Paris for well-made dresses; and as one of their number was coming over to Europe, they gave him *carte-blanche* to procure a suitable teacher. Almost as soon as he reached London he called on the manager of the Scientific Dress Association, and asked whether he could recommend a lady who was *diplomée*, and would answer their purpose. They did not offer to pay her passage, but if such a person liked to go out to the colony, they were prepared to place the dressmaking classes in her hands, and pay her at the rate of 10s. 6d. an hour for whatever lessons she gave. The manager recommended Madame Erckmann, and she, on receiving the offer, at once decided to go, perhaps with some premonition of what would come to pass in that distant land. Mr. Linskill, her Bristol employer, was at first very much annoyed, but he was too right-minded a man to stand in her way, especially when she told him something of her story, and how glad she should be to leave England behind her. He begged her to try and find him some one in her place, and she at once mentioned Clemency, who had obtained her certificate, which proved that she understood her business. So my sister was sent for, and worked with Madame Erckmann for the next six weeks, and was duly installed as head and manager of the dressmaking department when her friend departed. Mr. Linskill did not offer her the salary Madame Erckmann had had (she had not her years nor self-possession), but he gave her £100 a year, and promised to increase it if she proved herself valuable to him and kept the "hands" under proper control as well as in good working order.

Madame Erckmann spent a week with her sister before she embarked for Australia, and gave Auntie Puss the best and most hopeful account of Clemency and her position, and persuaded her that now three of her girls were fairly on their feet she could well afford a general servant to do the roughest of the house-work. Auntie and Mrs. Wilson went down to the Docks and saw her safely on board the great Australian clipper that was like a floating town, and came back with very sore hearts, but feeling confident that nothing better could have been arranged for her.

Clemency was quite as comfortable as she could expect, and devoted her earnings to getting herself a good stock of clothes and sending Beatrice a little pocket-money. The first Christmas she was at Bristol she longed to come home, but as Christmas Day was on Sunday she could only have left on Saturday and returned by the first train on Tuesday, and it did not seem worth the expense of the long, cold journey. She said she felt dreadfully inclined to cry on Saturday morning, and felt as though Christmas would be a terribly dull time.

But just when she was very busy packing up some dresses Mr. Linskill sent for her to come to his private room, and there she found him sitting with his wife, who had just driven in from their house at Redlands. She gave Clemency a really cordial invitation to spend Christmas with them, and was determined to have her kindly way. At three o'clock that afternoon, when the shop and work-rooms were all closed and cleared, a carriage was at the door, and Clemency went off with Mr. Linskill to stay till Tuesday. Going with him took off all the awkwardness she might have felt on entering a strange house, and she was so completely made one of the family that she speedily felt happy and at home. The girls admired her, and told her all about their interests and occupations; and since then she has paid them many a pleasant visit, and is all the more looked up to in business because those under her know that she enjoys her employer's friendship as well as his confidence.

E. CLARKE.

THE ART OF FISH COOKERY.

WE assert at the outset that no article of food is more frequently served in an unappetising form, or robbed of more of its nutriment, than fish; and, while admitting that dirt is at the root of many culinary failures, with regard to fish, ultra-clean cooks have much to answer for; for they are not content to wash it, but must needs leave it in the water to soak, thus making it flabby, and extracting much of the flavour; and when we consider the enormous percentage of water most kinds of fish contain, it behoves us, surely, to retain the nutritive elements to the fullest possible extent.

Let us, then, touch briefly on the usual methods of cooking, and try to clear away a few of the difficulties.

Boiling. — Many cookery books instruct the uninitiated to lay the fish in *cold* water, and then bring it to the boil; this is a mistake—nay, more: it is opposed to all the laws of common sense and science; so here, in a nutshell, is the whole secret of how it *should* be done. Wash your fish well, but quickly. Have ready in a *shallow* vessel some boiling water, and to each quart or so add an ounce of salt, a tablespoonful of vinegar, and half a dozen peppercorns. Have only just enough water to cover the fish; too much robs it of flavour. Cook it at *simmering* point until done, then take it up immediately, or it will break and soak up the water; in a word, it will be spoiled.

Time.—Here is a real difficulty; common sense and experience, aided by certain tests, form the best

time-tables. Just by way of a guide, we will say for *thin* flat fish, five to ten minutes to the pound ; *thick* flat fish, twelve to sixteen or eighteen minutes ; and for *very* thick fish, twenty minutes to the pound may be allowed. All the oily kinds, namely, salmon, eels, mackerel, &c., being solid, are indigestible unless thoroughly cooked ; indeed, many people cannot partake of them in any form.

