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XIX. M. Apicius - Darteneuf.

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happen hereafter from the extensive ideas of negociation and war which you have established. They have been salutary to your kingdom; but they will, I fear, be pernicious in future times, if, in pursuing great plans, great ministers do not act with a sobriety, prudence, and attention to frugality, which very seldom are joined with an extraordinary vigour and boldness of counsels.

XXXXXXXXXX

DIALOGUE XIX.

M. APICIUS—DARTENEUF.

DARTENEUF.

ALAS! poor Apicius!—I pity thee from my heart, for not having lived in my age and in my country. How many good dishes, unknown at Rome in thy days, have I feasted upon in England!

APICIUS.

Keep your pity for yourself.—How many good dishes have I feasted upon in Rome, which England does not produce, or of which the knowledge has been lost, with other treasures of antiquity, in these degenerate days! The fat paps of a sow, the livers of scari, the brains of phœnicopters, and the *tripotanium*, which consisted of three excellent sorts of fish, for which you English have no names, the *lupus marinus*, the *myxo*, and the *muræna*.

DARTENEUF.

I thought the *muræna* had been our lamprey. We have delicate ones in the Severn!

APICIUS.

No:—the *muræna*, so respected by the ancient Roman fe-nators, was a salt-water fish, and kept by our nobles in ponds, into which the sea was admitted.

D A R-

DARTENEUF.

Why then I dare say our Severn lampreys are better. Did you ever eat any of them stewed or potted?

APICIUS.

I was never in Britain. Your country then was too barbarous for me to go thither. I should have been afraid that the Britons would have eat me.

DARTENEUF.

I am sorry for you, very sorry: for if you never were in Britain, you never eat the best oysters. See St. Evrmond's Letters.

APICIUS.

Pardon me, Sir, your Sandwich oysters were brought to Rome in my time. See Juvenal and Pliny. Arbuthnot on ancient Coins, c. 5. Pars 2.

DARTENEUF.

They could not be fresh: they were good for nothing there.—You should have come to Sandwich to eat them. It is a shame for you that you did not.—An epicure talk of danger when he is in search of a dainty! Did not Leander swim over the Hellespont in a tempest, to get to his mistress? and what is a wench to a barrel of exquisite oysters?

APICIUS.

Nay—I am sure you can't blame me for any want of alertness in seeking fine fishes. I sailed to the coast of Africk, from Minturnæ in Campania, only to taste of one species, which I heard was larger there than it was on our coast, and finding that I had received a false information, I returned immediately, without even deigning to land. See Athenæus, and Bayle in his Notes to the article Apicius.

DARTENEUF.

There was some sense in that: but why did not you also make a voyage to Sandwich? Had you once tasted those oysters in their highest perfection, you would never have come back: you would have eat till you burst.

M m m

APICIUS.

DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD.

430

A P I C I U S.

See Senec. de
Consol. ad
Helviam.
Martial. Epig.
21. l. iii.
Bayle, Api-
cius.
See Arbuth-
not, p. 116.

I wish I had:—It would have been better than poisoning myself, as I did, at Rome, because I found, upon the balance of my accounts, I had only the pitiful sum of fourscore thousand pounds left, which would not afford me a table to keep me from starving.

D A R T E N E U F.

A sum of fourscore thousand pounds not keep you from starving! Would I had had it! I should have been twenty years in spending it, with the best table in London.

A P I C I U S.

See Arbuth-
not, p. 116.

Alas poor man! this shews that you English have no idea of the luxury that reigned in our tables. Before I died, I had spent in my kitchen 807,291 l. 13s. 4d.

D A R T E N E U F.

I don't believe a word of it: there is certainly an error in the account.

A P I C I U S.

See Arbuth-
not, p. 133.

Why, the establishment of Lucullus for his suppers in the *Apollo*, I mean for every supper he sat down to in the room which he called by that name, was 5000 drachms, which is in your money 1614 l. 11s. 8d.

D A R T E N E U F.

Would I had supped with him there! But are you sure there is no blunder in these calculations?

A P I C I U S.

Arbuthnot,
p. 133.
Plin. l. x.
c. 60.

