

COMFORT FOR SMALL INCOMES

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Comfort for small incomes by Eliza Warren

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ELIZA WARREN

**COMFORT FOR
SMALL INCOMES**



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SMALL INCOMES.

BY
MRS WARREN,
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"HOW I MANAGED MY HOUSE ON TWO HUNDRED POUNDS A YEAR,"
"HOW I MANAGED MY CHILDREN,"
AND EDITOR OF "THE LADIES' TREASURY."



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PREFACE.

THE result of some years' experience in small matters, which go to make up great comforts, is offered in this little book. Some may sneer at, and some condemn, these small economics, but it should be remembered that "there is nothing in this earth so small that it may not produce great things." And amidst every household toil of a wife, and every energy of a husband to obtain money for family needs, what can be greater than to know how comfort is to be had for the money expended. Chief among the chiefest of evils are wastefulness and unskilfulness in cooking, which cannot be too greatly deplored when there is no money but that arising from a limited income; and where there is ignorance of the art of making the most of everything, there seems to be no remedy. What comfort can there be in dining off stewed meat rendered tough, tasteless, and full of fibre, of eating potatoes soddened with water, or greens boiled to a mash, and of a rusty colour, of having before one stone-like artichokes, tasteless and rusty-looking carrots, which if one partakes of, a fit of indigestion, with its train of horrors, is sure to follow. Boiled meats and fish—which are insipid—or fried fish, greasy looking and white, cause far more trouble to produce than if they were cooked by a proper process; to help the mistress in giving instructions in these important trifles, and on which comfort so much depends, has been the author's aim.

In most homes there is a tendency to leave small matters to take care of themselves. With servants there is a perpetual waste of candles, soap, coals, and cinders. These articles are not very

often interfered with by mistresses with incomes of £200 a-year, but in all of these an unobserved waste brings a pinching in other requisites which are really necessary for comfort. Even the melting away of a penny a day amounts to upwards of thirty shillings a year. At Christmas many comforts may be obtained for this sum, or it would gladden a starving or sick fellow-creature.

It is against waste of every kind that one should war. A hospitable heart and economy are twins. We should be careful that we might be liberal. Waste in small matters, and profusion in large, is burning the candle at both ends, not to be compensated for by stinginess in any household department.

There is also a great waste in using unnecessary ingredients in cooking, which may not be unnecessary to persons with large incomes, who give entertainments, and who, if suffering from indigestion, can afford the time to be ill, and money to pay the doctor. To these may be safely left the eggs, the cream and butter, which enters so largely into what is termed first-class cooking. A custard is much more enjoyable—and the flavour is equally good—when made with milk, and the exact number of eggs to thicken the milk, than it is when made with an excess of eggs added to cream. Those who desire to have a bilious attack need swallow but half a custard made in this extravagant fashion.

Again, rice puddings are richer tasted and entirely wholesome when made without eggs, and with milk only, no water. But if the precaution be not observed of first washing the rice three or four times in boiling water, then not all the richest ingredients can destroy the offensive musty taste which the grain has acquired. Well-flavoured arrowroot puddings, made with boiling milk only, are excellent, and these can be made in a moment; when water only is used for them, an addition of a glass of sherry makes excellent jelly for the sick who cannot take meat jellies.

The French cooking of roast meat, poultry, and game, which most English people say they so much admire, owes much of its excellence to the process of *larding*, and to its being slowly cooked by a proper degree of heat. The directions for larding, as given by a French cook, are, to cut up shreds of bacon and tie it on to the article to be cooked, or to introduce these shreds with a larding-

needle underneath the skin. Now, the same flavour and moistness can be given to English cooking by economising and using the bacon fat which drips from the bacon when cooking it for the morning meal. It is no extravagance, but a real comfort for persons of moderate incomes to enjoy a small quantity of bacon for breakfast; if the mistress is watchful to take the bacon fat into her own possession, and to see that the bacon be cooked in the same manner as described in Chapter III., otherwise bacon, butter, or lard must supply the need when called for.

In the Appendix will be found many useful hints, which will assist an unskilled mistress. It may be as well to remark that servants will invariably set their faces against any appearance of economy. Nor is it worth while to dispute the matter with them. If a mistress will once try the recipes and directions given for cooking, superintending the whole process herself, even to the minutest particular, she will then find it so easy to obtain well-cooked food without any uncertainty in the matter, that, however unskilled her servant may be, she will herself hold the power of mastership in her own hands, and be able to create comfort for her household, and a reward for herself in the well-being of her family.

How such a mistake could have arisen—that it is beneath a woman's dignity to superintend the cookery of her kitchen—it is hard to tell. Surely she need be none the less accomplished in all the refinements and acquirements which are visibly attractive, because she is invisibly invaluable in her domestic experience. Woman should be an adept in all domestic work, not always with her hands, "unless a scant fortune wills it," but with hand and heart, and judgment and skill to guide the rough worker placed by the accident of birth beneath her care. Her husband and children cannot be fed and cared for by song and music, by drawing or dancing; but after a wholesome, well-cooked meal, all these certainly add to their enjoyment, and frequently to their happiness.

Those who suffer from indigestion are always cross, they cannot help it, it is the natural effect of a cause; and one ill-cooked meal will give the malady for a week, which nothing but frequent exercise in the day in pure air can cure; and when one badly-

cooked meal presses upon another, a man cannot be amiable, his purse-strings are closed, and his heart has become stone.

When a woman knows the simple principles of cooking well, just as she could learn to sketch and to play correctly, she is independent of the sudden desertion of her servants, and can manage to place a respectable dinner on the table, with but slight assistance, or she can

“— sit apart, and in the cool direct—
Observant of what passes—others' toil.”

Isaac Disraeli, in his chapter on Ancient Cookery and Cooks, remarks—

“No people are such gorgers of animal food as our own; the art of preparing vegetables, pulse, and roots is scarcely known in this country. This cheaper and healthful food should be introduced among those who neglect them, from not knowing how to dress them. The peasant, for want of skill, treads under foot the best meat in the world; and sometimes the best way of dressing it is the least costly.”

It is certainly true that no more healthful food exists, even when plentifully eaten, than potatoes, greens, turnips, carrots, and onions, when properly cooked. They are also very nutritious, and added to a very small portion of animal food, will cleanse and purify the blood and banish fever. The authoress is greatly pleased to know that, while the articles which form the present book were appearing monthly in the LADIES' TREASURY, her directions for cooking vegetables were appreciated by numberless subscribers to that popular work. After a successful career of nine years, this Magazine, still retaining its old title, will appear in a new and more attractive form, and through the year many subjects of domestic interest will appear in its increased number of pages.

This little book—“Comfort for Small Incomes”—is not intended to supersede the promised Cooking Book, called the “Epicure,” which, as soon as the author's numerous engagements will permit, will be published; but it is hoped that it will in a measure render a mistress able to cook her own dinner, if her “plain cook” should be ignorant or turn restive.