

WILKINS UPON RURAL LIFE

It was while spending the night in the Phenix Hotel, Oldcastle, that I overheard the following conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins, who occupied the next room to mine:

"If I do, hang me! There now, you understand that, Mrs. Wilkins, don't you?"

"But, Wilkins, if you'll only listen for a min—"

"I tell you I don't want to listen; I don't want to hear another word on the subject. I'm not a-going to break up and move into the country for any summer to accommodate you or any other woman. Do you suppose I'm going to give up all the comforts of civilization, and dodge around in a wilderness, hunting for some old shanty or other on an open lot, where it will be so confounded hot that you'll get a sun-stroke every time you go to bed, and where the garret will be full of wasp nests, and of hornets, that will walk around and jab their stings into you the very first chance they get? Why, you must be crazy. I'm not—"

"Wilkins, you know I didn't want—"

"I say I'm not going to locate in any canoe away out of town, alongside of some canal, where the children will very likely get drowned in the dirty water, or where Bucephalus Alexander will get an idea that he's bound to be a sailor, by Caesar! or die, and run off some night, and scud away from home in a canal boat, and get wrecked, and be brought back an inanimate clod, so that I'll be put to the expense of a funeral. I say—"

"You talk like a—"

"I say I don't intend to plant myself alongside of any rippling canal, so as to give you a chance to get me out on the banks, in the cool of the evening, to sit there with one arm around what used to be your waist, while I fight mosquitoes with the other; and you calmly watching the canal boat engineer mashing his mules on the head with a brick, while you try your all-fired best to voice, 'Oh, Cottage by the Sea,' with that voice of yours, which puts me more in mind of a saw mill that's out of gear, than anything else."

"Mr. Wilkins, aren't you ashamed to speak?"

"Do you suppose I intend to put up with all that annoyance—to live on country fare, and have nothing but pork and cabbage for breakfast, cabbage and pork for dinner, and pork with cabbage for supper? Well, I just want you to understand, I don't know very well how it is in the country. When you want an egg the hens are all setting; when you want a drink of milk, the calves are draining the cow; if you want your boots blacked, you've got to do it yourself. They don't have any of the modern improvements, I tell you. There are no sidewalks, or street lamps, or Common Council men or peanut stands, or lager beer saloons, or any of the blessings of civilization. And am I to go and flop myself down in such a place just to accommodate you? You must think I'm a jackass. I can just tell you that you can't get any such soft thing on me, even if you have got red hair, and your sister Louisa is cross-eyed, and does have to work for a living."

"What on earth has that got to do with it, Mr. Wilkins?"

"Never mind, I know what it's got to do with it. But I'm not going to emigrate to any farmhouse, you just bet. They always have dogs in the country, but all that poetical stuff about their 'having a deep-mouthed welcome home' is played out. They don't do anything of the kind; they fly out and grab you by the leg, and prance off with a mouthful of your calf; and as for country girls, they're worse yet; they always kiss you with a noise like tearing a yard of muslin. But, to be sure, even that's better than being stammered over by an old pullet like you."

"Wilkins, I'll scratch your eyes out!"

"Besides, I'm a temperance man, and I don't want to go to any rural district where there isn't a hydrant within ten miles, and every time I want a drink of water I've got to go out and practice gymnastic exercises on a pump handle and jerk it up and down for an hour and then get nothing but some water that tastes like a seltzer powder. A man might as well be dead as to be in a place like that. He might just as well be moldering in the cold and silent grave as to live in a farmhouse where all the newspapers are a year old, and when you read of a murderer that makes your hair stand on end, and get you excited only to find that it was committed when you were a boy, and the murderer has been hung a quarter of a century."

"Mr. Wilkins, that's not so."

"It's all very well for you to talk about the comforts of a farmer's life, but you're as ignorant about that as you are about most everything else. You want to be vaccinated with some common sense about as bad as any woman I know. For a farmer, I'd like you to recollect, has got to rise right up out of his bed in the middle of the night, and split wood, and prow around the barnyard, and get his breakfast almost as early as most people get their supper the night before. And then, very likely, he has got to stop eating to go out and doctor some old horse with the spavins or the glanders, and get kicked in the jaw, or have some mad bull or other stick nine inches of horn into his vitals. You may consider that pleasant, but I don't. If you're so fond of it I'll kick you in the jaw myself to see how you like it. I'd do it any how, if I thought it would keep you quiet."

