



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts McKee

Indecision.

It stretched before him wondrous fair,
A shining land—
And oft he dreamed of sailing there.
But there came tales
Of storm-swept seas and heavy gales,
Of how this ship or that
To reach the port had failed,
And so, he never sailed!
But sought to find a safer mode
To reach that blest abode.
Ah, foolish man, dost not thou know
If thou wouldst reach that land,
'Side which all others pale,
Thou, first, must sail?

Poems Sent In, and Poems Wanted

Mrs. M. F. S., Virginia, sends kind words and words of poem asked for; Mrs. E. L. B., Minnesota, would like words of a poem, containing these lines:

"Be glad, your friends are many;
Be sad, you lose them all;
There are none to refuse our nectared wine,
But alone we must drink life's gall."

Mrs. F. M. R., Texas, sends us several well known poems, but their length prohibits the use of them. We can not devote so much space to old poems, but will gladly forward any that are asked for and sent to us in reply. Mrs. S. K., Oregon, asks if we pay for old poems. We do not. We have several requests for poems which we will give later. And, now, friends, let me thank you for your kind wishes for The Commoner, including my own department. Kindly comment and also kindly criticism are both gratefully received.

Gleanings

The veteran florist, Eben E. Rexford, tells us that both the carrot and the beet make fine window plants, sending up foliage as lovely as many of the high-priced plants so extensively advertised. A good, sound carrot about four or five inches long, planted in good garden soil, given moisture and set away in the dark until the leaves begin to show, then brought to the sunshine, and treated as any house-plant. Treat the beet the same.

Floral Notes

It is getting along toward time for starting the early plants, and here are some directions which will aid you: Hard seeds, like the cyclamen, canna, moonflower and smilax, should be soaked by pouring over them boiling water, letting cool, and repeating, three or four times the day before they are planted. As soon as the first water begins to cool, pour this off and put on fresh water, and repeat the draining and covering with the hot water three or four times. Unless this is done, the seeds may lie in the ground a long time, and at best it may take about a month for them to germinate. It is a good idea to take a three-cornered file and file through the hard shell until the white inside shows through. Do not file too deeply—just enough to show the faintest sign of white.

There is nothing more lovely, in the way of a hardy vine, than the dear old-fashioned Trumpet Creeper that grows along the rivers and creek bottoms. When used for a hedge, the plants should be set in an even row where the hedge is intended to grow, as early in the spring as possible, not more than two feet apart. Tie each plant to a stout stake, and allow only one branch to grow, cut-

ting this back when three feet high, to form the head. By the time the stake has rotted away, the plant will have made a trunk that is perfectly self-supporting. All dead and weak branches should be kept trimmed out, and the hedge pruned back as any hedge; if the seed pods are not allowed to form, the plant will bloom from July on, nearly all summer and fall.

As a climber, there are few things handsomer, and on rough surfaces it will support itself, with tiny rootlets. Where it does not find support, it must have a support furnished. It is a heavy-topped vine, and the support must be strong. When grown as a standard, the top branches will form a beautiful weeping effect, each branch bearing a big cluster of orange colored flowers.

For the Garden

With Easter coming so early, we are hoping for an early coming of warm weather, and it is time to send in your orders for seeds. The catalogues have been flying about for some time, and if you have not yet supplied yourselves, do not delay. A good rule to follow is to sow carefully in season; indoors for transplanting, and outdoors as soon as the ground is warm. Enrich the soil, and stir often, as soon as it is in condition to stir.

Many things do best if planted very early, especially is this true of peas and potatoes. Sweet peas must be in the ground as soon as it can be worked. Many things should be started in the hotbed or cold frame, and if you do not know how to make and attend to a hot bed, send to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., stating your wants, and I think you will be supplied with advice. Unless you have tried it, you have no idea what a fund of information you can get from this bureau.

Just as early as the weather permits, the garden should be plowed and harrowed until the soil is fine and mellow. But if worked when the soil is too wet, it is apt to be lumpy and hard to manage.

In another month, at farthest, it will be time to start many plants in the house if early vegetables are wanted. Tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, celery, egg-plant, and many such things will grow in the kitchen window, and with careful transplanting at the right time, the plants will be stocky and sturdy, and do finely when the earth warms up to receive them. Don't leave the garden for mother's particular work; let it command attention with the horse and plow, and it won't be asking too much to supply the family with some of the hand tools that will make the work of cultivating easy enough to be attractive.

Try to have some window boxes for flower-growing this summer. Get the boxes ready before needed, and see how much the plants add to the beauty of your home.

Eggs and Water-Glass

It will soon be time to begin putting the eggs away for the "shortage" season. Water-glass as a preservative is about as satisfactory as there is known, but there are conditions to be considered. Strictly fresh eggs must be used; just as fresh as possible, and eggs for this purpose should be collected during April and May, as it is conceded that eggs at that time are at their best. If possible, the eggs should be collected

from flocks which have no male running with them, as the infertile eggs keep best. The eggs must be perfectly clean and the sooner they are put into the glass after being laid, the better. Eggs gathered from ordinary farm flocks, or bought from unreliable people are not satisfactory. These eggs, while not satisfactory for boiling in the shell, are to be used in almost any other way. If the water-glass should become jellied, or turbid, it will do no harm. The way to prepare it is to use nine times as much water as you do of the glass—one pint of the liquid glass to nine pints of fresh boiled water, letting the water get cold before mixing. The eggs should be at all times covered with the liquid.

