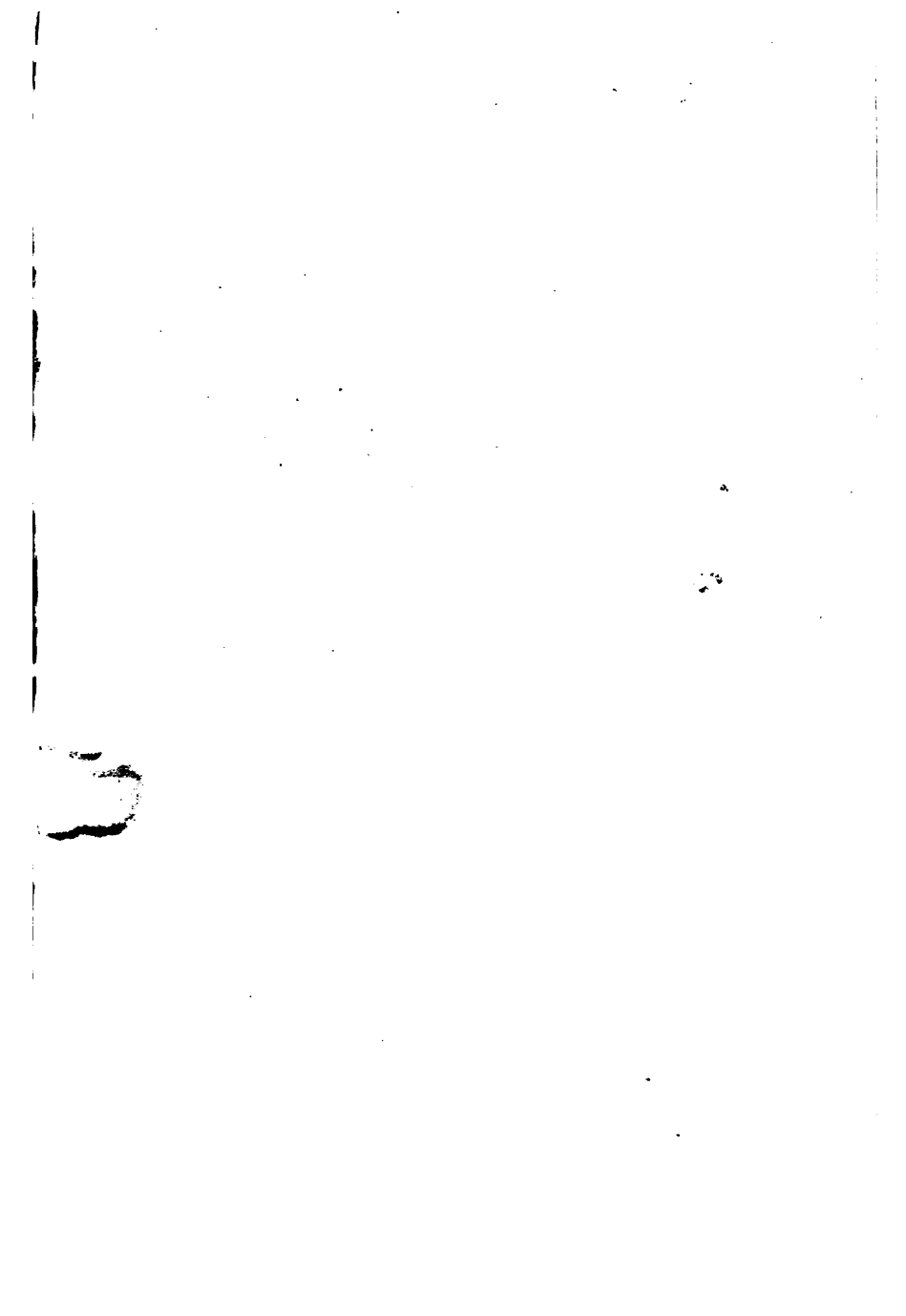
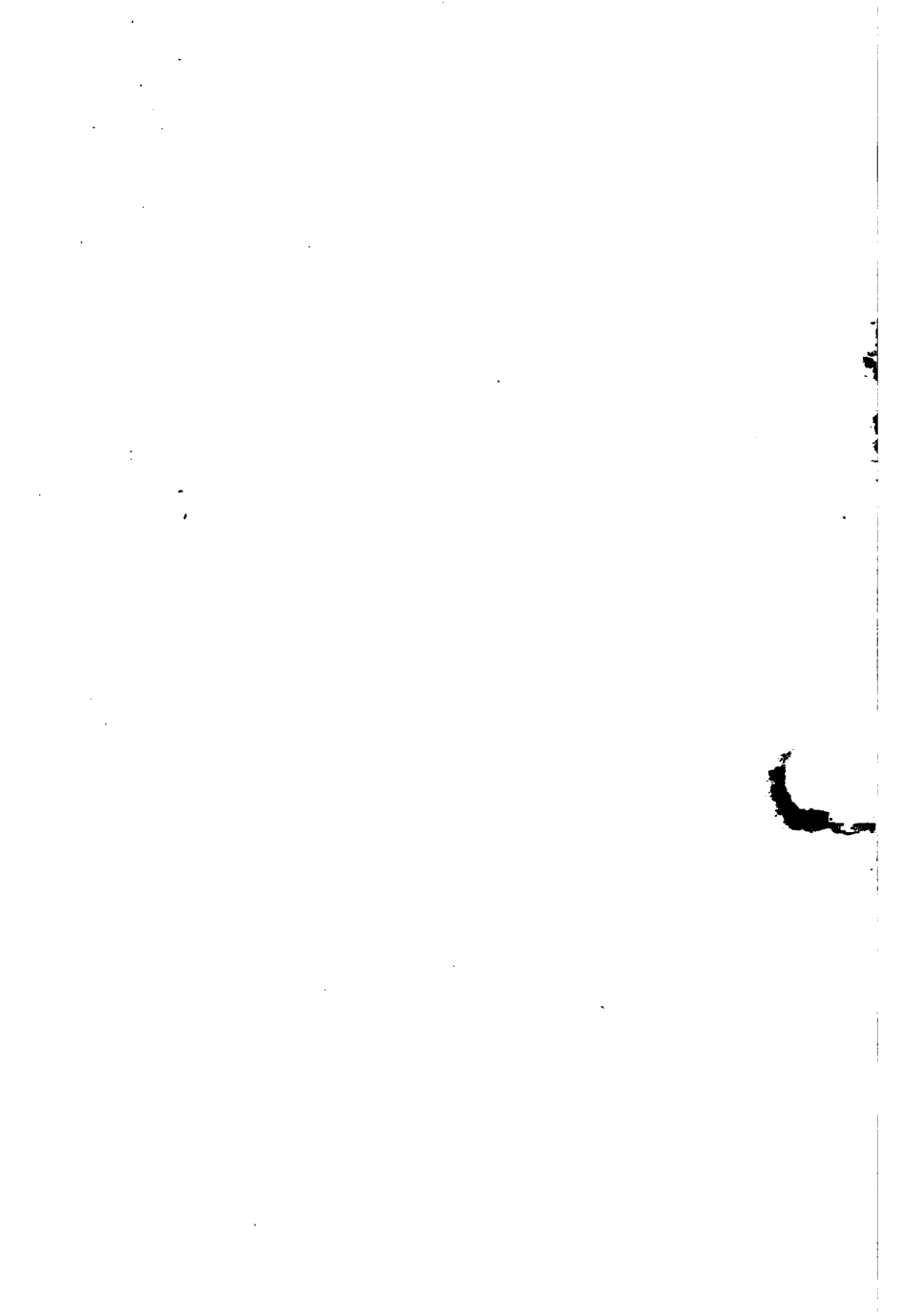


