

INGLE NOOK CHATS

Dear Friends,—Almost the end of April! Season of warm rains and southern breezes, of song-birds and marsh-marigolds, of shooting grasses and wild-flowers in the wood, of awakening interest to all the world, and the renewed hope that comes with seeing the earth burst forth in the glad new life which proclaims with each springtide, "God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world." Do you feel all this, Ingle Nook friend? Oh yes, you do; the story is written in your face these mild spring days. I can see you often, you know, best of all, perhaps, in the twilight, when the "work" is all done, and you have time in which to think a little, and feel how good most things are after all. . . . You are sitting in your kitchen, perhaps alone, for the "men" haven't come in yet, and the rest of the family are all "out around" somewhere. Your lamp hasn't been lighted, but there is a ruddy fire in the stove, and the light of it runs rampant over the floor which you have scrubbed so carefully, and up along the white walls where the shadows seem to run off into the corners, and dance little hobgoblin capers there. The door is open, and through the doorway you can see the gray fields, with a thin April fog hanging low over them. . . . Presently you go over and stand there, with your hand on the doorpost. You look away out and down to the marsh, over which a long red gleam shows where the sun has sunk; then on to that little clump of trees, among which the "gustful April mornings" have already begun to "puff the swaying branches into smoke." . . . How still the air is! From the marsh away off there you can hear the frogs quite plainly, but their shrill "chirr-r-r" does not jar upon you; it comes to you, rather, with a sort of musical cadence, which you love to hear. Somewhere a robin is rollicking away as though it were morning; somewhere else a dog barks, and, nearer, the sound of an axe cuts the air with a measured thud, thud. . . . Common sounds these, and not much music in them? Perhaps so; yet, while listening to them, there comes a quiet smile on your face, which the grand st. overture of Bach or Beethoven, heard in the brilliantly lit music hall, amid the rustle of gowns and bewilderment of fair faces and hearts far from yours could never bring there. After all there is no perhaps about it. There is music here for you as you stand in your open door. You know it, and I know it, though there may be some who cannot understand. For these we may feel just a little bit sorry.

But now I must stop rambling on in this way. A little heap of envelopes on my desk reminds me that there are guests present, and that it will never do for the hostess to do all the talking. I am delighted to make room for these friends.

COUSIN BEE AND HER LAMPS.

Dear Dame Durden,—I am one of the many who are deeply interested in your "Ingle Nook Chats," and I would dearly like to become an occasional contributor. I likewise am one of the many farmers' wives, who cannot persuade a girl to live in the country now; although I have kept servants steadily until two or three years ago. Now, I am planning continually how to lessen the work, that I can save some time for visiting, or more congenial work, for a portion of the day. I have gained many useful hints from your columns, and, if possible, I would like to give some. I wonder if I am an exception, when I say, I used to abominate cleaning the lamps; but since it has fallen to my lot to do them regularly, I have so changed

the manner of doing them, that now it is a pleasure, instead of a burden. To begin with, I wash all the bowls thoroughly, rinse well, and dry them perfectly. The burners can be boiling, with washing soda in the water, while the lamps are being washed. One can make them look like new by rubbing and polishing well with Meyer's Putz cream. I have found nothing like it for brightening brass. I invariably wash my chimneys in the morning, and dry them with a nice glass towel. COUSIN BEE.

NOTES FROM "SEABIRD."

Dame Durden,—Here is a recipe for quick-rising bread, which I have seen for years without a failure: In the morning, stir in a bowl, one cup lukewarm water; one cup flour; one tablespoonful sugar; one tablespoonful salt, and one Royal yeast cake, which has been previously dissolved. Set in the cupboard to rise. In the evening, boil one quart potatoes in three pints of water; when nearly cool, mash the potatoes in the water in which they were boiled, stir in the bowl of rising, which you set in the morning, cover closely to keep warm. In the morning, it will be light. Then set your bread; use half this mixture for yeast; keep the other half in a cool place, where it will not freeze, for the next time you bake. Stir, let rise, knead, let rise again, knead and form into loaves in the ordinary way. This bread requires close watching, as it passes through all the stages in less than half the time of that made by the slow process. Set in the morning, and you can bake it while getting dinner. Be sure not to set at night, as it rises so fast it will be spoiled before morning. Remember, yeast in bread is plant life, and treat it accordingly. Don't freeze or scald it, but just keep it covered up warm (in winter warm the flour), and it will grow. Don't stir or knead it until it is developed, as the plants should not be broken until they are ripe. A cheese box makes an excellent bread tray.

Tenderfoot will find beef dripping a very good substitute for lard. If, when using, he melts the dripping, warms the milk or water, and in winter warms the flour, then it will not form in hard lumps of tallow.

When the bread is ready for the pans, take a piece, according to the size of the family, knead into it two or three tablespoonfuls of shortening, form into balls, flour the underside, dust the board with flour, and place them not too close together; let rise; drop into water almost boiling; boil for fifteen minutes. Lift the dumplings out hurriedly, and place in a hot oven immediately; allow them to remain two minutes; then serve with sugar syrup. Hoping this may be useful, Yours sincerely, SEABIRD.

JOTTINGS FROM HELP-ON-A-BIT.

Dear Dame Durden,—Again in answer to Tenderfoot's request, I send you a few recipes for hungry, hard-working people; the dainty expensive dishes we will leave to the cookbooks: First, a good, plain cake can be made by taking four cups—by cup I mean one that will hold half a pint—of light dough; two cups of brown sugar; one of soft dripping; one of currants; one of raisins, a little mixed spice or nutmeg. Work all thoroughly together; put in a greased pan, and set to rise in a warm place for about half an hour; then bake in a moderate oven for about an hour. Second, a good cake can be made with four cups of flour, if you have sour or buttermilk; crush with a knife a teaspoonful of baking soda, and mix it dry into the flour; then add two cups brown sugar; one of soft dripping or lard. Then rub with your hands until thoroughly mixed and smooth. Then add one cup of currants; one of raisins; spice to taste, or a teaspoonful of essence of lemon or vanilla. Then take a spoon—a wooden one is best—and stir in the milk until you have a nice soft dough. Then beat it until it has a

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