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NOTHING  
TO FEAR



*W. H. Murray*



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“PROTESTING, EXCUSING AND SWEAVING A VOW,”  
SHE'D NOTHING WORTH EATING TO GIVE US FOR L.I.N.E.”

# NOTHING TO EAT.

Illustrated.

NOT

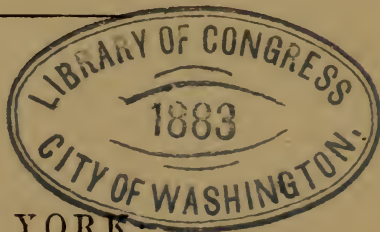
By the Author of "Nothing to Wear."

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"I'll nibble a little at what I have got."

———"My appetite's none of the best,  
And so I must pamper the delicate thing."

———"The least mite will suffice;  
A side bone and dressing and bit of the breast,  
The tip of the rump—that's it—and one of the fil's."



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EDWARD O. JENKINS,  
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Respectfully Dedicated

TO ALL LADIES "DYING WITH DYSPEPSIA.

"Where fashion and folly are all of a suit."

BY A JOLLY GOOD NATURED

AUTHOR.



Preface.





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# Nothing to Eat.

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Not by the Author of "Nothing to Wear."

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## The Argument.

**T**HOUGH famine prevails not at all in  
the city ;

Though none of starvation have died in  
the street ;

Yet many there are now exciting our pity,  
Who're daily complaining of nothing to eat.

The every-day cry and the every-day fare,

That's every day heard where the Livewells  
are dining,

Is nothing to eat, or else nothing to wear,  
Which naked and starving rich Merdles are  
whining.

There's Kitty Malone — Mrs. Merdle 'tis  
now—

Was ever on earth here before such a sinner ;  
Protesting, excusing and swearing a vow,  
She'd nothing worth eating to give us for  
dinner.

Why Kitty, if starving for want of a meal,  
And had'nt a cent in the world to buy  
meat,

You wouldn't exclaim with a more pious  
zeal,

“I'm dying of hunger — we've nothing to  
eat!!”

The Proof—the Queen of Fashion.

THE point I advance, if it need confirmation,

I'll prove by a witness that few will dispute,

A pink of perfection and truth in the nation

Where fashion and folly are all of a suit.

'Tis "Merdle the banker" — or rather his wife,

Whose fashion, religion, or music, or dress,  
Is followed, consulted, by many through life,  
As pilots are followed by ships in distress;

12      N O T H I N G   T O   E A T .

For money's a pilot, a master, a king,  
Which men follow blindly through quick-  
sands and shoals,  
Where pilots their ships in a moment  
might fling  
To destruction the vessel and cargo and  
souls.

'Twas money made Kitty of fashion the  
queen,  
And fortune oft lends queens the scepter ;  
So fortune and fashion with this one we've  
seen  
Her money and fortune in fashion has kept  
her ;  
While slaves of the queen with her hoops  
rules the day,

Expanding their utmost extent of expansion,  
 sion,

And mandates of fashion most freely obey,

And would if it bid all their souls to extinction.

The Object aimed at.

**B**UT what "lady patron" as queen  
 holds the sway ;

Or sweeping, whose hoops in the street  
 are most sweeping ;

The burthen is not of this truth-telling lay,  
 That should in its reading the world set  
 to weeping,

14      N O T H I N G   T O   E A T .

While telling the suff'rings from head to  
    the feet,  
Of poor human beings with *nothing to eat*.

What another Poet did.

**A** N O T H E R expounder of life's thorny  
    mazes

Excited our pity at fortune's hard fare,  
And troubled the city's most troublesome  
    places,

While singing his ditty of "Nothing to  
    Wear."

"A tale worth the telling," though I tell  
    for the same,



Great objects of pity we see in the street,  
With nothing to wear, though a legion by  
name,  
Is not to buy clothing, but something to eat.

*How the Author sometimes Dines.*

**A**ND now by your leave I will try to  
expound it,

In truth as it is and the way that I found  
it.

My dinner, sometimes, like things transcend-  
ental

And things more substantial, like women  
and wine

A thing is, uncertain, and quite accidental,  
And sometimes I wonder, "Oh! where  
shall I dine?"

It was when reflecting one evening of late,  
What tavern or hotel or dining-room skin-  
ner,

With table cloth dirty and dirtier plate,  
Would give me a nausea and call it a  
dinner,

I met with Jack Merdle, a name fully  
known

As good for a million in Stock-gamblers'  
Street,

Where none but a nabob or forger high flown  
With "bulls" or with "bears" need look  
for a seat.

Merdle the Banker.

**N**OW Merdle this day having toss'd  
with his horns

The bears that were pulling so hard at the  
stocks,

And gored every bull that was treading his  
corns,

Had lined all his pockets with "plenty of  
rocks,"

And home now was driving at "two forty"  
speed,

Where dinner was waiting — "a jolly good  
feed."

Himself feeling happy, he knew by my  
 looks,  
 A case full of sadness and deep destitution  
 Was present in person, not read of in  
 books,  
 Appealing in pity for an alms institution.

Places where Mortals Dine.

**T**HE case, too, was urgent, for there  
 stood a sinner,  
 Whose fate hung on chance — a chance for  
 his dinner ;  
 A chance for all mortals, with truth I as-  
 sert,

Who eat where his chance was, to counteract fate,

“To eat during life each a peck of pure dirt”

By eating at once the whole peck from one plate.

