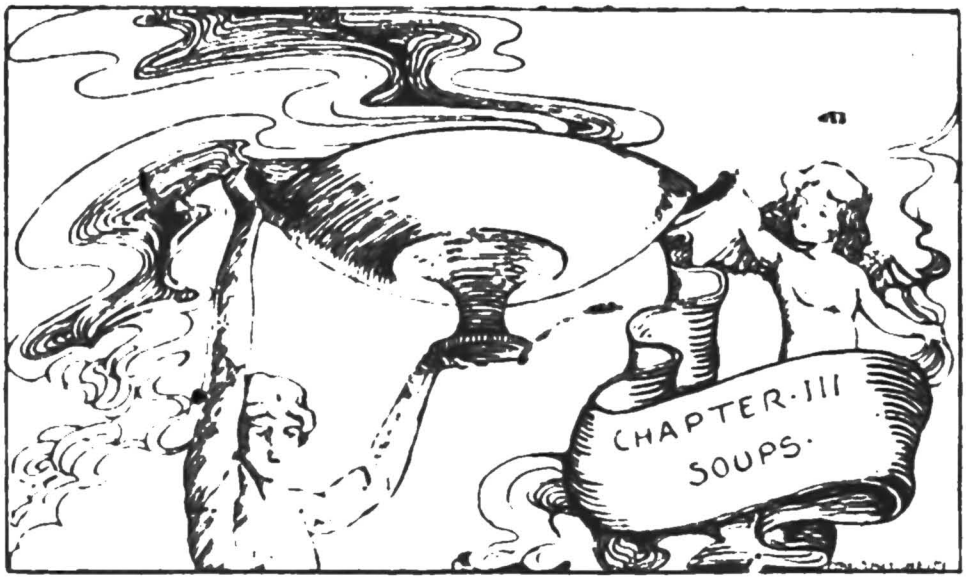

"Soup is to a dinner what a portico is to a palace, or an overture to an opera."

GRIMOD DE LA REYNIÈRE.

"WHILE there's life there's soup," said an irreverent parodist, but as a matter of fact the reverse of the proverb would be more true, for, of a verity, while there's soup there's life. There can be no complaint of having dined badly, or even insufficiently, if one has begun with a plateful of good soup; *good*, mind you, with some strength and body to it, for the coloured hot water that masquerades too often as soup is unworthy and despicable. But soup that has character, individuality, and belies not its name, is to the nice eater almost a meal in itself.

There are practically no soups beyond the scope of the Chafing Dish, albeit some of the more elaborate *bisques*, a *bouillabaisse* (an that be a soup), and a pink *Bortsch*, have not come within my experimental experience. The ordinary French *consommé* which may be likened to our gravy soup, is practically the foundation of most clear soups. One meets on different bills of fare with a score of variations on the theme, such as Printanier, Brunoise, Paysanne, Julienne, Mitonnage, Croûte au Pot, Faubonne, Macédoine, Chiffonade, Flamande, and many more, but they are really only a matter of flavouring and vegetable decoration upon a foundation of good stock. An old French cookbook, dated 1822, lies before me, which contains one hundred and two recipes for soups, but the first one mentioned, the Potage au Naturel, is the Mother Soup of all the rest.

The veritable chef has his store of Mother Soup, and that is his kitchen Stock Exchange whence practically all his varieties emanate.

The Chafing Dish votary cannot construct his own Mother Soup and keep up his own stock-pot, but he can use the many excellent

preserved soups, in bottles and boxes, which nowadays are absolutely equal to those which are self-manipulated or home-made.

I have tried many brands, and really think that there is not very much to choose between them. For ordinary use I lean to the Maggi preparations, the "Cross-Star Soups." They are in tablets, each sufficient for two persons, and the White Haricots, Onion, Tapioca, Chervil, Sago, Semolina, Lentil, Parmentier, Sorrel, Barley, Rice and Julienne are quite excellent.

