

THE TWO CHRISTMAS TREES

The Little Christmas Tree was decidedly envious, and the Big Christmas Tree was decidedly vain. In fact, they were not on speaking terms, though, up to that morning, they had been the best of friends. You see, it came about in this way:

That morning two men had entered the forest to choose the trees which were to be cut down that afternoon. It had been decided that the Big Christmas Tree was to go to a rich man's home in the city, and one of the men, a poor laborer, spied the Little Christmas Tree and cried:

"This little one will just do for my youngsters."

Hence this state of affairs.

"How I wish that I could go to a grand house in the city," sighed the Little Christmas Tree; "it is not worth while to go to a poor cottage."

"You are not fine enough for anything but poor people," sniffed the Big Christmas Tree, and both relapsed into silence.

In the centre of a large room the Big Christmas Tree stood, glittering with costly ornaments and loaded down with beautiful presents.

"How handsome I am!" thought the tree, "and how the children will rejoice to see me!"

When, at last, the door was opened and the children came in they did not greet the tree with happy shouts.

"It's just the same as last year's!"

"I've read this book before!"

"As usual Uncle Jack has sent me a doll!"

These were some of the comments of these rich children, to whom such sights were no novelty.

"Ah me! I wish I was back in the forest," sighed the Big Christmas Tree.

The Little Christmas Tree stood in a small, scantily furnished room. It was over-hung with bright red berries and strings of popcorn, and on its branches hung a few hard-earned gifts.

"What a poor display," thought the Little Christmas Tree.

In trooped the children, and shouts of surprise and joy greeted the tree.

"What a lovely tree!"

"Isn't it beautiful?"

"Oh! look what I've got!"

Thus cried the poor man's children.

Looking at the happy, beaming faces of the children and the pleased, contented smiles of the parents—

"After all, this is worth while," thought the Little Christmas Tree.

—BERTHA L. SMEETON.

Christmas Romps For the Little Ones

HIDE AND SEEK games are at ways at Christmas time or during other holiday seasons seldom did to play. There is a new way of playing hide and seek, just the opposite of the old familiar game. The player who is "it" goes away to hide, instead of blinding, while all the other players remain at the goal. While one counts 100 they all blind their eyes. At the end of the counting the players all hunt for the hider. As soon as one discovers his hiding place he must squeeze in and hide there too. If there isn't enough room for him he must take a seat in plain sight near the hiding place. The player who is unable to discover the hiding place is "it" for the next game.

A bean bag is almost a jollier play mate than a ball. Why, does a child ask? Just because it never runs away and loses itself as a ball does so often when it goes rolling off alone to see the world. A bean bag can't roll, and so it is nearly always ready to play when a child is ready. You can make your own bean bag, too, some rainy afternoon when you are not able to go out in the garden to play. Strong red and white striped ticking sewed carefully with small stitches in a double square which measures about six inches on each side is the best cover for a bean bag, and it should be filled two-thirds full of dried peas or beans. Another and a prettier cover for a bean bag is made of quite strong unbleached cotton and it is decorated with some bright flowers cut from scraps of flannel or copies of your Noah's Ark animals cut from black cambric. These little picture figures should be sewed in over and over stitches to the white bean bag cover. When you have made as many as eight or ten fine, new bean bags you are ready to invite all the children from the house next door for an afternoon of pleasant bean bag games.

An empty wooden soap box may be transformed by a clever boy into a splendid bean bag board, quite as strong and pretty as any which you can buy at a toy shop. One end and the two sides should be knocked off the box, and the remaining end must be braced to the bottom by some strips of wood taken from the other end. Three holes varying in size and one above the other are then cut with a circular saw in the bottom, and the entire board is painted red. The game is played like that of ringling hoops on a stake.

"Bean bag puss in the corner" is the jolliest sort of a bean bag game. Each child chooses a tree for his corner, and half the players are provided with bean bags. One child tosses a bean bag to a child at an opposite tree, immediately running toward his opponent's tree. The other child tries to catch the bean bag and reach the thrower's tree first. As a great many bean bags may be flying through the air at once, the game will prove a whole lot of fun for a group of children.

"Bean bag call" is a fine game to play on a lawn or in a field some frosty day when a child wants to warm his fingers and toes. One child who is "it" tosses a bean bag in the air and at the same time calls quickly the name of another child who is playing the game. The child called must run forward and catch the bean bag before it falls to the ground or he must leave the ground. The child who catches it successfully the greatest number of times wins the game.

"Mixed Pickles"

Both skillful and amusing is the Christmas game of "mixed pickles." Every one knows how difficult it is to get one's favorite piece of pickle out of the pickle jar, and it was this fact which suggested the game to its inventor. The players are provided with a couple of "pickle forks," which very much resemble knitting needles. Armed with these, the competitors take their seats around the table, in the center of which is the pickle jar. In front of each player a little heap of "pickles" is placed, the said "pickles" consisting of pieces of smooth wood or ivory of various shapes and sizes. It is exceedingly difficult to pick up these with the "forks" and convey them into the jar, and he or she who first succeeds in so disposing of their particular heap of "pickles" is the winner.

"Lord of Misrule"

There is a delightfully laughable Christmas game called "the lord of misrule." Here some one, usually one of the larger boys or girls at first, is given a spray of holly. Whatever the person holding the holly does other players must imitate exactly. No matter in which the holly leader indulges most stumps his followers. They follow him as he crawls under furniture, jumps over stools and benches or waltzes round the room. They even imitate his grimaces. When the invention of one holly leader has given out some other member of the company will volunteer for the position. Any one who would like to lead the company a merry dance around the room should be allowed to have a turn at it.

Once in a great while you meet a bright woman who successfully bosses of the skeleton in her closet. Some men are like roosters; they let their wives do all the work and they do all the crowing.

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FIRE BAGS AT SEA

Kind Used In Days of Old Tinder Box.

Every whaler and sealer that sailed the seas in the days of wooden ships carried a fire bag. This was a tarpaulin bag about a foot long and six inches wide, lined with waterproof material, with interlin-

ings of oilcloth and thick flannel. Into this was placed the flint and tinder box for kindling fire, and the bag was then securely fastened with double flaps and tied to keep its contents dry.

It was the special duty of the second mate to look after the fire bag and in case of shipwreck to attach it at once to his person by means of

stout straps provided for the purpose. Thus if officers and crew were cast away on some deserted shore

in the desolate Arctic circle the means of obtaining a fire to warm themselves by and to heat food and drink would not be wanting as long as the precious fire bag was safe.

The steam whalers and sealers of the present day still carry a fire bag

stowed in the lifeboat with the bread and water, but now it is of rubber and contains half a dozen tin boxes of matches.

Men who have nothing to do are kept busy doing it. Some people are so rich they don't have to support a dog.