

THE HOUSEHOLD.

THE HOUR-A-WEEK CLUB.

A STORY FOR HOUSEKEEPERS.

(Annie A. Preston, in "The Christian Work.")

'According to appearances now it will be a rainy day to-morrow,' said Farmer Mosely, as he drove his fat horse and Concord buggy up to a little group of ladies who were standing on the sunny side of one of the village churches, one balmy March afternoon.

'Rain? I wish it would and finish settling the mud,' said Mrs. Calendar.

'No wonder you think of the old saying,' added Mrs. Morse, 'it is such an unusual thing for the women in this village to be out-doors any day excepting on Sunday. I didn't see how I could get away to-day, but Mrs. Black was such an old neighbor.'

'I know it,' said Mrs. Johns. 'I left my ironing, and I must hurry back, for my bread will be ready to go into the oven.'

'You all left something, I'll be bound,' said Farmer Mosely again, in his good-natured way.

'Of course, for there is always the cleaning and scrubbing that comes along all the time.'

'She would have been alive to-day if she hadn't killed herself cleaning house all the time,' said Mrs. Mosely, who was by this time seated in the Concord by the side of her husband, looking up at the tolling bell; 'and you are all going the same way, and what does all this wearing yourselves out amount to?'

'That's what I say all the time,' said Mrs. Liscomb; 'for I am so tired every day of my life that I am as cross as two sticks, and take no comfort myself, even if I do endeavor to make my household comfortable.'

'Perhaps you might make them more comfortable with less pains,' said the farmer; and the women sighed one after another.

'I am tired to death all the time! I don't see how any one can be good-natured under such circumstances,' and some one said:

'I hope the time will come some time when I can get out once in a while and call on my neighbors and have company as my mother used to.'

All the other women nodded and looked sympathizing, but Mr. Mosely continued: 'That's what she always said,' pointing his whip toward the procession wending its way down the hill to the cemetery, and his wife added:

'You are all nice, well disposed women; but you are going on in a foolish and wicked way, each afraid of what the others will say if a line of the old established custom in housework is deviated from.'

They all looked up in astonishment at the spirited little woman in the Concord. Had it been Mrs. General Scolley or the minister's wife, or the doctor's wife even; but that Mrs. Mosely, who lived away up the Rock-cay road on an isolated farm, should presume to lay down rules for the village women, was something past comprehension.

'What would you have us do?' asked Mrs. Crane, dolefully.

'Learn to make the most of your lives as you go along. Strive to be neat enough and orderly enough without being foolish. Housework is a necessity, and should be the pleasantest and healthiest work in the world. When it is not so, the housewife is making a great mistake some way in her management.'

'I think every woman has her own way of doing housework,' said Mrs. Johns, a little stiffly.

'Yes, so do I,' assented her opposite neighbor, eagerly, and some one quickly put in:

'It is very hard for me to make a change.'

'But it is easy for you to change the

fashion of your clothing. Not one of you, I am bold to say, would wash dishes in a calico gown that had not sleeves like balloons, in which her arms are somewhat lost.'

'Yes, I know,' said Mrs. Waller, 'but some one is always liable to come in, and what would any one say to find us in a wrapper with tight sleeves, even if the ironing of those same calico or gingham sleeves does wear us threadbare, so far as nerves are concerned, every week?'

'And if tight sleeves should come in, you would cut yours all over, and find time to do it.'

'I suppose so.'

'But you cannot change your manner of doing your housework so as to give you a few hours of leisure every day?'

'I have been in a treadmill for so long, that I don't know what I should do with my leisure.'

'We might start an hour-a-week club, and go around from house to house and talk these things over,' still suggested Mrs. Mosely.

'Who would go?'

'All of us, I hope, and all our neighbors.'

'Would you come the two miles?'

'Only when you came to hold the meetings with me.'

'Try it,' cried Mr. Mosely. 'This has been a good meeting, as I can testify. Hold another a week from to-day. It may save us from a dry summer.'

