

Dinners and diners : where and how to dine in London / by Lieut.-Col. Newnham-Davis.

Contributors

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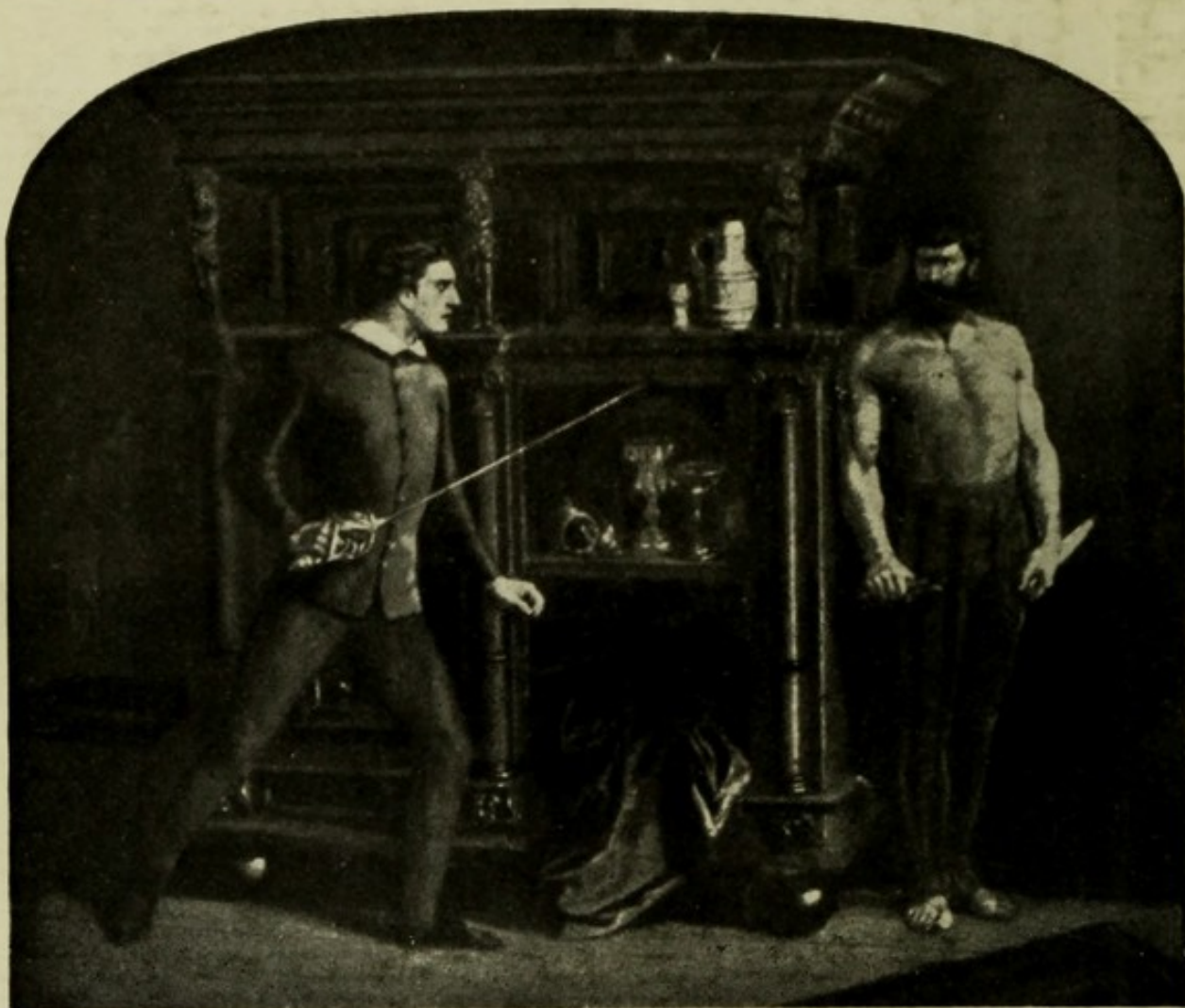


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DINNERS & DINERS

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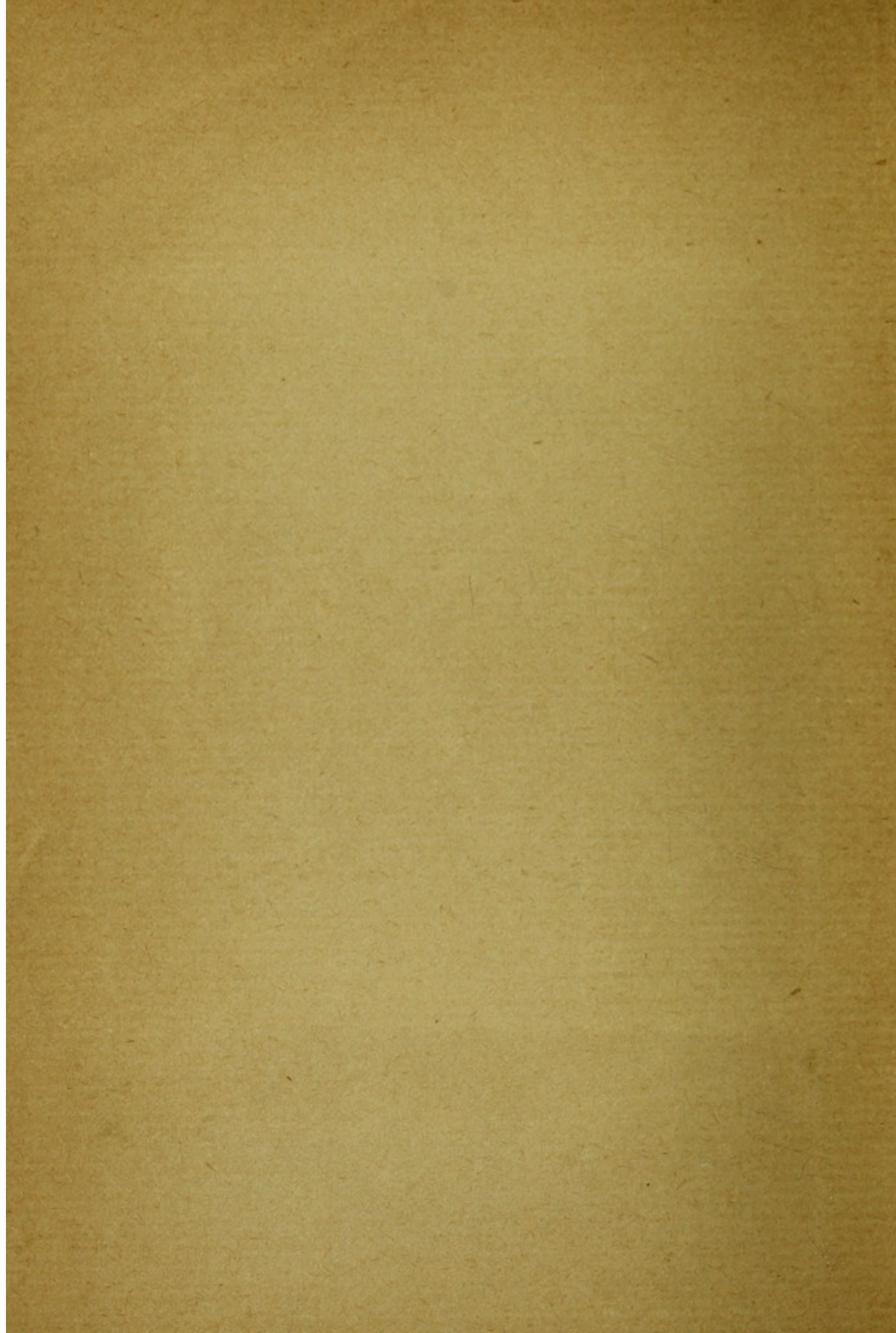
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DINNERS AND DINERS

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DINNERS AND DINERS

WHERE AND HOW TO DINE
IN LONDON

BY

LIEUT.-COL. NEWNHAM-DAVIS

A NEW ENLARGED AND REVISED EDITION

London

GRANT RICHARDS

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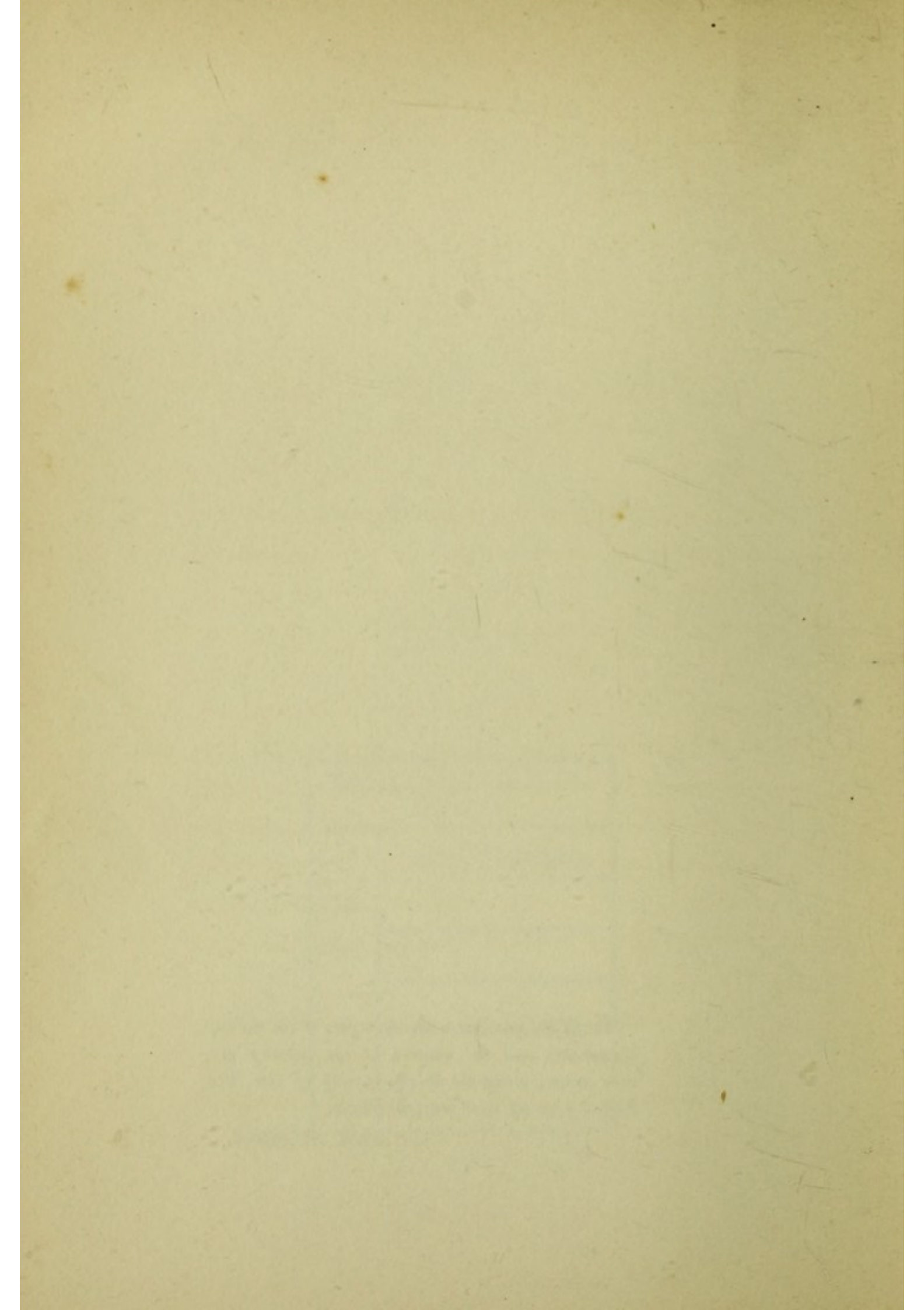
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*To all the gentlemen, the managers of the various
restaurants and the masters of the culinary art,
who have assisted me in the making of this little
book, I give my most grateful thanks.*

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THIS second edition of *Dinners and Diners* differs from the previous one in that descriptions of new restaurants and of others that have risen again to fame in the past two years appear in it, that some of the articles included in the former book are now omitted, as being for various reasons unnecessary, that many of the chapters retained from the first edition have been re-written, and all brought up to date. A list of all the hotels and restaurants mentioned in the book, arranged in alphabetical order, with a short statement of their specialities, follows the table of "contents."

What I have attempted in this book to do is to give a description of all the important restaurants in London and its dependencies which have any strong individuality, and to take good

examples of the restaurants which fall into great classes. If I were to attempt to describe every big eating-place at which a 3s. 6d. *table d'hôte* is served, I should have to write about a vast number of similar meals eaten under conditions so alike that the only difference would be in the colour of the marble on the dining-room walls, the size and shape of the room, and the name of the *maître d'hôtel*. I think that it will be found that every dining-place, great or small, which the man, or woman, of a most catholic taste in dinners is likely to visit in London is mentioned or described, and catalogued in the book.

Chefs and *maîtres d'hôtels* are a wandering race, and some restaurants seem to change their managers annually. Restlessness is sometimes one of the symptoms of genius, and the *cordons bleu* of a great *chef* often illumines many kitchens in succession. I have kept track as best I may of these Bedouins of the stew-pans and dining-rooms, and I trust that the wander-spirit will not seize any of the master minds at the eleventh hour, when this book is on the point of publication, and induce them to change their public addresses.

To the man, or lady, who knows his, or her, London thoroughly, I hope that the book is useful in jogging the memory gently as to the very many pleasant places there are at which to dine, and as a little incentive to sometimes move out of the groove we are all apt to fall into of going night after night to the same restaurant and eating dinners conceived always on identical lines. The *connaisseur* of pictures does not look at the work of only one painter, and musicians turn with pleasure from Wagner to Sullivan, from Sullivan to Offenbach, and from Offenbach back to Wagner. So should it be with *gourmets*.

To the stranger within our gates, the voyager from over the ocean, the man who runs up from the provinces, or the busy London man who has neither time nor taste for the gossip of epicureans, I hope the book is of use; for it gives both briefly and at length the names of the restaurants, their position in London, the manner of meals served there, the average price that has to be paid, and the name of the manager or *maître d'hôtel*, who should be asked for when ordering a dinner.

I trust that the many menus of dinners great and small scattered throughout the volume are of service to those ladies who are their own house-

keepers, and that the *recettes* signed by most of the great *chefs* of the moment may show the humbler practitioners of the great art of cookery how the masters work.

N. NEWNHAM-DAVIS.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

WHEN the series of articles now collected in this volume was first discussed between their author and myself in the early part of 1897, we found it a matter of no slight difficulty to determine what range they should take, and to what class of establishments they should be confined. There is no accounting for the variety of people's tastes in the matter of eating and drinking, and among the readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* persons no doubt could be found ranging from the Sybarite, who requires Lucullus-like banquets, to him of the simple appetite for whom little more than a dinner with Duke Humphrey would suffice. Consequently, the choice of places to be visited had to be made in a catholic spirit, with the necessary result that a formidably long list was prepared. In selecting Colonel Newnham-Davis

to carry out this commission for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I knew I was availing myself of the services of a thoroughly experienced, trustworthy, and capable commissioner, who would deal with the task entrusted to him in a pleasantly mixed anecdotal and critical spirit, while at the same time supplying useful guidance to persons wanting to know where to dine and what they would have to pay. In the following pages it will be seen how well he carried out the duty he undertook, and I am able to add that "Dinners and Diners" had a great vogue and very wide popularity among the readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. There were very many requests from various quarters that they should be collected into book form, and this has now been done with some valuable additions included in the shape of recipes and other information. In these days, when the taste for dining at restaurants is so largely on the increase, I have little doubt that the republication of these articles will be welcomed, and that they will supply not only interesting but useful information.

THE EDITOR OF THE
Pall Mall Gazette.

March 1899.

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<i>Name.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Description or Specialities.</i>
Adelphi . . .	Strand . . .	3s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Albert . . .	Dean Street (Soho) . . .	Small French restaurant.
Albion . . .	City . . .	Banquets.
Amphitryon . . .	Wardour Street . . .	Small French restaurant.
Anderton's . . .	Fleet Street . . .	À la carte.
Au Bienvenu . . .	Greek Street (Soho) . . .	Snails, tripes à la mode de Caen.
Bedford . . .	Covent Garden . . .	Old English cookery.
Berkeley . . .	Piccadilly . . .	Haute cuisine Française.
Blue Posts . . .	Cork Street . . .	Old English cookery.
Brice . . .	Compton Street . . .	2s. 6d. dinner, vin compris.
Bristol . . .	Cork Street . . .	10s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Café d'Italie . . .	Old Compton Street . . .	2s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Café de l'Europe . . .	Leicester Square . . .	Brasserie, French restaurant, and German restaurant.
Café National . . .	Great Windmill Street . . .	1s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Café Royal . . .	Regent Street . . .	Haute cuisine Française and grill-room.
Carlton . . .	Pall Mall . . .	Haute cuisine Française and grill-room.
Cavour . . .	Leicester Square . . .	3s. table d'hôte.
Cecil . . .	Strand . . .	Haute cuisine Française, 10s. table d'hôte, and grill-room.
Challis's . . .	Rupert Street . . .	3s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Cheshire Cheese . . .	Wine Office Court . . .	Old English cookery.
Chicks . . .	Long Acre . . .	Fish and tripe.
Circus . . .	Oxford Street . . .	À la carte.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Description or Specialities.</i>
Claridge's . . .	Brook Street . . .	Haute cuisine Française.
Coburg . . .	Carlos Place . . .	10s. 6d. table d'hôte and haute cuisine Française.
Cock . . .	Fleet Street . . .	Old English cookery.
Comedy . . .	Panton Street . . .	2s. 6d. Italian table d'hôte.
Continental . . .	Regent Street . . .	10s. 6d. and 7s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Criterion . . .	Piccadilly Circus . . .	Haute cuisine Française, 3s. 6d. table d'hôte, and grill-rooms.
De Ciproso . . .	Greek Street (Soho) . . .	Small Italian restaurant.
De France et l'Italie . . .	Lisle Street . . .	Small French restaurant.
Dei . . .	Wardour Street . . .	" "
De la Paix . . .	Lisle Street . . .	" "
De l'Univers . . .	Greek Street (Soho) . . .	" "
De Napoli . . .	Greek Street (Soho) . . .	Small Italian restaurant.
Des Gourmets . . .	Lisle Street . . .	Small French restaurant.
Dieudonné's . . .	Ryder Street . . .	7s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Dr. Butler's Head . . .	Coleman Street (City) . . .	Old English cookery.
Du Littoral . . .	Moor Street (Soho) . . .	Small French restaurant.
Epitaux . . .	Haymarket . . .	À la carte and table d'hôte.
Européen . . .	Dean Street (Soho) . . .	Small French restaurant.
Frascati's . . .	Oxford Street . . .	5s. table d'hôte dinner.
Freemasons' Tavern . . .	Great Queen Street . . .	Banquets.
Gambrinus . . .	Glasshouse Street . . .	German cookery.
Garrick . . .	Green Street (Leicester Square) . . .	2s. 6d. grill dinner.
Gatti's . . .	Strand . . .	À la carte.
Gatti and Rodosano . . .	Strand . . .	À la carte and table d'hôte.
Gedda's . . .	Arundel Street . . .	2s. 6d. Italian table d'hôte.
Gianella's . . .	Oxford Street . . .	Italian restaurant.
Golden Cross . . .	Charing Cross . . .	Grill.
Goldstein's . . .	Bloomfield Street (City) . . .	Jewish restaurant.
Grand . . .	Northumberland Avenue . . .	5s. table d'hôte, 2s. 6d. grill.
Great Central . . .	Marylebone Road . . .	5s. table d'hôte.
Grosvenor . . .	Victoria . . .	5s. table d'hôte, à la carte.
Hanover . . .	Mill Street . . .	À la carte.
Hans Crescent . . .	Hans Crescent . . .	10s. 6d. table d'hôte.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Description or Specialities.</i>
Hatchett's . . .	Piccadilly . . .	4s. table d'hôte.
Holborn . . .	Holborn . . .	3s. 6d. table d'hôte, grill.
Ideal . . .	Tottenham Court Road	Vegetarian.
Imperial . . .	Regent Street . . .	Haute cuisine Française and grill.
Kettner's . . .	Church Street (Soho) . .	À la carte.
Kirk's . . .	Haymarket . . .	2s. table d'hôte.
Kuhn's . . .	Hanover Street . . .	À la carte.
Long's . . .	Bond Street . . .	A la carte and table d'hôte.
Lyonnais . . .	Frith Street (Soho) . .	8d. table d'hôte.
Lyric . . .	Frith Street (Soho) . .	4s. and 2s. table d'hôte.
Mansion House . .	City . . .	Vegetarian.
Marguerite . . .	Oxford Street . . .	À la carte.
Métropole . . .	Northumberland Avenue	5s. table d'hôte.
Midland . . .	St. Pancras . . .	À la carte.
Monico . . .	Shaftesbury Avenue . .	5s. table d'hôte.
Odone's . . .	Victoria Street . . .	Italian restaurant.
Oriental . . .	Wardour Street . . .	2s. table d'hôte.
Oxford . . .	Euston Road . . .	Italian restaurant.
Oxford . . .	Wardour Street . . .	1s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Pagani's . . .	Great Portland Street . .	À la carte. Italian.
Piedemonte . . .	Frith Street (Soho) . .	2s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Pinoli's . . .	Wardour Street . . .	2s. table d'hôte.
Premier . . .	Dover Street . . .	5s. table d'hôte.
Previtali . . .	Arundel Street . . .	5s. and 3s. 6d. Italian table d'hôte.
Princes . . .	Piccadilly . . .	Haute cuisine Française and grill.
Quadrant . . .	Earl's Court . . .	7s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Queen's . . .	Leicester Square . . .	5s. table d'hôte and grill.
Queen's . . .	Sloane Square . . .	Small Italian restaurant.
Rainbow . . .	Fleet Street . . .	Old English cookery.
Reggiori . . .	Chapel Street . . .	Small Italian restaurant.
Roche . . .	Compton Street (Soho)	1s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Romano's . . .	Strand . . .	Haute cuisine Française.
Royal Academy . .	Sackville Street . . .	2s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Rupert . . .	Shaftesbury Avenue . .	À la carte.
Russell . . .	Russell Square . . .	À la carte and 5s. table d'hôte.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Description or Specialities.</i>
Savoy . . .	Victoria Embankment . . .	Haute cuisine Française, grill.
St. George's . . .	St. Martin's Lane . . .	1s. 6d. vegetarian table d'hôte.
St. James's . . .	Piccadilly . . .	3s. 6d. old English dinner.
Scott's . . .	Piccadilly Circus . . .	Fish dinners.
Ship . . .	Whitehall . . .	3s. and 2s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Ship . . .	Greenwich . . .	7s. fish dinner.
Ship and Turtle . . .	City . . .	Banquets.
Simpson's . . .	Strand . . .	2s. 6d. table d'hôte and 2s. 9d. fish dinner.
Spaten . . .	Piccadilly . . .	3s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Spaten . . .	Leicester Square . . .	2s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Star and Garter . . .	Richmond . . .	À la carte.
Tavistock . . .	Covent Garden . . .	Old English cookery.
Tivoli . . .	Strand . . .	5s. table d'hôte.
Toriani's . . .	Brompton Road . . .	Italian restaurant.
Torrino's . . .	Oxford Street . . .	" "
Toscano . . .	Compton Street . . .	Small Italian restaurant.
Trocadero . . .	Shaftesbury Avenue . . .	10s. 6d. table d'hôte, à la carte, and grill.
Veglio . . .	Euston Road . . .	Italian restaurant.
Verrey's . . .	Regent Street . . .	Haute cuisine Française.
Victoria . . .	Northumberland Avenue . . .	5s. table d'hôte.
Victorian . . .	Victoria Street . . .	Vegetarian.
Viennese . . .	New Oxford Street . . .	German and Austrian cookery.
Villa Villa Burke . . .	Gerrard Street . . .	2s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Walsingham . . .	Piccadilly . . .	7s. 6d. table d'hôte.
Washington . . .	Oxford Street . . .	À la carte.
Wedde's . . .	Greek Street (Soho) . . .	German restaurant.
Willis's Rooms . . .	King Street (St. James's) . . .	Haute cuisine Française.
Windsor . . .	Victoria Street . . .	À la carte.
Zappelonis . . .	Victoria . . .	3s. table d'hôte.

CHAPTER I

THE DIFFICULTIES OF DINING

I WOULD be willing to make you, my dear sir, a very small bet, that if in the early afternoon you go into the restaurant where you intend to dine in the evening and disturb the head waiter, who is reading a paper at one of the side tables, suddenly breaking the news upon him that you want a simple little dinner for two at eight o'clock, and wish to commence the repast with clear soup, he, in reply, after pulling out a book of order papers and biting his lead pencil, will, a moment of thought intervening, suggest *petite marmite*.

It is not his fault. Hundreds of Britons have taken the *carte de jour* out of his hands, and, looking at the list of soups, puzzled by the names which mean nothing to them, have fallen back upon *petite marmite* or *croûte-au-pot*, which they know are harmless homely soups which the lady they are going to bring to dinner cannot object to.

It requires a certain amount of bravery, a little

consciousness of knowledge, for the ordinary man looking down a list of dishes to put his finger on every third one and ask, "What is that?" He is much more likely, the head waiter, who has summed him up, prompting him, to order very much the dinner that he would have eaten in his suburban home had he been dining there that night.

Every good cook has his little vanities. They are all inventors; and when any one of them, breaking away from the strict lines of the classic *haute cuisine*, finds that a pinch of this or two drops of that improves some well-known dish, he immediately gives it a new name. It is the same with explorers. Did any one of them find a goat with half a twist more in its horns than another explorer had noticed, but he called it a new species and christened it *Ovis Jonesi*, *Browni*, or *Robinsoni*, according to his surname. If you see *filets de sole à la Hercules John Jones* on the *carte* do not be afraid to ask what it is. It is probably some old acquaintance slightly altered by the chef, who has had a flash of inspiration when preparing it for Mr. Hercules John Jones, a valued client of the restaurant.

I should have begun this chapter by warning all experienced diners to skip it and go on to Chapter II. It is not too late to do so now. I, who have gone through all the agonies that a simple Briton struggling in the spider web of a *carte de jour* can endure, am only trying to warn other simple Britons with a liking for a good dinner by an account of my experiences.

If you or I, in the absence of the *maître d'hôtel*

and the head waiter, fall into the hands of an underling, Heaven help us. He will lure you or me on to order the most expensive dinner that his limited imagination can conceive, and thinks he is doing his duty to the *patron*. Luckily, such ill-fortune as this rarely occurs. The manager is the man to look for, if possible, when composing a menu. The higher you reach up that glorious scale of responsibility which runs from manager to *marmiton*, the more intelligent help you will get in ordering your dinner, the more certain you are to have an artistic meal, and not to be spending money unworthily.

That you must pay on the higher scale for a really artistic dinner is, I regret to say, a necessity. No doubt the luxurious surroundings, the beauty of the glass, the china, and the silver, the quick, quiet service appear indirectly in the bill; but the material for the dinner is costly. No pains are spared nowadays to put on the table of a first-class restaurant the very best food that the world can produce. Not only France, but countries much farther afield are systematically pillaged that Londoners may dine, and I do not despair of some day eating mangostines for dessert. All this costs money; but the *gourmets*, like the dilettanti in any other art, do not get a *chef-d'œuvre* for the price of a "pot-boiler."

I, personally, always prefer a dinner *à la carte* to a *table-d'hôte* one. The *table-d'hôte* one—which is a misused word, for the *table-d'hôte* was the general table presided over by the host—has advanced, with the more general apprecia-

tion that dining does not mean simply eating, and at a good restaurant the dinner of the day is cooked to the minute for the groups at each separate table ; but it has the disadvantage that you have to eat a dinner ordered according to somebody else's idea, and you have no choice as to length or composition. With a friendly *maître d'hôtel* to assist, the composing of a *menu* for a small dinner is a pleasure. To eat a *table-d'hôte* dinner is like landing a fish which has been hooked and played by some one else.

M. Echenard, of the Carlton, in chatting over the vagaries of diners, shook his head over the want of knowledge of the wines that should be drunk with the various kinds of food. No man knows better what goes to make a perfect dinner than M. Echenard does, and as to the sinfulness of Britons in this particular, I quite agreed with him. In Paris no man dreams of drinking champagne, and nothing but champagne, for dinner ; but in London the climate and the taste of the fair sex go before orthodox rules. A tired man in our heavy atmosphere feels often that champagne is the one wine that will give him life again ; and as the ladies as a rule would think a dinner at a restaurant incomplete without champagne, ninety-nine out of a hundred Englishmen, in ordering a little dinner for two, turn instinctively to the champagne page of the wine-card. It is wrong, but until we get a new atmosphere and give up taking ladies out to dinner, champagne will be practically the only wine drunk at restaurants.

On the subject of tips it is difficult to write.

I have always found that a shilling for every pound or part of a pound, or a shilling for each member of a party brings a "thank you" from the waiter at any first-class restaurant. I should be inclined to err a little on the liberal side of this scale ; for waiters do not have an easy life, are mainly dependent on the tips they get, and have it in their power to greatly add to, or detract from, the pleasure of a dinner. I always find that the man who talks about "spoiling the market," in this respect is thinking of protecting his own pocket and not his neighbour's.

Finally—and I feel very much as if I had been preaching a sermon—I should, to put it all as shortly as possible, advise you, my brother simple Briton—not you, the experienced diners, who have been expressly warned off from this lecture—in ordering your dinner to get the aid of the manager, and failing him the *maitre d'hôtel*, never to be hustled by an underling into ordering a big dinner when you want a small one, and never to be afraid of asking what the composition of a dish is.

CHAPTER II

THE CARLTON (PALL MALL)

THE PRINCESSE LOINTAINE, a very charming lady who was born in Boston, U.S., and who married a member of the "White" nobility of Italy, passing through London to Rome, had been gracious enough to dine with me, the dinner had been a gastronomic dream of delight, the band was playing a Hungarian march, but not loudly enough to interfere with conversation, and snugly tucked away in the depths of two great green armchairs in the palm room the Princess and myself were enjoying, in that luxurious silence—a calm rippled now and again by little zephyrs of conversation—which comes to good friends after a good dinner, the view of the cream and pink of the great saloon, and the blue light on the palms beyond.

The Princess, I knew, felt that evening that she had done her duty both towards men and women. She had telegraphed to me on her arrival in London, and when I went to call on her had asked me, saying kindly that I was her gastronomic guide, which were the restaurants

to dine at, and on my running over the list, she told me that the Carlton had risen on the site of the old Opera House during the years that she had been away from England and asked me for particulars concerning it. I told her that MM. Ritz, Echenard, and Escoffier were the powers that controlled it—the three names have European celebrity—and that His Majesty, while still the Prince of Wales, had given his sign-manual to the restaurant by dining there in the public room. Would Madame la Princesse do me the honour to name a night on which she would dine? Madame did so; and when she arrived at the Carlton I saw that she had paid her tribute of respect to the company she expected to meet by wearing a superb dress of old black lace over some white material, and by having put on the three rows of historical pearls and some of her magnificent diamonds.

And at the tables in the dining-room—tables where the lamps are Delphic tripods and there is a profusion of flowers—the diners had been quite in keeping with the distinction of the place. A Russian Grand Duke was entertaining three men, his fellow-countrymen, at one table. The prettiest actress on the stage was dining *tête-à-tête* with a fortunate man at another. There was a Count from a foreign Embassy talking earnestly with one of the great merchant princes. An actor-manager who is revelling in a long holiday, which he seems to spend chiefly in London, was giving a dinner to his wife and his leading actress. There was a Duchess as the guest of honour at one of the many dinner-parties, and the painter

who has been called the English Meissonnier was the host at another table. A German Prince, a little dancer who is rehearsing for a new piece at one of the theatres, the Ambassador of one of the Great Powers, the proprietor of one of the great daily papers, the most popular of our English composers—these were some of the men and ladies whose faces I recognised, while the Princess, who had bowed and smiled to people she knew at half a dozen tables, told me the names of a score of marquis and marquises, and barons and baronnes, who, I if knew my *Almanach de Gotha*, which I do not, would no doubt have had much significance to me. It was all in the picture, all sumptuous, all luxurious, the mixed cream of all the societies from St. James's to the pleasant land of refined Bohemia, in dress-clothes, silk, lace, and diamonds.

I had seen M. Echenard in the morning and had put into his safe hands the ordering of the dinner, my only request being that it should be short—for I hold that four, or at the utmost five, dishes go to make a really good dinner for two people, and for the wine I selected Pommery Greno, 1889.

When we were seated I took up the menu to see what we had been given. As a rule, I order the dinner myself, and gain a pleasure of anticipation in narrowing down the menu to the three or four items; but when a manager knows his clients' tastes, and thinks, as every good craftsman does, of the artistic composition of a dinner, not of the shekels it will bring into the till at the accountant's desk, the pleasure of the unexpected

may balance against the pleasure of anticipation, and the ordering of the dinner may be left safely in his hands. I would do this with M. Echenard, M. Jules, M. Oddenino, and perhaps half a dozen of the other managers and *maîtres d'hôtel* in London. It is the supreme proof of gastronomic faith.

This was the menu :—

Royal Natives.
Consommé Marie Stuart.
Filets de Sole Carlton.
Noisettes de Chevreuil Diane.
Suprême de Volaille au Paprika.
Ortolans aux Raisins.
Pall Mall Salade.
Soufflé aux Pêches à l'Orientale.
Friandises.
Bénédictines roses.

Had I ordered the dinner myself I should have left out one of the *entrées*, probably the *noisettes*, but they were such tiny morsels of meat, with such a delightful sauce, that I forgave M. Echenard for tempting the Princess and myself near the border-line which divides the amateur from the glutton. The *soufflé*, which was a *soufflé en surprise*, with delicious peaches as a foundation, the *friandises*, and the *Bénédictines roses*, cherries in some sweet pink casing, were in honour, I knew, of the Princess, and therefore did not count against the four dishes to which I think the *gourmet* should limit his dinner.

The eggs in the *Consommé Marie Stuart* had been turned into little haggises of chopped

truffles ; the *filets de soles Carlton*, served in a square of piecrust, with its vermicelli and crayfish tails, and flavour of champagne and Parmesan, is a noble dish, but—and it is the only “but”—the one fault the sternest critic could have found in the dinner, it was not served hot enough. The *suprême de volaille*, served on its *socle* of clear ice, was the perfection of a cold *entrée* ; and the ortolans, cooked in an earthenware *cocotte* and served with grapes, the skins and pips of which had been removed, were delicious. It was, I think, as a self-denying ordinance, a tiny penance for greediness, that the Princess and myself only ate one each.

I paid my bill :—Couverts, 1s. ; natives, 5s. ; soup, 2s. ; filet de sole, 4s. ; noisettes, 4s. ; suprême de volaille, 6s. ; ortolans, 10s.—I believe I was only charged for the two we ate, not the four that were cooked—salade, 1s. 6d. ; pêches, 4s. ; café, 1s. ; champagne, £1 : 1s. Total, £2 : 19 : 6.

We sat after dinner in the palm lounge, in great comfortable armchairs, and listened to the soft music of the band, and the Princess told me of the wonderful season that Rome is to have this year and asked me to go over and stay there in her husband's palazzo, and in a sort of pleasant dream I saw myself in the Court circle, and doing the rounds of the studios and hunting with the hounds and going to the most delightful picnics with the most delightful people—and then somewhere outside a clock struck ten, and I remembered that there were such things as mud and inky fingers and Fleet Street in the

world, and that even the most delightful of dinners must have its ending, and I felt angry with Time and Fate.

* * The following *recettes* of the *soles Carlton*, the *ortolans aux raisins*, and the *soufflé* may be useful to ladies who are their own housekeepers and whose lords love savoury dishes. I give them in the *traduction libre*, as Maître Escoffier gave them to me.

Filets de soles Carlton

Select tender and white soles. Cut the filets, cover the outside part of each with a *farce* made with smelts and crayfish butter. Roll them in a spiral shape. Poach them in a *bouillon* of champagne. Dress them in a square crust, on a bed of *nouilles* with Parmesan, bordered by a garniture of truffles and tails of crayfish, covered with a Sauce Nantua.

Ortolans aux Raisins

Prepare a dozen ortolans (*bien dodus et fin gras*) and cook them in fresh butter in an earthenware *cocotte*. Add 24 grams of grapes of which the skins and pips have been removed. Cover them with a spoonful of *jus* (*très réduit*). Serve them quickly while very hot.

Soufflé aux pêches à l'Orientale

Skin and remove the stones of six fine well-matured peaches and keep them cool in a Sirop of

Vanille. Put the peaches on a *biscuit* bed about 2 inches thick covered with a layer of vanilla ice-cream. Lay over this like an omelette a *soufflé* flavoured with violets of Parma, cook briskly in an oven, and serve immediately with some powdered sugar.

A. Escoffier

CHAPTER III

THE COMEDY RESTAURANT (PANTON STREET)

I HAVE a bill against the Government for £1 : 2s., and I do not know to whom to present it. The bill is for a dinner given to a gentleman who professed himself to be Dr. Leyds's right-hand man, and to whom I gave it that I might worm out of him important diplomatic secrets. He had a black moustache with waxed ends, quite a respectable frockcoat, a turndown collar, which was almost clean, a black tie that resembled a shoe-lace, and when I met him in Leicester Square he recognised me, called me by name, and was apparently very delighted to see me. My joy was not equal to his, for I did not know him from Adam.

Then he recalled himself to my memory. Had I forgotten the days in the Queen's Hotel at Pietermaritzburg, and Aylward, and of the visit he, the speaker, had had the honour to pay me a few years ago at my private residence, and of the small present I had been kind enough to make him?

Then I remembered him perfectly. In 1880

I lived at the Queen's Hotel in Pietermaritzburg in the next room to that inhabited by Aylward the Fenian, and as there was only a partition of thin deal between the rooms, and as Aylward always shouted at the top of his voice, I could not help overhearing a good deal of his conversation. There was in the hotel a man with a foreign name and foreign accent, who at the *table-d'hôte* had boasted very loudly of having been one of the Diamond Fields rebels, and of having refused to take the oath of allegiance, and I overheard a conversation between this man and Aylward in the latter's room which would beat the best efforts of Mr. Davitt or any other of our English-speaking enemies.

The foreign gentleman, in spite of the cold shoulder, tried to force his acquaintance on me, and assured me that, in spite of what I might have heard, he had done good service to her Majesty.

Four or five years later the foreign gentleman found me out in London, about lunch-time, told me a cock-and-bull story about his unrequited services to the Transvaal Government and the ingratitude of Oom Paul, said that he had come to England to teach drawing, and borrowed a sovereign, which I gave him to get rid of him, and which he promised to repay on the following Saturday. I did not see my sovereign again; but after many days I had again met my foreign acquaintance.

With an air of mystery he buttonholed me. "I am here as an emissary of the Boers; but that fellow Leyds he is a scoundrel, and does not send me money to keep up my position. For a

snap of the fingers I would throw him over and give all his secrets to your Government," he said.

What the exact reward given for dexterous secret service work is, I do not quite know, but a K.C.B. seemed to dance for a moment before my eyes. "Revenge," I replied diplomatically, "is a kind of wild justice." "Would you believe it," went on my foreigner, "I am in the ridiculous position of being without the funds to pay for a dinner?"

A dinner seemed to be but a small price to pay for the distinction of laying at the feet of the Government all the secrets of the Ex-President and his agent, so I suggested that the revengeful emissary should dine somewhere in the neighbourhood at my expense. He was delighted, and mentioned that not fifty yards off, in Panton Street, was the Comedy Restaurant, where for half a crown was to be had an Italian dinner fit for an emperor.

As we walked down Panton Street towards a square lamp of ground glass on which in black letters was inscribed "The Comedy Restaurant," the emissary described in vivid terms the rage of Dr. Leyds when all his secrets should be made public, how he would pull his hair out by the roots, and perhaps put a pistol to his head and blow out his brains. I felt a little sorry that I was going to be the cause of Dr. Leyds's suicide; but, after all, he has been making himself very disagreeable the last year or two. Through a long room with many mirrors, with a row of small tables set against the wall on either side, and with a little bar in a recess, we went, and

a military-looking manager, with a great black moustache and a heavy watch-chain, bowed to me and looked, I thought, rather suspiciously at my companion.

"It is quieter in here, and I can tell you the secrets better," said the emissary as we went up a couple of steps into another room—a room with a golden paper, with mirrors in brown wooden frames on the walls, with a great framed advertisement of somebody's Italian wines, with artistic copper holders for the electric globes, and with two great champagne bottles flanking the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece.

This room and the other were full of diners, but there was one little table vacant, and the emissary made for it, bowed me into one seat, took the other, and handed me over the menu and the wine list, the latter open at the champagne page. This was the menu :—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

Consommé Caroline. Crème à la Reine.

Sole Colbert.

Filet Mignon Chasseur.

Lasagne al Sugo.

Bécassine rôtie.

Salade de Saison.

Glace au Chocolat.

Dessert.

The head manager, M. Andagna, plump, with a slight moustache, and with a curly head of hair just turning grey, came up to the table, put himself at my service, and looked at the emissary as if he had seen him before and never wanted to see him again.

M. Andagna recommended the *crème à la Reine*, and sent off one of the waiters with the order. Then carelessly turning over the leaf of the wine list to the Italian wines I asked the emissary what he would like to drink. "I think," he said, "the little wine of champagne, he is the best to bring out secrets ;" and on M. Andagna's recommendation, I ordered a bottle of Pol Roger, which I found to be excellent.

After the *sole Colbert*, which was fried to the second, and when the emissary had gulped down his first glass of champagne and had rubbed his hands—the nails of which were in mourning—together in enjoyment, I thought it time that a few of Dr. Leyds's secrets should be exposed ; but the emissary put a dingy finger to his lips, "S-s-sh'd" like a cobra, and then whispered, "The waitaire. After the *bécassine* you send him away and then——"

The *filet* was tender, and the emissary ate with great relish the *lasagne al sugo*, which is a big form of macaroni with a reddish sauce. Then came the snipe. Mine was a little overdone ; but I was surprised to find snipe, which are expensive birds, on the menu of a half-crown dinner.

I told the waiter that we would have coffee and liqueurs in ten minutes' time, and with a "Now !" I settled down to listen to the information, the imparting of which would gratify the revengeful feelings of the emissary, and the revealing of which would entitle me to some very high reward.

The emissary looked round to see that none of the diners still remaining in the room was

listening. Two young men, who might be medical students, and two young ladies in sailor hats, who perhaps spend their days in a florist's shop, were rising with laughter from their table, a bald-headed gentleman with a long flaxen moustache was talking very earnestly to a pretty lady with many flowers in her hat, a grey-bearded father was listening to some amusing story told by his son, and all the other diners were attending to their own business and not to ours.

"If I give your Government some good information, how much do you think they would pay me?" asked the emissary, and I replied that payment should not enter into his calculation; that revenge was what he wanted, and that I was to be the instrument through which his revenge was to be gratified.

The emissary rubbed his hands. "After your good dinner I feel no longer revengeful. I will spare my friend Leyds, unless I am well paid," he said. "You've humbugged me," I protested. "I am no longer revengeful—that is all," murmured the emissary.

When the coffee came I asked for the bill—a bill that the Government ought to pay:—Dinners, 5s.; champagne, 14s.; mineral water, 6d.; coffee, 1s.; liqueurs, 1s. 6d.; total, £1 : 2s.

Outside in the street the emissary bowed lowly to me. "Could you oblige me with the address of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain?" he asked.

I told him to go to the devil.

CHAPTER IV

THE HÔTEL RUSSELL (RUSSELL SQUARE)

WE always call him "the man fr' Sheffield," for though he comes from a town which is not the cutlery capital, he looks exactly like Mr. Groves as Uncle Gregory in *A Pair of Spectacles*, and it is a standing disappointment to me that he never calls me "laad," and that he does not constantly remark, "I know that man"—he does not rise, in fact, to the possibilities of his make-up.

We—that is, the estimable family of which I am a member—always have a vague idea that the "man fr' Sheffield" may do something for some of the rising generation, for he is what our grandfathers would have called a "warm" man, and is childless. Therefore, when I received a note from him saying that he was in town, would like to see me on a matter of business, and gave me the choice of two or three days on which to dine with him at the Hôtel Russell, I felt some of the emotions that the poor woodcutter must have experienced when he started off to the cave repeating "Open, Sesame" to himself, so as not

to forget the words. I would not, I thought, as I drove to the hotel in a hansom, unless under pressure, allow myself to be put down for anything in the will, except, of course, the usual compliment to an executor; and I felt doubtful whether I should advise that larger legacies should be left to my nieces than to my nephews, or *vice versa*.

The Hôtel Russell is a great caravanserai, the growth of which I had marked at various times as I drove across London to Euston or St. Pancras, and thus was familiar with the appearance of the outside of the gigantic pile of terracotta and brick, with the arms of all the countries in the world that possess such proofs of civilisation blazoned above the arches on the first-floor level, with four queens keeping guard above the front door, and with the heads of English statesmen decorating the Guilford Street frontage as though it were a second Temple Bar.

An imposing gentleman in a long livery coat was ready to help me out of my cab if I wanted any assistance, and two other impressive persons swung open the glass doors for me. Amid the shine of red and green and yellow marble pillars and panels, and with the full arms of the Duke of Bedford just above his head, stood my host, in a rough woollen suit, his hands thrust deep into his pocket. The bristly hair, the aggressively healthy colour of his cheeks, the shaven upper lip and Calcraft beard, the old-fashioned collar and blue bird's-eye tie were all quite in keeping with his clothes.

"Ah! So you've put on your dress-suit," he

said, with some disfavour, before he pulled a leg-of-mutton fist out of a pocket to shake hands with me. I acknowledged that such was the fact, and asked if it was not the custom of the guests in the hotel to do so. "Aye! *They* dress, but *I* don't," was the answer; and I felt somehow that I had been put in the wrong.

"I hope you're pretty peckish, for there's plenty to eat," said the man from Sheffield as he led the way into the great palm-lounge with a glass roof, which occupies the centre of the hotel. We were making for some marble steps which led up to a door which was evidently that of the dining-room, when my host paused and pointed with his thumb to the top end of the palmarium, where, through a wide entrance, I could see some little white-draped tables, a crimson carpet, and some high-backed chairs. "That's the restaurant *à la carte*," he said. "You can have there if you want it, so I am told, half as much as you get where we are going, and pay twice as much for it." I did not feel equal to the task of explaining the epicurean possibilities of the restaurant *à la carte*, and followed on silently.

The dining-room—the banqueting hall is the title it goes by in the hotel—is a spacious apartment with caryatides supporting the ceiling beams, with two large canvases by Snyder, one at each end of the room, with a gilt musicians' gallery, an alcove filled with plants and flowers, with a frieze of mirrors, and with windows looking into the palm lounge, where a string band plays during and after dinner.

The menu disclosed an excellent array of

dishes. "You get all that for five shillings," said my host, as he threw me over the card :—

Huîtres Natives.
 Consommé Paysanne.
 Crème Nélusko.
 Turbot à la Montreuil.
 Blanchailles.
 Croustade de Caille à la Moderne.
 Filet de Bœuf piqué à la Sévigné.
 Pommes Anna.
 Poularde rôtie au Cresson.
 Salade de Saison.
 Epinards aux Croûtons.
 Pouding Soufflé aux Citron.
 Biscuit Glacé Joséphine.
 Petits Fours.
 Dessert.

The wine list lay by my host's plate. He did not open it, but thumping his great fist on it asked me what I would drink. I said that there was a light sparkling wine made at Rheims which had a pleasant taste. My little pleasantry was received with a stare ; but the list was handed me, and I selected a Clicquot as our wine. About this period it dawned on me that there was very little of the benevolent testator in the manner of the man from Sheffield ; indeed, when he saw that he would have to pay 13s. for the very excellent bottle of wine I had ordered he showed me a "damned disinheriting countenance."

When our oyster-shells had been cleared away, I asked my host why he had deserted the little private hotel he had always stayed at when he came to London. "Well, it's just this. This

hotel is new and clean and healthy. It costs no more to live here than it did in the other. I get my full money's worth, the fare to the station is a shilling, and I meet men I know from the north." I looked round the room at the other diners, and there certainly seemed to be a sprinkling of men with the stamp of the north country upon them. America also evidently sends a large contingent to the Russell, and among the Londoners dining were a number of men with the unmistakable legal face; on the whole a very well-dressed, interesting assemblage.

The man from Sheffield ate the dinner through steadily, rather regretting, I think, that he was not given both thick and clear soup, and in the pauses between the courses told me what a blessing the war had been to trade in the North, and grunted something which sounded very like dissent, when I expressed a hope that the misery and expense of the campaign would soon be at an end. He gave me some interesting details of his own health, and of some economies he had effected in his household; but never a word spoke he that I could consider an approach to business.

Of the dinner I remember that the turbot, with its garnishing of carrot, the quail, and the spinach were notably well cooked. I was reproved by my host for not eating any of the beef, and my excuse that I was not hungry was scoffed at.

At last we left our table, with its silver *épergne* filled with sprays of foliage of many tints, at which we had sat by one of the windows, and went down into the lounge. Comfortably settled in one of the cane armchairs, coffee and "fine

champagne" ready on a little table, amid the surroundings of many-tinted marbles, broad-leaved palms, and burnished brass, with the band playing a soft waltz and the man from the North smoking a big cigar, I thought that now or never should benevolent business be done. "Oh, aye," he said, in reply to a hint; "it's just this. I've a laad I'm interested in in my office. He's a ne'er-do-weel: gets drunk, and such like. He writes a decent hand, and as I understand the only capital required in your calling is a pen, a bottle of ink, and a quire of paper, I thought, perhaps, you'd take him and make a journalist of him." The last pale vision of legacies for nephews and nieces vanished, as I said that an undue consumption of spirituous liquors and legible handwriting were scarcely the supreme requirements of a journalist. "Ye'll not take him, then," snapped the man from Sheffield; and I could tell in the silence which followed that he was reckoning up the cost of a wasted dinner.

Ten minutes later when I made an excuse to be gone he would scarcely shake hands with me.

I walked home.

CHAPTER V

THE SAVOY (THAMES EMBANKMENT)

I SHOULD like to write a book, not a big book, but something separate between covers about the Savoy, its palace and chapel and its hotel. I am sure that a dainty shaving of religious lore would sandwich well between the crowning slice of Court and the lower slice of restaurant. But my book on the Savoy will go, I fear, to add to the cobble stones in Pluto's domain. I have eaten many good dinners within the walls of the Savoy. I was a guest at the *rouge et noir* dinner given by two magnates of the financial world, to celebrate a great coup made at Monte Carlo, when all the decorations of the table, all the flowers, as much of the napery as was possible, reproduced the two colours, when the waiters wore red shirts and red gloves, and the number on which the money was won was to be found everywhere in various forms on the table. And I was bidden to the return banquet, a white and green one, which strove to outdo the luxury of the former one, whereat fruit-trees bearing

fruit grew apparently through the table, and each chair was a little bower of foliage.

If I were to attempt to describe all the notable dinners I have been thankful for in the white and gold house by the river I should have a good third of my book written; but I will sketch three little dinners, each *à deux*, eaten during the last three proconsulates at the Savoy, those of MM. Ritz, Joseph, and Jules, the latter of whom still reigns and flourishes.

UNDER RITZ

The first information that I received as to Mrs. "Charlie" Sphinx having returned from Cannes was in a little note from the lady herself, delivered on Sunday at lunch-time, to the effect that Charlie had been asked to dine that evening with his official chief, and that if I was not otherwise engaged I might take my choice between dining quietly with the pretty lady at her home, or taking her out somewhere to dinner.

I went to the telephone at once.

"No. 35,466, if you please"; and being switched on to the Savoy, and having asked for a table, I received the answer I expected, having applied so late, that every one was taken, but that the management would do what they could to find space for me in a supplementary room. This meant dining in one of the smaller dining-rooms, and as at the Savoy the view of one's neighbours and their wives, or other people's wives, is no unimportant part of the Sunday

dinner, I went to headquarters at once, and asked if M. Echenard, the manager, was in the hotel, and if he was, would he come to the telephone and speak to me.

M. Echenard was in the hotel, and as soon as I had secured his ear I made an appeal to him that would have melted the heart of any tyrant. I wanted to take Mrs. Sphinx out to dinner, and he must be aware that it would be quite impossible for her to dine anywhere except in the big room of the restaurant.

"If it is possible, it shall be done," said M. Echenard, and, telling him that I would come down by cab at once and order dinner, I switched off the telephone, wrote to Mrs. Sphinx that I should like to have the felicity of taking her out, and would call for her a little after eight, and then went down by cab to the Savoy.

In the office on the ground-floor, an office crowded up with books and papers, I found M. Echenard—who, with his little moustache with the ends turned upwards and carefully trimmed beard, always has something of the look of the Spanish señores that Velasquez used to paint—and his spectacled secretary.

I could have a table in the big room, I was told, and, having achieved this, I wanted to be given one of the two tables on either side of the door of entrance, tables from which one can see better than any others the coming and going of the guests. This was impossible. There was, however, a table for two which had been engaged, but the taker of which had given up his claim at the last moment ; and though dukes and scions

of Royalty would have to feed in the supplementary rooms, Mrs. Sphinx should have that table.

The ordering of the dinner came next, and to take on one's self the responsibility of this with such a chef as Maître Escoffier in the kitchen is no small matter.

Hors-d'œuvre, of course, and then I suggested *Bortch* as the soup, for of all the restaurants where they make this excellent Russian dish the Savoy takes the palm.

Timbales de filets de sole à la Savoy, hinted M. Echenard, and though I didn't quite know what that was, it sounded well, and went down on the slip of paper. I wanted a *mousse* for the *entrée*, for I know that there are no such *mousses* to be got elsewhere as the Maître can make ; and then M. Echenard suggested *Poulet de grain Polonaise*, and as he described the method of cooking, and how the juices of the liver soaked into the bird, and the essence of the chicken permeated the liver, I gave up my first idea of the celebrated *canard en chemise*. That was my idea of a little dinner, but M. Echenard insisted on the finishing touches being administered by a *parfait de foie gras*, English asparagus, and *pêches glacées vanille*. It was a dinner that had, perhaps, an unusual amount of cold dishes in it ; but it is one of the customs of Savoy cookery to have, if possible, one cold dish at least in the menu, for, the hot dishes being served scrupulously unadorned, the cold ones give M. Escoffier and his staff a chance of showing what they can do in the way of decoration.

Mrs. "Charlie" Sphinx, being a soldier's wife, was ready to the second when I called for her, and during the few moments that I had to wait in the ante-room of the restaurant, with its two fireplaces, its white and gold paper, great palms in pots, comfortable armchairs of terra-cotta colour, and Satsuma china, I could look with a comfortable superiority on the less lucky men who were sitting staring at the door and looking disappointed each time that the African gentleman, whose place is there, swung it back to admit some lady who was not the much-expected guest.

Mrs. Sphinx was in blue and white, and was wearing diamonds and turquoises. She had on for the first time a new diamond crescent, and looking round the room where everybody was smart I was pleased to be aware that the lady I had the honour of squiring was quite the smartest there.

