THE SUBLIME SOCIETY OF STEAKS.

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A few months ago there appeared in a periodi, cal work, accustomed to sensational flights, the strange assertion that no instance could be adduced of a beefsteak being eaten in perfection west of Temple Bar ! The unlucky wight who threw off this vain boast could know little of the gastronomic topography of the metropolis, or his knowledge must have been a light rider. and easily shaken off; since, for more than a century and a quarter has there existed a society in the classic region of Covent Garden, formed expressly for cating becisteaks in perfection, this being the only dish of the repast; and punch the paramount accompaniment, with the occasional addition of port wine.

Clubs have been formed for objects much less worthy than cooking and eating beefsteaks. This was laid down with much humor and par ticularity by Professor Wilson, in the palmy days of "Maga." "How many considerations," says of "Maga." "How many considerations," says the oracle, "are requisite to produce a good rompsteak! as the age, the country, and the pasture of the beef; the peculiar cut of the rump, at least the fith from the commence-ment; the nature of the fire; the construction and elevation of the gridiron; the choice of shalot, perchance; the masteriou, the choice of the oyster sauce, in which the liquid is duly fla-vored with the fish. It were better if pepper and sait were interdicted from your broking steak; and tongs only should be used in turning it. If left too long on the fire—the error of all bad cocks- the meat will be barl and jutceless, If sauce be used, it should be made hot before it is added to the gravy of the steak." And here we are reminded that Cobbett, who was gene-rally not a whit more choice in his meat than in his words (these, by-the-way, hesometimes ate), was very careful about the accompaniments to a He grows indigmant about old horsedeak. radish, which eats more like little chips than like a garden vegetable:-"So that at taverns and cating houses, there frequently seenis to be a rivalship on the point of toughness between the horse-radish and the beetsteak; and it would be well if this inconvenient rivalship never discovered itself anywhere else." Then, "people who want to enjoy a steak should eat it with shalots and tarragon." Cobbett adds:-"An orthodox clergyman once told me that he and six others once ate some beetsteaks with shalots and tarragon," and that they "unanimously voted that beetsteaks were never so eaten befote.

The earliest club with the name of "Beefsteak" was formed in the reign of Queen Anne, when the science of cookery had made great strides. Dr. King, in his "Art of Cookery," humbly inscribed to the Beefsteak Club, 1709, has these lines :--

"He that of honor, wit, and mirth partakes, May be a fit companion o'er beefsteaks; His name may be to future times enrolled In Estcourt's book, whose gridiron's framed with gold.

Estcourt, the actor, was made "providore" of the club, and for a mark of distinction wore their badge, which was a small gridiron of gold, hung about his neck with a green silk ribbon. Chetwood, in his "History of the Stage," 1749, tells us:-"This club was composed of the chief wits and great men of the nation." Dick Estcourt was beloved by Steele. Who that has read can ever forget Steele's introduction of this choice spirit, and the touching pathos of his last exit—embalmed in the pages of the "Spec-tator?" Then, in No. 264, we find a letter from Sir Roger de Coverley, "To Mr. Estcourt, at his house in Covent Garden," addressing him as "Old Comical One," and scknowledging "the hogshead of neot port came safe;" and hoping next term to help "ill Estcourt's Bumper "with our people of the club." The "Bumper" was the tavern in Covent Garden, which Estcourt opened, when Parnell spoke of him thus:-"Gay Bacchus liking Estcourt's wine,

A noble meal bespoke us; And for the guests that were to dine,

Brought Comus, Love, and Jocus. Ned Ward, in his "Secret History of Clubs," 1709, describes the "Beefsteaks," which he coarsely contrasts with "the refined wits of the Kit-Cat," and thus addresses them :--

"Such strenuous lines, so cheering, soft, and That daily flow from your conjunctive wit,

