

The Most Extraordinary Dinner on Earth.

BY ALBERT H. BROADWELL. PHOTOGRAPHS BY A. J. JOHNSON.



AN ELDERLY GENTLEMAN AND A PREPOSSESSING LADY ENTER THE DINING-ROOM.

them that is pleasing—at a distance! They catch and throw, and juggle and throw, and catch and throw again; sometimes they miss, and then there's a crash and a bang, and the fragments of plates and glasses fly like chaff in the wind.

They are stage waiters, and form part of a group of four clever performers who go by the name of The Rambler Troupe, and their ramblings have taken them



WAITERS are proverbially clever; in fact, they are mostly too clever for anything or anybody. The man who ever gets the better of a waiter has yet to be found.

Not that waiters are not human after all, and who would blame them?—but they have a sublime way of juggling with your change, and in such a way, too, that would have you believe that coppers were withdrawn from circulation for the time being.

There are two waiters *par excellence* who claim special notice at our hands at present. There is no half-and-half way about them; they take the cake, the biscuit, the pancake, the bun, the wedding cake, and the champion cake all in one. There is a swing about

to most parts of the habitable globe, to the intense enjoyment of thousands of people.

It has been the writer's good fortune to witness the Ramblers' clever act at the Alhambra Theatre, Leicester Square, and he has much pleasure in acknowledging herewith the courteous assistance of Messrs. Dundas Slater and E. A. Pickering, the able



CATCHES THE VISITOR'S HAT ON HIS HEAD.



THE GUEST LAYS HIS CIGAR ON A TABLE.

managers of one of the best places of amusement in London, in obtaining this photographic interview for the special benefit of STRAND readers.

The photographs as shown in this article are exact reproductions of the doings that take place on the stage; it is a pity that much of the actual movement is lost, but then we cannot claim to run cinematograph pictures through the pages of a magazine. These snap-shots, however, will convey in some measure the marvellous proceedings which take place in the course of this the most extraordinary dinner on earth.

An elderly gentleman and a lady of prepossessing appearance enter the dining-room of a restaurant. They are received by two waiters of the most approved and up-to-date type; their names, *pro tem.*, will be Garçon No. 1 and Garçon No. 2. Garçon No. 1 takes upon himself the onerous task of unloading the happy pair of

their coats, stick, and fan; with an artful twist he throws up the gentleman's hat (whilst the latter isn't looking) and catches it on the back of his head in the most comical manner. These preliminaries are shown in our pictures on the preceding page.

Now, however, they are entering upon a more serious phase of the business. It is proverbially difficult to do two things properly at

one and the same time, so that our worthy guest places a half-smoked Havana of the finest brand upon the edge of a small table close by. The waiters spot this, of course, and there's a rush for the coveted weed.

Garçon No. 2 makes a dash, but misses. Garçon No. 1 quickly picks up table and all and by an artful twist, and an equally artful jerk, he throws the cigar up into the air and catches it in his open mouth with the consummate skill of an expert juggler. Result: Consternation of Garçon No. 2.



GARÇON NO. 1 THROWS THE CIGAR FROM THE



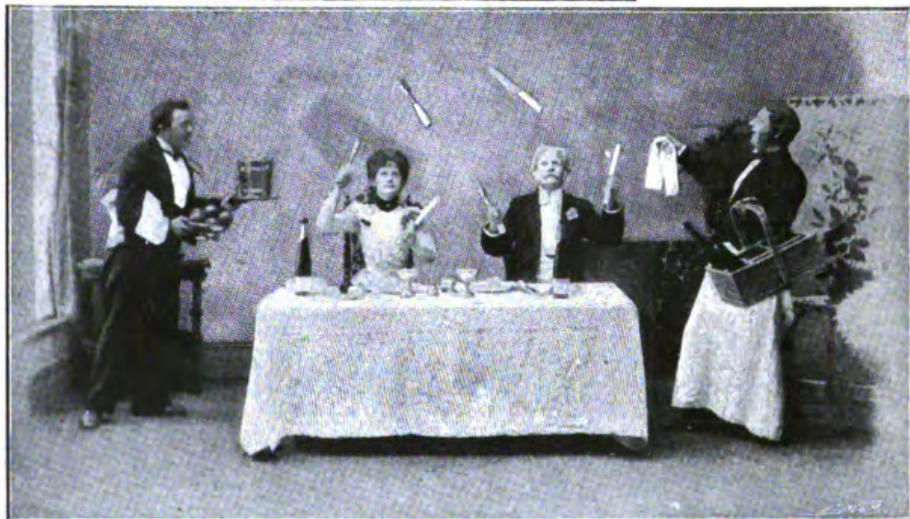
"Yes, sir," comes from both attendants, simultaneously, and no sooner said than done: quicker than lightning those lamps fly right up to the ceiling and are caught again and placed aside, to the horror and amazement of the diners!