And the company in the restaurant, the great room with mahogany panels, golden frieze and gold and red ceiling, of the Savoy on a Sunday night is as fine a society salad as any capital in the world can show. There was on this particular evening in our immediate vicinity, a lady who once won celebrity on the stage, which she left to take a title, and then become the chatelaine of one of the great historical houses of England; there was a good-looking fellow who was one of the best-known men about town and left fops-alley at the opera for the green-room of a comedy theatre; there was an Indian prince, the first swallow of the dusky, jewelled flight that comes

each summer to our shores ; there was the manager of one of the best known of our comedy theatres, with whom was dining one of the most beautiful of our actresses and her husband ; there was a lady who has the notoriety of having nearly ruined the heir to the throne of one of the kingdoms of Europe, and whose brown diamonds are the envy of all the connoisseurs of the world ; there was a party of South African stockbrokers, who from their appearance did not suggest wealth, but whose united incomes would make the revenues of half a dozen Balkan principalities. And around the tables the waiters in their white aprons and the *maîtres d'hôtel* and the silver-chained *sommeliers* moved noiselessly, and the master-spirit of the whole, M. Ritz, just back from Rome, with his hands clasped nervously, almost, with his short whiskers and carefully-clipped moustache, a duplicate of the present Secretary of State for War (Lord Lansdowne then held the post), went from table to table with a carefully graduated scale of acknowledgment of the patrons. M. Echenard was there also, and there is no restaurant in the world in which the chain of responsibility from manager to waiter is carried out with greater thoroughness. Mrs. "Charlie" Sphinx was doubtful as to trying the caviar. I should have remembered that she did not care for it ; but the grey-green delicacy in its setting of ice tempted her, and she owned to almost liking it. About the *Bortch* soup there could be no two questions, and the cream stirred into the hot, strong liquid makes it, in my humble opinion, the best soup

in the world. The fish, a fish-pie, with its macaroni and shrimps, was delicious, and then came the triumph of the dinner. Cased in its jelly covering, served on a great block of ice, melting like snow in the mouth, Maître Escoffier's *mousse* was an absolute masterpiece. The *poulet*, too, was as good to eat as it had sounded when M. Echenard had described it to me, and the *parfait de foie gras* was another delight. The asparagus and the ice were but the trifles of the dinner; but the ice swan that bore the little mock peaches was a very graceful piece of table decoration.

Mrs. Sphinx through dinner, while sipping her glass of Clicquot, had told me all the gossip of southern France; of the dance at the club at Cannes at which she had arranged the cotillon and led it; of the races of the big yachts for the various cups; of a magnificent scheme she had evolved, by which Gibraltar was to become a second Monte Carlo or Nice, a scheme which would involve a few batteries and casemates being removed to make way for a casino, and when we had drunk our café Turc, brought by the brightly clothed Asiatic, and when I had smoked my cigarette and my guest had despoiled the great basket of roses on the table, the band, which plays delightfully, softly, and unobtrusively, had come to the end of its programme, and it was time to be moving. This was the bill, a moderate one for such an admirable dinner:—
Two couverts, 1s.; bortch, 3s.; sole savoy, 6s.; mousse jambon, 6s.; poulet polonaise, 8s.; salade, 2s.; foie gras, 6s.; asperges verts, 7s. 6d.;

pêches glacées vanille, 7s. ; one bottle champagne 133, 15s. ; café, 2s. ; liqueurs, 2s. ; total, £3 : 5 : 6.

When I put Mrs. Sphinx down at her house-door, her last words were, "That *mousse* was an absolute dream."

UNDER JOSEPH

"Drive to the Strand entrance of the Savoy, but don't go into the courtyard," I told my cabman ; but he insisted on driving down, and his horse slid the last ten yards like a toboggan.

It was in the afternoon and few people were about, and I looked into the grill-room to find a *maître d'hôtel*, and to ask him if he could tell me where M. Joseph was at the moment. Smiler, the curry cook, appeared instantly. Because I talk a little bad Hindustani, Smiler has taken me under his protection, and thinks that I should not go to the Savoy for any other purpose than to eat his curries. (Smiler has now, I am told, gone to America to make his fortune.)

It was not Smiler, however, whom I wanted to interview, but M. Joseph ; and messengers were sent to various parts of the hotel to find the director of the restaurant.

A little man, with rather long grey hair, bald on the top of his head, with very dark brown eyes looking keenly out from under strong brows, with a little grey moustache, Joseph arrests attention at once, and his manner is just the right manner. In a short black coat, white waistcoat, and dark trousers, he came to meet

me, and put himself entirely at my service. I very soon told him what I wanted. Since the change of dynasty at the Savoy, Joseph, who temporarily left his Parisian restaurant, the Marivaux (to which, being home-sick, he has now returned), to come to the banks of the Thames, has been the dominating personality among the Savoyards. That being so, I wanted him to tell me something of his climb up the ladder of culinary fame, and I should be glad if he would think me out a dinner of the cuisine Joseph. I ended by saying that I had invited a lady to dine with me.

"A lady!" said Joseph, in rather a startled tone; but I assured him that the good angel who was to be my guest knew as much of good cooking as any male gourmet, and was aware that there are some culinary works of art in the presence of which conversation is an impertinence.

"I will give you soup, fish, roast—nothing more," said Joseph; and misinterpreting my silence, he went on: "In England you taste your dinners, you do not eat them. An artist who is confident of his art only puts a small dinner before his clients. It is a bad workman who slurs over his failures by giving many dishes." This is exactly what I have been preaching on the housetops for years, and, being thoroughly in accord on that subject, we settled down on a sofa in the corridor for a chat.

I am the worst interviewer in the world. I had been told that Joseph was born in Birmingham of French parents, that he is an adept at *la savate*, and that the one amusement of his life is pigeon-

flying ; and when I accused him of all this he pleaded guilty to each count. Directly we began to talk cookery I had no cause to ask leading questions. It is the absorbing passion of Joseph's life. "If I had the choice," he said, with conviction, "between going to the theatre to see Coquelin or Mme. Bernhardt and watching the faces of six gourmets eating a well-cooked dinner, I should choose the latter." When I referred to the dinner at which some of the great lights of the theatrical world were present, and he cooked a considerable portion of the dinner in their presence, Joseph replied that as it is the art of actors and actresses to make an effect on the public, he wished to show them that there could be something to strike the imagination in his art also.

Since '67, when Joseph entered the kitchen at Brébant's as a marmiton, he has given all his mind to cookery. He has been in every position that goes to the making of a real artist, and even when he walks the streets "looking at my boots" he is waiting for some flash of inspiration. "I cannot sit down in my office and create a new dish to command. An idea comes to me, and when I am free I try it in my own kitchen at home. I never experiment on the public." Many other things he told me, of how as a schoolboy he used to peep into the kitchens of the Anglais and other big restaurants in envy of the cooks, and of the genesis of some of the dishes in the long list of the specialities of his cuisine. With a sudden turn to the subject of literature, Joseph wrote down for me his con-

tribution, made the day before, to a young lady's album. This is it:—

C'est la première côtelette qui coûta le plus cher à l'homme — Dieu en ayant fait une femme."

M. Joseph slightly went beyond his three dishes in the menu I found awaiting the good angel and myself:—

Petite marmite.

Sole Reichenberg.

Caneton à la presse. Salade de saison.

Fonds d'artichauts à la Reine.

Bombe pralinée. Petits fours.

Panier fleuri.

We were among the familiar surroundings, the walls of mahogany panelling, the golden ceiling; but there was one novelty, and that was that pushed up to our little table was another one, with on it a great chafing-dish, some long slim knives, and a variety of little plates containing lemons, grated cheese, and a number of other condiments, and while we drank our soup, made with the famous *bouillon*, Joseph mixed the delicate liquid in which the slices of sole were later to be placed, soaked the croûte in the savoury mixture, and, finally, on the white filets placed the oysters, pouring over them also the foaming broth.

The good angel was equal to the occasion. Not only was she radiantly handsome, but she appreciated the special beauties of this most excellent sole; and when Joseph came back to the table to carve the duck, he knew that his

audience of two were enthusiasts. In an irreverent moment I was reminded of the Chinese torture of the Ling Chi, in which the executioner slashes at his victim without hitting a vital part in the first fifty cuts, as I watched Joseph calmly, solemnly, with absolute exactitude, cutting a duck to pieces with a long, thin knife; but irreverence faded when the rich sauce had been mixed before our eyes and poured over the slices of the breast—the wings and legs, plain devilled, coming afterwards as a sharp and pleasant contrast.

The *Panier fleuri*, which ended our dinner, a tiny fruit-salad in a basket cut by Joseph from an orange, was a special compliment to the good angel. The bill was: Two couverts, 1s.; champagne, 18s.; marmite, 2s. 6d.; sole Reichenberg, 5s.; caneton à la presse, 18s.; salade, 1s. 6d.; fonds d'artichauts, 2s. 6d.; bombe, 3s.; café, 1s. 6d.; liqueurs, 4s.; total, £2:17s.

It was no empty compliment when on leaving I told M. Joseph that the dinner was a perfect work of art.

UNDER JULES

Her Serenity, who in spite of the contented calm with which she regards life is very much "She who has to be obeyed," had elected to dine at the Savoy, and therefore I went down there after lunch-time to seek for M. Jules, the little plump good-natured autocrat, with closely trimmed side whiskers and immaculate frock-coat, who is now the manager of the big hotel. Jules, who possesses the supreme art of always being alert

but never in a hurry, I found superintending the operations of the workmen who were building the lift, which now takes diners from the Embankment level up to the restaurant. I told him vaguely what I wanted, and was at once pinned down for particulars. Which table would I like to have? Having naturally picked out two, one after the other, which were engaged, I found that a little one in a corner, as far as possible from the band and commanding a fine view of the room, had no one's name against it on the dinner-plan, and the first important question was settled.

There be many choices in life difficult to make; but to decide whether excellent fresh Caviar, or plump and succulent oysters should commence a dinner is a problem parlous hard to solve. I stood in the entrance between the two glass screens and pondered, and Jules watched me. Caviar had the day, and then came the selection of a soup. It must be clear and must not be *Petite Marmite* or *Croûte au Pot*, both of which I am weary of seeing on menus, and as I was too proud to ask for the *Carte de Jour*, from which to gain an inspiration, and as only the names of thick soups would come into my memory, I should probably have still been obstructing the fairway at dinner-time had Jules not suggested *Poule au Pot*.

"For Fish" I had begun in leisurely tones, and Jules evidently saw that desperate measures were necessary, unless he was going to spend the afternoon in my company and in a draught, so he suggested that we should go and inspect the larder and then settle what fish, and what meat,

and what bird should go to the making of the feast.

As we made towards the door in the further part of the restaurant, Jules pointed out to me that he had gained room by taking the band away from its position in the centre of the room, and by putting it in a more retired position. I was not in the least surprised to hear that the members of the band were not pleased with the new arrangement; but I was devoutly thankful, for the musical Savoyards have of late been so pleased with their own performance that it sometimes becomes a little obtrusive, which it never was in earlier days. One of the musicians, so Jules said, was "a little naughty" when told that he had to retire into comparative obscurity; but Jules gave me to understand that he was quite equal to the task of dealing with a man of music, however naughty he might be.

Just outside the double swinging doors that are in the wall near the band's new position a carver is established in one of the broad outer arches that support the building. He has a three-decker arrangement of white-clothed shelves before him, and he puts in a great deal of knife-play in a very little space. Beyond him, between the stained-glass windows of the restaurant and the outer windows of plain glass, is a fruit room, a narrow space where the fruit and salads are placed ready, and the cheeses are in a cupboard with ice kept above them in order that the cold air may strike down. Economy of space is necessary, and with the new lift in and the new broad passage which will soon be driven through the hotel out

towards the Strand, the appropriation of every square foot is of importance. The new entrance to the restaurant, which is to be not only on to the Strand side but on the Strand level as well, will make a wonderful change in the big restaurant as we have known it for years. There will be no more glissades in a hansom down the steep slope, and we shall walk from the higher level straight through a broad passage into the restaurant.

Having given my approval to the projected improvements, we went into the great kitchen, a big, white-tiled apartment, very hot, and very steamy, and very clean. Here was M. Thouraud, the chef, a good-looking, light-haired Frenchman, with curly moustache and imperial, in white cap and garments, commanding his army. Not really an army in strength, but a goodly force, for the board on which all the names are marked, each squad told off to special duties under a sous-chef, looks like the muster-roll of a company. In this great kitchen is the vast metal table, all fire inside and dotted with great copper vessels above, on which most of the cooking is done. A steamer with range upon range of shelves, a great roasting fire, big boilers, long wooden tables, each told off to a different use, a dresser with shining plates and dishes on it, rows of burnished copper pans, a broad funnel, to carry off some of the heat, an electric ventilator spinning in the ceiling, and a great clock, a most necessary thing to have in a kitchen—those are the impressions I carried away of the heart of M. Thouraud's domain. A board with many bell

buttons and rows of mouthpieces to speak into keeps the kitchen in touch with all the other parts of the hotel, and the arrangements by which the orders are filed are very methodical.

I was not sorry to go out of the big kitchen, through a smaller one, which is devoted to the preparation of the *table d'hôte* dinner, into the cool room where battalions of fish, big and small, lie on cloths spread on crushed ice, and where in cold cupboards the fat chickens and plump game-birds are placed in orderly rows. Here we talked business, M. Thouraud joining the board before allotment. I was all for an arrangement of sole, and M. Jules looked at M. Thouraud, and asked him if he did not think that he might be able to improvise something special, and M. Thouraud, with a look of confidence, said, "Leave it to me." "And a bécasse," suggested M. Jules, "they are splendid fellows"; and I answered, "Make it so."

The board then adjourned to the meat room, where in a cool atmosphere the great sides of bacon, the joints, great and small, of British beef for roasting, and of French beef for *bouillon*, the mutton, and the *charcuterie* are kept, and we there discussed what morsel of meat should go to complete my dinner. If it had not been that two brown meats in a dinner is bad art, a *Tournedos* would have preceded the woodcock; but M. Thouraud drew up from one of the long wooden hutches a tiny square of ribs of lamb, which he stroked as though he loved it, and that settled the artistic question. Asparagus and a *bombe* gave the finishing touches to the menu.

Before I ascended to the upper regions again I saw the blocks of clear ice being carved into birds and beasts to support the *bombes* and *biscuits* at night, the sugar being spun into flowers and leaves and baskets, the rooms where coffee is made for the hotel and for the restaurant, the kitchen where the meals are cooked for the hundreds of the staff and their dining-rooms, the dispense cellar, where batteries of champagne bottles are kept cool and ready for immediate use by masses of ice kept above them, and the bigger cellars where the cases are piled in barricades, and the bottles of red wine form walls and piers and buttresses. There was a bigger cellar still somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood ; but I felt that I had gazed on quite enough material for eating and drinking for one day, and I beat a retreat.

Her Serenity, attired in something in which black lace and grey and silver all played their parts, and with a little circlet of diamonds in the rippled gold of her hair, paid M. Jules' dinner—not me, I'm afraid—the great compliment of being in time, and when she had settled down in the corner and had acknowledged that she was in an excellent position for seeing everybody, looked at the menu and smiled.

Hors-d'œuvres.

Caviar frais.

Poule au pot.

Sole Newnham-Davis.

Carré d'agneau de lait à la Bordelaise.

Bécasse au fumet.

Cœurs de laitues.

Asperges nouvelles. Sauce Mouseline.

Glace Moët et Chandon.

Friandises.

Many good dinners I hope there may be for me to eat yet at the Savoy, but never a better. The *poule au pot* was no chicken broth, but a splendid strong liquid, admirable to the taste, and I felt it almost a sacrilege that Her Serenity would insist on pointing out to me lords and authors and society beauties and the latest divorcée while the sole was being served. "C'est bon," said M. Jules who disappeared round the screen for a moment to be alone with the sole, and then reappeared. And he was right. The simple foundation of the white fish, as innocent-looking as a bride, the *vin blanc* as sauce flavoured with parmesan, the sliced truffles and the asparagus points all combined to make a most delicate dish. The lamb was not really an *agneau de lait*, for its flesh had not the whiteness of the innocent which has never cropped grass, but it was a very dainty morsel; and the *bécasse*, the last finishing touches being given to its service over a lamp on a table wheeled up for the purpose, was irreproachable. The asparagus was a delicacy attempted too early in the season, and was a curiosity more than a delight. The ices, with tiny champagne bottles protruding from the silvered pails in which they were served, were an artistic finish to a dinner prepared by an artist.

The bill that was brought to me was £2 : 1s., and I smiled at Jules as I paid it. The thought that a great chef had given to composing a dish,

the minute care with which the dinner had been prepared and served, could not be put down in money value, they are the courtesies that the professors of an art pay to an enthusiastic student.

* * The following is the *recette* of the *timbale de filets de sole* kindly written out for me by Maître Escoffier.

Avec de la pâte à foncer, préparez et cuisez une croûte à timbale; après l'avoir vidée glacez-la intérieurement et tenez à l'étuve. Préparez une petite garniture de bon macaronis cuit tendre, lié avec de la béchamelle et parmesan rapé, beurré et pincé de poivre rouge.

Prenez huit filets de sole moyenne, tendre et bien blanche, aplatissez-les légèrement, salez-les, masquez-les avec une mince couche de farce de poisson aux truffes; roulez-les sur eux-mêmes en forme de petit baril, entourez-les d'une bande de papier beurré. Rangez les filets de sole dans une casserole ou plat à sauter, en ayant soin que la casserole soit juste de grandeur pour les maintenir serrés; mouillez-les avec un bon court bouillon au vin blanc, faites partir le liquide en ébullition, couvrez la casserole, laissez pocher sans bouillir douze à quinze minutes.

Mettez dans une casserole dix-huit écrevisses moyennes avec beurre, un demi verre de vin blanc, sel, et poivre; couvrez la casserole et cuisez les écrevisses dix à douze minutes sur un feu vif; aussitôt vif retirez la chair des queues; mettez-les dans une casserole avec deux bonnes truffes coupées en lame, un morceau de beurre, tenez au chaud. Avec les carapaces préparez un beurre d'écrevisses.

Faites réduire quelques cuillerées de bonne béchamelle avec addition de crème double, passez la sauce à l'étamine

et ajoutez le beurre d'écrevisses, tenir au chaud; au moment de servir garnir le fonds de la timbale avec le macaronis; dressez sur le macaronis les filets de sole à la garniture de truffes et queues d'écrevisses, sautez le tout avec la sauce préparée au beurre d'écrevisses; recouvrez la timbale et servez bien chaud.

A. Escoffier

And herewith is the recipe of the *sole à la Newnham-Davis* which Mons. Thouraud has been kind enough to give me.

Cuisez une belle sole dans un peu de vin blanc et de fumet de poisson, échalottes, fines herbes, bouquet garni, beurre et champignons émincés (geare boitel). Une fois cuite mettez votre sole dans un plat (allant au four) et les champignons rangés symétriquement dessus avec un bouquet de pointes d'asperges en éventail (passer au beurre) à chaque bout de la sole. Tenez au chaud.

D'autre part montez votre cuisson (après l'avoir fait préalablement réduire de moitié) en ajoutant une cuillère de veloute et un peu de beurre frais peu à peu et en fouettant vigoureusement pour en faire une sauce légère et mousseuse, passez à l'étamine, offrez votre sole de cette sauce, souproudez légèrement de parmesan et glacez au four bien chaud.

Surtout le sole cuite à point, la sauce légère de bon et de haut goût.

H. THOURAUD.

These are two menus suggested by M. Ritz for dinner-parties.

Canapés Moscovites.
Pommes d'amour.
Consommé aux nids d'hirondelles.
Filets de truite aux laitances.
Désirs de Mascotte.
Caneton de Rouen en chemise.
Petits pois aux laitues.
Suprêmes d'écrevisses au Château Yquem.
Ortolans Cocotte au suc d'ananas.
Cœurs de Romaine.
Asperges à l'huile vierge.
Belle de nuit aux violettes.
Friandises.

Caviar.
Canapés aux crevettes rouges.
Consommé Nurette.
Paillettes au parmesan.
Mousseline d'éperlans aux truffes.
Filets de poulet au beurre noisette.
Artichauts aux fines herbes.
Agneau de lait à la broche.
Petits pois frais.
Nymphes glacées au champagne.
Cailles aux feuilles de vigne.
Salade Mignonne.
Asperges d'Argenteuil.
Pêches de Vénus voilées de l'Orientale.
Mignardises.

CHAPTER VI

DUTIES OF A MAÎTRE D'HÔTEL

MONSIEUR JOSEPH, as I have written in the preceding chapter, once ruled the roast at the Savoy, and after a particularly good dinner I once asked him for the *recettes* of some of his "creations." Joseph, who looks, with his grey hair and little moustache, like a foreign ambassador, and who talks of the art of composing a dinner with all the serious enthusiasm of a devotee, put off my request with grave courtesy, saying that he would write to me. Subjoined is his little lecture on the duties of a *maître d'hôtel*.

MON CHER COLONEL—

Vous me demandez pour votre nouveau livre des recettes. Méfiez-vous des recettes. Depuis la cuisinière bourgeoise et le Baron Brisse on a chanté la chanson sur tous les airs et sur tous les tons. Et qu'en reste-t'il ; qui s'en souvient ? Je veux dire dans le public aristocratique pour qui vous écrivez, et que vous comptez intéresser avec votre nouvelle publication, cherchez le nouveau dans les à propos de table, donnez des

conseils aux maîtresses de maison, qui dépensent beaucoup d'argent pour donner des dîners fatigants, trop longs, trop compliqués ; dites leur qu'un bon dîner doit être court, que les convives doivent manger et non goûter, qu'elles exigent de leur cuisinier ou cuisinière de n'être pas trop savants, qu'ils respectent avant tout le goût que le bon Dieu a donné à toutes choses de ne pas les dénaturer par des combinaisons, qui à force d'être raffinées deviennent barbares.

On a beaucoup parlé du cuisinier. Si nous exposons un peu ce que doit être le Maître d'Hôtel.

LE MAÎTRE D'HÔTEL FRANÇAIS

La plus grande force du Maître d'hôtel français, je dis maître d'hôtel français à dessein, car si le cuisinier français a su tirer parti des produits de la nature avec un art infini, pour en faire des aliments aimables, agréables, et bienfaisants, le Maître d'hôtel français seul est susceptible de les faire accepter et désirer. Or voilà pour le Maître d'hôtel le champ qu'il a à explorer. Champ vaste s'il en fût, car deviner avec tact ce qui peut plaire à celui-ci et ne pas plaire à celui-là, est un problème à résoudre selon la nature, le tempérament et la nationalité de celui qu'il doit faire manger. Il doit donc être le conseil, le tentateur, et le metteur en scène. Il faut pour être un maître d'hôtel accompli, mettre de côté, ou de moins ne pas laisser percer le but commercial, tout en étant un commerçant hors ligne (je parle ici du maître

d'hôtel public de restaurant, attendu que dans la maison particulière, le commerce n'a rien à voir, ce qui simplifie énormément le rôle du maître d'hôtel. Pour cela il faut être un peu diplomate, et un peu artiste dans l'art de dire, afin de colorer le projet de repas que l'on doit soumettre à son dîneur). Il faut donc agir sur l'imagination pour faire oublier la machine que l'on va alimenter, en un mot masquer le côté matériel de manger. J'ai acquis la certitude qu'un plat savamment préparé par un cuisinier hors ligne peut passer inaperçu, ou inapprécié si le maître d'hôtel, qui devient alors metteur en scène, ne sait pas présenter l'œuvre, de façon à le faire désirer, de sorte que si ce mets est servi par un maître d'hôtel qui n'en comprend pas le caractère, il lui sera impossible de lui donner tout son relief, et alors l'œuvre du cuisinier sera anéanti et passera inaperçu.

Ce maître d'hôtel doit être aussi un observateur et un juge et doit transmettre son appréciation au chef de cuisine, mais pour apprécier il faut savoir, pour savoir il faut aimer son art, le maître d'hôtel doit être un apôtre.

Il doit transmettre les observations qu'il a pu entendre pendant le cours d'un dîner de la part des convives, observations favorables ou défavorables, il doit les transmettre au chef et aviser avec lui. Il doit aussi être en observation, car il arrive le plus souvent que les convives ne disent rien à cause de leur amphitryon mais ne mangent pas avec plaisir et entraînent le mets présenté : là encore le maître d'hôtel doit chercher le pourquoi. Il y a aussi dans un

déjeuner ou un dîner un rôle très important réservé au maître d'hôtel. La variété agréable des hors-d'œuvre, la salade qui accompagne le rôti, le façon de découper ce rôti avec élégance, de bien disposer ce rôti sur son plat une fois découpé, découper bien et vite, afin d'éviter le réchaud qui sèche. Savoir mettre à point une selle de mouton, avec juste ce qu'il faut de sel sur la partie grasse, qui lui donnera un goût agréable.

Pour découper le maître d'hôtel doit se placer ni trop près ni trop loin des convives, afin que ceux-ci soient intéressés, et voient que tous les détails sont observés avec goût et élégance, de façon à tenter encore les appétits qui n'en peuvent presque plus mais qui renaissent encore un peu aiguillonnés par le désir qu'a su faire naître l'artiste préposé au repas, et qui a su donner encore envie à l'imagination, quand l'estomac commençait à capituler.

Le maître d'hôtel a de plus cette partie de la fin du dîner, le choix d'un bon fromage, les fruits, les soins de température à donner aux vins, la façon de décanter ceux-ci pour leur donner le maximum de bouquet ; le maître d'hôtel ne peut-il encore être un tentateur avec la fraise frappée (à la Marivaux) ? La pêche à la cardinal, qu'accompagne si bien le doux parfum de la framboise, légèrement acidulé d'un de jus de groseille, notre grand carême qualifiait.

Certains plats de "manger des Dieux," combien l'expression est heureuse.

Depuis que je suis à Londres j'ai trouvé un nombre incalculable "d'inventeurs de ma pêche

à la cardinal." Il me faudra leur donner la recette un jour que j'en aurai l'occasion.

N'est-ce pas de l'art chez le maître d'hôtel qui tente et charme les convives par ces raffinements, et qui comme un cavalier sur une moture essoufflée sait encore relever son courage et lui faire faire la dernière foulée qui décide de la victoire ? Après un bon repas le maître d'hôtel a la grande satisfaction d'avoir donné un peu de bonheur à de pauvres gens riches, qui ne sont pas toujours des heureux.

Et comme l'a dit Brillat Savarin "Le plaisir de la table ne nuit pas aux autres plaisirs." Au contraire, qui sait si *indirectement* je ne suis pas le papa de bien des Bébés rieurs, ou la cause au moins de certaines aventures que mes jolies clientes n'évoquent qu'en souriant derrière leur éventail ?

JOSEPH

*Directeur du Savoy Restaurant, Londres,
et du Restaurant de Marivaux, Paris.*

CHAPTER VII

THE ST. GEORGE'S CAFÉ (ST. MARTIN'S LANE)

WHENEVER I have come across a Philistine who has eaten a vegetarian dinner, he always professes that he narrowly escaped with his life. Now this I knew must be an invention, and I was anxious to try for myself whether a dinner of herbs meant contentment or whether it did not, so I approached one of the high priests of the order, and asked which would be the restaurant in London at which it would be wisest to try the experiment. The answer I received was not of the most encouraging. The high priest had no very great faith in the cooking at any of the restaurants, and very kindly suggested that, if I wanted to try vegetarian diet, I should come and pay him a visit. If, however, I preferred the restaurants, the two he would suggest were the Ideal Café, 185 Tottenham Court Road, or the St. George's Café, St. Martin's Lane.

Before trying either I thought I would reconnoitre both. I passed the Tottenham Court Road café early in the morning, when neither people nor cafés look at their best. On the

brown brick front was a gilt device telling that it was a social club for gentlemen and ladies, and I gathered from legends on the windows that there was a ladies' chess club, and that the café was a restaurant as well; indeed, was all things to all eating men and women; for on the bill of fare exposed in the window there were the prices of fish and fowl, as well as such entirely vegetarian dishes as haricot and potato pie and mushroom omelette. There was something of the appearance of a pastrycook's about the windows on the ground floor, and a damsel was "dressing" one of them with yellow cloth, to act no doubt as a background to the delicacies presently to be exposed. I caught sight through the window of a counter with tea appurtenances on it.

It was in the afternoon that I made my second reconnaissance, this time in the direction of St. Martin's Lane, and I found the St. George's Restaurant to be a red brick building of an Elizabethan type, with leaded glass windows and with a sign, whereon was inscribed "The famous house for coffee," swinging from a wrought-iron support. The windows on the ground floor had palms in them, and the gaze of the vulgar was kept from the inner *arcana* by neat little curtains. From the bill of fare I gathered that I could obtain such luxuries as grilled mushrooms and seakale cream, which cost 10d., or mushroom omelette and young carrots sauté, which were 1s., or Yorkshire pudding with sage and onions and new potatoes for 7d. Before I moved on I ascertained that here also was a ladies' chess club, and that on the first floor was a ladies' room. I

made up my mind that the St. George's should be my dining place, and the next question was how to secure some one to dine with me.

I had to be present that afternoon at a committee for a benefit theatrical performance, and found half a dozen of my fellow committee-men assembled. During a pause in the business one of them remarked that the last dinner about which I had written seemed to have been an excellent feast. This gave me my opportunity, and mentioning that I was going to do another dinner for publication that evening, asked if any one would care to dine with me. A pleased look came to at least four faces, but all were too polite to speak first. Then I said what the dinner was to be. One man had to go to a Masonic banquet; another was dining at a farewell feast to a coming Benedick; another had promised his dear old aunt to spend that evening with her: the guests bidden to the scriptural feast were not more prompt in excuses.

I went on to my Service club and found there a subaltern who, in old days, had been in my Company, and who would have followed me, or preceded me, into any danger of battle without the tremble of an eyelid. Him I urged to come with me, telling him that a man can only die once, and other such inspiriting phrases, and had nearly persuaded him when old General Bundo-bust joined in the conversation and told a story of how Joe Buggins, of the Madras Fusiliers, once ate a vegetarian dinner and swelled up afterwards till he was as big as a balloon. That finished the subaltern, and he refused to go.

I had to go by myself. I opened the leaded glass door of the St. George's and found myself in a long room with plenty of palms and a general look of being cared for, with a counter and many long white-clothed tables, with seats for about half a dozen at each. There were little black-dressed waitresses flitting about, and at the tables a fair sprinkling of men, neither obtrusively smart nor obtrusively shabby, who were dining, and who nearly all kept their hats on. I drifted down to the end of the room and sat at a table and told the waitress in rather a feeble way that I should like the best vegetarian dinner that the house could give me. The waitress suggested that I had better go upstairs to the table-d'hôte room, and I gathered up my goods and chattels and went like a lamb.

The room on the first floor was a nice bright little room, with white overmantels to the fireplaces, with one corner turned into a bamboo arbour, with painted tambourines and little mandolines and pictures, and an oaken clock on the light-papered walls, with red-shaded candles on the tables set for four or six. Two pretty girls in black, one with a white flower, one with a red, were in charge, and another girl peered out from a little railed desk by the door. In the background was a glimpse of a kitchen, behind a glass screen, where some one was whistling "Sister Mary Jane's Top Note," and the two little waitresses were constantly hurrying to this screen with a "Hurry up with that pigeon's egg," or a "Be quick, now, with those flageolets." My table was beautifully

clean, with a little bunch of flowers on it, with a portentously large decanter and an array of glasses.

The waitress with the red flower put down a little bill of fare before me, and I learned that my dinner was to be—

Hors-d'œuvre.

Mulligatawny soup or Carrot soup.

Flageolets with cream and spinach.

Fried duck's egg and green peas.

Lent pie or Stewed fruit.

Mixed salad.

Cheese.

Dessert.

Some olives in a small plate were put down before me, and through force of habit I took up the black-covered wine list on the table. The first items were orange wine, rich raisin wine, ginger wine, black currant wine, red currant wine, raspberry wine, elderberry wine. I put it down with a sigh, and ordered a bottle of ginger-beer. Then while I munched at an olive I looked round at my fellow-guests. There was a sister of mercy in her black and white, with her gold cross showing against her sombre garment; there was a tall, thin gentleman who would not have done for any advertisement of anybody's fattening food; there was a young lady in a straw hat with a many-coloured ribbon to it, who was so absorbed in an illustrated paper that she was neglecting her dinner; there were two other ladies enjoying their stewed fruit immensely; and there were two other gentlemen of the type I had seen below, but who were not wearing their hats.

The carrot soup, which was the soup I chose, was quite hot and was satisfying. The spinach was not up to club form, and the flageolets topping it did not look inviting, but I made an attack on it and got half through, not because I wanted to eat it, but because I did not want to hurt the waitress's feelings. The duck's egg was well fried, and I enjoyed it, though the peas were a trifle hard. Then I fell into disgrace with the waitress, for I would have neither Lent pie nor stewed fruit, pleading that I never ate sweets. "What, not stewed fruit?" said the little girl with the red rose; and I knew that in her opinion I had missed the crown of the feast. A little bowl of lettuce and cucumber, with a bottle of salad dressing, was put in front of me, and I mixed my own salad. Then I ate a slice of Gruyère cheese, and finished with some almonds and raisins that were grouped on a platter round an orange. It being, as the sign-board had told me, a noted coffee-house, I ordered a small cup of the liquid, and said "Black," in reply to the waitress's question.

It was capital coffee undoubtedly, and, having finished it, I asked for my bill. The waitress pulled out a little morocco-covered memorandum book, and presented me with this:—Ginger-beer, 2d.; coffee, 2d.; dinner, 1s. 6d.; total, 1s. 10d. I paid at the desk, and went forth feeling rather empty.

As I am writing, twenty-four hours after the event, I may conclude that Joe Buggins's, of the Madras Fusiliers, fate will not be mine.

* * * The above dinner was, I take it, just the ordinary meal that a vegetarian eats every day ; for when they feast the vegetarians launch out very extensively. This is the menu of a dinner of which the members of the Vegetarian Congress partook at the Mansion House Restaurant under the chairmanship of Mr. A. F. Hills :—

SOUPS.

Green pea consommé. Purée of tomatoes.

SAVOURIES.

Vol-au-vent of eggs and mushrooms.

Macaroni and cheese with grilled tomatoes.

Egg rissoles with potato chips.

Lentil and mushroom croquettes with Lyonnaise sauce.

Savoury pie (cold) with salad.

VEGETABLES.

Grilled tomatoes. Spinach. Cabbage.

Chip, boiled, and mashed potatoes. Butter beans.

SWEETS.

Apricot Charlotte. Tapioca custard.

Blackberry and apple tartlets.

Pastries (assorted). Vanilla cream mould.

Orange jelly. Iced pudding.

STEWED FRUITS.

Damsons. Pears. Apricots. French plums.

Apples. Preserved pineapple.

DESSERT.

Bananas. Grapes. Apples.

Biscuits. Cheese.

Grape wine. Natural lemonade. Lime juice.

Siphon soda. Coffee.

CHAPTER VIII

THE QUEEN'S HOTEL (LEICESTER SQUARE)

"ARE you aware," I said to the Surgeon-Major, "that this spot, which is to gain an added lustre by the fact that you are dining here, is one of the most interesting, historically, in London?" The Surgeon-Major murmured something about not caring, and then told the waiter that he would take thick soup.

I would take clear soup, and said so. Then I returned to the charge. The store of historic knowledge which I had gained by reading Tom Taylor and John Hollingshead on Leicester Square and turning over the leaves of Smith and Pennant was not going to be wasted, and I had taken the Surgeon-Major out to dinner, partly for the pleasure of his company and partly because I thought that he would be a good audience. "This is the site of old Leicester House, built *circa* 1635, for Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester, on some lammas-land granted to his ancestor, Lord de L'Isle and Izes by Henry VIII." When I had got so far I paused to see what effect these details, the "*circa* 1635," and

the "lammas-land" would have on the Surgeon-Major. He was apparently unmoved, and told me that I was letting my soup get cold.

The *Consommé Bonne Femme* was excellent, and I did not give it time to freeze. The next dish on the menu was "turbot, sauce Nantua," and that gave me another opportunity. Gliding conversationally from turbot to sole, I told the Surgeon-Major, who was stirring his Nantua sauce doubtfully with his fork, that possibly not twenty yards from here the *sole à la Colbert* was invented, for Colbert, when he came as French Ambassador to London and started the French colony in Soho, rented Leicester House from the Earl of Leicester.

The Surgeon-Major opined that Colbert's cook was, no doubt, a good man in his day ; but did I know the whereabouts of Charpentier ? M. Charpentier, who was the *chef de cuisine* of the Queen's when it was opened, is a restless genius who has graced many kitchens. He was a mascotte to the Savoy ; he ruled over the saucepans of one of the Rothschilds ; he started the Queen's on its successful course, and the last I heard of him was during the Sussex race fortnight, during which he had temporarily entered Mr. George Edwardes's service. All this I told to the Surgeon-Major, and then asked the reason of his curiosity.

He said he had no particular reason except that he was sure that Charpentier had not made the *sauce Nantua*.

As a matter of fact, the talented chef, whoever he may be, who has stepped into M. Charpentier's

pantoufles, had not been successful in his sauce, the blot on a dinner which otherwise was very good for the money, five shillings, charged. This was the menu :—

Hors-d'œuvre.

Consommé Bonne Femme. Potage Crème d'orge.

Turbot, sauce Nantua.

Chartreuse de Perdreau ou Noisette de

Mouton Polonaise.

Canetons d'Aylesbury rôtis à la broche.

Salade.

Haricots verts au beurre.

Beignets d'ananas ou Parfait Nelusko.

Alumettes.

Dessert.

It was a little ungrateful of the Surgeon-Major to grumble at the sauce, for it was to please him that I had selected the Queen's as our dining place. When I told him that I had two tickets for a theatre, offered him one, asked him to dinner, and was doubtful where to go in the Leicester Square quarter for a light dinner before the play, he had suggested the Queen's, and told me how he, lately, being one evening alone and in a bad temper, had gone into the Queen's, had eaten the table d'hôte dinner, amidst bright surroundings, had drunk a pint of champagne, and had come forth a new man, refreshed and good tempered. Wherefore I had got up my antiquarian facts about Leicester House to amuse and impress him, had waited five minutes for him in the little entrance hall where her late Majesty smiles in white marble above the

mantelpiece, where the variegated marble columns are and the tessellated pavement, and where smart little pages in mess jackets and red mess waistcoats are always ready to run messages, and had broached for him a bottle of Moët and Chandon; and having done all this, it grieved me to see him morosely stirring the sauce with his fork.

To cheer him up I told him that the Queen's had in a former state been the home of Waller's "Sacharissa," at which the Surgeon-Major scoffed, and said that saccharine as Waller's lady might have been, he thought that the lady in a blue hat who had just come in could give her points in sweetness; and indeed the two ladies, both in blue, who had just entered, and were having much attention paid to them by the head waiter and his assistants, were both of them exceptionally good-looking.

The room had been filling up while we were in the early stages of our dinner. A tall and graceful lady in black and her husband had come to the table next to ours on one side, a bachelor party of four were on the other side, and at most of the other tables were gentlemen, some in morning coats and some in dress clothes, and their accompanying ladies, who affected high dresses and hats and evening dress in about equal numbers.

The movement of guests and waiters, the buzz of talk, the music of the band, perched up high in a gallery and railed in with blue marble, and the brightness of the room, combined with the *Noisette Polonaise*, with which no gourmet

could find any fault, roused the Surgeon-Major from his gentle melancholy ; and indeed the dining-room at the Queen's is so bright and glittering that it is not a place for dark moods. It is in Louis Seize style, with a painted ceiling carrying Aurora in the centre, with columns of soft creamy marble flaked with brown, with paintings of ladies and gentlemen in silks and satins enjoying themselves amidst pastoral surroundings let into the walls, with mirrors, with much gilding, and with electric lights shining amidst cut-glass pendants and in lamps pink and yellow shaded, on the tables ; the soft brown of the leather of the chairs and the staid red of the carpet forming a foil for all this glitter and gilt on walls and ceiling.

With the Aylesbury duck I imparted to the Surgeon-Major my tit-bit of antiquarian knowledge. He was on the site of the "pouting-place of princes," that phrase of Pennant's which is as comforting to the various historians of Leicester Square as the "blessed word Mesopotamia" was to the charitable old lady ; and without giving him a chance to intervene with any frivolous remarks, I told him how George II., when he was Prince of Wales, and not on the best of terms with the King, lived in Leicester House, and how—a case of history repeating itself—Prince Frederick, King George II.'s son, in a state of mutiny against parental command, held a miniature court there ; and how George III. lived in the house before his accession to the throne. The *Parfait* was excellent, but so cold that I had for the moment

to stop talking, and the Surgeon-Major, very unfairly, seized the opportunity of giving me *his* history of Leicester Square, which commenced with the decoration in scarlet spots of the statue of George I., and ranged over many other stirring incidents, such as the scenes when the various national fighting songs were played and sung at the Alhambra during the Franco-Prussian War, and the stormy evening when the barricades that fenced off "Mrs. Chant's promenade" at the Empire were demolished. I had still much interesting history to tell him as to Leicester House in the old days—anecdotes of Elizabeth Queen of Bohemia, who died there; of Lady Carlisle, who was arrested there; of the "butcher" Cumberland, who was born there, and of the Princess Augusta who was married there; but I was never given a chance, for the Surgeon-Major had so much to say about the "Judge and Jury," and other places which have made more recent history in Leicester Square, that I never was allowed to speak a word over our coffee and brandy.

I paid the bill. Two dinners, 10s.; two cafés, 1s.; one bottle 99, 15s.; two liqueurs, 2s.; total, £1:8s. The Surgeon-Major is a good fellow; no doubt he is a clever surgeon. But as an audience to tell interesting antiquarian facts to he is an absolute fraud.

CHAPTER IX

PRINCES' HALL (PICCADILLY)

SHE is a charming little lady, and her husband, to tell the truth, spoils her just a little. Most married dames would have been content, if they wished to dine at a restaurant on the occasion of their birthday, with one dinner ; but Mrs. Daffodil—if I may so call her, from her favourite flower—insisted on having a dinner out on Saturday, and another on Sunday, and another on Monday, because, though her twenty-first birthday really fell on Saturday, she was going to keep it on Monday, when a great party of her husband's people were to meet at the Savoy, and on Sunday her people were organising a feast at the Berkeley ; but Mrs. Daffodil said that unless she dined out on the evening of her *real* birthday she was sure she would have no luck during the coming year, and I was told that I was to have the privilege of being the third at the little dinner which was to be the veritable birthday dinner, and that, as a return for this great favour, I was to order the dinner and choose the restaurant.

I was too wise to take the full responsibility of anything so important, and in a council of three we ran down the list of dining places. Of those we paused over in consideration, the Princes' Hall was the nearest to Mrs. Daffodil's flat, and the little lady remembered that she had not dined there this year, and suddenly decided that it was the very place for a birthday dinner ; but was she to come to Jermyn Street entrance or to that in Piccadilly, and should she wear her new white dress, or would the black dress with the handsome bit of lace suit her better ? Her husband looked a little helpless at the mention of dress, and I at a venture suggested the black, for I remembered that the roof of the grand salon of the Princes', with its heavy mouldings, was white picked out with gold, while the great panels of brick red, powdered with golden fleurs-de-lys and the palms filling-in the corners, would show up a black dress just as well as a white one.

Black it was to be, and, this important matter decided and that the Piccadilly entrance and not the Jermyn Street one was where I should be found waiting, I was sent off as an advance messenger in a hansom cab to order the best table available and a dinner, not too elaborate and not too small, which was to be ready by the time little Mrs. Daffodil had dressed and could drive down to the restaurant in her brougham.

My hansom was a fleet one. A party of guests at one of the tables by the windows, evidently bound for a theatre, had finished their dinner and were just off and away as I arrived, and I pounced like a hawk upon the table they left

vacant. The first preliminaries were soon over, for the plump *maître d'hôtel*, whom I had known in previous days at the East Room of the Criterion as the most dapper of head waiters, had the table cleared at once, found some yellow flowers which, if they were not daffodils, were very like them, and had big bouquets of them put upon the table. Then came the important question of the dinner. *Hors-d'œuvre variés*, suggested the *maître d'hôtel*; but I moved as an amendment that it should be caviar, for the caviar at the Princes' is Benoist's, and no man imports better. "Turtle," suggested the *maître d'hôtel*, a little doubtfully, after being defeated in his first venture, and as I passed the suggestion with a nod, though turtle is rather too heavy for a tiny feast, *potage tortue* went down on the slip of paper. Mrs. Daffodil had made a suggestion as to salmon which she withdrew as soon as made, but I had remembered it, and *saumon à la Grenobloise* was scribbled down. "Now," said the *maître d'hôtel* a little decisively, "since the soup and the fish are brown, we must have a white *entrée*," and as I was not prepared at the moment with any practical suggestion, having thought most inartistically of a Chateaubriand and a woodcock as the rest of the solid part of the dinner, I allowed the proposal to go by default, and *fricassée de poulet à l'Ancienne* was ordered. "A tiny saddle of lamb?" was the next suggestion, and although I regretted my prospective woodcock I let the matter go, for we had a bird already in the menu. "*Pommes nouvelles risolées. Salade de mâche, céleri, betterave. Asperges anglaises*," reeled off my

mentor, and I nodded at the mention of the English asparagus ; and then to show that I was going to have a word in the ordering of the dinner I added *macédoine de fruits à l'orientale* and *friandises* without requiring any prompting.

I waited in the bright, French-looking entrance hall, with its mirrors and screens decorated with painted flowers, and watched the people coming in and going out. A party of smart young men from the Stock Exchange, most of whom I knew, on their way to a row of stalls they had taken at the Gaiety, passed and chaffed me for my waiting ; but the sound of the band within in the great white railed-in musicians' gallery was cheerful—and an excellent band it is, each artist in it being a soloist of some celebrity—and presently M. Fourault, the manager, who is the brother-in-law of M. Benoist, came out and talked to me, saying that M. Azema, the *chef*, was personally superintending the cooking of the dinner, to which I replied that I was much obliged that the great artist from the Café Anglais should have paid me the compliment. Then M. Fourault launched forth into details of the service and the building : how the dishes are brought direct to the guests by hand so as to avoid the chance of draughts in lifts ; of the beauty of the kitchen ; of the hotel, and the new entrance from Jermyn Street and the great lounge there is now room for, and of the private dining-rooms, of which I needed no description for I had eaten many good dinners in them, and of the grill room in the basement, and a variety

of other topics. And as he talked the band inside was softly playing, and I was growing hungry waiting for little Mrs. Daffodil, for I knew that it would not be her husband who caused the delay.

The brougham drew up before the glass portico with its brass ornamentations, and Mrs. Daffodil in the wonderful black dress was helped out. She would bring her ermine cape in with her, she thought ; and having arrived at the table smiled graciously at seeing her name-flowers there. I explained that the table by the door protected by the glass screens was my favourite one, and that I should have taken it if possible, but that it had been engaged for days, and Mrs. Daffodil was pleased to think the one we had obtained was quite as nice. Didn't she think the room, with its big panels, its few long mirrors, its clusters of electric lights and electric candles on the tables, and its musicians' gallery over the entrance to the offices and kitchen, very handsome ? I asked. And as she helped herself to the caviar, each little ball as separate as if they had been pellets of shot, she assented ; but to show that she was critical, thought there ought to have been more palms. Then the little lady took up the questioning, and wanted to know who everybody was who was dining. I was able to point out a well-known artist taking a quiet meal with his wife, who at one time was an ornament of the comedy-stage ; a party of soldier officers up from Aldershot (and I had a story of the gallantry of one of them, and how he should have won by right a Victoria Cross) ;

an ex-Gaiety girl whose marriage to a Guardsman was for ten days the talk of the town; a youngster whose good looks have won him a very rich but not too young wife—and there I had to pause, for though the room was full of well-dressed, smart-looking people, I knew no more of them by name.

I was reproved for not knowing my London better, and tried to turn the conversation by telling my host that I would sooner share the burgundy with him than drink the champagne which Mrs. Daffodil thought a necessary part of her birthday dinner, but at that moment, the soup being brought, we all relapsed into serious criticism. The turtle soup was good undoubtedly, as good as at any City dinner, with its jade-coloured semi-solid floating in the darker liquor, and we praised that unreservedly, but I was told that I was in a carping mood because I stated that I like my salmon as plainly cooked as possible. As to the *fricassée*, I liked it immensely; but Mrs. Daffodil, because her shoe pinched, or for some other good reason, said that she hated truffles. The lamb, the most delicate little *selle d'agneau de lait*, with the potatoes and the dark green salad relieved by the crimson of the beet-root, was admirable. English asparagus never can be anything but good, and though my hostess insisted on my eating a cherry from among the *friandises*, I left the sweets, as is my custom, alone.

And the bill. I asked my host to let me look at it, and here it is:—three couverts, 3s.; caviar, 3s.; tortue, 6s.; saumon, 6s.; fricassée de poulet,

7s. ; selle d'agneau, 8s. ; pommes risolées, 2s. ; salade, 1s. 6d. ; asperges, 10s. 6d. ; macédoine de fruits, 4s. 6d. ; one '67 (Burgundy), 12s. ; $\frac{1}{2}$ 140 (champagne), 7s. 6d., three cafés special, 1s. 6d. ; three liqueurs fine champagne (1800), 6s. ; total, £4 : 0 : 6.

* * This was a dinner ordered in a hurry and without perhaps due consideration. Talking over it some days later on with Mons. Fourault, I asked him to give me a suggestion as to what he considered a typical Princes' Hall dinner for a larger number, and I also asked him to be my ambassador to M. Azema, the *chef*, for the *recette* of the *poulet à l'Ancienne*, which I had liked so much.

This is the *menu* for a dinner of six covers, a very admirable dinner of ceremony. As to its cost, I am not prepared to guess.

Le Signi du Volga.
 Les petits coulubiaks à la Czarine.
 La crème Ste-Marie.
 Les suprêmes de truites à la Princesse.
 Les poulardes à la Georges Sand.
 Le Baron de Pauillac aux primeurs.
 Les bécasses au champagne.
 La salade Impériale.
 Les asperges d'Argenteuil Ste-Mousseleine.
 Le soufflé chaud succès.
 La glace Leda.
 Une corbeille de friandises.
 Les canapés Diane.
 Dessert.

Mons. Azema thought the *fricassée Ancienne*, the *recette* of which I had asked for, too simple a dish,

and instead sent me the *recette* for the *poularde Georges Sand*, which is a very lordly dish. Here it is as Mons. Azema wrote it.

Recette de la poularde G. Sand

Lever les membres d'une belle poularde très blanche bien régulièrement. Faire la tomber à blond, avec un oignon émincé, une bonne pointe de paprika, et deux verres de vin blanc, environ quarante-cinq minutes. Retirer la poularde et passer le fonds à l'étamine, le monter avec un bon beurre d'écrevisse, et garnir avec queues d'écrevisse, belles truffes, en olives, et croûtons de feuilletage. Servir très chaud.

A. Azema

CHAPTER X

THE CHESHIRE CHEESE (WINE OFFICE COURT)

I HAD been kept late in Fleet Street on Saturday, and at a little before seven I woke to the fact that it was near the dinner hour, that I was in the clothes I had worn all day, that I was brain-weary and tired, and not energetic. I should be late for dinner if I went home, half across the width of London; I could not well dine at a club without evening clothes, and a smart restaurant was equally out of the question, for I felt, being in the state of humiliation which weariness and London grime bring one to, that I could not have held my own as to the choice of a table or the ordering of a dinner against even the least determined *maitre d'hôtel*.

The easiest way was to dine at one of the Fleet Street hostelries, and I ran such of them as I know over in my mind. How they have changed since Herrick rang them into rhyme! Then they were the Sun, the Dog, the Triple Tun. Now they are the Rainbow, the Cock, Anderton's, the Cheshire Cheese, and a host more. It was a pudding day at the Cheshire

Cheese, not the crowded day, which is Wednesday, but a day on which I was sure to get a seat in the lower room and be able to eat my meal in comfort and content ; and that finally decided me in favour of the hostelry in Wine Office Court.

It is not a cheerful thoroughfare that leads up to the Cheshire Cheese. It is a narrow and dark passage, and the squat little door of the tavern itself is not inviting, for it is reminiscent of a country public-house. It is not until one is through the sawdusted passage and into the lower room that one is in warmth and comfort.

I was a little late. The man who loves the Cheshire Cheese pudding is in his place at table a few minutes before the pudding is brought in at 6.30 P.M., a surging billow of creamy white bulging out of a great brown bowl, and then when the host begins to carve—and there is a certain amount of solemnity about the opening of this great pudding—the early guest gets the best helping. By a quarter-past seven, when I made my entry, the pudding had sunk down into the depths of the bowl.

Most of the tables were full, but the long table, at the head of which Dr. Johnson is alleged to have sat with Goldsmith at his left hand, had some vacant places, and I took one of them. "Pudding?" said the head waiter. I assented, and Mr. Moore, the host, a dapper gentleman, with a wealth of dark hair and a dark moustache, who had been chatting to a clean-shaven young gentleman who had the seat opposite to mine, moved to the great bowl to

give me my helping, for no one but the host touches the sacred pudding. The clean-shaven young gentleman relapsed into a newspaper, and while I waited the few seconds before the brown mixture of lark and kidney and oyster and steak was put before me I looked round at my neighbours. A gentleman, bald of head and with white whiskers, who was addressed as "Doctor," sat in the great lexicographer's seat, and talking to him was a bearded gentleman whom I put down at once as a press-man, a sub-editor probably. The only other guest at our table was a good-looking, middle-aged man in clothes that had the gloss of newness on them, a flannel shirt, a white collar, and a gaudy tie. He had finished his meal, was evidently contented with the world, and there was a conversational glint in his eye when he caught mine that made me look away at once ; for I was hungry and down-cast and not inclined for cheerful converse until I had eaten and drunk.

"Pudding, sir," and the head waiter put the savoury mass before me ; "and what else ?" I ordered a pint of beer and stewed cheese. I ate my pudding, and being told that the cheese was not ready, ate a "follow" afterwards, for there is no limit to the amount of pudding allowed, and some of the "followers," as the host of the tavern calls them, have been known to have half a dozen helpings ; and then the brown and fizzling cheese in its little tin tray, with a triangle of toast on either side, was put before me. The cheese, mixed with mustard and neatly spread on the toast, according to custom,

eaten, the last drops of the bitter beer poured from the pewter tankard into the long glass which is supposed to give brilliancy to the malt liquor ; and then, feeling a man again, I looked across at the flannel-shirted gentleman who had been smoking a pipe placidly, with a look which meant "Come on."

The ripple of conversation broke at once. He had been out in Australia for fifteen years, went out there as a mere lad, and to-day was his first day in town after his return. He had been used in past times to come to the Cheshire Cheese for his mid-day meal, and the first place he had sought out when he came to London was the old hostelry. He missed the old waiters, he said, but otherwise the place was much the same and as homely as ever.

I recognised in the attraction that had brought this wanderer from the antipodes to the old-fashioned tavern, first of all places, the same force that had made me, the *blasé* man about town, unconsciously decide to dine there in preference to any other Fleet Street hostelry—its homeliness. The old-fashioned windows with their wire blinds, the sawdusted floor, the long clay pipes on the window-sill ; the heirloom portrait of Henry Todd, waiter ; the "greybeard" and leather-jack on their brackets (both gifts from Mr. Seymour Lucas the artist) ; the piles of black-handled knives, the willow-pattern plates and dishes ; the curious stand in the centre of the floor for umbrellas ; the great old-fashioned grate with a brass kettle singing merrily on it ; the pile of Whitaker's almanacks putting a touch of

colour into a dark corner ; Samuel Johnson's portrait over his favourite seat, and a host of prints, relating to the great man, on the walls ; the high partitions, one particular square pew being shielded by a green baize curtain ; the simple napery ; the ruin of the great pudding on its little table ; all carried one back through the early Victorian times to those dimmer periods when even coffee-houses were unknown, and every man took his ease at his inn.

