

HASH-HOUSE VISIONARIES

BY RAYMOND S. TOMPKINS

THE new industrial idealism, in the process of making the United States a finer place to skin competitors in, is jumping from business to business and from trade to trade like a conflagration, and nothing will ever stop it save dynamiting several blocks of idealists. Since nobody has yet shown any sign of wanting to stop it, it was inevitable that it should eventually reach the business of feeding the public.

The practice of this worthy and ancient trade, until recent years, involved simply the sensible cooking and polite serving of square meals at fair prices in decent surroundings. But to the idealist such simplicity was naturally revolting, and his first move toward getting rid of it was to make all the simple things complicated. Today, his bosom swells with pride at the splendid conceptions that have come to him as in a dream, and he will not rest until he has implanted these conceptions in the bosom of the old-time hash-house man, who believed that his customers called his place the Greasy Spoon because they loved it, and who was proud of its reputation.

The trouble is that after such ideas have been implanted in the soul of the old-timer, it is not his bosom but his head that swells, and not with pride but with a headache. He hears, for example, from a Modernist leader of his art in Toledo, that "the ability to prepare a meal is only one of the minor operations in the restaurant business," and beholds hundreds of fellow

grub merchants applauding the sentiment as if they thoroughly understood and approved it. And a moment later he hears from the Hon. Carl G. Stoddard, sometime president of the National Restaurant Association, in words as crisp and crackling as pie-crust, that

The restaurant man of tomorrow will be first of all a man of vision. He will be a man of action, of civic consciousness, a man with a heart, a man of leisure, a man using science and knowing art, a man of business acumen, a man believing in Service, and a man proud of his job.

Are these the words of hope or of doom? The old-time eating-house man does not know, but he fears the worst. All the things that Dr. Stoddard says the Restaurant Man of Tomorrow should be this old-timer thought he was already. Yet his daily takings dwindle and his customers become puzzles of steadily increasing toughness. Thus a Modern Restaurant Problem rears itself—and simultaneously there appears the idealist with his big, blond, shining face upturned to the rains, seeing lovely visions of some celestial ham-and-eggery beyond the ken of other mortals. It is very bewildering to the old-timer.

Millions of Americans now eat downtown every day. Almost past numbering, like clouds of gnats, in every town and city, they swarm into lunchrooms, drug-stores, tearooms, restaurants, cigar-stores, sandwich shops and cafeterias. With every sardine sandwich and every plate of salad

they get a liberal helping of the Modern Restaurant Problem. They may not see it or even suspect it. There may be music and gayety, a genial head waiter, an expansive host, happy waiters, contented waitresses, or there may be just smell, food, and the crash of iron coffee mugs. But the modern proprietor sees through and beyond all this. Hovering thickly over his tables, counters or one-arm chairs, he sees all facets of his problem—the Chain Restaurant Problem, the Prohibition Problem, the Drug-store Sandwich Problem, the Cigar-store Pie Counter Problem, the Problem of America's Changed Food Habits, the Sanitation Problem, the Business Men's Lunch Club Problem. If he is a Restaurant Man of Tomorrow he sees a happy solution to all these problems because he is a man with the spirit of Service in him, not to say a civic consciousness, a heart, a vision, a pride in his job. But if he is just the plain sort of human being that the old-timer is, he suspects that he is in a hell of a fix.

Chain restaurants and the changed food habits of Americans are, at bottom, responsible for the New Competition that gives the restaurant keeper the fantods. The whole business started with the World War, which America won by (among other things) strategic eating. In those heroic days we shipped our meat and wheat to the boys in the trenches, and at home laid down a barrage of vegetables, eggs, and bran muffins. Then came Prohibition, women in business, automobiles, the high cost of living, and the highly concentrated apartment-house kitchen. The modern wife came into the scene with a job downtown and no time to do any home cooking. The business man, finding competition growing keener and the need greater for alertness and fancy foot-work, dropped the habit of toying with a planked

steak for a couple of hours at luncheon, and began gobbling sandwiches instead, which got him back to his office in time to cross swords with a sandwich-eating competitor, and helped him keep his eyes open until quitting time. With automobiles cheaper and more plentiful, the habit increased of riding out to dinner in the evening, and since it was interesting to compare the cost of home eating with the cost of restaurant eating, and since *à la carte* checks are usually larger than *table d'hôte* checks, the club plate and the blue plate grew more popular, with everything spread out in plain view and the price of the combination plainly marked on the bill of fare.