Ask your learned men that.—I reckon as they tell me.—But you may think that these feasts were made only by great men, by triumphant generals, like Lucullus, who had plundered all Asia, to help him in his housekeeping. What will you say, when I tell you that the player *Æsopus* had one dish that cost him six thousand *sestertia*, that is, four thousand eight hundred and forty-three pounds ten shillings English?

DARTENEUF.

What will I say? why, that I pity my worthy friend, Mr. Cibber; and that, if I had known this, when alive, I should have hanged myself for vexation that I did not live in those days.

APICIUS.

Well you might, well you might.—You don't know what *eating* is. You never could know it. Nothing less than the wealth of the Roman empire is sufficient to enable a man of taste to keep a good table. Our players were infinitely richer than your princes.

DARTENEUF.

Oh that I had but lived in the blessed reign of Caligula, or of Vitellius, or of Heliogabalus, and had been admitted to the honour of dining with their slaves!

APICIUS.

Ay, there you touch me.—I am miserable that I died before their good times. They carried the glories of their table much farther than the best eaters of the age in which I lived. Vitellius spent in feasting, within the compass of one year, what would amount in your money to above seven millions two hundred thousand pounds. He told me so himself in a conversation I had with him not long ago. And the two others you mentioned did not fall very short of his royal magnificence.

DARTENEUF.

These indeed were great princes. But what most affects me is the luxury of that upstart fellow Æsopus. Pray, of what ingredients might the dish, he paid so much for, consist?

APICIUS.

Chiefly of *singing birds*. It was that which so greatly enhanced the price.

DARTENEUF.

Of *singing birds*! choak him.—I never eat but *one*, which I stole out of its cage from a lady of my acquaintance,

M m m 2

and

and all London was in an uproar, as if I had stolen and roasted an only child. But, upon recollection, I doubt whether I have really so much cause to envy Æsopus. For the *singing bird* which I eat was not so good as a wheatear or *becasique*. And therefore I suspect that all the luxury you have bragged of was nothing but vanity. It was like the foolish extravagance of the son of Æsopus, who dissolved pearls in vinegar and drank them at supper. I will stake my credit, that a haunch of good buck venison, and my favourite *ham pye*, were much better dishes than any at the table of Vitellius himself. It does not appear that you ancients ever had any good soups, without which a man of taste cannot possibly dine. The rabbits in Italy are delectable: but what is better than *the wing* of one of our English *wild* rabbits? I have been told you had no turkies. The mutton in Italy is ill-flavoured. And as for your boars *roasted whole*, they were only fit to be served up at a corporation feast or election dinner. A small *barbecued hog* is worth a hundred of them. And a good collar of Canterbury or Shrewsbury brawn is a much better dish.

Pope's Imit.
of Hor. Sat.
l. l. 46.

A P I C I U S.

If you had some meats that we wanted, yet our cookery must have been greatly superior to your's. Our cooks were so excellent, that they could give to hog's flesh the taste of all other meats.

See Arbuth-
not, c. 5.

D A R T E N E U F.

I should never have endured their imitations. You might as easily have imposed on a good *connoisseur* in painting the copy of a fine picture for the original. Our cooks, on the contrary, give to all other meats, and even to some kinds of fish, a rich flavour of bacon, without destroying that which makes the distinction of one from another. It does not appear to me that *essence of hams* was ever known to the ancients. We have a hundred *ragouts*, the composition of which surpasses all description.

description. Had your's been as good, you could not have lain indolently lolling upon couches, while you were eating. They would have made you sit up and mind your business. Then you had a strange custom of hearing things *read to you* while you were at supper. This demonstrates that you were not so well entertained as we are with our meat. When I was at table, I neither heard, nor saw, nor spoke: I only tasted. But the worst of all is, that, in the utmost perfection of your luxury, you had no wine to be named with claret, burgundy, champagne, old hock, or tokay. You boasted much of your *Falernum*: but I have tasted the *Lachrymæ Christi*, and other wines of that coast, not one of which would I have drunk above a glass or two of, if you would have given me the kingdom of Naples. I have read that you boiled your wines, and mixed water with them; which is sufficient evidence that in themselves they were not fit to drink.

A P I C I U S.

I am afraid you do really excell us in wines; not to mention your beer, your cyder, and your perry, of all which I have heard great fame from your countrymen; and their report has been confirmed by the testimony of their neighbours, who have travelled into England. Wonderful things have been also said to me of an English liquor called punch.