The floodgates of the friendly stranger's speech once unloosed, he told me of his life in Australia, and the hard times he had had, and how matters had come so far right that he was able to come home to England and enjoy himself for six months ; and the clean-shaven young gentleman—he was going on later to assist in an entertainment to the poor of Houndsditch, he told us—emerged from his newspaper, and we all found a good deal to say. Nothing would satisfy the returned wanderer but that he must be allowed to ask us to join him in drinking a bowl of the Cheshire Cheese punch, and Mr. Moore, the host, must make one of the party. The other guests—most of them, I should think, connected in some way or other with the Fourth Estate—had gradually drifted away, and Mr. Moore, who had been going from table to table, came and sat down. “No celebrities here to-night, Mr. Moore,” I said somewhat reproachfully, and he admitted the soft impeachment, but Irish-wise told us of the great men of the present day that we had missed by not dining at the Cheese on any night but the present one. Every journalist of fame,

every editor, has eaten within the walls of the old hostelry, and there is no judge that sits on the bench who has not taken some of his first dinners as a barrister in the little house up Wine Office Court.

The hot punch was brought in in one of the china bowls, of which there are three or four in a little corner cupboard in the old-fashioned bar across the passage, and an old silver ladle to serve it with ; and the talk ranged back from the great men of the present day to those of the past. Thackeray knew the "Cheese" well ; Dickens used to come in his early days and tell the present host's mother all his troubles, and so we got back to Goldsmith and Johnson, the latter of whom is the especial patron saint of the hostelry, for when he lived in Gough Square and Bolt Court the Cheshire Cheese is said to have been his nightly resort.

The punch ended, the time came for the reckoning. Of old the head waiters were all clean-shaven, like Henry Todd, whose portrait hangs aloft, and all the reckoning was done by word of mouth. But the present head waiter has introduced innovations ; he wears a moustache, and makes out his bills on paper. This was mine—Ye rump steak pudding, 2s. ; vegetables, 2d. ; cheese, 4d. ; beer, 5d. ; total, 2s. 11d.

CHAPTER XI

THE ST. JAMES'S (PICCADILLY)

WHEN he stopped me in Piccadilly I did not for a moment recognise him. In the tall, thin young man with a turn-over collar and a butterfly tie of green and yellow, it was not easy to discover the little boy, the son of a very old friend, whom I had gone down to Harrow, with his father, to see more than once. I remembered that he had been up for the Service and had failed to pass, and that the last time I had met his father and asked him what the boy was doing he shook his head and said "Nothing good."

It was seven o'clock, and I was walking down to dine at a club when the slim young man stopped me in Piccadilly, recalled himself to my memory, and asked me if I would give him some advice as to which corps of Yeomanry, or Irregulars, or Police to volunteer into so as to see active service, and whether I knew anybody out in South Africa to whom I would give him some letters.

I know, or rather should say knew, General Dartnell fairly well, and there are plenty of old

friends of the days when I soldiered in South Africa still in the country to whose good graces I was quite willing to recommend the youth ; but the middle of the pavement of Piccadilly was not the place to discuss these matters, so I asked him if he had dined, and, if he had not, whether he would come to the club with me, dine, and tell me all about himself and his proposed South African trip afterwards. He had not dined, but was shy of going to a club, as he was not in evening clothes ; so I told him that I would give him dinner anywhere he liked. The twin glass canopies of the St. James's Hall and St. James's Restaurant were but a few paces from us, and he suggested that "Jimmy's" was as good as any other place.

In the entrance hall of the St. James's we found a little altercation going on. A young gentleman in frockcoat and silk-hat was doubtful whether he owed a waiter in white apron and jacket, who had followed him out of the long bar on the left, two shillings ; the waiter was sure that he did. A huge janitor, towering above both, stood by to see fair play.

What the end of the discussion was I did not hear. I asked my charge whether he would sooner dine in the grill-room, the glass doors of which I found on the right, or in one of the other rooms. The central hall he suggested as being the best place for a dinner, and down the narrow passage we went on our way there.

I had not been inside the St. James's for a score of years, but the place seemed very much the same as it was in the days of my subalternhood, when I used occasionally to eat a dinner

there, and very often looked in at supper-time. It is a huge place, a maze of many rooms, with placards at the corners of the passages directing one to the various bars and dining-halls. The youth was evidently an *habitué*, and when we came to a buffet abundantly covered with cold meats, fish, and fruits, by which stood a cook in white cap and jacket, he turned to the left, and we were in a great hall with cream-coloured walls and red morocco chairs and a red carpet. Over the door by which we entered is a balcony divided into three compartments, with a clock on the balcony railings, and at the other end of the hall squares of looking-glass are inserted in the wall as if they were windows. The pillars which support the roof have as capitals groups of ladies, in scanty attire ; a not very flourishing palm has the place of honour in the centre of the room, and along the wall are curved red lounges. A little platform for the orchestra is hidden away in a corner.

The majority of the people dining were in morning dress, solid City men most of them, I thought. One paterfamilias was giving his whole family dinner. Some of the men dining by themselves read the evening papers as they took their meal.

We seated ourselves at a little table for two, and the waiter placed before me the menu of the 3s. 6d. old English dinner, which ran thus :—

Sardines and olives.
Vegetable soup. Oxtail.
Boiled cod and egg sauce.

Fried filets of soles.
Boiled fowl and parsley sauce.
Sirloin of beef and horse-radish sauce.
Saddle of mutton and red currant jelly.
Victoria pudding.
Wine jelly.
Bread and butter.
Cheese and celery.

I opened the wine card and asked the youth what wine he liked, and he replied "Ginger-ale." When I lifted my eyebrows in astonishment he told me that he had sworn off all spirits and wine from the day he made up his mind to go to South Africa. I ordered a pint of claret for myself, and said that I was ready to hear his story.

He had been hopelessly plucked, which I knew, for the Service—too much football and cricket and not enough mathematics at school—and had given up cramming for the examination in despair. He was not in the Militia or the Volunteers, and so had been unable to take advantage of the doors which at the commencement of the South African war were flung so widely open to officers of the Auxiliary forces. He found that he was doing no good in London, running up bills and loafing in the Burlington Arcade, and he wanted to start a clean sheet, to earn his own living, and lead a healthy life. He had started by becoming a teetotaler. A soldier's life was the only one he cared about, but he wanted to see fighting, not to walk about a barrack square. He would have enlisted in the Guards or in a Cavalry regiment if he saw any chance of being sent abroad to any place where fighting was going on, but as a

recruit he would have been sure to be left in England. He had money to pay for his passage, his father had consented to his going, and meeting me in the street he had thought that I might be able to help him to get into the Natal police or B. P.'s force, or one of the irregular corps, to give him some advice as to kit and saddlery and to tell him something of the life of the country.

All this I could do. I promised him his letters before breakfast the next morning, or if he chose to enlist in England, I promised to go with him to any of the offices open and to see whether I could not find a friend at court. As we ate I afforded him what advice I could, chiefly as to trifles; I told him to arrange for a supply of boots from England, and gave him some hints as to the articles that London shopkeepers think essential to a South African outfit, but which are thrown away as useless encumbrances after a few weeks on the veldt.

We ate our dinner, but I gave but little attention to it, for in imagination I was thousands of miles away galloping across the high veldt on a sure-footed shooting horse to get a shot at a herd of springbok; hearing the lions roar by the Olifant's river; eating with relish a chunk of trek-ox steak cooked in the top of a soldier's canteen over a cowdung fire, lying out on the great rolling plain at night with a saddle as a pillow, and watching the Southern Cross dip to the horizon in the violet sky, and longing for the years that are gone when no day was too long, no march wearisome, when fighting was a glorious pastime and the sun seemed to shine every day.

I remember that I was very glad to find one place in London where such a simple dish as boiled fowl is not looked down upon, and that the saddle of mutton was an excellent one.

I paid my bill—dinners, 7s. ; wine, 4s. ; waters, 1s. 6d. ; liqueurs, 1s. ; total, 13s. 6d.—and went out with the youth again into Piccadilly. I promised him once more that he should have his letters early the next day, shook his hand, wished him God-speed and a charmed life against Boer bullets, and so we parted.

CHAPTER XII

ROMANO'S (THE STRAND)

[Mr. Romano, the proprietor of Romano's, died while the proof-sheets of this book were passing through my hands. The restaurant is to be carried on on its old lines, at all events for the present, by M. Antonelli, who has been for many years the manager and "the Roman's" right-hand man.

N. N.-D.]

SOMETIMES after a period of depression one wants a tonic in dinners, as one does in health. My gastronomic malady had been a family feast at which I had sat next to a maiden aunt who, after telling me that I was getting unpleasantly fat, recounted anecdotes of my infancy and childhood all tending to prove that I was the most troublesome baby and worst conducted small boy that ever was. Something had to be done to banish that maiden aunt and her anecdotes from my memory. The happy thought came to me that, as the antidote, I had better, as I wanted cheering up, ask Miss Dainty, of the principal London theatres, to be kind enough to come out and dine at any time and at any restaurant she chose

to name. I sent my humble invitation by express early in the day, and received her answer by telegram:—"Yes. Romano's. Eight. See I have my pet table. I have been given a beautiful poodle—Dainty. Be good, and you will be happy."

At luncheon time I strolled down to the restaurant, the butter-coloured front of which looks on to the Strand, and the proprietor, "the Roman," as he is called by the *habitués* of the establishment, being out, I took Signor Antonelli, his second in command, into my confidence, secured the table next to the door, sheltered by a glass screen from the draught, which I knew to be Miss Dainty's pet one, and proceeded to order dinner. Antonelli who has all the appearance of a very well-fed cavalry colonel, led off with *hors-d'œuvre*. I followed with, as a suggestion for soup, *crème Pink 'Un*, a soup named after a light-hearted journal which practically made "the Roman's" fortune for him. Then, as there were some beautiful trout in the house, the only question was as to the cooking of them. *Truite au bleu*, my first thought, was too simple. *Truite Chambord*, the amendment moved by Antonelli, was too rich; so we compromised by *Truite Meunière*, in the sauce of which the lemon counteracts the butter. *Côtelettes de mouton Sefton* was Antonelli's suggestion, and was carried unanimously; but I altered his pheasant, which sounded greedy for two people, into a *perdreau en casserole*. Salad, of course. Then, taken with a fit of parsimony, I refused to let English asparagus go down on the slip of

paper, and ordered instead *artichauts hollandais*. Vanilla ice *en corbeille* and *petits fours* wound up my menu.

When the handsome lady arrived—only ten minutes late—she swept like a whirlwind through the hall—past the flower-stall, over which Cleopatra presides, where I had intended to ask her to pause and choose what flowers she would—in a dress which was a dream of blue with a constellation of diamonds on it, and as she settled down into her seat at the table, not quite certain whether to keep on the blue velvet and ermine cloak or let it drop, I was told the first instalment of her news at express speed. I need not look a crosspatch because she was late, the pretty lady said. It was the fault of the cabman, who was drunk, and had driven her half-way down Oxford Street. What was a good name for a poodle? The one she had been given was the dearest creature in the world. It had bitten all the claws off the Polar bear skin in the drawing-room, had eaten up a new pair of boots from Paris, had hunted the cat all along the balcony, breaking two of the blue pots the evergreens were in, and had dragged all the feathers out of the parrot's tail. Was Sambo a good name? Or Satan? Or what? Why couldn't I answer?

My humble suggestions as to a name for a poodle having been treated with scorn, Miss Dainty turned her attention to the *hors-d'œuvre*. There were no plain sardines among the numerous little dishes on the table, and the ordinary tinned sardine was what her capricious ladyship wanted—and got. The *crème Pink 'Un* was highly

approved of, and I did my best to explain at length how the combination of rice with a Bisque soup softened the asperity of the cray-fish, and that the particular colour which distinguished this soup from all others was difficult of achievement. Miss Dainty, changing the subject, demanded to know what the seascapes, which are framed all round the room, in mauresque arches, were. I told her that the distemper paintings of deep blue sea and castles and islands and mosques, which are the principal features of the room, a room in which everything, the clock, the musicians' gallery, the electric light brackets, are of Eastern type, were views on the Bosphorus ; and, thinking to amuse, related how when the paintings were first put up, a celebrated battle-painter and myself had volunteered to give an up-to-dateness to them by adding some Armenian atrocities to lend life to the pictures, and of "the Roman's" horror, under the impression that we really meant to do as we said. My humorous anecdote fell rather flat, for Miss Dainty, who did not care much for her trout, though I thought it very excellent, but a trifle too buttery, said that that was just the sort of silly thing I would do.

The quiet person with a silver chain round his neck had brought our bottle of *St-Marceaux*, and the clean-shaven little Italian waiter in a white apron had replaced the trout by the cutlets *à la Sefton*. For these Miss Dainty had nothing but praise, which I echoed very heartily.

"Your dinner — everything go right, eh,

mon Colonel?" and "the Roman," a dapper little Italian in faultless dress-clothes, with a small, carefully tended moustache, a full head of black hair, turning grey at the temple, and talking English with a free admixture of Italian, and scraps of French, stood by our table, going his round to see that all the diners were satisfied. Miss Dainty did not ask for the deep-red carnation that was in "the Roman's" button-hole; but before he had passed on she was pinning it into her dress, and when I ventured a very mild remark I was told that if I had not been mean enough to let her pass the flower-stall without offering her a button-hole she would not have had to accept one from anybody else—a retort which was scarcely fair.

I asked Miss Dainty if she knew who the pretty lady dining with a good-looking grey-haired man at a table at the end of the room was. She did know and gave me a full account of the lady's stage career, and while the *perdreau en casserole* was being cut up we ran over the professions of the various diners who occupied the triple line of little tables running down the room. The two men dining by themselves were powers in the theatrical world. "May I ask them to come and take their coffee and old brandy at our table?" I asked, and Miss Dainty graciously assented. There were as well a well-known theatrical lawyer talking business with the secretary to a successful manager; a dramatic author, who was proposing plays to a colonial manager; a lady with golden hair and a permanent colour to whom a small Judaic youth was whispering

with great earnestness ; a well-known sporting lord, dining by himself ; a music-hall agent laying down the law as to contracts to a journalist ; two quiet ladies in sealskin coats ; and many others, nearly all connected with the great army of stage-land.

A little too much onion with the *perdreau en casserole* we both thought, otherwise admirable. Salad good, artichokes good, though we preferred plain vinegar as a dressing to the *hollandais* one, and the ice delicious. Then Miss Dainty trifled with cherries cased in pink sweetness and sections of oranges sealed in transparent sugar, and our two friends from the table at the far end came across and took coffee and liqueurs with us, and talked of the old days when Romano's was but a quarter of the size it is now, when it was far more Bohemian than it is now, when there was a little aquarium in the front window into which the sons of Belial used to try and force each other late at night, much to the consternation of the goldfish, when everybody who took his meals there knew everybody else, when poor Bessie Belwood, the merriest soul that ever stepped the music-hall stage, always had a good tale to tell to her circle of cronies, and the chaff ran riot down the single line of little tables, and when every Sunday morning a devoted but Sabbath-breaking band were led across the Strand by "the Roman" to see his cellars, "best in London," as he used to say.

All of a sudden Miss Dainty, whom these reminiscences did not interest very much, remembered that the door of the parrot's cage had

been left open. She was quite sure that the poodle would be trying to kill the bird, and she must go back at once to see to the matter.

I put Miss Dainty, who said that she had enjoyed her dinner, into a hansom, two brown eyes full of laughter set in a pretty face looked out at me as she told me to be good and that then I should be happy, the cabman cried "Pull up" to his horse, and the pretty lady was off to the rescue of the parrot.

Then I went back and paid my bill: Two couverts, 6d.; hors-d'œuvre, 2s.; crème Pink 'Un, 2s.; truite, 2s. 6d.; côtelettes de mouton, 2s. 6d.; petits pois, 1s.; pommes, 1s.; perdreau, 6s.; salade, 1s.; artichauts, 2s.; glace, 2s.; champagne (107), 13s. 6d.; café, 3s.; liqueurs, 5s.; total, £2 : 4s.

When I asked Antonelli for a specimen menu of a dinner of ceremony such as is often given in the pretty Japanese room on the second floor he looked pleased and said that I should certainly have it; but when I asked for the *recette* of the *crème Pink 'Un* he looked as doleful as if he had just heard of the death of his grandmother, or as if I had tried to pass off on the establishment that special variety of cheque known in the Roman's as a "stumer." But Signor Romano came to the rescue. "The *chef* he say that soup what-you-call-a *secret du maison*; but I tell him no matter *secret* or not he just write it out for you." So I got my *recette*. This is the dinner, and a noble feast it is, that the Roman recommends for a party of twelve. The *homard sauté à la Julien* is a specialty of Romano's; but I have some respect

for the feelings of Antonelli and the *chef*, and did not ask for a *recette* of *that*.

Huîtres natives.
 Petite bouchée norvégienne.
 Tortue claire.
 Crème Dubary.
 Homard sauté à la Julien.
 Aiguillete de sole. Sauce germanique.
 Zéphir de poussin à la Brillat-Savarin.
 Selle d'agneau à la Grand-Veneur.
 Petits pois primeur à la française.
 Pomme nouvelle persillade.
 Spongada à la Palermitaine.
 Jambon d'York braisé au champagne.
 Caille à la Crapaudine.
 Salade de saison.
 Asperges vertes en branche. Sauce mousseuse.
 Timbale Marie-Louise.
 Bombe à la Romano.
 Petits fours assortis.
 Dessert.
 Café.

Pink 'Un Potage

The *recette* of the *crème Pink 'Un* is as follows :—

Mettez dans une casserole deux onces de beurre, deux cuillérées-à-bouche d'huile d'olive; coupez en petits morceaux une carotte et un oignon, que vous laisserez cuire pendant cinq minutes tout doucement. Avez ensuite vingt-quatre écrevisses vivantes, un livre de crevettes et six tomates fraîches, que vous mettrez ensemble; ajoutez une demi-bouteille de Chablis, et, après

avoir assaisonné de sel et poivre cayenne, couvrez votre casserole et donnez vingt minutes d'ébullition.

D'autre part prenez une livre d'orge perlée que vous aurez faite cuire pendant trois heures dans un bouillon ordinaire, brayez dans un mortier vos écrevisses et crevettes, ainsi que l'orge, mélangez, délayez avec un litre de bouillon, passez ensuite à l'étamine; ceci fait, remettez votre potage à chauffer sans lui donner de l'ébullition; additionnez une réduction de cognac où vous y aurez mis une branche de tym, deux feuilles de laurier, un petit bouquet de persil, d'estragon et cerfeuil. Finissez votre potage en y ajoutant six onces de beurre frais et servez avec croûtons.

Julien Cornet

CHAPTER XIII

A WALK IN SOHO

THE Club Grumbler was having one of his field-days when I came into the room at 6.30 P.M. He was standing by the desk on which the daily bill of fare is placed, and with an order form in his hand was denouncing to the head waiter the iniquity of the House committee in all matters connected with the feeding department. I gathered that the special grievance to the forefront at the moment was connected with mustard.

"What mustard would you like procured?" I asked with the gentleness of a saint.

"Colman's," he grunted ferociously. "Only mustard that ought to be put on the table."

I smiled serenely. "What you eat every day is Colman's," I replied, "and I thoroughly agree with you as to its excellence."

Defeated in detail he turned to generalities and denounced the committee as rapacious for charging half a crown for the "House Dinner" of soup, fish, joint, and cheese.

The Club in question is a very small one-roomed establishment not far from Cambridge

Circus, and I put it to *any one*—and I speak as a member of the House committee—whether we do not provide a sumptuous meal at the price.

I reasoned very gently with the Club Grumbler, but when he turned on me and, waving his hand as if to include all Soho, said, "There are twenty places within musket-shot of this spot where one can dine better for eighteen-pence than one does here for half a crown," my fine-crusted military temper began to rise, and I told him if he was a man to come out in the street and show me one such place, and that I would pay for both our dinners at it.

The Club Grumbler muttered something about the cold wind and not having an umbrella, but the Ancient Mariner was not more tenacious of his guest than I of my Grumbler, and I led him into Shaftesbury Avenue. "Which of the many excellent places you are acquainted with shall we go to?" I asked, and as he only grunted I turned him gently into Greek Street.

Now I flatter myself that I know my Soho fairly well, and I did not believe that the Grumbler knew one street from the other. The first place of entertainment I stopped before was the "Au Bienvenu," a little two-windowed shop with a faded air of jauntiness imparted to it by red paint, and with curtains which have seen better days hiding the mystery of the interior from curious eyes in the street. In one window is a dish of snails, the aperture in the shells stopped up with green butter, and an announcement that a half-dozen snails may be enjoyed in the restaurant for 6d., or a dozen may be had

for 10d. to take away. In the other window *tripes à la mode de Caen* are advertised as a specialty of the house. Here was a dinner for an Emperor, I said, to the Grumbler; we could eat six snails and a plate of tripe and get change out of three shillings; but he did not take kindly to the idea of *escargots de Bourgogne* instead of fish, and on we went. The exteriors of the Restaurants de Ciproso and de Napoli did not seem to fascinate him; but when we came to Wedde's Hotel and Restaurant, I planted him over the grating whence rose the perfume of Sauerkraut, and other distinctly German aromas, and pointed out to him that inside the rather steamy room he and I could revel for eighteen-pence apiece in this feast—

Consommé.

Bohnen suppe.

Filet de sole Mornay.

Blut und Leberwurst or Sauerkraut und Kartpurre.

Schmorbraten à la Milanaise.

Beignets soufflés or cheese.

The Grumbler said that German dishes gave him an indigestion and moved away sulkily; nor would he pause before the Restaurant de l'Univers at the top of the street, which is half eating-house, half registry-office, where he might have feasted sumptuously either for 1s. or 1s. 6d.

Down Frith Street I led him and pretended to be much struck with the architectural beauties of the Piedemonte Hotel, and regretted that the prohibitive charge of half a crown prevented us from sampling all the luxuries that were con-

tained in the meal served behind the front of imitation marble pillars and plate-glass windows, gorgeous lamp and coloured glass-shelter. At the Restaurant Lyonnais I called a halt and refused to be dragged along. The Restaurant Lyonnais is one of the glories of Soho. It is not imposing in appearance, for rather dingy pink curtains cloak three-quarters of the window-space, the lace curtain on the door seems to sigh for the laundry, and the only decoration attempted consists of two little plates in one window each with three oranges on it. But it offers a meal, a real dinner of ceremony for 8d.: "Soupe, 1 viande au choix, 2 légumes, dessert, café, pain à discrétion;" and lest the perfidious English should miss this marvel, there is a translation in the British tongue concluding with "Bread included." I pointed out to the Grumbler that here we could both dine for eighteenpence and could tip the waiter as well and then have a penny left; but he was hard to please, and on we trudged.

In Dean Street Guermani's Restaurant glittered with light, but 2s. confronted us marked on the big bills of fare. The windows of the Lyric Restaurant looked cheerful and bright, and in a little shrine all to itself an *épergne* crowned with fruit shone between two indiarubber plants; there was the glitter of mirrors within, and the room seen above the yellow blinds looked warm and comfortable, but I told my victim that the eight courses for 2s. were not for him, yet to make him feel hungry and miserable I described to him the 4s. dinner I had once eaten there in

great content in a private room. I knew that the Restaurant European and the Restaurant Albert would scarcely tempt him, but I walked him up to the top of the street where the Tudor Hotel stands at the corner just to tire him and add to his punishment.

Wardour Street is a fine thoroughfare to take exercise in, and we traversed the whole length of it from the Leicester Square end, where Pinoli's windows of frosted glass bear the proud legend: "Parisian Dinner, 2s.," and the clean little Amphitryon—Ah, for the past glories of the name!—puts forth a bill of fare on which the highest-priced dish is but 10d., past the Dei restaurant, a Rip Van Winkle of a restaurant, up to the far end where the Oriental Restaurant and the Oxford face each other on opposite sides of the way. The dinner at the Oxford costs but eighteenpence, the place looks clean and bright, and the Grumbler had his hand on the door-handle when he noticed how low the ceilings of the rooms are, and not being satisfied turned away again.

Then I entangled the Grumbler in the maze of side streets. In the search for imaginary restaurants I took him through Great and Little Pulteney Street, Brewer Street, and Great Windmill Street, and brought him face to face with the Café National, where he might have feasted at my expense at his stated price; but the tarnished entrée dishes and the small but curious selection of fruit in the windows did not allure him, and I took him, limping now and very limp, by the zig-zag by-street into Compton Street.

He gave a little moan when the lights of the *Café d'Italie* struck across our path ; but the joys of that flourishing establishment were not for him, nor could he feast at the *Restaurant Brice* just opposite, for though his wine there would have been included in his repast, the fatal 2s. 6d. shone on him from every window. When I cried "Excelsior" and pointed out to him the *Restaurant Roche*, the modest meal at which was just the price he named he said that the place was too small, and he refused even to look at the hares and the poultry which seem to be the stock-in-trade of the *Restaurant Toscano*. He groaned deeply when I told him there was another establishment, the *Hôtel du Littoral*, to be looked at in Moor Street, and then I knew that I had him beat.

"Will you come back now and eat your half-a-crown dinner at the club and be sorry for having grumbled and never do it again?" I said severely, but he shook his head. I knew that he dared not meet the reproachful eye of the head waiter, and offender as he was I did not wish to make his penance too hard. "You shall be fined 5s.," I said magisterially, "and those five shillings shall be spent in two dinners at the *Villa Villa Burke Restaurant*, in Gerrard Street, which I want to have a look at, and while we eat I will entertain you with antiquarian anecdotes concerning the street and its neighbourhood. The Grumbler was visibly affected, but he followed me without protest.

The *Villa Villa* is Burke's old house joined on to the next door one. The two back yards

have been roofed over and form a large dining-room added on to Burke's original more modest-sized apartment. There are statuettes and palms in the hall, and there is a writing- and waiting-room on the first floor. On the first floors some handsome old ceilings look down on modern decorations which Burke would not have appreciated. In the dining-rooms all is in good taste, in grays and whites, and here we sat and eat a sumptuous meal for the Grumbler's half-crown, in which sole and cutlets and quails played their appointed parts, and I talked of "the Club" and Sir Joshua and Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith and Crabbe, and Garrick and Gibbon, and though the Grumbler winced now and again and shivered, he had not the pluck left in him to protest.

CHAPTER XIV

SIMPSON'S (THE STRAND)

THE battle-painter and I were walking down the Strand, uncertain where to lunch, when just by the theatrical bookshop a man in a shabby suit of tweed and a billycock hat, drawn rather low down on his forehead, passed us quickly, looking into our faces for a second as he did so. "It's Smith," said the battle-painter. "Poor fellow !"

It was the man we had been talking about only that morning, the good fellow who had been at school with me, who had made a voyage on board a P. and O. in which both the battle-painter and I had gone out to India, and had been the life and soul of the ship ; with whom we had spent a week in his station on the Bombay side, and who had come on a return visit to me in the Punjab when the battle-painter honoured me with his company at the quiet little garrison where I was quartered at the time. We knew he had left his cavalry regiment, and had heard vaguely that he had come to grief through some financial smash. Here was our

man, and we turned at once and went after him.

"I didn't think you fellows would know me in this kit," he said, when we caught him up and laid friendly hands on him. "Most people don't seem over-anxious to recognise me now." He certainly did not look flourishing, though he had the smart carriage of the soldier about him, was as carefully shaved, and his light moustache as carefully trimmed, as if he were going on parade, and had the old buoyancy of manner. "Where will you come and lunch with us?" we both asked in a breath. "It's my dinner-hour now," he told us, and somehow there was a touch of pathos in the way he said it. We proposed the Savoy grill-room to him or the Cecil, or Romano's across the way; but he said that, if we were anxious that he should come and eat with us, he would sooner have a cut from the saddle of mutton at Simpson's than anything else.

We turned back and went into the entrance to the old-fashioned eating-place, with its imitation marble columns, its coloured tile floor, its trees in tubs, and its two placards on either side, one announcing that a dinner from the joint is to be had for 2s. 6d., and the other that a fish dinner for 2s. 9d. is served from 12.30 P.M. to 8.30 P.M. Smith changed his mind. The last fish dinner he had eaten was at Greenwich more than half a dozen years ago, when he had asked a party of thirty down to celebrate an investment that was going to make his fortune, and if we didn't mind he would eat another now.

We took three seats at the end of one of the tables in the downstairs room. Smith looked round with an air of recognition. Nothing had changed, he said, since the days when he used to come to get a cut from the joint after a day's racing. And, indeed, Simpson's does not look like a place that changes. The big dumb-waiter in the centre of the room, almost as tall as a catafalque, with its burden of glasses and decanters, and four plated wine-coolers, one at each corner as ornament, the divisions with brass rails and little curtains that run down one side of the room; the horsehair-stuffed, black-cushioned chairs and lounges, the mirrors on one side of the room and ground-glass windows on the other; the painted garlands of flowers and fish and flesh and fowl, mellowed by age and London smoke, that fill up the vacant spaces on the wall, the ormolu clocks, the decoratively folded napkins in glasses on the mantelpieces, the hats and coats hanging in the room, the screen with many time-tables on it, the great bar window opening into the room, framing a depth of luminous shadow, all are old-fashioned. Only the two great candelabra that stand, a dozen feet high, on either side of the room have been modernised, for they no longer are crowned with wax candles.

The waiters at Simpson's are Britannic and have that dignity which sits so well on the chairman of a company addressing his shareholders, or an M.P. entertaining his constituents, or the genuine English waiter taking an order. It is an undefinable majesty; but it exists.

Rubicund gentlemen of portly figure, dressed in white, the carvers, leisurely push carving dishes, with plated covers, running on wheels, from customer to customer.

A benignant waiter with a gray beard had stood and accepted our order, which was, to begin with, turbot and sauce; and while with becoming dignity he conveyed the news to one of the white-coated gentlemen, Smith gave us a résumé of his history since we had all three parted at a railway station in the Punjab. He had almost been a millionaire, he had ridden as a trooper in a squadron of American cavalry, he had fought in Matabeleland, had scouted in the Transvaal, had prospected in Klondyke, and in the West African jungles, and now he was going this afternoon down to the City to meet a man who was going to finance a marvellous invention of his, and presently he would make the fortunes of the battle-painter and myself. The battle-painter and myself smiled, and fell to on our turbot and its rubicund sauce, for we knew Smith of old. A fine big slice of firm turbot it was, but I fancy the sauce owed its deep colour and some of its substance to the artistic methods of the cook. Next Smith voted for a fried sole, while the battle-painter and I ordered stewed eels, and as the first bottle of Liebfraumilch, which Smith had preferred to any other wine or spirit, was getting near low-water mark, I asked our waiter, who somewhat resembled the ex-Speaker, to bring us another. Smith having for the moment exhausted his historical reminiscences, we could look round at

our neighbours. Half a dozen country gentlemen up to see the shire-horses at Islington, most of them confining their attention to those saddles of mutton which are the pride of Simpson's, a barrister or two, the good-looking husband of a popular actress, and four or five well-known bookmakers, for Simpson's is essentially sporting. Then our eels and the sole were brought. Smith said the sole was excellent; and except that I like my sauce with the eel a little richer than I got it at Simpson's, neither the battle-painter nor myself could find the slightest cause to grumble. The Liebfraumilch was pleasant and soft, and we were in the best of tempers when the white-bait, a trifle large, and the salmon for Smith—salmon which looked beautiful, and which we both secretly envied—arrived. A little group of men who bore the stamp of racing men about them had congregated round the bar window while we had been at table, and were being attended to by a rosy-faced maiden. Cheese and celery we paid but little attention to, for Smith, now quite the cheery, confident cavalryman of old, said that he must not miss his appointment in the City, but that when the splendid fortune that was in his grasp came to him he would give the battle-painter and myself, in return for our mid-day meal, a dinner at the Savoy that would outdo the celebrated *rouge-et-noir* one, or a banquet at the Carlton. It was pleasant to see the good fellow himself again, and we wished him success in his venture. Then, after seeing him off, we paid the bill. Dinner, 8s. 6d. (Smith's salmon was 3d. extra); two

Liebfraumilch, 12s. ; attendance, 9d. ; total, £1 : 1 : 3.

Having a half-hour to spare and feeling the gentle laziness that comes with good digestion we lingered at our table, and presently William, who was for many years waiter at the Cock, having finished his duties on the other side of the room, came across and chatted to us, and when William chooses to be reminiscent, he can tell anecdotes of most of the past celebrities of London. There always seems to be a waiter of more than ordinary note at Simpson's, for of old days Charles Flowerdew was the potentate of the ladies' dining-room, a large well-lighted apartment on the first floor, and many men of light and leading used to eat their sole or turbot for preference then in that room in order to take a pinch of snuff from his box and listen to his stories told with much circumstance and emphasis.

As we sat on, after the other lunchers had left, Mr. Crathie, tall, clean-shaved, except for narrow side whiskers, with a white head of hair in which a ruddy tint still lingers, found us, and under his guidance we went upstairs and peeped through the glass doors into the room where half a dozen games of chess were being played. Mr. Crathie, who has been proprietor and, later, managing director of Simpson's for half a long lifetime, told us something of the history of the place, how it originally consisted only of a cigar-shop on the ground floor and the chess divan above, how he purchased it and formed it into a small company, and how now a larger company, which also owns the Golden Cross, has control of it.

Before we left the old-fashioned house, about which the steam of saddles of mutton seems to cling, we looked in on the Knights of the Round Table, who have their club-room at Simpson's, who possess a wonderful collection of portraits of past worthies of the club, and a unique book of playbills, whose motto is, "I will go eat with thee and see your Knights," and who once a week dine together off plain English food at the round table, one piece of mahogany, from which they draw their name.

CHAPTER XV

THE HANS CRESCENT HOTEL

IF I had to set an examination paper on the art of dining, one of the questions I should certainly ask the examinee would be : "What occupation or amusement would you suggest for your guests after a dinner at a restaurant on Sunday?" The Hans Crescent Hotel management have answered this question in a practical way ; and not the least pleasant part of a dinner at the smart hotel Sloane Street way is the coffee and liqueur and cigarette taken under the palms in the winter garden, where the red-shaded lamps throw a gentle light, and the band playing Czibulka's waltz-whisper, "Songe d'amour après le bal," sends one back in a dream to the days when an evening of dancing was a foretaste of the seventh heaven, and every woman was a possible divinity.

The Editor does not write long letters, but the card with his initials at the bottom gave me place and time, and told me that I should find myself one of a *partie carrée*. What was the exact reason of the dinner that the good Editor

gave to the gracious lady and the handsome niece and myself, I do not know ; but I rather think that it was a propitiatory offering made for non-appearance on the editorial tricycle when warned for escort duty to the gracious lady, who had gone that day for a long bicycle ride. If it was so, the dinner at the Hans Crescent Hotel, plus the excuse given, whether it was church-going or letter-writing, did not save the Editor during the evening from little barbed conversational shafts as to sloth and laziness and the evil habit of lying late in bed on the Sabbath morning.

I never commit the unpardonable offence of being late for dinner, and three minutes before my time I was waiting in the oak-panelled hall, which, with its stained-glass window, big staircase with a balcony at the back, its palms and great fireplace, always looks to me like an elaborate "set" for a scene in some comedy. The hands of the clock stole on to eight o'clock, and that feeling of righteousness which comes to the man who is in time when he believes that his fellow-creatures are late fell on me, when, on a sudden, the hall porter, who had regarded me with some curiosity, asked whether by chance I was the gentleman for whom a gentleman and two ladies had been waiting some ten minutes in the drawing-room. So it came that when I went into the drawing-room, where the two ladies were looking at the brocades in the panels and the editorial eye was fixed on the clock on the mantelpiece, it was I who had to stumble through apologies, and I felt conscious that my

tale of waiting in the hall sounded hideously improbable.

The manager showed us to our table in the dining-room, which is as near a reproduction of an old baronial hall as modern comfort, electric light, and civilisation will allow. The baron of old, in the days when each man cut his own portion off the roast meat with his dagger, might have been able to boast of the open fireplace in green Connemara marble and the panelled walls, but the handsome frieze and the carved oak pillars would have been beyond his artistic dreams. He would probably have preferred rushes to the Oriental rugs that half cover the oak floor, and he would certainly have thought the palmery seen through the open French window in a glow of rosy light a vision called up by some magician.

The Editor, stroking his pointed beard with satisfaction, was reading through the menu, the gracious lady and the handsome niece were noting, one by one, the celebrities dining at the other tables, and the head waiter was standing watching the Editor with the calm but deferential confidence an artist shows when an important patron is inspecting his work. A minor servitor, a thin tape of gold on the collar of his livery coat and wearing white gloves, was also in attendance, and the overture in the way of *hors-d'œuvre à la Russe* was before us.

In quick succession our ladies had named the tall, slim, titled lady in black, who had come in leaning on a stick; the good-looking young musical critic, who was entertaining "Belle"

and a very pretty girl; a newly-married Earl and his wife; the handsome stockbroker and his wife, who in the summer are to be found not far from Maidenhead Bridge, and at whose table were sitting the most hospitable of up-river hostesses and her son; a millionaire, who was entertaining a tableful of guests; and one or two titled couples whom the gracious lady knew, but whose names meant nothing to me. I was able to add my quota by pointing out a steward of the Jockey Club, at whose table was the owner of one of the horses of a century.

The Editor, having learned that we all preferred for the moment claret to champagne, put down the menu with a little sigh of anticipatory gratitude, and ran his finger half-way down a page on the wine-list. This was the menu which the gracious lady looked at, and then handed on to me:—

Hors-d'œuvre à la Russe.

Consommé Brunoise à la Royale.

Potage en tortue.

Suprême de saumon à la Chambord.

Tournedos à la Montgador.

Poularde à la Demi-Doff.

Caille rôti sur canapé.

Salade.

Flageolets Maître d'hôtel. Bombe Chateaubriand.

Corbeilles de friandises.

The handsome niece had approved of the people at the other tables as being most of them interesting and good-looking, had said she liked the table with its decoration of a ring of yellow

flowers and leaves drawn round the basket of *friandises*, and we began dinner with good appetite and good temper.

The clear soup with its patchwork ground or minutely chopped vegetables seen through the amber of its liquid was excellent and hot; the fish deserved a special word for its sauce, in the making of which an artist's hand had been employed; and the *tournedos* with their attendant "fixings," to use an Americanism, a symphony in rich browns with the scarlet of the tomato to relieve it, gave no loophole for captious criticism. We had been talking of the respective merits of houseboats and cottages as summer residences, and from that had drifted on to the subject of the wonderful steam launch that the Editor owns, and inventions generally. The gracious lady had said her say on the wonders she knew of; and the handsome niece, not to be outdone, described what was in her idea the invention of the age, something very splendid which a dress-maker had thought of; and I, fired by the spirit of healthy emulation, had just started an account of the flying machine by which I hoped to reach Mars, to which the ladies, not noticing the twinkle in the Editor's eyes, were listening gravely, when the waiter brought the *poularde à la Demi-Doff*. The Editor was the only one of us who took any, and he, in very excellent French, told the head waiter, who was hovering round, that he thought it good. Whether it was that the gracious lady had caught the tail-end of the editorial smile at my Munchausen flying-machine story, or whether the non-appearance of the

tricycle was remembered, it matters not ; but the Editor was gravely warned not to talk Hindustani at the dinner-table.

The quails were a trifle over-cooked, and the artistic hand which had made the sauce for the salmon had not mixed the salad, which was too vinegary. I think our negative criticism must have hurt the feelings of the waiter, who probably paused on the way from the kitchen to wipe away a tear, for the *flageolets*, excellently cooked, were not quite as hot as they should have been. Then the dinner got into its stride again, for the *bombe* was admirable.

The band had been making music for the past half-hour in the winter-garden, and the diners at the various tables had gradually left the oaken hall for the tables, each labelled with the number of the corresponding dining-tables and name of the host, reserved under the rosy lamps and the palms. The violins played with a delightful softness, the rings of cigarette smoke curled and vanished up towards the glass dome. From table to table the men went, saying a word here, staying for a chat there ; and at last, when the little band had played Gounod's "Ave Maria," and ended with the wail of Miska's "Czardas," it was time to gather in the hall to say good-night and be off homewards to the land of Nod. This was the bill that I asked the Editor to let me glance at :—Four dinners at 10s. 6d., £2 : 2s. ; three bottles claret, £1 : 10s. ; cafés, 3s. ; liqueurs, 3s. ; total, £3 : 18s.

CHAPTER XVI

GATTI'S (THE STRAND)

I WAS somewhat in a quandary. I was going to the new play at the Garrick, and had made up my mind to dine at a little club, of which I have the honour to be a member, not far from the theatre. I went into the sacred portals. I found the hall without a hat or coat hung up in it, and entering the big room of the club I disturbed the meditation of the club servants. There was, for a wonder, nobody in the club, no one had ordered dinner, and as I do not like being a solitary diner at a long table, with three guardian angels in white jackets hovering round me, I made up my mind to go and have my chop elsewhere. My time was short, for I was anxious not to miss a word of the first act. Any of the dinners of the hotels in Northumberland Avenue would be too long for my time; but I was within a stone's-throw of Gatti's and thought that I would revisit an old haunt and revive memories of my days of subalternhood.

When I had a large crop of curly hair on my head, and just enough down to pull on my upper

lip, when a small allowance and a sub-lieutenant's 5s. 3d. a day were all my wealth and I never entered the portals of Cox's Bank without trembling, I used to go much to Gatti's. If I had the felicity of entertaining a lady at a *tête-à-tête* dinner my ambition did not rise to the Café Royal—the Savoy and the Carlton, and Willis's and the rest did not exist at that time—where I should have fingered the money in my pocket and should have been desperately nervous when the waiter appeared with the bill. I went instead to Gatti's. One could get a large amount of good food at a very easy tariff there, one knew exactly the price of everything from the card, and there was no smiling head-waiter with a nest of plovers' eggs at 7s. 6d. apiece, or a basket of strawberries for a guinea, to set one's poverty against one's gallantry. *Asti spumante*, too, is much cheaper than champagne, and I think most of the fair sex really like it better. Be that as it may, the financial question was the prominent one, and I sometimes found myself standing waiting at the Strand entrance alongside a gigantic porter and a huge hound. I made great friends with both the big man and the big dog, and, if after a quarter of an hour's waiting, my fair guest did not appear the big man invariably consoled me with, "Do not despaire, saire. Perhaps the lady 'as a dronken cabman."

Gatti's was not then as it is now. There was the straight run in from Adelaide Street, where strange-looking foreigners sat at the marble-topped little tables and made the most of one portion of some dish piled high with macaroni,

and there was the curving entrance-hall leading in from the Strand, with its white-clothed tables, and its steps up to the biggest room, and between the long gallery with its clothless tables and the aristocratic end of the restaurant the Messrs. Gatti sat at an oval desk to which each waiter brought every dish that was to be served, and there was a mysterious interchange of what looked like metal tokens. All the theatrical demigods of my subalternhood used to be at the tables too. There I first (off the stage) saw Nelly Power, whose photograph had adorned my room at Harrow, and a gay young fellow called Toole, and another named Lionel Brough, and H. J. Byron, and half a hundred more. The modern lights of the stage and the dramatists go to Gatti's still, and no doubt are furtively stared at now by youngsters such as I was then. There were many interesting people at Gatti's in those days, as there are now, and most fascinating to me was an old aide-de-camp of Garibaldi, a fine, white-moustached old man in a slouch hat and voluminous cloak, with something of the look of his great chief about him, who always ordered only one dish, and that of the cheapest. The halfpenny he gave the waiter as a tip was always received with as many thanks as a reckless young swell's half-sovereign would be.

The entrance from King William Street is new since those days, and so is the room it leads into, making Gatti's, with its triple entrances, rather like the crest of the Isle of Man. I went in by this new entrance, noticing that the house

next door had also been absorbed into the restaurant, and found myself again in the familiar scene of bustle. Every table was taken ; here a single gentleman, pegging away at his cut from the joint, there a family party, the father with a napkin tucked under his chin, the child with one tied round its neck. Yonder was a party of girls in much-flowered hats who unmistakably belonged to some theatre ; two dramatists with a bundle of brown-paper-covered manuscript on the table between them ; a little costumier in blue spectacles eating silently, while a light-bearded gentleman, who is the best-known perruquier in London, was telling him volubly of the wonderful wigs that Mdme. Sarah Bernhardt and Rejane had ordered for their new pieces. The dramatists would have had me stay and eat at their table ; but I wanted to go if possible to my old seat, and so went on to the largest room, the centre of the restaurant, where I used to retain a corner table. Not a seat was to be had, everywhere were parties of respectable citizens and their wives in broadcloth and stuff, and the bustling waiters in dress clothes and black ties could only look round helplessly when I asked them to find me a table. I was the one man in dress clothes in the room, the waiters excepted, and I began to think, as I stood rather desolately amid all the bustle and clatter, that I should have done more wisely to dine in solitary dignity at the club, when I looked towards the table where the two Messrs. Gatti in old days, when they were not at the desk, used to sit—for they were always together—and there was the survivor of

the two sitting in his accustomed seat. The author of *Captain Swift*, who had been sitting opposite to him, talking, no doubt, about past successes, *The Fatal Card* and other plays, rose at that moment, and Mr. Gatti, seeing my dilemma, motioned me to the vacant seat. We none of us grow younger, and as I shook Mr. Gatti's hand I thought that, though his hair, brushed straight back from the forehead, and his moustache are hardly touched with grey, he was looking very careworn.

One of the managers, in frock-coat and black tie, was at my elbow with the bill of fare. *Croûte au pot*, printed in bigger letters than the rest of the dishes, first caught my eye, and I ordered that, though it is not a soup I care much for; and, skipping the long list of fish and entrées, I was puzzling as to which of the many joints to have a cut from, when the manager suggested braised mutton, which I thought sounded well, and for drink I would have a big glass of cold lager-beer.

I looked round the rooms. Except for the new rooms and a new serving-room, everything seemed very much the same as of past times. The crowd at the marble-topped tables was not quite so picturesque as that I remembered of old; but the great counter, with its backing of dark wood and looking-glass, its lager-beer engine, and its army of bottles, was there, the oval desk with its two occupants was there, the carvers with the big dish-covers running up and down on chains were there. The decorations of blue and gold were of the same colours that I recall,

the stained window I remembered, but a new portrait of the late Mr. Terriss, the actor, in the well-known grey suit, looked down on me from the wall.

The soup, strong and hot, with its accompanying vegetables on a separate plate, was brought, and, having disposed of it, I thought that it was a good opportunity to interview Mr. Gatti as to the transformations of the restaurant and as to his theatrical speculations. I learned that the first state of the Adelaide Gallery was a long entrance leading to one big room, that the floor of the restaurant was where the cellars are now, and that two balconies at that time ran round the room. Bit by bit the various changes were explained to me, until the advent of the braised mutton, with white beans and new potatoes, brought a pause. Capital mutton it was—a huge helping too—and the lager-beer delightfully cold and light. “A concert season at Covent Garden was your first theatrical speculation, was it not?” I had begun, when my eye caught the clock over the arch. I wanted to hear about Covent Garden and the Adelphi and the Vaudeville, and I wanted to eat cheese and drink coffee and some of the excellent old brandy the restaurant has ; but the hands of the clock pointed to twenty minutes to eight, and at a quarter to eight the curtain would rise at the Garrick, so I called for my bill. Soup, 1s. 6d. ; entrée, 1s. 4d. ; vegetable, 4d. ; bread, 1d. ; beer, 6d. ; total, 3s. 9d.

CHAPTER XVII

VERREY'S (REGENT STREET)

THE little curly-headed, light-haired page, who is the modern Mercury, in that he gives warning when one is rung up at the telephone in the club, came to me in the reading-room and told me that a lady at the Hôtel Cecil wished to speak to me.

"Hullo! Are you there?" was answered by a "Yes" in a lady's voice, and in a few seconds I was informed that Myra Washington was in London, that she would like to see me, that she would be busy all the afternoon shopping, but that if I was not otherwise engaged I might take her out to dinner and to a show afterwards.

Mrs. Washington is a lady whom it is a liberal education to have the honour of being acquainted with, for she knows most people who are worth knowing in Europe, has been to most places worth seeing, and is in every way cosmopolitan. She is generally taken for a Russian, until she speaks, chiefly, I think, because of her hair, which is so light that it is

almost white, and because she smokes cigarettes at every possible moment. She is generally to be found in Paris, where she has a flat in one of the avenues branching from the Arc de Triomphe, and where she is kind enough, most years, to give me *déjeuner* on the morning of the Grand Prix. But her movements are always erratic. I first made her acquaintance at Suez, where I had the honour to be recorded on the tablets of her memory as having delivered her from some impertinent Arab hawkers, and she showed me what American hospitality is during the exhibition at Chicago, in which city her husband, John P. Washington, is always making or losing fortunes in the wheat pit.

I was glad, therefore, to hear the pretty lady's voice again, even though filtered through a telephone, and I proposed innumerable plans to her. She had come to London from Cannes to meet John, who was running over from America for a couple of days on business, and wanted to do as much as possible in the shortest time. She had been to the Gaiety after dining at the Savoy her first night in London, had lunched at Prince's and seen a *matinée* at Daly's, dined at the Carlton and spent the evening at the Palace on the second, and now I was to be responsible for her evening's amusement on the third evening.

Did she know Verrey's? And as a reply I was asked whether I thought she knew her own name. Then would she dine with me at the restaurant in Regent Street, and I would have a box for her at the Empire afterwards? and Mrs.

Washington said she would. "If I may, I will come and call for you at a little before eight," I said promptly, and Mrs. Washington wanted to know whether there were bandits in Regent Street. Eventually, I was told that if I was cooling my feet in the entrance at 8 to a second I should have the felicity of helping her out of her cab.

To give Mrs. Washington a satisfactory dinner is not one of the easiest things in the world, for she understands the art of dining, and is, as well, a most excellent cook herself with a chafing dish when she chooses ; so it was with a full sense of the responsibility I had incurred that I sought Mr. Krehl, the elder of the two brothers in whose hands Verrey's now is, and found him in the café. He knew Mrs. Washington, of course, and hearing that it was she who was to be my guest, he called in his brother Albert, almost a twin in resemblance to him, who now devotes all his time to the management of the restaurant, and we held a solemn council of three. I am a very strong believer myself in small dinners, but it was difficult to make up a menu which would be sufficiently substantial, without appearing gluttonous, for two. I held out against the second entrée ; but the sense of the house was distinctly against me, and the *pouding Saxon* was an addition that I did not approve of, but gave in, being outvoted. This was the dinner that we settled on before I started home to dress :—

Petite marmite.
Œufs à la Russe.
Soufflé de filets de sole à la Verrey.
Timbale Lucullus.
Noisettes d'agneau à la Princesse.
Petits pois à la française.
Pommes Mirelle.
Aiguillettes de caneton à l'Orange.
Salade Vénétienne.
Pouding Saxon.
Salade de fruits.

Mrs. Washington, enveloped in a great furry white cloak, and with a lace covering to her head, was punctual to the second, and as we settled down to our table in the dining-room, with its silver arches to the roof, caught and reflected a hundred times by the mirrors, and its suave dark-green panels, which formed an excellent background to the cream-coloured miracle of a dress that Mrs. Washington was wearing, she told me a few of the events of the last few weeks. She had stayed in New York for the second Assembly, and had gone from New York to the Riviera, where Cannes had been her headquarters, and I incidentally was given full particulars as to doings of the ladies' club there. Now, pausing for one night in Paris to see the new Palais Royal piece, which is a play, so Mrs. Washington says, that no respectable girl could take her grandmother to see, she had run over to England to meet John, and afterwards was going to leisurely travel to Seville, getting there in time for the Holy Week processions.

The soup, admirably hot, had been placed before us by the waiter, in plain evening clothes, while Mrs. Washington talked and pulled off her long white gloves, and before using her spoon she took in the company dining at the many little square tables, lighted by wax red-shaded candles, in one comprehensive glance; smiled to the well-known journalist whose love for dogs forms a bond between him and the Messrs. Krehl, themselves powers in the dog world; thought that the ruddy-haired prima donna looked well and showed no signs of her recent illness; wanted to know if it was true that the celebrated musician, who was dining with his wife, was to be included in the next birthday list of honours; and nodded to a gentleman with long black whiskers, her banker in Paris, who was entertaining a party of a dozen.

The *œufs à la Russe*, with their attendant *vodkhi*, met with Mrs. Washington's approval: there were no flies on them, was her expression. We did not quite agree as to the *soufflé*, I daring to say that though the fish part of the dish was admirable I thought the *soufflé* covering might have been lighter, a statement which my guest at once countered, and, by her superior knowledge of culinary detail reduced me to silence, overcome but certainly not convinced. As to the *timbale*, with its savoury contents of quenelles, foie gras, cocks'-combs, and truffles, there could be no two opinions; it was excellent, and the same might be said of the *noisettes*, each with its accompanying *fond d'artichaut*, and the new peas with a leaf of mint boiled with them. Mrs.

Washington would have preferred *pommes soufflées* to *pommes Mirelle*, but I could hardly have known that when ordering dinner. The Venetian salad, a little tower of many-coloured vegetables, looking like poker chips, Mrs. Washington said, peas, beans, truffles, potatoes, beet-root, flavoured by a slice of *saucisson* and dressed with whipped white of eggs, was one of the triumphs of the dinner, and so was the *salade de fruits*. For Mrs. Washington to praise a fruit salad is a high honour, for she is one of the favoured people for whom François, late of the Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, deigns to mix one with his own hands. The gourmets of Europe say that as a salad-maker no man can approach François. I personally uphold the fruit salads that Frederic, of the Tour d'Argent, makes as being perfection, but Europe and America vote for François. I was told that the *pouding Saxon* was an unnecessary item, and I was rather glad, for I had shied at it when ordering dinner.

I reminded Mrs. Washington, who was sipping her Perrier Jouet lazily, that the Empire ballet begins comparatively early, and to be in time for it, which she insisted on, we had to hurry over our coffee (which is always admirable at Verrey's) and liqueurs, and the cigarette, which is a necessary of life to the lady. Then, while Mrs. Washington drew on the long white gloves again, I paid the bill:—hors-d'œuvre, 1s.; potage, 1s. 6d.; poisson, 3s.; entrées, 2s. 6d. and 3s.; pommes, 6d.; légumes, 1s.; rôti, 10s. 6d.; salade, 1s.; entremets, 3s.; café, 1s.; liqueur, 2s.;

cigarettes, 2d. ; Perrier Jouet, 1889, 13s. ; total,
£2 : 4 : 2.

* * I asked Mr. Albert Krehl to give me an idea of any special dishes which Verrey's is proud of, and pausing by the way to tell me how the house has always tried to wean its patrons from the cut from the joint at déjeuner time, and to induce them to eat small and light dinners, he said that entremets ices were one of the delights that Verrey's prides itself on, dwelt lovingly on a description of an *entrecôte Olga*, and then reeled off *œufs à la Russe*, *omelette foies de volaille*, *sole Polignac*, *filets de sole à la Belle Otero*, *glace Trianon*, *sole à la Verrey*, which has a flavouring of Parmesan, *moules à la Marinière*, *poulet Parmentier en casserole*.

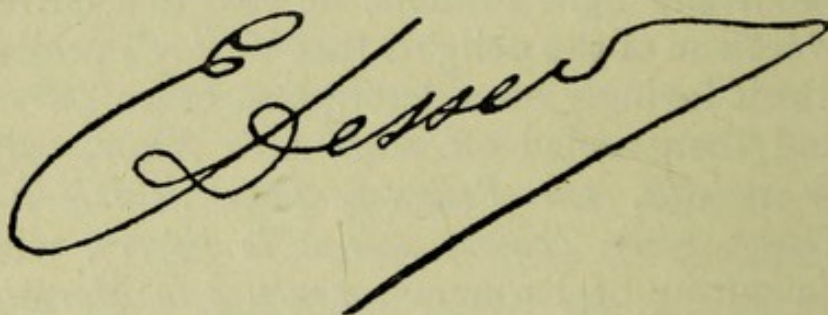
If the Messrs. Krehl counsel small dinners in the salle, they do not always do so for the private rooms upstairs. This is the menu of a dinner at which H.R.H. the Prince of Wales was present :—

Œufs à la Kavigote
 (Vodkhi).
 Bisque d'écrevisses. Consommé Okra.
 Rougets à la Muscovite.
 Selle de mouton de Galles.
 Haricots panachés. Tomates au gratin.
 Pommes soufflées.
 Timbale Lucullus.
 Fonds d'artichauts. Crème pistache.
 Grouse.
 Salad Rachel.
 Biscuit glacé à la Verrey.
 Soufflé de laitances.
 Dessert.

