

## PLEASANT HOMES

by ELIZABETH MacRAE BOYKIN

## YOUR CHRISTMAS WILL BE JUST WHAT YOU MAKE IT

WE'D BE willing to bet our favorite china teacups that the lady of the house can make of Christmas what she will. She can make it a glamorously festive occasion that will leave its aura in memories long after . . . She can make it a mystic spiritual day touched with the halo of its symbolic origin . . . She can make it a merry gay time . . . She can make it a drain and a disappointment . . . She can make it a drab, dutiful event.

It depends on whether she puts her emphasis on Things or on Thoughts. It's up to us to make a sincere effort to try to recapture some of the old charm of the day, if we really mean all we've been saying these weeks past about the good old days when Christmas was really something. Don't tell us that you've not made any remarks about how Christmas has gotten to be too much give and take, that the spirit is gone, that it

doesn't mean anything any more. We owe that to our families.

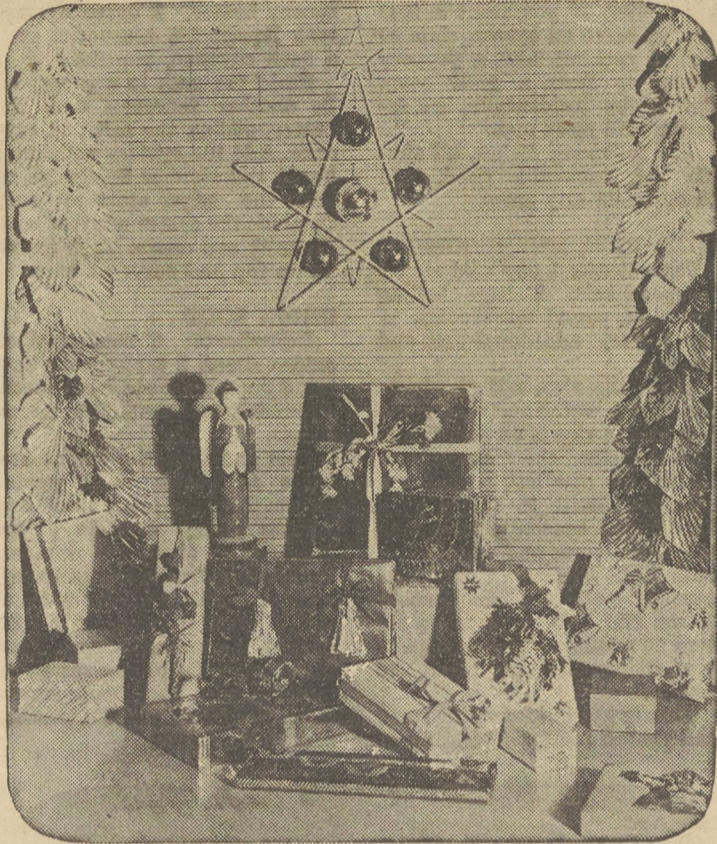
First we have to consider why so much of the lure has gone out of the great day, if it has, and where we've missed our opportunity for recreating the dear joy of other times. Our failure can probably be attributed to the emphasis we have put on the exchange of gifts. Remember that they're to commemorate the Day, rather than that the day is an excuse or necessity for gifts.

Other angles of Christmas deserve emphasis too—Christmas carols, for instance, in your own home. Plan the time that seems to suit your family best . . . Maybe the carols can be for Christmas Eve; maybe early Christmas morning would seem nicest. Either way, make it a tradition in the family to sing carols as a part of the celebration, and see how much more Christmasy the whole house will seem.

Making the Christmas tree decorations is another family custom that will recapture much of the atmosphere that used to pervade the house before Christmas. Making special jellies and conserves for little gifts for people who drop in—that's another way to make your home seem pervaded with the old-time cheer of Christmas. Going to a lot of trouble over gift wrappings is another way to bring the mood of the holiday into the house . . . You see, so much depends on the things you do yourself rather than your frantic buying.

As for gifts, we think they're lovely to give and to receive. Don't misunderstand us here; we wouldn't leave out the gift part for anything. But rather than giving things this year, give thoughts!

GIVE MUSIC, for instance, so that Christmas carols can become a traditional part of the Christmas celebration in your home, either on Christmas Eve or early on Christmas morning.



## GIFT WRAPPINGS

Beautiful gift wrappings of unusual design are pictured here. Metallic wrappings predominate, for this is to be a glittery and golden Christmas. The boxes are tied for the most part with ribbon, and caught with sprays of berries, flowers or pine cones. Fancy papers are also tops, as are little pasted-on decorations that children use in kindergarten.

## NOW IS TIME TO FINISH CLEANING UP YOUR GARDEN

WITH DECEMBER here, work outdoors will soon stop for the gardener. But there are several things that should be done this month.

If poison ivy has been a menace earlier in the year, dig the plants up now and burn them, but remember to keep gloves on while doing so.

Use an asbestos torch to destroy pests which inhabit your trees. Any cocoons in the crevices of trees can be forced out with a broom. When ridding your trees of pests, be careful not to injure the bark of the trees.

Pulling chickweed from the lawn will provide plenty of outdoor work this month. More efficient, however, is the use of a spray, obtainable from any dealer.

