

A FRENCH DINNER IN LONDON.



H EIGHO!
 another
 y a w n,
 and I awake
 to the fact that
 I have slept,
 this dull after-
 noon, some—
 let me see,
 half-past five
 o'clock—yes,
 some two
 hours by my
 fireside, or
 what *was* my
 fireside, for
 the grate now
 contains but a
 heap of ashes
 scarcely hot in
 themselves,
 certainly not

possessing sufficient caloric to impart the least warmth to the being who from the contemplation of it turns to ascertain the state of the weather out-of-doors. What little light there might be is obscured by a thick yellow fog, which hangs as a pall over everything. Certainly not a very enticing atmosphere in which to set out for a stroll, but anything is better than to wait and see the fire re-lit, perhaps to go out half-a-dozen times before assuming a cheerful appearance.

So, well wrapped up, I set out, and after a brisk walk of about ten minutes, find myself in Oxford Street. Never caring to walk without some object in view, however trivial, the question arises, where am I going, and what am I about to do? No places of public resort are yet open, so I must perforce look for amusement elsewhere. "Permettez-moi, monsieur," from a man who politely hands me a piece of paper, whereon is printed, "Table-d'hôte à six heures, à 1s. 6d.—Café ———, ——— Street."

What an opportunity for whiling away an hour in the study of humanity while attending to the dictates of nature! Though perhaps my gastronomic cravings may not be satisfied so delicately as they might be elsewhere, yet on the other hand there will be the novelty of finding myself in so unusual a place, and surrounded by strangers and foreigners. It is astonishing what a fund of amusement may be obtained from a careful observation of our fellow-men, and experience has taught me that the habit of free converse with any and every one in whose company one may at the time chance to be, not only tends to widen one's knowledge of human nature, but at the same time inculcates good feeling and that frankness of address to which every man should strive to attain.

Arrived at the café, I take my seat at one of two long tables, each capable of accommodating about twenty guests. Around them some thirty people are

already seated, for I am somewhat late, and the soup is being served.

On looking round I find myself in an assembly of persons of both sexes, nearly all of whom appear to be foreigners. Opposite me is a man whose nationality I cannot determine; dinner is beyond doubt his sole care, for, without waiting for his soup, he makes a vigorous onslaught on the bread, two or three huge pieces of which he quietly appropriates.

Having finished my soup, which, though decidedly *maigre*, is anything but unpalatable, my attention is arrested by a gruff voice calling, "Here, waiter, some more o' that." The words proceed from the mouth of an individual of most extraordinary appearance, apparently about sixty years of age, short, stout, and rejoicing in a great display of shirt-front—the latter anything but clean, which may be at once accounted for, seeing that it becomes the receptacle for about a third of each spoonful of soup—of him more anon, for here comes the fish. Boiled cod with—oyster sauce?—No; with what is the usual accompaniment of boiled mutton in England—caper sauce. Ah! well, the taste shown is not so bad after all—at any rate, our old friend before-mentioned doesn't seem to think so, for having quickly disposed of his first helping, and having kept one eye on his plate and the other on the remains of the marine monster in the dish while so doing (for his eyes cross, thereby adding to the grotesqueness of his visage), he again thunders forth an appeal for more, which he has scarcely demolished before the *entrée* arrives.

The ingredients of this dish it is somewhat difficult to name, consisting, in appearance at least, of vegetables of various kinds, chopped and cooked with oil. Our friend, after examining the compound with his best eye, evidently comes to the conclusion that it's all right; and having found it to his liking, he looks quite discomforted when he discovers he is too late for more.

And here a word for the claret, of which on my first arrival a pint bottle was placed before me. Though somewhat rough and new, it is a sound and wholesome wine, much appreciated by the foreigners, if one may judge from the avidity with which they drink it. I am disturbed from my cogitation as to its merit by my right-hand neighbour—a Frenchman—who, with many apologies, requests me to translate to him an English letter which he hands me for perusal. I find it is from an English firm, declining his proffered services; and as I, in the best French I can muster, explain this to him, his look of disappointment is pitiable to see. On inquiry he tells me that to every application for employment he has made during the last three months he has received the same reply.

Now the more substantial part of the repast is served—a hot roast leg of mutton, accompanied by a delicious salad, made as few but Frenchmen know how. Stewed pears, followed by Gruyère cheese, conclude a most satisfactory dinner, everything—the

before-mentioned pint of claret included—costing but eighteen-pence!

