Household

Dishes Made With Asparagus.

Asparagus is one of the things that make us glad when spring comes. Its flavor, like the first warm winds that blow out of an April sky, is a delicate forerunner of the richer gifts of summer. And yet is there one of all the many vegetables that the warm suns of summer bring out that is more toothsome than asparagus?

From the housewife's point of view, the best thing about asparagus is that it is so simple to prepare for the table. In fact, with a little boiling in a little water with a little salt and butter you have a dish fit for a king.

The matter of boiling, however, is sometimes a stumbling-block. We all have seen asparagus come to the table with decapitated heads. This difficulty is due to the fact that the heads are so much tenderer than the stalks that when the stalks have been boiled sufficiently the heads have been boiled to pieces. One way to obviate this trouble is to take pains to put the bunches of asparagus after they have been washed and scraped into the boiling dish with the stalk end down. The boiling water should be poured over the stalks as far as the heads, but not to cover them. Then, as the stalks boil, the heads are gently steamed, and if handled carefully will not break.

Another way to obviate this difficulty is to use a wire basket which is made especially for asparagus. This basket holds the stalks while cooking and the bottom opens easily so that when the asparagus is cooked it can be put on a plate or serving platter without breaking the ends.

Asparagus should always be cooked with salt in the proportion of a teaspoonful to a quart of water. No rule can be laid down as to the length of time to cook asparagus. When it is young and very tender 15 minutes will suffice. When it is somewhat older it will be improved by cooking up to 30 minutes or more.

In choosing asparagus from the market it matters little whether it be small and highly colored, or thickstalked and white. If it is young and fresh it is sure to be good. Asparagus is like fish in this—that you don't really know its flavor until you have eaten it very fresh—just caught from the water or just cut from the asparagus bed. But the next best thing to do with respect to asparagus is to buy it on market day, and get it home and in the ice box early in the morning before it has been exposed to the air and heat many hours.

The custom of sending asparagus in as a separate course is a good one, for nothing is more satisfactory as a separate vegetable course than this succulent spring stalk. It can be served with the heads resting on a tiny strip of buttered toast, dressed with pepper and salt and butter or with a good cream sauce or it can be served in any of a dozen more elaborate ways.

Served simply with butter or cold, with a vinaigrette sauce, it is a good accompaniment of any roast meat.

Various sauces make various dishes of asparagus, and although connoisseurs insist that the delicate flavor of this vegetable cannot be improved on by the addition of flavoring, other than pepper, salt and melted butter, still sauces can be depended on by the cook for variety.

Regarding green and white asparagus, it is generally admitted that the long, green sort is sweeter than the larger white variety. But, on the other hand, the thick white stalks perhaps look better than the green ones. Either kind is good, if it is fresh.

Scales in the Kitchen a Necessity.

An important way for the efficient housewife to reduce the high cost of living is by weighing everything which comes into the kitchen.

It may seem a bother at first, but when the habit has been established and the tradespeople know it is done the housewife may be sure of getting value received. The head of the ice trust, writing for a woman's magazine, said that if all of the housewives had scales and would make a practice of weighing their ice it would not only result in a great saving to the consumer, but help the producer as well. The dishonest iceman and the careless housewife have combined to establish a system of short weighing that only constant personal supervision can break down.

One housewife was aroused by the size of her bills, and, being confident that her icebox could not hold the amount of ice charged to her, she bought scales. It seemed a little extravagant, but in three months' time she had more than saved the price of the scales by the reduction of her ice bills.

She found that there had been a continual charge of ten to twenty pounds a day too much. She wrote the company a statement of the facts and announced that she would henceforth weigh her ice. The case was investigated and it was found that the iceman was accustomed to shave these few pounds from each customer, and when he had accumulated a few hundred pounds by this method, sell it, and pocket the proceeds.

Another way of promoting dishonesty is for the careless housewife to give the iceman an extra quarter "to give her a good, big piece of ice to-day." This he does, but at the expense of the other woman in the neighborhood, who take no notice of the size of the pieces put into their boxes. Good scales which weigh up to sixty pounds may be had for $3 or $4, and they are emphatically a household necessity.

Useful Hints.

Hardwood floors should be dusted daily.

