

"I did not say so, Ruth. You must know it was real. I ask again, what did it mean?"

"Mean—mean? Oh, miss, forgive me—do, pray! I'm—I'm very miserable," and she burst into tears.

"You, Ruth, miserable?" said the compassionate Gertrude, ever ready to pardon anything that merely affected herself, and, perhaps, all the more impressed by the woman being a person of middle age. "Why miserable? And what has my getting better had to do with that?"

"Hech, but, forgie me taking the liberty to say so, I just thought you looked like some one I remember—minded me of some one I loved long years ago—a wee—a young lady that died; and I never can think of her without crying. And, maybe, I'm a bit o'er wearied w' sitting up. I canna think how I came to disturb you, miss, w' my clash-ma-clavers. Pray forgie me!" She spoke the last few words in a more reassured manner.

"Well, well, it's over. But do not yield to such vagaries, Ruth. I should never have thought you nervous, or that you called yourself miserable. You half frightened me, you did, indeed; for I am not strong yet."

From that time, as Gertrude's convalescence progressed—though she could not banish the incident from her mind; indeed, she often woke up with a sudden startle, as if a tear fell on her cheek—she was convinced that Ruth was of an affectionate nature, and had known sorrow; and, therefore, she distinguished her by special kindness, feeling assured that for some, it might be, fanciful, reason, Ruth regarded her with a devotion it was not in Gertrude's nature to undervalue.

To be continued.

EDIBLE REPTILES.

MAN, whether civilized or savage, has an instinctive repugnance to reptiles of every kind and degree, and yet there is not one of the four families into which naturalists divide the race that does not minister to his sustenance in some measure. Ugly and repulsive as the saurian, ophidian, batrachian, and chelonian tribes may be, they each contribute something to the dietary of humanity.

The crocodile, worshipped in one part of Egypt, was eaten in another. Herodotus informs us the people of Apollonopolis were compelled by law to eat crocodiles, to revenge the death of a princess who fell a victim to saurian appetite. The inhabitants of Elephantina did from choice what the Apollonopolians did from compulsion, and modern Egyptians follow their example when they have a chance, not being deterred by the risk of perpetrating cannibalism at second-hand. Crocodile-flesh is publicly sold in the meat markets of Sennaar, and Pallegoix declares he saw half a hundred crocodiles hanging up for sale (as sheep hang in our butchers' shops) in a market place in Siam. Burckhardt compares crocodile-meat to veal, but it has a dirty hue and faint fishy odour, of which veal is innocent, and, unless the musk-glands are removed previous to cooking, the dish is intolerable. Sherard Osborne tried an alligator-cutlet, and, although he did not find it uneatable, he confesses it was not over-nice; the best that could be said of it being, that it was equal to a very bad veal-cutlet. Winwood Reade likens alligator to something between pork and cod, with the addition of a flavour of musk. Nienhoff's taste was of a different order, or he was luckier in the specimens upon which he experimented, for he avers, that boiled or fried in butter, cayman-meat is quite equal to rabbit. Both crocodile and alligator eggs are held in estimation. The Siamese consider the first an especial dainty; while the natives of Madagascar are particularly partial to the latter, and lay up a store of them, first removing the shell, and then boiling the eggs, and drying them in the sun. The Mandingoes prefer crocodile eggs when the young reptile within has attained to the length of a man's finger. M. Linnaut was tempted by the evident enjoyment of his African friends, to take his share of a fricassee of crocodile-eggs; but the combination of rancid

oil and musk proved too much for an appetite not to the manner born. Ancient physicians prescribed boiled crocodile for sciatica, lumbago, and chronic coughs; crocodile-blood for ophthalmia; and crocodile-fat in cases of fever.

The iguana, with its scaly, black-spotted, green coat is, as far as externals go, more repulsive even than crocodile or cayman; but, living chiefly upon fruits, flowers, and leaves, its flesh is as white as that of the chicken, and equally palatable. Catesby lauds it to the skies, as at once delicate, delicious, and digestible. The iguana affords a valuable supply of food to the people of the Bahams. The reptiles are hunted down with dogs, their mouths are sown up, to prevent them using their teeth, and so carried alive to market. Those retained for home consumption are killed, salted, and barrelled. Iguana is generally served up boiled, with a calabash full of clarified iguana-fat, into which the meat is dipped as it is eaten. The Singhaless know the iguana as the *tallygoa*, and keep dogs for the purpose of catching it; with them, it is valued not only as an article of food, but also as a remedial agent. They apply the fat as an external remedy for cutaneous diseases, and hold the tongue, plucked from the living reptile, and swallowed whole, a certain cure for consumption. The eggs of the iguana are in as high favour as its flesh; they are said to resemble hens' eggs in taste, but are entirely filled with yolk, and never become hard in cooking. The horned iguana of St Domingo is appreciated by West Indian lovers of good living, its flesh resembling that of the roebuck. A very different verdict is passed, by one who ought to have been a good judge, upon the iguanas of New Holland. They are thus described by Dampier: "Of the same shape and size with other guanans, but differing from them in three remarkable particulars; for these had a larger and uglier head, and had no tail, and at the rump, instead of the tail there, they had a stump of a tail, which appeared like another head, but not really such, being without mouth or eyes; the legs also seemed all four to be fore legs, and to be made as if to go indifferently head or tail foremost. They were speckled black and yellow like toads, and had scales or knobs on their backs like those of crocodiles. Their livers are spotted black and yellow, and the body when opened hath an unsavoury smell. The guanans I have observed to be very good meat, and I have often eaten of them with pleasure; but though I have eaten of snakes, crocodiles, alligators, and many creatures that look frightfully enough, and there are but few I should be afraid to eat of, if pressed by hunger, yet I think my stomach would scarce have served to venture upon these New Holland guanans, both the looks and the smell of them being so offensive."

