

Marion Harland's Page

UNDER MY FOREIGN VINE AND FIG TREE.



Hot Water Jugs are Used to Warm Beds.

NO CONDITION, or combination of untoward conditions, is intolerable when once one has seen the ridiculous side of it. A laugh salves the smart of defeat and blunts the edge of an insult.

The funny side of our initial experiences in Switzerland was quick in coming to the front. It lay in the discovery that not one of our family party could speak the language of this region in which we had pitched our moving tent for six months. And this although a year in Italy had given half of the number a colloquial acquaintance with the musical, facile tongue. Granted a tolerable familiarity with spoken and written French and a substratum of Latin, and Italian was the closest of the linguistic tasks. We had furnished our French in anticipation of the year in the Swiss Republic, for was it not the vernacular of the free-born Swiss?

A Trying Linguistic Experience

"Boy," now 5 years of age, and a glit chatbox in three languages, was one of the first to proclaim our formidable disability. Returning, red of face and swelling with rage, from a visit to the excellent fruit market on the shore of the lake, he came to us with a tale of woe. He had been asked to buy a bunch of grapes, and he had asked an old woman how she sold her grapes, and she said a long nonsense I had never heard before. And when I told her "Non capisco tedesco," she laughed at me. It was good Italian, and meant I don't understand your horrid old Dutch!

We laughed, too, at the small man's discomfiture, and brought our proverbial family philosophy to bear upon countless similar experiences no less surprising and inconvenient, the unknown for in our chosen nest. The speech of the common people of Lucerne and the dialect of German and French, with a smattering of Italian, introduced, our discomfited Parisian professor used to say, "pour la rendre plus difficile." As if it were not difficult enough already to make the earlier weeks of our sojourn in Helvetian lodgings a series of distractions.

From first to last, the fruit market in which "Boy" had his lesson was a curious, and a delight. Grapes, figs, oranges, pears, nespels (a novelty to us) and berries were a delicious jumble that set season at defiance. We ate Alpine strawberries in November and grapes and pears at the same meal.

In September of the next year we reached Geneva just in time for the autumn "grape-cure," of which I have written somewhat at length in my Exchange. We "took" the cure conscientiously, but neither then, nor ever, did we learn to like the much-lauded grapes of Switzerland and Germany. They were fair to view, and we thought, at first sight, preposterously cheap. The latter variety we could lay hands upon. They were sour when fully ripe, even those that blushed rosy on the side of the cluster kissed by the sun. The purple-and-gold of the finest varieties was a delusion and a snare to eye and taste, until we came to know them well.

The berries, including currants and gooseberries, were delicious, and, as I have said, phenomenal in the length of seasonableness, in consequence of the wide range of altitudes in the mountain lands.

Here, as in Italy, our rooms were lofty as to ceiling; the windows were casements, opening down to the floor, and the floors were of brick in the chambers, stone in the salon and dining-room. When we got to Geneva we entered upon the realm of parqueted floors and rugs. The stairs were of stone, everywhere, and uncarpeted.

Europe is Late Breakfasting

America leads the world in the matter of early breakfasts. In Switzerland, as in Italy, France, Germany and England, we arose at the hour at which we would have sat down to the first meal of the day at home. Not a shop in the business portion of Lucerne, Lausanne or Geneva was opened before 9 o'clock. To desert one's pillow before 8 would be to invite remark, and the inconveniences of an uncleaned, unwarmed apartment. Not a drop of hot water could be had at 7, or at 7.30. We were lucky if we could secure a pint apiece for our mutual ablutions at 8, and early in the season began to utilize the embers of the extravagant stoves

for heating a kettledrum of shavings water and to take the chill from the firewood. Firewood was the most expensive item in our weekly bills. We computed that the short billets cut from small trees we would call saplings at home and the bunches of dried twigs bound into fagots for kindling cost at least \$20 a cord. And this in a house that had no furnace to make, as it were, a background of heat for the ceaseless flare of our rancorous wood fire!

An Uncomplaining Maid

Breakfast was served in the salon upon a table drawn directly in front of the hearth. It was brought up from the lodging-house kitchen, three flights below, upon a huge tray, borne by a pretty maid about five feet two inches in height. When Marie comes to America she will not "engage" in a house where there is not a dumb-waiter from the kitchen to the dining room, one floor above. For four months she lugged the loaded tray up three flights of stone stairs with never a murmur, except on one dreadful morning when an incautious step on the topmost stair brought her to the corner of the tray into contact with the railing, and tray and contents—coffee, cocoa, rolls, eggs, marmalade, cups, saucers and plates—went hurtling down the abyssal wall of the lofty stairways and crashed upon the stone floor of the basement. What wonder that the poor little maiden, all forlorn, sat herself down on the upper stair and wailed aloud: "For it is I who will have to pay for all that is broken!" was the burden of her plaint.