"Mr. Wilkins, you're a brute!"

"Maybe I am, maybe I proved myself to be a regular full-minded idiot by yoking myself to such an old heifer—"

"Mr. Wilkins, I'll break—"

"Such an old heifer as you; but I'm not quite dumb enough to go to settling in some agricultural district, and getting so sunburned that people will mistake me for a negro, and will go around wondering what could have in-

duced such a good-looking colored man to marry a homely woman like you."

"Wilkins, you sha'n't talk in that scandalous way."

"There isn't any fun in it, I tell you. I never saw anything nice about a place where all the creeks are covered with long-legged spiders that hop around like they had St. Vitus' dance, and where every time you go out and lay down in a hayfield a million ticks bury themselves in your leg, and straddle bugs get down your neck, and you very likely sit on some rattlesnake or other, and have him chaw on you so that you come home cowed, and with your pants full of stickers at that. If you want to go out and enjoy a snake bite, and get soaked with poison, why go. Very likely it will be a good thing; but I'm not going, if I am acquainted with my own mind, and I think I am."

"Very well, Mr. Wilkins; I won't do it. I, you som-th'ng, but now I went to—"

"All right; I don't want to hear it, especially if it's anything about the country."

"So I shall just sell the place and put the money in my own pocket."

"Sell what place?"

"Oh, never mind, Mr. Wilkins; you don't want to hear it."

"What place do you mean, I ask you?"

"Well, then—but, no; you said you didn't want to hear about it, and I won't annoy you."

"Mrs. Wilkins, if you don't tell me what you mean by selling the place, there will be a first-class riot in this room, in less than five minutes."

"If you must know, then, I—I—I—well, I—"

"Why don't you say it, woman?"

"Well, then, Uncle William is just dead, and has left me his farm, but as you don't like the country, of course, it's of no use to us, so I'll—"

"Don't like the country! Who said I didn't? Come, now, Matilda, I was only joking; we'll move out to-morrow. If I did call you a heifer, you must forgive me, for you know that you are one, anyhow, and—"

"Take that, now, and if you come back here I'll break every bone in your body."

Here there was a heavy fall on the floor, and there is reason to believe that Wilkins was kicked out of bed. But he didn't seem to mind it much, for he started out right after breakfast the next morning to walk five miles to see that place. I think he likes the country better now than he did.

THE POPULAR OPAL.

Lovers of the beautiful opal will be glad to learn that not only is it no longer considered unlucky, but it has become a supreme favorite with Queen Victoria, who is fond of giving it away as a keepsake. It was Scott's novel of "Anne of Geierstein" which brought evil import upon the rainbow-tinted gem and caused people to shun it. Jewelers in vain endeavored to dispose of their wares, but few people could be induced to buy these lovely stones. An old superstition forbids the picking up of an opal, as you pick up somebody else's bad luck. The Empress Eugenie refused to accept a magnificent parure of opals presented to her by Napoleon, although it was artistic and costly. The ladies of the German court have never been dominated by this absurd superstition, and wear the opal with pleasure. During the last few years a reaction has taken place, and American women are accepting the magic gem. Many superb designs are seen at the jewellers, one of the latest being a golden eagle with outstretched wings thickly studded with opals, the edges being incrustated with tiny scintillant diamonds. The shimmering, changeful fire of the opal renders it suitable for articles of jewelry to be worn in the evening, the light glittering upon the evanescent hues of the lovely gem in a most fascinating manner. There are striking designs of butterflies, dragon-flies and beetles in opals associated with emeralds and diamonds. These stones admirably express the brilliant beauty of the insects. In ancient times the opal was considered a lucky stone, and was believed to be imbued with all manner of supernatural virtues. These stones were offered by one friend to another as talismans, and there was no thought of their bringing evil fortune to the wearer.

