

of examining it all round. She began by making sure (by approaching and withdrawing as usual) that she was dealing with a glass like the others. She passed behind it several times, more quickly each time; but, seeing that she could not get at this cat, which was always too quick for her, she placed herself at the edge of the mirror, and looking alternately on one side and the other, she made quite sure that the cat she had just seen neither was nor had been behind the mirror. Then she arrived at the conclusion that the cat was inside it. But how did she proceed to test this conclusion, the last that remained to her? Keeping her place at the edge of the mirror, she rose on her hind feet and stretched out her fore paws to feel the thickness of the glass; then, aware that it did not afford sufficient space to contain a cat, she withdrew dejectedly. Being convinced that the matter in question was a phenomenon impossible for her to discover, because it was outside the circle of her ideas, she never again looked in any glass, but at once renounced an object which had vainly excited her curiosity.—*Mrs. Cashel Hoey's Book on Cats.*

THE INSPIRATION OF "MUGBY JUNCTION."

On the arrival of the train at Rugby, it was discovered that the carriage in which we were travelling was on fire. While I was busy superintending the transfer of the light baggage, Mr. Dickens came along in a state of great excitement, and requested me to accompany him to the refreshment-room. Then, standing in the doorway, and pointing with his finger, he described the picture he particularly wished to impress on my mind. "You see, Dolby—stove to right hand—torn cocoanut matting on floor—counter across room—coffee-urn—tea-urn—plates of rusks—piles of sawdust sandwiches and shrunken-up oranges—bottles—tumblers—and glasses on counter—and, behind counter, note particularly our missis." When the train was fairly off again, Mr. Dickens proceeded to explain. Entering the refreshment-room, he and Mr. Wills had each asked for a cup of coffee, which was supplied to them. While Wills was feeling in his pocket for some small change wherewith to pay, Mr. Dickens reached across the counter for the sugar and milk, when both articles were suddenly snatched away from him and placed beneath the counter, while his ears were greeted with the remark, made in shrill and shrewish tones: "You sha'n't have any milk and sugar 'till you two fellows have paid for your coffee." This speech was delivered by the woman whom he had pointed out to me as "our Missis," and it gave infinite amusement to a page in buttons, who, with that demoniacal spirit which seems to seize some boys at the idea of somebody else "catching it," was so overjoyed that he burst out into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. The discomfited travellers left their coffee on the counter, after an apology for making so free with the sugar-basin. But it was an evil day for that "buttons," for he figured as "The Boy at Mugby" in the next Christmas number of *All The Year Round*.—"Charles Dickens as I Knew Him," by George Dolby.

PRESENTS.

AMONGST the minor miseries of life, which, like æsthetic love, are pains that are all but a pleasure, and pleasures all but pain, must certainly be reckoned present giving. Who has not sometimes grumbled over the choosing of a wedding present? Then birthday presents are in some families annual worries, to say nothing of Christmas boxes, New Year's gifts, valentines, Easter eggs, and so on, and so on. It is not only the cost, though that is often considerable, and oftener still a consideration, but the *bother* of it!

Take wedding presents, for instance, which in these days have become little short of a tax! How people do worry themselves (and everyone round them for that matter) on this subject! and oh! the monotony of friendship's offerings! and yet one might have thought the *embarras du choix* would have been the difficulty. Granted that the donor cares sufficiently for the recipient to spend a little pains, as well as money, on the gift, the choice of it should be simple enough. A few minutes spent in considering the tastes and probable future of your friend, will go far towards making your present a joy for ever, instead, as is too often the case, of its being a white elephant, the very receiving of which properly is a severe tax on one's good feelings.

Jewellery is fairly safe, and can be got of all sorts and prices. But still even here one needs caution. Bracelets and lockets will bear multiplying; but, after the fifth pair, gold earrings become monotonous, and I once knew a luckless bride who got ten pair. Brass *objets de vertu* offer a large field for choice, from the large Moorish (or Viennese) tray, or the antique girandole, to the last dainty toy for my lady's boudoir. China, too, is a resource, especially to people of large hearts and small means. Whatever the difference of cost may be Vieux Saxe, modern Worcester, Bleu du Roi, Rose de Barri, Valauris, Lambeth Doulton, and Japanese, all possess the gift of beauty. Then, burglary and electroplate having alike pretty near reached perfection, the latter is in constant request, and offers a large variety to the would-be present giver. The list is a formidable one, from the handsome plate mounted salad bowls, and spirit stands, hash dishes, five-o'clock tea kettles, down to the toy cruets for one person, the little cream and sugar stands, lobster and nut crackers and pickers, oyster forks, tiny laver and brandy sauce-pans, etc. Certainly these are, some of them, indispensable, but they all possess the charm of being dainty additions one longs for, even if one does not feel justified in buying them for oneself. Furniture again, in these days of art feeling, when "suites" are discarded, and matching is an abomination, offers a variety of suggestive items.

