Under My Foreign Vine and Fig Tree
In Merrie England

"The R.B. Was Always Well Bred"

"After Breakfast the R.B. Always Took My Order."

"O, the homes of Merrie England!
How beautiful are they!"

LODGING-HOUSE life in England is a sort of semi-housekeeping that appeals most strongly to Americans who have been traveling far enough to long for a touch of home seclusion and domestic comfort. We "went into lodgings" for the first time during the second year of exile. For six months we had—as the slangiest member of the party put it—"cropped the promiscuous vegetation" of pensions and hotels, and were a-weary of printed menus, of ambiguous entrees, of ubiquitoru national dishes, of questionable beds and unequivocal impositions upon the strangers within foreign gateways. We yearned for food we need not analyze; for plain, wholesome living and the right of free speech, if not of high thinking.

We sought—and found—our pleasant pastures, and what the marginal reading of the Shepherd Psalm translates as "the waters of quietness," in Brighton, just an easy run from London by railway.

We lived in lodgings subsequently in Leamington, and in the Isle of Wight, and in comfort. The Brighton experiment was so triumphantly satisfactory that the memory is an abiding delight.

The personnel of our landlord and his wife interested us from the beginning to the end of our sojourn in the famous old town—a fashionable and expensive resort of royalty and nobility 200 years ago. It is highly respectable still, but modern modes of travel have brought it so near to town that the charm of exclusiveness beloved by fashion has departed.

Luxury Without Fashion.

"'Arry" and "'Arriet," taking advantage of cheap holiday excursions, make love with the frank, matter-of-course audacity of the British cockney, in the forsaken haunts of fop and coquette of the olden time. Shopmen do a fair, but not a brisk trade; parks with high-sounding titles are bordered by buildings that were once grand, and are now described by agents as "genteel and roomy."

In such a house and upon Regent Park (a name that must have dated back to the youth of George IV, of scapegracish memory) a retired butler, who had lived for thirty years as boy and man in the family of Lord Somebody, had taken up his abode ten years before we were recommended to his good graces by a real estate agent. True to the traditions of his order, he had wedded the cook and drawn her, and the tidy sum she had saved in the same "service" as himself, into his honorable retirement. That is the way they do things in sensible old England. Upon the foundations of their united savings the mature couple leased the "genteel-roomy" house that had outlived its mansion days, and took lodgers.

The business is so little known in America (a more's the pity!) that I will explain what the term means.

They furnished the house, dividing it into suites and flats for the accommodation of a certain number of individuals and families, for whom, when domiciled, they kept house, the requisites for daily living, and the proprietors doing the rest. The retired cook had but changed her scene of labors, but she was the nominal mistress of the house. The retired butler transplanted his dignity and dress coat in new soil, of which he was the owner. Both worked harder than ever before, but under conditions more honorable, from their point of view.

Let the report of one day set the case more distinctly before the mind of the reader who has never lived in lodgings.

In Commodious Quarters.

It was early in the summer, and the London "season" was not over. In consequence, Brighton was not full, and we had no difficulty in securing the best lodgings in the whilom mansion. We had the "drawing-room floor." The English drawing-room is always gained by mounting stairs. Hence, our "English basement houses." On this floor was the drawing-room entered through a smaller ante-chamber, which we, receiving no visitors, used as a library and writing room. Back of the spacious drawing-room, which looked out upon the park, was one nearly as large, in which our meals were served. On the floor above were four bedrooms, of fair dimensions. All were clean and airy, and those in the front of the house gave us glimpses of the sea.

Even in summer we never breakfasted earlier than 8 o'clock, and the "R. B."—thus christened by our irreverent youngsters, and spoken of by no other name out of his hearing—made known, by a sort of plaintive patronage unattainable by any but a cidevant chief butler, that the meal was spread at that ghostly hour out of deference to other "colonial" prejudices. He was too well bred, or too wary, to quote "the quality" to us, then or ever. I have observed that those who have the offensive trick are usually people who have the least acquaintanceship with the authorities they cite. If there were mild protest in the R. B.'s shining morning face, clean-shaven daily—as he passed muffins, toast and bacon, coffee, chocolate and tea—it went no further. He was a shade graver, perhaps, than after the world was better aired. More respectful he could not be. His deportment was of the best brand, and ripened by years. His spouse never, even by accident, gave us a brew of tolerable coffee. In this she was not unlike the chefs of the best hotels in London. She did make excellent chocolate, and the tea was delicious in flavor, although costing just half what we pay for inferior quality in our own country.

