

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE END OF ONE.



LIVELY sense of the dangers of misinterpretation makes me hasten to explain the title of this paper. I am the End of One, and my observations were made in the "Sans Nom" dining-rooms, where I was once in the habit of getting my midday meal for a period of about three years. I used to attend at an early hour, and thus, having my choice of position, I invariably

placed myself at the end seat of the first table. Hence my title. My requirements being regular became known at last to the management, and as soon as I had taken my seat, the order for "brown bread and half of stout to the End of One" was given by the superintendent of the room to one of the waiters. Whatever my subsequent wants were, they were always ministered to as those of the End of One, and to the last occasion of my attendance I was never known by any other appellation.

My recollections of my companions at the table always amuse me. Here would come a dyspeptic man, who used to drop silently into a chair opposite me, and scan the bill of fare with an anxious and troubled countenance. He would frequently order some dish so proverbially indigestible as to send a thrill of horror through me, and make me seriously consider what my position would be in a legal point of view if he hastened his own death while I sat silent and observant only.

Then there was a gloomy, globular foreigner, with an enormous sandy moustache, and glistening spectacles which reflected two little miniatures of the whole room. His favourite dinner, which he ordered in such a bass voice as to startle strangers, was—

"Rose bif, pottitoe, turnytops, wid 'arve a poind of shdoud an' bidder."

And there were two friends who would come sometimes, and eat most prodigious dinners, never speaking a word to one another to distract attention from the all-important business of gobbling, except perhaps when one would look up and say—

"How are you getting on, old man?"

To which the other would reply—

"First-rate."

As indeed he certainly was.

Some idea of the amount of work done in these rooms may be gathered from the following facts:—Five hundred people dined here before the clock struck

one, and the daily total average was over fifteen hundred. Plates of roast beef and roast mutton and other joints, for which there was always a steady demand, were kept standing upon the hot-plate—*i.e.*, a long metal counter heated by gas—six or eight dozen at a time! Imagine half-a-gross of plates of roast mutton! A breakage of two dozen plates a day was recognised as an unavoidable necessity, and was provided for by a standing order for a hundred dozen, always in course of manufacture at the potteries. Each diner was charged a penny for attendance, and this one item alone realised close on forty pounds a week.

The alertness and memory of the waiters were truly admirable. There was one waiter named Sam, whom I have hardly ever known to make a mistake. He used to collect half-a-dozen orders from as many tables, and after being absent four or five minutes, he would return and serve each customer with his dinner, with an unflinching correctness I marvelled at greatly. Once I recollect his giving the dyspeptic man's dinner to the foreigner, but the latter had hardly time to exclaim, "Ha! here! hullo!" when the matter was set right again.

I once was rather irritable with Sam because he kept me waiting over-long for my dinner; but on subsequently ascertaining a little more of his private affairs, I always treated him with leniency, although it must be said he very seldom stood in need of any such indulgence. What a life of labour that man led! Besides his post at the dining-rooms, he held a situation at one of the music-halls, and his daily routine of duties was as follows:—He rose at six, and was out of the house by half-past seven. He arrived at the music-hall about eight, and immediately busied himself by cleaning and dusting the hall, and clearing away the various adjuncts of the previous evening's revelry. This occupied him till eleven, when he started for his second sphere of work, the dining-rooms, where he was duly reprimanded if he did not arrive before a quarter to twelve. From twelve until three was hard work without a moment's rest. At three he dined, and continued to attend to diners up to seven in the evening, when the dining-rooms closed. But the work at the music-hall was just commencing, so he had to hurry across London to commence his evening's avocation. He would then be briskly engaged until twelve midnight. Then this toiler would go home, and, needless to say, to bed, to rise again at six the next morning, and go through a similar day's programme.

Think of that, all you who are inclined to grumble at the number of hours you work, and the hardness of the labour you perform! Think of that, and be content when you hear that Sam's earnings did not exceed two pounds per week and his dinners. One would have thought, too, that among his hardships one advantage would surely have been his—*viz.*, good eating and

drinking. A man, it would naturally be concluded, who spends his day among soups, fishes, joints, and entrées, would probably be able to pick up a satisfactory dinner on his own account. Even this, however, was denied to him, for the benevolent proprietors for whom he worked provided for the dinners of their employés by collecting together all the bits, scraps, remnants, and leavings throughout the place. These were delivered to the head cook, who, placing them in a large dish specially made for the purpose, seasoned, spiced, and sauced them with various condiments, of which I was not permitted to know the names, and then passed them over to a second cook, with instructions to "put a crust over that." This injunction being fulfilled, the composition was duly baked, and then formed the material for the "waiters' dinners."

In order to give my readers an adequate idea of the comprehensive assortment contained in this "entrée," it may be mentioned that one of the waiters had served out to him on the same plate a leg of a turkey (turkey had not been on the bill of fare for a fortnight), a piece of cod's liver, and a slice of veal, with a portion of the crust under whose protecting shadow these

incongruous morsels had been united. Mind, I don't mean to affirm that this is the universal method of "dining" waiters; I know of some dining rooms where these gentlemen have as fair a dinner catered for them as any average one served by themselves to the most regular and respected of customers. And we must acknowledge that this, after all, is only fair; for the endless smell of dinners is enough to make one squeamish.

Poor Sam! I am nervous lest the reader should imagine that I must necessarily be going to conclude with an appeal on behalf of my waiter's wife and children, an appeal supported by a baronet and the rector of the parish, to whom cheques and postage stamps may be sent. But, no. Sam's labours may not be fruitless of benefit to his kind, however, if you should be a little more tolerant of all waiters for his sake, and when your chop or your pastry does not come exact to time, should check the hasty complaint while thinking of his life and work. And this not the less, I hope, for the fact that these have long since ceased for aye, and that Sam, after waiting on other persons all his days, has at length been waited on himself by Death.



THE CHURCH OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

BY ISABELLA BANKS.

TO the green primeval forests across the western
wave,
Oppression drove a slender band of true hearts
strong and brave:
They could not think as others thought, nor feel as
others felt,
Nor obey the royal edict to kneel where others
knelt;
But they had heard of shores afar by priestly feet
untrod;
So they sought that land for conscience' sake—their
guiding star, their God!

No gallant bark was theirs to steer, only a time-worn
boat,
With stores as small as seamanship—and yet she
kept afloat,
For Faith and Hope were at the helm amid the
tempest's roar;—
But Hope was dead and Faith was numb before
they reached the shore,
Where children faint, and women pale, first pressed
their feeble feet,
And stretched out hungry hands to clasp their last
few grains of wheat.