

ORIGIN of the CHRISTMAS TREE



WHO invented the Christmas tree? Whence does it come? It is a curious fact that most of the old chroniclers have thrown a veil of mystery around the Christmas tree and make no attempt to explain its origin. It has been stated that the tree came to us from Egypt.

This legend is well propagated in old Irish and Welsh fairy tales. The idea is that in ancient Egypt they used a slip of the palm tree with twelve shoots on it at certain winter festivities. The tree symbolized the year with its twelve months.

Consequently, any one who is equal to the effort may believe that the modern Christmas tree represents that twelve-shooted slip of palm. Minds of less stalwart credulity may prefer to trace the Christmas tree back to Germany only, where they had Christmas trees long before they were ever heard of in this country or England or France.

The Christmas tree was not introduced into England from Germany until after the marriage of Queen Victoria to her German consort, Prince Albert. But where did the Germans get the Christmas tree idea from? S. J. Adair Fitz Gerald, writing in T. P.'s Weekly, offers an explanation of this by saying that far away back in the ages you find Teutons believing in a mystic ash tree, Yggdrasil, which, with its roots and branches, united the world of the living and the world of the dead. "At the foot of Yggdrasil sit the three Norns, who determine the destinies of men, and Yggdrasil's branches bear gifts for men to take."

Is that our Christmas tree? Anyhow, the idea that Prince Albert introduced it into Great Britain is very prevalent. One of the prettiest and most eagerly looked for events of the Christmas tide—that of the setting up of the Christmas tree—is associated with the late Empress Frederick of Germany. Queen Victoria, after the birth of the princess royal, had Christmas celebrated at Windsor in 1840, and "on that occasion Prince Albert introduced the pretty German custom of decorating a Christmas tree. Since that period it has become a welcome custom for both rich and poor, and affords a graceful means of distributing little presents. It was probably first imported into Germany with the conquering legions of Drusus, and is alluded to by Virgil in the "Georgics."

It will be seen by this that the generally accepted notion is that Prince Albert was responsible for the British adoption of the pleasing tree and all that it means, symbolical and practical, to the youngsters. But on the threshold of this acceptance we are met with this statement from the "Greville Memoirs," under date Dec. 27, 1839, when Queen Victoria was yet but ten years old: "On Christmas day the Princess Lieven got up a little fete, such as is customary all over Germany. Three trees in great pots were put on a long table covered with linen; each tree was illuminated with three circular tiers of colored wax candles—blue, green, red and white. Before each was displayed a quantity of toys, gloves, handkerchiefs, workboxes, books and various articles, presents made to the owner of the tree." This princess was a Russian, and in her later days lived mostly in Paris. Then again Prof. Ditchfield, in his "Old English Customs," says that the Christmas tree was first imported into England by some German merchants who lived at Manchester in the first years of the nineteenth century.

In 1909 a writer on folklore said: "Although we are accustomed to consider Germany the home of the Christmas tree, it has not been general there for more than a couple of centuries. Old people are still living whose parents never saw one in Germany. The decoration of houses with olive leaves and green branches, as in England at Christmas, is a far more ancient custom, and can be noticed in Botticelli's picture of "The Adoration of the Shepherds," in the National Gallery in London. It is, as Fritz Ortwein observes, a distinct remnant of an ancient heathen custom, as at the turn of the year during the twelve days of the Jul festival in honor of Woden, greenery could be fetched by all from the woods without punishment, and every hall was decorated with greys leaves and branches.

Again, in old works on English customs we find many references to the decorating of the interior of the dwellings, as well as the adornment of the churches with greenery, and the introduction of a fir tree as symbolical of the palm. In the halls of the barons and the squares and in the gigantic kitchens of the farmers a fir tree ever held prominent place, but whether ordinarily decorated or not is not specifically recorded. Here we are in doubt. In all probability the remaining fruits of the orchards of the year were hung upon the branches as a propitiation to the gods of the fruits of the earth to insure good harvests.

