

voice of the man crying, "Flowers all a-blow—ing and a-grow—ing." He is a dreadful humbug, that man. I know it all the while, and all the while I can't help being taken in by him. He so constantly assures me that he doesn't make a penny by selling to me, that I wonder why he should be so anxious for my custom. I suppose he would go on the principle of the apple-woman, who told the schoolboy that she sold each apple under cost price, and when he asked how then she made it pay, replied, "By selling a many of them." But whatever his arithmetic may be, my hawk is terribly seductive. I go to the door steeling my heart, and determining not to buy a single plant, and he cajoles me into spending all my ready-money—all the money laid aside to pay the butcher's bill. I sometimes think that no class understands human nature so well as London flower-sellers. They have made a study of it for years. When they find your desire to buy flagging, they stimulate it by asking "if you have any old clothes." I don't know what connection there should be between old clothes and flowers—but so it is. I once had a friend, who was a novice at London gardening, and the flower-man was an Old Costermongering Hand. Incautiously she gave him a pair of her husband's boots in exchange for two sickly specimens of the fern tribe. Her husband complained when he came home that they were "the only boots he could wear;" but what was that to the flower-seller? He had got the boots, and possession is nine points of the law. But there is, at any rate, one comfort in dealing with the barrow-men. They are not like doctors who fix their fees according

to the house-rents of their patients, or Italian shopkeepers who have an esoteric and an exoteric tariff. The London plant-seller tries at all times to get out of everyone as much as he can. He haggles with his own class as remorselessly as with any other. I once saw a cabman pull up his empty cab before a barrow of plants in a slum, and, pointing to a seedy white geranium, say—

"How much?"

"Four - and - a - half," replied the barrow-woman laconically.

The man demurred; he wanted it for his missus, he said, but he would not pay so much. The woman would only abate one halfpenny.

"Four d's the price of it; you may take it or you may leave it," she answered sturdily.

And with that he could resist no longer: the white geranium was handed up to him, and he drove away, its proud possessor.

But, indeed, the fact is that London gardening is more popular with the poor than with the comparatively well-to-do. In Seven Dials on a hot July day, you will hardly find a window that does not boast of a pot or two. It may be only (as Hood has it) "a weakly monthly rose that don't blow, or a tea-plant with five black leaves and one green;" but to its owners it is more than Mr. Chamberlain's choicest orchid. And why should it not be so? We poor Londoners live, after all, imprisoned in brick. Is it strange that, like the Italian captive in the pretty story of "Picciola," we should grow our prison flower?

E. C. C.



## DISHES IN WAITING.



It does sound odd, but it exactly expresses my meaning. Don't tell me to exert myself, and exercise my inventive faculties. I have none, I fear; at any rate, originality is not my strong point."

The speaker was Mrs. Leebank, the wife of a young country surgeon, and she found it difficult to serve their modest little dinners with the nicety she desired, partly owing to previous inexperience, and partly to her husband's necessarily irregular appearance at dinner, as to be home within half an hour of the time fixed was the most he could manage.

Mrs. Crutchlow, her friend, expressed her usual willingness to help her out of her difficulty, for she had been a friend in every sense of the word, from the day of the home-coming of their popular doctor and his bride.

"First, my dear, you are at a disadvantage in common with your fellow-residents, so far as good catering is concerned, our nearest town being far away; you must think out your meals well beforehand; our choice of joints is but limited, as you know, and as for fish, we are thankful for anything we are fortunate enough to get. Some day we will have a chat about an 'emergency cupboard'; mine is one of my greatest boons, and without it I should often get stranded, with



our large family and so many 'droppers in,' as we call them. Has your husband any special preference or prejudice?"

"Only one; he will not eat warmed-up meats at dinner: to use his own words, he 'will not burden his digestion with them.' Chops and steaks I do not introduce now; they spoil so if kept waiting, do they not?"

"Yes, indeed; they must be banished from your dinner *menu*. I am a firm believer in the truth of the maxim that a chop ought literally to burn your mouth. I am, of course, referring to the ordinary grilled chop; there are other ways of preparing chops, cutlets, or steaks, which would be available for dishes in waiting. What you must do, in my opinion, is to depend for the most part upon made dishes of a dainty and delicate kind, such as will not spoil by a little extra cooking, and which can be kept hot without injury. In the *bain marie* and braising-pan I foresee two of your best friends."

"Why, we possess neither, and we can't afford them, I am sure; our old doctor's wife, you know, is a Frenchwoman, and she has told me that they cost ever so much, and she understands all about kitchen furniture, and everything else, I think."

