

This year the sale opened on Monday. December 14, and continued all week. . It is an auction sale and just about the liveliest sort of an auction sale that could possibly be imagined. Each day the proffering and bidding begins at ten o'clock in the morning and continues with very brief interruptions until dark. Then at seven o'clock in the evening the auctioneer resumes his oratorical efforts, and the sale progresses until, say 11 o'clock. when an adjournment is taken until

Although this unique sale takes place at the and make room for the national capital, the purchasers are by no year's accumulation of means limited to persons residing or visiting unclaimed parcels. at the seat of government. The postoffice de- However, there are partment issues thousands of catalogues-this several circumst year's catalogue is a book of 235 pages-of its. novel sacrifice sale, and these are mailed to all parts of the United States upon request. So many out-of-town residents desire to bid for the articles put up for sale that there has of late years developed a distinct field of activity in Washington for "brokers" who act on behalf of absent clients in bidding on designat ed articles as per the instructions sent them.

No person who has not attended one of these quaint sales can have an adequate conception of the number and bewildering variety of the articles which are annually lost in the mails with no clew to the owners. For, be it explained, only a fraction of the total number of articles that go astray in the mails ultimately find their way to this picturesque clearance sale. The major portion of the waifs of the mails that are consigned to the Dead Letter office because of lack or absence of address or any other cause ultimately find their way to their rightful owners, thanks to the exceptional discernment of the "blind readers" and other tracers of lost letters in this branch of the postal institution. It is only the letters and parcels that are absolutely baffling in their lack of means of identification, that have a chance of finding their way into the stock of the Christmas bargain sale.

Even at that there is a further sifting of these unidentified postal victims for after the experts of the Dead Letter office are forced to abandon hope of tracing the origin or intended destination of a strayed parcel, the walf is held at the postoffice department for a year in the hope that the owner may on his own initiative apply to the department for his missing property and thus enable its restoration. When, finally, there seems to be no hope of reading the riddle by this means, either, the unclaimed parcel is consigned to the great annual auction sale.

It is a woeful commentary on the proportion of our citizens who evidently do not know how to take the first step to trace articles lost in the mails that this annual postal sale contains thousands upon thousands of articles. There are upward of 1,000 different "lots." In a few instauces a "lot" consists of a single article, but as a rule, each item comprises from six to twelve separate articles, which are thus grouped because of similarity of character or for some other reason. Many of the unclaimed articles are of such small value, individually, that the thought might suggest itself that the losers had not considered it worth while to trace them, but on the other hand there are hundred of really valuable articles including numbers of diamond rings, gold and silyer watches and other pieces of jewelry.

To some readers the question may naturally present itself of why this sale is held each year just at Christmas time. The reason aded by the prosaic postoffice department is that it is the natural time for a clearance sale since it is the season when the work of the calendar year is being brought to a close and obviously it is desirable to clear out the capacious store rooms at the postal headquarters

AD LETTER

which make the holiday season an especially appropriate time for this governmental bargain sale. In the first place a surprising proportion of the articles contained in the sale are such as the average person prefers to give as Christmas gifts - gloves, Christmas handkerchiefs, cards. dolls, toys, books and

jewelry. Indeed, it is from the wreckage of the holiday postal rush that the dead letter sale of the following year is chiefly recruited At the holidays many persons who are not familiar with the preparation of parcels for the mails make use of this service with the tobe-expected sequel of improperly wrapped parcels, missing addresses, etc. Thus, too, it is during the Christmas holidays when the voume of mail is heaviest that the greatest proportion of wrappers are accidentally torn from parcels in transit, thus creating waifs of the mails. Finally there is less tracing of packages lost at Christmas than at other seasons for the reason that many a prospective recipient of a Christmas gift, unless independently advised, has no means of knowing that a parcel has been mailed to his address, whereas the giver, unless an acknowledgement is requested, has no means of knowing that the gift failed to reach its destination. Doubtless many a heartburn has been caused by the failure to deliver the artilces that have place in Uncle Sam's huge auction stock.

The annual auction sale of postal odds and ends having been so largely derived from Christmas postal derelicts it is peculiarly appropriate that the articles should be sold at the holiday season when these self-same articles can be made to a second time do service as gifts. There is no doubt that this is the disposition to which many of the purchases are put. Then too, it is a genuine bargain sale. Uncle Sam has no "reserve price" and he never "bids in" an article. The articles are sold in regular order, numerically, as they are listed in the catalogue, and each lot in turn is knocked down to the highest bidder without reserve, and without regard to how inadequate the price may be as compared with the real value of the article.

