

UNCLE SAM'S CHRISTMAS BARGAIN SALE

BY WALDON FAWCETT

IT IS doubtless news to many readers that the United States government conducts a Christmas bargain sale, but such is the case. Of course Uncle Sam's holiday "flyer" in the marts of trade is not officially designated by any such fanciful title, but the event amounts to that all the same. In official parlance this federal contribution to the Yule-tide shopping activity is termed "The Sale of Articles Accumulated in the Division of Dead Letters," and it takes place each year during the Christmas holidays, by order of the postmaster general.



WRAPPING UP PACKAGES FOR AUCTION SALE

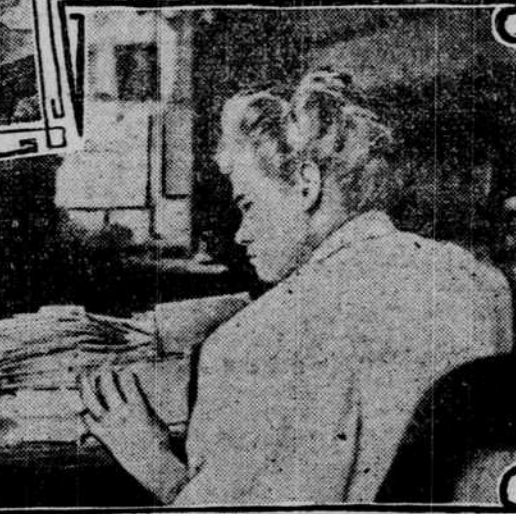
TALES OF THE CHRISTMAS GREENS

"And they found written in the law . . . Go forth into the mount and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees to make booths."

In the days of Joshua the custom of using greens for midwinter festivals was popular among the Hebrews—in fact, it was obligatory. And the use of mistletoe by the old Druids and of holly by the Romans were customs already centuries old when Christianity adopted them. The use of Christmas greens began before Christmas.

Now you are preparing, doubtless, to decorate your home, to twine ivy about the paintings in the drawing room or parlor, to hang on walls and in windows holly wreaths and suspend mistletoe from chandeliers and door frames. But do you know the legends of these greens, of the significance of the ivy, the holly and the mistletoe?

Holly was used by the Romans in the feasts of Saturn, to whom it was dedicated. It was an emblem of peace and good will. When the early Christians began to celebrate the birth of Christ, holly became the symbol of resurrection. Even the Persians regarded this plant as sacred and believed that "the sun never shadowed the holy tree." They would drench



OPENING DEAD LETTERS

and make room for the year's accumulation of unclaimed parcels.

However, there are several circumstances 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 cards, handkerchiefs, 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 to-be-expected sequel of improperly wrapped parcels, missing addresses, etc. Thus, too, it is during the Christmas holidays when the volume 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 acknowledgment is requested, has no means of knowing that the gift failed to reach its destination. Doubtless many a heart-burn has been caused by the failure to deliver the articles 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 Dead Letter office, the actual barrier is in the hands of a private auctioneer—this 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 \$3,000 net profit. This is 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 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-looker.

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 post-office 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 piano box, filled with souvenir cards. Another almost as large, holds a miscellaneous assortment of cheap jewelry.

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

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

Nay, ivy, may, it shall not be, I wots:
Let Holly take the mastery as the manner ys.
Holly stud in the hall, fayre to behold;
Ivy stood without the door; she is full sore a cold

Holly was preferred, but ivy became popular in the course of time. Mistletoe has all ways shared with ivy the popularity of Christmas. Mistletoe is more rare and more associated 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.

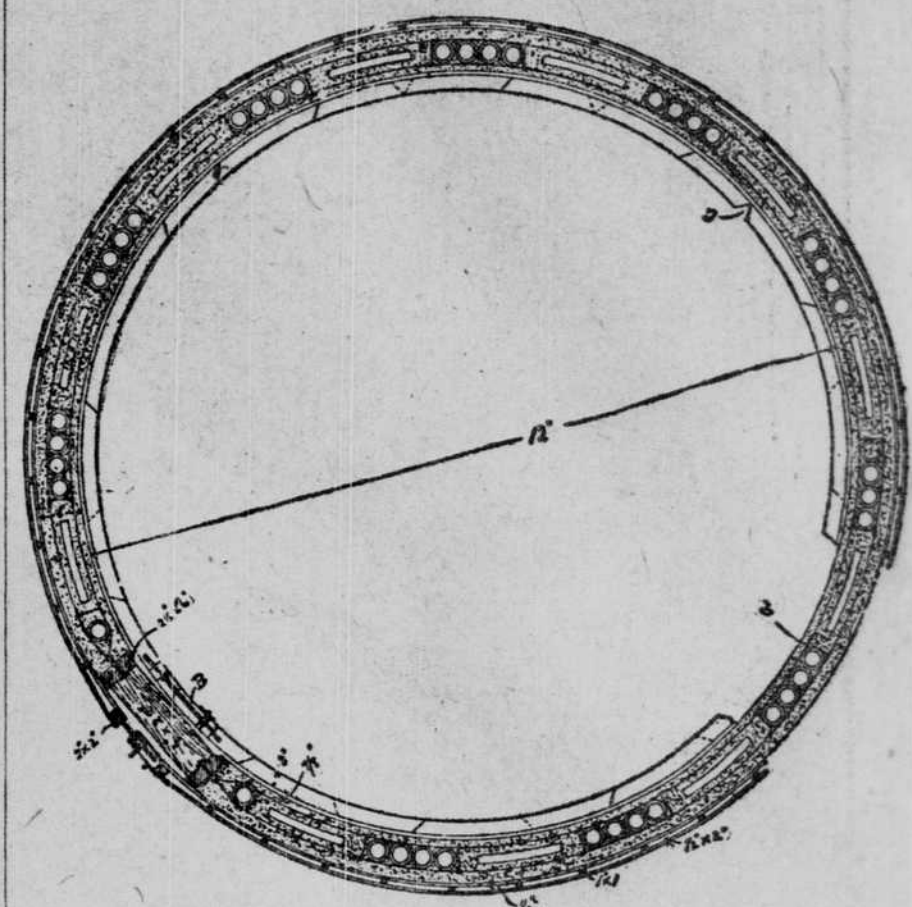
On the day appointed, when the moon was six days old, there were led to the place two white bulls; a white-robed priest would ascend the tree and cut the mistletoe with a sickle of gold. The sickle was never used for any other purpose; all the fragments of the plant were gathered, and with great rejoicing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

