

HOW NOT TO WASTE.



HAVE heard it said that the food which is regularly wasted, in large towns, would alone be sufficient to support in health and strength the pauper population of the whole country.

The question at once arises, with whom does the fault of this waste lie? Like the blame of a great many very wrong things, it is divided amongst a large number of people, servants and employers both,—scarcely any

of whom *intend* to do wrong. When it arises from ignorance, we can only pity and endeavour to enlighten the culprit; when it arises from idleness and carelessness, we blame. I was looking over a house which was to let the other day, with a friend, and in walking round the garden we came upon the dust-bin. The lid was thrown open, and there were conspicuously to be seen several large pieces of bread, dry and hard. My friend could scarcely express her indignation.

“I should like,” she said, “to send that woman to the treadmill.”

“Which woman?” I asked; “there are three servants.”

“The mistress,” she replied. “If that mistress does not know anything about the waste, she ought to know. Depend upon it, her husband, like almost all the men now-a-days, is working far harder than he ought to work, to maintain a home; whilst his wife is sitting up in the drawing-room, and a few feet below her, her servants are allowed to throw away good food like this.”

I must say I thought my friend was right. If a servant does not know better than to waste, her

mistress ought to teach her. If, after being taught, she will not do the right thing, she ought to be sent away. It is a notorious fact that the women who make the worst wives for working men are those who have been domestic servants in English homes. They become accustomed to a lavish style of living. They are *never* contented, give them what you will they have *never* had enough; and then they come to marry men with twenty-five or thirty shillings a week, and are unable to make the home comfortable, and they lead miserable lives, deploring the time when they lived as servants in a home where waste was not instantly checked.

Honest, well-meaning girls have no dislike to the mistress looking into every corner; they know that nothing will follow but credit to themselves. Dishonest or careless girls dislike it because they will be found out, and the sooner they are the better. If the majority of mistresses would do this perseveringly and regularly, the waste of which we complain would be prevented to a very large extent, and the servants would be the ones to be benefited more than any one else. They might grumble now, but they would in all probability come to bless the mistress who taught them habits of economy and care.

Now to enter into detail. Let us see where waste is most usual in ordinary households, and what a mistress who wishes to prevent it would have to look after. She would have to look after the coal, and see that the cinders were properly sifted and burnt; she would have to see that all the bread was used—one loaf finished before another was cut; that wood was not wastefully burnt; that gas was not left flaring in empty rooms; that soap was not left to waste in the water; that candles were put out as soon as they were done with; that all the bones were stewed down for gravy; that all the pieces of fat were melted down for dripping; that the potato and apple peelings were thinly cut; that the butter was carefully used, and not spoilt or wasted in making sauce; and that beer was not allowed to drip away.

It will be evident to any one that, in order to look after all these things, a mistress would have to spend most of her time in the kitchen; and this, of course, she cannot do; but she may do a great deal by visiting her kitchen once or twice every day, and noting these points, by letting her servants see that she notes them, and by trying to instil into their minds an idea of the sinfulness and foolishness of waste. I have always found that the way to reach servants is to tell them earnestly and kindly how bad it will be for themselves, when they have homes of their own, if they contract habits of wastefulness now, and also if they do not learn how to be careful now. The girls are not so very much to blame: they are only following the example of every one they see around them. Another way in which the mistress may alter things is by putting a stop to perquisites of every kind. She will find it well worth her while to raise the wages to make up for the trifling loss to her maids; but mis-

tresses who allow perquisites are merely making elaborate arrangements to reward dishonesty and encourage theft.

To return to the details I mentioned. Every one acknowledges, now that coal is so dear, that it is most extravagantly used; and doubtless, in the course of a few years, ranges constructed to lessen the consumption will be in general use; but meanwhile a great deal might be done to save coal. The cinders, of course, should be constantly sifted, and when sifted they should be mixed with coal-dust which has been made almost into a paste with water. This dust, which forms a large portion of each ton of coal purchased, is a standing ground for grumbling with a great many people, who have no idea what a good fire may be made with it when it is prepared as I have said. The only things to be remembered are, that it has to be put on the fire and left to cake, and that it will not stand poking. But as to poking a fire, I consider a person who is continually using the poker is utterly destitute of ideas of economy. For a copper fire, rubbish only should be burnt after it is once lighted. For all fires excepting those which are used for cooking, the baked bricks which are sold by ironmongers, and used to fill up a portion of the range, cannot be too highly recommended. They take up the room which otherwise must be filled by coal, and when the fire has burnt up throw out the heat almost better than the coal would do.

