

**Dinners and diners at home and abroad : with piquant plates and choice cuts, comical, anatomical and gastronomical forming a comprehensive dining directory for all palates and all pockets / by E.L. Blanchard.**

**Contributors**

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DINNERS

AND

DINERS.

E. I. BLANCHARD,

1860.

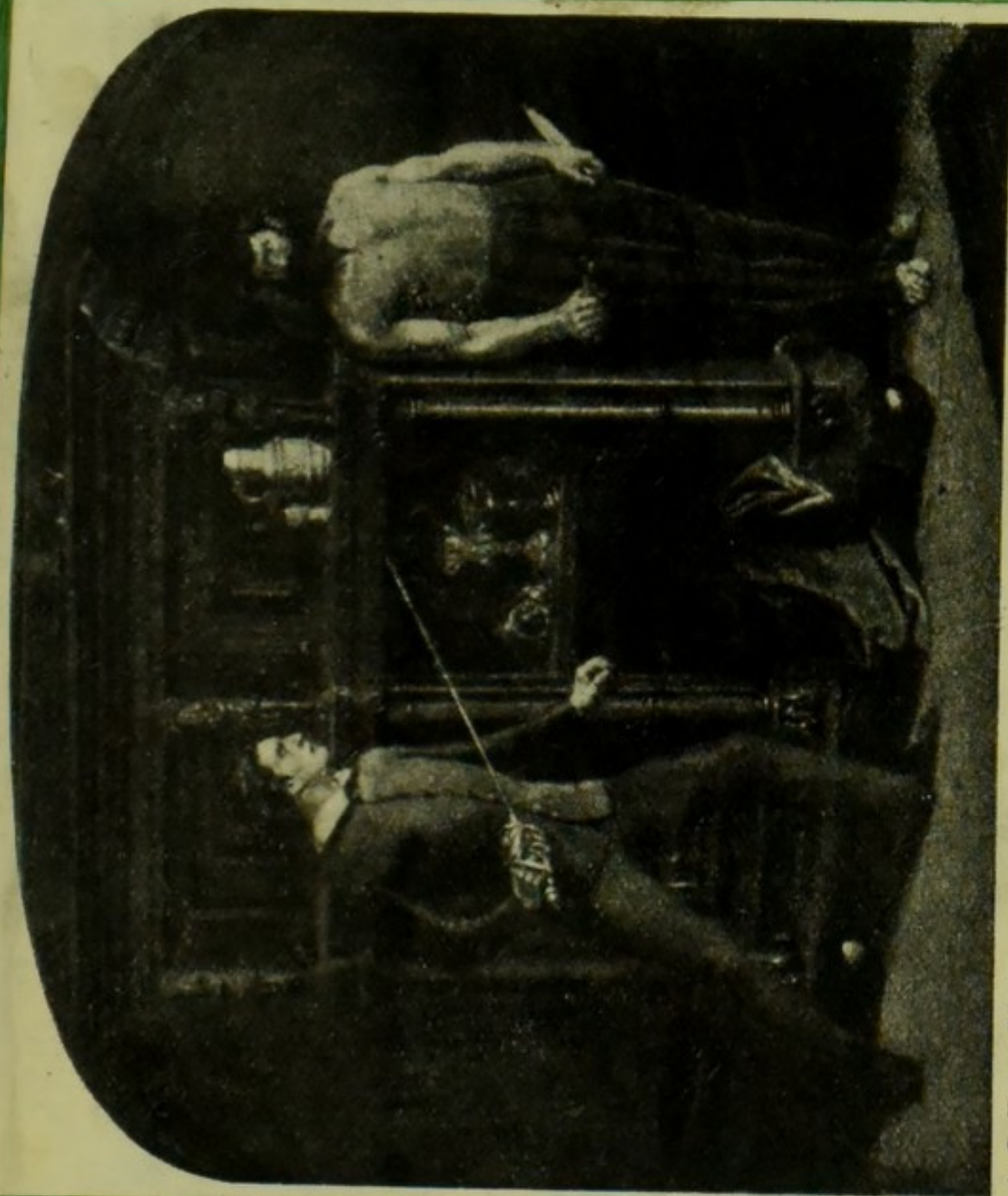
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# DINNERS

AND

# DINERS.

E. BLANCHARD.

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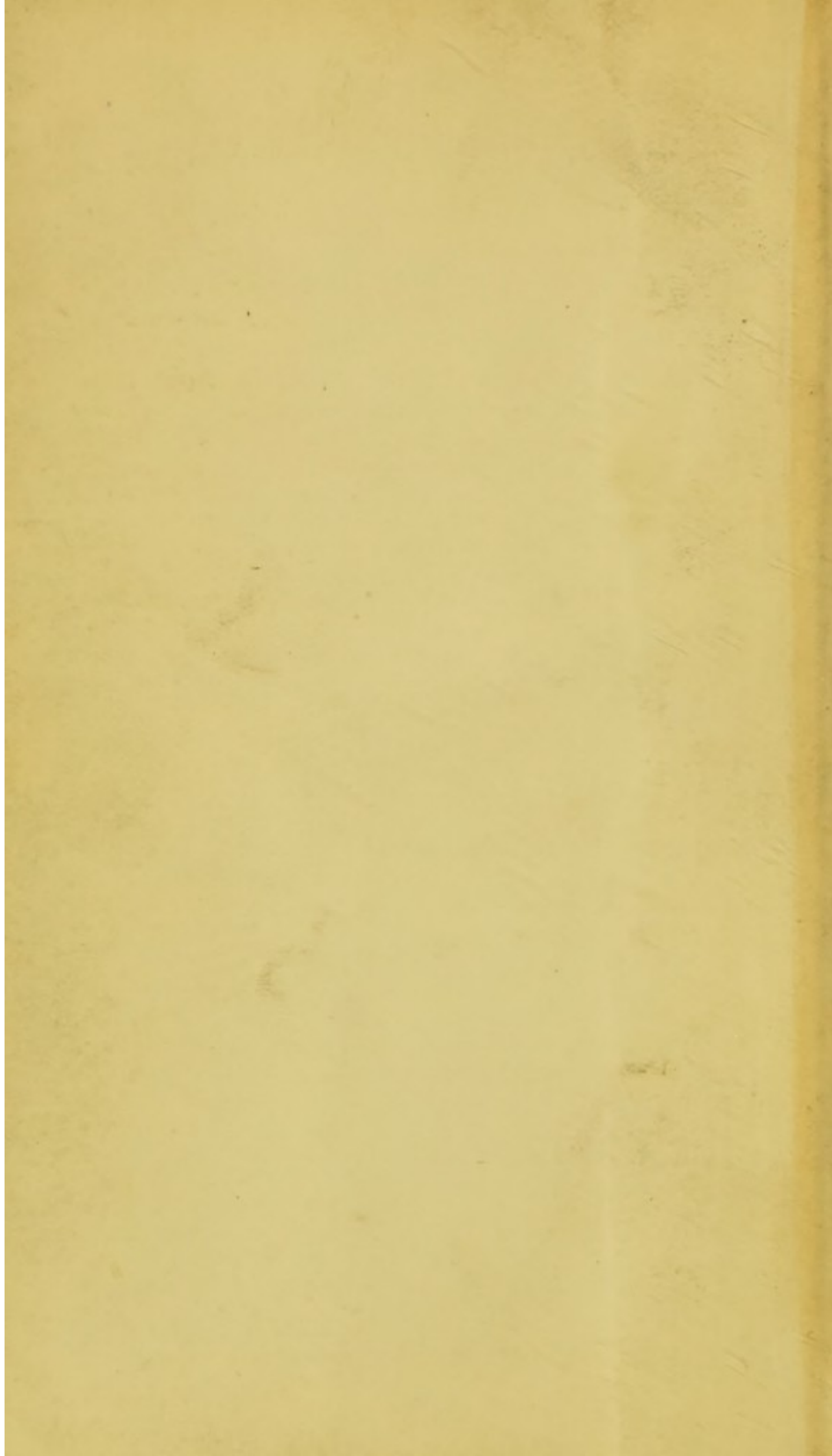
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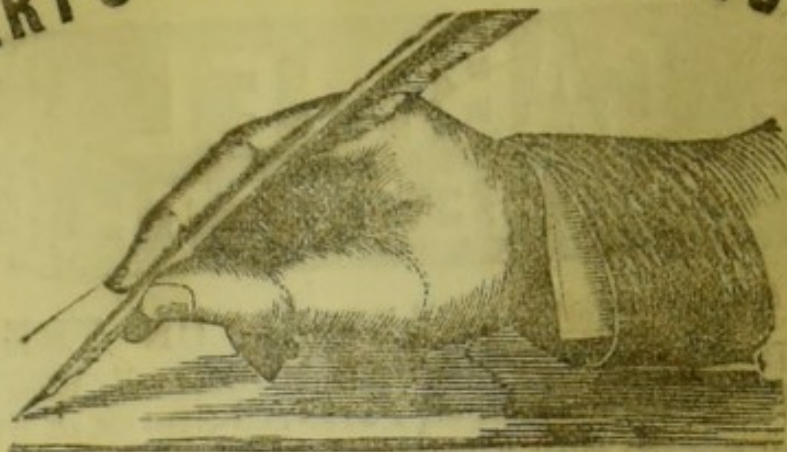
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DINNERS AND DINERS

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

BY

E. L. BLANCHARD.

WITH

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COMICAL,  
ANATOMICAL AND GASTRONOMICAL.

FORMING

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LONDON:

W. R. H. ADAMSON, 16, BRYDGES STREET, STRAND.

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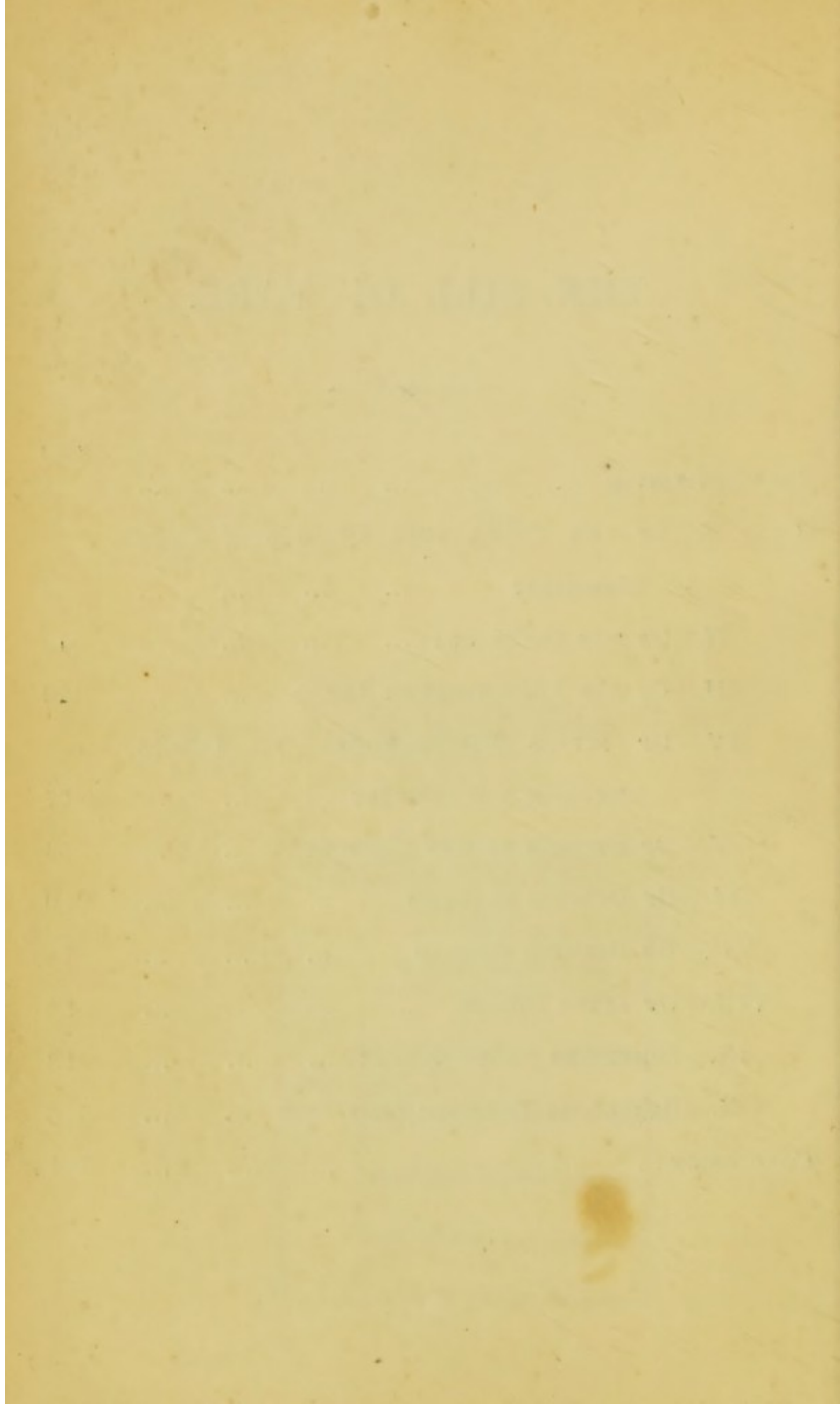
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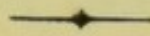


	PAGE
THE INVITATION ... ..	1
CHAP. I.—OF THE DINER THAT DINES WITH DUKE HUMPHREY ... ..	5
II.—OF THE DINER OUT ... ..	13
III.—OF THE PHILANTHROPIC DINER ... ..	22
IV.—OF DIVERS DINING-HOUSES AND DINERS DISCUSSED DISCURSIVELY ... ..	37
V.—OF DINNERS IN THE COUNTRY ... ..	50
VI.—OF DINNERS IN TOWN ... ..	59
VII.—OF DINNERS ABROAD ... ..	71
VIII.—OF AFTER DINNER ... ..	84
IX.—SOMETHING ABOUT SUPPER ... ..	93
X.—DESULTORY DOTTINGS UPON DIET ... ..	105
CONCLUSION ... ..	111



# DINNERS AND DINERS

AT HOME AND ABROAD.



## THE INVITATION.

“EVERY man,” says Sterne, “chooses to be present at the shaving of his own beard.” In like manner, we may assert that every man chooses to be present at the eating of his own dinner. There is no operation in which the individual humanity can take greater interest. It is the goal of his daily ambition, the crowning reward of his daily toils and struggles. The lever that moves the world, which Archimedes so ardently desiderated, is simply—a dinner. The impulse of the poet, the statesman, and the philosopher may be traced to that diurnal attrition of the coats of the stomach which, according to the learned in physiology, produces the singular sensation we denominate “hunger.” Once every day does this gastronomic temple demand the sacrifices of its worshippers. The offering—a piece offering—is accepted, and



the threatening vengeance of the idol is appeased: but another revolution of the earth on its axis, and the same necessity returns. The votaries are found wherever life exists. The extension of knowledge may be limited by the capacity of the mind; civilisation may receive a check from the impenetrable barriers of the prairie and the jungle; commerce may be baffled in its progress by legislative inflictions;—but one thing has spread over the entire world, and that one essential so universally spread is—a tablecloth.

We remember a worthy Epicurean, of some little fame in his way, who invariably, after the removal of the last course, used to fold his hands complacently together, gaze regretfully on the remains of the late substantial repast, and exclaim in tones of melancholy inflection—“Ah! now the glory of the day hath departed!” We entertained a profound feeling of respect for that man. He appreciated to the full the music of the dinner-bell, for he had philosophically investigated the mysteries of the culinary art. He it was who, in a bold spirit of enterprise, undaunted by ridicule, and undismayed by sneers, first *ate cheese with apple-pie*; and ages yet to come will invoke blessings on the head of their benefactor. He was a bold man who swallowed the first oyster—a bolder

who flung himself into the air and turned the first summersault; but he who first contrasted the savoury with the sweet, and united these two happy morsels in the bonds of indissoluble wedlock, must take rank with the boldest. Now can we understand why Sir Hugh Evans, the utterer and appreciator of all good things—the Welsh judge of a rare-bit—should have so eagerly desired his return to dinner when there was “*pippins and cheese to come.*”

Man has been emphatically called a cooking animal—one who alone purifies his food by fire; but with equal truth and sagacity it may be observed that man is the only animal that chats over his dinner, or takes wine over it—or makes the dinner the nucleus of a social solar system, around which a sparkling universe of bright stars may pleasantly revolve. Many a brilliant idea has culminated behind a chop, or shot, meteor-like, across the horizon of a steak. The dinner-hour is, in fact, peculiarly the hour of mental as well as bodily digestion. What a volume of thought, for instance, lies condensed in the different tenses of the verb “to dine.” Mark the impression made upon the ear by even the different pronouns used in its conjugation. What a succession of vivid pictures dilate upon the eye as we run through

—“*I* have dined; *YOU* have dined; *WE* have dined.” What beauty in the last climax—the gradual communion into plurality—the suggestion of a snug party just over—the reminiscence of a *tête-à-tête*—the inkling of the thousand and one memories that come floating over the mind at its enunciation. There is an encyclopædia of reflection in every syllable!

A dinner is the transmigrated skull which our modern philosophers, with more wisdom than the ancients, place daily upon their tables, to remind them of their mortality. How it fills the mind with genial fancies, and ripens it for the enjoyment of a cheerful evening. It is to a discussion of this meal that we are now about to solicit the honor of the reader's company. We know not whether individually you are aware of the fact, but we have often entertained an opinion that——

“Please, sir, dinner's ready.”

Very well; then give us the pleasure of your society, and we will talk the matter over within. Let us not disturb for awhile the harmony of that sound. “The words of Mercury are harsh after the song of Apollo.”

## CHAPTER I.



OF THE DINER THAT DINES WITH DUKE HUMPHREY.

“Plenty of room inside, sir.”