Admired a Tea Maker.

The R. B.'s respect for me mounted visibly when he found that I expected to make tea at table. It was "uncommon to see a lady from the States do that," he informed me. And when, kettle, tea-caddy and urn in place, I measured the died leaves into the heated pot, poured a little boiling water over them and slipped the cozy into place, he was moved out of his habitual calm.

"Ah, madam, you do macerate your tea!" was an outburst of surprised admiration.

The Continental breakfast does not take with the English. We had oatmeal and cream, bacon and eggs, or fish and bacon. Always bacon—the English breakfast variety we never get out of England, and which we ordered seven mornings in the week. About twice a week we had stewed or deviled kidneys, muffins almost every day and toast as invariably as bacon. Another inevitable adjunct of the morning repast, as it was of luncheon, afternoon tea and the Sunday night supper, was marmalade.

It is the Briton's piece de resistance at three of his daily meals. Dundee marmalade; apple marmalade; marmalade based upon apricots green and apricots ripe; damson marmalade—marmalade named for every berry that grows—are native species of the genus. Besides these we had occasional treats of East Indian guava and preserved ginger.

After breakfast was cleared away, the R. B. presented himself, paper and pencil in hand and professional responsibility upon his brow, to receive my orders for the day. He was to do the marketing; he was familiar with shops, supplies and prices. I knew as well as he, that the program for the next twenty-four hours and week was settled in his long head before he appeared in "Madame's" presence. His manner of consulting me as to the least detail of the memoranda he jotted down, as from my dictation and his deferential attention to every suggestion, were inimitable. He was there for my "commands" and he went through the form of taking them. In reality, I had little to do with catering beyond paying the bills on Saturday night. I do not think I was cheated, albeit I was fully aware that my major-domo got his little commission from the tradesmen favored by our orders. He shopped to better advantage than a foreigner could hope to do. His show of protecting me against my lavish self was as good as a play.

"Strawberries, Madame!" in plaintive reluctance. "I am afraid you would hardly care to pay the market price for strawberries today. The recent rains have curtailed the supply, I grieve to say. I could not reconcile it with my conscience to let you order them without telling you that they are two shillings per quart. Uncommon fine berries, of course, but really, two shillings in the height of the season is extortionate!"

The English strawberries were, as he said, uncommon of their kind. I have never seen finer, or tasted any that were more delicious, and when we could not get them for less, we smothered the R. B.'s conscience and our own, and paid the extortionate 2 shillings (50 cents) per quart.

Five O'clock Tea Was Always a Joy

When it came to paying sixpence (12½ cents) apiece for peaches in the Leamington market, we hesitated and thought longingly of the basketfuls of the luscious fruit rotting at the week's end on New York docks.

The weak point in the cuisine managed by the thrifty pair was the 1 o'clock luncheon. The retired cook had evidently lived out her term of service in a family that had the true British contempt for made dishes.

The distaste is as old as the reign of "Good George the King," whose favorite dish was boiled mutton and turnips. Mrs. R. B. could compass a mince on toast. Her ignorance of croquettes, salmis, scallops, and the like matched her ineptitude for all manner of salads. Her lord looked upon luncheon as a stop-gap for appetites that had been satisfied with breakfast and were reserving their best energies for dinner.

This, the fourth meal of the eating day, was to him a serious function. A meaty soup—sometimes rather heavy for our taste—was succeeded in due and solemn procession by fish, a roast with vegetables, pudding or tarts, crackers and cheese and black coffee. Fruits and nuts were brought on with the crackers and cheese. These were the "dessert." Tarts, custards, puddings, and ices were "sweets."

The main defect in the average English cuisine is sameness. We were painfully conscious of this during a fortnight's stay at one of the largest and most expensive of London hotels. We did not weary of juicy Southdown mutton, unequaled in savoriness by any we had eaten in any other part of the world, unless it were the small roasts of lamb we used to get in Italy. Charles Lamb said of roasting pig: "He is a weakling; he is a flower." The Italian lamb is a gentle bud—a very exquisite in his way. And his English cousin Southdown is a larger edition in flavor and tenderness. The "roast beef of Old England" was a lasting disappointment, and, with all deference to the native cooks, it was killed in the kitchen. We ate none that was not overdone until what gravy followed the carver's knife was almost colorless. Sometimes it was boiled while fresh, an unheard-of method with us. The liquor in which it was boiled made good soup. The meat was insipid and fibrous.

