

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES.—We are fast approaching the festive season in which the children gather from far and near around the dear old hearth where were spent those happy, happy days of childhood. One of the sweetest thoughts in connection with Christmas Day is this—that as He, the master of the feast, came on earth to insure the eternal happiness of all His believing ones by the gift of Himself, we, for His sake, should make a point of sacrificing something in order to render a poor home, a single individual, or even one little child, the happier on Christmas Day. Join together, dear girls, if your means are small, and spread some cottage table with plenty. Buy a warm garment for some old body who shivers and shivers for want of a shawl. Buy a toy or two for a child who never knows the luxury of purchasing one for itself. Send out a pile of those Christmas cards which have been showered upon you in such abundance during past seasons and gladden the hearts of those who cannot enjoy such luxuries, except as they stop to look at them with longing eyes as they brighten the stationer's window.

About Christmas shopping—take advice from one who has had experience, and don't leave it all until the last thing, for the stores are crammed and the helpers overworked. Purchasers can hardly obtain attention, and gifts chosen in a hurry are often unsuitable. People who drive their shopping, decorations and other Christmas preparations to the last minute are generally too weary to enjoy the day when it comes. Merry hearts, cheerful countenances, loving words, finding expression in loving deeds, a spirit of peace, forbearance and forgiveness all tend to make our own Christmas a happy one.

Now, dear girls, perhaps a few hints about making presents will not come amiss, to some at least. Many persons complain that it is very hard to decide what to make for gentlemen. I own that has been a great query sometimes with Minnie May. To begin with, slippers are a good standby; dressing gown, slipper case, a silk handkerchief with the initials embroidered in the corner, smoking cap, tobacco pouch, cigar case, braces made of kid, fine silk canvas or silk strengthened with heavy cotton cloth and embroidered with some pretty, simple pattern, and lined with a good thick piece of ribbon, a shaving paper case and watch pocket to match made of any colored velvet, plush or silk with embroidered flowers or initials and trimmed with bows of ribbons or bead fringe, are all suitable presents for gentlemen.

Articles as gifts for ladies and children are inexhaustible. Crocheted clouds or scarfs, hoods, sofa cushions, tea cosies, tidies of all kinds, one style being silk and lace, the silk being either hand-painted or embroidered with silks or crewels, toilet sets either worked on canvas with worsted, hand painted on silk or satin, or dotted muslin over a color and edged with lace. Tablecloths made of squares of cretonne joined by narrow black velvet worked with gold silk in feather-stitch and edged with a pretty worsted fringe or some of the cretonne unravelled out. Others are very pretty made of plain cloth, having a border worked in crewel-stitch. Table, mantel and bracket drapes in all styles. Hand painted panels and palettes; small easels, covered with plush, for photographs and panels. An easy and pretty remembrance for a lady friend is made by getting some satin ribbon of some delicate tint two or three inches wide, fringe the ends about half an inch and then paint some pretty, simple flowers on the ends and make into a bow for the neck. For children, crocheted or knit mittens, hoods, jackets, scarfs, boots, etc., are all pretty and useful gifts.

Among the Christmas preparations one of the most important is decorating the home. It may seem a little trouble, but what of that? surely we can do nothing without a certain amount of trouble, and my dear young friends will be doubly repaid when everything is complete. If you have brothers make them useful by sending them to fetch the green and hanging the beautiful devices which

have been so admirably carried out under your deft fingers. There are many ways of using the green. You can make a heavy festoon of it and fasten at each corner of the room, crossing them in the centre where they are caught up to the ceiling. Another exceedingly pretty way is to take a light cord the length of each picture cord and tie small pieces of the green to it, make a light festoon, then hang them over the nails of each picture and let them lay over the cord, then make another long one and festoon tastefully over the lace curtains. This is particularly effective if you have a bow window. Then cut letters out of cardboard and cover by sewing little pieces of the evergreen all over them and pin them to the curtains, forming the words "merry Christmas to all," or any sentiment you may desire. Wreaths of green with red and white berries hung in the windows or on the wall, are very pretty. If you have no berries you can easily make some by tying small peas into turkey-red and white cotton, and bring the rough edges among the green. Dip some of the leaves and sprays of evergreen in a solution of alum and water, allowing a pound of the former to a quart of the latter. These are very pretty for decorating the chandelier, the effect being doubly beautiful from having the light so near them. Bare branches dipped in the same solution and placed here and there among the green secures variety and looks very quaint. All of these preparations afford a great deal of amusement to the young people, and certainly the pleasure manifested by all who see them is worth all the trouble.

A few words before closing about New Year's Day. Many if not all my readers receive callers on that day, and a few hints may be acceptable. It is fast becoming the fashion for two or three young ladies who have much the same circle of acquaintances to join together and receive at the house of one of them, they each do their share towards providing the refreshments, and take pains to let their young friends know where they are receiving. The advantages of this plan are that some gentlemen have a number of places to call, and if they can see two or three of their lady friends at one house they are saved a great deal of time and travel. Then, on the other hand, many young ladies find it rather hard to entertain gentlemen, especially where two or three happen in at the same time, whereas in the above arrangement they can assist one another at entertaining. When preparing refreshments we advise as little spread as possible. If you have a convenient little nook in your parlor to lay a small table there is nothing out of the way in doing so. First of all make some nice thin sandwiches; chop the meat up very fine and season it is the best way. You will find that most gentlemen prefer a good sandwich to sweet cake; then one or two kinds of cake and fruit if desired; tea, coffee and chocolate. Many use wines; of course that is a matter of choice; my advice is to omit all such beverages. It is becoming quite a common thing to offer milk, and very many gentlemen prefer it to anything else. You must not expect your guests to eat a great deal, and do not be offended if some should refuse to take anything. If a gentleman has many calls to make during the day it would be impossible for him to eat and drink everywhere, or he might be laid up the next day, all because of not liking to refuse his fair hostess. I should like to talk with you longer, but time and space will not allow, so I wish you, one and all, every pleasure and happiness this Christmas can afford, and trust the new year will have a bright and happy dawning for all my dear nieces.

