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RED BLOSSOMS ARE FAVORED

American and Liberty Roses, Carnations and Immortelles Among Popular Christmas Flowers.

IF CHRISTMAS eve comes in mild and warm and Christmas morning follows its gentle prophecy, the city florists will be happy. That will mean that the thousands of boxes of Christmas flowers which must be delivered on Christmas forenoon can go out with only the ordinary packing. But should there be freezing weather, every flower must be packed in cotton, which doubles the labor and the time necessary. Even with the mild Christmas, which is the florist's delight, the force in the big retail flower stores works all night the night before Christmas. From midnight until 7 o'clock in the morning all hands are busy packing the boxes which in a few hours are to convey Christmas remembrances. At 7 o'clock the delivery wagons start, and before noon all the fragile blooms have reached the feminine hands for which they were purchased. Probably 20,000 such boxes are delivered every Christmas morning in New York. One dealer in a fashionable residence district has sent out between 300 and 400 every Christmas morning for many years.

The "mixed box" ranges from \$10 to \$50 in price. It is a very modest little box for the first price—just half a dozen roses, a dozen carnations, a bit of "Christmas green." In the \$50 box there will be probably half a dozen American Beauties, half a dozen long-stemmed liberty roses of the rich, velvety, deep crimson variety; some violets, some "valley," some Magnonette to sweeten the whole box; perhaps some sweet peas and hyacinths, a bit of heliotrope and always some holly and a red satin ribbon to tie the whole.

These expensive boxes are simply pretty trifles, sent to the rich, by those who are not sufficiently indebted or on sufficiently intimate terms to send more costly or substantial gifts. The very extravagance of the flowers makes them superlatively luxurious. Fifty dollars for flowers that fade in a day makes the attention more delicate than four or five times that amount put into some more durable trifle.

Red is pre-eminently the Christmas color, and red carnations and red roses are the favorite purchases. The red immortelles, also, go in great bunches for Christmas decorations in houses of both high and low degree. These immortelles are real flowers, though some people have a notion they are made of paper. The natural color is yellow, and they grow in the south of France, where great fields of them may be seen dried and dyed for the market. It is a great industry there. Europeans use them largely to the exclusion of fresh flowers for all occasions. They are dyed in all colors for the European market, and thousands upon thousands of boxes of the red ones are imported to New York every year for the Christmas trade. They cannot be successfully grown in America, owing to climatic differences. A few have been produced in Texas, but the florists say they are not "right."

Trees and Fires.

It is doubtful whether any single agency has caused more fires than Christmas trees. These are covered with inflammable ornaments and kept until the branches are as dry as tinder. The practice of decorating with candles and lighting these in order to beautify the tree is the main source of danger. There is something so pleasing and satisfactory about Christmas trees that no one feels like giving them up, or opposing their use, but they are a source of loss and danger. Something should be done to eliminate the danger, even though it should reduce the number of trees. Until regulations from the outside interfere with the practice, it will be well for every person who indulges in the luxury to have a garden hose ready for immediate use in case the tree catches fire. Those who have no means for extinguishing a fire should not have a tree.—From the Kansas City Journal.

About the Mistletoe

COLES, in his "Art of Simpling," observes, "If one hangs mistletoe about the neck the witches can have no power of him." Some lingering superstition remains in the present day, and in many houses a bunch of the mistletoe is suspended from the ceiling, under which the male part of the assembly have the privilege of taking the ladies and saluting them. At the same time they should wish them a happy new year and present them with one of the berries for good luck. In other places people try by lots by the cracking of the leaves and berries in the fire.

An Unsatisfactory Plan.

"Why, Johnny," said the caller, as the lad wept bitterly, "crying on Christmas morning?"
"Yuh—yessir," sobbed Johnny. "We all agreed in our family this year to gag-give each other only what we needed most."
"Well, that isn't such a bad idea, is it? Nothing to cry about, anyhow, eh?"
"It's run-rotten," sobbed Johnny. "Dad gave me a lickin'."