Although the annual postal sale is conducted under the direction and supervision of the officials of the Dend Letter office, the actual barter is in the hands of a private auctioneerthis task being bestowed by contract upon the lowest bidder-that is, the auctioneer who is willing to sell the postal stock on the lowest percentage of commission. The terms are strictly cash. Uncle Sam usually derives gross receipts in excess of \$10,000 from this sale, deducting for the cost of catalogues and other expenses, means at least \$8,000 net profit. This turned over to the United States treasury. However, if at any time, within three years a

person shall prove that any article disposed of at the sale was his property when lost in the mails, the government will restore to that individual the sum derived at the sale, from

AT US DEAD LETTER OFFICE

the disposition of his property. Because of this responsibility it is necessary for the government officials to keep an accurate detailed record of the transactions at each sale, with the notation as to the sum received for each article sold.

There is always plenty of amusement for the vast throngs that crowd each dead letter auction sale. For all that each lot offered is comprehensively, though briefly described in the catalogue, there are invariably numerous bidders who through failure to consult the catalogue or because they are carried away by the spirit of the occasion, purchase on the "pig in a poke" plan, and the dismay that results when some of these "sight unseen" parcels are opened, is sufficient to recompense those spectators who have come to the sale merely for the fun that is provided for the on-

The average price, per "lot" brought at the dead letter sale is well above \$1. The lowest prices recorded are usually for the parcels of vocal and instrumental music which go for 30 or 40 cents per "lot," whereas the top-notch prices are derived of course, from the jewelry sales, notably the diamond rings. A solid gold ring set with a diamond weighing slightly more than half a karat sold for \$50-a decided bargain at the prices at which diamonds were then selling. All the packages containing jewelry of value are sealed, but the postoffice officials supervising a sale will usually break the seals and display in advance any designated pieces of jewelry if requested to do so by bona-fide bidders. Not all the parcels offered at the postal sale are such as can be carried home by the purchaser. Many a "lot" is contained in a huge wooden box. In this year's sale one item is represented by a packing case, as large as a plano box, filled with souvenir cards. Another almost as large, holds a miscellaneous assortment of cheap jewelry.

other system."

the faces of babies with water in which the bark was saturated. In France it was hung outside of houses to protect them from light-

OPENING DEAD LETTERS

greens began before Christmas.

mistletoe from chandeliers and door

frames. But do you know the legends

of these greens, of the significance of

Holly was used by the Romans in

the feasts of Saturn, to whom it was

dedicated. It was an emblem of peace

tians began to celebrate the birth of

resurrection. Even the Persians re-

garded this plant as sacred and be

lieved that "the sun never shadowed

the ivy, the holly and the mistletoe?

Ivy, which lent itself to the decoration of houses, was the vine of Bacchus. Whence the old proverb:

Nay, Ivy, nay, it shall not be, I wys; Let Holly hafe the maystery as the maner ys. Holly stud in the halle, fayre to behold; Ivy stood without the doore; she is full sore a cold

Holly was preferred, but ivy became popular in the course of time. Mistletoe has always shared with ivy the popularity of Christ mas. Mistletoe is more rare and more asso ciated with myths.

Of old the Druid priests at their yearly celebrations were wont to send out persons to discover the newest of the mistletoe growth at a season when the voice of a cuckoo was first heard. Only that which grew on an oak tree was acceptable. When it was found, great sacrifices were prepared.

On the day appointed, when the moon was six days old, there were led to the place two white bulls; a white-robed priest would ascend the tree and cut the mistletoe with a sickle of gold. The sickle was never used for the sickle of gold. The sickle was never used for the sickle was never used for the sickle winter. any other purpose; all the fragments of the plant were gathered, and with great rejoicing the Druids proceeded to their sacred grove, where the sacrifices were made and particles METHOD OF

It was believed that the mistletoe brought with it the good will and blessings of the fairies, for, it is said, they sought protection within it during the winter when all other trees

of the plant distributed.

In Sweden for many years it has been regarded as a cure of epilepsy and an antidote for poisons. In southern Wales it is worn about the neck as a protection against snake bites. The belief of the old Druids that the possession of it guaranteed children is believed in many parts of England to this day.

