Title: A Little Housekeeping Book for a Little Girl; Or, Margaret's Saturday Mornings

Author: Caroline French Benton

Release Date: January 9, 2010 [EBook #30897]

Language: English

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Or, MARGARET'S SATURDAY MORNINGS

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By Caroline French Benton

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53 Beacon St., Boston, Mass.

A LITTLE HOUSEKEEPING BOOK FOR A LITTLE GIRL

Or, MARGARET'S SATURDAY MORNINGS

By

Caroline French Benton

AUTHOR OF

"A LITTLE COOK BOOK FOR A LITTLE GIRL"

Boston

THE PAGE COMPANY

Publishers

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This little book was originally published under the title

Saturday Mornings,

but there has been some criticism of that title because it is not sufficiently descriptive of the contents of the book. The Publishers, consequently, have thought it wise in the present edition to change the title to

A Little Housekeeping Book for a Little Girl

Or

Margaret's Saturday Mornings.

This change has the advantage also of making the title uniform with the other titles in the series —

A Little Cook Book for a Little Girl,

A Little Sewing Book for a Little Girl, etc.

Thanks are due the editor of *Good Housekeeping* for permission to reproduce the greater part of this book from the serial in that magazine.

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CHAPTER I

MARGARET'S CHRISTMAS TREE

About Christmas time Margaret was accustomed to see things tucked out of sight whenever she came around, and her feelings were never hurt when her Pretty Aunt, or her Other Aunt, or her mother, or her grandmother said: "Don't you want to run down-stairs a little while, dear!" or, "Margaret, would you mind staying out of the sitting-room all this morning?" But this Christmas everybody said these things twice as often as usual, and Margaret wondered about it.

"Mother," she said one day, "if you were a little girl and every one said 'Run away, now,' over and over, twice as many times as other Christmases, what would you think?" [Pg 14]

Her mother laughed. "Well," she said, "I suppose I should think I was going to have twice as many presents as usual."

Margaret drew a long breath. "Would you?" she asked, thoughtfully. "Two pairs of skates, and two sets of furs, and two boxes of handkerchiefs, and two pink kimonos, and six books; that would be twice as many presents as last year. But what does one little girl want with twos? Now if I was twins—"

The Pretty Aunt laughed. "Let me explain it to her," she said. "Margaret, how would you like two Christmas trees, one for everybody, just as usual, with your presents on it, and one little tree, all for yourself, with more presents? Would you like that for a change?"

Margaret said she thought she would, but it seemed very queer. Two trees, and only one little girl! Now if she really had been twins—

"Twins, indeed!" said the Other Aunt. [Pg 15]

"Just wait till you see, and perhaps you will be glad there's only one of you!" And everybody laughed again except Margaret, who thought it all very queer indeed.

When Christmas morning came she jumped up in a hurry and waked every one up calling out, "Merry Christmas!" and then she danced with impatience because it took them so long to get ready. But at last the doors of the parlor were thrown open and she rushed in. There stood the great, beautiful tree, hung with tinsel and bright balls, and twinkling with beautiful lights, and on its branches were bundles and bundles, tied with red ribbons and holly, and on the floor were more bundles, and she forgot about the little tree she had meant to look for. But by and by, when she had opened all her presents, and made a pile of them on the piano, and thanked everybody for them, she whispered:

"Mother, was there to be a little tree, all for me?"

"Why, of course," said her mother, smiling, "we nearly forgot, didn't we? Suppose you look behind the library door?" [Pg 16]

Margaret ran and looked, and, sure enough, there was the tree, but such a queer one! It was small, and had no candles and no ornaments. The corner was dark and she could not see very well, but it seemed to be hung with things that looked like dust-pans and whisk-brooms. She stood looking at it, wondering if it was all a joke.

Just then her father saw her and came to pull the tree out where she could see it, and, sure enough, there was a dust-pan tied on with a red tape, and a whisk-broom with another red tape, and a little sweeping-cap with a red bow, some gingham aprons and white aprons, and brown towels and red-and-white towels, and dust-cloths, all with red M's in their corners; and put at the top was a little book tied on the tree with a big red bow. Her mother took this down and handed it to her, and every one stood and looked on and smiled because she was so surprised. When [Pg 17] Margaret looked at the cover of the book she knew what was inside in a minute, because, painted on the cover was a little girl who looked just like her with a big apron on, and a sweeping-cap, holding a broom in one hand and a dust-pan in the other, and above, in bright red letters, were the words, Saturday Mornings.

"Oh, it's for me!" she cried, delighted. "It's like my own cook-book, only it tells how to clean house instead of cook. I love to clean house! I love to make beds! I love to wash dishes! I just *love* to sweep! May I wear that beautiful cap, and are all those dish-towels for me, and is that my very own dust-pan?" Then she ran to the tree and got everything down. First she put on all the aprons, one on top of another, with the ruffled waiting-on-table apron on top of the rest, and she put the cap on her head, and hung all the dish-towels over one arm and all the dusters over the other, and gathered up the brooms and dust-pan in her arms and sat down in a corner with her book. [Pg 18]

"This is the best of all," she said, soberly. "My other presents are lovely, too, my books and my gold heart pin, and my white rocking-chair for my own room, and the mittens grandmother knit for me with the lace stitches down the back, but I like my little book best, and all the things on my own little tree most. This is the nicest Christmas I ever, ever had! The name of my book is Saturday Mornings, because other days I have to go to school, but Saturdays I can sweep and dust and wash dishes. What fun it will be! I don't know which chapter sounds best." She hugged the little dust-pan and shook out the dish-towels. "Oh, I just can't wait to begin," she said. [Pg 19]

CHAPTER II

THE KITCHEN FIRE

Although Margaret had become pretty well acquainted with the kitchen during the year she was learning to cook she had never quite understood how to manage the kitchen range or the fire, because Bridget always attended to that part for her. But at the very first lesson in the Saturday Morning Class her mother, who was to be the teacher that day, said the subject would be "Ranges and Fires," because it was the beginning of all housekeeping.

Margaret put on her biggest, longest-sleeved gingham apron, got a hearth brush, a dust-pan, the little dish which held the stove blacking, brush and polisher, rolled up her sleeves and prepared to listen.

"The reason why so many women find cooking hard work," her mother began, "is because they do [Pg 20] not understand their range or stove. They cannot make a fire grow hot quickly, or make it cooler if it is too hot; they do not know how to get what the cook-books call a 'moderate oven.' 'We never could understand about drafts and things,' they say, but the real truth of the matter is that they are too lazy to try and learn, I'm afraid, because it is so very simple that even a little girl can learn about it in ten minutes. The only way to be a good housekeeper is to understand all about a fire and how to keep a kitchen range in a good temper."

Margaret laughed at this, but her mother said stoves were just like people, and sometimes would refuse to do as they were told, and were cross and sulky; but they could be as pleasant and smiling and obliging as a good little girl. Then she took off the covers and explained all about the inside of the range. "You see," she began, "the fire is in a sort of box lined with heavy brick. Now, if the coals come up to the very top of this, or lie on its edges, they will crack the brick as they [Pg 21] get heated, and so spoil it, and fire-brick is very expensive and troublesome to replace. You can heat the sides and bottom very hot, and it will not hurt it, but not the top edges. So, in putting on coal you must never let it quite fill the box, and after you set the scuttle down on the floor you must take the long poker and feel all around on top of the ovens and see if any bit has rolled there, and bring it back where it belongs. If it should roll down the sides you could not get it out, and it would spoil the draft and injure the stove. Now if you understand all this we will shake out the coal and make a new fire."

"Oh, let me shake!" exclaimed Margaret, and before her mother could stop her she had put in the shaker and moved it about so quickly that the ashes came out of the open covers and drafts and filled the room, and both she and her mother were coughing and choking.

Her mother stopped her. "That isn't the way to shake a fire," she said. "The covers must all go on [Pg 22] first, and everything be shut up tight." Then she showed her the two slides over the oven doors, and the others in front, and pushed them shut. The two in the stovepipe were opened, so the

ashes could go up that way, and the covers were tightly put in their places. "Now," she said, "you may shake."

So Margaret shook and shook until her arms were tired, but though the fine ashes all came out, there was a handful of large coals which would not go through the grate. These, her mother explained, were partly good, unburned coal, and partly poor, hard bits, called clinkers. Some people just turned them all out with the ashes and threw them away, but this was wasteful. They must be picked over and the good bits burned again. Margaret hunted up a big pair of old gloves of her father's, and with these on she picked out the good pieces of coal and laid them on one side, and then she tipped the grate by turning the stove handle quite around, and the clinkers all [Pg 23] fell into the ash-pan and the grate was left empty. A big newspaper was next spread on the floor and the ash-pan carefully drawn out over it and emptied into a scuttle kept ready for this, so it could be easily carried to the place where the ashes were kept, and emptied into the can there. She put the empty pan on the paper, and with her brush swept out all the cracks inside the stove, up and down, here and there, till no ashes were to be seen anywhere. Then the pan was put back. The ovens were opened next, and these, too, swept out with a clean whisk-broom, and away back in the corners they found several bits of toast and such things all dried to a crisp, which Bridget had not seen at all. When all the ashes were taken up and those on the newspaper cleared away, her mother said, "Now we are ready for the fire."

"First we put a crumpled paper on the bottom; on this we lay crossed sticks of kindling, a good many, because this is to be a coal fire; if we were going to burn wood we would not need so [Pg 24] many; we must shut the little slide in the front of the stove directly before the fire, and open the one at the bottom, so the smoke will go up. Look and see if the two drafts in the pipe are open; if not, the room will be full of smoke as soon as we start the kindling. The dampers into the ovens must be shut, too, so the fire will have nothing to distract its attention; if we left them open it would think it had not only to burn, but to get the ovens hot, too. Now if you are ready you can light the paper."

In a moment Margaret heard the wood roaring well, then she took off a cover and sprinkled on one shovel of coal and closed the top again; as soon as she saw by peeping in that this was red, she put on another, scattering it evenly all around, and presently she added a third shovelful, and by this time the wood was well burned away and the coal was hot, so she knew the fire was made.

The lesson then took up heating the ovens, which was still more important. Her mother showed [Pg 25] Margaret how to push in and out the dampers over the oven doors, and explained the shutter inside which they worked. "When we want the oven hot we pull the shutter open to let the heat go all around the oven. When we want to cool it we shut the shutter. The first thing to learn about a stove is this: find out whether the damper is pushed in or pulled out to heat the ovens; you can tell by taking off the top covers and watching, for you can see in that way how the shutter works. Some push in and others pull out, and each stove may be different. These push in when you want to get the oven hot. Now, if you want to cook on top of the stove, and want all the heat up there, of course you do not need the ovens heated, so you shut them away. When you are all done with the fire never let it burn uselessly, but close it up, and so keep it. The reason of the draft in the front of the stove at the bottom, is this: the air rushes in up through the coal and on into the chimney, and makes the fire go hard. If you want to have it go slowly and not waste the [Pg 26] coal, of course you must shut this tight. The other draft, directly in front of the fire, lets the cool air right in on the hot coals, and keeps them from burning up rapidly, so if you want a hot fire you must shut this, and when you want the fire to go down you must open it. Is that plain?"

"Yes," said Margaret, thoughtfully. "When I bake I make the ovens hot by pushing in the dampers, and opening the slide at the bottom and shutting it at the top. When I want to make something on top, I pull out the dampers to get the ovens cool, and I open the one at the bottom and shut the one at the top. When I'm all done I leave the oven dampers out, shut the bottom draft in front and open the top one. Then the fire gets cool. But what do I do to the chimney dampers?"

"Sure enough," said her mother, "we almost forgot those. You see the queer handles on them—thin and straight; those are like the flat plates inside the pipe that turn just as they do. When you [Pg 27] want the fire to burn hard you turn the handle along the pipe, and that turns the plate the same way, and the heat can get out and make a good draft. But if you are shutting up the fire you turn the handle across the pipe, and that makes the plate turn straight across, too, and stops the heat from getting out, and so the fire dies down."

"Oh, yes," said Margaret, "that's easy to understand. But what do people do who don't have coal fires? Sometimes they have wood to burn."

"But the dampers and drafts all work the same way," said her mother. "Wood is nice and clean to burn, and makes a quick, hot fire, but it has to be watched all the time or it will go out. Coal makes a steady heat, and so for most things it is better to use. Now look in and see how things are going."

Margaret raised the covers and found a bed of bright red coals. Her mother told her to put on coal at once; if she waited the fire would grow still hotter,—what was called white hot,—and then [Pg 28] it would be spoiled. Coal must always go on before this point, but not too much, which would be wasteful. A bright, low fire was always best.

"Now leave the drafts all open just a moment," said her mother, "to let the coal gas burn away,

and then you can shut the fire up and it will keep just right for hours. And one thing more—never let the coal come up near the covers of the stove, or the great heat will warp these and spoil them; they will always have cracks around their edges, and the heat will be wasted."

"Bridget never lets her fire go out at night," said Margaret, as she shut the fire all up. "She likes to keep it a whole week and then let the stove get cold and make it all over again on Saturdays."

"Yes," said her mother, "that is a very good way to do, for it does not use up the kindling, and it takes no more coal to keep the fire all night than to start a new one every morning. But if you [Pg 29] ever notice how she manages you will see that she shakes out the ashes at night, puts on coal, and lets the gas burn off, just as we have done. Then she shuts up the oven drafts, and the one at the bottom, and opens the one in front of the fire as we did; in the morning she finds her fire exactly right; all she has to do is to make it a little brighter and hotter, so she shuts the draft in front of the coal and opens the one at the bottom, to get the air to rush up through the coal, and sets the drafts in the pipe open, too, so the hot air can get out; then when the fire burns up red she shakes out the ashes a little and puts on fresh coal, and it is ready for the day, and as hot as she wants it."

"I don't see why she ever lets it go out at all," said Margaret. "Why does it burn worse on Fridays, and have to be built all over on Saturdays?"

Her mother laughed. "Why, you see," she said, "the ashes will get into the corners and the clinkers into the grate in spite of all the care one can take, so once a week she takes everything [Pg 30] out as we have done and makes a nice, clean, new fire. But now we are all done except blacking the stove. Generally that ought to be done when the fire is not hot, but we were talking and I did not have you do it then; next time we will manage better."

Margaret wet the blacking a little, dipped in her brush, and scrubbed the stove well all over, especially in the corners. Then she polished it with the dry side of the brush till it shone like a mirror. The little knobs on the doors she rubbed with a bit of nickel polish she found in another box, and used a dry flannel cloth on them last. Her mother explained that it was necessary to keep a stove very bright and shining, or it would wear out, and, besides that, a bright one made the kitchen look tidy and attractive. "Some people just paint the whole stove over once or twice a year with a black enamel, and never polish it at all, and perhaps that is a good way for very busy people to do, but I like the old-fashioned way better myself. Shine it a little every day in the week, [Pg 31] and once in every few days give it a good thorough blacking and polishing when the fire is out, and you will make the stove wear a long time and keep it in good working order as well. A clean range, one that is really clean and well cared for inside and out, is always good-natured and happy, and does the very best it knows how for you when you try and cook, but one that is full of ashes and clinkers, with a face all grimy and dusty and gray, gets sullen and cross, and will not try and please anybody. You must keep it good-natured. Just see how proud and happy it looks now."

