Oh, crooked is he, but strong enough
To handle the tallest mast;
From the royal barque to the slaver dark,
He buries them all at last.

Then hoy and rip, with a rolling hip,
He makes for the nearest shore;
And God, who sent him a thousand ship,
Will send him a thousand more;
But some he 'll save for a bleaching grave,
And shoulder them in to shore, —
Shoulder them in, shoulder them in,
Shoulder them in to shore.

Bliss Carman.

THE END OF TORTONI'S.

Tortoni's has closed, — on the last June day of 1893, — before the century's end.

The spirit which drove the glass of Paris fashion and the mould of literary form to this central point of the Grand Boulevard, there to admire themselves at the green hour over their absinthe, has grown weak and failed before its hundred years are over. It had its strength from an atmosphere alternately cleared and troubled by the winds of the Revolution; and it has become powerless only with the dead calm into which have subsided the Republican children of the Second Empire. Fashion, literature and art, and the green devil continue to exist; but they are not as they were, and the putting up of the shutters at Tortoni's is the sign of an age that has passed.

I.

Tortoni was not the founder of the café-glacier so long known by his name; he was but the Amerigo Vespucci of Velloni, who was the real Columbus.

It was in the first years of the nineteenth century, when all Europe was finding it necessary to use for its own purposes of respiration the air which had already served for Napoleon's deep breathing. Velloni, a maker and vender of ices, from Naples, was led, by the spirit which was breaking down the barriers of race and nation, to transport his little trade to Paris, the city of the First Consul. Parisians had now been shocked many times over out of the grooves of their old provincial routine. Some of them would be ready to appreciate his Italian ways and ices.

He found a convenient house for his purpose on the Boulevard de Gand; it was the name given to a part of the *contre-allée* occupying the former fosse of the ramparts, on the site of which the Boulevard had originally been made. It was to the present Boulevard des Italiens what the Rue Basse du Rempart — that puzzle of the tourist — still is to the Boulevard de la Madeleine. The place was near enough to the houses which the city was already beginning to push out in this direction; and it was not too far from the part of the Boulevard leading east toward where the Bastille had been, which was still bordered by what were the palaces of nobles and princes before the upheaval of the Revolution. A few steps away was the Pavillon de Hanovre,

the house of the terrible Maréchal de Richelieu, into whose aged veins Cagliostro infused his elixir of youth. Alexandre Dumas the elder has recounted the fact and its event; and any one may still see for himself the round corner salon, with its Renaissance ornament, now serving to show off the goldsmith work of the Maison Cristofle. In the Chaussée d'Antin, just above, Mirabeau had died a few years before. Straight across the Boulevard was the Salle Favart, built for the Opéra Comique, and burned down in our own day with fearful catastrophe. The Théâtre des Variétés was further down the street; and behind, the road climbed up to the villages which clustered round the mills of Montmartre, with their harvest feasts to attract the blasé Parisian. The situation could not be better. It was on the border of city amusement and country pleasance.

Prosperity soon came. Napoleon's marshals, with scarred faces and breasts slashed with gold, rode out for a stirrup cup of the Neapolitan's aqua vitæ before galloping off across Alps and Pyrenees, or beyond the Rhine to Russia. Fine ladies and the few cavaliers left in Paris came, on warm afternoons, to sit at the little tables, with their black marble tops heavily rimmed with brass, on the terrace raised a few feet above the shaded roadway.

Velloni's ideas grew with success. The Emperor was of Italian blood, — a Bonaparte, — and he had become the master of France. Why should not a Neapolitan reign imperially over the cafés of Paris the capital? He had already shown how much better things there were than Procope's, once the scene of Voltaire's gibing, and now the type of all that was dull and old-fashioned in French cafés. His ices and sherbets, made from the juices of choice and varied fruits, gave a subtle flavor to life in a generation so keenly alive to novelties and delicate distinctions. In truth, the fashion he set soon crossed land and sea. A score of years later, Fitz-Greene Halleck, the bard of the ancient Tammany Hall with its barrel of porter, hailed the advent of Parisian daintiness amid the primitive aristocracy of New York, whose traditional heavy wines and cherry bounce were giving way to these sherbets,

"Sublimed (see Lord Byron) with snow."

Accordingly, Velloni opened, in different parts of the city, a score of new glaciers. But there were not enough Parisians who cared for his ices and liqueurs, which were a distinction for the fine flower of life, and not for the commercial *bourgeois*. The one place by the aristocratic promenade was quite sufficient; and Velloni was soon forced, by stress of business weather, to put his original venture under the name of his head waiter and fellow-countryman, Tortoni. Things went on from bad to worse, and in 1809 he hanged himself in his cellar.

