

A Christmas Stocking

By Bertha Edmund Ridgeley

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CHRISTMAS and the high cost of living do not make a very harmonious combination," observed Mrs. Ralston, in her quiet, patient way.

"I was just thinking of that, mother," replied her married daughter, Eunice Marsh, who sat with her work basket in her lap, her needle threaded with mending yarn, and rounding one of her husband's stockings at the heel. "There! that is done, and I hope it will pass muster as half respectable pinned up to Aunt Mary's maudlin!"

Mrs. Ralston sighed, and Eunice did not act any too cheerful. They were lovable, generous souls, and until the past year or two had never known what it was to skimp and watch the corners closely. The mother picked up the stocking Eunice had placed on the table.

"Come to think of it, Eunice," she said, "we can do better than that. Just run up to the storeroom. Here is the key. You'll find father's clothes and things as they were when he died."

The last years of John Ralston's life had been full of anxiety and struggle. There was a mortgage on the old homestead, and at one time it seemed a foreclosure could not be avoided. Then, in some way he secured the money to pay it off, and fortunately it was clear of encumbrance when he died. That was just a month after Eunice married Randal Marsh.

Her heart warmed as she thought of the loyal, wholesouled man who had come into her life at a critical time. It had been generally supposed that Randal had some little means, for he was industrious and thrifty, but when Mr. Ralston died Randal stepped into his place, practical, hard working and self-sacrificing.

The tears fell as Eunice reached the storeroom, and lifted the top of the fancy box she had herself covered, in which her father had been accustomed to store his extra clothing. Randal himself had made the receptacle, and together they had given it to Mr. Ralston on his last birthday. Eunice removed some articles of apparel tenderly and with care, placed them on a chair, and discovered some handkerchiefs and three pairs of stockings rolled up neatly. She took the top pair, unrolled it and with satisfaction noted as it unfolded that it was new and whole.

"Why, what can this be?" she uttered, as an envelope fell from the released folds. Her wonderment increased as she picked it up and found it unsealed and inside a written page and a peculiar looking key. Then with staring eyes, breathless, stirred to the depths of her soul, she read:

"After I am gone see that this letter and key are given to Randal Marsh. It has been a secret he made me promise never to divulge, that he gave me money to pay off the mortgage. Poor, noble hearted fellow! he had saved the \$2,000 to build a little home, and gave it freely to benefit us all. Month by month I have saved what I could, and have placed the money in a safety deposit box in the City bank, where there is nearly the amount he gave me."

Eunice with difficulty suppressed a great cry of joy. She could scarcely refrain from rushing downstairs and revealing her marvelous discovery to her mother. As she reflected how much this generous donation would mean to them all, in a transport of happy tears she sobbed forth her love for the worthy helpmate who had so well fulfilled his duty to herself and her family.

Eunice was alive with half-subdued excitement all that evening. She waited when they had reached Aunt Mary's until her mother and the others had placed their little gifts in the stocking bearing a card with Randal's name. All alone, she kissed the precious envelope and slipped it into the stocking.

"A necktie, gloves and a pen knife. That from aunt. Something always useful. A letter, no! a card of greeting, no! Why, what does this mean?" spoke Randal Marsh, and read it as they all gathered about the fire place, and then he knew. Unselfish man that he was, he actually blushed like a culprit detected at the revelation of a sleeping secret of years.

"It means that I have the dearest, most noble husband in the world!" cried Eunice, her arms about him, her lips raining kisses. "Oh, my brave one! my true one! And who in the world today deserves the blessings of Christmas more than you!"

Illustration of a family scene with a woman and children.

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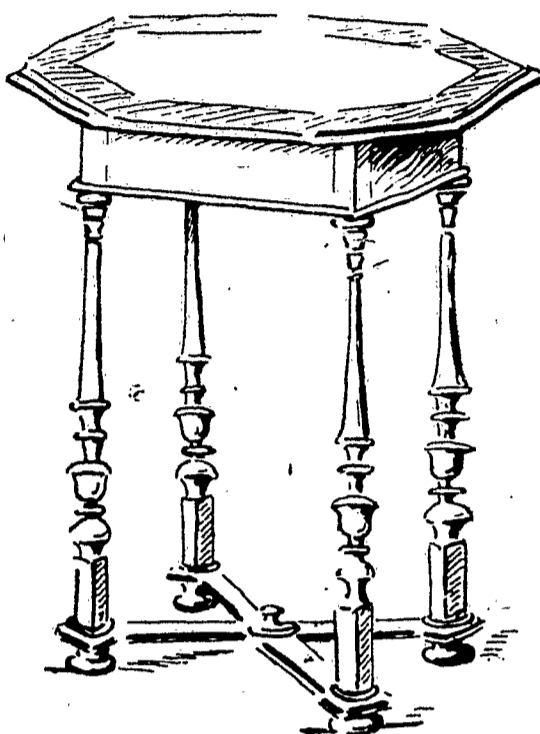
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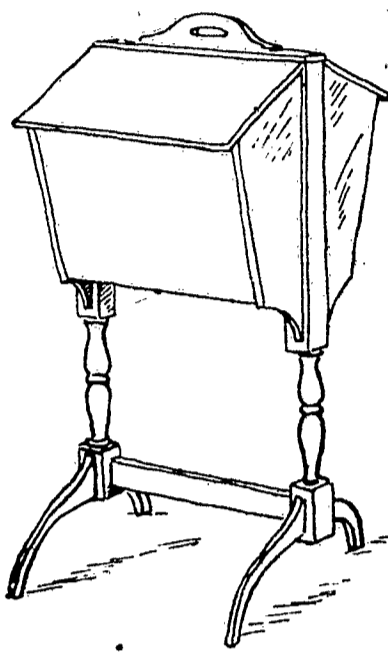
This is a companion sale with the great lamp event. We are wishing you a merry, a practical, a happy Christmas when gifts as well as being ornamental are the last word in usefulness.