For true when I think of the places we eat at,

Or rather the places by hunger when driven  
We rush in and swallow our bread and  
our meat at,

A bushel good measure in life will be given  
To those who are living a “boarding-house  
life,”

Or those who are driven by fortune to  
journey,

And eat when we must with so dirty a knife,  
I wish 't could be done by the power of  
attorney ;

Or where you must eat in a place called  
"saloon ;"

Or "coffee-house " synonym of whisky and  
rum ;

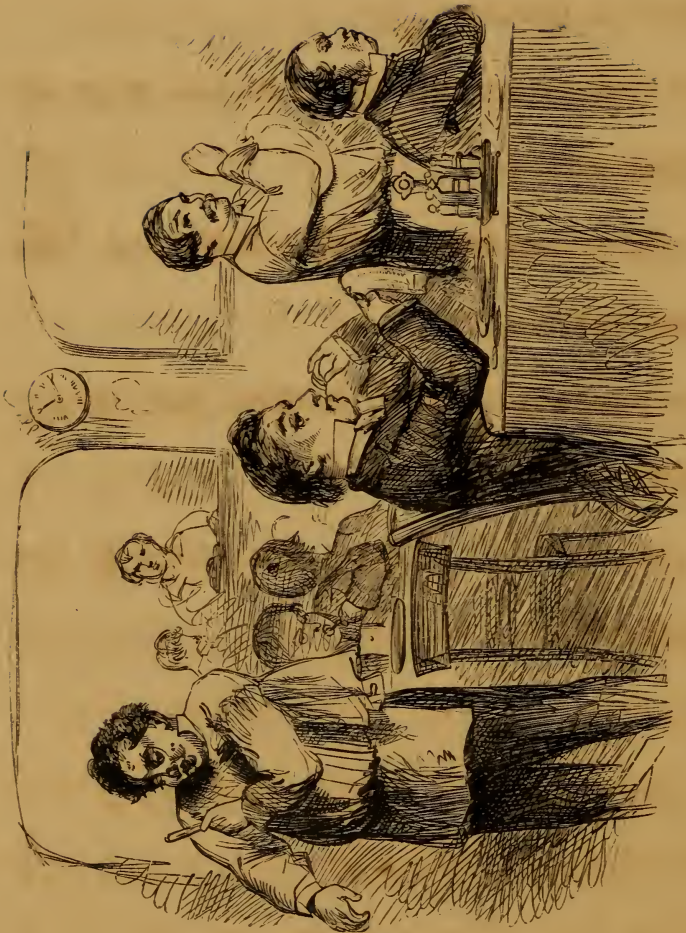
(I wish all the breed were sent off to the  
moon,

And earth was well clear of the coffee-  
house scum ;)

Or where "Restauration " hangs out for  
sign,

At bar-room or cellar or dirty back room,  
Where dishcloths for napkins are thought  
extra fine,





"WHERE KNIVES WAITERS SPIT ON AND WIFE ON THEIR SLEEVES,  
AND PLATES NEEDING POLISH, WITH COAT TAILS ARE CLEANED."



And table cloths look as though washed  
with a broom ;

Where knives waiters spit on and wipe on  
their sleeves,

And plates needing polish, with coat tails  
are cleaned ;

Where priests dine with harlots, and judges  
with thieves,

And mayors with villains his worship has  
screened.

## Things that Mortals eat there.

AND what do you eat in the mess  
there compounded?

For roast beef, the gravy the soap-man  
should claim—

The soup some odd things might turn up  
if sounded,

And other “made-dishes” might turn up  
the same.

Decoctions that puzzle your chemical skill,  
You get if you call either coffee or tea;  
And milk that is made with and tastes of  
the swill,

As like milk, as wine is that often we see

Is like to the juice of the grape in perfection,  
Or like as the candidate after election

Is like the fair thing that we hoped or ex-  
pected

Before the base thief was exposed or de-  
tected ;

As like truth and virtue — and more is the  
pity —

The men we elected to rule our own city.

In “council” while sitting, though “com-  
mon” we call them,

In common opinion, if people at large  
Are 's common in morals, no worse could  
befal 'em

If Satan should take them at once in his  
charge.

If food as their filth was as plenty for  
diet,

No lack would they feel of the coveted  
cash,

Or power they maintain with the power of  
a riot,

When heads of opponents are served up  
as hash

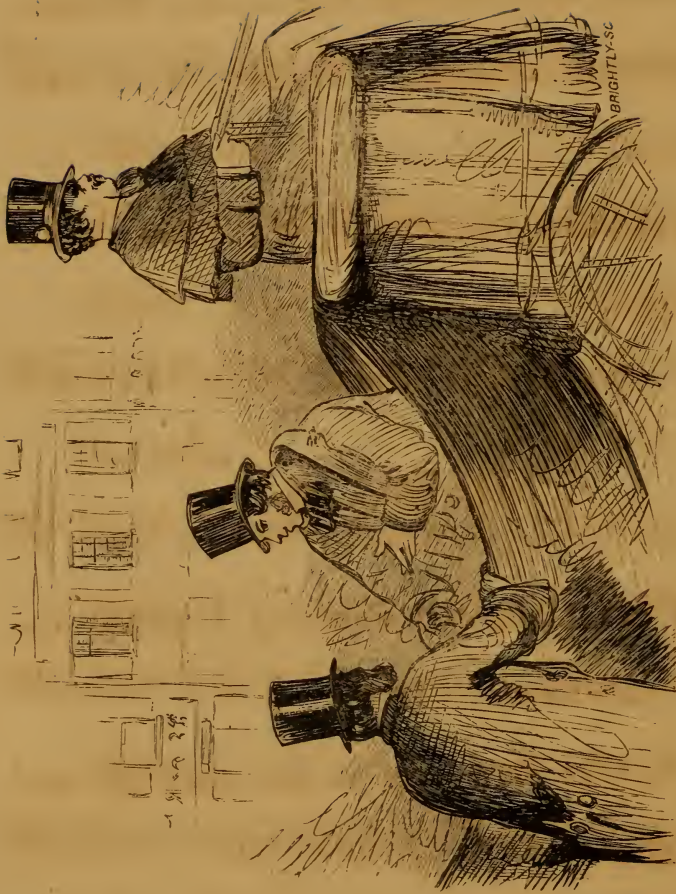
By Star - chamber cooks of the club "re-  
storation,"

That rules now the city and would rule  
the nation,

If "Sachems" were willing the "Wigwam"  
to yield,

And give the arch - traitor a fair fighting  
field.