In roasting poultry Mrs. R. B. was an adept. Her "fowls," which she never called "chickens," were done to a turn, pleasant to the sight and eminently satisfactory to the palate. If we did not learn to appreciate the "liver-wing" as the choicest morceau of the goodly bird, we approved of the jaunty touch lent to a plump young cock, or a capon, by tucking the brown liver under one wing—"like an opera hat"—said a saucy girl of the party.

The list of vegetables was pitifully short. Potatoes, that were perfect in their way, miracles of mealiness and magnitude; broad beans, a sort of overgrown lima; vegetable marrow, to which we inclined favorably, and Brussels sprouts, were the chief of our diet, so far as the table vegetables went. Day after day the round was repeated, with an occasional and most welcome interpolation of delicious green peas, when ducks took the place of the "regulation" fowl. Those who hankered for coarser esculents might regale plebeian tastes with cabbage and turnips. The finer vegetables that make our home markets beautiful and enticing throughout the year are unknown luxuries to the untraveled Briton.

I should be ungrateful and unjust if I failed to descant briefly upon the chaste joys of afternoon tea in the country that gave birth to the fascinating function.

Afternoon Tea's Joys.

At 5 o'clock p. m., England, from palace to hut, "puts the kettle on and they all have tea." It is the hour sacred to domestic tranquillity and social comfort. We had the habit before we went into lodgings. It was confirmed for the rest of our lives by our two summers in the tight little island. And, verily, the tea spread in our sight by the Turveydroplan R. B. were something to remember. However far we might have wandered afield, Londonward or into the country rich in downs, dykes, castles, and historic ruins, we were sure to bring up at teatime in the quiet drawing room and as sure to find the round table, covered with a snowy cloth, drawn to the corner of the hearth. The late afternoon was sometimes chill with seafogs, and in England the least suspicion of dampness and falling temperature is seized upon as an excuse for lighting a fire. Sometimes we came in wet, but cheerily, for we knew what awaited us. Then the sea-coal was aglow in the grate; the tea-urn bubbled in unison with it, and the cloth was hidden by plates of thin bread and butter, sandwiches, the toast rack, cake basket, a plate of hot scones or tea cakes shrouded in a napkin, always marmalade, and, not infrequently, a delicacy with which we became acquainted—and zestfully during that halcyon summer at Brighton—to wit, Devonshire cream! It was eaten with brown bread and butter and jam, otherwise marmalade.

At 10 o'clock we might have had supper if we had wanted it. I think the R. B. and his spouse never failed to eat their bread and cheese with, maybe, a bit of cold beef or pork, and to wash the food down with a "pint of bitter" at this ungainly hour. The poorest cottager must have his supper, if there be a crust of bread or a heel of cheese in the cupboard.

How the better classes keep up the national custom, when they have breakfasted at 9, lunched at 1, had tea at 5, and a heavy family dinner at 7:30, or a dinner party at 8, passed our comprehension then, and is not yet quite clear.

English Recipes.

TEA CAKE.

Sift four cupfuls of dried flour into a bowl and chop into it a scant cupful of butter. Dissolve half a yeast cake in four tablespoonfuls of warm water and stir it into two cupfuls of milk, or enough to make a soft dough. Roll this out into a sheet and cut into cakes as large as a tea plate and less than half an inch thick. Set them, covered lightly, in a warm place until they have nearly trebled in thickness. Bake in a floured pan. Keep them covered for twenty minutes, then brown.

Run a sharp knife around the edge, tear the cake open, butter, and serve upon a plate lined and covered with a heated napkin.

YORKSHIRE PUDDING.

Two cupfuls of flour, into which have been stirred, and then sifted with the flour, a teaspoonful of baking powder and one of salt. Mix to a soft batter with two cupfuls of milk. Beat four eggs light and whip into the batter with quick, upward strokes.

This is always served with roast beef. When the beef is done, transfer it to a heated dish and keep hot over boiling water. Pour off the fat from the top of the gravy left in the dripping pan; turn the batter into the pan, set back in the oven and bake quickly to a delicate brown. Dish the meat and lay the pudding, cut into squares, about it in the platter.

