

while skating, and that the Humane Society were piling upon me a Pelon, or rather a Vesuvius of blankets. I awoke a little refreshed. Alas ! it was the 25th of the month—it was Christmas-day ! Let the reader, if he possesses the imagination of Milton, conceive my sensation.

I swallowed an atom of dry toast—nothing could calm the fever of my soul. I stirred the fire and read Zimmerman alternately. Even reason—the last remedy one has recourse to in such cases—came at length to my relief : I argued myself into a philosophic fit. But, unluckily, just as the Lethean tide within me was at its height, my landlady broke in upon my lethergy, and chased away by a single word all the little sprites and pleasures that were acting as my physicians, and prescribing balm for my wounds. She paid me the usual compliments, and then—"Do you dine at home to day, Sir ?" abruptly inquired she. Here was a question. No Spanish inquisitor ever inflicted such complete dismay in so short a sentence. Had she given me a Sphynx to expound, a Gordian tangle to untwist ; had she set me a lesson in algebra, or asked me the way to Crebdignag ; had she desired me to shew her the North Pole, or the meaning of a melodrama ;—any or all of these I might have accomplished. But to request me to define my dinner—to inquire in its latitude—to compel me to fathom that sea of appetite which I now felt rushing through my frame—to ask me to drive into futurity, and become the prophet of pies and preserves !—My heart died within me at the impossibility of a reply.

She had repeated the question before I could collect my senses around me. Then, for the first time, it occurred to me that, in the event of my having no engagement abroad, my landlady meant to invite me ! "There will at least be the two daughters," I whispered to myself ; and after all, Lucy Matthews is a charming girl, and touches the harp divinely. She has a very small pretty hand, I recollect ; only her fingers are so punctured by the needle—and I rather think she bites her nails. No, I will not even now give up my hope. It was yesterday but a straw—to day it is but the thistle down ; but I will cling to it to the last moment. There are still four hours left ; they will not dine till six. One desperate struggle, and the peril is past ; let me not be seduced by this last golden apple, and I may yet win the race." The struggle was made—"I should not dine at home." This was the only phrase left me ; for I could not say that "I should dine out." Alas ! that an event should be at the same time so doubtful and so desirable. I only begged that if any letter arrived, it might be brought to me immediately.

The last plank, the last splinter, had now given way beneath me. I was floating about with no hope but the chance of something almost impossible. They had "left me alone," not with my glory, but with an appetite that resembled an avalanche seeking whom it might devour. I had passed one dinnerless day, and