Dishwashing
As It Was

THE FRENCH had a phrase for them. "Tablettes a Chaudiere" they'd say when they talked about their open-air dishwashing shelves.

In the early days, before such new-fangled things as panes and sashes, windows were closed by wooden shutters, and even now more a than a few bayou homes may be found that have shuttered windows.

Years ago, directly beneath the window-sills there were sloping shelves, large enough to support big dishes, projecting outward from the windows to form the Tablettes a Chaudiere. This open-air system provided for more than just dishwashing. Besides supporting the pan in which maman or grandmere scoured her pots and pans, it afforded the ladies the opportunity of keeping an eye on the children at play, and it opened the way for an exchange of neighborly gossip.

Soon the Tablettes a Chaudiere will be nothing but a memory, as they have almost completely disappeared from the bayou. But if you look hard, and travel the inland roads off the highway, you may find one or two still in existence but not in use. Today, no doubt, maman and grandmere indulge in the indoor sport of sudsing the dishes and who knows, perhaps they dream about the new-fangled electrical gadgets that wash dishes all by themselves!

—Violet Brown Shay, 2451 Lavender.