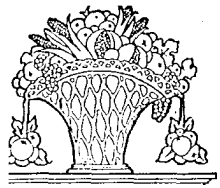


Christmas for the Elderly

By Myra Emmons



GRANDMA is not, as a rule, greatly concerned as to what will be done to make her holiday season agreeable. She is, instead, thinking of what she can do for the children, or the children's children. She has, perhaps, learned to accept patiently the ingratitude and indifference of those nearest to her, or even to see—most painful of all—that the gifts she presents are valued lightly, and that she is a mere afterthought. Sometimes even the servants are remembered with more liberality and energy than grandma is, for those haughty functionaries are the real rulers of the world, whereas grandma has reached the place where only love can sustain her.

Those who should be her dearest are prone to think almost any kind of a present will "do for grandma," and she, dear soul, often feigns a gratitude it is impossible to feel for the scant crumbs that fall to her lot.

Let us give grandma a pleasant surprise. Let us make her the centre of interest, for once, and see if we do not, incidentally, find a new joy for ourselves.

Remembering that anticipation and preparation are more than half the joy of Christmas, begin early with her. Take her into all your plans. Ask her advice, and follow it when possible. Get her to help you make your gifts, or at least to add a touch here and there so she can feel she has had a part in the generous work.

Help her, most of all, to plan and make little presents—or big ones, for that matter—for everybody whom she would like to remember. Help her to tie up her gifts attractively, and see that they are shipped or delivered for her, so that she will have none of the burden, but all the pleasure, of giving.

Unfortunately, an anniversary contains a suggestion of advancing age. Grandma should not be allowed to think for a moment of that. Do not let her dwell on past Christmases. Even if you have to banish hastily some tender sentiments, keep her thinking actively of the present and living in it.

Do not give grandmother presents of dark

woollen shawls, knit bed-shoes, or other stupid, uninteresting articles which plainly relegate her to a place outside of your own interests. Give her, instead, something that you would like to have yourself.

Perhaps it may be a lace collar, or a set including cuffs. Then let it be the very latest mode, and handsome enough so that you will yearn to borrow it for some fashionable occasion—which you must never on any account be persuaded to do, for you must be above the suspicion that you intended when presenting it to make use of it yourself at some future time.

Give her something girlish, frivolous—something you would like to have yourself, and that will make her feel like a girl again.

Do not give her black or ugly gray articles. White is the most becoming color an elderly person can possibly wear, and light blues, pinks, and violets are charming with white hair. Give grandma a superb, long, fluffy boa or stole collar of white chiffon or feathers. It will be as warm and comfortable as a crocheted shawl, and a thousand times more endearing.

Give her a white lace hat, trimmed with ostrich plumes, that will soften any lines which may have intruded on her face; or even with pink roses. They will bring a new color to her cheeks and people will begin to say, "What a lovely old lady!"

Give her a lace or chiffon or silk scarf, printed or painted or woven in the beautiful designs which make these graceful articles among the treasures of a woman's wardrobe. She will delight to wrap herself in its soft folds, and it will take ten years off her age.

Give her a lace or silk or velvet bolero, or bridge coat. These are the most becoming of garments, lending attractiveness to any style of figure. They are also extremely useful and economical, as they can be slipped on at a moment's notice, and they make any gown look dressy.

A set of furs is always a valuable present, for young or old, but don't let them be

black. Funereal suggestions are not in order at any time.

A handsome silk petticoat would delight grandma's heart and give her that feeling of elegance which women always desire. Silk stockings are agreeable to wear, and grandmother will be much more appreciative of them than any *débutante* will be. The girl would take them as a matter of course, but to grandma they will say that she is yet worth while to you, and they will stir a world of love.

A kimono of silk or lawn, in light, beautiful colors and patterns, which will make her feel cheerful every time she looks at it, may be a most useful gift to an elderly woman. Never give her a dark, dull one.

Handsome silk gloves, preferably white, and white Chinese silk blouses, for the coming summer, will inspire her to look hopefully ahead to length of happy days. If her immediate need is for a blouse of heavier silk, let it be in any color but black; and be sure that she has a handsome skirt to wear with it.

If you give her cushions for her room, cover them with the most cheerful of materials. Bestow pictures sparingly—on grandmother or on any one else—but if you are positive you know her tastes and wishes, a handsome, cheerful picture may please her.

If you give her a book, let it be the best literature and the most up-to-date there is. Do not encourage grandma to look backward, not even at the books she once loved best. Keep her interested in the present.

