

The Home

Conducted by MARY FORD

A CHAT WITH MY READERS

Dear Friends:—May I wish my readers a very happy and prosperous New Year. What will this New Year hold for us all? Who knows perhaps in the silver lining of the coming year we may not find the greater freedom for the uplift of humanity that lies close to the heart of every woman. I would like this page throughout the coming year to be the means of binding together the women of the West. Here we can talk over our little heartaches and plan together the best means of helping one another in the work which lies to our hands. Alone, I can do so little, but with the hearts of my readers with me in the work that I am planning for the coming year, it would be a new era for womanhood. Perhaps it would be just as well to wait until the rush of the New Year is over to lay my plans before you. Hearty co-operation must be the keynote of the Home page. Just what sort of a society for the page to form should, I think, be left to the vote of our readers. To the Homemakers' club in Saskatchewan, and the Home Economics in Manitoba, I appeal for reports of the work they are doing. While the clubs in the States and in England are doing wonderful work for the woman, I feel assured that our home clubs are not far behind, but unless the secretaries send in their report we can not realize the work that is being done in the West. Health, peace and prosperity in the coming year; helpfulness to one another and charity to all is the wish of your friend,

MARY FORD.

HOW I ENTERTAIN A "SHUT-IN"

My friend is suffering from an illness, the end of which she knows to be death—and her indomitable courage is a wonder to us all. There are weeks when she cannot see anyone but her immediate family, sometimes only her nurse, and then her cry is: "Help me to keep cheerful!"

Her friends have responded to her cry in various ways; and I want to tell you of my ways, hoping that some of them may be new to others who wish to minister to their "shut-ins."

Once my friend's cheerfulness was hidden 'neath a cloud of despair, and she cried to the nurse:

"It is hard to be forgotten!" A heartick cry—full of longing for her friends.

This was repeated to me over the ice-laden wires on a stormy day, and it drove me into swift communication with some twenty friends of my friend—all grown old in the same city—friends who had not forgotten her, only the stress and hurry of their own lives forcing them into neglectfulness. As one said:

"I declare! I'm so rushed that I never keep up with each day's demands, and I lack common courtesy!"

From them all came promises of remembrances in some form—to be delivered the following day; and, true to their word, these promises came, in the shape of funny notes done up in odd or attractive manner.

From one came, "The Pensive Pup"—and its verse burned in wood. Do you remember it? It goes like this:

"I'm a Pup Dog, and I know it,
And I'm blue sometimes and show it;
Just as you do, when a Hoodoo
Comes and steps upon your toe;
But never let your little thinker
Get so badly out of tinker,
That your thoughts are a dark, dark blue;
For there's neither sense nor reason,
Nor any time or season,
When the sun doesn't shine a rosy, rosy red—
So, cut out the 'solemncholy,'
And don't be melancholy,
Unless you find it pleasant so to be;
But, for Heaven's sake! don't show it,
For the world will surely know it,
Just-as-you-have-got-the-goods-on-me!"

From another was a "Handkerchief" with this:

"As a blower and a shower,
I hope that this thing pleases;
It will comfort you in sorrow,
And serve to hush your sneezes.
When its usefulness is ended,
And it can no more be mended,
Just cast it to the Ragman,
With a sigh, for your friend, who cannot
Think how this old verse should be ended."

There was an envelope full of funny newspaper clippings—jolly notes, full of allusions to olden good times.

From one, a big horse-chestnut, to be placed in her bed-slipper—"To keep her from broodin',"—also, as a sure cure for any old ailment.

From another, a string of buttons—relic of a time when she and my friend were children and had the button craze; on one extra big button, of fanciful design, was a card, reading:

"This is the button we had our first spat over and didn't speak for two whole hours!"

There was also a funny, old-fashioned photo of the two of them, when they were girls of sixteen, showing them with their hair done up for the first time.

While the friends were preparing these contributions, I was busy concocting a good-sized bag made of gay-colored cretonne—a white ground with pink and red roses sprawling over its surface. All around the outside of the bag were narrow and rather deep pockets; strong pink ribbon draw-strings for the bag, and small ribbons of same shade to tie the pockets.

After the remembrances were all collected, I added my own bunch—a small bottle of Violet Water, "to be taken externally;" a fancy bag of favorite hard candies, "to be taken after disagreeable medicines;" A bunch of postals, stamped and addressed; a pad and indelible pencil, well sharpened. Some curl papers!! and other little thoughts.

