"Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese"

OF

LONDON

CITY.

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The Literateurs' Haunt

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THE
Book of the Cheese

BEING TRAITS AND STORIES OF

"Y^{E} OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE"

WINE OFFICE COURT, FLEET STREET
LONDON, E.C.

COMPILED BY THE LATE T. W. REID

THIRD EDITION REVISED BY WILLIAM HUSSEY GRAHAM

FOURTH EDITION EDITED BY R. R. D. ADAMS, M.A.

FIFTH EDITION

REVISED AND ABRIDGED BY FRANK BANFIELD, M.A. (OXON.)

ILLUSTRATED BY MESSRS. SEYMOUR LUCAS, R.A., HERBERT RAILTON, JOSEPH PENNELL, WALTER ALLEN & GEORGE CRUICKSHANK

"Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?"—SHAKESPEARE

London:
"Y$_{E}$ OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE"
145, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1908

PREFACE

TO

THE FIFTH EDITION

TO OUR FRIENDS AND CUSTOMERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

In the present edition, while most of the matter which has appeared in previous editions of our little book has been retained, we have deleted portions that we considered could be dispensed with, and added some fresh incidents and reminiscences that we think may add to its interest. We have enlarged the work by the addition of a chapter descriptive of the pictures and objects of interest to be seen within the precincts of this historic House. We desire to record our thanks to Messrs. W. Marchant & Co., of the Goupil Gallery, 5, Regent Street, for assistance given in relation to the pictures, and to many old customers of the House for facts relating to its past history.

Yours obediently,
THE DIRECTORS.
O. C. C., LD.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

IN TEXT

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LONDON, E.C.

"TODDY AT THE CHESHIRE CHEESE." *By W. Dendy Sadler.*
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CHAPTER I

EARLY HISTORY OF YE OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE

Time consecrates;
And what is grey with age becomes religion.—SCHILLER.

Old London is fast disappearing off the face of the earth. One by one its ancient taverns have gone, or if the names familiar to our ancestors have been retained, the hand of the builder has been laid remorselessly on the structures our forefathers knew, and they have been transformed beyond recognition. One of them, however, survives, untouched by the hand of time, spared by the vitality of the traditions, literary and other, which it enshrines, and that is the Cheshire Cheese. Though its story reaches back long before the eighteenth century, it is with the memory of Dr. Johnson and his more brilliant contemporaries that it is very largely associated in the minds of men. It is in a special sense London's living memorial of the great Lexicographer. Amid the changes which have altered Fleet Street almost beyond recognition by the Doctor and his contemporaries, it stands safe still, its old activities in full swing in the narrow backwater of Wine Office Court, a venerable reminder of the past. That men should be possessed with an unwearying curiosity about the old tavern which was so much the haunt of the mighty literary potentate who was the patron and friend of Goldsmith, is but natural. They feel for it what the devotee feels for a shrine. Dr. Johnson was not himself indifferent to a sentiment of the sort, and just as we take an intense interest in the "Cheshire Cheese" which he frequented, so he, in his day, was sympathetically curious as to the places which Dryden half a century or so before the Doctor's time had made sacred to literary memory by his presence.

"When I was a young fellow," he says, "I wanted to write the life of Dryden, and in order to get materials I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old Swinney and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, 'That at Will's Coffee-house, Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter and then called his winter chair, and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and then called his summer chair.' I went and sat in it."

Thanks, therefore, to the fact that we have one specimen of the Johnsonian tavern remaining practically the same as it was in the Johnsonian days, we can still depict for ourselves, with but the slightest effort of the imagination, what must have been the scene at the Cheshire Cheese in the Doctor's time. Johnson is there in his favourite seat, mouthing and talking as who should say: "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my mouth let no dog bark." One or other of his friends is never wanting to keep him company—Burke, or Goldsmith, or it may be Langton or Beauclerk. But the inn is with us, though the men of the eighteenth century are gone.

Even then the tavern as a club was beginning to fall into comparative decay. Fashion was voting for the club proper, proprietary or otherwise, and the habit of ceasing to live in the City carried away the old frequenters of the Fleet Street taverns into the suburbs or the more distant environs of London. Washington Irving gives us in his "Sketch Book" a charming account of one of the city of London hostelries, as it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The opening of the description would serve for the Cheshire Cheese of to-day. "This has been a temple of Mirth and Wine from time immemorial. It has always been in the family, so that its history is tolerably well preserved by the present landlord. It was much frequented by the gallants and cavalieros of the reign of Elizabeth, and was looked into now and then by the wits of Charles the Second. The members of the club which now holds its weekly sessions there abound in old catches, glees, and choice stories that are traditional in the place. The life of the club, and indeed the prime wit of the neighbourhood, is mine host himself. At the opening of every club night he is called in to sing his 'Confession of Faith,' which is the famous old drinking troll from Gammer Gurton's 'Needle.'" Washington Irving gives the words of the four verses of the song with chorus, the first of which, as a specimen of an old-time City tavern song, may suffice to be produced here:

I cannot eate but little meat,
  My stomack is not good;
But sure I think that I can drink
  With him that wears a hood.
Though I go bare, take ye no care,
  I nothing am acold.
I stuff my skin so full within
  With jolly good ale and old.

Chorus: Back and side go bare, go bare,
  Both foote and hand go cold;
But belly! God send thee good ale enough,
  Whether it be new or old.

But from the time of Dr. Johnson down to the present day unbroken links of tradition connect the Cheshire Cheese of the twentieth century with the Cheshire Cheese of the eighteenth, and through that with all the taverns in story, which begin with the Tabard and pass on, through the Mermaid and the rest, to the old house in Wine Office Court. This venerable survivor of a vanished race has a double interest: to

the lover of antiquity in general it appeals as the type of the place our forefathers loved; to the lover of the Johnsonian cycle, as enabling him to picture to himself what that race of giants did, where they ate and drank, and where they talked. That they had reason for their choice of an inn, and could give a reason for that choice too, is plain from a well-known passage in Boswell, which runs as follows:—

ENTRANCE TO THE “OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE” IN WINE OFFICE COURT.

From an Original Drawing by Herbert Railton.

“There is no private house in which people can enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy, in the nature of things it cannot be; there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests, the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man but a very impudent dog indeed can as freely command what is in another man’s house as if it were his own. Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome, and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give” (we should remember that this was said in the rougher world of the last century), “the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, Sir, there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.”

Although the origin of the Old Cheshire Cheese (formerly spelt “Ye Olde Cheshire Chese”) is not altogether involved in obscurity, there is a decided want of complete, or even semi-complete, details as to its very early history; but it is much more affluent in literary anecdote.

It was in the Old Cheshire Cheese that the dispute arose about who would most quickly make the best couplet. One said:—

I, Sylvester,
Kiss’d your sister.

The other’s retort was:

I, Ben Jonson,
Kiss’d your wife.

“But that’s not rhyme,” said Sylvester. “No,” said Jonson; “but it’s true.”

A later poet, Lord Tennyson, was himself a frequenter of the “Cheese” in his young days, while it was there that Isaac Bickerstaff made the epigram:

When late I attempted your pity to move,
  What made you so deaf to my prayers?
Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
  But—why did you kick me down stairs?

In fact, the “Cheese” was famous for epigrammatists. Who would not like to have seen the face of the old glutton and scandalmonger when, in the “Cheese,” the following lines were solemnly presented to him?—

You say your teeth are dropping out—
  A serious cause of sorrow,
Not likely to be cured, I doubt,
  To-day, or yet to-morrow.
But good may come of this distress,
  While under it you labour,
If, losing teeth you guzzle less,
  And don’t backbite your neighbour.

That Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, and other distinguished men were in the habit of frequenting the Old Cheshire Cheese, there can be no manner of doubt, and they knew what they were about in choosing their place of rendezvous, for I find in a *brochure* entitled “Round London” (1725), that the house is described as “Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese Tavern, near ye Flete Prison, an eating-house for goodly fare.”

Wine Office Court, where the Cheshire Cheese is situated, took its name from the fact that wine licences were granted in a building close by. The present “wine office” of the Old Cheshire Cheese is exactly at the junction of the Court and Fleet Street.

“In this court,” says Mr. Noble, “once flourished a fig tree, planted a century ago by the vicar of St. Bride’s, who resided at No. 12. It was a slip from another exile of a tree formerly flourishing in a sooty kind of grandeur at the sign of the Fig Tree in Fleet Street.”

STAIRCASE IN “OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE.”

From an Original Drawing by Herbert Railton.

CHAPTER II

JOHNSON AND GOLDSMITH AT THE "CHEESE"

There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn. —JOHNSON.

Not the least delightful characteristic of the "Cheese" is the persistency of its old customers. Those who once have been admitted to its charmed circle soon become wedded to its ways. It is not merely to the goodly cheer provided there that this loyalty is due, although, no doubt, to the viands and the wines a share of it is to be attributed. An anecdote of the late Mr. George Augustus Sala, the well-known writer, *Daily Telegraph* special correspondent, and genial *bon vivant* and gastronomist, is delightfully illustrative of the attractions of the place from the side of the creature comforts. The story is told by the London correspondent of the *Liverpool Courier* (December 10, 1895) in recording Mr. Sala's death. He writes: "Some years ago Mr. Sala went to Paris on behalf of the *Daily Telegraph*, to write on the subject of French cooking and French restaurants. Such praise of Parisian kickshaws was never lavished before, and the extollation, to the complete discomfiture of English cooks, lasted for fully six weeks. Everything in the cooking line in Paris was grand, everything in England in the same line was horrible. At the end of the six weeks Mr. Sala returned to London, went immediately to the Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street and said to the head waiter—'William, bring me a beefsteak, some potatoes in their jackets, and a pint of ale. I've had nothing to eat for six weeks.'"

The sentimental attractions are equally strong, and their influence is felt even by the most occasional of guests whose situation in life, or whose distance from London, unfortunately precludes their being regular attendants at the hostelry. A fine acrostic sent to the landlord by the Rev. William Kerr-Smith, Vicar of Whiteby, Newcastle-on-Tyne, embodies some of the thoughts that naturally arise in the mind of the cultivated visitant:

C hanged are the times and changed, alas, the guests!
H ow changed from those who erst with gossip stored
E ach day saw grouped about thy cheerful board!
S till are their voices now, whose noisy jests
H ave filled these rooms with laughter. Gathered here
I n rare confusion Beau, and Wit and Sage,
R ich, Poor and Spendthrift, Youth and fuller age
E njoyed whilst yet they might thy festive cheer.

C areless of censure each one told his tale,
H eard the last scandal as he quaffed his ale.
E ager to praise, they scrupled not to school,
E njoyed the folly, but condemned the fool.
S o lived they far removed from dulness dire,
E schewed the commonplace and tuned the lyre.

Among the bygone guests with whose memory the Cheshire Cheese is fragrant, not the least notable was the immortal author of "The Deserted Village" and "The Vicar of Wakefield." Indeed he was its very near neighbour, for Goldsmith's lodging was at No. 6 Wine Office Court, nearly opposite the "Cheese," and here he wrote "The Vicar of Wakefield." It was on Johnson's first visit to supper here with Goldsmith that Percy called for him on his way, and found him dressed in a new suit of clothes and well-powdered wig. Noticing Johnson's unusual smartness, he heard from him the reason of it. "Sir, Goldsmith is a great sloven, and justifies his disregard of propriety by my practice. To-night I desire to show him a better example." Johnson's house, where the Dictionary was compiled, was within a minute's walk, in Gough Square. Boswell does not record any visits to the "Cheese," but Boswell's acquaintance with Johnson began when Johnson was an old man, when he had given up the house in Gough Square, and Goldsmith had long departed from Wine Office Court. At the best, Boswell only knew Johnson's life in widely separated sections. Boswell was in Edinburgh while Johnson was in Bolt Court, and it is certain Johnson wrote no diary for the benefit of his biographer. Witnesses who were on the spot supply the deficiency. Some of them Mr. Cyrus Jay, in a little book entitled, "The Law—What I have Seen, Heard and Known," published in 1868, states that he had met. The book contains this inscription:

TO THE
LAWYERS AND GENTLEMEN
WITH WHOM I HAVE DINED FOR MORE THAN
HALF A CENTURY
AT
THE OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE TAVERN
WINE OFFICE COURT, FLEET STREET
THIS WORK
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT
CYRUS JAY

In his preface Mr. Jay says: "During the fifty-five years that I have frequented the Cheshire Cheese Tavern ... there have been only three landlords. When I first visited the house I used to meet several very old gentlemen, who remembered Dr. Johnson, nightly at the Cheshire Cheese; and they have told me, what is not generally known, that the Doctor, whilst living in the Temple, always went to the Mitre or the Essex Head; but when he removed to Gough Square and Bolt Court he was a constant visitor at the Cheshire Cheese, because

nothing but a hurricane would have induced him to cross Fleet Street."

Mr. Jay's fifty-five years, from 1868, take us back to 1813, or little more than a quarter of a century after the death of Johnson. But who then was Mr. Jay, and what are his claims to credibility? "I have heard," says Dr. Birkbeck Hill, that indefatigable inquirer into Johnsonian facts and dates, "a member of our (the Johnson) club relate that, when he was a student of law, there used to be pointed out to him in the Cheshire Cheese an old gentleman who, day after day, was always to be found there, prolonging his dinner by an unbroken succession of glasses of gin and water. It was as a kind of awful warning of the depths to which a lawyer might sink, that this toper was shown, and it was added in a whisper that he was the son of Jay, of Bath. Jay, of Bath, is well-nigh forgotten now, but during the first half of the present century his fame as a preacher stood exceedingly high. It was Cyrus Jay, his son, who for fifty-three years frequenting this ancient tavern, preserved and handed down this curious tradition of Johnson. The landlord has told me how, in his childhood, he used to hear in the distance the gruff voice of the old gentleman as he came along Fleet Street, and how sometimes he was sent to see Mr. Jay safe home to his chambers at 15 Serjeants' Inn hard by. For most of his long life, port, that medium liquor, neither like claret for boys nor brandy for heroes, but the drink for men, had been his favourite beverage. A failing income brought him down at last to gin and water. He used to comfort himself by the reflection that he could get twice as drunk for half the money. He dined in the tavern to the very end. One evening he was led home to his lodgings, and within four-and-twenty hours he was dead. He was the last frequenter of the Old Cheshire Cheese who knew the men who had known Johnson. Mine host remembers a still older guest, Dr. Pooley by name, a barrister, who died about 1856, at the age of eighty. Night after night for many a long year he had dined at half-past seven to the minute on a 'follower,' the end chop of the loin. He, too, used to tell of the men of his younger days, who boasted that they had often spent an evening there with Dr. Samuel Johnson."

"THE COSY CORNER" IN OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE.

Another writer, Mr. Cyrus Redding, who went to live in Gough Square in 1806, in his "Fifty Years' Recollections, Literary and Personal," published in 1858, takes us a little further back. He says:

"I often dined at the Cheshire Cheese. Johnson and his friends, I was informed, used to do the same, and I was told I should see individuals who had met them there. This I found to be correct. The company was more select than in later times. Johnson had been dead about twenty years, but there were Fleet Street tradesmen who well remembered both Johnson and Goldsmith in this place of entertainment."

Mr. Cyrus Jay, deploring the loss of the Mitre, the Cock, and other old taverns, remarks, "There still remains the Old Cheshire Cheese, in Wine Office Court, which will afford the present generation, it is hoped, for some years to come, an opportunity of witnessing the kind of tavern in which our forefathers delighted to assemble for refreshment.

"There was a Mr. Tyers, a silk merchant on Ludgate Hill, and Colonel Laurence, who carried the colours of the 20th regiment at the battle of Minden, ever fond of repeating that his regimental comrades bore the brunt on that memorable day. The evening was the time we thus met. There was also a sprinkling of lawyers, old demisoldes and men of science; among the latter was a Mr. Adams, an optician, of Fleet St.

