

bright face again about the house which had grown so dreary, especially as there was every reason to hope that perfect health and strength would speedily be restored.

"I shall come to meet you presently," he said, as he bid the girls good-bye on their way down the garden path. "Do not attempt to go very far *this first time*, my darling," he added, "or you will be over tired."

Florence and Phœbe passed down the broad, straight walk of the old-fashioned garden, between the trimly-cut, sombre yew trees and wide, tall box edgings, and passed through a gate at the end. Then, crossing by a narrow bridge a little rippling brook where the minnows darted in and out in the network of warm May sunshine, they reached a pleasant field, gay with buttercups and ox-eye daisies, and ringing with the merry song and ceaseless chirping of finches and sparrows intent on domestic anxieties.

The invalid soon found that she had not yet much strength to boast of, and Phœbe having spread a rug for her under the shade of a noble beech, she was glad to discard her crutches, and settle down for a cosy chat beside her friend.

"Phœbe, dear," she said, after a little desultory talk, "you *cannot* think how lovely it is to be out in the sunshine again, and to feel that I am really getting well fast, or how thankful I am to God that He is giving me back the health I threw away. I am so ashamed now of my naughty self-will. Father is so good, he hasn't a word to say about my disobedience; but I'm not going to grieve him again like that, Phœbe," and here Florence's voice dropped low, and she spoke very earnestly. "I've given up my will to God," she went on; "and I'm going to serve Him entirely."

"Why, Florrie dear," returned her companion, "that's the one thing I wanted for you. I was sure you were not satisfied with pleasing yourself, or enjoying for their own sakes all the beautiful things with which God fills your life. But this feeling is not all new and fresh, dear?" she continued, inquiringly.

"No, Phœbe," replied her young companion, "no, I've meant to live for God a long time, and I think I have tried a little to serve Him, but now I'm going to give the life and health He has given me back entirely to His service. Can you keep a little secret?" Florence added, under her breath, and with an eager glance in her eyes.

"A secret, dear? Yes, I suppose so," returned Phœbe, "if it ought to be kept, but I am not much of a believer in secrets."

"Oh, but this won't be a secret long," said Florence. "Only I wanted to tell you first of all. I've made up my mind, Phœbe, to go out as a missionary. There are hundreds of poor Indian women, shut up in zenanas, who have never even heard of God, and who welcome eagerly anyone to speak of Him in their sad monotonous lives, and English girls and women are trifling away their time and thoughts on worldly things—even those who profess to serve Him—and letting these poor degraded creatures die in darkness. Oh it is a grand thing" she added, with enthusiasm, "to give up one's home and country for Christ's sake, and to have a real purpose for one's life in such work as this."

Phœbe Statham watched the sparkling eyes and flushed face of her young companion, as she spoke, with genuine feeling and devotion, of her determination and, when she ceased, did not reply for a moment. Then she said, "But your father, Florence, think of him; he could not do without you."

"Ah, yes," returned the girl, decidedly, "you dear old matter-of-fact thing, I have thought of father. You know we expect Bertram home in the autumn or next spring. Many people do not even know I have a

brother; he is so much older than I, and married, and went away so many years ago. He's been living in Australia, but now he's coming home with his wife and two little girls to live with us, and then I think father could spare me. I wouldn't leave him alone for anything, Phœbe; but Bertram's return seems just to make all right, and you know our Lord said, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.'"

There was silence for a few minutes. Only the tinkle of the little brook in the distance, or the plaintive bleat of a trembling lamb that missed its mother for a moment. Phœbe's eyes were on the far-away woods as she strove to think of just the right thing to say, and Florence did not look up from the daisy she was slowly stripping of its petals.

Presently Phœbe broke silence.

"No grander work could fire your ambition, Florence, darling," she said. "Would to God our English women would rise by hundreds, and go out to the great harvest field to win souls for Him; but, forgive me if I seem to discourage you. Don't you think God calls in a special manner to special work? We are not to choose our own work any more than our own trials, or our own life history, and should we not leave it to Him to show us the path to tread, not taking up of ourselves even the best or the holiest work?"

Phœbe spoke very gently, but she saw that her words had given pain.

Florence did not look vexed exactly, but the gay sparkle died out of her eyes.

