

AVOCADO, OR THE FUTURE OF EATING

(NOTE FOUND IN AN EMPTY STOMACH OFF SANTA BARBARA)

ONE day not long ago in Los Angeles I found myself, banderillas in hand, facing the horns of a dilemma. I had gone into a Corn Exchange bank to exchange some corn and had fallen into conversation with the manager. He was very affable and insisted I inspect the assets of the branch, which included, among other things, the teeth Roy D'Arcy had used in his film career. Issuing into the hot sunlight of the street, I was dismayed to find that it was time for lunch, and since I had forgotten to bring along a bag of pemmican, I would have to eat in Los Angeles—a fairly exact definition of the term "the kiss of death." I looked around me. On my left I could obtain a nutburger (hamburger with chopped walnuts, double ball of vanilla on the side) and a Giant Malted Milk Too

Thick For a Straw; on my right the feature was barbecued pork fritters and orangeade. Unnerved, I stopped a passing street Arab and courteously inquired where I might find a cheap but clean eating house. Phil the Fiddler (for it was he) directed my steps to a pharmacy bearing the legend "Best Drug Stores, Inc." Merely for the record, I dined off an avocado sandwich on whole wheat and a lime rickey, and flunked my basal-metabolism test later that afternoon. I don't pretend to blame the management for my physical shortcomings; all I want them to do is laugh off their menu, a copy of which I seem to have before me.

In general, "Soda Fountain Suggestions" (Best Drug Stores, Inc.) is an attractively printed job in two colors (three if you count the gravy), and

though it can hardly hope to rival the success of "Gone With the Wind," I suppose there is an audience which will welcome it. The salads and three-decker sandwiches are treated with a certain gaiety and quaint charm which recall "Alice of Old Vincennes." The banana splits and hot-and-cold Ovaltines are handled with a glib humor in the text, which is more than I can say for the way they are handled behind the fountain. The day I was there, a simply appalling oath escaped the lips of one of the dispensers when he dropped some fudge on his shoe. The authors have included a very disarming foreword short enough to quote in its entirety: "It is our earnest desire to fulfill the name that we have chosen for our chain, THE BEST. We can only accomplish this by serving you best. Any criticisms or suggestions will be appreciated by the management." Only a churl would decline so graceful a gambit. *Messieurs, en garde!*

Specifically, gentlemen of the management, my criticism concerns that cocky little summary of yours at the bottom of the menu. "BEST Soda Fountains," you proclaim flatly, "Are BEST Because: The ice creams contain no 'fillers' (starch, albumen, etc.); the syrups are made from cane sugar and real fruits; the coffee is a special blend made the modern Silex way with a specially filtered water," and so forth. Lest some of the younger boys in the troop think the millennium has come to the City of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, what are the facts?

In the first place, you needn't think you can woo me with any such tinsel as "The ice creams contain no 'fillers' (starch, albumen, etc.)." One thing I'll have in my ice cream or it's no dice—and that's fillers. I don't even insist on ice cream as long as I can stuff myself with fillers. You heap my plate with albumen and starch (any kind, even laundry starch) and stand clear. Call me a piggy if you want to, but I just can't get *enough* of that starch.

Quite honestly, your statement that the syrups "are made from cane sugar and real fruits" surprised me. If that's a boast, I must say it's a pretty hollow one. It might interest you to know that back in 1917 the Allied High Command specified *beet* sugar and *false* fruits in all syrups purchased by its commissary departments. Didn't know that, did you? Probably too busy evading the draft at the time. Well, you just ask any biochemist his recommen-



"Do you find curtain rods confusing?"



"Today Mr. Chatfield is going to show us a little—but not too much—of the horror in Spain."

dation on sugars, as I did recently; you'll get the same terse answer: beet sugar and false fruits. I have this cousin of mine who is a perfect wiz at chemistry—really astonishing marks for a boy of nineteen in high school—and no matter what you ask him, he'll give you the same answer: beet sugar and false fruits. Frankly, the family's getting a little worried about it; they have to keep Benny chained to a ring in the floor most of the time.

Furthermore, it's useless to try to creep into my heart with any blandishments like "the coffee is a special blend made the modern Silex way with a specially filtered water." Filtering Los Angeles water robs it of its many nourishing ingredients, not the least of which is chow mein. It is an interesting fact, known to anybody who has ever been interned in that city or its suburbs, that the water possesses a rich content of subgum almond chow mein, Cantonese style, and one or two cases have even been reported where traces of peanut candy and lichee nuts were found. The assertion of a friend of mine that he

once saw a Filipino houseboy come out of a water faucet, of course, must be regarded as apocryphal. The Filipinos are a wiry little people, but they are not as wiry as all that. Nor are they ready as yet for the self-government which my distinguished opponents, the gentlemen of the affirmative, claim they should have. And so, honorable judges

and ladies and gentlemen, we of the negative conclude that the Filipinos should not be given their independence because (1) we need them for a coal- ing station, (2) there is a high per- centage of illiteracy, and (3) if we do, Japan will soon be snatching up Guam—or "chewing Guam," so to speak. I thank you. —S. J. PERELMAN

QUEENS, UP-TO-DATE

You must wake and call me early, call me early, Mother dear;
Tomorrow will begin the round that lasts through all the year;
Through all the glad new year, Mother, with many a merry day,
When I'll be queen and ten times queen, beside the Queen of May—
A Class Queen, a Convention Queen, a June Queen of the Rose,
A Beauty Queen, a Bathing Queen in many a diving pose,
A Cherry Queen, a Harvest Queen, a Queen of Apple Day.
Full many a madding queen I'll be beside the Queen of May.
And when the nation's hills and vales are solid with a freeze,
I'll be a Queen of Skates, Mother, I'll be a Queen of Skis.
And I'll sign a contract, Mother, ere next the cherry blows,
To model sweaters, bathing suits, and shoes and hats and hose,
And rouges, creams, astringents—for others' transformation.
Ah, how I pity yon poor land, with but one coronation!

—EDITH FRANKLIN WYATT