Then Tortoni began a twenty years' career of wise and liberal progress. On his first floor he opened a billiard-room, where he installed Spolar, who had left the profession of law in provincial Rennes to become the champion player of the capital. The game was a presentiment of the fascinating *poule* of later days, and betting ran high. Talleyrand became one of the most assiduous frequenters of the place, and the little blue salon *au premier* kept his name for many years. He reposed a mind weary of the game of diplomacy by fixing his twinkling eyes on the *carambolage* of Spolar's play. Grave members of the Academy did not disdain the relaxations of the place, — Jouy, who wrote The Hermit of the Chaussée d'Antin, and Lacretelle, who said to an idling young *élégant*, "Give me your twenty years, if you have nothing to do with them."

Napoleon passed, and Tortoni remained. With the Bourbon Restoration his place came into greater vogue than ever. The returned *émigrés* and the king's officers were ashamed not to be up to date with all that was latest in Paris,

and they crowded Tortoni's smoking-room, — for society had abandoned the snuff of the old régime. But the men who had conquered half Europe under Napoleon would not give up their favorite resort so easily; and over the billiards and the pipes many a quarrel broke forth, to end in a bloody duel. It was easy to ride out to the secluded Mare d'Auteuil (whose peaceful waters are now a part of a far different resort of fashion, the steeplechase course in the Bois de Boulogne). There they could kill each other picturesquely, and according to the full requirements of the code of honor.

This supreme point of finished elegance, this fine, exquisite flower of the *flânerie* of the Boulevard gods, has marked Tortoni's to the end. If it is all over and past, it must be because the gods are dead, or else have fled before a democracy that brings all down to a dull, earthy level. But for three quarters of a century the place remained the rendezvous of the serene upper ten, — first, of the *gratin* of elegance, adding afterwards the fortunate in literature and art. It was but gradually that the military spirit ceased to lead, subsiding before the ideals of a generation that had not drunk gunpowder with its milk in the days of the Terror.

Meanwhile the city grew out to the Boulevard, and pushed beyond. Little by little the Boulevard itself was lined, behind its rows of trees, by tall houses, having shops with shining windows below. Then the street of the old fosse was leveled up with the Boulevard of the ramparts, and with it the terrace of Tortoni disappeared, — all but in name. For the space reserved for the little tables on the level pavement in front of all cafés has kept the title. "Voyez, terrasse!" will long startle the heedless waiter to attend to the customers on the sidewalk. It was this first age of Tortoni's which gave the word to the Parisian language, whence it has spread to the provinces. To the end, the house itself remained a last relic of the old Boulevard de Gand, which, with it, has now vanished utterly.

To the ices and billiard pools and tobacco of the new order of things, with its leveling of society and of streets, another element was added. This was the newspaper, shaping politics and diplomacy; and it found due place on the little tables at Tortoni's. Its triumph was coming when Tortoni died, about the time when Charles X., the last king of France, with the haughty grace of the old school, was retiring before his pear-headed cousin of Orleans, Louis Philippe, whose commercial spirit fitted him to be "the king of the French," then the newest formula of government.

But the clicking of swords was still heard in the distance. Chocquart — the Chocquart of Dumas — was one of the faithful to the little table and the daily Constitutionnel. Tall, hatchet-faced, with long mustaches waxed straight out at right angles to his nose, he was the link between the old courtliness and the new revival of intellect. One day he sat down, as usual, and demanded his paper of the *garçon*.

"Monsieur, it is in hands."

A quiet gentleman in the corner sat reading the only copy impassively.

Five minutes passed silently by. Then Chocquart spoke again: "Garçon, I have asked for the Constitutionnel."

"Monsieur, it is still in hands."

With his most terrible air Chocquart arose, marched straight on the quiet gentleman, and snatched the paper from him. The next day there was a duel, which sent a sword full into the breast of Chocquart, and kept him in bed for a month. No sooner was he up than he came back to Tortoni's. The quiet gentleman was there again, reading the newspaper as before.

"Garçon," cried Chocquart, "the Constitutionnel!"

"Monsieur, it is in hands."

Again five minutes of silence, and

Chocquart planted his full height before the gentleman.

"Ah, then, do you wish for another lesson?"

II.

With the change in the spirit of the times, the Anglomania which had preceded the Revolution appeared once more. Then it had been said that the head of the house of Orleans, lately back from England, and rising high in his stirrups as he rode English fashion, boded no good to the French state. Under the Orleans king, the English themselves appeared notably — men like Thackeray's Lord Steyne — on the terrace at Tortoni's. But chiefly it was the English spirit which was being copied, — Chesterfield by the French "dandies," and Byron by the fashionable poets.

