

# Old Yet New

## An Appreciated Gift . . .

Perhaps you are puzzled to know what to give a friend. You want something different. They are hard to select Christmas Gifts for because they have many things. We have a suggestion or two and gifts that will bring back over a period deep appreciation of your thoughtfulness.

### Suggestion 1

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—OR—

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### Suggestion 2

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### Make It a Christmas That is Remembered.

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## Halcyon Days At Christmas

AT Christmas time in England, writes Oliver G. Pike, we often have a period of calm weather, when the trees stand motionless and the sea itself is calm; these are known as halcyon days, and halcyon is the kingfisher. An ancient author wrote, "The halcyons are of great name and much marked, they lay, and sit about mid-winter when daisies be shortest, and the times while they are brood is called the halcyon daisies; for during this season the sea is calm and navigable."

In the days of long ago it was believed that the English kingfisher nested at Christmas time; it was said that it built its strange nest of fish bones on the sea, and during the time of incubation the gods looked down and calmed the waters until the young arrived.

### The Legend

The first two kingfishers were the Greek nymph Aleyone and Ceys, her sailor boy lover; Aelus, the god of the winds, was the father of Aleyone, while her mother was the beautiful rainbow. The legend tells us that during a terrible storm Ceys was drowned at sea, and for days afterwards Aleyone's grief was so great that it was thought she, too, would die, but

## They Still Bring Frankincense At Christmas Time

AND when they were come into the house they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshipped, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gold and frankincense.

The Wise Men from the East brought to Bethlehem the most valuable presents they could find. For as long as man could remember, such presents had been dedicated to their gods.

Two thousand years ago frankincense was one of the most valuable and sacred commodities in the world. Every altar and every funeral required this fragrant gum. Pliny wrote: "The heaps of odors that are piled up in honor of the bodies of the dead. It is the luxury of man, which is displayed even in the paraphernalia of death, that has rendered Arabia thus happy."

For it was Arabia that had the monopoly of this rich trade, and there only, to the east of Aden, in that part of the country known as the Hadhramaut, was the gum produced.

### Camel Caravans

Frankincense comes from a small tree which is tapped through short incisions in the bark. The milky juice which then

solidifies when exposed to the air. The tree was sacred, and everything connected with it, the harvesting of the gum, the cultivation of the tree itself, those who handled it—all were governed by religious rites and laws.

The control of this monopoly lay in the city of Shabwa, the ancient capital of the Hadhramaut. Then it was a great walled town with sixty temples, and from it led one of the oldest trade routes in the world from the frankincense country to the

markets of Egypt, Syria, and Rome. The great camel caravans skirted the central desert, then turned north to Mecca, and thence to Alexandria, Antioch and Rome with their precious freight.

There were special storerooms for the sacred gum in the Temple at Jerusalem; vast quantities were used each year in the temples of Egypt; the Arabs paid it as tribute to Darius, the Persian; and Alexander the Great sent it as a present to his tutor. So valuable was it that men who handled it were stripped before they left their work and searched in case they might have stolen some!

Part of the crop was taken down to the coast and shipped on the Red Sea to Egypt. It was the lure of this lucrative trade, and the exorbitant rates charged by the Arab shipping princes that persuaded the Romans to build their own fleet on the Red Sea and to fight for the command of the eastern seas.

### Shipped by Dhows

Today frankincense is still produced in the Hadhramaut, but there is no longer a world-wide demand for the gum. The thousand tons that are produced on the average every year are brought down to the coast at Makalla by camel caravan.

These ships would be familiar to the Arab of 2,000 years ago, for their design has changed but little.

The frankincense comes to Acton about Christmas time, and there you may see the women squatting over shallow baskets, sorting out and grading the gum. The air is heavy with its aromatic scent, but it is difficult to realize that these brown, pebbly heaps were once one of the richest and most sacred treasures of the East.



## Girls Served As Trees

YOUNG people are always enthusiastic over the prospect of trimming Christmas trees, and the following plan was evolved for a party of school girls, where it was not possible to have enough trees to supply work for all of them. It was decided that the tallest and largest of the girls would make most effective substitutes. Nine of the girls were chosen and warned that on the day of the party, by some sort of magic, they would be turned into trees. Each one was assigned one of the letters of the word "Christmas," and given a cardboard bell bearing the letter.

Every girl who came to the party was bidden to bring, carefully wrapped up, a present, something she had made herself, the cost of which should not exceed ten cents. Curiously enough, there were not many duplicates.

There were calendars of various kinds made from post cards, funny cards, hand-painted cards and kodak pictures. There were memorandum cases made of small pads with pencils attached. There were dolls made out of clothes pins and dressed with crepe paper. There were Christmas bells and stockings filled with trinkets.

### Arrival of Guests

As each guest arrived she was given a large red candle cut from cardboard and fastened with red raffia that it could be



her father, taking compassion upon her, changed her into a bird so that she could accompany the soul of her lover on his flight from the world.

