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Legendary Origin of Christmas Fir Tree

Sprites in the Holly. The Story of Yule Log, Other Christmas Legends.

(By Jean Hersey)

Christmas will come and Christmas will go and, suddenly, you will be faced with a house full of greenery that is a trifle outworn. Your Christmas tree looks like a weary lady in bedraggled evening finery. Holly wreaths hang disconsolately at the window; mistletoe nestles forlornly on the chandelier. What to do with them?

Customs and superstitions for countless years have made evergreens your Christmas decorations. Most of us—who find a definite, if unscientific pleasure in defiantly fostering a few hoary and fanciful misbeliefs just for the good of our souls—find it a bit less like a massacre to dispose of these decorations according to mere superstitions—superstitions that grew up in the merry days when fancies were facts and statistics were an invention as yet unthought of by Satan.

It was said, about this time in England, when elves could be heard rustling about on any dark night, that Candlemas (February 2) was the proper date for burning old greenery. Others said that Twelfth Night (January 6) or Plough Monday (the following Monday) was best. Shrove Tuesday (the day before Ash Wednesday) is, without a doubt, the only time to burn holly. You may choose which of the first three dates you will and be sure of remaining on good terms with the touchy goblins that take winter refuge in evergreens. Never burn mistletoe until another sprig has taken its place for it guards your home from catastrophe.

When you burn holly on the same fire that pancakes are fried over (don't ask why), be certain that no stray leaves fall on the floor, for every unburned leaf will turn into a spiny green sprite that works no end of mischief—souring the milk, jinxing your best recipe, teasing the baby, and manufacturing "dust kitties."

Another important part of the Christmas stage-set that possesses magical qualities unsuspected by factual-minded moderns is the Yule log, the huge log that smolders in the fireplace, ready to revive the frost-bitten toes of Saint Nicholas, long after weary and expectant children are in bed. Years ago, in many countries, dragging in the Yule log from the forest was a ritual attended by the whole family, some working and others carrying lanterns that swung in staccato yellow arcs from the ends of long poles, torches that sent flickering shadow and flame across the snow. To-day we are thankful for a fireplace large enough to hold a few sticks of wood. But, never mind, whatever size the log, rescue a piece of it at midnight this Christmas Eve, tuck it away on some high shelf, and kindle your next year's fire with this bit of the past—to bring you good fortune. And don't overlook this sage advice that comes whispering down the years—charcoal of the Yule log placed under your bed will turn aside any but truly heaven-sent lightning; fed to animals, it makes them fertile.

As to the legends of why we use evergreens at Christmas, they are myriad, but so old that many are forgotten and only the meaningless customs remain, like dusty seashells, commonplace to the eye, but echoing the roar of oceans to inquisitive ears. If Christmas is a day of beauty, it is the sweetness and romance of the past that makes it so; a past that includes a queer mixture of Christianity and paganism. For instance, we do not decorate before Christmas Eve because the mischievous sprites in the evergreens would make havoc of our homes before the sacred presence of the Christ Child was felt.

The tale of the origin of the Christmas tree, that altar where grown-ups place their offerings to the innocence of all childhood, was passed from tongue to tongue until finally a learned man wrote it down and thus saved a simple legend for a more sophisticated world. It was in Holland, the story goes, on a blustering Christmas night, that a woodsman and his wife gave thanks for the snug comfort of their beds and the warmth of their peat fire. Before it sat little Hans, chin on his chubby knees, wishing that he might have seen the wondrous star of Bethlehem—when he suddenly cocked an ear toward the door, for above the wail of the wind there came the sobbing of a child.

A child on such a night? The woodsman cracked the door an inch, the better to hear, and there on the very sill he saw a frail fair-haired boy, lightly clad and shivering. As quick as a wink the boy was inside, wrapped in a quilt, brimful of porridge, and nodding sleepily over the fire. Little Hans scrooged himself into his discarded trundle bed and the wail was tucked into his new big bed. The eyes of the woodsman and his wife met above the sleeping children in pity and wonder. Who were his parents to leave their child to die of cold?

