

# Woman's Interests and Occupations.

Written for "THE TRUE WITNESS."



## THE CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS.

In the ghostly light I'm sitting mus-  
ing of long dead Decembers,  
While the fire-clad shapes are fit-  
ting in and out along the em-  
bers,  
On my hearthstone in mad races,  
and I marvel, for in seeming  
I can dimly see the faces and the  
scenes of which I'm dreaming.

O golden Christmas days of yore!  
In sweet anticipation  
I lived their joys for days before  
Their glorious realization;  
And on the dawn  
Of Christmas morn  
My childish heart was knocking  
A wild tat too,  
As 't would break through,  
As I unhung my stocking.

Each simple gift that came to hand,  
How marvellous I thought it!  
A treasure straight from wonder-  
land,  
For Santa Claus had brought it,  
And at my cries,  
Of glad surprise,  
The others all came flocking  
To share my glee  
And view with me  
The contents of the stocking.

Years sped—I left each well-loved  
scene  
In Northern wilds to roam,  
And there, 'mid tossing pine trees  
green,  
I made myself a home,  
We numbered three,  
And blithe were we,  
At adverse fortune mocking,  
And Christmastide  
By our fireside,  
Found hung the baby's stocking.

Alas! within our home to-night  
No sweet young voice is ringing,  
And through the silent rooms no  
light,  
Free childish step is springing.  
The wild winds rave  
O'er baby's grave  
Where plumed pines are rocking  
And crossed at rest  
On marble breast,  
The hands that filled my stocking.

With misty eyes but steady hand,  
I raise my Christmas chalice:  
Here's to the children of the land  
In cabin or in palace;  
May each one hold  
The key of gold,  
The gates of glee unlocking,  
And hands be found  
The whole world round  
To fill the Christmas stocking!

—Clarence Henry Pearson.

## THE MOTHER'S PART IN THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES.

Of all the days in the year Christ-  
mas is pre-eminently the children's  
days. To all, indeed, both old and  
young, it is dear and welcome, but  
with us who have outlived the  
dreams of childhood, it is essential-  
ly a day of retrospect. Each recurrence  
of the glad feast comes to us  
freighted with memories of the past,  
memories of joyous Christmas Eves  
when, nestling close to mother, we  
listened in awe and childish wonder-  
ment to the story of the first Christ-  
mas night in Bethlehem, of the oc-  
casion of anticipation that filled our  
hearts as we lay down to dream of  
the morrow with mother's good-  
night kiss like a benediction on our  
sleep; memories of long-drawn-out  
Christmas dawns when our eager  
eyes strained through the semi-dark-  
ness to catch a glimpse of the stock-  
ings by the chimney, as we lay,  
waiting with consuming impatience  
for the daylight, and when morning  
broke at last, the wild rush to see  
what Santa Claus had brought us;  
memories of the walk to church  
through the crisp, shimmering morn-  
ing, the incense, the music, the  
countless quivering lights the sol-  
emn ceremonial, and through all  
and above all appealing to our child-  
ish hearts, the dear little figure on  
its bed of straw beneath the canopy  
of evergreens. Then the long after-  
noon and evening over our new tra-  
sures, studying, exhibiting, experi-  
menting, discovering every moment  
some new wonder. How glorious it  
all was, how tender, and pure, and  
holy! O, thank God for the Christ-  
mas days of our childhood! Thank  
God for the sanctifying halo their  
memory has spread through all the  
intervening years!

But we are men and women now,  
struggling with life's responsibilities,  
and with the recognition of the  
blessing the remembrance of these  
far-off golden days has been to us,  
comes the realization of our duty to  
the children growing up about us.  
It is to the mother that this lesson  
should come home with especial  
force, teaching her the part it will  
be hers to play in the coming festi-  
vities, for upon her depends in great  
measure what Christmas will be to  
her children, and how they will re-

member it in the years to come.

Now, making Christmas happy  
time for the little ones does not  
mean the buying of expensive toys  
with the money which, in many  
cases, is needed for absolute neces-  
sities, nor plying them to repletion  
with sweet meats and dainties,  
which treatment tends to make them  
sensual and selfish, to say nothing of  
its present ill effects on their  
health. They should, by no means,  
be allowed to imbibe the idea that  
Christmas is merely a time of extra  
fun and self-indulgence. The full  
and beautiful meaning of the feast  
ought to be impressed upon them,  
and its sacred story of love and sa-  
crifice and Divine humiliation taught  
them in such a way as to engage  
the sympathy of their childish hearts.

