CHRISTMAS GIFTS

There is a good deal of blundering in Christmas giving. There are a number of delusions in relation to this subject which it is worth while to discover and avoid. One delusion which prevails is that all our gifts are to be valued at the dollar and cent rate. At this rate the gift which cost $100 will be worth to the recipient just a hundred times as much as the one which only cost one dollar. This is surely a bad blunder. The value of the gift depends comparatively little upon its monetary value. It depends very much more upon its suitability, and most of all upon the person who gives it. While Christmas is no time for extreme and unnecessary economy, it is just as little a time for ostentatious display of wealth. The emphasis must not be laid upon the dollar, for, if it is, the value of Christmas will be sadly impaired, and possibly wholly destroyed.

Another blunder is to allow our Christmas giving to worry us. It seems strange that this should happen, and yet we are persuaded that there are not a few who every Christmas really suffer from nervous exhaustion on account of the worry incident to their Christmas shopping. This probably may be largely avoided if we take plenty of time to choose our gifts, and purchase them as we have opportunity. And if the gifts are largely our own handiwork we can probably commence them much earlier and escape the penalty of Christmas weariness.

Another mistake is harder to remedy. It consists in giving people what we think they ought to like instead of what they really do like. The boy would like a top or a sleigh; the father gives him Baxter's Saint's Rest. The girl would like a book or a brooch; the mother gives her a pair of boots. In all giving we have a right to consider what is best for the recipient, but we have an equal right to consider what he (or she) would most prefer. The tragic element in such cases too often lies in this, that the giver is woefully out of sympathy with the one he wishes to please. Probably the heart is grayer than the hair. Christmas, rightly used, should help to keep us young.

Another blunder lies in foolishly giving what our better judgment condemns. There are fathers and mothers who are too fond to be kind, and at Christmas they seek only to get that which the children most desire, forgetting that the day may come when the child, grown wiser through bitter experience, will curse the well-meaning folly which made his own wishes his parents' law. The child's wishes should be consulted, but the parent's judgment and experience must not be ignored.

Another mistake lies in confining our Christmas gifts to our own little circle. If the Christian church in Canada were fully alive to this, there need be no family in the whole land without a goodly measure of Christmas cheer. If each one would only look after his own corner! It would mean a little more time, a little more money, but a good deal more happiness, both to those who give and to those who receive. The Christmas time, if it is to realize what it seems to us it is divinely intended to realize, should make the whole world of mankind, at least for a little time, one great family, of which no member should be left out in loneliness or neglect.

A FEAST OF LIGHTS.

The Jews Keep Up the Festival of Hanukah.

Almost coincident with the Christmas festivities, when the lighted Christmas-tree is the special feature of the occasion, another feast of lights is celebrated by Jews.

It commemorates the victories of the Maccabeans (Jews led by Maccabeus) over a tyrant king of Syria. This king had attempted to force the Jews to idolatry, hesitating at nothing to compass his ends, but the latter, led by Maccabeus, resisted, and, fortified with a true belief in their own religion, they gained a complete victory over the large armies of the enemy.

The Holy Temple, which had been polluted by the heathen soldiers, was again sanctified, and the true service of prayer re-established.

But on attending to the perpetual lamp it was discovered that there remained but one flask of holy oil sufficient for one day only. By a miracle of providence it sufficed for eight days, until a fresh supply could be obtained.

In memory of this dedication of the Temple, the Jews keep up the festival of Hanukah (the Hebrew word for dedication) by lighting up a candle in their synagogues and houses on the first night of the festival and adding one more each successive evening, so that on the eighth evening eight lights are kindled. After the candles have been lit a special hymn, expressing feelings of gratitude, is chanted to end the evening's ceremony.

Why He Needed It.

"There are things more valuable than money," ruminated the philosopher.

"Sure!" retorted the iconoclast. "That's the reason I need money to buy them."

DINNER FOR FAMILY OF SIX

Good Christmas Fare at a Cost of Less Than $2.

As the holiday season approaches the housewife is busy making the usual plan for a family dinner party, or for as many guests as she can accommodate. Christmas and New Year's dinners are frequently elaborate affairs, especially with those who can afford to buy all the good things in the markets. It is the less expensive dinner that the housewife has to figure out and plan for.

