



old farm home rush and grandchildren for Christmas time. Truly it is the season of all the year, and sisters and cousins and uncles and aunts and grandmothers and grandfathers meet at each party as if it were the first Christmas, and the second, as the first has been.

many of them, are practically so, to each make the family party a must be entertained in a set them thoroughly acquainted grandmother and grandsons and host, must present of a sort that will be recalled the old time, so what is new, there must be something for every minute of the party to prevent the monotony that would breed antagonism; the various sets of course must be enough of interest.

Grandfather takes hold of the arbor or the out-door games. Things, there must be a variety, for the children from none of its pleasures. Big bob-sled comes into its commodious box are we wites of the party. The abundance of hay and warm blankets behind the big sled are small hand sleds, the sleds of all being at the end of the line, and onto these boys and girls, and often of their parents, who have the joys of such a frolic. They go, up hill and down, over the roads and around the corners. And at the sharp corner the greatest fun comes

will tire of it. Another game that is less noisy is blindman's wand, in which the parties playing form a circle about the one who is blindfolded. The blindfolded one has a cane or small stick, and after the others have circled about him to the accompaniment of any well known song, he points his wand at one in the circle and imitates the noise made by some animal. The one pointed to must repeat the noise, disguising his voice so that he may not be known. Three times may the test be repeated, imitating a different animal each time. If at the end of the three tests the blindfolded one is still undecided as to who he is pointing to, he may run his wand over him and find out in that way, if possible. If he guesses who it is places are exchanged and the game begins over again.

Christmas candles sound Christmas, and will be remembered by the elders as one of the pleasures of long ago. A lighted candle is placed upon a small table, when one person is blindfolded and stationed with his back to the candle, and close to it. He is then to take four steps forward, turn around three times and return and blow out the candle. Simple as the game is, it will afford amusement for an hour on Christmas eve.

If grandfather wishes to provide something especially for the boys, and has a big barn, he can get up a series of races, at which the girls will be interested spectators. A threelegged race, in which the legs of two contestants are tied together, will be exceedingly funny, especially to the onlookers. Another is a sack race, in which the



THE FUN OF A HITCHING PARTY.

contestants are encased from the waist down, or, if the sacks are long enough, from the neck down. Thus prepared, they are given a certain distance to go, and are prepared to cover the distance in any way they can quickest, as, for example, jumping or rolling. A potato race, or an egg race, is yet another game which will furnish great amusement. In these there is laid out on the barn floor a row of potatoes or eggs for each contestant, and these must be carried one at a time and deposited in a basket or box. In case of eggs being used the breaking of one of them loses the race. The boys will also enjoy a pig race. For the purpose a pig for each boy should be released in a room in the barn, and the boys be given each a designated pig to catch. It may be hard on the pigs, but it will be great sport for the boys and the audience.

Christmas night in the house is the gayest time of all the holiday season. Grandmother has prepared for it, and the last trace of embarrassment has worn away from the shyest of the youngsters. "Bob apple" is a good beginning for the evening. Place a number of apples in a bowl of water and let each have a try at catching one of them by the stem with their teeth. Wet faces and soiled dresses will be fully compensated for in the amount of fun that is had. Later, a hunt through grandmother's garret will provide the necessities for Christmas mummies, in which old Father Christmas leads the revellers, composed of such characters as Dame Plum Pudding, Sir Loin of Beef, Miss Pumpkin Pie, etc. Charades and shadow shows follow in rapid succession, and then, as a climax, comes a Virginia reel, in which old and young participate. Then the singing of a Christmas carol, and the happy guests are off to bed and pleasant dreams.

When grandfather's big sled carries them back to the trains that are to distribute them to their far-away homes they will vote this the merriest Christmas of all they have had, and grandfather and grandmother will wish that Christmas might last throughout all the year.

A Costly Experiment.

Crawford—Instead of buying you a Christmas present, why don't you have your wife make you something with her own hands?

Crabshaw—Can't afford it. She once made me a one-dollar-forty-nine-cent smoking jacket, and the materials she bought cost me the least part of a ten-spot.—Judge.



THE SPIDER'S WEB
A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The Christmas tree has by no means passed the day of its usefulness, and let us hope that it never may do so, but a variety is sometimes desirable at Christmas time, as well as at other times, and to get it the spider's web may be substituted for the tree. The way of arranging it is to have a large spider made of wire and other material suspended from the ceiling, or attached to the wall. To this are brought a number of reels, or spindles, one or more for each person to be remembered. Each spindle should contain a different colored string or ribbon, and these are then threaded in a bewildering maze through the furniture, from room to room, up and down stairs, and

then at the far end of the ribbon is the present. To secure the present the child must follow the windings of the ribbon wherever it may lead until the gift is arrived at and claimed. Such a plan is productive of much innocent amusement, and the surprise at the end of the ribbon is all the more appreciated for the search it has taken to find it. For Christmas house parties, either for children or for "grown ups," the scheme will add much to the pleasure of the occasion, and will serve as a means of getting all present better acquainted. When the sons and daughters and grandchildren return to the old home for the holiday season a spider's web will add to the merriment of the season.

