THE MODERN SERVANT GIRL.

We hear a great deal now about "service not being what it was," and I cannot help thinking that there is some truth in the statement. Without committing myself to "Reactionary" or "Retrograde" views in general—without laying all the blame on the School Board—I am disposed, for reasons which I will proceed to explain, to echo the popular cry.

It is against young girls as servants—the products, presumably, of "improved education"—that I bring my charge. I do not want to complain of servants in general, for I have received from them in my life more kindness than I can ever repay; it is against the raw, untired, unapprenticed article that I inveigh. For five years I have suffered from a succession of these. They have been of all kinds: quick, slow, active, lazy, pleasant, sulky; but one and all incompetent to do the work they professed to do. When I have exhausted the resources of London, I have tried the country—for the unknown is always desirable. The results have been equally disappointing. While disclaiming any tendency to Mrs. Carlyle's spirit of romancing, and with no such awful revelations as hers to disclose with regard to either girls—or insects—I think I may safely say that, with rare exceptions, the young servant girl, under present conditions, is, to use a colloquial but expressive phrase, "more trouble than she is worth."

I began with a little damsel of sixteen, named Martha, who came to me from a large well-managed orphanage in the East End. In many ways she was vastly superior to her successors, being willing and obedient; but she was absolutely devoid of method. This, I will allow, was not altogether her own fault, for she had been "driven" like a machine all through her short life. One day had succeeded another at the orphanage with monotonous regularity, and the girls had been taught everything except to teach themselves. Martha, probably as a result of this training, was easily depressed; she took a saddened view of life, and everything made her weep. She could supply no originality, or even "gumption."

"What shall we have for dinner?" I once asked her vaguely, and waited for a suggestion.

Martha's eyes grew round as she revolved in her mind the dinners of the preceding days.
squeezed the bolster on her” (and it needed a deal of squeezing!) “the more she looked round the corner of it.” Reproofs rolled off her like water off a duck, and she was always pleasant and amiable. She was very fond, too, of reading—a pursuit which I encouraged until I found it hopeless to elevate her taste. Many servants, I have noticed—and many mothers too, for that matter—appear to think that “reading” is a virtue in itself, entirely independent of the thing read; and Marianne was addicted exclusively to Dream Books and cheap “Dreadfuls.” Her character cannot be better shown than by the fact that her first month’s wages went in buying a showy gilt Albert watch chain, which, as she possessed no watch, and her only pair of stockings showed large holes, seemed rather superfluous. Even Miss Ophelia herself would have given Marianne up, and yet to this day I occasionally regret her.

My next attempt was of a very different kind. Susan was as fragile as Marianne had been big and strong. She was seventeen; neat, and precise; and she gave herself all the airs of a little old woman. Poor girl! she was not particularly robust, but no confirmed out-patient of an hospital could have described her complaints more fondly than she did.

“My ’ed’s all of a goggle, and my legs are all of a fur,” she would say; adding, with a weak little smile, “I think it’s carryin’ the coals as does it.”

Poor Susan was already an expert “class leader,” and her school prizes, which she proudly showed me, were many and various. I couldn’t help thinking that almost any walk in life would have suited this young woman better than that of a general servant. Her mother came to see me one day, to ask me if I couldn’t manage to make the work easier—“Must she carry the coals?” for instance.

“Well, you see,” I said, “I engaged her to carry coals, and she wouldn’t be of much use to me, if I did all the work while she sat in the parlour.”

Susan left at the end of two months.

“I feel better in myself, m’m,” she said at parting, with the manner of a dame of sixty, “but my meals they lay there” (pointing to her chest); “and as for the meat, I can turn it round and round in my mouth, but swaller it I can’t.”

After Susan’s departure I tried a registry office. Now, to my mind, registry offices are nets for the unwary. How often have we not entered their voracious maw, and paid ten, or even fifteen, shillings without getting any return! And the cheap registry offices are just as bad as the dear ones. After trying a few “high-class” offices with no result, I thought I would try another kind, and applied for a servant at a dingy little place near Tottenham Court Road, where the usual charge was a shilling only. A crowd of girls and women filled the small shop—and it was certainly not a pleasant-looking crowd. Girls with bold eyes and long straight fringes, and feathers of the Whitechapel type; women, on whose blunted faces drink was but too plainly written—a brazen, pitiful group! I paid the shilling, gave my address, and one of the nicest-looking of the waiting damsels was brought forward for interrogation. She was a pert, red-cheeked girl of twenty, with a dirty face, a frayed ulster, and a wild red fringe that obscured her eyes. I stated my requirements. The girl did not budge.
“Business 'ouse?” she inquired, without moving an eyelid.