All of these packages and letters were attached to narrow ribbon of various colors; and to the other end was tied a tiny card, upon which was some inscription telling when the package was to be opened—all at different times of day or night, covering a period of two weeks. Then, in each pocket was slipped an article, and tied in, with the ribbon hanging out, showing the card with injunction; and the rest of the gifts bunched in the center, with all of the ribbons hanging out in the same way.

Then, the bag was partly closed by the draw-strings, and into the half-opened top was a big bunch of pink and white carnations. It looked very pretty and gay, and I placed it in a round band-box, which I had covered with fancy wall-paper.

The little cards attached to the ribbons had as many funny directions as I could think of. One was to be taken when it rained (this in bitter winter weather). Another, when the nurse was cross. One, at midnight, when the moon set; and another, at sunrise. All different dates. Some with the dates had funny little verses, conundrums, doggerels, limericks, etc.

It kept her interested for over two weeks, and then the empty bag was hung upon the upper post of her brass bed, where it held various articles she liked to have near her; her letters and notes, pencils and pad, and a bit of crocheting.

Since then I have sent her a string of black china dolls. I glued brown fringe about their waists, and a fuzzy top-knot to their heads, strung them along on a green ribbon, with doggerels telling why those Hottentots "hottentotted" to her. One declared he was a Cuss—todan for all the "cusses" she was too much of a lady to even think of uttering. Another was a "Fretter," prepared to do all of her fretting for her. Another had a message from "Roosevelt;" and so on. They raised a laugh on one of her dark days, I am pleased to say.

Later, it was a huge carrot, highly polished, and hollowed out, filled with water and grass seeds, and swinging from a ribbon. She had some pleasure in watching it grow.

May Day, it was a basket with a long handle, and of yellow crepe paper braided and sewed together as one would

sew straw, shaped over a deep jelly tumbler, and filled with wood violets and dark green leaves; the card attached to the handle by a gilded (child's size) clothespin, was shaped at one end like a butterfly, and tinted in watercolor. It was very effective.

At Christmas time there was a long red stocking filled with fascinating and nubby packages, both funny and useful. On her birthday was "a candle to grow on," with a glass candlestick for holder.

My latest thought has been a ribbon roll of three-inch ribbon paper, which a saleslady at the ribbon counter saved for me. I pasted pretty pictures at each end of the roll, then glued the paper's end to the roll, then down one side of the "ribbon" I pasted pretty pictures and funny jokes, comforting and humorous poems, a lock of her pet cat's hair, with a catty verse of sentiment; there were recipes for invalid dishes, and a piece of my new dimity dress, with a description of my struggles in the making; some kodak pictures, of friends, and also of places we had been together at different times. Then, when the roll was full I pressed it carefully with a very warm iron, rolled it up neatly, and kept it in place with a tiny garter, made of the narrowest blue silk elastic, finishing the joined place with a fat rosette of baby blue ribbon (No. 1). It has given my friend a lot of fun, I am told.

I am planning several things for the future. One will be a newspaper full of personalities, a "household column" of ridiculous advice, and receipts, answers to correspondents and all that.

Another is to be a "Round-Robin" letter, of one very long sheet, one friend starting it, and after writing some six or seven lines, folding it over, so that only the last line of her communication will be seen; the next friend taking her cue from that, will proceed with her part, folding her's over in the same manner, until the letter is finished. It will make a smile, I think.

I have talked over another stunt with the friends, and we plan the next stormy day to telephone my friend's niece, who will jot down as we talk, just what we are doing at that present moment. Each friend phones a certain hour, and at four or five o'clock the notes are to be read to my friend, and she will mentally take a peep upon the "happenstances" of us all, and know that in the midst of our own busy lives we took thought of her.

All of these may be in a small way small things, but they are the little soldiers of love and comfort, helping her in her battle against hopeless physical odds. The spiritual victory will come later, but that will be after all these of the rank and file shall have been mustered out. Willing soldiers of good spirit, they will do what they can, until the ramparts of pain hand been stormed, and the "Angel of Death"—which is "Life Eternal"—shall crown her with Osphodels and Laurel of glorious victory.

