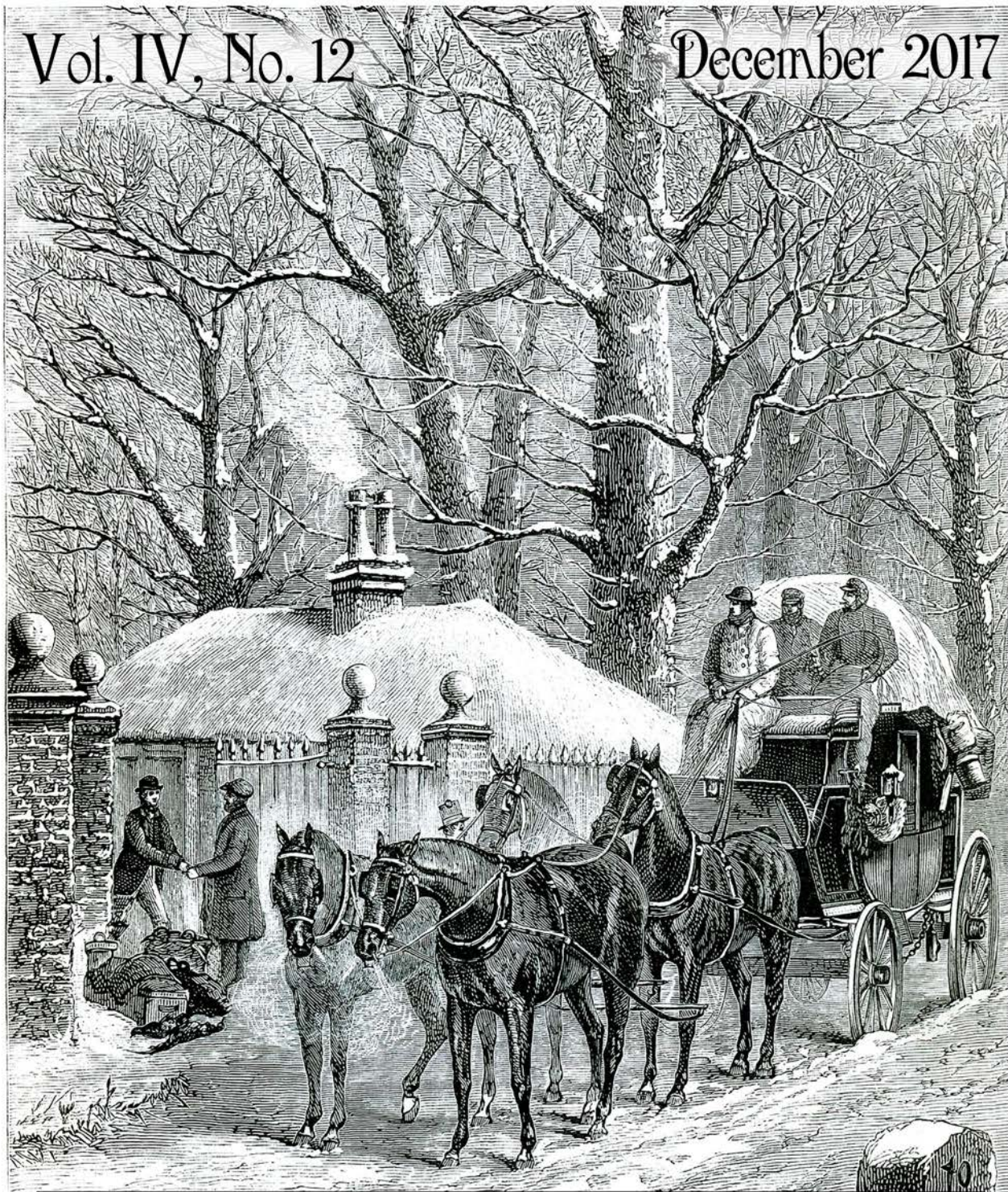


Victorian Times

Vol. IV, No. 12

December 2017



*How Christmas Cards Were Made • Christmas Customs • Christmas in Germany
A Christmas Poetry Collection • School Christmas Hampers • A Christmas Play
Skating for Ladies • In a Guard's Van: A Christmas Sketch
Christmas on the Kansas Prairie • Holiday Serviettes • Animals in Wintertime*

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The Girl's Own Paper* *Cassell's Family Magazine*

A Word About Christmas*

WHEN what was designed to be a pleasure becomes a burden, it is time to stop and examine it carefully, and see if it is the thing itself which has grown to be such a weight, or whether it is simply an awkward manner of carrying it. Certainly there must be something wrong in any celebration of Christmas which results in serious fatigue of mind and body. During the first three months of the year, nothing is more commonly given as a reason for ill health than an overstrain during the holidays. "She got so worn out at Christmas," or "She worked too hard in finishing her Christmas presents," or "The week before Christmas she was tired out with shopping," are excuses which appear as surely as January and February come. The question must occur sometimes to everyone, whether all this worry and wear of heart and hand and brain are really worthwhile.

Is there not some better way of celebrating this day of days than for women to wear themselves out in making or buying pretty trifles for people who already have more than they can find room for? Setting aside all effort of eyes and fingers, the mental strain is intense. Merely to devise presents for a dozen or more people, which must be appropriate and acceptable, and which they do not already possess, and which no one else is likely to hit upon, is enough to wear upon the strongest brain; and when one's means are not unlimited, and the question of economy must come in, the matter is still more complicated. The agony of indecision, the weighing of rival merits in this and that, the distress when the article which is finally decided upon does not seem as fascinating as one had hoped, the endless round of shopping, the packing to send to distant friends, the frantic effort to finish at the last moment something which ought to have been done long ago, result in a relapse when all is over into a complete weariness of mind and body which unfits one for either giving or receiving pleasure. Now, when all this is looked at soberly, does it pay?

It is a remarkable fact that, although Christmas has been kept on the twenty-fifth day of December for more than a thousand years, its arrival seems as unexpected as if it had been appointed by the President. No one is ready for it, although last year every one resolved to be so, and about the middle of December there begins a rush and hurry which is really more wearing than a May moving.

It seems to be a part of the fierce activity of our time and country that even our pleasures must be enjoyed at high pressure. While it is almost impossible, in matters of business, to act upon the kindly suggestions of intelligent critics that we should take things more leisurely, surely, in matters of enjoyment, we might make an effort to be less overworked. Cannot the keeping of Christmas, for example, be made to consist in other things than gifts? Let the giving be for the children and those to whom our gifts are real necessities.

As a people, we are very negligent in the matter of keeping birthdays. If these festivals were made more of in the family, especially among the elder members, we should not find that we were losing the blessedness of giving and the happiness of receiving, even if we did omit presents at Christmas time. In many large families a mutual understanding that the Christmas gifts were all to be for the children would be an immense relief, although, perhaps, no one would be quite willing to acknowledge it. Sometimes a large circle of brothers and sisters can unite in a gift, in that way making it possible to give something of more value, and at the same time to lessen the difficult task of selection.

Above all things, if you give presents, be more anxious to give something which "supplies a want" than to send some pretty trifle which can only prove in the end an additional care. A little forethought and friendly putting of yourself in another's place will make this possible. In the great world of books something can be found to suit every taste. Flowers are always a graceful gift, and can never become burdensome by lasting after one has grown tired of them. There are numberless other things which can be procured, without a wear and tear of mind and body which make the recipient feel as David did of the water from the well of Bethlehem, that what cost so much was too valuable to be accepted.

—Susan Anne Brown
Century Magazine, 1884

*When I came across this, I felt it would hardly be possible to say it better myself! I have taken the liberty, however, of breaking what was originally a long block of text into somewhat handier paragraphs!

—Moira Allen, Editor, editors@victorianvoices.net

HOW THE CHRISTMAS CARDS ARE MADE.



A PLEASANT sound of many voices, that rises and falls as a door is opened and shut, like the effect produced by raising the louvres, or shutters, in the swell of an organ; then a merry laugh or outcry, and then, as we enter, a complete silence, save for the scratching of busy fingers over paper. To a certain extent it is like entering a school-room with Madame the principal; but this is no school, only a light, well-ventilated work-room, in which some fifty or sixty girls are as busy as the bees in some hive—the bees whose hum seemed to issue from this hive of industry.

Those who take an interest in seeing girls and women furnished with the means of gaining a respectable livelihood in some clean, light business, would be delighted here. For there is not a sallow, unwholesome face to be seen; no girl seems drooping over too much work in a close room, but all look bright, cheerful, and happy, their eyes directing their busy fingers, while a staid middle-aged female sits at a kind of desk in a stall, as if

playing at selling the brightly coloured pictures about her to the various girls who come and go. But this seeming play is all in earnest, and every movement here is relative to the great commercial power, business; for though it is a bright, sunny, autumn day, these are preparations for Christmas; in fact, this is one of those factories of Christmas Cards, visited to obtain the materials for a description of the little artistic works with which our homes are flooded at the festive time.

It is of very modern growth, this sending of Christmas tokens; and in spite of the very severe letters that have appeared in the daily press, it is a plant of healthy and ever-increasing dimensions. In fact, it seems that this year there will be a great advance in quantity and quality, for the various makers have been enlisting the services of artists of no mean position, with the result that some of the cards, small as they are, display pictures of such refinement and delicacy of treatment that they will be well worthy of preservation. Let us see how these cards are prepared.

Accompanying a guide to a lower room, where men and boys only are employed, we see a number of great, heavy, creamy-coloured stones, like the flags used for paving, but much thicker, and with one side exquisitely smooth. These are German lithographic stones, and on a closer inspection we find them covered with designs. In fact, an artist has painted on paper some charming little scrap, perhaps a bullfinch on a spray of holly, and this has been copied by the lithographic artists, and, to use their term, placed upon the stone. Let us watch the work, and see what that means.

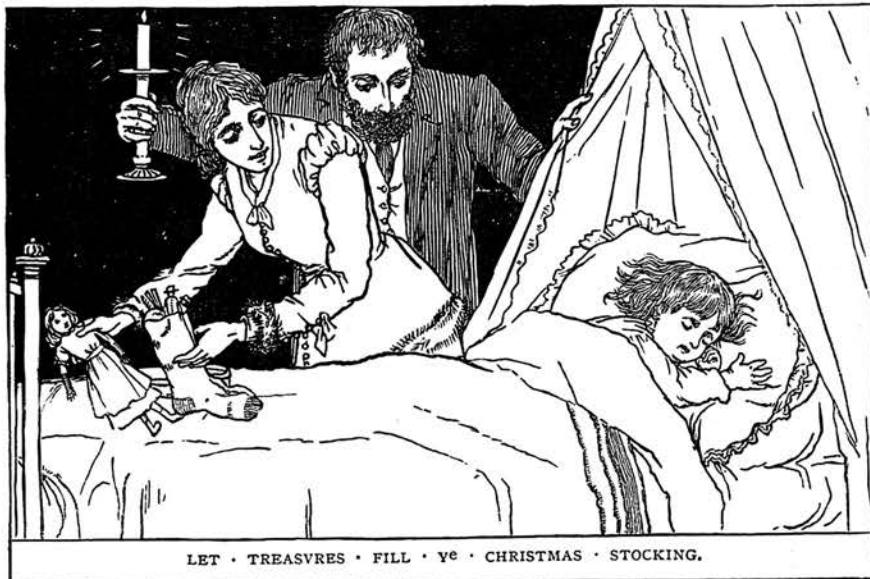
Here is what has been done. Ten stones will be required to print this pretty design, and on examining them we see that something resembling a badly defined or shadowed resemblance of the pretty card is on these stones; not once, but sixty-four times repeated—eight rows and eight columns of birds placed



there by printing or transferring on the stones. It seems a great number, and a great amount of preparation, but we soon learn that it is needful, and that the repetitions of what seem trifles result in the per-

the screw-press descends on the printed roses, and when the card is removed, the petals and buds stand out above the paper with admirable effect.

This embossing is carried to a great pitch of perfection—faces, figures, and various designs being treated in this way; but a vast amount of the work is done abroad, cut out by steel dies, and sent over here to supply manufacturers at a far lower cost than they can get the labour done at here. It is this same principle of stamping with steel dies, each of which is laboriously cut in some intricate design, at great expense, that supplies us with the delicate paper-lace work that so charmingly ornaments many of the so-called cards, while much of the work is cut out on the same principle—that is, the driving down of a steel die by means of a fly-wheel, or a couple of heavy flying balls,



LET • TREASURES • FILL • YE • CHRISTMAS • STOCKING.

fection we see. The object is, of course, to produce the one brightly-coloured drawing of the water-colour artist in endless quantities, and so at the different presses this is done.

At one the smooth, pure white sheets of card are brought in contact with the stone, and they come up with a bordering of gold. At another press an outline blue pattern is printed on the ground of gold. At the next, a dark shading to the blue pattern, and in the middle of each card a dull dark patch, and a faint trace of a spray. Next follow the shape of the bird, the dark head and back, the delicate roseate hue of its breast, the bright green and dark green of the holly, the scarlet of the berries, and so on and on, each stone supplying some one touch of colour, till lying before us is, in all its original beauty, the reproduction of the artist's water-colour painting, repeated here sixty-four times, and being produced by this combination of labour, after the long preparation, in thousands upon thousands.

Here, though, lies a heap of sheets of cards of a very charming but simple design. It is merely a full-blown rose. Its shadows are delicate in tint, and the whole is very beautiful; but its beauties are yet to be heightened by bringing them out in low relief. In fact, these cards are to be embossed, and to do this a steel die has been cut of the shape of the rose with all its petals. This die is attached to a die-press of tremendous power, a couple of heavy balls fly round,

which are attached to the die-armed screw, and twist it down.

The printing in colours of all the cards is executed on the same principle. The more colours in a card, the more tints even and shades of the same colour, the more stones it has taken, and consequently the more printings it has received. But these sheets of twenty-fours or forty-eights or sixty-fours, according to the size of the designs, are broad and large. They have been rolled and pressed, and look the very perfection of beauty as they are passed over to a man ready to do execution upon them, for he presides over a guillotine. This is a machine set to the exact gauge of the length of the cards to be, and taking forty or fifty, or maybe a hundred sheets, the workman lays them flat on the machine table, passes them under till they are stopped by the gauge, runs round a couple of balls



LET • VS • SHARE • YE • FRUIT • OF • YE • XMAS • TREE.

which turn a screw to hold them tight, and then a wheel revolves, the guillotine knife comes down with a steady, lateral descent, and cuts through the hard mass of pressed-together cards as easily as if they were so much cheese. By this process the card of sixty-four designs is cut up into equal rows of eight, and these in turn are cut into the single cards so familiar at Christmas time, and with edges so regular and smooth that no knife or scissors will produce the same effect. A man so employed cuts up countless thousands in a day, a few turns of a wheel regulating his machine to suit cards of any size; and these now cut up are passed to an upper room, where busy-fingered girls packet them in assorted dozens—fastening each packet with a pretty ornamental band of paper, whose ends are rapidly secured with a touch of molten sealing-wax.

Passing up-stairs once more, we are led into the room where so many girls are busy, some making the packets, but the greater portion at much more elaborate work; and we learn that they far excel boys in these tasks, from their deft cleverness of finger, cleanliness, and closer application to the duty in hand. One girl here has before her a number of cards with so many pretty borders, but blank in the centre. Over this blank place she fits a pretty design in lace-paper, which is made to stand away from the base by four paper springs, formed by doubled strips of the width of narrow tape. Another has a box full of stamped flowers, which she rapidly gums on her cards. Another has birds, the robin being the favourite, and it is wonderful to see how the red-breasted bird, stamped out and embossed, is placed in position with a rapid touch of a gum-brush, and laid in a heap with others to dry. And so card after card is built up with embossed ornaments according to its price, some being quite elaborate pieces of workmanship, all lace, gilding, silvering, and brilliant colours, like one of the better-class valentines meant for a later season.

As a matter of course, the emblems of Christmas time form the majority of the designs for cards; holly is abundant, with its dark glistening leaves and scarlet berries; and so is mistletoe, all delicate grey-green and luminous pearl. The Christmas rose too is plentiful, and every floral design is in exquisite taste, and marvellous in its fidelity to nature. But wassail-bowls and ruddy Father Christmases are not wanting, with fir-trees out of number. Wondrous plum-puddings, each with a knife and fork in it, lie heaped in a box, ready for gumming on some of the cards; in another box are comical turkeys and stately pigs, but the serious and pretty have the greatest sway, while nothing is seen that would offend the most fastidious taste.

Here are some quaint cards, evidently intended for a novelty for the children. They consist of figures which are at first represented by faces, hands, and legs, but which a nimble-fingered damsel dresses up with little stamped velvet suits of clothes, taking them rapidly from a box, and gumming them in their places with a delicacy of touch and accuracy of eye that are in truth surprising. Next to her a quiet-looking girl is

fitting together card-fans, each leaf of the fan bearing a calendar printed ready for the New Year, 1879. They are pretty designs, these, and combine the useful with the ornamental, though from their fragile structure the latter must prevail.

There is a pleasant odour here, though, as if the mimic flowers that flash in myriad dyes had assumed the real at the touch of some enchanter's wand. Rose, lily, musk, and verbena, what a sweet blending! It is only, however, the girl who makes up the sachets or scent-packets distributing perfume, Flora-like, as she hastens on her work. Her scent-packets are, so to speak, so many glazed or enamelled envelopes, with a Christmas card where the direction should be. Into each of these, the Christmas card Flora places a little cotton-wool or wadding, just dusted over with the scent-powder, fastens securely the lappet, and there is a pretty Christmas present, odorous and sweet, ready to remind its recipient of the giver with a strange and subtle power of its own. It is for this reason probably that the forget-me-not, with its tiny eyes of blue, is so often a portion of the design outside, even though a kindly wish for the coming season leaves the gentle flower in the shade.

One firm has excelled itself in the beauty of some of its productions. No built-up pictures are here, all embossing and separate designs, but charming artistic designs, many being gems of the most exquisite tinting and effect. For instance, they have prepared a series of studies of girl-life, simple and classic as if from the pencil of Alma Tadema. Another series is of Japanese birds, leaves, and flowers, delicately quaint, and though perhaps bordering on the grotesque, yet so beautiful in conception that the eye does not weary, as it is never offended by a garish hue.

Perhaps the most perfect of these real gems of colour-printing are the birds, which are so true to nature, so harmonious in tint, that none but an artist who is a naturalist as well could have produced the effect. The aim seems to have been more to obtain a pleasing picture than to produce anything related to the festive season. Hence we have sea-anemones, orchids, and cacti horrent with spines, and quaint in shape; flowers of tints such as nature might have dyed; and mingled with these a series of wild dreams of fairy and elf land, with wondrously formed birds and quadrupeds, such as must have come from the brain of Ernest Griset, though they are unsigned.

Seen in their perfection of blended colours, the cards are very beautiful; in their earlier stages of production, however, they are so many puzzles, and a half-blank sheet with a few colours apparently daubed here and there is anything but a pleasing object to the eye. It is not until lithographic stone after stone has added its blending touches that we realise the patience, care, and wonderful exactitude that have to be exercised to produce these trifles of the season, many of which are really high-class works of art.

But the hum of voices has suddenly increased as we are deeply studying one of a heap of pictures being formed into packets, the scene being a sailors' mess,

with the Jack at the head cutting the Christmas pudding, and this brings us back to the fact that it is one o'clock, and dinner-time, the girls hurrying away to their midday meal, evidently light-hearted and happy at the coming of this respite from their daily task, one that gives pleasure to old and young throughout the land.

The silhouette studies we have given with this paper are original designs supplied by our own artist for the delectation of the readers of this Magazine. Some of our younger readers may find a pleasurable employment in taking tracings or pen-and-ink copies of them, and sending them to their friends.



CHRISTMAS AND ITS CUSTOMS.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON.



CHRISTMAS is the festival of the year. With modern Christian nations it takes precedence of all and every religious celebration. Its blessings are for the old as well as for the young. The magnificent shows, which welcomed it, in the old baronial times, have, indeed, long been disused. We no longer see the boar's-head borne in, to the sound of violin and harp, to grace the overloaded table. We no longer behold the page, with the wassail bowl, preceded by the mimic trumpeter. We no longer hear the shouting, the music, and the mirth of the jester, as crowds of servitors drag the yule log into the great hall, where the baron and his lady stand, in state, to welcome it. The mimes, the games, the buffoonery, the noisy revels have passed away. But not the less hearty is our modern observance of Christmas. On the contrary, the festival is the more appropriately kept, in whatever it is more sedate than formerly. In thousands of happy homes, the Christmas tree is raised: in thousands of churches prayer and thanksgiving go up. All over the land, the hospitable board, at the old homestead, is spread for children and grandchildren. Once more the parental roof-tree overshadows the reunited family, and sheds down upon them its calm and peaceful blessing. Alienations are

forgotten, jealousies disappear, heart burnings cease to be. The genial atmosphere of Christmas thaws out even selfishness itself. And the angels, who sang "peace and good-will to men," on that still, calm morning, eighteen centuries ago, seem even yet to reverent minds, to usher in this sacred dawn. The last star is paling before the



morning. Hark! do you not hear seraphic voices?

