

TOUCHING SAUCEPANS.

While it is true that the finest tools will not impart skill to the untrained workman, it is equally a matter of fact that the best artisan is he who cares most jealously for the quality and condition of his instruments as well as for the finish of his workmanship.

A visitor once asked permission to witness the operation of cooking a beefsteak in my kitchen, saying that her husband had spoken in terms of commendation of those he had eaten at my table. Like the good wife she was, she desired to "catch the trick," whatever it might be, of preparing them to his liking. I willingly acceded to her request, and upon her return to the parlor her husband inquired eagerly: "Did you learn the secret?"

"Yes," was the smiling answer. "You must buy me a grid-iron!"

Up to that time she then exclaimed, fried steaks had been the rule in her house, and gridirons a thing unheard of or unthought of.

A fried beefsteak being, as I have elsewhere stated, a culinary solecism, I have, perhaps, selected an extreme case as the test of my discourse upon the necessity of a supply of fitting utensils for the proper prosecution of home-cookery. Mrs. Whitney's idea of the "art-kitchen," so charmingly set forth in "We Girls," may not be so chimerical (with limitations) as most practical housewives—practised in nothing more than in the exercise of patience—are apt to suppose. They tell us the tale—known already too sadly well to each of us—of the impossibility of inducing "girls" who are tractable and respectful in most things, to accept labor-saving machines, and the thousand-and-one ingenious contrivances for making cooking easier and even graceful; of the hard usage to which expensive implements are subjected in rude hands, the motive-power of which is the untitled brain, unrestrained by the conscienceless will; of how innovations are openly flouted, or secretly sneered at, "until," say they, "we find it easier to let the cook have her own way down-stairs, and reconcile ourselves, as best we may, to obstinate stupidity and unmerciful breakages. As to art kitchens"—a shrug and a groan—"we are thankful if our tenderest care can keep the upper stories free from the vandalism that rages below."

Nevertheless, acknowledging, as I have, personally, reasons for doing—the truth of all these things—I make answer, "Have an art-kitchen for yourself!" First, give your cook, or maid-of-all-work, a fair trial. It is a duty you owe to humanity and to her to prove, conclusively, whether her careless or

destructive habits be ingrain and wilful, or merely the result of ignorance and bad training. There are bad mistresses, let us remember,—and more still who are indifferent or incompetent. If "our girl" has a heart or a conscience, let us find it. Make her understand the value and usefulness of the appliances you have furnished for her work, where and how they are to be kept, and set her the example of always looking for and putting them in their proper places. If they are misused, show your regret decidedly, but still kindly. Should all means of civilizing her taste up to your standard fail, make, as I have advised, an art-kitchen for your own use. Appropriate one corner of the room, where cooking is done, for your operations, and arrange there your pet tools. Have your scoop flour-sifter; your patent pie-lifter and oyster-broiler; your star-toaster; your pie-crimper, vegetable and nutmeg graters; gravy-strainer, colander, biscuit-cutter, skimmers, larding needles, wire and perforated, and slit and fluted spoons; your weights and measures, and the tidy serviceable tinned and enamelled saucepans, Scotch kettles, frying-pans, etc., that will retain tidiness and serviceable qualities so long in your care, and so soon come to grief in boorish clutches. Set all these, and as many others as you like and can afford to buy—always including the Dover egg-beater and its "Baby" (made for whipping one egg to more purpose than one egg, or anything else as small, was ever whipped before)—in array upon walls and shelves,* and let the logic of daily events prove how far they will deprive work of the wearing vexations attendant upon long searches for the right article, and its wrong condition when found. Make your helpers—one and all—comprehend that these are your especial property, to be used—and kept clean—by no one else. Let them be looked down upon as the toys of a would-be-busy woman by the superior intellects about you, should they see fit thus to do, and provide such tools as are suited to coarser fingers for them to use. The chances are many to one that your dexterous manipulation of your instruments; the excellence of the products achieved by yourself and them; even the

* It gives me pleasure to state, in this connection, that all the articles named in the above catalogue (and many more) are made by the DOWNS STAMPING COMPANY, BOSTON, MASS., 88 AND 90 NORTH STREET. The inventors of the inimitable Egg-Beater have proved themselves as appreciative in other respects of the needs of American housewives, and as ingenious in meeting these. I call attention to their wares, as a simple act of justice to what is so excellent in itself, and as an unsolicited thank-offering to the stranger-benefactors who have made many of my culinary duties a pastime, rather than a toil.