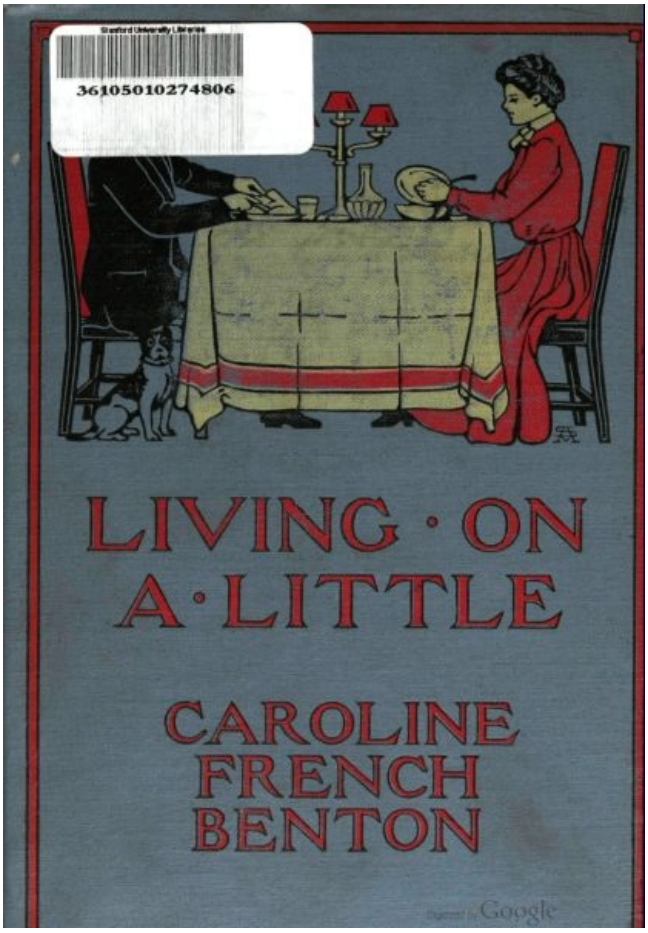
Title: Living on a Little

Author: Caroline French Benton

Release date: May 25, 2013 [EBook #42803]

Language: English



LIVING ON A LITTLE

LIVING ON

A LITTLE

BY

CAROLINE FRENCH BENTON

Author of "A Little Cook Book for a Little Girl,"
"Margaret's Saturday Mornings," etc

BOSTON * DANA ESTES &

COMPANY * PUBLISHERS

To all those housekeepers, young and old,

who are engaged in the delightful

task of making one dollar do

the work of two

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

Contents

I. At the Very Beginning—Dividing the Income
II. Saving for Staples—The Kitchen—Buying—Linen
III. Arranging the Meals—Cooking-Dresses—The Table—The Dinner
IV. Soups and Meats
V. Vegetables, Salads, Desserts
VI. Breakfast, Luncheon, Supper—Odds and Ends
VII. The Emergency Closet—Winter Preserves—Cake
VIII. The Game of Menus
IX. Two Dinner Parties
X. Reducing Expenses
XI. Luncheons for a Little
XII. In the Country

XIII. Midsummer Housekeeping—The End of the Holiday

CHAPTER I

[Pg 11]

At the Very Beginning—Dividing the Income

Mrs. Thorne laid down the letter she was reading and looked across the table to her husband, who, as he was industriously engaged in buttering a muffin, paid scant attention to her for the moment. Presently, however, as he became aware of something portentous in the air, he looked up and inquired:

"My dear, you alarm me. What's the matter? Has the bank suspended and are you considering how best to break the news to me, or has Dolly eloped with the ice-man?"

His wife did not relax her important expression as she replied, "Dolly's engaged."

"Engaged!" Mr. Thorne assumed an overwhelming surprise. "You don't say so! Now who in the world can she possibly be engaged to?"

Mrs. Thorne regarded him with scorn.

"Just as though you did not know perfectly well! Who could she possibly be engaged to but Fred Mason? I told you a month ago she was certain to be." [Pg 12]

"So you did," was the soothing reply, "but I strive to please, and I thought from your manner that you hoped to astonish me with the news. So she's really and truly engaged. Well, I'm glad of it. Fred's a good fellow in spite of the fact that he has arranged to be a brother-in-law to me when he knows that I hate brothers-in-law; and Dolly's a great girl."

"Dolly's a dear, and I only hope he's half good enough for her. But that is only part of the news in the letter."

Her husband took another muffin and looked interested.

"She wants to come and spend a year with us; if we can take her, father and mother will go abroad. Her idea is to learn how to keep house. Listen to what she says:

> "'Dearest Mary:—
>
> "'I don't suppose you will be exactly amazed when I tell you that Fred and I are engaged, for when I wrote you last I realized that you must know what was in the air. And I don't suppose I need say that we are the two happiest people in the world and that Fred is the dearest—'"

"Skip all that," pleaded Mr. Thorne. [Pg 13]

"Well, I will; but she goes on to say that the firm Fred is with has offered him a better salary than he has now, provided he will go to South America for a year and really learn the business. I'll begin there:

> "'That means that we can get married as soon as he comes back, for then he will have as much as eighteen hundred a year, certainly. But even so, with rents so high and food going up daily as the papers say it is, I am sure we shall find it not too easy to make both ends meet, especially as I strongly suspect that years in an expensive apartment hotel do not exactly fit one for living on a little.
>
> "'All this brings me to the point of my letter, which is: won't you please let me come and live with you for a year and learn how to manage? That would be a cool proposition, I am aware, but for certain mitigating circumstances which I hasten to mention.
>
> "'You said in your last letter that Delia was leaving you to be married; I suppose by now she is only a memory. You also said that you dreaded getting a new somebody in her place because you were confident that Fate had in store for you a high-priced, high-spirited and extravagant person who would smash your things and possibly order you out of the kitchen, not to mention putting whole loaves of bread in the garbage pail daily. Now if that remorseless being has not yet arrived, won't you consider me in the light of an applicant for a place as general housework maid in her stead? I'll do anything and everything. I'll take the place of a butler, a cook, a house-maid, a waitress, anything you can mention except a laundress, and you can order me around all you like and I'll never, never answer back. My aprons shall be clean, my hair tidy and my kitchen immaculate. I won't ask for a latch-key, and for only occasional afternoons out in cases of great emergency, such as matinees or afternoon teas and such things. And I'll solemnly promise not to have a single follower. [Pg 14]
>
> "'It won't cost any more for you to board me than it would a second edition of Delia, and what you save on wages you can turn in toward the dishes I break and the ingredients I waste in my apprenticeship. Please, please let me come! And send a telegram, for this suspense is wearing me to a thread.
>
> "'Fred sends you his love and says he will be perfectly easy in his mind about me if I am

with you while he is away. And he thinks it such a good idea for me to learn to cook!

"'Affectionately yours,
"'Dolly.

"'P. S. Isn't it too perfectly dreadful that he has to go away at all! I'm just in despair.'"

Mrs. Thorne laid down the letter and looked eagerly at her husband. He was smiling broadly. [Pg 15]

"Let her come," he said as he rose from his chair. "Poor, heart-broken young thing, it would be cruel to refuse her. Let her divert herself cooking up messes; if we can't eat them we can always invite company, who can't refuse. I'll send her a telegram as I go down town, and congratulate and condole with her, and incidentally include the invitation she wants."

So for a week preparations for the coming of the new maid absorbed her sister's attention. Delia had been a treasure, and there was little cleaning up to follow her departure, but on general principles the pantry shelves were scrubbed and some new saucepans purchased to replace the burned ones bestowed on the ash-man; the dish-towels were done up with extra attention to their folds, and the kitchen window had a fresh curtain.

Dolly arrived presently; rather a pensive Dolly too, for Fred had just sailed and life for the next year seemed scarcely worth living. But after she had unpacked and settled herself in her pretty room her spirits revived, and she was able to look forward to her stay at her sister's with some degree of resignation, if not enjoyment.

When the work was all out of the way the very next morning she produced a blank book and pencil.

"Now sit down close by me," she began importantly, "and let us begin this very minute with my [Pg 16] lessons. You see, I am going to do this thing in a really systematic fashion. You had to learn as you went along, I remember, and I dare say you made a lot of mistakes and wasted a lot of time; my plan is to take everything up in order and to write down all you teach me, and then I shall have it ready to use at a moment's notice.

"I have got a nice ruled book, and Fred and I talked over some things, and he put down some columns for me to fill out. See—first comes Income; then Food; then Rent; then Fuel, and Clothes, and so on. Mary, you have no idea what a practical mind he has! So you see we can take up these things and get some sort of view as to what it will cost us to live; then we shall know where we are. Later on, in the book, I will write down other things, such as suggestions on How to Save Money, and things like that, you see."

Her sister regarded her admiringly. "My dear, I didn't give you credit for so much forethought. How I wish I had had anybody to start me right! When I think of my struggles and of what a time it took me to learn how to manage on a small income I wonder I have survived. I did make such blunders, and then I cried,—I cried bucketfuls of tears, and most of them at least could have been [Pg 17] saved for other and important occasions if only I had been taught more practically. I do think it is too difficult for a girl who has always lived on a liberal income, and never had to think twice about expenses, to suddenly have to get along on a tiny amount of money all by herself. I certainly will promise to save you some of my mistakes."

"I really scarcely know where to begin," said Dolly, as she brushed back her hair, "but perhaps we had better give my book a title; I shall call it 'Living on a Little.'"

"Then the first question to settle is this: 'What is a little?' and that has about a hundred possible answers. You can easily see that to a couple brought up 'in marble halls, with servants and serfs to command,' five thousand a year might seem a pittance, while other people would cheerfully begin housekeeping on five hundred dollars and think it plenty; it all depends on the point of view, of course.

"But this is the way I reason about an income: to live with any real comfort on whatever is to you a little, you must be a good manager; when you have arrived at that desirable point, the actual amount of your income does not matter so much as you would think, because, you see, you know how to get out of it all that there is there, and it is enough for your needs.

"Do you remember that friend of mother's, Mrs. Grant, who had that perfect palace of a house [Pg 18] and an income of fifty thousand dollars a year? Well, I have never forgotten that one day I heard her say that for the first six years of her married life she and her husband lived on a salary of six hundred dollars, 'and,' she said in the most complacent way, 'I could do it again, too, if I had to!' You see, she was a good manager and she realized it. She had learned just how much to buy at a time, and where to buy it, and what to pay for it, and how to make a small amount of money do as much as twice that.

"Now I have been married only six years, but I have learned a lot in that time, because we have had to move from one place to another and our income has varied so much; then you know all one winter Dick was ill and we had nothing to live on but what we had saved, and so we had to be very, very careful. I really feel that I have mastered the problem of living on a little."

"Then I'll begin my book with the result of your experience in a nutshell, or in an epigram, or something, please, if you can put it that way."

"I don't believe I can do that; but here is the main part of it: Keep down your table expenses. You see, even if you wear your old clothes and pay a lower rent than you have been accustomed to pay, and walk instead of riding, you still must eat, and you must have nourishing, appetizing food, [Pg 19]

or you will have doctor's bills which will terrify and impoverish you. Unless you can set a good table for a small sum of money, you are lost on a narrow income, and if you know how to accomplish that economic feat, you are safe. So that is my first great rule for living on a little: Learn how to have a generous table for a small sum of money.

"You will find you have to study the food question with a will, too, if you mean to master it in a year so you can work out its problems easily forward and backward, as you must. You see you begin by learning to manage with a fixed allowance; then how to buy in places that are not necessarily the best ones, but the best for you; how to cut down expenses when you have been extravagant or have to entertain, and how to lay in supplies when you have a surplus of money on hand; what to get in quantities and what to get in small amounts; what to do with the left-overs, and how to eke out one thing with another so as to have enough when you are short. It is as difficult to be that kind of a housekeeper as to be a great whist player or a concert artist! It is easy enough to make a little money go a long way if you are a clever manager, and fatally easy, too, to drop a little here and there till you are actually bankrupt, if you don't understand just how to live. So put your mind on the food question, my dear." [Pg 20]

"Then tell me what to put down under Food; that seems to be the next item after Income; that I put down as $1,800, though of course that is only a sort of average, because we are not positively certain just what we shall really have, but it will be about that. Now what will it cost us a year for our table?"

"We will put down just what Dick and I spend—about a dollar a day; you can feed a maid or a sister on that, too, so I am sure it is enough."

"It certainly does not seem so," Dolly murmured, but she obediently set down "Food, $365."

"Then here is my second question: 'Which is the cheaper place to live in, the city or the country, when you have only a small sum to put into rent, and such things?'"

Mrs. Thorne considered.

"The fact is I cannot say with any certainty, though we have tried both places. We found the balance was pretty even. Suppose you live in the country; there rent would be less than here. We pay forty dollars a month for this small apartment, and we paid twenty-five for a whole house there; but to offset that, Dick's commutation ticket used up the difference. Of course if your home and your husband's business were both in the one country place, that would be saved and you would be ahead; but I am supposing the business to be in the city. [Pg 21]

"Then in the country we had to burn a great deal of coal in the furnace and the kitchen range, and that was a decided item, while here we do not have to consider that at all. In the country we had to hire our walks cleaned, and here we do not. There I simply had to have a maid, because I could not do all the work of a whole house, and here I can do without perfectly well if I like. Really, you see things were about the same in those ways, so we will waive the question for the present and get at it later by degrees according to your own needs."

"Then what shall I put down under Rent? Shall I say $40 a month and put down nothing for fuel? That would be right in both city and country you see, the rent here more and the fuel less, and there just the reverse."

"Yes, I think that will be fair."

So that item went down: Rent and Fuel, $480.

"Wages come next. Do we settle the servant question here and now, offhand? I've always understood that was a life-work, and you might even go to another world no wiser on the subject than when you came into this one."

"It is a great subject, certainly; anybody who has had an average experience can testify to that. I scarcely know where to begin to tell you what to do. But let us see. Suppose you decide to keep a servant, at least at first. For general housework in the city you will have to pay $5.00 a week, and you will be lucky if you get any one who will do your washing for that; probably you will have to pay $5.00 and put the laundry work out; at least that is what your maid will ask." [Pg 22]

"Well, she won't get it, then," said Dolly decidedly. "She may as well understand first as last that two people who have not much money to spend cannot pay five dollars a week and still put out the washing. It's perfectly absurd to expect it." She shook her head indignantly at the imaginary maid who was supposed to have made the preposterous suggestion.

"Let us give up having her at all," smiled her sister. "Perhaps, instead of taking a competent person, you can get a newly landed Finn or German who will consent to wash and iron, cook and clean, all for $4.00 a week; you really cannot do much better than that. Then you must teach her everything, of course, and do all the dainty cooking yourself, beside. You must also allow a good deal for her food; she will be accustomed to eat a great deal and of a substantial sort."

"I don't like the idea of an untrained maid, at all," said Dolly rebelliously.

"It is nice to have somebody, though, especially at first, because no bride likes to cook in her new clothes, above all at dinner time. Still, many a clever girl does do all her work and still manages to be always rested and fresh and prettily dressed; it's a miracle how she does it, but you must learn the secret if you have to dispense with the maid, my dear, or risk seeing romance vanish!" [Pg 23]

"Well, you know how! I'm convinced Dick thinks you a perfect Queen of Beauty and a Madame Recamier of cleverness and a female chef and everything else that is desirable in a wife, all rolled up in one prize package."

"Well, if he does,—and let us hope he may!—remember how long I've been in the business of learning how to manage. You must try and get to the point without wasting the time I have put on my lessons. But to go back to that perennially interesting question, Concerning Servants; put down $200 under Service. It really ought to be a little more than that at $4.00 a week, but as your Finn will certainly never stay a whole year at a time, you will probably do your own work for some weeks at least, and so save her wages."

"I have about decided not to have either a Finn or a German or anybody else. I think I'll do my own work and have a woman in to wash and iron and clean by the day; that will save something, won't it?" [Pg 24]

"Yes; but in town, at least, you will have to pay $1.50 a day, besides car-fare and meals; that is pretty expensive for you."

"Well, why can't I have a woman just to clean, say a day, or even half a day at a time, and put out my washing?"

"Laundry work is dreadfully expensive. You must pay, at the very lowest, fifty cents a dozen, and more for all the fine things, such as white petticoats and shirt-waists. I don't believe you can afford it. Why not try this way? Send out all your washing except the finest things and have it returned rough-dry; that is a rather cheap way of doing, if you send a whole wash; then have a woman one day to iron and give you perhaps an hour or more of cleaning, too. There is an economical and a practical plan, to my thinking, but very likely you may not find it the best one for you to follow. For that particular one, you must experiment and study conditions for yourself in the place you live in; what would do for me here might not suit you at all elsewhere. But anyway, we will put down $200 for service, for I doubt if it will be less than that amount, no matter how you manage."

"And the next item I suppose should be Clothes."

"Yes, it ought to be, but here is a difficulty. The first year you are married the sum will fall way below the average, for your two trousseaux will supply your needs. Suppose this time you put down $150, just to have something to go by; it will be at least double that, possibly, after awhile. Now if you will add up what you have there you can tell what you will have for the most important item of all, Incidentals, which we have left for the last." [Pg 25]

Dolly added in silence for a moment, and then read:

"Income	$1,800	
Food		$365
Rent and Fuel		480
Service		200
Clothes		150
		———
Total		$1,195

"Or, say $1,200; that, subtracted from what I hope will be our income, $1,800, leaves $600 for Incidentals."

"And that is very much like a skeleton in the closet. Incidentals, my dear Dolly, are the very worst foe of all young housekeepers. I wish I could impress upon you from the very first to watch that column. It must cover everything we have not put down, and the name of them is Legion. Doctor's bills, dentist's bills, church, books, magazines, car-fares, entertaining, pocket money of every sort, gas bills,—unless you can get those out of your table allowance, as possibly you can, and perhaps you can not,—and vacations, and amusements, and two things that ought to come first of all, and you must never, never forget or treat lightly—life insurance and the savings bank account." [Pg 26]

"Really, Mary, you frighten me!"

"You may well think of these things seriously at least, because they need that sort of consideration. Six hundred dollars is very little for all those items, and yet it must cover them. Life insurance is a necessity; don't ever think you can dispense with that, but keep your premiums paid up if you have to live on bread and water to do it. And the savings bank; into that must—must, Dolly—go a small sum every single month. Nothing makes one feel so at peace with all the world as to know that there is a small but growing sum laid by for the rainy day which is absolutely sure to come just when you can least endure it. Think what it means to have something to fall back on in a great emergency! It is so fatally easy to forget about that and all these other things which devour that sum under Incidentals, and then, behold, the end of July finds one with the next December's money all spent! Candy and flowers and theatre tickets and other nice but unnecessary things will behave in just exactly that way; they will simply devour Incidentals." [Pg 27]

"Well, I'll try and keep a stern and watchful eye on the column," said Dolly, "and when Fred's salary is raised we will go on living at exactly the same rate as before and spend all the new margin on luxuries; I do love luxuries!"

"They certainly are pleasant, but if you want a mind at ease, keep your attention firmly fixed on your account in the savings bank. That in the long run gives greater satisfaction than candy or violets, though I don't dispute that they have their place, too. But cheer up! Housekeeping always gets simpler the farther you get along, and the day will come when you won't know that you are

economizing, it will be so easy and natural and pleasant."

Dolly sighed heavily as she added Incidentals on to her other items and made her column under Income come out neatly, $1,800 received, and $1,800 spent.

"I hope you will hurry up and teach me everything as fast as possible," she said. "It does seem rather impossible to me, after all, and I started off this morning so sure that I could do it offhand! I feel exactly as though I had a lesson to learn made up of a mixture of Sanscrit and German philosophy and trigonometry, and all the rest of the most dreadful things you can think of."

CHAPTER II

[Pg 28]

Saving for Staples—The Kitchen—Buying—Linen

The very next day the two lady-maids went seriously to work on their problem of living on a little. They arranged for a woman to come one day in the week and wash, do a little cleaning for perhaps an hour while the wash was drying, and then iron the heavy things; the next morning the sisters were to finish up the light and dainty things left over, the napkins, pretty waists, handkerchiefs, and odds and ends; these would take only an hour or two after the regular routine of bed-making, dusting, and brushing up the hardwood floors was out of the way, and this in their small, convenient apartment was no great task.

After everything was in order, they sat down with books and pencils to lay out a sort of campaign for the winter.

"I said we would allow ourselves about seven dollars a week for food," Mrs. Thorne began. "Please notice that I said about. It is really impossible to be absolutely exact with you, because you are not sure just where you are going to live. If you are in the country proper, or possibly [Pg 29] even in a suburb, you will find food somewhat less than in the city; milk, eggs, and vegetables are almost always cheaper there than they are here. Then, too, prices differ in different places, sometimes without any apparent reason. So we won't be absolutely bound down to seven dollars a week; sometimes we will spend only six, and once in awhile we may go a little over our allowance, though I plan never to do that.

"Now out of this dollar a day we must buy meat, vegetables, groceries, milk, butter, and eggs, so you see we shall have to be very careful indeed and very saving, especially as we must have a little margin every week to put in some staple. One week we will lay in half a barrel of potatoes, if we find some that are cheap just then; another, we will buy olive oil, or fruit for preserving, or flour, or something for our emergency closet; all these things must be taken into account, you see, if we are not going to get into deep water financially. Just fancy! We might spend our dollar a day right along, and some morning wake up to find ourselves flourless, sugarless, coffeeless, and no money in our purse but the one dollar for the one day! No, the only safe way is to put in staples as we go along, and so never get out of everything at once.

"You see that tin bank on the kitchen mantel: every day when I come back from market I put in [Pg 30] that all the pennies and nickels I have left; then some days, when I have spent only about fifty cents down-town, because we had so much in the house in the way of left-overs that I did not need to get much of anything, I put in all of the dollar that I have left,—perhaps forty cents or so. You can see that I always have enough for our needs right there without drawing on our future.

"And then besides staples there is entertaining to save for. Half the fun of keeping house is having one's friends in to a meal now and then. I just love to give dinner-parties."

"But I thought we allowed for that," said Dolly, turning over the leaves of her book. "You certainly said Entertaining came under Incidentals; see, here it is in black and white."

"So I did, but by that I meant really serious entertaining, which comes only once in awhile, such as a big family dinner at Christmas, with a fourteen-pound turkey or some similar extravagance. If we undertook any such affair as that I should unhesitatingly take out its cost from Incidentals, because otherwise we should be on short rations ourselves for far too long a time to be comfortable, in order to make things come out even; but now I am speaking of little dinners and luncheons when we have four people at a time. Those I hope to get out of our regular allowance; [Pg 31] that is what I want a good margin for. And we can do it all, too; even with meat and vegetables at the frightful price they have reached to-day, it's quite possible, if you know how to manage. Other people do it, and we can, too. 'What man has done,' you know."

Dolly groaned.

"I'm perfectly sure I had better cable to Fred to-day that I have decided we can never be married at all," she declared, dismally. "The longer I think about the matter the more certain I am that seven dollars a week is nothing, absolutely nothing. Why, the last winter we kept house mother went off for a week, and I did the ordering; and I remember the meat bill alone for father, Cousin Marion, myself, and three maids was twenty-eight dollars. Father did not say anything when it came in, and did not seem surprised, and I would not have thought that there was anything strange about it except for a remark mother made when she came back and looked over the accounts. 'Well,' she said, 'I do hope you won't marry a poor man; if you do, I'm sorry for him in advance!' From which I argued that poor people did not spend twenty-eight dollars a week on meat,—not as a general thing!"

"I suppose you had sweetbreads for luncheon once or twice?" asked Mary, smiling.

Dolly nodded. "Certainly. We had sweetbreads several times, and quail, and broiled chickens, too; [Pg 32] and for breakfast we had little French chops, and such things; and for dinner we had capons and guinea-hens and legs of spring lamb. All the delicacies of the season were ours for the telephoning. So you see I don't know the first thing about living on a little."

"I should say not," said her sister, emphatically. "If ever there was an ignoramus, you are one, my dear. But then, I did not know any more than you when I was married, and behold me now! And I'll make you into an expert, too, before this year of servitude is over, or I'm no prophet. And as we had better lose no time over it, we will begin the lessons this very minute. Come out in the kitchen and take a careful view of its contents. I'm proud of my kitchen!"

Dolly did not wonder, when she looked around the room and noticed what her sister pointed out. It was small, but very attractive. The walls were painted cream color and the floor was covered with a blue and white oilcloth. The woodwork was the exact color of the walls. Around the room, six feet from the floor, ran a shelf set out with nests of blue and white bowls and cheap but effective plates and cups and saucers to match, all meant to use in cooking. Under the edge of [Pg 33] the shelf, over the table, hooks were driven, and from these hung spoons and egg-beaters and the little things needed in stirring up dishes. The table itself was covered with blue and white enamel cloth. The sink was painted white, and the dish-towels were of crash marked off in blue squares.

The open cupboard door showed shiny tins and blue and white saucepans, and some delightful contrivances in the way of cream-whippers and mayonnaise-droppers and moulds. Everything was not only spotless but charmingly pretty to look at.

"Do you remember a book we had when we were small, called 'We Girls,' I think it was, in which the family decided to let their maid go and do their own work? They had a basement kitchen and an up-stairs dining-room, and the problem was how to manage. They solved it by doing the work up-stairs in the dining-room, behind a screen. The cooking-stove was brilliant and ornamental with polish. The carpeted floor—carpeted, mind you—never had a speck of flour or grease on it. The cooking was done as if by magic, and they called their workroom a 'ladies' kitchen.' That story made an undying impression on me when I was sixteen. I thought if Fate would only grant me the boon of doing my own work in a palatial kitchen like that, I should have no further requests to make. And I've never forgotten the idea behind the story. My kitchen simply must be [Pg 34] an attractive room, bright and cheerful, with the 'rocking-chair and the white curtain and red geranium in the window,' which newspaper articles tell us nowadays are essential to make a maid contented; you know the kind of thing I mean! Well, since I mean to be a maid a good deal of my life, my kitchen too must be charmingly pretty. And I have not spared expense to make it so, either, for I regard all my blue bowls and labor-saving utensils as investments; they make my work easier, and that is everything when one has other things in the world to do besides cook."

"But don't you have to keep supplying these things over and over? Your first outlay does not by any means cover the whole thing; you have to replace all the time."

"Oh, no, for when I do my own work things last forever; I don't smash bowls and cups and burn the bottoms out of saucepans, as a maid does. And even when I have a maid, I find these things pay, for she will not break pretty things half as fast as she will ugly cracked and burned ones; those she does not bother handling with care. And then I watch the ten-cent counters and other places, and pick up blue and white ware when I find something very cheap; so it does not cost as much to keep stocked up as you would think. But now I want to show you my stoves. I have three [Pg 35] of them—think of that!"

"I don't see a single one," said Dolly, looking around in amazement.

"That is because this is an apartment and not a house, and we cook by gas. But instead of having a range, as most people do, I got the landlord to just give me a three-holed stove standing on little low legs, connected with the gas-pipe with this flexible tube, which I can take off when I am not using it. When I want the stove, I first reach under this cooking-table and pull out this lower table,—an invention of my own; I'm thinking of patenting it. I got a small pine kitchen table, exactly like the larger one, and had six inches cut off the legs and rollers put on; you see it slips in and out easily under the regular table. Then I had the top covered with zinc, so nothing would set it on fire. Under this, on the floor, stands my gas-stove. I pull out the small table, set this stove on it, attach the tube to the gas-jet, and cook. The upper table holds all my extra dishes, you see, and I take them off when I want them on the gas. I have a splendid sheet-iron oven I use to bake things quickly; that I keep out by the refrigerator, because it is bulky, but it is light and easy to handle, so I don't mind lifting it in and out. Then when I have finished cooking I unfasten the gas pipe and let it hang down by the wall; I lift off my stove and put that on the floor, push my [Pg 36] zinc table under my ordinary one, and there I am, all done and orderly. In a little kitchen like this I have to manage space. Of course if you have a good-sized apartment or a house you can have a regular gas-range, as other people do; but I am explaining how to manage if you have a tiny kitchen, such as many of us cliff-dwellers have to cook in. But in any case, have a zinc-topped table; you lift off a hot pot from the stove and set it down there and neither burn nor crock anything, and that is a real blessing when you have to do your own cleaning-up."

"Doesn't your gas cost you a great deal each month? I remember hearing somewhere that it was expensive to cook with it."

"It is not expensive for us, because I use it carefully. Of course if you have a maid who turns on four burners at once, and runs them for hours, you will have a frightful bill. But see these saucepans; three of them, and triangular in shape, so that when they are put together they make

what looks like one good-sized round one. You can fill all three with vegetables or other things, and cook them at once on one burner. That's one great saving, to begin with."

"But even so, when you cook soup or corned beef, or such things, which take hours and hours, you must use lots of gas, in spite of yourself." [Pg 37]

"Ah, that is where another great economy comes in. Look at my fireless stove!" From a corner she drew out a covered wooden box and raised the lid. It was lined with asbestos pads, some fitted close to the sides, others ready to tuck in here and there, or put over the top beneath the lid.

"Now," she said, triumphantly, "you behold the eighth wonder of the world! I want to make soup, let us say, or a slow-cooking rice-pudding, or a stew. I put any one of them on the gas-stove and let them boil for fifteen or twenty minutes, depending on the size of the materials. A small pudding will need less time and soup more,—say twenty or twenty-five. Then I take it off, cover it tightly, put the dish or pot in the box and tuck it up carefully, shut down the cover, and set the box away. When I want it, six or eight hours later on, I open the box, and behold, my soup or my pudding is done to a turn and not a cent's worth of fuel used."

"They'd have burned you for witchcraft a century ago," said Dolly, gazing awestruck at the miraculous box.

"So they would have—cheerfully," Mary replied. "But wait a minute; I forgot to tell you that it also freezes ice-cream."

"That fairy story, my dear, I distinctly decline to believe." [Pg 38]

"It's a fact, nevertheless. The way to do it is this: I make what is called by the initiated, a mousse; that is, I boil a cup of sugar and a cup of water to a thread, pour it slowly over the stiff whites of three eggs, just as you make boiled icing, and when I have beaten it till it is cold I fold in half a pint of whipped cream and flavor it. Then I put the whole in a little covered pail and set that in a larger pail. To admit a somewhat embarrassing truth, they are merely lard-pails which I save for this purpose. I put cracked ice and salt between the two, cover both, and set them in the box. As the pads retain cold as well as they do heat, the ice does not melt, and the mousse gradually freezes itself. Unlike ice-cream, you must never stir it any way; so that if I put the mousse away at noon I take it out for dinner a perfect frozen mould, which both metaphorically and literally melts in your mouth."

"Do have it every day," begged Dolly, with fervor.

"We will have it semi-occasionally," laughed her sister. "Cream, whites of eggs, and flavoring all cost money; but still we do and will have it at convenient periods. That is one of the things I keep a bank for; you will be surprised when you see how much I accumulate there from week to week."

"I certainly shall be surprised if it turns out there is anything at all in it," declared the skeptical pupil, who had yet to learn economy. [Pg 39]

"Now see my third stove; no well-regulated family can manage without three. This thing that looks like a big square tin cracker-box is what is called an Aladdin oven. Perhaps you think I do not need it; but wait a minute. Suppose you want to have baked beans—"

"Fred simply adores baked beans," Dolly murmured, parenthetically, hanging on her sister's words.

"You can't afford to bake them in the gas-oven, because it takes a whole day or night; and of course you can't well bake things in the fireless stove. At least, you cannot make them crisp and brown there, though you can cook them in it. So you put this stove on the zinc table, light the Rochester burner which is attached to a lamp underneath, and then let it go on and bake for you without any attention. It will bake the beans a beautiful and artistic brown, and the kerosene in the lamp will cost you about two cents. Now are not my stoves worth their weight in gold? And if you are too poor to buy them, one of their greatest attractions is you can make two of them yourself. Take a wooden pail with a cover, and make hay-pads for your fireless stove, and get a real tin cracker-box and put a lamp under it for the Aladdin oven, and you will have good substitutes for both these." [Pg 40]

"Well, they are truly wonderful," said Dolly, with conviction, "and far be it from me to throw cold water. But suppose I live in a country village where there is no gas and where the kitchen is unheated. I don't see but that I shall have to have a real old-fashioned stove, and burn plain coal or wood in it, to heat the kitchen, nevertheless."

