THE BIRD'S CHRISTMAS TREE

It was the week before Christmas and real Christmas weather. Young people in the country like snow and ice. They don't complain if Jack Frost does nip their noses and their fingers, for he brings coasting and skating, and he makes wonderful pictures of mountains and castles on the windowpanes.

The Wells children were at the front window watching for the station wagon. "Oh, why doesn't it come!" cried Susie, one of the ten-year-old twins.

"Perhaps Auntie Martha can't come," said Mary, the other twin, who was always the desponding one.

"Of course she'll come," cried George, a sturdy boy of twelve. "She always comes for Christmas. There she is!" The five children rushed to the door.

"Do let your auntie get in out of the cold," exclaimed Mrs. Wells, as she held out a welcoming hand to a smiling young woman who stood in the doorway surrounded by children.

"Oh, I'll get in all right. I'm so glad to be here. I've been looking forward to this all through my fall term," said the newcomer.

"We've got all sorts of surprises for you," said Emma, a bright little girl of eight.

"Don't try to tell your auntie everything before she gets her hat off," said Mrs. Wells. "Let her go up to her room and rest before your father gets home."

Martha Wells, with the twins still clinging to her, went up to a sunny room which her brother had furnished for her when her home was broken up after her mother's death. There was a cheerful fire in an open fireplace, and Martha sank into her favorite chair with a sigh of content. "Now we are going to have a happy week together," she said.

"Every one of us has got a Christmas gift for you," said Susie, "even Billy-Boy."

"And Rex, and Mr. Tommy-Cat," added Mary.

"We're going to have the biggest tree we ever had," shouted George, putting his head in the door.

"Just come to the window and we will show it to you," cried Susie, dragging her auntie to the window. "Father is going to cut it down for us the day before Christmas."

"Cut that beautiful young evergreen tree down just for a Christmas holiday?" exclaimed Martha; "why it would be cruel."

"Cruel? What do you mean?" cried the children.

"Let us not talk about it now," said Martha soberly. "Run away and let me rest a little while, then I will come down and talk to you."

II.

It was after supper and the children, excepting Billy-Boy, were sitting around their beloved auntie in the parlor. Mr. and Mrs. Wells were with them, also Rex and Tommy-Cat. George suddenly spoke up,—"Father, auntie says it would be cruel to cut down our Christmas tree."

"I rather felt that way myself," said Mr. Wells, slowly. "I was waiting to hear what your auntie would say about it. Speak up, sister!"

"I shall begin by telling you something about my work," said Martha. "When I first began to teach school, five years ago, I soon realized that the children had not been taught to think. I saw that a good deal of the trouble and the suffering in the world was because older people as well as children did not stop to think whether what they wanted for their own comfort or pleasure was going to hurt anybody else. When I say anybody else, I mean any creature that lives and can suffer. I have always felt that we have no right to cause suffering to others for our own selfish comfort.

"I began to have my pupils commit to memory poems about birds and animals, and flowers and trees, and it was surprising what a difference it made in that neighborhood in a short time. The boys stopped robbing birds' nests and firing air guns at living targets. They unchained their dogs, but did not let them chase after their bicycles, —or cats. They did not desert their poor cats and kittens and let them starve. The grocer's boy no longer whipped the poor horse he was driving. All this I did without interfering at all with my other lessons, and any teacher could do it if she felt sympathy for suffering animals.

"Then I began to teach them to love the flowers too much to tear them up by the roots, and to love trees. I thought about this very tree you want to have cut down. I have watched that tree in my vacations and seen it grow from a little baby tree to what it is now, and I loved it. I called it the 'birds' tree'."

"We didn't know you cared about that tree, or we would not have asked to have it cut down," said George thoughtfully.

"I love all the trees, George. Just before I came here I had my class learn that beautiful poem of Joyce Kilmer about a tree. Surely you know that."

"I'm afraid they don't," said Mrs. Wells. "I ought to have read it to them."

"Shall I repeat it?" asked Martha.

"Please do," they all said, and she began:

"'I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree;
"'A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
"'A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
"'A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
"'Upon whose bosom snow has lain:
Who intimately lives with rain.
"'Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree'."

For a moment no one spoke, then Mary said, "What does a 'nest of robins in her hair' mean? A tree hasn't any hair."