MINNIE MAY.

Answers to Enquirers.

DEWDROP.—1. The constant use of good lip salve will heal the lips. Cold cream and glycerine are also good. 2. A few drops of ammonia added to a gallon of water, and applied once a week to the potted plants, is said to perform wonders.

A SUBSCRIBER.—1. It is altogether a matter of taste whether the bride dresses in white or not; any quiet color is quite as suitable, unless for a grand wedding. She should not change her dress until after the dinner or breakfast is over. 2. If the bride wears white, the bridesmaid may wear white, cream or any delicate tint, but if the bride dresses in a dark, either evening or travelling dress, the bridesmaid can wear any medium shade; she should not change her dress. 3. If white dresses are worn, white slippers would certainly be most suitable; otherwise black are preferred.

NANETTO.—Wash flannels in a tepid lather, ring well and dry quickly. Hot water and imper-

fect wringing will be sure to make them shrink. We believe it is considered best to sleep with a little of the window open at night, and we know many old people who have always done so, and thought it one of the causes of their healthy and long life; no draught, however, is good.

Recipes.

BEAN SOUP.—Soak a quart of navy beans over night. In the morning put them over the fire in three quarts of water, with three onions fried in a little butter, one small carrot, two partly cooked potatoes, a small piece of salt pork and salt. Boil slowly five or six hours. Then pass through a colander and return to the fire. Season with salt and pepper. Bits of bread fried brown in butter make a pleasant addition; celery and clover are sometimes added; a cupful of cream mixed with the soup makes a pleasant change.

CHRISTMAS CAKES AND DISHES.

A good plum cake is made as follows: Beat up one pound of butter and one pound of sugar, the whites of eight eggs and the yolks beat separately; half a grated nutmeg, two teaspoonfuls of ground cinnamon and two ounces of candied orange and lemon peel are added and beaten up to a light batter for a whole hour to make the cake light. This cake is baked for three hours and makes a good New Year's or a Twelfth Day cake. Icing can be added if desired.

DOUGHNUTS OR FRIED CAKES.—Make a batter of flour, eggs well beaten and sugar, and add a few caraway seeds. Have ready a pan full of hot lard and drop into it large spoonfuls of the batter, or the batter may be made stiff enough to stamp out into rings, or made into flat cakes, which are cooked in the hot lard until browned. When taken out, a little white sugar is sifted over them.

MINCE PIES.—A pound of lean, tender beef and two pounds of suet are chopped fine; three pounds of currants, three pounds of pared apples and half pound of candied lemon are chopped fine and added to the former. To these are added the juice and grated rind of a lemon, two pounds of white sugar and half a grated nutmeg and a quarter of an ounce each of mace and cinnamon pounded fine. A pint of good cider and a glass of brandy are also added, and the whole is well mixed. Pack into a stone jar to keep.

COLD CREAM.—A. T. sends the following: One half ounce spermaceti, twenty grains white wax, two ounces oil sweet almonds, one ounce pure glycerine, six drops oil of rose; melt the first three ingredients together, and when cooling add the glycerine and oil of rose, stirring until cold.

MACCAROONS made as follows: Remove by scraping the skins of half a pound of the best almonds, and pound them to a paste in a mortar or bowl, with two tablespoonfuls of water flavoured with vanilla essence; beat up the whites of 8 eggs to a froth; add a pound of fine sugar and mix evenly with the almond paste. Drop it on tissue paper in small rounds and bake 20 minutes.

RICE CAKES.—Beat up 8 ounces of butter to a cream, add the whites of 7 eggs, well beaten, then a pound of sugar, then the beaten yolks of the eggs; lastly beaten in a pound of ground rice very thoroughly; drop on a baking tin, sift sugar over the small cakes and bake 20 minutes.

GINGER CAKES.—Beat up 4 ounces of butter with four ounces of sugar, an ounce of ground ginger, and the yolks of 4 eggs, well beaten. Add flour to make a fine paste, roll out very thin and bake 20 minutes.

Cinders in the Eyes.

Persons travelling by railway are subject to continued annoyance from the flying cinders. On getting into the eyes they are not only painful for the moment, but are often the cause of long suffering that ends in a total loss of sight. A very simple and effective cure is within the reach of every one, and would prevent much suffering and expense were it generally known. It is simply one or two grains of flaxseed. These may be placed in the eye without injury or pain to that delicate organ, and shortly they begin to swell and dissolve a glutinous substance that covers the ball of the eye, enveloping any foreign substance that may be in it. The irritation of cutting the membrane is thus prevented and the annoyance may soon be washed out. A dozen of these grains stowed away in the vest-pocket may prove in an emergency worth their number in gold.