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Observations by an Epicure on Art of Dining in Many Lands

BY J. K. MUMFORD. F COURSE, when you talk about eating, which some 18th century mollycoddle maintained was a disgusting but necessary physical process that ought to be carried on in the privacy of one's apartment, just like taking a bath, there's always the gray routine of "home cooking." Just breakfast, dinner and supper, which within limits of the butcher's imagination are always alike.

Outside the gladsome circumference of town, where the foreign cook has shed a little hilarious variety, the "home cooking" bugaboo persists. And it is going to die hard. Up in Greene county, where they are still dodging the draft in the revolutionary war, there's a nice girlwho goes out sewing by the day. A summer boarder who liked her brought her to New York to make a few things for the children and see the sights. Among the strange things she discovered was a fruit salad. She went home and tried it on her antediluvian dad. The old man looked 1t over, and tried a stingy taste.

"M-m. Tastes like potater bugs. Cook me a piece of ham."

There was a mind and a palate that would never remember, in the last weary days of existence, one meal of vittles as any different from another. To a gastronomic intelligence like that there could be no high lights to dot the path along which it had journeyed for its threescore and ten. The menus of Marguery's to him would have been nothing but an entomological collection, and one shudders to think how his home trained palate would have rebelled at the marvels of cookery in the "Yellow Canary Bird" in Barcelonathat dingy oratory of two little rooms, up winding stairs behind a green grocer's shop, where two women weave subtle magic in saucepans and the king of Spain and his most epicurean nobles go to forget the "cares of the state."

But to the criminally vagrant nature that for the preservation of sanity must refuse to swing like a pendulum-in on the 7:32 and out on the 6:21, with chicken on Sunday-there are bound to be a few square meals in the course of a dusty and damned existence the memory of which brings back an illusion of perfect peace. For such one would be content to subsist on Persian sheet bread and kanant water for the remainder of his days. But what is sauce for the goose is certainly not sauce for the gander-despite the rhythmic charm of the proverb. The dinner which to one person is a very pharos of gastronomic joy leaves another with everything to be desired. Mind and heart-the esthetic sensibilities and the ear and the eye-are so inseparably funed to the harmonies that titillate the palate that half the savor of the viand is in the tales told over it or the color of the lights or the music out vonder where the moonlight sifts down through the palm trees or the eyes that laugh over the rim of the opposite wine glass. This eating is a complicated business. You may think it's the vittles, but is it? A cookery fan will tell you was, but he can't prove it

Cookery-and the judgment thereof-

are counted among the illuminati of the table as an exact science. But the trouble with it is that wherever it is a science it is French, and whether in Tiflis or Hongkong or Paris or San Francisco it differs only in service and in degree. The instruction is the same. The difference is in personality. Even the setting doesn't change. The Louis Seize dining room has chased itself around the world with the spread of "civilization," along with Aristide, who is the Raphael of butter and garlic-the two keys to the mystery of the cuisine. Ingenious as be the symphonies in flavor, sauve as are the sequences and luring as are the vintage bridges on which one passes from dream to dream in the perfect French dinner. I doubt if the connoisseur who has eaten his last one can tell you which of them all was the masterpiece. They are all too sophisticated for any single one to make an enduring dent in the memory. If it does, then it was probably the woman or the languishing moan of the cello or the moon and the little breeze that ruffled the water below the verandah and brought opalescent pictures of the thing you wished you might have done. There's this to be said, that the subtle and penetrating harmonies of the "perfect" French dinner, if you'll bring yourself in tune, will find the finest that is in you and lead it out for an hour to brighten an otherwise monotonous life. I'll send you home knowing how it used to feel to wear satin breeches and a powdered wig and ruffles, but no one save a palate worshiper at a dinner of that order ever thought mainly about the food. Perhaps that's the beauty of it. I have spent foolish years trying to get a little way under the surface of French culinary artistry, but-so base is the metal of most of us-I cannot remember a sole in any one of half a dozen gastronomic shrines of Paris that was ever cozened or coaxed into a flavor like to that of a panful of small mouth bass fried by a French Canadian guide on a tree-shaded island in the St. Lawrence many years gone by. Now that I think of it, that might have been the oman, too, and the little breeze playing over the river's ripples and youth and the tong, long day of dreams. The palate is

an emotional thing withal. From Kent to the Black Sea.

