

In Praise of Homespun.

Dear Aunt Mary: Although I am very busy, I cannot refrain any longer from writing to you. I've been very much interested in the sensible health talks in The Progressive Farmer, also the clippings concerning Mrs. George Vanderbilt's wearing homespun dresses. I have spun many an ounce of cotton and woven many a yard of cloth. I have a homespun dress now that was woven over thirty years ago, and I prize it very highly because my mother dyed the blue that went into it with real indigo that she raised at home. I sometimes think that if people had kept up making their own clothes at home there would have been less pride and haughtiness than there is, and that the whole country would have been better off, for then our girls would have known how to make their own clothes at home. June and July are the months when we are most annoyed with flies. I get rid of them by getting large bunches of pusley and hanging them around the room. I change them every week or two, and am not bothered much with flies. Many good wishes to you, Aunt Mary, to your department, and to The Progressive Farmer.

A READER.

Wayne Co., N. C.

Words.

Dear Aunt Mary: I find the study of words a very great pleasure; and I never feel like the time so spent is wasted. Whether we realize it or not, this life is a course of preparation for the next. Here we are schooled for the great hereafter, and our joy or misery depends on how we learn our lessons. Many of these lessons depend on the import of single words, such as hope, love, faith, holiness, temperance, and so on. With the Bible in my hand and plenty of good scientific books nearby I spend many pleasurable days. A word is the sign of an idea, and may be spoken or written: an idea is the mental image of anything, and an image is a copy, a likeness, a picture. It is said that we who hear think in words, because words represent ideas or mental images, while the uneducated deaf mutes think in pictures. The imagination re-combines the material furnished by experience or memory for the accomplishment of an elevated purpose, conceives and expresses the ideal. Shakespeare says:

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth,
from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown,
The poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to
airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

I wish you a very pleasant summer.
MINNIE.
Cumberland Co., N. C.

Every One Should Have Work.

Dear Aunt Mary: We find so many people who are sitting around doing nothing, waiting for success to come to them, but if we ever wish to be successful we must have a work to do, must live for something, be something, and do something. First, we should prepare for our future life by securing a good education that will qualify us for our work. We must be polite to everybody, must have gentle manners. The great Chesterfield said true politeness is perfect ease and freedom. It simply consists in treating

others just as you wish to be treated yourself, and we cannot be true gentlemen unless we are polite, face the difficulties and shake hands with them.

If we wish to make life a success we must be true to our fellowmen, true to our country, and greatest of all, true to our God.

JOHN S. DIXON.

Pitt Co., N. C.

Rest-Rooms in Town for Women Shoppers.

Dear Aunt Mary: This warm weather brings to my mind a paragraph in The Progressive Farmer of some months ago relative to a rest-room for farmers' wives and daughters.

A lady had recommended rest-rooms in our city for farmers' wives and daughters, suggesting that a room be set apart in our court houses for that purpose, and supplied with hot and cold water etc.

I think it is a glorious idea and hope that it soon will be realized in our Southern cities. Farmers' wives and daughters could then accompany their men-folks to town and enjoy every moment of the time, whereas, they now have to wait in stores, on some corner of the street, in a vacant lot, at the postoffice or some other public and uncomfortable place. If they had the rest-room it should be arranged for cooking and serving refreshments or light luncheon. I like the idea of couches, with lots of cushions and fans, magazines and papers. There should be a lady care-taker for the room, whose duty it would be to see that all those who frequented it were made to feel at home, and to keep everything in order.

SINCERE.

Clarke Co., Ga.

The Hay Box or Fireless Cooker.

During these warm summer days the housekeeper is casting about in her mind for every contrivance that will shorten her stay in the kitchen. A very interesting cooker called the hay box or fireless cooker, is attracting considerable attention just now. To quote, in part from the Farmers' Bulletin, 296, of the United States Department of Agriculture:

Considerable interest has been manifested recently in a system of cookery in practice in Norway and other parts of Europe, in which boiling hot food in tightly covered receptacles is packed in some non-conducting material in such a way that it keeps hot for a long time and slowly cooks. As hay is commonly used in Europe as a packing, the cooker is frequently called a "hay box cooker." Sometimes it is spoken of as a Norwegian nest, and the name "fireless cooker" is also used. The principle involved is a simple one, namely, the retention of heat and hence the continuation of cooking by surrounding hot food with some non-conducting material.

Such cookers may be readily made at home, and even when they are of very simple construction, they give good results provided they are well-packed with insulating material. A tightly-covered tin or enameled can or bucket or a kettle preferably without a handle, but having a tight cover, and a wooden box and packing material are the essential features. The packing box or other receptacle should be considerably larger, say three or four inches in every direction, than the vessel used for cooking. Line the box with several thicknesses of paper or with asbestos. Over the bottom of the box should be spread a thick layer of hay, crumpled newspaper, or similar ma-

terial tightly packed. The cooking vessel is placed on the center of this and the spaces between it and the sides of the box packed full of hay or whatever is used. A thick cushion or pad of suitable size should be made for covering the top of the can and a wooden cover for the top of the box is also desirable. In some of the cookers which have been described in magazines, etc., thick felt, asbestos, cork, and other non-conducting materials have been used for packing, but good results have been reported with the simpler materials.

These cookers may be made to hold one or more cooking vessels, and in case space is desired for two or more it is convenient to divide the box into compartments.

The food which is to be cooked is brought to the boiling point in the can or bucket and cooked for a short time, two or three to twenty minutes usually, or perhaps ten minutes on an average (though the time depends upon the material and should be learned by experience, and is tightly covered and placed in the nest and covered on top with the cushion and the lid of the box closed. The cool air of the room cannot pass through the packing to the can, nor can the heat inside it pass through the non-conducting material except very slowly, and so the food remains hot for several hours and cooks thoroughly and evenly without further attention. According to the Cornell report, "about twice as much time is required as in cooking over the flame. There is little evaporation, consequently care must be taken not to use too much water in preparation. Many articles of food are better for long, slow cooking, and as neither fire nor attention is needed (after the initial heating) it proves an economical means of preparing food for the table." An advantage claimed for the hay box cooker is that there are no noticeable odors from the cooking food.

The cooker must not be opened from the time the food is placed in

it until it is needed for serving, as the removal of the covering, etc., would mean an escape of heat.

Cookers constructed on the principle outlined have been tested for several years by the Commissary Department of the United States Army and have always given good satisfaction, particularly for the preparation of rations for soldiers on the march.

In this system of cookery the food is kept on the stove for only a short time, and hence only a small amount of fuel is required, and it has a further advantage in that it does not heat the rooms in which cooking is done.

By means of this cooker a breakfast cereal may be prepared by boiling it a few minutes in the evening, then packing it away in the cooker, and in the morning it will be ready for use. Soup can be prepared early in the day and will be ready for luncheon without any further attention. In the descriptions of the hay box cited above and other similar publications the writers, on the basis of personal experience, give directions for the preparation of vegetables, meats, soups, desserts, and other dishes, and the consensus of opinion seems to be that the hay box cooker is a convenient, economical, and labor-saving device.

The Chain Letter Cranks.

The postal authorities are seeking a way to stop the idiotic people who are sending the fake Bishop Lawrence prayer chain letters through the mails. It is a puzzling job to head off such imbeciles. Better let them spend their postage stamps and wipe out the postal deficit. Uncle Sam needs the money and the cranks do not.—Watson's Jeffersonian.

We publish elsewhere an advertisement of Littleton Female College, to which we call attention. This institution has had a remarkable history, and is one of the most successful schools in the South.

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