HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT.

Conducted by MRS. PRUDENCE FAITH. Address all correspondence to THE STOCKMAN. Our lady readers will please remember that they have a standing invitation to become contributors to this Department.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTMAS.

[The following article came too late to have a place in the Christmas number, or in earlier numbers, where it naturally belonged. Its merits warrant its publication, and the ideas suggested will live until another Christmas time.—ED.]

These hints are not intended for those mothers who are the possessors of plethoric purses, who can buy all the dainty things they wish for their darlings, but for those who find it necessary to consult the "ways and means" before buying even a few Christmas presents. I know there are a good many such these close times.

But, dear mothers, do not let the hard times deter you from making the little ones happy at the glad Christmas time, even though you have to sacrifice a little time and money. These Christmas times are mile stones along the pathway from infancy to manhood and womanhood, that will never crumble down or be effaced. If there be any mothers who have never given their children a "Christmas" let them begin now for the next one, and they will never regret it.

A few years ago it was approaching Christmas, and the family purse was in such a condition that it did not warrant any great outlay for presents; but the thought of "no presents" was not to be tolerated for a moment. But *what* to get and *how* to get them was a serious question. But with a little ingenuity, and some help from "the Papa," we solved the problem. First, we procured some boxes from a dry goods store, of the right shape and dimensions—which will suggest themselves to anyone wishing to procure them. For our older little girls we made a box for their handkerchiefs, gloves, ribbons, etc.; fastened the lid on with small hinges, procured at the hardware store; screwed knobs, taken off an old sewing machine, on the bottom, for feet; sand-papered it smooth; painted it with black varnish and ornamented it with those beautiful pictures, which are to be had for a few cents. The inside was lined with wadding; then with pink silesia, put on in pleats with small tacks, and the edges finished with fancy braid.

Next we made a cradle for our "four-year-old's" dolly. The box was about six inches square and eighteen inches long. The sides were cut away in the shape of a cradle, the ends rounded over, rockers cut out of a board were fastened on it, and then it was treated the same way as the box. This cradle has stood the racket ever since, and is as good as ever—whereas three or four "boughten" ones would have been demolished. A mattress, pillow slips, sheets, and everything necessary for a baby's cradle, were made for it.

Next came a trunk for the dolly's wardrobe. A box of suitable size and shape was covered with leather colored canton flannel. A lid was fastened on with hinges and the box papered inside. Strips were then nailed inside the ends to hold up the till—which was made of stout pasteboard. Wide braid was fastened underneath and over the box, and tied to keep the lid closed. This trunk not only held baby's doll clothes, but her playthings, dishes, etc., and served for a stool for her to sit on when at her play.

Our childrens' dolls are all home-made, except the heads. Any one with a little ingenuity can cut and shape one better than the ones you buy. I make them of stout muslin and stuff them with rags. The legs are made in two pieces, overstitched together at the knees and onto the body, thus making joints better than those on the bought ones. A nice piece from a worn out fine stocking is sewed on neatly for stockings. An old kid glove, with the buttons on, is made into shoes, sowed on securely. The best part of the glove is made to cover the hands and arm to the elbow. Put a head on it, and you have a doll complete, with only the cost of the head. This will outlast a dozen sawdust dolls. The next Christmas, if necessary, they are re-covered, a new head put on, and, presto! a new doll.

The children really like these things better than things you would buy; for the fact that "mamma made them" adds a charm to them.

Do not omit the "Christmas tree." If nothing better can be had a branch from an evergreen, decorated with anything your mind may suggest, will be better than nothing. Twenty-five cents' worth of tiny candles will light up a tree beautifully. I would like to tell you of some of our decorations, home-made candy, etc., but this article is already too long.

LOIS.

UNJUST DISCRIMINATION.

I have often thought that a greater degree of attention is shown by parents to daughters than to sons. Too often we see the boy made the drudge of the family, the tool of all work, whether competent to perform it or not. He may have worked all day turning the "stubborn glebe," or numberless other jobs equally tedious, known to a farmer boy; and as the last rays of Sol dance o'er the glowing West slowly wends his tiring foot-steps homeward. He thinks himself happy if there is not an errand to town for a pound of coffee, or across to the neighbor's for a making of yeast. Thrice happy, he is now seated with a newspaper, intent upon informing himself of the week's events. Mother glides gently through the room and endearingly addresses him: "Monte, will you please to feed the chickens?" or, "Dearie, please, a bucket of water," "A load of wood," or some other similar invitation. Poor boy! What attraction is there in that home for him?

At the same time the daughter sits arrayed in evening attire, awaiting the arrival of some especially invited guest. I would not have girls to do the hardest drudgery about a house, but I would have them to do that which they are capable of doing, and which is really healthful to them, rather than to worry their minds over some tangled lace pattern, or to imagine themselves water-fairies. I do not think it beneath the dignity of any young lady to work.