"I, too, have neither," returned Mrs. Crutchlow, "but I regularly use improvised substitutes, which anyone else may do who will take the trouble to consider their principles for a moment. What is the *bain marie* but a water-bath on a large scale, by which a number of things can be kept hot? Now, on a small scale, for one or two saucepans, a stew-pan or baking-tin answers equally well for the reception of the hot water, in which, on a corner of your range, your sauce or gravy, or what not, will keep hot without fear of spoiling or burning if you take care to replenish the water from time to time.

Before I say anything about more solid viands, let me give you a fish dainty which can be very quickly cooked. I tried it yesterday—it is a superior form of steamed fish; whittings, soles, and the like are the best for it. Fillet the fish, and lay it in a shallow baking-tin with a few drops of white vinegar, a little salt and pepper, and a morsel of butter; put a sheet of buttered paper over—I forgot to say butter your tin—then set it in another tin containing hot water, and cook it in the oven; ten to fifteen minutes will do it. Stew the bones for sauce (here let little and good be your motto), and add to it the liquor from the tin just before serving. If it has to stand, put in the last minute a spoonful of cream, or a morsel more butter."

"I shall be glad to try that," said Mrs. Leebank, "I am sure it will be nice. Gus likes fish, but it always happens when we have any boiled that he is unusually late, and if I leave it in the water it is spoiled, and if I take it out it is——"

"Confusion worse confounded!" said Mrs. Crutchlow, "I know; it is either semi-cold, or spoiled in colour, or perhaps overdone and looks sodden. But you might try steaming—you have a potato-steamer

—there is much less chance of mishap, and you are certain to retain more flavour."

"Thanks, too, for that wrinkle. One minute now—about my potatoes—even your *bain marie* will not enable me to send a decent-looking one to table, I fear," was the rejoinder.

"You boil them in an iron pan, probably? That in itself does not matter, but perhaps they are left in it?" queried Mrs. Crutchlow.

"I really don't know; I never asked Charlotte. Does it matter?"

"Yes, for if put back in an iron pan with the lid on they always change colour, more or less; try this mode:—When done, strain instantly, shake your pan well, and turn the potatoes into your vegetable-dish; yours are round ones fortunately; set it in, or rather on, a saucepan containing hot water, so that it just rests inside the rim, about an inch above the surface of the water, and put a soft cloth over your potatoes."

"Then the lid of the dish, I presume?"

"No; no lid; potatoes and rice are two things that should never be covered by a lid, or they will become watery. I am quoting the highest authorities in telling you this; even in their transit from kitchen to dining-table nothing more than a clean serviette should be put over."

"But what would people think?" was the natural question of the young housekeeper.

"Ah! that is the point; we are such slaves to custom, it stands in the way of most of our food reform; we should be accused of having broken all our lids, which we could not or would not replace, were we to attempt the innovation. But to return to potatoes, do remember my hint to bake them in their skins, they are so much more nutritious; and ring the changes on as many varieties of vegetables as possible. You like haricots, I know. I have just been trying the green ones called flageolets; they are excellent and have such nice thin skins, and although they are soft enough to dish in a couple of hours, or rather more, three hours won't hurt them, but don't let them become mashed after boiling."

"The very thing for us, then, are they not?"

"Yes; you shall have a sample of mine; any left over from boiling, you can turn to good account in a salad, preferably with beetroot and celery, or Spanish onion. I tasted recently a delightful combination of this sort; the dressing was a novel one, as it contained curry paste, and Indian pickles, very finely minced, were added to the vegetables; it was as good to look at as to eat, and that is high praise."

"Another item for my notebook," said the young wife gratefully; "it is becoming quite voluminous, but we must not run on until we forget my braised meats altogether."

"Well, I propose to give you a few recipes which you can vary according to circumstances; I want you to feel that you have a basis to work upon; you can manage with that nice steel stew-pan of yours. Braising, remember, is to cook slowly but continuously—that is, keeping the temperature uniform—in a little liquid, with a good bed of vegetables and herbs under



the meat, which, if of a dry nature, ought to be larded, but a sheet of buttered paper is a substitute by no means to be despised, or you can use thin slices of bacon."

"When you say liquid, you mean stock?"

"Certainly, and you know now that it need cost next to nothing by managing the stock-pot wisely and well."