The word "dandy," transplanted spelling and all, has from the beginning had a meaning in French quite different from its English sense. It came just in time to label a thing new-born of the ages, — the Frenchman who replaces in modern society the courtier of the old régime. Like the dwellers on Olympus, sung by Lucretius, he has all the indifference of the gods for his neighbors of level earth. So great is his indifference that he does not even scorn the ordinary mortal; and his self-satisfaction amounts to satiety. These dandies form a select inner circle, until this day, amid the widening eddies of what were then called *les fashionables*, and are now the Parisian *élégants*.

In those years, the Comte de Montrond was the recognized king of the dandies, and he held his court at Tortoni's. His successor, the Comte d'Orsay, who was even more absolute in his sway over the male world of fashion, followed his example. Each morning he drove in his tilbury to the terrace, and alighted amid the chosen few who dared to admire and aspired to imitate. It was for the public ceremony of his midday lunch; for lunches, delicious *déjeuners*, had now been added to the ices and liqueurs, to the billiards and smoking, and to the attractions of the daily newspaper.

The young Thiers, whose large ambitions, political and social, were already piercing through his small body, had long been content to gallop up on horseback for an ice. He was attired irreproachably, with soft leather boots and *culotte mastic*, the putty-colored material then used for a professional rider's breeches. His adoption of what was latest in dress did not prevent his saying with decision, when he saw the first railways in operation in England, "That may do for you English, but it will succeed in France — never!" However, the dandy of the Restoration came to have a more accurate conception of the real world in which he lived. It was he who chiefly helped to shape the Third Republic, in whose practical atmosphere the ideal life of Tortoni's has expired finally.

At the start, when these dandies were still too Olympian to be human, their patronage — like Anglomania to France — boded no good to Tortoni's. Perhaps the Neapolitan's successor, Provost, was not a good business manager. In any case, during the six years of his rule the café-glacier went so near the top of the social pyramid that it threatened going off the apex. Still, the poets of the day wrote in their songs, which were sung by the favorite tenor, that of the glacier of Tortoni and the glaciers of the Alps, Tortoni's was more admirable by far.

Of the spirit of these days the memoirs which illustrious Frenchmen delight in writing are full, and for some years the time for publishing them has been upon us. The Englishman in Paris has rescued many of their anecdotes, big with verisimilitude; but it is Alfred de Musset's prose — his Confessions of a Child of the Century — that gives, by incidental lapses from its general vain sensualism, the most veracious impression of the Parisian intellect which now began thrusting itself into the company of birth and rank.

Of these men of letters, Byron was, for some years, the model and the muse. They were at the same time men of would-be fashion; there was as yet no room on the aristocratic terrace for Bohemians like Henri Mürger or for the new lights of Romanticism. At most, Balzac, and a few like him, — aristocrats by birth and at heart, and Bohemians only through their general impecuniosity, — appeared there on the occasion of some unusual windfall of author's or artist's luck. Alfred de Musset was the finished type of this middleman between fashion and letters. As a boy he had been nicknamed "mademoiselle" by his schoolmates, and he became a dainty and intensely morbid sensualist when a grown man. He alternately made love to and quarreled with that other lawless genius, George Sand, and cried melodiously between whiles over the hopelessness of his present earthly life and his despair of any heavenly life to come. A divinely gifted trifler and sot, he disdained the common herd, and vainly tried to look with Voltaire's cynical glance through the weak and watery eyes of Rousseau. His brother Paul, who was of more wholesome make, remained faithful to the old rendezvous at Tortoni's until his death, toward the close of the Second Empire.

This lack of seriousness in life, this engulfment of existence in elegant pleasures, must always be a mark of the highest fashion, which is by nature both selfish and sensual. But not all who passed by Tortoni's aimed at a permanent residence on these Olympian heights. Moreover, at this very time a reaction in the sense of Christian faith was springing up against Rousseauism. It was led by Lacordaire and Ravignan from the pulpit; by Berryer, Ozanam, Montalembert, and others high placed in the world of social rank and letters. It was a movement of thoroughly distinguished men. It was also far too much in earnest to give sign of life among the triflers of the Boulevard.

With the next change in the management of Tortoni's, room was made for a new class of celebrities, who might be neither "lions" nor dandies. Whether it was the result of the breaded cutlets of the déjeuners, which had now become a choice feature of the place, or of some hidden process of evolution, it is certain that men little known to fashion, yet always distinguished for something which separated them from the material crowd, now became familiar with Tortoni's.

