

THE HOUSEHOLD.

EXTRAVAGANCE IN GIVING.

ELIZABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL.

The reform must begin with women. We are the greatest sinners in this respect because, as a general rule, it is we who regulate the expenditure of the family income. The scale of living in the household is usually adjusted in accordance with our idea of what is proper and befitting our position. Men sometimes have a spasm of extravagance and buy a handsome present which we consider far more expensive than was necessary or desirable, but it is always done to please and gratify some special friend. They do not waste money as we do in numberless little gifts, each small in itself yet the total cost reaching a sum that is by no means insignificant.

Must we then deny ourselves the pleasure of remembering those dear to us and refrain from any substantial expression of our regard for them lest we should run into excess? Not at all. We have to steer between selfishness and extravagance. The wise woman decides in her own mind how much she can afford to spend, and on whom she will bestow her gifts, and then resolutely refuses to be tempted beyond the limit she has assigned herself.

It is astonishing to those who never have tried the experiment how much can be accomplished with small means plus care and thought and patient labor.

Lowell, with the insight of the poet who sees clearly the spiritual law in the natural world, has told us,

'The gift without the giver is bare.'

In our offerings to our friends we should try to put into them something of ourselves. If they are our own productions, the creation of our brains or our fingers, so much the better. We are not all skillful enough to be able to give of our handiwork, or clever enough to lay claim to having originated the tribute we bring. We can all add immeasurably to the value of our gifts by choosing them with special reference to the tastes and wishes and needs of the recipients. A shoe-bag that is positively required to fill a space on a closet door, and hold the shoes that have a habit of being lost when they are wanted in a hurry, will give more real comfort and satisfaction to a busy woman than a bracelet which she would only have an opportunity to wear at long intervals.

Sometimes a dainty trifle that the house-mother would not have time to make for herself, and yet which she longs to have to aid in the adornment of her home, will be more acceptable than a present of greater intrinsic value for her own personal use. Bits of delicate embroidery, a table centre, a set of doilies, a tea cloth, or a pretty toilet set will give a young housekeeper as much pleasure as if her friend had expended many times their cost in the effort to gratify her without meeting her wants.

Evidences of loving care for ourselves always touch our hearts. To know that we have been specially thought of and planned for sends a warm glow of gratitude and responsive affection through us that nothing else can call forth. With what tenderness we regard the gifts of the children when first they begin to manifest their love for us by independent offerings. They may be almost ludicrously inappropriate—if they are the work of the little hands they are sure to be full of imperfections—but such as they are we would not exchange them for the most finished productions of skilled workmen.

Good taste and thoughtfulness and money together can almost work miracles when they are brought to bear in this matter of presents. When a woman has generosity, common sense and the means to carry out her plans, she can bring happiness into many less fortunate lives without causing any embarrassment or painful sense of obligation. There are numberless women with artistic tastes and a love for the beautiful, with a keen appetite for literature and art whose limited incomes forbid their gratification. The new book, the picture or the cast, is as unattainable to them as if they had been removed to another planet. It is at Christmas that those who are blessed with this world's goods can supply some of these wants and help to fill a vacuum of whose extent they little dream. A subscription to a favorite periodical will bring

a recurring pleasure for a whole year to a quiet country home or a lonely life where events are few. There are persons far removed from the very poor whom we pity, and whose material wants we try to supply, who are fully as deserving of sympathy and help as they. The struggle for mere subsistence is so intense it swallows up all that they can bring to it, there is no margin left for luxuries, and yet to some minds these are necessities almost equally with daily bread.

The soul of gifts is love; they are only tokens of something else, the inward feeling of which they are the outward expression. If no affection goes with them they are a mockery far better withheld. It is the thought of the great love which on Christmas day brought to the world the gift of a Redeemer that gives meaning to our presenting them at this time. If we kept this before us it would make us hesitate to offer frivolous mementoes of a passing fancy having no root in our hearts.

If there is a joy in giving there is also, in a lesser degree, a pleasure in receiving. It is this pleasure the recipient is very apt not to express, or at least not to express in full measure, and so defraud the giver of a part of his rightful gratification.