II

If only the problem of adjusting himself to these changes had been involved, the old-time restaurant man would not have had much trouble. But they were swiftly seen by people who were not in the restaurant business at all, but saw a chance to ride to greater profits on the new eating wave. Thus the drug-store, cigar-store, and candy-store sandwich counter competition was born. Chain restaurants sprang up and the chains grew rapidly longer, with high-powered inspection and accounting systems that reduced costs and waste. Then Prohibition agents began leering through restaurant windows searching for signs of conviviality and, finding them, began pinching the restaurant keepers and waiters and annoying the guests. This drove the peace-loving American and his family, who like to eat and drink without the risk of search and seizure, to speakeasies with double doors of iron, where liquor was easy to get at and the food was at least passable.

On top of all this, thousands of amateurs

came into the restaurant business—usually women who had read about Alice Foote MacDougall or somebody else who, according to the legends, had started Ye Olde Pyckwycke Inne with a set of dishes, half a dozen teaballs, a hunting print, and some hand-painted chairs and tables, and become fabulously rich. When these novices went bankrupt others took their places, and so the volume of business of the old-timers was reduced, and customers whose eating out experiments in amateur tearooms had soured them on the idea were driven from restaurant life forever.

Such a combination of troubles was bound to make the poor restaurateur pretty groggy. Harassed with these woes on one side and smothered with a feeling of his own futility on the other, no wonder he is appalled. The immensity of the restaurant chains, in particular, staggers him today. He is amazed to learn that Loft's, Inc., already owning 175 stores, in addition to a flock of candy and ice cream plants, has just bought out another chain, and will soon operate a total of 275 eating places, with a total sales volume in excess of \$19,000,000 a year. It appalls him to hear that Woolworth's restaurants fed 90,000,000 people in 1928. When he reads that the Childs mammoth serves more than one cup of coffee annually for every two persons in the United States, and that the 18,000,000 buckwheat cakes it sold in 1929 would reach from New York to St. Louis if laid end to end, he feels about ready to go out into the alley and jump into the garbage can.

While his little business goes to the dogs, some slick fellow imported from the gas and oil business is making millions for a gigantic lunch-room chain. His famous old-time specialties, beefsteak pie, corned beef and cabbage and unsurpassable coffee are being passed up for the four-deck

sandwiches sold in the chain shop down the street. No wonder he begins to think there may be something, after all, in the theory that "ability to prepare a meal is only one of the minor operations in the restaurant business," and that what he needs is a four-year course in advertising, accountancy, architecture and psychology.

III

The restaurant idealist is right there to see that he gets all the new-fangled ideas his skin will hold. Let him begin with fundamentals. One prime fundamental of every restaurant business is the garbage can. No matter how gorgeous the decorations, how sweet the music, how handsome the waiters or waitresses, or how splendid the linen, silver and china in a restaurant, there is always a garbage can in the back alley. Modern restaurant art says "Watch it carefully!" Profits frequently disappear into it.

