



My Garden

In summertime how fair it showed—
My garden by the village road,
Where fiery stalks of blossoms
glowed,
And roses softly blushed;

With azure spires and garlands
white,
Pale heliotrope, the sun's delight,
Sweet odors filled the day and night
Where'r the south wind rushed;

Beneath the strong, unclouded blaze
Of long and fervid summer days,
Their colors smote the passing gaze
And dazzled every eye;

Their cups of fragrant honey-dew
Charmed all the bees that o'er them
flew,
And butterflies of radiant hue
Paused, as they floated by.

Now falls a cloud of sailing snow,
The chilling winds of winter blow,
No blossom dares its cup to show—
Earth folds them in her breast.

A blanket brown, a sombre pall
Is softly, gently hiding all;
In vain shall any sweet winds call
To break their rest.

My garden is a vanished dream;
Dead in the chilly moon's pale beam;
Stiff icicles above it gleam;
And yet, I know not how,

My flowers shall hear the dropping
rain
When spring renews each hill and
plain,
And they shall all be mine again,
Though swathed in snow clouds
now.

—Rose Terry Cook.

Commercialism and Christianity— Giving

Gleanings: St. Louis society and club women opposed to the useless giving of presents at Christmas will shortly organize a society to be known as "A Society for the Prevention of Useless Giving" to carry their idea into effect.

Similar organizations have already sprung into life in New York, Chicago and other eastern and middle western cities. Mrs. August Belmont and Miss Anne Morgan are the leading spirits of the New York movement. Dr. Lena K. Sadler imported the idea to Chicago.

The purpose of the societies is, as their names designate, to abolish the now prevalent custom of giving a Christmas present simply because you think someone is going to give you one. It is a determined effort to do away with the so-called "exchange" system of gift-giving and to revert to the simple pristine custom of close friends observing the yule tide by the bestowal of homely, inexpensive gifts.

Everyone would be much happier if the custom of useless gift giving was entirely abolished, and the plan to militantly oppose it deserves universal support. Men and women in every class of society impelled by a foolish sense of propriety annually make extravagant purchases that all but impoverish them and certainly cause their donors much more misery than joy. The thing should be stopped.

As long as the practice of giving extravagant and numerous presents at Christmas time is confined to the wealthy and rich, while it is in con-

flict with the spirit that prompted the custom, I do not see that its existence effects much harm. But when people who can in no sense afford to buy expensive gifts and yet at the same time are compelled to do so because they are expected to return in like what has been given them, then the viciousness of the custom is seen in its actuality and certainly should be wiped out. Any society that would bring this about deserves commendation and support.

In theory everyone is opposed to the custom and in practice everyone supports it. The true Christmas spirit has become so commercialized that virtually the twenty-fifth of December has come to signify the banner bargain sale of the year in the department store calendar rather than the commemoration of the birth of the Christian religion.

"Women Before the Law"

I have several letters from our sister readers discussing the "Votes for Women" question, and every one of them is full of food for thought. But this department of The Commoner does not deal with political questions, and the individual opinion of your editor is of small consequence where she has no voice. I would like, however, to repeat my urgings that every woman make herself acquainted with the laws of her state governing women, individually, or as property owners, wage earners, and as regards her rights in the matter of her children and her household goods. Not every husband is honest with his wife, where property matters are concerned, and it is well to know what, if any, real ownership you may have in your children. Many a woman, by trusting to the honesty of her husband, so far as her earnings and property is in question, has been reduced to penury through either his own ignorance, poor business ability, or dishonesty. Get your law-books, and read up on the common questions of the day. See if you even own yourself. A Texas sister asks what I think of the laws of Texas regarding women's position. If I lived in Texas, I should know what they are. It is but a question of time when all states will open the polling places to women.

The Church and the Young People

During the winter months, the church should keep its doors wide open for its young people. It should study the questions most earnestly as to how to engage the young minds and activities in ways which will make them grow into symmetrical, well-developed men and women. They should have responsibility; the officers of the church should have the settlement of questions involving vital interests of the body, but churches are often afraid to put the young people forward, and leave them feeling like outsiders. Let them have a real, social, live home in the church; make them feel that it is their church; their interests that are involved. Show them that their brethren have warm, loving hearts and take pains to join in their pleasures. The young of both sexes demand social life, and if they do not find it in the church, they will find it elsewhere. Let them have social meetings, and church parties, and encourage them in feeling at home among the brethren; show an interest in their interests, and make their joys and sorrows your own,

with loving, courageous sympathy. The young people expect great help and encouragement from you, and you must live up to their expectations of you. Do not leave it all to your minister. Take part of the responsibility on your own shoulders, and make it your business to keep the young people in the right path. Say what you will, if the church shows no interest in her young members, there are others who will, and the "children" will go where they are made to feel welcome. The church, not alone the minister, owes a duty to the young, and now is the time to help with example as well as by precept. Right now!

