

A MATTER OF ECONOMY

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

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THE house stood close to the street—so close that between the front porch, which extended its entire breadth, and the fence, there was room for only a few feet of soil; but this, beaten hard by the drippings from the porch roof, was swept clean every morning by Mrs. Gusta Muller. The house itself was bright and clean in new paint; for paint, preserving the wood, is an economy. Heiney Muller had painted the house himself. The rich yellow of the walls was relieved by the sky-blue of the door- and window-frames, and the door itself glowed in a warm red. The picket-fence repeated the blue of the door-frame, for the can of blue paint could not be wasted.

"He iss so nice like anythings," Gusta had said, when she viewed the completed work. "Nobody thinks how fine it is to be for so few moneys"; and Heiney, looking the job over critically, admitted it.

"I likes him putty vell myselfs," he said modestly.

Mrs. Gusta Muller was rosy and round, and so plump that when she wore an apron the strings were lost to view in a crease that alone told where her waist had been. As wooden shoes are laughed at in America, she commonly went about her household duties with bare feet. Leather wears out so quickly!

Heiney Muller, twelve years in America, had the air of a German professor. His long, lank figure and dreamy eyes would have graced a chair in a German university, and his shoulders bore the stoop of a scholar's back. Four years of labor as an immigrant in the lumber-yard of a sawmill, at wages averaging eighty cents a day, had given him the bent back

and a keen appreciation of the value of a cent, and Gusta and Heiney had literally purchased their little home penny by penny. It was the neatest and yellowest house in the sawmill district—Slough-town, as it was nicknamed.

When Mrs. Muller bought a steak, she always asked the butcher for the small pieces of waste fat. These bits she put, with other fat scraps, in a large keg in the cellar, and when the keg was full, she made a fire in the back yard, and with potash strained from the wood-ashes she had carefully preserved during the winter, she made soap. By hard work and careful saving of fat scraps, Mrs. Muller often made as much soap during a winter as could be bought for seventy-five cents at the store.

Economy was Mrs. Muller's failing. She economized from pure love of saving, and one of her greatest sorrows was that she had grown so stout that a new dress for her ample form now demanded two yards more of material than were required five years before. Even the fact that her worn-out dresses now cut up into more carpet rags did not compensate for the extra twenty-five cents required for the additional two yards of calico. So she wore her dresses until they were mere shreds, and thus satisfied her soul.

With all her closeness, Mrs. Muller was cheerful. She had a good husband, a good home, and good health, and her husband was a kindred spirit in economy. They had lived together happily for twenty years, loving each other better each year, and yearly devising new economies.

Every one knows that the economical way to buy soap is by the quantity. If you buy a quantity and set it on the shelf in the wash-house, the cakes will dry and

harden, and will not waste away so quickly in the dish-pan or the wash-tub. Mrs. Muller, when she had to buy soap, bought a quantity, unwrapped the bars, and put them on the shelf. The wrappers she put in the wood-box; they were useful to start the fire in the morning. They burned greasily and reluctantly, but they enabled her to save the newspapers for shelf-covers.

Mr. Muller, coming to the wood-box one morning to start the fire, picked up a handful of the soap-wrappers, and chanced to read the words that were printed on them. "For two hundred wrappers the soap company gives a chenille table-cover!" As he read this, he felt a sickly, sinking sensation. He recalled how many wrappers he had burned. He had been burning something of value. Then he had a feeling of anger that his wife should have carelessly thrown away the valuable papers without first reading them; but as he recalled how many times she had out-economized him, he glowed with pleasure. Here was his opportunity for a sweet revenge! He would save the wrappers, and when he had two hundred, he would confound Augusta by presenting her with the chenille table-cover—the table-cover that she had so blindly and carelessly thrown away!

The winter wore away, and so did many cakes of soap, and Mr. Muller counted his increasing hoard of soap-wrappers with the avidity of a miser. He watched the soap disappear from the shelf, and saw it replaced by more, fretting because it disappeared so rapidly, but somewhat pleased because his pile of wrappers grew with corresponding celerity.

