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be uncovered, for the personnel of these two competing houses seem to have been forbidden to recognise even the existence of the opposite faction—or was that not the reason for the look of horror on a waitress's face when I mentioned *La belle Cuisine* in her hearing one day?

He also knows that if a new eating-house should be set up, particularly if it is out to catch the trade of another, he may rely on being well fed for a matter of four or five weeks, large helpings being accompanied by the explanation "We always spoil our regulars." Probably he has also discovered, as a friend of mine reported from a Southern city, that an easy way to the heart of a lazy waitress is to sit about a long time afterwards, thus relieving her of the need to re-lay the table too soon. Or perhaps he has acquired that dexterity in the handling of butter which I picked up during a period when good coffee lured me to a smallish establishment in a back street. I can dispose of one small dish of butter so swiftly that the proprietor sees nothing, and then accept a second from a friendly waitress as if it were my first. It is hard to imagine that our Peripatetic Gastronome has failed to perfect this useful trick.

Halibutosis

Another modern technique that has become essential since Canadian salmon disappeared is that of mesmerising the person opposite you when he studies the



menu, in the hope that he will not choose "N.Z. Fish Salad." For there is no doubt that the odour of this pungent delicacy mixes ungraciously with one's own desert or tea.

Still, however successful he is in applying these techniques, our friend never fully succeeds in freeing himself of a sense of guilt. His shame will ever haunt him, and his only remedy is to keep his head down, showing great interest in his food, and escaping the eyes of discerning women who know all the tricks far better than he does. Even so, he will be well aware of that conflict with his own race which daily reduces his actions to the crude standards that apply when a tin of mash is emptied in the fowl-run. He must realise in moments so secret as to be almost hidden from his own brain that his behaviour in the queue, at the self-service counters and even at the table, could become habitual and disgraceful if present conditions were to last much longer. And he must daily find it necessary, somewhere between his lunch-hour and his five o'clock rush, to reconstitute himself by a conscious effort, into a human being fit to take his place at the head of a table with his own wife and children.

But obviously our friend cannot perform this feat every day without suffering strain, and therefore he must seek such compensations as his unnatural life can offer. I envy the happy man whose good fortune it was to overhear the incident which I am now about to recount as it was recounted to me.

It befell, I understand, at an eating house at which one of the attractions is a fortnightly exhibition of works of art. Here you may eat your food in an atmosphere that affords intimate contact with the Higher Life. You may take your mind off the sordid realities of the fowl-run and the jungle waterhole by gazing at some of *The Finer Things in Life*. If fortune smiles, you may even have the artist himself pointed out to you by one who has met him. The tables at this place are small enough and near enough together to make eavesdropping simple, indeed unavoidable, and my informant was near a table for four at which two seats were vacant. The other seats were occupied by a young woman whose dress denoted that she was in quest of the above-mentioned Higher Life, and a young man who clung to the more solid bourgeois virtues.

At the moment when my informant first overheard their conversation, the young man was being silent and unhelpful, and his admirer was being tense. She was trying to look into his eyes. She said "You do not lov me." He continued to roll a cigarette. Seeing two people considering the empty seats, she made one more attempt to rouse him before the last vestige of privacy should be taken from her. "You do not lov me." The strangers, a soldier and a girl who had obviously strayed in without knowing the character of the place, sat down within a few inches of the pair. The soldier soon sensed the tension, and began to fidget. He put his finger in his collar and pulled it round. Then he noticed the paintings on the walls and saw a means of escape from the situation by opening a topic of conversation. After looking at them for a few moments he said to his girl: "These pictures are pretty bloody, aren't they?"

Opposite, our lady of the sandals and gold fingernails sighed deeply. "You do not lov me," she said, "and now zis man says my pictures are bloody."

Quite New!



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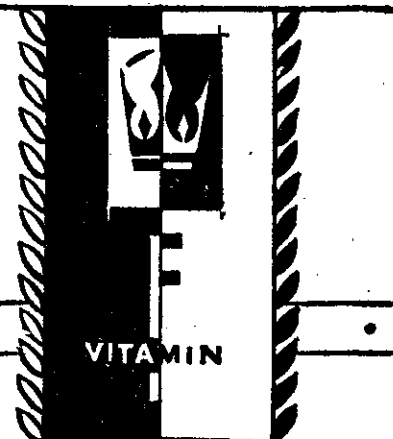
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