Indeed, Mr. Carlo Marchetti, a famous Los Angeles victualer, dives in after them. Said he in a recent interview, "I am not ashamed to say that I delve into the garbage can for profits." And he finds them. He gets down early every morning and comes in by the back door, where the garbage cans stand. He gets a three-pronged hook and sits down and has an employé dump the cans in front of him. Then he fishes through the garbage with his hook. On one side he piles up the silverware and crockery that somebody had thoughtlessly thrown away with the scraps. On the other side, he piles up the sound meats and vegetables that always get into every eating-house garbage can by mistake. In one day he fished out four silver spoons, two saucers, two cups, a plate, two heads of lettuce, several tomatoes only slightly used, and a bucket of soup. With these things Signor Marchetti stalks into the

kitchen looking pretty grim, and then there is trouble for some careless cook or scullery boy. But thereafter, the *maestro's* customers will be glad to know, the stuff is thrown back into the can, excepting, of course, the silver and crockery.

Mr. Marchetti gets along in the innkeeping world, and is held up as an example of modern restaurant culture by the boosters, but, as a matter of fact, they differ among themselves as to the propriety of using leftovers or potential garbage. By Mr. E. A. Waters, a man of some fame in the industry, the practice is frowned upon as modern and unethical, but by Miss Alice Easton, an eminent Restaurant Consultant, it is not. From her the yearning landlord learns some profitable cageyness in the matter. He is to snare the leftovers on their way to the pigpens or the harbor, but he is to be careful (*a*), to make his leftover dishes attractive; (*b*), not to crowd the menu with too many of them; and (*c*), to mix up plenty of new items with his second string stuff. She does not recommend too much old-fashioned hash, but in *Restaurant Management*, the official organ of the profession, she shows how last night's dollar dinner may serve as a basis for today's seventy-five-cent lunch. In this miracle last night's half grapefruit becomes grapefruit, orange and endive salad; yestere'en's chicken pie with biscuit crust serves as a base for today's fried minced chicken sandwich; last night's broiled filet of sole is resurrected in the guise of today's baked stuffed filet of sole, and the survivors of the Julienne carrots on the dinner menu step forth next day at luncheon as glazed carrots with mint.

The studious innkeeper can read Professor Walters or Professor Easton and take his choice. And if the difference between the two authorities tends to confuse him he may study the controversy between

Restaurant Management and the Ohio State Restaurant Association, which read sinister meanings into the magazine's helpful hint to dishwashers to save scraps brought in untouched from satisfied customers in the dining-room. To the Ohio innkeepers such a practice was unthinkable and they denounced it. The editors replied that their position had been grossly misunderstood, and that, anyway, their bulletins were "not released to nor intended for the general public."

If even this case sheds but a feeble light on the restaurant man's garbage problem, he can fall back on the comforting result of a long controversy in San Francisco between the Restaurant Association, the city Board of Supervisors and the Hog Raisers' Association, which gave the hotels and restaurants the best break on swill prices. The rate varies with the price of hogs, and since hogs apparently fatten best on hotel and restaurant garbage, it brings from \$1.75 to \$3.75 a ton, while the swill from cafeterias brings only \$1.50 to \$3.00, and the lean pickings from sandwich shoppes and dairy lunches only 75 cents. So far as the rank of its garbage cans is concerned, the restaurant reigns supreme in San Francisco.

IV

If the Restaurant Man of Tomorrow or even today can safely regard cooking and preparing meals as "minor operations," he cannot so regard advertising and salesmanship, for if he does so he is sunk, at least in the opinion of the modern idealists. A hotel advertising counsellor advises the industry that "the public at large does not realize the value of a high-class eating place." To change this, "the entire family must be sold the idea of eating in the quality restaurant." But the advance of the

profession in advertising psychology may still be described as lame, though red hot adjectives have turned the trick for the Hon. A. A. McVittie, the genial host of two Denver inns. Mr. McVittie loves adjectives. "People," he says, "are full of dreams," and he believes that profitable opportunities to fill them with something else will come to the innkeeper who keeps them heated up. As proofs of his success he wears double-breasted gray vests and a diamond ring.

