

The Household.

The Sense of Taste.

The tongue is not the only organ used in the enjoyment of this sense, and alone it is scarcely capable of appreciating delicate flavors.

The difference between salt and sugar when placed on the tongue is hardly perceptible, provided the tongue is not allowed to touch the roof of the mouth and the lips. Indeed, the act of getting the full enjoyment of a flavor, commonly called smacking the lips, consists in bringing the tongue into contact with the roof of the mouth and lips. By this act the substance to be tasted is spread over the surfaces of these parts, particularly of the tongue, and mixed with the saliva.

Just how this act produces taste is not exactly known; but we do know that the tongue is covered with two layers of skin, the lower one thick and filled with nerves, and the upper one thin and porous. The nerves in the lower skin are the nerves of taste, and probably are set into vibration by the substance tasted, very much as the exquisitely sensitive nerves of the retina are affected by light, or the nerves of the ear by sound. At all events the sense is conveyed to the brain, where we involuntarily distinguish between pleasant and disagreeable tastes.

The nerves, moreover, of the tongue, are not all alike. In the tip of the tongue they are clustered together more closely than at the back, and transfer to the brain a different sensation. For instance, a little powdered alum placed on the back of the tongue tastes sweet, whereas on the tip it tastes acid.

The sense of taste is an almost certain guide to the wholesomeness of foods, and a monitor which warns us when we are in danger of swallowing any injurious or poisonous substance.

Poisons as a rule are extremely disagreeable to the taste, and it requires an effort to overcome the natural repugnance to them. Hence it is that accidental poisoning so rarely occurs.

In the case of foods, we soon tire of a thing as a regular diet, and the taste craves a change. Here the whole system rebels against the monotony of diet, because no one food is likely to contain all the elements of nutrition required by the body for the exercise of its functions, and soon the elements which are in excess cloy upon the taste, because the system is already supplied with them, while we crave the foods containing substances which the system lacks. A change is then demanded by nature and made manifest by the sense of taste.

If the change cannot be made, nature shows her disapproval by causing a loss of appetite, or a repugnance to the condemned article of diet.

Again, in the case of foods which are much concentrated, or have a strong flavor, like fruits or syrups, the taste so on becomes dulled to the pleasure of their sweetness, because the delicate nerves which convey the impression of sweetness to the brain become fatigued, and fail to respond to the exciting cause.

There seems to be, also, a set of tastes which are in some degree complementary to each other. That is, if we taste of some intensely sweet substance, we cannot detect a less degree of sweetness until the nerves have recovered from their first impression; but we can appreciate keenly any acid flavor.

To illustrate this, take a glass of lemonade, which contains substances designed to produce both sweet and acid tastes. If before drinking it we eat a lump of sugar, the lemonade will taste sour; but if we take a little clear lemon juice first, the lemonade will taste like sweetened water.—*Hall's Journal of Health.*

Family Circle.

THE DAY OF THE PIC-NIC.

"To think I must stay in the house and iron, on an afternoon like this! It's too bad!" was Marcia Wheeler's exclamation, as she stood for a minute at the open kitchen-door, looking at the shady grove, only a quarter of a mile distant, clothed in the marvellous robes of autumn. Then she turned to the kitchen table and went on to herself, as she spread the ironing blanket, "I just wish Jane Austin had to iron this white skirt herself. The idea of wearing such a thing at a pic-nic! I hope she will tear it, and—No, I don't either, for I shall have to mend it, if she does," and the little hands carefully smoothed a bit of the lowest trim, preparatory to beginning operations.

"Marcia Wheeler," said a voice, at that instant—a voice which the most vivid imagination could not have pronounced "soft and low," "haven't you begun that skirt yet? I declare it's nearly three o'clock! What on earth have you been doing since you washed the dinner-dishes?" "I have washed my face and hands, combed my hair, and changed my dress," replied Marcia, concisely.

"Combed your hair?" pursued the high-pitched voice. "That is always your excuse. How you can reconcile your conscience to wasting so much time over your hair is more than I can tell."

A bitter retort rose to the young girl's lips, but she refrained, for in a war of words the elder lady always came off victor; so she went on ironing, in utter indifference to the aunt, whose spare shrewish face, and keen, gray eyes, formed such a contrast to her own fair, oval face, and orbs of deepest, darkest blue.