JAM PUDDING.

Line a buttered bake dish with a good puff paste. For a batter allow two eggs and their weight in butter and in dried and sifted flour. Cream the butter and sugar, whip in the yolks, beaten smooth, and then the frothed whites, alternately with the flour, which has been sifted twice with a teaspoonful of baking powder.

Now spread the puff paste in the bake dish with peach jam, or with preserved peaches, mixed with a tablespoonful of preserved ginger, cut fine. Pour the batter upon this prepared bed and bake in a steady oven. Cover with paper as you would cake, removing to brown after the pudding has puffed up well.

It is really very nice when properly made, although un-American in construction.

CASTLE PUDDING.

Two eggs, the weight of the eggs in granulated sugar, dried flour and in butter. Sift the flour twice with half a teaspoonful of baking powder. Cream the butter and sugar, working in the juice and grated peel of half a lemon. Add the beaten yolks; beat hard and whip in the stiffened whites, alternately with the flour. Bake in buttered pate pans as you would small cakes; turn out and eat hot with sauce.

THE HOUSEMOTHERS' EXCHANGE

A WESTERN member contributes a list of household helps that remind us pleasantly of the valuable "briefs" for which we are indebted to our brotherly "Private Secretary." If I had ten times the space which is now adjudged to be our lawful proportion, I should gladly bring into the light sundry excellent communications that lie in my Exchange drawer. Necessity knows no choice, and one long letter would swallow up our tiny corner.

Dear and worthy friends and willing workers! I may not plagiarize Sydney Smith's advice to the young author who submitted a manuscript to the great wit for his "candid criticism."

"Before I read it let me advise you to revise it and strike out every other word," said the elder writer. "You will be astonished at finding how much it will strengthen your style!"

I do plead for short, pithy letters. They will be read by more people and with more attention than longer papers, and room can be made for them where I should like to have our practical women and would-be learners represented. Say what you have to say, and then stop!

Have I ever told in this Corner our family anecdote of the guinea pig? One of our small boys was told to "pick up a guinea pig by the tail and see his eyes drop out." The 4-year-old thus described the failure of the experiment:

"I couldn't take him up by the tail, for he hadn't any! It wasn't cut off or broken off, either. The guinea pig just stopped there!"

Take the story to hearts, dearly beloved. Do not withhold our rightful tale of helpful letters. Help us, and let us help you. But when the story is done, stop there!

Small Things That Help in the Kitchen.

1. Set a dish of cold water in the oven to keep the bread from burning while baking.
2. Lemons will keep fresh if put into an uncovered jar of cold water. Change the water every two or three days.
3. Salt will remove stains from oilcloth table cover. Rub hard with a flannel, dampened, not wet, with water.
4. Baking soda, rubbed hard on tinware with a piece of damp paper, will clean and polish it.
5. Cut off the top of an old soft shoe and sew the leather between two thicknesses of cloth, and you can iron without burning your hand.
6. If the lampwick will not turn up easily and evenly, pull out three or four threads lengthwise in different parts of the wick. Try it in your oil stove.
7. Keep a large, sound apple, that is not too fragrant, in your cake box to keep the cake moist.
8. To drive away ants, mix salt, pepper, borax, and sugar together and scatter on the pantry shelves.
9. Here is a new way to manage a pot roast: Put the meat into a large granite pan or pail that has a top. Season to taste, pour in a cupful of hot water, fit the top on tightly and set the pail in the oven. Cook slowly for three hours for beef, two for lamb or young mutton, not removing the cover until the meat is done. Then take up the meat and keep hot while you make gravy of the liquid left in the pan.
10. I have been much interested in the Exchange. This is my first visit. If any member has an old bureau or bookcase in attic or woodshed for which she has no use, your humble servant would be thankful to get it. Yours for help. HOUSEKEEPER.

Will you add to the other "helps" you offer your address in full? I hope to have occasion to make further use of it, and that we have now is incomplete.

Fruit Punch and Salad.

You flatter me by asking for the formulas for fruit punch and fruit salad you had when you lunched at my house last summer. It gives me pleasure to inclose recipes. You may rely upon them as exact. They have been often tried in my family.

C. C. (Elizabeth, N. J.)

FRUIT PUNCH.

