



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts McKee

February Rains.

O, dreary day. No sound is heard
Save winds and floods that downward pour,
And timid fluting of a bird
That pipes one low note o'er and o'er.
Before the blast the bare trees lean,
The ragged clouds sail low and gray,
And all the wretched, wintry scene
Is but one blur of driving spray.

O, day so meet for memories—
For musing by the vacant hearth
On that which was and that which is,
And those who walk no more on earth.

And yet, methinks, this dreary day
Some brighter lessons still may bring,
Though winter storms still hold their sway,
Tis faint foretoken of the spring.

Beneath the ceaseless beat of rain
Earth's snowy shroud fast disappears,

As sorrow pressing on the brain,
Fades in a flood of cleansing tears.
For thus in darkness oft is wrought,
Through lonely days of tears and grief,

The wondrous change by which is brought
To shadowed lives some sweet relief.
—Selected.

Ah, calmly comes the change: the
garments gray
Will, falling, show the under robe
of dun
Upon our mother earth; and day by
day,
The north is tilted fuller to the
sun,
And day by day, forever on their way,
The circling seasons run.

Stomach Troubles.

The stomach, especially when out of order, is the instigator of many of our worst sentiments and actions. How many dark presentiments, dismal forebodings, unconquerable seasons of depression, spells of the "blues," and even fits of sudden anger, which are incomprehensible, even to ourselves, may we not trace to the workings of a disordered stomach! Here, alas! we have an enemy which it seems impossible to rout, and against which even our most learned physicians find themselves powerless to successfully combat. Drugs may relieve symptoms, but they are helpless to cure; they cannot create a healthy stomach or a vigorous digestion; their use is immediately or ultimately injurious in even skillful hands; the best of them are uncertain in their effects, either from being spurious in their nature or spoiled in their quality, or by the abuse through ignorance of the patient. The best-treated cases, treated according to the doctrines of the schools, are too often attended with such serious drawbacks as to greatly abate the confidence of the physician, or to cool the gratitude of the patient.

The bulk of the chronic troubles are admittedly the result of neglected or badly treated acute cases. Acute diseases of the stomach are too often the consequence of wrong-eating—either eating too much or too little, or of eating improper food. To both the last two charges, women must plead guilty; their greatest fault lies in not eating enough; their next

greatest, in the unsuitable nature of what they do eat. Women starve themselves, either from hurry or from worry, or because they do not like to eat alone, and these irregularities of diet soon beget disorders of the digestive functions, which are the roots of all other bodily ailments—perhaps of the mental maladies, also. An imperfect digestion will beget imperfect nutrition; abnormal or arrested secretions may be the result; the nervous system is implicated, the mainspring of the machine thus gets relaxed or unbound; all the functions will participate in the impairment of the nerve centers, inducing weakness, suffering and consequent disease.

If one has contracted stomach trouble, through either ignorance or careless violation of the laws of hygiene, she should at once take herself firmly in hand and find out wherein she has erred; when she has settled the matter to her full understanding, she should at once set about undoing the mischief. If she is sure her case is serious enough to call for the use of drugs, let her place herself in the hands of the most competent physician at her command, and decide to follow his directions implicitly. Under his directions, she should make a careful study of the laws of health, and notice wherein her practices are contrary thereto, and govern herself accordingly.

But she can do a great deal for herself, without a physician. No one can prescribe another's diet satisfactorily, or say positively what she shall or shall not eat; this can only be approximated; the simplest, most nutritious foods, intelligently chosen, will be found to contain correctives for whatever evils her system may have contracted. Regularity in partaking of foods should be strictly observed, but if "completely exhausted," as she often finds herself at meal-time, it will be well to rest a few minutes, drink-

Question Box.

The conductor of the Home Department will be glad to answer questions concerning matters of interest to Housekeepers. Make your questions as brief as possible and address all communications to "Home Department, The Commoner, Lincoln, Nebr."

ing only a cup of moderately hot water, sweetened and creamed as one would coffee or tea, before partaking of the light, nutritious diet which she must use to tone up her abused stomach. If the rest of the system is exhausted, the stomach is, too, and should be rested. She should also make up her mind that she must learn to be lazy—shirk! shirk! shut her eyes to all sorts of disagreeable things, and forget that she is responsible for anything except her own health! If she is able to hire "things" done, let them be done, but resolve not to overdo in doing them, herself. But she will tell me she cannot do this; and she won't; so there it is.