A CHURCH COURTSHIP.

A young gentleman, happening to sit at church in a pew adjoining one in which was a young lady, for whom he conceived a most sudden and violent passion, felt desirous of entering into a courtship on the spot; but the place, not suiting a formal declaration, the exigency suggested the following plan: He politely handed his fair neighbor a Bible, open, with a pin stuck in the following text: 2nd Epistle of John, verse 5. "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." She returned it with the following: 2nd chapter of Ruth, 10th verse, "Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take notice of me, seeing I am a stranger?" He returned the book, pointing to the 12th verse of the 3rd Epistle of John: "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face." From the above interview the marriage took place the coming week.

HE WOULD BE AHEAD.

A Scotch minister, missing one of his congregation from church, called on him one day to see what was the matter. Well, Mr. McNab, I was wondering what was the matter that you were not at church these few Sundays back? Oh, I have been at Mr. Dunlop's kirk. Minister—Oh, I don't care for my congregation going to other churches. How would you like your sheep to go into strange pastures? Mr. McNab—Oh, I wadna care a grain if they got better grass.

JIMMIEBOY'S DESSERT.

It was at dinner at the Profile House. I'll have some blueberry pie and some ice cream, said papa. You may bring me some jelly and creamcakes, said mamma. And what will you have? asked the waitress of Jimmieboy. I'll have the same, said Jimmieboy.

THE HOME.

TESTED RECIPES

Coffee Cake.—Two cups brown sugar, one of butter, one of molasses, one of strong coffee, as prepared for the table, four eggs, one teaspoon soda, two of cinnamon, two of cloves, one of grated nutmeg, one pound raisins, one of currants and four cups flour.

Creamed Dried Beef.—One tablespoonful of butter, browned in a frying pan; put in about one-half pound of chopped beef, and let get thoroughly hot; pour in one cupful of milk, and thicken with a little flour and water. Scrambled eggs put in and the beef are a nice addition.

Marguerite Pudding.—Scald one quart of milk in a double boiler; beat together three-quarters of a cupful of sugar, two tablespoonfuls of flour, the yolks of five eggs, one tablespoonful of salt, and one cupful of cold milk. Pour the scalded milk over the mixture and return to the fire. Stir until it thickens, beating until smooth; cook fifteen minutes; add one tablespoonful of butter and one teaspoonful of vanilla. Turn into a pudding dish. When cool beat the whites of the eggs to a froth, add five tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar, and beat until very stiff and glossy. Spread over the top of the pudding and dust with powdered sugar, and put in the oven until a delicate brown. Serve cold.

Lady Cabbage.—Chop some cabbage very fine; cook in boiling water one-half hour; drain, then season highly with pepper and salt, one-half cup of milk, and one teaspoonful of butter. Cook a few minutes and serve.

A Bean Salad.—A red, white, and green bean salad, is made as follows: Cook string beans until tender, cutting them once or twice lengthwise. Cook some white beans, which have previously soaked for twelve hours, and add some beets. Let them all get cold. Place some white beans in the centre of the plate, some string beans, piled up in the centre of the other beans, and around the edge put the sliced beets, and serve with a dressing made of oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper, well mixed.

Boiled Beets.—Beets require very careful use in cooking, so they do not bleed and lose color. Be careful not to abrade the skin. Boil one hour in hot, slightly salt water, when cooked, rub off the skin. When served alone, they are best when cut up and covered with the following: One tablespoonful of butter, two of vinegar, and a little pepper and salt, brought to a boil, and poured over the beets.

Tasty Dishes of Rice.—To cook rice properly is not as commonly understood as it should be, even though it is simple. It should, however, be boiled in a double boiler when possible. It should not be stirred at any time, only as little as possible, to prevent scorching. Rice should always be well washed. Then cover it well with cold water, bring to a boil, pan off and again cover with cold water, and bring to a boil. By this means the grains will be found to be thoroughly cooked and separated, instead of having a mushy appearance.