"Yes, of course you will; these stoves do not heat the kitchen at all,—which, by the way, is a merit in city eyes. But you can have a regular stove for winter, and for summer a kerosene-stove, which is really as good as a gas-range, because it is made with a flame which does not smoke or black things up, and it has an oven lifting on and off exactly like this one on the gas-stove. That will save fuel and work and keep the house cool at the same time. But I certainly would have a fireless stove in any case, because you often want to cook things all night and still not keep the fire going. Oatmeal, for one thing, is far better cooked in this than on top of a stove; you let it simmer from eight at night till seven the next morning, and you will take it out in a sort of jelly which is delicious and very digestible. The Aladdin oven you can have or not, as you find you need it; perhaps in the country you might get on without it, but in town I find it a necessity."

"The stoves must have cost a good deal," mused Dolly. "Did you buy them out of Incidentals?" [Pg 41]

"Yes, I did. I consider all utensils for my work necessities, and when I cannot buy them out of the

margin in my tin bank I deliberately take the money out of the general fund; but in this case you can even things up by saving on Fuel, so it is all the same in the long run, you see. But now look at this pail; this is my bread-mixer."

"You don't tell me that you make your own bread! Why, I supposed of course you bought that in the city. Isn't it a nuisance to have to make it?"

"Simply child's play with this. In the evening I put in the flour and milk and water and yeast, according to the directions, exactly so much of each; then I turn the handle and beat them up for five minutes, cover the pail, and set it away in a nice cozy place, and in the morning I beat it all up again for three minutes in the same way, and put it in my pans to rise. Afterwards I bake it in my gas-oven. In summer I mix it up in the morning and bake it the same day, because, of course, it rises more quickly in warm weather."

"Do you really save much by making it yourself? Because unless you do, I think I'll buy mine; I am sure I would rather."

"I should say you did save! Why, baker's bread would cost at least five cents a day, getting only one loaf, and that is nearly a dollar and a half a month, and a good deal more than a bag of flour would cost, which would last twice as long at least. Flour is expensive to buy by the bag, too; if I could I should always get a barrel at a time, and save a bagful by doing so, but I have no place to put a barrel, and when we are alone it lasts too long, and in a steam-heated apartment it possibly might spoil. But if you live in the country, buy this by the quantity." [Pg 42]

"Don't you always buy things by the quantity? I thought all careful housekeepers made a point of doing that."

"That depends. If I have a maid I seldom do, because experience has taught me that, generally speaking, the more she has to 'do' with, the more she uses up and wastes, and it is natural enough that she should do just that way. So I find the best way is never to have too much on hand. I get a few pounds of sugar, only one box of gelatine, half a cake of chocolate, and so on. I know there is a theory that by buying at wholesale you save a good deal, and so you do, on paper. Actually, with a maid, I believe you use enough to even the account. You know the French, whom I always try and copy as far as possible, since they are such wonderful managers, buy only in tiny quantities, such as we should be ashamed to ask for in our shops. I am perfectly sure if it were cheaper to buy in quantities they would do that way. [Pg 43]

"But of course there are exceptions to this rule; when I do my own work, at least, I frequently do buy a good deal at a time. Tea and coffee I get in small quantities, because they do not improve by keeping; canned vegetables we use rather seldom, and I get those only by the half-dozen. Still I save a little there, because a half-dozen of this and that gives a discount on the whole dozen or dozens that they come to. Butter I buy by rule: a pound a week for each person, when I have a maid; when we are alone I frequently manage to use a little less. Sometimes, too, I get a pound of good cooking-butter and help out with that a little.

"I make it a point to read the market reports in the papers and get an idea of what is cheapest at the moment. Sometimes things will fluctuate from week to week in the most curious way, and you can find real bargains in fruit or some particular vegetable. For instance, when I read that a ship has come in loaded with dates or lemons or pineapples or Bermuda onions, I wait a few days till they are distributed, and then I ask for them, and invariably the price has dropped below normal. So I do not lay down any hard and fast rule about buying, but I just do as seems best from time to time. There are certain things I should do if I had more room, such as buy flour, as I told you, and sugar as well, by the barrel. I cannot do that in a small apartment. In the country I should put in winter vegetables each fall; that, too, I cannot do here, but I try and make it up in other ways." [Pg 44]

"Could you not do with a maid as the Southerners do with their colored people, and give out stores every morning?"

"Perhaps some women might, but, honestly, I have not the moral courage to do so. When everybody does it, as in the South, it is accepted as a perfectly proper thing to do. Here it would be thought mean and small, and a maid would think herself under suspicion of possible theft, and I am sure she would take herself off at the first moment. No, it would not do to try such a thing here, I am sure."

"But with other things besides groceries which you must have, table-linen and bed-linen and towels, how do you do about buying those things? Do you lay in a supply every year at a regular time, or get them as you go along?"

"Linen is one of the things it is difficult to get when you have a small income, and when your housekeeping allowance does not permit any margin larger than just enough for staples. I have to do as best I can here, too. Of course the linen I had when I was married still exists, but most of it is too fine for us to use every day. Costly tablecloths and napkins wear out when they are in constant use, and if I get rid of mine rapidly I shall never be able to replace them; so, though I have so much, I am about on a level with the woman who has none. Don't make the mistake I made, Dolly, and buy your linen all of the loveliest quality. I know it is a temptation, when a father who does not mind what things cost is paying the bills. It is not wise in your future circumstances to have too much beautiful linen and too little that is good also, but plainer and heavier. Get an abundance of small tablecloths and lunch squares, and napkins of medium size, and good strong towels, and sensible sheets and pillow-cases of cotton. I know linen sheets and pillow-cases with monograms on them are delightful to have, but then in a short time you must buy, buy, buy, as you find these are not what you need in your particular surroundings, and with [Pg 45]

a laundress who possibly stoops to use soda in her washing once in awhile when she thinks you won't find her out.

"As to replacing these things, I get a dozen napkins or towels or a tablecloth when I have the money and when they are cheap; that is all I can tell you about it. I do not buy them at regular intervals, because I cannot do that way. I believe, of course, in putting in just so much linen every year and so never getting short, only I can't do it."

"I suppose all your things need replacing at times. When chair coverings wear out, and carpets, and your china set breaks to bits gradually till it disappears, do you fly to Incidentals, or what?" [Pg 46]

"Oh, I do as I told you before; I manage as best I can. You learn to cover your own furniture in time, not elegantly, but well enough. You paint or stain your floors when your carpets wear out, and put down rugs, not always Oriental rugs, either, but occasionally artistic—and luckily fashionable—rag-carpet rugs made in beautiful colors, dyed just the way you want them, in olive-greens or dull orange or old blue; they are really beautiful, and I mean to have plenty of them as my wedding supply of good rugs gradually goes. As for china, I take care of what I have, you may be sure, and once in awhile I put Christmas money or birthday money from home into a set of plates for salad or dessert; or I save up and buy a whole set of platters and vegetable dishes and plates for a main course. Even if I were rich I should never care for a whole dinner-service that matched. I like different kinds of plates for different courses, though they ought to harmonize. Then as tumblers and such small things vanish, I cut down my table expenses for a week and buy them with my savings, unless my tin bank is full at the time. I will not break into Incidentals unless I must."

"No, I should expect you to serve water in tin mugs before you would touch that sacred sum." [Pg 47]

"Well, perhaps I might do that way; I'm glad you suggested it."

"Is that the end of the lesson for the day?"

"What have you written down?"

"'Have a pretty kitchen,'" read Dolly. "'Have a zinc table and three stoves; make your own bread; buy some things by quantity and don't buy others so; have linen not too nice for hard usage; get dishes as you can, when they break; and don't buy anything with money out of Incidentals."

"Very good indeed, especially the last warning," laughed Mary. "Now the class is dismissed, for it is too lovely to stay indoors another minute, and we will go to market and then down-town. By the way, one of the joys in having no maid is that you can turn the key in your door and walk off any minute you please and leave no anxieties behind you. You know the dishes are washed and put away, there is nothing left in the oven to burn, and no mistakes to be made by anybody; and you come home when you please. I just love to do my own work!"

"What a desirable state of mind to be in," Dolly replied. "Let us hope I'll attain that same lofty height by the time my 'prentice year is up."

CHAPTER III [Pg 48]

Arranging the Meals—Cooking-Dresses—The Table—The Dinner

"Now that you know all about your working-tools in the kitchen and pantry, I think it is time you should begin to take them in hand," said Mrs. Thorne, the next morning. "Don't you remember how Squeers used to teach his boys first to spell 'bot-tin-ney,' and then go and weed the garden to prove that the lesson had been learned? That's my principle, exactly. So now as to to-day's work; I have been thinking it over and I believe we must study the routine of the meals theoretically and go on to illustrate by getting them practically. But where to begin—that is the trouble; I'm such a novice in teaching that I am bewildered what to take up first."

"Bread-making, I suppose," said Dolly, with regret.

"Oh, no, indeed, not for a long time yet. First, the theory, you know."

"Well, while you are thinking about it I will just occupy the time with asking some questions. One of them is this: do you always look as neat and trim when you do your work, or is this costume a sort of stage-dress for my benefit?" [Pg 49]

"My dear, I can proudly say I always look just as I do now, and I'll tell you why. When I first had to do my own work, years ago, I put on a short skirt and shirt-waist, with an apron over all; that, I supposed, was just the proper thing. Then I rolled up my sleeves, took off my stock or collar, and hung it on a nail in the kitchen, and did my dishes or cooked. When the door-bell rang I put on my collar and unrolled my sleeves and took off my apron, and answered it. It was not long before I discovered that my sleeves were perpetually mussed, and I had temporarily lost my self-respect by dispensing with a collar. Then, too, in spite of all I could do, the dish-water would sometimes splash over and the lower part of my dress would get greasy. I spoiled two good tailor-skirts that way. And worst of all, when Dick came home, all I could do by way of dressing to meet him was to put on another fresh shirt-waist and a clean apron, because I knew that after dinner I should wash the dishes. The consequence was that I never wore my pretty frocks at all, and my husband knew me only as a cook; sometimes a cook who sat with him in the parlor, but a cook,

nevertheless, and one who did not change her dress after the dishes were done for the night, and so had to run when callers came for the evening. [Pg 50]

"After a few weeks of that sort of thing I made up my mind it would never do. I must be a 'lady help,' even though there was no one to help but Dick. So I changed my plans of work and got some especial gowns, and I have kept to a sort of uniform like this ever since, to my infinite satisfaction. If you look me over carefully you may discover the points I had in mind when I planned it."

Dolly looked. "I see," she said, slowly. "Elbow sleeves, to keep from rolling them up; and a little square Dutch neck just below the collar line, so you won't have to wear a collar; and a short, full skirt, just off the floor; and the color, my dear,—and here you show your feminine vanity,—a most becoming blue!"

"I hope so," said Mary, not at all abashed. "I like to have becoming clothes, even in the kitchen. But you did not say a word of the material; all my working things are ginghams or some sort of wash goods. Then they are all in one piece, and trimmed with plain bias bands edged with a fold of white, or some similar contrivance. I put an apron on when I do kitchen work and try and keep the dresses clean as long as I can, and when they are soiled put them right in the tub, and they take no time to do up. And, by the way, they are not all this pretty color. I have still more [Pg 51] serviceable ones of dark navy blue, and others of striped gray and white, like a nurse's dress; but I am thankful to say they are all pretty and all becoming, and far neater in every way than my shirt-waist and skirt used to be."

"Do you wear the same thing summer and winter?"

"No; in summer I have thin things, lawns and dimities and organdies, but they are all made like this. Even my dress-up summer things are apt to be, too, because I like the fashion and it never 'goes out,' as other fashions do."

"But you don't wear this uniform at dinner. At least you change every afternoon now to a more or less dress-up frock. Is that for my benefit? Do you wear these gowns when you are alone?"

"No, never. I always put on a fresh and pretty gown after my lunch dishes are put away and my dinner all ready but heating it up or doing the last necessary cooking. Then I spend the afternoon like a lady of leisure. At dinner-time I put a mammoth long-sleeved apron on and go out in the kitchen and finish up as I am; I take off my apron before the dinner is served, too. If I have to carry out plates and wait, as of course I do when we are alone, then I have a really pretty little white apron I slip on; but I will look as nice as I can at my own dinner-table."

"And spill the greasy dish-water around the edge of the dress, as you did before?" [Pg 52]

"Never again; I learned my lesson at that time. No, my dresses clear the ground all around; that had to be so, to my regret, because I love a long gown for dinner, but I will not pin up a train at the back with a safety-pin, as so many do, nor will I wear things soiled. I have them just a tiny bit off the floor, and put on the big apron. As to the dish-water, Dolly, to let you into an awful secret which would make our New England grandmother turn in her grave, I never do any dishes at night; that is part of the lesson I told you I had mastered. I just clear the table, scrape the things and pile them in the big dish-pan, with some very hot water and a little soap powder, and there they repose till morning. I tidy the kitchen and dining-room in about three minutes, and that is all I do. Then I take off my apron and go into the parlor, rested and ready to spend the evening with my husband."

"Do you never set the breakfast-table at night?"

"No; it does not take any time to do it in the morning, and, as I tell you, I will not do a single unnecessary thing at night. Then I have more important things to think of; books to read and friends to see and a husband to entertain. I am in earnest, Dolly. That is all a part of learning how to manage to keep a home as well as a house."

"I certainly shall never learn enough to marry on, I see that. But tell me more while we are on [Pg 53] this subject. How do you have such a pretty table all the time and still economize in everything, including time and strength? I should think it would take both money and labor to keep up as you do."

"To speak with seriousness still, then, I am convinced most girls make a great mistake when, after having had pretty things all their lives, they marry on a small income and one by one give up their dainty little ways of doing. Sometimes they put everything on the table at once at dinner; sometimes they have a tablecloth that has seen better days; sometimes they dispense with a fern-dish, or stop cleaning the silver. I call it all bad management. One can keep up the traditions of niceness just as easily as to dispense with them, and to my mind it is false economy to let down. If you must have plain food, it tastes better, and I believe it nourishes you more, if it is set out attractively. No, Dolly, never give up using your pretty dishes and doilies, and keep your silver and glass bright, and learn to do it so easily that it is a matter of course, and it will never be the last straw that reduces you to nervous prostration, as some women believe. Ugly things, soiled and broken things, and careless living, are far more likely to wear out your nerves than trifles such as I am telling you to attend to."

"But as to details, Mary. Take your breakfast and lunch-table; there are those doilies, always [Pg 54] clean and white, and your pretty blue and white china. How about the laundress's bills and the cost of the dishes?"

"There is no economy, to my thinking, greater than is found in using doilies, to begin with. I put

them on as you see, always, for two meals. When one gets mussed or gets a spot on it I wash it out when I do my dishes; I have an iron on and press it as soon as it dries, right here in the kitchen, and it is ready for next time. When they all need a regular boiling, I put a set in the weekly wash, and the laundress does them in far less time than she would a tablecloth. For dinner of course I do use a cloth, but having it on only once a day it lasts a week, and there is but one in the wash instead of two or three, as there would be otherwise. If a spot comes on this I rub it out in a hand-basin and stretch the cloth out smoothly on the table and leave it to dry; then if it is rough, I put on an iron for a moment. Of course I should not use a soiled cloth under any circumstances."

"And the china?"

"That is just cheap blue and white Japanese stuff that I have picked up a piece at a time, sometimes at the ten-cent stores; it would chip in the hands of some maids, I suppose, but I am [Pg 55] careful of it. If I had a maid who broke things I would get other and heavier kinds of blue and white; there are plenty that are cheap and pretty. I love blue and white for breakfast and luncheon."

"And how often do you clean the silver?"

"I wash it every day in very hot soapsuds and dry it quickly; that keeps it bright a long time. Then usually I polish it all once a week, some rainy afternoon when I am not pressed for time."

"Well, this is all a revelation to me. I supposed people who 'did their own work,' as we say, had to have everything very plain, and, to be honest, very uncomfortable. I supposed they put on a dinner-cloth in the morning and kept the table set most of the day, and saved steps by having on all the food at once at each meal. I hate that way of living, too. But how do you do about waiting on the table? Do you keep jumping up and down all the time?"

"Certainly not, my dear—perish the thought! When you lay your table put on the bread, the butter balls, if you use them, the jelly, if you are to have any, and fill the glasses. Put on the sideboard the salad, the dressing, the plates and crackers; put the dessert there, too, with its plates, and the coffee-cups and spoons. Have ready there also extra bread and butter, if necessary, and fill the water-pitcher before the meal is served. Then take up all the dinner, and put the vegetables [Pg 56] in the covered dishes in the warming-oven, and the meat ready there also on the platter; leave nothing to do after you sit down that you can do beforehand.

"In changing the courses you can set the soiled plates on the sideboard, to save leaving the room, provided you have the next course there; or, if you like, you can have a low two-shelved serving-table on casters close by your side at the table. You can put the plates on this if you can easily reach them, as you can if you have a small round table for two, and if your next course is on one of the two shelves, instead of on the sideboard, you may be able to produce it from there and put it right on and not get up at all; that is a very easy way of doing."

"You use a coffee machine, I see; do you like it better than the old way of making the coffee in the kitchen?"

"Without a maid I certainly do. I light this before dinner, and when we are ready it is there, ready for us, and I do not have to go out for it."

"Single-handed housekeeping has its ways of doing of which people never dream who have always had maids to wait on them. I think that all sounds simple enough."

"It is simple, and yet it is nice, and things go smoothly. Now, next I want to say some things about [Pg 57] having dinner at night, for that is one of my hobbies. I believe it is by far the easiest way to manage when one is to be the cook as well as the lady of the house."

"Most people don't think so, I fancy."

"Well, but they have not tried it, perhaps. It is a tradition in many places, especially in the country, to have dinner at noon and supper at night, on the ground that supper is the easy meal to get and clear away, but I maintain that it makes one work all day. Now listen: Suppose you are to have dinner at noon. After breakfast you must hurry and do up the dishes and get the house in order; go to market as early as possible, in order that the food may come home in good season; come back, make dessert, lay the dinner-table, and as soon as your orders arrive, clean the vegetables, put the meat on to cook, and generally prepare the meal. If it is ready by half-past twelve or one o'clock you have been busy every single moment since you got up. Then after dinner there are all the dishes to wash and put away and the supper to begin, unless that you have done in the morning with the other things. By three o'clock you have finished, but you are all tired out, if you are a normal woman of average strength.

"Now see how different the matter is with dinner at night. After breakfast you wash and put away [Pg 58] the dishes from the night before with the breakfast dishes; then you do up the housework and examine the refrigerator. As you have only a light meal to get for noon, you will ordinarily find something there which you can have; or you can decide to get something simple and prepare it just before lunch. Next you go down-town and market in a leisurely manner, because you are not in a desperate rush to get the things home. When you return you prepare the dinner; put the soup-meat and bones in the fireless stove to cook, or make a milk soup to reheat; make the dessert and set it away; stir up salad-dressing; bake a cake, or do any such light cooking. When the grocery boy comes and the butcher's boy, you prepare the vegetables for dinner and do whatever you have to to the meat; perhaps put it in the fireless stove, if it is a stew, or chop it if it is to be any sort of mince.

"Then you have luncheon; scrambled eggs, or devilled sardines, or any light dish, with tea. Afterwards you wash and put away these dishes, and then your afternoon is before you; it cannot be later than two o'clock at the worst. You sew, or go out, or rest in any way you like, and at five or half-past, at the earliest, you put the final touches to the dinner and lay the table. Afterwards, as I have said, you pile the dishes in the dish-pan in a nice, tidy way, and your day's work is done. [Pg 59] That seems to me the easiest sort of housekeeping. However, I don't mean to dogmatize. This is merely my own idea, and if you don't agree with me, but later on you can manage better some other way, do so, and accept my blessing."

"Certainly I shall. But as I now see the case, I shall do just as you do and continue to have dinner at night to the end of the chapter. You might have added to your other reasons for having it than the one we were taught at school, that it is most hygienic to have the heavy meal when work is over."

"That is true; I did not think of it, but there is that in its favor as well as the ease and comfort of it. But now to go on to other things about dinners."

"Why do you begin with dinners? I should think you would take up breakfast first and then luncheons."

"For one thing, dinner is the principal meal of the day and therefore the most important; for another, as the two lighter meals are largely made up of left-overs from dinner, you must begin with that or you will not have anything for the other two."

"Oh, yes, of course. Go on, then, with the lesson."

"The first rule for dinners is this: Always have your food in courses. You would be surprised to find that plenty of poor people—poor but respectable, like ourselves—would dispute this, but I assure you they would. [Pg 60] They have an idea that with a small income you should have one large, substantial course of meat and vegetables, with perhaps a solid pudding or pie to follow, and eliminate all frills and fashions of service. To them the plan of a three-course dinner every day is a wild vagary, not to be considered by people living on a little; but really it is the truest economy. Look at the French; I have to point to them over and over, even if you tire of hearing about them. They can make a tiny bit of money go farther than an American would dream possible, and they always have their dinners in courses. You may be perfectly positive that there is good, solid reason back of that fact, for unless they saved money by it they would not do so.

"You will see how it is if you think a moment, too. If you give a hungry family, or even a lone hungry man, a plate of strong, substantial soup, the edge of his appetite is blunted, and when the meat course appears, instead of demanding two helpings, one will probably suffice. Now as meat is your most expensive item of housekeeping, you can easily see what an advantage that is. Soups are very wholesome, and, if you will kindly overlook the slang, decidedly 'filling at the price.' You will save materially, your family will have stronger digestions and better health, and no one will suspect your economic motive.

"Then after the soup, of course you have your substantial course; and here comes in my second [Pg 61] rule: Remember that you cannot have any expensive meats. Give up all your preconceived ideas of what is 'proper' for dinner. You cannot have the proper thing; instead you must have the cheap thing. Roasts, steaks, and chickens are not for you. In their place you must have all sorts of queer things, which you would naturally call luncheon or supper dishes. It seems strange and unpleasant, doesn't it? But that is the way it has to be if you are to be a good manager. However, here is a grain of comfort for you: men seldom pay much attention to details; to them, meat is meat, and if it is good and there is plenty of it, it does not much matter from what part of the animal it is cut nor how much it costs a pound. So a Hamburg steak or a stew or a meat pie is all right, provided only that it is appetizing and nourishing. And as I said, the costly things you simply cannot have."

"Do you really mean we are never to have a roast?"

"Oh, once in awhile you may have one, for Sunday dinner or for company; but for steady diet you are to have simpler things. And here comes in my third rule, no less important than the other two: Never use up the meat from one day's dinner for breakfast or luncheon, but always save it for dinner the second day. That seems absurd and impossible, I know, for sometimes there is [Pg 62] nothing worth mentioning left over; but listen:

"Suppose you get three pounds of lamb stew one day, which is too much for a single meal; you cook it all, take out the large bones and put them over for soup, and serve half the meat for dinner. The second night you have the other half in a meat pie, with any gravy you do not need you put in the stock-pot. Now, incidentally, let me say that sometimes lamb is expensive, so do not rush madly off when you market and invest largely in it because I said it was cheap. Always watch the price and buy only when things are low in price.

"You see this is the way I plan: I make a point of buying enough meat for two dinners at one time, because one large purchase costs less and goes farther than two smaller ones. You can buy a pound and a half of chopped beef and make two meals of it for less than you can buy one pound one day and a second pound the next, and that is what you would do, practically, if you bought each day."

"But I am sure Fred would not like Hamburg steak twice running, Mary."

"He need not have it. I buy the two days' supply at once, say the steak on Monday; I serve half that night in one fashion; Tuesday night I have something quite different, perhaps veal; Wednesday night we have the rest of the steak in another way from the way we had it Monday [Pg 63]

night, and Thursday night we finish up the veal, also in a different way from the Tuesday night style. That gives variety, and a man cannot keep count of these things in spite of his alleged mathematical mind, so it works perfectly."

"Suppose you don't get enough for two nights, or the man eats more than you expected he would and you are short, what do you do then?"

"I manage, my dear. If I have a good deal of meat left over from the first day's dinner I have perhaps English rissoles; or I have a nice dish of baked hash; or a cottage loaf; or I have a meat pie.

"If I run short and have only a little meat, as you suggest, I have a soufflé, which takes only a cup of chopped meat for a good-sized dishful. I'll give you the rule for that. Or, I have croquettes; they are one of the queer dishes apparently out of place at dinner, but they are good and make a change, and when you have only a little meat they are invaluable. You see what I mean. Plan to get enough meat for two dinners at once, and if you are short on the second night, have a little dish of left-overs, disguised."

"But do you think croquettes would be enough dinner for a hungry man? I have an idea they would be considered as a sort of appetizer only."

"Of course they would not be enough; what an idea! You have forgotten soup. Always have a [Pg 64] course of distinctly heavy soup when you are to have a light meal, and vice versa. With corned beef you can have a thin stock, clear; but with croquettes have a rich, substantial bean soup or split pea purée, and have solid vegetables with the meat and a good dessert. All those things may be cheap and not bring up your bills at all, and still you can keep down that dreadful item we housekeepers all must struggle with,—meat."

"And do you have fish on Fridays?"

"Yes, I have fish occasionally, for a change, but I am careful to buy that which has little waste. Large, whole fishes for baking are expensive, for the head and tail have to come off, you see. I get codfish steaks or sometimes a little halibut; neither of those has any waste at all. Or, if there were a river near by, or a lake, I should find out what they caught there and buy that. One day I have the fish as it comes from market, baked or fried, or otherwise prepared; the next day I have the remains scalloped with crumbs and baked. Sometimes I have them in cream sauce, baked in the same way. Once in awhile I get a can of salmon in the place of fresh fish and use it in exactly the same way; and when the exchequer gets very low indeed, I take salt codfish and freshen it and cream and bake it, and invariably Dick compliments me on the extremely good halibut I [Pg 65] have!"

"Absurd! But to go on: tell me about the vegetables and salads and desserts that you have."

"I can't do it all at once, my dear; you are so energetic! We will take a special lesson on each of those important things as we come to them. Just now I am laying down principles, you see, and I was speaking of courses at dinner when you diverted me with your questions, just as a pupil when she is not prepared does to a teacher. But perhaps you have my idea, and I can stop here."

"Yes, I think I understand. Have a heavy soup when you have a light course to follow; have a light soup with a heavy meat; have vegetables with the meat and dessert last; is that all?"

"Often I have meat and vegetables first and then salad next; always in summer, I think. It is the best way in hot weather. But have three courses,—that is the economic point I am striving for,—and have coffee last, if you can. Men love coffee for dinner, and if it is black and only a little is taken, it is considered a digestive; and, like other things, it helps out."

"Think of the dishes you are piling up for me to wash in the morning, Mary!"

"Not at all. Only a poor cook ever has piles of dishes to wash up. Wash up all your cooking utensils as you go along. When you have finished with anything, even a bowl or spoon, take it to [Pg 66] the sink, wash, wipe, and put it away; it takes no more steps to do it then than it will later. After dinner at night there should be only the few dishes actually in use on the table; if, possibly, you cannot manage to wash up your broiler or frying-pan because you use them at the last minute, and also because they are too greasy to handle in your nice gown, put these in a special dish-pan all by themselves, with hot water and washing-powder, and stand this out of the way till morning; so much is allowable."

"Is that all for to-day?" Dolly inquired, seeing her sister preparing to do some cooking.

"Yes, that is all, and though you may not think it amounts to much, you will see more in the lesson when you come to keep house than you do now. If you always are neat and look attractive, if you always serve a delightful course dinner for a minimum sum, and have a pretty table, you will be far on your way toward being the perfect housewife."

"I wish I were at the end now," murmured Dolly.

"Then you would lose half the fun of life, my dear. The interest of your studies grows the farther you get along, as I have told you before. Long before you know it all you will be sighing for more worlds to conquer." Dolly looked unconvinced, but her sister laughed at her sober face. [Pg 67]

"Mark my words, before you are a finished housekeeper you will love your work!"

CHAPTER IV

[Pg 68]

Soups and Meats

"When I came to look over what you said about soups and meats the other day," Dolly complained at the next lesson, "I found it was all glittering generalities. I didn't have a thing written down under soups but 'beans' and 'split peas,' and as to meats, it was mostly don'ts or left-overs. Now, before you go off on anything else, suppose you tell me a lot more about these things."

"So I will. Perhaps I did generalize a bit, but I do not always realize that you do not know how to use a cook-book yet; if you did you could look up all these things for yourself.

"To begin with soups, then, like 'all Gaul,' they are divided into three parts.' There are soups made with vegetables and water and nothing else; soups made with a foundation of meat and bones; and milk-and-vegetable soups. The first kind is the cheapest, and we will start there.

[Pg 69]

"There are any number of good things to make these soups of, principally beans,—black, white, red, and Lima beans, all dried. You must soak them, cook them slowly in another water, season well with a slice of onion, salt, and pepper, and put them, when they are soft and pulpy, through the sieve. What is called a purée sieve is the best, because it is made in such a way that it presses the vegetables through itself. Then you must thicken the soup with a little bit of butter melted and rubbed with flour; this is not because it is not thickened with the vegetables already, but because the water will separate from the rest if no extra thickening is used. You can have the soup rather thin to make it just right after it is thickened.

"Black bean soup is the best kind; this really needs a bone of some sort cooked with it, a ham bone if you have it. Then it takes lots of seasoning, a pinch of mustard, a thin slice or two of lemon, and last a little chopped hard-boiled egg on top at serving; but it pays for the slight trouble of making it because it is so good; have it often in winter. White bean soups also need a good deal of seasoning, and a bone is good in them, but not really necessary. Left-over baked beans make a good brown soup, and dried Lima beans are excellent; alternate these, and make each one by rule, for each has some little touch of seasoning which makes it have a taste of its own. Any cook-book will tell you how, because all of them are so simple to put together. Besides

[Pg 70]

these there is one more thick soup, split pea purée, which you must have too. You can buy the peas in packages, but you can also get them in bulk, and that is the cheaper way. You soak and cook them exactly as you do the beans, and serve them with croutons on top; croutons are tiny squares of bread browned in the oven,—not fried in fat, as some people make them; those are very greasy.

"You can also make purées of any fresh vegetable, carrots, or garden peas, or a mixture of several kinds of vegetables; cook them with onion and salt and pepper and bits of celery or parsley, and put them through the sieve and thicken them. All of them are improved by adding a little milk, but they will do as they are if you have none to spare."

"Do you put a bone in purées?"

"If I happen to have one I do, but not otherwise; I never buy a bone for such a soup. Remember that these thick soups go with the dinners with the light meat course, because they are so substantial. Now we will go on to the next kind.

"The stock soups are made with water, bones, meat, and vegetables. Some housekeepers keep a stock pot on the back of the range and put in it any odds and ends they happen to have, adding more water and seasoning from time to time. When they want a soup, they pour off enough of the

[Pg 71]

stock, strain and clarify it, and either use it as it is or put in something like tomato or potato. This is all very well if you have a range which goes day and night, and if you are careful to completely empty the pot twice a week in winter and three times a week in summer and scrub it out thoroughly and start an entirely fresh lot of bones and meat; otherwise the whole will have a sour taste. I think a better way is to start a soup on the fire and cook it all night in the tireless stove; start it over again in the morning, and cook it half a day more, and then cool and use it."

"Do you mean you pour off the soup, and it is all right just as it is?"

"No, indeed; you first put what bones and meat and vegetables you have in cold water and slowly bring them to the boiling point and skim well. Then you must simmer and simmer on the stove or in the tireless box. When it is done you cool it, take off the white cake of fat on top and save it for frying purposes; heat the soup again and clarify it by stirring in a washed and broken up egg-shell and a little of the white. When this has boiled with the soup for two minutes, the whole will clear. Then you strain it and divide it; half you can have one night with tapioca or barley or minced vegetables, and the other half another night with perhaps tomato in it."

"Do you buy bones and things for stock soup?"

[Pg 72]

"No, because I use what I have. I don't think it is necessary to buy things for it; but one thing I do; I keep a little kitchen bouquet in the house. It comes in a small bottle on purpose, and it flavors the soup and at the same time colors it brown; that is really necessary, making soup out of odd things, for too often it has little color.