One warm February day—it was one of those balmy days that come as an advance sample of spring—Mrs. Muller, at the breakfast-table, dropped a bombshell into Mr. Muller's lap.

"Heiney," she said, "I guess I don't wait by spring this year to make my soap. I guess I make her to-day. The keg iss full, und when this warm wedder keeps on, it sours quick. Please und get up the soap-kettle."

"Gusta," said Mr. Muller, gently, "this ain't no time to make soap alretty. It's better you wait by April. What comes by the fat you gets from now until hot wedder? He goes for nothings, yes?"

"He don't goes for nothings when we don't gets any, does he?" asked Mrs. Muller. "We have sausages awhile, und ham und eggs. I got a feeling like I must make soap to-day, Heiney. I ain't happy to-day unless."

"Such foolish business," Mr. Muller exclaimed in disgust, "to make soap in Februar'!"

He saw his cherished revenge postponed for many months—"on account of the weather," as the base-ball managers say, and for the third time in their married life he openly quarreled with Augusta.

"You don't make some soap to-day," he said firmly.

Mrs. Muller eyed him critically.

"No?" she said. "Yes, I do, too, make soap. I bet you I do!"

"I don't get up soap-kettles in Februar'," said Mr. Muller, doggedly. "I ain't so loony."

"I gets him up myself, then," Mrs. Muller rejoined, with a well-assumed air of carelessness. "You ain't no boss here, Heiney Muller."

Mr. Muller finished his breakfast in moody silence, and wandered out to the barn with his hands meditatively under his coat-tails. From a rafter in the hay-loft he took down his soap-wrappers and counted them. He had ninety-eight. For a long time he gazed thoughtfully at the wrappers. When he returned to the house, Augusta was not in the kitchen nor in the sitting-room. He pulled on his overcoat and went out, not noticing that the velvet collar was turned in at the back. At the cellar door he stopped. He could hear Augusta dragging the soap-kettle across the cement floor.

"Gusta," he called down the cellar-way, "I bet you, you *don't* make some soap to-day!"

Half an hour later, as Mrs. Muller was piling wood under the soap-kettle, the grocer's boy trundled a wheelbarrow into the yard, and in the wheelbarrow lay a full box of soap—one hundred cakes.

"What iss?" asked Mrs. Muller, from where she knelt beside the soap-kettle.

"Soap," said the boy, laconically.

Mrs. Muller bent over her work again. "You makes mistake," she said carelessly. "Iss not for here."

"Oh, yes, it is," the boy replied saucily.

"I don't 'makes mistake.' Your husband said you 'd try to send it back, but he said to tell you he had paid cash for it already, so it would n't be any good sending it back. Here it is."

He turned the barrow over, dumping the box out on the grass, and retired, whistling.

Mrs. Muller arose and stood over the box.

"Yess!" she said angrily. "You do this to me, Heiney Muller! You go und waste goot moneys on soap we ain't some needs for, yust to make me mad! So much you care for me! What goot iss it I work und save, und you go throw away our goot moneys on soap we ain't some needs for? 'T ain't some use in livin' when money gets throwed away for soap we ain't some needs for. You makes me sick!"

Leaving the soap and the kettle where they stood, Mrs. Muller, her chin trembling and her eyes tear-filled, entered her house and climbed the stairs to her bedroom.

"It ain't some use in livin'," she kept repeating to herself, and suddenly the full meaning of the words came to her. She sat by the window, looked out at the slushy road, and considered her case. Heiney did not love her, or he would not have so insulted her. She was a useless burden to him. He held her attempts to be a good and careful housewife as naught, scoffing at them by sending home whole boxes of soap. Doubtless she ate more than she saved, anyway. Doubtless he would be better off without her. Doubtless he would be happier without her, but he would be sad enough if he should come home and find her dead. What had she to live for, if her husband was to scatter money like water, to be a spendthrift of her careful savings? Better dead than tied to such a man!

