

broadest manner, but my aim and object is to be definitely helpful, and of practical use in the future.

For this purpose I propose from month to month to give information respecting the various remunerative employments open to gentlewomen.

In some respects the members of my sex resemble sheep. One woman makes an antimacassar or some such comparatively useless article, and immediately a whole flock of her fellows proceed to follow in her footsteps, regardless of the fact that although there may be a ready sale for six, or even perhaps for sixty articles of that description, there will not be a demand for six hundred, or six hundred thousand! It is, I am

fully aware, a somewhat difficult matter to ascertain what is really marketable, and to discover the new fields of labour, but this I shall endeavour to point out.

There are some paths long trodden by women which will always, we presume, remain in their possession—paths of usefulness in house and home; but the ornamental grounds are constantly varying, and are subject to the perpetual caprice of fashion. New modes, new styles, new ideas spring up suddenly, are greatly in vogue, and then decline, fall into disuse, and die out entirely. Thus, one has ever to be on the alert, and ready to seize each opportunity that occurs by the help of which we can keep ourselves afloat.

CFM1883

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS, AND HOW TO MAKE THEM.



YOU are often compelled to forego the luxury of present-giving, because we find there is a limit to our means. But "where there's a will there's a way," and where time represents no money value, women can make most acceptable gifts at little expense. It occurs to me that, with Christmas before us, I may offer some useful

hints on this score. To begin with a thought for the poor folk we have always at our gates. We may materially help them in their struggles for subsistence, even with trifles which are of little moment to ourselves. A warm counterpane, for example, can be contrived of strips of any woollen stuffs half an inch wide, stitched in lengths, and knitted twelve stitches deep on coarse wooden pins, subsequently sewn together. Or sheets of newspaper tacked together, and laid between a double layer of unbleached calico, will keep a sleeper warm through the most frosty night.

A houseful of children may be amused, and at the same time healthfully employed, in assisting in the manufacture of presents for the poor. A pillow stuffed with old writing-paper torn into infinitesimal pieces would be a boon to an old or sick person, especially if it has a loose cover to be removed and washed. Children could tear up the paper better than grown-up folk. Where there is any infectious complaint a pillow of this kind is burnt without any serious loss. Old clothes, likely to be of better materials than the poor can afford to buy themselves, if thoroughly mended before given, are priceless treasures; but time is money to a hard-worked mother of a family, and mending and renovating comes hard upon her. Keep your eyes about you next time you go to a village church, and note the form of the old dames' bonnets. Buy a shape as near it as you can, and try your hand at covering it with pieces of silk, add a curtain and strings, and if you give it away, and do not give

infinite satisfaction too, you will be less lucky than I was under similar circumstances.

The shops assist the charitable at Christmas in many ways, and a charity bundle of flannel and calico, at a low price, may be turned to wonderful account. It takes four yards of flannel for a shirt, two for an under-vest, three for a woman's petticoat, and the odd pieces will make capes, jackets, aprons, and cloaks. I need not describe how to make these, but I have an easy plan for chemises. I take the width of the calico and twice the length of the garment; double it, join the sides together, cut the upper part to shape for neck and sleeves, adding gussets to the under-sleeves, and the work is done.

Drapers' cuttings and list are a mine of wealth. For waistcoats, cut the shape in unbleached calico, which may cost 2d., and cover with the pieces herring-boned down. Cradle quilts, children's petticoats and bodices, can be done after the same fashion, and mats be made by sewing list when plaited in a three plait on a circular foundation. Keep any odd length of wool, knot it together and crochet it up into muffetees, collarettes, &c., or knit the foundation of twine, and use the wool for loops knitted in with the twine, by passing it round the finger; and a number of delightfully warm articles may be produced, such as caps, slippers, muffs, &c.

