

later Socotra had prospered so wonderfully as to be able to furnish 10,000 fighting men. Truly those shipwrecked mariners must have been wondrous folk!

Three hundred years later, the Venetian traveller Marco Polo gave the world an account of Socotra, though, as he had not visited it himself, his information partook very much of the character of hearsay. According to him, Christianity still prevailed, and Socotra had attained the dignity of an archbishopric, though both primate and people rejoiced in a reputation of being successful and skilful practisers of the black art.

In the early years of the sixteenth century, Nicolo Conti found the inhabitants to be Nestorian Christians, and in 1506 the Portuguese took possession of the island and rejoiced the hearts of the natives by delivering them from the yoke of the Moors. Portugal took them under her protection out of compliment to their faith, and, with a keen eye to her own projects and the commanding position of Socotra, fortified it strongly. After this the people embraced a different ritual, set up the cross as an object of worship in their churches, wore it on their clothes, reproduced the names of the twelve Apostles *ad infinitum* among the lords of creation, baptised all the weaker vessels as Marys, and opened the sanctuaries for service three times a day, the prayers being read in the tongue of the Chaldees.

The Portuguese abandoned Socotra after a few years, but the natives, though still nominally Christians, had adopted some very free-thinking notions and abolished all ecclesiastical dignities. St. Francis Xavier paid them a visit soon afterwards, but found

the signs and tenets of the Crescent and the Cross commingled in strange juxtaposition, and the Chaldean language, in which services were still conducted, as much of an unknown tongue to the majority of the race, as Latin was to the British rustic in Reformation days.

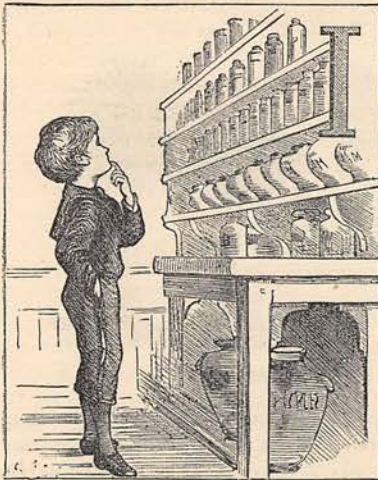
In 1656, Pope Alexander VII. sent a Carmelite missionary to the East, who, on his arrival in Socotra, found the so-called Christians offering sacrifices to the moon, practising the rite of circumcision, and following those good commandments of the Prophet of Islam which forbid men to drink wine or to eat pork—that unwholesomest of all meats in a hot climate. Thenceforth Christianity seems to have sunk out of sight, and when Lieutenant Wellsted explored the island in 1834 all traces of it were lost, and not even a relic or ruin remained to bear witness to its former existence.

Socotra wants only inhabitants, culture, and good government to become a fertile and prosperous little spot. Colonists will probably not be long in flocking to it, in the firm belief that British rule alone is safe and equitable in the East. Perhaps some of the unfortunates who have lost their all in the late disastrous war between Russia and Turkey might be drafted there to the advantage of every one concerned. Home can be no longer home to multitudes among them, the past can neither be re-called nor blotted out, but in a new land where a little industry is rewarded by plenty, the saddened Osmanlis might live peaceful, happy lives, and might learn to look back on their struggles, privations, and miseries as a bad dream or a troubled phase of some scarce-realised previous existence.

ELIZA CLARKE.

## HOME-MADE SWEETMEATS.

BY PHILLIS BROWNE, AUTHOR OF "COMMON-SENSE HOUSEKEEPING."



SUPPOSE that there are not many grown-up people who have not, at least once during the period of youthful days, indulged in the supreme delight of "boiling toffee." We can all remember doing it: first laying our plans, then persuading the

cook to admit us into the kitchen, then obtaining possession of the requisite saucepan and ingredients, and after a time, when the house was filled with a scent suggestive of a sugar refinery in flames, producing a compound

burnt and sticky and horrible, which yet was "sucked" with appreciative gusto, and presented in minute portions to intimate friends as a conclusive and valuable proof of esteem and regard.

