

GAMES IN THE OLDEN TIMES

After the dinner table was removed, the hall was given up to the younger members of the family, who prompted to all kinds of noisy mirth by the Oxonian and Master Simon, made its own walls ring with their merriment, as they played at romping games. I delight in witnessing the gambols of children, and particularly at the happy holiday season, and could not but be seized out of the drawing room on hearing one of their peals of laughter. I found them at the game of blind-man's buff. Master Simon, who was the leader of their revels and seemed on all occasions to fulfill the office of that ancient potentate the Lord of Misrule, was blinded in the midst of the hall. The little helms were as busy about him as the mock fairies about Falstaff, pinching him, plucking at the skirts of his coat, and tickling him with straw. One fine blue-eyed girl of about thirteen, with her flaxen hair all in beautiful confusion, her frolic face in a glow, her frolic hair torn off her shoulders, a complete picture of a romp, was the chief tormentor; a l from the sky with which Master Simon avoided the smaller game, and hummed this wild little nymph in corners, and obliged her to jump shrieking over the chairs, I suspected the rogue of being not a whit more blinded than convenient. When I returned to the drawing room, I found the company seated around the fire listening to the parson, who was deeply amused in a high-backed oaken chair, the work of some cunning artificer of yore, which had been brought from the library for his particular accommodation. From this venerable piece of furniture, with which his shadowy figure and dark weazen face so admirably accorded, he was dealing forth strange accounts of the popular superstitions and legends of the surrounding country, with which he had become acquainted in the course of his antiquarian researches. I am inclined to think that the old gentleman himself was somewhat tinged with superstition, as he is very apt to be who lead a reclusive and sequestered life. He gave us several anecdotes of the fancies of the neighborly peasantry, considering the efficacy of the Crutcher which lay on the tomb by the church altar. It was the only monument of the kind in that part of the country, it had always been regarded with feelings of superstition by the neighboring peasantry. It was said to get up from the tomb, and walk the rounds of the churchyard on stormy nights, particularly when it thundered; and one old woman, whose cottage bordered on the churchyard, had seen it through the windows of the church when the moon shone, slowly pacing up and down the aisles. It was believed that some wrong had been left unredressed by the deceased, or some treasure hidden which kept the spirit in a state of trouble and restlessness. While we were all attention to the parson's stories, our ears were suddenly assailed by a burst of heterogeneous sounds from the hall, in which were mingled something like the clang of rude minstrelsy, with the uproar of many small voices and girlish laughter. The door suddenly flew open and a train came trooping into the room that almost might have been taken for the breaking up of the Court of Fairy. That indefatigable spirit, Master Simon, in the faithful discharge of his duties as Lord of Misrule, had conceived the idea of a Christmas mummery, or masquing, and having called in to his assistance the Oxonian and the young officer, who were equally ripe for anything that should occasion romping and merriment, they had carried it into instant effect. The old housekeeper had been consulted; the antique clothes presses and wardrobes rummaged and made to yield up the relics of finery that had not seen the light of day for several generations; the younger part of the company had been privately conveyed from parlor and hall, and the whole had been beddiesed out into a burlesque imitation of an ancient masque. Master Simon led the van as "Ancient Christmas," quaintly appareled in a ruff, a short black, which had very much the aspect of one of the old housekeeper's petticoats, and a hat that might have served for a village steeple, and must indubitably have figured in the days of the Covenanters. From under this, his nose curved boldly forth, thrust with a frost-bitten bloom that seemed the very trophy of a December blast. He was accompanied by the blue-eyed romp, dressed up as "Dame Mince Pie," in the venerable magnificence of faded brocade, long stomacher, peaker hat and high-heeled shoes. The young officer appeared as Robin Hood in a sporting dress of Kendal green and a foraging cap with a gold tassel. The costume, to be sure, did not bear testimony to deep research, and there was an evident eye to the picturesque, natural to a young gallant in the presence of his mistress. The fair Julia hung on his arm in a pretty rustic dress as "Maid Marian." The rest of the train had been metamorphosed in various ways; the girls trussed up in the ancient finery of the belles of the Bracebridge line, and the striplings bewhiskered with burnt cork, and gravely clad in broad skirts, hanging sleeves, and full-bottomed wigs, to represent the characters of roast beef, plum pudding, and other worthies celebrated in ancient maskings. The whole was under the control of the Oxonian, in the appropriate character of Minerva, and I observed that he exercised rather a mischievous sway with his wand over the smaller personages of the pageant. The intrusion of this motley crew, ancient custom, was the consummation of uproar and merriment. Master Simon covered himself with glory by the staidness with which, as Ancient Christmas, he walked a minuet with the peerless, though giggling, Dame Mince Pie. He was followed by a dance of all the characters, which from its medley costumes, seemed as though the old family portraits had skipped down from their frames to join in the sport. Different centuries were figuring at cross hands, and right and left; the dark ages were cutting paces and rigadoons; and the days of Queen Bess, jiggling merrily down the middle through a line of succeeding generations. The worthy squire contemplated these fantastic sports and this resurrection of his old wardrobe with the simple relish of childish delight. He stood chucking and rubbing his hands and scarcely hearing a word of the parson's said, notwithstanding that the latter was discoursing most authentically on the ancient and stately dances of the Pavan or peacock, from which he conceived the minut to be derived. For my part, I was in a continual excitement from the varied scenes of whim and innocent gaiety passing before me. It was inspiring to see wild-eyed frolic and warm-hearted hospitality breaking out from among the chills and gloom of winter, and old age throwing in of its spathy and catching once more the freshness of youthful enjoyment.—Washington Irving in "The Sketch Book."