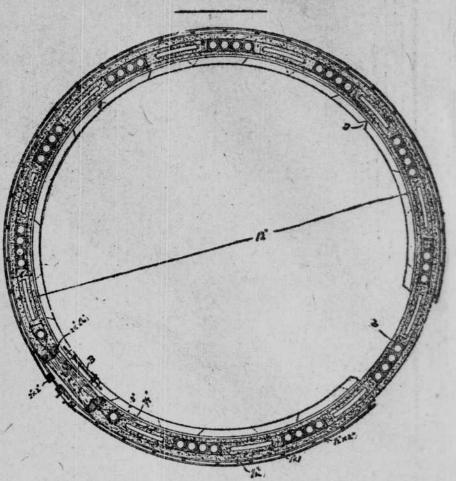
these parts, I guess."-Cleveland Plain again by and by. I must use some

Docile Pigs of Portugal.

Pigs in Portugal are more docile than anywhere else in the world, said G E. Thompson, F. R. P. S., in a lecciety's exhibition. Instead of prodding and pushing the animals along the market women carry panniers joy, and the drove trots behind them

ENSILAGE IS DEFINED AS SUCCULENT RATION

Stock Raisers Prefer Use of Certain of Legumes, Such as Altalfa, Clover, Etc.-By J. A. Jeffrey.



Cross Section of Wall and Forms of Porter Silo.

A. Section of wall showing position of one of the re-enforcing cables, B. Inner

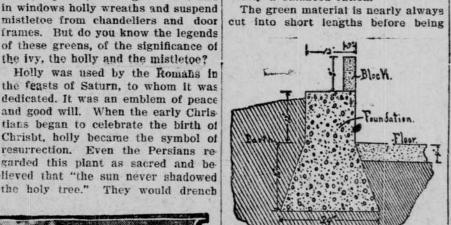
moderately fermented succulent feed | tom of the foundation. "And they tound written in the law ing material. The succulent material Go forth into the mount and is usually green corn in this country. fetch olive branches, and pine Other materials sometimes used are the upper two feet is of concrete. The branches, and myrtle branches, and green field peas, cow peas, soy beans, foundation is 101/2 inches wide at the palm branches, and branches of thick horse beans, ensiled alone or with top and broadens inward and outward corn. Green rye, wheat, oats and oth- to about 17 inches at the base, the ers of the grasses are sometimes floor having a diameter of only 11 feet

using greens for midwinter festivals | Some practical ensilage users think form thickness of eight inches and is was popular among the Hebrews-in that certain of the legumes, such as unique in its construction. Forms are fact, it was obligatory. And the use alfalfa, clover, field peas, cow peas or used in its construction, but the wall of mistletoe by the old Druids and of soy beans, mixed with corn make a is rendered "hollow," first, by the use holly by the Romans were customs al. much more desirable ensilage than of forms, and, second, by the building ready centuries old when Christianity does corn alone. Three reasons are into the wall of tiers of No. 2 three adopted them. The use of Christmas offered for this preference:

1. Stock enjoy this mixed ensilage Now you are preparing, doubtless,

to decorate your home, to twine ivy 2. Stock thrive better upon it. about the paintings in the drawing 3. Such an ensilage approaches more room or parlor, to hang on walls and nearly a balanced ration.

The green material is nearly always



Section of Foundation and Floor.

put into the silo. For several reasons it is better to cut it, but it is not imperative that it be so cut. In early practice not even corn was cut in ensiling.

The best ensilage is produced when the air can be kept most completely from coming in contact with the en-

siled material. A silo may be defined as a deep chamber with air-tight walls, in which green fodders are preserved in a mildly fermented condition for future feed-

in a good silo the wall should be perfectly air tight; otherwise air will get into the ensilage and promote

molding and rotting. The inner surface of the wall should be perpendicular and smooth. Where these qualities are lacking, open spaces are almost sure to occur between the ensilage and the wall of the silo as the ensilage settles. The air will work into these spaces with the affects mentioned above.

The walls should be strong and rigid. If they do not possess these qualities they will crack or spring and air will be admitted to effect the spoiling

of the ensilage. The walls should be sufficiently non-conducting ("warm") to prevent extensive freezing of the outer portions of the ensilage in cold weather. Such portions as adhere to the walls by freezing are likely to spoil if they

thaw out slowly. Built of stone, brack or cement, the walls may be made sufficiently strong | we ever had on our grounds. to produce a perfect silage, the round silo being the most popular type.

