

The Free Press Short Story

Bertha Reforms the Family

ALICE DYAR RUSSELL

MEET little Mrs. Asa Chamberlain had no great opinion of her own ability as housekeeper, and she admired her elder daughter's precise and orderly activities immensely. When friends and neighbors inquired how with her frail health she was able to keep her large family so well clothed, fed, and in such conspicuously happy spirits, she would smile and say: "Oh, the poor things have to put up with a good deal; but love and laughter mixed with judicious neglect do work wonders. And, of course, I have Bertha."

Her friends would agree that it certainly was fortunate she had Bertha; for besides the fact that she was young, aged fifteen, generally described as a perfect imp; John, in his third year in high school, an excellent student, but factious and shy to a repelling degree; and Margery, an adorable but delicate child of three, who required an unusual amount of motherly attention. Mr. Chamberlain was a man not only burdened with the conduct of a large and exacting business, but a public-spirited citizen, much called upon by civic organizations and Welfare Committees. He lived his home and his children, but he had neither time nor thought to spend upon the intimate machinery of their existence.

The Chamberlains' was not a luxurious home; ends did not meet without careful planning, and help in the kitchen was always uncertain. Fortunately Bertha was willing to wait a year before going to college, and as she was neither frivolous nor indolent, but strong, serious, and competent, her mother found her indispensable. This young woman was convinced, moreover, that although she accomplished much under her mother's tolerant sway, the results were nothing to those which could be accomplished under her alone.

In the course of time this eldest Chamberlain's abilities were to be put to a test. The mother had borne too long a series of wearing headaches; and her husband insisted that she go to a skilled oculist in a large city near by. The decision had come upon an invitation for a month's visit from an old school friend in Central City.

"I think, Mother, that you can safely leave everything in my hands," Bertha assured her mother with dignity.

At the actual moment of parting, Mrs. Chamberlain must have been visited by a sudden quail of misgiving, however, for in spite of her daughter's warning, "Mother, there isn't time!" she ran into the kitchen for a last word with Ida, the help. "Ida," she said hurriedly, "I am leaving Bertha in charge, of course, but I am depending on you, too."

The one addressed, a tall, gaunt person of middle age, glanced up with a gloomy and cryptic expression. "It shall never be said I don't know my duty, ma'am."

"Ida," Mrs. Chamberlain whispered guiltily in her ear. "Don't mind Bertha. She means well." The grim countenance before her relaxed into the faintest semblance of a smile, and Mrs. Chamberlain fled.

"Everything depends on system. I must work out a system," said Bertha to herself, home again from the station. "If mother only used system."

Bertha worked late in her own room that night. Her final act before going to bed was to pin up beside her bureau a sheet of paper bearing several red-ink items in her large, neat script.

AIMS
Hitch your wagon to a star. (Emerson.)
A man's reach should exceed his grasp, else what's a heaven for? (Browning.)
I. ORDER.
To instill habits of general tidiness (especially in Benny).
Note on civility and the manly virtues: Boys should not be ashamed to help their sisters with housework.
II. BEAUTY AND DECORUM.
To instill a deeper respect for authority in the minds of the lower class. Discourage interference and familiarity. Symbols are helpful things.
In the morning John and Benny discovered little slips of paper at their breakfast plates. Ida had one on the kitchen table. Benny's read:
1. Every article found out of place will be sent to the Armenians.
2. Set the table for breakfast alternate mornings. Peel potatoes for dinner alternate evenings.
3. Instead of your molasses candy pull every Saturday, I will give you ten cents to put in the bank. Cut Down on Sweets.
4. Make up your own bed. Sew on your own buttons. Do not ask where anything is. I will not tell.
5. Do not talk to Ida during meals.
6. Go to bed at seven instead of eight. Rise at six instead of seven.
Numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, were duplicated on John's slip. In addition:
7. Be on time at meals, or you won't get any. Only one helping of potatoes. Cut Down on Starches.
8. Go to bed at nine. I will take your lamp away from you.
The boy exchanged papers with each other, and snickered in an aggravating manner.
"I mean it," said Bertha, with rising color and a determined glint in her cool eyes. "Mother told you to do as I said."
"What about Margery?" asked John

in a cup of coffee. You know father needs that when he's working hard."

