

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]
THE HIGH JOINT COMMISSION.

A Ballad of ye olden tyme.

Sir Anglo Saxon was a knight
Of prowess and renown,
And ere from earth he did him hight,
His sonnes to menne had growne.

His oldest sonne, yclept John Bulle,
Is now ane aged manne,
His sonnes and daughters scattered fulle
Through earthe its widest spanne.

Ye other Brother Jonathanne,
Eke Uncle Samme yclept,
Waxed fatte, and in his wrath did planne,
"Creation" should be whipt!

Ye family of Samme did growe
In wealth and pryde and power,
Ye while ye angry passions' flowe,
Brought fratricidal warre.

John Bulle did have one favourite sonne,
Jean Canuck he was hight,
And Jean stood calmly looking on
At Samme his bloodie fight.

In shippes to sail ye stormie maine,
Though rich as menne could wishe,
And eke of wayes to worke for gaine
In catching of ye fische,

Ye three felle out and quarrelled sore,
And as ye stryfe grew harder,
Putrescence entered—by ye doore—
Ye Anglo-Saxon larder!

John Bulle did question—"What be this—
Ye Alabama claime?"
Sam his answer—"Wa'al, I guess
You'd better take that same."

This John Bulle would not willinglie,
He spake him smoothe of worde,
For he a manne of peace would be,
And sparing of ye sword.

But as ye warre of words waxed hotte,
Ye putrefaction rose,
And eke ye filthie odour gotte
Into John Bulle his nose.

What tyme ye quarrel grew apace,
Ye putrefaction spreade,
And catching on ye fish-er-ies
Did puzzle Samme his head.

Jean claimed ye fish-ries for his owne,
Samme did ye claime repelle;
But eke ye odour—upward gone—
Did stryke on Samme his smelle.

In such sore plights ye three resolved,
While wrangling for possession,
Ye knottie points might all be solved
Through ye HIGH JOINT COMMISSION.

(Which we may remark, parenthetically, is still in session—on the last page of this number of the C. I. News.)

ALPHA.

SWEET SIXTEEN.

Sixteen to-day:—

The world hath called it "Sweet Sixteen,"
And oh! how sweet to me;
'Tis not that bright world's dreaming
Which fills my heart with glee;
But Thine own love, my Saviour,
That makes my soul rejoice;
The sunshine of thy favour
And the music of thy voice.

While all the gay and thoughtless throng
Bow low at pleasure's shrine,
A higher, holier, better aim,
In life be ever mine;
To glorify my master,
And lead some soul afar,
From wandering in the darkness,
To look to "Bethlehem's Star."

While others in life's morning
May to their bosom clasp
The gilded glittering toys of earth
With an unyielding grasp;
May I but cling to Jesus,
In him my treasure lies.
I want a name, a lasting name,
Where glory never dies.

Ottawa, 13th Feb., 1871.

LIT.

[The foregoing lines, clipped from the Ottawa Times, display such power of versification and purity of sentiment as give promise of a bright and useful future for the fair authoress, who has, we believe, written not from affected, but from real feeling, and at the "sweet" period of life indicated.—Ed. C. I. N.]

THE SECRET OF THE CAFÉ.

EVERYBODY—that is, everybody that is anybody—knows the Café Talleyrand in Regent Street, how good it is to dine there, and how much better to dine there, if it be possible, at somebody else's expense. Most of us—for we all belong to the Upper Ten Thousand, I hope—have dreamy pleasant recollections of that Temple of the Palate, very much as Mr. Alfred Tennyson entertained of the Arabian Nights,

When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the sails of our minority,

and drove us into heavenly harbours for eating and drinking; before the cares of Paterfamilias overshadowed us, and what we had for dinner was decided with no reference to what would hash up for the children next day. It is not given, indeed, to every one to be a poet, and far less a poet-laureate, but we have most of us some poetry in our souls; we may not all be men of Genius, but we are all, more or less, people of Taste. We know the trail of a woodcock served on toast from marrow, I suppose.

