

The Home Department.

Conducted by Helen Watts McVey.

The Conductor of this Department will undertake to answer questions that interest Housekeepers. Address care Commoner.

Dimple's Christmas Present.

Now, what shall we get for our Dimple—

Sweet Dimple, who sits on my knee,
And coaxes, with whispers and kisses
For something she wants for her
"tree."

She has toys that would stock a small
merchant,

And dolls, something less than a
score;

Of all sorts and shapes and conditions,
In numbers they burden the floor.

She has a wee cabinet cupboard
With cunningest drawers and shelf,
Just groaning with all sorts of dishes,
From daintiest china to delf.

Her cutlery beggars description,
All silvered and polished with care,
The daintiest falling-leaf table,
The prettiest red and gilt chair.

A work basket lined with soft satin,
With pockets of cardinal red;
Tucked into them, wee, snippy scissors,

And ribbons and buttons and thread.
And, Oh! such a hint of a thimble!
You'd doubt 'tis a thimble at all;
You'd think 'twas a buttercup petal
Rolled into a wee hollow ball.

Her "kitchen things" crowd every
corner,

Her "traps" litter table and chair;
"There's just nothing left to get for
her."

I said, with a sigh of despair.
"O, I know!" the laughing lips an-
swer,

"I know just the thing that will do—
And mamma would only half-promise;
I think 'twould be splendid—don't
you?"

And then, the sweet voice, sinking
lower,

Just whispered, a sentence to me:
"Now, will you?" she eagerly ques-
tioned;

I laughed. "If I find one—may be."

When Dimple arose Christmas morn-
ing,

She saw, in its wrappings, snow-
white,

A wee, wrinkle-faced little brother—
"You found it!" she screamed with
delight.

Merry Christmas.

Before another issue of The Commoner greets its thousands of readers, the white festival of the year will have passed away. May its coming bring into your homes the true Christmas spirit—the blessedness of a desire to do good—to follow in the footsteps of Him whose birth the season commemorates. We, of adult years, look backward, and see the many mile-stones marking the happy periods when hearts were aglow with hope, and joyous with glad ambitions; when the strong, sweet side of life stood out in bold relief, flooded with the beautiful sunshine of our morning years, and this retrospection fills us with a tender sympathy for the little souls just now beginning the journey along the road over which we have passed.

Where memory fails us, imagination takes up the flight, and we see afar down the centuries, the fields where "shepherds watched their flocks by night;" we see the darkness burst asunder as the glory of God shone around about them, and we hear the voice of the angel messenger pro-

claiming the blessed birth of the Savior of mankind. The angel bands, joined by the heavenly hosts, break into anthems of praise, and the dome of heaven resounds to their delirious joy, as they tell to the lost sons of Adam the glad tidings of great joy—the glorious refrain rolling down the ages, even until now—"Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace; good will toward man." And with the echo of this refrain filling all our hearts, we remember that the message came—not to the proud of earth, but to the lowly shepherds—the watchers by night on the darkened plains of Palestine.

Suppressed Education.

It is a lamentable fact, and one fraught with lasting misery, not only to the present, but to future generations, that the one subject upon a knowledge of which hinges the health, happiness and mental, moral and physical well-being of the human race, is so strictly tabooed that one scarcely dares hint at it, with voice or pen, without being at once frowned down by the very ones who should be the most interested in a thorough understanding of it.

We send our sons and daughters to the best schools, are careful that they have the most thorough educational advantages obtainable; we try to inculcate good morals; we approve of physical culture. Our children are painstakingly trained along business lines, and vast sums are lavished upon the acquirement of accomplishments by our daughters. We encourage marriage, and complain at the lessening number of children born in our families. Yet we go blindly on, neglecting the most important teachings of all—that our young people should know themselves—should understand the laws of being, and realize the awful penalty of nature's broken law. Until quite recently, the subject of heredity has been given but little attention, but the widespread evils crowding about us cannot be ignored, and the awakening has begun.

To this ignorance—which is in no sense to be confounded with innocence—is attributable much of the unhappiness of married couples—ill-health and early death of many women, mis-shaped, deformed, depraved and ill-conditioned children, organic and functional diseases among both sexes; all the growing train of evils resulting from a blind abuse of the bodily functions, the criminal misuse of a wonderful mechanism, the delicate intricacies of which are most imperfectly, if at all, understood, even by the best of them.

This ignorance, and, indeed, criminal suppression, along lines of the most vital importance, is greatly deplored by those observant enough to see the wretchedness to which it tends, but, say they, where are the teachers? The lessons would be one-sided, if taught by one sex alone. So we must go back to the proposition that the teachers themselves must be taught. Let the "co-education" between husband and wife begin in the home. Let the father and mother lay aside all prejudice and look at the subject from both sides, in all its bearings, and learn from each other, and from the best authorities, all that is to be known. If they will do this, in all fairness, they will be surprised to find how narrow and biased have been

their single prejudices. Let them lay aside all thoughts of prurency and talk seriously to their children as soon as they are old enough to understand—and, friends, that is at an earlier age than you may have thought possible. Lead these little white souls upward along the paths from which you have removed the blocks of stumbling, teaching them the sanctity of their physical body which should indeed be the temple of the living God.