Proclaim the power of Beef, that noble meat. Your tuneful songs such deep impression make, And of such awful, beauteous strength partake

with the initials "B. S. ?" and behind the Presi-dent's chair was placed the Society's halbert, which, with the gridiron used from the formation of the Steaks, was found among the ruins after the Covent Garden fire. This gridiron is preserved in the ceiling of the room wherein

preserved in the ceiling of the room wherein the Society now dine. Among the celebrities who came early to "The Steaks," were Hogarth and his father-in-law, Sir James Thornhill, stimulated by their love of the painter's art, and the equally potent charm of fconviviality. Churchill was intro-duced by his friend Wilkee, to whom he writes on one occasion:---"Your friends at the Beef-steak inquired after you last Saturday with the greatest zeal, and it gave me no small plea-sure that I was the person of whom the inquire sure that I was the person of whom the inquiry was made." Charles Price was a member, and it is related that he and Churchill, with their wit, often kept the table in a roar. Mr. Justice Weish was irequently chairman at the beelsteak dinners: and Mrs. Nollekens, his daughter, acknowledged that she often drease! his hat for the visit, trimmed with rithmas similar to the second the Yeomen of the With, trimmed with ribbons similar to those worn by the Yeomen of the Guard. The Justice was a loyal man, but discontinued his membership when Wilkes joined the Society, though Wilkes was the man at "The Steaks."

To "The Steaks" Wilkes sent a copy of his infamous "Essay on Woman," first printed for private circulation; for which Lord Sand-wich (Jemmy Twitcher), himself a member of the Society, moved in the House of Lords that Wilkes should be taken into custody. Horace Walpole writes in the same year, 1763:—"The wicked affirm that very lately at a club (The Steaks) held at the top of the playhouse in Drury Lane, Lord Sandwich talked so profanely that he drove two finitequins out of company." The grossness and blaphemy of the "Essay" disgusted "The Stenks," by whom Lord Sandwich was expelled; and Wilkes never dined there after 1763; yet when he went to France they hypocritically made him an honorary member.

Garrick was not fond of club-life, but he was an hon-ed-member of "The Steaks;" and they possess among their relies the hat and sword which David wore, probably on the night when "Babger" at Drury Lane. The pit grew restless; the gallery bawled, "Manager! manager!" Gar-rick had been sent for to "The Steaks," at Covent Garden

Carriages blocked up Russe'l street, and he had to thread his way between them. As he came panting into the theatre, "I think," said Ford, one of the auxious patentees, "considering the stake you and I have in this house, you might pay more attention to the business." "True, my good triend," returned Garrick, "but I was thinking of my steak in the other house," At "The Steaks" Garrick was reconciled to Colman, to which the following note refers:-

"My Dear Colman: -Becket has been with me, and tells me of your friendly intentions towards me. I should have been beforehand with you, had been ill with the beefsteaks and arrack unch last Saturday, and was obliged to leave the playhouse.

"He that parts us shall bring a brand from Heaven, And fire us hence,"

"Ever yours, old and new friend,

"D. GARRICK."

At "The Steaks" one night Garrick was boasting of his regularity in ticketing and labelling plays sent to him for acceptance for performance, when Murphy said across the table, "A fig for your hypocrisy; you know, Davy, you mislaid my tragedy two months ago, and I make no doubt you have lost it." "Yes," replied Garrick; "but you forget, you ungrateful dog, that I offered you more than its

value ; for you might have had two manuscript farces in its stead." This is the right paternity of an ancedote otten told of Sheridan and other parties.

Jack Richards was never absent from "The Steaks," unless arrested by the "fell sergeant," gout. He was recorder, and had to pass senence upon those who had offended against the rules and observances of the Society ; when he put on Garrick's hat, and inflicted a long wordy arangue upon the culprit ; nor was it possible to see when he meant to stop. He was a most exuberant talker ; but would as soon adulterate is glass of port wine with water, as dash his talk with an ungenerous remark.

