



## Christmas Toys.

YEARS ago when the inhabitants of many inland German towns and villages were maintained by the handiwork of the whole family, as it was exhibited in wooden carriages and toys, the application of machinery to their manufacture was considered most disastrous, and sure to result in the ruin of whole communities. This, of course, was not the case. The principle as developed by the introduction of the sewing machine, viz., that of increased demand in proportion to the cheapness and excellence of the supply, was found to hold good in toys, as well as sewing; and the number now sent us from France, as well as Germany and Switzerland, is almost fabulous, while we are also making no inconsiderable advance in toy manufacture in this country.

Here, however, the toys made are mainly of a mechanical and expensive character. We make some wooden and metal furniture, it is true, tin kitchens and dolls' houses, but we go principally into the building of boats, the construction of games, the making of locomotives, the creation of elegant brown-stone dolls' houses, and the invention of new, light, and stylish dolls' carriages. Whatever its mistress has the doll must have—its barouche, its landau, or its phaeton—and the style in which they are finished, at least the most expensive of them, would do credit to Brewster.

The cheaper toys all come from abroad, principally from Germany, and though they are now turned out in such immense quantities, and with a smoothness unknown before machinery was introduced, we cannot help sometimes regretting the grotesque animals, the quaint and irregular hand-carved figures, which formerly delighted the little ones, and which had an individuality quite absent from the stock turned out by the dozens like cheap modern furniture.

France has always been the source from which we have derived the chief toys for girls, namely, the doll. But the doll of to-day is a work of art, almost equal to its counterpart in nature, and greatly superior in its pretensions. The French doll, *par excellence*, is not a thing to play with. It is a fine creation to exhibit, and though all little girls desire one, yet we doubt if they take as much comfort out of its possession, as they do out of the rag-baby, which they can drag by the heels or one arm, and about which they are never scolded.

There is a time and an age when toys seem particularly appropriate. It is at Christmas and during the years of childhood. Nothing that is useful or sensible can ever give half the pleasure to a child's mind, that these miniature forms of natural objects impart; for they can be made to understand them, and through them the things which they represent. Thus, they not only give pleasure, but they serve a purpose, and even if their life is short, are infinitely less costly to us than many of those pleasures which only give us pain in after years.

## "Merry Christmas."

(See Chromo Card.)

This pretty child carries our Merry Christmas greetings to every subscriber, and our wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year to all.

## Christmas.

WITH the good wishes of this joyful season, we offer our friends a feast for Christmas, which though rich will not be found indigestible.

We have endeavored to bring all the elements together for a Christmas banquet—the oysters, the delicate soup, the fish, the joints, the poultry, the *entrées* the vegetables, the relishes, the bread, the fruits, and the plum-pudding. Or perhaps our Christmas number may be better likened to the pudding itself, which we hope will be found well made and full of plums.

We cannot control events, but unless sadness, of a more than common sort, intrudes into the household, Christmas should be made memorable, by all the associations which tend to give color and brightness to the most beautiful festival of the year.

"Keep its memory green" with holly, with the Christmas tree, with the dainties which fitly crown the Christmas board! Buy toys for the little ones, and gifts for everybody.

If the value is not great, and your good intention unrecognized, that is no concern of yours; you will have done your work all the same, and it will not be lost; some time it will be appreciated and crowned by blessing, whether you know it or not.

Loving-kindness, thankfulness, are the best gifts after all, and rich gifts become poor, unless accompanied by these evidences of sincerity and true fellowship. There are gifts which sting like the bite of an adder, because the giver is not equal to the gift, and generosity becomes too much for him or her, as the case may be. Such gifts are not worth having. They cost too much in the pain and humiliation of obligation. Such persons are out of harmony with the divine spirit of love, which is the foundation and inspiration of the merry Christmas time, and furnishes the perpetual fountain from which its perennial freshness flows.