Margaret smiled admiringly at the shiny range and bright fire. "Sometimes Bridget puts things in her stove that make all the house smell," she said. "I am never going to put anything into mine but nice, clean wood and coal."

"The reason Bridget puts them in," her mother replied, "is a good one. I often burn up small quantities of garbage myself, but I never have a bit of odor, for all I have to do is to open the [Pg 32] drafts in the chimney and at the bottom, and shut those going into the ovens and the one in front of the fire, and then all the smell goes straight up the chimney. If you are careful you can often get rid of little things in the kitchen by burning them, but you should be sure and never let the odor get out into the room."

Just then Bridget came into the kitchen and said it was time for her to get lunch.

"See, Bridget," Margaret exclaimed, proudly, "we blacked the range and made it smile all over. It just loves to be clean and shiny!"

"It does that," said Bridget. "I guess it'll bake sponge cakes for lunch to say it feels glad."

"Oh, goody!" said Margaret, as she ran to take off her big apron and wash her hands. [Pg 33]

CHAPTER III

THE DINING-ROOM TABLE

The second lesson in Margaret's book really took her a whole month to learn perfectly, because there were so many things to remember. One Saturday she studied about the breakfast-table, and during the next week she practised the lesson over every day; the next week she took the luncheon-table and laid that and waited on it, and the third and fourth weeks she learned all about the dinner-table, and that was hardest of all. But, as her mother said, if she learned in one single month to be a perfect waitress she was an unusually bright maid!

BREAKFAST

The first Saturday morning her Other Aunt woke her rather early, and told her after she was [Pg 34]
ready to put on a nice white apron and over it a fresh gingham apron to protect it, or, if she did not feel quite sure she could keep it fresh even so, to put on the gingham one and bring down the white one to put on when everything was ready.

The dining-room was dark when they went into it, and smelled of the dinner the night before; they threw open the windows and let the wind sweep through while Margaret got the carpet-sweeper and took up the few crumbs which had not been found and taken away after the last meal. Then they closed the windows again, and dusted about where it was necessary, leaving the thorough dusting until later in the day.

"We are going to have oranges for a first course at breakfast," said her aunt, coming in with some in her hands, "and we will put them on the table now. See how nice and cold they are because they have been in the refrigerator all night. Some people leave their fruit-dish standing on the [Pg 35]
sideboard all the time, and all the oranges and apples and bananas grow warm and stale, instead of being cold and crisp and refreshing. Put a white centrepiece in the middle of the table, and we will pile these in a flat dish on it instead of using the pot of ferns we sometimes have. It is always nice to have something pretty in the middle of the table."

Margaret was standing before the drawer in the sideboard hesitating whether she should bring a table-cloth or not. Then she saw a large hemstitched square in a corner, and remembered that her mother had said she had just bought some new cloths for breakfast and luncheon, and that made it still harder to decide. What should they have on the breakfast-table? They usually had little squares of linen, one under each plate and larger ones under the platter and tray, but perhaps she was to learn some new way this morning. Her aunt came and looked over her shoulder.

"For breakfast and luncheon we do not use a table-cloth," she said. "Few people do nowadays. [Pg 36]
Some use the doilies we have been using, and others use a small cloth with a fancy border, such as fringe, or a narrow pattern; the dinner-cloth, you know, is large and heavy, not suitable for a simple meal. But now we have some nice small cloths, which are less trouble to put on than the doilies. See, this is a square which lies on the table with a point hanging over each side, leaving the table corners bare. The plates go on it, but still it looks informal and pretty. Here is a pad just the right size to go under it. You must always put a pad or something of the kind under everything you use on the table; under the doilies, you know, we put squares of felt, and under the big dinner-cloth a large piece of double Canton flannel; if we did not, the varnish on the table-top would be spoiled in no time. Now let us get the silver."

There were always six places laid at the table, so Margaret counted out the knives, forks and spoons, and brought them over from the drawer. At each place they put a knife on the right, the [Pg 37]
sharp edge of the blade toward the plate, and outside that a dessert-spoon for cereal and a teaspoon for coffee; on the left was a fork, and then a napkin. At the top of the place, directly in front, they put a tumbler at the right and a small plate for bread and butter at the left, with a little knife, called a spreader, on it. They then got out small fruit-plates, and on each they laid first, a small, clean doily, then a finger-bowl with a little water in it,—not very much, as it was not intended to swim in, the aunt said,—and on the edge of the plate a fruit-knife and an orange spoon. These plates were laid all around the table at the different places. At the top of the table where her father was to sit Margaret put a carving knife and fork, but took them away when she found there would be bacon for breakfast, and it would be passed around with a fork and spoon on the small platter; if there had happened to be beefsteak she would have left them on, as then they would have been needed. [Pg 38]

At the other end of the table, where her mother was to sit, they put a tray covered with a fresh napkin, and arranged on it the sugar-bowl, the cream-pitcher, the tray-bowl, and a small pitcher for hot water. At the right near by, the cups and saucers were arranged, each cup standing in its own saucer, not piled up. As it was cold weather Margaret was told she must bring in hot water and half-fill them just before the meal was ready, so they would be hot and not chill the coffee; her mother would empty the water in the tray-bowl when she was ready to use them. Then they brought out of the china-closet the dishes which were to go into the kitchen to be heated: the dish for cereal, the small, deep plates to use with it, the plates and vegetable dish, and the round platter.

"Never serve a hot cereal in a cold dish, or use cold dishes to put it in on the table," said the aunt. "And never, never ask anybody to eat hot bacon and potatoes, or anything else which has just come from the fire, on a cold plate. It is no trouble to warm everything, and it makes just the [Pg 39]
difference between a good meal and a poor one. A famous man once said that if he could have only one thing for his dinner he would choose a hot plate." Margaret laughed as she began to carry out the dishes.

Her aunt stopped her. "You have a dinner platter," she said, "get the pretty round platter; always use that for luncheon and breakfast, because it looks more informal, and seems more appropriate. And we must stop a minute to put on the salts; we forgot them." They did not have shakers, because Margaret's mother thought small, low, open silver or glass bowls were prettier; these they filled freshly with salt and shook them evenly, and placed them near the centrepiece at the ends of the table. They only put on two because the table was small; sometimes, however, they used four or six, when guests were there.

While the dishes were heating, and Bridget was getting breakfast ready, they filled the glasses [Pg 40]

and put the butter balls on the bread and butter plates; then, Margaret had her lesson in waiting on the table.

"After we sit down," her aunt said, "pass the fruit, going to each person's left, so he can take it with the right hand and hold the dish low down. Then put the dish back in the middle of the table, and leave it there through the meal. If there are flowers or a plant on the table, serve the fruit from the sideboard, and put it back there when you have passed it. If you have berries or melons to serve, those may be ready on the sideboard before breakfast, and a plate with a finger-bowl on it can stand at each place. The berries may be passed, and each person can lift off the finger-bowl and doily at the same time and set it near the plate and serve himself to the berries. Melons are usually set on the table before breakfast on each plate, the finger-bowl standing near by, but if you want to have it more elegantly arranged than this, put the melons on small plates, and after [Pg 41] the finger-bowl is removed, lay this plate down on top of the one standing already on the table. Just now it is considered very nice to nearly always have a plate in front of one. I will tell you more about that when we come to serving dinner.

"You can have the hot plates brought into the room when the cereal comes in with its hot dishes, and you can lift off a fruit-plate, standing on each person's right, and lay down a hot plate with the small cereal dish already on it, and when all are around you can pass the cereal, and then the sugar and cream."

"But," objected Margaret, "I can't carry a tray and take off a plate and put down a plate all at once, because I don't have three hands, only just two!"

"No, of course not," smiled her aunt. "But you don't use a tray in changing plates. You slip off the soiled one with the left hand and lay down the clean one with the right, holding this clean one over the other. It really saves time in the end to manage in this way, as you will see. After the [Pg 42] cereal, if those small plates have been so good-sized as to well cover the hot plates underneath them and so protect them from cream, all you have to do is to take these off, leaving the larger plates, using your tray this time and standing always on the right; put the first dish on the tray and take the next in your hand and carry them to the sideboard and leave them there and then take the next two, and so on; never pile your plates. Then pass the bacon around, going to the left, as with the fruit, and then the potato and muffins. Bring the cups on the tray, as your mother fills them, and set them down carefully at each person's right; do not offer a cup to any one, because coffee is so easily spilled in taking it off and on a tray and handing it about.

"Few people would ever have fruit, cereal, hot things, and then cakes, too; but some day you may have fruit, bacon or meat, and then cakes, so you had better learn how to manage with them. Just have ready small, hot plates, and bring one at a time and exchange it with the meat plate as you [Pg 43] did before; you must put on two forks instead of one at the left of each plate when you lay the table, if you are to have a second hot course.

"You do not take off the crumbs at breakfast because it is such an informal meal, but you must watch and see if any tumbler needs refilling, or if anybody needs a second butter ball, and supply it without being asked. The meat platter, the dish of potatoes, and the muffins or toast should also be offered twice to every one. Your mother, however, will ask if any one wants a second cup of coffee, and then you bring her the cup, and after she has rinsed it out by pouring in hot water from her little pitcher, she will fill it and you can carry it back and set it down again. Now that is all, I think, and you can wash your hands and take off your gingham apron and ask Bridget if you may call down the family; that is, if you may say to your mother, very quietly and politely, 'Breakfast is served!'" Margaret laughed, and smoothed down her nice crisp white apron proudly [Pg 44] as she left the room.

LUNCHEON

Laying the luncheon-table proved to be exactly like laying the breakfast-table, and, as her aunt said, if they were laying a supper-table that would have also been done in the same way; so really all Margaret had to learn was how to lay two tables, one for breakfast, luncheon or supper, and one for dinner.

However, her aunt thought they would use doilies instead of the lunch-cloth for a change, so Margaret would not think her lesson did not amount to much, and she got these out at lunch time and put one down for each person with its square of felt underneath it. In the middle she put a large doily which matched the others, and added one or two smaller ones, one for bread, one for a dish of olives, and so on, arranging them evenly on the table. She put a dish of ferns on for a centrepiece and a tray for tea for her mother at the end. [Pg 45]

"If," said her aunt, "you wish a formal luncheon you lay a pretty plate—a cold one—in front of each place, and exchange this for a hot one when you pass the main dish. But when you are just laying a family table you can put a hot plate down and merely pass the food as usual. You need not put the dishes of food on the table—just bring them from the sideboard. But remember at every meal never to let the food get cold. The vegetables you can keep in covered dishes, of course, but after you have passed everything so you can leave the room, carry the meat out and put it in the oven until you want to pass it a second time.

"If you are to have salad, have this ready on the sideboard before lunch, with its plates, and, if you are to have them, the crackers and cheese also. You can take off the soiled plates after the meat course, and lay down clean ones just as before, standing at each person's right, taking off

the soiled plate with the left hand and laying down the clean one with the right, holding it above the other. Then pass the salad, on the tray to each one's left, and next the salad dressing or crackers or olives, or whatever goes with it. After the salad, crumb the table, both at luncheon and supper, but if you use doilies do not take the regular crumb-knife and tray, but carry a folded napkin in your right hand and gently sweep off the crumbs into the tray; a knife might scratch the table, and would certainly sound disagreeable against the wood. [Pg 46]

"The dessert, which may be fruit, should be ready before the meal on the sideboard, with the plates and finger-bowls. When the last course before it is taken off and the crumbs removed, there are no plates on the table at all; it is the one time when it is cleared. So all you have to do is to lay down the plates and finger-bowls with the fruit-knives and spoons and pass the fruit. If you have cake, or preserves, or dessert of any kind instead of fruit, you do just the same way; lay down the plates and pass the things." [Pg 47]

"But what do I do with the tray and teacups?" Margaret asked.

"Take them off when you do the last plates before the table is crumbed," said her aunt. "Take off the bread and butter plates, too. A good way to do this is to take the large plate on the tray and carry the small one in the hand. Of course the large bread plate is removed, too, and any dish of jelly or olives which is done with. But dishes of salted nuts or candies are left on, to keep the table looking pretty. Now I really think that is all. Do you think you can serve luncheon as well as you did breakfast?"

Margaret said she thought she ought to do twice as well, because it was really the same thing over again.

DINNER

If the lesson on dinner had come first Margaret would have thought it pretty hard, but after the other two she had just had, it seemed easy enough. [Pg 48]

This time she put on the large pad and the long, heavy dinner-cloth; her aunt had to stand at the opposite end of the table and help her with these, and she warned her to always be very careful not to crease the cloth, because a mussed cloth was worse than none at all.

"Be careful always to have table linen spotless," she said. "If anything gets on the cloth at dinner, as soon as the meal is over put a cup under the place and pour a tiny stream of hot water through and then rub the place gently with a clean, dry cloth and smooth it out with your hand; leave the cloth on the table till morning, and usually it will be smooth and dry; if not, take a flat-iron then and quickly and lightly iron the place; then fold the cloth and lay it away. Most people cannot have a new cloth on every night, but no one need ever have on a cloth that is not clean; a good housekeeper never does, so of course you never will." Margaret said she certainly never would. [Pg 49]

"One reason why we use doilies or a lunch-cloth for breakfast and luncheon and supper is because if these get soiled it is easy to wash them out at once; it makes housework simpler in the end to have them instead of using table-cloths three times a day, which are large and very troublesome to wash. People who once learn to use them never go back to the old-fashioned way of doing. Now get a pretty centrepiece and put that on in the middle, and bring the bunch of roses from the parlor; we will have them to-night instead of the fern-dish, because we want an especially nice table for you."

After the flowers were on, the silver was laid, almost as at breakfast. A knife at the right, blade to the plate; a dessert-spoon beyond, for soup; two forks at the left; the bread and butter plate at the top, at the left, and the tumbler also at the top, to the right. If they were having a company dinner, Margaret was told, the bread and butter plate would not be used, for then a dinner roll would be laid in the napkin and no butter served at all. The napkin, as before, went to the left, beyond the forks, and a large, cold plate was laid down between the silver. The salts were freshly filled and put on, and a glass dish for jelly at one end of the table. In front of her father's place they laid a carving cloth, and on it a large knife and fork, putting the tips on a little rest. [Pg 50]

Next they took the soup-plates, the dinner-plates, the large platter and two vegetable dishes out into the kitchen to be made hot; they also carried out the bread-plate, the salad-bowl, and the pudding-dish, as well as the after-dinner coffee-cups and saucers. Then they arranged the plates for salad on the sideboard, and the dessert-plates, putting a dessert-spoon and fork for each person on these. While the dinner was getting ready came the lesson in waiting, as before.

