

flowers in a bottle or glass on their table, where some numbers of a popular journal lay ready for perusal at odd moments.

As we passed through several of the painting-rooms, we kept expecting to see women engaged on work which in our own country they have found so good and remunerative an occupation, and great was our surprise to learn that at Meissen they were only employed as

drudges, in the hard work of burnishing the gilding, the final operation on the china, which is performed by rubbing the gold with agate polishers, before which it looks perfectly dull and brown. In a country where women are commonly employed in field labour, it is perhaps natural that fine and delicate manual operations should be left to the stronger sex, though it reverses our insular ideas and customs.

MY EXPERIENCE AT THE NATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL OF COOKERY.



WAS some considerable time making up my mind to attend the school in the first instance. I had thought of it many a time, but it seemed such a strange thing for a middle-aged, respectable mother of a family like me to leave home every day for six weeks, to don

white apron and sleeves, and toast myself in a hot kitchen, making dishes for folks out of my own family to devour; and I rather shrank from the undertaking. But my difficulties with Mary Ann increased daily. She was willing, but she did not know how to cook, and I did not know enough myself to feel competent to teach her what to do.

At last I summoned courage to suggest the advisability of the thing to my husband, and he settled the affair at once, as husbands generally do dispose of their wives' small domestic difficulties, evidently regarding them as almost too small to trouble about. He listened patiently to what I had to say—how I could not meet with an experienced, trustworthy cook, and how, if I only knew everything for myself, I should be independent, for I could engage a young girl and teach her what to do.

"There are three questions which must be answered about this," he said at last. "The first is—have you the strength for it?"

Yes; I was quite sure there was nothing to prevent me on that score.

"Then how will the household go on in your absence?"

"I have asked your sister Mary to come to us, and she would look after the house and the children."

"That will do, I think. Then the third consideration is, what will the expense be? I suppose you don't know that yet?"

"Yes, I do. You don't think I should propose a thing like this to you without knowing all about it? I heard that visitors were allowed to go over the Cookery

School in the afternoon, so I went, looked over it, and made all inquiries."

"And what did you make out?"

"Oh, I went all over, and found it very interesting. There were three large departments—one where what they call demonstration lessons are given, another where artisan cookery is taught, and a third devoted to middle-class cookery. We went first into the demonstration kitchen, and saw and heard one of the students 'demonstrating.' We stayed about a minute, and she looked exceedingly relieved when we took our departure. We then passed through the other two kitchens, and saw a number of ladies, fifty I should imagine there were at a rough guess, all busy, some whisking eggs, some pounding ingredients at a large marble mortar with a pestle that was fastened to the wall, and all looking very happy."

"Who took you through then?"

"The secretary, a very polite lady. I inquired the terms, and I found that if I went into the school for six weeks——"

"Six weeks!"

"Yes, it would take three or four days more than six weeks to go through the course. The secretary says numbers of ladies go in just to be able to teach their cooks, as I should do. And it would cost 10s. 6d. for the lessons in scullery work; £2 2s. for ten middle-class demonstration lessons; 10s. for ten artisan demonstration lessons; £2 2s. for ten artisan practice lessons, and £3 3s. for ten middle-class practice lessons; altogether £8 8s. all but sixpence."

"That is definite enough," said Jack after a pause; "but do you think," he added, "you should care to go through the scullery part of it?"

"That is the part I am most doubtful about. Of course it will be the most fatiguing, and besides I expect it will be the least useful to me of anything. On the other hand, if I go through the scullery the middle-class practice lessons will cost £3 3s., if I miss the scullery they will cost £4 4s."

"And how do you feel about it?"

"I fancy I feel imbued with the spirit of the man who said he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. If I do go in for it, I might as well do the thing thoroughly. The secretary said it was always felt to be much more satisfactory to go right through."

