

## CHRISTMAS GIFTS.



WITH the approach of Christmas and Christmas gifts, the cares of the girl members of a large family may be said to arrive at a crisis.

There is no girl so friendless or so heartless that there is no one she loves or wishes to remind of

that love at this season, while there are many surrounded by affectionate relations and true friends, whose love they warmly return, and whom they wish to please with a gift, and yet have but a small sum at command, and must think carefully over its division.

How many anxious calculations have to be made, what knitting of smooth brows, what hasty arithmetic on stray scraps of paper, what self-denial in personal matters to increase the little store, and then, when the materials are bought, what secret work is carried on behind father's chair, should he happen to be awake, and in this and that out-of-the-way nook of the house, so that the all-important, and generally extremely apparent, secret is not divulged until the Christmas or New Year's morning!

All honour to this secrecy, this planning and patient work! It is the true spirit of present-giving; and let not any of our readers despise it as childish; rather let them remember that that which costs no time, no thought, no self-sacrifice is but of little value in the eyes of affection, and pleases only where the gift is valued for itself, and not for the giver. The girl who can walk into a shop and select the first handsome article in it for mamma, and pay for it from an amply-supplied purse, neither awakens in herself or her mother the same holy feelings that are excited when baby works an impossible kettle-holder "all by herself," and which she "bided" out of the pennies given her for sweeties.

Admiring and sympathising as we do with girls who are generous-minded and do not count labour and time when anxious to please, we have brought together in this paper, with the idea of helping them, several useful and pretty articles that can be made without any great expense.

For a small present, costing at the utmost one shilling, the fashionable little "hold-all bags" are good. These bags are four in number, and are connected together only at the top; they are filled with odds and ends, such as buttons and silks, until they stand upright and all of a row, and they find a conspicuous place among drawing-room nick-nacks.

To make them, purchase one yard of good satin ribbon, in colour either ruby, navy blue, or chestnut brown, with the reverse side of a pale blue or old gold shade. The ribbon should be from two and a half to three inches wide. Divide the yard into four equal portions, sew over the sides, and hem the tops of two bags without decorating them, but work on one of the other bags a handsome and legible monogram containing the initials of the person for whom the present is intended. Work this with fine gold-coloured purse silk, and surround the chief outlines with Japanese gold thread. On the other bag work a small spray of flowers, either a branch of wild rose, a bit of heather, forget-me-not, or jessamine. Sew up these two bags, and hem them round like the others; then make sixteen eyelet-holes, four on each bag; make these round and not very big, and place them opposite to

each other, and at the extreme corners of the opening. Sew the bags together by over-casting the first bag with its monogram turned outwards on the inner side of its opening to the outer side of the opening of one of the undecorated bags. Attach the second plain bag to the inner side of the first plain bag, and sew the fourth bag, with its decorated side turned outwards, to the inner side of the third bag. By this arrangement both the decorated bags are outside, and every bag at its base is separate. Finally, take a silk dress lace, the colour of the satin ribbon, and run that through the eyelet-holes to make a draw-string. Fill the bags, plant them out on the table, and draw their openings slightly together.

These "hold-all bags," instead of being filled with odds and ends, are sometimes turned into flower-vases. The smallest-sized penny tumblers are inserted into each bag and filled with cut flowers, or the smallest size flowerpot, filled with a tiny fern, is used. In the latter case, a piece of American cloth is fastened round the pot to prevent any moisture soiling the satin bag.

The present method for concealing flowerpots when required for drawing room decoration makes another simple but acceptable present. This is a bag of plush, into which the pot is put. To make this bag of plush, cut a round of millboard or stiff cardboard the size of the bottom of an ordinary flower-pot. Take a piece of plush, in width twice the circumference of the centre part of the pot, and in height the height of the pot; sew the two ends of the plush together, and make a hem an inch and a half wide. As a finish to the upper part, just below this hem, on the wrong side of the bag, run on a narrow piece of black tape to hold a draw-string, which make by running in a piece of strong elastic, that will draw in the fulness of the plush until it fits the upper part of the flower-pot tightly. Gather the lower ends of the plush, arrange evenly round the piece of millboard, and sew to the latter with the edges concealed, using strong thread for the securing stitches. When the plush cover is used, its millboard foundation keeps the bottom of the pot (which may be damp) from doing any damage to the furniture, and the wide hem beyond the draw-string stands out as a frilling a little below the edge of the pot. Half a yard of plush, which costs two shillings, will make a pair of flower-pot covers.