In reply to the question whether the meat for braising should be browned, Mrs. Crutchlow said that it should, either before or after, while the gravy was being skimmed, seasoned, and reduced by quick boiling if too thin; she also pointed out that the lid must be kept on the pan by means of a weight, not removed oftener than necessary, and if on an open fire, very carefully, for fear of smoking.

"But," she concluded, "so many people stir too often; a shake might frequently be substituted; and use a wooden spoon always; iron spoons spoil delicate dishes. I say always: there is an exception, that is curry, for that spoils a wooden spoon—for any other purpose, that is; if you will keep it *for* curry, all well and good. Now will you take notes of a dish from chicken and tomatoes? I see you are eager."

"I am indeed; as you know, poultry is often the most accessible solid commodity, and I am rather tired of the few ways I know of cooking it."

For the next few minutes the speaker's pencil was busy, and to be sure that no error had been made, she read aloud as follows: "Truss a chicken as for roasting, put it in a stew-pan with a bunch of herbs, two or three shallots, half a dozen peppercorns, a couple of cloves, and a gill and a half of stock; cover with a sheet of buttered paper, and cook it gently for an hour to an hour and a half, according to size; add salt to taste, just before serving."

"Should the stock be warm or cold when it is put in?" was the next question.

"Warm, hot in fact, for a chicken; it closes the pores and retains the goodness and flavour; but for an older bird it should be cold, or nearly; and now I think you have it right, save that I omitted to say pass the liver through a sieve, and serve it in the gravy. The latter, by the way, is to be poured over the bird, and some chip potatoes or peas should be arranged round it.

"The tomato purée, for which I will now give you the recipe, you send to table in a separate tureen. Take it down carefully, for it is one of the best I ever came across. I am purposely giving it to you separately, for I want you to understand that it is no special addendum to the chicken, but good with all sorts of meats, and really delicious with boiled lamb or mutton, and—need I add?—with veal also. Break up a pound of ripe tomatoes, put them in a stew-pan with a salt-spoonful each of salt and sugar, a morsel of onion, a tiny sprig of thyme and parsley, a table-spoonful of minced bacon, and a couple of ounces of butter; cook them, giving an occasional shake, until they can be passed through a hair sieve—a coarse one will do; take care to press well to get all the pulp through, and scrape it from the under-portion of the sieve; reheat it, and add a few drops of carmine colouring, and a

little cayenne to season pleasantly—cayenne because of the colour."

"That sounds good," was Mrs. Leebank's remark, "but is there no liquid? I have never yet had tomato sauce without water or gravy."

"None; that is just the point in its favour; you get moisture from the bacon, and of course the butter liquefies immediately."

"I will certainly try it, but it is more trouble than some recipes I have tested, I fancy," was the somewhat hesitative remark.

"No doubt, but it is worth it; don't fall into the common habit of shirking all the little niceties of refined cookery, always more formidable on paper than in actual practice, remember; and I am quite sure that, compared with the basting of a plain joint, with its attendant heat and discomfort, to say nothing of the cost, the balance is in favour of such dishes as we are now discussing.

"Now for my second little 'braise.' I will give it just as I make it, but half the quantities will suffice for you. You require a pound of beef steak, a couple of ounces of bread-crumbs and fat bacon, salt, pepper, herbs, an egg, a teaspoonful of anchovy essence, and a table-spoonful or two of gravy with a morsel of glaze dissolved in it—failing glaze use a little gelatine. You mince the meat finely and mix the rest with it, excepting the white of the egg; shape the mass into a roll, coat it with the white of the egg, then cover it with more crumbs, shaking off all the loose ones; you then turn it about in a little hot clarified fat until it is golden brown; drain away any fat and put in sufficient stock to half cover your roll; cook it gently for an hour and a half, or longer will not hurt it; turn it over during the cooking, and, just before serving, add a little red-currant jelly to your gravy; it should also be thickened with brown roux, but if you have none by you, use browned flour, and put in a drop or two of liquid browning, or a morsel of a colouring pastille."

"It sounds tempting, and ought to taste rather gamey, I should think."

"Well guessed! it does; it is called *Boulette à la Game*. I will just mention another variety called *Indian Boulette*, for which veal or any other meat can be used; you omit the anchovy, adding some curry paste, and the roll is cooked in curry sauce. With that you would serve boiled rice, which, as you know, takes a long time to dry, therefore it is the very thing for awaiting guests; another dish ready to your hand, you see."

"I hope to try both ways," said Mrs. Leebank, "my meat, I suppose, I can pass through a mincer; I told you I had one, did I not?"

