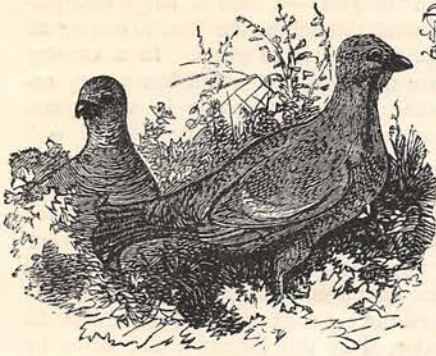


GAME AND GRAVY.



THE month 'tis now September; the season has begun when English customs give us game, when dinner's almost done. Now for my own part I think we

often rather waste our game in this country, by bringing it in when really everybody has dined; or if some one has reserved himself for that course, he probably finds he gets such an exceedingly small portion that he runs considerable risk of going home hungry.

I recollect an old story of a notorious gourmand, who was asked to dine with a so-called friend, who played upon him the following cruel practical joke. A little soup and fish were followed by a plain leg of mutton, and the gourmand was informed that he saw his dinner before him. He accordingly gorged freely, while his host scarcely tasted a mouthful. The leg of mutton was, however, followed by a splendid haunch of venison.

"It was cruel not to tell me," said the guest, with tears of anguish rolling down his cheeks.

The story does not sound like a true one, and we trust for the sake of human nature it is not; but it exemplifies our point in saying, or rather asking, is it not a mistake when game is cheap and plentiful to leave it quite to the last?

I must say I admire the good, honest, English hospitality of the North. It may be called the Black Country, but as long as black is associated with black-cock and grouse, long may it remain so.

Nowhere do you get grouse in such perfection as in the neighbourhood of the Moors. They have not yet arrived at that depraved state of appetite in which it is considered the right thing to send game to table nearly putrid; nor, as a rule, do you get one, or at the outside two, mouthfuls put on your plate by an elegant waiter. Elegant waiters are all very well in their way, but we prefer grouse.

Now game, whether grouse, partridge, pheasant, or woodcock, requires careful cooking, and above all things good gravy.

By good gravy we mean that which will assist, and not counteract or destroy, the flavour of the game. Weak beef-tea or rich turtle-soup would be alike wrong; and it will, we fear, be too often found that cooks fail very much in adapting the gravy to the occasion. Roast goose with sage-and-onion stuffing would bear a gravy which, so to speak, would kill the delicate flavour of a partridge.

Game served as a salmi, which nine times out of ten means game cooked before and warmed up, requires quite a differently flavoured sauce to game proper—*i.e.*, game not too fresh, and at the same time not at all high, roasted to a turn and served quickly.

In cooking game I fear we cannot learn much from that nation of cooks, the French. I am such an admirer of French cooking, as a rule, that I wish to speak with the greatest diffidence, but did you ever taste any game, never mind of what kind, at any foreign hotel or restaurant abroad, to compare with the game we get at home?

I say hotel or restaurant, as I have had no experience of French country private houses.

Whether this is owing to the game itself being of inferior quality or flavour—as is undoubtedly the case with red-legged partridges, when compared with the ordinary English ones—or to other causes, I cannot say, but simply record the fact.

There is no doubt that a large class of men enjoy their food when game is in season more than at any other time.

The class to whom we refer are those who live for the greater part of the year in London, and as a rule never move a mile except in a hansom; to such the 12th of August is the commencement of what may be termed their annual training, the exercise they take during the next three months probably saving them from the inevitable gout and dyspepsia which would necessarily follow a town life such as theirs without such intervals.

What a change! First, the early rising—and there are thousands whom nothing but hunting or shooting will persuade to get up early—the substantial breakfast, the glass of bitter, the gun examination, the struggle into the heavy greased shooting-boots, and then the tramp through the heather. What with the exercise and the bracing air of the Moors, lunch is approached with feelings which, by contrast, approximate to what we should imagine the alderman's would have been, had he carried out the famous doctor's recipe—*viz.*, to live on a shilling a day, and earn it.