Toys and confections are, indeed,  
part of the Christmas programme  
and altogether indispensable, but it  
is necessary to exercise prudence in  
their purchase. Of the latter none  
but the very best should be procur-  
ed, and they dispensed in modera-  
tion. In the selection of playthings,  
in order that they may afford real  
pleasure and be thoroughly appre-  
ciated, it is always well to be guid-  
ed by the particular bent you have  
observed in each of the children for  
whom they are intended, and they  
should be of a character to with-  
stand, for a reasonable time at  
least, the hard usage, to which  
they are likely to be subjected. Toys,  
too expensive or too fragile to be  
used in ordinary play are, especially  
with people of limited means a pur-  
poseless and unpardonable extra-  
vagance.

It should be borne in mind above  
all that there can be no really hap-  
py Christmas for children except in  
a home where peace and love reign  
supreme, where perfect harmony does  
not prevail amongst the elder mem-  
bers of the family the dispositions  
and tempers of the children must  
suffer accordingly. If you love your  
children, then, your great object  
should be to create a bright and  
healthy atmosphere in the home, and  
this not for one day only, but all  
the year round. But on this day, of  
all others, you should guard jeal-  
ously that not the tiniest shadow be  
allowed to cloud one moment of the  
day's happiness for the little ones.

Least of all should you yourself be  
the one to put a damper on their  
innocent mirth. Let them have their  
merry fling. Don't try to hush the  
noise or say it makes your head-  
ache. Years hence when they have  
grown up and gone out into the  
world and left you by your fireside  
alone, your heart will ache for the  
lack of it. Enter, you, fully into  
the spirit of the gracious season.  
Forget, for the time, life's canker-  
ing cares. Be a child yourself again  
that you may take part with the  
children, and their merry voices and

ringing laughter will make music in  
your heart, not for to-day alone, but  
in years from now when to-day's priv-  
ilege of making them happy will no  
longer be yours.

And in the midst of your happi-  
ness, as you look round on your  
darlings gathered about you, and  
your heart goes out in gratitude to  
God for His unspeakable goodness  
to you, be not unmindful of the  
poor little motherless waifs, for  
whom Christmas is but a name. You  
surely know of such, for, unhappily,  
they are to be found everywhere.  
Seek out some of these and teach  
your children the sacred duty as  
well as the joy of sharing their  
blessings with those less favored.

And when the day is done, and  
you lie down to rest, it will be with  
the blessed consciousness that you  
have done your part towards mak-  
ing for your dear ones a Christmas,  
the recollection of which must shed  
a purifying influence over all their  
after lives.

## SOME OLD CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS.

Of the many old Christmas cus-  
toms that have been handed down  
to us, the dearest to the Catholic  
heart at least, is that of which we  
commonly speak as "The Crib of  
Bethlehem." The origin of this beau-  
tiful practice is ascribed to St.  
Francis of Assisi. A sweet story is  
told of the Christmas night, when  
for the first time the Crib, with its  
tiny, recumbent figure, representa-  
tive of the Holy Child, was exposed  
to inspire the piety of the faithful.  
St. Francis, himself, celebrated the  
Divine Sacrifice, but when we would  
have spoken to the people of the su-  
blime Mystery they had come to  
honor, only one word would come to  
his lips and over and over again he  
whispered it—the sweet Name of Je-  
sus. And, presently, as he stood  
before them, the tears streaming  
over his face, the shepherds and the  
poor mountaineers beheld the Di-  
vine Child Himself lying in the arms  
of the saint, clasped in an ecstasy  
of love to his gentle heart. From  
that time forth he spoke of the  
world's Redeemer always as "the  
Babe of Bethlehem."

The Christmas Tree and the burn-  
ing of the Yule Log with others of  
the old customs that have come  
down to us through the centuries,  
seem to have had their origin  
amongst the nations of the North.  
They are, in all probability, a sur-  
vival of the ancient Yule festival,  
which in pre-Christian times was  
held at the winter solstice. At this  
feast fir trees, typical of the great  
"Celestial Light Tree," as the peo-  
ple of the North designated the sun,  
were profusely adorned with sym-  
bolic animals and covered with  
lights to signify that the god of  
light was about to reassert his su-  
premaccy in the winter sky. When,  
in course of time, paganism gave  
place to Christianity and the Yule  
to the Christmas celebration, the  
evergreen still retained its place in  
the festivities and the lights upon  
it came to be emblematic of the  
Light, which, radiating from Beth-  
lehem, has shed its glory over the  
whole earth. From Norway and  
Sweden the Christmas Tree and the  
Yule Log found their way into other  
European countries and into Eng-  
land, where they became very popu-  
lar features of the Christmas merry-  
making. The Yule Log, which was  
usually the root of an immense tree,  
was brought in with much noise and  
jollification, placed in the fireplace  
and lighted with a brand saved from  
last year's yule log. It was sup-  
posed to burn from sunset Christ-  
mas Eve till sunset Christmas Day,  
and if, between these hours, the fire  
went out, it was considered ominous  
of ill luck for the coming year.

