Skitters and the Falls

By MORTIMER O. WILCOX.

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PART I.

B. G. Skitters.

How great events depend on trivialities! A chain of circumstances, in themselves insignificant, brought us together, a little group of strangers, and drew us finally into that tragic adventure of which so much has been said and written. The first of these circumstances was no doubt my stopping to speak with Skitters, B. G. Skitters of Buffalo, one day in April last.

Skitters since I have known him has always been full of enterprise and of schemes more or less crazy to make a fortune in an hour. But the spring of the Pan-American year with its dazzling possibilities which affected some stronger heads seemed utterly to turn a head originally none too steady. When I saw him that morning he was loitering feverishly on the corner of Niagara street and Main and glaring like a tiger at the crowds which went to and fro. There was a feel in the air of adventure and success and the man on the corner seemed to be maddened by it.

He began to rave. "Three good things gone wrong," said he. "Three elegant, gilt-edge, safe ideas, all gone to smash in a week!"

"How so?" I inquired.

"Oh, the same old fogies. Men that I tried to git interested wouldn't take 'em up. No more nerve in this town! But, say, for heaven's sake, if you know of anything real good that's doing let me in, will you?"

"Same here," remarked a weary voice beside us. A youth with a derby hat on the back of his head and a cigar stump in the corner of his mouth had paused in his aimless strolling. I recognized him as a distance acquaintance, one Curley Bowers, somewhat well known among the East Side gangs. Curley has imagination and even cultivates the Muses. I made the suitable introductions and happened to remark:

"Mr. Skitters here is interested in some Pan-American enterprises."

"Not now," he answered darkly, "I wouldn't touch such wild-cat schemes; haven't the time anyway; too busy." His mood had changed and he eyed with a certain pitying melancholy the people that went past us, ephemerals of the hour.

"Look at 'em," said he, "and every other one has got some kind of a bee buzzing, restaurants, notions and sideshow fakes, anything, anything to coax a dollar out of the poor visitor. They'd better git on to one of them big yellow cars and go down to Niagara Falls and float over."

Young Bowers was moving leisurely away. At this casual remark he half turned round, and said: "I know of a feller in this town who says he can do the trick."

"Do what?" asked Skitters, "what's he talking about?"

"Go over the Falls," replied Curley. "Shoot Niagara. Course he'd need something to do it in." He spoke with a tired, dispassionate air, and drifted on.

"Would be quite a scheme, wouldn't it?" said Skitters, and his eye lighted fitfully as it rested for a moment on one of the yellow cars. "What an advertisement!" And we talked of something else.

But the very next day he, Skitters, rushed into the office where I was. "I've found it! I've found it!" he exclaimed.

"Found what?" I asked.

He dropped into a chair, and lowered his voice, but he was quivering all over with eagerness, like a hound who points the game. "In this here town," said he, solemnly, "up near Black Rock, there's an old fellow that's an inventor, and he's had a hobby for years. He works in a bicycle repair shop, but night times he works on the hobby—an invention. And, by Gad," (his voice fell to a whisper), "I most believe that he's got something there at last. Where's that young fellow," Skitters cried, "that we were talking to yesterday?"

"Who? Oh, young Bowers?" said I. "What do you want of him?"

"Do you remember what he said?" Skitters replied, "about knowing a fellow who wanted to go over Niagara. Well, by heavens, I'm a-going to give him the chance."

"I went to the telephone and called up a grocery store out on the East side, on a corner opposite to Guggleheimer's old saloon. Around that corner, as I knew, relics of one of the old street gangs of Buffalo still loafed and loitered through the heavy hours.

"Hello," said I into the telephone. "If Curley Bowers is near there will you please ask him to come down town?" and I gave the name and number.

Skitters meanwhile had sat down by the window. From that window one can see two empires facing the waters of Lake Erie, wide and blue, and the point where those waters pass so quietly and unsuspectingly into the clutch of the strongest of rivers. Skitters gazed upon this scene with a new appreciation.

"Looks quiet and gentle enough out there, don't it? he observed. "Who'd ever guess what there was a few miles down yonder? What a chance for somebody!" He went off into deep musing and presently came out of it to chant a kind of song to me, the song of the "Dollar Hunter."