Let us hope the hungry sportsmen may not meet with the disappointment that occurred to a shooting party on the Moors, an incident we have referred to before. The first brace of grouse shot were sent to a neighbouring farm to be cooked for lunch. The farmer's wife, however, had them *boiled*, and stuffed with sage and onions.

There are various ways of cooking grouse, but only one which we consider to be worthy of consideration, and that is what we term grouse *au naturel*, or in other words plain roast, with good gravy and fried bread-crumbs, or bread sauce.

To overpower the delicious flavour of a good grouse with strong sauces, seems to us as cruel a waste as to mull good 1848 La Fitte claret, and mix in cinnamon and sugar.

As an instance, however, of what cooks may come to, we will mention an Italian method of spoiling grouse—the ingredients for this extraordinary dish comprising mace, garlic, brandy, macaroni, tomato sauce, and Parmesan cheese.

Imagine what a dish this Italian cook and our farmer's wife could manufacture between them!

Game, in fact, should be treated exactly like a good haunch of mutton. No one would keep a haunch till it is *high*, but yet every one knows that the longer it is kept the more tender it becomes. In a large number of London shops the game for sale has already been kept too long, reminding one of the story of the man who arrived home after a day's shooting, who



"THE BRACING AIR OF 'THE MOORS'" (p. 628).

The first point to be considered with regard to game is, how long should it be kept.

When game is bought, it is of course impossible to say how long it has been killed, except from appearances. As a rule, the first symptom of discolouring, or the faintest smell of being high, shows that the birds are ripe for cooking. We would, however, allow a pheasant a longer time than either a partridge or a grouse. A thoroughly fresh pheasant is more tough than a fowl.

had however been driven to buy a brace for appearances, the look of which called forth the remark from his wife—

"Well, my dear, it is time they were shot, for they are getting very high."

The next point to be considered is the actual cooking. We will suppose the birds ready trussed. They should be wiped inside, but never washed.

All game requires a brisk fire, and plenty of basting. It is the custom among French cooks to fasten a thin

slice of bacon over the breast, in order to prevent the bird being too dry. Indeed, they go so far as to send it to table with the bacon still on. In my opinion this spoils the flavour altogether, giving it what may be termed a greasy taste. If bacon is fastened on at all, it should be removed before the bird is taken down; the breast should then be basted with a little butter, and frothed and browned before it is sent up.

With regard to the time that it takes to cook game, it is difficult to lay down any general rule. The time of course varies with the size of the birds. Young, small partridges want about twenty-five minutes; good-sized partridges as much as thirty-five minutes; small grouse will take a little over half-an-hour, and good-sized ones require three-quarters; pheasants require from thirty-five minutes to an hour, or even more, according to the size.

The principal thing, however, for the cook to bear in mind is to adapt the time to the period of dinner when the game will be required. Herein lies the great secret of game being properly cooked. Have you not often at a large dinner party had game completely dried up, the outside skin being quite hard? The reason of this is that the game was ready for table about the period you were finishing your soup. The fact is, cooks, especially young and inexperienced, get nervous about time, forgetting that it is quite as bad to have things dried up as to have them underdone. It would be a good plan were the housekeeper to give the following directions to the cook:—Do not begin to cook the game till you send up the soup. Suppose the dinner to consist of soup, fish, entrées, and joint, followed by game, there is ample time to cook grouse, or even a small pheasant, by putting them down as soon as the soup is served. In any case tell the cook never to put down game until it is known that dinner may be served. The late arrival of some important guest should never be the excuse for overcooked game. It would be far better to have a slight pause in the middle of dinner than to have things spoilt. Besides, a pause after soup, fish, entrées, and joint is never objectionable.

Another important point is the basting. Game should be basted directly it is put down. Ordinary dripping is quite good enough to commence with, but it will be found an improvement if during the last five minutes a little butter is used instead. Baste quickly with a little butter, and froth it at the same time, shaking a little fine dried flour over the breast out of a flour-dredger. When this is done, let the game be sent up immediately. Treat it, in fact, like a soufflé, which everybody knows, or ought to know, requires a running man for a waiter to be served properly.

