



A CHRISTMAS BAND.



Wood Carving Parties.

WOOD carving for boys and girls, women and men, promises to become one of the most popular winter pastimes, and for those who develop an aptitude for it, it not unfrequently opens a field to profitable employment.

In England the matter is no longer an experiment. It has been tested for years and found a success. A country Rector there gives his experience with what he terms, recreation evenings.

"It has long been a question with us," he says, "how to retain our influence over our growing population, and to provide means of interesting and keeping them together.

"Almost against my judgment our daughters established a Wood Carving Class. I thought it 'would never pay,' and that the 'boys and girls would soon tire of it,' but neither of these things happened.

"We set aside an unused storeroom for the purpose, and beautified it with a coat of limewash, a chocolate wado, and some tables. A lamp hangs from the ceiling, a gridstone occupies one corner, a fire blazes in winter in the hearth, while every Tuesday evening the place is alive with bright faces, and noisy with the sound of hammer and tools."

Some of the most intricate carving was turned out by a dressmaker's apprentice, while most of the "blocked-out" work came from the skillful hand of the clergyman's youngest daughter. Of course every young man carries a penknife; and only a trifling outlay was required for a board of yellow pine that they began to carve on, and the use of several-sized chisels and gouges. The clergyman himself strolled about with a hone, sharpening tools, while his artistic and practical daughters directed the workers.

About eight o'clock on the first night the rector's wife appeared, followed by a bevy of young ladies carrying big cups of coffee, tea and milk, and huge plates of home-made cakes.

"This is my part of the amusement," she said, and somehow or other chisels and dotters and hammers and knives worked quicker and more willingly after such refreshment.

(A wise way would be where a class is formed to make a small assessment for this purpose, so as to avoid the expense falling too heavily upon any one person, and to have a Refreshment Committee.

But it must be stipulated what the refreshments are to be; and it is best to restrict them within such limits as those above mentioned; otherwise extravagance will creep in, and the Carving Class will come to naught.)

In England we are told that the majority of these classes are not only self-supporting, but positively profitable. Why should not such be the case here?

The necessary tools consist of a couple of chisels of different sizes for each person (one moderate in width, the other very fine for angles and corners), a small saw for cutting up wood, a good penknife, a Swiss knife, a dotter (which anyone can make by inserting a bradawl into each end of a small wooden mallet—one awl round-pointed, the other flat, with a nick filed in it so as to make two points), and a gouge for turning circles.

A more complete outfit comprises the following:—A parting tool, a corner-former, half inch and quarter inch gouges; three-quarter inch, half inch, quarter inch, and one-sixteenth inch flat chisels; two or three slow gouges, from a quarter to three-quarter inches; a pair of compasses, a slip for sharpening, a bottle of oil, some glass-paper, some tracing paper (black or white), a vise, a mallet, a pencil, and a carver's bench.

At last accounts after a lapse of several years, the country rector's class was still carving away, developing new delights at every meeting. The eyes of its members being trained to notice fresh beauties in God's works, as shown by their bringing in chance sprays of beautiful woodland leaves for "copy." Their hands meanwhile being taught to work deftly and neatly. They themselves—in their association with the ladies of the parish—being educated in refinement and self-respect, and their homes ornamented with bits of their own beautiful handiwork.

If life were not so sad a thing,
Who then could think of being merry!
If God's will would bear altering,
His plans we should not try to vary?—
Were we once free from pain and care,
We straight would seek some cross to bear!

If upon love a seal were set,
How many seals would then be broken!
If gentle speech were hard to get,
How many kind words would be spoken!—
If Heaven were once denied us all,
How we should then to Heaven call!