As to bread: there are very few houses in which it is not found difficult to use up the pieces of bread. Some like crumb and some like crust, and whichever of the two is not preferred is in danger of being left. The only thing that can be done is to be careful in cutting the bread, and to use it up every day, so that it shall not get stale. If after all any pieces should be left, they should be placed on a clean dish, carefully covered over, and put in a cool place, then used the next time bread is wanted. Where there are children, and puddings are used, there need be no difficulty with the bread, for so many different and very nice puddings may be made of the pieces if only they are not fingered, but kept clean and soft.

Perhaps as an old housekeeper I may be allowed to remark that when children have puddings made of bread placed before them very frequently, it is as well to make them vary, and to call them by different names. Among the puddings I may mention the following:—

Swiss Pudding.—Fill a buttered dish with alternate layers of pared and sliced apples and finely-grated bread-crumbs. Add sugar and seasoning, place little pieces of butter here and there on the top of the pudding; and bake in a moderate oven. The undermost and uppermost layers should be made of bread-crumbs.

Bread-and-butter Pudding.—Butter a pie-dish, cover the bottom with currants, and three-parts fill it with pieces of bread and butter. Place a little sugar seasoning and a few currants between each layer. Pour over it a plain custard, which for a small pie-dish may be made with one egg and a little Swiss milk,

when no sugar will be required, and let it stand until the bread is moistened. Bake in a moderate oven. Turn the pudding out of the dish or not, as you may prefer to serve it.

Bread Plum Pudding.—Take half-a-pint of bread broken into small pieces, and pour half-a-pint of boiling milk over it. Let it soak until soft, then beat it with a fork, and stir into it whilst hot three ounces of butter or beef dripping. Add, when cold, sugar, spices, and plums or currants, and beat all up with two eggs. Fill a basin with the mixture, cover it with a cloth, and steam it until done enough. This pudding is good both hot and cold.

Hydropathic Pudding. (As used at the hydropathic establishments, where pastry is not allowed.)—Put a round piece of bread at the bottom of a basin. Line the sides with bread cut into fingers, with a little distance between each piece. Boil any kind of fruit with a little water and sugar until quite soft. Whilst it is hot put it with a spoon gently into the basin, so as not to displace the bread. Cover the top thickly with pieces of bread cut into dice. Press the pudding down with a plate, and lay a weight upon it. Let it stand some hours, then turn out in a mould. A little custard is of course an improvement.

Bread Pudding for Juveniles.—Soak bread and jam for two or three hours in cold milk, and serve.

Crusts of bread should be put into a cool oven and allowed to remain until hard and brown, then crushed to powder and bottled. The powder is useful for garnishing hams, or for strewing over fish which has been egged and crumbed for frying.

In using wood, it should be remembered that one bundle is enough to light two fires. It used to be enough for three, but since the late rise in wood the bundles have been made smaller.

Waste in gas may be in a great measure prevented if it is turned off at the meter during the day. Its escape will thus be prevented through those defective places in the pipes which often exist for some time before they are discovered.

Soap should be cut up and dried for some time before it is used.

In conclusion, let me say that in attempting to prevent waste in small things there is nothing parsimonious. It would be parsimonious to deny your family or your servants or yourself proper comforts—warmth and light, and food and clothing—in order to save the expense. It is not parsimonious to provide only what is necessary for those comforts, and so leave no opportunity for waste. The waste that is practised in the houses of the rich does not inconvenience them, but it is just as blameworthy as if it did. When we think of the thousands who lack comforts, and of the many who have them and waste them, surely the women who are trying honestly to do their share of the world's work will not consider that the most unimportant part of it is that they should do all in their power to stem the tide of wastefulness, which is ruining so many, and in their own little kingdoms at least be careful to "gather up the fragments that remain, that none may be lost."

PHILLIS BROWNE.