The dinner given below is of good quality and costs very little:

What Soup to Make.—Cut celery and one onion into very small pieces, cover with four cups of cold water and let boil until thoroughly cooked; do not strain off the water, but crush the celery and onion with a large spoon or potato masher, season well with salt and pepper; add to this one cup of milk and one teaspoonful of butter, thicken with a little flour or bread crumbs.

Stuffed Shoulder of Pork.—Have the butcher remove all the bone from three pounds of a shoulder of fresh pork. Wipe the pieces of meat with a damp cloth and be sure there are no particles of splintered bone remaining on it. Rub the meat well with salt, pepper and powdered sage. Fill the cavity from which the bone has been removed with a stuffing made of two cups of bread crumbs, the onion finely chopped, chestnuts that have been blanched and put through the grinder, season well with salt and pepper, tie together with a strong white cord and bake in a double roasting pan. Bake in a buttered dish three or four cooking apples that have been pared, cored and quartered. Serve on platter with the meat. One pint of cranberries, sugar, make into sauce or jelly. The cranberry sauce or jelly is very attractive when served in small individual glasses.

Take seven cents' worth of potatoes that have been boiled, mashed and seasoned well with salt, pepper and sufficient milk to make them creamy, place in a well-greased baking dish and put in the oven to brown.

Creamed Pumpkin.—Use half of a pumpkin, remove all the pumpkin from the rind, taking care not to break the latter, as it makes a very attractive centrepiece for the table filled with fruit. Take the pumpkin that has been removed from the rind and steam until tender, then mash and add seasoning or salt, pepper and a spoon of cream or butter.

A Mixed Salad.—Salad made of one small head of lettuce, two apples finely chopped and a little grated cheese; just before serving put the apples and cheese on the crisp lettuce leaves, pour over all a French dressing made of two tablespoons of oil, two of vinegar, a pinch of dry mustard, salt, pepper and a dash of paprika. Apples, cheese and dressing.

Steamed Pudding.—To two cups of bread crumbs add one-half cup of finely chopped suet, one-half cup of seeded raisins, chopped nuts, three-quarters of a cup of sugar, nutmeg and cinnamon; moisten all with equal parts of water and milk, put into a well-greased pudding pan and steam for three hours. Serve with a pudding sauce of one large cup of boiling water, two tablespoons of sugar, one tablespoon of butter, half teaspoon of nutmeg, and thicken with cornstarch to consistency of cream. Just before serving add a little brandy or sherry wine. Cost of sauce, 9 cents.

Crackers and Cheese.—Crackers, cheese, spread cream or grated cheese on saltines or water crackers that have been split. If using grated cheese, place the crackers in the oven just before serving. If cream cheese is used spread on crackers and sprinkle with a dash of paprika.

Holiday Games

At our Christmas bazaar green canes (cut on the river bank and closely resembling bamboo) furnished the foundation of a most effective Japanese booth. They were easily made into a latticed summer-house, over which wild smilax was trained. This keeps its glossy green leaves all winter in the South. When heavy clusters of loosely made pink paper flowers were added the result was beautiful. Several hundred of these flowers were made in one evening by simply scalloping two circles of paper, one slightly smaller than the other, twisting them together in the centre and slightly curling the petals. They were fastened to the leaves with pins. This little flower-covered booth, with its lanterns half hidden by the flowers and leaves, had a distinctly Japanese air.

The "lucky bean" game can be played at any informal dinner, supper, children's party, fancy dress dance or masquerade. Each guest, on arrival, is asked to partake of a small piece of cake, a bean being hidden in one of the pieces. The lucky finder of the bean becomes king or queen of the evening, and is crowned with great ceremony. The sovereign holds full sway for the rest of the evening. Whatever he or she does all must follow suit. If he chooses to hop around the room, all must do so, if he drinks, all do the same; in fact, every action has to be imitated by the other guests, or the penalty is a forfeit.

In the left-handed party the host and hostess have their right hands fastened behind them in receiving their guests. Any guest giving his right hand in greeting pays a forfeit later in the evening. Potato races form a part of the entertainment. Potatoes are placed at one end of the room in a row. Contestants start from the other end, take up the potatoes in spoons held by the left hand, and return to the other end of the room within a given time. Then a large bowl of peanuts is put on the table, and each guest removes as many as he can on the back of his left hand, even to the partaking of refreshments.