*Omnibus Proclamation to Everybody.*

ST. SIMEON STYLITES, who, in the early days of self-inflicted martyrdom, was a sort of ecclesiastical advertisement placed at the top of a column, is traditionally alleged to have, by constant practice, brought himself to a wonderful capability of abstinence. We have often regretted that this worthy gentleman's secret was not handed down to posterity, that it might have been promulgated to the world at large, and practised by some of its inhabitants. If, however, it were possible to have transferred St. Simeon, for one day, from the summit of his domicile in the desert to the site of the Duke of York's statue in Waterloo-place, and thence bade him gaze upon the locality spread out beneath him, he would fancy that many of the wayward wanderers seen below were, with tolerable success,

striving to rival him in that peculiar power. A stroll through St. James's Park, one would innocently imagine, more calculated to create than destroy an appetite for dinner, yet, for more than a century past, has this been a chosen resort with those who have serious thoughts of dining with the hospitable nobleman above-named. It may be that the band of the Horse Guards possesses some peculiarly soothing influence over the digestive organs, and that the harmonies of the morning are as chloroform to the peristaltic action. Music has been already admitted the "food of love," and it may be metaphysically possible that Auber's score may be found fully equal to twenty chops. At all events, Milton seems to have got hold of the idea. Witness *L' Allegro* :—

" And ever against *eating* cares  
Wrap me in soft Lydian airs."

Here, then, we have some clue to this mystery of the Park as the haunt of the hungry. Feeling a natural sympathy—the instinct of authorship—in the destiny of the dinnerless, we have even sought to carry our investigations further. We have singled out a solitary specimen of the class, and watched the gradual development of his case.



The first symptom appeared in a rigid tightening of the coat inflicting an unmerciful stress upon the last button. The hat, too, was more firmly set upon the head, and whilst the walk changed from a rapid movement into a sauntering lounge, one hand slid gracefully into the vest, and the other was adroitly occupied in describing imaginary diagrams with a thin cane. Thus prepared, he took a lingering retrospective glance at the Horse Guards' clock, and entered, with a resigned demeanour, the enclosure. From the gate-keeper's lodge arose a savoury fume exhaled from the combination of roast pork stuffed with sage and onions, and as he passed the little man in the green coat we fancied there was a glance—

with the slightest dash of envy in it—bestowed on the unconscious official; but he struggled with his emotions and walked on. The ducks came flaunting along over the surface of the ornamental water with their broad, shiny backs, glistening in the bright sunshine, and looked up impudently to be fed. The Dinnerless One stopped awhile to meditate on their plump and sleeky condition—walked a step or two—stopped again—sighed—possibly he was thinking of the sage and onions—threw a few crumbs of a bygone Abernethy biscuit, which some impertinent sparrows hopped away with anticipatively, and then, quickening his pace, withdrew to an unoccupied bench, where he could contemplate at leisure the exigencies of his condition. One o'clock was chronicled in its transit by the local horological monitor, and the hour so associated with the claims of the Wood-Dæmon and the attractions of an “ordinary,” seemed to evoke a myriad memories of the past. His visions were of huge joints—spectral ribs of roast beef, garlanded with phantom shavings of horse-radish, and exuding the apparition of a fragrant stream of rich brown gravy, dotted at tempting intervals by the ghosts of the mealiest of potatoes, crumbling at the touch of an imaginary fork into scattered lumps of speckless flour. It was more than frail

humanity could endure. The Undining One became perpendicular once more. He strove to banish the image from his mind, but in vain. He sought to quench the fire of imagination with a whistle, and from his lips flowed, solemnly and slowly, a fragment of that well-known national melody, which begins by apostrophising with a round O—a symbol of the vacancy he heaved a sigh for—the “Roast Beef of Old England.”

He paused a moment to refix a fugitive button, and then continued whistling as before the next portion of the strain.

It was evidently an undertaking that required an immense amount of moral fortitude to complete; but, striking his cane resolutely on the gravel walk, he quickened his progress towards Pimlico, and concluded his musical reminiscence with a prolonged shake that illustrated the firmness and decision of a mind that had been made up. And with this last cadence he vanished through the gates, and, doubtless, contentedly passed the remainder of the afternoon in regaling his olfactories with the odours that steamed up in a grateful incense from the teeming kitchens of Belgravia.

A day without a dinner is a gap in our life—a leaf ruthlessly torn out of our book of existence—an entire page blotted out from our diary; we



have lost the landmark of our diurnal struggle with the world, and seem shipwrecked on society to drift through the remainder of the four-and-twenty hours in the dark. When Titus so deplorably exclaimed, "I have lost a day," he was undoubtedly bewailing the circumstance of its having passed without a dinner; and in sooth such a loss might well demand a demonstration of regret. Without this daily soother of our cares—this balm to the anguish of a wounded spirit—the harassing asperities of business would be insupportable, and the pangs of disappointment beyond endurance. We may judge of the feelings of a man without a dinner by watching the aspect of him who has yet to dine, and still can scarcely brook the tediousness of waiting. He is feverish, testy, and impatient, talking in jerks or writing by "fits and starts," evidently fretting at delay. He is perturbed inwardly, and manifests it outwardly. A favour requested is refused; an application for a loan wanted is rejected. A man with a discontented inside is at war with all without. He deals in snarls and snubs; his eye wanders as in search of an object yet invisible, and his whole frame is shaken. He believes in universal treachery, and growls forth anathemas against his best friends. He is haunted by difficulties magnified through

the haze of bilious brooding into horrid phantasms of impending ruin. Yet, let his vision be once again bathed in the steam of a smoking platter; let the sturdy substantiality of a joint rise in its integrity before him, and away fly the chimeras of ante-prandial creation. *He has dined*, and the excellent Howard himself would not outrival him in philanthropy.

Poverty knows nothing of a dinner in the aggregate. With a man whose purse fluctuates constantly between little and nothing—the tidal currents of the breeches-pocket exchequer—these repasts are dreadfully intermittent. With the phantom kings they “come like shadows, so depart.” He, however, who dines occasionally with Duke Humphrey may glean some wholesome philosophy from his host, and gather some choice crumbs of consolation as his guest. He is, by the denial of present gratification, gaining an additional zest for the future. He is sharpening up an appetite in reserve which will keenly appreciate the next opportunity of an onslaught. And then, how delicious does that dinner become which was unexpected, flashing upon us in all its glorious beatitude at a moment when we were utterly unprepared for such an agreeable change! How ready, then, is the mind to receive and retain the longer an im-

pression made upon its surface! As the tranquil lake, unruffled by the breeze, will respond readily to the pebble cast into its depths when the more turbulent ocean would absorb the ripple in the curling waves and leave no trace behind, so it is with the mind of man. The pleasure elaborated by expectation, and enjoyed at last as one among many, is scarcely sooner felt than forgotten, whilst the delightful hour opening to us unawares is strung upon the rosary of memory, and kept for future tilling in our quieter moments of retrospective meditation. Speaking, however, confidentially, we always make a point, where practicable, of declining Duke Humphrey's invitation, even though attended with the compensation balance above referred to. There may be, as Shakspeare says, "a soul of goodness in things evil;" but for our own part, it is a weakness, but we cannot help its acknowledgment; we prefer "a *sole* of goodness" served up in something more personally agreeable.

## CHAPTER II.

## OF THE DINER-OUT.

LADY M.           *"To feed were best at home :  
From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony.  
Meeting were bare without it.*

MACBETH.       Sweet remembrancer !  
May good digestion wait on appetite,  
And health on both."—*Shakspeare.*



UR friend Beeswax is a type of that too numerous class of London loiterers, who, having no resources of their own, fancy it best to appropriate those of others. Once meet him in the morning, and he adheres to you all day, fastening on to your arm with a

tenacity, that no gentle hint or persuasion will cause him to forego. Change your destination

how you will, thither is he also going, and nothing but an escape into a tepid bath, where isolation becomes a perfect luxury, will free you from his shadow-haunting propensities. That odd-looking electrified brass knob, which your hand finds it so easy to clutch, and so difficult to disengage, must have been modelled from the fist of Beeswax. The worst of the fellow is his unaccountable ubiquity. Dodge him round the Mansion House, and jump into a West End omnibus, and there he is when you alight, promenading Pall Mall with the pertinacity of a sentry. Give him the slip in Soho, and you pounce upon him at the Pantheon. Cut him at Camberwell, and you have him at Hampstead. Like the phantasmagorian views, the further he appears to recede, the more distinct does his image become. His unsought companionship might be endured, had he not a rather unpleasant habit of making you his banker for the expenses of the day, and as he would on no account offer the insult of repayment, his importunate advances are always fatal to the recovery of your own. The organ which phrenologists call "adhesiveness" is wonderfully developed in the pericranium of our pertinacious acquaintance. He has the sense of scent, too, in remarkably fine preservation. His knowledge of your culinary arrangements is so

complete, that you would fancy he was mesmerically *en rapport* with your cook. Thus, if he encounters you in the street, he insists upon going home with you to dinner, and if he “drops in” upon you at home, it is always within a few minutes of that repast being on the eve of presentation, and of which he makes up his mind to partake. Whilst his knees form a rectilinear



angle under your mahogany, his hands are continually employed in describing the segment of a circle between his plate and his palate. Directly he places his frontispiece before you, he clears the entire table of contents. His eye, “in a fine frenzy rolling,” at once discovers the location of the most savoury morsels, and from the absence of all ceremony in his universal appropriation,

you may judge him to have fervent faith in the truth of the adage, "Heaven helps him who *helps himself*." Beneath his magical touch salt-cellars appear endued with vitality, the cruet-stand is perturbed with constant requisition, the square wedges of bread disappear as rapidly as the mountainous loaves did in the fairy-tale, and the tumbler beside them stands in such constant need of being replenished, that you might fancy the glass possessed curious properties of absorption. Like the rest of his tribe, Beeswax is invulnerable to insult, and consequently all the minor artillery of hints and inuendoes fail to make the slightest impression upon him. It is in vain that you allude to some imaginary appointment, or "wonder what o'clock it is," that the question might remind him of his own. He remains as fixed as the festival of Easter, and believes in the progress of the hours only so far as they govern the "movable feasts." Thus, throwing his feet on to the fender and himself back into your easy chair, he sips your wine complacently, smokes your cigars consumedly, and contenting himself with a familiar parenthesis of "*My dear fellow, your time is mine.*" Alas! how true! He has the unblushing effrontery to think "it will be too late to call elsewhere," and

consequently stops to supper. Fortune has especially favoured you if you get to bed by two o'clock in the morning at least.

This is the "Diner-out" of every-day life—one of those social sponges that conventional customs so often call upon us to press and squeeze. But there is a more exalted specimen of the class who may be almost dignified with the distinction of the diner-out by profession. He descends to nothing less than three courses and a dessert; and in fact fairly earns his dinner by the assistance he renders to digestion. Of this art Tom Torkington is a wonderful professor, so that, in sketching the peculiarities of his vocation, we cannot select a better subject for a specimen.

Tom—or as those who never presume to abbreviate sponsorial appellations always call him—Mr. Thomas Torkington is the sun of most of our social systems. You have only to get him seated behind a knife and fork on one side of the table, and perch yourself on the other, and away fly all the fretting annoyances of the day, completely routed from the field of memory by Tom's hearty artillery of good humour. Now and then some peevish grating care may attempt to contest the ground, and rally the hypochondriac forces, but it is no use battling against such long odds. Tom



has only to go on joking and eating, and eating and joking, and there is the victory gained at once without further trouble. Tom's temper, too, is even as a bowling-green, rebounding like a racket-ball from every sturdy blow of Fortune, and any belief in checking his flow of animal spirits by an ordinary process would be perfectly utopian. He is a kind of human Jack-in-the-box, with one of those very elastic spiral coils of wire twined about his heart; for press him downwards one minute, and up he is the next, with all the imperturbable vivacity belonging to those red and green gentry attached to the toy aforesaid. But his jokes are the great attraction. Nobody ever joked like Tom. Such quaint contortions of Walker; such queer quiddities of language, and such a flashing exuberance of mirth never flowed from other lips in the way they did from Tom's. No wonder that he was the lion of every dinner-party, where he contrived to prove so zoologically attractive about "feeding time."

Mr. Thomas Torkington, then, is a "diner-out" of the first-class, and, being besides his dexterous proficiency as a jokist, a skilful adept in the conversational maintenance of small talk, his presence is warmly welcomed in all circles. According to the peculiar tendency of the company, so flows

the current of his discourse. Tom having that rare and serviceable tact of discovering in an instant the topics that would prove most interesting and agreeable to his auditors. He changes, too, the course of his subjects with the change of courses, and thereby infuses a charming and appropriate variety into his discourses. With the soup, for instance, he is contemplative and serious; with the fish, facetious; with the joints, jocose; with the game, gallant; and with the pastry, poetical. He slides in, between the custards and the cheese, a short anecdote crisp and pointed, which gives a relishing piquancy to the sparkling Bucellas it accompanies; and to render the vanishing of the tablecloth almost imperceptible, he favours you at that crisis with a fascinating narrative, that has possibly more claims to vivacity than veracity in its details. From his marvellous knowledge of what is doing in the various worlds, political, musical, theatrical, and literary, he would appear to have access to those rare and exclusive sources of information, which country newspapers assume to be the peculiar property of "our own correspondent;" and the floating rumours of the day are embellished with additional mystery, as they are delivered with emphatic solemnity from his lips. Enjoying all these

advantages, and having besides the credit of being in everybody's confidence, from the Prime Minister to the lowest Government official—the policeman—it will be readily imagined how Torkington has dined himself into celebrity, and rendered his company essential to every well-appointed table.

Torkington contributes more to the hilarity of society than he does to the revenue derived from the income-tax. He has nothing a year, and out of that has to find everything. He was born to expectations, but they never arrived at maturity. His resources are as great a secret as his origin, yet few men about town make a better appearance than Torkington. The whiteness of his linen, and the glossy freshness of his coat, would hardly bear, perhaps, a critical daylight investigation; but he comes out with brilliant effect by candlelight, and that is generally the time when he shines the most. He trumpets forth his intimacy with the great; dines sumptuously on the credit of his acquaintances, and retires with the resignation of a martyr to his third-floor back, in the obscurity of the suburbs. To him the world must seem but a large ordinary; the greatest aim of life an appetite; and man's destiny a dinner.

The most prominent characteristic of an experienced diner-out is his peculiarity of costume,

by which he may be easily identified. His chin rolls in fleshy folds over the shore of his cravat, like ocean billows surging on the beach; his linen is one vast expanse of dazzling whiteness—a broad firmament in which a few glittering star-like studs just culminate above the horizon of the tablecloth. The wrinkled furrows of white over the chest bespeak a long career of epicurean gratification; each casual crease tells a tale not to be mistaken of entombed turtle and evaporated Burgundy. In fact, what would seem absolute gormandising in another is only small eating in a man who ensconces himself behind a white waistcoat. It is the outer indication of “the devouring element” that rages furiously within; and which produces an effect, as the newspaper paragraphist has it, “much more easily conceived than described.”

## CHAPTER III.

## OF THE PHILANTHROPIC DINER.

“Why doth he limit thus his charity?”

“He had not dined. The veins unfilled our blood is cold, and then we pout upon the morning, are unapt to give or to forgive.”

—*Coriolanus*, Act v., sc. 1.

WE believe it is a recognised truth among physiologists that every animal eats as much as it can procure and as much as it can hold. Ruminative quadrupeds eat but to sleep, and sleep but to eat; and not content with eating all day long, twice again they “slay the slain,” and enjoy their repast anew with an additional zest. When a whale opens its mouth ten millions of living shrimps are devoured at a draught; the mite and maggot eat the very world in which they live, and modern entomologists tell us that when a spider has nothing else to eat he will, for want of something better, devour himself. Yet we do not learn that a whale is ever troubled with dyspepsia, or that a mite ever crawls about with the

gout—a happy immunity from the consequences of over-eating which must often have excited the envy of our aldermanic fraternity. In the propensity to swallow as much as can be conveniently procured and retained, there are certain individuals who successfully emulate the example of the quadrupeds before cited. These, too, are the gentry who assume a virtue if they have it not, and dine out of pure charity—to themselves. They see in the smoking haunch of venison the shrine of their holiest and purest sympathies, in the delicious pyramid of currant jelly they trace the sweetness of a virtuous action, in the flavoured beeswing of the aged port they find the key to the tenderest emotions. To them the tavern of the freemasons is a temple of benevolence, the clatter of knives and forks a melody of the mind, the jingle of the glasses a seraphic strain which expresses the purest poetry of philanthropy. They take a ticket for the dinner, but—worthy souls—they would disburse their guinea as freely though the feast were that of the Barmecide.

The Duke of Dumplingshire is a worthy president of these philanthropic dinners. Like those mysterious wells about the coast that overflow as the tide recedes, so does his heart become full as

his plate becomes empty. The stewards with their long white wands crowd around to do him homage, the toast-master behind suspends his breath to catch the slightest word that flows from the ducal lips, a thousand bright eyes from the ladies' gallery are concentrating in one burning focus upon his form ; but the noble president undaunt-



edly goes on relishing his repast, and causing the component parts thereof to disappear with the humility of ordinary humanity. The canon of "*Non nobis*" is the signal of attack on the viands drawn out before him, and this rarely ceases till the secretary comes in with "the report." The set speeches are of the usual stereotype school,

with about three intelligible words in each, such as, "Hum, hum, hum—army and navy," or, "Buz, buz, buz—Church and State;" and then at the instigation of the toast-master, the holders of quiet conversation at the extreme end of the room go off into a condition of wild enthusiasm, and demonstrate their rapturous concurrence in a sentiment of which they never heard a syllable. But all this tends greatly to increase the popularity of the president, and when the subscriptions have been announced and the chair has been vacated, unsophisticated folks will pleasantly interchange compliments about his grace, and remark how much the society is indebted to the condescending Duke of Dumplingshire.

