

= Isabella Beeton =

Isabella Mary Beeton (née Mayson ; 14 March 1836 ? 6 February 1865) , also known as Mrs Beeton , was an English journalist , editor and writer . Her name is particularly associated with her first book , the 1861 work Mrs Beeton 's Book of Household Management . She was born in London and , after schooling in Islington , north London , and Heidelberg , Germany , she married Samuel Orchart Beeton , an ambitious publisher and magazine editor .

In 1857 , less than a year after the wedding , Isabella began writing for one of her husband 's publications , The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine . She translated French fiction and wrote the cookery column , though all the recipes were plagiarised from other works or sent in by the magazine 's readers . In 1859 the Beetons launched a series of 48 @-@ page monthly supplements to The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine ; the 24 instalments were published in one volume as Mrs Beeton 's Book of Household Management in October 1861 , which sold 60 @,@ 000 copies in the first year . Isabella was working on an abridged version of her book , which was to be titled The Dictionary of Every @-@ Day Cookery , when she died of puerperal fever in February 1865 at the age of 28 . She gave birth to four children , two of whom died in infancy , and had several miscarriages . Two of her biographers , Nancy Spain and Kathryn Hughes , posit the theory that Samuel had unknowingly contracted syphilis in a premarital liaison with a prostitute , and had unwittingly passed the disease on to his wife .

The Book of Household Management has been edited , revised and enlarged several times since Isabella 's death and is still in print as at 2016 . Food writers have stated that the subsequent editions of the work were far removed from and inferior to the original version . Several cookery writers , including Elizabeth David and Clarissa Dickson Wright , have criticised Isabella 's work , particularly her use of other people 's recipes . Others , such as the food writer Bee Wilson , consider the censure overstated , and that Beeton and her work should be thought extraordinary and admirable . Her name has become associated with knowledge and authority on Victorian cooking and home management , and the Oxford English Dictionary states that by 1891 the term Mrs Beeton had become used as a generic name for a domestic authority . She is also considered a strong influence in the building or shaping of a middle @-@ class identity of the Victorian era .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life , 1836 ? 54 = = =

Isabella Mayson was born on 14 March 1836 in Marylebone , London . She was the eldest of three daughters to Benjamin Mayson , a linen factor (merchant) and his wife Elizabeth (née Jerrom) . Shortly after Isabella 's birth the family moved to Milk Street , Cheapside , from where Benjamin traded . He died when Isabella was four years old , and Elizabeth , pregnant and unable to cope with raising the children on her own while maintaining Benjamin 's business , sent her two elder daughters to live with relatives . Isabella went to live with her recently widowed paternal grandfather in Great Orton , Cumberland , though she was back with her mother within the next two years .

Three years after Benjamin 's death Elizabeth married Henry Dorling , a widower with four children . Henry was the Clerk of Epsom Racecourse , and had been granted residence within the racecourse grounds . The family , including Elizabeth 's mother , moved to Surrey and over the next twenty years Henry and Elizabeth had a further thirteen children . Isabella was instrumental in her siblings ' upbringing , and collectively referred to them as a " living cargo of children " . The experience gave her much insight and experience in how to manage a family and its household .

After a brief education at a boarding school in Islington , in 1851 Isabella was sent to school in Heidelberg , Germany , accompanied by her stepsister Jane Dorling . Isabella became proficient in the piano and excelled in French and German ; she also gained knowledge and experience in making pastry . She had returned to Epsom by the summer of 1854 and took further lessons in pastry @-@ making from a local baker .