"I'm hungry," announced Benny.

"Of course!" His mother was brisk. "Run out, Bertha, dear, and tell Ida to give us supper right away."

"Ida's left, she was—mad."

"Then, John," said Mrs. Chamberlain, "you'll have to go down and ask her to come back. Tell her I've come home, and I need her."

"What if she won't come?" Bertha's tone was one of doubt and melancholy.

"Oh, she'll come!" replied Mrs. Chamberlain, and it was a tribute to Bertha's new-found respect for her mother that she was convinced Ida would.

"And now for Margery," continued her mother, who had been deftly loosening the little girl's clothes. "She seems to be pretty tired and feverish, and she needs to go to bed more than anything else."

The girl gave a quick, appraising look around the circle of happy, contented faces. "Oh, Mother," she sighed, "how do you manage?"

WHAT TO DO WITH LEFT-OVER MEATS
By Barbara B. Brooks

A thrifty woman is not necessarily the one who spends less at the market. She can easily be the one who gets the most for her money, wastes no good food way to use every left-over. There is a difference between those who spend and those who manage well.

There comes a time in every week of housekeeping when there seems to be a wide and varied collection of food in the refrigerator. This time arrives especially after a big Sunday dinner or a holiday feast. The woman who is wise fits the left-overs into the menus for the following days. And if she is clever, the family will not recognize these foods as left-overs.

We are going to talk particularly about left-over meats. They may be used in salads, sandwiches, stews, omelets, or in creamed mixtures. Left-over ham is delicious chopped, mixed with a small amount of chopped green pepper and onion and combined with beaten eggs for an omelet. This egg mixture is sometimes used as a sandwich filling and is served under the name of Denver Sandwich.

Pieces of dried beef which are left after making enough creamed dried beef on toast for the family may be used as an appetizer. The small thin slices are spread with cream cheese mixed with a small amount of mustard and horse-radish, rolled and a sprig of parsley put into one end. These little rolls may accompany a jellied soup, tomato juice or a fruit-cocktail. They have an excellent flavor and are easy to handle.

The baked sandwich is becoming popular. It is really no more than a pan of biscuit dough topped with a highly seasoned meat mixture, covered with another layer of biscuit dough and baked. This mixture is cut into squares and served piping hot. Some people like it served with a very rich cream sauce or milk gravy.

There are dozens of ways of using left-over chicken and sometimes we like it better remade than we do originally. One of the nicest ways is to combine the shredded chicken with mushrooms, sweet breads and a thick white sauce. This mixture is put into a casserole or shallow baking pan, topped with buttered crumbs and baked until brown. The best ever chicken salad is made by combining the cold chicken with fresh pineapple, almonds and seeded white grapes.

A vegetable and meat combination, especially stuffed vegetables, is always welcomed by the family. The following recipes are all interesting and worth trying:

VEGETABLE MEAT CASSEROLE
3 medium potatoes
1 lb. ground roast beef
1 large onion (chopped)
1 small green pepper (chopped)
Salt and pepper
1 can tomato soup
1/2 cup water
1 cup rice krispies
1/2 lb. grated cheese
Butter

Place layer of sliced raw potatoes in bottom of greased casserole; then a layer of meat mixed with chopped onion, pepper and seasonings. Alternate layers of meat and potatoes until casserole is filled. Add tomato soup diluted with water. Sprinkle rice krispies on top, then cheese and dot with butter. Cover and bake in moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for about one hour. Remove cover the last ten minutes so the rice krispies will brown. Yield: 7 servings.

