

SANTA CLAUS and the WICKED DJINN—A PLAYETTE IN THREE ACTS

The Christmas Tree

Millions sold every year. The origin of the Christmas tree custom is lost in the mists of antiquity. It is probably a relic of the tree worship which formed the basis of several pagan religions of northern Europe, just as the mistletoe and holly customs are survivals of rites practiced by the Druids. Whatever its origin, the Christmas tree is now a established institution in Europe, Canada, America and many other countries. And the custom is far from dying out. Every succeeding year more and more Christmas trees are bought. The growing of them and their subsequent sale has developed into a big business.

Christmas trees are usually young specimens of Norway spruce, but other coniferous trees, such as balsam and Scotch fir, are sometimes used. They achieve about the same ages as the children for whose entertainment they are bought. A tree four feet high would be about ten years of age.

Sometimes they are grown from seed specially for the Christmas market and sometimes they are forest thinnings. Commercially grown trees are sprouted in seed beds just like any garden vegetable. At the age of two years, when they are nothing more than fragile, feathery plants, they are transplanted to trenched rows. They remain there, with the soil heaped well over their roots, for another two or three years. They are then hardy enough to face their final removal, which is to be well ordered plantation where thousands of trees of various sizes are waiting for the advent of the Christmas that will see them uprooted or cut.

Forest thinnings are self-grown trees which they fought a hard struggle for existence in the shady depths of some forest. If they were left to grow unchecked they would hinder the growth of valuable timber trees. Many of the seedlings and saplings would die from lack of sunlight and sustenance, and their rotting branches would become breeding places for fungi and insects which would eventually attack and harm even the giants of the forest. Of the survivors a few would develop into valuable timber trees of their own accord, but many would never be anything more than stunted cripples. Good forestry demands that the saplings shall be thinned out annually, and as, in the case of Christmas trees, the things can be sold at a good price, good forestry is good business.

Specially grown trees are usually better than those that grow in a forest. The former are likely to have a better shape than the latter.

English Christmas trees, when not grown in England, are imported from Norway, Sweden, Germany and Holland. In Germany the cult of the Christmas tree has reached a very high stage of development. There is scarcely a home in Germany which cannot display a decorated tree at Yuletide. In England a Christmas tree is found in one house out of every three. In America the proportion is somewhat lower, one home in four, but her larger population makes America the largest user of Christmas trees in the world.

Every year about ten million Christmas trees are bought by American parents. Most of them are home-grown, although Canada supplies some. Big business methods have even invaded the Christmas tree industry in America. Special brands of trees are advertised, and each of these is sold with a label certifying its origin. First favorites in the public taste are trees cut from the national forests by the United States Forest Service.

Owing to the cost of transport, Canada finds it difficult to compete in the American market, but she nevertheless manages to export some three millions of trees every year, some of them to points as far distant as Chicago, and New Orleans. Of these, half-a-million come from Quebec, pulling some \$30,000 in the pockets of the exporters for what was regarded some years ago as useless slash only fit for staving ship bottoms. Some Canadians have definitely set aside a few acres of poor land solely for the purpose of cultivating Christmas trees. One planted they need little attention, and as the average produce of an acre is worth from \$50 to \$25, Christmas growers are the owners with a substantial "gift."

(By Mrs. Malcolm Mason)

CHARACTERS

Santa Claus
The Wicked Djinn
Saint George of England
The Goblins
A Horse
Any number of Children
Any number of Christmas Fairies.

ACT ONE

Santa Claus is discovered in the middle of the stage surrounded by parcels of every shape and size which he is busily sorting.

The parcels can be arranged on a sleigh (or something resembling one), or else they must be altogether on a sackcloth or mat which can be dragged off the stage later, by the Fairies.

SANTA CLAUS (very low):
This for a girl!
And this for a boy!
And this will bring
To a baby, joy.
I'll pack the stockings with right good
will.
Up to the top each one I'll fill.

Enter the Christmas Fairies, each carrying a tiny parcel.



"Time to be filling the dear little children's stockings, isn't it?"

THE CHRISTMAS FAIRIES:
Good evening, Santa Claus!
We've brought our offerings too.
Please add them to the great big pile
You take along with you.
Our presents may be very small,
But every single one
Brings lovely laughter down to earth,
And lots and lots of fun.

SANTA CLAUS:
Indeed! I thank you, children!
For offerings great or small.
A FAIRY GIFT,
Full well, I know
Brings much more joy
Than any gift at all.