Mrs. Sheridan's brother, William Linley, often charmed the Society with his pure, simple, English song, to a melody of Arne's, or Jack-son's of Exeter, or a simple air of his father's. He had written a novel in three volumes, which was so schooled by "The Steaks" that he wrote no more. A member brought a volume of the work in his pocket, and read a passage from it aloud. Yet Linley never betrayed the irritable sulkiness of a wounded author, but bore with good humor the pleasantries that played around him, and used to exclaim :--"This is no flattery; these are the counsellors That feelingly persuade me what I am.' Dick Wilson, whose complexion had for many years been crimsoning over the port wine of he Society, was a solicitor, and long dignified as Lord Eldon's "port-wine-loving secretary. He stood the fire of "The Steaks" with goo humor. another good-natured butt was Old Walsh, the "Gentle Shepherd." Rowland Stephenson, the banker, was another "Beef-steaker," as was William Joseph Denison, who sat many years in Parliament for Surrey, and died a millionaure. He was a man of cultivated tastes; we remember his lyrics in the Keepsake annual. The golden period of the Society is generally considered to be that when Bubb Dodington, Aaron Hill, Hoadley (who wrote "The Suspicious Husband"), Leonidas Glover, Bonnell Thornton, and Tickell were members, John Beard, the rich tenor, who sang in Handel's operas, was President of the Club in 1784. In 1785, when the Society had been instituted just fifty years, the Prince of Wales was admitted; there was no vacancy, but the number of members was in-creased from twenty-four to twenty-five. The Dukes of Clarence and Sussex were also of "The Steaks;" these princes were both much attached to the theatre-the former to one of its brightest ortaments, Dorothy Jordan. Charles, Duke of Norloik, was another cele-brity of "The Steaks," and frequently met here the Prince of Wales. The Duke was a great gourmand, and used to eat his dish of fish at a neighboring tavera, and then join "The Steaks," The Duke took the chair when the cloth was removed; it was a place of dignity, elevated some steps above the table, and decorated with the insignia of the Society. For the dinner, as the clock struck 5, a cortain drew up, dis-covering the kitchen, in which the cooks were seen at work, through a sort of grating, with this inscription of Macbeth-"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere Well

pened to him, and which being related by one of "The Steaks" with mahcious fidelity, raised such a shout of laughter at the Baronet's exense that he could no longer stand it. John Kemble was one of "The Steaks" celebri-

John Remote water terms with his Grace of ties, and upon familiar terms with his Grace of Norfolk. One evening at Norfolk House, Cap-Norfolk. One evening at Norfolk House, Cap-tain Morris baving left the table early, for the lyrist kept better hours than his ducal friend, it grew late, when Kemble ventured to suggest to the Duke some significant hints as to the im-provement of Morris' fortune. His Grace grew experies over his wine, and monipole the period generous over his wine, and promised: the reali-zation came, and Morris lived to the age of ninety-three to enjoy it.

It has been remarked of "The Steaks," that there must have been originally a wise and sim-ple code of laws, which could have held them together for so lengthened a period. Yet they have had, during the past sixty years, a migra-tory time of it. Covent Garden Theatre, in which the first steak was broiled, was destroyed by fre in 1808; the first gridiron, which had long been enshrined as one of the *Penates* of the club, was saved ; but the valuable stock of wme shared the face of the building, and the archives of the Society perished. Herein it was customary to set down the good things said at "The Steaks," and register the names of the early members. After the fire at Convent Garden the "Sublima Society" was re-established at the Bedford Hotel until Mr. Arnold had fitted up apartments for their reception at the English Opera House. Here they continued to meet until the destruction of that theatre by fire, in 1830. Thus twice burnt out, they returned to the Bedford; and their old friend Mr. Arnold, in rebuilding his theatre, the Lyceum, had a dining room provided for them of a very characteristic order. Mr. Con-ningham has appropriately termed it "a little Escurial in itself." The doors, wainscoting, and roof, of good old English oak, are studded with griditons, as thick as Henry VII's Chapel with the portcullis of the founder. Everything assumes the shape, or is distinguished by the representation, of the emblematic implement-the griddron. "The cook is seen at his offic through the bars of a spacious gridiron, and the original gridiron of the Society (the survivor of twe terrific fires), holds a conspicuous position

in the centre of the ceiling " The portraits of several worthies of the "Sublime Society" have been painted. One brother hangs "in chains," as Arnold remarked, n allusion to the civic chain which he wears. His robe drew from Lord Broughan, one of "The Steaks," on being asked if the portrait was a likeness, the remark that it could not fail of being like him, "there was so much of the fur (thiet) about him."