Christmas for the Sunday School
By WILLIS S. EDSON
Superintendent, Covenant Baptist Sunday School, Chicago.

THERE is no Sunday school but should have and does have its Christmas celebration. It is not a question, then, of "Shall we celebrate?" but "How shall we celebrate?" Christmas comes but once a year, but when it comes, it does not always bring good cheer to the Sunday school superintendent and his helpers, who along in the fall after the trials of picnic time have passed, become haunted by this question which comes up and must be settled. It is an important question. The matter should not be carelessly considered. Those having the arrangements in charge should not forget that something more essential than sweetmeats and gifts, and a jolly good time, with Santa Claus and Christmas tree, to make the celebration an abiding joy and blessed memory. The Christmas celebration should not be the end in itself, but should be the means to the end of honoring the Christ, in memory of whose birth the celebration is held. It is so easy in the burden and rush of planning for the event—the greatest event in the whole year for the Sunday school—to forget the spirit and purpose which should lie behind the preparations, and give inspiration and direction to all the plans. It is the birthday party of the Christ child, if you please, and He should not be forgotten; all thought and all plans should center about Him. I know of one school that in a pretty little prayer service a few weeks previous to Christmas formally invited Jesus to be present at His birthday party, and asked Him to help them in making the plans. And Jesus was there in the person of 20 or 30 of His little ones from a neighboring orphanage, and the boys and girls of at least one Sunday school realized the beauty and force of the words of Jesus: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these ye did it unto Me." The spirit and purpose of the celebration must not be forgotten.

But what shall the celebration be? There are four divisions into which this subject naturally falls: Decorations, which includes the Christmas tree, if one is used; the entertainment, the gifts and the offerings. The decorations comprise a very important and beautiful part of the celebration. They create the atmosphere, and give the first impressions, which go far towards the success of what follows. Scripture texts should be liberally used, selecting such as are appropriate to the occasion. The lettering can be done in evergreen, or gilt or colored letters may be used. The star should be conspicuous. The extent of the decorations depends, of course, largely upon the amount of money to be spent, but with a resourceful and tasty person in charge it is surprising how far a few dollars can be made to go. The colored paper decorating, which can be obtained at all Sunday school and denominational supply houses very cheaply, makes a good substitute for the more expensive evergreen and holly. If the entertainment is held after Christmas, it is easy to secure tree and trimmings from those who have used them in their homes, and in this way considerable expense may be saved. The work of the decorations committee may be lightened by enlisting the interest of the individual classes and getting a few of the older ones to furnish some feature of the decorations or some text in evergreen or paper lettering. Utilize all the latent talent and ability in your school.

ment feature of the celebration are almost infinite. First determine the kind of entertainment, that is, whether it shall be a cantata, a part programme in which the boys and girls sing and speak, or an entertainment furnished by some outside talent. The latter is desirable with schools of over 500 membership, but in smaller schools it is undoubtedly better to have the programme furnished by the talent in the school, as it appeals to the sympathy, pride and loyalty of its members, and parents love to see their children sharing in the exercises. Space will not permit our going into details, but we may be able to make some suggestions that will prove helpful to those having the matter of entertainment in charge. Don't have the programme too long. Have it full of bright, sweet Christmas fun and frolic, but do not forget to have a strong undercurrent of the true purpose and spirit of the blessed Christmas time. You do not need to give the children a Christmas sermon or lecture, but you do need to be careful that the dear Jesus, in whose name the celebration is held, has opportunity to make his presence felt. The entertainment committee ought to pray earnestly over the plans, and seek Divine guidance. At some specially favorable and appropriate part of the programme let the thought of the claims of Christ be sweetly and briefly pressed home to the heart of the child. I remember one entertainment where, after a very touching piece, sweetly spoken, entitled "No Room for Jesus," the pastor in a few well-chosen words drove the thought home to the hearts of the boys and girls, and the influence of which was noted in the weeks following by many making open confession of the Christ whom they made room for at the Christmas entertainment. One school I know of planned a "Surprise Christmas." Each class provided a surprise for the school. Some arranged the entertainment, some looked after the decorations, while the older classes provided treats and little souvenirs for the younger classes. The work was so divided that no one specially felt the burden and every one was made blessedly happy in planning for the happiness of some one else. I have not said anything about a Santa Claus, because I feel that there are so many other and more attractive features which can be provided. Have your Santa Claus if you must, but pray over the matter and let Jesus "show you a more excellent way."