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

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.

ENSILAGE IS DEFINED AS SUCCULENT RATION

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



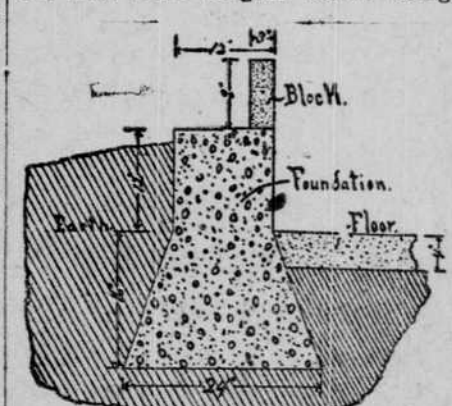
Cross Section of Wall and Forms of Porter Silo. A. Section of wall showing position of one of the re-enforcing cables. B. Inner form and clamp used to spread it to place.

Ensilage may be roughly defined as moderately fermented succulent feeding material. The succulent material is usually green corn in this country. Other materials sometimes used are green field peas, cow peas, soy beans, horse beans, ensiled alone or with corn. Green rye, wheat, oats and others of the grasses are sometimes used.

Some practical ensilage users think that certain of the legumes, such as alfalfa, clover, field peas, cow peas or soy beans, mixed with corn make a much more desirable ensilage than does corn alone. Three reasons are offered for this preference:

1. Stock enjoy this mixed ensilage better.
2. Stock thrive better upon it.
3. Such an ensilage approaches more nearly a balanced ration.

The green material is nearly always cut into short lengths before being



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 ensiled 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 feeding.

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 are likely to spoil if they thaw out slowly.

Built of stone, brick or cement, the walls may be made sufficiently strong 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 diameter of 12 feet and stands 36 feet high above the floor. The floor stands 4 1/2 feet below the surface of the

ground and six inches above the bottom of the foundation.

The lower three feet of the foundation is of cobble stones and cement; the upper two feet is of concrete. The foundation is 10 1/2 inches wide at the top and broadens inward and outward to about 17 inches at the base, the floor having a diameter of only 11 feet. The silo wall above ground has a uniform thickness of eight inches and is unique in its construction. Forms are used in its construction, but the wall is rendered "hollow," first, by the use of forms, and, second, by the building into the wall of tiers of No. 2 three-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 2x3/4x26 inch pieces of pine, nailed upon two circles of elm. Each of these circles was built up of two to three inch pieces. All of these pieces were cut to circles of proper radius.

The outer form was built of five by one-half inch strips nailed outside and at the ends of the ribs. These forms were clamped into place by means of two one-half inch bolts in each form.

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METHOD OF 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 their being confused with other litters.

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 four; one notch in the upper or inner edge of the left ear means five. With these as a basis the litters can

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 so expensive.

Stables must be well whitewashed at least once a year.

WAS UP AGAINST A TARTAR

Amateur Checker Player Doesn't Think as Well of His Game as He Used To.

After playing checkers with the crowd down at the Builders' exchange and defeating them all, L. A. Griffin got it into his head that he must be a real loud noise as checkerist.

One day he went to the home of D. S. Craig to discuss a piece of work

and while there he saw two or three different kinds of checker boards lying about Craig's library. The men to be played on these boards were fancy, too, some of aluminum, some of ivory and many of them handsomely carved.

"You must go in for checkers," remarked Griffin, casually.

"Yes," admitted Craig, "I used to play the game once in a while in the evenings."

"Suppose we play a game or two," suggested Griffin.

So Craig got out one of his fancy boards and they played. Griffin won, just as he expected he would. They played another game and again Griffin won.

"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 time."

"Oh, well, we'll try another," says Craig. "Mebby I'll catch on to it

again by and by. I must use some other system."

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.

"Yes," commented the friend, "he's the secretary of the Cleveland Checker club, and about the best around

these parts, I guess."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Ducile 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 lecture at the Royal Photographic society's exhibition. Instead of prodding and pushing the animals along the market women carry panniers filled with savory things that pigs enjoy, and the drove trots behind them without any trouble.—London Globe.