

GETTING HOME FROM THE COUNTRY

BY HELEN JAY



GENERALLY at the close of the vacation the housewife is anxious to return to her home. She has had enough of the bread of idleness, and longs to be once more in the activities of life. During the long summer mornings, spent for the most part on the hotel piazza, she has heard of many new and delightful economic laws. Her note-book bulges with fresh receipts. She has commenced several new designs in embroidery and learned many new stitches. She is really impatient to see how the fancy work she has made will look in the places in which she has already mentally arranged it. She is eager to try the receipts and put in practice all the lately-acquired theories.

Without realizing it, our housewife is ready to undo all the good gleaned from the summer's outing. It is a characteristic of the average American woman to be rather pitiless in her treatment of herself. After the weeks during which she attempted nothing in the way of exercise save a walk now and then, she too often rushes into a perfect hurricane of work. She cleans the house from garret to cellar, renovates the wardrobes of the children and gets them in readiness for school, and then preserves and pickles every accessible atom of vegetable growth. As a result, if she escapes a severe illness, she quickly loses the vitality and enthusiasm which should have been her stock in trade for the entire winter. By following the wise old adage and "making haste slowly," she can set her house in order, take care of herself, and with it all see well to the ways of her household.

There is one requisite to the preservation of the health of the home-coming family too often neglected, and that is the thorough airing of the house. It is really dangerous to bring children from the pure air of the country and put them to bed in a room which has been tightly closed for months. The mere opening of the doors and windows will not serve the purpose. It will pay to have some one go to the house two days at least before the return of the family and make a fire in the range and in one of the grates up stairs. It is better still to let the furnace be set at work for half a day. Then after the house is dry and the atmosphere purified by heat, open every door and window.

In the cleanest kitchens and their closets the close air of a shut-up house brings about a certain activity of insect life. The most effectual remedy for this trying state of affairs calls for a degree of caution in its use. The doors and windows of the kitchen should be tightly closed, excepting, of course, those leading into the closets. Then a small iron candlestick holding a sulphur candle, should be placed in a large iron kettle. These candles may be found at any drug store. After one has been lighted the person in charge should run for their life. The stifling fumes enter every crevice, and drive the little lurkers out to die. The mice scamper away, and if coal tar is placed about the cellar they will leave the premises in disgust. To make assurance doubly sure fill the places which they have gnawed with broken bits of glass or china. The sulphur is also an excellent disinfectant, and will destroy disease germs if there are any.

Before the mattresses and pillows are slept on they should be hung in the open air with the blankets. The sheets and pillow-cases meanwhile should be airing by the fire. The pillows themselves should never be exposed to the sunlight. The natural oil of the feathers is apt to be extracted and cause a disagreeable odor often noticed but seldom attributed to the right source.

The bedsteads should be carefully cleaned, first with a dry cloth and brush, then with benzine, which may be applied with an ordinary sewing-machine oiler, which throws the fluid in every crack otherwise inaccessible.

If there has been a house cleaning in the spring it is rather an excess of zeal to inaugurate another. Let everything in the way of redecoration, sewing and shopping wait until the preserving and pickling are attended to—if they must be done at all. It is questionable if it really pays for the housewife to plunge from the cool, bracing air of the mountains or seashore into a hot kitchen and spend days bending over boiling masses of fruit. It would probably be better for the family and herself if she would take time for a breath of open air daily, gradually becoming accustomed to the conditions of city life.