In making bread sauce, it will be generally found that cooks make it a long time before dinner—in fact, putting in the bread-crumbs, so to speak, to soak in a saucepan, with an onion, in a little milk. The result often is that the milk all dries up, and the sauce gets burnt; a fresh lot has to be made in a hurry, and a sort of bread poultice is sent to table. There is, however, a good deal of difference between bread sauce and a bread poultice. The way

to make the former is as follows:—Have ready some dry bread-crumbs, put these in some milk, or, still better, cream, and boil them, with an onion and a few pepper-corns, for about ten minutes; take out the onion, add a pinch of salt and a little butter, keep stirring till the butter is dissolved and well mixed in; add, if you like, a suspicion of nutmeg, and the sauce is finished. Take care in taking out the onion that it does not break, as it is extremely disagreeable to have a piece of onion left in the sauce; it is apt to get into the mouth by mistake, and give notice of its presence by a crunch which is not at all pleasant.

With regard to gravy for game, what is required is that it should be good and strong, yet without any predominant flavour. For instance, some cooks like to add mushroom ketchup to gravy. This, when the gravy is intended for roast goose or fowl, would be unobjectionable, but should certainly be avoided when the gravy is intended for game. Again, the flavour of garlic should be guarded against. There is an old proverb which says, "It is a pity to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar." So, too, it is a pity to spoil a brace of grouse for the sake of a little gravy beef, and recollect a little and good is better than plenty and poor. Equal quantities of good gravy beef and knuckle of veal should be used; of course, less gravy beef is necessary where extract of meat is used. The gravy may be thickened with a little brown thickening, but not too much. A very little arrowroot may be used, but the gravy for game should be by no means thick, yet at the same time it should look of a rich dark colour.

To make a salmi of game: it is almost always the case that the game has been previously cooked; take, therefore, any game bones or trimmings that can be got, and place them, with a bay-leaf, to stew as long as possible in some gravy similar to what we have described, which is simply good strong stock made from gravy beef, knuckle of veal stewed with an onion in which a few cloves have been stuck, a head of celery, a carrot and turnip, and a large handful of parsley, flavoured with pepper and salt, &c. After stewing all the game bones, you can strain off the gravy from them and the bay-leaf, make the gravy a trifle thicker with a little more brown thickening, make this gravy hot in a stew-pan, and then add the remains of the game cut off as neatly as possible; let it soak in the gravy, but do not let it boil; about a quarter of an hour before serving, add a wine-glassful of Madeira, or good golden sherry. A pale dry sherry is not nearly so good for the purpose. It is in reality the addition of the wine that makes the gravy into the salmi sauce—just as in nearly all the French restaurants in London it will often be seen in the bill of fare, something with sauce Madère, which simply means some ordinary gravy to which has been added a spoonful of sherry.

To make fried bread-crumbs—the best accompaniment to grouse—a clear fire is necessary. Get an enamelled stew-pan, and put a little butter in it (about an ounce), then get some bread-crumbs, stale and not too fine, throw them in the butter, and keep stirring

till they begin to change colour ; as soon as they do, remove the stewpan from the fire, but keep on stirring ; the process of cooking, as we have said before, goes on some time after the stew-pan is removed. As soon as they are sufficiently brown, place them on some blotting-paper in order that all the grease may be soaked up.

The blotting-paper can be placed in front of the fire, and the bread-crumbs tossed lightly about with a fork. The bread-crumbs can be made hot in the oven when required for use, but should not be allowed to remain in too long, as they are apt to get too hard and crisp, and thereby get converted into tooth-breakers.