= = = Marriage and career , 1854 ? 61 = = =

Around 1854 Isabella began a relationship with Samuel Orchart Beeton . His family had lived in Milk Street at the same time as the Maysons ? Samuel 's father still ran the Dolphin Tavern there ? and Samuel 's sisters had also attended the same Heidelberg school as Isabella . Samuel was the first British publisher of Harriet Beecher Stowe 's Uncle Tom 's Cabin in 1852 and had also released two innovative and pioneering journals : The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine in 1852 and the Boys ' Own magazine in 1855 . The couple entered into extensive correspondence in 1855 ? in which Isabella signed her letters as " Fatty " ? and they announced their engagement in June 1855 . The marriage took place at St Martin 's Church , Epsom , in July the following year , and was announced in The Times . Samuel was " a discreet but firm believer in the equality of women " and their relationship , both personal and professional , was an equal partnership . The couple went to Paris for a three @-@ week honeymoon , after which Samuel 's mother joined them in a visit to Heidelberg . They returned to Britain in August , when the newlyweds moved into 2 Chandos Villas , a large Italianate house in Pinner .

Within a month of returning from their honeymoon Isabella was pregnant . A few weeks before the birth , Samuel persuaded his wife to contribute to The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine , a publication that the food writers Mary Aylett and Olive Ordish consider was " designed to make women content with their lot inside the home , not to interest them in the world outside " . The magazine was affordable , aimed at young middle class women and was commercially successful , selling 50 @,@ 000 issues a month by 1856 . Isabella began by translating French fiction for publication as stories or serials . Shortly afterwards she started to work on the cookery column ? which had been moribund for the previous six months following the departure of the previous correspondent ? and the household article . The Beetons ' son , Samuel Orchart , was born towards the end of May 1857 , but died at the end of August that year . On the death certificate , the cause of death was given as diarrhoea and cholera , although Hughes hypothesises that Samuel senior had unknowingly contracted syphilis in a premarital liaison with a prostitute , and had unwittingly passed the condition on to his wife , which would have infected his son .

While coping with the loss of her child , Isabella continued to work at The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine . Although she was not a regular cook , she and Samuel obtained recipes from other sources . A request to receive the readers ' own recipes led to over 2 @,@ 000 being sent in , which were selected and edited by the Beetons . Published works were also copied , largely unattributed to any of the sources . These included Eliza Acton 's Modern Cookery for Private Families , Elizabeth Raffald 's The Experienced English Housekeeper , Marie @-@ Antoine Carême 's Le Pâtissier royal parisien , Louis Eustache Ude 's The French Cook , Alexis Soyer 's The Modern Housewife or , Ménagère and The Pantropheon , Hannah Glasse 's The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy , Maria Eliza Rundell 's A New System of Domestic Cookery , and the works of Charles Elmé Francatelli . Suzanne Daly and Ross G. Forman , in their examination of Victorian cooking culture , consider that the plagiarism makes it " an important index of mid @-@ Victorian and middle @-@ class society " because the production of the text from its own readers ensures that it is a reflection of what was actually being cooked and eaten at the time . In copying the recipes of others , Isabella was following the recommendation given to her by Henrietta English , a family friend , who wrote that " Cookery is a Science that is only learnt by Long Experience and years of study which of course you have not had . Therefore my advice would be compile a book from receipts from a Variety of the Best Books published on Cookery and Heaven knows there is a great variety for you to choose from . "

The Beetons partly followed the layout of Acton 's recipes , although with a major alteration : whereas the earlier writer provided the method of cooking followed by a list of the required ingredients , the recipes in The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine listed the components before the cooking process . Isabella 's standardised layout used for the recipes also showed the approximate costs of each serving , the seasonality of the ingredients and the number of portions per dish . According to the twentieth @-@ century British cookery writer Elizabeth David , one of the

strengths of Isabella 's writing was in the " clarity and details of her general instructions , her brisk comments , her no @-@ nonsense asides " . Margaret Beetham , the historian , sees that one of the strengths of the book was the " consistent principle of organisation which made its heterogeneous contents look uniform and orderly " , and brought a consistent style in presentation and layout . Whereas Daly and Forman consider such an approach as " nothing if not formulaic " , Hughes sees it as " the thing most beloved by the mid Victorians , a system " .