"Colonel Laurence showed me Goldsmith's tomb in the Temple Churchyard; he was never tired of talking of his acquaintance with the poet, whom he knew when Goldsmith, as well as Johnson, lived hard by the Cheshire Cheese. I listened with eagerness to what these men of other days told me. Tyers broke a leg, and was confined to his bed for a long time, and the rubicund-cheeked Colonel passed the way of all the earth in a year or two after I first became acquainted with him. He used to speak of Goldsmith's ordinary person, and told me the poet never broke in upon the conversation when Johnson was talking.

"The left-hand room, entering the 'Cheshire,' and the table on the extreme right upon entering that room, was the table occupied by Johnson and his friends almost uniformly. This table and the room are now as they were when I first saw them, having had the curiosity to visit them recently. They were, and are still, as Johnson and his friends left them in their time. Goldsmith sat at Johnson's left hand." But the public room on the ground floor was not the only place affected by Johnson and his friends. When they wished to retire from the madding crowd a little room on another floor supplied all the privacy they occasionally desired, and here to this day is carefully preserved the chair from which the Doctor thundered."

CHAPTER III

RELICS AND ART TREASURES OF "THE CHESHIRE CHEESE"

"There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn."—JOHNSON.

About half-way up Fleet Street, on the right or northern side if we are coming from Ludgate Circus, the sign of "The Cheshire Cheese" meets the eye of the wayfarer, and intimates to him the near presence of the famous hostelry. There are two approaches, the western by Wine Office Court, the other by the passage way leading to the annexe. We will take the western, by Wine Office Court, because up it have often strolled side by side Dr. Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith, the latter parting for a moment with his dictatorial friend at the portals of "The Cheese" to go on to his lodgings a dozen yards further up the court on the other side the way. The sign beneath which the Doctor stands intimates to all and sundry that "The Cheshire Cheese" was rebuilt in 1667, seven years after the glorious Restoration, on the site of that older Cheshire Cheese, where Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and many another Elizabethan wit were wont to quaff their sack amid laughter and eager bandying of jest. We will leave the Doctor to make for his favourite seat in the room on the left, while we enter the bar. This is a delightful apartment in its tranquil reminder of the past. Ranged round it are a number of valuable punch bowls, of which we can imagine Mr. Pickwick if he were on a visit here took elaborate and reverential note. They speak eloquently of countless *noctes ambrosianæ*, when the wit and the liquor were alike of the best. The bar of the Cheshire Cheese has seen them drained to the last drop with effusive enthusiasm when the news of Blenheim, and Oudenarde, and Ramilies arrived, or later for Dettingen and Minden. We can imagine the punch was not without its tributory tears when its patriotic customers suddenly learnt that Nelson had fallen in the hour of victory, though there was nothing lachrymal to dilute their jovial joy in the frequent triumphs of "The Iron Duke." If the old punch bowls could but speak! But the very air of the place is redolent of the past, both storied and convivial, and eloquent for him who but pauses to think and to recall.

One of the most touching things about "The Cheese" is the way in which it treasures the memory of its old servants. "William" has actually given his name to a room, and there over the fireplace of the bar just opposite the door is his portrait, the portrait of William Simpson, who commenced waiter at "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese" Chop-house in 1829. "This picture," says the inscription below, "was subscribed for by the gentlemen frequenting the Coffee Room, and presented to Mr. Dolamore (the Landlord) to be handed down as an heirloom to all future Landlords of 'Ye old Cheshire Cheese,' Wine Office Court Fleet Street." The name of the artist is unknown. It is worth noting that in this inscription the room in which we stand is called a Coffee Room. Its modern designation of "the bar" therefore is of comparatively recent origin.

The two small oil paintings on either side this heirloom were painted in 1883 by William Allen. One of them depicts the interior of the old bar, the other its exterior. To the right of the fireplace is a striking and important painting. It is a portrait, but it is not certainly known of whom. Tradition varies, and while according to some it is a portrait of Dean Swift, others maintain that here we have the counterfeit presentment of the first proprietor of the house after the Great Fire, Theophilus B. Cruneble. There are other objects of interest in the room, particularly worth notice being the old china and glass. Nor must we omit to mention the young ladies behind the bar, but it is for the visitor to appraise their grace and charm. Beauty draws the human heart in every generation, and the men of Johnson's day were no less susceptible to its appeal than are we. The picture upstairs, near the "Grandfather's Clock," would have fired their imaginations as readily as it does ours.

But now, turning from the bar over which Hebes of our twentieth century so efficiently preside, we pass to the room opposite, and immediately on the left of the passage way as we enter. This room has not changed its character or its furniture for centuries. If Dr. Johnson were to come in now and go by us to his corner seat there to the right of the fireplace, he would find things essentially much as he left them. If his ghost wanders about Fleet Street, it must be a great relief to it to get, when it can, back safe into its unchanging old haunt, out of reach of the structural revolutions which elsewhere time has wrought.

As in the bar, the important picture in this room is that of a waiter. It is a portrait of Henry Todd, as the inscription informs us, who commenced waiter at the Olde Cheshire Cheese the 27th February, 1812. It was painted by Wageman, July, 1827, and "subscribed for by the gentlemen frequenting the Coffee Room, and presented to Mr. Dolamore (the landlord) in trust to be handed down as an heirloom to all future landlords of the Old Cheshire Cheese, Wine Office Court, Fleet Street."

Two oil paintings by Seymour Lucas, R.A., of the dining-room, with portraits of customers, will repay inspection, while above Dr. Johnson's old seat is an oil painting of the Lexicographer himself, a copy of the famous portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, now preserved in the National Gallery. Underneath may be read the following inscription:—"The Favourite Seat of Dr. Johnson. Born 18th Septr., 1709. Died 13th Decr., 1784. In him a noble understanding and a masterly intellect were united. With grand independence of character, and unfailing goodness of heart, which won the admiration of his own age and remain as recommendations to the reverence of posterity. 'No, Sir! there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness has been produced as by a good tavern.—JOHNSON.'"

Hard by are two interesting old prints, one of Dr. Johnson rescuing Oliver Goldsmith from his landlady, the other of a literary party at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Then there is an oil painting of a family group in which the Doctor is easily to be recognised. More modern, but still well worthy of inspection, is an artist's proof, signed by the artist himself, of the well-known picture—"Toddy at the Cheese." This is the painter, Mr.

Dendy Sadler's own gift to the house, the interior of whose dining-room he has so genially portrayed. Noticeable adjuncts of the apartments also are two old water-bottles, one of leather, the other of stone, and of what is known as Godstone ware.

THE JOHNSONIAN CORNER.

The old staircase is well worth careful attention, having stood marvellously the test of time. If we ascend it we arrive at the first floor and William's room, to which an announcement on the wainscot at the foot of the stairs served as a guide. It is immediately on our left when we reach the landing, perpetuating with its name the memory of Mr. Dolamore's faithful old henchman. Its most interesting feature is a second copy in oils of the portrait of Dr. Johnson by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to which I have just made allusion. But it is much more than a mere replica of the copy downstairs in the dining-room. It is a copy, indeed, but a very old copy, and dates back to the Doctor's own time. It was painted in order that it might adorn the room at "The Mitre," in Chancery Lane, where the club founded by Dr. Johnson first held its meetings. Dr. Johnson's "Mitre" has long since been pulled down, but the club he founded exists, and meets several times a year in William's room. Two prints next claim our attention—a coloured one of Dr. Johnson's House in Gough Square, the other a book print of Dr. Johnson, who is also shown to us in a framed wax bas-relief model.

About the room also are a number of sepia drawings of the various parts of the house—the work of that accomplished artist, F. Cox—while there are several pictures on the wall which serve to show that the tastes of the frequenters of the "Cheese" are not limited to literature and journalism. For example, we have "Roach, Perch and Dace," and "Salmon Trout" and "Trout," by C. Foster, a coloured print of steeple-chasing, a portrait of Lord Palmerston, engraved by F. Holl from the painting by F. Grant; a landscape of considerable merit by an unknown artist, and a view of Fleet Street, showing the entrance to Wine Office Court. Very interesting too is a print of the meeting of Dr. Johnson and Flora Macdonald in the Isle of Skye in the year 1773. This valuable work was recently exhibited at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908 at Shepherd's Bush.

Issuing from this room, which embalms the memory of "William," we must pause at the foot of the flight of stairs leading to the next floor to admire a handsome old grandfather's clock, which even in Dr. Johnson's time was venerable by reason of its years, as it was almost certainly part of the furniture of "The Cheese" when the hostelry was rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1667. It is not impossible it was ticking off the flight of time when Hawkins and other Elizabethan sea captains were harrying the warships of the great Armada in its progress up the British Channel. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson may have studied that ancient clock-face which would warn them that it was desirable to cut short their pleasant revelry and hasten to the theatre. We pass on with a lingering look, and the next turn in the old staircase brings us to a private room, containing one of the most valued treasures of the Cheshire Cheese, nothing less than the original chair used by Dr. Johnson at the Mitre, the old Chancery Lane tavern, patronised occasionally by the Doctor and now pulled down. This chair was acquired by the proprietor of the Cheshire Cheese, and sedulously protected from all accident and injury. The better to ensure this end it is now enclosed in a glass case. On the back of the chair is a medallion of Dr. Johnson with the inscription—"Born Sept. 7th, 1709. Died Dec. 13th, 1784." Copies of the chair can be supplied to order in oak at £5 each, but the medallion and inscriptions, which are perhaps modern, or at least post-Johnsonian additions to the original chair, are not copied. A notice card upon the seat of the chair announces to the visitor that "This chair was in daily use by Dr. Samuel Johnson," while below follows the quotation:—"More regal in his state than many kings." Though he passed away when George Washington was in the zenith of his renown after splendid epoch-making achievement in arms and diplomacy and council, the memory of the great Doctor is as fresh and fragrant as ever, as on the day when he last sat in the chair before us, the oracle of a select company of wits and scholars. It is idle to moralise further on this more than royal relic. Each intelligent visitor, as he reverently contemplates it, will pursue his own line of reflection.

Turning from the chair we find at the other end of the room a glass-fronted cupboard, which contains many original samples of the old willow pattern plate and also of the unique badge plate, which has been in use in the house for many years. Here, too, are several specimens of the old punch glasses, which have found favour with so many generations of *convives* of the Cheshire Cheese. The stranger is not perhaps without a tremor of gastronomic emotion when the spoon used for at least three generations, probably for a period of over a century, in stirring *the* pudding is pointed out to him. Hard by on the walls of the room are seven old prints from Hogarth's "Rake's Progress."

The great artistic treasures of this room are, however, three important paintings, which have recently been restored by Messrs. William Marchant & Co., of the Goupil Gallery, 5 Regent Street. The first, which looks down on the chair of Dr. Johnson in its glass shrine, is an oil painting of a boy and dog. On the back of the picture is written:—"David Boyle, aged 10." "Ye 19th of July, 1691." So that it was painted eighteen years before the birth of Dr. Johnson. On the opposite wall is another oil painting, a still life picture, attributed by competent critics to Peter Boel, who lived from 1626 to 1680, and was a pupil of Snyders. The third of these oil paintings is a figure picture, probably of "Diana," by Charles Le Brun, or the school (France, XVII. century).

In the smoking-room adjoining there is nothing of special interest for visitors, since this apartment is mainly devoted to the smoking of churchwarden pipes and to the consumption of "goes" of rack, cork, and, above all, of Punch, for the right compounding of which Ye Old Cheshire Cheese enjoys a reputation so deservedly high. Here take place noteworthy arguments, conducted with much skill and logical acumen by the regular customers, each in his own special chair, and each with his own churchwarden pipe in his mouth, or held gracefully poised to emphasise a rhetorical point. A case is provided in which gentlemen may keep from harm the favourite pipes to which use and wont have made them attached. In this room, too, the evening clubs hold their meetings. The subject of "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese Clubs" is, however, dealt with elsewhere. Still

attention may be drawn to the fact that on the walls of the smoking-room are some interesting pen and ink sketches and drawings relating to the clubs. It would be unbecoming perhaps to omit mention of an engraving of “The Empty Chair at Gadshill,” since it serves to remind us of the intimate association of Charles Dickens with “Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese,” while it suggests that other empty chair in the next room. Further, a pen and ink drawing of the old bar downstairs, by Joseph Pennell, must not be forgotten, any more than three Phil May sketches, the gift of the Goupil Gallery.

DR. JOHNSON’S CHAIR.

AN INCIDENT AT THE OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE.

“An interesting episode in the family history of the House.”

By F. Cox.

(William’s Room in the distance.)

At the foot of the staircase leading up to the apartments sacred to the fair Hebes of the House a sepia drawing by F. Cox claims our notice. It is entitled “An interesting episode in the family history of the House.” A stalwart favourite of the bar is snatching a kiss, while two lovely colleagues of his beautiful victim are tip-toeing down these very stairs to see the fun, and one pretty forehead has just reached the corner of the wainscoting. And now as the smiling beauties to the right of the picture bar our further progress, let us descend to the kitchen, where the most interesting objects are the original coal range and coal grill, which have been in use for over a hundred years. Possibly nowhere in the wide world is there a gastronomic temple of greater renown or more worthy of it, for here have always been cooked in huge copper boilers the famous pudding, the fire being fed and the pudding tended throughout the whole night previous to the solemn and regular introduction of this mammoth delicacy to the longing gaze of its patrons. That is the hour when the analytical observer might make valuable studies of the watering mouth.

Dinners, by the way, are now served in the Annexe. This room has been formed by roofing with glass what was originally a court-yard. It contains amongst the rest two famous original prints by H. Bunbury—“A City Hunt” and “Hyde Park, 1780.” Other interesting prints are “Destruction of the Bastile, July 14, 1789,” after a painting by H. Singleton, and a line engraving by James Heath from a painting by F. Wheatley of “The Riot in Broad Street on the 17th of June, 1773.” Here also is a cabinet containing various articles which may be purchased by visitors. The price list may be conveniently appended here. It runs as follows:—

O.C.C. Ware, etc.	Each	
	s.	*d.*
Three-handle Mugs, silver mounted	50	0
Three-handle Mugs	10	0
Two-handle Mugs	7	6
One-handle Mugs	2	0
One-handle Mugs, silver mounted	21	0
Cream Jugs	1	0
Sugar Basins	1	0
Mustard Pots	1	0
Salt Cellars	1	0
Pepper Pots	1	0
Tea Pots	—	

	Large.		Small.	
	s.	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*
Badged Willow Pattern Plates	1	0	0	8
Badged Willow Pattern Dishes	1	0	0	8

Post Cards.

No. 1 Series	6d. per packet.
No. 2 Series	6d. per packet.
Coloured Interior	1d. each.
Views of the House	6d. and 1s.

The above is a fairly complete inventory of the relics and art treasures of the Cheshire Cheese, that ancient hostelry which has become a place of pilgrimage for all in the wide realms of Anglo-Saxondom who cherish the memory of a unique figure in the literary history of the English-speaking peoples. Much has been said and written of the great men of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries who have eaten good fare and waxed honestly merry within the precincts of the Cheshire Cheese, but little of the men of note of this generation and the preceding one who have at one time or another been its guests. There are few distinguished Englishmen who have not partaken of its hospitality, and few persons of eminence, whether hailing from the far Antipodes or from the great country over which floats the Stars and Stripes, who would deem a visit to England complete if due homage to the memory of the great Lexicographer in the Johnsonian shrine in Wine Office Court had not been paid. There is nothing to compare with this worship of the mighty literary monarch, unless it is to be found in that of which Shakespeare is the centre, which has made of Stratford-on-Avon the other Mecca of Anglo-Saxondom.

CHESHIRE COURT AT SIDE OF “OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE.”

