# CAROLINE FRENCH BENTON

## LIVING ON A LITTLE

Caroline Benton

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**Benton C.**

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# Содержание

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## CHAPTER I
## 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."

"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.

"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 housemaid, 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.

"'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.

"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 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 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 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, 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."

"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.

"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."

"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!"

"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?"

"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."

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

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|---|---|---|
| "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."

"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."

"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
# 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 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 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; 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; 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 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 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 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 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."

"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."

"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.

"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."

"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?"

"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."

"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.

"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."

"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 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?"

"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."

"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
# 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?"

"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.

"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 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?"

"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 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 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 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 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 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 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. 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. 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 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 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 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 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 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 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.

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

# CHAPTER IV
# 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.

"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 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 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."

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.