PICTURES ON THE WALL.

I STOOD within the lonely halls
Where all my sires had dwelt,
I wandered round the pictured walls—
How strange and sad I felt!
The brave, the fair, the young, the old
Looked down upon me all:
What tales of life and love they told—
Those pictures on the wall!

Stout warriors of the days gone by
With helmet and with shield,
Gay squires of court and revelry,
Of sport and hunting-field;
The stately dames, the maidens bright,
Sweet children, striplings tall
Seemed living in the changeful light—
Those pictures on the wall.

My father's form in manly grace
Leaned o'er me from above;
My mother's pensive gentle face
Was beaming full of love.
My eyes were blinded with my tears,
No more I dare recall,
I fled those things of happier years—
Those pictures on the wall.

JOHN FRANCIS WALLER.

AN AMERICAN TEA-TABLE.

IN travelling through America it is not at all unusual to be invited to partake of *supper* at six o'clock in the evening. The guest will in time, however, come to understand that this is the same meal as *tea* in New York, and that "supper," as English people understand it, is not an every-day, or rather every-evening, meal in America. Ball suppers, theatre suppers, and sometimes gentlemen's supper parties there are, but "supper" as a family meal is a rare exception among the classes in which it is a rule in England, from the bread-and-cheese and beer of the working man, to the more dainty meal of the well-to-do who prefer an early dinner to a late one.

In New York almost all except the working classes dine at six o'clock, and a cup of tea is served with dinner. The three meals of the day consist in this city, therefore, of breakfast, luncheon, and dinner. In other large cities, however, the hour varies from the two o'clock dinner of the Eastern States to the four o'clock one of New Orleans, and in most of these tea, or supper, as it is indifferently called, is always served.

Tea in these cases is a very substantial meal, being indeed a sort of supper and tea rolled into one, the hour of taking it being from six to seven; and as cooking in the different parts of the States differs as much as it does in the various counties of England, there is great diversity in the dishes served at these teas. Different sorts of hot breads, of course, are inevitable at an American table; rolls, both Graham and white, hot biscuit, corn muffins, rice bread, hominy bread, baked muffins, and among country people very often hot griddle cakes are served, besides wonderful things in the way of pies, fried cakes (under which head come dough-nuts, an exceedingly popular dish with Americans, and crullers, which deserve to be popular anywhere), and cakes of every kind. America has certainly a good right to the title Land of Cakes for there is more variety of that article than in any other country I have ever visited.

Among savoury dishes, oysters in every form—although scolloped are *par excellence* the favourite mode for tea—stewed, fried, broiled, all are popular. In addition to these, there are various viands that would be no novelty to English readers, and one or two that are familiar to them, but novel from the manner in which they are treated. Even so plebeian a dish as pigs' feet becomes quite dainty cooked as they often are in this country; and as in England they are so despised, I will append the recipe among others, and may thus rescue them from the contempt in which they languish at present.

Chipped beef is a savoury morsel very frequently met with at country tables, and in warm weather is to many more acceptable than more substantial fare.

I am now speaking of the teas of the middle and lower classes; those of the upper classes in this, as in many other things, so nearly approach our own English dinner that description would be superfluous. This, true of teas, is also true of many other things American. The upper strata of society here, Europeanised by travel, approaches as nearly as circumstances (in the shape of cooks and other servants) permit to the European standard. Kettledrums are fashionable in England, they become the rage in New York, and so with most other things; and in so far as they thus approximate to European manners, they lose the racy native flavour: there are no typical Americans among the *crême de la crême* here. It is not uncommon to hear them speak among themselves of a person who has been unable to shake off the provincialism, or has not tried to do it, that he is "so very American." I suppose it will be a somewhat new view of the Republic to see Americans spoken of as upper, middle, and lower classes; yet the classes are very distinct here: that is to say, each class believes in several strata beneath itself, but none in one above.

There are, however, one or two delicacies even from these more exalted tables which will bear transplantation : notably, fried chicken and jellied oysters. The latter are very new and fashionable as a luncheon, tea, or supper dish, and being so we will dispose of them first.

Jellied Oysters.—Take oysters enough to nearly fill the mould you use, then season highly sufficient stiff veal stock to fill up the mould—say about one pint—put the oysters in it, and simmer slowly from three to five minutes ; when plump they are done. Do not wait for them to shrink, as they will do if over-cooked; strain them from the liquor, which proceed to clear in the following manner :—Stir into the hot broth the white of an egg well whipped ; stir quickly, and boil up once ; then let it stand a minute, take off the scum that will have risen, and strain through tammy or double flannel ; then lay at the bottom and round the sides of the mould (which you must have dipped into cold water) a few quarters or slices of lemon, with a split gherkin here and there, or a few capers, a capsicum or two, or anything suitable for ornamental effect ; then lay in the oysters, with a bit of lemon here and there as you fill up the mould. When all are in, squeeze a little lemon-juice into your cleared stock, and fill up the mould with it, set in a very cold place to harden, and turn out as you would any other jelly when required ; garnish with cut lemon and parsley.