STUFFED VEGETABLES
3 each tomatoes, green peppers and cabbage leaves
1/2 lb. boiled ham
1 1/2 cups rice krispies
1 egg (well beaten)
3 small onions (chopped)
1 clove garlic (chopped)
3 pimientos (chopped)
1/2 teaspoon salt
Few grains pepper
1 tablespoon melted butter

Remove seeds and tops from peppers, remove centres from tomatoes. Stuff with above mixture.
Dip cabbage leaves in boiling water to soften. Put stuffing in centre of each leaf. Roll and tie or fasten with small skewers.
Place stuffed peppers, tomatoes and cabbage leaves alternately in a kettle or casserole which contains tomato sauce. Cover and simmer until tender (about 20-30 minutes.)

misled, Benny, or rather, evidence of his usual activities. She searched John out in the fastness of his room, "Where is Benny?" she asked pleasantly. "He's not emptied the ashes or split the kindling for Ida."

"I don't know where he is. Run away, maybe. Good idea!" growled John, his eye on his papers. "I'd run, too, if I knew of a spot where there were no girls!"

Bertha overlooked this. "You will have to look for him, and you may as well empty the ashes and split the kindling yourself, John. Ida isn't in very good humor this morning."

"I may as well not!" John rose and steered his sister to the door by the elbow. "Whenever I sit down, to get some work done, it's John, go to the store and get the soap I forgot! John, now don't be late to supper! John, just run over and take Elsa this wool! John, did you make up your bed?" John, did you shake the furnace?" Great guns, Bertha, it used to strike mother sometimes that a fellow doing high school work needs to be alone!"

The girl struggled to free herself, but her brother pushed her relentlessly out of the room and shut the door. An hour later, when in desperation she went up to find him, he was gone; he did not appear at dinner time, nor did Benny.

Before that hour, however, there had been a passage with Ida. Bertha had come in from her Saturday morning trip to market to be met by that person, arms up and a frown on her face.

"It simply went out of my head, Ida," apologized Bertha. "I was worrying about Benny. I don't usually forget things."

"No, not when your ma's around to remind you of 'em." Bertha had promised to call at the home of Ida's sister, which lay on her way, and inquire after a sick child. "And me fool enough to give up my afternoon yesterday, so's you could go to your lit'ry meetin'!"

"I'm sorry, Ida."

"Sorry you may be," spoke the queen of the pitchers, beginning to take off her apron. "I made no complaint. Miss Bertha, when you put a cap on me, and me not fifty nor when you come into my kitchen with your upsetting ways; nor when John and Benny was set to do the work of him as knew how. There warn't a thing you asked but I done, such being the wish of your ma." Ida hung up her apron. "But now I think I'll be stepping down myself to see how Folly gets on, and it might be I'd feel more comfortable like with folks that ain't so high-toned, but have a more human feelin' in 'em!" With this final shot the indignant one left, Bertha to contemplate alone the scattered preparations for dinner, and the disorder of a half-completed weekly cleaning.

She was in the midst of many weary tasks when a sad cry from Margery smote upon her ear. A swift examination of the flushed, heavy-eyed child made it plain even to inexperience that something was wrong, but Bertha could hit no resting in her sister's arms, fell into a light sleep; Bertha sat still as a mouse while a few weary tears wet her cheeks. She was thinking of her mother longingly when the door suddenly opened, and in walked that person herself, by her side the truant Benny.

Margery opened big eyes and with a plaintive sound of joy went straight into her mother's arms, and nestled there. Her face was a sight to see, but she was not so happy as Bertha. "Mother, how did you happen to come?"

"I was homesick."

"But Benny? Where did you find Benny?"

"Oh, I happened to pick him up!" the mother answered evenly, and Bertha did not know until long after, that Benny with a determination born of desperation, and a shrewdness of which no one had dreamed him capable, had taken his savings, boarded an early train to Central City, and with the aid of a kindly policeman, brought his mother home!