Of course, as "soft" foreigners, we made ourselves responsible for the breakages—deliverance for which we suffered in the esteem of our landlady—"padrona," as we had learned to call her in Italy. Nor will Marie set it down to the account of some other American mistress when she emigrates. The Swiss breakfast differed from the usual continental pattern in nothing save that marmalade of some kind was an invariable accompaniment of coffee, and that a slab of tough Swiss cheese balanced the butter. No body ever ate it, and for all we know, the same slab may have mounted guard the season through. The Swiss are as strong on cheese as are the Netherlands. I do not recollect that it ever failed to appear in some form at every meal to which we sat down during

the eight months we passed in the light little republic. Nor that breakfast or luncheon was ever set before us that did not display a glass dish of "condiments," alias jam, alias marmalade. The abundance and all-the-year-around supply of fruits may account for the craze in this line. Every housewife puts up her own fruit. "Canned goods" have no harbor in her larder. The Swiss honey also goes with the simple breakfast. Sometimes it is strained; often it is served in the comb, clear as amber, and fragrant with the distilled breath of mountain thyme and other wild blossoms that help to make the Swiss flora the richest in the world. We became, in time, so fond of the native bread as to find the fine white rolls sent in from a French bakery insipid by comparison. The Swiss housewife rarely makes fresh yeast, or sponge. She carries it from one baking to another for weeks together. It may be that this custom accounts for the slight "tang," sometimes sharpening into sourness, that is seldom absent from the loaf. It is a mammoth loaf, and round and high. Thick slices were leaven from it as it was called for at table. It had a stand all to itself, at luncheon, being made from whole wheat, and was, altogether, so wholesome and whole-souled, that we gave it a distinguished place in our regard.

Luncheon was spread in the dining room at 12.30. Besides the big loaf we had a dish of hot meat—as often as not, kid or chicken, roast or braised. In kid or chicken, of course, the condiments, in the shape of allusions to Ambrascian kid carved so slow motion, and savory rights in the mountain but where the "kid turns on the spit"—we did not take kindly to him, or to his country cousin, the chamois.

Condiments Disguised the Meat

The meat came on the table, dark, all in black—colored, doubtless, by the spices cooked with it—and whatever native flavor it might have had disguised by recognition by the condiments. Ragouts were also frequent; we had potatoes-boiled in their jackets—always the common beverage. For sweets there was pastry, a doubtless, by the rounds of pastry separated, yet cemented by rounds of "condiments."

Dinner was served at 6.30. Having taken up the English fashion of afternoon tea early in our pilgrimage, we were comparatively indifferent to the defects of our luncheons, solacing our-

selves at 4 o'clock with the most informal, social and refreshing function of the day. Other exiles from the homeland and resident English soon fell into the habit of dropping in at tea-time, until our modest salon became the rendezvous for a coterie of the most charming people I have ever had the good fortune to know. We brewed the tea in our own quarters, made cozy on the stormiest day by the American innovation of the open fire. The silver teakettle bubbled early over the alcohol lamp; we had light cakes and biscuits, thin bread and butter, lemon for those who preferred tea à la Russe to tea with sugar and cream—and this was all! Some of my happiest reminiscences of foreign life are of the winter spent in dear old Geneva, and the remembrance of English-speaking folk in the salon overlooking the Lake Lemman, of Byron, Shelley and Bonnyard, the snow-capped Juras forming the horizon line.

The Dinner Menu

Our chat was usually prolonged until we had just time to dress hurriedly for dinner. The first course was soup—sometimes a thin bouillon floating roodies or rice or manna. A broth of lentils suggested "Fedesco" kintip about twice a week. Sometimes we had a "potage à la bonne femme," which had squares of toasted bread drift upon a sea of consommé besprinkled with parsley.

Fish followed the soup. The lake furnished a fair variety, and it was invariably breaded and fried. Potatoes went around with it. Next appeared a solitary vegetable—cabbage, with a cheese sauce, fried celery, or stewed celery root, or artichokes eaten with a sauce tartare or dipped in melted butter, or of boiled "bolognas," attested by a green of unknown name and family. The roast was, three or four times a week, chickens. Turkeys and ducks appeared so rarely as hardly to deserve a notice. We got up an American Thanksgiving dinner in Geneva, even achieving a mince pie.

Fowls were cooked with their heads on. The somewhat gruesome fashion had crept across the frontier from the country that had lent gutturals to the French the natives assented to speak. Salad of some kind—chicory and cress—being favorites of our household—was served with the roast. It is an uncomely custom, to my notion,

The salad cools the fowls, and the hot meat with the crispness of the salad, but it has been adopted in America since we made our daily protest against it in Switzerland.

Biscuits and the inevitable cheese succeeded a course of fruit, pastry, custard or cream, wrought into fantastic shapes. We affected especially "crema montata," or stout's milk, whipped to a standing froth and sweetened. Served with strawberries, fresh or preserved, it found signal favor in our eyes and mouths.