In England many of the old customs still survive. On Christmas Eve, groups of singers rove about, from house to house, singing "Christmas Waits:" and are usually rewarded, after the ancient fashion, with a dole. The church bells are set merrily ringing. Many of the wealthy landed proprietors still keep up the habit of dispensing coals and blankets to the poor, at the door of the castle or the mansion. Children go out into the woods, to cut holly, or look for



mistletoe; and their mirthful laughter makes many a silent dell vocal with gladness. The churches are all decked out with evergreen. As in the United States, gifts are exchanged between husband and wife, parents and children, betrothed lovers, friends, sisters, and old acquaintances. Hampers of game are sent,

from country relatives, to cousins in the city. The poorest indulge, on Christmas day, in a good dinner. Hilarity everywhere prevails.

On this side of the Atlantic, Christmas is less universally observed: indeed, until within a few years, it was hardly kept at all in New England, except by the members of the Episcopal church; and even yet, over large portions of that intelligent section, it is regarded as of secondary importance to Thanksgiving Day. But in the middle states it has always been the chief festival of the year. In Virginia, where so much of the old cavalier spirit survives, Christmas has been kept, from the era of the first settlement at Jamestown, with more unanimity, perhaps, than anywhere else in the United States. As we go further south, we find it the national holiday, if we may use such a phrase, for the Anglo-African races. In Charleston, it is welcomed, by the negroes, with the discharge of Chinese crackers, and all the uproar which distinguishes the Fourth of July at the North. At Havana it



becomes almost a Saturnalia, or to speak more strictly, an uproarious negro carnival.

Oh! blessings on Christmas! How the little hearts of children throb with delight, as it draws near: and how, week after week, the dear

ones ask, "Isn't Christmas 'most here?" Visions of plum-puddings, turkeys, and other delicacies, float before their imagination: they linger about the kitchen doors, all Christmas morning, if not at church; and when the pudding is triumphantly taken up, they follow it, shouting and dancing, wild with glee. Ah! our mouth fairly waters at the thought: we are a child again; we taste, in fancy, the delicious dish, than which nectar could not be more exquisite. Will we ever again enjoy anything as we enjoyed the Christmas pudding?

But the Christmas tree is the crowning joy for children. With what rapt wonder they gaze on it, when it is revealed to them for the first time in their lives, with its golden fruit, its twinkling tapers, and its loads of tempting toys! As they grow older, they begin to doubt the fable, which they have been told, perhaps, of a certain Kriss-Kringle, who brings gifts for good children and is the omnipresent architect of all Christmas trees. They understand, now, why their parents,

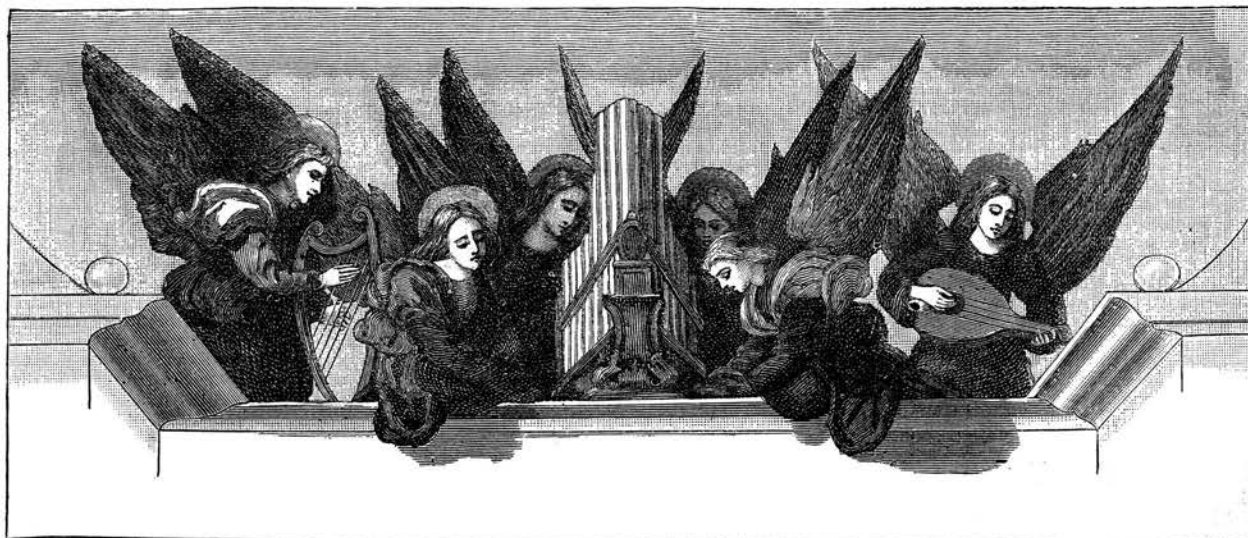
CHRISTMAS AND ITS CUSTOMS.

on Christmas Eve, are so pertinacious in shutting them out of the room where the Christmas tree is to appear, all glorious, to-morrow. They peep under doors and listen on the staircase: they even, sometimes, steal in on the busy parents: till, at last, there is nothing left for it, but to put the inquisitive, excited little rebels to bed. So to bed they go, where they lie awake, talking of what they had, on last Christmas, and of what they would like to get, on this: and so

gradually fall asleep, to dream of Kriss-Kringle, to wake at daylight, and to be filling the house, with glad uproar, an hour before their parents usually rise. But who would have a house, at Christmas, without children, even though the little mad-caps deafen the ears with their noisy gladness? Alas! alas! for the homes, where, this year, no little feet patter about overhead, on Christmas morning, as they did a twelve-month ago.



OUR CHRISTMAS TREE.



MERRY CHRISTMAS.

MERRY CHRISTMAS! Through the tumult
 Of earth's Babel manifold,
 Through its eager strife for honor,
 O'er its restless cry for gold ;
 Through the fever and the fretting,
 Through the sorrow and the sighs,
 List ! the chorus of the seraphs !
 List ! the greeting of the skies.

MERRY CHRISTMAS! Angels brought it
 From the opened door of heaven ;
 Never gift so great to mortals,
 Largess so divine was given.
 High above Judean mountains,
 Flamed the torch of Bethlehem's star !
 Patient over Syrian deserts,
 Came the wise men from afar.

MERRY CHRISTMAS! Virgin Mother,
 With the Holy on thy knee,
 Every woman, babe that beareth,
 Blesséd is, because of thee.
 Still the mother's joy is riven
 By the mystic sword of pain ;
 Still in love's supreme evangel,
 Comes the Child in peace to reign.

EVERMORE around the cradle
 Hardest hearts grow soft and mild ;
 Every human babe is dearer
 Since He lived, the undefiled.

And the GLORIA IN EXCELSIS
 Overflows our doubt and scorn,
 Brims the world's deep heart with sweetness,
 In the flush of Christmas morn.

CHILDREN'S SONG.

THE blossoms were over, oh ! long ago,
 And now it is falling, the fleecy snow ;
 It sifts o'er the branches, it powders the eaves,
 And over the meadows its mantle weaves.
 Oh the merriest, merriest time o' the year,
 Is Christmas ! and good Santa Claus is near.

HE speeds along in his reindeer sledge,
 Piled with pretty things clear to the edge ;
 Dolls from Germany, dolls from France,
 Dolls that can walk, and talk, and dance,
 Castles from Switzerland, English drums ;
 Hurrah for Santa Claus ! hither he comes.

HIS bells go jingling over the snow,
 As swiftly he rushes to and fro ;
 But only the fairies can see him pass,
 Quick as a ripple, over the grass,
 Quick as the lightning across the sky,
 He has so much to do that he *has* to fly.

AND this of Santa Claus must be told,
 He is ever so young, though so awfully old ;
 And he knows every child in the big round earth,
 Lofty its name, or lowly its birth ;
 And we think a child would be dreadfully bad,
 If Santa Claus couldn't make him glad.



"A multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, on Earth Peace, Good Will toward Men."

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.

WHO cares for nipping wind,
 Who cares for sullen cold,
 When everybody's copper
 Is sudden turned to gold?
 When crusty men grow cordial,
 And fretful women mild,
 And once more all the world is grouped
 Around a little child.

THE streets like gardens laugh,
 The windows are so gay;
 Folks carry their own bundles home,
 When to-morrow's Christmas day.

AND oh! such gems of price,
 Such silver frost of lace;
 And such a light of happiness
 On every passing face.

WHAT SHALL I GET FOR JOHN?

GIVE me your advice, my dear, it's *so* hard to choose
 for men;
 And my husband's had already paper-knife, and
 fountain pen,
 Slippers, dressing-gown and cap, yes, my picture
 in a frame,
 And, just let me whisper, dear, himself has paid
 for all the same.

I'VE never felt the pleasure that I want, when giving
 things to John,
 Because he knows just every cent I spend, for all
 that I have on;
 And then I hate to go to him for money, every
 little while—
 Indeed, it's bitterness to me. Now, Cora dear,
 you needn't smile.

BUT now I've *earned* my Christmas fund; that
 china set I painted Lou;
 Has paid me for it, and I've got a purse that is
 not tinged with rue;
 And *now* the question in my brain is, what to
 buy for darling John?
 And surely you can help me, love, your own good
 thinking-cap put on!

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

OVER the sea, there's a wonderful tree,
 We heard of it first in Germany;
 But now old England gathers its fruit,
 And here in our soil it has taken root.

IN GERMAN HOMES.

HERE is the day when we cast away
 The weight of our cumbering cares;
 And this is the sign of the Child Divine,
 Such marvelous beauty who wears.

THERE'S blowing of bugles, and beating of drums,
 There's dancing of dear little feet;
 The children are jumping, and shouting, and
 trooping,
 The children so merry and sweet.

AND there's nobody old, for the ringlets of gold
So mix with the tresses of gray,
That the grandsire forgets, as he plays with his
pets,
The years which have vanished away.

CHRISTMAS COMFORT.

LIKE to rest after toil, like to ease after labor,
Like trilling of flute, and like piping of tabor ;
Like hand-clasp of friend, and like greeting of
neighbor,
Is the day of the Child Divine.

MIDNIGHT ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

IN Albion, when the midnight falls
O'er roofs of thatch and storied halls,
The old cathedral chimes send forth
Their message, far to South and North.
And hark ! O hark !
Through the thickening gloom
How sudden the silence
Seems breaking in bloom.
There are lights on the highway,
And fires on the height,
And men go with singing
To blazon the night.
Ring, bells in the steeple,
Gleam, lamps in the spire,
And waken good people,
And build the yule fire.

ADVICE AT CHRISTMAS.

OUT of the Black Forest, there stole a wolf one day,
And he carried a pretty maiden far and far away ;
O, list, my own fair daughter, the fierce wehr-
wolf beware,
And fortify thy innocence each day with fervent
prayer.

SO to the child the mother
Still talks on Christmas night ;
And to the father listens
The son, with blushes bright ;
For simple souls and loving
Abide anear the wold,
And worship God with honest faith,
As in the days of old.

IN HOLLAND:

COME hither, Marie, let me string thy cap
With the shining coins I have in my lap ;
For the boats went out in the summer time,
And the sound of the oars was smooth as rhyme.
Come hither, and let thy mother pray
Christ bless her child on Christmas Day.

HANGING UP THE STOCKINGS.

HANG the stockings in the corner !
Santa Claus will come to-night ;
Baby's little sock, and brother's,
Though he's grown to manly height.
And the children in between—
Pretty Gertrude's, sweet sixteen,
Maud's, and Reginald's, and Bess's,
Little Tom's, who never guesses
Anything about the day,
But that it is jolly. Say,
What shall fill these dainty hose ?
Bulging them from knee to toes ;
Candies, sashes, toys, and furs,
Books and puzzles, pictures bright,
Just what each had wanted ; hers
And his too, and all is right.
Somehow, in the wildest weather,
Santa Claus and love together,
Fill the happy house with light.

HANG the stocking in the corner ?
Here, where want is gaunt and grim ?
Where the wolf is ever stalking,
In the shadows fierce and dim,
Where the fire is failing, dying,
Where the cold must freeze the blood,
Where the feeble faith grows feebler,
Wondering if God is good ?
Shall they hang the stocking here ?
What have they of mirth and cheer,
In this ending of the year ?

YES, wan mother, hang the stocking,
Bid the children go to sleep ;
For the Christmas angels see you
When you watch, and when you weep.
And already up the stairway
Climbs a messenger, to bring
Christmas gifts to those who need them,
Till the weary heart shall sing.
Ah ! let none forget the power
Given by God at Christmas hour :
Love must not despise its dower.

MERRY CHRISTMAS.

MERRY CHRISTMAS ! Merry Christmas !
Deep and solemn, far and wide ;
Let the old-time music thrill us,
Let it still our clamorous pride.
Peace on earth ! Let raging passion
And its folly be subdued,
While we chant, in thankful fashion,
Praise the Lord, for He is good.

WINTER.



C.P. NICHOLES

Leisure Hour 1860

HOW I SPENT CHRISTMAS IN THE FATHERLAND.



"AH, MY CHILDREN, HERE IS WORK FOR ALL."

the country being described, as if we had not all been saturated with guide-books." Bearing these words in mind, I will not now "describe" the old German town where I passed the Christmas of 1882, but will only say that I was spending the winter in a German family, consisting of the Herr Vater, the Frau Mutter, Fräulein, her sister, little Lenchen, the eight-year-old daughter, and last, but by no means least, the dear old Herr Grosspapa. How well I remember the first night in my new quarters! A tremendous gale was blowing, but, tired out with the two days' journey, my head had literally no sooner touched the pillow than I was asleep. In the "dead waste and middle of the night" I was suddenly and rudely waked by the sound of glass smashing and crashing all around me. Terrified, and firmly convinced that thieves were breaking into the house, if not actually into my room, I leapt up, prepared to alarm the family. But all was now again still, and nothing to be either seen or heard until my door was opened, and Fräulein, who had been also awakened, made her appearance, and explained matters. It seems that on account of the violent storms and excessive cold the windows are all made double, and the noise I had heard was caused by my outer window being blown entirely away, and falling into the street below. "But it is nothing," concluded Fräulein cheerfully, as, smiling benevolently, she once more left my room. I returned to bed, but for a long time lay awake listening to the raging of the wind, and hearing at intervals the crashing of glass, now near, now far along the street, and thinking what a curious country it must be where the falling out of windows was looked upon so calmly as an everyday, or rather nightly, occurrence.

On the Sunday before Christmas Day, as we came home from service in the cathedral, I was surprised to find all the shops open, and

the first time we went abroad, a wise old lady gave us the following piece of advice: "My dears, I shall always like to hear from you, and you must tell me all you are *doing*, but please remember my objection to the face of

the streets thronged with people laden with baskets and bags. It is the custom for the shops to be open on the two Sundays before Christmas, so that people who cannot get out during the week may do their Christmas shopping.

Christmas in Germany is a very serious business indeed, and everybody, young and old, is in an immense state of excitement about it for weeks beforehand. Lenchen could talk of nothing but what the "Christ-child" would bring her on Christmas Eve; and even the old Herr Grosspapa, when he went out in the afternoon to drink his coffee and read his paper, would come in with his pockets full of contributions for the Christmas-tree.

One evening, about a week before Christmas, we were all called from our usual occupations by the Herr Grosspapa to "come and help to prepare for the 'Christbaum'" (Christmas-tree). There he sat at the table, his long silver hair peeping out from under his velvet skull-cap, as, with a triumphant smile on his kind old face, he pointed proudly to the well-filled table before him, exclaiming, "Ah, my children! here is work for all." And work indeed there was. There were walnuts and Brazil nuts to be covered with gold and silver paper, chocolate and cakes to be cut up into all imaginable shapes and wrapped in like manner in coloured paper, besides oranges, apples, and sweets of various and poisonous-looking colours, which were to be tied up with parti-coloured ribbons for



"THE TREE ARRIVED"

suspending to the tree. These preparations alone occupied us for three evenings, as nothing could be begun until little Lenchen was disposed of for the night; and as the whole party retired to bed at ten o'clock at latest, our time was very limited. The German children believe that if they are good the "Christ-child" will bring them presents, which they will find under the tree. Our custom of hanging up the stockings for Santa Claus to fill seemed quite a new idea to them, but one to which Lenchen took very kindly.

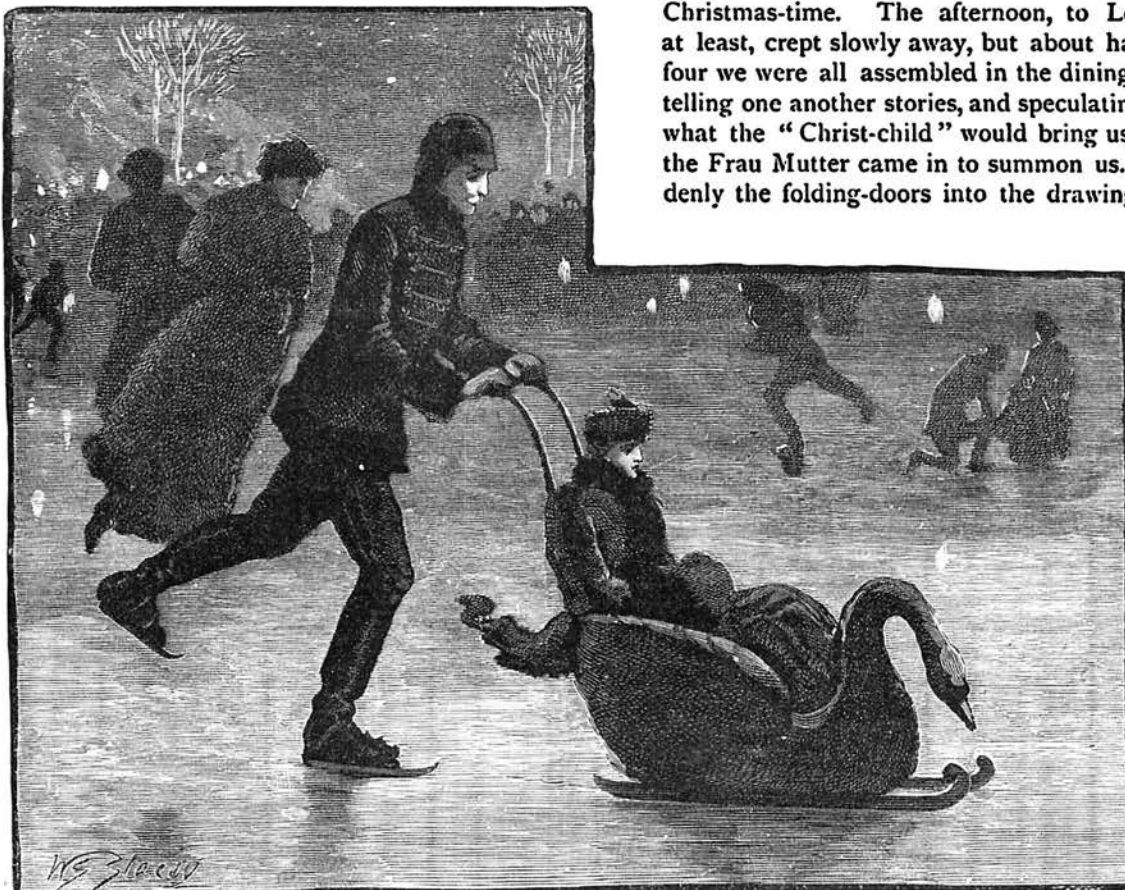
On the morning of the 23rd the tree arrived. It was bought by the Herr Vater at the "Jahr Markt," or great fair, which is held in the market-place at Christmas-time, and where any conceivable thing, from wearing apparel and furniture to ginger-bread and Christmas-trees, can be bought. From that moment every one appeared to be in a state of the wildest excitement and bustle. Frau Mutter was very busy in the kitchen, superintending the making of mysterious and unknown dishes, and the Herr Grosspapa and the Herr Vater set to work at once fixing all the candles and fruit on the tree. I offered my services, which were not accepted, as it is against all the rules and regulations for the "children" of the family to assist in the actual decoration of the tree itself, and from the moment of my arrival the Herr Grosspapa had numbered me among his "Kinder." So I retired to tie up and ticket, according to Fräulein's instructions, the various presents I had secretly prepared for

the family. This done, they were all handed over to the Frau Mutter, to be seen no more until the long-wished for Christmas Eve arrived.