The Fairies crowd around him.

THE FIRST FAIRY:
Oh! Santa Claus!
Can't we come too, to help you
Pack the children's stockings?

SECOND FAIRY:
DEAR Santa Claus!
DO take us with you.

THIRD FAIRY:
We'd be SO quiet
And SO good
And SO useful!
You'd get through the work in HALF
the time.

SANTA CLAUS (very impressively and very slowly):
Nay! Nay! My little ones!
You cannot come.
For needs—all alone,
My work I've done.
Come! help me harness
Reins for my sleigh,
For 'tis high time
I started on my way.

The Fairies catch hold of the sleigh or mat and start to draw it from the stage.

A GOBLIN (with wild scared face):
The wicked Djinn
Has burst his iron door!
And vows that he
Will harass you, full sore!
This Santa Claus! (mooches mo)
WHAT'S HE TO ME?
I'VE THIRP/TENED HIM
FULL MANY A TIME BEFORE.
Now I am free
I ACT!

'TIS WAR!

SANTA CLAUS (terrifiedly perturbed):
What?
He has escaped?
And on Christmas Eve too.
Oh! Woe is me!
He has vowed vengeance on the happiness
I bring to the children of earth at
Christmastide.
Come! We must find him and fol-

low him!
But Santa Claus and the Fairies
dragging the load of presents. From
off the stage—far away—is heard
long drawn-out cries and wails. It is
supposed to come from the children
of earth.

THE CHILDREN:
Our stockings!
Our stockings!
The Wicked Djinn has stolen our
stockings.
Our stockings!
Our stockings!
The Wicked Djinn has stolen our
stockings.

The sound dies away.
On the stage stalks an awful look-
ing apparition. If possible he should
walk on stilts (covered by trousers).
Behind him trail twenty or thirty
socks or stockings, knotted on a rope
at intervals.

THE DJINN (very maliciously):
AT LAST!
I STOP
Your pretty game!
Christmas . . . without stockings!
Will—never—
Be the same!
Haha Haha Hee
Hee Hee Hee

He vanishes, laughing.
(End of Act One)

SANTA CLAUS AND THE WICKED DJINN
ACT TWO
In a corner of the stage sits Santa
Claus bound with thick ropes. On a
line across the stage the socks and
stockings are fluttering.

SANTA CLAUS:
'Tis Christmas Eve, and here am I,
A prisoner without hope.
Before my eyes the stockings hang
All dangling on a rope.
The wicked Djinn has captured me.
In fetters I am bound.
Around my wrists and ankles fast
The cruel cords are wound.

Enter the Djinn

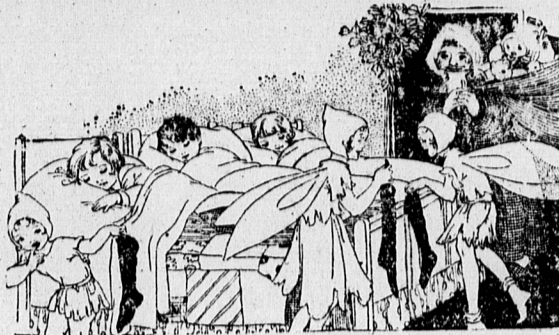
THE DJINN (mockingly):
Good evening!
Santa Claus
Time to be filling the dear
Children's stockings, isn't it?
Surely you are not going to let
Christmas Eve go by without filling
the
Dear little Children's dear little
stockings?

What ever would they think of their
Kind old friend?
SANTA CLAUS (sternly):
Let me go, follow!
Let me go.

THE DJINN:
Let you go indeed!
No! No! Santa Claus!
YOU'VE kept ME a prisoner for

Saint George strikes the cords and
Santa Claus is free. He falls on his
knees and kisses the hands of Saint
George.

Enter the Djinn. See! Saint
George he staggers and put his hand
before his eyes. Saint George strikes
him and he falls. Saint George puts
his foot on him.



"We'll lay the presents near the beds for little ones to see"

hundreds of years.
It's MY turn now!
Let you go indeed!
Not!! Not!!

SANTA CLAUS:
I implore you, let me go!
Only let me go and find the presents!
And lay them by the children's bed-
sides,
And I promise you I will return.

DJINN:
Promises . . . are made to be broken.
Santa Claus.
There shall be no kind old Santa
Claus to
Visit the children this year. I assure
you.
And that's my promise to you . . .
which
Will not be broken dear kind old
Santa Claus.
Let the little children think what
they will.
This year . . . their kind old friend
has gotten them.
Forgotten them.