Hot vinegar is good to serve with spinach.

Always break rather than cut asparagus.

Never cover the pot in which you cook greens.

Boil brass curtain rings in vinegar to clean them.

Rhubarb jam is a good filling for the children's sandwiches.

The best dressing for asparagus is butter and pure cream.

Camphorated oil will remove white spots from furniture.

A combination of rhubarb and orange makes a delicious jam.

The simpler, thinner and fresher summer curtains can be the better.

Tattling is revived, not only for use on collars, but for centrepieces.

Spiced rhubarb makes an appetizing relish to serve with cold meats.

Cut glass needs thorough scouring and scrubbing to bring out its beauty.

A broom cover made of velveteen is excellent for going over dusty walls.

During housecleaning time all door hinges and all castors should be oiled.

If one has but a few mushrooms the most economical way to serve them is on toast.

To mend an umbrella take a small piece of black sticking plaster and soak it until it is quite soft; place it carefully under the hole inside and let it dry. This is better than darning, as it closes the hole neatly and without stitching.

FORTUNE-TELLING IN CHINA.

How a Student Came Out at the Head of His Class.

The Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Pekin, written by Edmund Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, and covering Chinese history from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, have a human interest quite apart from their historical value and may be read with pleasure for the many entertaining stories contained in them. One amusing anecdote is of a student who rushed into the crowd gathered about a fortune teller, seized the man, and shouted: "You have ruined my career for good and all. Either you or I shall die for it." When an attendant of the Emperor, who was there incognito, had separated the men, the soothsayer explained:

"A few days ago this man came here to consult me with regard to his prospects in the impending examination, and I promised that he would win the first place. Now having failed to take his place in the examination hall, he comes here forsooth and blames me for his own unpunctuality. Much learning has made him mad."

At this, the scholar broke in and said: "Because you foretold that I should come out at the head of the list, my friends gave me a banquet, at which I became very drunk. When at last my servant managed to arouse me, I got up and hurried to the examination hall, but the gates were already barred. Did you ever hear of a non-competitor coming out at the head of the list? Are you not, then, the sole cause of my undoing?"

The dispute continued till the Emperor ended it by writing an order which would secure to the tardy student admission to the examination hall. The fortune-teller agreed to punishment if his prophecy was not fulfilled. The student went to his examination, the Emperor went to his court, and the fortune-teller quietly disappeared. The Emperor, in order to triumph over the fortune-teller, had meant to give orders that the student should not be passed, but he forgot to do so, and the examiners, impressed by the student's apparent influence with the Emperor, agreed that it would be disrespectful to place anyone else above him. So the fortune-teller's prediction came true, but when the Emperor, impressed by his prophetic skill, sought his services for the court, the man had vanished and was never seen again.

"Doctor," said a man to Abernethy, the famous doctor, noted for his brusque manner, "my daughter had a fit and continued for half an hour without knowledge." "Oh," replied the doctor "never mind that; many people continue so all their lives."

A Very Odd Spring Hat by Buret, Paris.

Model of black tagal straw trimmed with a huge wing of accordeon-pleated taffeta.

A DOG'S SENSE OF DIRECTION.

"Husky" Animal Shows Remarkable Intelligence.

Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell tells in his book, "Down North on the Labrador," about a "Husky" dog that had an almost uncanny sense of direction. It was necessary to make a hurried overland trip to Island Harbor, where sickness had broken out, and the two doctors decided to go over a short cut—a seventy-mile trail through the wilderness that had long been unused.

The leader of our team was named Brin. He was a yellowish-brown fellow with queer black markings somewhat like those of a tiger. They gave his face the appearance of an eternal grin—an impression that his odd way of turning up the corners of his mouth when he caught your eye intensified. Of all the cavalcade, he alone had ever seen the trail, and that only once, years before.

Nothing of particular interest happened until we came to the edge of Hanging Marsh. There was not a mark on its virgin face. If I had to find my own way to the trail on the farther side, I should have had to go all round the edge, and perhaps miss it, after all, for the blazes on the trees were obscured by ice. The outlook was discouraging. Our only assets were our pocket compasses, our axes, and Brin.

It was a moment of real excitement when he led off at a gallop across the big white marsh straight for a lone spruce. As we whisked by it, I can almost swear he looked back at me and winked.

