"And sweets grown common lose their dear delight."
SHAKESPEARE (Sonnet cii.).

THE warm glow of virtuous satisfaction induced by the knowledge that one has done what was expected of one is my sole excuse for the contents of this chapter. I have no sweet tooth, and my experience in the cooking of sweets has been limited to the few recipes which come later on. Even these I would rather have omitted, because it is so easy to buy *éclairs*, *petits fours*, and other "dulceties" wherewith to finish off a Chafing-Dish meal, but it is just on the confines of possibility that this book may be read by a lady—or, if I am lucky, by two or even three—and I should be indeed accounted a poor instructor if I omitted

sweets from my curriculum. "I humbly beg pardon of heaven, and the lady," as Mr. Pepys said when he kissed the cook.

"Give the bairns pudding in plenty, again say I"—so wrote Sir Walter Scott, and I am heartily at one with him, but Chaffinda does not accommodate herself to the fabrication of pudding—and, besides, children ought to be in bed when supper-time brings the Chafing Dish on the table. Baking is of course impossible, and boiling in a cloth equally so. I have already said that Chaffinda—being so nearly human—has her limitations, and these are two of them, which I, for one, in no wise regret. Nevertheless, pudding is a great institution—in its proper place—which is childhood.

Our national Jack Pudding was a common object of whilom country fairs, a sort of typical buffoon who performed pudding tricks on a stage; one of them being to swallow a number of yards of black puddings amidst yokel plaudits. Curiously enough, and this is an etymological puzzle well worth following up, the typical buffoon of most European countries is christened

after the commonest article of the daily food of the people. France has her Jean Potage; Germany, Hanswurst; Italy, Macaroni; and Holland, Pickel Herringe. This can hardly be a coincidence.

The learned Dr. Thudichum wisely says: "The state of culture of every nation can be estimated comparatively by its confectionery, even when we know little of its cookery, for confectionery is the most advanced and refined part of cookery, and thus enables an expert to draw a conclusion backwards regarding the kind of cookery out of which it originated."

This is certainly true to a limited extent, but to attempt a rough and ready analysis on these lines is like dissecting a humming-bird with a hatchet. Generalisations are as dangerous as July oysters.

Apple Fritters.

Now for my sweets. The first one on the list is the familiar Apple Fritter, or *Beignet de Pommes*. It is quite easily cooked, especially if a little care be taken over the

concoction of the all-important matter of batter.

Begin by carefully peeling four apples, fairly large ones for choice, then cut them into slices, about one-eighth of an inch thick, and take out the cores. Now make the batter. Put four tablespoons of flour in a basin with half a teaspoon of salt. Pour one tablespoon of oil on to half a tumbler of tepid water. They will not mix of course. Add this gradually to the flour, stirring it well. Next beat up two whites of egg to a very stiff froth, and stir it lightly into the flour. The batter is then ready for use. The eggs should not be added until you are quite ready to make the fritters. Now with a skewer or fork take up the apple rings, one by one, dip them in the batter, see that they are well covered, and then drop them into the Chafing Dish in which you have heated two tablespoons of butter to boiling-point. Fry the apples until they are soft, and of a golden brown colour. Drain them on kitchen paper, and sprinkle them with a little cas or sugar.

Stewed Apples.

Apples, plainly stewed in slices, in milk and sugar, and then served on a bed of rice, are very satisfactory. The experimenting Chafist will find that sweets can very often be adapted so as to be suitable for the Chafing Dish. But always rehearse your impromptus before trying them in public.

Stewed Rhubarb.

Cut a pound of fresh sweet rhubarb into two-inch lengths, put it in the Chafing Dish with a tumbler of water, the peel of one lemon, and a tablespoon of soft white sugar. Let it boil up until the rhubarb is quite soft, and then either serve hot, or—preferably—let it get quite cold and serve with clotted cream.

Almost any stoneless fruit can be cooked in the same way. Gooseberries, currants, strawberries, and raspberries all make excellent compote, but care must be taken that the fruit does not get pulpy: it should be quite soft, but retain its proper shape.

Quite ripe fruit is not so desirable as fruit that is just going to be ripe.

Fried Pineapple.

