

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES.—How to amuse the children during the evenings, especially those of the long winter, is a question of no slight importance to many mothers who have children growing to manhood and womanhood.

The children of some families are allowed to spend their time between school hours and bedtime in the streets, and that is when and where so many acquire bad and pernicious habits.

Dear reader, can you guess the reason of this?—the home is wanting in attractions for them. The parents themselves may be good people, trying to lead consistent lives, but thoughtlessly and carelessly leave the children to run as they please, instead of providing such home amusements as would make them love it.

We well know that many young men have been driven to find their pleasure elsewhere, because nothing was done to make their homes attractive to them; and we also realize how much of the cheerfulness and life of the house depends upon the conduct of the sisters in it. So let me take this opportunity of reminding you, my dear nieces, that you are, in a great measure, responsible for the happiness of your brothers, some at least of whom may have a decided objection to spending a dull, quiet evening at home.

This desirable end cannot be brought about without any self-sacrifice on the part of the girls. We do not want the brothers to think by this that they were born to be entertained, for they must also do their share to make it equally pleasant for the girls. Our Lord tells us that if we would follow Him we must deny ourselves; therefore, to practice music or play games, to please a brother or a sister, when we would much rather do something else, is just as true self-denial as it is to bear suffering and persecution.

Music is one of the most pleasing of home entertainments, but even that grows tiresome to many. Reading is also pleasant and instructive. I have spent many a happy evening at home that way. While the boys would read aloud, the girls are occupied with sewing, or one of the many kinds of fancy work, for needlework helps one to remember wonderfully.

If at times the minds of the family require some more stirring amusement, there are many games suitable for all ages, from the parents to the younger members of the family circle, who may be allowed an hour or two of fun before bedtime, and we all know the fun is much better appreciated and enjoyed when "mother and father will play too," and not consider it beneath their dignity to join in the children's sports.

These games are endless in number and too lengthy in description to name many of them in detail, but I will try and give a general idea of a few.

There is a *drawing game* which causes much merriment. Sitting around the table, each person is supplied with a pencil and piece of paper. Then he or she will think of some subject—say an incident in English history, or a line from a well-known poem—and draw an illustration, not mentioning the subject; then pass the paper round the table, and each person in turn writes beneath what she thinks it represents, beginning at the bottom and fold-

ing the paper so that no one can tell what the person before has guessed. When all these have returned to their original owners, each opening her paper, states what the subject really was, then reads out all the guesses. Sometimes they are very amusing; and the least idea a person has about drawing the better is the game, for a good artist is apt to make the subject too evident.

"Verbarum" is another good game. Each player must have a half-sheet of foolscap, folded lengthwise into three, and a lead pencil. Now decide upon a word containing most of the vowels, and an *m*, a *d*, or a *t*; avoid if possible a repetition of letters. Suppose we choose "fortunately;" out of this word you must make as many others as you can produce in the time allowed, confining yourselves strictly to the letters of which "fortunately" is formed. Three minutes will be given for each set of words. Commence with the first letter, each letter in turn being the beginning of a new set. There must be no proper nouns nor words of foreign languages, and perfect silence must be observed. A conductor may be chosen to time each set, calling out the words "start" and "stop." At the end of the first three minutes the player sitting next the conductor reads out her words. "Fort." All who have it on their papers call out "yes." If more than two have it, all cross it out, but count nothing. She passes on to the next word, "front." If only two people have this they each count one, putting the figure against the word. If one person alone has a word she counts two for one syllable. The list of words being called out by each player, they proceed to the next set, commencing with *o*. When again at the end of three minutes the "stop" is given, the same form is gone through, counting where you can. The words with *o* being finished, you start again with *r*, and so on with all the letters, except where letters are repeated a second time; these are, of course, omitted.

Having completed the word, you reckon up your numbers, and the one having the highest is the winner of the game.

"Quotations" is very good, but one in which only the older members of the family could join. Each person selects say three or more quotations, committing them to memory before hand. Then when each quotation is repeated, some one else must try and name the author. The one who first guesses correctly obtains a mark, or receives a favor, say a flower or a bit of bright ribbon to tie in the button-hole. A pleasant evening with friends and neighbors can be passed in this way, calling in a "quotation party," apprising each one before hand of the idea, so they may come with their quotations prepared.

In one's own family, it is a good plan to interest the children, in fact all the members of the family, in the history of the common articles of daily use, as food, dress, etc. For instance, once a week let each member tell all they can find out about some particular article of food, say pepper, sago, prunes, coffee or tea, or of clothing, as silk, shawls, alpaca, etc. Most families, if questioned, would exhibit a lamentable ignorance concerning the source whence these very common things are derived, but studied in this manner they form a pleasant and really instructive pastime.

"The stool of repentance" may be played by

any number. One of the players sits on a stool in the centre of the room, while another goes round and collects remarks (which must always be of the kindest nature, consistent with truth) relative to the individual occupying this position. These remarks are communicated in whispers and carefully written down in turn by the collector. They are then read off aloud but not in the order they were received, and the player on the stool has to guess the authorship of each. When she succeeds in fitting a remark to its author she vacates her stool, which is taken by the one whose saying was guessed.

"What is my thought like?" is also good. All sit in a line except one, who stands out facing the others. This last writes down the name of a person or thing thought about, and then, without revealing what she has written, turns to any one of the players and demands, "What is my thought like?" An answer must be given before twenty is counted, and then the original thought is read out, and the last speaker must prove the likeness between the two things. Sometimes there is a great dissimilarity and the player is at a loss to find the least resemblance between the "thought" and what she had ignorantly declared it to be like.

Dumb crambo is played by dividing the players into two sets. One set goes out of the room, whilst the players who remain in choose two words that will rhyme. The others are called in, one word is told, and they have to guess the second and represent it in dumb show. If wrong they are clapped out, and must try again. If correct, the sides change place.

Although there are numbers of games not yet named, still I must go no further, as space will not permit, but trust these few will be a help, at least, to some, in passing pleasant evenings at home.

In your desire, my dear girls, to make your homes attractive, do not neglect to let this coming Christmas inspire your hearts to do something for the sake of Him whose birth we are about to celebrate. There are many sad and afflicted ones for us to cheer, hungry ones to feed, and shivering ones to clothe, and Christ Himself it was who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Therefore, let us each, even with our mite, do some little act of kindness to those less fortunate than ourselves. It may be that thus, or even in the loving Christmas remembrances of friends far away, we may find something to animate our best and highest desires, helping us to be more constant in the practice of all that is good and true, which is but the reflection of His power and love within us.

May all my nieces and friend enjoy the best possible cheer Christmas has to bestow on every board, whether it is in cottage or in mansion.

Sincerely hoping to continue the acquaintance of all with whom I have had such pleasant intercourse for months and years now passed away, I wish you each and all a truly "Merry and Happy Christmas."

MINNIE MAY.

Remedy for Deafness.

I was very hard of hearing for a long time. I tried nearly everything. At last I heard of this: Take two-thirds British oil and one-third laudanum; put together and shake before using. Put two drops twice a day in the ear; if it makes you dizzy use the two drops only once a day. I can now hear almost as well as ever.