After a while Curley Bowers sauntered in, still doing the dignified. Like some of his kind, in the presence of strangers he affected a polite and lofty indifference, his notion of good manners. We explained that we wanted particulars about the man who thought he could swim Niagara.

"Well," replied Curley, "he's a feller named Jake Westerman—a Dutchman. He kind of hangs on to the edge of our push an' he's a sort of queer feller—always doin' things that others won't, makin' long swims 'n' dives, you know, 'n' jumpin' off'n elevators. Well, one day he had some kind of job down at Niagara Falls 'n' when it was done he went over 'n' looked at the place 'n' asked questions about logs that had went over, 'n' Graham's barrel, and so forth. He's been down there lots of times since to poke around—whenever he had the carfare—'n' they say that he'll set down over Table Rock 'n' watch the water 'n' think for hours. He's a sort of a queer feller. He don't never say much, but I've heard him say that with some kind of a rig, a barrel or something, he'd try it as sure as beans."

"Now, you listen to me," said Skitters impressively. "I've found the rig. I want you to get that fellow and I want you to bring him over to Black Rock; here's the address—tomorrow at 2 p. m. I'll be there and we'll go down to Niagara Falls and look over the ground. You come along, too," added Skitters, graciously, to me. "It's a thing worth seeing.

But soon other matters intervened and Skitters and I were late to that rendezvous. When we reached the house at Black Rock, Bowers and his mysterious friend had come and gazed and gone. They had seen the invention and left word that we could find them down at the falls. Gills, the inventor, was a shambling, shy old man of about 60, with somewhat of a cranky gleam in his weak eyes. He led the way mysteriously around the house, past the repair shop, and to a little woodshed in the rear. There he pulled aside a canvas and we looked upon his masterpiece, the labor of his love.

It will be easily understood that I cannot, at the present time, attempt to describe this apparatus very closely. Every body knows that it is some kind of a pneumatic suit, but in reality Gills' much discussed invention looks rather like a huge cigar and is an intricate contrivance of rubber and steel springs. A certain freedom and power of movement are allowed to the limbs, which close in upon a trunk of great rigidity, and the headpiece looks not unlike a diver's helmet. Ignorant as I am of such things, it seemed to me, even then, that a person encased in this might endure tremendous buffeting and frightful shocks, and possibly keep the breath of life awhile amid a whirling chaos.

The inventor was speaking and looking at us with a childish, shy pride. "We rolled it off'n the roof of the house," said he, "with a boy in it and it didn't never hurt him."

"WE DREW IT UP ON THE BEACH AND BEGAN TO OPEN THE PNEUMATIC SUIT."

"That is pretty ingenious," I said to Skitters as we came away, "but to drop over Niagara Falls in! Do you think it would ever work?"

"Looks as though it might, anyway," he musingly replied, "and that would do just as good." From which I guessed that he had his own ideas.

Then we two got upon a car and rode down past Tonawanda and the open country beyond. Presently we caught sight of the river above LaSalle, with its waters moving onward quietly to their doom, a little restlessly perhaps, but, as Skitters had said: "Who would ever guess!" My companion viewed this scene with complacency and I listened to a dissertation from his lips on the utility of Niagara.

"Seems as though somebody would have thought of it before," he ended. "I wonder no one hain't and I shouldn't wonder a bit if they'd be doing it, a-following on my footsteps." He glared around with an injured air. "This year there's big inducements to do it. This ain't the year for small fakes."

At Prospect Point we found Curley Bowers awaiting us. He was alone, but explained that his friend was across in Canada, looking at the river. For myself he had already begun to seem almost a myth, this singular being who wanted to go over the falls. We three crossed the bridge and stopped to gaze upon the view, then on down the bank of the Canadian side and saw there a lonely figure seated upon a wet rock and staring fixedly up at the cataract. Curley approached and touched him, then with a graceful wave of his paw said: "Let me make you gents acquainted" and did so.

Westerman was, as I now remember him, a short and very thickset young man, in whom the life lay deep. He appeared to be somewhat stolid, yet at the same time interested me. The curious, absent look in his eyes impressed me even then, and he had also an expression which is, I believe, characteristic of those who love daring ventures. If you have ever watched a man about to try, say, a high dive, you will know what Westerman's constant manner was. He spoke very little, and appeared either sullen or shy, but kept turning his eyes toward the cataract above us. Seen from down there one could imagine that the waters of all the lakes were being tipped over upon one out of the sky, and the clouds above vanished behind that overhanging brink.