Walnut Tables, \$35



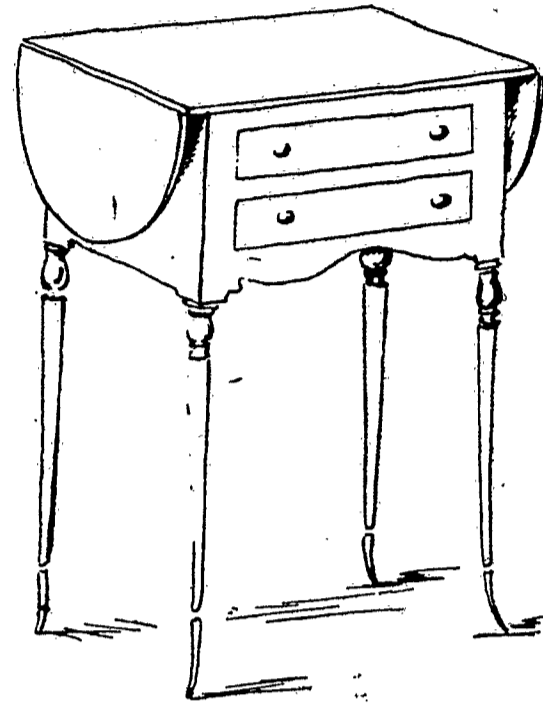
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Telephone Stands \$17.50

A useful and good looking present for the whole family. A stand and chair complete. The stand made with a shelf for the directory. Very well made and a splendid gift.

Reed Fernery, \$20.

22 inches long, 9 inches wide and 8 1/2 inches deep, with galvanized interior. Finished in gray or brown. A very pretty gift.

Gate Leg Tables \$42.50

The popular gate leg tables, made from solid mahogany and with a top that measures 28x38 inches when open. These are delightful gifts for the family.

USE OF CHRISTMAS STOCKING BE SURE GIFTS WILL PLEASE

Good St. Nicholas, Saint of Fourth Century of Christian Era, Founder of Custom. It is Well to Be Sure of Appreciation.

CHRISTMAS stockings have come down to us from the good St. Nicholas, who was a saint of the fourth century of the Christian era and was born December 6, 342, in Lycia, Asia Minor. He was regarded especially the patron saint of children, young girls and sailors. The Christmas stocking custom arose as follows:

It seems that St. Nicholas, who was the archbishop of Myra, lived in the same town with an impoverished nobleman who because he had no portions to give his daughters, and indeed no means with which to support them, was about to sell them into a life of sin. St. Nicholas, who was accustomed to dispense his large fortune in gifts of charity, resolved to rescue the young women. As he approached their house wondering how he should proceed, the moon shone out and displayed an open window. Instantly St. Nicholas threw a purse of gold in at the window which, falling at the feet of the father of the girls, enabled him to portion his oldest daughter. The second time St. Nicholas visited the house he also was able to throw a purse of gold through an open window, thus providing for the portion of the second daughter. On the third visit the father, watching for his benefactor, cast himself at the feet of the saint and cried:

"Oh, St. Nicholas, servant of God, why seek to hide thyself?"

The saint made the father promise not to reveal his benefactions. From this habit of bestowing gifts in secret and under the cloak of night arose the practice of putting out shoes or stockings for the younger members of the family, so that the good saint would be able to fill them without being spied on. At one time it was the custom for young women pupils in convents on the even of Saint Nicholas to hang their new silk stockings on the door of the apartment of the abbess. They would also write notes calling the attention of the good St. Nicholas to their stockings. In the morning when the convent pupils who had not gone home for the holidays arose they invariably found their stockings filled with sweetmeats.

Christmas Animals.
They're red.
They're of rubber.
And they're for baby.
They make good chewing.
They cannot possibly wound.
And they are wonderfully lovable.
One may indulge at from 20 cents upward.
The choice ranges from mice to elephants.

WOMAN tells in recently published magazines how she has a "pillow Christmas" for the benefit of her many friends. She consulted the piece bag, and from it drew forth the materials for making any quantity of dainty sofa pillows, all destined for different friends. The cost of the materials was chiefly that spent for silk cords, for embroidery silk and for filling for the completed pillows. Nearly all the pillows were made by copying figures out from contrasting materials on a chosen background, and the result was completed. The very same idea might also be carried into effect by the girl who loves to make dainty stocks. There never was a time when the prevailing styles offered such a dainty array of collars, and a box of assorted colors and kinds would be welcomed by any girl friend. There might be found in the piece bag all sorts of bits of silk and ribbon which could be fashioned into the daintiest of dressy stocks, as well as bits of lawn and percale which would do nicely for stocks for every day wear with cotton shirt waists. The gift of a box of stocks might be made valuable if the box itself was a thing of beauty, and this could be brought to pass by the girl who is expert with her needle. Giving the same sort of gift to a large number of people is perfectly proper if the gift is one which is calculated to please everybody. We've heard the story of a nice-old lady who always made pin-cushions for all her nieces and mittens for all her nephews every year. It was said that her plan gave great pleasure to one person, the aunt. It's a good idea to be sure your gifts will be appreciated before you go into the wholesale manufacture of one style of article for many people.

Immense Sulphur Deposit.
Popular Mechanics Magazine reports that a sulphur deposit of perhaps 10,000 to 15,000 tons has been found in the crater of an ice-covered volcano on Unalaska Island in the Aleutian group. Akun Island, in the same group, also has a sulphur deposit.

How It Feels.
Father—Why is the boy reading the auto ads so intently these days?
Mother—Well, you know, he got a raise last week.

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