The Romance of Silverware

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The Romance of Silverware

By MARGARET MARNETTE

THE knife, fork and spoon, which so ably assist us to partake of our daily food, have a long and honorable history. Their progress has had an important part in man's conquest of nature. From man's ten fingers, which he used as natural instruments, to the invention of the fork, which is the latest of the three to appear, progress is recorded in tableware.

The primitive man felt the need of some container for water when he had to dip it out with his hands, and could not keep it for any time, nor carry it any distance. From an oyster shell, he developed a fairly satisfactory device. The Latin word for shell, "cobela", has the meaning "spoon".

The Saxons first used wood as a means of providing instruments for food. The word "spoon" in their language meant splinter of wood. A form of their early spoon was one which had a handle and a pointed end. This form might be said to be the first fork to be made, but the development of it was delayed for many years.

The Egyptians were considerably more fastidious in their selection of tableware, for they used ivory spoons to remove the marrow fat from bones. A few wooden spoons may be found in the collection of instruments taken from old tombs.

The first spoon, which was made in America in 1660 by John Hull of Boston, had an elliptical bowl and a straight handle. The handle is only slightly enlarged at one end and is not decorated at all. Utility, rather than beauty, seemed to be the aim of this first spoon maker. Teaspoons and dessert-sized spoons were then generally used in England.

Spoons were made in America long before knives or forks. The process for making spoons was extremely simple. Small heaters and simple machinery were required. Cold silver was the favored material because it had the requisite degree of hardness.

The greatest variation in American spoons is found in the handle and in the joining of the stem and the bowl. The "slip stem" spoon which John Hull first made has a short V-tongue projecting into the back of the bowl. The long rat-tail joint on the back of the bowl was common in early days, but later spoon makers made the V into more ornamental figures.

Prominent among early silver spoon makers was Paul Revere, best known for his midnight ride. Among the many types of spoons which he made is a perforated one intended to remove cork from wine glasses. This is especially interesting in that it had a large sale in England!

Often spoons are presented for christenings and graduations today, but in colonial times spoons were presented at funerals, in memory of the deceased. One enterprising silversmith made spoons with coffin-shaped bowls, but these never attained a great popularity.

One of the most common of old spoons is the pointed "fiddle" type, which was very popular about a hundred years ago. Many families have this spoon in their collection of "familly silver".

There were more kinds of spoons than any other kind of implement. Among those which have been known to exist are snuff spoons, salt spoons and even ear spoons! An interesting form of spoon is that which was made in England after the fashion of the Egyptian spoon or fork for getting marrow from bones. This was long and slender and had a groove in the handle, which could be used with other smaller bones. One can imagine the scene of a banquet with each guest digging away at his own bone!

In the Stone Age man learned that a cutting edge could be placed on flint or stone to make a servicable tool. Bronze later came to be desired, and finally when the value of fire was developed for tempering steel, steel became the favored cutting material.

A history of early days reveals that an instrument resembling a meat ax was used to prepare pieces of meat to fit the hand. Greeks and Romans, even when well-to-do, preferred eating with their fingers. Yet there were some Romans who, without desiring for improvement, no matter how we might consider it today, in several old books there have been found scenes of a Roman eating with his knife.

The present fork is a development (believe it or not) of the ancient pitchfork. However, two-tined forks were often used to assist in turning meat upon huge spits, as in digging bread and other foods from the hot ashes. A skewer was the first table fork as developed in England. A guest was cautioned not to "pick his teeth with his knife, nor with a straw or stick," according to an old book, "The Boke of Curtseye."

The table-fork seems to have been invented first in Italy. About the year 1060 the Cardinal Petro Damiani preached a sermon against the unholy use of this article. He believed it to be a symbol of luxury and thought that, inasmuch as the Creator had given each person five fingers on each hand they should not flout nature by this two-pronged tool. But the unconcerned Italians went right on making the forks, often of gold and silver, with precious stones stuck into them.

Queen Elizabeth started the vogue for table forks, as she did for so many other things. She had two forks and kept them with her whenever she went visiting. Sermons were often preached in England against the use of the fork, but Ben Johnson, one of the finest writers the history of literature has known, wrote that "forks were brought into custom here, as they are in Italy, to the saving of napkins."

Two-tined forks were the rule until the opening of the 18th century, when it became possible, but not correct, to eat peas with a fork. The knife was remodeled about this time so that a fair mouthful of such elusive foods (Continued on page 14)
Value of Rural Clubs
(Continued from page 7)

The chief activities are the indi-
vidual work of the member such as
securing and feeding an animal, or
studying clothing problems; the de-
monstrations, exhibits and contests; the
projects. Farm clubs are more
broad in their scope and give
members a broader view on life,
and are more easily adaptable to
the local situation.

The motto of the club work is:
"Make the best better." The slogan
is: "To win without bragging, to lose
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The best leaders are farm people, both
men and women, who have had prac-
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conducted. Cattlemen usually make
good leaders for calf clubs, poultry
growers, good turkey growers and
homemakers good leaders for girls'
clubs. Sometimes teachers can be used
as leaders, providing they are in the
community the entire year. Former
club members are rapidly taking up
leadership of clubs and should provide
valuable leaders in the future.

No better type of service can be
given in a community than to help a
group of boys and girls by accepting
leadership of a club. The club work
is now limited because of not having
sufficient capable leaders more than
anything else.

The colors of the "Four-H Club" are
white and green—the white for purity
and the green emblematic of the great
out-of-doors.

The emblem is the four leaf clover
with an H in each leaf. These H's
stand for Head, Hand, Heart and
Health—"the training and proper care
of which will be the hallmark of a boy
or girl who can possess. In club work
the things learned train the head to think
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