



***CAROLINE
FRENCH BENTON***

***A LITTLE
HOUSEKEEPING
BOOK FOR
A LITTLE GIRL;
OR, MARGARET'S
SATURDAY
MORNINGS***

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A Little Housekeeping Book for a Little Girl; Or, Margaret's Saturday Mornings

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CHAPTER I

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MARGARET'S CHRISTMAS TREE

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About Christmas time Margaret was accustomed to see things tucked out of sight whenever she came around, and her feelings were never hurt when her Pretty Aunt, or her Other Aunt, or her mother, or her grandmother said: "Don't you want to run down-stairs a little while, dear!" or, "Margaret, would you mind staying out of the sitting-room all this morning?" But this Christmas everybody said these things twice as often as usual, and Margaret wondered about it.

"Mother," she said one day, "if you were a little girl and every one said 'Run away, now,' over and over, twice as many times as other Christmases, what would you think?"

Her mother laughed. "Well," she said, "I suppose I should think I was going to have twice as many presents as usual."

Margaret drew a long breath. "Would you?" she asked, thoughtfully. "Two pairs of skates, and two sets of furs, and two boxes of handkerchiefs, and two pink kimonos, and six books; that would be twice as many presents as last year. But what does one little girl want with twos? Now if I was twins—"

The Pretty Aunt laughed. "Let me explain it to her," she said. "Margaret, how would you like two Christmas trees, one for everybody, just as usual, with your presents on it,

and one little tree, all for yourself, with more presents? Would you like that for a change?"

Margaret said she thought she would, but it seemed very queer. Two trees, and only one little girl! Now if she really had been twins—

"Twins, indeed!" said the Other Aunt.

"Just wait till you see, and perhaps you will be glad there's only one of you!" And everybody laughed again except Margaret, who thought it all very queer indeed.

When Christmas morning came she jumped up in a hurry and waked every one up calling out, "Merry Christmas!" and then she danced with impatience because it took them so long to get ready. But at last the doors of the parlor were thrown open and she rushed in. There stood the great, beautiful tree, hung with tinsel and bright balls, and twinkling with beautiful lights, and on its branches were bundles and bundles, tied with red ribbons and holly, and on the floor were more bundles, and she forgot about the little tree she had meant to look for. But by and by, when she had opened all her presents, and made a pile of them on the piano, and thanked everybody for them, she whispered:

"Mother, was there to be a little tree, all for me?"

"Why, of course," said her mother, smiling, "we nearly forgot, didn't we? Suppose you look behind the library door?"

Margaret ran and looked, and, sure enough, there was the tree, but such a queer one! It was small, and had no candles and no ornaments. The corner was dark and she could not see very well, but it seemed to be hung with

things that looked like dust-pans and whisk-brooms. She stood looking at it, wondering if it was all a joke.

Just then her father saw her and came to pull the tree out where she could see it, and, sure enough, there was a dust-pan tied on with a red tape, and a whisk-broom with another red tape, and a little sweeping-cap with a red bow, some gingham aprons and white aprons, and brown towels and red-and-white towels, and dust-cloths, all with red M's in their corners; and put at the top was a little book tied on the tree with a big red bow. Her mother took this down and handed it to her, and every one stood and looked on and smiled because she was so surprised. When Margaret looked at the cover of the book she knew what was inside in a minute, because, painted on the cover was a little girl who looked just like her with a big apron on, and a sweeping-cap, holding a broom in one hand and a dust-pan in the other, and above, in bright red letters, were the words, Saturday Mornings.

"Oh, it's for me!" she cried, delighted. "It's like my own cook-book, only it tells how to clean house instead of cook. I love to clean house! I love to make beds! I love to wash dishes! I just *love* to sweep! May I wear that beautiful cap, and are all those dish-towels for me, and is that my very own dust-pan?" Then she ran to the tree and got everything down. First she put on all the aprons, one on top of another, with the ruffled waiting-on-table apron on top of the rest, and she put the cap on her head, and hung all the dish-towels over one arm and all the dusters over the other, and gathered up the brooms and dust-pan in her arms and sat down in a corner with her book.

"This is the best of all," she said, soberly. "My other presents are lovely, too, my books and my gold heart pin, and my white rocking-chair for my own room, and the mittens grandmother knit for me with the lace stitches down the back, but I like my little book best, and all the things on my own little tree most. This is the nicest Christmas I ever, ever had! The name of my book is Saturday Mornings, because other days I have to go to school, but Saturdays I can sweep and dust and wash dishes. What fun it will be! I don't know which chapter sounds best." She hugged the little dust-pan and shook out the dish-towels. "Oh, I just can't wait to begin," she said.



CHAPTER II

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THE KITCHEN FIRE

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Although Margaret had become pretty well acquainted with the kitchen during the year she was learning to cook she had never quite understood how to manage the kitchen range or the fire, because Bridget always attended to that part for her. But at the very first lesson in the Saturday Morning Class her mother, who was to be the teacher that day, said the subject would be "Ranges and Fires," because it was the beginning of all housekeeping.

Margaret put on her biggest, longest-sleeved gingham apron, got a hearth brush, a dust-pan, the little dish which held the stove blacking, brush and polisher, rolled up her sleeves and prepared to listen.

"The reason why so many women find cooking hard work," her mother began, "is because they do not understand their range or stove. They cannot make a fire grow hot quickly, or make it cooler if it is too hot; they do not know how to get what the cook-books call a 'moderate oven.' 'We never could understand about drafts and things,' they say, but the real truth of the matter is that they are too lazy to try and learn, I'm afraid, because it is so very simple that even a little girl can learn about it in ten minutes. The only way to be a good housekeeper is to understand all about a fire and how to keep a kitchen range in a good temper."