

with the rest of the luggage, until the day arrives. I have determined to try the American Christmas puddings, which, I am told, are very good indeed,—like most things American.'

"'Oh, our people manufacture them by thousands. After all, a Christmas pudding is only a mince-pie boiled.'

"'Just so,' said Mr. Irving, laughing in his silent, interior, Leatherstocking manner. 'I am thinking,' he exclaimed, 'of the Christmas dinner I gave last year in the room of the old Beefsteak Club, which, you know, is now part of the Lyceum Theatre. We had talked the matter over,—a few friends and myself,—and decided that we were tired of professional cooks and conventional bills of fare, and that the best stimulus for our jaded palates was a return to plain, homely dishes.

"'You can fancy Stoker saying that. He said it over and over for at least a month, and kept humming, "There's no place—or no dinner—like home," in the most disquieting way, whenever the matter was mentioned. He also undertook to arrange the whole affair.

"'Well, it was arranged. There were to be no professional caterers, no professional waiters, no luxuries of any kind,—except the wines, which I took under