During the particularly bitter winter of 1858 ? 59 Isabella prepared her own soup that she served to the poor of Pinner , " Soup for benevolent purposes " ; her sister later recalled that Isabella " was busy making [the] soup for the poor , and the children used to call with their cans regularly to be refilled " . The recipe would become the only entry in her Book of Household Management that was her own . After two years of miscarriages , the couple 's second son was born in June 1859 ; he was also named Samuel Orchard Beeton . Hughes sees the miscarriages as further evidence of Samuel 's syphilis .

As early as 1857 the Beetons had considered using the magazine columns as the basis of a book of collected recipes and homecare advice , Hughes believes , and in November 1859 they launched a series of 48 @-@ page monthly supplements with The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine . The print block for the whole series of the supplements was set from the beginning so the break between each edition was fixed at 48 pages , regardless of the text , and in several issues the text of a sentence or recipe is split between the end of one instalment and the beginning of the next .

The Beetons decided to revamp The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine , particularly the fashion column , which the historian Graham Nown describes as " a rather drab piece " . They travelled to Paris in March 1860 to meet Adolphe Goubaud , the publisher of the French magazine Le Moniteur de la Mode . The magazine carried a full @-@ sized dress pattern outlined on a fold @-@ out piece of paper for users to cut out and make their own dresses . The Beetons came to an agreement with Goubaud for the Frenchman to provide patterns and illustrations for their magazine . The first edition to carry the new feature appeared on 1 May , six weeks after the couple returned from Paris . For the redesigned magazine , Samuel was joined as editor by Isabella , who was described as " Editress " . As well as being co @-@ editors , the couple were also equal partners . Isabella brought an efficiency and strong business acumen to Samuel 's normally disorganised and financially wasteful approach . She joined her husband at work , travelling daily by train to the office , where her presence caused a stir among commuters , most of whom were male . In June 1860 Isabella and Samuel travelled to Killarney , Ireland , for a fortnight 's holiday , leaving their son at home with his nurse . The Beetons enjoyed the sightseeing , although on the days it rained , they stayed inside their hotel and worked on the next edition of The Englishwoman 's Domestic Magazine . Isabella was impressed with the food they were served , and wrote in her diary that the dinners were " conducted in quite the French style " .

In September 1861 the Beetons released a new , weekly publication called The Queen , the Ladies ' Newspaper . With the Beetons busy running their other titles , they employed Frederick Greenwood as the editor .

= = = Mrs Beeton 's Book of Household Management and later , 1861 ? 65 = = =

The complete version of Mrs Beeton 's Book of Household Management , consisting of the 24 collected monthly instalments , was published on 1 October 1861 ; it became one of the major publishing events of the nineteenth century . Isabella included an extensive 26 @-@ page " Analytical Index " in the book . Although not an innovation ? it had been used in The Family Friend magazine since 1855 ? Hughes considers the index in the Book of Household Management to be " fabulously detailed and exhaustively cross @-@ referenced " . Of the 1 @,@ 112 pages , over 900 contained recipes . The remainder provided advice on fashion , child care , animal husbandry , poisons , the management of servants , science , religion , first aid and the importance in the use of local and seasonal produce . In its first year of publication , the book sold 60 @,@ 000 copies . It reflected Victorian values , particularly hard work , thrift and cleanliness . Christopher Clausen , in his study of the British middle classes , sees that Isabella " reflected better than anyone else , and

for a larger audience , the optimistic message that mid 19th Victorian England was filled with opportunities for those who were willing to learn how to take advantage of them " . The food writer Annette Hope thinks that " one can understand its success . If ... young ladies knew nothing of domestic arrangements , no better book than this could have been devised for them . "

The reviews for Book of Household Management were positive . The critic for the London Evening Standard considered that Isabella had earned herself a household reputation , remarking that she had " succeeded in producing a volume which will be , for years to come , a treasure to be made much of in every English household " . The critic for the Saturday Review wrote that " for a really valuable repertory of hints on all sorts of household matters , we recommend Mrs Beeton with few misgivings " . The anonymous reviewer for The Bradford Observer considered that " the information afforded ... appears intelligible and explicit " ; the reviewer also praised the layout of the recipes , highlighting details relating to ingredients , seasonality and the times needed . Writing in The Morning Chronicle , an anonymous commentator opined that " Mrs Beeton has omitted nothing which tends to the comfort of housekeepers , or facilitates the many little troubles and cares that fall to the lot of every wife and mother . She may safely predict that this book will in future take precedence of every other on the same subject . " For the 1906 edition of the book , The Illustrated London News 's reviewer considered the work " a formidable body of domestic doctrine " , and thought that " the book is almost of the first magnitude " .

