered Christendom. In 1830 the tree was introduced into Munich by Queen Caroline. At the same time the custom was spread through Bohemia and Hungary. In 1840 the Duchess Helena of Orleans brought it to the Tuileories. Twenty years later German residents of Paris could only with great difficulty procure a Christmas tree. To-day Paris uses almost 100,000, only about one-fourth being bought by Swiss, Germans and Alsations. The French plant the tree with its roots in a tub so that it can be preserved until New Year, when it is shorn of its decorations. The marriage of Queen Victoria to a German prince augmented the Christmas tree's popularity in England. German immigrants brought the tree to America and it was soon adopted by all classes.

Nearing the City.

The quiet hills stretched far behind,
 The swift train cut the broad green plain,
 Like some mad stream of impulse blind
 That rushes heading toward the main,
 The peace of apple trees in bloom
 No longer wooed the soul to dream,
 While songs of hillside brooks made room
 For harsher sounds of brass and steam.
 The keen, electric thrill of life
 Rose vibrant through the sunless air,
 Already traffic's noisy strife
 Foreboded the unrest of care.
 Not ev'n the memory of the thrush,
 Outpouring lyrics o'er the fold,
 Could drown the cries or still the rush.
 Of those who gave their souls for gold.
 Yet in this net of complex ways,
 Where time is all too brief for dreams,
 With heart still stirred perchance by days
 Passed long ago near willowed streams,
 The child named Thought—who hither came
 From guardian hill, from cradling mead,
 Who learned through God or lure of fame
 To master life—became a Deed.
 —Margaret Ridgely Schott.

December, 1907.

A Christ

"God bless Tim.
 If you will of Dickens able tale call you will learn he appears. in the librari thors with v friendly acqu are in danger liest good com sweetest mes may pass us One of the pl weeks that it is to read Christmas st of my Christ I wish it mig bless us ever the whole sp I am sure you this mor find most su of helpfulnes I will tell yo done and som bring Christ and others.

The Right

There is a Avenue in N ample, with stars, though it, were in th by only one. ment house lighted on e three or fou going on, in same time. this house of so very long bors, a squa very poor an walked along ing she pick boys and girl destitute. went to thei their mother small guests come to her ing. On C generous siz at each of ment, garret to be, addre morrow. It snoces, a war little girl, a for each lit of shoes to in their bra dren appare stroke of te party. Young ladie and made n nice things presented w skates, the f containing a to the moth It was a ri thing out of many girls a group of class, or H school or H might adopt

Christma

One of th spent was for women, faculty part the houses howing wit embroideries, and little, sa or looked pr dresses were much person superior m queens, or How much These learn president to man, were d Settlement it that appeal was the add which were and material flannel pett the little m clothing for ally get som themselves. I saw with those Chr good many estatic fac in the bigh lavished on repaid over the young v hard work d Christmas b One doll h years. High crowded Ea small room, there was a fall that h hurt her he than eight y