

be able to afford a tree. Year after year the forests have been denuded. New England, a generation ago, was thought to have an almost inexhaustible supply. Today her hills are bare. Nearly all her immense forests of spruce and fir have been sacrificed to the sentiment of

The middle states have been ransacked for their treasures. The farmer, although he receives but two cents apiece for the trees, is afraid to look the future in the face and wait until the tree is full grown. Neither does he show any discretion in cutting, but every year he rushes to the woods and cuts everything that he can lay his hands on in order that some one

may have a night's pleasure by defacing nature's work with cheap tinsel and candles. After that, what would have been the forest of the future is discarded forever, beyond the power of man to restore and the work of nature for years to re-

The bulk of the trees now come from Canada. More than 300,000 are used annually in Philadelphia alone. New York, Chicago, Baltimore and a hundred towns between them use three times that number every year.

In the wild hills of the Canadian provinces the trees are still plentiful. But it is only a question of a few years' time, with the increased demand for them, when their price will soar. No attempt is made, apparently, to rejuvenate the for-

In a few scattered places throughout the country, it is true, one or two men have started nurseries in Christmas trees. Intelligent planting and cutting within three generations may make them useful patches from which to glean hardy trees. But elsewhere, in spite of the talk of conservation which we hear so much about nowadays, the trees are stripped ruthlessly from the hills and

valleys and no attempt is made by the greedy marketer to replace them. This has resulted in the present dearth of the much-desired spruce trees. Vermont already charges an additional stumpage of five cents, upon

trees which are shipped out of the state. Let us consider the Christmas tree situation in Philadelphia. Each year more than 1,000 flat freight cars, loaded with the trees, which are piled in double tiers, reach the city. The capacity of the flat car averages 300 trees.

Therefore, approximately 300,000 trees are used in Philadelphia annually. Sentimentality apart, this is an enormous waste of material, when it is recalled that the trees serve no economic purpose, and the majority of them furnish fuel for bonfires on vacant lots two weeks after the hol-

It is an expensive proposition considered in any light. First comes the cost of sending men into regions where the trees grow. They are experts. They are able to size up the marketable value of a patch of woods after a day's tramp through them. Then comes the cost of cutting, stumpage, hauling and shipping to destination. After that, it is mainly a matter for the retail dealers, who buy trees either as they stand in the forests, or at the freight yards in the cities to which they are consigned.

The small dealer must make his profit. He tacks on an extra price which the consumer must pay. Then comes the expense of decorating the greenwood with tinsel and glistening ornaments. This costs a little fortune in itself. Finally, it is usual to pay the ashman to cart the tree away, after the holidays are over.

It has been estimated that from first to last, from the time that the seedling is plant-

ed in the soft, friable soil, to the moment it returns to its primal element, the dust, as a handful of embers on the city lot, a Christmas tree represents a money valuation of \$25. This is a total expenditure of \$7,-

500,000 annually. Of course, this figure is purely imaginary. The trees do not actually cause that amount of money to change hands in a simple buying and selling transaction. But there is actually that much loss to the regions which supply trees. If all the trees in an average load-

ed flat car were to be stood upon their butts, in the natural way in which they would grow, they would cover a ten-acre lot. Multiply this by 1,000 and the amount of timber stripped annually from the hills will become apparent at once.

Just at this time of the year the Christmas tree industry is in its most flourishing condition. All of the trees for this year's market have been cut. Many of them are in transit, but some of them are even now standing in the freight yards of the railroads, waiting for the retail dealers to purchase them

Dealers are gradually awakening to the fact that it is better to ship their trees early, sell them all at a low price, and save the trouble and expense of remaining a long time in the city bartering their wares.

The dealers in Christmas trees are types. They are all queer characters. You cannot pick out one that has not some peculiarity. As in all trades, there are tricks to the business of

buying and selling Christmas trees. You would think that the disposal of a car load of railroad ties, with a layer of trees piled on top, to an unwary customer, would bar the dealers from coming again to the spot where they had practiced such deception.

DETACING NATURE FOR

A NIGHTS PLEASURE

Yet it never does. Year after year they practice the most dishonest tricks upon their patrons. One man last year got a high price for 20 of the finest trees ever seen in Philadelphia. He told the buyer that the rest of the car on which the 20 were loaded was just like them, but when they were unloaded and placed for sale, proved to be small and scrubby,

many of them being utterly unfit for use. Dealers such as these are rare, it is true; the majority of them are honest.