O pleasant ante-chamber through which we used to tread to the Salle d'Heliogabalus, with thy thousand tapering bottles and double-headed pâtés for those who were content to stand and eat, how unlike any pastry-cook's shop wert thou! What Houris were those who stood behind thy counters, and discoursed in broken English, better by far than the integral tongue as minced veal surpasses the fillet! How cool in July days were thy golden-footed marble tables—to a gross fancy, not dissimilar to petrified Oxford brawn—with their heaped-

up ices, and "wafers" more delicate than the thistle-down! How warm in winter were thy brazen stoves! thy soups from the beginning to the end—of the Giraffe's brain and Bison's tail—how comforting and benevolence-inspiring! Shall we ever again escape from mutton-broth and what they call brown gravy, we wonder, and once more experience those — But this is weakness, and unworthy of ourselves.

We remember, then, those little rooms upon the left, the purgatories where those who were too proud to eat at the counter but yet only came for luncheon—bah! how many an excellent dinner has that foolish intermediate institution thrown away!—were wont to look forth with pride upon the rest; and then the passage with the aloe-trees in tubs on either side, and at the end, the Statue and the Fountain; the former was so out of all proportion to the latter that we used to liken it to some old gentleman who had been dining in the Salle rather too freely, and had come out thither, in undress, with his finger-glass in his hand, with the intention of bathing in it. But the Salle itself—the sanctum of the Café Talleyrand—O "give me a golden pen and heaped-up flowers upon which to lean," or else I dare not paint it! It is no task for even a *Magnum Bonum* to describe that glittering hall (of eighty feet by forty), those blissful bowers (adapted for any number of guests), the ring of peaceful steel, the silvery clash of transverse fork and spoon, the clink of crystal, and that velvet tread of the innumerable Ganymedes pervading all as sleep pervades a dream. What human voices one did hear there for the most part swelled the harmony—their "More Moselle," or, "Yes, some Curacao," had a certain music in them—but, now and then, a gentleman who loved good eating and (particularly) good drinking "not wisely but too well," would have to be "removed"—that is to say, requested to leave the apartment.

"The next time you want a dinner, sir," our head-waiter would on such occasions remark to the offending person, "you will find it at the Cat and Pumpkin round the corner, sir; but not here, sir—not here." If that gentleman could possibly have been anything else than what he was, he would, I am confident, have been a bishop. There is a beautiful legend extant respecting this dignitary, who has been at the Café Talleyrand for three generations or so, which I will take the liberty to repeat, although it has been current for years, and applied falsely to chiefs of other establishments. A gentleman, still young, and only melancholy in expression so far as it is fashionable to be so, once stepped into the Salle d'Heliogabalus, and ordered a Dinner; not a mere collection of good dishes, be it understood, but that judicious assortment of them which alone is worthy of that title. He was dressed to admiration; his hair and moustache were miracles of the art of the *coiffeur*; and his hands were whiter even than the waiters', though he was attended upon by two of the most gentlemanly of them, as a man of his distinguished taste deserved to be.

He began with *absinthe*, and concluded with a glass of *cau-de-vie*; and throughout the meal, took the right wine in the right place, and plenty of it. The head-waiter was so impressed with his judgment that he actually came out of his bower, and took the last dish away with his own superlative fingers, and the dined person acknowledged the attention with a graceful bow. It was evident, however, that this excellent judge of what was good for him had but an indifferent digestion—with such apparent inconsistency are the gifts of fortune distributed!—for he sighed heavily when he had concluded his repast, and while he was imbibing the bottle of claret. Presently he touched the little silver bell—or the bell that looks like silver—which pertains to every table in the Salle d'Heliogabalus, and the waiter was at his elbow before it had ceased to tinkle. There was now a mournful indecision in the dined person's countenance, which, in a meaner man, would have signified something like intoxication, but it presently disappeared. "Bring another bottle of claret," said he, "and be sure that it comes from the same bin;" and the waiter brought it.

The gentleman had been four hours dining and drinking, when he was heard once more to sigh deeply and to tinkle the silver bell again.

