

MINNIE MAY'S DEPARTMENT.

MY DEAR NIECES,—

No one can drive through the country without being struck with the difference in farmhouses and their surroundings. Some look well cared for and comfortable, while others have a neglected and miserable appearance. Here is a farm with a cosy, snug little dwelling house on it—only a simple frame cottage, but well-kept and clean. Graceful creepers cover the walls and add beauty to the building, and close by is a neat garden filled with a great variety of flowers and vegetables. Not far off are the stables and barn, all in good order, with the cattle quietly standing about, chewing the cud and looking the picture of contentment. The fences, too, are trim and tidy; no gaps in them or fallen pieces. If we step inside the home the same order and cheerfulness prevail. Everything is in place and cosy-looking, inviting us to enter and rest; flowers blooming in the windows, brightening the room. Everything about the place, inside and outside, suggests order and comfort; aye, even prosperity. "Surely," we exclaim, "this farmer and his family are on the road to success." And they deserve it, too!

But we come to another scene by no means so enchanting. What a tumble-down place! What an air of general neglect! Shingles off the roof; in the windows a few broken panes of glass, patched, perhaps, with paper or rags; garden nowhere; kitchen refuse thrown anywhere; vegetable scraps adorning the paths; dirt and cobwebs over all, with possibly a pig or a calf lending grace and beauty to the scene at the back door. Look at the outbuildings; doors off their hinges, or will not fasten. Nice wide spaces in the fences, through which the cattle and pigs may pass "at their own sweet will," and cause the loss of many a half-hour to their owner while he chases them out. The animals are all standing about, but they have not the peaceful, contented look of their neighbor's across the way. They seem to say: "Here we are, poor, neglected creatures! We have the misfortune to belong to a man who cares neither for us nor our comfort. How would he like to exchange places with us? Would that we had a home as pleasant as our friends next door; but we are only dumb animals and must suffer patiently." No one seeing a farm of this description would think of associating with it the word "prosperity."

So it is all over the country. We need not go far to see both kinds of farmers' homes; they are everywhere. But every farmer and his family ought to aim at improvement in their home. It is not necessary to have expensive outer buildings or fine houses, but we can all have homes—cosy, cheery, inviting and bright. We can make our house have a "homey" look, both outside and inside. We can remember the climbing vines and the plots of brilliant flowers; the orchard, with its tempting produce; the garden, with its many varieties of vegetables for our tables; and the trees, with their refreshing shade on a hot day. Inside we can follow the same lines and make everything just as inviting as possible. A pot or two of paint and a few rolls of wall paper will work wonders under a judicious hand.

A good way to work is to have a particular object in view and try to attain it. We might lay our plans as to what is most needed. First, it might be a new reaper or a rake for the goodman, or a washing machine or a better churn for his wife, or something equally necessary; but let us work for that, trying to save a few cents here and there, and we shall gain our object by and bye. Do you not think, my dear girls, that things acquired in this way have far more interest and value to us than if we got them easily? It is human nature to prize what is difficult to obtain. It is hard work—hard, steady work—to make our homes just what we wish them to be, but how great is the pleasure of living with the object of getting on. This month is just the very best time to begin. Winter will soon be forgotten, and Nature will revive again. Dear nieces, do not forget the tiny seeds now, if you would have a beautiful home in summer. Many seeds should be sown now in boxes, and with a little care will be ready for transplanting later on. A few packets cost only a few cents, and then the wealth of color and fragrance which we may have! Nasturtiums, poppies, morning glories, geraniums and others, for color; and for their delightful odor, what is better than mignonette, violets, heliotrope

or roses? Did someone say, "Oh! such common flowers; anyone can grow these." Yes, they are common, and that is a glorious thing, for beauty and fragrance may thus be everywhere. It is people's own fault if they have surroundings devoid of beauty and taste. A girl once said to me: "I am sick of geraniums—vulgar, scarlet things, in everybody's windows. I hate them!" What do you think of this? I am pretty sure you do not agree with such a foolish remark. All flowers are lovely, however plentiful they may be. Shall we all try to have lovely flowers this summer, girls? We can if we only begin in time. Let us each endeavor to make our home the most pleasant place in the world for our dear ones, and to think of a farmer's home as an ideal one.

Your loving old Auntie,
MINNIE MAY.

"A Difficult Step."

Our last picture was sad, but here is a decided contrast. How proud and pleased the wee dancer looks as she practices her difficult step, and surely it must be rather difficult with such a long dress! Some months ago we had Little Pepita dancing to her old grandfather's accordion music in the quaint Dutch kitchen. Here, however, is something quite different, and there seems to be a certain atmosphere of wealth. The attitude is very graceful, particularly in the holding of the castanets; also the young guitarist is most attractive. The instrument is a trifle larger than is generally seen, but perhaps in those times they were larger. Dance on, little girl, with the sweet face and old-fashioned frock—we think that difficult step is nearly perfect.



"A DIFFICULT STEP."

Our Library Table.

