

## SOME FRENCH DISHES.



In a previous paper we pointed out some of the differences between English and French cookery, and we now call attention to another difference not less noticeable than those we have already mentioned, although our remarks refer as much to the way of serving at table as to the dishes themselves. At a French table it is generally considered necessary to have more than one dish; and while an Englishman can dine off a joint or beefsteak

with potatoes, a Frenchman must have a second course, with a second accompanying dish of vegetables. Soup of some kind is also indispensable, even at the poorest table. Just lately we heard some Frenchmen who had paid a visit to England complain of not having had enough to eat at dinner while there. On being asked why they did not satisfy their appetite with the joint or dish which was served, they replied, "Oh, but we could not eat so much of the same thing!" It is possible that at a French table the total quantity of eatables does not exceed that served at an English one, for in the one case as much will be put on the table at once as is sometimes spread over two or three courses in the other. How would it suit a hungry Englishman to have potatoes simply boiled in their skins served with a little butter, as one course? We can imagine him wishing to have the dish which followed, whatever it was, served along with the potatoes. It is true that when we have seen potatoes thus served it was on a Friday, a *maigre* or meagre day, and the next course was either fish or eggs. We have partaken of a dinner composed of twelve courses, all light, unsatisfactory dishes, so far as the appetite was concerned. No joint or any substantial piece of meat appeared, and the bill of fare was entirely composed of "tit-bits." We presume that such a dinner is sometimes lengthened out for the sake of the conversation at table, "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" which ensue, for we have noticed that on such an occasion the servants were enjoined not to serve too quickly at table, that is, not to bring in too hurriedly the different courses. It may be also that the length of the entertainment may be an excuse for drinking so many kinds of wine at various stages of the dinner. In justice, however, to our continental neighbours, we must allow that, in spite of the quantity of wine consumed, no one ever appears to have passed the bounds of sobriety and moderation. Let those explain this who can; we can only suppose from the nature of the wines, or from their being taken along with solid food, that they produce no visibly bad effects.

It will be seen from our remarks that French cooks study variety rather than quantity in the composition of a meal, and we suppose this idea has occasioned the great difference between English and French cookery, in so far as that French cooks have invented a host of light made-up dishes which serve to lengthen out a repast. As we shall afterwards see, some of these are only vegetables cooked in an elaborate fashion. One of the faults found by foreigners with English cookery is, that we serve all our vegetables simply boiled in water. They do not seem to understand that we prefer the peculiar flavour of the vegetables instead of having it completely disguised by

accompanying sauces, sometimes, we may even say, totally lost in them. We lately heard two English ladies abroad compare notes. One asked the other, "Do you know what I particularly asked to have at dinner to-day, as a treat?" The other replied, "No, but I also asked to have something nice; guess what it was!" They had both asked to have potatoes simply boiled in water as a welcome change from the usual method of serving them.

We now give a few of the dishes most commonly used in French cookery to form one or other of the different courses at table. A favourite one is what is called a *vol-au-vent*. This is a case made of light puff-paste about the size of a Melton Mowbray pork-pie. It is generally procured ready-made at the pastry cook's, and filled with different preparations. The most popular is fowl cut into small pieces, along with a white sauce and little balls of forcemeat, hard-boiled eggs, mushrooms, &c. It is often filled with mushrooms alone. The contents must be thoroughly cooked before being put into the case, and all must be served hot. We give the following recipe for cooking the mushrooms. Peel and throw them into water mixed with a little vinegar. This prevents them from turning black. Put them for a few minutes into boiling water slightly salted. Drain and put them back into the saucepan with butter, salt, and pepper, shake them well, add a little flour, and stock or cream, and let them simmer slowly for half an hour. The sauce may be thickened by adding a yolk of egg beat up with a little water. Take the saucepan off the fire, to prevent curdling, and stir in the egg until the sauce thickens. These mushrooms may be either put into the case we have described, or served either on buttered toast or bread fried in butter.

Another favourite dish is macaroni, which is thus prepared: Take about half a pound of macaroni to nearly a quart of water or stock. When the liquid boils, put in the macaroni, broken into small bits, with a little pepper; cover, and let it simmer. When it becomes soft and all the liquid is absorbed, put in half a pound of grated cheese and a bit of butter. Shake the saucepan, and do not stir the macaroni in any way so as to break it. The cheese generally used contains salt enough for the dish, but if desired highly flavoured, salt may be added, and even a little mustard. *Macaroni au gratin* is prepared first as directed above. Then butter a dish which may be put in the oven, sprinkle with breadcrumbs, and put in the oven from half an hour to an hour. The top should be browned. Serve in the dish in which it has been cooked. This excellent and satisfying dish may be rendered still more appetising by adding a little minced ham and an egg. It is then, in fact, a savoury pudding, and those who like it rarely feel disposed to partake of any other course. The stock may be replaced by milk or Liebig's extract of meat diluted with water. The breadcrumbs used by French cooks, as we have already stated in a previous article, are those of toasted bread or a kind of rusk. Where economy is studied, this dish of itself makes a good dinner without any other course of meat. The cheese generally used is Gruyère and a little Parmesan, but there is no reason why any good English or American cheese should not serve the purpose as well.