"You makes me sick, Heiney Muller!" she repeated to his working-trousers, which hung against the door.

Twice before they had quarreled, and Heiney had been at fault both times. Once he had brought her home a new gingham wrapper, when the one she was wearing was still capable of mending. And only last summer, against all her arguments, he had insisted on planting melons in the lot, where she had told him, again and again, melons would never

grow. There was good ground wasted that might have been put in radishes; but she forgave that. But when the vines came up, sickly and thin, only to fall prey to the ravenous melon-worms, and Heiney rebelliously insisted on spending real money for Paris green to scatter on the hopelessly blighted leaves, she had become angry and they had quarreled.

"Him!" she now said, with stubborn anger—"him! All times making for expenses what iss no use for! Him mit his Paris greens! Ain't she money throwed away? Ain't she wasted? Ain't I got half them Paris greens left yet, und no usefulness for her? Und nefer will be!" she added positively.

She looked out of the window and up the road toward the store corner, but no Heiney appeared.

"Und nefer will be!" she repeated. "No, sir. Twenty-five cents throwed by the dogs. All them Paris greens wasted. 'T ain't some use in livin'!"

Suddenly her eyes brightened, even while her dejection increased. She arose and steadied herself by putting one hand on the bed-post, and gave the room a last sweeping glance.

"I guess, Heiney," she murmured, "I make out to save them Paris greens. She don't be wasted no more now."

There was something like elation in her breast at the thought of turning another of Heiney's extravagances into an economy, of rescuing from uselessness the only useless thing the house held; but her heart was heavy, and her tireless, strong limbs trembled as she groped her way down the back stairs to the kitchen.

She took the package of poison from the top shelf of the tin-paneled cupboard and set it on the kitchen table. She carefully untied the string, rolling it around her finger and placing it in the cupboard drawer, where many other carefully hoarded bits of string lay. Then she went into the dining-room for a tumbler.

When she returned she stopped in the doorway, surprised and momentarily abashed. Heiney was standing by the table, his eyes staring at her with fright, his mouth wide open.

"Well," she said lifelessly, "what iss? You comed back; you could yust so well go away once more."

"Gusta!" he gasped. "Gusta!"



Drawn by Charlotte Harding. Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

"'NO, GUSTA!' HE CRIED, WITH ANGUISH. 'NO! NO! DON'T 'DID IT!'"

He could not speak the question, but his hand pointed tremulously to the poison, and his eyes questioned her.

"So iss it!" she said firmly. "Get along out mit your soap-buyings. I go my own ways. Let be!"

The man, long and lank, fell on his knees and clasped his hands.

"No, Gusta!" he cried, with anguish. "No! no! Don't did it!"

He seized her around the knees, and buried his face in her torn skirt, pressing her convulsively to him, so that she staggered and had to support herself by the door-frame.

"Let be!" she said again, without emotion. "I save you the Paris greens."

Her husband glanced up at her set, stern face. All he saw there was the resolution, firm and cruel, and again he grasped her knees, and the weather-faded back of his coat shook with his sobs.

"Gusta," he moaned, "don't did it! I lofe you; don't did it!"

She passed her free hand across her brow, tears welled into her eyes, and, looking down, she saw in the long, unkempt hair of the back of his head that touch of familiarity and daily contact that sometimes condenses, in a single common object, long years of close association and love. She dropped on her knees beside him and wrapped her strong arms around him, laying her head on his shoulder, and wept.

"Heiney," she cried, "what for you make me feel so bad? When you do so then can I not do it. Go away, Heiney! go away!"

"No," he wept; "no, Gusta! That will I not. Give it up! Don't did it!"

"Yess," she moaned; "Yess, Heiney!"

Suddenly he took her hands and leaned back until he could look into her eyes.

"Gusta!" he said sternly, "ain't you love me some more?"

"Yess, Heiney," she answered.

"Then don't did it," he pleaded.