"You see we have laid down cold plates," the aunt said. "Some people lay down hot ones, as we did at luncheon, but the soup is so likely to soil them that it is really hardly safe. Besides, dinner is a more formal meal than the others, so we must be more particular. When Bridget brings in the tureen she will stand it on the sideboard with the hot soup-plates, and you are to dip a spoonful of soup carefully in each plate and carry it on your tray to each person's right and set it down,—do not offer it on the left. When all are served, carry out the tureen. If we had no waitress of course your mother would serve the soup from the table, but this is the way we do when we are nicely waited on. [Pg 51]

"When it is time to carry off the soup-plates, take your tray and go to each person's right and lift the plate, putting the first one on the tray and taking the next in your hand. Put them on the sideboard, and carry them out later, very quietly, but do not stop now. Leave the cold plate on

[Pg 52]

the table still. Then bring in the hot plates and put them in a pile in front of the carver, slipping out his cold plate first. Bring in the vegetables and put them on the sideboard; last of all bring in the meat and set it before the carver; do not leave the room after the meat is on the table, for it will get cold.

"As each plate is filled, take it to the first person served—your mother, if you are a family party, and either your mother or a woman guest first, if you have company; some people always have the mother served first even if guests are present, and others prefer the other way; but always serve the ladies first, whether guests are there or not. Slip out the cold plate and lay down the hot one at the right, as you have before, and put the cold plates neatly in a pile on the sideboard. Pass the vegetables next, offering them at the left, and then the bread in the same way. While this course is eaten, carry out the soup-plates, if they are still on the sideboard, and fill the glasses.

"When all have finished take off the roast first and carry it out; then take off the soiled plates and [Pg 53]
lay down the salad-plates at the right, as you have done each time, and pass the salad to the left. Take off these when they are used, with the bread and butter plates, bread and jelly, and crumb the table, using the knife and tray. Then lay down before each one a dessert-plate with either a fork or a dessert-spoon on it, or both, if the dish to come needs them; nowadays this is done even where the dessert is served at one end of the table. If you can, pass the pudding, or whatever the sweet is, so that each one can serve himself, offering it at the left, of course. If it is very soft, or is something difficult for one to manage in this way, then have the dish put at one end of the table before your mother. She will put a portion on the plate before her, removing the spoon as she does so and laying it at one side, and you can set the plate down before the one you serve first, exchanging the two plates; this person will also remove his spoon and lay it down as the plate is slipped away. Stand on the right to do this; then take the second plate for your mother to fill, and [Pg 54]
so on.

"It is a good plan to have one extra plate ready, and when you take the first plate lay this down before your mother, and when you come back with the second one this will be filled waiting, and you can exchange the two, and so save time. There will be one over at the end, of course, and this you can lay on the sideboard.

"When you have company, the coffee is served in the drawing-room, and you must bring it in on a tray. But when you are alone, and wish to have it on the table, take off the pudding-dish, when all have finished, and then all the plates, and bring in the coffee-cups filled on the tray, and set one down before each, from his right. If you use finger-bowls after dinner, lay these down, too, a little above each place.

"This is a long lesson, and a difficult one for a little girl, and you must not be discouraged if it [Pg 55]
takes you quite a while to learn it well. Keep on trying, and soon you will be a perfect waitress. Just remember these things, anyway, and everybody will forgive you if you forget some others:

"Be sure your hands are clean, your hair very tidy, and your apron white and starched. Wear silent shoes, and do not clatter the dishes; do not speak to any one, unless you do not understand what to do next, then quietly whisper to your mother. Do not offer anybody a cup of tea or coffee, or a plate of soup, or even a plate with food on it; set these all down at the right. Offer platters, vegetable dishes, bread, and such things always at the left. Change all plates at the right. While a course is being eaten, softly carry out any soiled dishes from the sideboard and fill the glasses. Watch to see what is needed, and offer it. Do not offer any one what is already on his plate; that is, if you are passing a dish all around and see that he has some of it left, skip him and go on to the next. Now I hear Bridget coming in with the soup-tureen; run and put on your very best apron [Pg 56]
and announce dinner as though you were the finest waitress in the land!" [Pg 57]

CHAPTER IV

WASHING DISHES

It was Margaret's grandmother who gave her the lesson on dish-washing. She said it was the part of housekeeping she really liked the best of all and did most easily, so everybody said, "Oh, well, if you really *like* it, perhaps you had better be the one to show Margaret how to do it properly!" and then they all laughed.

The gingham apron with sleeves was the one Margaret put on after breakfast. It buttoned around her wrists snugly, but on unfastening the buttons the sleeves could be rolled up and pinned out of the way, so they would keep clean. After she was ready the grandmother showed her how to stand all the dining-room chairs back against the wall and take up the crumbs under the table, [Pg 58]
pushing this to one side and then the other, so that the rug would really be clean when they were done.

"Now," she said, "run into the kitchen and see that the table there is quite empty, so there will be plenty of room for the dishes we are going to bring out; bring back with you the large tray, and get out the scraping-knife."

Margaret found that Bridget had left some pans and dishes on the table after she had cooked the

breakfast, and these she piled neatly at one end, out of the way. The scraping-knife was a long one with a thin blade which bent easily; a palette knife, such as artists use in cleaning their paints up, her grandmother explained.

"It seems funny to use an artist's knife to scrape dishes with," said Margaret, when she came back. "I should think we would just scrape the plates with the silver knives on them. That's the way Bridget does."

"But it is bad for the knives," her grandmother said. "Besides, a stiff knife cannot get the grease [Pg 59] off, and this thin one can. You will see presently how beautifully it works. Now we must carry out the food."

The dishes of meat, potatoes, bread, and other things were taken to the kitchen table and emptied; the bread was put back into its box; the bits of meat and vegetable were put on small dishes and put in the refrigerator; the butter on the small plates was scraped together into a little bowl and set aside to cook with. Then they were ready to get the dishes together on the dining-room table. They carefully emptied the tumblers and coffee-cups into the tray-bowl, so they would not be spilled in carrying them out. They piled the silver carefully on a dish, and carried out the plates and other things on the table. When it was quite cleared, Margaret took up the crumbs and laid the cloth and pad in the sideboard drawer. A centrepiece was put on the bare table with the fern-dish on it, and the two armchairs were pushed back in their places, one at each end. "There," said the grandmother, "when you have dusted the room will be right to leave [Pg 60] until luncheon. Once or twice a week, of course, it has to be thoroughly swept and put to rights, but this is the way we do every day."

In the kitchen they scraped the plates very carefully, putting all the scraps into a bowl to empty into the garbage pail. They piled them nicely, putting all the same kind of plates into one pile, not mixing two sizes or sorts. The cups were put together, and the saucers piled also. The tray was set ready on one end of the table, and Margaret got out her new, clean dish-towels, soft ones for glass and silver, and firmer ones for the rest of the things. Then she put out the two dish-pans, and turned on the water. It ran very hot from the first, so it was all right, but Margaret was told she must always try it before she sat down to a meal, and if it was only warm she must put on a kettleful to heat, so it would be ready when needed, because it was impossible to wash dishes [Pg 61] well in any sort of water but the very hottest.

They only filled one dish-pan to begin with, and after it was half-full Margaret put in the soap-shaker and stirred it around till the water was foamy. She hung it up again, and began to put in the tumblers.

"You must be careful that those are not icy," her grandmother cautioned. "Even after they have been emptied they must stand till they are fairly warm, or they will crack as soon as they touch the hot water. But you must be most careful of all about cut glass; that really needs a special lesson. If you have a piece there, set it to one side, and when the rest of the glass is done and the silver, we will take that." There was a fruit-dish which had been used for breakfast, so it was put on a corner of the table where it could not be knocked off, to wait its turn.

The tumblers and finger-bowls were put into the hot soapy water at once and turned about in it till they were clean. Then they were wiped while they were still a little soapy, without rinsing [Pg 62] them, because in that way they were polished like diamonds. After they were lifted out and put on the tray the silver went into the pan and was well scrubbed with the mop, and then rinsed with very hot water, which proved to be too much for Margaret's hands; when she tried to lift out the forks and spoons she could hardly touch them.

"Ouch!" she exclaimed. "It burns me. I must put in some cold water."

"No, indeed!" said her grandmother, "that would spoil everything. Just slip a large spoon under all the silver, and lift it out at once. There is a saying that no water is hot enough to wash silver in unless it is too hot to put your hands in. Just see how fast the heat in it dries it as it lies on the tray! And see how it polishes, too, as I wipe it! If it were cold it might be greasy, and certainly it would not look half as well when it was done. Now before we take the china I will tell you about washing cut glass. You can put some fresh water in the dish-pan, but make it only as warm as [Pg 63] your hand."

While she was getting it ready the grandmother got a soft brush and a cake of nice white soap, and, after trying the water to see that it was not too warm or too cold, she mixed the soap in thoroughly. The beautiful glass bowl was lifted carefully into the pan and scrubbed with the little brush till every crack was cleaned and it was brilliant with the suds. Margaret was not allowed to lift it out on the tray for fear she should let it slip, but she watched how her grandmother handled it.

"If I had done as some careless maids do," her grandmother began, as she wiped, "I might have put this bowl right into the very hot water the tumblers can bear, and cracked it at once. Cut glass cannot bear either hot or cold water. I once had a beautiful bowl broken in two because it was held directly under the faucet in the sink while the hot water ran into it, and another dish was broken by having a piece of ice put in it on the table. Iced lemonade often breaks lovely and [Pg 64] costly pitchers. You must always wash each piece by itself in lukewarm water, and never put it in the pan with other things. Make a suds with good white soap, scrub the cracks well with a soft brush which will not scratch, and wipe dry without rinsing, and you will have beautiful, brilliant glass, and your care will make it last a lifetime. I will set this away in the dining-room while you

draw some hotter water with soap in it for the china. Put in the cleanest things first, and only a few at a time, so they will not be chipped."

"Why do I take the cleanest china first?" Margaret inquired, as she put in the fruit-plates. "Why don't I take them as they happen to come on the table!"

"Some plates are greasy and some are not, and the greasy ones would spoil your dish-water," her grandmother explained. "Now rinse those, and while I wipe them, wash the rest and then change your water." [Pg 65]

When Margaret lifted out the plates, she turned them up edgewise and let the water run back into the rinsing-pan, so that they were already half-dry when she laid them on the tray. But her grandmother got a fresh towel for them, because the first one had become damp, and the dishes would not dry easily with it.

Margaret decided that the easiest way to empty the dish-pan before putting in more hot water would be to tip it up, so she took it by the handles and turned the water directly into the sink. Her grandmother stopped her.

"Use the sink-basket," she said. "See, the wire one in the corner. Pour the water through that, and then if any bits of food are in it they will stop there and not get into the drain; it's a great convenience, and one we never had when I was a little girl. So with the dish-mop; that goes into hot water where the hands do not like to go, and into cups and dishes where it would be much more trouble to take a cloth, as we used to do. Nowadays we do not use dish-cloths very often, [Pg 66] because doctors tell us that they are not as cleanly as they might be, and may bring us typhoid fever and other things. A mop can be scalded in very hot water after it has been well washed in soap suds, and then shaken out perfectly clean to dry quickly, so that it is better to use. On the iron and tin things we use a wire dish-washer, which is also very clean, indeed, and these make us feel safe."

When the glass, silver, and china was done, Margaret took them on her tray and carried them into the dining-room and put them all away. When she came back, she looked at the pile of pots and pans on the table, and groaned. "Now," she said, "comes the worst of all!"

"These are no trouble," laughed her grandmother, "though there are a great many more of them than there ought to be. If Bridget only washed, wiped, and put away every dish as soon as she had finished using it, there might not be one to wash now. As it is, scald out the dish-mop, and [Pg 67] put it away, and get the wire dish-washer, and a little household ammonia and sapolio, and some more very hot water in the dish-pan, and we will do these in a minute."

Then she showed Margaret how to wash out her rinsing-pan well, and wipe it dry before hanging it on its nail. The other pan was half-filled with very hot water, and a teaspoonful of ammonia put in. "The cleanest dishes first," Margaret was told, so in went the baking-tins, after they were well scraped, and the wire-washer soon scrubbed them clean, and grandmother dried them with a strong towel, and put them on a corner of the stove for a moment to get rid of any dampness before they were put away. The scorched marks on the white enamelled saucepans had to be rubbed well with sapolio, and a nice dish-cloth was found hanging up over the sink for the purpose. The coffee-pot had a special bath all alone, and was scrubbed out carefully inside as well as out, and every single ground was picked out of the spout and corners, and it was wiped [Pg 68] and dried very carefully, because otherwise it would never make good coffee.

The frying-pan had to have a little ammonia to cut the grease, and as the outside seemed to be rough, as though it needed attention, too, this was well scrubbed with the wire washer till it was just as nice as the inside. After it was wiped, it, too, was dried off on the stove, lest any dampness might rust it.

This finished the dishes, and Margaret washed out the dish-pan and scalded it, and then wiped and hung it up, as she had the rinsing-pan. The sink was swept up with a little wire broom, and the bits gathered on a small iron shovel. These they put first into the wire sink-basket, and then turned out into the bowl of garbage; they scalded the shovel and broom, and the basket—turned upside down in the sink—till they were all clean. A bit of washing-soda was laid over the drain-pipe, and a quantity of very hot water was poured into the sink to flush it. The soda melted away, [Pg 69] and as it went down the pipe it took all the grease with it which the water had left on the sides and in the corners of the pipe.

A special cloth was always kept hanging up over the sink for the tables. This Margaret wrung out, and used in wiping off all the dish-water which lay there; she also wiped up the wood of the sink. Then the kitchen broom was brought out and the floor nicely swept, especially under the tables and in the corners. The damp dish-towels were scalded and hung out in the sunshine; the chairs were set straight, the window-sills wiped off and some flat-irons put away which had been left on the stove.

"There," said the grandmother, as they stood looking at the tidy kitchen, "that's all there is to do, and I call it pleasant work. I like to make things clean and sweet, and I never could see why so many women hate to wash dishes."

"Why, grandmother," said Margaret, "I think it's just fun!" [Pg 70]

CHAPTER V

THE CARE OF THE BEDROOMS

When it was the turn of the Pretty Aunt to give her lesson in housekeeping, she said she should begin at daybreak, so Margaret was not surprised to hear her knock at the door early in the morning, almost before she was dressed.