How often we see mother and sisters with downcast countenances, because of sons' and brothers' evil conduct or associates! And how often sisters are, in a measure, responsible for it! How often after a ball or night's dissipation she comes down stairs frowning and scolding! Is this a manner in which to inspire confidence and respect? Alas! it has too often been an arrow to the boy's sensitive nature.

Since boys are in many ways about a house indispensable, let us share their company, make home attractive and keep them their evenings. Instead of making their's the reception room of all household rubbish, make it as comfortable as the girls'. Carpet their room, furnish it with necessary articles, such as washstand, looking-glass, books and pictures (even if you have to construct the frames yourself), and many other inexpensive articles which serve to make home attractive; and you will be surprised what pride they bear in receiving and entertaining their companions in their own room. When you invite your own friends invite theirs. Let the evening be spent socially. If you have an organ or piano let your brother have a harmonica, guitar, violin or banjo (my brother has the latter, and he feels very proud to be asked to accompany the organ), and he will feel that he has helped in the evening's enjoyment—that life is not all a drudge.

I have noticed, too, that the educational advantages of a great many farm boys are limited, even neglected. To acquire the habit of reading, if there be several children in the family, organize a home "reading circle." Have your course of study laid out, and these long winter evenings will afford excellent opportunities for reading. If he has not already formed the habit of reading, take history for instance, to begin with, as most boys will, with but little pains, take an interest in that study. Appoint a meeting for rehearsal each week. Monday evening suits very well, as you then are ready for the week's work; and it is astonishing how much you will have gained during three months, with but little cost.

Of course it is natural for boys to seek company away from home; but with a little exertion on the part of sisters, a boy's home can be made cheerful, attractive and lovable, thus avoiding the carving of initials on store-boxes and the duties of news-mongers. Talk with him kindly of the danger of evil associates, and, if possible, from your own reading, describe to him the untold misery of drinking, swearing and gambling er'e he has been led to experience their power. OHIO GIRL.

Freeport, O.

Eyes to the Rear.—I fully agree with the writer who says she thinks that, until the needed reform in the manner of keeping the back yard has been accomplished, guests should be admitted by the back rather than the front entrance. If such were the case many a pretentious mansion would feel disposed to hide its face for shame at the thought of the wide difference as to cleanliness existing between its front and rear approaches.

As surely as that, "Westward the star of empire takes its course," rearward the accumulations of dirt and filth take *their* course; but usually they call an indefinite halt when they reach the back yard. Thus it is that many a back door is guarded by a motley army of old brooms and mops, skeleton umbrellas, broken chairs, smashed crockery, discarded clothing, battered tinware, old barrels and pails—to say nothing of decaying fruit and vegetables, eggshells, paper, feathers, etc. It is our opinion, after having studied the question with some care, that such shameful neglect of this much tenanted part of the home arises from some one or more of three causes, viz: Downright shiftlessness, a mistaken notion of what constitutes good housekeeping, or an almost complete lack of development of the bump of order and neatness. It is strange, but nevertheless true, that many women imagine that if they keep that part of their house into which guests may come in a presentable condition, it matters not in what plight the rest of the house and surroundings be found. I have seen a woman on her knees with soap and scrubbing brush, scouring the front steps—that were already about as white as they could be made—while on the back porch and in the rear rooms, not likely to be seen, dirt and pandemonium reigned supreme. Is it not reasonably certain that such a one has imbibed an improper idea of what constitutes good housekeeping?

We dislike to see a back yard bald of grass, reeking with slop and strewn with trash and garbage, for other and graver reasons than for its unsightliness. First, and perhaps most important, among these is its disease breeding tendency. Slops and garbage thrown upon the ground soon enter the porous soil, and a sort of slow fermentation ensues that fills both the earth and the atmosphere in that immediate vicinity with the germs of disease. If the well is near it is apt to become contaminated, sickness follows, and we are wont to wonder where the malady had its origin.

Writing upon this subject, Dr. Edson, an eminent authority on hygienic subjects, says: Disgusting as it may be to contemplate, it is nevertheless a pretty well proven fact that in contracting many infectious diseases, one receives into his mouth and stomach germs from the systems of persons suffering from those diseases. That such germs are most frequently introduced through the medium of polluted water no one who has studied the matter will hesitate to assert. If they were traced to their true origin, many an epidemic of typhoid and scarlet fever, diphtheria and other germ diseases, could be referred to the gross neglect of the back yard.

If any one of the great army of the housekeepers who read THE STOCKMAN shall find herself in any degree wanting in this particular, we hope she will at once institute a reform movement, not only because it is unsightly, untidy and not in harmony with the custom of the best housekeepers, but because the health and comfort of your family, and possibly of your friends, demand it. As a recent writer has said, nothing is so costly in all ways as disease, and nothing is so remunerative as the outlay which augments health and in doing so augments the amount and value of the work done.

