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## Affairs of the Hostess

# ENTERTAINING AT CHRISTMAS

By KATHERINE WYNNE

AT this time of year our thoughts turn to entertaining and the hospitality which marks the season. Without our friends, Christmas would be barren indeed; but the old-time custom when a hostess put all her energies into providing a heavy and substantial Christmas dinner is past. That dinner was all that was necessary—and a little more—and left but small inclination for conversation or any other form of exercise. To-day the dinner is the least part of the feast; and the hostess grows wrinkles between her brows trying to think up new ways of entertaining.

One hostess, whose grounds contained a small lake encircled by a miniature wood, solved the problem to her own satisfaction and the delight of her guests. Being a wise woman, and knowing that mystery adds zest and charm to anything, she kept her plans to herself. The guests expected something, but were surprised when she announced a sleigh drive after the late dinner. That was tame and a disappointment—when they had looked for—at least—a dance. But—being well bred people—they obediently wrapped up and bundled into the sleighs which were waiting. It was a typical Canadian night—clear, still and frosty.

Not wishing to reach the lake in five minutes, the hostess ordered that they be driven a round about way which involved three or four miles, so that they came upon it from an unexpected direction, and swinging round the last curve, suddenly beheld a scene that looked little short of fairyland. The ice was clear as a mirror, with no light but the moon, which it reflected as a great golden ball, but every tree that fringed the banks had its burden of lighted candles, which swayed gently in the still air; while from the farther end a small band of musicians broke into a merry dance. It did not take the guests many seconds to understand what it meant and amid shouts of delight, they caught on to the idea of an open air dance. The musicians, as they played, slowly circled the lake, the music rising and falling as they and the dancers advanced and retreated, thus adding a distinct touch of weirdness to the scene. When the fun was at its height, a sudden loud jingling of bells was heard and a small sleigh drawn by a small horse and driven by a forest sprite dressed in green, his suit and cap both trimmed with fur, came furiously around the last curve. Scattering the guests in all directions, he drew up in the middle of the lake and flourishing his long whip demanded:—

What do ye here in my domain  
On this my starless night?  
My prisoners all! you sue in vain—  
Come, follow ye, the Yule Log's light.

Then the sleighs drove up and the guests stampered in, wondering what might next be in store for them. They were rapidly driven into the heart of the forest—which was not very far—in the wake of the forest sprite, and there deposited on a thick carpet of evergreen boughs, in the centre of which burned a huge fire, with the Yule Log in front. As at the lake, the trees were hung with candles—these and the fire being the only light, and never had chicken and salad and coffee tasted better than at that midnight supper in front of the Yule Log in the midst of the wood, and not the least of the charms of this novel entertainment was the surprise.

A MOTHER GOOSE Supper is as ridiculous and merry as anything ever invented, and is suited to both grown ups and children. The invitations should be square and of heavy red paper, at the left of the card is a pen and ink drawing of the character assigned to each guest, and underneath the couplet:—

"Bread and butter  
Come to supper."

on the right of the cards is the invitation to "A Mother Goose Supper" the date, hour and a request to come in a crepe paper costume representing the pen and ink drawing. Upon arrival, Mother Goose gives each guest their instructions, which must be kept secret; then takes her place, in her tall church steeple hat, at the long table, which is entirely without decorations. After the guests are seated—in whatever order they please—she asks:—

"Mary, Mary quite contrary  
How does your garden grow?"

Leaving the room Mary quickly returns with her arms full of bouquets of many coloured paper flowers, which she arranges in a row down the centre of the table, with the stems pointing up and the flowers down in her own contrary way. Little Tommy Tucker now "sings for his supper," either a Christmas carol or a Christmas grace. Next Jack and Jill with their "pail of water" fill the glasses and then Mother Goose calls for "Pease pudding hot, Pease pudding cold," and the cook in white cap and apron brings in quaint little bowls of soup and wooden spoons which he places before each guest. In this way Mother Goose calls on each guest to serve one dish. Jack Sprat who could "eat no fat" and his wife who could "eat no lean," serve the turkey. The "Old

