

ONE WOMAN'S WAY.

[MAGGIE WHEELER ROSS]

"I don't see how you do it. You always look neat and tidy; your house is in order, and you have plenty of spare time," said Stella Underhill to her sister Grace, a housekeeper of six months' experience.

"Brains," briefly answered Grace, tapping her broad, smooth, forehead, with one white, slender, well-cared for finger.

"Bosh!" sniffed Stella, stamping the floor with a boot which had not been on friendly terms with the polish bottle. "Housekeeping is nothing but arudgery. Here I've been mistress of my flat for nearly two years. I work all the time; I'm never through, I'm always tired, and things are never straight. I don't see that brains have anything to do with it."

Grace rippled a merry laugh, and made an effort to be sympathetic, as she took her sister's hand; but she knew the picture of Stella's housekeeping was well drawn and true to life.

The two girls were sitting in the cosy parlour of Grace Murray's apartment. Everything visible was immaculately clean and well-ordered, with the single exception of the person of the elder girl. Here was evidence of a hastily made toilet, lacking all of the trifling touches which go towards making up the well-groomed woman.

"Well, I'm convinced that brains are the most valuable capital in the house-keeping business," went on Grace, "and I can prove my statement."

"Your home proves anything you might say," replied Stella, "but I never think of brains in connection with house-keeping except as those nasty-looking, spongy wads soaking in a yellow bowl of salt water," and a faint smile passed over her tired face.

"That's your point of view," said Grace, "but let me explain. When the average man goes into business he works on a definite plan. He studies and systematises each department. He carefully plans his business hours, and usually reserves some time for himself. When I married I determined to use my grey matter in the housekeeping business, and I opened up with system, with a big, big, 'S,' and Grace smoothed out her snowy-white apron, and relaxed her graceful figure back in her Morris chair.

"I'm open to suggestions," laughed Stella, seating herself comfortably.

"In the first place," resumed Grace, "I never throw a thing down where I happen to be using it, or when I take it off. I put it instantly where it belongs. You toss anything you have, any place you happen to be—result, confusion all the time. When I get a meal I wash up

things as I use them, and put *them* away. Then I don't have everything in the pantry to wash when the meal is over, as you do. Another thing, in the preparation of a meal I make the same vessel do duty several times, economising dish-washing, see?"

Stella nodded assent.

"When I tidy up in the morning, I don't try to do the whole house at once, as you do. I take a room at a time, and do *everything* necessary before I leave it. Then nothing is omitted, to be forgotten entirely, perhaps, when my efforts are put elsewhere; and I have always one completely tidy apartment in which to ask a stray visitor. In order not to make my work too routine and dull I vary my room for beginning. One day the bedroom, the next the sitting room; sometimes the dining room, and seldom the kitchen, for several reasons. I don't like it so well to work in, especially soon after cooking in it and again, it matters little and adds nothing to your reputation as a house-keeper if your kitchen is in perfect order, and some chance early caller finds your reception room up-side-down."

"But your kitchen is always perfect," put in Stella.

Grace smiled and went on, "If I'm tired after doing up the rooms, I sit down and read the morning paper—just like a man and then I wash the dishes. Then my own toilet is arranged for the day. This I never neglect, if John gets one less dish for luncheon. The balance of my morning I give to a different thing each day in the week. Sometimes the silver and glassware is cleaned; again the dainty linen is washed. One morning I bake another I sweep and invariably on Monday I mend and get the laundry ready. You see, with system it's simple enough."

"Where do the brains come in?" asked Stella.

"First in the system and later in the small things on which I save much time. For instance, when I was in your house last week late in the day, you and your home were in shocking disorder, because you said, it took you half the morning to chop the citron for your mincemeat. Now I'd use my brains."

"To chop with?" asked Stella.

"Not exactly," laughed Grace, "but instead of trying to chop the hard, sticky stuff, I'd reason thus, it would *cut*, if soft. So I'd steam it a few minutes over the tea-kettle, while I did something else, and the citron would cut easily and quickly."

"Good point," said Stella, with interest.

"Here's some more good points," went on Grace, "when you have a fire in the

range all morning boil beans, soup stock and other things that use up time and fire, and at the same time make brown bread. A fine flour dredger will save you lots of dishwashing if you use it to *sift* your thickening into gravies and soups instead of *mixing* it in a cup or bowl. And don't forget to use your gas or gasoline flame to singe fowls over, as it doesn't blacken them like a burned paper, and they are not so hard to clean after singeing."

"You've learned all these things in six months' experience?" asked Stella, thoroughly awakened.

"Yes, and many more," answered Grace, "which I will tell you another time. Just one thing now. I do everything possible in the back porch, such as preparing vegetables and cleaning glassware and silver. By this means I get the fresh air and you know that is one thing most women neglect which accounts for nine-tenths of the feeble health amongst our sex. This with my daily afternoon walk, when I do my marketing or go visiting, gives me plenty of outside life, especially with the regular Sunday afternoon outing which John and I always take together.

"Must you go?" as Stella began to gather up her belongings.

"Yes," answered the older girl, "you've set me to thinking; I'm going right home to begin housekeeping over again."—*American Motherhood.*

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