"JACK MERDLE DROVE UP IN HIS CARRIAGE AND BAYS."

But fighting just now is not our intention,  
But dining with Merdle, the banker, in state,  
And only these items like side dishes men-  
tion,

While waiting the coming the main dinner  
plate.

*The Invitation.*

**W**HILE waiting debating I stated be-  
fore,

Jack Merdle drove up in his carriage and  
bays,

“Halloo,” said the banker, “I see you’re  
ashore —

No wonder — this weather is all in a haze —

30      NOTHING TO EAT.

But come in my carriage, and truly confess

You're a victim of hunger and dinner  
down town ;

A case of most common distressing distress ;

When dining in public with Jones, Smith  
or Brown,

Or some other practical men of the nation,  
tion,

Is worse on the whole than a little starvation.

But come home with me for the sake of  
Lang Syne,

And see Mrs. Merdle and see how we  
dine.



I must not expect," he advised in advance,  
 "To meet with a dinner got up in per-  
 fection,

But must run the risk of the luck and  
 the chance,

As candidates do on the day of election."

The Merdle Origin.

NOW Merdle, *en passant*, I had known  
 for a score

Of years, when a dinner with Jones, Brown  
 or Smith

As good as one gets for a quarter or more,  
 Was a thing unthought of, or else but a  
 myth

In Merdle's day-dreaming of things yet in  
store,

When hope painted visions of a painted  
abode,

And hope never hoped for anything  
more —

I'm sure never dreamed he would dine *à*  
*la mode.*

In dreams wildest fancy I doubt if he  
dreamed,

That time in its changes that wears rocky  
shores,

Should change what so changeless certainly  
seemed,

Till Merdle, Jack Merdle, would own twenty  
stores,

Much more own a bank, e'en the horse  
 that he rode,

Or pay half the debts of the wild oats he  
 sowed.

I knew when he worked at his old father's  
 trade,

And thought he would stick to his wax  
 and the last,

But Fortune, the fickle, incontinent jade,

A turn to his fortune has given a cast ;

“A wife with a fortune,” which men hunt  
 in packs,

To Jack was the fortune that fell to his share ;

A fortune that often is such a hard tax,

That men hurry through it with “nothing  
 to spare,”

34      N O T H I N G   T O   E A T .

With "nothing to eat," or a house "fit to  
live in,"

With "nothing half decent" to put on  
their backs,

With nothing "exclusive" to have or be-  
lieve in,

"Except what is common to common street  
hacks."

So fortune and comfort, that should be like  
brothers,

Though fought for and bled for where for-  
tunes are made,

Though sought for and failed of by ten  
thousand others,

Are not worth the fighting and fuss that is  
made.

But fortune for Merdle by Cupid was  
cast,

And bade him look higher than wax and  
the last,

That Merdle his father, with good honest  
trade,

Had used with the stitches his waxed end  
had made.

I knew when old Merdle lived down by  
the mill,

I often went fishing and Jack dug the  
bait ;

But Jack Merdle then never thought he  
should fill

With fish and roast meat such a full din-  
ner plate :

Nor I, when my line which I threw for  
a trout

While Jack watched the bob of the light  
floating cork,

Ever thought of the time in a "Merdle  
turn out"

To ride, or to dine with a pearl handle fork  
In Jack's splendid mansion, where taste,  
waste and style,

Contend for preëmption, as then by the mill,  
Old Merdle contended with fortune the  
while,

For bread wherewithal Jack's belly to fill.

I never thought then little Kitty Malone

As heir to old Gripus would bring him  
the cash,



“ I NEVER THOUGHT THEN LITTLE KITTY MALONE,  
AS HEIR TO OLD GRIPUS WOULD BRING HIM THE CASH.”





'Pon which as a banker Jack Merdle has  
shone,

And Kitty in fashion has cut such a  
dash ;

Nor when as a girl not a shoe to her  
feet,

She accepted my offers of coppers or  
candy,

She would tell me in satin "we've nothing  
to eat,"

While eating from silver or sipping her  
brandy,

And wond'ring that Merdle, the Jack I have  
named,

Should bring home a friend — ('t was thus  
she exclaimed —

The day that I've mentioned — a day to  
remember —

When Merdle and I in his carriage and  
bays,

Through Avenue Five on a day in Sep-  
tember,

Drove up to a mansion with gas-light a-  
blaze.)

### Mrs. Merdle at Home.

She Discourseth of Nothing to Eat and the Cost thereof.

“**W**H<sup>Y</sup> Merdle — why did you bring  
Dinewell to-day?

So very, though welcome, so quite unex-  
pected!

For dinner, if any, I'm sure I can't say,  
 Our servants with washing are all so in-  
 fected.

If any's provided, 't is nothing but scraps  
 Of pot-luck or pick up of some common fare;  
 Or something left over from last week  
 perhaps,

Which you've brought a friend, and an  
 old one, to share.

I never, I'm sure now, so much was ashamed,  
 To think he'll discover — what's true to  
 the letter —

We've nothing, or next to't that's fit to  
 be named,

For one who is used every day to what's  
 better.

