

# WOMAN and HER WORK.

I see that "the servant girl problem" as it is called, has assumed such gigantic proportions in the United States, as to call forth the perfectly serious suggestion from a correspondent of one of the leading New York papers, that the neat handed Phyllis whom we have so long regarded as an indispensable adjunct of every well ordered household, shall be deposed from the throne, she has come to regard as hers by right, and from which she has undeniably exercised a very despotic sway; and that her place shall be taken by an equally neat handed young man, who shall perform all the duties and services which have heretofore been looked upon as exclusively feminine.

The correspondent referred to, speaks very seriously of the numbers of unemployed young men, who daily scan the advertisements in the papers, hoping to find work of almost any sort, and he makes the bold assertion that, if these youths would only turn their attention to cooking and general housework, they might be perfectly independent now and always, and that they could then laugh at hard times, and never fear any commercial panic whatever, and would always be sure of good homes, untailing employment and grateful employers. He even proceeds to hold out the dazzling lure of matrimony to these aspirants for honors in domestic service, telling them that they can still retain their positions even if they marry; while their wives can add to the family exchequer by working at typewriting, decorating the interior of fashionable dry goods stores, with their gracious presence, or engaging in any one of the employments which they have seemed of late years to prefer to domestic service.

Now it almost seems to me as if this suggestion pointed to a speedy fulfillment of my prophecy that before very long all the women in the world would be engaged in regular outdoor business, while the men remained at home looking after the household affairs! Just imagine the busy, tired woman of affairs, plodding wearily home after her day's work, and being met at the back door by a cheerful husband, who greeted her with a bright smile, helped her off with her coat, took off her muddy rubbers and replaced her damp boots with warm, dry slippers; then drew an easy chair to the glowing kitchen stove and seated her in it, while he placed a smoking hot supper on the table; and they both proceeded to enjoy the meal, she making tender inquiries as to how he had got on with the Master and Missus through the day, whether he had good luck with the cooking and how the preserves had turned out, while the husband responded by asking what was going on down town, how stocks were and what had happened in the office during the day.

Of course they would have to live in the kitchen, and their social pleasures would naturally be limited because few domestic servants even of the better paid, and "upper servant" class are in a position to set up separate establishments for themselves, and rear their families in independent homes; consequently there are disadvantages connected with a husband who lives out at service. But no doubt a truly loving wife who had the welfare of her husband and family at heart, would find a way out of this difficulty by endeavoring to provide a suitable home for them by her own exertions, and once the position of house-hold helper, obtained a recognized place amongst employments for men, and was not looked down upon any more than that of a lawyer, doctor, bankman or merchant; there is every reason to hope that literary women, teachers, business women generally, and perhaps even great singers and actresses, will not refuse to enter their hands upon members of this household brigade, and together the couple will be able to maintain a cosy home of their own, where both will meet after the toils of the day are over, and six o'clock has released both husband and wife from their duties. This home would of course be presided over during the day either by some smart active young "gentleman" help, or else by the husband of some other busy professional woman, whose wife's office is laid down at six o'clock, also when he hands over the keys to his employers, and goes cheerfully home to either his wife or his boarding house, with his work for that day ended. Perhaps some philanthropist will inquire what has become of the original servant girls all this time, the dear girls who ruled us with an iron rule, and crushed out so many fair young lives beneath the iron bed of disposition for so many years? Well really the correspondent I have quoted did not make any provision for them, but perhaps it might be a good idea for them to learn the lumber business, take lessons in wood sawing or else enlist in the standing militia of Canada since there is every reason to fear that there will not be enough men to fill such positions once the new regime is established.

Now I am quite aware that I have been treating this subject as if it were merely a good joke, and it is almost impossible for anyone gifted with the least sense of humor not to take a slightly jocular view of so novel and apparently absurd a suggestion, but I can assure my readers that there is more in it than appears on the surface, and that the writer, whose opinions I have quoted, argues out his case in a very thoughtful and able manner, and he bases it with considerable logic upon the present state of the domestic service market.

