

Across the Editor's Desk

THIS is going to be a confidential chat about some new things for *Better Homes & Gardens*.

First let's talk about next month's issue.

"Man's place is in the kitchen!" That's the startling slogan of Frazier Hunt, who has looked things over in every land on the globe, coming to the conclusion that what this nation needs is more men cooks.

Frazier Hunt, as you probably know, is a war correspondent, author of many books and magazine articles, rancher, and globe-trotter. (By the way, his recent book "This Bewildered World" is one you'll want to read.) On top of that he is a most human and lovable character, full of good humor—a genuine home and family man despite his wanderlust. You may be surprised that this tall, robust, intensely masculine man knows his recipes, and he proves it by his writing. And here's another little-known fact about this well-known cosmopolite: When a young man he published a weekly newspaper at Alexis, Illinois.

HONORE WILLISIE MORROW, famous Lincoln biographer, who has written so many novels, historical books, and magazine articles that we couldn't begin to list them, says Abraham Lincoln was a great lover of trees and a character who would have greatly endeared himself to *Better Homes & Gardens* families, even if he had not become famous.

She has written "Lincoln Among the Trees" for our February issue, in it presenting many facts about the great American that have hitherto been unknown to most of us.

Mrs. Morrow was born at Ottumwa, Iowa, and was educated at the University of Wisconsin. She has had a very busy and useful life, as magazine editor, novelist, and writer on general subjects. Her article breathes a fine sentiment you will enjoy.

EVERY year, in January or February, the genuine garden fan begins to think of the best flowers he can raise, so in February we are presenting "Parade of the Champions," which describes the finest



Honore Willisie Morrow, author of "Lincoln Among the Trees," in next month's *Better Homes & Gardens*
(PHOTOGRAPH BY J. H. GORHAM & SONS)

1935 new products of the flower-propagator's art.

"SHOULD children help with housework?" This question has probably agitated your mind more than once. Read Gladys Denny Shultz's article in February and you'll find new light on the subject.

NOW we shall back up just a little to consider the article on the growth of winter bulbs for house plants, which is the first of a series. (See page 44.) This is a most informative and useful article, and if you will study it closely you will detect that it is written to be useful to Junior Gardeners as well as adult beginners.

During the year this treatment will be continued. There are many things that interest every beginning gardener, whether he is 6 or 60, and you'll get much information from the series. Please write me what you think of it.

A READER in New Jersey writes that she and her husband bought a bldcost garden home plan from *Better Homes & Gardens*, built a house, and some neighbors liked it so well that they bought it. Then the original builders started another home, also from *Better Homes & Gardens* plans. That was also sold. Within a year or two, four *Better Homes & Gardens* homes have been built and sold in this manner.

In an article last month I told of some people who had built homes of poor construction and architecture, later finding that the economy was very wasteful. The readers in New Jersey, just mentioned, did the opposite. They followed good architectural design and good specifications, and found that they got their money back, and more. Thereby they not only created more comfort and happiness for themselves, but contributed substantially to good architecture and construction in the nation at large. The correspondence with these readers is one of the hopeful signs of the times. It pays to build a strong, well-designed home.

Editor

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THE Diary OF A PLAIN DIRT GARDENER

By Harry R. O'Brien

Jan. 1 Here beginneth the—let me see, it's either the twenty-seventh or twenty-eighth year that I have kept the pages of this old diary book. Think of that. And right glad I am that in the years when I was younger and more foolish, I didn't have to pick out and edit extracts of it for *Better Homes & Gardens*, like I've been doing the past few years.

My Plans. Here's what I want to do this year. First, there's the bed I made



"I put cornstalks over the iris"

ready for more peonies that still stands vacant. No money to buy said peonies. I plan to fill it with annuals this year and maybe I can get the peonies next fall. I want to get a good collection of the newer hardy chrysanthemums. I want to prepare a little bed and plant it with tall phlox, including some more of the new Lilian that is such a fine pink. I hope to grow a lot more perennials from seed to catch up on the ones I didn't grow last year because I never could get the money ahead to buy the seeds.

Jan. 2 Antidote for Avoirdupois. My extra 15 pounds worry me. So about 4 this afternoon I donned war paint and feathers (I speak figuratively, for what I donned was overalls plus my summer-camping high-top shoes) and went right out into the chilly air. The ground was frozen and it was an ideal time for finishing up the winter-covering job. I put cornstalks over the new iris I planted last summer. Before the ground froze I had dug little trenches back and around the bed to run off surplus water.

