

my own care, being cast for the part of the butler. Stoker was to buy the material. The property-man's wife was to roast the beef and the turkey. The mistress of the wardrobe undertook to boil the pudding. An usher, born with a genius for cookery, who was discovered by Stoker, had charge of the soup, fish, and vegetables. We were to wait upon ourselves,—a genuine family party. A suggestion to order ices from Gunter's, in case the pudding was a failure, was voted down indignantly.

“As Christmas approached I became quite interested in this home dinner—hungry for it days in advance, as one may say. I began by inviting one friend who had a reputation as an epicure; then another asked to be allowed to share our homely feast. Presently our family party grew to thirty. I began to have forebodings. You see, a small family can wait upon themselves, but not a family of thirty.

“However, Stoker appeared cheerily satisfied and mysteriously complacent, and seemed to think that our motto should be “The more the merrier!” I imagined that he had secretly tested some of the home cooking beforehand, and rather envied him his position as taster.

“The guests were met; the table set. I had made sure that the wines were all right. As I looked along

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