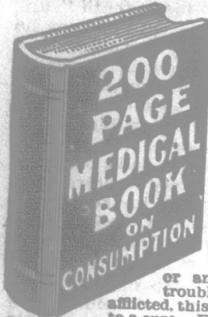


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Advertise in The Farmer's Advocate

My mother was awake. "Dear, dear!" she said, sleepily, "where's your father off to now? Why can't he stay in his bed?"

A moment later she raised her head, for a strange, continuous, flickering light, not like that of the lightning, was creeping up the bedroom wall.

"Gracious sakes' alive," she said, "what's that?" and sprang out of bed.

Against the window I saw her white-robed form, with the shadow of it black upon the strange, red light.

"Mercy upon us! The barn's a-fire!" she screamed with the next breath; then I was at her side.

In truth, the barn was afire, the flames already bursting forth, in a momentary cessation of rain, from the roof, while dense clouds of smoke, all red from the glow beneath, curled up to the inky sky.

A moment later and we were running, both of us, toward it, our bare feet splashing through the cold puddles that lay shining with the reflection along the path.

We found my father frantically dragging at some piece of machinery that had been run in on the barn floor.

"Call Torrance and Might!" he shouted; but ere we had well turned to obey his behest we came face to face with Carmichael and Dick.

One wrench of Carmichael's mighty arm and the big machine, whatever it was, rolled forth on its wheels and down into the yard.

"Go for Might!" shouted Carmichael, and Dick set off on a run.

Then an awful thing happened. Striding up before Henry Carmichael, my father looked him fair in the face with an expression upon his that made us fear for what was to come.

Slowly he raised his hand, as if in accusation, but the words failed him. Instantly the hand dropped and he clutched at his throat, the white of his face turning, in the red light, to purple. An instant later his features worked convulsively, then he fell heavily forward on Carmichael, who reached both arms to receive him.

With a low cry my mother rushed forward; then, collecting herself marvellously, she said, "To the house!" and set off, while Carmichael followed, carrying my father as though he had been a child.

Oh, what a sight that was, our little procession moving along with that terrible burden, with the fire-brands flying above our heads, and the red light mounting up behind, and the lightning quivering everywhere, with intervals of double darkness between! And the worst was not yet.

"Merciful Heaven! The house is afire too!"

It was Carmichael's voice, and, looking up between my terrified sobs, I saw that what he said was only too true. Ignited somehow by a straying brand, the fire was already well under way, and the smoke and flames were bursting through the kitchen roof. The higher front part of the house was still intact, with the reflection of the fire shining red upon all its windows facing the barn.

My mother gave a smothered cry, "Miss Tring!" and dashed in through the front door, whence she returned in a moment with the little teacher, who, as it afterward appeared, had been sleeping quietly through all the turmoil.

Carmichael had laid my father on the grass, and was kneeling beside him with a hand on his heart.

"I'll carry him to our house," he said to my mother. "He must be got in out of here!"

But my mother turned on him with a sort of savagery, my placid, gentle mother, in whose eyes there had seldom been any look more angry than that of a playing kitten. Yet there she stood, erect as an avenging goddess, with the flickering glare of the firelight on her white, terrible face, and the burning of a bitter resentment in her eyes.

"Henry Carmichael," she said, and the tone of her voice was enough to make one shudder, so full of determined agony was it, "Robert Mallory will never enter your door, dead or alive!"

"But, Heavens above, woman, he can't lie out here!"

She raised her hands to her head as though dazed, then took them down and spoke again in those harsh, unnatural tones which, surely, were not my mother's.

"He will rest in the apple-house till Adam Might comes," she said.

But she made no objection to Carmichael's carrying my father, and so once more he raised him and carried him to the little outhouse, where my mother, now sobbing wildly, threw herself on the floor beside him, shrieking, "Robert! Robert! Speak to me! Speak to your own little Alice! Robert! Robert!" like one demented.

Scarcely had he been laid on the floor when Miss Tring came in with a lighted lamp, and set it down on a board over an apple-bin. Then, away she went again, only to return with a pillow and blankets.

"Is Dick back?" asked Carmichael.

"I have sent him for the doctor," said Miss Tring.

"Thank Heaven! How did he go?"

"On horseback. He'll be back soon."

(To be continued.)

About the House.

CHRISTMAS COOKERY.

Fruit Cake.—Three pounds flour, three-quarters pound butter, two pounds sugar, three pounds currants, two pounds raisins, one-quarter pound orange peel, one ounce soda, one ounce cream tartar, two ounces cinnamon, two ounces nutmeg, one and one-half pints milk, no eggs. Mix, let rise half an hour, and bake slowly. This cake will keep a year.