We have grown wiser since those days, and have come to understand that confectionery is one of the fine arts, and is not to be taken up and practised at a moment's notice. Perhaps we have been favoured with a view of French sweetmeats, and have seen the chocolate creams and liqueur bon-bons, the flavoured tablets, the almond and pistachio soufflés, the Psyche's kisses, and the brochettes of dried fruits, the brilliant rosolios and imitation fruits, the bouchées and the prâlines of Parisian manufacture. These have affected us much as a picture by Millais would, or a sculptured figure by Woolner, or a brilliant pianoforte performance by Rubinstein. We acknowledge the beauty of the performance and the wonderful genius which it displays, but we feel that it is something quite beyond us, and that if we were to attempt to imitate it we should be sure to fail most ignominiously, and, more than that, our good materials would be wasted and destroyed.

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It must be confessed that when a good confectioner is at hand, ordinary people, who only require his elegant fanciful trifles in small quantities and at uncertain intervals, will find it more economical and more satisfactory, as well as more convenient, to buy what is wanted ready-made, rather than to attempt to make the things at home. Still there are a few simple sweetmeats which do not present so many difficulties as the rest, and these may be attempted without fear of failure. They will be very useful for dessert and supper dishes, as well as for treats for the children; making them will afford a pleasant variety to the ordinary business of the kitchen; and they will be sure to be appreciated.

And first for our old friend the toffee. To make this 1 lb. of very finely powdered sugar should be procured; the kind which is called by confectioners castor sugar is the best for the purpose. This should be put into a perfectly clean saucepan with a teacupful of cold water, and placed on the fire till it is dissolved. Then 4 oz. of fresh butter, which has been beaten in a bowl with the hands or with a wooden spoon till it looks like cream, should be stirred into the syrup, and the mixture should be kept stirred until it will "set"—that is, until a little dropped into cold water becomes at once crisp and hard. It will be necessary to try the toffee frequently, as it quickly passes from the "done" to the burnt stage; just before it is ready five or six drops of the essence of lemon should be added to it. The preparation should be poured upon an oiled or buttered tin and left till cold, when it can be easily removed and broken up into convenient pieces. If liked, it can, when it begins to set, be marked in squares, into which it can afterwards be broken. Four oz. of blanched almonds, which have been split into strips, can be thrown into the toffee instead of the lemon flavouring, if preferred; thus almond toffee will be produced.

Barley sugar is another sweetmeat that may, with a little practice, be successfully made. It is a great favourite with children, and when quite pure is very wholesome; and, of course, there need be no anxiety about the purity of home-made barley sugar. For this, 1½ lbs. of fine loaf-sugar should be broken into small lumps, and boiled over the fire with a pint of water. It should be skimmed carefully till it looks like glue, and when dropped into cold water becomes brittle and will snap. The juice of a lemon and six drops of essence of lemon should now be added, the sugar boiled up just once, and then the bottom of the pan should be placed in cold water till the first heat has subsided. The preparation should then be poured upon a marble slab which has been slightly smeared with butter. It will, of course, spread out, but it should be drawn together with a knife, and kept as much as possible in a lump.

As soon as it is cool enough to handle, pieces about the size of an egg may be cut off, rolled to the form of round sticks, and twisted slightly, as barley sugar usually is bought. These should be put on an oiled sheet and left till they are cold and stiff, when sugar should be sifted lightly over them. They should be

stored either in tin canisters or closely stoppered glass jars, and kept in a dry place.

Burnt almonds, properly called *prâlines*, are delicious and favourite sweetmeats, and they are not particularly difficult to make. For these it will be necessary to have any quantity of good Jordan almonds, say half a pound. These should be rubbed in a clean cloth and shaken in a sieve, to free them from dust and broken fragments, then put before the fire to get slightly warmed; three-quarters of a pound of sugar should now be boiled with half a pint of water, till the surface looks like large pearls or globules, when a few drops of prepared cochineal, a few drops of vanilla, or any other suitable essence, and the almonds should be thrown in, and all stirred gently together with a wooden spoon, to detach the sugar both from the bottom and sides of the saucepan. The almonds should be kept from sticking to the bottom of the pan, and should be thoroughly turned over and over, so that they may be well coated, or, as it is called, "charged" with sugar. As soon as they give out a crackling noise the pan should be removed from the fire and still gently stirred, until the sugar has the appearance of being grained almost like sand, when almonds, sugar, and all should be turned upon a wire sieve and covered with paper for five minutes.

At the end of that time the almonds should be picked out, and the grained sugar put again into the sugar boiler with just enough water to dissolve it, and when it is again boiled to the point it had before reached, the almonds should be thrown in again, and stirred again until they have received another coating, being careful only to keep them entirely separate. The operation may be repeated a third, and even a fourth time, when they will probably be double their original size and are done. It is to be expected that a little additional sugar flavouring and colouring will have to be added before they are finished. They ought to have a rugged uneven surface, to be of a light pink colour, and to be crisp and hard when bitten in half. They may either be used as they are or wrapped in fancy papers.

