



Just Thoughts

This department is in receipt of a request from a young friend who lives in Perry, Oklahoma. He writes:

"Please don't laugh at me in ridicule, but in the May 10 issue of The Commoner in your 'Just Thoughts' you spoke of crawdad tails being good eating. I am a boy of sixteen, and if there is anything I love to do it is to eat. One day, during the absence of my mother, I prepared and served some frogs' legs to the boys. Now I wish you to tell me how you prepared the narrative of Mr. Crawdad for eating purposes. Our Oklahoma ponds are alive with them, and if there is anything savory about their caudal appendages please tell me how to prepare them. By the way, we are especially fond of sassafras tea and are sorry when mother says 'enough.'"

We are awfully afraid that a boy whose "taster" is equal to liking sassafras tea is not going to appreciate the delights of the crawdad diet. It has been so many years since the writer prepared crawdads for eating purposes that he fears he has forgotten. But the formula was something like this: First catch your crawdads, selecting the ones of average size. After mercifully killing the crawdad by shoving a knife blade through its head, amputate the tail at the point where it joins the body. After carefully washing and rinsing the tail through a couple of waters, drop into a kettle of boiling water which is slightly salty and boil for three or four minutes. Remove from the water and as soon as cool enough to handle without blistering the fingers, remove the shell. Drop the white meat into a skillet containing enough boiling grease to float the crawdad tail and skim out in about thirty seconds. If this is the right way the crawdad tail will come out of the grease curled up like the shrimp meat you buy at the fancy grocers. This done, any boy will know how to perform the rest of the operation.

Epicures say that the best way is to drop the live crawdad into boiling water, just as lobsters are boiled. This is cruel, and no boy with half a heart will do it.

Wonder if this young Oklahoma friend knows how to cook a wild duck when he is out on a hunting trip? The formula is good for chickens, plover, snipe, or any other edible bird that is not too big. Before starting on the hunting trip put an onion in one pocket and an apple in another. Also some salt and pepper. Then get your duck. When you get so hungry you think you just can't wait any longer for something to eat, prepare the duck. Dig a hole in the ground big enough to bury about three ducks the size of the one you have, and build a fire in it. The idea is to prepare a good bed of coals. Clean the duck thoroughly, but you need not remove all of the feathers. Rub the salt and pepper inside of the bird and then put in the apple and the onion. Close up the bird and then put it inside of a big ball of stiff clay that has been well kneaded. The mud walls should be about two inches thick. Then put the big ball of mud in the bed of coals, covering it up well and adding more fire on top. When the duck is cooked the mud walls will have cracked and the savory steam arising will tell you that

the meal is ready. Pull the ball of baked mud from the fire, break it open and take out the duck. The skin and feathers will come off with the clay. The apple and onion inside of the duck will have given an indescribable flavor to the flesh. Fish may be prepared the same way, omitting the apple and onion.

A young lady friend in Fort Smith, Arkansas, who says she enjoys reading The Commoner every week, and especially the "Whether Common or Not" department, seems to have grasped in a measure one of the dangerous tendencies of the times. She submits the following:

There was a poor fellow one time
Who had spent his very last dime,
And to get him a meal
He attempted to steal,
And was given three years for his
crime.

A stockbroker couldn't refrain
From "taking" two millions in grain.
'Twas easy, indeed,
The jury agreed,
To see that the man was insane.

We have heard, during the last eight or ten years, a great deal about the "kings of finance." Now isn't it about time to pay a few tributes to the "queens of finance," three millions of whom are performing financial stunts every week in the year that would make Gates and Rockefeller and Morgan and all the rest of the "kings" look like three plugged dimes in comparison. The "queen of finance" is the wife of an average workingman who draws the average pay of his craft. She has an average of about \$10 a week with which to work, and with this she pays rent, provides plenty of nourishing food for the family of from three to six people, dresses herself and the children—shoes, clothing, hats, underwear, stockings, etc.—pays the doctor's bills, gives a little to the unfortunate about her, provides amusement for the little ones and puts by a few pennies now and then for a "rainy day." Wouldn't you like to see Mr. Rockefeller or Mr. Morgan providing for their families, and doing it fairly well, on \$10 a week? Wouldn't it make them exercise their business acumen to the limit to have things come out even? The average American housewife is the best financier in the world, and don't you forget it when you go to talking about business managers.

Let's see, it was year before last, wasn't it—or was it the year before that—when mamma took the little girl in short dresses by the hand and walked with her to the schoolhouse to be with her during the first few minutes of the first day of school? Really, now, it does not seem as if it were over three or four years ago, at most. And now when the father returns home in the evening he finds the sitting room cluttered up with white dress goods and paper patterns, long strips of lace, lace medallions, insertion, ribbon, and all that sort of thing—things that the average man knows very little about in the raw state. For the last two weeks all he has heard at the supper table was talk about class parties and class plays, and class day exercises, and thesis, and oration, and graduating dress. He just has to sit there and listen while mamma and the little kindergarten girl of yesterday talk about preparations for

commencement, and as he listens he wonders if the gray hairs are really showing very plainly over his temples, and if he looks as old to the little girl as his own father did to him long years ago just about graduating time.

My, my! How the years do fly. Only yesterday she came home from kindergarten her face lighted up with joy and her little hands grasping the first little picture she made under the instructions of the patient young woman who presided over the department. Only yesterday she was making paper chains and sorting out colored beads. Only yesterday she was cutting out paper dolls. And now she is fluttering around in an agony of joyous anticipation, watching the finishing up of her graduating gown.

A little girl no longer, but a young woman—almost. A young woman looking into the future with joyful expectancy, seeing great duties to be performed, great wrongs to right.

We used to write "funny jokes" about the "sweet girl graduate." But that was before Old Father Time had ripped off a few years and brought one of them to our own household. The point of view makes all the difference in the world, doesn't it?

Answers to Correspondents

"Dermatologist"—Some complexions are improved by a moderate application of soap and water.

"Superstitious"—Of course we believe in signs. We know one that costs us at least a dime every time we pass it with the missus.

"Queen of Diamonds"—We can not help you. We never play cards because it's too hard work.

"Spuds"—It strikes us that potatoes planted in the full moon would be awfully hard to cultivate and dig. How would you get there?

"Uneasy"—We tried lard and red precipitate when we felt the symptoms you describe.

"Cook"—We like our pies open-faced.

"Fannie"—We will answer your question when you tell us why an apple turnover is always better than an apple pie made from the same batch of materials.

"Hamlet"—Do we believe in ghosts? We certainly do. If we did not see one walk about 4 o'clock every Saturday we would be in bad shape over Sunday.

"Friendly"—Her name is Lottie, but she seldom hears it.

"Susanne"—Sew the bias pieces to the gore, tucking the ruffles easily over the applique and letting the bishop sleeves droop gracefully from the neckyoke. Maybe it is from the singletree they ought to droop. We always get mixed on these things.

Modern Definitions

Congress—A place where they make appropriations of money wrung from the people.

Federal Judiciary—Men who have usurped the congressional function of lawmaking.

Traitor—A man who objects to being robbed by special interests.

Undesirable Citizen—One who does not think your way.

Brain Leaks

The man who "flys high" usually falls hard.

Flattery puts fat in the head, not on the bones.

A real hungry man looks with suspicion on a chafing dish.

When a man says: "Now tell me exactly what you think," he means that he wants you tell him just what he thinks.

The traveling evangelist has one advantage over the local preachers. He doesn't have to stay and reap the criticism of his words and methods.

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F. A. NASH,

General Western Agent.

Omaha, Neb.