"Waiter," said he, languidly, but with that politeness to his social inferiors that never deserts a real *bon-vivant*, though gluttons possess it not—"waiter, be so good as to fetch a policeman."

"A policeman, sir!" replied Ganymede. "Most certainly, sir." And off he hurried to the head-waiter to know what the strange wine was, of which he would not have had the guest suppose him ignorant for worlds. The head-waiter understood the difficulty at once. He procured the gentleman's bill—it was £3 17s. 6d., as far as I remember, exclusive of attendance—paid it himself, and got it receipted.

"If I understand your last order aright," observed he, in his musical whisper, "you have no money about you?"

The gentleman nodded blandly.

"You have probably left your purse at home?"

"Alas! no; I have no home; I am a ruined man, in fact; but I have been accustomed to dine well, and was determined to do so once again before I was locked up for good; that is all."

"Sir," replied our head-waiter with emotion, "I sympathise with you—you are a man who deserves a good dinner; and you must permit me to be your creditor upon this occasion."

Whether this best of Samaritans ever got reimbursed for that act of charity I cannot tell; but if the esteem of all who know him can repay a man for a pecuniary sacrifice, I am sure that our head-waiter has been paid in full.

If the gentleman had taken the *cau-de-vie* first, and the *absinthe* last, it would, of course, have been a different matter.

But the circumstances which used to awaken our young astonishment most respecting the Café Talleyrand was this. Once, twice, thrice, ay, half-a-dozen times at least, we observed an elderly female dining by herself in the Salle d'Heliogabalus, whose appearance would have certainly led people to imagine that she would have found herself infinitely more at home at the Cat and Pumpkin. She certainly did not belong to the Upper Ten Thousand, nor the Upper Hundred Thousand either. It was no use calling her plump, for she was downright fat; nor short, for she was unmistakably "stumpy;" while if you had said her hair was auburn, you would have told a fib. She wore under her bonnet, but yet plainly visible, a broad fillet of velvet, with a brooch in it almost as big as the cups which jugglers wear on their foreheads to catch balls in. She had a loud voice too—for the Salle d'Heliogabalus—and asked for the dishes she wanted in the most execrable

French we ever listened to. She also called the waiters "lads," and made them "look alive" whenever she considered them to be dilatory. She was the only person that our head-waiter—to whom she always courtesied when she left the room—could never make out, and, indeed, he went in much mysterious fear of her. The remarkable thing about her was, that she knew how to dine as well as anybody, and absolutely sent away some potato-fritters upon one occasion as being insufficiently crisp. She preferred, too, somewhat outlandish and unusual dishes—*Soupe à l'Aigle* and *Côtelettes de la Licorne*—over which she would smack her lips with a rather obtrusive appreciation. She never ate of the same delicacy twice; and having discovered that her quotations from the *carls* excited the public merriment, she confined herself to laying a dumpy finger upon the required dish, and saying: "Now, I want some of that, lad, and mind it's done juicy, and to a turn."

On the first occasion of her visiting the Café Talleyrand, she excited an immense sensation by taking warm ale with her dinner; and would afterwards have had a glass of gin and water, if such a sacrilege could have been permitted to her in such a place. "You're dear, sir," observed she to the head-waiter as she left the Salle—having paid, by the by, no less than a shilling's worth of her bill in the copper coinage of the realm—"you're uncommon dear, that's certain; but there's no denying you are good." There was a great crowd of diners there the next day, to see this wonderful woman, but she did not appear again for a week or so; and, indeed, a considerable interval always elapsed between her visits. This secret of the Café gave the Salle d'Heliogabalus an additional charm to us for years, and was only disclosed to us the other day in the most accidental manner.