When the flesh is the same colour throughout, and leaves the bone easily, take up your fish; but if near the bone the flesh is red and raw-looking, it is under-done. It must be carefully drained, and should be neatly dished and garnished ; and if no fish-kettle proper be at hand, by tying the fish in a thin cloth, or laying it on a meat trivet set in the water, the risk of breaking during the taking up will be considerably reduced.

A word now about *Steaming*, a process not generally known ; one trial, however, will convince any one of its manifold advantages. Any short, thick pieces of fish, or small whole ones, such as mackerel, can be very successfully cooked in a potato steamer, while fillets are best treated as described in a former article on "Kitchen Physic."* Those who are desirous of cooking large fish in this way would find a steamer, made to fit any ordinary oval boiling-pot, a very good investment ; and, it is almost needless to add, many things could be boiled in the pot under the fish at the same time.

Frying.—We fancy some will at once exclaim, "Why, anybody can fry fish!" Experience, however, proves the reverse ; and as nothing is more indigestible and unwholesome than the greasy or burnt mess so often served as "fried fish," it is worth while, and quite easy, to carry this operation out in the proper way. The freshness, firmness, and dryness of the fish have a great deal to do with the success of the undertaking, and so has the size ; thick fish should be filleted. One practical lesson would be worth many pages of written instruction ; all that is necessary is to cut the fish, if flat, down the centre on each side, then raise the flesh with a sharp knife, keeping it close to the bone, and giving sharp, not "haggling," cuts : this gives four fillets, which, unless very small, should be divided again, or even twice ; they look nicer if cut in a rather slanting direction ; they may then be simply floured, or coated with thick batter, or, what is still nicer, dipped into beaten egg, then into fine bread-crumbs. The rules for frying may be briefly summed up as under :—

The fat used should be sufficient to cover the fish, and it should be gradually heated.

It should be quite hot, *i.e.*, the bubbling should be over, and the fat quite still, when a bluish smoke will be seen to rise from it.

The smaller the fish to be fried, the hotter the fat must be.

Do not put too much in at once, or the temperature of the fat will be reduced, and the fish will not brown properly.

Drain on kitchen paper or a clean cloth, and serve on a hot dish.

Although we have given the test for the right heat of the fat, the novice may employ the simpler one of putting in a small piece of bread, and if it brown at once, the fat is ready ; this is safer, too, for in waiting for the *blue* smoke, one may wait too long ; it will turn instantly from blue to black, and the whole be burnt and good for nothing.

Grilling and *Broiling.*—These terms are often used synonymously, though there is a difference ; to *grill* is to cook on a gridiron *over* the fire ; to *broil* is to cook *before* a fire, the article being suspended from a broiler. The rule being pretty much the same in both cases, we will speak of grilling. See that the bars are perfectly clean, grease them a little, lay on the fish, and turn it every minute until done. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and serve on a hot dish. "Simple," you say. Yes, very, if you have a clear fire : this is an absolute necessity. Many an invalid would enjoy fish cooked in this way, it has so sweet a flavour, and is so free from grease. We once heard an old surgeon say, "There is nothing I like so much as a grilled sole, but I always have to go to my club to get it."

If wrapped in oiled or buttered paper, previous to grilling, any kind of small fish, or slices from larger ones, will furnish a dainty meal—less digestible, though, than the result of the foregoing mode.

Some people's only idea of *Baked Fish* is a compound of fresh herrings (or something similar), various herbs and spices, and vinegar, cooked in a slow oven for an hour or two ; appetising as this is, it is not, in the strict sense of the word, baked fish. The oven should be of a good heat, to close the outer surface of the fish and keep in the juices; some fat should be made quite hot in the baking-tin, and the fish often basted ; a trivet should be used, just the same as for meat, at any rate for large pieces, or whole fish of medium size ; small ones can be cooked on a flat tin; a good way is to coat them with a greased paper.

The fish may be brushed over with milk, and then floured, or egged and crumbed ; a few raspings sprinkled over after taking it from the oven will improve its appearance. A brown piquant sauce is a favourite and suitable accompaniment.

The modes of *Stewing* fish are multitudinous, so many variations can be made in the added ingredients ; as a rule, the simpler ways will produce most enjoyable results, and just according to the skill of the cook stewed fish may be either very delicious or an utter abomination.

As we are here dealing with principles, space forbids our giving detailed recipes, so we will close by reminding our readers that stewing and boiling are not identical ; to stew is to cook at a much lower temperature than boiling point, hence longer time must be allowed ; and a brown jar is a good receptacle, because it is slow to receive heat, and slow to lose it. If not convenient to place it in the oven, it can be set into a pan of boiling water over the fire, to insure uniformity of temperature for the stew itself.

A word on behalf of the sick. Any white fish, just covered with milk and water, and stewed until tender, is very delicate ; the liquor should be thickened with a little arrowroot, boiled up, and poured round the fish.

* CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, April, 1887, p. 271.