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## EC1187 Shortening the Work Hours

Mary E. Runnalls

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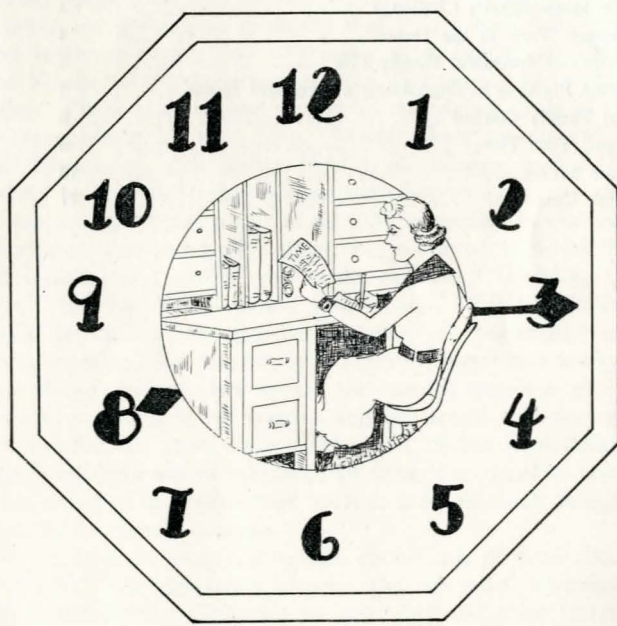
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# SHORTENING The WORK HOURS



The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service  
and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

## CONTENTS

The Homemaker's Challenge .....	3
Sharing Work in the Home.....	4
Factors of Successful Family Life.....	5
Sound Practices in Organizing a Successful Home.....	5
The Family Council.....	6
Watch Your Time.....	6
Time Savers.....	10
Short Cuts.....	11

# Shortening The Work Hours

MARY E. RUNNALLS

*"Keep ever in my soul a sense of perspective, that my kettles and dish-cloth may not obscure the beauty of the rose blooming outside my door, the quiver of the leaves in summer wind, and the classic purity of the snow on the valley and hills."*—FARM WOMAN'S PRAYER.

## The Homemaker's Challenge

THE responsibility of managing the home is given to every homemaker. Her three tools—energy, time, and money—need to be carefully managed in order that the home can attain a high standard. Too common is the expression, "I always have so much work to do that I cannot find time to do the things I would like to do." We shall never have any more time. We have twenty-four hours a day and that is all the time there is.

"Man works from sun to sun, but woman's work is never done" has been taken for granted so generally that it is a real venture for the farm woman to try to outwit time. Probably never before has there been such a need for the wise expenditure of time and money as in the farm home of today. There may be less money to spend but there is just as much time—twenty-four hours a day. Homemakers are endowed with time, health, knowledge, and skills. Health, knowledge, and skills may vary according to the individual homemaker but to each one of us alike is given twenty-four hours a day to do with according to our own plan. It's not the hours you put in; it's what you put into the hours that counts.

"If I had time I would read to the children," "If I had time I would garden," "If I had time I would visit school," "If I had time . . ." The chorus is heard wherever you find a group of homemakers. Sometimes regret is expressed for the lost opportunities, sometimes used as an excuse for the things undone, but always the remark shows a gap between the power and ambition of the woman and her actual achievement.

This desire for more time on the part of the homemaker signifies a growing consciousness of the fact that time is a valuable asset, a tangible, material thing to be apportioned with at least as much thought, care, and wisdom as the family income.

No doubt more people complain about lack of time than they do of their work. The difference between the successful homemaker and the failure is mainly the difference in how they use their twenty-four hours a day. We generally find time to do some of the things we want to do. Perhaps we could do still more of the things we want to do if we managed our time well. Do we think of an hour as we do of a dollar? The average homemaker thinks of time as having monetary value only when it can be converted into money directly. She does not think of an hour as of a dollar and yet she wonders where the time, the morning or the afternoon, has gone, just as she often wonders where the dollar has gone.



One of the purposes of studying home management is to make plans for work so that there will be time for recreation, reading, and those things which contribute to the development of the individual members of the family. Time for such uses will help to make the woman in the home



a homemaker rather than a housekeeper. It is indeed a poor home that is held together by the broom, the sewing machine, and the cook stove. The goal of every homemaker is the achievement of a satisfactory home. She wants her children, her husband, and herself to be happy, useful, and successful.

