

SEYMOUR CHARLTON

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ON a May evening, sixty or seventy men had gathered together for dinner in a London picture gallery. It was the inauguration of a new dining club. The club had been founded for the purpose of meeting at dinner from time to time, and for the entertaining at dinner of distinguished visitors when opportunity offered. Speech-making had now begun, and all the speakers dwelt upon this truly British dinner-idea as though there lay hidden in it something of novelty and grace.

There was a table across the top of the room, and from each end of it stretched a long side table. At the bottom of the room, near the wide entrance, an estrade and a piano had been introduced. On the walls hung the usual sort of pictures: fantastic things rejected by the Royal Academy, wild impressions of land and sea, many portraits staring out of dark backgrounds, two or three large studies of the nude—one, the largest, of a woman who has just stripped herself in an artist's studio. The hired waiters had ranged the empty champagne bottles in rows by the skirting boards, had distributed newly opened bottles along the tables, had brought the coffee, and liqueurs in queerly shaped flasks. As the chairman said, addressing the company with heavily genial tones, there was cause for satisfaction in the success of this first meeting of their club. Members and guests applauded each time that a speech came to an end; and then immediately began talking as if they still had much of interest to discuss. The voices, mingling, made a confused and stupid