

Of Interest to Women.

UNTIDINESS: A COMPLAINT.

Our is an untidy civilisation. For the matter of that, mankind is an untidy race. The first cave man probably left the bones of his dinner lying round the door of the cave. Perhaps his wife gathered them upon the day when, according to Kipling, she put a mat at the door and said: "Now wipe your feet dear, before you come in."

Nature is untidy too, but in a different way, a way that dispenses with the need of kindness. The fallen leaves of autumn rot into the soil, and the spring verdure covers them and feeds upon them. The fallen trunk of some forest patriarch, broken under the weight of years, is clothed upon with soft mosses and ferns, and out of death come life and beauty. The method resembles perhaps that of the savage who puts on a fresh coat of oil for a festival, or the old English housewife who puts a fresh layer of rushes on the floor when the last lot had decayed. But its results are different, for with all her profusion Nature is the most careful of economists, she wastes nothing; and with all her untidiness she is the great beautifier whose methods we are always trying to copy.

Man, however, would be hopelessly untidy if it weren't for woman. Through all the ages she has had to toil after him tidying up the bones and litter of his wars and his huntings, and his buildings and un-buildings. Is there, for instance, a more untidy creature in this world than a carpenter? Yes, there is the bricklayer, and the man who puts down the concrete paths. After they have done their worst the prospective householder sends his wife or "gets a woman in" to scrub the floors, and tidy up.

"All fares the land to hastening ills a prey" then, where the women are untidy as well as the men.

I don't mean, by the way, that all men are untidy. No general statement is without exception; and there are some few "bright, particular stars" in whom a tidy nature shines through despite the bad training most boys receive in this particular; for the women seem in the past rather to have gloried in the task of tidying-up than to have made any attempt to correct the bad habits of man. But these tidy men are the exception, emphatically; the last incarnation. — How do you think they would like the idea?

Now, to come to the point we really have at heart, have you ever taken a tour round Invercargill for the purpose of observing the homes of the people? Have you ever gone over to Otatara, not merely to boil the lilly, but to look at the landscape? Have you ever used your eyes while in the country generally? And if so, can you conscientiously say, "Yes," to the question, "Are we a tidy people?" And by the way, have you ever walked through Dee street on Sunday morning, or cast a glance at the floor of a theatre (picture or otherwise), after the people had left. We throw bits of paper, lolly bags and boxes, parings of fruit, and all manner of such unsightly rubbish on the streets for some one else to sweep up; and if we go for a picnic up the Waihopai, we leave the lunch papers and apple cores behind us on the grass. Now, Nature, given time, can do something with the apple-cores; but the paper being a man-made article bothers her a good deal. The most she can do is to get the wind to gather it into a corner in the hope that in time the rain will wash it away; and a modern newspaper is too tough for that, even when the sou'-wester does its best.

The peculiar stage at present being passed through in the development of the country no doubt accounts largely for the dismal aspect of a country-side where gaunt dead trees and prostrate logs and chopped-off stumps disfigure the sky-line on all sides. But why are the fences so often tumbling over, and the gates off their hinges, or hitched up with a bit of barbed wire? And do all Southland farmers leave their ploughs, etc., standing in the fields? And why do country people rarely or never have a decent garden? They have manure at hand, they could have kept enough of the bush to give shelter, they could make time to work it—when there's a will there's a way—but you generally see their houses planted out in a bare wind swept paddock with no vegetation near-by, except a few cabbages struggling with the thistles. Here again, of course there are honourable exceptions—I speak of the general rule.

As for the men and youths who go rabbiting in the country, their untidiness is shocking to every well-ordered mind. They leave the entrails and bodies of rabbits all over the place. I suppose they say jauntily, "Oh, the hawks will get them."

There is hardly a straw to draw between town and country either. Tumble-down fences, dilapidated gates, long, rank,

ragged grass, unkempt hedges, and weedy yards (if an empty tin or can be added so much the better), indicate the degree of interest taken by many so-called "working men" in the immediate surroundings of their homes, and sometimes crooked blinds, and dingy screens held up by tapes with a dolorous droop in the middle, testify to the perverted nature of the housewife indoors.