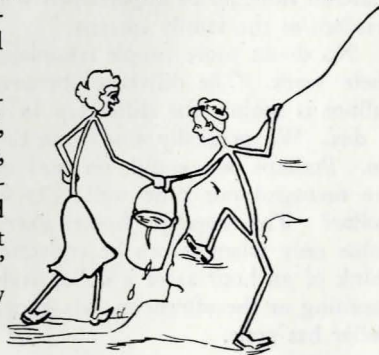
Many women *plan their work and work their plan*. They may not have a written schedule, but in their minds there is a systematic planning for the days, the weeks, and the year. They know how to weigh values—how to put first things first. They consider

first the interests, abilities, and problems of the individuals in the home. They are able to distinguish between the "must do's" and the "may do's"; they have no difficulty in deciding whether or not to spend a given hour in reading and playing with the children or in scouring the black off the bottoms of the cooking utensils. They know when they have reached the limit of their strength, and they stop before they become too tired to enjoy the results of their work—before they become Marthas "cumbered with much serving"—and thus they still retain the Mary spirit of companionship and love.

### Sharing Work in the Home

Family cooperation is an important factor in outwitting time. The efficient home is the product of cooperative family effort to secure with minimum expenditures of time, energy, and money, a home atmosphere where each member can achieve a well-balanced physical, mental, and spiritual development.

Planning the work together, helping to form the habit of "taking turns", not only in pleasures but also in tasks, giving each member of the family responsibility according to his age and ability, and letting each one feel that he is an important part of "the firm" will make the household machinery run smoothly.



A simple schedule of tasks for each member of the household is an important step in the building of a successful time plan. The home is the center of life and activity of the family as a group, and each member of the family should be given an opportunity to contribute in some way and to feel a responsibility for the tasks to be done. Each member should have his special tasks and be allowed to work out the best ways and methods of doing the work and of improving the practices.

### Factors of Successful Family Life

The following have been given as contributing factors to successful family life:

Parents with vision and knowledge of homemaking; their personal efficiency and general attitude winning the respect and voluntary following of the family members.

Faith in the ultimate success of the family and pride in family membership.

Family agreement upon a simple but satisfying standard of living.

A well-planned program of work.

Cooperative sharing of home work and responsibility by the family members.

Each member intent upon discovering for the mutual benefit of all the most efficient way of accomplishing the essential work of the home.

Home and family problems frankly faced and discussed by the group.

Consideration by and for all family members.



### Sound Practices in Organizing a Successful Home

Successful organizations hold meetings regularly to discuss the details and plans for their business. The responsibility of the organization is divided among the membership. The members are interested in the work but each is not burdened with the whole responsibility. There is much frankness, courtesy, and respect for the rights of others. Common sense and justice direct its decisions. There is no place for misunderstanding in the successful business. It is the business of each member to understand and be understood. The leaders have the ability to direct without seeming to do so. They are alert to anything which might increase the efficiency of the organization. They are willing to give up old practices and adopt new ones. They help individual members to see and accept opportunities.

Homemakers who have applied these principles of successful organizations to their homes have found that a happier home life results.

### The Family Council

A plan for running the home cannot be carried out without the cooperation of the family. Let the children plan with you; then they like to help you carry out this plan. Every member of the family should be given the privilege of assisting and the successful homemaker asks for the advice and help of other members of the family in working out the plans. The plan then is a truly cooperative affair, as much the father's and children's responsibility as the mother's. Willing hands will prove to mother that "Light is the task when many share the toil."

Some form of family council is common in a well-managed home. The council recognizes homemaking as the cooperative responsibility of the whole family. It analyzes the work of the home and provides for group discussions of its problems.

The council may be held daily, around the breakfast table or in the evening after the chores are done. Some families get together weekly or semi-weekly at some convenient time.

The family must accept certain rather definite objectives which are made up of the things hoped for by the family members, the blending of ideas about what would contribute to their happiness.

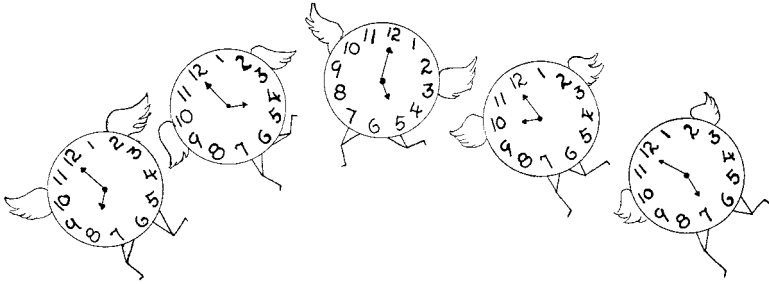
Such objectives have to be made definite and reasonably understandable to all members and of course they have to be within the income. Such objectives need to have put into them not only the points of view of the older members of the family but also those of the younger ones as well. When attention is centered on a family goal the various family members find themselves enjoying each other's accomplishments and experiences in a vital way. Things should be talked over in the family council in such a manner that each child will want to do his or her part, for everyone has a right to satisfaction and happiness in work that is well done. If the child selects and creates the task and plan and has freedom to use the plan, he will achieve the goal of satisfaction and happiness. Challenge the child to work out his own plan or method.

