

# **THE ENGLISH HOTEL NUISANCE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649197323

The English hotel nuisance by Albert Smith

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**ALBERT SMITH**

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HOTEL NUISANCE**



©

THE

ENGLISH HOTEL

NUISANCE.

BY

ALBERT SMITH.

Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn, but I shall have my pocket  
Picked? .. SHAKESPEARE—*Henry IV.*

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LONDON:

DAVID BRYCE, 48, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1855.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

Bu 36 30. 35. 15

~~8456.20~~

1864. Mar. 5

By Exchange for a Copy  
of the  
Gen. Statutes

TO

PETER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., F.S.A.,

ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

NOT in connection with any of those old and time-honored haunts that we both love so well—not in the slightest association with those calm and tranquil taverns, up courts only threaded by the initiated, wherein the saw-dust and the feeding-time are so zoologically combined, and the old phantom waiters glide about, and the old ghostly clocks tick, as they might have done (and I sometimes believe they did—the same waiters and clocks), in Dr. Johnson's time: not with the most remote alliance to those particular mildewing cellars of cobweb-covered magnums, which are now and then disinterred to follow that especially tender steak and that singularly mealy potato, which we know occasionally where to find—not in connection with any of these things does your name suggest itself to me, as the proper friend to whom this pamphlet should be dedicated.

But I have heard it rumoured, that a certain 'Hand-book' is in preparation, in which first the environs of London, and afterwards county after county, are to be

dealt with in that same spirit of truthful observation and experience that has made the name of MURRAY so terrible all over that portion of the globe wherever an inn can be found for the English traveller to take his ease in. I should not at all wonder if someone were to tell me, as a secret, some fine morning, that you had a great deal to do with it.

And therefore I inscribe these few leaves to you, with the hope that even this trifle may impress you still further with a notion of the importance of the mission attributed to you—if such indeed be true; and that the useful warning, which in other works has told us,

*“Inn: Hotel de la Couronne, (Crown),  
bad and dirty: extortionate prices and  
uncivil landlord.”*

may be given to us as plainly in your book, and put us equally on our guard.

And so, permit me to regard myself as a skirmisher in the attack against this conventional fortress-system of discomfort and dearness which is the terror of tourists in England, firing a light rifle in advance until you bring the heavy artillery of Albemarle Street to knock the abuse to the ground,

And as your very sincere friend,

ALBERT SMITH.

*London, Dec. 15, 1855.*



## THE HOTEL NUISANCE.

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### I.

IN *The Times* of Saturday, Nov. 3rd, 1855, there appeared the following leader, so excellent and practical, that I take the liberty of extracting it, as the text of the observations which follow:—

“Is it not a strange thing that in London, which is called the most civilized city in the world, a stranger may be sorely puzzled to find a place in which to lay his head? There are, no doubt, a few inns scattered about the town, but it is almost necessary that a visitor in the metropolis of the British empire should be well informed beforehand, or he runs a very fair chance of finding no other quarters for the night than such as would disgrace a provincial town. Everybody, of course, knows of Mivart's, the Clarendon, and of two or three other hotels of the first class, as they are called—but *non cuius*;—whose purse is equal to the expenditure which is involved in a residence at such establishments? Besides, if the stranger be a millionaire, or a person who is determined to keep up the appearance of a millionaire at an alarming sacrifice, the accommodation which he obtains in return for his lavish expenditure is scarcely commensurate with the outlay. It is not to be denied that the

accommodation given at such establishments is good enough, the attendance excellent in its way, but no hotel-keeper, however great his anxiety to please his customers may be, can convert dingy rooms into cheerful ones, or enlarge an ordinary London house into the dimensions of a palace. Let us, however, dismiss from consideration altogether the question of the half-dozen hotels at the West-end of the town which have contrived to win for themselves a certain amount of reputation. As long as customers are found to fill their apartments, and submit to the exigencies of their tariffs, it is scarcely to be expected that the proprietors will consent to reduce their charges to a reasonable point. Even if they did so, the aggregate accommodation which all the first-class hotels of London could supply is but as a drop of water in the sea as compared with what is really required. How many thousands of persons are there sojourning in London every day throughout the year who are willing and eager to pay from 10s. to 30s. a-day for comfortable accommodation, and for food plain and wholesome, and who are forced to be content with dirt and grease until they can effect their escape from luxurious London? We Londoners in our own persons know nothing of such sufferings. We have our comfortable homes, our clubs, our accustomed lounging-places. We know where to turn for every description of indulgence or accommodation we may require. We cannot understand the miseries of the foreigner or provincial who wanders blindfold, as it were, about the streets, hesitating to return to his inn with its heated coffee-room and flaring gas, or to take the yet more serious step of retiring to his stuffy bed-room with its 'four-poster' and fusty curtains, its feather-bed and insect tribes, the greasy 'boots' with his commercial slippers, the pert chambermaid with her flat candlestick and her leer.

“ On the continent of Europe these things are far better managed—so they are in the United States of America. Who that has ever stayed at the delightful hotels which are scattered about Switzerland and various districts of the continent but has a pleasant recollection of the comfort he has enjoyed in them, quite independent of the beauties of the scenery by which they are surrounded? The bed-rooms contain just what bed-rooms should contain, now that the continental hotel-keepers have modified their views upon the quantity of water necessary for purposes of ablution. They are not covered with thick, frouzy carpets, nor filled with odds and ends of furniture for the sole purpose of retaining dirt and dust. Guests who do not object to the *table d'hôte* system can obtain a dinner, which is certainly superior to our English sole, steak, and cheese, at one-half the cost. What is best of all, from the first the tariff of charges is placed before the customer's eyes, and he may regulate his expenditure according to his taste and means. We do not say the continental system is perfect; on the contrary, in many of the principal towns the hotel charges are unreasonably high, and the extra expense inflicted upon those who would maintain their privacy out of all proportion with the public tariff. With all their faults, however, compare them with the English—especially with the London hotels! Before the influx of visitors consequent upon the Great Exhibition had driven the Parisian hotelkeepers mad, a visitor to that capital was at least sure of comfortable accommodation, and not at any very outrageous cost. The Exhibition has, no doubt, produced a great change, and that change has been a great evil as far as foreign visitors are concerned. The excess of the evil, however, as usual, has worked its own cure. An hotel upon a gigantic scale, called the ‘Hôtel du Louvre,’ has been erected, but