But what can you expect if you come on  
a Monday?

Our French cook's away too, I vow and  
declare —

But if you would see us with something  
to spare,

Let's know when you're coming, or come  
on a Sunday;

For that of all others, for churchmen or  
sinners,

A day is for gorging with extra good din-  
ners.

If Merdle had told me a friend would be  
here,

A dinner I'd get up in spite of the  
bills —





"AND THAT IS JUST WHAT, AS OUR BUTCHER EXPLAINS,  
THE DICKENS HAS PLAYED WITH OUR BEEF AND OUR MUTTON."

I often tell butcher he's wonderful dear —  
 He says every calf that a butcher now kills,  
 Will cost near as much as the price of a  
 steer,

Before all the banks in their discount ex-  
 panded

And flooded the country with 'lamp-black  
 and rags,'

Which poor men has ruined and ship-  
 wrecked and stranded

On Poverty's billows and quick-sands and  
 crags.

And that is just what, as our butcher ex-  
 plains,

The dickens has played with our beef and  
 our mutton ;

But something is gained, for, with all of his  
pains,

The poor man won't make of himself such  
a glutton.

I'm sure if they knew what a sin 't is to eat,  
When things are all selling at extravagant  
prices,

That poor folks more saving would be of  
their meat,

And learn by example how little suffices.

I wish they could see for themselves what  
a table —

What examples we set to the laboring poor,  
In prudence, and saving, in those who are  
able

To live like a king and his court on a tour.



I feel, I acknowledge, sometimes quite de-  
jected

To think, as it happens with you here to-  
day,

To drop in so sudden and quite unex-  
pected,

How poor we are living some people will  
say.

Mrs. Merdle goes to Market.

“ WITH prices outrageous they charge  
now for meat,

And servants so worthless are every day  
growing,

I wonder we get half enough now to eat,  
And should n't if 't want for the fact of my  
going

To market to cheapen potatoes and beef,  
And talk to the butchers about their abuses,  
And listen to stories beyond our belief,  
They tell while they cheat us, by way of  
excuses.

And grocers — do tell us — is't legal to  
charge

Such prices for sugar, and butter, and flour?  
Oh, why don't the Mayor in his wisdom  
enlarge

Both weight and measure as he does  
'doubtful power?'

The Dinner-bell Rings.

Mrs. Merdle describes the Sufferings of Dyspepsia and its  
Remedy.

“**B**UT come, now, I hear by the sound  
of the ringing

That dinner is ready, and time none to  
spare

To finish our eating in time for the sing-  
ing

At Niblo's; or at Burton's drop in for a  
stare.

To 'kill time' the object, whatever the  
source is,

And that is the reason we sit at the table

And call for our dinner in slow-coming  
courses,

To kill, while we eat, all the time we are  
able.

Though little, I told you, that's worthy  
your taste

You'll find on our table, pray don't think  
us mean —

Your welcome is ample — that's better than  
waste —

Oh! here comes the soup in a silver  
tureen —

'Tis mock turtle too — so good for diges-  
tion :

That kills me by inches, the wretched  
complaint

Dyspepsia — to cure which, I take by suggestion

Port-wine in the soup, when I feel slightly faint.

The Dinner Table Talk.

“NOW soup, if you like made of beef very nice,

You'll find this the next thing to the height of perfection ;

And eaten with ketchup, or thickened with rice,

Will suit you I know, if this is your selection.

My own disposition to this one in-  
clines,

But dreadful dyspepsia destroys all the  
pleasure

Of dinner, except it's well tinctured with  
wines

Which plan I adopt as a health-giving  
measure.

A table well ordered, well furnished, and  
neat,

No wonder our nature for ever is tempt-  
ing;

And I'd like to know if Mahomet could  
beat

Its pleasures — dyspepsia for ever exempt-  
ing—

With all that he promised in paradise  
gained,

With Houris attendant in place of the  
churls

With which we are worried, tormented,  
and pained —

The colored men servants, or green Irish  
girls.

*Mrs. Merdle doubts Paradise's Unceasing Pleasure.*

“**T**HOUGH Houris are handsome,  
though lovely the place —

More lovely perhaps than our own country  
seat —

I never could see, in the light of free  
grace

What pleasure they have there with noth-  
ing to eat.

With nothing to wear, if the climate is  
suited,

We might get along I am sure pretty  
well ;

No washing and starching and crimping  
and fluting,

No muslin and laces and trouble of dress-  
ing, they tell,

E'er troubles the women, or bothers the  
men,

Who soon grow accustomed, as people do  
here,



To fashions prevailing, and things that they  
ken ;

To dresses fore-shortened where bosoms  
appear ;

To bonnets that show but a rose in the  
wearing ;

To dresses that sweep like a besom the  
street ;

To dresses so gauzy the hoops through are  
seen ;

To shoes quite as gauzy to cover the feet ;

But watch how a man here goes raving  
and swearing,

At wife and all hands, if they've nothing  
to eat!

Mrs. Merdle Discourseth of Things Earthly.

“ NO matter how costly or flimsy her  
dresses,

The angel you honor with your kind at-  
tentions ;

No matter how foolish her wardrobe in-  
ventions,

You love her, or say so, from slipper to  
tresses ;

But, presto ! you call her the greatest of  
sinners,

Though smiling, she treats you to badly  
cooked dinners ;

Which proves where the seat is of men's  
best affections,

With which 'pon their honor they extol us  
as wives,

And treat us at dinner with sagest reflections,  
Of beauty, and duty we owe all our lives  
To you, noble lords, of this mundane crea-  
tion ;

Which, judging from some things they tell us,  
Was made for the creatures of this trading  
nation,

Who make it a business to buy us and sell us,  
Like 'Erie,' or 'Central,' or other such  
stocks ;

With care, when they bid for a very 'Miss  
Nancy,'  
3\*

That she's of a stock that the brokers  
call 'fancy,'

Or else has a pocket 'chuck full of the  
rocks'—

The rocks that are wrecking each day of  
their sailing,

More fortunes than ever in ocean were  
swallowed ;

Where 'ventures' of marriage their vic-  
tims impaling

With mammon and mis'ry together have  
wallowed.