Add to the juice of one can of pineapple that of six lemons and three oranges, one can of rich preserved strawberries, and one of the same quality of preserved cherries.

Sweeten to taste and let all stand for two or three hours. Add, then, a quart and a cupful of iced water and a large cupful of chopped ice. If you wish, you may also add a pint of claret.

FRUIT SALAD.

Put into "individual" cups three strawberries to each, canned or fresh; some grated pineapple, a teaspoonful of orange pulp and the same of grapefruit; a very little syrup from preserved ginger; a teaspoonful of lemon juice, one of raspberry juice, a little sugar and fill up the cup with maraschino cherries. Set in ice until very cold. Eat from the cups.

I can testify the punch was as nectar and the salad was as ambrosia to my thirsty self on the June day of the memorable luncheon that introduced a dozen of us women to the delicacies aforesaid.

Suggestions for Churning.

May a practical butter-maker suggest to "Mrs. A. H." that a small barrel churn is preferable to the old-fashioned "dasher" churn? In using the more modern vessel, as soon as the granules of butter appear on the surface of the milk, pour in a dipperful of cold water, and when the clots are all formed and collected on the liquid drain off the buttermilk through the hole provided for the purpose. Stop this with a cork and pour in a bucket of cold water in summer, warmer in winter—say, from fifty-six to sixty degrees. Fit on the lid and turn the churn several times. Drain away the water and salt while the butter is still in the churn. Stir with a round stick, used for this purpose alone. A butter paddle will do. Wait fifteen minutes, then, with the lid still fastened down, turn as in churning, and the butter will be thoroughly worked and the salt evenly distributed. It may now be molded into pats or packed in boxes that come for the purpose, holding from one to five pounds.

This is a much easier and quicker way than the old method of lifting the butter out into a bowl, working, setting away, and working again.

And if "Mrs. A. H." wants to make money with her butter, she can get two cows, and, with a cream separator, she would find the work would be done most expeditiously with the barrel churn, and, as I have indicated, with more satisfactory results.

Mrs. F. E. G. (McNabb, Ill.).

A Wish Gratified.

I saw in your Corner that "I. L. W., of Buffalo, N. Y.," wants a recipe for hulled corn.

I have made it every year for ten years according to an easy and simple formula. I have had so much help from the Exchange in the past that I should like to return a little of it.

First, let me thank you for sending my name to two dear ladies—one in Trenton, N. J., one in Philadelphia. The books they have given me were so much nicer than we had expected that we are overjoyed. And they have written such friendly letters that I almost feel as if they were personal friends instead of utter strangers.

I suppose, if we only knew it, that there are lots of good things we all could do for others, poor though we may be.

HULLED CORN FOR "I. L. W."

Soak half a peck of corn over night in lukewarm water. On the morrow put it into a large pot; cover deep with cold water; add three heaping teaspoonfuls of saleratus, or of baking soda, and boil gently until the hulls will rub off easily in the hands. Drain, and wash the corn until the water runs clear. Cover again with cold water and boil for half an hour. Wash once more. Proceed in this way until the corn is tender, and the last water in which it is boiled is not at all discolored. At first it will be very red, but each washing will make it lighter. It will take several hours to make it ready, but it requires no care while in cooking. I keep the corn in an open crock covered with water until it is used up.

I fry it in bacon fat for the table. It seems like a tedious operation, but it is good enough to repay one for the trouble of preparing it.

A. F. D. (Spencerport, N. Y.).

You are right! There are many, many good things we can do to make life brighter and easier for others, if we only keep our eyes and hearts open. You have done one kind thing in taking a busy woman's time to write out the recipe another woman wants.

Complies with all requirements of the National Pure Food Law, Guarantee No. 2041, filed at Washington

"Fresh Roasted Coffee?—bah! Mother didn't use fresh roasted coffee, she had Arbuckles."

The way to get a good cup of coffee that tastes like Coffee with all the delicious flavor and aroma intact, is to buy a package of the old original Arbuckles' ARIOSA Coffee, and grind it as you want to use it, first warming it a little to develop the flavor and make the grinding easy. Coffee loses its identity as Coffee after being ground or exposed to the air and is easily contaminated by handling.

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The pores of each coffee berry are sealed after roasting with fresh eggs and granulated sugar to hold the goodness in and make the coffee settle clear and quickly; an actual application by machinery, of "Mother's" methods—as patented by this firm.

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