The method of procedure is simplicity itself. The tablet is broken into fragments in a cup or a bowl and mixed into a thin paste with a little cold water. Then heat a pint of water in the Chafer to boiling, pour in the mixture, and let it cook gently, not boiling, for fifteen to twenty minutes. Each tablet has its own particular directions on the wrapper, and I have found that they apply equally to the Chafing Dish, except that the time required is rather shorter than that mentioned, owing to the greater heat. The flavour of the soups can be enhanced by a few drops of sauce, a sprinkling of Paprika

pepper, half a wineglass of sherry, or a dash of Tabasco ; but this is a matter of individual taste. The tapioca, sago, and semolina soups are particularly good, and I do not find that they require the addition of any salt, although this again is a purely personal affair. A beaten-up raw egg put into the soup and well stirred up just before serving makes it richer and suaver, but is by no means necessary.

By the way, in cooking soups, as indeed in all Chafing-Dish cookery, I cannot too earnestly insist upon the use of wooden spoons for all stirring manipulations. Metal spoons, even silver, are abhorrent to the good cook. Wooden spoons are clean, cheap, and thoroughly efficient. The fancy-dress-ball cook ("Cordong blew" he generally calls himself) always wears one in his apron, but if he only knew it, the wooden spoon (apart from examination awards) is his surest title to honour as a true *maître de bouche*. The Spanish Estudiantina also wear a wooden spoon in their black tricorne hats, but this, I understand, only means that they are poor and hungry, and glad to dip their spoon in

any one's mess of Puchero, in order to enjoy a square meal.

Pea Soup.

Pea soup is a great invention. Not the *Purée aux Petits Pois* (good as that may be) of the chefiest of chefs, but the plain, good, thick, flavoursome pea soup which is as nourishing as it is soothing and satisfying. I find that Chaffinda's favourite is Brand's Consolidated Pea Soup, which sounds like a gold mine, but is really a sort of *Erbswurst*, only better. It is sold in dainty little tins at an absurdly cheap price. One little tin makes two good platesful. It is prepared by mixing the contents to a thick paste with water. To this paste add a pint of cold water, put it all in the Chafing Dish, and boil it for about twelve to fifteen minutes until it gets thick. To make it even better, add a sprinkling of dried mint and a handful of toast dice, browned with butter, and you have a feast for hungry gods on a cold day.

Another way: instead of using mint and toast, cut half a dozen thin slices from a

Brunswick sausage, peel off the rind and drop them in the soup when it is half cooked. The mixture is very toothsome.

Turtle Soup.

From small things to great: from the common and strictly garden pea to the Aldermanic and luscious turtle. Most turtle importers make their own preserved turtle, which is sometimes good and always expensive. For Chafing-Dish purposes I prefer the Concrete Turtle Tablets made by Levien and Sherlock, of 68 Harbour Street, Kingston, Jamaica. They are to be had at the Army and Navy Stores. Each little cake is enough for two moderately greedy people, and costs one shilling.

Put in the Chafing Dish a good pint of water, which bring to the boil; add salt and pepper (Paprika for choice) to taste. Cut the turtle tablet into pieces, or if it is too hard, as is often the case in winter, break it up into eight or ten lumps. Throw these into the boiling water and keep on stirring until they dissolve and the soup becomes

clear. This takes some little time, but it is worth waiting for. Add a squeeze of lemon juice, a wine-glass of sherry, and a teaspoon of Worcester sauce. Give a final stir to these ingredients, and serve it up steaming hot.

There is extraordinary reviving power about a basin of good turtle soup, and, as I think I have shown, it is quite a mistake to deem it an expensive luxury. Abraham Hayward, Q.C., in his inimitable book, "The Art of Dining," which were originally *Quarterly Review* articles on Police Magistrate Walker's "Original" (1835), says that "Turtle Soup from Painter's in Leadenhall Street is decidedly the best thing in the shape of soup that can be had in this or perhaps in any other country." And if an Alderman, a Queen's Counsel, a Police Magistrate—and Chaffinda—agree on this point, who shall say them nay?

The student of mid-Victorian ballads will remember, too, the touching allusion to turtle soup in "Ferdinando and Elvira," by one Bab, where the hero searches for the cracker-motto poet, and at last unearths him at a confectioner's where he has ordered soup :

"'Found at last!' I madly shouted. 'Gentle
pieman, you astound me!'
Then I waved the turtle soup enthusiastically
round me."

