



### The Table and its Decoration.

ONE of my "dear five hundred friends" said behind my back that she thought I must be awfully fond of eating; that I was such a severe critic about the way people ate and ordered their tables. Now, it seems to be no virtue to be unjust to one's self, and perhaps my defense may convey a hint to others. I have been a reader of DEMOREST'S for certainly seventeen years, and have failed to find love of comfort considered heresy.

*Imprimis*, as they say in wills, take one's breakfast: The lady on my visiting list above alluded to has pretty much this style of breakfast the year around:

Hams, cost about . . . . .	23 Cents.
Eggs " " . . . . .	12
Coffee, including milk and sugar . . . . .	12
Marmalade (Crosse & Blackwell's) . . . . .	35
Bread, plain or toasted . . . . .	6—87

I quote my own breakfast yesterday, as a fair example of my "extravagance" in eating:

Coffee, including cream and sugar . . . . .	13 Cents.
Yarmouth herrings, broiled . . . . .	7
Bread, heated . . . . .	6
Marmalade or jam . . . . .	5
Flowers . . . . .	7—38

There are the same number of persons in my family as in hers. Myself, two children and two servants (housemaid and general servant). The latter, except when I have guests at dinner, and dainties like crystallized fruit and *fromage de Brie* or *Rocquefort* are in the *menu*, fare as we do. My lady acquaintance does not give her servants good coffee nor good anything, but "second quality, you know." She thinks to do otherwise is extravagant. She gossips with her servants, but does not give them an easy bed. My neighbors' affairs by the way of the kitchen have no interest for me, but my servants have an easy bed, and their room, in point of comfort and beauty, exceeds the hotel bed-room, for which one pays a price of \$2 a day.

Her house is as handsomely furnished as the "swell" upholsterer could fancy; but I think the movables in my drawing-room would fetch more at an auction—if the buyers had brains—than hers, and there are other differences in my breakfast-table than my linen, which I am quite sure is finer than hers. I think it is because I do not disdain to put some of the common sense Providence has given me, in my kitchen. Take the first item, coffee. I use the best—Java with one-fourth Mocha, and one pound lasts us a week. (The children do not drink coffee; the servants drink the same as I do.) My milkman brings me two quarts of milk a day. This I set in pans, and I find this method economical, as I have real rich, ropy cream for coffee, not "skimmed" milk for the children, as I do not remove all the cream; also for puddings, and occasionally sour milk, which, with the addition of a spoonful of cream and caraway seeds, I make into a Dutch curd cheese, allowing the sour milk to curdle, then drained through a linen cloth and seasoned and formed into cheese. More than this, I am never at a loss for cream in the house for suddenly demanded tea or coffee for a guest or for extra sources or improvised dishes. It is real economy sometimes to get a full gallon or half-gallon of milk a day, instead of one quart or, as some do, one pint daily; it is so good for children and so many things can be made from it. In winter it keeps well and furnishes cream for coffee, for whipping, for drinking, for fresh butter (in the tiny churns) and cottage cheese. Try it for one month and see, with *proper management*, how much can be saved and what elegant dishes can be made out of this economical "extravagance."

My lady critic gets two pounds of coffee weekly at an inferior price (need I say inferior quality?) and when I tasted hers my mind reverted to the little rhyme,

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!"

This sounds like the egotism of the Pharisee perhaps, but I have my reasons, and as my critic does not read DEMOREST no harm can come of it; besides, we know nobody ever takes the hard hits of a sermon to himself.

Again, I only use loaf sugar, never brown, *because it is more economical*, and I always boil my milk for coffee, and in serving put in first the sugar, then boiled milk, then coffee, then a little cream, plain or whipped (if one of us can spare the time) last. I have tried all ways of making coffee, and the following (brought to me by a German servant) is my rule now and henceforth: Scald the pot with hot water, put in the coffee—a table spoon to each cup, to be strong—and pour upon it furiously boiling water. Let it boil in the pot while you can count sixty and then, at once, remove it to a part of the stove where it cannot stew or simmer, but may keep hot. In five minutes it will be ready to drink. The making of the coffee should be the last thing, and as one should drink at the end of the meal (a difficult habit to many) one gets the best *bouquet* by having the coffee made just as one sits at the table.

Broiled herrings does not *sound* very grand, but try them my way. Get the best Yarmouth bloaters (forty cents a dozen in New York, twenty-five cents in our city); take two for a family of four, soak them over night in cold water, in the morning wipe them dry with a fish (cooking) napkin and spread over them olive oil; then broil them, turning frequently, and remove to a hot plate and keep in the oven to soften till time for serving—about three minutes. I can make my jam and marmalade of the best fruit and broken loaf sugar, which is the best for jellifying, and only requires three-quarters of a pound instead of one pound, so that it does not cost me more than ten cents a pot, better, I think, than Crosse & Blackwell's at thirty-five and forty cents. Moreover, my orange marmalade, which costs me less than ten cents a pot, is not adulterated with turnips, as it is notorious that the Edinburgh and Glasgow marmalades are. We do not use the whole of a jam-pot at breakfast, but if we did, that would only increase the sum I have mentioned by five cents.