A REASON FOR ENCORE.

Mrs. Gabbler (at the musicale)—"Oh, Mrs. Noodle, I had so much to say to you, and now the pianist is through."

EXPERIENCE TEACHES.

Flatbush—"You know music has a wonderful influence over us. Bensonhurst—"I know it."

"Did you ever feel the power of a singer over you?" "Oh, often. I married one, you know!"

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FOUR CHRISTMAS DINNERS

- From The Ladies' Home Journal.) Chicken Pie Dinner. Chicken Pie. Roast Fresh Ham or Sparerib With Apple Sauce. Plain Boiled Potatoes. Mashed Squash, Mashed Turnip, Boiled Onions. Celery. Cranberry Sauce. Brown and White Bread. Delicious Christmas Pudding. Hard Sauce. Apples, Marlborough, Mince, Cranberry or Squash Pie. Cheese. Apples and Winter Peas. Butternuts, Hickory Nuts. Raisins. Coffee and Cream. Planked Chicken Dinner. Chicken or Gumbo. Olives, Celery. Pickled Watermelon Rind. Spiced Cantaloupe. Cheese Cutlets. Tartar Sauce. Deviled Cucumbers. Planked Chickens, Vegetable Garnish and Pastry Horns of Plenty Filled With Peas. Candied Sweet Potatoes. Mamma's Bestest Biscuit, Unsalted Butter.

APPAREL GIFTS FOR MEN

THEY CAN BE CLOTHED FROM HEAD TO FOOT

Khaki Mufflers Are Survivor of Warfare—Suggestion: Are Given For a Selection of Remembrances For Christmas.

Give a man something to wear and you will please him. This appears to be the Christmas course that is generally followed by relatives and close friends. In fact, a man can be clothed from head to foot with Christmas remembrances. The furnishings stores are filled with appropriate gifts for mere man and they are as busy at this season of the year as any other store.

For his head, there are hats, caps, woolen toques and helmets for outdoor and driving purposes. For his bodily comfort there are house coats, smoking jackets, bathrobes, fancy vests and sweaters.

For his feet there are house slippers, bath shoes and, if he is a gymnastic enthusiast or an athlete, a pair of rubber-soled shoes will not come amiss.

Mother is likely to buy him several suits of underwear and, naturally, he expects several pairs of socks at least.

There are sets of fancy garters, sleeve bands and suspenders. They come neatly arranged in a special holiday box. The prices are widely varied, too.

Perhaps he does not wear suspenders. Then there is a leather belt as a gift. There are many styles and sizes for both young and middle-aged men.

The shirt is also a standard Christmas gift for men. Those with soft cuffs are very popular, but perhaps father still clings to the stiff-starched front and cuffs.

There are countless styles and qualities of neckties. The knitted tie is practically off the market, but the silk or satin tie of usual design is

evident in great number. Some member of the family is apt to buy him a pair of rubbers or overshoes.

Soft collars are being worn the year round and it is quite easy to pick out the latest styles in men's neckwear of this type.

There are gloves and gauntlets and mittens in numerous qualities and at various prices.

Many a man would like to have a pair of gaiters but probably he has not thought about going into a store to buy a pair.

