FARM·FIELD AND GARDEN

SUGAR CURED HAMS.

At a recent meeting of the farmers' institute the subject discussed was the best method of curing and keeping hams. All members agreed that the quality of meat depended in a great measure upon the kind of hogs and the way they were cared for. Much better meat is obtained from the pure-bred than from the common scrub. In order to be perfectly healthy they need plenty of range, with as great variety of food as possible, and plenty of fresh clear water. They should be killed in cold, frosty weather, hung up to cool over night. Several methods of salting and smoking were presented, but the following, which was given by a farmer who, after years of experience, has gained the reputation of having the best sugar-cured hams in the country, was accepted as the most satisfactory.

Cut the meat up in the morning and shape the hams nicely. Salt lightly to bring out the blood, and allow it to remain a day or two. Prepare a brine, using two pounds of salt, two ounces of saltpetre, two pounds of brown sugar, one ounce of red pepper, and five gallons of water for each one hundred pounds of meat. Let this brine, which should be strong enough to float an egg, stand until the ingredients have dissolved, then place the hams in a tight barrel and pour the brine over them until they are covered. After ten days pour the brine off and cover with fresh brine prepared as the first was. When they have been in the brine a month, take them out, wipe them with a dry cloth, and while still damp sprinkle powdered borax over them, using a tablespoonful to ten pounds of meat. A large pepper is a great help in applying it. Hang them up and smoke with hickory chips two or three weeks. Slip each ham into a flour sack, tie the ends securely, and hang them up in a cool dry place until you wish to use them. The preservative qualities of borax are recognized by all who have tried it, and it is now used in all the large packing houses. The best meat is made of hogs weighing 180 to 200 pounds. It has long been a question among progressive farmers as to whether it paid to produce hogs weighing over 300 pounds, and we are quite certain that when the object is to obtain meat of a superior quality it does not.

MICE AND TREES.

In considering the enemies of apple trees it is well to count in mice. They often injure young trees by gnawing the bark off near the ground. While not so dangerous as rabbits, they ruin many trees. The surest and best way to prevent their depredations is to wrap the bodies of the trees with wire screening. This protects the tree from three of its enemies — rabbits, mice and borers.

When the trees get large enough to render such protection impracticable, other means of mice-proofing trees must be considered. The first thing to do is to clean all grass and weeds away from the tree trunk, for they furnish a harboring place for mice. Under the protecting cover of a heavy growth of grass mice will girdle trees, and the injury not be noticed until the tree begins to die the following spring. It is also a good idea to mound the earth up around the base of the trunk in the fall, removing the mound late in the spring.

It is difficult to mice-proof trees by washing them with some liquid preparation, for, unlike rabbits, mice are omniverous, and grease and greasy substances are not distasteful to them. Trees barked by mice may be protected from serious injury by throwing earth up against the gnawed places. The moist ground keeps the wood from drying out and new bark forms rapidly.

A SHREWD BUYER.

In a recent number of the Shepherd's Bulletin a breeder boasts that he recently sold twenty-five ewes, and his flocks were so even in quality that the buyer agreed to take the first twenty-five that went through the gate. That certainly speaks well for the uniformity of the flock, but it also shows some shrewdness on the part of the buyer. Those that go ahead are those that are the natural leaders of the flock, and likely to be the strongest and most vigorous. The custom of having a bell wether to lead the flock is so seldom followed now that it devolves on the strongest ewes to take the leadership when there is no ram with the flock, and even if there were it is probable that the best ewes would be in the advance next to him, unless at a season when they were heavy with lamb. This is true in regard to nearly all stock. When you see them self-assertive, and even aggressive, you will find them hearty eaters, strong, healthy, and with good digestive powers.

DISINFECTING STABLES.

