

The Transposition of Stomachs.*

BY CHARLES E. MIXER.



Y Dear Elliott :

Since your departure for elsewhere with your bonny bride, some two years ago, our correspondence has been of the chills and fever sort, I furnishing the chills and you the fever, intermittent at that.

During the last year I have been more delinquent than ever, partly from stress in my feelings and condition, and the remainder from a desire to throw no cloud over your very evident happiness, for in sympathy you were never bankrupt, as your friend well knows.

It was about this same time a year ago that that arch-enemy of man's comfort, dyspepsia, laid his grip on me, and, may the plague take him, continued to tighten it. I resorted, of course, to our friends the doctors — of whom I had many, and many of whom you know — too many, no doubt, and too often, and the help I got was nil.

You have often done me great honor in terming me the most artistically finished article of a gourmet you ever saw. I never quarreled with your conception of me, and after you left even thought you fell short of the truth. You knew me a fairly genial, good-natured chap, with a keg of humor always on tap to my friends, but, alas, after a while the keg ran dry and in its place stood a barrel of wormwood. I considered how long I might be allowed to remain here, or, to follow more nearly my line of thought, how long I should be compelled to. I assure you I had no wish to give up my occupation as gourmet, though there seemed no help for it.

Well, one evening I sat warming my shins before my open fire, dreaming of what might have happened had I married Ethel, as

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you urged. I might have been, perhaps, the happy father of children. But this was not to be; I became instead the father of a thought, an idea or revelation, or anything you like. As I mused, my great idea grew and flourished in my mind. As you have destined yourself for the noble profession of medicine, I at once made you godfather to this creation of my brain, and now you will, no doubt, be interested to learn the details of its results, if you have not already heard of them. My idea was no less than the transposition or exchange of stomachs, in which I saw a hope for a new and healthy existence in my old rôle of gourmet. To carry out my thought I needed the help of one we both know, the distinguished surgeon, Dr. Dickson, and of another person, whom we did not know. Next morning I found myself possessed of distinctly more faith in the plan than I had the night before, which decided me. You well know of the doctor's wonderful operations, and I knew him to be the very man for this one, if such existed. I found him, and with considerable diffidence communicated my scheme. Before I had fairly finished he jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "By Jove! I believe it possible; but how can you find the other man?" I admitted that this might be difficult, but thought I knew a suitable subject. "See him," he said, "see him, and if he will consent, I will."

You know that before I retired from business, with enough to last several lifetimes, I was President of the Island Sound Steamship Company. Among the 'longshoremen I knew one Jerry Kelly, a strapping, robust, rosy-cheeked fellow, about my size and build, the picture of health and the possessor of a good wife and a big family of children. I knew him quite well, as I had often given him odd jobs when the boats were not in. The next evening I sent for him, "as I had something for him to do." I had him shown into the dining room, where the sideboard displayed a fine joint of beef, some cold cabbage, a bottle of whiskey and a few other things. I think he saw these before he did me.

"Have you had supper, Jerry?"

"I belave I have, sor," he said.

"You believe you have? Well, suppose you tackle this, and then say you *know* you have."

"With great pleasure, sor."

The way he closed with that beef would have made a reputation for a tackle on a college eleven and I, looking on, green with envy, said:

"Have you a big appetite, Jerry?"

"So big, sor, that I niver yet saw the end of it."

"Is it always with you, Jerry?"

"I niver yet lost sight of it," he mumbled with his great mouth full of beef.

"Just one more question, Jerry. Do you ever have a feeling of distress after your meals?"

"Yis, sor, I do that, for it's the big meals I like and it's the small one I do be gettin' some days; it's after thim that I have that same feeling of dishtress that there wasn't more of it."

"I reckon you are sound, Jerry, in stomach and wit. Don't spare the grog, for I have a big job for you to consider and no mistake."

"What is it, sor?" he asked.

"Well, Jerry, you have a fine stomach, and I haven't. I have plenty of money and you haven't. I propose to exchange."

"Aw, don't be joshin' me, sor!" said he.

And then I told him of the wonderful things Dr. Dickson had done, and how I thought this could be accomplished, and no damage to either. Would you believe it? He seemed to fall in with my idea.

"It's a rishky job when all's said, and what is it worth, sor?"

"Twenty-five thousand," said I.

"Whew!" said he, "and how about Nora, and the children, if ——"

"Jerry," said I, "here it is; before we start with the Doctor I make my will, in which I leave you twenty-five thousand dollars, in case I go; if I live, I pay it to you; if you go I pay it to Nora; do you see?"

"Faith I do, sor, and for the sake of Nora and the kids, and your faith in your big doctor, begorra I'll try it, so I will," and with that we took hands and a big noggin to our success, and parted.

Well, when the Doctor heard all this he was game, and carried out his part at the Park Hospital before a select few of the pro-

fession. As to the result — well, I am writing this and shall soon resume my rôle of gourmet.

Jerry is also all right all round, though he says he has no appetite, poor chap, and is cheerful as a sparrow. No wonder, from his standpoint, for, attend to this! Directly he got about he went to a friend of his, even tougher than he was, and succeeded in driving the same identical bargain with him for *five thousand*! So, if all goes well, Jerry will have a better stomach than he ever had, and twenty thousand in the bank. What will eventually become of my old stomach, I can't at present tell; perhaps I may be able to inform you later.