Rice Croquettes.—These are very appetizing. Take two cupfuls of boiled rice, one well beaten egg, a heaping teaspoonful of good butter, and a teaspoonful of good salt, or enough to season all beaten thoroughly together. Roll in cornmeal, or fine breadcrumbs, and fry brown in hot lard.

Rice Crumpets.—Take two cupfuls of milk, one small cupful of yeast, one tablespoonful of white sugar, two tablespoonfuls of melted butter, one cupful of boiled rice, and enough flour to make a light batter; salt to taste. Beat all together, and let the batter rise until light. If started after dinner they will be ready to bake in time for supper. Bake in quick oven.

Boiled Rice Pudding.—Wash a pound and a half of rice and mix with it a half pound of large raisins, seeded. Put it into a bag leaving plenty of room for swelling, and boil in slightly salted water two hours. Serve hot with sugar and cream. Instead of raisins, apples, peaches, or other fruit may be used.

Ginger Cakes.—Mix one cupful each of molasses and brown sugar, half a cupful of lard, three cupfuls of flour, a teaspoonful of ginger and three eggs. Roll thin and cut out and bake in a quick oven.

Corn Bread.—One pint sifted cornmeal, one pint of wheat flour, one pint buttercup sugar, beaten light, one-half cup sugar, butter size of an egg. Add last one teaspoon of soda. Bake about twenty minutes in a hot oven.

Stuffed Oysters.—Wipe and season large oysters with salt and pepper; roll them in cracker dust; spread half the oysters with force-meat; cover these with the remaining oysters; press them together gently; double bread, and fry in the usual way. Serve on a folded napkin with lemon points.

Light Waffles.—Sift a quart of flour, rub a teaspoonful of butter in it; add a teaspoonful of salt and three cupfuls of milk. Beat well. Dissolve half a cake of compressed yeast in a little warm water for half an hour. Beat three eggs and add. Let stand ten minutes. Grease well-heated waffle tins; fill with batter and bake. Take up on a heated plate, spread with butter and heated with syrup.

Piquante Sauce.—Put a tablespoonful of butter in a small saucepan and set over the fire until brown; add a tablespoonful of flour and mix until smooth; thin with a cupful of stock and stir until it boils. Have two tablespoonfuls of finely chopped onions, one of vinegar, one tablespoon of capers, a sprig each of thyme and parsley cooked in a saucepan; add to the sauce; season with salt and a pinch of cayenne; stir all together well and serve.

SOME GOOD RECIPES.

Scalloped Fish.—Pick any cold cooked fish carefully from the bones, and moisten with an egg, beaten up in

milk. Add one large blade of pounded mace, one tablespoonful of flour, one teaspoonful of anchovy sauce, a lump of butter, some breadcrumbs, and pepper and salt to taste. Place in a deep dish or in scallop shells. Cover with breadcrumbs, butter the top, and brown quickly in the oven. Serve hot.

Cold Mutton.—Cut the remains of cold loin or neck of mutton into small cutlets trim off some of the fat, season and dip them in a beaten egg, roll in breadcrumbs and fry in boiling lard to a nice brown. Arrange neatly on a platter and pour around them a good gravy, or a hot tomato sauce.

Parsnip Cakes.—Mash cold boiled parsnips and form into small cakes, dip into beaten egg and breadcrumbs, season to taste with salt and pepper, and fry to a light brown. Serve hot. Salsify, potatoes, turnips, and carrots, are equally nice served in this way, and if the quantity of the vegetable is insufficient, mix well, and finely grate breadcrumbs, mix well, and season thoroughly.

Roast Beef Remnants.—Remove all the meat from the bones and chop fine. Use cold gravy that has no fat, put it in a spider to heat. If you have no gravy, use stock, or some good extract of beef. Season the minced meat with salt and pepper. When the gravy boils put in the meat, cover, and let it remain long enough to heat thoroughly. Stir in a small piece of butter. Toast some bread, butter very lightly, lay a slice on a platter, and pour over it some of the minced meat and gravy.