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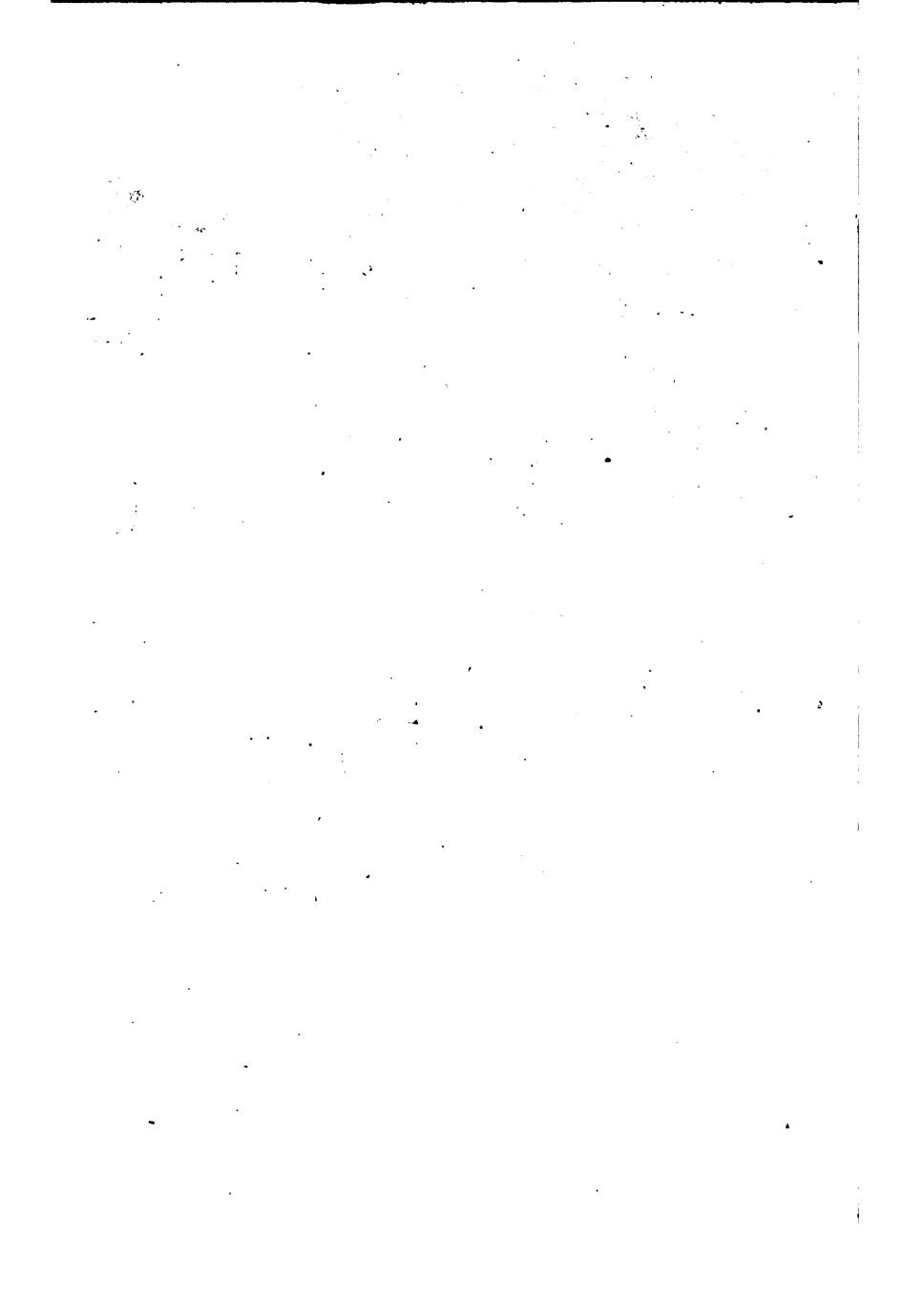


Smith, Albert.

THE
ENGLISH HOTEL
NUISANCE,
BY
ALBERT
SMITH.

LONDON,
DAVID BRYCE, 48, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1856.

SIXPENCE.



©

THE
ENGLISH HOTEL
NUISANCE.

BY
ALBERT SMITH.

Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn, but I shall have my pocket
Picked? ..

SHAKSPERE—*Henry IV.*

LONDON:
DAVID BRYCE, 48, PATERNOSTER ROW.

—
1855.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

Bu 36 30; 35. 15

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1864, Mar. 5

By *Ernie* for a *copy*
delivered to
Geo. Sturges

'Nassau Steam Press,' W. S. Johnson, 60, St. Martin's Lane.

TO

PETER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., F.S.A.,

ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

NOT in connection with any of those old and time-honored haunts that we both love so well—not in the slightest association with those calm and tranquil taverns, up courts only threaded by the initiated, wherein the saw-dust and the feeding-time are so zoologically combined, and the old phantom waiters glide about, and the old ghostly clocks tick, as they might have done (and I sometimes believe they did—the same waiters and clocks), in Dr. Johnson's time: not with the most remote alliance to those particular mildewing cellars of cobweb-covered magnums, which are now and then disinterred to follow that especially tender steak and that singularly mealy potato, which we know occasionally where to find—not in connection with any of these things does your name suggest itself to me, as the proper friend to whom this pamphlet should be dedicated.

But I have heard it rumoured, that a certain 'Hand-book' is in preparation, in which first the environs of London, and afterwards county after county, are to be

dealt with in that same spirit of truthful observation and experience that has made the name of MURRAY so terrible all over that portion of the globe wherever an inn can be found for the English traveller to take his ease in. I should not at all wonder if someone were to tell me, as a secret, some fine morning, that you had a great deal to do with it.

And therefore I inscribe these few leaves to you, with the hope that even this trifle may impress you still further with a notion of the importance of the mission attributed to you—if such indeed be true; and that the useful warning, which in other works has told us,

“*Inn*: Hotel de la Couronne, (Crown),
bad and dirty: extortionate prices and
uncivil landlord.”

may be given to us as plainly in your book, and put us equally on our guard.

And so, permit me to regard myself as a skirmisher in the attack against this conventional fortress-system of discomfort and dearness which is the terror of tourists in England, firing a light rifle in advance until you bring the heavy artillery of Albemarle Street to knock the abuse to the ground,

And as your very sincere friend,

ALBERT SMITH.

London, Dec. 15, 1855.

THE HOTEL NUISANCE.

I.

IN *The Times* of Saturday, Nov. 3rd, 1855, there appeared the following leader, so excellent and practical, that I take the liberty of extracting it, as the text of the observations which follow:—

“Is it not a strange thing that in London, which is called the most civilized city in the world, a stranger may be sorely puzzled to find a place in which to lay his head? There are, no doubt, a few inns scattered about the town, but it is almost necessary that a visitor in the metropolis of the British empire should be well informed beforehand, or he runs a very fair chance of finding no other quarters for the night than such as would disgrace a provincial town. Everybody, of course, knows of Mivart’s, the Clarendon, and of two or three other hotels of the first class, as they are called—but *non cuivis*;—whose purse is equal to the expenditure which is involved in a residence at such establishments? Besides, if the stranger be a millionaire, or a person who is determined to keep up the appearance of a millionaire at an alarming sacrifice, the accommodation which he obtains in return for his lavish expenditure is scarcely commensurate with the outlay. It is not to be denied that the

accommodation given at such establishments is good enough, the attendance excellent in its way, but no hotel-keeper, however great his anxiety to please his customers may be, can convert dingy rooms into cheerful ones, or enlarge an ordinary London house into the dimensions of a palace. Let us, however, dismiss from consideration altogether the question of the half-dozen hotels at the West-end of the town which have contrived to win for themselves a certain amount of reputation. As long as customers are found to fill their apartments, and submit to the exigencies of their tariffs, it is scarcely to be expected that the proprietors will consent to reduce their charges to a reasonable point. Even if they did so, the aggregate accommodation which all the first-class hotels of London could supply is but as a drop of water in the sea as compared with what is really required. How many thousands of persons are there sojourning in London every day throughout the year who are willing and eager to pay from 10*s.* to 30*s.* a-day for comfortable accommodation, and for food plain and wholesome, and who are forced to be content with dirt and grease until they can effect their escape from luxurious London? We Londoners in our own persons know nothing of such sufferings. We have our comfortable homes, our clubs, our accustomed lounging-places. We know where to turn for every description of indulgence or accommodation we may require. We cannot understand the miseries of the foreigner or provincial who wanders blindfold, as it were, about the streets, hesitating to return to his inn with its heated coffee-room and flaring gas, or to take the yet more serious step of retiring to his stuffy bed-room with its 'four-poster' and fusty curtains, its feather-bed and insect tribes, the greasy 'boots' with his commercial slippers, the pert chambermaid with her flat candlestick and her leer.

