

admirable imitation of the comforts of a home, but only an imitation. For your entry-money and moderate subscription you may have the run of a palace, with the services of an admirably trained staff. But the luxury of the living is overrated, and the more celebrated the *chef* and the higher his salary, the less he concerns himself except on special occasions. Silenus' dinner in the strangers' room may be a great success, but Shendy's mutton-chop may still be unsatisfactory. What you do get is a fairly cooked meal at a moderate price, with undeniable wine. But the economy is not merely to be reckoned up in pounds, shillings, and pence. The youth who, a hundred or even fifty years ago, would have been dining at a Covent Garden hotel, at the "Blue Posts" or Long's, or in a tavern in Fleet Street, drinking port for the good of the house, going to Ranelagh, Vauxhall, or Cremorne, and winding up at "The Finish," the "Back Kitchen," or worse places, now has every inducement to finish quietly at the club. There is no more harmless recreation than the rubber or the game at billiards; the library, with its luxurious retirement, may encourage literary tastes if there is any natural bent that way, and the youth may do worse than lounge into the smoking-room, where nowadays the general conversation is correct as in a boudoir. No man now makes a smoking-room reputation by loose stories or indecent jests. Though now, indeed, as to smoking, the old restrictions are relaxed, and the difficulty is for non-smokers to hold their own even in the hall or the morning-room.

The most aristocratic of clubs is nevertheless essentially democratic, and nothing gives a better idea of the immensity of the Empire, of its resources in the way of talent, and of the importance of its great metropolis, than the way in which eminent men are submerged. They not only find their level; they often sink below it, and distinguished service is almost forgotten or ignored. At every turn you rub shoulders with an ambassador out of place, with a colonial governor who has just been paid off, with a pro-consul who has ruled a vast