A family plan made by the family, perhaps not rigidly adhered to but kept in spirit, can furnish the guiding line that a good many families need if they are to find their way into more enjoyable ways of living.

### Watch Your Time

*"Be not slack in your work today,  
For tomorrow it doubles and makes harder the way."*

Homemaking is the most important business there is, and the method of carrying it on can be compared with any other great business. It is said, "The whole future of any corporation depends upon having good management." And so it is with the home. Since the homemaker is given the responsibility of managing the home, what standards does she set for her business? One of the things which she must carefully manage is her time.



There is an old English saying to the effect that the use of the "odds and ends of time" is more important than the use of one's regular time.

Of all the races with time that are run there is probably none more strenuous than that in which the homemaker is entered. The race is such a difficult one that the only way for her to win seems to be to plan the way time shall go.

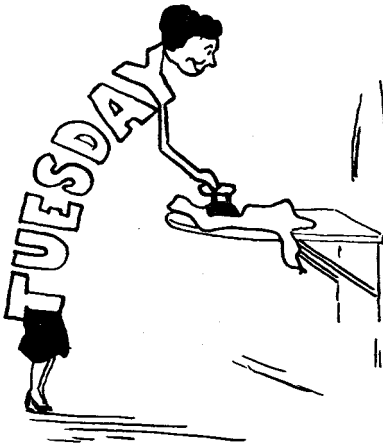
In spite of all we hear about the leisure of modern women, the busy homemaker still has plenty to do and a little over. So many demands are made upon her time that she often has the sense of being driven by her work and of trying in vain to "catch up" with all she has to do.

This pressure of work is nothing new, but fortunately the modern homemaker has found a way of relieving it. She is taking a lesson from industry and scheduling her work.

A plan of work enables the homemaker to know if she is making the best use of her time, energy, and resources, for it gives her an opportunity to check on her methods of work as well as on the tasks in her plan.

A little more time spent on management or planning of housework might give a larger percentage of time for leisure. No one can deny that "system saves work." Having a definite plan and knowing just exactly how one is going to accomplish a task leaves one with a tranquil attitude of mind, which is another value. Do at least one thing well; then start trying to do another task as well.

In making a plan of work for the first time it is desirable that the plan be written and be built around the essential daily tasks. A written plan soon grows into an unwritten one and becomes a part of the homemaker's routine life, to be adjusted as the needs of the family change.





When drawing up a schedule the homemaker's first step is to make a list of all her regular tasks, including even those which come only once in several weeks. She must next decide the approximate time each task takes. Some of her estimates will be rough but by keeping records when she does these tasks again she can correct her earlier figures.



Keeping her list before her, she distributes the various tasks through the seven days of the week, arranging the work for each day in the order in which it is to be done and placing the time of starting and finishing it.

In starting to make a plan of work the following list of daily, weekly, and seasonal tasks may serve as a guide:

The written plan should include time for:

1. **Everyday tasks:** meals, dishwashing, marketing, ordering, planning, bedmaking, routine cleaning, care of family, and outside work.
2. **Weekly tasks:** planning, cleaning, marketing, special cooking and baking, laundry, mending.
3. **Personal requirement:** recreation, rest, social activities.
4. **Extra tasks:** shopping, sewing, cleaning, repair work, gardening, canning, and others not included in the daily or weekly tasks.

