



# The Home Department

Conducted by  
Helen Watts McKee

## The Missing Bird

There's a story that's old, but good  
If twice told,  
Of a doctor of limited skill,  
Who cured beast and man on the  
"cold water" plan,  
Without the least help of a pill.  
On his portal of pine hung an elegant sign  
Depicting a beautiful rill,  
And a lake where a sprite, with apparent delight,  
Was sporting in sweet dishabille.

One beautiful day, as he sauntered  
that way,  
Pat gazed at the portal of pine,  
When the doctor, with pride, stepped  
up to his side,  
Saying, "Pat, how is that for a sign?"

"There's wan thing," said Pat,  
"Ye've left out of that,  
Which, be jabers, is quite a mistake;  
It's trim and it's nate, but to make  
it complate,  
Ye shud have a foine bird on the  
lake."

"Ah, indeed? Pray then tell, to  
make it look well,  
What bird do you think it may  
lack?"

Says Pat, "Of the same I've forgotten  
the name,  
But the song that he sings is  
'Quack! quack!'"

—No Name.

## "The Tyranny of Things"

So much has been said and written about the extraordinary prosperity of every branch of industry, as well as the farm, that little is left to say. But with all these things in mind, and contemplating the wonderful "modern improvements" we cannot but wonder that our people do not realize that they are becoming slaves to the tyranny of "things." A family no sooner finds themselves possessed of a few dollars more than their needs call for than they at once rush out after the useless things. They build bigger houses than they can occupy, simply for show; they go in debt for this, and pinch and scrape, year after year, to meet the payments, and in addition there must be further scraping and pinching to meet the interest on the borrowed money, the taxes, repairs, insurance and other maintenance charges, to say nothing of other avenues that demand extra money for useless show, until life becomes a grind of the most joyless sort. The fine house must have fine furnishing; fine clothes must go with the other finery, and fine entertainment follows fast. The man's nose is kept to the grindstone, and the wife is worn out caring for useless things. Both are breaking down under the strain, simply living to work, instead of working to live. They are always "going to" have a good time; but they never get it; they grow older in body and poorer in spirit every day. If only they would be content with comfort, and keep out of debt, taking time for refreshing the spirit by the reading of good literature, and cultivating the social side of their nature with simpler pleasures, mingling with congenial people for pleasure, rather than for show, how much happier they might be. If people would live within their means thousands of women and girls could give up working for wages and

devote themselves to better things. But the spirit of emulation urges them on, and new necessities arise every hour. It is claimed that the women of today are more restless and nerve-racked than ever before, while men are breaking down under the strain which is entirely unnecessary.

## The Cause of Colds

In cold weather, nearly every one spends as much time as possible indoors in an over-heated room, with faulty ventilation. This tends to weaken the skin circulation and affects adversely the resisting power of the mucus surfaces of the air-passages, which consequently fail to react to changes of temperature when the person goes out of doors; the skin is chilled, and a large volume of blood is forced back to the internal organs, waste elimination through the skin is hindered, and the result is what we call a "cold;" the discharge of mucus waste exudation, in the form of nasal, bronchial or other catarrhal disorder, is the disagreeable result. Overheated rooms should be avoided, the heat should come from within the body, rather than from the furnace in the house, the limbs should be kept well-clothed, warm and dry, and the circulation good by plenty of out-door exercise. Keep the house atmosphere clear of foul emanations from the body, the skin clean, and the temperature below 75 degrees.

## Dressing Neatly at Home

One of the lessons women and girls must learn is that, if you fall into the habit of slovenly dressing at home, it will be sure to show in your attire on the street. The home clothes need not be fine, but they should be clean, the hair neatly combed, some kind of a collar about the neck, and the feet neatly shod. The girl or woman who acts out the thought that "any old thing is good enough to wear at home" is going to look the character when on the street.

## Stopping the Leaks

If the size of the family warrants, it is better to buy groceries and eatables by quantity. Fresh vegetables, in their season, are usually much cheaper than the canned goods. Cheap canned goods are dear at any price, and only responsible firms should be patronized. It is false economy to buy ready-cooked foods simply to save time and labor where one has only the housework to do. Home-cooked foods, if well prepared, are usually made of better materials, more wholesome, and are really cheaper than the commercial ones, as in the case of breads, cakes, pastry, jellies, jams, etc. But where the housewife is delicate, or seriously hindered, or the expense of fuel is great, it may often be more economical to patronize the baker or grocer.

Many goods are just as wholesome in the second grade as in the first; except in appearance, there may be little difference. On the other hand, the first cost may be considerably higher, yet the purchase may be cheaper because of the smaller waste and greater nourishment afforded by the higher-priced. Soaps may be bought by the box, and will improve with age, as well as cost less than by the few bars. If one has a little stale grease or rancid

lard or butter, or surplus fats, a box of potash will readily change it into good, soft soap.

If possible, the house should be stocked with as many of the really valuable labor-saving inventions as possible; there are many worthless inventions on the market, however, but nearly every "worth while" device is advertised and endorsed by good publications.

