LYDIA MARIA CHILD

# THE AMERICAN FRUGAL HOUSEWIFE

ESSAYS

**Lydia Maria Child**

# The American Frugal Housewife: Essays

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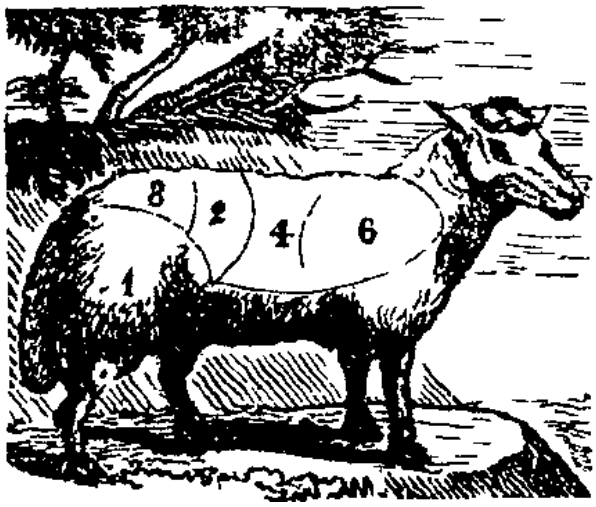
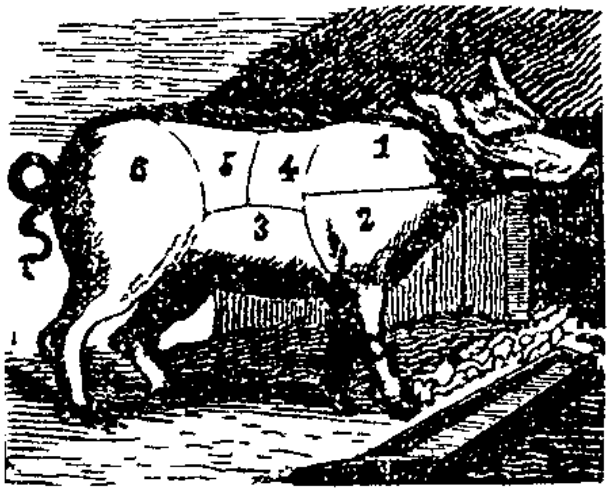
## MUTTON.




1. Leg.
2. Loin, best end.
3. Do. Chump do.
4. Neck, best do.
5. Do Scrag do.
6. Shoulder.
7. Breast.

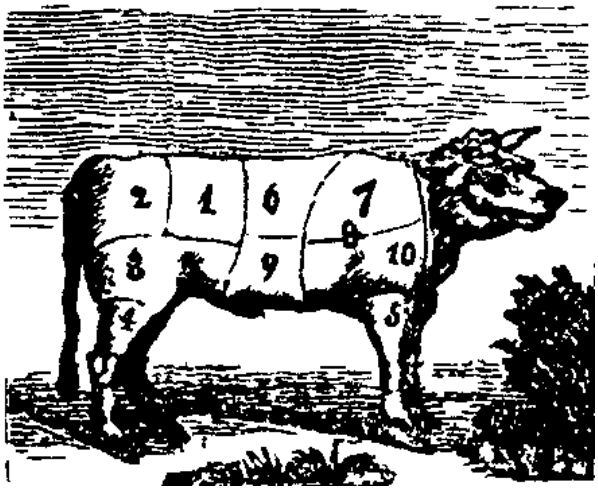
Saddle, 2 Loins.