Expression is, in a large degree, a matter of disposition. Frank outspoken persons without shyness or self-consciousness, say naturally what is uppermost in their minds. They may not feel more gratitude than others who cannot put their feelings into words but certainly they are far more satisfactory recipients of gifts. When one has spent time and thought in preparing what one hopes will be a pleasant surprise to one's friend, to have it received with a tepid 'thank you,' no surprise manifested, no pleasure shown, is apt to make one feel a sense of blank discouragement that prevents the effort from being repeated.

On Christmas morning there should be no lack of loving words of appreciation, of smiles of gratitude and warm, hearty thanks for the love that has so bountifully remembered us.—*Ladies' Home Journal*.

THE LIVING-ROOM.

No home should be without it! By whatever name it is called, whether living-room or back parlor, withdrawing room or kitchen,—however named, or if, indeed, nameless, or even misnamed,—this sanctuary of the family life should exist. It is as helpful as is the American woman's rocking-chair, or—sopolo. A house may have a magnificent parlor, a fine reception room, an elegant dining-room, a well-appointed kitchen, and chambers of all varieties of beauty and daintiness,—yes, even an attic,—and yet be far from an ideal home, simply because there is no living-room.

Any room in the house, however, may serve this purpose if only certain conditions are fulfilled. It need not always be planned for by the architect. Common consent may convert the most precise and proper of rooms in the city mansion, or the one room of the frontiersman's 'shack,' into the ideal living-room. I would like to suggest these few conditions, calling them the shalts and the shalt-nots of the living-room.

First, if you want your living-room an ideal one, thou shalt live in it. If one member always goes to his own room to read, and another betakes herself and her sewing to her particular apartment, and the children are banished to the nursery, and the father goes to the club, there is no living-room, no matter how beautiful a room you may call by that good, old-fashioned name. And if only a part of the family gathers here, there is a vacuum in the room, and human nature, as well as other kinds of nature, hates a vacuum.

Second, thou shalt have comfortable—not necessarily handsome or new, better if they are neither—chairs in the room, enough of them to go around in the family.

Third, thou shalt, when in it, worship, not thyself, but the family,—collectively and individually, especially the latter. There can be no selfishness in a true living-room.

But thou shalt not, oh housekeeper, allow the room to be too fine or good for human nature's daily food.—I do not mean the children's lunches, but the more ethereal, but none the less important, functions of family intercourse and comradeship.

Second, thou shalt not banish from it the family tools, by which I mean not the axe and lawn-mower, but the house-mother's sewing-basket if she wants it, the grandmother's knitting-needles, the sister's bright-colored worsteds, and the boy's jack-knife. Let it look as if you were at home, and not parlor boarders.

Do you wonder where sunshine, the open fire-place, attractive furnishings, the latest magazines and books, and other such delightful accessories came in,—or, rather, why they do not appear at all? Simply because they are accessories, charming, delightful, to be desired, of course, but not essentials. It is possible to have a model living-room without any one of them.

Let me give the essentials of this room, then, in one word: love,—love alive, alert, and—at home.

DISPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLD REFUSE.

'If all housekeepers followed my example, the ashman would have most of his trouble for his pains,' remarked a clear-headed woman as she dumped a bundle of odds and ends into a kitchen range. 'I never have anything for the ashman except at house-cleaning time and on unusual occasions, save the ashes and cinders. I have several reasons for this. One is, that I excessively dislike the smell of kitchen refuse, and never allow it to stand about if I can help it. After my meal is prepared, I gather up everything that is useless and put it on to the coals in the range, then turn on the draughts full. In fifteen minutes, all other things being equal, there will not be a scrap of objectionable material left; everything is reduced to clean ashes. I consider it an actual waste to throw out the refuse into the garbage can.

It is just so much good fuel to me, and I never think of doing it. I can keep a fire for hours on corn-cobs, potato-parings, apple-cores, peach-pits and similar stuff, that is ordinarily thrown away. I never allow the yard or area-way to be cluttered up by trash of any sort, dust-sweepings, leaves, dried-up flowers, everything goes into a receptacle, and in due course of time finds its way into the capacious throat of the kitchen range. I find that this sort of thing makes quite a bit of difference in my coal bills, and that, to me, is an item of some importance.