As to the vegetables which are served alone, the most common is cauliflower, with a simple white sauce corresponding to our melted butter. It is always cut into little branches, and the stalk is peeled before being boiled. It is generally seasoned with nutmeg, but we advise the cook to be sparing of that spice for

English palates. Arranged more elaborately with butter and breadcrumbs, it is called *choufleur au gratin*. The cauliflower is first boiled, then put into a buttered dish, covered with little bits of butter, sprinkled with breadcrumbs on the top, seasoned with nutmeg, and browned in the oven. The same may be mixed with grated cheese, exactly as we have described for the macaroni. A little water or stock may be put in to keep it moist.

Some other vegetables are often served alone, such as green peas at the beginning of the season, French beans, asparagus, &c. The last-mentioned is generally served as a separate course in the following manner—Hard boiled eggs cut in two are put on a separate dish, and minced parsley on another. The sauce, also served separately, is simply oiled butter, and each person mixes the egg, parsley, and butter on his plate, and seasons the mixture according to his taste. Served in this way, asparagus forms a satisfying part of a dinner.

A most elaborate dish which is considered a great treat is called *tête de veau en tortue*. So many different things enter into its composition that we are almost afraid to give the recipe, lest it be considered not at all a practical one. However, as it is always possible to simplify a recipe according to the resources and taste of the cook, we give one here, promising that the foundation of the dish is a calf's head boiled and cut into small pieces. The sauce is made by browning some ham in a saucepan, then, adding stock or gravy and a bunch of herbs, let it boil for two hours. Afterwards add tomato sauce, a little Madeira wine, very little salt on account of the ham, but plenty of pepper, as this is supposed to be a highly-seasoned dish. A little cayenne may be added. Mushrooms, truffles, balls of forcemeat, pickled gherkins, hard-boiled eggs; such are some of the numerous ingredients of this heterogeneous dish. Several given in the recipe we omit, such as cockscombs, crayfish, brains, &c. Let all cook together, and when sufficiently done take out the ham, put in the pieces of calf's head, and boil for a few minutes. The little balls of forcemeat are made from the brains, along with breadcrumbs. The sauce is generally of a red colour, owing to the tomatoes, but the dish may also be served with a white sauce. If desired, it may be thickened with a little flour. As we have already remarked, the cook may select from the recipe given, but this dish is considered all the better the more numerous the ingredients are which are put into it.

A very pretty little dish often presented at French tables is *ramikins*. The name is to be seen in English cookery-books, with various recipes for its preparation, but the dish itself is seldom seen at English tables. The best we have tasted are made from grated cheese, mixed with a white sauce and yolk of egg. This mixture must be thick enough to remain on slices of buttered toast. The whites of the eggs are beat into a froth, put on the top, and then the slices are either set in the oven or in the convenient pot of fat, the *friture*.

We conclude this paper by giving a recipe for potted calf's liver, which is often served as a separate course with salad, and which is an exceedingly convenient preparation, as when properly made it will keep for several weeks. Take the half of a calf's liver, about a pound of unsalted pork fat, three or four bay leaves, pepper, salt, and if liked, an onion. Put all into a saucepan with water enough to cover, and cook gently until very little water remains. Then pass through a colander, afterwards put into an earthenware dish, and bake in the oven for an hour. Next day cover with melted

fat, and set in a cool place at least for a week before using. When made with truffles, this potted meat cannot be distinguished from the famed *pâté de foie gras* which is said to be made from goose's liver. We suspect that much that is sold as made from calf's liver is

made from pig's liver, and we give this as a hint to those who cure their own bacon. This potted meat may be made richer by the addition of breadcrumbs and eggs, but will not then keep so long. It is often eaten on bread and butter.

*Pâté lie re* (potted hare), and *pâté de chevreuil* (potted venison), are made in the same way, but these meats being very dry, a little butter is generally added to the mixture to keep it sufficiently moist. A glass of port or claret is considered a great improvement.



## CORAL.

### CHAPTER I.



AND so she remained with them.

They had found her on their doorstep, a little maiden of two or three years old, left there, no one knows by whom; but it seemed to them that she had some claim on their hospitality, if only from her helplessness, and they took her in. For no one wanted her; no one knew anything at all about her; and the two ladies who lived in the house yonder with the ugly window curtains and hideous flaming flower boxes and glaring glass to the front door determined to keep her for themselves.

"She has been sent to us," said Miss Ann, who was the elder of the sisters, a lady of about forty years.

"Yes, she has been sent to us," remarked Miss Jane, who, according to the Briggs Chronicles as preserved in the family Bible, came into the world three years later than her sister.

The two ladies were hardly distinguishable the one from the other; they both had little snarling dogs, who were also precisely alike; they both had the same kind of dresses; the same thoughts, to which they gave utterance at the same minute; the same smile brightened up their kind faces, and there was no doubt that they had the same literary tastes. Dr. Watts was their hero of poetry, and Jane Austen their heroine of prose.

Now when they beheld this little intruder, they both seized hold of it, kissed it, and cried:

"Little darling, it shall stay with us. God bless its little soul!"

