

Second Prize Essay

ON

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING.

BY MRS. G. A. FORBES, WATERDOWN, ONT.

IN order to have a well-kept house, there are two essential qualifications required, namely:—System and order. The lady who, either in the oversight or actual performance of the every-day duties devolving upon her, has a systematic and orderly method, will accomplish more, and of a better quality, than another whose work is done in a hap-hazard, go-as-you-please manner.

To begin with, Monday, which (if a fine day) in most families is washing day, it is well to have a dinner of baked potatoes, meat pie, pickles and sauces, with pie for dessert. By so arranging this you have the top of your stove at your disposal.

Tuesday follows with ironing, and in many cases bread-baking, which, if properly managed, can be got through with in the forenoon. It is well when ironing to lay aside all articles that require mending or buttons, and have them properly attended to before being put away in their respective places.

Wednesday is usually churning, and cake and pie baking day.

Thursday, to my idea, is the sewing day of the week, although a portion of every day can be allotted to that.

Friday is general sweeping day, on which bedrooms, halls, closets, and in fact every part of the house, should be thoroughly gone over, followed by careful dusting.

Saturday (in some families may call for churning and bread baking), scrubbing, cleaning of stoves, windows, and general preparations for Sabbath, which in every well-ordered house ought to be one of comparative rest.

In the winter it is well to purchase prints, shirtings and cottonades, and have them made up before spring overtakes us, as at that season the setting of poultry, additional dairy cares, and that most important of all duties, house-cleaning, comes with unexpected rapidity. As soon as these are attended to we have broods of young chicks and turkeys claiming our attention for a few weeks.

About this season the summer small fruit requires attention.

It should be the aim of every good housekeeper to have her cellar stored with all kinds of fruits and jellies, as they are healthful as well as a relish when the snow is blowing without, and we sit around our well-spread table beside a glowing fire.

After fruit follows the pickling season, and although a great many condemn them as unhealthy, yet they are very appetizing, and I think (in moderation) ought to have a place in every cellar.

A close cupboard for keeping fruit, pickles, and sauces in, is a very useful article in the cellar; as well as several hanging shelves.

It is now drawing towards autumn, and we are beginning to feel the need of warmer clothing. This should be attended to early, as the want of it sometimes has serious results amongst our little ones. It can be done during the evenings, if not in the afternoons, while the head of the house can render this part of the day most pleasant and profitable by reading aloud.

I would here say that no woman should be so much engrossed by housekeeping as to neglect the cultivation of her intellect, as the woman of a cultured mind has a refining and elevating influence

upon those she comes in contact with each day in her own home as well as abroad.

DIET.

Under this head I would suggest the use of substantial nourishing food, comprising beef, well cured ham, eggs, milk, good bread and butter, and for the appetite of most gentlemen, a good apple pie.

I believe strongly in the use of oatmeal porridge or cracked wheat for breakfast during the winter months, with bread, butter, and hot coffee. Unless men are working very hard, they do not require meat for breakfast, for as a rule it is not very early in winter time.

For dinner, meat, potatoes, and always vegetables of some other kind, cabbages, onions, beets, turnips, canned tomatoes, or corn, with tea, bread and butter, pudding or pie.

For supper or tea, cold meat, with baked or warmed potatoes, bread, butter, apple sauce or fruit, and pie, with one kind of cake, makes a very good bill of fare for general use, but can be varied to suit the appetite. During the spring and summer months meat and potatoes are required for men's breakfasts, and dinners as well, with the addition of parsnips, salsify or lettuce salad and pudding or pie; while for tea, bread and butter, with fresh fruit and warm biscuit, with milk from the creamers, which is very much relished in most families.

SETTING OF TABLE AND TABLE MANNERS.

However frugal the meal may be, its appearance is greatly enhanced by being neatly set on the table. This is a part of housekeeping too often neglected, and if so, has not an elevating influence on the minds of those who are to partake of it.

