

Of Interest to Women.

SPRING FASHIONS.

Spring will soon be here. Already there are a few snowdrops and yellow crocuses opening to the warmer sun; a primrose or two and some violets, while as for those precocious maidens the hellebores, they have been out nigh two months. Of course the first to come were the white, short stemmed ones, waxlike and half concealed among the leaves. Now the taller varieties, white to dark purple, are lifting their graceful heads in defiance of the frost. Everywhere under-ground there has been a stir and movement and crowding upward for weeks; and now the blades of the daffodils and the thick green points of the hyacinths are well up into the light. Nature is getting her spring dresses, and her wardrobe is an extensive one.

Soon there will be green leaves on the trees and hedges, blossoms on the may, and the flowering currant will early hang its ruddy tassels out in token of the new season's goods. No wonder when spring comes, we want to clean our houses and get ourselves new clothes. The bright sunshine streams in and shows the carpet dusty and the curtains dingy, and reveals a lurking cobweb in some forgotten corner—over the light-metre as like as not. Our felt hats become all of a sudden dingy and heavy, and winter's coat or jersey is shed one day with a sigh of relief.

No wonder mankind has grown up with the notion to change its clothing with the seasons. Do not the animals change theirs?

"In the spring, a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove."

And to-day I saw a starling with the glaziest iridescent tints of green and bronze and blue, shining in the sunlight on his throat and breast. I'm sure he was getting his new spring clothes.

The change of seasons is one of Nature's greatest blessings. Even in warmer climates, tropical and sub-tropical, there is some thrill of renewal when the rains come to wash the heated earth, or the sun turns backwards in his age-long path, and life leaps up to meet the spring.

Without the changes of seasons, we might all have died of monotony millions of years ago and there would never have been any post-war problems—and I am positive we are right in accepting the teaching of Nature to sweep and garnish our homes when spring comes, and to get ourselves new clothes.

Only, and here's the rub—we are not content that spring should differ from winter, summer from autumn, or so forth; we want to make each spring different from the preceding ones. At the dictate of some occult power vaguely spoken of in fashion journals as "Paris," we must get us small round hats one year and large oblong ones another. We must have full skirts this season and tight ones that; we may wear frills now, but we must make them into folds to-morrow, and so on ad infinitum.

We gaze in fashion journals at impossibly long and slender creatures the like of whom was surely never found among the human race, and form our ideas of beauty thereupon. There results a monstrous distortion of our conception of the proper proportions of the human frame. Athens in her prime, is famed to have fostered the most lively appreciation of the most nearly perfect ideal of human beauty; but Athens never dreamed a human foot narrowed to an extreme point and elevated at the heel upon a three-inch peg. It was France in the age of Louis XIV., which foisted that nightmare upon us, and like an incubus, it besets us still.

There results also an unfortunate conviction that to be "in the swim," we must not dress as we did last spring, however becoming or convenient that mode may have been, but in some new style, which everyone else like ourselves is aping at bidding of "Paris."

It is a free country—so we say. Why then in the name of common sense, don't we dress as we please? In a new fashion if we want to or in an old one; in what suits us and not in what "is being worn." One almost cries in parody of Hamlet's words:—

"Give me the woman that is not Fashion's slave,
And I will wear her in my heart's core,
Yea, in my heart of hearts."

Of course the men nowadays feel very superior on this point, but they don't need to plume themselves. It is only that fashion has so far conformed to them to the necessities of a commercial and industrial age, as to make a prevailing uni-

formity in fashion for men's garments. There are not wanting voices at the present day crying that men's have never been uglier, but no man will go out of them for all that. The men have gone to another extreme of servitude and their artistic love of beauty and variety is cribbed, cabined and confined to such details as the shape of a collar, or the pattern of a sock.

There is no doubt great advantage would result if we could imitate Nature more faithfully in the changing of our fashions, imitate her moderation as well as her profusion. We would not find shopkeepers able to allege the vagaries of fashion as an excuse for inordinate percentages of profit, on coats and hats and so forth; we would find it much more easy to adapt one year's clothing to the needs of its successor; I am convinced that, acting with all the other and many greater currents of this changing age, it would do something to bring about a better distribution of the good things of this world, a little less for a few and a good deal more for the many.

Children's Column.

MATER'S LETTER BOX.

Mater invites children to send in stories for this column, or correspondence which will be replied to through these columns. All matter to be clearly written in ink, and on one side of the paper only. Name, age, and address, must be always given, and correspondence directed to "Mater," care of Editor, "The Digger," Box 310, Invercargill.

Patricia, Ettrick street, Invercargill.—I am glad to have your story on Mignonette. As far as I can remember we have not had the pleasure of your entering our children's column before. However, we will be pleased to hear from you again.—Mater.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

THE WHOLE OF THE STORY OF THE QUEEN OF HEARTS TOLD FOR CHILDREN.

