

*Vintage and Victorian  
Homemaking Hints*



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## *Introduction*

*This rendition is just a simple ebook of Victorian era household tips.*

*Since these are from the texts of such as historical homemaking women as Isabella Beeton, the Beecher sisters and Mary Lockwood Matthews the tips are from those eras (1880's).*

*Please take them in the manner that they are meant.*

*•To Entertain*

*•To Educate*

*•To Inspire*

*~ Enjoy*

# *The Order of Days*

*A very good order of work is :*

*Monday, washing.*

*Tuesday, ironing.*

*Wednesday, mending.*

*Thursday, cleaning silver, preserving, etc.*

*Friday, sweeping, and window cleaning.*

*Saturday, thorough cleaning of kitchen closets, cellar, etc., baking, etc.*

***Mondays.*** Clean toilet and bath-rooms, and wash her own clothes, dust doors.

***Tuesday.*** Sweep upstairs porches, and iron own clothes, over rugs with carpet sweeper.

***Wednesdays.*** Clean dining room, sweep down all back stairways, dust baseboards, wash tiling in front of fireplaces ; afternoon out.

***Thursdays.*** Clean bedroom No. 3, clean all doorknobs, spigots, fireplace rims, dust doors ; next week clean bed- room No. 1, clean silver, dust doors, once in two months wash transoms. Next week clean bedroom No. 3, all door knobs, "spigots", and fireplace rims, dust doors.

***Fridays.*** Clean bedroom No. 2, and lavatory, wash windows on second floor, carpet sweeper over rugs. Next week clean guest rooms, wash windows on 3rd floor, carpet sweeper over rugs. Next week, clean bedroom No. 2 and lavatory, wash windows on second floor. Next week clean library and bedroom No. 1, wash windows on first floor, carpet sweeper over rugs.

***Saturdays.*** Clean all front and back halls (6) and own room ami butler's pantry, and dust baseboards.

# *The Day's Work*

*The first difficulty lies in taking for granted that successful housekeeping is as much an instinct as that which leads the young bird to nest-building, and that no specific training is required.*

*The new home, prettily furnished, seems a lovely toy, and is surrounded by a halo, which, as facts assert themselves, quickly fades away.*

*Moth and rust and dust invade the most secret recesses. Breakage and general disaster attend the progress of Bridget or Chloe.*

*The kitchen seems the headquarters of extraordinary smells, and the stove an abyss in its consumption of coal or wood.*

*Food is wasted by bad cooking, or ignorance as to needed amounts, or methods of using left-over portions; and, as bills pile up, a hopeless discouragement often settles upon both wife and husband, and reproaches and bitterness and alienation are guests in the home, to which they need never have come had a little knowledge barred them out.*

## **Getting Organized**

In the beginning, then, be sure of one thing, — that all the wisdom you have or can acquire, all the patience and tact and self-denial you can make yours by the most diligent effort, will be needed every day and every hour of the day.

Details are in themselves wearying. The day's work of a systematic housekeeper would confound the best-trained man of business.

The best-arranged plans may be overturned at a moment's notice.

In a mixed family, habits and pursuits differ so widely that the housekeeper must hold herself in readiness to find her most cherished schemes set aside.



Absolute adherence to a system is only profitable so far as the greatest comfort and well-being of the family are affected; and, dear as a fixed routine may be to the house-keeper's mind, it may often well be sacrificed to the general pleasure or comfort.

Progress may be slow, but the reward for every step forward is certain.

*(In other words take heart)*

## **Getting Started**

We have already found that each day has its fixed routine, and are ready now to take up the order of work, which will be the same in degree whether one servant is kept, or many, or none. The latter state of things will often happen in the present uncertain character of household service.

**First**, then, on rising in the morning, see that a full current of air can pass through every sleeping-room; remove all clothes from the beds, and allow them to air at least an hour. Only in this way can we be sure that the impurities, thrown off from even the cleanest body by the pores during the night, are carried off.

***A neat housekeeper is often tempted to make beds, or have them made, almost at once; but no practice can be more unwholesome.***

While beds and bedrooms are airing..

- breakfast is to be made ready,
- the table set,
- and kitchen and dining-room put in order.

The table can be set, and the dining or sitting room swept, or merely brushed up and dusted, in the intervals of getting breakfast.

To have every thing clean, hot, and not only well prepared but ready on time, is the first law, not only for breakfast, but for every other meal.

**After breakfast** comes the...

**Dish-Washing,**

dreaded by all beginners, but needlessly so.

With a full supply of all conveniences,—plenty of soap and sapolio, which is far better and cleaner to use than either sand or ashes; with clean, soft towels for glass and silver; a mop, the use of which not only saves the hands but enables you to have hotter water; and a full supply of coarser towels for the heavier dishes,—the work can go on swiftly. Let the dish-pan be half full of hot soap and water.