The ladies all laughed, for the procession was well out of sight, and the bell had ceased tolling, and Mrs. Andrews, who lived next door to the church, said:

'Meet with me next week, from three until four, each with an idea as to how our work may be made lighter. I feel like a new creature already, from having my lungs filled with fresh air during the time we have been standing here.'

'So do I,' said Mrs. Shenstone, 'and we all have been helped on the principle that misery loves company.'

'Count me out there,' laughed Mrs. Mosely, as they drove away. 'Good-bye.'

'I wonder if anyone will go?' they all said over and over to themselves, a dozen times a day, and they each invited some one to accompany them, so as not to be embarrassed by being alone.

Thus it transpired that as the town clock on the church steeple struck the hour of three on the day appointed, the same company, with several reinforcements, having gathered on the church steps, proceeded together to Mrs. Andrews'. As she opened the door at their approach a boy running past called out:

'Who's dead? We hadn't heard of no funeral.'

'No wonder he asked,' said Mrs. Neff. 'I said to my husband when I was washing my dinner dishes, and dipping them in hot water and leaving them to drain without wiping them so as to get time to come, that that was what everybody not in the club would think.'

'Why do you not do your dishes that way after every meal?' asked Mrs. Mosely. 'I do, and it saves me an hour a day and the dishes are nicer.'

'I left the table set so as to have it ready for supper,' said Mrs. Johns. 'I don't, usually; I clear it away, and take the leaves out and push it back, and lifting those heavy leaves and adjusting that extension table three times a day does make a lot of work.'

'You lift the leaves six times,' said Mrs. Mosely.

'Yes, but I want the room to look like a sitting-room if anyone comes in, and I don't think anyone can help me out unless the club builds me a dining-room.'

'For the present you can change the arrangement of your room and put your table where your sofa now stands and leave it with the leaves in, saving you a half hour's hard work every day, for six times five is thirty minutes. And as soon as the weather is warm enough, fit up your pretty square porch for a summer

parlor, and entertain your familiar friends there. For more formal occasions you have your parlor. Then you can leave your table set and you will find that it will save you a great deal of time.'

'I will try it, and thank you for the suggestion. When that porch was built I fancied I should sit there a great deal, but I never have.'

'We none of us avail ourselves of the opportunities we have of breathing the fresh air,' said Mrs. Fish. 'Now you have put an idea into my head. I might keep my table set all the time on my door stoop; it would make a fine summer dining-room. I have often wished it was enclosed, although it is pleasanter as it is, except for flies.'

'It is completely shaded with vines, and a piece of fly netting, costing forty cents, would make a complete curtain. It would be like eating in a grape arbor for the whole summer, and you will not only see how much time it saves you, but how enjoyable a cool, airy room will be for your husband and sons, where they may take their time, sure that the table is not in the way.'

'I wanted to come so badly that I saved time by shirking my ironing,' said Mrs. Stebbens. 'I have heard of people doing that; the idea was not original. I am not one of the people who have original ideas.'

'Why have you not done it before?'

'I didn't dare to. I was afraid some of you would find it out. I folded my sheets, and ran them and the pillow cases and towels through the wringer, smoothed the common night gowns and some other things, and, really, my ironing seemed to be next to nothing. The house was not heated, and I was not so tired as to be cross. So it was a great saving altogether.'

'And one to be commended and followed,' said Mrs. Johns. 'Who has the next experience?'

'Well, if we are all to economize time, we need none of us fear to make confession. I shirked about my sweeping and dusting and polishing windows. I don't know as I need to go all over the house every week, whether it needs it or not.'

'I hope you will never any of you be so foolish as to do that again,' said Mrs. Mosely. 'There is such a thing as being over-nice, as you will confess at some future meeting, no doubt. Mrs. Kendall looks as if she had something to say.'

'Yes,' said a bright little woman over in the corner. 'My find is in the matter of food. I have always spent so much time in making pies that were not nutritious, and some that I knew were positively injurious; but quite lately I have heard of the biscuit made of shredded wheat, and my family are taking to them so kindly, eaten with fruit, with cream, with butter and cheese, and even plain in milk, that the dessert problem seems effectually solved, as the shredded wheat is something anyone does not tire of. Come to my house next week, and I will give you a lunch of shredded wheat biscuits and cereal coffee.'