Mrs. Merdle Discourseth of Things Eatable.

“**N**OW Colonel, to husband you need  
not be winking,

While wiping the soup with a smile from  
your lips ;

I know just as well as he does how you're  
thinking

The soup is as tasteless as though made  
of chips.

You need not deny it, and swear that no  
better

Concocted was ever in London or Paris ;

Remember the praises you gave in your  
letter

Of cooking and eating you wrote to Miss  
Harris.

Now, Colonel, do n't offer a word more to  
flatter —

The soup may be so-so, but wait for the  
meat ;

And after you've seen the last dish, plate,  
or platter,

You'll own then, I'm certain, we've nothing  
to eat —

That is compared, as described to Miss  
Harris,

With all the best tables you eat at in  
Paris.

Mrs. Merdle Ordereth the Second Course.

“**C**OME, John, Jane, and Susan, the  
soup take away,

And bring in the turbot, the sheep’s head  
and bass;

And have you got lobster and salad to-day?  
And see that the celery’s all right in the  
glass.

Now fish — Colonel Dinewell, which fish  
will you try?

And how shall I dress it to suit your nice  
taste?

For sauce to the fish is as love to the sigh,  
Imperfect, it’s worthless, and both prove a  
waste.

Mrs. Merdle Discourseth of Hygiene and Fish  
Sauce.

“**B**UT this is concocted by rules so  
complete ;

Though piquant, is healthy and easy di-  
gested ;

And if you will note it as slowly we eat,  
The contents I’ll give for our friends in-  
terested.

Imprimus : in fish stock, an onion we  
stew,

And anchovy essence two spoonfuls we  
add ;



With butter, horse-radish, and lemons a few ;  
 Mushrooms, too, in ketchup is not very bad ;  
 And pickle of walnuts with onions chopped  
 fine,

To which there is added some old sherry  
 wine.

My doctor, so queer, when I suffer distress,  
 Inquires what I've latterly foolishly eaten,  
 And swears that to swallow this 'horrible  
 mess,'

Would entitle a dog like a dog to be  
 beaten.

But la ! such a doctor knows nothing of  
 women's complaints,

And talks Latin nonsense about 'regular  
 diet ;'

And thinks that us mortals should live  
more like saints,

On moonshine and nonsense of a heavenly  
quiet.

He says that a woman of my plaint com-  
plaining,

If she was a woman at all half discreet,  
Would shudder to think every day she is  
maiming

Her stomach with trash, and such stuff as  
we eat!

Mrs. Merdle Describeth her Doctor.

“**B**UT he’s an old foggy, you may  
know by this sign—

He do n’t smoke tobacco, drink lager or  
wine ;

And swears that rich gravy, roast pork or  
chop,

Would kill a big ostrich, if stuffed in his  
crop.

He told me one day ’bout the pain in my  
feet,

‘I see what ’tis ails you — you’ve nothing  
to eat!’

Provoking, absurd, foolish hint that my  
 health

Was injured by eating what station and  
 wealth

And fashion give right for my sex to en-  
 joy

In spite of the doctors we choose to em-  
 ploy.

*Mrs. Merdle Discourseth again on Dinner.*

“**B**UT you are not eating, and I  
 fear that the fish,

Or else 'tis the gravy's not done to your  
 wish.

You're starving while waiting for something to eat—

Thank fortune I told you how poorly we live—

I hope John now will give us a piece of roast meat,

Or else such a dinner you'd never forgive.

Why yes, Merdle, look, there is beef on that dish—

Jane Hill, don't you see, there's a plate here to shift—

That John is now bringing—'tis all he can lift—

And Colonel, that turkey, you know 'tis my wish—

68      NOTHING TO EAT.

You know that Excelsior's your motto in  
carving—

As nothing more now we shall have on  
the table

We'll eat and give thanks this day that  
we're able

To keep our poor bodies entirely from  
starving.

Now Susan's this all that you've been able  
to pick up?

Oh, no! there's a ham, and it's done to a  
turn

So nice, that the nose of a Jew needn't  
stick up;

And a tongue—well, a tongue I never  
could spurn;





“MY APPETITE’S NONE OF THE BEST,  
AND SO I MUST PAMPER THE DELICATE THING,  
AND TICKLE A FANCY THAT’S VERY CAPRICIOUS  
WITH BITS OF A TURKEY, THE BREAST OR THE WING,  
WITH BEEF VERY TENDER, AND GRAVY DELICIOUS.”



It's nice while the wine at our leisure  
we sip ;

And good with a cracker in wine we can  
dip.

*Mrs. Merdle Accepteth of a slight Dinner, suitable  
for a Woman suffering with Dyspepsia.*

“ **S**OME turkey? why yes — the least  
mite will suffice ;

A side bone and dressing and bit of the  
breast ;

The tip of the rump — that's it — and one  
o' the fli's —

In spite of the doctor: my appetite's  
none of the best,

And so I must pamper the delicate thing,  
And tickle a fancy that's very capricious  
With bits of a turkey, the breast or the  
wing,

With beef very tender, and gravy delicious.  
Some beef now? I thank you, not any at  
present;

I'll nibble a little at what I have got,  
And wish for a duck, or a grouse, or a  
pheasant,

Though none of them come for a wish,  
in the pot.

