

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.

Hot Water.

Headache almost always yields to the simultaneous application of hot water to the feet and back of the neck.

A towel folded, dipped in hot water, wrung out rapidly and applied to the stomach, acts like magic in cases of colic.

There is nothing that so promptly cuts short congestion of the lungs, sore throat or rheumatism, as hot water when applied promptly and thoroughly.

A towel folded several times, and dipped in hot water and quickly wrung out and applied over the toothache or neuralgia will generally afford prompt relief.

A strip of flannel, or napkin folded lengthwise and dipped in hot water and wrung out, and then applied round the neck of a child that has the croup, will sometimes bring relief in ten minutes.

Hot water taken freely half an hour before bed-time is helpful in constipation.

How to Select Wall-Paper That is Cheerful and Effective.

The highest art is now displayed in the designs for wall-papers, and there is no discounting the magnificent appearances of some of these latest patterns when properly placed on the sides of the room. Large figures in old gold, especially scroll work in borders, are used. In selecting wall-paper it should be chosen in accordance with good taste, and the most important question to decide is whether it is to form a decoration for itself or whether it is to become a mere background for pictures. In either case, the colors should be subdued in tone, and two shades of light drab or silver-grey will be found the most appropriate for this purpose. Where water-color drawings are hung in a drawing-room paper of embossed white or cream color, with very small spots of gold, will not be amiss. The patterns should also be selected with reference to the place. Where a large part of the wall is to be presented to the eye a greater play of line in the patterns may be attractive, but in all other situations the patterns should be comparatively simple. It is a mistake to make the wall-paper decorations of the same color as the furniture. Instead of repeating the color of the furniture and hangings, it should oppose it. Contrast is as essential as simplicity to good taste in household decoration.

In selecting papers for the walls one should not trust simply to the pattern-books. A paper that has been ordered will often look darker or lighter after it is hung than it did in the pattern-book. In order to avoid disappointment in this respect it is advisable to take several lengths of the paper and suspend them side by side on the wall, and notice carefully the general effect it has upon the eye and the room. The leaves of certain plants conventionally treated are very effective decorative forms. The ivy, maple, oak, and fig leaves are beautifully adapted to this purpose, and they come in large and small designs on wall-paper. Where two shades of the same color are employed, and quietness of effect is especially desired, the overlaid tint should be but very little darker than the ground; and if drawings and other things are to be hung upon it, the pattern should be hardly discernible from a little distance.

The most dreary method of decorating the wall of a sitting-room is to cover it all over with an unrelieved pattern of monotonous design. Yet many housewives who are careless about such matters, or probably do not know the secret of the art, will do this every spring that their paper is changed. Paper-hanging should in no case be allowed to cover the whole space of a wall from skirting to ceiling. A plinth space of plain color, either in paper or distemper, should be left to a height of two or three feet from the floor. A light wood molding, stained or gilded, should separate this from the paper above. A second space of frieze, left just below the ceiling and filled with arabesque ornament, is always effective, but, of course, always involves more expense. Gold, when judiciously introduced, is always a valuable adjunct in the design of paper-hangings, but it frequently doubles and sometimes trebles the price of a piece.

To Dye, Wash and Curl Feathers.

To dye feathers proceed as follows for the different colors:

Black—Immerse for two or three days in a bath at first of hot logwood, eight parts, and coppers or acetate of iron, one part.

Blue—In a vat of indigo.

Brown—Use any brown dye suitable for silk or wool.

Crimson—A mordant of alum, followed by a hot bath of Brazil wood, afterward by a weak dye of cudbear.

Pink or rose—With safflower or lemon juice.

Plum—With red dye, followed by an alkaline bath.

Red—A mordant of alum, followed by a bath of Brazil wood.

Yellow—A mordant of alum, followed by a bath of tumeric or weld.

Green—Take of verdigris and verditer, each one ounce; gum water, one pint; mix them well and mix the feathers (they having first been soaked in hot water) with the mixture.

Purple—Use lake and indigo.

Carnation—Vermillion and smalt.

Thin gum or starch water should be used in dyeing feathers.