"When I was here on my spring vacation a robin was building a nest in that very tree you want to cut down. Do you remember you wrote me, Mary, that there were five little birdies in the nest and that they all came off the nest safely, and that Mr. Tommy-Cat did not try to catch one of them?"

"Of course he didn't," said little Emma, fondly stroking the head of the pretty cat curled up in her lap. "Tommy never catches birds or chickens. We talked to him when he was little and told him he mustn't."

"It seems strange to me," said Mrs. Wells, "that so few persons understand cats. They think they can teach a dog anything, but do not know that with a little patience and without harsh treatment, a cat can be taught to mind. Plenty of cats live in the room with birds and when the birds are out of the cage never think of touching them. They have been taught better."

"Sometimes my cat and my dog mind me better than my children," said Mr. Wells, with a smile. "I don't think Rex ever disobeys me."

Rex, who was lying on the floor by Mr. Wells' chair, hearing his name called, lifted his head and thumped his tail on the floor.

"To get back to the tree," said Martha, "That is just the tree for birds to take shelter in when the cold winds are blowing and the snow falling. I am sure you would not wish to take away the birds' comfortable house?"

"Oh, no, auntie," the children all cried in chorus.

"But our presents—it'll sort of spoil our fun, won't it?" said George.

"Not a bit of it," answered his auntie. "I have thought out a fine way to give the Christmas presents."

"Tell us!" cried the children, so eagerly that they jumped up from their seats and set Rex to barking.

"Let us go back to the tree again," Martha. "Suppose we make our first Christmas present to the birds."

"How can we do that?" asked George.

"We can begin right away to get the presents for the birds. We will buy two pounds of beef suet and cut it into squares, or any shape you like, then make little wire baskets that we can fasten on the branches and the trunk of the tree. That will be a great attraction to the wood-peckers and chickadees. The blue jays will be greedy and get more than their share, but we can't help that—we don't want them to starve. If the squirrels, or the sparrows, are very hungry, they may take some of it, but we will provide other food for them. Then we will bake two dozen large potatoes long enough to make the skin hard so that we can cut them in halves. Each potato will make two baskets. Fill them with a mixture of bread crumbs and grain, and fasten them to the branches all over the tree with fine wire or cord for handles. Next, get your father to give you some of his cracked corn to spread under the tree for blue jays, squirrels, and perhaps pheasants, if there are any about here. That will make a Birds' Christmas Tree that will keep a good many of our dear little friends happy for days,—in fact, I am sure you will keep it supplied all winter, when once you see what a joy it is."

"Auntie, that is splendid! We shall love to do it," said Susie.

"Indeed we will," echoed Mary.

"It's surely a fine idea," said Mr. Wells, and his wife added,—"indeed it is."

III.

Christmas morning dawned bright and cold. Snow covered the ground and the children shouted with delight when looking out the window they saw the Birds' Christmas Tree alive with birds. Susie, who had been making a study of birds, announced proudly that she had seen the winter chippie, juncos, blue jays, chickadees, woodpeckers, a lame blackbird, cedar birds, and English sparrows, at different times, since she first began looking out her window as she was dressing.

The crows were calling to each other back of the barn, where cracked corn had been placed, and she was almost sure that she saw a pheasant.

"I can vouch for that," said Mr. Wells. "I saw three pheasants come out of the woods and enjoy our Christmas treat when I went to the barn just as the sun was rising, and the squirrels were scampering around as busy and happy as they could be."

"Our teacher told us to drive away the English sparrows," said George.

"I am sorry she should say that, for two reasons," said Auntie Martha, "one is, that the greatest lesson in the world to teach children is to be kind to every living creature. If we once begin to teach children to do anything to hurt or frighten any kind of bird or animal, we can't tell where it will end. We are teaching unkindness and hardening their hearts so that that first thing we know they will be cruel to each other, or to unfortunate dogs or cats that have no one to care for them, and they will get air guns and shoot at any kind of bird."

"It is strange that so few persons know how useful English sparrows are," said Mr. Wells. "I have watched them feed their little ones and seen them fly to their nests again and again with their little beaks full of wriggling green worms. I should hate to see any bird or animal go hungry,

IV.

and winter is a hard time for English sparrows, as well as other birds in the city or country."