Going abroad we get fuller knowledge of these things. The custom of carrying away branches and trees from the woods at Christmas time in various parts of Austria became so extensive on account of the superstitions of the peasantry that at Salzburg, in 1755, and at Nuremberg, in 1768, severe by-laws were issued against persons purloining from the forests. In some regions of Hungary a solemn procession with a decorated tree takes place through each village before the shepherd play begins. It is adorned with ribbons and fruit, and is supposed to symbolize the tree of knowledge. Although most of the

Christian customs adhered to by the Austrian-German peasant can be traced back to heathenish Germanic rites, some dispute the use of a tree at the Jul festivities; nevertheless, it is certain that in Sweden, scandinavian pines and firs were set up at this time before the houses. Teutal of Saxony, an antiquarian authority on these subjects, says: "The ancient heathen ate before their houses between two crossed pine trees and ate and drank at the turn of the year for nineteen days."

The Christmas tree was introduced into Austria some eighty years ago by a Duchess of Wurtemberg and spread throughout Germany. About 1840 it is supposed to have taken fresh root in England, and became highly popular. Both Thackeray and Dickens seized hold of the idea of happiness begot of Christmas gatherings and the Christmas tree, and Charles Dickens in 1850 used "The Christmas Tree" as a title for one of his annual stories.



main of a once horrible Druid rite. The ceremonies which the mistletoe figured in among the ancient Druids always accorded it a place of honor. The myths that clung around it in their wondering, puzzling minds were many more than the few that have come to us in these later years. But, old as they are, those hoary, heathen myths lack the true flavor of antiquity when it comes to measuring traditions by the centuries.

Oh, we do not by any means owe our mistletoe to the Druids. We can go back so much further for the first adventures of the mistletoe that the Druids become merely modern innovators. It was one of the noblest of the trees in Paradise, the lordly tree of good and evil; and on its twig hung the apple which Mother Eve plucked with such disastrous consequences. Alas for Mother Eve and Father Adam! And alas for us, their punished heirs-at-law divine! But alas, too, for the wicked, handsome, tempting tree of knowledge which put humanity in such graceless plight! Upon its lofty crown, its massive trunk, its delicious fruit, descended the universal curse. It shrivelled away from the horrified earth; it dwindled to the meanest smallness; it was cast out into the bitter cold; it became a parasite and beggar, existing by the bounty of vulgar neighbors. Only in the pearly transience of its shrunk fruit, the most trivial of berries, did it preserve some semblance of its once radiant splendor.

And it has preserved some of its pristine virtues, too, in traditional Christian lore, as if it were still hedged about with a vestige of the glory that arrayed it in Paradise.

Time was, and time is now, when epilepsy is one of the scourges of mankind; only now we look for its cure, as we look for its cause, in quite natural means and conditions. The notion that some poor devil with the falling sickness has been cursed from on high is held scarcely compatible, in popular science, with the principles of eternal justice or with cold observation of cause and effect.

But in times that were, in Wales, when an epileptic developed the symptoms characteristic of the disorder, it was commonly believed that he was being scourged with the "rod of Christ," and that was the name by which the disease went, although it had another designation as well—St. Valentine's sickness. The cure for it was believed to lie in the Rod of Jesse. The use of the mistletoe as the Rod of Jesse in epilepsy was general and, if faith can work wonders, perhaps the miracle of cure did sometimes attend its employment.

Perhaps it didn't, if hard-headed science chooses to take a sly at that gracious addition to the list of miracle-working agents. But whether it did or didn't, the mistletoe's rare birth and fruition still carry with them the tenderness of Christian faiths, as they carry, too, the story of humanity's most far-reaching disaster. It is one of the Christmas greens which has the warrant of religious associations dating back to the very beginnings of man's creation, even as it is accorded the sublime honor of typifying the ancestral origins of the Redeemer of Man himself.

But what about the mistletoe kiss? Hm! To tell the truth, if we want to be consistently Christian in our Christmas greens and the purposes to which they should be put, there isn't anything about it, at least of any records which such careful investigators as Alfred E. P. Raymond Dowling have dug up while studying the general subject. None will deny that the most consistent Christians have taken to the mistletoe with abundant enthusiasm and a faith in its excellent results that has never been surpassed. But that doesn't make the mistletoe kiss any more Christian than it ever was.