It was not a happy life she led in the old farm-house, though, as Mrs. Austin informed her friends, "Marcia was well done by, but she never acted as if she was contented, and was so jealous of Jane, you'd hardly believe it."

Jane was Mrs. Austin's daughter; and all the love the stern old dame possessed was lavished on the fair-faced, helpless-handed, twenty-year-old woman, "sole daughter of her house and heart," whose mission in life it was to be waited upon by the willing hands of her mother, and the unwilling ones of her cousin, Marcia Wheeler.

Marcia's father had been Mrs. Austin's only brother, and he had married just such a person (so Mrs. Austin told her niece) as she, Marcia, was herself, and—Here the estimable lady shook her head solemnly, and looked more severe than ever through the immense steel-bowed spectacles she always wore.

Marcia could remember neither father nor mother; but once I heard her say, while looking at the pictured face of her mother, so like her own in its girlish beauty: "If my father at all resembled my Aunt Austin, I do not wonder my mother died before she had lived three years with him." Poor Marcia! Her words sounded strangely from the lips of a girl of nineteen.

The golden October afternoon wore away, the numerous frills were carefully ironed, and about half-past four the tired hands shook out the snowy folds, and, with a sigh, Marcia exclaimed: "I am thankful!"

Mrs. Austin was sitting in the kitchen, knitting most industriously, and she echoed her niece's words: "I'm thankful, too, for I didn't think that you would ever get that white skirt done; an hour and three quarters by the clock you've been at it. Now, I want you to put on your hat, and go over to Miss Tucker's, and tell her that Jane has decided to have the trimming for her new dress cut on the bias, instead of the way she talked of when she was over there. There's plenty of time for you to get back before dark, if you don't dawdle on the road."

Marcia obeyed her aunt's gentle bidding with more alacrity than was usual on such occasions, for she had been longing all day to be put out in the fresh air; and the walk to the village nearly two miles distant seemed no hardship to her. Before she left the house, she said, quietly:

"I suppose you have no objections to my stopping to change my library book at the village, Aunt Austin?" "I want to know if you have read that last book through? Doesn't Jane want to read it, too?"

Marcia smiled, not a very sweet smile. "No, aunt: Jane has no wish to read it. I do not think, if she lives to be a hundred years old, she will ever read a volume of Carlyle."

"So much the better, then," retorted Mrs. Austin. "I'm glad she doesn't want to waste her time over such stuff."

Marcia passed out of the shady porch, and down the old-fashioned drive, to the road. She smiled, this time with real amusement. "Jane Austin wasting her time over Carlyle!"

Many and sharp words had been spoken between Mrs. Austin and her niece, before Marcia had been allowed to read what books she could obtain from the village library. Marcia had said, finally: "I will not stay here unless I can have a little time to read. I will knit faithfully while I am reading, but read I must, or I shall starve."

"What nonsense you are talking, Marcia!" good Mrs. Austin had answered, severely. "It's sinful to talk in that way, about starving for want of books when you have plenty of good victuals to eat."

Marcia had answered, quietly: "There are different kinds of starvation," and her aunt had, at length, given a grudging consent to her reading, providing she "kept at work on the sale socks" for thriftness. Mrs. Austin found her niece very useful, and had no intention of dispensing with her services. So Marcia knit pair after pair of coarse, steel-gray socks; she never counted how many, but knit and read every spare moment, and was happy when so doing.

When the momentous errand to Miss Tucker had been accomplished, Marcia exchanged her book for another volume of her favourite author, and then started homeward, a little tired, but happy, because, for the time, forgetful of everything but the present. She walked slowly

through the beautiful woods, stopping now and then to pluck a tiny fern or spray of richly-hued autumn leaves, and gave a little cry of dismay as a large dog bounded from the bushes with a sharp bark.

An instant after, however, a manly voice called to the dog, and almost immediately there stood beside her the owner of the voice.

"I am sorry Neptune frightened you, Miss Wheeler. He is very boisterous."

The speaker was Roland Ashton, a new-comer in the neighborhood, a city lawyer, who had inherited old Squire Ashton's house on the hill. Marcia had met him occasionally, and had talked with him, and sometimes she fancied he particularly liked to talk with her. She looked up shyly now, and blushed.

"I was not really frightened, Mr. Ashton," she said. "But he startled me with his loud bark." And she patted the dog's head as he came close to her.

