

The guests would arrive at half-past seven, and, having left their wraps in the hall, would be received in the drawing-room with a kindly welcome, and soon made to feel at ease by cheerful pleasant chat; in fact they would be treated exactly as if they were friends of the family come to spend a social evening. The adjoining conservatory would be lighted up by Chinese lanterns, and fairy lights, which had the effect of glowworms, would be deftly placed in the mossy borders, while the fountain in the centre of a rocky fernery threw its illuminated spray into the air, and coloured lamps lit up the leaves of tropical plants. This charming scene proved always an immense delight to those who had so little to vary the monotony of home life. "Isn't it lovely!" "It's just like heaven!" "I should like to stay here for ever," were the sort of comments we heard on all sides.

It was worth possessing a conservatory to put it to such a use, and to witness the intense pleasure derived from it. But now the gong is sounding its summons to tea in the dining-room, whither our friends repair to find abundant provision for hearty appetites. Tea and coffee, meat pies, fruit tarts, cakes and sweets are successively enjoyed, whilst pleasant chat goes on, and it is evident that our friends are all at ease, and as happy as those can be who, once in a way, are enabled to leave the drudgery of their daily life, and

taste the pleasure of real bodily and mental relaxation.

When the repast is ended we adjourn to a music-room, where an hour is spent in listening to sweet homely songs that go to the hearts of rich and poor alike, some organ and piano duets are played by the ladies, and then the guests are invited to contribute their part towards the evening's entertainment. Simple and touching are the old-fashioned ditties we sometimes hear sung by rustic voices, by no means untuneful or devoid of taste and true feeling.

A table covered with interesting objects in natural history supplies material for an informal address upon shells, birds, insects and common things of everyday life, about which much may be said which is not only listened to with attention, but which may be made instructive and practically useful. Sometimes the brief lecture is upon Palestine, illustrated by models, garments, and Eastern curios of many kinds. Time quickly passes, and as the evening draws to a close, we all unite in singing a hymn. Then after a few earnest words of counsel founded on some verses of Scripture, the guests take their departure about ten o'clock, expressing their simple thanks for the happy evening they have had. It is pleasant to be able to say that, although these parties include some of the lowliest people from the neighbouring village, yet all behave with the utmost propriety, really one might say with the

manners of gentlefolks, and the appreciation of these small kindnesses is unbounded. All of us may not be able to receive the poor exactly in this way, and some, on the other hand, may be able to entertain them far more lavishly, but we each and all can in some way lighten the often dreary lives of those who make their living by daily toil. Such parties as these cannot fail to bridge over, at least to some extent, that gulf which seems to exist between the rich and the poor, and they certainly tend to create a more kindly feeling between different classes. Whether it is a party of five hundred lowly workers from London, entertained at some country seat, or a dozen poor girls invited by a kind lady to spend an evening in her one sitting-room, and made happy by friendly sympathy and wise advice, the effect will be the same—namely, a thankful recognition of love, reaching out to the lowly, and of unselfish desire to give pleasure to those who toil on with little to cheer their daily life. "Actions speak louder than words," and the poor will begin to believe in the Christianity of others when they see their love to God taking the form of love shown towards their neighbours. May it be that some who read this simple paper may find it suggestive of possibilities in their own lives, which, if carried out, will bring a rich reward of happiness both to those who give and to those who receive such kindly tokens of sympathy!

VERAX.

CHRISTMAS FARE FOR RICH AND POOR.

HERE are two plum-puddings that cost so little as to be within the reach of all, but so good-looking and good-tasting are they, the rich man's table would be graced by them both.

A Baroness Plum-Pudding.—Take equal quantities, say, three quarters of a pound of flour, finely-chopped beef suet, and good raisins stoned and cut small, a small teacupful of golden syrup, half a teaspoonful of salt, and a small teacupful of milk. Mix all very thoroughly together, working them to a stiff dough and kneading it for several minutes. Butter a pudding basin, line it with raisins and shred lemon-peel, then put in the pudding mixture, which must not quite fill it, cover with a buttered paper, and boil this pudding, or rather steam it by standing the mould in boiling water for four hours. Turn out of the mould without allowing it to stand more than a moment or two, and serve with simple sweet sauce. This is, or should be, dark, rich, and luscious, and very easy of digestion.

