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HOUSEHOLD.

The Housekeeper's Allowance

(Mrs. E. R. Esler, in 'Home Messenger'.)

There are two or three circumstances which seem to offer persistent difficulties in the marriage relation. The first of these is money. I do not mean income in the abstract, but details of income. It takes a long time to teach the majority of people anything. Old custom permitted a man to solemnly asseverate in church that he endowed his wife with all his worldly goods only that he might go home and refuse her a halfpenny for the poor box. Multitudes of women, as sane and sensible as the average, never have one farthing to call their own, unless they filch it from the housekeeping money, or traffic surreptitiously with the tradespeople, from the day they become Mrs. Somebody until the day their empty hands are folded on their finally satisfied hearts beneath the coffin lid. This is an abomination, an abiding shame to both partners in the union. A wife is absolutely entitled to a share of the household income, whatever it may be, for her personal expenses. She requires to be clothed; it would no longer be seemly to appear in a suit of blue put on with a paint-brush, like her remote ancestresses. She has to buy what befits her station, and she is entitled to pay for it with her own ready money, and to use the balance as she likes. For her labor, to put the matter on the lowest possible ground, she has a human right to some tangible recompense; the extent of that recompense must depend on the domestic income. It may be £4 per annum, or £40 or £400; I have known women present a seemly and contented appearance on a dress allowance of the first sum; I have known women not

a whit happier for spending the last amount on their fripperies and fancies.

The money question is a difficult one. Where a girl is unprovided with a dowry it is hard for her or her friends to speak of a dress allowance after marriage, and to many men the necessity for such does not occur. Each means his wife to have what she shall require, he to pay the bills; but such an arrangement is based on bad economy as well as absolute injustice. If his employer told him to order what he wanted at the shops, and accept the payment of such bills, always open to investigation and censure, in lieu of salary, he would consider the proposal both absurd and offensive. It is equally humiliating in the case of a wife. The fact that she cannot throw up the place and go elsewhere makes the position all the worse. A husband may often say at the outset, 'How much will you require for yourself?' to which the wife answers shyly and affectionately, 'Oh, nothing,' and is taken at her word. Or, again, she may be given an allowance which is never paid punctually, or which is borrowed back when paid, and never restored. To the fair-minded, both men and women, this may seem incredible; it may be so, but it is true in thousands of cases, and it is very unjust, a cause of unhappiness to many women out of all proportion to the magnitude of the sums involved. Where a woman has money of her own the question of an allowance will never arise. Where she is not so fortunate, she is absolutely entitled to a fair proportion of the family income for her own use, and her right to it should be held as inalienable as if she were the cook or the gas man.

Apple Omelet.—Peel, core, and quarter ten large apples, put them in a stewpan, and let them cook gently to a pulp. Then stir in two ounces of butter and two ounces

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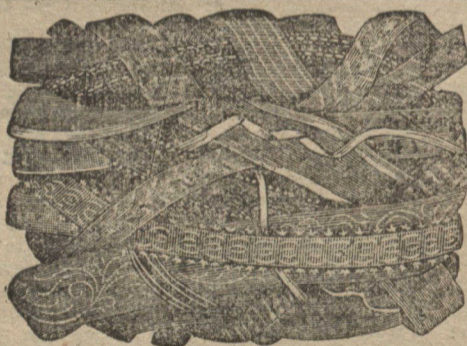
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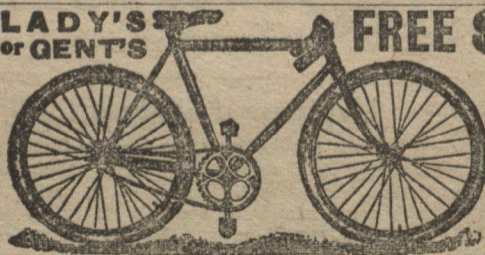


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