It is the waiters' turn to be startled, however, for no sooner have they returned with the necessaries "to follow" than the lady does a little juggling of her own.

UP GO THE LAMPS —

In the meantime our guests have taken their places, but somehow the pretty but cumbersome standard lamps, with their gorgeous shades of flaming red silk, are found to be in the way.

"Here, garçon, remove those lamps, will you?"



—AND THE KNIVES, FORKS, AND SPOONS.

Up go the serviettes, to the consternation of Garçons 1 and 2, who are fairly caught at their own game.

The example seems contagious; certain gentlemen have opinions of their own about themselves, and they are often prone to think that, if one of the



—AND THE SERVIETTES—



ENTER THE SOUP!

weaker sex should happen to be on the high road to supremacy, she should be quickly suppressed or put into her proper place; so up go the gentleman's knives and forks and spoons in a rush. He has quite forgotten his dinner: he *will* show his



IT SPINS ON THE HANDLE OF THE SOUP LADLE.



EXIT THE SOUP!

fair partner that *she* is by no means the only pebble on the beach. No, there are others, and he is one of them. But, lo! *her* knives and *her* spoons and *her* forks follow *his* knives, *his* spoons, and *his* forks in rapid succession. In fact, it is a case of a knife for a knife and a spoon for a spoon!

The waiters are happy: here at last they have met with a pair worthy of their steel! No. 1 is jubilant; No. 2 tries to look like it.

"Enough, enough; soup, waiter, do you hear? Bring the soup, or I'll wipe the floor with you."

"Clear or thick?"

"Clear, and be quick about it," comes the stinging reply.

There is a lull



THE COINS DISAPPEAR INTO HIS WAISTCOAT POCKET.

The dinner proper is nearly over by this time, and the bill is duly presented. With a flourish and much twisting of the silver dish in his right hand Garçon No. 2 approaches timidly. He nearly drops the dish on to the gentleman's head, recovers himself in time, smiles, and gets a splendid tip for the quiet way in which he and his friend have performed their duties.

Proverbially suspicious, Garçon No. 1 approaches from behind and is on the point of seizing what seems to him a fair share of the

and a hush, a dead silence creeps over an overstrung audience. What-ever is going to happen now?

Whoop—br—bang! Enter the soup! It flies from one side of the room to the other, from one pair of hands into another pair of hands. Flop! Has he missed it? No, he smiles and bows and scrapes and "Clear or thick, madam?" in a whisper, follows what promised to be an exciting episode. It is an anti-climax such as we meet with every day.

The lid is removed and a cloud of steam rises to the ceiling. It is soup, real soup, and spectators gaze aghast. After all, "the proof of the soup is in the steaming."

Whoop—br—bang! Out goes the soup! Back it flies the way it came, over the heads of the guests on to the very tip of the soup ladle, where it whirrs and twists fast enough to be turned into ice-cream, if only the motion lasted long enough.

profits, when, with a dexterous jerk, up go the coins, to disappear, in a glittering shower, into the waistcoat pocket of Garçon No. 2.

It seems that juggling, like many other diseases, is contagious in the extreme. I knew a young fellow, smart in his way, who would insist upon showing me how to spirit a penny by means of a handkerchief, an overcoat, a silk hat, and a perambulator. He was so engrossed in finding the latter that I conveniently disappeared, and soon breathed once



THE BOTTLES KEEP TIME TO A WALTZ.



TWENTY ORANGES ON THE MOVE.

more the fresh air of my old-world suburban rose-garden. I used to think that juggling as a fine art might pay, but I gave it up after that.

Not so our friends; but, then, they are professionals. Watch their bottle performance and listen to the tick-tack, bang-bang,

Garçon No. 1 comes in with a vengeance. His late guests and Garçon No. 2 have before them two piles of plates, numbering something like a hundred altogether. These, have evidently to be transferred from one table to another. Whirr—whizz—whirr—whizz—follow each other for quite thirty



REMOVING THE PLATES.

tick-tack, bang-bang as the lower edges of their bottles keep time on the edge of the dining table to the tune of a popular waltz.

Not content with juggling all the available bottles, they unite in thorough good fellow-

seconds, while the plates fly from one table to another with amazing swiftness.