"Yes, I dare say it is. Well, my dear, you must please yourself. If you would like to go through the course, I am agreeable. I think you will find it



"THERE WERE FOUR TEACHERS 'DEMONSTRATING'" (p. 86).

rather fatiguing, but I have no doubt you will gain knowledge that will be very valuable to you, and will make you, to a certain extent, independent of professed cooks. So, if you like, begin on Monday morning. What time will you need to leave home, by the way, and when will you return?"

"I must be at the school by ten o'clock. Morning lessons are from ten to twelve. Then there is an interval of two hours, and if I choose I can have luncheon at the school for a shilling. Afternoon lessons are from two to four. Saturday is a holiday."

I must say I felt a little trepidation as I set out for the school, the following Monday morning. The first person I saw on reaching my destination was the head cook, who asked me very shortly what I wanted, and if I were coming into the practice kitchen. When I said, "No, I am going to the scullery department," she told me that I had better go into the office and wait until the secretary came.

In due time the secretary appeared, and led me to a room where I could take off my bonnet and jacket, and put on my new apron and sleeves. Whilst doing so, I said to her, "I feel a little afraid of the scullery work; I don't know whether I shall have the physical strength for scrubbing chairs and tables."

"I don't think you need fear," she replied, "it is not very severe."

A strong-minded lady who was in the room had heard my foolish remark.

"Nonsense!" she said most emphatically, "hard work makes people strong, it is idle women who are weakly. I used to fancy I could not do this, that, and the other till I came to the school; now I can work with any one."

Of course I was suppressed, and bore the rebuke administered to me with due humility. If I had spoken my thoughts, I should have said, "My dear madam, I am not weakly, nor do I feel guilty of having been idle up to the present moment." I found, however, that this kind of thing was a specimen of the manners of the frequenters of the school. No unkindness was meant. The cookery ladies were women with a vocation in life, and some of them felt the importance of it, and a proportionate contempt for the outside world. My experience is that women with an object and a position are too frequently disagreeable. The male Jack in office is certainly bad enough, but he is delightful compared with the female Jack in office. Perhaps the reason is that women are new to business, and have been kept in subjection so long, that now when a change has come they cannot "carry corn," so to speak. Maybe, by the time the leaders of the women's rights movement have attained their object, women will have learnt to bear their blushing honours meekly, and to treat the outside world, and especially the female portion of it (for these ladies are not nearly so stern with members of the opposite sex to their own), more gently.

The lady-secretary now led the way to the scullery, and introduced me to the head of the department, who was a strong, capable-looking servant-girl. By her I was taken to a sink, where a pretty young lady stood washing copper stew-pans.

"Please to wash these stew-pans, ma'am," said she; "this young lady will show you how."

I plunged into the business bravely, though I may confess that if there is one thing to which I am less partial than another, it is washing pots and pans. I was duly instructed how to wash the stew-pan in hot water and soda, then to soap my hand, dip it in salt and sand, and rub the inside of the pan with it till it was quite bright and clean; then it was rinsed well, dried, and cleaned on the outside in the same way, all stains being removed with a piece of lemon. I should rather have preferred to have used a flannel instead of my hand, but this was not permitted, the young lady pointing out to me that if I did so the flannel itself would absorb the grease, and I should keep rubbing that grease up and down the saucepan instead of rubbing it off. My teacher and I worked away industriously, and "though I say it as shouldn't," in two hours we made four saucepans look beautiful. Meanwhile we had a little pleasant conversation. She told me she was going through the teachers' course, and intended to become a teacher of cookery, if only she could pass the examination and obtain a first-class diploma.

"And, oh, how I do dread that examination!" she said, "it is so hard. You are shut up in a room, and have a list of questions given, some of them about the nature of food and where it comes from, and all that sort of thing, and of course the more questions you answer



AT WORK IN THE SCULLERY.

correctly, the higher the number of marks you obtain. And if you get a first-class diploma you may get an appointment worth £2 a week, and that would be much nicer than being a governess."

"And does the diploma depend entirely upon the examination?" said I.