I spend twenty-four cents a week on cut flowers. As I get them regularly, the florist is rather obliging and lets me have quite a lot of the smaller flowers for which there is no "rage." Of course this does not include *Jacqueminots* nor *Gloire de Dijon*, nor any of the famed *Noisettes*, but I have *Scarlet Geraniums*, *Candy Tuft*, a little *Bayardin*, *Lautana*, *Heliotrope*, and *Mignonette*. My pots at home furnish me with plenty of *Trades Cantin* (vulgarily called "Wandering Jew") and geranium leaves; by carefully changing the water and adding salt they keep a week; and from these I can fill two vases for the sideboard, a small blue bowl for the dining-table, one in the drawing room, just a flower and spray of leaves and the same on the writing table in the library. I would prefer my flowers to an extra dish, and I would give up butter on my bread rather than them.

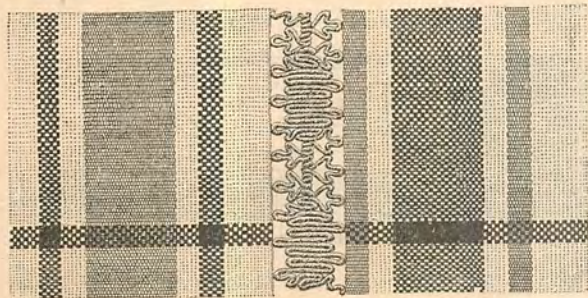
The bread, which I never cut except thin for afternoon tea, I heat in the oven and break. It is more elegant and lighter nicely broken, and the practice sooner teaches the housemaid what only the well-trained servants know—never to cut bread in thin slices for dinner. Everybody in the house gets plenty to eat, and I know they would not change our coffee and hot-bread or milk toast for the table at the *Windsor Hotel*, and as I spend less money than my critical acquaintances I fail to see how I can be accused of gluttony. Is there any virtue in soggy potatoes and half infused coffee? I can respect the poverty that cannot have butter to its bread, or the poor biblio-maniac who denies himself butter and sugar and tea, that he may buy books and rare prints—but I refuse to see any whole souledness in waste, or respect the ignorance that refuses to make the best of everything, that throws out coffee half infused and does not know that stale bread is property, and can be made into nice dishes for home, or with meat extract a *pate* for some one of the sick poor.

An economy which I learned from a dear old English house-keeper last winter is table decoration. It is a crocheted border of white cotton to fit about dishes containing *macaroni au gratin* scalloped oysters and game pies. It looks like frosting and is well worth the labor, though the crocheting must be done closely and full. A game pie dish and two jelly pots so encircled are a great addition to the supper table. They last indefinitely—these borders; no blueing must be put in the water they are

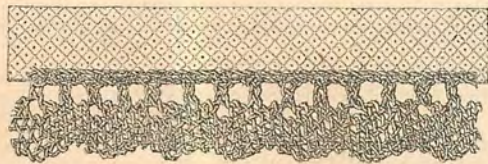
washed in, and if you like you may sprinkle them over with flour, which adds to their paste-white, blossomy appearance.

Frankly, I think people generally eat too much, but I see nothing wrong in making food pretty. And flowers and good table linen are so indispensable to accomplish this. "But good table linen costs so much, and bad linen looks so horrid." Quite true; for a real nice table cover two yards long costs fully four dollars. But I have enlarged my stock in this way, and hope the hint may be worth something. My large covers I keep for dinner when we have guests, and every day I use small ones made of white birds-eye linen, which cost me about 55 cents each; they are a yard and a quarter long and have a narrow lace on the sides and a wide lace on each end: they are in reality table sconces, and just fit my mahogany dining-table, which is nearly one hundred and seventy-five years old, like one the modern "Eastlakes," are copied from. It is small, but I do not like to change it, and extend it when necessary with a side table made to add to it. A dozen of these birds-eye linen covers keeps us well in clean linen for a month, with the satisfaction of it being fine. I should never spend valuable time in unintelligent embroidery upon it, so I put my money in the quality of linen, my time in a modest blue or red cross stitch border (medieval German), and for "decorations," I have my own initials in a quaint device which is as different as can be imagined from the embroidery stamping shop's designs. Etching one's linen, to me, is a waste of time. I think I took first a dislike to the incorrect use of the word, as *linen cannot be etched upon*, and an etching is a representation *made by a reproducing process*. Thus an oil painting cannot be a "reproduction," but a steel engraving or a lithograph may be a "reproduction," as steel, stone, copper and glass and the like, are the only materials upon which etching can be done. The word was got up by the class of English girls who pronounced *Elizabethan*, *Eliz-a-be-thi-an*, and copy, copies of copies of Kate Greenaway *ad nauseam*.

I have added to my table-linen stock in this wise. A friend brought me from the Japanese Trading Company of New York,



JAPANESE TEA TABLE COVER.



