

the house—we'll see. Now I will say 'Good night' to you, I think. I have had a long journey to-day, and I am tired. Thank you very much for giving me so much of your time."

Jim clattered down the stairs, and Mr. Chester lay back in his chair lost in thought.

"The housekeeper must be an exception to the general rule," he muttered, "if she won't show the house for a consideration. I'm safe enough, I fancy. Jim has no suspicion. And it isn't that he has forgotten me, dear old man. Jim is as staunch as ever. I thought I'd have to compel him to secrecy, but it is much better so."

It caused no small excitement in Ashworth when it was announced that Sedgewick Hall was let, and that the new tenant, a Mr. Chester, was to take possession almost immediately. That he was the same man who had recently been staying at The Crown no one knew, save perhaps old Jim, for they had not thought him of sufficient importance to watch his movements. Like all tourists he had been over the banqueting-hall, the old church, and the Roman remains; and if he finished up with the Hall garden, that was nothing out of the common, for, since the late Squire's death, the gardener had got into a way of showing it to strangers, saying in excuse that it was poor work to spend one's days in beautifying a place its owner never set eyes on, and to hear his flowers admired (and pocket a shilling or two at the same time) was what no man could grudge him. That the garden should be kept in the same perfection as if the family were in residence seemed strange, but those were the Squire's orders, and as old Porter observed when Mr. Chester made some such remark—"Young Squire Robin was always main fond of flowers."

As a fact, Mr. Chester, after admiring the flower garden to Tom's entire satisfaction, asked if it were possible to view the house. On being told it was not, he had insisted on seeing the housekeeper. That functionary, as he had foretold, proved amenable to a bribe, and with very little demur had conducted him through the principal rooms. But this proceeding being quite against the rules, she had not mentioned it, and Tom the gardener, for obvious reasons, did not betray her.

How Mr. Chester found his way to Mr.

Sedgewick's lawyers did not appear; the housekeeper was positive she had not furnished him with the address; but after a brief interval the matter was arranged, and workmen sent down from London to set the house in order. Three months later Mr. Chester came himself, bringing with him as many servants as were necessary for a bachelor establishment. That it was a distinct advantage to the neighbourhood that the Hall should be occupied all were agreed; but while some persons thought it a pity the tenant should be unmarried, others again were very glad of it. Mr. Chester, they argued, was young—for a man, that is—fairly good-looking, and to all appearance very well off. If he were cordially received, there was no knowing what might happen.

When the old Squire died the widow and her son retired to a small house some two miles distant. It had been a blow to Mrs. Sedgewick to find that Cyril was, as she termed it, disinherited, but the lad himself did not view it in that light. He had never expected to have the place, he was heard to say. He had no right to it, and was very glad the pater had done justice to old Robin. Cyril's recollections of his half-brother were very hazy; he had been scarcely eight years old when Robin went away, but he had never forgotten his kindness, and still treasured the small possessions he had left behind him. But what lingered longest in his childish mind was a vision of Robin stealing into his room on tip-toe in the dead of the night—or what Cyril had taken to be such—and waking him from a sound sleep with the news that he was going away for ever. Cyril had taken it for a dream, till day after day went by and his much-loved brother never came back to play with him.

It was early to turn out of her home, but Mrs. Sedgewick had declined to remain at the Hall for an hour after she learned it belonged to her step-son. He had telegraphed, through his lawyers, to beg her to suit her convenience, but his consideration met with no response. So far did she carry her animosity that she even objected to Cyril's showing any attention to Robin's tenant. For her own part, she declared, she would never enter his doors, nor would her boy if he had any proper pride.

Apparently Cyril was lacking in that quality, for, his mother's arguments notwithstanding, he was among the first to call on Mr. Chester. He loved the old place, of which he was now the heir, and was glad of any excuse for going there. But it was with rather a curious sensation about the heart that he followed a strange servant through the familiar scenes and heard himself formally announced as Mr. Cyril Sedgewick.

