

WITH PAPER AND PASTE

Women and the Home

Aid For The Red Cross

UNTIL a few days ago my experience of *papier maché* work was confined to the making (in early childhood) of relief maps of New Zealand and the contemplation, also in early childhood, of a rather unattractive *papier maché* fruit dish in black enamel with white daisies on it which stood on the side-board at home. I may also have gazed,

but with no particular interest, at an occasional *papier maché* egg-cup at the Church Bazaar. But until the other day I had no idea that *papier maché* was capable of playing a not-insignificant part in our national preparedness campaign.

I had heard a rumour that a group of Lower Hutt women, members of the *Papier Maché* Branch of the Red Cross Auxiliary, were engaged in making utensils of various kinds to equip the First-Aid posts of their district. I visited their headquarters at the home of Mrs. Phillips, in Cornwall Street. I was taken first of all to the room in which some of the finished products were waiting to be despatched. There were large wash-basins, kidney-bowls, instrument trays of various sizes, and shaped splints. I handled them. They were light and extremely hard. I dropped one. "You see, they don't break," said Mrs. Phillips. "They're every bit as serviceable as enamel-ware, and of course enamel wear is very difficult to get these days. And apart from that the cost of equipping each of our First Aid Posts with enamel-ware would be considerable, whereas *papier maché* is made mostly from waste materials and costs next to nothing."

It Must be Waterproof

"Can it be washed?" I asked. "Yes, and sterilised," said Mrs. Phillips. "Otherwise we couldn't use it for things like implement trays. You see the finished product, after drying out, is given one coat of waterproof size and two coats of enamel. The outside is thus completely waterproof."

I was impressed by the beautifully smooth finish of the completed articles. "If there are any small roughnesses you can't be sure that the paint has covered the whole thing properly and then there's a danger that the article may absorb water, which, of course, would render it useless. But come and watch some of our members at work."

I found myself in a large workroom with windows on three sides. In the middle a huge table was heaped high with strips of paper and articles in various stages of completion. Round the table eighteen women were working, talking and laughing.

The Process Explained

One of those in charge explained the process to me. "You begin with the mould." She held up a small basin. "You cover it with soft soap to prevent it sticking to your *papier maché* and then proceed to cover it with a jacket of light card. This in turn is covered with four layers of newspaper strips pasted (we make our own paste from flour and water), then another layer of card and four more of newspaper, finishing up with a layer of white paper. Larger articles, such as wash basins and splints require twelve layers of newspaper strips."

"Why strips?" I asked. "Can't you make things by merely pulping newspaper, then shaping it and leaving it to dry?"

"Yes, but the articles are much less durable. Articles made from strips of

newspaper will stand up to almost anything. In fact, when we were given a *papier maché* splint to use as a model we had to saw it into pieces to find out now it was done."

Patience And Skill

I wandered round the table and watched the members at work. The job seemed to demand a large degree of patience and a measure of skill. Care is needed to see that each layer is perfectly smoothed before the next is started, and that there is approximately the same thickness of newspaper everywhere. The smoothing is accomplished by untiring massage with a paste-covered palm, so that the edges of one strip are merged into the preceding one. "All edges must be torn," explained the instructress behind me, "because they grip so much better. A straight cut edge tends to lift. And of course you need plenty of massage."

"We enjoy the massage part," said one worker, "especially if we're massaging something we don't like, like a picture of Hitler." She rubbed vigorously with her palm, but I noticed that it was strips of *The Listener* that were being thus massaged into oblivion.

"How many articles have been sent out?" I asked.

"About five hundred so far. We've been going for eight months. But there's really quite a lot of work in a single article. Those large basins, for instance, take a whole day to make."

Sales Talk

"If we carry on like this nobody will need to buy enamelware even after the war," remarked a worker. "We can form ourselves into a company and sell everything at a profit."

"Count me out." The voice came from the depths of a very large *papier maché* basin. Two paste-encrusted arms gesticulated wildly. "I won't contribute a single newspaper. As soon as the war's over I'm going to get a great deal of pleasure from burning everything, absolutely everything, in the copper fire."

"You can't burn *papier maché*."

"Absolutely indestructible—"

"Doesn't break—"

"Doesn't chip—"

"Lasts a lifetime—"

Unnoticed in the hubbub I stole downstairs. The buzz of happy conversation followed me into the open air.

—M.B.

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Advice On Health (No. 46)

VEGETABLE WATER

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Department of Health)

A FEW years ago an exhibition was held in London, arranged by women, and on one of the stalls there was a caption "Why pay to get out of a bottle or pill what you throw away each day down the sink?" At the stall, demonstrations of proper methods of cooking were being given.

As simpler methods of testing the value of cooked foods and of the fluids in which they have been cooked have been evolved, we are able to say more about what we do actually throw away down the sink. One thing that has emerged very plainly from researches in recent times is that the losses due to cookery are to be traced in the main to our habit of straining our vegetables into the sink.

Many of the nutrients present in vegetables and fruits are soluble in water; they become dissolved out during the process of cooking or of preparation for cooking. Soaking the vegetables in water for a long time before cooking them, using too much water to cook them in, then throwing the water down the sink—these cause great losses of both minerals and vitamins. A previous article dealt with the best methods of cooking vegetables. In this one we wish to draw your attention to the quantity of these nutrients that you actually lose by improper methods of cooking. This has an important bearing on our health, particularly in war time when we cannot afford to be extravagant with our supplies.

Ponder over these facts: If too much water is used in the cooking of vegetables, up to 50 per cent. of the vitamin B, up to 50 per cent. of the vitamin C, up to 35 per cent. of the calcium, up to 50 per cent. of the iron can be lost into the water. If it is consumed, well and good. So often, however, too much salt is put into it while you are cooking the vegetables, and you are then disinclined to use it in soups or gravies or to drink it. At least you could keep it till you cook the next lot and the losses would not be so great.

I wonder whether you realise just how much this means, at a time when we are unable to buy oranges for vitamin C, when we need all our vitamin B to keep cheerful, and when vegetables are scarce and dear, as they have been this season.

An illustration may make it clear. If you take two cupfuls of fresh cabbage or cauliflower or turnip tops or puha or any other green vegetable, shredded, and put this into boiling water (about a cupful) then bring it quickly to the boil, keeping it boiling gently for about 20 minutes, strain off the liquid, you will get a juice which is from one-third to one-half as rich in vitamin C as orange juice. If you intend it for the fishes, it will be so long in getting there that I fear it will be of no use. Better to drink it and save your health and your pence at the same time. You wouldn't throw tomato juice away, but in straining off your vegetable water you are often throwing away a fluid that is equally valuable.

(Next week: "On Call — a First Aid Outfit," by Dr. H. B. Turbott.)