A company of boys and girls who seem determined to play "Quaker Meeting" and nothing else, can often be roused from its starched stiffness by the highly intellectual game of Cat. Seat the players in a circle with one in the centre to be the cat. This animal at once proceeds to make his moan at the publicity of his position, and with as wailful waouls as possible, kneels before some member of the party and tries to make him laugh. The cat can make three pleas, each as long and doleful as possible. Meanwhile the seated players must reach out his hand, pat the cat on the shoulder and say, "Poor pussy, poor pussy, poor pussy!" three times without laughing. If he laughs he must become the cat. This is not a game that can be played long, but to break the ice it is very successful, since it is so utterly ridiculous that even the shyest must smile at least a bit.

Santa Found Out.

Ha! ha! You can't fool me—
I know who Santa is!
For I lay awake the whole night long,
And solved the tactless quiz.
I wondered why my mamma put
Us kids to bed at eight,
While she stayed up a-workin' round
Till it was awful late;
So, with my eyelids almost closed,
I kept awake, ha! ha!
And waited for old Santa Claus
To find it was just—Ma!

A LITTLE CHILD.

Babe of Bethlehem Was a Simple, Helpless, Human Child.

Did you ever stop to think what it must mean to the world of Christian men and women that once in every year they are everywhere impelled to gather about the cradle of a little human child. For we must remember always that Jesus was that. He was, indeed, no make-believe child, any more than He was a make-believe man in the after years. The Gospels tell us no marvel tales of His early years, for there were none to tell. We cannot understand it; it is the greatest marvel of the many marvels that crowd our lives, but we must stand by this, that the Babe of Bethlehem, though He was the Son of the Father, was a simple, helpless, human child.

And every year we stand about His cradle, learned and unlearned, and standing there, with Him the centre of our thought and feeling, our earthly hopes and ambitions and longings grow to be something other and better than they were. Apart from all that Jesus does for us in other ways, His influence over us as the little Child in Bethlehem is wonderfully full of blessing and of helpfulness. That little Child must make the life of the world simpler, honester, purer, more kindly, more helpful than it could otherwise have been. Looking at Him there in all His helplessness, filled with all the mystery and strangeness and condescension of that scene in Bethlehem's inn, the hardness and coldness and self-seeking of our lives drops from us at least a little, and purposes for better and kinder and holier living fill and grip our hearts. In a fulness of meaning that we but little understand, it is true that "a little child" is leading the world into ever new and better and happier and holier ways.

Looking at Him to-day we ought to resolve that our lives will realize the promptings that stir within us as we gaze with the shepherds and wise men of old at the strangest, most beautiful sight this world has ever seen. We ought to determine that we will let Him, the Babe on Mary's knee, who was so much more that we may never understand, lead our lives up along those higher ways of love and charity and holiness and service.

HANDKERCHIEF GIFTS.

A Very Intimate Little Token of Remembrance.

Handmade handkerchiefs are the most delightful of gifts. Every woman likes a dainty handkerchief, but many women consider them an extravagance not to be bought out of their own purses. It remains for friends and anniversaries to form a conspiracy and give that economical woman a supply of daintiness that will last her until another gift time comes about. As color is one of the leading notes in handkerchiefs, both feminine and masculine, pretty, plain handkerchiefs can be made from squares of sheer linen button-holed in color about the edges, instead of being hemmed. Add to this a monogram worked in color, and possibly a monogram frame or wreath about that, and you have as smart a handkerchief as one could wish. Still other hand-made handkerchiefs have little sprays of foliage and flowers, worked in the came color, in one corner. White lace and sheer linen combinations are as welcome always. They may be simple little hemstitched squares with an edging of lace, or more elaborate handkershief with insertion, edging and even inset madallions of valenciennes or filet.

A handkerchief has the advantage of being, if you wish it, a very intimate little token of remembrance if enclosed in the same envelope, with an affectionate note. A handkerchief will make a "letter" gift worth having.

The Busiest Fellow in the Land

GIFTS FOR THE MEN FOLKS.