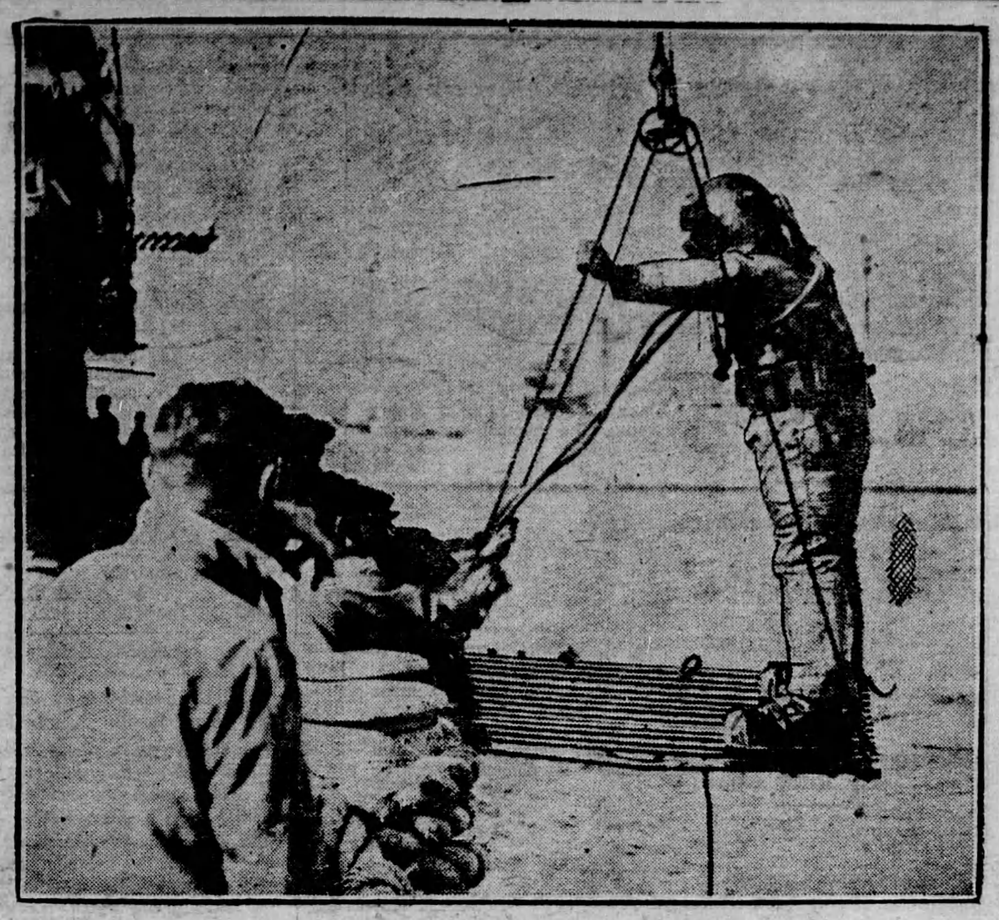
Christmas afternoon was a happy time at the Wells farm. The children were kept out of the parlor all the forenoon. When the door was opened they all exclaimed with delight. The tables were covered like a counter in a store, with all sorts of delightful things. To each article a narrow ribbon was attached and carried across the table to hang over the sides like a fringe, the ends finished with a round shining button. There were five different colors, a color for each child. Susie was invited to begin by drawing toward her any one of the blue ribbons, and the article at the end of the blue ribbon was hers. The children took turns, each seizing one of the ribbon ends, and carefully pulling it toward them. If the present at the end of the ribbon was large and heavy like a train of cars or a box of blocks, it made all the more fun. There was a great uproar when George, following his color, a red ribbon, all across the table, found that it led to a new sled that was hidden under the table. Another smaller table had gifts for the older ones with pretty cards, and still another table, when a snowy cover was lifted, displayed a feast of sandwiches, fruit, candy, cake, set out in readiness for the children's supper.

So the day ended, and as the children were going to their night's rest George said, "I think this is the best and merriest Christmas we have ever had, and I'm awfully glad we gave the birds our Christmas tree."

