

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES.—To begin the New Year, I am afraid I shall have to begin by scolding, or good advice we will call it; the fact is I have a very severe cold and it is the manner in which I got it that annoys me.

Some visitors when about to leave a house are so thoughtless as to stop and talk unnecessarily with the hostess at the outside door. When a lady is so polite as to accompany a friend to the hall-door, it is in bad taste for the visitor to linger, particularly in winter.

The lady may have been sitting in a comfortably heated room, or perhaps she is warm from working in the kitchen; not expecting to be kept in the cold, she does not put on extra wraps when she goes out with her caller to the door. The latter in her heavy cloak and furs does not mind the cold; it is rather agreeable to her than otherwise. The hostess is the one who suffers; the shock often leaves her with a cough, chills or neuralgia.

There is another thing of common occurrence that ought to be changed. It is the habit that some people have of asking to see a friend at the door for "just a minute." If the call did not extend beyond the specified time, it might be well enough in most instances. Generally, the call of a minute is lengthened to one of five, ten or twenty minutes. When a lady receives such a peremptory summons to the door she answers it as quickly as possible, naturally thinking that her friend is in a hurry. She fails to discover any reason for undue haste, and secretly wishes she had waited to finish her half baked cake or the garment that lacked but five stitches of being done.

It may be she is tired and would like to rest in an easy chair while talking, as she could if the caller would only come into the house. "She don't want to go, and she don't want to stay," as Josiah Allen's wife said of the "Wido Doodle," so what can she do?

These things happen every day, and will continue so until ladies reflect a little upon the evil of what at first seems of little consequence. Now I think, my dear nieces, you can well guess how I obtained my cold. Visitors should finish talking while indoors, and when they make a move to leave they should go without delay.

MINNIE MAY.

Answers to Inquirers.

JESSIE.—Never expose your disappointments to the world.

W. S. B.—How can I keep a curl in the hair? ANS.—Dampen the hair before curling with a solution of borax in water.

A YOUNG MAN.—What can I use to strengthen the growth of whiskers and beard? ANS.—Age will do it more effectually than you may wish. A quick growth of hair may be procured by frequent shaving, but the effect of this is to make the hair bristly. You may use a little of the following:—alcohol, one ounce, 10 drops tincture of cantharides, rubbed well into the skin after washing or shaving. It would be advisable not to shave if soft silky hair is desired.

EVALIE.—Woollen underwear is considered by physicians of far more benefit to the health than the silken garments that have been brought into unwarranted popularity of late. Delicate persons, whether suffering from neuralgic, rheumatic or pulmonary weaknesses, should wear wool next the skin, not only on their bodies, but also on their feet. Woollen stockings alone have been known to effectually ward off neuralgia and rheumatism for a whole winter. The sleeves of knit or flannel undershirts or chemises should for such sufferers always be long.

RECIPES.

MUFFINS.

To one quart of milk add two eggs well beaten, a lump of butter half the size of an egg, and flour enough to make a stiff batter. Stir in half pint of yeast. Let them stand until perfectly light, and then bake on a griddle, in tin rings.

JOHNNY CAKE.

Take one quart of buttermilk, one teacup of flour, two-thirds of a teacupful of molasses, a little salt, one teaspoonful of saleratus, one egg (beat of course). Then stir in Indian meal, but be sure and not put in too much. Leave it thin, so thin that it will almost run. Bake in a tin in any oven, and tolerably quick. If it is not first-rate and light, it will be because you make it too thick with Indian meal.

TO CLEAN LACE.

Upon the leaf of a large book sprinkle magnesia, place a strip of lace upon it and cover with magnesia, put another strip of lace on and more magnesia, repeating until all the lace is packed; place a weight upon the book and let it remain twenty-four hours, then gently rub the magnesia out. If the lace is badly soiled it may require a second packing. I have tried this and found it to be efficient.—J. T. S.

OYSTER PIE.

Puff paste, oysters, cream, butter, two-eggs cracker crumbs, pepper and salt. Roll out the puff paste, and cover the pie dish. Fill with bread crusts, and cover with puff paste. Bake till the crust is done. Stew the oysters with the cream, butter, pepper and salt. When done, stir in very quickly, while on the fire, the two eggs well beaten, and one tablespoonful of cracker crumbs. Lift the top crust of the pie, empty the crusts out, pour in the oysters, cover, and serve very hot.

Lard for Keeping.

