



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts McVey

My Children

The house is closed; the windows shuttered down;
The chairs stand empty and the place is still;
Far from the glare and struggle of the town
My children dance upon a sylvan hill.

The yellow shine fades from the summer day,
An elm trunk rears aloft its ivy load;
The purple aster swings across the way
And golden rod o'erhangs the sandy road.

Long sails are flapping in a distant breeze,
High cliffs make shadows on the whitened sands;
I see the vales where grow the wondering trees
On picture post cards sent by little hands.

I may not seek them; yet I hold it well
When mother brings them home so tanned and fair,
That I may listen to the tales they tell,
As high they clamber on my evening chair.

I see, through baby eyes, dim meadows grow,
And hear my long-lost collie bark for joy,
Adown the vanished lanes of long ago,
Where I, too, romped and played, a little boy!

—J. J. Meehan.

Our Home Chat

I think I must apologize to a few of our readers, if any of them have not received the information asked for as promptly as they may have wished; I have been away from my desk for some time, trying to fight down a stubborn case of nervous prostration, and have been in places where access to books, or even people who could have helped me, could not be had. The long, hot season was averse to rapid recovery, but I am at my desk again, greatly improved, and I hope to have no further trouble. I believe I have answered all my letters, but some of you may not have found me. If so, won't you write again, and I will be glad to give the belated help. If you only knew how much your kind letters help me, by keeping me in touch with our readers, you would not hesitate to write, bringing all your perplexities, or your kind, appreciative words. Your letters give me courage to go on, and serve to keep me constantly reminded that it is my work to "do unto others," and you know, "Blessed are they that DO." I hope you will keep me very busy helping you to adjust your perplexities, now that the cool days are again promised us. I've got "heaps and heaps" of patience, and I feel that my very best endeavors belong to our thousands of readers. I want our department to be THE BEST of its kind.

The Reading Lamp

As the evenings are lengthening, it is time to consider the lighting in all its bearings, and especial pains should be taken for a good light by which to read. With the gas lamp comes the unsightly tube which is al-

ways more or less in the way, while the electric light can only be had where the house is wired for electricity. The coal oil lamp is still much used, and it gives a soft, gentle light very grateful to the eye; but unless carefully cleaned and kept filled with the best of oil, the odors and smoke which it produces make it very objectionable. Since the use of denatured alcohol is becoming general, alcohol lamps may be found in a variety of designs, and the standard alcohol burner, employing an incandescent mantle, gives a light of about forty-five candle-power, and its value as a reading lamp is becoming much appreciated.

If the coal oil lamp must be used, then do keep it clean! Get the best oil you can find, though truth to say, there are times and places where "the best" is exceedingly poor, and price is scarcely a measure of desirability. It must be looked after every day, freshly filled every morning, and the wick not allowed to get "gummy." Owing to the cost of electricity or gas for illuminating, in many locations, the houses are sometimes kept dark, in order to economize; but a dark house is always a house to get away from. Light and warmth are essential to the true home feeling, and if you can not afford to keep the electric or gas lamp burning, do have a good, clear oil lamp, and make the house attractive to those who "love light rather than darkness." "Let there be light," should be the word for the home. Darkness is death to every growing thing.

The Poorly Nourished

As this is the season when the schools open, it is well to sound a note of warning to both teachers and parents in regard to the food habits of the children intrusted to their care. It has become the rule to crowd as much mental work into as few years as possible, and this enormous burden is laid upon the youth at a time of both mental and physical growth, when it is of the utmost importance that the food supply should be both digestible and nourishing. There are the over-fed, as well as the under-fed, and in the case of the first-class, the pupil has to struggle with a system clogged with unused material, more often than not entirely lacking in the essentials of nourishment, bolted hurriedly and with the mind busy with the unlearned lesson. In the under-fed class, there is the double strain of mental activity and anxiety, weakened in every endeavor through lack of nourishment for the starved nerve cells. The "poorly fed" do not belong exclusively among the poor in purse, but because of lack of appetite, or indifference to foods which are not set before them in attractive form.

Many children go to school in the morning, nerve-starved, because of the fad of "no breakfast;" their luncheon, taken from home, or bought at a near-by supply station, is perhaps a wedge of pie, a box of candy, a glass of milk, or a bit of unsuitable fruit. At best, the food is unsuitable, but it is usually hurriedly bolted, and thus rendered more unwholesome and indigestible. These children are allowed through ignorance on their part, and either ignorance, or indifference, or carelessness on the part of the parent and teacher, to violate every law of dietary, and they are thus soon reduced to a condition of physical wreckage and crippled mentality. Mothers should

see that the child is fortified for the day's demands with a good, substantial, wholesome breakfast, that they are supplied with a plain, wholesome, nerve-building luncheon, and the teacher should make it her business to see that this luncheon is eaten. Pastries, sweets, and pickles should find no place in the lunch basket of the school child of whatever age. Take care of the stomach, and "everything else shall be added unto you." The food supply is most important to every condition.