In the gray dawn of Christmas the little cottage filled with a warm bright light and the startled peasant family awoke to see their child guest, golden curls blazing, standing by the hearth. In his hand he held a tiny fir-tree. "This I give you," he said, "to bring you good fortune. It will be perpetually green to remind you of my love."

With that the little boy walked out into the snow, and the door opened and closed gently to let Him pass. But the fir-tree remained. After that, on the eve of every Christmas, the woodsman and his wife made it lovely with globes for the sun, the earth, and the stars; with apples and nuts for abundance; with candles for the light of Christ; and on its topmost branch they placed the star of Bethlehem.

Mistletoe has always been credited with mystical powers. To the Druids, the pagan priests of ancient Britain, Gaul and Ireland, the oak and mistletoe were sacred. As mistletoe depended for its life upon the tree, so they thought, did man depend upon his gods.

Norsemen believed that it played a part in a drama of their gods and they told the story of lovely Freyja, Goddess of Love, and her son, Balder, who brought the summer and sunlight to the world. She loved him so dearly that, at his birth, she decreed he could be harmed by nothing on earth or under the earth. The God of Evil, Loki, pondered this problem for quite a while before he hit upon mistletoe, living neither on the earth nor beneath it but on a tree, as the solution. With an arrow tipped with this plant he slew Balder, and all the darkened world wept with Freyja.

Meanwhile, poor innocent mistletoe

Christmas Gift of Formal Dress



By LISBETH

A new evening frock for the holiday parties is surely a Christmas gift that will be appreciated by any girl home for the holidays or the business girl. Time was when "formals" were only for "society" girls. Every girl needs one in these modern times.

Clinging white crepe roma makes this lovely one worn by Patricia Ellis. It has a high neckline, simply draped, and a waist marked by a wide, pointed belt of quilted silver cloth. The skirt is long and slim, with a train—which might be dispensed with if preferred. There is a little jacket of the same material edged with the same effective quilted silver cloth.

If you prefer a colour for a gift dress instead of white, as being more practical (nothing could be more becoming and arresting for a young girl), look at the striped dresses.

Drifting on the new vein at Golden Gate Mining Company on the 350-foot level has advanced for some 120 feet, with 100 feet of the entire length indicating high grade ore over widths of two and three feet. The west face is still in ore with appreciable quantities of visible gold in evidence. Although the east face is now in ore it is expected that the vein will be picked up at an early date in this direction. Average values will not be given until the backs have been thoroughly tested by bulk sampling. Two large bulk samples taken from two drift rounds, however, returned an average gold content of \$50 and \$60 per ton.

The ore shoot in question is already twice as long as any opened up to date, proving that commercial ore continues to depth. Plans are now being laid for enlarging the present mining plant and the sinking of a new vertical shaft.

Ottawa Journal.—Japan invents untearable paper. Probably for use in wrapping and not for international treaties.

was looked upon with great disfavour until, overcome with guilt and sorrow, it wept great pearly tears and offered for eternity its services to Freyja. Softened, she forgave it, and ever since, Mistletoe has been sacred to the Goddess of Love. And that is why a maiden kissed beneath is sure to marry within a year—that is, if one jerry, a tear for Balder, is plucked by the gentlemen after the kiss.

The name "holly" is derived from the word "holly," because a wreath of it symbolizes a crown of thorns and its red berries, the blood of Christ. It also means eternity for, to the ancients, a plant that stayed green when the rest of the world lay desolate must have been granted eternal life by the gods. If you take nine holly leaves, tie them in a handkerchief with fine knots and slip it under your pillow on Christmas Eve, you will dream of the future—or so it is said. A sprig at the head of your bed is guaranteed to scare away goblins.