A word regarding table etiquette will not be amiss here, and beginning with the children, they should be taught to reverence the asking of God's blessing, also to eat in a tidy manner, and say "please," or "thank you," as the case requires. All unpleasant and unprofitable topics should not be introduced or discussed during the meal hour.

WASHING OF DISHES.

This is an endless portion of housekeeping, and should be done at once after the dishes have been used, as they are much easier done then, and in that way time is saved. It is well to keep a large pot on the kitchen stove filled with soft water and covered with a close-fitting tin lid, if you are not provided with a tank.

The washing of glassware should precede the dishes, which should be dried with a towel kept for the purpose; a small brush is also very convenient for glassware and flowered dishes.

VENTILATION.

As I think a great deal of our health depends on the purity of the air we breathe, the necessity of giving due attention to ventilation is of vital importance.

A very good plan is to throw open the bedroom windows and place the bedding on a chair close by, and while we are busy with our morning duties in the kitchen, the dining and sitting room windows and hall doors should be opened. Of course in case of sickness the comfort of the patient should be first considered.

The cellar is another part that must not be overlooked, and should be kept scrupulously clean, and all decayed vegetation removed as soon as possible.

CARE OF FURNITURE.

The care of furniture ought to take an important part in the well-kept house. All articles, from the

most common stool or chair to the finest upholstery should be handled carefully and quietly. The banging of chairs is destructive as well as disagreeable.

Scribbling on white walls, wall paper, or paint, or in books, should not be allowed in any case.

GENERAL REMARKS.

As in most cases, the housekeepers of our land are wives and mothers, it is well to say a word regarding the families in our homes, as to a great extent the weal or woe of our country depends upon the young people of to-day.

To the mothers of small children I would say, begin with orderly, cleanly habits. It soon becomes a second nature and the child so influenced is not in after life likely to go far from home for comfort and company.

With the younger members, those under six years, it is well to form the habit of retiring early, as it gives the tired mother and housekeeper time to reflect before retiring. For those older, nine o'clock ought to be a fixed hour for retiring, as all lessons can be studied before that. When they begin to pass from boyhood and girlhood to young "lads and lasses," attending high schools, we should endeavor to make our homes especially attractive and happy, by encouraging each good taste such as music, drawing, painting, mechanical ingenuity, and company of their own age and similar bringing-up, but by all means we should by example and advice show them the importance of nice associates, avoiding those of profane language and addicted to the use of tobacco amongst boys and slangy conversation or rude, boisterous manner amongst girls.

Boys ought to be taught the necessity of keeping themselves clean, their clothes well brushed and shoes polished. These are matters which seem small in themselves, but are of great importance to a young man leaving home, for who is it that wishes to employ a young man of slovenly appearance?

The good housekeeper should do her utmost to cultivate a taste for the use of the needle in her daughters, as no young woman is fitted to go out into the world without a knowledge of sewing and mending. True it is, machines do a great deal of our sewing, but not all. There is the making of button-holes alone, which, when properly done, is an ornament to any garment, but if poorly done, is an eyesore. Now when so many pretty things can be made for very little expense, it is a pleasant pastime, as well as profitable, in making our homes attractive.

The home can be made a good training-school for future usefulness as well as enjoyment, by devoting one evening in the week to amusements, music, readings, recitations, and whatever each member can furnish. Pictures are another requisite to a well-kept house; they relieve the eye and make us forget ourselves for a few moments.

I would not neglect the cultivation of flowers. What is more pleasant in summer than to have a nice fresh bouquet of flowers on the sitting or dining-room table, and in winter, when "ice bounds the brook and snow clads the vale," nothing is more pleasant than a window filled with healthy plants, which seem to speak words of thankfulness for each fresh drink and each sunny day.

A HEN and chicks in a garden sometimes prove beneficial, as they destroy many insects, but they should be kept away from plots that have been recently seeded.