



## How I Made Soap.

We were sitting on the front stoop, Maggie and I, making lace, and keeping a watch on the children who were playing croquet. Pretty soon Irma called out, "Mamma, the soap man's coming." She knew I wanted some soft-soap, and also that a pan of grease down cellar was to be got rid of as soon as possible. I laid down the delicate needle-work, and attended to the old man who about three times a year drives his old horse over our hill picking up ashes and grease, and leaving our buckets filled with soft-soap.

After he had gone I took up my work again. Maggie sat with her hands folded in her lap dreamily looking at the children; then came the question, "Oh, Belle, do you remember when you made soft-soap?"

"Do I remember it? Well, I think I do. Why, it was when May was a baby, and look at her now, eleven years old, and as tall as you are!"

Memory went back over those eleven years to the pleasant sunny home on Linden Street, the dining-room with its windows looking toward the sunset, a rag carpet on the floor, and a little round table in the center, covered with a turkey red tablecloth, checker-board pattern, the first red tablecloth I ever had—didn't I think it pretty. You see we were poor then, and I made that carpet while we were boarding, and when it was finished we went to housekeeping in that pretty new house, and baby came. I did my own work because I wanted to economize, and I did so dread to have a girl about my pantry and kitchen. Well, baby was about two months old, and sister Addie came up to make me a nice long visit, so I sent for our old friend Maggie, who lived up in the hills, to come down and have a good time with us. Well, Maggie came, and those two girls washed the dishes, swept, dusted, rocked and tossed and tended that baby, and kept their pretty white dresses dainty and fresh, their hair crimped and curled, and kept me baking and cooking, and I enjoyed that part thoroughly. They hunted up all manner of receipts in newspapers, almanacs, cook-books, and I verily believe made them up out of their own heads, and coaxed me to try them. I was a young and inexperienced housekeeper then, and it was downright fun to experiment, and I almost always had good luck; to be sure I did not know enough to strain the yeast the first bread I made, and that husband of mine laughed at the little bunch of hops in the middle of the loaf, yet it was good bread, and I never made that blunder again.

Addie and Maggie had been with me a week or more, when I informed them one morning that I was "going to make soft-soap that day."

"Can we help you?" came from one of them.

"I am not going to have you girls in the kitchen; but there is a box of raisins in the pantry that I am afraid are getting wormy; you may look those over and take care of baby, she will sleep till noon I think, as she was so restless all night, and don't eat up all the raisins, as I want to make a plum-pudding to-morrow, and try that new receipt for French loaf-cake." I gave the girls the box from the pantry and a plate of cookies, and shut myself in the kitchen.

For a long time I had noticed an advertisement in the paper relating to a wonderful "concentrated extract of lye," by the use of which every housekeeper could make her own soap—soft, hard, or fancy toilet—if they would only save their waste grease; so I had carefully laid away the ham rinds,

chicken fat, had skimmed off the thin cake of grease that would stand on the top of the water in which I had boiled corned beef, I had scraped the frying-pans very thoroughly, and all this I had cleansed till it was good to look upon, and for weeks I had been wondering what in the world I was to do with it, for I had many pounds, and this wonderful lye was to help me solve the problem.

When I asked my husband to "bring me home a box of 'concentrated extract of lye' from Bly's grocery," he asked no questions, but sensibly brought it home. It was a little round box about as large as those little paper-collar boxes used to be, but very heavy, that was snugly hid away under the sink.

I left Addie and Maggie picking over those raisins in the dining-room, baby May asleep on the bed, and shutting myself into the kitchen commenced. Now I never saw any one make soap, but my success in all those cooking receipts gave me an idea that it was but a small undertaking. I read the directions on the outside of the box and opened it; a whitish rock met my eyes. I tried to get it out of the box, and it would not come out. I took the hammer and screw-driver and tried to pound and pry it out; after half an hour's hard labor I succeeded in breaking it up. I put my fat on the stove to melt in my large-sized dinner pot; when it arrived at the proper heat this lye (it was just like chunks of granite) was to be thrown in. I did that, the tub stood by the stove to receive that first-class soft-soap. By and by it commenced to rise up in the kettle. Well, it kept on rising until it reached the top of the pot, and I seized a holder and put the kettle of soap into the tub, but it did not stop, it rolled out into the tub and kept on rolling, and the smoke became bluer and denser, and poured out of the three kitchen windows till the neighbors must have thought a locomotive was there. Well, I took the poker and lifted the handle of that dinner pot, and with my hand wrapped up in the dish-cloth, and protected by a woolen holder, I dropped the smoking, boiling volcanic crater out of the window. Maggie's voice broke the silence, "Belle, what are you doing—this room is full of smoke, and baby wants you."