She helped the little girl take the clothes off the bed, one at a time, and put them on two chairs near the windows, being careful not to let the blankets get on the floor. She beat the pillows well, and turned the mattress up over the foot of the bed so the air could get underneath it. The white spread she kept by itself, and had Margaret help fold it up in its creases. "Nothing wrinkles more easily," she told Margaret, "and a wrinkled spread spoils the look of neatness a bed ought to have [Pg 71] when it is made. If you have a heavy Marseilles spread, do not sleep under it; fold it at night and put it away, and use only the blankets, because it is not good for any one to sleep under such a weight. Now hang up your night-dress, and put away your slippers and bath-wrapper. I am delighted to see that you have no dress or petticoats lying around this morning from last night. Too many girls do not hang them up at once when they take them off, but leave them over a chair, and put them away in the morning, perhaps creased with lying. It is much better to put them away as you take them off. Open your windows, next, top and bottom, and set the closet door open, too, and then we will go to breakfast."

"Why do I open the closet door?" asked Margaret, laughing at the idea.

"Because your closet needs airing just as much as your room does; more, indeed, because its door has been shut all night, while the fresh air has been blowing into the room through the open [Pg 72] windows. If you did not air it every day, it would soon have a close, shut-up odor, and perhaps your dresses would have it, too, which would certainly not be nice at all. It has to have fresh air to keep it sweet. Now we will shut the door of your room as we go, for the cold wind would chill the halls, and besides, the sight of a disordered bedroom is not attractive."

After breakfast Margaret went up-stairs and shut the windows of her room, and a little later, when it was warm, she and her aunt put on fresh white aprons and went in and began to put it to rights.

One stood on each side of the bed and turned the mattress from head to foot; the next day, Margaret was told, it must be turned from side to side as well as over, to keep it always in good shape. If this was not done constantly there would soon be a hollow place in the middle, which would never come out, and the mattress would be spoiled. They laid over it the nice white pad which kept it looking always new and clean, and then the lower sheet, the wide hem at the top [Pg 73] and the narrow one at the bottom, the seams toward the mattress, and tucked it smoothly in at the sides.

"Some people are careless about these little things," said the aunt as they worked. "They think it does not matter if there is a hollow in the mattress, or whether they have a cover for it or not. They mix the top and bottom sheets, and never know which is which; but you are going to do things the right way, which is always the easiest in the end."

They laid the upper sheet on with the wide hem at the top, as before, but with the seam up instead of down. Margaret wondered at this, but was told that this way made the two smooth sides of the sheets come next to the one who slept between them, and at the same time made the upper sheet turn over at the top with the seam underneath.

When the blankets went on, the Pretty Aunt said she was thankful to notice that Margaret's [Pg 74] mother always cut hers in two.

"What for?" asked the little girl.

"Well," was the reply, "double blankets are difficult to handle. They are really one long blanket folded together, and one-half sometimes slips and gets wrinkled, and is hard to get into place. Then, half-blankets are more easily aired than whole ones, and more easily washed, also. And if one is too warm in the night, and wishes to throw off half of the clothes, it can be done without pulling the bed to pieces. It is simple enough to cut a pair in two and bind the edges with ribbon so the colors will match, and it well pays for the small trouble."

"I sometimes wish I had a nice, fat comfortable instead of two blankets," said Margaret. "I know a girl who has such a hot one, all made of cotton and cheesecloth."

"They are not nearly as healthful as blankets, my dear, nor so easily kept clean. People who own them would hate to have to tell how seldom they are washed, because they are so heavy to [Pg 75] handle that it is put off month after month, and season after season. A pretty little silkolene coverlet to lay on the foot of the bed, such as you have, or a small eiderdown puff, is very nice, but blankets are the things to sleep under. Now let us put the white spread on."

"But, auntie," objected Margaret, "you haven't tucked anything in! Just see, not the sides nor the bottom! I don't like to have my feet out all night; I like to be tucked in all nice and warm. Shan't we tuck in everything as we go along? That's the way Bridget does when she makes my bed."

Her aunt laughed. "Just wait!" she said. Then she put on the white spread, and smoothed it nicely

all over, and told Margaret to stand opposite to her at the side of the bed near the foot, and do as she did.

First she turned the spread back, just as though it was at the top instead of the bottom; then she [Pg 76]
turned back one blanket; then the other; then the upper sheet, and next the lower one, leaving the mattress and pad showing. They raised the mattress, and putting their hands under all the folded back clothes at once, they put them under the end of it smoothly, pushing them well back; then they tucked in the sides. "There," said the aunt, nodding her pretty head at her little niece, "I'd like to see you pull those clothes out at night, as you do when Bridget makes your bed! If you tuck things in one by one sometimes they will come out, but if you tuck them in as we have done they are sure to stay. Now for the top."

She turned over the spread, blankets, and sheet, and laid them flat on the spread, and then turned them under themselves, making a smooth, rather narrow fold, close up to the place the pillows were going to stand.

"If the sheet was mussed I would not do this," she explained. "Then I would just lay all the clothes
back under the pillows; but when the sheet is fresh it looks nice this way. Beat up the pillows, [Pg 77]
smooth them out, and stand them up evenly. Remember, if you have a white spread with a fringe on it and a muslin valance around the bed, the spread is not tucked in at all, but after the bed is finished and tucked in all around, it is laid on and left hanging over sides and foot.

"If, instead of a spread, you have a figured cover, or one made of lace or muslin, you do not use any spread, but put that on over the blankets during the day and take it off at night. A roll covered with the same stuff is used with such a bed cover, and at night this, too, is put away and the pillows brought out from the cupboard and put on when the bed is opened. The bed in the guest-room is like that; you know it has a pretty cover and a roll. But whatever you have, it is always nice to have the bed opened for one at night, the clothes folded smoothly back, the spread laid away and the pillows put down flat, so all one has to do is to slip in." [Pg 78]

"I know," Margaret replied. "It makes you feel sleepy to see a bed like that."

"Now let us take the wash-stand," her aunt went on, after she had passed her hands all over the bed as though she were ironing it, leaving it as smooth as a nice white table. "Get the cloths from the bathroom, a clean white one, you know, and a clean colored one; and the soap."

She showed Margaret how to wash everything out neatly, beginning with the tooth-brush mug and soap-dish, and she was told to look carefully and see if they were both clean in the bottom, "because probably they are not," she said. The wash-bowl was washed with soap, especially where there was a greasy streak around it, and the pitcher was filled, and wiped where the water dripped down the front. The dark cloth was used on the rest of the china; it was better to have two cloths of different colors, her aunt explained, to avoid mixing them. [Pg 79]

After the stand was finished, and the top wiped off with the white cloth, the cloths were both washed out in the bathroom and put away, with the soap. The towels were folded in the creases they had been ironed in, and pulled into shape and rehung; the wash-cloth was wrung dry and shaken out before it was hung up on the rack. The cake of soap had been washed off in the bowl when that was washed, and it was now put back in the clean dish. "Whatever you forget, Margaret, never forget to wash off the soap!" her aunt warned her.

There seemed a good deal to do to make the room nice even after the bed and wash-stand were done, for the closet was opened and everything taken out and put on chairs around the room, and then put back. The dresses had to be hung up by the loops on the skirt, and the waists which matched hung each on the same hook with its own skirt by the loops at the sleeves. The
petticoats had to go by themselves in a separate part of the closet, and the shoes were all put in [Pg 80]
pairs in the bag on the door, instead of being left on the floor in piles. Margaret did not like to do these things, but she had to admit that she could dress faster in the morning when she knew just where everything was, and when she could find mates to her shoes in just half a second, instead of having to take a minute or more to hunt them in the corners of the closet on the floor.

Arranging the bureau was still worse than making the closet tidy. All the drawers were emptied out, and everything sorted in heaps and put away. Some pretty boxes without covers were brought from her aunt's bureau and put in Margaret's upper drawer, one for gloves, one for handkerchiefs, one for ribbons, so that everything should be where it belonged, yet as soon as the drawer was opened one could see where everything was. Underclothes were made into neat piles, and arranged in the drawers below, one sort of thing in one pile and another in another,
and the stockings laid in a nice row, mates together, folded and tucked in, ready to go on. [Pg 81]

The top of the bureau had many pretty silver ornaments, but they were dull and shabby, and Margaret had to get the silver polish and a bit of chamois and make them shine before they could go on the fresh bureau-cover the aunt put on, and she was given a bit of velvety stuff to tuck in a corner of a drawer, ready to use every day or two, so they would not grow dull again.

When all else was done they brushed up the floor, dusted everything thoroughly, straightened the pictures on the wall and the window-shades, and set the chairs where they would look best. Then Margaret sat down to rest, and her aunt finished the lesson in this way:

"A lady," she began, "no matter whether she is grown up or not, always keeps her bedroom in beautiful order, fresh and dainty, especially the places which do not show, like bureau drawers!

Her closet has plenty of hooks, and her gowns are kept together, each on one. Her hats are in their boxes on the shelves, her shoes in their bag. Her bureau is orderly, the silver clean and shining. Her hair-brush is washed at least once a week, to keep it white and fresh, and the comb is never allowed to have bits of hair in it, but is as clean as the brush. Her wash-stand is always perfectly clean and tidy, and nothing is ever left about in the room. Most important of all, the air of her room is always fresh and sweet, because the window is left open at night and often opened during the day for a time. Now this has been a good long lesson to-day—it's almost noon; but if you have learned it, you have not wasted a minute of even this nice bright Saturday. There's a prize offered by this teacher for perfect lessons. Keep your room in order for a month, and see what you'll find on your bureau then!" [Pg 82]

"Oh, what?" cried Margaret, running after her Pretty Aunt as she went out into the hall. [Pg 83]

"Wait and see!" was all she would say, but Margaret decided to keep the room beautifully tidy for the prize, just the same. [Pg 84]

CHAPTER VI

SWEEPING AND DUSTING

Margaret could hardly wait for the time for her sweeping lesson, because she wanted so much to wear her sweeping-cap. When she heard her mother say one Saturday morning that the lesson that day would be on the care of the parlors and hall, she asked to be excused from the breakfast-table, and ran up and put on her long-sleeved apron and the pretty little cap with the red bow in front, and came down proud and smiling.

The halls and stairs were of hardwood, so Margaret selected from the broom-closet the long-handled floor-brush, the large dust-pan and the small one, a flat wicker beater for the rugs, the bottle of floor oil, and the flannel cloth which was with it, a certain small dish kept especially for the oil, and some of her new dust-cloths. She tried to remember all the things her mother had told her to get, but, after all, she forgot the broom, and had to go back twice for it, the second time because she brought the wrong one. The very best broom, used only on the freshest carpets, had a red tape tied around the handle, so it would not get mixed with the one used in the dining-room, or the rest of the house. [Pg 85]

Bridget helped carry out the rugs and put them over the clothes-line, and Margaret gently struck them with the wicker beater till all the dust was out. She knew she would injure them if she pounded as hard as she wanted to, so she was very careful to hit them softly, but to do it so often that they were clean when she was done. She laid them on the back porch, and brushed them with the whisk-broom afterward until they were like new; then they were folded and left in a corner of the dining-room, ready to go down when the halls were done. [Pg 86]

Her mother told her to go to the very top of the house and shut the doors of the rooms all the way down that no dust could get in. Then they moved the table and chair and umbrella jar out of the hall, and carried the coats and hats to the closet, and shut them up. The upper hall was very dark with all the doors closed which usually lighted it, so the gas was lit, that the corners might be easily seen. Beginning at the top of the house Margaret swept down the halls and stairs all the way, using her long-handled brush and taking a little whisk-broom, which was also soft for the corners and the stairs, putting the dust into the pan as she went along, especially on the stairs.

Her mother wanted her to let Bridget wipe off the wood with oil, but Margaret begged to be allowed to do at least one floor and the lower stairs, so she would know just how to do it in her very own house, when she had one! She put on a large, strong pair of gloves, put a little oil in the dish from the bottle, dipped in her flannel cloth, and was going to begin when her mother stopped her. "Wring out the cloth," she said; "you are not going to wash the floor, only to wipe it." Then she went away until this part of the work was done, so she might not step on the wood while it was wet, and perhaps spoil the whole floor. [Pg 87]

The work was not very pleasant, perhaps, and the oil did not smell very nice, but it was interesting to do something new, and Margaret did not mind it at all. She wiped up one floor and one flight of stairs, and then wiped also the baseboard around the floor and the balustrades of the stairs, and when she was done it all looked so fresh and nice she wished she had done all the halls. However, she put away the oil and cloth and floor-brush, and, setting the front door open to let the air come in and dry the wood and carry away the odor of the oil, she dusted the rest of the halls with her ordinary dust-cloth, wiping the tops of the pictures well, and the hall table and chair, which Bridget helped her put back. They brought in the step-ladder, too, so that Margaret could get to the chandelier and the top of the doors, and wipe these off thoroughly. [Pg 88]

The vestibule had been swept and dusted early in the morning, and there was nothing to do outside, but the glass in the front door looked dingy, and Margaret wiped it off with a clean, damp cloth and polished it with the chamois duster and shook out the lace which hung over it, and dusted the edges of the glass and the wood of the door. Then she ran and got the rugs and spread them down, and called her mother to come and see how beautiful the halls looked.

"Beautiful! I should think so, indeed!" her mother exclaimed. "I could not have done the work

better myself. What made you think of the glass in the door? I forgot to tell you about that."

"Oh," said Margaret, "I pretended I was a new maid, and that you were showing me all about the work, and first I said to myself, 'Next, Mary Jane, the front door,' and then I was Mary Jane, and did the front door, you see!" [Pg 89]

Her mother smiled. "Well, certainly, Mary Jane does her work thoroughly," she said. "I am sure I shall keep her. Now if you are not tired we will do the parlors."

These two rooms took all the rest of the Saturday morning lesson. The window-curtains and portières were pinned up and put into bags, long, loose ones, which kept them off the floor and out of the dust, but did not muss them. They dusted the piano and large sofa and covered them with strong sheets. They wiped off the book-shelves, and tucked newspapers in and out until all the books were entirely covered and protected. They brushed off the cushions of the chairs with a whisk-broom as they had the sofa, and wiped their woodwork, and then carried them into the dining-room; the sofa-pillows were shaken and beaten and put there also. All the ornaments on the tables and mantels, and the lamps, were wiped and put on the dining-room table. [Pg 90]

When the rooms were as empty as possible they shut the doors and sprinkled bran on the carpets just as though they were sewing garden seeds, which Margaret thought was great fun.

"Some people use tea-leaves on their carpets," her mother explained, "and as they are damp they do take up the dust nicely; but they will stain delicate colors so, I think it is safer to use bran, which also takes up dust but never hurts any carpet. Now I will show you how to sweep."

Beginning at one side of the room near the wall, she made long, even strokes with the broom, not bearing on too hard, and sweeping toward the centre all the time. "Don't give little jerky dabs at the carpet," she cautioned, "for that is bad for it, and don't sweep from one side to the other, but always toward the middle. But we forgot to open the window."