Now as to the gifts and offerings. It is right and proper that the school should provide something for its boys and girls, but whether it is wise and best to put so much money in cheap candy, nuts, etc., is a question which each school must decide for itself. One thing is becoming more and more recognized among the schools of the land, especially of the larger cities, and that is that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The school that overlooks this means of joy and blessing misses the very heart and spirit of Christmas. Give to the children by all means, but be sure that carefully laid plans are made to enlist their sympathies and to encourage them to give. Provide a definite object for the children's excellence. Be sure they understand exactly what is wanted and that it is within their easy means of giving. Present the matter in such attractive way that there will be uniqueness and charm in the giving. Announce that the classes are to make their offerings in stockings made of bright colored cambric; that these stockings are to be hung up before the school and the classes are to see which class will have the largest stocking. In one school where this was tried some of the stockings were so big and heavy that they could not be hung up, but had to be stood against the wall at the back of the pulpit. And such fun and laughter as there was, with

the deep joy underlying it all of giving to those in need. One stocking, knit by an old lady when she was a little girl for her doll, was filled with silver coin. The school contributed an express wagon load of provisions, fruit, nuts and candy, toys, and dolls, and clothing, besides nearly \$20 in money, and that by a school of only 300, a majority of whom came from homes of working people. Another year this same school adopted 20 to 30 orphans from a neighboring institution. Each class had a particular boy or girl who was present at the entertainment and was right royally entertained by the class and then sent back to the institute laden with various bundles of wearing apparel and toys. The individual need of each adopted orphan was intelligently consulted through the matron of the institution and those things for which it had special need provided. It was the happiest, busiest Christmas which I ever saw a school spend. And no school should miss the blessedness which comes from giving. In all of the Lord's work, whether it is Christmas, Easter, Children's day, picnic, scholars' social, or what not, there is need of prayer in planning and planning in prayer; there is need of purpose and method and ingenuity, and underlying it all there should be the earnest desire to give true expression to the spirit and purpose of the day, and in all that is done to honor Him in Whose name the celebration is held.

NO THOROUGHFARE.



Mamma—What is troubling you, Toddy?
Toddy (new to steam-heated flats)—I was wonderin' how on earth Santa was ever going to get through that thing!—Brooklyn Life.

Sordid.
Now merry Christmas comes again, And Santa Claus doth fret the soul. He gives you diamond scarfpins when You'd rather have a ton of coal. —Washington Star.

To Thaw Frozen Greens.
It often happens that Christmas greens are frozen in transit. In such cases put them at once into a very cool, dark cellar where they can thaw out very gradually. The temperature should not be allowed to exceed 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Frozen holly is very little damaged if intelligently treated, but a single night in a warm express car may cause it to turn black. Mistletoe and wild smilax are much more susceptible to frost injury. The California holly is not a member of the holly, but of the rose family. It is not hardy in New England, but is worth cultivating in all parts of the south.

A Reminiscence.
"Well, Johnnie, what are you going to give your little brother for Christmas?"
"I dunno. I give him the measles last year."—Chicago Record-Herald.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

FOUND IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES OF EUROPE.

In Many of Them the Farm Animals Play an Important Part in the Observances of the Day.

In different nations one finds many odd ideas regarding the Christmas season. Among the observances that grew up by degrees all over Europe, many of them grotesque and absurd, and some with profuse and unseemly accompaniments, were also not a few of more pleasing and humanizing kind, and among the rural population the brutal creation was included as interested parties.

Among the fancies of this kind that longest survived in Europe, and even became naturalized in our own prosaic land, was one that the cattle, at one o'clock on Christmas morning, whenever they were free to do so, would turn their heads to the eastward and get down upon their knees to worship the King that was born in a stable; and still another, which continued to comparatively recent times, that during the Christmas season the barnyard cocks were accustomed to crow with unusual force and frequency by day and by night.

The early inhabitants of the great Scandinavian peninsula were accustomed to celebrate, at this season, the great festival of their gods. When the people of the peninsula became Christians, although no less zealous for their Christmas observances, they retained some of the old practices, and are to this day careful to associate with themselves in their festivities every living thing about them. The author of "The Land of the Midnight Sun" tells us in his account of a Christmas in Norway:

"The Christmas feeding of the birds is prevalent in many of the provinces of Norway and Sweden. Bunches of oats are placed on the roofs of houses, on trees and fences, for them to feed upon. Two or three days before cartloads of sheaves are brought into the towns for this purpose, and both rich and poor buy and place them everywhere. Every poorman and every head of a family had saved a penny or two, or even one farthing, to buy a bunch of oats for the birds to have their Christmas. On this day, on many farms, the dear old horse, the young colt, the cattle, the sheep, the goats, and even the pig receive double their usual amount of food. It is a beautiful custom, and speaks well for the goodness of heart of the Scandinavian."

A singular custom prevails in Servia and Bulgaria among the orthodox. If it can possibly be avoided no one crosses a strange threshold on Christmas day. In the same countries an early ceremony has to be performed by the head of each household. Before breakfast is served corn is placed in a stocking, and the chief of the family sprinkles a little of it before the door, saying: "Christ is born;" to which each of the inmates replies: "He is born indeed." Then the house father has to wish, and advancing to the hearth where logs are burning in readiness, strikes them till sparks fly out, with a good wish for the horses, another for the cows, another for the goats, and so on through the whole farming stock, winding up with an extra blow for a plentiful harvest. Then the ashes are collected, a coin is placed among them and the whole is hidden or, in some districts, burned. As for the Yule logs, they are not permitted to smolder quite away, but are carefully garnered, and the burnt ends placed in clefts in fruit trees, so as to insure a bountiful crop.