

## The Champion Orange - Peeler.

Photos. specially taken by George Newnes, Ltd.

BY A. B. HENN.



R. BIRCH is a ship's cook by profession, but, let it be said, he is rather more than that: he is to all intents and purposes an accomplished *chef*, as his numerous medals and diplomas

will show. More than that, again, he is an inventor. Mr. Birch is one of those extraordinary all-round men it is one's ill-luck to meet with but seldom. He is the one man we would wish to have as a companion on a desert island of the Pacific. He has the wonderful gift of making something out of what might well be called nothing at all, or the very next door to it.

He has manufactured with his own hands a set of kitchen utensils out of an ordinary hundredweight of cocoa-nuts. From an egg-separator to the most useful of soup-ladles, the shells were speedily transformed into useful and business-like utensils. Now, for a man who can make an up-to-date egg-separator out of the most common of cocoa-nut shells in less than ten minutes, it is not too much to expect something still more wonderful and startling.

It so happens that at times the most careful and industrious of ships' cooks will find time lie heavy on his hands; whenever such has been the case Mr. Birch contrived to fill in his odd moments in his endeavour to

perfect himself in one of the various hobbies which he has made his own.

When a man happens to travel in the company of some thousands of cases of oranges his mind will naturally dwell for a considerable part of the journey upon the luscious fruit and its possibilities. Our champion happened to travel once in such companionship, and he then and there decided to form a closer acquaintance with his fellow-travellers, and the photographs which illustrate this article will serve to show the fruits (no pun intended) of his endeavour.

No Christmas dinner is considered complete without its *addenda* of oranges. It may therefore not prove uninteresting to show how the peel of this popular dainty may be used as a means of ornament and, let us add, amusement.

Though much time and patience are required to attain the perfection of our champion, it is nevertheless possible to acquire the art of ornamental orange-peel-

ing in a few self-taught lessons. The photos. here reproduced of oranges peeled by Mr. Birch in our presence will give sufficient aid to a beginner should he care to devote his attention to the art for a few hours only. The well-sharpened blade of a penknife is all that is required. The oranges, of course, are a *sine qua non*.



MR. BIRCH, THE CHAMPION ORANGE-PEELER.  
From a Photo.

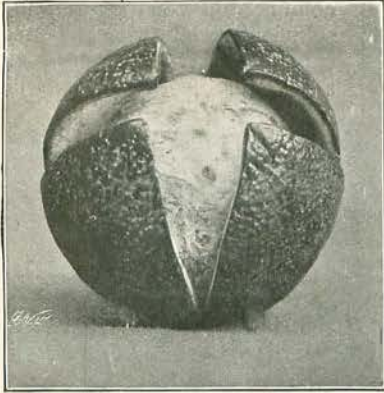


FIG. 1.

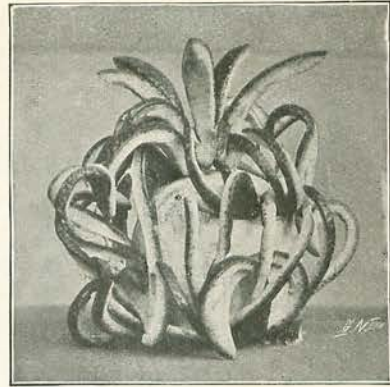


FIG. 4.

Look at Fig. 1, which illustrates the first cut. We see that the initial stage consists in making four slits at right angles from the top, but not quite to the bottom, of the peel. The nail of the thumb is then inserted

goodly strip of peel such as is shown in Fig. 3—in the second stage on the right, and in the third stage on the left of the fruit. Figs. 4 and 5 show different ways of cutting or carving; but Fig. 6 will show how to use



FIG. 2.



FIG. 5.

beneath the peel in order to separate it from the body of the fruit.

Fig. 2 shows how thin slices or strips are cut from the sides of the four main sections, or leaves. These four leaves must then be cut again from top to bottom, and from bottom to top alternately, but never quite to the end, so as to form one continuous strip of smaller leaves, that with gentle pulling will lengthen into a

the original cutting of Fig. 3 in the ornamental building up of Figs. 7 and 8.

Here we shall have to give away "a trick of the trade," if we may call it so.