"It was very odd," Cyril said to a friend of his that same evening, "but, do you know, my entrance gave the fellow quite a start. He came towards me holding out both his hands, and seemed so glad to see me that I didn't know which way to look. I was half afraid he was going to embrace me. 'How very good of you to come so soon!' he said, laying his hand on my shoulder in quite a fatherly way. But after that we were very jolly. He said if I cared to hunt he would give me a mount whenever I liked. I was nothing loath, of course, so he carried me off to the stables, and I spent a very pleasant morning."

In spite of Cyril's favourable report, his mother still adhered to her decision to have nothing to do with Mr. Chester. It was useless to assure her that he and Robin had never met and knew nothing of each other, and after a while Cyril ceased to urge it. He consoled himself with the reflection that the Rector and his family were soon coming back from Nice, where they had been spending the winter, and Dr. Marshall would speedily bring her to reason.

And when, with boyish frankness, he had essayed to make some excuse to Mr. Chester for his mother's neglect, he was relieved to find his friend was quite unaffected by it.

"Nothing could be more natural," that gentleman had replied. "Under such altered circumstances, any communication with Sedgewick Hall would be, of course, very painful to her."

But if the Squire's widow turned the cold shoulder on the new master of Sedgewick Hall, she was the only one to do it. In a very short time he became a general favourite, and was received, not only by his immediate neighbours, but by the best families throughout the county.

(To be continued.)

WEST INDIAN PRODUCTS.

By DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.



HERE are certain things I can remember from my childhood as coming from the West Indies, which I can recall as having been given to me as great treats; and I have always retained my liking for them. But for

years past we seem to have forgotten these edibles in England; and our intercourse with the Islands does not seem to have been so close socially as it was when people lived partly there and partly in England as well, and travelled much to and fro.

The introduction of the

BANANA,

which is now a firm favourite, was the most beneficial and best of their gifts. But there are many other things waiting for an opening,

which we shall find delightful additions to our larders and store closets, and numberless dishes and concoctions that we can learn to make, which will be both useful and economical.

When we once realise this, and how much increased demand will mean to them, I have no doubt we shall be glad to learn a little about their use, and so I am anxious to interest my "G. O. P." readers in some other things besides bananas.

The nearest thing to them is, of course,

BANANA FLOUR,

called plantain meal, the plantain and the banana being first cousins of the botanical family *musa*, which are all natives of tropical climates. The banana is never eaten green, but the plantain is, and may be cooked and eaten as a vegetable or used as a fruit in *compotes*. So, as we do not know enough about them to make much distinction, the flour is generally called banana flour. I have found this a delightful addition to my stock of milky puddings; and it is much recommended

by Mr. Stanley for both invalids and babies, for it is easily digested, and excellent in all gastric troubles. It may be made for invalids like arrowroot, taking two tablespoonfuls of the flour to one pint of milk; boil for a quarter of an hour, till it thickens, then sweeten to your taste. It requires both careful boiling and stirring. For infants it should be diluted still more with milk. The same measurement will answer for puddings and for blanchmange; and it always needs boiling for puddings; bake these, after boiling, in a pie-dish, and you may use it with sugar or preserves; or serve it with the meat course, and eat it with gravy, after the fashion of a Yorkshire pudding. For blanchmange, when boiled, it should be poured into a wet mould and allowed to get cold before turning out. It requires no flavouring.

So far as bananas are concerned, we seem to prefer them *au naturel*; and really, when we consider that they are unalloyed nourishment—a real food—it seems wonderful to see people after a good meal, use them as a dessert fruit, or eat four or five at a sitting. A

plantain tree furnishes four or five of those big clusters which we know so well, which will give about two hundred of the fruit—enough to keep a family for a month. Of course, the banana is rather smaller, but is equal in nutriment, 29 per cent. being obtained from it.

I have given several banana recipes on other occasions, so I will give you only a boiled pudding which you may like to try. Eight ounces of bananas cut small, six ounces of bread-crumbs, four ounces of castor sugar, four ounces of suet, chopped fine, two eggs, half a pint of milk. Mix, and beat with a wooden spoon for ten minutes; boil in a mould for four hours and serve plain, or with a sweet sauce.

