

Mrs. Santa Claus at Christmas Parties

NEW YORK, Dec. 14.—"New ideas for Christmas" repeated the man whose business it is to provide new ideas for all sorts of occasions and entertainments. "Of course we have—"

"In the first place I want to say that Deen and Shaw and all the rest of that literary gang don't seem to have made any difference in the number of orders that come for Santa Clauses—in that plural for Claus? The kids believe in him just as much as they ever did and there isn't a mail that goes out that doesn't carry with it some wigs and beards for local Santa Clauses out on the plains or in some part of the union."

"We have a new device for Santa Claus this year that is taking pretty well. Each brick in it is really a candy box, and when Santa Claus has stepped out of the fireplace and distributed his gifts then the children are allowed to pull it to pieces and each one finds a brick filled with goodies and his or her name written on the bottom of it."

"We have a snowball heap made the same way of candy boxes. When it is built it looks just like a pyramid of snowballs and the little ones grow crazy over it when they find out that instead of a cold getting a nice warm box of bonbons."

"The big snowball boxes with sprigs of holly stuck in them are very popular for holly luncheons and dinners. The snow sparkles like the real thing and the holly berries look all the redder in contrast."

"One of the most popular innovations for the country is the addition of Mrs. Santa Claus. The idea of Mother Santa Claus is just to add a little fun to the evening."

"All he needs to play her part is a big fur lined cloak turned fur side outside, and the poke bonnet and muff we send, made of white cotton wool with black worsted tails. Mrs. Santa Claus should be stout, even fat, and when she is first disclosed to the eye of the admiring children she is standing by the side of an enormous pumpkin, out of which in due time steps a little girl dressed like a fairy with wand and wings, who sings a little ballad and then takes gifts from the inside of the pumpkin, while she distributes to the children. Poor old Santa Claus stands by as useless as the husband of a boarding house keeper, and as much

overlooked as the bridegroom at a June wedding."

"Many of the societies that we hear from tell us that they have decided for various reasons, some because they do not believe in cutting down the beautiful trees for temporary purposes, to have some substitute for the tree and ask for suggestions in regard to this."

"While there is nothing so beautiful as a Christmas tree and nothing that appeals so directly to the children, these considerations are potent, as well as the ever present danger from fire in a crowded room with gas or 200 children present, so we have many substitutes. One is the Captain Kidd treasure chest."

"We send directions to the home or to the committee in regard to its building and furnish the covering and the big brass headed nails if required. The presents have to be dug out of the box, where they are imbedded, either in sand or straw, and a pirate stands guard with the most practical costume ever imagined. There are some skulls and crossbones thrown in with other properties of that kind."

"The grab bag and bran pie never lose their charm, and for a few dollars we send the pie and bag all filled with presents, enough for twenty-five children. These may be made more expensive if desired, and a \$3 outfit really furnishes some charming gifts, even including the popular Teddy bear and their accompanying lady dolls."

"One of the popular substitutes we made for a tree was a little western church, where in the vestry was built a bower of Christmas greens powdered with glistening snow—represented by cotton sprinkled with coarse salt—the walls festooned with the usual garlands of Christmas green. Approaching the bower was a long chute down which Santa Claus came, sliding on a large red sled with his pack on his back."

"At another place Santa Claus also appeared on a sled drawn by six children dressed in white, who stood and sang their little carols before he alighted and began to distribute his goods."

"The amount of supplies that are sent out over the country to help to gather money for charitable purposes is simply tremendous. New York people are not the only ones who like to feel when they give they are getting something in return."



THE DELICIOUS MOMENT AT THE CANDY BOX CHIMNEY.

"Our hat trade alone is enormous and we send hats, caps and bonnets for masquerades, carnivals, cotillions and especially for church fairs. Today we shipped two dozen Chinese skulls with queues to a committee in Maine and we have in an order from the giver of a cotillon in Long Island for three dozen Rough Rider hats and some Salvation army bonnets."

"For this same cotillon we sent some gift flowers, that is, large flowers of our own manufacture whose petals conceal the favors until they are ready for distribution."

"We have a number of orders for Japanese parties during the holiday week, one of them coming from a big establishment which intends to have a Christmas eve jollification take this form. The presents for the guests will be distributed from the Jintikka."

"The city children who are deprived of the delight of seeing and playing with the open wood fires have burning outfits which make a very satisfactory understudy. The logs look very natural and the burning effect is produced by fire gilt tinsel."