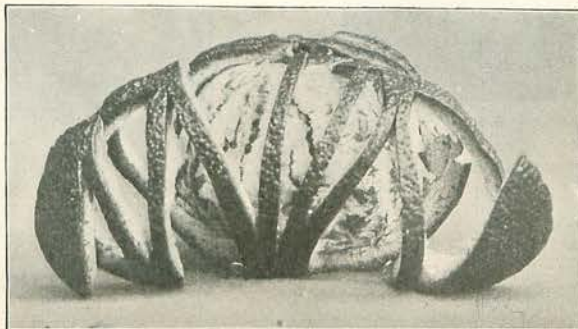


FIG. 3.

In order to mount the orange-peel artistically, small bits of wood the size of large Swedish matches, pointed at each end, will be found useful. Also longer bits of wood, such as are shown in the centre of Fig. 6, with tiny bits of wire upon

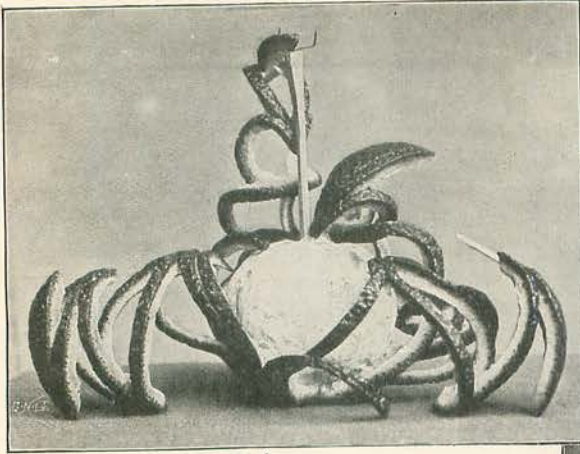


FIG. 6.

which the ends of the peel strips may be firmly fixed, will come in with advantage. Fig. 7 shows how an orange suitably peeled, carved, and trussed can be placed on an ordinary wine-glass, which glass has been



FIG. 7.

previously ornamented with a small square of white or coloured paper cut in any suitable design. In Fig. 8 we find an orange also carved and trussed, but ornamented in a more elaborate shape.

It is difficult to show in a photograph the charming effect of such table decoration,

owing, of course, to the loss of colour; but our picture will show sufficiently well what can be made of carved oranges with a little skill and a handful of greens and flowers,



FIG. 8.

such as are easily found in every well-appointed household.

Fig. 9 is what must be called a piece of fancy carving. We call it carving, for it can hardly be called peeling, though, perhaps, the difference is insignificant. It is intended to represent a Japanese house-boat, with folding doors, and very pretty do these

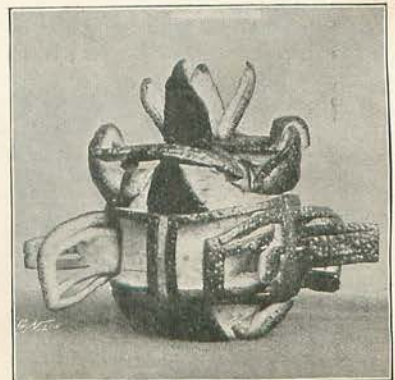


FIG. 9.

doors look, for they can be opened and closed at will, and give room for considerable amusement.

Fig. 10 is one that represents a great deal of skill, coupled with no little amount of patriotism. Mr. Birch's enthusiasm for the Crown is exemplified here in a striking manner. He has endeavoured to represent in orange-peel the symbol of our power and greatness.



FIG. 10.

fashioned. There is no limit to these designs. A favourite form of amusement suggests itself. There are, for instance, endless possibilities in trying to carve your partner's features in the peel of an orange. Try it.

In the course of conversation Mr. Birch suggested the erection of an elaborate table-centre decoration by means of one hundred carved oranges.



FIG. 11.

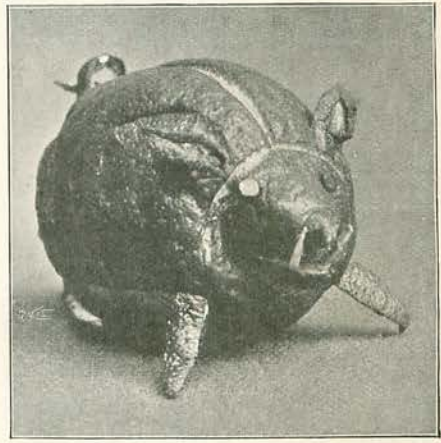


FIG. 12.

