

Practical Information for the Housewife

"Nothing lovelier can be found in woman than to study household good."—MILTON.

All questions regarding this department will be cheerfully answered in this column.—Ed.

How to Purify a Sick Chamber.

The British Parliament awarded a London physician twenty-five thousand dollars for the discovery of the following method: Put half an ounce of sulphuric acid in a crucible glass or china cup and warm it over a lamp, or in heated sand, adding a little niter to it from time to time. This produces nitrous acid vapor. Several of these vessels must be placed in the sick-chamber and in the neighboring apartments and passage at a distance of twenty feet from each other.

A Sweet-Smelling Disinfectant.

A very pretty form of disinfectant is being introduced to sick rooms in Australia, in the form of the green branches of eucalyptus. The reputation of the eucalyptus as an absorbent of malaria, and as an antidote in fever-cases is well-established, and for some time its effect as a disinfectant in sick chambers has been carefully watched.

Dr. Curgenvén states, after twelve months' trial, that in cases of scarlet fever, if the branches be placed under the bed, the bedding undergoes thorough disinfection, the volatile vapor penetrating and saturating the mattresses and every other article in the room. The vapor is also said to have a beneficial effect upon phthisical patients, acting not only as an antiseptic, but as a sedative, and to some extent, as a hypnotic.

Burns and Scalds.

Children often have slight burns or scalds, and proper treatment will allay the pain so quickly that they will suffer little from the accident. Stir a teaspoonful of soda into four tablespoonfuls of molasses until it is like cream, and apply or use equal parts of linseed oil and lime-water in the same manner. An old-fashioned but good remedy was a tablespoonful of wood soot (not coal ashes) and two tablespoonfuls of lard rubbed together like a salve. Some one of these remedies will always be at hand in any household. If the burn is where it can be covered with a piece of old linen, do not remove this to see how the burn looks, for a burn or scald heals rapidly if let entirely alone after receiving an application of some alkali and softening substance to remove the burning sensation.

What to Try.

Try pop corn for nausea; try cranberries for malaria; try a sun bath for rheumatism; try ginger ale for stomach cramps; try clam broth for a weak stomach; try swallowing saliva when troubled with sour stomach; try a wet towel to the back of the neck when sleepless; try a hot, dry flannel over the seat of neuralgic pain, and renew it frequently; try snuffing powdered borax up the nostrils for catarrhal cold in the head; try taking your cod liver oil in tomato catsup if you want to make it palatable; try breathing the fumes of turpentine or carbolic acid to relieve the whooping cough; try a cloth wrung out from cold water, put about the neck at night for sore throat; try a saturated solution of bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) in diarrhoeal troubles; give frequently; try walking with your hands behind you if you find yourself becoming bent forward.

Cellar Windows.

Keep all the cellar windows open and allow the air to circulate, but use screens on the windows and doors in order to keep out insects. At this season the cellar should be kept in neat condition, plenty of whitewash used on the walls, and all articles that may be stored away should be arranged for convenience of access during the winter.

Don't Shut Up The Windows.

Where the body is not overheated the draught caused by the ordinary incoming of air through an open window will do infinitely less harm than the impure air caused by closed windows. The way to enjoy pure air in cold weather is to turn on the heat when the room gets cold, not to shut up the windows. If the room becomes too warm, don't turn off the heat, but open the windows. By this means a person who knows anything about ventilation can have an equable, summer-like atmosphere about him all winter long. The necessity of open windows is doubly apparent where tobacco smoke is indulged in, as the smoke is dangerous to the breathing apparatus and makes it liable to lung troubles.

Egg Tests.

A good egg will sink in water.
Stale eggs are glassy and smooth of shell.
A fresh egg has a lime-like surface to its shell.
The boiled eggs which adhere to the shell are fresh laid.

After an egg has laid a day or more the shell comes off easily when boiled.

Thin shells are caused by a lack of gravel etc., among the hens laying eggs.

Eggs which have been packed in lime look stained, and show the action of the lime on the surface.

If an egg is clean and golden in appearance when held to the light it is good; if dark or spotted, it is bad.

The badness of an egg can sometimes be told by shaking near the holder's ear, but the test is a dangerous one.

Many devices have been tested to keep eggs fresh, but the less time an egg is kept, the better for the egg and the one that eats it.

Ridding a House of Rats.

