

"But I can always soften the hard water for you by adding a teaspoonful of carbonate of soda to a saucepanful."

Betsy opened her eyes very wide at this, but made no remark. She did not altogether enjoy her mistress's reforming moods. Though she always listened to and acted on whatever she was told, still she listened in a silence which betokened disapproval.

"I have ordered some damsons for making damson cheese, which will be coming soon, and I want you to do the first part for me, Betsy, and I will finish them off in a few days. You have only to pick off the stalks, and put them into some of those wide-mouthed glass bottles from the store cupboard, without water or anything; cork them loosely, and put them in a very slow oven for four or five hours. Then drive the corks in firmly, and set them aside with the mouth downwards till I have time to finish them."

At this moment a discordant shout outside the kitchen window announced the arrival of one of the tradesmen, who proved to be the greengrocer with the said damsons.

"Why, them's nothing but bullaces, miss," Betsy exclaimed with scorn, as she took them in, "they're no damsons. Why, these here things grow wild by the bushel down home, and nobody troubles to pick them."

"Oh, Betsy, do they really?" said Margaret, in a melancholy tone, "I thought they were so nice, and they are certainly the best to be had in the town. Perhaps they will do for preserving and for the damson cheese."

"Oh yes, miss, well enough for anything of that; but a real damson is as large as a small plum, and full and plumpy-looking—quite different from them poor little hard things. As they're here so early, perhaps I can finish them off for you, miss, if you will please to tell me the rest of the way."

"You take them out of the bottles as soon after they are cold as you like, and press them through a sieve to keep out skins and stones. Then boil up the pulp till it becomes stiff with half a pound of this broken loaf sugar to every pound of fruit. Then pour it on to some of the common dinner plates, buttered, and put it in a warm dry place till the cheese is quite dry and firm."

"Well, it don't sound over much like cheese, miss, though no doubt very nice. And what about them birds master brought home last night, please, miss? There's one of them, in particular, won't keep above a day or two."

"Oh, the partridges! We cannot use more than one for tea to-day, so you had better half roast the other, then it will keep several days longer, and will be just as good as ever when re-roasted. The bread-sauce for to-night is very simply made: break up some stale bread, taking off all the crust and hard pieces, till you have three-quarters of a pound of crumb, then pour a pint of milk over it, and leave it to soak. While it is soaking get a small onion, cut it across twice, and put it into hot water for about a quarter of an hour, to steam out the strong taste and smell."

"Well, I never! Why, it will wash all the goodness out, miss."

"No, it leaves in quite as much flavour as anyone likes. Very few ladies will eat onions at all, simply because the strong taste and smell are so disagreeable, while if they would only soak them first they might have them in all sorts of dishes without any unpleasantness. But to finish the sauce. When the bread has soaked long enough, put it in a clean saucepan, and simmer it gently for an hour; when it is about half done, put in the onion, and a little butter, salt, and pepper."

"How long must I leave the onion in, miss?"

"Oh, you can leave it in all the time, and

serve it up in the sauce. Many gentlemen like it, and in that way they can help themselves to it if they like."

"Yes, miss; but there's three birds, and one of them—well, he really do seem as tough as an old goat, and his legs is as blue as your new bonnet, instead of nice and yellow, like the other two. I were thinking as perhaps you'd have him made into soup, or something of that."

"I never heard of partridge soup," said Margaret, dubiously; "but I will look in the cookery-book, and if it says anything about it we will certainly try it."

The quest proved successful, and the tough old partridge furnished an excellent soup, treated in the following way:—It was cut into pieces and fried with a little butter and a slice of ham cut small. When the butter was thoroughly melted, a little flour was added, and all kept well stirred till it was lightly browned. Then the breast, legs, and wings were taken out and put aside, and the other contents of the pan put into a stewpan with a pint of stock flavoured with onions and celery, and a half-pint of water. It was then strained, and the fat carefully skimmed off, the breast and other portions put back, together with a lump of sugar and a little salt and pepper. The whole was boiled up once more, and skimmed, and the soup was ready for serving. Betsy was very anxious that one of the partridges should be boiled, instead of roasting them both, for the sake of a change; but Margaret declined spoiling the birds, even for the sake of variety, murmuring to herself, as she left the kitchen, the old cook's adage:—

"By roasting that which our forefathers boiled, And boiling what they roasted, much is spoiled."

