



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts McKee

To a Tired Mother

A little elbow leans upon your knee,
Your tired knee which has so much
to bear.

A child's dear eyes are looking lov-
ingly

From underneath a thatch of
tangled hair;

Perhaps you do not heed the velvet
touch

Of warm, moist fingers holding
yours so tight;

You do not prize this blessing over-
much;

You almost are too tired to pray
tonight.

But it is blessedness! A year ago,
I did not see it as I do today.

We are so dull and thankless, and
too slow

To catch the sunshine, till it slips
away..

And now it seems surpassing strange
to me

That, while I wore the badge of
motherhood

I did not kiss more oft and tenderly
The little child that brought me
only good.

And if, some night when you sit
down to rest,

You miss the elbow from your
tired knee,

The restless, curly head from off your
breast,

The lisping tongue that chattered
constantly;

If from your own the dimpled hand
had slipped,

And ne'er would nestle in your
palm again,

If the white feet into the grave had
tipped,

I could not blame you for your
heartache then.

I wonder so that mothers ever fret
At little children clinging to their
gown;

Or that the foot-prints when the days
are wet

Are ever black enough to make a
frown.

If I could find a little muddy boot,
Or cap, or jacket, on my chamber
floor;

If I could kiss a rosy, restless foot,
And hear it patter in my home
once more.

If I could mend a broken cart today,
Tomorrow make a kite to reach
the sky—

There is no woman in God's world
could say

She was more blissfully content
than I.

But, Oh! the dainty pillow next my
own

Is never rumped with a shining
head,

My singing birdling from its nest has
 flown;

The little boy I used to kiss is
 dead!

—Mary J. Smith.

Among Our Letters

"A Brother," South Carolina, writes us that he "thinks the ant is an interesting little customer, doubtless made to fit snugly in somewhere, but his proper place does not seem to be among the eatables, nor in his fruit garden. He is not prepared to place him definitely, and thinks the housewives are right in denying him quarters in the culinary department, pantry or storage.

P. H. V., Michigan, says she is in favor of anything that shall prove

effective in destroying them, as she has suffered severely from the "plague of ants." She sends us a remedy, given her by a lady who has had experience, saying that the use of it has done more to keep her house free from the pests than anything else she has tried. Here is the remedy: A half teaspoonful of cobalt on a plate with sweetened water sufficient to dissolve the cobalt; place where ants most do congregate, and they will drink and die. This drug used to be used in the same way to kill flies, and will still prove effective where there are no screens. Cobalt can be had at the drug store, is quite inexpensive, and should be kept out of the reach of meddling little fingers and mouths.

W. J. D., Mississippi, sends us so good a letter that we should like to pass it on entire, but will have to eliminate the politics. He tells us: As I walked across the cotton field, I saw an ant climbing up a cotton stalk, and stopped to see what he was after. About six inches up the stalk he caught a boll weevil, brought it down and carried it to his nest in a stump nearby. I said: "Here is a greater benefactor of the human race than even Columbus, or any other person." Extending his walk, he visited the Home department to listen to the ladies, and learned how to cook tomatoes, fix his hair and remove his freckles; he also met the friend who exterminated the ants with the coal oil, and now tells us a reason for the existence of the little ant. He says: "God made them as a possible barrier—a weak one probably—but the only one between the people, especially the poor people, and the politicians who are burdening them." He thinks that instead of sending men down into his country to tell the people how to grow grain, the most urgent need of the whole civilized world is more ants. If the ants should fail to come to our assistance, cotton goods will soon be classed as luxuries. He is told that ants are blind, and thinks that is the reason they stopped to eat the lady's butter, or nest on the business man's papers instead of rushing away down into the cotton fields to feast on the boll weevils.

I am sure our housekeepers—myself included—wish the little ants could be made to understand their poor choice of stamping ground, and induced to take the first fast train to the cotton fields. We could spare them.

Another writer tells us that he is a long-time subscriber to The Commoner, and thinks it is fine, clear through; that he always reads the politics, and political correspondence and clippings, and Mr. Maupin's page, and then, if he has time, "looks in on the ladies," and frequently gets some excellent ideas for his pains. We are delighted!

A Dictionary a Necessity

I have a letter from a reader in California, who writes, asking the meaning of a word used in the Bible. I have also, a letter from a reader in Texas, asking the meaning of two words used in the newspapers of recent date. These words are "new words," and are not to be found in the really out of date dictionary, but are in all dictionaries printed within the last ten years. One of the very best investments for a family that takes any interest whatever of the meaning of the words heard, or read,

is a large, unabridged dictionary. The cost will probably be ten dollars, though now and then one can be had, second-hand, for a few dollars less. Thirty-six years ago, a large, leather-bound unabridged dictionary was bought for \$10, and used regularly and steadily by a whole family of growing children, until it began to show its "out-of-dateness," when the new International took its place. As we were all literary, or otherwise interested in the correct understanding of language, there were several smaller, hand-size dictionaries that could be consulted for ordinary usage of words, but for a clear knowledge of just what word must be used, we always consult the "big" dictionary. The old dictionary of about forty years ago is still useful for obsolete words, or fuller descriptions of their meanings. There are large dictionaries advertised by mail order houses at a less cost to purchasers, and for the average family, these dictionaries serve well enough; but the best is none too good, and the best in binding and contents is worth the extra money. But get a dictionary of some sort; get also a biographical dictionary, and a Bible dictionary. If you "don't care for them," cultivate a taste for information by getting and studying them. It will pay. People know by far too little, anyway.