"Milk soups come next, and those are always nice; cream of celery or cream of corn are among the best things we can have. Unfortunately, if you have to buy your milk, they are rather expensive; however, I will tell you how to make them in case you have an extra pint to use up at any time. You take about a cupful of any vegetable and cook it in a pint of water till it is pulpy,

adding a little onion, salt, and pepper; then you put it through the sieve, and add a pint of milk, or, rather, add as much milk as you have water, for often you can use only half a pint of each. Then you thicken it slightly, cook it up once, strain, and serve. You can use left-overs of any sort for this,—the outer leaves of lettuce, a little spinach, a few cooked beets, or minced carrot, or a mixture of any different thing you happen to have in the refrigerator. I often make this soup in the morning and just heat it up for dinner, to save time; or, I get the vegetables ready and add the milk at night. Now that is the end of the soup lesson; it is too easy to spend more time over." [Pg 73]

"But I can think of ever and ever so many more soups you have not so much as mentioned," said Dolly, indignant at having her thirst for information treated in this summary manner. "You have not spoken of oyster soup or clam chowder, or tomato bisque, or potato soup, or—"

Mary put her hands over her ears. "I won't listen," she said. "I am not compiling a cook-book, as I keep on telling you over and over. I am only laying down general instructions, and after you get those fixed in your mind you can go on by yourself and have no trouble at all. I am in such a hurry to get on to meats, to tell the truth, that I feel like skipping everything to get to that, because to my mind it is the most important of all the subjects we have to learn about. It is where most housekeepers come to grief, if they do. I consider that a girl who wants to really live on a little cannot know too much about meat; she must simply have the whole subject at her finger-ends.

"Remember what I told you in your last lesson, that you cannot have regular dinner meat at all, but instead must have plain and cheap dishes of all sorts and kinds. Now we will begin with beef, because that is really our staple; it is good and nourishing and has no waste about it. Also it does [Pg 74] not vary much in price in the different seasons of the year; it is a plain, substantial, dependable sort of meat.

"Though we cannot have regular roasting-roasts, we may have pot-roasts. To make those you buy a sort of square piece from the round. Do not let the butcher persuade you to get a long, thin piece; insist on a chunk. Sear this all over by pressing it down in a hot frying-pan, first on one side and then on the other; this makes a covering that keeps in the juices. Then simmer it a long, long time in a deep covered dish; a casserole, or a crock, or some such thing. When it is half-done put in salt and pepper, chopped onions, and plenty of finely minced vegetables, and keep on cooking till it is tender and the juice is pretty well absorbed. You can cook it in the tireless stove all day, or keep it shut up in the oven of the range, or let it cook slowly on the back of it; but it must cook very slowly and a long, long time. This is all good solid meat, and a four-pound piece will easily make three meals, with perhaps something over for croquettes.

"Beef stew is just this same sort of thing; beef cut in finger lengths, and cooked with vegetables till very soft. Serve that with the gravy thickened. Chopped beef you can have in a dozen ways. Buy cheap beef and put it through your own meat-chopper, to be quite sure it is perfectly clean. [Pg 75] Sometimes I get three pounds at once, and make up two pounds into beef loaf, mixing it with a cup of bread crumbs, an egg, salt, and pepper, and a little bit of salt pork. I put it in a bread tin and bake it two hours, basting it well with melted butter and water mixed, and serve it hot, with either a brown gravy or a tomato sauce. That is a dish good enough for a king. For the second dinner you slice what is left, and heat this in the gravy or tomato; or, have brown gravy with the loaf and thick tomato with the slices.

"The other pound I make into a steak. Now real porter-house steak is far too costly for you and me, but I recommend this substitute; you will be surprised to see how exactly it looks like a porter-house and how good it tastes. Copy the shape and size of the real thing, and flatten out the chopped meat and make it into a long piece, larger at one end than the other. Have the butcher give you some strips of suet and press one down through the middle, to represent the bone; put the other one all around the steak to look like the edge of fat. Then put this into a hot, dry frying-pan and cook it, turning it only once and dusting with salt and pepper as you do so. Do not overcook it, as it should be pink inside. Take it up on a hot platter, put a little butter on top and parsley around the edge, and, behold, a perfectly gorgeous porter-house!

"When I am going to make a beef loaf, and do not intend to have this steak, however, I get only [Pg 76] two pounds and a half of the meat, and the extra half-pound I make up into little balls and fry. At the same time I fry thick rounds of banana and put one on each ball when I take them up; this is a very good combination. Or, Dolly, if you will never betray me, I will tell you a horrid secret. Twice a year, when the equinoctial storm rages and I am positively certain no one can go out or come in that evening, I make up a plain little steak without suet of the extra half-pound, and all around the edge I put—fried onions!"

"I don't wonder you said it was a horrid secret. I don't think I shall ever sink to that low level; fried onions are not romantic."

"Still, put it down, equinoctial and all, my dear, for Fred probably will approve the dish in spite of your prejudice. And now one thing more about steak: did you ever hear of a flank steak?"

"Never in my life."

"That is the answer most women would make to the question, I fancy; yet, strange to say, many epicures think this one of the best dishes of beef there is. You get the butcher to cut you one, and hang it till it is tender. Then broil it, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and dot with butter mixed with chopped parsley; if you have any doubts about its being tender, score it all over with a sharp [Pg 77] knife and lay it in a little oil and vinegar mixed for half an hour or more before you cook it. You will really find it a delicious piece of meat, and you will have enough over for a second dinner, at least."

"Do you ever have corned beef?"

"Once in awhile. When we have it, I cook it till it is very tender and serve it as it is the first night; then I put it back in the water it was cooked in, to keep it from drying out, and the second time I have it I cut it up in even cubes and cream them and put them in a baking-dish with crumbs and butter on top, and brown it in the oven. It is difficult to use up corned beef, for it is not good sliced and warmed over, as most meats are. Sometimes we have it cold, with a hot soup and vegetables; or I have a dish of hash put in a mould and baked. I turn this out and surround it with a ring of minced carrots and turnips; that does very well indeed. The stock I make into bean soup.

"Veal I find a most useful meat, for there is so little waste about it, like beef. When I have a roast I get the breast and stuff it and it is just as good as the higher priced roasts. I get the cheap cut from the leg too, and have a stew with dumplings in it, or a meat pie; if I have any over I sometimes mix it with egg, gravy, and crumbs and make a loaf of it. Or I mince it, add chopped [Pg 78] hard-boiled eggs, and serve it that way. Then there is veal stew cooked with tomatoes; to make that, cut up the meat, add a slice of onion and a small cup of tomato, with a tablespoonful of rice or barley, and simmer them all till they are almost solid. This is very nourishing and good. Veal cutlet is expensive, but half a pound goes a long way if you have it cut in small bits and pound them out, and bread and fry them.

"Then there is veal loaf; that is a delightful dish. Get the cheapest veal you can buy and chop it; add a little chopped salt pork, bread crumbs, seasoning, some celery if you have any, or chopped nuts, and bake it as you did the beef loaf; that will make at least two dinners. In summer you can have that for dinner, cold.

"And also for summer, do not forget to have veal and ham pie. You get about a pound of veal, a slice of ham, and a veal knuckle bone, and simmer them all together till the meat drops apart; put this in layers in a deep baking-dish, and add seasoning. Boil down the stock to a cupful, strain it, add a level teaspoonful of gelatine dissolved in cold water, and pour it all over the meat; put on a thin crust and bake it. Set it away to get ice-cold, and you will have a pie with the meat set in a delicious aspic jelly."

"Wasn't that the 'Weal and hammer' of the Boffins?" [Pg 79]

"It was indeed, and worthy of immortalization, too. And now as to a second dinner off one of these firsts. One of the perfectly improper dinner dishes you will want to have is croquettes. You can make them of any sort of meat, but they are particularly nice of veal. Learn to make good croquettes, Dolly. So few amateur cooks can do it, and it is the easiest thing in the world to do if only you will remember a few simple things."

"I'll write the rule down; I love croquettes."

"Chop your meat evenly, to begin with; then make the white sauce with double the usual quantity of flour. Instead of using one cup of milk, one tablespoonful of butter, and one of flour, you must take two of flour; that is the first thing to emphasize. You mix this with the meat and seasoning and cook it till it is a smooth paste; spread it out thickly in a platter and let it get perfectly cold before you take another step. I leave mine an hour, at the very least. Then cut it up into small pieces and roll them under your hand and square the ends; dip each one in finely sifted bread crumbs—have them well sifted, Dolly. Next dip in half-beaten egg yolk, then in crumbs again, and then dry them thoroughly before you go any farther. I usually make the paste after breakfast and [Pg 80] set it away, bread the croquettes after lunch and set them away again. Then just before dinner I fry them, two at a time, in the wire basket in deep fat. I keep them in only enough to brown the crumbs; then I put them in the oven on paper to drain, leaving the door open. That way you make delicious croquettes, pale golden brown outside and creamy inside and with a soup—"

"A good thick purée," interrupted Dolly.

"Yes, and vegetables, you will have a substantial meal.

"Now for pork. I do hope you are going to see that you get that from a reliable man, and have it once in awhile, especially in winter, for it is to my mind neither indigestible nor unwholesome for a change, and it is such an inexpensive meat that it saves you ever so much. You can see for yourself that two pork chops, with all the other things you are to have for dinner, will be plenty of meat for two people, and so cheap! Pork tenderloins I think are the greatest economy. Try getting two of them and opening them lengthwise, filling them with bread-crumb stuffing, and roasting them with nice brown gravy; you will be perfectly surprised to see how good they are. There will be enough meat left over for a second dinner, either croquettes or scallop or something else. And there is this other way of cooking them: tell the butcher to French them for you; that is, to cut [Pg 81] them into rounds and pound each one out into a little cake. Cook these in the frying-pan till they are a pale brown; arrange them on a hot platter, and put an edge of mashed potato around. One good-sized tenderloin will make a dinner.

"As to mutton, you can get what are called steaks of that; really they are chops from the top of the leg, round, with a bone in the middle. Those you can simmer a little, as they are inclined to be tough, and then fry them; or broil them and have peas with them. And there is mutton stew, and scrag of mutton—a part of the neck,—and minced mutton made up into collops with Worcestershire sauce, and mutton stewed with barley into a thick Scotch broth and served like a stew; all those are cheap. As to roasts, once in a long time you can get a small leg of mutton and parboil it, to save roasting it all the time in the oven, and so shrinking it more or less. Brown it at the last, however, and serve it with peas and mint jelly. For the second dinner there will be plenty to slice with the gravy, and enough still to offer again, perhaps disguised as a curry. Of course

the stock in which the meat was boiled must make a soup. Tomatoes would go well with mutton, and after the bone was free, that could go in bean soup. As to lamb, I spoke of having stew of that, the cheap parts such as the neck, of course; and occasionally the forequarter for parties. We will experiment with that later on, so I am going to skip it now." [Pg 82]

"Yes, do; I want to talk about chicken. Are we never, never to have that? I think you are dreadfully severe."

Mary smiled. "Well, as a concession, I will say that you can have it once in a long, long time, provided you conscientiously make up beforehand for the extravagance by going in for a regular diet of cheap things. When you do indulge, buy a large fowl, because that goes farther for the price. Stew it till it is tender, and serve it in sections. Cut the breast in four pieces, and lay two away; cut the second joints lengthwise, take out the bone and lay half the meat away with the breast. Cook some boiled rice, to put around your platter; have plenty of gravy, and the first four pieces will do very well for two people. For the second dinner, brown the corresponding four pieces, and serve these with sweet potatoes. The third night, open the drumsticks, take out the bones, fill the centres with stuffing, and brown these. Serve them on toast, like birds; you might well pretend that is what they are, too. You will still have the bits on the wings, neck and back for a nice luncheon dish or for croquettes; and the liver, gizzard, and heart should go into an omelette. After all, a fowl is not too expensive for two people provided they will make three meals of it; not too expensive for an occasional change, that is. It would be too much for daily consumption." [Pg 83]

"It would do provided the fowl was not too tough," corrected Dolly.

"It is tolerably sure to be tough, but long cooking corrects that. Try this sometimes: instead of simmering it, cut it up and fry each piece a little; as you do so, put them in a kettle and add a very little water. When all are in see that the water just covers them; put a cover on and put this away in the tireless stove, or simmer it very slowly on the back of the range for four or five hours. It will come out brown and tender."

"And put all left-over gravy and bones in the stock pot," Dolly muttered to herself as she wrote this down. "Now, before I forget it, tell me why the drumsticks are to be served 'on toast?' I see I have that expression down over and over. Are you so awfully fond of toast as all that?"

"Toast, my dear child, is the way of making a small dish larger. When things are scanty it conceals the fact as nothing else does. Don't you know how often the cook-books say, 'serve with sippets of toast?'"

"Now you mention it, I do seem to recall the phrase, though I thought it said 'snippets' of toast. I supposed they were a sort of garnish, like parsley."

"They are a garnish, but at the same time they are one of the small economies of cooking. They get rid of bits of bread, and at the same time give an air to a dish while they help eke it out. [Pg 84]

"And now for the left-overs of meat. I have spoken of some of those as we have gone along, but there are heaps and heaps more. If you have a good deal of meat left over you can have English rissoles, for one thing; generally you make them out of beef, but not necessarily. You chop the meat, mix it with gravy and a raw egg to bind it, add a few crumbs and some seasoning, and roll the whole into balls. Dip each one in flour and fry it in a wire basket. Beef olives are thin slices of beef with a spoonful of crumbs put on each slice, and these rolled over once and pinned in place with a tiny wooden skewer—in other words, a wooden toothpick. Any other meat can be used in the same way. Mutton can be served a la marquise; that is, mince it, mix it with boiled rice and curry-powder and a tiny bit of onion, and a raw egg to bind it all; make into balls and fry them. Sliced mutton is nice dipped in French dressing and broiled. Cottage loaf is good, especially for an extra busy day. For that, line a dish with mashed potato, put the minced and seasoned meat in the centre and cover with more potato; bake this and turn out in a mould. Tomato sauce goes well with this dish by way of gravy. Baked hash is just minced meat mixed with gravy, pressed into a mould and baked in the oven till it will turn out. [Pg 85]

"When you have only a little meat left over and can make none of these dishes, try soufflé; I have never found anything so good to help out. You chop the meat till you have a cupful; or, if there is less, measure everything else in the same proportion. With a cupful take as much white sauce, a little minced onion and parsley, salt and pepper, and put it all on the fire with two beaten egg yolks. Cook this three minutes; take it off and cool it, and fold in the stiffly beaten whites. Put it in a buttered baking-dish and bake it half an hour and serve at once while it is nice and puffy.

"Besides this have croquettes, and if you are short of meat for those, put in a little boiled rice. And when your meat gives out altogether, try this cheap and very nice Mexican dish: put in a saucepan a quarter of a pound of dried beef cut up rather small, with a cup of tomato and a quarter of a cup of rice, a little onion and seasoning; cook till the rice is soft. The rest of the beef in the box, if you buy it that way, you can broil; it is like delicate ham.

"I should think all these things ought to make it easy for you to at least begin to manage; afterwards you can go on and have anything more you can find to make that is good and cheap."

"I think somebody once told me that twice-cooked food was not wholesome; do you really believe it is a good idea to have warmed-over things for dinners?" [Pg 86]

"Think of the French once more! They have the greatest number of made dishes in the world and they never have dyspepsia. And then you are to have warmed-over things only every other night, at the worst, and not always then, by any means, and I am sure you will thrive on them."

"One thing more; do you believe it pays to spend so much time and thought and all that on doing over things? Don't you think you might as well buy fresh ones as to put so much strength in these?"

"My dear girl, if you are going to save your money you must expend your time and ingenuity in doing so. I don't believe in wasting strength, but I do believe in using it wisely in order to save buying unnecessarily. But you will learn that as you go on. Now do you think I have told you enough about meat to enable you to keep the wolf from the door?"

"I do, indeed; I only hope Fred will consent to eat these things. If he finds out he is dining on left-overs and dried beef and scrags of mutton, I am afraid he will think me a pretty poor sort of housekeeper."

"Do you suppose any mere man is going to know that he is eating cheap meat unless you actually tell him so in plain words? Not at all; he will eat all these delicacies and declare that they are far [Pg 87] better than roasts of beef and spring lamb, and wonder how you can possibly afford to have such good things on your little housekeeping income. You will simply be covered with glory, and he will never know how you are deceiving him for his own good."

"I think it is going to be dreadfully trying to live on an allowance, anyway. It will be just like being shipwrecked on a raft, and having exactly so much hardtack and so many ounces of water doled out to you each day. If you eat any of your to-morrow's provisions you won't be alive when a ship sights you at last. In other words, you will never get your salary raised if you don't live within what you have now."

"You won't deserve to have it raised if you can't live within what you have now; so much is sure. But you won't have any trouble. Remember to keep within your week's allowance, not your daily one; there's comfort in that for you. You can see that one day you may buy two days' food at once, and so spend part or all of the dollar that properly belongs to to-morrow; but the end of the week straightens that out comfortably, and if that account comes out all right you cannot run over the whole."

"I really believe we had better be vegetarians and live on pea soup and lentils and peanuts and such things. Being both cheap and filling, what more could one ask?" [Pg 88]

"Well, vegetarians have taught us all a great deal. I think, however, that men who have been brought up to have meat at least once a day do not take kindly to a diet which cuts it out altogether. But I am sure they are far better off without too much meat, and if they can be made to think they are getting as much as usual when really they are getting only half as much, that is a distinct gain. Always remember what I told you, that they do not inquire too closely exactly what they are getting to eat if only it is good; that is something to count among your mercies."

"Have you any idea what you spend for meat a day?"

"Yes; we have it for dinner only, and, as I explained, I buy enough one day for at least two dinners. Dividing the two or possibly three pounds up in that way, of course it makes the daily total absurdly small; I suppose it averages only about twenty cents,—probably less."

"That does seem impossible, except as I review the baked hash and other dinner meats you mentioned. And with this enormous expense you pay for vegetables, milk, eggs, butter, and all the rest, and yet put pennies in the kitchen bank?"

"Of course. I buy meat one day, vegetables the next, flour the third, and so on; that is the [Pg 89] explanation."

"Well, I see that it is not quite as impossible as one would think at first sight, anyway."

"You are only in the first stages of housekeeping yet, so wait awhile, my dear, before you make up your mind one way or the other. Now get your hat and we will go down-town and buy the dinner for to-night,—pot-roast, I think, for one thing."

"Pot-roast to-night; to-morrow the remains of yesterday's mutton; the next day the beef again,—in soufflé, possibly, provided Dick comes home to-night with a good appetite, in which case little will be left."

"Don't forget the soup; we have a vegetable one to-night."

"Then there may possibly be enough beef left for rissoles next time."

"Good girl," said Mary, approvingly, "you are learning, and deserve a reward, and, as George Eliot says 'the reward for work well done is the ability to do more work,' we will pick out a particularly difficult lesson on something for to-morrow," and she laughed over the ungrateful face Dolly made as she went for her marketing hat.

CHAPTER V [Pg 90]

Vegetables, Salads, Desserts

"After soup and meat I suppose we have dessert," said Dolly, as she hung up her dish-washing apron.

"No, indeed; after soup we have vegetables with the meat, and sometimes salad next, before we

come to the dessert. I think those things are difficult to manage, too, especially the vegetables; so sharpen up your wits and let us finish up dinners as soon as possible. I seem to see so much ahead all the time that I am in a constant hurry; there are breakfasts and luncheons, preserves, and entertaining, not to mention about forty more things, each one more interesting than the last. So hurry!"

"Begin," said Dolly, finding her pencil; "I'm all attention."

"Suppose we take up the subject of potatoes, then, because those come oftenest on the table. Potatoes are one of the extravagances of the housekeeper, strange as it may seem at first sight. To have them twice a day, to peel them carelessly and throw away about a quarter of each potato, and to buy them by the small basketful in the first place, are all distinctly wasteful. If you [Pg 91] live where you can do it, Dolly, always buy them in good measure, a half-barrel at a time, let us say, when you find they are rather cheap, as they are in the fall; then toward the end of winter, when they grow dearer all the time, do not have them right along. I would not have them for luncheon at all, if I were you; I never have them then; and at night have boiled rice twice a week with the meat, choosing the time by the kind you have, for some things are better with rice than others."

"Chicken goes well with it."

"Yes, and lamb stew, and in general meats with gravy. Then once a week have macaroni in place of potatoes, and vary the way you cook it; at one time have cheese and the next time tomatoes. You can put in about a quarter of a can of those, and use the rest in other ways; perhaps put a second quarter of the can into a beef stew and still have a half-can for one night's vegetable. Then remember when you are cooking potatoes that it is a time-saving plan to boil enough for two meals, or even more. You can mash the first supply, because they must be freshly cooked for that; but make more than you need, and the second time you can make potato-cakes of the left-overs of those; the third time you can cream what are still plain boiled. By the way, sometimes [Pg 92] cut or chop these potatoes quite fine, and after creaming them put crumbs on top and bake them; that is a good change. Of course you can scallop the second supply, too, or chop and brown them, or serve in any one of a dozen ways; look those things all up, so you will not get into a rut. So many women seem to know only two ways of cooking potatoes, for they always serve them either boiled or mashed. And, Dolly, when you have a maid to peel your potatoes for you, do try and teach her to cut the peel thin; she will possess an inveterate determination to cut it thick, and it will probably be a lifelong battle to teach her to do your way, but your duty will be to persevere just the same. If she will not learn, at least you can have her boil the potatoes whole first and scrape off the peel afterwards; that will save them in spite of her.

"As to the other vegetables, I think we ought to add another dinner rule to those I laid down when we were on that subject, and that is this: Buy only the vegetables that are in season. You know that all winter long city people can have spinach and string-beans and eggplant and such things, because they come from the South, and also because many of them can be kept in cold storage,—eggplant for one. But these are always expensive. You must resolutely turn your back on them when you market; you cannot have them at all."

"We have to have canned things, I suppose," said Dolly, writing down the statement immediately, [Pg 93] with conscious pride in her knowledge.

"Canned! Not at all. Canned vegetables are far too costly for you; like everything else, they have risen in price. You must use them very carefully indeed, and for every-day use you must depend on old-fashioned winter things, parsnips and turnips and beets and onions; really, if you cook them in nice new ways they are very good, too, and you will not mind at all."

"I don't believe there are any new ways."

"Indeed there are; I can't stop to tell you many of them, but here are just a few ideas. Cook parsnips a long time, season and slice them, and put them in the double boiler with a little butter and let them smother; brown them a little at the end in the frying-pan, and you will find them really delicious. Or, cook them soft, add salt and pepper, and make them into little cakes and fry them brown. Never boil, slice and fry them, as we once did; they are frightfully indigestible so.

"Turnips you can steam, dice and cream alone, or better, mix them with a few peas and diced carrots and serve them around meat. You can get a pint or so of dried peas and soak them up as you need them, to avoid opening a can each time.

"A delightful company way of serving turnips is this: boil or steam them whole and scrape them; [Pg 94] scoop out the tops till you have a little white cup of each one, and cut a slice from the bottom, to make it stand evenly; put butter, salt, and pepper in each and fill with drained and seasoned canned peas. You can't think how pretty they are; you can have those with mutton or lamb. The inside bits you mix with the carrots the next night, as I told you.

"Speaking of carrots, they are considered one of the most wholesome of vegetables, because they are full of iron; so have them often. Just boil them, cut them up and cream them, or drain them dry and put a little butter on them if you are short of milk; they are especially good with Hamburg steak or beef in any shape.

"Beets you boil, scrape and dice and put in a very little white sauce; any left over make a good milk soup the second night. Or, for company you fix them exactly as you did the turnips; make them into cups and fill them with peas. I am not sure which is the prettier dish.

"Onions you have once in awhile for a change; they are certainly good for you, and they need not be odoriferous. Cut them up and simmer them in just enough water to cover them, adding a bit of

soda. Drain them,—and, by the way, do not 'throw away the water,' as cook-books say, but save it for soup; put the onions in a baking-dish with white sauce and crumbs and bake them. I think with a dinner ending with black coffee no one will suspect you of having eaten them. If ever you find any especially large onions in market, or can pick out several from the quart of the ordinary kind, boil these whole, and when they are soft take out the middle part and fill them with bread crumbs and bake them, basting them occasionally. [Pg 95]

"Salsify or oyster-plant is really an extremely good vegetable if only it is well cooked, which it isn't, as a general thing. Try this way: simmer it till it is very tender indeed; take it up and drain it and scrape it well. Then cut off the little end and also the top, so that what is left is like a croquette in shape; of course the rest can go in soup, so it will not be lost. Dip each piece in crumbs, then in egg, then in crumbs, exactly as you do croquettes, and let them dry; fry in deep fat in a wire basket, and you will be astonished to see what a nice new dish you have.

"As to cabbage, there you have a real treasure. If every woman could only cook it in the hygienic way she would find she had one of the greatest helps in winter. It is so cheap, so good, and so easily digested when it is right that it is a pity every one does not know how to do it. You cut the cabbage up in quarters and take out the core; the four pieces you put in a pot of hard-boiling water, dropping in one at a time gently, so as not to stop the boiling. Then put in a small plate or anything to keep it under water, a piece of soda as large as the end of your little finger, and some salt, and boil as hard as you can for twenty-five minutes, being careful to keep the pot uncovered." [Pg 96]

"Think of the horrid odor, Mary! It would just fill the house."

"That is exactly what it would not do, my dear. If you cover the pot, the cabbage will make itself known at once, but if you boil it hard and keep it uncovered, it will not; if you don't believe me, try for yourself. At the end of the time take it up and press the water out in the colander and cut it up. Put it in a hot dish and cover with white sauce; and then bless your kind sister who taught you how to make one of the best things you ever ate.

"Now the canned things come next. There, as I said, you must economize, and the best way to do that aside from buying few of them, is to always make two meals of each canful. That is not difficult to do with a small family. For instance, when you have tomatoes, serve half stewed down with bits of toast in them; the next time scallop what is left with crumbs, to help out. Canned corn you also divide, having two-thirds as it is, drained and freshly creamed, of course, with lots of seasoning; and the next night you have the left-over third in corn fritters. By the way, Dolly, try the grated corn; it is better than the other kind, and you can have another change by sometimes serving the first part in a baked corn custard. If you use the ordinary kind, you will also make one can go farther by adding some beans and serving it as succotash. [Pg 97]

"Canned peas are one of the most useful things for an emergency, for they can be combined with so many other things; with croquettes they are delicious, and with sliced meat. Just reheat the meat and have a circle of creamed peas around it on the platter. And with salmon, too, they are invaluable. However, be careful in buying them, for they are not cheap, and remember to buy small American peas, not French ones, even for company. Canned string-beans are good for some things, but you do not need them as a vegetable; I'll come to those later on. Asparagus is out of court entirely, for it's too expensive for us.

"As to dried things, by all means invest in dried beans of all kinds; most of them you will use for soups, but Lima beans are excellent as a vegetable. Soak them with a bit of soda, to bring back their color, and then season well. I believe always in adding a bit of onion to the water I soak them in, for it brings out the flavor; and then add white sauce or butter, as usual. I suppose few people ever bake Lima beans, but they are very good, especially for a change. In winter, Dolly, have plenty of baked beans for luncheon, the ordinary kind and the Limas, and once in awhile pretend to live in Boston and have a big dish of nice crisply browned beans, with a bit of pork in them, for Saturday night's dinner, in place of meat." [Pg 98]

"All right, I will. But if you have come to a stopping-place, may I speak? Tell me this: are we never to have any green things, celery or lettuce, for instance?"

"Celery you must watch for, and when you find it is cheap, as sometimes you may,—for small bunches often look rusty and go for a little when they are still useful,—then buy some. Open it and take out the best parts for dinner as they are; scrape the outside pieces and cut them up; stew them and bake in a white sauce. You can put a little grated cheese over the top with the crumbs if you choose; it makes a good dish that way. And as to lettuce, that turns me to salads.

"You know how strongly I believe in having a nice fresh green salad, with a light dressing of oil, for dinner every single day; it is a real hardship that people who must live on a little cannot have it right along, but they cannot. Once in awhile in winter you will find what grocers call 'seconds' in market; that is, lettuce which has had its outer leaves pulled off because they are withered. Those little round heads sell for a small sum, often five cents or less; one of them is plenty for two people, so buy whenever you can. You can omit the soup that night; begin with a heavy meat, such as pot-roast or corned beef, have the salad next, and then dessert. Or, here is another way I like still better: have the soup and meat and vegetables as usual, with the salad next, served with crackers and cheese, and have no dessert at all, simply coffee last. We often do that way. [Pg 99]

"Besides lettuce, however, you can frequently find watercress in market for five cents a head, and often chicory; both those are good for dinner salads. And shredded cabbage mixed with nuts is good, and of course celery. As to the oil, there is an economy you must practise. Never buy bottled oil; it is frightfully dear and too often it is not fresh. Besides, the so-called quart bottles

hold only a pint by actual measurement. Always go to an Italian grocery and get the oil that comes in tins, at about sixty cents a real quart; that is pure and fresh and does not turn rancid, no matter how long you keep it, because it is not exposed to the light. One tin will last a long time, so it is not expensive. Anyway, you buy that out of the box on the mantel, as it is a staple."

"So we can have only plain salads, and those occasionally," mourned Dolly. "And I simply dote on [Pg 100] grapefruit salad for dinner."

"Watch your market, then. Once in awhile you can buy a grapefruit for about seven cents; get it by all means, and a little head of lettuce, and have it; only remember to make up for your extravagance by having a cheap meat twice over. And sometimes you can have orange salad in the same way; get one or two oranges, cut them in thick slices, and serve with French dressing. You don't need lettuce for that."

"Good! That's an idea that suits me, and I will cheerfully sacrifice dessert to have either kind. Is that the end of salads?"

"Not quite. You can have canned string-beans sometimes, very cold, with French dressing, either as they are or on lettuce. And of course escarole and romaine and anything else you find that is cheap; sometimes in a city market one of them will be. And in the spring you can have nice little dandelion leaves and spinach and garden lettuce, and such things. And in summer—in summer, Dolly, you can simply revel in salads. Then I should dispense with soup for dinner and have one every single day; sometimes twice a day. There's nothing more wholesome in the whole range of eatables, and nothing which requires so little preparation. There are a thousand things to have in [Pg 101] summer; study them up by all means."

"I suppose you do not have salads with mayonnaise for dinner, or you would speak of salmon and chicken salad and all those things."

"No, those are for luncheon and we will take them up then. I think that is the end of the dinner salads."

"Now for desserts," said Dolly, cheerfully. "Those are the best of all. I really and truly know how to make some of those, too. You remember, Mary, I began to take cooking lessons once, and got in three, all on desserts, and then I went off visiting and never finished the course. But I did learn how to make bomb glacé, and marrons with whipped cream, and a perfectly delicious sort of iced pudding that I know Fred will just love, if only I have not forgotten all about them!"

"Well, suppose we begin with some of the plainer things," laughed her sister; "rice pudding for one."

"Oh, I forgot," Dolly groaned. "Yes, I suppose we must have rice pudding and bread pudding and corn-starch pudding and tapioca pudding in a pleasing round, and when we have completed the circle we begin and have them all over again. I hate them all!"

"You are tolerably certain to have them, at one time or another, but I would not have them in rotation, and I would dress them up so as to change them whenever I could. But before we go [Pg 102] into details, let me tell you one important thing: that is, that in making desserts you must be extra careful, for most of them take eggs and butter and sugar and possibly a good many other things that cost money, especially in winter time. You must have simple desserts, made from apples when they are cheap, and rice, and as you suggest, tapioca and corn-starch at times. In summer, of course, you can have fruit, and if you live in the country there are lots of good things to make out of milk and cream, especially cream. But in town, be on your guard. Have the plain things, but disguise them so they will seem new.

"Bread pudding can be varied in ever so many ways. One day you can put raisins in; another you can put in home-made orange peel or orange marmalade; still another, put dates in it or chocolate. A little something different is very nice, and a man will never know that, after all, he is eating bread pudding each time.

"So with corn-starch pudding; you can have infinite variety there. Always make it soft, never stiff, Dolly, look out for that; and one day put in a little chocolate, and another a few chopped nuts with a dash of almond flavoring, and a third mix the milk with as much coffee; or add orange juice or [Pg 103] lemon. Always change the flavor, and you will not tire of the basis. I find the best way to serve those things is in glasses, too, not on plates; they go a great deal farther, for one ordinary portion will serve two people easily. Then, too, a plain cold pudding seems nicer and more appetizing served in little glasses or glass cups, so it pays.

"Tapioca is good for a cold night's dinner. Try the instantaneous kind, and you will find it turns out a sort of hot jelly, and very good. In that you can have clear coffee once, and apples or oranges at other times, and any sort of canned fruits you have left over; and as it takes no eggs and no butter, just like corn-starch pudding, it is particularly cheap.