"Allow me to take your book, Miss Wheeler, for I am going past your aunt's house—that is, if you have no objection," said Roland Ashton, who was congratulating himself on having met the rarely-beautiful girl thus alone, who, in secret, he had loved ever since the first time he saw her in the little village church at Riverton, and of whose mind he had formed so high an impression, from the conversations, rare though they had been, which he had enjoyed with her.

"So you read Carlyle?" he said, glancing at the volume. Marcia answered, frankly: "Yes; I like his writings very much."

Her companion looked at her a little surprised. "I do not know many young ladies who read Carlyle for pleasure. And what other authors do you like?"

"I like Ruskin, next to Carlyle; but I have not read many of his works—only 'Modern Painters' and one or two others," answered Marcia, quickly.

The young lawyer smiled a little at the odd choice of favourites—the authors so utterly unlike. He hesitated a moment, then said: "I have all Ruskin's works in my library. May I bring you some of them to read?"

Marcia looked up quickly, her shyness gone for the moment. "Oh! Mr. Ashton, would you be so kind? You don't know how grateful I should be. It is like seeing beautiful pictures, or hearing sweet music, to read Ruskin."

The walk passed pleasantly, and as they neared Widow Austin's house, he said: "Are you going to the pic-nic on Thursday, Miss Wheeler?"

"No," answered Marcia, the happy light fading out of her eyes; and her companion, quick to observe the change, said, gravely:

"May I ask why?" "Aunt Austin is going to be very busy on that day, and I must help her."

"Is the work of such importance that it cannot be put off for a day?" "Yes—no; that is, aunt does not wish me to go," said poor Marcia.

"Would you go with me if Mrs. Austin could be prevailed upon to give her consent?" asked the young city gentleman, looking at the rose-hued cheeks, with a world of admiration in his great, dark eyes.

"I should like to go, Mr. Ashton, but I am sure aunt will not—cannot spare me, I mean. I haven't been on the lake since I was a little girl."

As he opened the gate for her, he said, laughingly: "Are you not going to invite me in, so that I may try my powers of persuasion with your aunt, Miss Wheeler?"

Marcia stopped a moment, blushing painfully. "I would rather you did not say anything to Aunt Austin about the pic-nic, Mr. Ashton. I am sure I cannot go. Good-night." And she went swiftly toward the porch.

Roland Ashton closed the gate with a strange, new feeling in his heart. "Poor little girl," he thought, "she dare not ask me to come in. What a lovely face, and what a sweet voice! I am more in love with her than ever. My old nurse used to say that the Ashtons were a wonderful set for having their own way, and I mean to have my way in regard to taking her to the pic-nic. The old aunt must be hardhearted indeed if she resists my entreaties."

The next morning Mr. Ashton selected "The Stones of Venice," and wended his way to Mrs. Austin's, hoping, as he lifted the old-fashioned knocker, that Marcia would open the door herself. But Mrs. Austin stood before him instead, and to his morning greeting and inquiry, "Is Miss Wheeler at home?" responded, frigidly, "My niece is at home, out in the kitchen, cooking," at the same time neither inviting him to enter, nor standing aside for that purpose.

But Roland Ashton was too much a man of the world not to feel at ease in the lady's presence, and he answered, pleasantly: "Thank you, Mrs. Austin: I shall be pleased to see Miss Wheeler a few minutes. She was afraid yesterday that she would not be able to go to the pic-nic on Thursday. I think she said you expected to be very busy—"

"If Marcia told you she couldn't go to the pic-nic, she told the truth. I've got work for her to do at home, and she'll stay and do it!" answered Mrs. Austin, more idly than before.

This was too decided even for a lawyer to think of arguing against; and, feeling the pic-nic disposed of, he went on as pleasantly as before, though his dark eyes flashed and his lips tightened a little under the heavy, black moustache: "Then I will speak to Miss Wheeler, if you please, to express my regrets, and give her the books I promised to bring."

Mrs. Austin turned and walked through the hall to the kitchen-door, and opening it, exclaimed with polite emphasis, "Miss Wheeler, here's a gentleman wants to see you." At the same time standing aside for him to enter the kitchen.

Marcia was standing before the table, busily working eggs and sugar together, preparatory to forming the loaves of golden sponge-cake that were to accompany Miss Austin to the pic-nic on the morrow. Miss Austin was also present in the kitchen, clad in blue cambric, and engaged in crimping the frills Marcia had ironed the day