Mrs. Merdle Discourseth of Wishes and her  
Sufferings.

“ “ “ **I**F wishes were horses’—I’ve heard  
when a girl—

‘If wishes were horses, the beggars would  
ride’—

If wishes were pheasants, I’d wish with  
a skirl

Till cooked ones came flying and sat by my  
side.

A fig, then, for doctors, their tinctures and  
drugs ;

Good eating would cure me, with plenty of  
game ;

And as for pill boxes, and bottles, and  
jugs,

I wouldn't know one, when I saw it, by  
name.

Oh, dear! such a load now my stomach  
oppresses,

While eating these trifles, attempting to  
dine—

I'm sure 'taint the turkey—it must be  
my dresses—

And if so 'twill ease them to sip sherry  
wine.

'Tis sad, though, to be such a sad in-  
valid—

Dear me, Colonel Dinewell, you've done  
eating meat—

Your doctor, like mine, I hope hasn't for-  
bid,

That you shouldn't have, as I do, so little  
to eat.

Ah! well then, I see, though I've hardly  
begun,

The meats and the solids must go right  
away ;

So bring in the pudding, if Susan's got  
one,

Which will for a while one's appetite stay.

Mrs. Merdle Discourseth of Pudding.

“**A** PUDDING! why yes, as I live,  
too, it's plum ;

So plain, Susan makes them on purpose  
for me

I never refuse, when the plum puddings  
come,

To finish my dinner, if finished 't can  
be

On things unsubstantial, like puddings and  
pies,

So made up of suet, and currants, and  
flour,

Like this one before us, to get up the  
size,

And stirred up and beaten with eggs by  
the hour,

With bread crumbs, and citron, and small  
piece of mace ;

With nutmeg, and cinnamon, and sugar,  
and milk,

And currants, and raisins, and spices so  
rare,

And what else I know not of things of  
that ilk.

The whole after cooking six hours at the  
least,

When thus well compounded with delicate  
skill,

78      NOTHING TO EAT.

With wine sauce is eaten, to finish the  
feast,

And suits the digestion of ladies quite  
ill,

Who suffer as I do, from having bad  
cooks,

And very weak stomachs, and food that  
near kills 'em ;

And then such a sight of bad rules in  
the books

From contents to finis, to cure one that  
fills 'em.

There's one of all others so much recom-  
mended

To cure every ill of old Eve's every daugh-  
ter,







BRIGHTLY, 50

“FOR NOTHING TO CURE WITH IS USED BUT COLD WATER:  
AND WHAT WITH THE BATHING AND WASHING AND SCRUBBING—”

With nothing or next to't, for medicine  
expended,

For nothing to cure with is used but cold  
water.

And what with the bathing, and washing,  
and scrubbing ;

The packing, and sweating, and using the  
sheet ;

The shower bath, and douche bath, and all  
sorts of rubbing ;

And literally nothing but brown bread to  
eat,

No wonder the patient accepts of the  
lure,

To escape such a ducking, acknowledged a  
cure.

But Lord, what a skein I have made of  
my yarn,  
While Susan's arranging and changing the  
plates,  
And running all round old Robin Hood's  
barn,  
Like puzzles at school that we made on  
our slates ;  
But talking of puzzles, no one that we  
made,  
While playing the fool we played as a  
trade,  
When childhood and folly joined hands at  
the schools,  
Could equal the pranks of these cold-water  
fools.

Yes, yes, Mr. Merdle, I knew by the  
smelling

The pudding was ready, without any telling ;  
So Colonel, I'll help you a delicate slice —  
For nothing, I'm sure, like a dinner you've  
eaten —

And afterwards follow with jelly and ice,  
So pleasant while waiting to cool off the  
heat on ;

And then with a syllabub, comfit, or cream,  
Our dessert of almonds and raisins we'll  
nibble,

Till coffee comes in to revive with its  
steam,

When cakes in its fragrance we'll leisurely  
dibble.

I'm sure after all it's a terrible bore  
To labor so hard as we do for our victuals ;  
I envy the women that beg at the door,  
Or hire out for wages to handle your kettles,  
And wash, bake, and iron, and do nothing  
but cooking,  
So rugged and healthy, and often good  
looking :  
The doctor has told me except when they're  
mothers,  
They never take tincture, or rhubarb, or  
pill,  
And swears the profession if there were  
no others,  
Their patients would use up, and starve  
out and kill.

I'm sure I don't see how that makes them  
exempt

From all sorts of sickness and woman's  
complaints,

With nothing to hinder if appetite tempt  
From eating or drinking as happy as saints.

Oh Lord, now, this pudding so delicate made,  
And gravy I'm sure with nothing that's  
rich in,

That one of those women who beg as a  
trade,

The whole in one stomach could leisurely  
pitch in,

Is now in my own so terribly painful in  
feeling,

Its calls for relief are most loudly appealing.

Mrs. Merdle Discoursethly of the necessity of  
good Wine and other Matters.

“SO while we are eating the fruits  
of the vine,

Don't let us forget such a health giving  
juice,

As Champagne, or Sherbet, or other good  
wine,

Nor sin by neglecting its 'temperate use.'

Now Sherbet, my husband extols to the  
skies,

With me though, my stomach is weak and  
won't bear it:



And Sherry, though sometimes affecting  
my eyes,

A bottle with pleasure we'll open and  
share it.

Ha, ha, well-a-day — what a queer world  
to live in,

If one were contented on little to dine,

We need not be longing another to be in,

Where women, they tell us, exist without  
wine ;

Where husbands are happy and women  
content ;

Where dresses, though gauzy, are fit for  
the street ;

Where no one is wretched with purses unbent,

With nothing to wear and nothing to eat.