A good music-box would be a most acceptable Christmas gift for grandma; or one of the best grades of talking-machines—those which reproduce the human voice and all the complex tones of the orchestra with such faithfulness and delicacy that they bring the opera and the concert into your own doors. Grandma can then hear "Tannhäuser," "Faust," Melba, Sembrich, Caruso, Plançon, and hosts of harmonious singers and players while reposing in her own luxurious room.

If grandma is a bit inclined to be studious, treat her to a phonographic course in French or German or whatever language she wishes to keep up in. This will employ her time and entertain her vastly.

If she has ever liked to paint, supply her with colors, canvas, and brushes, and encourage her to revive her interest in that work. Do not scorn her renewed efforts, but

help her with your modern suggestions and ideas, and prove to her that she can still do things which are worth while.

Give her a large, handsome scrap-book, and aid her in finding selections which she would like to keep in it.

Give her a big blank-book— one of the kind which opens out flat—and tell her to write a history of her times—not reminiscences of her own affairs, which would remind her that she has passed a number of milestones, but a vital setting-forth of customs and phases of life that prevailed when she was a girl. You will be amazed to find how interesting such a book can be.

Give her whatever will provide her with something to do—something agreeable and natural to her. This will keep time from hanging heavily on her hands, keep her from feeling lonely, give her an interest of her own in life, and save her many a heart-ache when the sons and daughters and children wish to go out about their own affairs.

Above all, help grandma to do something for others, for that will keep her young, active, and alert to the present life. There are hundreds of things which she can make that will be acceptable to her friends.

Cushions will be among the favorite articles because their variety is infinite and their uses are legion. By cushions I do not mean the tiresome, stiff things which too often disfigure our dressing-tables, nor yet the be-laced and beribboned dust-catchers of swiss which take up too much room. I mean, chiefly, couch and chair cushions, soft, comfortable, and a rest to the weary. Grandma will enjoy making these and giving them to her friends, for they are easy to make, and they show up handsomely as gifts; besides never being superfluous. There is always room for one more sofa pillow in any household. The college boys and girls will love them for their apartments, done in special college designs. Whenever you see an attractive square of material, take it home to grandma for a cushion, and help her to plan the latest design, so that whatever she does will be down to date.

If she can paint in water-colors, think what a beautiful parasol she could make out of a simple, inexpensive white or black silk foundation. If she paints on china, there is no limit to the acceptable gifts she can make her friends.

Kimonos are simple of manufacture, and

grandma could make them of dainty lawn or silk or beautiful flowered organdies that would delight the heart of any of her women or girl friends.

Corset covers of dotted or embroidered swiss, with the dots or flowers outlined in colored silks, are easily made and are an exquisite addition to any wardrobe. One charming confection of this nature was made of a simple dotted swiss, the dots on the front, only, being embroidered in satin-stitch of delicate blue, running down into a V. A few dots were also embroidered all around the top edge, which was finished with narrow lace. The waist was similarly finished, and blue ribbon was run in next to the lace, for fastening the cover at the shoulders and waist. The cover was made after a seamless pattern, which requires almost no sewing, and two days sufficed for completing the garment.

Any piece of underwear that grandma might see fit to make would prove an acceptable gift, but you must help her about getting a modern pattern.

Painted silk or chiffon scarfs will be among grandma's possibilities, if she can handle her brushes and colors with extreme delicacy, and will certainly endear her to the recipients.

With a few pictures, cards, and ribbons

grandma could make calendars, clipping-books of envelopes fastened together with ribbons, postal-card albums, and similar desk contrivances that might be welcome presents to some of her friends.

The new processes of weaving straw baskets, and even hats, are most interesting to any woman who has time to take them up, and grandma would have that; also patience and enthusiasm to prepare delightfully attractive designs and shapes; and her interest would increase with her skill.

If you have room to set up a small hallowm where grandma can weave rag rugs, she may prove wonderfully adept at this new-old occupation, and beautiful strips of weaving may grow under her care.

Speaking of growing reminds me that potted plants make acceptable gifts for grandma; and from them she can raise shoots which she, in turn, can present to her friends.

What will be your reward for taking so much pains with one who, in far too many households, is relegated to the corners and to obscurity?

The reward of seeing the wonderful work which love can do when it is really unselfish. You will see new life created, new joy diffused, new hope inspired, new beauty developed; and you will share it all, pressed down and running over.