But let us glance at the lower end of the table, and take cognisance of a gentleman with a bald shiny head, rising like an excrescence from the blue body coat dotted all over with bright brass buttons, and who smiled benignantly from behind his white cambric handkerchief when the secretary announced, among the list of donations, "Peter Plum, Esq., annual donation, five guineas." He is an apt illustration of the class of dining philanthropists, and worthy a distinct analysis.

Peter Plum is at once a merchant and a millionaire. His ledger is a mine of incalculable



wealth. Open it where you will you stumble upon arithmetical combinations of figures that are there enshrined as symbols of golden sovereigns, counted up by hundreds and stored away in the substantial coffers of Peter's bank. His autograph endows a simple strip of paper with wondrous pecuniary virtues, and his name endorsed upon a bill would make it as easily convertible into cash as though it bore the talismanic authority of "Mr. Matthew Marshall." But wedged in somehow between the fourth-button of his waistcoat and the tightening tape at the back is an indurated mass, which only by anatomists would be called a heart. Peter hath no sympathies with poverty; he would listen to the most harrowing tale of desolate distress without the movement of a muscle; he would not bestow a doit in secret, but blazon his munificence abroad and he is liberal; the prospect of an advertisement with his donation chronicled therein, is the key that unlocks his purse-strings. With him charity is a cardinal virtue only fed and fostered by public dinners. Yet in the City is Peter Plum accounted a man with a large heart, whose benevolence is proverbial and whose gifts are manifold. He is, in short, a fair specimen of pseudo-philanthropy; his charity, like a cucumber, ripens under a glass.

Far be it from our wish to disparage by a cold sneer the genuine impulse of benevolence, that prompts so many to lend their presence and their aid to these excellent institutions; but we would fain distinguish the gold of true charity from the tinsel that mocks its brightness, and penetrate the real motive of the giver through the mist of vanity by which it is surrounded. True it is that charity covereth a multitude of sins;” but, in sooth, we must admit also that it is the covering to a multitude of dinners as well.

Connected with the class under discussion are the gentlemen who make a point of dropping in at your domicile about meal-time, under the insidious pretext of telling you “something to your advantage,” as the advertisements phrase it. They exchange courtesies for chops, and make good-nature the stalking-horse for good dinners. We remember a philanthropic diner of this description who dined for years off a chancery suit in perspective, and who to make the case more remarkable, actually made each creditor his host by turns. This marvellous feat was accomplished in this wise. Having become much involved through a series of unsuccessful speculations, he called those to whom he was indebted together, and by the exhibition of sundry rolls of parch-

ment made them acquainted with the fact of his prosecuting a suit in chancery for the recovery of an estate to which he was the rightful owner, and which, being of considerable value, would, in a short time, satisfactorily enable him to liquidate their claims in full. Thus prepared he began to go the rounds, and so regulating his visits that he always contrived to come in with the table-cloth, he would enter rubbing his hands and his face beaming with smiles, exclaiming, "Ah, my dear B——! sorry to interrupt you at this time, but the fact is, just seen my solicitor. Case to come on Monday next, sure of a verdict—pay you in full with a *douceur* besides. Interest, my dear boy—insist upon it. Couldn't resist the pleasure of popping in to tell you—very acceptable, I know, &c." To which the delighted victim, in the innocence of his heart, of course would respond, "Really, this is very kind of you; pray sit down. The joint just up; nobody here—only Mrs. B—— and the little ones. Nay, I insist upon it."

And the colloquy would terminate with a short struggle after coat and hat, which the victim captures after a little decorous resistance, and then the dinner is served up, and the visitor leaves, promising to call again on the following Monday, with the necessary means of settlement. It is needless to say neither arrive as promised.

By dint of having fifty creditors, and ringing the changes on each twice in the quarter, our philanthropic diner managed to pass a very agreeable and economical twelvemonth, without the inconvenient outlay of tavern banquets. But the world rolled round: the cause was lost, and with the cause departed the effect.

March, in its social aspect, may be considered as peculiarly a dining month. It might have been called by our ancestors, more appropriately than the later period so designated, the "wyn monath;" but as our ancestors, at least those belonging to the remote Saxon generation, had no knowledge of the advantages to be derived from spreading the tablecloth to diffuse generous emotions, and of the tendency of dinners towards donations, it is evident that, though they certainly might have called it by that name, they would have been perplexed to have explained to the curious the reason why. In our time, however, the period has become peculiarly associated with the celebration of those anniversary festivals that so happily tend to keep alive amongst us the remembrance of the numerous charitable institutions with which this great metropolis so richly abounds. In this month London does not go for a day without its dinner. Now is it that the Freemason's Tavern is besieged

at the earliest hour, by butchers depositing meat enough of a morning to supply a village for a week, and fruiterers and greengrocers from Covent Garden Market sending in the productions of a province to form a sufficiently adequate supply of the rarest and earliest productions of the season. Now is the London Tavern—that wonderful repository of viands—daily a scene of prodigious cookery and interminable uncorking. The bins which, from their inexhaustible store, can never be included amongst the has-beens, now yield up their stores of fine old port and rich dry sherry, wherewith to warm the hearts and cool the palates of the company; and the holder of the guinea dinner ticket who shall be insensible to their influence has never yet come within the experience of the oldest and most bald-headed waiter. Now does the accomplished Mr. Toole, the prince of toastmasters, awaken the enthusiasm of dreamy diners, absorbed in the contemplation of the ceiling, a position highly conducive to the proper process of digestion, and cause the sonorous thunder of his voice to follow with marvellous effect the lightning flashes of the chairman's speech. Now does the proffered plate jingle melodiously, and the cheque flutter pleasantly, and the toast-master's assertion that "this is a bumper, receive universal

adoption and confirmation: and now does the secretary grow proud of his position, and the announcement of the collection make everybody else satisfied with theirs, and the wine passes round more freely than ever, and the ladies' gallery seems to be gradually becoming filled with more fascinating forms and faces than were ever seen before collected into one focus; and all through March, day after day, and night after night, does this diorama of dining, with its various effects of light and shade, present itself. Pleasant, above all, is the reflection that, through this annual recurrence of these genial gatherings, many a sad heart is lightened, many a sorrow lessened, the darkened days of many a declining age brightened, and the suffering from many a painful disorder alleviated or removed. March fills again those channels of charitable contributions that will run dry in the rapid course of time, and the two great taverns we have mentioned are the principal sources of those copious springs that, wisely applied, irrigate so wide a field, and convert what otherwise would be a barren surface into a teeming soil, from which the finest fruits of human benevolence can be gathered. Money, the "mere dross," the "vile earth," the "wretched dust of the cynic," hath thus laid within it seeds that will

germinate as surely as the vital grains of the husbandman, that are now ready to burst into life beneath our feet, and will yield, in the fulness of time, plentiful a harvest. A bushel of this "March dust" we may regard proudly as far exceeding in worth the royal ransom the proverb taught us to estimate it by, and the month may thus stand prominently forth in the calendar as the true type and symbol of human progress in its advance towards that perfection of Christian charity which is nearest the divine.

But—confidentially, reader—a word in your ear.



Paradoxical as it may seem, we simply record a trite truism when we affirm that the great pleasures of life are the small pleasures, and that the greatest unhappiness we experience results from our minor miseries. The number of each that shall fall to the lot of the diner determines his enjoyment or his wretchedness for the day. The man who sallies forth predetermined to enjoy himself, with a full purse and a light heart, may be, but a quarter of a mile from his dwelling, rendered the unhappiest of beings by the flying off of a fugitive button, or the untimely discovery of a tender corn. No matter how brightly the sun may shine, or how favourably fortune may smile, the blandest influence of the atmosphere, and the most direct warmth of prosperity's rays, would be equally lost upon the man with a tight boot. Our destiny may be decided by the angular upstarting of a collar that had burst its fastenings even as we are upon the threshold of the mansion where we were to have had that long-expected interview with that individual who was to lead us joyously by the hand into the flowery paths of the world's ways. Well might the sage of old declare that our life hung upon a thread, and wisely did Mythology symbolise the most inexorable of the Fates as a stern being with shears, to cut the ends



unexpectedly off! We were present, the other day, at a public dinner, where one of the most eminent literary men of the age presided, and from whom, as the orator of the evening, great things were expected. We saw him rise with the easy confidence of one who knew his subject well, and who also knew how to make the most of it. There was breathless expectation among his auditors, a hum of eager preparation for an unusual treat ran along the tables, every ear was acutely strained to catch the brilliant tropes and metaphors, the gems of wit and wisdom, to which they knew his pen had given form, and to which they had been for months looking forward to his lips giving utterance. The great lion of the evening began to roar, and everybody nudged his neighbour into silence. For three minutes a stream of earnest eloquence, flowed from his tuneful tongue, that seemed to be bearing down upon its silvery tide a freight of golden imagery, when suddenly a metaphor broke down, a sentence got entangled, grew more intricately unintelligible, became utterly hopeless, got helplessly lost amidst a chaotic mass of words hesitatingly put forth, abruptly recalled, and then unsteadily experimented upon again, till finally the speaker, stuttering and stammering, with blazing cheeks

and a nervous tremor of confusion, sank back into his chair, and became an Awful Mistake for the remainder of the night. What think ye was the cause of this dismal and unexpected discomfiture? A sudden illness? A temporary over-clouding of the finer fancies of the mind? A momentary loss of that self-possession, without which even Cicero himself might have been but a sorry bungler? Nothing of the kind; we saw the effect and guessed the cause. Alas! and alack for poor humanity. We had learned long before how the inspiration of the soul can be quenched, and its fine harmonies put out of tune by the most commonplace occurrence, and the most simple means. The chairman would have sent away his hearers enthralled and enraptured by his discourse, beyond their most sanguine anticipations, but at that moment—at that critical minute in his oratorical existence, when his mind was revelling in its wealth of riches, and his heart was deeply engaged in the noble cause his speech was to assist, the faithlessness of thread, or the negligence of his tailor, betrayed him. In the very outburst of his eloquence, he had heard a dull snap go off behind him, a wretched sensation of collapsed habiliments succeeded, and then the fatal conviction flashed upon him, that he had——burst

a brace button, and the mighty spirit was reminded of the links that united it with mortality!

Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that the next hour is to fulfil the promises of this, and that the deficiencies of the tailor are to be supplied by the resources of the orator, will do well to remember this little history of Crackalas, Prince of Abuttonoffia.

## CHAPTER IV.

## OF DIVERS DINERS AND DINING-HOUSES.

“ Man is a carnivorous production,  
 And must have meals—at least one meal a day  
 He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction ;

\* \* \* \* \*

Although his anatomical construction  
 Bears vegetables in a grumbling way,  
 Your labouring people think, beyond all question,  
 Beef, veal, and mutton better for digestion.”—*Byron.*

DEFOE, in the life of “ Colonel Jack,” gives a striking picture of his young tattered hero sitting, for the first time in his life, at a threepenny ordinary and expressing the delight with which he relished the hot, smoking soup and the airs with which he called about him ; “ and every time,” he says, “ we called for bread or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, ‘ Coming, gentlemen—coming !’ and this delighted me more than all the rest.” “ It was about this time,” as the same quaint author pithily observes, “ that the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt.” We have here afforded us some slight clue to a pecu-

liar gratification and self-importance derived from attendance at an eating-house, and one, we believe, which really constitutes no small portion of the enjoyment. Provided money—that “wonderful lamp” of the moderns—be but ready in the purse, to embolden and back up the demand, the Genius of Aladdin could not more readily supply your gastronomical desires. A London waiter is a character *sui generis*; he is gifted with attributes which belong to no other class, and which he seems to acquire by instinct. Though called upon to minister to the impatient cravings of a dozen simultaneous inquirers, scarcely has your deliberate determination been made known, and his customary prandial prologue of “Yezzir, ’rectly, sir,” been uttered, than lo! the ideal objects of your desire appear before you, invested with the properties of substantiality. Had one of his guests the mouth of Gargantua, and the digestion of an ostrich, he would not evince the slightest astonishment at the consumption of the viands. Shuffling along in his yawning slippers, and perpetually transmitting from some remote region a succession of smoking dishes, he seems to thrive solely upon the fragrant steam thereof. We behold him continually appeasing the appetites of others, but never regaling his own. No-

body—and we promulgate the act without fear of contradiction—nobody ever saw an eating-house waiter dine. You may, perhaps, about twilight, when the room has become empty, and the joints downstairs in the shop-window have dwindled to meagre fragments, stumble upon him behind a corner, munching some indescribable morsel, and, when addressed, trying to speak as if he had been taking lessons in the unknown tongue; but this is only dining by instalments, and cannot even in the aggregate be called a dinner. A waiter, too, can have no private friends, or, at least, could never meet them if he had; for in his department the demand for dinners begins at an unaccountable hour in the morning, and goes on without cessation till an equally inexplicable hour of the night. Even in sleep he must be constantly perturbed by a recollection of his vocation. We would not have a waiter's nightmare for the world!

Arriving thus at a conclusion which compels us to deny waiters the blessings of an uninterrupted meal and a sound repose, we are next led to doubt whether the occupation of a waiter is to be easily reconciled with a notion of man's high destiny. Fancy a human being born into the world expressly to run about through existence with "six

of biled beef and taters," and that the purveying of such anomalous dishes is the mission for which he was ordained. Imagine the boy suddenly expanding into manhood, with the responsibility of his office, his mind enlarging with the sphere of his vocation and growing learned upon the distinction of fat and lean, and critically erudite upon gravy; and then trace him gradually dropping into the vale of years, bending under the accumulated weight of dinners he has provided for the multitude, and growing grey in the service of the stomach. The picture is too painful for contemplation. When, therefore, oh, diner! the inevitable moment arrives that thy pursestrings must be withdrawn in payment for thy vanished repast, let not thine eager fingers clutch up the copper change with scrupulous exactness; but leaving a fragment of thy finances as a waif to the waiting one, thou shalt button up thy breeches pocket with the consciousness of one who has not dined in vain, but who, in ministering to the personal requisitions of the present, has also contributed a trifle to the coming exigencies of the future.

It is a recognised Christian principle that we should all help one another; and waiters devoting themselves to helping, as a branch of the fine arts,

accept their vocation as a high mission of which they have seen in Providence a brilliant example set before them.

Of late years the spirit of refinement and the march of modern improvement have wrought an observable change in the diction of the London waiter. In the days of old, you used to have, as a reply to the question of "What have you got ready?" a strange jumble, running somewhat after this fashion, in the true dining-room vernacular:—

"Biled beef—line of pork, sir, just up—rumstik pie, taters, greens, &c."

But the other day we heard the same sentence thus elegantly elaborated:—

WAITER (*log.*): "I am happy to inform you, sir, our culinary arrangements of to-day are on a most extensive scale, and comprise those gastronomical refectations which are at this season of the year in extensive demand; such as eminently digestible and nutritious beef, boiled upon the latest pneumatic and hydraulic principles—a delectable loin of pork, fresh from the process of preparation—a substantial pie, enclosing a sufficiency of steak amputated from the most tender sources—and such farinaceous and nitrogenised vegetables as potatoes, cauliflowers, &c. &c."



And from this period we have strenuously supported the early-closing system and literary institutions.

Some philosopher of the olden time, who, from the antiquity of the axiom, might possibly have been present at the first repast on record, observed that "one-half the world knows not how the other half lives." We totally deny the truth of the proposition altogether. The fact is, that one-half the world is perpetually engaged in preparing dinners for the other half, and consequently must know how they live very well. The temples dedicated to the worship of good eating are as numerous as were those shrines of yore devoted to the sacrifices of the jocund Bacchus. Dining-rooms, however, are not altogether of modern origin, for Pliny makes honourable mention of the general hospitality that prevailed in Rome; and we may conclude that those private banquets served much the same purpose as our public ordinaries. It would doubtless considerably militate against our notions of the heroic to believe in Julius Cæsar ordering "a small plate of beef and cabbage," or Cicero inquiring confidentially of the waiter what joint was in best "cut;" but it is evident, on the great commercial principle of wherever the de-

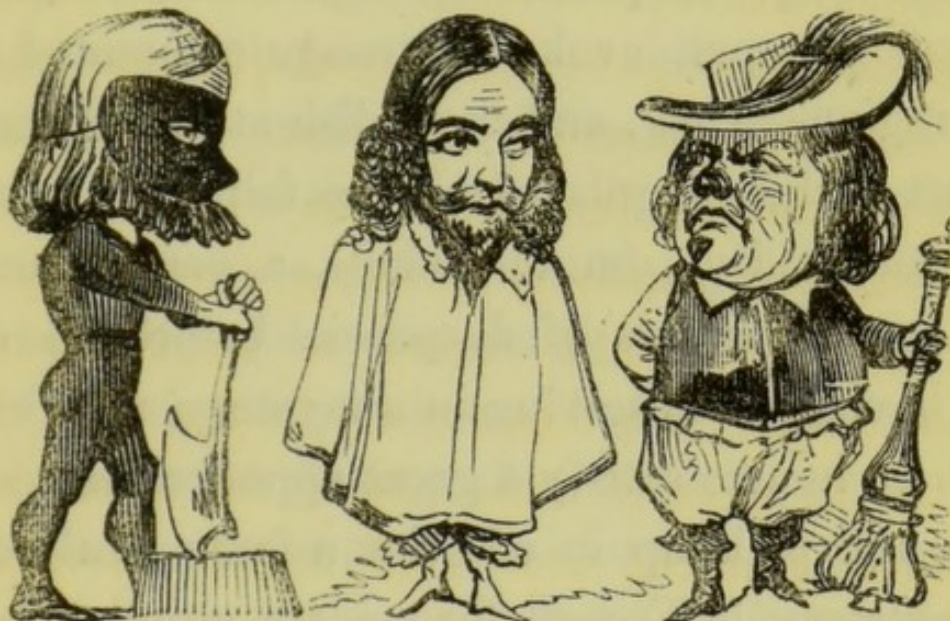
mand exists there also must be the supply, that some general provision of this nature must have existed from time immemorial.

