

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. ---

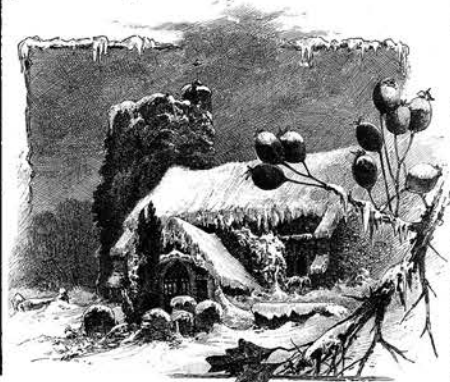
YEARS ago when the inhabitants of many inland German towns and villages were maintained by the handiwork of the whole family, as it was exhibited in wooden carriages and toys, the application of machinery to their manufacture was considered most disastrous, and sure to result in the ruin of whole communities.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

DINNER FOR SIX PERSONS.

Oyster Soup.
 Croquettes of Lobster. Stewed Celery.
 Boiled Turkey (Oyster Dressing).
 Mashed Potatoes. Cranberry Jelly.
 Roast Chicken, with Lemon, Rice, and
 Currant Jelly.
 Salad.
 Lemon Pudding. Mince Pies. Cranberry Tarts.
 Nuts. Fruit.
 Coffee.

DINNER FOR TWELVE PERSONS.

Oysters on the half shell, served with Lemon.
 Celery.
 Vermicelli Soup.
 Sardines.
 Boiled Cod, with Lobster Sauce.
 Roast Turkey, Cranberry Sauce.
 Boiled Chicken and Ham, with Asparagus, and
 Currant Jelly.
 Lemon Fritters.
 Braised Duck, with green Peas and Barberry Jelly.
 Salad.
 Plum Pudding. Mince Pies.
 Nuts. Fruit.
 Clear Coffee.
 The last served in the drawing-room.

Our Christmas Pudding.—One pound of beef suet well chopped; one pound of bread-crumbs; two table-spoonfuls of flour; two pounds of currants, picked, washed, and dried; two pounds of raisins, stoned; one quarter of a pound of mixed candied peel, well shred; half an ounce of spice, mixed nutmeg and cinnamon; six eggs, well beaten; a cup of sugar; a salt-spoon of salt. Mix with just enough sweet cider to well moisten it, and boil in a mold four hours.

Plain Plum Pudding.—Three-quarters of a pound of suet; one pound of fine bread-crumbs; three table-spoonfuls of flour; one pound of raisins; one pound of currants; one quarter of a pound of lemon peel, and a little sugar, if preferred. Beat up seven eggs, and mix all the ingredients well together. Boil first time four hours, second time two hours, and serve with creamed liquid sauce.

Delicious Plum Pudding.—One pound of bread-crumbs; two pounds of stoned raisins; one pound of currants; three-quarters of a pound of suet, chopped as fine as dust, with the aid of a little flour; one-quarter of a pound of citron, orange, and lemon peel, some cut in thin strips and some in four-cornered little lumps; four or six eggs, and milk enough to make a stiff batter. Spread the bread crumbs, with a little flour, in a large open pan; mix the suet, and spice to taste, with it, then stir in the fruit, then the milk and eggs, well beaten up, and grate a nutmeg over the whole. Wet the pudding cloth, arrange it in a mold, and put in the batter. Take care that it is not too liquid to run through the cloth, or too solid to make it difficult to take up with a spoon. Tie up carefully, put in a pot of boiling water, and boil four hours or more, according to its size.

Plum Pudding without Eggs.—Three-quarters of a pound each of currants, raisins, and suet; one-half a pound each of flour and bread-crumbs; one-quarter of a pound of moist sugar; one-third of a nutmeg, almond flavoring to taste, two ounces of candied peel; as much milk as will moisten it well—about one pint, or less—as it must be fairly stiff. Chop the suet very fine, and mix all together. Boil ten hours, six when made, and four when required for use.

Mother Eve's Pudding.

“Take two pennyworth of eggs, when two for a groat, Take the same fruit that Eve once did cozen, Well pared and well chopped, at least half a dozen, Six ounces of currants, from the stones you must part, Or they'll break your teeth and spoil all your sport,

Five ounces of bread—let your maid eat the crust—The crumb must be grated as small as the dust. Five ounces of sugar won't make it too sweet, Salt, nutmeg, and orange peel to make it complete. Three hours let it boil, without hurry or flutter, And then serve it up with sugar and butter.”

Greatest and Best of Plum Puddings.—Two pounds of bread-crumbs, quarter of a pound of prepared flour, one and a half of kidney suet, finely chopped, two pounds of Sultana raisins stoned, and cut two pounds of well-cleaned currants, half a pound of mixed candied peel, twelve eggs, one quart of rich milk, the rind of two lemons grated, a cup of sugar, two nutmegs, one ounce of powdered sweet almonds, half an ounce of cinnamon. Boil six hours.

Baked Plum Pudding.—The basis of all well-made plum puddings must be bread-crumbs, as flour, in quantity, makes them indigestible. But in baked plum pudding the suet should be replaced by butter, and the candied peel put in finer and in smaller quantities. In other respects, proceed exactly as for boiled plum puddings, and bake two or three hours, according to size.

