

thin stalks in the middle. This fact needs to be remembered, because if the stalks are put into the water all at once the small stalks will be broken by the time the large stalks are tender, and thus the dish will be spoiled. The first thing to do, therefore, when dressing the asparagus is to look the sticks over, and put those of the same size together that they may be evenly cooked. It is a good plan to use the large sticks for the table and the small sticks for soup, or to mix with buttered eggs for breakfast. In any case, if the asparagus is to be enjoyed in perfection it must be fresh. Its condition may be known by the stiffness of the heads; if they droop and are limp, the asparagus is stale.

To boil asparagus, scrape the stalks near the roots, cut them into equal lengths, and let them lie in cold water awhile. Put them into boiling salt and water for the first minute or so, place the lid on the saucepan to bring the water quickly again to the boil, then take it off and boil from fifteen to twenty minutes. Take every precaution to keep the tips whole. Some, with this object in view, have them tied in muslin; others put them upright in the saucepan with the tips an inch above the water. When tender at the tip, drain the asparagus well, and dish it neatly on a slice of toast cut to its own size. Send to table with it melted butter, white sauce, Dutch sauce, or oiled butter, whichever is preferred; but be sure to send the sauce to table in a boat—do not pour it over the asparagus. Asparagus should never have sauce poured over it. Many

people in these days prefer to have asparagus served cold with mayonnaise sauce. They say that those who once taste it thus will never consent to have it hot again. This, however, is a matter of taste. Cold asparagus is often served with a simple salad dressing of oil and vinegar, pepper, and salt, instead of mayonnaise.

Dutch Sauce.—A very easy, homely way of making this favourite sauce is to put the yolks of two eggs and a teaspoonful of lemon-juice, pepper and salt, into a quarter of a pint of melted butter. The sauce should cool a minute before the eggs are put in, and it must not boil after they are put in; the lemon-juice should be added last. The orthodox way of making the sauce is to boil a gill of vinegar, with peppercorns and a bay-leaf, till reduced to one-half. Strain it; stir into it off the fire the yolks of two eggs, put it over the fire in a gallipot surrounded with boiling water, and beat it till it thickens, then add gradually a good slice of butter. The difficulty with the orthodox method is that the sauce is very liable to curdle. It needs to be most carefully mixed.

Rice Cream and Apricots.—Fruit puddings are more acceptable than anything else in the spring, but until the fresh fruit appears housewives do not find it easy to supply the demand. There are, however, always available at the grocers a variety of most excellent tinned fruits and bottled fruits. A most dainty dish can be made with rice-cream and any one of these, although apricots are, per-

haps, to be preferred above all. Housewives who have not hitherto bestowed the special pains upon rice suggested in this recipe are recommended to do so at once; they will be delighted with the result. Rice-cream must be prepared the day before it is wanted.

Put a dessertspoonful of gelatine to soak in a tablespoonful of water. Wash two tablespoonfuls of best *Carolina rice in one or two* waters (this will make it less likely to burn); then cook it, with an inch of stick cinnamon, in a pint of milk. Let it simmer gently and slowly by the side of the fire for two or three hours, and add more milk from time to time until a pint and a half has been used. Take out the cinnamon, stir in two ounces of white sugar and the gelatine melted, and mix well. If allowed, add last of all three pennyworth of cream which has been whipped till firm. The cream is not indispensable, of course, but it makes a wonderful improvement. Take a plain tin mould with straight sides, rinse it in cold water and leave it wet, and set a gallipot, with a weight inside to keep it down, in the middle. Put the rice in the space around the gallipot and leave it to set. Next day remove the gallipot, turn the rice upon a glass dish, put a few of the apricots into the centre and the rest around, and pour the syrup over all. If a second three pennyworth of cream is not considered extravagant, it may be whipped and piled upon the apricots. Damsons stewed in syrup are an excellent substitute for apricots when served in this way.

Superstitions Concerning Trees.

AMONG the superstitions respecting the kind of tree of which the cross was made, two have been especially prevalent. There has been in both England and Scotland a widespread legend that it was made of the elder tree; therefore, although fuel may be scarce and these sticks plentiful, the poor superstitious people will not burn them. In Scotland, according to a writer in the *Dublin Magazine*, it is called the bour-tree, and the following rhyme is indicative of their beliefs:

Bour-tree, bour-tree, crooked rung,
Never straight and never strong,
Ever bush and never tree,
Since our Lord was nailed on thee.

In "Chambers's Book of Days" is an instance of the belief that a person is perfectly safe under the shelter of an elder-tree during a thunder-storm, as the lightning never strikes the tree of which the cross was made. Experience has taught us that this is a fallacy, although many curious exceptional instances are recorded. James Napier, in his "Folk-lore" of the northern counties of England, tells us of a peculiar custom. The elder is planted in the form of a cross upon a newly made grave, and if it blooms they take it as a sure sign that the soul of the dead person is happy. Dyer, in his English "Folk-lore," says that the most common belief in England is that the cross was made of the aspen (*Populus tremula*), the leaves having trembled ever since at the recollection of their guilt. Another legend is that all the trees shivered at the Crucifixion except the aspen, which has been doomed to quiver ever since. An extract from Mrs. Hemans's Wood

Walk and Hymn is worthy of quotation here as beautifully illustrating the first idea:

FATHER. Hast thou heard, my boy,
The peasant's legend of that quivering tree?
CHILD. No, father; doth he say the fairies dance
Amidst the branches?
FATHER. O! a cause more deep,
More solemn far, the rustic doth assign
To the strange restlessness of those wan leaves.
The cross he deems, the blessed cross, whereon
The meek Redeemer bow'd his head to death,
Was formed of aspen wood; and since that hour
Through all its race the pale tree hath sent down
A thrilling consciousness, a secret awe
Making them tremulous, when not a breeze
Disturbs the airy thistle-down, or shakes
The light lines from the shining gossamer.

In Ulster the aspen is called "quiggenepsy"—that is, "quaking aspen." In support of these beliefs the aspen still flourishes near Jerusalem. In the west of England there is a tradition that the cross was formed of the mistletoe, which before that event used to be a fine forest tree, but has since been doomed to lead a parasitical existence. The gypsies believe that it was made of the ash tree. In Cheshire the *Arum maculatum* is called "Gethsemane," because it is said to have been growing at the foot of the cross and to have received some drops of blood on its petals. "Christ's Thorn" is a very common plant in Palestine. We must mention just one more superstition in connection with our Lord's agony. In Scotland it was formerly believed that the dwarf birch is stunted in growth because the rods with which Christ was scourged were made from it.