Life is very short, and to most of us very circumscribed, and the Christmas holiday gives us year by year the most universal awakening from its monotony, both in the actual experience and the retrospect. Doubtless it loses some of its charms at the period of middle age, when we are usually beset by cares and anxieties, and when Christmas brings to us, instead of simple joy, pecuniary responsibilities and additional burdens upon time and strength. Still, judgment and foresight provide for the first, and the last are labors of love which actually lighten others, instead of being felt as additional troubles.

For the children's sake, for the home's sake, for the sake of the cheering influence in your neighborhood, let the yule fires burn, and the guests be bidden. Let the kitchen be alive with the preparations for days or weeks beforehand, for the very odor of spice and lemons, and the plum cake and mince pie are part of the general atmosphere of rejoicing and good cheer, of which as few as possible should be defrauded.

A cold, unloving hearth and home at Christmas is a sad state of affairs, and let us be careful that we are not responsible for it. Some very good people are so irritable over any interruption upon the ordinary routine of life, that, without any intention, and while furnishing the means, or doing their best to put them to use, they embitter all the sweetness with ill-temper and fault-finding. Oh! friends, whatever of life is reserved for us, let us render it as wholesome and healthful, as honest and true, as kindly and gentle as life should be, not only at Christmas, but throughout the year.

## Christmas Mishaps.

(See Engraving.)

CHRISTMAS is no defense against mishaps; on the contrary, its hurry, its bustle, its multifarious demands, its excess of business over other portions of the year, are very apt to create difficulty and trouble, and the only way to avoid them is to "take time by the forelock," and "make haste slowly." But even this does not always prevent mishaps. The disaster to the tree in the picture is one that perhaps might have been avoided by putting it in place before attaching the gifts to it. Gifts and tree together were one too many for the colored man, and so down it came.

But the trouble is only momentary, the tree will soon be righted, the ornaments and presents replaced, and everything will be bright as it was before. Pity that all the troubles in this world could not be as easily repaired as this specimen of Christmas mishaps.

## An Artist's Opinion of "Consolation."

THE following very truthful description of Mr. Reinhart's picture of "Consolation" is from the pen of an artist friend of the artist, whose technical opinion was thus unqualifiedly given:

"In describing the conception and treatment of Mr. Reinhart's charming picture of 'Consolation,' the motive may be simply stated to be the turning point from that desolate and despairing grief to consolation and hope.

"In order that the subject might be freed from all disagreeable features, the artist has so skillfully managed his composition, that the beautiful vision seen by the mother constitutes the picture, shedding over the canvas ineffable light and beauty. The form of the mourner, dimly visible, is only introduced as an accessory figure, necessary, however, to the clear interpretation of the story.

"A mother, sorrowing over her child who has just passed away, throws herself, weeping, on the bed lately occupied by her little one. Falling asleep, a glorious vision is given to her, by which life and immortality are brought to light, and which fills her heart with the music of hope, and turns the shadows into sunlight. All radiant with celestial light, she beholds, hovering over her, a bright array of angels, who seem to be bestowing on her their divine benisons. Nestling with loving confidence on the bosom of the principal figure of the angelic host, she discovers the beatific form of her child, blest of the blest! The angel who lovingly bears the child looks down upon the mother with benign sympathy, and points upward, as if to show her the source of hope and consolation.

"The prevailing ideas embodied in this beautiful painting are those of life and light and the triumph of hope. The exquisite delicacy of feeling displayed throughout the whole composition cannot be exceeded, whilst the originality and skill everywhere visible in this beautiful painting are marked and striking. The correctness of the drawing, the beauty and expressiveness of the faces, and the harmony and richness of the coloring combine to make this a most attractive work of art."

## Miss Alcott's Story.

WE regret to state that Miss Alcott's Christmas story failed to come to time, and that the following note was received from her instead of the hoped-for MSS.

"It will be impossible for me to write the Christmas story, so many delays have occurred in the serial; but if leisure serves, in November I will finish the longer tale."

L. M. ALCOTT.