

# Why the White House Servants Must Watch Their Step

The New First Lady of the Land  
a Very Practical Housewife  
Who Knits, Darns Socks and  
Can if Necessary Go Into the  
Kitchen and Prepare the  
President's Meals

"A T HEART I am a simple, home-loving New England woman, and I like, best of all, to gather my little family under my own roof and to stay there."

This is the description which Mrs. Calvin Coolidge gave of herself in her days as Governor's lady when she used to divide her time "half and half" between her two sons at school in Northampton and her husband at the State House in Boston.

Now, some women might so speak, and yet investigation show that there were more frills to their lives than they had stated. But pitiless publicity of the New England sort showed early that the pleasant wife of silent Calvin Coolidge was even as plain as she said.

A few years ago the proper matrons of Boston's Back Bay rose up to wonder and admire as they watched the Governor's lady. Now the mothers of the nation are doing the same, for they have learned that Mrs. Coolidge's claims to plainness consist of homely duties, accurately done. Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, first of all, they learn, has herself knitted every pair of woolen stockings her two boys have ever worn. Moreover, she has darned every hole through the hose that mother knitted in the first place. From earliest infancy Mrs. Coolidge has taken entire charge of her own children, without the help of nurse or governess, and in the first years of her married life she performed every household task—cooking, cleaning, dusting and arranging without the help of a servant.

Mrs. Coolidge early learned as the wife of a rising young lawyer to do without things she wanted, just as patient women in New England have always done without. And none the less cheerfully at home she sits in her room, wash their dirty faces and make them neat for supper. Then before tucking them into bed herself she reads them "Treasure Island" and "Swiss Family Robinson." In the morning again she got them up early enough to earn their spending money before school, delivering papers and shoveling out the neighbors' snowy paths. There is no motherly secret nor any housewifely perplexity which the new First Lady has not met and wrestled with.

And yet, despite all her homely duties, she always found time to mediate between father and the boys—to adjust the ideas of the older generation and the younger. This, in particular, came when the boys wanted a dog.

"You can have a 'rapidly disappearing' dog," said the father; "a dog that says 'Good morning,' and then runs away and never comes back. That kind of dog doesn't get hairs on your mother's parlor carpet."

"But we want our dog around all the time," Calvin, the younger son, objected; "we don't want him rapidly disappearing."

It was then that mother interfered. "Calvin wants that dog so badly," said mother, "that I think we'll have to overlook the parlor carpet this once and get the dog."

Accordingly, the boys had the dog. Now, very early in the days of her married life pleasant Mrs. Coolidge learned other things besides the duties of a New England wife and mother. She learned how to play her part as the wife of a rising young public man.

She has always been a gracious talker on the subjects of children, cooking and society—subjects which she considers within her special domain, just as public questions are the especial province of her husband.

To begin with, in the days which are just done, Mrs. Coolidge used to tell about her "neutrality." "I am neutral," she used to say. "Neutral on woman suffrage, neutral on economic fuses, neutral on labor tangles, neutral on every controversy in which Mr. Coolidge has to mix. That's my idea of the best way to serve my husband. He takes care of the public questions and I take care of the house and the boys. That to me seems a fair division."

Now, to many a man and woman it may seem a trifle exaggerated to state that Mrs. Coolidge for years wanted a modest little automobile and for years learned to do without it.

The latest mistress of the White House preparing with her modern electrical cooking appliances some of the old-fashioned dishes which President Coolidge prefers to any others



How Mrs. Coolidge Makes the President's Favorite Custard Pie

MIX three-fourths of a cup of sugar, one rounding tablespoon of flour and a pinch of salt with the yolks of two eggs, well beaten, and two and one-half cups of milk. After they are well mixed together pour the ingredients into a pie plate in which the lower crust has been allowed to cook slightly. Bake in a moderate oven until nicely browned.

To make the pastry take one large cup of flour and mix it with four tablespoons of lard (not melted). Add one-half teaspoon of salt and one teaspoon of baking powder.

Stir the ice water in gradually, adding more than half a cup if necessary to make a dough stiff enough for handling and rolling. Add just enough flour to roll lightly, as too much handling or mixing spoils the crust. Bake in a glass pie plate.

"You know," she once explained as she sat in the modest little sitting room of her modest little two-room suite at the old Adams House, in Boston, "I dearly want a Ford. I wouldn't ask for anything more expensive. Just a little Ford which I could run myself and take marketing and shopping. But Mr. Coolidge thinks we can't afford it yet."

It was mentioned to Mrs. Coolidge that a Ford cost then about \$500. "Surely!"

"Oh, yes," said she, and her blue eyes twinkled. "I don't mean to say we couldn't get together the money for the purchase. Of course we could. But Mr. Coolidge seems to think I would always be running into people and that the damage might be high. So we are waiting and I am living in hopes."

Long ago Mrs. Coolidge explained how she bought her pretty clothes, her hats, her accordion-pleated gowns, her embroidered silken stockings, and she gave Mr. Coolidge all the credit. She was a very proud young wife, as she told the secret.

"You know, Mr. Coolidge loves to select my clothes for me. And he has such good taste I just let him."

