

Christmas Gift Making



SOMETIMES we are prone to think that if we only had an unlimited supply of money and could buy anything and everything we fancied Christmas shopping would be easy and a delight. But there is another side to the picture—the satisfaction that comes from successful contriving, and the pleasure of giving what has cost some personal effort. In the making of Christmas gifts, however, one should realize that it is not enough to plan the article to suit the taste of the recipient—although that is essential—but the work also must be as neat as one can make it. Better some inexpensive trifle purchased outright and good of its kind than an article of more apparent worth but so carelessly or unskillfully made as to be valueless, unless it is the work of the untrained fingers of a child, to whom all is more than forgiven. One should not attempt what is beyond one's powers to accomplish, but there are any number of dainty trifles which only need careful cutting and measurement and neat stitches or application of glue in the making.

When one begins to contrive Christmas gifts one realizes the truth of the saying that there is nothing new under the sun. It sometimes seems as if one can but ring the changes on the bags, cushions, cases of all kinds. And speaking of bags, a gift which any girl will appreciate is a neat bag to match her street suit in color, if she hasn't such a one already. Most girls are obliged to do with one for all purposes. One can find bags in all colors now, either in velvet, suede, moire, or kid. If a fabric bag is chosen, an addition that will give the "personal touch" is the monogram of the recipient embroidered on the velvet or moire in silks to match outlined with gold threads.

The grandmother who remembers the days before the evolution of suit-cases and fitted-up travelling equipment, when the carpet-bag was the means of transporting one's belongings on the rare occasions when one went from home, will no doubt be pleased to receive a work-bag fashioned on the order of the old family receptacle. Such a

work-bag should resemble its prototype as closely as possible in all but size. A piece of quaintly figured tapestry answers for the material, but denim with a flowered pattern or cretonne could be used. An oblong piece of cardboard, say ten inches by three and a half or four, is covered with leather-colored lining material for the bottom, and the sides and ends attached to this. Colored braid or ribbon is used to bind the edges, and there are double handles, one on each side. If there is one of the old-fashioned carpet-satchels to be found for a model, the construction is easy. A bag for grandmother's knitting—there are still stiff canvas foundations so that the needles will not poke it out of shape. Measure it a little more than the length of the needles, wider at one end than the other for the ball, and deep enough to hold the work when rolled up. It is better to line the case—it is a case rather than a bag—with a good quality of mercerized or brocade sateen, than with a soft silk or satin. A silver gray satin or brocade would be nice for the outside.

A brush and comb box with spaces partitioned off for side-combs and for hair-pins of different sizes is not very difficult to make, although it takes a little extra time and carefulness. Made of a cigar box or some other box of light wood and covered with chintz, silk, or other material to match the decorations of the room, it is inexpensive and would make a useful gift. If a cigar box is used, the cover can be cut up for the partitions. These are covered with the chintz and pushed into place in the box after it is lined. If the outside is of flowered material, it will be pretty to have the lining plain. Various receptacles for use on the dresser can be beautified by covers of flowered silk or Dresden ribbon, when one cannot have these receptacles in silver or ivory or some ware beautiful in itself. A can of talcum powder by itself would not make a very presentable offering, but enclose the flask in a little case of delicate-hued silk, with a draw-ribbon and bow, and it is quite within the gift class. A pin and needle-case, especially convenient when travelling, is made from a piece of Dresden ribbon, about four by six inches, a piece of soft corded silk and a piece of chamois or white flannel, of the same

dimensions. Lay the three pieces in place with the chamois as interlining, baste together, and bind all around with inch-wide ribbon or silk braid. Fasten a piece of the braid on the middle of the outside to tie the case with when it is folded in three. Put in pins of different sizes and colors, safety pins, and three or four needles threaded with black and white cotton and silk.

The little sweet-grass baskets of Indian manufacture, which are to be had for small sums in the shops, have quite excellent possibilities in the gift line. They can be lined with silk or satin in pink or any color that goes prettily with the natural tint of the basket, and used for holding a piece of embroidery and its materials, for small workbaskets, for handkerchief boxes, to hold buttons, rolls of tape, collar supports, and so on. When the covers are not wanted they can be removed and used for the bottoms of work-bags, covered as mats, etc.

For the person proud of his or her Irish origin a letter rack in the shape of a harp will be a gift likely to meet with approbation. Use a piece of heavy cardboard for the foundation, and experiment with pencil, scissors, and wrapping paper until you have the shape correct. When the foundation is cut to suit, draw an inner line on your pattern from two to three inches from the edge, and cut along this to get the pattern for the frame, which is also of cardboard. Cover the front of the foundation with green satin, the real Irish green, or mercerized sateen will do. Bring the edges over and fasten at the back with glue or by catching across with thread from one side to the other. From top to bottom, at the front, run gold cord for the strings of the harp, fastening them securely to the foundation. The fastening will be hidden by the frame. Cover the frame with velvet of a little deeper shade of green, or with gold-colored plush or satin, or even with gilt paper, although this will not wear so well. Glue the frame into its place on the foundation, and put in rings to hang the harp up by. Cover the back with sateen lining. The letters and cards are held by the strings of the harp.

For the young matron a boudoir cap would be charming. It can be made out of a small piece of net and lace for frills or edging, with a bow of ribbon to finish. These little caps, which have come into fashion so much of late, are really quite simple to make, not much more difficult than a dust cap.

A "vanity" bag to carry in the satchel is an inexpensive and dainty trifle which can be made in a short time. Take a piece of five-inch Dresden ribbon about ten inches long, and sew up ends to make a little bag. Procure a tiny round mirror and glue the bottom of the bag to it, holding the silk in tiny plaits. Cut a piece of cardboard the size of the mirror, pad with a bit of cotton, cover with thin silk, and glue to the back of the mirror, on the inside of the bag. Make a double hem near the top and run in a narrow draw ribbon. Put a small piece of chamois and a little celluloid box of powder with a tiny puff in the bag.