If it is wished to impart a glazed appearance to burnt almonds, they should, when prepared, be dropped into a little thickly dissolved gum-arabic, boiling hot, and stirred lightly till they are covered with the gum, then turned on a sieve to dry.

Cocoa-nut rock, that favourite with the youngsters, may also be managed with comparative ease. For this it will be necessary to procure the ingredients in the proportion of 1 lb. of cocoa-nut to 1 lb. of loaf-sugar, a half-pint of milk, and the whites of two eggs. Grate the cocoa-nut and boil it in the milk with the sugar until the syrup seems to be about to become solid sugar, then add the well-whisked whites of the eggs and beat all thoroughly. Have a Yorkshire pudding tin already buttered, spread the mixture in this about three-quarters of an inch thick, and put it in the oven to dry. The oven must be of a gentle heat, and the door had better be left open while the rock is in it. Cut the preparation into squares and store in a dry place.

Preserved fruit is such an indispensable article when sweet dishes of various kinds are to be prepared, that the skilful housekeeper will be very certain to prepare a good store of jam and jelly when fruit is in season. Yet it must be confessed that the practice of preserving fruit is becoming more and more uncommon, especially in large towns. Our grandmothers would be horrified could they see how their degenerate daughters buy jam instead of making it. This is the more to be regretted because bought jam, however good it may really be, cannot for one moment be compared with good home-made jam, made from freshly gathered fruit, boiled with refined sugar, and stored in a dry well-ventilated closet.

And if it is becoming more and more uncommon to boil jam at home, it is still more unusual for housekeepers to bottle fresh fruit. The process of jam-making is very generally understood. Very few people would think of boiling fruit that was broken, or that had been gathered in wet weather, and it is almost universally acknowledged that the best sugar is the most economical for making jam. The trouble and fatigue of the work is the real reason why fruit is not so extensively boiled at home as it was once upon a time; not because housekeepers do not know how to set about it. But this cannot be said about bottling fruit. The process is a very simple one, and it involves comparatively little trouble. It

requires only that great attention should be paid to small details, for if these are neglected, failure will certainly be the consequence. Then bottled fruit is most delicious. In it the original flavour of the fruit is preserved better than it is either in jams, jellies, or fruit-paste. It furnishes a convenient and excellent delicacy for winter use. Pies and tarts made with it afford a pleasant variety to those made with jam; and last, but not least, the fruit prepared at home will cost about one-third less than that which is bought at the shops.

It is true that the bottles take up a good deal of room, and where space is limited this is a disadvantage; but if this difficulty can be got over, the thrifty and economical housekeeper will find it well worth her while to make the bottling of fresh fruit one of the methods by which she lays up stores for her household.

In order to do this it will be necessary that she should have the fruit, some tall wide-mouthed glass bottles, corks to fit them tightly, string or wire to fasten them down, bottle-wax or a little beeswax to cover the corks, and a stock-pot or some other large vessel of sufficient size and depth to hold the bottles.

The fruit must be fresh, sound, and not over-ripe; and it must have been gathered in the morning and in dry weather. The stalks must be picked without bruising the fruit, and any that are at all blemished must be rejected. The bottles must be perfectly sound, without crack or flaw of any kind, and they

should be of equal thickness throughout. They must, of course, be thoroughly clean and perfectly dry inside and out. The corks should be soft and new, and entirely faultless. They must fit so tightly that they will have to be forced into the bottles, and should be soaked in tepid water which has a little sugar dissolved in it for an hour or two before they are wanted. The string should be thin, but strong, and there should be plenty of it, so that the corks may be well tied down. Wire is sometimes preferred, principally because it looks neater than string. When wire is used there is a danger that it will cut through the cork, and therefore it is necessary to lay a circular piece of tin between it and the cork. Gloves, too, should be worn when handling wire, otherwise there may be a good many wounds



MAKING TOFFEE (p. 746).

and bruises to deplore at the end of the day's work. Bottle-wax may be bought of any oil and colour shop. It should be melted in an earthenware pipkin, and beeswax stirred with it in the proportion of an ounce of beeswax to a pound of bottle-wax. When buying bottle-wax it must be remembered that green wax is poisonous, and should not be used for fear of accidents. The other colours are harmless.

