

FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN

DAILY THOUGHT.

The Dear Old Tree.

There's a dear old tree, an evergreen tree. And it blossoms once a year. 'Tis loaded with fruit from top to root. And it brings to all good cheer.

For its blossoms bright are small dandies white. And its fruit is dolls and toys. And they all are free for both you and me. If we're good little girls and boys.

Is the movement for a safe and sane Fourth of July to be followed by one for an economical Christmas? Do the majority of people feel that the Christmas present has been as much overdone as the firecracker, the toy cannon and the pinwheel?

It must be understood in the outset that the movement to curtail Christmas giving has no relation to the children. The joy of the little ones in their Santa Claus and his bounty is too beautiful a thing to disturb. It is only the presents that to the grownups, to every Tom, Dick and Harry with whom one happens to be acquainted, the presents that are a burden and a bore both to giver and recipient, that it is proposed to abandon.

Frequently these are given through a sense of duty and cannot be afforded by the donor. Just as frequently they are not needed by the one on whom they are bestowed. Thus the outlay is not justified. It is a deprivation to one without any corresponding benefit to the other. The recipient in turn feels it a duty to make presents to the giver, presents that perhaps he can as little afford and that his friend as little needs. Thus both have had to make sacrifices for which they have received no equivalent good.

With the children it is different. We give to them for the pure joy of it, with no hope of return. We enter into their joys and partake of the Christmas spirit by sharing it with them. Thus we unconsciously fulfill the command of him in whose honor the day is celebrated and veritably become as little children.

Novel Toys for the Baby.—Rattles are still the joy and consolation of babies everywhere, but they are of quite a different sort from the old-fashioned rattle cases used in our grandmothers' days. Nor is the babyship confined to one particular kind, for the variety is endless. The musical rattle is doubtless the favorite. This toy masquerades in a variety of forms, one of which is a beautiful doll dressed in bright colors, with a handle in place of legs. When baby grasps the handle and shakes it, the music box concealed inside plays a tune, which it will continue as long as the doll is kept in motion.

Another popular rattle is the Punch doll, which also has a music box inside, and which is manipulated in the same manner. An amusing rattle has two clowns astride a mule, each of which performs all sorts of queer antics to the time of the music as long as the baby keeps hold of the handle.

One of the daintiest rattles is made out of an ordinary embroidery hoop about five inches in diameter. It can be fashioned in various ways. For instance, blue and pink baby ribbon may be used alternately for winding the hoop. When it is covered in some pretty pattern—star, diamond or shell—and sew silver or gilt bells here and there about the circle. Celluloid rattles are liked because they are light, as are also the straw basket, the drum, the ivory and the chicken ones.

When baby takes his bath the task is lightened for the mother or nurse and made attractive to him by all sorts of objects. He forgets his fear of water in watching the celluloid frogs, gold fishes, seals, mud turtles, ducks, swans or lobsters in natural colors floating on the water.

Sometimes when the bath is particularly obnoxious to the youngster his mother can save much wear and tear of nervous energy by placing a non-destructible celluloid doll in the bath beside him, or by winding a mechanical fish which will swim about like a real one until it runs down.

Then, too, a mechanical duck or boat may serve a double purpose, and baby be none the wiser if one is purchased which has a thermometer attached.

A curious toy, which cannot fail to attract the attention of the baby, is the papier mache roly-poly, which is light at the bottom. It represents the figure of a woman which swings in all directions, but never topples entirely over.

Of animals there is no end. Crocheted Spitz dogs, with blankets and collars, sit and stand in all sorts of positions. Velvet rabbits in natural colors, the ears lined with red velvet and with red ringed eyes, and dolls which with voices move around and bend their joints to suit the occasion, all of which helps to keep the baby good natured.

One of the cleverest things shown is a music box, the top of which is supposed to represent a back yard scene. As soon as the box is wound the music and performance begin simultaneously. A bear turns a miniature hand organ, which gives the impression that music comes from that source. Meantime a cat and dog perform on a trapeze, while another cat dances a jig in the corner. All of these animals have voices.

A smaller music box has on top a boy with a whip in his hand and several geese near him. As soon as the music starts the geese begin to waddle, while the boy tries to drive them away. Older baby boys have their worsted reins with bells and such toys as a clapping clown, who has a pair of cymbals in his hands, which he claps together as he closes his eyes. The older baby girls can play housekeeping with toys that are not only novel but marvelous, as, for instance, dishes which contain the most natural looking food imaginable—poached eggs, potatoes, meat, celery and vegetables of all sorts in dainty portions, which help to carry out the make-believe idea.