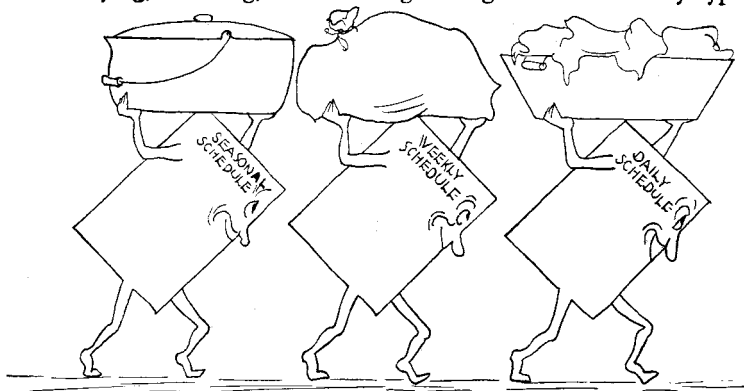
A plan should include a calendar for:

**Seasonal tasks:** canning, gardening, poultry work, shopping, sewing, cleaning, repairs of various kinds, painting, papering, and other tasks not included in other plans of work.

**Social activities:** meetings, social clubs, entertaining, vacations, holidays, and community activities.

**Other work:** all work done for pay which is carried on inside or outside of the home.

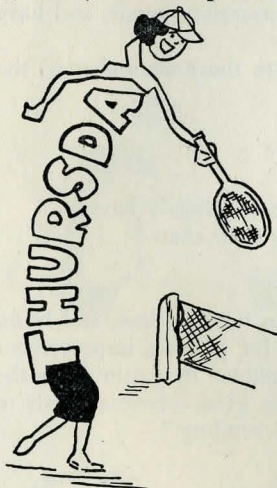
A plan of work means increased interest in the job and therefore greater skill. By developing and using a plan, the homemaker will find herself studying, checking, and thinking through each task. Any type of



work will be done with greater skill where there is interest and pride in the job.

It is not only routine work which enters into a schedule. Periods for rest, leisure, and for irregular work are also written in. As much consideration should be given to time for play and leisure as to time for work. Time for personal appearance should be planned as well as the rest period.

It is no disgrace to take fifteen minutes in the middle of a busy morning or afternoon and deliberately forget about housework; to sit down and relax for a short time is not a sign of laziness but a sign of good sense. The women who know enough to rest before becoming completely exhausted are the ones who carry on the longest. Such a rest period out of the work day may prove to be a sound investment. The renewed vigor with which household duties may be attacked and the peace of mind given by this rest period make the rest of the work seem easier and are more likely to leave the homemaker in a cheerful mood to greet the family at the end of the day.



*"Rest is not quitting the busy career;  
Rest is the fitting of self to one's sphere,  
'Tis loving and serving the highest and best,  
'Tis onward, unswerving, and this is true rest."*

—GOETHE.

A plan to be workable and satisfactory must be more or less flexible and must allow time for the never expected interruption in housekeeping. When making your plan remember that you will have interruptions; everybody has them. If a neighbor comes in to visit, drop the plan and pick it up after the visit; or if someone stops just as you are making beds, this may mean that the beds may be left unmade until evening, but no great harm will have been done.

The housekeeper is the one who must decide which activities are essential and which are non-essential. A housekeeper who gets the most good from a plan will break it without hesitancy in an emergency and keep sweet while doing so. The feeling of being tied down is not desirable. A work plan is more of a balance wheel than something which ties you down closely to scheduled hours.

A plan of work means increased skill due to reduced tension and fatigue. One of the things that must be avoided is working under pressure. A good plan of work removes pressure. If regarded as a pressure device, it will only cause fatigue and irritation.

The advantage of a schedule does not come wholly from making the work run smoothly. Often more is gained through cutting down on the amount of work to be done. There is no better way of finding where time can be saved than by a written plan. Then by carefully studying

the daily tasks the homemaker can decide which of these can be done less frequently without any sacrifice to her standard of housekeeping, and also improve her methods of work. Some of the tasks she may eliminate entirely from her plan, and others which she has been doing may be assigned to individual members of the family.

Elimination of tasks may make it possible to save even more time than other methods will save. In times past the idea prevailed that a good homemaker baked all her own baked goods, did all her own canning, did all her cleaning and laundering, did all her sewing and whatever else might have to be done in the home. All of these things were done in the spirit of a martyr, with no thought given to the effect which it might have on the physical or mental welfare of the homemaker.

The question now comes up in the mind of the homemaker whether she should buy or produce at home, exchange labor or products with others, whether to select worthwhile instead of temporary goods, and have some work done or do it all herself.

A good many questions will probably occur to the homemaker as she plans her schedule, such as:

Do I spend enough time with my family?

Can I reduce the time spent on routine work?

Do I need more labor-saving equipment?

Do I need to make better use of the equipment I already have?

Are the various members of the family doing their share?

Am I getting enough rest and relaxation?

Do I spend enough time in personal care?