I am forced to admit, however, that the average servant is no good whatever as a consumer of odds and ends; indeed, it is scarcely safe to expect her to dispose of things in this way. One whom I attempted to teach dumped the remains of Sunday's roast, half a plum pudding and a goodly quantity of stale bread into the fire, and with it destroyed my ambition to teach help to do anything out of the beaten track.'

HOW WOMEN REST.

How differently men and women indulge themselves in what is called a resting spell. 'I guess I'll sit down and mend these stockings and rest a while,' says the wife; but her husband throws himself upon the easy lounge or sits back in his arm-chair, with hands at rest and feet placed horizontally upon another chair. The result is that his whole body gains full benefit of the half hour he allows himself from work, and the wife only receives that indirect help which comes from change of occupation. A physician would tell her that taking even ten minutes' rest in a horizontal position, as a change from standing or sitting at work, would prove more beneficial to her than any of her makeshifts at resting. Busy women have a habit of keeping on their feet just as long as they can, in spite of back-aches and warning pains. As they grow older they see the folly of permitting such drafts upon their strength, and learn to take things easier, let what will happen. They say, 'I used to think I must do thus and so, but I have grown wiser and learned to slight things.' The first years of house-keeping are truly the hardest, for untried and unfamiliar cares are almost daily thrust upon the mother and homemaker.

COCOANUT CAKE.—Four cups of flour, three of sugar, one cup milk, five eggs, beaten separately, (save the whites of three for icing), one cup of butter, two teaspoonfuls cream of tartar, one teaspoonful soda, one cup shredded cocoanut. Bake in thin pans. The whites of the three eggs, mixed with one-half cup of powdered sugar, and half a cup of cocoanut flavor to suit, when done spread between and on top of the cake, put in the oven for a few minutes.

CHRISTMAS RECIPES.

TO CLEAN POULTRY.—First be very careful to singe off all down by holding over a blazing paper, or a little alcohol burning in a saucer. Cut off the feet and ends of the wings, and the neck as far as it is dark. If the fowl is killed at home, be sure that the head is chopped off, and never allow the neck to be wrung, as is often done. If it is not only an unmerciful way of killing, but the blood has thus no escape, and settles about all the vital organs. The head should be cut off, and the body hung and bled thoroughly before using. Pick out all the pin-feathers with the blade of a small knife. Turn back the skin of the neck, loosening it with the finger and thumb, and draw out the windpipe and crop, which can be done without making any cut. Now cut a slit in the lower part of the fowl, the best place being close to the thigh. By working the fingers in slowly, keeping them close to the body, the whole intestines can be removed in a mass. Be especially careful not to break the gall-bag, which is near the upper part of the breast-bone, and attached to the liver. If this operation is carefully performed, it will be by no means so disagreeable as it seems. A French cook simply wipes out the inside, considering that much flavor is lost by washing. I prefer to wash in one water, and dry quickly, though in the case of an old fowl, which often has a strong smell, it is better to dissolve a teaspoonful of soda in the first water, which should be warm, and wash again in cold, then wiping dry as possible. Split and wash the gizzard, reserving it for gavy.

DRESSING FOR POULTRY.—One pint of bread or cracker crumbs, into which mix dry one teaspoonful of pepper, one of thyme or summer savory, one even tablespoonful of salt, and, if in season, a little chopped parsley. Melt a piece of butter the size of an egg in one cup of boiling water, and mix with the crumbs, adding one or two well-beaten eggs. A slice of salt pork chopped fine is often substituted for the butter. For ducks two onions are chopped fine, and added to the above; or a potato dressing is made, as for geese, using six large boiled potatoes, mashed hot, and seasoned with an even tablespoonful of salt, a teaspoonful each of sage and pepper, and two chopped onions. Game is usually roasted unstuffed, but grouse and prairie chickens may have the same dressing as chickens and turkeys, this being used also for boiled fowls.