A Recipe for Soap Making

Mrs. C. C. Sherrod, Kansas, sends us the following, which she recommends: "Two pounds of rosin, two pounds borax, one pound sal soda, four boxes good lye, eight and one-half gallons of rainwater, sixteen and one-half gallons of grease. First add water, then grease, then the other ingredients. Boil altogether one hour, after it begins to boil. Let cool, then cut out in pieces. Less than this quantity may be made by keeping the same proportions.

In giving recipes, do not give name of manufacturer of brand of flour, or other ingredients, as we can not use such recommendations.

Coffee and Caffeine

According to the deductions of Dr. Hollingsworth, of Columbia University, after a forty days' experiment with a "poison squad" of sixteen, caffeine is the only known stimulant that quickens the functions of the human body without a subsequent period of depression. The test was made as thorough as possible, and in order that the "law of suggestion" should not interfere, two kinds of tablets were given—one containing caffeine and the other sugar, and the subjects were kept in ignorance of what they were swallowing. Experience teaches us that well-made coffee is not only harmless, but helpful, while cheap-quality, poorly-made coffee is very bad. It is much easier to make good coffee than bad coffee, but a majority of the "average" women seem not to know that not only the coffee-pot itself, but the kettle the water is cooked in, should be perfectly clean when in use, and kept so, when not in use. One of the worst things one can do is to keep a dirty, long-used coffee pot setting on the stove, with a lot of grounds in it, and a muddy liquid stewing all the time, from which to serve the family. You may buy the best brand of coffee, and keep the vessels clean, but if you over-cook the decoction, or let it stand on the grounds from one meal to another, the stuff will upset the strongest digestion.

Looking Ahead

Now is a good time to plan for the summer vacation. A little early, if you have plenty of money; but the working girl must watch her pennies. It is said that many girls are now putting into savings banks of some description, the pennies, nickels, and dimes that have heretofore been spent for sodas, candies, moving picture shows, and chewing gum, and in this way accumulating a fund to be used for the summer vacation pleasures. Once a person begins to

save, the practice grows, until it becomes a habit, and it is the only way to rise above the grind of necessity.

Removing Stains and Spots

To clean a panama hat, soak a cupful of corn meal in benzine or gasoline, rub this well on the hat with a clean, soft cloth, and it will clean and leave no stain. For the straw hat, use one teaspoonful of oxalic acid to a cupful of water; scour with an old tooth brush, until all soiled spots are clean.

One of the best dry-cleaners is gasoline, and if used away from any possible contact with fire, it is perfectly safe; but it just must be used outside of the "fire zone." To clean the soiled skirt, gasoline may be used on all woolen stuffs of all grades without injury to color. A whole garment may be washed in gasoline; but the fire must be far away. Out doors is the only place big enough.

To remove ink stains from goods, saturate the spot with spirits of turpentine and let it remain several hours; then rub between the hands. The ink should crumble away without injury to color or texture.

For cleaning blue silk, this is recommended. Put the article to be cleaned in a tub, or large vessel; cover with corn meal slightly salted, and scrub with the meal as you would use soap suds, rubbing between your hands and give especial attention to the soiled spots. Then shake out the garment when clean, cover it with clean meal again and leave two days, covering the tub to keep out the dust. Then shake and brush with a perfectly clean brush or whisk broom. For stains of vinegar, probably the application of a few drops of hartshorn or sal-volatile will restore it.

Many fabrics can be cleaned perfectly by putting into hot corn-meal, wheat bran, or flour, and rubbing just as you would in water, using no soap. Or the article may be put into a bag with the meal or flour, and rubbed while in the bag, until clean, then shaken out and "rinsed" through clean meal or flour.

Requested Information

At the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, the bridal pair are first congratulated by the officiating minister, who quietly steps aside, and the bridal pair turn and face relatives and friends who come forward and congratulate them. There is no rule governing who shall come forward and offer first congratulations, but it is supposed the immediate family will take the precedence. At the wedding breakfast the bride and groom sit side by side at one end of the table, while the bride's mother and the minister are at the other.

At a quiet home wedding, the wedding cake is passed first to the bride who cuts a slice before it is offered to others. The wedding veil may be removed immediately after the ceremony; a pretty custom is for the bride to loosen the ribbons holding her bouquet and send a shower of blossoms among the guests as souvenirs. Announcement cards are sent out after the wedding, and usually immediately after the ceremony.

Javelle Water

To make javelle water, put two pounds of sal soda (some use baking soda) into a large stone, brass, or porcelain-lined pot and pour over it two quarts of boiling, or very hot water; stir with a wooden spoon, or stick until the soda is dissolved, then add half a pound of chloride of lime. (Fresh, unslaked lime is just as good, if obtainable.) Set the pot in a wide pan of warm water and let stand covered on the range until the mixture is quite hot; then set off the stove, covered, and let cool. When cold, pour off the clear liquid,