Isn't the excellent story of foolish Mother Eve and the original mistletoe apple enough for any reasonable Christmas decorator who wants to justify its employment? And if it isn't, haven't we the legend of the Rod of Jesse to make it distinctly one of the Christmas greens? As for the kisses that are supposed to go with it—well, if you insist on knowing about them, you'll simply have to take the consequences, same as Eve did when she insisted on tasting of that confounded tree-of-knowledge. The mistletoe kiss seems not to be Christian at all—Druidical, probably, and therefore heathenish, and therefore very, very wrong. So, all young men who encounter it, artfully suspended where a pair of ripe, red lips must pass, do you piously refrain or, more piously, tear down the hoary old temptation and flee the accursed roof, as if it were the house of Arria Marcella and you were not Gautier's young Frechman. And you, maidens, give leave to no pagan rites; remember the fate of your poor Grandmother Eve and beware lest the fruit of the mistletoe, accursed tree of knowledge, prove now more bitter in the mouth than it did in Eden.

But if you have love, wreath it generously, for the French know it as the herb of St. John, the disciple whom the Savior loved, the emblem of pure friendship, the vine that needs not decay and death of its beloved, but clings ever more closely as the fall impends, and bears up its falling ally against all adversity. Learned students of these legends have surmised, too, that it may be the herb of St. John the Baptist, who is usually pictured as the boy in his camel's-hair coat, gazing at his cousin, the infant Jesus.

Lucky. "Thousands of years ago men shaved themselves with sharks' teeth and with pieces of flint," said the young man who had been reading the "Notes of Science." "How lucky," replied the fair maiden. "Lucky? Why so?" "I mean how lucky it is they have got to making razors in Germany. Otherwise the poor men would still have to shave with sharks' teeth and pieces of flint, wouldn't they?"

IDEAS FOR HOME BUILDERS

BY WM. A. RADFORD.

Mr. William A. Radford will answer questions and give advice FREE OF COST on all subjects pertaining to the subject of building, for the readers of this paper. On account of his wide experience as Editor, Author and Manufacturer, he is, without doubt, the highest authority on all these subjects. Address all inquiries to William A. Radford, No. 178 West Jackson boulevard, Chicago, Ill., and only enclose two-cent stamp for reply.

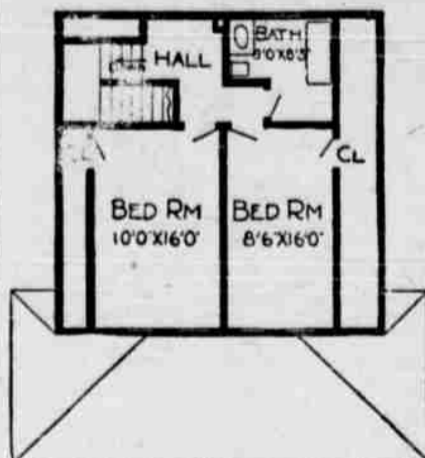
There is no question about it that the best investment the average man can make is to buy a home of his own. "Put your rent money into a home of your own" has been good advice which the real estate men have been giving for years. It has been maintained that this is the simplest and easiest method of making a real saving, and it does seem that for the man who is paying out \$25, \$30, or \$35 every month for rent no saving could be more easily accomplished.

Resident property is considered such good security that it is very seldom that any difficulty is encountered in arranging for the financial end of a home building proposition. In almost every locality, especially in the suburbs adjacent to our large cities, there are real estate operators who will build exactly as the home buyer desires, according to his plans. Possession of the property is secured by a comparatively small amount down and a monthly payment thereafter no larger than would be paid out as rent for the same house.

The only difference between renting and buying, according to this plan, is that after seven or eight years the man has in one case a bundle of old rent receipts to show for

the smaller house, using the money so received as a first payment on the larger, more costly structure.

This is probably the ideal method of saving money through home building, for, at the end of twenty or twenty-five years, a really fine property has been acquired. Each one of the series of homes has been adequate to the needs of the family at that time



Second Floor Plan.

and all the way through no extra saving was needed in addition to the ordinary monthly rent.

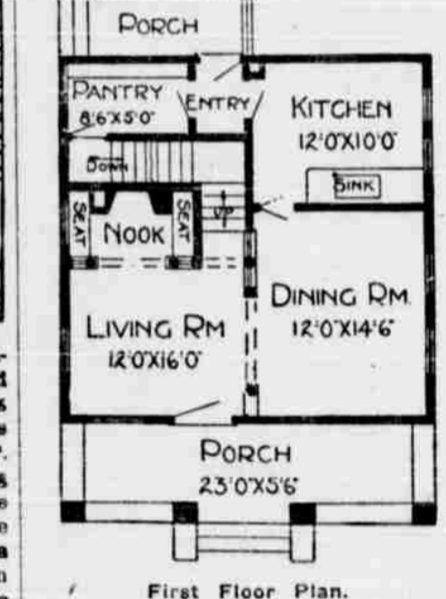
The design shown herewith is very suitable for the house to begin a series of home building, such as has been mentioned. This is a five-room story and a half cottage, which ought to appeal to any two young people just starting out in life's highway together. Although small and simple in



his money and in the other case a deed to the property.