Coffee is now served to those who wish it, and our opposite neighbour, who has carried out his evident determination of getting the most for his money, at the sight of the fragrant beverage wakes up from the lethargic state into which his gastronomic labours have thrown him, and inquires of the waiter, "Extra, isn't it?" and on being answered in the affirmative, growls out, "Then I won't have any," immediately preparing to depart. He produces a two-shilling-piece, and on the waiter, with the usual foresight of his *genus*, returning him the change, sixpence, in coppers, the old gourmand pockets the lot, to the evident disgust of the garçon, who says to him in broken English—

"Vell, sar, I sall hope you not come here again, or ve sall have to raise de prices."

The old man, looking perfectly unconscious, places on his head an enormous white hat, winds a huge muffler round his neck, shoulders his umbrella, or rather the ghost of one, and departs.

And now for one or two other occupants of the

room, who have attracted my attention during dinner by some peculiarity or other.

A single glance at a couple within a few yards of me is sufficient to tell me they are Germans, even before they have spoken a word—evidently man and wife, the husband showing his watchful care for the object of his affection by transferring from his plate to hers all the choicest morsels. Next to these two sits a diminutive Italian, the ferocity of whose glances at the waiter, when not attended to with sufficient promptness, is ludicrous to behold. My left-hand neighbour, his taciturnity overcome by my offer of a cigar, proves to be a military man who has seen much service in India, and has met with many exciting adventures, some of which he details with a quiet modesty which in itself is sufficient guarantee for their truth.

And now, my coffee finished, I bid my neighbours good night; and amid an animated discussion between a Republican and an Imperialist, which might have been interesting if more intelligible, I take my departure, having spent a couple of hours most pleasantly and, I hope, also most profitably.

HOME DRESSMAKING.

PART THE FIRST.—CUTTING OUT.



DRESSMAKING has—unfortunately, we think—been long considered a mystery too recondite for any but professional minds to unravel. But this is quite an erroneous impression, and it will be our endeavour in

these pages to give clear directions by which the most inexperienced may, with a little care, trouble, and practice, be enabled not only to make their own dresses, but to insure their fitting satisfactorily. Probably the first attempt may not be perfectly successful, nor may the second; but, with perseverance, success is certain, and the economy achieved will be immense, besides the pleasing power being attained of exercising individual taste, and rendering the costume other than the exact counterpart of all those around.

The first object to be considered is the construction of an absolutely correct, well-fitting pattern, by which all patterns of special garments procured at different times must be remodelled. It is the neglect of this necessary remodelling that so frequently induces discontent with bought patterns; ladies will cut by them—forgetting that they are cut to a general average, not an individual figure—and are then disappointed to find that the garment is a failure.

A pattern may be taken in two ways—either by fitting on a holland body or by measurement, the latter being by far the easier and more satisfactory, besides not requiring assistance, as the fitting on necessarily does. Of course, great care and accuracy are requisite in taking the measurements, and they should be at once written down, and never trusted to memory.

Take an inch measure, and measure first the length of the bodice in front. Write down on a sheet of paper, (1) length of front of bodice, — inches. Then measure the size of the neck, and mark it (2) size of neck, — inches, and so on for all the other measurements. Those required are:—Size round the figure taken under the arms, width of chest at the top of the shoulder taken from the centre of the front of the bodice, length from the point where the shoulder-seam joins the neck-band crosswise to the front of the waist, size of the waist, length of the centre of the back, width of the shoulders taken at the top of the arm, length from neck to top of arm, length of the arm straight, the same with the elbow bent, size of the wrist, size of the arm-hole—making thirteen necessary measurements for the bodice. They should be taken fairly, with no undue tightening of the measure.

Now that dresses are so closely fitted on the hips, it is necessary to measure them about four inches, and again about eight inches below the waist; then measure the proper length of the skirt in front, on the hips, and at the back, noting the measurements carefully, as has already been done for the body. The next step is to construct a paper pattern from these measurements; and it should be borne in mind that, as the correct fit of the dress depends entirely upon the pattern, no trouble should be spared in making it quite perfect.

Take a large sheet of paper, and draw a line exactly the length of the front of the bodice, then another at the top at right angles to it, precisely half the width of the chest, then the one from the junction of the shoulder-seam and neck-band to the bottom of the front line. Another line at right angles to the first one gives half