I have pointed out myself on a previous occasion that the unsatisfactory nature of a servant girl's work and the uncertainly defined hours of labor had done much to make the trade, if I may so describe it, of domestic service most unpopular amongst girls, and why should not this very fact produce a remedy of its own? Women are leaving this particular field of labor vacant or filling it very reluctantly and indifferently, so why should not men try their hands at rivaling them on their own ground, as we have long been doing with them? Turn about is fair play, and my contemporary of New York points out this fact, and also mentions many attributes which would be invaluable in servants, and which men possess in a marked degree while girls are just as conspicuously lacking in them.

For instance, men are as a rule amenable to authority and more docile than women, they are prompt, methodical and more patient than we are, and above all, they are always anxious to remain as long as possible in one situation as they rightly consider length of service an evidence of trustworthiness and industry, while girls are never happier than when they are "making a change" as they call it.

Taken altogether, I greatly fear that it would not be very difficult to make out a pretty good case in favor of male service for our homes, in opposition to the present state of things, and I begin to think the servant lassies may be, like the youthful Khedive of Egypt, "seated on a quaking throne."

The New York reformer does not expect to have his suggestion carried out at once, he even expresses his conviction that the happy condition of things he pictures may not come to pass for a generation or two yet, but he explains very clearly why the course of events is drifting in that direction and why in the course of a generation or so there will be more young men out of employment as the weaker sex usurp occupations which have been considered for ages to belong exclusively to men and that if woman willfully deserts her own field to oust men from his, there is no earthly reason why he should not take up her weapons when she laid them down and excel in her work just as she is doing in his.

Good logic, girls! And good sense too, so take warning while there is time and hold the domestic sceptre more tightly lest you regret it bitterly when it is too late, and it has slipped from your hands forever.

It is only February I know and the most wretched cold, ill-tempered February, so far that I have encountered since last year, when everybody thought that month had placed itself on record, made an awful example of itself, so to speak as the most inhospitable and wretched month of the name, the oldest inhabitant could remember. But still next Wednesday will be St. Valentine's day and the birds are popularly supposed to set a good example to the rest of the world by going out courting. Very silly of them I am sure, and they had much better huddle into any hollow tree they can find and leave their love affairs to be settled when the weather gets a little warmer, unless they want to catch influenza. I fancy Canadian birds will but the fallacy that the fourteenth of February is somewhere in the vicinity of spring remains and the fashion magazines will persist in talking about spring styles, and describing fabrics and costumes, the mere mention of which chills one to the heart. The shop windows are already filled with chilies and prints in bewildering variety and chilly colors, while in nuds and matrons press their frozen noses against the panes and contract frost bites on their toes, and often frozen ears in admiring them; because one cannot stand still very long when the mercury stands far below zero, and a biting wind congeals the blood, without feeling some very unpleasant effects from doing so.

However, I am glad to say that cottons, lawns and chilies are not having it all their own way, and that some very substantial materials will interpose between them, and the cruel rigors of a Canadian spring. There are of course chevrons, who could get along without that most convenient and durable material from the land of heather? And there are hosiackings innumerable, and the newest show a novel arrangement of color in the checks which are so popular, these checks are really only the size of one thread of the goods, or a little larger than pin-head checks; they are formed in this way, there will be one green and one grey thread, or one red and one grey, alternately, lengthwise of the goods, and the same arrangement across, forming the fine checks which are very novel and pretty. The colors are chiefly those I have described, or blue and grey, blue and gold, green and drab, and also in the neutral tints, and solid colors of last year.