If the building is properly located in a growing community, the natural advance in its value will counter-balance its depreciation.

By means of this method of home buying an astonishing number of families are working up every year from



First Floor Plan.

the renting to the home owning class. A great many have purchased two or three different homes by these methods, starting in with a small, inexpensive cottage, and as the needs of the family grew larger have sold

design it has that cozy, home-like air which is most desirable. It is plenty large enough for two people, with a guest room to spare.

A house of this kind always commands a ready sale and never stands vacant if offered for rent. Even where there are a number of large houses standing vacant it is very seldom that a desirable five or six-room house can be found.

This house is twenty-five feet six inches wide by twenty-six feet. It is covered on the outside with narrow siding put on over tar building paper and seven-eighths inch rough sheathing. The interior is finished in birch down stairs and yellow pine upstairs. The living and dining room floors are best quality red oak, maple flooring being used for the kitchen, pantry, back entry and bath room. For the remainder of the second floor yellow pine flooring is used.

For a house of this size a surprising amount of room is secured down stairs by the arrangement of living room and dining room opening together with a columared archway. The fireplace nook is a cozy feature that will be appreciated in a house of this kind. There should be a cemented basement, or cellar, under the entire house, and a warm air heating plant is to be recommended. A square, compact house of this kind is very easily heated by means of a warm air furnace which should be placed as near the center of the basement as possible. The cost of this building, not including the heating plant nor lighting, is estimated at \$1,700.

DOESN'T KNOW HER WEALTH

Mrs. Hetty Green Would Have to "Take Stock" to Determine Her Millions.

"How much are you worth now?" Mrs. Hetty Green was asked on her birthday.

"I haven't the least idea," she said very frankly. She left little doubt as to the truth of her statement.

"Can it be \$10,000,000, \$27,000,000 or \$190,000,000?"

"I am an old Quaker, and when I say I don't know what I am worth I mean that. You see, if I sell a piece of property in Chicago for \$200,000 I keep the money on deposit in the banks there. If I sell bonds in St. Louis for \$500,000 I keep the money with the bankers there. In that way the banks help me to dispose of what I don't want."

"Is there no way in which you can arrive at an approximate value of your wealth?"

"Yes; I could take stock of what I have."

"Will you do that, or do you intend doing so?" "I had not intended doing so, but if you want me to, I will." Mrs. Green's old straw hat, covered with black silk lace, which she has worn many years, tottered back and forth on her head as she called for her son. When Colonel Green arrived she said: "Eddie, this gentleman wants to know how much I am worth. I guess we better take stock." "Eddie" whispered with his "mom," and then Mrs. Green said: "We will take stock of everything we own on January 1. Not until then will we know just what we possess."

Bridge and Babies.

"Women must give up either bridge or babies; the two are incompatible," declares John Drew, who is in Pittsburgh this week.

"A woman cannot devote herself to bridge playing and at the same time perform her—well, her maternal duties," says Drew. "Bridge certainly is a cause of race suicide. And it has become so serious that it can't be ignored any longer. In England the bridge craze has become so violent, they tell me, it is actually hurting the business of the theaters. There are many people who would rather play bridge than eat."

"So it takes no great stretch of the imagination to think of women preferring bridge to babies. For you know babies take time and attention and a woman cannot devote her time to bridge playing and still perform her maternal duties."—John Drew in New York Sun.

Victor Hugo a Suffragist.

"And woman, what will you do with her?"

"Leave her where she is—the servant of man."

"Yes, one one condition." "What?" "That man shall be the servant of woman." "Can you think of it? Man a servant? Never! Man is master. I admit only one royalty—that of the freesoil. Man in his house is king." "Yes, on one condition." "What?" "That woman shall be queen there." "That is to say, you wish for man and woman—?" "Equality"—From "The Ninety-Three," by Victor Hugo.

CONTAGION NOT INFECTION.