Considering the frailty of the material, we venture to suggest that he has met with no small amount of success.

There is a comic side to orange-peeling, and, though Mr. Birch mostly inclines to the artistic, there is nothing to prevent our digressing a little from his methods, and to suggest a somewhat novel kind of entertainment for after-dinner amusement.

Fig. 13 is an illustration in point. In less than two minutes this clever representation of Mr. What-you-may-call-him has been

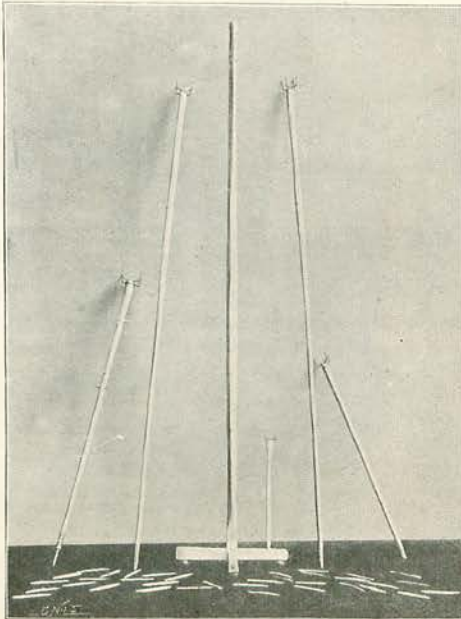


FIG. 13.

We challenged him to perform the feat, and forthwith ordered one hundred of the finest fruit extant.

Upon the receipt of these Mr. Birch set to work on the extraordinary structure which is illustrated in its various stages by the pictures that follow. In the construction of such an elaborate "set piece," as we may be permitted to call it, several accessories are of course necessary.

Those shown in Fig. 13 are of the simplest. They are the accessories that were used in the construction of the centre-piece



FIG. 14.

under notice. They consist in the first place of a base made of wood in the shape of a cross, with one long piece of wood fixed in the centre thereof and projecting vertically upwards.

Four pieces of wood, similarly shaped, are fixed into the ends of the arms of the cross in such a manner as to remain rigid in an upright position. The shorter pieces are fixed at suitable intervals, according to the form of design that is intended.

It must be understood, of course, that this staging is but an elementary one. If wire were used there is no end to the designs that might be produced. These may be left to the ingenuity of our readers.

In Fig. 14 we find what we will call the table-centre orange pyramid in its first stage. The oranges have all been carved in one and the same design. In the first row they are placed side by side in an oval, and form the base of the pyramid. It is not necessary to place the "foundation" or "staging" in the middle of the structure until at a later stage.

In some places you will see that bits of refractory peel have fallen back as though neglected, but on

close inspection of subsequent stages you will find that they have been put right, and this is part of the careful finishing touches that must be given as reasonable advance is made.

Look at Fig. 15. Here we have a number of rows added to the first, and our pyramid is already assuming respectable proportions. The centre support has been

firmly fixed into its base, and forms, as it were, the main-mast of the whole concern.

It must not be forgotten that, as the process of piling up goes on, the various supports must be tied together by means of tape, wire, or even strong thread, whichever, in fact, is most handy, in order to give the whole struc-