When milk has a strong taint at the time it is drawn, the trouble is usually not due to bacteria, and it can be removed by aeration. But when it is natural at first, and gradually becomes more and more tainted, the longer it is held, bacteria are probably to blame, and if the dairy is badly infected with them, energetic measures are too often required to get rid of them. If the affected milk is not harmful to health, but only objectionable on account of its taste or smell, its entire loss may be made unnecessary by pasteurizing or sterilizing it as soon as possible after it is drawn and before much of a change has been made, and then using it immediately or keeping it where further infection cannot take place. But this treatment does not effect the source of the trouble, and if that is not overcome by sterilizing all utensils and practising scrupulous cleanliness everywhere, the disinfection of the stable or the killing of all the germs must be undertaken.

Whitewash partially serves the purpose of disinfection; it should soon follow other agents which are employed when more thorough work must be done. Before disinfection the stable should be carefully cleaned as above detailed, and any fodder which may have been stored where it was exposed should be destroyed.

DAIRY AND STOCK.

It is the poorest kind of policy to try to keep forty cows on a twenty-cow farm. Better to give the 20 better care than to half starve the 40.

One thing which will follow the high price of beef will be a decided drifting into cattle raising on the part of our eastern farmers. It always works that way. Then beef will flatten down and we will hurry out into something else. But a steady gait is best.

In the barnyard manure heap we have a source of fertility of greater value than most of us realize, and so we fail to make the most of it. We allow the storms and the sunshine to make drafts on it. Part of it oozes away through the ground, and altogether we lose a large share of what ought to be turned to account on our fields. The result is our farms grow just so much the poorer every year. It is not right. Let's turn over a new leaf with the new year.

MAN'S SEWING AND WOMAN'S.

One Cardinal Difference Between Them.

"'A good seamstress never takes long threads.'

"Thus Mrs. Billtops," said Mr. Billtops; "and if anybody is qualified to speak on such subjects, she is.

"Now, I have done more or less sewing myself in the course of my life in one situation and another, and I always took, as I still do, a long thread. I believe that most men would do just the same thing, take a good big needleful.

"But women, it seems, or good seamstresses, anyway, never take long threads, and I am informed that, besides finding in the short thread certain specific advantages, they can sew as long a seam with a short thread as a man can with a long thread.

"This they accomplish simply by greater accuracy in their work. The man with a needle and thread takes in cloth on either side of the seam regardless. In one stitch he may take in just the right amount, in the next stitch he may exceed that limit by a sixteenth or an eighth of an inch, or more, and the way in which that manner of sewing uses up thread is astonishing.

"The woman never does anything of that sort. She takes in just enough cloth and no more, and so gets over as much ground with a short thread as a man does with a long one.

"But the specific advantages of the short thread over the long one are many and great. There is less liability of a short thread's kinking; there is less likelihood of the short thread's bight catching on a fold or bunch of the cloth.

"The arm of the sewer doesn't have to be swung so far in drawing the short thread through after the needle and so the sewing requires less physical exertion. Finally, and greatest advantage of all, by sewing with a short thread more work can be accomplished in a given time.

"So as between the long thread, or man's way, and the short thread, or woman's way of sewing, there can be no doubt which is the better."

QUENCHING THIRST AT SEA.

Many years ago Dr. Hing suggested to Captain Kennedy that thirst might be quenched by dipping the clothing in salt water and putting it on without wringing it out. The captain, on being cast away, succeeded in persuading some of the men to follow his example, and they all survived, while the four who refused and drank salt water became delirious and died. Captain Kennedy goes on to say: "After these operations we uniformly found that the violent thirst went off and the parched tongue was cured in a few minutes when we had bathed and washed our clothes, while we found ourselves as much refreshed as if we had received some actual nourishment."

TO MARKET ON STILTS.

An interesting and picturesque custom in Southwestern France is that of going to market on stilts. Groups of young men and women mounted on high stilts may be seen daily crossing the marshy plains known as "The Landes." "The Landes" are cut up into small ditches, pools, and hummocks, and stilts are, in consequence, almost necessary to those who desire to traverse them.

About the ....House

DOMESTIC RECIPES.

