

EXHIBITION OF DOMESTIC BLISS

I on the other hand managed about a pound of it, for it tasted like wild-boar. For I said to myself: 'If bears devour us poor men, all the more should we devour bears!' To wind up with, we had a soft cheese soaked in wine, a snail each, portions of tripe, liver croquettes, eggs *en petit chapeau*, mustard, radishes, and forcemeat rissoles. Not a word, Palamedes⁴! Then savouries were handed round in a big bowl, of which some were vulgar enough to take three handfuls. For me, I allowed the gammon to go scot-free."

CHAPTER LXVII

AN EXHIBITION OF DOMESTIC BLISS

"BUT tell me, Gaius, I beg of you, why is Fortunata not dining with you?"

"That shows how little you know her", replied Trimalchio; "till the plate is all safely put away, and the scraps distributed to the slaves, she wouldn't touch even a drop of water."

"All right", said Habinnas; "unless she takes her place, I for one am off"; and he was beginning to rise, only Trimalchio gave a sign and all the slaves called out her name half-a-dozen times. Thereupon she made her appearance with her skirts tied up by a yellow sash, so that you could see her red petticoat and her spiral anklets¹ and her gold-embroidered white slippers. She wiped her fingers with her napkin, which she carried round her neck, bestowed herself on the couch where Habinnas' wife, Scintilla, was reclining, saluted that lady, who received her with applause, and said: "What a treat to see you, my dear!"

PETRONIUS : THE SATYRICON

Subsequently they got on so well that she unfastened her bracelets from her podgy arms and showed them to the admiring Scintilla. To wind up with she unclasped her anklets and took off her hair-net² of gold, which she said was pure gold. Trimalchio noticed this, and ordered all her jewelry to be handed to him.

“ Just look ”, he said, “ at these feminine shackles ; that’s the way we poor fools are robbed. They must weigh six-and-a-half pounds, all told. I myself, I admit, am wearing an armlet weighing a good ten pounds, made up of my one-tenth per cents. to Mercury³. ”

Last of all, he proved his statement by calling for a balance and handing it round so that we could test the weight.

Scintilla was just as bad : she unfastened from her neck a little golden locket which she called her ‘ Luck.’ Next she produced a pair of ear-rings⁴, which in return she handed to Fortunata to look at, remarking : “ My husband is such a generous man—no one has a finer pair.”

“ What ? ”, cried Habinnas. “ It’s drained me dry to get you those wretched glass kickshaws. I tell you, if I had a daughter, I’d amputate her ears. If there were no women, everything would be dirt-cheap. Now-a-days it’s a case of hot water for other people and cold drinks for ourselves.”

At this, the good ladies, slightly muddled, burst out laughing together and exchanged kisses, one holding forth on her virtues as a housewife, the other magnifying the gallantries and the indifference of her husband. Amid their embraces, Habinnas unobserved got up, caught Fortunata by the heels and threw her along the sofa. Little cries of horror escaped her as

her ankles emerged from her skirt. Then she threw herself into Scintilla's bosom, and hid her blushes in her napkin.

CHAPTER LXVIII

DURING DESSERT, A SLAVE OF HABINNAS OBLIGES

AT this point we had a breather ; then Trimalchio gave the signal for the second part of the banquet¹ to begin. The whole staff set to work, carrying off the tables we had used ; and then appeared with new ones. They sprinkled the room with fine sand, coloured with saffron², cochineal, and—a thing that was entirely new to me—powdered mica. Thereupon Trimalchio, “ For my part ”, says he, “ I was fully satisfied with the menu so far as it has gone ; but I see you have a second lot ; if there are any tit-bits left bring them along.”

Thereupon an Alexandrian-bred slave, who was in charge of the warm drinks, began to give some imitations of a nightingale, which performance Trimalchio from time to time interrupted with cries of “ Try another ! ” Behold thereafter a new turn. All of a sudden a page-boy sitting at the feet of Habinnas—I believe on a signal from his master—in a piercing voice struck up the old strain ‘ And while she spake Aeneas cleft the main ’³. In all my life I never heard a more distressing sound. For, being a mere alien, his quantities were all mixed up, and he sandwiched in scraps from ancient farces of Atellane days, with the result that for the first time in my life even Virgil got on my nerves. All the same, when at last he halted, Habinnas gave him a clap and cried :

“ He never had an hour's training ; I gave him