"Aw," remarked Bowers at last, "give us something simpler. Better go down 'n' take a swim in the whirlpool, Jake, 'n' let her go at that."

"Do you really think," I questioned Westerman, "that any man could go down that place and live?"

"Well," replied he, thoughtfully, "up there I can't help thinkin' that there'll be a kind of a chance. The American fall is no good, and besides they've spoiled it drawin' the water off. This fall here is lower than the American, and there's lots more water to float in, and that, I guess, would be my chance. There's a place up there where the curve is that I've looked at a good deal. Water seems friendlier, somehow, and it keeps a-goin' over and a-goin' over so easy—" He recovered himself with an effort and became sullen again. "But I'll tell you what," he added to Skitters, "you'll have to get that rubber rig and send it over first. I want to see how she stands it."

"Oh, yes, of course, of course," Skitters replied. He had not been looking at the falls, but at Westerman and the rest of us. Presently he drew me apart.

"Well," said he, and cocked his head on one side like a bird.

"Pooh!" replied I. "It's mere madness. Niagara means death."

"Death?" said he, cheerfully. "I should say it did. Death and your bones mashed up. What's that got to do with us? Now that we've got the man and the machine for the public to look at, all that we need is good management, and that's where your little friend comes in. Yes, sir," he cried, and swelled with the sublime ideal, "just a little good management and we've got the fake of fakes."

"I refuse," said I with proper severity, "to become a party to any fraud upon the public."

"Oh, well," he replied, still cheerful, "we'll arrange it some way." Skitters and I rode back to Buffalo together, leaving the two others to lurk about the place and enjoy their own society.

That was the last that I saw for some little time of Skitters and his Niagara Navigation company. When I met him again he reported that arrangements were being perfected; that he had a rowboat all ready below the falls and a scheme worked out to put the supposed swimmer into the river above. "And we've tried the rubber suit!" he exclaimed one day. "We sent it over by moonlight, night before last. It got bumped a bit, but stood it pretty well. Gills, though, is such an old fogy, always afraid that his invention is going to git hurt. I've got Westerman down there, learning the ground and practicing with the suit. All he needs to do is seem to git in above the falls and then seem to git took out below, and then—Oh, mamma, the world is ours!

"I'll have some people fixed all right," he used to hint mysteriously. And the motto that he gave his followers was, "Remember Steve Brodie."

He began to be afraid, horribly afraid, that some one would be before him. There were, indeed, as may be remembered, vague rumors of attempts upon the falls, for such ideas seem at times to come like a contagion. Skitters got so at last that he would eye the people who got upon the yellow cars with a positive hatred. He saw a rival in every traveler and chafed at the flight of hours. "Some one will beat us yet, some one will beat us yet," he used to bitterly cry. But for myself I had begun to lose all interest in his scheme, believing that it would end in nothing.

Then came that day in June, a memorable day in the history of Niagara. On the drowsy hush of a noon hour the telephone bell in the office suddenly jarred. I went to the telephone, expecting some ordinary message, but it was a boy's voice from far away which was speaking and a strange excitement was vibrating in it.

"Hello, hello," that voice said. "Say, this is Bowers, down at the Falls. We're goin' to try that thing today; you'd better come on down. And say," the voice seemed to hesitate. "I can't quite make out Westerman. I'm kind of afraid he—means—to—Come on down, will you?"

I hung up the receiver and did some sober thinking. Ie began to dawn upon me all at once that Skitters and I had been playing with fire, if the expression may be allowed in this connection. I had heard of how men could sometimes keep gazing upon a dangerous thing until the wish to conquer it became a manie with them. And I remembered the queer look I had seen in Westerman's eyes and the answering gleam in the eyes of Curley Bowers. They belonged to a gang whose creed was to "take no bluffs" and whose ideal was audacity. A presentiment of danger came heavily upon me and a feverish longing to be away, and I went down into the street, almost running into people as I went, and boarded one of the yellow cars which go to Niagara Falls.

PART II.

The Apex of the Horseshoe.

Arrived at the city, I hurried across to the other bank, where I knew that Skitters and his party would be found.