Brown Bread.—One and a half cups Indian meal, 1½ cups rye, half cup buttermilk (the top), half cup molasses, one teaspoon soda, and nearly two cups warm water. Bake slowly three and a half hours. Very nice.

Apple Betty.—Butter a mold and slice tart apples thinly. Take thin slices of stale bread, dip each quickly in hot milk; arrange bread and apples in layers, seasoning each layer with bits of butter and sifting sugar over it; add also raisins or bits of figs cut in pieces. Pour over the top half a cup of milk, or more, according to the quantity of apple, etc., and bake till the apples are thoroughly done. Serve with a hard sauce, or with cream and sugar. Try this some day when you are tired of apple pie.

Baked Bananas.—Many who complain they cannot eat bananas would find it possible to do so if the bananas were baked. Tear a strip of skin from each banana, lay them in a baking dish, put a very little water in the pan, cover, and bake 25 minutes. Eat with sugar, or a sauce of sugar and butter. Some like a little lemon juice squeezed over them.

Coffee Jelly. — Pour a pint of boiling milk through a muslin bag containing three ounces of freshly ground coffee. Put an ounce and a half of soaked gelatine into a saucepan with a pint of cold milk, an inch of stick cinnamon and two tablespoonfuls of sugar. Let boil, and stir till the gelatine is dissolved. Mix the yolks of two eggs with the coffee, strain the milk and gelatine upon it, pour in a mold that has been wet with cold water, and let stand in a cold place till stiff. It should stiffen in about twenty-four hours.

Prune Whips. — Wash half pound prunes, then cover with cold water and let stand a few hours, over night is better. Cook until the juice is cooked out and they are tender, and then press through a colander. Add ¾ cup sugar, stir until it is dissolved. Beat the whites of four eggs to a stiff, dry froth, fold carefully into the prunes. Bake 25 minutes in a quick oven. Serve at once with cream. This makes a delicious dessert.

Layer Cake.—Sift twice two teaspoons baking powder with two teacups flour. Stir to a cream two tablespoons soft butter and one teaspoon granulated sugar. Add one teacup sweet milk, then stir in a little at a time the sifted flour. Bake in layers. Filling: Pare and slice two pleasant sour apples. Stew in a very little water until soft. Stir in one tea cup sugar the well-beaten yolk of an egg, add the juice of one and the grated rind of half a lemon. Cook five minutes, and while hot spread evenly between the layers. For the icing, dissolve one teacup granulated sugar in a very little water, boil until it will thread from a spoon, pour slowly into the frothed whites of two eggs and beat until of the right consistency to spread. Scatter over the top of the cake the thinnest possible slices of very soft ripe apples, and over them spread the icing with a knife, wetting it occasionally in cold water.

TABLE LINEN.

Pretty dishes and good napery are so cheap that almost any housekeeper can afford them, making the plainest fare attractive by the neatness and skill with which it is served. This is the season when the housekeeper usually lays in her supply for the year, and a few suggestions in regard to it may be helpful.

Red damask may be used for the breakfast table, but white is preferable at any other time. Some like cloths with fringe and borders all around them, but experience has taught us that the fringe soon becomes worn and ragged, and it is necessary to cut it off and hem the cloth all around, long before it is worn out. Very handsome linens are sold by the yard, and one may buy just the amount that is needed for the table. Do not hem them on the machine, as it gives a common appearance to the most elegant damask.

Provide a supply of doilies and centerpieces, for they save the large cloth, and make the table look well. Many of them are handsomely embroidered, but if the housewife cannot do such work, she can buy squares of butchers' linen and finish them with hemstitched hems.

Almost any design may be found in a large stock of table linen, and although large flower designs seem to be popular, the small clover leaf, dice and other old-fashioned patterns are still found.

If you wish to be economical, buy a good grade of unbleached linen, for it is cheaper to begin with, and lasts much longer than the bleached. It may be bleached as white as any by boiling it fifteen minutes in a strong suds made with gold dust washing powder, then rinse and hang it on the line in the sunshine. If the first trial does not whiten it enough, repeat the process. This treatment does not rot the goods, as bleaching powder or chloride of lime are almost sure to do.