Mr. Krehl gave me the *recette* of the *timbales à la Lucullus*. Here it is—

TIMBALE LUCULLUS

La garniture Lucullus se compose de : crêtes de coq, rognons de coq, truffes en lames, quenelles de volaille truffées, champignons, foie gras dans une demi-glace bien réduite, un filet de madère, et un jus de truffes.



CHAPTER XVIII

THE CAFÉ D'ITALIE (OLD COMPTON STREET)

I WAS going to the Palace Theatre to see the moving pictures. I was alone, I was not in dress clothes, and I was wandering up Shaftesbury Avenue with a half-formed intention of eating a cutlet at Kettner's, when the Café d'Italie occurred to my mind. A young gentleman who is learning his London had that morning told me that he had discovered a wonderful Italian restaurant where a marvellous half-a-crown *table d'hôte* dinner was served, and then, as if it were a valuable secret, told me that this pearl among restaurants was the Café d'Italie, in Old Compton Street. I made my informant feel small, or at least I hope I did, by telling him that *I* knew of the Café d'Italie fifteen years ago.

Fifteen years back may not have been the exact number ; but about that period of ancient history a little band of literary Bohemians discovered the Café d'Italie and let their friends know of the find. The dinner then, I think, cost eighteenpence, but on the evening that I

was introduced to the establishment the feast had several additions made to it by the proprietor, for he, good man, had been given to understand that "The Press," that vague power, was going to honour his establishment with a visit. The good-natured, clever, reckless Bohemian who nicknamed himself "Frère Sauvage" was my host, and most of the others of "The Press" were free-lances of the pen, whose contributions went more often into the waste-paper basket than into print; but all were good fellows, all had fine appetites, and all of them punished the Chianti severely. I was introduced to the proprietor as a distinguished warrior from India, and it was done in such a way as to give the impression that as a warrior, and in India, Lord Roberts could not hold a candle to me. All that I can recall now as to the appearance of the proprietor and the restaurant and the nature of the feast was that the first was small and fat and fussy and in a terrible hurry, that there was a paper of glaring crimson and gold on the walls, and that the principal dish of the dinner consisted of ptarmigan. I recollect those ptarmigan. I had never eaten any before, nor have I since. Through the mists of remembrance those birds loom up as large as geese, and I remember that all the guests agreed as to their flesh being firm. I ascribed a very bad headache I had next morning to the toughness of those ptarmigan. It is true that after the feast at the Café d'Italie I was taken down to a club known as the Spooferies, for it was there that the mystic cult of "spoof" flourished under the fostering care of

Mr. Arthur Roberts, and was made a member. I had supper at the Spooferies that night, but the headache of the next morning I ascribed to the ptarmigan.

Old Compton Street is not aristocratic. Its inhabitants live much in the street, and talk all European languages except that of England. Gas jets, untrammelled by globes, flare in front of many of the shops, fish bars, French laundries, French butchers' shops, and cheap haberdashers' are the principal characteristics of the street; and the names above the shop windows are mostly foreign. There is electric light in the glass drum which, projecting over the door, calls attention to the Café d'Italie, and informs all men that *table d'hôte* meals can be had there.

Fifteen years ago the Café d'Italie did not boast a hall porter; now it has one as tall and gorgeous as any of his fellows. He bade me good evening, and motioned me to a door on the right, from which came the sound of many voices. Going in, I found myself in a room crowded with diners, every place at the little tables being apparently occupied. Above the loud hum of conversation rose the voices of the waiters shouting orders in Italian to the kitchen, like captains on a battlefield, and there was a clashing of plates and a rattle of cutlery.

I stood for a moment bewildered; but the head waiter (who has since set up on his own account in Gerrard Street), with a nose like a hawk's beak, and a little roll of hair curling up from his forehead, came to my aid, told me that there was an excellent place at the far end of

the room, and personally conducted me to a table next to the door leading to the kitchen—a table for four, at which only two gentlemen were sitting. I took my place; two plates of *hors-d'œuvre* were put before me; I looked to see what my neighbours were drinking, and, following their example, ordered a small flask of Chianti; I said “Clear,” on chance, when the waiter asked me which soup I would take, and then, trifling with a slice of tomato, I studied the room, the menu, and my neighbours.

The windows looking on to the street are gay with coloured glass and are draped with artistic chintz, a double door prevents any stray draughts finding their way into the room, the walls are covered with a paper of light blue and gold, and decorated with mirrors. The light comes from electric globes hung from the ceiling. Down each side of the room is a row of tables, each seating four diners. This was the menu:—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

Potages.

Consommé Brunoise, crème Turque.

Poisson.

Soles à la Colbert.

Entrées.

Tournedos Provençale.

Vegetables.

Haricots verts au beurre.

Spagetti au jus.

Rôtis.

Volailles à la broche. Salade.

Entremets.

Glace au liqueur.

Dessert.

Cheese assorti, fruits.

At my table, sitting next to me, was a fresh-faced young Englishman, who before dinner was over told me that he is a barrister. The gentleman on the other side of the table was a foreigner, and after he had left the head waiter told me that he believes he is a German journalist and a Socialist. As at the table I was sitting at, so at the others; all sorts and conditions of men take their meals at the Café d'Italie. From their appearance I should say that artists, journalists, and people of the theatrical world form the bulk of the clients of Signori Molinari and Baglioni.

Opening a conversation with my neighbour the barrister, he told me that when in town he generally dined at the Café d'Italie, for the dinner was exceptionally good at the price—the second time during the day that I had been told so—and everything was perfectly clean; and looking at the napery and cutlery I saw that the latter statement was a fact.

The *Consommé Brunoise* was put before me in a little tureen, and tasting it I came to gastronomic "attention," for it was as strong and well-flavoured as any *consommé* I have tasted at a *restaurant de luxe*, that wonderful *consommé* at the Savoy perhaps excepted, and the tiny sole à la Colbert was cooked to the minute, crisp and crackling from the fire. The *tournedo*, with its section of artichoke, tomatoes, and mushroom, was served as it should be, and the potato chips were light as snowflakes. It was, as my two

informants had said, a wonderful dinner for the price.

Dinner finished and my bill paid—dinner, 2s. 6d.; wine, 1s. 9d.; café, 3d.; liqueur, 6d.; total, 5s.—I asked Signor Baglioni, one of the proprietors, a prosperous-looking gentleman with a curly moustache and spreading whiskers, some questions about his restaurant. Every day the restaurant is full and people have to be turned away—and when I went up the narrow little stairs and looked round I saw that the upstairs rooms were full of diners—and the regret of himself and of his partner is that they cannot enlarge their premises. Signor Baglioni was one of Mr. Ritz's lieutenants at the Savoy, and Signor Molinari was a well-known chef before he became a restaurant proprietor. The cook of the restaurant is Baghalo, who was *chef de cuisine* at one time to the Prince of Monaco, and I was right when I detected the hand of the master in the soup and the crisp little sole.

Any one who does not mind the noise, the close quarters at table, and the unaristocratic neighbourhood will find a dinner at the Café d'Italie a pleasant experience.

CHAPTER XIX

WILLIS'S ROOMS (KING STREET)

I WAS getting to the end of a tiring day in a dingy office in Fleet Street, and the little printer's devil, who was sitting on a chair in the corner by the fire playing cat's-cradle, had brought word that all that was now wanted from me were a few "fill-up" notes.

It is not easy when one is brain-tired to be playfully humorous as to the European Concert, and I had struggled through a few lines, only to lay down my pen and take up a bundle of exchanges and a pair of scissors, when one of the clerks in the outer office brought me in a card and a letter. The card was that of Miss Madge Morgan, with below in a feminine handwriting "George Swanston Clarke," and the letter was from an old schoolfellow and friend, a banker in a country town, asking me to put Miss Morgan in the way of seeing one or two places in London which she wished to visit. Somehow the "George Swanston Clarke" seemed familiar, so I told the clerk that I would be out in a moment, the scissors went "click, click, click," the printer's

devil was dispatched with a silent malediction, my day's work was done, and I went out to greet Miss Morgan and bring her into the inner office.

She was a very neat and very tidy little person, of a neatness of dress that was almost primness ; but she had dark-brown hair parted in the middle, with a shine of gold where it rippled, and dark-brown eyes with a glint of fun in them that were a relief to her general sense of earnestness.

I gave her our best chair and asked what I could do for her. It had been my bad luck, it seems, to have to send "George Swanston Clarke" back a short story ; but I had added a few words to the usual formula and that had emboldened her to ask our mutual friend for an introduction. She had come up from the country town where she was one of the chief teachers at the ladies' college to get some local colour for a novel she was going to write.

I murmured that I should be delighted to do anything I could to help her, and she explained : The novel is to be called "The Education of an Angel." The principal characters in the book are to be two good angels and two bad angels sent again to earth, and, as she wished to be up-to-date, she particularly wanted to see behind the scenes of a variety theatre, where the temptation was to take place, and one of the clubs devoted only to dining, where the hero and heroine first meet at dinner.

I promised her an introduction to Mr. Hitchens, of the Empire, and Mr. Slater, of the

Alhambra, and Mr. Morton of the Palace, smiling mentally at the disappointment in store for her, for "behind the scenes" at the big variety theatres is ruled with an iron discipline, and told her I was sorry that, as the *Amphitryon* and the *Maison Dorée* and the *Cercle de Luxe* had ceased to exist in their original form, I could not help her in that.

Miss Morgan looked very blank ; evidently the club chapter was one of her pet ones, and I told her, hoping to comfort her, that a number of the former patrons of the *Amphitryon* now dine regularly at Willis's rooms ; that M. Edouard Fayat, who was once at the *Amphitryon*, is manager and proprietor ; and that if she did not mind a very dull dog as host, and if 8.30 was not too late, I should be very glad if she would dine with me there that evening, and Miss Morgan smiled again and said, "Thank you very much."

I called at Willis's on my way homeward to dress and saw M. Fayat, clean-shaved and rotund, with a touch of the *P'tit Caporal* about him and tried to order dinner ; but I found my tired brain had no more imagination for a menu than it had for a paragraph, and when M. Fayat asked whether I would leave the dinner to him I was glad to do so, premising that it must not be an expensive one. All the tables in the upstairs rooms were taken, but there was a comfortable one downstairs for two which I could have, and to be sure of the celebrities who usually dined I looked through the book where the names of the givers of dinners are recorded.

At half-past eight to the second my guest drove up in a hansom. I was prepared for a primness of attire, but instead found the little governess looking very nice in a low-necked black silk dress, with a tiny diamond heart hung round her neck by a little gold chain.

Our table had a cross of flowers on it and a two-branched silver candlestick, the wax candles in which had red shades. We settled ourselves in our places, the head-waiter placed a mossy nest of plovers' eggs upon the table, Miss Morgan began to look rapidly round her surroundings, while I took up the menu and glanced down it. This was it :—

Œufs de pluviers.

Soupe Henri IV.

Barbue au vin de Bourgogne.

Noisettes de pré-salé à la Dubarry.

Haricots verts nouveaux de Poissy.

Pommes nouvelles.

Poulet de grain polonaise.

Cœurs de romaine en salade.

Asperges d'Argenteuil. Sauce mousseline.

Fraises à l'orange.

Miss Morgan would have none of the plovers' eggs, nor would she be tempted by the other delicacies offered her in their place.

"Have you begun to absorb your local colouring?" I asked, and she was anxious in return to know if it would seem *outré* to take notes, and being encouraged thereto produced a workmanlike note-book. "Did you notice, as you came in, the window, six arched, with its 'Déjeuners,

dîners, soupers, patissier,' etc., on it? and the tall commissionaire and the little page?" Miss Morgan nodded her head and jotted all these down. Then the soup was brought. A simple soup enough, as its name would promise, but excellently hot. "Now for the interior," and Miss Morgan picked up her pencil again. "You might note that it is as close a transcript of a Parisian restaurant as could be found in London, the crimson couches by the wall, the chairs with their quaint backs and scarlet seats all savour of Paris," and Miss Morgan jotted all this down. Then the brill, reposing in its brown sauce, with little hillocks of mushrooms around it, was shown to us, a bottle of old hock, carefully decanted, was put on the table, and I, at least, cared for the time nothing for local colour, for the sauce vin de Bourgogne was delicious, and the hock was golden.

But Miss Morgan was trifling with her pencil, and, looking over her page, I found that she had noted the dumb-waiter in the centre of the restaurant piled high with fruit and bundles of asparagus, with the duck press of shining silver, the *dame de comptoir* in black at her little desk with a little clock above it, and the great clock of enamel and ormolu, the principal ornament of the room. The *noisettes* I thought a little too dry; but I could get no opinion from Miss Morgan except that she thought the little potato-filled open cases on which they were served were pretty.

I pointed out to her, as a purely French touch, the black apron of the wine waiter, the distin-

guishing mark from the others, all white-aproned; explained the position of the room upstairs, and where the distant music of Horvath's band came from; gave her some reminiscences of Willis's in past days, and then waxed eloquent over the *poulet polonaise*, which, with its savoury accompaniment of rice and chicken liver, was excellent.

But Miss Morgan wanted now to know who all the guests at the tables were. There were two *grandes dames*, Lady A. and Lady B., there were a couple of Guardsmen I knew, there was Sir George Lewis, the British Fouché—Miss Morgan noted that—there was a handsome lady in black with many black sequins, there was an ex-soldier, now a power on the Stock Exchange, and a number of other well-groomed men whom I did not know. But this I was aware would not satisfy Miss Morgan, so my previous glimpse at the book of the tables came in useful, and the unknown men became minor members of the Ministry, lords, poets, editors, and composers. Miss Morgan wrote them all down, and was happy.

The asparagus and the strawberries were excellent, and over the latter, served in a silver dish over a silver bowl of ice, Miss Morgan for the first time became enthusiastic. The coffee, too, and the liqueurs were good.

I paid the bill—two dinners, £1 : 5s. ; one bottle 131, 6s. ; café, 1s. ; liqueurs, 2s.—total, £1 : 14s. ; and in explanation of the lack of detail, told Miss Morgan that in the old days of the *Amphitryon* we who were not over-wealthy

used, when we gave a dinner, to go to Emile and ask him to do the best he could for us at 12s. 6d. a head. But though I told her this I was perfectly aware that I had been treated too kindly by the management, and that the bill should have been of larger proportions.

I put Miss Morgan into a cab, amid thanks on her part and many messages to our common friend on mine.

I shall be interested to read the club chapter in "The Education of an Angel," by "George Swanston Clarke."

CHAPTER XX

LE RESTAURANT DES GOURMETS (LISLE STREET)

THE superior person and I were chatting in the club as to eating generally, and he was holding forth on the impossibility of discovering any dining-place, as Kettner's was discovered by our fathers, where a good meal could be had at a very small price.

I turned on him and rent him figuratively, giving him a list that commenced with Torino's and ended with the Hôtel Hanover, and asked him if he had been to any of them. He had not. His system was to go to the Savoy or Willis's, or the Princes' Hall, or the Carlton, and then to grumble because he could not get his meals at those places at grill-room prices. I finally pinned him by asking him whether he would, as a man and a discoverer, come with me that evening and dine at the Restaurant des Gourmets. The name seemed to tickle him, and he said something about going home to change into dress clothes, which I assured him was unnecessary, and he then asked where this restaurant might be.

Did he know the stage door of the Empire? And the superior person looked at me in answer to that question with a look that showed me that he had a full-blown Nonconformist conscience. I explained that the Restaurant des Gourmets was in Lisle Street, as was the stage-door of the Empire, that I was not trying to lure him to meet any fairy of the ballet, but that if he came with me he would very probably find some members of the Empire orchestra dining, and as likely as not M. Wenzel, the conductor, himself. Six was the hour I proposed to dine, changing afterwards into dress clothes, to go to a first night at the Duke of York's, but the superior person sniffed, and said that that was too early for any one to eat an evening meal. So I left him, and my ideas having been turned towards the little Lisle Street restaurant, I wandered down there.

Lisle Street is not exactly an aristocratic locality. There is next door to the Restaurant des Gourmets the Hôtel and Restaurant de France et d'Italie, which has been newly painted, which more or less gives itself airs of superiority, and which posts its bill of fare upon its front; there is the Restaurant de la Paix, small and white-faced and not obtrusive; and there is the office of a musical publication; but most of the rest of the houses are dingy private residences. The outside of the Gourmets is not too inviting either. It has a double window with a strawberry-colour curtain hiding the inside from view, and the woodwork is painted a leaden grey.

It is well to be early at the Restaurant des

Gourmets, for by half-past six there is rarely a seat to be had at any of the tables.

At six to the stroke I pushed back the door with its whitened glass panel, whereon is inscribed "Entrée," and was in the humble home of the connoisseur. A burly Frenchman with a beard, another with his hair combed over his forehead in a fringe, and a third with a slight beard and wearing a little grey cap, were drinking vermouth at one of the tables; otherwise the room was empty.

I sat down at one of the tables, and a waiter in dress clothes and a clean shirt put a bill of fare, written in cramped French handwriting on blue paper, in front of me. The first item on the blue paper was *hors-d'œuvre*—hareng, saucisson, sardines, radis, beurre, 2d., and I ordered these delicacies and some *soupe, paté d'Italie*, which also cost 2d., and then proceeded to look round.

The Frenchmen, talking volubly, had gone out. Another waiter with a light moustache had joined the first one, and both were regarding me with the interest the waiter always has in a chance customer whose tip may be lordly or the reverse. Up against the window were piled little bowls of salad, the green and white telling well against the crushed strawberry of the curtain, and a great stack of long French loaves of bread cut into sections which, with their white ends and brown crust, had something of the appearance of a pile of little logs. In front of the window was a counter covered with green baize, on which were some long uncut loaves, an earthenware bowl, a kettle, and a bright metal machine that

had a lamp under it, and contained either coffee or soup. A comely Frenchwoman in black, with an apron, was behind this counter, and as the waiters gave her an order she shouted it down a little lift, and the dish was presently hoisted up from the depths below.

At the far end of the room is a sloping glass roof, with panes to lift up for ventilation. The pink paper on the wall under this gives the touch of colour to the picture. The other walls are of plain panelling painted a greyish white with pegs all round to hang up hats and coats upon, and an occasional mirror in a dark wood frame. Placards with "Toutes les boissons doivent être payées à l'avance," and "La pipe est interdite" are posted round the walls, and there were some flowers in vases on the mantelpiece. The little tables to hold two or four were round three sides of the room, with coarse but clean napery, glass bowls for the pepper and salt, with little bone spoons, and thick glasses, and decanters of water. The couches against the walls were covered with black leather, the chairs were of Austrian bentwood. The waiter had put *L'Eclair*, a French newspaper printed with the usual abominable French type, in front of me.

I nibbled at the bit of herring in a little saucer, and drank my soup, which was just as good as if it had cost two shillings instead of twopence, and then proceeded to order the rest of my dinner, a proceeding which was regarded with mild interest by the little Frenchman with a slight beard wearing the grey peaked cap, who had returned.

"C'est le patron," said one of the waiters, and I promptly introduced myself to him, and began to cross-examine him as to the identity of his clients, for the room was filling very quickly. M. Brice sat on a chair by my table, which now had its full complement of diners, for the burly, bearded Frenchman, the other with the hair combed down on to his forehead, and a third with a carefully curled moustache, had taken the three vacant places.

"That," said M. Brice, indicating a dark gentleman with a curled moustache, "is Chaudoir, the *chef d'orchestre* at Sergeant Sole."

"What?" I said, bluntly enough.

"At Sergeant Sole, where they are blacked."

A sudden inspiration that Sergeant Sole was St. James's Hall came to me.

"And that," pointing to a gentleman with a red tie, "is the gentleman who does the socialistic writing for the *Pall Mall*."

Three clean-shaven gentlemen were vaguely described as "artists," and after gazing at a lady in black with white hair for some time, M. Brice said, "That is an old woman." The two gentlemen sitting opposite this lady were the Messieurs Chose, of a firm in Old Broad Street, and the three Frenchmen at my table were big men in the greengrocery line, who come over two or three times a year to Covent Garden.

A clean-shaven, prosperous-looking gentleman, with a young lady in black, entered just then, and a note of admiration came into M. Brice's voice as he told me that this was the coachman of the Baron Alfred de Rothschild.

The turbot and caper sauce, which was the most expensive part of my dinner, costing as much as 8d., I did not care for very much ; but, on the other hand, the *gigot haricot*, which followed it, was excellent. M. Brice, who kept up a running accompaniment of conversation to my dinner, told me that all the meat cooked at his restaurant was English.

There is no such thing as a wine list at the Restaurant des Gourmets, and I had ordered at a venture a pint of *vin ordinaire*, which the waiter told me would cost sixpence. It is a rough, strong wine, and I suggested to M. Brice that it probably was of Corsican or Sardinian growth. M. Brice shrugged his shoulders, and from somewhere produced a pint of claret, with the name of the late M. Nicol of the Café Royal on it, and told me that he was able to sell that at a very moderate price.

The omelette that I had ordered was as light as a French cook always makes them, and the slice of *brie* that closed my repast was as *coulant* as it should be.

Then M. Brice, still talking, made me out my bill on the back of one of the cards of his restaurant. Hors-d'œuvre, 2d. ; pain, 1d. ; potage, 2d. ; poisson, 8d. ; entrée, 6d. ; omelette, 4d. ; fromage, 2d. ; half ordinaire, 6d. ; total, 2s. 7d.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAFÉ ROYAL (REGENT STREET)

My sister-in-law is the daughter of a dean. I do not make this statement through family pride, but because it is pertinent to certain matters to be dealt with hereafter.

One of these days—which is the fairyland future balancing the past of “once upon a time”—a distinguished dramatist and myself are going to write a book on the Romance of the Restaurants, and in this work the Café Royal will figure largely, for its history is a strange one. It was the Franco-German War that started the popularity of the Café Royal and the fortune of its proprietor, M. Nicol. The refugees from France in the “terrible year” found in Regent Street a café and a dining-place where they could imagine that they were back again in their beloved Paris, and London, which was beginning to believe that it might be possible to find a good restaurant away from the boulevards, followed suit.

I have a dim memory of the Café Royal as a very small establishment indeed, with stuffed pheasants and vegetables, fruit and gilt-topped

bottles in its window, and I have watched it spread during the past thirty years, house after house being absorbed until it became the great establishment it now is.

My sister-in-law is the daughter of a dean. I mention the fact now because later on you will find that it is important.

The Café Royal, in the years that I have known it, has had its succession of managers: Delacoste, who brought the restaurant to its pride of place amongst the eating-houses of the world; Wolschleger; Oddenino, who was appointed to the position when M. Nicol died, and under whose reign the lift and the little waiting-room, the glass with its N and crown, the gorgeous carpets, and beautiful china appeared; and now Gerard, in whose hands is the future of the great establishment.

It is *à propos* of Oddenino and his improvement that I feel compelled to impress upon you the fact that I have a sister-in-law, and that she is the daughter of a dean.

I have eaten many good dinners at the Café Royal, indeed so many that the memory of most of them is outworn. It is one of the restaurants much affected by Freemasons, and in the great gilded room on the second floor the Bons Frères, a club of cheerful gourmets, hold their meetings during the winter season. The little private rooms looking down on to Glasshouse Street could tell stories of many interesting *tête-à-têtes* and many bright gatherings. I recall with especial pleasure one dinner given by a well-known actor-manager and an equally distinguished

actor. Two other actor-managers, whose names are household words, a dramatist of fame, and my humble self were the guests, and the conversation I listened to was as good as the viands I tasted.

We now come to the dinner I propose to describe, and to my sister-in-law, to whom I make my apologies for the delay.

In the summer of 1897 Oddenino, who had then just taken up the reins of management, confided in me his ideas for improving the restaurant and told me some of his troubles, one being that some people thought that the company that frequented the restaurant was rather Bohemian. How anybody could think so, I told him, I could not understand, and as a triumphant proof of this I stated that the first lady whom I would bring to dine in the redecorated restaurant should be my sister-in-law, the daughter of a dean.

In the autumn the opportunity arrived for carrying out my promise. My brother was away slaughtering many driven partridges in Wiltshire, and my sister-in-law—did I mention that she is the daughter of a dean?—was left in solitary dignity in town. I went in the afternoon of the day we were going to dine to apprise the establishment of our impending visitation—that word has a comforting clerical sound—and to order dinner.

My sister-in-law is not partial to shell-fish, so the oysters with which I should have begun the feast were not to be thought of, nor were most of the most delicate ways of cooking a sole to be considered. My sister-in-law has always said

that my idea of a perfect dinner is semi-starvation, so I included two *entrées* instead of one in the menu. This was the dinner which I, in consultation, settled upon :—

Hors-d'œuvre russe.
Pot-au-feu.
Sole Waleska.
Noisette d'agneau Lavallière.
Haricots verts à l'anglaise.
Parfait de foie gras.
Caille en cocotte.
Salade.
Pôle nord.

When I suggested an ice, and Oddenino wrote down *pôle nord*, I asked him what particular ice that meant. It was only a cream ice served on a pedestal of clear ice, he said ; but he thought that *pôle nord* to end a menu sounded grand and mysterious.

I should, out of compliment to my sister-in-law, have liked to have driven up to the Café Royal in an equipage such as dignitaries of the Church use, with a hammer-cloth and a white-wigged coachman ; but a humble *coupé* had to suffice.

We went up the staircase, with its allegorical paintings on either side, and its gilt railings and little grove of plants and flowers, and into the little waiting-room at the top of the stairs. It is not a very large waiting-room, a promise only of better things to come, a slice of the first of the big rooms partitioned off by a screen of mirrors. Some easy-chairs look comforting even to a hungry man, and, no doubt, it has saved the

tempers of many men who, like myself, grew restive when waiting in the draughty hall or on the stairs. A table had been kept for us in the first room, and when my sister-in-law had settled down she began looking carefully at the diners at the other tables. I asked if there was any one whom she expected to see, and was told that she was looking for the actresses I had promised to point out to her. Our table commanded a fine view of the room we were in and of the big room. There was scarcely a vacant table, but nowhere could I see an actress to point out to my sister-in-law. There was a celebrated doctor, clean-shaven and with white hair, dining *tête-à-tête* with his wife; there was a well-known barrister, invincible in licensing cases, who was giving a dinner to his wife and daughter; there was a big dinner-party of men all hailing from the Stock Exchange; there was a smart little lady talking hunting to three entranced youths; but nowhere could I see a face that I recognised as belonging to an actress.

My sister-in-law thought that she had been defrauded, but luckily the fat waiter—since promoted to higher duties in the grill-room on the ground-floor—an old ally of mine, appeared at the right moment with the caviar, and the *sommelier* was anxious to know whether I would have the Clicquot *vin rosée*—[*Eheu fugaces!* That *vin rosée* has vanished from the wine list. Poor M. Nicol used to say that it was the best champagne in the cellar]—iced. My sister-in-law approved highly of the soup, and indeed it was excellent, simple and strong. Then came the

sole Waleska, and I was anxious to see whether my sister-in-law—who, I have omitted to state, is the daughter of a dean—appreciated the delicacy of the sauce and the almost imperceptible flavouring of cheese. She did, and I forgave her on the spot for not liking oysters. The *noisette d'agneau* was not quite on a par with the glory of the remainder of the dinner, for the tiny morsels of lamb, the foundation of the *plat*, might have been more tender; but I am sure that if the dear departed geese of Strassburg could have looked upon their livers, placed snugly in a great *terrine*, to which the blocks of truffle gave a half-mourning effect, and covered decently with a fair coating of transparent jelly, they would have been consoled for all their over-eating and subsequent demise.

During the pause before the appearance of the quails I called my sister-in-law's attention to the domed glass roofing which gives the room to some extent the appearance of a green-house, to the heavy curtains which shut off two of the four rooms when they are not in use, to the glass and china with the capital N and the crown, which might have come from the Tuileries and have belonged to Napoleon had not the N been the first letter of Nicol and the crown that of the Café Royal.

The quails were delicious. Their flesh almost melted in one's mouth, as my sister-in-law remarked. When the *pôle nord* came the ice proved not to be an ordinary one, but a semi-fluid delicacy cased in harder cream ice. The ice pedestal was in the shape of a bird resting on

rocks, and when I jested feebly at the shape of the creature my sister-in-law laughed. I reproved her austerely, telling her that if she laughed thus she would be taken for an actress. Whereon she retorted that she did not want to be taken for an actress, but that she wanted to be one. I opened my eyes in a query, and she said that if actresses were given every night such a dinner as she had eaten she wanted to be an actress.

The bill was: Two couverts, 1s.; hors-d'œuvre, 2s.; pot-au-feu, 2s.; sole Waleska, 3s. 6d.; suprême d'agneau, 3s. 6d.; haricots verts, 1s. 6d.; parfait de foie gras, 4s.; caille cocotte, 5s.; salade, 1s.; pôle nord, 2s. 6d.; café, 1s. 6d.; one bottle '67, 15s.; liqueurs, 2s.; total, £2:4:6.

I told my sister-in-law that if we were not to miss the first act of the play we were going to see, we had better be moving, so she laid down the straw through which she had been sucking her *crème de menthe*, and with a sigh, a tribute of remembrance to the quails, put on her gloves. My sister-in-law is the daughter of a dean; but ever since that dinner she asserts that she has mistaken her vocation, and that she ought to have been an actress.

* * * One of the most delicate methods of filleting soles, a "creation" which came into being at the Café Royal, is the *sole St-Augustin*, and the *recette* of this was given me by Oddenino. I give it in the original French with the signature of Charles, the *chef* of that period, at its tail.

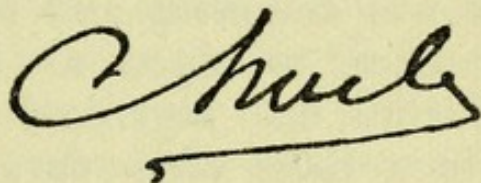
Recettes de filets de sole St-Augustin

Prenez une belle sole bien fraîche, enlevez-en les filets, pliez-les en deux, mettez-les dans une casserole avec un morceau de beurre, sel, poivre et un bon verre de champagne.

Faites cuire les filets de sole, aussitôt prêts retirez-les et faites réduire la cuisson aux trois-quarts, ensuite ajoutez-y une demie-pinte de crème et laissez réduire un moment le tout ensemble.

Mettez à part dans une casserole vingt-quatre queues d'écrevisses avec une truffe fraîche emmincie, un peu de beurre, sel et poivre, faites chauffer le tout doucement et mélangez ensuite votre sauce avec la garniture.

Dressez les filets de sole sur un plat rond, saucez par dessus, ajoutez un peu de fromage rapé pardessus, faites glacer au four et servez très chaud.



CHAPTER XXII

THE CECIL RESTAURANT (THE STRAND)

I DO not think that the dining world of London has ever given the restaurant of the Cecil a fair trial. It was opened in a hurry when the hotel was first given to the public, and those epicures who make the opinion of London saw it before it was complete and before M. Coste had his kitchen arranged to his satisfaction and M. Bertini had organised the service thoroughly. Since those early days there have been many improvements and many additions. François, who was so well known at the Grand at Monte Carlo, came to the Cecil as *maitre d'hôtel* and remained there until a spell of ill-health brought on by our villainous climate obliged him to relinquish the post, and now the name of Paillard, who has taken on his shoulders the superintendence of the restaurant, under Mr. Judah, who is in supreme command, is a guarantee that all that concerns the management is on the best Parisian model. A dinner with M. Coste, who is one of the greatest culinary artists not only in England but in the world, in command in the kitchen,

and M. Paillard as generalissimo in the restaurant, is bound to be a work of art put before the *connaisseur* in the manner and with the surroundings that masterpieces should command.

The advent of M. Paillard, the opening of a new lounge as an anteroom to the restaurant, and the engagement of the Royal Roumanian Band seemed to me to necessitate another visit to the Cecil Restaurant, and when I met "the Colleen" in Bond Street, driven to London from Leicestershire by a brief spell of frost, I blessed my stars that I had encountered the cheeriest companion for a little *tête-à-tête* dinner, and asked her if she would do me the great honour of dining with me under M. Paillard's eye on Sunday. "Will I dine with you on Sunday? Indeed and I will and any other day you like till the soft weather comes again. And who may this Paillard be—a straw merchant?" A little knowledge of French, I told my Colleen, is a dangerous thing, and also informed her that if she knew as much about pots and pans as she did about horses, and studied cookery books instead of those relating to Mr. Jorrocks and Mr. Soapy Sponge, she would not have been ignorant of the identity of a European celebrity, at which she laughed impenitently and said that she kept a cook to read about cookery.

May I be permitted to introduce the lady whom I, and a large slice of the Britannic world, call "the Colleen." She is a very charming little Irishwoman who rides the horses her husband—a landlord in the distressful country whose tenants conscientiously refuse, yearly, to

pay their rents—breaks and makes. She hunts from Market Harboro', and I fancy her perfect hands and splendid pluck bring in, indirectly, more through the sale of the horses she rides in England than all the family acres of bog in Ireland do—but that of course is mere conjecture. When the great, noisy, good-natured Irishman, who is now her husband, first announced his engagement, he told us that he was going to marry "a bit of a colleen from the County Galway," and as "the Colleen" she has been known all her married life.

While I waited before dinner in the new lounge for my guest, I took stock of my surroundings. Formerly, when dining at the Cecil, the only anteroom to the restaurant was the hall of the hotel, and the rush and bustle of the entrance to the vast caravanseraï was not the atmosphere of calm that is the right preliminary to the leisurely enjoyment of any dinner which is more than mere food. Now a side entrance in the *cour d'honneur* leads into the lounge, which is a salon, light in colour, pillars of greys and pinks with gilt capitals supporting the roof with its little domes of stained glass. A white tessellated pavement with crimson rugs on it is underfoot, a great white carved mantelpiece projects above the hearth where a coal fire burns brightly, crimson couches are fitted into all the cosy corners, and palms and cane chairs are scattered over the floor space in picturesque disorder. From this bright room glass doors lead directly into the restaurant.

The Colleen was punctual to a minute and

looked superbly handsome in a simple black frock and pearls in her brown hair, with a copper sheen on it, showing up splendidly in contrast to her sombre apparel. I ventured to remark on this, and was told that a woman in mourning should return thanks daily if she has chestnut hair.

From the corner table I had secured, near the long glazed-in balcony which overlooks the Embankment gardens and the Thames, we had an excellent view of the great room, with its stately rows of red-brown marble pillars, its vast fireplace, its crimson curtains, its hundreds of spots of red and yellow light from the shaded candles on the tables. The Roumanian Band, in white braided jackets and crimson sashes, perched up upon the roof of a little room built into the big one, and topped with gilt railings, form a picturesque group, and play softly waltz music and the airs of their country. As we ate the oysters which commenced our repast I told the Colleen of the great success which the Roumanian restaurant achieved at the Paris Exhibition—it and the Jena, under Emile, being about the only two restaurants in the Exhibition quarter that made money—and that this band was the one which assisted so much in the achievement of that success.

The *table-d'hôte* dinner at the Cecil is a half-a-guinea one, and though the *maître d'hôtel* suggested that I should leave the conception of a special little dinner to M. Coste's genius, I preferred to eat the "Cecilia" dinner of the evening. It was—

Royal natives.
Consommé Marquise.
Crème des gourmets.
Filets de soles cocotte à la Crème.
Blanchailles.
Suprême de volaille grillé à la Maréchale.
Noisette de mouton sauté Nicoise.
Pommes Château.
Bécassine rôti sur canapé.
Salade.
Croûtes aux fruits.
Asperges glacées. Sauce mousseline.
Friandises.
Canapés Juliette.

And for wine we drank an '89 Moët et Chandon, Cuvée 36. It was an admirable dinner served as hot as it left the fire; and, indeed, the beautifully clean kitchen where M. Coste in white rules his little army is only a step away separated from the dining-room by a screen and double door. The *consommé*, with its little green globes swimming in it, was as strong as a *consommé* always should be, the rolled fillet in its little white *cocotte* served with the cream was delicious. The chicken had been grilled to the second, and the tiny morsel of mutton and its wealth of vegetables was as tender as a sigh. The snipe, the bright fruits on their brown *croûte*, the ice in the form of asparagus, all were admirable.

M. Paillard was in Paris, but was expected over the next day, and I enlightened the Colleen's ignorance as to the vast interests in Paris he controls, the restaurant across the road from the Vaudeville, the pavilion in the Champs Elysées,

Maire's, the Armenonville, and how the Maison Paillard has perfected many of the great cooks and *maîtres d'hôtel* of Europe, for Frederick, Joseph, Henry, Mourier all graduated in the school of Paillard. Now in addition to his Parisian duties the great man finds time to come backwards and forwards weekly to London, and his name is a guarantee that everything is *du dernier cri*.

"And who do you think the moss-headed lady is?" said the Colleen, cutting in on my rhapsody on the gentle art of the *maître d'hôtel*, and I found I was expected to discuss our fellow-diners. A colonel, who commanded a cavalry regiment, I knew—he had brought out his wife for their usual Sunday dinner from home. A light of the Stock Exchange was giving a big dinner-party; five American ladies on their travels were dining without the society of man. The Colleen knew two hunting-men and a very pretty girl, the sister of one of them, and the other diners, including the lady so irreverently described as moss-haired, looked pleasant and well dressed.

"Now, if you please, I'm going to talk horse," said the Colleen, and for the rest of dinner I heard tales of various "finest little harses" that ever were, and of marvellous runs over the grass country.

My bill was: Two dinners, £1:1s.; champagne, 18s.; coffee, 1s.; liqueurs, 2s. Total, £2:2s.

A CURRY DINNER

The combination in days gone by of MM. Bertini, Coste, Laurent, and the little curry cook Smiler, was an excellent one, and I ate a dinner at the Cecil in which curry played a principal part which, I think, is worth keeping on record. It was in the noble cause of conversion of fellow-man that I dined at the Hôtel Cecil. One of my uncles, the Nabob—so called by us because he spent many years in the gorgeous East—affects the belief that there is no good curry to be had outside the portals of his club, the East India ; and for that reason, when he is not dining at home, dines nowhere but there. I would not dare to trifle with the Nabob's digestion ; but I also thought that he should not be allowed to go to his grave with the erroneous impression that curry can only be made out of India in St. James's Square. I have eaten good curry at the Criterion, where a sable gentleman is charged with its preparation, and I also remembered that at the Cecil they make a speciality of their curries.

The Nabob, doubting much, said that he would dine with me ; and, with the possibility of the alteration of the terms of that will always before me, I went down to the Hôtel Cecil to interview M. Bertini on the morning of the day of the dinner.

Three gentlemen in gorgeous uniforms, and with as much gold lace round their caps as a field-marshal wears, received me at the door. A clerk in the reception bureau took my card, wrote

something mysterious on a slip of paper, and sent a page-boy in blue off on the search for M. Bertini, while I stood and contemplated the great marble staircase.

M. Bertini would see me directly, I was told ; and I went down a floor or two in the lift and was shown into a comfortable room, the big table in the centre covered with papers, a telephone at either side of the arm-chair by the table, and on the walls sketches for the uniforms of the gentlemen with gold-laced caps who had received me, a caricature of M. Bertini, and drawings of various Continental hotels. A yellow dog which had been asleep under the chiffonier rose, stretched himself, inspected me, and apparently thought me harmless, for he went to sleep again. Presently in came M. Bertini himself, looking cool and neat, his beard closely clipped, his moustache brushed out. I had interfered with his morning round of inspection ; but he could spare a minute or two to talk over my needs for the evening. I told him at once what I wanted : a dinner for two with the curry course as the most important item, and M. Bertini, who is an expert in cookery, took a slip of paper and sketched out a menu. Here it is :—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.
 Consommé Sarah Bernhardt.
 Filet de sole à la Garbure.
 Côtes en chevreuil. Sauce poivrade.
 Haricots verts à la Villars.
 Pommes Cécil.
 Mousse de foie gras et jambon au champagne.
 Curry à l'indienne.

Bombay duck, etc. etc.

Asperges.

Bombe à la Cécil.

Petites friandises choisies.

We had a table in the corner of the great restaurant, with its dozen marble pillars, its walnut panelling, its tapestries, the gilt Cecil arms on a great square of red velvet, its great crystal lamps that hold the electric light, its fireplaces of Sicilian marble, its gilt ceiling, its musicians' gallery in one corner. The waiters with their white aprons bustled silently about setting down the *hors-d'œuvre*, the important person with the silver chain round his neck took the order for a bottle of Deutz and Gelderman, and the curry cook, clothed in white samite, and with his turban neatly rolled, came up to make his salaam, and was immediately tackled by the Nabob, who in fluent Hindustani put him through an examination in the art of curry-making, which was apparently satisfactory, for he was dismissed with a *Bot atcha*.

Then the Nabob, hook-nosed, clean-shaven, except for two thin side-whiskers, turned to me. "When I was at Mhow, in '54, Holkar—not the present man, but his grandfather, had a curry cook named Afiz, who——" and just then the waiter brought the soup, which I was glad of, for I knew my uncle's story of Holkar and Afiz, and how the cook was to have been beheaded for giving his Highness a mutton curry instead of an egg one, and was saved by the Nabob's interference, and I knew that it took half an hour in the telling. The *consommé Sarah Bernhardt*, which

has a foundation of turtle, to which is added *consommé de volaille*, *quenelles* and parsley, was worthy of M. Coste, erstwhile of Cubats', the gorgeous restaurant in the Champs Elysées, who has deserted the banks of the Seine for those of the Thames ; and the *filet de sole à la Garbure*, over the description of the cooking of which M. Guy Gagliardelly, the most attentive of *maîtres d'hôtel*, waxed eloquent, was another masterpiece of the kitchen. It is a variation of the *filet de sole Mornay*, having vegetables added to it.

Then came a pause, and with it the Nabob's opportunity. "Holkar never gave a great curry feast without asking me to it, for he said that I was the only European who understood what a curry should be——" and just then the waiter put down our cutlets before us, and M. Gagliardelly was at my elbow to explain that the *haricots verts* were prepared with flour and egg and then fried like a sole, and M. Laurent, the *chef du restaurant*, who had been going the round of the tables, told us the secret of *pommes Cécil*.

My uncle drew a long breath, and I knew what was coming, when luckily a lady with a great dog-collar of diamonds passed and attracted his attention, and I staved off the dissertation on curries for a few minutes by telling him of the wonderful diamond stomacher the lady possessed, which made the collar look only like a row of brilliants. I called the Nabob's attention, too, to a quiet, almost shabbily-dressed gentleman, dining with his wife and two little girls, for he is a man with an estate in Australia big enough

to form a principality in the Balkans, and people talk of the revenue he gets from his flocks and herds with a sort of awe. A little French chansonnette singer; the editor of a Society newspaper; a well-known musician and his daughter, who is a rising young actress, were other people of interest to be pointed out; and by that time our two wedges of the delicately-coloured *mousse*, with its flavouring gained from tongue and champagne and old brandy, were before us. The *mousse* was the only dish in the dinner that was really open to criticism, and I do not think that I am captious when I say that I prefer it made less solidly than M. Coste's creation at the Cecil.

Then came the dish of the evening, a tender spring-chicken for the foundation of the curry, and all the accessories, Bombay duck, that crumpled in our fingers to dust, paprika cakes, thinner than a sheet of note-paper, and chutnees galore, to add to the savoury mess. It was a genuine Indian curry, and the curry cook, his hands joined in the attitude of polite deference, stood and watched rather anxiously the Nabob take his first mouthful. I myself think the Malay curries the best in the world, those wonderful preparations of prawns, fish, fowl, meat, or vegetable, with one great curry as the foundation swimming in the delicious semi-liquid, which has always the taste of fresh cocoa-nut, with half a dozen subsidiary curries, and then a host of *sambals*, little dishes of *ota-ota*, which is fish brains pounded in cream, fresh cocoa-nut and chili, beans, shredded ham, Bombay duck, and a

hundred other relishes ; and I put next to it the Ceylon curry. But the Nabob swears by the curries of India, and even the old Quai Haies of his club pay attention when he gives his decision on a question of feeding. "Er, um, yes, good," said the old gentleman, and the cook salaamed. "Good, decidedly. I don't say as good as we get it at the club"—he was bound to say this—"but decidedly good." The asparagus and the *bombe*, with an electrically illuminated ice windmill as a background, were but the skirmishes after the pitched battle had been won.

As I lighted a cigarette, the Nabob, who does not smoke, began again. "Holkar always invited me, and a fellow Afiz, whose life I saved—that's a devilish good story that I must tell you some day—used to make one special curry of lambs' tongues, which he called after me." "Pardon me, uncle, while I pay my bill," I said as a last resource, and this was the bill I paid: Soup, 2s. ; filet de sole, 3s. ; côte de mouton, 3s. ; haricots verts, 1s. 6d. ; pommes, 1s. ; mousse, 4s. ; curry, 3s. 6d. ; asperges, 7s. 6d. ; bombe, 2s. ; two cafés, 2s. ; liqueurs, 3s. ; cigarettes, 1s. ; wine, 15s. ; total, £2 : 8 : 6.

* * * Mr. Judah was kind enough to give me the *recette* for the *consommé Sarah Bernhardt*, one of the special dishes of the house, and I also asked him to suggest a dinner for six people, with some specialities of the Cecil included in it.

Here is the *recette*, and here the menu, with an asterisk against the dishes which are specialities of the Cecil cuisine :—

Caviar frais de Sterlet.
Consommé Sarah Bernhardt.
* Suprême de truite Astronome.
* Poularde soufflée Cécil.
Selle d'agneau de Pauillac rôtie.
Petits pois nouveaux.
Caneton de Rouen à la Presse.
Salade de cœurs de Romaine.
Asperges de Lauris. Sauce mousseline.
Pêches rafraichies au marasquin.
Comtesse Marie glacée.
Paniers de petits fours.
Fruits.

Consommé Sarah Bernhardt

Il faut d'abord avoir un bon consommé de volaille ; le lier avec du tapioca grillé, que l'on jette dedans pendant qu'il bouille, et laisser cuire environ trois quarts d'heure ; y ajouter une infusion de cerfeuil, estragon, coriandre, avec une pointe de cayenne, ainsi qu'une ou deux eschalottes et un ou deux champignons émincés revenus au vieux Madère sec ; verser le tout dans le consommé et laisser cuire environ dix minutes. Passer au linge fin ou à l'étamine ; garnir de peluches, de petites quenelles d'écrevisses et de ronds de moëlle coupés à l'emporte, pièce d'environ un centimètre d'épaisseur.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TROCADERO (SHAFTESBURY AVENUE)

I DINED one day early last week at the Trocadero, a little specially-ordered *tête-à-tête* dinner over which the chef had taken much trouble — his *Suprêmes de sole Trocadéro*, and *Poulet de printemps Rodisi* are well worth remembering — and while I drank the Moët '84, cuvée 1714, and luxuriated in some brandy dating back to 1815, the solution of a problem that had puzzled me mildly came to me.

An old friend was sending his son, a boy at Harrow, up to London to see a dentist before going back to school, and asked me if I would mind giving him something to eat, and taking him to a performance of some kind. I said "Yes," of course; but I felt it was something of an undertaking. When I was at Harrow my ideas of luxury consisted of ices at Fuller's and sausages and mashed potatoes carried home in a paper bag. I had no idea as to what Jones minor's tastes might be; but if he was anything like what I was then he would prefer plenty of good food combined with music and gorgeousness

and excitement to the most delicate *mousse* ever made, eaten in philosophic calm. The Trocadero was the place ; if he was not impressed by the dinner, by the magnificence of the rooms, by the beautiful staircase, by the music, then I did not know my Harrow boy.

Jones minor arrived at my club at five minutes to the half-past seven, and I saw at once that he was not a young gentleman to be easily impressed. He had on a faultless black short jacket and trousers, a white waistcoat, and a tuberosé in his buttonhole. I asked him if he knew the Trocadero, and he said that he had not dined there ; but plenty of boys in his house had, and had said that it was jolly good.

When we came to the entrance of the Trocadero, an entrance that always impresses me by its palatial splendour, I pointed out to him the veined marble of the walls and the magnificent frieze in which Messrs. Moira and Jenkins, two of the cleverest of our young artists, have struck out a new line of decoration ; and when I had paused a while to let him take it in I asked him what he thought of it, and he said he thought it was jolly good.

Mr. Alfred Salmon, in chief command, and the good-looking *maitre d'hôtel*, both saw us to our table, and a plump waiter whom I remember of old at the Savoy was there with the various menu cards in his hand. The table had been heaped with roses in our honour, and I felt that all this attention must impress Jones minor ; but he unfolded his napkin with the calm of unconcern, and I regretted that I had not

arranged to have the band play "See the Conquering Hero Comes," and have a triumphal arch erected in his honour.

I had intended to give him the five-shilling *table-d'hôte* meal; but in face of this calm superiority I abandoned that, skipped the 7s. 6d. *table d'hôte* as well, and ordered the half-guinea one. I had thought that three-and-sixpennyworth of wine should be ample for a growing boy, but having rushed into reckless extravagance over the food I thought I would let him try seven-and-sixpennyworth of wine. I personally ordered a pint of 277, which is an excellent wine. I told Jones minor that the doctor told me not to mix my wines, and he said something about having to be careful when one got old that I did not think sounded at all nice.

While we paused, waiting for the *hors-d'œuvre*, I drew his attention to all the gorgeousness of the grand restaurant, the cream and gold, the hand-painted ceiling-panels, on which the Cupids sport, the brocades and silks of the wall panels, the broad band of gold of the gallery running round the room, the crimson and gold draperies, the glimpse of the blue and white and gold of the *salon* seen through the dark framing of the portières; I bade him note the morocco leather chairs with gold initials on the back, and the same initials on the collars of the servants. It is a blaze of gorgeousness that recalls to me some dream of the Arabian Nights; but Jones minor said somewhat coldly that he thought it jolly good.

We drank our *potage vert-pré* out of silver

plates, but this had no more effect on Jones minor than if they had been earthenware. I drew his attention to the excellent band up above, in their gilded cage. I pointed out to him amidst the crowd of diners two ex-Lord Mayors, an A.D.C. to Royalty, the most popular low comedian of the day, a member of the last Cabinet, our foremost dramatic critic and his wife, and one of our leading lawyers. Jones minor had no objection to their presence, but nothing more. The only interest he showed was in a table at which an Irish M.P. was entertaining his family, among them two Eton boys, and towards them his attitude was haughty but hostile.

So I tried to thaw him while we ate our whitebait, which was capitally cooked, by telling him tales of the criminal existence I led when I was a boy at Harrow. I told him how I put my foot in the door of Mr. Bull's class-room when it was being closed at early morning school time. I told him how I took up alternate halves of one exercise of rule of three through one whole term to "Old Teek." I told him how I and another bad boy lay for two hours in a bed of nettles on Kingsbury racecourse, because we thought a man watching the races with his back to us was Mr. Middlemist. And I asked him if Harrow was likely to be badly beaten by Eton in the coming match at Lord's.

This for a moment thawed Jones minor into humanity. Harrow, he said, was going to jolly well lick Eton in one innings, and before the boy froze up again I learned that Bowen's had

beaten some other house in the final of the Torpid football matches, and several other items of interesting news.

The *filets mignons*, from his face, Jones minor seemed to like ; but he restrained all his emotions with Spartan severity. He did not contradict me when I said that the *petites bouchées à la St-Hubert* were good ; but he ate three *sorbets*, and looked as if he could tackle three more, which showed me that the real spirit of the Harrow boy was there somewhere under the glacial surface, if I could only get at it.

Mr. Lyons, piercing of eye, his head-covering worn a little through by the worries of the magnitude of his many undertakings, with little side-whiskers and a little moustache, passed by, and I introduced the boy to him, and afterwards explained the number of strings pulled by this Napoleon of supply, and at the mention of a "grub shop in every other street" Jones minor's eyes brightened.

When Jones minor had made a clean sweep of the plate of *petits fours*, and had drained the last drops of his glass of Chartreuse, I thought I might venture to ask him how he liked his dinner, as a whole. This was what he had conscientiously eaten through :—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

Consommé Monte Carlo. Potage vert-pré.

Petites soles à la Florentine. Blanchailles au citron.

Filets mignons à la Rachel.

Petites bouchées à la St-Hubert.

Sorbet.

Poularde de Surrey à la broche.

Salade saison.

Asperges nouvelles. Sauce mousseux.

Charlotte russe.

Soufflé glacé Pompadour.

Petits fours. Dessert.

He had drunk a glass of Amontillado, a glass of '89 Liebfraumilch, two glasses of Deutz and Gelderman, a glass of dessert claret, and a glass of liqueur, and when pressed for a critical opinion, said that he thought that it was jolly good.

Impressed into using a new adjective Jones minor should be somehow. So, with Mr. Isidore Salmon as escort, I took him over the big house from top to bottom. He shook the chef's hand with the serenity of a prince in the kitchen at the top of the house, and showed some interest in the wonderful roasting arrangements worked by electricity and the clever method of registering orders. He gazed at the mighty stores of meat and vegetables, peeped into the cosy private dining-rooms, had the beauties of the noble Empire ball-room explained to him, was told of the vast extension of the premises which is being carried out, and which will give the Trocadero a hundred yards of frontage on Shaftesbury Avenue, and finally, in the grill-room, amid the surroundings of Cippolini marble and old copper, the excellent string band played a gavotte, at my request, as being likely to take his fancy.

Then I asked Jones minor what he thought of it all, and he said that he thought it jolly good.

I paid my bill: Two dinners, £1:1s.; table-d'hôte wine, 7s. 6d.; half 277, 7s.; liqueur,

2s. 6d. ; total, £1 : 18s. ; and asked Jones minor where he would like to go and be amused. He said he had heard that the Empire was jolly good.

* * I bearded Mr. J. Lyons in his den one fine spring day and told him that "Dinners and Diners" was going to appear in book form. He showed no visible sign of emotion. Next I asked him if he would tell me what the *plats* were that the Trocadero kitchen prided itself on, and if he would give me the *recette* of *suprême de sole Trocadéro* of which I had a pleasant memory. He kindly said that I should have a list of the dishes, and not one but two *recettes* if I wanted them. My remark was "Thank you."

Caviar glacé, huîtres à la Orientale, potage Rodisi, soles à la Glover, côtelettes de saumon à la Nantua, chapon de Bresse à la Trocadéro, poularde à la Montique, selle d'agneau à la Lyon d'or, salade d'Orsay, asperges nouvelles Milanaises form a little list from which an admirable dinner could be designed.

These are the *recettes* of *suprême de sole Trocadéro* and Saddle of Lamb *à la Pera*—

Suprêmes de Sole Trocadéro

Take two fillets of soles and stuff them with fish forced meat, put one slice of smoked salmon on the top of each, roll them together, then take a small sauté pan well buttered, and place the fillets in it, with salt, pepper, half a wineglassful of white wine, and the juice of half a lemon, cover it and let it simmer for from eighteen to twenty minutes. Dress them on a silver dish, and cover one fillet

with real Dutch sauce mixed with some of the fish gravy, the second fillet you cover with real lobster sauce. Place one slice of truffles on each fillet and serve very hot.