Véron — the doctor who was at once Director of the Opéra and of the Constitutionnel, the patron of the new music of Rossini and Auber and of constitutional government, which was quite as new in France — must have been responsible in part for this change. He was the soul of hospitality, and would have his friends with him from all the different worlds in which he figured so long and bustlingly. He lived in the quarter, and was an *habitué* of Tortoni's corner as well as of the new Maison Dorée, a door away, at the corner of what was then the Rue d'Artois. This short street, running up to the new Church of Notre Dame de Lorette, — from whose easy neighborhood the *lorettes* came into French literature, — was already taking on itself that individual air which it has never yet lost. The great banker Laffitte had his house in it, and it soon took his name. Then the Rothschilds' house was planted there, where the bank still remains, though the great gardens are now empty of the courtiers of money who flocked thither when this was a palatial residence.

Here Beugniet, who has died since Tortoni's was closed, began that picture-dealing for which the Rue Laffitte is still famous. He has willed to the National Museum his own peculiar collection of fifty years, — the palettes of one hundred and sixteen noteworthy French painters who had dealt with him, each with its special mingling of colors as the artist left it. In those early days, Delacroix and Ingres and the luckier brethren, hav-

ing "touched" their money after some sale in the Rue Laffitte, let it slip freely from their fingers' ends in a moment's glory over their cups at Tortoni's.

By some chance, Louis Blanc, by this time at work on his social philosophy, and then publishing the five volumes of his Histoire de Dix Ans (1830–40), had his home in the upper regions of the house toward 1842. The first morning cup of coffee was for him. It was his brother Charles who afterwards became a notable historian of art. Already, as has been said, when a book had been successful or a painting sold, and money for a day was flush, the occasion was commonly fêted by a friendly meeting at Tortoni's. Sometimes this was done when there was money without success, in order to strike envy into the breasts of less fortunate rivals. Until the end, all who desired to pose as men of distinction ascended to Tortoni's glacier.

III.

Days golden with the glint of coin had already begun when Girardin, the second French proprietor of the place, fearful that they might not last, sold out to the Percheron brothers, in 1847, for what was considered the enormous sum of three hundred and twenty-five thousand francs. It is the younger of these two brothers who has now put an end to the place, regretfully, because of the *débâcle* of a society then only blossoming into full life.

"Then I gained one hundred thousand francs a year; now I have only the glory for my work. I am sixty years old, and for forty years I have been at the trade. I am *le doyen de la limonade*, but I am not willing to end my career by a fall." And he added, with a sigh, that he had not slept for a week through thinking of the change. "It is such an event in my existence."

It is also the closing of a page in the existence of Paris and modern France.

Long before this the Boulevard had become the crowded and cosmopolitan promenade unique in the world's history. Until the next great change in French society, after the break-up of the Second Empire, Tortoni's welcomed to its tables every celebrity, royal or not, that came to taste, *incognito*, the intoxication of Parisian life. King Leopold I. of Belgium, and Victor Emmanuel, who was to be king of an Italy not yet born, and many another one, equally royal, left behind them golden memories of princely *pourboires* for the waiters in the *cabinets particuliers* where they had supped sumptuously. Louis Napoleon, before he made himself Emperor, was seen there, and there were at all times such men as the Comte Walewski and English noblemen, drinking and spending like lords, from Lord Seymour, in the early days, down to Lord George Hamilton, who broke his neck while tumbling out of the Maison Dorée.

Under the new régime — Percheron at Tortoni's, Napoleon III. at the Tuileries — things grew with successive splendors. The morning was now almost given over to *boursiers*, money-kings lunching lavishly, and, with their bottomless purses, leaving only the eventide of absinthe and ices to the more limited means of dandies and men of letters. Late in the night carriages came rolling up to the side entrance on the Rue Taitbout. Ladies of the *grand monde* descended, and mounted the stairs, with their escorts, for a *consommé* and sandwich, a cup of chocolate and a picking of cold meat, and for the inevitable ices and liqueurs which nowhere could be found as at Tortoni's. They were just from the Opéra, two streets below, or perhaps from a garden party in the Rue Laffitte, patronized by the Empress Eugénie. Their costumes, which were the envy of a whole civilization infatuated with the philosophy of clothes, expanded into wonderful crinolines, and became daily uglier, and more essentially vulgar and ridiculous, and more costly.

It was not, however, the mere costli-

ness of Tortoni's wares that made the place a favorite rendezvous for those to whom the ostentation of lavish expenditure had well-nigh become a substitute for all distinction. Tortoni's was the only night resort where the fine ladies of a world still wishing to be "correct" might enter without danger of meeting the finer ladies of a *demi-monde* caring only to live pleasantly.