To the dealers, whom the railroads designate as the consignees, come the little fellows, the traders. These also represent almost every phase of human character. Many save up a few hundred dollars and visit the freight yards with their teams, buying the trees in less than carload lots. In this way they can see just what they are getting. Most of them are shrewd fellows, and drive a hard bargain. Your upcountryman is ofttimes as shrewd, however, as the "piker" dealer, and many amusing hours may be spent frequenting the freight yards in the railroads where the trees are stacked or exhibited for sale.

Each year there are many new additions to the company of dealers. The lure of the adventure, the chance to realize money upon an investment that is practically certain to bring a 50 per cent. return, attracts many to the business. Trees can be purchased in half carload lots, or even in hundred lots for about 60 cents aplece. If they can be sold for a dollar, or perhaps more, the chance to make money quickly is irresistible to many investors.

Not always does the investor succeed. fingers are sometimes pretty badly burned. The market may be glutted, he may have a rival on the next corner, or perhaps his trees are not sufficiently attractive to cause the public to patronize him. Perhaps he has held off, waiting for better prices, till the last moment, and finds himself with half a hundred spruce on his hands, which he must dispose of as best he may.

Usually, however, the business is lucrative. The wise dealer buys trees in hundred lots, peddles them out quickly, and comes back for more. He does not wait for high prices, but sells his trees for what he can get.

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Heap on more wood!—the wind is chill. But let it whistle as it will, We'll keep our Christmas merry still.

Each age has deem'd the newborn year

The fittest time for festal cheer; And well our Christian sires of old

Cornelia's Customer

By HARRIET LUMMIS SMITH

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"It really isn't anything to get ex- | amount of cream in a large freezer." cited about, Aunt Nancy," Cornella

said soothingly. Cornelia herself was not at all excited. Her serenity was in most agreeable contrast to Aunt Nancy's fluttering perturbation. To be sure, it was Aunt Nancy's silver closet to which Cornelia had lost the key.

"If it falls into the hands of a dishonest person," observed Aunt Nancy, on the point of tears, "then goodby to the silver, including the loving Irank and the tablespoon on which the price?" your great-grandfather Bennett cut als teeth."

"Dear Aunt Nancy," Cornella reasoned kindly, "unless the dishonest llogical flops.

"It will be necessary to cancel our invitation for Friday," remarked Aunt Nancy. "With the silver locked up and only half a dozen spoons and three forks available it is out of the question to entertain a dinner party." Cornella looked at her watch. "I

will get a locksmith at once," she replied. "The key will be ready by tonight and Mary can clean the silver in the morning." She went to put on her street things, wondering that Aunt Nancy could not see how much better it was to be calm and philosophical in case of some trifling annoyance like losing the key of the silver closet.

Cornella is an observant young woman. Weeks before, when nothing was further from her expectation than the need-of such services, she had noticed the sign "Locksmith" in a window of a little hardware store near where she was waiting to take the car. In the direction of this hardware store she now bent her steps. A bell clanged loudly as she opened the door, and a wizened, elder ly person swooped out from a back room and asked what she wanted.

Cornella explained. "I should like to have you see to the matter at once. if you please," she said. "for my aunt is in a great hurry for the key."

"Can't do a thing before Saturday." snapped the locksmith, seemingly offended because she had not wished to purchase a range for the kitchen "But you must, you know," Cor-

nells answered him kindly. "I must have the key tonight. My aunt entertains at dinner tomorrow." "I won't have nobody to leave the

store with before Saturday," persisted feels like it, he'll stay here while i get the impression of your lock. Them jobs is more trouble than they are worth."

"Yes, but you see I can't walt for your grandson," Cornella explained. "You will have to go at once. I will stay and take care of the things until you are back."

She seated herself on a stool behind the counter as an evidence of good faith.

"Anybody in charge of this bere store has got to be on to the job," the owner exclaimed. "Only last week a rake was stolen out front while I was waiting on a customer. There's an ice cream freezer by the steps now that worth three-fifty. If somebody was to come along and snatch that-

"Nobody will snatch anything while I'm here," said Cornella. "The address is on this card, and please say to the servant that you are the locksmith Miss Hawes was to send." She folded her arms and gave her attention to a shelf of cooking utensils several feet above the locksmith's beed. That individual after several half-hearted attempts to distract her attention, put on his coat and de-

parted on his errand. The echo of his footsteps had hardly died away when the customer appeared. At first view, Cornella had no thought that he was a customer, for be seemed to be strolling along in a somewhat aimless fashion.