Magistrate Serving Under Fourth Ruler of Britain

Some days ago when Magistrate Siegfried Atkinson, stipendiary magistrate for this part of the North, took the oath of allegiance to King George VI, as required by the law and constitution, it was the fourth occasion on which he had taken the oath of allegiance as magistrate. Mr. Atkinson first served as magistrate under King Edward VII. At the death of that monarch he took the oath of allegiance to the succeeding King, King George V. Last year, on the death of King George, the magistrate took the oath of allegiance to King Edward VIII, and on the abdication of that sovereign it was necessary for the magistrate to take the oath of allegiance to the new King, George VI.

Cores Indicate High-grade at Golden Gate Mining Co.

Drifting on the new vein at Golden Gate Mining Company on the 350-foot level has advanced for some 120 feet, with 100 feet of the entire length indicating high grade ore over widths of two and three feet. The west face is still in ore with appreciable quantities of visible gold in evidence. Although the east face is now in ore it is expected that the vein will be picked up at an early date in this direction. Average values will not be given until the backs have been thoroughly tested by bulk sampling. Two large bulk samples taken from two drift rounds, however, returned an average gold content of \$50 and \$60 per ton.

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F. BAUMAN

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Good Work Done by the Humane Society

Report of Inspector for the Month of November Indicates Extent of Work for Animals.

The report for November of Inspector Oscar Robertson of the Timmins and District Humane Society shows that a large amount of valuable work was accomplished by the Society for the betterment of the treatment of animals in the area during the first month of its active and organized existence. While the report simply tabulated the various lines of work, reading "between the lines" it is easy enough to visualize the benefit to animals and to the community from the Society's programme. Inspector Robertson's report gives the following:—

- Dogs tended in hospital, 10.
- Dogs destroyed, 11.
- Cats destroyed, 5.
- Cats treated, 1.
- Dogs killed by cars, 3.
- Dogs impounded, 43.
- Dogs claimed by owners, 15.
- Dogs sold but not claimed, 18.
- Horses destroyed, 2.
- Cases in police court of cruelty to horses, 2.
- Phone calls answered, 29.

The dog hospital conducted by the Humane Society here has been referred to before in *The Advance*. It is doing an excellent work, and is valuable not only so far as the dogs themselves are concerned, but also is a notable advantage to the owners of dogs that have special intrinsic or sentimental value.

The number of dogs killed by cars is of interest, but it may be said that in the ordinary summer month the number would considerably exceed the three noted for November. At that some people will say—no matter what the number reported—"Well, it's a wonder there are not more." In fairness to the motorists in general it should be noted that the most of car and truck

drivers avoid hitting dogs if at all possible, but so many dogs have the car-chasing habit that it is a wonder more of them are not hurt. Dog owners would do well to break the animals of the dangerous habit of tearing out into the road every time a car comes along. It is a danger for the dogs as well as for traffic.

Except for those who believe that there are hundreds of dogs too many in Timmins, the number of dogs placed in the pound (43) will seem large. It may be expected to be large until dog owners get the habit of keeping track of their dogs. The attitude of many dog owners is indicated by the fact that out of 43 dogs impounded only 15 were claimed by the owners. Of the remaining 28, there were 18 sold, so it would seem that the majority of the dogs picked up had some value.

The references in the report to the prosecution in police court of men who allowed their horses to suffer suggest ways and means in which the Timmins and District Humane Society is doing good work. Two cases of ill-treated horses were taken to police court through the efforts of the society, working in conjunction with the local and provincial police. In each case there was a conviction with a salutary penalty. The cases have done much to warn others against cruelty or neglect to their animals.