Table linens that are not of the best quality are much improved in appearance by giving them a slight starching and thorough ironing, which makes them appear heavier in texture and weave than they really are. Many housekeepers laundry them without starch, but this is advisable only when the linen is of the heaviest quality.

USEFUL HINTS.

Boot laces that have been slightly waxed will not come untied.

Neither colds nor debts grow smaller when you contract them.

Love and faith and patience bring all things to a right issue in God's good time.

Teach the children to wait until they are waited upon at the table and not pass up their plates before their elders are served.

See that the children's feet are warm before they go to bed. Friction with a towel or warm hand is the best way of warming them.

If cane chairs are sagging in the bottom turn upside down and wash with soapsuds. Soak them well, and when dry the cane will be stiffened up to its normal shape.

Articles of white wool, such as towels, fascinators and hoods, can be cleaned without losing their fluffy softness by rubbing in a pan of warm flour. Shake vigorously in a good breeze outdoors and you will find the article cleaned looks "amaist as gude as new."

One reason we take cold is because the air we breathe is often impure. Animals that breathe fresh air all the time are not subject to colds. If we exclude fresh air and neglect to thoroughly air beds and bedding, our sleeping rooms will be filled with disease germs. To be healthy we must understand the hygienic principles of life and living.

A very simple method of rendering the soles of shoes or boots waterproof may be followed by any one. This is an effectual remedy, and is nothing more than a little beeswax and mutton suet warmed in a pan until in a liquid state. Then rub some of it slightly over the edges of the sole where the stitches are. This will repel the wet and not in the least prevent the blacking from having the usual effect.

If you have many pairs of little hands to cover in the winter time save all the old thick stocking tops or heavy knitted underwear. Make your own pattern for each child by laying their hands flat on a paper and marking a rough outline as a guide. They will often outwear "store" mittens and can be made in a few minutes. Mittens good enough for sliding and outdoor work can be made in the same way from heavy woollen cloth.

How many housewives ever think of using empty spools, or know that they can be utilized for clothes-pegs in closets, back rooms, etc. They are much better than a nail, as a nail sometimes rusts clothing and cuts the loops of coats. Get long wire nails with good large heads and drive through the hole in the spools. If possible get spools of uniform size as they look much better.

A BOOMERANG.

Of course a man may without reproach refer to the excellence of his own work, but it is never well to call attention to one's own skill by casting aspersions upon the ability of others. A piano tuner had nearly finished his work on her piano when he looked up and said to the lady of the house:

"Your instrument was in awful condition. You ought to have sent for me sooner."

"It was tuned only three months ago."

"Then the man who did it was ignorant of his business."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it, ma'am. He ought to be sawing wood or cleaning the streets instead of tuning pianos. A delicate instrument like a piano needs fingers equally delicate to handle it, and it needs an accurate ear, too. The person who attempted to tune this instrument last evidently had neither."

Here the tuner regarded his own hands complacently, and then continued: "In fact, I am free to say," he added, "that he did more harm than good."

"I can hardly think it is so bad as that."

"Well, he certainly didn't do it any good. May I ask who the man was?"

"Yes, it was yourself."

"Madam, you are mistaken. I never tuned a piano in this house before."

"Probably not; but you tuned that instrument, nevertheless, or attempted to. It belongs to Mrs. Jones, who sent it here for me to use while she is out of town. She told me you had always tuned it, and to send for you when it needed tuning again."

On his way back to the piano warehouse the tuner reflected solemnly on the irritating way some women have of presenting facts.

FINED FOR DANCING.

At Luchow, in Germany, 129 fathers have been fined one mark apiece for allowing their children under ten years of age to dance at the harvest festival of a village near by. The village pastor objected to the dancing and reported the case to the police. It was discovered, however, that his children had danced too, and he was fined with the rest.