"Certainly the child of today has great advantages in this respect over the children of a generation ago who had to be content with burning their own corks and making raids on the four barrel when the histrionic fever reached the point of expression. You would be surprised, too, at the number of these that are given to children for Christmas presents."

"Just at this moment the telephone rings and a request comes over the wire for a new device for Christmas presents. The man of ideas replies that he is working out an idea that is not quite complete and explains, after quieting the questioner with promises to let her see it the next day, that

he has originated a Ferris wheel made by placing two ordinary carriage wheels together, painting and covering them with mock snow and fastening Christmas boxes to the spokes. The idea is to be worked out consists of turning the wheel so that when it stops the child gets the box nearest him. Hardly is this described before a suburban woman comes in and asks for help in arranging some kind of butterfly party, while she keeps the staff busy looking up butterfly favors for it. These favors consist of velvet winged pins for the hair, pin cushions and fans with painted butterfly adornments, matchsafes with enamel butterflies and stickpins with the same design."

"The guests are to amuse themselves and one another by painting butterflies on parchment squares and prizes are to be given for the best work. The decorations for the table are butterfly shaped and a tiny little girl dressed as Psyche is to dance as a windup for the evening's entertainment."

"So the entertainer decides, and having satisfied the customer he turns his attention to an anxious mamma whose small boy is expected home from boarding school and who wishes to give a nautical party for him."

"For this it is planned that she shall cover her table with a long green cloth and over this spread a fish net, the sixteen covers to be laid on it, some imitation seaweed outlining each. In the center of the table a huge pumpkin, hollowed out, will contain a deep pan filled with water, on which will float a good-sized ship, its decks covered with a cargo of apples, pears, oranges and other goodies."

"On the side of the pumpkin little anchors are stuck and from these ropes of evergreen and holly extend to the different places. Little canoes are to be fastened to these ropes, and across the bow of each of the tiny craft a paddle will bear the guest's name. Shells are to do duty as salt and bonbon dishes."

"Over the door of the drawing room two big oars crossed will bear the words, 'Come Aboard,' and after the dinner the old game of donkey in a different guise is to be played. A ship at anchor with mast and no sails taking the place of the head of burden. The little guests will try to pin sails to the masts in the places where they ought to be, the prize for the best placed sail to be a silver rowboat pin."

"There is no doubt about it," says the man of ideas as he arranges for half a dozen other entertainments in the course of half an hour, among which are a lesson party, a rummage sale, a corn sodal, a lullaby concert and a Mother Goose carnival. "That people do like to be amused when they go to a party with something besides tea and talk. Anything that takes us out of ourselves a little bit, no matter how silly, answers the purpose. We are but children of a larger growth, you know."

"The other day we were asked to get up something in a hurry for a stag dinner at the Aldine club. We sent them a pie with a papier mache crust, all decorated with sprigs of green and holly."

"When the pie was opened instead of the four and twenty blackbirds a number of balloons flew out, on each of which was painted in big white letters the names of one of the party. They had been carefully inflated beforehand, and as the pie appeared when everybody was feeling pretty mellow, why it raised a big laugh. Every man got up, chased his particular balloon around, and having captured it tied it to his buttonhole and was as pleased as a peacock."

"We had an order a while ago from a man who lives in a big studio uptown for an autumnal party, sort of a golden sheaf and hunter' moon affair. For he had had a jug of maple syrup sent him from the country and that had started his mind on a sort of a merry-go-round of harvest home."

"Well, we went into his place and covered it with yellow hunting and put some big pumpkins around and some sheaves of corn and wheat. We had some ears of corn in papier mache and they had a regular corn husking, and perhaps the girl that got the red ear didn't have the time of her life."

"He had insisted that we have some good trick played on the crowd, and as supper time approached he came to look up the man we had sent to superintend things. The man didn't let on, said it would be all right, and finally when they went into the dining room he was perfectly satisfied, for he was fooled himself."

"The table was covered with white paper and only the food that would be served to a country crowd in such a merrymaking was on the table, except of course the cocktails, which shone seductively each on its plate, with a big shopping cherry in the center of the glass."

"They all raised the cocktail glasses, some one proposed the health of the host and then they swallowed them—at least a part of them, for the cocktails were of the maple syrup, an absolutely perfect imitation of the transparent liquid. The host was as mad as a hatter, for he had swallowed his down with one gulp; then he tried to pretend that he did it on purpose, but it didn't work."



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