All that day Westerman and Curley Bowers had lain and watched the rapids and the cataract from those high grounds of Canada, where one can see them best. The immensity of the thing, which grows upon one gazing, did not daunt, but fascinated them; perhaps the very insignificance of any human atom going down that watery road made the thought of the descent less terrifying. Yet even to those daredevils the attempt could have promised hardly better than magnificent death. Bowers tells me that his companion talked strangely, when he talked at all, and that there was a look upon his face all day not to be understood.

He was a genuine product of the streets and the water fronts, without a settled trade and without relatives, so far as I can learn. It is said that he had tried unsuccessfully to enlist in the army; he surely had the courage. Unsuccessful in most things, he no doubt had been a street Arab who dreamed, a young man who picked up a livelihood, as Curley said, doing odd jobs of work and the minor feats of daring. It was not the training to make him refuse when Skitters came with his glittering offers to find him money and notoriety if he would pretend to do the hugest feat of all. Westerman was as much a piece of drifting wreckage in the current as though he had been drawn into the Niagara and carried down to the brink from the city up above. But the more that he watched and studied the river the more did the strange fascination of it and the longing to conquer it—and I cannot help thinking also a certain deep honesty of nature—preserve him from the fakir's part. He and Skitters, on the whole, were working at cross-purposes and with very different minds.

For Skitters in the meantime had been making his arrangements for the fraud with a cheerful, tireless industry. Day after day had seen him down at the scene of action, taking measurements and "fixing people." The pneumatic suit had indeed been sent successfully over the Canadian falls. Skitters, I believe, had persuaded certain men upon that side that the same thing would merely be done again this day; artful stage management and the gift of gab would make it appear that a man had been inside the suit this time, and such truly enough was the program as Skitters planned it. The one element to interfere, the infatuated daring of a man of the old Germanic war breed, Skitters could not estimate. "This kind of thing needs a head like mine to do it," said he when he saw me come, and he mopped a seaming brow, "but it's all figgered out now."

I arrived upon the stage in time to see, but not to take a part. The characters were already grouped for the play—which might become a tragedy—it was too late for me to interfere with the performance had I known how. As Skitters and I walked up past Table rock he pointed ahead toward the wooded shore that borders the Canadian rapids. We looked across wild waters and saw even at that moment two men come suddenly out of the bushes close by the river and bend over something which lay between them on the ground. "That's him," said Skitters, "and the professor, old crank, he's so dead afraid that his suit may git hurt. He doesn't care so much about the man." For the inventor also, it seemed, was in the cast, and his part was to put Westerman into his invention, and afterward to let him out again, not so publicly—an easy thing to do with nobody very near. A car on the trolley road had stopped some distance away and the people in it were staring suspiciously and with that half hypnotic bewilderment which a mystery causes. "See 'em rubber," Skitters said complacently. "They think that this is genuine. We'll be in the papers tomorrow." He turned and started back to look to his arrangements, for he had a boat all ready on the lower waters to assist in the deception. Westerman had instructions to hurry down along the bank and be fished out of the stream below, and the press agent would do the rest.

But just above the point where one enters the elevator I met Curley Bowers, and his eyes were alight with a strange excitement. "He swears he's goin' to do it; he swears he's goin' to do it!" cried the lad in something between terror and delight, "an' nobody knows but me." We stood in a line with the cataract and stared at it rather blankly, while the spray drenched and the roar deafened us. Before us we could see the point where the precipice retreats and forms almost a funnel, the apex of the so-called Horseshoe fall. Volume of water was what Westerman desired, and out there the water wall was green with depth where the lakes went toppling down. There are hours of the day when the Canadian shore appears almost deserted, and this was one of them. The few people walking about seemed like little puppets; we ourselves seemed puppets, in a stage scene, and with that scenery! The whole business was unreal, with those two burly figures up the river bank, the little silent people in the trolley car looking on and Bowers and I the while obliged to move along deliberately keeping up appearances, and to know that matters were out of our control. All day the sky had been cloudy, but now at sunset the sun came out and showed off the green and white of the crumbling waves that moved from above past the islands in endless procession and threw long shadows down to the vortex. The swimming suit lay motionless upon the rocks and Westerman had disappeared. "Oh, he'll never dare," I said to Bowers, and turned to look after Skitters, but just then the boy clutched my arm and pointed. I say but indistinctly; it seemed to me as though an empty suit had been pushed into the current by its inventor, but Curley Bowers, with keener eyes, had dropped upon one knee, straining fiercely forward, and he cried: "He'll try it! He'll try it! By G—, he's coming down!"