If you are a knitter, innumerable are the presents you can make. Space forbids me to give receipts, but you will find them in the many cheap handy volumes continually published. These will teach you how to knit vests, shooting stockings, cardigans, knee-caps, leggings, gaiters, cricketing and smoking caps, infants' boots and socks, bassinette quilts, and much besides which will be gratefully received by many friends, masculine and feminine, whom you desire to please at Christmas time. If, however, you want something quite new for head-dresses on leaving the theatre, caps for children, cuffs, infants' boots, &c., let me recommend to you the new knitting arrasene, stronger than the embroidery kind, sold in wool and silk; which are charmingly light and pretty-looking.

If you are at all artistic, you have a very wide field open to you in present-giving. One of the features of our day is that the most common and discarded articles are transformed by the touch of deft fingers into things of beauty. Honey-pots, salt-jars, blacking-bottles, all these can be turned to account. A very little ornamentation makes a red-grounded pot or jar ornamental; there are few better models than the Moresque. Broad irregular lines of yellow and grey carried across a red jar have far more effect than you can imagine, and a band of colour round the mouth. Salt-jars and blacking-bottles are covered all over with some grounding colour in oils, and on this flowers or conventional designs are painted; a deep, rich blue I find the best grounding.

Menu cards, painted and so contrived that the actual list slips in and out, are pretty certain to be an acceptable gift to any housekeeper. Or a couple of large terra-cotta ones, for the daily list of what is coming for dinner, saves many inquiries and regulates difficult appetites. China would, of course, answer the same purpose, and can be as easily painted, but I mention terra-cotta because the painting when done can be covered with a coat of varnish and need not be baked, which saves much trouble. But, on the other hand, a menu written in pencil on terra-cotta is somewhat dazzling to eyes that are no longer youthful.

Our rooms, in these modern days, gain so much by painting, that to those who are not themselves able to colour, the gift of a painted screen, or a painted plate to hang against the wall, would be invaluable. Some black terra-cotta plates, requiring but a very small spray to make them decorative, I would suggest to those who have not time for elaborate work. Quite the most artistic screens I have seen were covered either with leather paper or with black calico, and painted in oils after the Japanese idea, with trails of japonica, or orange or apple blossom thrown carelessly across each panel, barely taking an hour to paint. Table-screens after the same order are new and are less ambitious gifts. Looking-glasses to hang against the wall or to stand on tables, with black frames, have

not only the frames painted, but the bouquet or spray is carried on to the glass itself with admirable effect. Quite new are the black-wood post-card cases, having affixed a triangular piece of wood which makes them stand firmly on the table; these also are painted in oil-colours. To those who are not born artists, and have but little idea of drawing or colouring, Briggs' patterns, which can be laid on and ironed off, will get over many a difficulty as to out-lining, and the Christmas cards and illustrated books will give a fair notion of how to fill in such outlines with proper tints.

Many shops let out designs, and I have been of late inspecting the newest. I am inclined to think that

birds of all kinds—swallows, snipes, flamingoes, and peacocks—and classic figures are the most used.

Happily women are not only bringing their artistic but their creative faculties to bear on decorative art, and the blacking-bottles and salt-jars I have just been talking to you about, I have known transformed into what I imagined was Barbottine ware. The flowers, in exact imitation of this species of pottery, had been formed in plaster of Paris, stuck on, and when thoroughly dry painted after the same mode of colouring.

Milk-pails, butter-barrels, milking-

stools, and wheelbarrows find their way into drawing-rooms transformed into very pretty articles indeed. Try giving these; the milk-pails and butter-barrels are first covered with a uniform ground-colour, and then have fruit, flowers, or old English models painted on them, and are subsequently lined with satin as receptacles for work. The stools, painted in the same way, are used for seats, but the toy wheelbarrows, just the largest size made for children, are, when varnished and painted, or merely gilded on the outside, intended for receptacles for growing flowers. Sabots painted are also used to hold flowers, but are hung up against the wall.