“What’s that?” I asked.

The woman in charge explained that it meant a shop.
The girl was dismissed—or, rather, dismissed me—with contempt; for mine is not a “business 'ouse.”

With two others I fared no better. They made the same query, and departed; and I departed too, leaving my shilling behind me. The shopwoman promised to send me a suitable damsel, but I need hardly say that no one came.

I may state in this connection that the real slum girl is, like her better-educated sister, very contemptuous of service. I remember once sending a raw girl of fifteen from a starving family to a registry office, enclosing the necessary fee for her in an envelope. Subsequently we found that her mother had appropriated the fee, and drunk—so to speak—the clothes.

Finally the girl refused a place I eventually got for her, because she had expected at least ten pounds a year, and was only promised nine pounds. She preferred a daily drudge to and from the factory at two shillings per week.

But to return to my own girls. After the failure of the registry offices to supply my wants, I advertised for “a strong country girl.”

The numbers who answered my advertisement seemed certainly encouraging, and I congratulated myself—a little too hastily, as it afterwards turned out. All the applicants represented themselves as giants of strength, paragons of virtue, and of unflagging industry. I engaged the most promising, who, among her other virtues, boasted that she had never had a day’s ill-health. At the end of three days I found her weeping in the pantry.

“What’s the matter, Ellen?” I said.

“Oh, m’m, please, my legs is all of a tremble, and I think my ‘ealth is bound to suffer if I stay. The fogs, they make me feel fainty-like.”

“But I thought you said you were so strong.”

“Well, m’m, I’ve ‘eard say as ‘ow the strongest goes off soonest.”

I administered some sal volatile, and did the little work there was to do myself, sending the patient to bed. Next day I sent her out for an hour’s run in the fresh air. She went out at 10 a.m., and did not return for twelve hours. At ten at night the invalid walked in smiling. She did not stay long after this. From experience of Ellen and the three girls that followed her, I have come to the conclusion that many girls come up from the country just for a week or two’s jaunt in London, and get the fares for the proposed jaunt from the ladies who are foolish enough to engage them. Ellen and her successors seemed surprised that any work at all was expected of them. One of them proposed to leave after a week, saying plaintively—

“I couldn’t live, m’m, where there ain’t more things kept.”

Another, the second day, began to remark, “This ain’t my work,” which remark she made unceasingly, until requested to leave.
Some Economical Indian Dishes.

By the Author of "We Wives."

Some time ago (in the September No. of the G. O. P.) I told our readers the way to cook curry and rice. I then promised, at a future date, to contribute an article upon some other Indian dishes, which we have proved toothsome and economical.

The first one sounds like lenten fare. It tastes far too savoury to be relegated to those forty days of abstinence. My family would indeed make a to-do if they never saw one of their favourite dishes, except between spring and summer. We indulge in it all the year round; but, I admit, a cold joint has to be served on our table, it is flanked with a vegetable dish full of

Dhall and Rice.—The ingredients required are a cupful of red Egyptian lentils, a couple of onions, a few small red chillies, some pepperpods, an ounce of dripping, another of butter, and a tablespoonful of curry powder.

Split peas may take the place of lentils if your jar is empty of such; but the dish is not so delicate in flavour then; it also takes longer to cook.

After boiling the lentils in enough water to make them of the consistency of soft straw, add to them the curry powder and half-a-dozen chopped chillies. Let it simmer away until shortly before serving, then stir in a lump of butter about the size of a walnut.

To dish.—Have ready a wall of well-cooked, snow white rice (directions for the boiling of this to be found in the September No. of the G. O. P.) of a soft yellow yellow to the centre of this. It will be about as thick as whipped cream. Pile on top a crown of crisp brown fried rings of onions, and serve very hot.

This is a very easy dish to prepare, and is always appreciated, besides being most economical. Far less meat is eaten when dhall is served with it. Yet the children's health will not suffer, beans and peas and lentils supplying every requisite necessary for heat-giving and flesh-forming purposes.

