

Minnie May's Dep't.

MY DEAR NIECES:—

"Oh, the spring hath less of brightness
Every year,
And the snow a ghastlier whiteness
Every year;
Nor do Summer blossoms quicken,
Nor do Autumn's fruitage thicken
As it did—the seasons sicken
Every year."

We are emphatically a retrospective race. As time rolls rapidly ever onwards, we look back to the long years that are gone. Childhood's innocent, happy days, the best, bright days of school, the first dawn of manhood and womanhood, when life began to seem stern reality, and we took our stand among our fellows; all these hold dear. But perhaps if there is one thing that stands out in bold relief, it is the long, cheerful winter evenings that passed so pleasantly away.

I can remember it all so plainly, even now—the day's duties over, we all gathered together to forget our petty troubles and trials in pleasant talk and merry games, and there is no place so suggestive of cosy comfort as the spacious farm sitting-room, with father, mother and children gathered round the cheerful wood fire. It is a rare thing in the city to find all gathered by the home fireside in the evening. Business, amusements, dissipation—something, I am sorry to say, to break up those home pleasures which farmers' families only know.

But it is of the approaching Christmas I wish to speak to my nieces. I hope each and every one of you will try in some way to make somebody else happy on that day. Remember all you can, and especially those who have no parents nor home, and whose lot in life seems less blessed than yours, for if we look around we can see many who have little to cheer them, and to whom a kind word, a "Merry Christmas," and a little useful present or a toy for their children would do much towards making them happy. Wherever possible I would recommend having a Christmas tree in the home. It always is an attraction, and when the process of disrobing the gorgeously attired tree commences, who has not heard the shouts of joy as Johnny receives the coveted knife and Fanny the longed-for book, and when the spring skates that Bobby prayed and hoped for all last winter actually go plump into his arms, such a howl of ecstasy is set up which fairly makes our own hearts bound with delight; and if we have succeeded in making even one happy on Christmas day, do we not feel much better ourselves?

I must now conclude in wishing all my nieces a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, trusting that our pleasant intercourse shall be continued during 1893. The *ADVOCATE* is to be much improved and enlarged, and to be issued hereafter every fortnight, giving us an opportunity of much closer communication.

MINNIE MAY.

P. S.—Minnie May offers a prize of \$2.00 for the best essay on "Punctuality," all essays to be in our office by the 20th December. Also a prize of \$2.00 for the best original New Year's story, not to exceed four columns in length of our ordinary type; must be in our office by the 1st January.

The cries of none of the animals approach more closely that of the human voice than those of seals when lamenting the loss or capture of their young. The cry of a wounded hare resembles that of a child in distress. Its piercing shriek can be heard on a still night at a distance of more than a mile.

Prize Knitted Mitts.

WON BY MISS NELLIE COWAN, MOSBORO, ONT.
DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING.

Cast on your needles fifty-five stitches and knit the first round plain.

2nd Round—p 1, k 1, p 1, k 6, p 1, k 1, p 1, k 7, throwing the thread over between each stitch, p 2, k 7, and, as before, throw your thread over between each stitch, p 2; repeat this until the end of the round.

3rd Round—p 1, k 1, p 1, k 6, p 1, k 1, p 1, k 9, n, p 2, n, k 9, n, p 2, n, k 9, n, p 2, n, k 9, n.

4th Round—p 1, k 1, p 1, k 6, p 1, k 1, p 1, n, k 7, n, p 2, n, k 7, n, p 2, n, k 7, n, p 2, n, k 7, n.

5th Round—p 1, k 1, p 1, k 6, p 1, k 1, p 1, n, k 5, n, p 2, n, k 5, n, p 2, n, k 5, n, p 2, n, k 5, n.

6th Round—p 1, k 1, p 1; remove three stitches to an extra needle, knit the next three, and replace the three lifted and knit them; p 1, k 1, p 1. Repeat from the second round until long enough for a cuff. Knit the front of the mitt plain, for the back the cable stripe with fern stripe on either side, and two purled stitches between the fern stripe and the plain front.

Simple Christmas Gifts.

BY EVELYN L.

Once more dear old Father Christmas is near at hand, and, at the thought of his coming, we bestir ourselves to be ready with the little gifts which we wish to send in loving greeting, as expressions of good will, to those united with us in the ties of love and friendship. A few suggestions as to new and pretty fancy work may be found useful.