"It will make us all happy when we listen to the bitter wind that is blowing to-night to think of the dear little birds and the crows and squirrels that will sleep warmer and better because they are not going hungry to their cold beds in the trees," said tender-hearted little Emma, and Mrs. Wells, as she led the little ones upstairs, repeated:

"'He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all'."

—Anna Harris Smith.



ABANDON S-51 SALVAGE FOR WINTER

Due to the fact that the lives of the divers were imperiled through the freezing of the air lines, the work of raising the sunken U.S. submarine from 129 fathoms off Block Island has been postponed to the spring. Photo shows the final descent into the icy waters being made.

"I want to learn skiing, skating, climbing and yodeling," said Whews. "How much do you charge?" "Charge," replied the Swiss guide. "I'll teach you all without pay if you promise to instruct me in that Yankee ———— stuff you are now exhibiting."

(Kindly draw straight lines between the numbers).

Early Marriage Rite.

Hymen was probably originated by the Greeks. In the olden days it was Hymen who led the torch dance, as he carried the real "wedding torch" at the front of the procession which conducted the bride to the home of the groom. In Rome as late as 1800 Hymen and his torch-bearers were always part of royal marriages.

The Glory of the Commonplace.

How the glory of the commonplace
shines upon our ways!
That welcome tell-tale click of the
swinging garden gate,
The homey sound of pine-knots burning in the open grate,
The ring of childish laughter that
comes floating down the stair,
And that silent, holy moment that is
kept for evening prayer—
The nightly rounds of tucking in the
quilts of little beds,
And the soft kisses placed on sleeping
golden heads—
The glory of the commonplace casts
a halo round our days.

—Ruth Holway.

Faith.

If on this night of still, white cold,
I can remember May,
New green of tree anr underbush,
A hillside orchard's mounting flush,
The scent of earth and noon's blue
hush,
A robin's jaunty way.

If on this night of bitter frost,
I know such things can be,
That lovely May is true—ah, well,
I shall believe the tales men tell,
Wonders of bliss and asphodel,
And immortality.

—Hortense Flexner.

Vitamines.

The two subjects that are engaging the attention of medical men more perhaps than any others at the present time are vitamines and the internal secretions, or hormones. And the two are in a manner one, for it has been found that the proper action of the glands that give origin to the internal secretions depends largely upon a sufficient quantity of vitamines in the food.

It is difficult to give a satisfactory definition of vitamines, for their chemical composition has not yet been discovered, and we know them and can classify them only by their effects and by the evil results to men and animals when they are absent from the food. We know only that they are substances contained in small amounts in fresh foods, and that they are essential to normal nutrition; they are different from the energy-producing principles in food—proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Perhaps the best explanation is that given by a recent English writer, who likens them to the spark that ignites the fuel mixture of a gasoline engine, the spark, he says, is of no use without the fuel, or the fuel without the spark.

There are at least three different vitamines that are classed broadly by the diseases that the lack of them causes. Rickets results from the lack of A vitamine, beriberi from the lack of B vitamine, and scurvy from the lack of C vitamine. It is thought that the so-called "hunger dropsy" is caused by a deficiency of D vitamine, but that is pure speculation as yet.

Vitamines are not manufactured in the animal body, and such of them as are contained in fresh meat, milk, butter and eggs are derived from the vegetable food of the animal or the fowl. The diseases above mentioned are not the only ones caused by a deficiency of vitamines; they are seen only occasionally when there is an almost total lack of the essential vitamine. The usual manifestation is ill health—poor appetite, headaches, dyspepsia, intestinal indigestion, neuralgia and neuritis, sleeplessness, fatigue after slight exertion, anaemia, neurasthenia and so on.

The prevention or cure of the troubles that are traced to lack of vitamines is a change to protective foods in the dietary—whole-wheat bread, eggs, milk, butter, fresh fruits, salads and fresh vegetables cooked rapidly, for prolonged boiling or even simmering destroys the vitamines. Tomatoes have all the vitamines in fair amount and so are very useful, but they can seldom be eaten in large quantities because of the acid they contain. Canning meats and vegetables destroys the vitamines in large measure.

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Eyeglasses enable about sixty per cent. of our business and professional men to continue working after middle-age has been reached.

MUTT AND JEFF—By Bud Fisher.

Jeff Wants to Have a Mutual Understanding With Mr. Tiger