'Two invitations ahead already,' said Mrs. Miner. 'It looks as if we were going to keep this thing up, and were going to find time for it.'

'I want to suggest,' said Mrs. Calendar, 'that as soon as it is warm weather enough we meet out-doors, in some of the pleasant places in which this locality abounds, and that our plan of work shall be, "Suggestions for the good of the community." No gossip to be allowed.'

'That seems unnecessary,' said Mrs. Mosely; 'we have had two meetings, no one has been inclined to gossip, and several of our members are yet unheard from.'

The club grew and flourished; and was the means of revolutionizing society in the town, which is now as progressive in every way as any town in the commonwealth, and the houses are really better, because more sensibly kept than of yore.

'The women have all grown young

and handsome,' declares Farmer Mosely, and their husbands doubtless could testify that they are better natured than they were before the club was organized.

'Hush!' cried Mrs. Johns, 'because you were at our first meeting it is no reason for your declaring our secrets; but we are better in every way, because we are living on the high plane of neighborly love taught by Christ himself. I wish we could induce women in other country places to hold an hour-a-week club.'

A COTTON MATTRESS.

The 'boughten' mattress of wool, hair or husks, to be rendered more comfortable, needs the additional cotton mattress for each bed. It is also quite worth while to protect the heavy mattress from both the upper and under sides, as one cannot thoroughly renovate them without taking all to pieces, and that is work from which the average housekeeper would much prefer to be relieved.

To protect them from the under side heavy muslin is tacked over the springs, and the cotton mattress protects them from the upper side.

This mattress we make of heavy or medium weight unbleached muslin and cotton batting, one and a half widths, the desired length, for each side, and the thickness of said mattress to be governed by inclination. The muslin is put upon frames, cotton laid over, four rolls is about right, and it is tied after the fashion of comforts. One is quickly made. The ties need not be so close as in the comfort. The edges of mattress are just run together by hand, for after a while you will notice that it does not look quite so fresh and nice as it did at first, and you may wish to renovate it, and you will then be glad you have not machine stitching to rip out. The ties are very soon cut—much sooner than put in—the cotton put out for an airing and beating, and the soiled muslin goes into the wash, and pretty shortly you have a brand new cotton mattress again, made out of the old one. They will last a long time, and need 'repair' not oftener than once a year, and they do make a bed look so neat and tidy, and really there is something in 'looks' as well as comfort.

Mattresses are made of ticking, or striped or checked shirting, but we prefer the unbleached muslin.—Nellie Hawks, in 'Housekeeper.'

SELECTED RECIPES.

Potato Pancakes.—Boil six medium-sized potatoes in salted water until thoroughly cooked; mash them and set aside to cool; then add three well-beaten eggs, a quart of milk and flour enough to make a pancake batter. Bake quickly on a well-greased griddle and serve very hot.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Delicious Chicken Pie.—Take a pair of chickens, not too young, that have been carefully dressed; remove all the fat and skin, and the tendons from the drumsticks. Place in a saucepan, cover with boiling water and allow them to simmer gently for about two hours, keeping them tightly covered during the entire time. Remove the chickens from the fire, and add to the liquor in the saucepan a pint of milk; thicken with two tablespoonfuls of flour creamed with one of butter, season with a very little cayenne pepper, some onion juice and salt, and when thoroughly cooked and just before removing from the fire add the well-beaten yolks of two eggs. Pour over the chicken, which should previously have been cut into pieces and placed in a deep earthenware pie dish. When both sauce and chicken are quite cold place over all a rich cover of good paste, making an incision in the centre for the steam to escape; ornament prettily, brush over with the white of an egg, and bake in a moderately hot oven. When the paste is cooked the pie will be done.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Raspberry Jam Pudding.—Take two eggs, their weight in flour, sugar and butter, two tablespoonfuls of raspberry jam, and one teaspoonful of carbonate of soda. Beat the sugar and butter to a cream, then add flour, eggs, jam, and lastly the soda which should have been dissolved in a little cold water. Steam for one hour and a quarter.—Ladies' Home Journal.