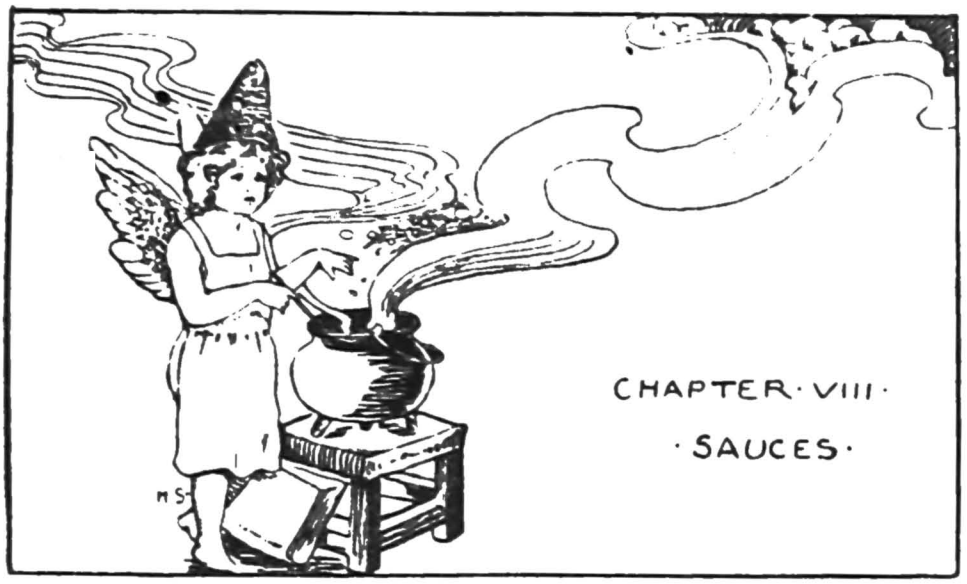

CHAPTER·VIII·
·SAUCES·

"Like as, to make our appetites more keen,
With eager compounds we our palates urge;
As, to prevent our maladies unseen,
We sicken, to shun sickness, when we purge;
Even so, being full of your ne'er cloying sweetness
To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding."

SHAKESPEARE (Sonnet cxviii.).

MADAME DE STAËL said that she did not believe in ghosts—but that she was afraid of them. After the same fashion, I do not altogether believe in sauces, or perhaps I ought to say in any save the very simplest; but I fully recognise their great value in the assimilation of food.

Many dishes, without their special sauces, would be like a well-known song sung without an accompaniment. However beautifully delivered, no one, be he never so musical,

could honestly say that he enjoyed Schubert's "Erlkönig," unaccompanied. The accompaniment is so much a part of the artistic whole that to separate them would be sheer vandalism. Something of the same intimate oneness exists in cookery. Who would care to eat lamb divorced from mint sauce, or boiled mutton without the necessary caper sauce, or goose minus apple sauce?

At the same time it is a culinary axiom that the less sauce used the better. A dish—any dish—"covered in sauce" is an abomination. We have the august authority of Pliny for moderation and simplicity. "Their best and most wholesome feeding is upon one dish, and no more, and the same plaine and simple: for surely this huddling of many meats one upon another of divers tastes is pestiferous. But sundrie sauces are more dangerous than that." This is Holland's translation.

Another point worthy of consideration is that sauce is to a great extent a geographical expression. What may be most excellent in Madrid is wholly out of place in Inverness; and what is nice at Nice is nasty at Norwich.

Insufficient account, I venture to think, is taken of the influence of climate upon national food, and it is often difficult if not impossible to acclimatise foreign fare to British stomachs, not because of anything inherent in the food, but simply as a matter of latitude. It is an historical commonplace that in the bleak cold north of Europe boar's flesh was found more to man's taste than that of the bull or bear, because it is fatter, richer, and produces much more heat. For this very reason in the South and East of Europe the flesh of swine is an abomination. In the Scandinavian Edda we are told that a boar was killed every night for the food of the warriors who feasted in high Valhalla. The bones were all preserved, together with the hide and head, and in the morning they were put together and re-endowed with life. The name of this huge pig was Sœhrimner, the cauldron in which it was boiled was called Eldhrimner, and the cook Andhrimner.