"Oh, no!" was the reply; "the marks we get are counted as well. Those of us who are going in for teachers have to be one month in the scullery, a fortnight learning and a fortnight teaching. The

afternoons of that month we spend in the demonstration room. Then we have a month as pupils, and a fortnight as teachers, in the artisan practice kitchen, and the same in the middle-class practice kitchen. After this, we have a month given to prac-



"I PLUNGED INTO THE BUSINESS BRAVELY."

tice in demonstrating—a fortnight in private, and a fortnight in public. Every day that we work, we have a certain number of marks given according to our deserts. Those who are teaching are marked according to the pupils' work, so if you don't clean your saucepans well, I shall get low marks."

"If that is the case," said I, "we will give this little one another rub. What nice saucepans they are!"

"Yes, are they not? When I am married I shall have nothing but copper stew-pans in my kitchen."

"Then let us hope that you will be able to keep some one to do nothing but clean them. For my part, I am beginning to wonder how the servants keep the saucepans as bright as they do. What a long time we have been over these! We could never give so much if we had to get our living by it."

"No; but ordinary people have iron saucepans, and they don't take nearly so much cleaning."

Five successive mornings I spent in the scullery, under the instruction of my loquacious friend. During this time we cleaned iron saucepans, scrubbed tables, peeled potatoes and fruit, learnt how to lay a fire, to clean a gas-stove, and a close and open kitchen-range. The part that we enjoyed the least was blackleading the range, and we came to the conclusion that blackleading was not the work we should choose to while away a leisure hour. When I left the scullery, I must say that I felt the time I had spent there had been wasted. The teachers must go through it, but it had not done me any good. I understood the work theoretically before, and practically I found it exceedingly unpleasant and fatiguing. If ever it becomes my duty to do scullery work, I will endeavour to perform it cheerfully, but I shall not take to it from preference.

The next experience was the demonstration room, and this was most instructive and interesting. I spent here a fortnight of afternoons and a week of mornings; the other mornings had been taken up

with scullery work, for I had limited myself to six weeks. In the mornings the students witnessed and took notes of artisan cookery, and in the afternoons of middle-class cookery. These notes, I found, were to be given up for examination by those who were training for teachers, and marks would be given for them according to their merit. These marks also would be considered in the diploma.

There were four teachers "demonstrating" at that time—three students besides the head of the department. This woman, whom I will call Mrs. Thompson, was exceedingly clever. She was quick and capable to a degree. Her dishes *never* failed, and yet when we were watching her it seemed as if cooking was one of the easiest things in the world. She was so managing too, every little piece left over from one dish was brought in for another; and so contriving, if she found that the particular thing she wanted was absent, she would be sure to think of something else that would do a great deal better. Then she was very good-tempered, and I am sure she had a great deal to try her. One or another of the students was sure to be making some mistake, and she had the anxiety and responsibility of everything done in her kitchen. In the school it was said that she could get "nasty," but I only saw her put out once. She had made some particularly light puff pastry and put it in the oven, when she was unexpectedly called away. She ran off, telling one of the young ladies as she did so to be sure and look after the oven; but, alas! when she came back her pastry was burnt as black as a coal. She threw a glance upon the offender that was enough to scorch her, then turning to the class said, "There is one thing about an oven, ladies, which any one who intends to be a cook had better make up her mind to at the beginning. *It won't look after itself.* You may make things ever so nicely, but if you don't look after them when they are in the oven they will be spoilt." Any one who heard the way in which this speech was uttered would not willingly have stood in the shoes of the unhappy one who had neglected the pastry.

I said that there were three students in the department taking part in the demonstration lessons. These young ladies had passed through the kitchens, had had a fortnight of private demonstration—that is, they had demonstrated to one another in a little room by themselves, where they were entirely responsible for the success of every dish—and now they were demonstrating in public. The idea was doubtless a very good one; the pupils were intending to engage in teaching cookery, and, of course, it was necessary that they should show their capability, or the want of it, for doing so.