When all is ready, put the fruit into the bottles and shake it down till it is closely packed, but not in any danger of being bruised. Fill up the bottles with a thin clear syrup, cork them tightly, and tie them down securely. Put a wisp of hay round each one to keep the bottles from knocking against each other, place them standing upright side by side in the vessel, and pour cold water round them nearly up to their necks. Lay a wet cloth upon them, put on the lid

over this, and put the pan on the fire. Let the water come to a boil, draw the saucepan back and let it boil gently for a few minutes, then lift the pan quite off the fire and leave the bottles untouched till they are cold.

When ready to be taken out they should be lifted up carefully and the corks examined. If, as is very probable, any of the corks have burst out or become loose, they must be re-corked and tied down again. The nozzle of each bottle must then be dipped into the melted wax, which should, however, have been allowed to cool a little, or it may crack the glass. The bottle should be turned about gently so that the wax may run all round the cork, and when all are finished the bottles may be placed in a cool cellar.

The time that the water should be allowed to boil must depend upon the nature and size of the fruit. Currants, raspberries, strawberries, and ripe gooseberries require about eight minutes' gentle ebullition; cherries and apricots must have twelve minutes; while for green gooseberries and the larger stone fruits, such as greengages and peaches, a quarter of an hour will not be too much. To make the syrup with which the bottles are to be filled, put a quart of water and a dessert-spoonful of the white of egg with every three pounds of loaf-sugar. Whisk all together in a sugar-boiler over the fire, and let the syrup boil gently for five minutes. Throw a table-spoonful of cold water into it once or twice while it is boiling. Strain it through a napkin, and when cold it is ready for use.

Very agreeable sweetmeats may be made by preparing compôtes of fresh fruit. Compôtes are simply fruit stewed in a thin syrup and intended for immediate use. The fruit should simmer gently in the syrup until it is tender but unbroken; the syrup should be perfectly transparent, and should be poured over the fruit when cold. These preparations are delicate in flavour and very wholesome. They are very refreshing too, and are much more economical than tarts and

puddings. They will not keep very long, indeed the quantity of sugar which they contain is not sufficient to preserve them in good condition for many days; but they can be kept in a cool larder for a day or two, and even longer if they are gently boiled up a second time.

Compôtes may be made of all kinds of fruit—apples, pears, rhu'barb, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, currants, plums, apricots, peaches, pomegranates, green figs, pineapples, melons, cucumbers, chestnuts, green walnuts, oranges, lemons, barberries, crab-apples, cranberries, prunes, and grapes. They can be dished in various ways, but they should always be both neat and elegant. The ordinary way of serving them is to put the drained fruit into a compôtier, or glass dish, a few minutes before it is wanted, and to pour the syrup over it. Sometimes a thin circular sheet of clear colourless jelly is slipped over after they are dished and garnished, and this greatly increases their brilliancy. Round fruits are usually arranged with one piece in the centre and the rest round it in a circle.

The surface may be decorated with ornamental shapes cut out from angelica, coloured jellies, preserved cucumbers, the red peel of apples, orange and lemon rind, chopped pistachio kernels, &c.; or, if preferred, pastry stamped out into fanciful shapes; or plainly boiled rice or macaroni may be employed both as a garnish and an accompaniment.

The quantity of sugar used for the syrup must depend upon the nature of the fruit; it must be remembered that the sweetness should not overpower the flavour of the fruit or destroy its agreeable acidity. In a cold or wet season more sugar will be needed than in a warm dry one. For the majority of fruits a syrup made by simmering 5 oz. of sugar with half a pint of water for ten minutes will be sufficient for 1 lb. of fruit. The finest loaf-sugar should be used for the purpose, and it should be broken into small lumps, not crushed to powder. If powdered sugar were used the syrup would be less brilliant.

## SONNET: HOAR-FROST.

**H**ARDLY more beautiful are woods and trees  
 In summer's gay exuberance than now,  
 Brightening at sunrise, while a gentle breeze  
 Plays through the ringlets gracing Nature's brow,  
 And kindling radiance glows o'er hills and leas.  
 The short-lived glory of the glittering rime  
 Illumes the weeping willow and white birch

With rich fantastic forms, and the tall lime  
 Is robed in affluence, while the ivied church  
 Wears jewels as it rings the morning chime.  
 The crisp white clothing, elegantly chaste,  
 Melts into diamonds exquisitely bright,  
 Flashing in sunshine brief—but falls in haste,  
 Thawed into genial rain-drops, pure as light.

BENJAMIN GOUGH.