Both bear-ham and boar-ham are delicacies to this day in the North of Europe.

Much depends, too, upon the cooking; bad cooking is waste, both of money and comfort.

Those whom God has joined in matrimony, ill-cooked joints and worse-cooked potatoes have often put asunder. In sauces, above all things, careful cooking, implicit keeping to the exact formulæ of recipes, and a restraint of all imagination, are immensely necessary. Not even the greatest artist can afford to juggle with sauces. They are fixed, immutable, and unalterable. A very favourite expression in French culinary manuals is the injunction to the cook: *Travaillez bien votre sauce.* The amateur sauce-maker would do well to bear this in mind. The sauce must be well worked, amalgamated, combined; otherwise it is a mere mess, lacking cohesion and perfection.

It is alleged of the incomparable Soyer that he said that sauces are to cookery what grammar is to language. Whether he really said so or not, matters little. Some of the Soyer sauces are classics to this day, and not to be lightly imitated—especially on the Chafing Dish.

Let it be borne in mind that each and every sauce should have a character of its own. Many otherwise quite virtuous cooks

live and die in the belief that they cannot make a sauce sufficiently savoury without putting into it everything that happens to be available, thinking, ignorantly enough that every addition is bound to be an improvement.

There are only two real foundation sauces —*mères sauces*, or *grandes sauces*, as the French call them—the white and the brown sauce. All other sauces are more or less based on these two.

The great Carême resigned the position of Master of the Mouth to George IV. after only a few weeks' service, and at an honorarium of £1000 a year, because he could not bear the English climate. His culinary swan-song took the form of a wondrous sauce, now alas! lost, which he called *la dernière pensée de Carême*.

A quite excellent and easily prepared sauce, which the very poorest households can make, and which will give zest to the simplest meal, is that described in the Delamere Cookery Book. This is the recipe for Pleasant Companionship sauce. A kind word will stir up the dormant appetite, while a

harsh one will extinguish it, and, what is worse, will check the digestion of nutriment already taken. Such sauce may be regarded as Moral Sauce.

Reasoning from these winged words, we may infer that the remark so often heard from the mouths of little girl-children in the street: "Now, I won't 'ave none o' your sauce!" must really mean that there is a lack of Moral Sauce in the family circle.

In the recipes for the following sauces, I have purposely kept the ingredients as simple as possible; they are all reliable and appetising. As to which sauce appertains especially to which fish or meat, I do not propose to enter. That is a matter of taste, experience, and individuality, and I need hardly add that a white sauce does not go well with brown meat, nor brown sauce with white meat. Such admonitions are surely unnecessary to the advanced Chafist.

Butter Sauce.

Two tablespoons of butter, the same of flour; melt and mix together in the Dish,

bring to boiling-point and allow to boil up for half a minute, then pour in a cupful of boiling water, to reduce the same to the consistency of cream; boil up again, stirring all the time, add a squeeze of lemon before serving.

White Sauce.

Mix well in the Chafing Dish two tablespoons of flour, one of butter, a small grating of nutmeg, a little pepper and salt; add a tumbler of milk; hot it up, stirring the while, and strain before using.

Brown Sauce.

Two tablespoons of butter. Heat and stir until it is brown and sizzling, then add a tablespoon of Tarragon vinegar, the same of Worcester sauce, half a tablespoon of chopped capers, a teaspoon of anchovy sauce, and a wine-glass of bouillon. Boil up all this for three minutes.

Piquant Sauce.

Mix up in the Dish a teaspoon of each of the following, chopped finely : gherkins, capers, shallots (or mild onions); add half a teaspoon of black pepper and a tablespoon of vinegar. Boil this for three minutes, then add a wine-glass of bouillon and a tablespoon of "brown thickening"—which is sold ready made by grocers—and a dash of anchovy sauce. Boil up again and skim the surface before using.

Maître d'Hôtel Sauce.

Mix up well two tablespoons of butter with one of flour, a grating of nutmeg, half a teaspoon of black pepper, the same of salt, rather more of chopped parsley, and a good squeeze of lemon. Put all this in the Chafing Dish with a tablespoon of milk. Stir it until it boils up, and then serve very hot.

Ravigote or Rémoulade Sauce.

