The Home Department

Conducted by Helen Watts McVey

"Blessed Be Nothing"

Now, blessed be nothing! We don't have to dust it;
It never wears out; the dampness can rust it;
It needs neither floor-space nor room on a shelf;
Naught else in the house takes such care of itself.
It will not get broken; we don't have to mend it;
Children can't scratch it, and servants can't bend it;
The poorest of all need not be without it;
There's never a rule that one must know about it.
Its price never rises—it's always in season;
You may hate it, or love it, without rhyme or reason.
Useless, you say? Ah, there you mistake!
For all minor ills 'tis the best drug to take;
It's the right repartee to an ill-natured sneer;
The healthiest drink, except water clear.
So, blessed be nothing! When weary and sad,
It oft seems that nothing can make the heart glad.

—Tudor Jenks, in Good Housekeeping.

Health Notes

It is well to care for the throat and lungs by protection from within, rather than from without. When passing from a warm room to a cold one, or when going out into a colder atmosphere, keep the mouth closed, and breathe through the nostrils. Sometimes the chest protector will do better service if worn as a back protector, as the back of many persons is extremely sensitive to cold while the front does not mind. A chain of sympathetic nerves runs along the spine, and it is the spinal column which should be cared for. The back of the neck should be protected from draughts of cold air, and it is a good thing to use the coat collar rather than a muffler.

It is well to keep the hands and wrists warm; the feet will make their own complaints, and so will the fingers; but the hand and wrist will make one very uncomfortable if cold, without the sufferer knowing exactly where the trouble lies. The old fashioned "wristers," or wristlets were valuable.

Where children have the habit of kicking the clothes off at night in cold weather, it is a good plan to sew a large button to each corner of the covering, and attach a long tape loop to the corners of the bedstead. With this precaution, the restless child cannot displace the cover, and contract the chill which is often the source of more or less sickness. A small child should have night gowns made of thick canton flannel (not flannelette), with legs and feet as well as arms. The lower limbs should thus be protected at night.

Many delicate or nervous people suffer during cold nights from a sensation of chill or cold on the top of the head, which is seldom covered even by a cap such as our mothers used to wear. Such should keep a suitable covering for the head at hand, and when the disagreeable sensation is felt, the head should be wrapped, always leaving plenty of uncovered space for breathing.

"A Food Cup of Coffee"

An expert gives us the following directions as to how to make a cup of good coffee: Have a nickle-plated or graniteware pot that can be brought to the table, and have it perfectly clean, inside and out. Cleanliness cannot be too strongly urged. Have a fitted cover, rather than a lid, with a cover for the spout. Take a piece of medium fine white flannel and sew into a bag terminating in a point, long enough to reach half way down the pot and wide enough at the large end to fit closely over the top of the pot; have the coffee of a good grade, and ground as fine as powder—pulverized, as the excellence of your beverage depends upon the fine grinding. Pour boiling water into the pot to heat it, empty it and fit the flannel bag (previously dampened) over the top of the pot. It may be kept in place by a ring with open ends that can be slipped over the rim of the pot. Put into the bag the usual heaping teaspoonful for each person, and the customary "one for the pot," and perhaps one or two for the person who expects an extra cupful; pour slowly into this bag one large cup of boiling water (freshly boiling, not boiled), for each spoonful of coffee. Have the water boiling and pour slowly. Set the pot on the back of the range for several minutes, but it must not boil. Then lift out the bag and send the coffee hot to the table. Put into each cup the required amount of sugar, then rich, sweet cream, then pour in the coffee and serve. This is the drip coffee any housewife may make, as it does not require any special pot. But the pot must be clean; the bag thoroughly washed and dried every time it is used. If the pot is not clean, your carelessness will be betrayed at once, the moment the cream is mixed with it, as it will have a very ugly color, and the taste will be as unpleasant as the color.

Fashion Notes

Narrowness seems to be the prevailing idea in all clothing. All lines must remain straight, with great closeness about the hips, no curves being permissible. The coat sleeves are made to fit fairly close, without fullness at the shoulder. The indications are that the spring jackets and coats will be short, averaging about twenty-six inches in length. The shoulders are made to appear as narrow as possible, and the principle difficulty is in placing the sleeves so they will be comfortable as well as fashionable.

For dresses, the peasant sleeve will remain in the lead.

Many tailored skirts have the raised waist-line; models having overskirts are shown, some of the circular skirts having circular overskirts.

Girls and women who are clever with the needle can have many things at very little cost which, bought ready-made, would be extravagances.

Foulard is a very stylish silk for one-piece dresses, and can be had in a great variety of colors and designs. Its adaptability to draperies and semi-tailored suits is much in its favor. For house dresses it is very popular.

Panel fronts, from neck to skirt-hem, are shown; the neck may be high, with stock collar, or yoke and collar, of any suitable material. Filet lace, embroideries, fine tucking, insertion, may be used, while those who prefer it may have the sailor collar.