The desiccated

"COKER-NUT"

I daresay you know and use. Its value in puddings is very great, and its flavour is delightful for cakes as well. I do not know why we are asked to spell cocoa with a "k" in it, and the "er" termination, but I notice it is constantly done in shops. Our use of this word is a corruption, and a misuse at any rate; for we apply it to the product of the theobroma, the chocolate tree, which is called the cacao; whereas it is only properly used of the palm that produces the cocoa-nut; and it has no connection with the chocolate, or cacao. On the Continent we find the word chocolate used invariably; which is more correct, as it is derived from a native word, *chocolait*—used in America before the landing of the Spaniards.

This leads me back to tell you about the purest form of cacao, which we call

COCOA-NIBS.

And after the experience of our soldiers in South Africa, we know its value; and, no doubt, most of us would be better if we introduced the use of cocoa-nibs at our breakfast tables instead of tea, of which, I am sure, we take too much, now that afternoon teas are the rule with every class of society.

A cocoa-nibs beverage is very easily made, a good-sized coffee-pot (not a percolator) being all that is needed, holding about a quart. Into this put each day, after use, half a teacupful of nibs, and the pot is then filled with cold water, and it is returned to the top of the stove to simmer all day long. To begin with, you should put in one teacupful of nibs, and one quart of water; and at the end of the week, turn all the contents out of your pot, and begin again. This amount may be found too strong. It would be sufficient for four people at breakfast; so it can easily be reduced by one half, for two only. All the old recipes tell you that the grease should be skimmed from the top, but I have never found this needful. If greater economy be required, cocoa shells can be used in exactly the same way.

Amongst the tinned fruits which come from the West Indies, I must mention

GUAVAS,

which, I daresay, you know in guava jelly. They are a rather small fruit, which look outwardly like apricots, and taste and look like figs inwardly, when cut open. Place the tin in boiling water for half an hour before using, and serve with cream.

SWEET POTATOES

are the original kind that Sir Walter Raleigh brought home with him, and in the time of Queen Elizabeth, they were largely imported from Spain and Portugal, under the name of potatoes, before the tuber we know under that name had been introduced. So when you read in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* the speech of Falstaff about "the sky raining potatoes," you must remember that Shakespeare knew nothing but the sweet potato which we get from the West Indies, and which, when roasted, and eaten with butter, is very delicious.

From what is called

"FARINE MEAL,"

the cassava cakes are made, that are so popular in the Islands, and also excellent puddings, that resemble those of tapioca. Soak two tablespoonfuls in a pint of milk, add the yolk of one egg, sweeten to taste, and bake as for a tapioca pudding.

Cassava is one of the most interesting plants in the world. It produces tapioca as well as the cassava meal, and offers that peculiar admixture of a strong poison and a valuable nutrient in the very same plant. The juice is a poison, but is so volatile that when exposed to the air for thirty-six hours, it loses its poisonous properties. From it is also made the foundation sauce for many West Indian dishes, "Cassareep," which is an excellent adjunct to hashes, soups, and indeed any made dishes; but it is particularly known in its native country as the foundation of a national dish, "Pepper Pot," which is one I think every housekeeper might imitate with advantage. A very simple West Indian recipe is the following: Cut some fresh fat pork into dice, and fry them brown. Place them and the melted fat into a new pipkin, and add to them cold meat, game, or poultry. Cut up without either vegetables or stuff; add enough water to cover the meat, and to every pint of water put a tablespoonful of cassareep, and you may like to add some cayenne pepper instead of the chillies or capsciums of the West Indian recipe. On no account must you put in boiled meat. The pepper-pot, once begun, is always kept in, and also brought to table in the same pipkin. It must be boiled up every morning, and cold meat can be added to it every day before heating it. The fat should be always skimmed off the top, and only a wooden spoon should be used to put into the pipkin, which, whether used or not, must be warmed up each day.

Amongst the other products of the West Indies is

ARROWROOT,

and the following is a West Indian recipe for a cream, which is very good. Take one tablespoonful of arrowroot, two of water, boil one and a half pints of new milk, with a bay leaf, or the thin rind of a lemon. Add a dessert-spoonful of cane sugar, and strain carefully. Then pour on the water and the arrowroot; stir constantly till cool, then pour into a glass dish, and use as a custard, either with *compotes* of fruit, or tarts.