These are to all intents and purposes one same sauce, save that Rémoulade has an

added dose of oil and mustard. Mix a tablespoon of flour with the same of butter, a grating of nutmeg, half a teaspoon of pepper, the same of salt, the same of chopped parsley, and a good squeeze of lemon. Put this in the Chafing Dish with a tablespoon of bouillon, boil it up and skim it. Now mix up separately a tablespoon each of Tarragon and Chili vinegar and Worcester sauce, with a teaspoon of anchovy sauce. Boil up this mixture, and after two minutes' boiling add it to the former mixture and combine the two.

Reform Sauce.

A cupful of bouillon in the Dish, add a wine-glass of port (or claret, but port is more orthodox), half as much Worcester sauce, a teaspoon of anchovy sauce, and a full tablespoon of red currant jelly. Boil it all up for three minutes, and skim before using.

Soubise Sauce.

Peel and slice four onions; put them in the Dish with a teaspoon of butter, a little

nutmeg, pepper, and salt. Cover up and stew very slowly until the onions are almost dissolved. Then add two tablespoons of flour, a cold cooked potato cut into dice, a cupful of bouillon, and the same of milk. Stir and boil for three minutes. Then rub the sauce through a sieve and hot up again before serving.

Bread Sauce.

A tablespoon of bread-crumbs in the Dish with an onion, pepper and salt, a cup of milk, and half a tablespoon of butter. Hot up and stir for four minutes. Take out the onion before using.

Mustard Sauce.

To the foregoing plain butter sauce add a teaspoon of made mustard, a tablespoon of Chili vinegar, a squeeze of lemon, and a teaspoon of anchovy sauce. Make and serve very hot.

Poor Man's Sauce.

Chop up a fair-sized onion in the Chafing Dish with half a tablespoon of butter. Fry to a light brown, then add a cup of bouillon, a teaspoon of vinegar, pepper and salt, and a teaspoon of chopped parsley. Stir vigorously and add gradually half a tablespoon of flour, and another half-tablespoon of butter. Boil up the sauce for two minutes.

Madeleine Sauce.

Put in the Dish a teaspoon of bread-crumbs, two shredded shallots, a walnut of butter, a teaspoon of vinegar and two tablespoons of bouillon. Boil this for three minutes with pepper and salt. The sauce should not be too thick.

Black Butter Sauce.

A walnut of butter in the dish; heat it till it is thoroughly brown, then add a tablespoon of vinegar, pepper and salt, and hot it up again.

Italian Sauce.

Put in the dish the peel of a quarter of a lemon, three sprigs of parsley, one of thyme, four button mushrooms, cut up small, a walnut of butter, and a suspicion of garlic. Hot up, and when all is well mixed pour in half a cup of bouillon ; let it get thick, but not boil. Then take out the garlic, and add half a walnut of butter.

Onion Sauce.

Cut up two good-sized onions into slices. Simmer them gently with a tablespoon of butter and two slices of ham, one fat slice and one lean slice, a teaspoon of flour, salt, pepper, a pinch of sugar, a wine-glass of bouillon, and a good squeeze of lemon juice. Hot up for three minutes.

Gubbins' Sauce.

This is the best sauce I know, and I have tried many, for grills or anything in that way. I copy it verbatim (and without permission)

from that most excellent food-book entitled "Cakes and Ale," by Mr. Edward Spencer. Gubbins' Sauce is peculiarly adaptable to the Chafing Dish, and is made in this wise: Fill the lower hot-water dish with boiling water. Keep it so. Melt in the Chafing Dish proper a lump of butter the size of a large walnut. Stir into it, when melted, two teaspoonsful of made mustard, then a dessertspoonful of vinegar, half that quantity of Tarragon vinegar, and a tablespoonful of cream—Devonshire or English. Season with salt, black pepper and cayenne, according to the (presumed) tastes and requirements of the breakfasters. So far the recipe. I should add that although the ingenious inventor puts Gubbins' Sauce with a grill among his breakfast allurements, it is by no means necessary to confine it to that meal. I have found it excellent at midnight—and later—with devilled kidneys, and it is not to be despised at any time of the day when you feel that way inclined.

