

CHRISTMAS GAMES



A FAVORITE old Christmas sport, which is still played frequently by persons of English descent, is that known as **snapdragon**. A quantity of raisins is deposited in a broad, shallow bowl and brandy or some other spirits poured over the fruit and ignited.

The bystanders endeavor by turns to grasp a raisin, plunging their hands through the flames, this requiring both courage and rapidity of action. While the sport is going on the lights are extinguished so that the lurid glare of the burning spirits may produce the weirdest possible effect.

In this amusement some persons have traced the remains of the druidic ordeal by fire. While the game is on the following lines are chanted:

Here he comes with flaming bowl.
Don't he mean to take his toll?
Snap! Snap! Dragon!
Take care you don't take too much.
Be not greedy in your clutch.
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

With his blue and lapping tongue
May you will be stung.
Snap! Snap! Dragon!
For he snaps at all that comes,
Snapping at his feast of plums.
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

But old Christmas makes him come,
Though he looks so fee-fa-fum!
Snap! Snap! Dragon!
Don't be afraid him, but be bold—
Out he goes; his flames are cold!
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

MISFIT ANSWERS.

For the many jolly gatherings of Christmas week a game or two may be in order. Here is one that will help the young folks have a good time:

Let one of the party go out of the room and those remaining choose three objects, to be called respectively No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3. These objects may be either persons or things or a combination of both. Choice is not limited in any way. When the player comes in he is asked what he will do with No. 1, then with No. 2, and so on. If the answers he gives are possible in connection with the object or person represented by the numbers he passes and another is sent out. If not, he must go out again.

Suppose, for instance, Independence Hall is chosen for No. 1, Roosevelt for No. 2 and the cow that jumped over the moon for No. 3. If in answer to "What will you do with No. 1?" he replies, "I will paint it pea green," in answer to No. 2, "I will send it a letter," and to No. 3, "I will write a poem about it," he would pass. But if any one answer had been an impossibility as, for instance, if in answer to No. 2 he had said, "I will make bouey out of it," he would have to try over again.

KING AND QUEEN.

A jolly Christmas diversion is the game called king and queen. This game requires an equal number of girls and boys. One boy is chosen king and a girl queen.

The king and queen choose their respective followers, and each one is given a number.

Then they all form a circle. At the same moment the king and queen call a number, and the two players bearing the numbers run around outside the circle, the queen's after the king's follower.

If she catches him before he completes the circle he has to go over to her side, and if she does not she becomes a king's follower. The side that has the most followers wins.

Self Peeling Banana.

If you want to create wonderment and laughter at the Christmas dinner table take a banana and just start the peel, or covering, at one end, enough to uncover it an inch or so. Now insert this end into the neck of an empty bottle. The banana will be drawn into the bottle, peeling itself as it does so.

OLD FASHIONED KABAK.

An old fashioned game which is always amusing at the Christmas gathering is kabak. In this absurd pastime the leader says to the one who sits at his right hand, "My ship has come home from China?" The other then asks, "What has it brought you?" The leader makes reply, "A fan." Thereupon with his right hand he makes gestures as if fanning himself. The next player then takes the place of the leader in stating that his ship has come home from China. The questions and answers are repeated as before until the second player is also engaged in fanning himself.

In this manner the round of players is made, and at the end all are industriously working an imaginary fan with their right hands.

The leader then begins the second round with a similar remark, from which is evolved the fact that he has received two fans, and he illustrates this by fanning himself with both hands. This, in turn, makes a round of the company until all are waving both hands to and fro.

The leader then begins the third series, making three fans in fancy by swaying his right foot back and forth. Then he inclines the left foot. Finally the head is nodded. The effect of a whole company engaged in swaying their hands, their feet and heads is altogether ludicrous.

There are many Christmas amusements which depend for their fun on the failure of the players to perform any designated task. Such, for example, is that where each person with blindfolded eyes tries to draw the outlines of a pig. Often the unfortunate subject of the sketch will have an eye in its side and a tail on its head, with a general appearance unlike anything else in air or on earth.

WHO HAS THE BUTTON?

The old game of "Button, button, who has the button?" may be played in a new way at the Christmas merry making. The players sit in a circle. Then the leader takes a button and, holding it between his hands to conceal it, goes around the circle. Each player holds his or her palms together, and as the leader goes around he presses his hands between those of the other players in turn, saying to each, "Hold fast what I give you," being careful not to show into whose hand he drops the button.

When the circuit has been made the leader goes to the first player and says, "Button, button, who has not got the button?" and this person must answer, naming some one that he supposes hasn't it. Thus he proceeds around the ring until all have answered this question according to their belief, when the leader cries, "Button, button, arise!" and the button holder does so.

Then if any one has guessed that the person who really held the button did not hold it he becomes a "ghost" and is out of the charmed circle. The player who held the button becomes leader, and the game goes on. If no one is caught, however, the game proceeds as before, the leader changing places with the player who held the button.