The doors of his restaurant lavatories have no stodgy "Ladies" and "Gents" stenciled on them, but the intimate personal pronouns, "Him" and "Her." When Mr. McVittie's menus want to mention sliced tomatoes, they do not stop there, but say, "Sliced Tomatoes, one of Nature's most wonderful appetizers, perfected in the serving by Mack; the finest, luscious hot house tomatoes, cut in thick slices with our own mayonnaise or French dressing." In McVittie's a baked potato is not just a potato that has been baked, but "a Husky, Mealy Idaho Beauty, with plenty of butter, 10 cents." His roast loin of young pork is "from contented hogs." His prunes are "large size, tender skin, served with plenty rich cream"; his applesauce is "smooth, delicious, with Maraschino cherry." It is all pretty confusing to the old-time victualer, this modern technique, with Marchetti of Los Angeles out in the alley poking through the garbage, and McVittie of Denver in the library dashing off wise-cracks.

The old-timer may think, "Well, at least I've got some sound assets in Maggie, Lena, Hilda and Irene—I don't need to worry about waitresses"—but if he does it only goes to show how backward he has become, and how much he needs guidance. He may not know it, but waitresses are really his biggest problem. Irene is a blonde and a

blonde waitress is just about as much good (according to the Modern Restaurant Expert) as a blind halfback. A scientific survey has indicated that blonde waitresses are less courteous, less intelligent and less reliable than brunettes, and that goes, no matter if Irene has been handling satisfied customers for ten years. Maggie is as big as a house and the whole trend is toward small help. Lena, who can reel off an entire menu card from memory, always looks as though ready to bite a customer in the leg. Hilda, a red-head and a wonder with travelling salesmen, says "I bane," for "I am." Any Restaurant Consultant worth his salt would throw out the whole quartette.

One trouble with the restaurant business today, we learn, is that not enough attention has been paid to salesmanship and merchandising through the waitresses. The old-timer seemed to think it made no difference what kind of girls they were so long as they spilled no soup on the customer. But such complacency spells failure today. The modern ideal of a waitress is a combination of the best qualities of Florence Nightingale, Ruth Hanna McCormick, Clara Bow and the Mona Lisa. She must have a good manicure, just the right amount of rouge, clean starched collars, cuffs and apron, clean stockings, no halitosis or B. O., and the entire menu in her memory. She must not say, "And how!" or "You said a mouthful!" nor swear within the hearing of the customer. If he doesn't know what he wants to eat she must tell him pleasantly but without jollying him. She must deliver orders while they are still hot, study her customers, suggest a second cup of coffee, not drop any dishes, and smile happily, though her heart may be breaking.

The same thing, in a general way, goes for the waiter, who, if ideal, must always have a crease in his trousers, a clean shave,

rubber heels, a decent hair-cut, and cuffs that can be reversed if the edges are not clean. As a matter of fact, in the bright lexicon of modern restaurant keeping, the experts put things pretty much up to the Wot'll-you-have? boys and girls. All sorts of charts, rules and mottos are prepared for their enlightenment. One proprietor whose success has made him notable, hands out a daily dozen for his employés, so that they may all plunge happily into work each morning remembering the following:

1. Smile until the smile sets for the day.
2. Affirm you are going to be successful.
3. Think optimism until you feel the exhilarating conviction that it's great to be alive.
4. Mentally visualize yourself doing a big day's work.

The other eight are all like that, and the genius behind them sells more doughnuts and coffee than anybody else in California.

The chain restaurant, of course, has brought in the New Efficiency, putting the business on the plane of a scientific enterprise. The biggest successes today in the trade of feeding Americans are made by the sort of men who wouldn't have thought of going into anything but the coal business or wholesale groceries ten years ago. The chains are sharks for efficiency and their systems of inspections, reports, cost-keeping, buying, supervision and merchandising make the old-timer feel like an early model Oldsmobile. So he sets in to study the systems and soon is worse off than before. To have to go snooping around with a pencil and form sheet putting down, "Beans poor," or "Steak unsatisfactory"; "Chef did not have on white trousers"; "Garbage cans too close to milk cans"; "Waitress No. 3 had a black rosette in hair instead of uniform bow," and then give all these points a proper rating and add them to see where he

stands, is pretty tough on an old-fashioned fellow who has never learned to spell *gravy* without an *e*.