The best way of ridding a house of rats is to fill all the holes that can be found with pounded glass, and seal them up with plaster of Paris and tin it if you wish. Then thoroughly clean the premises and see that there are no garbage pails left about to attract rats, and secure the services of a good cat. Treat her kindly. Confine her as much as possible to the basement of the house, so she will keep these intruders away, and there need be no trouble. In a large hotel or boarding-house the amount of refuse food unnecessarily left about draws rats, but there is no excuse for their presence in a small house if there is a good cat.

Keeping Pots and Pans Clean.

The secret of keeping clean all pots and pans used in cooking, with the least labor, is never to allow anything—grease more especially—to get cold in them. What is required is that everything cooked in these pans should be emptied out while hot and the pan at once filled with hot water and a bit of soda and stood at the side of the stove until there is an opportunity to let it boil up, when the pan can be quickly washed and rinsed out, and will be bright and perfectly sweet. Copper and iron cooking utensils can thus be kept well without any laborious periodical scouring.

MEAT which is roasted in an open pan should at first have an oven hot enough to crust the surface, thereby retaining all the juices.

TO SOFTEN WATER-SOAKED BOOTS OR SHOES.—A pair of boots or shoes thoroughly wet are not easy to dry without being left stiff and very likely shrunken. To avoid this as much as possible, fill the wet articles with dry oats or stuff them firmly with paper. This not only keeps them in shape, but hastens the drying by absorbing the moisture. Apply a little glycerine to the leather before it is thoroughly dry, rubbing it well in.

The owner of the room put up on the side of the wall, on each side of the fire-place, shallow shelves of plain pine wood, stained cherry to match the rest of the woodwork, and rising about four feet from the floor. These shelves met another shelf of the same width which ran along the wall to the mantel, and under which was placed a small table lamp and an old straight back chair. On the other side of the corner the shelf was prolonged about four feet from the floor, just high enough to enable one to sit under it comfortably, a small cherry rocker being placed for the purpose. This shelf held unframed etchings and books, the other shelves daily papers and magazines, one or two artistic vases and a gay little basket with a bright bit of work, making the most homelike and delightful of afternoon resting places. From it one looked across and easily talked across to the corresponding corner, where was placed a stand with a hardy fern that did not need much light, and some dull red spots with drooping English ivy. An old brass claw foot chair stood beside the greenery, and above it hung one or two good engravings.

Entertainment.

"To find the way to heaven by doing deeds of hospitality."—SHAKESPEARE.

All questions regarding this department will be cheerfully answered in this column.—Ed.

Refreshments For Informal Evening Parties.

Light refreshments in many cases are all that is needed. For a simple menu: Veal or chicken, crackers, olives, lemon tarts, excellent cake, white cake, chocolate.

VEAL CRACKERS.—Boil two hours or until meat will fall from bones. Chop fine, season with salt and pepper, and a lump of butter size of an egg, enough of water in which meat has boiled to moisten mince. Make a rich pie crust, roll and cut in rounds with biscuit cutter; they must be very thin; spread spoonful of mince, cover with pastry rolled thin. Make a number of perforations in cover, place in pan and bake in hot oven until brown. Serve hot or cold.

LEMON TARTS.—Line shells with paste, bake and fill with following:

LEMON JELLY.—Two lemons, juice and grated rind, one cupful sugar, one-fourth cupful butter, two eggs. Boil or steam until thick, fill shells, frost if desired, and serve cold.

EXCELLENT CAKE.—Two cupfuls of brown sugar, two eggs, one cupful sour milk, one teaspoonful soda, dissolved, one cupful butter,

four cupfuls of flour, one cupful raisins, one of citron, one of currants, one teaspoonful each mace, cloves, cinnamon, ginger. Beat well, bake in loaf. Frost if desired.

WHITE CAKE.—Whites of four eggs, one-fourth cupful of butter, one cupful sugar, half cupful of sweet milk, three cupfuls of flour, two teaspoonfuls baking powder, one teaspoonful lemon extract. Beat thoroughly, bake in loaf, and if desired, frost with chocolate frosting.

Another simple menu is small biscuit, jellied chicken, crisp pickles, apple jelly, Columbia cake, sponge drops, chocolate.

SMALL BISCUIT.—Two quarts flour, one cupful yeast, one cupful lard, one half cupful sugar, warm water (lukewarm only) to make a dough stiff enough to knead. Let rise over night; in the morning push down, let rise, then knead, let rise, then make into small biscuit, let rise half an hour and bake in a moderate oven. They should be small but high.