"Good morning." said Cornella rising. "Can I do anything for you today?" Then with sudden dismay she realized that out of the stock in the hardware store, she knew the price of but one article. It happens, however, that Cornella is a young woman of resources. "Perhaps I can interest you in ice cream freezers," she said. Oddly enough, this was exactly what the young man was looking for "O, yes," he exclaimed, with seeming relief, "I should like to look at some

thing first class." Cornella led the way to the door "This is our best freezer," she said, indicating by a gesture the article in question. "If you'll just set it inside, please—it's quite heavy."

"It's a trifle large for the average family, isn't it?" asked the young man. Cornella took alarm. She would have had no objection to selling a smaller freezer had she known the price of the others in stock.

"I shouldn't advise you to get s smaller size," she said firmly. "It is much better to have a freezer large enough-to meet an emergency. Your wife might wish to entertain several at luncheon, you know And there is come in handy some time." nothing to prevent making a small

The young man was impressed. That's a good idea," he exclaimed. "Perhaps a still larger one would be even better, in case we wanted to give a regular party."

It was necessary to head him off again "No," said Cornella with decision. "If you give a party you will need a caterer. A freezer larger than this would be in your way."

"That's right," agreed the customer, who for tractability left nothing cup from which General Washington to be desired. "I'll take it: what's

Cornella had no idea that business success was so simple a matter. It occurred to her that the ability of the men who made fortunes had been person were a mind reader, too, he greatly overestimated. Then a sudcould not possibly know that this den staftling thought broke in on her particular key fitted your silver self-congratulation. In her efforts to closet." She was about to continue ensuare her customer she had forgother argument along this line when ten the price the locksmith had made. Aunt Nancy executed one of her "Thr-four and a half," she said uncertainly.

The customer made no protest. He drew a five dollar bill from his pocket and Cornella made change from her own little purse. "Now, I'll have this sent, please," he was beginning.

"Oh!" Cornella looked at him in blank dismay. "I'm afraid I can't send it. Not before Saturday, anyway." she added, remembering the grandson. "I suppose, it would be too heavy for you to carry, wouldn't it?"

There was appeal in the gaze she lifted to his. She could not bear the thought of losing a sale for so triffing a reason. Luckily the customer was still accommodating. He protested hastily that the freezer was not at all heavy, and looked about him with an air of a man about to make purchases with a view to setting up housekeeping. Cornella felt it was time to assume a distant manner and she did so with immediate effect. The customer left the store, carrying his single purchase in his hand.

When the locksmith returned grambling, Cornella announced her sale, and he looked at her with reluctant admiration "You done him out of a dollar," he observed. "That freezer wasn't worth but \$3.50." His sudden accession of respect for Cornella received an immediate check from the dismay with which she received the

"Don't you think he will come back?" she asked anxiously. "He was such a polite young man. I can't bear to think I've cheated bim out of a

The locksmith grudgingly assented that the customer's return was possible. He added darkly, "Twould have been a different thing if you'd sold it a dollar under price. We'd never see hide or hair of him again."

The customer did return within a few days. He came in looking about him in the same undecided manner which had characterized him on his previous visit, and yet he did not look to be a young man lacking in determination. After he had purchased a screwdriver and a wond of natis, be came to the point.

"The young lady who waited on me before, your daughter, perhaps-"She ain't no daughter of mine," said the locksmith. "Nor yet a clerk

She was asking about you this very day," he added calmly. The young man spun about

"What!" he shouted. "She lives , with her aunt at the Rutherford apartments. She wanted a key made for a lock and she stayed in the store while I went to get the impression She overcharged you a dollar for that freezer," explained the locksmith, reluctantly, opening his cash drawer, "and she asked if you had been back to complain."

It seemed that the young man did not care about the dollar. "See here," the locksmith said

"The young woman came down this morning to bring the key. It stuck a little, you know I've filed it off and it's ready to take back. If you'd like the job. I promised her I'd send my grandson when he came from sehe

The young man thought it would be a pity to trouble the grandson. He said, with feeling, that growing boys need all the playtime they could get. At the entrance of the Ruther apartments be met Cornella ce

"Oh!" cried Cornella, dropping bet purse in her excitement. "Have you come about that dollar?"

"I've come to bring your key," said the young man, and gave it to ber. Explanations followed, and thes came argument Cornella was not

sure that selling an ice cream freezer to a stranger constituted an introduction. The young man, on the other hand, was positive about it. "But your wife?" Cornella hinted,

delicately.