"As to rice pudding, cook one tablespoonful of rice in one pint of milk with one tablespoonful of sugar; put it in a baking-dish and put it in a moderate oven in the morning for an hour or more, and as a crust forms on top, turn it underneath and the bottom part up, and repeat till the whole is soft and creamy and pale brown; then let the top brown. Put in raisins or chopped dates, and eat it very cold, and you will think you have found something deserving a fancy French name, it is so good, and different from plain rice pudding as one usually gets it. Orange marmalade, too, is very nice on cold rice pudding.

"When apples are cheap try apple porcupine. Peel and core and bake the apples, and when they [Pg 104] are cold stick them full of strips of blanched almonds; five cents' worth will be enough for six

apples. If you serve them covered with a nice glaze of sugar and water syrup made by basting them as they cook, you will not need cream with them, though it is nice, too.

"Junket takes only milk and sugar, but you must dress it up well when you have it. I mean if you have one little pot of preserved ginger in your closet for use at such times, put the junket in glasses to set, and serve with the ginger cut in little cubes on top and a bit of juice with it. One pot of ginger costs only fifteen cents and keeps forever. So I would get it occasionally; or, make some for yourself from the root, in the fall.

"As to pies, in winter I have them rather often, but I make them as the English do, in a baking-dish with an upper crust only. I take a small can of fruit which I have put up on purpose, perhaps blueberries or cherries or plums, and fill the dish; then I add sugar, and a sprinkling of flour, put on the crust and bake it, and serve it almost or quite cold. That is a wholesome dessert and one a man is certain to approve of. Apple tart is very good, too, and of course peach or apricot tart are best of all, if you can get these fruits cheaply, as you sometimes can in September.

"Gelatine things are economical, because with them you do not need butter or eggs. Any sort of [Pg 105] cooked fruit, such as prunes or canned fruits, needs only to be set with gelatine in a pretty mould and served with the fruit juice, or cream if you have it. In a city you can't have it often, but luckily people who own cows may; I only hope they appreciate their blessings as they should.

"Then try French pancakes; sometimes you will have griddle cakes for breakfast. Save a little batter and for dinner make four cakes for two people, because two will be called for apiece. While they are hot spread them with jam or jelly, roll them up and cover thickly with mixed sugar and cinnamon.

"Shortcakes in summer are an unfailing delight; have them with strawberries and raspberries and peaches. In winter you can make a rather thin layer of shortcake, split it open while it is warm, spread it with a little butter and sugar, and put jam inside or rich preserves and serve a little boiled custard with it. All these things, you see, take only a short time to make, as well as few costly ingredients. I don't think it good policy for people who are trying to economize to put much time or money on desserts. Indeed, if I could I believe I would always have fruit; but in town it is too expensive, except occasionally. Sometimes I do have baked bananas; those are cheap, certainly, and good, too; and when I find some good and cheap oranges I have two for [Pg 106] dessert and possibly save a little elsewhere. One orange sliced with two bananas goes a long way, too."

"And no ices or ice-creams, Mary! Are we never to have those?"

"Of course—I forgot them. In winter I put out a small pail of water at night and freeze it; the next day I make an ice or sherbet from some simple thing, such as part of a can of pineapple, or a lemon or orange, and freeze it. This costs almost nothing at all, especially as I save the salt and dry it for next time. For creams I get the ice in the same way when I can, and either make a mousse and put it in the fireless stove, or make a cheap boiled custard and freeze that, adding a few dried and rolled macaroons to enrich it, or even a few dried crumbs of Boston brown-bread, which, strange to say, look and taste much the same. Of course you must not deliberately buy ingredients for ice-cream except for company, but an ice you can have whenever you choose. Then in summer, if you can get ice cheaply, you can have fruits made into sherbet or frozen as they are. I think frozen peaches are perfectly delicious."

"So they are, and three peaches with sugar enough to sweeten them ought not to cost much, surely, nor would frozen watermelon."

"Speaking of that, reminds me of something I had last summer which was cheap and good, which [Pg 107] you might put down. I had some watermelon on hand which had lost its freshness; indeed, it was not fit to put on the table as it was, but my conscience would not let me throw it away. I just chopped it up, sweetened it with a little sugar and water syrup, flavored it with a dash of cooking-sherry, and froze it, and it came out one of the best sherbets I ever ate in my life."

"It does sound good. I'll write that down; and we can have lots of melons for dessert in the autumn, just as they are."

"Yes, indeed; have all the fruit you can when it is cheap. You can serve it in so many ways that you can never tire of it. That suggests something else, too,—nuts. You have no idea, Dolly, how nuts help out in winter. When you have no time to make dessert, or nothing in the house to make it of, try serving nuts and a few raisins with the coffee for a final course, and you will be surprised to see the rapture which Fred will show. Men always like nuts, and if you are careful not to have them after a heavy dinner of corned beef or such things, they are not unwholesome. Of course you must not have many; just a few with the black coffee. Keep them for emergencies, too, and do not have them too often, or they may pall, which would be a pity, for a dessert of [Pg 108] nuts, raisins, and coffee will often cover a multitude of deficiencies in the dinner."

"Good; and I must put down not to have anything made with eggs or butter or cream, so I won't forget your words of wisdom about those."

"Don't put down a 'never,' only a 'seldom,' then. I do have things made with whipped cream sometimes, for a bottle holding a quarter of a pint costs ten or twelve cents, and judiciously used makes two desserts, in part at least, so once in awhile I indulge in it. Half a box of red raspberries, served in two glasses, with a big spoonful of whipped cream on top of each, is ever so good. And just a little cream on a small open shell of pie-crust filled with preserved fruit, makes it what the late Delia used to call 'a stylish dish.' No, don't entirely bar out all expensive ingredients, Dolly; sometimes you can have some of them in homœopathic quantities. A few lady-

fingers, split in halves and cut across, laid in two glasses with a spoonful of flavored cream on top, make a good dessert, especially if there is a bit of jam tucked underneath the cream. And after all, the lady-fingers cost only two cents and the cream five or six,—so you see."

"I see," said Dolly. "And eggs, now; may I ever make desserts with them?"

"Certainly, in the spring you can have them in a custard often; and a little sweet omelette made with jam is a delightful finish to a dinner, and it takes only two eggs to make it." [Pg 109]

"Then how am I to know what to do? No, don't tell me, for I know myself. I use my common sense."

"Exactly. Keep your eyes and ears open when you go to market, and buy things in season and cheaply, and have whatever you can afford. It would be too ridiculous to have rice puddings when strawberries were cheaper, or corn-starch, when you could have sherbet or some other delicacy. Just 'use your common sense,' and you will be safe. And this finishes Dinners, at last, and with a good motto for your book to head the chapter as well as to close it."

CHAPTER VI [Pg 110]

Breakfast, Luncheon, Supper—Odds and Ends

"To-day we will begin on the smaller meals," said Mrs. Thorne, one morning. "Those seem trifles light as air after the heavy work we have put on dinners, and as the meals themselves are far from being substantial, we ought not to have to spend very much time or thought on any of them.

"Breakfast comes first, of course. For that you will need to plan for plain, simple dishes only. It would be nice always to have a first course of fruit, but in winter that is really impossible on our tiny income, since it has grown so expensive. In summer I do try and have it, if not every day, at least every other day. Ordinarily I can find some sort of berries in market within my means; and if we lived in the country, Dolly, we could have something from our garden, surely. But in cold weather we either do without or have something twice a week only. Often I find bananas costing only a trifle, perhaps even ten cents a dozen at times, and then I get half a dozen; not more, because probably they are rather too ripe to keep long or they would not sell for the price. [Pg 111] Oranges, too, sometimes come into market in quantities, and then small ones are cheap for a few days. In the autumn I have baked apples frequently. We could have dried fruits, prunes, and peaches, and so on, but neither Dick nor I care for those for breakfast, so I do not get them. But I do get figs, a half-pound at a time, and dates in the same quantity, and stew those and cut them up in a hot cereal; they are a great addition to it. And often we have neither fruit nor cereal, but instead a second course of hot dry toast and home-made orange marmalade.

"The days we do not have fruit we often have cereal first; not always, mind, for we tire of it. Probably we have it three times a week. And here, Dolly, let me give you some advice: look out for the cost of cereals; there is one place where economy counts more than you would believe. Many of the cereals that come in boxes cost fifteen cents or more and do not last any time because they are loose and light; those are what I call extravagant breakfast foods. You must use the plainer things; old-fashioned oatmeal and cracked wheat, bought in bulk, and rice and corn-meal. They go twice, no, three times as far as the things you buy in packages. If you cook the oatmeal and wheat all night they will be really very good and far more wholesome and digestible [Pg 112] than the same things bought in small amounts and cooked up in twenty minutes. Never fail to cook your cereals a long time, Dolly, no matter how 'instantaneous' they are said to be. As for the corn-meal, that you can have as a second course in fried mush, or you can make up a well salted mush with raisins in it."

"What we had when we were children, plum porridge!" interrupted Dolly, smiling, "and didn't we love it!"

Mary nodded, but went on without pausing. "The rice you can have boiled, with or without raisins in it, for one morning, and another you can have it in little brown cakes or croquettes; or you can make griddle-cakes out of what is left over."

"Do you buy extra cream for these cereals?"

"No, unfortunately we can't do that, though I wish we could. Here again is where I long to keep a cow. But as it is, I take off just a little of the very top of the milk for coffee and the next best I put on for the cereal."

"And do you have muffins and cakes and those hot breads?"

"I think I had better tell you in order just what we have, because you will understand it all better. I arrange breakfast this way:

"First, if it is a day when we are to have fruit, a course of that; afterward a hot dish, a little [Pg 113] bacon, an egg apiece, milk toast, or creamed codfish, or some simple thing warmed over that I have in the house; often in summer fried tomatoes on toast. And I have coffee and hot rolls or biscuits or muffins or toast, too.

"That is one sort of breakfast. When we do not have fruit I have cereal, let us say; after that we do not care for anything hot and substantial, as when the first course was an orange, perhaps, so

we have the coffee and muffins alone. Or, for a third breakfast, one for cold weather, we begin with a hot dish and coffee and have cakes afterward."

"I am astonished to hear you speak of having eggs as though they were to be bought for nothing. I thought in town they cost too much to eat them up recklessly."

"So they do, in winter; they are often four cents apiece. But you see then I do not use them in cooking, or only occasionally, so even at that price I can afford to have them for breakfast twice a week, and that is the extent of my recklessness."

"But one apiece! My dear Mary, I am positively certain Fred will demand two eggs for his breakfast, if that is all he is to have."

"Then you must scramble the one-apiece with milk and serve them on toast, and he will think he is having any number of them. Or, make a parsley omelette of two with a little milk; or have them [Pg 114] hard-boiled, chopped, and creamed, on toast or in individual dishes, with crumbs on top; that is an easy way out of the difficulty. He can't count how many eggs there are on the table when they are served mixed up."

"I only hope he won't ask, that's all. Now before you leave Breakfasts tell me whether you ever have waffles."

"Yes, when I have time enough to make them. On Sundays, when Dick does not have to hurry away, we often have them, but not when I have to rush; then I have easy things."

"And don't you have to rise with the lark to get a breakfast of two courses?"

"No, indeed; I put on the things to heat, such as the cooked cereal out of the tireless stove; or I start the corn-meal mush in the kettle and put the muffins in the oven. While they are getting themselves ready I lay the table and make the coffee and put on the butter and set out the fruit, or whatever else I am to have. I pride myself on having everything ready in a very little while."

"So breakfast is just fruit or cereal; muffins or toast; eggs or bacon or codfish, and coffee," said Dolly, as she wrote these down.

"Not quite, for there are a number of small dishes I make out of scraps of this or that, but those [Pg 115] will come later on. Many of them will be under luncheon dishes; that is, easy things to make up for any informal meal. But this will do for the present. Now we will begin on Luncheons."

"I think those are so interesting, too; we can have all sorts of good things creamed and in croquettes and salads. Luncheon is such a dainty meal."

"Unfortunately you cannot have exactly everything you can think of, for your luncheons must be made up of odds and ends, usually what is to be found in the refrigerator. Still I agree with you in thinking this an interesting meal, but partly, I am afraid, because I enjoy the fun of getting something out of nothing. You must remember that you cannot use up anything at noon that will do for dinner; the meat and vegetables left over from one night, you know—"

"Yes, of course; you must use them up the next night. But if you cannot have those and cannot buy on purpose, what can you have?"

"There is where the fun comes in; you must study up possible dishes made out of odds and ends. I am not going to try and make a full list for you, but just to begin on, I will give you a few things you can have:

"Macaroni and cheese; cheese fondu; rarebit; milk toast; milk toast with grated cheese on it; [Pg 116] French fried toast; vegetable croquettes; fish croquettes; creamed fish; baked potatoes cut in halves and the centres scooped out, mixed with creamed codfish and browned; sweet potatoes treated in the same way, omitting the fish; Spanish toast,—that is, thick tomato, green peppers, and onion, on toast; corn fritters; clam fritters; fruit fritters; creamed peas; croustades of bread filled with any sort of creamed meat, fish, or egg; green peppers filled with similar things; baked beans; fried eggplant; stuffed eggplant; all sorts of salads with mayonnaise; creamed celery, baked; cabbage and cheese baked; rice and tomatoes; rice croquettes; potato croquettes; eggs in every shape when they are cheap; all kinds of griddle-cakes and muffins. As a second course, if you want one: jam and thin crackers; or cookies, or gingerbread, or a bit of cake; left over preserves, or anything sweet that you have at hand; and of course tea or cocoa. You see how easy luncheons are, even if you can't have meat. Really the greatest help in learning to keep house is to understand how to have good luncheons at a small expense; when you know that, you know how to do both breakfast and dinner better."

"Of course if I am all alone I can have a good luncheon with but little to eat, but you know what a [Pg 117] way people in town have of dropping in at that time. Suppose you, for instance, should come in some fine day; I am sure there would not be enough for two people."

"That is one of the places where I hope, my dear, your grandmother's 'faculty' will assert itself. Suppose I do come in, or even a more formidable person than I. If you were planning to have a cup of soup left over from the night before for a first course, thin it with a very little boiling water and a seasoning of kitchen bouquet if it is a stock soup, and add a little milk if it is a cream soup, and serve it in two half-filled cups instead of one full one. There will be enough that way without too much liquidating. If you were to have had a hot dish first, say a little baked corn, put in a beaten egg and a trifle of milk, and it will grow larger at once; or, if you planned to have one plate of string-bean salad, add a hard-boiled egg quartered to the quantity, and there will be enough for two. If you were to have had some little hot thing which you cannot add to, fry some potatoes to go with it, and add 'sippets of toast.' If there is nothing whatever to eat, make an

omelette, or open one of the tins of tomatoes you keep for such an occasion and have Spanish toast, and then tea and crackers and cheese and jam; you see it is simple enough."

Dolly groaned. "Yes, simple enough for you, my experienced sister, but most frightfully difficult for me." [Pg 118]

"Just in anticipation, Dolly. Really it is great fun to manage, and you will enter into the spirit of the thing when once you get to work. Now we will take Suppers next in order."

"I thought you did not believe in suppers."

"I do not, but I must take into consideration that you may have to live where it is customary to have them instead of dinners at night, and you must possibly conform; or, Fred's work may send him home at noon and again late in the evening; in that case you must also have them. Anyway, the subject is part of your education and you cannot be allowed to skip it.

"You lay the table in the same way as for breakfast and luncheon, with doilies instead of a tablecloth; suppers are really the very same thing as luncheons, you have the same things to eat. You can have a first course of soup, if you like, served always in cups or bouillon bowls, not in soup plates; or, you can begin with a hot dish. In winter time you must have things of the same sort as I planned for luncheon; not meat, but baked corn, or minced clams, or milk toast, or bread croustades, or baked beans; with them go potatoes, possibly, sometimes, or merely tea or coffee, [Pg 119] with hot biscuits or muffins. Then comes a salad, if you choose. In summer I have the main dish for either luncheon or supper of salad, and you can serve mayonnaise or French dressing on them. Here a meat or fish salad comes in if you can afford it; chicken or cold salmon with mayonnaise, or lobster, or whatever you can have easily. Afterward comes the sweet course; or you can omit the salad, as you did the soup, and have the supper consist of the main dish first, with tea or coffee, and the sweet course next and last. It depends on circumstances what you will decide to do. Of course with a heavy dinner in the middle of the day you would have a lighter supper at night; but if you wanted to enlarge the meal for company, you do it by putting on the extra courses.

"For the sweet course you usually have preserves in winter and berries in summer, with cake or cookies or gingerbread. Or, you can have hot gingerbread and American or cream cheese, and no fruit; or you can have first one thing and then the other."

"It seems to me you have a good deal of cheese in your suppers and luncheons. I thought it was considered indigestible."

"Not at all, by those who understand how to use it. Most of the nations of the world live largely on it and have digestions of iron. Do not have it with meat, but in the place of meat, because it is [Pg 120] so hearty. When you put it in a dish and cook it, always put in a tiny pinch of cayenne pepper and one of soda, that makes it perfectly wholesome. When once it is digested it is all solid nourishment, too, and for the money you get more than you can in any other way; so don't be afraid to use it. Cream cheese is always considered easily assimilated, and if you can get some one to make it fresh for you out of country milk you will find it a perfect standby."

"You passed lightly over the subject of cake for supper; don't we have chocolate layer-cakes at all?"

"Dolly, try hard to curb the natural propensity to make chocolate cake which lies in every woman's heart. All girls, I know, consider it the very staff of life, but it isn't; it is an expensive thing to make, and as few men care for it, it is largely wasted on them. Do not make much cake of any sort, and when you do, make up simple little things and have them fresh. Make cookies and gingerbread and drop-cakes and spice-cakes and peanut wafers and such things, and when you are tempted to indulge in a great layer-cake, count up first the ingredients, the butter and sugar and eggs and other things—and refrain."

"I have already written down somewhere in my book, 'Beware of ingredients,'" said Dolly, meekly.

"That is an excellent rule, too: 'Beware of ingredients.' Stick to it, my dear. Now, if you are sure [Pg 121] you understand Suppers, we will go on."

"I think I do. Have a hot dish in winter for a main course, and something nice and cold in its place in summer. Have coffee or tea and preserves or shortcake or gingerbread and such things afterward, usually. When you have company, begin with soup, then have the main course, then the salad, and last the sweet. It really seems exactly the same thing as a luncheon."

"So it does, and it is, too. Now we come at last to my hobby; such an interesting hobby, too, Dolly; it is Scraps, or, Left-overs, if you like that better. And here you must study hard, for to my thinking you stand or fall as a housekeeper by your knowledge or ignorance of the subject.

"Of course you know the saying that a French family could live on what an American family throws away. There is something in the saying, though I will not admit it to be entirely true; but it is a fact that a good cook seldom has anything to put in her garbage pail, and it really is horrifying to see what people, especially poor people, do throw out: half-loaves of bread, good-sized bits of vegetables, bones that would have made soup, and lots of other things.

"To begin with bread, save all the odds and ends of that. Make crusts and hard ends into crumbs [Pg 122] and sift them well; the half-slices make into bits of toast and use them at once, whenever you find them in the box, before they get very dry. No bit of bread should ever be wasted.

"Then there is fat of all sorts; the grease on top of soups, drippings from meat, bacon fat, everything of that sort is to be saved. Put the strips of fat through the meat-chopper and then put

all in a dish with water, cover tightly, and set in the oven and let it cook till the water is gone. Strain it through cheesecloth, put it in a covered pail, and you will always have enough for frying without buying lard. When you use part of it and it gets brown, do not pour it back on the white fat, but put it by itself, and when you have enough cook it up again with boiling water, strain it twice, and it will turn white and as good as before.

"As to bits of meat, I have told you about those; use them up in soufflé or in hash, or any way you can. Some people insist that there are some things that one cannot properly use, such as an end of steak, but I have yet to find the bit of meat that is not good for something. The steak ends I pour boiling water over and scrape till the charred part disappears, and they make either hash of some sort or soufflé. If you cannot do any better, at least put the bits of meat into soup stock, and [Pg 123] of course all the bones you have go with it.

"As to bits of fish, those go into patties or croustades; the patties are really baking-powder biscuits. I just cut out the middle, without opening them, and there is a perfect shell. I put a little butter inside, heat it well, and fill it with creamed fish or anything else. The croustades are one of the most useful things of all for serving left-overs. To make those you take slices of bread three inches thick and cut them into rounds with a biscuit-cutter; on top you mark a smaller circle. Dip each one in milk; drop it into hot fat and let it turn golden brown; fill it with creamed chicken or meat or fish or peas. A platter of croustades is a really attractive dish and as good to eat as it is to look at. If ever I have a round loaf of bread that I can spare I make that into a large croustade, too, especially for company. I cut out the middle till it is a good-sized shell, butter the inside, and brown it in the oven, and then fill it with creamed salmon, or anything else. Creamed oysters are delicious in it. That does not properly come under left-overs, but as it belongs with croustades I put it there, anyway.

"As to eggs, begin by saving all their shells and washing them; they do for clearing coffee. Of course you must not break a fresh egg for that. Then when you make mayonnaise out of the yolk [Pg 124] of one, always make up a dish calling for one white, perhaps a little cake; or, whip it, sweeten with powdered sugar, mix with currant jelly, make it very cold, and serve it in two small glasses as currant fluff. It does for dessert after a heavy dinner. If you use the egg white first, do not let the yolk dry out, but stir it with a little cold water and you can keep it over a day or so till you need it; or make it up at once into mayonnaise, and do not put water in it.

"Vegetables, as you know, I have already told you a good deal about. Peel the potatoes carefully. When you have only a little bit of carrot or turnip, mix this with cooked peas; or put all three together and cream them. Put a slice of beet in corned beef hash; a spoonful of peas goes into an omelette; a carrot can be diced and added to beef stew; celery tops go into soup; mixed vegetables are to be made up into vegetable croquettes; cooked potato makes potato soup, and so on. Never let so much as a single pea escape your watchful care. Even in slicing an onion, remember not to cut through the middle, but to begin at one end, to keep it fresh for next time, and so on till it gradually disappears.

"Now, the worst of economies is yet to come, for to my mind utilizing bits of cold puddings and such things is most difficult. If you feel you must not eat up such left-overs at luncheon, and of [Pg 125] course you ought to feel so, and yet there is not really enough to make a second dessert as it is, you have to face a problem at once. But here are a few things I have learned.

"Suppose you have a very little rice pudding left; mix some jam with it, beat in it the yolk of one egg, pour it into two little moulds, and bake them in a pan of water. They will come out nice little shapes of fruity rice, quite different from the previous pudding. Corn-starch left-overs can be thickened by reheating and adding more corn-starch; when it is all smooth, pour this into a baking-powder can to harden, then turn it out, slice it, dip each piece in crumbs, egg, and crumbs again, and fry in deep fat; they grow soft in the middle and are very good indeed; the French call them fried cream. Treat bread pudding in the same way, and serve with a nice sauce. When you make gingerbread, put some raisins and spice into part and bake separately. When you want this half, steam it up and serve as a fruit pudding with a hot sauce. You can crumb up plain gingerbread that is stale, add a little molasses to keep it together, and raisins and spice, and steam it that way, too. It is surprisingly like a plum pudding.

"A spoonful or two of boiled custard can be utilized as sauce for another pudding. Tapioca pudding can have canned fruit with plenty of juice put with it; it can be cooked over again and [Pg 126] this time served cold, perhaps in a mould. In fact nearly everything but a small bit of pie can be made over to seem unlike itself. Pie, my dear, I really think you must eat for lunch, provided there is but one small piece."

"Fred can have it for dinner," said Dolly, complacently. "All men love pie, and I can have coffee only, for once."

"So you can; or, if you have saved all the bits of pie-crust, as, of course, you should have done, you can have a little tartlet in place of the pie. I always make up some tartlets, anyway, when I make crust, and when they are filled with peach jam with perhaps a dot of cream on top, they make an excellent dessert. This reminds me to say that a half-can of fruit or left-over cranberry sauce can be put into a pie-crust shell with strips of crust over the top; they make very good pies."

"I should think you could use left-overs of canned fruit for pudding sauces."

"Bright girl! So you can. Chop up the fruit and heat the whole together; it would be especially good on cottage pudding."

"I hate cottage pudding; I shall never have it."

"Oh, yes, you will; put grated chocolate in it and you won't know what it is. But don't divert my attention, for I am not done yet with left-overs. There is orange peel, for one thing. Keep all the orange skins you have and throw them into a crock of salt and water and let them stand till you have enough to make candying worth while. Then drain them and wash them well, and put them in cold water and bring to a boil; repeat this till the water is perfectly fresh. When the skins are transparent take them out, put two or three together and cut them in tiny little strips; cook these in thick sugar and water syrup, only enough to cover them, and dry in the oven with the door open. Sprinkle with granulated sugar, put them in a fruit-can with a cover, and they will keep for years, and be just the thing to put in fruit-cake or plain bread pudding or any such thing. Lemon peel and grapefruit peel are good, too, and quite as useful. [Pg 127]

"When you have a little syrup left after you have taken out spiced peaches or pears from a can, stew peeled and quartered apples gently in it and serve them without canning. They will be almost as good as the peaches were; and sometimes stew prunes a little, till you can slip the stone out, and put these in the syrup. You can't guess how good they are, and how they help out a plain meal."

"And watermelon rind—don't you do something with that?"

"Yes, make that up into sweet pickles, too."

Dolly suddenly threw down her pencil and snatched off her apron. [Pg 128]

"Mary, there are the Cliffords coming around the corner. I know they are coming to lunch, too!"

"Of course they are, and we have scarcely anything to give them. Let me see." The refrigerator yielded up some outer pieces of celery, a good-sized wedge of cheese, eggs, and milk.

Before the door-bell had rung, Dolly was told to lay the table. After she had done that she was to come into the parlor and entertain the guests while her sister excused herself and transformed the cheese into a rarebit, and the celery, with hard-boiled eggs and mayonnaise, into salad. The meal was to conclude with thin crackers and jam and tea.

"And plenty for them, too," said Dolly, ungraciously, as the footsteps sounded in the hall. "I did not want them to interrupt my lesson."

"That was the end, anyway," said her sister, laughing; "and you can't convince me you are so interested as all that. Now I'll go to the door; be as pleasant as you know how, and we will surprise them with a good luncheon of transformed scraps in short order."

CHAPTER VII [Pg 129]

The Emergency Closet—Winter Preserves—Cake

"The lesson to-day begins with a story, a story with a moral, too," said Mrs. Thorne. "Once upon a time, when I was a young and inexperienced housekeeper, it began to snow early in the morning, before I had been out to market. It happened that everything in the house had given out at once, and I had a long list of things to get, but as I had a bad cold I did not wish to go out in the storm. I waited nearly all day for it to stop, as it was against my principles even then to telephone for anything, but at last, as it began to grow dark, I could not wait longer, and took my receiver to call up the grocery and meat market, only to find the wires were down. What to do I did not know. Even if I ventured out it was now too late to hope to have anything delivered before dinner-time, and I could not carry the food home in my arms and at the same time manage a dress and an umbrella.

"Well, just as I was trying to make up my mind to go and borrow something of the neighbors whom I didn't know, which made things all the harder for me, a strange grocery boy came to my door by mistake, thinking it was the apartment above. I saw my chance, and poured out my tale of woe to him and begged him to help me. Of course I could not ask him to go to the meat market for me, but between us we planned a meal which we could get at the grocery, and I tipped him to go and get the things and bring them back at once, and I would pay for them on delivery. He said he had canned roast beef, for one thing, so we began with that. Then he was to bring canned string-beans, and some oranges for dessert, besides the staples I had to have. It was an expensive meal, I assure you, for roast beef is not cheap, even when it is tinned. I thought then I must have meat, at any price. I know better to-day, and could now plan a supper which would cost about a quarter of what that meal came to. However, as I said, I ordered the things, laid the table, put on the potatoes to boil, and the groceries came just before six o'clock. Ten minutes later Dick appeared, bringing with him two college friends who happened to be in town for the day, men I had never met, and for whom I certainly would have wished to have a good dinner! [Pg 130]

"There was nothing to be done but to make the best of things. We had a first course of the beef, heated in gravy, with potatoes and pickled pears. The string-beans I served up in a salad, though of course I wanted them with the meat; but I was determined to have three courses, somehow; I had no crackers or cheese to serve with it, either, and plain beans seemed very little. The dessert was oranges and coffee. How I wished I had anything else, even nuts, to help out, but there was nothing whatever. I simply lived from hand to mouth in those days and bought supplies enough [Pg 131]

for only one day at a time. Well, we tried to make up in conversation what we lacked in food, and I thought of what some novelist of New England life once suggested, that when the cake was heavy you should always turn the talk toward the sufferings of the Pilgrim Fathers. But I can tell you that experience taught me a lesson. Never again did I fail to have something to set out in an emergency, and now anybody may drop in, day or night, and I can furnish a really good meal; not an extravagant one, but one that I shall not be ashamed to offer."

"That reminds me to tell you something. This morning, after you left the dining-room, I was telling Dick about the luncheon yesterday, and how you managed to get up such a good one for the Cliffords, and he said, 'Dolly, you and Mary are having far too easy a time of it. One of these days I am going to surprise you with a nice little dinner-party by bringing home two fellows I know.' His eyes twinkled as though he was planning a joke of some sort."

"Yes, I know the kind of joke perfectly well; he often springs these surprises on me when he [Pg 132] thinks he will catch me unprepared, but that only makes me more determined to have everything ready for such an event. Come now and see my emergency closet, and you will understand why Dick's little jokes do not alarm me."

The closet was dark, but Mary lighted a gas-jet and showed rows of shelves stretching almost from the floor to the ceiling, with pots and jars and packages, fruit-cans and jelly-glasses and paper boxes.

"Here in the middle part are my groceries," she began, pointing out some well-stocked shelves. "First come the tins of soup, only two, because they are of the best kind and expensive; but I have those on hand all the time, for they are very good, and such a comfort when you are in great need. Next are the tins of meat and fish; not roast beef now, but a can of tongue, two of chicken, and bacon, and several of salmon and sardines. Then come the vegetables, two of each kind, like the animals in the ark: grated corn, peas, string-beans, tomatoes, and mushrooms. Here are several kinds of crackers, to serve with fancy cheese, either with salad or for dessert, and the cheese as well, three pots, two small ones and one of larger size. And I have two cans of condensed milk, a jar of beef extract, and some nuts. Here are olives, too, and a pot of ginger, [Pg 133] and some quickly made gelatine for jelly. All that last needs is to add hot water and pour it into a mould, and before you know it it is ready for use, and very pretty and good. You can imagine how, if we were actually without another thing in the house except what is here, with perhaps coffee and sugar and potatoes, we could have a good dinner. First soup; then hot tongue with a brown sauce, with potatoes and grated corn made into a custard; then a salad of string-beans, with crackers and cheese; then jelly, for dessert; and we could follow this up with a breakfast of bacon and a luncheon of creamed chicken, you see."

"But, Mary, these things must have cost a great deal of money; dollars and dollars, I am sure. How did you ever get them?"

"Most of them out of the tin bank on the kitchen mantel. When a day comes that I do not need to buy any meat and no staple is out, you see I have perhaps sixty cents over from my dollar; then I buy a can of vegetables, or a pot of cheese, or a can of tongue or soup, or whatever is out in the closet. I make it a rule not to use up what I have here without replacing it at the earliest possible moment; that prevents my getting out of everything before I realize it. Then when I am feeling very poor, and am in need of a vegetable, let us say, I just use one of my canned ones from here, [Pg 134] and so tide over till the money is plenty again. Of course toward spring I let everything get low, for I like to put in fresh canned things once a year; then in the fall I stock up for the winter as I can."

"It's a great idea," said Dolly, admiringly. "The first thing I do when I go to housekeeping will be to set up an emergency closet and keep it full all the time."

"Not too full; that is extravagance; but get just a few very useful things and add to them as you can."

"Tell me why, with all these things you did not fly to get them out when those people came in to lunch the other day. It would have been much less trouble, and we could have had a better luncheon; not that I cast aspersions on that one, either."

"For two reasons: first, because I found on looking in the refrigerator that I could manage with what was there, and I do not take anything from my closet except in case of real need. And secondly, because the Cliffords have rather a habit of coming in to luncheon in that way, and once when I was showing them over the apartment they went through this closet, and I knew I would be found out if I served anything canned to them. And also, perhaps, to show you what could be done with odds and ends of food, because the lesson that very day had been on the [Pg 135] subject."

"Oh, I see; very good reasons, too. Now what is to be to-day's lesson? Or is this closet the lesson all by itself?"