Floral Notes

The seeds of perennial phlox should be sown in the autumn as soon as ripened, as they do not germinate readily, sometimes lying in the ground a year before the young plants appear. After sowing the seeds, do not disturb the soil for two years. Perennial phlox is one of our finest blooming plants, and gives quite a variety of colors. It is perfectly hardy, and will form a large clump in a short time. If bloom is wanted at once, get plants from the florist and give good care in the spring.

Among the old-fashioned favorites, than which none are better, are the Dianthus family, sweet williams and several kinds of pinks. Sown this month, they will give a fine display of flowers the coming year; they are hardy, and most of them self-sowing. The young plants from seeds sown now are much more satisfactory than old plants.

Don't fail to get a few hardy spring-blooming bulbs. They make a bright spot very early in the spring months, the hyacinths and crocuses often blooming before the late snows are gone.

Fall sown pansy seeds give plenty of flowers next spring. They are so pretty, and so easily grown that one should not be without them. Seeds of the tarragon plant may be had of any reputable seedsman, and the herb is much prized at pickling time.

The Plant Doctor says spirits of ammonia, a teaspoonful to a gallon of water, applied to the soil once a week is a fine tonic for plants. For developing buds and flowers, stir in about the roots occasionally a little bone meal or phosphate. Quick-lime, stirred into the soil, or lime water made by stirring quick-lime in water, will sweeten sour soil. Lime should be fresh-slaked, applied to the soil and raked in. Rains will carry it down to the roots.

As soon as the season will admit, gather up the plant supports, garden tools, and other implements that are

no longer needed, and store them out of the weather.

For the Home Seamstress

An improvement on the old way of fastening separate founcions on the foundation skirt by means of buttons and button-holes or snap buttons, is to edge the upper part of the founce and lower part of the foundation skirt with beading, then lace the two together with ribbon; this insures an evenness of gathers which can not be obtained by buttons, and is a much safer way of fastening the two pieces together.

Many entire dresses for the little folks are made by hand; the tops of the sleeves are rolled and gathered and whipped into the arm-hole with an almost invisible seam; lace is whipped on, and many times, the different parts are joined by beading. The cotton of the skirts are hem-stitched with a three-inch hem, and a cluster of tucks run above the hem.

The dresses of children under three years old do not vary much with the changing seasons, and little white dresses may be worn all the year. Outer wraps and underwear must be suitable for the season and temperature. For little dresses, batiste embroiders and launders beautifully. Keep the seams neat and the stitching dainty. For older children, cambric, linen, pique are much used, and all may be more or less embroidered, using fine cotton floss, button-holing the edges with care in neat scollops.

If one has not the time, or skill, or the inclination to embroider her underwear, strips of nice, well done embroidery of suitable width may be used, and the edges may be finished with lace edging and beading. This is especially desirable for corset covers, and many embroideries come especially for that purpose.

In selecting ready made embroidery, it is well to select the best one can afford, and if the work is done by hand, it should not be wasted on poor material. Cotton floss will work much smoother than linen, and give better satisfaction for embroidering.

Some Reminders

It is none too early to remember that winter will soon be with us, with many discomforts in its train. It is of importance that the feet are kept warm and dry, and the cold autumn rains bring sickness to those who neglect proper precautions. Try water-proofing your foot-wear, and be ready for emergencies. Here are some tried methods:

Water-Proof Leather: Tallow, one pound; beeswax, one-fourth pound; castor, or neat's-foot oil, half a pint; lamp-black, half an ounce. Put these into a vessel and set in another vessel containing boiling water, and as the ingredients melt, stir, mixing thoroughly. When thoroughly blended, put into proper receptacles—boxes, small cans, and apply quite warm to the foot-wear, soles and uppers, letting thoroughly dry before using, as they will in a very short time. If for use out-doors, they can be worn at once.

Another method is to heat together two parts of tallow and one part resin, and when quite hot and melted together, apply to the bottoms, or soles, of the shoes quite hot, until the leather will absorb no more. If a polish is wanted, after applying to the uppers, dissolve one ounce of beeswax in spirits of turpentine, with a teaspoonful of lamp-black thoroughly stirred in. This should be applied to the shoes twenty-four hours after water-proofing them, and it must be kept away from the fire. The reason for using resin is that tallow or other grease rots the stitching and the leather, but the resin pre-