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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, April 5, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "More About Moths." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

The good, old-fashioned neat-and-tidy housekeeper whose home is always so clean that it fairly shines, who was an enthusiast about washing and scrubbing and polishing, to say nothing of airing and brushing and sunning --you know the kind of housekeeper I mean -- well, she's had a lot of fun poked at her. She's even had to endure many mean remarks. But she has much in her favor just the same. Don't think I'm setting up an immaculate household as the end and aim of woman's existence. And don't get the idea that I admire the painfully neat lady who almost has hysterics if she sees a bit of dust. I'm just saying that careful and regular cleaning of the house pays -- yes, even in the far corners and the nooks and crannies -- pays not only in looks but also in an actual saving of dollars and cents.

I have many illustrations to prove that. For example, textile experts will tell you that keeping all household fabrics clean prolongs their life considerably. Dust wears out fabrics. Sharp particles of dust and dirt ground into rugs will wear down the fibres in time. So frequent cleaning saves the rugs. Certain kinds of dust rot window curtains and hangings, unless they get frequent cleaning.

That's just one small example. A better illustration, which applies especially at this time of year, has to do with those small but powerful enemies of the family pocketbook -- clothes moths. Moths do thousands of dollars' worth of damage every year. They are dangerous and expensive pests to allow around the house. And cleanliness is one of the best weapons against them.

If you clean all your wool clothes -- wash them or dry-clean them or carefully brush, air and sun them -- and then if you put them away in moth-proof containers, you don't need to fear these troublesome pests. As far as moths are concerned, care and cleanliness may save you a good deal of money.

If you have woolens and furs that you won't be needing again until fall, now is the time to store them out of reach of moths, if you haven't done it already. Moths often get in their dirty work on the forgotten coat or the neglected dress -- the garment you meant to clean and store away when you found time. Give a moth a soiled wool garment in a quiet dark place and he'll just settle down to getting fat and prosperous and raising his family in comfort. Then, when you finally remember that garment, hopeless damage may be done.



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So get out your woolens and furs and give them a good cleaning. Take them out into the sun and brush and air them well. To be doubly safe, wash the clothes that are washable and have the others cleaned. But thorough brushing, shaking, airing and sunning -- usually will rid the cloth of any eggs or larvae that might be in it. Then pack the clothes away immediately where the moths can't get at them. You can wrap them with heavy unbroken paper and seal all the edges with gummed paper strips. Or you can hang dresses and coats in garment bags that are entirely tight -- not even the tiniest opening for moths to enter. Be sure that the bag is carefully sealed around the top where the hanger comes out. Another safe place to store woolens is a well-made cedar chest, that is, if the woolens are clean when they go in. Since trunks and even well-built boxes are not always entirely tight, any clothes stored in such places are safer if a pound of naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene crystals are sprinkled in with them. These crystals are inexpensive and keep moths out. Naphthalene comes in the form of flakes or moth balls.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that your clothes are safe by putting some naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene in your closet. The fumes from these crystals must be very concentrated if they are effective, so use them only in tight chests or compartments where the fumes can't escape.

How valuable are cedar chests against moth enemies? Well, the scientists who have been investigating say that a good cedar chest made of red cedar heart-wood at least three-fourths of an inch thick with a cover of solid red cedar will kill all the newly hatched or very young larvae of clothes moths. But you can't depend on the cedar to kill the moths or miller or the eggs or even to destroy the little worms after they are half or full grown. It's only the youngest babies in the family, you see, that succumb in a cedar chest. That's why the experts insist that only clean clothes, absolutely free from moth eggs and worms are safe in these chests.

Here's a point worth knowing about the so-called "moth-proof" bags. The purpose of these bags is not to kill moths, but to keep them out. So bags made of plain heavy paper are just as safe as those containing tar or cedar or pine oils. The value of the bag lies in its tightness.

Cleanliness in your clothes closet is also a protection against moths. You see, dust that collects on the floor often collects a moth family. Dust on a dark shelf may do the same. But a light, clean, well-ventilated closet discourages these unwelcome visitors.

The experts on the ways of household pests say that many people are using worthless remedies against moths -- substances that have no effect at all. Tobacco extracts don't bother moths. Neither do dried lavender flowers nor cayenne or black pepper, allspice, salt, borax, eucalyptus leaves nor red cedar leaves. You'll save by going after moths scientifically and by not spending your money on worthless remedies. And, as we mentioned at the beginning, scientists are in favor of absolute cleanliness as the safest and cheapest protection.