Saddle of Lamb à la Pera

Take one saddle of lamb, and place it in an earthenware roasting-dish and cook for about three-quarters of an hour. Prepare carrots, turnips, and potatoes in fancy shape, and half cook them, place them in bouquets round the saddle and put it back in the oven for twenty minutes. Prepare some stuffed aubergines in rows on the top of the saddle, the peas and French beans between each. To be served with strong sherry sauce.

CHAPTER XXIV

KETTNER'S (CHURCH STREET)

"I HAVE no amusement at all now," said little Mrs. Tota—we always called her Mrs. Tota up at Simla, for she was as bright and perky as her little namesake, the Indian parrot. "George says that the night air brings on the fever, and refuses to go out after dinner."

George looked up from behind his paper and grunted ; but there was a quiver of his left eyelid which looked very like a wink.

"I never go to a dance now, and you know I *love* dancing. I never have any fun like we used to have at the Black Hearts' masked balls at Simla ; the only *kala jugga* I ever go into is the coalhole. I never eat a nice little dinner like you used to give us at the Chalet. I never do anything, or see anything, and all because George thinks he might suffer from imaginary fever."

George from behind the paper moaned a mocking moan. "If George wouldn't mind," I said, "I should be delighted to take you out some evening, give you a little dinner, take you

to a box at some theatre, and to a Covent Garden masked ball afterwards."

"Mind!" said George, reappearing from his paper with great suddenness. "*Mind!* Why, my dear fellow, if you will only be so kind as to do that I shall not be abused for a week. Take her out, and give her dinner and supper, a box at a theatre and a dance, and my blessing shall be with you all the days of my life."

Mrs. Tota clapped her hands. "George, for once in your life, you're nice," she said.

"We'll have a regular Simla evening," I suggested. "The nearest thing I can think of to the dining-room in the little U.S. Club chalet would be a private room at one of the restaurants."

Mrs. Tota looked to George for approval, and then nodded in acquiescence.

"The Savoy private rooms would be too big for our little party of two. Romano's has some charming Japanese private dining-rooms. There is the turret-room at Scott's, which looks down on to Piccadilly and the Haymarket. There are two sweet little corner rooms at the Trocadero, the bow windows of which command Shaftesbury Avenue. There are——"

"You seem to know a good deal about the private rooms of all the restaurants," said Mrs. Tota.

"I have an elderly relative who dislikes noise, so when I take him out to dine——"

"Oh, *him!*" interrupted Mrs. Tota. "Go on with your list."

"There are some very handsome little rooms

at the Café Royal, and Kettner's, and a lot more."

"What's Kettner's, anyway?" queried Mrs. Tota; and I told her of the snug little restaurant buried away in Church Street, which was first discovered by two well-known journalists, a restaurant of comfortable nooks and corners, a restaurant of such individuality that when it was necessary to rebuild it a few years ago it was rebuilt as nearly as possible on the old lines, with its three or four public dining-rooms below, and its network of passages and warren of little rooms above.

Mrs. Tota said that it sounded nice. She liked the name; Kettner's sounded a little unusual, and she liked the description of the old-fashioned place.

Then I summed up: "You will very kindly pick me up at the club; we will dine at Kettner's, then go across the way to the Palace Theatre, where I will have a box; after that back to Kettner's to put on your domino, which we will leave there; and then on to the Covent Garden ball, where we will sup in our box and stay until after the procession."

Mrs. Tota declared that I was a dear, and George grunted a few words of genuine thankfulness.

I went down to Kettner's and interviewed Henri in charge of the upper portion of the house. The nicest possible little dining-room and a very simple little dinner were what I wanted.

Henri put his head on one side, like a wise

magpie, and suggested oysters as *hors-d'œuvre*. I said that the idea was novel, but that I preferred caviar. Then Henri relapsed into deep thought. *Petite marmite* was his next suggestion, and on this I turned on him and rent him, figuratively, for every *maître d'hôtel* in the world seems to think that *petite marmite* or *croûte-au-pot* is the only possible beginning to a small plain dinner. Friendly relations were re-established, and this was our final effort so far as the menu was concerned—

Caviar.

Consommé à la Colbert.

Filets de sole à la Joinville.

Langue de bœuf aux champignons.

Epinards. Pommes Anna.

Poulet à la Parmentier.

Salade.

Asperges. Sauce mousseline.

Biscuits glacées.

Dessert.

and a bottle of Moët '89, just chilled, to drink with it.

Room A was the dining-room that Henri thought would suit us. So A was the room selected.

Mrs. Tota, in a very charming black dress with a pattern of tiny steel sequins on it, with a gorgeous ermine cloak and a mysterious bundle that I knew must contain the domino, picked me up at the club and drove me down to Church Street. She was delighted at the appearance of the cosy little houses and the narrow entrance.

Before we went to our dining-room above I asked Louis, the manager, to take us through the kitchen, which, with its walls of white tiles and perfect cleanliness, is well worth seeing, and we peeped into all the public dining-rooms on the ground-floor.

"Isn't this quite wrong?" said little Mrs. Tota, who was evidently enjoying herself. "Oughtn't we to have slipped up the stairs like a couple of guilty things? Do you take your elderly relative round the kitchen?"

At that moment Henri appeared and said that our dinner was ready, and we went up the narrow stairs.

A little room, with a paper in which old gold and soft browns and green mingled, three windows with warm-coloured curtains to match the paper, bronze ornaments on the mantelpiece, oil paintings of Italian scenery on the walls, a tiny sideboard, a square table lighted by gilt candelabra holding electric lights—Room A is a very snug place to dine in.

"H'm, yes," said Mrs. Tota. "Not quite like the room in the dear old Chalet; but quite near enough."

Henri had taken us under his special protection, and had added half a dozen *hors-d'œuvre* to the menu besides the caviar, and when the time came for our slices of tongue he appeared bearing a whole tongue lavishly garnished.

It was a capital dinner, well cooked throughout, and as Mrs. Tota praised each dish Henri beamed more and more upon us. And Mrs. Tota chattered like her namesake. We talked

about the famous masked ball at Simla, at which Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, disguised in mask and domino, went up to a humorous Irish lady, and, in a feigned voice, asked her for a dance, receiving a reply that she "hadn't time to be dancing with boys to-night." We talked of gymkhanas at Annandale, and picnics at Mashobra, of A.D.C. theatricals and town-hall balls, and we effectually brought the scent of the deodars into Soho.

Mrs. Tota finished her coffee and Curaçoa Marnier, and sighed as she drew on her gloves. "Those were good days," she said, and I nodded assent.

I told Henri to bring me the bill. Two dinners, £1 : 1s. ; one Moët, 15s. ; two cafés, 1s. ; two liqueurs, 2s. ; total, £1 : 19s.

"Henri," I said, "you have let me off too lightly. It should be more than this" ; whereat Henri went through an expressive pantomime which meant that to undercharge me was the last thing the management would think of doing.

We left the domino in Henri's charge, and Mrs. Tota thought she would walk the few yards to the Palace. "If all dinners in private rooms are as pleasant as that, I rather think that I envy your elderly male relative," said Mrs. Tota as we emerged into Church Street.

CHAPTER XXV

THE AMERICAN BAR, CRITERION (PICCADILLY CIRCUS)

IT was half-past seven, or it may have been even a little later, when I encountered the recorder of racing romances wandering along the eastern half-mile of Piccadilly, and both he and I had been too indolent to get into the conventional sables. To him it was a matter of no moment. Many racing campaigns had so "taken the corners off" him that, like that excellent warrior, but distinctly casual diner, Frederick the Great, he could sit himself down in any garb and return grateful thanks to Heaven for enough salt beef and cabbage for a meal—which may go to prove either that Frederick should have been enshrined among the martyrs, or that salt beef has monstrously degenerated.

A very good place in the old days for an undress dinner, the romancer declared when the subject was broached, was the American Bar at the Criterion, and further than this he went by telling me of the men who "knew their town," who swore by the succulent grilled pigs' feet

to be had there at supper-time ; so there we went.

Managers come and managers go at the big caravanserai at Piccadilly Circus, but the American Bar remains the same. The ceiling had been recently renovated, and the fine patriotic design of the national eagle, with its talons full of forked lightning, had been embellished with some extra gold-leaf ; otherwise there is little change. There are the little carved cupids on the outside portals, the marble-topped tables which are deftly covered with table-cloths by the waiters in the usual French garb of white aprons and short jackets when the meal-times approach, the partitions of brass rail, the marble columns, the panels of glazed tiles, and, at the end of the room, the grill with a clock above it, where, shielded by a transparent screen, a stout cook all in white stands and turns the chops and the steaks on the great gridiron where the fat drips through and fizzles on the coals beneath. The great janitors, both of mighty girth, who stand at the outer doors, look in occasionally to give a message, for from about twelve in the morning to midnight the American Bar is as busy as a beehive, and each edition of the evening papers is anxiously bought and scanned by most of the habitués, who have, as a rule, a tinge of the racing man about them.

After ordering our soup, a *consommé Nevers* that proved good, though we waited an unconscionable time for it, my guest fell to pointing out some of the many celebrities who were there, either sitting at the tables or standing at

the bar, where the many bottles on the shelves make a fine show, where the lager-beer engine is surmounted by a silvered statuette, and three white-coated tenders seem continually employed in mixing drinks in tumblers half-filled with crushed ice ; and foremost amongst them was a Mr. Cockburn, a florid man of distinctly sporting appearance, whose cheeks still bore the unsightly scars that their wearer got in the now almost forgotten brawl with cutlasses in a house in Munster Terrace, Regent's Park. Near him was a spare, dark man, dressed in grey, wearing his bowler hat very much over one ear. This was Saville, Cockburn's fellow-sufferer in the battle of the blades, who, when the chief assailant, a Mexican named Tarbeaux, was about to return to the attack on Cockburn, made the extraordinary appeal, "That's enough ; don't *twice* him !"

Then there was sitting at one of the tables a burly fellow, broad of back and lavishly bestudded with diamonds, who the romancer informed me was a redoubtable bookmaker. The names of the other prosperous-looking people who formed a group round the hero of the diamonds have slipped my memory, but they all seemed to have a nickname of some kind, and the racing romancer, when I asked for information about any of them, invariably began, "What, not know old—whatever the name might be ?"

For our second course we took *saumon*, *sauce Gervoise*, and very good and well-cooked it was, though again we had some time to wait for it ; and here it was that many eyes noted the entrance

of a well-known Oriental banker, a gentleman of great wealth, and one of the last personages one would have expected to see dining solus and in the plainest manner possible. That it was a favourite resort of his seemed apparent from the fact that he walked straight to a table at which a chair had been turned up, and the manager of the room himself came forward to proffer those few words of advice which relieve the diner of so much hazardous speculation. Yet other newcomers were a stalwart ex-major, and a music-hall agent, who in the halcyon past had half the proprietors of variety theatres in London at his feet. The bar-keeper in immaculate white had something of importance, apparently, to say to each newcomer, and my guide had much to tell me of the various bar-tenders who had presided over the counter in turn, of what he called "hot-nights" and of friendly raids of the olden days when a certain festive youth and his companions were wont to take the place by storm, and on one occasion escalated the bar, took possession of the tills, and scrambled the shillings among the chronic needy. What wild extravagances were they not capable of! It was here that the undefeated racing man who used to be known as the best-looking youth in London, and was to be seen daily in Piccadilly with a black poodle decorated with bows of yellow ribbon, once mixed, for the entertainment of his friends, his fearful and wonderful "fruit-salads"—generally a couple of sovereigns' worth of hothouse fruit steeped in the oldest cognac of Justerini and Brooks, and *liqueurs variées*, the

effects of which the friends aforesaid found the greatest possible difficulty in sleeping off by dinner-time.

But our *entrée* arrives, a *filet sauté Béarnaise*, than which I desire to eat no better. A new arrival of guests, most of them fresh from Kempton, with their racing-glasses hung over their shoulders, included a young man with a familiarly known nickname, who in the first Jubilee years galloped through his money and earned his jubilant title ; another racing man, with the name of a philanthropist of a past generation, who at one time owned a property with two racecourses on it ; and a gentleman who used to drive a yellow-bodied coach with four piebald horses, which he alluded to humorously as his mustard-pot and guinea-pigs, who having run through one fortune seems likely to make another. A sporting baronet, who takes an interest in yachting ; a dramatist, who has written more than one racing play, and no doubt finds the American Bar useful for his local colour ; our cleverest caricaturist, and a dozen or two less well-known people, formed a solid mass before the bar, and occupied all the available tables. We had finished our Burgundy, which for its price was exceptionally good, and my guest had eaten some cheddar cheese, when the roving disposition of the racing romancer asserted itself, and for our coffee and liqueurs we must needs go to the hospitable Eccentric Club across the way, so I called for the bill : Two consommés, 2s. ; two salmon, 4s. ; two filets sautés, 6s. ; cheese, 6d. ; Burgundy, 5s. ; total, 17s. 6d.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MERCERS' HALL (CHEAPSIDE)

IT is not the least pleasant part of writing of dinners and those who eat them that it brings me some varied correspondence, and perhaps the pleasantest letter I received when these accounts of various dinners were first published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* was one asking me if I would like to dine with the Company of Mercers ; for if I would, my correspondent offered to send me an invitation.

If there was one City Company that I was anxious to dine with it was the Mercers, for most of my forebears had been of the guild. My great-great-uncle, who was Lord Mayor and an M.P., and who fell into unpopularity because he advocated paying the debts of George IV., was a Mercer ; my great-uncle was in his turn Master of the Company, and my grandfather, who was a very peppery and litigious old gentleman, has left many pamphlets in which he tried to make it warm for everybody all round because he was not raised to the Court of Assistants when he thought he should have been. I had looked

out Mercers' Hall in the Directory, and found its position put down as 4 Ironmonger Lane, Cheapside ; so a few minutes before seven o'clock, the hour at which we were bidden to the feast, I found my way from Moorgate Street Station to Ironmonger Lane, and there asked a policeman which was the Mercers' Company Hall. He looked at me a little curiously and pointed to some great gates, with a lamp above them, enshrined in a rather dingy portal. I passed a fountain, of which two cherubs held the jet and three stone cranes contemplated the water in the basin, and found myself in a great pillared space. A servant in a brown livery, of whom I asked my way, pointed to some steps and said something about hurrying up. At the top of the steps a door led me into a passage, on either side of which were sitting gentlemen in dress-clothes. I looked at them and they looked at me, and I thought for a second that the Mercers' guests were rather a queer lot ; and then the true inwardness of the situation burst on me. I had come in by the waiters' door.

I was soon put right, my hat and coat taken from me, and my card of invitation placed in the hands of a Master of the Ceremonies, who in due time presented me to the Master, to the Senior Warden, and to the House Warden, who stood in a line, arrayed in garments of purple velvet and fur, and received their guests.

The ceremony of introduction over, I was able to look around me and found myself in a drawing-room that took one away from the roar

of Cheapside to some old Venetian palace. The painted ceilings, the many-coloured marbles, the carved wood, the gilding and inlaying make the Mercers' drawing-room as princely a chamber as I have ever seen.

While the guests assembled my host's sons took me away into another room, which, with its long table, might have been a council chamber of some Doge, and here were hung portraits of the most distinguished of the Mercers. Dick Whittington looked down from a gilt frame, and Sir Thomas Gresham, and there was Sir Roundell Palmer in his judge's robes. But, preceded by some one in robes carrying a staff of office, the Master was going into the hall, and the guests streamed after him. "It only dates from after the Fire," said my host as I gazed in admiration at the magnificent proportions of this banqueting-house, the oak almost black with age, relieved by the colours of the banners that hang from the walls, by the portraits of worthies, by some noble painted windows, by the line of escutcheons which run round the room, bearing the arms of the Past-Masters of the Company, and by the carved panels, into all but two of which Grinling Gibbons threw his genius, while the two new ones compare not unfavourably with the old. At the far end of the hall is a musicians' gallery of carved oak. A bronze Laocoon wrestles with his snakes in the centre of one side of the hall, and on the other, on a mantel of red marble, a great clock is flanked by two bronzes. Three long tables run up the room to the high table, at the centre

of which is the Master's chair, and behind this chair is piled on the sideboard the Company's plate. And some of the plate is magnificent. There are the old silver salt-cellars, there are great silver tankards, gold salvers, and the gold cup given to the Mercers by the Bank of England and the Lee cup and an ornamental tun and waggon, the first of which is valued at £7000, and the second at £10,000.

"Pray, silence for grace," came in the deep bass tones of the toastmaster from behind the Master's chair, and then all of us settled down to a contemplation of the menu and to a view of our fellow-guests.

This was the dinner that Messrs. Ring and Brymer, who cater for the Mercers, put upon the table :—

<i>Madeira.</i>	Tortue. Tortue claire.
	Consommé printanière.
<i>Hock.</i>	—
<i>Steinberg, 1883.</i>	Salade de filets de soles à la russe.
	Saumon. Sauce homard.
	Blanchaille.
<i>Sauterne.</i>	—
<i>Château Yquem, 1887.</i>	Ortolans en caisse.
<i>Champagne.</i>	Mousse de foie gras aux truffes.
<i>Pommery, 1884.</i>	—
	Ponche à la Romaine.
	—
	Hanches de venaison
	Selles de mouton.
	—

Burgundy.
Chambertin, 1881.

Claret.
Château Latour, 1875.

Port.
1863.

Canetons.
Poulets de grain.
Langues de bœuf.
Jambons de Cumberland.
Crevettes en serviette.

Macédoines de fruits.
Gelées aux liqueurs.
Meringues à la crème.

Bombe glacé.
Quenelles au parmesan.

I always rather dread the length of a City dinner, but in the case of the Mercers a happy compromise seems to have been arrived at, the dinner being important enough to be styled a banquet, and not so long as to be wearying. Messrs. Ring and Brymer's cook is to be congratulated, too, for his *mousse de foie gras* was admirable.

There were some distinguished guests at the high table. At the far end, where Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, then the Senior Warden, sat, there were little splashes of colour from the ribbons of orders worn round the neck, and the sparkle of stars under the lapels of dress-coats.

The Master had on his right a well-known baronet, and on his left Silomo, who had just returned from his exciting tour in the Far East, when for a time he was a prisoner of war. Next to the friend of the Turk was an ex-M.P., and next to him again one of the humorists of the

House of Commons—an Irish Q.C., with clean-shaven, powerful face.

At the long tables sat as proper a set of gentlemen as ever gathered to a feast ; but with no special characteristics to distinguish them from any other great assemblage. The snow-white hair of a clergyman told out vividly against the background of old oak, and a miniature volunteer officer's decoration caught my eye as I looked down the table.

The dinner ended, the toastmaster's work began again, and first from the gold loving-cup and from two copies of it, the stems of which are said to have been candlesticks used when Queen Elizabeth visited the Company, we drank to each other "across and across the table." The taste of the liquor in the cup was not familiar to me, and when my host told me how it was compounded I was not surprised. It is a mixture of many wines, with a dash of strong beer.

Grace was sung by a quartet in the musicians' gallery, and then the company settled down to listen to speeches interspersed with song. By each guest was placed a little cigar-case, within it two cigars ; but these were not to be smoked yet awhile. While we sipped the '63 port, we listened to Silomo gently chaffing himself as he responded for "The Houses of Parliament." Later the Irish Q.C., who spoke for "The Visitors," caught up the ball of fun, and tossed it to and fro, and Madame Bertha Moore and Miss Marian Blinkhorn, and others sang songs and quartets, and my host told me, in the intervals, of the great store of the old clarets and

ports that the Mercers had in their cellars, which was enough to make a lover of good wine covet his neighbour's goods. And still later, after the cigars had filled the drawing-room with a light grey mist, I went forth, this time down the grand oaken staircase, with its lions clasping escutcheons. I passed into Cheapside with a very lively sense of gratitude to the Mercers in general, and my hospitable host in particular.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN ——— STREET

YET another invitation to dine from an unknown friend, and this time with a tinge of mystery to give it piquancy. My would-be host offered to give me what he believed to be one of the cheapest obtainable dinners in London, as well as one of the most amusing ; but as an introduction is required before any guest is able to use this dining-place, I was asked, should I describe it, to give no clue as to its whereabouts.

As I waited for my host at a club which happened to be not far from the district in which I was to dine, I had vague ideas that I might be blindfolded and conveyed to our destination in a four-wheeled cab, and that some blood-curdling oath as to secrecy might be demanded of me. There was none of this. My host and I walked through a labyrinth of streets, and in due time, in an unpretentious locality, came to a wine-shop, the exterior of which somewhat resembled the good bottles of wine to be found within, in that it was dusty and had a suggestion of crust about it. Inside, the piles of

bottles reaching up to the ceiling, seen in a half-light, had something of a Rembrandtesque effect.

No sooner had my companion opened the door than we were faced by a lady in black, her hair parted in the centre, whom we had caught in a moment of arrested motion, for she had a bottle in either hand and was going towards the staircase at the corner of the shop. "Is the dinner to-night at six o'clock or at seven?" my host asked in French; and he was told that it was at six, and that he was in excellent time, for as yet there were only three up above; and then I was introduced to Madame, and we three climbed the narrow staircase in company.

I had been warned that I would have to bring into use such French as I was master of, for the guests at this dinner were cosmopolitan, and the language of diplomacy was the currency for conversation; and so when on entering the room I was presented to a French lady and her husband, and to an Italian gentleman, and shook hands with them, I expressed my gratification at being admitted into this friendly circle with my best Parisian accent.

I looked round the room. In the centre was a dining-table with a clean coarse tablecloth upon it, knives and forks and spoons and glass salt-cellars—and my attention was called later on to the excellence of the crystals of salt—and an array of black bottles, which those in the hostess's hands went to join, and siphons. There were two windows, with clean muslin curtains, looking out on the dingy street. Through an open door could be seen an inner room, a bedroom, with a

very large bed showing as the principal object in it. The walls of the dining-room were covered with a brown paper with a little pattern on it. By the fireplace were hung some photographs, amongst them one of the little French gentleman I had just been introduced to, who is a member of the Covent Garden orchestra, and had been taken holding in his hand his musical instrument ; and on the wall opposite were some good portraits, the work of the Italian gentleman, who is an artist. There were lithographs and photographs of scenes in Paris, and a print of the head of Napoleon III. Photographs and china figures were on the mantelpiece, a cottage piano between the two windows ; a chiffonnier with glasses on it and a glazed cupboard completed the furniture of the room.

The guests were punctual, each lady as she came in, after the preliminary hand-shaking, going into the bedroom and putting her wraps upon the big bed ; and soon Madame cried, " À table ! "

We settled down into our places, leaving space for some late-comers who were expected. At the head of the table was a dark lady with wavy hair, an actress in a company of French comedians playing in London. Next to her sat on one side the *monsieur d'orchestre* and his wife—and every newcomer made a point of inquiring after the musician's health, for he had been, it seemed, ill, and was now convalescent—and on the other side an English major, with a waxed moustache and a flower in his button-hole, mighty fine, as old Pepys would have had it, and his good-looking

wife. Other guests at table were a lady with white hair, who was the mother of a bright-eyed, good-looking young Frenchman with a velvet collar to his coat, who was playing with a troupe of mimes at one of the variety theatres, and who faced his mother at table ; and the Italian artist who, with carefully brushed white hair, waxed moustache, and ample cravat, was as great a beau as the English major.

Under Madame's superintendence a servant, bare of arm and in a print dress, brought in through the bedroom a great soup-tureen, and we at our end of the table, who had been drinking vermouth with my host, soon found platters of excellent *crouûte-au-pot* before us.

The evening was warm, and at the request of Madame la Majoresse, as the Major's wife was called, one of the windows was opened. The little bustle caused by this was subsiding when a good-looking French lady in green made her entrance, kissed Mdme. la Majoresse, shook hands with the rest of us, settled into a place next to the bright-eyed Frenchman, and immediately felt a terrible *courant d'air*. This, of course, had to be obviated ; and after some discussion—and we all had our say—it was thought that if the door giving on to the staircase was shut the draught might vanish. The lady in green, who was a comédienne, had brought some tickets for stalls for the Opera, which she gave to Madame la Majoresse ; and this turned the conversation to the Opera and the artistes singing this year. The bright-eyed little Frenchman had an anecdote to tell of how Noté,

on the evening of the Derby Day, had from the promenade of the Empire joined in the refrain of one of the beautiful Cavalieri's songs, and how the house recognised his voice and applauded. Both the Italian artist and myself had been at the Empire that evening, and while we ate the boiled beef that succeeded the soup we discussed the matter, the Italian gentleman not having noticed the incident, I having an impression that something of the kind had happened.

Then the lady in green made the terrible discovery that we were thirteen at table, and Madame, who had been hovering between the bedroom and the dining-room, with one eye on the dinner-table and the other on the kitchen beyond, was prayed to sit down at table, which she did till the arrival of the two other guests—a lady, who had forsaken the operatic stage for matrimony, and her husband, who came in and so broke the spell.

A great bowl of macaroni succeeded the beef, and brought a volley of light-shafted chaff upon the Italian artist in whose honour it was supposed to be provided, and then we chinked glasses full of the excellent red wine, and interchanged international courtesies.

A third actress looked in for a moment or two just for a little chat with her friends amongst the diners, and then, to Madame's great grief, for there was a most excellent poulet to come, the Major and the Majoresse had to depart to dress for the Opera, and the bright-eyed young Frenchman had to be off to the variety theatre. To make up for this deprivation, however,

another guest made his appearance, and was hailed with joy. A most merry little Frenchman, with a very pretty wit, the wag of the party, was the newcomer, a *fumiste* into whose hands had been given the rearrangement of the Savoy kitchen, and who had also seen to the kitchen of the Cecil. He was a person of much importance, but he joked with the bare-armed serving-maid and made her blush, and threw Madame into a fit of laughter, and chaffed all the rest of us just as if he had been an ordinary individual and not a European celebrity.

The chicken was as admirable as Madame had said it would be, and a great bowl of salad accompanied it; and then there came a sweet of some kind and cheese and excellent coffee—"all this we get for two shillings," the Italian artist told me—and eventually when, after much handshaking, the greater portion of the guests had left, the *fumiste* came down to my end of the table and talked soldier's talk, for he had been through the Great War, calling me "Mon vieux colon," while my host played the piano softly, and the lady who had sacrificed fame for the wedding-ring sang gently an old-fashioned French *berceuse*.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DIEUDONNÉ'S (RYDER STREET)

"I THOUGHT your Galatea a superb creation, and flatter myself I gave an entirely new reading of the part of Chrysos's slave," I said; and our leading lady was kind enough to say in reply that through force of genius I raised the part of Chrysos's slave into a principal character.

I never inflict the fact upon my friends, but I am an amateur actor. I do not play Hamlet or Othello, for owing to the jealousy of "casting" committees, those parts are never offered me. I have some original readings which the world will be startled by when I *do* play Hamlet; but I can, I believe, get more expression into such sentences as "My lord, the carriage waits," than any other amateur who has ever trodden the boards of St. George's Hall.

The leading lady of a troupe of which erstwhile I was a member—a little difficulty over the allotment of the part of Young Marlowe was the cause of my ceasing to assist them—was anxious to see Réjane as Gilberte in "Frou-Frou." Her husband, a worthy man, but with

no taste for the higher dramatic art, and in the habit of saying sarcastic things as to amateurs and amateur acting, preferred the Empire to the Lyric ; hence I had the honour of escorting our leading lady to see Réjane, and asked her to dine with me at Dieudonné's as a preliminary.

It was while she trifled with a sardine at the commencement of dinner that I remarked that her Galatea was a superb creation—it really was not at all bad—and she complimented me very justly on my Chrysos's slave.

We had a table close to the window, and looked over a bank of flowers across to the rather sombre houses on the opposite side of Ryder Street. But if the look-out is not of the brightest, the inside of the room on the first floor is charming—the perfection of a room to dine in on a hot day. It is all in white. The two pillars in the centre of the room are white, the great dumb-waiter is white, the walls are white. There are delicately-painted panels, with gentlemen and ladies in powder and silk and brocade limned upon them ; the ceiling is the work of an artist, and there is here and there a touch of gold in the framing of a screen or the capital of a pillar. One little shade on each of the bunches of three electric lights, that are held by brackets from the wall, is pink, the others white. On the tables there were flowers in vases of silver. The downstairs room, which is smaller, is equally cool-looking and tastefully decorated.

M. Guffanti, the proprietor, slim, and with a moustache that a cavalryman might envy,

had come to ask whether the table he had reserved for us was to our liking, the bottle of Pol Roger was in the ice-pail within reach of my hand, and I was just going to tell our leading lady with what pleasure I recalled her Lady Teazle when we played in the schoolroom at Tadley-on-the-Marsh, and to ask her candidly what her opinion was of my rendering of the part of Joseph's valet, when Giovanini, the *maître d'hôtel*, came up with a bunch of flowers in his hand. Giovanini, bushy of eyebrows, and with whiskers that are almost Piccadilly weepers, evidently regarded our leading lady with much respectful admiration ; for he presented her with the bunch of roses. And indeed our leading lady might well compel admiration, for she was looking superbly handsome, and was wearing all her diamonds. Her appearance reminded me, as I told her later, of that evening when she made such a hit as the heroine of "Plot and Passion," at Slopperton, and I played, with some distinction, I trust, the part of Grisbouille.

What our leading lady's impressions were of my rendering of the valet in "The School for Scandal" I shall never know, for the arrival of the *consommé Nelson* turned the conversation, and I was asked as to the identity of all the people who were dining. There were two ladies at a table by themselves—Dieudonné's is one of the places where ladies can dine by themselves, without fear of any inconvenience—whom I put down as country cousins who had come up for a fortnight's shopping and sight-seeing in town. There was a family party ; husband,

wife—a stern lady with spectacles, who took immense interest in the leading lady when she overheard me call her the Ellen Terry of the amateur stage—and two children. There were two colonels and an admiral, who were going to escort two ladies to the theatre; there was a large party of French people, a very pretty dark-eyed girl among them; there were a handsome American lady and her husband; there was a Royal Engineer just off to Malta, who had played hero's parts with the leading lady—I should not wonder if he was the fellow who cut me out of the part of Young Marlowe; and there were a dozen other people whose identity I could not determine. This was the menu of the dinner, the customary *table-d'hôte* meal, a menu to which the leading lady seemed more inclined to devote attention than to my remarks on my own rendering of various characters:—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

Consommé Nelson.

Crème brésilienne.

Saumon du Rhin bouilli. Sauce mousseline.

Caneton braisé Fermière.

Noisettes de Béhaques Romaine.

Poularde de Surrey à la broche.

Salade.

Haricots verts à l'anglaise.

Bombe favourite.

Petits fours.

Laitances sur toast.

Salade de fraises.

When the creamy-pink salmon was put upon the table, M. Guffanti, going the rounds of the

tables, came and asked if everything was to our satisfaction, and as I thought it might interest the leading lady, I asked him what had become of Madame Dieudonné's little room and the pretty things that were drawn and written on its walls.

Before Dieudonné's became the handsome hotel and restaurant that it is now, it was a boarding-house which stood in high favour with such of the French artists and sculptors and singers and actors who crossed the silver streak to perfidious Albion. The *table-d'hôte* dinner, at which Mdme. Dieudonné took the head of the long table, was a celebrated institution. No one could come without being vouched for by some of the habitués, and most of the people who might be found at the board were of European celebrity. Madame had a little parlour, which was a kind of holy of holies, and on the walls of this all the most celebrated of the celebrities who were the *amis du maison* either drew a sketch or wrote a quatrain, or dotted down a bar or two of some favourite air, and the names that were signed below the sketches and the scribblings were some of those that stand highest on the roll of fame. M. Guffanti told us that in spite of all precautions the walls were spoilt, and that Madame's little parlour was now the ante-room downstairs with the Watteau panels, where people sit after dinner and drink coffee.

The duck was excellent, but to be absolutely critical I thought that the vegetables had lingered a thought too long by the fire, and if the weather had not been as muggy and stifling as it was, I

might have suggested that the lamb from which the noisettes were cut would have been better for a little longer hanging. For the rest of the dinner I had nothing but praise, and the salad of strawberries, as cold as ice could make it, was delicious. I ordered coffee and some chartreuse in crushed ice for the leading lady, and some *fin champagne* for myself and asked for my bill.

While disposing of the coffee I thought that my chance had come to get the leading lady's real opinion of my conception of the character of Joseph's valet, and began explaining at length my method of entry to announce the arrival of Charles Surface; but the leading lady rather brusquely asked for her cloak, and said we should miss part of the first act of "Frou-Frou."

I paid the bill—Two dinners, 15s.; one bottle 89, 13s.; two cafés specials, 1s. 6d.; two liqueurs, 2s.; total, £1:11:6—and helped the leading lady on with her cloak. I think she might have listened to my ideas as to the valet's entrance. These amateurs—all but myself—are so inordinately selfish.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BERKELEY (PICCADILLY)

THE Berkeley forms one of a group of hotels and restaurants of which the Savoy, Claridge's, and the Restaurant Marivaux, in Paris, are the others. The late Mr. D'Oyly Carte was the generalissimo who planned the campaigns, culinary ones which his subordinates carried out, and, as a good general should, he recommended his successful captains for promotion. Jules, who distinguished himself at the Berkeley, has now been translated to the greater responsibilities of the Savoy ; but his second-in-command succeeded to the managerial desk and the managerial cares ; there was no revolution, the traditions of the house have been carefully maintained, and the white-faced building at the corner of Berkeley Street and Piccadilly remains exactly the same comfortable place to dine, and dine well, as it was when the Editor invited me to a little feast there (*console Julio*).

It was to a small dinner that I was bidden by the wielder of the dreaded blue pencil, for we were but three, the Gracious Lady, himself, and myself, and in his note of invitation he

suggested that I should interview Jules as to the menu.

When I sent in word to Jules that I should like to see him, I had plenty of employment, during the few moments I was kept waiting, in looking at the ante-room to the right of the entrance-hall, a very handsome apartment, with old gold as the dominating colour everywhere. First, there came to me Emile, the *maître d'hôtel* whom I remember of old at the Bristol. M. Jules would not keep me waiting a moment, he said ; and even as he spoke M. Jules, in frock-coat, with a little sheaf of papers in his hand, came in. "The Editor is coming to dine here to-morrow night, and wants a little dinner for three," I began, and M. Jules selected one of the papers from his sheaf and handed it to me. He had heard in some way of the Editorial advent, and had put his suggestions as to a little dinner upon paper. They ran as follows :—

Melon Cantaloup.

Crème d'or.

Truite froide au court bouillon. Sauce verte.

Caneton Nantais à la Drexel.

Selle de pré-salé rôtie aux légumes.

Petits pois à la française.

Salade à la St-James.

Ananas glacé sibérienne.

Corbeille de petits fours.

Croustade Victoria.

I read the menu down, and when I came to the *caneton à la Drexel* I paused, and looked interrogatively at M. Jules. "It is new," he said ;

"it will be the second time that I have served it"; and I thought how honours were reserved for editors which are not given to simple correspondents. I should not wonder if some day Jules actually named a dish after the Editor.

The Gracious Lady and the Editor arrived on the stroke of eight—punctuality is the preliminary courtesy to a good dinner—and there was M. Jules waiting to show us to the very best table in the dining-room, the table by the corner window which looks out to the Green Park across the road. Emile was there also, smiling, and a waiter, with a thin line of gold edging his collar, placed the slices of iced melon before us as we sat down.

M. Jules regretted that we had not dined at the Berkeley the night before, for it had been an evening on which the restaurant had been full of interesting people—so full, indeed, that a noble lord who had given a dinner party in honour of a prima donna could only be accommodated with a table in the ante-room. We did not altogether share in Jules's regret, for we might have had to dine in the passage, and looking round at the diners at the other tables we came to the conclusion that though there were no lords, so far as we knew, nor prima donnas among them, they were, on the whole, a very smart and good-looking set. A pretty little grass widow was being entertained by a young soldier—we invented quite a Kiplingesque story about the pair; a rector up for the Oxford and Cambridge match was having his last dinner in town before he went down to his country parson-

age again; two ladies going on to the opera were dining by themselves—the Berkeley is a place where ladies can dine and lunch without an escort; two gentlemen, who from their speech were Australian—Colonial Premiers the Gracious Lady called them—were giving a dinner to two very smart ladies; there was another lady with six men at her table, all of whom she was keeping amused; there was a pretty girl, with hair of the sheen of copper and a great spray of roses, dining *tête-à-tête* with a bored-looking man with a bald head (*un mariage de convenance* was the Gracious Lady's decision); and there was a family party commanded by a stern lady with spectacles.

"Very good soup indeed," said the Editor, as he laid down his spoon, and Jules, who was within hearing, smiled as if the wish of his life had been accomplished, while Emile beamed as if he had come in for a fortune.

And indeed it would have been difficult, if we had been in a fault-finding mood, to have discovered the slightest matter to carp at in either room or dinner. The room, with its light oaken boarding, topped by a deep red frieze, its tall fireplaces with blue tiles, its white ceiling ornamented with strange devices, somewhat resembling Whistler's butterfly signature, its wooden pillars and beams, its clusters of electric lights and revolving fans, is a perfect banquet-room. Our table, gay with orchids and with sweet-peas strewn in the shape of a heart, and lighted by electric globes held by a stand of wrought-iron, was the best in the room, as I

have written above, and nowhere in England or abroad could we have been given a better dinner. Indeed, from my point of view, it was too good a dinner, for there was no weak spot in it to fasten a criticism on. The trout, in a silver boat cased in ice and ornamented with paper-paddles and a flag at bow and stern, was delicious, and Jules, with enthusiasm, described its cooking: the white wine, the pepper, the little drop of vinegar, the method of cooling.

But the dish of the evening was the *caneton à la Drexel*. No great bird of Rouen, but a delicate little fellow from Nantes was this duck, the breast cut into fillets and the inside full of a glorious mixture in which *foie gras* played a leading rôle. "It is the second time only that I have served it," said Jules again, when we complimented him; and we all fully appreciated the great honour that was being paid.

The *salade St-James*, of hearts of lettuce, tomatoes, and French beans, pleased the Gracious Lady much, and she told us to notice how the beans absorbed the flavour of the tomatoes. The ice made its appearance as a pineapple with something which looked like a bridal veil over it, and with a base of transparent ice fashioned to represent a snake among leaves. Inside the pineapple was the ice. The snake set the Editor a-telling tales of the gorgeous East. "The biggest snake I ever saw," he began, "was killed in my house at Allahabad under the ice-box." I glanced across to the Gracious Lady, who sat unmoved, apparently used to the Editor's snake stories. I glanced at the jug of hock cup,

but the Editor had only had his fair share. Then I clenched my teeth and settled down to listen, for one has to stand anything, even snake stories, from one's Editor.

The dinner ended, the coffee and old brandy absorbed by the Editor and myself, a long cigar, which he said was very good, placed in the Editor's mouth, and one of Savory's cigarettes in mine, a passion for exploring came upon us, and, with Jules as guide, we set off on a tour of the basement, the Gracious Lady holding up her skirts out of the way of the sawdust with which the floors were strewn. We went through the beautifully clean kitchen, lustrous with white tiles, over which M. Herpin holds sway, through the pantry with its glass-fronted cupboards, through the cool rooms where the meat and fowls are stored, and through the bakery where three batches of bread are baked each day. We reascended, and then the Editor, who was going on to a theatre, paid the bill:—Three dinners at 10s. 6d., £1 : 11 : 6 ; two hock cups, 16s. ; three cafés, 2s. 3d. ; liqueurs, 2s. ; cigars, 1s. ; total, £2 : 12 : 9.

* * * I think that the Editor was let off very lightly on this occasion in the matter of his bill, and when on a later occasion I expressed this opinion to M. Jules, he smiled, shrugged his shoulders a little, and gave me to understand that even managers were but mortal, and appreciated the power of the press. *À propos* of this, I have been asked time and time again whether I have not been more gently treated in the bills presented to me at the various restaurants than other men not known to be "ink-stained wretches"

are. I can only say that I always tell a manager, or *maître d'hôtel*, when I think he is giving me a bill in which the items are too lightly priced, that I write for the public, and that any man coming to his restaurant and asking for the same dinner at the same price will be perfectly justified in making himself disagreeable if he does not get it. I also, whenever I think that a manager has been too kind-hearted, let my readers know it.

M. Jules, very kindly gave me *recettes* of some of the dishes which are specialties of the Berkeley, and I subjoin those of *petite marmite à la russe*, *crème d'or*, *truite en gondolier à la Monseigneur*, *poularde à la Berkeley*, *caneton à la Drexel*, and a *timbale Parisienne*.

Petite marmite à la russe

Julienne de légumes composée de carottes, navets, poireaux, oignon, céleri et choux (braisés selon le règle), mouillez avec un bon consommé de canard clarifié, ajoutez des morceaux de canard fortement blanchis, faites bouillir doucement pour dépouiller, cuire et amener la petite marmite à un goût parfait. Servir de la crème aigrette en même temps.

Crème d'or

D'un fond de sole et volaille faites un velouté bien dépouillé, et le tenir léger; lier avec un beurre de homard, le passer crème et beurre extra fin pour finir, le goûter (il doit être de haut goût comme le bisque), garnissez d'une Royal au beurre de homard et huîtres fraîchement pochées, et leur cuisson.

Truite en gondolier à la Monseigneur

Pocher au vin du Rhin avec légumes et aromates, dresser dans un gondolier assez large pour contenir la garniture suivante : œufs pochés glacés, petites truffes, pommes au naturel, grosses quenelles, crevettes piquées sur la truite même, bouquet de queues de crevettes, champignons tournés, écrevisses dressées ; tenir le tout très chaud, glacez la truite et la garniture, saucez à part une sauce genevoise faite avec le fond du poisson.

Poularde à la Berkeley

(Pour une jolie poularde)

Deux cents grammes de riz Caroline revenu au beurre mouillé au fond blanc, assaisonnez de bon goût (bouquet garni) ; cuire dix-huit minutes, alors le riz doit se trouver à sec ; le lier avec un velouté réduit et légèrement monté à la crème, un peu de glace de viande ; ajoutez gros dés de truffe et foie gras. Vider la poularde par le haut, l'assaisonner et la farcir du riz déjà préparé, brider soigneusement pour éviter que la poularde garde une jolie forme, la citroner, la barder et la rouler dans une petite serviette. Cuisez à grand fond blanc quarante-cinq à cinquante minutes, finissez de cuire en la laissant pocher dans le cuisson. Débarassez de la serviette, la barde, dressez sur un plat rond orné d'une bordure en pain du Argent du Nouilly, saucez suprême et envoyez une saucière de sauce à part.

Caneton à la Drexel

Bridé en entrée, le passer de cinq à huit minutes à four vif pour rafermir les chairs, enlever la poitrine, et

bien parer la carcasse, l'assaisonner, la remplir d'un appareil à soufflé de canard à cru, garni en abondance de gros quartiers de truffes et foie gras de façon à reformer le canard en y ajoutant la poitrine enlevée; cuire vingt-cinq minutes, découpez les aiguillettes du caneton; et servez avec le propre fond, dégraissé et réduit au madère et porto; légèrement lié avec un peu de demi-glace garnissez de tranches de citron.

Timbale Parisienne

Pâté à brioches levé dans des moules à Charlotte cuite, regarnir de la pâté intérieur, en réservant le couvercle, que l'on glace à la glace Royale, et décore aux fruits de clemont (ou confis); d'un autre côté vous cassonez vos timbales au sucre coloré de couleurs ardentes. Coupez des fruits frais tel que ananas, poires, bananes, abricots, muscat, cerises, mettez ces fruits dans une sauce abricots au kirsch et marasquin, chauffez bien et remplissez vos timbales, servez sans faire attendre la timbale.

chef - Victor Herpin

CHAPTER XXX

THE SHIP (GREENWICH)

IT was pleasant to see Miss Dainty's (of all the principal London theatres) handwriting again. She had read all the "Dinners and Dinners," she told me, and did not think that any of them were as good as the one when I had the inspiration of her presence. She had been very ill—at the point of death, indeed—owing to a sprained ankle, which prevented her going to Ascot, for which race-meeting she had ordered three dresses, each of which was a dream. Why did I take out to dinner nobody but Editors and Society ladies now? The parrot was very well, but was pecking the feathers out of his tail. She had some new pets—two goldfish, whose glass bowl had been broken and who now lived in a big yellow vase. The cat had eaten one of the lovebirds, and was ill for two days afterwards. The pug had been exchanged for a fox-terrier—Jack, the dearest dog in the world. Jack had gone up the river on the electric launch and had fought two dogs, and had been bitten over the eye, and had covered all his mistress's white piqué skirt

with blood ; but for all that he was a duck and his mother's own darling.

This, much summarised, was the pretty little lady's letter, and I wrote back at once to say that the pleasure of entertaining a princess of the blood-royal was as nothing to the honour of her company, and if the foot was well enough, would she honour me with her presence at dinner anywhere she liked? And, as the weather had turned tropical, I suggested either Richmond or Greenwich or the restaurant at Earl's Court.

Greenwich the fair lady gave her decision for, and then I made a further suggestion : that, if she did not mind unaristocratic company, the pleasantest way was to go by boat.

This suggestion was accepted, and Miss Dainty in the late afternoon called for me at a dingy Fleet Street office. I was delighted to see the little lady, looking very fresh and nice as she sat back in her cab, and I trust that my face showed nothing except pleasure when I perceived a small fox-terrier with a large muzzle and a long leash sitting by her side. Miss Dainty explained that as she had allowed her maid to go out for the afternoon she had to bring Jack, and of course I said that I was delighted.

We embarked at the Temple pier on a boat, which was as most river-boats are. There were gentlemen who had neglected to shave, smoking strong pipes ; there were affable ladies of a conversational tendency, and there were a violin and harp ; but there were as a compensation all the beautiful sights of the river to be seen, the cathedral-like Tower Bridge, the forest of

shipping, the red-sailed boats fighting their way up against the tide, the line of barges in picturesque zig-zag following the puffing tugs; and all these things Miss Dainty saw and appreciated. There was much to tell, too, that Miss Dainty had not written in her letter, and Jack was a never-failing source of interest. Jack wound his leash round the legs of the pipe-smoking gentlemen, was not quite sure that the babies of the conversational ladies were not somethings that he ought to eat, and at intervals wanted to go overboard and fight imaginary dogs in the Thames.

Arrived at Greenwich, at the Ship (the tavern with a rather dingy front, with two tiers of bow windows, with its little garden gay with white and green lamps, and with its fountain and rockery which had bits of paper and straws floating in the basin), I asked for the proprietor. Mr. Bale, thickset, and with a little moustache, came out of his room, and whether it was that Fleet Street and the Thames had given me a tramp-like appearance, or whether it was that he did not at once take a fancy to Jack, I could not say, but he did not seem overjoyed to see us. Yet presently he thawed, told me that he had kept a table by the window for us, and that our dinner would be ready at 6.30, as I had telegraphed.

In the meantime I suggested that we should see the rest of the house. "Would it not be better to leave the dog downstairs?" suggested Mr. Bale, and Jack was tied up somewhere below, while we went round the upper two

stories of dining-rooms—for the Ship is a house of nothing but dining-rooms. It is a tavern, not a hotel, and there are no bedrooms for guests. We went into the pleasant bow-windowed rooms on the first floor, in one of which a table was laid ready, with a very beautiful decoration of pink and white flowers, and in the other of which stand the busts of Fox and Pitt. We looked at the two curious wooden images in the passage, at the chairs with the picture of a ship let into their backs, and at the flags of all nations which hang in the long banqueting-room; and all the time Jack, tied up below, lifted up his voice and wept.

I asked if Jack might be allowed to come into the dining-room and sit beside his mistress while we had dinner, giving the dog a character for peacefulness and quiet for which I might have been prosecuted for perjury; but it was against the rules of the house, and Mr. Bale suggested that if Jack was tied up to a pole of the awning just outside the window he would be able to gaze through the glass at his mistress and be happy.

A fine old Britannic waiter, who looked like a very much reduced copy of Sir William Vernon-Harcourt, put down two round silver dishes, lifted up the covers, and there were two *souchés*, one of salmon and one of flounder. I helped Miss Dainty to some of the salmon and filled her glass with the Pommery, which, after much thought, I had selected from the wine list. But she touched neither; her eyes were on Jack outside, for that accomplished dog, after doing a

maypole dance round the pole, had now arrived at the end of his leash—and incipient strangulation. Miss Dainty went outside to rescue her pet from instant death, and I, having eaten my *souché*, followed. Jack wanted water, and a sympathetic hall porter who appeared on the scene volunteered to get him a soup-plateful, and tie him somewhere where he could not strangle himself.

The *souchés* had been removed, and some lobster rissoles and fried slips had taken their place. Miss Dainty took a rissole and ate it while she watched the hall porter put Jack's plate of water down, and I made short work of a slip and was going to try the rissoles when Jack, in a plaintive tone of voice, informed the world that something was the matter. His mistress understood him at once. The poor dear would not drink his water unless she stood by; and this having been proved by actual fact, Miss Dainty, with myself in attendance, came back to find that whiting puddings and stewed eels had taken the place of the former dishes.

Miss Dainty took a small helping of the eels, looked at it, and then turned her eyes again to Jack, who was going through a series of gymnastics. I ate my whiting pudding, which I love, in fevered haste, and had got halfway through my helping of eels, when Miss Dainty discovered what was the matter with Jack. The boys on the steps below were annoying him, and the only way to keep him quiet would be to give him some bones. The sympathetic hall porter again came to the rescue, and Jack, under his

mistress's eye, made fine trencher play with two bones.

There was a look of reproach in the veteran waiter's eye when we came back and found the crab omelette and salmon cutlets *à l'indienne* were cooling. I tried to draw Miss Dainty's attention away from Jack. I told her how Mr. *Punch* had called her Faustine, and had written a page about her ; but when she found there was nothing to quote in her book of press notices she lost all interest in the hump-backed gentleman.

With the advent of the plain whitebait a new danger to Jack arose. A turtle was brought by three men on to the lawn and turned loose, and Miss Dainty had to go out and assure herself that Jack was not frightened, and that the turtle was not meditating an attack upon him.

The turtle was found to be a harmless and interesting insect, and having been shown, with practical illustrations, how the beast was captured by savages, Miss Dainty took great pity on it, collected water in the soup-plate from the fountain, poured it over its head, and tried to induce it to drink, which the turtle steadfastly refused to do.

The veteran waiter was stern when we returned and found the devilled whitebait on the table. I told him to bring the coffee and liqueurs and bill out into the garden, because Miss Dainty, having been separated from her dog so long, wanted to nurse and pet him.

This was the bill :—Two dinners, 14s. ; one Pommery, 18s. ; two liqueurs, 1s. 6d. ; coffee, 1s. ; attendance, 1s. ; total, £1 : 15 : 6.

We sat and watched St. Paul's stand clear against the sunset, and Miss Dainty, her dog happy in her lap, suddenly said, "If you give this place a good notice, I'll never speak to you again."

"Why?" I replied. "The whitebait was delicious, the whiting pudding capital, the omelette good. I liked the fried slips and the rissoles."

"Yes, perhaps," said Miss Dainty, with a pout. "But they wouldn't let me have my dog in the dining-room!"

CHAPTER XXXI

PAGANI'S (GREAT PORTLAND STREET)

"If you will dine with me on Sunday night I will give you dinner in the most interesting private dining-room that any restaurant in London can show," I said to little Mrs. Tota.

"She'll do nothing of the sort," said George, her husband, from behind his paper.

"George!" said little Mrs. Tota, and there was a mixture of astonishment, query, and reproof in the way she spoke her husband's name.

George laid down his newspaper. "Since you took her to dine in that private room at Kettner's nothing has been good enough for her. She would like a *maitre d'hôtel* and a head-waiter dancing round her at every meal, and she can't go out of the front door without looking round to see if there is a manager there to bow her out."

"You are perfectly horrid, George," said little Mrs. Tota with some asperity. "You won't take me out yourself, and when other people are kind enough to offer to do so you are as cross and sarcastic as you can be."

George looked at me with the corners of his mouth drawn up by a suppressed smile, and his left eyebrow twitched as if he felt inclined to wink. I poured oil on the troubled waters. If Mrs. Tota, with her husband's permission, would dine with me at Pagani's on Sunday we would dine in the public dining-room on the first floor, and look afterwards at the drawings and signatures in the celebrated little room on the second floor.

"It is real good of you to take the wife out," said George, as he saw me off the premises. "I hate going out at night, as you know, but she enjoys it all thoroughly. She chattered about that last dinner for a good month."

On the Saturday I went to Pagani's, secured a table for the next evening in the room on the first floor, a very pretty dining-room with soft blue curtains to the windows, a blue paper on the walls, shaded electric lights, and a little bow-window at the back, which makes the snuggest of nooks. Then M. Giuseppe Pagani, one of the two proprietors, having appeared, we talked over the important matter of the menu. The difficulty that vexed our minds was whether *filets de sole Pagani* or *turbot à la Pellegrini* would best suit a lady's appetite. Finally the sole won the day. I hesitated a moment over the *Bortsch* soup, for it has become almost as much a standing dish as *croûte-au-pot* in most restaurants ; but *Bortsch* is the customary Sunday soup at Pagani's, so it had to be included in the menu.

This was our list completed :—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.	
Potage Bortsch.	
Filets de sole Pagani.	
Tournedos aux truffes.	
Haricots verts sautés.	Pommes croquettes.
Perdreau Voisin.	Salade.
Soufflé au curaçoa.	

At eight o'clock on Sunday I was waiting for Mrs. Tota in the arched entrance which is one of the distinctive features of the modern Pagani's. Glazed grey tiles front the whole of the ground floor, the rest of the building being red brick, which however is now being covered with a gorgeous front of glazed tiles, and the deep entrance arches are supported by squat little blue pillars. The curve of the arches are set with rows of electric light, which give the little restaurant the appearance of having been illuminated for a fête every night. Pagani's has flourished exceedingly and is still spreading, a house next door to the old restaurant having now been wonderfully decorated and incorporated into the bigger building.

"Now mind, I want to see everything, and be told who everybody is," said Mrs. Tota as she got out of the cab, and I promised to do my best to carry out her wishes, and suggested that we should peep into the room on the ground floor before we went upstairs.

The long room, with its golden paper, its mirrors painted with flowers and trellis-work, its little counter piled with fruit, was crowded with

diners, not one of the many little tables being vacant. A great hum of talk fell on our ears, and many of the gentlemen at the tables were gesticulating as only foreigners can. I told Mrs. Tota that at least half the guests were musicians or singers, and immediately she was all attention. One gentleman, with long hair and a close-clipped beard, she recognised as a well-known violinist; and a gentleman with a black moustache and a great bush of rebellious hair, she identified as a celebrated baritone, though he looked strange, she thought, without a frock-coat, lavender kid gloves, and a roll of music in his hands.

In the blue room on the first floor the tables were mostly occupied by couples, and Mrs. Tota wished to know if this was where the married musicians came. The gentleman with the clean-shaven face at the next table to ours, deep in conversation with a very pretty lady in a fur toque, was certainly a doctor, and the gentleman with a white moustache, who had secured the table in the little bow-window, was evidently a soldier; the two ladies dining *tête-à-tête* did not look musical, but on the first floor, as on the ground floor, the majority of the guests were evidently of the artistic temperament.

The *Bortsch* was excellent, and when the *sole Pagani* made its appearance M. Meschini, the partner of M. Pagani, came to our table to ask whether the dish was approved of. "It is beautiful," said little Mrs. Tota. "What are the wonderful little pink things with such a delicious taste?" M. Meschini, without moving a muscle of his face, told her that they were

shrimps, which, with fresh mushrooms and *moules*, help to give a distinctiveness to this excellent dish. "How was I to know a shrimp without his head and tail and scales?" said Mrs. Tota, when M. Meschini had moved on.

Mrs. Tota ate some of the *tournedos truffés*, and gave her opinion that the truffles were perfectly heavenly; but I preferred to wait for the partridge and its casserole, with all its savoury surroundings. M. Notari, the chef, is an artist in his kitchen, and nowhere in London could we have found a better-cooked bird.

