

ROUND THE TABLE.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

'WHAT a nuisance Christmas is !' This amiable remark was made by a lady who was evidently selecting Christmas presents with no great relish for the task. And it is a remark which has probably been made, audibly or inaudibly, by more than this speaker ! 'I think it is so nice to remember one's friends at Christmas'—said another lady, *apropos* of the question of Christmas tokens. The two speakers were representatives of two classes of people and Christmas givers, who, with many varying shades between them, are always pretty distinctly marked,—the people who love to live in the lives of others, and the people who think anything 'a bore' that calls them out of themselves, and makes it necessary for them to think of others. Some people have a latent but strong conviction that any expenditure they are called upon to make for others is an injustice, and an oppression to themselves. Of course, to such people, Christmas is a nuisance, since, if they will do nothing else, they find themselves expected, at least, to send Christmas cards to their friends, and even Christmas cards may be felt a burden. Such people, if they were more honest, would not profess to give Christmas presents at all !

But Christmas gifts are like a great many other things,—wedding gifts included—good or bad, according to the spirit in which they are bestowed. When they are given for the credit of the donors, to gratify the spirit of ostentation—or even merely because 'it is expected,' or because there is an obligation in advance to be discharged on account of anticipated gifts from others, they lose all the sweet meaning of a gift, to the givers at least, if not to the receivers ! When Christmas gifts come to be a sort of unadmitted barter, they lose all the grace of gifts, without the satisfaction of purchase. For it is almost

sure to turn out, as some one has cynically observed, that A. gives to B. something he cares for to get from B. something for which he does not care at all. From which, it may be easily observed, that comparatively few people have what may be called the *genius of giving*—in which is implied not only nice perception and tact, but sufficient consideration for others—their tastes and wants, to understand what will be an acceptable gift for any particular friend—consequently very *mal-a-propos* gifts are often made even by people who are not at all stupid in other things. But it is only those who are not too self-absorbed to live a little in other people's lives, who can give attention enough to the wants and wishes of their friends to present them with just the thing they were wishing for ! In the dearth of ingenuity or attention or tact or sympathy, whichever it may be that is lacking, Christmas cards are a resource for the many perplexed people who like to show their friends that they remember them at Christmas, without too great an expense of money or thought, and who can in this way include a much wider circle of friends in the Christmas greetings. And the really beautiful and artistic designs of many of the cards make it possible to give real pleasure by sending one, apart from the more special pleasure of being remembered at a time when to most of grown up persons the day is apt to have more sad than 'merry' associations, and so a token of remembrance from the friends whom life's changes have left is all the more appreciated. Some very practical people consider even Christmas cards a 'nuisance' and a 'tax.' Let us hope that they better bestow the price of their alabaster boxes; and, in the meantime, let us be glad that bonds of affection are strengthened and old ties re-knit and lonely hearts made glad by this pleasant Christmas custom in a world wherein for most people the sorrows are apt to overbalance the joys. F.