

## Country Girl's Ideas

When we approach nearer to the angels we may feel just as grateful for the Christmas gift that has to be stored away until our next moving in the bottom of our trunk as we do for the one that fills a long-felt need. But at present, being very human, most of us don't.

I think sometimes that it is enough to make our guardian angels weep to see each year's sinful squandering of money on gifts that have no relation whatever to the recipient. I fancy they must say to themselves: "Why will they do it year after year and never learn by experience?"

And still we go on, giving bedroom slippers to the woman who has enough pairs already to last out her natural lifetime and withholding them from the woman who goes pattering about on cold oilcloth with bare feet. We give little fancy work aprons to the woman who never does a stitch of embroidery and give the "best seller" to the dainty little person who never sits down without a bit of needlework in her hands and who regrets that somehow she never gets time to read.

It isn't the costliness of the gift that counts, but the fitness of it. It is a good plan to make a note of it when your friends express a wish. You will be surprised at the simple little things that people are doing without. You will find probably that some housewife has always wanted a set of muffin rings or a pot scraper or some other inexpensive piece of kitchen furniture and has never got around to buying it. Every time she uses it she will bless you.

Another fault I think with our Christmas giving is to buy things that we think our friends ought to like. Now, it seems to me that at Christmas time at least we might relax our sense of responsibility and buy even ugly things for those to whom we think they will give pleasure. Suppose that an impossibly colored cat holding a match receiver does offend our sense of taste but we know someone who glories in just such novelties, might it not be excusable if under pressure of the Christmas spirit we departed from our own high standard temporarily?

Then again, with elderly people we have our own conception of what they ought to wear and to enjoy and so we restrict our gifts to the things that are proper for them. Most of them submit meekly to the general opinion in this regard, but occasionally some rebellious old lady with a spirit far less careworn than that of her granddaughter who has turned eighteen, breaks through all conventions and declines to array herself in sober colors. She doesn't feel sober and she balks at pretending she does. If she is a poor woman—the

neighbors are scandalized, and her family "find her a great trial." If prosperity has smiled upon her the neighbors call her eccentric and the relatives are very sweet about it, declaring that it is "just her way."

But it is my opinion that most old women pine in silence for frivolities that they would blush to mention to their straight-laced daughters and nieces and granddaughters.

As they do this pining in silence, however, they are apt to get another windfall this year of bedroom slippers and padded dressing gowns and mufflers. I don't suppose anyone will think of giving the elderly mother with a pretty foot a dainty pair of black velvet or black suede pumps to adorn her graceful pedal extremities. There are some old ladies with beautiful round full necks who would set off one of the new collars parting in front but, bless you, I don't believe their families will dream of letting mother or aunt run to such lengths of gaiety.

In reading matter, too, though they are supposed to like only heavy and serious works on theology, many of these old folk revel in a good interesting love tale. Try them with one anyway and see what happens.

And now to point a moral and adorn a tale, I want to point out that we spend too much money and not enough time and thought upon our gift selection.

When people live at a distance it is very difficult to know what to send them, and so I might lay down a parody of a whist rule. When you are in doubt send handkerchiefs. One can never have too many and every civilized person uses them.

When they live near or in the same house with you study their tastes and wants carefully until you find a need that your means will enable you to fill. Don't leave all your Christmas planning until the last minute and then have to decide in a rush what will do for this or that one.

Having made a suitable choice take care, no matter how expensive the gift, to have the price removed and to wrap it up attractively in holiday colors.

I remember one present that came to our home with the funniest, quaintest little letter from the sender, and I don't know to this day which was more appreciated the note or the present. At any rate, the evident trouble this friend had taken in composing and sealing the note doubled the value of the gift in our eyes.

It is these little attentions to detail that make Christmas, Christmas—the thought, the kindness and goodwill that goes with your holiday reminders are the only real manifestations of the Christmas spirit.

*The Country Girl*

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