It was impossible that a simple corner like Tortoni's, with the dozen tables of its terrace and café below, and its few private salons above, should suffice to the refreshment of the most exclusive, even, from these two worlds of fashion and of letters. A torrent of luxury and ostentation, such as the world had not seen since the brilliant decline of the Roman Empire, rolled in waves down the Boulevard, in these flush times of another empire, whose highest brilliancy was also mingled with decay. Besides, in those days Paris had not become the vast agglomeration which it now is, where life eddies and pours in a hundred distinct whirls and channels. The court alone, by centralizing the ambitions and the expenditure of wealth, turned the tide in well-defined courses. Sooner or later, it flowed noisily and without stagnation between the banks of the Boulevard.

Across the Boulevard from Tortoni's and the Maison Dorée, the Café Anglais now sprang into notoriety. It was just round the corner from the Rue de Grammont, where the Jockey Club then had its seat. It soon became one of the most undoubted glories of imperial Paris. Turgénieff knew the Paris of the end of the Empire at least as well as anything else, except the Russian life from which he drew his wonderful tales. Until his death, the Café Anglais represented to him the acme of Western civilization, with its brilliancy and its essential defects. The proprietor of the new resort laid down a principle from the beginning: "A man must be very rich to say that he is a daily customer of my house." It was essentially an eating-place in the style of Heliogabalus. There was no long bill of fare, there were no *plats du jour*. It was for the guest to know what he wanted; it was the proprietor's business to supply him with it. What should be paid afterwards was of slight consequence.

The life which developed here was not as correct as that across the way, but it was far more dazzling in the splendor of its sensations. The café was for men mainly, as may be supposed; and in spite of the expense and the twenty cabinets at its disposition, it was often necessary to engage places days in advance for a seven-o'clock dinner — that was the hour in those days — or an after-midnight supper. Prince Demidoff, who had married the Princess Mathilde, the daughter of Jerome Bonaparte and Miss Paterson's successor, remained a devotee of Tortoni's. But his Tartar magnificence could not neglect the new life, and more than once he telegraphed from St. Petersburg the date of his arrival at the Café Anglais. Cabinet No. 16, in the bevel-angle overlooking the Boulevard, was the most famous of the supper-rooms. It was here that another Russian welcomed his friends at five hundred francs a head. The tradition of heavy drinking of champagne began here, through love of lavishness rather than of the wine. It has died out of French ideas of good living, to which it was always essentially foreign. It remains, perhaps, only in American fashions ill copied from the high living of Paris under the Empire.

The great ladies of the day were emancipated enough to be curious of this new side of life, and the cabinet of the *femmes du monde* is still shown. Perhaps they were satisfied when they heard from No. 16, with its forty guests, the voice of La Belle Alsacienne calling imperatively through the corridor, "Taniel!" It was only M. Daniel Wilson who was wanted, the son-in-law of the austere

and reforming politician Grévy, whose presidency of the Republic, after the Empire's fall, he was destined to illustrate dubiously. Sometimes quarrels arose here between jealous cavaliers. One night, after a ball at the Tuileries, a prince fought at sword's point with a rival in the corridor. Ernest, the omnipresent *maître d'hôtel*, was, luckily, a model of discretion; and his lips never breathed a word of what might have provoked scandal in dozens of families of note.

Meilhac and Halévy have tried to catch, in the lilting strains of their Vie Parisienne, the spirit of this spasmodic and too often factitious revelry. In the main, the librettist's verses are accurate in their description of a place which supplemented, rather than supplanted, Tortoni's, in those heavily gilded days.

"Rires éclatants, fracas de champagne,
On cartonne ici. L'on danse là-bas,
Et le piano qui grince accompagne
Sur des airs connus d'étranges ébats.

"Ils s'en vont enfin, la mine blafarde,
Ivres de champagne et de faux amour,
Et le balayeur s'arrête, regarde,
Et leur crie: 'Ohé! les heureux du jour!'"

Men of letters and art could not lag behind in this movement of boulevardiers. Even with them there were secessions, at least where there was question of uniting letters with solid food and drink. In 1857, Henri Mürger was repudiating his earlier Bohemian life in company of a few choice spirits: Baudelaire of pessimistic verse, and the artistic Goncourt brothers, and Mario Uchard, who has just died, and who was then in the midst of his matrimonial trouble with the actress Madeleine Brohan. These, with several others, found an independent rendezvous at the Café Riche (unromantic juxtaposition), in the New York Life Insurance building. But even these continued to gather at the green hour before Tortoni's; and there, too, all that was newest and most Parisian sought a first sanction.