“ On the continent of Europe these things are far better managed—so they are in the United States of America. Who that has ever stayed at the delightful hotels which are scattered about Switzerland and various districts of the continent but has a pleasant recollection of the comfort he has enjoyed in them, quite independent of the beauties of the scenery by which they are surrounded? The bed-rooms contain just what bed-rooms should contain, now that the continental hotel-keepers have modified their views upon the quantity of water necessary for purposes of ablution. They are not covered with thick, frouzy carpets, nor filled with odds and ends of furniture for the sole purpose of retaining dirt and dust. Guests who do not object to the *table d'hôte* system can obtain a dinner, which is certainly superior to our English sole, steak, and cheese, at one-half the cost. What is best of all, from the first the tariff of charges is placed before the customer's eyes, and he may regulate his expenditure according to his taste and means. We do not say the continental system is perfect; on the contrary, in many of the principal towns the hotel charges are unreasonably high, and the extra expense inflicted upon those who would maintain their privacy out of all proportion with the public tariff. With all their faults, however, compare them with the English—especially with the London hotels! Before the influx of visitors consequent upon the Great Exhibition had driven the Parisian hotelkeepers mad, a visitor to that capital was at least sure of comfortable accommodation, and not at any very outrageous cost. The Exhibition has, no doubt, produced a great change, and that change has been a great evil as far as foreign visitors are concerned. The excess of the evil, however, as usual, has worked its own cure. An hotel upon a gigantic scale, called the ‘Hôtel du Louvre,’ has been erected, but

is not yet, we believe, opened. The plan of this huge caravanserai has been forwarded to us, and we notice it in so prominent a manner because it is a scandal that no establishment of the same kind is to be found in London. The excuse hitherto has been that the means of individuals are not sufficient to set an undertaking of this kind afoot, but the recent alteration in the law of partnership will obviate every objection of this kind. There is no reason why a number of persons should not club their £1,000 a-piece, place the affair under competent management, and command success. The absence of an hotel of this kind—possibly of a dozen hotels of this kind—is one of the great wants of London. It cannot for a moment be doubted that, were such an enterprise conducted with prudence and liberality, the persons engaged in it would obtain excellent interest for their investments. The situation should be central, so that, whether a visitor came to London on business or for pleasure, he might equally find himself not too far removed from his peculiar centre of attraction. The only hotels at all answering the description with which we are acquainted are the Great Western and Euston Square hotels, establishments which we believe are conducted with great propriety; but they labour under the inherent defect of a bad locality. It is, no doubt, a great comfort to a belated traveller, who is delivered in London by the train from Exeter or from the north at an undue hour, to find such excellent accommodation near at hand. If we consider them merely as Chapels of Ease to the Railways, such hotels are of great advantage; but we require something more. In the centre of London the foreign and provincial visitor should be able to find good accommodation at a fixed and reasonable rate,—hotels, in short, such as are to be found in Paris, Vienna, Brussels, Berlin, Geneva, and with

charges such as they will be when this new scheme comes into operation.

“The Hotel du Louvre extends from the Place du Palais Royal to the Rue du Coq lengthways : on the one side it looks out on the Rue de Rivoli; on the other on the Rue St. Honoré. We wish, however, to say nothing especial in its favour. It has yet its character to earn for all but felicity of position, great architectural splendour, and a reasonable tariff. If we notice the establishment, it is because it is scandalous that Paris should be suffered to draw so far ahead of London on a point of so much consequence to the comfort of the community. A little while back it was the fashion to say that any attempt at organising dining-rooms on a large scale must be attended with inevitable loss and failure, partly because the social habits of Englishmen were opposed to the system—partly because the clubs satisfied all wants of this kind. Well, large dining-rooms have been established, and it is difficult to find a place vacant in them at the usual dinner hour. The same result would, no doubt, attend the establishment of large and comfortable hotels, with moderate tariffs. We recommend the subject to public attention. There are Ballarats in London, with richer nuggets than Australia has sent us, to which nobody gives a thought.”

I read this leader with very great satisfaction, for it was on a subject to which I had given some attention. Years ago I had avowed that the writer, who once tried to invest an inn with such an idea of comfort, made a great mistake; and so have all those who, in the sturdiest traditional spirit, still believe they believe so. Light and warmth, after a cold night's journey, make an inn comfortable: so would be a brick-kiln, or a glasshouse, or a blacksmith's shed under similar circumstances. But the feeling upon arriving at an inn in the daytime, when you know you have got to

stay there, is to me irresistibly depressing. The utter isolation in the midst of bustle is bad enough in itself; but everything about you makes it worse. The chilling side-board, with its formal array of glasses; the thorough Swiss of the household, whose services can only be procured by paying for them; the empty tea-caddy and imperfect backgammon board; the utter absence of anything to beguile even two minutes, beyond a local directory, a provincial journal of last Saturday, or Paterson's roads; the staring, unfeeling pattern of the very paper, and, in the majority of country places, the dreariness of the look out; the clogged ink-stand and stumped pens; the inability to protract a meal to six hours to get rid of the day; and, above all, the anticipations of a strange bed, with curtains you cannot manage, and pillows you are not accustomed to, and sheets of unusual fabric—all these discomforts, and a score more that I will enumerate, keep me from ever falling into that state of rampant happiness at an inn which popular delusion would assign to a sojourn therein.

Circumstances enabled me, two or three years ago, to form some notion of the manner in which almost all the principal inns, all over England, were conducted. I tried most of them—the leading expensive sea-side establishment, where I could scarcely ring the bell without paying for the privilege—the old, almost forgotten, dingy, rambling inn, that was great in the coaching times,—the flaunting, gas-blazing, French-polished, bustling, terminus tavern—the small country town, bow-windowed, old-chamber-maided, stone-passaged, tobacco-odoured, family and commercial hotel and posting-house—and I found the same things to object to in most of them. I discovered, at the same time, that there was no earthly reason why these objections should not be removed, and the whole routine of inn-keeping routed

and overthrown ; and, in the hope that some of my readers may think with me, I put forward my experiences. Knowing how, abroad, hotel keeping has become a perfect science ; and how a fixed charge for everything makes stopping in a first-class continental house so very agreeable, I launch a pebble at the brittle hotel conventionalities, in the hope that the multitude will follow my example, and smash the whole system to atoms.

II.

Let us first take, as an example of the harpy spirit brooding over most hotels, the elaborate and expensive process of washing one's hands, which is as follows :

You go into the coffee room, and, previous to dining, wish to wash your hands. You ring the bell, and the waiter appears, to whom you communicate your wish. He says, "Hands, sir, yes—sir," and goes away. After waiting a reasonable time you ring again. He then conducts you to the foot of the staircase, and calls up it to the chambermaid. You stand in expectancy with the waiter for a little while upon the rug, and then the chambermaid appears. She precedes you up some stairs, and down others, and along passages on different levels, and round corners, and at last introduces you to a bed-room. She next draws the bed-curtains, and pulls down the blind—not because such is wanted, but from mere mechanical habit, and then leaves you to your own devices, with some hard water that will curdle the soap, if it would dissolve ; but you might as well wash with a bit of chalk, as with the singularly hard white cake in the soap-dish. There is one towel, damp and hard, and very like embossed pasteboard ; and with these aids you make what

toilet you may, and then come out to find the attendant waiting for her fee at the door. This is no exaggeration: I am certain there are few of my readers who will not bear me out in the truth of the picture.

And this at once brings me to the nuisance—for it is really one—of having to pay “what you please” to servants, without a fixed charge to the bill. I do not wish to diminish the earnings of hotel attendants. Let them be paid at whatever rate they please,—eighteen-pence, two shillings, half-a-crown a day—but let it be understood and included in the bill. Commercial men have generally a tariff of their own, but they will tell you themselves that they are bothered at times to know what to do. If such is the case, what must it be with mere tourists and visitors, who find that the donation received by one waiter with smiles and thanks, is sulkily carried away by another without a word, or with a muttered question of “Whether it includes the Boots?” I would recommend all travellers, if the choice is offered, to patronize only those houses which advertise “*a fixed and moderate charge for attendance.*” The practice is already extending, and as the railway scared away the tribe of hostlers, porters, coachmen, guards, postboys, and other vultures, who fluttered about inn doors and yards, so we may be sure that the more we travel and insist on these changes the more rapidly will the old system blow up or decay.

