

admittedly a good deal that was sensational and dramatic in the banquets of the Romans—collapsing seats, the sweet stifling with rose-leaves, the "surprise" dishes, swimming fish, perfume-scattering birds, and costly gifts descending from the roof—but there were tragic sensations enough and to spare, where those who came to feast remained to die. And none is more lurid than that banquet in the halls of Nero, at which young Britannicus was done to death. The boy had a slave to taste for him, but the precaution availed nothing to the apt pupil of Locusta. A dish was danded so hot that, though the taster duly performed his office, it was unpalatable to Britannicus. So water was added to make it cooler. Cooler in truth it was, with the cold of death; there are gasps, convulsions, change of colour, and then—exit the rightful heir to the throne of the Caesars. One can imagine the sensation when, at that Easter Feast at Winchester—so, at least, said the Norman tradition—the mighty Earl Godwin prayed that the mouthful he was about to eat might choke him if he had ought to do with young Alfred's death. Men said that the saintly Confessor blessed the morsel, and that Godwin could never swallow it, but choked and died. And almost more sensational at any rate in its bearing on English history, was that banquet at York where Harold, victor at Stamford Bridge, was feasting among his thanes, when a breathless messenger arrived with the news that the Normans had landed. The history books, indeed, are full of these sensations a meals, instances of which will occur to everyone. Not so familiarly known, perhaps, is the pretty dramatic trick played by Frederick William of Prussia on his old general, Koeckewitz. The fiftieth year of the latter's military service found him alone in the world and by no means overburdened with riches. After a review held in his birthday honour, the King invited himself back to lunch with his old officer. Koeckewitz thought with dismay of his frugal table, and stammered out all manner of excuses. But the King was affectionately insistent, and would not even allow him to go and make preparations. And so the Royal party with their miserable host arrived at the latter's humble quarters. And lo; a whole retinue of servants met them, a blaze of trumpets announced their arrival, flowers crowned the entrance, and an elaborate banquet, with costly wines, graced the unaccustomed table. Nor where the King and his suite the only guests, for awaiting him in the dining hall were three old men, who hastened to embrace him. They were three friends of his early days, with whom he had fought side by side in many a fierce battle, but had lost sight of for many years till now, when the royal kindness and endeavour had brought them together once more.

So highly appreciated is the value of sensation at meals in fiction that the choice of samples is embarrassing. Intensely dramatic, with the right note of a happy ending was that wild banquet in the castle of huge Earl Doorm, with shameless license and coarse riot holding orgie over the rude plenty on the boards, and, a little apart, a girl in the first flush of womanhood weeping over the lifeless body of her lord. There is the sound of an unknighly bow, a pitiful little wail, and the seeming corpse springs into life with flashing glaive and gleaming eyes, and, "like a ball, the russet-bearded head" of the would-be ravisher rolled upon the ground. There are a whole family of sensational feasts of the hyper-gruesome sort to be found in the old balladists and romancers, of which the hideous repasts in "Titus Andronicus" and "The Lady Isabella's Tragedy" may stand for samples; feasts in which the principal dish is a human body, the victim of lust, revenge, or cruelty—but the subject is scarcely inviting enough to dwell on. Occasionally the sensations are due to supernatural agency. There was the marriage feast of young Lycius to the beautiful Lamia. Never had the assembled Corinthians seen such beauty as the bride's, seldom gathered at a more sumptuous board. But among them was the magician Apollonius, and at the height of the festivity he was seen to fix his cold eye on the bride. A silence fell, a sense of terror brooded over the room, flowers and lights faded, and the bride seemed to wither under that stony gaze. Then, in awful, pitiless tones, the old man uttered the word, "serpent," and with a scream of anguish the wretched Lamia vanished, and Lycius, bereft of his love, swooned and died. Something akin to this, though burlesqued, is the familiar Ingoldsby Legend of St. Nicholas, when a too hospitable abbot entertains too sumptuously—not to say affectionately—a vagrant lady of bewitching charms. Fortunately for the good cleric's reputation, St. Nicholas happened to look in in the nick of time, sprinkled some holy water on that lady fair, and she stood—or sat—revealed as the foulest of all imaginable fiends. Still more sensational, though not so lurid, was a banquet gravely described in a history of Norfolk: one of the guests produced an

acorn which after it had been inspected, he planted in the middle of the hall. Before the company had time to empty another bumper a stately oak tree sprang up to its full height. Wonderful as this was, it was obviously in the way, and a couple of workmen were summoned, who with infinite labour felled the tree. But to get it out of the hall baffled everybody's endeavour, till the same marvel-working guest called in a couple of young geese he saw outside, who promptly and unaided walked off with the ponderous mass.