Another way to prepare jellied oysters is to use their own liquor instead of stock, and sufficient gelatine to make a firm jelly ; scald them till plump in it, then take them up, strain and clear the liquor as before directed, add the dissolved gelatine, season with pepper, salt, and mace, squeeze a little lemon-juice into it, and use as directed for veal stock.

Fried chickens are one of the dishes in which black cooks excel, and all through Virginia they are the favourite dainty, and certainly are deliciously prepared. Take quite young chickens—they should not be more than three or four months old—split them down the back and breast ; cut each half across, then give a gentle blow to each quarter to slightly break the bone, that they may lie flat ; then either dip each piece in thin batter or in egg and bread-crumb. An inexperienced cook had better use the batter, for which the following are very good recipes :—

Pâte à Frire.—Half a pound of flour, three-quarters of an ounce of butter melted in a little warm water, enough to make a stiff batter ; when smoothly mixed, thin the batter with more warm water till it will mask the spoon, stir in one white of egg beaten till it will stand, salt to taste.

Pâte à la Provençale is made in the same way, except that a large table-spoonful of oil is used in place of the butter, and the yolk of the egg is mixed with the batter, the whipped white added last. (Into these batters, fish, chops, or thick slices of cold meat may be dipped for frying.)

To cook the chickens, have ready a deep pan of lard, which must be very hot—boiling lard is *not nearly* hot enough: it must boil, get still, and begin to smoke; then drop a bit of bread into it: if it crisps and browns at once, it is hot enough ; put in your chickens which have been dipped into the batter, as many pieces only as will lie easily. When a golden brown on one side, turn them carefully, draw your pan back from the fire, so that the meat may be thoroughly cooked through before it burns; take them up, sift a little fine salt over them, lay them on white paper to absorb grease, then serve garnished with parsley.

Stewed Oysters are simply cooked five minutes in their own strained liquor, sufficient of it to make gravy, which is thickened either with the yolk of an egg and a good table-spoonful of butter, or a little cream is added, and the same quantity of butter rolled in flour and stirred smoothly into the gravy ; if flour is used it should be put in before the oysters have simmered two minutes, so that it may cook sufficiently without over-doing them. Most English cookery-books give recipes for scolloped oysters as good as those used in this country ; it is needless, therefore, to give them here.

To Broil or Fry Pigs' Feet.—They should be either soused or salted as for boiling, then boiled slowly till the large bones slip out ; they should then be split, the bones taken out, but left as perfect in shape as possible; place something on them to preserve the shape—a plate will answer—and when cold dredge them lightly with flour, and either broil them till brown, pepper them, and serve very hot, or else fry them, and serve in the same way. Prepared thus they are very delicate eating.

For *Chipped Beef*, cure a piece of round of beef in the same way as ham, smoking it very highly, then it is cut with a sharp knife in thinnish chips, and served as it is—the smoking having cooked it—or else it is just tossed in butter till hot through.

Recipes for several of the hot breads I have mentioned have been given in a former article (see "Some Favourite American Dishes"), but I have a few to add which will be acceptable additions to the English breakfast or tea-table, I think.

Batter Bread.—Two eggs, the yolks beaten separately, three table-spoonfuls of flour, the same of milk; mix the yolks, flour, and milk into a smooth batter, salt it, stir in a table-spoonful of butter melted, then add the whites, beaten till they stand high, and a tea-spoonful of *sifted* cream of tartar, or half a one of tartaric acid *sifted;* mix gently, and when the whites are well blended dissolve half a tea-spoonful (scant) of carbonate of soda in a very little boiling water, stir it into the batter, and bake in a well-buttered tin in a *very* hot oven. To be eaten with butter as new bread.

Baked Muffins.—Make a pint of milk, in which a quarter of an ounce of German yeast has been dissolved, into a thick batter with flour, add sufficient salt, a tea-spoonful of sugar, and a table-spoonful of butter melted. The time it will take to rise differs with the yeast and temperature ; if for breakfast, set over-night in a warm place : they are generally ready by seven in the morning ; for tea, they should be set early in the morning. If they are light enough too soon in the day, stir them down, and let them rise again. When light enough the batter should be like

honeycomb, and be more than double the bulk it was when first mixed. Bake in little round tins or cups in a very hot oven. *Graham muffins* are made in the same way, only "Graham" flour, which is the flour brown bread is made from, is used in the place of white.