When the scraps are just beginning to get brittle and brown, put in a tablespoonful of fine salt to a quart of hot lard, and there will be no trouble; the lard will keep perfectly sweet for any length of time, and the salt does no possible harm to any kind of crockery. Persons can easily judge of the quantity of lard if they know how much the kettle holds. It makes the lard whiter and harder, aside from preserving it sweet. It must cook a little while after adding the salt. That designed for summer use should be either kept in a tight earthen jar, or a tin bucket with a cover. To restore lard that is a trifle tainted, put the lard into an iron kettle, and cut up salt pork into thin slices—about one-half pound of pork to a gallon of melted lard; add two spoonfuls of salt, and let it cook till the pork is crisp; take out the slices of pork, and turn the lard into your jar, and you will never know that it has not always been sweet. But it is better to salt it, in the first place, as it saves much trouble and time.

Alligator's Nests.

These nests resemble haycocks. They are four feet high, and five in diameter at their bases, being constructed with grass and herbage. First, they deposit one layer of eggs on a floor of mortar, and having covered this with a stratum of mud and herbage eight inches thick, lay another set of eggs upon that, and so on to the top, there being commonly from one to two hundred eggs in the nest. With their tails they then beat down round the nest the dense grass and reeds, five feet high, to prevent the approach of unseen enemies. The female watches her eggs until they are hatched by the heat of the sun, and then takes her brood under her own care, defending them, and providing for their subsistence. Dr. Lutzenburg, of New Orleans, told me that he once packed up one of these nests with the eggs in a box for the Museum of St. Petersburg, but he was recommended, before he closed it, to see that there was no danger of the eggs being hatched on the voyage. On opening one, a young alligator walked out, and was soon followed by the rest, about a hundred, which he fed in his house, where they went up and down stairs, whining and barking like young puppies.

Bulbs of hyacinths, tulips, lilies, &c., which naturally grow at some distance from the surface of the soil, should be planted in pots and kept in a cool, dark place until the roots are developed, the darkness having the effect of keeping back the growth of the top until the roots have made a good growth.

FASHION NOTES.

Bonnet strings are immensely wide.

Hand-painted designs on silk and satin pin cushions and satin-covered toilet bottles command fabulously high prices for holiday gifts.

Cloth jackets matching the costume, or of cream colored material, are very stylishly trimmed with plush, which is used for the hood, collar, cuffs and muff.

Broad velvet sashes are worn, tied at the left side in a careless knot. They are gaily lined, and finished on the ends by shirring and tassels; sometimes one end is left plain.

Furniture tidies are things of fine art at the present time. They are of silk, satin, plush and lace, and enriched with hand-painted designs, embroideries of chenille and tinsel, and trimmed with ribbons, laces, balls and tassels.

HOW TO BE BEAUTIFUL.—Large feet should never be cased in kid, least of all in white kid slippers, for kid reveals so clearly the form and movements of the feet, and stretches so easily, that few feet have a chance in them. Those who are very stout should wear nothing but black; those who are very thin should put a little padding in their gowns; and neither should be in the least décolletée.

One of the prettiest millinery sets seen this winter is a bonnet or toque of maroon plush with a garnet satin quilled border in place of a brim, and a long ostrich plume fastened on one side and waving down the back; on the opposite side of the toque are some red plush rosebuds. The muff of maroon plush is trimmed at the ends with garnet satin quilling and red silk lace. On the front of the muff instead of a bow a red parrot is placed flat, its head covering the steel clasp of a concealed portmanteau. The cord which suspends the muff is of heavy garnet chenille.

Cheerfulness.

Although a cheerful countenance does not always betoken peace of mind and a heart at ease, it is the harbinger of goodwill, and speaks favourably for the character of the wearer. On the other hand, a sulky appearance is oftener the sign of peevishness and displeasure, than of sorrow or pain. As politeness is a man's passport where he is not known, so good humor will ensure him a continuance of favours which his good manners have elicited, and will preserve affections that beauty and elegance can do little more than win. Nothing is more amiable than a constant desire to please, and an unwillingness to offend the taste, or hurt the feelings of a friend. And when this sweetness of disposition shines out in the calm, placid countenance, it is the token at least of a contented mind.

The troubles of life fall lighter when they are calmly looked for and quietly received, than when he who must bear them bears also a continual frown. The less we dwell upon our various burdens, the lighter they will appear; and if we must carry them—if misfortune must be our lot—why aggravate our distress by reproaches and grievings? and why tell the world, by gloomy looks and bitter words, of the trouble which sympathy may not relieve?

But good nature may be carried too far, and become the unintentional cause of prevarication and deceit; and men are sometimes found, who, rather than offend a friend, will stoop to flattery or downright untruth. There are those who use it to so great an extent, that it blinds their reason, and, like Honeywood in the play, they satisfy and encourage the apparently charitable demands of those who have penetration enough to ascertain the weak points of their "good-natured" friends, and impudence enough to invent and carry out their schemes of attack.

Good humour, when not weakened by an universal and indiscriminate charity, is the most exquisite beauty of a fine face, and a redeeming grace in a homely one. It is like the green in the landscape, harmonizing with every colour, mellowing the glories of the bright, and softening the hues of the dark.