

Winter Entertainments.

ONE of the most successful forms of entertainment adopted this season consists of theatricals, or musical operettas, the parts being, of course, all sustained by amateurs. A Christmas variation is an original play, one scene of which introduces a Christmas tree, in the distribution of the contents of which, all the children present are requested to join. Of course there is great fun, which the spectators share, for they consist mainly of the fathers and mothers, the uncles and aunts, the cousins, and other relatives of the little folks. After this distribution, which includes oranges, cakes, and perhaps boxes or bags of sweetmeats, candy, and the like, the juveniles are sent home, leaving the older people to finish out the play, which, of course, ends with a supper and a dance. Amateur dramatists are almost as thick as amateur actors and actresses, and there is no difficulty in getting a play, or a musical extravaganza written, which, if not of the highest literary character, makes up by plenty of fun, and local allusions, which are sure to be highly appreciated.

"Literary" Christmas parties are very new, and may be made exceedingly interesting. They are very suitable for an annual entertainment for reading or other societies, as they require a certain amount of co-operation among the participants.

The lady at whose house it is to be given has a right to select the author from whom the characters are to be taken, and the more the period or area is narrowed down, the more complete and characteristic will probably be the result. The dressing must either be taken from printed description, or from the best idea which can be formed of the dress of a person of the class and time, and the point is to keep up the illusion, and make conversation and the like accord with it. In short, it is acting an unwritten play.

The "Phantom" parties, or balls, are another form of marked entertainments. Over the evening dress, each person throws an ample winding sheet, which is draped ghost-like around the body. A white mask covers the face, or part of it, the lips are painted a bloodless hue, and the company walk about like a congregation of specters in a graveyard, until the clock strikes twelve, when presto! the disguise is cast aside, the brilliant costumes stand revealed, and also their owners, and all goes merry as a marriage bell. A Phantom party is a favorite form of entertainment for New Year's eve.

Charade and "Mother-Goose" parties are too well known to need description. Messrs. Lee & Shepard, of Boston, published last year a "Mother-Goose" play, specially adapted to a children's entertainment of that kind, with directions as to scenery, dresses, and the like. A doll's wedding, or christening, may also be made a basis for a very pretty and enjoyable merry-making for boys and girls. Of course it is the dolls that are invited, their mistresses, or mothers only take them to witness the ceremony of marriage between the young lady and gentleman doll, owned by some one of their friends. It is necessary that the misses who give the party should have quite an array of elegantly dressed dolls. Besides the bride and groom, there must be the mother and father of the bride, an old nurse, a minister, the groom's best man, and sisters, or bridesmaids for the bride. The dolls who are invited are the spectators, still some of them may be invited as "best man," and as bridesmaids. After the ceremony, a wedding-cake is cut, with a tiny ring in it, and lemonade is served with more cake, and, perhaps, ice cream. A very important part of the fun is the presentation of presents; but it is all lost if these are made costly, or of large size. Tiny bits of imitation jewelry, doll china, cut-out pictures, and miniature bouquets, are the proper articles, and add enormously to the jollity of the occasion.

Christmas Toys. ---

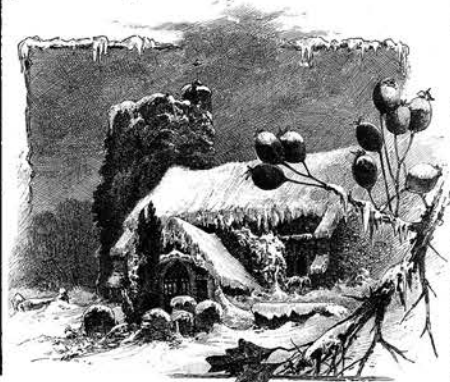
YEARS ago when the inhabitants of many inland German towns and villages were maintained by the handiwork of the whole family, as it was exhibited in wooden carriages and toys, the application of machinery to their manufacture was considered most disastrous, and sure to result in the ruin of whole communities. 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.



Dinners.—As a rule, modern dinner giving is one of the most foolish, not to say wicked, and certainly useless forms of entertainment. Persons who are invited to dinners are not those who need them. They are always those who have dinners at home, and who not unfrequently satisfy their appetites before going among strangers, rather than risk the indigestion and disordered stomach which the eating of a great, unusual dinner invariably entails.

Dinners are the least social of almost any form of entertainment, because it is not considered in taste to arrive at the house of one's entertainer until the hour at which the food is put upon the table, and it is a mere chance if the person who is your next neighbor will be congenial, or one whom you care to see, or with whom you can carry on an intelligent conversation.

Dinners are usually a mere parade of glass, china, flowers and *vases*, which nine out of ten of those who partake of them would feel that they were better without.

Of course, this need not be so. There is nothing more delightful than a really social dinner, where the party, whether small or large (it is much better small), consists of persons who know each other and are in harmony, so far as position and general ideas are concerned.

The fashion of state dinners has really undermined and partly destroyed the genuine hospitality which ought to be an outgrowth of every home, and which admits of the addition of a friend to the family meal without change or confusion. Neatness and liberality in the habits of the household permit this form of dinner giving, which is the best of all, and exercises the most salutary influence upon table manners and customs.

CHRISTMAS DINNERS

are exceptional, and are not bound by the same laws as those which regulate formal and fashionable dinner giving. Whoever has a home, a Christmas turkey, and above all, a Christmas plum-pudding, is delighted, on this occasion, to share them with friends as well as family; and the good will and the welcome being there, it is of little consequence whether the cut glass and the French *entrées* are absent or present.

We subjoin, in addition to the recipes of Christmas dishes, some bills of fare for Christmas dinners, which may serve young housekeepers as a guide to the display of culinary ability:

PLAIN FAMILY DINNER.

Roast Turkey with Oyster Dressing.
Cranberry Sauce.
Celery.
Mashed Potatoes, Peas, or Corn.
Stewed Tomatoes and boiled Onions.
Chicken Fricassee.
Salad.
Plum Pudding, with Sauce.
Nuts. Apples. Oranges.
Coffee.

FAMILY DINNER.

Tomato Soup.
Celery.
Oysters on the half shell (with Lemon).
Roast Turkey, Cranberry Sauce.
Vegetables as preferred.
Plum Pudding.
Pumpkin Pie. Apple Meringue.
Nuts. Grapes. Raisins. Figs.
Coffee and Tea.