## PORK.



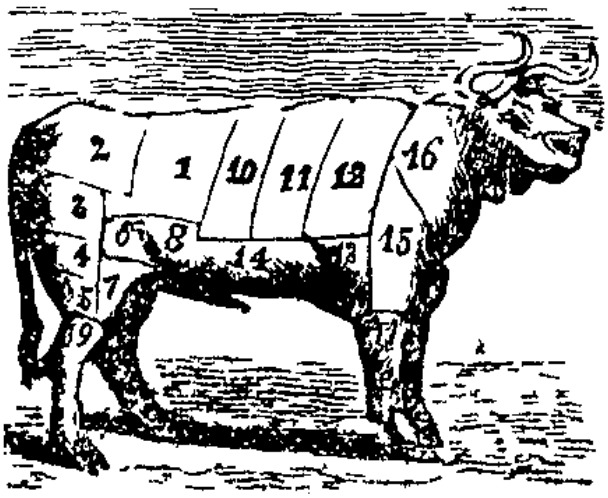

1. The Sperib.
2. Hand.
3. Belly, or Spring.
4. Fore Loin.
5. Hind do.
6. Leg.

## VEAL.




1. Loin, best end
2. Do Chump do
3. Fillet.

## BEEF.




*Hind Quarter.*

1. Sir Loin.

4. Knuckle, hind.
5. Do. fore.
6. Neck, best end.
7. Do. scrag do.
8. Blade Bone.
9. Breast, best end.
10. Do. Brisket.

2. Rump.
3. Aitch Bone.
4. Buttock.
5. Mouse do.
6. Veiny piece.
7. Thick Flank.
8. Thin do.
9. Leg.

*Fore Quarter.*

10. Fore Rib, 5 Ribs.
11. Middle do 4 do.
12. Chuck, 3 do.
13. Shoulder, or Leg Mutton piece.
14. Brisket.
15. Clod.
16. Neck, or Sticking piece.
17. Shin.
18. Cheek.

# INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

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The true economy of housekeeping is simply the art of gathering up all the fragments, so that nothing be lost. I mean fragments of *time*, as well as *materials*. Nothing should be thrown away so long as it is possible to make any use of it, however trifling that use may be; and whatever be the size of a family, every member should be employed either in earning or saving money.

'Time is money.' For this reason, cheap as stockings are, it is good economy to knit them. Cotton and woollen yarn are both cheap; hose that are knit wear twice as long as woven ones; and they can be done at odd minutes of time, which would not be otherwise employed. Where there are children, or aged people, it is sufficient to recommend knitting, that it is an *employment*.

In this point of view, patchwork is good economy. It is indeed a foolish waste of time to tear cloth into bits for the sake of arranging it anew in fantastic figures; but a large family may be kept out of idleness, and a few shillings saved, by thus using scraps of gowns, curtains, &c.

In the country, where grain is raised, it is a good plan to teach children to prepare and braid straw for their own bonnets, and their brothers' hats.

Where turkeys and geese are kept, handsome feather fans may as well be made by the younger members of a family, as to be bought. The sooner children are taught to turn their

faculties to some account, the better for them and for their parents.

In this country, we are apt to let children romp away their existence, till they get to be thirteen or fourteen. This is not well. It is not well for the purses and patience of parents; and it has a still worse effect on the morals and habits of the children. *Begin early* is the great maxim for everything in education. A child of six years old can be made useful; and should be taught to consider every day lost in which some little thing has not been done to assist others.

Children can very early be taught to take all the care of their own clothes.

They can knit garters, suspenders, and stockings; they can make patchwork and braid straw; they can make mats for the table, and mats for the floor; they can weed the garden, and pick cranberries from the meadow, to be carried to market.

Provided brothers and sisters go together, and are not allowed to go with bad children, it is a great deal better for the boys and girls on a farm to be picking blackberries at six cents a quart, than to be wearing out their clothes in useless play. They enjoy themselves just as well; and they are earning something to buy clothes, at the same time they are tearing them.

It is wise to keep an exact account of all you expend—even of a paper of pins. This answers two purposes; it makes you more careful in spending money, and it enables your husband to judge precisely whether his family live within his income. No false pride, or foolish ambition to appear as well as others, should ever induce a person to live one cent beyond the income of which he is certain. If you have two

dollars a day, let nothing but sickness induce you to spend more than nine shillings; if you have one dollar a day, do not spend but seventy-five cents; if you have half a dollar a day, be satisfied to spend forty cents.