Ring-work being still fashionable, many useful as well as attractive articles are made of the brass rings crocheted with knitting silk. Needle-books are novel and effective when made in this way: Take seven rings for one side of the cover and crochet them with silk. If a ring sufficiently large be used, a spider's web may be worked in the centre. Sew the rings together—one in the centre and the other six surrounding it—forming a circle; then cut two or three pieces of flannel the same shape, but a size smaller, and button-hole the edges with silk; join the covers and flannel together with two tiny bows of baby ribbon the same shade as the silk, and, on the opposite side of each cover, sew a piece of the ribbon, about five inches long, to tie together when the needlebook is not in use. Yellow, pale blue, pink or crimson are the favorite shades. Pen-wipers may be made in a somewhat similar manner, the rings being joined in triangular form and chammois skin being used instead of flannel.

How many times, when sewing, are we annoyed by the scissors slipping down to the floor or disappearing into unthought of corners. A good way to obviate this difficulty is to make a pretty ribbon and ring attachment and pin it to one's side. The materials required are:—Fifteen rings, one inch in diameter, two yards of ribbon, an inch and a-half wide, and a pair of scissors. Crochet the rings with knitting silk the same color as the ribbon, yellow being very effective but red more durable. Fasten one end of the ribbon around a ring, then run the other end through one of the handles of the scissors, leaving a loop about four inches long. Make a similar loop through the other handle, passing the ribbon through the same ring, slightly lapping one ring over the other, weave the ribbon in and out, leaving a plain piece at the top six inches long, and finish with a pretty bow, which is pinned to the side of the wearer, and the scissors hang ready for use.

Many are the devices and designs used for making photograph frames, but the prettiest one I have seen was made from the following directions:—Take three quarters of a yard of ribbon, four and three-quarter inches wide. (Five inch ribbon will answer, but the former is preferable.) Fringe it on each end to the depth of five and a quarter inches; then crochet twenty-six rings, join them together in this way

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and sew them to the ribbon so that a cabinet photograph will fit the frame thus constructed. The lowest row of rings should come above the fringe. Join three rings in triangular form and draw the ribbon together some distance above the top of the photograph where the rings are secured, the top one being used to hang it up, and the other fringed end of the ribbon hanging gracefully at one side.

One of the most unique articles is that used for hat and stick pins in place of the old-fashioned cushion. Buy a pretty bisque doll's head with flowing hair; it must not be too large, say about seven inches around the shoulders. Take a piece of sheet wadding nine inches long and sixteen inches wide; fold it up so that will be about four inches wide, then put a thick coating of mucilage inside the doll's shoulders and crowd one end of the batting into the neck in order that the shoulders may fit neatly down upon it and let it dry. When this is ready, take a piece of satin about nine inches square; double it and make a case to cover the batting; gather it at the top, and secure it tightly around the doll's neck. Then, with soft lace about an inch and a-half wide, make a deep frill around the neck, putting a stitch here and there to keep it in place. The lower edge of the case may be finished with loops of baby ribbon an inch long, or crocheted rings, fringe, or in any pretty way which one's taste may suggest. A crocheted ring is securely sewn at the back of the neck and drawn through the hair, by which to hang it up, and, when finished and filled with pins, it will be found useful as well as ornamental.

Dainty hairpin-holders may be made of the small, round Japanese baskets so common in our city stores. Select one about twelve inches in circumference, and take out the bottom. Knit or crochet, in some delicate shade of wool, round, tufted pieces to fill the apertures and sew them in securely. Chenille balls of the same color sewn around the basket are a great improvement; about ten will be needed. Finish with a pretty bow and strings of ribbon.

To make a neck-tie case, a very suitable gift for a gentleman:—Take two pieces of pasteboard fifteen inches long and six inches wide, covering each with three sheets of wadding on one side and one sheet on the other; scatter a little sachet powder between the wadding and cover them with pale blue satin. Across the sides more thickly wadded put two rows of fancy elastic or pale pink ribbon; join the covered pasteboard together in book form with two bows of pink ribbon, and sew a piece of ribbon on each cover on the other side with which to tie them together. The neck-ties are slipped under the elastic and are easily kept in place. Any colors which combine well may be used. A pretty idea for one of the covers is to stretch a piece of ribbon across diagonally from one corner to the other, upon which may be painted or embroidered the name or initials of the one for whom the case is intended, or, if preferred, a spray of flowers or a conventional design.

Tatting is now so fashionable that many dainty and useful articles may readily be made by those who are handy with the shuttle, doilies being particularly popular.

Large wooden spoons are utilized for the purpose of making pin-cushions. The spoon is gilded or bronzed, as taste may dictate, and a small satin cushion glued into the bowl, while a ribbon bow and loops finish the handle.