The Djinn goes off laughing, Santa
Claus struggles, and at last gives up
in despair.

Enter the Goblin leading in Saint
George of England.

THE GOBLIN:
Here! Here, he lies
Before your eyes.
SANTA GEORGE:
What Santa Claus,
And in this plight,
And Christmas Eve
This very plight?
Dear Friend
What foe
Has laid you low,
To fill the Christmas world
With woe?
Up! Up! And to your
Work, my friend.
To all vile deeds
I MAKE AN END

SAINT GEORGE:
And so you thought, Oh Djinn
To sadden earth
And steal from little children
Christmas mirth.
Back to your prison full of woe
Back to your prison you shall go.
(End of Act Two)

ACT THREE

There are as many children as
possible asleep on the stage. It is
dark and a night light is burning.

FIRST CHILD (waking up):
Oh! Oh! I dreamed a Wicked Djinn
had stolen my stocking.

SECOND CHILD:
He has stolen them, too—mine is
not here.

THIRD CHILD:
Nor mine

FOURTH CHILD:
Nor Mine.
Oh dear! What shall we do?
Santa Claus will never leave us any
Presents if he doesn't see any stock-
ings.

Very soft music is played. The
Fairies tip-toe into the room. The
children, absolutely enchanted, sit up
in bed perfectly still staring at them
as they move around their beds.

FIRST FAIRY (very sleepily and slowly):
When the pretty flowers sleep
And the birds sleep
And the fish in the water sleep too—

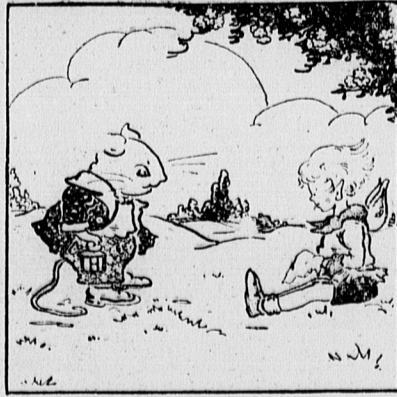
ALL THE FAIRIES (whispering):
Then sleep little children of earth,
Just . . . sleep . . .
It's the comfiest thing you can do

SECOND FAIRY:
When the tall trees sleep

THE LOST GOBLIN.



1. Once there was a Goblin—A tired and frightened Goblin. He'd been and lost his way. So he cried beneath a tree!



2. He was going to a Party—A lovely Christmas Party. And now he really didn't think He'd be there in time for tea.



3. But, finding him, a little Mouse—Long-tailed, whiskered little Mouse—Said, "Now cheer up, and let us run. We'll get there in time, you'll see."



4. The Mouse he ate up lots of cakes—Fork and white and sugared cakes. And, turning to the Goblin, said, "Aren't you glad you came with me?"

And the pussy cat sleeps,
And the dog in his kennel sleeps too—

ALL THE FAIRIES (very softly):
Then sleep, little children of earth,
Just . . . sleep . . .
It's the comfiest thing you can do.

THIRD FAIRY:
When your mummy's asleep
And your daddy's asleep
And the King in his palace sleeps too

ALL THE FAIRIES:
Then sleep, little children of earth,
Just . . . sleep . . .
It's the comfiest thing you can do.

One by one the children fall asleep.

THE FIRST FAIRY (hunting around):
Look, sisters, look!
What I've found—the pair to every
stocking
That was stolen by the wicked Djinn

The Fairies hang the stockings up
by the bedsides.

THE SECOND FAIRY:
He won't have it all his own way
this time ANYHOW
And if only the Goblin finds Saint
George, all
May yet be well.

There is a sound of galloping rein-
deer outside, and Santa Claus comes
staggering into the room with a great
sack of presents on his back.

SANTA CLAUS:
The midnight hour has not yet struck
Saint George has set me free!
We'll lay the presents near the beds
For the little ones to see

THE FIRST FAIRY (Pointing):
DEAR Santa Claus
SEE! WHAT HANGS THERE
Were found the lost stockings for
every pair

SANTA CLAUS:
Ah fair ladies, fond and true
My gratitude I tender you.
Now help me, everyone I pray
That all may be ready for Christ-
mas Day.

They pack the stockings and tip-
toe out. There is a silence on the
stage for a while. Then a nurse
comes into the room and draws the
curtains.

THE NURSE:
Wake up, children! It's—Christmas
Day.