That evening a large skating party was given a short way out of the town, to which we were all invited. Well wrapped up in furs, we set forth about seven o'clock in a sleigh, and half an hour's swift gliding over the snow brought us within view of the lake. It is difficult to imagine what a bright, animated, un-English picture met our eyes. I felt for the first moment as though I must be dreaming—and dreaming of Russia. The whole lake was illuminated with numberless lanterns of all shapes and sizes; the white trees stood out, like giant spectres, against the starry sky, and as far as we could see stretched that "snowy coverlet" which the German poet says the "liebe Gott" lays over the sleeping earth. We were taken entirely round the lake in small, swan-shaped sleighs, which the skaters pushed before them, or tempted to the refreshment tent hard by, where hot coffee, spiced drinks, and cakes took the place of ices and champagne.

The 24th was a lovely bright day, and we were out all the morning skating in the park, as the "Beschereung," or the distribution of the presents, did not take place until after dark. Almost every one we met on our way home was laden with a Christmas-tree; sometimes they were quite little ones, not much bigger than dwarf azaleas, and worth about fourpence or fivepence.

Every one, however poor, makes an effort to have a little household festival and a tree at Christmas-time. The afternoon, to Lenchen at least, crept slowly away, but about half-past four we were all assembled in the dining-room, telling one another stories, and speculating as to what the "Christ-child" would bring us, when the Frau Mutter came in to summon us. Suddenly the folding-doors into the drawing-room



"WE WERE TAKEN ENTIRELY ROUND THE LAKE IN SMALL, SWAN-SHAPED SLEIGHS."

were thrown back—the Herr Grosspapa played a brilliant march on the piano, and we were all ushered in. The “tree” stood in the middle of the room, all ablaze with lights, and sparkling with gold and silver. Beneath it and dotted about the room were many little tables covered with white cloths, and on these the presents were laid out. Each person had his or her own little table, and a prettier sight than this “Bescherung” I have seldom seen. Little Lenchen rushed about, showing us all her treasures, especially a large doll which Fräulein had dressed for her. Every one received a present from every one else, besides three large pieces of the “Pfeffer Kuchen,” or gingerbread, which is almost universally eaten in Germany at Christmas-time. The servants had their tables also filled with presents, for the most part of a more useful kind, but with a liberal supply of gingerbread.

When the noise had a little subsided, we all settled down to “coffee and cakes,” and then, too, we had an opportunity to examine the contents of each other’s tables, to guess from whom the various presents came, and to return thanks accordingly. At supper appeared sundry awful compounds, called “Weihnachtessen”—the Christmas dishes over which the Frau Mutter had been so busy for so long. She informed me that they were “national” dishes, and thinking it my duty to share thoroughly in the German Christmas, I conscientiously tried them all, though in much fear and trembling. Herring is the chief ingredient in these “national” dishes—*herring*, together with *apples* and *oil*. I felt it best not to inquire what else might be there, and breathed an inward thanksgiving that “Christmas comes but once a year.” After supper we had music and merry-making till about half-past ten, at which hour little Lenchen was discovered sound asleep on a sofa, surrounded by her presents, and cuddling the new doll. She was waked to join in singing the Christmas hymn, “Stille Nacht” (“Still is the Night”), after which all trooped off to bed. On my way to my room I was waylaid by Lenchen, who begged me to come in when she was in bed, and show her “how Santa Claus liked the stocking to be put.” I made her hang it on to the bed-post, and left her dreadfully afraid that Santa Claus “might have too much to do in England to make time to come to her.” When she was asleep I filled the stocking with the sort of things we liked so much to find in ours when we were children, not forgetting a little purse with twenty-five pfennige in it. I did not, of course, see the fun of the stocking’s being emptied, but was told next day by the Frau Mutter that at four in the morning she had been aroused by loud shrieks, and hurrying to see what was the matter, had found that all the noise came from Lenchen, who had waked and found her well-filled stocking, and was shrieking with delight and surprise. The best of it all was that she firmly believed it was Santa Claus who had brought the treasures to her, and that it was I who had told him to come. This I discovered as she



“SHOW HER HOW SANTA CLAUS LIKED THE STOCKING TO BE PUT.”

proceeded to exhibit to me all my little gifts, with the greatest and most unsuspecting pleasure.

On Christmas morning, after a hasty cup of tea and a biscuit, we started off, a large party, to the nine o'clock Christmas service in the Lutheran Church, where some of Bach's music was to be played. I felt very strange and not a little homesick on this, my first Christmas Day away from home and England, and my thoughts were at first far from the great German building, now filled almost to overflowing. Two gigantic Christmas-trees, filled with candles, stood one on each side of the Communion table, and almost hid the portraits of Luther and Melancthon. The exquisite Bach music did much to comfort and console me, and then the familiar Gospel and Epistle were read, and a hymn was sung, after which the address was given. The length of that address was something appalling—the author of the *Mikado* would have sympathised with us, for our “mystical German” seemed as if he really would go the length of preaching from “ten till four.” The want of any proper breakfast, and our long trudge through the snow in the cold and early morning, made all this the more trying.

Owing to severe snow-storms, the English post had been delayed, and my disappointment was keen when I found I could have no Christmas greeting from home that day; but every one was so kind and anxious to make me happy, that I hid my depression, and joined a sleighing party into the country. In the evening, as we were all sitting at supper, a loud ring was heard at the front door, and a minute afterwards Augusta (the maid), entering the room, handed me—a telegram—a telegram from home wishing me “A Merry Christmas.” Words could not express how pleased I was—the whole world seemed changed to me, for really Christmas so far from home *does* feel lonely, and

HARD FARE.

SUCH a winter as was that of 1880-81—deep snows and zero weather for nearly three months—proves especially trying to the wild creatures that attempt to face it. The supply of fat (or fuel) with which their bodies become stored in the fall is rapidly exhausted by the severe and uninterrupted cold, and the sources from which fresh supplies are usually obtained are all but wiped out. Even the fox was very hard pressed and reduced to the unusual straits of eating frozen apples; the pressure of hunger must be great, indeed, to compel Reynard to take up with such a diet. A dog will eat corn, but he cannot digest it, and I doubt if the fox extracted anything more than the cider from the frozen and thawed apples. They perhaps served to amuse and occupy his stomach for the time. The crows appeared to have little else than frozen apples for many weeks; they hung about the orchards as a last resort, and, after scouring the desolate landscape over, would return to their cider with resignation, but not with cheerful alacrity. They grew very bold at times, and ventured quite under my porch, and filched the bones that Lark, the dog, had left. I put out some corn on the wall near by, and discovered that crows will not eat corn in the winter, except as they can break up the kernels. It is too hard for their gizzards to grind. The difficulty, during such a season, of coming at the soil and obtaining gravel-stones, which, in such cases, are really the mill-stones, may also have something to do with it. Corn that has been planted and has sprouted, crows will swallow readily enough, because it is then soft, and is easily ground. My impression has always been that in spring and summer they will also pick up any chance kernels the planters may have dropped. But, as I observed them the past winter, they always held the kernel under one foot upon the wall, and picked it to pieces before devouring it. This is the manner of the jays also. The jays, perhaps, had a tougher time during the winter than the crows, because they do not eat fish or flesh, but depend mainly upon nuts. A troop of them came eagerly to my ash-heap one morning, which had just been uncovered by the thaw, but they found little except cinders for their gizzards, which, maybe, was what they wanted. They had foraged nearly all winter upon my neighbor's corn-crib, and probably their mill-stones were dull and needed re-

placing. They reached the corn through the opening between the slats, and were the envy of the crows, who watched them from the near trees, but dared not venture up.

The general belief among country-people that the jay hoards up nuts for winter use has probably some foundation in fact, though one is at a loss to know where he could place his stores so that they would not be pilfered by the mice and the squirrels. An old hunter told me he had seen jays secreting beech-nuts in a knot-hole in a tree. Probably a red squirrel saw them too, and laughed behind his tail. One day, in October, two friends of mine, out hunting, saw a blue jay carrying off chestnuts to a spruce swamp. He came and went with great secrecy and dispatch. He had several hundred yards to fly each way, but occupied only a few minutes each trip. The hunters lay in wait to shoot him, but so quickly would he seize his chestnut and be off, that he made more than a dozen trips before they killed him. It is a great pity they did not follow him to the swamp and discover where he deposited his booty, and how much he had accumulated.

A lady writing to me from Iowa, says: "I must tell you what I saw a blue jay do last winter. Flying down to the ground in front of the house, he put something in the dead grass, drawing the grass over it, first on one side, then on the other, tramped it down just exactly as a squirrel would, then walked around the spot, examining it to see if it was satisfactory. After he had flown away, I went out to see what he had hidden; it was a nicely shucked peanut that he had laid up for a time of scarcity."

It would seem, therefore, that the jay has the habit of all the crow-tribe, of carrying off and secreting any surplus food it may chance to have, and it is not improbable that these hoardings sometimes help it over the period of winter scarcity.

A bevy of quail in my vicinity got through the winter by feeding upon the little black beans contained in the pods of the common locust. For many weeks their diet must have been almost entirely leguminous. The surface snow in the locust-grove which they frequented was crossed in every direction with their fine tracks, like a chain-stitch upon muslin, showing where they went from pod to pod and extracted the contents. Where quite a large branch, filled with pods, lay upon the snow, it

looked as if the whole flock had dined or breakfasted off it. The wind seemed to shake down the pods about as fast as they were needed. When a fresh fall of snow had blotted out everything, it was not many hours before the wind had placed upon the cloth another course; but it was always the same old course—beans, beans. What would the birds and the fowls do during such winters, if the trees and the shrubs and plants all dropped their fruit and their seeds in the fall, as they do their leaves? They would nearly all perish. The apples that cling to the trees, the pods that hang to the lowest branches, and the seeds that the various weeds and grasses hold above the deepest snows, alone make it possible for many birds to pass the winter among us. The red squirrel, too, what would he do? He lays up no stores like the provident chipmunk, but scours about for food in all weathers, feeding upon the seeds in the cones of the hemlock that still cling to the tree, upon sumac-bobs, and the seeds of frozen apples. I have seen the ground, under a wild apple-tree that stood near the woods, completely covered with the "chonkings" of the frozen apples, the work of the squirrels in getting at the seeds; not an apple had been left, and, apparently, not a seed had been lost. But the squirrels in this particular locality evidently got pretty hard up before spring, for they developed a new source of food-supply. A young bushy-topped sugar-maple, about forty feet high, standing beside a stone fence near the woods, was attacked, and more than half denuded of its bark. The object of the squirrels seemed to be to get at the soft, white, mucilaginous substance (cambium layer) between the bark and the wood. The ground was covered with fragments of the bark, and the white, naked stems and branches had been scraped by fine teeth. When the sap starts in the early spring, the squirrels add this to their scanty supplies. They perforate the bark of the branches of the maples with their chisel-like teeth, and suck the sweet liquid as it slowly oozes out. It is not much as food, but evidently it helps.

I have said the red squirrel does not lay by a store of food for winter use, like the chipmunk and wood-mice; yet in the fall he sometimes hoards in a tentative, temporary kind of way. I have seen his savings—butternuts and black walnuts—stuck here and there in saplings and trees, near his nest; sometimes carefully inserted in the upright fork of a limb, or twig. One day, late in November, I counted a dozen or more black walnuts put away in this manner in a little grove of locusts, chestnuts, and maples, by the road-side, and could but smile at the wise

forethought of the rascally squirrel. His supplies were probably safer that way than if more elaborately hidden. They were well distributed; his eggs were not all in one basket, and he could go away from home without any fear that his store-house would be broken into in his absence. The next week, when I passed that way, the nuts were all gone but two. I saw the squirrel that doubtless laid claim to them, on each occasion.

There is one thing the red squirrel knows unerringly that I do not (there are probably several other things), that is, on which side of the butternut the meat lies. He always gnaws through the shell so as to strike the kernel broadside and thus easily extract it, while to my eyes there is no external mark or indication, in the form or appearance of the nut, as there is in the hickory-nut, by which I can tell whether the edge or the side of the meat is toward me. But, examine any number of nuts that the squirrels have rifled, and you will find they always drill through the shell at the one spot where the meat will be most exposed. It stands them in hand to know, and they do know. Doubtless, if butternuts were a main source of my food, and I were compelled to gnaw into them, I should learn, too, on which side my bread was buttered.

A hard winter affects the chipmunks very little; they are snug and warm in their burrows in the ground and under the rocks, with a bountiful store of nuts or grain. I have heard of nearly a half-bushel of chestnuts being taken from a single den. They usually hole in November, and do not come out again till March or April, unless the winter is very open and mild.

The woodpeckers and chickadees, doubtless, find food as plentiful during severe winters as during more open ones, because they confine their search almost entirely to the trunks and branches of trees, where the latter pick up the eggs of insects and various microscopic tidbits, and where the former find their accustomed fare of eggs and larvae also. An enamel of ice upon the trees alone puts an embargo upon their supplies. At such seasons the ruffed grouse "buds" or goes hungry; while the snow-birds, snow-bunting, Canada sparrows, goldfinches, shore-larks, and red-polls are dependent upon the weeds and grasses that rise above the snow, and upon the litter of the hay-stack and barn-yard. I have never seen the shore-lark in my locality, and only one season the red-poll; but the former bird has been common the past winter in other parts of New York State. Neither do the deep snows and the severe cold materially affect the supplies of the rabbit. The deeper

the snow the nearer he is brought to the tops of the tender bushes and shoots. I see in my walks where he has cropped the tops of the small, bushy, soft maples, cutting them slantingly as you would do with a knife, and quite as smoothly. Indeed, the mark was so like that of a knife that, notwithstanding the tracks, it was only after the closest scrutiny that I was convinced it was the sharp, chisel-like teeth of the rabbit. He leaves no chips, and apparently makes clean work of every twig he cuts off.

The wild or native mice usually lay up stores in the fall, in the shape of various nuts, grain, and seeds, and the frost and the snow-blockade seem to interfere very little with their enjoyment of life. One may see their tracks everywhere in the woods and fields, and by the road-side. Why they gad about so much, having a full larder and a warm nest at home, is a mystery. Doubtless the motive is sociability and the delights of travel. The deer-mouse is much more common along the fences and in the woods than one would suspect. One winter day I set a mouse-trap—the kind known as the delusion trap—beneath some ledges in the edge of the woods, to determine what species of mouse was most active at this season. The snow fell so deeply that I did not visit my trap for two or three weeks. When I did so, it was literally packed full of deer-mice. There were seven in all, and not room for another. Our woods are full of these little creatures, and they appear to have a happy, social time of it, even in the severest winters. Their little tunnels under the snow and their hurried strides upon its surface may be noted everywhere. They link tree and stump, or rock and tree, by their pretty trails. They are not traveling in quest of food,—for they generally have a well-filled granary or nuttery at home,—but evidently for adventure and to hear the news. They know that foxes and owls are about, and they keep pretty close to cover. When they cross an exposed place, they do it hurriedly.

Such a winter as that of 1880-81 probably destroys a great many of our half-migratory birds. The mortality appears to be the greatest in the Border States, where so many species, like the sparrows, robins, blue-birds, meadow-larks, kinglet, etc., usually pass the cold season. A great many birds are said to have

died in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including game-birds. A man in Chester County saw a fox digging in the snow; on examining the spot, he found half a dozen quails frozen to death. Game-birds and nearly all other birds will stand the severest weather if food is plenty; but to hunger and cold both the hardiest species may succumb.

Meadow-larks often pass the winter as far north as Pennsylvania. A man residing in that State relates how, in the height of the severest cold, three half-famished larks came to his door in quest of food. He removed the snow from a small space, and spread the poor birds a lunch of various grains and seeds. They ate heartily and returned again the next day, and the next, each time bringing one or more drooping and half-starved companions with them, till there was quite a flock of them. Their deportment changed, their forms became erect and glossy, and the feeble mendicants became strong and vivacious birds again. These larks fell in good hands, but I am persuaded that this species suffered more than any other of our birds the past winter. In the spring they were unusually late in making their appearance,—the first one noted by me on the 9th of April,—and they were scarce in my locality during the whole season.

Birds not of a feather flock together in winter. Hard times or a common misfortune makes all the world akin. A Noah's ark with antagonistic species living in harmony is not an improbable circumstance in such a rain. In severe weather, when the snow lies deep on the ground, I frequently see a loose, heterogeneous troop of birds pass my door, engaged in the common search for food; snow-birds, Canada sparrows, and goldfinches, on the ground, and kinglets and nut-hatches in the tree above,—all drifting slowly in the same direction,—the snow-birds and sparrows closely associated, but the goldfinches rather clannish and exclusive, while the kinglets and nut-hatches keep still more aloof. These birds are probably not drawn, even thus loosely together, by any social instincts, but by a common want; all were hungry, and the activity of one species attracted and drew after it another and another. "I will look that way too," the kinglet and creeper probably said, when they saw the other birds busy and heard their merry voices.

John Burroughs.

Christmas Day.

(Uncle Seth *loquitur*.)

A GOOD old-fashioned Chris'mas, with the logs upon the hearth,
The table filled with feasters, an' the room a-roar 'ith mirth,
With the stockin's crammed to bu'stin', an' the medders piled 'ith snow —
A good *old-fashioned* Chris'mas like we had so long ago!

Now *that's* the thing I 'd like to see ag'in afore I die,
But Chris'mas in the city here — it's different, oh my!
With the crowded hustle-bustle of the slushy, noisy street,
An' the scowl upon the faces of the strangers that you meet.

Oh, there 's *buyin'*, plenty of it, of a lot o' gorgeous toys;
An' it takes a mint o' money to please modern girls and boys.
Why, I mind the time a jack-knife an' a toffy-lump for *me*
Made my little heart an' stockin' jus' chock-full o' Chris'mas glee.

An' there 's feastin'. Think o' feedin' with these stuck-up city folk!
Why, ye have to speak in whispers, an' ye dar's n't crack a joke.
Then remember how the tables looked all crowded with your *kin*,
When you could n't hear a whistle blow across the merry din!

You see I 'm so old-fashioned-like I don't care much for style,
An' to eat your Chris'mas banquets here I would n't go a mile;
I 'd rather have, like Solomon, a good yarb-dinner set
With *real* old friends than turkle soup with all the nobs you 'd get.

There 's my next-door neighbor Gurley — fancy how his brows 'u'd lift
If I 'd holler, "Merry Chris'mas! Caught, old fellow, Chris'mas gift!"
Lordy-Lord, I 'd like to try it! Guess he'd nearly have a fit.
Hang this city stiffness, anyways, I can't get used to it.

Then your heart it kept a-swellin' till it nearly bu'st your side,
An' by night your jaws were achin' with your smile four inches wide,
An' your enemy, the wo'st one, you 'd just grab his hand, an' say:
"Mebbe *both* of us was wrong, John. Come, let's shake. It's Chris'mas Day!"

Mighty little Chris'mas spirit seems to dwell 'tween city walls,
Where each snowflake brings a soot-flake for a brother as it falls;
Mighty little Chris'mas spirit! An' I 'm pinin', don't you know,
For a good *old-fashioned* Chris'mas like we had so long ago.

Alice Williams Brotherton.



ON THE ICE.

SKATING FOR LADIES.

BY J. M. L.

WHY LADIES OUGHT TO SKATE, AND WHY THEY DO NOT.

Learn to skate, and the ice will give you a graceful, sweet, and poetic motion.—*Emerson.*

I LEARNED to skate very early ; I cannot now remember my precise age, but I know that about the time I mastered the "spread-eagle," and the "outside," my Latin grammar was the most serious difficulty of my existence, and I used to wish I could skate through it. Since that time—it is several years ago—I have seldom failed to use my skates on at least one day during each sufficiently severe frost to make sound ice. To my skates I am indebted for many a day's enjoyment—days that might, but for them, have been dull and uninteresting. But this is the least of the advantages I have derived from them ; confidence and strength are among the others. Emerson says, continuing the passage from which I have quoted above—"The cold will brace your limbs and brain to genius, and make you foremost men of time." A "foremost" man himself, and a great lover of skating and all motions and exercises that give grace and strength, he sets upon skating its real value—a very high one. I remember a good doctor saying—"Cricket-balls and skipping-ropes, skates and hoops, are the best physicians in the world if used with moderation, and early enough." He was right. If the people of a country are effeminate, it arises from the luxuries and restraints that are practised, and it is only necessary to extend the circle of outdoor exercises to counterbalance these. This brings me to the consideration of my subject—"Skating for Ladies."

