

THROUGH A MONOCLE

HAVE WE SPOILED CHRISTMAS?

THE touch of Midas is death. Not even Christmas can survive it. Its paralyzing power is beginning to be seen already in connection with this most beautiful of the festivals of the year—the festival of family love. You hear a great many people crying out under the burden of Christmas preparations. "Oh, I will be so glad when Christmas is over," say mothers and daughters, and even those least harried of the household—husbands and fathers. The mere man who thinks that Christmas is a species of "hold up" and that everybody is delighted to "get money out of father," should undertake to make the money he gives go the long round which his women-folk stretch it out to cover. The writing of cheques is the lightest part of the Christmas shopping. The thoughtfulness, the searching of counters, the jostling of crowds, the breathing of bad air, the study of tastes, the consultation of friends, and all the other "labours of Hercules" which go with the spending of the proceeds of the cheques, mint every penny of them into gold.

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BUT, after all, the trouble lies with the touch of Midas. We have imported our spirit of boastfulness and display, which is so characteristic of this continent, into the keeping of Christmas; and we are simply suffering the penalty which is so properly imposed. When we choose a Christmas gift so that it "will not look mean," and so that it will be worth quite as much as the one we got from the same parties last year, and so that the recipient can show it off with pride both to herself—or himself—and to us, we are not observing the spirit of Christmas; we are paying for a personal advertisement. And, of course, advertisements cost money, and the buying of them is a burden. Trebly crushing is the burden when we cannot afford the outlay, and are feeding our pride at the expense of our comfort or possibly our health. It is useless to preach to people on the exceeding sinfulness of Pride. But it is a sin which brings its own punishment with a promptness which would discourage all but incorrigible sinners.

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THE best Christmas gifts I have ever got, have cost little. But they have been wrapped in love. One such gift sweetens the day; and a dozen boastful advertisements of how much money some of my friends have to spend, cannot spoil the effect. It is exceedingly pleasant to be remembered at Christmas; but the evidence of remembrance ought to be personal and individual. There ought to be something in it which conveys the intelligence that your friend thought of more about you than your name and address. He picked out something which would appeal, to what he knew of you; and it would not have done just as well for anybody. Personally, the remembrance I like best at Christmas from a distant friend is a letter. I know that that is a costly gift. Letters take time, and time is literally money. But I believe that any person will scatter more real Christmas joy abroad if he will write five letters than if he buys fifty presents.

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MANY people try to spread their affection too wide—and too thin—at Christmas. It is impossible that any human being should really have a hearty Christmas feeling, which must inevitably precipitate itself in the form of a gift, for so many people as are sometimes on the Christmas list of wholesale givers. This leads us naturally to consider one of the most delicate of Christmas questions—the "duty" gift. You hear people say, for instance, that they have so many relatives that it is a real tax to "remember" them all at Christmas. Now the last thing that their relatives would desire would be that anyone should be "taxed" on their account. Did you ever think that, when you send a gift which you would rather not send—either because of the trouble or the expense—you are playing a "low-down trick" on the recipient? You are imposing on a blind man. You purposely keep your friends in the dark as to the real character of the gifts you send, and obtain their gratitude for them under false pretences. You put them under an obligation they would bitterly resent, if they knew. Your action is dishonest, unkind, and as un-Christmaslike as possible.

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THERE ought to be no "duty" about a Christmas gift, whether to relatives or to friends. If it be not prompted imperatively by love, it should

never be made. The reason your relative takes it and prizes it is because he believes that love is the larger part of it; but you have left love out of the package—and inserted that coldest of substitutes, duty. To say that you owe an insult of this character to your relatives, is to talk nonsense. If you cannot give love, at least give them the respectful treatment of silence. The great thing is to put yourself in their places. What would you like done if the cases were reversed. This test requires courage and frankness and honesty and the true spirit of the birthday of the Author of the Golden Rule.

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YOU are saying that it is all very well to talk this way, but how can one go about explaining why they give to one and not to another. Is it necessary? Are your relations with your friends so delicately—not to say, diplomatically—hung that their friendship will not understand how you may have grown weary of Christmas-giving before you got to them? Are they of a jealous disposition who

will say—She gave to So-and-So, and not to me? If so, I would advise a selection of new friends. Friends who are constantly trying us and weighing us and measuring our interests in them against our interest in somebody else, are too fickle and uncertain for the rough wear of life, and had better be exchanged for something more durable before the storms come. It is possible for a friend to stand aside and let his friend find interest in another which he himself is unable to supply. Friends are not lovers. There is no monogamy in friendship. Fraternity is brotherhood—not marriage.

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BE very sure that if Christmas is a burden to you, you have missed the spirit of the occasion. You have converted Christmas into a competition of some sort in which everybody draws "blanks." You have let it suffer the Midas touch. I think we need a league in this country for the restoration of the Old Christmas—the Christmas of legend, of family love, of the fireside, of the Yule log. We ought to take "one day off" in a whole year from our Continental pastime of Boasting. We ought to approach Christmas again as we did when we knew that Santa Claus came down the chimney, and that there was no other day in the year on which the home was so full of happiness.

THE MONOCLE MAN.



COME TO BE PRINCESS OF OUR DOMINION

Daughter of our Governor-General, the beautiful Princess Patricia of Connaught (on the right), photographed since her arrival in Canada, with Miss Annie Evelyn Pelly, Lady-in-Waiting to H.R.H. the Duchess of Connaught.