



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts Meyer

Before It is Too Late

If you have a gray-haired mother
In the old home far away,
Sit down and write the letter
You put off day by day.
Don't wait until her tired steps
Reach heaven's pearly gate—
But show her that you think of her
Before it is too late.

If you've a tender message,
Or a loving word to say,
Don't wait till you forget it,
But whisper it today.
Who knows what bitter memories
May haunt you if you wait?
So make your loved ones happy
Before it is too late.

We live but in the present,
The future is unknown—
Tomorrow is a mystery,
Today is all our own.
The chance that fortune lends to us
May vanish while we wait.
So spend your life's rich treasure
Before it is too late.

The tender words unspoken
The letter never sent,
The long-forgotten messages,
The wealth of love unspent,
For these some hearts are breaking,
For these some loved ones wait—
So show them that you care for them
Before it is too late.

—Selected.

"Spring Winds"

Not just yet, but they will soon be blowing through our open windows, and it is time to plan for them. Are you one who leaves everything to be done "at once," rather than begin early and do "by littles" what performed "in the lump" will surely break one down? If you are, try the easy way, this time, and begin doing as soon as you find yourself with a moment of leisure. An hour of sorting out every day, one room at a time, will bring you to the end with vastly more strength and comfort than any other way. The closets, cupboards, odd corners, boxes, bags, bundles, may be undertaken at odd times and spare afternoons and evenings, and in this leisurely overhauling, the simple needs of any department of the housekeeping may be brought to light, and necessities provided for the work of the larger cleaning.

If one could only keep things clean, instead of cleaning things up, it would simplify matters; but there are so many things lying in wait for every spare moment that one should hesitate to blame the woman who gets behind-hand with her work. In going through the corners often, however, the accumulation may be much less, and you can thus know better what resources are at hand. This is especially true, in the matter of preparing the clothing for the coming season, as, by knowing just what you have, and planning how it may be used to the best advantage, the necessities may be planned for and purchased much more economically.

For Other Hands

Do not hesitate to call in all the help you can get. Point out to the good man the various places where his help, in the way of tools and repairing, will be invaluable. In these matters, he is as much interested as you are, for the property will be all the more valuable, lasting longer and

looking better, if kept in repair. Very few women can handle tools with enough skill to do the odd jobs of repairing. I confess that I am one of the helpless ones. Besides, the tools generally to be found about the house are such as no self-respecting mechanic would think of using. Did you ever notice the hammer, saw, or hatchet that lies about the house? Did you ever try to work with them? Did you ever hear your husband "say things" when he was forced to take them up?

Many things cannot be done until the stoves are taken out, but there are a few things that can. Here a little and there a little, the tasks can be worked out. It is not always the woman who "puts off." Looks need oiling and repairing; windows need new cords or fastenings; stops need tightening; the hinges are loose and the doors are sagging; a window-pane is wanting; a shelf should be put up; hooks are needed; a chair is broken, or "come loose," the table is "staggered," the plastering is cracked or broken and needs patching; the door-step is rickety, and a thousand little things that make or mar the comfort of the family, may be attended to now. A side-walk, if only of the loose stones that are found on many farms, will add to the comfort and cleanliness of all the family. The porches may be out of repair, or the yard fences may need attention. The more you do now, dear brother, the less will confront you when the busy season sets you to rushing. Do not forget the cellar, if you have one; and if you have not, a few days' work, while you can do so outdoors business, will be "dollars" in your pocket, during the hot days, and the coming winter.

Many things for the outdoor garden may be started now in the window boxes; but the hot bed is so much better for such things, and costs but little except time and labor, that it is better to have even a small one—say one window-sash size. The plants do so much better, too, and so much more can be grown with no fear of freezing if the fire should go out at night, or the wind through the cracks about the window should chill the plants. Many of our people do have such things; but it is to the one who has not, that I am now talking. Do make the best of your homes; much depends upon you, and there is much the wife should not have to do.

Specializing

It is the desire of nearly all women, whether the necessity exists or not, to be able to earn their own living, so that, in case such a necessity should arise, they may meet the demands. As conditions now are one can never be sure that this need will not overtake her, sooner or later. Hence, it is but the part of wisdom to insist that every girl be taught to do some one thing well. But that women may not have to win their way at the expense of womanhood, the subject should be discussed in all its bearings. First, for a woman, we think of housework. But housework has so many branches. The thorough housekeeper, like the "all-around builder," is seldom found, because housekeeping has become such an intricate mixture of trades, business and callings. There are special needs, knowledge and training, without which the branch termed cookery is but too often a dismal failure. Yet, one can be an excellent cook and a very poor laundress or indifferent seamstress. She may be excellent

in all those branches, yet be decidedly "slack" about keeping things neat and clean. Each one of the many branches are becoming specialized, and there are cookery schools, sewing schools, dressmaking, millinery, laundries, bakeries, and each one of these "trades" have branches, any one of which may be learned and followed as a business.