We have spoken of the brotherhood equality of the Society, and may as well note that junior member has a duty accord-with his station. Thus the noble learned lord whom we have just the ant mentioned has been seen emerging from the cellar, with half-a-dozen bottles in a basket. And the Duke of Leinster, who is now the President of the society, has in his turn, taken the same duty. Morris continued to be the Laurente of "The Steaks" (the other dow has was treasurable and due to be the day he was ureverently called a poet "by courtesy") whill the year 1831, when he bade adieu to the Soclety. He was then in his eightyixth year.

Morris revisited the Society in 1835, when he was presented with a large silver bowl affec-tionately inscribed. He then addressed the brotherhood. There was still another effusion on the treasured gift :---

"and call to my Muse, when care strives to pursue, Bring the Steaks to my memory, the Bowl to

my view."

Morris was staid and grave in his general de-portment. There is, in the collection in Evans' nusic-room in Covent Garden, a portrait of the music-room in Covent Garden, a portrait of the bard—a poor performance, but a likeness. A better portrait, from the family picture, is en-graved as a frontispiece to "Club Life of Lon-don." Moore, in his Diary, tells us of Colman being at "The Steaks," "quite drunk," making extraordinary noise when Morris was singing, which much disconcerted the bard. Yet he could unbend. We remember to have heard him strike a piano forte at a music-seller's, and sing "The Girl I left behind Me:" he was then past his eightieth year. Curran said to him one day, "Die when you will, Charles, you will die

Morris' ancient and rightful office at "The Steaks" was to make the punch. One of the members describes him at his laboratory at the sideboard, stocked with the various ingredients. "Then smacking an elementary glass or two, and giving a significant nod, the flat of its excellence; and what could exceed the ecstacy with which he filled the glasses that thronged round the bowl, joying over its mantling beauties, and distributing the fascinating draught. "That flames and dances in its crytal bound." Morris' allegiance to "The Steaks" was un-divided. Neither hall, nor rain, nor snowstorm kept him away; no engagement, no invi-tation, seduced him from it. He might be seen 'outwatching the bear" in his seventy-eighth cear, when nature had given no signal of decay in frame or faculty. "The Steaks" partake of a five o'clock dinner every Saturday, from November till the end of June. The Society consists of noblemen and gentlemen, twenty-four in number; every mem-ber has the power of inviting a triend. With the enumeration of a few memorials, we conclude. Formerly the gridiron was a more prominent emblem of "The Steaks" than at preent. The table-cloths had gridirons in damask ou them; the drinking-glasses were engraved with gridirons, as were the plates; just as the orchestra decorated the plates at Vauxhall Gardens.



Each stanza seems an ox, each line a steak. As if the rump in slices, brolled or stew'd In its own gravy, till divinely good, Turn'd all to powerful wit as soon as chew'd.

To grind thy gravy out their jaws employ O'er heaps of reeking steaks express their joy, And sing of Beef as Homer did of Troy."

A few years later was established "The Sublime Society of Steaks," who abhor the notion of being thought a club. The society was founded in 1735 by John Rich, the patentee of Covent Garden Theatre, to whose genius we owe the comic pantomime. He was accustomed to arrange the comic pusipess and construct the models of his tricks in his private room at Covent Garden. Here resorted men of rank, who relished the wit which hangs about the stage, and Bich's colloquial oddittes were much cojoyed. Thither came Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, the triend of Pone, and commemorated by Swift in the well-remembered lines commencing with-

"Mordanto filis the trump of fame, The Unristian world his death proclaim, And prints are crowded with his name, In journeys he outrides the post, Sets up till midnight with his host, Talks politics, and gives the toast,"

