

Thoughts On Washing-up

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story of mankind have so many owed so much to so few": that is the whole thing. The solution, of course, is Church-ill; the washing-up is not exactly speeded up by one worker falling to the floor and the others watching him, fascinated, but it is made easier. Try for yourselves.

Sometimes we sing. I learn all the song-hits of the day, standing at the sink. I am proud to say that I was the first woman among my friends to know "Pistol-packing Momma." I am now engaged in practising "Mairzydoats and Dozidoats" (or however you may spell it). The volume of our voices exceeds their quality by a long way. I think that is the reason why we like to sing while we are doing the washing-up. The clatter of the dishes makes our shortcomings less obvious.

We used to make up limericks while we did the dishes. We produced pieces of poetry like this:

*There was a young husband of York
Who liked nothing more than roast pork
"But dear," said his wife
"Don't eat with your knife
"You must learn to eat pork with a fork."*

You might say that it is easy to make rhymes on cutlery while one is drying it. Of course it is. You can do it, too. Or on crockery if you prefer:

*A Mammy, somewhere in the States,
Sighed deeply, "There's something I hates,
That's washing them dishes
And therefore I wishes
I could throw them away with the plates."*

Generally we do the washing-up without Dad. It is a silent agreement in our family that he should have a rest, enjoy the garden, or read the paper after dinner. He helps us, though, in an emergency. But we can't use either of our methods when he joins us: he has not our training for the speedy one, and he cannot stand the noise of our singing. Sometimes the milk of human kindness is overflowing in one of us, or, unfortunately, in all of us at the same time. Then the boys offer to do the dishes without me, and I refuse to accept the offer. This almost ends with tears. The only time, in fact, that we are unhappy about the washing-up is when we are supposed not to do it.

Counting the Cost

Occasionally, however, when I am very tired, I accept the kind offer. Memorable among these instances is one when I was sitting happily by the fire, while the others did the work. Then Stephen came in, stood calmly in front of me and said: "After severe fighting the Germans suffered heavy losses. Our casualties are one glass cracked, one broken."

In all fairness and as a warning to those who might want to profit by our experience I have to confess that we are great breakers. Sometimes I wonder whether I should not call our second method one of destruction rather than distraction. Soup plates and cups are our favourite victims, for some mysterious reason. When we have guests for dinner we cannot give them soup except in cups (of the "best" set). Our coffee, tea, and cocoa we all drink out of mugs. Not that we mind. They have, we find, a special charm; they are more personal than cups. Dad has a white china one; ours are yellow earthenware, one with a pimple, one with a crack, and one without a blemish (for the time being).

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