Another mistake a woman will make

is to force herself to eat some one dish because she is told that it is "so wholesome," and just the thing for her case, against which dish her stomach rebels, even to nausea, simply because the system knows, better than any one can tell it, just what it does need, but somehow don't get. Half the food recommended for invalids would make a well person sick. If others want to eat such things, let them; but do you find out what you like, and what your stomach likes, and ten chances to one, it will be just the medicine for your case.

Dressing For Floors.

"House-Mother" writes: "I do not like a bare floor in the living room—not only on account of the air of nakedness it gives to the room, but because if its being cold for the feet and for the little ones who play on it, and for the noise of the constant stepping and scuffing of chairs. I realize that the dust arising from the carpet is very unhealthy, and I would like to know how to prevent it."

There is but one satisfactory way to lessen the amount of dust which every sweeping or movement raises in a carpeted room, and that is by constant cleaning and dusting; the carpet does not make the dust; it only holds it. If the room were not used at all, the dust would still gather, as it is borne in through even the tiniest opening on the draft of air that finds every cranny or crevice.

Her objection to the bare floor can, in a measure, be overcome and still not sacrifice all comfort. If the boards were thoroughly scoured, let dry and treat to a coating of boiled linseed oil, applied hot, and well rubbed in with the brush, then let get quite dry before using, it would look very nice, and could be quickly wiped up with a wet cloth, saving all hard scrubbing. Or, she could get a can of ready-mixed paint or floor-stain, any color she liked, always having the floor perfectly clean and dry before applying, thus doing away with the "board" look of it. The word "boiled" is used in connection with the oil to distinguish it from the "raw" article—either of which the merchant will sell you. You do not, yourself, have to boil it; you have simply to beat it that the boards will readily absorb it.

Many house-wives now use only a square of carpet, lightly tacked down about the edges, or a large rug, or several small ones laid loosely about on the most-used places, and these can readily be taken up, shaken and replaced as often as necessary, always wiping up the stained or painted floor while the coverings are airing. In this way, the room may be kept comparatively free from dust and its accompanying disease germs. This method is very little more work than the sweeping of a large, laid carpet, and there is much less dusting to do. The family can soon be taught not to kick or scuff up the rugs with their feet or chairs.

It should be strictly required of every member of the family—not even excepting "him"—that feet must be well scraped and wiped before crossing the threshold, and that clothing should be brushed free from litter. Especially should this be the rule in the farm home, where the homemaker always has her hands (and

too frequently her heart also) full with the selfish or thoughtless negligence of these matters by those for whom she toils. The father is more to blame, perhaps, for the untidy condition of the house than he realizes, or is willing to acknowledge when he does; his often disregard for the condition of his own feet or clothing, and his impatience at being reminded of his shortcomings is not lost upon the children, and they are not slow to "pattern after pa," even in the matter of "saying things" to ma, and greatly discourages her efforts.

Another matter in which the father is greatly to blame is the more or less disorder in which he leaves every room he uses; he comes in—tired, doubtless, but others may be tired, too—and, heedless of the work he creates, he throws his clothing—hat, coat, or wrappings—about, wherever the articles will lodge, calls for somebody to get the papers for him; wishes in no gentle tones that things could be left where he puts them, and then settles himself down to comfort. When he goes out, the room looks like a young cyclone had struck it, in more ways than one, and—well, it is discouraging! Only a woman would have the heart to set about "tidying" it up again.

If, in her desperation, she summons courage to mention the discomfort, and ask him to "do put things in their place when done using it," or to "do hang up your clothing when you take it off," she receives such a look—if no more forcible reminder that she is forgetting herself and her wifely station in thus daring to dictate to him!

St. Valentine's Day.

This festival, celebrated on February 14, was established in England, Scotland and France about the Fifteenth century, and was popular among the upper classes and at many European courts.

On St. Valentine's eve spinsters and bachelors were accustomed to meet in a social way, write upon bits of paper the names of a number of spinsters and bachelors of their acquaintance, throw them into a basket, and then draw them out, one at a time, care being taken that each should draw one of the opposite sex, the per-

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