The "ghosts" can only become mortal and again join the circle when they can get some player in the circle to speak to them, and then that mortal must take the "ghost's" place.

THE FROG RACE.

This is a capital Christmas game. The frogs, large and fat, are made of cardboard.

Each frog is threaded on a string, which later is secured at one end to a chair. The other end of the string is manipulated by the player in a series of tugs which jerk the frog along the floor.

It works well on a thick carpet, but should not be put on oilcloth or anything slippery, like parquet or polished boards, for a certain amount of resistance is needed.

As the frogs should be a fair distance apart, allow a chair for each string and tie this to the leg. Ask some one to sit upon the chair so that the jerks, which are sometimes very energetic, may not pull over the starting posts.

Fasten a white tape across the carpet with pins. The first frog that gets over this wins a prize.

The competitors desire speed, but the leisurely manner in which the frogs often respond creates shrieks of laughter from onlookers, especially when the race is a close thing.

MUSICAL THIMBLE HUNT.

Even the very small children find the thimble a delightful game. The home folks may play it with the youngsters or they may play it when other Christmas fun runs low.

One of the company hides the thimble, while the one who is to hunt for it leaves the room. When it is properly hidden some one sits at the piano and plays, and the one who is to hunt for it comes in. Not a word is to be spoken, but when the hunter is near the hidden thimble the piano music must be loud, and when he goes away then the music must be low. It is much more fun than the old way of calling "hot" and "cold."

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FOR those who can sing and for those who cannot the honorable ballad of the popcorn man offers opportunities for huge enjoyment at the Yuletide, when all is jollity and merriment.

The players are arranged in a circle. The leader turns to his left hand neighbor and sings solemnly to a grave or monotonous tune the following words:

Oh, don't you know the popcorn man?
Oh, don't you know the popcorn man?
Oh, don't you know the popcorn man?
Who lives in poor man's lane?

The leader and every player must maintain a sober face throughout the chanting of the ditty or pay a forfeit. The next player, thus questioned in song, must stare the leader in the face and sing in serious manner this reply:

Oh, yes, I know the popcorn man!
Oh, yes, I know the popcorn man!
Oh, yes, I know the popcorn man!
Who lives in poor man's lane!

When he has concluded this stanza he turns to his left hand neighbor and interrogates him:

Oh, don't you know the popcorn man?
Oh, don't you know the popcorn man?
Oh, don't you know the popcorn man?
Who lives in poor man's lane?

The fun continues in this way until the round of players has been made. When all have sung the words the whole company joins in singing the following chorus:

We all well know the popcorn man.
We all well know the popcorn man.
We all well know the popcorn man.
Who lives in poor man's lane.

It is to be believed that no company has yet succeeded in singing through this ballad without accumulating a large quantity of forfeits.

SANTA CLAUS' GIFTS.

Have a large sack (about the size of a laundry bag) filled with inexpensive toys. Each boy or girl is allowed to plunge his or her hand into the bag (which is pulled together at the top with a drawing string) and to keep it there for a minute, feeling as many as possible of the toys contained in it.

Paper and pencils are then distributed, and each must write down the names of all the toys he thought he recognized in the bag.

Those having the best sets of answers receive the toys as prizes.

Of course the bag is opened and the contents spread out in order that all may see just what is there.

This is not a game for the very little tots, but any school boy or girl can play it.

The point which puts it beyond the very little folks is the fact that the names have to be spelled out.

CHRISTMAS BALL GAME.

To provide Yuletide amusement for the children try the following:

Suspend a wreath of evergreen or holly by a red ribbon from the ceiling and see who can throw an apple through it. Use a soft rubber ball where the apple would be likely to break things.

The players stand at the opposite end of the room from the wreath and on a base which has been arranged for in advance.

All those whose missiles actually pass through the wreath receive popcorn balls as rewards for their dexterity.

Match Trick.

Give a person sixteen matches and ask him to lift up from the table fifteen of them on the surface of the remaining one. To accomplish it you must do as follows: Place one match on the table; now place seven of the matches on this single one crosswise, one end on the table, other portion on the single match; now in between these seven more matches leaning in the opposite direction; on top of all the matches, just where they cross, place the remaining match; now grasp the first single match placed on the table, lift up, and you have all the matches raised clear from the table just as if they were a solid mass.

ROYAL COURT.

This game of royal court will afford amusement for the children at Christmas.

Arrange two rows of chairs back to back and seat the children.

At each end of the double row place a table on which is a cardboard box containing one pack of cards. Two children in turn are selected from among those seated.

They go, one to each table, and when the signal is given race in opposite directions round the chairs till they return to their original starting point at the tables. The cards are hastily placed in the box, and a hurried search is made by each of the two children for picture cards.