CHAPTER IV

MR. JOSEPH PENNELL AND LADY COLIN CAMPBELL ON "THE CHEESE"

Hard by there is the Cheshire Cheese,
A famous tap.—T. HOOD.

In the last chapter no mention was made of the fact that in 1887 a remarkable picture of the Cheshire Cheese by Mr. Seymour Lucas, R.A., was exhibited at the Royal Academy, since it is not among the art treasures of the house. It can, however, not be passed by, since Mr. Seymour Lucas and the Cheshire Cheese are mutual friends. We will therefore quote here the description given of the picture by a well-known London evening paper. To Mr. Dendy Sadler's picture, "Toddy at the Cheshire Cheese," allusion has already been made.

"THE WAY IN."

The *Pall Mall Gazette* of March 29, 1887: "It represents a scene in the Old Cheshire Cheese inn, and is entitled 'The Latest Scandal.' In one corner of the quaint old room, on the bench which is still pointed out as the place where Dr. Johnson used to sit, we see a typical group of the wits of the period. Some wear powder, while others have the full dark wigs of an older fashion still. One of the group, in the uniform of the Guards, is relating the latest scandal to the rest, and pointing over his shoulder towards two young beaux, who stand by the fireside. One of these wears his right arm in a sling, and has evidently come to grief in a duel on the previous night. He and his friend are mightily disconcerted to discover that their escapade has become the talk of the town, and that it is affording vast amusement to this group of scandal-mongers."

What Mr. Seymour Lucas and Mr. Dendy Sadler have so admirably portrayed for us with the brush, an American writer of distinction has both described with his pen and illustrated with his pencil in the pages of *Harper's Weekly*. In a November number of that periodical, in 1887, Mr. Joseph Pennell writes as follows:—

"On my first coming to London, I had fortified myself, not with a course of English history, but by re-reading 'Pickwick.' My first Sunday morning, about one o'clock, I found myself in Chancery Lane outside the entrance to Lincoln's Inn, in the company of the proverbial solitary policeman and convivial cat. On my asking the policeman where in the world I could get something to eat—as it is well known one must starve in London on Sunday before one and after three—he gave me the inevitable answer, 'Down to the bottom, first to your left, under the lamp, up the passage, and there you are!' After he had repeated these mysterious directions two or three times, and had found me hopelessly ignorant of his meaning, he did what I have very seldom known a London policeman to do—a proof of his loneliness; he walked to the end of Chancery Lane with me, and there being no one in Fleet Street, pointed out the sign of the Cheshire Cheese.... A push at the door, and I have passed into another world. I was in a narrow hall, at the far end of which was a quaint bar, where, framed in by small panes, were two very pretty, but I cannot say fascinating barmaids—I never could be fascinated by the ordinary English barmaid. Suddenly a waiter with a very short nose came out of another room and screamed up the stairs: 'Cotherum steak. Boatherum foozlum mash. Fotherum coozlum, botherum steak!' and then remarked to me: 'Lunch, sir? Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. What can I get you, sir? Steak, sir; chop, sir; kidney, sir; potatoes, sir, cooked in their jackets, sir? Yes, sir; thank you, sir.' Then up the stairs he added: 'Underdone steak one!' Then to me again: 'Walk in, sir. Take a seat, sir. Paper, sir? *Lloyd's*, sir? *Reynolds'*, sir? Yes, sir.'...

"I had begun to look around me. I found I had stumbled on just what I had determined to make a hunt for. I was in one of the greenbaize-curtained boxes into which Mr. Pickwick was always dropping under the guidance of Sam Weller, whose 'knowledge of London was extensive and peculiar.' Unless you have a Sam Weller at your elbow you will not very easily find the Cheshire Cheese, the last of the London chop-houses, even though it is in Baedeker. In the opposite corner was, not Mr. Pickwick, but one of those respectable shabby old gentlemen you never see outside of London. The waiter asked him in the same confidential tone, 'if he would not have a half-bitter! if he would not like to see yesterday's *Times*? A most interestin' article in it, sir, Mr. Price, sir.' Then Mr. Price's half-bitter came in a dented old pewter pot, and along with it an exaggerated wine-glass; and Mr. Price held the pewter in the air, and a softly murmuring stream flowed from the one into the other. Beyond the box I was in I saw other hard straight-backed seats, and between them other most beautifully clean, white cloth-covered tables, at all of which were three or four rather quiet and sedate, but after their manner sociable, Englishmen, everybody seeming to know everybody else in the place. Everything seemed happy, even to the cat purring on the hearth, and the brass kettle singing on the hob. Perhaps I should except the restless waiter, who, when anyone came in, rushed to the bottom of the stairs and gave his unearthly yell. Soon down the same stairs came the translation of the yell in the shape of the steak I had ordered, and with it the potatoes in their jackets, all on old blue willow-ware plates.

"'Your steak, sir. Yes, sir. Anything else, sir? Napkin, sir? Oh, serviette! Yes, sir. All Americans like them, sir.'

"And so I found for the first time that napkins and bread, freely bestowed in decent restaurants at

home, are in England looked upon as costly luxuries.[1]

... “I have returned again and again to the Cheshire Cheese, and have, moreover, tried to induce others to go there with me. For if the place is not haunted, as it is said to be, by the shades of Ben Jonson and Herrick, of Samuel Johnson and Boswell, the waiter is perfectly willing, for a consideration, to point out to you the stains of their wigs on the wall. It is certain that Dickens, Forster, Tom Hood, Wilkie Collins, and many other worthies did frequent it, while Sala periodically puffs it, and a host of other lights have written about it. In my own small way I have endeavoured to lead some modern junior novelists and poets there, to show them how near they could come to some of the great masters whom they apparently worship so thoroughly. But on the only occasion when I succeeded in placing one probably in the seat of Goldsmith or Herrick, he sniffed at the chops and remarked that if Johnson had had a napkin it would have been better for his personal appearance.

“I hardly know myself what is the attraction of the place, for you can only[2] get chops and steaks, kidneys and sausages, or on Saturdays a gigantic pudding, to eat your money’s worth of which you must have the appetite of a Gargantua, or, on Shrove Tuesdays, pancakes. If you should happen to want anything else, you would probably get the answer which Mr. Sala says was given to a friend of his who asked (at the Cock) for a hard boiled egg with his salad: ‘A hegg! If Halbert Hedward ’imself wuz to cum ’ere he couldn’t ’ave a hegg.’ Whoever really cares to see the last of the Old London chop-houses, let him, when next in London, look up the sign of Ye Olde Cheshyre Cheese.”

Not out of place, after the remarks of Mr. Pennell, will be found a vivacious description of a dinner at the “Cheese,” given by Lady Colin Campbell, writing under the pseudonym of “Ina” in the *World* of August 31, 1892. Its “go” and high spirits render an apology for quoting at length unnecessary. This clever lady writes as follows:—

“It is August, London is empty, and we are bored; yet dine we must somewhere, and where to go is the difficulty. Everybody one knows is either at Homburg or Cowes, so we cannot possibly go to the Savoy or the Amphitryon. There is nothing more utterly stupid than to visit the haunts of society after society has left, and to find them peopled by the unknown—good creatures in their way, no doubt, but not exactly *des nôtres*; not fashionably dressed enough to admire, nor ridiculously dressed enough to be amusing, and the affairs of whom we cannot discuss, for the simple reason that we know nothing about them, good, bad, or indifferent. How strange it is to think that only a short time ago no lady would ever have dreamed of dining at a London restaurant! Then a few somewhat fast people set the fashion of supping at some public place instead of their own homes; and now there is probably no inhabitant of Mayfair or Belgravia, with any pretensions to smartness, who has not at some time or other either dined or supped at one of the many fashionable cafés which have sprung up in various parts of the town, and have become for a time the rage, only to be displaced by some newer, more pretentious, and more expensive restaurant, to which people flock, quite as much to see and discuss each other as they do to discuss the delicacies provided for them by the latest celebrated *chef* imported direct from Paris. But, as I said before, dine we must somewhere; and dining at a restaurant being depressing, and dining at home dull, we are just turning over in our minds what we had best do under the circumstances, when there comes a loud peal at the front door bell. We all start up, and”—and, to abridge Lady Colin’s narrative, three ladies and three gentlemen find themselves in Fleet Street “in front of a little narrow alley, suggestive (to me) of robbery and murder. Here we alight, and, with many apologies for the shabbiness of the entrance, our host conducts us—by the back way by mistake—into a dining place. A flare of unshaded gas lights up a small, old-fashioned room, the floor of which is covered with sawdust. The ceiling is white, with projecting cross-beams, and at one side of the room is a long oak table, at which Johnson, Goldsmith, and a few other choice spirits, were wont to sit and feed; and here, it is said, originated the well-known riddle about the number of beefsteaks it would take to reach the moon. All along one side of the room are wooden partitions, exactly like old-fashioned pews, with hard, cushionless sets. One of our party says, as she sits down, that she feels as if she were in church; we devoutly wished she would *behave* a little more as though she were there, long before the evening was over; but reaction having set in, we are all, I fear, in a terribly frivolous humour, not by any means in keeping with the solemn respectability of our surroundings, for we are told that this chop-house has been in existence ever since the year 1667, and is no ephemeral mushroom-house of the hour, to be sought out one day and forgotten the next.... Our pew just holds six comfortably, and we sit down three and three, opposite each other, on either side of a very narrow table covered with a spotless white cloth. We have willow-pattern plates, large and hot for the meat, and small and cold, each with a pat of butter on it, for our potatoes. First, we have thick slices of hot ham, the lean tender and pink and the fat succulent, with an immense dish of the most delicious peas I ever ate, and young potatoes served in their jackets. Anyone who has tasted a fresh-run salmon which has been green-kippered, and has compared it with the hard, salt fish that is cured for the London market, will appreciate the difference between an ordinary ham and one that is prepared for immediate consumption. These Yorkshire hams were not intended for keeping, and, as the cook afterwards informed us, were all eaten up in a day. I could easily have believed her if she had said one was eaten up at every meal, judging by the thickness of the slices to which we were helped, and the amount we were supposed to eat of them. The next dish is a point steak, rosy without being *saignant*, accompanied by fresh dishes of young peas and potatoes.... Our somewhat eccentric dinner is brought to a close by a bowl of rum punch, accompanied by six long churchwarden pipes and a glass full of bird’s-eye tobacco.”

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Serviettes are now provided as a matter of course.

[2] A more extensive menu is now provided.

CHAPTER V

ABOUT THE PUDDING

> Now, good digestion wait on appetite
> And health on both.—SHAKESPEARE.

"How do you make it?" asked a fair American of the proprietor.

The answer is not recorded, for in the manner of making chiefly lies the speciality of the Old Cheshire Cheese. The hand of the proprietor himself compounds the ingredients in a secret room, secure from the gaze of even his most inquisitive attendants.

Yet when we look on the immense bowl from which sixty or seventy people are to be fed, one cannot wonder at the lady's desire to know how such a Brobdingnagian dish could be so exquisitely prepared.

The proportions of the bowl are emblematic of the profusion with which its contents are dispensed, and even Gargantua would find himself vanquished in presence of the "Cheese" hospitality.

Old "William," for many years the head-waiter, could only be seen in his real glory on Pudding Days. He used to consider it his duty to go round the tables insisting that the guests should have second or third, ay, and with wonder be it spoken, fourth helpings.

"Any gentleman say pudden?" was his constant query; and his habit was not broken when a crusty customer growled:

"No *gentleman* says pudden."

William either never saw the point or disdained to make reply.

The narrow limits of this volume are all too small for a complete collection of the prose and verse written in praise of the pudding. A few examples must serve.

In "Ye Lay of Ye Lost Minstrel," printed in the *West London Observer* (April, 1890), are a number of verses in praise of the "Cheese," by Mr. William Henderson. We give the following extract from his poem:—

> If you'd dine at your ease
> Try "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese."
> At this famous resort
> In the Wine Office Court
> Kickshaws, entrées or slops
> You'll not get, but the chops
> Devil'd kidneys and steaks
> He will say who partakes
> Are all second to none—
> To a turn they are done!
> But the pudding!—oh my!
> You look on with a sigh,
> As it comes piping hot
> From the cauldron or pot—
> Oh the savour, the taste,
> Of its lining, its paste!
> How it wells! how it swells!
> In its bosom there dwells
> Food for gods, meat for men,
> Who resort to Moore's den.

A parody by the same author will appeal to the sentiment of those who scorn a foreign yoke. It is inscribed to Beaufoy A. Moore, and was published by Mr. J. H. Wadsworth, of Boston (U.S.A.):—

YE PUDDING'S REQUIEM

AIR: DEATH OF NELSON.

> We sought "The Cheese," with thirst and hunger prest,
> And own we love the pudding day the best.
> But no one quarrels with the chops cook'd here,
> Or steaks, when wash'd down by Old English beer!
>
> 'Twas on Saint Andrew's day,
> Our way thro' Fleet Street lay;
> We sniff'd the pudding then!
> We scorn'd all foreign fare,
> True British food was there,
> To "cut and come agen."
> Our landlord carved with manner grave,
> Brave portions to each guest he gave,
> Nor thought he of his booty,
> Nor thought he of his booty.
> Along the boards the signal ran,

"Charlie" expects that ev'ry man
  Will pay and do his duty,
  Will pay and do his duty.

And now the waiters pour
Prime "Burton" foaming o'er
  "Old William" marks his prey!
No tips that waiter claimed,
Long be that waiter famed,
  Who smiles and makes it pay!
Not dearly was that pudding bought,
For ev'ry hungry Briton sought
  A "follow" from that beauty,
  A "follow" from that beauty.
With plate on plate each waiter ran;
"Charlie" confessed that ev'ry man
  That day had done his duty,
  That day had done his duty.

At last the fatal sound,
Which spread dismay around,
The pudding's off, the pudding's off at last!
"The vict'ry's on your side,
The day's your own" Moore cried!
  "I serve and have to fast!
However large that pudding be,
No scrap is ever left for me!
  Content I do my duty!
  Content I do my duty!
For to complain was ne'er my plan."
Let all confess that Moore, good man,
  Has ever done his duty,
  Has ever done his duty!

1890. W.H.

The "Cheese" pudding has a far-extended sphere of influence. It boasts a clientèle much more numerous than are the actual frequenters of the ancient hostelry. Hundreds are sent out every year to all parts of London, and, indeed, England. Some even have found their way to the United States, imported direct from "The Cheese" by enthusiastic Americans. The following extract from the *Court Journal* of April 4, 1891, describes the misadventures of one owing to the operation of the McKinley Act: "The London lark pudding is renowned in many lands. The travelled American speaks with rapture of that lark pudding he partook of in Fleet Street. Mr. Burras, of New York, requested that such a lark pudding should be sent out to him from London, so that the stay-at-home ones might partake of the British culinary luxury. The delicacy duly arrived; the guests who were to aid Mr. Burras in eating it were duly invited—all was ready, indeed, when an unexpected difficulty arose. The Customs House authorities declined to give it up until the question as to what duty 'lark pudding' was liable to was settled. The McKinley Bill does not mention lark pudding. It takes cognisance of canned goods and potted meats, certainly; but larks in a pudding were unclassified, and they said it did not come under the head of manufactured articles, because it was food in a natural state. A week has elapsed while the authorities have been debating the point, and in the meantime the lark pudding is most probably turning sour, and Mr. Burras and his friends dancing with indignation. More trouble will ensue over this lark pudding, no doubt, than did upon the opening of the four-and-twenty-blackbird pie of yore! It may cause the establishment of Free Trade in the States."

It is satisfactory to be able to state that the pudding eventually passed the Customs House none the worse for its detention. The guests were eloquent in its praise, and several of them have since visited England merely to track the pudding to the place of its nativity.

THE BAR.