A Few Suggestions That Will Come In Useful.

A remark often heard at this season of the year is: "I can't think what to give So-and-so for Christmas."

That is the trouble—to think of things. The making or the shopping are minor details when one has decided what to make or buy. The shops do not help much, for there is so very much to be seen that they are apt to dull the imagination rather than sharpen it.

Here are a few suggestions that may prove useful, or may at least suggest something else to your mind.

We will think of presents for men first, as they are by far the hardest. The older man, who usually is adequately supplied with gloves, ties, handkerchiefs, sleeve links, cigarette cases, etc., who has no idea what else he wants, is the problem of every household. Would he, for instance, like an electric toaster. They come now for $2.50. They make the best toast imaginable, and the man with a toaster beside him on the breakfast table can be sure of hot, delicious toast each morning, no matter how early or late he may be, for his breakfast.

If there is a motor in the family, brass initials or a monogram will make a nice gift for its owner. These can be made by a harnessmaker or a silversmith. Pocket travelling slippers of soft leather that come in little leather cases and cost from $1 or $2, are a good idea for a man who has to travel much. Florida water is a gift often appreciated by the fastidious man, as it is a toilet water that can be used after shaving without leaving an offensively perfumed odor.

WHEN MISTLETOE WAS SACRED.

Ancient Druids Brought Greens Within for Sylvan Spirits.

The Druids with ceremonies of great solemnity used to collect mistletoe "against the festival of winter solstice." Only the oaks bearing mistletoe were sacred to this ancient order of men, and they made solemn procession to such oaks, a prince of the order cutting the mistletoe with a golden sickle.

It is recorded that the people's reverence for the priests proceeded in great measure from the cures which the priests effected by means of this curious green plant of the pearlike berries. It was collected thus ceremoniously by the Druids because it was supposed to drive away evil spirits.

The reason among the Druids for bringing in bits of evergreen from the woods and adorning the house is a most charming and lovable one. "The houses were decked with evergreens in December that the sylvan spirits might repair to them and remain unnipped with frost and cold winds until a milder season had renewed the foliage of their darling abodes."

IF ANIMALS COULD TALK.

Would Recall Events Which Happened Hundreds of Years Ago.

It is a startling fact that if some animals could tell their life history they would be able to recall events which happened hundreds of years ago.

A Russian eagle, for instance, would be able to remember watching with greedy eyes as one by one the French soldiers under Napoleon fell exhausted out of the ranks in their awful retreat from Moscow in 1812.

There are crocodiles alive in India to-day which saw the first English traveller set foot there, while there are whales in the sea which might have skirted the coast of France when the English invaded it in 1415.

A great many elephants could recall historical events of a hundred years ago, while there are ravens still living whose memory could go back twice that period.

Talking of birds, the parrot, the crow and the swan often live a hundred years—that is, of course, if they do not meet with misfortune—while the heron will live 60 years. Geese and pelicans will survive half a century and the sparrow 40 years.

Pigeons, linnets, canaries, cranes and peacocks will live to well over 20 years, while the goldfinch, partridge, pheasant, lark and nightingale will live from 15 to 18 years, the robin 12 years and the thrush and hen 10 years.

Napoleon and Hannibal.

Napoleon and Hannibal were both supreme in the art of battle winning. To the question, "Which was the greater?" it is difficult to give an answer. A great many military authorities give the palm to Hannibal over all the great captains of history.

The common hen lays about 500 or 600 eggs in ten years.

"I understand Smith and Jones had high words the other day." "Yes; and they're going to have higher ones. Each of them has engaged a lawyer."

In the matter of recruiting, Wales has done better in proportion to her population than either England or Scotland.

Proud Father—"I believe, my dear, that the baby knows as much as I do." Mother (gazing at the infant)—"Yes, poor little fellow."

HOLIDAY SWEETMEATS

There is no culinary secret so dear to the feminine heart as a recipe bequeathed by one's great-great-grandmother. The recipes for these little cakes have been used for generations by the Moravians whose quaint Old World religious customs have withstood our fin-de-siecle civilization for a century and a half. To them the neighborly exchange of Christmas cakes is an institution as honored as the singing of carols, and much more gratifying to the youngsters who revel in edible birds and beasts cut after the grotesque Moravian patterns. The cutters used to form these unusual shapes are now found in some house-furnishing stores, but they can be made by any tinsmith.