Personally speaking, I have always regretted that more ladies do not skate, and considered that ladies ought to learn, because there are really so many reasons why ladies should skate, that I cannot decide which is the most important and entitled to the place of honor ; let me therefore select the one which will admit of no refutation, and is most agreeable—let me say because it is a pastime in which they would greatly excel. I am not quite sure that my regret has always been of the most disinterested kind. In cold Christmas weather, when a merry party was gathered in my father's house, it would have been much pleasanter not to have had to leave the young ladies at home

while we went to the pool. Does the dear reader say, "Then why go at all?" I answer, "because the opportunities for skating are few and precious." How had the ladies used to beguile those hours that were so merry for us? Let me draw you two pictures.

It is a bright, keen winter morning. Those of us addicted to the wholesome cold-water bath have to break the ice in our bath-tubs. Little Charlie has to breathe on the window-pane a long time before he can disperse the pictures of Arcadian dells and rough mountain passes which the fairy Frost has traced thereon in the silent night ; and almost before he has looked out the business of a new picture is commenced. The postman brings up the letter and tells us, "Yes, the lads are on the pool, and it would bear a wagon loaded with hay, or an army." The important business of breakfast is speedily dispatched. Skates are rubbed, and, gimlet in pocket, off we go, with—forgive us ladies—an impatient answer to your questions: "Is it quite safe? and how long will you stay?" "Stay? why, till dark, if the ice is good, of course."

After the warm breakfast-room the air is keen and sharp ; but it has a delicious freshness all its own, a briskness unknown to other mornings, that imparts itself to us as we anticipate the delights of a day on the ice. The trees are all draped with lace, to which the most exquisite manufactures of Valenciennes or Nottingham are nothing. The fieldfares and blackbirds are congregated in them, chattering as they make a scanty breakfast on the few frozen hips and haws that remain. The larks start up in a huge flock from the stubble, and utter their winter notes over our heads ; we remark that they have probably had no breakfast, the frost has robbed them of their food ; but then it has made the pool bear. This is to us sufficient, and so we pass on, feeling—if we are not in too great a hurry to reach the pool to feel—that, after all, it is Nature's doing, and not ours, if they are robbed of their breakfast.

At the pool we find the lads from the village, and not a few girls, too, sliding bravely up and down the smooth surface, and greatly exhilarated by the motion. Our skates are soon on, and ten minutes after we are "all a-glow," and in the enjoyment of the most delicious motion

SAFETY SKATING FRAME.

FOR BEGINNERS.



Our readers can see the proportions in the cut. The bottom of the runners being slightly curved, the frame is easily turned in any direction. The ends of the runners being turned up, enables the frame to pass over any reasonable impediment, thus saving it from stopping, and being thrown over forwards; the long tails would not allow it to be pulled over backwards. The skater's hands being placed on the hand rail, *between its supports*, prevents her from upsetting the frame sideways.

I know. A graceful succession of circles or semi-circles, made with scarcely an effort, to which all the waltzes in the world are "as moonlight unto sunlight." The morning wears on, in the happiest way, and the delicious movements set every generous and pleasurable emotion vibrating.

Meanwhile, how does the morning wear with the ladies whom we left at the breakfast-table? They cannot ride; it would be cruel to the "poor feet" of the horses, to say nothing of the danger of slippery roads. They read and write letters, they gather around the fire and indulge in "small talk"—I beg pardon—or they knit, crochet, or embroider. I am not going to say one word against these pretty occupations. (I may remark, *en passant*, that therein ladies have a great advantage, being able to make nimble and good use of their fingers while carrying on the most animated conversation, whereas the most gentleman can, or, at least, the most they *do do*, under similar circumstances, is to smoke.) But are these the best occupations ladies can have on bright winter mornings? All days and nights answer for the purpose of embroidering; how very few afford an opportunity for skating! Do the fingers never grow tired, and is not the warmth of exercise out in the bracing air more pleasant than the artificial heat of burning coals? Ladies, try it.

I am drawing these pictures from a real experience; for me, the ladies, and the pool, and the frosty mornings to which I have referred, quite incidentally, and by way of illustration, have a real and tangible existence, and some of those ladies are now my happiest skating companions, and look, on a frosty winter evening, when the sun is setting, up to the church vane with as much interest as I do, to see if the wind is still easterly, and the frost likely to make sound ice.

It seldom happened that after luncheon they did not pay the pool a visit, and, thoughtful and charitable as ever, bring some pretty bags well stored with sandwiches. It was then that I felt most keenly what a great loss of pleasure ladies suffered by not skating. To me the cold air was exhilarating, delightful; as they stood upon the banks, it was to them painful, and they hurried back to the fireside for the remainder of the bright day. Perhaps an old arm-chair with runners—say a superannuated rocking-chair from the nursery—was produced, and they, in turn, enjoyed being pushed before me round the pool. Still, that was not self-motion, not the airy, joyous, graceful exercise that dispersed the blood rapidly over my frame.

It was after such a visit that I determined to teach my sisters to skate. They tell me now that making a figure of 8 is the pleasantest occupation and the most enjoyable amusement that the whole year brings them. Clara says: "Walking is like prose, skating is like poetry," and really on the ice one does seem to move in rhythmical numbers. I never had a day's skating that I did not feel benefited mentally as much as physically, and, I believe, morally, too, for the action produces vigorous health, and a new, strong current of generous emotions.

There is no danger in skating, always providing that due precaution is taken relative to the soundness of the ice. Of the difficulties of learning, which by the way are always greatly exaggerated, I shall have more to say anon. The only real ones are the first step—perhaps I ought to say stroke—and the access to a place suitable for learning. I think I shall be able to show that neither of these are obstacles of sufficient importance to deprive ladies of what I am sure they would find as delightful an amusement as dancing, with this advantage, that the one would add to their strength and health as much as the other, by the late hours at which it is practised, impairs it. If I can do this, and can induce ladies generally to follow the excellent example set by a few of their number, I am confident they will be thankful for the addition to their somewhat limited number of amusements, of one of the purest and best sports practised by men. Experience has proved, in cases where ladies have adopted skating, that in it, as in dancing, they greatly excel, and are, if less adventurous than their brothers, far more graceful. But it is not only as an amusement that skating would benefit them, but as a wholesome and highly profitable exercise, which offers itself at a time when others cannot be had, and which will develop their strength and powers of endurance.

Ladies, then, ought to skate. Let me now proceed to consider why they do not.

I shall first of all deal with the weakest objection raised against it; but it is one, though puerile and paltry, which I feel to be very general. Paterfamilias objects to his daughter's skating, because he thinks it is unfeminine. This is one of those deplorable notions with regard to "proprieties," and what women may and may not do—

That seem to keep her up, but drag her down.

Is it unfeminine for ladies to be healthy, good walkers, with an upright gait, and a frame that is physically able to endure as much watching

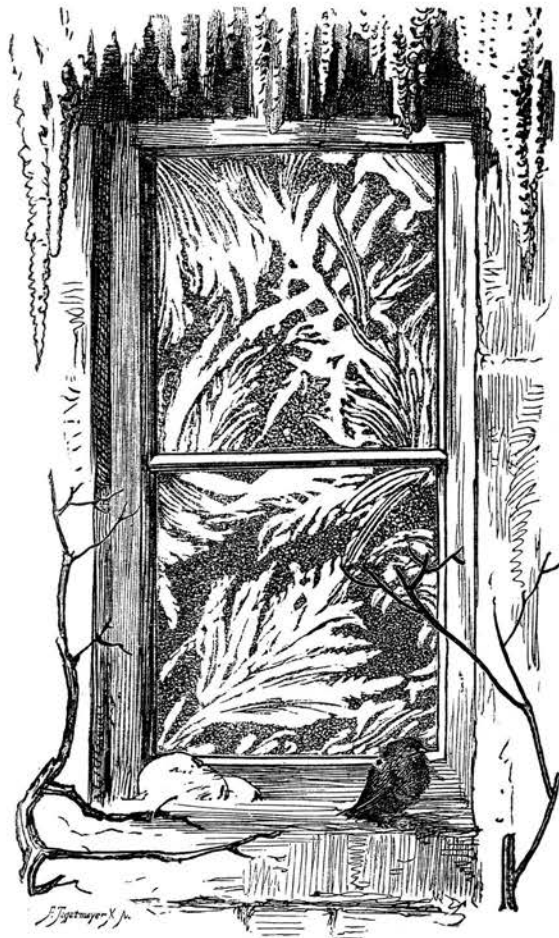
and working, if need be, as they are willing to undergo? Nothing I know is more conducive to these qualities than skating. Yet, say how many fathers, it is "unladylike," and the very same men do not object to their daughters dancing till long after midnight. When the skipping-rope has become too childish and hoop-bowling has lost its charm, there ought to be some substitute found that will do their work, and for the winter days a pair of skates offers the very best.

The real difficulties are the access to a sufficiently private place for learning, and the friendly initiation. It is, for obvious reasons, very desirable that a lady's first day on the ice should be only in the company of some few friends upon a pond not frequented by others. To ladies residing in provincial towns and villages, this difficulty is but slight. Half an hour's walk, at most, will bring them to some suitable place—some little pool (a large one is not required) where they may practise. The railways, too, offer ladies residing in the metropolis itself almost as great facilities. A day, aye, even the first day upon the ice will be delightful; and the second and third days will bring with them a degree of proficiency that will afford a new and pure enjoyment, and the cold weather will have a charm it has never had before. An occasional fall during the early days—and by no means a violent one—is the very worst that is to be anticipated by a lady who has a brother or friend, used to the ice, to accompany her. I have known ladies so attended learn without falling at all, and make fine, dashing figure-skaters in an almost incredibly short space of time. *Confidence* is the most essential quality; and here is another reason why the first attempts should not be made on crowded ponds, for it is impossible, where skaters are darting about, and many people are looking on, that any one should have confidence unless it has been acquired by experience. I have known strong, sturdy schoolboys so talked to about the difficulties of skating, and the falls they would have to undergo, that they have been timorous on the ice for days, and consequently tumbled about in every direction. This ought not to be. Another mistake is that it needs strong ankles. That is all nonsense; there is more stress upon the ankle in ten minutes' dancing than in an hour's skating.

Another reason why skating is not general among women is a natural objection each one feels towards taking the first step. That is, the first step among her own circle of friends.

A few, a very few, ladies do skate, and have done so now for many years. I have said that the pool to which I have referred has a real existence. It was there I first saw ladies skate, and they were, without exception, the best skaters I ever saw.

I would earnestly exhort fathers to buy their daughters each a pair of skates, and their brothers to teach them how to use them, with the full assurance that they will ever after be their pleasantest skating companions, their *vis-a-vis* in many an eight. It is a great folly, to say nothing of the positive wrong, to narrow the straitened limit of out-door amusements in which ladies are privileged to indulge. Here is one, offering a graceful occupation for days that are spent by them at the fireside, offering itself at a time when riding is generally impracticable, and walking insufficient for warmth; embrace it, and the interest of the scenes of our ponds and rivers during the frosts will be greatly increased, and skating will have a greater attraction, and be productive of more good than it ever has been in England.



IN A GUARD'S VAN : A CHRISTMAS SKETCH.



THOSE who deem that railways have nothing of romance about them cannot have had much experience of the work of a guard thereon, nor can they have any idea of the suggestiveness of the contents of a guard's van in and just before *the* holiday week of the year. That vehicle

is usually varied in its contents, but before Christmas the variety becomes bewildering. In ordinary weeks heavy articles of luggage alternate with the parcels of daily newspapers, and the occasional hamper of the Parcels Post is flanked by a couple of hounds ; an unwieldy piece of machinery, sent so hurriedly, points to breakage of part of locomotive or engine ; and the huge milk-cans perform their daily journey in the van. But as Christmas draws near the "parcel traffic" develops alarming proportions : widens in its area, increases in its kind ; and every station, from the huge metropolitan terminus to the smallest station on the little valley-branch, contributes to and receives from the overflowing contents of that then popular portion of the train. There are parcels proper, of all shapes and sizes ; there are evergreens, plants ; there are ducks and geese, alive and dead ; hares and rabbits obtrude their presence ; and crates, hampers, jars, and baskets crowd the van. It is, indeed, a veritable postman's delivery bag—the parcels becoming the letters, and the stations the houses.

Starting from the junction, there is a varied load to begin the journey, and the guard has a task of no little difficulty in the arrangement of these "parcels" for readily shooting out at the respective stations. A huge tree for some Christmas gathering fills one corner of the van, and obtrudes its boughs into the high seat whence the guard dominates the brake ; hampers of evident mistletoe are tightly packed in another corner, and a few hares repose in dead rest thereon. A scent of apples indicates the contents of a basket ; another parcel has its cover-corner torn, and there peeps out the suggestive Christmas cake that tells of a present from provident mother to distant daughter. And then the eye loses itself in a mass of countless parcels, hampers, and packages, as varied in contents as in colour, and in dimensions as in destination, but all indicating clearly the kindly thought and the observance of a custom that grows, and that has greatest honour in the observance. The toy for a child will not survive the holiday parties, but the pleasure is an enduring memory that passes not away.

As the brake checks the speed, and the train ultimately stops, the guard has opened the van doors, and has ready the many parcels for a small suburban

station, the two or three neck-labelled turkeys that he had ranged near the door, and then he raises the wicker box of the Parcels Post and shoves it quickly on the trolley. And thus, from station to station, leaving and receiving, the guard's van does its work. It is a Christmas carrier, for the ordinary work that it does is overshadowed by that vaster traffic which the guard looks on with an amusement that lightens the labour, and which the porters at the stations regard with undisguised glee. It is a pleasant sight, too : the pictures of the stations, with their platforms banked with snow, eaves snow-tinted, and the plants snow-sprinkled : with unaccustomed life about even the smallest, the passengers muffled from the cold, the busy porters, the panting engine, and the country over which a slight snowfall spreads a thin mantle, marked and scored by hedges, roads with the dark ruts of many wheels. The air is keen, purer, more invigorating ; passengers have put off some of the work-a-day trouble ; and the mission of the guard's van is to aid in that evanescent emancipation.

So, on its frequent journey the guard's van brings with it the savour of kindly remembrance. It serves alike the rich and the poor ; it brings to the one the "polar marvels and a feast of wonders from the west and east," that are to enrich and decorate the magnificent fir that a distant plantation has given ; and it will also add to the limited meal—even in the



SOMETHING FOR THE OLD FOLKS.

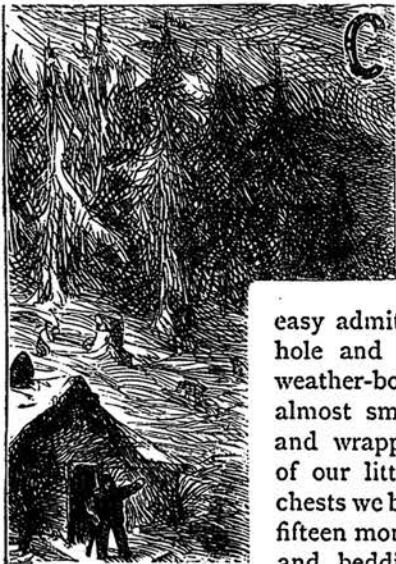


AT A COUNTRY STATION.

holiday times—of the poor, by the quaintly wrapped little package that is the contribution of son or daughter to the old home. There are indications of varied positions of recipients in the carriage that waits, in the little spring-cart that is in the station-yard,

and in the more homely group still that from the platform watch the parcels thrown from the van. It is in such circumstances that our railways become romantic, and that the guard's van does picturesque service.

CHRISTMAS IN THE FAR WEST.



CHRISTMAS DAY in the midst of the vast Kansas prairies—Christmas Day with the thermometer registering fourteen degrees below zero inside our shanty, and the cold wind gaining

easy admittance through every hole and crevice in the thin weather-boarding. We are lying almost smothered in blankets and wrappers along the sides of our little hut, upon the big chests we brought from England fifteen months ago. Bedsteads and bedding are luxuries we

discarded when we entered upon our new mode of life, and we are now quite reconciled to their absence. We

feel disposed to boast of our Spartan hardihood, and look with contempt upon the effeminacy of European civilisation. I am lying with my feet against those of Harry Norman, and our heads are close to the wall at either end of the room. On the other side, Fred Maitland and Frank Wright occupy similar relative positions, while upon the floor beneath us are Maitland's two sturdy boys, Jack and Percy. We must not move or turn in our sleep, for our boxes are not wide enough to permit reckless motion, and a fall would be broken by the bodies of the lads below. A north wind, or "norther," has been blowing for the past three days, and though it has veered round and the sun is shining, it is very cold, and our blankets are white with the congealed breath of the night. The bucket of water kept for household use has frozen into a solid mass, and every few minutes makes a cracking noise like a pistol-shot.

We have no woman to prepare our meals and keep things neat and clean, but we manage pretty well in a rough way. Maitland has a wife in the "old country,"

but he will not bring her out until he has a home fit for the reception of an English lady. The rest of the party are young and hardy, and for a time the rude frontier life is full of novelty and excitement and hard work.

But in mid-winter there is little to do; care of the stock and care of ourselves are the only duties, and

always asked, but seldom cheerfully responded to, in the morning, but on this Christmas holiday there is no hesitation, and I spring boldly to my feet, already partially dressed. I am unusually fortunate, and the fire, as if in recognition of the day, permits itself to be lighted without the display of obstinacy which generally tries our temper to the utmost. By its warmth I



OUR SHANTY.

after the cattle in the corral have been fed and watered we hasten back to the fire-side, and sit there until the approach of night sends us forth again to seek the "lowing herd." Then "early to bed," for in bed alone can warmth be maintained, in spite of our red-hot stove and thick clothing. "Early to rise" does not form part of our duty, and we almost wish that, like bears, we could roll ourselves up in our den and sleep away the winter, to come out, thin and hungry and blinking, into the spring sunshine.

"Who's going to light the fire?" is the question

finish my toilet, and then, running to the little brooklet which flows a few yards distant, the ice is broken with an axe, a bucket is filled with water, and the kettle is placed hissing upon the fire.

Then the others show signs of life which they had carefully concealed until the fire was lighted. Frank Wright unrolls himself from his blankets, and hastens to prepare the breakfast. He is our cook on this important occasion, and shows that he feels the responsibility of his position. He stirs the corn-meal with a practised hand, hews a large piece from the

pig which hangs frozen in a corner, and places it on the fire to thaw, preparatory to cutting it into slices for frying. He mixes the flour for the flap-jacks, without which the meal would be incomplete, and boils the coffee. Breakfast is soon ready, and as quickly eaten; for though we sit round the red-hot stove, our cups of boiling coffee would be frozen in twenty minutes were they even placed upon the table within our reach.

Next come the preparations for the grand Christmas dinner—not the first we have eaten on this continent,



but the first of our own cooking. The joint of English roast beef could not, of course, be procured; but in its place there is a tempting piece of buffalo-beef, bought for six cents (or threepence) a pound from hunters just arrived from the plains. A Christmas pudding we must have, and a journey over the frozen prairie has been made to the nearest village for the ingredients, or as many of them as might be obtained in that region. Two wild ducks have fallen beneath Frank Wright's unerring gun; and with a plump prairie hen, obtained in the same manner, we have material for a meal which would please an epicure.

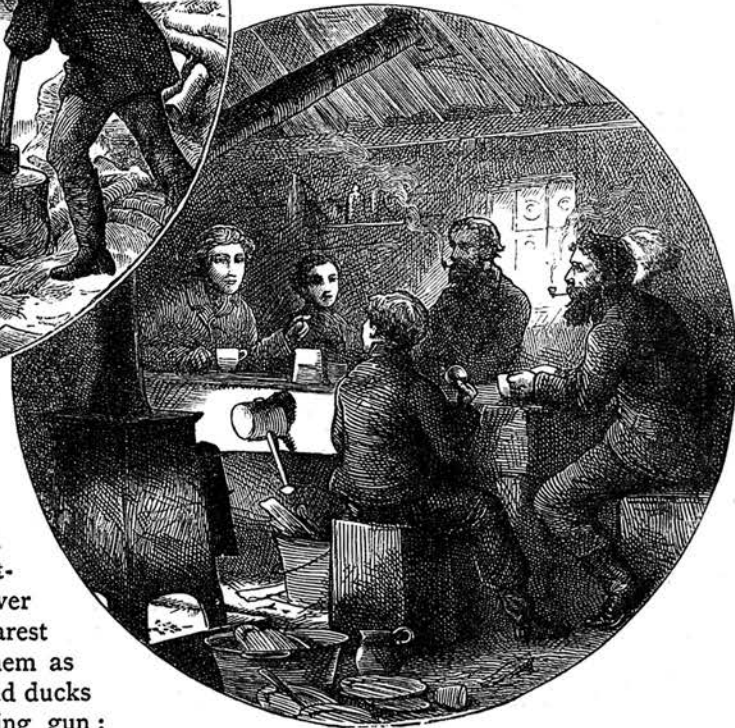
The boys are set to work to pull the feathers from the birds, while Norman and Maitland feed the cattle. I am detailed to chop the supply of wood for the day, a task which pleases me well, for wood-cutting is almost the only kind of labour by which circulation and warmth can be maintained. These arrangements have been made during breakfast, according to our usual custom.