Fruit Cake No. 2.—Dissolve a level teaspoon soda in two tablespoons warm water. Add half a pint thick sour cream, stir, turn into a bowl, and add half cup black molasses. Mix, then add half a pint brown sugar, one tablespoon allspice, one of cinnamon, and three and one-half cups pastry flour. The batter must be very thick. Stir in one pound raisins, stoned, cut in two and floured. Turn into a pan, and bake in a very moderate oven one and one-half hours, or steam for one hour, and bake the other half hour. This cake grows better with age.

Eggless Plum Pudding.—To one cup sweet milk add one cup molasses, one cup chopped suet, three cups flour, one pound seeded raisins, one teaspoon each of salt, soda, cloves, allspice and cinnamon. Boil in a mould three hours.

Good Plum Pudding.—Nearly three cups bread crumbs, half a pound beef suet (chopped fine), Add to the suet two cups small seedless raisins, one cup currants, half cup thinly-sliced citron, grated rind of an orange or a lemon, and one cup sugar. Mix together thoroughly, then add the crumbs, three-quarters teaspoon cinnamon, three-quarters teaspoon cloves, one-third teaspoon mace. When well mixed again, add the well-beaten yolks of four eggs, with half a cup milk, and, lastly, the stiffly-beaten whites of the eggs. Steam six hours.

Pound Cake.—One pound butter, one pound sugar, one pound flour, nine eggs, the grated rind and juice of one lemon. Beat the sugar and butter to a light cream; add the yolks (beaten light), the lemon, then the whites (beaten to a stiff froth), and, lastly, the flour. Bake slowly.

Mince Meat.—Stew gently two pounds lean beef in a very little water until quite tender, let it get cold, and then chop finely. Add one pound finely-chopped beef suet, four pounds peeled, cored and chopped tart apples, three pounds sugar, three pounds currants, two pounds raisins, one grated nutmeg, half a teaspoon ground mace, the grated rind of two oranges, and one lemon, one-tablespoon salt, piece of half a dozen oranges and two lemons, half pint sherry, and one wineglass brandy. Will keep well in a stone jar in a cool place.

Lemon Mince Meat.—Take four lemons, pare thin, and boil the rinds until tender in a little water. Squeeze the juice on one pound sugar, add one pound currants, one pound chopped raisins, one pound apples (baked), three-quarters pound suet. Chop the lemon rind and add, also add the water it was boiled in. Add two grated nutmegs, and any other spice that is desired. Put in candied peel when making the pies.

STAINING FLOORS AND WOODWORK

Floors or unstained woodwork of any kind may be given a very attractive finish by simply staining them, then waxing to a gloss, or giving a thin coat of white shellac. Oak, walnut—in fact, any of the wood stains—may be bought all ready for use, with directions accompanying each tin, but some of them may be made at home at less expense. For walnut stain, for example, first wash the wood with a strong solution of sulphuric acid, one ounce to a pint of warm water; then stain with a solution made by boiling six pounds of common shag tobacco in a little water until like a syrup. Strain, and use one or two coats, according to the shade desired.

A good spruce stain for a kitchen floor is made of one quart of water, four ounces of glue, and three pounds of spruce yellow paint. Let the glue soak in the cold water over night, then heat in the morning, mix in the coloring, and paint while hot, following the grain of the wood. Let dry for three hours, then oil, and the floor will be ready for use in twenty-four hours.

Very attractive stains in dark green, gray, or wood-brown tints may be made, very inexpensively, as follows, but the stain must be applied while the wood is new. Simply get tube paint of the desired shade, and thin it with turpentine until it will sink into the wood almost as easily as pure turpentine. Apply one good coat, working it into the wood well with a cloth, and, when dry, apply a thin coat of white shellac, or wax, and rub to a gloss.

Before staining any floor or any kind of woodwork, fill all cracks with putty, colored with paint to match the stain, then go over the whole with fine sandpaper, and brush off well to remove any particles of wood dust.

It is well, too, to try the stain on a piece of wood to see if it will be satisfactory.

To wax a floor, melt a piece of beeswax the size of an egg, and add a pint of turpentine, warmed by setting it in an open dish in a pan of hot water. As turpentine is volatile and inflammable, this operation should be done with care. When blended, apply to the floor with a paint brush, following the grain of the wood, and, when dry, polish with a horse brush. If you do not care to go to this trouble, get one of the prepared floor waxes and follow directions.

THE OPEN ROAD.

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me, leading
wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune—I am
good-fortune,

Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone
no more, need nothing,

Strong and content, I travel the open
road.

—Whitman.

LESSON FOR HUSBANDS.

The late Mary A. Livermore liked to tell a story of a young friend of hers in Melrose, for she believed that in this story lay a lesson for husbands.

Mrs. Livermore's friend was passing a month alone, her mate having been summoned to Europe on a business matter.

"And you are very lonely without your husband, now?" the elder said to the younger woman one morning.

"A little lonely," was the qualified answer.

"But surely," said Mrs. Livermore, "you miss your husband very much, now he is away?"

"Oh, no," she said. "At breakfast I just stand his newspaper up in front of his plate, and half the time I forget he isn't there."