"But this seems just the thing for me to do," she said. "I have not any duties at home, at least I shall not have when Bertram and Kate come back, and I always loved languages at school, and should learn them readily. Besides, there really isn't any real work to do here; the Sunday-school is much too far away, and there are hardly any poor people to look after, even if I liked poking into their dirty cottages, which I don't. You cannot say, Phœbe, that I should be neglecting home duties."

"No, dear," returned Phœbe, "I don't say that. I do not even say that you are not quite right in your desire to go out among the dark heathen women; only I want you to look for His guidance, Florrie—to wait for His call. He generally puts very distinctly, and sometimes very unexpectedly, into our hands the work He would have us do."

Florence did not reply, and before her friend had time to say more Mr. Hamilton's figure appeared on the little bridge, and the crutches were eagerly resumed, that father might see how quickly his daughter could pass through the crowd of nodding spring flowers thus aided, and after a turn or two beneath the blossoming limes, vocal with the hum of newly-awakened bees, they went in to tea.

After that Florence grew stronger day by day, and soon the friendly crutches were discarded and forgotten, and her springing step and happy laughter awoke once more the echoes in the sombre old house.

(To be continued.)

OYSTERS, AND WHAT TO DO WITH THEM

By PHILLIS BROWNE.

PEOPLE who have lived fifty years in England have seen a good many changes with regard to oysters. Once they were to be had for fourpence or sixpence a score, and thirty years ago I knew an old Frenchman who told me that the day he landed in England his first meal consisted of half a hundred oysters, a pint of porter, and a loaf of bread, for all which he paid sixpence. This made him think, "Oh, what a happy land is England!"

Usually, when food is to be bought cheap, it is not much esteemed, but this does not seem to have been the case with oysters. They were always appreciated, and people were so fond of them, and partook of them so freely, that the oyster-beds became partially exhausted, and then oysters rose very rapidly in price, and were out of reach of all but the wealthy. After this, various precautions were taken, and measures were adopted to cultivate the fish, and these efforts have been fairly successful. Oysters are now moderate in price. They are in full season, and will continue to be so, so long as there is an R in the name of the month. They are quite a delicacy. They are also, I believe, considered very wholesome, and I propose, therefore, that we turn our attention for a short time to oysters.

One reason why oysters have become cheaper than they were is that large quantities are now sent over alive from America. These oysters are generally known by the name of "blue points" and "east rivers," and they are very good indeed. They are not equal to English "natives," which are, I suppose, the best oysters in the world, but they are very good, notwithstanding; they are very cheap, too, varying in price from sixpence to tenpence or one shilling per dozen, and for cooking they are as satisfactory as if a high price were paid for them. There are a good many extravagant persons who do not believe in anything which is not costly. These persons would look with scorn upon the cheaper sorts of oysters, American, Spanish, and Portuguese. Their scorn would not, however, affect the quality of the shellfish, and, I daresay, when the oysters were not served raw, but dressed by a skilful cook, the fastidious individuals would not know one kind from another, if they were not told. For eating raw, the best natives are certainly to be preferred, but for stewing, scalloping, frying, making into patties, or sauce, the cheaper sorts answer very well.

It is rather curious* that what are called "natives" are oysters which have been taken up from their native beds and raised in artificial ones. There are three or four sorts of "natives," and the best are generally understood to come from Milton, Colchester, and the neighbourhood. Other kinds of natives are, however, considered by good judges to be of nearly equal value. There are Whitstable natives, too, Anglo-Dutch and Medway natives, deep sea oysters, and other kinds, to say nothing of timed oysters, which are so valuable for helping to flavour soup and sauce. So altogether there is no doubt that we have abundance of material at our disposal; what we have to do is to learn how to make the most of it.

Although there are so many different ways of dressing oysters, epicures are accustomed to say that they are never so delicious as when freshly opened and eaten raw without either pepper or vinegar. Yet this is not the usual way of serving them. As everyone knows, it is customary to send them to table on the flatter of the two shells, with black pepper or cayenne, vinegar or quarters of lemon, and brown bread and butter as accompaniments. On the Continent the oysters are always served in the deeper shells, and this seems to be more reasonable, because the "oyster broth" is full of flavour, and it is apt to be lost if the flat shell is employed. Whichever shell is used, the oysters should not be opened until just before they are to be eaten, and they should be laid in salt and water, made as nearly as possible like sea water, a few hours before they are opened. Some people are accustomed to put them in oatmeal and water, to fatten them, but this is quite a mistake. Oatmeal makes them look white and plump certainly, but it quite destroys their flavour.

