

Washing up as a fine art

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WASHING UP AS A FINE ART — PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR HUSBANDS

Late in the evening, just as the sun was setting,
I heard a husband singing in the kitchen down below :
" Oh, don't deceive me! Why did you leave me?
How could you treat a poor husband so?
" Oh, piled are the dishes and damp are the tea-cloths ;
The water is chilly and the tide's very low.
Oh, don't deceive me! How *could* you leave me?
Why do you treat your poor husband so? "

Of all the jobs that are forced on harassed and hardworked husbands in these topsy turvy times the most unpopular and irksome seems to be the job of washing the dishes. As one who has a considerable experience of this " fatigue," I should like to make a few comments on the subject in the hope that these may be helpful and encouraging to men who dread the time that has to be devoted to the kitchen sink.

The unpopularity of the work arises, I venture to think, from an attempt on the part of the inexperienced husband to imitate the methods employed by his wife — methods that must of necessity be different from those that should be employed — and could be employed — with enjoyment by a man.

A woman has a certain dashing, unmethodical approach, a sort of mastery, which may be practical enough — for we know that women are, above all, more practical than men — but which lacks the refinement of technique that appeals to the masculine mind. It is as if she has got past the beginner's needs for obeying rules; for you will find that a woman tackles the job in a forthright way, regardless of the shape of the dishes with which she has to deal — the result being a tottering and hazardous pile of mixed crockery and cutlery that threatens, or appears to threaten, immediate collapse.

To a man this is altogether abhorrent and if, in his ignorance, he commits the blunder of emulating this method under the impression that it is the recognized and approved way, disaster is almost certain to follow. He must make no attempt to imitate his wife's example for he will make a poor show of it, and this effort is the cause of all the misery and suffering that he endures.

I am reminded of a great friend of mine, a gallant major of the First World War, D.S.O., M.C., an elderly man now, who has learnt how to deal with the job. I have been privileged to watch him at the work and it is indeed to his example that I owe whatever improvement there is in my attitude towards the problem. A description of his technique may be helpful to others.

He refuses to share the work: he goes into action alone: if his wife wishes to wash up, she must do it unaided. If he is detailed for the duty he drives his wife out of the area of operations, girds his loins with an apron and gets to work. Having made sure that there is some promise of hot water, he assembles his dishes and cutlery, classifying them very carefully according to shape, size, and function — one almost expects him to call upon them to " number off. "

This performance is executed rather deliberately and it is some time before he has the parade organized to his satisfaction and is able to get down to the main part of the business. Then, as each article is dealt

with, it is placed in its proper classification, ready for the operation of drying, which is done in a similarly methodical and orderly way. As he works there is a fierce gleam in his eye, of satisfaction at a job well done and well controlled.

It is this gleam that I like to believe can be stimulated in the eyes of all good husbands and it is my firm conviction, based on my own humble case, that this manly delight and pride in the job can be gradually cultivated. As soon as it is realized that it is not for us to attempt to do the work in the time-honoured, haphazard and inspired manner of our wives, but that we may branch out in our own style, we shall begin not perhaps to look forward to but at all events to take a sort of craftsman's joy in our own particular way of handling the horrid business. And, once that condition has been achieved, the wife may hope for many more free evenings. She will have, too, the great pleasure of hearing her husband holding forth to her and to his friends on the superiority of his own methods.

The Times

AN INTERESTING BROADCAST.

We wish to direct the attention of our readers to a B.B.C. broadcast on Friday, November 16th (Third Programme), from 10.40 to 11.10 p.m., of an organ recital by the British organist Geraint Jones from the church of Notre-Dame de Valère, Sion. (Ct. Valais).

The Gothic organ of this church is one of the earliest and dates back to the year 1380; it is a German instrument which has been recently restored to its original condition.

During the period when a great many early organs lost their original character owing to the 19th and early 20th century methods of restoration, this organ was overlooked, since the church to which it belonged was no longer in use for normal services, although it had been the cathedral at Sion in the Middle Ages.

The recital will be preceded by an introductory talk by Cecil Clutton, who is an authority on early organs.

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