In aggravation of this inn-fluenza, I have suffered much at hotels from wax candles: having been made first to burn them, and then to pay heavily for them, at all sorts of places. When I am at home, I do not burn wax candles; very few people in my position in life do—I make bold to say that the majority of my readers do not—we are content with Price

or Palmer, or a moderator lamp, or gas. Then why should wax be forced upon us by hotel conventionality, to swell the bill? and why, the instant they are lighted, should every other charge be run up in proportion, until the prices of the commercial-room are at least doubled? I should, perhaps, add, that these extortions—it is the only proper word—chiefly occur in the inns that were great in those days of misery, the “fine old coaching times.” Whenever I see pictures of “Pulling up to Unskid,” or “Down the Road,” or “The Salisbury Rumbler meeting the Exeter Delay upon Easterly Common,” I am sure wax candles burn in that room at the Pope only knows how much an inch. And I am certain also, that the honest domestic chop, upon the hissing hot blue willow-pattern plate, will be superseded by the “cutlet” in the old battered, silver-edged, ricketty-handled, copper-betraying, plated side dish; for the sake of an extra shilling on the candles, and another on the dinner, looking to their refinements.

I am not flattered by these attentions. They do not make me think myself one-sixteenth of a degree higher on the ladder than the intelligent cosmopolitan gentlemen in the commercial room. They only provoke a melancholy smile at the dull contrast the wax-candles and side-dishes present to the hard homeless aspect of the room. A hearse hung round with illumination lamps could not present a more depressing antithesis.

A great many of my readers know the charm of a well-conducted foreign hotel. Let us take for example the *Grand Laboureur* at Antwerp, the *Baur* at Zurich, or the *Schweitzer Hof* at Lucerne—Bairr's at Milan—the *Colonies* at Marseilles—the *Ville de Paris* at Strasbourg—the *Trois Couronnes* at Vevay—the *Couronne* at Berne—the *Fedor* at Turin—the *L'Univers* at Lyons—even Misseri's (before the war) at Constantinople—in fact, take one any where, every where, all about Europe,

wherever Murray guides, or circular notes are solvent, and we have not a house in all England to compare with them. The quick appreciative attention—the moderate charges—the utter absence of feeling yourself compelled to drink what you do not require “for the good of the house”—the single small cup of good coffee brought when wanted, instead of the fine old entire equipage, making another actual meal at most houses—the cheerful lofty bed-room, which you can sit in all day, so light and elegant is it, if you please—the pleasant change in the bill of fare from the “Chop, sir, steak, broiled fowl,” and all told—these things might be paid for at double their usual rate, and yet be cheap compared with our own tariffs and vaunted English comforts. And far above all, to return to our old grievance, the servants are charged in the bill.

At some of our hotels, as if still further to harass and perplex the departing guest, when he has humbly paid his so-many shillings for the attendance, the waiter says to him, “How is this to be divided, sir?” as if, in addition to the annoyance, an intricate and sure-to-be-unsatisfactory calculation was to be forced upon him. I have found out a plan of retaliation in this case. I carefully pencil down the two shillings a day for attendance, at the bottom of the bill, and when the waiter asks my intentions as to its distribution, I make an elaborate division. I write—*Waiter, eleven-pence three-farthings; Chambermaid, eight-pence three farthings; and Boots three-pence half-penny.* You cannot think how this distresses him; and as servants at hotels never agree one with the other, what a war it occasions after you have left. There is some satisfaction in that.

III.

It was a blessed thing when the stage coaches were run off the roads by the winged engine of the rail; and therefore I think that the enterprising proprietor who heads his advertisement in Bradshaw, "The Olden Time Revived," and has a wood-cut of a four-horse coach below the announcement, mistakes the public taste, and offers anything but an attraction.

We all of us remember the misery of a journey on a coach ten or fifteen years ago. Who the people were who used to write and talk about the pleasure of sitting behind "four spanking tits" we never could understand. The tits never spanked when we were perched behind them on the black shelf which was called a seat, and was about as comfortable as a mantel-piece. Then again, "the box" was considered a great thing to secure. I never intrigued, or fee'd, or struggled for it. It entailed an uncomfortable position, with the trouble of holding a bunch of hard leather reins in your hand while the driver got down; and the bore of listening to his common-place uninteresting attempt at conversation when he kept his place. If you went behind you had no room for your legs, or they hung dangling over the wheels. If it was cold, you were frozen; if it rained, you were soaked; and if it was dusty, you were smothered. All was as bad and dreary and miserable as it could well be. And yet no one had the courage to say that it was so, anymore than anybody would now dare to state in print that the Crystal Palace has been a dismal Stock-Exchange-Art failure—that the people, "whose palace it is," are much more bored than amused by the large images and plaster of Paris heads stuck about it—that its future is something comical to think about—or, in fact, to run tilt against any other tolerated conven-

tionality. Thank goodness, however, at last the coaches have gone; and all the 'coachmen', and guards, and loaders, and hostlers, and helpers, and hangers-on generally, with them. The coarse hurried dear inn-dinner is gone; the troublesome passengers who got down to drink brandy-and-water at every stage, and would talk to you afterwards, are gone; the horses, whose histories you were supposed to be interested in—how the leader had been picked up for a "fippun" note, or the wheeler had worked ten years in the Brighton Highcharger—are gone; and in their place we have the civil unpaid guards, the rapid transit, and the all but actually reasoning steam-engine, of the railroad.

It is about the hotels, to which these coaches formerly ran, that discomforts and abuses are most obstinately collected. Founded before our universal intimacy with the Continent showed us what good hotels were really like, they have got absolutely mouldy in their usages. From the very moment you arrive, until your departure, everything goes on as it did forty years ago. As you come up to the door a bell is rung violently, not that anybody replies to the summons, but it gives a little sort of galvanic bustle to the establishment, and impresses you with the notion that you are creating a sensation, and must do something immediately "for the good of the house." Formerly it called all the harpies together for the arrival of the coach; but now, although there is no coach, the bell is still kept up, like the curfew or any other old usage. So we have seen reduced people still ring a dinner-bell, when living in a six-roomed cottage in Camden Town.

At these old hotels the waiters have decayed with the life of the establishment. They are slow of action and comprehension; the chambermaids are the same, and they hate being

asked for a plurality of towels or a tub. The rooms are the same; they have old forgotten names painted on them—the *Chatham*, the *Portobello*, the *Ranelagh*. The passages are dark and intricate, and on different levels, with obtrusive sills every now and then to trip you up; and the grand characteristics of the bed-chambers are bad soap and four-post bedsteads, and inconvenient three-cornered washstands, about which I will say a few words. Which leads me to contemplate a maxim. “Every inn ought to be entirely burnt down every ten years.”

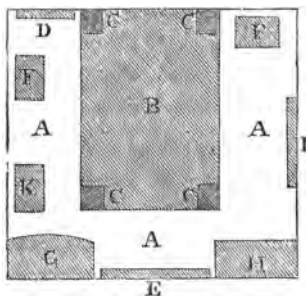
IV.

Of inn soap—of that little inconvenient latherless cube of indurated composition which is a part and parcel of the old hotel system? What is it? Where is it bought? How is it made? What is supposed to be its use? Is it really soap, or cheese, or wax, or chalk, or gutta-percha, or cement, or all these things combined? If you try to wash with it in cold water, you might as well use a square of ivory—if you put it in warm, after a time a film collects about it, as we have seen about a dead perch in the well of a punt; but you will get no lather. And if, in your desperation, you try to rub it hard on your coarse single towel, its nipped-up cornerless form offers no hold; and slippery, without being saponaceous, at last it darts out of your hands, like a bullet, into a corner of the room, where you had better let it lie, and purchase some brown Windsor on your own account.

The accompaniment to this soap—to the conventional hotel and all its appendages—is sure to be that grand old temple of suffocation, bed-besiegers, and night-mare, the four-post bedstead. It is one of the fine and ancient institutions which it is the glory

of England to cling to. Originally constructed in the dark ages, when doors and windows would not close, and chimneys were blast furnaces, and space was no object, it has come down to us in all its original hearse-like imposing presence—shorn only of its surmounting plumes of dusty feathers, which may yet be seen in some old places, gloomily brushing the ceiling.

Why it so always happens that the smaller the room, the larger is the hotel four-poster, I cannot explain. I only know that it is so—that the ordinary chamber would have that appearance in a plan whereof the description is



A A A. The Chamber.

B. The Bedstead.

C C C C. The four Posts.

D. The Door.

E. The Window.

F F. The two Chairs.