Thought for the Sick

Whomsoever else Santa Claus forgets at Christmas time—alas, that anyone should be forgotten!—we should, all who have opportunity, help him to remember those who are sick, especially the invalids who are shut in day after day. It requires more tact and consideration to select gifts for those who are sick than for the healthy, because the former in their weakness feel disappointment keenly. For the same reason, if the right thing is hit upon it gives proportionate pleasure.

School children can be encouraged—a hint is all they will require—to make Christmas a very happy time for one of their number who is ill. One school last year contributed the contents of a box which was sent to one of their schoolfellows, a gentle manly boy who had been a favourite until he was stricken with disease. Into the box went a couple of books, a group photograph of the class, a red tartan stocking filled with delicious home-made bon-bons, some choice fruit, a collection of picture cards with greetings from each one of the class, and by way of a joke a whole menagerie of little candy animals. The box made Christmas glad for the young invalid, and helped to lighten many a weary day that followed. But it should not be only the favorite well-behaved boys and girls who are thus remembered. The child who has been rough or indolent or generally trying needs the influence of kindly Christmas thought and action.

A novel way of finding his presents will often give added pleasure to a sick child, although nothing can quite take the place of a well-filled stocking. After he has had his stocking, later in the day if he is ready for some fun, a half-hour's fishing will be great amusement. Provide him with a light round stick to which is fastened a piece of cord with a bent pin on the end. A number of small parcels are placed behind a screen near the bed, and the little invalid fishes over this. Some person concealed behind the screen helps on the game. The parcels must be light, of course, and may con-

tain the merest trifles. Small candy fish of different colors, or baked from biscuit dough if candy is forbidden, would be great sport. The fishing game will appeal to a little girl as well as to a boy, or she can have a "shower," and secure the little packages by drawing on different colored ribbons leading from a small colored parasol, in which the packages are concealed, to the bed or chair.

In the case of an older invalid, the element of surprise and novelty may be a welcome relief from monotony. Several friends can arrange it so that their gifts will be delivered at intervals on Christmas Day, instead of sending them to the house on Christmas eve. Do not give an invalid things to be worn during illness, unless the person is poor and really needs them. Give things that suggest getting well rather than a continuance of illness, or if convalescence seems a long way off, and things for immediate use are advisable, let them be as pretty and dainty as possible. A favourite magazine arriving by post on Christmas morning with a note stating that it will come monthly throughout the year is a welcome visitor to the "shut in." Sometimes an invalid fond of reading finds the weight of a book tiresome. The parts of a serial story can be removed from back numbers of a magazine, which the person has not had a chance of reading, and the several parts bound separately in plain paper, and numbered on the cover. A snapshot album, the kind that has paper covers of some satisfying artistic tint, a box of unmounted kodak pictures of members of the family, friends—human and animal—and bits of scenery, and a tube of photographer's paste may furnish many a half-hour's interested occupation. If the invalid is a woman who likes to crochet or do needlework, some new patterns and designs may be acceptable. Crochet patterns can be picked up from a few inches completed and accompanied by written or typed directions, understood of the worker in crochet, although Greek to the uninitiated. A piece of linen stamped and with the silks or threads to work it will be welcomed by the embroiderer who has not always money to spare for her hobby.

In every case where an invalid, grown up or little, old or young, is concerned, great care should be taken to ascertain the desires and to consider the tastes of the person for whom the gift is intended. It is well worth a little extra trouble to give the right thing in the right way.



Christmas

By Julia Ward Howe.

In highest heaven a new-born star
Unveils its radiance from afar;
The while, upon her first-born child,
The mother of an hour has smiled.

To what a rustic nursery
Cometh this dear nativity!
No hostelry our Babe receives.
Upon the refuse of the sheaves
Is pillowed that sweet forehead, born
To feel the sharpness of the thorn.

Pious souls, in Orient warned,
Seek the Presence unadorned.
Journeying far, they would inquire
Where doth rest the mystic fire
That shall ravish land and sea
With a new divinity.

Regal gifts the pilgrims bear,—
Gold and myrrh and incense rare.
Soon the offered sweet perfume
Consecrates the stable room:
While, from out the wintry gloom,
Leaping Dawn uplifts the skies,
Shows the Babe to reverent eyes.

Soon thou, dear Child, wilt leave thy
play,
Mimic dance, and roundelay;
By some deep whisper in thy breast
Sent on Truth's immortal quest;
In thy young reason, tender still,
Shaping the fatal fight with ill.

Thou shalt learn the humble trade
That for thee no cradle made;
Eat the peasant's homely fare,
His unfashioned garments wear,
While thy royalty of soul
Doth foreshadow its control
Over ages yet unborn
That shall bless thy natal morn.

Ah, sorrow! that thy fair spring-tide
The martyr's mission must abide,
Thy thought with saintly daring probe
The festering ulcers of the globe;
While reckless multitudes will stand
To pierce and bind thy healing hand,
And thy manhood's fixed intent
Leads to Calvary's ascent!

Oh, joy! that far beyond the cross,
Its bitter pain, its shame and loss,
Above the failure men might see
Truth's endless triumph crowneth thee!
Such a promise in thy birth,
Such a glory come to earth,
Such a tragedy divine
To be wrought in pangs of thine,
Such redemption without end,
Brother, Master, Savior, Friend!



Making Christmas Stockings

This is quite an industry for girls who make and fill hundreds of the big stockings for the stores.

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