From America comes to us a novelty in bedroom decoration, and one very suitable as a present to a young lady who uses her bedroom as a sitting-room and likes it prettily decorated. This is known as a "pillow sham," and is a long strip of linen or cambric ornamented with lace and ribbons, and laid over the top part of the bed in the daytime only. It fits the width of the bed whatever size that is, and does not fall down the sides. If the worker is an adept at drawn-thread work, the pillow sham can be made very inexpensively and of material that will last through much wear, but when drawn-thread work is not used, Torchon and other strongly made lace is required. An easy way for making a pillow sham is to buy four new hem-stitched-bordered handkerchiefs, and upon the corner of one of the handkerchiefs to embroider the first letter of the owner's Christian name, making it four inches high and slanting it from the corner to the middle of the handkerchief. Join these handkerchiefs together, inserting between each an inch and a half wide strip of Torchon lace insertion, and bordering the handkerchiefs lengthways with a

line of the same, so that each square of cambric is surrounded by insertion lace. Finish with a frill of Torchon lace edging, which carefully whip to the insertion lace. A careless bow of ribbon or one of Liberty's silk scarves tied in a bow is sewn to the corner of the pillow sham, just above the embroidered corner.

When using drawn-work instead of lace insertion, a piece of linen the length and width of the sham is taken, and the threads from this are drawn out as strips down the width, leaving five squares of plain linen between them. After working the strips over with linen thread into a pattern, narrow coloured ribbon is run down the centres of the drawn-work, and the linen squares embroidered with washing cotton of the same colour as the ribbon. An edging of lace finishes the border, and into this lace a line of narrow ribbon is threaded.

Another variety of pillow sham is made by sewing together five or eight pocket handkerchiefs with coloured borders, and ornamenting the same with a large knot of narrow ribbons of various shades of colour. The handkerchief borders in this case need not be alike, but should blend together, and their colours should be used as some of the colours in the knot of ribbons.

Palm-leaf fans still find favour as drawing-room fans, but are no longer left undecorated. The two newest ways of decorating them are as follows:—Take a well shaped and strong fan and paint it with oil-colours, with which a very little varnish has been mixed, either a very bright yellow or a brilliant scarlet. Give two coats of colour, and let the fan dry. Buy some ribbon half an inch in width; in colours, black, vivid green, sky-blue, and yellow-pink. Make a wide vandyke running down one of the lengths of ribbon by taking the running thread in diagonal lines across the ribbon from edge to edge. Draw the ribbon up so that it forms a number of pointed vandykes, sew the strips down the ribs of the fan at equal distances apart, and use black ribbon more than the other colours. Sew on a line of red gold tinsel between each strip of ribbon, and finish the handle with a knot of coloured ribbons.

The second make of fan requires a piece of plush, some narrow coloured silk cords, and various shades of tinsel. The cords are obtained by buying a yard of a twisted silk cord made up of various shades, and using the strands of this separately. Cut the piece of the plush the size of half the fan, so that it covers the fan on one side from the tip of leaf to the handle. Fasten this round the edge to the back of the fan, and ornament its straight edge on the fan with a line of tinsel on the uncovered side of the fan. Sew down each rib alternate lines of coloured silk cord and double lines of tinsel, using as many varieties of tinsel as possible, and arranging the cords with due regard to effect. Take three long peacocks' feathers, and fasten these across the piece of plush and sew their ends together close to the handle of the fan. Cover the handle with a piece of plush, and arrange a bow and ends of ribbon round the handle and to conceal the peacock feather ends. Line the back of the fan with thin silk or dark twill.