Cold Meats With Curry.—Beef, lamb, or veal may be made quite appetizing, when it has to be warmed over, by using a curry sauce. Remove all fat and skin from meat, cut into thin slices, season with salt and pepper. Put into a saucepan three tablespoonfuls of butter, half an onion, cut fine, and a spoonful of tomato catsup. Cook two minutes, then add two tablespoonfuls of flour, and a heaping teaspoonful of curry powder. Stir until smooth, gradually add a pint of stock, and cook five minutes. Strain the sauce into a spider, add the sliced meat, and cook fifteen minutes. Serve with rice balls.

Bread Balls.—Allow well-worked bread dough, made of the whitest flour, to become very light. Butter the hands, pinch off small bits, and roll into round balls, making one dozen. Put them into warmed and greased gem irons. Let them become light, prick with a fork, turn a pan over them, and bake in a quick oven. They should be a delicate brown and as nearly round as possible.

Brown Soup.—Brown two heaping tablespoonfuls of butter in a kettle. Break four slices of toast in bits, and stir them in the butter. Pour four teaspoonfuls of boiling water over and add one-half teaspoonful of salt, one tablespoonful of pepper, and half a cup of good cream—more if the cream is thin. Let it just come to a boil and serve. This is a very delicate soup.

Roasted Oysters.—Scrub the shells well in cold water; place the oysters in a baking pan, laying them on the deep half of the shell. Bake in a hot oven until the shell is well open. Remove the upper shell carefully and serve with butter, pepper and salt.

Green Pea Soup.—A delicate and delicious soup is made of green peas. Put one onion cut into halves, with a generous quart of shelled peas in a saucepan with hot water enough to cover them, and cook until the peas are soft. Remove the onion and press the peas through a colander. Put in a saucepan over the fire one pint of chicken or veal stock, and add the mashed peas to it. Rub together two tablespoonfuls of butter and one of flour, moisten with a little cold milk and add it to the soup with one cupful of milk and the same amount of cream, which is nicer if whipped; or the whole mixture may be beaten with a whip just before turning into the tureen. After adding the milk season well with salt and pepper, and allow the soup to boil up once before serving.

Browned Sweet Potatoes.—Wash and rub sweet potatoes, steam until tender; remove the skins, slice, place in a pan, spread with bits of butter, and set in the oven to brown.

Baked Tomatoes.—Take six smooth, round tomatoes, not too ripe, cut a slice from the smooth end of each, and with a teaspoon carefully remove the pulp; lay each slice with the tomato it is cut from, chop very fine, one onion, a little white cabbage; crumb in two slices of fresh bread; add half a cupful of sweet cream, a piece of butter the size of an egg, one teaspoonful of sugar, salt and pepper to taste. Fill the tomatoes with this mixture, replace the covers, and place them, stem-side down, in a buttered baking-pan. Bake for half an hour. If nicely done they are a handsome dish, and are very good. Be careful not to break them when taking from the pan. Serve hot.

FOOD FOR CHILDREN.

Sweetmeats that are healthful for children are made from dates stuffed with peanuts. Seed the dates, shell the nuts, and take off the red skin that covers them. Either use nuts, that have just been roasted or if raw ones are used, brown the meats in a little olive oil or fresh butter. Put on a shallow dish in a hot oven, and stir often until the nuts are a light brown. Drain them and put several in the center of each date. Press together and roll in granulated sugar.

CYNICAL.

Those who have reached a point in their journeying on a wrong road where they have lost their pride in a good name are in a very dangerous position. They are not far from the moral case of a certain speculator of whom one acquaintance said to another: "I don't see how he can do as he does; he does not seem to think much of his reputation." Well, answered the other man, I don't see how he could think much of it—it's so bad!

BEFORE AND AFTER.

Evening Caller.—I have been wondering who those companion-framed portraits are, one a beautiful young girl, the other a wrinkled, sad-faced old woman. Pretty Hostess.—Oh, that's ma, before and after marriage.

PERSIA ADVANCING.

That Country Raises a Barrier Against Russian Ambition.