D A R T E N E U F.

Ay—to have died without tasting *that* is miserable indeed! There is rum punch, and arrack punch! It is difficult to say which is best; but Jupiter would have given his nectar for either of them, upon my word and honour.

A P I C I U S.

The thought of them puts me into a fever with thirst.

D A R T E N E U F.

These incomparable liquors are brought to us from the East and West Indies, of the first of which you knew little, and of the

the latter nothing. This alone is sufficient to determine the dispute. What a new world of good things for eating and drinking has Columbus opened to us! Think of *that*, and despair.

A P I C I U S.

I cannot indeed but exceedingly lament my ill fate, that America was not discovered, before I was born. It tortures me when I hear of chocolate, pine apples, and a number of other fine fruits, or delicious meats, produced there, which I have never tasted.

D A R T E N E U F.

The single advantage of having sugar, to sweeten every thing with, instead of honey, which you, for want of the other, were obliged to make use of, is ineffimable.

A P I C I U S.

I confess your superiority in that important article. But what grieves me most is, that I never eat a turtle. They tell me that it is absolutely the best of all foods!

D A R T E N E U F.

Yes, I have heard the Americans say so:—but I never eat any: for in my time they were not brought over to England.

A P I C I U S.

Never eat any turtle! How could'st thou dare to accuse me of not going to Sandwich, to eat oysters, and didst not thyself take a trip to America, to riot on turtles? But know, wretched man, I am credibly informed, that they are now as plentiful in England as sturgeons. There are turtle-boats that go regularly to London and Bristol from the West Indies. I have just received this information from a fat alderman, who died in London last week, of a surfeit he got at a turtle feast in that city.

D A R T E N E U F.

What does he say? does he affirm to you that turtle is better than venison?

A P I C I U S.

A P I C I U S.

He says, there was a haunch of the fattest venison untouched, while every mouth was employed on the turtle alone.

D A R T E N E U F.

Alas! how imperfect is human felicity! I lived in an age when *the noble science of eating* was supposed to have been carried to its highest perfection in England and France. And yet a *turtle feast* is a novelty to me! Would it be impossible, do you think, to obtain leave from Pluto of going back for one day to my own table at London, just to taste of that food? I would promise to kill myself by the quantity of it I would eat before the next morning.

A P I C I U S.

You have forgot you have no *body*: that which you had has long been rotten: and you can never return to the earth with another, unless Pythagoras should send you thither to animate a hog. But comfort yourself, that, as you have eaten dainties which I never tasted, so the next age will eat some unknown to this. New discoveries will be made, and new delicacies brought from other parts of the world.—But see; who comes hither? I think it is Mercury.

M E R C U R Y.

Gentlemen, I must tell you, that I have stood near you invisible, and heard your discourse; a privilege which, you know, we deities use as often as we please. Attend therefore to what I shall communicate to you, relating to the subject upon which you have been talking. I know two men, one of whom lived in ancient, and the other in modern times, who had much more pleasure in eating than either of you, through the whole course of your lives.

A P I C I U S.

One of these happy epicures, I presume, was a Sybarite, and the other a French gentleman settled in the West Indies.

M E R C U R Y.

MERCURY.

No: one was a Spartan soldier, and the other an English farmer.—I see you both look astonished. But what I tell you is truth. Labour and hunger gave a relish to the *black broth* of the former, and the *salt beef* of the latter, beyond what you ever found in the *tripotaniums* or *ham pyes*, that vainly stimulated your forced and languid appetites, which perpetual indolence weakened, and constant luxury overcharged.

DARTENEUR.

This, Apicius, is more mortifying than not to have shared a turtle feast.

APICIUS.

I wish, Mercury, you had taught me your *art of cookery* in my life-time: but it is a sad thing not to know what *good living* is till after one is *dead*.

DIALOGUE XX.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

CHARLES the Twelfth, King of Sweden.

ALEXANDER.

YOUR majesty seems in great wrath! Who has offended you?

CHARLES.

The offence is to you as much as me. Here is a fellow admitted into Elysium, who has affronted us both: an English poet, one Pope. He has called us *two madmen*!

Pope's Essay
on Man, ep.
3v. l. 229, 20.

ALEXANDER.

I have been unlucky in poets. No prince ever was fonder of the Muses than I, or has received from them a more ungrateful