We had been told that about ten miles from the marsh there was a forked juniper tree, standing by itself. The top boughs had been stripped from it, and the skull and antlers of a caribou fixed in the cleft. The utter inaccuracy of our map had led me to forget this landmark, and I was excessively surprised to hear my chum shout out, "There she is!"

"There's what?"

"Why, the skull in the tree."

A little later we passed the ridge of the Cloudy Hills, and there seemed to lie between us and our goal nothing but miles of rolling forest. How much longer could we trust Brin? He had swung off almost at right angles and was guiding the other dogs along the upper edge of the woods. A minute later he dashed into the forest. There were no marks of any kind whatever, and it was a long time since we had seen any indications that we were following a trail.

Suddenly Brin jumped into a fresh fox track, and at once increased his pace. It seemed to us that he was making fools of us, and so we decided to halt the team.

"What's the best thing to do, John?" I asked. "There's still time to make camp before dark."

Brin was sitting bolt upright on his haunches, staring directly at us—as if he understood everything we were saying. As he caught my eye, he put his head on one side and actually poked out his tongue, and then as I threw myself on the sledge, he started off at a trot along the fox track.

Finally, we came out on a river bed that ended in a lake. There was not the faintest indication to determine whether we should turn north, south, east, or west. It seemed possible, however, to eliminate the east, because we could see across the lake a high range of hills. Yet without hesitation Brin headed straight for them. On—on—on—until at last we came to the woods. The dogs went straight into the forest, and in half a minute were on opposite sides of a dozen trees.

The dogs, glad of a rest, lay down and started chewing icicles out of their fur, while we set to work to untangle them. Brin, at the end of his longer trace, was nearly hidden by the bushes, but I could see that he was standing up and looking back. I went in his direction. To my amazement, I found that he was standing in a well-marked path that ran at an acute angle up the hill! There was no troube after that, and by eight o'clock we were at Island Harbor.

Before turning in, I went out to see what the night was. My hand was on the latch of the cottage door, when something warm and furry rubbed against my leg, and I found myself looking into Brin's eyes. They were asking unmistakably, "How did I please you to-day, master?"

I could not help putting my arms round his neck and hugging him. Then we both went off to our beds, the happier for it.

BUILT UPON 19 HILLS.

Valparaiso Is One of the Most Curious of Cities.

The City of Valparaiso is built upon nineteen hills, like Rome upon her seven. It is one of the most curious cities in the world, says the National Magazine. Its hills rise from 300 to 1,100 feet, and the city is ranged upon them, tier above tier, in sections that are separated by deep gullies, through many of which flow lively little rivers. Winding streets climb, as in Lisbon, by the aid of stairways, lifts and inclined tramways, up from the docks to the hilltops. The houses are modern, but not notable architecturally. Those of the wealthier classes are mansions and have fine grounds, though many of the aristocratic families spend most of their time at Santiago or at summer villas further south.

Everything in Valparaiso is distincely a part of the twentieth century restless business world. The traveller finds as many comforts though far less of luxury than at Buenos Ayres, which lies twelve hundred miles away at the opposite end of the great Transandine Railroad.

The poorer people live on the lower levels of the city, not far from the narrow strip which contains the shipping offices, shops and banks. They are industrious, steady workers and gave one the impression of a virile, worthy, thrifty folk.

The tramway system was put in by Germans and is still owned by a German syndicate. The cars are double decked, and some genius divided them into first and second-class compartments, the first-class passengers riding inside and the second-class climbing up a winding, narrow staircase to seats on the top. First-class fare is five cents, second-class two and a half cents. Most of the conductors are women. During the campaign against Peru and Bolivia it was necessary to have women for car conductors, the men being away at the war. The women proved to be more efficient and honest than the men, and they have been continued ever since.

Our London Letter

British Speaker Is Dignified.

Amid all the signs of decline which many observers profess to detect in Parliament to-day one position stands free of reproach. With undiminished authority the Speaker respects the House, and the House respects the Speaker. This is the very essence of order in the institution which has won the title of the Mother of Parliaments.

