

## HOLIDAY GIFTS.

BY COUNTESS DE MONTAIGU.

**N**OW is the time for the provident woman to commence preparing her gifts for the holiday season. The habit of procrastination is strong with most of us, and we are apt to put off to-day, that which we can do to-morrow. And so the minutes and the hours slip away imperceptibly, like sands from an hour glass, until all at once one awakens suddenly to the realization that the festive season of Christmas is near by and we are still empty handed.

Much of the value of a gift lies in its sentiment, a piece of needle-work or a bit of painting executed by one's own hand bears with it a sense of personality, and is often more precious to the recipient than would be a more costly gift purchased from a store.

Trifles consume a good deal of time in their manufacture; they should be neatly made and every detail worked out with fidelity and an understanding of the eternal fitness of things.

Among the prettiest presents may be mentioned the white wood screens which may be made at a minimum cost. The everlasting enamel in white or colors, with a design in gold or bronze on the frame, make the most effective decoration. The latest shapes in screens are spinning wheels, fans, lyres, etc. They are covered with either the bright figured India silks or pale hued inexpensive brocades, gathered and tied here and there with wide satin ribbon. Those endowed with the gift of painting can make beautiful panels executed in tapestry colors, or in oil on canvas. The fine Japanese matting makes a charming surface on which to paint, and so does the straw covering which comes over tea chests, either of which can be charmingly decorated.

The large three and four-fold screen is useful for concealing a bed, a washstand or any other undesirable object. On the reverse side may be hung the scrap bag, letter rack, etc.; bands of cloth can be tacked on so as to hold cards, newspapers and the other flotsam and jetsam which accumulate in most households.

Catch alls made of the flat Japanese baskets, which are pliable enough to be bent in a canoe-like shape, are convenient for holding cards and notes; they should be lined with silk or silkoline neatly shirred around the edges, caught together at each end with large bows and suspended to the wall by two straps of ribbon. A graceful floral design painted across one corner adds much to its appearance, or if that is beyond the skill of the maker another bow of ribbon may be added.

A novel idea in wall decoration is to get one of the ordinary Chinese straw seats that can be bought in any oriental bazar; trim the bottom with woollen fringe of some bright color and hang by a heavy cord and tassel of wool; take Japanese coins or Turkish sequins, and sew on at irregular intervals; place several realistic bugs and spiders here and there, or even a sportive green frog. The soft lightly woven straw makes an excellent surface on which one can pin memoranda notes, etc.; the pins for this purpose should be the long ones with turquoise or ruby heads. The affair gives a note of color to an obscure corner, is inexpensive and quickly made.

A convenient wall bracket may be made in this manner; Take a biscuit board and on it nail at irregular intervals three or four cigar boxes without the tops; the whole may be painted or stained of any desired color, and suspended to the wall by a new manilla rope, the ends unravelled out to form tassels.

Another tasteful little article for the wall is made of two of the Ning-po fans of colored straw, bent in some graceful way and held together with strong copper wire. In this place a receptacle of folded tin filled with earth, planted with a small fern; this should be hung in a shaded nook and two or three times a week aken out and well watered.

Flower pots are not as a rule ornamental in a room, and those who can not afford jardenieres can subordinate their ugliness in the following manner: Take a ten-cent yellow, blue or red folding fan; take out the pin which holds the sticks together and cut them off near where the paper commences. Make two holes in each stick about an inch and a-quarter from where they join the mount and pierce others equa-distant from the first ones; then take any fine cord or even strong crewel, run it through the holes and tie securely around the pot; pass a cotton thread through each fold of the fan, top and bottom and tie also. The pot thus covered is ornamental even in a handsome room.

A cute little work-table may be fashioned from one of the cheap round or down leaf tables with turned legs; the top may be either painted or covered with plush tacked on neatly with brass nails. Take three pieces of silk about three-eighths of a yard long by about one-quarter in width; sew up about half of the length so as to form a bag and finish with feather-stitching; gather the lower end into a point and sew on a tassel; then tack each pocket to the table and finish with furniture gimp or gold braid.

Cushions for lounges are always acceptable presents, as one can scarcely have too many of them. A fan cushion is very unique. Take a square of gold-colored Turkish satin and paint in it a design of long stemmed purple fleur-de-lis or anything else you may choose; the outline of the fan must be indicated by a border of some contrasting color and finished with lace about one inch wide, laid on flatly at the top; the sticks of the fan are painted to represent ivory or carved wood and finished with a great bow of ribbon.

Another effective sofa-pillow is made by taking a square of silk or satin and cutting it across each of the four corners as far as the middle—the piece must be lined—the edges button-holed and eyelets worked in them at regular intervals; it is then laced across with gold cord, a puffing of contrasting silk showing beneath. If made of plain satin each of the sections may be decorated with applique, or embroidery, or painted. The cheap brocades and India silks, however, come in such lovely patterns as to render so much work unnecessary, and a cushion made of these materials is quite handsome enough for all purposes. The under side may be lined with silk or even sateen, if economy is an object. If feathers are too costly, cotton may be substituted, or old letters torn into little bits.

Cushions for chair backs may be made of scraps of silk left over from other things; the newest are in three-cornered shapes edged with fringe. Two hearts of pink and blue tied together with a butterfly bow is another good design. The hearts may be crushed by much leaning, but at any rate that is preferable to being trampled upon. A melon-shaped cushion is fashioned from broad ribbons of contrasting colors and lightly puffed on a muslin foundation filled with down. It is finished at each end with a pompon of silk, tied to the chair with ribbons or attached by cords and tassels.

Scarves of all kinds are as popular as ever, those of fine bolting cloth being the most dainty. The prettiest way of finishing them is with drawn work and a painted spray; the newest thing, however, is a border about an eighth of a yard in depth, made of knitting silk in a design in fine crochet, into which is tied tassels or lengths of the silk to form a fringe.

Pretty receptacles for holding matches may be quickly made by taking small brass rings and covering them with crocheted silk; they are, when finished, sewn together, drawn over a small glass tumbler and hung by cords beneath the gas jet.

A postal card holder is a nice present. To make it take a piece of water-color paper, double, and cut a trifle larger than the postal; thread a large needle with heavy silk and sew back and forth on the edges in a pattern like lacing; turn over one corner and fasten with a bow, paint a design on the side.