From those curious chop-houses in the City—to gain which you turn round sharp corners, down dark courts, and where you dine by a blaze of gaslight even on a summer noon, and hear hungry rats gambolling furiously behind the wainscoating—from these to the quiet solemnity of the West-end *restaurateurs*, is a wide and strongly marked line of demarcation. The diners also exhibit totally distinct characteristics, as will become palpably apparent to the most superficial observer. The City dining-houses have a peculiar bustle and commercial activity about them; the very atmosphere breathes of profit and loss, and, in the clatter of the knives and forks, the weakest imagination may hear the melodious jingle of a metallic currency. A large clock occupies some conspicuous position in the room, and measures forth the progress of the minutes with a sturdy, sonorous “tick” to mark the true economy of time. The newspaper is propped up between the cruet-stand and the plate, so that the contents of the former may be devoured simultaneously with the contents of the latter; and the diners have a shrewd, hungry aspect about them that quickens

the waiter into wonderful vitality. The fare provided, too, has the same unsophisticated plainness as those have who partake of it, and the joint, in its native, unadorned condition rises into an appreciation that is not to be found elsewhere. We find no inexplicable concoctions, that one would be puzzled to define as belonging to either the animal or the vegetable kingdom, and chops are not brought to table stitched up in writing-paper, as if they had been put into an envelope in the kitchen and delivered through the post. Occasionally some continental innovation may be successfully repeated, but, generally speaking, everything is as fine, straightforward eating as an Englishman would desire. In fact variety is the only thing wanted in most of these places, for, after having banquetted off the same kind of dish several days in succession, it requires the patience and resignation of one of the old martyrs to be again tied to a steak, or, in the pursuit of gregarious gastronomy, to be despotically doomed to a chop.

At the west-end we find a totally distinct class of diners, and the arrangements for gastronomic regeneration are also elaborated after a much more comprehensive fashion. In the immediate neighbourhood of Leicester-square there are some famous French houses, where you may see at an

early hour in the morning an interminable supply of provisions going in, and all day long an endless variety of diners, with bland and smiling faces coming out. There is no external evidence of the business carried on in the interior—we do not insist upon the joke—and unsophisticated people might regard the building simply as an ordinary dwelling expanded beyond the usual proportions.



or, from the unpretending order of its architecture, pass it over altogether as not calling for any especial notice. When once, however, inducted into the mysteries of the mansion and located in one of the oblong boxes into which the room is cut up from end to end, a fresh source of perplexity arises from the details held forth in the bill of fare, and we find it necessary with Hamlet to “speak by the *carte*, or equivocation will undo us.”

An immensity of moral courage and a wonderful amount of self-denial is required to arrive at a final decision upon the dishes. We are bewildered by an embarrassment of riches, and, at last, startled into a rash judgment by the sudden apparition of the waiter, despairingly indicate two unknown items in the list as being desirable for production. Cabalistic tones, small and shrill as though they had passed through the medium of a penny trumpet, evoke a strange compound from the regions below, and the relish attendant on the repast is then regulated by the faith you have in the cook. But, on the whole, a gentleman not having the terrors of dyspepsia before his eyes, and having no misgiving in a mystery, may at one of these houses satisfy a great appetite for a small sum, and pick up in addition a few useful scraps of gastronomic French for private circulation.

It would be a curious effort of scientific research to submit various articles found upon some dining-room tables to a rigid chemical analysis. The melted butter is so near akin to diluted paste; the mustard so much resembling gamboge in colour and cold cream in consistency; the vinegar so suspiciously thin at the top and so unpleasantly thick at the bottom; the anchovy-sauce so suggestive of oatmeal gruel with a stick of red sealing wax grated

into it; and the ketchup, which tastes like a vile concoction of black ink and ginger-beer, so utterly defies the most critical investigation, that any light thrown upon the nature of their constituent elements would create a tremendous sensation at the next meeting of the British Association. But we must not forget the flies—*such* flies—absolute monsters of their species, that crawl about the tablecloth and fatten upon the flavorful fume of the viands until they attain an aldermanic obesity and a brigand's audacity. Directly you sit down, one of these insatiate insects impudently alights before you on a bread crumb, poised like an island in the midst of a small ocean of spilt soup. You flourish your knife and fork, but in vain, his flyship doubtless having the impertinence to consider you as the intruder and himself as the guest. You begin to eat and he looks on inquisitively, rubbing his hands together and working his proboscis about as much as to say, "That's not a bad dinner you've got there." And then a score of hungry assailants belonging to the same fraternity dance a quadrille under your nose, and take tepid baths in the gravy before your eyes. Resistance to the invasion is utterly hopeless, your very victory is defeat, for such trophies as the captured legs and wings lost in the battle are far from being

pleasant embellishments to a stewed steak or a dish of apple fritters. You at last resign the contest, and have the small satisfaction, perhaps, of seeing the leader of the freebooters drowned in the stream of syrup into which he had the greediness to plunge, and the rest dispersed for a time by a flourish of the waiter's napkin. From this period you cherish a greater respect for spiders, and begin to think, after all, they are a calumniated race.

The terrible amount of dining that we have gone through in our time, to become a guide and a fingerpost to the initiated, would wring the heart of the most hardened. We have dined at different places every day; and often with heroic fortitude have we sacrificed ourselves, like Curtius, dining a dozen times on the same day that the great chasm in our social requirements might be closed—that we might speak with the air of one having authority. We have been rewarded at last by seeing the great art of dining assuming the importance to which it is entitled, and justifying a reference to modern dining-rooms as proud proofs of our modern progress. We need not here point out the whereabouts and thereabouts of each; but knowing that other portions of our space will be found inscribed with the names of

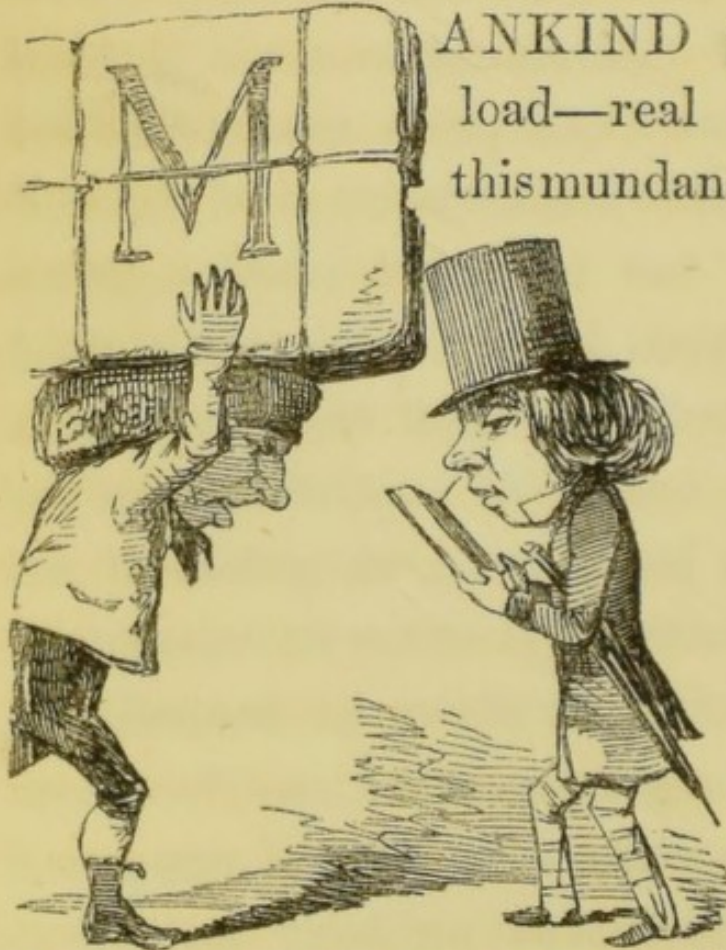
the enterprising individuals who are thus rendering good service to the community, we advise the reader to pay them each a visit in turn. *Floreat Etona*—or in good honest Saxon, let eating flourish on every floor.



## CHAPTER V.

## OF DINNERS IN THE COUNTRY.

“Oh, well may poets make a fuss  
 In summer time, and sigh ‘*O Rus*’  
 Of city pleasures sick :  
 My heart is all at pant to rest  
 In greenwood shades—my eyes detest  
 This endless meal of brick.”—*Hood.*



ANKIND groaning under a load—real or imaginary—in this mundane pilgrimage, should always try to lighten the burden on their shoulders by walking it off.

We have elsewhere observed that the breakfast at an inn by the roadside, when out on a country ramble, and before you

start for the day's exhilarating journey that is to ensue, has a right to occupy a prominent place in the catalogue of our enjoyments. Somehow, whether attributable to the fresh air, or to the novelty of the situation, you never can enjoy a meal of this kind so well as at an inn. The crisp sections of bacon, browned to a marvellous degree of temptation, the hitherto unattainable excellence of the coffee, the supreme perfection of the new-laid eggs, the cake-like seductiveness of the brown bread, and the superlative flavour of the gigantic ham, which almost dissolves in your mouth as you look upon it;—these, and the many other luxuries of a country inn—we, of course, exclude the bill from the panegyric—make a pedestrian's breakfast unapproachable for the hearty zest with which it is enjoyed. What has been thus said about a breakfast applies with double force to a dinner enjoyed in this manner at a country inn, it being—or should be—the *omega*, as the other was the *alpha* of the day's journey. You are about to arrive at the climax of enjoyment, your vision has been saturated with bright sunny landscapes, and you have felt the appetite within sharpened by the oxygen without, to the very verge of stomachic endurance. There is yet another mile intervening between the experience of this internal rebellion

and the welcome hostel wherein it may be appeased. You no longer pause to dwell upon the tranquil beauties of the surrounding prospect: the mellow gurgling of the rivulet, which but an hour ago would have awakened a lingering train of pleasant thoughts, now ripples on unheeded; the old mill, flinging its dark shadow across your path, and looming forth in strong contrast to the rosy sky beyond, now dyed with the innumerable hues of sunset, hardly attracts a passing glance; the mind is wholly engrossed with the prospective images of viands that are to renovate the body. You ascend the brow of the eminence, and there, nestled in the valley beneath, behold the country town which is to be your destination for the night. The "King's Head" at last is reached, and then, on the proverbial principle that two heads are better than one, you put your own inside it. In a few moments—few measured by the clock, but many according to internal evidence—the waiter enters with the object of your anxious desires, and the preliminary bread with which you have beguiled the interim, is indignantly spurned to receive the more savoury substantials with becoming reverence. Your meditations are instantly confined to the immediate sphere of your movements, and are thus bounded on the east and

west by a knife and fork, and north and south by the fare provided and the county map at the back of your chair. There is no field for your imagination beyond; the most excursive fancy is at such a season satisfied within those limits. The fastidiousness of your epicurean taste is no longer a hindrance to your enjoyment, and the plainest provender has then a relish which can be seldom obtained elsewhere. You rise in the full consciousness of having dined, and the senses are steeped in a halycon repose, which allows no intrusive care to disturb the charmed associations of that hallowed *reverie*.

Picnics form a very pleasant phase of dining in the country. There is a charming gipsy freedom about this way of improvising a dinner that, in agreeable companionship, makes a summer afternoon slide delightfully away, with a joyous throng of happy moments in its train. A picnic is a perfect pastoral luxury, provided only that it be properly managed, that decisive arrangements are made beforehand and acted ably upon afterwards, and that in the general preparations of the provisional committee the essentials of a corkscrew and salt are not forgotten. A cold collation *al fresco*, with the table-cloth spread under the shading branches of a fine old oak, and the company,

cookery, and crockery, scattered about with picturesque profusion, intermingled with a radiant assemblage of bright eyes, long ringlets, and charming smiling faces—this forms by no means a disagreeable picture to contemplate. True it is that green caterpillars will crawl into apple-tarts, clumsy grubs tumble into wine-glasses, and an adventurous “daddy-longlegs,” be found sticking occasionally in the pie-crust; but these are minor miseries, which are by people of philosophic temperaments not suffered to interfere with the real sources of enjoyment.

Whitebait dinners are capable of affording much entertainment to small parties, not for the sake of the white-bait and Blackwall, but for the addenda, which are delicious. The scene of the repast being also generally laid at some short distance from the metropolis enables an appetite to arise in the interim of the journey which is not susceptible of cultivation in the close and dusty streets of town. Tempting, however, is cider-cup and seductive is cold punch on these occasions, and the prudent will do well to consider their influences.

It is the charm of novelty that gives such a zest to these dinners out of town, and to the autumnal outings with which they are connected. You see a breakfast service of a new pattern on the

table when you get down of a morning, a new view through the window, and you discover in the customary loaf a new shape. There is a new flavour in the coffee, and a new pattern on the wall. The mind is invigorated by a sort of mental shower-bath, imparted by a succession of shocks, and gains strength from encountering something out of the usual field of contemplation. The very local paper bursts out upon you with a novel fascination, and the most trivial scrap of village intelligence assumes a sudden interest. It is with a quick, jaunty step, having these thoughts flitting butterfly-like about us, that we resume our stroll in the sunlight after the matin meal; but the evil steals up to remind us of the brief tenure of our pleasures, when, towards nightfall, some dozen miles off, we again take refuge in an inn parlour, go through the same dreary monotony of hearing expounded themes in which we can take no possible interest; and when having thrice read the latest London paper through, the only resource for reading left is the local Post-office Directory. And then the night closes in with a plague of the deepest azurean diabolicals, and amidst a dulness so dense it can be felt.

This it is that makes the great metropolis the favourite trysting place of the cheerful, the

chatty, and the convivial. The position of the solitary London pedestrian in a country tavern parlour, where he knows nobody, and where he has no sympathy with the habitual frequenters, is the dreariest and dullest fate that can befall humanity, especially if the elements prove unpropitious, and he has no hope for the resumption of his day's pilgrimage on the morrow, amidst sunshine, to light up with a glimmering of consolation his wearied and desponding breast. In such a mood, with the parlour visitants all gone, and he left to his own melancholy meditations, I can fancy something like this to be the Tennysonian

#### LAY OF THE LONELY TRAVELLER.

##### I.

With clinging foam the pewter pots  
 Are thickly crusted, one and all,  
 The flies have left unpleasant dots  
 Of black upon the parlour wall ;  
 The empty chairs look dull and strange,  
 Loud is the ticking of his watch,  
 Time slowly seems to cut its notch,  
 He thinks of smoking for a change.  
 But everything looks dull and beery,  
 " Charles cometh not," he said ;  
 He said " Of sitting up I'm weary,  
 I think I'll go to bed."

##### II.

He reads the paper brought at even,  
 He reads it through from side to side,  
 And ere the clock has struck eleven  
 Again to read it through has tried.

He wonders how those cricket bats  
 Made one "caught out" and one a "bye."  
 And then he also wonders why  
 We wear uncomfortable hats.  
 And feels that he is getting beery  
 He grog will have instead—  
 A night spent out of town is weary,  
 He soon will go to bed.

## III.

About a placard on the wall,  
 That tells the time the trains have kept,  
 He hovers, though the type be small,  
 And finds out where he last night slept ;  
 And then he thinks, a pleasant day  
 He might have had, if only one  
 Companion had but with him done  
 The distance, walking all the way,  
 But, as it is, it isn't cheery,  
 "I'll ring the bell," he said,  
 "And Charles shall bring the grog,—I'm weary  
 And want to go to bed."

## IV.

They bring the best within the house,  
 The door upon its hinges creaked,  
 Out goes the waiter, and a mouse  
 Beneath the sanded flooring squeaked ;  
 He through the crevice peers about,  
 But sees no mouse about the place,  
 And finds of mouse no further trace,  
 Yet feels excitement in the doubt.  
 "For anything, oh, deary, deary !  
 Will stir me up," he said,  
 "Of going out of town I'm weary,  
 I would I were in bed."



## V.

He thinks a country life is slow,  
 He hears the shrill wind far away,  
 In town, he feels that he should go  
 In at half-price to see a play.  
 And fancies to be shut up so,  
 With only cribbage for a ray  
 Of gladness to light up a day  
 Of dulness, might be called "a go."  
 That would be very dull and dreary;  
 He everything has read,  
 Of sitting up he has got weary,  
 And wants to go to bed.

## VI.

He hears the rain upon the roof,  
 The slow clock ticking, and the sound  
 Of wind in gusts—a certain proof  
 To-morrow will be showery found.  
 And having thus got through an hour  
 And smoked a wretched pipe alone,  
 And heard the gas-lights' murmuring drone  
 Amidst the dripping of the shower,  
 He says, "Well, this is very dreary,  
 I'll now go up to bed,  
 I would—of rural rambles weary—  
 I were in town instead."

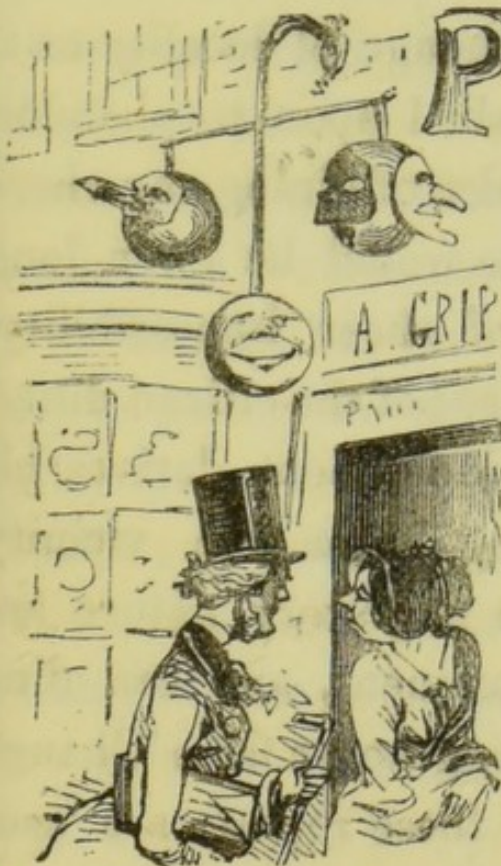
And this is, after all, the way in which our  
 solitary dinners in the country will generally  
 terminate.