- Wash glass first, paying no attention to the old saying that "hot water rots glass." Be careful never to put glass into hot water, bottom first, as the sudden expansion may crack it. Slip it in edgewise, and the finest and most delicate cut-glass will be safe.
- Wash silver next. Hot suds, and instant wiping on dry soft cloths, will retain the brightness of silver, which treated in this way requires much less polishing, and therefore lasts longer. If any pieces require rubbing, use a little whiting made into a paste, and put on wet. Let it dry, and then polish with a chamois-skin. Once a month will be sufficient for rubbing silver, if it is properly washed.
- China comes next—all plates having been carefully scraped, and all cups rinsed out. To fill the pan with unscraped and unrinsed dishes, and pour half-warm water over the whole, is a method too often adopted; and the results are found in sticky dishes and lustreless silver.
- Put all china, silver, and glass in their places as soon as washed. Then take any tin or iron pans, wash, wipe with a dry towel, and put near the fire to dry thoroughly. A knitting-needle or skewer may be kept to dig out corners unreachable by dishcloth or towel, and if perfectly dried they will remain free from rust.
- The cooking-dishes, saucepans, &c., come next in order; and here the wire dish-cloth will be found useful, as it does not scratch, yet answers every purpose of a knife. Every pot, kettle, and saucepan must be put into the pan of hot water. If very greasy, it is well to allow them to stand partly full of water in which a few drops of ammonia have been put. The outside must be washed as carefully as the inside. Till this is done, there will always be complaint of the unpleasantness of handling cooking-utensils. Properly done, they are as clean as the china or glass.
- Plated knives save much work. If steel ones are used, they must be polished after every meal. In washing them, see that the handles are never allowed to touch the water. Ivory discolours and cracks if wet. Bristol-brick finely powdered is the best polisher, and, mixed with a little water, can be applied with a large cork. A regular knife-board, or a small board on which you can nail three strips of wood in box form, will give you the best mode of keeping brick and cork in place. After rubbing, wash clean, and wipe dry.

The dish-towels are the next consideration.

A set should be used but a week, and must be washed and rinsed each day if you would not have the flavor of dried-in dish-water left on your dishes. Dry them, if possible, in the open air: if not, have a rack, and stand them near the fire.

On washing-days, let those that have been used a week have a thorough boiling. The close, sour smell that all housekeepers have noticed about dish-towels comes from want of boiling and drying in fresh air, and is unpardonable and unnecessary.

Put away every article carefully in its place.

If tables are stained, and require any scrubbing, remember that to wash or scrub wood you must follow the grain, as rubbing across it rubs the dirt in instead of taking it off.

The same rule applies to floors. A clean, coarse cloth, hot suds, and a good scrubbing-brush, will simplify the operation. Wash off the table; then dip the brush in the suds, and scour with the grain of the wood. Finally wash off all soapy water, and wipe dry. To save strength, the table on which dishes are washed may be covered with kitchen oilcloth, which will merely require washing and wiping; with an occasional scrubbing for the table below.

The table must be cleaned as soon as the dishes are washed, because if dishes stand upon tables the fragments of food have time to harden, and the washing is made doubly hard.



## Bedrooms

Leaving the kitchen in order, the bedrooms will come next.

Turn the mattresses daily, and make the bed smoothly and carefully. Pillows should be beaten and then smoothed with the hand, and the aim be to have an even, unwrinkled surface. As to the use of shams, whether sheet or pillow, it is a matter of taste; but in all cases, covered or uncovered, let the bed-linen be daintily clean.

Dust the room, arrange every thing in place, and, if in summer, close the blinds, and darken till evening, that it may be as cool as possible.

Sweeping days for bedrooms need come but once a week, but all rooms used by many people require daily sweeping; halls, passages, and dining and sitting rooms coming under this head.

## Dusting

Careful dusting daily will often do away with the need of frequent sweeping, which wears out carpets unnecessarily. A carpet-sweeper is a real economy, both in time and strength; but, if not obtainable, a light broom carefully handled, not with a long stroke which sends clouds of dust over every thing, but with a short quick one, which only experience can give, is next best.

For a thorough sweeping, remove as many articles from the room as possible, dusting each one thoroughly, and cover the larger ones which must remain with old sheets or large squares of common unbleached cotton cloth, kept for this purpose.

A feather duster, long or short, as usually applied, is the enemy of cleanliness. Its only legitimate use is for the tops of pictures or books and ornaments; and such dusting should be done before the room is swept, as well as afterward, the first one removing the heaviest coating, which would otherwise be distributed over the room.

For piano, and furniture of delicate woods generally, old silk handkerchiefs make the best dusters. For all ordinary purposes, squares of old cambric, hemmed, and washed when necessary, will be found best.

Remember that in dusting, the process should be a wiping; not a fliriting of the cloth, which simply sends the dust up into the air to settle down again about where it was before.

If moldings and wash-boards or wainscotings are wiped off with a damp cloth, one fruitful source of dust will be avoided.

or all intricate work like the legs of pianos, carved backs of furniture, &c., a pair of small bellows will be found most efficient.

Brooms, dust-pan, and brushes long and short, whisk-broom, feather and other dusters, should have one fixed place, and be returned to it after every using.

If oil-cloth is on halls or passages, it should be washed weekly with warm milk and water, a quart of skim-milk to a pail of water being sufficient. Never use soap or scrubbing-brush, as they destroy both color and texture.