The industrial development of Persia, in spite of many difficulties and opposition from corrupt officials and fanatical priests, has made great progress during the last few years, has raised a moral barrier against Russian ambition. Persia, with an elaborate telegraph system, a rudimentary free press and a veneer of Western civilization in her capital, almost as substantial as that of Belgrade or Bucharest; with all the nations of Europe represented by their legations, and enjoying the special regard and friendship of England, cannot be attacked and overrun without outraging the conscience of Europe. Russia has done good service in Central Asia in restoring order and subduing the wild, slave-hunting Turkoman tribes, but she has no superior civilization to offer to an ancient monarchy like Persia, nor is the fate of the Persian peasant so miserable or degraded as that of the Russian. Nor should it be thought that Persia is a country where life and property are insecure.

Crime is of rare occurrence, traveling is safe, and it is from pride, and not from necessity that Persians carry arms. The streets of Teheran are certainly safer than those of Paris and London, and a stranger may roam at night in perfect security in the darkest quarters of the capital. Lastly, the Russian Empire, which from various considerations, such as its vast area, the homogeneity of its population, and their stolid patriotism, is impregnable as a defensive power, is singularly weak for offense. The very qualities which make the Russian soldiery so formidable at home render them inefficient abroad; the inferior quality of the officers and Generals, the indescribable corruption which makes the transport and commissariat departments invariably break down, the want of communications and the general absence in staff or men of any intelligent spirit—these and other causes render the Russian armies, so overwhelmingly on paper, altogether unreliable for offensive warfare. Even Turkey, bankrupt and enfeebled, would have beaten Russia in the late war had not the despised Roumanians come to her assistance.

JANIZARIES.

The Sultan's Strange Army and Its Historic Place.

The Janizaries are unique in the history of the world. Nothing like them has ever been known in the constitution of any state. We think of them somehow in association with the Mamelukes of Egypt, but though there were some points in common between them, they differed widely in their character and aim. The Mamelukes, though originally a race of slaves, founded a sovereign dynasty in Egypt, but the Janizaries, even at the height of their power, never ceased to be soldiers, and they maintained throughout all their history the proofs and symbols of their lowly origin. They made and unmade sultans, but they never aspired to the high positions of state, and were content to fill their original posts. Not one of their number ever occupied the throne of Turkey, and the whole corps acted ostensibly only as its guardians. They formed the first standing army of which we have any record; but they were appointed not as the defenders of the national interests, but simply as the executors of the personal designs of the Sultan. The name by which they were best known and which inspired most awe was Yenitzer, signifying in Turkish the new army, because it superseded, as a perpetual and consolidated force, the old troops which were raised only in emergencies and scattered when war was over.

NERVE-SOOTHING BELL.

The "Popular Science News" is authority for the announcement that "sensitive persons who are annoyed by the sharp, incisive sound of the electric bell will be glad to know that a French electrician has produced a bell which gives a continuous musical sound. The note is very soft and sweet, although penetrating, and is said to be an exaggeration of that obtained by rubbing the edge of a glass with the finger. Instead of a bell with a hammer and a spring interrupter, a steel bell is used, which is its own interrupter."

THE ENGLISH PENNY.

The disappearance of the old ship and lighthouse from the English bronze sterling penny has created some talk, but the Deputy Master of the Mint declares that neither the ship nor the lighthouse was old; indeed, the lighthouse was such a novelty that everybody who wept over its deletion should be thoroughly ashamed of himself. It was in the reign of Charles III. that Britannia (said to be modeled on La Belle Stewart, afterward Duchess of Richmond) first arose on the face of the copper coinage.

ELECTRIC PAINTING.

At the last half-yearly meeting of the Directors of the Overhead Railway Company, in Liverpool, England, the Chairman mentioned among the innovations proposed on its lines a novel way for painting the structure and stock of the system. Electrical power, he showed, was utilized for this purpose. The paint was sprayed on by electric apparatus, with the result that the cost of labor was reduced by about 90 per cent.

A SALOON IN A CHURCH-YARD.

The strangest saloon in the world is a tavern in Hendon, a London suburb. It stands in the centre of an old churchyard, and ancient tombstones surround it. It is many hundreds of years old and is the only licensed beer saloon in the neighborhood of the graveyard.