"My mind she iss make up, Heiney," she said sadly. "It iss to do."

"But, Gusta," he urged, "you love me und I love you, und what iss the use? It costs me a lot by your funerals. I don't save nothings!"

"Sometimes you got to have my funerals, anyhow, Heiney," his wife replied, smoothing his hair gently. "You got plenty money in the bank for him now." She let him capture her hand, and then added: "I ain't want to did it much, myselfs, Heiney."

"Then don't," he exclaimed. "I ain't want you to, any."

"I got to," she said simply.

Her husband dropped her hand in exasperation.

"Why? Why? Why? Why?" he shouted.

"Because," she replied, "I make up my mind I save them Paris greens, Heiney Muller; und I save them! So!"

Heiney's head fell forward in hopeless despair. He knew well that when his wife made up her mind to save anything it was useless to argue, and for a brief moment his mind wandered to the unmarried women of his acquaintance. It was not disloyalty: he had been managed so long that he was merely seeking a manager to succeed Gusta.

Quite suddenly a broad smile spread across his face.

"Gusta," he exclaimed, "'T ain't some use! 'T ain't worth dying! The drug-store he 'll take them Paris greens back."

Gusta, from her place on the floor, considered the proposition a moment, and then heaved a mighty sigh.

"All right, Heiney," she said; "I 'm glad for it." Then she added: "You can yust take them Paris greens in the paper. You don't needs some strings. I save them strings."



HISTORIC PALACES OF PARIS

IV. HÔTEL DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD-DOUDEAUVILLE¹

BY CAMILLE GRONKOWSKI



HE Hôtel de La Rochefoucauld-Doudeauville is located on the Rue de Varennes in the very heart of the Faubourg St. Germain. This special world of the faubourg, very retired, very much shut in, a little worn with age, but with a good deal of an air, really constitutes a kind of organism which lives a life apart, one rendered abnormal by circumstances. In order to accentuate this isolation and silent disdain the most uncompromising of its members have remained jealously within a clearly circumscribed quarter, in the halo of a reputation for supreme elegance, but threatened and mined by modern progress.

The representatives of the great names of the past no longer constitute one of the wheels that move the state, since at present they are kept away from high public office. But this ostracism is of recent date, as is proved by the lofty dignities which the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Doudeauville was still enjoying during the early years of the Third Republic. The only official functions which remain to them (to those at least who consent to occupy themselves therewith) are diplomacy and the army. Even these two careers, in which "one does not derogate from one's rank," will remain open to them less and less. As to politics, it is not for one who happens to wish to participate, since the deputies are appointed solely according to the wishes of the voters. Some princes and dukes still sit in parliament; but for the most part they owe their seats to some great ownership of land and to ancient local attachments. However,

they are few in number; and their position depends in no wise on government. What then remains for the descendants of the ancient chevaliers? Prince Henri of Orléans, son of the Duc de Chartres, great-grandson of King Louis Philippe, and a republican, it is said, gave an illustrious example to others, crossed Tibet in heroic fashion and exercised a happy diplomatic influence in Abyssinia. Some others followed this example of adventure and fared forth to learn, and to widen their minds in contact with distant lands and strange customs. So, very lately, the Prince de La Tour d'Auvergne explored the plateaus of the Himalayas, and the Prince de Léon, elder son of the Duc de Rohan, requested and obtained the honor of being the standard-bearer of General Voyron, commander of the French forces during the expedition to China. But one must acknowledge that this is very rare. And almost all of them, to use the expression of Alfred de Vigny, inclose themselves "in their ivory tower"—energies without employment, scornful spectators of the happenings of the day.

From that period onward one need to be no great prophet to foresee the consequences of this state of things. An organism prospers only by assimilation and activity. In this case the vital factors are absent. Whence it results that many activities mark time, discouraged and turned aside by puerile fashions of the world, which have become the real affair of their lives. On the other hand, just because these persons feel themselves fenced off and in a certain sense put under the ban of official society and its favors, they have

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