And the Borough leads the way or shows the example, by the way in which it keeps the streets. Perhaps it can't get its employees to realise what tidiness really means.

The first step in "town-planning" or town beautifying here will need to be training in orderliness, and legislation to deal with the man who won't keep his garden decent.

Children's Column.

MATER'S LETTER BOX.

E.M., Tisbury.—We are pleased to receive your story which is very interesting. Mater has travelled a good deal in Africa, in the Gulf of Guinea, also the French province of Senegal and the Moonday river about 150 miles north of the Equator. Durban on the east coast is a delightful place for boys and girls. The sun seems to shine all the time and with the beautiful beach you can bathe all the year round in the waters of the Indian Ocean. I think you would like to be able to do that at Tisbury. You also have a black boy to carry your bathing outfit. Have you ever read of the rickshaw boys, Ethel? They dress themselves up quite different to boys in New Zealand and have a nice little cart, and a ride in one is very nice. It would not take long to go to Tisbury either, because they go fairly fast. However, Ethel, let us hear from you again, and be careful to put capital letters in their proper places, and always set out your letter heading correctly. You are doing very well.—Mater.

MARY AND THE ANTELOPE.

Little Mary's home was on the edge of the forest in South Africa. There the big game roamed among the deep untrodden forests and beside the great rivers. One cool evening, when it was growing dusk, Mary was sitting on a little three-legged stool just inside the door of her father's study, taking her supper. Her mother was cooking a meal over the fire for her father, who was a worker in the gold mines. Suddenly the watch dogs began to prick up their ears and growl, and strange cries could be heard in the distance. It was the hunting cry of the wild dog, and there seemed to be great numbers of them barking in different directions. Then from among the distant trees came rushing out a beautiful antelope springing and jumping over the bushes and hillocks, its eyes full of terror, and sobbing and panting for breath as it ran. After it came ten or twelve wild dogs whose cries now filled the air. Mary sprang up excitedly. "Oh, Mother, they will kill it." But her mother was so busy that she did not hear her. "Oh, Spring-buck! Springbuck!" Mary cried, using the name that her father had taught her for the animal, "Come in here to me. Quick, quick, I will take care of you." The poor little thing flew straight towards Mary, almost knocking her down in its haste, as it rushed into the doorway and fell in a heap at her feet. There it lay panting for breath and trembling in every limb. The wild dogs were close after it, but they were afraid of the great fire that blazed on the hearth and shone so brightly in the doorway. Then the fierce watch dogs flew out and chased them away. "Oh, you poor little thing," cried Mary, fondling and stroking the antelope's gentle face, and patting its pretty reddish-brown and white coat. "Don't tremble so, they will not touch you. You are quite safe here. How came you to be chased like this. Tell me," and she sat on the ground and laid the little creature's head upon her lap. Now Mary never expected the antelope to answer her, so she was greatly surprised when it stopped sobbing and spoke: "I got lost, kind girl," it said. "My mother and I were feeding with the herd in the woods, when I thought I would like to run off by myself for a little. And then—" the springbuck stopped for breath.

"And then—?" said Mary, who was deeply interested.

"I wandered a little way, and suddenly heard wild dogs bark. I was so frightened that I ran the wrong way. Another dog then barked on the other side of me. I ran in another direction, and they began to chase me this way and that, and I could not tell which way to go. If I had not run in here they would have killed me."

"Tell me now little antelope, what are those little lumps on your head."

"Those are my antlers coming," said the little antelope.

"Tell me," said Mary, "What happens when you break your antlers against the trees."

"They grow again," said the antelope, "They grow fresh every year."

"Whom are you talking to, child," called out Mary's mother, who was still busy over the fire.

"He is telling me about his antlers," said Mary, laying the antelope's head gently down and running to see what her mother wanted.

"What do you mean, child," said her mother in astonishment.

"Why the antelope," Mary said.

"What antelope?" asked the mother.

But when Mary turned round to show her mother the antelope, it was gone. "Oh, mother, it must have gone home," cried Mary. "It was a lovely little spring-buck," and she ran to and fro looking for the little visitor.

