



Optimism

When all my fields are frozen,
When my orchards naked stand,
I hear a sound that is like the sound
Of a sower, sowing the land.
And all at once the limbs and leaves,
So darkly-dim before,
Shine round me like a thresher's sleeves
When he stands in his threshing-floor.

Awake from troubled slumber,
In the middle-watch of the night,
I see a hand that is like the hand
Of a painter, painting the light.
And all at once, with the shadows
Are threads of silver spun,
And all my room is like the bloom
Of a garden in the sun.

When pleasures please no longer,
When the charm of love is lost,
When my dearest hopes before me
Like chaff in the winds are tossed,
My empty heart forgets its lack,
And I hear a voice that sings
Like the mother-bird, when she calleth
back
Her little ones to her wings.

When the sea of life is darkest,
When the billows gap with graves,
I hear a step that is like a step
That is treading on the waves;
And all at once the clouds are rent,
And I wish my spirit see
That Time is but an incident
Of the great Eternity.

—ALICE CARY.

Home Chat

That is right, friends: When anything is wrong on the Home page do not hesitate to set us right. Mistakes will creep in, no matter how careful one is. On the Home page of The Commoner of date September 1, there appeared a poem entitled "The Beyond," signed Mrs. J. C. Renshaw, Charlottesville, Va. The poem appeared, credit and all, just as it was clipped from a city daily paper. Since its reproduction, several of our readers have written, asking me to correct the mis-statement as to authorship, as the poem was written by Mrs. Ella Wheeler-Wilcox, many years ago. The poem is certainly beautiful enough to tempt one to covet its authorship.

One of our friends says, in regard to saving recipes which appear on the Home page, that her husband will not allow her to clip from The Commoner, but that, as soon as he has finished reading it, he puts it in his pocket to "read to So-in-So," and that is the last she sees of it. She says: "What can I do in such a case?" Well, I should advise that she ask her husband to subscribe for two copies of the paper—one for his own reading and one for her. There is much on the Home pages that is well worth keeping. We get quite a few calls for numbers containing recipes which the writers meant to, but did not, keep.

Since the appearance of the Home Chat in which was suggested the need of some safe method by which the savings of elderly people might be securely invested so they would be available when old age paralyzed their abilities, I have had quite a few letters endorsing the idea, and many elderly persons—some with, and some without means, some without children or relatives—asking me to direct them to a home (not a work house) to which they might retire, sure of reasonably kind treatment. I

am sorry I cannot help them. Many of the churches, and most of the benevolent associations have established homes for the aged, but by most of them it is required, that, to gain admission, the applicant must be a member of that particular denomination or society, and, as one circular puts it, the applicant "must be over seventy years old; be in indigent circumstances, with no near relative to support them," and at the same time, make an entrance fee of from one hundred dollars upward. In short, as near as I can make out, must be an acknowledged pauper and friendless—which few persons would like to declare. Some of my correspondents say they could pay as high as \$1,000 if assured that they would have refined and intelligent, cleanly, moral associates; that they have no children, and have to depend upon the honesty and services of strangers, drifting about, as circumstances may determine. Surely, some way might be made practical, in order to give to these old people (and there are thousands of them in the states) a clean, comfortable, quiet home among congenial surroundings. Cannot some of our philanthropists take up the matter?

For the Sewing Room

If the center front of a skirt hangs too full, the other widths need raising at the top. When basting the skirt, commence at the top and fit carefully before stitching the seams; have an easy tension on the machine to prevent drawing when stitching up the seams.

In making your waist darts, be careful not to cut them too high and too wide in the front of your waist; a well-cut dart should be like a very slender V-shape affair, one with a very long point at the top; the narrower you make your dart at the bust-line, the better will be the result.

In making buttonholes, strengthen the material around the cut portion with running stitches of thread and carry a strand of the thread to prevent the buttonhole from stretching along the top of the cut while working it. A regular tailor buttonhole has a bar worked across at each end.

When stays or bones are applied to a waist-lining, first catch the top firmly to the lining, then press the stay up and stitch the lower end, making it seem a trifle short for the space to be covered so that the wearer can curve or "spring" the stay in to the figure at the waist-line, where it is firmly sewed again. A fitted waist-band curved over the hips and in front is best for a full or short-waisted figure.

In using old goods, it is often the case that the old machine stitching shows too plainly; this difficulty may generally be overcome by wetting the stitch-marks thoroughly and allowing the goods to dry; this will almost always bring into place the threads which were flattened down by the stitches; then smooth out the material, cover with a wet cloth, steam it over a kettle of boiling water and press with a hot iron.

The seams of a gored skirt may be finished in one of several ways; the ordinary seam-finish, with the edges pressed well open and the raw edges "whipped" to keep them from frizzling; the "lapped" seam, which has both edges turned in one direction and held in place by one or more careful lines of stitching; the "strapped" seam, which has its edges pressed

well open, and a band of the material applied directly over the right side of the seam and stitched on its edges.

