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A DINNER IN THE TEMPLE. (FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE)

CHAP. I.
HOW WE WENT TO DINE AT JACK GINGER'S.

So it was finally agreed upon that we should dine at Jack Ginger's chambers in the Temple, seated in a lofty story in Essex-court. There was, besides our host, Tom Meggot, Joe Macgilllicuddy, Humpty Harlow, Bob Burke, Anthony Harrison and myself. As Jack Ginger had little coin and no credit we contributed each our share to the dinner. He himself provided room, fire, candle, table, chairs, table cloth, napkins,—no not napkins; on second thoughts we did not bother ourselves with napkins—plates, dishes, knives, forks, spoons, (which we borrowed from the whig-maker,) tumblers, lemons, sugar, water, glasses, decanters—by the by I am not sure that there were decanters—salt, pepper, vinegar, mustard bread, butter, (plain and melted,) cheese, radishes, potatoes and cookery. Tom Meggot was a cod's head and shoulders, and oysters to match! Joe Macgilllicuddy, a boiled leg of pork, with peas-pudding; Humpty Harlow, a surloin of roast beef, with horse radish; Bob Burke, a gallon of half-and-half, and four bottles of whiskey, of prime quality, ("Potteen, wrote the Whiskeyman, "I say by Jupiter, but of which many-facture, He alone knows!") Anthony Harrison, half a dozen port, he having tucked to that amount at some unfortunate wine-merchant's; and I supplied cigars à discretion, and a bottle of rum, which I borrowed from a West Indian friend of mine as I passed by. So that, on the whole, we were in no danger of suffering from any of the extremes of hunger and thirst for the course of that evening.

We met at five o'clock—sharp—and very sharp. Not a man was missing when the clock of the Inner Temple struck the last stroke. Jack Ginger had done every thing to admiration. Nothing could be more splendid than this turn out. He had superintended the cooking himself of every individual dish, with his own eyes, or rather eye, he having but one, the other having been lost in a skirmish when he was midshipman on board a pirate in the Brazilian service. "Ah!" said Jack, often and often, "these were my honest days; gad, did I ever think when I was a pirate that I was at the end to turn rogue, and study the law."—All was accurate to the utmost degree.—The tablecloth to be sure, was not exactly white, but it had been washed last week, and the collection plates was miscellaneous, exhibiting several of the choicest patterns of delf. We were not of the silver fork school of poetry, but steel is not to be despised. If the table was somewhat rickety, the inequality in the 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 sat, hungry as hunteas, and eager for the prey.

"Is there a parson in company?" said Jack Ginger from the had of the tabl.

"No," responded I from the foot.

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

CHAP. II.
HOW WE DINED AT JACK GINGER'S.

The history of that cod's head and shoulders, would occupy but little space to write. Its flakes, like the flakes on a

river, were for one moment bright then gone for ever; it perished unpitiedly.—"Bring hither," said Jack, with a firm voice, "the leg of pork." It appeared, but soon to disappear again. Not a man in the company but showed his abhorrence of the judicial practice of abstaining from the flesh of swine. Equally clear was it in a few moments that we were truly British in our devotion to beef. The surloin 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, dum-defyer, and many other offices in commendam, toiled like a hero. He covered himself with glory and gravy every minute. 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 Macgilllicuddy 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 the fashion on the continent.]

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

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

"It's double Gloucester," said Jack Ginger; "prime, bought at the corner; Heaven pay the cheesemonger, for I shant, but as he is a gentleman, I give you his health."

"I don't think," said Macgilllicuddy, "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.—Then we attacked the cheese, and in an incredibly short period, we battered in a breach of an angle of 45 degrees, in a manner that would have done honor to any engineer that diacted the guns at San Sebastian.

"Clear the decks," said Jack Ginger to Jerry Gallagher. "Gentlemen, I did not think of getting pastry, or puddings, or any thing 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 amongst 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 soon was seen meandering round the table.

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

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

"I take it," said Joe Macgilllicuddy, "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 day."

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

"I take it," said 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 remain in the pots of half-and-half; item for your own dinner what is left of the solids, and when you have pered 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 honor," said Jerry Gallagher, "it's a small liganp he would have that would depend for his daily bread for what is left behind any of you in the way of drink; and this blessed hour there's not as much as would blind the left eye of a midgie in one of them pots; and may it do you all good, if it an't the blessing of heaven to see you eating. By my soul, he that has to pack after you, won't be much troubled with the mate. Howsomeye!"

"No more prate," said Ginger.—"Here's two-pence for you to buy some beer; out, no," he continued, drawing his empty hand from the breeches pocket into which he had most needlessly put it, "no," said he, "Jerry, get it on credit wherever you can, and tell them to 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.

CHAP. 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 heeltaps.—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. Heavens! what a flow of soul! More good things were said in Jack Ginger's chambers that evening, than in the Houses of Lords and Commons for a month. We talked of everything: politics, literature, the fine arts, drama, high life, low life, the opera, the cockpit; everything, from the heavens above to

the hells in St. James's-street. There was not an article in a morning, evening, or weekly paper, for the week before, which we did not repeat. It was clear that our knowledge of things in general was drawn to a great degree, from these recondite sources. In politics we were harmonious; we were Tories to a man, and defied the Radicals of all classes, ranks, and conditions. We deplored the ruin of our country, and breathed a sigh over the depression of the agricultural interest. We gave it as our opinion that Don Miguel should be King of Portugal; and that Don Carlos if he had the pluck of the most nameless of insects, could ascend the throne of Spain. We pitched Louis Phillippe to that place which is never mentioned to ears polite, and drank the health of the Duchess of Berri.—Opinions differed somewhat about the Emperor of Russia; some thinking that he was too hard on the Poles, others gently blaming him for not squeezing them much tighter. Anthony Harrison, who had seen the Grand Duke Constantine, when he was campaigning, spoke with tears in his eyes of that illustrious prince, declaring him, with an oath, to have been a d—d good fellow. As for Leopold, we unanimously voted him to be a scurvy bound; and Joe Macgilllicuddy was pleased to say something complimentary of the Prince of Orange, which would have, no doubt, much gratified his Royal Highness, if it had been communicated to him, but I fear it never reached his ears.

Turning to domestic policy, we gave it to the Whigs in high style. If Lord Grey had been within hearing, he must instantly have resigned; he never could have resisted the thunders of our eloquence. All the hundred and one Greys would have been forgotten, he must have sunk before us. Had Brougham been there, he would have been converted to Toryism long before he could have got to the state of typification in which he sometimes addresses the House of Lords. There was no topic left undiscussed.—With hand we arranged Ireland, with another put the Colonies in order. Catholic emancipation was severely condemned, and Bob Burke gave the glorious, pious, and immortal memory. The vote of £20,000,000 to the greasy blacks was much reprobated, and the opening of the China trade declared a humbug. We spoke in fact, articles that would have made the fortunes of a hundred magazines, if the editors of those works would have had the perspicacity to insert them; and this we did with such ease to ourselves, that we never for a moment stopped the circulation of the bottle, which kept running on its round rejoicing, while settled the affairs of the nation.

Then Anthony Harrison told us all our campaigns in the Peninsula, and that capital story how he bilked the tavernkeeper at Portsmouth.—Jack Ginger entertained us with an account of his transactions in the Brazils; 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 Macgilllicuddy we got multifarious narrations of steple-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 gentleman 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 church-yard 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, Macgilllicuddy's steple-chase, and Tom Meggot's rows in the High-street, had been told over and over; so often, indeed, that the several clators 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 that there cannot be