To associate with influential and genteel people with an appearance of equality, unquestionably has its advantages; particularly where there is a family of sons and daughters just coming upon the theatre of life; but, like all other external advantages, these have their proper price, and may be bought too dearly. They who never reserve a cent of their income, with which to meet any unforeseen calamity, 'pay too dear for the whistle,' whatever temporary benefits they may derive from society. Self-denial, in proportion to the narrowness of your income, will eventually be the happiest and most respectable course for you and yours. If you are prosperous, perseverance and industry will not fail to place you in such a situation as your ambition covets; and if you are not prosperous, it will be well for your children that they have not been educated to higher hopes than they will ever realize.

If you are about to furnish a house, do not spend all your money, be it much or little. Do not let the beauty of this thing, and the cheapness of that, tempt you to buy unnecessary articles. Doctor Franklin's maxim was a wise one, 'Nothing is cheap that we do not want.' Buy merely enough to get along with at first. It is only by experience that you can tell what will be the wants of your family. If you spend all your money, you will find you have purchased many things you do not want, and have no means left to get many things which you do want. If you have enough, and more than enough, to get everything suitable to your situation, do not think you must spend it all, merely because you happen to have it. Begin humbly. As riches increase, it is easy and pleasant to increase in hospitality and splendour;

but it is always painful and inconvenient to decrease. After all, these things are viewed in their proper light by the truly judicious and respectable. Neatness, tastefulness, and good sense, may be shown in the management of a small household, and the arrangement of a little furniture, as well as upon a larger scale; and these qualities are always praised, and always treated with respect and attention. The consideration which many purchase by living beyond their income, and of course living upon others, is not worth the trouble it costs. The glare there is about this false and wicked parade is deceptive; it does not in fact procure a man valuable friends, or extensive influence. More than that, it is wrong—morally wrong, so far as the individual is concerned; and injurious beyond calculation to the interests of our country. To what are the increasing beggary and discouraged exertions of the present period owing? A multitude of causes have no doubt tended to increase the evil; but the root of the whole matter is the extravagance of all classes of people. We never shall be prosperous till we make pride and vanity yield to the dictates of honesty and prudence! We never shall be free from embarrassment until we cease to be ashamed of industry and economy. Let women do their share towards reformation—Let their fathers and husbands see them happy without finery; and if their husbands and fathers have (as is often the case) a foolish pride in seeing them decorated, let them gently and gradually check this feeling, by showing that they have better and surer means of commanding respect—Let them prove, by the exertion of ingenuity and economy, that neatness, good taste, and gentility, are attainable without great expense.

The writer has no apology to offer for this cheap little book of economical hints, except her deep conviction that such a book is needed. In this case, renown is out of the question, and ridicule is a matter of indifference.

The information conveyed is of a common kind; but it is such as the majority of young housekeepers do not possess, and such as they cannot obtain from cookery books. Books of this kind have usually been written for the wealthy: I have written for the poor. I have said nothing about *rich* cooking; those who can afford to be epicures will find the best of information in the 'Seventy-five Receipts.' I have attempted to teach how money can be *saved*, not how it can be *enjoyed*. If any persons think some of the maxims too rigidly economical, let them inquire how the largest fortunes among us have been made. They will find thousands and millions have been accumulated by a scrupulous attention to sums 'infinitely more minute than sixty cents.'

In early childhood, you lay the foundation of poverty or riches, in the habits you give your children. Teach them to save everything—not for their *own* use, for that would make them selfish—but for *some* use. Teach them to *share* everything with their playmates; but never allow them to *destroy* anything.