Garçon No. 1 catches them in their flight and places them on the table before him, without missing so much as a solitary one.

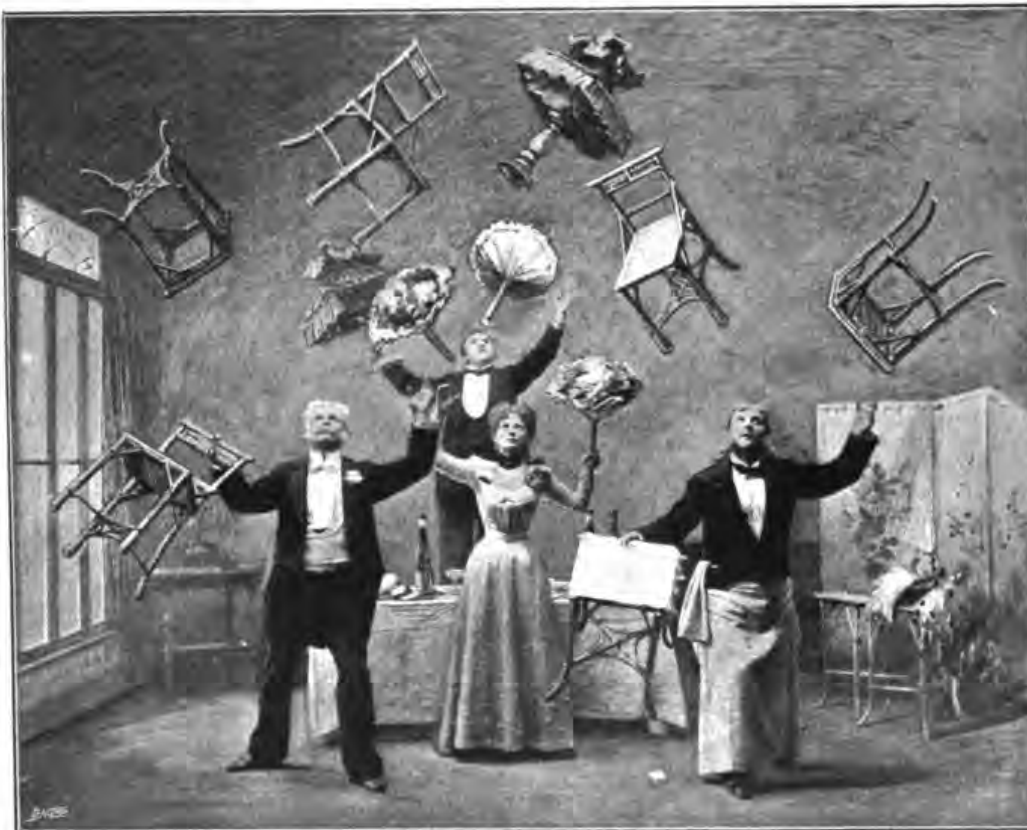
It is awful to contemplate what might happen should the unfortunate man miss a couple, or even one, of the delicate missiles as they come in quick succession.

The bottles are gone, the fruit is gone, the plates are gone: there are only the tables, and chairs, and lamps, and flowers left. Hurrah! Up goes a chair, then a table, then a lamp, and a bouquet. Then more chairs and more tables, and more lamps and more bouquets. They fly all over the room. The air is thick with them. Yet not one is missed. They all come back to their owners in due course. The Ramblers are clever—very clever, in fact, and they are genuinely funny and amusing.

There is a menu provided, but this, of course, is for private circulation only. We caught a glimpse of it, and glimpses are all you can reasonably expect, considering the rate at which these good people dine. We here give a few of the items that form

part of the bill of fare provided for the occasion:—

- Hors d'Œuvres.
- Sardines on the Wing. Slippery Olives.
- Anchovies quickly.
- Soup.
- First clear, then thick, à la whoop—brr—bang—flop!
- Fish.
- Poisson d'avril à la flying salmon.
- Entrées.
- Anyhow on toast.
- Joint.
- Roast beef, mashed out of shape à la squashed.
- Roast.
- Flying roosters à la Lee-Metford.
- Bullet-proof Yorkshire pudding.
- Salad.
- Let-us-go! and other kinds ad lib.
- Sweets.
- Blanc mange all over the place.
- Cheese.
- Emilezola. Petits Suisses. Stilton à la Hurry.
- Glaces.
- Bombs Glencoe and Modder. Shrapnel Special.
- Coffee quick as lightning, etc.



"THE AIR IS THICK WITH THEM."