

# The Home Department

Conducted by  
Helen Watts McKee

## Whose?

Within us lives the spark we call immortal,  
Essence divine and subtle, undefined,

That stays not at the closing of death's portal,  
But bursts the bonds that once its flight confined.

It onward wings its way — ah, whither?  
Onward and onward, through eternal days,  
But never comes a sign or token hither  
To hint the mystery of its secret ways.

Only, at times, strain of heavenly sweetness,  
A flower's breath, a voice, a look, a face,  
Elusive in its sense of incompleteness,  
Stirs us with its old, and half-familiar grace.

And a vague consciousness of pre-existence  
Struggles to light, through memory's half-closed door.  
Whose once the soul that thus with strange insistence  
Whispers within—"Soul, we have lived before!"  
—Elinor Gray, New York.

## The Lenten Season

Whether we are Catholics, or not, we are all rejoiced when the Lenten season approaches, because it is the first clear suggestion of spring. This year, the beginning of Lent came in February while storms of ice and snow were fretting the earth and the skies looked anything but "spring-like" in their cold grayness. Lent is called the penitential season, and there is a tendency to more or less fasting and rest from the heavy winter feasting and merry-making. Meat-eating gives way to dishes of fish, eggs or fowl, and the system is all the better for the change. Winter is usually very much on the wane, and the culmination of Lent in the beautiful spring festival of Easter, is looked forward to with happy anticipations. As a holiday, Easter Sunday is growing in social and religious importance, and observance of the day is now general, with recognition stretching wider, and wider. Easter is the year's physical beginning throughout all the globe north of the equator; in January, the old year is dying, and the new yet unborn; many nations of the new world have wisely started the real year with the vernal equinox, which is the 21st of March. When the Council at Nice made the Easter date dependent on the full moon which come on or just after the full moon in March, it consciously or unconsciously fixed on a day which coincided with the actual beginning of the year for all the northern and greater half of the earth. This is the real new year that counts in the world's physical progress, and the Easter season brings back the flowers and foliage, not alone in the growing warmth of the earth, but in the apparel of people. Birds, butter-

flies, and every other beautiful thing in nature comes in on the trail of the Easter morning.

## Common Sense Gardening

Many women, after reading the letters and talks about the glory and profit of gardening as told in their favorite magazines, will rush away for their gardening tools, and enthusiastically start in to reduce the h. c. l. "as advertised." They will start their plant-raising as they do their baby-raising with absolutely no idea of the requirements to make a success of the undertaking. The magazine writers—many of them never had a garden, nor raised a pumpkin-vine—will tell you any woman can grow a good garden, with enough "sass" to not only supply your own table, but plenty to give away, or trade, or sell to your thrifless neighbor. Well, any woman can—generally, if she knows how, and has the right conditions as to soil, sunshine, water, hardihood of muscles and a good big parcel of common sense in her "think-box"; but gardening is no haphazard, or chance affair. It is just hard, constant, careful work, if you would succeed, and unless you have the right conditions, or can bring them about, it is going to keep you guessing every day of the spring and early summer. Another drawback is the fondness of the flocks of chippies that always find the early lettuce or radish bed, unless you hang rag scare-crows over seed beds. Then, there are untold numbers of other things, insects of all kinds, ready to help you dispose of your early growth—bugs, worms, flying and crawling things without number, and along with these, plenty of diseases both at top and root, the treatment for which you must understand and practice. So, you see, you must begin, right now, to read, read, read; study, and experiment, and get your munitions of war ready, and be prepared to kill, kill, kill, from the time you sow your first seeds or set your first plants, until you reap your last harvest. But if you do succeed, you will be perfectly happy, and you will deserve to be. You must get all the literature you can, and as reliable as possible, and mix with your reading a big handful of good common sense. "Prove all things" and hold fast that which has the strongest appearance of being good. Don't get discouraged; don't admit the possibility of your failing. Just work, and make up your mind to DO.

