

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

PRISCILLA'S PROBLEM.

(By Miss Kate L. Rorer.)

The doctor had prescribed two months in the mountains for the invalid, but the dragon known as "Can't Afford" stood in the way. "I'd love to," said Mrs. Floyd, wistfully, "but July is over now and I guess I can stand August all right, and September will be cool. We haven't the money, and I can get strong without going."

When her sister Priscilla heard of the decision, she immediately descended upon the household, and her advent was like an exhilarating breeze to the depressed family.

"You say you can't afford, do you, Emily? Well, let me try my hand at figuring out. William, how much do you give my sister for running expenses?"

William meekly named the figure, and Priscilla opened her brown eyes in astonishment. "Why, you capitalists, do you have terrapin and quail on toast?"

Mrs. Floyd smiled. "Not every day," she replied, "but you know all the time I've been sick, I've let Delia do the ordering, and I suppose she isn't as saving as she might be."

Priscilla took up a pencil and a sheet of paper. "Let's see, how many are there of you?" she said, musingly. "William, Jack, Helen, Grace, Delia and myself. No, I'm not counting you, for you'll be up in the mountains, climbing cliffs and playing golf. Just wait till I figure out." She made a few calculations, and then looked up with satisfaction. "Here's a proposition: Will you give me half that allowance, and use the other half toward sending Emily away for August any way, and I guess we can manage September, too."

"I say amen to anything that will get Emily strong and well," was the hearty response. "I've been telling her all along that I could squeeze out enough to send her, but she seems to doubt it."

Mrs. Floyd looked dubious. "Will you give my poor husband and babies enough to eat?" she asked, in mock anxiety. "I wouldn't want to come back to a starving family. 'Til feel selfish enough as it is, going off all by myself."

"Don't you worry about that," replied her sister, earnestly. "We want you to get strong. You and Will figure out where you want to go, and I'll attend to the rest. I'll give your family enough to eat, and I'll see that they have a good time."

So it came about that a week later Mrs. Lloyd left for the mountains, and Aunt Priscilla took the helm of domestic affairs.

Her first step was to match the gingham of Helen and Grace's morning dresses, and make a pair of full bloomers to wear with each dress, for she had shrewdly guessed that the children's clothing formed a large part of the weekly washing. The bloomers were far more comfortable, saved the white underwear, and were preferable in appearance.

Then she took up the problem of providing for a hungry family at a minimum cost. She had carefully studied works on dietetics, so that she might know the comparative nutriment of various foods, and the amount required for daily nourishment. For summer, she decided that meat once a day was sufficient, and served this either at noon or night. The breakfast table was always especially attractive,

and a bouquet of flowers freshly gathered from the garden formed the centerpiece invariably. This meal consisted of cereal, eggs, fruit, a glass of milk for the children and a cup of coffee for the head of the family.

Frequently the fruit or berries were stewed with a little sugar, and while still hot were poured as a sauce over the cereal. This made it especially appetizing for those who ate cereal from a sense of duty, and for no other reason. When the fruit was served uncooked, a spray of flowers or a few geranium leaves garnished each plate, and Priscilla herself presided at the table, invariably neat and trim.

The noonday dinner was more perplexing, for the price of meat threatened to make serious inroads into Priscilla's weekly allowance. But her ingenuity came to her rescue, and with the assistance of the cook book she devised appetizing ways for the serving of the cheaper cuts of meat. Delia had previously fried Hamburg steak in hard round balls, poorly seasoned, and unappetizing. Priscilla converted it into a tasty beef loaf, by seasoning with salt and pepper, sweet marjoram, a little onion, bread crumbs, binding together with a beaten egg, and baking, serving with gravy made as for a roast. At other times she simmered it, thickening the gravy with browned flour, and serving on toast. Broiled it became a popular dish, the secret of which was that it was served the moment it was taken from the gridiron, and not allowed to dry in the oven.