Many handsome materials may be picked up in short lengths and remnants during the spring sales; many short lengths will serve for house dresses, while no end of fine lingerie and neckwear may be made of remnants. Checked nainsook, batiste, lawns, muslins, long-cloth, are all used for lingerie, while embroidered flouncing makes lovely and inexpensive corset covers, easily and quickly fashioned with only one seam under the arm.

For the Home Seamstress

For joining shirt waist and skirt in the one-piece house dress style, put your skirt on over the waist and adjust the waist so that it fits nicely and comfortably across the back and under the arms, arranging the fullness of the front in a becoming manner, and pin or otherwise fasten the skirt and waist together so as not to disarrange the meeting line when taking it off. See that it fits perfectly, back and front, and at the sides, so there will be no awkward waistline. Take it off and baste the skirt and waist together carefully and substantially enough so it can be tried on again without twisting. If the joining is done satisfactorily, take it off and stitch the two together, and cover the seam with a belt of suitable material, or ribbon or insertion. When the belt is applied satisfactorily, stitch both edges of the belt, and cut away the material underneath, so as to have as little bulk at the waist line as possible. If liked, a thin lining may be applied to reinforce the outer belt.

Eudora cloth is really a fine henrietta, and is appropriate for street gowns when very deep mourning is worn. It is light in weight and closely woven, and requires no trimming, unless folds of the material, or folds of crepe.

The coats now worn by girls and women are very easily made, as all lines are straight. The tailoring of the collar and fronts of the coat is not difficult, but requires great care and careful pressing. Every part should be carefully basted and tried on before it is stitched, and it should be fitted smoothly and comfortably. The machine stitching must be as neat, regular and even as possible.

For a woman having a full abdomen, an alteration of the skirt pattern is a necessity in order to allow for the extra length needed at the top of the skirt, and this provision must be made in the cutting or the skirt will draw up in front and poke out very unpleasantly at the bottom.

Ground Meats

The hamburger steak usually sold over the butcher's counter should be regarded with suspicion. It is the "last resort" for unclean leavings, scraps and much spoiled meats; there is an acid mixed with it to preserve the red color and prevent further spoiling. Though the acid may not be poisonous, the fact that it preserves the meat indicates that it will not aid in its digestion.

Another thing we often see—women buying steak or other meat and having the butcher grind it for them; the butcher's grinding machine may not be washed as often as one would like, and there may be bits of tainted or stale meat sticking to its inside which will not add to the flavor of that we buy. The best way is to buy your meat and take it to your home, grinding it with your own machine to suit yourself. It may receive cleaner handling, too.

Sausage is another form into which many waste scraps, and much spoiled meats are worked up, as in other forms it could not be so readily, if at all, disposed of. It pays to make one's own sausage, and the work is neither difficult nor disagreeable. A small grinder will not cost much, and you will be pleased with the result.

Improvised Bookcase

Where one cannot have the handsome sectional bookcases that cost so much, this is a good plan to try. Go to a house-furnishing store and get as many empty boxes as you have use for. Ask the dealer to let you have those in which blinds or shades are packed, and get them all of a size, if you can. These boxes are about thirty-nine inches long by ten wide, and will probably cost you ten cents each. In your room, lay the boxes on the side, with the bottom against the wall, one above the other, as many as you wish. They may be covered with cretonne, or with table oil cloth with oak or mahogany coloring, or they may be painted and varnished, or painted white and enameled.

For Tough Meats

Stewing is the very best way to cook tough, or very lean meats. Long, slow cooking produces nourishing, digestible and appetizing dishes, and is the most economical way of cooking, saving time, money and fuel. There should be a pan or kettle with a tightly-fitting cover, or lid, which must not be taken off too frequently, and the contents must not be allowed to boil—just a slight simmering being enough. Neither too much nor too little water must be added, and the stewing may be performed in stoneware covered jars, or stew-pans either in the oven or over the fire, usually on the back of the range on days when a slow, continuous fire must be kept up.

For the Toilet

This is recommended for removing superfluous hair from the face; but it is also recommended that it be tried first on the arm, or other part of the body, before using on the face, as some skins are more sensitive than others. It does not permanently remove the hair. Take two drams of barium sulfid with three drams each of oxide of zinc and starch. At the time of the application, sufficient water is added to make a thick paste, and this paste must be thickly spread over the parts and allowed to remain for a minute or two, then washed off with water and a cold cream applied. More or less redness will result, and ordinarily a slight sense of warmth will indicate when the paste has been on long enough. When the hair re-appears, about once in ten days or two weeks, repeat the application.

To soften hard water for the bath, put one pound of wheat bran in a muslin bag, and put this into four quarts of water; boil for fifteen minutes. Add enough of this water to the bath to make it milky. This is fine.

One can accomplish about as much with the hands and fingers in the way of cleaning the face as with the complexion brush. If the brush is used, the bristles must not be very