

HOME CIRCLE.

WHAT THEY ATE TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

An Englishman's appetite had always been famous. He was fond of good solid eating. The farmer always had his bacon and his slices of salt mutton on hand, in addition to salt beef and barrelled herrings from Varmouth. In all good houses there was an imposing array of salting-tubs. The art of stall-feeding was almost unknown, and fresh meat, if procurable in the winter, was very lean. It cost from a halfpenny to a penny per pound, which was equal to a penny or twopence of our money. Fresh fish was the luxury of the rich, obtained from their own ponds and streams. Salt fish was a common article of diet amongst the working-classes. Rye and barley bread were eaten by the poor. Wheat was often three pounds a quarter, or, as we should say, 120s. The prices of bread and beer were regulated by local assize. Horse bread was the name given to bread conveyed in packs; manchet was a fine wheaten loaf of six ounces; mesline bread was the penny loaf; and mayn bread, or demain, was the same as that used in the sacrament. Cakes of oats and spice were on all good tables.

Pies and pasties were made of all sorts of things. Page invited Falstaff and his friends to a dinner of "hot venison pasty," wound up by "pippins and cheese." The fee farm rent of Norwich consisted of twenty-four herring pasties, of the new season fish, flavoured with ginger, pepper, cloves, galingales, and other spices. On one occasion King James I.'s servants complained that four instead of five herrings were in each pasty, and that they were "not baked in good and strong paste, as they ought to be." Artichokes were also baked in pies, with marrow, dates, ginger, and raisins. Pilchard pasties were a Cornish dainty. In fact, the various pasties still to be met with in Devon and Cornwall are representative "survivals" of Elizabethan diet. The cooks were chiefly French, but a few of them were Italians.

Very few vegetables were used, and some were regularly imported and salted down. Cabbages and onions were sent from Holland to Hull. The Flemings commenced the first market gardens. Lettuce was served as a separate dish, and eaten at supper before meat. Capers were usually eaten boiled with oil and vinegar, as a salad. Eschalots were used to smear the plate before putting meat on it. Carrots had been introduced by the Flemings. Rhubarb, then called patience, came from China about 1573. The common people ate turnip-leaves as a salad, and roasted the root in wood-ashes. Watercress was believed to restore the bloom to young ladies' cheeks. In fact, all vegetables were regarded more as medicines than as necessary articles of food. Flesh meals were more believed in than anything else. They were eaten with a knife and a napkin. "The laudable use of forks," as Ben Jonson has it, did not commence until 1611, and was rare for many years after. The custom came from Italy, and the first forks were preserved in glass cases as curiosities. A jewelled one was amongst the New Year's gifts to Queen Elizabeth. Probably the absence of vegetables had something to do with the immense potations of the time. Iago said the English could beat all other nations, and were most "potent in potting." As tea did not come into England until 1610, and coffee until 1652, beer or wine was taken at all meals.—*England of Shakespeare.*

STIMULANTS AND TOBACCO.

The opinions of medical men as to the use of stimulants as an auxiliary to intellectual work are, says Arthur Reade, in "Les Mondes," too diverse to have much effect upon the habits of men of letters. Nor are they in much better agreement, he says, as to tobacco. That tobacco is a poison is certain; so are many things used, not only in medicine, but in food. The influence of tobacco on brain work has been the subject of interminable controversy, and the question has occupied all classes of society. One argument is that smoke helps men to think (to dream, rather), and it is asserted that the journalist smokes in writing, the man of society in solving a problem, the artist in painting, the clergyman in composing his sermon; that, in fact, every man great in science, in literature, in arts, climbs the ladder of fame with a pipe or cigar in his mouth. Tennyson has composed, it is said, his sweetest idylls under the influence of nicotine. Carlyle has taught the world philosophy, smoking.

Not the young only have these ideas. Moltke is a great snuff-taker, and it was due to snuff that Napoleon was so pitilessly expelled from Belgium. John C. Murray, in his volume on Smoking, undertakes to show when it is dangerous, neutral or beneficial to smoke. He claims that Raleigh, Milton, Dryden, Newton, Steel, Addison, Swift, Congreve, Bolingbroke, Pope, Johnson, Byron, Burns, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Dickens, spoke, wrote and sang under the influence of coffee, that plant of mystic power. But for those who have recourse to tobacco, he adds, their genius is generally but a lightning flash or a meteor, involving too great mental tension, likely to drag reason from her throne and plunge it in the night of chaos. Another medical authority says that a moderate use of tobacco is as necessary to the brain worker as moderation in the use of alcohol.