It is a strange and magnificent picture which we behold as we step out from the shanty. The undulating prairie, extending far as the eye can reach, is covered with pure white snow, glowing with dazzling brilliancy beneath the cold rays of the sun—not as we

see it in England, only veneering the fields and hedges and trees, but one spotless white mantle without rent or stain: snow beneath us and blue sky above. Looking heavenward, we see a phenomenon which astonishes and almost alarms us, until we recollect that we have heard of similar appearances and remember their cause. There are two suns in the firmament—one directly above the other, the lower sun being the more brilliant. It is the first time we have witnessed this singular spectacle, though it was occasionally seen afterwards in unusually cold weather.

Sometimes three orbs have been visible, but in more northern regions, where winter is still more severe.

The snow crumbles beneath our feet; the keen, frosty air bites our cheeks and brings a glow to our noses which in a milder climate would be ascribed to a less innocent cause. Walnut and oak are soon chopped into lengths and split into fragments for the stove, each resounding blow of the axe severing some gnarled limb and sending fragrant chips into the



untainted air. Enlivened with the exercise, I quickly carry the wood in-doors, and pile it in a corner ready for use by the cook, who is hard at work stewing, and basting, and tasting, with an affectation of solemnity which makes us laugh heartily.

The stockmen soon return. They have fed the long-horned Texas and Cherokee cattle, pulled down the bars of the corral, and turned the willing beasts loose upon the prairie to wander at their own sweet will. The stock, glad to escape from confinement, in spite of the cold, march with tinkling bells to a favourite sheltered feeding-ground on the other side of the creek, and leave us to our enjoyment. The grass is covered deeply with snow, but their wild nature makes them prefer the cold prairie and liberty to warmth and confinement.

Reminiscences of "old times" from Maitland, and tales and jokes from Norman, one of the wittiest men I have met, pass the hours quickly away. Our *chef* is subjected to a good deal of *badinage* while we are awaiting the completion of his mysterious rites, and his dignity is sorely lowered when it is discovered that he has unwittingly dropped the plum-pudding into an empty saucepan, and is carefully baking it and spoiling the saucepan at the same time. The burly, good-tempered farmer, however, receives in good part the laugh that is raised against him on the score of this and other eccentricities detected in the course of the morning.

At length it is announced that everything is ready. Maitland, the senior of our little party, takes his place at the head of the carpenter's bench which does duty as a table, and in merry conversation the time passes away. The cook has been duly complimented on his skill and success, and forgets the good-natured satire lately levelled against him. Our minds are filled with the memories of earlier days when Christmas was spent with friends or in happy home circles, and "I wonder how they are enjoying themselves in the old country," is the remark that breaks involuntarily from each of us some time in the day. It is finally dismissed by young Jack, who thinks that "if they are getting along as bully as we are, you bet they're all right!" and we all concur with him. The hopeful young scion has devoted all his powers of mind to the acquirement of a sound knowledge of Western slang, and has succeeded "passing well." Our party is strictly temperate. Wine we have not; there is a keg of whiskey in the shanty, but though glances are occasionally cast towards it, no suggestions are put forward as to its immediate application. It has been obtained for a special purpose, and it is felt that even on this day we have no right to divert it from that purpose.

Whiskey is believed by Western men to be one of the most successful remedies for rattlesnake bites. These venomous reptiles abound on the prairies, and in summer one will often be found coiled up under a sleeper who is camping out, attracted by the warmth of his body. We discovered a rattlesnake once in the house, under some clothing which was lying upon the floor, but it was soon killed. Happily, it is sluggish in its habits, and the quick, whirring, grasshopper-like noise of the rattle generally gives timely warning of its proximity, so that it is easily despatched. So far as dangerous American snakes are concerned, it is a merciful dispensation of Providence that they are generally inert and tardy in their movements, unlike the majority of harmless reptiles of the species. Were they otherwise, danger would be increased tenfold, and deaths

from their bite would be numerous instead of being rare, as is the case. Should, however, a rattlesnake bite a man, death results in a few hours, unless some of the few known antidotes are instantly applied. No reliable remedy has yet been discovered, but the raw, fiery Western whiskey is considered efficacious and is generally used, the person bitten having to drink all he can take. It is supposed that the spirit neutralises the effect of the venom—poison counteracting poison, they say—so the patient must drink until he becomes intoxicated. Not until that happy result is arrived at is he safe. If, as is sometimes the case, the potent spirit has no effect upon him, he dies in agony. Some time ago, a man in a drinking saloon, in a fit of bravado, made a wager that he would allow himself to be bitten by a rattlesnake and would remain unhurt. A bystander as reckless, and at least as culpable as himself, accepted the bet, and steps were at once taken for its fulfilment. A snake was found, placed in a box, and brought to the saloon. The man bared his arm and lifted the lid of the box. The snake lay coiled up, its head raised, and its eyes glowing with anger, while the quick vibrations of its horny tail, so rapid as to be almost invisible, gave rise to the noise from which it has been named. It darted suddenly upward, straightening out its body, thrust two tiny spear-like fangs into the unshrinking arm above it, and was then beaten down and killed. But it had done its work. Two little spots, scarcely to be seen, were the only marks, "not as deep as a well, nor as wide as a church door," but they were enough; they served. The wager was lost. Whiskey, as much as the man could drink, was forced upon him, but the poison had greater power. His agony became extreme as the venom coursed through his veins, and in a few hours life was extinct. Sobered by the tragic termination, his companions went to their homes, carrying with them remorse for the part they had played and the share they had borne in the death of their comrade.

Knowing the danger that exists in the event of an accident, we feel that we had better drink to our distant friends in pure water or coffee, rather than use the spirit obtained for a much more serious purpose. Pipes are smoked and yarns spun until the sinking sun warns us that the stock must be hunted up and corralled. Horses are saddled, and riders are soon cantering over the prairie in search of the herd, and in a short time the cracking of stock-whips and the shouts of horsemen announce that the cattle have been found and are on their homeward road. Then they are penned in the corral and fed with hay and maize, the horses are stabled, a final pipe is smoked, and we "turn in" at an hour when in the old country all would be life and gaiety.

W. H. WILTSHIRE.





A Christmas Welcome.

Words by GEORGE WEATHERLY.

Music by C. A. MACIRONE.

1st SOPRANO.
2nd SOPRANO.

TENOR.
BASS.

ACCOMP. T.

Now the Christmas fire burns bright,
Now the Christmas fire burns bright,

M. M. ♩. = 80.
f

And the frost is on the pane,
now the fire burns bright, And the frost is on the pane, on..... the pane,
now the fire burns bright, And the frost is on the pane, frost is on the pane,

ppp *f* *ppp*

We will wel-come in the night With a song of glad de-light, a song.....
We will wel-come in the night With a song of glad de-light, wel-come with a song,..... a

f

..... of glad de-light! *ff* Good friends all, Good friends all, Here met a-gain! Ho! *dim.*

of glad de-light!

song of glad de-light, of glad de-light! friends all, Good friends all, Here met a-gain! Ho!

p ho! Sing out the old re-frain! Sing out the old re - frain!..... Wel-come, wel-come, ev - 'ry one!

ho! Sing out the old re-frain! Sing out the old re - frain!..... Wel-come, wel-come, ev - 'ry one!

f Wel-come, ev - 'ry one! Wel-come, now the day is done! *p* Toil is o - ver, rest be-gun: Raft - ers *f*

Wel-come, ev - ry one! Wel-come, now the day is done! Raft - ers

f e - cho, e - cho the re - frain! Now the Christ-mas fire burns bright, And the frost is on the

e - cho, e - cho the re - frain!..... Now the Christ-mas fire burns bright, And the frost is on the

pane; Now the Christ-mas fire burns bright, And the frost is on the pane, the frost is on the pane;

pane; Now the Christ-mas fire burns bright, And the frost is on the pane, the frost is on the

pane, the frost is on the pane, the frost is on the pane, the frost is on the pane!

pane, the frost is on the pane, the frost is on the pane, the frost is on the pane!

Wel - - come, all !..... Wel - come, wel - come, ev - 'ry one! Wel - come, one!..... Wel - come, one!..... Wel - come, ev - 'ry one! Wel - come,

Wel - - come, all !..... wel - come, ev - 'ry one! Wel - come,

ev - - 'ry..... one!..... ev - - 'ry..... one!.....

wel - come, ev - ry one!..... Wel - come. ev - 'ry one!.....



DECEMBER.

THE YULE BLOCK.*

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

A cross-grain'd block of elm we'll take
And by his light hold merry wake!—**OLD BALSAM.**

When holly leaves and ivy green,
With berries bright and dark between,
Around the cottage room are seen,

The simple place adorning—

What joy before the cheerful blaze,
The almost conscious fire displays,
To sit in Christmas' merry days

Ay! sit up till the morning!

And hear the early carillon
Of village bells—while old and young
Are mingled in that festal throng,

Through life we aye remember!

To feel the heat of Summer's glow,
In frosty depth of Winter's snow
And think we're *Maying* it, although

'Tis flowerless December!

To join the hearty laugh around,
When some coy damsel's feet are found
To thoughtless tread the fairy-ground
The Mistletoe that's under;—
And see some longing lover steal
A kiss from cheeks that ill conceal
The secret joy they inward feel,
Neath frowns and blushing wonder!

What face with summer's sun embrown'd
Was ever half so joyous found
As those in ruddy gladness' round
The YULE-BLOCK's† cheerful gleaming!
Romance may seek wild solitudes,
By waterfalls in lonely woods—
But Mirth and Love, with happier moods,
O'er Christmas hearth are beaming!
W.

* Yule from the Saxon *yeol* or *yehul*, the Christmas time.
† In many parts of the country it was a practice to preserve a portion of the yule block to the next year in order to light the new Christmas log.

CHRISTMAS is now no longer marked by that fervid hospitality which characterised its observance among our forefathers. At present, Christmas meetings are chiefly confined to family parties. The wassail bowl, the yule olog, and the Lord of Misrule, with a long train of sports and customs, which formerly prevailed at this season, are nearly forgotten: even Christmas carols are nearly gone by; and the decking of churches and of a few houses of people in humble life, with holly and other evergreens, forms now almost the only indication that this great festival is at hand, if we except the distribution of warm clothing and creature comforts among the poor by those whom heaven has blessed with "the luxury of doing good." In olden times—

On Christmas Eve, the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve, the mass was sung;
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear,
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;

The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all.

The pursuit of the fox may be now enjoyed in perfection; the fox, the hounds, and the horses having, by exercise, obtained good wind and good running condition altogether. Hares which by previous over-feeding were rendered somewhat sluggish will now stand up well before their pursuers, and afford as good runs, if not better, than at any other period of the season.

ANGLING.

USE the same baits as last month. In favourable weather, pike, roach, and chub, may sometimes be taken; but all other fish have retired to their winter retreats, to screen themselves till the voice of Spring again re-animates, and call them forth to their old haunts.

GREETING.

A HAPPY Christmas and a Bright
New Year!

We wish to all our friends, far-off or
near!

To all alike the message comes to-day,
'Glory to God on high!' the sweet
bells say.

To old and young—to every lass and
lad—

To well or ill—the merry or the sad—
To rich and poor, in hut, or house, or
hall,

'Peace and Good-will on earth to one
and all!'



DOBSONIAN CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A GENERAL SMASH," ETC.

"'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. . . .
And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled ourselves for a long winter's nap."

THIS much of the old Christmas story was extremely true of the Dobsons at the particular time I am going to tell you about, for it was the night before Christmas, having just struck eleven on the parlor mantel-piece by the clock that made so much noise about all its performances. You could hear them distinctly in the room overhead—and Mr. and Mrs. Dobson wore respectively kerchief and cap—presuming the words to designate the masculine and feminine of the same noun—Mrs. Dobson's with a high crown, and nicely fluted, tied beneath her chin; Mr. Dobson's of many-colored silks curiously netted together, with a lengthy tassel depending on one side. Fortunately the mice kept quiet, for—whisper it softly—the lady being of a certain, or, in other words, uncertain age, when wooed and won by her present lord, retained a spinster's lively horror of "mice and men," so that no napping would have been possible had the little animals referred to felt inclined for a nocturnal ramble; and you may be sure, when Mrs. Dobson was wakeful, Mr. Dobson's chances for slumber were reduced to a veritable minimum.

I have omitted some of the intermediate lines of the poem, because there were no little Dobsons nestled snug in their beds, while visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads, and, consequently, no stockings were hung "by the chimney with care, in hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there." An elongated brown cotton stocking, belonging, no doubt, to some one, and a short, blue woollen sock, the property perhaps of some one else, had been produced and taken into consideration, but the proceeding was finally voted nonsensical by the wise old people, who feared being the cause of concealed mirth to Betty the housemaid should those extremes in the hose department be seen solemnly hanging beneath the chimney for St. Nicholas to fill. These ancient lovers were very childish, at times, and I fancy it was with considerable regret the stockings were at length quietly returned to their respective drawers. They

had had their little talk after the light had been put out, and Mr. Dobson taken the flying leap necessary to land him in the heap of feathers that, with an old-fashioned love of comfort they patronized instead of hair mattresses; they had said good-night and "turned over," in fact, had settled themselves for a long winter's nap, when—yes, the clatter came, but not the miniature sleigh and reindeer—it was a loud rap on the front door. Of course the good people were considerably startled. To them, in their quiet way of life, eleven o'clock seemed like a very mysteriously late hour; any one out at eleven and coming to their house for a call was a thing incredible, and not to be entertained for a moment.

"What's that?" said Mr. Dobson.

"Speak softly, dear," whispered the lady.

"They don't knock softly," he answered.

"I suppose I must go down and see what it is. Ugh!"

This exclamation was not wholly uncalled for, as, be it understood, it was a very cold night, and there was no fire in the room; Mr. Dobson had just got nicely warmed in bed, and not being equipped in full walking costume—he had neglected to put on his necktie and gloves—he dreaded the exposure to the chill air.

"My love, I positively declare you shall not go!" cried his wife. "It isn't safe—and in your condition, too! Think of the pains in your knees, the neuralgia in your left shoulder—besides, it may be thieves."

Now, Mrs. Dobson having for many years had sole control of her own life and limbs, was very apt to think, since they shared their flesh and bones in common, she had, and of right should have, equal control over the life and limbs of Mr. Dobson, who generally permitted such control unless the cause seemed urgent. In this instance the cause so seemed, and he showed a celerity in his movements in leaving his resting-place that was quite astonishing in a man of his years, for he thought if the thing had to be done, it was one of those that had better be done at once, since jumping out of bed on a cold winter's night presents more horrors to the imagination the longer the idea is dwelt upon, as some among

my readers may certify if they will recall the remembrance of a refractory window-shutter and their sensations as they lay and hoped (need I say how vainly?) it would fasten itself either backward or forward, and they remain undisturbed. Mr. Dobson knew very well thieves would not make so noisy an entrance, and felt no fears on that score; but lumbago presented terrors he dreaded to face—or back. “At any rate, look out of the window, Ebenezer, and see who it looks like.”

So Ebenezer threw up the sash. The moon on the crest of the new-fallen snow gave the lustre of midday to objects below; but still the doorway being in shadow naught to his wondering eyes appeared. He summoned the individual to speak by calls of “Who’s there?” and “What do you want?” but apparently nobody wanted anything, or somebody wanted nothing, or most probably nobody was there. This was eminently unsatisfactory. Then Mr. Dobson saw clearly it was a case admitting of no delay, and declared he must “put something on” and go down. Poor Mrs. Dobson’s terror revived, she seemed singularly averse to his leaving her, and finally asserted it must be a baby that some one was going to leave at their door, “and the idea, Ebenezer, of our taking a baby in this time of night—or any other time for the matter of that. Get you in bed again, husband, and don’t mind ’em.”

Husband, however, stoutly averred it was quite impossible to think of leaving a poor little baby out there all night—it would freeze before morning; and if it really was a baby, he would take it to the poor master in the morning; they need not keep so undesirable a Christmas gift. It almost seemed that Mr. Dobson was unwarrantably anxious to go down. Then it was that his wife seeing it must be, and remembering, doubtless, that it was her duty to cherish and help him in health as well as to obey him, asserted if some one must go down, she’d be that some one, for it really could not be thought of that he should, when he had a plaster on his back at that very moment.

“See! I’ll just throw this wrapper around me, slip my feet in your shoes, run down and peep out; you, meanwhile, standing on the stairway keeping watch.”

In a trice she was ready, and started off before Mr. Dobson had time to enter a protest; and forasmuch as she had on his shoes,

there were insuperable objections to his crossing the lower entry, therefore, he was content with stationing himself half way down the stairs, and watching his spouse with great admiration for her self-immolation and suddenly-acquired courage. But ah! poor Mrs. Dobson was a heroine in undress. Little did he guess of the flutterings of that heart as she crossed the hall and laid her hand on the door-knob. However, she cast a glance back at her liege lord, so encouragingly near, bravely drew the bolt, and looked forth.

In this position of affairs let me pause to give you a description of the *dramatis personæ*; their appearance is peculiarly striking, and I must ask you to picture them to your imagination with the help of my pen and ink sketch.

Mrs. Dobson is decidedly lineal in her development, with here and there an inclination showing itself after acute angles. Her crinoline being a story higher, on the bedpost, no artificial rotundity lends gracefulness to the flow of her not ample draperies. Her bonnet *de nuit*, rather in the style of the latest bonnets *de jour*, looks like a little pigeon-house stuck on a tall pole, and her wrapper evinces a constant tendency to fly open, which she combats vigorously. Mr. Dobson’s shoes are so large for her that dexterity of no small amount is required to keep them beneath her feet, and this lends a peculiar appearance to her style of walking as seen from behind, which, were her spectator other than he is, would elicit volumes of applause and laughter.

Mr. Dobson’s appearance is always ridiculous. His formation is globular. Not to enter into the anatomy of the subject, I simply state that he protrudes in all directions. He is short both ways, and, like the deceitful little pitchers and bottles of that description, he holds a great deal. His features show unsuspected lines of beauty when examined, not according to Hogarth, but curves nevertheless. His forehead, which is low and broad, bumps out, and then there is a curve till you reach the end of his nose—an inverted curve. His mouth twists in all sorts of ways; but when you get to the ends, they turn up, but you are a long time getting there. His chin is nothing but indentation, and the dimples and lines over his cheeks remind one of the childish game—the name of which I forget—which is played on a slate, and requires numerous and mysterious dots to be made;

the pencil starting from a certain point, winds around all the spots and gets back to the beginning again without crossing the same place twice; the track so traced resembles wonderfully Mr. Dobson's complexion, not because his face is thin, but because he is so fat he has to gather it up to keep it within the required limits. His hair sticks out beneath his cap like the ruffle of paper around a candle, and his ears always look as if they were standing on tiptoe to listen. His eyes being very round, and his eyebrows arched more than the requirements of beauty exact, his *tout ensemble* is that of a man who is *making a face*, and you are irresistibly inclined to make one in return; but when Mr. Dobson intends to look serious, he only succeeds in looking so very much funnier, that any attempt to keep from laughing is quite hopeless, the incongruity between his style of features and the expression is so great. His attire is in the extreme of simplicity; but I leave it untouched upon, for he could not find his necktie, and his gloves were still in his bureau. His expression is one of great anxiety, and bending forward, with one hand on the banisters, as Mrs. Dobson gives that preparatory look backward, the tableau is at once extremely unique and *vivant*.

"I hope she won't see it," he mutters.

At first she does not; but at length she exclaims: "Yes, here is a basket! I verily believe it is a baby after all." She stoops down, examines the contents cautiously, and then retreats inside and locks the door.