Although I have made these remarks about the way of serving fresh oysters, I expect girls know nearly as much about them as I do, through having them at their own homes. Yet it is less likely that they will know the different ways of cooking oysters, because in England it is not very usual to cook the fish. Yet oysters cooked are something so different from oysters eaten raw, that it only for the sake of variety it is worth trying them. As is very often the case, the plainer methods are as satisfactory as the more elaborate ones. Thus, what are known as devilled oysters are very tasty morsels. Here the oysters are opened in the deep shell, seasoned with a small piece of butter, cayenne, salt, and lemon juice, then placed on a gridiron over a brisk fire, and broiled for about three minutes. Roast oysters are laid on the gridiron the deep side downwards, and are served with brown bread and butter, as soon as the shells open. I may add for the benefit of tender-hearted folks who may be disposed to pronounce this mode of preparing the fish cruel, that I have heard, on what I regard as reliable authority, that oysters feel little pain, because they are almost destitute of nerves. Fried oysters are also much approved. They should, after being opened, be put into a stewpan with their own liquor, with a little water added if necessary to cover them. Bring the water gently to the boil, and take it off the fire the moment it does so. This is called blanching the oysters, and it is done to make the outside firm, while retaining the flavour and juice inside. If, however, the oysters are allowed to remain boiling on the fire they will be quite spoilt. Drain and dry the oysters on a cloth, fasten them on a small skewer, and fry them in hot fat till they are lightly coloured. If liked, the oysters can be egged and breaded before being fried, but I question whether they are not then more trouble than they are worth. They can also be folded in caul, dipped in batter and fried, and then they become oyster Kromesies, a recipe for preparing which I have already given.

Curried oysters make a favourite dish, and when they are liked it is not a bad plan to make a little curry sauce beforehand, and heat the oysters in this when wanted. The curry sauce may be made by thickening a little stock which has been flavoured with the oyster liquor, with curry paste and flour, then heating the oysters gently in it till they are hot through, without allowing them to boil. A little boiled milk or cream is often added, and rice boiled as for curries, that is boiled in plenty of salted water until the grains are tender, but still remain separate.

Oyster patties are very acceptable delicacies, and they make a good dish for a supper party at the festive season, as a change from sandwiches. They are expensive to buy, costing 4d. or 6d. each, and the worst of bought patties, or, at any rate, of all the bought patties which I ever tasted is, that there is so very much patty about them, and so little oyster. Now, the preparation of oyster is the *bonne bouche* of the whole affair, and to find oneself supplied with an abundance of unsatisfactory puff paste, when one is anticipating a tasty morsel of oyster, is rather disappointing. Yet a good many people buy oyster patties at the pastrycook's, simply because they do not care to give the necessary time and trouble to make the puff paste cases. Under circumstances like these, it is not a bad plan to buy the empty cases of the pastrycook, and to make the oyster preparation which is to fill them at home. Then a good spoonful of the sauce can be put into each patty, the pastry cover can be laid on the top, and the patties will be worth twice as much as those usually supplied. Of course the patty cases must be warmed in the oven before the warm mince is put into them.

To prepare the oysters for the cases, open the oysters, saving the liquor, and cut off the beards. Then put both oysters and liquor into a small stewpan, and let them remain till they are on the point of boiling. Instantly strain off the oysters, and put them aside. If left to boil they will be hard and leathery, instead of being full of gravy. Boil the beards for ten minutes in the liquor from a tin of oysters (or half the liquor, according to the number of patties which are to be made), which liquor is strongly flavoured with oysters. A gill of this liquor with the real oyster liquor will be enough for a dozen oysters. Strain off, and throw away the beards, add the real oyster liquor, and thicken by mixing smoothly in an even tablespoonful of flour for each gill of liquor. Stir the sauce over the fire till the flour is cooked, and the sauce very thick; then add gradually an equal measure of cream, and a little cayenne. Put in the oysters, and let them remain in the sauce off the fire till they are hot through; fill the warm patty, and the patties are ready. The number of oysters used will depend upon their size, as well as upon the number of patties which are required. Thus, eight large fat oysters, with their sauce, would go as far as a dozen small ones—that is, for a dozen patties—and the large ones might with advantage be cut into quarters. Some cooks would flavour the oyster patty preparation with a little grated nutmeg or a little lemon peel. Additions of this sort are, however, a matter of taste. By the majority of people the unadulterated oyster flavour would be preferred. This preparation might be used for a *vol-au-vent*—that is, a sort of enlarged patty, large enough to fill a dish by itself. A few drops of anchovy sauce will help to bring out the oyster flavour.