A new Parisian literature was just beginning, belonging essentially to the newspaper and the passing world of high life. This was the *chronique*, imagined by Villemessant for his weekly Figaro. He and his little circle of writers formed, perhaps, the first of the many literary coteries which have been fond of displaying themselves at Tortoni's. It comprised, among other Parisian notorieties of the late fifties, Manet, the apostle of impressionist art; Charles Monselet, who sang melodiously of the place; Henri Rochefort, a young count, but already revolutionary enough to give foretastes of that *intransigeance* which has driven him into his London exile; Albert Wolff, the nephew of Offenbach, and, like him and Heine, a German Israelite who had become more Parisian than the Parisians; and Aurélien Scholl, now the last of the boulevardiers, and faithful to the old trysting-place until the end.

Their Parisianism was destined to modify deeply the form and spirit of modern French journalism. Albert Wolff was its best representative. He was a veritable Athenian, always on the lookout for something new, — new, that is, to Paris. Living at the club, in places of public amusement, on the street, he was an observer of life rather than of society, — of the life whose stream flows back and forth through the Boulevard. He scented, as it were, the coming of its least changes; and his knowledge of art, which allowed of his reforming the old long-winded criticism of the Salon into sparkling instantaneous views, helped him to look on life as a united and never ending vaudeville. "The truths of his criticism," said Ernest Renan, "are the flashes from a revolving beacon-light." He gave full utterance to that "Parisian Opinion" which he proclaimed queen of the world, in its cynical refusal to attend to aught else than the passing moment, in the yet more cynical common sense with which it criticises all that comes to pass. It was a new de-

velopment of Olympian loftiness as sung in the Greek Anthology: —

"All is but dust, and all is but laughter, and all is but nothing."

The chronique, day by day, which was the most perfect embodiment of this opinion, has all but disappeared from the columns of the Paris press. Like Tortoni's, it has given way to a bourgeois development which is more serious only in its worship of money, and is not a whit less sensual, while it is far less serene. Among the waning number of Renan's disciples, who are already a generation that is passing away, these smiling and sublimely indifferent Olympians may still be found. Albert Bataille, in his law-learned but most unlegal Gazette des Tribunaux of the daily Figaro, and Anatole France, in his weekly reviews of literature, still show the kindly irony of men who stand aside to watch the comedy of human life. But there is no longer before Tortoni's that heroic session, from five to seven in the evening, of those who dreamed that men of art are essentially distinct from the money-making bourgeois, and who sat there expressly to be envied of them.

"Art for the sake of art" has definitely yielded to "art for the sake of life," however commonplace. Even the daintiest symbolist, one of the original set which took its *thé chez Miranda* round Tortoni's little tables, could not now imagine the bourgeois crossing himself, as he passes with wife and daughter along the Boulevard, in superstitious terror of the orgies of these men of the higher art. Yet this was the refrain of Monselet's sprightly wit, when he addressed the Parisians of thirty years ago: —

"Quand deux plats et quatre bougies
Composent tout notre dîner,
Les bons bourgeois rêvent orgies,
Femme nue et luxe effréné.
On voit les pères de famille,
Passant, après le jour fini,
En se signant, dire à leur fille :
'La Maison d'Or . . . et Tortoni!'"

IV.

Tortoni's under the Third Republic has had but a long story of failing fortune, of the old spirit growing weak and expiring before the breath of the new. "With the tastes of the new public," says M. Percheron, who has full experience of both Empire and Republic, "I prefer simply to withdraw rather than keep up a business that ends in a yearly loss."

The story has none the less meaning because, from its material side, it has to tell of vulgar details, — of the reduction of Parisian expenditure in eating to a democratic dead level, and of the steady advance of cheap exotic drinks. There are less important events in history than the victories of the English bar and German brewery in Paris, — the triumphal march of American mixed drinks and Bavarian beer. They connote something else than the cosmopolitan and democratic air which has come to pervade the French capital. They correspond with vital changes in the ideals of social life.

The gods who sat at drink on Tortoni's terrace had until now been feared and respected. Their divinity was chiefly critical, not to say cynical. They had themselves succeeded; they knew what was correct, and what was fit only for laughter. Would-be dandies and artists and men of letters sighed as they passed, and longed, if only for a day, to take their place among these *heureux du jour*.