"It is a baby, I'm afraid, for I felt straw and cotton, as true as I live. And now, Mr. Dobson, what would you do?"

She evidently expected a somewhat lengthy discussion to ensue; but on the other hand he seemed to consider it quite unnecessary, for he replied coolly: "Come back to bed by all means; it's quite cold," and he looked really almost relieved.

But the baby—you said it would freeze."

"I've thought better of that. Most likely it is a baby, but, if so, somebody is waiting outside, and they'll know soon enough we haven't taken it in, and then they won't leave it there." After a moment's pause, with an animated countenance, he continued: "It strikes me, Lelina, this is probably some confounded joke of the neighbors. Don't you see? sending a baby to you and me. Likely enough it's a hoax; and isn't a real

baby at all, and they are on the watch to laugh at us, if we don't show them we can see through a thicker stone-wall than that, any day."

This was quite convincing to Mrs. Dobson, and she willingly reascended the stairway, remarking only she thought it a very poor joke. First in, she was soon tucked down most comfortably. "Ebenezer, why don't you get in and put out the light, and not stand shaking there?"

"I think—perhaps—my dear, I'll go down and get warmed by the dining-room fire. I've got thoroughly chilled; and I noticed quite a warm light shone out in the hall."

"Nonsense! You'll get warm quick enough if you get where you should. The dining-room fire went out more than half an hour ago; there isn't a spark big enough to warm your toe."

It seemed to Mr. Dobson that his Lelina looked almost suspiciously at him. "Well, well, never mind, then!" and out went the light, and in went the submissive Dobson, but with strenuous efforts he tried to keep his eyes open, for, thought he, "when she gets asleep I'll just run down and take the basket in. There's no use in its being left out all night. I don't think it is quite safe."

But the adventure had made Mrs. Dobson restless; and while he with great exertions tried to banish sleep, she vainly sought to yield herself to its embraces; and so it happened that when at length she found oblivion, and testified it by a long and unmistakably heavy breath, his exhausted nature could endure no more, and in one minute more Morpheus's fingers were on his closed eyelids—not to be removed till the daylight dawned. Then with a start he awakened. His first thought was of that basket, and his first act to look at Mrs. Dobson. She was still sleeping peacefully; and, rising with the utmost caution, he stepped on tip-toe out of the room, leaving the door ajar. The pale glimmer of early dawn shed a mysterious gray light over everything, just sufficient to guide his steps. He reached the bottom of the stairway in safety, and commenced crossing the hall, still watching every footstep with the most anxious solicitude, that no loose board or unwary stumble rouse the sleeping beauty overhead. But suddenly he pauses. Through the half opened door of the dining-room, in the dim light, he clearly distin-

guishes the figure of a man. At first he thinks he has been seen, and his limbs tremble beneath him, but in a moment he becomes aware that the man's back is towards him; and, with great presence of mind, he turns quietly around and retraces his steps with equal care and nicety. The Fates are propitious; the wife of his bosom lies wrapped in unconscious slumbers still. The heroic Dobson lays his hand with trembling excitement upon his pistol on the mantel-piece, and then bravely marches back to the encounter. Unluckily, in his nervous haste, he trips at the first step, but recovers his balance, and no one seems to have heard the noise, for when he reaches the doorway again he sees the figure still in the same position. He raises the pistol, fires, and at the same moment hears the voice of Mrs. Dobson calling: "Ebenezer, what *are* you about?"

Awakened by the noise he made in his second exit, she had rushed out to see where he was going, and arrives just in time to behold him strike an attitude, and send a ball through the unconscious robber. Even in moments of intense excitement, habit will assert its control, and, before looking to see the effects of his fire, Mr. Dobson turns his horror-stricken countenance towards the surprised face of his wife.

"I'm afraid I've killed him—he doesn't move!" said he, in an awed tone of voice.

With a woman's quickness Mrs. Dobson comprehends the situation at a glance, and replies, while her face expresses at the same moment pity, amusement, and regret. Pity for Mr. Dobson's evidently terrified depression of spirit, amusement at his mistake, and regret at the consequences. "Why, Dobby"—she always called him "Dobby" when she wished to administer comfort, and testify her sympathetic affection—"why, Dobby, you are shooting at your Christmas presents; and I've no doubt but that you have put a hole through the pretty dressing-gown—silk lining and all, maybe."

By this time she had descended to his side; and together they walk into the room, which is not yet entirely divested of its horrors to Mr. Dobson's disturbed vision; it is not till his wife has thrown back the blinds, and let in a little more of the Christmas daylight, that he sees it is no worse than she says. There stands the fire-screen with the cashmere dressing-gown thrown around it; a

smoking cap perched on top, and a beautiful pair of embroidered slippers on the floor in front of it. "There, Dobby; these are my Christmas gifts to you, and may you take comfort in them, for I've no doubt I can mend the holes nicely."

This restores him to his senses; and he returns his wife's warm embrace a hundred fold. Thus standing admiring the bright colors, and talking of the promised comfort of these things, it is some minutes before Mrs. Dobson recollects to ask what brought him down at such an unwarrantably early hour, shooting at the presents Santa Claus brings him, instead of waiting till the proper time to see them, when no such misfortune could have happened.

"Why, my dear, that reminds me I came to see after that basket and baby, you know. Just open the door and see if it's there." Hereupon Mr. Dobson chuckled most facetiously, as if there was a mighty good joke somewhere around.

Curiosity predominating over all fears of a hoax, and the daylight rendering the opening of the door no longer terrible, and with now no secret to conceal from her husband, she looks forth, and, sure enough, there stands the basket still. It appears to be very heavy; but nevertheless the usually gallant Dobson offers her no assistance as she carries it in. Cautiously she pulls aside the paper and peeps in, then a sudden beam of intelligence and delight shoots over her countenance, and with a rush she has her arms around her Ebenezer's neck, and is thanking him with all a woman's vehemence. She has him at a disadvantage as far as his comfort is concerned; for he had unwisely seated himself to enjoy his laugh in turn, but with so tight a clasp around his throat he can only return gasps for the affectionate utterances of his wife.

"You dear, good old fellow! Just what I wanted! But to think of leaving them out there all night!"

At length he finds a chance to say: "Why you see, deary, you wouldn't let me take that baby in while you were awake, and you were so confoundedly long getting asleep, I hadn't a chance till morning."

Then they fall to examining their respective gifts again. Mrs. Dobson setting the pretty china tea-set all out on the table, and wiping each piece with affectionate care,

while Mr. Dobson is actually trying on all the articles given him, and pronouncing each and every one an exact fit. At length, with a pang of remorse, he remembers the damage he unwittingly had done; but on searching no hole can be seen, and finally they find the ball safely lodged in the fireplace.

"Well, you wouldn't have killed him if it had been a robber, after all," said Mrs. D.

"No;" he returns, a little disappointedly, "that's so. But it's the first time I ever fired at a man, and I was so afraid I might kill him, it made my hand a little shakey—and then, besides, I took aim in a hurry."

"For my part I'm glad you did. It would have been a thousand pities to have had a darn on that, when it is just made up, particularly if it had come on the red silk facing."

Mr. Dobson acknowledges that; but, with manly inconsistency, very much wishes his giving proofs of being a good shot might be compatible with no damage to his dressing-gown.

Betty's movements up stairs recall to them the fact that they are "not fit to be seen," and bring this scene to a close. With a last, long, lingering look at the pretty things, they swiftly go on the light fantastic toe to bed again, for breakfast will not be ready for two hours yet; there simultaneously they remember it has not been said, and call out, "Merry Christmas."

Thus it was Mr. and Mrs. Dobson exchanged their gifts; and now, having told my story, to my kind readers I say: "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a Good-night!"

HEALTH COMMANDMENTS.

They are slightly Irreverent, but Decidedly Fat.

1. Thou shalt have no other food than at meal time.

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any pies or put into pastry the likeness of anything that is in the heavens above or in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not fall to eating it or trying to digest it. For the dyspepsia will be visited upon the children of the third and fourth generation of them that eat pie, and long life and vigor upon those that live prudently and keep the laws of health.

3. Remember thy bread to bake it well; for he will not be kept sound that eateth his bread as dough.

4. Thou shalt not indulge sorrow or borrow anxiety in vain.

5. Six days shalt thou wash and keep thyself clean, and the seventh thou shalt take a great bath, thou, and thy son, and thy maid-servant, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days man sweats and gathers filth and bacteria enough for disease; whereupon the Lord has blessed the bath tub and hallowed it.

6. Remember thy sitting room and bed chamber to keep them ventilated, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

7. Thou shalt not eat hot biscuits.

8. Thou shalt not eat thy meat fried.

9. Thou shalt not swallow thy food unchewed or highly spiced, or just before hard work, or just after it.

10. Thou shalt not keep late hours in thy neighbor's house, nor with thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his cards, nor his glass, nor with anything that is thy neighbor's.



SCHOOL HAMPERS.

BY E. V. LUCAS.



THE other day, while aimlessly turning over the pages of a list of one of the great London stores, I came upon a description of the school hampers and Christmas hampers which the firm is prepared to despatch—more than prepared, one supposes, even pleased: for if there is one employment above another that should carry good humour with it, it is the preparation and despatch of a hamper. As I had always conceived hampers to be a home-designed product of the kitchen and store-room, their supply was an additional proof of the thoroughness of the stores system. I knew that conjurers were to be obtained there, and Ethiopian minstrels, and paper plates for picnics, and the kinematoscope, and I knew also that the transfer of a non-transferable stores ticket is one of the sins which the Recording Angel blots; but the hamper page was a true surprise. Forth-



“Ripping!”

with I determined, if ever a change of employment is necessary, to apply to Messrs. Blank & Co. for engagement as their hamper editor, or even to establish a hamper bureau of my own. In a world which is mostly disappointment and frustration, the life of a hamper editor must be radiantly agreeable.

Half the hamper page was devoted to school hampers and half to Christmas hampers, and really it was very good reading. Few novelists write so much to the point. Here, as proof of entertainment, is the first entry:—

SCHOOL HAMPERS AT 5s. CONTAIN—

2 lbs. currant cake.	1 Jar marmalade.
1 Ham and chicken sausage.	1 Bottle sweets.
	12 Oranges.
1 Jar potted meat.	2 lbs. mixed nuts.
1 „ jam.	

What expression of satisfaction is now most in favour at school I cannot say—“ripping,” perhaps, or perhaps “jolly decent”: I heard both terms lately, although they may have been survivals—but even a five-shilling hamper should merit it. The “1 Bottle sweets” is, perhaps, a questionable inclusion. Butter-scotch, toffee, and chocolate (the cream dug out and eaten first) are sound boyish tastes; but “1 Bottle sweets” has a feminine ring. The purist also would object to the phrases “1 Jar jam” and “1 Jar marmalade”—Pot is the word. And the oranges would, one hopes, at another season be replaced by apples. Yet, carp as we may, the five-shilling hamper is desirable.



“6 Mince pies.”

Now see what another crown will bring—enough for any one boy.

SCHOOL HAMPERS AT 10s. CONTAIN—

4 lbs. currant cake.	1 Bottle sweets.
1 Ham and chicken sausage.	2 lbs. mixed confectionery.
2 Jars potted meat.	6 Mince pies.
1 Jar marmalade.	24 Oranges.
1 „ jam.	2 lbs. mixed nuts.

The “1 Bottle sweets” still persists, but “2 lbs. mixed confectionery” come in to rectify it. Come in also “6 Mince pies”—the list clearly belongs to the winter—and there is a lavish duplication of other matters. One of the “2 Jars potted meat” might well be anchovy or bloater paste—anchovy for choice, because it lasts longer; and I do not greatly esteem the “Ham and chicken sausage.” Boys infinitely prefer sardines; indeed, the omission of sardines from all these hampers is a serious fault.

Add ten shillings.

SCHOOL HAMPERS AT 20s. CONTAIN—

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4 lbs. currant cake. | 6 Mince pies. |
| 2 Ham and chicken sausages. | 2 lb. box mixed crystallised fruit. |
| 1 German sausage. | 4 Jars assorted potted meats. |
| 1 Box braised beef, 2 lbs. | 24 Oranges. |
| 2 Jars jam. | 3 lbs. mixed nuts. |
| 2 „ marmalade. | |
| 2 Bottles sweets. | |

With a shining pound it is manifest that one may make a young friend very ill. Probably



“A dozen of ginger beer.”

this class of hamper is intended rather for brothers or for boys of conspicuous generosity. From one or two items, such as the “1 Box braised beef, 2lbs.,” it would seem that the gentleman who now acts as hamper editor has an eye to bedroom feasts, because the theory of the hamper is not to take the place of school meals, but to amend them, to add a silver lining to

them: and braised beef is a viand in itself rather than a concomitant. Hence, possibly, the nuts, whose shells are notoriously good to place on the stairs, where they crack beneath the feet of the approaching master and so give warning of danger. In default of nuts a small boy must endure the draughty duties of sentinel. To return to our criticism, the “1 Bottle sweets” has now become two, and the “mixed confectionery” has given way to “mixed crystallised fruits.” The principal lack in each variety of hamper is drink, unless the oranges are calculated to fill that office. Were I asked for practical comment, I should advise a dozen of stone ginger beer in the stead of sweets.

To learn the news that a hamper is awaiting one in the hall is a supreme school joy. For the moment it can render the heaviest imposition null and void, just as the cessation of toothache in the condemned cell effaces for a brief space the dread of the hangman. Of the behaviour of boys on receiving hampers much has been written. Ann and Jane Taylor’s “Plum-Cake” and “Another

Plum-Cake” are among favourite nursery apologues, and Mrs. Elizabeth Turner has worked the theme with admirable thoroughness. In a moving trilogy she vividly presents the three methods in which a large plum-cake may be dealt with. First comes Harry. Harry was greedy and stingy.

When it arriv’d, the little boy
Laugh’d, sung, and jumped about for joy;
But, ah, how griev’d I am to say
He did not give a bit away!

He ate, and ate, and ate his fill;
No wonder that it made him ill.
Pain in his stomach and his head
Oblig’d him soon to go to bed

Then comes Peter. Peter was stingy, too, but stingy to himself as well as to others—in short, a miser.

And sometimes silently he’d go,
When all he thought engag’d below,
To eat a *very little* piece,
For fear his treasure should decrease.

When next he went (it makes me laugh),
He found the mice had eaten half;
And what remain’d, though once a treat,
So mouldy ’twas not fit to eat.

Lastly, William. William was free-handed, virtuous; William behaved nobly.

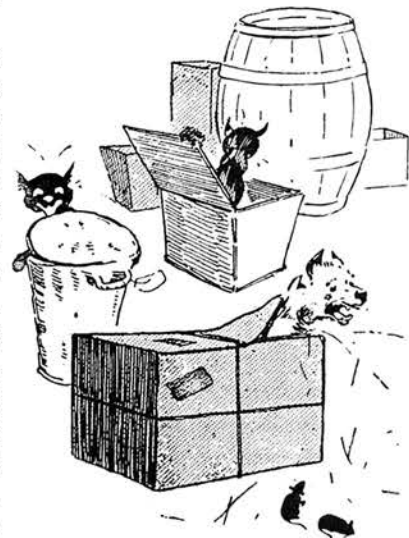
“Come round,” he cried—“each take a slice;
Each have his proper share of ice!
We’ll eat it up among us here;
My birthday comes but once a year.”

At this point, lo! a blind beggar, to whom William incontinently yielded his own slice and a penny besides. The poem ends—

I need not ask each youthful breast
Which of these boys you like the best;
Let goodness, then, incitement prove,
And imitate the boy you love.

How can the youthful breast demur? William, William it is who, of course, comes out at the head of the poll.

Quite as interesting a study to the psychologist is the conduct of the other boys when one of their school-fellows receives a hamper. But there are pleasanter matters for inquiry. Poor human nature!



“The hamper is not for food alone.”

The hamper is not for food alone; it is also the travelling compartment of live stock. Dogs who travel without a ticket usually do so in a hamper. Cats are conveyed by that means from Blackburn to Torquay, and the next day but one, dishevelled and footsore, creep into the Blackburn kitchen once again, and thus win attention from the *Spectator* and Mr. Tegetmeier, of the *Field*, who occupies the same attitude to the homing instinct that Mrs. Prig did to Mrs. Harris. It is strange that no one ever meets a cat under the dominion of the homing instinct. It would be quite unmistakable, because of the bee-line which it takes and the rate it has to travel at to deserve the notice of Mr. St. Loe Strachey. As Mark Twain wrote of the jackass rabbit—"Long after it is out of sight you can hear it whizz." I suppose a homing cat never stops for a mouse. Carrier pigeons are conveyed in hampers to the place where their flight is to begin; but not all birds are so lucky. I was never so surprised in my life as when the naturalist's man from whom I bought a cockatoo last winter thrust the screaming thing into a deal box hardly bigger than itself, and hammered nails two inches long through the lid. Then he sawed off a corner for ventilation, wrapped up the box in brown paper, fastened it noisily with string, and slammed it on the counter before me. Five hours later, after a weary and cold railway journey, a very angry and very dirty cockatoo was liberated by two frightened men in wicket-keeping gloves. And, according to the latest accounts, the bird has not recovered its temper yet.



"Cook has memories!"

The stores-supplied hamper is, I take it, designed to meet the requirements of the bachelor uncle who has no kitchen where he may prepare one. It therefore has notable uses. But the hamper, as most boys understand it, is a home-made blessing. More than one friendly intellect has contributed to its plenishing. The maternal mind is, of course, the fountain and origin of good, but cook has had her say too. Cook knows Master Tom's tastes as well as anyone, perhaps better. Cook has memories . . . hence the cold plum-pudding. And at hamper time a certain reason for the existence of sisters becomes evident: they can make toffee. The "1 Bottle sweets" is unknown to home-made hampers, but a bottle of raspberry vinegar has sometimes found its way therein. I have also a recollection of dough-nuts. Quince jam was of old a stimulating surprise. But the crowning triumph of any hamper is, of course, the cake. That is the nucleus; all else is accessory. One of a boy's earliest acute perceptions is of the inferiority of all cake made outside his own home. I remember a boy at school whose cake was but plum-bread. I remember another whose hampers contained a sickly confection of rose-leaves and honey. And yet another who was supplied with a tin of cocoa and a parcel of coarse brown sugar, the contents of which were mixed (sometimes, I regret to say, in the palm of the hand) and eaten as an ant-eater eats ants—a departure in tuck which soon became a fashion, and possibly flourishes to this day.



Receipts, Etc.

FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

THE space we intended to occupy in this department with engravings of the holiday serviette necessitated our commencing in the November number the usual Christmas receipts. It being a season for pies, cakes, and other good things, which serve to make the heart glad, we always devote this space to directions for those eatables that experience has taught us will be appreciated.

DINNER SERVIETTES.

THE HOLIDAY SERVIETTE.

FOLD down the top of this serviette three inches; fold upwards the bottom edge to meet it, or rather one inch above it (see Fig. 1). Place the hands as in Fig. 2, and make a third fold upwards, the result will be Fig. 3. Lastly, make the fourth fold upwards from the bottom edge (see Fig. 4). Turn one end towards you, and crease it backwards and forwards in eight regular two-inch folds. Now, hold it on the side with the left hand, and with right finger and thumb crease down the plaits between the folds into vandykes (see Fig. 5). Stand it upright on its heaviest end, and form it round. If for a supper party or wedding breakfast, decorate with flowers.

CHRISTMAS CAKES.

Plum Pudding.—Take of flour three ozs., and the same weight of finely-grated bread-crumbs, six ozs. of nice beef suet (kidney suet) chopped very small, six ozs.

of raisins (weigh the raisins after they are stoned), six ounces of well-cleaned currants, four ounces of minced apples, five ounces of sugar, two ounces of candied orange peel, half a teaspoonful of nutmeg mixed with pounded mace, a very little portion of salt, a wineglassful of brandy, and three whole eggs. Mix all these ingredients well together, tie them tightly in a thickly-floured cloth and boil for four hours. This will make a light, rich, but small pudding. It should be served with wine sauce.