The common green lizard is eaten by many African tribes; and the flesh of the gray lizard was once in great European repute for various medicinal purposes. This species was at one time so abundant in the environs of Vienna, that Laurenti tried to induce the poor of that capital to become lizard-eaters, telling them that lizard-meat, either baked or fried, was not only wholesome, but productive of appetite. His philanthropic endeavour failed, perhaps because the hungry Viennese wanted something to allay rather than increase their appetites.

Marco Polo tells us that the hunters of Carazan obtained a very high price for the serpents they happened to kill, the people of Cathay counting serpent-meat as the most delicate of food. Brazilians eat a green and yellow snake called the *haninana*; Bushmen and Bakalahari relish the African python; negroes can make a hearty meal on rattlesnake; and the anacondas and other boas supply the natives of the countries favoured by their presence with wholesome and nourishing food. The lazy folks of King George's Sound reverse Mrs. Glasse's maxim, and cook their snakes before they catch them, by setting fire to the grass around their encampments, picking up the broiled reptiles from the ashes at their leisure. The adder is considered savoury meat by the Sardinians, and forms a welcome ingredient in their broths and soups; nor are the Sardinians alone in their taste, for the adder is

eaten, as a matter of course, in many of the provinces of France.

The doctors of old had great faith in the virtue of frog's flesh, as at once restorative, diluent, analeptic, and antiscorbutic, and invaluable in cases of consumption and affections of the chest. Pliny says frogs boiled in vinegar are an excellent remedy for the toothache. Dioscorides recommended them to be cooked in salt and oil as an antidote to serpent-poison; and another ancient physician cured a fistula, or said he did, by administering a frog's heart every morning as a pill. Thanks to caricaturists and song-writers, frog-eating and France are indissolubly connected together, as if none but from China indulged in batrachian dainties, while, in truth, they only share the propensity with Belgians, Germans, and Italians. Andrew Bordo, recording the manners and customs of European nations in the time of Henry VIII., mentions with disgust that the people of Lombardy eat frogs, "guts and all," while he says nothing about the French doing the like. In fact, it was not till the middle of the sixteenth century that the frog obtained a place at continental dinner-tables. Even now, French epicures confine themselves to dishes composed of the hind-quarters of the little reptile, dressed in wine, or served with white sauce; but the Germans, less wasteful, make use of every part except the skin and intestines. The particular species in favour for culinary purposes is that known as the *Rana esculenta*, or green frog, although the red frog, is eaten in some places, and thought in no way inferior to his more popular relative. The frog is in the best condition for the table in autumn just when he takes to the water for the winter, but is most eaten in spring, from the simple reason that he is easier caught at that season. He is captured in several ways: sometimes by means of lines, baited with scarlet cloth, sometimes a net is used, sometimes a rake, or he is pursued at night with torches. A hundred years ago, a shrewd native of Auvergne made a fortune by forming a frog preserve, from which he supplied the capital. Similar nurseries help to satisfy the modern demand for this peculiar luxury, but that demand is gradually decreasing, although, at certain times of the year, plenty of frogs may be seen in both French and Italian markets.

Dr. Livingston speaks eulogistically of a large African frog called the *matlametlo* of which his children partook with eagerness and delight. This monster frog measures nearly half a foot, with a breadth of four and a half inches, and when cooked, looks very much like a chicken. After a thunder-shower, the pools, even in the driest parts of the African desert, are alive with *matlametloes*; and the natives not unnaturally, believe that they are born of the thunder-cloud, and descend to earth with the rain. During the season of drought, the *matlametlo* takes up his abode in a hole of his own making at the root of certain bushes, and as he seldom emerges from his retreat, a large variety of spider spins his web across the orifice, and provides the tenant gratuitously with a screen; but the gift often proves a fatal one, serving to guide the hungry Bushman to the reptile's hiding-place. The *matlametlo* would make a worthy companion-dish to the bull-frog, which is considered equal to fowl in the Antilles.

Among the various temptations to extravagance exhibited in the Siamese market-place, nothing astonished Turpin more than a number of hideous ball-shaped toads, spitted ready for the cook. Judging from the abundant supply, there would seem to be a general demand for the *houhan*—a name given to this edible toad in imitation of its cry, which is so loud that two of them are sufficient to disturb a whole country. The common toad is habitually eaten by Africans, to whom nothing comes amiss in the shape of food, and there is small doubt that it is often substituted for the frog in countries where frog-eating prevails.

The green sea-turtle is the only reptile that ever finds its way to an Englishman's table, and although the stout buccaneers, who made every sea familiar with Old England's Flag, had long before borne witness to its merits, the turtle, a hundred years ago, was still a rarity here; at