## CHAPTER VI.

## OF DINNERS IN TOWN.

“Hail, Memory, hail ! in thy exhaustless mine,  
 From age to age unnumbered treasures shine !  
 Thought and her shadowy brood thy call obey  
 And Place and Time are subject to thy sway  
 The by-gone glories into being start,  
 And that which passed the lips dwells in the heart.”

*Pleasures of Memory.*



**P**ERPLEXITIES will often arise as to how the daily dinner can be obtained, but people must dine somehow. To the old inhabitant of London, whose avocations enforce the necessity of a mid-day meal apart from his domestic circle, the chosen scene of his daily repast becomes a haunt of hallowed memory. He clings to his favourite corner with pertinacious

adherence, and enjoys the right of fixing his hat upon the peg above him by the privilege of long prescription. The waiter bows to him deferentially on his entrance, and gives him private intelligence of the joints in best condition. He has priority of the paper, and enjoys uninterruptedly the exclusive possession of the cruet-stand, whilst the periods of his arrival and departure are so exact that they might supersede the obligation of consulting the clock during his stay. The usage of long custom has rendered him a portion of the distinctive features of the place; and it would be a painful separation to sever him from the room to which he has been so long habituated. He would feel as miserably perplexed by a change of locality as if he had been imperatively called upon to abandon his favourite seat; and the idea of dining anywhere else with the same appetite would be for a long time to come a matter of sheer impossibility. Such is the fixed temperament of the citizen diner, who, as immovable as the Monument, derives his pecuniary power of dining from the vicinity thereof. Those of a more migratory nature are less constant in their attachment, and can dine with equal ease in every eating-house from 'Change Alley to Drury-lane. As these repasts are usually regulated by the existing amplitude of the

purse, it is not straining after a forced coincidence to imagine certain places associated with very agreeable memories, and others with the reverse. In this way what a halo of happiness may surround Bucklersbury! What a cluster of joys may hang round Fleet-street! What images of retrospective enjoyment may link themselves with Leicester-square! A man can hardly show more gratitude to Fortune than by celebrating her latest favours by the festival of a good dinner. An accession of health, wealth, or happiness, is deserving of commemoration by an indulgence beyond the usual limits; and in this manner you may preserve an undying connection between the dishes provided and the events that called them forth, associating vows of love with green peas and lamb, fame with Frangipane, and the increase of cash with the decrease of capons.

Who that has ever made a right-angle with his knees under the table of one of our most famous City dining-houses can forget "Joseph," the head waiter, who therein presided? He seemed to feel the honour of his craft at stake; and elevating his vocation into a positive dignity, you felt it to be an absolute condescension on his part to bring you the viands you had presumed to order. He would flourish his napkin with the air of one who con-

sidered such exercise a distinguishing mark of personal elegance, and when he addressed you it was in the tones and with the manner of a patronising nobleman who had honoured you with an invitation to be that day his guest. In receiving change from Joseph—for the boldest diner never dared to abbreviate his name into the familiar “Joe”—it was rarely that you could escape from a donation of silver.

What a contrast was presented by the smiling sisterhood that formed the waitresses at the renowned emporium for boiled beef in the Old Bailey. How silently and smirkingly they glided about with those pewter platters that bore the thin and smoking sections off the round! Dear Mary, we can fancy thee now with thy tight prim bodice and smart cap and ribbons as of yore, answering our request to pay with the dulcet delivery of “one and fourpence.” How many hungry swains, whose gross imagination came prepared only for brisket and brocoli, have gone hence undined, and yet with an appetite appeased, having banquetted off thy bright blue eyes, and fed to the heart’s repletion on thy light brown ringlets! and has not the sturdy countryman, whose soul, impervious to all ordinary impressions, was at first absorbed in the goodly bulk of edibles provided, sat with his

mouth agape to see thee pass in all thy charms until his beef grew cold and his heart waxed warm? And now—touched by the wand of the magician Time—thou mayst have expanded into a comely matron, with a tribe of little rosy-cheeked Maries in miniature about thee to claim thy ministering care, and a hungry husband, perchance, who prizes not the humble fare for the fair hands that provide it, as we did once. Sweet Mary! there may be a little matter of half-a-crown between us which our love for thee caused us to forget when we last encountered each other, but, be assured, thou wilt always live in our memory!

Barristers—who, from eating their own terms, acquire a badgering practice of making witnesses for the opposite side eat their words—are excellent judges of good dinners; and accordingly we find in the neighbourhood of the inns of court and chancery some of the best houses wherein they may be obtained. The most select are generally at the remote extremity of courts, branching out of the great thoroughfare, and the dinners partake more of the *table d'hôte* character than the isolated provision for each guest which distinguishes the eating-house proper.

At the inferior kind, about one o'clock, an inundation takes place of impetuous individuals,

with damp umbrellas under one arm, and limp rolls of writing paper, tied round with a piece of red tape, under the other. These are the minor gentry of the law, who look with contempt on the innovating "glass of ale and a sandwich for fourpence," and have no faith in those bilious monstrosities denominated sausage rolls. They generally engage in a desultory comment on the *Times*, which they hold in one hand, whilst they engross imaginary deeds, with the bread crumbs collected, in the other. During the first part of the week the extra luxury of pastry is superadded to the substantiality of meat; but, towards the latter end, the repast is confined to the most satisfactory and least expensive fare—a phenomenon which has been attributed, with some show of reason, to the fluctuating condition of the waistcoat-pocket exchequer.

An ordinary, where, for a moderate sum, the diner has the privilege of consuming as much as his digestive faculties will permit, is peculiarly favourable to the habits of gentlemen who have great appetites and small incomes. The consumption of the articles, and the question of economy as to the choice of dining thus, is materially affected by the changes of the atmosphere. On a close, muggy day, the balance is in favour of the landlord:

on a fine, frosty morning, the diner has the advantage considerably on his own side. It is perfectly frightful to nervous people, who have always the fear of a famine before their eyes, to mark the devastation that here prevails. We have seen a joint of reasonable dimensions dwindle in a second to a shapeless skeleton of bone, and, were it not for the viscid tenacity of the soup which prudent proprietors place first before their guests to take off the sharp edge of the appetite, it would be hazardous to predict that even that would always remain.

In order fully to appreciate the amount of substantial fare placed before you at these houses it is worth while to lounge the next day down Regent-street, and drop in at one of those *restaurateurs* where the small quantity of nourishment capable of being extracted from half-a-crown would excite even the astonishment of a Liebig. You have heard of the celebrity of their omelettes, and you desire to become personally acquainted with them. The opportunity of enrolling your name among the list of votaries is given you, and the result possibly answers your expectations, but from the arithmetrical computation which the waitress afterwards assists you to make, you discover that an omelette is divisible into exactly five



mouthfuls, and that the price of each mouthful is sixpence. From this time you have a higher opinion of all ordinaries—the one of Newgate excepted; and wonder how the proprietors can make them pay.

It is with no slight emotions that we have lately seen some of our old familiar dining haunts themselves devoured by the gargantuan swallow of the railway companies; and we must here really enter a word of protest against the gradual absorption of our ancient abodes by these cormorants of space. The worst of it is, we can neither tell now what we shall all come to, or where the railways will all go to? Already we begin to get miserable sceptics as to the existence of a terminus, and our future creed will be that a railway has no precise terminus at all; but that the lines, like those parallel lines in one of Euclid's axioms, can stretch out in the same direction to an infinity. They are bisecting streets and intersecting squares in all directions, flinging sombre iron bridges across quiet thoroughfares, and so disturbing every pre-conceived notion of metropolitan localities that a friendly direction to a stranger will reverse the attributes of mercy, and neither bless "him that gives" nor "him that takes." We should marvellously like to see a map of London for the

next century, with the course of these worthily named "extensions" duly indicated by lines of red ink. The result would be as nearly approximate to a Chinese puzzle or a Scotch plaid as anything with which we are acquainted. How truly then would our great city be found "a mighty maze, but *not* without a plan." Fancy St. Paul's as much a hidden mystery as Fair Rosamond shut up in her Woodstock Bower, and making a clue quite as essential to unravel the intricacies of a progress so perplexing. Conceive the necessity of a constant supply of finger-posts, erected at equal distances, like those poles of the electric telegraph, and having such inscriptions at street corners as "To Temple Bar," "To Westminster Abbey," and so forth, with Government guides stationed at extreme points, to conduct back to their lodgings those worthy citizens who may have strayed out of their reckoning. Yet to such expedients will the havoc made by railway alterations with our old haunts drive the metropolitan authorities at last, unless stringent measures are resorted to in time to stop their insatiate cravings. Already a suburban resident may find himself borne along the line through the precise point in space where his second floor windows were formerly situated; and behold in the place occupied by the ticket collector the identical spot of his once cosy fireside, now vanished into vacancy with the other appendages of his demolished dwelling. A few years

more and an aged man may perhaps be seen, gazing retrospectively on the elevation of a railway signal post, and whilst pointing out the top of a pole to a bystander may bewilder him with the doleful exclamation of "There, sir! *That*, sir, was the identical spot where I was born!" or indicating an altitude of twenty feet in the air, ejaculate—"For fifteen years, sir, I took my dinner in exactly that position."

At some uncertain hour, between mid-day and sunset, when a growing attrition of the coats of the stomach is producing an intensely susceptible condition of the whole human frame, we have frequently found our walking-stick, loosely poised in the hand, assume all the occult properties of the divining-rod, and indicate the whereabouts of that particular kind of treasure of which we are in search. This Rhabdomancy of the roadway is not, however, of that particular kind which points out streams beneath the surface, or minerals down in the depths of the thoroughfares. It has a purely gastronomic turn, inclining towards dining rather than digging, and to meals rather than to metals. Thus, it is not to the rich vein of gold, but to the juicy section of a fine leg of mutton, in prime cut—not to the silvery lode of a hidden mine, but to the silver side of a round of beef, that it may be mine to hide, towards which our trusty staff will point the way. Wonderful are the results of this phase of the penetrative power which all the

dabblers in the mystic art, from Zoroaster to Zadkiel, have declared to be inherent in a certain kind of wood, brought into proximity with a certain place, and held in a certain manner. Thus have we divined the abiding-place of those gastronomic gnomes and culinary kobolds that, with the celerity of sylphs, and the constitution of salamanders, are at work all day beneath the level of the pavement, preparing viands for the food-seeking passengers above it. Thus have we been lured by the instinctive propensity of our malacca cane into those resplendent refectories and those satisfactory saloons where a hungry man, going about seeking what he may devour, finds the appetite that is within him approvingly appeased. Any knowledge, however acquired—and how grievously tormenting in this respect are some of the lessons we are compelled to take, and to pay so dearly for, of that schoolmaster of life, old Experience—any knowledge, we re-affirm, of those places to which one may go in the inquisitive mood, and emerge from in the preter-pluperfect condition of sumptuous satisfaction, may be considered the most valuable information that a man can acquire. We look upon a well regulated dining-room as the most important of social institutions to encourage and maintain; and when a victorious general first plants his foot in a foreign country, and the British flag upon the native citadel, the first thing he

ought to do, to subjugate the inhabitants effectually, and secure them from all murmurs of dissension, should be to diffuse amongst them the blessings of boiled beef, distributed from establishments that would at once minister to their immediate wants and secure their digestive organs from all possible insurrection.

Having these views—from which, by the way, many plates have been taken, from time to time—it is with peculiar feelings of interest that we observe an absolute eruption of dining-rooms has broken out in different parts of town. The metropolis—yea, we may appropriately call it the hot metropolis—has been lately positively reeking with steaming dishes and smoking platters. The great bell of St. Paul's has become one gigantic dinner-bell—a bell that, with its iron tongue of time, might, in American phraseology, lick all creation. Open yet around us, ye portals of pleasant promise! Back on your east and west hinges, ye doors of mighty kingdoms of cookery, where a new dynasty of dining princes shall rule the roast! Gape wider yet, ye narrow courts that lead from brisk and busy thoroughfares to regions of diurnal bliss! Grow greater yet, each avenue where what we have in you is so greatly prized! London has need of every one, and in the capacious stomach of its people there is room enough for all that ye can furnish!

## CHAPTER VII.

## OF DINERS ABROAD.

“He who goeth out of his own country must make up his mind to behold strange things, the like whereof have not entered into his imagination. The constant presentment of new sights and new images may at first prove distasteful, but custom—the tutor of the eye—soon maketh that agreeable to the palate which at the onset was like to have proved but a rebellious acquaintance.”—*Bacon*.

THE first thing that invariably perplexes a traveller abroad, when planting his foot upon a foreign shore, is that fulfilment of his wishes which he has been so ardently desiring; he is dubious of his dinner. It assumes a condition to which he has not been accustomed; and if he has only chosen for his fare a fowl, it is served up to him after the fashion of the murder of Hamlet Senior, in a manner strongly suggestive of fowl “strange and unnatural.” A foreign cook has a wonderful knack of dressing up dishes in masquerade, and it is no easy matter to guess the primitive elements of which it is composed. The *carte* is a gastronomical charade, peculiarly difficult of solution; and the horrid traditions of domestic animals being sacrilegiously spiced into a com-

mendable delicacy, will, in spite of one's better judgment, interfere with the perfect enjoyment of a continental repast. But as we have got a story to tell illustrative of one of the eccentric modes of dining abroad, we will in this chapter abandon the didactic for the narrative, and furnish the reader with material for his mental as well as bodily digestion. To begin:—

In these days of universally disseminated French literature, everybody has heard of the illustrious Alexandre Dumas, and how, on the occasion of the memorable Spanish marriages, he journeyed to Madrid as the official historian of the events he came to witness. Everybody knows, too, the reputation acquired by the voluminous novelist, who is popularly presumed to write six novels a day, with a pen in each hand, and four amanuenses continually around him, each receiving a distinct dictation from his lips. But everybody may not know the way in which he dined abroad the day after his arrival in Spain, and so we may at once, without further preamble, proceed to enlighten them on this hitherto mysterious point.

Imagine, then, Dumas, the morning after he entered Madrid, rambling forth into the country around, leaving his carriage at an inn on the road, to enjoy the delights of a solitary stroll. Behold him rapt in the busy realms of romance, his mind busy in the construction of complicated plots and,

his thoughts engrossed by the dilemma into which he was about to plunge his chief character. Thus occupied, he very naturally loses his way, and awakens from his day-dreams to find he has got entangled in the mazes of a gloomy wood, with the shadows of twilight deepening around him. He has left word for his attendants to follow, and he now shouts for their aid, but in vain; nothing overtakes him but night, and this he has the prospect of passing, dinnerless and supperless, in the midst of a tangled thicket. Now, though this is an interesting situation for a novelist to place his hero in, it is by no means a very agreeable position in reality for the novelist himself; and as he gazed around, doubtful of his own safety, he suddenly saw some figures advance from an opening in the trees, which did not contribute to reassure him.

“Bah!” cried Dumas, slapping his breast to arouse the dormant courage within, “there are no robbers in this part of Spain.”

But unfortunately, at this crisis, something startlingly cold touched his ear; it was the shining barrel of a veritable carbine. Dumas jumped round, and found himself surrounded by some half-dozen ill-looking ruffians, all armed to the teeth, and severally directing their threatening muzzles at his head, which, at that moment the great Alexandre felt painfully insecure.



The chief of the gang advanced quietly, observing, with a graceful salute, "You will excuse me, Signor, but will you have the kindness to follow us?"

"How, if I refuse?" sternly inquired Dumas, with a melodramatic flourish of his cigar-case, which he made to look as much like a pocket-pistol as possible.

"In that case," returned the bandit, "M. Dumas will acknowledge that he places a smaller value on his head and its contents than we do."

The author smiled approvingly at the implied compliment, and as he felt his vanity flattered by a recognition so singular, he subdued the high tone of his first excitement into a quiet note of interrogation, "Who are you?"

"My name, Signor, is Luigi Vampa, who, thanks to the indiscreet revelations you have thought fit to make concerning me in your justly celebrated romance of 'Monte Christo,' has been forced to leave Italy and commence practice here in company with the gallant gentlemen to whom I have now the honour to present you."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Alexandre. "And what may be your pleasure with me?"

"Business, Signor! You will, perhaps, be good enough to follow?"

Finding resistance was useless, and perhaps desirous of seeing the end of an adventure so

curiously commenced, Dumas obeyed. After a rapid march of about a quarter of an hour, the banditti arrived, with their prisoner, at a sort of cave situated in a dense part of the forest, and conducting him into a small cell scantily furnished, and apparently cut out of the rock, they left him to his meditations. It was late, and Dumas having had nothing since breakfast, felt the appetite of a wolf stir within him. He was getting positively voracious; so, shouting loudly, to make his hunger known, Vampa himself made his appearance.

“What does the Signor do us the honour of requiring?”

“Dinner!”

“The Signor will, perhaps, examine our bill of fare, and, above all, our prices.” And as the brigand politely placed the paper on the table, Dumas read as follows:—

Bread . . . . .	Five Pages.
Soup à la <i>Mulligatawny</i> . . . . .	Ten Pages.
Roast Fowl . . . . .	One Sheet.
Ditto <i>aux truffes</i> . . . . .	Two Sheets.
Vin Ordinaire . . . . .	Half-Sheet.
Crème à la Portugese . . . . .	Ditto.
Burgundy, per bottle . . . . .	Three Sheets.
Dessert . . . . .	Twenty Pages.
Cigars . . . . .	Ten Pages.
Waiter . . . . .	Five Pages.

“Come,” said M. Alexandre, “it is only one

volume for a dinner. Let it be got ready at once."