"You've been dreaming child," said her mother, "That's what it is. There never was an antelope or any other lope. Whatever will the child be talking about next."

But Mary knew that she had saved the antelope from the wild dogs and it made her happy.

THE POOR WOODCUTTER.

(By Ralph, Coldstream, aged 10.)

John Evans was a poor, honest, hard-working man, whom his wife was continually scolding, for, although, he could support his own family, he was often lending money to some needy friend. His trade was that of a woodcutter, and although he had to work for half the day, he was never too tired to tell his children a story before bedtime. He used up nearly all his earnings in keeping them at school, in clothing and in food, and was always very thin. Despite his poverty he was always shaved and neat, and on this account, he earned more than most woodcutters.

One day as he was beginning work he heard a cry for help. Hastening to the spot he saw a boy trying to ward off the heavy blows which a burly tramp was giving him. Grasping his axe he told the man to stop or he would—

The instant the man stopped the boy ran into the surrounding forest.

"What did you do that for?" asked the tramp, angrily.

"Why were you beating that boy?"

"That's my business!"

"Is it," slightly lifting the axe.

"Well, if you must know, he's been stealing some of my er—belongings," was the answer.

"I will let you off this time, but mind you, if we meet again, it will be the worse for you." So saying, he went back to his work. After a few minutes he heard the boy's voice thanking him for his help. Looking up, he saw the boy coming towards him.

"Follow me and I will reward you," he cried, and led the way to an open space, where, telling John to dig, he disappeared. When he had dug down a few inches with the axe, he unearthed a box containing jewels, diamonds, sapphires, pearls, opals, and many other precious stones. John carried it home and sold them. He now had enough money to live in comfort to the end of his days, and he did.

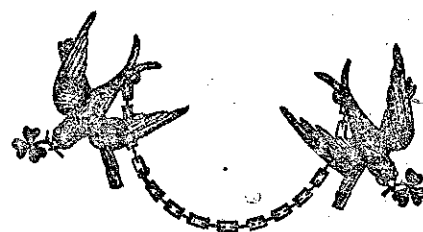
The Home.

TO CONVERT OIL INTO SOAP.

1.—If oily matters be mixed with water, they will rise to the surface; but if the water contains an alkali the oily matter will go into the solution, forming an emulsion. When this solution is boiled for some hours it becomes clear, being a solution of soap. By adding common salt a curdling is produced. The curds rise to the surface, which, when collected and pressed from soap, glycerine remaining in the clear liquid. Soda is the alkali used in hard soaps, and potash in soft soaps. 2.—A cheap soap may be made from 10lb. of oil (linseed or rape, or mixtures), 17lb. of caustic potash, and 4lb. of caustic soda, with eight or nine gallons of water. It is usual to commence the saponification with a lye of about 1.07 specific gravity, and finish with a lye of 1.15 specific gravity. By using soda in partial replacement of potash, much more water may be left in the finished soap, but this replacement is limited in amount, because too much soda causes a cloudiness, or hard white patches. 3.—The principal difference between hard and soft soaps is that three-parts of it afford, in general, fully five parts hard soda soap; but three parts of oil will afford six or seven parts of potash soap of a moderate consistency. From its cheapness, strength, and superior solubility, potash soap is preferred for many purposes, particularly for the scouring of woollens. The lyes prepared for making soft soaps should be made very strong, and of two densities, as the process of making potash or soft soap differs

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materially from that of making soda or hard soap. A portion of the oil being placed in the boiling-pan, and heated to near the boiling point of water, a certain portion of the weaker lye is introduced, and the fire kept up so as to bring the mixture to the boiling point; then some more oil and lye are introduced gently, strong lye being added until saponification is complete. The pan should then be removed, and some good soap, previously made, added while cooling down, to prevent any change by evaporation. One pound of oil requires about one-third of a pound of the best potash, and will make 12lb. to 2lb. of well-boiled soap, containing about 40 per cent. of water. Sixty pounds of lard will make 100lb of first-class soft soap by using one and a half cans of concentrated lye, which is made from salt, and is really soda lye.

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