For a moment the clumsy misshapen form seemed to lie motionless in the water, then it stirred and made a stroke or two. And with that the current caught it and whirled it forward, pitching and stumbling through the waves. As though in mockery the river played with it awhile and drove it downward against that reef of rocks which show above the water parallel with shore. When we saw the German clutch at these and lie there, it seemed to us that it was not too late and that he might yet be saved. For, perhaps the space of two minutes, he rested against those rocks and he may have heard our shouts of encouragement, but who can guess what was going on in his mind as he hung there over death. He stirred again spasmodically at last, rolled over on his side into deeper water and with reckless valor which made us gasp to see it, swam straight for the apex of the Horseshoe.

Skitters the while was coming up behind us; when he beheld that sight he turned around and ran away, uttering strange noises. But Bowers and I, as we saw the Alsatian take thus his one chance for life and victory, were seized with a new mad recklessness, so that we forgot the stake, forgot the ghastly odds and began to shout encouragement again. "O, good boy, good boy, Pete," we cried. (We must ourselves have been half-crazy.) "Go on there; you can do it!" The water caught him again and shot him forward; it all passed rapidly as an accident. That moment when the black form hung poised upon the brink of the abyss was not to be forgotten. He had swung himself around to go down feet foremost; he seemed to shoot out and to keep the crest of the water skillfully enough and fell with it through crashing space and clouds of blinding vapor to the bottom of the precipice 150 feet below

Upon the place seemed suddenly to rest a solemn hush and quiet for all the movement and the uproar. Curley Bowers and I stood peering and watched the water going over so majestically, as though we half expected that it might bring him back. A rainbow had appeared and hung across the chasm; behind us the sun was shining and the world went on as usual. But from out the misty, echoing gorge faint voices and strange noises seemed to rise, and Curley Bowers was shivering, and talking to himself. "He's gone," the lad lamented; "poor old Westerman, he's off the map! Wouldn't that jar you?" Then he pulled himself together and started to run down toward the elevator. "C'm on," he shouted to me. "Let's see this circus through."

"Beside the elevator we found Skitters, his face a pale pea green. "Look a-here," he cried, with a knowing air, "this thing is getting pretty close to risky. We'd better look out for our scalps, and cut and run." But Bowers, showing his teeth like a wharf rat, snarled: "Who cares about your scalp? There's a game man gone down there. You've got a boat, 'n' you'll come along 'n' help get him out." So we hurried down to the lower river where the boat was, Skitters and his company. We must have been a curious collection! The inventor had run down and joined us, his eyes bulging and his mouth wide open. Even then he seemed to be principally concerned about the fate of the suit. From his somewhat fragmentary remarks I gathered that after he had carefully inclosed Westerman in this, plain for all men to see, the German had quietly rolled off into the water. He had gone down to keep the appointment, indeed, but in his own fashion; old Gills was still indignant at the trick. We crouched there, meanwhile, on the stones, and watched the writhing water come out from the shadow of the precipice with queer long streaks in it. Bowers and Skitters and the man who had charge of the boat pushed off in this; they went a long way out and as far as they dared up the stream. Yet it was close inshore and very near us that we caught sight of the object of our search, and the sight of it gave us all a start. "See, see; there it is!" muttered old Gills and pointed. We watched it with a kind of awe as though it had been uncanny, and as we watched the figure stirred and swam.

Alive! Skitters stood up in the boat, reckless of the river and flushed with the pride of victory, Napoleon at Austerlitz, Caesar on the triumphal car. He bowed as though to invisible crowds; I believe that for a moment he thought he owned the Falls. "Gentlemen," he almost sobbed, "I didn't quite plan it this way, but we've got here the biggest attraction that the world has ever yet seen. We'll be known all over America tomorrow."

"Help me to get him out of this," cried Bowers. They had towed the bulky figure in toward land and the arms kept swimming and convulsively clutching air. We drew it upon the beach and began to open the pneumatic suit, wondering to see how this had been bruised and strained. One of the legs hung limply, smashed in spite of all the armor.