To wash and curl feathers, use warm soapsuds and rinse them in water a very little blued, if the feathers are white; then let the wind dry them. When the curl has come out by washing the feather or getting it damp, place a hot flat iron so that you can hold the feather just above it while curling. Take a bone or silver knife and draw the fibres of the feather between the thumb and dull edge of the knife, taking not more than three fibres at a time, beginning at the point of the feather and curling one-half the other way. The hot iron makes the curl more durable. After a little practice one can make them look as well as new feathers. When swansdown become soiled it can be washed and made to look as good as new. Tack strips on a piece of muslin and wash in warm water with white soap; then rinse and hang in the wind to dry. Rip from the muslin and rub carefully between the fingers to soften the feather.

BROUGHT UP IN A HAMMOCK.—I wonder if all mothers know what a nice place a hammock is to bring up a baby in? My little girl slept in one till she was four months old, and a snuggler little nest was never made. She was born in November; so, to make it cosy and warm, it was well lined with old soft shawls and flannels; and to be near her mother at night, it was swung across mamma's bed. When the darling was hungry, she was gently lifted out into her mother's arms, and then quietly returned to her soft little nest out of harm's way; for I was mortally afraid of lying on her if she slept by my side, and could not rest well myself with that fear before me. Later on, the hammock was hung at the back of the bed, against the wall, and was the nicest and altogether the most convenient and comfortable bed that a baby could have. When she was older, a crib was provided, with a hair mattress, as soft as could be bought; but it seemed hard and cold compared with the little hanging-bird's nest.

AROMATIC VINEGAR.—The following recipe makes a delightful, refreshing wash. It is invaluable in the sick room, and cools the aching head. A tablespoonful to a quart of water is about the right proportion, although more can do no harm. Bathe the patient freely, as it is very cooling. Take of rosemary, wormwood, lavender, rue, sage, and mint, an ounce of each (either dry or green will do). Place in a stone jar, and pour over it one gallon of strong cider vinegar; cover closely, and keep near the fire for four days; then strain, and add one ounce of pounded camphor gum. Bottle, and keep tightly corked. Another mode of using it is to wash the face and hands with it before exposing one's self to any infection.

A DELIGHTFUL COUGH CANDY.—Break up a cupful of slippery-elm bark, and let it soak an hour or two in a cupful of water. Half fill a cup (use the same cup for measuring) with flaxseed, and fill up to the brim with water, leaving it to soak at the same time as the slippery-elm. When you are ready to make the candy, put one pound and a half of brown sugar in a stew-pan over the fire; pour the water from the slippery-elm and flaxseed over it (straining the latter), and stir constantly until it boils and begins to turn back to sugar; then turn it out, and it will break up into small, crumbly pieces. For teachers or preachers who use their voices much it will be found an admirable and agreeable medicine, the taste being peculiarly pleasant. It is highly recommended to any one subject to throat infections. A little lemon juice can be added, if desired.

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.

A Doughnut Contest.

"Ting-a-ling," rang the postman's alarm, and little Miss Rosebud flew up from the Sleepy Hollow chair in which she had been lounging, and was at the hall door in a twinkling.

"Something from the Vavasour girls—that means fun," she announced, as she came back into the room, tearing open a pale brown envelope with eager fingers—and sure enough, there fell out one of the most unique invitations ever issued to festive gathering. It was made from heavy water-color paper, cut, and tinted the shape and color of a doughnut, and around the ring was printed in tiny gold letters:

Come and eat me, at No. 125 Hawthorne Street, January eighteenth, 1892, from 7 to 10 p. m.

Though the prospect of nibbling a colossal doughnut for three hours at a stretch, seemed a slightly appalling one, Miss Rosebud, nothing daunted, announced her delighted intention of accepting the invitation, despite the fact that this was her first season out, and she would thereby miss a very grand, and very tiresome dinner-party.

So when the evening arrived, she departed, in one of the simplest of her pretty evening frocks; and knowing I was anxious to hear what kind of an entertainment it proved to be, she came into my room the next morning, and told me all about it.

"You know the Vavasour's dining room is decorated in buff and brown," she began, drawing her footstool close to my side. "It is just the cosiest room, and precisely the thing for that kind of a party. The carpet was covered with a brown linen crumb cloth, and the portiere had been taken away from the folding doors, that were pushed completely back, while four brass hooks projected at equal distances from the top of the door frame.