Garden furniture has doubtless been taken indoors by now. Any ornamental objects such as bird baths and statues should also be taken indoors if there is a possibility that they may be injured by the cold.

If you haven't already done so, see that all garden tools are cleaned and oiled before being put away for the winter.

FOR THE INDOOR gardener who is looking for a brilliant plant to add to his collection,

the Hippeastrum is highly recommended. Hippeastrum, also known as Amaryllis, although it is not strictly a member of the Amaryllis family, is long-lived and easy of house culture, and has been a favorite for many years. The straight vigorous stems bear large lily-like flowers, white, red, and pink in color. It is not unusual to see the formation of the flowers even before that of the leaves.

The bulbs may be procured now and should be potted as soon as they are received. Use a pot one inch larger in diameter than the bulbs. Soil should be mixed with bone meal and rotted cow manure. The bulbs should be set so that the thick part only is covered with soil. Be sure that the neck of the bulb is completely exposed.

The bulbs are stored in a cool, dark place and watered about once a week. As soon as growth is well established they should be brought to a sunny window. During their most active stage they need plenty of water and a weekly application of fertilizer.

Hippeastrum can be made to live a long time if taken care of properly. Plunge it outdoors in the summer-time, and bring it in to a cool cellar when fall comes. After it has "rested" a while, it can be brought back to

bloom once more in a desired room in your home.

Repotting may be done right after flowering or just at the end of the "resting" period; or the plant may be left in the pot until it breaks through, a practice often recommended for Hippeastrum.

For the moist atmosphere of the kitchen, Baby's Tears is an ideal plant. Moss-like and delicate, this creeping plant has round leaves, all of different size, all very minute. Placed on the kitchen sill, it will add a very dainty touch to the room.

IF YOU'VE been planning to repair your garden equipment or add to it, TOWN'S Garden Editor will be glad to supply information on where to buy any implements you may wish, as well as fertilizers, insecticides, etc. He will also tell you where you may obtain plants, bulbs and seeds, and will arrange to have catalogues sent you. Merely enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your request to TOWN, Garden Editor, P. O. Box 721, Rochester, N. Y.



## CHARMING TEA SET

Nothing could be nicer than a beautiful china tea set for a lady's gift. Don't forget that men like tea, too, no matter what they have to say about it, and, anyway, they will think she looks her prettiest over a nicely appointed tea table.

And that music can be part of the family life each day of the year. A small piano would be a lovely thought for this Christmas giving, one of those new little pianos that look so much like the old melodeons or spinets, graceful and space-saving, yet fine instruments to play. Or give a fine new radio to bring the world's great or gay music to your home at the turn of the dial. Or consider a good phonograph or records of loved numbers. (Don't forget how many people still adore phonographs—with good reason.)

GIVE COMFORT so that home will seem like the best place to be on Christmas as well as on any other day—the comfort of a deep easy chair which stands by the fireside awaiting Father's home-coming on wintry nights—the comfort of a little slipper chair for Mother's bedroom, a pretty chair covered in something more luxurious than she'd buy for herself—the comfort of a good family sofa in a material that has a fresh vibrant look about it, yet is made to stand the wear and tear of family use—the comfort of small dignified little cushions that tuck themselves here and there for genial ease—the comfort of a good indirect-light reading lamp.

GIVE GRACIOUSNESS that comes from the extra, not really necessary, things for a house. A truly lovely china tea set brings that quality to a home. So do graceful and convenient small tables for hospitality's sake. Simple beauty in flower containers contributes graciousness, too, as do exquisite little ornaments and the wall brackets that hold them so smartly now.

GIVE FASTIDIOUSNESS that we associate with silken linen for the table, with fine count percale sheets appropriately monogrammed, with bath linens of luxurious size and soft resilient quality, with a pretty

painted tray for serving breakfast in bed or meals to an invalid.

GIVE GAYETY to the friends or relations who entertain casually with after-the-movie suppers or golf luncheons. They'll like a painted wooden scoop for serving sliced bread or sandwiches. They'll adore any of the debonair aluminum that goes to parties so jauntily (grand sandwich humidors, Dutch supper servers, bean pots, clam chowder servers and no end of other helps.

GIVE CONVENIENCE if you want to be thanked forever and aye. Pinking shears are one of our pet ideas for the lady who does any sewing. Thread clippers are another good suggestion. Clipping shears are the choice for the gardener. And have you ever considered how many uses a variety of nice baskets can be put to around a house; they're not expensive either. If there's a man on your mind, consider a set of heavy-duty towels that he can wipe his razor on to his heart's content, or a tool box for that little workshop where he likes to get away from it all. In a more matter-of-fact range, the good, substantial, but not very romantic gifts are the most appreciated of all—an electric refrigerator, an electric sewing machine, an odd-sized electric iron for special jobs, besides all the smaller electrical gadgets, including an electric clock for somebody who missed out on wedding clocks.

But don't try to order Christmas from the store and have it all wrapped up and delivered in a pretty box. You have to create it in your own home just as you create the atmosphere of love and kindness and consideration there by your own example, guidance and cooperation. And now, as always, you have to be subtle with that family of yours and not let them know it all doesn't just happen that way!