

Children's Column.

MATER'S LETTER BOX.

Dear Boys and Girls.—This week I am thanking you for the interest you have taken in the Children's Column and I hope you will continue to write to us and also get others to do so. We are going to give three prizes, details of which will be announced later. The proposal is that you write an essay on: "Should Invercargill have Municipal Baths." Just fancy, girls and boys, a nice big building where you could go and have a swim in beautiful warm water. Why, mother's bath is not in it! I want you to talk to father and mother about it and just think it over in the meantime. Now dear Country Cousins, you can take part in this competition too. Don't you think it would be nice if your schoolmaster brought you into town and you could all go and have a good plunge in nice warm water? The essay is not to exceed half a column (about 400 words), and I want you to watch next week's "Digger" for full particulars. If you do not want to write on this subject, still send in your stories as usual.—Water.

A GOOD DEED.

By M.D.M., East Road.

Tom was a scout, that is to say, he was one of that band of boys whose object is to do at least one good deed a day. Now Tom had not done his deed and was wondering what he could do.

"Ah, I know," and jumping up, Tom put on his hat and ventured into the snow. Tom's destination was the home of Mrs Rout, an old lady who kept a little fruit shop, for Tom had remembered her saying she wished she had someone who would chop her wood.

"Well, Tom, what can I do for you?" asked Mrs Rout, of our hero, who, by the way, was well liked in the neighborhood.

"I have come to chop the wood you were talking about, Mrs Rout."

"Well, you are a good boy, Tom; it will not be hard to chop as its empty fruit cases. Here they are," and the good lady pointed to a neat pile of cases.

Tom soon made an impression upon the stack of boxes after half an hour's hard work.

"This is warm work, but I am doing my deed. Now for another go at the pile."

"Why, Tom, you are nearly finished!"

"Yes, Mrs Rout, this is the last box."

"Well, when you are finished, come into my shop for a few apples."

"Thanks very much, Mrs Rout," said Tom putting on his coat.

"Well," said Tom to himself as he was going home (munching an apple), "I must say it is a good apple I'm eating, and also I have done my day's good deed," and Tom was happy.

WHAT A BIRD TOLD ME.

By Edna, Clifton.

One day when I was out in the woods, I saw a little bird lying at the bottom of an old tree. When I came up to it, I saw that it was frozen. I picked it up and took it home, and put it beside the fire while I went to get it some food. After it had eaten the food which I gave it, it started to sing brightly, and I knew that it was getting quite well again.

I started to talk to the little bird, and he came and sat on my shoulder, so then I asked it how it had become frozen at the bottom of the old tree, and he told me his story. "I could not get any food," he said, "and I thought that I would die, but you found me, brought me to your home and so saved my life. Now here is your reward."

I did not know what to say to this, and in a moment he began to whisper in my ear. He told me that, in the tree where I found him, there was a box full of diamonds and pearls, and he said he would come and show me the place. So we started out and soon came to the old tree. He opened a little secret door and there I saw the box which was full of jewels. We took the box and set out for home. When we had sold the jewels, I was a rich little girl and it was all through that dear little bird.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

THE STORY OF THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Poor little, dear little Babes in the Wood, ev'ry-one's heard their sad lay; how they lost both of their parents so good, both on the very same day; how their bad uncle—whose heart was like wood—carried the darlings away!

"Hush!" said the uncle, pretending to be ever so gentle and kind. "You shall both ride to my castle with me, where

a nice home you will find!" But oh, that uncle, so cruel was he! He'd a bad plot in his mind!

"They shall be killed," so he whispered away; "Glumbe will do that, of course. Yes, when I've kept these small Babes for a day, then they shall both die by force!" Little the Babes knew his plans, as they rode with him home on his horse!

But oh, alas, while at midnight they slept, dreaming and quite unaware—stealthily, stealthily, slowly there crept right up the high castle stair, two ugly ruffians who cautiously stepped; Glumbe and Wheeze were both there!

Seizing the children they held them both tight; oh, such bad rascals were these; raced to their horses and rode through the night, jog-a-trot through the trees taking no heed of the cries, and the fright of the poor Babes on their knees.