The four kings, queens and knaves must, when collected, be deposited on a tray that has been placed in another part of the room as a winning post. The first to accomplish this wins. The successful competitor returns to his seat; the loser vacates his and is then out of the competition.

The last two to remain in the game are proclaimed king and queen of Christmas and receive prizes, while the third is Jack the knave. He gains a funny booby prize. It is amusing to dress the royal pair in regal robes, crown them and present scepters. They may march at the head of the guests and sit together on draped and gilded thrones.

Crowns of cardboard covered with gold paper may be prepared for king and queen. A very grand scepter may be made by fixing an old tennis ball by means of sealing wax on to a bamboo cane and covering the whole with silver or gold paper or going over it with gilt paint.

HOLLY FOR SANTA.

A frolic on the order of the ever popular donkey game is always in order for a Yuletide gathering of young folks. Vary the picture a little to suit the occasion and offer a prize to add zest to the struggle. If the shops are not at hand to offer inspiration for the new version of this contest, any one with some little artistic skill can draw a picture of Santa Claus on a square of muslin and color with tinted chalks.

The youngsters are blindfolded one by one and are sent to pin a spray of holly in Santa's hand. It is, of course, the one who comes nearest to accomplishing this feat who wins the prize, a copy of some popular juvenile story. The children who stick their holly sprays farthest away from the mark may be condemned to perform some funny stunts. For instance, they may draw imaginary reindeer in the air with the index finger in the presence of the rest of the company.

An amusing Christmas trick is to make a small star upon the wall with a piece of white chalk. One by one the players kneel upon the floor at a distance of about two feet from the wall and with arms folded behind the back bend forward and try to kiss the mark. With a tall player the distance might have to be a little greater, but with players of an average height two feet from the wall will make it very difficult to succeed, and the arms must on no account be unfolded. Prizes may be awarded successful players.

IVY AND HOLLY.

Very little people will enjoy a rimed pastime called ivy and holly.

Chairs are arranged in two rows, and the children sit facing each other. One youngster begins with some adventure, as "Holly and Ivy went out to a party." The child sitting opposite must complete the rhyme with another couplet, for instance, "Holly and Ivy came back hale and hearty."

Indeed, there is no reason why the pastime should be entirely relegated to the kindergarten. On account of the rapidity with which the rhymes must be thought up the older boys and girls will find it amusing too.

For a pretty search game which young children as well as the school going boys and girls would enjoy at Christmas parties, cut several hundred little holly leaves from green tinted paper and hide them in the festive rooms.

At a given signal the young people scamper off in search of these symbols of the season. The youngster finding the greatest number of them in the ten minutes allowed for the search should receive some inexpensive prize decorated with a design representing holly.

HOLLY BERRY CONTEST.

A contest adapted for children of any age can be played with the loose berries which drop from the holly when the Christmas greens are swung into place. Gather up the little red fruit, and when the game is to be played give each child a dozen berries, a glass tumbler and two match sticks.

The youngsters should be seated around a large table. When the signal is given each child begins to lift his holly berries with the dead matches and to drop them into his tumbler.

The berries must not be touched with one's fingers under penalty of a "foul." The boy or girl first to call out "All in"—that is, that all his holly fruit has been dropped in the glass—is the prize winner.

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THE children will want some new game to play after Christmas supper is over. They will all enjoy the cut-out family game, which is played in the following manner:

Get a big pile of illustrated Christmas magazines and picture papers and give each child a blunt pointed pair of scissors, a large sheet of newspaper or brown paper and a pot of paste or a packet of pins.

Then read or tell them some simple little Christmas tale—not a fairy story, but an ordinary, everyday tale of boys and girls and their fathers and mothers. As you go along stop from time to time and let the children hunt through the illustrated journals for pictures to suit the occasion.

Perhaps you will begin the game in this way:

"Once upon a time there was a little girl called Susie. She was seven years old, and she had long, curly hair. Now look through your books and find a picture of Susie."

Then the children will spend five happy minutes in finding Susie, cutting her out and fastening her at the top of the blank sheet. As the tale continues the sheet will become full of portraits of the different people whom Susie met.

It will take an hour or more to fill a sheet, and the children will be quietly and happily occupied all the time. Mothers are enthusiastic over these quiet games which hold the children's attention, and the youngsters like them too.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

An amusing Christmas game is questions and answers, which is played in the following manner:

Arrange the players in two rows, one on each side of the room. Then two must be chosen to make questions and answers. One starts at the head of one line and one at the foot of the other. One whispers to each one in his line a question, and the other whispers to each in the other line an answer.

After each one has been told what to say let the one at the head of the question line begin by asking his question audibly of the head of the answer line, and so on through the line.

Of course the one who gives the question does not know what the answers will be, and sometimes they are very funny.

