

the Sacrimints. The poor boy was axin' t' see Miss Grace wanst more afore he died, so I threw an me cloak, an' wint off for her. She was standin' in the windy, smilin' an' laughin', an' talkin' t' a lot av quality; but whin I tould her what I wanted, the tears kem into her purty blue eyes, an' she just put an her hat in the hall, an' kem aff wid me.

An' thin, shure, poor Brian tould her out quite brave-like that he wasn't sorry he was goin', for that he'd nivir be very happy av he was t' live, an' he tould her that the raisin he med the pomes about her was in regard av him bein' very partial t' her.

"An'," sez he, "I thought maybe av I was eddicated like a gentleman, that I'd be nearer t' yeh. But somethin' tould me how foolish it was, an' I saw the truth; but from that out I had no heart in me at all, an' I got waker an' waker until I kem t' this. I hope I give no offence, Miss Grace."

Well, what d'ye think? Och! throth I'm an ould fool t' be cryin' whin I think av it now! but purty Miss Grace stooped down, an' she kissed poor dying Brian's forehead, an' she said, quite soft—

"You never did anything to offend me, Brian; I

always admired your poetry very much, and I am very grateful to you for your love."

An' thin she sat down be the bed, an' held Brian's big hand in her two little white ones, an' she kep' whisperin' t' him that she'd always look afther ould Mrs. McGurk an' Owney; an' a lovely colour kem into his face, an' he sez t' Father Pat—

"Yer rivirence, will Miss Grace get t' heaven?"

Not a lie I'm tellin' whin I say ould Father Pat was cryin' like a child. Howsomediver, he sed—

"Bedad she will, Brian; she's only wan av the angels that's here for a little while."

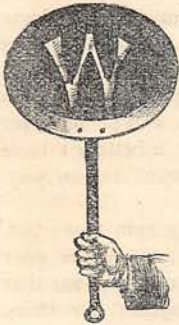
That was enough for Brian, for he knew Father Pat knewn for sartin, an' he closed his eyes, an' in less time nor I'm tellin' it, he wint off quite an' aisy like a lamb.

There was a grand wake, an' the funeral was wan av the biggest ivir seen in that part o' the country. Miss Grace, an' the fine handsome gentleman she was goin' t' be married to, kem t' the funeral; an' shure she nearly cried her purty eyes blind; an' very respectful t' Mrs. McGurk an' Owney it was too; an' she put up a tombstone over the grave, an' the writin' an it sed Brian was a grate janius intirely.

IS IT GOOD TO EAT?

BEING COMMON-SENSE PAPERS ON COOKING.

I.—THE USES AND ABUSES OF A FRYING-PAN.



E had such an awful time of it with Mary Ann!" Probably never have the domestic trials and difficulties of young housekeepers been summed up in fewer or more expressive words.

Let each of our readers pause for an instant, and look around mentally among his relations and friends with whom he is in the habit of dining. Each one probably has had many changes of servants, yet there are some houses

where the dinner is invariably good, others where it is equally invariably bad. Who has not, on entering a house where he expects to dine, been greeted at the door with a whiff of the smell of the cooking, from which whiff he could pretty well determine in his own mind the style of dinner he may expect?

No cooking is so good as the French, none so bad as a certain style of English. Compare the odour of a good French restaurant, or outside the kitchen of a first-class hotel, like the "Pavilion" at Folkestone, an hour before the table d'hôte, with that of an ordinary cook-shop, with its steam-pipes, keeping warm large flabby joints, and greasy Yorkshire pudding, the whole being impregnated with that peculiar smell of greens in which one can almost fancy he detects the flavour of caterpillars.

I think it may be laid down as a rule that if on entering a house you smell greens, you may make up your mind for a bad dinner. On the other hand, a

gamey smell, with perhaps just a dash of garlic in it, is favourable, especially if mingled with the odour of rich pastry.

It would however require many volumes to enter into a minute description of a good and a bad dinner. We would rather be practical, and if possible useful.

The natural resource of young housekeepers is the cookery-book. After the pathetic statement with which our article commences, David Copperfield proceeds as follows:—

"In search of the principle on which joints ought to be roasted, to be roasted enough and not too much, I myself referred to the cookery-book, and found it there established as the allowance of a quarter of an hour to every pound, and say a quarter over. But the principle always failed us by some curious fatality, and we never could hit any medium between redness and cinders."

Here is the old story, and one that probably happens every day, and will happen: viz., reference to a cookery-book, the directions followed, the result—failure.

Who is most to blame, the cook or the book?

That the book is often in fault there can be no doubt. So long as we meet with such absurdities as "and flavour to taste," or "add seasoning," &c., we shall continue to maintain that recipes which contain these directions might just as well have never been written.

But in the present article we wish to confine ourselves to the "frying-pan," one of the most useful and, at the same time, abused articles of kitchen use.