G. The Chest of Drawers.

H. The Washhand Stand.

I. The Fire-place.

K. The Portmanteau Stool.

Now it will be seen in this plan that there is not room for anything. Within the heavy expensive elaborate mass of serge, chintz, feathers, mahogany, horse-hair, sacking, holland, ticking, quilting, winch-screws, brass rings, castors and watchpockets, the hapless traveller rolls about in vastness, and swelters and gasps, and breathes the same uncirculating air over and over

again, and before he ventures into it is even at times asked "if he will have a pan of coals." Without the bedstead, his toilet operations are necessarily contracted to cabin-like space. There is no table to put anything on, nor is there room for one. Sitting in such a cribbed chamber is out of the question : and so he has no choice between the coffee-room and the gaunt stark expensive private apartment, where the old waiter makes him an assenting party to all the old tomfoolery of burning two old wax candles in two old plated heavy candelabra rather than candlesticks, after which it is possible the old chambermaid sends him to his old bed with an old mutton dip without snuffers.

How great the contrast here presented to any foreign hotel you please to remember, with its airy comfortable simple bed—its half sitting-room bed-chamber, with tables, chairs, bright chimney ornaments, and convenient *escritoire*—its ready, quick, perceptive, civil attendants, for whose services you know how much exactly you will be charged in the bill. No wonder people like travelling on the Continent.

Touching wax candles, I would recommend travellers not to have private rooms unless they see gas introduced. There is something so enormously comical and absurd in a stranger at an hotel sitting down alone in a cheerless room with two grim wax lights burning before him in dreary solemnity, that he must be a dull fellow who would not laugh outright at this melancholy little bit of state, but for the annoyance we all feel at having useless expenses thrust upon us.

V.

ONE fine day, in my wanderings, I chanced to come upon one of the best specimens of the old conventional expensive comfortless hotel that I expect is to be found in England. No matter where it was; perhaps portions of it will be recognised by my readers.

It was advertised to be let. In the "old coaching days" it had without doubt been a flourishing establishment. People had bolted bad coarse two-shilling dinners there, whilst the horses changed; and had the pleasure of sitting down with the coachman. All sorts of hotel birds of prey had haunted its dingy time-dusted interiors and precincts. Waiters had bowed, and chambermaids had curtsied, for their respective fee. The boots who took your carpet-bag at the door had touched his forehead for your donation; and the helper who threw it on to the roof of the coach had done the same. The coachman had expected his gratuity at the end of the journey: and so possibly had the guard. In fact everything that sneakish extortion—worse, and far more contemptible than a direct brigand-like attack upon your purse—could exact, had been miserably submitted to, until the locomotive came rattling through the suburb of the town, scattering all this harpeyism to the right and left, as the tectotum top in the game of "the devil amongst the tailors" knocks about the little ivory ninepins. And then there arose a famous inn close to the station, to which quick civil railway porters wheeled over your luggage for nothing. The attendance was charged in the bill at eighteen-pence a day. Wax candles were driven away by light gas chandeliers. The waiter's idea of dinner got beyond "chops, steaks, broiled fowl,

sir:" and there was some capital fresh old English beer in the house, instead of the inevitable doctored nauseous Pale Ale, which was very well as far as it went, and was considered "the thing" to drink by young swells, but is now becoming rather a nuisance; for in many places you can get nothing else, and mild October has departed. And so, altogether, the old house had its bar put out of joint.

I got there by mistake, late in the evening, having been taken there by a stray fly. I have before stated that a fly is a sad thing. Its lining is always fusty, and its windows always small and difficult to manage. Its accommodation is uncomfortable: it has a bad horse: it is thrice as dear as a Hansom; and its driver looks for something for himself—that miserable expectant sum of "What you please."

The coffee-room of this "old-established hotel," was a ghastly place. There was no gas; but some mould candles were burning about with cocked-hat wicks, and their light was all absorbed by the dingy paper. The only pictures were of the old "coaching" school, with that dull half-animal clod, the "Jehu" (as smart writers used to call him), "tooling the prads" along a road at a rate they never achieved. Next to the Jehu—who was something between a "thorough John Bull" (an equally objectionable person) and a hackney coachman—on the box was a female in a green spencer, a short waist, and a yellow bonnet, large and radiant, such as we see worn by Queen Caroline in old pictures, with a reticule on her arm. This was the "fast thing" of coaching life; a low variety of that ambition which makes Charley Lincoln, of the Life Guards Blue,—whilst those other fellows are fighting in the Crimea,—drive somebody he calls "*Pussums*," some fine Sunday, on that dismally uncomfortable remnant of legendary Swellism, the four-in-hand, to dine at the

Trafalgar or *Crown and Sceptre*. Behind the box, on the knife-board seat in front, were an agricultural gentleman; a man with mustachios, smoking a cigar, in a hat bigger at top than at bottom, with a curved rim, the convexity being downwards, after the fashion of Corinthian Tom in "Life in London," white trowsers tight at the ankle, and with long straps. (It appears essential to all coaching pictures, that a snob smoking a cigar, in moustachios, should form one of the load.) There was also a man in that old style of blue cloak with a cape, called in the coaching vernacular a *rockelow*. And the shelf was filled by a soldier. The company behind appeared to have come from the print of the Licensed Victualler's Festival; and altogether the sight of the pictures suggested thoughts of what you would do, short of actual murder, rather than be one of the party. There was also an old dusty stuffed pheasant over the door—a looking-glass over the mantel-piece, divided into sections, that put each side of your head on a different level if you got between them, making your face look as if it was going up stairs—a number of dark old tables, indented with knocks of presidents' hammers and freemasons' glasses—and a couple of long old-fashioned bell-pulls of scarlet stuff edged with black, which came down bodily when you pulled them. On a thin byegone side-board, were some old battered, plated, cruets stands and egg-cups—always with the copper coming through; and an ancient toastrack of the same fabric—one of those you can only see at sales.

It is needless to say that everything was in keeping with this room all over the ghostly old establishment. A nipped up old lady presided in the bar—the waiters had the air of old curates, who had tried to better themselves by taking to the hotel business—the boots was permanently bent with carrying port-

manteaus up and down stairs; and the chambermaid had attended on Queen Charlotte when she changed post-horses there. They had all lived at this inn without changing one of its arrangements, until they had allowed the world to ride past in an express train, and finally away from them.

The bed-rooms "kept up the allegory." The beds were huge four-post mausoleums of red serge, scarcely leaving one space to turn round in the room. One hard skimpetting towel hung on the horse, and a cornerless cake of insoluble soap reposed in a little round dish which went into a hole in the washhand stand, as it had done for years. On the landing I saw two wax candles, ready to be forced upon some desolate victim in a private room. They were the regular heavy old eighteen-inch high candlesticks, and their tops had been freshened up to a point with a knife. But with all this, I had a regular old dip to go to bed with, and the warm water they brought me was so hard that my hands almost scrooped over one another in it.

The inmates of the coffee-room were principally commercial travellers—men who had once been great in the horse and gig way, and who hated the rail. They tried to keep up a little of their former importance, by whistling as they came into the room, and then standing right before the fire, with their back to it and their hats on. But they wanted their whip to throw down in the corner; and the omnibus ride from the station had lowered their self-esteem. They pulled their boots off in the room—not a very delicate performance—before everybody: and then, after sitting over the fire and drinking hot brown brandy and water until they were nearly at red heat, ordered "a pan of coals," and went to bed. I have frequently seen men of the same genus pull off their boots in the room and order "a pan of coals:" and only this genus. It is an idiosyncrasy, at the elements of which I have not very clearly arrived.

The general proceedings of these old established commercial travellers were in accordance with the old established house. I saw them at dinner. One of them, who was in the chair, they called Mr. President, and he ordered the wine, and was generally appealed to. After dinner they asked me for a "sentiment." I knew none; I thought "sentiments" belonged to middle ages; indeed, I had never met with any but on the last pages of sixpenny song-books; and it always tried my understanding to make out how any man by gravely saying "May the wings of friendship never lose a feather," could contribute to the conviviality of a dinner. So I said I knew none, to their great amazement, on which one of them observed, "The gentleman seems rather green, Mr. President. (A laugh.) I'll give one for him, if you please. 'Here's all fortune's daughters but the eldest—Miss fortune!'" He thought me green; well, perhaps I was. "Good again," said Mr. President, knocking the table; and to this comicality followed one of those ghastly pauses which attempted smartness is sure to bring in its train into society.