What followed next I find it not easy to describe. We got the helmet off at last with nervous fingers, and we saw a smothered, distorted countenance, the eyes closed tight as though to shut out fear. They opened in a moment, with the strangest, blankest expression in them, and did not see us, and a voice began to speak, or gibber rather, no matter what the words were. What would the words be of one whose reason has snapped suddenly and left a mind all blank or topsy-turvy.

I suppose, in fact, that the German's brain, long dwelling upon that foolhardy feat, may have become unsettled at the last and have given way rapidly during those minutes in the upper rapids. That had been no sane man who swam at the falls before us, and the mental wreck had been completed at last by possibly the greatest physical shock that a human being has ever yet survived. Life was there still in that wrenched and battered form, but not a spark of reason. But Skitters, with an El Dorado of dazzling possibilities still before his eyes, refused to accept the truth, and he strove to revive the shattered man with words of glittering cheer. "Just think of it," he bawled above the stunning uproar, "that you're made a man now. Think of the Midway up yonder; think of them great great big crowds a-streaming in from all America, and you alive, and the biggest thing of all, the biggest inducement in all the burch—The Man Who Went Over Niagara—no fake about this show, and me your manager!" Thus he gabbled to the man before him, and the other was gabbling something about green girls who swam in the water and turned the lights out when one fell off the world. Meanwhile the solemn cataract above thundered on unceasingly, indifferent to us and our small tragedy. Once Curley Bowers turned toward it and exclaimed with a touch of respect he rarely showed: "I guess it doesn't pay to monkey much with you." I am disposed to agree with this opinion. For indeed those giant things of nature would seem to have a certain stern resentfulness and Niagara, like the Matterhorn, took vengeance on her conquerors at last.

But think of that situation! He, B. G. Skitters, of all the men on earth, is forced by the might of circumstances to shake his head and deny knowledge of a feat as to whose possibility the world is arguing. He has the pneumatic suit all ready for exhibition; he has, if he could produce him, the only man alive who ever saw Niagara from a point on the middle of the Horseshoe fall; yet the public waits in vain. And the harvest hours are passing.

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Table and Kitchen

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Daily Menus.

THURSDAY.
BREAKFAST.
Fruit.
Cereal. Cream.
Fried Eggplant. Tomato Omelet.
Hashed Brown Potatoes.
Corn Bread. Coffee.
LUNCH.
Tripe a la Creole.
Stuffed Potatoes. Dressed Cucumbers.
Stewed Fruit. Wafers.
Tea.
DINNER.
Clear Soup.
Roast Loin of Veal.
Brown Sweet Potatoes.
Rice Croquettes. Stewed Tomatoes.
String Bean Salad.
Chocolate Soufflé. Coffee.

FRIDAY.
BREAKFAST.
Fruit.
Cereal. Cream.
Codfish Balls. Creamed Tomatoes.
White Muffins. Coffee.
LUNCH.
Creamed Eggs. Cheese Toast.
Popovers. Fruit Sauce.
Cereal Coffee.
DINNER.
Cream of Onion Soup.
Boiled Salmon. Cucumber Sauce.
Buttered Beets. Scalloped Potatoes.
Cold Slaw.
Tapioca Pudding. Coffee.

SATURDAY.
BREAKFAST.
Cereal. Sliced Bananas. Cream.
Liver and Bacon Broiled.
Sauted Cucumbers.
Rice Cakes. Coffee.
LUNCH.
Fried Oysters. Cold Catsup.
Cheese. Nut and Apple Salad. Wafers.
Tea.
DINNER.
Vegetable Broth.
Braised Beef Tongue. Horseradish Sauce.
Mashed Potatoes. Glazed Turnips.
Tomato and Cucumber Salad.
Nutmeg Melons Filled with Vanilla Ice Cream.
Coffee.

SUNDAY.
BREAKFAST.
Fruit.
Cereal. Cream.
Broiled Birds. Bacon. Chips.
Potato Soufflé.
Popovers. Coffee.
DINNER.
Cauliflower Soup.
Hot Boned Chicken. Spiced Cherries.
Oyster Sauce. Mashed Potatoes.
Sweet Potatoes a la Caramel.
Tomato Mayonnaise.
Ice Cream in Cantaloupe.
Coffee.
SUPPER.
Indian Sandwiches.
Nut and Orange Salad.
Cheese. Wafers.
Tea.