Clubs for the Young Folks

A new question is opened up for our young people, and we can but urge them to give close attention to the matter. That there is more money to be made on the farm, and more happiness in the making of it, than any city work can give, is being demonstrated through the boys' and girls' agricultural clubs being organized all over the country. While the boys are running their corn clubs and showing what good work they can do, the girls are organizing farm clubs, and beating the boys to the dollars right along. Raising vegetables, fruits, poultry, eggs, and many other food stuffs, canning the fruits and vegetables and selling the poultry out-put, has been found to be immensely profitable, and I am asked to have our girls and boys send to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for Farmers' Bulletin No. 385, which will tell them how to form these clubs. Put in the winter planning for the coming year.

What You Want to Know

The mercerization of cotton has added to the difficulties of the housewife, as it is very hard to detect the presence of cotton in fabrics that pass readily for silk or linen. Cotton is mercerized by immersing it in a solution of caustic soda, which swells out the cell-walls of the multiple fiber, giving it the glossiness of silk. But the gloss will wash out, and thus expose the fraud.

"Huckaback" toweling is most in demand, yet very few know why it is thus called. It is so named from the weave, which throws up a little knot, or huck, in both warp and woof, making a slightly roughened surface, which is very much liked for absorbing moisture, and only very sensitive skins object to it. Many of the weaves are very attractive. The "bird's-eye" toweling is delightfully smooth and absorbent, and is much glossier and finer than the huckaback. If one has time and inclination, the toweling may be purchased by the yard and the hemming and marking done at home, giving them individuality; but nothing is saved. Twenty-four inches by forty-two inches is the size most liked, or twenty-two-by-forty, as one likes. This for the family use, while the guest towel may be fifteen by twenty-four inches, as it can be used once or twice, then thrown into the laundry-bag.

The all-wool blankets are much more economical, even at a greater price, than the mixed blankets containing more or less cotton. Serviceability, beauty, lightness and warmth are all in the favor of the all-wool covering. It will outwear the mixed fabric, will wash better, and be

serviceable as long as there is an inch of it left. A small percentage of cotton will not hurt the blanket, as it will keep it from shrinking when washed, and add to its appearance after being laundered. It is scarcely possible for the housewife to detect the small quantity which is nearly always used in the "all-wool" blankets sold as such in most of stores. When cotton is used, it is mostly used in the warp.

For the Laundress

Replying to queries about the usefulness of the gas iron, we quote from Good Housekeeping Magazine the following: "The trying and difficult piece of mechanism to heat by gas is the flat-iron. In general, gas-heated flat-irons are a delusion and a snare; they are working against the natural law that air, when heated, rises and does not fall. To construct an iron so that it will distribute heat evenly and well over the bottom surface of the flat, and yet to permit full access of air for combustion without endangering the safety of the ironer, is not a simple thing. And with the iron has to be used that unsafe thing, the rubber tube. That ironing is done with them, that people do not burn up, that they are not asphyxiated, is no proof that they cost little to use in this way, or that they are not surrounded by elements of danger, or that they do not contaminate the atmosphere. There are some few good gas irons, but the gas iron, at its best, is not so good nor so safe as the hot plate on which good sad-irons may be placed to heat, and we have found this method uses no more gas."

The flat-iron which uses gasoline for fuel does the work more cheaply, heats up quicker, and gives satisfactory results, so far as we have heard, except for the smell, which goes with the fuel. The same burner will use denatured alcohol, and many prefer this fuel, though it costs more, and can not always be had. The most satisfactory self-heating flat-iron is the electric. It is not much, if any more expensive than coal or wood used in a range, and the heat is even from start to finish. It is the ideal self-heater where electricity can be had.

However, the gas story is in its initial chapters, and the devices for its successful uses in the household are constantly improving.

Requested Recipes

Chop Suey—This is said to be made as it is served in Chinese restaurants: Get the Chinese beans at any Chinese store; these are something like macaroni, made of paste and molded into beans and let dry hard. Take half a cupful of fresh pork cut into small pieces, put into a sauce pan or skillet and let fry brown in its own fat; half a cup of chopped celery and half a cupful of chopped onions added to the fried pork and add to this a large half cupful of the Chinese beans; add enough boiling water to prevent burning and simmer all together for ten minutes. Season to taste and serve hot. There are other recipes, calling for other ingredients, but this is claimed to be "real Chinese."

Mrs. L. R. says, "Any one can cook a goose, but how do you get it ready for cooking?" After killing the goose, dip in water near the boiling point until the water has penetrated to the skin, then roll in an old blanket or anything that will prevent the escape of the steam. Leave about ten minutes, then begin with the legs and rub the feathers toward the head. After the goose is cleaned of feathers dress as any other fowl. Some say to pluck the large feathers while the fowl is still warm, then dip in boiling water,