"Mrs. Vavasour, Grace, and Mildred, all wore dainty tea gowns of ecru china silk, with brown embroideries; and after we had laughed and chatted a few moments, the two girls came in, each

carrying a tray, upon which rested a pyramid of doughnuts wound with bright colored narrow ribbons.

"There were forty of us, and,—Mrs. Vavasour explained,—a like number of doughnuts, every four being wound with ribbon of the same color. We were each to draw one, and then sort ourselves out,—the four persons holding doughnuts tied with yellow, forming one set,—the 'blues' another,—the 'lavenders' a third—and so on.

"When we were nicely arranged in ten sets of four each, Mrs. Vavasour sat down at a little table close to the folding doors, upon which were pens, ink, paper, and her watch, and requested the 'yellows' to please take their places in the doorway. Lou Rogers, Tom Sayer, Fred. Winthrop, and I, were the 'yellows,'—and as we advanced, Grace and Mildred took our doughnuts from us, and unwinding the ribbons attached, tied one end of each, to each of the four hooks, so they hung just an inch or so above the level of our mouths. Then our hands were firmly tied behind us, and we were ranged in order beneath the hooks,—facing the rest of the company.

"It was then explained, that the guest out of all others, who should devour his or her doughnut in the shortest time,—the record of which was kept by Mrs. Vavasour,—would be entitlee to first prize,—while the most belated one, would prove the 'booby.'

"Then the word was given slowly,—'one, two, three, eat' and the fun began.

"You can realize the comical difficulty of trying to devour a bobbing doughnut fastened to a string on a level with your nose, at any rate of speed, especially with hands fettered behind you; but suffice it to say I never laughed so much in my life, after my own turn was over, and the rest took theirs. There wasn't a sober face in the whole company, and the fun kept increasing every moment, until the last doughnut was eaten up at precisely at nine o'clock, and it was discovered that Dick Rogers had taken first prize,—the dearest cup and saucer, in two shades of brown and gold, that Mildred painted, and fired herself. Dick gave it to Lou of course, and the 'booby'—a cunning, round bronze card receiver, was bestowed upon me,—but as it was filled with delicious chocolate bonbons, I found that 'Defeat is sometimes sweet,' as the little printed card on top announced.

"And then we all sat down to ten little round tables lighted with yellow fairy lamps, and had luncheon served us, every article of food being ring shaped.

"The menu, itself, was printed in circular fashion, on tiny coffee-colored, cardboard plaques, and included chicken croquette, muffins, chocolate cakes, coffee jelly, chocolate ice-cream, and coffee and chocolate.

"Ten o'clock was now close at hand, and so on bidding our friends a grateful good-night, we all came home together by a 'round-about' way, as Tom Sayer declared, each one of the enthusiastic opinion, that for an all round good time, a Doughnut Contest bore away the palm."

Before the Ball.

See illustration on next page.

So deftly dressed, so wondrous fair,
And with a diamond in her hair
Which lights her upward from the glow
That follows from the room below
Toward shaded lamp and silenced floor
(How soon she finds that curtained door!)
To where the baby sleeps in bliss,
Dreaming perhaps of good-night kiss.

How dear he is, that sleeping thing!
What untold chords his pulses sing!
And lilies, too, and violets, rose,
Seem breathing from that soft repose,
Soft, undefined, his outlines are,
But sculpture rare to young mamma;
He is a garden of delight,
Which blossoms in the pale moonlight.

How much to her that little span
She holds in him, her future man!
Before her now sweet visions rise;
Each year shall bring a glad surprise,
Brave powers unfold, for he to her
Is poet, hero, conqueror.
Has life another phase like this—
The rapture of that good-night kiss?

How gently beats the little heart,
That pulse which is of hers a part!
How fondly swells beneath the lace
Her pride, her love, her sense of race!
He is her own, her child, her boy!
And she would ask no other joy,
But now she hears from anxious mate,
"My love, don't make the carriage wait."

Say, warrior, little statesman, poet
(When you get old enough to know it.
This weary world, with all its glare),
Does there still linger in your hair
The perfume of that soft embrace?
Better by far than pride of place,
Have you found greater joy than this?
What wreath was worth that mother's kiss?