

legs was supplied by clapping a volume of Vesey under the short one. As for the chairs—but why weary about details—chairs being made to be sat upon, it is sufficient to say that they answered their purposes, and whether they had backs or not—whether they were cane-bottomed, or hair-bottomed, or rush-bottomed, is nothing to the present enquiry.

Jack's habits of discipline made him punctual, and dinner was on the table in less than three minutes after five. Down we sate, hungry as hunters, and eager for the prey.

"Is there a parson in company?" said Jack Ginger, from the head of the table.

"No," responded I, from the foot.

"Then, give thanks," said Jack, and proceeded, after this pious grace, to distribute the cod's head and shoulders to the hungry multitude.

CHAPTER II.—HOW WE DINED AT DICK GINGER'S.

The history of that cod's head and shoulders would occupy but little space to write. Its flakes like the snow flakes on a river, were for one moment bright, then gone for ever; it perished unpitiously. "Bring hither," said Jack with a firm voice, "the leg of pork." It appeared, but soon to disappear again. Not a man of the company but showed his abhorrence of the Judaical practice of abstaining from the flesh of swine. Equally clear in a few moments was it that we were truly British in our devotion to beef. The sirloin was impartially destroyed on both sides, upper and under. Dire was the clatter of the knives, but deep the silence of the guests. Jerry Gallagher, Jack's valet-de-chambre, footman, cook, clerk, shoeblack, aid-de-camp, scout, confidant, dun-chaser, and many other offices *in commendam*, toiled like a hero. He covered himself with glory and gravy every moment. In a short time a vociferation arose for fluid, and the half-and-half—Whitebread quartered upon Chamytton—beautiful heraldry!—was inhaled with the most savage satisfaction.

"The pleasure of a glass of wine with you, Bob Burke," said Joe Macgillicuddy, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"With pleasure Joe," replied Bob.—"What wine do you choose? You may as well say port, for there is no other; but attention to manners always becomes a gentleman."

"Port, then, if you please," cried Joe, "as the ladies of Limerick say, when a man looks at them across the table."

"Hobnobbing wastes time," said Jack Ginger, laying down the pot out of which he had been drinking for the last few minutes; "and besides, it is not customary now in genteel society—so pass the bottle about."

[I here pause in my narrative to state, on more accurate recollection, that we had not decanters; we drank from the black bottle, which Jack declared was according to the fashion of the continent.]

So the port was passed round, and declared to be superb. Antony Harrison received the unanimous applause of the company; and, if he did not blush at all the fine things that were said in his favour, it was because his countenance was of that peculiar hue that no addition of red could be visible upon it. A blush of Antony's face would be like gilding refined gold.

Whether cheese is prohibited or not in the higher circles of the West End, I cannot tell; but I knew it was not prohibited in the very highest chambers of the Temple.

"Its double Gloucester," said Jack Ginger; "prime, bought at the corner—Heaven pay the cheesemonger, for I shan't—but, as he is a gentlemen, I give you his health."

"I don't think," said Joe Macgillicuddy, "that I ought to demean myself to drink the health of a cheesemonger; but I'll not stop the bottle."

And, to do Joe justice, he did not.

With cheese came, and with cheese went, celery. It is unnecessary to repeat what a number of puns were made on that most pun-provoking of plants.

"Clear the decks," said Jack Ginger to Jerry Gallagher. "Gentlemen, I did not think of getting pastry, or puddings, or desserts, or ices, or jellies, or blancmange, or any think of the sort, for men of sense like you."

We all unanimously expressed our indignation at being supposed even for a moment guilty of any such weakness; but a general suspicion seemed to arise among us that a dram might not be rejected with the same marked scorn. Jack Ginger accordingly uncorked one of Bob Burke's bottles. Whop! went the cork, and the potteen was seen meandering round the table.

"For my part," said Antony Harrison, "I take this dram because I ate pork, and fear it might disagree with me."

"I take it," said Bob Burke, "chiefly by reason of the fish."

"I take it," said Macgillicuddy, "because the day was warm, and it is very close in these chambers."

"I take it," said Tom Meggot, "because I have been very chilly all the day."

"I take it," said Humpy Harlow, "because it is such strange weather that one does not know what to do."

"I take it," said Jack Ginger, "because the rest of the company takes it."

"And I take it," said I winding up the conversation, "because I like a dram."

So we all took it for one reason or another—and there was an end of that.