Scott gives us a good many sensations at feasts; those in "Ivanhoe," at the Sack of Liege and the Court of Burgundy, in "Quentin Durward," and the happy finale to "Waverley" will at once suggest themselves. But for dramatic effect nothing equals the scene at Saladin's banquet, where the guilty Templar is killed by his royal host ere his lips can touch the p.e.d.g.e cup. There was plenty of sensation, too, in that marriage feast in "The Lord of the Isles," when the chance guest stood revealed among his enemies as the Royal Bruce. Marryatt has a most effectual "situation" in Percival Keene, where Mammy Criscobella revenges herself on her turbulent and undesired guests by telling them the meal they had just partaken of had been poisoned, and that she herself, to avoid the penalties of the law, had taken a similar fata. draught from the glass she then held in her hand. The scene is pure comedy, and, like most of Marryatt's work, admirably executed. There was, unfortunately, more fact than fiction about the grim "sensations" the Borgias were in the habit of providing at their banquets. The "food of the gods" of the old Romans had survived the deities of Olympus, and, as one of Dumas' characters puts it, death sentences were no longer conveyed in the formula, "Caesar orders you to die," but "His Holiness requests you to sup with him." In this connection one recalls that dainty meal in "The Honour of Savelli," where d'Amboise and Machiavelli are about to drink the choice old Faernian which Alexander has so kindly sent. Luckily the Italian statesman bethinks him of testing it. Had they drunk they would have been dead in a few hours. It was, perhaps, less a feast than an impromptu drinking bout that Blackmore tells us of when, in the ruined Hall of the Warren, Carver Doone rose, glass in hand, to propose a health to the ghost of the murdered squire, and then "in the broken doorway stood a press of men with pointed muskets covering every drunken Doone."

So many and graphic are these sensations at feasts in fiction that it is no easy task to choose one, on the principle of keeping the best to the last, to terminate the selection. But one seldom goes amiss when one trusts to Charles Reade for dramatic colour and virile force, and a certain dinner scene in "The Cloister and the Hearth" will, in sporting parlance, take a deal of beating. Gerard had just learned of the treachery of his brothers, by which, believing his love, Margaret, to be dead, he had taken Holy Orders. Eli and his family are just about to dine when, like some whirlwind of wrath, a Dominican friar rushed into the room, and, throwing "his tall body over the narrow table, and with two hands hovering above the shrinking heads like eagles over a quarry, he cursed the delinquents by name, soul, and body, in this world, and the next." It is not surprising to learn that this sensation effectually put an end to the feast.—"The Globe."

CHRISTMAS SALES IN GERMANY.

Germany's traditional reputation for simplicity has, writes a Berlin correspondent, been swept away by the extent and extravagance of this year's Christmas celebrations. Shops, everywhere, from the great emporiums in Berlin to the humblest corner grocery store in the country districts, report unprecedented sales. The widespread prosperity had loosened the country's purse-strings, and in many families where simple remembrances were formerly exchanged, such things as motor-cars, pianos, furs, jewels, stocks, bonds, and cheques have this year been scattered with a profusion entirely out of keeping with the German reputation for frugality. Unparalleled prosperity has blessed every class of the population. Statistics just published show an increase in the Prussian savings bank deposits in the past year of £26,000,000, the largest increase on record. In 1870 the Prussian savings totalled £25,000,000; to-day they amount to £415,000,000. It was upon this enormous store of hoarded wealth that the great middle and working classes drew to give themselves a Christmas commensurate with Germany's mounting national fortune.

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novel about them (says Mr. Richard Le Gallienne in the "Reader"). Many clever and industrious men are daily employing the same methods—as far as we can see—without achieving any such substantial success. Wherein lies the difference; Is it mere luck? No, that explanation will not suffice. Your Liptons and Wanamakers never wait for Luck. No doubt they have their share; but, as one reads the stories of their success, he finds no evidence of any special providence or luck attending them. Such "luck" as they have had seems to have come through the capacity for fearlessly taking opportunity on the instant. They are men of rapidly-working imaginations, or of great courage; for imagination and courage are qualities which one can safely set down as indispensable to any form of success. The part played by imagination in business is but little recognised; yet a moments thought will show how important it is. A business man like J. Pierpont Morgan possesses enough imagination to set up a dozen poets.

CHINS AND CHARACTER.

Dr. Louis Robinson, writing in Blackwood's Magazine on this subject, rather knocks on the head the old notion that a strongly developed chin necessarily means a strongly developed will. At least, we must modify, if not upset, our notions. The chin, of course, is a distinctively human characteristic. What is not generally recognised about it, however, is how much it may be modified by the nature of the food taken. In the case of the primi-

tive savage, for instance, the shape of the jaw is generally influenced by the extremely hard work his teeth have to do in masticating coarse food, just in the same way as a blacksmith's arm and collarbone become almost abnormally developed by striking his anvil. Until recently sailors have had to live on "hard tack"—food which gave them much severe chewing to do—and consequently "one never sees a sailor with a weak jaw." Some years ago the writer had to pass a number of boys from a London parish district for the navy. From time to time these lads revisited their old homes, and the most noticeable change in them, especially when contrasted with their companions who had never left the streets, was, next to their taller stature and healthier appearance, "the total change in the shape and expression of their faces. On analysing this, one found that it was to be mainly accounted for by the increased growth and improved angle of the lower jaw. The fact that so many otherwise pleasing young faces nowadays are marred by a certain weakness in the outline of the jaw is due, Dr. Robinson thinks, probably to our elaborately-prepared food, needing so little mastication; and he wonders that none of the clever "beauty specialists" have ever seized on this fact and made capital out of it. A weak mouth is certainly not a beauty. Whether a square jaw denotes laudable strength of character or mere "pig-headedness" depends on the presence or absence of certain brain cells, those necessary for the manifestation of other mental and moral faculties, quite distinct from the nervous mechanism of the strong will.