We will suppose that a certain dish consists of something fried. Perhaps one or two are expected to dinner, who are known or supposed to be rather

particular. The mistress has consulted the cookery-book, which gravely recommends as follows:—"Fry of a nice golden colour, and serve hot." How to do it, however, we are not informed. Suppose the dish to be a fried sole or a sweetbread. We all know the real thing—a sweetbread at the Café Bignon. Soft and white inside, and a perfect golden brown out, without even a shade of colour varying in the whole dish. On the other hand, a sweetbread *à la* Mary Ann, covered with bread-crumbs, some a whitey-brown, some brown, and some black, but still containing patches with no bread-crumbs at all, looking like a cat's back where the cook had accidentally spilt some boiling water.

Or perhaps a still greater blunder has been made. On this particular occasion Mary Ann, who means well, endeavours to do her utmost to make things *look* nice, and in trying to obtain this nice golden colour, fries the sole till it is so dried up that it becomes scarcely eatable. Who has not occasionally in small families noticed the slight passing shadow of annoyance on the face of the hostess, as she becomes aware of some such little *contretemps*?—in which perhaps a very close observer of human nature might detect the thought, "It will never warm up for breakfast."

Now is it possible to write clear directions, so that any one with an average amount of common-sense can by following them fry fish, sweetbreads, &c., which will combine colour with quality? We believe it is possible; at any rate, it is worth the attempt.

All fish that has to be fried with egg and bread-crumbs must be treated alike in this respect. The fish must first be thoroughly dried. Next, it must be floured. This is done in order to insure its being dry, just as a baby's neck is powdered for a similar purpose, after being dried with a towel. Next, the egg must be thoroughly beaten up before it is used; otherwise the white of the egg especially is apt to slip off, leaving those bald patches we have mentioned. Again, the bread-crumbs must be dry and fine. It is no use to attempt to use bread-crumbs made from new bread, which will be necessarily coarse.

Now we will suppose these conditions complied with—say a sole has been thoroughly dried and floured, carefully egged over, and then covered with some very fine bread-crumbs. Most cooks will say, "Well, then fry it in plenty of hot fat, allow it to drain on a napkin, and that's all."

Wait a minute. If you have a frying-pan two feet in diameter, filled with boiling fat three inches deep, this would do very well. A few minutes would suffice to cook the sole a nice colour, "all over alike." But have you this? Probably, to start with, the fish is a trifle longer than the frying-pan. The fat is a quarter of an inch deep, and won't cover the fish. How, under these very common circumstances, will you get your fish to look nice?

Go to the baker's at once, and order in as follows—it does not cost anything—a bag of light brown bread-raspings, of about the colour you would use for a ham. Always have some by you—they keep almost for ever, and, as I have said, the baker gives them away. Take some of these, and make them fine—a

rolling-pin and a little patience are sufficient for the purpose. Take these fine raspings and sprinkle the sole—we left it egged and bread-crumbed well on both sides—and pat it with your fingers. Lo, and behold! the sole, even before it is put in the frying-pan, is all that is desirable in the way of colour. The weight is off your mind, all you now have to do is to cook it so that it is done through without being dried up.

Now, for this purpose you must have a certain depth of lard or dripping, or it cannot be done. Properly speaking, there ought to be enough fat to cover the fish. However, it is no use writing for things as they ought to be, it is more practical to write for things as they are. You must have enough fat at least to dip the sole in. Of course it is impossible to draw any exact line between a single drop of fat and a gallon. What we mean is, it is no use to try and fry fish in a frying-pan that has had a little piece of butter put in it, just sufficient to prevent the fish from sticking. A properly fried fish is one which has been boiled in fat.

If, therefore, you have not sufficient to cover the sole, it will be necessary to cook one side first, and then the other. With regard to the time it takes, this, of course, altogether depends on the thickness of the fish. If you have enough fat to cover it, the very largest sole would not take more than ten minutes. The mistake generally made in frying fish is to over-cook it. A properly fried sole must appear moist inside on lifting the meat from the bone. Still the meat must not stick to the bone, or look red. However, with regard to time, experience alone will teach, but recollect an under-cooked fish can always be warmed up, and an over-cooked one—never. Besides, a beginner can lift the fish off the fire after a few minutes, take a knife, and look at the meat nearest the bone in the thickest part. If it is white, and not transparent, it is done enough, and a pinch of raspings hides the place. With a cook, however, of almost any experience, this is unnecessary.

Another exceedingly important point is, the fat must be boiling. This can generally be found out by dropping a single drop of cold water into it, and if it makes a great hiss the fat boils. On dipping the fish into the fat, a noise ought to ensue somewhat similar to that made by plunging a red-hot poker into a pail of water.

When the fish is done, lift it on to a hot cloth, in order to let the fat drain off it, keeping it of course in front of the fire, and afterwards lift the fish carefully, and without breaking it, on to a clean napkin folded in a dish, or over a strainer made for the purpose.

Now some of these directions may seem unnecessary, on account of their being so very obvious. But then it must be borne in mind that there are Mary Anns whose stupidity is absolutely unfathomable. I recollect, many years ago, being in lodgings at the seaside—it was at Worthing—where I met two specimens in the shape of mistress and servant that would, I think, match any pair ever likely to come together again. The mistress, who was also cook, seemed to require a considerable amount of stimulant, and under its influence the following scraps of conversation could be heard at intervals throughout the day:—

"Please, mum, where's the rolling-pin?"