Margaret pushed up the one nearest to her and instantly in rushed the wind, scattering bran and dust all over the floor. Her mother hurried to shut it. "You must find out from which way the wind comes before you open the window," she said. "That one did more harm than good. Try the other one." [Pg 91]

When this was open they could not feel any breeze at all, and it seemed as though it was not worth opening, but the mother said it was exactly right, for it made a draught, and carried all the dust gently outdoors.

After a time Margaret took the broom and finished the floor, and when the dust lay in a little pile in the middle, her mother held the pan for her and she swept it all up, except a little which refused to come on; this they brushed up with the whisk-broom; they also brushed out all the corners of the room with the whisk and pan, because the broom was so large that it would not go in easily, and a little bit of dust had been left in each one. The carpets looked nice and fresh when they had finished.

"Once in awhile," the mother said, "it is a good plan to have Bridget wipe off the carpets quickly with warm water in which a little ammonia has been put. She squeezes out a cloth almost dry and works quickly, not to wet the carpet too much, and the ammonia brings out the colors and makes the whole look like new. Some housekeepers like to put a couple of tablespoonfuls of turpentine in the water instead of the ammonia, and this is just as good for the carpet, and if there is any fear of moths being in it, it is even better. Every two or three months a carpet ought to be wiped off in one way or the other to keep it nice. Now while we wait for the dust to settle we will make the marble mantel clean. You can get a basin of water, the sapolio, a flannel cloth, and a white cotton one." [Pg 92]

They wet the cake of soap a little and rubbed the flannel on it and scrubbed the mantel thoroughly, and then the hearth, rinsing them off and wiping them dry afterward. They also wiped off the fireplace, using a dry cloth here, too, for fear of rust, and then took a damp one to wipe off the baseboard. If there had been a wood floor, that would have had to be treated just as the halls had been—brushed up with the soft brush, and wiped off with floor oil. And, her mother explained, if the halls had been carpeted Margaret would have had to sweep them with the broom and use the whisk in the corners and on all the stairs, one at a time, carefully. [Pg 93]

By this time there seemed to be no dust left in the air, so they wiped the pictures off with a clean duster, especially on the top where Bridget's duster sometimes failed to go. The sheets were taken off the sofa and piano next, and they were lightly dusted again, "just to make sure," Margaret said.

The piano keys proved to be very sticky, and in some spots there were dark marks, as though a little girl had practised with unwashed fingers,—though, of course, no little girl would really do such a thing, the mother said. So Margaret got a little bottle of alcohol and a flannel cloth and sponged off each key. If she had used water on the ivory it would have made it yellow, but the alcohol did not injure it at all. [Pg 94]

The chairs were brought in after this, and the other things they had carried out, and all arranged again. Some of the bric-à-brac was not clean in spite of its dusting, and this had to be carefully washed in warm water and wiped dry before it was put in place. "Anything but soiled ornaments," her mother told the little girl. The curtains and portières were taken out of their bags and smoothed, and the bags and sheets folded and put away till the next sweeping day. The parlors

looked beautifully fresh and orderly, but something seemed missing. "Why, the palm!" Margaret said at length. "Bridget took it out this morning for its bath and did not bring it back."

They found there had been no time for the bath yet, so Margaret and her mother said they would attend to it. They wet the earth well, and while the water drained off into a large pan they [Pg 95] washed the leaves, using a soft cloth dipped in a basin which held a cup of water and a cup of milk.

"I did not know plants liked milk," said Margaret, as she helped sponge the large leaves all over, the back as well as the front sides.

"Palms love it," her mother replied, "and it pays to use it on them, for it keeps them green and glossy; you will see how pretty this looks when we have finished it."

Sure enough, when they were done the palm looked as though the leaves had just opened, and they agreed that it should have a drink of milk and water every week. Then they put it back in its pot in the window of the parlor, and the room was all done.

The last thing of all was the lesson the mother repeated for Margaret to remember for all kinds of sweeping and dusting. It was like this:

"First get rid of all the ornaments and furniture in a room; in a bedroom you can put the things from the bureau and mantel on the bed, provided you dust them all well first. The chairs can go [Pg 96] into the hall, and over the bureau, table, sofa, and bed, you must put sheets and towels, or even newspapers; never sweep till everything is well covered, or you will have to do double work when you come to dust. Pin up the curtains, and put bran on the carpet, and get somebody to help you push the heavy furniture about so you can sweep under it; there are some people who do not move these things for months, because it is too much trouble, but nice housekeepers always move them every single time they sweep. Use the whisk-broom in all the corners; wipe off the baseboards; dust the pictures thoroughly, and shake out the curtains, and when the room is rearranged, dust all the little things and your rooms will always look as though they had been housecleaned."

"My windows really and truly need washing," said Margaret. "When I sweep my room next week I shall wash them all myself." [Pg 97]

"Then you had better learn how now," her mother said. "That will be a good ending for the lesson. To wash windows you need a basin of warm water, a little ammonia, and two clean cloths. Wring out your first cloth in the ammonia-water until it is nearly dry, and rub the glass over and over from one side to the other, and around and around. Wipe dry each pane as you finish it, so it will not be streaked, and when all are done, polish them off with a handful of tissue-paper or a chamois. When you wash plate glass, such as we have in the parlors, do not use ammonia, but instead put a few drops of blueing in the water, and when they are wiped dry go over the glass again with a cloth wrung out in alcohol. Do mirrors in this way if they are very dim; if they are new but dusty, do not use any water, only the alcohol, and polish them with the chamois. Would you like to try one window or one mirror still, this morning?"

Margaret said she thought she would rather wait a week, and as it proved to be luncheon time [Pg 98] she hurried to put all the things away which they had been using, and get herself ready. [Pg 99]

CHAPTER VII

THE BATHROOM; BRASSES, GRATES, OILCLOTHS, AND VESTIBULE

When the Saturday morning came on which Margaret was to learn how to take care of the bathroom, and clean grates, and do other such things, she groaned out loud. So far her lessons had been delightful, but this one sounded as though it would be work instead of fun. However, she put on her long-sleeved apron and out of the little bathroom cupboard she took the flannel cloth, the cotton cloth, the sapolio, the metal polish, a queer little brush of twigs with a long handle and a bottle of disinfectant, all of which stood ready there in a neat row. Then her Other Aunt came into the room, with a big apron on just like Margaret's, and began: [Pg 100]

"The bathtub, luckily for us," she said, "is of white enamel, so it is easy to keep clean. But see, all around it there is a streak where the top of the water came after somebody's bath this morning. Now, of course, every single person who uses a bathtub ought to wipe it out afterward; but men don't take the trouble, and women sometimes forget; little girls never do, of course! So the tub has to be washed and wiped out every morning."

"Every single morning?" Margaret asked, grumblingly. "It seems as if that would be too often; it must wear the nice enamel off to wash it so much."

"Not at all," said her aunt; "it is good for it! Get the nice white cloth and a cake of soap,—not the sapolio, because that would scratch it,—and roll up your sleeves. Kneel down by the tub, put in the stopper, and draw a little warm water; wring out your cloth in it, rub it well on the soap, and scrub off the greasy mark first, and afterward wash the tub all over; rinse out your cloth, let out the water, and wash the tub again and wipe it dry. Sometimes, perhaps twice a week, put a little [Pg 101]

ammonia in the first water so that the tub will have an extra cleaning. If ever you have a really dirty tub to scrub, take gasoline on a flannel cloth and wash with that, and it will be like new; but tubs which are washed out every day never need gasoline.

"If you have a tub lined with zinc remember that needs even more care than a white one, if it is to be kept shining bright. You can scrub it out with gasoline if it seems greasy, then with vinegar, if it is dark, then with metal polish, and so on; zinc tubs are really difficult to care for. A better way is to paint it all over with two coats of white paint and when it is dry enamel it. It costs only a dollar to do it, and it does save so much work; besides, a white tub always looks best of all. Now we will do the wash-stand."

They took off the soap-dish and tooth-brush mug and bottles of tooth powder, because, as the aunt explained, one must always wipe under things, not around them. The marble slab and bowl [Pg 102] were scrubbed and dried, and the mugs and soap-dish washed, wiped, and replaced. After this they cleaned the closet by pulling the handle and letting the water run while they put in the long-handled brush of twigs and brushed out every inch of china, even down into the pipe as far as possible. Margaret was told that when she used ammonia in the tub she must put some in the closet, too, and once or twice a week a little disinfectant must be poured down to keep the pipe perfectly clean. The woodwork was wiped off with a cloth kept for that purpose, and then they turned to the polishing of the faucets and pipes.

This was hard, but as Margaret and her aunt both worked it made it easier. They put some polishing paste on a flannel and rubbed and rubbed till they could see the metal shining through the paste; then they wiped it off with a dry cloth. "If this was all rubbed a little every single day," [Pg 103] said the aunt, "it would never be such hard work. I should say that this nickel had been just a little bit neglected lately, but see how bright we have made it! Now for the oilcloth on the floor."

They set the hamper and a chair out into the hall, and Margaret went to the kitchen for a basin of milk with a little warm water in it. Out of the cupboard she brought the Japanese seat she had learned she must always use when she got down on the floor, partly to save her dress, and partly because there was a painful disease called sometimes "housemaid's knee," which one could get by kneeling and working on a hard floor with nothing underneath one. When she was all ready her aunt wrung out the cloth for her in the milk, and told her to begin at one edge and work straight across the floor, wiping every part well, but especially under the tub and wash-stand, because those were likely to need it most. "The milk will freshen the oilcloth and make it shine," she said. "Always try and have some when you wipe up an oilcloth, for water alone is not good for [Pg 104] it."

When the floor was dry they set in the hamper again, folded the towels neatly, and hung them straight on the rack, and dusted around the window and the wood around the sides of the room. "We are done here," the aunt said, as they put away all the things they had been using, "but the lesson isn't over yet, for while we are in the scrubbing business you may as well learn how to take care of steps and vestibule. You may get the old broom from the kitchen Bridget keeps for this, and ask her to bring a pail of water; you will need the scrubbing-brush, too, and the sapolio, and two cloths; the Japanese seat, some more metal polish, a flannel, and a duster."

Margaret got them all, and brought them out to the vestibule. The door-mat was taken up, shaken well, and hung over the balustrade outside, and, after sweeping out the vestibule, Margaret knelt on the seat and scrubbed the marble floor, especially in the corners, and then [Pg 105] wiped them dry. The steps had already been swept once that morning, so all they needed was a good bath. A little water at a time was poured over them and swept off with the broom, and while they dried in the sunshine, she rubbed the door handles and bell with polish, and gave them a beautiful finish with chamois leather. The woodwork of the doors was pretty dusty, and before it could be made to look just right it had to be rubbed off with a damp duster and a little stick used in the cracks of the wood. When the rug was laid down once more Margaret and her Other Aunt stood and admired their work.

"A good housekeeper always has nice, clean steps and a well-cared-for vestibule," said the aunt. "They are like a sign-board on the front of a house, telling the sort of people who live inside. That thought ought to make you keep your vestibule in nice order."

"Yes, indeed," said Margaret. "I'd be ashamed to have a sign-board in front of my steps, saying, [Pg 106] 'An untidy girl lives here!' Now what do we do?"

"Well, let us see if we can find any brass to polish. There are the andirons in the hall, for instance, and the shovel and tongs." So out came the metal polish once more, and, after putting down a newspaper, they rubbed them all well. They found out, however, that some of the brass about the house had an enamel finish over it to keep out the air, and all this needed was wiping off with a cloth instead of rubbing, which was a great saving of time; though this brass was not quite as nice looking as that which they rubbed till it shone like a mirror, in the old-fashioned way. It happened that the chandelier in the hall was covered with the enamel, and here her aunt told Margaret she did not dislike it, because it would have been nearly impossible to rub a chandelier clear up to the ceiling every week. They brought out the step-ladder and wiped it off with a dry duster, however, and then they washed the globes nicely in warm water, and dried [Pg 107] them. Globes often got very dusty, the aunt said, and nobody remembered to wash them off instead of merely dusting them once in awhile, and then the family thought the gas must be very poor because the light was dim.

"Now, auntie, what next?" Margaret asked, when this work was done.

"The sitting-room fireplace," her aunt replied. "It is full of wood ashes."

Margaret went once more to the broom closet and got a shovel, a dust-pan, a whisk-broom, a damp cloth, and a newspaper.

There were andirons in the fireplace and the ashes lay all over and around them, so her aunt first helped her lift these heavy things out on the newspaper at one side. Then she told her to sweep most of the ashes into a small pile right in the centre of the hearth, at the back.

"But, auntie, they won't burn any more; why don't I take them right out!" asked Margaret.

"Because they make the fire burn better and last longer. You can take up part of them and put them in the scuttle, but leave some, and especially all the bits of charred wood; it would be wasteful to take those away." [Pg 108]

Margaret carefully swept up the greater part of the ashes, working from the edges of the hearth toward the middle, and put them into the scuttle. Once she spilled a shovelful, but as a newspaper was spread on the carpet it did not matter. Her aunt told her to be sure and always have plenty of papers ready to use in housework, because in the end they saved so much work. "Suppose you had to sweep up those ashes," she said, "and clean the carpet, too, would not that be a bother! Now if the hearth is clean, wipe it with the damp cloth, and dust off the andirons well. If there had been a grate here you would have had to polish it with the blacking from the kitchen stove. When you have finished you can get more paper and kindling and lay a fire."

They put crumpled paper between the andirons, covering all the ashes which lay there so they did not show. On this they laid kindling, crossed, and then some pieces of wood. When they gathered up the newspaper there was nothing to brush from the carpet, and everything was neat. [Pg 109]

"There," said her aunt, "that's all for to-day. Run and wash your face and hands,—they need it!" [Pg 110]

CHAPTER VIII

HOUSECLEANING; CELLAR AND ATTIC

Margaret's Saturday morning lessons were interrupted at this point by the spring housecleaning. Everybody was so busy taking up and putting down carpets, hanging curtains and pictures over, putting away winter clothes and getting out summer ones, that the lessons seemed forgotten. The grandmother, however, remembered, and one day she took the little girl around the house while the cleaning was going on, showing her how the work was done. They found the guest-room had been finished, so they sat down there and talked.

"Housecleaning is very different nowadays from what it used to be," she began. "We used to take up all the carpets at once, and keep everything upset for a week or two, and then get all to rights. Now we take a room at a time, and so do the whole house gradually and comfortably. Perhaps the work is divided, and part done in the spring and part in the fall, to make it still easier. Then we do not take up every carpet every year, as we did. This guest-room carpet, for one, does not need beating and cleaning and putting down again, because the room is not used all the time, and once or twice a year it has a scrubbing with warm water or turpentine or ammonia after it is swept." [Pg 111]

"Yes," said Margaret, "I learned about that in my sweeping lesson."