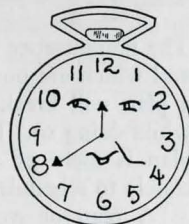
It is by the use of a plan, a revision of it from time to time, and being alert to every opportunity, method, and device for possible improvement in the plan that the homemaker can gradually reduce to a minimum the demands made upon her time and energy. "The ideal schedule bends to take care of emergencies, but does not break on bending."

### Time Savers



*"Spin cheerfully,  
Not tearfully,  
Though wearily you plod."*

*"Spin carefully,  
Spin prayerfully,  
But leave the thread with God."*



Most homemakers have a certain amount of routine work that may become wearisome. Does the time you spend alone over routine work leave you cross or fatigued, or do you welcome these jobs so you can have a chance to think or get better acquainted with yourself? Homemakers often work alone and have much time to think. The question, "What do you talk to yourself about as you work?" was asked a group of homemakers, with the following replies:



"I often sing, trying to recall as many songs as I can, and sometimes I whistle."

Another said she often turned her troubles over and over in her mind, although she was ashamed to admit it.

One woman said, "I say my prayers. I see no reason why that isn't as good a time as any."

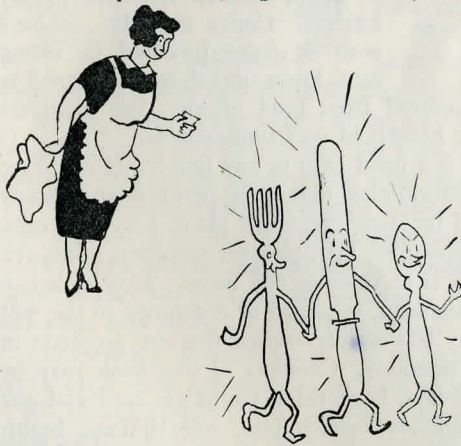
Another homemaker kept a small framed piece of cardboard over her work table and attached with thumb tacks bits of prose and verse. She changed them from time to time.

"I had never thought much about it before, but I believe I spend most of the time counting my blessings. Life has held some things that are dark, but much that is bright and I'm so very, very thankful for it all."

From these quotations we are convinced that we are losing something precious if we are not using this time for worthwhile things.

### Short Cuts

*"To make the home efficient, scientific methods must be applied to it."*



Short cuts or handy hints release time. The following may be suggestive time savers for your family:

1. A home repair kit might include:

Hammer	Rule
Screw driver	Plumber's friend
Pliers	File
Wrench	Sand paper
Putty knife	Nails
Saw	Screws
Hand drill	Nuts and bolts
Plane	Wire

2. "A place for everything and everything in its place."

Low shelves for children's toys and books. A pole in the closet that children can reach. A drawer within reach of the little ones, filled with clean white rags, supplies of handkerchiefs, bandages, paint rags, etc., for the whole family.

3. Systematic shopping—make a list of things to be purchased, sizes, kinds, and amounts to buy.

4. When measuring a half cup of fat put a half cup of cold water in the cup first, then add fat until water reaches one cup mark.

5. Keep near cabinet or work table an indexed file with basic recipes in it.

6. When cutting marshmallows, butter the scissors used. It keeps the marshmallows from sticking together or sticking to the scissors.

7. Keep a small enameled pitcher in the warming oven of your range. Melted shortening is always ready for use.



8. A spice cabinet on the kitchen cupboard on the left side of the working surface is a convenience when cooking.

9. An old wooden salt box with a hinged cover, enameled attractively and hung beside the stove, makes a convenient place to keep holders, and it is much handier than trying to keep them hung on a hook.



10. If your kitchen sink has no back or splasher on it, an old windshield from an automobile may be improvised. Enamel it on the back side. Place the glass (painted side to the wall) along the top of the sink. This can be wiped off easily and always looks white. A handy man with tools might adapt this idea.

11. A nutpick is useful in any kitchen. Corks may be removed with it, holes punched in sifting cans, knots untied, seams cleaned in

milk pails, clogged particles removed from food grinder, lids pried off smaller jars, and there are other household uses innumerable.

12. A family bulletin board is a great help to any family. It can serve as a "clearing house" for all information that is of personal and family interest. The board can be used for messages, work plans, telephone calls, any special events, grocery and shopping lists, pleasant surprises, jokes, etc.

13. A household record book is of value to any home. This book is a memorandum book for the homemaker, arranged or organized so she will have at her finger tips the many bits of information that are necessary to have recorded to run a home smoothly. Contents of this book may be addresses, automobile data, birthdays, book titles, Christmas card and gift lists, church, club, finance, magazine subscriptions, prescriptions, health record, garden, games, party suggestions, travel, etc. Separate scrap books may be made for these subjects if desired.

