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The Ladies' Column.

BREAKFAST CAKE.—Into one pint of flour mix two teaspoonfuls of tartar. In one cup of milk dissolve one teaspoonful of soda. Beat two eggs with two tablespoonfuls butter and three of sugar. Add the milk, and then stir in the flour. Beat well, and bake in a quick oven.

FRENCH CROUTES.—Although the foundation of these little appetisers is simply bread, let no one despise them on that account, as they are really most delicious little morsels. Cut slices of bread, half an inch thick, from a stale loaf; stamp these out in small rounds, or cut them into tiny squares, diamonds, or finger pieces, and soak for a few minutes in milk, or good stock. When moistened all through, drain the croutes well, and coat them entirely over with a savory mixture composed of finely mixed parsley, sifted bread crumbs, a pinch of minced herb powder, and pepper and salt. If a small quantity of grated ham or tongue, or a little finely-minced chicken can conveniently be added to the above ingredients, so much the better, but it is not at all necessary. Press the coating firmly in, and fry the croutes in boiling clarified fat until coloured a lovely golden brown; then drain thoroughly, and serve crisp and dry, tastefully arranged on a hot dish-paper, and garnished with sprigs of parsley.

Methinks every gentlewoman, even though she be not blessed with the purse of Fortunatus, delights to hear about all the pretty things destined to adorn the homes of her wealthier sisters. Messrs. Phillips, of Oxford street, have just designed a table decoration, which even *fin de siècle* luxury can hardly surpass in elegance and costliness. The drapery, of finest damask, is almost lost to sight, for laid down each side, and across top and bottom, are slips of rich, white, corded silk about two feet wide, bordered with silken fringe, and exquisitely embroidered with a geometrical design of orchids in subdued colouring. The centre-piece, a bowl of cut crystal and ormolu, holds a delicate spreading palm embedded in velvety moss; this is flanked on either side by graceful lamps, also of crystal, at whose base are receptacles for natural orchids (cypridium being the variety used in this instance) and ferns. At each corner of the table is a candelabrum harmonising with the lamps in design, and, like them, holding the same rare blooms. Single orchids and sprays of ferns are strewn carelessly about among the many bonbon dishes, etc., and soft lamplight sheds a roseate softness over all, through shades of tender pink. The feast worthy to grace this dainty board should be at least the conception of the famous Amphitryon chef.

There never has been a season where so much fine jet trimming has been imported; and everything can be trimmed with it; in some cases even little girls' dresses. Chenille fringe, heavily besprinkled with jet, is very rich trimming to put upon wraps.

A dainty new bonnet is flat and saucer-shaped, of black lace, with a wreath of velvet primroses.

THE BREAKFAST TABLE AS IT OUGHT TO BE.

I am anxious to have a little chat with my readers on the above subject, because I feel sure that if once the true value and vast importance of a punctually-served, daintily-cooked meal with which to begin the day were fully realised, the average English breakfast would soon become what it ought to be, namely, the brightest, cosiest,

and most cheery meal of the day. Instead of this being so, however, I fear that in many households it is just the reverse. Owing to no preparation having been made for the meal the previous night, all is hurry and confusion, and consequently nothing is done properly. The cloth is carelessly laid, not half the necessary articles being on the table, and the dishes, no matter how simple they may be, are not only badly cooked, and served in a most slovenly, uninviting fashion, but they fail to make their appearance until several minutes behind time—a circumstance in itself sufficient to upset everybody's temper, especially that of the husband, who, in all probability, is obliged to leave home at a fixed hour, breakfast or no breakfast. The loss of those few minutes leaves him barely time to hastily and silently swallow a few mouthfuls when off he must rush—certainly in anything but a fit frame of mind—to face the difficulties of the day; feeling, perhaps, a sense of relief that he is able, for some hours at any rate, to leave behind him such a scene of disorder. But, indeed, every member of the home feels, to some extent, the influence of such a meal, and if things are allowed to go on in this fashion morning after morning, “week in, week out,” as they are in some households with which I am acquainted, all quiet, harmonious home comfort will speedily be destroyed. Happily, however, there is not the slightest necessity for this state of worry and discomfort to exist, a little kindly forethought and good management on the part of the housewife being all that is required to prevent it.

And now let me offer, just briefly a few suggestions as to what, in my opinion, the breakfast table ought to be. First of all, I think, the cloth should be laid as neatly and prettily as possible, all the articles placed upon it being spotlessly clean and bright. Then the meal should always be served in good time, so as to afford an opportunity for a little pleasant chat amongst the members of the family before they separate each to take part in the day's work, whatever that may happen to be; then lastly, seeing that the majority of people are troubled with a rather capricious appetite in a morning, let the dishes served for breakfast be dainty and appetising.

I expect some of my readers will feel inclined to turn away here, and say that only those fortunate folks who are possessed of large means can command a breakfast table like this, and that it is no use for them to try and do likewise. But this is really a thorough mistake. A well-supplied breakfast table does not, by any means involve a large outlay, for there are many dainty dishes which are composed of mere scraps; yet which, when nicely cooked, and tastefully served, never fail to meet with full appreciation.

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