Blotting-book covers of velveteen are always acceptable presents. The foundation for these is a sixpenny blotter, size ten inches by eight inches, while three quarters of a yard of velveteen (price three shillings the yard) will make two covers, with a piece of brown holland or blue twill for the inside lining. The decoration for these covers is embroidery.



but this is only worked on the upper side of the blotter, the underside being left plain, so as not to interfere with its usefulness. The embroidery can be of any description of silk embroidery, either oriental embroidery with its quaintly-formed but impossible flowers and foliage, or sprays of naturally-tinted flowers worked in crevel silks, and both worked directly on to the velveteen foundation; or silk embroidery finished with a gold thread outline and worked upon a coloured rep silk foundation, and sewn on as an ornamental corner to the blotter; in fact there are many ways of ornamenting the cover, and the embroidery the worker is most proficient in should be selected. If church embroidery is within her capabilities, we advise the initials or coat of arms of the owner being worked in a frame on linen, cut out and couched down to the velveteen foundation with gold thread or gold cord; but such elaborate embroidery is not often obtainable. The way to make up the blotter is to cut the holland lining exactly the size of the sixpenny blotter, and the velveteen a little larger. Turn in the edges of both, and overcast them together, enclosing the stiff cover of the blotter between them, and sewing the blotting paper sheets in when the cover is made. Bradshaw covers are made like blotters, but naturally take less material, and are only embroidered in one corner.

Large photograph-holders can be easily made at home. These are used for the display of a number of cabinet photos, and are fitted with bands, into which the photograph is slipped and easily taken out. The size of such a stand is usually seventeen inches long by thirteen inches high, but they can be made of any size desired. The foundation is of millboard, to which a millboard support is fastened by its being glued to stout tape and the tape glued to the millboard, with sufficient width of tape left between the two pieces of millboard to allow the support to work. The upper side of the millboard is covered with quilted satin. The satin is selected of some bright colour, and the quilting lines are run as diagonal lines, not as making diamonds. Three tight bands of satin are sewn across the quilting; these are two inches in width, and require a lining of stiff net when made up. They are embroidered with coloured silks, either forming a running design, such as a spray of jessamine or celandine, or with some

geometrical pattern constantly repeated. When finished and lined, the bands are placed as diagonal lines across the satin, not as horizontal lines.

For a photograph-holder the size given, the first band will be eleven inches in length, and will cross from the top of the holder to the left-hand side; the second band will be nineteen inches in length, and will cross from the extreme top corner of the frame on the right side to the bottom of the frame on the left; the third band will be twelve inches in length, and will be arranged beneath the last-mentioned, crossing from the right side to the bottom of the frame. Into these bands the photographs are stuck; therefore, they must be sewn firmly down at the sides where they end and commence, and stretch tightly across the quilted frame. On the right-hand bottom corner of the foundation, which is never covered with photographs, the owner's initials are sometimes worked in black silk over the quilting lines. This makes a good finish, but is not essential.

Bachelors' wall pincushions are useful presents for gentlemen. They are made of plush, and are ornamented with the perforated brass ornament used about the harness of cart-horses. These brass rounds are sold by all harness and saddle makers, and cost from sixpence to a shilling, and for the latter price the small brass handle by which they hang will be removed by the shopman, as it is not required for the pincushion. A quarter of a yard of plush, a quarter of a yard of house-flannel, and one yard of narrow satin ribbon are required for these cushions. To make them, tear up the house-flannel into an inch and a quarter wide widths. Roll these strips very tightly one over the other as a wide narrow wheel, and keep the strips firm by sticking pins through the wheel. When a round as large as the perforated brass is made, cut the plush into two rounds of the same size and a long strip an inch and a half wide. Cover one plush round with the perforated brass, and sew them both on the face of the wheel and well through to the back; turn the edges of the round of plush over the side, and sew on the round for the back of the cushion; conceal the edges of both pieces of plush with the narrow band, which turn in at its edges and secure tightly round the sides of the cushion. Make a loop of the ribbon to hang up the pincushion by,

and sew the ends to the sides of the cushion, and with the remaining ribbon make a pretty bow, which fasten to the top of the loop.