"I hold the Prince!" shouted Glumbe the Bold; "you, Wheeze, have got the Princess; ah, I'll have most of the treasure of gold that we've been promised, I guess! For a prince always is worth more I'm told; and a princess is worth-les!"

"No!" shouts out Wheeze, and with fury he hurls, leaps down in rage from his horse; hits out at Glumbe and Glumbe returns each of the blows in due course, soon they were fighting 'mid grasses and ferns, fighting with terrible force!

Well, you all know how those Babes so good wandered and wandered away; losing themselves in the thick of the wood, trying to search out a way home to their parents. And, finding no food, how down to die they both lay.

But they both slept, for the birds and the bees, fairies and butterflies too—yes and the softest and kindest breeze watched them the whole dark night through. Robins brought leaves and sang. "We bring you these—fairy-leaves, darlings, for you."

So in the dawning the children awoke from a soft slumber so sweet; and, of the birds' kindness red leaves still spoke, for they lay near a heap.

"Why," said Prince Victor, "Some kind fairy-folk guarded us during our sleep."

"Search, search, and search," so the robins they said. "Fairies have hidden a key under the leaves that you used for a bed. Don't ask us where it can be! Search, search, and search for your parents aren't dead—as you shall very soon see!"

Oh how those babies, the Prince and Princess, searched through the leaf-heap that day. "Where can the key be—I wish we could guess!" so little Christine would say.

"Search, search, and search," sang the birds, "and success certainly must come your way!"

But, when at evening the last sun rays shone, both the Babes melted in grief; they had been searching, yes—on, on, and on, without the smallest relief.

"Sister," sobbed Victor, "our last chance is gone! This is the very last one!"

"Courage," the birds sang; "Look closer, my dears. Ah, do not throw it away; wipe from your eyes, oh, my darlings, those tears! you will get home sure, to-day if a princess or a prince perseveres—that leaf will show you the way!"

"Victor!" cried Christine, "Look here, brother, please! I've found a hole here!" And then—Oh, what a shouting of songs from each bird—how the breeze kissed Christine's cheek. Such a commotion was ne'er before heard; when, hardly daring to speak, little Prince Victor obeyed Christine's word, fitted the key in the creek.

And, as he turned it, sweet music pealed loud, slowly a door opened wide; and of gay fairies the merriest crowd beckoned the children inside; "come, little darlings, for you are allowed into our magic!" they cried.

"Here is a palace of silver," cried they. "Here is a treasure of gold. Here, yes, for ever and ever you may live, dears, and never grow old! Here you may do as you like every day; never be hungry nor cold."

And at that moment, in glittering sheen, sudden the babies espied—who, but their mother, the lost dear-loved Queen, who, with both arms opened wide, hugged the Prince Victor and Princess Christine—smiled at them both, starry-eyed!

HOW YOU ARE DONE.

Brown was going to have some alterations made on his way home, and asked Jones—who had just got rid of the builders—the best way to go about it.

"Well," said Jones, "you call in a decent builder and tell him the limit you are prepared to pay, being sure that the sum you mention to him is about a quarter of what you have for the alterations, and then, if you are lucky, and keep your wife away while the work is proceeding, you may get half of what you want done for about twice the total sum you want to spend!"

The Home.

A FAMILY CAKE.

Four eggs, weigh them, and take the same weight in flour, in powdered sugar, and in butter. Break the eggs, separating the whites from the yolks. Mix the powdered sugar with the yolks, add the butter that has been warmed and melted to a paste, the juice of a lemon, and finally the flour. Mix well with a wooden spoon, and then beat the white of the eggs to a stiff froth, and incorporate them with the other ingredients, introducing, however, the whites so carefully that they quite disappear beneath the surface. Then butter the mould, half fill it with this preparation, and bake in a moderate oven for an hour. The cake must rise to the extent of the mould.

CREAM CAKES.

Half a pint of water, two ounces of butter; boil together, and add six ounces of flour, stir quickly to paste, let it stand a few minutes to cool; mix in four eggs one by one; put in a tin three or four inches apart with a spoon, and bake very well in a slow oven. When cool fill with whipped cream.