The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts all on a summer's day. The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts and carried them away. The tarts were brought back to the Queen; yes, but what happened in between?

The tarts were in the oven, they were very crisp and hot. The Knave came creeping, creeping in—a villain, was he not? "The Queen's not here, I know," thought he. "I'll steal these quite easily."

"The Queen is in her parlour—yes, she's eating bread and honey. The King's down in his counting-house; he's counting up his money. The maid is hanging up the clo'. I'll steal those tarts before they know!"

It didn't take him long at all to open the oven door. There were six tarts inside and oh—the rascal, he stole four! "I'll hurry to the woods!" said he, "and picnic on them royally."

Now was the time; a Blackbird sat and shouted from a spray: "Oh, King, oh, Queen, see o'er that hedge the Knave who runs away! He's carrying four of your tarts—he is—he is, oh, Queen of Hearts!"

The King and Queen rushed out at once the Queen forgot her honey. The King forgot his money-bags, though they held all his money. "Send for the military!" he cried. "That Knave, he must be caught and tried!"

It was a pity—yes, it was—that they did not speak low. The Knave was not so far away; he heard their words, you know. "I am found out," thought he, "I fear—well, I must hide these tarts, that's clear!"

"What shall I do? I'd better fly, or else the military will surely shoot me if the Royal tarts are found on me. I'll give the tarts away if I meet anyone who's not too spry!"

And, at that moment who should he see coming through the trees but Tommy Bones, the butcher's son, as jolly as you please. "Hi, Tommy, have these ripping tarts!" exclaimed the wicked Knave of Hearts.

Perhaps Tom Bones was just a bit suspicious, so it's said; because the Knave was panting so, and he was oh, so red! "No thanks," said Tom, "for long ago I stole a pig, and—oh, you know—

"Oh, botheration!" thought the Knave, and jumped a bush or two; then, to his joy, a little house came suddenly to view. "It's Mother Hubbard's cottage, yes! She won't say 'No' to tarts, I guess!"

So said the Knave, and hurried on and battered at the door. Dame Hubbard came to open it, a hungry look she wore. But stared the Knave first up, then

down, and shut the door with such a frown.

"This is too dreadful!" said the Knave. "Have they all found me out? Tom and Dame Hubbard both say 'No!' " But then he raised a shout as round about that way there came a pie-man with his tray.

"Here, Pie-man, Pie-man!" shrieked the Knave. "Here are four tarts to sell! I'll give them to you if you like, for I'm not very well, and I can't eat them so, you see, they'd be more use to you than me!"

"Hi!" said the Pie-man, stopping short and speaking with a frown. "I wouldn't take these tarts of yours, not for a silver crown. They're stolen tarts, and if you're wise, you'll go—before I black your eyes!"

He saw a gentle Ladybird, with very tender heart; she didn't know the Knave was such a rogue, she took his part. "I fear you're burdened, sir, with care. My house is close, pray rest in there!"

"My daughter Ann will cheer you up, my children will all try to soothe your sorrows; I myself, am just off for a fly. But you are welcome, while I roam, to rest a little in my home."

The wicked Knave, with tarts in hand he sought her little house, and there, under a frying-pan, as silent as a mouse, he hid his spoil and then, oh, dear! he set the house alight, I fear!

Up flared the flames, off went the Knave, and in a frightened crowd, the Lady-birdlets hurried off, all buzzing very loud; except the eldest one, named Ann, and she hid 'neath the fryin-pan!

And there she found the four hot tarts, and then and there she guessed—because Miss Ann was cleverer, you know, than all the rest. "I didn't trust that Knave," said she. "'Twas he destroyed our house—'twas he!"

And that moment up there marched a band of military, and how they stared to hear Ann's tale so interestingly. And off they carried the jam tarts at once back to the Queen of Hearts.

But then the Knave, still watching near, saw what was happening. "Oh, me!" he sobbed. "I'd better go confessing to the King! I'll vow to steal no more," said he. "Perhaps he'll be merciful to me!"

But no, the King did not forgive that Knave, I'm glad to say. He was sent off to Goblin Land for ever and a day. And there he lives unto this time, in punishment for all his crime.

THE DISCONTENTED MIGNONETTE.

(By "Patricia," Ettrick street.)

The evening breeze sweeping through the king's gardens bore on it wings a low mournful sigh, and listening, I heard a tiny voice say plaintively, "Oh, why am I not like other flowers? The fair rose by my side gives pleasure to all who see her; that tall white lily is admired by everyone, many a heart is gladdened, and many an eye brightens at the sight of her beautiful blossoms, but I am so plain and tiny! I can do no one any good! Why should I live any longer?" And the Mignonette drooped wearily as she ceased speaking.