During these demonstration lessons I used to sit by the side of a girl who had been teaching in the scullery when I went into it, and who consequently came into the demonstration room at the same time that I did. I liked to sit by her because she seemed to know so much about cooking, and was always able to explain the why and the wherefore of anything I did not understand.

"I don't think you needed very much to come here,"

I said to her one day; "you seem to know all about cooking without being taught."

"Yes, I know as much as most of them, but I don't wish that to be known. I think it is best to appear ignorant in a place like this, and then you make no enemies. But I should be very much ashamed to turn out a soufflé like that," looking scornfully at one moist and sodden, which was just at the moment held out for Mrs. Thompson's horrified inspection.

"Where did you learn cookery?"

"My mother taught me. My father died when we children were little, and we have had a hard struggle for it. I went out as a cook, and I got on very well; but whenever I tried to get a first-class situation I was always asked, 'Have you learnt cookery properly? Have you taken lessons in cookery?' And at last a lady told me if I could only come to this school and get a first-class diploma, she would give me £30 a year as cook."

"I should have thought you would have commanded more than that."

"Perhaps I should if I were educated, but I am not. I can only read and write fairly and cast up accounts. I am very much afraid on that account that I shall not pass the examination. As for the practical part, I don't fear it at all."

"How did you manage to get to the school then?"

"I saved the £20. It took me a long time, but I did it. Then I was saving to pay for my lodgings in London, but it happened that a person who used to know my mother said that if I liked to come up and stay with her she would give me lodgings, and I might pay her by doing the work of her house in the evening after I had finished here. Of course I was only too glad."

"But is it not very hard work? I find it is as much as I have strength for, simply to do the work here and then rest all the evening."

"Yes, but you see I *must* work. And yet, as you say, I do find it hard. I could get on if it were not for the evening lectures that we have to attend. They make such a difference, and they cost so much to any one like me. We do not have to pay for admission, it is true, but the railway tickets and the tram fares mount up in course of time."

"What lectures are they? I never heard anything about them."

"Neither did I till I came up. Every pupil has to attend, during her course, a certain number of lectures—I think it is twenty, but I am not quite sure—given in various parts of London. She takes notes of them as she does of the demonstration lessons, and receives marks."

"Are they useful, do you think?"

"They may be to some, but they are not to me, because it is the same thing over and over. Besides, most of these teachers are not fit to teach. They make very great mistakes sometimes. The head cooks are capital; as for Mrs. Thompson, I never saw any one to equal her; and she ought to be clever, for she learnt under Francatelli; the head cook in the practice kitchen is very clever too; and so are most of

the staff teachers ; but these girls who give lessons in the demonstration kitchen are perfect novices. Put any one of them in a gentleman's kitchen and let them have a dinner to send up, and where would they be?"

"I don't suppose they do any harm?"

"Not much, perhaps, but they don't do much good either. And when the fees are so high as they are the instruction ought to be of a high class. It is £20 for the five months, remember, and railway fares and food and lodging for those who do not live in London; altogether I am sure it will cost £40 for the course, manage it as economically as you will; £40 is a great deal out of a poor person's pocket."

"Indeed it is. How do you manage for your meals?"

"I bring some bread-and-butter in my pocket, and sometimes I get a cup of coffee from the servants. They make tea or coffee every day, but so many want it that some have to go without. I believe you can get a plate of meat now and then, but it costs 5d. or 6d."

The fortnight in the demonstration room being over, the next step was into the artisan kitchen. This was a small room by the side of the practice kitchen, where the pupils themselves prepared various dishes supposed to be suited for artisans. There were good plain joints, and soups made of Australian meat, and puddings with two and three eggs in them. Bread-making was taught too, one day in a fortnight, and common pastry made with dripping. There were exceedingly useful, good, sensible dishes, but I am afraid it ought to have been said that middle-class cookery, not artisan cookery, was taught in the department, for the dishes were more suitable for people with £300 or £400 a year than for artisans. There were a few cheap dishes, such as beef à la mode, tripe, Irish stew, Brazilian stew, baked mackerel, fried plaice, crowdie, and milk-soup; but the greater portion were dishes such as I should have thought just the thing for my own family, and which would cost as much as ever I could afford to pay.