The practice of decorating the  
house with holly and other ever-  
greens is also of great antiquity. By  
some it is believed to have had its  
origin in an old Tuscan custom of  
hanging the interior of dwellings  
with evergreens to entice the sylvan  
spirits into shelter from the incle-  
mency of the weather. Many super-  
stitions are connected with the use  
of holly, especially in England. In  
some parts it was considered un-  
lucky to have it brought into the  
house before Christmas Eve. In sev-  
eral of the rural districts there was  
a popular belief that according as  
the Christmas holly was rough or  
smooth the husband or wife should  
hold the reins of government through-  
out the ensuing year. In parts of En-  
gland and Scotland, as well as in Ire-  
land, the holly that has been used  
in the decoration of the church is

eagerly sought, as the possession of  
a branch with berries is supposed to  
ensure a year of prosperity.

Mistletoe, which was much véné-  
rated in the ancient radical days, has  
also figured conspicuously in Christ-  
mas decoration, and in parts of the  
country the tradition is still honor-  
ed by which a young man has the  
privilege of kissing a maiden caught  
standing under the mistletoe.

The Carol singers, too, have held  
their place in the Christmas festivi-  
ties from time immemorial, at least  
in the old countries; the practice  
never obtained in any extent with  
us. A pretty variation of this old  
custom prevails in some of the pro-  
vinces of France, where, at every  
house, the singers demand admis-  
sion, which is never denied. When  
the door has been thrown open, they  
enter the kitchen, and gathering  
about the fire, finish the carol begun  
on the street. Then each presents  
his basket to the housewife with a  
petition for a donation from the  
Christmas supplies. The delicacies,  
thus procured, go to provide a feast  
for the poor on Christmas Day.

## HELPS IN BUYING CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

For those who are not hampered  
in the purchasing of their Christ-  
mas presents by the consideration of  
expense, no suggestion is necessary.  
The furrier, the jeweller, the book-  
seller, the picture dealer and the  
dry goods merchant, all present in  
endless array, beautiful an appropri-  
ate things, from which it should not  
be difficult to make a choice. But for  
the girl who must make a little mo-  
ney go a long way, it is more of a  
problem; still, even for her there is a  
wide range of pretty and suitable  
articles which gives scope for the  
exercise of taste and judgment. From  
the almost endless list we will pick  
out a few by way of suggestion.

For a gentleman—A fancy necktie,  
a whisk holder, a tobacco pouch, a  
cigar case, a laundry bag, a match  
safe, an ink blotter, a penwiper, a  
fancy pencil, a diary, a new book,  
etc.

For a lady, a pair of gloves, a  
pretty hat pin, a purse, a fancy rib-  
bon, a silver thimble, a dainty bit  
of china, a photograph frame, a  
pretty doily, or any of the numer-  
ous toilet knick knacks so necessary  
to the dressing table. Then there  
are the many pretty things in sil-  
ver and pearl and silver and ebony,  
from which dainty and inexpensive  
gifts may be chosen for either a lady  
or gentleman.

And now, just a word about  
Christmas giving. It would be a  
pity that the time-honored practice  
of remembering friends with a token  
of affection on Christmas morning  
should be allowed to develop into  
an abuse, as it sometimes threatens  
to do. None but worthy motives  
should ever prompt the making of  
any present. Giving extravagantly  
in order not to be behind others,  
who, perhaps, have heavier purses,  
and giving in the expectation of re-  
ceiving in return, are simply forms  
of vulgarity, which detract from the  
character of the giver, and in no  
wise compliment the receiver. It is  
a wise rule to make never to give  
with the hand a gift the heart does  
not sanction. Choose your presents  
carefully, and with due considera-  
tion for the position and tastes of  
those for whom they are intended.  
Let them be dainty and expressive.  
Do not give beyond your means. Re-  
member an over-expensive object is  
more apt to be criticized than appre-  
ciated. Gifts are not prized, at  
least not by right thinking people,  
for their "face" value, but for the  
love which prompted them. Do not,  
therefore, be afraid or ashamed to  
give a trifle, especially to one whom  
you know to have more money to  
spend than you have yourself. So  
that your gift speaks your heart's  
message you should be perfectly sat-  
isfied.

