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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, December 25, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "GAMES FOR THE CHRISTMAS PARTY" Information from the Playground Magazine, approved by the Extension Office, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

Merry Christmas to everybody. And my motto is: "Say it with games."

I got out my game book the other day and looked up some good games to play on Christmas afternoon, or on any other holiday occasion when you have a good-sized group to entertain.

A clever hostess whom I know has a habit of making over old games to suit the occasion. Old games like blind man's buff and hunt the thimble, guessing games and alphabet games, she converts into the finest kind of games for Christmas, say or any other special day. It's like taking a standard recipe, you know, and by a few simple changes making it into a festive dish just adapted to the day and the occasion.

If you have no special plan for Christmas afternoon -- either after a noon Christmas dinner or before a dinner at night, let me recommend family games.

Right after a meal, when too lively games are not in order, why not have a memory contest? The hostess, who has planned a few of these games the day before, brings out a big stocking made of coarse net and filled with all sorts of odds and ends. Small articles like pencils and erasers, a paper cutter, a ball, a spoon, and so forth. The guests have a chance to look this stockingful over for a few minutes. Then the stocking is removed and each guest is given a paper and pencil and asked to write down as many of the articles in that stocking as he can remember. Both children and grown-ups enjoy this game. And sometimes the youngsters have better memories than their elders. A prize goes to the person who has the best memory.

Another pencil and paper diversion is writing a Christmas menu, using each letter in the word Christmas to start each word of the menu. Of course, the letters must be used in order -- C for cherry cocktail, H for hot soup, R for -- and so on. A prize may be given to the one who finishes first or to the one who has the best menu.

For more lively sport, there are contests and obstacle races. Most children like the nut shelling contests. Two groups stand in two straight lines parallel to each other for this contest. Several feet from the head of each line is a bag of peanuts. When the whistle blows to start the race, the first in line runs up to the bag, grabs a peanut, shells it, eats it, and goes to the end of the line. This continues until all the players have had a turn. The line finishing first wins.

Another Christmas game of the same variety is called "Christmas ties." The players form in two lines, facing each other. A tie is given to the leader of each line -- one red and one green. At a given signal, each leader puts on his tie, ties it, turns, shakes hands with the player in back of him, and then as quickly as possible, unties it and passes it on to the person next to him, who does the same. The line finishing first wins. A strip of cheap, bright-colored cambric or other inexpensive material will do for the ties.

A Christmas version of the old game of pinning the tale on the donkey can be arranged, if you have a doll dressed like Santa Claus minus his beard and fasten it on the wall. The object is to pin a white beard on Santa Claus blindfolded. Each player in turn is blindfolded, turned around three times and given a white beard made of cotton. The player who succeeds in pinning the whiskers in the best position on Santa Claus' chin wins the game.

Marksmanship contests can be arranged with a wreath and snowballs made of cotton batting covered with white tissue paper. Suspend a large wreath in the doorway at a convenient height from the floor and have a little bell hidden in it. Each player is provided with three snowballs, one marked 5, another 10, and a third 20. The players stand about eight feet from the wreath and each in turn tries to throw his balls through it. Any player who accidentally hits the little hidden bell and makes it ring receives an extra 25 on his score.

The youngsters of the household always enjoy a candy hunt. Sometimes the grown-ups join in on this fun, too. Hide hard candies or candies wrapped in waxed paper all over the room. Then give each young player a little red and green crepe paper basket. At the word "Go," let them all start hunting for candies to fill their baskets. The child with the largest number of candies at the end of ten minutes wins.

Oh, my. I almost forgot to mention charades among these good games for Christmas. Charades, as I think I told you when we were discussing Thanksgiving games, are fun for any group, young or old or both, at almost any time or place. Here's a chance for anyone with dramatic ability to show it. Here's a chance to dress up and act. And along with the fun of impromptu acting, this game provides a contest and takes some thought. The group divides into sides and the side chosen to be the actors first goes off for a private conference and decides on a word to act out in pantomime. Each syllable is acted out separately and then the whole word. The opposing side is the audience and tries to guess the word. If it guesses right, it has a chance to perform. As a wit sharpener, dignity destroyer, or ice breaker, no game can compare with charades.

If you have the time and inclination to plan a more elaborate game, puzzle boxes will delight the children. This is something like the old grab bag or fish pond. When the family grows tired of rough and tumble games, puzzle boxes is just the thing. A lot of little inexpensive articles of different sizes and shapes are wrapped up in packages that will give no clue to their identity. On a tag attached to each box, there is a description of the article inside. A truthful description but a puzzling one also. For example, the tag on a package containing a small mirror might read, "A place for reflection." A blotter might be labelled, "An absorbing subject." And a box of sixteen candies might be called, "Sweet sixteen." Arrange the boxes on the table and give the players pencils and cards. Then ask them to write what they think each box contains, judging from the label. The best guesser wins. Of course, this game takes some time and thought in advance, but small articles can be saved from time to time during the year and be ready for any party where this game will fit in.