All brass or silver-plated work about fire-place, doorknobs, or bath-room faucets, should be cleaned once a week and before sweeping.

The bedrooms and the necessary daily sweeping finished, a look into cellar and store-rooms is next in order,—in the former, to see that no decaying vegetable matter is al-

lowed to accumulate; in the latter, that bread-jar or boxes are dry and sweet, and all stores in good condition.

Fifteen minutes or half an hour will often cover the time consumed; but it should be a fixed duty never omitted.

A look into the refrigerator or meat-safe to note what is left and suggest the best use for it; a glance at towels and dish-cloths to see that all are clean and sweet, and another under all sinks and into each pantry,—will prevent the accumulation of bones and stray bits of food and dirty rags, the paradise of the cockroach, and delight of mice and rats.

The preparation of dinner if at or near the middle of the day, and the dish-washing which follows, end the heaviest portion of the day's work; and the same order must be followed.

Only an outline can be given; each family demanding variations in detail, and each head of a family in time building up her own system.



# *Vintage Cleaning Hints*

## **Furniture Polish**

Mix two tablespoonfuls of sweet or linseed oil with a tablespoonful of turpentine, and rub on with a piece of flannel, polishing with a dry piece.

## **To Make Hard Water Soft**

Dissolve in one gallon of boiling water a pound and a quarter of washing soda, and a quarter of a pound of borax. In washing clothes allow quarter of a cup of this to every gallon of water.

## **To Take Out Fruit Stains**

Stretch the stained part tightly over a bowl, and pour on boiling water till it is free from spot.



## **To Take Out Ink Spots**

Ink spilled upon carpets or on woolen table-covers can be taken out, if washed at once in cold water. Change the water often, and continue till the stain is gone.

## **To Wash Greasy Tin and Iron**

Pour a few drops of ammonia into every greasy roasting-pan, first half-filling with warm water. A bottle of ammonia should always stand near the sink for such uses. Never allow dirty pots or pans to stand and dry; for it doubles the labor of washing. Pour in water, and use ammonia, and the work is half done.

## To Clean Brass and Copper

Scrape a little rotten-stone fine, and make into a paste with sweet oil. Rub on with a piece of flannel; let it dry, and polish with a chamois-skin. Copper is cleaned either with vinegar and salt mixed in equal parts, or with oxalic acid. The latter is a deadly poison, and must be treated accordingly.



# *Vintage Cooking Hints*

## **Mixed Spices**

Three heaping tablespoonfuls of ground cinnamon, one heaping one each of clove and mace, and one even one of allspice. Mix thoroughly, and use for dark cakes and for puddings.



## **Spice Salt**

Four ounces of salt; one of black pepper; one each of thyme, sweet marjoram, and summer savory; half an ounce each of clove, allspice, and mace; quarter of an ounce of cayenne pepper; one ounce of celery salt. Mix all together; sift three times, and keep closely covered. Half an ounce will flavor a stuffing for roast meat; and a tablespoonful is nice in many soups and stews.

## **Weights and Measures**

As many families have no scales for weighing, a table of measures is given which can be used instead. Weighing is always best, but not always convenient. The cup used is the ordinary coffee or kitchen cup, holding half a pint. A set of tin measures, from a gill up to a quart, is very useful in all cooking operations.

One quart of sifted flour is one pound.

One pint of granulated sugar is one pound.

Two cups of butter packed are one pound.

Ten eggs are one pound.

Five cupfuls of sifted flour are one pound.

A wine-glassful is half a gill.

Eight even tablespoonfuls are a gill.

Four even saltspoonfuls make a teaspoonful.

A saltspoonful is a good measure of salt for all custards, puddings, blancmanges, &c.

One teaspoonful of soda to a quart of flour.

Two teaspoonfuls of soda to one of cream of tartar.

The teaspoonful given in all these receipts is just rounded full, not heaped.

Two heaping teaspoonfuls of baking powder to one quart of flour.

One cup of sweet or sour milk as wetting for one quart of flour.



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# *Final Notes*

## **Periodical Cleanings-**

Besides the daily routine which we have described, there are portions of every house which can only be thoroughly cleaned occasionally; at which time the whole house usually undergoes a more thorough cleaning than is permitted in the general way.

On these occasions it is usual to begin at the top of the house and clean downwards; moving everything out of the room; washing the wainscoting or paint with soft soap and water; pulling down the beds and thoroughly cleansing all the joints; "scrubbing" the floor; beating feather beds, mattress, and pailasse, and thoroughly purifying every article of furniture before it is put back in its place.

This general cleaning usually takes place in the **spring** or early summer, when the warm curtains of winter are replaced by the light and cheerful muslin curtains.

Carpets are at the same time taken up and beaten. The French-polished furniture well rubbed and polished.

The same thorough system of cleaning should be done throughout the house; the walls cleaned where painted, and swept down with a soft broom or feather brush where papered; the window and bed curtains, which have been replaced with muslin ones, carefully brushed, or, if they require it, cleaned; lamps not likely to be required, washed out with hot water, dried, and cleaned.

*I hope you have enjoyed these tidbits of Victorian Housekeeping Hints.  
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*Kemi Quinn*

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