

The skilled cooking of economic materials affords a theme on which it is popularly supposed to be easy to preach, and far from easy to carry doctrine into practice. I shall speak only of the mode of preparation of the very simplest and cheapest kinds of food in the simplest and cheapest way. I shall begin with breakfast, and breakfast foods. I should like to see the tea-pot abolished from the breakfast table. I believe tea to be a drink utterly unsuited for an early morning meal, and one which has only come into general use because it is the easiest sort of hot infusion which bad cooks, careless housewives and thoughtless mothers can prepare. Breakfast should be digestible, warm, abundant, unexciting, nourishing. I am not going to quarrel with bread and butter, especially other people's. It is a typically good food, though not always presented in the most agreeable form, and far from being the most appetizing or cheapest of its class. Bread and butter, and hot cocoa, make a very good breakfast for working people, but not perhaps the cheapest they can get, or the handiest. I believe very firmly in our good English household white bread. One hears a good deal, and reads a good deal, of the waste in grinding off the outside husk, which contains nutritious gluten. The apparent economic waste is palpable enough. On the other hand, the silicated husks of all cereals is apt to be irritating. It hurries the digestion, quickens the passage of food through the intestinal tract, and I am inclined to believe that the actual physiological waste is greater in a brown bread than in a white bread diet. It is easy to take a superficial view

of this question, and superficial reformers are always wanting to turn the world upside down. The instinct which has led to the preference of white bread over brown, in places where the two can be had side by side, is nothing else than the crystallized experience which has taught people unconsciously that they are more comfortable after eating the white bread, and that the solid household bread, which is the staple food of the working classes of this country, is in the end most sustaining. A good deal is to be said in favor of some of the forms of "whole meal bread," in which the husk is partially ground off, and the inner pelticle of the grain is very finely ground, and mixed in that condition with the white flour. Moreover, it is undoubtedly a fact that under certain circumstances, in lymphatic temperaments, and in conditions tending towards scrofula, where the diet has to be carefully supervised, and in certain forms of dyspepsia, where something like mechanical excitation of the intestinal tract is useful, whole meal bread is an extremely valuable article of diet. But those are cases which I am not considering. For the working man, for the poor man, and for every day use, I doubt whether anything has yet been produced in any country of the world which is equal to the English household bread. But when we pass out of this category, and come to consider what is to be the cheap, warm, nourishing breakfast with which, at the least trouble and smallest expense, and with the greatest success, we can nourish our children, ourselves, our servants and our laborers, then we have to consider the claims of an immense class of