There had been visitors to the king's gardens that day, and the gardener had pointed out to them the rarest and most beautiful of all the flowers. The lily held her stately head proudly, while the rose blushed deeper as many paused, attracted by their surpassing loveliness. But for the lowly plant that grew beneath the shadow of the rose tree, the day had been one of sadness. All had passed her by unnoticed, and twilight found her sorrowful and discontented.

Morning dawned. That day the king himself was coming to see his garden, to choose the fairest flowers to adorn his palace. The gardener's words, which aroused a tumult of hope in many a bright-hued blossom, fell unheeded on poor Mignonette. "If I am not fair enough to be noticed by the gardener, the king will never see me," thought she.

At length the monarch came; many fair and beautiful, were the blossoms he chose, but he paused, unsatisfied still. "These flowers are very lovely," he said, "but whence comes this rich perfume? It does not belong to any of the flowers I have chosen."

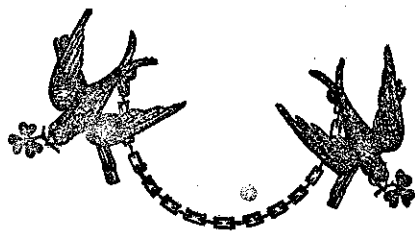
"It is only some common mignonette that smells so sweetly," the gardener answered.

"Call it not common, the fairest flowers in my garden cannot rival its sweetness. I will have no other to adorn my palace." The other blossoms scoffed at this, but the little Mignonette cared not for she thought "even the king himself has need of me."

In the Northern New Hebrides, a bride who is unhappy seeks the earliest opportunity of running away from her husband and seeking a home with some man she likes better. If her parents cannot induce her to return to the injured husband, they usually send him a pig to soothe his wounded feelings.

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The Home.

TO MIX COD LIVER OIL WITH HONEY.

1.—Powdered gum tragacanth, 10 grains; rectified spirit of wine, 60 drops; cod liver oil, 4 ounces; honey, 4 ounces. Rub the tragacanth in a mortar with the spirit, and then add to it, gradually stirring all the time, a wineglassful of water, forming a smooth, translucent jelly. Add gradually to this in successive small portions, 4 ounces of cod liver oil. The honey previously liquified with the addition of two tablespoonfuls of hot water in a jug or jar is now gradually added to the contents of the mortar, stirring vigorously as before, until all is thoroughly blended together. This forms a perfect mixture that will pour from a bottle. 2.—Take 4ozs. of cod liver oil and 1oz of powdered gum acacia. Mix the oil in a mortar with the gum, and then add 2ozs. of water or lime water, and triturate briskly but lightly until an emulsion is formed. Then take 3oz of honey and 2ozs. of water, and warm until a solution is formed. When cold add gently to the cod liver oil emulsion, constantly stirring. This could be flavoured by the addition of elixir of saccharin or essence of almonds.

TO MAKE TRANSFER INK FOR EMBROIDERY WORK.

Transfer paper is made by rubbing white paper with a composition consisting of 2oz. of tallow, 1/2 oz. of powdered black lead, 1/4 pint of linseed oil, and sufficient lampblack to make it of the consistency of cream. These should be melted together, and rubbed on the paper whilst hot. When dry it will be fit for use. Transfer ink:—Virgin wax 2 parts, white soap 1, shellac 1, lampblack 1/4; melt the wax, then add the soap, which must be previously cut into strips, and when melted apply a light, and allow to burn until the whole has decreased to the same bulk as existed before the addition of the soap. The shellac is now carefully added bit by bit, stirring the whole time to effect perfect amalgamation. The black is next to be added, and the whole well mixed while in a liquid state; then poured into a mould or on to a shape, and cut to the required size while warm. Dissolve by warming pot at fire or gas, using rain water to rub it down with. First dip the pen in oil and wipe previous to drawing design. To use: Lay the article to be embroidered on a flat surface, place the transfer design on the article, right side down. Iron over with a moderately hot iron.

TO PREPARE CAMPHORATED OIL.

Procure 2oz. of best turpentine, 1 pennyworth of sweet oil, and 2 pennyworth of cake camphor. Put the turpentine and oil in a bottle, cut the camphor into small pieces, and put it in a bottle. When it is dissolved it is ready for use. This is

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TO WHITEN AND SOFTEN THE
HANDS.

Take 1/2 lb mutton tallow, 1oz glycerine, melt and when thoroughly mixed, set away to cool. Rub hands with this every night.

Magistrates in England in the sixteenth century had certain powers with regard to fixing wages and hours of labour.