On the other hand, the adversaries of tobacco regard the idea that smoking helps sound thought as a most mischievous delusion; they maintain, on the contrary, that it renders men incapable of intellectual labour. Tobacco leads to physical and mental indolence. Mr. Reade considers that the use of stimulants is a subject which should be examined in the light of the experience of poets, artists, journalists, men of science, authors, etc., in Europe and America. M. l'Abbe Moigno makes the following remarks in reply to Mr. Arthur Reade's questions:

"Though I cannot offer myself as an example, because my temperament is too exceptional, my experience may have some degree of usefulness. I have published already a hundred and fifty volumes, small and great; I scarcely ever leave my work-table; I never take walking exercise; yet I

have not experienced any trace of headache, or brain-weariness, or constipation, or any form of urinary trouble, etc. Never, in order to work, or to obtain my full clearness of mind, have I had occasion to take recourse to stimulants, or coffee, or alcohol, or tobacco, etc.; on the contrary, in my case stimulants excite abnormal vibrations in the brain, unfavourable to its prompt and steady action."

NOON.

Even the mowers are resting awhile
Under the tree, by the old stone stile,
And scarcely a bird
In the wood is heard,
So softly to rest does the heat beguile,

Let us take our rest. It is long since morn,
The hot sun lies on the waving corn;
And everywhere
On the trembling air,
The sounds of labour abroad are borne.

So long ago did our toil begin,
As soon as the early day came in;
Now it is best
To stay and rest;
Counting the gains it was ours to win.

Alas! for the pain of the restless heart,
That sees how ill it has done its part,
Though half of the day
Has passed on its way;
Alas! for the musing that brings dismay.

But if we have set to our task with zest,
Honestly striving to do our best,
Till the heart was fired,
And the hands were tired,
Though the work be not finished we yet may rest.

So soft are the breezes that come at noon,
So sweet is the sound of a restful tune,
And dear is repose
Unto him who knows
There is waiting work he must take up soon.

So let us be glad of the respite given!
In the midst of our work is a thought of heaven,
And the deeper rest
Shall make us blest,
When a little longer our hands have striven.

—*Marianne Farningham.*

TEA CULTURE IN INDIA.

There seems abundant reason for the belief that, so far from the tea-plant being the distinctive and original product of China, it has its true birth-place in Upper India, and was transported across the Himalaya range into the Celestial Empire, where it was cultivated in a degenerate form very inferior to the true and parent stock. In Assam it is still to be found growing wild, keeping up its purity as an indigenous growth. With its discovery in that Province it has been thought the tea enterprise in India had its beginning. But it has been proved to have originated with Col. Kyd, who in 1870 formed a tea garden in Calcutta with plants from Canton—the nucleus of the well-known Botanic Gardens. It met with anything but encouragement, being looked upon as an unwelcome rival to the China tea trade, then a source of much profit to the East India Company.

The tea-plant is, it seems, to be found growing wild in the forests and jungles of Upper Assam, the Sylhet hills, the Himalaya and the great range of mountains that extend from thence through China to the Yang-tse-Kiang. *Thea assamensis*, though differing in minor points of structure and size, is pronounced by botanists to be specifically identical with the tea of China, partaking of the characters both of *Thea bohea* and *Thea viridis*, in its geographical distribution as to latitude approaching the black plant, and in its stations the green.

The date of its introduction into China seems past determination. It has always been felt to be a matter for surprise that no mention of tea-drinking should have been made by Marco Polo. Soliman, an Arabian merchant, who wrote an account of his travels in the East about the year 850 A.D., is quoted by Macpherson, in his "History of European Commerce with India," as stating that tea (*tsa*) is the usual beverage of the Chinese; yet no other mention of the custom has been met with prior to the Jesuit missions to China and Japan a little before the middle of the sixteenth century. Botero is quoted as speaking of it in 1590; Teixeira, a Portuguese, about the year 1600 saw the dried leaves of tea at Malacca, and Olearius in 1663 found it in use among the Persians, who obtained the leaves from China through the medium of the Usbeck Tartars.

Tea seems to have been first introduced into Europe by the Dutch East India Company, and to have found its way into London from Amsterdam. Tea, coffee, and chocolate are all mentioned together in an Act of Parliament of 1660, wherein a duty of 8d. is charged upon every gallon of chocolate, sherbet and tea made for sale. How great a novelty it was is shown by Pepys' well-known entry, Sept. 25, 1661: "I sent for a cup of tea (a Chinese drink), of which I had never drank before." It long continued to be imported in small quantities only, the East India Company having purchased in 1664 for presentation to the King 2 pounds and 2 ounces of tea. In 1678 they imported 4,713 pounds of tea, it being then for the first time thought worth their attention as an article of trade.—*Saturday Review.*

THERE is imminent danger of famine in Iceland. The past two winters have been exceptionally severe, and crops have been scanty, and many of the stock have died. It is desired that supplies of grain and other provisions be forwarded at an early date.

TENDENCIES TO BARBARISM.