Appetizing stews found their way to the dinner table. For these she purchased either the rack or neck of lamb, or the round of beef. As for desserts, Priscilla's artistic nature had free play, and was only held in restraint by the limitations of her pocketbook. Her first outlay was a good freezer, and her menus arranged so as to have ice cream once or twice a week. It was not difficult to persuade one of the children to officiate at the grinding, especially when "scraping the dasher" was the promised reward. Frozen fruits were found more inexpensive than ice cream, but the latter contained the more nutriment. A pitcher of lemonade almost invariably appeared on the table upon a warm day, while at supper time Mr. Floyd frequently found a tall glass of iced tea beside his plate. Tapioca had previously been despised, but when made by Priscilla's recipe and served in glasses thoroughly chilled and topped with whipped cream, was a favorite dessert. It was made with fruit or berries, or even as a custard, with eggs. These glasses were used in serving many other desserts, and were a very tempting way of setting forth cold pudding or gelatine.

In planning her menu she found it necessary to consider expenses as well as nutrition, so when the meat course was an expensive one, the dessert was simple, while ice cream was usually preceded by left-overs.

Daintiness was Priscilla's motto, and however plain the food, it was always temptingly set forth. The platter of cold meat was garnished with parsley, the dish of potato salad decorated with olives, the boiled fish served with slices of lemon, while the tablecloth was clean, and the glass and silver bright. Priscilla herself wore always a trim, becoming gown, and her cheerful face was an antidote for any depression.

Her account book was carefully kept, and the weekly bills regularly met. As the warm weather of August was

followed by the cooler days of September, she changed her menu to suit the different conditions, for she realized that the diet for warm weather was not the one for all the year round. As the children started for school their lunches were appetizingly prepared. The sandwiches were made with bread cut thin and the crust removed, while the meat for the filling was usually minced. Fresh fruit formed a part of the lunch, with plain cake, a couple of cookies, or a cupful of custard for dessert.

At length as September passed the invalid wrote that she could stay away no longer. "I can't even pretend to be delicate any more, so I want to return to my poor, emaciated family who have been living on fifty cents a week to keep their mother in the mountains."

The evening she returned she listened smilingly to the glowing accounts of Priscilla's management.

"I'm afraid you've hopelessly spoiled my family for my housekeeping," she exclaimed, in mock despair. "But if you ever think of getting married, Priscilla, I will certainly give you a recommendation as a good manager."

"Thank you," replied Priscilla, and after a moment she added, while the color deepened on her cheeks, "perhaps before long I shall ask you for it."—New York Observer.

HER TICKET.

"I am about to start on a long journey; I have a ticket clear through, counter signed by the chief manager of the road, and I am just waiting to hear the conductor's call." Thus, not many days ago, to her physician spoke an aged saint who had passed ninety-seven milestones of the road of life. Ninety-seven beautiful years—nearly all of them filled with work pertaining to her heavenly Father's business. To her, death was but the gateway to a fuller life, and she longed to be on the way. She talked of her going as cheerfully as you or I would speak of returning home after a long absence.

Soon after this bidding good-bye to friends and kindred dear, she departed with that assurance of hope which only comes to those who, like Enoch of old, walk with God and hold intimate daily communion with their best earthly and heavenly friend. As a legacy she left to son and daughter and two grandchildren, who had long been permitted to minister to her wants and enjoy the privilege of her charming companionship, the precious memory of a life filled with generous deeds and kindly acts.

To look into her face was a pleasure, to talk with her an inspiration, and to witness the calm and perfect trust with which she awaited the Master's summons was a lesson in faith not soon to be forgotten by those who were privileged to be with her during the days immediately preceding that on which her gentle spirit burst the shackles of time and space, barriers and distance that had bound it here so long, to enjoy the blessed freedom which only immortals physically disenthralled can know.

"A ticket clear through!" Soon or late you and I, too, must journey over the same road so recently travelled by this aged one—even now the "special" may be on the way. Are we sure our tickets are properly certified? Can we express a like confidence in the genuineness of the passports with which we hope to gain an entrance into the house of many mansions—Exchange.

Character is like a brass name-plate on a metropolitan church, it must be kept rubbed up if it shines.