



The Home Department

Conducted by
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"Down in the Dust"

Is it worth while that we jostle a brother,
Bearing his load on the rough road of life?

Is it worth while that we jeer at each other

In the blackness of heart? That we war to the knife?

God pity us all in our pitiful strife.

God pity us all as we jostle each other;

God pardon us all for the triumphs we feel

When a fellow goes down 'neath his load on that heather,

Pierced to the heart—words are keener than steel,

And mightier far for woe than for weal.

Were it not well, in this brief little journey,

On over the isthmus, down into the tide,

We give him a fish instead of a serpent,

Ere we fold the hands to be and abide,

Forever and aye in the dust by his side.

Look at the roses saluting each other—

Look at the herds all at peace on the plain—

Man, and man only, makes war with his brother,

And laughs in his heart at his peril and pain.

Shamed by the beasts that go down on the plain!

Is it worth while that we battle to humble

Some poor fellow-soldier down into the dust?

God pity us all! Time efts-oon will tumble

All of us together, like leaves in the gust,

Humbled indeed, down into the dust.

—Joaquin Miller.

Sweet Peas

If you are a lover of the sweet pea blossoms, you should begin preparations at once for the planting of the peas. The soil should be rich and deeply worked, and it would have been better for the peas if you had begun preparation of the ground last fall. It is not too late in the winter, or too early in the spring, to give the ground a top dressing of wood ashes, if you have them, or, failing this, use air-slaked lime, and as soon as possible, work them into the soil. This will sweeten and purify the soil, and the pea rows should be in a sunny place. Just as early as the ground can be worked—along with the very early planting of potatoes, you should put the peas in the ground, opening a trench five or six inches deep, and wide enough for two or three rows. The seeds should not be covered more than an inch or so deep at first, pressing it down firmly, and as the plants grow, the soil should be drawn about them until the trench is filled and the peas making a good growth. Wood ashes and soot will keep insects away while they are small. Stakes, or wire netting should be provided for their support, and during the dry weather, they should be well soaked with water. House and laundry rags are excellent for this purpose.

Green stable manure should not be used about the plants, but liquid manure is excellent. The roots should be mulched during hot weather, and the blossoms picked daily, if you want profuse blooming.

Night-Blooming Flowers

If you would like the night air to be full of fragrance, plant some of the night-blooming flowers. The Nicotiana is one of the finest, and will fill a garden with the sweetest odors. These bloom only at night, commencing late in the evening. They "sow themselves," and bloom all summer. The hybrids of Nicotiana Affinis come in various colors, and a mixed packet of seeds will give a large bed or long row.

For the House Plants

The tiny flies seen among plants do no especial harm, but they indicate a sour condition of the soil which is harmful to the plants. Let the soil become apparently dry, then apply hot lime water until it flows freely from the drainage hole at the bottom of the pot. If the drainage is clogged, it may be necessary to repot in fresh, sweet earth. Many times, the water will flow freely out of the drainage hole in the bottom of the pot, yet not wet the ball of soil except at the sides, where the water runs down between the soil and the pot. It is a good plan to set the pot in a vessel containing the lime water, until the surface shows that the ball of earth is wet through. Hot lime water is also a remedy for angleworms in the soil of pots. The worms will come to the surface and can be picked off.

When a palm dries and the tips of the leaves turn brown, it is usually because the atmosphere is too dry. Keep the air as moist as possible until warm weather, then set the plant out on the north porch, or north side of the house, setting the pot in a larger pot or box with a filling of sphagnum moss between, and lay the moss over the surface of the soil in the pot. Wet the sphagnum moss. The palm should not be left out in very windy weather, as the wind is liable to whip the leaves to pieces. Morning and evening sunshine is good for it, and a little lime on the surface will keep the soil in good condition.

If the Amaryllis does not do well, bed it out in the border as soon as the weather gets warm enough, keep well cultivated and the soil mulched, and when cool weather comes in the autumn, lift the bulb and take it inside.

For white worms in the soil, treat with the hot limewater—a little hotter than the hand can bear, applying until it runs from the drain-hole quite hot. This will kill the worms and sweeten the soil. A great many of the plant ailments come from sour soil, the result of poor drainage and too much water. Very few plants can stand wet, cold feet, any better than little children can.

The Vine Family

If you want a covering for a screen, and one that will pay its "keep" right along, try one of the gourds. Among the useful ones is the Luffa, or dishrag gourd; it is a rapid grower, has handsome leaves and beautiful golden yellow flowers that make you think of lilies (yellow ones) and morning glories. They like sandy soil and hot sunshine,

and when the fruit is ripe, if you take out the coarse, lace-like filling, remove the seeds and dry it, you have the finest of wash cloths, bath cloths and dish rags. You can buy them in the drug-store, but you can raise them in your back yard. Another ornamental vine is the dipper gourd, also the one that bears the little egg-shaped kind. Another vine that is ornamental where ugly views are to be shut out is the pumpkin vine. Get the ones with crinkly, or slightly fluted leaves and bright yellow flowers. These vines will need poultry wire for support, and if the fruit is wanted to ripen, a little stand, or other support can be furnished; but the blooms and leaves will pay for the care you give it. The foliage or many of this family is as beautiful as high-priced begonias.