"The Signor must know that we give no credit; and as our dishes are perfectly fresh, so we expect to be paid in original matter. The Signor will not deceive us in this point."

"Agreed," said Dumas. "And now, what o'clock is it?"

"Eight, Signor."

"Then, order my dinner to be ready at half-past ten precisely."

At eleven o'clock Dumas sat down to a superb banquet magnificently served, comprising the whole of the articles enumerated in the bill of fare. Just as he had finished, Luigi Vampa made his appearance with some more cigars and a tempting bottle of curiously pale cognac.

"Well," laughed Dumas, struck by the oddity of the whim, "now you have got my romance, what are you going to do with it?"

"Signor," replied the brigand, "I shall instantly cause it to be translated into Spanish and published in my paper, the *Heraldo*, of which I have long been the proprietor. Excuse the little project to which we have had recourse; it was our only chance. You gain ten thousand reals, and I ten thousand new subscribers, for which sum," continued the pretended brigand, taking it from his pocket-book, "I shall trouble you for a receipt."

Thus terminated the most singular literary dinner on record ; and the next day the *Heraldo* announced, in all the confidence of large type, a forthcoming romance, entitled “ ‘The Kings of Leon,’ by Signor Alexandre Dumas.”

One more little historiette for the sake of the moral attached, and we have done.

A few years ago, a London bachelor friend of ours, whom we may call John Smith for the sake of the name's novelty, took a trip to Paris for a month, and, perplexed by the mysteries of continental cookery, never enjoyed a dinner the whole time. One fine morning, prior to his intended departure for England, he was strolling along the Champs Elysées, when he encountered M. Bonville, a jolly French naval captain, with whom he had got tolerably intimate during his stay.

“Hollo!” cried the captain, “how are you, my dear fellow? I am just off for Versailles.”

“Indeed! Well, I wish you a pleasant journey.”

“What are *you* going to do?”

“Dine, somewhere or other ; but as yet I have not made up my mind where.”

“Come on, and dine with me.”

“Impossible. I leave for London in the morning.”

“That's the very reason, then, you should. Besides, I'll give you a treat.”

“Well, since you insist. Let me see, it is now two o’clock, and I’m as hungry as a hunter. Provided your dinner is immediate, I’ll join you.”

“Agreed!” And a post-chaise being procured, our London bachelor soon found himself seated by the side of the French captain, galloping towards Versailles as fast as four horses could carry them.

“Now, then, for the dinner,” thought he. But the chaise went through the place without stopping.

“Hallo! Bonville, we are leaving Versailles behind us,” exclaimed the bewildered John Smith.

“So we are indeed! But it’s all right.”

“Why, where the deuce are you going to? I want my dinner.”

“Don’t disturb yourself, my dear fellow; it’s all right, I tell you.”

“You wouldn’t say so if you had my appetite for a moment.”

“Well, the fact is we are going on to Rouen, to see one of my relations.”

“So far as that? You are joking? Why, man, I’m nearly starving.”

“Pooh! it won’t make much difference. It is but ten leagues.”

“Ten centuries! I might as well fast for a twelvemonth.

“Never mind! Your appetite will be all the better when we arrive.”

“ Upon my word, you are the coolest and most unscrupulous ——.”

“ And you the most impatient and unreasonable ——.”

“ I wish to goodness I was in a City chop-house at this moment.”

“ Now do, my dear friend, be quiet, and don't get in a passion. It will only increase your hunger.”

Finding remonstrances of no avail, John Smith gave up the discussion, and surrendered himself to his fate, internally cursing the unlucky moment when he first met Bonville. Hours passed away, and they at last entered Rouen. The Captain stepped out, and called upon Smith to follow, who was bewildered at finding himself in the yard of an inn, instead of at the house of the relation, as he had expected.

“ Why, where the deuce are we now ?”

“ At an inn, to be sure.”

“ And what do you mean to do here ?”

“ Dine, to be sure. I'm tolerably peckish. How do you feel ?”

“ Ravenous ! If a little child came across my path now I would not answer for the consequences. You have nearly made me a cannibal.”

“ Then you may thank me for casting anchor here ; and the sooner we begin dinner the better.”

“ Decidedly. But in the first place tell me ——.”

“ Nothing ; at least, not till we have dined.”

The travellers now sat down to a table plentifully served, and got rid of their appetites with all possible expedition. When the repast was over, the horses were ordered forth, and the captain again rose to depart.

“ Well, now I suppose,” cried Smith, “ we really are going back.”

“ Nothing of the kind. We have had an excellent dinner, and we can now go on to Havre.”

“ Havre! Why I intended to be in London to-morrow.”

“ So you can. It will be all in your road ; you can go thence by the packet to Southampton.”

“ True : I forgot that. And I can send orders to Paris to forward my luggage direct home to Piccadilly.”

“ Of course you can. Do it now.”

It was done. Smith grew contented, and the travellers resumed their journey. In a short time the sea-port was reached, and Bonville drew the attention of his companion to the wharves and quays of the busy scene of commerce, now beheld under the exciting aspect of night.

“ Come,” said he, “ you would not like it to be said that you ever came to a sea-port without going over a vessel.”

“ Certainly not ! I should desire nothing better,” returned Smith, now exhilarated by the novelty of all around him.

“Follow me then. You can see my own vessel; she is now getting ready for her voyage, and you will have a very good idea of life on board.”

A boat was waiting belonging to the captain, and in a few minutes they reached the ship. When they were on board the captain requested the first lieutenant to show his friend the vessel, and explain the use of everything.

“Go, my dear fellow,” added Bonville, “and I am sure you will admire the stowage of the ship and the appearance of the men.”

John Smith stuck to the first lieutenant, descended with him between decks, expressed his admiration and astonishment at everything, and, in fact, was in the height of his glory, when the voice of his friend—pitched in an unusually loud tone—struck his ear, followed immediately by the clanging of chains and other strange noises.

“What’s the matter on deck?” asked the visitor of his cicerone.

“Nothing,” replied the officer; “we are only weighing anchor.”

“Good gracious! And what will become of me?”

“*You!* Why I thought you came expressly for the voyage.”

“Zounds and the deuce! I don’t want a voyage round the world!”

He rushed frantically to the captain and seized his arm furiously.



“Here, put me ashore—I insist on it—I am expected, I tell you, in Piccadilly to morrow.”

“Piccadilly, pooh! we *are* going round the world!”

“Going round the world! Do you want to kill me?”

“Pshaw! think of the different people and countries you will see; the new discoveries we shall make, and the book of wonders you will publish on your return.”

“Confound your wonders, I would rather see them all in the British Museum. Besides, I never get out to sea without being dreadfully unwell. I shall never forget the dinner you have given me.”

“That’s why I am now anxious to give you plenty of time to digest it.”

We need not prolong our recital of the colloquy that ensued. The luckless Londoner was at last compelled to show a stout heart against what he called his misfortune of being asked out to dine; and after many perils by sea and land, needless to be here chronicled, he returned safely to his native shore, after an absence of five years.

“Thank heaven!” exclaimed he, as he stepped on shore; “I am in dear London once again, and if ever I have another dinner abroad——”

“What, haven’t you digested that old one yet?”

said the captain; "you must own I have given you time and exercise sufficient, for we have had a delightful voyage."

"Delightful! I have been nearly drowned, burned, tatoed, scalped, impaled, roasted, toasted, chewed, devoured, and digested, and all this in consequence of your very pressing invitation to dinner."

From this time John Smith rigidly took his chop in the City.

*Moral.* Beware, when dining abroad, of an invitation to take "pot-luck" with a friend."



## CHAPTER VIII.

## OF AFTER DINNER.

“I crown thee king of intimate delights,  
Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,  
And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours  
Of long, uninterrupted evening know.”—*The Task*.

OF all the hours which make up the grand aggregate of a pleasant day, the hour after dinner is the most sociable, the most supremely happy, and the most serenely blest. If the dinner-table has formed the centre of a large social system, round which a host of pleasant, smiling faces are seen shining through the infinity of tabular space, how delicious is this period that seals the friendly compact, and gives full play to the chatty intercourse of the dined! How the portly decanters lend a mellow tone to the conversation, whilst the gurgling outpouring of their contents into the beaded glasses serves as a rosy symbol of the cheerful flow of fancy that then runs on unchecked! What additional zest is imparted to the anecdote that sixty minutes before might have been told unheeded; and how sparkling

is the pun fired across the dessert, that would have lost its rewarding laugh had the point been hazarded at an earlier time. The great epoch of the day is over; there is a feeling of quiet satisfaction experienced which leaves the mind equally prone to enjoy a contemplative reverie, or ripe for the interchange of sprightly chat and pleasurable reminiscences. It is astonishing what stores of latent benevolence are unlocked in the heart—what vast fields of philanthropy are opened to the eye; the fingers entwined round the cheering glass would be as readily held forth to grasp the extended digits of all mankind, and the punster's quibble of the vinous source of "shaking hands" has thus a truthful interpretation. We feel for the time being not only isolated from the intrusive cares of this world, but positively thrown into a new state of existence which has a sublimated pleasure of its own. We have no anxiety before us. *We have dined.*

There is one portion of time in which we are ever interested. It is that horary isthmus which divides day from night; that charming crucible in which the last golden minutes of sunset are dissolved; that daily link between the real and the imaginary, the visible and the invisible, to which we have given the appellation of "twilight." How delightful it is to consecrate this incertitude of light to the company of an old friend whom we have not met for years, and with whom, as the

autumnal gloaming gradually subsides, we find ourselves obliviously chatting on after dinner about old loves and old acquaintances, groping for mysterious wine-glasses in the dark, and hunting after runaway walnuts. There is a strong congeniality in the associations of the time that we discover in no other division of the day; and it has been, in consequence, the trysting hour for hearts warmed by love and friendship from time immemorial. But prose is inadequate to the task of description; let us in verse throw a few scattered images together that rise up vividly before us at the mere mention of the words—" *After Dinner.*"

Now's the time to work the spell,  
 Heart-linked spirits know so well.  
 Crack the joke and tell the story,  
 Whilst the fire burns bright before ye.  
 Puns that draw like corkscrews after,  
 From portly words the gurgling laughter.  
 Let the cheerful bottle pass,  
 Mix the care-defying glass,  
 But be still the pledge that's shown,  
 Such as Temperance may own.  
 Let the wreaths of Raleigh's weed  
     Float around unfurrowed brow,  
 Choice Havannah, we have need  
     Of thy fragrant incense now.  
 Schoolboy pranks and recollections  
     Of some furtive pleasures gone.  
 Mingle with the sad reflections,  
     That have dulled and changed the tone.  
 Friendship's halo shines around us,  
     Weaving joys of rainbow hue,  
 Making men as youth once found us,  
     Fond in love—to friendship true.

War unequal we but wage,  
When from care we weapons borrow,  
Peace proclaim and here engage  
To make—and *keep*—a truce with sorrow.  
Roasted chesnuts! *They* are coming  
Pleasant in the firelight gloaming.

But let us individualise. Look at the solitary bachelor after dinner, who, seated in his cosy arm-chair, tilts it down to a comfortable angle with the gleaming blaze before him, and listening to the careless clicking of the embers through the dim firelight, crowns the termination of the day's toil with a determination to thoroughly enjoy the evening. Wavering in a belief that Tomkins may drop in for a social hand at cribbage or a rival bout at chess, and finish the last of the hamper of Guinness begun by him when they last met—hardly a week bygone—he postponeth the time of exit from his room one hour beyond the time of opening the playhouse doors. But lo! Tomkins cometh not, and at last he wanders forth, finally plunging into some cheerful-looking vista where the talismanic inscription of "Half price has commenced," acteth upon him like a spell, and quiets his restlessness by a location in the congenial pit. What though the domestic revelation in the last act that startles the rest of the audience into vehement plaudits, is to him a thrice told tale? What, though the jokes in the succeeding farce are to him familiarities that have

bred contempt—that the heart-breaking sorrow of the young lady in book muslin is to him shorn of its poignant sympathy—that the lover who relieves her anxiety, by turning up exactly at the right moment, is no longer unexpected—that the revenge of the hard-hearted uncle, which so overwhelms his fellow pittites with acute anguish, has been to him malice aforethought?—he welcomes his favourites as heartily as ever, and forgets the anxieties of the outer world in the contemplation of the scene by which he is surrounded.

After dinner is peculiarly the time for making speeches. It is then that the stereotyped phrases, cast in the mould of everyday usage, are most in request. It is then that “the proudest moment of existence” is discovered, and the “heirloom to succeeding generations” made known. The familiar toasts and sentiments, handed down to posterity by the diners of the last century, stand sadly in need of renovation, and it is melancholy to reflect that the proposal of a health should be so generally followed by the severe attack of coughing and stammering that seizes the orator when returning thanks “for the honour that has been done him.” The occasion of a birthday, a christening, a wedding, or any other of the social anniversaries that prove necessarily provocative of a dinner on their recurrence, gives rise to some

fearful inflictions of this nature, which, but for the aid usually afforded by a snuff-box, or a friendly ejaculation of "hear, hear," would speedily carry off the speaker from the party. The safest plan at a political dinner is to trust more to the effect of the vinous influence upon the auditors, than the exact tendency of the speech to be delivered, and we have known an audience roused to the wildest pitch of enthusiasm by an oration that was made up, like Cassio's remembrance, "of a mass of things, but nothing distinctly." No one appreciated the value of this principle better than Fitz Flamwell, Esq., the famous after-dinner orator, who, from the humble condition of a tavern expounder of political leaders in the newspapers, rose to the dignity of a leader himself—nay, advanced to the honoured posts of perpetual chairman to the "*United Britons of Bermondsey*," and honorary member to the "*Upset-Everything-and-don't-Care-a-Button-for-Anybody-but-Ourselves Society*." Who that was present can ever forget the magnificent effect produced by Flamwell's fluent eloquence at the last anniversary dinner of this powerful association? The members had manifested their devotion to the dinner set before them by a display of physical force truly characteristic of the society, and after the thunderous clatter of the knives and forks had finally subsided, the



wine was placed upon the table and the toasts began. Mild and unobtrusive were the speeches of the evening, compared with the one that followed from the lips of the orator of the night. He had reserved his strength, according to invariable custom, until the wine had ascended from the decanters into the heads of those who sat before them, and then rising from his seat, amid the tributary applause of the assembly and the rapid concussion of the stewards' wands, he shone the acknowledged star of the festival in the subjoined blaze of eloquence :—

“ It is with feelings of the most overwhelming description that I now rise to address an auditory of the resplendent respectability and numerical intelligence that I behold gathered at this moment around me, and still more when I reflect upon the noble cause that has so attracted them. The nation has now arrived at a crisis when the emancipating voice of the demagogue, stirred by the impulse of the moment, and actuated by the tocsin of truth, must be aroused to stem the torrent of numismatic principles that, without reference to the consolidated reasoning of our antagonistic forefathers threaten, in one volcanic ebullition of unintelligible formation, to plunge the face of the whole world into the arena of maritime convulsion. I do not wish to be an alarmist, but when I behold the prophetic voice of the next generation sound-

ing in my ears a vision of futurity, and feel that the happiness of a great country is revolving upon a pivot of oscillating tendency, I *do* call upon those I see around me to assist in the dissemination of those oblivious opinions that should rise upon the lips of every Briton, and rouse the lion heart of England into throbs of indignation throughout the length and breadth of the land. At a period when the arts are attacked by a systematic projection of superannuated forms—when the sciences are on the brink of premeditated prosecution, and when even our manufactures—those manufactures that have been for a thousand centuries the pride and glory of the civilized universe—are marked ruthlessly out for immediate development—I cannot consent to the pacific views of those who renounce the impossibility of the one to obtain the impracticability of the other. No! The promulgation of the words that have gone forth this day from this meeting will for ever stop the insensate apathy of that man who would quietly walk about in a wheelbarrow and juggle with the sunbeams at a time when the Thames was exposed at any moment to the incendiarism of a reckless adventurer. Is it wise? Is it reasonable? Is it prudent in us to throw open the great gates of our liberty to the admission of a reckless horde whose only aim would be the subversion of our most cherished attributes? The stentorian speaking-trumpet of our inmost heart

thunders forth an imperative negative. Again I reiterate the crisis is at hand, and Britons must be prepared for the issue. With this I beg to propose health to the chairman, happiness to the visitors, and prosperity to the honorable members of the 'Upset-everything-and-don't-care-a-button-for-any-body-but-ourselves Association.' ”

The speaker sat down amidst the most tumultuous cheering that ever resounded through the famous Barn of Highbury ; and the anxious listeners, who had become thoroughly bewildered by the old port and the substance of a speech so far beyond their comprehension, went away with an indelible impression that of all orators they had ever heard, Mr. Flamwell surpassed them all for well-rounded periods conveyed in a matchless torrent of eloquence.

It may be worth while, in the manufacturing of speeches, at a certain period of the evening, to borrow a hint from the famous device of our democratic Demosthenes, and after dinner try the effect of a similar oration. Of its general practicability there can be no doubt, but its perfect success must depend upon the sobriety of the guests and the condition of the decanters.

## CHAPTER IX.



## SOMETHING ABOUT SUPPERS.

“Small cheer with hearty welcome makes a feast.”

*Shakspeare.*

A SUPPER may fairly be considered as a sequel to a dinner—a necessary appendage, without which the first would have been evidently incomplete, and manifestly indigestible. It affords the opportunity for reviving an agreeable memory of the prior repast, and furnishes besides a venial excuse for one of those chatty, companionable meetings that make us occasionally neglectful of the proverbial method of obtaining health, wealth, and wisdom. The nocturnal meal may be said to have two distinct characteristics, appertaining, however, more to the eater than the things eaten. We would classify the two kinds thus: *Supper in our slippers—Supper in our boots.* The first breathes exclusively of the comforts of home, the preliminary prologue to nightcaps, woollen and spirituous, and the harbinger of quiet domestic enjoyment. The second is the natural concomitant of late hours, latchkeys, and London loiterings, leading

to the tempting allurements of *Comus*—"midnight song and revelry." The latter is the more germane to our purpose of the two. Not but what we have an intense respect for the man who revels in his slippers. He invests himself with the very symbols of ease and repose; and when he plants them confidentially on his family hearthrug he can readily enshroud himself from the obtruding annoyances of the day. But the boots have attended him to his dinner; have patiently awaited under the table the gradual evaporation of the viands above; and therefore, having witnessed the demolition of one meal, it is but fitting that they accompany the demolisher of the next.

