

Delmonico's: A Century of Splendor / Lately Thomas  
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115  
When Dickens Ate Crow

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knew, would carry his words to the whole nation, the novelist first denied that he proposed to write another book about the United States; and then went on:

"What I have intended, what I have resolved upon (and this is the confidence I seek to place in you), is, on my return to England, in my own person to bear, for the behoof of my countrymen, such testimony to the gigantic changes in this country as I have hinted at tonight. [At this point the stenographic reporter interpolated, "Tremendous applause."] Also, to record that wherever I have been, in the smallest places equally with the largest, I have been received with unsurpassable politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality, consideration, and with unsurpassable respect for the privacy daily enforced upon me by the nature of my avocation here and the state of my health. [Applause.] This testimony, so long as I live, and so long as my descendants have any legal right in my books, I shall cause to be republished as an appendix to every copy of those two books of mine in which I have referred to America. [Tremendous applause.] And this I will do and cause to be done, not in mere love and thankfulness, but because I regard it as an act of plain justice and honor. [Cries of Bravo! and cheers.]"

This dish of crow not prepared by Delmonico was downed by Dickens with fortitude and aplomb.

6.

But the proof of the banquet lies in its elements and their interrelation; and this gastronomical-literary celebration of 1868 furnishes material for a direct comparison with the banquet tastes of cultivated New Yorkers in 1842. This is the 1868 menu which Charles Ranhofer prepared:

M E N U

Huîtres sur coquilles

Consommé Sévigné

Crème d'asperges à la Dumas

Hors-d'Oeuvres Chaud

Timbales à la Dickens

*Lorenzo the Great**Poissons*

Saumon à la Victoria                      Bass à l'Italienne  
Pommes de terre Nelson

*Relevés*

Filet de boeuf à la Lucullus              Laitues braisées demi-glace  
Agneau farci à la Walter Scott        Tomates à la Reine

*Entrées*

Filets de brants à la Seymour  
Petits pois à l'Anglaise  
Croustades de riz de veau à la Douglas  
Quartiers d'artichauts Lyonnaise  
Épinards au velouté  
Côtelettes de grouse à la Fenimore Cooper

*Entrées Froides*

Galantines à la Royale  
Aspics de foies-gras historiés

*Intermède*

Sorbet à l'Américaine

*Rôts*

Bécassines                                      Poulets de grains truffés

*Entremets Sucrés*

Pêches à la Parisienne (chaud)  
Macedoine de fruits                      Moscovite à l'abricot  
Lait d'amandes rubané au chocolat  
Charlotte Doria  
Viennois glacé à l'orange              Corbeille de biscuits Chantilly  
Gâteau Savarin au marasquin

Glaces forme fruits Napolitaine  
Parfait au café

*Pièces Montées*

Temple de la Littérature              Trophée a l'Auteur  
Pavillon International              Colonne Triomphale  
Les armes Britanniques              The Stars and Stripes  
Le Monument de Washington        La Loi du Destin

*When Dickens Ate Crow*

Fruits

Compotes de pêches et de poires  
Fleurs

Petits fours

Dessert

*Fourteenth Street and Fifth Avenue**Delmonico*

A glance suffices to differentiate this composition from what was regarded as the ultimate in the way of grand-scale dining in 1842. The mere profusion of the City Hotel bill of fare has been replaced by economy, order, balance, and smooth progression of the courses. Elaborate, yes, but the total number of dishes has been cut from the sixty-odd of 1842, not counting nuts, fruits, or "pyramids" (sweetmeats in elaborate forms), to about thirty, again excluding desserts and setpieces. Two soups (the conventional thick and thin) replace the three of 1842; there are six main entrées, instead of the nineteen listed in 1842; the heavy boiled meats are eliminated, with their sauces. Symmetry has been imposed upon variety, the meal charted along a definite line of development; it is no longer a superfluity of abundance. The sauces contain shadings that the palate could catch, and among vegetables are newcomers that would have puzzled the gourmands of 1842 — braised endive with the *filet de boeuf à la Lucullus*, and artichokes. The clumsy crutch of two languages has been thrown aside, for New York's educated diners had passed that primer stage. There are a multitude of literary allusions, as there had been in 1842 — a soup named for Dumas, chopped lamb *à la Walter Scott*, grouse *à la Fenimore Cooper*, *consommé Sévigné*, *timbales à la Dickens*. The international motif appears in *petits pois à l'Anglaise*, to counterpoise the *sorbet à la Américaine*. The setpieces distribute honors evenly — the *British Arms* flanked by the *Stars and Stripes*; the *Temple of Literature*, by that reliable standby of eggwhite, gum arabic, and confectioner's sugar, the *Washington Monument*. And not only are the diners carried by easy transitions from course to course, they are so wafted in a way to reanimate flagging appetite. The concluding stages, especially, are beyond the scope of