

# FROM TIMES PAST

## CHRISTMAS GREEN - OUR CLUB-MOSSES

by Lawrence W. Watson

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"Something for the Christmas number - botanical, seasonable and of local interest." This my commission; what shall it be?

All the wild flowers have bloomed and passed, the fields are covered with snow, the trees have put off their vesture of leaves and only the evergreens (spruces, hemlock and fir, with cedar principally in the western county) stand green against the background of white, or the blue of the heavens coursed by clouds. At some other time we may consider these interesting evergreen trees, from which we take branches to decorate our churches and our homes for Christmastide and for other festive occasions. For the present let us take the Ground-spruces which we weave into festoons for similar purposes or use as a setting of contrasting green for the wild flowers which we gather when foliage is scarce.



Fig. 1

These running evergreens adorn almost every grove and wood. Scarcely a way-side coppice without their pretty tracery, and many a mossy bog-surface is covered by a network of their vines. From early spring-time until snow comes and covers them in their winter sleep, these pretty plants lend ornament to wood and swamp, irresistably appealing to our appreciation of the beautiful in Nature.

Little children, lads and maidens, twine the running stems to ornament their hats; florists use their tufted branches to emphasize the charm of colour, shape and outline of blossoms in bouquets; and, when times of rejoicing come and homes and places of assembly are to be decorated, to add to the atmosphere of festivity, we bring into service the trailing Christmas-Green and Running Pine.

Naturally, flowering plants have a larger clientele of admirers. and students, but few persons can resist the charms of Ferns. Next to those latter in point of favour come the Club-mosses. These are very aristocratic plants, of ancient lineage, tracing their ancestry back to the earliest appearance of terrestrial plants upon the earth. In the *Lepidodendron* and *Sigillaria* (so abundant in the coal measures of the carboniferous period of geologists) we have the ancient allies or ancestors of our humble Club-mosses. These, the

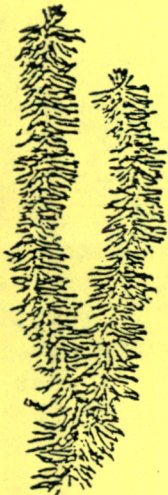


Fig. 2 *Lycopodium-lilulium, Michxii*.  
Shining Club-moss.

monarchs of the forest primeval, attained a height of one hundred feet or more. Their trunks measured three feet in diameter, and in some forms the leaves were upwards of two feet long.

It is only another instance of family reverses. Another Pharaoh has risen in Egypt; a new dynasty has succeeded to supremacy. The departed greatness of the mighty race is recorded in the enduring pages of the rocks, but the modern representatives of the ancient autocrats are humble forms, content to earn a modest living under the shadow of their conquerors' vastness. Yet they are too proud to beg. They do not flaunt in gay attire, but deport themselves in an unostentatious manner befitting their reversed circumstances.

They do not bear flowers to produce seeds, but, like their neighbours and kinsmen, the Ferns, (these, too, have fallen from a high estate) they produce spores from



Fig. 3 *Lycopodium obscurum L.*  
Ground-Pine.