"Dear me, no; that is only the first half. Now look at my preserves on the other shelves. On the top one are my very best ones, peaches, rich cherries, strawberries, and such things. Those I use only when I have company; or, if I have a plain ice-cream, sometimes I put some around that to help out. I am careful in using them, because they are not cheap to make, by any means, when you have to buy the fruit.

"Next below come my canned fruits, and those I use more freely; plums, you see, and red raspberries, and blueberries, and such things. Many of those I use in pies in winter, when I must economize on butter and eggs. They were not so costly as the preserves, for I bought them a few

at a time and put them up as I could.

"Below are all my spiced fruits, peaches, pears, melon rind, gooseberries, currants, plums, grapes, and various things. Those are great helps when one has a rather plain dinner. My jams and jellies come last, on these shelves, and here I have just the usual things, currant jelly and grape and crab-apple and so on. And on this last shelf of all are my winter preserves that I keep [Pg 136] on making all the time."

"Winter preserves! What in the world are they?"

"I rather thought that would surprise you, but one of my pet economies is in making preserves and jellies all winter. See, here are six glasses of apple jelly I made up the day you lunched down-town. I found some cheap apples in market that morning and bought them, and then I cut them up without peeling them, stewed them in water enough to cover them, hung them up in a bag to drain, and when the juice was all out I boiled it fifteen minutes and put in the sugar and boiled it five more. Then I dropped in half a lemon for a moment to flavor it, and put it in glasses. It was firm in a short time. That explains my way of doing. I buy anything I find that is cheap and put up a glass of it one day and another glass of something else the next day, and so keep this shelf full all the time and save my summer fruit. Some of the jelly is spiced, too, for variety. I dropped a bag of whole cloves and cinnamon in while it cooked, and gave a distinctly new flavor to it. That goes well with meats; it's no trouble at all to make up a few glasses either way."

"'No trouble,' is your daily phrase; you say it over and over, and I never cease to be astonished at it. Everything seems a trouble to me, and I am sure jelly-making the year round would be a [Pg 137] dreadful trouble."

"Not at all, if you took it as a matter of course and made nothing of it. I cook up my fruit in the morning while I am doing up my dishes, and then put it in a bag and hang it up and go away and forget it. After luncheon I find the juice is all out, because I have only a small amount of fruit, you see. I let that boil while I do the luncheon dishes, and put in the sugar, and it is done; I pour it into glasses and set it away to harden for one day, or for two if necessary, and then I just pour melted paraffin on top of it and put it in the closet. That is really no trouble, is it?" Mrs. Thorne asked, placidly.

"Well, we won't discuss it now. Tell me instead whether you do up anything besides apples in winter?"

"Yes, indeed, lots of things. For one, when early in the season I find a basket of winter pears, I get those and make up pear conserve. I peel and chop them, cook them with sugar, lemon, and ginger-root; four pounds of pear, a pound and a half of sugar, an eighth of a pound of cooked and finely chopped ginger-root, and a chopped lemon. Boil it down thick, and you will find it extremely good, especially with cream cheese, or in sandwiches for afternoon tea. If pears were expensive in the fall and I did not pickle any, I usually do some now. [Pg 138]

"Later on, carts full of small sour oranges come through the streets, and then I make orange marmalade; that helps out a breakfast nicely. And when, later still, the carts have the queer little whole figs covered with sugar, I preserve them. They are the best thing in ice-cream you ever ate, and also good just as preserves; and I make sweet pickles of them if I had no peach pickles in the fall."

"How do you make those?"

"Just by the one rule you always use: a quart of cider vinegar boiled down with three pounds of sugar and a handful of whole spices; that is a pretty large rule for just a few pickles, however, and you had better divide it."

"And what comes next?"

"Cranberry conserve, I think. You chop a quart of the berries, mix them with the pulp of two oranges and the grated peel, a cup of raisins, and two cups of sugar, and boil it all down till it is thick. That is a really choice thing to have with chicken or a good company roast. Then, too, I make a little mint jelly to go with lamb, also for company. I divide the apple jelly when I make that, and in part I put a bunch of bruised mint, or if I cannot get that in winter at the butcher's, I use dried mint. When it is done I strain it well and add a little green vegetable coloring, and it [Pg 139] makes a lovely jelly. You know you can also make that with a basis of lemon jelly and use gelatine to set it with, if you want it at once."

"Suppose in the autumn you find peaches and pears are expensive; do you go on and do them up regardless of price, or do you depend on these winter preserves?"

"I certainly never do anything 'regardless of price.' I get around the difficulty some other way. If I cannot afford peaches and pears, I preserve some apples, for one thing, making them just as rich and transparent as I can, and they do to help out in the place of the better things. Then I always have a good deal of summer fruit, for some of that is bound to be cheap at one time or another, no matter what the season is. And I put up melon rind in the place of pickled peaches, and citron and crab-apples in the place of pears. So you see I have enough with the winter preserves, even when I have to do without the costly fruit."

"It sounds as though you were supplying a boarding-school or a hotel with all these things, but I suppose you mean that I shall make only a little of each kind."

"That is it, exactly; make these things up as you can, a glass or a can at a time. For instance, when you have cranberry sauce for dinner and have a cupful left over, boil that down the next [Pg 140] day with an orange and some raisins and a little more sugar, and you will have two glasses of

compote. So with the other things; do not take a whole rule at a time, but divide it and make up a small amount."

"I am sure with a closet full of such goodies I shall be extravagant and use them all up as fast as I can; it will be such a temptation."

"Then you must resist it. Have things only when you need them. Put on the jelly when the dinner seems just a little bit too plain, and if there is any over, do not feel bound to eat it up at luncheon the next day in order to 'save' it. That idea of saving is too absurd. But make it up into something useful for dessert; tartlets, perhaps."

"And when do you have the preserves and canned fruit?"

"Those are for Sunday night suppers and company luncheons and to put with too plain a pudding when somebody drops in at dinner-time. And when butter and eggs are beyond the dreams of avarice, I just fly to this closet for relief. I make deep tarts of cherries or plums or blueberries and put a crust on top only; they are about the best winter desserts that we ever have. And the bits of crust left over from them I make into small tartlets, to fill with jam or jelly and help out luncheons, or I cut the crust into strips and cover it with sugar and bake it in a very hot oven, so [Pg 141] the sugar melts and turns to a brown caramel. Those go well with afternoon tea. Or, sometimes I cover the strips with a little white of egg and chopped nuts and put them in the oven to just brown. They are what our grandmothers called 'toothsome dainties.'"

"Let's make pie to-day and try those; they sound perfectly delicious," begged Dolly.

"Very well, we will. And, by the way, remember when you make cake to keep out just a little batter and thin it with water or milk and pour it on a buttered tin; bake it quickly, mark it off while warm into strips, cover with the egg and nuts as before, and brown it; that is just as nice as a more elaborate cake."

"You said we were not to have cake."

"No, I said not often, and no rich cake at all. But you can make cake once a week, for Sunday night, of course; and when you do, Dolly, try this: take out enough batter to put in two little patty pans. Bake those, and while they are fresh split them open on the side and take out part of the crumb; put in a spoonful of preserves or jam or half a peach and press the edge together so the opening does not show. Then cover the cakes with plain icing made by mixing a little water or milk with confectioner's sugar; when this is firm, serve the cakes for a dessert. If you have a tiny [Pg 142] bit of whipped cream to put with each cake, so much the better. There you have a dessert which practically costs nothing, for the cake was inevitable anyway, and you simply took a bit of left-over, added the fruit and icing, and there you are."

"If I had a cow and so could have cream, I could fill the middle with whipped cream, and have something even better."

"Yes, indeed; it makes me sigh to think of that cow! Or, you could manage this dessert in this way; bake the cake in one small tin instead of in two little ones, and split it and fill it with soft custard well thickened with corn-starch and flavored; or you could put jam between the layers and eat cream on it, if you had any. Or, you could use strawberries in summer and have a perfectly delicious shortcake."

"Yes, of course; I'll write all those things down. Only I suppose we sha'n't have cake very often if it has to be cheap and plain, for I don't care for that kind."

"Oh, there are good kinds you can have, my dear. I said not to have extravagant kinds, that was all. Have good cake when you have any, and do not try and skimp on the materials. Only, make a little cake, that calls for a small amount of butter and few eggs, and eat it up while it is fresh and good, rather than make a huge layer-cake that lasts a week and costs money. If you choose a [Pg 143] good rule, you can vary it. One day bake the cake in a loaf and add raisins and spices; or split it and put jam between the layers; or bake it in two tins and put mixed nuts and raisins chopped together between the layers. You can have all sorts of things for a change, you see."

"I am afraid to venture, but I suppose I will learn in time. When eggs are cheap I suppose we can indulge in a little better cake than when they are dear."

"Yes, indeed; and then, too, you will economize in butter, so you can afford to spend a little more on eggs. In April or May you can have sponge cake, or even angels' food; either divide the rule and make half, or make it all and use part in one or more dessert. Even stale cake is most useful cut in strips and put in soft custard or with whipped cream; while for that good thing, pêche Melba, you need a round of rather stale sponge cake for each person, to stand half a peach on before you fill the top with ice-cream or fruit. And there is cabinet pudding, made by lining a mould with stale cake and filling the inside with custard, jam, and more cake crumbs; you bake that in a pan of water. And you can make a pudding of mixed bread and cake crumbs, too, and color it with grated chocolate, and have a change from the usual thing. Don't think I despise [Pg 144] cake, or undervalue its use, for I do not. I am only warning you not to make too much of it and not to use an expensive recipe."

"I see. Your advice here, as on other occasions, would he 'Study the cook-book,' I suppose."

"Exactly. A sensible cook-book is a wonderful help in learning to live on a little. But before we finish this lesson I had better just tell you a little more about eggs, because here I differ with so many housekeepers that I want to put the matter before you and let you hear my side; you will find the other exploited in plenty of articles here and there. I do not believe in using any eggs that are not fresh. I never put mine down in lime or brine or anything else. That seems a heresy,

because it is possible to keep them in several ways. But I either buy good, fresh ones when I need them, or go without. One can easily manage to use very few in housekeeping by being careful, and I would rather do that than have those on my table or in my food which have the slightest flavor of stateness. I just tell you this as a personal feeling, and if you live where you can buy them cheaply in quantity and put them away for winter use, do so; only I never do it."

"How many do you use a week, anyway?"

"A dozen for two people will answer, and in very cold weather, when they are costly, as I said, I do without, except for breakfast once a week, possibly." [Pg 145]

"So if they are forty cents, or fifty, a dozen, you spend a good deal."

"Yes, we do; you need not follow in my footsteps if you do not choose, you know. The fact is, I economize everything else so carefully that I suppose I permit myself this one laxity."

"That reminds me; are you infallible, Mary? In other words, do you never make a mistake and overrun your allowance? I have a horrid sinking feeling that I certainly shall do that."

"Very likely you may, at first. I used to; but it would be inexcusable after my six years of housekeeping if I did so now. But do up your accounts at the end of each week, Dolly, and if you find you have spent more than your dollar a day, or if your tin bank is so low that you see you are not going to have enough in it for staples the next week, cut right down somewhere. I suggest in meat and fruit and cake. Live on very plain things till you catch up again. In that way you will keep within your monthly sum, and if you do that it is all right."

"Well, now, just one thing more and I will let you go. I see you have an eye on the kitchen clock. Tell me how you manage to so plan your meals that you will not have the same things over and over. If we are to have cheap meat always, and cheaper vegetables, and no fruit to speak of, it seems to me I shall get right into a rut and have the same food each week, a sort of squirrel-in-a-cage round and round, and that would be horrid." [Pg 146]

"So it would, and distinctly unhygienic as well, for you must have variety or your digestion will give out. I think a good way is to write out bills of fare and follow them more or less; or, to have a card catalogue and keep that in a convenient place and run it over when you want anything. That is, have Puddings in one small square box, each recipe written out clearly with a nice black title. If you want one, run these over and select something for which the ingredients are in season. So with hot breads, and made dishes and meats. That might be some little trouble at first, but after you were started I think it would be simple and easy to follow."

"Yes, it might be a help; I'll put that down. However, that does not quite cover what I meant to ask you. How do you plan your meals? Do you begin with what you happen to have in the house, say a piece of mutton, half a can of tomatoes, and so on, and so have a hit or miss meal, or do you plan two dinners at once and buy things that will do over in different ways?"

"I do both ways; I say to myself when I buy anything, 'What form can this take to-morrow?' and when I see things in the refrigerator in the morning I plan the next meals out of them. I always plan luncheon, dinner, and breakfast each morning. I never will think up breakfast after dinner at night. But I see what you mean, and in the next lesson we will go to work on the subject of meals. I really think, as it is more play than work, we won't make a lesson of it, but a game; the Game of Menus." [Pg 147]

"It sounds difficult, just the same."

"No more than whist or chess or any other game worth learning. Of course it calls for brains, and it cannot be learned in a moment, but it's a game, all the same, and good fun when you have learned it; you'll see!"

CHAPTER VIII [Pg 148]

The Game of Menus

"Now for our game," said Mrs. Thorne, after looking in the refrigerator the next day. "I have been thinking about what it is like, and I have decided that it is not so much like chess or whist as it is like anagrams. But though it may not be as great an intellectual feat to master it as though it were one of the famous games, it takes brains, nevertheless. So take heart and try and learn it."

She took one sheet of paper and gave Dolly another, and went on.

"You know already that the refrigerator plays a large part in our housekeeping and we must be guided in our planning by what we find there morning by morning. But still there is always a place for new dishes after combining the old ones. So first we see what we have and then decide what will best go with it."

"Do you always write down what you are going to have? Why?"

"Oh, no, of course I do not write every meal down, but I keep a lot of possible menus on hand and turn to them for inspiration when I feel stupid. Or if I have a maid, I hand her over a few and have her follow them, and so be sure—that is, tolerably sure—that the meal will come out as I planned it. Besides these good reasons, there are more which apply especially to you. One is that [Pg 149]

when you have once learned to make up menus rapidly, you will save yourself a lot of mental storm and stress. Often young housekeepers groan over thinking out meals, especially dinners, of course, since they are the most difficult, and declare that they have had every known meat and vegetable again and again. Instead of that sort of thing, if they had at hand a number of dinners written down, they could select one and save bothering.

"And one thing more. You might often go on having the same thing over and over without realizing it. Now, in writing down the dinners for a week at a time you soon see if you are repeating yourself. If the words 'beef stew,' for instance, appear frequently you presently grasp the idea that you are having too much of that festal dish, whereas if you did not see the words in black and white, you might not guess it."

"I still do not see how you can plan a second day's meals at the same time you plan the first day's, unless you can gauge with accuracy the size of the family's appetites. Suppose some night, instead of each one's taking one helping of meat all around, we should all take two helpings; that would smash your written menu to bits." [Pg 150]

"Yes, of course it would, and such things have happened. But written menus are not binding contracts, but only suggestions, and when you and Dick recklessly eat up all the meat between you some night,—personally I should know better than to join you in your extravagance,—then you will have to modify your next day's menu and either plan a new meal or substitute something else for the meat you had arranged for. But still you will find written menus a great help if you use them sensibly and do not feel bound to follow them literally. Now let us begin to play the game. You write down a dinner for to-night, and then I will undertake the thankless task of criticizing it."

Dolly gazed thoughtfully at the chandelier a few moments and then wrote rapidly. Presently she read glibly:

"Potato soup.
Lamb pot pie with dumplings; boiled rice; macaroni and cheese.
Tapioca pudding.
Coffee."

Mrs. Thorne smiled. "Poor Fred! If that is the sort of meal you are arranging to give him, I think he had better stay where he is. Now think a minute. Potato soup first, and potatoes are starchy; next, boiled rice, dumplings and macaroni,—more starch; and last, tapioca pudding! Starchier and starchier, to parody Alice in Wonderland." [Pg 151]

Dolly pouted. "Well, I am perfectly sure he would eat that dinner thankfully and say it was a good one. He would never know he was eating starch if you did not put it into his head. I think it is all nonsense to point such things out to a man, anyway; it makes him notional about his food."

"Later on he would wonder why on earth he had dyspepsia, my child. You would not like to have a dyspeptic husband, would you? People who have poor digestions are proverbially cross, you know, and too much starch is certain to ruin even the very best of stomachs in time.

"Now let me explain what I took it for granted you knew already. You must not have too much of any one ingredient in your food; not too much fat, or starch, or sugar or anything else, because it is not wholesome. The perfect dinner is like this: First a good soup; then meat with one green and one starchy vegetable; then a fresh vegetable salad dressed lightly with oil; then a very simple sweet; coffee last; or, omitting the sweet, coffee alone. Of course you and I cannot afford to have dinners like that all the year around, because green vegetables cost too much, but that is the ideal toward which we must strive. In place of the things we cannot have, we must have substitutes as nearly resembling them as may be. In summer, of course, it is the easiest thing in the world to have salads and green vegetables, and in winter we must do the best we can without them. Now try another menu, and do not mind my criticisms. And put a date on this one, so we can tell the time of year and see whether or not you are having the proper things; suppose you say this is a March dinner." [Pg 152]

Dolly again consulted the chandelier, and after much study produced this result:

"Clear soup.
Veal stew; mashed potatoes; canned string-beans.
Prune pudding.
Coffee."

"Better," said her sister doubtfully. "But don't you think veal would be pretty expensive in March? And why string-beans, when parsnips and salsify are plenty? And as to prune pudding, consider the egg whites!"

"Mary, you are too exasperating for words," ejaculated her much tried sister. "I am sure that was a beautiful menu. However, I'll try again. Still winter?"

"Yes, still winter." [Pg 153]

"Well, here is a perfect one; absolutely faultless," Dolly said presently.

"Clear soup.
Mutton and barley stew; potatoes; parsnip cakes.
Deep apple tart.
Coffee."

Her sister laughed outright. "This game evidently has more to it than you thought when you began to learn it, hasn't it? Now this menu has its good points, but I think you were rash in pronouncing it faultless. The clear soup is all right, provided you made it out of what you had in the house, and the mutton and barley stew is good and nourishing. But why have potatoes and barley at the same meal? You do not need them both. Instead, drop out the potatoes and have a dish of spiced fruit with the meat instead of a second vegetable. Or, omit the soup, have the stew first, and then a salad. As to dessert, unless it was a phenomenal apple year, I am afraid you would find deep apple tart would cost too much in March. However, that menu is an improvement on your other. Now make a second dinner off the remains of the first, if you can."

"That is worse still. I think we will eat the whole up one night, this time, and have no remains."

"If you do, you must have half-priced things the second night, then." [Pg 154]

"Well, how is this?

"Mutton croquettes; mashed potatoes; minced turnips.
Celery salad; crackers and cheese.
Bread pudding with dates.
Coffee."

"That does very well. I see you had no carrots and had to buy turnips, but they are cheap. Celery, however, I am afraid was rather expensive, wasn't it? Could you not have had shredded cabbage instead? And you really did not need crackers and cheese with it; you might have had them with coffee for dessert. But, you are learning. Now try another winter dinner, because they are most difficult of all."

Dolly wrote, after some thinking:

"Purée of dried lima bean soup.
Rounds of pork tenderloin; minced carrots; potato balls.
Cherry pie.
Coffee."

"Fair; pretty good," commented her sister. "I see you plan to put the carrots and potato balls around the one pork tenderloin you had Frenched, so it would be enough, and you had a heavy soup with the light meat. So far I have no fault to find. But I cannot approve of pie after pork. Can [Pg 155] you not have the canned cherries another way?"

Dolly scratched out the word "pie," and wrote in "pudding."

"That is all right. Now just one more to use up the scraps left from this."

"Cream of carrot soup.
Veal chops, breaded; scalloped canned tomato; sweet potatoes.
Chocolate custard.
Coffee,"

wrote Dolly.

"Now that is what I call a good dinner," Mrs. Thorne said approvingly. "The left-over carrots you made up into soup. You had no pork to use up, so you got two veal chops, and those are fairly cheap. Having tomatoes was a master stroke, because they go so well with veal, and you will have enough of them over for a second dinner. I suppose the custard does not call for eggs?"

"No, it's a soft corn-starch pudding served in glasses. But, Mary, I did not intend to use up the tomatoes for a second dinner, but to have them for luncheon as Spanish toast."

"Oh, very well, that will do for once, especially as I hope you bought only a small can of them. By [Pg 156] the way, speaking of luncheon, remember when you have cabbage for dinner, to keep out half after it is creamed, and the next day have it baked with layers of cheese; that is a delightful luncheon dish. You can use up boiled rice in the same way with white sauce and cheese, or you can merely mix your tomato and rice and bake that. Or, you could have rice croquettes and tomato sauce. But I am getting off the subject. Now try a July dinner, for a change."

"Oh, that's easy.

"Cream of celery soup.
Lamb chops and peas; new potatoes in cream.
Strawberry shortcake.
Coffee."

"Where will you buy celery in July, my dear? That must come off your menu the very first thing. Remember you can have only seasonable things. And lamb chops are always expensive by the pound, and very small, with lots of bone and trimming, too, so they will not do; you must change them for a cheaper meat. As to strawberries—strawberries in July?"

"It's the very first of the month, Mary. They are still plenty and cheap."

"All right, then. But if the weather is warm I don't think Fred will care for a hot soup and hot [Pg 157] coffee too. Why soup at all?"

"Just because. I can change that if you do not approve. How is this?

"Veal cutlet in strips; peas and new potatoes.

Sliced tomatoes on lettuce.
Strawberry shortcake.
Coffee."

"That is perfect. But do not let yourself be eaten up with pride yet, for as you said, summer menus are easy to do. Try one in September."

"Boiled corned beef; potatoes; cabbage.
Watercress salad.
Chocolate corn-starch pudding.
Coffee."

Dolly wrote down rapidly, and read aloud.

Her sister laughed again. "This time you have decidedly lost the game," she said. "I think you have everything wrong in that menu that you possibly could have. Remember the rule: you must eat whatever is in season. Now, why have in September the food you should reserve for winter, and why omit all the good fall vegetables and fruits? Try again. I blush for you, my dear."

Dolly muttered something about people who were too particular, but rewrote her menu docilely. [Pg 158]

"Cream of corn soup.
Lamb and tomatoes stewed; fried eggplant; sweet potatoes.
Frozen peaches.
Coffee."

"Perfectly delicious; I wish we could have that to-night. You see you really know how to use what you can have in market if only you think about it. Corn for soup, and tomatoes, eggplant and peaches all in one good dinner, and yet all cheap. Now, cover yourself with glory again in a menu for December. And this time use up some probable left-overs. Let me see. Suppose you had the lamb only the night before and there was a little left of that, and half the corn and sweet potatoes. Add what you need to those, since all of them come in December as well as earlier."

This took more time, but presently Dolly read:

"Lamb soufflé; sweet potato puff; corn fritters.
Oranges.
Coffee."

"That is a distinctly inferior menu," said Mary severely. "I see you are not ready for a prize yet, unless it's a booby prize. That soufflé of the lamb is quite right, but imagine what a light and trifling meal for a hungry man! Soufflé,—half fluff; corn fritters, and potato puff,—more fluffiness. What should have begun that dinner, Dolly, in December?" [Pg 159]

"Oh, of course! A heavy bean soup; but I will add that."

"Before you do, let me finish my criticisms. Oranges are too light a dessert for a simple meal unless everything else is heavy. With the bean soup you will improve things, but it seems to me you should have either crackers and cheese with the fruit and coffee, or nuts and coffee instead of the oranges."

"Oh, well, I can easily rewrite the whole thing. How is this?

"Black bean soup.
Lamb soufflé; fried sweet potatoes; succotash.
Nuts and raisins.
Coffee."

"Splendid! I could not do better myself. You put dried beans in with the corn, and sliced and fried the sweet potatoes. That is a very good dinner indeed. Now do two menus for January and use up left-overs again."

"Corned beef; cabbage; mashed potatoes.
Canned string-bean salad.
Mince pie and cheese.
Coffee."

"Dolly, I do think you are crazy! Corned beef and cabbage and mince pie! Do you want your husband to expire in agonies that very same night? Never have mince pie with a heavy meat. I might almost say never have it at all, because it is so hearty it ought to be a meal all by itself. If you ever do have it, put it after the lightest things you can find, and have green salad or apple sauce, or something of the sort, to counteract it." [Pg 160]

"Well, I'll cut the pie out. But what is the matter with corned beef and cabbage? I thought those went particularly well together."

"If you do not cook them in the same pot, but prepare the cabbage as I told you, in such a way that anybody can digest it, even a child or a confirmed dyspeptic, you can have it with any meat. But never cook anything with corned beef, except a slice of onion to season it. As for dessert, what will you have instead of mince pie?"

"Oh, canned blueberry tart; eggs and butter are dear in January. You see I do know something."

"Very good. Now make a second dinner and use the left-overs of this one."

"Split pea purée.
Creamed corned beef, baked; string beans; mashed potato cakes.
Steamed fig pudding.
Coffee."

"That menu is really a success. You made the purée of the water the corned beef was boiled in, I see, and used up your half-can of string-beans for a vegetable; and of course the potato cakes were the mashed potatoes reheated. But why that particular pudding?" [Pg 161]

"Fred ate up all the blueberry tart the night before; not a scrap of it was left, because it was so good," said Dolly demurely.

"Well, I don't blame him. Now I think you understand the game, and you can go on and practise it as you get time. Making out a whole set of menus for a year, four or five for each month, would be excellent practice for you, Dolly. But that is all for to-day."

"But, Mary, why do you skip all the breakfasts and luncheons? I am quite as capable of making glaring mistakes there as in dinners. If you don't tell me what to have, I shall certainly lunch on cold meat, and have two eggs apiece every morning in the week—also grapefruit!"

"What a frightful threat! Well, then, here are a few breakfasts, just to start you off comfortably:"

Spring

1. Poached eggs on toast; muffins; coffee.
2. Boiled rice and raisins, with cream; milk toast; coffee.
3. Codfish croquettes; pop-overs; coffee, toast, orange marmalade. [Pg 162]

Summer

1. Cold oatmeal with berries; coffee and toast.
2. Scrambled eggs; corn bread; coffee.
3. Slices of fried eggplant; muffins; coffee.

Autumn

1. Sliced peaches; little pan fish; toast; coffee.
2. Fried tomatoes with cream sauce; rice muffins; coffee.
3. Parsley omelette; sally-lunn; coffee.

Winter

1. Cereal with chopped figs; creamed codfish; toast; coffee.
2. Bacon; fried apples; corn-meal puffs.
3. Creamed hard-boiled eggs on toast; coffee; fried hominy and syrup.

"Those are all practical and cheap, Dolly, I think, but you must modify them to suit your own needs, of course. If you find any of them expensive, substitute something else. You can have broiled dried beef in place of the bacon in one of the winter menus, for one thing, and in place of the eggs in any menu you can have some left-over you cannot use elsewhere. Now for the luncheons:"

[Pg 163]

Spring

1. Canned corn fritters; tea; jam tartlets.
2. Spinach on toast; tea; cheese crackers.
3. Codfish cutlets; tea; drop cakes.

Summer

1. Lettuce with mayonnaise; sandwiches; iced tea; berries.
2. Stuffed and baked eggplant; tea; lettuce and French dressing.
3. Baked tomatoes; iced coffee and fruit.

Autumn

1. Vegetable croquettes; cocoa; grapes.
2. Plain omelette; tea; stewed pears.
3. Baked sweet potatoes; tea; baked apples.

1. Cheese soufflé; tea; wafers.

2. Cup of soup; macaroni and tomatoes.

3. Potatoes filled with creamed fish; doughnuts.

"There! I think you might write those down and add to them as you like, too. I did not say which luncheons were made from left-overs and which were not, but some of them are, you can see for yourself. Of course you must never forget to use up what you have in the house rather than buy anything whatever for any meal. I think I have sufficiently impressed that on your mind, haven't I?" [Pg 164]

"You have, indeed. Now let's stop playing this game for awhile and go and get luncheon; I am starved."

"Dear me, I should think you would be; it's lunch time now. I declare, Dolly, this game is as absorbing as bridge."

CHAPTER IX [Pg 165]

Two Dinner Parties

Mr. Thorne proved as good as his word, for though he did not immediately follow up his warning that he would bring home unexpected company to dinner, he merely bided his time. One morning his wife said that, as she and Dolly would be out most of the day he need not expect a very good dinner that night, so that evening he gaily put in an appearance at six o'clock with two bachelor friends who had occasionally helped enliven the domestic circle on similar occasions.

Now, the dinner had been planned with an especial view to getting it on the table without a delay, as Mrs. Thorne could not be certain just what time she would be at home. The soup was ready to reheat. It was a plain purée, made with vegetables and water, flavored with a bone and plenty of seasoning, but there was not enough of it for five, unluckily. The meat was a Hamburg steak of moderate size, all ready to put in the dry frying-pan. For vegetables, a half-can of corn was already scalloped with crumbs, to be browned in the oven, and for potatoes a dishful of plain boiled ones was at hand, to be heated up in a white sauce. For dessert there was to be crackers, American cheese, and the usual black coffee, made in the coffee machine on the sideboard for convenience' sake. [Pg 166]

When Dolly took in the situation and reviewed this menu, she shuddered. What a company dinner! Insufficient soup, scanty meat and corn, plain boiled potatoes, no salad and no dessert!

"Really, this time Dick has all but caught us," her sister whispered, as after receiving her guests with a cordial welcome she excused herself to put the dinner on. "Hurry, Dolly, and put more plates in the oven to heat, and get out the big platter and the vegetable dishes and put them in, too. Then lay two extra places and come out and help me.

"Now, here is the soup," she went on when her sister appeared. "There isn't half enough. You will have to get a can out of the emergency closet. Then the steak; isn't it fortunate that I had not put it over to cook? Now I can flatten it a little and make it larger, so it will cover more surface. I'll put vegetables all around it, and it will just fill that big platter and look exactly like a planked porter-house when I'm done with it. But the corn is hopeless; it is far too small an amount. Get some peas from the closet, Dolly, and drain and season them and make them hot. The potatoes won't do, either. Get some raw ones, and peel them and cut them in good-sized bits. And put on the kettle of fat to heat; I'll brown them in that." [Pg 167]

After the meat was on the fire Mrs. Thorne made a salad by peeling and slicing in thick pieces three oranges she had bought for the next day's breakfast, because they happened to be cheap that day. She arranged these in the salad bowl and stirred up a French dressing to pour over them. She put the bowl on the sideboard and arranged the dessert by it, the crackers, a jar of fancy cheese from the closet in place of the American, and the coffee in the machine with small cups and saucers; she also set out the salad plates. She filled the tumblers, put on bread, and the bread and butter plates, with butter balls on them. Then she added a dish of spiced prunes to go with the meat course. As she was always certain that the dinner cloth was fresh and her fern dish filled and pretty, she had no changes to make in the table, and the two extra places had been laid by Dolly.

When she returned to the kitchen, the steak was ready to be turned and the potatoes prepared for the hot fat; it took only a moment to cook and drain them. The soup was put in the heated tureen, and with the hot soup plates carried into the dining-room. Then dinner was announced.

While the rest were seated at the table, Dolly served the soup from the sideboard. This plan was arranged beforehand. Whenever the question was discussed in the family which was the easiest and best plan of managing this first course without a maid, Mr. Thorne always held that the soup should be served at the table, and when they were alone this was done; but with guests there was always the possibility of an accident when men's unskilled hands passed filled soup plates from hand to hand. Sometimes in the past they had tried the plan of serving it before the guests came [Pg 168]

to the table, but too often the soup had been somewhat cooled, an unpardonable offence in the eyes of the hostess. Generally there was the same compromise as to-night, and with guests it was passed from the sideboard.

After this course the cold plates under the soup plates, which had been put on when the table was laid, were removed with those above. With a maid they would have been left on the table and merely exchanged for hot ones by her, but after many experiments this had been decided on as the only feasible plan,—to take away the two together and put a pile of hot ones before the carver and have them passed from hand to hand. It was not as elegant as the other way, but it did away with the waiting on the table during the course. So Dolly brought in the large platter of steak and set it down before the carver. The meat was brown on the outside and pink within. A strip of suet [Pg 169] representing a bone ran down the middle, and another outlined the edge, making it look like a porter-house cut. All around it were alternating piles of browned potatoes and green peas, with sprigs of parsley here and there, so that it was appetizing to look at and delicious to eat. With this arrangement there were no vegetables to pass, and the bread and spiced prunes were passed around without trouble.