Man of Tobago" carves a leg of mutton or other meat, Mother Hubbard cuts the bread, Bobby Shafto brings comfits and fruits—cranberry sauce and jellies—and Jack and his beanstalk furnish vegetables. Little Red Riding Hood uncovers her basket and contributes olives and pickles—the bears are better without them. Simple Simon extols his pies and the baker's boy brings hot buns. The little boy and girl who have "waited at the gate" pass a "golden butter cake" and the Queen praises her bread and honey. Little Miss Moffat has her curds and whey and Polly is asked to put the kettle on when "My Sister Mollie and I serve tea." But the crowning delight is when Little Jack Horner brings in his "Christmas Pie"—which is the Christmas Pudding. After that the King cuts his pie of "four and twenty black birds" and distributes the favors with which it is filled. Then Old King Cole, that "Merry Old Soul" calls for his "fiddlers three" and Tom the Piper's son begins a lively tune. This may be the signal for an impromptu dance or silhouette pantomimes may be given. Divide the company haphazard into two groups, one group in each of two rooms, which are connected by an arch or wide door. Stretch a white sheet on this opening, and have one room almost dark. In the other, place a bright, strong light directly behind the curtain, but with sufficient space between for the actors. Each actor acts out his own rhyme. Old Mother Hubbard "goes to the cupboard to get her poor dog a bone" and if you can coax a dog to follow her so much the better. If he does unexpected things don't worry—'tis the unexpected that gets the laugh. When all this group of actors have had their turn the other group take their place. All the nursery jingles can be easily acted and they furnish a large variety. A pretty little act can be given by a Mother and Child. He hangs his stocking up before the chimney, then the mother puts him to bed. Santa Claus comes down the chimney and fills the stocking, letting the sharp shadow of each gift fall on the curtain. He puts in nothing but small, square, hard packages, securely tied with string, then disappears up the chimney. The boy wakes and goes directly to the stocking, holding up each gift as he takes it out—and he takes out a live puppy, a very much alive kitten, a pair of skates, a ball, a knife, an aeroplane, a kite and several other things. These are handed to him from beside the stocking in such a way that it looks as though they were coming out of it. The unexpected contents of the stocking cannot fail but bring down the house. Let the kitten's head appear over the top of the stocking before the boy wakes. These are only suggestions, but any clever hostess can work up the Mother Goose idea into any number of attractive amusements.

A MYSTERY Dinner provokes much merriment and is easily prepared. Beside each plate place a menu card on which are numbers from 1 to 10. Each order is limited to five courses and the guest places a cross after those courses which he wishes served. Suppose you order 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, you are brought a glass of water, an egg shell, a nut, a cup of coffee and a toothpick. If your guests are all close friends—as they should be for this—it is more than likely that presently they will raid the kitchen, from which appetising odours are coming. Don't let them into the kitchen, but surrender the menu card on which they will find something like this—1, a glass of water; 2, a sardine; 3, an egg shell; 4, an olive; 5, a nut; 6, a chocolate; 7, a grape; 8, a lump of sugar; 9, a cup of coffee; 10, a toothpick. Re-arrange the table, and persuade them to sit down again, passing around new menu cards on which are drawn ten pictures—each numbered—a glass of water, an eggshell, a sheaf of wheat, a potato masher, a jelly mould, a pie, a raisin and currant, a date, a cracker, and a bean. Being interpreted, this produces the usual Christmas dinner, though the guests are loath to order an egg shell until some one brightly guesses that it means turkey. No orders are brought in until all lists are marked. Six courses are permitted and when the first wave of fun is over the missing portions of the dinner are supplied. The wise hostess never waits for the merriment to wane. She takes time and—the laugh—by the forelock.

THE Cent Game furnishes a pleasant amusement for a small party. Give each a sheet of paper, a pencil and a Canadian cent, then ask them to write down as many of the following articles as they can find on both sides of the cent. Part of a needle, connecting piece of land, what burglars' pick, what slaves often received, two flowers, place of worship, a small animal, part of a hill, part of a river, part of a Chinaman's name, what the mail contains, what are used on letters, part of a nail, a numeral, what is used in a rifle, what a bald man lacks, a mineral product, a great country, an emblem of Canada, one form of Christmas decorations, something that has no end, a preserved fruit, insignia of rank, a kind of drum, what we are when we spend out last cent, what sashes are made of, and a number of other things which you may pick out for yourself. The answer to the first is "the eye."



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