Scalloped oysters.—Prepare some oysters as for patties. Butter some scallop shells, or deep oyster shells, put a portion of the oyster mixture in each, and cover with bread-crumbs which have been flavoured lightly with cayenne and a suspicion of nutmeg; place little pieces of butter on the top, and make hot in the oven. Some cooks fill the scallop shells, or a shallow dish, with alternate layers of blanched oysters (that is, oysters which have been heated in their own liquor till on the point of boiling) and bread-crumbs, putting little pieces of butter over each layer, and arranging that bread-crumbs should form the uppermost layer. According to this method a larger number of oysters are needed. Another way of preparing this dish is to blanch the oysters with their liquor and an equal measure of milk, thicken the liquor till it is of the consistency of gruel, put bread-crumbs with it to make it firm, and lay portions in the scallop shells, covering the preparation with bread-crumbs, and making all hot in the oven.

Stuffed oysters.—This is a superlative recipe, and would be thought too rich by many. It is, however, very delicious, and is more troublesome to make than costly. Get a dozen firm, fat oysters—blue points will be too soft for the purpose. Take a gill of good white sauce, and put with it three shallots and four mushrooms which have been finely chopped and warmed in butter. Two truffles may also be added if they are obtainable, but they are not within the reach of all. Mix the yolk of an egg in the sauce, and stir it over the fire to thicken the sauce without letting it boil. Cut the thick part of the oyster, put in each a portion of the sauce. Beat an egg, dip the stuffed oysters into it one by one, then drop them into bread-crumbs, which are placed in a sheet of kitchen paper, and lift the paper first by one side and then by the other to roll the oysters in the crumbs, and so cover them entirely. Half fill an iron saucepan with clarified fat. Heat it until a blue smoke rises from it, then drop in the oysters, and let them remain until the crumbs are lightly browned.

Put them on a clean sheet of paper for a minute to drain the fat from them, and serve on a dish covered with a heated napkin.

Oyster soup.—This soup is a great favourite, and it is astonishing how many ways there are of making it. The method chosen depends, of course, upon what the cook is willing to pay for it, for it may be made so that it will cost several shillings, or it may cost a reasonable price. In my humble opinion it will be almost as good when economically made as when extravagantly made, only it will not be so rich in the one case as in the other. The idea of oyster soup is easily understood; it is that good white stock, preferably fish stock, should be thickened with flour and butter flavoured with oyster liquor, and a little anchovy and cayenne, enriched with cream, and mixed with oysters which have been bearded and blanched. The variations in these recipes are caused by the differences in the number and quality of the oysters used. Of course, if we are going to make oyster soup at all, we might as well have the real thing. There is no satisfaction in making a pretence, and giving our friends a plateful of white sauce with one small oyster conspicuous in its solitude. And yet how many oysters are we to put in? I have one excellent recipe in which it is directed that a hundred oysters should be put into two quarts or a good tureenful of soup. A hundred oysters! The notion is appalling. Even with blue points at 1s. a dozen this would make more than eight shillings for oysters only, and I have no doubt those who made the soup would scorn blue points. Another recipe recommends that a quart of freshly-opened fine oysters be employed. Doubtless the soup made according to this method would be excellent and tasty, very tasty indeed; but could we enjoy it for thinking of our brothers and sisters *outside* in the cold who are hungering, and dying for want of bare necessities, while we are feeding sumptuously thus? Whatever may be the capabilities of the girls of our class, I am sure that I could not. Indeed, one reason why we want to become skilful cooks is that we may practise economical methods, and show all who come within our influence that food may be both appetising and wholesome without either waste or extravagance when it is intelligently and carefully cooked.

