

MONSIEUR JOSEPH.

ON the day that I left the hospital, with a month's sick leave in hand, I went to dine at my favorite Soho restaurant, the Mazarin, which I always liked because it provided an excellent meal for an extremely modest sum. But this evening my steps turned toward the old place because I wanted a word with Monsieur Joseph, the head-waiter.

I found him the same genial soul as ever, though a shade stouter, perhaps, and grayer at the temples, and I flatter myself that it was with a smile of genuine pleasure that he led me to my old table in a corner of the room.

When the crowd of diners had thinned he came to me for a chat.

"It is indeed a pleasure to see M'sieur after so long a time," said he, "for, alas, there are so many others of our old clients who will not ever return."

I told him that I, too, was glad to be sitting in the comparative quiet of the Mazarin and asked him how he fared.

Joseph smiled. "I 'ave a surprise for M'sieur," he said—"yes, a great surprise. There are ten, fifteen years that I work in these place, and in four more weeks the patron will retire and I become the proprietor. Oh, it is beautiful," he continued, clasping his hands rapturously, "to think that in so little time I, who came to London a poor waiter, shall be patron of one of its finest restaurants."

I offered him my warmest congratulations. If ever a man deserved success it was he, and it was good to see the look of pleasure on his face as I told him so.

"And now," said I presently, "I also have a surprise for you, Joseph."

He laughed. "Eh bien, M'sieur, it is your turn to take my breath away."

"My last billet in France, before being wounded," I told him, "was in a Picardy village called Flechinelle."

He raised his hands. "Mon Dieu," he cried, "it is my own village!"

"More than that," I continued, "for nearly six weeks I lodged just behind the church, in a whitewashed cottage with a stock of oranges, pipes and boot-laces for sale in the window."

"It is my mother's shop!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

I nodded my head, and then proceeded to give him the hundred-and-one messages that I had received from the little old lady as soon as she discovered that I knew her son.

"It is so long since I 'ave seen 'er," said Monsieur Joseph, blowing his nose violently. "So 'ard I work in London these ten, fifteen years that only once have I gone 'ome since my father died."

Then I told him how bent and old his mother was, and how lonesome she had seemed all by herself in the cottage, and as I spoke of the shop which she still kept going in her front room the tears fairly rained down his face.

"But M'sieur," said he, "that which you tell me is indeed strange; for those letters which she writes to me week by week are always gay, and it

'as seemed to me that my mother was well content."

Then he struck his fist on the table. "I 'ave it," he said. "She shall come to live 'ere with me in Londres. All that she desires shall be 'ers, for am I not a rich man?"

I shook my head. "She would never leave her village now," I told him. "And I know well that she desires nothing in the world except to see you again."

Then as I rose to go, "Good night, M'sieur," said Joseph, a little sadly. "Be very sure that there is always a welcome here for you."

The next time I dined at the Mazarin was some four weeks later, on the eve of my return to the front. A strange waiter showed me to my place, and Joseph was nowhere to be seen. Indeed a wholly different air seemed to pervade the place since my last visit. Presently I beckoned to a waiter whom I recognized as having served under the old regime. "Where is Monsieur Joseph?" I asked him.

"Where indeed, sir!" the man replied. "It is all so strange. One day it is arranged that he shall take over the restaurant and its staff, and on the next he come to say 'Good-bye' to us all, and then leave for France. Oh, it is so droll. So good a business man to lose the chance that comes once only in a life! He is too old to fight. Yet who knows? Maybe he heard of something better out there . . ."

As the man spoke the gold and white walls of the restaurant faded, the clatter of plates and dishes died away, and I was back again in a tiny village shop in Picardy. Across the counter, packed with its curious stock I saw Monsieur Joseph, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, gravely handing a stick of chocolate to a child, and taking his sou in return. In the diminutive kitchen behind sat a little white-haired old lady with such a look of content on her face as I have rarely seen.

Then suddenly I found myself back again in the London restaurant.

"Yes," I said to the waiter, "it is possible, as you say, that Monsieur Joseph heard of something better in France."

And raising my glass I drank a silent toast.—Punch,

ANOTHER WAR CASUALTY.

"You don't seem to feel so enthusiastic as usual about speech-making."

"Well," answered Senator Sorghum, "times have changed and it isn't so easy for a man in a silk hat and a frock coat to stand out before a lot of men in khaki uniforms or overalls and assert that he is saving the country all by himself."—Washington Star.

RIPENED JUDGMENT.

"Then we're engaged?"
"Of course."
"And I am the first girl you ever loved?"

"No, my dear, but I'm harder to suit now than I used to be."—Kansas City Journal.

NOT MUCH CHANCE.

If love were a berry that I could pick I'd doubtless eat until I was sick.

If love were a perfume that I could smell

I would suffocate in some incensed dell.

If love were the touch of a woman's hand

I would seek every woman in every land.

If love were a wine, never mind the cost,

I would drink and drink till my soul was lost.

If love were the scent of a woman's hair

I would die, no doubt, from my sniffings there.

If love were the touch of a cherry lip

I would still kiss on 'though my senses slip.

But love is not of taste, smell or touch,

So there's little chance of my having much.

—The Logician in Town Topics.

THE HAPPY SMOKER.

When I am "broke," I take a smoke—
Comfort is my aim—

Likewise when "flush"—or maybe 'lush',

I gently nurse the flame.

The wreaths of smoke that round me roll,

From "Garcia" or from carven bowl,
Drive care away

And make the way—
If dark, all bright; if bright, then more

Of joy is added to my store.
And so I puff, morn, noon and night,

The Gods be thanked for this sweet "light."
—E. Bonfils.

HIS FIRST PERFORMANCE.

"Who's dead?" asked the stranger, viewing the elaborate funeral procession.

"The bloke what's inside the coffin," answered an irreverent small boy.

"But who is it?" the stranger pursued.

"It's the mayor," was the reply.

"So the mayor is dead, is he?" mused the stranger.

"Well, I guess," said the small boy, witheringly. "D'you think he's having a rehearsal?"—Milestones.

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