To establish my claim to be critical, I said that I had tasted better *soufflés*, but Mrs. Tota, telling me that I was a pampered Sybarite, ate her helping with perfect content. The two pints of Veuve Clicquot we drank were excellent, and with a Biscuit Pagani, two cups of Café Pagani and liqueurs, we ended a very good dinner.

I paid my bill: Bread and butter, 4d.; hors-d'œuvre, 6d.; soup, 1s. 6d.; fish, 2s.; joint, 2s.; game, 5s.; vegetables, 1s.; sweets, 1s. 6d.; ices, 1s.; salad, 10d.; wine, 14s.; coffee, 1s.; liqueurs, 2s. 6d.; total, £1 : 13 : 2, and then asked M. Meschini to take us upstairs and show us the private dining-room, which is known as the artists' room.

When we came to the little room with its ruby velvet curtains and mantel drapings, its squares of what looks like brown paper, at about the height of a man's head, covered with drawings and writings, and protected by glass, its framed drawings and paintings, Mrs. Tota turned to me and asked me if I often brought my invalid maiden aunt to dine here.

"Invalid maiden aunt?" I said with astonishment, but remembered in a second that I had mentioned some such relative (or was it an uncle?) when we dined in the private room at Kettner's. Mrs. Tota laughed and turned to M. Meschini, who was beginning to explain the various works of art.

The name of Julia Neilson, written in bold characters, catches the eye as soon as any other inscription on these sections of a wall of days gone by; but it is well worth while to take the panels one by one, and to go over these sections of brown plaster inch by inch. Mascagni has written the first bars of one of the airs from "Cavalleria Rusticana," Denza has scribbled the opening bars of "Funiculi, Funicula," Lamoureux has written a tiny hymn of praise to the cook, Ysaye has lamented that he is always tied to "notes," which, with a waiter and a bill at his elbow, might have a double meaning. Phil May has dashed some caricatures upon the wall, a well-meant attempt on the part of a German waiter to wash one of these out having resulted in the "sack" of the said waiter and the glazing of the wall. Mario has drawn a picture of a fashionable lady, and Val Prinsep and a dozen artists of like calibre have, in pencil, or sepia, or pastel, noted brilliant trifles on the wall. Paderewski, Puccini, Chaminade, Calvé, Piatti, Plançon, De Lucia, Melba, Menpes, Tosti, are some of the signatures; and as little Mrs. Tota read the names she became as serious as if she were in church, for this little chamber is in its way a temple dedicated to the artistic great who have dined.

* * * I asked M. Meschini if he would be so kind as to give me the *recette* for the *filets de sole Pagani*, and here it is just as he wrote it down for me.

Filets sole Pagani

The sole is first of all filleted, and with the bones, some mussels, and a little white wine, a *fumée de poisson* is made in which the fillets of the sole are then cooked.

The cook takes this *cuisson*, and by adding some well-chopped fresh mushrooms, makes with that what he calls a *réduction*; to this he adds some *velouté*, little cream, fresh butter, some lemon juice, pepper and salt, and cooks the whole together till well mixed, then passes it *à l'étamine*. With this the sauce is made. The cooked fillets of sole and eight or ten mussels are then placed ready on a silver dish, and the above made sauce poured over them. The top is well sprinkled with fresh Parmesan cheese, and after allowing them to *gratiner* for a minute or two, are ready to be put on the customer's table.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

I HAVE a vague remembrance of having as a small boy been taken round the Houses of Lords and Commons as a holiday treat. The Houses cannot have been sitting at the time, and the only thing that I remembered was the fact that the Lords sat on red seats, the Commons on green.

I did once, in later years, make an attempt to gain admission to hear a debate ; but, after some waiting, the legislator to whom I had sent in my card came out with rather a long face. He had moved heaven and earth, he said, to find a place for me, but it was impossible. However, he suggested, brightening up, there was nothing to prevent our going together to the Aquarium over the way, which we should find much more amusing.

The House of Commons was, therefore, quite new ground to me, and I was very pleased when the Rising Legislator asked me if I would not dine some night with him in the House and hear a debate afterwards.

The House of Commons is a nice comforting

address to give a cabman, and as I drove down Westminsterwards I felt that in the eyes of one individual I was that glorious person, an M.P.

But, if my cabman thought I was the member for somewhere or another, he was soon undeceived. We bowled into Palace Yard as if the place belonged to me, and pulled up at an arched door, where a policeman was on guard. I mentioned the Rising Legislator's name, but the policeman, who, though hard-hearted, had excellent manners, could not admit me except on the personal appearance of my host.

"Then where am I to go?" I said, appealing to the better side of that policeman's nature, and he told me to go out of the yard and turn to the right, and I would be admitted at the first door. The cabman, who had been listening, must have been satisfied with the fare I gave him, for he invited me to get into the cab again, and said he would take me round to the right place in a jiffy. Though friendly, there was a distinct familiarity now in the cabman's manner. I had ceased to be an M.P. in his eyes.

The policeman at this other door was not hard-hearted, and directed me up a long lobby, on either side of which were gentlemen of various periods, in very white marble. Every policeman I passed I mentioned the Rising Legislator's name to, just as a guarantee of good faith, and I was passed on to a central lobby, where a small selection of the public, looking very melancholy, were sitting patiently on a stone bench, and where gentlemen of noble appearance—I do not wish to be brought up at the bar of the House

for saying anything disrespectful of any member of the House—were in converse with others, whom I took to be influential constituents. Some ladies in evening dress were being shown about by smart gentlemen. There were policemen guarding an entrance, and whenever any body of the outside crowd approached it they were warned away with a kind of “stand out of the draught” motion. It is, no doubt, some deadly crime to get in the way of an M.P. in his own House.

A policeman directed me to write the Rising Legislator’s name on the back of my card, and, having scrutinised it to see whether I had spelled the name correctly, handed it over to a gentleman in dress clothes with what looked like a gilt plate with the Royal arms on it at the V of his waistcoat. I waited some little time and inspected the statues, some of which were rather comic, in the Lobby.

Presently the Rising Legislator appeared, and apologised for being somewhat late. A chat with a Cabinet Minister was the cause. I felt a sort of reflected glory in this. We passed the sacred portals, and, as we did so, I gave the policeman a glance as much as to say: “You see, I didn’t deceive you ; I really do know him !” And I set my hat on the side of my head with more of a cock. “It is the custom for no one except the members of the House to wear their hats here,” said the Rising Legislator ; and I relapsed again into humility.

We peeped through a door and I was shown the Speaker in the chair, whom I looked at with

due awe ; and then we went down a long, panelled passage, the panels being the lockers, of which each member has one, and presently we were in a lofty room with three great windows, and the Rising Legislator was asking for the table that had been reserved for him.

It is a fine room, this Strangers' Dining-Room. The ceiling is nobly ornamented, and the clusters of electric lights dropping from it illumine the room cheerfully. On the walls is a paper with a pattern in which heraldic roses and fleurs-de-lys play the principal part ; the curtains to the windows are of a soft green, and at about the height of a man's head, topping the oak panelling, is a fine work of art, a broad border of carvings of such things as furnish the good fare of the table. The great windows, looking out on the Terrace and the river, have massive stone frames, and inside they have as well a second wooden framing, with all the modern appliances for letting in fresh air. There is a little desk, with an accountant sitting at it. Beyond him, through an open door, there is a glimpse of the Members' Dining-Room. The chairs are covered with green leather, and have stamped on their backs a gilt portcullis. It is in most things just like the dining-room of some big club.

I had asked to be given the ordinary dinner ; but the Rising Legislator insisted on our having either a duck or a chicken in our menu. He ordered *consommé Brunoise*, which, looking at the bill of fare with him, I saw would cost him 5d. a portion ; whitebait ; *noisettes de mouton aux haricots verts*, two portions of which would cost him half

a crown. From the price list I gathered, too, that hon. members can have a dinner, at fixed price, of two courses for 1s. 9d., three for 2s. 3d., four for 3s.

There was a difficulty about the duck, or chicken, and the waiter had to go from the table to the desk a couple of times before it was discovered that the Rising Legislator could have a duck; and a fine fat duck it was when it appeared. "I have got to speak to-night," said the Rising Legislator, "and therefore we must have champagne," and he ordered some Clicquot to be put on ice. While the *pourparlers* as to the duck were in progress I had time to look round at the little tables and the people dining at them. There were but few diners yet; but two of the faces at the table next to ours caught my eye at once as being familiar. The hair, with a streak of grey in it, the long face, the spectacles, the straight beard, belonged to Mr. Dillon, and the man opposite to him with the penthouse brows and the sleeve pinned up on to his coat was Michael Davitt. The little stout gentleman with a moustache, fingering his pince-nez, who came up presently to speak to them, was Dr. Tanner.

Just as the duck difficulty was settled and our soup put before us, somebody entered the room and mumbled something in a loud voice. "Speaker has left the chair," said the Rising Legislator in explanation, and immediately the tables began to fill. Mr. Walter Long and two friends were the first to enter; then, in succession, baldish of head, bearded, and in a very long frock-coat, Sir

William Wedderburn ; Mr. Morrell, broad of face ; Mr. Yoxall, champion of the N.U.T., thin and lightly bearded ; Mr. Sam Smith, with a big white beard ; and burly Mr. Henniker-Heaton, the Imperial Postmaster-General of time to come—all familiar public figures easy to recognise. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, in a grey Ascot suit and a blue-and-white shirt, hovered about the desk by the entrance, as if waiting for some one who did not appear.

The whitebait was excellent, the duck in life must have been a bird of aldermanic figure, the *noisettes* in size would have satisfied a hungry man and in tenderness have pleased a gourmet, and we had come to the strawberry-ice stage when again there was a loud mumble, and the Rising Legislator told me that the Speaker was in the chair.

From strawberry ice we had progressed to coffee and old brandy, when behind the wainscoting there was a ringing as of many bicycle bells, and about half of the diners rose, grasped their hats, and ran as swiftly as if they were going to a fire.

"It is a count," said the Rising Legislator. "*We* will go down on to the Terrace and smoke a cigar before I find you a place to listen to the debate." Down a staircase with beautiful dark old panelling of the napkin pattern we went until we came to the dimness of the Terrace, where a policeman stood at ease to mark the spot sacred to members only, and where the ladies who had dined in the House formed the centres of groups. We watched the lights twinkle in

the great hospital across the dark flood, and the red and green eyes of a launch that came slipping down the river. Presently, with a sigh, the Rising Legislator threw away his cigar. "I suppose we must go in and hear what they are talking of," he said.

CHAPTER XXXIII

EARL'S COURT

IN the morning, with my shaving water, was brought a note in a dashing feminine handwriting. It was from the little American prima donna to say she was sorry that she had forgotten, but she was engaged to dine with some friends who were leaving England, and would I take her out some other night instead ; and she considerately suggested two evenings on which she should have known that I would be out of town for Goodwood.

I felt inclined to reply, like Uncle Gregory, that I knew those friends—"they cum fr' Sheffield"; but I did nothing worse than to write that of course I would take her out with pleasure on the first evening she had vacant when I came back to town.

I had arranged to drive her down to Earl's Court to give her dinner at the Quadrant, to take her on to the lawn of the Welcome Club for coffee and liqueurs, and then to go the round of the side shows. It is not easy in August to find a lady to take out to dinner at twelve hours'

notice. Mrs. Charlie Sphinx was at Carlsbad, and Miss Dainty was taking a holiday from the wear and tear of "resting" at some French watering-place. Mrs. Tota was in Wales.

At the worst, I thought, I could pick up a man at the club; but the few men in the smoking-room had either to go back to their wives or had some dinner engagement. So it came that I started alone for Earl's Court.

I had written for a table to be kept for me at eight o'clock, and a few minutes before the hour I disembarked at the entrance by the lake. It was between the lights, and the great white globes aglow with electricity looked garish against the delicate opal of the sky, and cast strange reflections on the water. I paused for a moment to listen to the musicians on their island bandstand commencing the march from "Aïda," and then went past a buffet where a little crowd were dining frugally off sandwiches and pale ale, over the long bridge, through the gardens, and at last to the restaurant. In front of the broad awning which stretches before the restaurant, standing by a red rope, which keeps the public from coming too near, are two janitors, who, in their dark blue and peaked caps, look rather like warders: a clerk at a desk, with a big open book before him, sits opposite to the entrance.

Had I booked a table? the clerk asked me as I came up. Certainly I had. I had written that I wanted a particularly good table at eight o'clock. The clerk looked up at a tall gentleman who stood behind him, Messrs. Spiers and Pond's

manager, and the gentleman looked at his watch. It was a quarter-past eight. The manager explained that no tables were kept after eight, and drew a vivid picture of a well-dressed but famished crowd standing outside at the red ropes and threatening to tear down the place if they were not admitted to the vacant places. My table had been given to an eminently respectable couple who did not look as if they would tear down anything, and I was about to go over the way to the Welcome, in wrath, when it was found that there was a table for four, right up against the barrier, vacant; and I settled down in solitary dignity at one of the best tables in the place. A smart young waiter, in white apron and brown coat with pink facings, put the menu in front of me. I ordered a pint of Deutz and Gelderman to be put in ice, and then looked round me.

Immediately behind me a party were being entertained by two young barristers. I could hear but not see them. They were telling legal stories, and there was one as to Inderwick and the House of Lords that set their table in a roar. Opposite to me was a little family of father, mother, and son, and a pretty girl came bustling in to complete the party, with, from her manner, a tale of misadventure and delay to be told. A bald-headed, smart-looking soldier, a cavalryman from his bearing, was giving dinner to a youngster who might be at a crammer's—they were among the few men wearing evening dress; there was an engaged couple who gazed into each other's eyes across the table, and there was

a fat gentleman, who I should think was a Jewish financier, who was giving dinner to a girl with many rows of pearls round her throat and a glint of diamonds on her dress. The financier was drinking the girl's health, and as he held back his head to drain his glass she made, lightning quick, a face at him, which said more than pages of history.

I had eaten my *hors-d'œuvre*, and the waiter brought me the clear soup I had chosen. It was not as hot as it might have been; but the kitchen is some way off from the tables at the far edge of the awning, and, with one of the most wonderful outlooks in the world, one is not prepared to be over-particular as to cookery.

The opal tints in the sky had died out and had left it a sheet of steel. On the right the tall white building in which is the panorama was already shining with electric light; the canvas buttresses and towers, looking solid enough now, stood black against the grey. In the bandstand in the centre of the promenade Dan Godfrey and his crimson-coated musicians were playing a waltz air, and a crowd, dimly seen, was moving round and round this centre of attraction. The Welcome Club, with its lighted windows, was away to the left, and, above all, the Great Wheel, starred with lights, moved its circle very gently and silently. Men in the half light were running hither and thither with long sticks with a flame at the end, and lights green, white, and rose began to twinkle on all sides.

The choice had been given me between *saumon*, *sauce Rubens*, and *filet de merlan frit*,

sauce Ravigote. I chose the whiting, and had the cook only been more careful in boning his fish, I should have called it excellent.

The engaged couple had left their table, and a merry party, two nice-looking girls, a young, clean-shaven man, and a grey-haired *bon vivant*, had taken their places. The girls, who had evidently come out to enjoy themselves thoroughly, were laughing already.

The financier had ordered another bottle of champagne; the girl with the pearls opposite to him, her chin on her fist, was gazing out at the sky from which the light had faded. A big party, the men in evening dress, passed through under the awning to the big room of the restaurant, a room decorated with paintings of Indian gods and heroes and rajahs, and the red shades of the candles on their table made a pleasant note of warm colour.

My waiter brought the *pigeon braisé Dëmidoff*. I looked at it and it appeared nice; but I sent it away, for I was not hungry, and there were other dishes still to come.

The sky now was all light indigo, with the clouds deeper patches of the same colour. All the little lamps in the garden were alight, twinkling in great curves against the black of the battlements. The bandstand was outlined with rose: the Welcome Club was ablaze with green: the trees under all this light had a strange metallic shine. The rays from the searchlight came sweeping overhead: the Wheel with its circle of stars still turned solemnly. Amidst all the lights one inscription in green and white

lamps, "Infant Incubator," fixed itself on my attention, and I found myself wondering what an infant incubator could be like.

The crowd outside had increased in number. There seemed to be many ladies in white with white hats amongst it ; there was occasionally a gleam of white shirt fronts ; little boys in straw hats and Eton collars dived into the thick, and then reappeared ; the programme boys came and went. The band was hammering away at the "Mikado." Two pretty girls in black dresses with wide white collars, one with a white sailor hat, one with a black one, paused outside to watch us dining. I should have liked to ask them in to dine, for I was feeling very lonely, but I remembered British conventionality, and forbore. The *côtelette d'agneau à la Bellevue* which the waiter brought me was hot and well cooked, but I do not think that the chicken, a wing of which succeeded the cutlet, could have lived a very happy life. I think it must have been consumptive.

The restaurant was beginning to empty now, the guests filing out in twos and threes, and vanishing into the parti-coloured crowd ; and still the Wheel, with its silent power, turned, and still the "Infant Incubator" danced before my eyes.

The beans, the ice, and the peach with which I finished my dinner were all good—I refused the *pouding Victoria* which was on the menu ; and after sipping my coffee and paying my bill—one dinner, 7s. 6d. ; one pint 239, 6s. 6d. ; liqueur, 2s. ; total, 16s.—I obeyed an irresistible impulse and went over to see what an infant incubator was like.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE STAR AND GARTER, RICHMOND

THE little American prima donna was not so faithless as I thought, for when, Goodwood being over, I wrote to her and asked her if she would not take pity on a poor bachelor stranded in a deserted town, and drive down to Richmond and dine, she telegraphed back a "Yes," and told me that I might come and pick her up at the Hôtel Cecil.

The covered-in space before the big caravan-serai in the Strand in June and July, is almost as representative of English life as is church parade in the Park. In August it is more like the hall of an hotel at some big American watering-place, for our cousins from across the herring-pond take possession of all the seats, and sit all day long drinking iced drinks through straws, and listening to the band.

I found the little prima donna, looking very fresh and cool in pink, rocking herself in a chair, and was immediately denounced for being in dress clothes when I had wired to her not to change into evening dress. I explained that

dress clothes with a man are a very different thing from evening dress with a lady, and also that it was the custom. "Some of your English customs do tire me," was the remark with which the prima donna closed the discussion, and then told me that I might have a cocktail if I thought that it would make me feel good. This libation in honour of the great republic performed, we started. The little prima donna, once the dress clothes forgiven, was prepared to be pleased. She had a remark to make as to everything that we passed, and reconstructed for me the Fulham Road as it would be in an American city. In time she thought we might learn how to build a town. The groups of ponies coming back from Ranelagh, where the last match of the season had been played between the Butterflies and a home team, interested her immensely, as also did some of the players driving back in their neat little carts at a great pace, and later on a glimpse of the club grounds with the great elms, the glint of water through a thicket, and the smooth green of the polo ground, set her talking of American polo grounds, Myopia, and other names which were strange to me; and though she was quite sure that the boys over in America could whip our British players every time, still she allowed that they had nothing there quite like the grey old house with its elms and its water. The conversion of the little prima donna was commencing.

The sun set, a red ball dipping into the brown heat mist, as we passed over Barnes Common, and when the little prima donna said that we

had nothing in England like the sunsets over the Hudson, I felt that on this day, at least, the sun was not behaving well in his manner of setting.

We came to Richmond Park in the afterglow, and going in through the Sheen gate, drove through the Park, which was glorified by the rosy dimness which lingers so long at the close of a hot August day. The mysterious light was on the great trees and the stretches of bracken and the rolling distances of sward. The deer were moving through the fern, and there was a drowsy silence, broken only by the calling of the birds and the faint hum of the outside world shut away beyond this fairy paradise. The little prima donna sat with parted lips and wide-open eyes, drinking in all the scene and whispering at intervals, "Beautiful! beautiful!" I had no need to ask her whether there was anything like this in her country across the ocean.

Presently the bicyclists came drifting down the road in shoals. These swift, silent travellers put a modern note into the picture of old-time woodland, and suddenly we came to the iron gates, and the tall, grey house, and the little prima donna said that her drive through fairyland had given her an appetite.

The Star and Garter has as many appearances and moods as a pretty woman. On a Sunday afternoon, when the bicycles are piled in tens of scores outside the building, when the gravel is crunched continuously by carriages coming and going, when every table in both dining-rooms

has its full complement of guests, and little groups stand outside the glass panelling watching for their turn to come, when the coffee-drinkers sit at the round tables in the passage, and the terrace is bright with girls' dresses, and rings with laughter, when far below, the face of the river is crowded with boats, and a crowd streams along the towing-path, then the Star and Garter is frankly, merrily Cockney. But on a summer night when the moon is at the full, when the windows of the ball-room are alight, and the whisper of a waltz tune comes down to the terrace, when the river runs a ribbon of silver through the misty landscape, then the Star and Garter becomes an enchanted palace.

It was a quiet evening on the day that I drove down with the little prima donna, but had I not telegraphed early in the day we should not have got the table for two by the open window that looked out on to the terrace and to the Thames in the valley below.

The little prima donna stood by the window and gazed out. She felt the charm of the scene, but fought against it, for she was a little piqued that she had never seen anything quite like it before, that the United States did not hold its exact parallel. "I guess it is that your landscapes are so small and so easily filled up that makes them so different from ours," was her explanation; but that was not what she meant.

The manager of the restaurant had told me that he had ordered a little dinner for me, some *hors-d'œuvre*, *petite marmite*, red mullet, *tournedos*, *pommes sautées*, a duckling, salad, and some ices;

and I told him that that would do very nicely. The *hors-d'œuvre* were on the table, but it was difficult, hungry as she was, to induce the little prima donna to leave her first view of the river, a river now grown steel-colour in the growing darkness, and to turn to the prosaic side of life, and dinner.

It is a comfortable dining-room, with its green curtains to the big bow-window, its paper with a flower pattern, its mirrors and its great panes of glass through which the arched looking-glasses of the hall can be seen. Of our fellow-diners there was no one whose face is well known to the world. There was a young man with gold buttons to his coat and a suggestion of the Georgian period in his full head of hair, who was dining *tête-à-tête* with a pretty dark-haired lady; there was a bald-headed gentleman entertaining a family party; there were three young gentlemen dining by themselves very merrily; the rest were the people one sees at any good hotel.

The soup was excellent — though why managers of restaurants always seem to think that *petite marmite* is the only soup in existence I do not know; but the prima donna was glad to put down her spoon and look out of the window again. She had read that morning, she told me, all the descriptions she could find of Richmond, in prose and verse; but the real thing was more beautiful than any description of it had prepared her for. I felt that the conversion of the little American was progressing.

The fish was not a success. The weather

was very hot, and, as the prima donna put it, "this mullet, I guess, has not been scientifically embalmed." The waiter, deeply grieved, spirited the fish away, and put the tournedos, which were excellently cooked, in their place.

The pine outside the window was black now against the sky, and a chilly breeze came up from the river. The little prima donna felt the chill, and drew her cloak over her shoulders.

The duck was plump and tender, and when she had trifled with a wing, the prima donna, hoping that nobody would be horrified, asked for a cigarette. The ice and coffee and liqueurs finished, I called for the bill—*hors-d'œuvre*, 2s. ; marmite, 1s. 6d. ; tournedos, 4s. ; pommes, 1s. ; caneton, 8s. 6d. ; salade, 1s. ; ices, 2s. ; coffee, 1s. ; one bottle Deutz and Gelderman, 12s. 6d. ; cigarettes, 1s. ; liqueurs, 2s. 6d. ; couverts, 1s. ; total, £1 : 18s.—and then suggested that we should go down on to the terrace. The prima donna leant over the balustrade, her cigarette making a point of light, and gazed in silence at the darkened landscape. The river, visible still amidst the darkness, had caught and held in its bosom the reflections of the summer stars and of a newborn moon. Presently she threw away the little roll of paper and tobacco, and began quoting in a low voice—a speaking voice as musical as singing—the lines of poor Mortimer Collins's swan song :—

Stern hours have the merciless fates
Plotted for all who die ;

But looking down upon Richmond aits,
Where the merles sing low to their amorous mates,
Who cares to ask them why?

The conversion of the little American was
complete.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE CAVOUR (LEICESTER SQUARE)

I FIRST met Arthur Roberts in the buffet of the Cavour, and first heard there the tale of "The Old Iron Pot." On that occasion I was taken by a friend into the buffet, a long room with a bar decorated with many-coloured glasses, a broad divan running along the wall, and many small tables by it. Seated on the divan was a thin, clean-shaven little man, talking to a very tall man, also clean-shaven. So immersed in their conversation were the two that they hardly acknowledged me when I was introduced to them; "they" being Messrs. Arthur Roberts and "Long Jack" Jervis, both of them then playing in "Black-eyed Susan" at the Alhambra, almost next door. As far as I could make out, the entrancing story that Mr. Arthur Roberts was telling, had as its central figure an old iron pot. He was in deadly earnest in his recital. Mr. Jervis and my friend were thoroughly, almost painfully, interested, and accompanied the story with little exclamations of surprise and sympathy, but for the life of me I could not

follow the narrative. All sorts and conditions of people suddenly were introduced into the tale by name, and as suddenly disappeared out of it. Arthur Roberts finished, and the other two broke into speeches of congratulation, saying how thoroughly interested and affected they had been. I, in a bewildered way, commenced to ask questions, when the mouth of the merry comedian began to twitch up on one side, and his eyelids to blink. Then I understood. I was another victim to the tale of "The Old Iron Pot."

It was in this buffet, which remains now as it was then, that Arthur Roberts invented the game of "spoof,"—but that is a very long story.

There has always been a savour of Bohemianism around the Cavour, and therefore it was only right and proper that the six of us who sat down to dinner there one August evening, should all in our time have wandered through the pleasant paths of the country of free-and-easiness. With grey hairs has come ballast, and one of the party is now a great landowner, doing his duty as high sheriff of his county; two of the others are chairmen of boards controlling great theatrical enterprises; a fourth, who won renown originally as a Jehu, now coins money in successful speculation; and the fifth is the trusted adviser of a well-known plutocrat. One of the chairmen, who can claim the title of successful dramatic author as well, and is not unknown on the Stock Exchange, was the giver of the feast. Our gathering came about through an argument on the relative merits of

cheap and expensive restaurants, and whether there was value received for the difference in the price of the dinners. The chairman was a warm upholder of the cheap dinner, and concluded the argument by saying, "When I go to the Savoy or Princes' I am prepared to pay for my surroundings and company; when I want food only I go to Philippe of the Cavour, and ask him to add something to his three-shilling dinner, and to give me five-shillings-worth, and if you fellows will come and dine with me there you shall try for yourselves." And "we fellows" said like one man that we would.

The Cavour, which shows its clean white face, adorned with golden letters, to Leicester Square, has grown immensely since I first made its and M. Philippe's acquaintance. There comes first a narrow little room, with a big counter on which fruit and flowers and cold meats are displayed, and behind which a lady in black stands. Here M. Philippe, shortish, grey-haired, with a little close-clipped moustache, black coat, and turned-down collar, with a black tie, generally waits to usher his patrons in, and find them seats. Then comes the big room, the walls in light colour, brass rails all round to hold hats, on the many mirrors a notice pasted, "Our *table d'hôte* Sundays, 6 to 9"; in the centre a big square table with a palm in the middle of it, the table at which, when the room is crowded, lone gentlemen are set to take their dinner, and around the big table a cohort of smaller tables. The ceiling mostly consists of a skylight, the windows in which always keep

the room cool. Beyond this room is another one, newly built, also light in colour, and with many mirrors.

As soon as we were seated, M. Philippe came bustling up. He is a very busy man, for he believes in the adage as to doing things well; and, therefore, he is up at five every morning, and goes the round of the markets, and in his own restaurant is his own *maître d'hôtel*. Yet, busy as he is, he finds time to devote much attention to Freemasonry, and his list of subscriptions to the various Masonic charities has generally the biggest total of any sent in. He was supposed in this charitable competition to have been, on one occasion, outstripped by another worker in the cause, and we immediately began to chaff him on the subject. M. Philippe acknowledged that a march had been stolen on him; but to make up for it he had been eminently successful in securing the admission of a little girl to one of the masonic institutions. "She got in on top of our poll," was his way of putting it. The feast he had prepared for us was as follows:—

Hors-d'œuvre.

La petite marmite.

Filets de soles Mornay.

Whitebait.

Poulet sauté Portugaise.

Côtes de mouton en Bellevue.

Canetons d'Aylesbury.

Petits pois française. Salade. Haricots verts.

Fromages.

Dessert.

I noted that the *petite marmite*—I seem doomed always to be given *petite marmite*—was good, and was more enthusiastic than that over the fillets of sole, for those, I thought, were “very good.” The whitebait, erring on the right side, were a trifle too soft. The *poulet sauté Portugaise* was a triumph of *bourgeois* cookery, but so rich that I was glad that the good doctor who takes an interest in the state of my liver was not one of our party. The Aylesbury ducklings were fine, plump young fellows, who must have lived a youth of peace and contentment. We drank with this substantial dinner some Pommery.

There is always a bustle at the Cavour, and a coming and going of guests. Directly a table is vacated plates and glasses are whisked away, fresh napkins spread, and in a few seconds M. Philippe has personally conducted some incoming guests to their seats. The *table d'hôte* is served from five to nine. First to the feast comes a sprinkling of actors and actresses, making an early meal before going to the theatre. Then comes an incursion of white-shirt-fronted gentlemen and ladies in evening dress, dining before going to the play. Lastly comes the steady stream of ordinary diners, good *bourgeois* most of them, who choose to dine as they have come from their City offices, in frock-coats or other unostentatious garb.

As we settled down to our meal, a theatrical manager, who had been giving one of the prettiest ladies of his company dinner, was leaving. A well-known amateur coachman, just up from

the country, had time to give his wife something to eat before going off to catch another train; a white-bearded gentleman was entertaining two pretty daughters in evening dresses, and was desperately afraid that they would not get to the theatre in time to see the curtain rise. A very pretty lady, with a hat of peacocks' feathers and a great bow rising from it, was an actress "resting." The rest of the diners who filled the room were all good, respectable citizens and citizenesses, in fine broadcloth and silk, but none of their faces was familiar to us through the pages of the illustrated papers.

This was the bill paid by the chairman:—Six dinners at 5s., £1:10s.; three bottles Pommery, '89, £2:2s.; one seltzer, 6d.; five cafés, 2s. 6d.; six liqueurs, 4s. 6d.; total, £3:19:6.

M. Philippe has a little pleasure-ground attached to the restaurant, a plot of kitchen garden and an orangery, the vegetables and herbs and fruit from which must cost him about a thousand times their value at Covent Garden. But it is Philippe's hobby, and he likes to be able to give any favoured customer a bunch of mignonette grown in a garden within thirty yards of Leicester Square. At night the blazing cressets of the Alhambra and the gas decorations of Daly's light this strange little bit of *rus in urbe*, and when one wonders at a practical man keeping such desirable building land for such a purpose, M. Philippe shrugs his shoulders and says, "The earth he grow every day more valuable."

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE HÔTEL CONTINENTAL (REGENT STREET)

CAPTAIN DE FOREEST of the American navy and his pretty wife who used to be Miss Carcanet—to her very old friends “Brighteyes”—were dining with me at the Continental last week. Mrs. de Foreest chose the place of dining herself. I had asked her to name any restaurant she chose, and she thought that for the sake of reminiscence she would go to the Continental. “I dined out twice alone with a gentleman at a restaurant the year I came out,” said Mrs. de Foreest, as if she intended to shock her husband. He laughingly replied that he never could have believed that an English girl brought up in the best society could have committed such a crime, and then Mrs. de Foreest told him that if he was going to go to Chicago to apply for a divorce he had better name me in the proceedings. “He made me do it and shocked poor mother terribly,” she said, and we all laughed, and Captain de Foreest said something neatly turned and charming, for which he got a little pat of approval on the hand.

They had been married barely nine months, had honeymooned in California, and were eventually to go out to Japan, in which waters Captain de Foreest was to take up the command of one of Uncle Sam's new ships. The wedding had been a very merry one, and the newly-made Mrs. de Foreest lost none of her high spirits during the ceremony, for when she thanked me for the scrap of Venetian glass I had sent her as a wedding present, she told me that she had been half afraid that I might present her with a cookery book ; for I had always lectured her on the respect due to good cookery.

We had partaken of an excellent little dinner—the Continental being one of few places where the management do not think it necessary to give far too long a list of *plats* at a *table-d'hôte* meal. We had eaten our *côtelettes d'agneau à la Cambaieres* and our *cailles bonne femme*, with their savoury vegetable accompaniment, Captain de Foreest had duly admired the white and gold mantelpieces, the cupids on the ceiling, the golden paper and the many mirrors in white frames on the wall, and I had told him something of the history of the hotel, its changes of decoration, and its succession of *maîtres d'hôtels* and managers, MM. Garin, Laurent, and now Mr. Wilson, who is both secretary and manager, when Captain de Foreest asked his wife how it was that I had acted as escort to her on a previous occasion to the Continental. "It was through Sir George discovering that he wrote the articles on 'Dinners and Diners,'" said Mrs. de Foreest, and referred her husband to me, and I referred him to the

written report of the said dinner, published two years before, which is duly set forth at length below.

THE DINNER IN QUESTION

"So you are the man who is writing those articles about 'Dinners and Dinners,'" said old Sir George one day at dinner at his own house. "Good Lord! Who'd have thought it!"

This sounded rather a dubious compliment; but pretty Miss Carcanet, "Brighteyes," as her family nickname is, began to take more interest in me than she had ever shown before.

Did I go alone, or did I really take the people I said I did? she asked. And I told her that I really did take the people I described. "Why don't you take Brighteyes to do one with you," said Sir George. "It's her first season, and she is seeing everything that London has to show. She has figured in print after the Drawing-Room, and one of the ladies' papers has had a portrait of her as a *débutante* of the season. Now you might lend your aid to immortalise her."

Miss Brighteyes said she would like it immensely, and though Lady Carcanet did not think it at all the thing for a young girl to dine at a restaurant alone with a gentleman, Sir George said something about there being no harm in being seen with an old buster, old enough to be her father—which was a doubtful compliment to my grey hair. I, of course, was delighted, and asked Miss Brighteyes to choose her day and her restaurant.

"Is the Continental the hotel with a ruddy

face and red pillars to its portico at the bottom of Regent Street?" Miss Brighteyes asked, and when I said that it was, she made that her choice.

"Dear me! Isn't that restaurant considered a little—well, a little fast?" came from Lady Carcanet, who very evidently disapproved of the whole of the proceedings; but I was able to reassure her on that subject. The ladies who sup in the upstairs rooms may not all be duchesses and countesses in their own right; but there is no more respectable place to dine at, and there is no better *table d'hôte* than is served in the downstairs room. I told Miss Brighteyes that if she wanted to see the restaurant at its best we should have to dine early, for most of the guests were sure to be going on to the theatre either as spectators or players.

On Thursday Miss Brighteyes was going to the Opera to hear the "Huguenots," and was to join her aunt there, so I was asked if Thursday would suit, and said "Perfectly." Lady Carcanet looked discouragingly on the whole matter; but said, very freezingly, that in that case we had better have the brougham, which could wait and take Miss Brighteyes to the Opera afterwards.

"Why didn't you come to my Drawing-Room Tea?" was the beginning of the cross-examination that I went through in the brougham, on our way to the restaurant; and I explained that as a recorder of dinners I considered myself exempt from teas, an answer which did not satisfy Miss Brighteyes, who pouted, and said that I might have made an exception in her favour.

Miss Brighteyes' cloak was deposited in a side

room, my coat and hat were taken from me and put in a locker in the hall, and we settled ourselves down at a corner table in the room, dimly lighted by electric globes and by the red-shaded candles on the tables. It is a most effective room, as I pointed out to Miss Brighteyes, with its oil-paintings of figure-subjects framed in dark wood over the mantelpieces, its line of muslin-draped windows down one side, and on the other mirrors and the *comptoir* of dark wood, where between two palms one catches a glimpse, under the glow of a red-shaded lamp, of the pretty face of the lady enthroned there. A screen of old gold comes pleasantly into the scheme of colour. "Isn't it *delightfully* improper to be dining alone with a gentleman in a restaurant! I do wish Madame Quelquechose could see me now," Miss Brighteyes remarked, as I looked through the three menus, one at 10s. 6d., one at 7s. 6d., and one at 6s. 6d. Madame Quelquechose was, I may state, the head of the celebrated Parisian school at which Miss Brighteyes had finished her education.

As the young lady had to be at Covent Garden at eight, and it was now seven, I thought the shortest of the menus—the 6s. 6d. one—would suffice. Besides, I hold that the best dinners are always short ones. Here it is:—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

Consommé Sévigné.

Paupiettes de merlans Héloïse.

Tournedos grillés Judic.

Poularde rôtie.

Salade.

Asperges au beurre fondu.

Soufflé glacé Victoria.

Petits fours.

As Miss Brighteyes ate her plovers' eggs she wanted to be told who the different people dining at the tables might be. The bearded gentleman was one of the best-known singers, and his name a household word. The other man with the impress of the artist strong upon him was, I was able to tell her, the well-known Wagnerian conductor, who at the time was constantly travelling backwards and forwards between Bayreuth and Covent Garden. A pleasant-faced gentleman with a dark moustache, who had smiled at me as I came in, was a well-known comedian and manager ; the gentleman dining with two ladies was a cricketer of fame. There was the London correspondent of the *Figaro* dining with another French gentleman.

Our soup was excellent. There was in it a savour of the sea which reminded me of the birds'-nest soup of China, and by that alone I should have judged M. Baptiste Commaille, the chef, to be an artist.

Before the fish arrived my cross-examination was continued. "Had I been to a Levee?" I was asked ; and when I said I had not, and that the reason of the not having done so was that my practical study of the art of dining had made my tunic too tight for me, and that I was not sufficiently wealthy just at present to buy another to use for one occasion only in the year, I was told that I should learn to bike, and that if I did I might come sometimes and take Miss

Brighteyes to the Park in the morning. Was I going to the big charity fancy ball at the Empress Rooms, and if so, as what? I was not, I regretted to say, my tunic not suiting better for balls than for levees, and my figure not being quite in keeping with a Romeo costume from Nathan's; but I learned that Miss Brighteyes was, and that she was going in a copy of a costume of one of her ancestresses, all light blue with the front laced across with pearls. The ancestress had real pearls, but Miss Brighteyes was only to have imitation ones.

The fish I did not care for much, a *merlan* being rather a tasteless denizen of the sea, but Miss Brighteyes admired the cream and pink of the *plat* immensely, and thought that there was a suggestion for a dress in it. Then I heard all about the recent balls, how charming the pink peonies were at one house, and the lilies and palms at another, and so on; and was given a disquisition on the dresses at the Drawing-Room, of which all that I can recall is that one lady wore muslin with roses painted on it, and ropes of wonderful pearls.

The *tournedos*, with their accompanying quarters of artichokes in batter and scarlet tomatoes, were excellent, very excellent indeed, and so was the chicken, delightfully brown, and done to a turn. The *soufflé glacé Victoria*, which was brought in triumph by M. Garin, the *maître d'hôtel*, was encased in a little summer-house of sugar, with the names of various papers blazoned on it—that of the *Pall Mall* being over the door, I had finished my pint of excellent champagne

and Miss Brighteyes had sipped her lemon squash, a sinful drink, even for a girl in her first season. I was selfish enough to take my coffee and liqueur before I told Miss Brighteyes that it was ten minutes to eight, which put her in a flutter, for she was anxious not to lose the overture.

This was the bill :—Two dinners, 13s. ; half 88, 7s. ; one lemon squash, 1s. ; half tasse, 6d. ; one liqueur, 1s. ; total, £1 : 0 : 6.

CHAPTER XXXVII

FRASCATI'S (OXFORD STREET)

I AM beginning to flatter myself that I am a success in clerical circles. I once took out to dinner my sister-in-law—who, I omitted to state, is the daughter of a dean; and now I have successfully entertained a dear, simple-minded, white-haired old clergyman who had come from his parish in the North to London on business.

Two little boys home from Harrow are sitting at a table by an open window, looking through the frame of rose sprays and streamers of virginia-creeper to the turn of the road in the foreground, where the black wood of the sundial, put up to commemorate the battle of Waterloo, stands out against the rose red of the old brick wall behind it, where one of the posts of the village stocks still exists as a warning to evildoers, with beyond, in the middle distance, the great horse-chestnuts and the village cricketing ground, which serves as a promenade for the postmaster's geese. The whole landscape is closed in by a great forest of firs, on the outskirts of which red roofs and the tarnished gold of

thatch chequer the dark green. Behind the two little boys stands a curate fresh from Oxford, who is trying to hammer into their thick little heads the translation of

———*cur apricum*
oderit campum———

his own thoughts all the time, like theirs, being on the cricket-ground, and not with Quintus Horatius Flaccus. That is the picture that always comes to me when I think of my old clerical friend.

He was a keen cricketer, and bowled under-hand with a cunning break from the off which was too much for the yokels of the teams that our village eleven annually held battle with ; and those daily two tiresome hours over, our holiday task done, he would bowl, at the net put up in the neighbouring field, as long as we chose to bat. His one dissipation now is a visit to London annually to see the Oxford and Cambridge cricket-match, and he always stays when he comes to London at my mother's house. Unexpected business had brought him south last week, and one evening he would have been alone had I not offered to take him out somewhere.

Where to take him was a puzzle. I did not think that he would appreciate the delicacy of Savoy, or Cecil, or Princes', or Verrey's cookery ; the refinements of the Carlton, the Berkeley, and the Avondale, and the light touch of M. Charles's hand would be as naught to him. Luckily I remembered that last July he had been taken to dine

at Frascati's, by a friend and old parishioner of his, and that the place and the dinner had made so great an impression on him that his conversation for the next day consisted chiefly of praise of the gorgeous palace in which he had been entertained. If Frascati's had proved such a success once, I saw no reason why it should not be so again, and suggested that we should dine there, a suggestion which met with decided approval ; so I telegraphed to ask that a table might be reserved for me upstairs.

My previous experiences of Frascati's had been chiefly confined to the grill-room, a gorgeous hall of white marble, veined with black, with a golden frieze and a golden ceiling, where I often eat a humble chop or take a cut from the joint before going to listen to Dan Leno or some other mirth-provoker at the Oxford next door ; but looking at the great restaurant after we had settled down into our seats I could quite understand that the building would appear as gorgeous as a pantomime transformation-scene to the eyes of any one not *blasé* by our modern *nil admirari* London. There are gold and silver everywhere. The pillars which support the balcony, and from that spring up again to the roof, are gilt, and have silver angels at their capitals. There are gilt rails to the balcony, which runs, as in a circus, round the great octagonal building ; the alcoves that stretch back seem to be all gold and mirrors and electric light. What is not gold or shining glass is either light buff or delicate grey, and electric globes in profusion, palms, bronze statuettes, and a great dome of

green glass and gilding all go to make a gorgeous setting. The waiters in black, with a silver number in their button-holes, hover round the tables ; somewhere below a string band, which does not impede conversation, plays. My old tutor rubbed his hands gently and smiled genially round at the gorgeousness, while I told the light-bearded manager that what I required was the ordinary *table-d'hôte* dinner, and picked out a Château Margaux from the long lists of clarets.

This was the menu of the *table-d'hôte* dinner:

Hors-d'œuvre variés.
Consommé Brunoise.
Crème Fontange.
Escalope de barbue Chauchat.
Blanchaille.
Filet mignon Victoria.
Pommes sautées.
Riz de veau Toulouse.
Faisan rôti au cresson.
Salade.
Pouding Singapore.
Glacé vanille.
Fromage. Fruits.

A platter divided into radiating sections held a great variety of *hors-d'œuvre*, the rosy shade of the lamp threw its light upon a magnificent bunch of grapes on the summit of a pile of other fruits, and the manager in the background kept a watchful eye upon the waiter who was putting the *consommé Brunoise* on the table. I could not help wondering whether my telegram had not in

some way divulged the fact that I carried a fork under the banner of the Press, and that I was getting in consequence a little better treatment than the ordinary. Certainly my bunch of grapes looked like the one that the Israelitish spies brought back from Canaan, in comparison with the ones on the other tables, and the *chef* had no niggard hand when he apportioned the truffles and little buttons of mushrooms to our dishes of the *escalope de barbue* and the *riz de veau Toulouse*.

My old tutor was considering the diners at the other tables benignantly, and having quite an unjustifiable belief that I know the face of everybody in London, asked me who they were. Whether we had come to dine on an exceptional night I do not know, but all our fellow-guests were in couples: the men, I should fancy, principally gentlemen who spend their days in offices in the City, or in banks, fine specimens, most of them, of young England; and the ladies with them, either their wives or ladies who will eventually honour them by becoming so, as handsome representatives of British womanhood as I have ever seen collected under one roof. Out of all this gathering of stalwart men and pretty ladies there was not a single face that I recognised, and I am afraid I went down in the good old man's estimation as being a walking dictionary of London celebrities. My old tutor said that the *escalope de barbue* was excellent, and it certainly looked good. I tried the whitebait, and found it too dry. The fillet was good. The *chef* had surrounded the *riz de veau* with

truffles and tiny mushrooms and many other good things, and my old tutor, who ate it, said that it was excellent.

The little tables on the ground floor had all filled by now, and the lady behind the long bar, with piles of plates on it, and with a long line of looking-glasses behind it reflecting many bottles, was very busy. A subdued hum of talking and the faint rattle of knives and forks against crockery mixed with the music of the band.

The pheasant was a fine plump bird ; the ice was excellent. I insisted on my old tutor having a glass of port to end his dinner, and after much pressing—for one glass of wine is all he allows himself as a rule at a meal—he was over-persuaded. Then he rubbed his hands and beamed, and told me stories of his own schoolboyhood : how he once fought another boy, now a Colonial Governor, and smote him so severely on the nose that it bled ; and of a dreadful escapade, which still weighs on his mind—nothing less than going to see a race-meeting, and being subsequently soundly birched.

This was the bill I paid :—Two dinners at 5s., 10s. ; one bottle 6A, 7s. ; half-bottle 6I, 5s. 6d. ; total, £1 : 2 : 6.

My old tutor went away with his enthusiasm of the summer still unimpaired ; and when next I have a country cousin to take out to dinner I shall go to Frascati's.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE HÔTEL GREAT CENTRAL

"You can have no possible excuse for not coming out to dine with me some evening, now that you have one of the most-talked-about dining-places in London not a stone's-throw from your door," I said to Mrs. Tota's husband.

"Well, my dear old fellow, you know that beastly Indian fever——," he began, but Mrs. Tota cut him short with "Pickles!" "It is pure laziness," she went on to say to me. "He eats his dinner at home, gets into the most comfortable armchair in the morning-room, and pretends to read. Then he drops the cigar-ash all over his clothes, and snores like a hippopotamus."

Whether this indictment was too much for George, or he was as curious as Mrs. Tota was to see the interior of the great hotel which has sprung up in the Marylebone Road, a cable's length from the square in which we both live, he thought no more about his fever, and said that he would be very glad to bring his wife to dine with me.

When I used to see Sir Edward Watkin

prowling about Blandford and Harewood and Dorset Squares I fancied that there must be some railway scheme in his brain which would affect those squares. Then came the bill before Parliament for the extension of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway; the meetings to oppose it, the wrecking of the neighbourhood as if by a combination of an earthquake and a bombardment, and at last the gradual return to orderliness and form as the terminus of the Great Central, with its clusters of warehouses and sheds, came into existence, and the Hôtel Great Central rose as a towering red-brick pile, relieved with brown terra-cotta, dominating all the houses in the neighbourhood, and set by its clock in its topmost tower the time for the clockless district that lies between Marylebone and the Edgware Road.

I feel a personal interest in the hotel, for in company with all the gutter-boys of the neighbourhood I watched through the windows the decorating of the rooms and the installation of the *batteries de cuisine*.

But, though I have been an amateur clerk of the works, I had never been into the hotel until Mrs. Tota and her husband did me the honour to dine with me there. I had heard from men whose opinion I value that the five-shilling dinner was a very good one, and some people who, as a rule, ring the changes for their Sunday dinner from the Savoy to the Carlton, from Princes' to the Berkeley, had faced the journey to Marylebone more than once on the Sabbath, and had reported themselves pleased.

When I, in the early afternoon, went to the coffee-room of the hotel to secure a table for eight o'clock, I was told by the *maître d'hôtel* that he could not guarantee me any particular table, for the tables were used for two or three parties of guests nightly during the time the dinner was served. This I looked on as a little bit of "bluff," and, pressing my point, secured a table; but in the evening I found that it was as the *maître d'hôtel* had said, and every table was occupied.

I waited for Mrs. Tota and her husband—it was George's absurd vanity about the bow of his white tie that made them late, so his wife said—in the restaurant entrance hall, panelled with dark grey marble. Had I known the hotel better, I should have arranged for our meeting in the lounge; but starting from this entrance hall to reach the coffee-room we were able to pass through the banqueting hall, which is a magnificent room, a sight in itself. The walls are of Norwegian marble, a marble of light greens and yellows and pinks; its ceiling is of cream and gold; the twelve marble columns that support the roof are white in colour, thickly veined with pink and grey; and over the grill, which is at one end, is a long frieze depicting a number of beautiful ladies who are apparently meant for the Seasons.

A three-shilling dinner is served in the first part of the hall, and about a third of the space is divided off by a movable screen of glass and mahogany, and forms a grillroom.

We went through the lounge, which is all

faïence, and marble, and Oriental rugs, and great palms, and easy-chairs, and came at last to the coffee-room. And a very magnificent room it is, second only in gorgeousness to the banqueting hall. Just above us over the big fireplace of grey marble was one of Sir Frederic Leighton's early pictures, "Orpheus and Pluto"—an indifferent Leighton, but a Leighton for all that. The pillars are of grey marble with gilt capitals, the panels of the wall are of deep red silk, the dados are of marble, the embroidered valances to the windows are deep purple, the carpet is a warm red, the ceiling is of the lightest cream, picked out with light reds and blues and gold, and the chairs, in harmony with carpets and panels, are a soft brown in colour.

Mrs. Tota, who confessed that she was greedy, and George, her husband, who murmured something about the best cure for fever being to keep up the constitution, took up their menus and looked down them—I had seen what our feast was to be when I secured the table—while I looked round at the diners, wondering whence came the goodly company that were at the many little tables.

I appealed to Mr. Elliott, the manager of the restaurant, who was at hand, and he told me that, apart from the dwellers in the hotel, many of the habitual diners at restaurants came to the Great Central, and that the neighbourhood was beginning to know of the dining facilities of the place. Two judges who live near and one of our local M.P.'s were, it seems, among the

pioneers who first adventured on the discovery of this oasis in the wild North-West.

Mrs. Tota put down the menu with a little sigh of anticipatory contentment, which was as good as any grace. This was the list of the good things we had before us :—

Hors-d'œuvre.
Consommé aux quenelles de volaille.
Bisque de homard.
Filet de rouget en matelotte aux laitances.
Blanchaille.
Escaloppe de ris de veau à la Patti.
Contré filet piqué à la Vernon.
Pommes persillées.
Petits pois Paysanne.
Faisan rôti.
Salade d'endive.
Chaud-froid de pêches Great-Central.
Petites glaces moulées.
Dessert. Café.

Mr. Elliott gave us some oysters instead of the more ordinary *hors-d'œuvre*, a little attention due, I think, to Mrs. Tota's bright presence and new frock, the gorgeousness of which passes my powers of description.

It certainly was an exceptionally good dinner for five shillings. My selection from it was the *bisque*, the mullet, the *ris de veau*, and the ice, and I dined well on this. The *bisque* was excellent, the mullet—a fish I have, as a rule, no love for—was neither hard nor dry, and the *ris de veau*, with its slice of soft roe, was a triumph. I think M. Jeannin, the chef, whose handiwork

I used to know at the East Room, must have cooked this with his own hands.

Mrs. Tota pecked at everything, criticised everything impartially, and talked of Europe, Asia, and South Africa as she did so. Her husband went solidly and contentedly through the dinner, and when our first bottle of the Moët was finished, and I asked, in a general way, whether an imperial pint or another bottle would be looked upon with favour, he started with, "The doctor——" But Mrs. Tota did not give him a chance to say more. "George, don't be a hypocrite. If you two men *want* to drink another bottle between you, why don't you say so, and not invent fables about the medical profession?"

We did want that other bottle.

This was the bill: Three dinners, 15s.; two bottles 70A, £1:5s.; liqueurs, 3s.; total, £2:3s.

After dinner, before we settled down for an hour in the lounge to listen to the band—an excellent band—Mr. Schneider, the manager, at whose hotel in Manchester Mrs. Tota and her husband had once stayed, showed us the wonderful marble arches of the hall, the oak carvings, after Grinling Gibbons, of the smoking-room, the blue panels of the drawing-room, and all the other wonders of this most gorgeous hotel.

CHAPTER XXXIX

SCOTT'S (PICCADILLY CIRCUS)

HE was the junior subaltern when I commanded H company in the old regiment, and a very good subaltern he was. It was only the other day that I read how in one of those skirmishes on the north-west frontier of India, which mean a great deal to the people in the border-land, but are only recorded in a meagre paragraph in the home papers, he had distinguished himself by standing over a wounded man and keeping off the hillmen till assistance came ; and it seemed strange to meet him now in crumpled, sun-scorched clothes, with a soft handkerchief round his neck, and with a very thin white face, walking up the Haymarket.

"They hit me, you know," he said, in answer to a question. "The wound in my shoulder healed directly, but the wound in the neck gave a lot of trouble, and the doctors packed me home as soon as they could."

I particularly wanted to hear of the deed that the boy had done, and asked him to come and dine at a club ; but his dress clothes were stored away

somewhere in the Punjab—where, he did not know—with the heavy baggage of the regiment, and his London tailor had not made him new ones yet. Besides, he would not be able to put on a collar for weeks, perhaps months, and though he would be glad to dine quietly with me, he asked that it might be somewhere where he would not feel uncomfortable at not being in dress clothes. We were standing at the top of the Haymarket, my eye caught the two great smoked salmon hung up in Scott's window, and I asked the junior subaltern if oysters and a lobster *à l'américaine* were to his taste.

He had not eaten any oysters, except the Karachi ones, which are brought in ice to the towns of the Punjab, since he left England six years ago; and though he did not know what his surgeon and doctor would say to his eating lobster, he was prepared to risk their wrath. Half-past seven was the hour I appointed to meet him, and then I went into Scott's to secure a table and to order dinner.

Scott's, springing from its ashes, has become a gorgeous place, with pillars of some material which looks like black marble inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with stained glass and much ornamentation in worked brass, and with a great plate-glass window which displays a show of ice and fish and lobsters and crabs and salad-stuff that looks most appetising.

Inside, it may be said to be divided into four parts. There is the wide entrance hall, at either side of which are marble counters with many plates and little bottles upon them, and piles of

sandwiches made with fish delicacies, and piles of slices of brown bread and butter. Behind the counters stand men in white samite, who are constantly opening oysters, and behind them are mirrors with, on shelves above the glass, piles of little kegs which suggest how suitable a small barrel of oysters is as a Christmas present. In the midst of this entrance hall sacred to the oysters, and very excellent fish sandwiches, a staircase leads down to the lower regions, "The Dive," as it is labelled, where there are comfortable curved divans with a little table as the pearl in the midst of these brown leather shells, and on the walls a Japanese fantasy in tiles where strange fish swim in and out of weeds. Upstairs on the first floor are the regular dining-rooms with red blinds, red shades to the electric lamps, and a warm red paper; and behind the hall, with its oyster bars, is the grill-room, shut off from draughts by a great screen of glass and brown wood which reaches from floor to ceiling.