SAVORY SOUFFLES.

"The Fortuitous or Casual Concourse of Atoms."

The souffle, as its name would imply, is something raised, light, puffed up.

It indicates indeed a delicate form of cookery that can be utilized in the concoction of various dainty dishes.

The foundation of nearly all souffles is the white sauce, but after this is laid the superstructure through skillful combinations, additions and subtractions may become one of cheese, meat, potato, rice, fruit or custard, as the occasion demands and the animating and controlling spirit of the "cordon bleu" may determine.

In the well-chosen menu of a correct English dinner the souffle almost invariably appears either as an entremet or a dessert, while at a luncheon it precedes or follows the sherbet.

The general directions for making a souffle are as follows: Make a smooth, white sauce, using two level tablespoonfuls of butter, one heaping tablespoonful of flour and one-quarter of a cup of warm milk. Add the well-beaten yolks of two eggs and the seasoning; cook just long enough to thicken, stirring it constantly at first, then set aside to cool. When quite cold fold in the stiff beaten whites (do not stir them in), and bake in small dishes or in a large dish suitable for the purpose, setting them in a pan of hot water to prevent their browning on the bottom and sides.

In baking souffles have a very moderate temperature in the oven, as a too sudden exposure to heat causes the air bubbles to break and forms a crust on top so they cannot rise. If served on platters, they should be accompanied by a sauce. The recipes which follow will serve as examples from which others may be deduced.

Meat Souffle—Make the foundation of thick, white sauce and season with a little onion juice, chopped parsley, celery salt, or, if chicken or oysters are used, a bit of nutmeg. Add one cup of fine-chopped meat, solidly packed; this may be chicken, beef, veal or lamb alone or in combination. Fish makes delicate and delicious souffles. A tablespoonful of cooked ham or tongue may be added to any of these meats if you desire to utilize a slice that would otherwise be thrown away. To the hot mixture add the well-beaten yolks of two eggs, then set aside to cool; when cold fold in the whites of the eggs beaten to a stiff froth. Butter your souffle dishes or pan and fill with the mixture; bake for twenty or twenty-five minutes in moderate oven; then serve at once with tomato or mushroom sauce. The souffle must be baked until set and dry and then not exposed suddenly to cold air or set on a cold dish, or allowed to stand after coming from the oven, or it will fall; heat the dishes on which you set the souffle dishes.

Tomato Sauce—Tomato sauce can be made from the fresh fruit or from the canned, or from the bright red catsup, the latter, however, being a little extravagant unless you have made it at home.

Simmer a can or a quart of tomatoes for three-quarters of an hour with two cloves, a small slice of onion and a piece of bay leaf. When done strain out the seeds and hard part; measure and if you have not a pint of the tomato liquor add a little hot water or clear stock. Put four level tablespoonfuls of butter in a saucepan and when it is oily add the same amount of sifted flour and stir until smooth and bubbling; let brown slightly and then add the tomato liquor, season with salt and pepper and it is ready to serve. Never add sugar to a tomato sauce for meat or fish, no matter how acid the fruit may be, as the acid flavor adds just zest to the dish that is so desirable.

Another Tomato Sauce—Take a cup of red catsup, heat, add one-half cup of soup stock or broth and chicken with a level tablespoonful of flour and same of butter, rubbed to a smooth paste and stirred in the sauce until thoroughly dissolved and mixed.

Mushroom Sauce—Add one-half can or one cupful fresh quartered mushrooms to one cupful of brown sauce made in the usual way; simmer gently for five minutes.

Potato Souffle—Season one pint of mashed potatoes with salt, pepper and butter; moisten with a little hot cream so they will whip up easily and lightly with a fork; beat the whites and yolks of three eggs separately; stir the yolks into the hot mashed potatoes and then whip well with the fork; set aside to cool. When cold, fold in the whites very carefully and bake in a buttered pudding dish or souffle cups. Cold mashed potatoes can be served in this way and make a dainty accompaniment to cold meat or hot canned salmon with tomato sauce if you are unexpectedly called upon to entertain a guest with "nothing in the larder."