CHAPTER VI

THE BAR

> If on thy theme I rightly think,
> There are five reasons why men drink:
> Good wine, a friend, because I'm dry,
> At least, I should be by-and-bye,
> Or any other reason why.—H. ALDRICH.

The bar of the "Cheese" is unique amongst the bowers of Boniface in the metropolis. It has no equal and no rival. "Here," says the *Sportsman* of March 30, 1887, "gather poets, painters, lawyers, barristers, preachers, journalists, stockbrokers, musicians, town councillors, and vestrymen, with just a *soupçon* of sporting celebrities, and a decided dash of the impecunious 'Have beens.' The latter represent in the 'Cheese' colony the Irish division in Parliament. Many of our most eminent journalists, legal luminaries, and successful merchants have been patrons of the Old Cheshire Cheese in the days when it was to them club, discussion forum, and even home."

The "Cheese" bar resembles no other in London. The customers are unique, and the names of their drinks are peculiar. The simplest and amplest is "whisky," and that means Scotch whisky. No old customer of the "Cheese" would ever think of asking for "Scotch." If anyone dares to say "Scotch," he is marked down at once as one not yet inured to the ways of the bar. On the other hand, neither must he whisper "Irish"—certainly not! If he knows his "Cheese" he asks for "Cork," and if he says "Irish" he is an ignoramus. Then who would mention "gin?" The word is absolutely vulgar, and should be confined to the East End and Mrs. Harris. No, no! the cognoscente calls for "rack"—an odd name, which may be meant to suggest the state of mind of the drinker on the morrow, or it may be a mere contraction of arrack.

Punch, a mysterious and delectable compound, we had better not order in the bar, its consumption is so much more pleasant upstairs; but there is no reason why we should not admire the punch bowls, and having considered them and studied the portrait of an erstwhile waiter over the fireplace as much as they deserve, we probably turn about, and, as the eyes become accustomed to the darkness, find ourselves confronted with the way out. But don't go for a while. You would probably like to see somebody in the bar. Adequately to people the bar would task the pencil of a Hogarth, the pen of a Thackeray. That more genial Hogarth of our time, the late Phil May, has indeed done it exceedingly well in his "Parson and the Painter." But the human constituents of the bar's society vary with the hour of the day. In the morning the journalistic element predominates. But it is when night begins to fall that the life of the bar is at its brightest. Then the blinds are drawn, the gas is lighted, and the full orchestra tunes up. The Cheeseites are in their glory, and what might be copy for a dozen comic papers elicits a little passing laughter and then is forgotten. When the sparkle has fled from the champagne, who can restore it? Here, however, are a few fragments of typical conversation.

The bar is crowded, and floating in the ambient air one detects the rich voice of a Scotch poet who is being taken to task for his grammar.

"THE WAY OUT."

"It's maybe not English at present, Mr. Bluggs; but wha maks your English? It's your Shakespeares, your Multons, an *Me*!"

From another part of the room comes the voice of an Englishman somewhat at a disadvantage among Irish and Scotch intonations of rich variety.

"Of course the Scotch say they speak better English than the English. I remember I once had a short engagement on an Edinburgh paper. When about to leave 'Auld Reekie' there was a little *deoch-an-dorus*, and some fifteen of the fellows came to wish me God-speed. They were from some fifteen different parts of Scotland, and after certain formalities in the way of hot toddy my Scotch friends brought up the eternal question of their immaculate English. 'It may be as you say,' I interposed, 'but why do you speak it with fifteen different accents?' Had them there, ha! ha!"

Irish Dramatist (discussing tours, etc.)—"Did I hear you say Stony Stratford? I was once there, and no wonder they called it Stony Stratford, for I was never so bitten with bugs in my life."[3]

Genial Advertising Manager—"I hear that poor old Mac's dead" (general sorrow and display of handkerchiefs). (Enter poor old Mac—silence falls on the company.)

Poor old Mac—"Good evening, Miss S——, I haven't seen you for a long time."

Miss S.—"Was it very hot where you have come from?"

Funny Man—"Why, Jack, you seem to believe in a lot of things nobody else believes in"—(then, as a clincher)—"I suppose you believe in the transmigration of souls!"

Solemn Man—"I do—and so do you. You must feel you were an ass when you lent me that half-sovereign six months ago."

Socialistic Journalist (to admiring friends)—“Have you read my articles in the *X Y Gazette*? No? Well, read them, and you will see that I am the second, if not the first, among the teachers of humanity. Nobody, for at least eighteen hundred years, has taught as I have taught.”

Waiter, suddenly entering the bar—“Oh, I beg your pardon, but you did not pay for that steak you had in the room.”

Socialistic Journalist—“Pay for it! Not likely! It was from the beginning as much my steak as Charlie Moore’s. Now it is more mine than his. Pay? Base is the slave that pays.”

Racing Journalist—“Jones is a good writer, but he will never set the Thames on fire.”

Impecunious Reporter—“I wish he would, for it’s very cold, and I have to sleep on the Embankment.”

The story goes that on one occasion there was some little misunderstanding at the bar; but misunderstandings are of the rarest, and this one has become legendary. The account which reached me ran something after this manner:—

Great Sub-Editor (with back to fire)—“*You’re* not a freemason.”

Great Reporter—“I am.”

G. S.-E.—“Why, I’ve been making masonic signs to you for the last half-hour.”

G. R.—“Do you call me a——?”

G. S.-E.—“I do.”

G. R.—“Then——” (and they roll together on the floor).

Head waiter (rushing in)—“What’s this? What’s this about?”

Manageress—“Only two gentlemen making a few masonic signs under the table.”

Of course, as a rule, harmony prevails in the “Cheese,” and “chaff” abounds without physical threshing, for the *habitués* love the ancient hostelry and themselves too much to make the place a bear-garden.

To quote again from the *Sportsman*:—

“There is a sense of comfort and veneration about the place which constitutes an absolute charm. There is something homely and out of the common in its sawdust-coated floors, with uneven boards and great gaping ‘chinks.’ The fireplaces are huge and commodious, capable of holding a hundredweight of coal at a time. These said fireplaces, by the way, have much to answer for in legions of broken resolutions to be home at six. On a cold winter’s day, when their genial warmth penetrates every portion of the room, and the merry flames dance and leap after each other up the capacious chimney space, a man listens to the howling wind without, or hears the rain pattering on the paved courts, and he says, says he, ‘The old woman may be cross, or the mater may scold; but we don’t kill a sheep every day, and—just one more, James, and I will catch the seven.’ Those wicked fireplaces, the huge singing kettle, the cosy recesses, and the seductive perfume of toddy have indeed much to answer for.”

FOOTNOTES:

[3] This *non sequitur* has already appeared in print.

CHAPTER VII.

CLUB LIFE AT THE "CHEESE"

The feast of reason and the flow of soul.—Pope.

One of the most interesting features of the "Cheese" is its club life. It is not the stately and withal solemn life of the modern West-end club, but it is the social and intensely human life of the club as Johnson, Burke, Reynolds, understood it. When the Doctor, Sir Joshua, and some others established "The Club" in 1764, the members were to meet once a month and take supper, passing their evening in witty discourses.

At the "Old Cheshire Cheese" the Johnsonian tradition is naturally strong; it pervades the whole place, and all the clubs which hold their regular or occasional meetings there endeavour, as much as our less heroic days will allow, to emulate the example of the giants of the days gone by.

The following is a complete list of the clubs actually in existence at the present time:—The Johnson Club, founded about 25 years; Sawdust Club, founded 1906; Ye Punchbowlers; the Mitre Club, founded November, 1903; "Ourselves," founded 1897; St. Dunstan's, founded 1790; Rump Steak Club; the Dickens Club.

The following further details regarding the Cheshire Cheese Clubs of the past as well as the present may be found not without interest. The place of honour is given to—

THE JOHNSON CLUB.

This club is composed of many men eminent in literature and art, or distinguished in other ways. The club, which is literary and social, and is restricted to thirty-one members, was founded about twenty-five years ago. The members bind themselves to sup together annually on or about December 13, the anniversary of the Doctor's death, but various other meetings are held throughout the year. The constitution of the club is thus described by Dr. George Birkbeck Hill, the well-known editor of the latest and best edition of "Boswell." "We are," he says (in the *Atlantic Monthly* of January, 1896), "in strict accordance with the great Lexicographer's definition, 'an assembly of good fellows meeting under certain conditions'; the conditions being that we shall do honour to the immortal memory of Dr. Samuel Johnson by supping together four times a year, and by swallowing as much beefsteak pudding, punch, and tobacco smoke as the strength of each man's constitution admits. A few of the weaker brethren—among whom unhappily I am included—whose bodily infirmity cannot respond to the cheerful Johnsonian cry, 'Who's for poonsh?' do their best to play their part by occasionally reading essays on Johnsonian subjects, and by seasoning their talk with anecdotes and sayings of the great Doctor. We are tolerated by the jovial crew, for they see that we mean well, and are as 'clubbable' as nature allows. Our favourite haunt is the OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE, the only tavern in Fleet Street left unchanged by what Johnson called that 'fury of innovation' which, beginning with Tyburn and its gallows-tree, has gradually transformed London. The Mitre—'where he loved to sit up late'; where he made Boswell's head ache, not with the port wine, but with the sense he put into it; where, at their first supper, he called to him with warmth, 'Give me your hand, I have taken a liking to you'; where, nearly a century later, Hawthorne, in memory of the two men, dined 'in the low, sombre coffee-room'—the Mitre has been rebuilt.

"The Cock, most ancient of taverns, has followed its 'plump head-waiter' along the road of mortality, although, fortunately, its fittings and furniture are still preserved with the house which, under the same name, has risen on the other side of the street. The Old Cheshire Cheese stands as it stood in the days when Goldsmith used to pass its side door on his way up the dark entry to his lodgings in Wine Office Court. The jolly host who owns the freehold can show title-deeds going back almost to the time of the Great Fire of London.

"There, on the ground floor, we meet our 'Prior' sitting on a bench, above which is set in the wall a brass tablet bearing the following inscription:—

"'The Favourite Seat of
Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON.
Born September 18, 1709; Died December 13, 1784.

"'In him a noble understanding and a masterly intellect were united to great independence of character and unfailing goodness of heart, which won the admiration of his own age, and remain as recommendations to the reverence of posterity.

"'No, sir! there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness has been produced as by a good tavern.—Johnson.'

"In this same room, with its floor as 'nicely sanded' as when Goldsmith knew it, our club gathers from time to time; here, undisturbed in our thoughts by a single modern innovation except the gas, we sup on one of those beefsteak puddings for which the Cheshire Cheese has been famous from time immemorial. So vast is it in all its glorious rotundity that it has to be wheeled in on a table; it disdains a successor in the same line, and itself alone satisfies forty hungry guests. 'A magnificent hot apple pie stuck with bay leaves,' our second course, recalls the supper with which Johnson 'celebrated the birth of the first literary child of Mrs. Lennox, the novelist, when at five in the morning his face still shone with meridian

splendour though his drink had been only lemonade.’[4] The talk is of the liveliest; from time to time toasts are drunk and responded to.”

The centenary of the death of Dr. Johnson was celebrated in December, 1884, and the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* of the 20th of that month thus refers to the Doctor’s connection with the ancient hostelry:—“Whoever has heard of the grand old Doctor knows well that the greater part of his life was passed between Ludgate Hill and Temple Bar, and that the most interesting portion of it revolved about Gough Square. There seems to be little doubt that while he lived here, the Old Cheshire Cheese tavern was, as is claimed for it, the haunt which he most favoured, and where much of that sledgehammer wisdom was coaxed forth or teased forth, which Boswell has recorded that, as Macaulay put it, the memory of Johnson might keep alive the fame of his works.”

Many notable men have sat down at the Johnson centenary dinners in the Cheshire Cheese. At that held on December 13, 1894, for example, the chair was taken by Mr. Augustine Birrell, Q.C., M.P., then most popularly known as the author of “Obiter Dicta,” but subsequently to become President of the Board of Education and later Chief Secretary for Ireland in a Liberal Government. From the *Sketch* of December 19, which devoted to this particular festivity a page and half of illustrated literary matter, is taken the following extract:—“The most interesting figure of the evening was undoubtedly Mr. Dobson. His health was proposed just in such a way as it must have been in the days when men of letters indited odes to one another.” Then followed the reading of gentle imitations of Mr. Dobson’s style, but exigency of space precludes our quoting more than a couple of stanzas from a delightful perversion of “The Ladies of St. James’s”:—

The Journalists of Fleet Street
  Have precious little cash,
They put their all in papers
  Which swiftly go to smash;
But Publishers, my Publishers,
  Sit twirling of their thumbs
While sweated clerks with ledgers
  Tot up colossal sums.

The Journalists of Fleet Street
  While taking of their ease,
Invoke the frequent tankard
  That haunts the Cheshire Cheese;
But Publishers, my Publishers,
  As epicures enjoy
The wines of Mr. Nicols,
  And soups of the Savoy.

THE RHYMERS’ CLUB.

Another club which affected the stern, uncushioned comforts of the “Cheese” was known as the Rhymers’ Club, and we betray no secret when we give the names of the members, for are they not written in the book of their poetic deeds? In this book, published through Elkin Mathews in 1892, the composition of the club is thus recorded: Ernest Dowson, Edwin J. Ellis, G. A. Greene, Lionel Johnson, Richard Le Gallienne, Victor Plarr, Ernest Radford, Ernest Rhys, T. W. Rolleston, Arthur Symons, John Todhunter, W. B. Yeats.

When such sweet singers meet, it may well be believed that the night was ambrosial, care and the world were banished, and the contests of the “Cheese” and of the “Mermaid”—in miniature, it is no discourtesy to say—live again, as Mr. Rhys sings:

As once Rare Ben and Herrick
  Set older Fleet Street mad,
With wit not esoteric,
And laughter that was lyric,
  And roystering rhymes and glad.
As they, we drink defiance
  To-night to all but Rhyme,
And most of all to Science
And all such skins of lions
  That hide the ass of time.

A very considerable poet and proseman, Mr. John Davidson, a Scotchman, by the way, from the vicinity of Paisley, in his work, “A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender, which Lasted One Night and One Day, with a History of the Pursuit of Earl Lavender and Lord Brumm, by Mrs. Scamler and Maud Emblem,” brings two of his characters, Mr. Gurdon and Sir Harry Emblem, into the “Cheese” in a condition which would spell ruin to the landlord were it generally adopted. The two gentlemen had spent some £40 in eight days, and now they are “on the rocks” in a Strand restaurant. But foreigners have hard hearts, and so the delightful couple find their way to the Cap and Bells, which every Fleet Streeter will recognise as the Cheshire Cheese. They order supper, and, though unprepared to pay, are prepared to justify their deeds. They were quite unconventional in the matter of settlement of accounts; they were financially naked, yet they were not ashamed. Fortunately for the landlord, it happens that on this night the Guild of Prosemen (oh, sarcastic Mr. Davidson!), otherwise the Rhymers’ Club, are holding

their meeting, and one of the members, acting more like an impulsive poet than a mere proseman, settles their account and introduces them to the club. There we must say farewell to Mr. Davidson's creations, but we cannot leave the Rhymers without quoting, by the kindness of the author and publisher, the following exquisite:—

BALLADE OF THE CHESHIRE CHEESE
IN FLEET STREET.

I know a home of antique ease
  Within the smoky city's pale,
A spot wherein the spirit sees
  Old London through a thinner veil.
  The modern world so stiff and stale,
You leave behind you when you please,
  For long clay pipes and great old ale
And beefsteaks in the "Cheshire Cheese."

Beneath this board Burke's, Goldsmith's knees
  Were often thrust—so runs the tale—
'Twas here the Doctor took his ease
  And wielded speech that like a flail
  Threshed out the golden truth. All hail,
Great Souls! that met on nights like these
  Till morning made the candles pale,
And revellers left the "Cheshire Cheese."