Handkerchiefs are also standard as holiday gifts and they are always handy. The pure linen handkerchief makes the best present. It is generally admitted. In many cases, silk handkerchiefs are considered more ornamental than useful.

There are a number of men who like to wear wristlets. They become more popular with the war and their use is being continued to a certain extent.

Kid gloves may cover soiled hands.

Spirit Of Santa Claus.

The good old man has many names and the preparation of his coming is different in various lands. But although in some places he is called Santa Claus, and in others Kris Kringle, and in others Father Christmas, or Saint Nicholas, in others Bonhomme Noel, while in still others Knecht Clobes, he is really in all lands and in all languages the same spirit of good doing and loving kindness. Saint Nicholas is not a person, but a spirit.

Long, long ago there was a real man named Nicholas who was very rich and who had fine possessions, but he was not happy. The sight of poor and suffering people added to him and he decided that only by giving comfort to others could he hope to know the true happiness himself. In the night, when the townfolk were in bed he went from

house to house in the poor neighborhood and left upon the window-sills gifts that would enable the poor to buy for themselves warm clothing and good food; and all these gifts he gave in secret so no one would know whom to thank and no one could trace the source of the blessings.

But the deed of good deeds is always discovered and one night a poor man waited until he saw the mysterious hand place a prize upon his window-sill. Then he caught up a lantern and running to the door saw Nicholas leaving his gift at the next house.

"Thank you, thank you," cried the poor fellow. "Do not thank me," said Nicholas, "thank God, who has sent me to you for His blessing." When this good man died the people called him Saint Nicholas, and his necessary prompted others to go on with the good work he had begun.

The best part of carrying on the work of St. Nicholas was that it was done in secret. Nobody knew who gave the gifts that brightened the day and nobody knew whom to thank, but better still was the noble spirit that caused men and women to wish to give gifts for which they could receive no "thank you." They gave, and they gave in secret, just for the love of doing good and for the joy of giving happiness to others. This is the spirit of Santa Claus, that slips each year into the hearts of men and women and boys and girls and which prompts them to slip gifts into the stockings of their friends on Christmas Eve.

Unique Belgian Sport. Sand boat racing is a sport enjoyed by Belgians and visitors along the sand dunes of La Panne. The boats are so named because they are sailed on the shore. A small frame is spread on four wheels and on the cross bars of the frame is set a good sized mast and sail. The wheeled craft is guided by a rope, as boys steer a bobsled or a small wheel. In a good breeze the boats make 15 or 20 miles an hour. The sand sailor can tack or turn his craft around just as easily as if he were sailing on water.

A Christmas Acrostic.

M for the mistletoe, 'merry and bright, E for the evergreen, Santa's delight R for the room where we hang up the hose, R for red ribbons for red ribbon bows, Y for the youngsters who scurry to bed. C for the candy canes, yellow and red; H for the holly that shines through the pane, R for the reindeer we seek for in vain, I for the ice of the valley and hill, S for the stockings for Santa to fill, T for the tinsel that hangs on the tree, M for the music of laughter and glee; A for the absent remembrance and dear, S for the season's glad greetings of cheer! Mabel Livingston Frank.

Burning the Faggot.

One of the old Christmas customs which has almost entirely died out is burning the faggot. It is still kept up in some parts of England. Large faggots bound with thick thongs of wood are placed across the throes of the village lavatories, and these are watched carefully by all present until the bonds burst. Immediately this takes place the customers are at liberty to help themselves to ale served in large cans, which the landlord supplies. The burning of the Yuletide log is still, of course, kept up in some parts. With much ceremony a substantial block of wood is brought in twelve nights in succession, and reverently placed on the fire, where it is allowed to remain a little while. Then it is removed and placed in a box, where it is kept until the next Christmas, to be used then to help ignite the new Yule Log.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

Yes, once again the Christmas bells are swelling, From out the belfrey tower, old and dark, And once again the story they are telling The old but tender story, hark!

Each year those same old bells have tolled the story, The message dear to every listening heart, Tidings of joy and everlasting sweetness, And once again that story they impart.

Mankind seems to heed the gentle warning, And remember that it is a time for good, A time for peace, for joy, and exultation, The time to live in friendly brotherhood.

Oh, may these bells, forever pealing in the spire, Bless earthly hearts and give them love and peace, And gently lift their souls to realms higher, Each Christmas.