But now, with the abolition of the court, society suddenly turned bourgeois, or retreated into haunts exclusive of the new Republican noblesse. Practical politicians were not likely to have time for an evening rendezvous of superfine wit and elegance. Worst of all, literature and art itself became a matter of commerce, and the buyers were the successful bourgeois. It was the age of shopkeepers with the money to pay for their likings, and with a strong dislike for all the fastidious Olympian ways. They would have what they liked in the pleasures of the mind, —

and their virgin minds were full of all curiosity. They would also have what their healthy animal appetites demanded in food and drink. Both desires were fatal to Tortoni's. Perish elegance, and *vive le comfortable anglais!*

All this was quite apart from the really serious life of the nation, whose deeper currents never flowed through the Boulevard: not with Lamennais and Guizot under the kings; not with Thiers become a grave statesman, and Lamartine turned politician; not with the three Jules, Favre and Simon and Ferry, in their opposition to the Empire. The little circle at Tortoni's — there were scarce a dozen tables in all — was never anything but that *haute gomme* which reflected the sunlight of a life running in a narrow groove. With the break-up of the Empire, life dashed into a hundred new channels; and the triumphant bourgeois only laughed at the idea of a controlling circle of wits. It is his money which must pay for the absinthe of the men of letters; and he gives his money for his own pleasure, and not at the dictation of Olympians who stand apart. The chronique of fashionable life died from the Boulevard press. Its place was taken by the *reportage* of the scandals of Tout-Paris, and by the literature of decadence, erotic, blasphemous, aping by turns the dandies and Bohemians of other days, and abject in its worship of the *chic.*

Guy de Maupassant is a bright instance of the qualifications for success under this new régime, joining with his superb talent an unerring scent of all that makes popularity and brings a material reward. Yet it was Flaubert, of the older school, who wrote loftily: "The chief thing in this world is to keep one's soul on the heights, far from the bourgeois and democratic mire." He lived to see the literary supply carefully adapting itself to the bourgeois demand, in quantity as well as in quality. The Olympian days are over. Muses that are but nine may sit apart in a narrow circle round some spring of Helicon; but a whole army of ballet dancers must needs dabble its feet from banks spacious as those of the river Lethe.

The bourgeois, because he has become the chief patron of art and letters, does not on that account mingle the ideal with his food and drink. The *gramolata* and the *sorbet à l'orangeade* peculiar to Tortoni's entice him but moderately. The dainty ices do not agree with his ruder build; and he cannot but feel the supercilious glances with which he is visited by the select few still lingering round the little tables. He has developed a liking for beer, which is cheap and cold, and given out on little tables, equally fine and far more numerous, in front of the great *brasseries.* The world, too, is heartier there and less critical, acknowledging the advent of democracy.

In Napoleon's time, a countrified beer was known under the pompous name of *bière de Mars.* It was sold in bottles, and had a vapid sparkle when tossed off hastily. It was looked on askance at Tortoni's; and the bocks, as they grew in favor, had to be drunk at humbler and more Bohemian cafés. After the débâcle, when the Prussian cannonades had ceased, the Parisian suddenly became cosmopolitan in his thirst, receiving aid and comfort from the strangers who now flocked again to his City of Light. Bavarian beer is now sold all along the Boulevard, and the *tavernes* and *brasseries* have been decked out with a gaudy magnificence that appeals to the bourgeois mind. The wooden ceilings are carved and gilded, and the walls are paneled in shining tiles. Everywhere clusters of the electric light hypnotize the sight; and the beer is pumped up, foaming, from the ice. Tortoni's, gray and narrow and thinly correct, in the presence of all this was but an antiquity of pale rococo splendor.

One by one, its compeers of the olden time fell away. Imoda's, which was

started several régimes back to run competition with Tortoni's uniqueness, disappeared; and in its place an English bar was seen, with a boy, in the red coat and chin-strapped tilted cap of Britannia's men-at-arms, hovering round the open door. Another frankly converted itself into a brasserie, where the *demis* and *quarts* of beer took the place of the *sorbets* and *granits* introduced by Velloni. In the last days, even Tortoni's showed some faint irresolution. On the printed leaflet of its ices there appeared, painfully written in by hand, with a spelling that protested, the "cherry gobler" and the "coketel." There was also the *bière de Pilsen*, and even a *bock comète;* and then, in fine disdain of all this commonalty, there was a new triumph of the old elegant art in the *bock champagne*.

All was of no avail. The world for which Tortoni's had existed was ceasing to be. Its déjeuners and its after-theatre suppers were still unrivaled; but the multitudinous clubs and elegant *cercles* furnished their members with an attractive substitute, cheaper and better served, — such is the power of organization. The catering to fine society in the town also met with serious competition; and moreover, the Paris season of these later years lasts scarcely from January to June. The *névrose* of the Wandering Jew has seized on the rich of to-day; the sea in summer, the hunt and vintage through the autumn, and the search for sunshine all the winter long are not favorable to the methods of the First Empire.

As to the bourgeois, they frankly preferred worse fare for less money. Now and then, some rich American, mindful of the legend of other days, treated himself to the sensation of dining by night at Tortoni's. But his lavishness in champagne too often befuddled his intellect noisily, to the damage of all reputation for elegance and literature. The absinthe of the habitués, mellow with the aroma of the same barrel refilled for forty years, was not for this, but to clear and animate the mind to an ideal state.