But this was, on reflection, probably mock turtle soup, no bad thing either, *vide* Alice's interview with the Gryphon. It lives, when cold, in a basin, and is set hard and is therefore wavable.

American soups are not to be despised. On the contrary, they make most excellent good eating—or drinking; which is it? do we eat or drink soup? An American book of etiquette says, "Never chew your soup, always swallow it whole."

Anyhow I have tried, and found good, Clam Chowder, Clam Broth, Chicken Gumbo, Okra, Terrapin, and Vegetable Soups. They are in tins, against which I confess I am prejudiced, but as yet I am totally unpoisoned, and I am told that there is a possibility of their being shortly put up in bottles. Each tin has full instructions, and these are quite applicable to the Chafing Dish, care always being taken not to boil the soup, but to heat it gently and continuously. The Clam Chowder and Clam

Broth are both quite excellent, of a distinct individual flavour, cheering, and, I opine, wholesome. They have a peculiar *cachet* of their own, and lend a certain Transatlantic originality to an otherwise banal Chafing-Dish luncheon.

These and other American provisions I procure from Jackson's in Piccadilly. They are well "packed" and adapt themselves excellently to unexpected calls on a limited larder. Their variety is infinite, and their flavour remains good and true. Tinned Broadway in London is a pleasant experience. There are other American delicacies, to which reference will be made in due course, which adapt themselves admirably to Chafing-Dish idiosyncrasies. Columbus' patent egg is not the only culinary innovation from the New World, but the average British cook is so ignorantly conservative and abhorrently Chauvinistic that she dreads novelty as she dreads the Devil.

Poor Man's Soup.

Poor Man's Soup, as the French call it, is

a very restorative dish after a bad day on the Stock Exchange, although there is little of the Poor Man about it save the name.

Put a finely-shredded onion and a walnut of butter in the Chafing Dish and fry to a light brown colour, then add a heaped teaspoonful of flour and stir well; pour in a pint of stock, add pepper and salt to taste. Peel and slice a potato and scatter it in the soup; let the mixture come to a boil, and then allow it to simmer for ten minutes. Just before serving stir into it the yolk of an egg, well beaten up, and a dozen sippets of dry toast. This is a soothing and easy soup, but it requires the stockpot, unless you make use of one of the many varieties of concentrated bouillon or beef-tea, which certainly save a lot of trouble.

Palestine Soup.

Another simple soup, which moreover has the advantage of not requiring stock, is Palestine or Jerusalem Artichoke soup. By the way, we misname this vegetable strangely. It was imported into Great Britain from

Italy, and being the tuber of a variety of sunflower, is there termed *Girasole*, because the flower turns to the sun. We, in our insular ignorance, corrupted *Girasole* to *Jerusalem*, and then, wishing to refine the latter word, committed a further solecism by calling the soup made therefrom *Palestine* soup. Could any little exercise in culinary etymology be more ridiculous, or more typical?

Pick out six good-sized Jerusalem artichokes, boil them in the Chafing Dish with a pinch of salt; when quite soft, put them through a fine sieve and place the extract on one side. Then put a pint of milk in the dish and boil it with a teaspoonful of Paprika pepper, two cloves and a dash of nutmeg, and a couple of sprigs of parsley. Let it boil up for a minute and then strain it, and also put it aside. Melt a walnut of butter in the dish and stir into it a dessert-spoonful of corn-flour, to which add the strained milk, and, lastly, the artichoke extract, keeping the spirit-lamp flame low, so that the mixture shall not boil. When it has simmered for five minutes and become thoroughly amalgamated the soup is ready to serve, and very good it is,

or ought to be, if the cooking has been artfully and carefully carried out.

Creçy (Carrot) Soup.

Carrot Soup is not only excessively nice and nourishing, but it has also a curious historical interest. The best French carrots come from the neighbourhood of Creçy, and Carrot Soup is therefore generally known as Creçy Soup. Now the famous battle of that name, where Edward the Black Prince won his three-feather badge and motto of *Ich Dien*, was fought on Saturday, August 26, 1346, and Court gossip relates that to this day the Prince of Wales has Creçy Soup for dinner every 26th of August. I am unable to verify the statement, but trust that it may be true ; anyway it is a pretty fable.