But the best Specialists in Restaurant Investigation, Analysis and Supervision assure him that he has got to learn things like these or quit. He can persist, if he likes, in fixing unbalanced window displays with two pumpkins at one end and one at the other, putting no pork in his chicken pies, making pumpkin pie out of squash, leaving soap on the silver, or ventilating the waiters' locker-room through a window in the customers' toilet, but if he does these things his doom is sealed as surely as though he had a flock of blonde waitresses.

The sharp-eyed uplifters in the feeding business are thoroughly in earnest about regenerating it, making America restaurant conscious, and selling the whole family on the idea of eating out. They miss nothing, and the things they have discovered which drive trade away are amazing and almost beyond numbering. A small list from one of these experts includes:

Owner walks around without a coat and with a cigar in his mouth. Waitresses don't wear bloomers. Decorations are drab and depressing. Napkins in fanciful shapes, standing like sentinels at each plate, give unpleasant impression. China too heavy and cups have no handles. Sloppy waitresses. No hot breads. Waitresses too fat. The coffee is terrible. Same old menu. Carbon copy menus are smeared. Waiter handles butter with his fingers; chairs are never dusted. Somebody is always dropping dishes.

On the other hand the archives of the science are full of great discoveries and encouraging tales of success attained through intelligent use of the New Psychology. One prophet, for example, recently sent out postcards to all the doctors and dentists in his town, reading,

Dear Sir: We wish to call to your attention that Mondays are known as Doctors and Dentists' Day at the Interstate Coffee Shop. On that day you will find Spare Ribs and Sauer Kraut a popular number on a well selected menu. On Wednesdays Corn Beef and Cabbage reign supreme.

At your service,

THE MANAGEMENT.

V

Restaurant Management, the oracle of the industry, has circulated the idea of a training table for university debating teams—"a suggestion for restaurants catering to college trade. Get in touch with the manager of the debates and arrange to provide a table reserved for members of the squad." This idea, productive of fatter and smarter college heroes and bigger luncheon checks, was born at no less a seat of gastronomic knowledge than Harvard University. A Chicago tea-room uses a stop-watch and a thermometer: the watch to determine how long guests have to wait for orders, the thermometer to detect variations in food temperatures. A Seattle café with a lunch-counter strings newspapers on a wire over the heads of the counter customers, who may read until they get their orders, then hang up the paper and begin eating. If the wait passes endurable limits, there is no rule against eating the newspaper.

An Oklahoma City restaurant prints the day's athletic scores on a blackboard out in front. A big town department-store café attempts to make things easy for the bashful drummer with no date for the evening by handing him a card bearing the message, "The Salesperson who served you was Miss Blank. Thank you!" Unfortunately, the bashful drummer gets this card on his way out instead of on his way in. A restaurant in a hot Southern city sets an

electric fan in the doorway and blows a breeze into the face of everybody who comes within ten feet of the door. When they turn to see where the breeze comes from, they see the salad display in the window and the fountain on the inside. In a Baltimore gypsy tea-room the waitresses, in appropriate costume, go around reading the guests' fortunes in the tea cups.

Not all the New Psychology works. Certain Seattle restaurants bidding for *matinée* and dinner patrons interested in the loftier sciences retained clairvoyants to read their futures. The police pounced on one of these mystics and dragged him to court, probably setting the Seattle café business back ten years. In Omaha a forward-looking victualer with a new idea opened a Physical Culture Restaurant, and prescribed courses of diet for ailing townsmen who had tried everything else from surgery to chiropractic. With a forty-cent meal he would make an ill man well, and with a fifty-cent one he would make a champion quarter-miler out of a cripple. But he didn't last long. Other Omaha restaurateurs said, "He served too much for the money."