Cut a smallish pine into half-inch slices, paring the skin, of course, and split in half three or four ordinary penny sponge cakes. Fry these latter in the Chafing Dish in a tablespoon of butter till they are light brown on both sides. Take them out and keep them hot. Fry the pine slices in a like amount of butter and their own juice. Pour over them a wine-glassful of brandy and serve on the browned sponge cake. Cream may be added, but it is not at all necessary.

Coffee Chestnuts.

Shell a dozen chestnuts, and boil them for five minutes, then remove the skins. Put them back in the Chafing Dish with enough fresh water to cover them, and a tablespoon of soft white sugar, boil them until they are soft. Take them out and drain them, but do not break them up. Now put in the

Chafing Dish the yolk of one egg, another tablespoon of soft white sugar, half a teacup of strong black coffee, a liqueur of brandy and a tablespoon of milk or cream. Keep on stirring till just upon boiling, then pour over the chestnuts, and serve hot.

It is not requisite to add brandy or other spirits to the foregoing dishes. It certainly tends to completeness of flavour, and, especially with cooked fruits, seems to bring out a subtle aroma or bouquet, but many most estimable gourmets dispense with all spirits in cookery, and are none the less well fed. Spirits should never be given in food for the young.

A Surrey curate opened the Sunday School one day with the well-known hymn, "Little drops of water, little grains of sand." In the middle of the first verse he stopped the singing, and complained strongly of the half-hearted manner in which it was sung. He made a fresh start. "Now then," he shouted, "little drops of water, and for goodness sake put some spirit into it!" And he wore a blue ribbon in his button-hole too!

I should have liked to give the full recipe for a seventeenth-century "Quelque-Shose," according to Master Robert May's cook-book. The ingredients read temptingly—if somewhat lavish in quantity. Forty eggs are required, which are to be made in the form of omelets, which are to be "rolled up like a wafer" and served with "white wine, sugar, and juyce of lemon." Another recipe of the same artist was for "Pie Extraordinary, or Bride Pie, which was made of "severall compounds, being of severall distinct pies on one bottom." At a rough guess this may have been the forerunner of our latter-day Bride-cakes, with their superimposed layers of almond paste, and consolidated indigestion. It is always marvellous to me that there are so few sudden deaths after a wedding, particularly if the cut cake has been handed about promiscuously.

Bananas contain three times as much nourishment as meat or potatoes, and as a food are declared to be superior to bread. They are as good raw as cooked, and my only advice is to take care to buy the smaller, more delicate kinds, and to avoid the grosser

plantains, which are musty and flavourless. The kind known as "Lady's Fingers" are the best of all.

Banana Cream.

Tear off a strip of skin from each of half a dozen bananas. Put them in the Dish with a tablespoon of milk, and a sprinkle of soft sugar. Heat them up until the skins are quite brown and the fruit soft and pulpy. Then strip the skins, add some more sugar, and serve with sponge-cake fingers.

Rice Milk.

Put in the Chafing Dish a teacupful of clean boiled rice, rather more than a pint of milk, a small stick of cinnamon, and a bay leaf. Add a heaped tablespoon of soft white sugar, and a suspicion of vanilla. Boil up very slowly, and remove spices before serving.

Skansk Gröt.

There is a very good Swedish pudding, known as Skansk Gröt, which is made in the following wise: Boil in the Chafing Dish half a pound of clean rice, with the peel of a lemon, and half a stick of cinnamon, and a cup of milk. Just before it comes to the boil add four apples, sliced and cored but not peeled, and a handful of stoned raisins, a tablespoon of sifted sugar, and a wine-glass of sherry. Boil all this for eight minutes, then take out the lemon peel and the cinnamon before serving. This Skansk Gröt can be eaten hot or cold, with or without cream or milk. It is good anyway.

Stuffed Figs.

Stuff a quarter of a pound of good pulled figs with blanched almonds, split in half. Put in the Chafing Dish a tablespoon of soft white sugar, a teaspoon of lemon juice, and a wine-glass of claret. Heat this up, but do not boil. Add the figs, cover up, and cook for eight minutes, when they ought to be quite tender and ready to serve.

Whisky Apples.

