

**DANGER OF OAK LEAVES
POISONING STOCK IN SPRING**

Oak leaves, if eaten continuously by cattle, produce a sickness which frequently proves fatal, investigations conducted by specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture show. Most oak-leaf poisoning, the specialists say, occurs in the spring, for at that time there is a scarcity of green forage on many ranges and the craving which stock have for green food leads them to eat the leaves in excessive amounts. In order to cause sickness, however, oak leaves must be eaten almost exclusively. If eaten with other feed, the animals are not injured. It has been found experimentally that as small a quantity as 3 pounds daily of alfalfa hay fed in connection with oak leaves prevented poisoning. Observations on the range and ex-

perimental feeding both show that some cattle may eat oak leaves for a long time with no definite bad effects, and some will even eat them exclusively with no harm. Generally speaking, those that are injured show the results only after eating a considerable quantity through a rather prolonged period, usually from 16 to 35 days. The specialists point out that the oaks on many ranges furnish a most important element in summer feed when additional sources of forage are available, but they urge that care be exercised during the spring that cattle be not admitted to summer range at too early a date, for oak leaves are well advanced before the appearance of the grasses.

—Sixty-five thousand girls disappeared last year in the United States.

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THE LITTLEST MOTHER

(By Edna Boutwell)

The old-fashioned clock chimed 6. As if it were a signal, the Winsome Lady opened the door and peered down the dusky hall, her eyes filled with welcome for the figure hastily approaching.

"Oh, I'm so glad you came," whispered the Winsome Lady, drawing the tiny figure within the room and closing the door.

"Are you dearie?" laughed the little lady softly.

"Surely, and oh, Littlest Mother, I'm going home, and I'm glad—glad. Why, you're crying!"

Quick as a flash she was down on her knees before the weeping lady, and had laid her head in the wee lap.

The frail hands caressingly stroked the brown hair. For a moment there were silence, then the Littlest Mother spoke:

"You are a dear girl, Ruth, and I love you. I'm sorry you're going. But it's better, as you weren't made for settlement work. Are you going to marry the Doctor Man?"

The girl raised her head quickly. "Marry him?" she scoffed. "I'd sooner die!"

"Speak gently, girlie," chided the Littlest Mother.

With a toss of her head the girl arose and stood looking down to the street, which was filled with a motley, hurrying crowd. All at once she raised her eyes and gazed far into the distance, to where a thin spiral of smoke—pure, white, wonderful—was rising straight toward heaven.

"Oh, how I wish I were like that," breathed the girl, wiping away a tear.

"It went through dirt and flame to become like that," said a calm voice.

"You say things so beautifully. But talk to me," begged the Winsome lady, as she resumed her former position.

"I think you need a love story. It sometimes proves a cure for a certain sickness. I'll tell you my own love story."

"Yours!" smiled the girl, her brown eyes filled with a tender light.

"It was long ago," began the Littlest Mother, bending her white head, "when I was a girl. I lived in Ireland, by the sea. I loved and was loved by Thomas Wynne. One lovely moonlight night as we strolled hand in hand up the side of a woodland hill, I told Tammas that I was sure there were fairies about."

"Fairies—little men!" mocked he. "There are no such things!"

"We heard a peal of shrill laughter, but could see no one. Then Tammas turned boyishly to me and said: 'Wait for me, Ellen, wait for me!' With this he was gone. I waited for a long time and then, being childishly afraid, I went after him." Here the speaker's voice broke, but she continued gravely as if grown weary with the telling: "At the top of the hill I found Tammas—dead. Dead, with a smile on his face, and in his hands—a tiny silver button! The fairies had punished him and left their sign."

The girl's eyes were luminous with unshed tears. "But you don't believe that—do you?" queried the girl as they both arose.

"Of course! Every one believed it! But it's children I've always wanted. At night I dream of them, with their little hands that they hold out to me. I went to night school for long years—to be a teacher; but I came here, out of pity, I think. Today is my birthday, and I've saved enough to buy a ticket to Ireland. I don't feel like cleaning—in fact I don't feel very well"—she hesitated as the door opened and revealed the handsome debonaire doctor.

"I heard the story," he announced, flushing, "and, Ruth, forgive me! I'm not in the service, because I belong to the secret service."

"Oh, my dear," and the girl kissed him. "Why didn't you tell me? I thought you were a slacker!"

And the Littlest Mother, being worldly wise, slipped quietly out, into the crowded street.

Suddenly she heard her name called. She turned and confronted a Irish policeman known as Tim Reilly. By the arm he held a girl with painted lips and wide frightened eyes.

In his rich brogue he narrated to the tiny lady how the "slick un," as the girl was famed, had been caught stealing again.

"An' it's me as will give 'er her doos," he grinned.

"Let me whisper in your ear, Tim," commanded the Littlest Mother, as if she did not mind the curious throng.

"Sure an' I will," shouted Tim, straightening up; "ye air a saint. Take her if ye can find good in the loikes of her."

The wee lady's eyes twinkled like stars as she drew the girl into a doorway, while Tim dispersed the crowd.

"Take this," she said, giving the girl a roll of bills, "and try to be a better girl."

The girl looked shrewdly after the disappearing figure. "God—what a fool!" she sneered, and fled.

The Littlest Mother reached her cheerless room at last, and sank wearily down in a chair facing the distant sunset.

Below the window stood a wanderer, his violin tucked lovingly beneath his chin. Seeing the weary figure, he started to play a haunting melody.

The weary look fled, and the Littlest Mother, chancing to raise her eyes, gave a cry of surprise. For there, hung on the faded wall, was a picture of the Madonna and Child—the birthday gift of her friends.

"Tammas," whispered the Littlest Mother, "see the baby—and look—the mother smiles at me."

She stretched out eager, trembling hands toward the picture and almost unconsciously repeated these sweet old words she loved so well:

Do you think what the end of a perfect day
Can mean to a tired heart—
Well, this is the end of a perfect day.

Near the end of a journey, too—
Her voice broke as the wanderer ceased his play, and she bowed her

head on her hands, murmuring: "I've waited long, Tammas—I'm coming—I'm coming!"

And the dying sunset touched with a lingering caress the bent head, and the glory of it filled the room.

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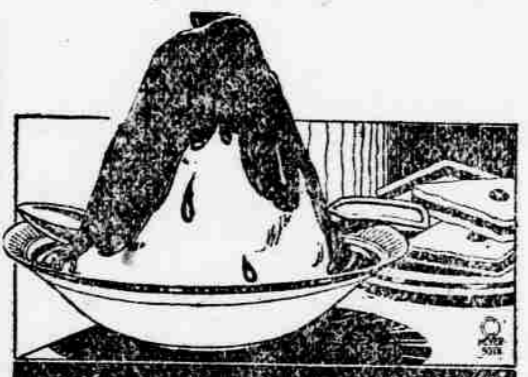
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