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A PLANT OF THE PRAIRIE

THE WESTERN WOMAN'S FRIEND

By HELEN GUTHRIE

This humorous and interesting appreciation of the pie plant is written by a Manitoba housewife who knows whereof she affirms, and it will no doubt prove entertaining and suggestive to readers in East and West.

RHUBARB! To you Easterners, and those of you who are farther West, with all your wealth of fruit, this will seem an absurdity. Nevertheless, it is true, that in the summer, this old, time-worn, plebeian plant is the best friend of the average Woman of the West.

From the moment when it pushes its first green leaf and pink stem above the brown soil, it is hailed with joy, and everything possible is done to facilitate its growth and bring it to the perfection of its kind. The gardener digs around it, applies the necessary dressing, and admonishes it to "grow quick!" The busy housewife gives it an additional little cultivation on her own account, and adds her fervent blessing, which doubtless enriches the soil and inspires ambition in the lowly plant. The children assist matters by means of a persuading watering-can, and in due time, our old friend Rhubarb ushers in the spring by appearing in a "lordly dish" before the hungry family.

After a long winter of prunes and dried apples, tempered, indeed, with saskatoons and wild plums, the advent of the tart, appetising rhubarb is a vast treat; and from that blessed day, onward, anxious wrinkles disappear from the brow of the busy cook, as she realises all the possibilities hidden beneath those large, clumsy leaves in the garden.

Peep into the steamer on the kitchen stove and what do you see? A white, foamy-looking batter, every moment becoming lighter and lighter! And, beneath its surface—if you will only wait until dinner-time—you will find delicious, tender Rhubarb. The whole decoction fairly melts in your mouth, and you are surprised to find that such a delicacy can be prepared from just ordinary Rhubarb. You smack your lips, and hope there is sufficient for a second helping!

Perhaps the very next day something brown and flaky comes to the table. The whiffs are most alluring, and you cannot wait to hear the name of this delightful thing. You are ill-mannered enough to lift the crust up at one corner and peep in! What do you find there? Simply Rhubarb, but the baking of it, together with the pastry, gives it an absolutely different flavour.

Two or three days after, a pretty, pink-looking concoction comes in from the ice-box, is popped in a silver dish and placed on the dinner-table. You long for your turn to be helped, for the prairie air gives you an appetite, and that pink dish *does* look good. Eagerly you watch while sugar and thick yellow cream are added, and you have your spoon all ready for attack whenever it comes your way. (You see, you are *very* impolite!) What should it be but Rhubarb again, in a fresh guise—this time, allied with Tapioca—a veritable feast of the gods!

Again, another day! You are working in the field and come home hot and tired, and after disposing of something substantial, you wonder what you *could* get, in this hot weather, to cool and refresh you! Have patience, please, for there, in a glass dish, bordered all around with whip-

ped cream, is something you do not know whether to describe as green or as pink—something which reminds you of wild roses and green leaves in one. You say to yourself: "It simply *cannot* be rhubarb again!" But that only shows how ignorant you are! For *that* is probably the culmination of all the wonderful delicacies which Rhubarb is capable of evolving. You take your share—quite a large share, too—of that delightful dainty, and you wish—*how* you wish—that you were only greedy enough to appropriate the whole glass dish full. You feel sure you could eat it all and then wish for more of the delectable jelly!

So, no wonder the Woman of the West eulogises the Rhubarb plant! Among all the strawberries and apples of the East, and the peaches and pears of the Farther West, it may seem poor, mean and commonplace; but, in the hearts of the prune-eating, evaporated-apple-consuming thousands of the West, this homely plant is surrounded with a halo of appreciation. No wonder it grows in profusion in the West, where it is watered with Showers of Blessings! No wonder it lifts up its big head in conscious dignity and grows taller here than anywhere else!

Processions of trim little jars on the shelf of the jam-closet, neatly labelled "Rhubarb marmalade," testify to its popularity. Armies of big "sealers" proudly show forth through their glass sides the familiar pinky-green cubes, floating in clear lakes of greeny pink syrup! Even the little children, holding tightly to the leafy ends, and biting resolutely through the sour, earth-encrusted stalks, never stopping until "nothing but leaves" are left—their tough little Western stomachs, none the worse!—even they bear testimony to its universal worth.

So, let us take a gallon of good pure rhubarb juice with water and sugar; add thereto some fine home-made yeast; put it in the cellar for a few days, and then—*then*, we can fittingly drink to the health of this most useful of household fruits—the Rhubarb!

IT'S SADDLE, MY HEART, AND AWAY.

By W. J. FUNK.

I.

The morning is cool and crisp with rime

And bright with the laughter of holiday time.

The tall, dark pines along the hill
Are touched with flame by the sun until

They glow and burn like slowly kindling embers.

It's saddle, my Heart, and ride away
In the rosy light of the dawning day,
To bid good-morrow,

A sweet good-morrow,
To a lass with eyes of gray.

II.

The evening is hushed with silent light,

And the fields are clothed with glist'ning white,

The keen stars glitter frostily;
But a friendly hearth gives warmth to me

While the pine knots fall in slowly dying embers.

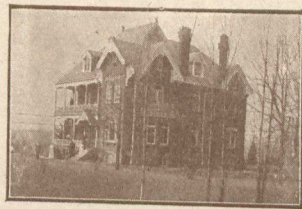
It's saddle, my heart, and ride away
In the gathering dusk of the dying day,

To breathe good-night,

A sweet good-night,
To a lass with eyes of gray.

—Nassau Literary Magazine.

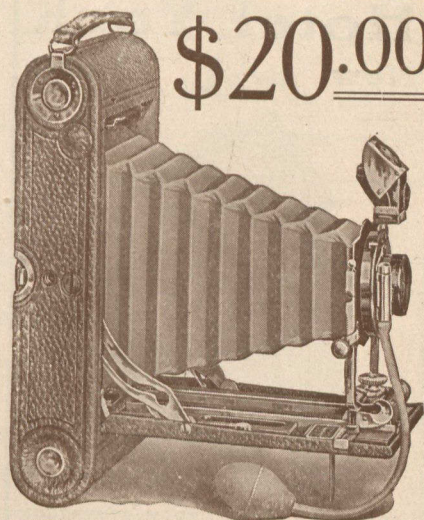
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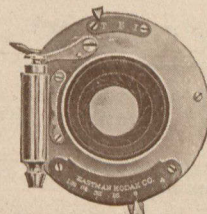
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