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THOROUGH GOOD COOK

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THE

THOROUGH GOOD COOK

A SERIES OF

CHATS ON THE CULINARY ART

AND

NINE HUNDRED RECIPES

BY

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA

New York

BRENTANO'S

CHICAGO *PARIS* *WASHINGTON*

1896

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PREFACE.—I.

To the General Reader.

EVERY one of the Recipes in this work has been carefully studied, and tested from personal experience, and compared with cognate formulas in the culinary manuals of such eminent authorities as Laguipière, Beauvilliers, Ude, Carême, Soyer, Francatelli, Urbain Dubois, Jules Gouffé, Kettner, Chandelier (Napoleon's last *chef* at St. Helena), Garlin, Suzanne, and Durand, together with the English experts, Hunter, Kitchiner, Brand, Simpson, and Dolby. A lady to whom I once mentioned that I had tried practically all the dishes which I have enumerated in the following pages, observed, with a smile, half of incredulity and half of disdainful compassion, that it was a wonder I had not died of apoplexy years ago; and should such a contingency suggest itself to the minds of my readers, I may respectfully inform them that my study of the Art of Cookery extends over a period of fifty-five years; and that ever since I was a boy I have been, not only theoretically but practically, a cook. In a work of mine called "Things I have Seen and People I have Known," I incidentally remarked that my dear mother had all her children taught systematically to cook, as an integral part of their education; and that although, from the circumstance of my having been a delicate child, I was absolved from the ruder labours of roasting, boiling, and baking, I was early initiated into the mysteries of preparing soups, entrées, sauces, and sweets. Further, I may just hint that although I fully appreciate the attributes of a *gourmet*, I certainly do not wish to claim the status of a *gourmand*. I delight in the genesis, as well as in the analysis and the

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moderate degustation, of artistically concocted *plats;* but it so happens that I have always had a very small appetite—that my favourite dishes have been boiled chicken and rice, Irish stew, macaroni, and haricot beans, and that for the last few years I have been almost a vegetarian.

It is because I wish others to live well, and to satisfy a cultured appetite without injuring their digestion, that I have written this book. In composing it I have kept three objects in view. First, to avoid padding my pages with quasi-scientific disquisitions on the chemistry of cookery. Nothing would be easier than to tell the public that which they have been told over and over again—that in making the *pot-au-feu*, or fundamental beef broth, the heat of the fire swells the muscular fibres of the meat, dissolving the gelatinous substances therein contained, and that by these means the osmazome, which is the most savoury part of the meat, gently adds "its unction to the broth, while the albumen, which is the muscular part producing the scum, rises to the surface." To harp on such a string would be not only to waste the time but to exhaust the patience of my readers. Nor do I intend in these pages to teach the fundamental principles of cookery. I assume that the cook in whose hands I earnestly hope that very many ladies will place this book has learned the rudiments, and is able to use the minor arts, of her trade—that she knows how to roast, boil, fry, stew, and bake. I have not hesitated, therefore, to leave to her knowledge and judgment things which I should have had to set out in detail if I had been writing a treatise on the elements of the culinary art. It is true that now and again I have given some simple hints with regard to braising, since that is a process only imperfectly understood by the majority of English cooks, and not half so much used by them as it should be.

My second object has been to make "The Thorough Good Cook" as cosmopolitan as I possibly could, though

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without attaching to avowedly foreign dishes more or less unpronounceable titles. I have seen and tried the cookery of every country in the civilised world—from that which has furnished forth the tables of princes down to that which has formed the fare of peasants and mechanics; and I do not know any foreign kitchen from which I have not been able to learn something, and in which I have not found dishes easily adaptable to English tastes. Scores of dishes, indeed, which we fondly imagine to be exclusively English have their counterparts in the *cuisines* not only of France but of Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, and even Greece and Turkey. That we, on the other hand, have a national English school of cookery is to me as indubitable as that we have a national school of painting; and I maintain that our *cuisine* contains many excellent dishes, as wholesome as they are succulent, among which I hasten to cite turtle and mock-turtle soup, boiled leg of mutton and caper sauce, grilled fowl and mushrooms, Irish stew, beefsteak pie and pudding, Scotch kale and collops, lark and quail puddings, pickled salmon, soused mackerel, tripe and onions, ox-tail soup, liver and bacon, roast saddle of mutton, roast sirloin of beef, and plum pudding —which last dainty, if the directions I have given are followed, need not be in the least indigestible. We have, besides, the finest butcher's meat and nearly the finest game in the whole world; although France and the United States beat us in the way of poultry. Finally, our Imperial mastery of India has added to the English kitchen a large number of splendid curries; and I seriously contend that a well-prepared curry is not only delicious to the taste but is also in most cases a salutary stomachic. The trouble is that, although we have plenty of good English dishes, not one cook in twenty knows how to prepare, artistically, edibles for the table, and that not one cook in a hundred has the faintest idea how even the simplest of curries should be composed.

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My final object in putting forth a work to which I have devoted many years of hard study and labour has been to make "The Thorough Good Cook" adaptable to very moderate as well as to well-lined pockets. It does not profess to be a manual of cookery for the working classes; because I am well aware that a working man's wife, whose allowance for housekeeping would not exceed fifteen shillings to a pound a week, could not afford to purchase all the ingredients prescribed in many of my least expensive recipes. This book is meant, first for that middle class of which I am myself a member, and next for the upper classes among whom I have mingled, and who, even to the very grandest of them, I have long been convinced, very often become wearied to the point of disgust by the monotony of the bills of fare provided for them by able and experienced *chefs*, who, for all their ability and experience, are continually travelling in a circle, instead of striking out now and again at a tangent by borrowing dishes from alien kitchens. Over and over again have I been asked by ladies who have had French cooks in their employment to tell them of some novel sauce, some unhackneyed entrée, some seldom-heard-of salad or sweet or savoury or *hors-d'œuvre*, the recipes of which they might communicate to their cooks, so that something like variety might be imparted to their luncheons or their dinners. The help which I have been able to give to a few I now extend to all; and I shall not, I hope, be accused of vanity when I say that such information as will be found in "The Thorough Good Cook" covers a rather wide range of culinary items. "I have seen the manners of my time and I have written this book," said, in his preface, the author of "La Nouvelle Héloïse." I, for my part, have seen and essayed the cookery of two generations all over the globe—I have a retentive memory: and that is why I have written "The Thorough Good Cook." G. A. S.

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