And mutton-which the aristocracy in Holland scorn to eat, holding it only, fit victual for the poor-mutton has memories. I have sat in tremulous agony at the table of a Kentish squire, where half a dozen country families-in the persons of men and women-wise in Southdown flavor-held a veritable clinic over a saddle of the host's best springling and wondered why no American could ever possess a palate sensitized to the point of finding a taint of coarse pasture in a Nelson Morris leg of lamb. I have autointoxicated myself after meatless days on the mutton of the Persian uplands, cooked over charcoal in a brazier, with strange Iranian herbs and reverently observed communion on baby lamb in food palaces that shall be nameless, when even seven dollars a portion could not sileuce the



still small voice that at every mouthful charged me with infanticide. I have shared with the now unpopular Mr. Kipling the glorious sense of satiety that only seasoned mutton fat can give. But to recall all these requires an effort.

Why, if baby lamb is worth seven dollars an ounce, or if the mists of the channel off Dover and Folkestone send up a microscopic insect that fastens on the pasture grasses and gives the flavor to the Southdown, why should "mutton" -the name or taste of it-invariably bring a picture of a little cabin looking out across the sea to the Reche Perce, burly and red in the slant light of a declining sun, and the deep forest darkening with oncoming night, and the restless waters, stretching away. I'ke the endless and silent years? And why cannot all the cooks, with all their iegerdemain and all their condiments, recall or counterfeit the celestial taste of one huge Canada lamb that perished years and years ago? And what has mutton to do with sentiment or pressed flowers in old books?

This isn't at all as absurd as it seems. It is simply a way of finding out what the real reason is for one dinner being better than another, and being remembered when ten thousand others are forgotten. or summoned to remembrance only by an effort of the will or a ransacking of the memory.

There was, for example, a marvelous dinner in a house looking out upon the Black sea where it washes the shores of Russia. By turning up the tension screw of memory it is not impossible to recall that the turbot was as royal as the caviar, that the grouse was never equaled by sea or land and that, best of all, were the little Black sea crayfish-miniature lobsters, sweeter than the chestnuts which we gathered in boyhood and which now are no more. I shall die wondering-if I happen to think of it-what that Russlan chef, whose employer had won him away from the Grand Duke Michael, did to those crayfish to make them taste like the Kreisler Humoresque. But these details do not come spontaneously. The first thing I always recall when that most delicious of Russian dinners comes to my mind is that the butler had a beard as long and as imposing as that of Fath Ali Shah. From caviar to coffee those portentous Russian whiskers seemed to overhang the feast like a great golden canopy, and I have always been sure that if he had been shaved before bringing in the zakouska that dinner would have gone down the ages as a masterpiece of culinary architecture. It was so small, so balanced, so complete - so everything. But it is the whiskers that make it memorable now-not the food, nor yet the wondrous Caucasian wines that for bouquet have not their betters in the world. Once more—is there any reason why,

when I saw the "sets" for the Fairbanks picture of "Robin Hood," I bethought me of two boys with single-barreled shotguns stealing through a hemlock swamp on a morning after the first light snow, getting, if I remember, two rabbits, three partridges, two gray squirrels and a couple of vagrant pigeons? Association of ideas has no confederate so potent as the palate. At 14 I read Scott's novels as a thirsty man drinks. There was the hut of Friar Tuck, and the game pasty. Well, the bag of that morning's hunt was made into a mighty pie, with pork and things. and a yellow crust two inches thick, and baked next day in a great earthen dish. And to this day I have never doubted what the filip was that the lusty Friar's pasty gave to the palate of his visitor. I can taste it vet, as plainly as be did. But it cost "Doug" Fairbanks a million dollars or so to remind me of it. And what anatomist is going to identify the brain cells that can bring back to the palate. after more years than one cares to remember, the vagrant but heavenly flavor of a pie? If remembrance is the test of culinary skill the dead and gone old wom-