"When this room was cleaned," her grandmother went on, "the curtains were taken down, and the pictures wiped off and put into the storeroom. The furniture was well dusted and put away also, and the bed all taken apart, the mattress beaten gently, the springs dusted and wiped off; the bed slats were washed in hot soap and water, and put away, too. Then the bed itself was taken to pieces and washed in warm soap-suds, because being white iron they could not hurt it. If it had been a wooden bed it would have been wiped with a damp cloth. And then, Margaret, what do you think? a brush dipped in turpentine was put in all the corners of the bed and the springs, so that if by any chance a little bug should have crept in there to hide, it would be driven out." [Pg 112]

Margaret looked disgusted. "We don't have bugs in our beds," she said, indignantly. "Nice, clean people never do."

Her grandmother smiled. "Even a very nice, clean person may bring home a bug from a crowded street-car," she said. "And if it happens to be on a coat which is thrown on a bed, it may crawl quickly into a corner without anybody's seeing it, and presently the bed will have half a dozen bugs in it. Of course a good housekeeper would never let them stay in a bed a single minute after she finds out they are there, and she always hunts occasionally, at least as often as every few months, so that she may be perfectly sure everything is all right. If ever you think you are perfectly safe, my dear, and do not look to make sure, you will be the very one to be surprised some day! You must often put the mattress on a sheet on the floor, and look all along the edge and in the corners and under the ties. The spring must be painted with turpentine, especially in the hidden places, and so must the corners of the bed. It is a good plan to use only metal beds with iron spring frames, for bugs like wood much better; they seldom stay where there is none. If [Pg 113]

you ever find a bug, or the tiny black speck it makes, get the white of an egg and beat it with a teaspoonful of quicksilver, and paint everything with it, and you will have no more trouble.

"After the bed is cleaned and taken down, the floor is to be swept twice over, and the carpet taken away; the paper under it may be swept clean in the yard. The walls are to be swept down with a soft brush, or a broom covered with a duster. The closet is to be emptied entirely, the [Pg 114] drawers, shelves, floor, and baseboard washed well, and the closet floor washed also. The windows must be cleaned and all the woodwork washed in warm water with a little nice soap, and rinsed well. When all is fresh and the floor dry, the paper can be laid, the carpet put down, the furniture wiped again, the bed put together and made, the pictures hung, and the fresh curtains put up, if they are used in summer, and the room will be thoroughly done. All rooms are alike in the way they are cleaned. First do the closets, remember, all the drawers as well as shelves; then, shutting this up, empty the room, and do walls, floor, paint, and windows. If there is a matting down, this must be wiped off with salted water, which freshens it. Now I think we can go down to the cellar for the next part of the lesson."

The cellar proved to be rather chilly, but they stayed long enough to learn a good many things about it. There were two rooms, one for the coal and wood, and one for vegetables and preserved fruit and such things. All these, Margaret was told, must be looked after. The fuel room should [Pg 115] have several bins, one for kitchen coal, one for furnace coal, and one low one for wood; it was untidy to leave any of these lying in heaps on the floor. The vegetables had to be constantly looked over for fear any should decay, and so bring sickness to the family, who might never know why it came. The preserves must be examined, lest any begin to leak, and the whole place must be kept cool and dry by having a window open a little at the top, with a good bolt or a few nails to keep any one from opening it from the outside. The windows did not need to be washed quite as often as those up-stairs, but they should never be left grimy and dirty. "A good housekeeper always keeps watch of her cellar," said the grandmother. "She sees that the air is fresh, the floor clean, the walls free from cobwebs, and that no rubbish is allowed to accumulate. The wood and coal must not get too low in the bins; the grocer's boxes must be kept chopped into kindling, and, [Pg 116] most important of all, every cellar should have a good coat of whitewash every spring to make it all sweet and clean."

Margaret said she thought she knew this part of her lesson now, and that cellars were not so very interesting.

"Well, suppose we take the attic next," grandmother said, smiling; "that is, if you are really certain you can keep your own cellar clean and nice when you have one." Margaret promised to try.

The attic was a nice, dusky room, with some old furniture, trunks, and boxes, rolls of carpet, and bags of pieces. It had a dry, comfortable sort of smell in the air. "I like attics," said Margaret. "I mean to have a great big one some day, all full of interesting things, like the girls in story-books."

"The more things in your attic the more trouble you will have to be a good housekeeper," said her grandmother. "Let us sit down on this sofa for our lesson, and suppose that was really your own [Pg 117] attic. What would you do to put it in order and keep it so!"

"Well," said Margaret, thoughtfully, "I'd move everything out and sweep it; then I'd brush off the walls and wash the windows; then I'd arrange things—and then it would be done."

"Oh, no!" her grandmother replied. "That isn't half. I see you needed the lesson on the attic, as I thought. Now listen:

"You see it is rather dark up here, and so moths love the place, and if it was left to them they would eat up all that is in the trunks. The first thing in cleaning an attic is to empty all the trunks, one at a time, and look everything over. There are pieces of clothing which may be used again which have to go outdoors on the line in the sunshine and be beaten, and furs, especially, require this done frequently. Your pretty little baby things are in one trunk, and those your mother wishes to keep always, so she airs them and refolds the dresses so they will not get discolored [Pg 118] streaks by lying always one way; the flannels are aired, too, and folded in papers with perhaps a bit of camphor or a moth ball, though these are not as much protection as the constant airing and shaking is.

"In that large trunk there are some old silk dresses, and such things, which are also to be kept. Moths do not touch silks, but these, too, must be taken out and shaken and refolded once in awhile to keep them from cracking in the places where they have laid. Once a year, at least, all trunks must be emptied, wiped out, and relined with fresh papers, the things aired and put back freshly.

"If there are any clothes which are being kept which, after all, are not needed, it is always best to give them away before they are out of style or moth-eaten. It is wrong to keep things one does not want when so many are cold. One always keeps certain things like your mother's wedding-gown, and some handsome pieces of velvet, too valuable to give away, and other things which [Pg 119] would be of no use to any one else; but your father's old clothes, and your outgrown dresses, and my heavy winter coat which I shall not wear again, must all go before they are half-spoiled by lying.

"You see there are several piece-bags hanging up; those we must go over, too. We always keep bits of our dresses to patch with, or to use in re-making them. But sometimes we keep the pieces

long after the dress is gone, when perhaps some one would like them for patchwork, or to make a pincushion or needle-book out of. The pieces must be sorted often, the woollen ones put by themselves with moth balls, and the silk and cotton ones divided, some to keep, and some to give to anybody who needs them more than we do.

"The roll of old carpet is to go away, too, this time to be made into a kitchen rug. Carpets must not be left in the attic or they will surely make a nice home for moth-families. The broken chairs are to go to-day to be mended, I heard your mother say this morning. Some she will use again, [Pg 120] and the rest she will pass on to somebody who wants chairs and has not enough. This old sofa, of course, she will keep, because some day she will have it re-covered; it is a strong, good piece of furniture, and she knows we can use it.

"The summer clothes are kept in those two large trunks under the window; in a few days they will go down-stairs, and the winter ones, all shaken and beaten on the clothes-line till they are fresh and clean, will be packed away carefully in their places after the trunks have had fresh paper put in them. Do you know how to put away winter clothes, by the way?"

Margaret said she did not think she did, so they stopped the lesson for a minute to put this in.

"After the things are aired well, fold each dress or coat or suit of clothes up by itself, and pin it snugly in newspapers, which moths do not like. Tie a strong string around the bundle to lift it by, and paste a slip of paper on the top, and write on this plainly just what is inside. If you have [Pg 121] anything very nice to put away, such as a broadcloth suit, put it in a new paste-board box and paste a strip of paper all around the edge of the cover; use good mucilage, and the moths cannot possibly get at it. Put furs in paper bags after they are clean, and hang them from the rafters. Hats and such things may go into boxes, and you can lay a paper over each box before putting on its cover, to keep the dust out. Summer clothes do not need so much care; just fold them neatly and put them in a nice clean trunk, and they will take care of themselves. Now do you think you know how to keep a cellar and attic in good order? Suppose you make up a rule to give me."

Margaret thought a moment. "Keep the cellar clean," she said at length, "and give away the things in the attic."

Her grandmother laughed. "Keep both the cellar and attic clean, and don't hoard uselessly," she corrected. [Pg 122]

CHAPTER IX

LAUNDRY WORK

Margaret's teachers held a meeting before her next lesson. They could not decide whether she should be taught to wash and iron or not.

Her Pretty Aunt said, "Certainly not! She will never need to know. Even on a desert island she will find some Woman Friday to do her laundry work!"

"But," suggested her Other Aunt, "suppose she had a very beautiful thin dress to be washed, and had a very poor laundress to do it who might spoil it; don't you think she would wish she knew how to do it herself?"

"Besides," said her mother, "however could she teach an ignorant servant to wash and iron if she [Pg 123] did not know how?"

"Of course she must know," said her grandmother, sternly. "I will teach her myself."

So on Friday night Margaret made up a bundle of clothes as she was told; "samples," grandmother called them, because there were some of every sort of thing found in a regular washing; these they took down to the laundry.

"The first thing is to sort the clothes," the lesson began. "Put the white, starched things in one pile; the bed and table linen in another; the flannels by themselves; the stockings by themselves; the handkerchiefs and colored things in two more piles.

"Many people do not soak clothes over night, and it is not necessary to do so, but I am going to teach you to do it because it is the easiest way. If you are ready, look over the white things first for spots. Coffee, tea, and fruit stains must have boiling water poured through them till they [Pg 124] disappear. Rust must be rubbed with lemon juice and salt and laid on a new, shiny tin in the sunshine till the spot disappears; some people use acid, but this is apt to eat the cloth. Blood stains must be soaked in cold water; get the handkerchief you had on your cut finger and put it in this pail. Now wet the white things only, rub on a little soap, and get out every spot; put them in nice rolls, the soapy side turned in, and lay them all in the warm water in these two tubs, clothing in one, and table and bed linen in the other—never put the two together. Do not soak the flannels or they will shrink; nor the colored things, or they will fade; nor the stockings.

"The handkerchiefs, well soaped and rubbed and squeezed, go into a pail of water all alone with a tablespoonful of kerosene to kill any germs of cold in the head which may be in one of them, and

would spread to all the handkerchiefs. The oil boils out and does not smell after they are ironed. That is all for to-night, but be up bright and early in the morning, for only lazy people hang out their washing at noon." [Pg 125]

The next day Margaret came into the laundry with her biggest apron and her sleeves rolled up and pinned to her shoulders, ready for work.

"Flannels first," she was told. "Draw two tubs of warm water, one just exactly as warm as the other. Put in some nice white soap and make a good suds, and then take it out and put in the flannels; rub and squeeze them with your hands till they are clean, but never rub them on the wash-board, or put any soap directly on them or they will grow hard and stiff; as soon as they are clean, wring them out and rinse them in the second water. The reason why they must be washed and rinsed in the same sort of water is that if they were dropped from cold to hot or hot to cold water they would shrink all up and be spoiled at once. A little ammonia or borax in the rinsing water makes them soft and white. You cannot take too much care in washing flannels, for they [Pg 126] are expensive and easily spoiled; think how often your winter undervests are shrunken before they are half-worn, and how once Bridget spoiled a pair of beautiful new blankets she washed for the first time, all because the two waters were not just alike, and because she rubbed soap on them and made them hard and yellow. Now you may wring yours out with your hands and hang them out on the line."

When Margaret came in again her grandmother had put the white apron into the water the flannels had been rinsed in, for its first bath. She said it was still fresh and warm and soapy and ought not to be wasted. The first tubful, however, she had thrown away as useless any longer. She told Margaret to put a little more soap on the apron and gently rub it on the board, turning it over and over till it was clean; then she dropped it in the wash-boiler, which her grandmother had filled with fresh water and put on the fire. The linen was washed in the same way, rubbing and turning it till it was all fresh, and putting it in the boiler. The water was allowed to boil up [Pg 127] well for a moment, the clothes pushed down and turned around with a stick as they rose to the top. They were lifted out with the stick into a tub of fresh, hot water, and rinsed till all the soap was out, and dropped in a tub of cold water which had a little blueing in it. Here they were rinsed once more, and wrung out dry and then put out in the sunshine.

Bridget had hung a low clothes-line for Margaret between two small trees, so she could easily reach it. The clothes-pins were in one of her aprons, in a pocket made by turning up the bottom almost half-way to the belt, so none could fall out. This apron was made of heavy ticking, and none of the water reached her dress as she carried out the wet things to the line.

When she came in this second time she found her grandmother ready to make starch. As there were only a very few things to stiffen she measured a heaping tablespoonful of dry starch, wet it with just as much cold water, and added a cup of boiling water, with a half-teaspoonful of sugar, [Pg 128] to make it extra nice and glossy. The white apron was dipped in this and wrung out; then more water was added till the starch was like milk, and the pillow-cases and gingham apron were dipped in.

"I never starch table or bed linen," said her grandmother, "but you may, if you wish to, if you use very thin starch. I know a better way to make such things look nice, however, and when we iron I will teach it to you. Now we must finish the washing. Wash and rinse the stockings in hot water, but do not boil them; wash and rinse and boil the handkerchiefs by themselves. When these are all on the line, and you have made the laundry tidy, you can rest for an hour, while the irons get nice and hot, and then we will take the second half of the laundry lesson."

The sunshine had made everything dry and sweet when Margaret brought in the clothes from the line and heaped them on the laundry table. She spread the napkins and pillow-cases out [Pg 129] smoothly, and from a nice white bowl of clean water she sprinkled them, one at a time, and smoothed out the creases as her grandmother showed her. "The fewer wrinkles, the easier ironing," she said. Each was made into a tidy roll and laid in the basket again. The handkerchiefs were sprinkled also, and made into one roll and laid by them. The flannels were still damp, and so just ready to iron as they were, and so were the stockings. As the irons were hot, Margaret now spread the ironing-pad of flannel over the table, and laid the ironing-sheet very smoothly over it. She put the iron-stand on one corner on a square, white tile, so the heat would not burn the cloth underneath and got out a thick, soft holder.

She also got out the ironing-board, because the flannel petticoats were easier to manage on this than on the table. She tried the iron by holding it to her cheek, and found it quite warm. Then she wet the tip of her finger, as she had seen Bridget do, and quickly touched it. It seemed just right, [Pg 130] hot, but not burning, so she began on the stockings, and ironed them flat, on the right side, turning each one over and pressing both sides. She did not turn in the toes, because some of them needed to be darned, and whoever did it would have to turn each one back to see if there were any holes in it; but she made them into pairs, folding each once, and hung them on the little clothes-horse standing before the fire.