By kindly sense and old decrees
  Of England's use they set their sail;
We press to never-furrowed seas,
  For vision-worlds we breast the gale,
  And still we seek and still we fail,
For still the "glorious phantom" flees.
  Ah well! no phantom are the ale
And beefsteaks of the "Cheshire Cheese."

ENVOI.

If doubts or debts thy soul assail,
  If Fashion's forms its current freeze,
Try a long pipe, a glass of ale,
  And supper at the "Cheshire Cheese."

"THE 49 CLUB."

This is a more recent club which met at the "Cheese" to partake, as their "Chronicle" has it, of "a curious mysterie

Yclept ye 49 pudding,
Also Grylled Bones,
Also Stewed Cheese,

together with such Olde Ales, Costlie Wines, and strong waters as may suit ye taste, purse, or conscience of ye Members."

The Chronicle of this club is very diverting, and begins with a motto *not* from Goethe,

Ein guter Trunk
Macht Alte junk

which is, after all, a very partial and temporary truth. For the guidance of other social clubs I cannot refrain from quoting *in extenso* the article headed "Rules":—

"The Rules of the Club being of the sort once heard are never forgotten, there is no need to repeat them in this Chronicle."

So much for the Forty-niners.

THE SOAKERS' CLUB.

"We'll have flesh for holidays, fish for fasting days, and moreo'er puddings and flapjacks; and thou shalt be welcome," was the Shakesperean motto of this frankly christened club. The pious founder of the club, in a finely printed booklet, declared that "it was deemed a requisite that your club should flourish under some rollicking epithet such as had not previously been 'empounded' by any other fraternity. The title should be terse; it should also be outrageous. It should smack of the *caveau*, and have the scent of the beeswing. Accordingly, many have been the creations that have in turn possessed the mind of your promoters. Fuddling clubs, gorging clubs, out Heroding Herod clubs—these comprised a whole hand of clubs, in which was not a single trump. Then did your promoters bethink themselves of that unctuous cognomen, 'The Soakers.' The title is a nudity.... The name of 'The Soakers' Club' is selected only as conveying a sharp antithetical travestie upon our sober habits as moderate men." This last statement is consolatory, for it would have been unpleasant if the club had come to the "Cheese" merely to make

manifest their loyalty to their name. They were good fellows, and, though not quite antithetical to their designation did not allow it to run riot with their moderate tendencies. They dined at the “Cheese” regularly for years, but their numbers did not increase, owing probably to the frank brutality of their title, and the natural result was that they gradually dwindled away.

THE ST. DUNSTAN’S CLUB.

No wife, however shrewd, could object to her marital slave being a member of the St. Dunstan’s, while even the most angelic of ladies would scarcely like to see her lord flourishing as a leader among “The Soakers.” Therefore has the St. Dunstan’s flourished like a green bay tree for over a century. Its proud boast is that it has contributed more Common Councilmen and Aldermen (and consequently Lord Mayors) to the Corporation of the City of London than any other club in the Metropolis.

The St. Dunstan’s is pre-eminently a social club, neither party nor religion entering into its management. As may be expected, its members (now limited to twenty-eight) are leading men in their respective walks of life. The St Dunstan’s Club is called after the courageous English saint who, according to tradition, once pulled Satan by the nose with a pair of pincers. This episode in the life of the holy friar is represented on the insignia of the club. The club legend is that St. Dunstan shook the devil all round the boundaries of the parish, and then dropped him in the Temple, hence the origin of the name of the “Devil’s Own” applied to the legal profession, hence also the name of the “Devil” tavern, nearly opposite St. Dunstan’s Church, where the Apollo Club was presided over by Ben Jonson. Fleet Streeters can no longer “go to the Devil,” in the sense of going to any particular tavern, but anyone of respectability may be introduced to Child’s Bank, No. 1 Fleet Street, which stands on the Devil’s site. The bankers preserve in their parlour Jonson’s Latin rules set down for the guidance of the club.

It appears by the Minute Book that the St. Dunstan’s Club was first established at Anderton’s Coffee House on March 10, 1790, by the Rev. Joseph Williamson, the then Vicar of St. Dunstan’s, Mr. Nicholls, of St. Bride’s, Deputy of the South Side of the Ward of Farringdon Without, and some fifteen others, inhabitants of Fleet Street and its immediate vicinity. The club was limited to thirty members, whereof twenty-six were to be inhabitants of the parish, and four gentlemen resident in the ward. A chairman, treasurer, and secretary, were annually elected at the first meeting of the club in the month of October, and the toasts were fixed by resolution to be as follows:—

1st.—The King.

2nd.—The Queen, the Prince of Wales, and the rest of the Royal Family.

3rd.—Unanimity to this Parish.

4th.—Prosperity to the Ward.

5th.—The Absent Members.

At the first regular meeting of the club Mr. Brewer, of St. Sepulchre’s, who was the Deputy for the North Side of the Ward, was duly elected a member, and at a meeting held on October 17, 1792, the celebrated John Wilkes, Alderman of the Ward, was unanimously elected an honorary member. The subscription to the club was one guinea per annum, and the principal source of income appears to have been derived from wagers for bottles of wine amongst the members, the annual elections for Common Councilmen in the Ward always producing a good number of bets as to the position of the various members of the club at the declaration of the poll. Wagers were laid about every conceivable thing under the sun, as a few of the following examples will show:—

January 25, 1792.—“Mr. Whipham laid Mr. P. North a gallon of claret that 14 days from this date the 3 per Cent. Consols would be 95 per cent.” Mr. Whipham lost.

January 16, 1793.—“Mr. P. North lays Mr. Hounsom a bottle of wine that he (Mr. P. North) will be in bed before 2 o’clock the next morning (January 17), and Mr. Hounsom lays Mr. P. North that he has lost the above wager.”

June 12, 1793.—“Mr. P. North lays that Mr. Hounsom will not forget to pay Mr. Thorne the 2d. to-morrow in the course of the day which he (Mr. Thorne) had lent and advanced for him to pay the waiter 2d. for a Welsh rarebit which Mr. Hounsom had for his supper.”

January 19, 1793.—“Mr. Thorne reported that Mr. Hounsom had paid him the 2d. at half-past 9 o’clock in the morning.”

June 12, 1793.—“Mr. Lambe and Mr. Dep. Nicholls ‘1 bottle.’ Mr. Lambe lays that Mr. Dep. Nicholls knows Miss W——. *Upon explanation Mr. Dep. Nicholls lost.* Mr. Jones and Mr. J. North ‘1 bottle.’ Mr. Jones lays that neither Mr. Lambe nor Mr. Dep. Nicholls knows Miss W——. Mr. Jones lost. Mr. Dep. Nicholls requested that the club would permit him to pay a bottle for having termed Miss W—— Mr. Hounsom’s *friend* instead of *neighbour*. Ordered that it be granted. Mr. Lambe and Mr. J. North ‘a bottle.’ Mr. Lambe lays that he (Mr. Lambe) never ran away from a good thing. After some discussion it was decided that Mr. Lambe had lost the bet.”

In 1795 a great number of bets were made about the wearing of hair powder, and the wagering was so keen that counsel’s opinion was taken as to who had won the respective bets; the original opinion and decision of the counsel (Mr. George Bond, of Serjeants’ Inn) is attached to the Minute Book.

It was also the custom of the club to wager on the "*first letter*" of the King's or Queen's Speech after the words "*My Lords and Gentlemen*." This naturally afforded great scope for speculation, which, it appears by the minutes, the members were accustomed to take full advantage of. When the funds of the club were low the following among other expedients was adopted:—

February 22, 1792.—"Resolved that any member of this club elected to any office of honour or emolument shall pay for the benefit of the club one bottle of port wine."

April 8, 1795.—"Mr. Hounsom and Mr. Whipham '1 bottle.' Mr. Hounsom lays that the Prince of Wales will not have issue within the space of 12 months. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Williams '1 bottle.' Mr. Fisher lays that the Prince of Wales will have issue within the space of 12 months. Mr. Thorne and Mr. George '1 bottle.' Mr. Thorne lays that the Princess of Wales will be delivered of a son or daughter within 12 calendar months."

April 22, 1795.—"Rev. Mr. Williamson and Mr. Ustonson '1 bottle.' Mr. Williamson lays that the Princess of Wales is not delivered of a son or daughter within 12 calendar months. Mr. Butterworth and Mr. Piggott '1 bottle.' Mr. Butterworth lays that the Prince of Wales will not have issue within 12 months."

THE LEGITIMIST CLUB.

Before leaving the subject of "Cheese" clubs one more of the many which have enjoyed on occasion the hospitality of the "Cheese" may be mentioned. Most people in this land, and presumably everybody in America, would consider this club somewhat belated. It has an idea that King Edward is a usurper, and that the rightful sovereign of these isles and of the empire is some foreign potentate whom even his own states disown. The following paragraph from the *Daily Telegraph* of March 25, 1895, will show that whatever we may think of the views of its members, the excellence of their taste in gastronomy cannot be called in question:—

"A few gentlemen are still left in this hasteful, bustling, and forgetful age who have time to remember that James I. ascended the throne of England on March 24, 1603. It is hardly necessary to add that they are members of the Thames Valley Legitimist Club, who spend their leisure in moaning over the extinguished glories of their country since the expulsion of James II. Taking advantage of the fact that yesterday was not only the anniversary of the date just given, but was also Mothering Sunday, when the rigidity of the Lenten fast is temporarily suspended, they dined together last evening in the Old Cheshire Cheese, and after doing justice to the famous Johnsonian puddings and other viands, amused themselves after their wont by inspecting a piece of the scaffold on which some unfortunate followers of the House of Stuart were executed. The health of the Queen was drunk, and it was incidentally mentioned as a fact not generally known that, with two exceptions, every sovereign in Europe was descended from the saintly mother of the monarch whose anniversary they were that day celebrating. The health of Charles VII. of Spain, whoever he may be, was duly honoured."

Dr Johnson's house in Gough Square (*By permission of* Messrs. Ingram Brothers, *Proprietors of "The Sketch."*)

FOOTNOTES:

[4] "The supper was elegant. Johnson had directed that a magnificent hot apple-pie should make part of it, and this he would have stuck with bay leaves, because, forsooth, Mrs. Lennox had written verses, and, further, he had prepared for her a crown of bays with which, but not till he had invoked the Muses by some ceremonies of his own invention, he encircled her brows."

The first literary child whose birth was here celebrated was a dreary novel called *The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella*.

CHAPTER VIII

DR. JOHNSON'S HOMES AND HAUNTS

Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.
SHENSTONE.

It is a common belief that Fleet Street is dotted with houses which were Dr. Johnson's homes in later years, and with the taverns in which he sat drinking tea and talking philosophy till the small hours of the morning. It is not so. The Doctor's house at No. 1 Inner Temple Lane has given way to "Johnson's Buildings."

In Johnson's Court (named after Thomas Johnson, citizen and merchant taylor, and one of the Common Council from 1598 till his death in 1625) the Doctor lived from 1765 to 1776, and during his "journey" in Scotland humorously described himself as "Johnson of that Ilk." The house (No. 7) has, however, gone the way of all bricks and mortar. In 1776 he removed to No. 8 Bolt Court, where he passed the rest of his life. The house was demolished soon after his death. In fact there is only one house—No. 17 Gough Square—on which we can look and say, "Here dwelt Dr. Johnson."

Gough Square itself has undergone inevitable alteration, but fortunately for the devotee, at the western end the Doctor's house, No. 17, still stands intact. Here his wife died in 1752, and here he completed his Dictionary in 1755. In his note book for 1831, Carlyle mentions having paid a visit to the house and interviewed the occupant, who was apparently under the impression that his illustrious predecessor in the tenancy had been a schoolmaster. So he had been, and one of his pupils, a pupil of whom any master might have been proud, was David Garrick. But the tenant knew not that schoolmastering had long been abandoned when the Doctor was compiling his Dictionary in that by no means majestic abode. On the right-hand side of the doorway the Society of Arts has placed a plaque with the following inscription:—

DR. SAMUEL
JOHNSON
Author

—

LIVED HERE

—

B. 1709. D. 1784.

CHAPTER IX

THE “CHEESE” AND ITS FARE—A GREAT FALL IN PUDDING

Resurgam.

La découverte d’un mets nouveau fait plus pour le bonheur du genre humain que la découverte d’une étoile.—Brillat-Savarin.

If, as Brillat-Savarin says, the discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of mankind than the discovery of a star, how much more deserving of human gratitude is the discoverer of the “Cheese” pudding than a Herschel or an Adams?

The *Sportsman* of March 30, 1887, has a long and eulogistic article on the “Cheese,” but exigencies of space preclude its being quoted in its entirety. The writer says: “Happily the most famous of London ancient taverns is left to us in the Old Cheshire Cheese, which is yet nightly haunted by the shade of Dr. Johnson, whose modern prototypes still enjoy their steaks and punch, and discuss politics, polemics, and plays, though they wear short hair and masher collars instead of full-bottomed wigs and ruffles.

“The ‘Old C.C.’ is a retiring, respectable, very conservative, and hoary-headed aristocrat of the bygone school. Changes are made with a very rebellious spirit, and the introduction of a patent American machine for squeezing lemons savoured so much of modern progress that its appearance nearly raised a riot amongst the patrons of the sawdust-strewed bar. The ‘Cheese’ has no glaring front, nor does it invite custom by acres of plate glass, glittering gasaliers, or gorgeous frescoes. A modest representation of a cheese in dingy glass does duty for a sign, so far as the street of Fleet is concerned. The house has its school of customers, who look upon it as a species of club, without the expense of entrance fee. How old the original edifice was I am not prepared to say, but I notice by an ancient sideboard that it was rebuilt in 1667.

“Inside, the hostelry has a curiously quaint, old-world appearance, and this has been jealously preserved to good purpose by successive proprietors. Rebuilt, decorated in the prevailing style of public-house architecture, the ‘Old C.C.’ would have nothing to recommend it over scores—nay, hundreds—of its fellows.

“The dining-room is fitted with rows of wooden benches and wooden tables without the slightest pretence of show. But the cloths are white and clean, and the cutlery bright, while the china service is of that ancient and undemonstrative blue design which delighted our forefathers, and is known as the willow pattern.... On the walls hang three prominent objects, a barometer, a print of Dr. Johnson, and an old oil painting by Wageman, representing the interior of the room, with a gentleman trying his steak with his knife; a waiter holding up a port wine cork in the well-known attitude ‘two with you’; and a cat rubbing her oleaginous hide in anxious expectation against the leg of the settle. This picture, like one in the bar, is an heirloom, or rather a fixture, which cannot be sold—‘for ever and ever, amen!’—but must pass from landlord to landlord.

“Upstairs there are extensive ranges of kitchens where burnt sacrifices are being perpetually offered up in the shape of mutton and beef; a dining-room and a smoke-room, dark-panelled and cosy, where a man may forget the world and be lost to it during a much coveted mid-day rest. Of other rooms on other floors no man knoweth, save that in rumours it is alleged there have been private parties over marrow-bones and puddings, a theory which is well borne out by echoes of peals of laughter, and the popping of champagne corks. Whatever the place may be above, however, it has no comparison with the glories that lie below the paving. The privileged few who are allowed to go into the wondrous cellars—redolent of sawdust, cobweb-coated, and covered with dust—wander amidst avenues of wine-bins with wonder and astonishment at the space occupied underground as compared with the upper regions. The entrance to the cellars is in the dingy office in the street of Fleet, which is devoted to the wholesale department, and here a record is kept of the rich old ports and generous clarets sleeping below, with the merry devils of laughter bottled up in quarts and magnums in overcoats of pink and foil. No man could remember them, be his experience as a cellar-man what it may.