The newest decoration for white wooden articles is the poker or burnt-wood work. This consists of burning down the background of any design so that the design itself is in relief. The fumes of the burning wood slightly colour the parts left untouched, and give an extremely soft and ivory-like appearance to the work, which, if carried out with the new apparatus introduced by Mr. Barnard, is quickly and easily accomplished.

The articles decorated with burnt wood work are all kinds of white wood photo frames, small wooden table screens, all kinds of boxes, bookslides, book cutters, drawing-room bellows, salt boxes, milking stools, tubs, paste rollers, etc. The best designs are those of large, single-petalled flowers, with their leaves, such as daffodils, daisies, and dog-roses. The design is drawn upon the wood, outlined with a burnt-in line, and its chief lines, such as divisions of flower petals, centres of flowers, veins of leaves indicated, and then the background burnt until it is depressed, and is of a warm brown deepening to black in colour. Mr. Barnard's apparatus consists of a platinum point connected by an indiarubber tube to a bottle of benzine, which is connected with another indiarubber tube to a small air pump. The latter held in the left hand is pressed, forcing air over the benzine to the platinum point and keeping that always red hot. The right hand holds the point and uses it like a broad pencil, keeping it steadily pressed on the wood until that is deeply burnt in. This apparatus costs twenty-five shillings, but if several girls join together to purchase it, there is no further outlay. Small pokers are used if the apparatus is not procurable. These are about eight inches long and an inch in circumference; they are sunk in wooden handles, and kept hot in a fire; four to six are required at once, as they soon become cold. The parts of the wood not burnt, such as the back of a screen, the legs of a stool, require to be stained, sized, and varnished, and the burnt wood is also varnished (not stained) as a finish. The paste rollers are used for holding whips, keys, etc. They are hung to the wall with coloured ribbons, and have a row of hooks screwed into them to hang keys, etc., to. B. C. SAWARD.

## THE AMATEUR CHOIR TEACHER.

By THE HON. VICTORIA GROSVENOR.



**I**n a former article we made some suggestions as to the possibility of improving a moderate gift for music with the view of learning to play the organ and qualifying for the noblest of service, that of leading

God's praise in His church.

We propose now to take up the subject of training choirs for the same excellent service, on the understanding that the future teacher has taken the advice already given as to her own musical improvement. Personal fitness for this branch of instruction is most necessary; as if once the taught discover they know anything of which the teacher has not more perfect knowledge, that teacher's task will be a hard one. Therefore, there should be familiar

acquaintance with every description of musical notation. Alto and tenor clefs should be well understood to be clearly explained when met with. On this subject we should like to recommend the careful study of "A Short Treatise on the Stave," by the late Dr. John Hullah, published by Parker, where the whole matter is admirably set forth and illustrated on its own technical grounds. The often-heard, but somewhat slipshod explanation, "Oh! you must read a note higher or a note lower," which leaves the puzzled learner very much where he was before, will thus be avoided. Even supposing the alto and tenor clefs are never met with, the study will repay the intending teacher by opening her mind and giving clearness to her musical ideas.

It will be seen, by what has been said, that we consider our amateur teacher's first qualification should be thorough knowledge of her subject. The second should decidedly be untiring patience, which will bear with stupidity,

carelessness, want of zeal, deficient ear, bad pronunciation, and all the thousand and one difficulties which beset choirs. These consist generally of volunteers who join with but little idea of giving of their best to God, and an impatient teacher would soon find herself in the lonely position of the last player in Haydn's "Good-bye" symphony.

We would next place hopefulness in the teacher's catalogue of moral furniture. The learners will soon find out if they are being taught without hope of their improvement; listless work will be the result, and the shy, anxious members will give it up in despair. The power of encouraging effort, of detecting and commending the slightest sign of improvement, of persuading the members mentioned above that the work is within their grasp, if persevered in, is most necessary, and a kindly sunny disposition ever ready to look at the brightest side is simply invaluable.

Next we should place regularity and per