

and "little dinner" parties, not to refer to the mighty mountain of manuals upon cookery in general; but, up to the time of the present writing, I have found nothing that, to my appreciation, meets the case stated by the friend whose plaint heads this chapter.

My aim has been to write out, for seven days of four weeks in each month, a *menu* adapted, in all things, to the average American market; giving meats, fish, vegetables, and fruits in their season, and, so far as I could do so upon paper, rendering a satisfactory account of every pound of meat, etc., brought, by my advice, into the kitchen. I have taken the liberty accorded me by virtue of our long and intimate acquaintanceship, of inspecting not only the contents of your market-basket, but each morning the treasures of larder and refrigerator; of offering counsel concerning crumbs, bones, and such odds-and-ends as are held in contempt by many otherwise thrifty managers—to wit, other cold vegetables than potatoes, and dry crusts of bread and cake, while of gravy and dripping I have made specialties. I have tried, moreover, to inspire such respect for made-over dinners, as we feel for the pretty rugs made of the ravellings of Axminster carpets. We do not attempt to impose them upon ourselves or our friends as "pure Persian." But neither do we blush for them because Mrs. Million Aire across the way would scorn to give them house-room. Let "CONSISTENCY" be stamped upon every appointment of your household, and even the *parvenue* opposite cannot despise you. Once learn the truth that moderate, or even scanty means do not make meanness or homeliness a necessity, and act upon the lesson, and you can set criticism at defiance. Apropos to this point of consistency, let me say, in explanation, not apology, for the small space devoted to company-dinners, that I have dealt with them upon the principle that ten times one makes ten. Having, in emulation of the Eastern beauty, carried the calf with ease for four weeks, you will hardly appreciate the difference in the weight of the cow you lift upon the fifth. In plainer phrase, give John and the children good dinners, well-cooked, and daintily served, every day, and the entertainment of half-a-dozen friends in addition to the family party will cease to be a stupendous undertaking. They have a saying in the Southern States that aptly

expresses the labor and excitement attendant upon such an event in too many families; the straining after Mrs. Million Aire's *diners a la Russe*, which presuppose the despotism of a *chef* in the kitchen, and the solemn pomp of a Chief Butler in the *salle a manger*. The Southern description of the frantic endeavor is—"Trying to put the big pot into the little one," and it is invariably used with reference to preparations for company. Be content, my dear sister, to put into your little pot only so much as it will decently hold, and be thankful that you have in it a sure gauge of responsibility.

I have spoken of dinners for four weeks in each month. I have written receipts for this number, not in forgetfulness of the fact that there is but one February per annum, but because the need of adapting the bills of fare to the days of the week, instead of the month, was absolute, and if I wished the Dinner Year-Book to be a perpetual calendar, I must say nothing of the broken week that sometimes ends and sometimes begins the month. The difficulty of disposing satisfactorily of the two or three odd days brought to my mind, while blocking out my work, the summary manner in which one of my baby-girls once dismissed a somewhat analogous difficulty.

"My dear," I said to her one night as she concluded her prayer at my knee, "you have forgotten to pray for your little cousins. How did that happen? Don't you want our Heavenly Father to take care of them?"

She made a motion of again bending her knees, yawned sleepily, and tumbled into bed.

"Can't help it, mamma! Baby is too tired! Horace and Eddie must scuffle for themselves just this one night!"

I have given you twenty-eight—nay, counting your possible company-meal—twenty-nine dinners in succession to little purpose if you cannot collate from previous receipts one or two for yourself, and be the better for the practice. I need hardly say that I do not anticipate or desire slavish adherence to the plan sketched for your day or week. I have sketched—that is all—not worked out a sum in which addition or subtraction would materially affect the sum-total. The framework is, I would fain hope, symmetrical. I expect you to build thereupon as convenience or discretion may dictate.