Bertha had time to say no more, before a noise on the stairs heralded John's leaping approach. "I thought I heard your voice, Mother," he said, putting a hand on her shoulder. "That was all he said, but his face had never been more eloquent."

"John! Where have you been?" sputtered Bertha. She would really be indignant with John.

"I took the oil heater, and went up into the attic for the day. That was the only way I could get my thesis done."

"Daddy?" murmured Margery comfortably from the shelter of her mother's arms.

"Oh, yes!" explained Mrs. Chamberlain. "he'll be home soon. He had an appointment first. I saw him at the Quick Lunch next his office as we came by." She smiled a little, but did not glance at her oldest child. "He had gone

TOMATO SAUCE
1/2 cup oil
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1 onion (sliced)
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1 tablespoon sugar
3/4 cup water
2 cups tomatoes
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon salt

Put oil in saucepan, add pepper and heat two minutes. Add sliced onion and cook until a delicate brown. Mix tomato paste with water and add this to the oil in three installments, allowing the mixture to boil up after each addition. Add tomatoes, bay leaf, and salt and cook slowly for 45 minutes. Put in the sugar and cook fifteen minutes longer.

Yield: 9 servings.

In a man's eye, there is nothing which will take the place of good hash, which may be served to use up the left-over beef, pork, corned beef or veal. Corn beef hash made into cakes and topped with poached eggs is one dish which will always win favor with the man of the house.

Left-overs are excellent foods and take just a little ingenuity and discretion in flavoring to eliminate the twice-cooked flavor or appearance.

SATISFY THE CUSTOMER
Flapper—"I would like to try on that vieux rose frock in the window."
Saleslady—"I'm sorry, that is a lampshade, but we could copy it for you."

RETORT COUETOUS
Husband—"Going to church, eh? To show your new furs, I suppose?"
Wife—"No, dear, to show everybody what a generous hubby I've got."

ASK THE INSTALLMENT MAN
Hobbs—"Do you live within your income?"
Dobbs—"Good heavens, no! It's all I can do to live within my credit."

WILES OF THE LADIES
Dorothy—"But surely, you didn't tell him straight out that you loved him?"
Jane—"Goodness, no! He had to squeeze it out of me."

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Here's a Game

For all the Family (or Your Guests)

SOME night, when the family is complete, or when you are giving a party, ask everybody to give answers to these questions.

Question	Fill in Answer	Question	Fill in Answer
1. What product would you use for gargling, to kill throat and mouth germs?		8. No matter how much housework you have to do, you can easily avoid the embarrassment of Domestic Hands—so say the half-century-old makers of a skin cream. What cream is it?	
2. What brand of cheese is best known to you?		9. A certain advertiser says that when you are constantly tired and overworked, Fatigue Poisons accumulate in our system. He makes a drinking cereal which fights fatigue poisons. What is the name of this beverage?	
3. French women rarely allow water to touch their skin, but prefer cold cream for cleansing. What cold cream is said to be the purest and best for skin-cleansing?		10. After 30 years of experience in ham-curing, a meat packer says that "Four great improvements came dramatically from a new method of smoking the hams"—improvements in (1) flavor, (2) tender quality, (3) pinkness of color, and (4) firmness. The new way is called "Oven-ized." What hams are ovenized?	
4. It is said that Canadian women are using more white soap for all cleaning and dish-washing. What white soap was named?			
5. If you wished to color your finger nails to match the color of your gown, what preparation is available for such a purpose?			
6. There's a certain floor wax giving a surface which neither pounding feet nor scraping chairs can mar. What is its name?			
7. What toothpaste bases its appeal for use on its declared ability to remove the film which forms on teeth?			

You can make your own questions—by studying the advertisements in this and other newspapers.

Write out the questions, and pin the sheet of paper on the wall. Offer a small prize to the one who gives the most correct answers inside 30 minutes.

Or ask each member of the family, or each guest, to provide a question, for inclusion on the "examination paper."

You'll have an evening with lots of merriment—and some useful instruction—in it.

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