The annoyance which is almost invariably associated with extravagance like that of using a hundred oysters for a dish of soup, is that unless very careful calculations as to quantities have been made, it is more than probable that a large portion of the soup thus expensively made would be sent out of the dining-room untouched. With regard to soup, it is very usual for inexperienced cooks to make more than is needed. This is unfortunate, because soup, especially oyster soup, is not improved by being warmed up, and servants very rarely care for it. Where economy is a consideration (and it ought always to be a consideration, because extravagance and waste are immoral), it is a great point to provide a little over what is wanted, and no more. It would not do for us to provide exactly what was likely to be required. There must be a certain margin, because it would be very unpleasant if our soup were to be unexpectedly appreciated, and we were to fall short. I have no doubt many persons will consider this a minor detail not worth thinking about; but they are mistaken, for attention to it will save pounds in a year. A clever cook, who is able to calculate requirements, not in a niggardly fashion, but in a reasonable fashion, would make her money go half as far again as would the cook who was in the habit of providing more than would be used.

In making soup, therefore, or in making anything, we first of all want to know how many guests are expected, and we must regu-

late our quantities by the answer. When soup is served at the commencement of dinner, and other dishes are to follow, a ladleful is generally supplied to each person. If we allow a gill for each ladleful, we find that a pint is sufficient for four persons, a quart for eight persons and as a rule this supply would be found ample. Yet as we should not wish to have the exact measure and no more, we may say that for a small family of four or six persons a quart of soup would be abundant. In the same way the number of oysters used must be determined by the number of guests expected. If we provide four oysters for each ladleful of soup, and there are five or six guests, we might buy two dozen oysters, and very good soup might then be made at a reasonable cost.

This is how I should proceed. Open two dozen oysters and preserve their liquor, then

blanch them according to the method already described, beard them, and cut away the hard parts and put them aside. Dissolve a good slice of butter in a stewpan, and mix smoothly with it two ounces of flour. When the latter is well cooked, stir in a pint and a half of stock made up of the oyster broth (the liquor of a tin of oysters) if approved; this will increase the oyster flavour; fish stock or mutton stock and milk. Season with cayenne, half a teaspoonful of anchovy, and salt if required, and when pleasantly flavoured boil the soup gently for a few minutes, stirring it all the time; stir in half-a-pint of cream which has been boiled separately, put the oysters into a hot tureen, pour the soup upon them, and serve. Of course, if it is preferred, a smaller proportion of cream may be used, or milk may be substituted for it.

Oyster sauce is a sort of diminutive presentation of oysters, with the proportional quantity

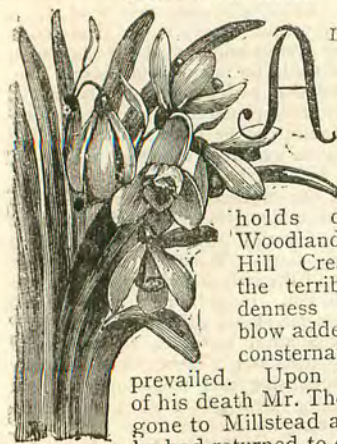
of oysters increased. Blanch the oysters and take away the beards and the hard part. Melt two ounces of butter, mix smoothly with it an ounce of flour, and add the oyster liquor with liquor from a tin of oysters and milk to make up half-a-pint. Stir the sauce till it boils, add cayenne and a tablespoonful of cream, and when off the fire a little lemon juice. Cut the oysters into halves, put them into the sauce, and serve.

One more recipe for a homely dish made with tinned oysters, and suitable for supper and luncheon. Melt two ounces of butter in a stewpan, and mix an ounce of flour smoothly with it. Add the oyster liquor and half-a-pint of milk, and flavour with cayenne and a little nutmeg. When the sauce is hot, stir in the oysters from the tin and serve with toasted fingers round the dish. In tinned oysters, the fish itself is hard and flavourless, but served thus they are often much enjoyed.

THE MOUNTAIN PATH.

By LILY WATSON, Author of "Within Sight of the Snow," etc.

CHAPTER XVII.



AL was
confu-
sion
and
mourning
in the two
house-

holds of The
Woodlands and
Hill Crest, and
the terrible sud-
denness of the
blow added to the
consternation that

prevailed. Upon the day
of his death Mr. Thorne had
gone to Millstead as usual;

he had returned to dinner in
an especially genial humour, had spoken
kindly and regretfully of the two de-
parted visitors, and had in every way
been like himself. A letter was brought
to him by the evening's post as he sat in
his drawing-room; he read it, and a
minute or two afterwards he fell lifeless
from his chair.