For many years the idea of infection in disease has gradually merged into contagion. The International Congress of Hygiene, which held its sessions in Washington, would seem to have definitely settled that disease conveyance is always by contagion and not infection. It is contact, either direct or indirect, with a patient suffering from a particular disease that causes the occurrence of that disease in a second patient. Much used to be said of infected places, says the New York Herald. Swamps, low ground or marshy surroundings were thought to be the cause of disease. The night air had a bad reputation as a fomenter of illness of various kinds. Now we know that it is the mosquito which directly carries various diseases and acts as an intermediate host between one human victim and another. In the same way other carriers of disease have been found. Flies, fleas, ticks, rats and various forms of parasites are responsible for disease distribution. Even among human beings certain individuals prove to be "carriers" of infectious material. They may be inappreciable themselves or have acquired immunity from the disease, yet can convey it to others. Always when a communicable disease occurs it can be traced to a preceding case with which there has been contact either directly or indirectly.

Dr. Wiley is right in his contention that people die too young. Human life should be prolonged, and it can be by higher education on matters of hygiene. The average expectation of life in the United States is only about 44 years. It should be much higher, and probably will be hereafter, for people are learning more and more concerning the prevention of disease. As a matter of fact, the most valuable study in our schools is hygiene, says the Boston Globe. If the young folks are taught the value of food and moderate exercise they will grow up strong and possess a knowledge of how to take care of their bodies. There is too much ignorance among young and old concerning the proper care of the health. How few there are who know even how to eat; that is, to consume only those things which will create a sufficient supply of vitality with which to ward off disease. The sooner more attention is paid in all our institutions of learning to hygiene and kindred topics the better it will be for the students. None but the strong and healthy can enjoy life or engage successfully in its battles.

The age when we boasted of holding our own opinions is past. Today, if we possess any view at all, it is not usual to express them. This is a polite, a non-controversial age, one in which one fears to confess to strong feelings. To hold one's own opinion is to risk being called opinionated, and the world of today would avoid that at all costs, says the London Mirror. Our conversation has degenerated into a state of non-committal phraseology, and a superficial amiability is the right note to strike. Amiable we must be, the world demands; argument is the worst of forms. There was a time when two subjects only—politics and religion—were held taboo; today all subjects that may lead to dissension are to be avoided.

In 1908 Great Britain imported 348 American automobiles. See how the figures have expanded: 1909, 427; 1910, 1,101; 1911, 3,734. In the first six months of the present year the number of American automobiles purchased in Great Britain was 3,227. The total value of these machines was \$481,000 in 1908 and \$2,961,000 in 1911. The machines shipped to Great Britain from this country in the first half of the current year were worth \$2,792,000. It is evident that American manufacturers can make serviceable automobiles, and make them cheaply.

Beyond reasonable duration, applause is an uncivilized nuisance. Public meetings are making it wear that character, says the Brooklyn Eagle. Manufactured applause is becoming a contest of "stunts." "Stunts" such as have been resorted to are simply barbarous. Public opinion should stop them and candidates should resent them. They made no votes. They are a hindrance to good manners and an offense to good taste.

Every automobile of Serbia and Bulgaria was appropriated by the government at the outbreak of the war. Talk about the deprivations of the battlefield! They're not in it with the deprivations of the home!

A California man has just been given a judgment of \$100,000 against a man who alienated the affections of his wife. Now it only remains for him to collect the judgment and marry again.

A Nebraska judge had an operation performed to save him from blood poisoning, due to the fact that a rat nibbled his ear while he slept. The sleepiness of the judiciary has been a standing joke for years, but this establishes a record.

A Chicago woman who is suing for divorce alleges that for four years she shaved her husband and cut his hair. It would seem as if he would be the one to want a divorce.

His Presentation Speech

The winning grace and youthful dignity with which children often fulfill their part on occasions of civic, state or royal pageantry is one of the most charming features of such occasions. Sometimes, indeed, the little folk do not behave exactly as they are expected to do; but they are likely to improve on the original program as to spite it.

In Italy in the days when the present Dowager Queen Margherita was

the lovely young bride of the crown prince, a little anecdote of her reception in one of the hill towns was current alike in society and in the press. The little boy who was to present the usual bouquet was the son of a distinguished literary man, and he had been taught a pretty poem of a few lines, in graceful praise of the princess. But when the moment came to recite, he stood mutely gazing at her, too overcome to speak. At