"Yes, I am glad; you will find it a profitable investment. I should next like to tell you of a very tasty snack—it is economical and excellent. I have heard you say that you sometimes get in a knuckle of mutton; on the next occasion cut from it a couple of slices half an inch thick, from the thick end; make a little veal forcemeat, but instead of dry crumbs, use a bit of bread soaked in gravy, and butter instead of suet; drain and beat the soaked bread, season nicely, and don't spare the herbs. Next, mince finely a mutton



kidney, removing, of course, the core; the finer it is, the better, but don't chop it, or you will lose so much gravy. Lay half the forcemeat on each piece of mutton and place them together with the kidney between, making a sort of sandwich in five layers. I only tasted these away from home, and have not yet tried them, so cannot now give you details for the gravy in which to stew them, but I feel sure you will evolve one, and am not sorry to give you an opportunity of doing so. I wonder if this has suggested any similar dish to you?"

"Yes, indeed! already I am thinking how good a portion of veal would be—kidney end of course."

"Excellent, but be sure and omit the fat, or your gravy will be too greasy for anything. Now I must hurry off; you will let me know if you are in a fix?"

"Thank you, but I don't anticipate failure. I shall

return your call before I have exhausted your list of good things, and feel sure that I shall have only success to chronicle. I told you that Mrs. Grove, the doctor's wife of whom I spoke just now, is coming to see us in the autumn, did I not?"

"You did, and I am anxious to meet her, for I am hoping that she will give you much useful culinary information, which you in turn will bestow upon me. You say she is clever."

"She has already promised to help me. She is a most excellent cook, and so economical. I often regret that, in the days when I might have learned from her much that would be invaluable now, I was too little interested in matters domestic to do so. I am quite coming round to your way of thinking, that well-cooked meals form one of the strongest home-ties."

## JACK AND HIS MASTER: A SEA-SIDE ROMANCE.

BY HENRY FRITH.

### CHAPTER THE FIRST

"LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG."



JUST seven years since auntie and I spent those few weeks in Cornwall! There is no doubt of the fact; but it scarcely seems possible. I was twenty years old that summer, rejoicing in the glorious weather, in my splendid health, and supremely thankful for the many blessings I enjoyed.

I am an orphan.

At the time to which I am referring, I was residing at Reignton, in Devon, with uncle and aunt, who had no children. Auntie and I went down to Cornwall that autumn while uncle was abroad; and during our visit a series of most unexpected adventures turned the current of my life. These incidents I will proceed to explain without further preface.

It was in September. We were located at Lowcliffe, a quiet little place where all the desirable features of sea-side existence are to be found to this day. Pure air, fine scenery, beautiful walks, extensive sands, caves, caverns, rolling seas, and picturesque bits of scenery, which I assiduously sketched; an infinite variety of scenery and colour, where as yet tourists were not in droves, and excursions were almost unknown. There were some visitors at the hotel on the cliff, and we often met them. One gentleman we frequently encountered. He was a tall, handsome young man, generally accompanied by a collie dog. There was nothing remarkable about him but his dog; but he

appeared to know auntie and me by sight. One Sunday we almost ran against him in the church porch as we were coming out. Auntie noticed his glances.

"Do you know that gentleman, Hilda?" she asked.

"No, aunt; I have only seen him here."

"I fancied that he recognised us," she continued. "His features are not altogether strange to me; he may have been in our part of the country, but I suppose he is staying at the Cliff Hotel?"

"Yes; I have seen him standing on the steps with a collie dog," was my reply, given unwillingly, for this horrible man seemed destined to be a factor in my life at Lowcliffe!

"I wonder who he is," remarked my aunt. But as I made no reply, and, later on, changed the conversation, she said no more about him.

Next day I did not go out sketching, and had the intense gratification to observe from my window, the gentleman and his dog walking on the sands, and gazing into crannies and caves. He had already seen me several times, but, of course, we had never exchanged a word—hardly a look; yet he *had* very expressive eyes! But that very afternoon, when I was sitting on the rocks with auntie, the dog ran up after a swim, and shook the water from his rough coat over my book—Tennyson's poems, the "Idylls of the King."

His master came upon the scene at once, and raising his hat in a most polite, deferential manner, apologised very courteously for his favourite's *gaucherie*. He spoke in a rather low, soft voice, and his bright brown eyes looked boldly at auntie and me. There was a twinkle of fun in them too, and I had some difficulty to restrain a smile.

"I am awfully sorry," he said; "I trust 'Jack' has done no damage! Permit me," he continued, taking the volume from me; "dear me! I am afraid the