The legend goes on to say that the spirit of Ceys remained over the sea and rivers, and he and his mate, clothed in the colors of the rainbow, can be seen to this day flashing above the waters of the streams.

An eastern legend gives another explanation of the kingfisher's gorgeous plumage. When Noah called all the birds into the ark, the kingfisher was a small bird clothed in sombre brown plumage. As the flood abated Noah sent out first the raven and then the dove, but as these did not return at once he thought he had



made a mistake, and so a third bird was sent out, the small brown kingfisher. He said: "You, my little friend, will not fear the waters, for you are no stranger to them; you are courageous, and are swift of wing; go forth, and returning anon bring truthful news."

## IN KENT THEY GO A'GODDING

This was a custom formerly observed only by women who went from house to house with handfuls of evergreens and in return for alms and presents gave their benefactors sprigs with which to decorate their homes. Often they stayed and helped in the decorating, and in return were given a meal, some wine and a little money. The custom is still kept up in parts of Kent, especially near Maidstone.

## Writing Games Will Add to Silarity Of That Party.

WRITING games make an entertaining change for the Christmas party, and are ideal for fitting in between the more boisterous pastimes.

An easy one to start off with is "Telegrams." One player calls out twelve letters of the alphabet, chosen haphazardly, and each person then writes out a telegram, using the twelve letters in order as the initial letters of the words.

For "Wills" each player is given a half sheet of notepaper. At the top must be written the name of the maker of the will. This, of course, can be the name of a relation or friend or some celebrity, such as a film star. The paper is then folded over to hide the name and is passed to the next player. He or she writes another name and the paper is folded and passed again.

This time each player writes something which has been suggested to the person whose name was last written down. The game proceeds until ten or twelve bequests have been made, to different persons, and the papers are then read out, to the amusement of the company.

In "Backwards - or - Forwards" the players are asked to make a list of all the words they can think of which make sense either backwards or forwards. For example: star-rats, bud-dub, moor-room, leper-repel. One mark is scored for each word. Words which read the same backwards or forwards score five, such as tot, bob; or ten if of five letters or more, such as civic.

For "Alteration" a letter is chosen and players must try to make the best sentence they can with every word beginning with the chosen letter. "Cautious Clara came cleverly carrying charming Chinese cups" is an example.

In "Give-Two-Words" each player writes down any two words—the more incongruous the better—at the top of his paper and passes on to the next player. This person must write some kind of verse, four lines or more, bringing in the

two words. Many may exclaim that they cannot write poetry, but some very good results can be obtained by writing a limerick or a parody on such well-known works as "Mary had a little lamb," or "Hiawatha." Let us suppose that the words given are "mandoline" and "delight."

Your effort might be:  
"Mary had a mandoline,  
She played it day and night,  
And everybody wondered why  
It gave her such delight."

Or, if you prefer, "Hiawatha," how about this:  
"From its cover Hiawatha  
Took his mandoline and played it,  
Played it with delight and vigor,  
Till the audience shrank in horror,  
Shrank and writhed and squirmed in  
horror."

"Continued-in-Our-Next" is a story told in sections. Each player writes five or six lines of a story—ghost, thriller, humorous, and so on—and passes it on, first turning the paper down so that only the last line shows. The results are always unexpected and amusing.

"Sketch-and-Name-It" is a drawing game, but it is not necessary to be an artist in order to play it. In fact, the less skillful the person the more amusing the results. Every player just draws something—whatever he likes—a scene for choice, perhaps some well-known historical event, or some recent happening which those present took part in. It must not fill up more than half the paper.

The subject of the sketch is written at the bottom of the page and turned down so that it does not show. Then each player in turn writes down what he thinks the drawing is meant to be. The results are then read out and generally raise a laugh. A very impressionist sketch, purporting to be the battle of Waterloo, was diagnosed as: "Cheesemites in action," "Diphtheria" germs rampant," and "Dodging the traffic."

worn as a diadem. On it was a number and one of the letters corresponding to the letters on the trees, thus: 10, 511, 3R, etc., there being perhaps five candles for every tree. To each was also handed a tag with one of these numbers on it, which indicated the person to whom her present was to be directed.

Attracting as little attention as possible while the party was assembling, the "trees" stationed themselves at various places about the room, putting on their heads closely-fitting green caps, with a red taper effect, for the very top of the tree. And they hung their letter-bearing placards around their necks.

The hostess for the afternoon then jingled some sleigh bells, and all then

attention was turned to her. She explained that they had secured some rare varieties of Christmas trees for this party and that the girls who wore candles corresponding in letters to those worn by the trees, which they would find round about the room, were to trim that tree with the material given them, and that the work must be finished in twenty minutes from the time they received their trimmings.

Even the beasts were glad He came. They knelt in patience where He lay. Content to yield for His baby, head Their evening meal of hay.

## THAT FIRST NIGHT

The stable door was closed that night,  
But through the cracks no bolts could bar  
The light of holy innocence  
Burst like a spraying star.

—Louise Ayres Garnett.



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