I believe the old palm leaf and Paisley patterns are to be revised this season, in dress materials of all grades, but particularly in printed silks, chilies, satens, and cashmeres; I saw quite a number of them amongst the manufacturers' samples, which were sent out in December, and very sorry I was to see them because I cannot think them either pretty or artistic. A few patterns of broadcloth are shown which have borders of Paisley pattern bordered along the bottom. One of these borders was ten inches deep for trimming the foot of the skirt, and the other on the opposite edge, was three inches, for sleeve and bodice trimming. One pattern which had a mixed ground of brown and dark green, showed a border of gold colored silk in old palm leaf pattern, and another of biscuit colored cloth had a bordering of green, dull red and gold. The colors are not as pronounced as they sound, but interwoven so that the effect is far from being brilliant or striking, but soft toned and artistic, and the borders really make a lovely trimming. The new cotton crepons are beautiful; they come in the daintiest colors and are quite as pretty as the woolen ones, if not prettier. Fancy a lilac crepon

trimmed with quantities of cream colored lace and ribbon, and another of real, vivid mandarin yellow, veiled and trimmed with black Russian net! The net toned down the brightness of the crepon and prevented it from being glaring. These goods come in pale pink, pale yellow, cream, Nile green and blue and are a blessing to all who possess a love of pretty things, combined with a slender purse.

For the early spring days there are some very striking effects in woolen material. One lately shown had a biscuit colored ground with red diagonal stripes and dark blue figures of a truly startling size, the skirt was slashed up the right side to show an underskirt of blue silk with three flounces of blue velvet; the coat basque had immense revers of the blue velvet, bound with ermine, and a turned-down collar to match; around the entire skirt was a band of the velvet, and an ermine muff was worn with the costume which was stylish beyond a doubt, but almost too startling to be ladylike. Another new cloth was of light tan cloth ornamented with rough crisscrosses in red and a water pattern running through it, of black. Very many of the newest dresses, especially the imported ones have a small pad of horsehair set in the back, to support the weight of the back breadths, and give the skirt a graceful hang; while quite a fair percentage of them show little paniers which meet in front and end invisibly under the plaits of the back breadths. I am glad to see the panier again, it is a most charming addition to a dress, I think and lends a quaint style to it which nothing else can give, but then one must be rather tall, and at least reasonably slender to be able to wear it, and so many of us are either too short, or too stout to look well with paniers.

By the way, I wonder if that innocent and modest "small horsehair pad" so casually referred to in the fashion reports, can possibly herald a return to the bustle in the near future? I do hope not, but then we did not think it was really spring if we did not have the annual scare of a "revival" of some long past monstrosity to enliven us.

## Creamed Oysters.

Ingredients.—One cupful of cream sauce, one pint of oysters, salt, pepper and celery salt to taste, three or four slices of toast. To make the same, heat one cupful of cream in the double boiler; rub smooth one tablespoonful of butter with one of flour, and stir into the boiling milk. Warm the oysters in their own liquor, skin, drain, and add them to the hot sauce. Season to taste and pour over slices of toast.

## Curried Oysters.

Ingredients.—One quart of oysters, one cupful of cream, two tablespoonfuls of butter, a large tablespoonful of flour, one teaspoonful of curry powder, half a teaspoonful of chopped onion, pepper and salt to taste. Heat the oysters to the boiling point in their own liquor, skin and drain, and place them where they will keep warm. Fry the onion in the butter for ten minutes, mix the flour and curry, and stir in the butter until smooth and frothy. Add a cupful of the oyster liquor, and when this boils up, add the cream and seasoning. Boil up once more, and strain. Add the oysters and dish in a border of boiled rice.

## Oysters on Toast.

Ingredients.—One quart of oysters, three tablespoonfuls butter, one teaspoonful lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste, six slices of toast. Put the oysters in a frying-pan over the fire, heat to the boiling-point, and add the seasoning. Bring again to the boiling point, pour over the slices of toast arranged on a warm platter, and serve at once.

## Fried Oysters.

Ingredients.—Two dozen large oysters, four tablespoonfuls of butter, salt and pepper to taste, fine cracker-crumbs. Drain the oysters, season, and roll in sifted cracker-crumbs. Place the butter in a dish and melt it, by setting the cup in a dish of boiling water. Pour half the butter into a frying pan, put in half the prepared oysters, and then let them brown on one side, then turn and brown the other. Place on buttered toast, pour the remainder of the butter into the pan and fry the rest of the oysters. Serve very hot.