Peel and core, but do not cut up, four largeish apples, not necessarily cooking ones; in fact sweet eating apples are better. Put them in the Chafing Dish with six tablespoons of soft white sugar, the rind and juice of half a lemon, and an inch stick of cinnamon, a tiny bit of vanilla, and half a tumbler of whisky. Let this simmer over a low flame for a good half-hour, till the apples are soft. When quite done put them on a hot dish and pour the sauce over them.

There is an old tradition among whist players to the effect that there are at the present moment seven hundred and fourteen Englishmen wandering in destitution upon the continent of Europe, because they would not lead trumps when they held five. I do not desire to find myself in a like case, so I have played my trumps, and must abide by the consequences. I do not propose to invent impossible sweets which I have not tested in the Chafing Dish, give them high-falutin' titles, and palm them off on unsuspecting and all-confiding Chafing students.

Let them turn inventors themselves, and my blessing go with them!

I have purposely said little or nothing on the subject of appropriate drinks to accompany Chaffinda's efforts, because that is, to a certain extent, a personal matter. At the same time it may be useful to know that it is very easy to mature cheap claret. The trick is French, and fairly reliable. It happens sometimes that the ordinary dinner claret of commerce leaves something to be desired in the way of flavour and palatability. It may be sour, acrid, harsh, biting, vinegary, and half a dozen other things, all unpleasant. Add to a glass of such ordinary wine a teaspoonful of very hot water. The effect is usually magical. The wine seems ten years older. It becomes softer, mellower, suaver, and really almost drinkable. *Le petit vin bleu du pays* becomes almost a *cru*.

Some people drink coffee after dinner, and eke after lunch, if they have time—and lunch. Others use it as a barometer. You can do both, if you know how. It is very simple. The coffee must be very hot. Drop a lump of sugar into the cup, and before stirring it

observe how the bubbles rise. If they rush towards the middle of the cup and meet, then it is going to be fine weather. If they remain close to the edge of the cup it will rain or snow. If they separate but wander about vaguely, then the weather will be changeable. This barometer is not infallible, but it has been known to be accurate. Try it. Café frequenters on the boulevards spend hours in checking the prognostications of their coffee by the weather reports in the papers.

I should like to give a few final hints on Chafing-Dish party-giving, the result of my own experience, which has been both bitter and sweet. Imprimis: "Don't ask too many people," as H. J. Byron said on his deathbed, when his coachman told him that one of his horses was ailing and he thought he had better give him a ball. "You should always be two," quoth the Abbé Morellet, "to eat a truffled turkey. It is my invariable practice. I am going to dine off one to-day. We shall be two—the turkey and myself."

A fellow feeding makes us wondrous kind, and I do not for a moment suggest that Chafing-Dish meals should always be soli, far

from it; a duet is delightful, a trio tactful, and a quartet quieting. I cannot advise going beyond that number. Chaffinda is always present, of course, but she does not count as company, she is merely the hand-maiden, the *geisha*, the tutelary genius hovering over the meal.

I have already enjoined the absolute necessity of rehearsal; leave nothing to chance. If you want to make your little effect, see that it is properly stage-managed; your properties ready, your limes in working order, and your band parts ready and complete. "In the green salad days of my youth, when I rarely spoke aught but the truth," I tried more than once to dazzle my guests with unrehearsed effects, but in every case the result was dire failure. All that sort of thing is magnificent, but it is not cookery.

Again, do not attempt too elaborate a bill of fare. Be pre-Raphaelite in your attention to detail rather than Academic in your mass of lavish decoration. Of two evils choose the prettier, and prefer a discreet little meal of soup, meat, vegetable and savoury, to an

elaborate programme which defeats its own ends, and clogs the appetite.

It is such much better form to be simple, poor and proud—besides, it costs less. About forty years ago the late Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborn wrote a letter on the growing love of luxury to the *Times*, in the course of which he said: "The wealthy per force of their positions must have large expensive establishments; they are doomed to live in show houses; they are the proper consumers of the produce of the decorative arts but they yet have to eat, and here comes the question. How can they eat in character? How can they dine up to their pictures, sculpture, plate, and music?"

The answer is easy enough. They can never dine up to their pictures, because they are usually dyspeptic.