88      NOTHING TO EAT.

Where women no longer are treated *la*  
*Turk,*

Where husbands descended from Saxon or  
Norman,

For women when sickly are willing to  
work,

And not long for Utah and pleasures *la*  
*Mormon* —

Where men freely marry and live with their  
wives,

And not live as you do, mon Colonel, so  
single.

Such wretched and dinnerless bachelor  
lives ;

You don't know the pleasure there is in  
the tingle

Of ears pricked by lectures, *la curtain, au*  
*Caudle,*

Or noise of young Dinewells beginning to  
toddle ;

While plodding all day with your paper  
and quills,

And copy, and proof sheets, and work for  
the printer,

Pray what do you know of the housekeep-  
er's bills,

And other such 'pleasures of hope' for  
the winter ?

You men, selfish creatures, think all of the  
care

Of living and keeping yourselves in ex-  
istence,

Is due to your own daily labor, and  
share,

From breakfast to dinner of business per-  
sistance ;

While woman is either a plaything or  
drudge,

According to station of wealth or posi-  
tion,

Which men help along with a word or a  
nudge

To heaven high up or low down to per-  
dition.

But what was I saying of a world free  
from care,

Of eating and drinking and dresses to  
wear ?

Where women by husbands are never tormented,

And never asked money where husbands dissented ?

And never see others, their rivals, in fashion ahead,

And never have doctors — a woman's great dread —

And nothing, I hope, like my own indigestion,

To torment and starve them, as this one does me,

And keep them from sipping — forgive the suggestion —

The nectar ethereal they drink for their tea.

Mrs. Merdle Suggesteth that Dinner being Finished, the Gentlemen will Smoke. In the meantime, she Discourseth.

“**N**OW Merdle — now Colonel — I know  
you are waiting,

And thinking my talking to eating's a bar,  
Still hoping, by tasting, my appetite sating,  
Will give you the license to smoke a  
cigar.

Well then, I've done now, and hope too  
you've dined,

As well as down town where you dine for  
a shilling,



"WILL GIVE YOU THE LICENSE TO SMOKE A CIGAR."





At Taylor's, or Thompson's, or one of the  
kind,

Where mortals are flocking each day for  
their filling ;

Or else at the Astor where bachelors quar-  
ter,

Where port holes for windows give light  
to the room,

Far out of the region of Eve's every daugh-  
ter,

So high they are stuck up away toward  
the moon.

Though as for the 'stuck up' no walls  
built of brick,

Or granite, or marble, or dirty red  
sand,

96      N O T H I N G   T O   E A T .

Could stick up a man who himself's but  
a stick,

An inch above where he would naturally  
stand.

To witness the truth of this final asser-  
tion,

I call you to witness the sticks at the  
door,

Where they make it a daily, a 'manly' di-  
version,

To ogle each woman, and sometimes do  
more,

Who passes the hotel that's named by a  
saint,

Where boorish bad manners give room for  
complaint.

Where idlers and loafers, with gamblers a  
few,

Make up for the nonce the St. Nicholas  
crew.

The 'outside barbarians,' I freely confess,  
Who ogle our faces and ogle our dress,  
Who spit where we walk as dirty a puddle  
As bipeds can make when their brains are  
'a muddle,'

Do not prove the inside is as dirty as they  
are,

Or else the gods help all the ladies who  
stay there.

Why any prefer in a hotel to stay,  
Instead of a house of their choosing to  
own,

Is just to avoid all the trouble, they say,  
That servants to give us are certainly prone,  
I'm sure if a tyranny more terrible pre-  
vails,

In Austria or other despotic domain,  
My memory where most certainly fails,  
That servants and milliners over us gain,  
Just here in New York, and the more is  
the pity,

Where Wood is the Mogul that governs  
the city.

Mrs. Merdle, having “Nibbled a Little” for two Hours at Dinner, retireth from the Table unsatisfied.

“IMPATIENT — oh yes — just the way  
with you men!

I never have time to half finish my  
eating

Ere Merdle is done; such a fidget is  
then,

He’d starve me I think rather’n miss of  
a meeting

Where brokers preside o’er the fate of the  
stocks,

As Pales presided o’er shepherds and flocks.

100    N O T H I N G   T O   E A T .

Now while you are smoking— what non-  
sense and folly—

I'll go to my room— don't say No, for I  
must—

Put on a new dress, with assistance of  
Molly,

And then with a little strong tea and a  
crust,

My strength I may hope for a walk will  
be able

As far as the gate, and a very short ride,  
To give me a relish again for the table—

What else do we live for in this world be-  
side?"

The Poet Moralizeth. — He Discourseth to those  
 who Gorge and Complain.

**O**H! Kitty Malone — Mrs. Merdle 'tis  
 now —

Was there ever on earth than this, greater  
 folly?

Still gorging, while groaning, and swearing  
 a vow,

That yours is a case of most sad melancholy.  
 With table that Croesus never had but might  
 covet,

You live but to eat and to eat 'cause  
 you love it;

And yet while you swallow great sirloins  
    of meat  
Complain like a beggar of nothing to  
    eat.

*He Discourseth of th: Wherefore of Bachelorism.*

“**W**HAT else do we live for in this  
    world beside?”

Alas! 'tis the question of ten times a  
    day,  
That comes on the wind, or that floats on  
    the tide,  
And creeps in the houses where men go  
    to pray.



What else do we live for than get such a  
wife

As this of the banker of our faint descrip-  
tion?

What else is the end of our fashionable life  
From which men escape as they would from  
conscription?

What else is the reason so few natives marry,  
Than this, that extravagance leads on to  
ruin?