I ordered our dinner in the grill-room. A dozen of oysters, some mock turtle-soup, *homard à l'américaine*, and a steak.

At 7.30 to the second the junior subaltern was there, and I smiled inwardly as I recognised the cut of the Calcutta tailor in his black coat, well creased by having been jumped on to make it fit into a bullock trunk.

I took him into the grill-room, where the manager had kept a corner table for us, and after a look round at the neat little room, with its mirrors framed in white marble veined with black; its red marble pilasters with gilt capitals;

its grill, at which the white-clothed cook, with a table of chops and steaks at his elbow, stands ; its little glass case in the corner, in which a lady in black keeps accounts in big books ; its stained glass skylight ; its yellowish-brown cornice with many figures upon it ; its many little tables at which solid and respectable citizens were giving their wives dinners, or, if alone, were reading the evening papers : he turned his attention to his oysters.

The first time that a man tastes a native oyster after six years of exile is a solemn moment, and I would not disturb him while he ate them ; but when there were only empty shells on his plate, and he had drunk his glass of Chablis, I began to ask questions.

"Tell me all about that day on the spur I have read of, and how you came to be recommended for the V.C.," I said.

The junior subaltern took a great gulp of the mock turtle and began. "You remember J. Smith—he was a lance-corporal when you commanded the company." "Corporal," I amended. "Well, corporal. He did ripping well that day. He's colour-sergeant of the company now, and there was one time when, as we were retiring, some of the devils got right on our flank and enfiladed us. Well, Colour-Sergeant Smith just gave one yell and went for them, and old Kelly, who used to be your bat-man, and Pat Grady went with him, and they killed six of the Mamunds."

"My boy," I said, "I want to know what *you* did, and not what Colour-Sergeant Smith did."

"This is ripping good soup," said the subaltern.

It was very good soup. The cook, divining that I had an invalid as a guest, had put a liberal mixture of real turtle with the mock turtle, and it was practically turtle soup. I had sipped the Beaune, and found it a little tart, and the manager brought us a fresh bottle before I opened my second parallel with the advent of a really splendid dish of lobster.

"I want to know now," I said, with a touch of the manner with which I used to ask him if all the entries in the small books of his half-company were brought up to date, and whether he had counted the spare blankets, "what happened when you stood over that wounded man, and three big hairy hillmen all made a rush at you at once, and got to close quarters before the men could get back to bayonet them."

The junior subaltern was very much occupied with his steak. "Old Major So-and-So was just senior to you in the regiment?" he asked at last, and I said that that was so. "Well, he was ripping cool that day, and he made a joke that the men talked about afterwards. We had destroyed the mud huts that they called a village, and we were waiting till the wounded had got well to the rear before retiring. The Major was in command of our companies that day, for the Colonel was with the companies in reserve. Well, the Major was sitting on a great rock, looking at the country ——" "What sort of country is it?" I interposed. "Oh, just mountains and ravines and

nullahs, and that sort of thing—a beastly sort of a place,” the subaltern said, believing that he was conveying the fullest information, and then went on. “Well, the Major was sitting on the rock smoking that old meerschaum of a nigger’s head which he’d had for years. A bullet came and smashed the pipe to atoms. He spat out the pipe-stem and then shook his fist at the place where the shot had come from. ‘You blackguards,’ he said, ‘you’re not fit company for a gentleman to smoke a meerschaum with; I’ll only treat you to clays in future.’ Well, the men were amused by this, and——”

“Young man,” I said severely, “I knew that pipe, and it is a good thing it is gone. That steak you have disposed of was good, and these herring-roes I have ordered for you while you were blathering are excellent. Eat them, and then get to business at once.”

The junior subaltern ate the roes, which were perfect; and when the coffee and the brandy were brought, he looked at me to see if I was really in earnest, and began again, “Do you remember James Pilch, who was the company’s cook?”

“No, my boy,” I said, “I do not remember James Pilch, nor do I want to. Waiter, my bill.”

The bill was brought. Oysters, 3s.; lobster, 8s.; soup, 2s.; grill, 3s.; vegetables, 6d.; wine, 7s.; bread and butter, 4d.; coffee, 1s.; liqueurs, 5s.; roes, 2s.; total, £1 : 11 : 10.

This paid I turned to the subaltern. “Young man,” I said, “I am now going to personally

conduct you to the club smoking-room, and if I have to sit up with you all night with a stick I intend to be told how you came to be recommended for the V.C."

The junior subaltern groaned.

CHAPTER XL

THE MIDLAND HOTEL (ST. PANCRAS)

THE dramatic moment of the evening came when Juliette, the new French maid, with despair painted on her face, out of breath, and with her bonnet on one side of her head, came running into the dining-room at the Midland Hotel, and told Miss Dainty that the dog had escaped. Miss Dainty for one moment was overwhelmed, for she pictured Jack in fierce combat with every big dog in London; but, recovering herself, said that she wanted boy messengers. The wild duck was getting cold, the manager was beginning to look unhappy, the waiter was sympathetic but helpless, the French maid was weeping. If messenger boys could straighten out the difficulties Miss Dainty should have had a dozen; but she said that she only wanted three. So three little boys stood in a row and received their instructions. One was to go, in a cab, to Miss Dainty's flat to see whether Jack had returned there; another, in a cab, was to go round to all the places that Jack had been taken to during the day, chiefly

milliners' and dressmakers' and bonnet-makers' shops, to see whether he had wandered away to any of those localities ; the third was, in a cab, to go to all the places where Jack had special canine enemies to see whether he had gone to fight a parting fight with any of them. The three small boys were sent on their way, the weeping maid dismissed to mount guard over the pile of baggage, and then I told the manager to serve us our duck and he smiled again, while the waiter allowed the look of sympathy to die out in his face and woke to sudden activity.

Miss Dainty was going out to America to play what she called "a thinking part," with an English company on tour there. She was to have gone to Liverpool by a morning train, and a little crowd, male and female, assembled to see her off, to give her the customary bouquets, and to wish her the customary good voyage. But no Miss Dainty arrived. In her place appeared an agitated French maid, who explained that her mistress could not possibly go by this train, because one of her new hats had not been sent home. The lady section of the crowd was sympathetic, the male section gave their bouquets to the maid to take back to Miss Dainty, and we all went our separate ways.

In the afternoon I got this telegram : "Alone in London and starving. Going night train. Will you give me dinner ?—DAINTY." I was of course delighted to give the little lady dinner ; telegraphed to her that I would meet her at the station and give her dinner at the Midland Grand Hotel, and sent a note to the manager of the

French restaurant at the hotel asking him to keep a table for me, and to order a small dinner for two.

A cab with a pile of boxes on the top brought Miss Dainty with her bouquets, and her maid, and Jack, the fighting dog, to the station.

"Are you going to take the dog?" I asked; and Miss Dainty said, "Certainly. I am going to take him to bite the Custom-house officers if they interfere with my seal-skin cloak." Of course, such a reason as this was unanswerable.

The maid and the baggage and the dog were left on the platform, the former being given strict injunctions to keep a watchful eye on the two latter, and I took Miss Dainty off to the hotel.

Through the long curving corridor, with its brightly-painted walls and blaze of electric light, we went to the lift, and were quickly deposited on the first floor, where the restaurant is.

As a rule one does not expect to get a good dinner at a railway hotel; but I knew that the Midland was one of the exceptions which prove the rule, and that I had not done wrong in asking Miss Dainty to dine with me there. The room, a fine large saloon, has a comfortable red paper with handsomely framed mirrors to break the monotony of its surface, and what painting there is on pillars and cornice has something of an Egyptian brilliancy of colour. At one end a semicircular screen of curtains shuts off the serving-room. At the other end great doors lead into a drawing-room. The chairs, of red velvet, have a comfortable look. The lights on the tables are electric globes with yellow shades.

This was the dinner that the manager had ordered for us. When I saw *petite marmite* on the menu I groaned. I am beginning to believe that it is a sort of fetish that restaurant managers worship :—

Natives.
Petite marmite.
Sole Portugaise.
Filet Rossini.
Pomme soufflée.
Canard sauvage à la presse.
Salade de laitue.
Pouding à la reine.
Bombe Midland.
Petits fours.
Fruits.

With the soup, which was strong and hot, Miss Dainty told me how she had boarded out her pets for the time of her absence, and it seemed to me that the goldfish, the parrot, the cat, and the love-birds had, with Miss Dainty's usual perverseness, been sent to people who would loathe the sight of them. Jack was to go with his mistress to protect her from all perils in an unknown land and to bite Custom-house officers.

When the sole and its rubicund surrounding of tomatoes appeared, I inquired whether Miss Dainty contemplated matrimony during her travels, and was politely snubbed by being told that that was a matter in which she would not think of moving without first asking my consent.

As Miss Dainty toyed with the truffles of the excellently-cooked fillet, she informed me that America is a country which understands and

admires art, and I gathered that she looks forward to returning to England as a second Bernhardt or Duse, and that the bags of dollars which, with their hands and hearts, endless swains are sure to offer her, are but a secondary consideration.

Then came the wild duck; and as the manager was squeezing the rich brown fluid from the silver press the frightened maid came bustling into the room, and we heard the awful news that Jack was lost.

By the time that Miss Dainty had sent off her little army of boy-messengers and had ordered the maid back to her post on baggage guard, our table was the centre of attraction to the room. The old Anglo-Indian colonel, whose pretty daughter was sitting opposite to him, the family party of mother and son and daughter, the young honeymoon couple, the half a dozen old gentlemen dining in solitary state, all were taking an interest in the hunt for Jack. "I shall not leave London until Jack is found," said Miss Dainty, as her slice of the duck's breast was put in front of her. "But your boat starts to-morrow," I protested. "The boat must wait," said Miss Dainty decisively. "I don't go without Jack."

We ate our pudding in silence. "I expect the poor dear is fighting half a dozen dogs now," was the only remark that Miss Dainty made with the ice.

I called for my bill: Two dinners, 12s.; one bottle 343, 15s.; two cups of coffee, 1s.; total £1 : 8s.

"I am going now," said Miss Dainty, as she

drew on her gloves, "to send Juliette and the boxes back to the flat, and then you shall drive me round to all the police-stations in London to see if Jack is at any of them."

As we walked down the long corridor I was thinking of the pleasant evening I was going to spend, when there was a patter of little feet behind us, and the next moment Miss Dainty was hugging Jack, an unrepentant, muzzleless dog, with a great cut over one eye, and an ear bitten through.

When the train containing Miss Dainty and the bouquets and the boxes and the maid and the dog steamed out of the station I sighed a great sigh, which had something of relief in it.

CHAPTER XLI

THE MONICO (SHAFTESBURY AVENUE)

HE, a gentleman on the Stock Exchange, who has generally a stock of good stories, mentioned in the course of a letter to me that he had heard a really good tale of the last bye-election, and would tell it to me the next time that we met, as it was too long to write. Now, that particular election is fast becoming ancient history, and if that story had to be retailed to my circle of country friends, it would have to be done quickly. Therefore I wrote to my stockbroker, who lives in Shaftesbury Avenue, and asked him to name a day to come across the way, and dine at the Monico.

The day settled, I went to the Monico and interviewed the manager, Signor Giulio C. Nobile, a gentleman of stalwart figure, with a pleasant smile, and a small but carefully-tended moustache. I wanted to kill two birds at a stone—to hear the story and to see what the Monico and its cooking were like, for it is a restaurant which somehow or other has not fallen within the circle of my usual dining-places.

I asked Signor Nobile what he considered the speciality of the great restaurant over which he presides ; and though he was anxious to give me a specially ordered dinner, I came to the conclusion that I could best test what the establishment could do by trying the 5s. *table d'hôte* in the Renaissance room on the first floor.

"Dinner at 7.30 for two, if you please, and pray remember that I want exactly the *table d'hôte* dinner that all your customers get," was my last request to Signor Nobile, and he smiled and said that that should be so.

At 7.30 my facetious stockbroker friend, ruddy of face, his moustache carefully curled, and his expansive white waistcoat garnished with gold-and-coral buttons, appeared on the scene. As the lift, engineered by a smart page, took us up to the first floor he began : "It's the funniest story you ever heard, and will make you die of laughter. There was a doubtful elector and ——" But the lift stopped, and there was Signor Nobile bowing and smiling on the landing.

"We have five minutes to spare, Signor Nobile," I said, "and while they are putting the *hors-d'œuvre* on the table, will you take us round the house and show us the different rooms ?"

The Signor led, I followed, and my friend the stockbroker brought up the rear. First we went into a great hall on the first floor, where a smoking-concert was in progress, and thunders of applause were greeting a gentleman in evening dress who had just concluded a song. "It is some one going abroad, and they are giving him

a send-off," was Mr. Nobile's explanation. Next we went down to the ground-floor through a hall, where people were sitting at little round-topped tables drinking various beverages, and down some steps into a German beer saloon, with pigmies and other strange creatures painted on the walls. Up again to the first floor, through a long grill-room with little white-clothed tables in four rows, then a peep into a restaurant, and a flight in the lift up to the second floor, where solemn gentlemen in black were eating a dinner of ceremony in a very pretty saloon with an Egyptian room as a reception-room next door. Our five minutes were over, we had seen most of the big rooms of the house, and, descending, we took our places at a table by one of the windows in the Renaissance Saloon.

"Now for that story," I said; but my stock-broker was puffing and blowing. "Give a fellow a few minutes to get his breath, after rushing him up and down stairs at racing pace," he said; so I turned my attention to the room, the menu, and the company. The room is a symphony in old gold and grey. The paper has a gold pattern on a grey ground, the long line of windows have soft grey curtains. At one end of the room is a great clock above a large mirror. The ceiling is a series of square frames enclosing circular painted panels. The orchestra is in a balustraded balcony, with an arch above it, held high by two pillars. In the centre of the room, among the little tables, a palm grows out of a great vase. There are blue glass shades to the electric globes that drop from the ceiling, and the silver lamps

that stand on the table are curtained with crimson. Waiters in white waistcoats and black coats, and white-aproned *sommeliers*, with great silvered badges, come and go past the clerks' desk, which stands below the orchestra.

The diners, mostly in pairs, were fitting occupants of the handsome room. There was a very beautiful lady with a big diamond where the centre parting of her hair left her forehead ; and another lady in a mantilla, who would have many gallants with guitars below her windows had she lived in Seville. Most of the couples were evidently going to the theatre, and left soon after we arrived. This was the menu :—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.
Consommé Bortsch.
Crème à la Reine.
Soles à la Nantua.
Poularde Valencienne.
Tournedos Princesse.
Canards sauvages. Sauce Port wine.
Salade.
Biscuits Monico.
Petits fours.
Dessert.

When my stockbroker had drunk his Bortsch, which was well made, he began : “It is rather a long story, but it will make you die of laughing. There was a——” but at that moment Signor Nobile, who had been smiling in the distance, came up with a leaflet on which was inscribed the names of the Royalties who have from time to time honoured the Monico with their presence.

There are evidently some regiments with Royal colonels who always go to the Monico for their annual dinner.

"Go on with your story," I said, when Signor Nobile had once more smiled himself into the background; but a waiter had just then shown us a tempting dish of *filets de sole à la Nantua*, a *plat* really admirably cooked, and as my stockbroker took up his fork he said, "Yes, and be pilloried by you in print for talking to you while you are eating. Not me."

The poularde, a fine fat bird reposing in a bed of rice, satisfactorily disposed of, I told the waiter not to bring the *tournedos* for a few minutes, and settled back in my seat to hear the story of the doubtful elector.

"It's a long story; but you'll die with laughing when you hear it," my stockbroker began again. "There was a voter, and he would tell nobody——" Just then the band commenced the overture to "Guillaume Tell." Now, it is an excellent band, but when it gets to work at a Rossini overture the music takes the place of conversation, and my stockbroker stopped abruptly and waited for a better opportunity. Before the band had concluded the waiter had given us our *tournedos*.

The wild duck we were given *à la presse*, and when we had eaten our slices of the breast I said, like Demetrius, "I wonder"; for I was wondering whether all the pretty ladies and good-looking gentlemen had been treated as well as we had been. Five shillings is not a very large sum. Chickens and wild-duck cost money, even when bought

wholesale, and we had been given a whole chicken and a whole wild-duck. "If I were you," said the stockbroker, philosophically, "I shouldn't trouble to wonder. I should either eat my dinner—and it has been a good one so far—or else I should listen to an interesting story as to the doubtful elector."

I took his advice, in so far as eating my dinner was concerned, for the *biscuit* was capital.

Signor Nobile came up to ask if the dinner had been satisfactory, and I had only pleasant words to say to him. Then my stockbroker drew a long breath, and was about to begin, when once more I interrupted him. "Pardon me," I said, "let me order coffee and liqueurs, and pay my bill. The orchestra is enjoying ten minutes' interval, and there will be, once the bill is paid, nothing to interrupt the flow of your discourse, nothing to mar my enjoyment of it."

This was the bill:—Two dinners, 10s. ; one bottle 210, 16s. 6d. ; liqueurs, 5s. ; coffee, 1s. ; total, £1 : 12 : 6. This paid, I prepared to enjoy a really good story. "There was a voter who would tell no one on which side he was going to vote," I commenced, to gently lead my stockbroker up to his story. But he looked at his watch. "Very sorry, my dear boy," he said, "but I have an appointment in two minutes' time I daren't break. I must tell you the story another day. It's a bit long, but you'll die with laughter when you hear it."

I have not as yet heard that voter story, and am still alive.

CHAPTER XLII

GOLDSTEIN'S (BLOOMFIELD STREET)

HORS-D'ŒUVRE.

Smoked Salmon. Solomon Gundy.
Olives.

SOUPS.

Frimsell. Matsoklese.
Pease and beans.

FISH.

Brown stewed carp. White stewed gurnet.
Fried soles. Fried plaice.

ENTRÉES.

Roast veal (white stew).
Filletted steak (brown stew).

POULTRY.

Roast capon. Roast chicken.
Smoked beef. Tongue.

VEGETABLES.

Spinach. Sauerkraut.
Potatoes. Cucumbers.
Green salad.

SWEETS.

Kugel. Stewed prunes.

Almond pudding.

Apple staffen.

When I looked at the above I groaned aloud. Was it possible, I thought, that any human being could eat a meal of such a length and yet live? I looked at my two companions, but they showed no signs of terror, so I took up knife and fork and bade the waiter do his duty.

The *raison d'être* of the dinner was this: Thinking of untried culinary experiences, I told one of the great lights of the Jewish community that I should like some day to eat a "kosher" dinner at a typical restaurant, and he said that the matter was easily enough arranged; and by telegram informed me one day last week that dinner was ordered for that evening at Goldstein's restaurant in Bloomfield Street, London Wall, and that I was to call for him in the City at six.

When I and a gallant soul, who had sworn to accompany me through thick and thin, arrived at the office of the orderer of the dinner, we found a note of apology from him. The dinner would be ready for us, and his best friend would do the honours as master of the ceremonies, but he himself was seedy and had gone home.

On, in the pouring rain, we three devoted soldiers of the fork went, in a four-wheeler cab, to our fate.

The cab pulled up at a narrow doorway, and we were at Goldstein's. Through a short passage we went towards a little staircase, and our master

of the ceremonies pointed out on the post of a door that led into the public room of the restaurant a triangular piece of zinc, a Mazuza, the little case in which is placed a copy of the Ten Commandments. Upstairs we climbed into a small room with no distinctive features about it. A table was laid for six. There were roses in a tall glass vase in the middle of the table, and a buttonhole bouquet in each napkin. A piano, chairs covered with black leather, low cupboards with painted tea-trays and well-worn books on the top of them, an old-fashioned bell-rope, a mantelpiece with painted glass vases on it and a little clock, framed prints on the walls, two gas globes—these were the fittings of an everyday kind of apartment.

We took our places, and the waiter, in dress clothes, after a surprised inquiry as to whether we were the only guests at the feast, put the menu before us. It was then that, encouraged by the bold front shown by my two comrades, I, after a moment of tremor, told the waiter to do his duty.

I had asked to have everything explained to me, and before the *hors-d'œuvre* were brought in the master of the ceremonies, taking a book from the top of one of the dwarf cupboards, showed me the Grace before meat, a solemn little prayer which is really beautiful in its simplicity. With the Grace comes the ceremony of the host breaking bread, dipping the broken pieces in salt, and handing them round to his guests, who sit with covered heads.

Of the *hors-d'œuvre*, Solomon Gundy, which

had a strange sound to me, was a form of pickled herring, excellently appetising.

Before the soup was brought up, the master of the ceremonies explained that the Frimsell was made from stock, and a paste of eggs and flour rolled into tiny threads like vermicelli, while the Matsoklese had in it balls of unleavened flour. When the soup was brought the two were combined, and the tiny threads and the balls of dough both swam in a liquid which had somewhat the taste of vermicelli soup. The master of the ceremonies told me I must taste the pease and beans soup which followed, as it is a very old-fashioned Jewish dish. It is very like a rich pease-soup, and is cooked in carefully-skimmed fat. In the great earthenware jar which holds the soup is cooked the "kugel," a kind of pease-pudding, which was to appear much later at the feast.

Goldstein's is the restaurant patronised by the "froom," the strictest observers of religious observances, of the Jewish community, and we should by right only have drunk unfermented Muscat wine with our repast, but some capital hock took its place, and when the master of the ceremonies and the faithful soul touched glasses, one said "Lekhaim," and the other answered the greeting with "Tavim." Then, before the fish was put on the table, the master of the ceremonies told me of the elaborate care that was taken in the selection of animals to be killed, of the inspection of the butcher's knives, of the tests applied to the dead animals to see that the flesh is good, of the soaking and salting of the

meat, and the drawing-out of the veins from it. The many restrictions, originally imposed during the wandering in the desert, which make shell-fish, and wild game, and scaleless fish unlawful food—these and many other interesting items of information were imparted to me.

The white-stewed gurnet, with chopped parsley and a sauce of egg and lemon-juice, tempered by onion flavouring, was excellent. In the brown sauce served with the carp were such curious ingredients as treacle, gingerbread, and onions, but the result, a strong rich sauce, is very pleasant to the taste. The great cold fried soles standing on their heads and touching tails, and the two big sections of plaice flanking them, I knew must be good; but I explained to the master of the ceremonies that I had already nearly eaten a full-sized man's dinner, and that I must be left a little appetite to cope with what was to come.

Very tender veal, with a sauce of egg and lemon, which had a thin sharp taste, and a steak, tender also, stewed with walnuts, an excellent dish to make a dinner of, were the next items on the menu, and I tasted each; but I protested against the capon and the chicken as being an overplus of good things, and the master of the ceremonies—who I think had a latent fear that I might burst before the feast came to an end—told the waiter not to bring them up.

The smoked beef was a delicious firm brisket, and the tongue, salted, was also exceptionally good. I felt that the last feeble rag of an

appetite had gone, but the cucumber, a noble Dutch fellow, pickled in salt and water in Holland, came to my aid, and a slice of this, better than any *sorbet* that I know of, gave me the necessary power to attempt, in a last despairing effort, the kugel and apple staffen and almond pudding.

The staffen is a rich mixture of many fruits and candies with a thin crust. The kugel is a pease-pudding cooked, as I have written above, in the pease and beans soup. The almond pudding is one of those moist delicacies that I thought only the French had the secret of making.

Coffee—no milk, even if we had wanted it, for milk and butter are not allowed on the same table as flesh—and a liqueur of brandy, and then, going downstairs, we looked into the two simple rooms, running into each other, which form the public restaurant, rooms empty at 9 P.M., but crowded at the mid-day meal.

Mr. Goldstein, who was there, told us that his patrons had become so numerous that he would soon have to move to larger premises, and may by now have done so, and certainly the cooking at the restaurant is excellent, and I do not wonder at its obtaining much patronage.

What this Gargantuan repast cost I do not know, for the designer of the feast said that the bill was to be sent to him.

I think that a "kosher" dinner, if this is a fair specimen, is a succession of admirably cooked dishes. But an ordinary man should be allowed a week in which to eat it.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE GORDON HOTELS (NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE)

MY DEAR AUNT TABITHA—First, let me thank you for the tracts entitled “The Converted Clown” and “The Journalist Reclaimed”; they will have my attention. It was no doubt your nephew John’s conscience which impelled him to place my devotion to Shakespeare, and other dramatic authors of like calibre, and my efforts to improve humanity through the press, before you in the light he has done. When I have an opportunity of a personal interview with him I shall attempt to change his opinions.

That I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in London soon after the New Year is indeed good news. My cousin Judith I shall have the honour and privilege of meeting for the first time. It must, indeed, be a pleasure for a young lady, the curriculum of her studies in Switzerland at an end, to be returning *via* Paris; and your idea of meeting her in London, receiving her from her escort, conveying her to an hotel near the station of arrival, and affording her the

delight of witnessing such entertainments in London as may be edifying, is, I think, an admirable one.

There are, as you rightly suppose, hotels in the Northumberland Avenue, which is within a stone's-throw of Charing Cross, and in answer to your request I will give you, to the best of my power, a short description of each. I am not aware of Miss Judith's disposition, whether it be lively or of a serious complexion ; but if I write to the utmost of my ability the characteristics of the three hotels—the Grand, the Victoria, and the Métropole—you should be the best judge as to which would most thoroughly suit your needs.

I regret that I cannot inform you as to whether the new-fashioned or the old-fashioned doctrines are favoured by the three managers. As to the distribution of tracts, I would very dutifully suggest that you should mark out the persons in the hotel whom you think should be so benefited, and allow me, after your departure, to see that the tracts reach a suitable destination. This will spare you the confusion of receiving their thanks.

The Grand Hotel, with which I will begin, as it lies nearest to Charing Cross, presents a curved face both to Trafalgar Square and Northumberland Avenue, and from its windows a fine view can be seen of the pillar erected to the hero Nelson, whose deeds you have been good enough to admire while reprobating the frailties of his life. I inspected the sitting-rooms on the first floor, and saw some, notably a room decorated

in white colour, with a fine view over the Square, and well within hearing of the bells of the neighbouring church, which would suit you admirably. But Miss Judith might prefer the stir and gaiety of the public rooms to a private apartment, and the great dining-room with its white marble pillars with gold capitals, its mirrors set in a frame of deep-coloured velvets, its roof of stained glass, its many tables covered with white napery, is a most chaste yet withal cheerful apartment. A smaller dining-room in which alabaster pillars support the roof, is also a delightful room. The hall, which has pillars of white and black marble, is handsome, and has absorbed what was once the reading-room. Should you desire to give a family dinner during your stay—though I would not press you to do so, as I can hardly conceive that I could meet at present my cousin John with those feelings I should like to entertain towards him—there is a very delightful suite of rooms, known as the Walnut Rooms, where the head cook of the hotel—who previously cooked for the members of that politically misguided, but excellently appointed club, the Reform—has had the honour of serving meals to princes of the Royal blood. As for the company at the Grand, I should take it that it is chiefly of old country families, or the heads of great firms in the North.

Somewhat farther down the Avenue towards the river, and on the side opposite to the Grand, is the Victoria Hotel, and should Miss Judith be of a lively disposition, the coming and going of well-dressed and polite folk in this hotel would please her mightily.

Most of the road coaches—the continuance of the mode of travelling by which does much to sustain the high perfection of that noble animal the horse—start from the Victoria Hotel, and it is a stirring scene at eleven in the morning to view the passengers depart. The hall is gorgeous with brown and yellow and green marbles, and many of the guests of the hotel sit there to watch the coming and going of the ladies of fashion and their cavaliers. Many Americans and Australians, liking the brightness of the place, give it their custom.

The long line of drawing-rooms is on the ground floor, and is profusely decorated with that tint known as old gold. But if Miss Judith is an amateur of music, the dining-room will please her most, for here, in a great and really splendid apartment, which has pillars of white and gold with fine foundations of brass, a band of stringed instruments plays most excellent music during the dinner, and many people of distinction come here—as indeed also to the other two hotels—from great distances in London to partake of the dinner of the *table d'hôte*. There is a very cosy little sanctum for serious conversation on the first landing of the great staircase, and the private sitting-rooms on the first floor, decorated in a variety of styles, are very comfortable.

The Métropole Hotel, which is built in the form of a triangle, one of the points of the angle touching the Thames Embankment, is the largest of the three hotels, accommodating as many as 800 guests. It is an hotel the

solid comfort of which attracts many of those fortunate people who have acquired large sums of money in business ; and indeed it is no rare news to be told of some family who have made this hotel their home for years. The especially delightful nooks and corners, filled by lounges, with which this hotel abounds, have always pleased me much ; and there is, on the ground-floor, a drawing-room with a most dignified decoration of painted silk panels, a very noble room, with a fine view over the Thames, where ladies who are pleased to do so make their own dishes of tea.

The great dining-room may be thought by some to be a whit gloomy ; but the saloon, in which the dinners are served, to use a French term, *à la carte*, is a bright and withal handsome apartment, panelled to the ceiling with oak, and with tapestry spread on the walls. I fear that you do not approve of the game of billiards ; but there is a very delightful room for the pursuit of that game in this hotel, and an ante-room of much comfort, from whence ladies watch the strokes and cannons. The private rooms are most excellently appointed.

After your strictures as to excessive addiction to writing of, and partaking of, rich and delicate food—strictures prompted, I fear, by my cousin John—I feel some diffidence in writing of the dinners served at these hotels. Yet I must say that from experience I have found that at all three hotels the tables are well served ; the dinner of the *table d'hôte* being in each case five shillings in price.

For an instance, at the Grand Hotel on the day of my inquiry, among other delicacies, whitebait, and the curry of Madras, pheasants, and the toothsome pigeon were served ; while at the Métropole *dominos de foie gras* would have tempted your appetite, and you would have ended a capital dinner with partridges and various sweets. This is how you would have fared at the Hôtel Victoria :—

Canapés de caviar Moscovite.
 Consommé Marquise. Crème Chantilly.
 Sole Montreuil.
 Blanchailles à la Diable.
 Zéphires de faisan Princesse.
 Tournedos Ventadour.
 Selle de mouton au laver.
 Dindonneau Baltimore.
 Haricots verts sautés au beurre.
 Pommes fondantes.
 Pluviers dorés bardés sur croûtes.
 Salades panachées.
 Mince pies.
 Biscuits glacés vanille. Langue de chat.
 Dessert.

Should you arrive at Victoria Station and not at Charing Cross you will find the Grosvenor Hotel, under the management of the Gordon Hotels Company, newly swept and garnished. In this hotel is a restaurant with a separate kitchen from that in which the meals for the *table d'hôte* are prepared, and those who care for such vanities and weaknesses of the flesh as French dishes may be counted to bespeak lightly of it.

I need scarcely say, my dear aunt, how pleased I shall be to be of any service to you and my cousin Judith during your stay in the Metropolis, and remain, your very dutiful and obliged

NEPHEW.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE KING'S GUARD (ST. JAMES'S PALACE)

"THE best dinner in London, sir!" was what our fathers always added when, with a touch of gratification, they used to tell of having been asked to dine on the Guard at St. James's; and nowadays, when the art of dinner-giving has come to be very generally understood, the man who likes good cooking and good company still feels very pleased to be asked to dinner by one of the officers of the guard, for the old renown is still justified, and there is a fascination in the surroundings that is not to be obtained by unlimited money spent in any restaurant.

Past the illuminated clock of the Palace, the hands of which mark five minutes to eight, in through an arched gate, across one of the courts, and in a narrow passage where a window gives a glimpse of long rows of burnished pots and pans, is a black-painted door with, on the door-jamb, a legend of black on white telling that this is the officers' guard.

Up some wooden stairs with leaden edges to them, stairs built for use and not for ornament ;

and, the guests' coats being taken by a clean-shaved butler in evening clothes, we are at once in the officers' room.

It is a long room, lighted on one side by a great bow-window, flanked by two other windows. At the farthest end of the room from the door is a mantel of grey and white marble. The walls are painted a comfortable green colour, and there are warm crimson curtains to the windows. There are many pictures upon the walls; and a large sofa, leather-covered armchairs, and a writing-table in the bow of the window give an air of comfort to the room. A great screen, which, in its way, is a work of art, being covered with cuttings of all periods, from Rowlandsons' caricatures to the modern style of military prints, is drawn out from the wall so as to divide the room into two portions. On the door side of the screen stands in one corner the regimental colour of the battalion finding the guard, and here, too, are the bearskin head-dresses of the officers.

On the fireplace side of the screen is a table ready set for dinner, the clear glass decanters at the corners being filled with champagne, a silver-gilt vase forming the centre-piece, and candles in silver candelabra giving the necessary light. By the fireplace the officers of the guard, in scarlet and gold and black, are waiting to receive their guests.

In addition to the officers of the St. James's guard, the adjutant and colonel of the battalion that finds the guard, the two officers of the Household Cavalry on guard at the Horse Guards,

and some of the military officials of the Court have a right to dine. But it is rarely that all entitled to this privilege avail themselves of it, and the captain and officers of the guard generally are able to ask some guests to fill the vacant chairs.

As, on the stroke of eight, on the evening I am writing of, we sat down to dinner my host told me that he had ordered a typical meal for me. This was the menu :—

Potage croûte-au-pot.
Eperlans à l'Anglaise.
Bouchées à la moëlle.
Côtelettes de mouton. Purée de marrons.
Poularde à la Turque.
Hure truffée. Sauce Cumberland.
Pluviers dorés.
Pommes de terre Anna.
Champignons grillés.
Omelette soufflée.
Huîtres à la Diable.

The hand of M. Gautier, the messman, was to be recognised throughout; and the spatchcocked smelts, the boar's head, with its sharp-tasting sauce, and the *soufflée*, I recognised as being favourite dishes on the King's Guard.

On this evening the wearers of the black coats, as well as the red, had served His Majesty, at one time or another, in various parts of the world, and our talk drifted to the subject of the various officers' guards all over the British world. In hospitality the Castle Guard at Dublin probably comes next to the guard at St. James's,

for the officers of the guard fare excellently there at the Viceregal expense. The Bank guards, both in the City of London, and at College Green, have compensating advantages, and the officer's guard at Fort William, Calcutta, has helped many an impoverished subaltern to buy a polo pony. The story goes that some rich native falling ill close to the gate of Fort William, the subaltern on guard took him up to the guard-room and treated him kindly, and in consequence, in his will, the native left provision for a daily sum of rupees to be given to the subaltern on guard. These rupees are paid every day minus one, retained by the *babus* as a charge for "stationery," and though all the little tin gods both at Calcutta and Simla have exerted themselves to recover for the subaltern that rupee, the power of the *babu* has been too strong, and the stationery item still represents the missing rupee. We chatted of the Malta guard, with its collection of pictures on the wall; of dreary hours at Gibraltar, with nothing to do except to construct sugar-covered fougasses to blow up flies; and of exciting moments at Peshawar, when the chance of being shot by one's own sentries made going the rounds a real affair of outposts.

Then I asked questions about the gilt centre-piece, which is in the shape of an Egyptian vase with sphinxes on the base, and was told that the holding capacities of it were beyond the guessing of any one who had not seen the experiment tried. Some of the other plate which is put upon the table at the close of dinner is of great interest. There is a cigar-lighter in the shape of a grenade

given by His Majesty the King, a silver cigar-cutter, a memento of an inter-regimental friendship made at manœuvres, and a snuff-box made from one of the hoofs of Napoleon's charger Marengo. Which hoof it was is not stated on the box, but the collective wisdom of the table decided that it must have been the near hind one. Excepting on days when the Scots Guards are on guard, His Majesty's health is not, I believe, drunk after dinner—though I fancy that His Majesty, when Prince of Wales, dining on guard, broke through this custom. The regiment from across the Border was at one time suspected of a leaning towards Jacobitism, and while the officers were ordered to drink His Majesty's health they were not allowed to use finger-glasses after dinner, lest they should drink to the King over the water.

Dinner over, the big sofa is pulled round in front of the fire, and a whist-table and a game of drawing-room cricket each claims its devotees. I asked my host to be allowed to inspect the pictures which pretty well cover the walls. The most important is an excellent portrait of Her late Majesty in the early part of her reign. It is the work of "Lieut.-Col. Cadogan," and was begun on the wall of a guard-room—at Windsor, I fancy. The surface of the wall was cut off, the picture finished, and it now hangs, a fine work of art but a tremendous weight, in the place of honour. There is an admirable oil-colour of the old Duke of Wellington, showing a kindly old face looking down, a pleasant difference from the alert aquiline profile which most

of his portraits show. There are prints of other celebrated generals, mostly Guardsmen, and an amusing caricature of three kings dining on guard. It is a very unfurnished guard-room, with a bare floor, in which their Majesties are being entertained, but the enthusiasm with which the officers are drinking their health makes up for the surroundings. A key to the print hangs hard by, but the names attached to the various figures are said to have been written in joke. Many of the pictures are sporting prints and hunting caricatures; but the original of *Vanity Fair's* sketch of Dan Godfrey is in one corner; and a strange old picture of a battle, painted on a tea-tray, hangs over the door.

On either side of the looking-glass, above the mantelpiece, are the list of officers on duties and the orders for the guard, the latter with a glass over them, which is supposed to have been cracked in Marlborough's time. Some very admirably arranged caricatures, with explanatory notes, are bound into a series of red volumes and kept in a glazed set of shelves, and these, with a number of blue-bound volumes of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, form the greater portion of the library available for the officers on guard.

As the hands of the clock near eleven, the butler, who has been handing round "pegs" in long tumblers, takes up his position by the door. Military discipline is inexorable, and we (the guests) know that we must be out of the precincts of the guard by eleven o'clock. We say good-night to our hosts, and as we go down-

stairs we hear the clank of swords being buckled on.

Outside in the courtyard a sergeant and a drummer and a man with a lantern are waiting for the officer to go the rounds.

CHAPTER XLV

THE CRITERION (PICCADILLY CIRCUS)

MRS. DE FOREEST, her husband, Lady Carcanet, and Sir George were drinking five-o'clock tea with me in the restaurant of the Criterion, which forms one of the snuggest tea-rooms in London ; or rather I should write that the two ladies and the Captain partook of the cup that cheers but does not inebriate, and Sir George looked on and called the beverage cat-lap.

"When you brought me to dine here you promised that you would some day take me over the whole of the house," said Miss Brighteyes that was, and her husband laughingly said that he had now discovered the second place to which I had taken an unchaperoned young lady, and that he should make a note of it ; and Lady Carcanet encouraged him, saying that this unconventional jaunt had been arranged behind her back, and that the conspirators had treacherously waited until she had gone to Brighton. Sir George took a leaf from Brer Rabbit's book and lay low.

I pleaded the statute of limitations, for it was

years ago that I gave Miss Brighteyes a dinner in the East Room and took her to see *The Liars*. But, to change the subject, I was quite willing, I said, to act to the best of my ability as guide to the many different dining-halls there are under the roof of the Criterion, and if M. Eugène, who is now manager of the great house, was in the building, I was sure that he would go round with us.

Before starting on our tour of inspection, I told my little band of personally-conducted tourists something of the history of the great house, of the wonder with which Londoners regarded the pile of building that Messrs. Spiers and Pond, the enterprising Australians, set up in the very centre of London, and of the constant additions and alterations that have been made to the original house.

It is said of the appointment of Adjutant-General in India, that the holder of it either dies of overwork or else is promoted to a very good command, and the saying might be applied to the manager's post of the Criterion. Some of the managers—Oddenino, Mantell, Gerard—have gone on to other perhaps less onerous tasks, and some—M. Lefèvre, for instance—have found their health in danger of breaking down under the strain of the work.

Mrs. de Foreest had noticed the details of the little restaurant on the ground floor where we had taken our tea, the panels of handsome tiles, the paintings on the curve of the ceiling, the names of the most famous cooks the world has seen inscribed on tablets, and I told her that if

she and her husband wanted a simple little meal *à la carte*, this was the portion of the establishment to come to.

In the hall we stayed to gaze at the great gilded cage which projects over the staircase and holds the band, a cunning arrangement of openings, passing the sound to the buffet and American bar, the East and West Rooms, and the great hall.

The buffet, with its ceiling inlaid with golden glass, its walls of very light grey marble veined with a darker grey, its decoration of coloured glass tesserae let into the marble, and its arches with mirrors in them amazed the ladies; and it is, in truth, a beautiful hall, one which tourists would go miles to see if it was in some place difficult of approach. At lunch time, as I told my little flock, all the tables in this glittering apartment and in the two marble-walled rooms beyond are always occupied. Mrs. de Foreest naturally wished to inspect the American bar—it was a patriotic duty, she said, a compliment to her husband's nationality—but she was shown the stern notice which bars her sex from that particular grill-room. The grill-room in the basement I offered to show her, but she animadverted on the selfishness of men in keeping the bright and light room to themselves and sending the ladies underground. I did not feel equal to an encounter in argument with Mrs. Foreest, so proposed that we should take the lift and go to the first floor.

Here M. Eugène was waiting for us, and under his guidance we looked into the East Room, decorated in soft green and cream colour,

with deep pink shades to the little lamps on the tables, and dark green velvet curtains in the charming little ante-room ; and Mrs. de Foreest was kind enough to recall with pleasure the *caille à la Sainte-Alliance* she had eaten when she had dined in this room. The East Room, as all the world knows, is one of the temples of the Haute Cuisine.

Across the landing I showed my flock the West Room, which is now a symphony in shades of rose colour—a very beautiful room, but not so handsome to my mind as it used to be when it was an oriental chamber with a charming pattern of roses on its walls. Ever since I can remember the West Room a 5s. French dinner has been served there, and when I was a curly-haired subaltern, and sovereigns were even more scarce with me than they are now, I generally used to find that if a lady did me the honour to dine with me, it was more prudent to take her to the West Room than to the then East Room, where in those days the vast sum—to a subaltern—of half a guinea was charged for the *table-d'hôte* meal.

Apropos of sovereigns and dinners I received in connection with the series of articles here collected one very strange epistle. It was from a perfect stranger, and he requested me to send him £25. He had but one claim on my generosity, he wrote, and that was that he wanted the money badly. The tone of my articles, he continued, suggested the command of so much wealth that he was sure that I would not miss the paltry “pony” which would put him out of his difficulties.

But I wander from my subject. M. Eugène took us up one more flight of stairs and we were in the grand hall, with its brown marble columns with gilded capitals, its dome of stained glass and its statues of fawns and nymphs, and William Shakespeare with crossed legs leaning an elbow on a pile of books.

"What was that quail *à la Sainte-Alliance* anyhow?" asked Captain de Foreest as we went down the stairs, and I replied, with due gravity, that if he had read the first edition of a great work titled "Dinners and Dinners," by a most talented author, he would have known all about it. To which, with a becoming humility, he answered that there were quite a number of the most talented works of British authors that had not as yet got across the Atlantic.

I promised to send him the article, and as some of my readers may be in like case as Captain de Foreest, I print it as showing what the East Room and its dinners were like under the rule of M. Lefèvre, a description which is practically that of the room of to-day except for the change of decorations, and that the dinners are now served under the superintendence of M. Eugène.

THE EAST ROOM

"I want father to take me to see *The Liars*," said pretty Miss Carcanet ("Brighteyes" to her friends), "but he says that he sees too many of them as it is in his club smoking-room, and won't go with me."

There was naturally only one thing to do, and that was to offer to take Lady Carcanet and Miss Brighteyes to the play at the Criterion.

Sir George was evidently relieved at not having to go to the theatre, and thanked me. "It is just the play that ought to suit you," he added, "for I hear it's all about menus and sauces."

Lady Carcanet, however, could not go to the play. She was retiring to Brighton to escape the fogs, and did not know when she would come back. Sir George settled it all, however, over the walnuts and the port. He had to preside at a political dinner one day in the coming week, and if I would take Miss Brighteyes out to dinner and to the play that night it would take a responsibility off his shoulders. "Let the old woman get away to Brighton, and don't say anything till she's out of the way. I am all for letting the girl enjoy herself freely; but Maria thinks that no unmarried girl should stir without two chaperons and a maid to guard her." I nodded assent to Sir George's opinions, but I knew that he would never have dared to call Lady Carcanet "the old woman" to her face.

I bought the tickets for *The Liars*, and on the morning of the day I was to have the responsibility of chaperoning Miss Brighteyes I went to the Criterion, to the East Room, to order my dinner and choose my table.

M. Lefèvre, the manager, is an old acquaintance of mine, for once before the East Room was under his direction, and now, with M.

Node and Alfred as his adjutant and sergeant-major, he still keeps a watchful eye over all that takes place there. He is an enthusiast on cookery, and should one day write a book on the introduction of good foreign cookery into England, for he talks of M. Coste and Maître Escoffier, and the other great pioneers of culinary progress, with real enthusiasm.

There are three tables, one of which I always take, if possible, when I dine in the East Room. One is the little table in the corner by the entrance from the ante-room, another a table sheltered by a glass screen, and the third a table in the corner at the far end of the room. I told Alfred to keep me the table at the far end of the room; and then M. Lefèvre—tall, with a thin beard, with strong, nervous hands, that he clasps and unclasps as he talks—arrived, and we talked over our menu. Caviar I preferred to oysters, for I did not know whether Miss Bright-eyes cared for shellfish, and then we passed to the consideration of the soup.

I suggested that it should be a *consommé*, as I did not want a heavy dinner, and M. Lefèvre hit on exactly the right thing, a *consommé de gibier*. Next came the fish, and as the details of the fillet of sole with soft herring-roë, and the sharp taste of prawn and crayfish to make the necessary contrast were unfolded, I nodded my head. *Cailles à la Sainte-Alliance* we settled on at once, and then came the difficulty of the *entrée*. I wanted a perfectly plain dish, and in a grilled chicken wing and breast we found our way out of our difficulty. There was a novelty,

a method of cooking bananas that M. Lefèvre, who believes that bananas are not sufficiently appreciated, wanted us to try.

The menu completed read thus :—

Caviar.

Potage consommé à la Diane.

Filets de sole aux délices.

Suprêmes de volaille grillés.

Carottes nouvelles à la crème.

Laitues braisées en cocotte.

Cailles à la Sainte-Alliance.

Salade de chicorée frisée.

Croûtes à la Caume.

Soufflé glacé à la mandarine.

In the evening, before Miss Brighteyes, who was to be escorted as far as the ante-room to the East Room by Sir George, arrived, I had a few minutes in which to go and see that all was ready at my table, and to look round to see whether there was anybody whom I knew dining. It was, I should think, the first occasion on which I have dined in the East Room and have not recognised a single face ; but all the ladies appeared very smart, all the men were well groomed, the usual type of diners at a good restaurant. If I had looked at the book in which the names of people ordering dinners are noted, I should no doubt have found that there were a dozen people among the well-dressed diners whose names are familiar in our mouths as household words.

The little ante-room, with its green and cream walls, its mirrors, its big fireplace, and its

comfortable chairs, is cosy enough to have a soothing effect on a worse-tempered man than myself; and my patience was not much tried, for Sir George formally handed over Miss Brighteyes to me not five minutes after the time at which I had ordered dinner.

Miss Brighteyes looked very delightful in a dress of some white gossamer material with spangly adornments, which resembled diamonds, scattered over it. She wore a diamond brooch and a necklet of pearls with a diamond clasp, which had been her birthday presents from her father on her seventeenth and eighteenth birthdays.

When Miss Brighteyes gets up on her society high horse she reduces me to comparative silence. While I was being given some details as to beautiful decorations at St. George's on the occasion of her cousin's wedding, I tried in vain to make Miss Brighteyes understand that the caviar she was eating deserved some attention, but she was not to be turned from her account of an aisle decorated with chrysanthemums and palms.

Had a man dared to talk to me about a Duchess's reception while he was drinking the delicious *consommé* I should have reproved him, and asked him to reserve conversation for the interludes of the repast; but Miss Brighteyes, not thinking in the least of the serious responsibility of eating a good dinner, chattered gaily of Miss Mary Moore's black and white dress at a supper-party in a restaurant a week gone by, and reeled off a catalogue of names from the Peerage of the men who had been her partners at a dance given by Lady Somebody or another.

While I ate with appreciation the *délices de sole*, I was told why Miss Brighteyes preferred Princes' to Niagara as a skating-rink, or *vice versa*, I forget which.

With the *suprême de volaille* I was given a short account of a party at the Bachelors' Club to see a magic-lantern entertainment, and when the *cailles à la Sainte Alliance* were brought up Miss Brighteyes was beginning to tell me of some charades, at her aunt's house, acted by children. But the quails were a dish in the presence of which I felt that small talk must cease. "Miss Brighteyes," I said gravely, "cast your eyes around this room. You see dainty panels of dark green traced over with gold, you see red and gold cornices, a ceiling of cream and gold studded with lights innumerable, bronze velvet curtains, yellow-shaded lamps, fine napery, glass, and silver. All this is but the framing to what is contained in this little earthen *terrine*. Into the interior of a little ortolan M. Gastaud himself, the *chef cuisinier*, has introduced a little block of truffle and other delicacies. That little ortolan has been imbedded in a quail, and this sacred alliance, over which M. Jeannin, *chef des cuisiniers*, has smiled, has been served up cooked to the instant for your delectation. Is this a moment, then, young lady, to talk of children's charades? Is not thankful silence better?"

Miss Brighteyes appreciated the solemnity of the moment, and also ate the bananas—which she said were very good—in silence. It was not until she had begun her *soufflé* that she found voice to tell me about a new and very smart

cycling club of which she had been asked to be an original member.

I paid the bill: Couverts, 2s.; caviar, 4s.; potage, 2s.; filets de sole, 3s.; suprêmes de volaille et légumes, 8s.; cailles, 10s.; salade, 1s.; croûtes à la Caume, 2s.; soufflé glacé, 2s.; vin "62" (a capital bottle of claret), 5s.; eau minérale, 6d.; liqueurs, 3s.; café, 6d.; total, £2:3s.

"Now," I said to Miss Brighteyes, "we will go down to the theatre and listen in comfort to a discussion as to *sauce Arcadienne* and *sauce Marguérite*."

* * * Mons. Lefèvre being an enthusiast on the subject of bananas in cookery, I asked him if he would give the *recette* of the *croûtes à la Caume*, and as he said "Certainly," and seemed pleased to do it, I put in a request for the *recette* of the *filets de sole aux délices*, and that was given me as well.

I also asked Mons. Lefèvre to draw out for me two menus of what he would consider distinctive east-room dinners for four people and for ten. They were sent to me and admirably thought-out dinners they are. This is the feast for four—

Caviar.

Consommé Prince de Galles. Crème de santé.

Truites de rivière à la Cléopâtre.

Epaule d'agneau de lait à la Boulangère.

Petits pois nouveaux à la crème.

Caneton Nantais farci à la Rouennaise.

Salade Victoria.

Soufflé glacé à l'orange.

Friandises.

And this for ten—

Huîtres natives.
 Potage clair à la tortue. Crème Raphaël.
 Darne de saumon au court-bouillon.
 Cassolettes de laitances à l'Américaine.
 Cailles à la Mascotte.
 Noisettes de chevreuil à la Cumberland.
 Haricots verts nouveaux.
 Purée de champignons.
 Chapons du Mans à la truffe.
 Salade à la crème.
 Asperges d'Argenteuil. Sauce mousseline.
 Glacé Alaska.
 Diablotins à la Joinville.
 Dessert.

Suprêmes de soles aux délices

Rangez vos filets de soles dans un plat beurré ; arrosez-les de vin blanc et faites-les pocher pendant dix minutes. Egouttez ensuite vos filets et dressez-les sur un plat oval. Faites réduire rapidement la cuisson avec un peu de bon velouté et un morceau de beurre d'écrevisses. Quand votre sauce est prête, jetez-y des queues d'écrevisses et recouvrez en vos filets de soles. Dressez aux extrémités du plat des quenelles d'écrevisses décorées à la truffe, et servez.

Croûtes à la Caume

Vous préparez vos croûtes avec de la brioche en tranches d'un centimètre d'épaisseur, que vous faites rôtir légèrement au four après les avoir saupoudrées au sucre. Vous les dressez en couronne sur un plat rond,

au milieu, mais avec quelques losanges d'ananas au centre. Vous prenez des bananes pas trop mûres, mais surtout bien saines. Vous les jetez avec leur peau dans de l'eau froide que vous mettez à bouillir. Après deux minutes d'ébullition, les bananes sont cuites. Vous les retirez, vous les épluchez, et les rangez sur votre plat autour des croûtons. Vous arrosez l'ananas et les bananes d'une sauce abricot parfumée au Kirsch, et vous servez bien chaud, après avoir décoré de quelques fruits confits. C'est très simple. Toutes les ménagères peuvent faire ça. C'est cependant la façon la plus exquise de manger la banane.

A. L. Lefevre

When MM. Eugène and Garin, two young and enthusiastic managers with a Savoy training, started the Avondale as an hotel and a first-class restaurant—it had before been the Cercle du Luxe—I dined there in due course; some very excellent Bortsch soup formed a portion of the repast, and I begged for the *recette*. The Avondale no longer has its restaurant open to the public, the brightly-decorated room now being used as a coffee-room for the guests of the hotel, and Hatchett's, in the same building and under the same manager as the hotel, is the dining-place to which the Avondale *clientèle* is

directed. As M. Eugène is at the Criterion, and as I still have the *recette* of the soup, it seems to me to be suitable that it should be here inserted, as well as that of the *soufflé de filets de sole à la d'Orleans*, a dish invented by the Duke and prepared by M. Dutruz, then the chef of the Avondale.

BORTSCH SOUP

Ayez un bon consommé avec lequel vous manquez un morcelle la marmite comme il est l'usage pour le consommé extra, faites blanchir un morceau de poitrine de bœuf que vous ajoutez et une caneton que vous faites rôtir pendant quelques minutes, le tout étant cuit, coupez les filets du canard et le maigre du bœuf en petit carré d'un dessin centimètre, passez votre consommé à la serviette, ayez d'autre part une Julienne de légumes, avec beaucoup de choux. Servez notre potage en ajoutant aux légumes les morceaux de bœuf et canard plus un jus de betterave rouge de façon de lui donner une couleur rougeâtre et un peu de poivre moulu frais; envoyez une saucière de crème à part.

SOUFFLÉ DE FILETS DE SOLE À LA D'ORLEANS

Choisissez des filets de sole bien blancs, les parer et ciseler, les farcir d'une farce de poisson aux truffes et rouler en forme de paupiettes, faites pocher doucement avec du vin blanc, faire réduire la cuisson, ajouter trois cuillères de béchamelle, le tout étant bien réduit lier avec deux jaunes d'œufs et mélanger à votre appareil en ajoutant de belles lames de truffes fraîches chauffées au beurre assaisonné de sel et beaucoup de mignonette,

placez vos paupiettes sur un croûton très mince dans une timbale en argent et recouverte de l'appareil à souffler, faites cuire pendant quinze minutes au four en saupoudrant de parmesan (cheese) dessus de façon à prendre belle couleur.—Ce plat doit être servi de suite.

Wm. Dectung
Chef

CHAPTER XLVI

THE COBURG (CARLOS PLACE)

THERE were some portions of my aunt Tabitha's letter from the North which were distinctly satisfactory. She was kind enough to say that both she and my cousin Judith, the most delightfully demure little lady possible, had enjoyed their short stay in London, and had appreciated the oratorio, the museums, and the picture galleries I had escorted them to. She animadverted on the strange conduct of my cousin John, who went to call on the old lady after being up all night at a Covent Garden ball, where I detected him clothed as a monk, with a false nose and spectacles. She sent me half a dozen works of the fiercest fire-and-brimstone type, asking me to forward them to him—which I shall be delighted to do, and also sent a bundle of miscellaneous tracts for the servants of the Grand Hotel, at which hostel she stayed, and some specially selected ones for some of the guests staying at the hotel—these, I fear, may be mislaid. The principal item of news in her letter, however, was that Simon Treadwell,

her solicitor, was coming to London on business for her, and that she wished him to consult me as to certain investments she intended to make.