Cakes made from these recipes will keep for weeks if they are put in a stone crock in a cool place. Pepper nuts are especially good for long keeping, because they contain no shortening to become rancid. If they are made before Christmas they will keep perfectly until late in the spring. All of these cakes are better if they are mixed one day and baked the next. The dough should be covered and kept in a cool place overnight.

Pepper Nuts.—Mix one pound and a quarter of brown sugar, two tablespoonfuls of cinnamon, one tablespoonful of cloves and one teaspoonful of baking powder. Stir into this three eggs and add as much flour as it is possible to work in. The dough must be very stiff. Roll it out moderately thin, and cut the cakes no larger than a silver quarter. Bake in a very cool oven. These cakes will puff up round, and are more attractive if the flat side is spread with a hard icing. This recipe will make between three and four quarts of cookies.

Bethlehem Spice Cakes. — Cream one pound of brown sugar and one pound of butter, add to this one quart of molasses, one ounce of cinnamon, one ounce of ginger, one ounce of allspice, half an ounce of cloves, the grated rind of one orange and flour enough to make a dough stiff enough to roll out very thin.

Moravian Chocolate Cakes. — Mix together two cupfuls of light brown sugar and half a cupful of butter and lard mixed. Add two eggs, a half cupful of grated chocolate that has been melted over hot water and one teaspoonful of soda. Stiffen this with flour and form into a long roll as large around as a small baking powder can. Slice this down very thin, dip one side in granulated sugar, and bake in a moderate oven.

Nazareth Chocolate Cakes.—Cream two cupfuls of granulated sugar and a scant three-quarters of a cupful of butter. Stir into this one cupful of water, two eggs, two small teaspoonfuls of baking powder, half a cake of melted chocolate and four large cupfuls of flour. Roll very thin and bake slowly.

Almond Cakes. — Rub together a quarter of a pound of powdered sugar and a half a pound of butter, add the yolks of four eggs, three tablespoonfuls of cream and one pound of flour. Mix sufficient sugar and flour in equal parts to sprinkle over the dough board. Roll the dough on this until it is a quarter of an inch thick, then cut in diamonds, and when the cakes are baked ice them with the following icing: Beat together the yolks of two eggs and two tablespoonfuls of water and thicken with confectioner's sugar. Spread this on the cakes and sprinkle thickly with almonds that have been blanched and cut fine, then set in the oven a few minutes to dry.

Crisp Molasses Cakes. — Mix a pound and a quarter of dark brown sugar, half a pound of butter and half a pound of lard. Add to this one quart of molasses, two tablespoonfuls of ginger, two tablespoonfuls of cinnamon, one tablespoonful of cloves and a small teaspoonful of soda. Work in enough flour to stiffen and roll very thin.

Bavarian Christmas Cookies.— Mix half a pound of butter with a quarter of a pound of granulated sugar, add three-quarters of a pound of flour and moisten with three tablespoonfuls of orange juice. Roll the dough thin, cut into small round cakes and spread a little of the well-beaten yolk of an egg in the centre of each. Sprinkle pulverized sugar and a little cinnamon over the egg, and bake in a slow oven.

White Christmas Cakes. — Cream one pound of butter and one pound of sugar, add five eggs and one cupful of sour cream in which has been dissolved a teaspoonful of soda. Stir in flour enough to make a soft dough, roll thin, cut into round cakes and press half of a hickory nut meat in the centre.

Rice Cakes. — Rub together one pound of butter and one pound of sugar, add two eggs and one pound of rice flour. After the dough is rolled thin and cut, spread a little beaten egg on each cake and sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon.

Vanilla Wafers. — One-third of a cupful of butter and lard mixed, one cupful of granulated sugar, half a teaspoonful of salt, one egg, a quarter of a cupful of sweet milk, two and a quarter cupfuls of flour, one teaspoonful of baking powder and two teaspoonfuls of vanilla. Bake in a moderate oven.

Some people are always more suspicious of a self-admitted saint than they are of a self-confessed sinner.