One of the recent introductions to the shops in town is the

LIME,

which is rather smaller than the lemon, but contains more juice, though, unfortunately, it is more difficult to transport, as it is more perishable. But with the new accelerated service between ourselves and the West Indies, we shall hope to have it always, as it is much nicer than the lemon. It is thought to be invaluable for rheumatism, and as a drink in warm weather it is delicious.

Perhaps we shall also see plenty of

SHADDOCKS,

or, as they are called in the East, "Pomelloes," the very largest of all the orange tribe, which is so much esteemed in India for preserving, as well as the

YAM,

which is very delicious, and is either boiled or baked like a potato.

One of my earliest remembrances is the

SUGAR-CANE,

which is sawn into pieces of the length of the joints, and the skin is peeled off, so that it can be cut lengthways, and can be eaten, or rather chewed.

TAMARINDS,

too, form an excellent and cooling drink with water, for the summer. It is made by pouring boiling water on the pulp or preserve, adding sugar to taste, and covering the jug carefully over. It must be strained before use. It is also beneficial in sore throat and fever; and in India sauce made from the fresh fruit is served with roast duck.

I have written thus far, and have not spoken of the making of

CHOCOLATE,

and I feel most remiss that I have not mentioned the swizzle-stick, which is of such importance that I find it mentioned in several lists of West Indian products. It is used for putting a frothy head on chocolate, on cream, or on any of the many summer drinks. It is a longish stick, and has a rayed head, a kind of sun-rayed head of little spikes, and it is briskly manipulated and rolled about between the palms of the hands, in the chocolate or cream.

You now, of course, comprehend that cocoa and chocolate are both prepared from the nuts by freeing them first from the pulp in which they are enclosed, and by making them undergo a process similar to malting; they are then roasted in a perforated cylinder, and are thus freed from the husks, and made into chocolate by rolling the nuts into a paste, with sugar, and some kind of flavouring addition such as vanilla. I have told you that chocolate was made by the natives of South America long before the days of Columbus, and it has been the favourite beverage of the Spaniards ever since. It seems wonderful to read, in view of the discoveries of the present war about the sustaining and nutritious properties of chocolate, that the ancient Mexicans invented it, and used it for the same purposes. In long journeys it seems to have been, and is at present, the portable soup and the main food of the natives. "Spanish chocolate," prepared in Spain, was used in England for ages, and was considered a great luxury. But when we began to import the beans ourselves, it went out of use and, in point of fact, out of fashion, for, though we eat the chocolate, we cannot be called a nation of chocolate-drinkers, and although we have a number of ready-made preparations, which can be got ready in a few seconds with boiling water or milk—which are mostly excellent—nothing seems to me to replace the old-fashioned chocolate made of the cakes, which were scraped finely, added to water, and simmered over the fire. One ounce was used to the pint of water, sugar was usually added to the chocolate when scraped, or a sugared chocolate was used. But a special vessel was required for its manufacture, which was like a tin coffee-pot in shape, with a handle and spout, but which contained a circular wheel of wood or metal, with a handle which was twirled rapidly between the palms of the hands, and which bruised and mixed up the chocolate, giving it also the required "frothing," without which no chocolate was correct. The mill was our substitute for the "swizzle-stick" of the natives. The operation of milling was done when the chocolate was boiled, and it had to be taken off the fire for it, then re-boiled and milled again, when it was ready for drinking at once—as any delay spoils the flavour, destroyed the froth, and changed the substance of the drink. Chocolate must never boil too quickly, nor stand on the fire. In short, it needs careful hands to make it, but when made, how very delicious and dainty! I have thus carefully explained the process of chocolate-making, and the way to use cocoa-nibs, because the growing of the cocoa is one of the large West Indian industries, and those are what we want to help. We can also help them by asking invariably for cane-sugar (instead of beet-root sugar), and seeing that we get it.