Samuel 's business decisions from 1861 were unproductive and included an ill advised investment in purchasing paper ? in which he lost £ 1 000 ? and a court case over unpaid bills . His hubris in business affairs brought on financial difficulties and in early 1862 the couple had moved from their comfortable Pinner house to premises over their office . The air of central London was not conducive to the health of the Beetons ' son , and he began to ail . Three days after Christmas his health worsened and he died on New Year 's Eve 1862 at the age of three ; his death certificate gave the cause as " suppressed scarlatina " and " laryngitis " . In March 1863 Isabella found that she was pregnant again , and in April the couple moved to a house in Greenhithe , Kent ; their son , who they named Orchart , was born on New Year 's Eve 1863 . Although the couple had been through financial problems , they enjoyed relative prosperity during 1863 , boosted by the sale of The Queen to Edward Cox in the middle of the year .

In the middle of 1864 the Beetons again visited the Goubauds in Paris ? the couple 's third visit to the city ? and Isabella was pregnant during the visit , just as she had been the previous year . On her return to Britain she began working on an abridged version of the Book of Household Management , which was to be titled The Dictionary of Every 19th Day Cookery . On 29 January 1865 , while working on the proofs of the dictionary , she went into labour ; the baby ? Mayson Moss ? was born that day . Isabella began to feel feverish the following day and died of puerperal fever on 6 February at the age of 28 .

Isabella was buried at West Norwood Cemetery on 11 February . When The Dictionary of Every 19th Day Cookery was published in the same year , Samuel added a tribute to his wife at the end :

Her works speak for themselves ; and , although taken from this world in the very height and strength , and in the early days of womanhood , she felt satisfaction ? so great to all who strive with good intent and warm will ? of knowing herself regarded with respect and gratitude .

= = Legacy = =

In May 1866 , following a severe downturn in his financial fortunes , Samuel sold the rights to the Book of Household Management to Ward , Lock and Tyler (later Ward Lock & Co) . The writer Nancy Spain , in her biography of Isabella , reports that , given the money the company made from the Beetons ' work , " surely no man ever made a worse or more impractical bargain " than Samuel did . In subsequent publications Ward Lock suppressed the details of the lives of the Beetons ? especially the death of Isabella ? in order to protect their investment by letting readers think she was still alive and creating recipes ? what Hughes considers to be " intentional censorship " . Those later editions continued to make the connection to Isabella in what Beetham considers to be a " fairly ruthless marketing policy which was begun by Beeton but carried on vigorously by Ward , Lock , and

Tyler ". Those subsequent volumes bearing Isabella 's name became less reflective of the original . Since its initial publication the Book of Household Management has been issued in numerous hardback and paperback editions , translated into several languages and has never been out of print .

Isabella and her main work have been subjected to criticism over the course of the twentieth century . Elizabeth David complains of recipes that are " sometimes slapdash and misleading " , although she acknowledges that Prosper Montagné 's Larousse Gastronomique also contains errors . The television cook Delia Smith admits she was puzzled " how on earth Mrs Beeton 's book managed to utterly eclipse ... [Acton 's] superior work " , while her fellow chef , Clarissa Dickson Wright , opines that " It would be unfair to blame any one person or one book for the decline of English cookery , but Isabella Beeton and her ubiquitous book do have a lot to answer for . " In comparison , the food writer Bee Wilson opines that disparaging Isabella 's work was only a " fashionable " stance to take and that the cook 's writing " simply makes you want to cook " . Christopher Driver , the journalist and food critic , suggests that the " relative stagnation and want of refinement in the indigenous cooking of Britain between 1880 and 1930 " may instead be explained by the " progressive debasement under successive editors , revises and enlargers " . David comments that " when plain English cooks " were active in their kitchens , " they followed plain English recipes and chiefly those from the Mrs Beeton books or their derivatives " . Dickson Wright considers Beeton to be a " fascinating source of information " from a social history viewpoint , and Aylett and Ordish consider the work to be " the best and most reliable guide for the scholar to the domestic history of the mid @-@ Victorian era " .

