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Housekeepers' Chat

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Preventive" Housecleaning. From the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Housecleaning Made Easier."

"Hey there!" called my Next-Door Neighbor. "Would you mind jumping over the hedge, and lending me a hand? There's a regular cloudburst on the way, and if I don't get this mattress inside it will be soaked! Look at that sky!"

Before we got the mattress inside, it began to sprinkle.

"Just my luck," said my Neighbor, cheerfully, "I never started housecleaning yet, but what something untoward happened. Oh well, as the poet said, 'It isn't raining rain to me'---"

"Perhaps not," I said, "but you're getting just as wet as if it were. How did you ever get this mattress through the kitchen doorway?"

We tugged and pushed, and pretty soon the mattress was back where it belonged, in the room my Neighbor was cleaning. We sat down on the bed, to rest, while the raindrops pattered on the shingle roof. I love the sound of raindrops on a shingle roof.

"Do you remember," began my Neighbor, "when housecleaning was a semi-annual event? Like Christmas and the Fourth of July. And wasn't it awful! I mean the tedious, backbreaking 'spring housecleaning,' which upset the regular routine, and made everybody uncomfortable while it lasted. A little cleaning, now and then, is relished by the best of men, but to make a six-day event of housecleaning is too much of a good thing. Don't you think so?"

"It's unnecessary", I replied. "Frequent cleaning saves time and strength in the long run, and is also better for the house, and its furnishings. Heavy cleaning may be done a little at a time, to avoid the hard work and discomforts of the old-time spring and fall housecleaning.

"Nowadays," I continued, "we emphasize 'preventive' housecleaning--- that is, deeping dirt out of the house. 'Preventive' housecleaning saves a great deal of effort."

"I know," said my Neighbor. "I find that I save myself lots of work by removing dirt regularly from the window sills, porches, steps, and walks. Did you see the screen, covered with cheesecloth, on my storeroom window? Air passes through the screen, but dust and soot do not."

"A good idea," I said. "Cloth screens are particularly useful in pantries and storerooms, and for doors and windows near the ground, against which dirt of all sorts is blown. In some climates cloth screens are used in bedroom windows at night, to keep out dampness as well as dirt.

"Muddy or dusty shoes and clothing are another source of dirt in the house. Much of this dirt can be kept out by getting rid of dirt walks, and bare ground near the house, and by insisting that mats and scrapers be used out of doors, and by providing special places just inside where muddy rubbers and boots and coats may be left and cleaned. An entrance passage or small room answers this purpose. I've tried to teach my family that the kitchen is not the place for storing muddy shoes and cleaning dusty clothing.

"Has it stopped raining? I must go -- I left some Bran Muffins in the oven and I know they must be well done by this time."

"Thanks for your assistance," said my Neighbor, "and I'll be over after while to sample the Bran Muffins. If they're good, I want the recipe."

Now I'm going to answer a few housecleaning questions, before I give you the recipe for Bran Muffins.

First, "What is the best way to clean upholstered furniture?"

A vacuum cleaner, or a brush, is the most effective tool for cleaning upholstered furniture. A soft brush is best for velvet and velour; a stiffer one for tapestry and other strong, firm materials; and a pointed one for tufted upholstery. If convenient, upholstered furniture should be taken out of doors occasionally, and beaten with a flat carpet beater. It may be cleaned indoors by the following method: Cover the upholstery with a cloth, dipped in water and wrung as dry as possible, then beat with a flat beater. The damp cloth will take up the dust, and prevent its spreading over the room.

Second question: "How should one clean a leather rocking chair?"

Leather furniture coverings last longer and look better if rubbed occasionally with castor oil, or a commercial leather polish, to restore the oil that gradually dries out of the leather. Rub the liquid in well and wipe off any excess; otherwise, this film of oil will darken the leather, and soil whatever touches it.

Third question: "How can I remove paint and varnish which has been spattered on the window pane?"

Paint or varnish spatters on glass may be dissolved with turpentine or alcohol, or rubbed off with a dull knife.

Next question: "How many times a year does a floor need re-waxing?"



Under moderate use, a floor needs re-waxing only two or three times a year. Applying too much wax is a common mistake. The extra wax lies on the surface in a soft coat that collects dust, and is easily marred. To clean a waxed floor, sweep it with a soft brush or a mop entirely free from oil. Oil softens wax, and should never be used on it, in any way. About once a week a waxed floor should be given a more thorough cleaning with a cloth wrung out of warm soapy water, or better still, moistened with turpentine or gasoline. Water dulls and whitens a waxed floor. Turpentine, or gasoline, dissolves the film of dirty wax on the surface and leaves it bright. However, in using these liquids, remember that they are inflammable.

Last question: "Can you tell me how to clean ordinary plastered and papered walls and ceilings?"

Ordinary plastered and papered walls and ceilings should be cleaned with a soft wall brush, or a broom covered with soft cloth, such as cotton flannel. Use light overlapping strokes in cleaning; heavy strokes rub the dirt in. Cotton batting is good for cleaning places that soil more quickly than the rest, for example, the wall over radiators, registers, and stoves. The wall should be rubbed lightly with the cotton, which should be turned as it becomes soiled.

There are, on the market, commercial pastes and powders for cleaning wall papers, but these should be applied by an expert. An amateur is likely to have a streaked wall if he attempts to use them.

Don't forget about the free bulletin, called "Housecleaning Made Easier." It tells how to clean house, in the easiest and most efficient way.

Please take recipe for Bran Muffins now. Seven ingredients for Bran Muffins.

1 cup flour	3 cups bran
1 teaspoon soda dissolved in 1 tablespoon of water	1/4 cup melted butter
1-1/4 teaspoon salt	2 tablespoons sugar, and 2 cups buttermilk or sour milk.

Mix the dry ingredients. Add the soda, dissolved in 1 tablespoon of water and the sour milk or the buttermilk, and the melted butter. Bake in greased muffin tins, for 25 minutes, or until well browned. Raisins may be added if desired.

An equal quantity of sweet milk may be used in place of the sour milk or buttermilk. In this case omit the soda and water, and use 2 teaspoons of baking powder.

Tomorrow: "Points on Selecting a Washing Machine." Program includes Menu, and recipe for Welsh Rabbit.

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