This specializing is not so wise as one would suppose, for nearly every girl expects sometime to marry and have a home of her own. If she does, she should be past-mistress of every one of these branches, even though she may be fortunate enough not to have to do with her own hands; but the chances are that she will. And to these duties will be added others of which the girls are nearly always perfectly ignorant, for the health of the family, few or many members, will lie in her untried hands, as homes are now conducted. It is predicted by some of our foremost thinkers, that the work of the homes, will be much modified or changed radically, in future, in order to fit in with the changed conditions and diversified demands from the outside.

For the Little Folks

One of the most useful patterns for children is the bloomer drawers for little girls. They will serve instead of petticoats, and should be cut very full on a circular pattern; the openings are on the sides, and they are finished at the waist with bands and buttonholes, to be buttoned onto the waist, the same as other drawers. The fullness of each part, or side, is gathered into a close band and fastened below the knee with button and buttonholes. These may be made of woolen material of the same color as the dress, or they may be made of the same material as the dress. The usual knit or cotton underwear may be used under them, and they will thus keep the little thighs warm. Knit underwear should extend down to the ankle, well into the shoe-top, no matter what other garment is used above the knee. The skirt of the little dress should extend over the drawers about an inch. Paper patterns for these little garments will cost ten cents each.

"Too Versatile"

A writer in a Sunday publication tells us that "Women are too versatile; they are prone to try a little of many things, sticking to none of them long enough to reach even a moderate degree of perfection."

Running over a list of "things" in which it is demanded that the housewife must be proficient, it seems a little amusing to read of her great versatility as being a fault. If to the demands of the mere housewife be added those made upon the wife, mother and home-keeper, one is appalled at the list of trades, business, professions and callings with which she must have an intimate knowledge, and with the exercise of which she must have everyday experience.

No woman who "does her own work"—whatever that may mean—with any hope of doing so successfully, can possibly hope to become a specialist, no matter how her tastes and aspirations may tend. There may be some lines in which she may do better work than along others; but the positive demands are so varied, and have to do with so many things, that it requires a considerable amount of versatility and a decided intelligence in order to do even the most important of them well. The work of keeping a home has never

been given its proper place among the industries; the opinion has always more or less existed that any girl or woman, no matter the amount of intelligence and executive ability or the lack of it that is her portion, can be a satisfactory wife, mother and housekeeper, until woman, herself, has become disgusted with the low estimate, and has sought a supposed higher sphere—one suited to a supposed higher intelligence, thus leaving the disreputable and degrading business where public opinion has placed it—in the hands that are supposed to be fitted for nothing else.

The awakening to the just estimate of the work that no one can do so well as the versatile woman has occasioned some inconvenience to the world, but when the business, profession, trade (all these and more in one) of home-making and housekeeping has been placed upon its proper level, bright, self-respecting women will no longer fight against learning its intricacies and depending upon it as a means of livelihood.

"Learning a Business"

Nearly every woman who is supposed to have, or to be able to command the least influence with publishers, is often appealed to by other women for help in "getting them an easy job, where they can make some money." Most of these women are wives, mothers, housekeepers, with hands already full and time well taken up in caring for their families; they cannot go out into the gainful occupations, and the idea strikes them that newspaper work is the ideal money-maker, as it can be done at home, and will take so little time! They know they could do this work without it at all interfering with their home life, and many of them state that they have been contributing to their home or county papers, and perhaps others, for years, never having anything rejected, but never having had anything paid for. The majority of them want to start out as conductors of Home or Woman's pages. They know they could do work like that. Perhaps they could, if they were trained for it; but their letters show that they have very little idea as to what such work calls for.

There are a few callings in which there is not more or less hard work—plenty of it, and some of it will be disagreeable work—drudgery. No profession or business can be taken up and made successful at once as a money-earner, by those who have had no practical experience in its workings. Natural qualifications count for much; but to these must be added at least enough knowledge of its requirements to insure a sense of its responsibilities and a perseverance in seeking to master its details. Women who are attracted to a business because they feel a special adaptation to it, and are willing to work, and have courage to overcome obstacles and a determination to succeed despite of discouragements, stand just as good a chance of succeeding as men do, provided they are willing to commence at the bottom and work up, pay or no pay. A knowledge of technicals is helpful, but nothing will take the place of practical experience. There are no "easy jobs" lying about a newspaper office. Even though you are but a "correspondent," you must work, and work hard. And even then, you may fail of success.

About Porches

A writer in "Indoors and Out" says: "In all parts of the country passers-by see porches on which nobody sits—a waste of more things than space and lumber. Deluded home-builders attach to the fronts of their houses a shelf, platform or shed of various widths, in full view of the street, or encircle their sitting rooms and librar-

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