## Seasonable Work

Among the first things to show up in the early spring days are the green fingers of the hardy bulbs. The crocus and hyacinth hardly wait for the snow to be gone, and many of the most precocious of them get a good freezing, which, however, will not injure them; but the bulb beds should not be uncovered too early. Let the plants push up through the last fall's coarse manure covering, taking care to remove only sufficient from directly over the plant to insure air and sunshine, and sturdy growth. Tulips, lilies, and other hardy bulbs will not be so for-

ward as the hyacinths and crocuses. If the fall covering about shrubbery, perennials, or biennials, is removed too early, the possible hard freezes that follow will surely injure the growth, so it is best to leave the covering on the roots, keeping the ground from the harmful alternate freezes and thaws that come with the opening of spring. As soon as the soil can be worked without "lumping," after the frost has done its work of upheaving and pulverizing, it is well to level down the soil, working in a liberal supply of fertilizer, sand or coal ashes, or if it is to be had, wood ashes, passing the ashes through a coarse sieve or sand screen to remove the clinkers and slag that will do no good to the young plants. Little runways between the beds may be made of these cinders and clinkers, and pounded well into the soil, giving a narrow walk, free from weeds. All gross weeds should be killed on sight; burdocks — all other docks—plantains and perennial herbaceous weeds should be cut off below the crown as soon as they start. Do not attempt to work the soil while it is still wet; if you do, it may show bad results all summer. Let the ground be reasonably dry before spading. Potatoes, peas, and several other kinds of vegetables should be planted just as soon as the rows can be opened, but the soil should be readily crumbled at moving and no lumps should be left to dry and harden. Use a spading fork, rather than the ordinary spade or shovel for the garden. Be sure to have a good rake, and learn to use it intelligently. Have your seeds, flower and vegetable, ready at hand, and also your summer flowering bulbs, but let the ground get warm before you plant, which for most hardy things will be about the first to middle of April. Many tender things must be kept until May, and some even until June.

## Getting the Garden Ready

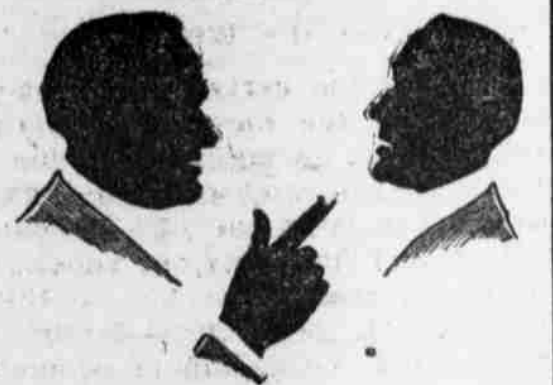
So much should have been already done in order to make the home garden a success, and our March issue may not reach our readers until the month is partly gone, that we shall begin our talks for the advanced season. We are all cognizant of the fact that the early vegetable garden will play an important part in the family diet, and there will be more amateur gardeners this spring than ever before, so we should study the matter carefully, and begin slowly and safely. There is a great deal of talk about the "backyard gardens" in the city, and many prominent publications are giving us tales of wonderful results which, it is declared, any housewife can attain by going into her backyard with a few garden tools, papers of seeds and an enthusiastic expectation of eating of the fruits of her own vine. But these publications only show the bright side of the picture, and the shady side is not mentioned. City backyards are not like the country back yards. If you do not own the city back yard, you will find there will be required more than a spading fork, a hoe and a rake, in order to get the ground in good shape for

seeding. Most city tenants use their backyard space as a dumping ground for ashes—coal ashes and cinders, old tin cans, and other cast-offs, until the ground is nowhere in sight; if the ashes are not there, the ground is of the poorest, perhaps being made of "dump" from excavating for other buildings, which is hard, sticky clay. There must be fertilizers, well worked into this clay, and some coal ashes worked into it may not be a bad thing, as it will act as a loosener of the clay; but there are other things to be considered. The city atmosphere is not like the country air; so much gas, smoke, and other pollutions abound in the city air that plants, at the best, have a hard time to get a good start even if the "chippies" do not eat everything in sight as soon as a green thing appears. It will take work, and plenty of it, with most backyards, to get the soil in shape, and the constant care, good feeding and watering to keep things growing under most unfavorable conditions. You may make it pay. It won't do any harm to try. But remember there are two sides to the city backyard garden, as well as other things.

## Query Box

L. L.—For renovating black goods, a sponge dipped in strong black coffee to which a few drops of ammonia have been added will prove an excellent cleanser. When clean, dry by rubbing briskly with a clean woolen cloth.

Mrs. L. B.—To save the gas, get a sheet of galvanized iron just large enough to cover the top of the gas range, according to number of burn-



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