

## THE ART OF GARNISHING.



T would, I am well aware, be quite as possible to teach people how to draw and paint by reading *alone*, as to impart the art of which this paper treats; but I feel that there are many who have but little opportunity or need perhaps to practise to any great extent (though without practice proficiency is never attained, be the study what it may), and to such I believe these hints will be useful.

As a rule, those who blend colours harmoniously and artistically, on their own persons and in their homes, will be most likely to succeed in their task, and all who will take a little trouble to make every-day meals look tempting will find less difficulty in setting off to the best advantage those of a more elaborate character. In the present paper I can but touch briefly upon each particular kind of garnish, rather giving hints than laying down fixed rules, so much depending upon the resources of the glass and china closet, as well as upon the capacity of one's purse. Again, those dishes unsuitable in size, kind, and colour to the articles placed upon them, require more embellishment than any of cut glass or silver; such are ornamental in themselves.

So, to treat the subject in its fullest sense, I must endeavour to show how to hide ugliness by means of garnishing, as well as improve what is already in itself pretty. To illustrate my meaning, in the case of sweets, although it is usual to place them—especially for a company meal—upon glass dishes, there may be times when the dinner-service, both plates and dishes, will have to do duty, and, if the service happens to be one in which blue predominates, it will be found a great stumbling-block in the way of garnish of an ordinary kind, for the simple reason that anything green will have to be prohibited, unless it can be used in sufficient quantity to hide all the blue; and without green many of nature's most beautiful decorations are lost, ferns and leaves of many kinds being as graceful and beautiful in effect as parsley and fennel are when brought into juxtaposition with savouries.

In these days of dinners *à la Russe*, there is less need for the exercise of one's ingenuity in the way of garnishing than there was in the olden time, so it seems to me that dishes such as are served at wedding breakfasts, high teas, supper parties, or what I may term evening parties of a family kind, claim most attention. I am just reminded of an incident in my own experience. I once sat at a table where everything was good, so far as the taste went, but the first thing that struck me was the manner in which all the dishes were arranged, or rather jumbled upon the table, not the least regard being paid to shape or colour. The sweets, six in number, consisted of a pale yellow jelly; a vanilla cream, almost white; a moulded custard; a covered fruit-tart; a dish of lemon cheesecakes, and one of stewed apples. Just

imagine it! Imagine, too, the difference in the appearance had a little brightness been introduced, as it so easily might have been, by colouring part of the jelly a nice bright red, or letting some pieces of crystallised fruit show through the top layer; the whole or part of the vanilla cream a delicate pink, or a little coloured brown by adding chocolate or coffee, either of which eats well with vanilla; fresh or dried fruit or bright jam round the moulded custard, or flowers and leaves such as I will mention presently; a sprinkling of red sugar over the fruit-tart; a few drops of cochineal in the apple syrup, with a spot of whipped cream or custard on the top of each apple; and what a transformation there would have been, at a cost and trouble not worth the mention! This is, I think, a practical lesson as to the way sweets should *not* be put upon a table, though I believe that many people *could* turn out a passable trifle or custard, who would fail in making soup or gravy.

Due regard must be had at all times to the prejudices of guests; a great many would refuse anything which owed its beauty to green colouring, though it is, as a rule, perfectly harmless. However, when the colouring is likely to be objected to, a substitute may always be found in crystallised fruit when nothing else is handy. Angelica is cheapest of all, then come green almonds, greengages, and green oranges, called *Chinois*; the latter may be had of a beautiful golden hue as well, but it is better, perhaps, to buy assorted fruit, and so get all shapes and colours, including the tiny rings and knots called *brochettes*.

Orange and lemon rings and chips will also be found very useful. I would advise all housekeepers who like to see dishes look nice to keep dried fruits always in the house; for, though particularly useful in winter time, they will always *supplement* the decorations, even when flowers are plentiful. As the writer of a recent article on "Table Decorations" so ably pointed out in these columns, artificial flowers are at best but feeble imitations of nature, and therefore out of place as decorations; and this is equally true of flowers for garnishing dishes, but I would remind my readers that almost all kinds of real flowers, from the rarest to the humblest, may be utilised for the purpose.

Jellies and creams surrounded by the petals of roses look very beautiful, and will convince any one that nature has no equal in the production of colour. The laburnum, geranium, woodbine, wallflower, flowering-currant, sweet-pea, cyclamen, lilac, wild-rose, apple and pear blossom, primula, violet, pansy, carnation, polyanthus, crocus, chrysanthemum, daisy, snowdrop, primrose, mountain-ash berries, holly, ivy, mistletoe, hips and haws, besides Virginia creeper, vine, and autumnal leaves of every description, will add greatly to the beauty of the simplest dish, and are but a few of the many products of garden and field that may be employed for garnishing.