The next course was the salad. After taking off meat plates and platter, Dolly set the bowl before her sister and put on the table a plate of thin bread crisps, rolled up slices of bread and butter, browned quickly in the oven while the plates were warming for dinner. After this third course Dolly removed everything and crumbed the table. Then came the crackers, and the fancy cheese which had taken the place of the plain American variety intended for family consumption only; and with them the coffee machine was put on, with the cups, saucers, and spoons and a bowl of cut sugar, and the black, hot, fragrant coffee brought the dinner successfully to a close.

"I can never catch you," said Mr. Thorne mournfully, when the guests had finally departed with complimentary remarks to their hostess. "You always spoil my nice little practical dinner-jokes by your confounded preparedness! And now I suppose I've got to pay the forfeit." [Pg 170]

"What forfeit?" asked Dolly.

"Why, we have an arrangement that Dick can bring any friends home to dinner at any time, the number not to exceed two at once," explained her sister. "Then if there is dinner enough, and if it really is good enough for the occasion, he has to pay me for my extra trouble. Of course, if I ever fail, I'll have to pay up in my turn, but so far he has been caught every time. Dolly and I will consider, Dick, what the forfeit shall be. Matinee tickets, I rather think, this time."

"Well, I'll get them cheerfully, for that was really a good dinner, and the kind a man likes, which is another matter."

The next day Mrs. Thorne replaced the soup, cheese, and peas she had taken out of her emergency closet. She had also to buy extra meat for dinner as there was none left over for a second day's meal, but as the dinner had been a cheap one for five, she did not grudge the small amount expended. "But now we must economize in earnest this week," she said as she added up her accounts, "because next week I want to have a real little dinner-party. I must have several, in fact, to return the hospitality shown you, my dear. Luckily it is spring, now; remember that it is [Pg 171] always cheaper to entertain in spring than at any other time in the year."

"It's a lot cheaper not to entertain at all," Dolly grumbled rebelliously. "Don't let's have any dinner-parties—they're such a bother!"

"On the contrary, they are no bother at all, but lots of fun when you have them as I do, simply and inexpensively. And you really must do some entertaining in your turn if you do not want to drop out of everything when you are married, and that would be a most foolish thing to do."

"Who waits on the table?" demanded Dolly.

"Oh, that's the trouble with the dinner-party, is it? Well, I hasten to relieve your mind—you don't! When I give a company dinner I have in a young girl whom I have trained. She does all the waiting, and stays and washes the dishes, and I pay her seventy-five cents for the evening. Sometimes, when I have a little luncheon I do my own waiting, and of course in a surprise-party dinner I have to also, but not when I give a regular invitation dinner. I wait till I have money enough in hand for the waitress as well as the food and flowers and all, and then I go ahead."

A few days later the party was arranged for. A young couple and their unmarried brother were asked, making a group of six to sit about the round table. This was the menu Mrs. Thorne wrote out:

[Pg 172]

Cream of beet soup.
Radishes, almonds, olives.
Forequarter of lamb, stuffed; mint jelly; new potatoes; peas.
Lettuce and cheese balls; wafers.
Vanilla ice-cream and sherried cherries; small cakes.
Coffee.

"Doesn't that sound good?" she asked, surveying the paper with her head on one side.

"Now to make as many things as possible to-day, so we won't get too tired to-morrow. First, we will salt the almonds."

"Do let me do those all alone! I saw somebody do it once, and I know exactly how. You just take off the skins and fry them in olive oil."

"My dear, I hate to seem unappreciative or hurt your little feelings, but the fact is, that is a most

abominable way to do them, though it's common enough. It makes them greasy and streaky, partly brown and partly white. This is the really-truly way to make them: first you put them in boiling water till the skins loosen, and then drop them in cold water; slip off the skins, and dry them and mix them with the half beaten white of an egg—that is, about half the whole white; then you sprinkle them with salt and put them on a tin in the oven and occasionally stir them. They [Pg 173] will turn a lovely creamy brown and will be crisp and evenly colored, and you can keep those you do not use at one dinner and heat them up to freshen them when you need them, for a second dinner, just as you do crackers. We will do them that way to-day. Then besides that we will get the dining-room in order, polish the silver and glass, fill the salts, and look over the china and table linen, so that to-morrow there will not be much to do."

The next morning the marketing was done early, so that the things would come home in good season. At the grocery they bought the beets,—one bunch of old ones, not the young ones just in market; a can of small American peas; a head of lettuce; a square cream cheese and a round one half its size in order to have enough; a little American cheese; two lemons, and a pint of cream.

At the butcher's they ordered lamb. "Not what you call 'spring lamb,'" she explained, "but exactly what you have been selling all winter; that is still nice, and plenty young enough. Now cut off the neck and the trimmings, and take out the shoulder-blade and make a pocket for the stuffing to go in comfortably, and send me a bunch of mint with it all." While she waited for her change she told Dolly about this purchase. "Forequarter of lamb is really the cheapest roast there is. Sometimes even when we are all by ourselves I buy it and make ever so many meals of it. I get a big piece, as [Pg 174] much as eight or nine pounds, because that is the cheapest way, and the butcher keeps it for me and lets me have it as I want it. The roast makes at least two dinners, and there is a lot left over still for croquettes and soufflés and such things. Then there are four chops for one or even two dinners more for two people—"

"'With a good filling soup to take off the edge of the appetite first,' otherwise the four chops would make only one dinner," interrupted Dolly, quoting freely.

"Exactly. And besides, there are the trimmings and odds and ends for meat pies and stews, so you see how far it goes."

"Really, I should think you and Dick would fairly bleat!"

"Well, perhaps we might if we deliberately sat down to lamb night after night, but we don't do anything half so foolish. We have things between, veal and beef and pork, and as the lamb is practically in cold storage at the butcher's, it can wait indefinitely, and when we do have it we live on what I used to think the old Jews wanted to live on in Canaan,—'the fat of the lamb!' But now's let's hurry home, for there's lots to do yet."

As soon as their things were taken off and kitchen dresses put on, the plain vanilla ice-cream was [Pg 175] frozen and packed away to ripen. For the sauce which was to be put on each glass which it was served, a small can of preserved cherries was opened and drained; the juice was boiled down to a thick syrup with a small cup of sugar, and the cherries put back in it to cool, with a flavoring of sherry.

The salad was made next, the lettuce washed and rolled up in a clean towel and put where it was very cold, to crisp. They rolled balls of cream cheese, wetting them with a bit of oil to make them smooth, and adding salt and a dash of cayenne; as each one was made it was rolled in grated American cheese and then laid away. The French dressing was also made, and at the last moment was to be poured over the lettuce, and the golden, white-centred balls laid on it.

The beets for the soup were next chopped and boiled in a pint of water; as much milk was added, the whole seasoned with a slice of onion, salt and pepper, and then strained and slightly thickened. This made the prettiest of pink soups, and one which could be set away and be reheated at dinner time in three minutes. The mint jelly was also made: a cup of water was put with the juice of a lemon and heated; when hot, a small bunch of bruised mint was put in and simmered for two minutes; then this was strained and a level tablespoonful of gelatine, dissolved in half a cup of cold water, was put in with a tiny bit of green vegetable coloring, the whole [Pg 176] strained through flannel and put into a pretty little mould. It would come out a lovely sparkling green, quite decorative enough to be put on the table, and delicious to eat with the lamb, Mrs. Thorne assured Dolly complacently.

The peas were turned out of the can, drained, seasoned and made ready to heat up quickly. The potatoes were boiled and cut up in a very little thick white sauce, and a spoonful of parsley was minced to be scattered over them, last of all.

After their luncheon the dinner table was laid. It had a white damask cloth, and a white, lace-edged centrepiece. There were four glass candlesticks with yellow candles and shades, and in the middle a bowl of the yellow jonquils, now in season and inexpensive. At each place was a pretty plate, which was to remain on till exchanged for a hot one later, and a small array of silver, with a tumbler and napkin. The latter hid a dinner roll, so no bread and butter was served at the dinner. The table was then finished except for the last touch; the small dishes of radishes and salted almonds, and a few white peppermints, were to be put on just before dinner, with the dish of mint jelly.

After the dinner was over Dolly confessed her amazement.

"I 'never did,' as the children say. I had no idea you could have so nice, so pretty a party with so [Pg 177] little to 'do' with. Really, we never missed the fish, or the entrée, or the game or anything else. It was a lovely and delicious meal, wasn't it, Dick?"

"Modesty compels me to refrain from saying what I truly think, Dolly. Otherwise I should mention my conviction is that it was as good a dinner and as nice a party as you'd often find, and your sister is about as fine a cook and manager as they make 'em. But as I said to begin with, in my position of host my lips are sealed."

"So little trouble, too," Dolly went on, smiling at him. "I really thought you were crazy to ask the Osgoods, whom everybody is afraid to entertain because they have everything in the world, but our dinner was just as nice as though we had followed in their footsteps and had a table decorated with orchids, and whitebait and fancy ices and everything else to eat. Mary, permit me to say I consider you a genius!"

"Nothing of the sort. I am simply a woman, more or less sensible, I fondly trust, who knows that nowadays nobody cares for long, ten-course meals, and if what is set out is only good of its kind, that is all that matters. Then, too, when we are really living on a little and everybody knows it, either we cannot entertain at all, which means that we cannot accept invitations, or we must do it [Pg 178] in a plain way, in keeping with the general style of our home life. Anything else would be absurd, snobbish and extravagant. And to prove that people like to come to simple dinner-parties like ours, I shall have two more right away."

"Three cheers," said her husband calmly.

The next morning the sisters added up their accounts and set down the dinner menu and what it cost in a little dinner-party book which was often used for reference by them. This is what the dinner proved to have cost:

Soup, milk and beets	$.15
Lamb	1.40
Lettuce, one head, cheese balls, French dressing	.30
Cream, ice and salt for freezing	.30
Cakes, home-made	.10
Almonds, radishes, olives, mint jelly	.50
	———
	$2.75

"That is all, except the flowers, which were forty cents, and the cherries, which I made myself last summer and paid for then, so I did not have to put their cost in now, you see. The little bottle of olives cost ten cents; so did the radishes. The Jordan almonds were forty cents a pound, and I got half a pound and have some over for next time. With the flowers, that makes the dinner $3.15; say $3.25, to allow a liberal margin for little bits of butter, sugar, salt and so on used up in [Pg 179] cooking, and $4, including the pay of the waitress. I call that a cheap party."

As soon as finances permitted and small economies had made the two sisters feel comparatively rich, they gave a second dinner. This time they found some pink tulips at a small florist's, and these they used in making a lovely table. They stuck them one by one into a very shallow dish filled with sand, the leaves put in and out also, and the edge of the dish concealed with moss; this gave exactly the effect of a little bed of growing flowers.

The menu was quite different from the other dinner:

Cream of almond soup.
Olives, radishes, salted nuts.
Maryland chicken with cream gravy; new potatoes; corn fritters.
Lettuce and cherry salad; crackers.
Vanilla ice-cream with strawberries.
Coffee.

The soup was made by chopping a quarter of a pound of almonds and simmering them in a pint of milk; then the other pint was put in with the seasoning, and it was slightly thickened, strained, and at last beaten up well with an egg-beater to make it foamy. The chicken was cut up and the best pieces dipped in batter and fried in deep fat; a rich cream gravy was passed with this. The [Pg 180] corn fritters which were the necessary accompaniment of the dish were made of canned, grated corn.

The salad was very cheap at this time of year. Large California cherries were stoned, laid on lettuce, and a French dressing poured over all. The ice-cream was a nice vanilla, and on each glass was put one fine large strawberry. The next day the remains of the chicken appeared at dinner in the shape of croquettes, with a rice border, and the rest of the box of berries came on also. This materially reduced the expenses of that meal, and the difference went on to the cost of the party dinner, to help out. The account was like this:

Soup, milk and almonds	$.20
Chickens, two	1.75
Potatoes and corn	.25
Lettuce and cherries	.30
Cream and berries	.30
	———
	$2.80

Adding the little things as before, the flowers, nuts, olives, pay of the waitress, and a margin, brought this up to a trifle over four dollars.

"That is too much," said Mary soberly, as she set down the figures. "I mean to keep strictly within a four-dollar limit. So our third dinner, Dolly, must be less than these and even things."

This was the third dinner: [Pg 181]

Clear soup with tapioca.
Salted nuts, radishes, almonds.
Roast of veal, stuffed; fresh mushrooms; potatoes.
Lettuce with chopped nuts; French dressing.
Strawberry ices.
Coffee.

"That is a good, sensible dinner," said Dolly. "No frills, unless you count the mushrooms."

"It is the cost of the waitress that makes these dinners so expensive," said her sister. "It provokes me to have to put money on that, yet I will do it at a real dinner-party. But as for the rest, this ought not to be a costly affair."

The soup was made of very ordinary materials, but it looked and tasted well. The roast was crisply browned and juicy within, and the delicious stuffing and broiled mushrooms were substantial and good. The salad was lettuce covered with chopped almonds put on after the French dressing. The ices called for no cream and so were inexpensive. The figures showed this result:

Soup	$.15
Veal	1.20
Mushrooms, quarter of a pound	.25
Potatoes, radishes, almonds, etc.	.35
Lettuce, nuts, dressing, crackers	.20
Ices	.20
	———
	$2.35

"Ah, that's better," said Mary, when she saw the total. "Then the flowers were the same as before, only red instead of pink tulips; the waitress, too, and the margin—only $3.25. I feel relieved." [Pg 182]

"Of course roast veal is not quite as good as Maryland chicken," said Dolly, "but the mushrooms made it seem quite elegant; broiled mushrooms are certainly food for the gods. It is quite a saving to have an ice instead of an ice-cream, isn't it? And Mary, did you see what a big, big piece of roast was left over?"

"That is one of the good things about veal, that there is so little waste. I am sure we can easily make two dinners out of it, and that will save ever so much. And when we can get ahead at all, Dolly, we must hurry and have our luncheons."

CHAPTER X [Pg 183]

Reducing Expenses

"I never feel as extravagant as I do in spring-time," Mrs. Thorne said as she hovered over asparagus, tiny new potatoes, fresh peas and strawberries in the market one May morning. "Everything is so tempting, and we are tired of winter vegetables, and yet we will run up dreadful accounts if we attempt to have any of these goodies. Come right along, Dolly; don't linger a moment longer, or I am lost."

"You could really have bought a spring vegetable or two," remonstrated her sister as they walked home. "We are ahead on our money, I know, because I rattled the bank this morning, and it was nearly full. I do not see why you did not get something nice and springy if you wanted to."

"Because now for a week or two I mean to reduce expenses. I want to give three small luncheons and have everything as nice and pretty as possible, and you know we used up our savings of two months on our dinner-parties. The rattling of the bank meant only pennies, my dear; I know, for I peeked. So we must cut down vigorously." [Pg 184]

"That is an absolute impossibility," said Dolly with decision. "We do not waste a single crumb now, not a potato paring, not a bone nor even an egg-shell. We can't save a cent's worth."

"Oh, yes, we can; we can save a lot if we try. And there is a suggestion for to-day's lesson; it will be on Retrenchment."

Dolly still looked unconvinced when she sat down with book and pencil, but Mary was complacent.

"Of course we do not waste anything," she began, as she took her seat in the sitting-room after the entire apartment was in immaculate order and lunch under way, "and as you suggest, we have cheap meats and vegetables right along. But we can still find some things that are cheaper still,—because you always can, whatever you have. So if we cut down on those to begin with, and

have desserts for a week made without butter or eggs, and abandon fruit altogether for the time, I am sure we can have quite a surplus presently.

"To begin with meat, because you know my theory that that is always the expensive point in housekeeping, you know I said veal was cheap in the spring. So it is, but instead of using the ordinary cuts, you can have something less expensive. There is a calf's heart, for one thing. A country butcher would probably give that away—and incidentally inquire what on earth you [Pg 185] wanted it for. Here in town I suppose we must pay something for it, but it will not be much; only a few cents. You have no idea what a delicious meat that is, so delicate and tender. You wash it well and make a bread-crumbs stuffing for it with a good deal of seasoning, and after you cut out the strings and wipe it dry in the middle you stuff it. Bake it in a covered pan for two hours, basting it well frequently, then make a gravy and pour over it. You really should have cooked onions, browned in this gravy, to go with the dish, because they are the accepted thing with the heart, but you need not if you do not want to, for it will be good without them. Then the next day you will have enough left over for a dish of baked hash, or a cottage loaf. And all for, say, ten cents or less! Isn't that a stroke of economy?

"Then there is boiled calf's head. That, too, you could get for a song in the country. Have the butcher clean it well and let you have both the brain and the tongue; be sure and make him understand that. Wash and parboil both of these in separate saucepans. The brains taste exactly like sweetbreads, and if you chop them and make them up into croquettes, no one will suspect that they are not what they seem. It is strange that so many people are prejudiced against using [Pg 186] brains, for they are the cleanest possible meat. They are kept shut up in a little bone box where nothing can soil or hurt them, and as a calf has little intelligence, they never grow tough from use! So have the brains for one meal. Then when the tongue is tender, take it up and peel it and braise it with minced vegetables; that is, cook it in the oven in a covered pan, smothered in vegetables. Have this as it is, as a roast, and what is left over make up into a loaf exactly as you do with chopped veal or beef; or dice, cream and bake it for a second dinner. If you have any tiny bits still left, put those through the meat chopper and spread them on toast; put an egg on each and serve for breakfast or luncheon.

"Then the head proper. This you had better have the butcher keep for you till you have used up the other things, or you will have too much meat on hand to use economically. When he sends it, tell him to split it open, as this must be done and you probably could not do it yourself. Put it into cold water and put it on the fire till it comes to the boiling point. Take it off and plunge it into cold water to blanch it, rub it all over with half a lemon, and then put it into boiling water, only just enough to cover it, and add a tablespoonful of vinegar, a small onion, chopped, a carrot and a sprig of parsley. If you have a bay leaf, put that in too. Cover the pot and gently simmer it for two [Pg 187] hours, or till the meat is ready to drop from the bones. Take it up then, take out all the bones, skin, and gristle, and put the meat in an even pile; cover it with bread crumbs and brown it in the oven. In cool weather this will make two good dinners, and you will find it as good as the tongue. In summer, divide the meat and have only one dinner baked. Put the other half into a mould and fill it up with the stock it was boiled in, after you have cooked this down and strained it; it is so full of gelatine that it will set at once and you will have a fine dish of ice-cold meat set in a clear aspic, and what better could any one wish for? If there is more stock than you need, keep out part for the basis of a soup; it is so strong that it will make you an extra good one, with perhaps tomatoes added to it. Now when you consider that one calf's head will make at the very least four dinners for a small family, do you not think by having it you will materially reduce expenses?"

"Having a mind open to conviction, I do."

"Well, then! To go on to another sort of meat, here is another suggestion of cheapness. You know what a shin of beef is, don't you? The lower part of the leg, where the meat is apt to be stringy and tough; most people think it is good only for soup. Get the butcher to cut you two rounds from that, right through the bone. Perhaps you may need three, if he cuts low down, or possibly only [Pg 188] one high up; you must watch him and judge how many you will need. Take this, put it in a casserole or stew-pan with hot water enough to cover it and put it on the very back of the stove, where it cannot boil, and let it stand there for three hours; then try it, and if it is tender, cover it with chopped vegetables, carrots, a little onion, parsley, and turnips and peas if you happen to have them at hand. Let it simmer now for an hour. Take up the meat, drain the vegetables and put them around it, thicken and brown the gravy and put it over all, and you would never guess you were dining off 'soup meat.'

"Or, here is another way to cook the same cut. Get a good large piece, say one weighing two and a half pounds. Brown it in a hot saucepan all over with a spoonful of drippings; when it is all a good color, pour enough water on to just cover it, and put in the vegetables as you did before and add six cloves. Simmer the whole under a cover for four hours and serve just as it is, in a hot dish.

"Still a third way to manage, is to cut the meat from the bone and dice it. Simmer this with the vegetables and the bone till it is very tender. Take up the meat and put it in a baking-dish, and strain and thicken the gravy and pour this over; then put a crust on top, either one of pastry or a mashed potato crust with an egg beaten in it to make it light, and bake the whole. Put a little [Pg 189] butter on top to brown it if you use the potato. Now, no one who ate those three or four dishes would think they were related; but when you have them, do not serve them one after another, but let a week go by between, just to have a change of meat.

"Then there is calf's liver. That in town even in spring costs more than it did some years ago, but even here a little goes so far that I call it a cheap meat, too; there is not a particle of waste about

it, you see. Get a pound and a half some time and lard it; that is, stick narrow strips of salt pork in it. If you cannot do that, lay two slices on top of the whole. Bake it in a covered pan and baste it often, and serve with a brown gravy. There will be one dinner off this roast to begin with. For a second, chop it up and either make a mock terrapin by a cook-book rule, or else cut it in dice, cream and bake it. If any bits are left over have those on toast for luncheon."

"Mary, you told me in the most solemn manner that I was never to have meat for either luncheon or breakfast."

"Did I say never? I did not quite mean that, because sometimes you have a very little bit of something you can economically utilize in that way. Of course you could have it in a soufflé for [Pg 190] dinner if you had a small cupful, but if you had only half as much, you could not; then put it on toast and add plenty of gravy, and have it for breakfast with a clear conscience. Only do not have anything which would do for dinner; that is all I meant by my 'never.' The same thing applies to lunch. If you have just a little meat you are sure is useless elsewhere, mix it with boiled rice and lots of seasoning, and bake it in a mould in a pan of water and turn it out hot; that makes a very good and economical dish for once."

"It does seem strange, when one thinks that we are eating scrag of mutton and beef stew right along, to buy things cheaper still for dinner, doesn't it?"

"Oh, we have not had those things right along! We had chicken last week, once, and the week before we had a pot-roast which I recall with pleasure this minute. But I admit the accusation in part, for you know we have had the dinner-parties to make up for. Ordinarily, I do not manage quite so closely. But if for a week or two you have calf's head once, and a dinner or two of beef shin and such things, you will cut down wonderfully on your meat bill. You can have also a dinner of one Frenched tenderloin, and another of scrag of mutton with barley, and a third of half a pound of chopped beef made up into meat cakes with a brown gravy. If you eke out with odds and [Pg 191] ends of things in croquettes, with heavy soup before it, I should think you could save nearly two dollars in the one item of meat, and no one the wiser. Then once have a main course of salt codfish, freshened and creamed and baked with crumbs, in place of meat, and another time have baked beans, just for a change. If it is summer-time you can have a very good dinner dish of an eggplant. Cut it in two sidewise, take out the centre and salt it, and put it under a weight to extract the juice. After an hour or so take it up and chop it and mix it with an equal quantity of seasoned bread crumbs and a small cup of chopped nuts. Heap this in the shell and bake it with a covering of crumbs and butter. It is just as nourishing as meat and not so heavy, though it is a distinctly substantial dish. Of course you must be careful to get a very cheap eggplant, or you save nothing, but I am supposing now you live where gardens are plenty; perhaps you can walk out and pick one in your own.

"To go with the meats, possibly we can find some spring vegetables that cost no more than winter ones would. Naturally we cannot buy asparagus, nor yet new peas, but I fancy we may pick up some cheap new beets or carrots. If not, we will just go on having winter ones, but we will try and serve them in vegetable croquettes, or cream them and bake them with crumbs for a change. And then we can certainly have greens of ever so many kinds, and nothing is more wholesome in [Pg 192] the spring than greens."

"I simply despise them," said Dolly with a sniff of disdain.

"You will not despise mine, my child; I learned how to cook them in Paris and they are good enough for an epicure. Write down my words of wisdom on this subject. Take any sort of green thing you can get, beet-tops, spinach, sorrel, lettuce, escarole or cress; wash them well in several waters, and do not drain them very dry; put them in a covered saucepan without water, and turn and press them well from time to time till the juice flows. Take them up then and put them twice through the meat-chopper; never try and chop them in a bowl or they will not be good, but instead, coarse and stringy. After they are a smooth pulp, put them on the fire, and add seasoning generously: salt, pepper, lemon juice or a very little vinegar, and a little cream if you have it. With sorrel, which is the very best of all greens, do not put in any acid; with spinach, add a little nutmeg. Then, when the whole has cooked for five minutes, take it up, put it in a very hot dish, and serve at once; you will have a new dish you will certainly like."

"How about potatoes?" inquired Dolly after she had written this down and marked it with a star as "extra good." "No new potatoes for us, I suppose?"

"Unluckily, no. I hate to keep on using old ones, but I always do until that happy day when I find [Pg 193] the price is exactly the same for new or old; then I change over. But do not have potatoes all the time; boiled rice is cheaper when you are cutting down expenses. And when you can buy some vegetable cheaper than potatoes, have neither, but have two fresh vegetables instead. That makes a good change in spring and summer."

"And how about salads?"

"Just as soon as you find young dandelion leaves and cress and cheap lettuce, cut off soups and have those instead. But do not buy them unless you can really save money by doing so; there is a danger you may not think of. Usually soups are cheaper."

"And desserts?"

"Eggs are cheap just now, so depend somewhat on them. That is, make a sweet omelet of two, for one night, and for another have prune puff. For that you take the white of one egg, sweeten it and mix with the pulp of half a dozen cooked prunes; chill this and serve it in glasses. Or, put it in small brown baking-dishes and put it in the oven for five minutes, and serve it hot in the same

dishes.

"Have a sweet soufflé sometimes, too. Beat the white of two eggs light, fold in a little powdered sugar, and put it in a buttered dish with spoonfuls of jam or orange marmalade dropped in here and there. Set this in a hot oven as you go to dinner, and it will be just ready when it is time for dessert. [Pg 194]

"The next night after you have had either of these, have baked custard. Mix the slightly beaten egg yolks with a little milk and sugar, and put them in cups or small moulds and bake them in a pan of water. You can vary them by putting in jam or by making the sugar into caramel, or adding a little bit of rice. Or, use up the yolks by having them scrambled with milk for breakfast.

"And if you live in the country, Dolly, have lots of rhubarb for spring desserts. You can serve it one day in a deep tart with pie-crust on top, and little tartlets made from the left-overs. On another you stew it in a little water, and put in the sugar as it is just done, because it does not take as much then as if it went in at first. Then, while it is hot, add enough dissolved gelatine to set the whole and pour it into a mould. Serve with part of the juice as a sauce, which you kept out on purpose.

"Speaking of this jelly suggests also coffee jelly and prune jelly and things of that kind, for they do not take butter or eggs; but I rather think I told you of those when we were studying desserts. However, I can remind you of them now, can't I?

"When strawberries are cheap, get one boxful and divide it. Serve part the first one night with a plain soft corn-starch pudding. The second night, slightly crush the rest and sweeten them. Make just a little bit of baking-powder biscuit dough and mould several rather thin biscuits; bake these, split them, and put in the berries between two layers, and you have nice individual shortcakes. In that way one box will make two desserts, while otherwise you might not find it enough. Of course if you had a garden you could go out and pick some berries and serve them in their natural state, but I am telling you how to manage if you have not such luxuries as home-grown fruit. [Pg 195]

"When we speak of cheap desserts, our mind naturally reverts to bread pudding, and we have already had that once. But to cut down its expense, serve it in small moulds instead of in one large one; individual dishes are a great economy for any sort of thing. And try having boiled rice croquettes with raisins in them; and have farina croquettes, too, cooked rather brown, and if possible covered with scraped maple sugar. Don't you think we might leave desserts now? I told you so much about them when we went over the subject."

"Yes, you may go on to breakfasts and luncheons if you have finished dinners. Can you really economize on those? It seems to me we have reduced them to their lowest terms already."

"Well, we have, just about. But for breakfasts I should cut out fruit altogether for a time, and make a breakfast of hot cereal, coffee and toast, or some good sort of muffin that did not take too many eggs. In winter you can have a hearty meal of fried corn-meal mush; you can either make that the day before you want it and slice and fry it in the morning, or you can stir it up and boil it freshly just before breakfast and fry spoonfuls of it while it is soft. I like it best that way myself, but you can try both ways. In summer you can have an excellent breakfast of cold cereals." [Pg 196]

"They sound horrid."

"They are not horrid at all, but very good; we will begin to have them ourselves as soon as it gets warm enough. And besides cereals, I should see if I could not have some cheap hot breakfast dish to alternate with them; I suppose milk toast, or if you live where milk is plenty, cream toast, and codfish in lots of ways, especially in baked potatoes, or mixed with mashed potato in small dishes. Sometimes I should have codfish in fritters; brown puffy fritters, not flat greasy cakes. And I should have clams in that way, too, if they were cheap."

"How about luncheons, now? Did you say you could or could not cut down on those?"

"I think we cannot do much better than we have done, but I should keep trying all the time. I should have fried bread with jelly to eat on it, and baked beans, and farina cakes, and minced vegetables, hot or in salad. And in summer I should have creamed corn or peas on toast, and lots of salads of plain cooked vegetables. But be very careful not to try and cut down on your luncheons by doing without substantial dishes. No woman who does her own work can long keep up on bread and tea at noon without getting sallow and thin and anaemic; you simply must not try and economize on nourishing food, even though you cut down on everything expensive. Starvation is poor management." [Pg 197]

"Well, leaving meals for a moment, do you try and cut down on other things, such as coffee, for example? Do you have a poorer quality to save money?"

"Never. I must have good coffee at any rate. But I will tell you what I do right along. I go to a very good grocery, one of the largest and most expensive sort, and there I ask for a good kind of coffee which is not as expensive as their highest grades. You will be astonished to find that all such places make a specialty of coffee which actually costs less than you can buy it for at your regular grocery, and it is infinitely better, too. One famous place keeps coffee for thirty-five and forty cents a pound and even more, and at the same time recommends what they call their 'best' coffee, at nineteen cents! It seems absurd, but that is a fact. I always use it, and it is the best I can buy. Never use cheap coffee, Dolly; it is horrid, just as bad butter is, or bad tea, or bad eggs. Go without, or have them good." [Pg 198]

"Mary, did you ever think what you would do if you had to live on just a few cents a day? I have often wondered whether I could manage or not. Suppose for a time you had practically nothing at

all, how would you manage then?"

"I suppose I should plan to have things to eat that would give the maximum of nourishment for the minimum of cost. Let me see. I should have corn-meal mush for one breakfast, because that contains fat and is very nourishing. For another, I should have boiled rice, I think. For luncheons I should have split pea purée, or a thick bean soup. For dinner I should have a dish of creamed codfish, let us say; or, I should have whole wheat bread and a baked apple instead of the fish. And I should have macaroni and cheese, too. I know people who have tried these things say you can live easily on beans and lentils and whole wheat bread and a certain amount of fruit, apples or bananas or figs, and I can quite believe it. Of course, if only one could have plenty of milk, the rest would be easy."

"Easy, but not pleasant. I should hate to have to have such monotonous food, so I hope Fred's income will never be less. I like a pretty dinner table and a dainty dinner. Cereals may be all very well as to nourishment for the body, but I think the spirit suffers. I don't mean spirit, either, exactly. But you get the idea, don't you?" [Pg 199]

"The general poetry of life, I suppose you have in mind. The dinner table with candles and china and glass and good things to eat gives an air of refinement to life. Well, I agree with you that they are worth having, too. We can economize in the food, but we cannot dispense with the graces of the dinner."

"If we cut down too much, you see I am afraid things will not be quite as nice as I like to have them."

"I don't believe in doing it all at once, but in cutting down a trifle here and another there, day by day, till you can afford better things. I am sure it would give one a most uncomfortable moral jar to suddenly drop from very comfortable living to lentils, or to anything corresponding with your idea of the 'scrags of mutton' which you are perpetually holding up as the very embodiment of inelegance! Better not go in for too much luxury any one day; have things economically nice right along and save a little margin so you will not have to cut down at all. Unless, indeed, you cut for entertaining, as we are doing now; then do it imperceptibly, and don't tell of it, and all will go well.

"And now that is my last word. I find reducing expenses has a most exhausting effect on me. Let's go down-town and lark a bit and refresh our jaded spirits, and when we feel equal to it, we will come back and cook up a dinner that will not cost half as much as it will seem to cost, judging by its looks and taste." [Pg 200]

CHAPTER XI [Pg 201]

Luncheons for a Little

One morning, after two weeks of close economy, the bank on the kitchen mantel was emptied and the sisters received the reward of their savings. There were not only pennies, but dimes and even quarters; quite enough to ensure the financial success of the luncheons they had planned for.

"Ah, we are evidently safe, now," said Dolly as she poured the money out in her lap. "Here's richness! I seem to hear broilers cackling; or don't fowls cackle in the spring-time of their youth? Anyway, there is no doubt we can afford to have some of them for our parties."

