

colored check is crisscrossed with white cotton floss. A very pretty one, which is, however, not quite so useful, is made of white muslin, with spots at wide intervals which are covered over with yellow embroidery silk. Such a cushion cover as this must be made like a slip, as it soils easily, and must be removed frequently to be washed.

PINCUSHIONS.—As a rule pin trays are more satisfactory than pincushions. A neat little one, however, which will not hold dust, is made of two circles of pasteboard, over each of which has been stretched a piece of linen embroidered in a floral design. Fasten the two together. Put baby-ribbon around to conceal the place where they are joined. Add a bow and loops to hang it up by. Now, all around the edge, put in glass-headed pins, black, white, blue, green, red, every color which may possibly be needed to fasten ribbons, veils or laces.

A SPOOLBOAT.—Make a little canoe of birch-bark. Bind it all around the edge with ribbon. Fill it with cotton spools, placed closely together so that they will keep one another firm, and laced together with baby-ribbon.

A FLORAL OFFERING.—Start bulbs in little pots, or in half a cocoanut shell, suspended by a small brass chain. Crocus or paper-narcissus will do very well. Present the growing plant to your friend, and if it is not in bloom at Christmas, she will have all the more pleasure in watching it bud and develop later on.

A HANDY PRESENT.—Take three pieces of narrow ribbon, each about two feet long. Fasten them together at one end. At each of the several other ends fasten respectively, a small pair of scissors, a spool of thread, and a small emery bag. This contrivance is to be fastened by the united portion at the belt when sewing.

Many other gifts might be mentioned were there space to write about them. Suffice it to say that, among others, neat laundry-bags, nice aprons (either fancy or work aprons), and oil-cloth medicine frames, in which numerous oil-cloth pockets are bound, labelled and fixed to a square of oil-cloth, which may be tacked in the bath-room or wash-room—all are gifts at once useful and sensible, and likely to be even more appreciated than trifles which look prettier, but may be used less.

THE HOUSE-MOTHER.

Othello.

Who has not read, in the story of the Moor of Venice, how that, having gained the affections of the dainty Desdemona, he was called upon to defend himself from the accusation of having won her heart by sorcery. The picture illustrates the only sorcery he used, but which sufficed to bewitch the fair maiden into forgetting his dusky hue, and becoming his wife in spite of it. In the wrapt attention of father as well as daughter one could fancy that the spell held both alike, but in different manner.

In his defence Othello says:

"Her father lov'd me; oft invited me;
Still questioned me the story of my life,
From year to year; the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have passed.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days
To the very moment that he bade me tell it.
These things to hear
Would Desdemona incline.
And often did beguile her of her tears.
My story being done, she gave me for my pains
A world of sighs.
She lov'd me for the dangers I had passed;
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.
This is the only witchcraft I have us'd."

The painter, E. Becker, might well have called his picture, "The Working of the Spell."

H. A. B.

Christmas is Coming.

It's getting close to Christmas. There's something in the air
That seems to breathe of Bethlehem and all the glory there,
And sweet the bells and bugles sound through our dreams of rest—
Ring, bells, your sweetest music! and bugles blow your best!

It's getting close to Christmas. Oh, time of peace and joy!
And, oh, to be once more, once more, a watchful boy,
With the stocking in the corner for old Santa Claus to fill!
And we still thank God for Christmas, and we're boys in memory still!

Look out for the new corner, "In the Sick Room," which is to appear before very long in the Home Department of the Farmer's Advocate. This corner alone may be worth more than the subscription price of the Farmer's Advocate.

Our Flower Corner.

Begonias.

There are lovers of begonias in plenty, but many are deterred from trying to keep these attractive plants by the fear that they are difficult to manage. Begonias, however, are not hard to manage, provided they can be kept from freezing. Like all other watery-stemmed plants, they are, of course, rather susceptible to frost; but are, at the same time, peculiarly free from insect pests. They do excellently well if kept in a kitchen where there is plenty of steam; but they must not be exposed too much to the full glare of the sun. An eastern window suits them to perfection, as in it they get just the amount of mild morning sunshine which will provide them with the rich coloring so much admired in these plants. They will, however, do very well if set near a southern or western window on a table, drawn back a little, so that while getting the full benefit of the daylight, the plants will not be exposed to the bright, continuous rays of the sun. Rex, or ornamental-leaved varieties, in particular, must not be kept in the sun, which causes the leaves to become speedily discolored. Begonias, too, should never be kept too close to the stove. Too much heat, as well as too much dryness in the atmosphere, injures them. They succeed best in a temperature of from 60 to 70 degrees.