The flannel skirts she slipped over the skirt-board, and ironed them by beginning at the hem and working toward the belt, pulling each one around the board to bring the unironed part up. These, too, she hung near the fire, because flannels take so long to grow perfectly dry.

The table napkins were a real pleasure to do. Her grandmother taught her why they needed no starch—because if they were ironed over and over, with a good hot iron, first on one side and

then on the other, they grew a little stiff, and became very glossy and beautiful, like satin, while if starch was used they easily got too stiff. These were folded very carefully indeed, so the edges exactly matched, and laid in a pile by themselves. [Pg 131]

By the time these were done the iron was again cool and had to be changed for the second time for a hot one. Linen, the grandmother explained, needed hot irons, but one should always be very careful not to have them so hot that there is any danger of scorching, because linen is very expensive, and easily ruined.

The towels were ironed exactly as the napkins had been, on both sides, and again and again, till they were dry and shining. Then they were folded carefully, not in four narrow folds, but in three parts, so they would "look generous," grandmother said. The side edges had to match exactly, and the lower edge had to be a tiny bit longer than the rest, so that when hung on the towel-rack it would be perfect. This took time, but when once Margaret learned how they should look, she said it was no trouble. [Pg 132]

The white apron also took some time to do because it had to be polished, and the gatherings and ruffles were bothersome, but still it was done presently, and also the gingham apron, which was easier. The handkerchiefs were only play, but they had to be carefully folded, so the edges would be even. At last everything was done, and there was a whole clothes-horse full of beautiful clothes. It looked like a blossoming tree, all white and fragrant, and Margaret felt very proud and happy as she ran to call the family to come and admire.

"I knew she could learn!" said her grandmother, nodding to her mother, as they all came in to look and praise the little laundress. [Pg 133]

CHAPTER X

THE LINEN CLOSET; PANTRIES; POLISHING SILVER; THE CARE OF THE REFRIGERATOR; CLEANING THE LAMPS

"I think," said the Pretty Aunt one day, "we must be coming to the end of the Saturday morning lessons. We have had the kitchen and dining-room, the bedrooms, halls, and parlors, the bathroom, cellar, attic, and vestibule. I really can't think of anything else to teach Margaret about the care of the house."

"Why," exclaimed the Other Aunt, "I can! I can think of five or six things you have not said a word about; all important ones, too!"

"How nice!" laughed the Pretty Aunt, "because now you can give the lesson!"

Margaret had felt disappointed when she thought the lessons were over, for she liked to learn something new each week; so when she was told to put on a clean apron and be ready in half a minute, she ran off in a hurry. [Pg 134]

Her aunt was in the upper hall when she appeared, with the door of the linen closet open, and she told Margaret they would begin here.

"This little room is the one good housekeepers are especially fond of," she began. "Clean, white linen, polished and beautiful, is a joy to look at and handle, and every woman is proud if she has a quantity, all nicely kept. Let us begin with the shelves, taking them in order, and see what is on each."

The top one held blankets, each pair folded together smoothly and pinned up in a clean, strong piece of white cotton cloth, and labelled. The first label read, "Guest-room blankets," and when they were opened there lay a fresh, soft, fleecy pair, with a lovely border of pale pink, and edges of broad pink ribbon. [Pg 135]

"This is your mother's very best pair of blankets," began her aunt. "They are cut in two and bound alike at each end, you see; they have never been washed or cleaned yet, so they are still very white and soft. By and by they will begin to look a little soiled, and then they will be cleaned perhaps, once or twice, and presently they will be washed, and they will not be nearly as nice as they are now, though well-washed blankets should still be fleecy and white."

"'Soft, warm water, with suds of white soap,'" murmured Margaret, reviewing her laundry lesson; "'rub with your hands, rinse in the same sort of water as you used in washing, with a little borax or ammonia, and they will look like new.'"

"Splendid!" said her aunt. "I see you can wash blankets to perfection. But even so, some day there will be new ones for the guest-room, and these will be on one of the family beds. The next two or three bundles, you see, are clean, washed blankets, in pairs, laid away till they are needed. All blankets have to be put on the line in the sunshine frequently whether they are washed or not, or they may be eaten by moths. [Pg 136]

"Here are a few clean comfortables next, on this second shelf, done up like the blankets. These have to be washed, too, and are more difficult to manage than blankets, because they are so

heavy; they have to be aired often to keep them sweet, for the cotton holds odors easily. Then come the white spreads, the heavy Marseilles in one pile, the lighter ones in another, and the single ones and double ones kept separate.

"The third shelf holds towels, you see. This pile is for the best ones; notice how beautifully they are ironed and folded, and how the embroidered initials stand out. The ordinary bedroom towels come next; see how many your mother has, and how each kind is by itself: the hemstitched ones in one pile, the plain huckaback in another; those with colored borders in this one, and the bath towels in that. Any one could come in and get a towel in the dark, sure of taking just the right one. You must remember always to keep your own towels just this way; too many people mix them in in any careless fashion, and do not take the trouble to have them arranged neatly, but it's the best way to do. [Pg 137]

"The sheets and pillow-cases are in these deep drawers. This top one has the double sheets and the best linen ones; notice how they lie in piles, each kind by itself, just like the towels. They are all marked on the narrow edge, and so they can be recognized at a glance; the large sheets have your mother's full name. In this next drawer are the single bed sheets, marked with her first initials, and her last name. The servants' sheets have only her three initials. You see how easy it is to tell which is which. The pillow-cases are marked in the same way, and put in piles. You must be sure when you have a washing to put away that you do not put the clean things on top of each pile, and then take them off again to use at once; put things on top and take them off the bottom of the pile, so they will all be used in turn. Now for the table-linen." [Pg 138]

This was in another drawer, and Margaret exclaimed when she saw how beautiful it was. The cloths were like satin, the napkins which matched lay in dozens by them; the every-day cloths and napkins were by themselves, and the small lunch-cloths had a pile of their own. The doilies were in a smaller drawer, all in piles, too, and the pretty centrepieces were fastened around stiff paper made into rolls.

"If you ever have lovely table-linen you will want to keep it nicely," said the aunt. "I think it is high time you had some, too. I believe in the old German custom of making a linen-chest for each girl; so learn your lesson well, and when your birthday comes who knows what you'll get? Perhaps a lunch-cloth or some embroidered napkins!"

"I'd like some towels, too," Margaret said, soberly. "I guess I'd like to have some linen every birthday." [Pg 139]

"Very well, I'll remember," said her aunt as they closed the drawers. "And when you really begin to fill your chest I will make you some pretty bags of lavender to lay among your sheets and pillow-cases to make them smell sweet. We will go down-stairs now."

The pantry shelves were looked over next; in the china-closet in the dining-room everything was in order; the dishes neatly arranged on white paper, with pretty scalloped flouncings hanging over the front. The plates were piled in sets, the platters were together, the glasses and small dishes on the sides of the closet where the shelves were short. There was really nothing to be done here, so they went into the kitchen.

The pantry where the pots and pans stood had rather dingy papers, and they decided to have a good cleaning. They took everything off and washed the shelves with warm water and borax and wiped them dry, and put on fresh papers. The tins and dishes which were seldom used, were then arranged on the highest shelf, and those which were used every day were put lower down. The little things, such as the skimmer, the small sieve, the egg-beater, and the spoons, were hung on nails driven into the edge of the shelf which was over the baking-table in the kitchen, where stood also the cups, bowls, and plates used in cooking, within easy reach. When they were done, the aunt said, "Always watch for ants in the pantry, and roaches and water-bugs in the sink. Ants hate borax, so you can put that on the shelves in all the corners, and it will help keep them away. Roaches come to the sink for food, and you must see to it that they do not find it. Keep it perfectly clean and scalded out, especially at night, and never let the sink-basket have any crumbs in it. If, in spite of everything, the bugs do come, put insect powder on the corners of all the woodwork and use washing-soda to flush the drain every day, and they will get discouraged and leave your house for somebody else's, where there is something in the sink for them. Now for the refrigerator." [Pg 140] [Pg 141]

Margaret helped empty this entirely, setting the things in it on the table, and putting the ice in a large dish. They looked underneath at the pan into which the ice drained and found it half-full, so they emptied it. Then the lesson began as usual.

"You see all these little covered bowls and plates with bits of food on them. We never put nice china dishes in a refrigerator, for fear of breaking them; this heavy, yellow ware is just the thing, and a saucer can go over each bowl. We do not put anything in which has a strong odor, such as onions or cheese, or they would make everything taste like themselves. Butter must be in a covered crock, and milk in bottles with a tight top. Warm food must never go in, or it will waste the ice. Let us look in the top; you see there is a nice piece of ice, all covered up with a bit of old blanket, so it will last. You must watch and see that you do not take more ice than you really need and use it economically. Some people never cover it at all, because it keeps the food colder if it is left so, but often it is unnecessary; there may be little food in the box, and that would keep as well if it were not quite as cold. Now you may get a basin of water, two clean cloths, and the borax, and I will show you how to clean a refrigerator." [Pg 142]

Margaret put a tablespoonful of borax in the water, rung out her cloth, and washed out all the inside of the great box, poking a little stick into the corners, and scrubbing the shelves thoroughly, as well as the sides and bottom. Then she wiped them dry and the food was put in again neatly. There had been a small pan of charcoal in one corner, and this was emptied on a paper and the pan refilled from a bag near by and put back.

"What do you put black charcoal in the clean box for?" Margaret asked, curiously.

"Because it dislikes a disagreeable odor, and destroys it at once," her aunt replied. "We change this pan every few days because it will take up only so much, while fresh charcoal will keep [Pg 143] everything sweet and nice; Bridget burns up what is not fresh, putting it in the fire when she wants to broil or toast, for it makes a clear fire without flame. It only costs a few cents for a large bagful, and we can always have it on hand.

"Remember to wash out your refrigerator at least three times a week. This is very important, indeed; if you forget it somebody in the family may be very ill. If you have not time to wash it out and still sweep the parlors, let the parlors go!"

Just as they finished they noticed the garbage pail outside the door and took a look into it. It was nearly empty, so Margaret got a dipper of boiling water and a handful of washing-soda and put them in, as her aunt told her, to keep the pail from getting greasy and sour. "The better the housekeeper the less she has in her garbage pail, and the cleaner it is kept," she said, as she put back the cover.

"We have still one pleasant thing and one disagreeable thing to do before we are done this [Pg 144] morning; which would you rather take first?" asked the aunt.

Margaret said she thought she would keep the pleasant one to finish off with.

"Then get a newspaper," was the reply, "and spread it over the table, first of all."

"That's the way most kitchen lessons seem to begin," said Margaret, as she took one from the paper drawer. "'First get a newspaper.'"

"And very sensible, too," smiled her aunt. "It saves so much work if everything can be carried away and the table left clean at once. You may go to the closet and bring the box of things for the lamps while I bring the large one from the sitting-room."

The box proved to have in it two cloths, one of flannel, and a white one free from lint; a pair of scissors; a round brush with a wire handle, and a piece of soap.

The lamp was taken to pieces, filled with kerosene from the can kept in the cellar-way, and wiped off nicely. The charred wick was rubbed and trimmed, and the corners rounded a little to keep [Pg 145] them from throwing the flame against the sides of the chimney and breaking it. The glass chimney was put in a basin of warm water with soap-suds, and washed with the flannel cloth, rubbed with the round brush, and wiped dry with the white cloth. Whenever a new wick was put in a lamp, Margaret was told, the burner should be boiled with washing-soda to free it from clogging oil, and if a wick ever smelled it was to be cooked a few minutes in vinegar and dried, and it would then be all right again. When the lamp was put back they gathered up the things used, and put the newspaper with the kindling for the kitchen fire.

"Now for the pleasant thing," Margaret said, as she carried away the oil-can and washed her hands. "I don't think doing lamps is very nice work."

"No, it is not," her aunt replied; "but it is certainly very nice to have a clear, strong light to read by at night, and you cannot have that unless the lamp is perfectly clean, so the work is worth doing. Look now on the closet shelf once more and find another box with the silver polish, while I [Pg 146] go for the basket from the sideboard."

Once more a newspaper was spread on the table, and they set out the box of powder, a small flannel cloth, a little saucer of water, a soft brush, and a chamois. They dipped the flannel into the water, then into the powder, and rubbed the pieces of silver well, scrubbing them with the brush, except where they were perfectly smooth, as in the bowls of the spoons. When it was done they washed it in hot water, wiped it dry, and polished it well with the chamois, and it shone like new.

As they put it away again they counted it carefully, using the list which was kept in the bottom of the basket; every piece was there, fortunately, so no time was lost in hunting for it.

"Do you count the silver every time it is cleaned?" Margaret inquired, as she took up the basket to put it away.

"Every single time," said her aunt, firmly. "It must always be done. One can find a missing spoon [Pg 147] when it first disappears, but not after it has been gone a month or more."

"We are all done," Margaret said, cheerfully, as they put the kitchen to rights. "Won't Bridget be pleased when she sees her clean refrigerator and pantry, and the nice shiny silver,—and the garbage pail too! That looks just as nice as can be!"

"Of course it does," said her aunt. "Everything looks nice when it is clean." [Pg 148]

CHAPTER XI

MARKETING AND KEEPING ACCOUNTS

"I think it must be my turn to give you your lesson to-day," said Margaret's Pretty Aunt at breakfast-time, "because I have thought of something none of your other teachers have as much as mentioned. You can get ready as soon as possible."

"Which apron?" asked the little girl, curiously.

"No apron at all," said her aunt; "your hat and coat. We are going a-marketing. How can anybody be a good housekeeper without knowing how to buy a dinner?"

Before they set out they went to the kitchen with a small pad and pencil, and looked into the refrigerator to see what they had already, to know what they would need to buy. There proved to [Pg 149] be several things which would be used for luncheon, and then they asked Bridget what she wanted them to get. She said she was out of flour and granulated sugar, and would want raisins and coffee and tea, beside a vegetable for dinner and some lettuce and meat. They planned the meals together, and decided on having a dessert of apple-tart, made with apples and cream, and these were added to the list Margaret wrote down so nothing would be forgotten; then they set out.

They stopped at the grocery first, and Margaret was told to order a seven-pound bag of sugar. While the clerk was getting it the aunt explained that this was a better way to buy it than to get it loose, as then it would be sent home in a paper bag, which might break and spill it; then, too, the nice cotton bag in which it would come home would be just the thing to strain jelly through. The flour was also ordered in a bag, this time a large one.

"Some things we buy in small quantities because there is danger of waste in the kitchen if there [Pg 150] is an unlimited supply at hand. But flour is needed every day, and never wasted, so we buy a good deal of that at a time. If we had a very large family we would buy a whole barrel at once, and so save a little money; as it is, the big bag does very well for us. Now for coffee; tell the clerk to give you his very best Java and Mocha mixed, in a tin can. We will take it browned, but not ground."