The young man blushed. "You invented the wife and I held my tongue I was afraid that if I explained that i was a bachelor you'd wonder what wanted with an ice cream free "What did you want with it?" Cor

pella was indiscreet enough to ask. The young man's reply was not verbal, but such as it was it was responsible for a marked increase in questioner's color.

"Oh, well," said Cornella, swing the key on her forefinger, "it a

It did.

And Ceremony doff'd his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose:
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hall'd, with uncontroll'd delight And general voice, the happy night, That to the cottage as the crown
Brought tidings of salvation down.
The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall table's caken face,
Scrubb'd till it shone, the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board No mark to part the squire and lord, Then was brought in the lusty brawn By old blue-coated serving man; Then the grim boar's head grown'd on

Crested with bays and rosemary. Created with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garb'd ranger tell
How, when and where the monster fell.
What dogs before his death he tore
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassail round, in good brown bowls
Garnish'd with ribbons, blitherly trowls.
There the huge sirloin reek'd; hard by
Plum porridge stood and Christmas pie;
Nor fail'd old Scotland to produce
At such high tide her savory goose. At such high tide her savory goose.

Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roar'd with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song, was a hearty note and strong.
'ho lists may in their mumming see Who lists may in their muniming see
Traces of ancient mystery.
White shirts supplied the masquerade
And smutted cheeks the visors made:
But, O! what maskers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
"Twas Christmas broach'd the mightiest

And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had roll'd
And brought blithe Christman back again,
With all his hospitsele train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honor to the holy night;
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung;
That only night in all the year
Saw the stoled priest the chalic rear.
The damsel donn'd her kirtle sheen,
The hall was dress'd with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then open'd wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside "Twas Christmas told the merriest tale; A Christmas gambol oft could cheer The poor man's heart through half the year.

-Bir Walter Scott

As you pass some windy corner one of these blustery nights before Christmas Eve and see the long rows of evergreens laid against the wall, or ignobly lying prone upon the ground, bethink you of the place in which they first saw the light. The kindly hills, snow-covered engirdling valleys fragrant with spicy odor; picture them bare, littered with the waste of cuttings, and the unsightly stumps of trees. Picture the brooding of those trees as they grew.

WHAT MAN WILL DO FOR TWO CENTS

It took them 20 years to reach an age and size where they might prove marketable. No more will the wind moan and sough through their branches. The hills are bare. The snow will melt in the spring, and the soil will not the locksmith obstinately. "Then my absorb it. Water will run into the streams and grandson'il be out of school, and, if he the streams become floods, and the floods bro calamities.

The trees, noble fellows all of them, will have their tops backed off to accommodate them to the stuffness of our little box-like homes. As the heat of our rooms dries up their sap, their lives will go out, slowly, day by day. They will end on the bonfire.

Yes, buy a tree. Buy one and take it home to your children. When it is bravely decked out in all its gala finery, gather your family about its spreading branches, which are exhaling their last breaths for you, and tell them the story of the life and death of the tree.

THE SPIRIT OF THE DAY.

Have you time for a little sermon? It will take but a few minutes, and today, if ever, our thoughts should be turned toward inward to the heart of things. To you, whose hands rock the cradles of humanity and indirectly rule the world, let us ask a question: Are you forgetting the real spirit of the day? Gift giving on this anni-

versary of the Nativity is in danger of losing its loving purpose. It has degenerated in many cases to a mercenary exchange—a gift for a gift The spirit is frequently absent.

This should not be. Women represent the greater number of giftgivers. Let us then revert to the underlying love and reverence that prompted the Wise Men to lay their offerings at the feet of the Holy Baby. Let us give a little of our hearts with each present, and if we cannot give a tangible expression of our love, let us g've a heart's wish instead.

In your hands lies great power for good or for evil. A woman influences thought and action. It is your duty. then, to discountenance the heartless offer and to smile your approval of the spirit of the day.

Then, indeed, Christmas will mean all that he would approve. The guiding star of love and good will that shone so clearly in the blue night long ago should never be lost in our minds, and the love to which it pointed should epitomize our ef forts to honor this great day.

A SURPRISE BOX.

Something which would delight any little invalid is a "surprise box." This may be planned to last a week or any length of time one wishes and should contain a package for each day, with the date on which it is to be opened written plainly on each one. Dolls, toys, books and many other things dear to the childish heart may be put in these pack ages and the little one will surely re joice to have his "Merry Christmas" last so many days.