

Servants and War Saving in the Home

A New York Woman's Plain Statement of Economy Problems Faced Nowadays in the Kitchen and Pantry of an Unpretentious Family

ONE of the most important features of the nation's war economy plan is the servant problem, according to Mrs. George Gordon Battle, who, besides being the wife of a leading New York lawyer, is herself prominent in civic and social enterprises. To teach servants economy is a difficult but possible task, she says, and the greatest responsibility for wasting or saving should rest with the mistress. Do your own marketing is her advice to the housewife who complains that her servants are wasteful buyers or in league with the grocer and butcher.

"Do not expect your servants to be automats," was the way Mrs. Battle answered a request for her views on the trials and problems of housekeeping in wartime, "but let them feel that they are as big factors in the nation's plan of conservation as you yourself or any one else. Let them understand that it isn't some little personal idea of yours to save money for yourself, but that the nation's need demands it.

"The servant problem is a great one—greater just now, perhaps, than ever before. But it seems to me that most servants would be willing to enter into the conservation plan if the proposition were put to them by the housewife in a fair, reasonable, and clear manner. So far, although I maintain a simple household, I have found my servants perfectly amenable to all of my saving plans."

American-born servants, or those of any of the Entente Allies' nationalities, are the most patriotic savers at this time, in Mrs. Battle's opinion. The colored servants, frequently characterized as wasteful and thriftless, she says, have a kindred feeling with the American mistress, because they, too, are native Americans. They are apt to help her better than any others at this time.

"A good plan for getting the servant interested in your share of the war economy plan is to explain fully why and what it is," she continued. "Let her see how important she is in the plan, and give her a share in carrying out that idea. Give her the credit she deserves for doing so. Do not impose little, impossible, or useless schemes of thrift on her, but, when once she fully understands the plan, let her use some of her own ingenuity in executing it. If your cook or maid is intelligent, she will be able to add to as well as assist you in economy plans. The regard that a mistress inspires for herself in her servants has much to do with her success at this time.

"Of course, the cook has in her or his hands the greatest power of saving or wasting. I have found that my cook is not only willing, but very much interested in war economy. She belongs to the Red Cross, the colored women's branch, and understands fully that the nation needs food. The servant who is permitted and encouraged to belong to some

patriotic organization will take a new interest in the saving plan at home.

"One of my friends had instructed her servants to economize, but had not told them just why it was being done. When her butler saw packages of new clothing arrive for her from the shops and several new hats the servants began to think that she was stinting them and her household to save enough to spend lavishly for herself. Not until the matter was fully explained and the servants understood that the idea was not a personal desire or greed and that no one was to be 'stinted,' but every one was just to be careful to utilize all food and waste none, could they be brought into the spirit of national thrift.

"It would be an embarrassing and inconvenient thing for a mistress to be always compelled to watch her servants lest they prove dishonest and wasteful. Such a state of affairs should not be necessary in a well-regulated household. Either such a mistress would not have confidence in her servants, or they would not have confidence in her, and it rests largely with her to select servants she can teach and in whom she can inspire respect, and then in her ability to be fair with them. She must remember that they are human beings, and show them that she remembers it. Give them an opportunity to think and work out some of their own plans. A servant with a conscience and intelligence will not want to be wasteful and will try as best she can to make herself a useful factor in the home in which she is employed. It must be a partnership between the mistress and the servants, in which the employer takes the lead. Of course, in a large household where there is an efficient housekeeper at the head of the staff of servants the mistress is relieved of all of the personal worry and direction of her servants. But in smaller households, where there are one, two, three, or four servants, the problem is different and, naturally, more difficult. Here the housewife must personally direct the servants and know what they are doing. The maintaining

of a standard of economy in her home depends, then, largely on her ability as a manager and on her good sense.

"It is charged by some women that the servants are in league with the tradesmen and get profits on what they buy for the family by whom they are employed. I do not doubt that this condition does exist in many cases. The temptation would be great to the servant who does the buying, and the grocer and butcher evince no great love for the woman who pays

cash, does her own marketing, and buys carefully. They are more apt than not to regard her as a crank or stingy. But I find that by doing one's own buying a great saving can be achieved. The family that has a charge account is more apt to run up large bills than the one paying cash and will be less watchful of items and not nearly so careful to buy thoughtfully.

"When they began to talk of cheap cuts last Spring, I asked my butcher for a cheaper cut of meat. The price he quoted me was higher than was the price of the more choice cut, but the former contained less bone, and therefore was still cheaper. I asked my cook to prepare it carefully, telling

her that it was an experiment. The result was that the meat was delicious and unusually tender. It isn't an experiment in my household any longer."

Supper three nights a week and dinner four is another suggestion from Mrs. Battle. By so regulating the meals, leftovers from dinner can be made into attractive and nourishing dishes for the supper on the following evening. For instance, if chicken were served for dinner, croquettes could be made from the leftovers for supper the next day. The same would apply to roasts and other kinds of meats, which could be made over into any number of combinations. This could be done, Mrs. Battle says, in a large household, but would be more difficult than for small families. Saving sugar for the nation can be accomplished, she says, by avoiding cakes, which provide little nourishment and take a great deal of sugar and butter. White sauce

are another extravagance, for so much butter must be used for them.

"Last Summer, while I was in the country, I noticed what a great interest people were taking in canning and conserving foods," she said. "I know a Virginia minister who himself canned hundreds of quarts of fruits and vegetables when his wife was ill. Two little girls, under ten years of age, canned and soldered into tin cans a large quantity of vegetables and fruit. The canning of fruit in our household was very successful, but I found that preserving took more sugar than the results justified. Two quarts of fruit often took four pounds of sugar. Preserves are not of any great value, save in the country or in households where supper is served at night; then they fill in well. In any other case they can be replaced by canned fruit or something else. I have not found brown sugar as good as white, although it has been suggested that it be used in place of white. It is not so sweet, and therefore more is required; furthermore, it sticks together and lumps if the cook is not very careful.

"The saving of bread is one of the most interesting features of the food conservation. People here will do well to follow the example of the Southerners, who have proved that corn breads and batter cakes are more economical and more nourishing than white bread. There are many other Southern recipes which are excellent for the housewife who wishes to obey the Food Conservation Committee's requests. Southern people have become experts at making over food. In the Southern recipes only cornmeal is required, but in those used here some wheat flour is required. That is perhaps, because the cornmeal here is of a different quality.

"The breadless meal had best be the dinner, as at that meal there is a sufficient variety of other foods to balance the meal without bread. Corn cakes and corn bread can be made to take the place of bread entirely at the other meals.

"So few women know about the scientific end of cooking and planning meals that it seems to me it would be well if some one who really knew would tell us just what to do, without bothering about telling us just how many calories everything had. Very few women have time to go and attend a series of classes or lectures, say three mornings or afternoons out of a week. But if explicit directions were given and generally circulated as to just what we must eat and what we must cook to serve the nation's need, I think many of us would be glad to follow those instructions. It would greatly help in the training of those servants who now seem unable to economize or are uninterested in the saving problem, as well as an aid to the housewife herself."



Alme Dupont

Mrs. George Gordon Battle, Who Says Servants Can be Persuaded to Take an Interest in Food Saving.