We left the bachelor after dinner, on his way to the theatre, ripe for the enjoyment of dramatic illusion, and eager for the prescribed period when playhouse doors open, and the gates of enchantment are unbarred, to give admission to the realms of imagination. You recollect how delightful that squeeze into the pit was, and how exciting was the progress through the long avenue leading down to the orchestra, somewhere in the vicinity of which you ultimately gained a seat, and got on terms of great intimacy with the big drum? And then, do you not remember well how you were certain to find the same old gentleman, with the brown wig and carefully cherished cane, seated in the same invariable place in the third row? and

how you wondered if he always paid for admission like yourself, and took his seat by long prescription; or if he knew somebody in authority there, who could let him into the theatre before the doors were opened, and so cause him to be the sole witness of the lighting up of the chandeliers round the boxes, and the tumultuous rush over the



gallery benches? And was it not agreeable to find that in very close proximity was Jack Hopkins, your old schoolfellow, who evinced his delight at the unexpected meeting by giving your hand such a hearty grasp that the fingers tingled for half-an-hour afterwards; and then, by means of telegraphic signals, you indicated the future pro-

bability of enjoying a cigar and a glass of brandy-and-water together at some favourite place of resort, and walking-sticks became semaphores for other parts of the house, until on egress you found that you had become one of a merry circle, which, after the performances had concluded, enclosed chops and steaks, curiously intermingled with divers spirituous compounds? All this, and much more than need be here set down, is at once suggested by the contemplation of a bachelor after dinner, who, with the latchkey in his pocket, and a purse to correspond, goes at full price to the play, and determines upon making what the "fast" gentry call "a night of it."

But the supper that follows—the savoury repast to which the previous enjoyment has given additional zest—what can be a more congenial conclusion to an evening thus spent? Chops and steaks become endowed with hitherto unperceived beauties, and a glass of stout has a relish until then unknown. Should the repast be taken where minstrelsy is supposed to attract custom and aid digestion, the chaotic blending of the orders to the waiter with the exertions of the engaged professionals will result in a confusion of ideas most bewildering to the uninitiated, and which leaves you in a perplexed condition as to whether you might not have requested a chop off "the Monks of Old," and a plate of mashed "Annie Lawries."

We have reason to believe that this atmosphere of bewilderment exerts a serious influence over the mental faculties of the waiter who takes the money as you go out. Despising Cocker, and the ordinary modes of keeping accounts, he has a simple method of calculation peculiar to himself, which saves a world of trouble. He counts in this way, always making everything *five and tenpence*, with a peculiar emphasis that italics will but faintly convey:—

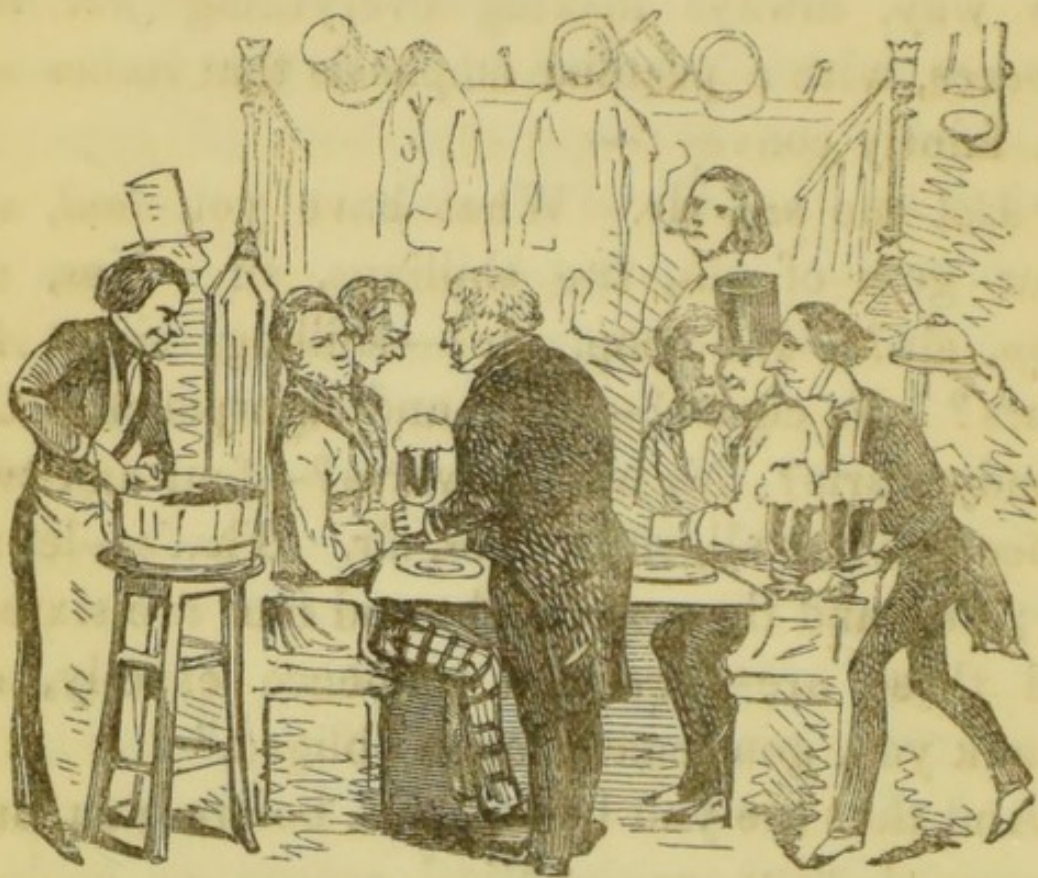
“Let me *see*, sir. What have you *had*, sir? Four goes of gin, *two* shillings, sir. Yes, sir. *Chop*, sir? *No* chop, sir?—shilling, sir. *Any* cigars? *No* cigars?—three and eightpence. *One* brandy warm? *No* brandy warm?—four and twopence. That all, sir? Yes, sir. That’s—let me see; two and three are eight and four are sixteen, and three are—*five* and tenpence exactly, sir. Thank you, gentlemen, much obliged.”

And thus are you bowed out, before you have recovered your arithmetical reason or coolness sufficient to inquire what becomes of the change out of the three half crowns.

The return home is a severe effort of self-denial. It requires a strong resolution to forego the temptation of one more glass at parting; but the resolution is made, and the exit of the bachelor—who has supped—follows. One dreadful contingency may yet remain. The door of the



domicile is reached, and pressing the latchkey inwards and upwards, the bachelor enters. The household is quiet, and all is darkness. You fumble for the congreve-box ; but how horrible it is to find that *one* solitary lucifer alone remains. What words can express the unspeakable anguish of that moment—the torture of that discovery?



A fresh source of perplexity arises. Which—*which* is the right end? Your fine sense of touch at last securely puts you in possession of the unphosphorised extremity. Premature haste or impetuosity of friction would now be fatal. It is a crisis for cool judgment and consideration alone. With a spasmodic effort you impart the desired amount of attrition, and then a flickering blueish-

yellow flame starts up in derisive mockery of your hopes, and your last lucifer goes out! You endeavour to explore the more than Cimmerian darkness for the bed, and from the effect of the darkness and the potations imbibed, get mistaken in the situation of everything. You thrust your new hat into the fireplace, believing it to be a chair, and go to bed upon the window-ledge, carefully tucked up in the window curtains, wondering why everything seems so uncommonly short. Happy, oh, bachelor of the booted supper! thrice happy art thou, if no horrible nightmare rob thee of thy rest and fill thy mind with fearful images. When you shall begin to have misgivings of the final bowl of punch, and form moral designs for futurity whilst through the night the brain is beating, like the pendulum of a Dutch clock.

And this induces us to close the present chapter with some metaphysical reflections. There is a certain mode of regarding human nature, which may be distinctively described as studying it upon principles of the Artesian philosophy. The Artesian philosophy consists in boring through the upper stratum of human motives, and reaching the lowermost spring, from which rises up the true fount of action. On this principle, when a man suddenly exhibits a querulous mood, or goes into an explosive passion, or developes, in some way or other, an eccentric departure from equanimity and

courtesy and good taste, we dig deep into the cause, and find it in a lost brace-button, a tight-fitting boot, or an undue preponderance of bile in his system, which have no more to do with the natural temper of the man proper than the cut of his tailor's coat, or the colour of his barber's hair. We know that a crumb of cork insidiously swallowed in the froth of a goblet of Guinness's stout, or gulped down in a glass of pale ale, will so incontinently derange the whole human economy, so affect the working of those little inner wheels that make up the grand system of our internal machinery, that the unconscious swallower may go straightway and have evil thoughts and dire misgivings about the harmlessness of terminating his own or anybody else's existence; yet, were his abdominal regions not thus visited by such an insurgent item, not thus turbulently set on to rebellion by such a ferocious fragment, and such a suggestively atrocious atom, would his mind remain smooth and unrippled by discordant ideas, and he might pass through life with a reputation for meeting his tax-collector with an even temper and an unruffled disposition, that would win from his biographer whole pages of eulogy. Is it not humiliating to reflect that the crudity of a cucumber, taken at an unseasonable hour, or the ponderosity of a Welsh rare-bit that shall refuse to assimilate itself to a new condition of existence,

might make the best of us turn misanthropes for the nonce, and heartily hate our fellow-creatures? Does it not militate sometimes against that belief in man's responsibility, upon which we construct the grand edifice of social ethics, to remember that our innate sense of what is truly correct and proper might be deflected and overthrown by such an insignificant thing in the scale of creation as an insufficiently cooked vegetable, and our philosophy become perplexed by a hard-boiled potatoe? When a fashionable culprit pleads at a police-court, in extenuation of his *post-prandial* offences, that he had taken "a little too much," we are by no means certain that the alcoholic indulgence is, after all, the real cause of his delinquency, so much as the lobster-salad that had, by some curious and well-understood, though imperfectly explained, agency on the system, impelled the defendant's legs to travel unsociably together on their road home, and the refractory arms to resent imaginary indignities from inoffensive passengers and policemen. It is by this light that we read, not only the history of the world, but the papers that photograph in print the floating images of to-day, to furnish food for the historian of to-morrow. The man well-buttoned, comfortably-booted, and blessed with an unimpaired digestion, was the hero of the past, and is of the present, and always will be the great man

of the future ; whilst he who hath been ill-affected in one or other of these conditions, has gone to the bad, and to-day and to-morrow, and through all time, will have sins to answer for, that society will refuse to cancel or condone.

“Love,” says the poet, “rules the camp, the court, the grove.” It does nothing of the kind ; it is a typographical error that has escaped the correction of the press, and the notice of the commentators of the poet. It should have been the liver which rules not only these three portions into which the world has been poetically cut up, but which even ruled the poet when he wrote the lines. A disturbed state of the gastric juices would have been sufficient to have deprived us of the finest poem that ever was penned. Our great national dramatist might have had his world-wide reputation utterly blotted out of existence by a derangement of that mysterious organ, which lies, as anatomists tell us, in the right hypochondrium, directly beneath the diaphragm. We can tell by reading the debates the exact condition of every liver present in the two Houses of Parliament. We know by the police reports in the morning how every magistrate finds that important function going on within him, and about him, and can by this daily diagnosis ascertain the healthy or unhealthy condition of every member of metropolitan society mentioned in newspaper

columns, with a precision to which the Registrar-general may hope to attain in vain. Hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, would be inevitably engendered during speeches made by bilious orators with a bad de-liver-y. It was with this conviction that the following was written by one who felt hypochondriacal, and knew the reason why:—

LINES TO MY LIVER,

WRITTEN IN A MOMENT OF DEEP DESPONDENCY.

I.

Remote, inactive, dilatory, slow—

A line evoking Goldsmith's recollection—

Behold my liver, and the world will know

From this broad hint whence comes my deep dejection.

II.

Source of all gloomy thoughts, all direful deeds,

All moping by the melancholy river,

Where he who plunging, strangled by the weeds,

Oft curses Fate, when he should blame his liver!

III.

Mysterious morsel of the human frame,

Recondite region of the rueful blues,

Tremendous tissue, from whose dark cells came

Those rays, far-stretching, of cerulean hues!

IV.

Why shouldst thy gloomy veil spread, far beyond,

A dark dim curtain o'er our future days, or

Make mortals shrink from pondering o'er a pond,

Or hesitate each morn to raise a razor?

V.

Vicarious viscus, that we know, yet see not,

Hepatic horror that we would forget,

Enlarging woes that be, and those that be not

Inventing, as the woes to greet us yet.

## VI

To thy shortcomings may be traced the gloom  
 That makes us feel by all the world deserted  
 To thine inaction may be traced the doom,  
 Which if thou actedst right would be averted.

## VII.

Lugubrious liver ! is proud man to be  
 The slave of thy remorseless eccentricity ?  
 Must still the sky be hung in black for thee,  
 Insensate increment of infelicity ?

## VIII.

No, think it not—thou Gorgon-like conjunction,  
 Stone-deadening everything on which we look,  
 Locking up every wholesome human function,  
 Leaving the keys with publican or cook !

## IX.

One is not going to be so besotted  
 As now to think he's wronged, and robbed beside,  
 And ought to sever his poor bared carotid,  
 Because there's something wrong with his inside.

## X.

Man's wiser grown—and when he feels unhappy,  
 And life is tedious, he goes out of town ;  
 And there, if still a sad and wiser chap, he  
 At once will send, to cure him, Doctor Brown.

And therefore is it that change of scene, active exercise, and similar remedial processes, that aid to re-establish our vitality, should always be taken when the dinner and the supper fail to retain their wonted importance in our social system.

## CHAPTER X.

## DESULTORY DOTTINGS UPON DIET.

“The most honest gourmands are decidedly the English; they talk of the subject with profound gusto, and may be said to have studied the philosophy of good eating more deeply than any nation in Europe.”—*Lacon*.



LAYING the novelist's game of leapfrog with Time and going clean over the old gentleman's head, forelock, scythe, and all, we alight upon a remote period, which has ever been a fertile source of perplexity and doubt amongst those who are given to the study of antiquarian lore. What a fearful picture of gloomy ignorance must the world have presented prior to the introduction of knives and forks; what a frightfully barbarous condition of society must that have been before the invention of the tablecloth. And then the gradual experiments on the viands themselves. Would that we could enshrine in our pages the name of him who first discovered mutton chops; would that we could immortalise,



for the benefit of posterity, the original manufacturer of plum pudding! But, alas, for the diffusion of useful knowledge the source of our most favourite dishes is a mystery. The names of our best benefactors have perished in oblivion, and over the early history of dinners there hangs something very like a veil!

Easily can we imagine the diet of our primitive forefathers must have been—like themselves—exceedingly simple. They generally dined *al fresco*, and contentedly submitted themselves to their fate. It is evident they could never have sat down to a repast, for the most public bodies in those days were not blessed with joints. There was little merit in being a hermit when the dinner-table presented no fascinations to lure the appetite into indulgence; and an anchorite might well devote himself to abstinence, when there were no good things in the world for him to hanker after. The truth is, that these venerable gentlemen were so hard driven, that they had no chance of being overcharged with their fare; and, therefore, whilst their votaries believed in the necessity of their virtue, we can, with greater penetration, see that they were compelled to make a virtue of their necessity.

Contemplating these solitary figures, and looking at the great sum of their existence, people have fallen into the grievous error of mistaking the ex-

ample for the rule, and have wrongly calculated that low living must necessarily produce long life. That these denizens of the desert lived to an exceedingly green old age there is no doubt, but it would be truly asinine to believe that the length of their years arose from the shortness of their commons. It is certainly on record that St. Anthony became a centenarian on bread and water alone; and that, on similar frugal food, Arsenius and others attained to the enjoyment of 120 birth-days: but such longevity was far from originating in this brevity of diet. In those unsophisticated periods we may fairly presume that James the Hermit never received periodical visits from Jones the taxgatherer. There was a happy immunity from bills and bailiffs; the income-tax had yet to be invented; at the door of a hermitage there was no incessant din from a dun; and quarter-day came rolling merrily round without producing its modern result of short purses and long faces. No wonder, then, that with such enviable exemptions from the lot of recent humanity, the web of existence was, as ancient historians testify, spun out to such an interminable yarn.

When the science of eating was first elevated, therefore, to the dignity of one of the Fine Arts, we see at once that a wide step was taken in the civilization of the world. The history of Modern Europe is more connected with the cookery-book

than many people, in their innocence of the doctrine of affinities, would seem to imagine. We can see how the progress of philosophical investigation kept pace with the introduction of new dishes to the table, and how the light that gradually irradiated the dark ages emanated direct from the kitchen. It is no idle assumption to trace an intimate connection between the epoch of a successful culinary concoction and the era of a new discovery in science. Thus the use of curry was made known co-etaneously with the use of gunpowder; the same year gave pancakes and printing to an admiring world; the first idea of the steam-engine associates itself with the period when potatoes—they were then excellent boilers—first appeared in all their mealy majesty; and the daguerreotype and the electric telegraph were manifestly the noble results of our modern triumphs of cookery. Well may our learned societies commemorate by a dinner the obligations they are under to the monarchs of the *cuisine*, and the annual festival of the British Association for the Advancement, &c., becomes thus a hallowed shrine whereat it is the imperative duty of every true philosopher to sacrifice an appetite.