The illustration shows a view of the hollow-walled cement silo of L. A. Porter, Adrain, Mich. It has an inside diamater of 12 feet and stands 36 feet high above the floor. The floor stands

Ensilage may be roughly defined as | ground and six inches above the bot-

tion is of cobble stones and cement; The silo wall above ground has a uni-Inch drain tiles. The illustration represents a horizontal cross-section of the wall. It shows not only the arrangement of the tile and other hollow spaces, but also the outer and inner forms, the plan of the door frame and the manner of re-enforcing the walls with the wire cables. The hollow spaces formed by the tile and by the forms are continuous. The tiles begin six feet above the foundation, form spaces lying below the tile. The inner form was built of 2x% x26 inch pieces of pine, nailed upon two circles of elm. Each of these circles was built up of two by three inch pieces. All of these pieces were cut to circles of proper

The outer form was built of five by one-half inch strips nailed outside and were clamped into place by means of two one-half inch bolts in each form

## PEACHES THAT WITHSTAND ROT

Damp Weather More Likely to Bring on Injury than Cool and Dry-Factors in Problem-By H. Mead

Peaches are more liable to rot in damp and muggy weather than when cool and dry. Some varieties are more subject to rot than others. That all varieties with fuzz on them are less liable to rot than the smoother varieties does not agree with my ex-

perience. Neither can correct conclusions be drawn from one or two seasons' experience, for soil, location, fertilization and culture are also factors in the rot problem. Fruit on a rankly grown tree is much more subject to rot than on one more moderately grown. Yet I think the weather has more to do with it than any one factor. One year all our early peaches were quite subject to rot, while the next year there was very little rot. Yet with unfavorable weather Champions were practically a total loss, Crosby, Stump and late varieties practically free. I do not think the matter of fuzz vs. rot worth considering as a factor in setting an orchard, except people do not wish to buy fuzz.

In regard to hardiness of bud, a good frost peach well grown will stand more cold than any other peach tree

Winter Quarters for Hogs.

The hogs' winter quarters should be dry, well ventilated and absolutely without draughts, then with an abundance of good dry wheat straw for bedding his porkship will pass a com-

## MARKING PIGS

Should Be Done Before there Is Danger of Confusing with Other Litters-By J. H. Morgan.

Pigs should be marked at an early date and before there is any danger of them being confused with other lit-

Perhaps the most successful and the most permanent method is by means of notches in different parts of the ear. A system which has given great satisfaction is as follows:

One notch in the lower or outer edge of the right ear means one; two notches in the lower or outer edge of the right ear means two; one notch in the lower or outer edge of the left ear means three; one notch in the upper or inner edge of the right ear means ten; one notch in the upper or nner edge of the left ear means 30.

be marked up to 99. For example, each pig of the first litter is marked with a notch in the lower edge of the right ear, making it litter No. 1; litter No. 2 is marked with two notches in the same ear; litter No. 3 is marked with one notch in the lower edge of the left ear; litter No. 4 is marked with one notch in the lower edge of the left ear and one notch in the lower edge of the right ear: litter No. 7 is marked with two notches in the lower edge of the left ear and one notch in the lower edge of the right ear: litter no. 12 is marked with one notch in the upper edge of the right ear and two notches in the lower edge of the right ear, etc. This marking is done with a punch or with a marker.

Shelter for Ducks.

Ducks require the simplest shelter and can be housed inexpensively, as long as their quarters are kept dry. They are good feeders, but for the most part their food is bulky and not

## WAS UP AGAINST A TARTAR

Amateur Checker Player Doesn't, and while there he saw two or three Think as Well of His Game as He Used To.

crowd down at the Builders' exchange and defeating them all, L. A. Griffin got it into his head that he must be a

one day he went to the home of play the game once in a while in the D. S. Craig to discuss a piece of work evenings."

different kinds of checker boards lying about Craig's library. The men to be played on these boards were fancy, After playing checkers with the too, some of aluminum, some of ivory and many by them handsomely carved. "You must go in for checkers," remarked Griffin, casually.

"Yes," admitted Craig, "I used to

"Suppose we play a game or two," So Craig got out one of his fancy oards and they played. Griffin won, just as he expected he would. They played another game and again Griffin

"This is a game that requires a lot of practice, of course," he remarked. magnanimously to Craig. "You probably haven't been playing for some

"Oh, well, we'll try another," says

That time Craig won. And the next time. And the time after that. They played about 50 more games and Craig won them all. Toward the last he gave Griffin a handicap by using only about half the usual number of men, but it made no difference.

The next day Griffin told a friend about his experience. the secretary of the Cleveland Check-

"Yes," commented the friend, "he's "Mebby I'll catch on to it er club, and about the best around

ture at the Royal Photographic sofilled with savory things that pigs enwithout any trouble.-London Globe.

Stables must be well whitewashed With these as a basis the litters can at least once a year.