If you only want small remembrances, which will go by post, I should suggest penwipers made of circles of cloth, covered at the top with one of kid, button-holed round with silk, and painted in the centre; or small round pincushions, covered with silk over cardboard



and painted. Bolster pincushions, with a strip of ribbon attached to each end, intended to be hung to the looking-glass, are acceptable to gentlemen. The last idea in these is painted satin, opening down the entire length to show an inner covering of silk for the pins, just as an Indian corn pod opens and the corn protrudes.

A fashionable form of fan would be an acceptable present to a lady, viz., a circular one with long handle covered with lace. The common straw ones of this form are not a bad foundation. Or you can make them with a circle of wire covered with stiff net, and a handle formed of ribbon-wire. Begin by sewing the lace from the centre in a circular form, and hide the starting-point with a flower, cover the handle with a ribbon wound round it, finishing it off with a bow at the point. Hand-screens on the same foundations covered with chintz and edged with a ruche of lace are pretty for bed-rooms.

Baskets can be bought for a few pence, and are worth many shillings if trimmed with plush and fringe, or chintz and fringe; any little pieces will do. The fringe costs only a few pence a yard, if you procure a kind which is very decorative, made of two colours, say dark green and red, blended with tinsel; this laid round the basket at the top, and diamonds or draperies of the plush, with a few stitches in crewel-work, or an edging of the fringe, makes a complete transformation. A carpenter's basket with stars of crewel-work worked all over it, the bands of webbing decorated to match, is a recent notion, which has met with success, as I think you would have if you presented it to any great worker, for it holds great stores of wool and materials generally.

Bags lined with satin, made of plush with just a large tassel at each point, and a long heading left below the running, are easily made, but are convenient for work, and fashionable as pocket-handkerchief bags. The cheap cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, red and yellow, are used for lining carpenters' and Nice baskets, the ends being brought deftly to the outside.

The wire sponge-baskets, sold at a low price, interlaced with ribbon and lined with satin, form admirable carriage-baskets. A charity blanket, the border torn off, the whole button-holed round with crewel-work, and embroidered with coarse wool, in outline stitch, with the monogram or flowers, is an acceptable sort

of rug; a friend's photograph laid on a plaque of terra-cotta, and painted round; a quilt made out of a Bolton sheet, and bordered with red twill worked round with wool in scrolls, and a centre circle, is a most ornamental one; a tennis racket cover of American cloth or holland, with the owner's monogram; bags of sweet-smelling lavender, sent from country to town; chair-backs of plush or linen, the design in outline, the groundwork darning (perhaps the newest species of work of that kind), all these I suggest to you as suitable Christmas gifts easily made. I must, however, say a word or two about Christmas cards, for the sending of Christmas cards is every year on the increase, and I am glad to see there is a preference shown for hand-painted ones. The newest are ivorine, which is to be purchased either in sheets or cut to the right size; then there is talc, which is found to be a good painting medium, and cards covered with satin. Another form of Christmas card which, to perpetrate a bull, is not a card at all, takes the form of good wishes painted on small circles of terra-cotta, or china plaques, intended to be hung against the wall, or set in velvet frames.

As a rule, however, I think people prefer their own names or monograms interwoven with the good wishes, and nothing is prettier than letters formed of flowers, say roses, or forget-me-nots.

The comic side of life is not forgotten, and many happy illustrations in etchings form acceptable Christmas cards, the gifts of artistic friends; while some recall illuminated texts, and borrow their ideas from Scripture. Some of the most beautiful Scripture Christmas cards come from America. Water-colours are universally employed for these cards; oils play but a small part, except in the case of satin cards, dark satin cards I should say, and then the oil-paints look well upon them. Seaweed deftly pressed is likewise used for Christmas cards, but the mottoes, and any wording required, should be painted. I give myself the preference to dried flowers used with painting. It is best to take them when in full bloom, press them, and then gum some fine tartan over them in placing them on the cards.



DESIGNS FOR CHRISTMAS CARDS. (By kind permission of Messrs. Hildersheimer and Faulkner.)