Looking For the Bright Spots.

Emerson says: "Do not hang a dismal picture on your wall, and do not deal with sables and glooms in your conversation."

Beecher follows with: "Away with those fellows who go howling through life, all the while pretending to be birds of paradise. He that cannot laugh and be gay should look well to himself. He should fast and pray until his face breaks forth into smiles."

Talmage takes up the strain as follows: "Some people have an idea that they comfort the afflicted when they groan with them. Do not drive a hearse through a man's soul. When you bind up the broken bones of the soul, don't use cast-iron splints."

It is not always easy to smile, especially if you have allowed yourself to dwell in the shadows; but if you resolutely repulse the demon of darkness you will find the sunshine all about you. One can so train the eye of the soul as to find out the bright spots and gloss over the gloom, and even the blackest clouds will give way before a determined, cheerful spirit. It may require some effort and a good bit of courage, to attempt the mountain paths, but it is better to toil upward than to spend one's life in the marshes of the low-land.

A year ago a little brown-eyed daughter came to our home, and in teaching her I have strongly insisted that she must always try to find the beautiful, no matter what else presented itself. A few days ago, pausing at the window, we looked out upon a leaden sky, a fine mist of falling rain, bare-branched trees and sodden pathways. The outlook was not calculated to awaken enthusiasm, and the general opinion would have been that the weather was decidedly "nasty;" but the little girl, looking up into my face and taking her cue from the expression seen there, electrified the household by cheerily saying, "Isn't it a beautiful day!"

Of course, every one laughed, but I comforted the little heart by telling her she was right—that there was beauty in it all, even if they did not see it.

Weeds or Flowers?

Boys, did you ever notice the weeds that grow in the garden—how tall and strong and sturdy they get to be, if let alone. Did you ever notice that it is always the good ground from which the rankest grow? Could you not, by a little care, just as well have had growing there a crop of fine vegetables, fruits and flowers? Did you ever hear of any good purpose those vile thistles, jimson, burdock, cockle burrs and careless weeds were made to serve? Did anybody ever express admiration of the rank weed growth?

No? Well, did you ever think that your heart is like the garden? Bad habits, little untruths, deceptions, acts of unkindness, are all weeds of the

heart—thistles and thorns that eat out the strength of your soul. Every indulgence of them is one more seed planted from which will spring up other like plants, and these will bear more seeds, which will sow themselves, and one day you will wake up to find your character garden all over-run with rank, noisome weeds, the fruits and flowers of kindness and truth all choked and dead because of these rampant intruders. A lie is a little seed, and planted in the mellow soil of a boy's heart, it will require no watering or sunshine to make it grow to harmful proportions; indeed, such things thrive best in the shadow. An act of selfishness, of careless cruelty to one weaker than yourself, is another seed, and from it will spring a poisonous plant, that it will be perilous even to touch. Once it has possession of the soil, it is like some plants in nature, the more you try to dig it up the thriftier it will grow. Every bruised or broken root will send up another plant, and the work of getting rid of it will compel you to a long, hard, discouraging struggle.

Is it not better, then, to commence now, while the plants are but started, and root them out at once, tear them out of the soil before even the "character leaf" shows itself, and plant in their stead, the seeds of honor, kindness, love and truth?

Sometimes you hear the grown people talk about "turning over a new leaf" at the dawn of the New Year. Well, now is a good time to look at your leaves, and make up your mind to pull up every vile thistle or murderous weed you find springing into life in your heart-garden. Some of these habits will be like purslane—even the broken bits of branches, if left lying on the soil, will take root, as you must not only pull them up by the roots, but burn them up by the fires of honor and truth.

Little Helps.

For the complexion, a simple recipe is, a glass of hot water, with a pinch of table salt dissolved in it; drink before breakfast. A good complexion is greatly dependent upon a good circulation and good digestion.

A good method for improving the complexion is to take one and one-half pounds of oatmeal, four ounces of powdered castile soap, eight ounces of Italian orris root, put in a cheesecloth bag and use as wash cloth in plenty of warm soft water, to be followed by a lotion made as follows: 10 cents' worth of glycerine, the well-beaten yolks of two fresh eggs, and a half glass of water, well shaken together.

If the face is thin and flabby, its contour can be greatly improved by using an application made as follows: One part lanoline, one part oil beune, one part spermacetti, one part coconut oil, two parts egg albumen, one part alcohol, hot water sufficient to absorb. Heat and beat while warm into soft, velvety mass. When applied, it dries at once.

This is an excellent recipe, for the complexion; to be used just before retiring: Give the face a good steaming between turkish bath toweling dipped in hot water, then apply to the face the following mixture: Two ounces of strained honey, two ounces of lemon juice, four ounces of glycerine; mix well before using, and rub well into the skin. In the morning, wash in cold soft water, using white castile soap, then rub the face thoroughly dry. This is excellent for

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