Even the occasional and ceremonious conviviality of men of letters no longer found any proper centre. For a time it lingered round the salons of Papa Brébant, the *restaurateur des lettres.* He was the founder of those *bouillons Parisiens* in which the minute cheapness of the establishments of Duval the butcher is joined with a more æsthetic *cuisine* and environment. In his chief house, farther down the Boulevard than the tide of fashion flows regularly, he welcomed for many years the masters of learning and literary style. Renan often presided; Taine, the "executioner of work," was persuaded to be present; and the young Melchior de Vogüé sat beside, believing in war and earnestness, and already beginning that "Neo-Christian" movement which would fain withdraw the French youth altogether from the intellectual cynicism and physical degeneracy of the idling Boulevard. The Goncourt brothers came hither, also, fresh from the gossip of Tortoni's, and went away to recount ruthlessly, in their terrible Journal, all the inappropriate talk they had heard.

But the higher letters have been unable to keep a common rallying point in this new Paris. Paul Bourget travels abroad, Maurice Barrès goes in for politics, and so on with the rest of the younger men. And then all the world and his wife have taken to the brasseries. Sarcey is seen at Montmartre. Catulle Mendès, — poet, playwright, story-teller, and idol of the bourgeois Boulevard, — although faithful to the end to Tortoni's green hour, with its assembly of decadent wits of Rambouillet, is a no less faithful sharer in the night refreshment of the Taverne Pousset. It is there, on the full Boulevard des Italiens, when the cafés have already put up their shutters, that the cabs stand three deep in the street,

while the long rows of little tables still swarm with all sorts and conditions of men — and women. The male world of distinction can no longer centralize itself. As well look for a Grub Street of poets in London as for another Tortoni's in Paris. Its glacier, which once shone like the Alps, has been leveled down and out of existence by the melting sunlight of democracy.

The clique of new wits and old chroniqueurs which, in these last days, has continued to give its final distinction to Tortoni's would have been ranked as provincial in a smaller city. In Paris it was narrowly Parisian. There were painters, like Gervex and Alfred Stevens and the *fin-de-siècle* Béraud, who translates the Christ of the Gospels into the customs and costumes of the workingmen of Montmartre; Forain, who designs the contemporary Comédie-Parisienne more frankly and pitilessly than Gavarni in the thirties; Charpentier, who has published half the Parisian thought of the last decades; poets, like Octave Pradels and Mendès, who speak of the unmentionable (which is also proper to Paris); the representatives of the newest Boulevard literature, like Abel Hermant and Courteline of the Théâtre-libre; Paul Arène, the *feuilletoniste*, who dates back to Sainte-Beuve; and others more or less known to the ever dwindling Boulevard world of music and art and letters.

"Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus!" It was seven o'clock, and the talk languished before the final separation. Aurélien Scholl, last of the classic boulevardiers, in violet cravat, sat gloomily amid the circle, throned like a patriarch in irreproachable correctness.

"Where shall we find Scholl, for arbitration and counsel, before the six-o'clock duels?" said one; for he made the art of the duel his own, in the days of elegant honor.

"And where shall we get the news after the encounters? Where will Mendès make his entrance with his following, when he has an affair again?"

Nowhere. Olympus has dropped out of the universe.

"Adieu!" Scholl cried, arising. "We shall see each other no more!"

"All is over!" groaned Stevens.

"As well throw one's self into the water!" answered the veteran sadly; then, standing, "Come, one cup more, — the last!"

As he walked away, Stevens whispered, "To-morrow you'll see Scholl seated here at a little table, alone, before the closed door."

He has done better; in a column of unwonted earnestness he has written his farewell to the place.

He has a deserved compliment for the last proprietor, who has yielded only to the Zeitgeist: "He yields blamelessly. He has defended butter against margarine, the consommé of beef against Liebig's extract, early vegetables against the canned, wine against beer, *eau de vie* against rectified spirits. But the struggle became impossible. *Apéritifs* the most preposterous vie with each other for the favor of a blasé public."

Such is all life to-day. "Everything is passing away. The great restaurants, with prices inaccessible to the fastidious bourgeoisie, are vanishing one by one. In their stead are opened the bouillon and the brasserie.

"And you will see, it will be the same for the theatres. Fifteen years from now all the theatres will be replaced by cafés-concerts. Ah! the public will not be difficult either for the prose or for the verse. A school of poets has already substituted assonance for rhyme. The times draw near!"

To Aurélien Scholl the proprietor presented one of the three black-marble-topped tables remaining from the time of the First Empire. "Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis."

Stoddard Dewey.