WHEN CHRISTMAS WAS YOUNG

To Understand Mysteries of the Yuletide, It is Necessary to Search Ancient History.

IN the midst of the rush and excitement of Christmas preparations certain questions will flash across the mind, and we find ourselves wondering why it is that we do the very same things Christmas after Christmas. Why do we hang stockings, light Christmas trees, trim our homes and have plum pudding?

To understand the origin of these customs we must wander far back into the forgotten past—ages before Julius Caesar set foot on British soil, or St. Augustine told the story of the Cross to the men of Kent. Hundreds of years ago—long before the year 1—the ancients, as we call the people of those times, all worshiped the sun, the great giver of light and life. In the month of March they built big fires to it, asking it to shine upon the seeds they had planted and warm them into life. In the autumn they held another festival, thanking the sun for the harvest, and again, in the winter time, they held the greatest festival of all to celebrate the coming of the springtime.

In ancient Egypt, in Assyria, in Greece, on Roman soil and in the northlands these festivals were celebrated year after year and always about the same time, the winter one being held about New Year's time.

Wherever the Roman eagle was found, this feast was called the Saturnalia and it was marked by universal license and good feeling.

All at once Christianity appeared upon the scene. As the policy of the early church was to reconcile heathen converts to the new faith by adopting some of the heathen customs and festivals, the new religion accepted and retained many, and the result, as is easily seen, has been the strange medley of pagan and Christian rites which we use at Christmas time today.

After Britain was Christianized by the Romans, the Saxons and northern tribes came, bringing their old northern rites, and as Christianity at last replaced paganism the Christians kept the old pagan rites, merely changing their meaning.

For many years no two lands celebrated the same day as the birthday of Christ. They did not know the exact day, and we do not know it; but this date has now become the most important one in the world's history.

The Old Age of Santa Claus.

In Anna Furquhar's "Convictions" in The National Magazine, she says: "Santa Claus totters under his pack, wearing a long, old face these days. Probably in his youth he had no idea of growing old or departing this life; therefore when his enthusiasm and joyousness began to wane unaccountably, he must have opined that the world was tottering—not his own generous throne of life. Nowadays he creeps down the chimney stealthily as if somewhat ashamed of his mission, like a polar burglar, and his eight tiny reindeer make small clatter on the lawn, for many of their jolly bells have been lost. When Santa lays a finger aside of his nose reflectively in our times, he exclaims, without a bit of jolly shake below the waist: 'Degenerates! Degenerates! Has my world come to such a pass that people wish to pay me for my presents? Can it be that little children are so surfeited with toys that they stop to ask how much they cost before accepting them. There was little Willie, last year, who said to his mamma, when he first saw a beautiful woolly dog, 'What's it got inside? Candy or money? Don't want a dog 'less it's got somethin' inside!'"

Games of Heathen Origin

MANY of our most familiar Christmas games have a heathen origin and some of their requirements once played a most important part in the heathen rites and mysteries. Every one knows how, when playing the popular Christmas game of "snap dragon," all other lights in the room are extinguished while we try to snatch raisins from blazing brandy, but probably few are aware that the ancient British Druids were accustomed to worship, in a temple otherwise dark, a flame of burning spirits into which they cast and out of which they plucked certain sacred objects, and that they thus performed some of the most awful solemnities of their religion.

The Christmas Season.

Though Christmas seems to gain rather than lose in popular favor as the years roll by, yet it is worthy of note that the Christmas season has been much curtailed from what it originally was. For several centuries it began with the eve of All Saints' day or "Hallow eve," October 31, and continued until Candlemas day, February 2. In England, it is now computed only from Christmas eve to "Twelfth night," January 6, while in our own country it begins on Christmas eve and practically ends on Christmas night. Yet even now it really begins on December 16, marked in the church calendar, "O Sapientia," from the name of an anthem sung during Advent.



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