THE LOST HEIR. G. A. Henty.—This author is so widely known as one who usually tells of thrilling adventure that a departure from this style comes as a surprise. This is a clever detective story, but on entirely new lines, the unravelling of the mystery being due to reading the motions of the lips—a system largely taught to the deaf and dumb—and, in this story, successfully pursued by two charming young ladies.

RICHARD CARVEL. Winston Churchill.—Few books have been as much talked about this season. It is certainly cleverly conceived, and deals with the olden time when George was king, and England and America were at daggers drawn. The hero is a fine, brave fellow enough in warfare, but in his love affair somewhat timid, for Mistress Dorothy Manners flouts him terribly—but we will not reveal whether this treatment continues, for it would be a pity to spoil the end. Many leading characters of those stirring times are introduced, amongst them William Pitt and Charles Fox. This book will be specially welcome to those who like historical novels. Copp, Clark & Co., Toronto.

IN THE GOLDEN DAYS. Edna Lyle.—As mentioned above of Henty's book, this author departs from her usual style, and instead of (sometimes overmuch) religious argument, gives us a powerful and beautiful story of brave self-sacrifice, which makes the heart glow to read. All Miss Lyle's books are well written and have a noble purpose, and often introduce the same characters, but this is of a different and earlier time.

KIT KENNEDY. S. R. Crockett.—In style much resembling the same author's delightful "Cleg

Kelly." You have Kit from childhood to manhood, and there is that masterly blending of humor and pathos which always distinguishes Crockett's work. Of boys' description he is simply pastmaster, and one cannot help but love them. William Briggs, Toronto.

Recipes.

FOR THE BATH OR WASH BASIN.

One pound of oatmeal, 1 pound orris root, 1 pound Castile soap shaved fine. Mix these ingredients well, and fill little bags of cheese cloth, about the size of a very small egg or large walnut. Leave in the water a few minutes before bathing. This causes a delightfully softening effect on the bath, and is specially suitable for winter.

POLISH FOR OAK.

Two ounces of beeswax (cut fine), 1 ounce of white wax. Cover with turpentine and let stand for 24 hours. Cut fine 1 ounce of Castile soap, and dissolve in 1 gill of boiling water. Add this to the mixture and shake until it is a creamy liquid.

SLICED EGGS WITH GRAVY.

Six eggs, boiled hard, and, when cold, sliced. One half cup of fine bread or cracker crumbs, to which a little pepper and salt are added. One raw egg, beaten light. One cup of gravy, well-seasoned and heated. Dip each slice of the hard-boiled egg into the beaten egg; roll them in the crumbs. Lay the eggs in a frying-pan in which you have melted some good dripping, and fry until light brown on both sides. As soon as they are done put them into a hot dish and pour over them the boiling gravy.

EGG TOAST.

Beat four eggs all together thoroughly. Put two tablespoonfuls of butter into a saucepan and melt slowly, then pour in the eggs and heat without boiling, over a slow fire, stirring constantly. Add a little salt, and when cooked, spread on slices of nicely browned toast, and serve at once.

GOOD RECIPE FOR A JELLY CAKE.

One cup of sugar; butter the size of an egg; 1 egg; 1 cup of sweet milk; 2 teaspoons baking powder; 2½ cups of flour. Bake in layers.

DOLLY VARDEN CAKE.

One-half cup of butter, beaten to a cream; 1 cup of sugar added; and the beaten whites of 3 eggs; 2 cups of flour and 2 teaspoons of baking powder; 1 cup of milk, and flavoring. Use the yolks for icing, and bake the cake in layers.

Dissolution.

Mr. Raggles—"You've been an' made a mistake with my washin', Mrs. Mangles, and sent 'ome three old hankychers as don't belong to me, an' nothink else."

Mrs. Mangles—"Lor! Mr. Raggles, that ain't hankychers; that is your shirt as 'as come to pieces in the washin' at last."

Begun it First.

An old minister in the Cheviots used, when excited in the pulpit, to raise his voice to a loud half whisper, half whine. One day a shepherd had brought with him a young collie, who became so thrilled by the high note of the preacher that he also broke out into a quaver so like the other that the minister stopped short. "Put out that collie!" he said, angrily. The shepherd, equally angry, seized the animal by the neck, and, as he dragged him down the aisle, sent back the growling retort at the pulpit, "It was yersel' begoud it!"

The Birthday Flower.

For a child's birthday party let the table be decorated with the flower of the month in which the child was born, as: January, snowdrop; February, the primrose; March, violet; April, daisy; May, hawthorn; June, wild rose; July, lily; August, poppy; September, convolvulus; October, hops; November, chrysanthemum; December, holly. Each has an appropriate sentiment attached to it: The snowdrop means consolation; the primrose, youthful sunshine; the violet, modesty; the daisy, innocence; the hawthorn, hope; the wild rose, simplicity; the lily, purity; the poppy, the comfort of sleep; the convolvulus, contentment; hops, aspiration; the chrysanthemum, cheerfulness; holly, foresight and protection.

Smith—One of Jones' sons was an idiot. What became of him? Brown—He got a position as a truck driver, and is getting along well.