A Vegetable Plum-Pudding.—Cheap but good.

Mix very thoroughly together one pound of mashed potatoes, half a pound of carrot boiled and beaten to a smooth paste, one pound of flour, one pound of currants, one pound of stoned raisins, three quarters of a pound of brown sugar, half a pound of chopped suet, a large teaspoonful of mixed spice, and half a teaspoonful of salt. No eggs and no milk.

The mixture should be prepared a fortnight before it is required, and stirred up vigorously every day.

Buttered moulds should be filled to within half an inch of the top, then tied over with cloths, plunged in boiling water, and boiled for nearly five hours. If boiled, these puddings may be kept for a long time, giving them another hour's boiling when occasion calls for their eating.

The above quantities will make a pudding large enough for sixteen persons, and will not exceed half a crown in cost.

The Rich Man's Pudding.—Will make four quart-mould puddings.

One pound and a half of bread-crumbs, half a pound of flour, two pounds of currants, one pound and a half of raisins, stoned, one pound and a half of suet, one pound of sugar, quarter of a pound of shred candied peel, nine eggs, one pint of milk, and half a pint of brandy. This pudding is not expensive but is almost perfect in flavour; it should boil for four hours also.

There are many persons who cannot be tempted to touch plum-pudding at all, however tempting it may be; for them it is well to have a contrasting one of which they can have the choice at festive times, and either of the following recipes will be found well worth trying.

Exeter Pudding.—Ten tablespoonfuls of bread-crumbs, three ditto of sago, six of suet, four of sugar, a pinch of salt, half a lemon-rind grated, and two or three well-beaten eggs, with two ounces of dissolved butter. Mix these ingredients well together, adding a little milk if needful; have ready half-a-dozen penny sponge cakes split in half and spread with raspberry jam, also a few ratafias. Butter a mould and lay a row of sponge cakes at the bottom, filling up the spaces with the biscuits, then cover with a layer of the mixture, then more cakes and biscuits, and repeat until the mould is full, keeping the mixture at the top. Cover with a buttered paper, and either bake in a gentle oven, or steam the pudding for an hour and a half.

For sauce a small pot of red-currant jelly is dissolved and the liquid poured over the pudding after it has been turned out.

Alpine Pudding.—A rather shallow, fluted, fireproof china dish should be buttered and sprinkled with brown sugar, then a mixture made from the following ingredients is poured in and baked until it is firmly set, after which it is spread with apple or apricot jelly and a *mêringue* made with the whites of three eggs beaten stiff, three-pennyworth of cream also

beaten, and a teaspoonful of castor sugar, also heaped lightly over the preserve. Ingredients:—Three ounces of stale sponge-cake crumbs, half an ounce of ground almonds or desiccated cocoanut, two ounces of castor sugar, a pinch of salt, yolks of three eggs, and half a pint of boiled milk.

A very inexpensive yet pretty dish is the following, it is suitable for a poor children's party, as it will please the eye and taste, and is wholesome, while but small trouble to prepare.

Peel as many fine apples as are desired, taking the cores out with a scoop, so as not to injure the shape. Put the apples into a deep baking-dish with three glasses of cheap wine, a quarter of a pound of loaf-sugar, and the peel of a lemon. Cover the dish and let the apples cook gently, but do not allow them to break. Place them on a pretty dish, boil the syrup longer until it is thick, and let it get cold. Place between the apples tiny heaps of well-boiled rice, pour over all the syrup, and fill up the holes in the apples with bright-coloured preserve. Decorate with strips of green angelica and crystallised cherries.

Apple Snow.—Half-a-dozen large apples that will cook well; let them be pared and cored, and cooked quickly in a very little water, then when perfectly soft beat them lightly with a fork; add, when nearly cold, three tablespoonfuls of castor-sugar and the whites of three eggs whisked to a stiff froth. Whisk all well together. Line a plain mould with sponge fingers, placing them close together at the bottom, and wider apart at the top. Fill up the mould with the "snow," taking care not to disturb the biscuits. Set the mould on ice or in a freezer until it is firm, then turn the shape out on to a glass dish, and heap bright apple jelly around the base of the shape, on the top pile a few spoonfuls of thick whipped cream, and sprinkle that with pink granulated sugar.