"The Gastronomic Regenerator: a Simplified and entirely New System of Cookery," by Monsieur A. Soyer of the Reform Club,

London, 1846. Such is the mouth-filing title of one of the most interesting and curious works of the last century. The two-page dialogue with Lord M(arcus) H(ill), and the extraordinary recipe for "The Celestial and Terrestrial Cream of Great Britain," are in themselves inimitable in their quaint pomposity. *Maga* for August 1846 reviews the work kindly and good-humouredly, and says that the "Gastronomic Regenerator" reminds them of no book so much as the "Despatches of Arthur Duke of Wellington." It may be a matter of dispute, adds *Maga*, whether Wellington or Soyer acquired his knowledge in the face of the hotter fire. Although Soyer was comic in his pompous affectation it must not be forgotten that he did splendid work in the Crimea in feeding the sick and wounded. Also his sauces are master works. And for these two things much may be forgiven him.

The foregoing sauces are best described as the regulars. There are plenty of others, mostly of a rather elaborate description, which those more experienced than myself

must describe. I will content myself with adding quite a few irregular or freak sauces, if I may use the expression.

Fisherman's Sauce.

This is a rather rich mixture, adapted for fresh-water fish. After a decent day's sport with the tricksome Mayfly, the quarter of an hour just before dinner may profitably be employed in concocting it. Half a pint of cream, or milk, but cream is better, two tablespoons of walnut ketchup, home made for choice, and one tablespoon of anchovy sauce. Boil these up for five minutes, and just before serving add a small walnut of butter, a teaspoon of flour, a squeeze of lemon, and a pinch of cayenne. Stir up all together, and serve very hot. It is the best fresh-water fish-sauce going.

Bigarade Sauce.

This is essentially the wild-duck sauce, and is a welcome and agreeable variant on the stereotyped port-wine sauce. Pare the

rind of two oranges, shred the rind thinly, and boil up for five minutes in as little water as possible. Set the rind aside. Melt a walnut of butter in the Dish, mix it with half a tablespoon of flour, and stir it till it begins to burn; add a cupful of bouillon, pepper and salt, the squeezed juice of both oranges, and a teaspoon of soft white sugar. Now put in the shredded rinds, boil up for two minutes, and serve with the duck. If you have not time to make this sauce, mix a glass of port wine, a dash of cayenne, and a squeeze of lemon. Slice the breast of the duck and pour this mixture over it. A very useful adjunct to wild duck is a simple orange salad. Divide two or three oranges into sections, dress them with oil, vinegar, pepper and salt, and eat it as you would any ordinary salad.

Périgueux Sauce.

This is simply Truffle Sauce, and appeals mainly to the vulgar-minded. It is made thus: Chop up two truffles very finely. Put them in the Chafing Dish with a glass

of sherry and a walnut of butter, and boil for five minutes; add pepper and salt and a squeeze of lemon. I am of opinion that truffles (which the ancients thought were the product of thunder) should only be eaten in one way, and that is *en serviette*, cooked in hot wood ashes and eaten with praise and thanksgiving. The flavour of truffles I take to be one of the most perfect in the whole category of food-stuffs. Their indiscriminate use in shreds, choppings, patterns, and for ornament, I consider to be a capital sin. The *charcutier* is mostly to blame for this; any old thing dressed up *aux truffes* he considers a delicacy. One day a band of knowledgeable eaters will slay all *charcutiers*.

Truffles suggest pigs; pigs suggest, to me, Berkshire; and Berkshire a certain witty lady who, speaking of a local magnate, a self-made man, and a very wealthy one too, but who retained his awfully uncouth manners, described him as a wild boar whom civilisation had turned into a pig. I fear me there are many such.

One of the English Kings died of a surfeit of lampreys, and one of the French

Ministers of a surfeit of truffles, which were also alleged to have mainly contributed to the demise of the famous gourmand Béquet, who was the predecessor of Jules Janin on the *Débats*, and on whom Roger de Beauvoir wrote this epitaph :

"Cy-gît Béquet, le franc glouton
Qui but tout ce qu'il eut de rente ;
Son gilet n'avait qu'un bouton,
Son nez en avait plus de trente !"

An ex-chef to whom I told this story of Béquet was profoundly moved, and said simply : "It must have been a beautiful death !"