Stammering is practically unknown among savage tribes.

TWO PICTURES

In fancy I see a beautiful country home with lovely surroundings. A neat housewife preparing a nice meal for the husband and children when they come home from their work, tired from the day's labor. I see the children running to see who will be first to greet their father, even the baby joining in the race. How the baby laughs as the father catches him up and he throws his chubby arms around papa's neck. The dear mother waits in the door to greet him with smiles of welcome. The father goes away, perhaps on a day's journey; how eagerly they listen for his coming as they gaze down the distant road, and how they rejoice at the first sight of his coming. They all run to meet him and greet him with smiles and kisses. They gather around his knees eager to tell him all the day's doings and to ask of all he has seen. The girls say to him: "Oh, papa! just think what we have done to-day; we've turned the matting on three floors, scrubbed the floors and washed all the windows."

"Oh, what smart little women you are; we'll have to find you something nice for this day's work."

In come the boys. One says: "Papa, we've saved fifty cents to-day."

The father insists upon knowing how they did it.

"Why, we chopped all the wood in the wood house!"

And the father, with a cheery smile, tells them how proud he is of them. And so life goes on in this happy home until the children are grown up and gone to homes of their own.

My fancy in its flight sees another home, where the mother in a shabby cottage, treeless and deserted looking, with nothing inviting around, goes about her daily toil from week's end to week's end; the children all in the field day by day; the father away from home the most of the time. He is getting ready to go to town; a daughter comes in: "Pa, please get me a yard of blue ribbon, two inches wide."

"What in the thunder do you want with that? I'd like to know."

"Well, I want to go to church tomorrow and I have nothing to wear around my neck."

"I'm not going to get it. I haven't neither the time nor the money to throw away on ribbons. If you want ribbons you'll have to get them yourself. It takes two hundred yards of ribbon here every year!"

The mother, heart-broken, but sympathizing with her daughter, says: "Why, papa, she hasn't had a yard of ribbon this year."

"That's all right; she can buy her own ribbon."

"I was going to send the money, pa."

"Well, if you've got the money, go and get it."

The daughter, fearing to speak again, goes away with a sad heart. She could not go to town if she had a way, which she had not, through deep woods and over rough roads. She goes into the kitchen and tells her sister what has happened.

"That's nothing more than I expected. It is mighty hard, but we'll have to stand it."

The mother follows to the kitchen. "What are you girls going to do this evening?"

"We'll scrub the floor first, then iron the rest of the day."

"Ma, ain't pa a tyrant?"

"Yes, child, but put up with it the best you can."

"I can't go to church. I haven't a thing to wear around my neck."

"I'll stay home, and you can wear my black ribbon."

"I don't want to do that."

"I'll stay at home; we'll have to bear these things the best we can."

"Yes; we've been bearing until I'm tired. I think it's time for a change."

"Children, your pa's coming; get through with your night work." The little chaps scamper and get to work, expecting nothing but scolding. And so it is; the girls come in from the cowpen and the boys from the barn to find the father fussing about something.

"I'm sure tired," said one of the girls.

"I expect you are," sneeringly replies the father. "What made you tired?"

"We've washed and scrubbed and ironed to-day and the old washboards are worn out."

"The dickens they are! You've had them no time. Your mammy used to do that much in half a day and had no rub board. There's always something wrong with you."

"Pa," said one of the boys, "did you see what a pile of wood we chopped to-day?"

"Yes, you cut up Jack to-day, didn't you, though? I could have cut that in a little while and it took you all day."

The boy goes out discouraged and disgusted, muttering: "I wish you had to try it a while."

So it goes on until one by one, all are driven away from home, driven away by unkindness. Children grow old and look old under unkind treatment. When a child is happy and treated with affection, there is sunshine in the face. Dear friends, these are two true pictures. If, dear sister, your home is like the last picture, ask your husband to read this letter and perhaps he will see himself in his true light.—Annie Laurie.