"AND how do you make fig-sue?"

We were at a country post-office in the north of England, a pretty rustic place where work seemed secondary to repose, and I made the inquiry of a buxom-looking woman who was an authority in the village, my curiosity having been excited by hearing much in favour of this Westmoreland dish.

"Stewed figs in a little beer," was the reply.

"Oh, what nasty stuff!" I said.

"Eh—no, not so bad. I shouldn't mind a sup now, at any rate; but don't forget the bread. It must ha' a bit of bread with it, or it won't taste well."

When eventually I did taste fig-sue (a corruption, of course, of stew) I by no means found it "so bad"; for indeed the majority of the dishes associated with any particular county are mostly toothsome, having been the result of many years' cooking, with improvements here and there introduced, according to taste and experience.

This fig-sue set me thinking how many dishes there were peculiar to every county, and that it was a pity such good things should not be more widely known. Syllabub has a home in many places, being simply wine or spirit mixed in a punch-bowl, and milk from the cow poured on to it—the greater the force with which the milk falls the better. Junket, however, has its home in Devonshire, and comes within the compass of even a poor Londoner. It needs two tablespoonfuls of rum, a quart of new milk, and a little more than a tablespoonful of rennet. If there is a cow handy she should be milked into the basin, but if the milk is warmed the effect is much the same. The sugar and rum should be first mixed, then the rennet, and the whole must be kept in a cold place for half-an-hour or so before using—nutmeg improving it.

Firmity—or, more properly speaking, frumenty—is an excellent dish almost peculiar to Somersetshire and Gloucestershire. The country people bring to market wheat boiled down to the consistency of blancmange, with every grain visible. This, when taken home, is mixed with milk, sugar, currants, eggs, and nutmeg, when it is served in a liquid state at the pudding course.

Pies and pasties of various kinds are indigenous to many parts of England, and if ever you should come in contact with a north country goose-pie, don't neglect your opportunity, for a great many good things are included in its making. First the goose is boned, then a fowl and a pigeon; the interior of each is thickly strewn with pepper, the pigeon is put into the fowl, the fowl into the goose, and all the gaps are filled up with good sausage-meat and hard-boiled eggs. Then the goose is sewn up, laid in a large baking-tin, covered with a thick crust, and when baked—which takes several hours—some savoury well-seasoned jelly is poured in through a hole in the pastry.

This reminds me of the Norfolk cygnet—which is eating fit for an emperor; and so it should be, considering that it requires three pounds of best rump-steak, cut into dice, for the stuffing; then the bird, having been carefully tied up, is covered with a paste or buttered paper, which is taken off before the cooking is finally finished. It is roasted like a goose, and served with a gravy concocted with currant-jelly and port wine.

When I was young I spent a good deal of my time in Cornwall, as my father represented a Cornish borough for many years in Parliament. I assisted at many elections, and

experienced—as everybody does in Cornwall —the greatest hospitality from the farmers and working classes generally; but I am afraid one of the hardest parts of my electioneering experiences was eating the various pasties with which we were regaled at pretty well every farmhouse we visited. I dare say you have heard the old saying, that if his Satanic Majesty were to pay a visit in person to Cornwall they would put him under a pasty-crust and cook him; and it is perfectly true that everything that has to be eaten seems at some time or other to be turned into a pasty, the ordinary form of which is about the size of a saucer, with a crust top and bottom, made of half a pound of suet, a quarter-of a pound of flour, a pinch of salt, and cold water, handled lightly. All kinds of raw meat as well as cooked are thus treated, intermixed with potatoes and often with herbs and onions; but one of the most notable of pasties is the onion pasty, which is filled entirely with onions, and is esteemed a delicacy. I know it well—alas! too well. There is much to be said in favour of this extremely portable form of carrying food for the agricultural labourer and other working men.

A Devonshire pie is of quite another class. It is made of scrag-of-mutton stewed with water, salt, pepper, and a large sliced onion, and allowed to simmer for a couple of hours until perfectly tender; the bones are then removed, and the meat is placed in a pie-dish and sprinkled with pepper and salt. The onions are left with it, and over the whole is spread a thin layer of apple-sauce or marmalade. The crust is composed of finely-shredded suet, flour and water, and sometimes a layer of mashed potatoes is substituted. It is ready when the crust is cooked.

Norfolk dumplings and Suffolk dumplings have a certain celebrity all the world over, but I have never tasted either really good, save in the counties themselves. I will give you the recipes, in order that you, too, may try—and fail; for unless you appertain to Norfolk or Suffolk you certainly will.

For Norfolk dumplings you stir two well-beaten eggs into a pint of milk, with salt to taste, and mix as much flour therewith as will make a thick batter; drop the mixture a table-spoonful at a time into a pan of boiling water, and leave them on the fire to boil for a few minutes, then take them out with a strainer. They are served as quickly as possible with a rich, thickened gravy from the meat of the consistency of cream, and they form the first course of the dinner. The difficulty lies in the boiling, which has to be done briskly.

Norfolk dumplings are of the nature of batter—not so the Suffolk ones. For them use water instead of milk, and make a very light dough with yeast and salt, as for bread. Put it in a warm place to rise for an hour. Twenty minutes before serving, the dough is pulled into lumps about the size of an orange and thrown into boiling water, which must be kept boiling for twenty minutes. To test when the dumplings are ready a fork must be stuck in, which should come out perfectly clean. They should be served on the instant; no knife should touch them, only a spoon and a fork. To taste them to perfection you should share a cottager's dinner, who will remove them from the fire instantly on to the table. But I have often enjoyed them served from the special silver dishes to be found in many old Norfolk and Suffolk homes.

Cornish pilchards are cooked in a variety of ways, but they are never so good as when there has been a "catch," which is perhaps one of the most exciting events in the records of fishing. When the silver gleam is seen on the waters heralding their approach, every boat on the coast is on the alert and soon on the spot, and the nets are laden with these small fish, between a sardine and a herring in size. Boiled or fried on the instant when they are brought to land they are singularly delicious. Away from Cornwall they are only known packed in tins like sardines.

Scouse hot-pot is an admirable dish which hails from the "North Countree." It is made on the principle of an Irish stew cooked in a large pudding-basin, with a potato crust—simply delicious on a cold winter's day. In this part of the world they often insert macaroni into their beefsteak pies; but Shropshire is responsible for an excellent pie, made with a puff paste, and containing rabbits and fat pork, intermixed with plenty of seasoning. The livers of the rabbits are parboiled and pounded in a mortar with the same quantity of fat bacon, herbs, finely-chopped onions, pepper, salt, and nutmeg, blended together with the yolk of an egg, made into balls and placed underneath the paste cover. They are a vast improvement.

So many good things are dying out amongst us besides national costumes, that I feel this paper may have done some good if it induces anybody to take a little trouble when visiting about in Great Britain to secure, if possible, the recipes for some of the homely dishes which are to be found in almost every village, and when found, should most certainly be taken note of.

Ardern Holt.