

THE BLUE BIRD'S-EYE

CHAPTER I

IF you had stepped into the One Tun Inn, on the 5th of April, 1803, you would have found that hostelry seething with great excitement. The One Tun Inn itself has long ceased to serve as a London landmark, or as a rendezvous for the sports and bloods who ruffled it with the best of them in the Haymarket. The old house stood on the site which the Criterion now occupies, and was not quite so handsome a place as the restaurant which decorates our Piccadilly Circus of to-day. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, our forefathers had not found the need of restaurants with pink lampshades, velvet pile carpets, French cuisine and foreign waiters. They did not dine off many courses to the music of a band of hired musicians. Your man of fashion got along in a far simpler manner. As a matter of fact, he did himself passing well, in a dingy coffee-room, taking his cut from the joint, dissecting a porter-house steak or toying with grilled or devilled bones; nor was he above washing his plain fare down with a pint or two of beer. In the evening, he did not need a padded arm-chair in a reposeful modern club. He sat in the smoke-rooms of the West End licensed houses with his boon com-