In the light of these and many other illustrative reflections that arise at the mention of "dinner" it is difficult for a conscientious chronicler of vittles to sit down and Underwood a catalogue of menus he has fought through the world around and crown some gorgeous one of them as the "best dinner in the world." There are so many faces to food, so many confusing factors in time and place and people, association, in short, all of which are more potent than the herbs and the spices. And there's the hunger, which for wo centuries we have been told was the best sauce, and the wine about which as a collateral fine art America-sneaking a drink of "hooch" for the sheer kick in it-is rapidly forgetting the little it ever

knew. No. I doubt if anyone can do it and feel sure when it is done that he has told the truth. I call to mind a delightful and penniless old gentleman for whom in boyhood it was my prized privilege to buy drinks. Immaculate and courteous, with an oldschool courtesy, he had a way of being at the one best thirst parlor at the psychological and unscheduled moment when I

passed by. The inquiry as to what he would have brought always the uniform response, delivered with the same unction and with a studied little formula of dramatic appreciation. With a smile like a sunrise he surveyed the merchandise in all its glistening bottles and rubbed his hands, which had never been marred by toil, and sighed: "Well, I don't know. They're all so good."

That's the inevitable reaction to the question, "What is the best dinner in the world?" It depends a lot more on who eats it and where than it does on what fills the blissful distance between the cocktail and the final sigh of content. The world is very wide, and in it there are many crooks. Under the most solemn oath I could not say, when it comes to dishes, whether the most satisfying-to the inmost fiber of one's bodily fabricwas the fragrant "hoppin' John" which the negroes make in the south, an inspired harmony of cow peas, rice and pig tails, which white folks scorn to know anything about and which to the epicure of the Paix would be a barbarous thing.

almost an offense to propriety, or the Italian fritton misto, which is virtuous in varying degrees. I have eaten it times enough in Italy when it was as commonplace as tripe. But once on Staten island it reached a climax that told what art could do.

But was it art? There again are the confusing collaterals. I will simply leave it to you. There was a little hotel, which might have been anywhere in Tuscany, and the waiter brought the fritto. Many people don't know the fritto. Their Italian horizon is bounded by spaghetti. For the fritto you must have veal. If the average Italian were firmly convinced that there was going to be no veal in heaven I honestly think he'd give up going to mass. But after the veal there's the mushroomand there are mushrooms and mushrooms most of them. I make bold to say, spoiled in the cooking. Then there are hearts of artichokes and the calf's brains, and celery and sweetbreads and some more things besides, all dipped in a batter and

CHEEK-By Henry C. Rowland

sesses me, or whether he wires me to

quit work and clear out." "He may run down himself," said Ali-

Richard shook his head. "I don't think He's a hard, bitter old heathen, infidel and rank materialist, but with some vein of sentiment that led him to bury his wife here, consecrate the island as her tomb, then never visit it again. I'm rather afraid I've played a wrong bet. It was an appalling bit of cheek when you come to think of it."

'Perfectly outrageous," Allison agreed. 'You see," said Richard, "I had reckoned a little on the soft stratum being washed out of him by the flight of time, just as it gets washed out of these rocks. But perhaps he's more oak than adamant, and instead of getting petrified he may have got softer still in that one tender spot. If so, then there may be a picturesque ruin here to commemorate the vanity of human presumption."

"And all of this terrible work for nothing," Alison almost sobbed. "Why couldn't they have let you alone at any rate. It would have been better to have finished even if dispossessed afterward than to be driven off and leave the poor old house the way it stands.

"Why, that's precisely the way I feel about it," Richard answered. "I'd rather like for once in my life to finish something that I'd started even if the result

wasn't a brilliant success so far as my efforts were concerned." "How about your fiancee?" Alison could not help but ask.

Richard's face hardened again. "Well, let's say that our relations are slightly strained," said he. Alison, closely watching his face, di-

vined something that he was holding back. Perhaps it was purely feminine intuition, or perhaps something in the slumbrous burning of his eyes. Was it about the place, or was it-

about the undertaking itself?" she asked with her characteristic directness. "Or was it some gossip about my having been seen helping you here?"

Richard did not hesitate. "The latter." He said. "It was all my fault. I shouldn't Lave let vou.'

"O, dear!" cried Alison. "Then she's jealous?" "Call it that," said Richard. "I told

her that you were a little girl, the daughter of the distinguished astronomer who lived across on the mainland, and in your idle moments you often paddled over to see how I was getting on. But the trou-

the was that she had got a good close-up of you in the canoe, so that my 'little girl' description met with a silvery laugh. A bell scooped from a block of ice could not have been more coldly musical. You see, Alison, the trouble was that I'd always thought of you as the little girl that I'd described until you said good-by to me the other day. So my own words may have lacked conviction."