## PREPARING THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

CREAM OF TOMATO SOUP.—To  
a pint of water add one quart of  
canned tomatoes, a teaspoonful of  
sugar, three or four whole cloves,  
a slice of onion and a little parsley.

Boil fifteen or twenty minutes. Add  
a small teaspoonful of soda; let  
stand a moment or so, and then  
strain.

Thicken one quart of milk with a  
large tablespoonful of cornstarch.  
Boil ten minutes, stirring all the  
time. Season with salt and pepper;  
add a heaping tablespoonful of but-  
ter and the mixture of tomatoes.  
Allow the whole to become thor-  
oughly heated but not to boil.

ROAST TURKEY.—Singe and  
draw the turkey, then clean well in-  
side and out with a dry towel.  
Truss, and place in an oven, hot  
enough to brown quickly. Let the  
oven cool slightly for the rest of the  
time required for the baking, which,  
for an ordinary sized bird, will be  
about two hours. Baste often. Be-  
fore removing from the oven dust  
with salt and pepper.

It is asserted by many good cooks  
that the turkey is better served un-  
stuffed, as the stuffing absorbs the  
juice of the meat and changes its  
flavor. But there are those again  
who would not think of bringing the  
Christmas turkey to the table with-  
out it, and for their benefit we add  
a chestnut stuffing which is much to  
be preferred to bread.

Chestnut stuffing.—Shell, blanch  
and boil two-quarts of common  
chestnuts, or one quart of Spanish  
chestnuts. When tender, drain and  
mash. Add a tablespoonful of but-  
ter, a teaspoonful of salt and a  
saltspoonful of pepper. Mix all well  
together.

GIBLET GRAVEY.—Boil the gib-  
lets very tender; chop fine. Take li-  
quor in which they were boiled and  
thicken with flour. Add a teaspoon-  
ful of butter, pepper and salt, then  
the giblets and dripping, in which  
the turkey was roasted.

CRANBERRY JELLY.—To one  
quart of water add one quart of well  
washed cranberries. Boil in a porce-  
lain kettle till the berries pop —  
about ten minutes. Strain through  
a colander and return to the kettle  
with one pound of granulated sug-  
ar. Stir till dissolved. If a firm  
jelly is desired boil five minutes, if  
not, turn out at once.

BOILED CABBAGE.—Remove the  
dead outer leaves and wash in cold  
water. Drain, and put into boiling  
water enough to cover well. Added  
to the water should be salt and a  
very little soda. Leave the pot un-  
covered and let it boil quickly till  
tender. Take up at once and drain  
well through a colander. Add melted  
butter and serve.

POTATO ROLLS.—Wash and boil  
potatoes; add salt, pepper and a lit-  
tle milk. Beat four eggs light and  
mix with them. Make into little  
rolls and cover with flour. Fry in  
hot lard.

SARDINE SALAD.—Two boxes  
sardines, four bunches celery; chop  
fine. Add whites of four eggs boiled  
and chopped.

Dressing.—Yokes of four eggs boil-  
ed hard, one raw egg, two table-  
spoonfuls mixed mustard, half cup  
vinegar, juice of two lemons, salt  
and pepper.

PLUM PUDDING.—One pound  
each of currants and stoned raisins,  
three-fourths pound suet well chop-  
ped, three eggs, one coffee cup sug-  
ar, one teaspoonful soda; add  
spices as desired. Moisten with milk  
and add flour to mix soft. Tie in a  
bag, leave room to swell, and boil  
three and a half hours.

PUDDING SAUCE.—One table-  
spoon butter, one cup fine sugar, one  
glass sherry. Beat butter and sug-  
ar to a cream and gradually add  
wine. Boil a half pint water with a  
tablespoonful flour. Strain on above,  
add nutmeg. Set over the tea-kettle  
a few minutes before serving.

MAY.

Typewriting and mat-weaving have  
been successfully taught to the blind,  
and it is believed that they could  
even learn to make lace, and thus  
gain a new means of livelihood.  
No reading does us any good that  
is not a pleasure to us.

Subscribe to the  
"True Witness."

## OBLITERATING

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nent contemporaries asks  
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