In a new book, "The Speaker of the House," Michael Macdonough describes the origin and romantic history of the Speakership. This office, which holds so many pitfalls, is treated as one of great honor and dignity. A salary of $25,000 a year, a palatial residence and a retiring pension of $20,000 a year, with a peerage, are the distinctions the nation bestows on the First Commoner in England. During the Parliamentary session the Speaker gives two full dress levees and seven full dress dinners. Of the many ancient perquisites of the office only two, Mr. Macdonough tells us, now survive. A buck and doe killed in the royal preserves at Windsor are annually sent to him and the Clothworkers Company of London presents him at Christmas with a generous width of the best broadcloth.

Queen Mary Slid Downstairs.

The late Lord Suffield was for forty years officially attached to the royal household and he was a personal friend of the royal family during the greater part of his life. Last year Lord Suffield published an interesting volume of memoirs, chiefly dealing with reminiscences of the court.

There are some merry stories in the volume. There is one of the Shah, who when he awoke from sound slumber at the opera in London, remarked on seeing the chorus, "Buy them all!" There is another of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt rebuking King Edward as Prince of Wales for presenting himself behatted behind the scenes, and a third tells of the tour through India, on which Lord Suffield accompanied the Prince (King Edward), and during which two thugs in Lahore jail gave the Prince a "practical illustration of their method of strangulation."

Another story told by Lord Suffield concerns Queen Mary:

"I went out one day (in 1879) to White Lodge, where I arrived just in time to see Princess Mary, now our Queen, sliding down the stairs on a tray. She looked much embarrassed when she saw me with her mother, feeling that her progress down stairs had been perhaps a little undignified, but the Duchess simply laughed at her and said: 'Never mind, dear child, it is only Lord Suffield.'"

Musical Prodigy a Girl of Fourteen.

As it is a well known fact that many musical prodigies have been discovered by accident, so there is every reason to believe that the West Ham Board of Guardians have found in a little orphan girl of fourteen under the protection of the Union one who may in the near future be rivalling Mme. Clara Butt, or Mme. Kirkby Lunn on the opera stage or concert platform.

"She is a marvel," said a member of the guardians, when asked about their discovery. "Several of the Board have heard her singing some popular ballads, and have been charmed by her voice. She possesses also a remarkable range—three octaves and a semi-tone."

She has a rich contralto voice, and a love of music seems ingrained in her heart. The guardians sent her to a professor at the Royal College of Music, who reported that he could say without any reserve that those critics who listened to her at the college were greatly surprised by her gifts.

"There is no doubt," he said, that the girl shows very great promise"; but warns her guardians that as there is plenty of time before her, she must not be allowed to practise her highest notes as she has been doing. "She ought, properly trained, to do very well indeed, as she has the making of a very unusual contralto voice."

In London's Poetry Bookshop.

Not the least of modern London's sensible institutions is the Poetry Bookshop. It is in Devonshire street, a somewhat uninviting turning off Theobald's road. You cannot mistake the shop, for a signboard representing stars and a flying flame hangs above the door.

Inside the daylight penetrates but dimly. When your eye has grown accustomed to the gloom you see all around and within easy reach of your arm shelves upon shelves of poetry, ancient and modern. You are at liberty to take down any volume and on a comfortable oak bench refresh yourself at will.

Moreover, if chance has led you to the spot any Tuesday or Thursday at 6 o'clock you will be permitted to penetrate to a small whitewashed chamber with a suggestion of the leanto shed about it to which access is gained by a passage, tortuous and full of mystery.

Such is the shed in which twice weekly Apollo's London votaries assemble. A background of blue curtains and the pale reflected light of two tall candles give to the whole assembly the seriousness of a cult. There is, moreover, a hushed air of mystery about the audience, among whom women predominate and where the long haired poet of comic fiction is absent.

Victory for Railway Union.

The recognition of the National Union of Railwaymen by the railway companies is being acclaimed as one of the biggest victories won by trades unions in England for many years.

The agreement between the men and the companies, by which disputes are referred to arbitration, expires at the end of this year, and the men had decided not to renew it unless the union was recognized. Since the fusion of the railway servants, the general railway workers, and the signal men last year, the membership of the combined organization has almost doubled. At the end of December it stood 263,482, actual railway men, and the names of another 22,000 have been added since.

Seven Wonders of the World.