Gilt flowers and leaves are used by many people, but though less objectionable, perhaps, than *coloured*

artificial flowers, I do not recommend them; a few bonbons will supply the gold shade very easily.

As most people know, a good supply of flowers is expected on a wedding breakfast table, and though nothing can be nicer than delicate white ones inter-mixed with maidenhair ferns, it is not in every one's power to obtain them, at certain seasons of the year especially, their price making them a prohibited luxury; and in that case silver leaves and flowers will be useful for ornamenting some of the dishes. They should, however, never be mixed with real flowers; a few of the latter, if it can be managed, being used for ornamenting the cake, and as table decorations, if only in specimen vases.

I may point out that the season of the year should, and must, influence one's choice of garnish; for instance, in summer time, when a moulded cream has been made from fresh fruit, nothing looks nicer round it in the dish than the same kind of fruit which formed the foundation of the cream, or bunches of the fruit and little heaps of whipped cream alternately will be better still.

A very pretty and inexpensive ornament may be found in cocoa-nut—grated on a perfectly clean grater—one nut makes a good pile; it falls so lightly and prettily that if the nut be a fresh one it will look like snow. It is very useful in many cases when the supply of whipped cream runs short, as it can be sprinkled over custard or the top of a trifle; a coloured jelly or cream surrounded by it is very pleasing to the eye, especially if strips of candied fruit of various colours are placed amongst the nut: when cherries are used they can be dropped in whole.

I may here remark that although moulded creams of all kinds and colours are frequently classed as *blancmanges*, a distinction ought to be made, as all that are not white come under the head of creams—as, for instance, raspberry, strawberry, pineapple, or ginger-cream. All white ones are *blancmanges*; a yellow cream is a *jaunemange*, a pink one is a *rosemanage*. A border of roughly chopped bright yellow jelly round a red or pink jelly or cream, or one of red round a pale jelly or cream, is always in good taste. The same answers for puddings, turned out of the dishes or moulds, as well as *fruit-solids* and *sponges*, such as lemon or orange sponge, &c.; a thin layer—say the thickness of a crown-piece—of any cream or *blancmange* can be poured into a large meat-dish, and, when set, chopped up into cubes, or cut with pastry-cutters into leaves, stars, and rings; if made purposely for garnishing, it need not cost much, as it can be made without cream, and will only need sweetening, not flavouring. It is better to make it rather stiffer than usual, and plain white to begin with, and it can then be coloured as required; or coloured sugar, angelica, or any other dried fruit, may be sprinkled over it just before it sets; while grated

cocoa-nut or chopped almonds would be found equally pretty on pink shapes. Indeed, personal ingenuity may be much exercised in this effective, though simple, decoration. If cut very small, and the colours nicely arranged, these are also pretty on jam-tarts.

At no time is a knowledge of the art of garnishing—however slight—of more value than when the supply of glass and crockery runs short, and some dishes are too large, and others of an unsuitable kind, for the contents. It is then requisite to conceal them as much as possible, and garnish becomes really necessary.

Again, the knack of ornamenting stands one in good stead when, either to an every-day or a company dish, an accident happens, and the result is unsatisfactory, to say the least of it. Here is a case in point. I was once present at supper at a friend's, who had made a very pretty sweet, consisting of a ground-rice cream, turned out of a "border mould," the open space in the centre being filled with a compôte of damsons; but the weather being warm, and the rice not stiff enough, it had cracked in several places. I asked for a little dried fruit, but there was none in the house except candied peel, orange and lemon, but that answered very well; long thin strips laid lightly over and between each crack improved the appearance, and no one suspected the existence of the blemish.

Let us presume that a dainty pudding has been turned out of the baking-dish, and that it is found to be over-baked, and, in place of a delicate amber, a dark brown patch presents itself; consider a moment how best to hide it. Never mind if in the recipe nothing *was* said about a layer of jam or marmalade; the chances are that it will not spoil the pudding. Of course discretion must be used in mixing any flavours that would nullify each other. Cream or custard, however, will rarely spoil any pudding, either in taste or appearance. A meringue mixture is as safe and pretty as anything; to make it, beat the whites of two or three eggs stiff, and then stir in lightly an ounce of finely sifted sugar to each white. This may be dropped from a spoon or spread over the pudding, which should then be returned to the oven just long enough to set the coating.

*Hard Sauces* can be well used as a garnish to a great variety of puddings, or little heaps may be mixed with, or spread over, a fruit compôte.

Lastly, homely family sweets may always be rendered attractive, at no increase in the cost, if the will be there, for it is as easy to pour a compôte of fruit round a plain mould of rice or tapioca as to place them on the table irrespective of appearance; for, let some people say what they will, the palate *is* affected, to a very great extent, through the eye.

I intended giving a few hints on the garnishing of savouries, but, for the present, want of space forbids.

L. HERITAGE.