There was a decidedly comforting sound in this, and I was only too ready to do all honour to Mr. Treadwell. I had memories of him as a very grave gentleman, clean-shaved, with a wealth of long white hair, and with gold-rimmed pince-nez attached to a broad black ribbon. He came of Quaker stock, and though I wished to entertain him, for it is so much easier to talk business over the dinner-table than anywhere else, I felt perplexed as to where to ask him to dine with me. The bustle and the music of the fashionable restaurants would not be in keeping with the staidness of this grave old gentleman.

The Coburg occurred to me. The name in itself commands respect, and there is dignity in the appearance of the red-brick Elizabethan building that shows a curved front to Carlos Place. From previous experience I knew that I might expect good cooking, and that we should dine with unhurried calm in the panelled dining-room. So in writing to my aunt Tabitha to say that I should be delighted to meet Mr. Treadwell again, I suggested that he should dine with me at the Coburg, and named the date and time.

Mr. Simon Treadwell, my aunt wrote, would be delighted to dine on the date named. Thinking of our after-dinner entertainment, I looked out in my morning paper the most classical concert I could find advertised for that date, and took tickets for it. Then I went to the Coburg,

and in consultation with the manager ordered a dinner which I thought should suit my guest, accepting the item of *petite marmite* with resignation :—

Caviar.

Petite marmite.

Filets de soles Waleska.

Tournedos niçoise.

Pommes Anna.

Perdreau Périgourdine.

Salade Victoria.

Bombe patricienne.

Friandises.

On the appointed evening I waited in the lounge which leads off from the entrance-hall, rather wondering as to whether my stock of conversation would last out a dinner with the very grave person I had to entertain. The lounge is a very comfortable room, painted oak-colour, with warm red curtains and a warm red carpet. From it one looks through a white arch into the white panelled hall, with its dead gold roof and the oak staircase, which, through its white arch, with a plentiful supply of palms to break the straight lines, would appeal to any artist's eye.

I heard my name spoken in the hall, and went out to receive my venerable guest. I was astonished, however, to find a young gentleman, black of hair, clean-shaven, with an eyeglass, and in the most modern cut of dress clothes. I am afraid that my face showed my astonishment, for my guest said, "I am Mr. Simon Treadwell, junior. Did you expect to see my father?"

I wondered how the classical concert would suit my new acquaintance, as I piloted him down the white-panelled passage, where a little fountain in a recess lets fall a tinkling stream of water, and into the dining-room. We were quiet, as I expected to be. The room, with its panelling of deep red wood, with a frieze of tapestry, its pillared overmantel, its recess curtained in, its soft red carpet, its high-backed chairs of dark-green leather with a golden C on them, its clusters of electric globes filling the room with a soft, luminous glow, is all in keeping with a certain sensation of stateliness, and the perfect silence of the service, a very good point, adds to this feeling.

The diners at the other tables were, I should say, all guests staying at the hotel. I had not the curiosity to ask who they were, but I should have expected to be told that their names were all to be found in "Debrett."

Mr. Treadwell was taking stock of me, as I was doing of him, and when the *caviar* in its bowl of ice and the *petite marmite*, strong and hot, had been served, he told me of the very simple business as to which he had been instructed to ask my advice, and that matter satisfactorily disposed of, we, with the *sole Waleska*, which, with its accompanying slices of truffle, is always a favourite dish of mine, fell on to general subjects, and I tentatively asked Mr. Treadwell whether he had a taste for classical music.

"Not so much for classical music as for a good song," said Mr. Treadwell, urbanely; and after a short pause he mentioned that he had heard

that Dan Leno was very amusing. I mentally tore up the tickets for the classical concert.

With the *tournedos* Mr. Treadwell told me that he had wired down to the Palace for two seats for the next night in order to hear Marie Lloyd's new songs, and asked my advice as to where he had better dine *à deux*, and whether Romano's, or Princes', or the Savoy was the most *chic* place to take a lady to supper at. I filled up Mr. Treadwell's glass from the nicely chilled bottle of Perrier Jouet, and he almost winked at me as he told me of my cousin John's delinquencies: how, after he, John, had hypocritically warned my aunt Tabitha that I took a delight in theatrical performances and attempted to raise the ready smile in journalism, he had been so indiscreet as to appear before my aunt on an occasion when he had evidently come home with the milk. Mr. Treadwell went so far as to call him a "garden jackass"; and, my heart warming to the young solicitor, I told him of the Covent Garden ball and how I had discovered my cousin there, and of the tracts that had been sent to me by my aunt to give him.

With the partridge, excellently cooked, I gave Mr. Treadwell my opinions as to the merits of the various pantomimes, and asked him to lunch with me next day, and to go and see a *matinée* at a music-hall. After the ice came coffee and old brandy, and Mr. Treadwell said that he would like to smoke a cigar.

The other diners had all finished their dinners, and we were the only occupiers of the big room,

in luxurious quiet. Mr. Treadwell lay back in his chair and pulled at his cigar with the air of a man enjoying life.

I paid my bill: Two dinners, £1:1s.; one bottle 83, 15s.; two coffees, 1s.; two fine champagne, 3s.; cigar, 6d.; total, £2:0:6. This done, I asked Mr. Treadwell where he would like to go and finish the evening; and he, waking from a day-dream, said, "Anywhere where they have a ballet."

"Heads the Empire, tails the Alhambra," I said as I tossed the coin, and it fell heads.

I wish I had not been so hasty in buying those classical concert tickets.

CHAPTER XLVII

CLARIDGE'S (BROOK STREET)

THE Princess was passing through town, and wrote that she would graciously deign to dine with me.

The responsibility of giving dinner to a Princess, even though she be not a British Princess, but the bearer of an Italian title, is no light one. Claridge's, "the home of kings," occurred to me at once as the right restaurant at which to entertain Her Highness, for the new and stately hotel that has sprung up in Brook Street has a quiet grandeur that is in keeping with its old nickname.

The Claridge's of the past was a comfortable hotel with convenient suites, but its outside was as philistine as any doctor's house in the street. Now the towering red-brick structure, with its granite columns, looks like a veritable palace. The proprietor in old days was very much in evidence. He felt the responsibility of having Royalty under his roof, and was always waiting in the hall to make his bow. So keenly did he appreciate his proud position that once, when an

enterprising artist took a room at Claridge's, so as to be able to observe a Royal personage who was going to be gently caricatured in a weekly paper, he being made aware that the crime of *lèse-majesté* was being committed, politely but firmly insisted on the artist taking his port-manteau and paint-brushes elsewhere. Royalty might be caricatured, but it should never be said that the crime was committed at Claridge's. Nowadays Claridge's is in the hands of a company, and though, no doubt, M. Mengay, the manager, is present to make his bow when Royalty arrives, he would not dream of expelling an inquisitive artist ; indeed, all the caricaturists in Europe would be welcome if they had the wherewithal to pay their bills, for Royalty in the new Claridge's is given a separate house, and so is effectually shielded from prying eyes.

The right touch of grandeur is given in the *porte-cochère*, where the roadway is paved with indiarubber, so that even the horses shall go softly, and where the pavement is of marble. It takes a great number of men—six, I think—to open the doors of Claridge's, and to show the visitor into the hall ; and as a great number of servants to do very little is one of the characteristics of Royal residences, the home of kings in this way asserts itself at its gates.

I went in the afternoon to order dinner and secure a table. The six men let me in, and two higher officials were at my service to direct me to the restaurant ; but I did not need any guidance, for when the new Claridge's was opened I had wandered at will through all the rooms,

had admired the great stone fireplace in the smoking-room, had passed through the many suites on the higher floors ; Louis Quinze suites, Louis Seize suites, Empire suites, Sheraton and Adams suites, and had peeped into the Royal suite with its blue and green and crimson rooms, and mahogany furniture.

In the restaurant I found an old acquaintance in the shape of M. Deminger, the *maître d'hôtel*. All the small side-tables for the evening were taken, he said ; but a table for four should be converted into a table for two in order that I might be accommodated. The dinner I left to M. Nignon, the *chef de cuisine*, whose handiwork I knew well when he was at Paillard's, and M. Nobile, the manager, asking only that the dinner should be short, and saying that though I wanted a good dinner I did not, as I am not a crowned head or a very wealthy man, want an inordinately expensive one.

At eight punctually the Princess arrived, and was received with ceremony by the six at the doors. She was wearing her sable cloak, which always seems to me to be longer and handsomer than the furs worn by other women, and a dress of delicate black lace over some soft white material. The pearls and diamonds that are one of the heirlooms of her husband's family, were round her throat, and there was a sparkle of diamonds amidst the lace of her dress.

The restaurant at Claridge's is a dignified room. The windows are draped with deep red curtains and purple *portières* ; the carpet carries on the scheme of quiet reds, and the chairs have

morocco backs of vermillion, with the arms of the hotel stamped on them in gold. The white plaster ceiling is supported by great arches, the bases of which and the walls of which are panelled with darkish oak, into which patterns in olive wood are set. The quiet-footed waiters in evening clothes, with the arms of the hotel as a badge on the lapels of their coats, are in keeping with the room. It is a restaurant that is essentially quiet, a restaurant where hurry on the part of the diners would be out of place, a restaurant where good digestion should be inseparable from appetite. The music of the band under Meyer van Praag lends itself to the benevolent atmosphere of the place. It is soft enough and far away enough not to interfere with conversation. One of the lessons that most restaurant managers refuse to learn is that an aggressive band spoils a good dinner.

This was the menu that M. Rouget, the second *maître d'hôtel*, laid down by my plate as we took our seats :—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

Crème Princesse.

Sole d'Aumale.

Poulet de grain à la Carifnon.

Délice de jambon frappé au champagne.

Bécassine flambée Empire.

Salade d'endive.

Asperges Anglaises à la d'Yvette.

Bombe Claridge.

Petits fours.

While I was reading this through with appreciation the Princess was looking round

the room and at the people dining. The wide spaces left between the tables met with her thorough approval, for the fact that one's neighbours hear every word that one says at many of the London restaurants is not an incentive to conversation. A lady in white at the next table to ours also met with approval, and the Princess, serenely secure in the consciousness of being perfectly dressed, could afford to praise another woman's gown. Four men dining together at the tables drew from the Princess what sounded to me like a long extract from "Debrett," and I added an item of information as to the owner of a handsome face that was to be seen at one time on the stage, and which marriage withdrew from the gaze of the public.

While we trifled with the *hors-d'œuvre* the manager came to our table, and in the course of conversation told us that the Portuguese Ambassador had entertained H.R.H. the Prince of Wales in one of the private dining-rooms the evening before. I felt inclined to say that I, too, entertained the great ones of the earth at Claridge's, but I reflected that humility was becoming in me, even though a Princess had been kind enough to dine with me.

The thick soup was good ; but in no way remarkable. I do not care for thick soups, and the Princess only took a few spoonfuls from her plate. The sole, with its oysters and truffles, was very well cooked, and so was the chicken, with its savoury stuffing of macaroni and truffles. The *délice de jambon* was a triumph, light and dainty, with a delicate blending of flavours, a

dish which marked the man who made it as an artist in his calling. The *bécassine* was a toothsome mouthful, the asparagus was good, and the *bombe Claridge* was as admirable in its way as the *délice* had been. An excellent dinner, as a whole, with two dishes that were supreme works of culinary art. We drank the wine of the good widow Clicquot.

I paid my bill: Two couverts, 2s.; hors-d'œuvre, 2s.; crème Princesse, 4s.; sole, 4s. 6d.; poulet de grain, 12s.; mousse jambon, 4s. 6d.; *bécassine*, 10s.; salade, 1s. 6d.; asperges, 8s.; bombe, 3s.; café, 2s.; liqueurs, 3s. 6d.; wines, 15s.; total, £3 : 12s.

Dinner over, we sat in the comfortable reading-room, where the chairs of blue silk striped velvet match the cerulean tint of the walls, until the brougham was announced, and the Princess was duly ushered out by the faithful six.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE WALSINGHAM HOUSE (PICCADILLY)

"OH yes," said my maiden aunt. "I read of your going out to dinners and taking actresses and grass-widows and other pretty ladies to dine. I wonder you are not tired of so much frivolity."

I answered meekly that the worthlessness of my life was often felt seriously by me, and that I took actresses and grass-widows out to dinner because they were kind enough to say that they enjoyed such little outings; but that I would really prefer much more serious company.

My aunt drew down the corners of her mouth and looked at me through her spectacles with supreme disapproval.

"If I could only," I went on, revelling in my wickedness, "secure a missionary lady, or a captain in the Salvation Army, or a shining light of the Pioneer Club, or even one of my maiden aunts, as a dining companion, do you think for a moment that I would dally with the butterflies of the pasture or the stage?"

My maiden aunt was so angry that she sniffed. "As if you would think of asking us!" she said

with a snap. "I have noticed you have been facetious at the expense of an imaginary invalid aunt; but you would be very sorry to ask me out really."

"But I do ask you. It would be one of the greatest honours of my life to entertain you at dinner."

My aunt sat silent for a moment or two, her lips so tightly shut that they were almost white. Then there came a tiny twinkle in her eyes. "Very well," she said, "when you name an evening I'll come—just to punish you."

I felt afterwards that I had done a bold thing, and while I was about it I rather regretted that I had not asked my grave and spectacled relative to sup at a Bohemian restaurant—the contrast would have been as delicious as a *soufflé en surprise*; but dinner it had to be, and as the good lady told all the rest of the family that I had asked her to dinner, but was meanly trying to get out of the offer, I wrote a formal invitation requesting the pleasure of her company at the Walsingham House at 8 P.M., and to this I received a formal answer of acceptance.

The Walsingham House restaurant is in the house which the Isthmian Club occupied so long, and it forms part of the block of chambers and hotels that stretches from the Green Park to Arlington Street. Its name in great gilt letters stands out boldly on the red-brick face; and the twin entrances, with glass shelters, one to the dwelling-house, the other to the restaurant, have become well-known features of Piccadilly. A flight of steps leads up from the door to the

restaurant, and at the top of these stairs there is a comfortable ante-room ; but I preferred to wait by the fireplace in the hall, so as to be on the spot when my aunt arrived.

She came in a four-wheeler, the driver of which is a special retainer of hers. He is sober and he goes to church, and as the possessor of these two cardinal virtues, he is retained to drive my aunt on all special occasions. I saw the glint of her spectacles through the cab window, and went out to welcome her.

"Well, I've come, you see," she said with a certain amount of grimness ; and when I said that that was the proudest moment of my life, she bridled and tossed her head to show how much faith she put in speeches of that kind. I told the faithful cabman that he had better be in evidence at half-past nine, and then I waited on the landing while my aunt went up to the region of the second floor to leave her cloak.

When she reappeared, I found that she was in her raiment of ceremony, and felt duly honoured. She was wearing her best black silk dress, a dress of such richness of silk that—so the family tradition goes—it will stand up of itself, and her most highly ornamented lace cap. She had her thick gold chain on, her brooch of rose diamonds, and her long enamel earrings. I ushered her in to the table for two, which I had reserved, and she settled down with a rustle, and then looked round somewhat defiantly.

"Are you well known here ?" she asked, and I said that I occasionally lunched or dined in the restaurant. "I only hope that they won't take

me for one of your actress friends—that's all," she said, and, do what I could, I could not prevent the corners of my mouth from twitching. I was told severely that it was no laughing matter; and, putting her fan down by her plate, my aunt took up the menu and read it through:—

Hors-d'œuvre.
 Croûte-au-pot. Mock turtle.
 Filets de sole Dutru.
 Tournedos Walsingham.
 Pommes soufflées.
 Suprême de volaille Jeannette.
 Canard sauvage.
 Salade.
 Artichauts hollandaises.
 Glaces napolitaines.
 Pâtisserie.

My respected relative knows what constitutes a good dinner as well as anybody does; and though she would have dearly loved to be able to pick a hole in the menu, she put it down with a satisfied expression, and, indeed, except for the *croûte-au-pot*, which is to me what King Charles's head was to poor Mr. Dick, it was a very well-considered dinner.

I ate the mock turtle, very good soup, but still a foreigner's idea of what is a thoroughly Britannic dish, and while I did so my aunt, who had refused soup, sat and watched me. "You have been getting terribly stout of late years," she said, as I put down my spoon, "and for a man with a neck like yours that is dangerous. There is apoplexy in the family; one of your

poor dear great-uncles died in an apoplectic fit. He always ate and drank too much, poor fellow."

The *filets de sole*, with their slight flavouring of cheese and accompanying shrimps and *moules*, were excellent. My aunt supped her champagne, and the corners of her mouth relaxed. But she still had some ammunition to fire away. "You were not at church last Sunday," she said with severity; but that was a matter I declined to discuss while eating dinner, and, to change the subject, I drew her attention to the beauties of the room, the deep frieze admirably painted with subjects of the chase, showing how our skin-clad ancestors collected their venison and game birds, the cunningly concealed lights, the panelling of inlaid woods, the white pillars and cornices just touched with gold, the comfortable brown-red carpet and chairs to match it, the curtains of deep crimson velvet, the ceiling with its little cupids floating on roseate clouds; and the old lady nodded her head in approval. M. Renato, the spick-and-span little manager; the waiters with white waistcoats, gold buttons to their coats, and a thin piping of gold on their collars; the band playing subdued music, the brass candelabra on the table with red shades, the fine napery and glass, were all noted by her. I told my aunt that the coat-of-arms on the china, supported by two griffins scratching their backs with their noses, were the arms of the De Greys, and with a "Hoity-toity!" I was requested not to give her lectures in heraldry.

The *tournedos Walsingham*, with truffles, *fonds d'artichauts* and a pink sauce so cunningly

mixed that one could not tell what the ingredients were, showed the artistic hand of M. Dutru; and the cold entrée, the *suprême de volaille* served on a rock of glass, was excellent. My aunt by now was in an inquiring mood, and wanted to know if there were any of my actress friends among the many diners—for by half-past eight nearly every table was occupied. I was sorry that I could not show her any lights of the stage, but I could tell her of the Irish lord who was giving a family dinner-party, of the old general dining *tête-à-tête* with his son, and of the three foreign attachés who were inventing fables as to the Dreyfus case for each other's benefit.

The duck, the artichokes, and the ice were all that they should be, and my aunt was thoroughly pleased, for she told me, smilingly, that she had always considered me the scapegrace of the family.

I paid my bill: Two dinners, 15s.; two cafés doubles, 1s. 6d.; champagne, 15s.; liqueurs, 2s.; total, £1:13:6.

The faithful cabman was waiting outside, and as my aunt got into the cab she tapped me on the arm with her fan, and said that she had enjoyed herself.

Perhaps, after all, the old lady will remember me in her will.

* * * I asked Mons. Gelardi, the manager of the Walsingham House, if he would be so kind as to give me the *recette* for the *tournedos Walsingham*, and M. Dutru very kindly wrote it out for me.

Faire sauter les tournedos à feu vif: dresser sur fonds d'artichauts et saucer d'une sauce madère avec lames de truffes; envoyer à part une saucière de Béarnaise à la tomate et pommes.

Gutru

M. Gelardi also told me of a dinner for fifty people that was to be served at the Walsingham the next night, and showed me the menu.

Hors-d'œuvre.

Caviar. Saumon fumé.

Tortue claire. Velouté printanier Royal.

Truite saumonée glacée au champagne.

Sole à la Meunière.

Filets de poulet aux truffes. Petits pois à l'anglaise.

Selle d'agneau de Galles. Artichauts aux frais herbes.

Suprême de cailles Valsingham.

Timbale d'écrevisses Américaine.

Sorbet au Clicquot Rosé.

Caneton de Rouen Rouennaise.

Salade Rachel.

Asperges d'Argenteuil hollandaise.

Cerise Jubilé. Bombe Alaska.

Friandises.

Soufflé au Paprica. Dessert.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE FREEMASONS' TAVERN (GREAT QUEEN STREET)

THE Victory Chapter of the Knights of the Pelican and the Eagle, perfect and puissant princes of Rose Croix, has been closed, and gentlemen in evening clothes are being helped into their great-coats in the entrance corridor of Mark Masons' Hall by the rotund sergeant who keeps guard there in a glazed box. Most of these gentlemen have mysterious flat tin cases, which they hand over to the sergeant or another official to be taken care of for them until spring brings round again another meeting of the Chapter.

There is no unnecessary waiting in the Mark Masons' Hall, for it is now a quarter-past seven, and dinner has been ordered next door, at the Freemasons' Tavern, at seven. A few yards of pavement only lie between the lamps of Mark Masons' Hall and the glass shelter before the doors of the Tavern, and in twos and threes the gentlemen in evening dress hurry from one door to the other.

Great Queen Street is quite a Masonic quarter, for opposite to the Tavern are two shops in which there is a brave show of Masonic jewellery, great candelabra, pillars, swords, highly-coloured pictures, and other adjuncts of Masonry. A humble house of refreshment, which also appeals to Freemasons for custom, faces the Tavern. The Tavern is not what the name implies. It is a restaurant, with a public dining-room, with a fine ballroom, and with many private dining-rooms. Its outside is imposing. Two houses stand side by side. One is of red brick, with windows set in white stone, and is Elizabethan in appearance. The other, of grey stone, is of a style of architecture which might be called "Masonic." From the pillars of the second story there rises an arch on which are carved the figures of the zodiac. In front of this are stone statues representing four of the Masonic virtues, of which Silence, with her finger on her lip, is the most easily identified. In all the details of the building there is some reference to Freemasonry and its attributes.

At the entrance to the Tavern stand two great janitors. Facing the doorway, at the end of a wide hall, is a long flight of stairs broken by a broad landing and decorated with statues. Up and down this ladies and gentlemen are passing, and I ask one of the janitors what is going on in the ballroom. "German Liederkranz. Private entertainment. What dinner, sir? Victory Chapter. Drawing-room," is the condensed information given by the big man, and he points a white-gloved hand to a passage branching off

to the right. On one side of the passage is a door leading into a bar where three ladies in black are kept very busy in attending to the wants of thirsty Freemasons. On the other side is a wide shallow alcove in the wall fitted with shelves and glazed over, and in this is a curious collection of plate, great salvers, candelabra, and centrepieces. Beside the alcove is a glass door, and outside it is hung a placard with "Gavel Club—Private" upon it. At the end of the passage a little staircase leads up to higher regions, and on the wall is an old-fashioned clock with a round face and very plain figures, and some oil paintings dark with age.

On the first landing there is a placard outside a door with "Victory Chapter" on it, and higher up outside another door another placard with "Perfection Chapter" on it. From the stream of guests and waiters which is setting up the stairs it is evident that there are many banquets to be held to-night.

The drawing-room is white-and-gold in colour. Four Corinthian pillars, the lower halves of which are painted old-gold colour, with gold outlining the curves of their capitals, support a highly-ornamented ceiling, the central panel of which is painted to represent clouds, with some little birds flitting before them. The paper is old-gold in colour with large flowers upon it. There is some handsome furniture in the room—a fine cabinet, a clock of elaborate workmanship, and some good china vases. The curtains to the windows are of red velvet. At the end of the room farthest from the door is a horseshoe table

with red and white shaded candles on it, ferns, chrysanthemums, and heather in china pots, pines, and hothouse fruits, and at close intervals bottles of champagne and Apollinaris. At the other end of the room, where stands a piano, with a screen in front of it, the gentlemen in evening clothes are chatting, having put their coats and hats on chairs and piano wherever room can be found. The waiters, in black with white gloves, are putting the last touches to the decorations.

Dinner is announced ; a move is made to the table, and each man finds his place marked for him. There is a precedence in Freemasonry, as at Court, and this is adhered to in arranging the places at table.

The Victory is a Chapter which is very much in touch with the army and navy, and looking round the table, the company, but for the sombreness of their attire—for one or two Orders at the buttonhole, and here and there a decoration at the throat, are the only spots of colour—might be hosts and guests at some military mess dinner. The "Most Wise," who sits at the head of the table, does not belong to either of the services, but on one side of him is the heir to a dukedom, who led at one time a troop of the Household Cavalry, and on the other one of the most popular of our citizen soldiers, equally at home on parade as in his civic chair when Master of one of the City Companies. These are flanked again by a well-known brigade-surgeon and a cheery Admiralty official. The gentleman who has just said grace, in two Latin words, left very pleasant recollec-

tions behind him when as ex-Lord Mayor he left the Mansion-House. All round the table are faces with the sharp soldierly cut or naval bluntness.

The "Grand Secretary" has ordered the dinner, and in the whole length and breadth of the world that hospitable Freemasonry covers, no man knows better how to construct a menu than he does:—

Huîtres.
Tortue clair.
Rouget à la Grenobloise.
Caille à la Souvaroff.
Agneau rôti. Sauce menthe.
Choux de mer. Pommes noisettes.
Bécasse sur canapé.
Pommes paille. Salade de laitues.
Os à la moëlle.
Petit soufflé glacé rosette.
Fondu au fromage.
Dessert.
Café.

I have known the Tavern to have varying degrees of culinary excellence; but to-night the most captious could find no matter for disparagement in the admirable meal that Mons. Blanchette, the manager, and his chef have provided. The mutton with its accompanying *choux de mer* is admirable, the woodcock is not over-cooked, the usual fault in England, the marrow-bones are large and scalding hot.

The genial old custom of taking wine is part of all Masonic dinners, and after the "Most

Wise" has drunk to the other guests, much friendly challenging takes place. The marrow-bones having been disposed of, the ex-Lord Mayor, the Chaplain of the Chapter, says a grace as short as that before meat, and then follow the loyal toasts. It is the custom of the Chapter that speeches should be short, and the toast of His Majesty, and the few Masonic toasts that follow, occupy very little time. Then the cigars are lit, and the formal order at table is broken up and little knots are formed.

One by one the guests who have an appointment elsewhere, or who are going to the theatre, say good-night and go off; but a remnant still remain, and these make an adjournment to a cosy little clubroom on the top story of Freemasons' Hall, where good stories are told, and soda-water-bottle corks pop until long after midnight.

CHAPTER L

THE GAMBRINUS (GLASSHOUSE STREET)

I WAS walking home to a solitary dinner, and, having plenty of time to spare, paused at Piccadilly Circus to look at the smoke-grimed Eros poising on the top of the fountain and the flower-girls on the steps below him.

"Hulloa!" said a female voice with a fascinating little rising inflection, and, looking round, I found that I was being addressed by Miss Belle, a splendid apparition in a tailor-made dress of some dark material, and with a black hat with nodding plumes above her flaxen tresses."

"I've a message for you, and I didn't know where to send it to," Miss Belle went on. "Your friend Miss Dainty is coming over from our side and wanted you to know it."

Now Miss Belle, when she first came over from America, was commended to my care by Miss Dainty, of all the principal London theatres, and it all at once occurred to me that I had done nothing more than ask her out to dinner once on a Sunday evening, and that for this I should, when next I met Miss Dainty, be hauled over the

coals. However, I was very glad to hear that Miss Dainty is going to return to the land of her birth, and said so ; and then I asked if anything had been said in the letter as to Jack, Miss Dainty's fighting-dog. I do not wish Jack any harm ; but if Providence or a bigger dog sent him to an untimely grave I should not be very sorry.

There was no news of Jack, it seems, in the letter, and the message having been delivered, Miss Belle held out her hand to say good-bye. I asked her, if it was not an impertinence, where she was going, and she replied that she was off to have a bite at Gamb's.

I suppose my eyes opened in surprise, for Miss Belle explained, "Gamb's is the Gambrinus, a queer old place where you get Dutch food—you over here call it German, but *we* call it Dutch—and where you get real cold *steins* of beer. We girls often go there by ourselves, for nobody says anything to us, and we haven't to dress up, and we are not stared at like we are in your real swell restaurants."

A Dutch dinner in the company of Miss Belle would, I thought, be much more amusing than the leg of mutton and solitude that awaited me at home, and I asked if I might accompany her. "Why, ye-e-es, certainly," said Miss Belle ; and we walked together to Glasshouse Street, in which the Gambrinus is situated.

A great lamp, with much wrought iron about it, and inscriptions and coloured glass, calls attention to the door, and the long window that fronts the street is all of stained glass, with coats of arms and scrolls in profusion on it.

Inside the first sensation is that everything is brown. The roof is of brown wood, with electric bulbs depending from it, the little four-legged tables are of brown wood, and so are the four chairs set at each table; the floor is covered with some brown material, and the walls are of a brownish-yellow. The place at first sight has the look of one of Rembrandt's backgrounds.

Miss Belle suggested that we should go into the back room, for there we should find the waiter who generally attended on her.

We sat down at one of the little tables. A waiter in a dress suit and black tie—a young German with a light moustache—being told that we wanted dinner, slid, in a second, a cloth on the table, and handed me a great sheet of stiff paper, folded in three, whereon were many things printed in English and German, and more things written, mostly in German, in violet ink. "To-day's Specialities" was the heading that caught my eye, and I tried to make out what they were. "Rindfleisch, Meerrettig sauce, Pommes Maître, Irish stew, Rotkohl, Brathuhn," were the first items, so far as I could make out the writing. One collection of consonants staggered me, and I turned to Miss Belle for help and suggestions.

"Oh! any old thing," was her answer when I asked her what dishes she preferred, and she told me that in ordering any meal she and the other girls generally consulted the waiter. In this I imitated them, but scorned his first suggestion of Irish stew.

Some varied Delicatessen, Hasensuppe, boiled beef and horse-radish sauce, and macaroni and

ham done in German fashion was the dinner decided on, and from a choice of Pilsen, Munich, and Kulmbach lager beer Miss Belle selected the last.

While napkins and knives and forks were being placed on the table I asked Miss Belle how she had enjoyed her year spent in London ; and afterwards looked round at the place and the people.

Miss Belle had had a bully time in London. She had been given a bull pup which was the sweetest, ugliest thing, and the most good-natured old slob that ever was. She had received from America a real 'cute hat, the first one of its kind that had come to London, but was afraid to wear it on the street, for the street boys would think it freakish and guy it. These and other personal items of interest I was told by Miss Belle.

The inner room in which we were sitting has a panelling of brown wood, elaborately carved in the upper panels, and with the napkin pattern in the lower ones, and above the panelling are pictures, one a representation of beer-drinkers from the mediæval knights down to Bismarck, the others caricatures and snow scenes. A great trophy of arms is on the wall between the two doors, and in the width of wall in the doorways are two caricatures, one of a hypocrite with a bottle and corkscrew hung round his neck, the other of a happy father clasping six rosy babies, a bottle of Rhine wine being in the distance. On the yellow walls of the outer room are inscriptions setting forth the advantage of taking

one glass more, and other festive sentiments, and notices that Slühwein and other strange beverages are for sale. A great mechanical organ is in this room, and a staircase leading to a room above. The bar is in a recess. On the back wall are many ornamental mugs of glass and china, the personal property of the patrons of the establishment, each hung on its own peg. Half the counter is covered with a white cloth, and on this are piled the little casks and bottles and cases that contain the Delicatessen, the Rollmops and Neunaugen, the sprats and sausages. Over the counter hangs a huge fish made of brown sacking, with teacups for eyes, a noble theatrical property. Great bunches of dried hops hang from the ceiling, and are garlanded above all the doors, and to complete the inventory of curious things, there is a book in which many German artists have sketched caricatures, and in which some celebrities have signed their names, and a table, a mighty block of wood, on which generations of beer-drinkers have cut their initials.

The company was of respectable, black-coated, quiet Germans, with, in some cases, their wives and daughters. Over the beer-mugs discussion, pipe in mouth, is leisurely, and a sense of good-humour pervades the place. English and Americans patronise the Gambrinus, but it is essentially a German establishment.

A delicate little sausage, as pink as a baby's cheek, and a delicious slice of cucumber pickled in salt and water were the best of the Delicatessen. The soused herring rolled with chopped onions

was too strong for my taste, and chopped onion mixed with caviare does not, in my opinion, improve it. The hare soup was good and strong, the boiled beef, cut very thick and served on a plated dish, was sufficiently tender and sufficiently hot ; the potatoes, Miss Belle said, were well cooked ; and the horse-radish sauce had a curious softness of taste, which, I should fancy, was due to a mixture of mashed parsnips. Be that as it may, it was an excellent sauce. I ate the brown bread cut from a long loaf, but Miss Belle patronised the serpentine little rolls. The brown beer, served stone cold in great glasses of the form of old-fashioned champagne glasses, was excellent. For the macaroni, which made its appearance, like the beef, on a silvered plate, I am afraid I cannot say a good word, for it was, judged by Italian standard, far too hard.

My bill was given me without the items put against the prices, and as Miss Belle was in a hurry to get to her theatre, I did not ask questions. Here it is, as given me :—4d., 1s. 6d., 6d., 1d., 2d., 1s. 6d., 1s. 4d., 1s. 8d. Total, 7s. 1d.

When we shook hands on parting, Miss Belle laughingly said that she hoped a year hence to dine with me again.

CHAPTER LI

CHALLIS'S (RUPERT STREET)

I FELT like an extract from a Christmas story after the manner of Charles Dickens. I was the unfortunate, desponding individual driven at Christmas time to eat a solitary dinner in a deserted club, and as I sat down to the little table, with three waiters regarding me with placid curiosity, I felt a savage discontent that no spirit of a dead sweetheart of days gone by, no child-angel, would appear to me as they always do to the morose heroes of Christmas stories.

I had been reduced to solitude, moroseness, and a club dinner by the possession of two tickets for the pantomime at Islington. It was the day after Boxing Day, and I felt sure in the afternoon that I should find a companion eager to see the performance and previously to dine quietly at some little restaurant where a dinner jacket and a black tie would be *en règle*. Somehow or other I found it very difficult to secure my man. It was the dream of the life of every man I met to go to the Grand ; but not to go there on Tuesday night. If I could change the tickets for others for Wednesday, or Thursday,

or Friday night I could have had a choice of fifty companions, but on Tuesday all the married men said they had to dine at home with their wives ; all the unmarried ones had some other engagement. I began to feel that I was shunned by mankind, and instead of thinking that I was conferring a great favour by an offer of the spare ticket, I adopted an almost imploring tone, begging for companionship.

I wandered from club to club, taking a gloomy pleasure in the sloppy streets and the vestiges of the gale of the night before. They fitted well with my growing melancholy. It was too late to send the tickets back and to go home and dine. I had to dree my weird, and, like the Wandering Jew, I moved on from place to place, seeking a companion and finding none.

At the last club I went to—a little Bohemian club—I found my man. He was playing dominoes. When I interrupted the game to ask him if he would dine with me and come to Islington, instead of making an excuse, as the others had done, he said that nothing in the world would please him better. He had to go home for a minute or two, but would be back, he said, at the club at a quarter to seven. We would stroll over to some bright, cheap restaurant and have a mouthful of food, and then take cab, ascend the northern mountains and see fairies and pantomime boys, and low comedians. I felt I had at all events one friend in the world.

A quarter to seven came and the club was deserted by everybody except a member asleep in an armchair and myself. I sat and watched

the clock, and three waiters stood by the little tables at the end of the room and looked at me and talked in whispers to each other. The minute-hand grew gradually up to the hour, and as it did so I sank down into the depths of despondency. My friend had deserted me, basely deserted me, or else he was killed, run over perhaps, or struck by a falling chimney. The minute-hand went on to five minutes past, the member in the armchair snored gently and regularly, the waiters seemed to look at me pityingly. Pity from a waiter I could not endure. I got up and went over to one of the little tables and sat down. The waiters looked placidly pleased. I was relieving the monotony of their lives. I said I would take the club dinner and a whisky-and-soda, and when two of the waiters faded away, the other remained on guard, no doubt to prevent me from changing my mind and making my escape. I put my elbows on the table, and my head in my hands, and felt that I was indeed the morose hero of pathetic Christmas magazine literature.

My soup was brought, and a whisky-and-soda deposited tenderly by the side of the plate, when the door was flung open, and in came my missing friend clothed in evening dress, white tie, white waistcoat and all, and radiant. There was an engagement he had forgotten: he was taking a lady to dine at Challis's—little place of Baker's—a thousand apologies—I must cancel club dinner and come over—couldn't keep the lady waiting—see me again in two minutes. And he was out of the room again like a well-dressed whirlwind.

I did cancel the rest of my club dinner, to the suppressed grief of the three waiters, who saw thus the only relief to their boredom vanish. I put on hat and coat and walked through the darkness and slush to Rupert Street, where two great ornamental lamps made a brave splash of light in the gloom, and where a tablet of opal glass with ruby lettering on it, dependent from a highly-ornamental glass and metal door-shelter, set forth that here was the restaurant of Challis's Hotel.

To go from the darkness of the street by the direct door into the restaurant is like the transition in the pantomime from the Realms of the Demon Gloom to the Glittering Palace of the Good Fairy ; and, in my splashed boots and black tie and abbreviated coat, I felt like the solitary scene-shifter who is generally "discovered" in the midst of the glittering scene when the front cloth rises.

Challis's Restaurant consists of two rooms, opening one into the other, one decorated after the manner of the Louis XIV. period, and the other after the manner of the Louis XV. period. Both are as pretty as a bride-cake or a silk Watteau fan. White and gold and soft colour are everywhere. The ceilings are painted with clouds and little roseate deities, and echoes of Fragonard, and the other courtly painters of dainty sylvan dreams are in the panels of the wall. The place blazes with electric light, a starry constellation in the ceiling, lights shaded with blue and pink and old-gold shades in brackets on the wall, and on the table candle-lamps

crowned with deep red shades. A palm topping a little chiffonnier of white wood, a fireplace with pillars of white-and-gold, and little bronzes on the mantelpiece; chairs of dark wood, in keeping with the period; a carpet of deep red, and in one corner a little counter of white wood, with a pretty little lady behind it. Such was as much as I can remember of the setting of a scene in which I should not have been the least surprised to have seen little *abbés* and *marquises* feasting on syllabub and various dainties, and dancing pavaues and minuets and gavottes between the courses.

A waiter in white waistcoat and with gold buttons to his coat, was waiting to take my coat and hat, and my friend was beckoning me to a table where he was sitting with a pretty lady in evening dress.

I was introduced, but did not catch the pretty lady's name. She seemed to look upon it as being the most natural thing in the world that I should have been brought away half-way through one dinner to eat another, and so did my friend; and as it all seemed to be part of a Christmas story, it all became natural to me. If Santa Claus and St. George and the Dragon had come in and taken seats at one of the neighbouring tables I do not think that on that particular night I should have thought the matter called for any particular remark. I felt very like the Ugly Duckling of the fairy story; but the unknown pretty lady did not allow me to be ill at ease. She talked, and talked admirably, on subject after subject, gliding from pictures

to theatres, from books to music, with perfect ease and knowledge. My friend sat in silent contentment, and I in a dazed state of wonder as to who this clever pretty lady might be, and how it was my friend could have forgotten his appointment with her, and I felt very thankful to her for being at the trouble to talk to an out-cast like myself. This was the menu—

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

Consommé aux Profiterolles. Crème Jackson.

Blanchailles.

Civet de lièvre à la française.

Aloyau à la moderne.

Poulet rôti au cresson. Salade.

Choux à la crème.

Glace aux apricots.

Petits fours.

Dessert.

The whitebait, which was the first dish I tasted, was good. The beef and the chicken were both as good as the market affords. We drank a light hock which was eminently drinkable, and when M. Coccioletti, in explanation, as he presented the bill, said to my friend, "Three dinners at 3s. 6d.," it struck me that I had eaten a very good dinner for that price.

"Good-bye, old fellow—explain next time we meet—hope you'll have a good time at Islington," was what my friend said as he helped the fair unknown into a brougham, and got in after her. She smiled at me. I was left on the doorstep with the awful responsibility of those two tickets for the Grand.

CHAPTER LII

SOME GRILL-ROOMS

Mrs. TOTA sat at afternoon tea time in her drawing-room and toasted her toes before a wood fire. George, her husband, was apparently studying deeply the Extra Special *Pall Mall Gazette*, but in reality was listening to the catalogue of his misdemeanours which were being poured into my sympathetic ears.

"George will never take me to any smart restaurant, for he says that he gets no change out of a 'fiver' if he does, and he always brings up that old story that he gets Indian fever if he goes out into the night air with dress clothes on," she said.

I saw the paper twitch convulsively and knew that George was enjoying a little joke all to himself.

"Why don't you get him to take you to the grill-rooms?" I suggested. "He needn't wear his dress clothes in them."

"Oh, grill-rooms!" and Mrs. Tota spoke a little sharply and contemptuously. "Nasty places with hard benches and mustard and gravy on the

tablecloths and an atmosphere impregnated with fried fat. Why are there no places, as there are in Paris, where you can get a beautiful little dinner *à la carte* cheaply, and with dainty surroundings, and nobody stares at a man who is not in dress clothes?"

"Let me tell you a fairy story," I rejoined. "Imagine yourself in a fair-sized room—accompanied, of course, by George in a frock-coat—the walls of which are a soft yellow, and have on them a few clever framed sketches. In the centre is a white-clothed table, with a palm in a Japanese bowl on it, and round this centrepiece are grouped cold viands and fruits; the gold of the oranges, the silver-gilt and green of the bananas, the ruddy blush of pears and apples, making a wealth of colour, while the silver *presse* is a point of high light. Curtains of the deepest purple are drawn before the windows, on the sills of which are palms, and shield the desk, at which the *dame de comptoir* sits, and above which a clock ticks placidly, and keep off all possible draughts from the door. Another similar room is seen through an archway. In a little glassed-in compartment a cook in spotless white busies himself at a great grill, and close to his hand are piles of crimson tomatoes, and chops and steaks of deeper red, and mushrooms yellow-grey and warm brown. Near this glazed compartment is a table on which some burnished copper pots and pans are kept heated by spirit-lamps.

"The little tables set against the walls on three sides have the best napery and glass and china and silver that money can buy. The

electric lamps are in the form of buds of lilies pendent from a spread of bronze lotus leaves. The waiters are in short black jackets and white aprons, and a *sommelier* all in white waits your orders. The head-waiter hands George a card with a few selected dishes on one side, the prices plainly marked, and a few recommended wines on the other. George chooses Crème de laitues, 9d.; Merlan aux moules Marinière, 1s. 6d.; Pilaff de volaille à la Turquie, 2s.; and an ice, 1s. You drink a bottle of Beaujolais between you, which costs 2s. 6d.; your 'couvert' each is 4d., and the dinner for the two of you comes to 13s. 8d. What do you think of that?"

Mrs. Tota heaved a sigh, and said that it was all too beautiful ever to be true of any place in England.

"Another fairy story," I went on. "You—with George, of course, in the best of tempers—have descended an oak-panelled staircase, have passed through one little antechamber, where there is a newspaper stall with all the evening papers for sale, and another where easy-chairs of a dark green colour are placed invitingly by tables with tops of burnished copper, and find yourselves in a long room of shining white wood, which would have made a dainty salon for a little Marquise in the reign of Le Roi Soleil. Panels and little pilasters break the smooth lines of the walls, blue china stands on shelves, and on one side of the room are some arched recesses with stained-glass windows at the back of them. A Cromwell clock on a bracket marks the time. The electric lights burn brilliantly all day and

most of the night, for rain or sunshine makes no difference here. The little tables are daintily spread with the whitest linen, and by the glass screen, which keeps the heat of the grill from the room, are the heaped fruits and the cold viands. The *maître d'hôtel* hands the card to George, who selects consommé ancienne, sole vin blanc, some of the dindonneau, purée de navets, which is one of the *plats du jour*, and laitances sur toast. This meal, if you divide the sole between you, costs, with a bottle of Graves, about 15s. Do you like the picture?"

"It is the vision with which Claude Melnotte, aged forty, would have tempted Pauline, aged thirty-five, instead of offering her eternal summer and singing birds," quoth Mrs. Tota sententially.

"George," I said, "why are you trying to kick me?" for Mrs. Tota's husband was making minatory gestures at me from behind his paper, and was reaching out a heavily-booted foot towards my ankle.

George relapsed into gloom and inaction, and I continued: "You are now—with George, in the highest of spirits—in another white room, a square one this time, with white pillars, and with panels of crimson and mirrors let alternately into the walls. The Brussels carpets are soft under your feet, the dark leather of the chairs is restful to the eyes, and the lights in the crystal bouquets that hang from the ceiling are reflected in the bright and delicate glass and china and silver. Once again the joyous George stretches out his hand for the *carte du jour* and he selects

bortsch, médaillon de turbot diplomate, filet de bœuf piqué Portugaise, and as an entremet, soufflé Princesse. This meal, with a bottle of Chablis, costs him no more than fourteen shillings."

"And where, may I ask, are these wonderful places?" Mrs. Tota inquired, and I explained that the first is the Savoy grill-room, or café, which had a very small beginning, being almost a club for a little circle connected with the world of the theatre, but which throve so much that the white tables overflowed into the reading-room and then swamped a buffet, and that the management is now planning a big extension; that the second is the Carlton grill-room, over which Mr. Ritz sometimes shakes his head, for it is a dangerous competitor to the big restaurant upstairs; and that the third is the grill-room of the Princes' Restaurant. And being well started on the subject of grill-rooms, I told Mrs. Tota of the Café Royal one, the mother of all modern grills, which is perhaps a little over-gilt, and is sometimes too hot and too crowded, but where the best sole Colbert and Châteaubriand and bottle of claret in London are to be obtained; and of the Trocadero grill-room, with its staircase of green and grey marbles, and its great room of grey marble and gold and buff plaster, with mirrors on the walls, with a grill large enough for an army, and with an orchestra led by Jacob. The Trocadero instituted a 2s. 6d. grill dinner which was, and is, a benefit to any man dining in a hurry, for he is served quickly with fish, a cut from the joint, or something

from the grill, and bread and cheese and butter. The Grand, the grill-rooms of which big hotel are walled with shining tiles of white and buff, goes one better than the Trocadero in giving soup as an addition to its half-crown meal. I described to Mrs. Tota the Frascati grill, with its walls of white marble, veined with grey, on which are hung Oriental mirrors, its ceiling of gold and buff, and its wealth of electric lights ; and the Garrick grill, where amid paintings, on the panels, of dramatic celebrities past and present an excellent half-a-crown meal is to be obtained ; and the Queen's grill where the cold buffet is one of the best in London, and the brown Munich beer comes to table ice-cold ; and the Criterion grill, with its entrance framed in Mashabir work, its red walls and air of quiet and comfort. I told her if she had a curiosity to study the ways of the surviving British waiter that she could find him amid Italian marbles at the Holborn grill, and should she care for American dishes that she should insist on George taking her to the Cecil grill-room, a great hall with glazed tiles in place of wall-paper.

"I say. You *are* a malicious beast !" said George, as he accompanied me to the door. "She'll insist now on being taken to every grill-room in London."

CHAPTER LIII

MY SINS OF OMISSION

FOR certain very good reasons—of which the principal one is that the publisher of this book has a prejudice against bringing it out in six, or more volumes—I have not been able to describe fully every restaurant, great or small, which merits an article. The Imperial Restaurant in Regent Street, for instance, is sure to stand very high amongst the best restaurants that have ever been opened in London; but at the time of writing the workmen are still hammering away, and M. Oddenino spends his days in a little subterranean chamber near his cellars whence he pounces out at intervals upon carpenters and bricklayers. By the time this little book goes forth the restaurant will have been opened and the glories I have only seen in a half-finished state will be before the public. The kitchen of the Imperial over which M. Charles reigns is an exceptionally large and airy one, and M. Oddenino has built a bath-room for his cooks, a very important addition to a kitchen, but very often conspicuous by its absence. The

grill-room in the basement, built so that air can penetrate to it from all sides, is designed on the model of the François I. room at Fontainebleau. It has on its walls oval frames supported by cupids, in which are pictures by modern Italian masters, and a high dado of oak panelling. There are in it two grills, one for fish and one for meat. The restaurant, on a level with Regent Street, is a copy of the Salle Henri II. at Fontainebleau, and with its copies of Boucher's pictures, its dome, and its exquisite marble mantelpiece, is a delightful dining-hall. The room has space for fifty tables.

The Bristol restaurant in Cork Street I feel that I should have given more than passing reference to, for there, under M. Lersundi's superintendence, a 10s. 6d. *table-d'hôte* dinner is served which is always excellent. The dinner is cooked separately for each party of guests, and each dish always comes to table at the right moment. There are other annexes to hotels that I should like to linger over. Long's in Bond Street used to have a reputation for its wonderful cups; and John Collins, the head-waiter of old in Limmer's, at the corner of George Street, has been immortalised in verse. I have dined admirably at the Hôtel Windsor in Victoria Street, and the Premier, in Dover Street, gives the patrons of its restaurant—distinguished by the great arc of its windows—an excellent dinner for 5s. In the joyous purlieus of Covent Garden are the Tavistock, and the Bedford, each with its restaurant, and each with a reputation for serving good honest English food. Of the

vast palaces which cater for a hundred different tastes, the Holborn, in Holborn, is one of the most gorgeous, and there is no more beautiful dining-room in London than the marble hall, with its triple galleries, where the 3s. 6d. *table-d'hôte* dinner is served. The Café de l'Europe in Leicester Square is another town in itself. In the basement is a German beer saloon, where the Munich beer is always ice cold. On the ground floor is a Brasserie, and on the first floor as dainty a little French restaurant as the heart of man can desire. The Golden Cross, in the West Strand, is also a large establishment run on modern lines.

M. Kissel, erstwhile of the Trocadero, gives an excellent 5s. dinner at the Tivoli, and the palm room on the first floor is a very handsome apartment. If you are going to spend an evening at the Royal Music Hall in Holborn, do not forget that there is a snug little restaurant stowed away on the first floor.

In the neighbourhood of Trafalgar Square there be many good places for dinners. M. Pratti returning to London after he had once bidden it farewell, now rules at the Ship in Whitehall, and you can dine there in content on the ground floor for 2s. 6d., and on the first floor in even greater content for 3s. Epitoux's in the Haymarket, almost next door to the theatre, is a place of many memories. The name is borrowed from the historical little restaurant which flourished in our grandfathers' and fathers' time, in the Opera Colonnade. The modern restaurant is on the site of Foote's theatre, which was

cleared away to make room for the Café de l'Europe, where the critics, after the play next door, used to sit till all hours and eat tripe and Welsh rabbits. Kirk's, also in the Haymarket, gives a good two-shillings'-worth for dinner. In the Strand, amidst a host of eating-places, the Messrs. Gatti's Adelphi Restaurant, known to *the* profession as "The Marble Halls," gives a 3s. 6d. *table-d'hôte* dinner, and farther east, Gatti and Rodesano seem always to be busy.

Hatchett's, the Old Whitehorse Cellars in Piccadilly, on which the resources of the Avondale have been concentrated, is now a capital dining-place. The Viennese band plays well, and the *table-d'hôte* dinner costs 4s. The Royal Academy Restaurant, hard by in Sackville Street, fixes its dinner price at 2s. 6d. Not far off is the Blue Posts in Cork Street, a house which had a great reputation for old English food. Frank, the head-waiter, who was quite a portion of the establishment, is there no longer, but I have no doubt that a capital grilled sole and steak is still to be obtained there.

Have you ever been to the Hanover Restaurant, in Mill Street, a retiring little place much in favour with opera singers? Have you dined at Kuhn's in Hanover Street? or the Rupert, next to the Apollo Theatre? Do you know the Hôtel de Paris in Leicester Place? Is Chick's in Long Acre, the clean little fish and tripe restaurant, the praises of which were always sung by poor Bessie Belwood, known to you? Have you experimented on the group of restaurants, the Marguerite, the Circus, and the

Washington in Oxford Street, near Oxford Circus? If you have not, you do not yet know your dining London.

Every great "sight of London," the British Museum, the Abbey, and Houses of Parliament, and every railway station gathers near it a little cluster of restaurants. Opposite Victoria Station is a line of restaurants, all of which loudly proclaim that they are fine places for a hungry man to enter. An epicure, a genuine one, told me that once having missed his train, he had dined and dined well and cheaply at one of them, but I am not certain which it was. Zappeloni's which advertises a 3s. dinner was, I fancy, the restaurant. Hard by, in Victoria Street, Odoné's clean little restaurant, and the Victorian, a new vegetarian restaurant, are to be found.

Of Italian restaurants there are hundreds in London. Torrino's in Oxford Street is so well and favourably known that I need scarcely do more than allude to it. The Menasli Brothers at the Previtali in Arundel Street, just off Coventry Street, will give you dinner for 5s. or 3s. 6d., and across the narrow street Gedda's charges 2s. 6d. I have dined at one time or another at Gianella's in Oxford Street, at the Queen's in Sloane Square, at Veglio's in the Euston Road, at the Colali Bros. Oxford Restaurant in the Edgware Road, at Toriani's in the Brompton Road, and at Reggiori's in Chapel Street, and have found their 2s. 6d. or 3s. dinners good meals at the price.

German beer halls which are also eating-places are springing up like mushrooms all over

London. At the Spaten Beer restaurant in Piccadilly Circus a 3s. 6d. dinner is served, and at the one in Leicester Square a 2s. 6d. one. At the Viennese Café in New Oxford Street, German and Viennese dishes are made a speciality.

The City requires a book to itself; but it is more a place of lunching than of dining rooms. The Albion is in great favour for regimental and masonic dinners, and the masons also love the Ship and Turtle. Of quaint little old-fashioned houses, such as the Dr. Butler's Head in Coleman Street, where "the Corks" often hold their secret, but not solemn meeting, there are many to be discovered by the curious and earnest diner.

THE END



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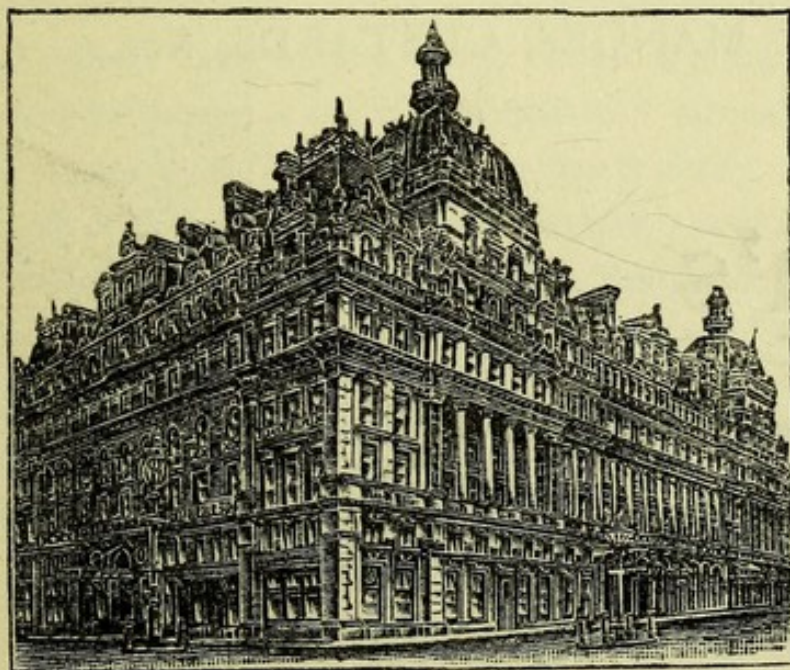
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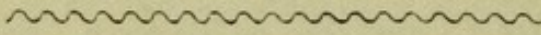
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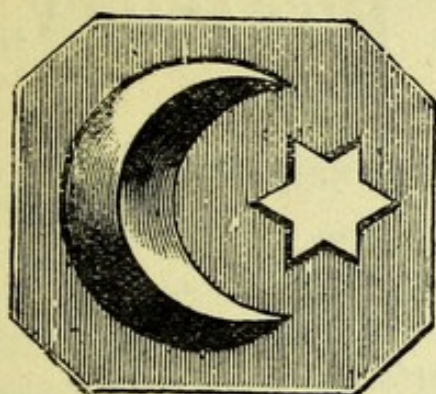
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