

Holly-tide Decorations

WITH the Christmas gaiety, the general feeling of festivity comes an involuntary desire to infuse our own happiness and holiday spirit into our surroundings and make our homes as gay and cheerful as ourselves. With the appearance of the first holiday wreath in a neighbor's window, announcing the fact that holiday time has come, that the children are coming home from school and college, prepared for a right royal time, and that everyone is busily engaged in preparing for the happy event, it is a cold heart that does not hasten to announce the same glad tidings and flaunt the same Christmas spirit from their own front windows, by this means gladdening the hearts of passersby and making them feel that this is a happy old world after all and one that it is good to live in, during Christmas week at least. Nothing helps so much to arouse the youthful spirit and to create a Christmas atmosphere, which moves us whether we would or not, as the brilliant berries of a bunch of holly, a romantic spray of mistletoe, or a flaming red ribbon. More and more this custom of decorating both windows and houses is growing. Nowadays there is hardly a house that does not contain its Christmas token, its elaborate holly wreath with scarlet ribbon ends, or its modest little wreath of red immortelles. Shopkeepers almost invariably adorn their packages or their buttonholes with a few red berries and a green leaf or two, and the passengers on crowded streetcars are obliged to dodge the pointed ends of holly leaves as huge bunches are borne home to make the inside of the homes as gay and festive as the outside. Some seem to consider it sufficient if wreaths are tied in the windows, but it is equally as important that the family should be happy inside as that the passerby should get his bit of good cheer. Florists try in vain to introduce a variety into our Christmas decorations, but nothing is as Christmasy as the green and the red, the holly, the evergreen, the mistletoe and the jolly little Christmas tree, ready for its gay burden of candles and glittering tinsel. They have made one valuable addition to the decorative possibilities in the poinsettia with its brilliant red heads and its large, graceful leaves. This is wonderfully effective. It may be had either grown in pots or by the branch. Its bright color and glossy leaves are so large and striking as well as graceful and artistic that they make unusually effective centerpieces in decorative schemes.

The arrangement of Christmas decorations is a delight, but it is also hard work. If we would have a thoroughly successful scheme, which is artistic as well as suggestive, we must lay our plans very carefully, scour the woods for ground pine and small fir trees, if we live in the country, and place our orders with florists early in holiday week for garlands, wreaths and bunches of holly if we are in the city. Ten or twelve yards of evergreen the roping, several large and small holly

wreaths, either doubly or singly faced, a large supply of loose holly branches and a small bunch of mistletoe, will furnish the means for very interesting decorations. If one may have in addition a large bunch of poinsettia the problem is very much simplified. Holly requires skillful, tactful and patient handling to acquire satisfactory results, beautiful though it is, but poinsettia is most tractable and with very little effort becomes a glowing center of decoration.

A supply of cheap, two inch wide red satin ribbon will help to cover awkward joinings, to brighten up dark corners when the supply of holly berries is insufficient and to form effective bits of color here and there among the garlands. Innumerable candle sticks and red candles are invaluable both as a means of decoration in themselves and as a means of artistic lighting for other decorations. A favorite method of arranging holly is to stick large sprays over the corners of all the large pictures, at least where the holly will consent to go, for it is willful. Either one or two sprays in a vase or over a picture are very bright and attractive if these must constitute the whole of the decorations.

In decorating, as in all other artistic work, the whole effect is to be considered first and the parts afterwards. There must be a massing of colors and a strong center to which all parts are subordinate. This is as true in decorating a room as in painting a picture. A plan must be blocked out with the fireplace, the bookcase or any prominent spot which promises opportunities for effective massing for a center, and the other parts will fall into their proper relations. At the central point, the strongest mass of color should be arranged. For instance, in a room with a large stone fireplace at one end, this is made the center. All the bric-a-brac is removed except the clock, which stands in the center. On either side are massed large bunches of holly. In front of the holly, one on each side, stand two Russian brass candlesticks, with red candles in them; care must be taken to keep the blaze of the candles a safe distance from the holly leaves so that there will be no danger of fire. At each side of the fireplace stand two holly trees, bright with berries, and the dancing fire completes the effect. Ropes of ground pine are draped over the doors with holly wreaths hanging at the center tied with brilliant bows of ribbon. A large bunch of holly is arranged in a brass loving cup or jardiniere on top of the piano in the corner. Wreaths hang at the windows, and at night, the room lighted only with the candles and the firelight, the room is fascinating.

Decorations of tinsel, red crepe paper, red Christmas bells and imitation snow, made of cotton and brightened with diamond dust, are sometimes very original and interesting for special occasions, but in one's own home there is nothing so dignified and beautiful as the time honored favorites—the holly, the evergreen, the mistletoe and the poinsettia.

'Twas the Night Before Christmas

When out on the lawn there rose such a clatter, I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the saah. The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow Gave luster of midday to objects below. When what to my wandering eyes should appear, But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer; With a little old driver, so lively and quick, I knew in a moment it must be Saint Nick. More rapid than eagles his coursers they came, And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name—"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer, now Prancer! and Vixen! On! Comet! on, Cupid! on, Dunder and Blitzen! To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall! Now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!" As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,

So up to the house top the coursers they flew With the sleigh full of toys—and Saint Nicholas, too. And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof, The prancing and pawing of each little hoof. As I drew in my head and was turning around, Down the chimney Saint Nicholas came with a bound. He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot, And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot; A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack. His eyes how they twinkled, his dimples were merry—His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry; His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow, And the beard on his chin was white as the snow! The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath. He had a broad face, and a little round belly,

That shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jolly. He was chubby and plump—a right jolly old elf; And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself. A wink of his eyes and a twist of his head, Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread. He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,

And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk, And laying his finger aside of his nose, And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose. He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, And away they all flew like the down of a thistle; But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

Clement Moore, 1822. 'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse; The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there; The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads; And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap, Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap;

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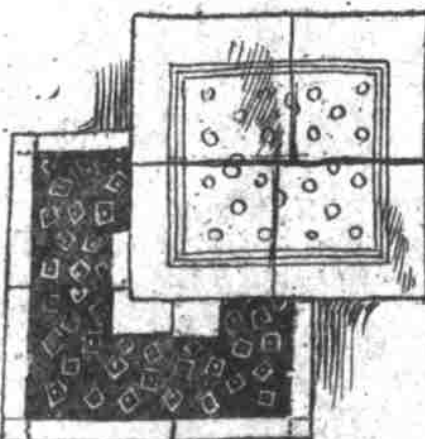
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