"I'll rolling-pin yer."

On asking whether there were any eggs, the unfortunate girl said—

"I think there's some in the cupboard," which called forth—

"Now, Mary Ann, what do you mean by thinking? never let me hear you think again."

The climax in the way of cooking was a fruit pie, as the handmaiden informed us—

"Please, sir, missus is very sorry, but she forgot the butter."

The pastry, as may be imagined, was not what may be called light; however, the crust came off as a lid, and we amused ourselves by spinning it like a tectotum. Of course such cases are exceptional, but I have known a grouse stuffed with sage and onion.

While the fish is draining is a good opportunity to fry a little parsley to put round it. All that is required is fresh, clean parsley—dry. A minute is sufficient to leave it in the fat, if the fat boils. Take out the parsley with a slice, and let it dry on the cloth by the side of the fish. It will soon become crisp. A large wire slice will be found better than an ordinary one.

If the fish has been large, and the frying-pan rather small, it is quite possible that in turning the fish a little of the bread-crumbs may get knocked off, though with care this ought not to be the case. When, however, it is, you can always mend the patch with a pinch of raspings, blowing away those that do not adhere.

Now the greatest difficulty in following these directions will probably be found to be "the quantity of fat." It is always a sore point with cooks. They look upon fat as one of their perquisites, and too often the mistress will find that she has to be constantly ordering in a skin of lard, or has to order dripping, in order to fry fish.

Recollect, however, that the same fat will do to fry fish over and over again, though it should be kept entirely for fish, and that it will often keep for months. Cooks are too fond, from interested motives, of making it out bad. It will be found in small families an excellent rule to forbid fat and grease being sold at all. Were ladies to insist upon this, which they could always do with young servants, much mischief would be avoided. Selling dripping and candle-grease is often the thin end of the wedge to downright theft. The class of people who buy are too often little better than receivers of stolen property, and sometimes lead young servants into small acts of dishonesty, in order to get them in their power, the consequence of which is that small acts are followed by great.

In frying sweetbreads it should be borne in mind that the sweetbreads should be soaked some hours in water first, and then boiled for about five or ten minutes, according to their size, and placed in cold water to get cold. When cold they should be carefully dried, and egged and bread-crumbed like the fish, and then covered over with the bread-raspings, to insure their being of a good and equal colour. Should the fat not be sufficient to cover them, they must be

turned occasionally in the frying-pan. The fat, as before, must boil before they are put in. Tomato or rich brown sauce can be poured round them, or served separately, but should not be poured over them, as they should possess a dry golden brown colour.

We have now described some of the uses of the frying-pan, and have given an instance of both a thick and thin substance for frying, but what are its abuses? Cooks are very apt to use the frying-pan for what they ought not. Too often they will use it instead of the gridiron to cook a chop or a steak, and if there is one thing in the world utterly spoilt in the cooking, it is a good rump-steak cooked in a frying-pan. Yet it will often be found, even in decent houses, that chops and steaks, especially the former, are cooked in this manner. A dish of chops appears, perhaps at lunch, the dish swimming in gravy, in which can clearly be tasted the ketchup that has been added. After a few minutes the gravy will be seen to be studded with blotches of grease about the size of wafers. The chops taste greasy and sodden, and the roof of the mouth becomes soon coated with hard mutton fat.

How different to a chop properly cooked on a gridiron! Black outside, red in, and brought up on a hot plate, on to which about a teaspoonful of clear red gravy may have run. The first mouthful you take ought to burn your mouth. Such is a mutton chop as it ought to be, and there are often times when an invalid or a person of delicate appetite feels as if there is nothing else he can eat. It, however, requires a tolerably thick gridiron, a clear fire, and common-sense.

A singular instance of audacity in the way of cooking a steak occurred at a country inn where we were once unfortunate enough to try and dine.

The waiter was a model of a dirty man in the right place. Everything was in unison—table-cloth, forks, wine-glasses, and thumb-nails to match.

We had a steak, the cooking of which completely baffled us. What possible method was adopted to make it what it was, we could not conceive. We made friends with the dirty man, and in time extracted the information that the cook always boiled the chops and steaks for a few minutes, previous to browning them in a frying-pan. This, the waiter informed me, was a capital thing for the soup!

We have endeavoured to explain the art of frying at greater length than it would be possible to do in any work on cooking, and on some future occasion may again call attention to some of the points where ordinary books on the subject seem to us to fail to meet the requirements of small households. Unfortunately, many of the best works on cooking are only adapted for very large establishments, or hotels, where probably a book would not be required.

Recipes, too, for making real turtle soup from fresh turtle are practically useless. Not so, however, from the dried turtle-flesh. At Christmas time, when calves' heads sometimes fetch a sovereign each, real turtle is cheaper than mock, and by no means difficult to make. We will explain the method in our next article.

A. C. PAYNE.