Corn Meal Muffins.—Scald half a pint of Indian meal with enough boiling water to make it into a thick paste, add a cup of flour and milk, enough to make a thick batter, then beat three eggs very lightly, and stir into the batter with a large table-spoonful of butter melted and a table-spoonful of sugar; add, the last thing, two tea-spoonfuls of baking powder, or a tea-spoonful of cream of tartar sifted, and a small half-one of soda dissolved in boiling water (the soda must always be added the *last thing* whenever it is used); bake in little tins in a sharp oven, or if baked in one tin it is a delicious corn bread.

Hominy Bread is very delicate, and as the recipe is equally good with cold boiled rice, which is often at hand in England, I give the manner of making it:—A large cup of cold boiled rice, or hominy, as much Indian corn meal, and the same of flour and milk, to make thick batter, then beat in three eggs, a tea-spoonful of salt, and a dessert-spoonful of sugar; stir in a table-spoonful of butter melted, and bake in a shallow tin pan in a hot oven; cut it out in squares, and serve hot on a napkin. This and all breads having corn meal need to be liberally buttered.

Dough-nuts are so well known in England that it may be superfluous to give the recipe, but *crullers* are an American dainty that I have not met with elsewhere.

Make a soft dough with three-quarters of a pound of flour, in which a tea-spoonful of cream of tartar has been sifted, half the weight of butter beaten to a cream, three eggs well beaten, and a tea-cup of sugar; dissolve half a scant tea-spoonful of soda in a little cold milk, and if the paste is too stiff—it should be as soft as possible, without being sticky—add more milk; flavour with nutmeg, knead only till well mixed, break off pieces the size of a small egg or less, roll between the hands into long strips, and tie in knots, or any shape you please. Before beginning to mix the crullers, place on the fire a saucepan or stewpan in which is at least a pound of lard—let this get very hot, so hot as to smoke; try a little bit of the dough—if it swells and browns almost at once, it is hot enough—then drop in your crullers, not too many at a time, as they swell very much and should have room to float; when a fine light brown both sides they will be done, unless too large; break one open to see if cooked through, then fry the rest. They are best taken up in a colander, and powdered sugar sifted over them. They should be very crisp, and not at all greasy outside; if they are so the lard was not hot enough. They keep for several days. In frying anything requiring great heat, if a slice of potato is kept in the fat it will check any tendency to burn; and, of course judgment must be used to draw back the stewpan if the articles show the least appearance of burning before they are cooked through.

There are so many cakes in use in this country that would be new to English housekeepers that it is difficult to select; I give one, however, most common here, which may be readily varied to taste.

White Mountain Cake.—Beat three eggs ten minutes with a breakfast-cupful of white sugar (granulated or crushed loaf) in which has been rubbed a dessert-spoonful of butter. When eggs and sugar are beaten they should look white and very light; then *sift* to them a good breakfast-cupful of flour, and a tea-spoonful of cream of tartar; stir, and when mixed, dissolve half a tea-spoonful of soda in a table-spoonful of boiling water; mix thoroughly and quickly, spread *thinly* over the bottom of four shallow pans or tin plates of equal size and shape (proper pans for this cake are those used for German sandwich cake), round and not more than half an inch deep; but if these are difficult to find, the cake may be made in a round hoop, and cut in three or four slices (as sally-lunn is cut for toasting,) each slice to be not more than two-thirds of an inch thick. Whether baked in layers, or whole and cut, each piece should be thickly spread with the following mixture:—

Grate one cocoanut, from which the brown skin has been removed, mix it with two table-spoonfuls of powdered sugar, and the white of one egg beaten to a high froth, leaving out a half-cup of the grated nut. When cocoanut, sugar, and egg are mixed, spread each layer, and lay one on the other so that it forms alternate layers of cake and nut; then spread the remainder of the mixture over the top layer as you would icing, sprinkle thickly over it the half-cup of nut you have left out, and sift over all enough powdered sugar to make it sparkle and look like flakes of snow.

This cake may be varied by using chocolate between the layers, thus:—Grate a cupful of fine French chocolate, beat the white of an egg, set the chocolate in the top of a tea-kettle to get soft and warm, then stir in the egg till it forms a paste; lay this between the layers, having used vanilla for flavouring, if the chocolate lacked it; or orange marmalade, or the lemon mixture used for lemon cheesecakes, will be found equally good used in this way.

Cocoanut pies are an American "institution," so very good, so little known, that they must not be omitted, forming as they frequently do part of an American farmer's tea. Of course, in cities pies are not used either for breakfast or tea.

Line a dish with nice puff paste, then pour into it the following mixture:—Grate one cocoanut, mix with it a pint of milk and three beaten eggs, three ounces of butter warmed, and a cup of white sugar; the sugar and butter to be well beaten before adding to the rest. Flavour with grated lemon-peel, or vanilla; bake as you would custard pudding in a moderate oven. Although called pie, this and many other such pies better answer the English idea of a baked pudding, having no cover on them. In this country "pies" are usually baked in round tins the size of a dinner-plate, but shaped like a mince patty-pan.

CATHARINE OWEN.