

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES,—We can say but little upon the hackneyed subject of "spring cleaning," about which advice and information are very plentiful at this time of the year. "Tear up one room at a time," "take things leisurely," is excellent advice on paper, but to a practical housekeeper is of little good. There can be no more fixed rules for house-cleaning than for house-work. No two women can work under exactly similar conditions. To "tear up one room at a time" will answer if you have neither papering, painting or whitewashing to do, as paper hangers, etc., cannot come at a woman's nod, and all such work must be done when the men are in the house. If a woman is hired to assist in cleaning, for economy's sake the mistress feels that she cannot have the job prolonged all summer, so hurries it along. At the very best it brings hard work, lame backs and shoulders, and pounded fingers. I will only give you a few hints that may be useful as you proceed.

Have all my friends, I wonder, tested the magic properties of borax? If not, you have a great help and comfort in store. It saves great labor in washing paint, and is said to drive away ants and roaches, if sprinkled on the pantry shelves. Two tablespoons of pulverised borax dissolved in a quart of water, to which water enough is added to cover a pair of blankets, will cleanse them beautifully. Pack away your blankets not in use with camphor or bitter-apple. Borax will extract dirt from articles of delicate texture without rubbing, as lace curtains, etc., it being only necessary to put the articles to soak in a solution of borax over night, then rinse them in the morning.

The destruction of moths is one of the greatest vexations a careful housekeeper has to contend with. From the time the windows come to be left open the trouble begins, and every housekeeper must be on the watch. If you have heavy carpets that do not require taking up every year, just take out the tacks and fold the carpet back, wash the floor with strong suds with a tablespoonful of borax dissolved in. Dash with insect powder, or lay tobacco leaves along the edge and retack. Freshen your carpets by rubbing with ox-gall; break one or two galls into a pail of lukewarm water, and rub the carpet hard with the cloth thoroughly wet with the gall water; do a small piece at a time, having ready a dry, coarse cloth, and rub the carpet dry. A thick flannel cloth wrung very tightly out of borax water, not *wet*, but *damp*, is good to wipe off the carpets.

Smears in polished wood are easily removed by rubbing with a soft cork. Bronze ornaments should be cleaned with soap and water and brush. Polish steel with emery powder. Some say that stains in marble should be covered with a paste of whitening and sweet oil for twenty-four hours. Brighten zinc by rubbing with a cloth saturated with kerosene, then wash with hot soapsuds.

To clean straw matting, it should be washed with a large coarse cloth dipped in salt and water, then wipe dry; the salt prevents it turning yellow.

Rosewood being in so much request for furniture, we give a recipe for an imitative stain,

applicable to pine and other plain woods, consisting of a transparent rose pink liquid. Mix, first, four pounds of potash in one gallon of hot water, adding same weight of sandal wood. When the color of the wood is extracted add two and one-half pounds of gum shellac dissolved over a quick fire. Apply a groundwork of logwood stains to the wood and then the mixture.

A good way to get rid of the rats and mice in the cellar is to prepare lime for whitewashing and put into the quantity of lime-water sufficient for covering a cellar, a large piece of copperas—as large as two fists; dissolve well, and whitewash with it. No rats or mice will return to the cellar, and all is sweet and healthful, destroying any malarial influence. Repeat this every year. Wash not only the walls, but also all partitions and wood work.

Mirrors and glass of pictures are best cleaned with methylated spirit, and then polished with chamois skin.

MINNIE MAY.

Work Basket.

PILLOW-SHAM HOLDER.—Take a broom handle three feet long, cover it with red cloth, then with flowered lace, and sew on a piece of wide lace to hang down. Take two yards of red ribbon with a rosette at each end of it and tack it on the ends of the roll; hang in a bedroom, and when retiring at night lay the shams over it. It is ornamental as well as useful.