Pillau.—When tired of a joint, put it down—bone and all—in about a pint and a half of water. Simmer until you have as much rich broth as will be absorbed by half-a-pound of rice. It is impossible to say exactly how much, as rice is so different in its absorbent qualities. A pint and a half goes to me without more than Carolina, Java rather less, and so on.

When well stewed, cut the meat from the bones and break up into small pieces. Add three onions, a few chopped cloves, shreds of cinnamon, a scrap of ginger, and a couple of pepperpods. Have ready some well-washed rice. When the broth is ready add it to the pot. You will find all the liquid soup very quickly, so prepare to supplement it with a teaspoonful of milk. Up to this point, your pillar has been to itself; but the moment of adding the milk, however, we must stir thoroughly until it boils again; otherwise that jelly-like substance of rice and broth and milk would discolor and alter to the pan.

A few minutes, and the pillar is dry enough to dish.

Ladle out into a cover-dish, strewn on the top the light brown rings of fried onions, and encircle with dishes of hard-boiled eggs as a garnish.

Babooty.—This is another plan for using up cold meat. Its curious name must not prejudice you against it, nor must the mention of water-soaked bread. I can assure you we will never regret trying it.

Take equal parts of finely-chopped cold meat and soaked bread-crumbs (warm water is best to use, and the bread must be squeezed quite dry). Add to this, I must confess, untempting sounding mixture some finely-shred onions, a little salt, a small dessertspoonful of curry-powder, and a piece of butter. Moisten, if necessary, with a little milk, and press into a buttered dish.

Now best up one egg, and pour over your shape. Bake for an hour. Throw out and serve with rice. Our Madrasese of former times thought this a very "seldom" recipe, and very seldom indeed have we met with it anywhere except at our own table.

I shall expect, however, to be pressed to try "babooty" very constantly in future, as the hundreds of readers of the G. O. P. are sure to have this dish very often when once they have tried it.

There is a sound gastronomic principle underlying the craving for sweet things occasionally, even with cooked meats. Mutton without red-current jelly is apt to taste greasy. Pork, when the corrective of sage-sauce is very indigestible. Bolled turkey, minus its accompaniment of raisin or prune stuffing, may be somewhat tasteless.

Far more "wanting" are curry and pillau, and dhall, without a modicum of chutney to eat them with. Yet chutney is an expensive thing to buy.

In our next two recipes I will tell you how to provide your tables with plenty of that same at the cost of a few pence.

Cashew Nut Curry.—Ingredients: Two pounds of green gooseberries (or apples), two pounds of moist sugar, one pound of raisins, one pound of dates, half an ounce of garlic, three quarters of an ounce of red pepper, four ounces of ginger, chopped and pounded, two ounces of salt, vinegar.

Have all these things well-chopped, except the dates. Pound the ginger as well, and of course top-and-tail your gooseberries. But on no account peel apples, if such are used.

Have ready a clean saucepan, and boil the fruit in enough vinegar to cover it. When soft, add everything else (the dates being cut in small pieces only).

Boil for about ten minutes all together. Have ready some wide-mouthed bottles. Fill with the chutney; cork well, and, if possible, put by for twelve months.

If used at once, this chutney is eatable; but I do not allow to mellow for some time, it is delicious. The cost thereof is infinitesimal compared with all chutneys bought at a shop, so it can be used at $1 in the most economical of households.

The above recipe is an exactly scientific one. The next one must be followed in great detail, as I can only give rule of thumb for it. It may be prepared fresh and fresh as wanted, and is preferred in summer-time to the more elaborate condiment. We will call it

Hasty-Mint Chutney.—From your garden gather a handful of fresh mint. Take another handful of saltanas, two tablespoonfuls of sugar, one chilie, one teaspoonful of salt.

Put all these ingredients into a mortar, and pound until the mixture is juicy and soft. Add about two tablespoonfuls of vinegar. Stir well, and put into ornamental glass jars. No boiling is required, and you have a tasty addition to lunch or dinner-table.

The recipes I have given in this paper have all been more or less of a savoury nature. At least, they have not had to do with sweets exclusively. In my private housekeeping-book there are many caramels with curious names, and fritters of Indian origin. At present I will content with passing on to my readers the above-menioned recipes. Whether I ever add to them remains to be seen. It depends on what welcome is accorded to this account of "Some Economical Indian Dishes."