We have a godfather—an eminently spirited person, we have no doubt, but not demonstratively so; he was chosen by our parents, we fancy, as much because he was confirmed in bachelor habits, and had a nice little property of his own, as for any other reasons. This gentleman dowered us with a silver mug at our baptism, and a silver fork, and spoon, and knife, as soon as we got old enough to use such things; and his benevolence towards us even now evinces itself in a similar fashion. He does not present us with such valuable utensils, indeed, any longer, but he gives us the eating and drinking for which they were but the conveniences; he supplies us with the end instead of the mean (and I hope he will supply us with the "means" some day); he asks us now and then, in short, to partake of a thoroughly good dinner. He doesn't invite our wife, because he says that females don't understand such things; and, indeed, we believe she is quite as happy (dear love!) with her four darling children at home and the cold mutton, as she would be with his five courses, and rather unreliable temper. There is no show, no parade about our godfather's dinners whatever. He has no man-cook, nor even a man-servant; indeed, his income is not large, only, since it is spent entirely upon good living, it of course does considerable things in that direction. All those stories of his having parted with the sum-total of his property to secure a magnificent table as long as he lived, are nonsense, and never so much as spoiled our appetite at any time. He seldom sends us a written invitation—observing that such a course is not fair to those who cannot give him dinners in return—but when he meets us accidentally, in the street or elsewhere, he is almost certain unctuously to whisper something like the following: "Charley, my boy, I have got some Aylesbury ducks to-day at 6:30, and a bit of Severn salmon, Charley; will you come?" At which, of course, we reply: "Thank you, my good sir," and privately lament that we have taken breakfast. The last time this occurred, he was looking very miserable. It was a wet day, late in the autumn, and he was muffled up to the chin in capes and shawls; had goshes on, and carried an umbrella of immense extent, under which he staggered like a ship with too much canvas; and yet it seemed he was in want of a cab. "A cab, Charley," groaned he as we met him, in our dreadnought overcoat; "get me a cab, my boy; you don't know what depends on it." Nevertheless, we did know what depended upon our pleasing our godfather very well, however; so, leaving him under shelter of a doorway, we ran off, and brought him back a Hansom, into which he bade us step, and carried us to his house.

"O Charley," moaned he, and we fancied we saw tears steal down his aged cheek as he did so, "there's a brace of grouse dropping to pieces in my larder that *must* be eaten to-day; and dash my buttons, sir" (he used a much stronger expression than that, however), "if I have not got such a cold that I can't taste!"

It was really quite affecting to see the despair and agony of our respected godfather at this misfortune. "It is my opinion," continued he, "that all doctors are most unmitigated humbugs; my medical attendant, to whom I have just been for his advice, has informed me that nothing can be done, sir, absolutely nothing in a case like mine; I must have patience and a mustard plaster, he says, and in a day or two, forsooth, I shall get the use of my palate as before. Heavens! as if those grouse would keep a day or two! I tell you, they fell from their legs, Sarah informs me, this very morning—always keep grouse hanging by their legs, young man, and when they drop, it is high time to eat 'em; and the same with peaches—it's a terrible blow, of course; but I am no dog in the manger. You shall taste them, my boy, and I will try not to hate you for it."

We sent home to tell our wife we were engaged out, and were shewn into a bedroom to wash our hands. Presently, in came our godfather in his shirt-sleeves, and with a radiant countenance. "Upon my honour, Charley, there is hope still. I tasted the soap—not completely, indeed, but enough to know what it was. Where's your soap? No. Gone again, or perhaps my soap has a stronger flavour. Why don't I smell instead? Why, because my olfactory nerves are in such a state that I couldn't tell a polecat from attar of roses."

So, hovering upon the border-land of hope, our venerable friend came down to the dining-room. "Can't taste the soup," cried he angrily—and he had got such a cold that he called it soup, poor fellow!—"can't taste the soup one bit: take my plate away, Eliza, instantly. What soup is it, Charley? White soup! Of course, it's white soup; I have got my eyes left, though everything else is gone; what sort of white soup, man? *Palestine!* The deuce!" I thought my godfather would have wept, for *Palestine* was his favourite *potage*. The fish was dismissed in a like unsatisfactory manner. "By Job!" (he meant those grouse!) (And, truth to say, he must have had a very bad cold, indeed, if he couldn't.) "What fluctuating things these delicate organs of ours are! Now—Eliza, shut that door