## Oyster Soup.

Ingredients.—One quart of oysters one quart of milk, one pint of cold water, two tablespoonfuls of flour, three tablespoonfuls of butter, a slice of onion, pepper and salt to taste. Put the oysters in a colander over a bowl, pour the pint of cold water over them, and when all the liquor has passed through, put the oysters into a dish and set aside. Bring the water and oyster-liquor to the boiling point in a small saucepan, skim and keep warm. Reserve one cupful of the milk, put the remainder with the onion into the double boiler, bring to a boil, and thicken with flour stirred to a cream in the reserved milk. Now take out cream in the oyster-liquor, the butter, oysters and seasoning. Bring to a boiling point, and serve at once.

## Stewed Oysters.

Ingredients.—One quart of oysters, one quart of milk, two tablespoonfuls of butter, salt and pepper to taste. Drain the liquor from the oysters, put it into a saucepan, bring it to the boiling point, and skim carefully. Put the milk in the double boiler, and when it boils, add the hot oyster-liquor, the oysters, the butter, and pepper and salt to taste. Let the mixture barely come to the boiling point, serving as soon as the oysters look plump and begin to curl at the edge. Further cooking would render them tough and spoil their flavor.

## Scalloped Oysters.

Ingredients.—One pint of oysters, one third of a cupful of melted butter, one cupful of bread crumbs or rolled and sifted cracker crumbs, salt and pepper to taste. Rub the butter thoroughly into the crumbs, as when preparing turkey stuffing, butter a shallow dish, spread with crumbs, then with a layer of drained oysters. Season with salt and pepper, then repeat the layers. Finish with a thick covering of buttered crumbs, put the dish in a hot oven, and bake about twenty minutes, or until the oysters are bubbling all over the surface, and the crumbs are brown.

## Another Oyster Soup.

Pour one quart of boiling water into a skillet; then one cupful of rich, sweet milk; stir in one teaspoonful of rolled cracker crumbs; season with pepper and salt; when all comes to a boil, add one quart of fresh oysters; stir well to prevent scorching; add

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a lump of butter the size of an egg; let boil up once, then remove from the fire.

## Chocolate Biscuit.

Take one pound of powdered sugar, six and a half ounces of dry sifted flour, one dozen eggs and a quarter of a pound of grated chocolate. Separate the yolks from the whites and beat the yolks and sugar to a cream. Whisk the whites to a stiff snow, then mix in the flour, the yolks, sugar and the chocolate. Put the mixture into little paper cases, dust over with fine powdered sugar, place them on baking sheets and bake in a moderate oven.

## Boiled Nut Cakes.

Heat a pint of milk just lukewarm, stir into it a teaspoon of lard (the lard should be melted). Stir in flour till it is a thick batter. Then a small teaspoon of yeast. Set in a warm place. When light work in two teaspoons and a half of rolled sugar, four eggs beaten to a froth, two teaspoons of cinnamon and one of salt. Knead in flour to make it sufficiently stiff to roll out. Set in a warm place till risen again. When it appears of a spongy lightness, roll it out about half an inch thick, cut into cakes with a wineglass and let them remain fifteen or twenty minutes before boiling them.

Boil them in a pot, with about a couple pounds of lard. The fat should be hot enough to boil up as they are put in, and a brisk fire kept under the pot. The pot should be shaken constantly while they are boiling. Only a few should be boiled at once—if crowded they will not fry well. If you wish to have them look nice dip them in powdered white sugar as soon as done. I fail to see where the nuts come in, in this old fashioned cake, but I fancy the name must be a sort of substitute for dough nuts. ASTRA.

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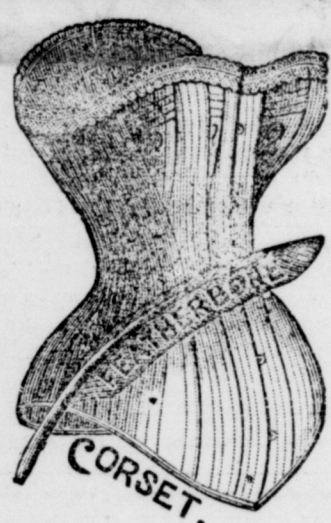
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