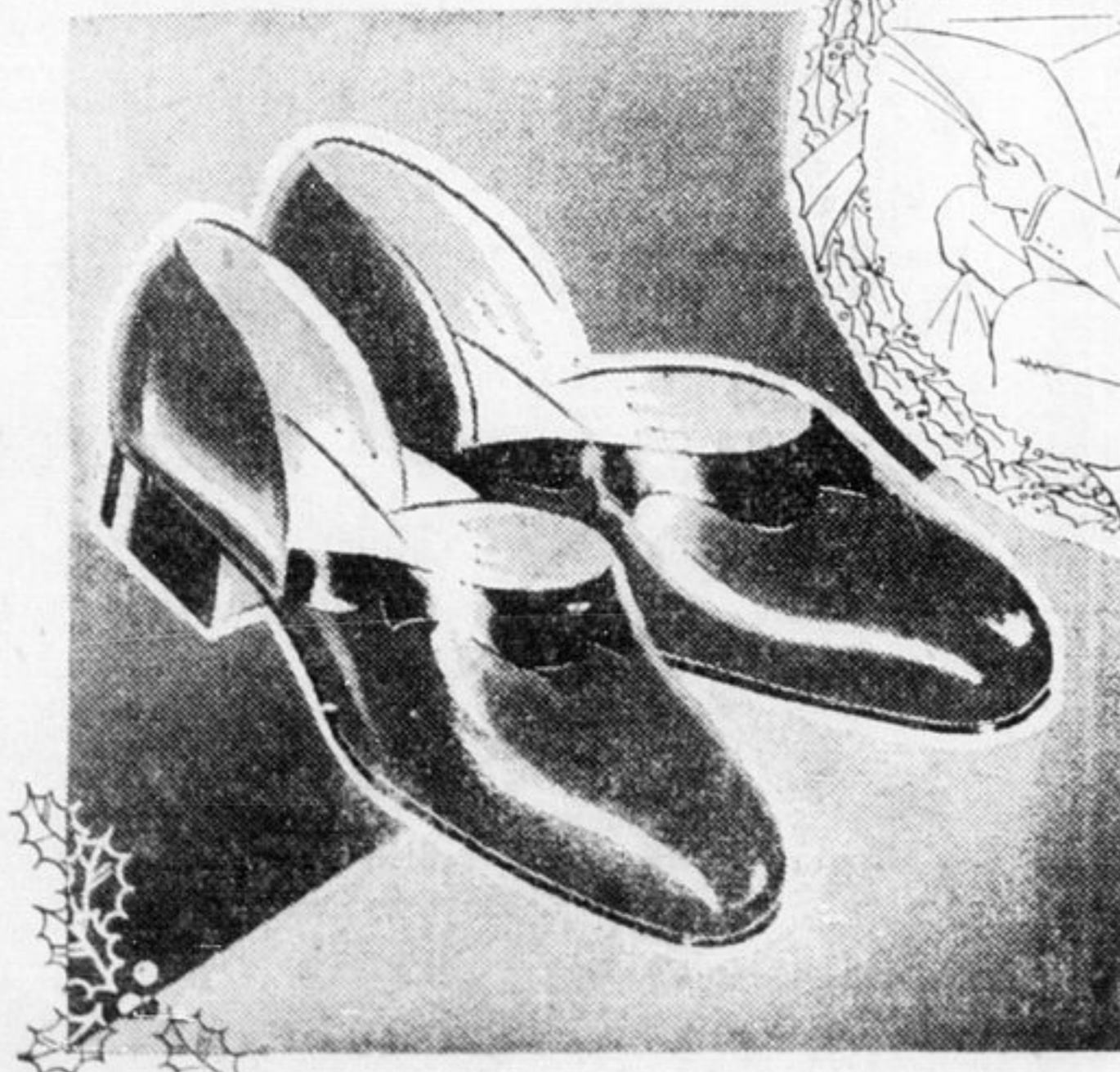
The number of phone calls during the month of November suggests that the inspector is kept busy and that many cases come before the officers of the Society from day to day.

North Bay Nugget.—One of the profound mysteries of the Return of Prosperity is that we rounded "the corner" without noticing it, and didn't take one serious skid.

Kansas City Star.—New eras, bring new standards, and now we see that the feminine gage of sobriety in Ohio says a woman isn't drunk as long as she can hold a glass of beer in one hand and powder her nose with the other.

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