No sound-thinking restaurant man is doubtful of the bright and profitable future of the business; there is only doubt about what sort of business it will be. Coffee shops seem to be gaining, cafeterias losing, in popularity. Trends differ in different sections of the country. In New York more people than ever patronize lunch-counters; in Washington, D. C., the trend is toward malted milk shops; in Detroit toward hamburger stands; in Massachusetts toward dining-cars gaudily built and decorated in regular railroad car factories, and set up for business on vacant lots. In some localities Standard Oil has opened hot dog stands in conjunction with its filling stations, though most of the ex-

perts see indications that the American public is definitely turning away from the hot dog. The Greek lunch-room continues to flourish. Drug-stores keep on installing sandwich and pie counters, though the seers who decry this competition declare that the druggist is "at the crossroads" and must soon decide whether he will sell medicines or food.

Even cold-hearted bankers harass the poor restaurant man. One group of New York banks sponsored a newspaper advertisement entitled, "She Found Europe on a Bill of Fare," and picturing the magnificent realization of a stenographer's

dream—a trip to Paris on the savings—promptly banked—from "unnecessary luxuries for lunch." "Yes," bitterly commented a restaurant leader, "starve and save for Europe at the expense of American business"!

When the restaurant men attacked the cigar-stores for the "unethical" practice of selling food along with tobacco, the cigar-store men replied, "How about the practice the restaurants have always followed of selling tobacco along with food?" This was a hard question to answer, but no harder than a lot of others facing the inn-keepers.

MUSIC

STOKOWSKI

BY ARTHUR D. PIERCE

REALLY proper Philadelphians always speak of the conductor of their orchestra as Doctor Stokowski. There is a certain fitness in that reverence, for Stokowski has been the mainspring, the vitalizing force behind what the Quaker City is pleased to call its musical renaissance. He has mocked the society women; he has scolded his audiences; he has defied the orchestra's directorate; he has flung futuristic tone-wads at the ears of protesting classicists; he has made enemies as fast as he has made friends; yet with it all he has put the town on the map; he has won it an artistic distinction it never enjoyed before.

He is indispensable there now. He is an honorary director, president or something-or-other of every local musical organization of any dignity, and has been given virtually every honor the city can confer. He was the first to get the Bok Award to "the person who has done the most for Philadelphia"; he was made a doctor by the University of Pennsylvania; and it is doubtful whether even the mighty Bill Vare could keep him from the mayoralty, once he decided he wanted that dubious distinction.

Connoisseurs differ on how all this eminence has been achieved. Some insist it lies in his sex appeal—and undoubtedly he has it, as I am assured by many women of sound judgment. One of them tells me that she cares not a hoot for music and doesn't know Bach from Richard Strauss,

but attends faithfully just to watch her idol in action. His photograph has the place of honor in her boudoir and she has managed to get his autograph also. This woman is only one. There are others, many of them; maidens, wives, mothers, all fascinated by this lithe Apollo with the blond, tousled hair. Then there are those who view his fame as an outgrowth of canny diplomacy, an idea also not without foundation, for no one in Philadelphia doubts for a moment that he knows how to play social politics as well as music. Again, one hears that he sensationalizes everything he conducts, in short, that he plays to the gallery; and in Philadelphia the gallery is almost the whole house. Finally, a somewhat smaller group holds that it is sheer genius which has catapulted him to the heights. One would, I suspect, hit near the truth by saying that the Stokowski method combines a little of all these things; that it is a seasoned mixture of pious virtues and magnetic vices, plus—very importantly plus—a rare deftness in obtaining useful publicity.

Leopold Anton Stanislaw Stokowski was born in London, of Polish parents, on April 18, 1882. There seems to be no record that he was an infant prodigy, although he began the study of music early, first in England with such men as Parry and Stanford, later at the Paris Conservatoire.

Before he was twenty he had acquired considerable training in organ, piano and violin, and it was in the organ loft that his destiny appeared to lie. He spent eight years in churches, coming to America in