“The ‘Old C.C.’ is a fine record of the passing seasons. When genial spring has brought forward vegetation, the waiter’s cheerful intimation that ‘Asparagus is on, sir,’ recalls the fact forcibly to your notice. When, later, ‘’Am and peas’ can be secured, the vision of early summer is perfect, and is not even disturbed by boiled beans and bacon. In the hot, sultry days, cool salads are appropriate, and when these disappear there is a closing in of daylight and a general warning that the year is past its prime. Then does the ‘Cheese’ draw its blinds and light its gas, stoke up its fires, and announce its great puddings. Yet further ahead, when raw November days come upon us, the savoury smell of Irish stew—that fine winter lining for the hungry—pervades the place and so the season goes round. Of all the changes brought about by the rolling year, however, none is so popular as the advent of

THE PUDDING,

though it means frost, and damp, and cold winds. *The* pudding (italics for ‘the,’ please,) has no rival in size or quality. Its glories have been sung in every country. The pudding ranges from fifty to sixty, seventy, and eighty pounds’ weight, and gossip has it that in the dim past the rare dish was constructed to

proportions of a hundredweight. It is composed of a fine light crust in a huge basin, and there are entombed therein beefsteaks, kidneys, oysters, larks, mushrooms, and wondrous spices and gravies, the secret of which is known only to the compounder. The boiling process takes about

SIXTEEN TO TWENTY HOURS,

and the smell on a windy day has been known to reach as far as the Stock Exchange. The process of carving the pudding on Wednesdays and Saturdays is a solemn ceremony. The late proprietor, Mr. Beaufoy A. Moore, could be with difficulty restrained from rising from his bed, when stricken down with illness, to drive to the ‘Cheese’ and serve out the pudding. No one, he believed, could do it with such judicious care and judgment as he did.

“Once, and once only was that pudding dropped. Alas, the sad day! In the room sat an expectant hungry army of fifty men. The waiter, bearing in triumph the pudding, appeared smiling on the scene. His foot slipped, he tripped, the pudding wavered, and then bowled along the floor, breaking up and gathering sawdust as it went. There was a breathless silence. The proprietor dropped the upraised carver, stood speechless for a moment, and then went out and wept bitterly. The occasion was too much for him. One after another the awed and hungry crowd put their hats on and departed, with sorrowful faces and watering mouths.”

CHAPTER X

MR. GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA AND OTHERS ON THE “CHEESE”

For he’s a jolly good fellow.—*Old Song.*

The late Mr. George Augustus Sala, in an article entitled “Brain Street,” which is to be found in “Old and New London” (Cassell, Petter & Galpin), thus describes Wine Office Court and the Cheshire Cheese:—

“The vast establishments of Messrs. Pewter and Antimony, type-founders (Alderman Antimony was Lord Mayor in the year ’46); of Messrs. Quoin, Case, and Chappell, printers to the Board of Blue Cloth; of Messrs. Cutedge and Treecalf, bookbinders; with the smaller industries of Scawper and Tinttool, wood-engravers; and Treacle, Gluepot, and Lampblack, printing-roller makers, are packed together in the upper part of the court as closely as herrings in a cask. The ‘Cheese’ is at the Brain Street end. It is a little lop-sided, wedged-up house, that always reminds you, structurally, of a high-shouldered man with his hands in his pockets. It is full of holes and corners and cupboards and sharp turnings; and in ascending the stairs to the tiny smoking-room you must tread cautiously, if you would not wish to be tripped up by plates and dishes momentarily deposited there by furious waiters. The waiters at the ‘Cheese’ are always furious. Old customers abound in the comfortable old tavern, in whose sanded-floored eating-rooms a new face is a rarity; and the guests and the waiter are the oldest of familiars. Yet the waiter seldom fails to bite your nose off as a preliminary measure when you proceed to pay him. How should it be otherwise when on that waiter’s soul there lies heavy a perpetual sense of injury caused by the savoury odour of steaks and ‘muts’ to follow; of cheese bubbling in tiny tins—the original ‘speciality’ of the house; of floury potatoes and fragrant green peas; of cool salads, and cooler tankards of bitter beer; of extra-creaming stout and ‘goes’ of Cork and ‘rack,’ by which is meant gin; and, in the winter-time, of Irish stew and rump-steak pudding, glorious and grateful to every sense? To be compelled to run to and fro with these succulent viands from noon to late at night, without being able to spare time to consume them in comfort—where do waiters dine, and when, and how?—to be continually taking other people’s money only for the purpose of handing it to other people—are not these grievances sufficient to cross-grain the temper of the mildest-mannered waiter? Somebody is always in a passion at the ‘Cheese’: either a customer because there is not fat enough on his ‘point’ steak, or because there is too much bone in his mutton-chop; or else the waiter is wroth with the cook; or the landlord with the waiter, or the barmaid with all. Yes, there is a barmaid at the ‘Cheese,’ mewed up in a box not much bigger than a bird-cage, surrounded by groves of lemons, ‘ones’ of cheese, punch-bowls, and cruets of mushroom-catsup. I should not care to dispute with her, lest she should quoit me over the head with a punch-ladle, having a William-the-Third guinea soldered in the bowl.”

“Old and New London,” ch. 10, part iii., p. 123, contains this paragraph:—

“Mr. William Sawyer[5] has also written a very admirable sketch of the ‘Cheese’ and its old-fashioned conservative ways, which we cannot resist quoting:—

“‘We are a close, conservative, inflexible body—we, the regular frequenters of the “Cheshire,”’ says Mr. Sawyer. ‘No new-fangled notions, new usages, new customs, or new customers for us. We have our history, our traditions, and our observations, all sacred and inviolable. Look around! There is nothing new, gaudy, flippant, or effeminately luxurious here. A small room, with heavily timbered windows, a low-planked ceiling. A huge projecting fireplace, with a great copper boiler always on the simmer, the sight of which might have roused even old John Willett, of the “Maypole,” to admiration. High, stiff-backed, inflexible “settees,” hard and grainy in texture, box off the guests half a dozen each to a table. Sawdust covers the floor, giving forth that peculiar faint odour which the French avoid by the use of the vine sawdust with its pleasant aroma. A chief ornament in which we indulge is a picture over the mantel-piece, a full-length of a now departed waiter, whom, in the long past, we caused to be painted, by subscription of the whole room, to commemorate his virtues, and our esteem. We sit bolt upright round our tables, waiting, but not impatient. A time-honoured solemnity is about to be observed, and we, the old stagers, is it for us to precipitate it? There are men in the room who have dined here every day for a quarter of a century—aye, the whisper goes round that one man did it on his wedding day! In all that time the more staid and well-regulated among us have observed a steady regularity of feeding. Five days in the week we have “Rotherham steak”—that mystery of mysteries—or our “chop and chop to follow,” with the indispensable wedge of Cheshire—unless it is preferred stewed or toasted—and on Saturday decorous variety is afforded in a plate of the world-renowned “Cheshire” pudding. It is of this latter luxury that we are now assembled to partake, and that with all fitting ceremony and observance.’”

FOOTNOTES:

[5] The late Mr. Sawyer was for many years the brilliant editor of *Funny Folks*. His articles signed “Rupert,” in the *Budget* have often been reprinted.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRESS AND THE "CHEESE"

> Crown high the goblets with a cheerful draught;
> Enjoy the present hour; adjourn the future thought.
> DRYDEN'S *Virgil*.

Among the earlier notices of the "Cheese" which have appeared in newspapers is the following, taken from *Common Sense, or, the Englishman's Journal*,[6] of Saturday, April 23, 1737:—

"On Sunday, April 17, one Harper, who formerly lived with Mr. Holyoake at the sign of the 'Old Cheshire Cheese,' in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, for eight years, found Means to conceal himself in the House, and early on Monday Morning got into the Room where the Daughter lay, and where Mr. Holyoake (as he well knew) kept his Money; and accordingly he took away a small Box wherein was £200 and Notes to the Value of £600 more. The Child, hearing a Noise, happily awaked, and cry'd out, 'Mammy, Mammy, a Man has carried away the Box;' which alarm'd her Father and Mother, who lay near, and immediately they got up; which oblig'd the Fellow to hide himself in the Chimney, where he was discover'd, with the Box carefully ty'd up in a Handkerchief, and being secur'd, was afterwards carried before the Lord Mayor, who committed him to Newgate."

In the *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* of Monday, August 9, 1784, we read an account of an attempted murder at the "Cheese." It appears that a porter in the Temple named John Gromont induced a woman who had cohabited with, and then deserted him, to accept a drink at a public-house in Wine Office Court, "where, starting up in a fit of frenzy, he cut the woman's throat."

"Before the transaction he had made several attempts to destroy himself at Mr. Bosher's, the Rainbow, opposite the end of Chancery Lane, in Fleet Street, and other public-houses in the neighbourhood."

Coming to a more recent period, we find the press notices of the "Cheese" increase in frequency. *Punch*, for April 14, 1864, describes a famous evening at the "Cheese." Mr. John Cordy Jeaffreson, no mean authority, in his "A Book about the Table," mentions the "Cheese" as one of the three houses in the immediate neighbourhood of the Inns of Court worthy of comparison with those near St. Paul's, and so the references go on ever spreading till they cross the Atlantic and even return from the Antipodes.

Considerations of space will only permit a few further quotations from the vast mass of journalistic literature dealing with the subject.

The *Kent Examiner and Ashford Chronicle* of June 20, 1885, referring to the "Cheese," says:—"It is very generally believed that Shakespeare was one of its numerous frequenters, but undoubtedly one famous man was, namely—François Marie Arouet, otherwise Voltaire—while often enough were present Bolingbroke, Pope, and Congreve, and it is well known that Rare Ben Jonson was one of its most jolly frequenters. Coming down to more modern times, among the many customers of the house have been Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, Shirley Brooks, Tom Taylor, Tom Hood, and last, but not least, Thackeray and Dickens."

In "A Walk up Fleet Street," which appeared in the *Sunday Times*, the following passage occurs:—"The Cheshire Cheese is not imposing in appearance, nor is it even to be seen from the street. Two little courts lead to its somewhat dingy portals; portals much frequented by the London correspondents of provincial journals and gallery reporters. More or less throughout every day of the week barristers and journalists—even members of Parliament are not always missing—come to this house for their dinner, and sit contentedly round the sides of two good old-fashioned rooms. But it is on Saturday that the Cheshire Cheese is seen at its best. Then it is that 'rump-steak pudding' makes its appearance; announced all the week, anxiously expected, come at last!"

The *Reporter*, of October 28, 1874, says of the "Cheese":—

"We have occasionally used this old-fashioned house for over a quarter of a century, and can conscientiously assert that for its chops and steaks, cold beef and salad, and marvellous rump-steak pudding, and for the alacrity with which these edibles are supplied the establishment is unmatchable in the metropolis. Besides, the malt liquors are of the strongest and the best brew, and the whiskies are mellow and old; whilst the ancient punch, which is served exactly as compounded in the days of Dr. Johnson, is simply nectar worthy of elevating even the gods."

Under the heading "Some Gossip about Famous Taverns," a writer in the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette* says:—

"What man who has ever been called into Fleet Street, either on business or pleasure, does not know the sawdusted floor and old-time appointments of the Cheshire Cheese? Who would dare to confess ignorance of the Brobdingnagian chops, the world-famous point steaks, the stewed cheese, which constitute its main attractions all the year round? Who has not here devoted himself during the hot summer months, in the cool dining-room which seems ever impervious to the sun's rays, to the manufacture of an elaborate salad to enjoy with his cold beef? And who, again, has never yet been so fortunate as to witness that appetising procession to be seen every Saturday during the winter months,

when Mr. Moore, the master of the house, in dress coat clad, and armed with a mighty carver, precedes into the room that mighty steak and oyster pudding, the secret of whose manufacture has never been allowed to penetrate beyond the mazes of Wine Office Court."

And again the same writer observes:—"The secret of the success of the Cheshire Cheese is that everything sold within its doors is good. For this we prefer its sanded floors to marble halls, for this we listen curiously to the weird cry of the waiter up the crooked staircase of 'Rudderhumbake,' which, by old experience, we know heralds the approach of a choice cut from the mighty rump of a succulent shorthorn or an Aberdeen steer."

The *Philadelphia Times* of October, 1884, thus refers to the "Cheese":—

"A famous man who haunted the 'Cheese' was Voltaire, side by side with Bolingbroke, Pope, and Congreve, and there is to-day an old play in manuscript in Scotland, written in Rare Ben Jonson's day, in which these lines occur:—

"Heaven bless 'The Cheese' and all its goodly fare—
I wish to Jove I could go daily there.
Then fill a bumper up, my good friend, please—
May fortune ever bless the 'Cheshire Cheese.'"

A reviewer in the *City Press* (October 30, 1875) says:—"Ben Jonson loved the 'Cheese'; and at one time you had only to walk into a Fleet Street coffee-house to become familiar with all the choice spirits of the age. Dean Swift, Addison, and Steele affected the tavern; so did Sheridan, and so did Lord Eldon, and so, indeed, did all men of mark down to our own time."

An article headed:—

"YE RUMPE STEAKE PUDDINGE"

in the *Fort Worth (Texas) Daily Gazette* opens as follows:—

"While I am on the subject of 'food' I must be permitted to mention that I enjoyed the privilege of partaking of 'ye rumpe steake puddinge' a few days since at no less celebrated board than 'The Cheese,' Wine Office Court, Fleet Street. 'The Cheese,' or, to give it its full title, 'Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese,' is now the most historical tavern of all the old taverns in London. Nearly all the other taverns have had to make way for the more modern restaurant or public-house. Little is known, it seems, of the very early history of the place. A *brochure* entitled 'Round London,' published in 1725, describes the house as 'Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese tavern, near ye Flete Prison, an eating house for goodly fare.' And now in 1883, or very near the beginning of the year 1884, I can bear cheerful witness to the fact that it still deserves to be classed with the very few public places in London where one can secure 'goodly fare.' The rump-steak pudding, which is the special feature of the place, is certainly toothsome, and is not apt to be speedily forgotten by the epicure. It has been served promptly at one o'clock p.m. every Saturday 'since when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary,' and the particular one that I assisted to dissect was enjoyed by quite a hundred persons. Though nominally a 'steak pudding,' there are very many other ingredients in the dish than rump steak. It is said that for more than 200 years the old tavern has changed hands but twice, and that it is now in the hands of the third family that has helped to keep up its ancient reputation. It is also said that the recipe by which the pudding is builded is a secret that belongs to the place, and is as sacred an heirloom as the old oil painting of Henry Todd, who, according to the inscription on the portrait, commenced waiter at the 'Old Cheshire Cheese' February 17, 1812. This picture was, according to the inscription again, 'painted by Wageman, July, 1827, subscribed for by the gentlemen frequenting the coffee-room, and presented to Mr. Dolamore (the landlord) in trust, to be handed down as a heirloom to all future landlords of the Old Cheshire Cheese, Wine Office Court, Fleet Street.'"

"Henry Todd, 'Old' Harry as he was familiarly called by the visitors, had made a considerable sum of money while in his situation," writes the compiler of the great work on which the British Museum so prides itself, "Signs of Taverns," "but I am informed that a spendthrift son reduced his circumstances much. To a stranger he appears a morose, cynical kind of man, apparently not by any means adapted for the waitership of a tavern, although he is always attentive to the wants of his customers. Perhaps he was a different being when younger, and to those who were old customers of the house and who knew him well, he used more freedom probably.

"The portrait, I am informed, is the first attempt in oil by that exceedingly talented artist Wageman, and was painted at the instigation of a visitor to the house, a Mr. Thomas Morell, a well-known pen and quill dealer who resided in the Broadway, Ludgate Hill (a brother of the Morell also pen and ink dealer in Fleet Street), and who was well known to the public for his eccentricity by the name of Peculiar Tom Morell, from the singularity of his puffs and advertisements."