The plan followed in this kitchen was the one that was carried out all over the school. Students who were training for teachers first received lessons themselves, then taught others. It was a little trial of patience, receiving instruction from people who were not always quite competent to give it. The young lady who taught me was learning cookery through the mistakes she made, and this was rather hard upon one who had paid two guineas for a fortnight's instruction.

Many of the students had come in, as I had, for a short time. Some were young ladies about to be married, and anxious to become good housekeepers. These might almost have been known by their bright, happy looks. Cooks came occasionally, although they were mostly in the middle-class practice kitchen. It was very convenient for them to take lessons in particular dishes that they did not feel quite equal to prepare; and they could, if they chose, have one day's instruction only in pastry, soups, jellies, creams, or entrées, or whatever else they chose. I was told

that the fee for one day in the school was 10s. 6d. to new pupils, 6s. 6d. to old pupils.

And now all that remained to me was the fortnight in the middle-class practice kitchen. To my mind, this was wrongly named, as was the artisan kitchen; it ought to have been called the high-class practice kitchen. Beautiful dishes were made here. At the end of each day the various delicacies that had been prepared were laid out on a table in the office, for sale, and it was quite a sight to see them just as they had been completed. Mrs. Fletcher, the head of this kitchen, was a thorough mistress of her art. I do not think she was equal to Mrs. Thompson, but then Mrs. Thompson stood on a pedestal. It would not be fair to compare her for a moment with any other cook. If Mrs. Fletcher had a strong point it was garnishing dishes. She had quite an artistic idea of colour, and could dish a preparation most beautifully; and there was no deception about her dishes, they tasted just as good as they looked. Personally, however, she did not do very much in the way of teaching; her time was taken up with fulfilling orders from the gentry of the neighbourhood. I have no doubt this was a fruitful source of revenue to the school, but it rather interfered with the real business, the training of teachers. Every dish was taken to Mrs. Fletcher before it was sent into the office, and it was quite wonderful to see how she always was down at once upon its weak point, if it had one. It was no use trying to hide it, covering it with a nice little garnish or anything of that kind, her practised eye was sure to notice it, and call attention to the fault.

There was one thing about this middle-class practice kitchen that was particularly pleasant, and that was, there were such beautiful cooking utensils and plenty of them. In the artisan kitchen we were sometimes short of what was required, and we had, so to speak, to scramble for what we wanted, but there was nothing of that kind in Mrs. Fletcher's department. Beautifully-kept copper stew-pans, sauté-pans, copper moulds, marble pestle and mortar, frying-baskets, all were there. Then the dishes were prepared over gas-stoves, so clean, so convenient, and so easily managed. I could not but fear that when I returned to every-day life, and had to do my cookery with the modest utensils found in my own kitchen, and on the old-fashioned range with which I was obliged to content myself, I should find it very different.

One thing I could not but notice. Every one who has kept house knows how determined ordinary cooks are to have lard for frying purposes, and what a scorn they have for dripping. Of course we know that the reason of this is that they wish to sell the dripping, and count it as the most valuable of their perquisites. Yet during all the time that I was at the cookery school, I never once saw lard used for frying. Butter was sometimes used for sautéing, and dripping for frying. Delicate fruit-fritters, kromeskiees, lobster-cutlets, whitebait, all were fried in dripping, made by rendering down little pieces of fat that were left from trimming joints. This dripping was used again and again, great care being taken to keep separate any that had been used for frying fish. After it had served

its purpose it was strained, and then was ready for use again. Kitchen paper was always at hand, and whatever had been fried was laid on this before it was dished, in order to free it from grease. The fact is, lard is about the most greasy thing that can be taken for frying, and it should never be used where it can possibly be helped. Yet, as a matter of fact, in the majority of kitchens it is more used than anything, and bought at 9d. or 10d. per pound, whilst the dripping, that would be so excellent for the purpose, is sold by the cook for 4d. or 6d. per pound. When mistresses understand cookery for themselves their eyes will be opened to one or two of these facts, and then the abuse of "perquisites" will cease.