Taking this profound view of the subject, we are the more readily prepared to properly estimate the vast influence exercised by diet on the destiny of mankind. We can trace the chain of causation and effect to the last link, and know

how statesmen, warriors, poets, and philosophers have thriven into distinction. Nay, to such a power of acute perception has our constant scrutiny into the subject brought us, that, given a three-volume novel, we can ascertain from every page in what manner the writer dined during the time he was engaged upon it, or make inversely the dishes on his dinner-table serve as an index to his "Table of Contents." We have known many a fine sentiment spoiled by a little superfluous seasoning, and felt that many a passage tomahawked by critics has been brought about by something wrong in the soup. How often has the fate of a heroine depended on the ingredients of a hash! how frequently has a delightfully exciting entanglement of incidents been suggested by a stew! We have traced the mellowness of macaroni in a love story, and detected the predominance of salt fish in a tale of the sea; but whenever a villain, more atrocious than ordinary, came upon the scene, we found the evidence of unmistakable pork oozing forth at every line. The production of light literature demands a diet corresponding, and it is a fact beyond dispute that certain dishes are peculiarly provocative of that pleasant humour which so effectually eradicates wrinkles, and with the salt of wit takes out the stains of care. The present work, for instance, was exclusively written upon—— but stop, that is a secret which we intend confining to ourselves.

From what has been said, it is palpable, then, to even the meanest capacity, that meat—not manners—makes the man, and that when a reviewer wishes to cut up any work, he should do it with a knife and fork. When this great principle comes to be fully carried out, the publishers will be able to estimate at a glance the value and character of any manuscript by the butcher's bill which accompanies it. Beef and badinage, mutton and metaphysics, pork and politics, veal and verse, poultry and pamphlets, will henceforth form the allied powers of the republic of letters, and magazines will be fed by light articles from the nearest *table d'hôte*. It was not for nothing that Newgate Market was built close to Paternoster-row.

## CONCLUSION.



BEFORE we finally part company with the reader, it behoves us to bestow a Parthian glance on those who are rendered, by stern necessity, diners at home; and the opposite class, who are likewise imperatively called upon to be diners abroad. It would be no difficult task to extend our survey; but the mention of a few will prove sufficiently suggestive to explain our meaning. Let us begin — with charity—*at Home*.

There is the prisoner for debt—the hapless wight of Whitecross—the helpless guest at a table which is to him only too redolent of the Bench. What a mockery to a man thus situated is the ceremonious inquiry, “*Do you prefer the outside, Mr. Wiggins?*” or the equally polite hope that he will make himself “quite free” with the cruet-stand. To him the sunshine that gladdens the meads and plains

might be as monotonously unchanging as the laws of the Medes and Persians; for he only beholds it lighting up the cross-bars of his prison, or flinging athwart the dingy table-cloth spread out before him the dark shadow of a spiked railing, that reminds him more forcibly of being in durance. How



gladly would he accept, at any time anybody's invitation to "drop in and take pot-luck"—how willingly would he, if he could, dine *out*!

The pauper is another diner at home by necessity; for though to him the union is not strength, he has a firm belief that the knowledge he there

acquires is power. He knows that at a certain hour he will have the opportunity of recruiting his energies with a repast which, albeit of primitive composition, does not tax the pocket to defray. So he contenteth himself with the legal provision "in that case made and provided;" and should he at unseemly periods express a natural desire to "*pick a bit*," those who have the management of the oakum depôt will in general gratify his inclination.

The toll-keeper who presides at the turnstile on Waterloo Bridge is another diner at home not to be passed by with impunity. His temper must be sorely tried by the thoughtless passengers who hurry him from the calm enjoyment of his daily meal into a whirl of excitement about the collection of coppers. There are some reckless adventurers who are constantly exhibiting their love of change at this point by the presentation of half-crowns; and a humane mind, capable of appreciating the delights of a dinner undisturbed, can hardly contemplate without emotion the progressive increase of the crowd before the barrier that hinders the decrease of the chops before the fire. He who sympathises with his fellow-men will always take care to have his copper in readiness.

A more agreeable picture is presented by a glance at the compulsory diners abroad, in which category may be included the gipsy, the haymaker



the railway officials when travelling, and others of a similarly erratic vocation. How keen a relish is imparted to the unctuous slice of bacon and hunk of coarse brown bread by the fresh breeze that—to borrow an Americanism—*whittles* the appetite to a formidable point, and makes the clear blue sky the canopy of a banquet which has a wholesome zest even monarchs might envy. The ever-flitting functionaries, too, of the trains must experience no small pleasure in the facility they possess of varying the scenes of their dinners; and a stoker, who can dine every day one hundred miles away from the place where he breakfasted, certainly enjoys a privilege of his craft not to be lightly despised. The bricklayer, who regales himself with humble nourishment on the summit of a ladder, exhibits, perhaps, a more eccentric regard for an elevation of position than people of weak nerves and giddy propensities would care to adopt; but we are not quite certain, after all, whether the situation may not be suitable to those partial to what is called high living.

But diners of every denomination — whether abroad or at home — we would fain hope that an appetite may wait on a good digestion, and a dinner invariably attend both. Our subject is yet far from being exhausted; but perchance “enough” has been already said, and, if so, that is of itself proverbially equivalent to a feast. Let us, then,

clothe our valedictory lines in the sententious diction of that great literary leviathan, Dr. Johnson, in whose opinion we beg most heartily to coincide:—“A dinner, sir,” said he,—and the sentence should be printed in letters of gold,—“*A dinner, sir, is a thing of which much, very much, may be said, but of which more, much more, may be eaten.*”



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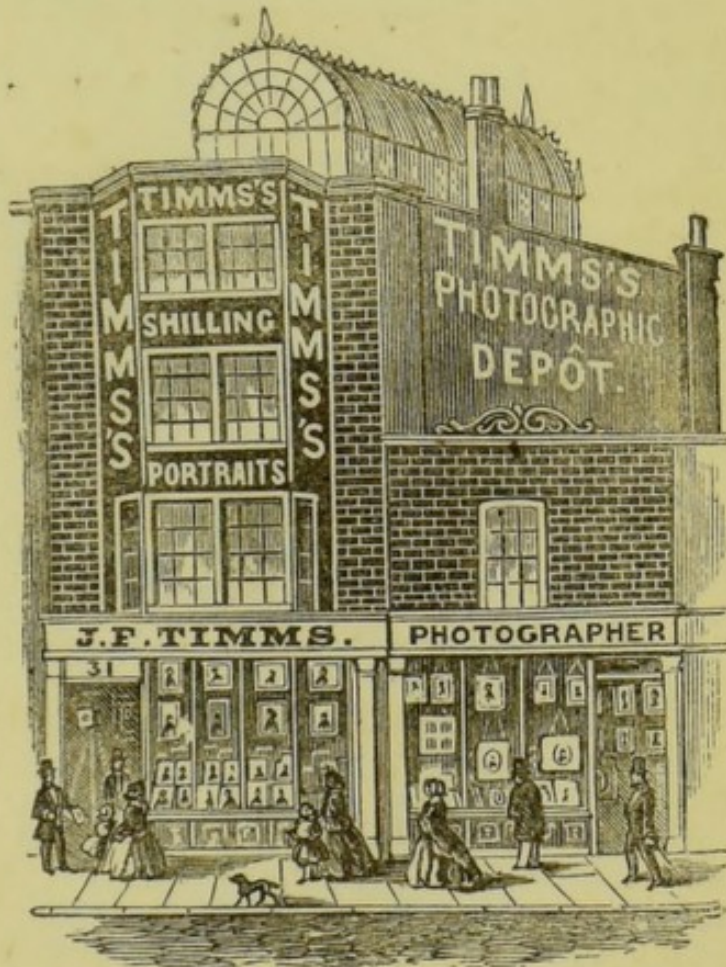
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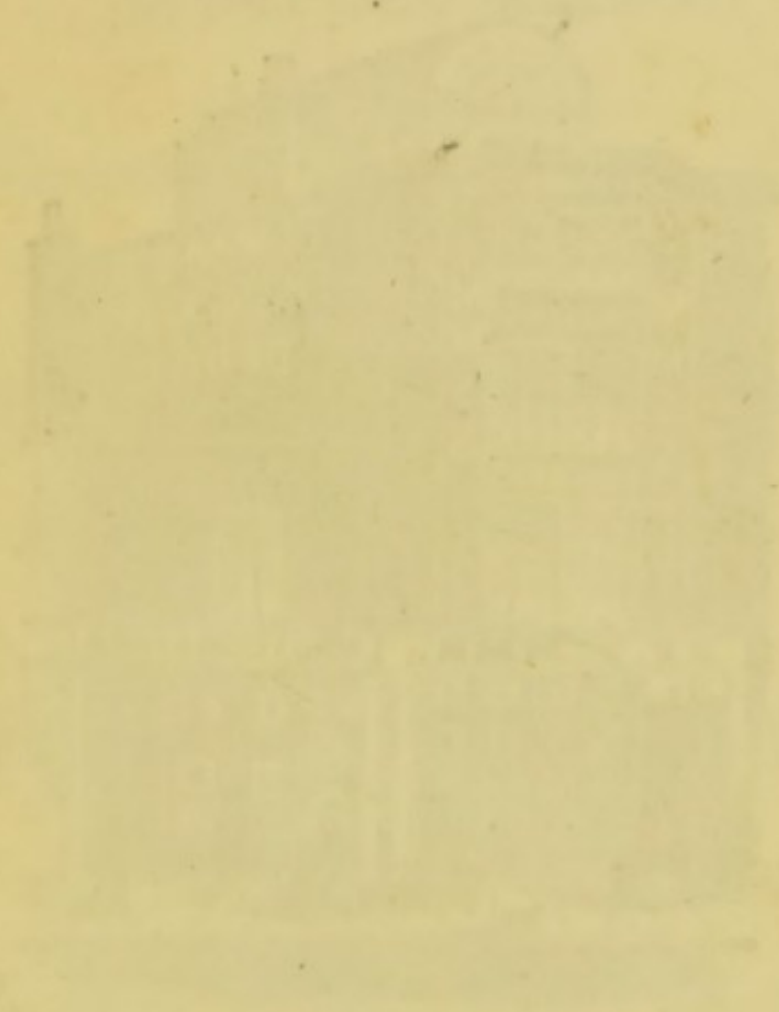
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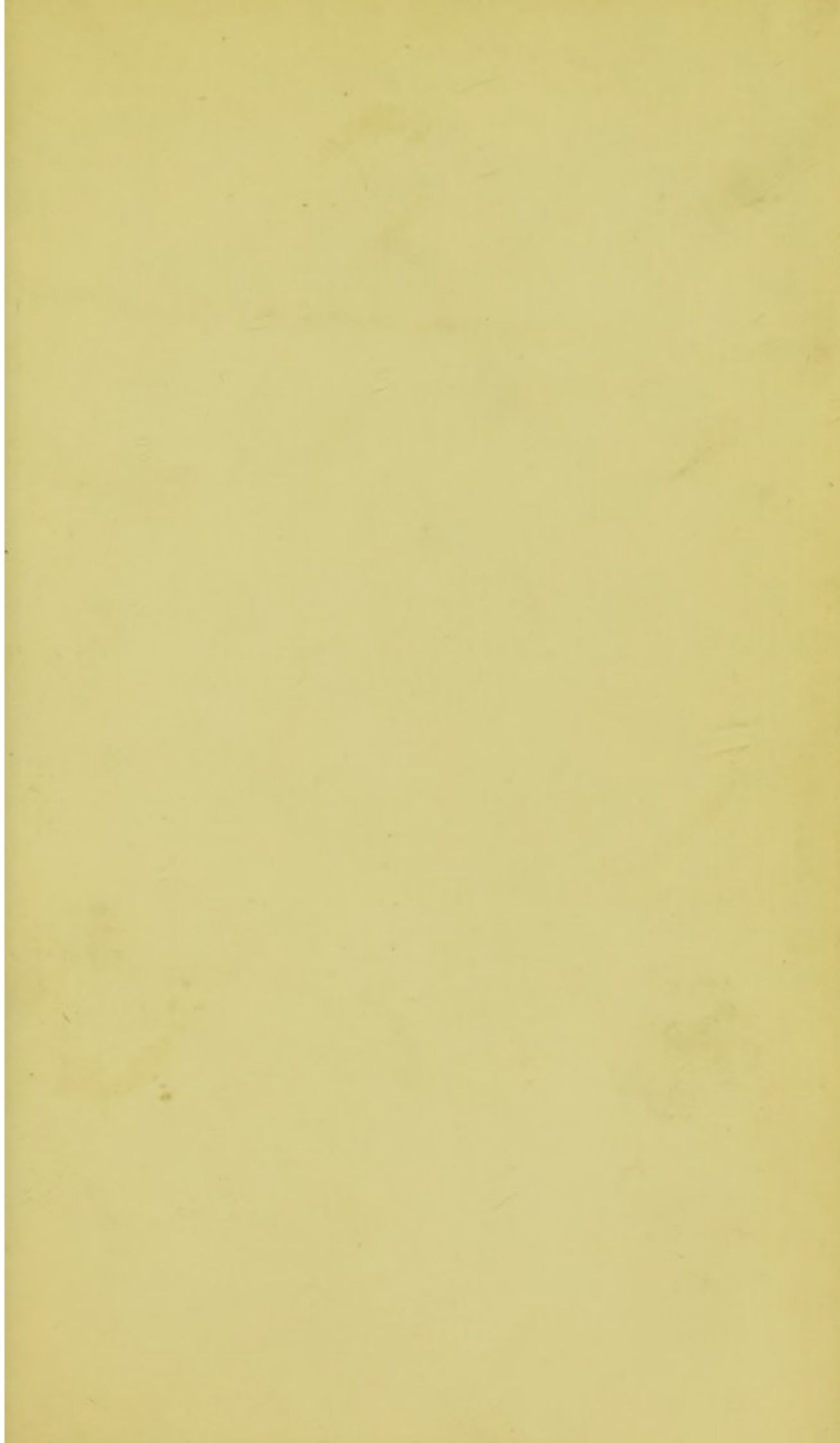
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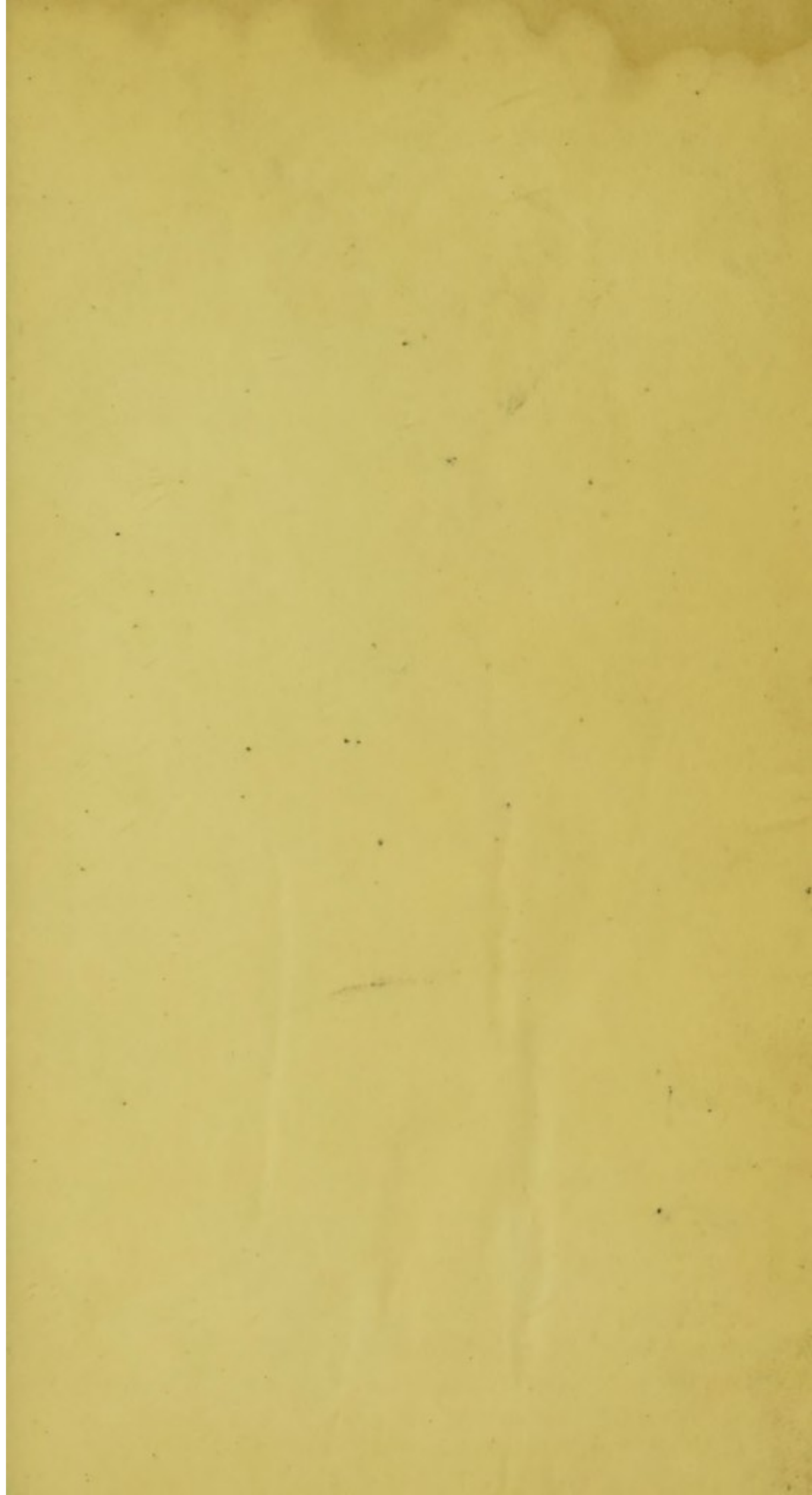
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