ROAST TURKEY.—Prepare by cleaning, as in general directions above, and, when dry, rub the inside with a teaspoonful of salt. Put the gizzard, heart, and liver on the fire in a small saucepan, with one quart of boiling water and one teaspoonful of salt, and boil two hours. Put a little stuffing in the breast, and fold back the skin of the neck, holding it with a stitch or with a small skewer. Put the remainder in the body, and sew it up with darning-cotton. Cross and tie the legs down tight, and run a skewer through the wings to fasten them to the body. Lay it in the roasting-pan, for an eight-pound turkey allow not less than three hours' time, a ten or twelve pound one needing four. Put a pint of boiling water with one teaspoonful of salt in the pan, and add to it as it dries away. Melt a heaping tablespoonful of butter in the water, and baste very often. The secret of a handsomely browned turkey lies in this frequent basting. Dredge over with flour two or three times, and turn the turkey so that all sides will be reached. When done, take up on a hot platter. Put the baking-pan on the stove, having before this chopped the gizzard and heart fine, and mashed the liver, and put them in the gravy-tureen. Stir a tablespoonful of brown flour into the gravy in the pan, scraping up all the brown, and add slowly the water in which the giblets were boiled, which should be about a pint. Strain on to the chopped giblets, and taste to see if salt enough. The gravy for all roast poultry is made in this way. Serve with cranberry sauce or jelly.

PLUM PUDDING.—Yolks of twelve eggs, and whites of six, beaten separately and well; one pound of best sultana raisins, stoned; one pound of best currants, picked, washed, dried, and rubbed on a towel; one pound of beef suet, chopped and shredded; one pound of flour, sifted; half a pound of white sugar, a quarter of a pound of citron, snipped very fine; half a nutmeg, grated; one teaspoonful of powdered ginger; half a pint of rich, fresh cream; one wineglassful of rose water. Mix the flour with the fruit; stir in the whipped eggs; add the cream, spices, citron, and suet; then the sugar, and rose water; beat well all the time it is being mixed; then tie tight in a pudding-bag well dusted with flour; let it boil for six hours, turning it in the pot from time to time; when done, plunge for a second in cold water to prevent its sticking to the bag. Admirable, and will keep for weeks.

CHRISTMAS CAKE.—One pound each of sugar, butter, citron and currants; two pound of raisins, seeded; one and one-half pounds of flour, two-thirds of a cup of currant jelly, twelve eggs, one teaspoonful soda, the same of salt; a dash each of cayenne pepper and black pepper, and one cupful of molasses. Divide the flour into two parts; into one part put one teaspoonful of cinnamon; one nutmeg, grated; one-fourth teaspoonful of cloves, and two-thirds teaspoonful of allspice. Mix fruit with the other half of flour. Cream the butter and sugar, add the eggs, well beaten; dissolve the soda in warm water, and stir in the molasses. Mix all well together, and put in pans lined with buttered paper. This will make two large loaves. Bake in a moderate oven for two hours. The result is a Christmas cake which will delight the heart of a good housewife and please the palates of those who eat it.

DELICIOUS CHOCOLATE PUDDING.—Boil four ounces sweet chocolate in a quart of milk; when quite dissolved, pour over a pint of bread crumbs and let it stand for an hour or so. Mash the bread well and, if there are any pieces of crust, it may be passed through a sieve until a perfectly smooth mass is obtained. Add four well-beaten eggs, a cupful of butter, two of sugar, a little grated nutmeg, a cup of stoned raisins, and another of blanched almonds. Steam for an hour.

FRUIT PUDDING.—Four ounces of rolled bread crumbs; eight ounces of sifted flour; one teaspoonful of baking-power; a quarter of a pound of suet; a quarter of a pound of sultana raisins, seeded and chopped; a quarter of a pound of currants, picked, washed, and dredged; two ounces of citron; the juice and grated rind of a lemon; half a pound of treacle; one egg, well beaten; enough milk to bind all together; a pinch of salt, and a teaspoonful of allspice. Mix as usual, pour into two buttered moulds of equal size, and steam or boil each for two hours.