COLUMBIA CAKE.—One and one-half cupfuls granulated sugar, one-half cupful butter, two eggs, one cupful sweet milk, four cupfuls flour, three teaspoonfuls baking powder, one-half teaspoonful lemon the same of vanilla extract, one cupful finely cut citron, one cupful each raisins, currants and coconut. Bake in two loaves. If desired frost with white frosting. Very nice.

SPONGE DROPS.—One cupful granulated sugar, three eggs, one cupful flour, one teaspoonful baking powder, one tablespoonful water. Bake by dropping spoonfuls on buttered paper placed on dripping pan. Remove by placing broad-bladed knife under drop.

Another may be sliced tongue, graham and white sandwiches, sliced oranges, little cakes, home made candy, coffee.

Boil in plenty of water an unsalted beef tongue; when tender, salt and let it remain in water until cool, then remove skin and keep in water until cold, over night if possible. Slice very thin, place on platter, garnish with parsley.

GRAHAM AND WHITE SANDWICHES.—Cut thin slices of graham bread, and the same amount of white. Put together with a layer of minced sardines, season with salt, pepper, mustard and lemon juice.

SLICED ORANGES.—Peel, slice and sprinkle with sugar quite liberally, if oranges are sour.

LITTLE CAKES.—Two cupfuls sugar, one-half cupful butter, one cupful sweet milk, two eggs, three cupfuls flour, three teaspoonfuls baking powder, one teaspoonful each mace and cinnamon, one-half teaspoonful salt. Beat well and bake in cup cake tins. Frost if desired.

The following is very nice when only simple repast is desired: Lobster salad, crackers, cake, coffee.

LOBSTER SALAD.—One can lobster, or the same amount fresh, one-half pint shred cabbage, lettuce or celery, one teaspoonful made mustard, salt, pepper to season, six tablespoonfuls salad oil or melted butter, twelve tablespoonfuls vinegar. Toss all together and serve cold.

PARTY CAKE.—One cupful granulated sugar, half cupful butter, one cupful milk, three cupfuls flour, three teaspoonfuls baking powder, one teaspoonful lemon, one half cupful finely cut citron. Beat well together, bake in layers, put together with frosting.

FROSTING FOR FILLING.—Beat to a stiff froth whites of two eggs, add six tablespoonfuls sugar extract lemon to flavor, a tablespoonful lemon in juice or vinegar. Spread between and over cake.

THE fare for an afternoon tea should consist of light dishes, such as little rolls of thin bread and butter, many ladies now have them made of delicate brown bread; cakes with icing, marrons glace and salted almonds. Tea and chocolate are the favorite beverages. Bowls of fernery ferns make charming and inexpensive decorations.

IT is now the fashion to have some arrangement in the drawing room or library for an impromptu cup of tea, hence the variety of parlor tea kettles in brass, copper, bronze and silver. Wrought iron and brass tea stands are both in favor. Dainty tea plates and teacups and saucers complete the usual equipage, though the silver tea-ball must not be forgotten. Some ladies prefer the tiny tea pots in Japanese porcelain to the tea-ball. Fancy crackers are served with the cup of tea, and it may be said of this simple entertainment that it is an inexpensive and highly promotive of sociability and ease, and within the reach of light purses.

The Yorkshire School for the Blind, York.

Amongst the many interesting characteristics of the century now closing, few are more remarkable than that of the amelioration of the condition of those who have to live and work in darkness. Such a picture as our artist has drawn on the opposite page, would have been impossible a century ago. Let us look at a picture described in 1786 by that ever memorable pioneer of blind education, Valentine Hany, of Paris. He writes:—"A novelty of a kind so singular has attracted, for several years, the united attention of a number of persons at the entry of one of those places of refreshment, situated in the public walks, whither respectable citizens go to relax themselves about the decline of day. Eight or ten poor blind persons, with spectacles on their noses, placed along a desk which sustained instruments of music, where they executed a discordant symphony, seemed to give delight to the audience. A very different sentiment possessed our soul."

Look at that in 1786 and then at this in 1891, and there is no need to describe further what has been done!

The quiet happiness of a picture like Mr. Soord's suggests well the usual characteristic of the blind—no moping, no melancholy—but rather cheerfulness. It is the invariable remark of visitors to blind institutions, "How cheerful they all seem." There are few things, indeed, they feel more inclined to resent than the thoughtless expressions of commiseration, to which some people give vent; and which not unfrequently meets with a well-merited rebuke.