Experienced people had often told me, "Ah! you should go to the traveller's room for fun;" but whether their humour was too esoteric, or whether (which I suspect) I had heard better, or whether I did not fall in with good specimens, I cannot very well tell. At all events I was not dazzled on the present occasion. Their fun was all allusive. They would say to one another, "How about the little widow at Peterborough?" or "I heard of the rare games you carried on at Stowmarket;" or "Ask Tomkins whether he means to go out to tea again at Oswestry?" And there was a laugh at each of these remarks. Certainly I did not hear one story or joke that I could remember, and I honestly believe that I am a capital audience. But these commercial gentlemen were slow old coaches,

and they suited the old established inn. I do believe, now, that they would have preferred driving across the country, cocked upon the box-seat of a wretched thing called a gig, with their hat on one side, and occasionally giving a lift to some uneducated uninteresting hard-handed female they overtook on the road, to rattling along the rail with all its speed, economy and certainty.

At the back of the old inn were acres of stables: the amount of slowness, and feeing, and discomfort that the former occupants of these drew after them, was terrible to think about. Not much was going on here now. Two or three post-chaises were rotting under a shed tenanted by pigeons; and when I wanted to go to the station they said they would "order the fly to be brought out." They had no notion of going to the corner of the street and calling a cab—of which there were several—in a few seconds. And I posed the waiter by saying, "What can I have for dinner besides chops, steaks, and broiled fowl?" Thus anticipated, he only staggered for a second, but then said he would go and see; and returned shortly to tell me I could have anything I liked. But I found afterwards the latitude allowed was too broad.

It must have been a terrible struggle for this old inn to keep up its old illusions. I suspect now that its staff of servants was made to appear larger by popping them in and out at different places, or bringing them on in different dresses, as theatrical processions are treated. Indeed, I once thought I saw an awful likeness between the waiter, who came in to light the fire, and the chambermaid.

VI.

ENOUGH has, perhaps, now been said to shew that a great reform is needed in the arrangements, management, and needless, although inevitable expenses of our English hotels—that some little inducement may be offered to the native of Great Britain to travel about his own land, without being forced to pay for things he don't want and never requires in his own comfortable home; and to the foreigners, to visit our country at a rate of something under fifteen shillings or a pound a-day, and find for this nothing but discomfort, and a lack of every conceivable intention on the part of that apocryphally-benignant and attentive person, "mine host," to make his stay agreeable. Well may continental visitors shun our "lions." I went one morning, in the autumn of 1850, into a leading hotel at Scarborough with my brother, and we ordered a plate of sandwiches and a bottle of pale ale. On my word in print, I was charged for this, and I paid, *seven shillings*—(it was put down in the bill as two luncheons at *three shillings each*, and the "Bass" at its usual price). The sandwich was not near so excellent as that you get with a glass of ale for fourpence in London; and as regards the beer, had it been furnished at my club, I should have "backed my bill." But it was served in a gaunt expensive coffee-room, with solemn stately waiters—quite another race to the quick, intelligent, pleasantly-communicative brigade of the *Maison Dorée*, Philippe's, or the *Trois Frères*: and all the heavy, lumbering, tasteless disposition of mahogany, mantlepieces, tumblers and Sheffield ware had to be paid for. What possible notion of English spirit and fair-dealing could a foreigner have formed, had he witnessed the manner in which the bill was paid! I have

an unfortunate but enduring desire to kick waiters generally, at "swell hotels."

Not all—for I know some most excellent ones: but as a body, they are an unpraisable race, usually coming under two denominations only—the Haughty and the Mouldy. If they are not smirking they are grimy: and if not haughty, they are familiar. Once I remember dining with a friend at the best known hotel in Bond-street—about fifteen months ago. I arrived in the coffee-room about ten minutes before my time. A superb waiter—a Jeames in *mufti*—was reading the *Globe*; he scarcely raised his eyes as I entered, so I sat down, in awe and trembling, by the fire. No body was punctual that day, and when he had quite finished, in about a quarter of an hour, he brought the journal towards me—said "Evening paper" in the same tone that he croaked "Sherry" in my ear, at a later period; and then placing it on the table, walked away with the proud consciousness of having done a charitable action. I thought how Thackeray would have loved him! I will not give you the name of the hotel—whether even, in point of syllables, it is, or is not, long.

I have heard that, even just at present, a large hotel is contemplated in London. If well-conducted it *must* return a fortune to the shareholders. Let me, with all submission, direct their attention, as well as the public's to my summing up of one or two changes which the public will appreciate.

1 (and again).—*A fixed moderate charge for attendance.*

2.—Bedrooms on the Continental plan, in which the inmates can sit if they please, without being driven to the melancholy extortion of the grim "private room."

3.—Something beyond "Chop, Sir, steak, boiled fowl," for dinner.

4.—The entire abolition of wax-candles, coffee “equipage” (the *demi-tasse* is alone wanted), and above all, the whole service of battered regular-old-established-English-hotel plated dishes with the copper shewing through.

5.—Civil, quick, appreciative waiters—not anomalous people between mutes and box-keepers—another race, by the way (the latter I mean) that must soon be done away with. Over the former I fear few of us have much control, as we only require their services when we cannot exactly superintend or correct them.

6.—A “Bureau,” or office for general information or complaint, with responsible persons constantly therein—again as on the Continent.

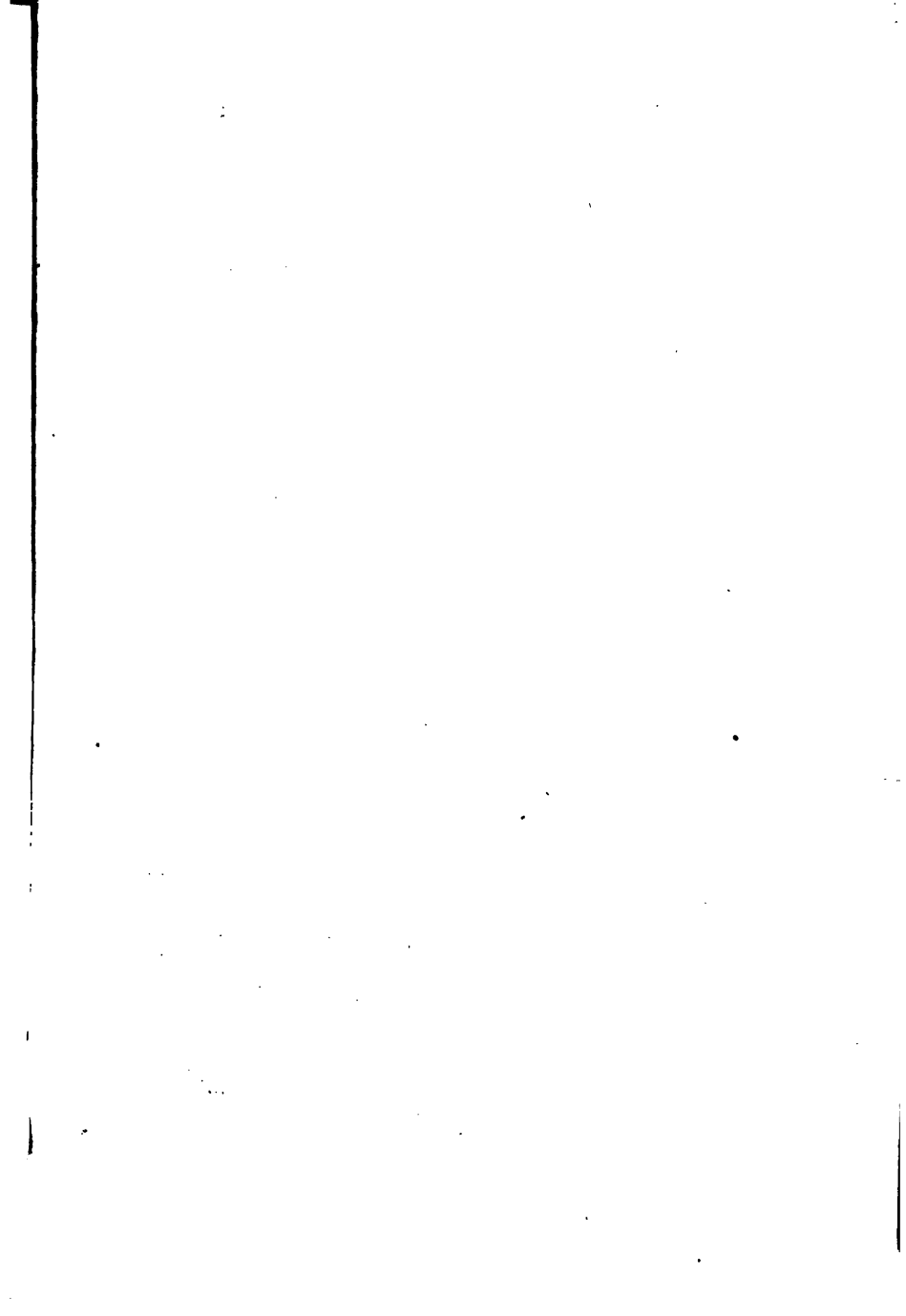
One great point, which I believe all those travelling with a family will readily appreciate, rests entirely with ourselves—the *recognition of the presence of ladies in the coffee-room*, as in the *salle-à-manger*.

