

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES.—Once again we take pleasure in announcing the result of the last competition, the subject being "The Life and Works of Charles Dickens." The prize, a beautifully bound volume of Scott's Poems, has been awarded to Miss A. M. Craig, of Cornwall, Ont. We have been so pleased and encouraged by the interest manifested by our numerous subscribers during the past few months, and the host of essays sent in upon every subject, that we have decided to continue them and offer this month a handsome silver brooch for the best essay on the subject of "Family Government." All communications must be in by the 15th of February.

Now, dear girls, a word about this new year upon which we are just entering. The old year has gone—gone with all its sudden trials and lasting sorrows, its pleasant surprises and transient joys. We will bury it in our memories, and smilingly welcome the glad new stranger. Time, it has been beautifully said, should be reckoned not by the furrows on the brow, but by the wrinkles on the heart. Our companionship with our readers in the past has been very pleasant, and we trust the future may cement in still closer bonds the acquaintance thus formed; we will try to do our part to make it so. It is our intention to spare no pains to render this paper what it professes to be—a journal to which our readers may turn as to the company of a true friend, whether for pleasant, genial fellowship, advice or encouragement. You, on your part, we trust, will help us by introducing it into circles which it may not yet have entered. May 1885 prove to all of you

A Happy New Year!

MINNIE MAY.

Work Basket.

A pretty tidy is made of alternate strips of black velvet and cardinal ribbon. Sew together, and cross-stitch with old gold silk, and edge with black lace. Line with some pretty cloth or silk.

New fancy wall pockets are now shaped like the old fashioned bellows of our grandmother's days.

Dust will accumulate in closets, will sift in through and under the doors, after one has done all she knows how to prevent it. If a woman can afford to have a regular chest of drawers of the exact length of her dress skirts, she should be counted as one of the happy; if not, she can shield her black silk and velvet dresses in this way:—Take two breadths of wide cambric, sew them together, hem all around both ends, and run in strings to draw them together, or pieces of elastic cord. In this slip the dress skirt. Have two loops on the band of the skirt, and let them come through the top of the bag to hang it by. The object in having both ends open is so that the dress may be slipped out at either end, and also may be arranged so that it will not wrinkle. There should be a loop on the bag also, by which it may be left hanging in the closet after the skirt is taken out.

A SHELF LAMBREQUIN.—If you have a rough uncouth shelf in your kitchen or sitting-room, first cover the top neatly with some dark, smooth cloth; then take a strip of dark but bright double-faced canton flannel about eight inches in depth (more or less according to width and length of shelf) and long enough to reach across the front of the shelf and around at either end. Paste a pretty contrasting stripe of cretonne through the centre, and stitch it on with the machine; hem the lower edge of the flannel, and finish with as pretty a worsted fringe as you can afford; bring the upper edge up over the edge of the board, and make fast with minute iron tacks, and you will have not only a convenient receptacle for lamps, books or vases of flowers, but an addition to the furnishing of your room in the shape of a very artistic and eye pleasing ornament.

NAPERY.—Every housekeeper feels the need of at least one set of handsome table linen that shall always be ready for company occasions. Fringed and embroidered damask table cloths are very expensive, but I have seen a table cloth in a mountain farm house that was pretty without being costly. The material was good linen sheeting with a fringe unravelled out and tied. Above the fringe was a vining pattern, not exactly a vine, but closely set groups of leaves and small fruits of various kinds, done very sketchily in outline work, which is simply long back stitching in colored thread, crewel or silk. The work referred to was in indelible cotton of various shades. In the centre was a large June apple with leaves. From the same linen, which, as it was bought, was of course too wide for a table cover, small square napkins had been cut off and finished with a narrow fringe. In the centre of each was worked patterns of fruit, a bunch of grapes on one, a pear on another, and berries of different kinds on others. The designs were all taken with the help of transfer paper from agricultural papers and seed catalogues, and the outlining is such rapid work that two or three napkins could be embroidered in an afternoon. Kate Greenaway patterns, copied from children's books or even from advertising cards, would be as pretty as fruit designs and easy to execute. If they are used the patterns on the table cloth should correspond.

Answers to Inquirers.

SUBSCRIBER.—What shall I do with a grey parrot which plucks off her feathers? **ANS.**—This vice is the consequence of giving the bird fresh meat, which is not natural food, as parrots are fruit and seed eaters only. All that can be done now is to make a decoction of walnut peels or gentian root and brush the plumage with it, by means of a feather dipped in it. The bitter taste will probably cure the bird of this bad habit of destroying its clothing.

MRS. K. D.—One of the most effective methods of disinfection is the following: Into an iron kettle put some live coals, set the kettle in the room to be disinfected and lay stick sulphur on the coals. The doors and windows should be closed before the sulphur is lighted, and whatever will be likely to be bleached by the sulphurous acid fumes should be removed.

2. *Asbestos* is a silvery white mineral of long silky filaments, which is found in mountainous countries, its peculiarity being that it will not burn. The ancients made it into a kind of cloth in which they burned the bodies of their dead, and were thus enabled to collect the ashes. It is now being used for firemen's clothes. Grease and dirt are removed by throwing it into a clear, bright fire.

NELL.—Will you kindly tell me a good way to preserve pencil drawings? **ANS.**—Take white or gum shellac and alcohol—one-third shellac to two-thirds alcohol—and with a fine glass spray, sold by druggists, spray the picture slightly; rub your finger across it lightly to learn when it is fixed. This is especially good for charcoal drawings.

SNOWBALL.—1. What is the meaning of the "Union Jack?" 2. Which would be most respectable, for a young girl to work in a factory, or in a private family as servant maid? 3. Is a bow sufficient on receiving an introduction to a gentleman? **ANS.**—The "Union Jack" consists of a union of three crosses. That of St. George for England, of St. Andrew for Scotland, and of St. Patrick's for Ireland. The first is red on a white ground, the second white on a blue ground, and the third is red on white standing obliquely from corner to corner, only thicker than that of St. Andrew. Some think that the word "Jack" means Jacques or James, after James I, who united them. 2. As servant maid, by all means, for their life is more retired and protected from all rude contact with the world than that of a factory girl. 3. Yes, generally, from a young lady, except when in her own house or when introduced to a friend's friend; in such cases she should offer her hand.

KATHLEEN.—We have not tried the following method of growing geraniums in winter, but think it very probable that it answers very well if properly attended to. Geranium branches taken from luxuriant and healthy trees, must be cut as for slips, and immersed in soap-water; they will, after drooping for a few days, shed their leaves, put forth fresh ones, and continue in the finest vigor all the winter. By placing a number of bottles thus filled in a flower-basket, with moss to conceal the bottles, a show of evergreen is easily insured for the whole winter. All the different varieties of the plant being used, the various shapes and colors of the leaves blend into a beautiful effect. They require no fresh water.

Recipes.

GIBLET SOUP.—Prepare first the vegetables, viz., an onion, a small piece of turnip and a carrot; cut in slices and fry in hot butter; when hot and beginning to brown, dust in a tablespoonful or less of flour, and add the giblets, and let them all brown; then put all into a kettle with a gallon and a half of water, or half water and half broth, and some pieces of chicken if you have them; simmer for four or five hours; season to taste, and thicken with browned flour; serve with the yolks of hard boiled eggs, one for each person, placed in the tureen before pouring in the soup. It will require the giblets of five chickens for the above quantity.

FRIED OYSTERS.—Drain thoroughly in a colander; season with pepper and salt and set