14. A table or desk, files, etc., in the kitchen or elsewhere facilitate and expedite matters. Even a table drawer or a shelf is better than no place. Such a place might include writing supplies, equipment files, bills and receipts, accounts and records, etc. *Every home needs a business center.*

15. Grouping of utensils in the kitchen saves time. Utensils should be near the place where they are used in routine work. The homemaker must check on the utensils that are at the cabinet, sink, stove, and pantry work centers after various tasks are done and then make a permanent grouping of the utensils at these centers.

16. Posture is important. Working equipment adjusted to the correct height makes for comfort, lessens fatigue, and increases the worker's efficiency.

17. A paper towel cabinet in the kitchen saves much laundering if the paper towels are used for polishing, rubbing, or wiping out greasy pans. It also saves many steps.



18. Cleaning can be saved by basting the top of the trouser cuff on men's work and chore trousers. Then they will not catch and fill with dirt and chaff which is so often brought into the house.

19. For cleaning the top of a kitchen stove a blackboard eraser is useful. It is more satisfactory than a cloth and keeps the hands clean.

20. Use a paper plate underneath a paint can when painting. It provides a place for the brush and prevents paint from dripping on the floor.

21. An alarm clock placed in the kitchen window will call you from the garden or flower beds at just the right time. This will save many unnecessary steps to the house to see what time it is.

22. A clothes basket and child's wagon save energy in carrying clothes from laundry to clothes line and in hanging up.

23. When cutting soap for washing clothes, try cutting it on a cabbage cutter. Flakes are uniform and as thin as tissue. Then pour boiling water over them and they will melt instantly.

24. Speaking of antiques—a pair of small discarded flatirons make excellent book ends, especially to be used in the kitchen.

25. If you haven't a jelly bag on a stand, fasten a pair of embroidery hoops around the top of your bag and see how much easier it is to put the fruit in and how free from stains are the hands.

26. If you will place a pin across the button and sew over it when you sew buttons on heavy cloth, a shank will be formed and the button will button easier and stay on longer.

27. If every person would pick up and carry his own plates, cups, and extra dishes to the kitchen or place where they are to be washed, he would save the dishwasher a good many steps in clearing up the table.

28. A metal tray, much like a cookie sheet, made to fit the floor of the shallow closet where brooms, mops, and other cleaning equipment are kept is easily removed and cleaned and protects the floor from oil and dirt.

29. A small funnel in the kitchen cabinet suggests many uses such as filling salt and pepper shakers or vinegar cruets, etc.



30. Mashed potatoes may be kept hot while waiting by placing the kettle in a pan of boiling water or by putting the potatoes in the upper part of a double boiler.

31. Cover the fruit juice which has oozed from a pie in the oven with salt to prevent smoke.

32. Rinse with hot water the cup in which you are to measure lard or butter.

33. When the outside of the house or the window frames are to be painted, spread Bon Ami or whiting on the glass. Then if paint is splattered on the glass it can be removed easily with the powder.

34. Several oil cans about the house are time savers. Keep one at the sewing machine, the separator, etc.

35. In cold weather, handkerchiefs may be pinned together with safety pins which are sewed to a strip of muslin before going out to the line.

36. Laundry supplies kept together in one place, in an old cupboard or shelf, make wash day less tiring.

37. A brush has a number of uses in the kitchen, for cleaning cut glass, vases, silver, or irregular pieces of china.

38. To flour chicken or sugar doughnuts quickly, put the flour or sugar in a paper sack, close, and shake.

39. To clean paint from clothing, take equal parts of ammonia and turpentine, saturate the spot two or three times, then wash out in soap suds. This will remove the paint, no matter how dry or hard.

40. Steel wool makes a good filling for pin cushions. It keeps needles and pins free from rust.

41. To use your miscellaneous collection of soap, place it in a coffee tin, the bottom of which has been perforated well with large holes. Pour your hot water over the soap and as it runs through a good suds is formed.

42. A bag of flannel large enough to fit over the broom is a handy article to clean ceilings and high walls. It can be removed and washed easily.

43. Try mixing tapioca instead of flour with the sugar to be sprinkled over the top of your juicy fruit pies.

44. A small cutting board is a convenience — one that can be easily carried to the stove, table, or cabinet for use.

The back of this circular may be used to write in additional short cuts suggested by homemakers.

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