Jan. 3 Down town, I bought my garden diary notebook for this year and found that my old favorite has appeared in a new water-resistant cover. Good, for this notebook will have many a chance to get wet as I lug it about the garden, making notes.

Jan. 6 Another Fish Fan. On the way home from a visit to the folks we stopped to howdy with John Siebenthaler, the nurseryman. He's a tropical-fish fan in his idle moments and he gave the boys a pair of sword fish and a pair of moons, which they proudly brought home, in a fruit jar with perforated lid, to our aquarium.

Jan. 8 The Fuller Life. This family has resolved to live a fuller life. We are going to do things and make things. I am

going to work at my photographing. Donald wants to do carpenter work and he's busy out at his Grandmother K's right now doing his first wood-carving. Maggie wants to paint and what not. So we need a play laboratory indoors that will take the place of our garden work outdoors in summer. And it's so chilly at the garage workbench.

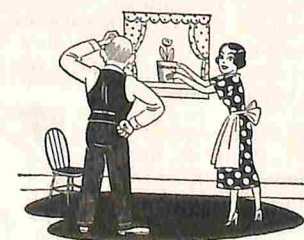
So I made measurements this afternoon. Then David and I went to Potter's lumber yard and ordered material to make a big workbench in the basement, with a smaller, lower one at the end for the boys. And Donald has already set up a howl for more tools.

Two Questions. There are those tulips in pots that I've been trying to force into bloom—and haven't. Maggie has them in the kitchen now and this evening she asked me two most embarrassing questions: "Do you think these tulips will ever bloom?" and "Do you think you are good enough carpenter to enlarge this window ledge to make a shelf for flowers?"

Such enthusiasm in Maggie needs encouragement. I've been trying for about twelve years now to get her to take care of my indoor flowers. Funny, but she likes cactus and those queer sedum-like things instead of flowering plants.

Jan. 7 Carpenter. By 4, after a day at my typewriter, I was tired, nervous, and querulous. The boys kept coming in and bothering me. So I just up and went to the basement with them. First, we carried in that new lumber which came this morning. Then we set to work to measure, saw, chisel, and hammer to make our indoors laboratory bench. Donald wanted to saw. David put on his play carpenter apron and appropriated my nails. The saw was dull. I broke my chisel. My mallet wasn't heavy enough. But anyhow, we worked away until bedtime for the boys.

Jan. 12 Roadside Effort. This afternoon I went to a meeting down town to hear Wilbur H. Simonson, landscape architect of the Federal Bureau of Public Roads, talk on roadside improvement.



"Maggie asked embarrassing questions"

Some call it beautification, but it's a lot broader than that. Our garden clubs and others have recently organized a Roadside Improvement Council. Our state has been pretty backward in looking after

roadsides, but maybe if those of us who love the open road and the beautiful make enough noise we'll soon change all that.

Jan. 17 Occupying the Pulpit in Jackson. Tonight found Maggie and me at a meeting of the Jackson Horticultural Society, at Jackson, Michigan, which was a unique experience. First, I was on the program, you see, and I had to speak standing in the pulpit of the Methodist Church. Now, be it known, this PDG is often pretty plain speaking. And standing there in a pulpit sadly calmed me down and limited my phraseology.

Second, I never saw such a lot of good gardeners in my life. At least eight of them had their training in England or adjacent territory. And they know more about gardening than I'll ever know. Morrison, the president, is an Irishman. Grinter, secretary, is an Englishman. After the meeting, Morrison took us out to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dobbin. We saw their fine garden by floodlight, then sat and talked garden gossip until midnight. This horticultural society has a membership of about thirty men and meets twice a month. It has a lot of enthusiasm.

Jan. 21 Back home, to find Donald at his grandmother's with the mumps. There are more baby guppies in the aquarium. A visitor actually came



"I just didn't listen to her"

this bright afternoon and wanted to see the garden. I showed what there is to him. So far everything seems to be standing the winter in good shape. The plants in the coldframe are growing brightly. The moles have well-nigh ruined the lawn in places. Wherever I put compost last spring, there they have been. Now I wonder why.

Jan. 22 Sanitation for Fish. Down town, David and I bought a feeding ring for the tropical fish—a little hollow glass square that floats on the water. By putting the feed inside this, it doesn't spread and it is easier to clean up any that the fish don't eat. Also I bought another medicated cone for the aquarium. This is mainly plaster-of-paris, I suppose, and its purpose is to neutralize any acid that is formed in the water.

Jan. 23 Christmas Tree Planted. The thermometer stood up toward 50 this afternoon. And there stood the live Christmas tree in its tub, [Continued on page 49]

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