

at the happy, friendly faces I felt that a home dinner was the most pleasant, after all. The soup-tureen was before me, and I lifted the cover with the anxious pride of a Wellington firing the first gun at Waterloo.

“The chance simile of a battle holds good; for the soup was awfully smoky. Somebody said that it tasted like a chimney on fire. The fish was worse. The roast beef was uneatable. Persistent as I naturally am, I gave up the attempt to carve the turkey. The pudding was as hard as a stone. What little appetite remained to us was lost while carving the meats and passing the plates around. I had felt like Wellington before Waterloo; but when the dinner was over I could appreciate the despair of the defeated Napoleon.

“Had we been only a family party the *fiasco* would not have been so fatal; but, as I told you, I had invited epicures; I had dragged my friends from their comfortable homes on Christmas Day to partake of this terrible repast. Some of them have never quite forgiven me. Some have forgiven me, because I had a chance to take them aside and put all the blame upon Stoker. But nobody who was present can ever have forgotten it.

“Like Napoleon, I retreated to Fontainebleau; I fell back upon the wines. One of the guests won my heart by loudly eulogizing the cheese and the crackers.