I once visited a family where the most exact economy was observed; yet nothing was mean or uncomfortable. It is the character of true economy to be as comfortable and genteel with a little, as others can be with much. In this family, when the father brought home a package, the older children would, of their own accord, put away the paper and twine neatly, instead of throwing them in the fire, or tearing them to pieces. If the little ones wanted a piece of twine to play scratch-cradle, or spin a top, there it was, in readiness; and when they threw it upon the floor, the older children had no need to be told to put it again in its place.

The other day, I heard a mechanic say, 'I have a wife and two little children; we live in a very small house; but, to save my life, I cannot spend less than twelve hundred a year.'

Another replied, 'You are not economical; I spend but eight hundred.' I thought to myself—'Neither of you pick up your twine and paper.' A third one, who was present, was silent; but after they were gone, he said, 'I keep house, and comfortably too, with a wife and children, for six hundred a year; but I suppose they would have thought me mean, if I had told them so.' I did not think him mean; it merely occurred to me that his wife and children were in the habit of picking up paper and twine.

Economy is generally despised as a low virtue, tending to make people ungenerous and selfish. This is true of avarice; but it is not so of economy. The man who is economical, is laying up for himself the permanent power of being useful and generous. He who thoughtlessly gives away ten dollars, when he owes a hundred more than he can pay, deserves no praise—he obeys a sudden impulse, more like instinct than reason: it would be real charity to check this feeling; because the good he does maybe doubtful, while the injury he does his family and creditors is certain. True economy is a careful treasurer in the service of benevolence; and where they are united respectability, prosperity and peace will follow.

# ODD SCRAPS FOR THE ECONOMICAL.

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If you would avoid waste in your family, attend to the following rules, and do not despise them because they appear so unimportant: 'many a little makes a mickle.'

Look frequently to the pails, to see that nothing is thrown to the pigs which should have been in the grease-pot.

Look to the grease-pot, and see that nothing is there which might have served to nourish your own family, or a poorer one.

See that the beef and pork are always *under* brine; and that the brine is sweet and clean.

Count towels, sheets, spoons, &c. occasionally; that those who use them may not become careless.

See that the vegetables are neither sprouting nor decaying: if they are so, remove them to a drier place, and spread them.

Examine preserves, to see that they are not contracting mould; and your pickles, to see that they are not growing soft and tasteless.

As far as it is possible, have bits of bread eaten up before they become hard. Spread those that are not eaten, and let them dry, to be pounded for puddings, or soaked for brewis. Brewis is made of crusts and dry pieces of bread, soaked a good while in hot milk, mashed up, and salted, and buttered like toast. Above all, do not let crusts accumulate in such

quantities that they cannot be used. With proper care, there is no need of losing a particle of bread, even in the hottest weather.

Attend to all the mending in the house, once a week, if possible. Never put out sewing. If it be impossible to do it in your own family, hire some one into the house, and work with them.

Make your own bread and cake. Some people think it is just as cheap to buy of the baker and confectioner; but it is not half as cheap. True, it is more convenient; and therefore the rich are justifiable in employing them; but those who are under the necessity of being economical, should make convenience a secondary object. In the first place, confectioners make their cake richer than people of moderate income can afford to make it; in the next place, your domestic, or yourself, may just as well employ your own time, as to pay them for theirs.

When ivory-handled knives turn yellow, rub them with nice sand paper, or emery; it will take off the spots, and restore their whiteness.

When a carpet is faded, I have been told that it may be restored, in a great measure, (provided there be no grease in it,) by being dipped into strong salt and water. I never tried this; but I know that silk pocket handkerchiefs, and deep blue factory cotton will not fade, if dipped in salt and water while new.

An ox's gall will set any color—silk, cotton, or woollen. I have seen the colors of calico, which faded at one washing, fixed by it. Where one lives near a slaughterhouse, it is worth while to buy cheap, fading goods, and set them in this way. The gall can be bought for a few cents. Get out all the liquid,

and cork it up in a large phial. One large spoonful of this in a gallon of warm water is sufficient. This is likewise excellent for taking out spots from bombazine, bombazet, &c. After being washed in this, they look about as well as when new. It must be thoroughly stirred into the water, and not put upon the cloth. It is used without soap. After being washed in this, cloth which you want to *clean* should be washed in warm suds, without using soap.

