

KITCHEN MANAGEMENT IN FRANCE.

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No more interesting or profitable investigations have we ever made among any people, than those which relate to kitchen management in France. The tourist has no difficulty in gaining access to the homes of the most lowly, and everything is open to inspection. It used to be the custom in that country, when the traveller alighted at any little wayside inn, to show him the kitchen and larder before opening the bed-chambers for inspection. In 1855-56, a period when there were fewer railroads than now, we journeyed leisurely through France, and obtained views of interior life which are not easily forgotten. From these observations we unhesitatingly declare that the eating in middle-class French houses, inexpensive as it is, is certainly far superior to that of the majority of the richer classes in this country. It consists of few dishes, of smaller quantities; it is composed of low-priced articles, and reference is had to the amount of nutriment secured. The French are too poor and too wise to waste money in the purchase of fish, flesh, or fowl, when these cost more than their nutrient or current values. They study the markets, and select such foods as are sold at reasonable rates and furnish muscular and nerve strength. And then, there are none so poor or saving as not to require that each dish shall be itself, with its full aroma, its full essence,—every particle of nutriment made available. Poverty in that remarkable country does not prevent the exercise of culinary skill; it sets the latter off against the former, it replaces money by intelligence. Every housewife spends the money allotted to the purchase of foods in a way to produce its utmost value, not only in quantity and quality, but, what is even more important, in suitability. The provisions are bought with reference to the use which is to be made of them, and no more than is needed in twenty-four hours is purchased at one time. A French woman knows that a cheap chicken will serve for boiling, and the water is invariably made into a nice soup with vegetables. A better fowl would be selected for roasting, especially if guests are expected. Cabbage, asparagus, and artichokes are more nutritious than potatoes, and therefore they are oftener seen upon the tables of the French peasantry. Dark bread, made from whole wheat and barley, is the only kind used, and eggs, which are usually cheap, are largely consumed. Scarcely any butter or cheese find their way to the tables of the poorer classes; they are too costly.

Everything is eaten up clean, and each morsel of nutriment is extracted. The bones of animals and fowls are broken, and the marrow forms the basis of the excellent soups, so common everywhere. Upon the table there is usually just enough for the family; so no one has a chance of leaving hardly a crumb. Waste is suppressed, because it cannot exist without a surplus, because its very possibility depends on an excess of supply over consumption. From experience and observation the French housewife knows how much weight of food she requires at each meal, and she provides that and no more. If at dinner there is more provided than is absolutely needed, it is known that the evening meal will be lessened in consequence. The peculiar economy of the French is manifested in the purchase of the cheaper articles of food. In the cities the cheaper portions of the meat of animals find a readier market than the dearer, and it often happens that the best or choicest cuts remain upon the market-men's hands until a late hour in the day, and are then sold at reduced prices. A large piece of meat is rarely seen upon the tables of even the richer classes in France; the portion is usually small, and the meal is supplemented with a fair allowance of soup, bread, and vegetables. This management does not lessen the attractiveness of meals, or indicate unpleasant parsimony. Small dishes of each sort of food, cooked in savory and palatable form, enable French housekeepers to economize on the dearer articles, and herein we should learn from them an important lesson.

Another matter connected with French kitchen management claims attention, the great economy of fuel. It is a prominent maxim that a small dish requires but a small amount of fuel to cook it, and a pint or a quart of charcoal will do more work in a French kitchen, than ten pounds of anthracite will in ours. Cookery is carried on almost exclusively with wood or charcoal fires, kept down to a low smoulder when not needed for the moment, and roused up to activity in five minutes when the time comes to use them. The same exact adaptation of means to ends is discovered here as in all other details of the subject: a fire to roast a chicken is made just big enough to serve the purpose; the combustion of a cent's worth of charcoal boils or

stews the contents of two saucepans at the same time; as soon as the operation is complete, the fire is covered up with ashes, or put out. Small quantities do not take so long to cook as large ones, so they need heat for a shorter period; and even in the case of soups which require hours of gentle simmering to bring them to the point, the very nature of the process prohibits strong flame and its accompanying loss of fuel. In cities, Paris particularly, families have their cooking done at cook-shops, of which there are many in almost every street. A housekeeper goes to market in the morning and purchases a joint of beef, or a fowl. It will cost perhaps four centimes to cook this at home; at the cook-shop it can be roasted for half that sum, so it goes to the shop, and at the hour specified it is returned in fine condition. One of the sights of Paris to a stranger is these cook-shops at about the hour of twelve, when the whole establishment is aglow with flame and permeated with the odors of cooking flesh. They are usually open to the street, and one can look in and see the work done in all its details.

It does not cost a poor man, in France, one-half as much to cook a meal as it does in this country, and fuel of every kind is much dearer. Our big stoves and cooking ranges are in constant blast summer and winter, and there is a prodigious waste of fuel. The same amount of coal is consumed to boil a teakettle as is used to roast a sheep. We have not yet learned the first principle of economy as regards either the purchase and use of foods or the consumption of fuel. We are the most wasteful people that now exist, or perhaps have ever existed, and the waste in the poorer class of families is sufficient to sustain in perfect health an equal number of families of the same class in France.

The "waste-buckets" belonging to French families present a very different appearance from those found at the kitchen doors in this country. A French gentleman once observed to the writer that the Americans were a wicked people, as shown by their speculations, murders, drinking-habits, thefts, &c.; but in nothing was the wickedness more distinctly indicated than in the contents of the "waste-carts," as noticed in the streets of our cities. A people addicted to such wanton waste ought to suffer from protracted famine, or some calamity which would teach lessons of economy in the use of food materials.

We should learn from the French housekeepers and cooks several useful lessons. First, as regards the selection of articles of food by those of limited means, it may be said that good bread is indispensable in families, and to secure this, it is not necessary to purchase the whitest and highest-priced flour. The middle and poorer classes in France use but little white-flour; they have learned that the sweetest and most nutritious bread is made from wheat, barley and rye, ground finely but unbolted. Their bread is dark, but of excellent quality. Meats should be selected with a view to the methods of cooking to be adopted. The French never *boil* meats unless for the purpose of making soups. They regard boiled meats as comparatively worthless, and never serve them unless in some prepared form, to restore flavor and lost nutrient principles. We forget in this country that to *boil* food, be it meat or be it vegetables, is to extract from it, first, its volatile aroma, then its essences or juices, its nutritive power; and these go out in the hot water, which is stupidly thrown away. Boiling meat or vegetables in France is to make soup, and so saving are they, that even the water in which beans and cauliflowers have been boiled is always kept to serve as a basis for vegetable soup. Every liquid which has received the extracted flavor of a boiled substance is looked upon as precious, and is employed again in some form, so as not to waste the properties which it has acquired. The entire system of French cooking, both in form and practice, is to save the whole nutritive elements of every substance, to pass into the stomach, instead of allowing it to be poured down the sink-spout or sending it to the pigs. The lesson taught us in this regard should be heeded. Butchers' bones, and those of fowls, which here go to the waste-bucket or to the soap-boiler covered with fragments of meat and loaded internally with rich suet, are in France carefully sought for and employed in making soups. Nothing is wasted which can be used for human food; soups are so common, it may be said the nation lives on them.

EMPLOYMENT OF DYNAMITE IN THE LATE ARCTIC EXPEDITION.—The accounts of the English Arctic Expedition under Capt. Nares, show the application of many devices supplied by the advancement of science in overcoming the many obstacles presented by nature to guard the approach to the pole.