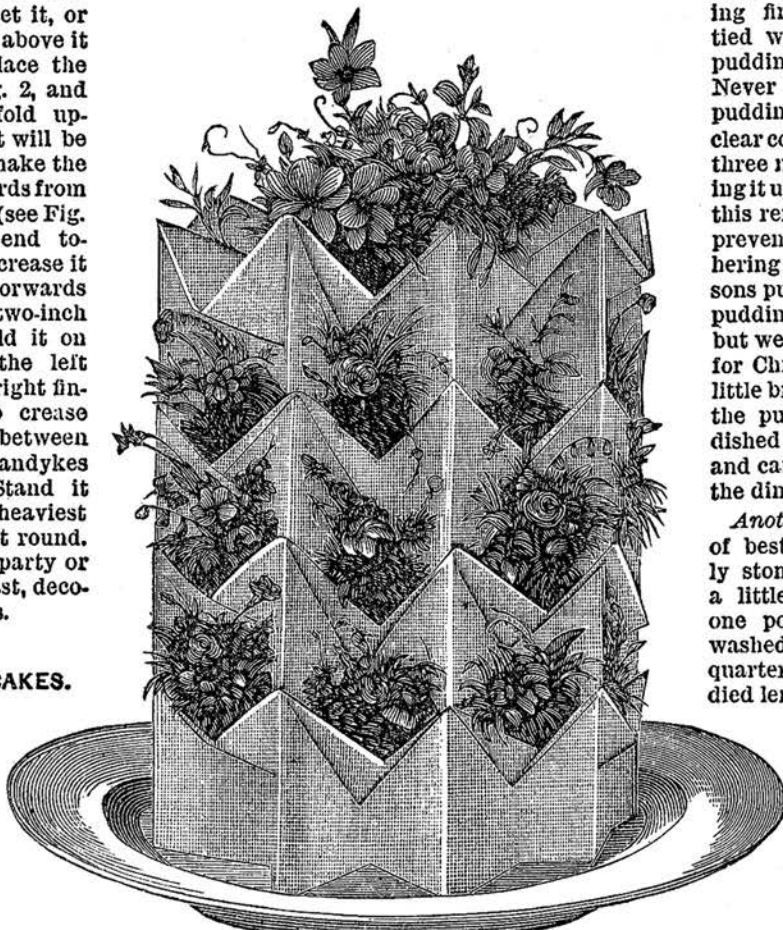
Lemon Cake.—Beat six eggs, the yolks and whites separately, till in a solid froth; add to the yolks the grated rind of a lemon and six ounces of sugar dried and sifted; beat this a quarter of an hour; shake in

with the left hand six ounces of dried flour; then add the whites of the eggs and the juice of the lemon; when these are well beaten in, put it immediately into tins, and bake it about an hour in a moderately hot oven.

Plum Pudding for a Large Party.—One pound of raisins, one pound of currants, one pound of suet, and two and a half pounds of flour, with one pound of sugar, three eggs, and a tablespoonful of ground allspice, one ounce of candied lemon, one ounce of orange peel. Prepare these ingredients as usual, and boil this pudding at least seven hours. Always place an old plate at the bottom of the saucepan in which a pudding is to be boiled, and do not imagine that a plum pudding can be over-boiled; we never knew any instance of this, but we have known many a pudding perfectly dry in the centre for want of a sufficient quantity of water or too small a saucepan in which to boil it; and we have also known a rich plum pudding appear at table in the form of a very

thick soup for lack of being firmly and tightly tied when put into the pudding cloth for boiling. Never omit to dip your pudding into a pail of clear cold water for about three minutes when taking it up for being dished, this renders it firm, and prevents the cloth adhering to it. Some persons put brandy into the pudding when making it, but we prefer, especially for Christmas, to have a little brandy poured over the pudding after it is dished; then set on fire, and carefully bring into the dining-room.

Another.—One pound of best raisins, carefully stoned and chopped a little on the board; one pound of currants washed and picked; quarter of a pound of candied lemon peel; quarter of a pound of candied citron; quarter of a pound of good sweet almonds blanched and chopped fine; one pound of suet, picked and chopped fine; half a pound of



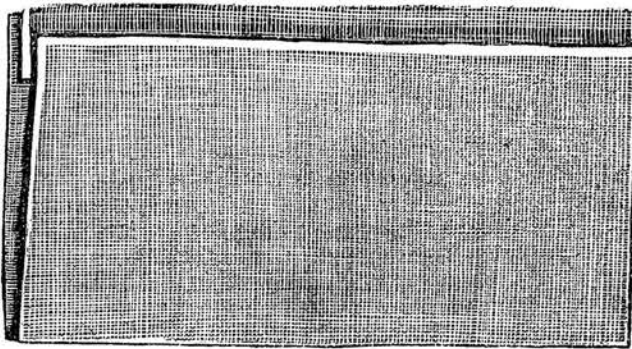
SERVIETTE COMPLETE.

flour, one pound and a quarter of sugar; nutmeg and mixed spices to taste; half a teaspoonful of carbonate of soda; eight eggs well beaten. Then take a little milk in a saucepan and put into it half a pod of vanilla. Let it simmer on the fire with the lid closed until the pod is quite soft. Take out the pod and mince it with a sharp knife, and put it into a mortar with a little of the milk, and bray it until reduced to a paste, which return to the milk and pour into the pudding. Just before putting the pudding on, give it a good stir, and mix in a little good brandy. Boil it for eight hours.

The following is an excellent pudding, and not too rich:—

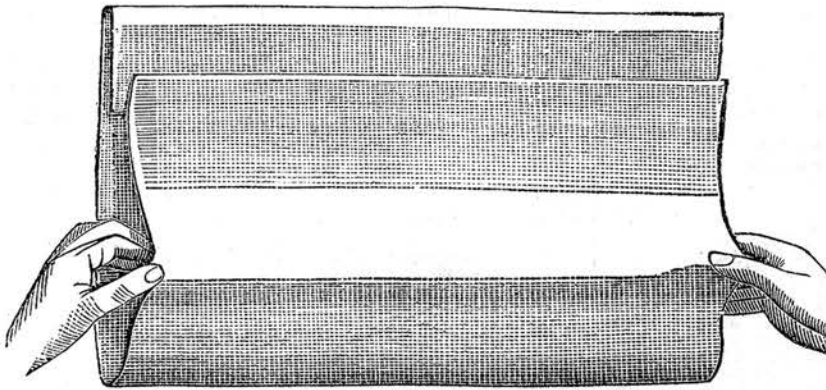
Suet, chopped fine, six ounces; raisins, stoned, etc., eight ounces; bread-crumbs, six ounces; three eggs, a wineglassful of brandy, a little nutmeg and cinnamon pounded as fine as possible, half a teaspoonful of salt, rather less than half a pint of milk, fine sugar,

Fig. 1.



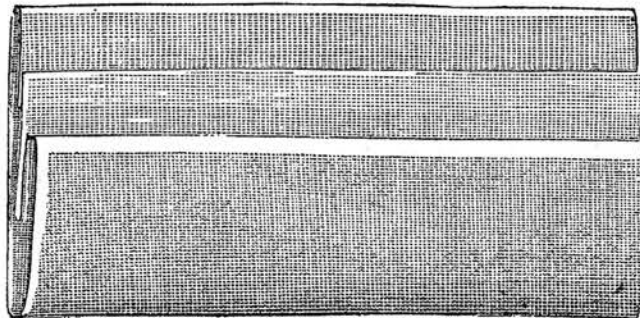
four ounces; candied lemon, one ounce; citron, one half ounce. Beat the eggs and spice well together; mix the milk by degrees, then the rest of the ingredients. Dip a fine, close, linen cloth into boiling water, and put in a sieve (hair), flour it a little, and

Fig. 2.



tie up close. Put the pudding into a saucepan containing six quarts of boiling water; keep a kettle of boiling water alongside, and fill up as it wastes. Be sure to keep it boiling at least six hours. Serve with any sauce.

Fig. 3.



Christmas Plum Pudding.—A pound of suet, cut in pieces not too fine, a pound of currants, and a pound of raisins stoned, four eggs, half a grated nutmeg, an ounce of citron and lemon peel, shred fine; a teaspoonful of beaten ginger, half a pound of bread-crumbs, half a pound of flour, and a pint of milk; beat the eggs first, add half the milk, beat them together, and by degrees stir in the flour, then the suet, spice, and fruit, and as much milk as will mix it together very thick; then take a clean cloth, dip in boiling water, and squeeze dry. While the

water is boiling fast, put in your pudding, which should boil at least five hours.

Another way.—Seven ounces of raisins, seeded, and a little chopped; seven ounces of currants, well washed and picked; one and a half ounces of citron; three ounces of beef suet, chopped very fine; three-quarters of a nutmeg, grated; one-quarter of a teaspoonful of cinnamon; five eggs, well beaten up; four tablespoonfuls of sugar; five tablespoonfuls of wheat flour; half a lemon peel, grated; one glass of brandy, and one glass of Madeira; a little milk to mix, sufficient to make rather a thick batter. The whole must be well mixed. The above mixture to be put into a well-buttered basin. Tie a pudding cloth over, and pin the four corners over the top. Put into boiling water, and to be kept boiling without ceasing for five hours. We have tried this receipt, and know it to be excellent.

Holiday Cakes.—Four pounds of flour, three pounds of butter, three pounds of sugar, four pounds of currants, two pounds of raisins, twenty eggs, half a pint of brandy; or lemon brandy, one ounce of mace, three nutmegs. A little molasses makes it dark-

colored, which is desirable. Half a pound of citron improves it, but is not necessary. To be baked two hours and a half or three hours. An excellent receipt.

Tea Cakes.—Six eggs, leave out the whites of four; three-quarters of a pound of loaf sugar, half a pound of butter; one teaspoonful of soda, dissolved in a large spoonful of vinegar. Flavor with any essence you may like best. Make into a soft dough, and roll thin and cut in shapes. It is a most superior receipt.

Common Crullers or Twist Cakes.—Mix well together half a pint of sour milk, or buttermilk, two teacupfuls of sugar, one teacupful of butter, and three eggs, well beaten: add to this a teaspoonful of saleratus dissolved in hot water, a teaspoonful of salt, half a nutmeg grated, and a teaspoonful of powdered cinnamon; sift in flour enough to make a smooth dough; roll it out not quite a-quarter of an inch thick; cut in small oblong pieces; divide one end in three or four parts like fingers, and twist or plait them over each other. Fry them in boiling lard. These cakes may be cut in strips, and the ends joined, to make a ring, or in any other shape.

A good Pound Cake.—Beat one pound of butter to a cream, and mix with it the whites and yolks of eight eggs beaten apart. Have ready, warm by the fire, one pound of flour, and the same of sifted sugar; mix them and a few cloves, a little nutmeg and cinnamon, in fine powder together; then by degrees work the dry ingredients into the butter and eggs. When well beaten, add a glass of wine and some caraways. It must be beaten a full hour. Butter a pan, and bake it an hour in a quick oven. The above proportions, leaving out four ounces of the butter, and the same of sugar, make a less luscious cake, and to most tastes a more pleasant one.

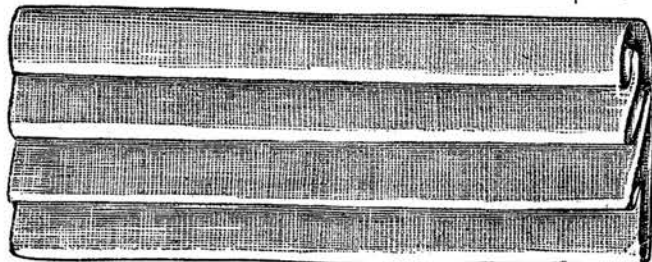
Queen Cake.—Mix one pound of dried flour, the same of sifted sugar and of washed currants; wash

one pound of butter in rose-water, beat it well, then mix with it eight eggs, yolks and whites beaten separately, and put in the dry ingredients by degrees; beat the whole an hour: butter little tins, teacups, or saucers, filling them only half full; sift a little fine sugar over just as you put them into the oven.

Baked Lemon Pudding.—Beat the yolks of four eggs to a froth, mix with them four ounces of pounded sugar and a quarter of a pound of warmed butter, stir well, and add grated rind and juice of one lemon; line a dish with puff paste, put in the mixture, and bake forty minutes.

Cream Pie (fine).—Half a pound of butter, four eggs, sugar, salt, and nutmeg to your taste, and two

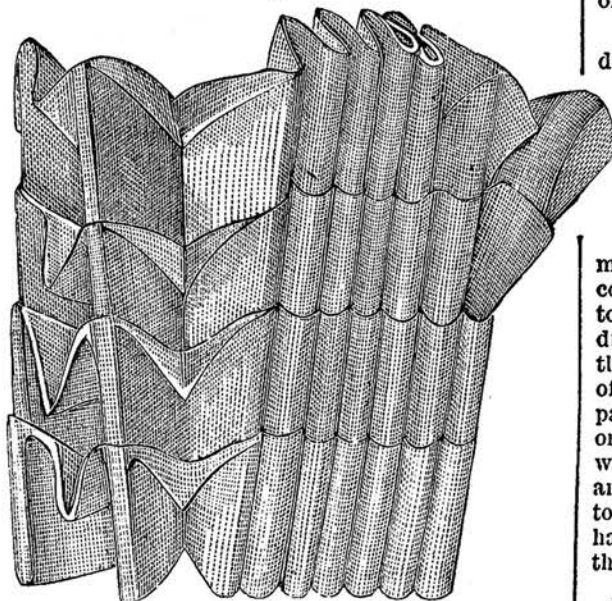
Fig. 4.



tablespoonfuls of arrowroot wet; pour on it a quart of boiling milk, and stir the whole together. To be baked in deep dishes.

Ginger Sponge Cake.—One cup of molasses, one cup of butter, two cups of sugar, four eggs, three cups of flour, one cup of milk, soda, and ginger.

Fig. 5.



French Jumbles.—One pound and a half of flour, one pound of sugar, three-quarters of a pound of butter, three eggs; dissolve one teaspoonful of soda in one half cup of milk; add this, also one nutmeg, and roll out the dough, and cut into small cakes of any shape, and bake them in a quick oven.

Seed Cake.—Beat one pound of butter to a cream, adding gradually a quarter of a pound of sifted sugar, beating both together; have ready the yolks of eighteen eggs, and the whites of ten, beaten separately; mix in the whites first, and then the yolks, and beat the whole for ten minutes; add two grated nutmegs, one pound and a half of flour, and mix them very gradually with the other ingredients;

when the oven is ready, beat in three ounces of picked caraway seeds.

Ginger Snaps.—Melt a quarter of a pound of butter, the same quantity of lard—mix them with a quarter of a pound of brown sugar, a pint of molasses, a couple of tablespoonfuls of ginger, and a quart of flour. Dissolve a couple of teaspoonfuls of saleratus in a wineglass of milk, and strain it into the cake—add sufficient flour to enable you to roll it out very thin, cut it into small cakes, and bake them in a slow oven.

Cookies.—Five cups of flour, two of sugar, one of butter, one egg, one teaspoonful of saleratus; cut it into small cakes.

Soda Biscuits.—One pound of flour, half a pound of pounded loaf sugar, one quarter of a pound of fresh butter, two eggs, one small teaspoonful of carbonate of soda. Put the flour (which should be perfectly dry) into a basin; rub in the butter, add the sugar, and mix these ingredients well together. Whisk the eggs, stir them into the mixture and beat it well, until everything is well incorporated. Quickly stir in the soda, roll the paste out until it is about an inch thick, cut into small round cakes with a tin cutter, and bake them from twelve to eighteen minutes in rather a brisk oven.

After the soda is added, great expedition is necessary in rolling out the paste, and in putting the biscuits *immediately* into the oven, or they will be heavy.

Soft Gingerbread.—Two cups of butter, two cups of sugar, two cups of molasses, one cup of milk, four eggs, a teaspoonful of pearlsh, five cups of flour, two teaspoonfuls of ginger, two teaspoonfuls of allspice, one teaspoonful of cinnamon.

Wedding Cake.—The following is a very rich wedding cake: Five pounds of finest flour, three pounds of good butter, five pounds of currants, two of sifted loaf sugar, two nutmegs, a quarter of an ounce of mace, half a quarter of an ounce of cloves, sixteen eggs, one pound of sweet almonds, half a pound of candied citron, half a pound of orange and lemon peel, one gill of wine, and one of brandy.

Kisses.—It is difficult to make kisses well, and in most cases it is advisable to procure them from the confectioneries. To the white of four eggs beaten to a stiff froth, add the juice of a lemon or a few drops of rose-water. Roll and sift half a pound of the whitest loaf-sugar and beat it up with the white of the eggs. Spread out several sheets of letter paper, and drop a large tablespoonful of the mixture on the paper. Be cautious that your oven is not too warm nor yet too cold; lay the paper on a tin pan and let the sugar and egg bake until it rises and the top grows hard—then remove it from the paper, and having some gum-Arabic prepared, dip one side of the oval in the gum and join it to the other.

Mincemeat.—Six pounds of currants, three pounds of raisins stoned, three pounds of apples chopped fine, four pounds of suet, two pounds of sugar, two pounds of beef, the peel and juice of two lemons, a pint of sweet wine, a quarter of a pint of brandy, half an ounce of mixed spice. Press the whole into a deep pan when well mixed.

Another way.—Two pounds of raisins, three pounds of currants, three pounds of beef-suet, two pounds of moist sugar, two ounces of citron, one ounce of orange peel, one small nutmeg, one pottle of apples chopped fine, the rind of two lemons and juice of one, half a pint of brandy; mix well together. This should be made a little time before wanted for use.

A New Christmas Carol.

IN TWO SCENES.

BY AUGUSTA DE BUENA.

CHARACTERS

MR. HORRID HARDTIMES.
MRS. PLEASANT HARDTIMES.
CHEERYHEART HARDTIMES.
MERRYTONGUE HARDTIMES.

SCENE I.

Christmas Eve in the Hardtimes household. The family seated around a table, all looking very sad and gloomy.

MR. HARDTIMES [*speaking impatiently*].

Absurd! you're silly children all,
I thought you [*to Mrs. H.*] were more rational;

To prate of Christmas trees and cheer,
I told you we'd have none this year:
The times are hard, and money's tight,
So let me hear no more to-night.

MRS. HARDTIMES [*pleasantly*]. But, husband,
really it seems strange

To have no kindly interchange
Of little presents Christmas-tide—

MR. H. [*interrupting*]. Pshaw! what's the
custom, pray, beside

A foolish Roman practice bold
To curry favor with their gold
In costly gifts on the new year?
I trust you are less *wily* here!

[*Looks severely at his daughters.*]

CHEERYHEART. Why, papa! Christians took
the *right*

To celebrate the Babe's birthnight,
Who for us in a manger lay
Upon the *first* glad Christmas Day.

MR. H. Of course that fact I well remember,

But how know we 'twas in *December*?
Because the Saxons burned their yules
This time of year shall we be fools
And copy them, by burning trees?
Times are too hard for *such* follies!
I tell you 'tis a heathen rite,
So talk no more such talk to-night.

MERRYTONGUE. Well, how *shall* we then
keep the day?

I wish you'd tell us, papa, pray,
For very dull to sit 'twill be,
And *others* see laugh merrily
At what *they* in their stockings find—

MR. H. [*interrupting*]. Tush, tush! such
speech shows childish minds.

What shall we do? why, stay at home—

CHEERYHEART. Our church, as well as those
of Rome,

Trims gay with greens on Christmas Day,
In wreaths, and garlands, festooned gay—

MR. H. [*quickly*]. A custom from the Druids
caught,

They mistleto and holly brought
To strew their altars; and the Greeks
As well, their temples decked. It speaks—

MERRYTONGUE. It *seems* to speak, these cus-
toms *all*,

Of natures kind and prodigal;
These gifts to friends, adorning shrines
With flowers, and greens, and trailing vines,

So sacredly commemorate
The gods whose feast they celebrate.

[*Some Christmas horns heard outside.*]

MR. H. [*stopping up his ears*]. What din and
turmoil on the street,
A pandemonium complete!
What there can in those shrill horns be
Of pleasure, I indeed can't see!

MERRYTONGUE. Why, papa, they but loudly
say,

“Let all rejoice on Christmas Day!”

Oh, what if “*times*” are dull and drear,
Let Christmas joys and Christmas cheer
Make bright and glad each human heart,
Some pleasant warmth to all impart!

These *pagan* rites but do instill
Into our souls but “peace, good-will;”

And if it be unknown *what* day

The magi came, we ought alway
To keep *some* time, *some* sacred hour
His birth to honor—our Saviour!

[MR. HARDTIMES *shakes his head impatiently*.]

MRS. H. [*rising*]. Come, girls, to bed and pleas-
ant dreams.

[*Aside to her daughters*]. I own it scarce like
Christmas seems.

I miss our little laughs and jokes

O'er gifts. [*Clock strikes aloud*]. The clock
strikes twelve slow strokes—

'Tis Christmas morn [*earnestly*]. Let's hope
and pray

These cruel “*times*” will pass away
And bright ones come. Good-night, my
dear. [*Kisses daughters*].