Another useful vine is the lima bean. It screens well, and if given proper soil and care, will give you abundance of fruit for the winter eating. No need to can lima beans—pick the pods when of the right size and dry the beans in the pods. They are fine. There are several varieties of the "pole bean" family, which we used to call "corn-field" beans, which will do well on fences, screens, and other supports, and will yield an abundant harvest until frost. These, when of the "shell-bean" size, can be dried in the pod instead of canning, and are fine for winter use.

Look over the advertisements and get the catalogues; read them; study them, and see how much you can "reduce the cost of living" by utilizing the odd corners and little spaces in the back yard, as well as in the garden and fields.

Starting Plants in the House

Unless one gives the seedlings extra good care, it is no gain to start plants indoors, but if one is careful, many things may be started and be well along when the ground is ready for the transplanting. For many things, if the right conditions can be had, there is gain. For those who are not situated to give the proper warmth, moisture and sunshine or shade, a seed-bed in some sheltered part of the ground is much surer, with a later planting—say, the last of March, or the first of April. Be sure to have the seed-bed right as to heat, for both seeds and plants are often burnt up by the careless planter.

Starting the Pot Shrubs

When you have a nice lemon, or orange, date, or other tropic fruit, just save the seeds and tuck them down in the soil, marking the spot. Some seeds germinate quickly, and will show up very soon in the spring, while others require a whole year before pushing through the ground. Put the seeds in the soil as soon as you use the fruit.

Palms are easily raised from seeds, and a ten-cent packet of mixed seeds will give you a variety. Palms are not at all hard to grow, but when started from seeds they are a long time showing the true leaf. Among the easiest to grow are the flafiera, or thread palm, and the Forsteriana; the latonia Bourbonica is the fan-palm, from the leaves of which the fans are made. Nothing is more cheerfully "folksy" than a well-grown, cleanly kept palm.

Canna seeds will grow thriftily,

if given half a chance—as readily as maize. The hard shell should be filed through, and boiling water poured over them, leaving until cold and the shells burst, before planting in the soil. Cannas do not "come true" to name, and you will get a variety from one package of seeds—some of them worthless, probably, and many of them fine. From a ten-cent packet of seed you may get some very choice varieties, worth dollars, if bought by the single root.

Some Fashion Notes

A fashion magazine assures us that much of the freakishness which has characterized the fashions for the past year is giving way to more sensible forms, the most important of which is the reasonable extension of the width of the skirt. For the spring season, the most approved width is from two to two and one-half yards at the bottom of the skirt. There is a decided tendency to return to the normal waist line; some of the newest designs make the waist to overlap the skirt at the waist, as it did many years ago, but this is not expected to become very popular.

The kimono sleeve, with its immediate successor, the smoothly set-in sleeve, is expected to give way to the newer design, wherein the sleeves are gradually gaining in fullness and in shaping. Three-quarter-length sleeves are the prevailing style, but a full-length and a shorter sleeve known as the seven-eights, are much worn.

The tunic skirts, both the double, and the single skirt draped to simulate the tunic, are both popular, thus two or more materials and colors may be used in the same garment which lends itself admirably to making over and remodeling.

Self-trimmings are a strongly-marked feature of the new styles; braid trimmings and pendant ornaments, with buttons, with button-holes either worked or simulated by covered cord, piping, or stitched straps are all used. All kinds of laces are used, from the sheerest to the heavy, hand-made.

Hat shapings are many and various; the wide-brimmed picture hats are always in style, but for ordinary wear, the smaller size is preferred. Wonderfully real-looking flowers are much used in millinery. The one-piece dress for housewear and informal occasions, as well as for street wear, in a variety of materials, grows in popularity.

Aluminum Cookery Vessels

We have been asked by a reader if any injurious effects on the health is to be feared where acid fruits have been cooked and left to stand in aluminum vessels. In reply we copy the following from Good Housekeeping Magazine: "So far as experiments of the Good Housekeeping institute give any indication, the use of aluminum vessels is advisable and safe if good grades of aluminum are used. Some alloys of this metal contain substances injurious to the digestive system.

"Nothing has been proven to warrant the assertion that the combinations formed by the cooking of acids in aluminum utensils are dangerous. The action of acids on the metal is very slow, especially if the aluminum is pure.

For the Seed-Bed

It is advisable each year to sow a number of perennial seeds, in order to keep up the supply of really good plants. Many perennials do not bloom well after the first few years, and there should be new plants coming on. The plants may "seed themselves," and many of them do, but others do not. Annuals generally seed themselves, if of the hardy