Tortoise shell and horn combs last much longer for having oil rubbed into them once in a while.

Indian meal and rye meal are in danger of fermenting in summer; particularly Indian. They should be kept in a cool place, and stirred open to the air, once in a while. A large stone, put in the middle of a barrel of meal, is a good thing to keep it cool.

The covering of oil-flasks, sewed together with strong thread, and lined and bound neatly, makes useful tablemats.

A warming-pan full of coals, or a shovel of coals, held over varnished furniture, will take out white spots. Care should be taken not to hold the coals near enough to scorch; and the place should be rubbed with flannel while warm.

Spots in furniture may usually be cleansed by rubbing them quick and hard, with a flannel wet with the same thing which took out the color; if rum, wet the cloth with rum, &c. The very best restorative for defaced varnished furniture, is rotten-stone pulverized, and rubbed on with linseed oil.

Sal-volatile, or hartshorn, will restore colors taken out by acid. It may be dropped upon any garment without doing harm.

Spirits of turpentine is good to take grease-spots out of woollen clothes; to take spots of paint, &c., from mahogany furniture; and to cleanse white kid gloves. Cockroaches, and all vermin, have an aversion to spirits of turpentine.

An ounce of quicksilver, beat up with the white of two eggs, and put on with a feather, is the cleanest and surest bed-bug poison. What is left should be thrown away: it is dangerous to have it about the house. If the vermin are in your walls, fill up the cracks with *verdigris*-green paint.[1]

Lamps will have a less disagreeable smell if you dip your wick-yarn in strong hot vinegar, and dry it.

Those who make candles will find it a great improvement to steep the wicks in lime-water and saltpetre, and dry them. The flame is clearer, and the tallow will not '*run*.'

Britannia Ware should be first rubbed gently with a woollen cloth and sweet oil; then washed in warm suds, and rubbed with soft leather and whiting. Thus treated, it will retain its beauty to the last.

Eggs will keep almost any length of time in lime-water properly prepared. One pint of coarse salt, and one pint of unslacked lime, to a pailful of water. If there be too much lime, it will eat the shells from the eggs; and if there be a single egg cracked, it will spoil the whole. They should be covered with lime-water, and kept in a cold place. The yolk becomes slightly red; but I have seen eggs, thus kept, perfectly sweet and fresh at the end of three years. The cheapest time to lay down eggs, is early in spring, and the middle and last of September. It is bad economy to buy eggs by the dozen, as you want them.

New iron should be very gradually heated at first. After it has become inured to the heat, it is not as likely to crack.

It is a good plan to put new earthen ware into cold water, and let it heat gradually, until it boils—then cool again. Brown earthen ware, in particular, may be toughened in this way. A handful of rye, or wheat, bran, thrown in while it is boiling, will preserve the glazing, so that it will not be destroyed by acid or salt.

Clean a brass kettle, before using it for cooking, with salt and vinegar.

Skim-milk and water, with a bit of glue in it, heated scalding hot, is excellent to restore old, rusty, black Italian crape. If clapped and pulled dry, like nice muslin, it will look as well, or better, than when new.

Wash-leather gloves should be washed in clean suds, scarcely warm.

The oftener carpets are shaken, the longer they wear; the dirt that collects under them, grinds out the threads.

Do not have carpets swept any oftener than is absolutely necessary. After dinner, sweep the crumbs into a dusting-pan with your hearth-brush; and if you have been sewing, pick up the shreds by hand. A carpet can be kept very neat in this way; and a broom wears it very much.

Buy your woollen yarn in quantities from some one in the country, whom you can trust. The thread-stores make profits upon it, of course.

It is not well to clean brass andirons, handles, &c. with vinegar. It makes them very clean at first; but they soon spot and tarnish. Rotten-stone and oil are proper materials