The Window Garden

The florists' catalogues will soon be ready for distribution, and if you are a lover of flowers, you can have a copy of any of them for the asking. Many of them contain much valuable information for the flower lovers, who are ready to care for them during the cold months. Nothing is more decorative in the house than one or more healthy, live plants. If you can not succeed with the bloomers, the foliage plants are just as lovely, in their green, and vari-colored garbs. If nothing else will grow, a healthy palm, or English ivy will serve you, and both are easily raised. If you are a "beginner," and have everything to learn, try some of the old, standard sorts. Tell the florist what you know, what you do not know, and what you think you would like to know, and he can generally make out a course for you. There is nothing more satisfactory to the busy woman than bulbs, but even bulbs require intelligent handling, and proper care; the catalogue will give you much instruction along these lines. If you have neglected to start the plants you intend to have in your windows, do not longer delay the work, for to do well, the plants must be well-rooted, and in healthy growth and must be gradually accustomed to the altered conditions before placing them permanently in doors. Not until frost threatens should the plants be taken permanently indoors, and even after, they must be given plenty of fresh air and frequent airings on warm days. They must be treated as you treat the children—fed, washed, given drinks, allowed plenty of room, and the atmosphere must not be too warm or too dry. See that they are free from insect pests when brought in, and give them occasional tonics when growing finely. Try not to have a window full of sickly, discouraged plants, but learn their needs and then meet them intelligently. Begin now.

For the Toilet

For the coating of tan gathered so recklessly by the woman and girl during the summer season, there is nothing so harmless, or so effective as buttermilk—real, cow's buttermilk that comes from the churn. Use it night and morning, bathing the face for ten minutes at a time, and let it dry on. In the olden times, prevention was regarded as better than cure, and high necks, long sleeves and comforting sunbonnets, together with "half-hander" mittens or old gloves with the ends of the fingers cut off, kept the skin beautifully white. A plentiful use of buttermilk, or buttermilk in which tansy leaves had been soaked, following a day's outing was one of the most popular remedies. The woman or girl who will recklessly strip her flesh of all the covering that "the law allows," go bare-headed and bare-armed into

the fiercest of sunshine, will find it very hard indeed to recover the delicate beauty she carelessly threw away.

In general, the more lotions and washes and bleaches the girl uses, the more she injures the texture of her skin, and by and by it will be like a piece of parchment. She must choose between the ruined complexion and the discomfort of wearing a covering.

It is claimed that women who have no common sense should not be blamed for the lack of it; but if good judgment is not used, the penalty must be paid. It is a pity that common sense can not be bought rather than the many poisonous or harmful compounds that are expected to undo the results of unwisdom.

Opinions differ as to how often to wash the hair; some women get along with two or three times a year, and from the looks of their hair, it is quite often enough; others wash their hair once a week, and insist that it is none too often. If the hair remains dry and brittle for days after the shampoo, it has been robbed of too much oil by the washing process, and should not be washed so often. Oily hair will stand a good deal of washing. If the hair is naturally dry, a little crude oil, or vaseline, or oils may be rubbed into the scalp. Do not gum over or "slick" the hair, but rub into the roots.

Gleanings

It is said that, when an egg has been allowed to boil too long, it can be softened by placing it quickly under the running water and allowing the water to run over it for a few minutes. It is claimed that the sudden shock of changing from hot to cold water will soften the inside of the egg.

If the housewife who had "bad luck" with her canning will send to the Department of Agriculture, and ask that Bulletin 359, on the subject of canning, be sent to her, she can learn much of where her trouble lies in the work.

A good way to can sweet potatoes is as follows: Prepare a syrup by dissolving one-fourth pound of white sugar in one quart of water, and when dissolved, simmer a few minutes. Boil the sweet potatoes, after washing, scraping and slicing, and when tender place the slices in glass jars, nearly filling the jar, and shaking down well as you fill; then have the syrup boiling hot, and flow it into the jar, giving it time to settle into all the air spaces, but doing the work quickly, and the potatoes must be right out of the boiling water. When the jar is filled with the boiling syrup, seal tightly, wipe off the outside of the jar, and put into paper bags. Put away in a cool, dry, dark place.

Okra can be put away as other vegetables, by preparing the tender young pods, packing in jars, and set in water to cook as you would other vegetables.

Spinach, beet leaves, dandelion, and other greens may be canned by cooking gently in salted water, using a very little water and covering closely to cook by steaming, then drain and pack closely in the jars, cover with the boiling hot juice, and seal tightly. Some recommended filling spaces with vinegar diluted with the juices.

Some Valuable Aids to Housekeeping

If you love good coffee (and you do, if your taste is not perverted), nothing will serve you better than the coffee percolator. A good percolator will cost you more than a poor one, but it will give satisfaction, and if given the care it deserves, will last a generation. The enameled vessel is not so desirable as the nickel-plated copper, as the enamel will break and chip; the plating should