CHRISTMAS DINNER.

- Consomme Radishes Pulled Bread
Roast Goose Salted Almonds
Chestnut Stuffing
*Apple Frappe
Potatoe Molds Creamed Cauliflower
*Basket of Plenty
Wheat Crispiers Hard Sauce
*English Plum-Pudding
Vanilla Ice Cream Fancy Cakes
Bonbons Demi-Tasse

Apples seem an indispensable accompaniment to the Christmas goose, and may be well introduced in the form of Apple Frappe. Wipe, pare, core and cut ten apples in quarters. Put in a stew pan, sprinkle with sugar and add a few grains of salt. Cover with boiling water, and let simmer until apples are soft, when water should be nearly evaporated. Rub through a sieve, add two thirds cupful of cider and two table-spoonfuls of lemon juice. Freeze to a mush, using equal parts crushed ice and rock salt, and serve in cups made from bright red apples.

When tomatoes are high in price, or perhaps inaccessible, a very attractive salad may be made from the canned vegetable. Basket of Plenty have the red and green color which is effective on the Christmas dinner table. Mix two cupfuls of canned tomatoes, one slice of onion, one-fourth bay leaf, three cloves, and one teaspoonful of sugar. Bring to the boiling point and let simmer fifteen minutes, then rub through a sieve. Add one and one-fourth table-spoonfuls of granulated gelatine dissolved in one-third cupful of cold water, one teaspoonful of salt, and one-eighth teaspoonful of pepper. Pour into small cups and chill. Run a knife around inside of mold, so that when taken out shapes may have a rough surface, suggesting fresh tomatoes. Scoop out a small quantity from centre of each and fill with celery cut in small Julienne-shaped pieces and marinated with French dressing. Arrange for individual service on nests of crisp lettuce leaves.

English Plum-Pudding is found on all Christmas dinner tables where old-time customs are adhered to. Soak one-half pound stale crumbs in one cupful scalded sugar and yolks of four eggs, beaten until thick and lemon-colored. Then add one-half pound of raisins seeded and cut in pieces (dredged with one table-spoonful of flour), one fourth of a pound of currants (dredged with one table-spoonful of flour), one fourth of a pound of figs finely chopped, two ounces citron finely cut, and one-half cupful of English walnut meats, broken in pieces. Work one-half pound of suet until very creamy (it will be necessary to use the hands), and add one-half nutmeg, grated, three-fourths teaspoonful of cinnamon, one-half teaspoonful of mace, and one and one-half teaspoonfuls of salt. Thoroughly combine mixtures; then add a table-spoonful of vanilla and the whites of four eggs, beaten until stiff. Turn into a buttered mold, place on a trivet in a kettle containing boiling water (having water half cover mold), cover closely and steam six hours, never allowing water to stop boiling. Remove to hot serving dish, and garnish with Christmas greens.

Birthday of the Saviour. The observance of the 25th of December as the birthday of the Saviour is ascribed to Julius, bishop of Rome, A. D. 337-352. The eastern church had previously observed the 6th of January in commemoration both of the baptism and of the birth of Christ.

Before the end of the fourth century the east and west had exchanged festivals, the west adopting January 6th in commemoration of our Lord's baptism and the east adopting December 25th in commemoration of our Lord's birth.

The exact date of Christ's birth appears not to have been known in the early church and cannot now be determined. Between the middle of December and the middle of February there is generally in Palestine an interval of comparatively dry weather, preceded and followed by the early and later rain. Thus there might have been shepherds on the plain of Bethlehem watching their flocks at night.

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"LET EVERY MAN BE JOLLY."

"So now is come our joyfullst feast; Let every man be jolly. Each year with yule leaves is drest. And every post with holly. Now all our neighbors' chimneys smoke And Christmas blocks are burning; Their ovens they with baked meats choke. And all their spits are tur'ng. Without the door let sorrow lie, And if for cold it hap to die, We'll bury it in a Christmas pye, And evermore be merry."

The spirit of Christmas has ever been a merry one, celebrated by feasting and giving. The Christmas dinner has been and, we hope, will always be, a yearly feast of joy.

The old English Christmas was more elaborate than ours of today, lasting from the 6th of December to the 6th of January, in the church calendar, at least, and called Yuletide. Then the waits sang carols on Christmas eve, great logs burned in huge fireplaces, Christmas greens hung everywhere, and the wassail bowl circulated merrily around. Our Puritan ancestors disdained the celebration of Yuletide, as it "savored of popery."