"If it has one," muttered the housemaid Evans, who evidently did not approve of waifs or strays. "Beg pardon, miss, but if I were you I should send the child to the parish or workhouse, for it won't do any good to have it here."

Miss Ann adjusted her eye-glasses and glanced severely at the heartless Evans. Miss Jane followed suit. No wonder, then, that the housemaid's lip quivered!

"Evans," said Miss Jane, in tones which would have struck terror into the bravest heart, "when a common little dog came straying to our door three weeks ago, did you suggest that we should send it to the workhouse or the parish? I think not. If I remember rightly you begged to be allowed to keep the dog, and I granted your wish, praising you for your benevolence to the helpless.

Now it is a child with a soul who comes to us for shelter, and you would have me turn it away. Shame on you, Evans!"

Miss Ann might really have been a tragedy queen while saying these few stern words, and Evans was thankful to escape with her life whole, and inwardly vowed never more to raise her voice in opposition to her mistresses' wishes.

"Let them adopt five hundred stray children for all I care," she grumbled to herself, "only they will have to get someone else to take my place."

But as the other four hundred and ninety-nine waifs showed no signs of invading the house in Regent's Park, where the Misses Briggs had lived for hundreds of years, Evans' hard heart thawed towards the little child, who had sweet winning ways and a dear pretty face and soft golden curls, and a smile which no one could resist.

They christened her Coral, because she was precious to them without being costly. No doubt the clergyman of the parish thought it rather a stupid name to give her: he vowed he could not find it mentioned in Scripture, and he said he thought it desirable that the child should be called by some holy name, but Miss Ann replied, drily, "We intend to call her by the name we have selected." And although the Reverend James Deane would have wished to give some stern answer, he restrained himself in time.

Miss Ann and Miss Jane doted on their Coral: no mothers could have loved their own children more than the Misses Briggs loved their foundling; and as time went by and she began to be a real companion to them they thought themselves the happiest women in all the world to have the affection of such a sweet child.

"She shall grow up a perfect girl," said Miss Ann to Miss Jane; "and think how proud we shall be of her!"

"We won't send her to school, my dear," suggested Miss Jane, "for it is there that children learn evil ways."

"And we won't teach her painting," said Miss Ann, "for it makes the fingers so dirty."

"And certainly she must not learn the harp, because her hands would become so horny," replied Miss Jane.

"And we will not encourage her to be too learned," said Miss Ann, "because then her brain might give way, and where should we be?"

"Where should we be indeed?" sighed Miss Jane.

"Where?" asked that forward Evans, who was privileged as an old servant to make any remarks she chose: "why, I don't know about you, but sure enough the child would be in a lunatic asylum!"

The sisters smiled at each other, for there was really no denying that Evans was very clever.

But there was no cause for them to worry

themselves. Coral showed no violent fancy for painting, or the harp, or learned pursuits of any kind. She grew up a simple sweet flower, casting fragrance all around, beautiful to the eye and refreshing to the mind.

No one had ever come to claim her, although advertisements had been placed in the leading journals, according to Evans' instructions, who urged as a plea that if one takes the trouble to find the owners of dogs and parrots, one ought all the more readily to try and discover the owner of a "child with a soul!"

Miss Jane and Miss Ann had complied sadly; for after two days' possession of their foundling they had conceived such a violent affection for her that parting would have been well nigh impossible. But they were not called upon to part with her, for no one claimed her, and then, feeling they were fairly safe not to lose her, they began to quarrel over her, an event hitherto unprecedented in the history of their kindly lives. But Coral unconsciously restored peace by showing no preference either for one or the other: the same bright smile greeted them both: the tiny arms were held out eagerly to caress both, and the same laughter welcomed the arrival of either sister in the wonderful nursery made so pretty with all that the heart of child could desire, and therefore under these conditions jealousy was not able to hold her own. The years went by swifter than my pen, and each year found Coral more beautiful and more loveable. She made the dull old house into a fairy palace, and the two maiden ladies lived again in her young life. There was only one thing about her which caused them vexation, and this was not entirely her fault. You see Miss Ann and Miss Jane were old-fashioned, like their curtains and their ringlets and their silverplate and their chintz coverings for the furniture, and they could not reconcile themselves to Coral's curly and frolicsome golden hair, which Miss Ann plastered down with cosmetique every morning, and Miss Jane brushed perseveringly for half an hour every evening. And, to tell you the truth, Coral had many a quiet laugh over the uselessness of their endeavours, for no plastering or brushing could induce her hair to give up its natural tendencies. But when, exasperated by failure, they suggested imprisoning the truant locks in an old-fashioned net, Coral became a red hot rebel, and gave certain signs that she was not perfect.

The end of the matter was that the net was burnt in the kitchen fire, and Miss Ann, Miss Jane, and Coral wept and embraced and were all the better friends after this little breeze. But Coral had triumphed, and she determined to conquer still further. She had an artistic eye, which was always being distressed by the myriads of ugly things in the ugly house. She had a soul which rebelled against patchwork antimacassars and glass shades and royal crimson curtains and huge