To make Carrot Soup, cut up three or four fair-sized carrots into thin round slices, put them in the Chafing Dish with a wine-glass of sherry, two cloves, a sprinkling of nutmeg, and a good bunch of parsley ; pour over it a cupful of stock and let it nearly boil, but not quite. When the carrots are

quite soft and almost pulpy, mash them well in a soup-plate and, discarding anything hard in the mixture, replace it in the Chafer with two more cups of stock, a teaspoon of sugar, and just before it boils drop in a walnut of butter, and take it off the flame. Toasted dice are the usual accompaniment, and the soup, if well concocted, is very hard to beat for honest, toothsome fare.

The menus of three Buckingham Palace dinners tell me that his Majesty the King partook of Bisque d'Ecrevisse on May 30, 1902, of Clear Turtle or Cold Consommé on June 2, and of Consommé Riche on June 13. The second of these quotations is from the interesting programme of the fare offered to the members of the Jockey Club at the King's Derby Dinner, one item of which was Cassolettes à la Jockey Club, presumably a creation of his Majesty's chef, Monsieur Ménager.

President Loubet was less lucky when he went on his visit to Algiers in April 1903. After a review of ten thousand native horsemen at Krieder, he was tendered a native banquet by the chiefs, which began with

Locust Soup. But even this is not so unappetising as the recipe of a Monsieur Dagin, an entomologist, for Cockroach Soup. It is made thus: "Pound your cockroaches in a mortar; put them in a sieve and pour in boiling water or beef-stock. Connoisseurs prefer this to real bisque." Possibly; but I do not recommend it for the Chafing Dish.

On the other hand, real bird's-nest soup is a great luxury. As Consommé aux Nids d'Hirondelles it occasionally appears on a menu; and the Chinese, I understand, call it Yen-War-Gung. There is a subtle taste of the sea in the gelatinous lining of the swallow's nest, which is exquisite and delicate. The Japanese make a soup from black seaweed, but I cannot speak of it from experience. There lies before me a curious Latin menu of a feast given by, or to, certain German professors whose culinary Latin seems to me to be a trifle canine. Two lines of it read "Sorbitio cum globulis jecoralibus et lucanicis," and "Jus et linguis bovinis factum cum panificio." These I take to mean liver soup with sausage, and ox-tongue soup with bread.

But esoteric food-stuffs are more interesting for their quaintness than for any intrinsic merit, and I prefer to turn to the degustation of a Potage Germiny, for instance. This is the invention of the great Casimir, of the Maison d'Or, who has placed it on record that "the happiest day of my life was the day on which I invented the Potage Germiny. It is made of sorrel, the yolks of eggs, and cream. It was for a dinner given by the Marquis de Saint-Georges, the author of 'Les Mousquetaires de la Reine.' I had racked my brains to discover something wonderful, unique; and finally I evolved the potage. When the Marquis had tasted it he sent for me. I never saw a man more moved. He threw his arms around me and exclaimed in unutterable accents: Casimir, this is not a soup; it is a masterpiece!'"

This is a veritable human document.

William the Conqueror had a cook called Tezelin, who one day served him with a white soup called Dillegrout. His Majesty was so pleased that he made Tezelin Lord of the Manor of Addington. Good cooks

were appreciated thenadays. But we have lost the recipe for Dillegrout.

Attempts have often been made to cook according to ancient recipes, but rarely with success. The curious in these matters may be referred to Smollett's observations in "Peregrine Pickle" on certain experiments to cook practically according to the recipes of Apicius. They ended disastrously.

A last word on soup. The French *cuisine bourgeoise* (the best in the world) believes in good strong meat for its soups, and not, as we erroneously suppose, makes shift—and good shift too—out of any odds and ends; "any old thing," as the Americans say. On the contrary, *pour faire sourire le pot-au-feu* (delightful expression!) you must have good material, and plenty of it.