"He takes his early morning walk to the State House past the smart Boston shops on Tremont Street and Boylston Street. And when he sees anything he likes he goes in, asks them to set it aside and then calls me up. Later in the day we go shopping. If the dress looks well on me, Mr. Coolidge buys it. If it doesn't, we just go further. For Mr. Coolidge is one of the most critical shoppers I ever knew. As for colors, he likes blue best for me. And as for materials, he prefers crepe de Chine. My skirts he always wants pleated. Mr. Coolidge is far fussier than I am. Often I get tired of looking about and would gladly take something not quite right, but he spurs me on."

"No, no," he says, "that's not quite the blue to go with your eyes." And so I give in and we go on till he is suited."

This is the way in Boston, and so far in Washington, that the new First Lady of the Land has chosen her wardrobe. Whether the Coolidges will keep up the custom now that the President has taken on so many added responsibilities, is of course doubtful.

Now, all the business of family life is not settled in New England when the socks are knitted for father and the boys and the gowns are chosen for mother.

A fine example of Mrs. Coolidge's skill with her knitting needles—the baby carriage robe which she entered in the national knitting contest and which is to be used to cover her first grandchild



Three of the Stitches Used by Mrs. Coolidge in Knitting Her Much Admired Baby Robe



This shows how she brought her yarn over the needle in order to put on extra stitches in place of the drop stitches which make the attractive openwork in the knitted lace



Passing the slip stitch over to make the rows of holes in the lace which the pattern calls for



What the expert knitter knows as "slipping on a" which, combined with knitting two stitches together, narrows the design in the lace-like sections of the pattern

There is still what they used to call in New England the "inner man" to be fed, and also in old New England there are very good recipes for feeding him. Mrs. Coolidge can cook the old New England standbys to perfection—all, in fact, except biscuits.

Several years ago the President in one of his lighter moments explained that he would never recommend Mrs. Coolidge's biscuits. "They are too hard, and they are inclined to be tough," said he, smiling teasingly at his wife. She took the disparagement of the biscuits with good grace. But when it comes to corn muffins, to salad dressing and to custard pie—all articles of diet by which New England swears, Mrs. Coolidge is "right there."

She has very generously given out her recipes for these and long ago they were

all tried out in Boston and acclaimed as

quite the thing in salad dressing and corn muffins and custard pie and biscuits. Perhaps they are quite the thing because Mrs. Coolidge went to the old New England cooks for her favorite recipes. Here's Mrs. Coolidge's custard pie recipe: Mix three-fourths of a cup of sugar, one rounding tablespoon of flour and a pinch of salt with the yolks of two eggs well beaten and two and a half cups of milk. After they are well mixed together pour the ingredients into a pie plate in which the lower crust has been allowed to cook slightly. Bake in a moderate oven until nicely browned.

To make the pastry take one large cup of flour and mix it with four tablespoons of lard (not melted). Add one-half teaspoon of salt and one teaspoon of baking powder. Stir the ice water in gradually, adding more than half a cup if necessary to make a dough stiff enough for handling and rolling. Add just enough flour to roll lightly, as too much handling or mixing spoils

the crust. Bake in a glass pie plate.

Her mayonnaise salad dressing comes next. This recipe Mrs. Coolidge learned from Mrs. Mary Hazel, her aunt, who lives at 60 Park Street, Roxbury, a suburb just outside of Boston. Here is the way the mayonnaise is made:

Cream lightly one cup of butter. In another dish stir smoothly together the yolks of four eggs, one tablespoon of prepared mustard and one teaspoon salt. Stir in the butter and add slowly, beating all the while, one cup of olive oil and half a cup of lemon juice and vinegar, or if preferred a whole cup of lemon juice. When mixed put into a quart jar and gradually work in more oil until the jar is filled. This dressing will keep indefinitely without losing its flavor.

The recipes for the corn muffins and the biscuits about which there is some difference of opinion follow:

Put one cup of cornmeal, two cups of flour, two teaspoons of baking powder and a pinch of salt into a mixing bowl. Add two eggs and milk to the right consistency. Melt one tablespoon of butter and add. Pour the ingredients into but-



Charming and sensible Mrs. Coolidge ready for a morning of shopping

tered muffin pans and cook in a moderate oven until golden.

The baking powder biscuits the President failed to recommend Mrs. Coolidge makes thus:

Add to four cups of flour and four tablespoons of baking powder a quarter of a cup of butter and milk to the right consistency. Roll out the dough on a floured breadboard, cut and bake in a hot oven until done. If a sweet biscuit is desired add four tablespoons of sugar.

But it is in darning and knitting and entertaining that Mrs. Coolidge is most interested, although she is an excellent cook. In spite of the honors which have come to her as her husband progressed through public life, honors which she has accepted with simple grace and humility, Mrs. Coolidge was more than delighted to hear that she had received honorable mention for a fine piece of knitting work which she made recently for the Women's National Knitting Contest.

Her offering was a baby carriage robe of plain knitted stitch, with panels of knitted lace. She lined it with pink crepe de Chine and sent along this verse to go with it:

"We are glad to know that a baby wee Adds another twig to your family tree; And may every tick of Time's old clock Prove it more of a chip from the good old block."

So she received honorable mention, and then she promptly announced, with true New England "forehandedness," that this particular carriage robe was going to be saved for the first Coolidge grandchild.