Black coffee wound up the list of courses. The only time I ever saw snails on the table, and eaten, was in Switzerland. We had seen them by the hundreds in Parisian shops, and after one shuddering gaze, turned away our eyes from beholding what was so abhorrent to transatlantic gastronomic prejudices. They are put up for the market, boiled in the shell, and shrinking in the process to a greenish paste. Gamings buy them by the handful, and dig out the paste with finger-nails and pins, devouring it greedily at the street corners.

During our temporary residence at a Genevan pension, I chanced, one day, to meet the proprietress in the corridor with a basket of snails in her hands. At my inquiring look she stopped to explain:

"M. B.—" (a Russian boarder) "has weak lungs, and is advised by the physicians to eat des coquilles for the malady."

M. B. sat opposite to me at luncheon, and in front of him was a bowl of what might have been long clams, boiled down to a gray, thick broth. I tried hard not to witness his consumption of the mess, and, harder still, to swallow my own food. Tuberculosis in France and Switzerland took on, for me, new horrors from the incident. Yet why not snails as well as frogs' legs, raw oysters, clams and oyster crabs?

SOME SWISS RECIPES

Potato Salad Dressing

Make a good mayonnaise in the usual way, and to a cupful add two large potatoes, peeled and cut in small cubes, put in a white hot and rub through a fine colander or vegetable press. Whip, when cold, into the mayonnaise gradually, stirring until the creamy mixture is smooth. Season with salt, pepper and a dash of onion juice, and just before serving stir in the mayonnaise the white of an egg whipped stiff.

Generous Slices of Bread Are Cut.

This is an excellent dressing for a maced-salad, one of tomatoes, or of fish. It is best suited for a side dish at luncheon or supper. Eat with brown bread and cheese.

Baked Eggs

Into a bakish which has been warmed and generously buttered pour a cupful of milk which has been made a little more than lukewarm. Add a teaspoonful of minute later, drop carefully into the milk five or six eggs, or as many as will fit in the dish without crowding. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and bake until the eggs are "set," but not hard.

Berry Mousse

To a pint of the squeezed and strained juice of currants, raspberries or strawberries add a pound of white sugar. Stir until dissolved and bring to a boil. Keep this up for five minutes, taking off the rising foam. Meanwhile, beat six eggs light in a bowl and pour the boiling syrup slowly upon them, stirring all the time. Put back over the fire and cook until it thickens, not interrupting the stirring for one second. Turn out to cool, stirring still for two minutes, and when cold set on ice until you are ready to use it.

Marion Harland

Housemothers' Exchange

Wanted—Remedy for Mildew

Will some of the good-members help me? A sudden call and a white linen gown forgotten! Result: A cold, utterly spoiled with mildew. I don't think butter-milk effective. I am afraid of potting in mother's days I heard orders given to old Betty to use chloride of lime for like disaster. Afterward I heard of the virtues of Javelle water. I don't dare to tell you how I have used it for this all the help I have had from the Exchange. Not being an efficient housekeeper, I don't dare to offer a HILL WOMAN (La Motte, Minn.).

Have you given buttermilk a fair trial? Of the detergents you name, it is the least harmful. Take plenty of time: soak the mildewed garment over night in the sourest buttermilk you can get, or in loper milk. Next day rinse in clear water and lay in the sun all day long, wetting hourly with lemon juice. Rinse in the evening and soak again in the milk. Repeat the rinsing and sunning. If there be snow on the ground, it will help on the bleaching. Javelle water is based upon chloride of lime. It will take out the mildew. Wet with it, leave for fifteen minutes, rinse carefully; dip again in the Javelle water, rinse and sun for some hours.

If you are too modest to advise, compliment us by asking questions or by finding fault with something some of the rest of us have written!

When the Baby Will Kick Off the Bedclothes

When you have put on his nightgown, have ready a small cotton blanket, begin in front and wrap it snugly around him, keeping the upper edge close up under the chin. It should go around him twice. Fasten to the gown with a safe pin in front and back, using two to close the blanket and one at the bottom. This will keep the baby warm and he will be covered. This sounds quite "pajama," but try it!

Another good way is to roll up a weight of heavy cotton flannel and place it over the child's back. It holds the weight of heavy cotton flannel and sometimes relieves restlessness. When it is necessary for an adult and a child to sleep together, roll up a soft comforter and lay between the sleeper and the child. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa).

You do not say that a light, warm covering must be laid over the pajamas after he is tucked in. But this must be, if you would protect his arms. An eminent physician once told me that children and bed-ridden invalids often take cold by throwing the arms rashly out on the outside of the bedclothes than in any other way. The gesture exposes the chest and throat, and both are peculiarly susceptible to changes of temperature.