"Has she broken off with you?" Alison murmured.

"Not yet," said Richard. "She's waiting to see which way Uncle Jonathan

Alison turned this in her mind without comment, then said, "Somehow I have hopes for Uncle Jonathan."

"So has my beautiful francee." Richard said dryly, "and so have I, in spite of the sneering whispers of old man Gloom, who has sat here with me on the job since you quit. But the devil of it is that, finished or unfinished, I seem to have lost my interest in this castle by the sea. It is very far from Spain."

Alison cupped her resolute chin in the hollow of her hands and stared at him "Still, you're going on with it," said

"Yes, I'm going on with it, but there's a momentary check for lack of cement. I was just about to start over with my scow to see if what I ordered had been left by the last boat when you came.'

"It's there," said Allson. "I saw it on the wharf last night. You'd better go before it begins to get dark."

Richard decided to follow this suggestion. Alison watched him put off in the dory with the barge in tow. Then, rather than return to a long evening with a book while her father worked in his study, she walked over to the bold promontory on which was placed the cairn and cross. She was in a soft but melancholy mood and one requiring solitude and meditation. She seated herself in a little niche at the foot of the cairn, and scarcely had she done so when her eye was caught by a white speck far out in the mouth of the estuary and evidently moving in from the open sea. Alison did not notice this particularly until presently, looking again, · she was surprised to see from the lessened distance how rapidly it was approaching and now revealed as a trim white seagoing speed launch, or, rather, yacht, of some 60 feet or more. It glowed a rosy white in the reflected rays of the setting sun, its bright work sparking in points of flame, a band of white across its bows

fried to the color of a soleil d'or. And and long, oily undulations in its wake. Alison was admiring it abstractedly when suddenly her heart gave a suffocating leap, for the fast little cruiser rounded a buoy, then headed directly for Mary's island, as though fixing its course by the granite cross at the foot of which she sat. And in that second the radio of her magnetic mood told Alison that here could be none other than Uncle Jonathan, retired millionaire contractor and builder of great dams and bridges, come to shatter to its solid foundation the little home which she and Richard had consecrated in perpetuity to the memory and mortal remains of the wife of his youth?

Peeping from behind the calrn, Alison saw Uncle Jonathan step out of the boat and mount the ladder of the temporary jetty. His harsh voice reached her through the perfect stillness.

"Go back alongside and come when I signal," and as the boat pulled off he started up the sloping rocks toward the rough walls that seemed to rise in unprotected but defiant fashion, passed round the corner of them and was hid from Alison's view.

For several minutes Alison sat there trying to make up her mind what she had better do. She did not believe that he would discover her canoe left in a niche of the cliffs fringed with dwarfed spruces. It occurred to Alison that it would be an added misfortune were he to discover her presence there, as this must destroy the impression of Richard's working in lonely solitude, consigning himself to a voluntary exile until his bold purpose might be achieved.

She decided that she had better keep out of sight.

But as this conclusion became fixed in Alison's mind, the impulse to dispute it surged up within her. The girl's combative nature, hitherto latent for lack of necessity for its expression, now flamed its protest at Richard being tried and condemned without even so much as a hearing or any opportunity to defend his position. She determined to defend it for him, come what might of it. pride forbade her cringing there behind the cairn while her friend was being silently condemned.

Alison drew a deep breath, ran her fingers through her thick, lustrous hair, drew down her blouse, then sprang up and stepped out from behind the cairn to confront a grim, craggy figure whose presence there was entirely outside her calculations. Evidently Uncle Jonathan had passed round the house and made his way directly to the cairn, his rubber-shod deck shoes making no sound upon the age-worn rampart of quartz and granite. (Copyright, 1922, by Henry C. Rowland.) (Concluded next week.)

a buerre noir to anoint it, and again buerre noir sometimes covers a multitude of sins.

There was an unwonted air of grandeur about the waiter when he brought it in. a triumphant prominence of the chest, a victorious liberality in his smile, an extravagant flourish in his bow. One knew by instance that something had been accomplished. And it had. Wine will do much, but the simple bottle of Capri-Rouff, not Scala-which bore the fritto company could not have made any difference. When the fritto was finished I went into the kitchen, where the artist smiled rosy and proud among her pots and pans of copper, and offered her my tribute.