The seven marvels of the modern world, according to the Berlin "Lokal Anzeiger," may be compared with what the world thought wonderful in bygone times. The Pyramids, Babylon's hanging gardens, Mausolus' tomb, the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, the Colossus of Rhodes, Jupiter's statue by Phidias, and the Palace of Cyprus—these were the "Seven Wonders" of antiquity. They were, you note, the work of men's hands, whereas the modern wonders are chiefly the outcome of man's craft in enslaving the forces of nature, and already "wireless," for instance, has almost become an adjunct of everyday life, familiarity killing wonder. Yet what man to this hour can gaze on the Pyramids without a sense of awe?—London Chronicle.

The Awakening.

"You're looking mighty sour; what's the matter? Honeymoon over?" "I guess so." "How'd that happen?" "Oh, we were drifting along down life's enchanted stream, like the poet tells about, and just as I was thinking I should like to drift on and on with her forever she up and told me that she had got to have some money."

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

INTERNATIONAL LESSON, MAY 17.

Lesson VII. The Rich Man and Lazarus. Luke 16. 14, 15, 19-31. Golden Text, Prov. 21.13.

Verse 19. A certain rich man—His name is nowhere given, the popular title "Dives" being merely the Latin for "a rich man."

In purple and fine linen—The outer garment was made of the "purple" and the under of the "linen." Both materials were very expensive. The name "purple" was at first applied only to the liquid dye obtained from a shellfish, and later came to be used metaphorically for the fabric dyed with this liquid (compare Prov. 31. 22; Rev. 18. 12 and 16). To-day it refers primarily to the color.

20. A certain beggar named Lazarus—It is interesting to note that this is the only instance in which Christ gives a name to any character in a parable.

Was laid at his gate—The verb probably means simply lay. The position of the beggar at the gate, or probably portico, indicates the grandeur of the house.

21. We are not told that Lazarus was not given the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. The fact that he lay there day after day and the rich man knew him would indicate that he shared favors and abuse alike with the dogs. His position does not imply, however, that he was not given enough to satisfy his hunger. As the dogs were regarded as unclean animals, the poor man's misery would be doubly exaggerated by them. Notice, however, that he does not murmur against God nor against the rich man. Later there is no exultation over the reversal of their positions.

22. This is, of course, only a parable, and we should not look for special meaning in each detail. The parable teaches that happiness and misery after death are determined by the conduct of persons in this life.

23. Hades—In general the abode of all departed spirits, good and bad, until the time of final judgment. Here, however, clearly a place of torment for the wicked.

Being in torments—The rich man was in torment because of his indifference to the poor and his lack of sympathy. It could not have been because he was rich, since Abraham himself had been a rich man.

24. Father Abraham—The rich man was a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, and he appeals to their relationship and to Abraham's fatherly compassion.

Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue—How changed the environment! On earth everything was made to contribute to his selfish enjoyment. He had lived a life of comfort, ease, and indifference. He had not been arrogant and driven Lazarus from his gate, but simply unconcerned about others. There is no one to help him and he must implore the smallest service.

25. Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things—He received these good things as his own and used them for his selfish pleasure, but he made no investments for the future life.

26. Abraham tells the rich man that it is impossible to interfere with his lot or with that of Lazarus.

28. Testify—A strong word meaning to "testify earnestly and thoroughly."

29, 30. Jesus doubtless had in mind the craving of the Pharisees for a sign, and wishes to warn them, as well as all of his hearers, that if they made no attempt to use the opportunities which they had, new signs and wonders could not permanently aid them.

31. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be permitted, if one rise from the dead—Jesus knew the books of the law and the prophets to which he referred. As a child doubtless, with his mother and in the synagogue school, he had learned the prophetic precepts and warnings against sin and selfishness, and he knew that those who had been thus taught God's will need not walk in darkness. He knew also that those not interested in these sacred teachings would not repent and change even if one rise from the dead.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

The weigh of the transgressor is short.

A man who is good chiefly on the surface is no good.

The deeper a man is in debt the less he cares for expenses.

A woman seldom accepts her husband's excuses at par.

If you intend to do a thing, do it—and don't talk so much.

Let's not waste our sympathy on the under dog if he started the scrap.