When potting begonias (as, also, indeed, in the case of all other plants) see that the pots, if new, have been thoroughly soaked, and, if old, that they have been well washed before being re-filled with earth. Small plants should never be placed in large pots. Usually, three-inch pots are quite large enough for the first potting; then, as the roots fill up the pots, the plants should be removed into somewhat larger ones. Many fail in having plants flower simply by reason of keeping them in too large pots.

The soil in which begonias are placed may consist of one-half leaf-mould, and equal parts of good garden loam and sand. (If you are starting a cutting, use a great deal more sand and less leaf-mould.) When potting, press the earth well down upon the roots on all sides, so that the little "mouths" of the rootlets will be in contact at every point with the mellow soil. Give the plants a thorough watering, so that the water runs out at the bottom, and set them in a shaded place for three or four days, until the roots have set well to work. After bringing them to the light, water them only in moderation, as over-watering, as well as over-drying, is likely to prove injurious. The Rex, or ornamental-leaved varieties, however, require more water than the flowering sorts. When watering, do not permit the water to fall on the leaves.

A few of the many species of flowering begonias which may be recommended are: Gloire de Lor-

raine, whose bright carmine flowers come in great profusion; Incarnata, with rose-colored flowers, which has been described as the "Ideal winter-flowering begonia"; Manicata, with large, blotched leaves, and bluish-white flowers; and Rubra, which grows so rapidly that it will fill a window in a couple of years. It may be said in passing that the flowering begonias are somewhat easier of culture than the Rex varieties.

Of the foliage begonias, which, when well grown are very effective pot plants, we may mention especially the Metallica, whose metallic luster is very attractive.

Before leaving the begonias, may it be repeated that they must be kept out of a hot, dry atmosphere, if they are to be seen in their perfection. Moisture in the air, when not available by means of the cook stove, may be obtained by keeping a dish of water on the heater, but it is necessary to have it in some way, if the best results are to be obtained with this charming flower.

FLORA FERNLEAF.

[Will those who have had especial success in dealing with any variety of house-plant kindly send in a detailed account of their method with such? We shall take much pleasure in publishing any short, practical articles of this nature.—F. F.]

A Story about "The Story of the Plants."

I want to tell the many boys and girls, who read the "Farmer's Advocate," how I came to read one of Grant Allen's most fascinating works, and to try to induce them to follow my example, and thereby reap similar or greater benefits from the study of books of such importance to every farmer, and, indeed, to all who take a live interest in the prosperity of Canada. Most of the young readers of the "Farmer's Advocate" are destined to become farmers or farmers' wives, or, at all events, to be deeply and directly or indirectly concerned in farms and farming; so that any aid to the better understanding of the workings of nature—the farmers' mightiest engine—must be welcome.

The days of the entirely unscientific farmer, and, indeed, even of the unscientific "man in the street" (in the widest sense of that catch-phrase), are past, and everybody nowadays wants to know everything about his business, and a good deal about the people's as well. "The story of the Plants" is just the book to help young people or unscientific readers to a clear knowledge of how and why plants grow; how they differ from each other, and why; how they progressed from very simple forms (the very beginnings of life on this earth) up to the highly-developed growths which furnish us with food, and delight us with their stately forms, their lovely colors and their exquisite perfumes; how they marry and are given in marriage; how they provide for their young; the wonderful relations existing between them and the insects, the birds and beasts, the wind and rain, the sunshine and the cloud; the air-food they eat; the mineral matter they drink up out of the soil; how they act as chemical laboratories and manufactories; how the flowers form co-operative societies; why some are colorless, while



OTHELLO.