"I thought Bridget always browned the coffee," said Margaret, who remembered the delicious smell which often had filled the house when the coffee came from the oven.

"So she did," her aunt explained, "until we found she would sometimes burn just a few grains each time, which made the whole taste burned. Now we buy it in a can, only a pound or two at a time, and of a man who has just had it browned for him. We keep the tin closely shut always so the odor cannot escape, and grind each morning only as much as we need, and have this heated [Pg 151] very hot just before the water is added, and that gives it the same fresh odor you remember. It is the easiest way to manage, though, of course, freshly roasted coffee is the best of all. But remember always to get a good quality in buying, for poor coffee is not fit to drink. Order the tea, when the clerk is ready, and get that also in a package, because it is cleaner and fresher that way. You can pay anything you like for tea, from thirty cents a pound to about two dollars, but your mother gets a black tea without a bit of green mixed in it for from sixty to eighty cents, and buys it in half-pound packages. What is next on the list?"

"Raisins," said Margaret.

"Well, order those in a paper box, the kind which come already seeded, and when you get them home, take them out of the box and shut them up in a glass jar with a tight top, to keep them fresh. The vegetables come now, but before we buy those you must put down in this little book what we have bought already, with the price of each article opposite. I could wait till we got [Pg 152] home, but I am afraid you may forget the cost of things, because you are not used to them."

She handed Margaret a cunning little book and a tiny pencil, and showed her how to find the right month and day printed at the top of the page, and to put down under a column headed "Groceries," just what they had bought so far and what each thing cost. After this they crossed the shop to the place where the vegetables and fruit were piled, and looked these over.

The apples were of all kinds, sweet and sour, big and little, red and green. Margaret said she would take the biggest red ones for the apple-tart.

"No, those are not cooking apples, they are meant for the table," her aunt told her. "And do not take the yellow ones, because they are sweet and only good for baking. Take a nice green apple, not too large, because the smaller ones do just as well and cost less. Let us get half a peck of those greenings. We want oranges for breakfast, too, though Bridget forgot to say so. Can you [Pg 153] pick those out, do you think?"

There were a good many boxes of these, some with rough skins, some with smooth, some with little bunches at the end. These last, her aunt explained to the little girl, were seedless and rather too dry for breakfast, though very nice for dinner. "The rough-skinned ones are light, as you will see if you lift one, so they would have little juice. Choose a heavy one of medium size and a rather smooth skin; but do not get those which are a very light yellow, for they may be sour."

The vegetables had to be looked over carefully. Spinach proved withered, so they passed it by;

the cauliflower had tiny black spots on it; the green string beans would not snap as they should when they were bent; but they found a large egg plant, with a fresh, smooth skin, which they took. The lettuce was all dark green, with thick strong leaves, and the aunt said it would never do; lettuce must be in heads, like cabbage, and pale green. Instead they chose some chicory with [Pg 154] a white centre, which seemed crisp and newly gathered. All these things were written down in Margaret's account-book under "Fruits" and "Vegetables."

A nice dairy was not far from the grocery, and there they ordered a little bottle of cream and put this down in the book before they went on to the meat market. As they entered this shop her aunt said the lesson here was so long it would take years to learn it, and they would only take the a, b, c, of it in one day.

"Buying good meat means learning day after day," she explained. "However, there are some things you can learn this morning, and one is to be sure you buy in a clean place. Look around the floor and see whether the sawdust is fresh; notice the odor of the place and whether it is disagreeable or not; look at the counter, too, and be sure it is white and freshly wiped off; and above all, see whether the meat is kept in the ice-box at the back of the shop, not hung up on [Pg 155] nails, or left lying carelessly about. Don't buy any meat which has been hanging or lying around; insist that it comes from the box."

"But I can't think of the kinds of meat there are if I don't see them," Margaret said, anxiously.

"You will learn," the aunt smiled. "I am sure you will never be willing to eat meat which you are not certain is clean. Then look well at what the butcher brings out to show you. Beef ought to be firm, clear red and white, and not streaked with little lines; mutton must not be too fat; veal not too young—you can tell when it is because then it will be very small. Bacon must not be too lean nor too salt, and cut as thin as a wafer. Fish must be fresh, with nice, clear eyes. Chickens too often are buried in a barrel of chopped ice for weeks, and come out blue and clammy; such are not fit to eat. Suppose we buy a pair of roasting chickens this morning, and then you will see how they ought to look." [Pg 156]

The butcher brought out a pair which were yellow and dry, showing they had not been covered with ice. The aunt bent down the breastbone to see if they were tender, and showed the little girl that if it had been too stiff to bend she would have known by that that they would not do. She also looked inside to see if there was a good deal of fat, for this, too, was a sign of age. She said they had few pin-feathers, were firm and plump, and the feet were clean, so she was quite sure they would be good, and told the butcher to send them home, and not to forget the giblets.

"Chicken liver gravy!" Margaret exclaimed at this. "I like your lessons, auntie!"

After they reached home and their things were put away the account-book was brought out again, and a lesson given in that. Margaret had to listen carefully, for it seemed rather difficult at first.

"It is best to know always how much you are going to spend on your table every week," her aunt began. "At first you may spend too much or too little, but by looking over your book you can tell [Pg 157] in a moment where the trouble lies, and the next week you can make it right. Some things cost a great deal, such as turkeys, or strawberries too early in the season, or certain fancy groceries, and by seeing just where your money has gone you can remember the next time not to get these. Look at the different columns in your book. One says Groceries, the next, Vegetables; then Fruits; Milk and Cream; Butter and Eggs; Meat; Fish; Wages; Incidentals. You can put down under these exactly what you spend each day, and when the month is over you can put down in another book what each has amounted to. Let me show you:

"Suppose when you add up your columns in your day-book you find at the end of the month you have spent twelve dollars for groceries, fifteen for meat, four for vegetables, three for fruit, and so on. You simply open your second book at the right month and put down what the whole has [Pg 158] been; the next month you do the same thing under the new date, and so on. At the end of the year you do not have to go over all the little sums spent each day, but by looking in the right book under each month you can see exactly what all the meat cost and all the vegetables, and so on. If your October bill for meat was larger than it ought to have been and more than it was in September or November, you can look back and see just why, if you care to. Under Incidentals you put all your car-fares spent in shopping for the house, and such things as dust-cloths, or new kitchen tins. When the last of December comes you can see all you spent during the whole year by adding what each month came to, and know exactly how much it costs you to live, and you can plan to spend more or less next year, as you think best. That is not hard to understand, is it?"

"No," said Margaret, "not to understand, but you see I am afraid I will forget to put things down, and then I will not know after all what I spent." [Pg 159]

"But you must put them down at once," her aunt said. "Either taking a pencil with you to market, or writing them down as soon as you come home. You will soon learn, and you will like the plan more and more. It is so nice to know exactly where the money went, day by day."

"Sometimes the grocer has a little book to put things down, too," said the little girl. "If he has a book why do I have to have one?"

"Because he may make a mistake, for one thing," her aunt replied, "and because if you have him put things down and do not do it too, you spend more than you think, and grow extravagant. You

can pay each day, if you prefer, or once a week, or once a month; some people like one way, and some another about this, but you should always keep your own accounts, anyway, and know what you have had and how much, and what it cost; and at the end of each month you must copy off the result of adding your columns, and see what the expenses of the month have come to, and so [Pg 160] at the end of the year. That's the way a good housekeeper does!"

"Well," said Margaret, "then I will do that way, too, even if it is some trouble."

"That's right," said her aunt. "If you do, I'll give you the loveliest set of account-books and the prettiest silver pencil I can buy when Christmas comes."

"Oh, I truly, truly will!" Margaret exclaimed. "I'll put down every single penny." [Pg 161]

CHAPTER XII

THE DAY'S WORK

It happened that just as Margaret was finishing her Saturday morning lessons Bridget had to go away for a few days, and the last lesson of all, which was given by her mother, was really a sort of review of what she had learned, such as she had in her school lessons.

It was hardly more than six o'clock in the morning when the little girl woke and jumped out of bed. She dressed softly so that she should not wake any one, and took her bed to pieces and set her closet door open, as she had learned in her Bedroom lesson. She threw up the windows and hung up her night-dress, and then left the room, closing the door behind her.

Her mother met her in the hall, and they went down-stairs together, tying on their clean gingham [Pg 162] aprons as they went. The house was all shut up of course, so they opened the front doors, raised the shades in the parlors, and opened the windows a little to change the air. In the kitchen the fire was burning, shut up as they had left it the night before, and they first closed it to shake it down, and then opened the drafts and put on fresh coal, as Margaret had learned when she studied about the range. While the fire was burning up she pinned a little shawl about her head and swept off the front steps and sidewalk, and came in all glowing from the cold air.

By this time the fire was hot and bright, and the cereal was put on to cook in the double boiler, the kettle filled with fresh water and put on to boil for coffee. Her mother said she would stay out in the kitchen and make muffins for breakfast while the other rooms were put in order, so Margaret went into the parlors and sitting-room and straightened the chairs, put away books and papers, and dusting a little here and there, leaving the regular dusting until later in the day. The [Pg 163] windows were now shut, and the rooms looked very tidy, so she went to the dining-room to prepare that for breakfast.

She brushed up the crumbs, aired the room, and put it in order. She arranged the doilies on the table, one under each plate, with a round of felt under that, laid the silver, put on her mother's tray with the cups and saucers, set the tumblers and napkins around, and the plates with the finger-bowls and fruit-knives, and the bread and butter plates with the spreaders. She filled the salts freshly, and last of all put on a vase of flowers. Then she took the cereal dishes, platter, and plates out to heat in the oven.

She found her mother was getting ready the eggs and other things for breakfast, and she need not help, so she carried into the dining-room the butter balls and put them around; filled the finger-bowls and tumblers with cold water and the coffee-cups with hot; arranged the fruit on the [Pg 164] sideboard, and put cream into the pitcher on the tray as well as in another pitcher for the cereal. By the time breakfast was ready she had on her white apron and had washed her hands, and when the family came down she was ready to show them all what a well-trained waitress she was.

"Do sit down with us," her father begged. "You have done so much already!" But Margaret felt a little proud that she knew her waiting lesson so well, and said she would rather not. She really enjoyed moving very quietly around the table, bringing in and taking out things, passing everything to the left, and laying down plates at the right, and generally remembering just what she had been taught.

After all had finished she ate her own breakfast, and found she had been up so long and worked so much that it tasted twice as good as usual. When she had finished she put on her gingham apron again and cleared the table. She took up the crumbs carefully and used the carpet-sweeper [Pg 165] all over the rug. She scraped and piled the dishes in nice, neat piles, and, drawing the hot water, she washed and wiped them all nicely, and put them away. She swept the kitchen, wiped off the tables, shut up the range and washed out the dish-towels exactly as her grandmother had taught in the lesson she gave on the kitchen. Then she went up-stairs.

Her grandmother, mother, and aunts had been afraid she would get too tired with such a long day's work as she had planned to do, and they had made their own beds, but they left Margaret's room for her for fear she would be disappointed. She closed the windows first, and while the room warmed she made the bathroom neat, washed and wiped out the tub and scrubbed off the wash-stand.

Her room was put in beautiful order, to her closet and shoe-bag, and she even stopped to put a clean cover on the bureau and dust nicely, to show she had not forgotten a single thing. The halls and parlors had to be thoroughly dusted now, but as none of them needed sweeping it did not take very long, and there was still time to go to market. She got out her jacket and hat, took her pencil, account-book, and kitchen pad, and went out to see what was in the refrigerator. Here she had to stop, for Bridget had gone away in such a hurry she had quite forgotten to wash this out and arrange it properly, so on went the gingham apron again, and out came all the things from the box. She gave it a good scrubbing with warm water and borax, and put in a fresh dish of charcoal before she put back the ice and dishes of food. Then she got her pad again, and with her mother's help, planned the meals and wrote down what she must buy. [Pg 166]

The walk to the grocery and meat market was pleasant, and Margaret quite enjoyed ordering the vegetables, chops, fruit, and fish, which were needed, and watched to see if she was getting fresh things and good measure, and wrote down the prices as though she had been an old housekeeper instead of a new one. [Pg 167]

When she got back again she found there was an hour until lunch, and she at once wiped off the shelves in the pantry and put fresh papers on them and arranged the tins in a more orderly way than she found them. By the time she had finished her Pretty Aunt came out to help get luncheon, and together they laid the table and got the meal. She put on her waiting-apron again, when it was ready, but this time she sat down with the family because her mother said she must surely be tired.

Her grandmother insisted on helping with the dishes, and watched with pride when afterwards Margaret poured boiling water down the sink after laying a bit of washing-soda over the drain, and scrubbed off all her tables until they shone, and blacked her range until it was like a mirror. "You surely are going to make a wonderful housekeeper!" she said.

Margaret laughed as she took off her apron. "But I just *love* to do things, grandmother," she replied, as she went up-stairs. [Pg 168]

Bridget always found that she had an hour or two to rest in the afternoon after her work was done, and so did the little girl, but after she had taken a walk and read in a new book for a time, she suddenly remembered that the silver needed cleaning, and she might surprise the family at dinner with it all polished. She got it out and rubbed it well, delighted to see how quickly it grew bright. As she finished her mother came into the kitchen with her Other Aunt, and said they meant to help get the dinner.

The mother looked around her. "Everything is very nice," she said. "The sink is clean, and so is the pantry, and so are all the dishes. The range is bright; the dish-towels are washed; the dining-room is in order. I noticed as I came through the other rooms that the bedrooms, bathroom, and parlors have all been looked after to-day, too. Margaret, I do believe you are as good a housekeeper as I am already."

"Well," said the little girl, thoughtfully, "I didn't sweep any to-day, nor wash any windows; I didn't shine the faucets in the bathroom, either, because I forgot them till this minute. I didn't have time to oil the floors in the hall this morning— I only brushed it up; and I haven't looked at the cellar or the attic at all." [Pg 169]

Her mother laughed. "But nobody does the whole house from top to bottom every single day," she said. "We sweep twice a week, only, and we wash windows when they need washing, not all the time. The attic and cellar are to be kept in order, but not put in order daily, you know. The really good housekeeper does a little putting to rights all the time, and every day she takes a certain part of the house and makes it clean, but she never tries to do more in one day than belongs to that one. To know how to keep a house nice is quite as necessary as to know how to make it so. The most important thing of all is knowing what you have learned to-day—to quietly go through the work, taking one thing after another, each in its turn, and to do all well, without hurry or worry. To be able to do this is to make housework pleasant." [Pg 170]

"Well," said Margaret, earnestly, "I like to keep house. When I am a woman I mean to have the nicest, cleanest house in all the world!"

"Suppose you help me keep this one nice till then!" said her mother.

THE END

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