Let some of the older players supply the questions and answers, and then they will not fail to make you all laugh. This is an old game and one that never fails to bring out lots of fun.

CARD MATCHING.

Cut in halves a dozen Christmas cards (this number is for twenty-four players). Mix the halves thoroughly in a basket and let each player take one. Until a signal bell rings every one retains his seat, simply holding his half card in readiness. When the bell is sounded, however, each player jumps up and runs about looking for the boy or girl who holds the half matching the one in hand.

The two players first to match halves correctly and bring the card so completed to the older person in charge of the frolic win a prize. The scampering and excitement which follow the signal bell are more easily imagined than described in this jolly Christmas game.

The Jumping Coin.

Tricks of all kinds are applauded at the Christmas party. The jumping coin is a jolly one. A coin is placed on the table, and a request is made for the coin to be handed to you in a person's hand. They are not to remove the coin from the table by using hands, feet or picking it up with the mouth. Now, this seems a puzzle, but is as simple as a b c. All the person has to do is to place his mouth within a short distance of the coin and, giving a strong blow with his breath, directing it at the coin at about an angle of forty-five degrees, causing the air to pass under the coin and propel it into the air, where it is caught in the hand, which is ready to receive it.

FINDING THE SPOT.

There must be a spotted carpet or wall paper in the room where this mystifying Christmas game is played.

For this game one must have a confederate with whom to agree about the sign that shall be used in the game. One takes a cane to point out the spots, and then the confederate goes out of the room. As soon as a spot is agreed upon the confederate is called back. Then the one with the cane points to a spot and says, "Was this the one?" "No." "This?" "No." "Possibly this?" "No." While you are asking these questions you keep your hand around the head of the cane. When you point at the spot chosen you extend one finger down the cane. The confederate sees this and at once says, "Yes; that is it."

After indicating by pointing two or three times you can try another way. Make an agreement with your confederate that after three trials with the finger you will say when you point at the right spot, "Is it this?" but when you do not point at the spot chosen say some other word before such as "Do you think it is this—well, is it this and is it this?" By changing it every three or four times no one who does not know the game will catch you.

Making up nonsense rimes is a game that should not be forgotten by the Christmas hostess. It may be played in this way. One member of the party writes a line of so many syllables at the top of a half sheet of note paper, folds it over so that it is not visible and hands it on to the next player, telling him the last word of the line, and then he has to write a line of a similar length and make it rime, and so on until the paper has passed round the room, when it may be opened and read out loud.

CHRISTMAS SNOWBALLS.

Snowballs are prepared by winding little toys or favors in strips of cotton batting so that the balls may be perfectly round. They are then wrapped in white tissue paper, which is glued on.

Over the outside of the snowball a thin coating of nuclage is applied with frost powder sifted on. This makes the ball look as if it were really made of snow. There should be as many snowballs as there are guests at the party.

Two baskets—just ordinary market baskets may be used if the handles are wound with ribbon and tied with a big red bow at the top—are provided to hold the snowballs and are placed in two chairs at one end of the room. The snowballs are then dropped on the carpet in a line stretching from the baskets to the end of the room, an equal number in each line and an equal distance apart.

A child stands by each chair, and at a given signal runs for the farthest snowballs, bringing them back and dropping them in the basket. All the snowballs are collected in this way, and the child who first fills his basket wins the game. No snowball must be broken. If one is torn it counts as a foul in the game.

The children may be divided for this game into two divisions, and the side which has the most successful players after all have had a chance, to play counts as the winning side.

At the end of the game the snowballs are distributed and the children open them, discovering the treasures wrapped up inside.

HITTING THE CORK.

A diversion for the Christmas gambol is gained by placing a cork on a chair at the height of four or five feet from the floor. The player then approaches the cork and places his forefinger by it in careful determination of the height. He must then walk backward across the room, pause, close one eye and once more approach the cork. This time he will endeavor to knock the cork off by a blow of his forefinger. The result is usually disappointing to the player, but most gratifying and laugh provoking to the remainder of the company.

PICKING UP SWEETS.

At no time in the whole year are suggestions for games and tricks so welcome as at Christmas, when the long, dark evenings are with us and when young folks meet together at numerous gatherings.

Picking up candles from the floor with the lips is no easy matter, and the attempting of this feat will cause a great deal of fun. The toes and right hand only must touch the floor, and the left arm must be folded behind the back. The knees must on no account touch the floor.

Christmas After Dinner Trick.

Many a boy has had an immense lot of fun from the use of what he terms a "sucker," generally made from a piece of leather, to which, through a hole in the center, he attaches a string, and with this bit of leather, when wet, he is enabled to lift stones and other heavy materials. But here is a sucker he never dreamed of: Take an ordinary winter radish (if you can get a large one so much the better), cut it away at the bottom, leaving a flat surface; apply this to a dinner plate and you will find they will become attached friends.