CHEERYHEART. Good-night, mamma, we'll
linger here

A little longer; maybe we

Old merry Kriss Kringl~~e~~ will see.

We'll ask him to send heartier cheer

Unto our home for the new year.

Good night, papa; *maybe* you're right,

But I like *still* the pagan rite!

[*Exeunt MR. and MRS. HARDTIMES*].

MERRYTONGUE. Well! as for me, I will not
stand

This strange, unkind, and cold command!

Not give each other gifts, indeed!

That isn't in *my* Christian creed!

CHEERYHEART. Nor mine; we'll ignorant
heathens be,

Dear sister; we *will* have a tree,

If it but be a sprig, I ween

'Twill serve to make our Christmas green!

MERRYTONGUE. Yes, for each one in the morn
Some little gift it shall adorn;

Come, now, we'll have to work right well

To bring about this magic spell. [*Exeunt*].

SCENE II.

Christmas morning. A small tree is set upon the table, with some tiny packages beside it.

[*Enter MR. and MRS. HARDTIMES. MRS. HARDTIMES has a package in her hand which she tries to conceal. They both start upon discovering the Christmas tree.*]

MR. H. Why, what is this, my dear? I see
Before me, here, a Christmas tree!

MRS. H. [*smiling gladly*]. Perhaps, who
knows? that after all

Kriss Kringle last eve made a call.

[*Enter CHEERYHEART and MERRYTONGUE. They also each have a small paper parcel.*]

MERRYHEART. Good-morning! Merry Christ-
mas, ma.

The same to you, my dear papa.

[*Unfastens paper, and discloses button-hole bouquet, which she fastens in his coat.*]

This is my offering. Do not start.

Not from my pocket, but my heart;

Where *every* gift, if given *pure*,

Should truly come, or rich or poor.

MERRYTONGUE [*opening her package, and taking therefrom a pretty breakfast cap, which she puts on her mother's head*].

This, mamma dear, I made last night,

Though it is not a *nightcap* quite!

And if the stitches are too long,

They're sewed quite tight, and fast and
strong,

And each one here is full of love

And merry wishes—

MRS. H. And to prove

That I, too, thought of you last eve,

Look in this napkin [*opens package*], and
perceive

What I, too, sat up late to make,

To “keep” this Christmas for your sake.

[*Opens package, and shows a Christmas cake.*]

MERRYTONGUE and CHEERYHEART embrace
their mother, and both exclaim:

Oh mamma, dear, how good and kind!

MR. H. [*looking from one to the other, and feeling inside his pockets with great haste*].

[*Aside*]. I really—hum!—wish I could find

Some trifling thing to give.] My dears.

[*Addressing all*]. I'm really sorry. I have
fears

You think me wanting in true love;

But now, indeed, to me you prove

That it is best these “heathen rites”—

MERRYTONGUE [*clapping her hands joyfully*].

Oh papa! Then, on Christmas nights

Hereafter we may merrily

Give gifts, and have our pretty tree!

[MR. HARDTIMES *nods his head “yes,” and both daughters embrace him. MRS. HARDTIMES pats him affectionately.*]

CHEERYHEART. Let the tidings gladly ring;
Sister, join with me and sing

Our new Christmas carol true,

Which we mean for you and you [*pointing to audience*].

[*They join hands, and sing DISTINCTLY.*]

Though it be a Roman rite,

Be a heathen Christmas night,

And unto each, loved and dear,

Offer presents and good cheer.

If our rude forefathers old,

In the winter's dreary cold

Burnt the yule right merrily,

Why should we not burn the tree?

Ah, deep down in every heart

There is, surely, a sweet part

Which holds *sacred* rites like these

Romanesque or Germane!

Let the blessed Christmas time

Send its joyous, merry chime

Into every home and land.

Let the word be a command:

“Peace on earth, to man good-will,”

Let each one the law fulfill.

Then the blessed Christ-child's day

Shall be *holy* kept alway!

CURTAIN.

CAKES FOR THE FAMILY.

BY LIZZIE HERITAGE.



WE will commence this paper with a few recipes for cakes to be eaten hot, and give first place to *Griddle Cakes*, which seem to be but little known here in England, except in the North, though they are easy enough to make in these days of close ranges and gas stoves, because the griddle should *not* be placed over a blazing fire. Those who have not a griddle may use an iron frying-pan, providing it is a thick one, and kept for the one purpose. Before baking the cakes, the griddle or pan should be allowed to get quite hot, then rubbed with a piece of fat pork, *just* enough to keep the batter from sticking, which for griddle cakes should be thin enough to *just* run when poured out on to the griddle. As flour varies, it is hardly possible to give the exact recipe; on trial, if the first cake appears too stiff, add a little more milk, and after the batter is right, as many may be made at once as the pan will hold, allowing, of course, sufficient room for each spoonful to spread. When one side is brown, turn the cakes. Eat them hot, with butter.

Graham Griddle Cakes.—Half a pint of brown flour, half as much white ditto, a tea-spoonful of salt (a little sugar, if liked), an ounce of lard, melted in about three-quarters of a pint of buttermilk or sour milk, two eggs beaten light, and half a tea-spoonful of carbonate of soda dissolved in a table-spoonful of hot water. If no buttermilk can be had and fresh milk is used, cream of tartar must be added to the soda.

City Cream Cakes.—A pint of cream and a pint of milk, four eggs, salt, soda, and cream of tartar as usual; flour to make a nice batter. These are a luxury.

Buttermilk Cakes without eggs are very nice. To a pint of buttermilk add a tea-spoonful of soda and salt, and nearly a pint of white flour.

Risen Griddle Cakes receive the addition of yeast, and should be mixed over-night. In the morning the butter or lard should be dissolved and stirred in.

Rice Cakes are a dainty, and must close our mention of griddle cakes. Half a cup of cold boiled rice, the same of corn meal, one egg, a bit of butter, salt, and sugar; milk to make a rather thin batter. Grease the pan well, as these are apt to stick.

Dough Nuts seem better known in this country than Crullers are, and we give a very good recipe—as good as any we know of. One cup of sugar, two eggs, half a cup of sour milk, with half a tea-spoonful of soda dissolved in it, three ounces of butter, a pinch of salt, a tea-spoonful of ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg mixed, and flour to make a soft dough. Cut into any shape preferred, or roll into tiny plaits, twists, and such-like. Fry in plenty of lard, and sift powdered sugar over while hot.

Crullers require some care in the frying, and, as will be seen, they are richer than dough nuts. Plenty of fat is required, very hot, then they will puff out and rise to the surface; as soon as they are brown, the pan should be drawn a little from the fire, that they may be thoroughly cooked without being burnt. Rub half a pound of butter or lard to a cream, with half a pound of white sugar. Beat in four or five eggs and half a cup of milk; then stir in flour enough to roll out as soft as you can without it being sticky. Roll into a sheet half an inch thick, and cut into rounds, or into strips, and tie in knots. Any spice or flavouring may be used, and baking powder, or soda and cream of tartar mixed with the flour, then fewer eggs will do.

A nice addition can always be made to any tea-table by setting on a dish of *jumbles*. They resemble short-bread in mode and taste, but are made small, in rings, leaves, and other shapes, not more than a third of an inch thick when baked. They should be *slowly* cooked to a pale brown, and be covered with sifted sugar before they are put into the oven.

Nut Jumbles may owe their name to walnuts or Brazil nuts; the chopped kernels of either are very nice. Cocoa-nut, too, is excellent. Almond jumbles are as good as any. Beat together half a pound each of sugar and butter and three eggs; add a quarter-pound of chopped almonds, and a little lemon-juice. Stir the flour lightly in, from half to three-quarters of a pound. Rose-water or orange-flower water is often used as a flavouring for these little cakes; and a very superior kind are flavoured with a tea-spoonful of vanilla essence.

Seed Jumbles are a plainer kind, more suitable for children. The recipe is a quarter of a pound of lard, six ounces of sugar, two eggs, a quarter of a pint of milk, half an ounce of seeds, either caraway or pounded coriander, and nearly a pound of flour.

Molasses Cookies are nursery favourites, and very nice. Mix together, and warm, one cup of butter and two of molasses; add a tea-spoonful of ground ginger and the same of nutmeg, and then, gradually, enough flour to make a stiff batter, firm enough for a spoon to stand in. Bake in greased small tins; or the batter may be made stiff enough to mould with the hands into round cakes, which may be baked on a baking-sheet in a gentle oven.

Short Cookies.—Rub half a pound of lard or dripping into a pound of rice flour, add six ounces of brown sugar, one egg, and a table-spoonful of lemon-juice. Mix with a cup of warm milk into which a tea-spoonful of saleratus has been stirred. Saleratus is much used in America; some prefer it to soda, though, if the latter is fresh and good, it may take its place.

Coffee Cake will, we think, prove a novelty, and it is worth a trial. It must be slowly baked in a tin lined with several sheets of paper, the one next the cake to be white and well buttered. Set a quart of flour in

the oven until quite hot, then rub into it half a pound of butter, twelve ounces of sugar, four ounces of figs cut up, six ounces of stoned raisins, three ounces of mixed candied peel, and a good tea-spoonful of fresh baking powder. Then put in a quarter-pint of treacle, the same of cream or good milk, a tea-cupful of strong, clear coffee, and three eggs, yolks only. It will take two hours or more to bake properly, in a shallow tin.

Chocolate Cake is made similarly to the above; the best chocolate should be used, and made as if for drinking, as thick as custard. If the chocolate is very sweet, a little less sugar should be put into the cake. Both coffee and chocolate should be added cold. These two are great Yankee favourites.

Angel Cakes are indescribably light and good; they must, to be worth anything, be consumed while fresh. Beat the whites of six fresh eggs to a froth, add six ounces of white sugar and a tea-spoonful of vanilla flavouring. Stir lightly in four ounces and a half of white flour, well sifted and quite dry: in fact, it should be warm. Pour instantly into a tin (not more than half filling it), and at once transfer to a sound regular oven. When done, do not take the cake into a cool place until it is quite cold. Part of the mixture might be coloured pink and flavoured with rose essence; this would give *Rose Cake*. May we suggest that, in that case, some of the two, with coffee or chocolate cake, arranged in a silver basket, in alternate slices, would look and taste good.

Dessert Cake is made in perfection by American confectioners; there are several varieties, the most liked being a very rich one, with a selection of dried fruits, such as cherries, apricots, greengages, &c., cut up in it. We lately tasted one with crystallised pineapple in small pieces, the cake being flavoured with pineapple essence. The foundation resembles an English Madeira cake. An oval or square tin, rather shallow, is chiefly used for them.

Soda Cakes, white, light, and delicious, are the *rule* in America, but seem the *exception* here. We believe the chief reason to be this: English cooks frequently use soda alone, without acid. In America double the quantity of cream of tartar is added to the soda. It should be remembered that soda itself has no lightening property; acid must be added before effervescence can be obtained. If the cake is a plain one, in which the butter is rubbed into the flour, the acid may be mixed *with* the flour, then the fruit, sugar, &c., next the eggs, and the soda put in last of all, in the milk. In a rich cake, when the butter, eggs, and sugar are creamed, the flour, acid, and soda (all together) may be stirred in last thing. Soda cakes want a good oven; properly managed, few kinds are nicer.

Of *Sandwich Cakes*, or *Layer Cakes*, the variety is so great that we hardly know which to select. We will first impress upon our readers the necessity of a hot oven, and of putting the cakes into it at once. The

tins should be round, about the size of a cheese-plate, and an inch in depth, never being more than half filled. Two are laid together to form the sandwich, first spread with jam, jelly, or lemon curd, corn-flour cream, chocolate cream, or, what is a great favourite, cocoa-nut cream. When the two cakes are turned out of the tins, the bottom of each must be spread; the tops, being browner, should be outside. To make the cake, beat hard together twelve ounces of sugar, four each of butter and lard, and five eggs. Then stir in a pound of flour, mixed with the third of an ounce of finely-powdered ammonia. Where the latter is discountenanced, soda and acid must take its place. *Cocoa-nut Cream* is made by grating the white part of a cocoa-nut, and adding half its weight of sugar, then mixing the two with the milk of the nut and the white of an egg, to bind it into a paste soft enough to spread easily. Some of the nut may be reserved, and sprinkled on the top of the cake. For the *Chocolate Cream*, boil together an ounce of grated chocolate and an ounce of corn-flour for a few minutes with a pint of milk. Sweeten, and flavour with vanilla essence.

Honey Apple Cake will sound to English readers somewhat odd, but those who try it once will be very likely to repeat it. Soak a cup of apple-chips for some hours; chop fine, and simmer for an hour in a cup of clear honey, stirring often. When cool, add a cup of sugar, half a cup of milk, half a cup of butter, a tea-spoonful of mixed cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves, two eggs, a cup and a half of flour, and a heaped tea-spoonful of baking powder. Bake in a gentle oven, in a tin lined with buttered paper.

Our paper shall close with a delicacy seen on the tea-tables of most well-to-do American farmers—viz., *Fruit Shortcake*. Huckleberries are much liked; in this country blackberries or mulberries could be used in their stead, and nothing could be more delicious than Raspberry or Strawberry Shortcake. The recipe here given is rich enough for ordinary purposes, but of course more lard and butter can be used if liked. Sift and dry a pint of flour, rub into it two ounces of lard and two of butter, a little salt, a spoonful of baking powder, and half an ounce of white sugar. Mix to a nice paste with one egg and about a tea-cupful of rich milk. Roll into two round sheets, one thicker than the other; cover the thinner of the two thickly with the berries, well sweetened, lay the other over, and bake in a tin, just large enough to hold it, for about twenty minutes, until nicely browned. Strawberry Shortcake is usually made by laying the two pieces of crust one on the other, dividing when baked, then putting the fruit between in a thick layer. Have fully ripe berries, not too large; sweeten well, and slightly crush them; then press well on the top layer. These cakes are often eaten hot, with sugar and cream. When sour milk or cream is at hand, use it, in which case leave out the powder and put in soda.





THINGS IN SEASON,
IN
MARKET AND KITCHEN.
DECEMBER.



NE glance round the markets and shops in any week of December tells us that Christmas is the prominent thought in the minds of all who have anything to sell, and that royal bird, the turkey, is very much

en evidence. But we cannot eat turkey all the weeks of December, and every day is not Christmas Day. Let us, therefore, take a look round with the object of seeing what else there is that is peculiar to the month, and that will help us in compiling our daily menus, as well as to make variety on extra occasions.

Among fish we have the dory—supposed by some to be the fish blessed by our Lord in the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. It is an unsightly fish, but most excellent for flavour and delicacy, very much resembling turbot, and it should be boiled and served the same as the latter.

Turbot is also in excellent condition now, so is cod; then we have ling, a cheap and nourishing fish, thought much of by dwellers on the northern coasts, and we have smaller fish in abundance.

All meat is, of course, in prime condition—almost too prime for some tastes—and we may even indulge in an occasional little roast pork, for if ever pork may be said to be wholesome it is now. Hams and pickled tongues make a feature in the shops now, also pork pies of every imaginable size, weight and kind. The wise and happy are they who can cure their own hams, pickle their own tongues, make their own sausages and bake their own pies—these have not to be taken on trust.

The list of vegetables and fruits is a long one; what we have not in a fresh state we can purchase dried, and there is no lack of variety either way.

Brocoli, savoys, celery, seakale and Scotch kale are all at their best; a touch of frost improves their flavour, but the later severe frosts of January are apt to kill them off entirely. We should make plentiful use of these now, for there will come a time later on when green food will be scarce, and we can then bring out our dishes of carrots, parsnips and the like.

As long as the supply of English apples and pears lasts we should have them frequently, we can have recourse to the cheaper foreign kinds when our own are all gone. Almonds, walnuts, filberts, hazel nuts, and many more, are very plentiful, and this shows us they are the natural food of winter time.

It might be well this month to devote one of our menus to such dishes as are Christmas-like in character, and to make the other festive without being suggestive of this special feast at all.

No. 1. (CHRISTMAS MENU.)

Clear Gravy Soup.
Boiled Turbot, or Cod, with Anchovy or Oyster Sauce.
Roast Turkey, with Stewed Celery, Sprouts and Potatoes.
Baked Ham and Endive Salad.
Plum Pudding. Apple Soufflee. Meringues.
Stilton Cheese, Biscuits, and Dessert.

MENU No. 2.

Oxtail Soup.
Fried Fillets of Haddock, Genoise Sauce.
Chicken Mayonnaise.
Roast Saddle of Welsh Mutton, Brocoli.
Salmi of Partridge.
Neapolitan Pudding.
Cheese or Anchovy Croustades.

A recipe for *Clear Gravy Soup* may not be unnecessary. A pound of gravy beef, and a small knuckle-bone of veal; simmer these in a glazed earthenware vessel, that will hold about two quarts of water, for several hours, but never allow the liquor to boil. When about half cooked add to it a whole carrot cut in four, two, or three onions and a bunch of savoury herbs, but no turnip. Strain off the liquor when done enough so that the fat may settle on the top, and then carefully remove it all. When about to re-heat it, pour it into a fresh vessel and season it to taste, then add a teaspoonful of cornflour wet with water, and a teaspoonful of Liebig's Extract of Meat, to give a little more "body" to the stock. Any special flavouring liked may be added at this time, but if the liquor has been properly cooked its flavour will be sufficiently good.

When we speak of "boiled" fish of any kind, it must be remembered that it should never by any means actually "boil," but only simmer gently until done. To boil anything is to spoil it, although, as a cookery term, we speak of it so.

Of the sauces, it may be needful to mention one in detail, namely, the Genoise sauce.

For this take half a pint of milk and put it into a saucepan with a few strips of thin rind of fresh lemon; when it boils pour it on to a spoonful of cornflour previously dissolved in a little cold milk, add this to the yolks of two eggs, an ounce of butter, pepper and salt, and stir these carefully over the fire. When the mixture boils, withdraw it, and add gradually the juice of half a fresh lemon. This sauce should be a clear bright yellow and of the consistency of good cream.

It is usual to stuff a turkey with sausage-meat at the breast end and put a veal stuffing in the body of the bird, or a mixture of boiled chestnuts, breadcrumbs and forcemeat is very good, but somewhat rich. The time the bird will take to roast depends entirely upon its

weight, a quarter of an hour to a pound is the correct proportion to allow. Keep well basted, and shield it from the fierce heat.

If intended for eating cold a turkey is never so nice as when "braised," if only a vessel can be found large enough to contain it and keep it covered. A few slices of fat bacon should be put with it, and plenty of good dripping, and rather more time allowed than for roasting; moreover, the cover should be kept tightly closed to keep in the steam. Drain away all the fat, but leave the bird to get cold in the pan. Garnish with its gravy when that has set to a jelly.

The sauce for a salmi should be prepared first, and the joints of the birds just allowed to simmer in it for a little while. Make the gravy from very good strong stock, adding a thickening that shall be transparent, and whatever drops of gravy can be gathered together. A little beef essence may be needed to enrich the stock, also plenty of seasoning. Chopped mushrooms should be added whenever possible, not many will be required. Serve fried potato chips with a salmi, but no other vegetable.

Almost everyone has a recipe for plum pudding; it is one of those possessions about which every woman is more or less conceited, so we will not take up space by giving another here. *Neapolitan Pudding* may, however, be new to some of our readers, and it is one that is well worth being known by all. For it a few macaroons, some sponge cakes, a little apricot jam and a pint or more of rich well-flavoured custard will be needed. Half an ounce of dissolved isinglass should be stirred into the custard, and this should be flavoured with some essence. Arrange the macaroons at the bottom and round the sides of a buttered mould. Spread the sponge cakes with jam, and fit them in, pouring a little juice over all. Pour in the custard while it is hot, and cover the mould tightly, setting it aside to become cold and stiff. When it is turned out, heap some bright jelly around the base and garnish the top with preserved cherries and greengages cut small.

Meringues are more difficult to make, and require practice to do them well. The cases require the frothed whites of the eggs to be whisked until very firm, and the sugar should be beaten in with a light hand. Drop this by small spoonfuls on to greased note-paper; bake to a very pale brown, slip off the paper with a sharp knife, scoop out a little of the inside and fill up with cream whipped very stiffly. Any flavouring that may be liked can be used.

Croustades of various kinds have been given so often in these pages that it is hardly necessary to repeat the recipe here. Fry the bread in butter or lard, and spread with whatever mixture is chosen whilst they are warm, garnish prettily, and serve warm and fresh though not hot.

COUNTRY SCENES. - DECEMBER.



Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow
And tread softly, and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying. TENNYSON.

Illustrated London Almanack, 1848

A Victorian Christmas Treasury



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