He was then advanced in years, and one day stayed talking with Rich about his tricks and transformations, and listening to his agreeable gossip, until Rich's dianer hour, 2 o'clock, had arrived. In all these colloquies with his visi-tors, whatever their rank, Rich never neglected tors, whatever their rank, filth hever neglected his art. The earl was quite unconscious at the time, when he observed Rich spreading a cloth, then coaxing his fire into a clear, cooking flame, and proceeding, with great gravity, to cook his own beetsteak on his own gravity, to cook his own beelsteak on his own gridiron. The stark sent up a most inviting incense, and my lord could not resist Rich's invitation to partake of it. A further supply was sent for, and a bottle or two of wine from a neighboring taven profonzed the enjoyment to a late hour in the afternoon. But so delighted was the gay old peer with the entertainment, that, on going away, he proposed renewing it at the same hour and place, on the Saturday following. The earl then picked his way back to his coach, which was waiting in the street following. The earl then picked his way back to his coach, which was waiting in the street hard by. He was punctual to his engagement with Rich, and brought with him three or four friends, "men of wit and pleasure about town;" and so truly festive was the meeting that it was proposed a Saturday club should be held there whilst the town remained full; the bill of fare being restricted to beefsteaks, and the hervare being restricted to beefsteaks, and the beverage to port wine and punch. It is also told that Lambert, many years principal scene-painter at Covent Garden Theatre, originated the club among the visitors to his painting-room, under similar circumstruces to those under which Rich is said to have done. Possibly both both patentee and scene-painter got up the soci-The members were afterwards accommodated with a special room in the theatre; and when it was rebuilt the place of meeting was changed to the "Shakespeare" tavern, where was the portrait of Lambert, painted by Hudson, Sir Joshua Reynolds' master.

In the Connoisseur, June 6, 1754, we read of the society "composed of the most in-genious artists in the kingdom," meeting "every Saturday in a noble room at the top of Covent Garden Theatre"-the situation of the painting Garden Theatre -- the situation of the painting room--and never suffering "any diet except beetsteeks to appear. Here, indeed, are most glorious examples; but what, alas! are the weak endeavors of a few to oppose the daily inroads of fricassees and soup-maigres?" The anartment in the theatre appropriated to "The Steaks" varied. Thus, we read of a painting room even with the stage over the kitchen, which was under part of the stage nearest Bow street. At one period they dined in a small room over the passage of the theatre. The steaks were dressed in the same room, and when it was found too hot a curtain was drawn between the company and Formerly the members wore a blue the fire. cost, with red collars and cuffs, and buttons

It were quickly done."

His Grace of Norfolk would eat two or three steaks, fragrant from the gridiron; and when his labors were thought to be over he might sometimes be seen rubbing a clean plate with a shalot, for the reception of another steak. The Duke was an enormous eater: he would often cousume three or four pounds of steak, and after that take a Spanish onion and beetroot, chop them together, as d eat them with oil and vine-gar. After dinner he was ceremoniously ushered to the chair, and invested with an orange-colored ribbon, to which a small silver gridiron was attached. At the sale of curiosities belonging to Mr. Harley, the comedian, in Gower street, in November, 1858, a silver gridiron, which had been worn by a member of the "sieaks," was sold for 1 2. attached. sold for £1 3s.

In the chair the Duke of Norfolk comported himself with urbanity and good humor. Usually the President was the target at which the jests were fired, but moderately; for though a char-acteristic equality reigned at "The Steaks," the influence of rank and station were felt there. The Date's The Duke's conversation occasionally showed evidence of extensive reading, which was rarely impaired by the sturdy whe of the Society. Captain Morris, the Inureate-lyrist of 'The Steaks," usually same one or two of his own songs. At 9 o'clock the Duke quitted the chair, and was succeeded by Sir John Bippisley, who had a terrible time of it: no one spared him-even new members made their first essays upon the Baronet, than whom no man was more prompt to attack others. He quitted the Society in con-sequence of an odd adventure which really hap-

Among the presents made to the Society are a punch-ladle from Barrington Bradshaw; six spoons from Sir John Boyd; a mustard-pot from John Trevanion, M. P.; two dozen water-plates and eight dishes, given by the Duke of Sussex; crue:-stand, given by W. Bolland; vinegarcruei-stand, given by W. Bolland; vinegar-crueis, by Thomas Scott; Lord Suffolk has given a silver cheese-toaster-toasted or stewed cheese being the wind-up of "The Steaks" dinner .-London Society.

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