

CHRISTMAS PLAYTHINGS BLEND ART AND SKILL



DRESSING DOLLS (PHOTO BY SHANNON)



OLD-TIME TOYMAKERS AT WORK



WOODWORKING DEPARTMENT OF A TOY FACTORY (PHOTO BY SHANNON)



VETERAN TOYMAKER WITH GLUE POT

Fascination Is Found in the Factories That Make Toys and Dolls—The Work Is Done By Machine and Hand

By MALCOLM MACDONALD.

AN AFTERNOON with the toy-makers is one of the fascinating experiences of a lifetime, with a thrill that is not to be forgotten.

The visitor may be young or old. He or she may be one to whom Santa Claus offers the supreme pleasure of existence, or one to whom the Christmas season is a period of bills payable and depleted bank account. Regardless of viewpoint, the imagination and the keenest interest for the visitor who is privileged to penetrate the inner mysteries of the place.

A BLOCK OF WOOD.

The starting point of the doll or other plaything may be a block of wood or a pile of sawdust. Both types of material are much used in fabricating the objects which are the delight of the childish heart. Wood is a vital factor in producing the world's toys. The logic of this practice is simple and convincing. Wood has special advantages that make it particularly useful. One important factor is the circumstance that the material is light in weight, and therefore easily handled and readily manipulated by little fingers and little hands.

QUICK TRANSFORMATION.

I have seen a block of wood placed in the hands of a skilled worker in a toy factory, with the promise that in a moment it would begin to take on the shape of a top, a toy horse, a battleship or the head of a doll. With this block of wood as his raw material I have seen the expert wood-turner manipulate his logs and gadgets with a swift certainty that brought realism in surprisingly short space of time. Pressure of a lever starts the whirling machinery, deft manipulation subjects the block to the cutting action of the blades concealed within the machine, and almost before the visitor realizes what is going forward he sees the block converted into the shape for which it is intended.

In one of the illustrations the photographer has caught the woodworker in the midst of their Christmas rush. The picture shows the machines employed in doll making. To the workers the fabrication of a doll is a combination of art and skilled craftsmanship. For producing the best articles the man at the machine must have an artistic perception that enables him to gauge results. He must be at once a sculptor and an expert in the work of a machinist, for the quality of his finished product depends on his ability to simulate nature in the object upon which he is employed.

When the various parts of a doll's anatomy have been turned out from the whirling machines of the wood-working department, the work of creation may be described as having been just started. Other workers take the parts and fit them together to produce the individual doll. Still others apply the paint and enamel that provide the doll with the bloom of youth so essential for meeting the exacting tastes of the American nursery. The complexion must be applied with the utmost care and precision. Every child of today has definite ideas of the possibilities of make-up.

DOLLS MADE OF WOOD FLOUR.

Fine sawdust is one of the favored materials for the modern doll. This is not the sawdust of past generations, used only for stuffing purposes, but is

the basic material from which the doll-maker fabricates the future queen of the nursery. The dust is first reduced to powder. This powdered wood is mixed with resin, then poured into molds representing the various parts that are to be produced, and placed in long ovens to bake. The action of intense heat melts the resin, and converts the mass into a waxy paste which takes and holds the form dictated by the mold in which it is contained. When cooled the resin hardens and the shape becomes permanent.

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLS DAILY.

The parts are dipped into a large bucket of flesh-colored paint, and placed on a shelf to dry. In a large factory the drying shelves have a charm that is all their own. Thousands of dolls in the unfinished state are spread before the eyes of the visitor. In one establishment there is an output of 5,000 dolls a day. The sight of these little creatures in their fresh coats of paint is worth a trip to the factory.

Drying is followed by the work of the man with the air-brush—the artist who applies the complexion. The dolls are then ready for the next artisan, whose work includes the task of supplying each of them with a cloth body stuffed with cotton batting. If the little creature is intended to say "Mamma" the vocabulary is supplied during the process of body-building. At this stage the worker inserts the mechanical apparatus which supplies the speaking sound so dear to the heart of the future owner of the make-believe baby. In appearance the mechanism suggests

a long, narrow tin box, with paste-board sides and a perforated top, placed where the lungs ought to be.

Supplying the eyes is one of the delicate tasks of the fabrication. Great care must be exercised to see that the two eyes are an exact match as to size and coloring. The optical expert has his choice of blue, brown and grey, and his work is one of the finishing touches on which much depends as to satisfactory results.

The doll is now ready for hair and clothing. The adjustment of the wig is followed by careful trimming and barbering, performed by girl workers to whom the proper "bob" is a subject of close study. The costumes are produced on electrically driven sewing machines, and the shoes are fashioned on tiny lasts and hammered into place. The doll is now ready for the show window—and for the Christmas tree.

TOYS OF NEW GENERATION.

Children of the present day have toys of a type not included in the dreams of their parents. In this class lies the motor vehicle, built along the lines of the newest models in regular cars. The manufacture of this type of toy is a distinct art within itself, and calls for

a degree of skill and workmanship which was not required in the production of the toy wagon or wheeled barrow. The motor vehicle may be either truck or pleasure car. Airplanes in miniature are another type of plaything afforded the privileged child of the Twentieth Century—with dirigible balloons as companion pieces. In spite of this evolution, however, the express wagon is still in favor, and is one of the most popular articles in the entire list of toys. A wagon is a vehicle that furnishes the thrill of actual and sometimes rapid travel, and its place in youthful affections may be expected to last.

There is persistent demand for toy furniture, and it is to be noted that the articles of the present day must be strong and substantial. The manufacture of this class of merchandise affords a busy picture, with one set of men sawing out the necessary parts, another group engaged in smoothing and fitting them together, and others carrying on the work of giving the final finish and applying the paint and varnish. The development of Boy and Girl Scout movements has given rise to the use of camp furniture on extensive

scales. Articles of this type enable the inmates of the nursery to imitate the camping activities of older brothers and sisters. Scout leaders feel that the use of camp fittings in childish games affords definite influence in securing future membership.

In the production of toy animals and mechanical creatures the visitor will find much to hold his rapt attention. The toy-makers reproduced a great variety of these playthings for the delight of the naturalists in the nursery. The inmates of the Noah's Ark are largely a matter of wood-work and painting. When it comes to the jointed reptiles and the animals that move around the room there is more intricacy of fabrication. The insertion of springs and later mechanism calls for the skill of a watch-maker, and a glimpse of the work-rooms is one of the most interesting places in a toy factory. The mechanic takes the pieces as they come from the hands of the man who fashions them, and with accurate touch inserts the equipment that "makes the wheels go round" to produce life and activity. After the painting process the mechanical toys are subjected to inspection even more careful than that given by a

boy's father on Christmas morning when the lad is awaiting his turn to play with his own possessions. The inspection table is a place of active evolution on the part of the animals, reptiles and insects, and the grave inspectors examine each toy to make sure it will "do its stuff."

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