More money is spent for tobacco than for bread; more for spirits than for wine; more for wine than for baths or means of preserving health and increasing vigour by exercise; more for amusement than for instruction; more for theatres than for churches. Actors, singers, dancers, are paid ten times as much as teachers and preachers are. The popular player who entertains people, makes them spasmodically laugh or cry, though he possesses but a thin vein of genius, enacts the same part continually, and is not associated with any of the means whereby human welfare is promoted, becomes in a year many times richer than the professor who devotes his life to the acquisition and the diffusion of knowledge, or the philanthropist who spends his soul for his kind. To excite the nerves is a surer way of gaining wealth and reputation than to strengthen the mind. To this extent we are still barbarians; to this extent has civilization failed to lift men and women above their instincts; to this extent have all noble influences—art, education, religion, love of country, love of man, love of God, failed to substitute intellect for inclination. When people who will not give dimes in charity give dollars to witness a foot-race or see a clown, it is pretty good evidence of the supremacy of appetite in the masses of mankind.—*O. B. Frothingham.*

STARTING PLANTS FROM SLIPS.

Peter Henderson, in the "Ladies' Floral Cabinet," gives the following directions for the domestic propagation of plants from slips: "Florists use what are called propagating benches for rooting cuttings when wanted on a large scale, as they usually are by them; at when an amateur, not having greenhouse facilities, wishes to root a few slips, there is no process that we can recommend better than what is known as the 'saucer system,' which, even at the risk of telling it to some of your readers who already understand it, I must again repeat, as there is no other plan that is so simple and so safe. Take any common saucer or plate, into which put sand to the depth of an inch or so. Then prepare the cuttings in the usual manner, and place them in the sand close enough to touch each other. The sand is then to be watered so as to bring it into the condition of mud. The saucer thus filled with slips may be placed on the window-sill and exposed to the sun. The cuttings must be fully exposed to the sun, and never shaded. But one condition is absolutely essential to success: until the cuttings take root the sand must be kept continually saturated with water, and always in the condition of mud. To do this the slips must be watered at least once a day with a very fine rose watering pot, and the watering must be done very gently, else the cuttings may be washed out. There is every certainty that ninety-nine per cent. of the cuttings put in will take root, provided they were in the proper condition when placed in the saucer, and that the temperature has not been lower than sixty degrees for greenhouse plants, or less than eighty degrees for tropical plants. By the saucer system a higher degree of temperature may be maintained without injury than by any other system of propagation, as the cuttings in reality are placed in water, and will not wilt, provided the water is not allowed to dry out. Still, the tender slip, until rooted, will not endure a long continuation of very high temperature, and we would advise that propagation be done at such seasons that they may have as near as possible a uniform temperature of seventy-five or eighty degrees in the sun-light. When rooted they should be potted in dry soil, such as is recommended for sowing seeds in. They should be potted in pots not exceeding two and a half inches in diameter, and treated carefully by shading and watering for two or three days."

THE STINGING TREE.

The "stinging tree" of Queensland is a luxurious shrub, pleasing to the eye but dangerous to the touch. It grows from two or three inches to ten or fifteen feet in height, and emits a disagreeable odour. Says a traveller: "Sometimes while shooting turkeys in the shrubs, I have entirely forgotten the stinging tree till I was warned of its close proximity by its smell, and have often found myself in a little forest of them. I was only once stung, and that very lightly. Its effects are curious; it leaves no mark, but the pain is maddening, and for months afterward the part when touched is tender in rainy weather, or when it gets wet in washing, etc. I have seen a man who treats ordinary pain lightly, roll on the ground in agony after being stung, and I have known a horse so completely maddened after getting into a grove of the trees that he rushed open-mouthed at every one who approached him, and had to be shot. Dogs, when stung, will rush about whining piteously, biting pieces from the affected part."—*Youth's Companion.*

HOW TO CHOOSE A WIFE.

"A place for everything, and everything in its place," said the patriarch to his daughter. "Select a wife, my son, who will never step over a broomstick." The son was obedient to the lesson. "Now," said he pleasantly on a gay May day to one of his companions, "I appoint that broomstick to choose me a wife. The young girl who will not step over it shall have the offer of my hand." They passed from the splendid saloon to the grove; some tumbled over the broomstick and others jumped over. At length a young lady stooped and put it in its place. The promise was fulfilled, she became the wife of an educated and wealthy young man, and he the husband of a prudent, industrious and lovely wife. He brought a fortune to her, and she knew how to save one. It is not easy to decide which was under the greatest obligation; both were rich, and each enriched the other.

THE graziers of Australia and New Zealand of late years have reckoned the rabbits as their worst enemy. In many districts those prolific creatures have left so little grass that the sheep have been kept from starvation only by their transfer to other localities.