But, whatever you give, unless you do not mind being remembered in

later times in anything but a grateful way, do please think a little what the recipient's life is or is likely to be. Don't give that pretty set of electro-saltcellers to a young couple whose plate chests groan with the collection of centuries; or, as I once really saw done, a set of delicate Venice table glass to a girl bound to the back of beyond to start with, and a wanderer's life for ever after. Then a large china bowl or vase that requires branches and armfuls to fill it properly, is simply a mockery to the poor London bride who would have rejoiced for years over the tiny Satsuma-Worcester bowls and cups requiring one flower and two leaves apiece, with which you puzzled her country cousin, whose future garden is innocent of anything smaller than a dahlia (of the old-fashioned sort), and whose taste runs in the line of beapots, and such old-world sheaves of garden produce.—*The Queen.*

TOY-MAKING AT HOME.

BUT I must not neglect the small fry of the community, for they are always favourites, as they can have a house of their own, and sit down to dinner in a handsomely furnished room and enjoy the delectable morsels cooked in the spotless clean kitchen adjoining. Boxes containing nine little dolls are sold now. I can imagine no more gratifying present for a child who possesses a doll's house. A small cradle is a valuable adjunct to the house. The mattress, pillow, sheets, and blankets should all be *real*, as the children say, and take on and off; a cradle that can only be looked at is not half so entertaining as one that can be taken to pieces so that the mattress can be turned and the pillow well shaken up in readiness for baby doll's next nap. A piece of goffered muslin frilling may be arranged as drapery for the foot of it, over the head part muslin corners are looped; but the crowning point is the coverlet, which should be of white satin, edged with lace. A half-tester bedstead can be readily imitated in strong brass wire; a curved piece makes the foot of the bed, and two posts and a head piece are at the top. Around the latter is a muslin frilling, and muslin curtains, edged with lace, hang from it; some frilling also acts as the bands. The coverlet here can be of coloured satin, and, if time is no object, it could either be embroidered at the corners, or worked across with white silk so as to form squares in imitation of lace insertion. A chandelier will improve the drawing room, and, if cleverly manufactured with cut-glass beads, will be superior to those commonly sold, which are of blown glass. Silver wire is needed for threading the beads on. A small ring of beads forms the top, from which a fringe of beads depends; from between every bead on this ring a long string of beads is commenced, which reaches down to a larger ring at the bottom of the chandelier; these strings are to represent the chain of rosettes and long pieces of cut glass that are seen in ordinary chandeliers. Another fringe of beads hangs from the lower ring, brackets for the candles branch out from this, and the candles are formed of wax lucifers cut to the requisite length. There is a great pleasure both in giving and receiving home-made toys; anything that mother makes is sure to be justly appreciated and admired by the little ones, and then, somehow, she knows just what each one of the children will fancy for presents almost better than they know themselves.—*The Queen.*

HERE are some examination absurdities—*bona fide* answers to questions set in recent examinations, which appear in the *Journal of Education*:—(1) "First they made the Apostles' Creed, but no one would believe it, so they made the Nicene Creed and some didn't believe it, then they made the Athanasian Creed, and that no one could help believing;" (2) "William Pitt began life by playing the cornet in the Blues;" (3) "Dryden was a man in high position, Pope lower, Johnson was still lower. Johnson was a frequenter of the Cock Tavern in the Strand;" (4) "Zacharias and Elizabeth had a son named John. When he grew older he had his head cut off to please a young lady." Men have had their heads turned "all on account of a lady," but cut off—never, at least by their own consent.

HAVE you ever observed (writes Sydney Smith) what a dislike servants have to anything cheap? They hate saving their master's money. I tried this experiment with great success the other day. Finding we consumed a great deal of soap, I sat down in my thinking chair and took the soap question into consideration, and I found reason to suspect that we were using a very expensive article, when a much cheaper one would serve the purpose better. I ordered half-a-dozen pounds of both sorts, but took the precaution of changing the papers on which the prices were marked before giving them into the hands of Betty. "Well, Betty which soap do you find washes best?" "Oh, please, sir, the dearest, in the blue paper; it makes a lather as well again as the other." "Well, Betty, you shall always have it then." And thus the unsuspecting Betty saved me some pounds a year.

THE sale of his newspaper, the *Star*, probably marks the final disappearance of John Kelly as a boss in local politics. He staked everything on the November election and lost. We doubt if the city will ever again be afflicted with a boss who will be Kelly's equal in ability and power. Kelly succeeded Tweed, and for a time was almost his equal in power, but he was a different boss from Tweed. He arranged "fat things for the boys," and put into our local offices and into the Legislature about the worst succession of political speculators and strikers that the city has ever been called upon to endure. He stole nothing himself, but he enabled others to steal with great freedom. Connected by marriage with the very head of the church in this country, he was able to command that blind obedience of his followers which existed only within the pale of the church.—*N. Y. Nation.*