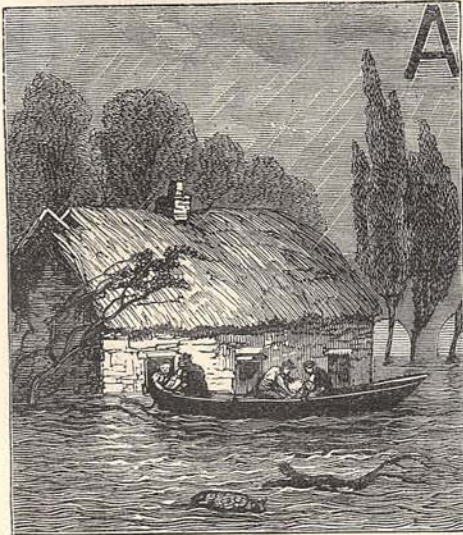
As we have said before, game, at any rate in this country, is far too good a thing to be left to the last, and then to be brought forward only in mouthfuls. The fact is, we are all of us to a great extent creatures of habit. We, as a rule, do what other people do, without reasoning whether it is right or wrong, good or bad, but simply because we shrink from drawing out a line for ourselves, or because we fear to be thought eccentric. For instance, take an ordinary party of, say, ten persons at dinner at the present season. We cling

to soup, fish, entrées, and joint, and follow up with game, served in the same course with sweets, the latter often being expensive to make, and uncared for by the majority. Suppose we change our dinner into, first, a little good clear soup ; secondly, a good haunch of mutton, well kept and well cooked, and let this be followed by some game in sufficient quantity. When we are by ourselves, we own probably we could manage half-a-grouse after "a cut off the joint." Why therefore not save the money too often wasted over second-rate entrées and sweets intended more to please the eye than the palate, and spend it in giving a dinner which, if not quite in the fashion, will at any rate please ?

Were this done, you might be certain of one point, that your house will be considered one at which it is worth while dining.

A glass of champagne cold, but not frozen, at dinner, followed by a good bottle of claret, say Château Margaux (which may be placed on a top shelf in the kitchen during the day to bring out its flavour), after dinner, will have the effect of sending home your guests enabled to say from their hearts, or at any rate their stomachs, "I have dined." A. G. PAYNE.

FAMOUS FLOODS.



A FLOOD is one of the most terrible calamities that can befall an industrious people. Think of it ; picture a province, but yesterday t h e

scene of busy life, and to-day overwhelmed by an inundation. No matter how it has arisen ; there is the dark water rolling on in its strength, bearing everything before it. The harvests in the fields, the grain in the granaries, and the wealth in the warehouses are swept away ; cattle and furniture, carts and wagons, bridges and farm-buildings—all are alike to the pitiless flood. Horsemen ride about, warning bewildered peasants to fly for dear life ; boats pass to and fro, picking people from the tottering house-tops to which they cling. Some are overtaken by the waters ; children are drowned in their cradles, mothers in their efforts to

preserve their offspring. Some perish by mishap, and some by stupidity. And when the torrent has spent its rage, nothing will remain of all the smiling land but vast sheets of water, dotted with the roofs of houses and the tops of tall trees. Imagination, even stretched to the utmost, fails to conjure up the scene in anything like its real gloom and desolation.

The late floods, which have made such havoc in France, have suggested to us to gather together a few notes regarding disasters of a similar nature which have happened since the beginning of the century. We need not go abroad to seek examples of misfortune : floods, as well as fires, have often come knocking at our own door. Only eleven years have passed since about two hundred and fifty lives were lost and £327,000 worth of property was destroyed at Sheffield, by the bursting of the Bradfield Reservoir, eight miles above the town. It was on the 11th of March, 1864, and at midnight—for a great catastrophe thinks nothing of the treachery of surprising men in their sleep.

The low-lying part of Sheffield, and the country for twelve or fourteen miles round, were flooded. Entire villages were swept away, huge manufactories, mills, and warehouses fell before the roaring torrent. In the town itself the scene was heartrending. People who were in the streets when the flood first came hurrying down told that in the stillness of the night there was suddenly a loud, long, and terrible roar. It increased in intensity, and as they stood listening and wonder-stricken, there came sounding above the roar a sudden hissing noise, as of waters dashing on a rock. This