

**THE CHEMISTRY OF
COOKING AND
CLEANING: A MANUAL
FOR HOUSEKEEPERS**

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The Chemistry of Cooking and Cleaning: A Manual for Housekeepers by Ellen H. Richards & S. Maria Elliott

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ELLEN H. RICHARDS & S. MARIA ELLIOTT

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ELLEN H. RICHARDS
S. MARIA ELLIOTT

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PREFACE.

IN this age of applied science, every opportunity of benefiting the household should be seized upon.

The family is the heart of the country's life, and every philanthropist or social scientist must begin at that point. Whatever, then, will enlighten the mind, and lighten the burden of care, of every housekeeper will be a boon.

At the present time, when the electric light and the gas stove are familiar topics, there is, after all, no branch of science which might be of more benefit to the community, if it were properly understood, than Chemistry—the Chemistry of Common Life.

There is a space yet unoccupied for an elementary work which shall give to non-scientific readers some practical information as to the chemical composition of articles of daily use, and as to their action in the various operations in which they are employed.

The public are the more ready for the application of this knowledge since Chemistry is taught in nearly all High Schools, and most persons have a dim idea of what some part of it means. To gather up these indistinct notions into a definite and practical form is the aim of this little book.

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There is, lingering in the air, a great awe of chemistry and chemical terms, an inheritance from the age of alchemy. Every chemist can recall instances by the score in which manufacturers have asked for recipes for making some substitute for a well-known article, and have expected the most absurd results to follow the simple mixing of two substances. Chemicals are supposed by the multitude to be all-powerful, and great advantage is taken of this credulity by unscrupulous manufacturers.

The number of patent compounds thrown upon the market under fanciful and taking names is a witness to the apathy of housekeepers. It is time that they should bestir themselves for their own protection. A little knowledge of the right kind cannot hurt them, and it will surely bring a large return in comfort and economy.

These mysterious chemicals are not so many or so complicated in structure but that a little patient study will enable any one to understand the laws of their action, so far as they apply to the common operations of the household.

No attempt is here made to cover the whole ground of chemical science, but only to explain such of its principles as are involved in the raising of bread, and in a few other common processes.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE science of chemistry has made rapid strides in the past fifteen years. Biological science has sprung from infancy to sturdy manhood during the same time, and a knowledge of both with their relations to each other is necessary to the right understanding of the manifold operations of life. All the sciences and all the arts are taxed by the intelligent home-maker for the proper foundation and continuance of the complex life of the home.

The establishment of more homes and their right conduct when established, which results in the better utilization of time, money and strength, means the perpetuity, prosperity and power of the nation.

Without trespassing upon the domain of household bacteriology, a knowledge of the chemistry of cooking and cleaning must include some discussion of the sources of dirt, its composition and its dangers, and the discussion of methods for its removal, which shall at the same time be speedy, safe and effectual.

Experience teaches that in domestic work there is no *best* rule of universal application. Circumstances vary so widely that principles, alone, can be laid down. Each case requires a large proportion of judgment—a compound of more complex composition than any chemical substance ever dealt with.

If any housekeeper finds a method better for her purpose than the one specified here, let her keep to its use and tell it to others. This work will have accomplished its purpose if it interests those who understand already the principles of cooking and cleaning; gives a few answers to those who continually ask "Why?" and "How?" and stimulates to study and thought the many who have long labored with willing hearts but with untrained minds and hands.

Boston, 1897.

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