MARbled RABBIT.

A large, handsome, dish, excellent for a cold supper, can be made with a couple of rabbits. Skin and cut into joints two fine fresh rabbits. Put the livers and kidneys into a small stewpan with a little piece of butter or good beef dripping, and let them steam until they are tender. Seal the joints in hot water, then plunge them into cold water to whiten them. Afterwards put them into a stewpan with a bunch of any approved herbs, an onion stuck with cloves, and salt and pepper to taste. Add sufficient cold water to cover the rabbits, and let them simmer gently till tender. At this stage remove the rabbits from the pan, cut the meat from the backs and the legs in as large, nice pieces as possible, and scrape the meat carefully off the smaller bones. Return the bones, with the heads and neck, to the liquor in the stewpan, add half an ounce of gelatine, previously soaked in cold water, and let it boil until about a pint of strong gravy remains, which will now become a jelly. While the bones, etc., are stewing, put in a few slices of ham, bacon or pork, to simmer sufficiently, then take them out. Mince the scrapings and small pieces of meat very finely; mix this with an equal quantity of the cooked meat, ham, bacon, or pork, also minced finely; add salt, pepper, chopped parsley, and thyme; bind the mixture with a well-beaten egg, and form it into little balls. Put these also in the liquor in which the bones are stewing; let them remain ten minutes, then take them out. Strain the jelly, and coat the inside of a damp mould with a little of it. Place the large pieces of rabbit tastefully at the bottom of the mould, with the little balls between, and everywhere and there a slice of hard-boiled egg, and a piece of dark liver and kidney. All must be arranged so as to contrast the colours nicely but not too closely packed, until the mould is full. Season the jelly well, and pour it over the meat. When it has stood all night, remove any fat which may have risen to the surface before turning it out.

TO PRESERVE BOOTS.

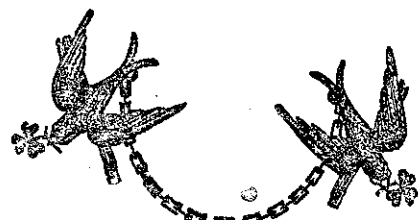
Put a pound of tallow and a half of resin into a pot on the fire. When melted and mixed, warm the boots, and apply the hot stuff with a painter's brush until neither the soles nor upper leathers will suck in any more. If it is desired that the boots should immediately take a good polish, dissolve an ounce of beeswax in an ounce of spirits of turpentine, to which add a teaspoonful of lampblack. A day or two after the boots have been treated with the tallow and resin, rub over them the wax in turpentine, but not before the fire. Thus the exterior will have a coat of wax alone, and shine like a mirror. Tallow or any other grease becomes rancid, and retards the stitching as well as the leather; but the resin gives it an antiseptic quality, which preserves the whole.

RABBIT IN MILK.

Divide into the usual joints, soaking all discoloured parts in salt and water for an hour. Dry and place the pieces compactly in a piedish or deep baking dish, sprinkle in a half-teaspoonful of very finely chopped onion, a little ground mace, and salt and pepper. Cover with milk; on top place an inverted piedish or dish, and cook very gently in the oven for two hours. With a knife on a plate mix a level tablespoonful of cornflour or flour and a little butter to a soft paste, and stir it in in small pieces when the rabbit is almost done. A little caramel will improve the colour.

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That he whistles and he warbles
Just as happy as can be.

Hi's the soul of wit and humour,
And the very height of candour,
And I have a sort of notion
Why the people call him Mack,
For he'll trace the Highland nation
Backward to the great creation,
It's quite a treat to hear him
As he drives along the track.

Now he's held in veneration
By the rising generation,
Who all rally round the station
His cheery smile to greet.
And when at length he reaches
The City of the Beaches,
You can hear the joyous voices
Of the children in the street.

Now when this cheerful mortal
Shall have passed the sacred portal
Where the wicked cease from troubling
And the weary are at rest,
You will hear the glad harps ringing,
And the happy children singing
"Here comes the jolly coachman
That on earth we loved the best."

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