

CAROLINE FRENCH BENTON

A LITTLE HOUSEKEEPING
BOOK FOR A LITTLE GIRL;
OR, MARGARET'S
SATURDAY MORNINGS

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CHAPTER I

MARGARET'S CHRISTMAS TREE

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Twins, indeed!" said the Other Aunt.

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

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

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

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

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

Just then her father saw her and came to pull the tree out where she could see it, and, sure enough, there was a dust-pan tied on with a red tape, and a whisk-broom with another red tape, and a little sweeping-cap with a red bow, some gingham aprons and white aprons, and brown towels and red-and-white towels, and dust-cloths, all with red M's in their corners; and put at the top was a little book tied on the tree with a big red bow. Her mother took this down and handed it to her, and every

one stood and looked on and smiled because she was so surprised. When Margaret looked at the cover of the book she knew what was inside in a minute, because, painted on the cover was a little girl who looked just like her with a big apron on, and a sweeping-cap, holding a broom in one hand and a dust-pan in the other, and above, in bright red letters, were the words, Saturday Mornings.

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

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

CHAPTER II

THE KITCHEN FIRE

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

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

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

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

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

Her mother stopped her. "That isn't the way to shake a fire," she said. "The covers must all go on first, and everything be shut up tight." Then she showed her the two slides over the oven doors, and the others in front, and pushed them shut. The two in the stovepipe were opened, so the ashes could go up that way, and the covers were tightly put in their places. "Now," she said, "you may shake."

So Margaret shook and shook until her arms were tired, but though the fine ashes all came out, there was a handful of large coals which would not go through the grate. These, her mother explained, were partly good, unburned coal, and partly poor, hard bits, called clinkers. Some people just turned them all out with the ashes and threw them away, but this was wasteful. They must be picked over and the good bits burned again. Margaret hunted up a big pair of old gloves of her father's, and with these on she picked out the good pieces of coal and laid them on one side, and then she tipped the grate by turning the stove handle quite around, and the clinkers all fell into the ash-pan and the grate was left empty. A big newspaper was next spread on the floor and the ash-pan carefully drawn out over it and emptied into a scuttle kept ready for this, so it could be easily carried to the place where the ashes were kept, and emptied into the can there. She put the empty pan on the paper, and with her brush swept out all the cracks inside the stove, up and down, here and there, till no ashes were

to be seen anywhere. Then the pan was put back. The ovens were opened next, and these, too, swept out with a clean whisk-broom, and away back in the corners they found several bits of toast and such things all dried to a crisp, which Bridget had not seen at all. When all the ashes were taken up and those on the newspaper cleared away, her mother said, "Now we are ready for the fire."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Margaret raised the covers and found a bed of bright red coals. Her mother told her to put on coal at once; if she waited the fire would grow still hotter, – what was called white hot, – and then

it would be spoiled. Coal must always go on before this point, but not too much, which would be wasteful. A bright, low fire was always best.

"Now leave the drafts all open just a moment," said her mother, "to let the coal gas burn away, and then you can shut the fire up and it will keep just right for hours. And one thing more – never let the coal come up near the covers of the stove, or the great heat will warp these and spoil them; they will always have cracks around their edges, and the heat will be wasted."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It does that," said Bridget. "I guess it'll bake sponge cakes for lunch to say it feels glad."
"Oh, goody!" said Margaret, as she ran to take off her big apron and wash her hands.

CHAPTER III

THE DINING-ROOM TABLE

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

BREAKFAST

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

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

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

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

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

There were always six places laid at the table, so Margaret counted out the knives, forks and spoons, and brought them over from the drawer. At each place they put a knife on the right, the sharp edge of the blade toward the plate, and outside that a dessert-spoon for cereal and a teaspoon for

coffee; on the left was a fork, and then a napkin. At the top of the place, directly in front, they put a tumbler at the right and a small plate for bread and butter at the left, with a little knife, called a spreader, on it. They then got out small fruit-plates, and on each they laid first, a small, clean doily, then a finger-bowl with a little water in it, – not very much, as it was not intended to swim in, the aunt said, – and on the edge of the plate a fruit-knife and an orange spoon. These plates were laid all around the table at the different places. At the top of the table where her father was to sit Margaret put a carving knife and fork, but took them away when she found there would be bacon for breakfast, and it would be passed around with a fork and spoon on the small platter; if there had happened to be beefsteak she would have left them on, as then they would have been needed.

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

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

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

While the dishes were heating, and Bridget was getting breakfast ready, they filled the glasses and put the butter balls on the bread and butter plates; then, Margaret had her lesson in waiting on the table.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LUNCHEON

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

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

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

"If you are to have salad, have this ready on the sideboard before lunch, with its plates, and, if you are to have them, the crackers and cheese also. You can take off the soiled plates after the

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

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

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

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

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

DINNER

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

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

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

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

After the flowers were on, the silver was laid, almost as at breakfast. A knife at the right, blade to the plate; a dessert-spoon beyond, for soup; two forks at the left; the bread and butter plate at the top, at the left, and the tumbler also at the top, to the right. If they were having a company dinner, Margaret was told, the bread and butter plate would not be used, for then a dinner roll would be laid in the napkin and no butter served at all. The napkin, as before, went to the left, beyond the forks, and a large, cold plate was laid down between the silver. The salts were freshly filled and put on, and

a glass dish for jelly at one end of the table. In front of her father's place they laid a carving cloth, and on it a large knife and fork, putting the tips on a little rest.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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