BIRD'S EYE LINEN FOR BREAKFAST TABLE COVER.

a roll of a striped blue and white fabric, analogous to Scotch gingham, the blue being dyed in the thread and not printed, for which she paid two dollars and forty cents; I took three strips of this, it being about sixteen inches wide, and joined them together with the stout linen fancy braid (not *nigardin*) used in crochet and point lace trimming as insertions; then added a border of lace all around, and of this made three very pretty table cloths, to set off my "old blue" china, for tea or luncheon. It washes perfectly, and one cannot have too much house linen.

Russia linen, cut in squares and fringed out, with a herring-bone border above the fringe, makes pretty napkins for lunch or tea, but they are too trivial for dinner, where a tiny napkin is as bad form as the vulgar big German napkin. They tried to introduce the big continental napkin in England a few years ago, but, I am happy to say, the English house-wives of good taste put

their faces against it; the size and its variations being the best style.

Did you ever try this way of economizing your beauty on a dinner table? Put a mass of geranium leaves or *Tradescantia* leaves in a bowl, then a dozen or so sprays of *mignonette*, and blend two or three *racemes* of scarlet geranium blossoms. It is a charming combination, and at such a trifling cost. When you can get daisies they look beautiful in a blue china bowl. Now if one can afford yellow roses in a blue bowl, it is "poetry and painting," but *que voulez vous?* We have not all bank-notes *galore*.

KATHERINE DECOURCY ARMSTRONG.

**Scalloped Veal.**—Chop cold cooked veal fine, put a layer in a baking dish, alternating with a layer of powdered crackers, salt, pepper and butter, until you fill the dish: beat up two eggs, add a pint of milk, pour it over the veal and crackers. Cover with a plate and bake half an hour, then remove the plate and let the top brown. Serve.

**Sausage.**—For thirty pounds of meat well cut, add twelve ounces of fine salt, six ounces of pulverized sage, four ounces of black pepper, two tablespoonfuls of mustard and summer savory to taste. The mustard prevents the savory from rising in the stomach, so that it can be used with safety.

**Another Recipe for Sausage.**—Take all the spare meat and tenderloins from your pork, and grind it in a sausage grinder or chop it. Season it highly with salt, pepper and powdered sage. Boil one or two pounds of red pepper and pour the tea over it: work it all up. Cook a small piece to try it, and if not seasoned enough add what it wants. Pack away in stone jars, or stiff skins that have been properly soaked and cleaned, or make small narrow muslin sacks, and hang up in the air in a cool place.

**To Fry Sausage with Apples.**—Take one pound of sausage and a dozen apples. Slice eight of the apples an eighth of an inch thick. Cut the other four in quarters. Fry them with the sausage a fine light brown. Lay the sausage in the middle of the dish and the apples round the outside. Garnish with the quartered apples. Serve with mashed potatoes.

**Sausages with Cabbage.**—Cut the cabbage very thin, put it into the stewpan with a small piece of ham, an ounce of butter at the bottom, half a pint of broth and a little vinegar. Let it stew three hours. When it is tender add a little more broth, salt, pepper and a tablespoonful of pounded sugar. Boil until the liquor is sufficiently wasted. Then put it into the dish and lay fried sausages on the top.

**Gumbo.**—Fry one chicken brown, and two slices of bacon. Pour on them two quarts of boiling water; add one onion, and some sweet herbs tied in a rag. Simmer this gently three hours and a half. Strain off the liquor, take off the fat, then put the ham and chicken, cut in small pieces, into the liquor, add one-half teacup of okra cut up, also half a teacup of rice. Boil half an hour, and just before serving add a dozen oysters, with their juice.

**Wild Ducks.**—After they are cleaned and ready for cooking, wrap them in a clean cloth, and bury twelve hours in the earth to remove the strong flavor of these birds. They are usually cooked without stuffing. Three-quarters of an hour will be sufficient to cook them. When you dish them, draw a sharp knife three times through the breast, and pour over a gravy of a little hot butter, the juice of a lemon, and a sprinkling of cayenne pepper. This is poured over as they go on the table.

**Beefsteak and Oyster Pie.**—Take beefsteaks that have been well hung, beat them gently with a circular steak-beater or rolling pin, season with pepper, salt and a little shallot, mincing very fine. Fill your dish with alternate layers of steak and oysters. Stew the liquor and beards of the latter with a bit of lemon-peel, mace, and a sprig of parsley. When the pie is baked, boil with the above three spoonfuls of cream, and one ounce of butter rubbed in flour. Strain it and put in the dish.

**Chicken Patties.**—Chop very fine the dry poorest bits left from baked chicken; season carefully with pepper, salt, and a little chopped celery. Make a light puff-paste, roll a quarter of an inch thick, cut with a neatly shaped paste-cutter; lay a narrow strip of the paste all round: then put some of the mince on the paste: cut another piece the same size and lay over. Boil fifteen minutes. This makes a very desirable dish.