Breakfast.—In ordinary households the attention is centered upon the dinner. The interests of the family bend towards the hour of dining, the room is carefully arranged for the meal and the table adorned with the best dishes and linen. The mother and daughter attire themselves afresh, the cares of the day are laid aside, and the returning members of the family bring news and incidents that enliven the conversation.

Breakfast is another matter, too often cheerless and unsocial, even in large families. The table is never entirely occupied, parents and children straggle (or would "struggle" describe it better?) into the dining-room and swallow some tasteless remnants of food while a conversational depression prevails.

The room ought to be bright and cheerful, and if a considerable amount of red is used in the decorations this effect can be obtained even if the light is not very good. Interesting pictures and books are necessary to give a living atmosphere to the room. Too many dining rooms are merely storerooms for a table, side-board and chairs. If the sunlight does not reach the room during breakfast throw aside the curtains and draw the shades to their full height. In the winter, when the mornings are dusky, light the lamps or gas rather than sit in a state of semi-darkness.

The table linen should be fresh and the arrangement of the food and dishes tasteful. If you cannot have cut flowers every morning keep a flowering plant in the center of the table. Best of all is a window filled with green things, which the eye rests gratefully on during meal time.

A warm drink is a necessity at breakfast. If coffee is not used for reasons of health, broma, cocoa or other forms of chocolate, tea, crust coffee or Cambric tea should take its place. Oatmeal, crushed wheat, hominy, Graham, gluten or some preparation of the kind, should be a part of the breakfast, and if not liked in a plain boiled form it may be fried and eaten with maple syrup with more relish.

Hot biscuits are abominable in the morning, and a variety is not difficult to have—oatmeal and graham gems, corncakes, muffins, soda or raised biscuit. Where fresh eggs and fish can be obtained meat is not needed for breakfast. Fruit can be managed in most households, either fresh or canned. Baked apples, if prepared in a delicate way and eaten with cream, can be used for months with relish.—*Exchange.*

Look Out for the Drain.—In every house there is of refuse matter a large amount. On washing days many gallons, often barrels, of water in which our clothing has been washed, and which contains the filth which the skin has thrown off during the week, must be disposed of. All through the week more or less dish water and dirty water from various sources accumulates. As a rule it is thrown into a drain, which is, perhaps, covered only with a board, and carried only a few feet away, when it soaks into the soil or spreads out on the ground or evaporates into the air. If the soil is pervious, it may soak into it, and some of it eventually finds its way into the well. In the course of a short time these slops fill the soil full, and a sort of fermentation takes place, and as the air is more or less excluded, most poisonous gases are generated. It is now positively known that many diseases have their origin in breathing these gases. It does not follow that they always cause disease, because the germs may not always be present, but they frequently do. Diphtheria, that scourge of both city and country, has been traced time and again in the city to sewer gas passing into the house. In the country where less attention is given to the causes of disease, the drain for slops is not always recognized as a source of diphtheria, but in very many cases it has been proved to be so beyond the slightest doubt.—*Exchange.*

Tested Recipes. — *Breakfast Toast.*—Add to one-half pint of sweet milk two tablespoonfuls of sugar, a little salt and a well-beaten egg. Dip slices of bread in this and fry on a buttered griddle until it is a light brown on each side.

Crumb Griddle-Cakes.—The night before using put some bread crumbs to soak in one quart of sour milk; in the morning rub through a seive and add three well-beaten eggs, a teaspoonful of soda dissolved in a little water, one teaspoonful of melted butter, and enough cornmeal to make them the consistency of ordinary griddle-cakes. Beat the yelks and whites of the eggs separately just before using.

Plum Cobbler.—Make a dough as for baking-powder biscuit, with either sweet milk or water, roll thin, and line a dripping-pan. Mix three tablespoonfuls of flour and two of sugar together, and sprinkle over the crust; then pour in canned plums, and sprinkle over them one coffee-cup of sugar; wet the edges with a little water, put on upper crust, press the edges together and bake in quick oven half an hour. Any kind of canned fruit can be used.

A Hint to Housekeepers. — Here is a thought for housekeepers, and a very important one it is, too, when we come to follow it out in all its ramifications. Merely covering up a bed with blankets and counterpanes will no more protect it from dampness or keep it dry than a pane of glass will keep out light. The atmospheric moisture will penetrate all woven fabrics. Hence the importance of keeping the beds in spare rooms regularly aired. Many a dear friend or welcome visitor has been sent to an untimely grave, or afflicted for life with disease, by being put into a bed which has been permitted to stand unoccupied. Keep the spare beds, when not in use, free from all covering but a light spread.