It is because few men are able to carry  
The load of this baking and roasting and  
stewing,

Of buying and wasting extravagant meat,  
Where women are dying of "nothing to  
eat;"

Where men in corruption so rapidly tend-  
ing,

In morals and wealth in bankruptcy end-  
ing.

That forging and stealing and breaches of  
trust,

And ten thousand arts of the confidence  
game,

And follies uncounted of men "on a bust,"  
Are follies and crimes of this age to our  
shame,

Till angels who witness the folly so wide  
Extended from palace to farm-house and  
cot,

Might wonder if mortals life's objects forgot,  
Or Merdle's position is man's common lot?

He Discourseth of What some Mortals Live for.

“**W**HAT else do they live for in this  
world beside?”

What else but for Kittys or one of the  
same,

Do mothers their daughters at schools give  
the touch

That leaves them to live as a wife but in  
name

While position and fashion they frantically  
clutch.

What else do they live for, our girls so  
refined,

So forward, precocious, and gifted at ten  
5\*

106      N O T H I N G   T O   E A T .

They are flirting and courting and things  
of the kind,

That never came under our grandmother's  
ken.

At fifteen so dressed up, and hooped up,  
I ween,

They're mothers full often before they're  
sixteen,

And fading and dowdy and sickly at twenty,  
With one boy in trowsers and two girls in  
laces

Complaining of starving while dying of  
plenty

The fate is of ladies in fashionable places.

He Imploretly Mercy upon those condemned with  
Fashionable Folly to Marry, and Illustrateth  
their Condition.

**N**OW heaven in mercy be kind to the  
wretch,

Who marries for money or fashion or folly ;

He'd better accept of the noose of Jack

Ketch

Than such a "help-meet ;" or at once marry

Dolly

The cook, or with Bridget, the maid of the

broom ;

With one he'd be sure to get coffee and

meat,

108      NOTHING TO EAT.

And never hear whining of nothing to eat,  
And 't'other would make up his bed and  
his room ;

And if he was blest with a child now and then,  
As happens sometimes with your fashion-  
able wives,

Who're coupled to bipeds, in nature called  
men,

He'd need no insurance to warrant their  
lives ;

And need no expense of a grand "bridal  
tour,"

Or visit each season at "watering places,"  
Where fashion at people well known to  
be poor,

In money or station, will make ugly faces ;

Where women, though married, with roués  
will flirt ;

Where widows, though widows in fresh sable  
weeds,

Spread nets that entangle like old Nessus'  
shirt

And finish with Burdell and Cunningham  
deeds ;

Where daughters when fading are taken to  
spend

A month at the springs, or a week in salt  
water ;

Where bachelors flirting on Ellen attend,  
Are whispered by mamma, "engaged to  
my daughter."

*He Imploreth Mercy for other Unfortunate Beings.*

**N**OW heaven in mercy be kind to the  
wretches

Who stay on the earth like this Mrs. Mer-  
dle!

More wretched than ever a wretch on the  
hurdle

Was drawn by all England's official Jack  
Ketches ;

More wretched, if can be, at church on a  
Sunday

A woman, who worships, than God, more  
her dress,



NOTHING TO EAT. III

Would be if she heard or e'en thought

Mrs. Grundy

Would sneer at the set of a bonnet or  
tress ;

Or say that she thought Miss Freelove's  
new pattern

Of laces, or collars, or yard flowing sleeves,  
Looked more like the dress of a real Miss  
Slattern

And not "so becoming" 's the first one of  
Eve's.

The Discourseth of a Common Prayer.

**D**ET look at the thousands whose every  
day prayer,

Far more than their own or their neigh-  
bor's salvation,

Absorbs every thought, every dream, and  
all care,

“To eat or to wear, is anything new in  
creation?”

Ye Discourseth of Trouble and Sorrow.

**W**HAT else do they live for? They  
live but for this ;

And nothing but this ever troubles their  
thinking ;

Rich eating, rich dressing, and flirting's  
their bliss,

And ' life's better purposes constantly blink-  
ing.

Their life's but a tissue of trouble and sor-  
row

Of what is the fashion or will be to-mor-  
row.

Be Moralizeth upon what a Day may Bring Forth.

“**T**O-MORROW!” who’ll warrant to-  
morrow we’ll see?

Who’ll care the next day or day after for  
dinner?

Or what the next fashion of new dress will  
be?

Or who Mrs. Grundy will say is the win-  
ner?

Having reached Thirtysixthly, the Author is about to Make the "Application," and Pray Forgiveness, but concludes by remaining Incog.

44 **W**HOO 'LL care for, to-morrow, for  
this bit of scandal,

With malice prepense that a cynic has writ-  
ten ?

(That's what they will say when the poem  
they handle,

Who feel 'tis themselves whom the mad dog  
has bitten ;

And wish he was treated as dogs with the  
rabies

Are treated, to stop his unmannerly bark ;

116      N O T H I N G   T O   E A T .

Or packed off to bed as you do naughty  
babies,

To sleep, or be frightened all alone in the  
dark.)

Who'll care? why the author of this ugly  
poem —

He'll care — for a reason — that all of you  
read it —

He'll care for the cash you'll give — Oh!  
how he needs it —

(Oh! what would you give, ladies dear, just  
to know him?—)

But that, by your leave, by the aid of the  
elf

The printer employs, he will keep to him-  
self.

He knows, if you knew him, what fate he  
would meet ;

At every table you'd give him—nothing  
to eat.

Excuse then, dear ladies, the author his  
shyness,

And accept his congè at the end of this

Finis.





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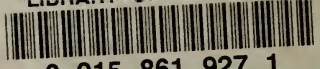
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