"Indeed we cannot. Not broilers, my dear girl; they are not for the likes of us. But we shall have some other good things, at least. And isn't it fine to have the money ahead instead of having to catch up later on when we have forgotten all about the occasion?" moralized Mrs. Thorne complacently. "I don't mind economizing beforehand, but I just hate to, afterwards. Now for our menus. I think we will begin with a luncheon for four only. Next week we will go on to six, and possibly we will have eight, later; still, I am not sure about it, for six is all we can really manage to serve easily. Suppose we take turns writing out what we will have." [Pg 202]

"I'll begin," Dolly said. "A simple luncheon for four, you said; I certainly ought to be able to manage that by this time. Let me see."

This is what she presently produced:

Cream of spinach soup.
Lamb chops; new potatoes; peas in crusts; tea.
Asparagus salad with mayonnaise.
Strawberry ices.

"That does very well indeed," said Mrs. Thorne as she took the paper and read over the menu. "My only criticism is on the chops; those cost a good deal, and especially in the spring, when the lamb is small."

"I meant to have old lamb," interrupted Dolly.

"Yes, but even so, I think chops for a luncheon of four cost too much. Why not substitute strips of veal, breaded? I know a delicious way of cooking those, and they are ever so much cheaper."

"All right," said Dolly. "Veal strips it is. How about that dessert?"

"Strawberries are only nine cents a box now; those will be all right. And we will have a perfectly delicious salad of that asparagus; that is, we will if it does not go up in price before the luncheon. [Pg 203] It has such a queer way in town of getting cheaper one day and more expensive the next. Now for our two invitations. We won't write them, but just run in and ask Mrs. Hays and Mrs. Curtis informally, as it is to be such a very simple affair."

"Yes. I wait on the table, I suppose?" Dolly inquired gloomily.

Her sister laughed. "You do, or I do; it is all the same. But how absurd to think of that! It makes things all the more homelike. You see, you are not used to it; if you were, you would not mind a bit."

"You make me think of the eels who didn't mind being skinned at all—not when they got used to it. But I agree for this time, and when you have the larger luncheon you will get the waitress, won't you?"

"I truly will," promised Mrs. Thorne.

The day of the luncheon found some changes in the meal that had been planned. Asparagus had suddenly taken on a higher price, as they had feared, and they had to do without it. Instead they had lettuce and cheese and nut balls, the latter made by mixing cream cheese and chopped nuts into balls the size of a hickory nut. These were laid in cup-shaped lettuce leaves and French dressing poured over at the last.

The table was laid with the doilies and fern dish of every day, but a festive look was given to it [Pg 204] when yellow sprays of genesta were stuck among the ferns. A bread and butter plate stood at the top of each pretty place-plate by the tumbler and a napkin at the side; one knife, and soup spoon lay at the right, and a spoon for tea, two forks at the left, and a dessert spoon across the top of the plate.

Just before luncheon the soup was taken up and put in hot cups, and the strips of veal, the potatoes and peas in the crusts were arranged on hot plates. All these were put in the warming oven, and fresh parsley stood ready in a cup of water on the table, to be added at the last moment. On the sideboard in the dining-room was the salad and the tea tray; the glasses for the dessert were ready in the kitchen, each one standing on a small plate.

The soup was put on before the guests came to the table. After it was eaten Dolly rose and got the hot, filled plates from the oven and put them on the sideboard; then she merely exchanged a hot plate with the food on it for the plate holding the soup cup. There was no delay or confusion, and no passing, so this went off easily, while Mary poured the tea from the tray her sister set before her. The same arrangement was made with the salad; this was already served on the sideboard, and the hot plate on the table was exchanged for the cold one with the lettuce.

After this course everything was taken off and the table crumbed. Then, while an animated [Pg 205] conversation covered the pause, Dolly went to the kitchen and took the strawberry mousse from its pail in the tireless stove, being thankful as she did so that she did not have to dive into an ice-cream freezer and extract a wet, icy mould and half freeze her hands. She quickly put a heaping spoonful of the cream in each glass, put on one of the big berries which had been saved on purpose, and carried all four glasses in on a small tray, putting this on the sideboard and serving one at a time from there.

"I did not mind waiting at all," Dolly said, after the guests had gone. "I suppose it was because luncheon is such an informal meal anyway; or rather, it is supposed to be. I think I believe in doing a good deal as the English do both at breakfast and luncheon—have things on the sideboard and let the guests help themselves from there if they choose. However, I flatter myself I did pretty well, to-day. You noticed, I hope, that I left the room only twice, once to get the meat course, and once for the dessert, and no one seemed to pay any attention."

"You did beautifully. You had 'the noiseless tread' the perfect maid is supposed to possess and so seldom actually does have. You see you can get along very well by yourself. Really, if one has everything possible on the sideboard or on the serving table, and will serve the main course [Pg 206] ready prepared on plates, there is nothing simpler than a luncheon. Now that we have tea served with the main course quite as often as coffee at the end, that too makes things easy, for with a ready prepared tray one can always manage passing the cups to a few women, and if there is nothing else on the table there can be no confusion."

"And what did it cost?" Dolly inquired, getting out her book.

"Soup: I got a quart of milk for that, and used a little spinach left over from the night before; I got a little extra on purpose when I was buying it. Then I had a third of the milk left still for the potatoes. The soup was about .07. There was three-quarters of a pound of the veal, .21. By the way, did you see me cook that? I pounded it well to ensure its being tender, and then I breaded it twice over."

"I thought you always breaded things twice."

"I mean I breaded it four times. I dipped each piece in crumbs, then in egg, then in crumbs, just as usual; then I laid it away till this dried, and repeated the process. Last of all I fried it in the wire basket in deep fat, and the result was a thick rich crust over veal as tender as chicken. That is the way the Germans cook it, and I think it is awfully good.

"Then the potatoes, those were only .05. The peas, half a can, at .15; I used only half, because by [Pg 207] putting them in bread-crusts they not only look prettier, but go much further. The other half of the can we shall have for dinner to-night, mixed with chopped carrots. The salad, lettuce, cheese,

nuts and dressing were .25. The mousse took only a bottle of cream, a quarter of a pint,—.12,— and the ice to freeze it was .05. I put in only half a box of the berries at .12, and the rest go in the shortcake for to-night. The almonds were only a handful. I got half a pound and used only half of those; four people do not consume so many as six do, I find. So altogether, and allowing a margin for staples, you see it comes out only a little over $1.00—say about $1.25."

"Perfectly absurd! I supposed it cost to have a luncheon, and it doesn't. I shall live in a perpetual round of gaiety, entertaining seven days a week, at this same rate. Now when will you have another?"

"Next week, I think. This second one will have to cost more, however, for we shall have two more people in, and must give them rather a better meal, or rather, a more elaborate meal. Shall we have the little maid?"

"Oh, well—never mind. I suppose I must learn to do my own waiting if I am to begin as I must keep on afterward. No, I'll wait, Mary."

When they came to write out the menu for this second luncheon, they again put down asparagus. [Pg 208]

"I'm afraid we shall be doomed to disappointment, but I hope we may be able to find some that is cheap," sighed Mrs. Thorne. "Nothing makes such a good company salad."

"A little voice within me tells me we shall get it for almost nothing," said her sister comfortably; "put it down, Mary."

This was the menu for the luncheon:

Strawberries.
Cream of beet soup.
Salmon cutlets; creamed potatoes; peas; tea.
Asparagus salad with French dressing.
Café parfait.

"But why is the main course fish instead of meat?" Dolly inquired anxiously, as she read it over.

"Oh, at luncheon I often have a substantial fish course as a main one; salmon is just what we want, and in the spring I like it better than a meat, anyway. You will see that it is all right. Besides, it is cheap!"

"I suspected as much. Canned, then, of course."

"Yes, my dear, canned, and very good; wait and see!"

This time the centrepiece was the fern dish as usual, but small white flowers were stuck in the earth all through the ferns, and the effect was beautifully fresh. [Pg 209]

For the meal, the strawberries were laid on small plates on paper doilies in a circle, with the hulls turned in; in the middle lay a little heap of powdered sugar. A finger-bowl stood above the plate, and this was left on all through the luncheon. In removing this course Dolly merely took off the berry plates, leaving the service plates beneath them on the table and putting the soup cups on these next; later on she substituted the hot, filled plates for both service plate and cup at once.

The salmon was picked over, mixed with a stiff white sauce, seasoned, and then cooled for an hour. The paste which resulted was cut in strips, moulded into oval, chop-shaped pieces, and crumbed as usual; these were again dried, and last fried a golden brown in deep fat; then a paper frill was stuck into each one to represent a chop bone. They were laid on the hot plates and a spoonful of peas and one potato added. As Mary predicted, the guests were fully satisfied, and never missed meat.

The asparagus materialized for the salad, to their delight. It was cooked, chilled, laid on lettuce, and a French dressing poured over just before it was passed. The mousse, or parfait, was made as before, but the flavoring of coffee was a cupful left from breakfast, boiled with the sugar in the place of the water usually cooked with it. [Pg 210]

"If that luncheon was not expensive, then I am indeed an ignoramus," said Dolly, when they began to figure out its cost. "It tasted expensive, Mary."

"It was that horrid asparagus. Why did you let me buy it, Dolly? I am truly sorry I did, for like you, I suspect we have spent too much. Let us see.

"Strawberries—a whole box this time. Luckily they are cheaper, however; they cost .10. The soup was much as before: left-over beets and three quarters of a quart of milk; put down .06. Salmon, one can, .25; peas, one can, .15; potatoes, only .05, thank goodness! Asparagus, .30, and right in the height of the season, too; it's absurd. Lettuce, .05. Parfait, say, .20. So, allowing a margin as before, it was about $1.30. Oh, well, that is not as bad as I feared. Six people, too! But then, this time we had almonds left over, and Dick gave me the chocolates we had on the table. We must be careful, anyway, even if this once we have not overrun."

The third luncheon again had but six guests, as Dolly was perfectly sure she could not wait on more. This time they were gay young women who were accustomed to all sorts of elaborate functions, and Dolly secretly dreaded her part. They, however thought it great fun to go to an informal meal cooked by one sister and served by another, and eat few and simple dishes beautifully cooked; so far from criticizing, they rather envied the two hostesses their ability to carry off the affair with ease and charm. [Pg 211]

The menu was planned very thoughtfully. They wanted things rather prettier than ever, and yet they must avoid extravagance. They decided on this:

Bouillon with whipped cream.
Creamed fish.
Chicken croquettes; creamed peas; potatoes; chocolate with marshmallows.
Pineapple salad, cream cheese and wafers.
Vanilla mousse with strawberries.

"Five courses," commented Dolly as the last was set down. "And chicken croquettes! I call that elegance."

"Five courses, because we omitted the fruit before the soup, as we had it before, and because fish is cheap and makes a good second course; it sounds more elaborate than it really is. Now for our table: do you suppose we could get some violets from the country? They make such a lovely centrepiece."

"Of course we can. Let's ask the milkman to get us some."

This proved a lucky thought, for the milkman had a small boy who promised to get a quantity of [Pg 212] wood violets and send them in early in the morning by his father all tied up in bunches, and all for twenty-five cents. Of course these were not fragrant like hothouse violets, but they had quite as beautiful a color. A lovely table was arranged with a low basket of the violets edged with a heavy band of their own leaves; a couple of small glass dishes held some violet-colored candies, and the finger-bowls which came on with the dessert had a couple of violets in each, so that the effect of the meal was springlike.

The bouillon was made the day before it was needed, out of bones and odds and ends of meat; it was clarified, colored a good brown with kitchen bouquet, and well seasoned. The spoonful of whipped cream on the hot soup gave a touch of richness to it.

The fish was merely a little plain fresh cod, boiled the day before the luncheon, then picked up in the morning, mixed with white sauce, put in individual dishes, with crumbs on top, and browned in the oven. The croquettes were made out of a small-sized can of chicken of the best brand. This was a genuine stroke of economy, for the cost was just half of what the very toughest and oldest fowl would have been. By taking it out of the tin in good season, picking it up and letting it lie in the air till the oxygen lost in canning had been re-absorbed, its flavor was largely restored, and [Pg 213] when the croquettes were made and came to the table, golden brown without, creamy within and deliciously seasoned, no one suspected the artifice used in making them. They were served with the peas and potato as before; peas were a staple for luncheon, Mrs. Thorne thought. This time the potatoes were not creamed, however, but cut in balls with a cutter and dropped in fat till they were browned.

Instead of tea with this course, there was chocolate, served from the pot on the table, and in each cup was dropped, last of all, one marshmallow, which puffed and melted in the steaming heat and gave a delightful flavor.

After this course, instead of exchanging the plates for others filled with salad, Dolly altered the plan of service. She took off all the plates and left the table bare. Then she set on the salad in front of her sister; it was so pretty that she wished every one to see it.

They had bought two pineapples, which were cheap just then. One was of moderate size, and the other the very smallest they could find; a perfect baby of a pineapple. The larger one had been peeled, picked up in bits and laid on lettuce on a flat glass dish. The little one was not peeled, but had its brush cut off with a slice from the top; the centre was scooped out till only a shell remained, and this was wiped dry and filled with a stiff mayonnaise; the brush was put on again, [Pg 214] and the pineapple put on a plate with the ladle by its side. In serving, Mary put a portion of the lettuce and pineapple on a plate, and removed the cover of the new mayonnaise dish by lifting it by the brush and laying it on the plate; then she added a spoonful of mayonnaise, and Dolly passed the plates for her. This salad was a great success.

Last of all came the vanilla mousse, each glass topped by a big strawberry. A few berries had also been sliced and mixed with the mousse as she put it in the glasses.

"That was the best luncheon yet," said Dolly as they discussed the affair. "Really, I was proud of the table it was so pretty with those violets. I don't know why it is, but lay a table with pretty white doilies and put on violets, and somehow it has a most gorgeous appearance. Then the luncheon itself was good, thanks to your cooking, Mary; I would not have been ashamed to have had anybody in the world drop in—not even a queen! Now what did it cost?"

"The flowers, .25," figured Mrs. Thorne aloud, writing it down as she did so. "Soup, about .05; I have been saving bones for that for days. Fish, half a pound, .09; chicken, .25; peas and potatoes, .20; chocolate and marshmallows, about .10. Salad, two pineapples, one .15 and one .05, and lettuce and mayonnaise, about .30; mousse and berries,—half a box of berries,—about .20. Then [Pg 215] almonds and candies and crackers, and the little margin bring it up to, say $1.75. That is much more, Dolly, than we have spent yet."

"Yes, but it's the last one of the season, and think how good it all was!"

"I know, but if we were going on we should have to cut down on things. However, I don't mind this once, as we had money enough for it. Now while you have your book there, do you not think it would be a good idea to write out some more possible luncheons like those we have had, and average the price, so you can have some sort of a guide to go by? We can easily make out some

menus for each season in the year, since you are so determined to have them right along."

"Blessings on you for the thought! Begin right away."

"First copy out those we have had and mark them Spring, while I go out and start the family meal that comes next. I have bread to mix, for one thing, so give me time enough."

"Four minutes is plenty for that; I'll give you just five."

When they were ready, the list began with a very simple one first, headed Summer:

[Pg 216]

Cream of corn soup.
Frenched chops; purée of cucumber; potato croquettes; iced tea.
Lettuce with peppers stuffed with string-beans; cheese balls.
Ginger ice.

"Just make a memorandum of that cucumber purée," said Mary as Dolly finished. "You cook the cucumbers soft in just a tiny bit of water; then season well, put them through the sieve, and serve very hot, a spoonful on each plate. It is very good indeed. The salad, too, is nice. Fill green pepper shells with tiny cooked beans, and pour French dressing over; on top of each put one white cream cheese ball, and stand on a lettuce leaf. The ice is just a plain lemon water ice, with preserved ginger cut up in it."

"Now the next one," said Dolly.

"Well, suppose we have two for each season. This will do for another summer one:

"Cubes of watermelon in glasses.
Soft shell crabs; fried tomatoes; potatoes.
Yellow tomato salad on lettuce.
Raspberry ice; sponge cake.
Iced coffee."

"Suppose you can't get crabs; what do you do then?"

[Pg 217]

"Tell the grocer to order them for you in tins; they come with the shells thrown in at about thirty or forty cents a big can, which holds enough for a whole family. Instead of having the soft-shelled crabs fried, devil the canned meat and serve in the shells; it's perfectly delicious."

"And whatever is yellow tomato salad? I never ate such a thing."

"Don't you know those little pear-shaped yellow tomatoes you see in summer? You scald those and skin them, chill them well, lay them on lettuce, and put on French dressing. Or, you can have mayonnaise with them, if you like. It's a nice change from the usual salad, and it will not interfere with your having fried tomatoes with the main course, for they neither look or taste alike."

"Very well; now the next one."

"Mark this Autumn. Suppose we have melons first;

"Little melons, halved.
Tomato bisque.
Strips of veal, breaded; creamed chestnuts; spiced peaches; coffee.
Salad of red peppers filled with cauliflower.
Pêche Melba.

[Pg 218]

"Cut the melons in halves, Dolly, and chill them, but mind you don't put ice inside, to make them watery and horrid. And pick out little melons, spicy green ones. Get the big Italian chestnuts to serve with the veal, if you can. Cook and peel them, and leave the inside skins on; then just cream them. If you can't get those, use ordinary ones, and put them through the sieve like a purée; they taste just as well. The salad is very pretty. Cut the tops off the red peppers and take out the inside exactly as you did with the green ones; cook the cauliflower, pick it up in flowerets, and mix with French dressing and fill the peppers. If you wish to be perfectly grand, cook a carrot, cut it up into tiny dice, and put a few on top of each; the colors are lovely together. Serve these on lettuce, of course. Then the dessert. Halve nice peaches, peel them, and put one half on a round of sponge cake for each person. Fill the middle with a spoonful of plain ice-cream, and add a little bit of candied cherry if you have any."

"One more for Autumn; two for each season except Spring,—I have three for that," said Dolly complacently.

"Try this:

"Cream of Lima bean soup.
Filets of fish; white sauce; potato balls; stuffed tomatoes.
Lettuce and grape salad.
Frozen peaches.
Coffee.

[Pg 219]

"That needs no explaining, I am sure. Have sauce tartare instead of white sauce with the fish if you can afford it, Dolly, for it's better. And serve the peaches in glasses, just a little to each person; they will be cheap, anyway, at that time of year. Now for winter; that is the most difficult time to entertain in, to my thinking."

"Still, we must entertain," said Dolly inflexibly.

"Then try this:

"Clam soup.
Creamed chicken; peas in crusts; sweet potato puff; tea.
Celery and nut salad with mayonnaise.
Little cakes filled with ice-cream."

"Very good! And as I can make all those things, go right on while the inspiration holds."

"Bouillon.
Fried oysters with sauce tartare; French fried potatoes; creamed celery.
Banana and peanut salad.
Chocolate mousse.
Coffee."

"How do you make that salad?"

"Peel the bananas and cut them in halves crosswise; cut off also the pointed end to make each one look like a croquette; then roll them in chopped peanuts and lay them on lettuce. Pass mayonnaise with them." [Pg 220]

"That's easy enough," Dolly said as she scribbled it down. "And that is the whole set already. I wish you would go on and do me a lot more, Mary; you do them like a lightning calculator."

"Why did I go to all the trouble to teach you that Game of Menus, I'd like to know, if this is the result? Not another one will I furnish you; just write out a lot yourself."

"Well, but don't rush away like that! Tell me how much these are going to cost?"

"I planned for a dollar and a quarter apiece for six people. That leaves a margin, and you can put as much or as little in addition in flowers and such extravagances as you choose. I do not think any luncheon will cost more than my estimate; if it does, I'll pay the difference."

"Then I'm certain it will not cost one cent more," said Dolly with decision. "That remark settles the matter for me. I know too well you would never make the offer if you were not sure and certain."

CHAPTER XII [Pg 221]

In the Country

"A letter from Aunt Maria," said Mr. Thorne, who had met the postman at the door at breakfast time. "Dear old lady! I wonder whether she can be coming to make us a good long visit."

His wife looked up from the coffee cups with dismay. "Don't suggest such a thing," she remonstrated. "Remember that last three months visit. Of course she will not come again for years."

Dolly looked inquiringly at her sister. "Aunt Maria? I think I recall something about a visit from such a relative."

"Of course you do," said her brother. "She came and found Mary was keeping house all wrong, and kindly tried to show her how it should be done. She insisted on boiled dinners and pie for me at night, and doughnuts every morning for breakfast. When at last she showed signs of getting ready to go home, I entreated her to stay longer, and it is my fondest dream to have her back; indeed, I want her to make her home with us permanently."

"Do hurry up and read the letter, Dick. If she says she is coming here, I warn you in advance that Dolly can keep house. I shall go off and make some visits." [Pg 222]

After a brief glance at the page Mr. Thorne waved the letter about his head. "Glory, glory!" he chanted. "Listen to this and think shame to your inhospitable selves.

> "'My dear Nephew:—I have decided to go West and spend the summer with your great-aunt Eliza. I write to say that, as I do not care to close the cottage, I shall be pleased to have you and Mary spend two or three months in it. I recall that though your ways of keeping house in the city seemed strange to me, still Mary did have things tidy, so I am quite willing to have her here in my absence. I shall go next week, and you can come any time after that. My regards to your wife.
>
> "'Your affectionate aunt,
> "'Maria Hancock.'"

Mary beamed as she listened. "Dear old thing," she said when her husband laid down the letter; "there's a reward for all my sufferings while she was here. Dolly, she has a darling little house only an hour's ride from town; and a garden, my dear, a garden! We can have a lovely cool time all summer, and eat our own vegetables. Think of it."

"Yes, Dolly, I seem to smell the delicious, soul-satisfying odor of those onions now," said Dick, luxuriously closing his eyes. "Young ones, Dolly, strong and spicy. We shall have them for [Pg 223]

breakfast in the morning and for dinner at night, and I shall have a light lunch of them with bread and butter at bedtime; there's nothing like onions for insomnia. Sundays, of course, I shall have them four times. Dear, dear Aunt Maria!"

"Hush, Dick; don't spoil all our pleasure with such horrid suggestions. Is it really a nice place, Mary?"

"Nice! It's heavenly. Not much society, you know, just a plain little country village, but cool and lovely. We will wear our oldest gowns, and do up fruit, and have our breakfasts on the porch, and just revel."

"Cherry pie," murmured Mr. Thorne, who was apparently eating his breakfast in a sort of waking dream. "And apple pie; rhubarb pie, too, and currant pie; strawberry pie and gooseberry pie also. Dear Aunt Maria!"

"You can cut the grass nights after you get home, Dick," said his wife; "and you can get up early and pull the weeds in the garden and water things. And on half-holidays you can saw wood; I remember Aunt Maria said she had a wood-stove. It will give you just the exercise you need, and be a pleasant change for you from office work."

"Mary," said Dick, rising suddenly from the table, "don't detain me with such frivolous ideas when [Pg 224] I am in such a hurry as I am in this morning. However, I must pause long enough to say that I am to have extra hours this summer, and no half-holidays, so that it will not do for you to depend upon me to pull weeds or cut grass. You had better plan to do those little things yourselves."

"He may joke all he likes," smiled his wife as the dining-room door closed after her husband, "but he is as delighted as we are over the prospect. We will go the very minute Aunt Maria leaves the house. It seems as though I couldn't wait till then."

In ten days the little apartment was ready to be closed for the summer and the trunks stood in the hallway. Mrs. Thorne was taking a parting glance all around.

"I have just one regret in leaving," she said to Dolly. "That is, that we have had no time to try and sub-let this place. I have known ever so many people who went away in summer and rented their apartments to people who wanted to come to the city and study in the college or take a course in art, or something of the sort. Often you can find half a dozen nice girls who want to do their own housekeeping in a furnished flat, and then, you see, I would have let them have this for exactly the same rent as we pay and so have saved a lot. Of course, as we do not pay rent in the country, [Pg 225] there is no additional expense, but still I cannot help mourning over the 'might have been.' Remember, Dolly, to try and get a good tenant when you move out temporarily."

By afternoon of the next day the family was settled in the little cottage. It was a plain, old house with a low roof, and the furnishings were largely of hair-cloth, and the pictures enlarged crayon portraits of deceased relatives, or wreaths of wax flowers encased in glass. Still, the porch was shaded with vines, and the flowers grew luxuriantly in the little yard in front, and back of the house was what Mary declared was "a perfect dream" of a vegetable garden, with rows of currant and raspberry bushes along the fence and a group of fruit trees in a tiny orchard further off. Altogether, it was just what filled their needs.

"The kitchen, however, does not suit me a bit," declared Dolly after the rest of the house had been examined and pronounced quite comfortable, and roomy enough for a servantless ménage.

"Well, it isn't up to our modern notions, to be sure," said her sister, looking critically around. "Everything is as clean as wax, as I had expected, but an unpainted sink needs lots of scrubbing, and a wood-stove needs blacking, and also constant stoking. Dear me, how horrid it is to have to burn wood after gas! But never mind; I ought to be ashamed to say such a thing in view of our [Pg 226] mercies. Keep your mind on the garden, Dolly, and such things as scrubbing will be forgotten."

"And no bread-mixer," Dolly went on, investigating the pantry shelves, "and no egg-beater and no cream-whipper! My dear, we must pack up our trunks and go straight back to town. We will be worn to a frazzle in a week working in Aunt Maria's ways."

"Don't worry," said Mrs. Thorne placidly. "Those things are all in the big barrel I packed while you were off shopping day before yesterday. I forgot to tell you. I knew we would have to eke out in such things. As to the bread-mixer, one of my unpardonable sins, in Aunt Maria's eyes, was that I made bread in one, so I knew in advance that I must bring mine along."

"And did you buy a kerosene-stove, too?"

"Yes, I did! I was going to surprise you with it, however, and I wish you hadn't asked. I just boldly took the price out of Incidentals, knowing that we should save mints of money on vegetables this summer and I could put the amount back on our return to town in September."

"And all those groans over the stove-stoking we were going to do were words, idle words!"

Mrs. Thorne laughed gaily. "Just low comedy," she said. "And now for our meals. What shall we [Pg 227] have for dinner to-night? We shall have to go down-town and buy some butter and eggs and coffee and such things, and bring them back, too; we must not expect city service here."

They decided that this first night it would be foolish to try and have a regular dinner, so when Mr. Thorne came home he found a supper table set out on the porch, and a little meal arranged of parsley omelet, creamed potatoes, and coffee, followed by strawberries and cream. It was the very poetry of living to sit leisurely in the growing dusk under the vines and listen to the soft country noises. The family then and there decided to take their meals out-of-doors all summer.

"The neighbors will think we are crazy," said Mr. Thorne placidly. "They will write to Aunt Maria and tell her we are disgracing her hearthstone. No well conducted villagers would think of doing such a thing as eating on a porch when there was a dining-room with a black walnut table and six chairs in their proper places. They will not consider us respectable, my dears!"

"I can't help it if they don't like it, and I don't believe it would surprise Aunt Maria in the least if she heard of it; I think she would say she had no doubt I was quite capable of doing something even as outlandish as this. But in spite of everything, we certainly shall have our meals out-of-doors except on blazing hot noons, and on rainy nights. So there!" [Pg 228]

Mr. Thorne was entirely right in the estimation put on the family by the neighbors, but nevertheless they ate, and rejoiced that they could eat under the vines on the porch all summer long.

The second day they took account of what their garden could be depended on to give them. They found string-beans in plenty, radishes, potatoes, spinach and beets. Lettuce was almost ready; peas and corn progressing nicely, and later on there would be cucumbers and tomatoes and eggplant. Last of all, squashes and melons might be looked for. They could scarcely believe all this wealth was to be theirs for the picking.

"But the weeding, don't forget that!" said Dolly, as she heard her sister's exclamation. "I somehow don't seem to fancy the idea of weeding this place. At least, I don't yearn to begin."

"I think we had better have a regular weeding boy; we can pay him in vegetables."

"He will not take them; everybody has vegetables here."

"Then we will pay him in dollars and cents,—mostly cents. Of course we can't do the weeding ourselves, except casually and at odd minutes, and I foresee that Dick will never do a bit. I shall take the money out of what we would spend on food at home, our dollar a day. Weeding is a legitimate expense, but you know how I hate to break into Incidentals, and we can easily save here." [Pg 229]

"There's the washing and ironing, remember. You have got to pay for those, you know. I wonder whether they will be a great deal here."

"Those will be less than in town; we can have the wash-lady scrub up the floors too."

"And there is milk."

"That will be less, too. In town we have to pay eight cents a bottle, and in some places it is more than that; here, I fancy, it will be about six cents a quart."

"And there is ice; or do they use ice in the country?"

"Yes, they cut it on the river near here; but it is not always good or abundant. I rather think we cannot use it recklessly; I have known the supply to give out in the middle of the summer when there was a short crop cut."

"And is it cheap?"

"About as much as in town, I think; that is the way usually."

"What do you think about meat? Did you see the butcher shop when we came up from the station?"

"Yes, and I did not like its looks a bit better than I see you did. But perhaps we need not buy our meat there, if we do not like it better when we go inside and look around. There may be a meat-wagon that comes around." [Pg 230]

"I think meat-wagons are horrid; they are never clean."

"Not to our city eyes, you mean. Well, we shall see. Perhaps there is a model cart with everything spick and span, and driver in a white jacket; who knows?"

One morning, when they had quite settled down to housekeeping, Mary got out the best preserving-kettle, after the breakfast dishes were done, and presently the weeding boy appeared with a big basket of strawberries which had been ordered the day before, as the garden bed must not be entirely picked off.

"Now for some delicious strawberry preserves," the cook observed as she began vigorously to stem them. "Get out my book, Dolly, and copy down for yourself that recipe marked 'Strawberries; unfailing.' I got it from a Danish woman once, and it is the best I ever saw. The fruit looks like rich German berries, the kind that come done up in glass and cost a dollar a bottle, and they never lose color or spoil; they keep for years."

So Dolly read and wrote out:

"'Get firm, large berries, and stem but do not wash them. Weigh three-quarters of a pound of sugar to each pound of fruit, and arrange them in layers in your kettle; cover and let them stand all night (or if the weather is very hot and damp, do this in the early morning and cook them toward night). The next morning put the kettle on and bring the berries slowly to the boiling point and skim them. Simmer exactly fifteen minutes and take the kettle off the fire; cover it with a thin cloth and let it stand all night without moving. In the morning heat again, and skim; this time let it simmer exactly ten minutes and take off the kettle; drain off the juice and boil down for just five minutes, put the berries in, and put them in the cans and seal.' That's a queer rule," Dolly commented as she finished. [Pg 231]

"It's perfectly splendid, and we will follow it to the letter and you shall see for yourself. Now remember this important thing that I am about to tell you, for it is something you must never lose sight of when you do up fruit: the reason why any fruit spoils, when you put it in good, air-tight cans, is that you have not sterilized the cans and covers, and have not used new rubbers each year."

"But just how do you sterilize cans?"

"Wash them, and then put them in the oven, tops and all, and bake them half an hour. Put the rubbers in hot water for fifteen minutes and wipe them dry. And always use glass cans with glass tops fastened on with wires. When you put the fruit away, find a place for it in a cool, rather dark [Pg 232] closet. If you do all these things, none of it will ever 'turn' or spoil."

"Well, I'll impress it all on my mind. Now tell me what we are going to do up this summer, and all about it."

"Currants come first. I shall make jelly of some of those, and later on we will spice them and make conserve, and mix some with raspberries for another sort of jam."

"Does your jelly always 'jell?'"

"Always. It has to, whether it wants to or not. Most jellies are perfectly easy to make, so you can follow a good cook-book; currant jelly is the only sort you could ever have any trouble with, and that you need not have if you follow this rule. Write down:

"'Currant Jelly That Never Fails. Take currants that are barely ripe, and do not pick them just after a rain, when the juice is thin. Do not stem them or wash them, but look them over carefully and crush them in a crock with a wooden potato masher. Put them in a bag, and hang them up and let them drain all night. In the morning measure the juice and take just as much sugar, with the addition of one extra half-pint at the end; put this in the oven to heat. Put the juice on the fire and boil it twenty minutes, skimming it occasionally; then put in the hot sugar and stir till this is [Pg 233] dissolved. Let it boil up hard just once, and take it from the fire immediately, for the jelly has come; longer boiling will prevent its ever setting. Pour it into glasses and put it in the sunshine for two days, then cover with paraffin and put it away. This is perfectly clear and of a fine flavor.'"