"Be off, Jerry Gallagher," said Jack—"I give to you, your heirs and assigns, all that and those which remains in the pots of half-and-half—item for your own dinners what is left of the solids—and when you have pared the bones clean, you may give them to the poor. Charity covers a multitude of sins. Brush away like a shoeblack—and levant."

"Why, thin, God bless your honour," said Jerry Gallagher, "it's a small liggacy he would have that would dippind for his daily bread for what is left behind any of ye in the way of the drink—and this blessed hour there's not as much as would blind the left eye of a midge in one of them pots—and may it do you all good, if it a'n't the blessing of heaven to see you eating. By my sowl, he that has to pick a bone after you, won't be much troubled with the mate. Howsomever"—

"No more prate," said Jack Ginger. "Here's twopence for you to buy some beer—but, no," he continued, drawing his empty hand from that breeches-pocket into which he had most needlessly put it—"no," said he, "Jerry—get it on credit whatever you can, and bid them score it to me."

"If they will"—said Jerry.

"Shut the door," said Jack Ginger, in a peremptory tone, and Jerry retreated.

"That Jerry," said Jack, "is an uncommonly honest fellow, only he is the greatest rogue in London. But all this is wasting time—and time is life. Dinner is over, and the business of the evening is about to begin. So, bumpers gentlemen, and get rid of this wine as fast as we can. Mr. Vice, look to your bottles."

And on this, Jack Ginger gave a bumper toast.

CHAPTER III.—HOW WE CONVERSED AT JACK GINGER'S.

This being done, every man pulled in his chair close to the table, and prepared for serious action. It was plain, that we all, like Nelson's sailors at Trafalgar, felt called upon to do our duty. The wine circulated with considerable rapidity; and there was no flinching on the part of any individual of the company. It was quite needless for our president to remind us of the necessity of bumpers, or the impropriety of leaving heel-taps. We were all too well trained to require the admonition, or to fall into the error. On the other hand, the chance of any man obtaining more than his share in the round was infinitesimally small. The Sergeant himself, celebrated as he is, could not have succeeded in obtaining a glass more than his neighbours. Just to our friends, we were also just to ourselves; and a more rigid circle of philosophers never surrounded a board.

The wine was really good, and its merits did not appear the less striking from the fact that we were not habitually wine-bibbers, our devotion generally being paid to fluids more potent or more heavy than the juice of the grape, and it soon excited our powers of conversation.

Then Antony Harrison told us all his campaigns in the Peninsula, and that capital story how he bilked the tavernkeeper in Portsmouth. Jack Ginger entertained us with an account of his transactions in the Brizils; and as Jack's imagination far outruns his attention to matters of fact, we had them considerably improved. Bob Burke gave us all the particulars of his duel with Ensign Brady of the 48th, and how he hit him on the waistcoat pocket, which fortunately for the Ensign, contained a five shilling piece, (how he got it was never accounted for,) which saved him from grim death. From Joe Macgillicuddy we heard multifarious narrations of steeple-chases in Tipperary, and of his hunting with the Blazers in Galway. Tom Meggot expatiated on his college adventures in Edinburgh, which he maintained to be a far superior city to London, and repeated sundry witty sayings of the advocates in the Parliament House, who seem to be gentlemen of great facetiousness. As for me, I emptied out all Joe Miller on the company; and if old Joe could have burst his cerements in the neighbouring churchyard of St. Clement Danes he would have been infinitely delighted with the reception which the contents of his agreeable miscellany met with. To tell the truth, my jokes were not more known to my companions than their stories were to me. Harrison's campaigns, Ginger's cruises, Burke's duel, Macgillicuddy's steeple-chases, and Tom Meggot's rows in the High Street, had been told over and over—so often indeed, that the several relators begin to believe that there is some foundation in fact for the wonders which they are continually repeating.

"I perceive this is the last bottle of port," said Jack Ginger; "so I suppose there cannot be any harm in drinking bad luck to Antony Harrison's wine-merchant, who did not make the dozer."

"Yes," said Harrison, "the skinflint thief would not stand more than the half, for which he merits the most infinite certainty of non-payment."

(You may depend upon it that Harrison was as good as his word, and treated the man of bottles according to his deserts.)

The port was gathered to its fathers, and potteen reigned in its stead. A most interesting discussion took place as to what was to be done with it. No doubt, indeed, existed as to its final destination; but various opinions were broached as to the manner in which it was to make its way to its appointed end. Some wished that every man should make it for himself; but that Jack Ginger strenuously opposed, because he said it would render the drinking unsteady. The company divided into two parties or the great question of