In buying ready-cooked foods, you have to help the dealer pay the rent and other expenses, as well as give him a good rate of interest on his money invested. A woman's time must be added to the cost of things, and if the woman has to be hired, it is often an expensive experience to compete with the factory; where there is home strength and time, much may be saved by doing the work at home, especially where the raw products are home-grown.

## Query Box

F. M. S.—The address asked for is 13 West Fifty-sixth street, N. Y.

E. M. B.—If you will send stamped, addressed envelope, I will try to help you. There is no infallible recipe for the condition; but I may help you to help yourself.

L. L.—For brightening the zinc, mix whiting to a thick paste with vinegar and rub the zinc with the paste, then rub with dry whiting to neutralize the acid, polishing with a dry rag.

Katherine—You can use tin cans of the size liked for molds for steaming brown bread—tomato, baking powder, or square beef-loaf cans. Melt the tops off smoothly.

A. M.—For the sore, cracked hands, get five cents worth of harness or shoe wax, heat a point of it over the lamp, and drop it onto the crack while very hot, then stick a bit of cloth on it to keep it from sticking to anything.

M. S.—Bicarbonate of sodium is the kind used in cooking. If the right proportion of sour milk or acid is not used with the soda, there will be a dark yellow color and soapy flavor, ruining the bread.

C. R.—For the top of the stove burnt red, try greasing the red surface with lard when the stove is cold; let stand for a few hours, then apply a thin coat of blacking, let get nearly dry, then polish with a brush.

Old Coins—Several persons have written regarding coins which they have for disposal. It is not possible for the Home Department to act as an exchange between buyers and sellers, but any one having something for sale, or wishing to buy, would find it to their interest to run a small advertisement in the Subscriber's Advertising column of The Commoner.

S. J.—For the oil cloth, make a paste of whiting and soap-suds and rub on the oil cloth with a piece of flannel, wash off with clear water and polish dry with a clean flannel.

## For the Laundry

Flannels should be washed by themselves, and it is best to take a separate day for washing up the woollens. If there are many articles, this arrangement is a necessity; but if only a few, it can be done at odd moments, taking advantage of propitious weather. For washing woollens, shave a bar of good white soap and pour into half a tub of lukewarm water; stirring until dis-

solved, or dissolve in a little warm water before adding it to the water in the tub. If the flannels are badly stained or soiled, put two tablespoonfuls of borax in the water to soften and loosen the dirt. Put the worst soiled pieces at the bottom of the tub, and the cleanest at the top; wash after soaking for a quarter of an hour, rubbing and squeezing between the hands; rubbing on the board will ruin the shape of the garment and texture of the wool, and the water must contain all the soap needed; none must be rubbed directly on the flannel. When the garments look clean, put them in another tub of lukewarm water, not quite so soapy as the first, and repeat the hand-rubbing and squeezing, then remove all soap-suds by running through two rinse waters; run through a wringer, or squeeze as dry as possible, pulling into shape and hanging to dry in the sunshine if possible. They must not be allowed to freeze, as this will shrink them, and for this reason they should be washed at some suitable time. Drying over the stove is injurious, too.

Stockings should not be worn long enough to require hard rubbing to get them clean; it is best to change often; long wearing makes them rotten from the perspiration from the feet; they should be turned wrong side out, and the toes washed until they are soft and clean. Stockings should be mended as soon as possible after drying, and put together in pairs, where they can be readily got at. Be sure the stockings of the little folks are mended with soft seams or darns.

## Some Recommended Recipes

Perfect Cream Biscuits—Four quarts of flour, one cup of white sugar, one teaspoonful of salt, one tablespoonful of soda (level), two (level) tablespoonfuls of cream tartar. Mix these ingredients well, sifting several times, then wet with pure sweet cream, making only moist enough to roll (if too wet they will not be crisp). Mix lightly with the fingertips, roll rather thin and cut in squares like soda crackers, and bake. If equal parts of white and whole wheat flour is used, these will resemble the graham wafers we buy.—T. M.

Old Virginia Waffles—Mix a quart of milk and six tablespoonfuls of flour with two tablespoonfuls of sifted corn meal; add a teaspoonful of melted butter; lastly, add three eggs beaten very light. Bake immediately in well buttered waffle irons.—R. W.

Buckwheat Cakes—Start the batter in the usual way. If when you come to use the batter it requires more than a scant teaspoonful of soda, you must wash the batter in this wise, to remove the bitter water: Add a quart of cold water to the batter and stir it well, then set it away in the usual cool place and let remain all day. At night pour off all the bitter water, add the usual amount of lukewarm water and mix the batter a little stiff, so that half a cupful of hot water poured over the soda in the morning and added to the batter will make it about right. By following this plan the cakes will not have the sour taste so much disliked, and they will be light, porous and brown.—A. L. S.

Pot Pouri—Early in the morning put into a couple of quarts of cold water all the scraps of meat and broken bones you have saved; set over the fire to simmer slowly three or four hours, adding more water if necessary to keep up the amount. Then, carefully pick out all pieces of bone, gristle and tough parts; strain the stock, and return with the meat to the fire, seasoning with salt and pepper, and adding one turnip, one onion and one good-sized carrot,