The cause of death was heart disease,
which had been hitherto unsuspected,
for although his grey ashen look at
times had startled his friends, he always
declared that nothing ailed him, and re-
fused to see a doctor.

The poor widow was heartbroken,
though quiet in her grief. It was indeed
difficult to realise that the barrier of
absolute silence was placed between her
and her husband so suddenly.

What would he do in the other world,
into which he had been swiftly called?
His pursuits in this life had been all
connected with business. The rise or
fall of the markets would elate or depress
him: he found his chiefest joy in
travelling into Millstead, attending to
his factory, talking with other business
men like himself, and always on the
same theme. Then at his home, a good
dinner with choice wine and a nap in the
evening constituted the staple of his en-

joyment. Now all that was reft from
him, and the spiritual life seemed
strangely and curiously incongruous with
his previous career. Would he be happy
without the money article in the daily
paper, his factory, and his dinner?

Helen could not help meditating on
this point as she went to and fro between
Hill Crest and the house of mourning,
busy with one and another kind office,
and soothing Mrs. Thorne, over whom
her heart yearned with inexpressible
sympathy. The widow clung to her,
and the daughters liked to pour out their
distress into her tender listening ear.
Oswald and his brothers, men-like, said
little of their grief, but appeared very
busy and looked pale and stern. Helen
observed that Oswald did not seem to
turn to Adela for consolation, but was
rather the one to comfort his betrothed,
who seemed bewildered and frightened
by all the sad commotion.

At last the funeral was over, the tide
of sympathy and condolence had ebbed
a little, and the mournful round of daily
life was to begin again for the bereaved
household.

"Is it your impression," Aubrey
asked Helen, on finding himself alone
with her for a minute or two, "that our
friend has left a large fortune behind
him?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so," said Helen,
astounded. "I always understood Mr.
Thorne was very rich; and they live in a
beautiful place."

Aubrey tossed back his fair hair and
slightly shook the wavy mass.

"Have you any reason for doubting
it?" inquired Helen, anxiously.

"I have heard rumours. As I travel
between Heatherbridge and Millstead, I
cannot close my ears to the conversation
of the worthy Philistines in the railway
carriage. Of late, remarks concerning
Mr. Thorne have forced themselves upon
my unwilling notice. From my appear-
ance," continued Aubrey, with a touch
of pride, "I suspect these British mer-
chants thought that their gossip fell all

unheeded. Nor should I have attended,
had I not caught the familiar name."

"What have they said?"

"The jargon of the Stock Exchange
would be as unintelligible to you as it is
odious to myself. But of late years I
fear he has been speculating, and in
matters of which he knows little."

"He has always boasted of his
wealth."

"Yes, and men who do that, I have
observed, are not the most secure. But
let us cease to discuss the subject. It
has no attraction for me; and before
long we shall know all."

Helen was plunged by this conversa-
tion into much perplexity and distress
of mind, and longed to know if there
were any truth in so extraordinary a sug-
gestion. If Mr. Thorne were not a very
rich man, it seemed to the simple girl
as though the foundations of the solid
earth would be shaken. What trust
could be put in appearances any more?
Mr. Thorne! Why of course he must
be rich. All her life she had heard of the
wealthy marriage made by Mrs. Brooke's
cousin. So she dismissed the idea,
setting it down as one of Mr. Gascoigne's
freaks.

A few days afterwards, Helen was
sent by Adela with a message to the
widow, and as she had abundance of
time in which to do her errand, she
chose a pleasant field-way by the river
side. October was drawing to its close,
and the path was thickly strewn with
leaves, among which Helen liked to
walk; their crackling rustle as she
buried her feet in them was delightful.
At her right hand brawled the rushing
river, swollen from recent rain; the sun
hung low in the west, and the sky was
flushed with a pale radiance. A crisp
touch was in the air, that spoke of
coming frost, and ere long Helen knew
these riverside fields would be haunted
by glimmering white mist, rising in the
twilight, and fleeting along the current
of the stream like a phantom presence.
As she walked, absorbed in her own
thoughts, a quick step crushed on the