Despite the criticism , Clausen observes that " ' Mrs. Beeton ' has ... been for over a century the standard English cookbook , frequently outselling every other book but the Bible " . According to the Oxford English Dictionary , the term Mrs Beeton became used as a generic name for " an authority on cooking and domestic subjects " as early as 1891 , and Beetham opines that " ' Mrs. Beeton ' became a trade mark , a brand name " . In a review by Gavin Koh published in a 2009 issue of The BMJ , Mrs Beeton 's Book of Household Management was labelled a medical classic . In Isabella 's " attempt to educate the average reader about common medical complaints and their management " , Koh argues , " she preceded the family health guides of today " . Robin Wensley , a professor of strategic management , believes that Isabella 's advice and guidance on household management can also be applied to business management , and her lessons on the subject have stood the test of time better than some of her advice on cooking or etiquette .

Following the radio broadcast of Meet Mrs. Beeton , a 1934 comedy in which Samuel was portrayed in an unflattering light , and Mrs Beeton , a 1937 documentary , Mayston Beeton worked with H. Montgomery Hyde to produce the biography Mr and Mrs Beeton , although completion and publication were delayed until 1951 . In the meantime Nancy Spain published Mrs Beeton and her Husband in 1948 , updated and retitled in 1956 to The Beeton Story . In the new edition Spain hinted at , but did not elucidate upon , on the possibility that Samuel contracted syphilis . Several other biographies followed , including from the historian Sarah Freeman , who wrote Isabella and Sam in 1977 ; Nown 's Mrs Beeton : 150 Years of Cookery and Household Management , published on the 150th anniversary of Isabella 's birthday , and Hughes 's The Short Life and Long Times of Mrs Beeton , published in 2006 . Isabella was ignored by the Dictionary of National Biography for many years : while Acton was included in the first published volume of 1885 , Isabella did not have an entry until 1993 .

There have been several television broadcasts about Isabella . In 1970 Margaret Tyzack portrayed her in a solo performance written by Rosemary Hill , in 2006 Anna Madeley played Isabella in a docudrama , and Sophie Dahl presented a documentary , The Marvellous Mrs Beeton , in the same year .

The literary historian Kate Thomas sees Isabella as " a powerful force in the making of middle @-@ class Victorian domesticity " , while the Oxford University Press , advertising an abridged edition of the Book of Household Management , considers Isabella 's work a " founding text " and " a force in shaping " the middle @-@ class identity of the Victorian era . Within that identity , the historian Sarah Richardson sees that one of Beeton 's achievements was the integration of different threads

of domestic science into one volume , which " elevat [ed] the middle @-@ class female housekeeper 's role ... placing it in a broader and more public context " . Nown quotes an unnamed academic who thought that " Mrs Beetonism has preserved the family as a social unit , and made social reforms a possibility " , while Nicola Humble , in her history of British food , sees *The Book of Household Management* as " an engine for social change " which led to a " new cult of domesticity that was to play such a major role in mid @-@ Victorian life " . Nown considers Isabella

... a singular and remarkable woman , praised in her lifetime and later forgotten and ignored when a pride in light pastry ... were no longer considered prerequisites for womanhood . Yet in her lively , progressive way , she helped many women to overcome the loneliness of marriage and gave the family the importance it deserved . In the climate of her time she was brave , strong @-@ minded and a tireless champion of her sisters everywhere .