FIRST CHILD (Waking wonderingly):
Oh! Here's my stocking full to the
very top.
It was only a dream after all.

SECOND CHILD (Slowly):
I had a dream too—about a Wicked
Djinn.

THIRD CHILD (Most dramatically):
My dream was awful.
I dreamed that Santa Claus had for-
gotten us
Altogether.

FOURTH CHILD:
In my dream the Fairies came and
sang to us.
Oh! MY DREAM IS TRUE

Enter the Fairies
The Fairies pull the children from
their beds and dance in a ring with
them. Soft music should be played

FIRST FAIRY:
When the pretty flowers wake,
And the little birds wake,
And the fish in the water wake too,
Then wake, little children on Christ-
mas Day.

ALL TOGETHER:
And a Happy Christmas to you.

SECOND FAIRY:
When the tall trees wake,
And the pussy cat wakes,
And the dog in his kennel wakes too,
Then wake, little children on Christ-
mas Day
And a Happy Christmas to you

**THIRD FAIRY (They break the
circle, and stand across the stage in
a long line, wishing the audience . . .
AND A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO
ALL)**

(End of Act Three)
CURTAIN
A Happy New Year could be sub-
stituted if acted after Christmas.

Christmas "Waits"
Christmas "waits" get their name
from the old Scottish word "waith",
meaning wretched or woe. Grad-
ually the term was applied to wan-
dering musicians.

The Real Santa Claus

A VERY HUMAN POSTMASTER



For there is a Santa Claus as thou-
sands of American children can testify.
They have received letters from
Santa Claus postmarked and they know
that they came through the ordinary
post because a smiling postman deliv-
ered them on Christmas morning
into their own hands. Even the older
children, wise in the ways of post-
al tickery at Christmas, are shaken
in their scepticism.

The explanation that Santa Claus
is the name of a village in America,
the postmaster of which is a kindly
soul with a soft spot for children at
Christmas is one of the hardest
worked men in America. Every year
hundreds of American children pass
letters to Santa Claus, and many of
them which missives find their way
to the little village in Indiana. In-
stead of consigning them to the waste
paper basket, the postmaster sends
out short stereotyped replies to the
delight of the fortunate children who
receive them and to the consider-
able surprise of those parents who
have never heard of the tiny vil-
lage.

The village did not always bear
the name of Santa Claus. It was origi-
nally known as Santa Fe, which
means the few inhabitants were
perfectly satisfied. As the population
increased the leading residents de-
cided to apply for the establishment
of a post office in the village. The
first observation of the United States
Post Office Department was that
another village in Indiana also bore
the name of Santa Fe and regula-
tions were that there could not be
two post offices of the same name in
any one state.

A mass meeting of villagers was
called to consider the ruling. A resolu-
tion that the village should
change its name was carried unani-
mously, but when it came to the
choice of a new name there was
considerable diversity of opinion. Just
as it seemed that the meeting would
have to dissolve without having
reached a decision, the village hum-
orist rose and in a weary voice pro-
posed that the new name of the vil-
lage should be Santa Claus. The
humorist only wanted to make a
laugh, but the effect of the proposi-
tion was almost magical. It was sec-
onded immediately and carried with-
out discussion.

As post office matters began to be
aware of the new name on the list
they realized that they had at last
found an appropriate destination for
these frayed and dirty envelopes
bearing the legend "Santa Claus" that
invariably found their way into the
mails at Christmas. At first only a
few letters reached the village, but
as the years passed and its name and
fame became more widely known the
letters increased in number until they
now assume formidable proportions.

Not only do children write to Santa
Claus, parents also take advan-
tage of the opportunity by writing
a letter signed "Santa Claus" to their
own child and forwarding it to the
postmaster to be packed at the fam-
ous village, so that the return will
bear the Santa Claus cancellation.

The postmaster is not out-of-reach
as the result of his kindness. The
parents of children who receive re-
plies from "Santa Claus" almost in-
variably remit the postage and some-
times they send the postmaster a pres-
ent for himself, after they have dis-
covered the origin of the letters.
Parents who send letters for posting
usually enclose a remittance large
enough to cover the expenses and to
leave the postmaster a little for him-
self. Originally, however, the post-
master overlooked these duties with-
out hope of reward and still feels
embarrassed when presents and fees
arrive.

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Christmas in France
Christmas in France is observed
chiefly in a religious way, and the
great feasting and merriment and ex-
change of presents are reserved for
the New Year.