During the first weeks of September, Margaret and her brother were much occupied in the arrangement of a boating excursion to be made on Margaret's birthday, which fell during that month. The spot chosen was a good way up the river, where the woods came down almost to the river bank. The day came—fortunately, gloriously fine and sunny; the lunch, consisting of cold joints, fruit pies, and so on, all cold, was packed into the hampers before breakfast, so that all was ready by the time the party assembled at ten o'clock. They landed for a very early lunch on the river bank, and the long afternoon was spent in rambling through the woods by the lazy ones, and in a long walk to look at the ruins of the old abbey by the energetic ones. The tea was fixed for five o'clock, and of course it was the duty of the hostess to see that it was ready at the time; but when the guests came to the trysting place, all with excellent appetites, Margaret was not to be found. Mr. Colville was quite anxious, and feared she must have got lost in the woods; but Dick, who seemed to be struggling, not altogether successfully, with the desire to go off into fits of laughter, assured him she was all right, and proceeded to play such ridiculous pranks during the business of getting tea ready, that one old lady, who had been invited because she so seldom had the chance of a little pleasure, whispered to her neighbour a fear that "Richard's mind would not bear the strain of going to business so young; and she hoped poor dear Mr. Colville would not have the grief of seeing one of his sons go crazy."

At last, seeing that the party were really being kept waiting unreasonably long, Dick volunteered to go and fetch Margaret, and he appeared to know where to find her, for they soon returned. He must have met Wilfred Trent in the woods, for he came too, looking as beaming and happy as though he had been doing his duty, and attending to the other guests all the afternoon.

Everyone was sorry when it was time to

turn; and as they floated gently down the stream, more than one of the party noticed how silent Margaret was. And yet her eyes gleamed, and her face was flushed with a radiant happiness which made her sweet face beautiful, and left no need to inquire if the day for her had been a happy one.

The next day, after a letter to her sister had been written and despatched, Margaret commenced one to her friend, Dorothy Snow; which, as it may throw some light on the mysteriously radiant and rather excited state of our young heroine, we may be allowed to intercept and read. It ran thus:—

"MY DEAREST DO,—

"I have a wonderful piece of news for you. I do not know how to tell you, for I can hardly believe it is really true myself. On my birthday, yesterday, we went for a picnic, and what do you think happened? Mr. Trent asked me to be his wife. You can just imagine how surprised I was, for I never thought such an idea had entered his head. I am not half good enough for him. He ought to have married somebody grand and beautiful—you have no idea how good and noble he is; but, oh, dear Do, I am so happy! And father is very pleased, and says he could not wish for any happier lot for me; so we are really engaged. As to dear Mrs. Trent, she seems nearly as happy as I am, which is saying a great deal. But I am really too happy to write any more. I must go and have a long talk with Mrs. Trent; but I do wish I was clever and good and lovely. I am not a bit fit to be his wife; it makes me feel so dreadfully ignorant and stupid when I think how clever he is.—
Your loving MADGE."

(To be continued.)



DURHAM DEGREES FOR WOMEN.

THE University of Durham has for many years past conducted examinations of girls, as well as boys, on a system very similar to that of the Cambridge local examinations, and has lately decided to make women eligible for the actual degree of B.A.

To obtain this degree, it is necessary for the candidate (a) to pass a matriculation examination; (b) to reside for not less than two years in a house provided by the University, attending lectures and conforming to special discipline; (c) to pass a second examination at the end of the first year, and the third and final examination after the conclusion of the required period of residence.

The subjects of all the examinations will be the same for women as for men, and they may either take a pass degree, or enter for honours—classical or mathematical.

Matriculation examinations will be held on October 11th, and at the beginning of each term afterwards.

As yet no entrance scholarships are open to women, but it is probable that the friends of higher female education, at whose request the University has decided to admit this class of students, will shortly come forward with the funds necessary to establish a suitable college endowed with adequate scholarships.

Anyone intending to become a student ought to write to the Registrar of the University of Durham.