PERSIAN RUGS MADE AT HOME.—To make a rug plenty of perseverance is needful, for it is a large contract to make one of ordinary size; but it is very pretty work, and can be done with ease by even those ladies whose eyesight is failing. Purchase from some carpet dealer a supply of scraps of tapestry, and Brussels carpeting; pieces that are too small to be worked up into hassocks are quite large enough for this purpose. Cut these into strips of any length their size allows, but let them be of uniform width, say three inches. Ravel these all out, rejecting the linen, and collecting in a box the little crimped worsted threads. Then provide yourself with a pair of the largest sized steel knitting-needles and a ball of the coarsest crochet cotton, either white or colored. Set on ten stitches, and after knitting a row or two to make a firm beginning, go on as if you were making a garter, but with every other stitch lay a thread of the crimped wool across the needles. After knitting the stitch take the wool which shows upon the wrong side, and turn it toward the right side, knitting a stitch above to secure it. Then put in another thread of wool and repeat the process. The back of the strips should have something the appearance of that of a body Brussels carpet, while the front should be like a sort of thick, long napped plush. The colors may be used without selection, making a sort of *chene* effect; or carpets may be chosen for raveling, which show only shades of scarlet or blue; or brown carpets may be used for the centre of the rug, and a border of scarlet or blue sewed on all around. After doing a little of this work, many ideas as to arrangements of colors will suggest themselves, and a little practice will enable the knitter to produce some very pleasing results. When the strips are all finished they must be sewed together at the back. It is only for convenience that they are knitted in strips—the rug, as a whole, would be cumbersome and un-

wieldy to handle. Brussels or velvet carpet hearth-rugs are made with a strip of this knitting for the border, giving a very pretty finish.

TABLE SCARF.—A simple but very handsome scarf for a small table is made by taking three strips of broad ribbon; have the centre strip of a contrasting color; for instance, if the two outer pieces are of the sombre or shaded ribbons so much in use a year or two ago, let the centre be of cardinal; turn the ends back to make them pointed, and put a tassel on each point; baste the ribbon to a lining of silesia, old silk, or even canton flannel, and where the edges join work fancy stitches. A great variety of scarfs could be made in this form, and be ornamented by putting sprays of flowers in embroidery or painting on each point, or a vine or a scroll could be worked with good effect on the centre stripes.

A young girl's room may be furnished daintily and in exquisite taste at a small expense. The chief outlay will be for a bedstead. This cannot be constructed out of pine boards and a bit of muslin, though many other things may be; but a handsome painted bedstead of blue and white is the first requirement for this room. The floor may be covered with plain white matting, or of blue and white plaid, with a soft rug at the side of the bed; a dressing case of white wood, covered with blue silesia, with white muslin, can be made next, and a white wood washstand is also needed. This, like the dressing-table, should have the under part entirely concealed by breadths of the silesia and muslin. These should be gathered slightly at the top, so that they will fall in graceful folds. The curtains should be of the muslin, draped, and the bedspread and pillow covers of the muslin over silesia also. The bedspread should, of course, lie smoothly over the bed, and be tucked in at the end and sides, unlike the lace ones, which hang over. The muslin of the pillow-covers may be shirred at the top and the bottom, if you like the full look the shirring gives; they need, in this case, no edges, and in fact when put over the silesia plainly, do not trim them with lace, unless you add this adornment to the curtains, but finish with a plain hem. With the various trifling ornaments a young girl gathers about her, the room will receive anything it may need in color to brighten it. A room so prettily furnished may be a real help to a girl; it will not be easy for her to cultivate disorderly habits there, for the effect she has worked to create would be entirely marred.

A strip of colored plush is often twisted round one side of a picture resting on an easel in a room. Any fancy piece of effective material is also arranged in the same way. Small mirrors are decorated thus.

Answers to Enquirers.

M. E. V.—1. To clean the men's clothing, mix two parts alcohol and one part ammonia; rub vigorously with sponge or woollen cloth. 2. It depends somewhat on who may ask you to sing; if it is by a married lady who is a particular friend of the hostess, you might comply, but certainly not if asked by a young man or young lady. In fact, such matters should be left to the hostess to arrange.

SUBSCRIBER.—1. Wedding cards are some times paid for by the bridegroom, but the