"Well," she blushed, "It ought to be good, but it wasn't the cooking. Vanderbilt's farm is just over back here. and twice a week he sends the steward down to get the meats for the town house. Our butcher does the killing. They take out a roast and some chops and he brings the rest of the carcass right to us. It's the veal that makes the fritto-not the cooking." Thus ever the artist.

"Well," she went on, "those calves are registered Guernseys and they're fed for six weeks on certified milk and game chickens' eggs. Yes, the fritto ought to be good."

The fritto certainly was all that fritto could be, but in the years of cold, unbiased judgment that have intervened. and with what I call "palate memories" blurred a bit by other and widely varied masterpieces, I have come to wonder whether my recollection of that delectable dish is colored somewhat by the consciousness that while Mr. Vanderbilt was eating roast and chops in Fifth avenue, seasoned, I'll warrant, by no such youthful appetite and no such worshiped company as mine, I was reveling in the far tastier morsels of his Guernsey, which must have cost him-and as a city farmer I know whereof I speak—at least \$50 a

But one thing leads to another. It is a saying in New York that "when Greek meets Greek-they start a restaurant." and-well, punishment for sins takes various forms. It will make some demand on the average New York imagination and credulity to believe that there was ever a meal in Greece that was beautiful as the "September Morn," And-fittingly enough-a breakfast.

Does One "Eat" the Landscape?

The ship that was taking me and some other freight to Batum on the way to the middle of Asia cast anchor in the gray of the morning off the venerable village of Patrasso, to lighter some dribblings of cargo. I paddled ashore, merely to get the feel of the ground and to pass the few hours of waiting. A huddle of sleepyeyed people stood stupidly on the beach, and one ancient "hack," drawn there by the slender chance of a fare. A young man came up and, finding I was an American, told me was a correspondent of the New York Herald. The world is very We took the ancient back and went trundling out over the long road that skirts the bend of the bay. And as we rode the day began to paint the sky with rose tints. Against that illimitable background of rose and misty blue, fresh with the purity of the morning, a score of fishermen, brown, bare-legged, were hauling a close-meshed seine along the beach for the tiny fishes which are the Mediterranean's priceless contribution to the joy of nations-little fingerlings with the color of opals and the delicacy of a pistache nut. And they sang, as Greeks forever sing. The picture was worth the fourney. But there was more to come, and-I find as the years go by-more exquisite by far.

We came at last to a little house, clustering amid many vines, looking out upon the sea. There was an arbor in front and under it tables. We disembarked and sat at one. Around the corner of the house came a girl-a marvelously beautiful girl, even at 5:30 of a spring morning. Sappho, 'burning and singing," was easy to understand. She had a smile as rosy as the sky, and without the aid of a lipstick. We wanted breakfast. She vanished in her smile somehow; she didn't seem merely to go. When she came back sne oore a salver with a cool, misty bottle of wine, and all about it were heaped roses that reflected the color of her lips and of the sky. She brought grapes, with the sprinkle of the dew still on them, cool from the night just gone. She brought the little opalescent fishes which had just left the sea, and an omelette tender as a farewell, and yellow toast, and a tiny cheese, which never was elsewhere, and fruits preserved in honey-I'm sure it was of Hymette-and a thimble of Turkish coffee, such as keeps the languor in the eyes of the odalisques in Stamboul. And everything was garnished with flowers, and the roses were over our heads, and roses on her lips and forget-me-nots and larkspur in the blue of her eyes-and then we got into the old back and rode back to the ship

I have wondered ever since if that breakfast was really as wonderful breakfast as it seemed to me thenwanted to make sure, and who is so likely to know these mystic and intangible things as a poet? So one day I told the story to Bliss Carman. He listened with the ascetic gravity of an Aztec idol, and from out the recesses of his poet's soul came the answer, like a solemn echo of judgment: "We don't have any Hebes in New Canaan."

Now what is one to believe? You go through life, a dingy life, catching through rifts in the murk a memory here and there of the scents of Araby, tasting now and then some flavor in which are mingled all the niceties of all the world's kitchens, and lo, some brutal singer or songs comes along and puts it all in the corned-beef and cabbage class. When it comes to putting an absolute value to a dish or a dinner one feels, after all, like the familiar rooster, who, leaning against a barn door in the rain, wet and draggled, with head and tail alike cast down, exclaimed in anguish of spirit: "An egg yesterday, a feather duster tomorrow What's the use?"