"Let baby alone, and don't, for pity's sake, open the door. My soap is all made, and I'll be in there presently."

"The neighbors are all looking at the kitchen windows, and I am almost choked for a drink of water," from Addie came next. While I was waiting for the smoke to clear away I cleaned off the top of the stove, wiped up the floor, and, in fact, the room, for the dreadful stuff had spattered everywhere, and such a mess! My nicely-painted yellow floor looked as if the leprosy had attacked it; my wash-tub was striped, instead of shining blue, and the graining about sink and window where it had dropped was ruined. The bottom of a green-painted tin pail was transformed by a very little of that stuff into a capital strainer—I'm sure I never want to see such a looking kitchen again! I went into the dining-room, and, as I opened the door, Addie and Maggie rushed out to see the soap.

"What is the matter with the wash-tub?"

"Have you been trying it on the floor?"

"Where is that soap?"

"Do the directions say, throw it out the window to cool it?"

"Won't your landlord just bless you for this kitchen?"

"Better advertise soap that will bleach green grass white in less than half an hour."

"Good to utilize old tin-ware, just make strainers of all you have."

"What a delightful tint this ceiling has acquired."

"Look at the toe of your slipper."

"Shall we mend that apron, or use the cloth around the holes to patch your dress?"

"Won't Mr. B. think you are so economical, making your own soap? and such soap!"

"I must take some home to mother."

"Concentrated extract of lye," how do you spell that last word? I never saw such a transformation as has taken place in this kitchen through its wonderful action."

"Better sell your waste grease to the soap man after this, if you must have soft-soap. But where in the world were you going to use it, Belle; surely not on this painted floor, or was it to be perfumed to wash this baby with?"

I rather dreaded to have Mr. B. come home and laugh at me, but I think he was glad to find I had neither burned up the house nor the baby; at any rate he never laughed at me; but those girls did enjoy asking me very frequently, "When are you going to make soft-soap again?"

Eleven years have gone by since then. May has grown to be a tall girl; to Addie and Maggie life has been both joy and sorrow, and we each have a little boy in heaven besides the little ones who claim our love and care on earth, and this afternoon we sit here, Maggie and I, watching her Earl try to catch my Florence, and wishing Addie was here to laugh with us over the remembrance of that soft-soap!

FLORENCE T. W. BURNHAM.

## Angle Decoration.

(A QUAIN ROOM.)

For the library a new "treatment" has been adopted, the elaborate adornment of the corner angles with pedestals upon which are placed figures half the size of life, or with shelves of gilded *terra-cotta* and *faience* on which are set animals in metal or clay, which must correspond in all the four corners of the room as to the climate which is theirs. Elephants with palanquins, tigers pierced with a lance, and exhibiting the engaging grimaces consequent upon an experience so pleasing; huge and beautifully marked serpents—some coiled up to within a few inches of the ceiling, and with eyes of crystal, and widely expanded jaws—and small monkeys are associated upon these corner-shelves, strange as such ornaments may appear. Other shelves of carved wood are curved to adapt them to the angle of the wall, and are sometimes twenty, one above another, as the rage for the accumulation of *objets d'art* increases, and they must be distributed in a manner that will not interfere with the symmetry of an apartment as to its remaining decoration. A curious Pompeian model of a hand and arm has found favor, being used as a sconce would be, except that instead of candle or torch it suddenly appears in the intersected spaces near the shelves as if just placed there, and holds forth a tray. On each of the four trays, thus appearing on the four wall spaces, between the four rows of shelves in the angles of the library, must be placed the choicest and best of all the *curios*, those that would be comparatively lost upon the shelves. Rich lava cameos, strange Etruscan ornaments, the rarest of the souvenirs of travel of the kind to be thus used have here their place, and severe is the test of taste in the choice of what so to display. Needless to say that an unfigured wall-hanging must be used in such a room, and that other than bar-hung "window-drapes"—as these are now called—would be unsuitable. The frieze should be rich, and for the library the lotus-flower is a favorite, while the kala, or cala, is almost equally liked. The carpet should be rich, and with a small design of an unobtrusive color.