"So it is," Mrs. Thorne added, as Dolly copied the last words. "Next let us make a sort of list of what you can put up when you are where you can get fruits cheaply in summer. When you are in town you cannot well do them by the wholesale, but a glass or a can when you can find something reasonable, such as a box of nice berries one day, and a quart of nicer plums the next, and so on."

"Like winter preserves," said Dolly.

"Exactly. But now, as we happen to be in clover this summer, we must do up a lot of things. I have learned to alternate the fruits, one year doing one kind and the next leaving that sort out and taking another, for variety's sake; but as you are going to divide all the fruit with me this year and have half for your very own, we must do up heaps and piles of everything. I will tell you what we can make if we choose."

Dolly took her pencil again, and her sister gave her this list: "Take strawberries first; those you preserve and also make into jam. Then come cherries; like the strawberries, you use the Danish [Pg 234] rule, taking less sugar if they are sweet, or the usual amount if they are sour. You can make spiced cherries to eat with meats, too; those are lovely. Currants you make into jelly, of course; to my mind it is the best kind of all. Then you spice them also, and make currant conserve, which is a mixture of currants, raisins and oranges, and awfully good. You also mix them with red raspberries for jam, and if you like, you make raspberry and currant jelly too. Raspberries you do up by the Danish rule, using the smaller amount of sugar, as they are sweet. Raspberry jam is very nice for a good many things, and I usually do up a good deal of that.

"Then come gooseberries; those you make into jam to eat with cream cheese—home-made Bar-le-Duc, you know. And you spice them exactly as you do currants. All those rules are in your cook-book.

"Pineapples you can with a good deal of sugar. Blackberries you can make into jam and jelly, and you can also can them, but to my mind they are pretty seedy except in jelly, and that is rather dark colored, not as pretty as most jellies. Still, all things are good for a change. Blueberries or huckleberries I can for tarts in winter.

"Then melons come on, and you can make watermelon sweet pickles, and also citron preserves. Plums come, too, about this time, and those you merely can, making them as sweet as you like. I [Pg 235] put up greengages and purple plums in quantities, and use them for deep tarts in winter, saving eggs, you see, in my desserts. And I also make plum jelly and spiced plums, if I can get them at a cheap price.

"Peaches are your best preserve. I can them in a rather rich syrup, leaving them whole and putting in a good many kernels from their stones. Buy those carefully, for they are usually expensive. The bits left over I make into peach jam; it is the best thing for little tarts and to use with whipped cream in different ways. And of course I make spiced peaches, too. Pears I can, and I make pear conserve, out of pears, lemon and ginger-root; that is very good with cream cheese and crackers for lunch.

"Quinces I use in jelly, sometimes mixing apples with it, as it is apt to be a little high flavored. I also do up a few cans of preserves, and once in awhile I make a lovely conserve of quince, grapefruit and a few oranges; that I do later in the fall. Grapes I make into jelly, and I spice a lot,

too. I make a marmalade with the skins and pulp and sugar, all boiled down together; and grape conserve, made of grape pulp and oranges and raisins, is one of my choicest things. Citron you preserve; it looks exactly like pineapple.

"By this time crab-apples come, and I spice some of those, and make a good deal of jelly, it is so clear and pretty. By the way, because your cook-book will not mention the fact, remember always [Pg 236] to put half a lemon, cut up with its peel, into each kettle of hot jelly as you take it off the fire; just stir it in and leave it while you dip out the jelly. It gives a delicious flavor. And when you want geranium jelly, drop in three of four leaves of rose geranium with the lemon at the same time; you can bruise them a little if you like. Spiced crab-apple jelly is nice, too; you just add a bag of whole spices as it cooks. You see what a lot of things there are, and I am sure I could think up others if I tried. But probably you will learn more for yourself as you keep house, because every cook is experimenting nowadays, and you constantly hear of new things."

"I am sure I shall love to do up fruit; it looks so pretty when it is in the glass, and you feel so rich when you see it on your shelves."

"The worst of it is that it is the poetry of cooking, and all housekeepers love to do it up, love it not wisely but too well. They buy when they ought not, and put too much money in both fruit and sugar. Often they have to keep a lot over from year to year, which is not at all a good idea. So be on your guard and do not rashly buy and do up everything in sight every summer. Of course this one year, when we are economizing so in vegetables and milk, we can afford to spend more than [Pg 237] usual in other things. Then, too, most of the fruit is right in our own garden, which is a wonderful stroke of good fortune and probably will not come our way twice. And I brought out that barrel of cans and glasses from town, so we shall not have to buy as many as we would otherwise; we shall have to buy some dozens, however, I am afraid."

"Don't you think we ought to do up some fruit for Aunt Maria, Mary?"

"Indeed I do. I am not sure whether she will like the idea,—though I hope she will like the fruit,—but I think we had better get out her own cans and fill them with the old-fashioned things she will be apt to enjoy, such as cherries and strawberries and quinces and watermelon rind. It will be fun to leave her some things, and goodness knows we ought to, after all we have had out of her garden."

"Do you ever do up vegetables?"

"I seldom have done that, but we must this year. We will do up some peas and corn and succotash, and string-beans and tomatoes, anyway."

"I thought vegetables didn't keep well if you did them up yourself."

"Get a good rule to begin with; you can get a perfect one by sending to Washington to the Bureau of Agriculture. Then sterilize your cans, and you won't have a bit of trouble. Spoiling used to be the bane of a housekeeper, for five times out of ten things would sour, and she could not tell what [Pg 238] was the matter; but sterilize the cans, and you will be all right."

"And do you think you save a lot by doing up vegetables?"

"Of course you do—heaps of money; you can see how that is at a glance; and they are so much better than what you buy, too. Tomatoes I just peel and salt a little, and put in cans and stand them in a cold oven; then I make a fire and leave them till the tomatoes boil. I keep one extra canful ready to fill up the others from as I take them out, because they shrink a little as they cook; then I put on the covers. They come out six months later just as though they had just been gathered. You see how easy that is, especially as you scald the tomatoes instead of taking off the skin with a knife, as you do with fruits. String beans and peas I can so you would not know them from fresh ones. I pick them over and put them on in cold water and simmer them fifteen minutes; then I drain and measure them; to a quart of either I put in one level teaspoonful of salt and one of sugar, and to each four quarts one of soda; then I put them back in the kettle, just cover them with hot water, cook five minutes and can them in glass jars."

"Oh, Mary, that reminds me—pickles! You haven't said a word about those."

"To be sure. Well, I do up few of those, because we like sweet pickles made from fruit better than [Pg 239] sour ones of vegetables; but you can make some tiny little cucumber pickles if you like, and chow chow, and chili sauce, and a sort of mince made of green tomatoes and cabbage and all sorts of things. You can study up on pickles, later on, and ask people who like to do them up about recipes, and decide, as time goes on, what you want. We have undertaken so much this summer that, except for chili sauce and a few jars of other things, I do not think we shall do much in the pickle line. Pickles are really not economical, because they do not serve as a food, as fruit and jellies and jams do; they are only a relish, after all. Still, they help out, especially at luncheon, so put up some when you keep house, by all means."

Picking over the strawberries and starting the process of preserving them, making up jam out of the smaller and poorer berries, and a hurried trip down town for more sugar, together with getting lunch and cleaning up the kitchen after all the work was done, consumed most of the day. It was not until toward night that Mrs. Thorne began to make preparations for dinner, and then she found that the beef left by the butcher had evidently not been kept in the ice-house, but had been exposed on the counter, and it had a distinct odor which was anything but pleasant.

"No wonder he drove off in such haste after he gave me the bundle," said Dolly indignantly. [Pg 240] "Whatever shall we do, now, Mary? Go down-town for more?"

"No, it's much too hot, and we are too tired. We shall have a supper of some kind. Let me see;

what can we have? I'm really too used up to think."

"Iced tea for one thing; that is made and ready, at least. But the kerosene-stove has got to be filled before we can cook anything, for the oil gave out just as we finished the last strawberry."

Mary looked apprehensive. "It did? My dear, that was the last drop in the house, and they won't deliver anything after four o'clock. And there's not a single stick of wood sawed, either, for that miserable boy, who promised to come back after handing in the berries, has never appeared at all."

"What will you do? Dick is sure to come home ravenous."

"There's the chafing-dish, blessings on it! And the alcohol bottle is full; even if all the other fuels have given out, that remains. We will stir up something in that and have a salad. Always have a chafing-dish, Dolly; there are times when life would not be worth living without it."

The emergency shelf of the pantry yielded a can of salmon, and this was drained and the bones removed, and a white sauce made for it in one of the pans of the dish. It was to be reheated and [Pg 241] the fish put in it in the chafing-dish on the table. With this was to be bread and butter and iced tea.

"For a salad, Dolly, get those string-beans I cooked and set away this morning. Put them on lettuce and add French dressing; that will be very nice. For dessert I meant to have strawberries, but the very idea of them is nauseating after working with them all day."

"I should rather think so—strawberries, indeed! No, for once I am going over to neighbor Thomas' and borrow; that is the proper thing to do in the country, and I dare say they have felt slighted that we have not been before. Probably they think we are proud. I know they have more cream from that Jersey cow than they can possibly use, and I have an idea of a dessert I can make up all alone. Mary, do you think we shall ever be able to have a real live cow of our very own?"

"If we were going to live in the country the year around, I think somehow or other we ought to manage to have one. We should have to pay for hay and things in winter to feed it on, and get somebody to milk it, though, and I remember to have heard that caring for the milk was no small consideration when one has a small family. I rather think, when you counted up the first cost of a good cow and added the price of its care and food, you would find it was cheaper to buy milk; but [Pg 242] wouldn't it be perfectly delightful never to have to economize on it? Think of the cream soups and ice-cream and custards and fresh cream cheese and everything else! Well, Dolly, dear, run along on your errand, for if we continue this subject you will see me dissolve in tears."

Their neighbor proved to have a bowl of cream she did not need and was glad to let Dolly have, and in a moment the cream-whipper was at work, and presently a mass of stiff whip was ready, sweetened, flavored and laid lightly on a cold glass dish. Then going to the pantry, a small paper box was found among the cracker boxes sent from town. This was full of lady-fingers. Half of it was used for the dessert, as they were split and arranged around the cream, and there was a most delicious mould of charlotte russe. As half the five-cent box of cakes was left over, this cost but a veritable song, thanks to the neighbor's kindness, which, by the way, was repaid later on by the gift of a strawberry shortcake.

Mary was getting the chafing-dish ready to light for the second time the moment the latch of the garden gate announced her husband's home-coming. Meanwhile she gave Dolly a talk on its uses.

"Always have a chafing-dish in the house," she began seriously. "When you need it at all, you need it dreadfully. Now, in a place like this, where you may be caught unawares at any moment [Pg 243] with no fuel, you can see that we simply could not do without it. Of course in town we have the gas-stove, and that cooks just as well as this, but even there a chafing-dish is a good thing to own. On Sunday night, for supper, it is more fun to cook with this than it is to stir up things in the kitchen. Then, too, when you have people in during the evening, it is nice to have them sit around the table and chat while you get up a little supper with it. You can have so many good things in it, too, such as lobster, creamed or Newburg, and scrambled eggs mixed with green peppers or tomatoes, or creamed haddie, or cheese fondu or rarebit. And with sandwiches and coffee and salad, you can see you can have a really beautiful supper, the coffee in the machine on the sideboard or on one end of the table, the salad ready in its bowl, and the chafing-dish and hot plates in front of the hostess."

"Yes, of course it is fun to use one. I know lots of girls who make a regular business of learning how to make new things; they take cooking lessons on them."

"I know they do, but sometimes I am inclined to think they overdo that matter. You should not take a chafing-dish too seriously, in my opinion. It is invaluable in an emergency, and good at other times, but after all it is better to learn to cook on a range, and make all sorts of things, and [Pg 244] then you can easily add on the chafing-dish cookery. In other words, it is an informal utensil for informal occasions, not for every-day use."

"Well, certainly to-night we needed it badly enough, and if Dick declines to saw wood this evening, as my prophetic soul says he will, we shall have to get breakfast on it too. What will you have?"

"Let me see. Are there plenty of eggs? I think we will scramble some, or, if we are short, we will cream codfish in the dish. The coffee I shall make in one of the two pans, too, since our machine is in town. Toast we can't have, and muffins are equally out of the question, but we will have berries, and bread and butter, and then our nice hot dish and coffee. That's a meal fit for

anybody."

"And 'no trouble at all,'" quoted Dolly.

CHAPTER XIII

[Pg 245]

Midsummer Housekeeping—The End of the Holiday

As summer went on the weather turned extremely hot, and the problem of keeping the little house cool and doing the work easily became a real study to the sisters. It was such a simple matter to allow the cooking to stretch itself out over so much of the morning that before they realized it they were tired out for the rest of the day.

In order to make things easier, they decided to rise a trifle earlier than usual, throw open all the doors and windows, and let the cool air in; then they would breakfast on the porch as usual, wash up the dishes, and set the house in order and close and darken it for the middle of the day. There would still be time to go down-town and market and do what cooking was necessary, and yet before noon everything would be out of the way. By careful planning they could manage the luncheons and dinner so that they could be ready in advance and the long afternoons could be devoted to rest and reading. Then between four and five o'clock the doors and windows were again thrown open. The dinner table was laid on the porch, just before the six o'clock train was due, and the dinner itself was put on in only a moment, thanks to the foresight of the morning.

[Pg 246]

One of the things upon which Mrs. Thorne laid great emphasis was the delightfulness of cold meals on hot days. When one rose jaded from a sultry night she felt it was not the time for codfish cakes or scrambled eggs. When luncheon was to be set out, things from the refrigerator were what one wished for, cold and comfortable. Even at dinner, the food on a blisteringly hot evening was cold; cold and appetizing, and quite as nourishing as though it had been heated.

They arranged these meals in this way: for breakfast, they cooked oatmeal or farina or some other cereal in the fireless stove all day, till it was a jelly; toward night they put this into a mould, cooled it, and then set it on the ice. In the morning they had first a pretty form of this cereal surrounded by red raspberries or sliced peaches, with sugar and cream; this, with toast and hot coffee, was all they wished for. Sometimes, when they tired of the cereal, they had a chilled salad of sliced tomatoes on lettuce, with a light French dressing, a curious breakfast dish, but one they found very refreshing in the heat.

On cooler mornings they had a first course of little melons, followed by eggs, muffins and coffee, or fried tomatoes in the place of the eggs.

[Pg 247]

For luncheon they had all sorts of things from the garden. Often the main dish was a vegetable salad,—string-beans or stuffed tomatoes, or cucumbers and tomatoes,—with freshly made cottage cheese bought from a neighbor, and bread and butter and iced tea, coffee or chocolate. Or, if the day was cool, they had the vegetable hot,—baked corn, or creamed peas, or tomatoes, baked, filled with crumbs and seasoning,—and for a second course there was usually fruit. Luncheons such as these were nothing to get up. The vegetables were prepared directly after breakfast. If they were to be served as salads, they were cooked, cooled and set on the ice; if hot, they were made all ready to put in the oven at the last moment.

Their cold dinners, however, were their pride. They found so many good things to have that they fairly hesitated which to choose for any particular night. Sometimes they began with clear soup. This, of course, was made the day before in the tireless stove, and only strained and put on ice the next morning for the second evening. On very hot days sometimes they put it in a small pail, and set this in another and larger one, with ice between, and put it back in the stove for the afternoon; then it came out full of splinters of ice, a most delightfully cool affair. Fruit soups they experimented with, but found they did not care for, so they clung to this clear bouillon when they had soup at all.

[Pg 248]

Usually, however, their dinner began with meat. This was made ready either the day before it was needed, or else it was prepared early in the morning. They had veal loaf sometimes, surrounded with sliced tomatoes and French dressing; or slices of cold mutton with peas in mayonnaise; or occasionally, as a treat, jellied chicken with the peas. Sometimes they had bits of lamb, cooked very tender with a knuckle-bone, and then made exactly like the jellied chicken, the meat turning out set in an aspic. Often peas were mixed with the lamb in the mould, and then a little gelatine was added to ensure its setting firmly. Usually, with the dish, they had dressed lettuce.

After this combination course of meat and salad, came dessert. They often had an ice or sherbet made from the fruit in the garden, costing nothing but the small amount of sugar used in making it and the ice used in freezing. This was alternated with some sort of mousse made in the fireless stove. Sometimes there was fruit jelly, raspberries, possibly, set with lemon jelly, moulded in a circle with whipped cream in the middle. Or there would be a chilled rice pudding; or peaches, cut up, sugared, and put in a pail with ice around them and set away till they were half frozen. These things, too, could all be prepared early in the day.

[Pg 249]

Usually, even when the weather was hot, the one exception to the cold-food rule was the coffee, which they liked best hot at night as well as morning, but when they had had any mousse or ice-

cream for dinner, part of this was sometimes saved, and late in the evening there came in tall glasses of iced coffee or chocolate with a spoonful of the cream in the bottom of each; a sort of ice-cream-soda they particularly fancied.

When the weather grew cooler these cold dinners gave way to hot ones. Then they had cream soups first, made with any vegetable they happened to have ready cooked from the night before; a spoonful of spinach, or a handful of beans, or the outer leaves of lettuce, all were used. Afterward came meat and vegetables, and then perhaps a berry tart or a custard or shortcake. However, whatever they had, they were certain to prepare it to the last possible spoonful in the morning.

The meat course at dinner was too often a problem, for the butcher continued all summer to exercise them in the virtue of patience. In the early part of their stay his shop was so far from sanitarily clean that they were obliged to tell him they could not trade with him unless he improved his ways. This he good-naturedly consented to do as far as in him lay. He put his meat in the ice-box instead of leaving it exposed on the counter; what there was out he covered with a [Pg 250] mosquito-netting. But as his ice-box was small, this meant that the meat could not hang long enough to make it tender; it was brought in one day by the farmers and put out for sale the next. All the beef was tough and stringy; the veal was apt to be far too young, and the chickens far too old. There was seldom any lamb to be had, and the mutton often had a curious flavor decidedly suggestive of wool.

To offset these difficulties, however, there were some advantages, advantages over the city market, even. By watching the calves brought in, Mary could select the largest one and insist that her meat must be cut from that. Then she would also secure the liver for almost nothing, and the sweetbreads and brains for a song; as she predicted in the winter she would find, the farming community did not appreciate these things as she did. The liver she roasted after larding it, and it made a delicious dinner, while the left-over appeared the next night as mock terrapin and was equally good. The sweetbreads and brains were of course among their choicest dishes. Sometimes on a Sunday night they had a salad of them served on lettuce with mayonnaise.

The mutton she bought occasionally, for it was cheap, too, but she always parboiled it before roasting it, and put considerable seasoning in the dish to disguise the woolly flavor she perhaps imagined she noticed. Once cold, however, this disappeared, and the meat was a welcome change [Pg 251] from the other things she could get.

Though the beef was really almost worthless in the condition in which it appeared in the shop, as it was coarse and tough and not ready to eat, this Mary also made palatable. She would buy a piece off the round, and put it through her own meat-chopper to ensure having it clean. This then appeared as Hamburg steak, surrounded by all sorts of vegetables, small piles of tiny carrots, little beans and fresh peas setting the brown meat off by their alternating colors. Or she cut the beef up into finger lengths and stewed it long and slowly in the tireless stove, putting in barley and tomatoes and other good things till it came out a delicious, rich, and nourishing stew. When she could get a beef's tongue, she always rejoiced, for one night it was braised with vegetables, and another the slices left over were set in an aspic jelly, and a third the rest was chopped, creamed and slightly baked, and the whole cost little as compared to what she would have had to pay in town, where tongue was an extravagant meat.

When a chicken could be found which promised to be tender, that was purchased, not at twenty-two cents or thereabouts, as it would have been in the city, but for fifteen cents. This was usually split up the back and panned for Sunday dinner. When an old fowl was purchased for jellied [Pg 252] chicken for hot nights, it was first stewed to rags, then imbedded in its own stock, strained and set with gelatine, and it came out tender in spite of itself.

As to fish, once in awhile they could get something from the river. A fish-man drove a wagon past the door, but as he asked city prices for what he had, and as there was always some doubt as to just what day the fish had originally appeared on sale, these they never purchased. The little perch and sunfish small boys brought straight from the water, strung on twigs and still dripping, they did buy, and found them excellent for a change, though after the skin and bones were removed there was little left of the fish.

As to groceries, there had been a good deal of trouble at first. The coffee and tea at the post-office-shop were too poor to use; the spices were distinctly stale; crackers were to be had only in broken bits from the common barrel. Butter was almost as expensive as in town, and not very good even so; too often it was pale, and the buttermilk exuded in tiny drops here and there. Eggs were a constant source of anxiety; they were not only much more expensive than they should have been, according to Mrs. Thorne's ideas, but they were of all ages, and so mixed at the store that it was impossible to decide which would do for breakfast and which would not, until, by [Pg 253] breaking several, one after the other, it was found that all were about equally stale.

To make housekeeping easy, it was necessary to hunt up a farmer's wife who made really good butter and would promise to deliver it weekly. This arrangement proved the solution of that difficulty. Sometimes, when the weather was cool, Dolly would take the cream-whipper, and using the sweet cream she could occasionally get for a small sum, she would turn out enough delicious unsalted butter to make the next day's meals a delight.

The egg problem had to be solved in the same fashion as the butter problem. A farmer had to be found who would bring in a dozen eggs or more a week, provided he had them; too often he came supplied with only half as many as they wished to have, hens being obdurate at the time. This meant that they had then to be very economical for awhile, till the wretched fowls returned to

business.

Most of the groceries had to be ordered from town, for their coffee and tea must be good, and a certain number of packages of crackers and fancy biscuit, with salmon, olives, spices, chocolate, gelatine, raisins and some tins of olive oil, were ordered with them. The staples, flour, sugar, rice, salt, corn-meal and such things, they bought from day to day, as they were needed, at the local grocery.

Ice continued to arrive on schedule time, but as it was almost as dear as at home, they had to use it carefully. The water was bottled and put on it in the refrigerator. Tea and coffee were treated in the same way, so that they could all be used without adding any ice from the block, except perhaps a small bit in each glass. They kept the one large piece carefully wrapped up, to prevent its melting, in defiance of the advice of most household teachers of housekeeping, who had declared that the truest economy consisted in letting the ice melt as it would, in order to best preserve the food. They found that the food still kept from day to day when the ice was wrapped, and just half as much had to be bought as when it melted at its own sweet will. When they had ice-cream they made only a small quantity at a time by having a little freezer, and breaking only as much ice as they really needed. They made more sherbets than any other frozen dainty, and for these they used fruit from the garden; raspberry, cherry and currant ices took little from the family purse. When cream was used, it was made into mousse, and of course frozen in the tireless stove. This useful article, by the way, was not brought from town, but constructed out of a wooden candy-pail with hay-filled pads; it took only a morning of the sisters' time, and no money at all to make. [Pg 254]

One warm afternoon Dolly roused herself from a reverie in the hammock and suddenly said to Mary, "This place reminds me of the seashore!" [Pg 255]

"Because it's so different, I suppose."

"Exactly; you have guessed it. The reason why I was reminded of the seashore in the first place, however, was the distant view I get from here of the fish-man's wagon disappearing down the road, and the thought of the shore suggested the summer we all spent there together before you were married. I was wondering whether you knew much about housekeeping then, and how you found living there compared with living here."

"I really did not do any housekeeping then, but four years ago Dick and I spent three weeks there visiting a friend, and I learned all about the way prices ran from her; she was a splendid manager, too."

"Well, what do you think of the difference between it and this place?"

"It's as wide as the sea itself. In the first place, unless you go to a very primitive spot, you will find the fish is nearly all sent to town, and you must pay city prices for what you can get. That is the first great disillusionment you meet with. Bluefish and lobsters and all, even down to flounders, are no longer cheap if the place is near enough a railroad to permit an easy shipment to town. Clams are usually an exception, and if you can live largely on these, you will find they cost little. We used to ring the changes on chowder, minced clams on toast, and clam broth." [Pg 256]

"Do you mean hard-shelled clams or soft?"

"Hard shell; quahaugs, they are called locally. Soft-shell clams you can dig yourself in many places; and if you go to the seashore, do try and find out in advance how the supply is, for freshly dug clams that cost nothing, and can be steamed or made into clam fritters and other good dishes, are indeed a boon to those who must live on a little by the sea."

"And how about groceries and such things?"

"They are all high; city prices again. You must really take down some good dry things yourself to help out, just as we do here. And butter and eggs are very expensive, for the climate at the seaside never seems to agree with either cows or hens; they are scarce. So eggs and butter and milk are all costly."

"And meat, I suppose, is, too."

"Meat is frightfully dear if you go to any place where it is sent down from the city. If it is not, but is bought at a butcher shop at the nearest place, it is the same sort of thing we get here—poor, distinctly poor, my dear."

"On the whole, then, you do not recommend the seashore as an economical place to spend the summer in."

"Not unless you go to an unfashionable place a long way off. Then if you get a furnished cottage, and can get clams by digging them and fish by catching it, or getting it of a fisherman who does not find it in demand elsewhere, you can really live on a little. Of course you will not have milk, nor eggs, nor vegetables nor fruit, except in homœopathic doses, but then, it will be cool and refreshing as to climate, and the rest will doubtless do your weary brain a great deal of good." [Pg 257]

"Doubtless. But I think, as long as I am poor, I shall take my vacations among the hills; it must be cheap there."

"Then you must rent your apartment in town or board in the country, for you can't well rent two places at the same time. You can get a cheap place in certain farmhouses in the hills not too near the city, but often they are not so very comfortable, to our ways of thinking."

"But certainly, if I rent the apartment and take a small house, I shall find food cheap enough."

"Just about as it is here: vegetables and fruit will be cheap, and meat poor, and ice probably hard to be had. But milk will be inexpensive, and probably eggs and butter, too."

"The farther off you get the more it costs to live, if one is to go by prices in the Adirondacks, or similar remote spots. I remember going there once and staying in a camp, and everything had to [Pg 258] be brought by pack, and I knew it must cost heaps to get such things as vegetables and eggs and city groceries."

"Yes, such places are costly if you try and live as you do at home. I believe the only way to manage is to accommodate yourself as far as possible to the place you are in. That is, here we do not send away for anything but groceries, and only one box of those in a summer; we eat the local meat, and if we had no garden we could buy vegetables of our neighbors. At the seashore you must live on what is there; not meat and vegetables, but fish you can catch for yourself and clams you can dig. In the hills, put up with discomforts and look at the sunsets. Don't try and have city meats, but when the farmer kills an animal, take what you can get of it and be thankful, and make it up on vegetables and blueberries and such things."

"But taking this summer as a whole and comparing it with life in the city and elsewhere, would you not say that the country is about the best place of all to live in? It seems to me that it is. Living has been very cheap this summer, hasn't it?"

"Yes, very, but remember that we pay no rent here, and have a garden. Suppose we hired a cottage and had to have a garden made. That would be another story, for the first year at least. I [Pg 259] suppose after that the garden part would be less expensive. Then remember that there are two of us to do the work; you alone without a maid would find it much harder to get along. And then in summer, it is lovely anywhere in the country, but think of this place in winter, with snow piled up high and nobody to dig walks except a husband who has only brief mornings and evenings to do it in. Then the problem of heating the house! No, I do not believe I should find it easy to live here in the winter."

"Oh, I did not mean here; I meant in some nice suburb not too far from town."

"Well, rents are high in any nice place, and you have to have a furnace man and somebody to shovel snow just as you would have here. Beside, food is always very expensive in a suburb; you have to pay city prices for everything."

"Well, is the last word that the city is the only place to live in economically?"

"Not at all. I hope I could live economically anywhere. But if you do live in town in an apartment, you get your heating done without trouble on your part, and you can buy any sort of food at any price you choose to pay. If you want cheap meat you can get it, and it will be of a good kind, not the poor stuff we have here. Vegetables and fruit are as cheap in summer in town as they are [Pg 260] anywhere, provided you have to buy them in the country. You have to spend car-fares there, and here you have a commutation ticket to get. My mind is exactly where it was before we came out here for the summer. It is not the place you live in, it is the way you live that makes things come out even. Don't pay more rent than you can afford; don't spend more on your table than you can afford; watch your small outgoings; keep down Incidentals. If you observe these rules, Dolly, I am sure you will come out right in the end wherever you are. Live in the country if you choose; there are lots of compensations for the extra care of the fires and the snow in the winter. Think of the lovely summer we have had here. That would be worth a long cold winter, I really believe. Or, live in a suburb and have a good time socially—I believe you get more gaiety of a nice kind in a small place than in town. But if you do, be very, very careful, for it is extra hard there to live on a little. If you live in an apartment in town, economize all winter, for no one will be the wiser, and spend the money you save in an outing in summer of some sort. That is my advice after trying living in all sorts of places."

"Well, I'll consider the subject later on. Meanwhile, tell me truly: have you saved as much money as you expected to when we came out here?"

"Yes, quite as much. Meat has cost little, and vegetables still less, in spite of the wages of the [Pg 261] weeding boy. Fuel has been low; milk less than in town, and butter and eggs no more here than there. Fruit has been almost nothing at all, and though we have done up so much, the sugar has not been so very expensive, because we bought that by the half-barrel and saved a good deal so. On the whole, I am more than satisfied, and we will have a snug little sum left over after we put back what we took out of Incidentals when we came."

"And next time we will have a cow and make all our butter," said Dolly.

"And we will surely have hens, too," said her sister. "That is, we will have them if we can; I am not sure we could invest in any for one summer alone, though I do sigh for plenty of eggs and broilers. I have heard, however, that hens are expensive and unsatisfactory in the hands of a novice, so we won't order any in advance."

When Mr. Thorne came home at night he had two letters in his pocket which proved of amazing interest.

One was Dolly's regular letter from South America, but it conveyed the joyful news that the end of probation was at hand and it was about time to begin ordering the trousseau for an early wedding. The other letter was from Aunt Maria, and said that her sister was ill and she should [Pg 262] not return in the autumn, and the family was to have whatever they could take home from the garden. These things naturally made the breaking up of the little home very exciting.

"We will take all the potatoes," said Mary as they looked over the outdoor supplies still uneaten.

"We will have those put in two barrels, and have one apiece for you and ourselves. The squashes we will take too, and the onions and turnips and beets, and all those things. The parsley we will plant in boxes for the kitchen windows, and the apples we will take every one."

"And may a mere man inquire where on earth you are going to store all these things in our flat?" asked her husband. "The barrel of potatoes can stand in the dining-room, to be sure, and the apples in the parlor, but the squashes and turnips will have to go in your dress-boxes under the beds."

"No, they won't. We will take everything to town that we can and divide them up. The janitor can keep our barrels in the basement and bring up one at a time, and I will put the other things in baskets and pile those one on top of the other in the corner by the refrigerator, or some other place."

"Some other place will be better," said Dick.

"Well, of course I realize that they will not keep forever, Dick Thorne, but I shall take every single thing I can find, for all that, and we will eat them up as soon as possible. Still, it is maddening not to have more room to store things in a city apartment. Now in the country we should have a root cellar, Dolly, and put lots of them out there, and have them come in all winter when we needed them. And of course potatoes and apples and squashes we could put down cellar and they would be all right there. Isn't it too provoking we can't do that way in town? I declare it is enough to make me determine to stay on here till spring." [Pg 263]

"Do," said her husband encouragingly. "Shovelling snow is said to be the finest exercise in the world, and you can do it at odd moments when you are not stoking the kitchen fire. I should have to catch the early train in the morning, and it would be dark when I came back, so I could not help you, unfortunately, much as I should regret the fact. But I am sure it would do you all the good in the world."

"Some other winter," laughed his wife. "The next thing is to get Dolly married, and we must go back to get that over. Father and mother will be home soon, too, and that is another reason for our leaving. But it has been a lovely summer; we shall always remember it, I am sure."

"It has been a lovely year all through," said Dolly. "I can't tell you how grateful I am for your taking me in. And do you—now honestly, Mary—do you think I know enough to keep house all by myself?" [Pg 264]

"I have my doubts, Dolly dear," her brother broke in. "On the whole I think Fred had better put off coming home for awhile. I shall write him to-morrow in any case, and I shall tell him so and save you the trouble."

"There won't be time for a letter to reach him, unfortunately," Dolly replied with a most becoming blush. "He is coming right away—about next week, he thinks. So, Mary, you see why I am anxious to know whether I can keep house or not. Do tell me honestly."

"I can conscientiously give you a diploma, my dear, so don't worry. You really and truly have learned to live on a little."

---

works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this

work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this

electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the

solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.