"Old Harry" retired soon after the portrait-painting from age and infirmity, but was alive at Christmas, 1838.

FOOTNOTES:

[6] Printed and sold by J. Purser in White Fryars, and G. Hawkins at Milton’s Head, between the Two Temple Gates, Fleet St. MDCCXXXVII.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT THE WORLD SAYS OF THE "CHEESE"

> That all-softening, overpowering knell,
> The tocsin of the soul—the dinner-bell.—BYRON.

The "Diner Out," in the *Evening Standard* of January 10, 1867, writes:—

"In each of the apartments on the ground floor is a full-length portrait, in oil, of a departed waiter—subscribed for upon his retirement by the gentlemen 'using' the house. The one which most strikes my memory at the moment is the representation of a portly, respectable—scrupulously respectable—middle-aged man, clad in a costume worn early in the century—that is to say, the coat is of blue, the buttons are gilt, the cravat is a cheerful roll surmounting a frilled shirt, and the legs know no trousers but the breeches and stockings of departed days, when well-made men 'stood upon their legs' in something more than the merely literal sense of the term. The background of the picture is a faithful representation of a section of the room in which it is hung. The box before which the waiter is standing, opening a bottle of port (I say port, because a man would never open a bottle of sherry with the same grave, but complacent, air of responsibility), is a speaking likeness, and so is evidently the representation of the guest for whom the order is being executed—a person even more respectable than the waiter, if possible, with a very high coat collar, his hair all brushed up to the top of his head, and a cute knowledge of wine depicted in every lineament of his countenance. You may be sure that no inferior quality is being opened for him. Indeed, the waiter is as incapable of deceiving as the guest of being deceived. The wine is evidently of that degree of excellence which impels people to talk about it while they drink it—a wine which is its own aim and end—not a mere stimulating drink, setting men on to be enthusiastic upon general subjects. The diner is plainly the model diner of the Cheshire Cheese, as the waiter is the model waiter.

"The Cheshire Cheese is famous for steak-pudding, agreeably tempered by kidneys, larks, and oysters. This dish, which is often ordered for private parties, and even for private houses, is frequently made the occasion of social gatherings of an extensive character—so much so, indeed, that Madame Roland might have extended her celebrated apostrophe to Liberty by saying—'O Steak Pudding, how much conviviality is committed in thy name!' Whatever you get at the 'Cheshire' is sure to be good and capitally cooked."

From an article entitled "At the Cheshire Cheese," which appeared in the *Commercial Travellers' Review*, the following is taken:—"At one o'clock—the time at which the 'Cheese' is most frequented—we accompanied our friends up Fleet Street, and then by devious ways and turnings, more than enough to upset our geography, until we finally arrived at that part of Wine Office Court where the 'Cheshire' stands. We were ushered into what seemed most like the after cabin of a steamer, with comfortably arranged and well appointed miniature tables on either side, attended by trim obliging waiters, and everything else equally inviting, and fully justifying our friend's previous good report. 'Roast Lamb,' 'Roast Beef,' 'Boiled Beef,' 'Beefsteak Pie,' and——'Thanks—plates for four of the first with the various &c., and four tankards of stout.' 'Yes, sir'—and away vanishes our excellent friend, the waiter, to the unknown regions where cook holds sway and reigns supreme, only to return in less time than it takes to record the fact, with all that was calculated to make us content and comfortable.... We enjoyed one of the pleasantest afternoons it has been our good fortune to participate in for many a day. Pleasant dinner—pleasant company over a well-brewed bowl of palatably flavoured sipping punch, that engendered pleasant reflections on past assemblies and present associations—in the heart of dear old London—surely no alloy was possible in our midst, and nothing more was needed save the presence of some other far away friends to overflow the cup of pleasure at the 'Cheshire Cheese.'"

In the *World* of December 24, 1884, there is an article on the "The Old Chop Houses," in which the writer, drawing on the recollections of thirty years, says: "There was only one other house that excelled the old Cheshire Cheese for a steak, and that was the Blue Posts in Cork Street.... But as regards mutton, chops, the Cheshire Cheese was unrivalled in London, or anywhere short of Barnsley, where a mutton chop is about a third part of a loin, not reckoning the chump end, and where this doubled or trebled chop is so taperly trimmed and freed from its superfluous fat, that when cooked, by a process which I take to be rather roasting than grilling, and served with the fillet under, like a sirloin of beef, it might, by virtue of its shapely plumpness, be taken for a roast partridge or grouse."

Under the head of "Public Refreshment," in Knight's "London," vol. iv., p. 314, appears this passage:—

"There is a dingy house in a court in Fleet Street where the chops and steaks are unrivalled. Who that has tasted there that impossible thing of private cookery, a *hot* mutton chop—a second brought when the first is despatched—has not pleasant recollections of the never-ending call to the cook of 'two muttons to follow'?"

In Charles Dickens's "A Tale of Two Cities" (book ii., chap. 4), after the trial at the Old Bailey, the text proceeds:

"'I begin to think I *am* faint.'

"'Then why the devil don't you dine? I dined, myself, while those numskulls were deliberating which world you should belong to—this or some other. Let me show you the nearest tavern to dine well at.'

“Drawing his arm through his own, he took him down Ludgate Hill to Fleet Street, and so, up a covered way, into a tavern.[7] Here they were shown into a little room, where Charles Darnay was soon recruiting his strength with a good plain dinner and good wine; while Carton sat opposite to him at the same table, with his separate bottle of port before him, and his fully half-insolent manner upon him.”

“Jeems Pipes, of Pipesville,” in a letter dated from Regent Street, London, June 26, 1879, to the San Francisco *Daily Evening Post*, thus refers to the Cheshire Cheese:—

“The Old Cheshire Cheese is, perhaps, at the present writing, one of the most popular of the old hostelries, and when you consider that for over two hundred years it has been in existence, and has been patronised by celebrities of every degree, rank, and station, and even royalty—for Charles II. ate a chop here with Nell Gwynne—and the genial landlord will actually show you the seats used by Dr. Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith, even to the marks on the wainscotted wall made by their greased wigs; the corner where the author of ‘Pendennis’ and ‘The Newcomes’ sat, or where Charles Dickens, Mark Lemon, Shirley Brooks, Douglas Jerrold, John Leech, and a host of others enjoyed their ’arf-and-’arf and toasted cheese. The tavern is situated up a little narrow passage called

‘WINE OFFICE COURT.’

I don’t think it can be more than three feet wide. On the right hand side of it is the entrance. Over the door is a glass lamp painted red, with the words ‘Old Cheshire Cheese’ on it. But, oh! what chops, what steaks, what cold lamb and salad, what beefsteak pudding you do get here! It is indeed a revelation! And should you be permitted to ascend to the upper part of the building you will find the walls adorned with paintings, articles of vertu, and other evidences of comfort and ease, where the proprietor dispenses his hospitality in the most genial manner; and, when I inform you that Mr. Moore is a vestryman and churchwarden of St. Bride’s, will shortly become Councilman, and probably Alderman and Lord Mayor, you will see that it is no common thing to be the landlord of the ‘Cheshire Cheese.’”

Mr. Moore did not live to attain the dignity of Lord Mayor which “Jeems Pipes” presaged. He died in 1886, loved and respected in his life, and deeply lamented at his death by the troops of friends who knew him both in his private and business life.

The following are extracted from a London letter in the *New York World* of September 14, 1884, and are interesting:—

“London abounds in historic taverns, but of them all none are more historic and interesting than the ‘Cheese.’ To eat a steak here is not to masticate fried cork, while the tankards of bitter ale, foaming and delicious, with which you wash down the steak are worth a long journey to enjoy. The folk-lore of this famous haunt is interesting, not alone to tavern-loving, but to general posterity, although as to a complete and detailed account of its very early history there is much of obscurity. While there are no positive proofs, there are authentic legends that Shakespeare spent many an idle hour at this place, because it was on his way to the Blackfriars’ Theatre, in Playhouse Yard, Ludgate Hill, of which he was so long a time absolute manager. In his time the play began at 1 p.m. and ended at 5 p.m., at which hour the wits of the town mustered forces in Fleet Street haunts.

“In modern times, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and now to-day that prince of diners and *bons vivants*, George Augustus Sala, have frequented the Cheshire Cheese and waxed eloquent over its comforts and subtle charms. Both Dickens and Thackeray knew how to appreciate a good inn, and, after singing the praises of the bill of fare, pay deserved compliments to the waiters. Men who serve the frequenters of the Cheshire grow gray in the service, and each boasts his own particular customers. Of the younger waiters all are most civil, and the young women at the bar are not only polite, but lady-like in manners and appearance.

“It is surprising how soon one gets used to the innovation of the feminine bar-tender, and it is not to be questioned that it is a good custom, productive of greater refinement among the male frequenters, and, where the young women conduct themselves modestly, in no wise degrading to their minds or morals.

FRONTISPIECE OF BILL OF FARE.

By Cruickshank

“It matters little what hour you select to visit ‘Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese,’ you will have plenty to amuse and instruct you, and always find the pretty barmaids in the bar room attentive and clever. The cutting of the rump-steak and kidney pie is a spearing process performed by the proprietor, and often as many as three, even four waiters are needed to lift the huge smoking hot pie to the centre table, while often from thirty to sixty hungry men wait at the various tables for a triangle of this toothsome viand. Take my word for it, you will have a great desire for a second help, and even though, like myself, you are a petticoat wearer, no one will annoy you or even look surprised at your devoting an evening among the odd masculine characters nightly frequenting ‘Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese.’”

In an article written by Mr. W. Outram Tristram, and illustrated by Mr. Herbert Railton, the *English Illustrated Magazine* of December, 1889, gives, under the title of “A Storied Tavern,” a most interesting account of this old house.

“Here,” says the writer, “is no home for kickshaws and cigarettes. From this kitchen comes no sample of fashionable culinary art, that ‘art with poisonous honey stolen from France.’ Nothing of that kind

obtains at the Cheshire Cheese. Here the narrowed kingdom lies of point steaks turned to a second and served hissing on plates supernaturally hot, of chops gargantuan in size and inimitable in tenderness and flavour, of cheese bubbling sympathetically in tiny tins, of floury potatoes properly cooked, of tankards of bitter beer, of extra creaming stout, of a rump-steak and oyster pudding served on Saturdays only,[8] and so much the specialty of the house, that I must deal with it hereafter. All smacks here of that England of solid comfort and solid plenty.

"There is a collection of useful

IMPLEMENTS OF INEBRIETY

in the bar of the Cheshire Cheese, which brings the place's past more vividly, perhaps, before one than any view of its sanded floors, low ceilings, or quaint staircase, disappearing suddenly from the entrance passage in formal but inviting bend.

"Voltaire was certainly here; Bolingbroke, in this place cracked many a bottle of Burgundy; and Congreve's wit flashed wine-inspired, while Pope, sickly and intolerant of tobacco-smoke, suffered under these low roofs I doubt not many a headache. But it is of its distinguished visitors of later days that the Cheshire Cheese as it now stands reminds one most fully. Johnson, Garrick, Goldsmith, and Chatterton were undoubted frequenters. Many a time the great Samuel, turning heavily in his accustomed seat, and beset by some pert sailing pinnace, brought, like a galleon manœuvring, his ponderous artillery to bear. Goldsmith lived at No. 6 Wine Office Court, where he wrote or partly wrote the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' his flagging inspiration possibly gaining assistance from the tavern's famed Madeira.

"His (Dr. Johnson's) frequent, nay, nightly visits here are matters of history, and have been vouched for on

AUTHORITY BEYOND DISPUTE.

The time is not so far distant when old frequenters to the house were to be found who had drunk and eaten with men whom Johnson had conversationally annihilated, and who recalled the circumstance with an extreme clearness of recollection. A recollection this which joined the record of two generations of the tavern's great visitors. And the second generation offered names not unworthy to compare with the first, such notabilities as these figuring in the list: Dickens, Thackeray, Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, Shirley Brooks, Tom Taylor, John Forster, Sir Alexander Cockburn, Professor Aytoun, Tom Hood, Andrew Halliday, and Charles Mathews."

Miss Sarah Morton, a special correspondent of the *Illustrated Buffalo Express* (N.Y.), gives in her paper, February 15, 1891, an amusing report of her visit to the "Cheese." "It was," she says, "with slow and lingering steps that I emerged from a visit to the ghastly yet fascinating Tower of London, by the way of old St. Paul's Churchyard into Fleet Street, towards the 'Cheshire Cheese.' 'Twas the night of the beefsteak pudding, a delicacy served only twice a week, and in precisely the same way that it has been served in this very place for 200 years.

"One feels just like sidling into an old-fashioned church pew, for the three tables on the left, each accommodating six persons, are provided with high-backed benches black with age.

"'Will you wait for the pudding?' asks the Imposing Personage.

"'What time will it come on?' I diffidently query.

"'Six o'clock to the minute,' was the answer.

"'I will wait,' I replied, and again I was left alone to continue my observations.

"Over on the broad window seat is something under glass in a gilt frame. It is a most glowing description of the glories of 'Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese,' written by Jeems Pipes of Pipesville.

"Every seat is occupied.

"'Tis just six.

"The door swings slowly open. A huge, round white ball is borne aloft, high above the head of The Personage, who enters with slow and stately tread, followed in single file by six serious-faced attendants. The salver is tenderly lowered, and rests upon the table. Every eye is fixed upon it. The room is pervaded with perfect hush.

"The Personage solemnly receives a big spoon and knife from his first gentleman in waiting. The fateful moment has arrived. The pastry is broken. The gravy gently oozes over it.

"The Personage gravely approaches me and apologises for not serving me first, but 'really the middle portion will be safer for you,' he explained.

"The plates of the others were heaped upon. My time has come. There is my big dinner plate piled high with—what on earth! Birds! yes, tiny bits of birds, skylarks, kidneys, strips of beef, just smothered in pastry like sea-foam, and dark brown gravy, steaming with fragrance, as seasoning.

"'Half-and-half'—British bitter and stout in old-time pewter mugs was brought; out of deference to my sex, I suppose, a glass tumbler was placed before me, but I scorned to use it. Didn't Thackeray say it was worth a year's absence in far-away countries to realise the joy that filled one's soul upon returning to old England and quaffing her bitter from a pewter mug?

"Then came stewed cheese, on the thin shaving of crisp, golden toast in hot silver saucers—so hot that the cheese was of the substance of thick cream, the flavour of purple pansies and red raspberries commingled.

"There were only 400 skylarks put into the pudding made for the Prince of Wales at the banquet of the Forth Bridge opening in Edinburgh. How many thousands of the 'blithe spirits' have been put into the Cheshire Cheese pudding for 200 years?

"Shades of Shelley and Keats!"

In *Society* a series of articles was devoted to the description of famous restaurants and of the fare to be enjoyed within their walls. The writer, long an intimate of the "Cheese," devotes not the least piquant of his descriptions to that immortal house. He writes: "Christopher North chopped here, and has recorded his high opinion of its kitchen and its cellar. I fancy, however, that it was about the early *Punch* period that its real connection with journalism was ratified and the union consummated. Shirley Brooks has written pleasantly about it, Albert Smith has chaffed it, Edmund Yates has embalmed it in his 'Reminiscences,' and I have always had an idea that the Fleet Street chop-house in which poor Sydney Carton is found sitting in a semi-drunken condition is the Cheshire Cheese. Dickens, at all events, knew this place well, nor was it likely to escape a use of this sort. Mr. George Augustus Sala was a constant customer."