Cheese Souffle—Make a white sauce according to directions given, seasoning with cayenne or paprika instead of white or black pepper. When sauce is smooth and thick, stir in the yolks of three eggs well beaten and a cup of grated cheese, and set away to cool. When quite cold, fold in the well-beaten whites of the eggs and bake half an hour.

Fruit Souffle—This is much on the same principle as the potato souffle. Take fruit that has been cooked, put through a sieve and sweeten; beat into the whites of the eggs, allowing one tablespoonful of sugar to each white, and as much fruit as can be beaten in without making it fall. The yolks may be used or not, as desired. If used, beat them and add to the hot sauce; then cool. The point is to have the whites unbeaten, adding the sugar and fruit alternately.

Apple Souffle—Rub stewed apples through the colander; allow two tablespoonfuls of sugar to each apple. Add finely sifted bread crumbs to make it consistency of marmalade; then stir in the well-beaten yolks of three eggs, and when cold the stiffly beaten whites.

Custard Souffle—To a white sauce made of three tablespoonfuls of butter, six of flour and one pint of hot milk, add three tablespoonfuls of sugar and the well-beaten yolks of six eggs. Set away until cool; then fold in the stiffened whites and bake in cups or paper cases. Thirty minutes in a moderate over will suffice. Serve with creamy sauce.

Creamy Sauce—Beat to a cream three tablespoonfuls of butter and six of sugar. Add two tablespoonfuls of sherry or orange juice and two tablespoonfuls of cream, beating vigorously. Just before serving warm the mixture over hot water, but do not allow the butter to become oily.

Oranges, apricots, bananas, peaches, prunes and dates are especially adapted to the souffle. Every housekeeper should provide herself with little souffle dishes and cases for she will find them the most useful addition to her list of cooking utensils. In a dainty, inexpensive souffle she can utilize many materials that would otherwise be impossible to set before a guest.

Mr. G. A. Stinman, a merchant of Tampico, Ill., writes: "Foley's Kidney Cure is meeting with wonderful success. It has cured some cases here that physicians pronounced incurable. I myself am able to testify to its merits. My face today is a living picture of health and Foley's Kidney Cure has made it such."

If It's a "Garland."

That's all you need to know about a stove or range.

Coast Hop Crop Short.

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 24.—W. E. Lovdal, secretary of the State Hop Growers' association, has issued a circular in which he estimates that the crop is short on the Pacific coast between 18,000 and 21,000 bales. He therefore advises growers to hold for higher prices.

Esoteric Knights at Cincinnati.

CINCINNATI, Sept. 24.—The eighth annual session of the supreme senate of Knights of the Ancient Essenic Order began here today with 200 delegates present. After addresses by Mayor Fielschmann, Charles Edgar Brown and others the supreme senate went into executive session to hear the annual reports of officers and committees. The session closes Thursday night.

POISON IN THE POT

For more than fifty years it has been known that tea and coffee contain poison. The eminent German chemist, Lehmann, was one of the first to point out this important fact. He experimented upon several teas and coffees and observed very grave symptoms from very small doses of this poison. The baneful effects of this poison resulting from the use of tea and coffee are now thoroughly recognized by physicians and even insanity has been traced directly to the use of tea or coffee. Indigestion, sick headache, constipation, various disorders of the liver and kidneys are justly attributable to this cause. For those who desire some beverage at the close of a meal, an excellent substitute has been prepared from cereals known as **Caramel Cereal**. It contains absolutely nothing but cereals so prepared as to develop an agreeable flavor and render a certain portion of the nutrient elements soluble. **Caramel Cereal** contains no burnt molasses or other cheap sweets which render unwholesome many of the coffee substitutes offered in the market at the present time. Especial care is taken in the preparation of **Caramel Cereal** to avoid the production of pyrolaneous acid, which is an irritating acid, the presence of which is often indicated by nausea and vomiting resulting from the improperly prepared cereal coffees with which the market is flooded. The public should be warned of this danger. A word to the wise is sufficient. Use **Caramel Cereal** and make sure that each package bears the picture of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, where this safe, reliable and most satisfactory of all coffee substitutes originated and is at present used and recommended by the faculty of the world-famous institution. Ask your grocer for it.