Cut your armholes just as small as is consistent with actual comfort, and give necessary breadth across the chest and extra length from the shoulders to the waist line. This will make your garment not only fit smoothly and well, but will also give actual comfort. To fit a sleeve properly and to insure it against twisting, the curve for the elbow should be over the bend of the elbow when the hand is brought to the bust-line. The inside seam should be in a line with the thumb when the arm is dropped to the side, and the palm of the hand turned to the body.

Be sure to have your sewing machine properly cleaned and oiled, your scissors sharpened and all the necessaries in the way of tape line, needles, threads, thimbles, buttons, hooks and eyes, pencil for marking, pin cushion, etc., and all the attachments belonging to the machine, at your hand. It will save you much time and vexatious delays.

Warm tights for the little tots may be made by cutting off the tops of two large stockings to a length measured from the waist to the knees of the child; then slit the two stocking legs, stretch them out flat, and cut by the pattern of the upper part of a child's under drawers; sew together, leaving a placket at the top of each side, finish with a waist-band and buttonholes; then sew to these trunks a pair of child's stockings.

When the heels of children's stockings are past darning, trim the thin edges nicely, then, with a medium-size steel crochet hook and darning cotton or fine Saxony wool, crochet around the edge of the hole, diminishing the stitches each round until the hole is completely filled. The same plan will work in the matter of mending knees, but the work should be carefully done, matching the size of the thread and color of the stocking to be mended.

Growing of Mushrooms

The growing of mushrooms is said to be an easy and fascinating work for women, and almost any one who is able to get about at all can see after one or a dozen mushroom beds and not miss the time that is given to them. The cost of making the beds is very little, and a cellar, shed, stall in a stable, or any unused out-building will do in which to make the beds, which may be of any size, according to the space at command. You can add to the space by making shelves or bunks like sleeping apartments in the hold of a ship. Take equal parts of fresh soil and rotten leaf-mould or manure; mix well; make the beds eight inches deep; smooth the earth, and water well with warm, not boiling, water; cover to keep damp for two or three days before spawning. Buy mushroom spawn from the most reliable seedsman in your locality, allowing one pound of spawn to every thirty square feet of bed. Break dry spawn into bits about the size of small hickorynuts and, after removing the cover from the beds, plant spawn about two inches deep and two inches apart all over the beds; sprinkle again and cover. Leave the cover on for one week; by that time the beds will be well spawned and ready for growing; keep the top of the beds moist, but

be sure to avoid the baking, or stiffening of the soil by too much water. If your beds are favorably located and well made, you may expect a fine crop of mushrooms in about four weeks. This crop grows winter and summer alike, if the beds are kept from freezing, and always brings a high price in market.

Soil once set in spawn is good for years of growth; besides, if one has to move, the beds can be shoveled into boxes or barrels and moved with the rest of the outside belongings and spread out again at the new home. To gather the mushrooms, cut them close to the earth with a sharp knife, leaving all the root, which will grow four or five—sometimes eight or ten—from the same root.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Are Wives "Supported"?

The Housekeeper (Minneapolis) says: "Before a definite answer to this question can be given, it would be well to understand clearly just what is meant by the term 'supported.' Wives are, in the majority of cases, dependent upon their husband's earnings for their food, shelter and clothing; but they are not supported in the sense that children, or pensioners or objects of public charity are. In the ideal marriage, husband and wife are equal partners; two departments engage the energies of the firm—the earning department and the home department. One is as important as the other; each requires an expert, industrious, watchful manager if the firm is to be successful. The manager of the earning department may bring home a pocketful of money every Saturday night, but without the intelligent and economic co-operation of the home department manager, he will find himself, ere long, a bankrupt. The money he earns is not all his; it belongs to the firm. In managing the home, superintending or preparing the meals, looking after his wardrobe, looking after the little leaks of the household, to say nothing of caring for the children, and performing the thousand and one arduous and nerve-wearing tasks which fall to the lot of the average housekeeper, his wife is doing just as much for the success of the firm as he is, if not more. She gives to this work, time, talent, labor, health, strength—all of which, if sold in the market places, would be accounted of money value. Hence, if by 'supported' it is meant that the wife is an idle, or unearning pensioner on the husband's bounty, then the term cannot be applied to the wife in any of the walks of life. In all instances, she gives as much as she gets."

Query Box

Mrs. J. D.—Velvet is especially becoming to a person with a thin, sal-low face, or with a face that is losing its bloom; or to an elderly lady, as it gives a softened texture to the skin.

A. F.—The spots may be removed from a varnished floor by rubbing with a cloth dampened with paraffine oil (not wax,) but this treatment will not do on a floor that has a wax finish.

Housewife—For rolling the pastry dough, try filling a large, long bottle with ice water and using it as a rolling pin. Some stores keep hollow glass rolling pins, to be filled with ice water, for this purpose.

Mrs. G. H.—Tells us that a neighbor of hers keeps weevils and other bugs-pests out of his flour and meal by keeping a bulb of garlic in the

BETTER THAN SPANKING

Spanking does not cure children of bad writing. If it did there would be few children that would do it. There is a constitutional cause for this. Mrs. M. Summers, Box 118, Notre Dame, Ind., will send her home treatment to any mother. She asks no money. Write her today if your children trouble you in this way. Don't blame the child. The chances are it can't help it.