However, some of them allowed their wives to make the English Christmas feast, calling it "mince," to avoid the popish term Christmas. But in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the holiday was again celebrated, though never with the reckless feasting and drinking of the old English days.

In olden times, the boar's head, garnished with rosemary, with a lemon in its mouth, was a typical dish. Great roasts of beef were also served. Our substitute is the turkey, making, perhaps, quite as noble a dish as the boar's head. Our plum pudding is a relic of old England. To be properly served it should be large and round, with a sprig of holly stuck in the top; just before being carried to the table, pour brandy over it and set it afire.

Table Decorations.—For your table use your prettiest china, linen, silver and glass. Candles with red shades give an attractive appearance. In the center of your table have a low, round decoration of mistletoe, surrounded by holly.

These may be placed in a wide, shallow bowl. About four inches from the center, on the tablecloth, run a strand of ground pine about two inches wide, forming a green circle. Cranberry jelly, molded in small cups and placed at each corner, gives more of real color.

Another pretty table decoration has in the center, a bed of poinsettia, the Mexican Christmas flower, and at the table corners bunches of holly. From the chandelier above the table is suspended a bunch of mistletoe and one of holly tied together with a bow of scarlet ribbon.

Not in Bohemia.—In all countries where Christmas is known and celebrated, the gastronomic feature seems to be most in evidence. Bohemia alone, among all the Christian nations, makes this day a season for rigorous fasting.

Children of this country do not, probably, look forward to the celebration with any great pleasure, as they are expected to practice the same self-denial as their elders. Only the working classes derive any material pleasure or benefit from the day's customs.

To this class, whatever his craft or trade, the master is expected to personate Santa Claus and render substantial tribute for the avalanche of "Merry Christmas" greetings showered upon him by these people who throng his house, without protest or denial, all day.

As a compensation, however, for self-denial and enforced generosity, he looks forward to the great Christmas feast that is served on the mother, daughters and maids are busy preparing for this meal, and the appetizing odors which issue from the kitchen must be tantalizing to the fasters. The meal is simple, as to viands, but ample. At sunset, when the last guest has departed, the angelus rings out its welcome announcement that the day's fasting is at an end. All deck themselves in their finest holiday attire and gather round the festive board; first asking, while all remain standing, a blessing on the food.

The menu that is usually served, with very little variation, consists of:— Fish Soup. Dried Mushrooms, Boiled in Gruel. Butter Cakes. Prune Marmalade. Pancakes with Poppyseed or Honey. Cold Cakes, Fried or Baked. Cold Cakes, in Blau Sauce. Cakes. Coffee. Sweetsmeats. Fruit.

The German menu consists of heartier viands; such as roast goose stuffed with chestnuts, pork and sauerkraut, sausages, beef with sour sauce, black puddings, smoked goose, baked apples, and an unlimited supply of beer and the famous German Christmas cakes, especially the pfeffer nusse, weise Lebkuchen and Mandelkranze.

The Swedish Christmas Feast.—Sweden celebrates Christmas with more joy and enthusiasm than any other nation. The preparations begin weeks before the day of celebration and one of the most important features is the brewing of the Christmas ale; as this is offered with generous hospitality to every guest or caller. No creature is forgotten on this festive occasion, even the beasts and the wild birds of the air have their Christmas feast. They have a pretty custom of fastening sheaves of grain on tall poles where it will be accessible to the most timid of the feathered throng, sure to be found near every farm-house on Christmas. The Swedes have a curious custom called "dipping in the pot."

The Christmas eve dinner is taken in the kitchen. Over the fire hangs a great pot, in which meat, tongue, ham, etc., are cooked together. Each member of the family takes a piece of bread, and it must be white bread, for Christmas, and not the coarse brown cakes so universally eaten.

The slice of bread must be dipped into the contents while the pot still hangs over the fire, and removed without its breaking. After each one has attempted this feat the stew is eaten, followed by rice and apple sauce. The great Yuletide dish is served later in the evening and is made of codfish and potatoes, followed by another dish of rice. The Swedes are famous for cooking rice and it is a very popular dish.

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Why We Hang Up Stockings.

The custom of hanging up the stocking on Christmas Eve arose, it is said, from an incident in the life of the good Saint Nicholas. One day, when he was overtaken by a severe storm, he took refuge in a convent, and the next day being Christmas, he preached a sermon to the nuns which they liked so much that they asked him to come the next year and

preach to them again. On his second visit, which was also on a Christmas Eve, before going to bed, he asked each of the nuns to lend him a stocking, and he filled the stockings with sugar plums in return for their hospitality.

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