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HOME COOKING

Rissoles.—Quarter of a pound of any cold meat (finely minced), one ounce of butter, one ounce of flour, one egg, one gill of stock (or milk), parsley, quarter of a teaspoonful of pepper, quarter of a teaspoonful of salt, little finely-grated lemon-rind. Melt the butter in a small pan, stir in the flour, and when these are well mixed, gradually add the stock (or milk). This sauce will take about five minutes to boil sufficiently, and needs stirring all the time. It should, when ready, come away from the sides of the pan. Mix all the other ingredients, except the egg, well together, and add them to the sauce. Stir well and set on one side to cool. Then when cold, divide the mixture into balls. Roll the balls in flour, and dip each in the egg (well beaten). Then roll each ball in bread-crumbs. The rissoles are now ready to be fried in clarified fat. (The butter and flour may be omitted and an egg used instead.)

Mashed Potatoes.—One pound of potatoes, one ounce of butter, two tablespoonfuls of milk, quarter of a teaspoonful of salt. Boil the potatoes. When quite cooked, drain them and let them dry. Break them up with a large fork, carefully pressing out any lumps. When smooth, add the butter, milk, and salt. Stir the potatoes over the fire until they are thoroughly hot again. Pile them lightly

on to a dish and make ridges on them by drawing a fork over the pile.

Pea Soup.—One pint of split peas, one quart of milk, one quart of water, one carrot, one turnip, one onion, seasoning. The stock must be prepared beforehand so that it may go cold and have the fat taken off.

The peas must be soaked in cold water for several hours before they are wanted. Boil them in the water for two hours until they are quite soft. Then add the stock, other vegetables, and seasoning. Let all boil together for two hours more, then strain through a sieve. Serve with toast.

A Delicious Pudding.—The secret of a good rice pudding is long, slow cooking. Four to six hours is not too much. A cant teacupful of rice to a quart of milk, with sugar and salt, and ground ginger to taste. Do not forget the salt, and try ground ginger as the flavoring for a rice pudding. Put these in a dish with a few bits of butter on top. It will still be very nice if you use a third of water to make up the quart.

To Fry Bacon 'Just Right.'—Cut the rind off the bacon, or, at least, notch the rind to keep it from curling up in the pan. Warm the frying-pan, and lay each rasher in flat. If the fire is very bright, hold the pan well off the blaze, so that the bacon may cook slowly. Keep turning the rashers over until cooked through and nicely crisped on each side.

Stuffed Potatoes.—These are excellent for supper or lunch, and use up left over meat.

Large even-sized potatoes; for each potato, a tablespoonful of grated cheese (stale bits), one tablespoonful of chopped cooked bacon, or any meat, one teaspoonful each of chopped onion, parsley and dripping, seasoning.

Scrub the potatoes, bake them until they are soft inside. Cut one end off each, and carefully scoop out the floury interior with a small spoon.

Mash this smoothly and mix it with the cheese, meat, parsley, onion, warmed dripping and seasoning. Refill the skins with this. Reheat until very hot all through, and serve at once.

A Sweet Omelet.—Some people imagine that a sweet omelet is a most difficult thing to make, but if you read the recipe through very carefully, and do exactly as it directs, you will have a delicious omelet, one which you will not be ashamed to offer to anyone.

Four eggs, one ounce of castor sugar, vanilla, a little jam without stones, half an ounce of good butter.

Break the eggs carefully, the yolks into one basin, and the whites into another. Be careful that not a speck of yolk gets into the white, if it does the white will not whisk up stiffly, and it is important that it should.

Add the sugar and a few drops of vanilla to the yolks, and stir them until they are thick and frothy, when they will also be of a much paler color. Add a few grains of salt to the whites, and whisk them to a stiff froth.

Melt the butter in an omelet pan, or in a perfectly clean frying-pan, and brush it all over the pan. Mix the whites very lightly into the yolks, stirring them as little as possible; this is a very important point.

Pour the mixture into the pan, place it on the fire for about three minutes, then put it in a hot oven for another three. You will probably not be able to shut the oven down, but close it as much as possible.

The omelet should then be just set and nicely colored on top. Turn it on to a piece of paper that has been dusted with castor sugar.

Spread one-half with a little jam, fold the second half over it, and serve on a lace paper as quickly as possible.

To Clean Brass Goods.—Brass tea kettles, or in fact, any article of brass with the exception of Benares ware can easily be cleaned in the following way: First wash the brass well in suds made of equal parts of ammonia and water with soap. This will remove all dirt from the article, leave it free from grease and give it a semi-polish. Then an extra polish may be put on with a good brass polish. If the brass looks hopelessly tarnished, any good powder that is used for cleaning silver or brass, if moistened with vinegar and applied vigorously, will remove the tarnish and leave a shiny surface.