

"The Kitchen."

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From time immemorial, the kitchen has been an important factor of every household.

Every body knows the charm of a pleasant parlor. It is the "Crown of the house", but the kitchen is its heart. In the parlor may bloom the flower of its culture, but the room of its comfort is the kitchen. The parlor may reveal to us the exact standard of a woman's taste, but the unerring interpretation of her disposition is the kitchen.

It is for the woman of the nineteenth century to hold in her development the equal balance of physical and mental culture. She cannot do this and neglect her kitchen. No matter how far at times she may rise above it, it will always do her good, to come back to it; and, if it is the kitchen that it ought to be, she will ever feel delight in returning to its homely brightness and savory smells.

It is the old New-England kitchen which appeals to our ideas of comfort and quaint beauty. It has a deep fireplace, a vast bake-oven, and a great pantry, whose wide shelves are filled with glittering milk pans all set for cream. There is also a store-room, in which can be found all kinds of good things for everybody. The old kitchen floor is painted a clear gray, brightened by homemade mats. Colored prints are on the walls, an old-fashioned clock slowly ticks from its place

in the corner, and there is a book-rack filled with books and magazines. An arm-chair, a sewing chair, and a chintz covered lounge all combine to make it a comfortable room, and, after all, it is only a kitchen with nothing in it too fine for its place.

But, coming to more modern days, we find that conveniences for the kitchen have not been advanced, as we read that the majority of women in the insane asylums of our country are farmer's wives, and hard work in the kitchen has produced this terrible result. When one stops to think about the cause of this evil ideas regarding improvement of our modern kitchen present themselves.

The average country kitchen is a health-destroyer in its very make-up, without counting the ceaseless amount of work to be done within its barren walls. No duty seems pleasant to the poor worker in such a place, and the farmer, who has every convenience possible for his work is thoughtless in regard to the way in which the housework has to be done. So the destruction of his wife's health goes on until it is too late.

The kitchen should not only have conveniences, but it should also be attractive. For, especially in the country, this room is often the resting place for the family. In the summer, vines would be in the way, but in the winter when it is cold and cheerless outside,

and the graceful out-of-door vines have died, there should be something green and fresh inside the kitchen. Windows may be made places of beauty by the "Wandering Jew" growing up their sides. Old chairs can be covered and made into comfortable seats. Instead of having shelves covered with the usual pieces of salloped newspaper, they would look much better if covered with some bright figured cloth, arranged tastefully. Many little things could be suggested by way of improvement, and it is often found a comparatively easy task to improve the appearance of the kitchen and give it even an air of beauty.

All Kitchens have one thing in common; they contain the same materials. But, although in a well-furnished house, as in every house, the kitchen is "the very pulse of the machine", one is apt to think that the needs of this part of the machinery are trifling, and that purchases for it can be placed like itself, quite in the rear of all else. As has been proven, this idea is a great mistake, for kitchen utensils and furniture should be carefully selected as they are the tools by which the health of a household is wrought.

Health-giving food comes from within the kitchen walls, and whatever cripples its efforts to provide these is lamentable and has no place

in the comfortable house. Scanty, poor utensils affect the variety, quality, and palatableness of food, and necessarily wear out the worker's strength and temper.

In order that the thoughtful cook shall do her best in planning food for certain work to be done, there should be in the kitchen cleanliness in all details, convenience, and the use of judgement in every part of the work. All things should be planned to save time and steps; for a person has no right to spend time foolishly. Every atom of force should accomplish a certain amount of work.

In the matter of convenience, there should be "a place for everything and everything in its place." Boxes should be labelled, things should be hung up, not huddled, and above all there should be plenty of good fuel, fresh air, and sunshine.

This last point cannot be emphasized too strongly, and the thoughtful house-builder will take care that plenty of light and air reach the kitchen. If daylight does not flood every corner of it, supply artificial light, even in the daytime; for no domestic operation requires more light than the treatment of food.

Painting the woodwork and floor is of use in this particular. In some of the modern houses where there are elevators, the kitchen is placed in the top story where there is plenty of light; and this also

adds to the comfort of all the inmates of the house, who thus escape the odors of cooking.

Equally important with light is cleanliness in the kitchen. The walls should be of some hard finish, or of plastering which can be covered with salomine coloring or whitewash. Any lime wash is desirable for the kitchen, because it tends to keep the air pure if frequently applied.

Many say that as long as we continue using coal in the kitchen, we cannot expect the utmost cleanliness. This is probably true, but there is no doubt that after a while our present domestic life will be revolutionized by the introduction of electricity in the kitchen. It is needless to say that when this system of cooking is fully established in our homes, all housework will be a pleasure and housekeepers will take a lively interest in their kitchen affairs.

The first glimpse of cooking by electricity was obtained by many at the World's Fair, in the section of the electrical building which showed the domestic work performed in this new way. But some day, the electric kitchen will be a possibility in any home in which pass the ordinary light and power circuits. Now will this be a luxury to be enjoyed by the inhabitants of

cities alone; for it has been shown that the plant of any suburban or the water power near a country village will furnish the electric fluid as easily and even more cheaply than the central power station of the city.

Taking up the subject of the utensils needed by the cook in the electric kitchen, we find that they have already been planned and manufactured.

A soap-stone or metal slab with switch-board and wires attached above takes the place of the ordinary range. On this is kept the utensils used, coffee-pot, tea-kettle, spider, etc. These are connected to the circuit through the switch-board above the slab, and, when any one of these dishes is needed, one has only to pick up the connecting wire, insert the plug switch into the receptacle provided for it in the utensil, press the button, and the work begins.

Inserted in cement below each utensil, and with a metal plate above is a coil of German silver wire. This metal is not a good conductor of electricity, and the efforts of the current to pass through it produce the heat required. Thus the fire is brought into the very base of the utensils used and none of its heat is

generated into the room to make its occupants uncomfortable, and it is all used at once in accomplishing its work. The electric oven shown at the Columbian Exposition was made of iron and lined with wood and asbestos to prevent radiation. It could be heated from above or below or both at the same time, and an incandescent light in the oven enabled one to see, through the glass, the process of cooking going on within. It can be seen that these ovens give a more effective heat than the ordinary kinds and some foods, like meats, are cooked more evenly and in much less time.

A final convenience which regulates the electric oven is a clock arranged so that the current may be turned on or off automatically and, when a roast for dinner is put in the oven, the clock is set to turn on the current at the right time and there is no more thought given to it.

As to the question of cost, it will be found that, although at first the cost of the electric energy is more than fuel directly burned, yet there are advantages which will offset the additional expense. The saving of time,

freedom from dirt, coolness of the kitchen, etc., will appeal at once to the householder, and, when enough households use electricity in the kitchen, the central power stations will find it profitable to run their plants by day as well as by night and competition will make the price correspondingly cheap to the consumer.

Then we will have the highest type of kitchen, and, in consequence, woman's work will become much lighter.