At last my course was completed, and I left the school. I had enjoyed it very much, and I think pro-

fit by it also; and of course what was left to me now was to practise what I had learnt, and so make it thoroughly my own.

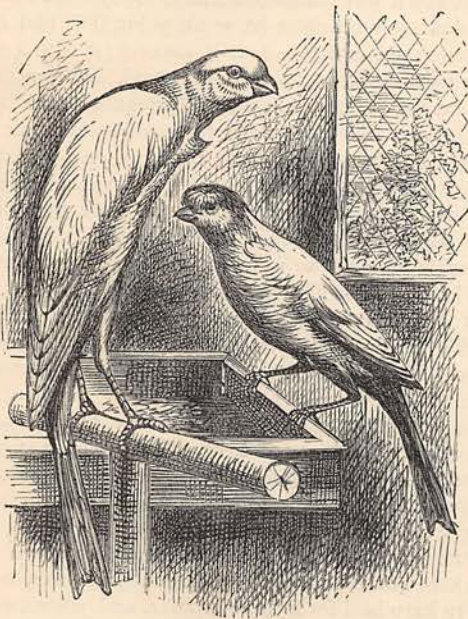
"Well," said my husband, "what do you think—has it been worth while?"

"Yes, on the whole, I think it has. I only wish I had gone many years earlier. But there is something that would be worth while, and that would be for every girl to go through the course as soon as she leaves school. Whatever position she is to occupy, it certainly cannot hurt her to know how to cook properly, and it may prove of such very great service, both to herself and to others. I should like all our girls to go."

"Well, we must think about it," said my husband; "there is time enough yet."



OUR AVIARY; OR, HOW WE KEPT CANARIES.



WE have certainly always been a wonderful family for pets. When we were quite little, in the old merry days, before our money made to itself wings and flew away, we kept tame pheasants, and bantams, and Muscovy ducks, and every variety of fowl under the sun. Father had his horses and hounds, and mother her white Arab, and many a joyous pilgrimage we children made with them after breakfast to the stables and kennels. And when the evil days came, and father could not keep even his favourite Black Bess, I think that it went to his

heart more than all the rest of the losses; and on the morning before the sale, when mother went round to say good-bye to the creatures, to give Araby her last bit of sugar and Bess the last apple, and the pretty Alderneys lowed and came crowding up to the paddock gate as she passed, it broke her down more than all the partings and packings of the previous days.

We children thought it would be rather fun living in a small house, and were overjoyed at the idea of being near a large town, and plunging into the world of school instead of having tutors and governesses at home. At this distance of time, I really believe that the change was the making of us, although I did not at the moment look so far ahead as to realise all its importance. We were sorry, however, to lose our kind, gentle Miss Morrison, who had taught us whatever we knew with infinite patience and amid endless interruptions; but as mother assured her that she would always be able to find room for her in her holidays, it was anything but a final parting.

A few of our best-beloved pets went with us. Tom took his own particular Skye terrier, I had a couple of my favourite canaries out of the aviary, and Jennie saw her dear white Persian cat consigned to a basket, with many promises that she would take him out and nurse him in the train, which he appeared to understand and rely on. Mother said baby was quite enough for her, and father shut us into the carriage that was to take us to the station, with a wistful look that said how much rather he would come with us than stay behind for even the few days that were necessary.

We all begged him to settle his business and follow his *impedimenta* as soon as possible, and mother assured us that we should find our time well occupied till