Not directly bearing upon my subject, but to show some of my untravellered readers what a wine-list may be extended to in a first-class foreign hotel, I have added to this pamphlet a facsimile of the famous *carte* of the *Three Moors* at Augsburg. It is known and established that every one of these wines is in the cellar of the proprietor, and that each is of excellent quality. It would astonish even Mr. Quartermaine, or Mr. Hart, to ask for a few of them at the *Crown and Sceptre* or *Trafalgar*. And here, by the way, let me except all Greenwich and Blackwall hotels from my remarks. We go there to dine, and dine well, on high days and holidays—and we do it. We all so enjoy ourselves that we would mark the very amount of the bill with a white stone.



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Granada }

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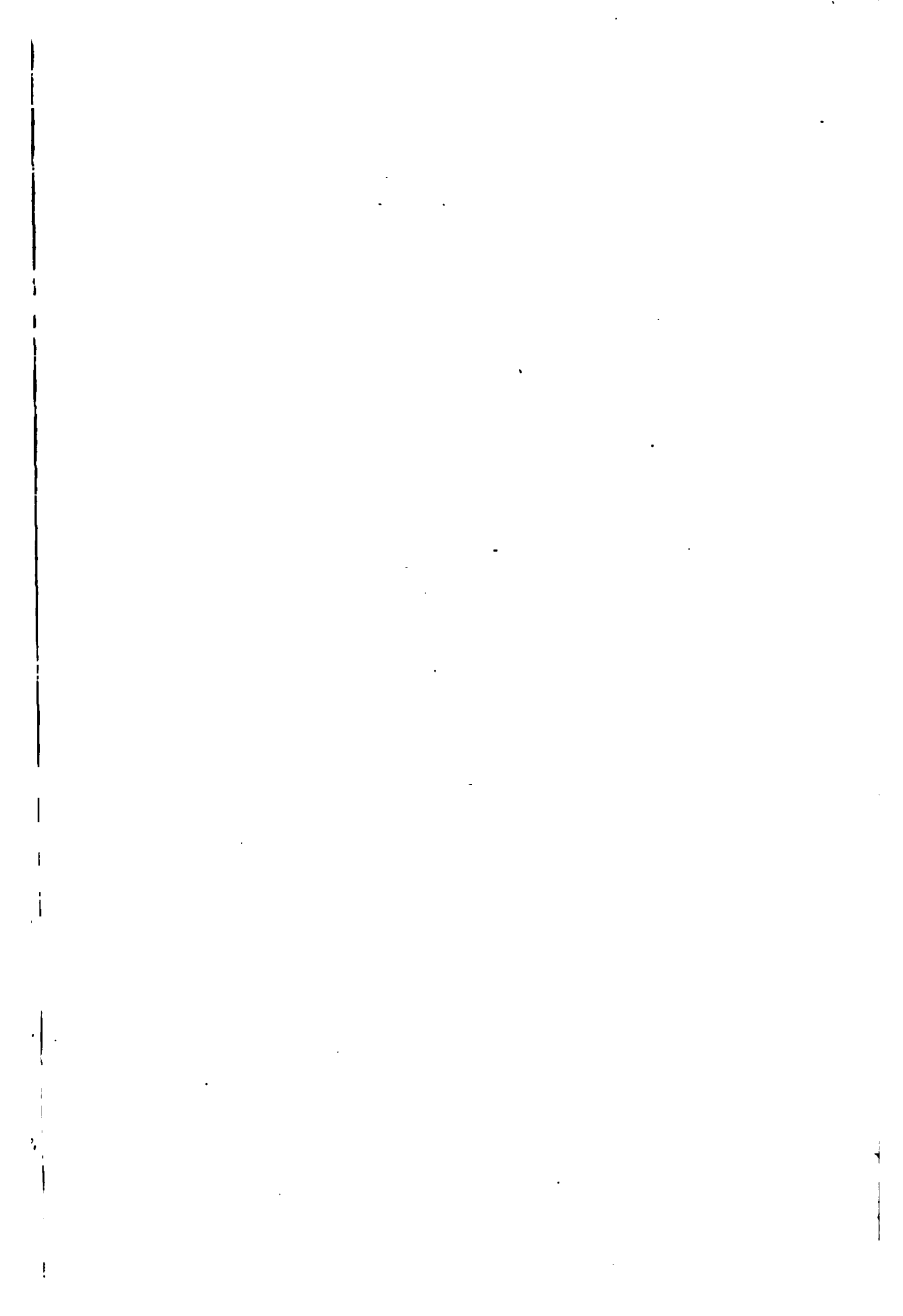
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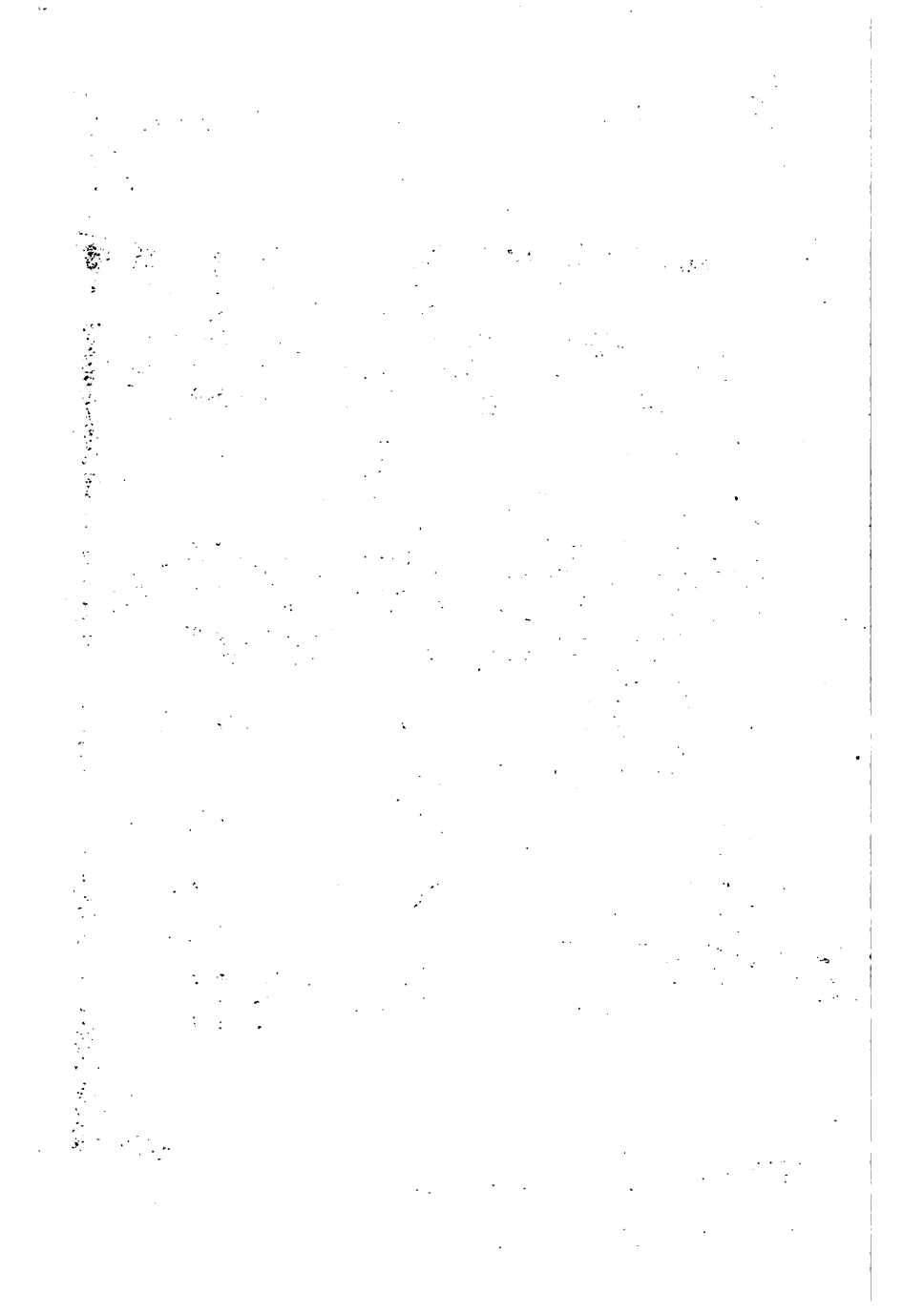
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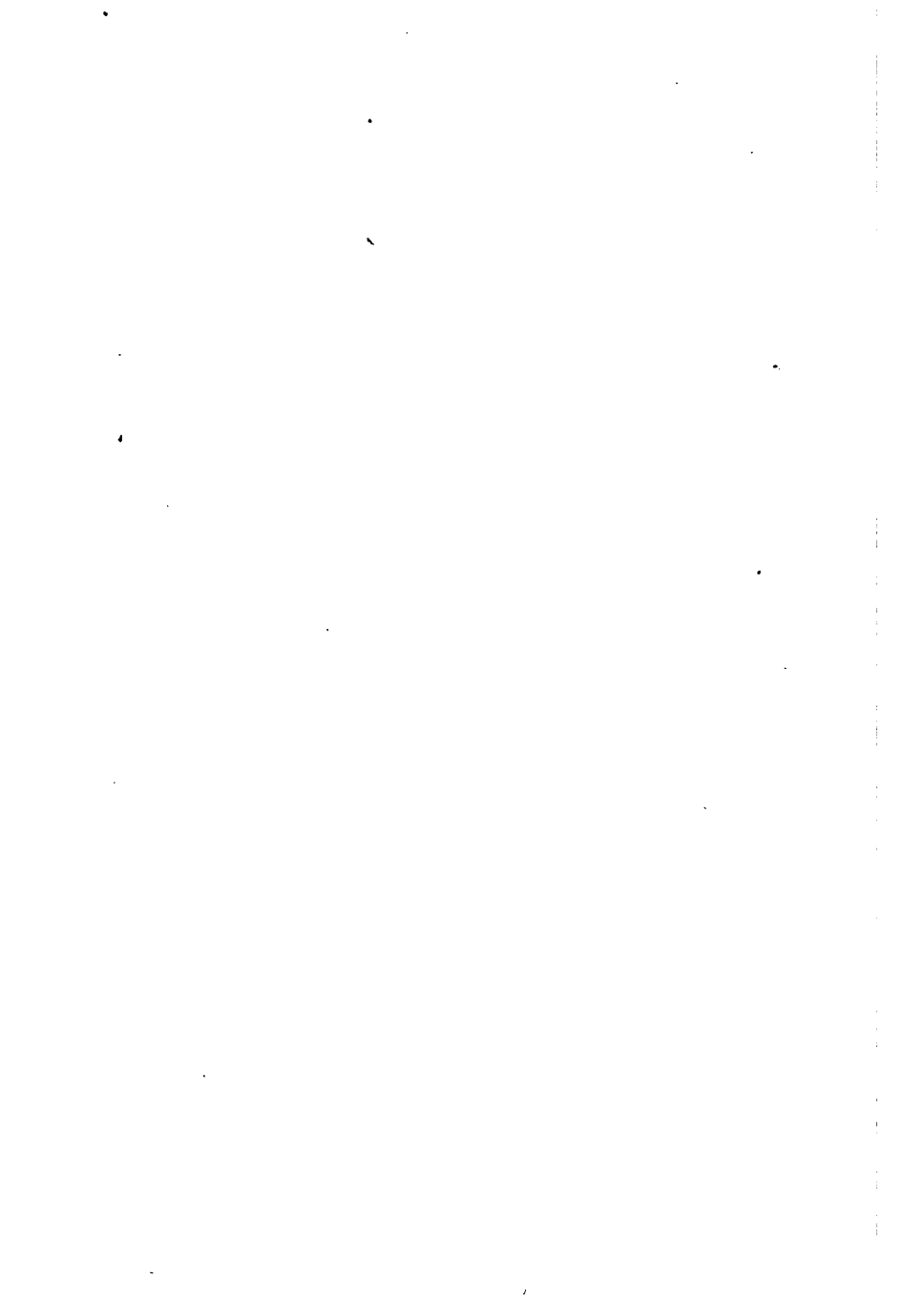
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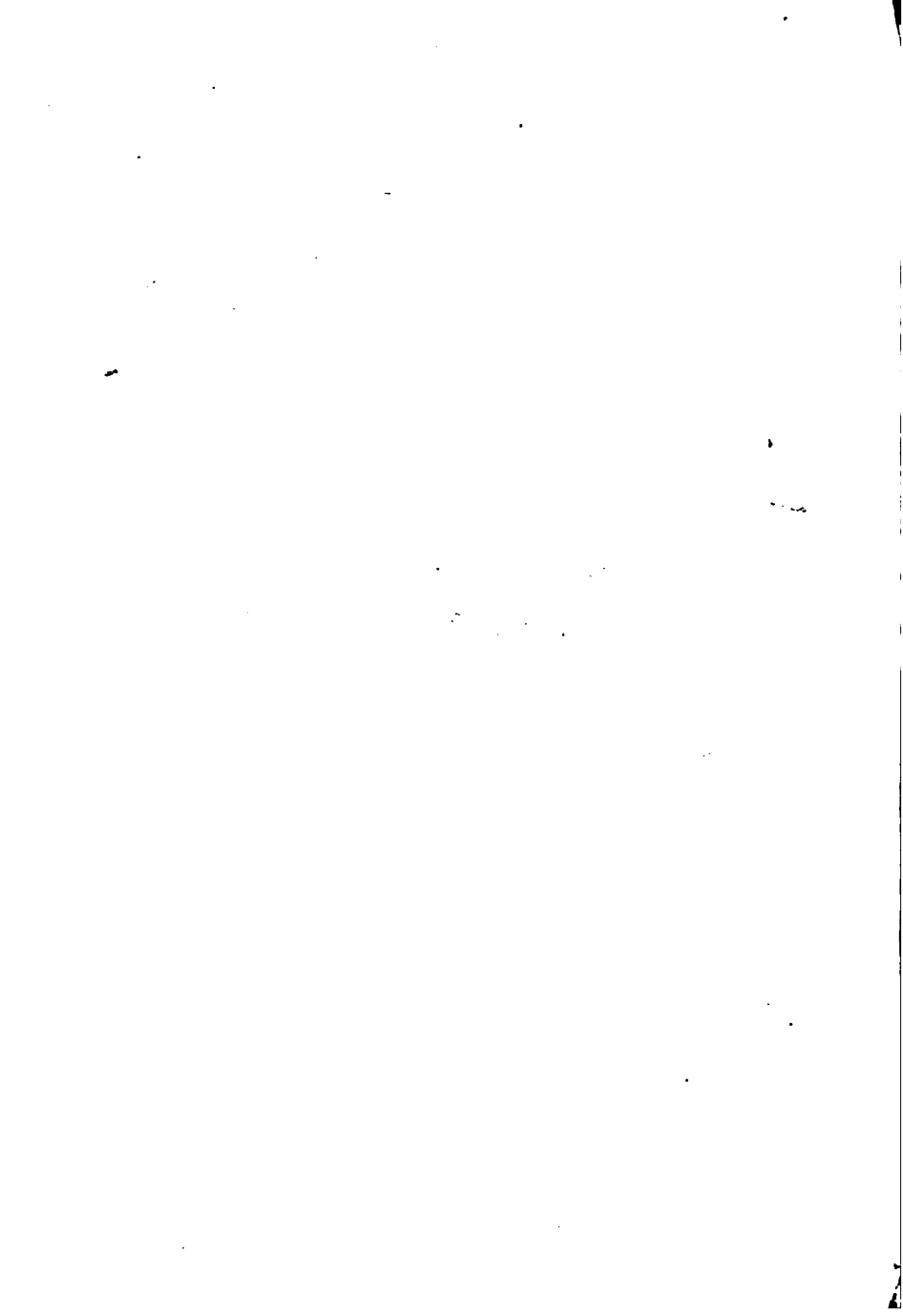
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