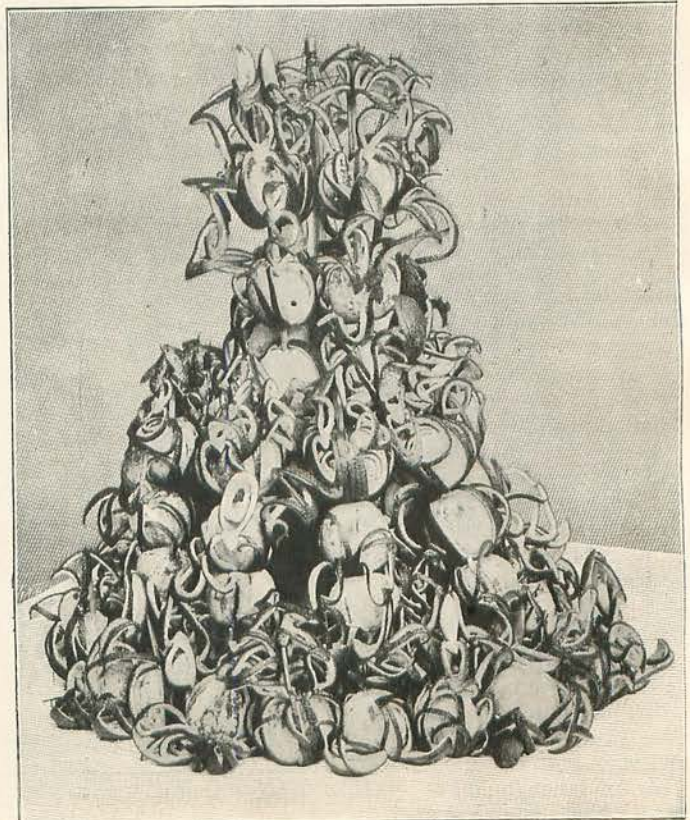


FIG. 15.



FIG. 16.

ture its required stability. If a wire frame were first constructed in much the same manner as those used for ornamental lamp-shades, the result would be more secure and, no doubt, more artistic also; but failing that, a wooden structure, such as the one indicated, will meet any ordinary case, and has on its side the advantage of simplicity, not to speak of economy.

Fig. 16 shows the pyramid practically completed, without, of course, its additional ornaments of ferns and flowers. The orange which forms the "mast-head," so to speak, must be carefully and

elaborately carved and "trussed." It is necessary that it should be firm in its setting, for should it vacillate there is danger of the whole structure collapsing owing to top-heaviness. Additional oranges, carved, trussed, and decorated, may with advantage be placed at the four corners or around the pyramid, such, in fact, as are shown placed upright on the wine-glasses in the picture.

In Fig. 17 we have a pretty view of the table-centre complete. About one hundred artistically peeled oranges are here shown, forming as pretty a centre-piece as has ever been devised. Streams of smilax trail down its sides, and maidenhair ferns peep out here and there; as also do little bunches of flowers to add the necessary colour. In fact, the whole structure reflects much credit on its originator, and suggests endless scope for the ingenuity of our readers.

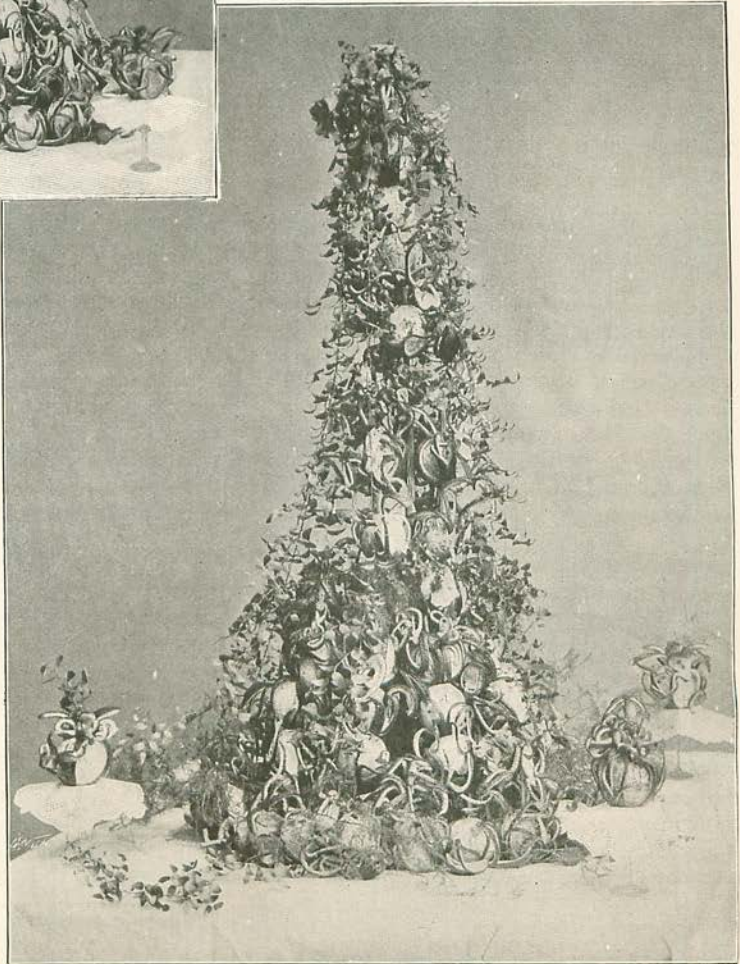


FIG. 17.