The *Freemason's Chronicle* of June 5, 1886, in reviewing an earlier edition of this little book, says: —"The praises of Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, one of the most antiquated, and yet the most favourite, resorts in the city of London, have been sung by historians and poets through the whole of the last century, and quaint stories have been handed down to us of scenes and incidents that have from time to time been enacted within the age-begrimed walls of this historic 'chop-house.' In these days of progress, when the links connecting us with the bygone history of Old London are being snapped one by one, and once familiar landmarks are being improved off the face of the City by modern innovations, it is refreshing to be able to sit down and con over the sayings and doings of eminent men who have left 'footprints on the sands of Time,' and whose names are immortalised in literature and song. This little volume brings us *tête-à-tête* with such sturdy intellects as those of Dr. Johnson, Boswell, Reynolds, Goldsmith, Burke, and a host of other 'men of the time,' who in their periods of leisure sought ease and refreshment at the 'Cheese,' and set the tables often in a roar with their pungent criticisms and flights of mirth and satire.

"You can have pointed out to you the seats used by Dr. Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, even to the marks on the wainscoted walls made by their greased wigs; the corner where the author of 'Pendennis' and the 'Newcomes' sat; or where Charles Dickens, Mark Lemon, Shirley Brooks, Douglas Jerrold, John Leech, and a host of others enjoyed their 'arf-and-'arf and toasted cheese. The 'Cheese' has still its *habitués* and on Saturday there is the famous rump-steak pudding, which draws a large attendance, for it is considered that you may search the wide world round without matching that succulent delicacy. Although we miss the genial form and face of the late Moore, whose prerogative it was to preside over this *chef-d'œuvre* of the culinary art, yet his place is filled by a worthy scion of the race, and the company, if not so garrulous or so boisterous as of yore, is still permeated by a sense of deep and affectionate loyalty to the 'old shop.'"

The *Globe* of September 23, 1887, says: "London itself bristles with associations of the great dead. The toil and moil of Fleet Street has tired you. Then turn up Wine Office Court and enter the Cheshire Cheese, where you may sit in the same seat, perchance drink out of the same glass, and if, like poor Oliver, you still ask for more, it is possible to rest your head on the identical spot of grease that Johnson's wig provoked on the bare wall."

FOOTNOTES:

[7] Indubitably the Cheshire Cheese.

[8] An error on the part of the writer. It is served on Mondays and Wednesdays as well.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "CHESHIRE CHEESE" IN LITERATURE

"The Field of Art" ("Scribner"), Feb. 1897:

"There is no date recorded of the building of the 'Cheese,' but for over two hundred years it has been in existence, and has been patronised by celebrities of every degree. Charles II. ate a chop there with Nell Gwynne. A brass tablet in one corner informs you that this was the favourite seat of Dr. Samuel Johnson, and the panelling immediately below is quite polished by the heads of generations of the faithful who have held it an honour to occupy the seat....

"Along Fleet Street nineteenth century humanity rushes in throngs, feverishly intent on the main chance. But now and again units from the mass fall out and disappear into a little doorway, so unobtrusive in its character as to be easily passed by strangers in search of it. A small passageway, a bit of court, and one enters the Old Cheshire Cheese, treading in the footsteps of generations of wits and philosophers. A wit the visitor may not be, but he is certain to be the other in one way or another, and his purpose in coming here can have little in common with the hurly-burly he has but just left out there in Fleet Street. The tide of affairs has left him stranded on an oasis of peculiar charm—a low-ceilinged room, brown as an old meerschaum, heavily raftered, and carrying to the sensitive nostril the scent of ages, the indescribable aroma inseparable from these haunts of geniality: the merry glow of the fire in the old grate, flirting tiny flames upwards that caress the steaming, singing kettle hanging just above. The old copper scuttle glints with the fitful gleams upon its burnished pudgy sides; the floor spread abundantly with sawdust softens the sounds of footfalls. The white tablecloths make the note of tidiness relieving the prevailing low tone of the room.... The silk hats and trousers of modern London almost seem out of harmony with the cosy quaintness of their environment; but smalls and buckles, and cocked hats pass away, and architecture survives the fashions and persons of its creators.

"The waiter before one looks very different from the picture on the wall of his one-time predecessor, but, what is important, the spirit remains the same. In an atmosphere of good fellowship the frequenters of to-day converse over their chop and pint, or perhaps before the cheery fire nurse their knees in reflective mood, drawn together by the same instincts that animated this delightful company of old.

"But who among these, if appealed to, could define the æsthetic charm of the place? Is it the rich colouring of yellow, and old gold, and silver, and brown, the traditions mellow as old wine that sweeten the atmosphere, the satisfaction of the senses, the pure contentment of soul, the pause by the way for the furbishing of one's mental apparel? It is all these and more that make the Old Cheshire Cheese a delight, and, when one has gone, leaves of its high-backed benches and polished tables, its general aspect of warm and cheery hospitality, a glowing memory."

"Chambers's Journal," Saturday, June 2, 1883, after speaking of an imaginary journey from Temple Bar eastward, thus describes the "Cheese":

"There is another old City tavern where Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith often sat together over a snug dinner, a tavern in Wine Office Court called the Old Cheshire Cheese. Passing along Fleet Street and glancing up this court, those magic words seem to take up all the space in the distance as completely as though they were being glanced at through a telescope, and if you follow the instincts of your nature you will dive down the telescope towards the attractive lamp above the door, and enter the tavern. The customary pint of stout in an old pewter will be placed before you, if your taste lies that way; and when you have finished your chop, or steak, or pudding as the case may be, there will follow that speciality for which the Cheshire Cheese is principally noted, a dish of bubbling and blistering cheese, which comes up scorching in an apparatus resembling a tin of Everton toffee in size and shape.

"It was the same when frequented by Johnson and Goldsmith, and their favourite seats in the north-east corner of the window are still pointed out. Nothing is changed—except the waiters, in course of nature—in this conservative and cosy tavern. If Goldsmith did not actually write parts of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' in that corner, he must have thought out more chapters than one while seated there. He lived in Wine Office Court, and here it is supposed the novel begun at Canonbury Tower was finished."

"Picturesque London" (Percy Fitzgerald):

"Fleet Street, interesting in so many ways, is remarkable for the curious little courts and passages into which you make entry under small archways. These are Johnson's Court, Bolt Court, Racquet Court, and the like. But in Fleet Street there is one that is specially interesting. We can fancy the Doctor tramping up to his favourite tavern, the Cheshire Cheese.

“Passing into the dark alley known as Wine Office Court, we come to a narrow flagged passage, the house or wall on the other side quite close and excluding the light. The ‘Cheese’ looks indeed a sort of dark den, an inferior public-house, its grimed windows like those of a shop, which we can look at from the passage. On entering, there is the little bar facing us, and always the essence of snugness and cosiness; to the right a small room, to the left a bigger one. This is the favourite tavern, with its dingy walls and sawdusted floor, a few benches put against the wall, and two or three plain tables of the rudest kind. The grill is heard hissing in some back region where the chop or small steak is being prepared; and it may be said *en passant* that the flavour and treatment of the chop and steak are quite different from those ‘done’ on the more pretentious grills which have lately sprung up. On the wall is the testimonial portrait of a rather bloated waiter—Todd, I think, by name—quite suggestive of the late Mr. Liston. He is holding up his corkscrew of office to an expectant guest, either in a warning or exultant way, as if he had extracted the cork in a masterly style. Underneath is an inscription that it was painted in 1812, to be hung up as an heirloom and handed down, having been executed under the reign of Dolamore, who then owned the place. Strange to say, the waiter of the Cheshire Cheese has been sung, like his brother at the Cock, but not by such a bard. There is a certain irreverence, but the parody is a good one:

> “Waiter at the Cheshire Cheese,
> Uncertain, gruff, and hard to please,
> When ‘tuppence’ smooths thy angry brow,
> A ministering angel thou!

“It has its *habitués*, and on Saturday there is a famous rump-steak pudding which draws a larger attendance, for it is considered that you may search the wide world round without matching that succulent delicacy. These great savoury meat puddings do not kindle the ardour of many persons, being rather strong for the stomachs of babes.

“Well, then, hither it was that Dr. Johnson used to repair. True, neither Boswell nor Hawkins, nor after them Mr. Croker, takes note of the circumstances, but there were many things that escaped Mr. Croker, diligent as he was. There is, however, excellent evidence of the fact. A worthy solicitor named Jay—who is garrulous, but not unentertaining in a book of anecdotes which he has written—frequented the Cheshire Cheese for fifty years during which long tavern life he says, ‘I have been interested in seeing young men when I first went there who afterwards married; then in seeing their sons dining there, and often their grandsons, and much gratified by observing that most of them succeeded well in life. This applies particularly to the barristers with whom I have so often dined when students, when barristers, and some who were afterwards judges.’”

Mr. Fitzgerald then goes on to quote from Jay the extract given in an earlier chapter, and concludes by saying, “Be that as it may, it is an interesting locality and a pleasing sign—the Old Cheshire Cheese, Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, which will afford the present generation, it is hoped, for some time to come an opportunity of witnessing the kind of tavern in which our forefathers delighted to assemble for refreshment.”

G. A. S. (“Twice Round the Clock: Six P.M.”) (talking of the ancient Roman repasts): “Better I take it, a mutton chop at the Cheshire Cheese than those nasty ancient Roman repasts.”

THE “GENTLEMAN’S MAGAZINE,” April, 1895 (“A Six Days’ Tour in London with a Pretty Cousin”):—

“We must take a glance at a tavern of the good old pattern close by, which has a regular pedigree and has had books written about it—the Cheshire Cheese to wit. We go up Wine Office Court and there it stands with its blinking windows and somewhat shaky walls.... Not so, Mr. Sylvanus Urban, the windows of the good old house may blink, but there is nothing shaky about the walls, they at all events are founded on a rock solid as the credit of the house. No wonder too, for it carries its two hundred years or so bravely enough, and like its extinct neighbour, the Cock, witnessed the Plague and Fire. It is needless to say that the older Cheshire Cheese perished in the Fire of London, which stopped about a hundred yards west of Wine Office Court, just on the City side of St. Dunstan’s Church. Here the floor is sanded—or rather sawdusted; here are boxes and rude tables; the chop is done on a gridiron before you, and there is a beefsteak pudding which delights epicures.”

WALTER THORNBURY (“Old and New London”):

“Goldsmith appears to have resided at No. 6 Wine Office Court from 1760 to 1762. They still point out Johnson and Goldsmith’s favourite seats in the north-east corner of the window of that cosy though utterly unpretentious tavern, the Cheshire Cheese in this court.

“It was while living in Wine Office Court that Goldsmith is supposed to have partly written that

delightful novel, the ‘Vicar of Wakefield,’ which he had begun at Canonbury Tower. We like to think that seated in the ‘Cheese’ he perhaps espied and listened to the worthy but credulous vicar and his gosling son attending to the profound theories of the learned and philosophic but shifty Mr. Jenkinson. We think now, by the windows, with a cross light upon his coarse Irish features and his round prominent brow, we see the watchful poet sit eyeing his prey, secretly enjoying the grandiloquence of the swindler and the admiration of the honest country parson.”

Mr. Lewis Hough, in “Once a Week,” Oct. 26, 1867:

“The historical haunts of Fleet Street have a peculiar charm for those who are open to the influences of association. The bench may be hard, but Dr. Johnson has sat upon it; the oak panelling is not luxurious to lean back against, but the periwigs of Steele and Addison have pressed it; the little room may be dingy, but the peach-coloured garments of Goldsmith once lent it a temporary brilliancy.

“The Cock, immortalised by Tennyson, will live for ever in poetry, but the architects, alas! have decided that it shall vanish from the world of prose. But there is a favourite haunt of mine higher up in Fleet Street. There you can feast upon marrow bones. On Saturdays the *pièce de résistance* is a wonderful pudding compounded of steaks, oysters, kidneys, and other unknown delicacies; there is a smoking-room upstairs, where punch is served in an old-fashioned bowl, with glasses of the pattern in use in the last century.

THE CHEESE IN THE TIME OF JOHNSON

“‘As soon as I enter the door of a tavern’—and many were the taverns whose doors the great Samuel entered—exclaimed Dr. Johnson from that tavern chair which he regarded as the throne of human felicity, ‘I experience an oblivion of care and a freedom from solitude; when I am seated I find the master courteous’ (courtesy is thus hereditary in the masters of the Cheshire Cheese) ‘and the servants obsequious to my call, anxious to know and ready to supply my wants; wine then exhilarates my spirits and prompts me to free conversation and an interchange of discourse with those whom I most love: I dogmatise and am contradicted, and in this conflict of opinion and sentiments I delight.’

“One can picture to oneself Johnson when he had entered and taken his favourite seat at the Cheshire Cheese, the fire blazing then as it blazes to-day, after a lapse of more than a century, in the mighty grate, and casting its flashes, as it casts them to-day, over the same oak-wainscotted walls, infusing a ruddier glow into the red curtains drawn across the windows, and dropping a deeper-dyed ruby into the drink that was meant for men.

“All the other tavern haunts which Johnson and his disciples frequented have passed away or been improved out of all semblance to the Johnson era; but the Cheese remains, within and without, the same as it did when Goldsmith reeled up the steps to his lodgings opposite the main entrance in Wine Office Court, or Johnson rolled his huge bulk past it to the house in Gough Square, where his wife died in 1752 and the Dictionary was completed in 1755.”

Mr. Philip Norman, in the “Illustrated London News” for December, 1890, remarks, in his “Inns and Taverns of Old London”:

“The faithful journey to the Cheshire Cheese firm in the belief that when Goldsmith lived hard by in Wine Office Court the two friends must have spent many an hour together in those panelled rooms and have sat on the seat assigned to them by tradition. Now that the Cock has quitted his original home, though under his former proprietor” (it must be remembered this was written in 1890, and does not hold at present—he crows gallantly over the way) “the Cheshire Cheese is unquestionably the most perfect specimen of an old-fashioned tavern in London.”

John Cordy Jeaffreson (“A Book about the Table,” vol. ii. page 43):

“But ere we pass from beef to less majestic delicacies, let us render homage to the steak pudding, than which no goodlier fare can be found for a strong hungry man on a cold day. Rising from his pudding at the Cheshire Cheese, such a feaster is at a loss to say whether he should be most grateful for the tender steak, savoury oyster, seductive kidney, fascinating lark, rich gravy, ardent pepper, or delicate paste.”

“Scribner” (“In London with Dickens”), March, 1881:

“These noisy and nasty eating-houses” (in and about Chancery Lane) “are in striking contrast with the staid old-fashioned taverns in the same neighbourhood, the Cheshire Cheese, etc.”

“The tavern,” says Sir Walter Besant (in “Fifty Years Ago”), “We can hardly understand how large a place it filled in the lives of our forefathers, who did not live scattered about in suburban villas, but over

their shops and offices. When business was over, all, of every class, repaired to the tavern. Dr. Johnson spent the evenings of his last years wholly at the tavern; the lawyer, the draper, the grocer, even the clergyman, all spent their evenings at the tavern, going home in time for supper with their families. The Cheshire Cheese is a survival; the Cock, until recently, was another. And when one contrasts the cold and silent coffee-room of the new great club, where the men glare at each other, with the bright and cheerful tavern where every man talked with his neighbour, and the song went round, and the great kettle bubbled upon the hearth, one feels that civilisation has its losses."

MARK LEMON ("Punch"):

"LINES WRITTEN AT THE 'CHEESE.'

"DEDICATED TO LOVELACE.

"Champagne will not a dinner make,
Nor caviare a meal.
Men gluttonous and rich may take
Those till they make them ill.
If I've potatoes to my chop,
And after chop have cheese,
Angels in Pond & Spiers's shops
Know no such luxuries."

Transcriber’s Notes

- pg 24 Changed: Views of the Honse
  to: Views of the House
- pg 24 Changed: Mecca of Anglo-Saxondum
  to: Mecca of Anglo-Saxondom
- pg 50 Changed: anl the natural result
  to: and the natural result

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOOK OF THE CHEESE ***

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