John Bull's Pudding.—Half a pound of bread-crumbs, made fine, and mixed with half a pound of prepared flour; eight eggs; one pound of stoned raisins; one of suet; one of washed, dried, and floured currants; half a pound of mixed lemon, and orange, and citron candied peel; one ounce of mixed spice, mixed with a full pint of sweet, fresh cider, and boiled five hours. Serve with burnt sauce.

Turnips in White Sauce.—Peel and cut white, juicy turnips in any pretty shapes, such as miniature pears. Boil them in salt and water, and when perfectly tender drain them, and pour over them a sauce made with a table-spoonful of flour mixed smooth with cold milk, and to which should be added a coffee-cup of mixed milk and water boiling. Add a table-spoonful of butter, a little salt, and boil up once more after it has been added to the flour.

Baked Rice Pudding.—Boil one tea-cupful of well-washed rice in water until tender, with a salt-spoon of salt. Put the rind of a lemon into a pint of milk, and let it slowly infuse until it is flavored. Then beat the yolks of three eggs and stir them into the milk. Take a quarter of a pound of currants, well cleaned, dried, and flowered, mix them with the rice, and then stir into it the milk and eggs. Butter the dish and pour the mixture into it. It will only require about three-quarters of an hour to bake. When it is done, the beaten whites of the eggs, mixed with powdered sugar, should be put on the top and lightly browned.

Baked Tomatoes.—Take large, smooth, fair tomatoes, remove the core, and fill each one with a dressing of bread-crumbs, seasoned highly with pepper and salt, and more moderately with grated onion and butter. Cover the tops with the pieces cut smoothly off, and bake slowly, and until they are browned.

Braised Ducks.—Prepare the ducks exactly like chickens for the dressing, which should be seasoned with butter, sage, and onions, as well as salt and pepper. Put them in a pot with some chopped onion, a little butter, and water enough to steam. Let them stew gently with the lid on, and then let the water evaporate, and then brown them. Serve with green peas and barberry jelly.

Oyster Soup.—Two quarts of oysters, three pints of new milk, three ounces of butter, one and a half ounces of flour, salt and pepper to taste, and mace, if liked. Put the milk over boiling water; drain the oysters, and put the liquor in a saucepan on the stove; wash the oysters, and remove every particle of shell that may adhere to them. When

the milk is hot, add the butter and flour, rubbed smoothly together, and thinned with a little of the milk; let it cook, stirring slowly, until slightly thickened; the liquor, which must be well boiled, skimmed, and *hot*, may then be added, and after that the drained oysters. As soon as they are well puffed, and the edges somewhat curled, serve the soup. Half a pint of rich cream is a great improvement, and may be used instead of the butter. Serve with them a plate of small crackers, crisped in the oven.

Lemon Dumplings.—Take half a pound of grated bread, quarter of a pound of suet chopped fine, quarter of a pound of sugar, and one lemon. Squeeze the juice on the sugar, and chop the rest very fine. Grate one large apple (Spitzenberg or Greening), and mix all thoroughly with two even table-spoonfuls of flour, and three well-beaten eggs. Tie in square pieces of cotton cloth, drop in boiling water, and boil three-quarters of an hour, with a tin plate under them to prevent their sticking to the kettle. Serve with the following sauce. This quantity will make eight dumplings.

Fairy Butter for Dumplings.—Take four ounces of butter, five ounces of powdered sugar, and the grated rind and juice of one lemon. Cream the butter thoroughly, and add the sugar gradually, beating hard and fast until it is very light. Add the lemon and beat three minutes more. To be served *piled*, as it falls from the spoon, not smooth.

Mince Pies.—One secret of good mince pies is long baking, the other is to make them of the very best materials, well prepared, and plenty of them. Niggard hands should never make mince pies, nor, in fact, any pies at all, for if they are not good, they are like Jeremiah's figs, very bad indeed.

Old Family Mince Pies.—Three pounds of fresh roast beef, chopped fine, and added to one pound of beef kidney suet, after it has been chopped and strained; three pounds of Rhode Island Greening apples, after they have been chopped; three pounds of raisins, muscatels, two stoned and one left whole; one pound and a half of well-cleaned and dried currants; a pound of mixed candied peel, one-third lemon, one-third orange, one-third citron; one pound of light brown sugar, and a second put with a pint of golden syrup into a quart of sweet, fresh cider, with which it should be boiled until it is reduced one-third. To the other ingredients add the juice and grated rinds of two oranges and two lemons, two tea-spoonfuls of salt, two large nutmegs, one table-spoonful of ground cinnamon, and half or more of ground cloves. When all these are put together, add the boiled cider, and mix thoroughly.

Make a paste by mixing half a pound of lard to half a tea-spoonful of salt and a pound of flour, with cold water. Roll out with butter, dredging with flour, until it has been rolled out three times. Cover with pastry quarter of an inch thick, and bake in a steady, but not fierce oven, covering with paper, if the top becomes too brown.

Smothered Chickens.—Cut the chickens in the back, lay them flat in a dripping-pan with one cup of water; let them stew in the oven until they begin to get tender, take them out, and season with salt and pepper. Rub together one and one half table-spoons of flour, one table-spoon butter, spread all over the chicken. Put back in the oven, baste well, and when tender and nicely brown, take out of the dripping-pan; mix with the gravy in the pan one cup of thickened milk with a little flour; put on the stove, and let it scald up well, and pour over the chickens; parsley chopped fine is a nice addition to the gravy.