

How Guests Are Fed at Big Hotels Told by Evening World Reporters



Members of This Newspaper's Staff Make Strange Waiters in Most Places, but Service, Careful Tests of Actual Conditions in All Big Dining Rooms.

The Evening World sent reporters to the leading hotels where strikes are on at the dinner hour last evening with instructions to digest their experiences along with their meal. What they saw and heard follows:

At Hotel Astor Service Was Prompt; Recruits Quick if Didn't Know French

It was a good-humored and thoroughly tolerant crowd of diners that filled the orangery and the adjoining cafe of the Hotel Astor at the dinner hour last night. The tables were all filled and there was no lack of waiters. To be sure, some very square-shouldered men in evening clothes, who sauntered about the entrances to both dining rooms, gave the hint that detectives might be keeping a careful eye on things; but in the two hours following 7 o'clock none of these guardians had occasion to do anything but stand about. Women and quite were as many of them as usual—came in their evening gowns, evidently quite willing to take the risk of something being dropped. But there was not the crash of a falling dish or the clang of an overturned cover during all the time that the orchestra kept accompaniment to the march of the waiters. Some of the women and their escorts seemed at first to be disappointed that no trouble interrupted their dining. One young person in clinging green was heard to say that "it was perfectly mean that everything is running as it ought to be."

Waldorf-Astoria Serves All Patrons, Though Machinery Is Yet Out of Gear.

It was evident to even the casual diner at the Waldorf-Astoria that the usual well-oiled machinery was out of gear. While the service was fair, treachery in the kitchen was apparent. The strike-breaking waiters displayed their hands to sympathizing diners and exclaimed: "Ah, see awful treks say play on us in see kitchen. See see bilatras on see poor hands. See kitchen washers say put see plates in see boiling water until say are what you call red-hot and we poor waiters grab up see plates and—ouch, see devil—we get see bilatras on see poor hands. It see terrible!" Looks of anguish accompanied violent protestations. It was not necessary to look at the hands of the waiters to understand that sympathizers somewhere in the big establishment were passing hot ones to the new waiters. The cooks at the Waldorf, upon which fraternity the striking waiters rely in their fight, kept no diner waiting for food, however. There was little or no complaint. The menu was tested throughout by the hundreds of diners who assembled as usual in the main dining hall, the cafe and the large grill room. In the main hall, frequented by women as well as men, the service appeared to be normal. For this provision had carefully been made by the management. It was noticeable that combusses in the grill room, many of whom looked like college boys but all of whom denied, had to be instructed in the laying of the tables and serving the rolls, bread and butter. It was also observed that several could not understand French when addressed. They were "there," however, when it came to serving salads of Pilsener, Wurzbacher and Culmbacher. In this they excelled, and aroused at once the admiration of the French artists. One waiter in the grill room, undoubtedly an old-timer who had taken lessons in a Beefsteak John's sort of emporium, tried an odd joke on a diner in swallow tails who had complained of delay in being served three soft eggs. The lowbrow whispered into the ear of the guest: "Them three-minute eggs, just run a dead heat and they've got to run it over again." The guest demanded the dismissal of the waiter and he was transferred to the cafe. One of the head waiters was asked by an Evening World reporter if the service was satisfactory to the management. "We are in bad shape here, but I guess the striking waiters and others will be back in a week or two. They will get sorry. As for the several dining rooms we will be able to manage after a fashion."

New Vanderbilt Guests Make Joke Of Plight—Only Grill Room Service.

The dining room service at the New Vanderbilt Hotel, at Park avenue and Thirty-fourth street, was completely demoralized last night. Manager Marshall was able to secure but ten raw waiters to take the place of the sixty regular ones who had walked out in the afternoon. Only the grill room was in operation. The main dining room was closed. Printed cards were placed on each table asking the patrons to exercise any shortcomings in the service, and stated that order and discipline would be established at an early date. The few diners accepted the situation good naturedly and the usually brilliant dining hour resolved itself into nothing less than a comic vaudeville act. The six head waiters, or captains, who remained loyal, were the busiest persons in the hotel and acquitted themselves admirably, doing the bulk of the serving in person. The ten new waiters were little short of worthless, resembling so many of the patrons who come to life in the middle of winter. If there had been the usual number of diner service would have been impossible in any kind of order. As it was, there was but a poor attempt to give the regular elite and fastidious diners a semblance of good service. The rattling of knives and forks upon the floor and the miserring of the different courses by the eager but confused strike breakers put the diners and the faithful captains on the broad grin. For a single order it took more than an hour for service that was no better than could be obtained in any third rate New York restaurant. Everybody took it good naturedly and realized that the management was doing its best under the circumstances. To inquiries by the

Service at Belmont Again Normal, With a Waiter Ready for Every Diner.

But for the fact that eight big policemen were unsuccessfully trying to conceal their bulk in dark spots about the Hotel Belmont, and that the numerous dining rooms had more waiters than diners, no one would have known that a strike was on there at the dinner hour last night. This hostelry, which was the first in which a strike was ordered, also was one of the first to recover from the walkout of garcon and his brothers, and at dinner last night boasted more tip receivers than tip givers. From hors d'oeuvres (Hungarian for toast provokers) to demitasse (Swedish for small cups of coffee) the service was perfect. In the grill there were less than fifty guests at 8 o'clock, with more than that many waiters. In the main dining room the same condition prevailed—and every waiter in sight was sufficiently intelligent to understand what was wanted when French dishes were ordered, which indicates a high order of intelligence.

Misfit Waiters Serve Brelain Guests In Cafe; Big Dining Room Closed.

Dinner at the Hotel Brelain was served last night in the cafe. There was no music. The lights were out in the big dining room. The tables were covered with cloths to indicate that they were out of commission. The strike-breakers in the cafe were a misfit. Some were waiters, but most of them looked like moving pictures on the Bowery. There were twenty-four in all, working in two shifts. The cafe closed at 9 o'clock. The waiters rattled the dishes and sometimes got rattled themselves. But the head waiter was on the job, and the misfits got away with it. Occasionally one would ask for a corkerew to open a bottle of wine, but he got the proper hunch and tore off the cork. They looked wise at the French menu, nodded their heads and took a chance. Generally they made good. The drum of the Salvation Army went whanging by. The waiters stopped where they stood. They seemed to fear the strikers were about to descend upon them. But there were no strikers outside, only policemen at every approach to the hotel. The men say that they got their jobs through a detective agency. Applications for jobs are coming in, and applicants are presenting themselves in person. Some of them look like as if they would fill the bill. Some already on the job can holler "two floats," "sunny side up," or "eggs in the country," better than they can interpret poems or terms of business in a carte. But they are all industrious and willing to work. They are living on the fat of the land, besides dining on the best the hotel can offer and occupying some of the swellest rooms. They don't have to leave the house. The majority don't care to leave. Some of them don't care if they never leave. The life is great. "I don't think the strikers can win," said one of the strike-breakers, a waiter who had walked out at the shrill of the whistle from another hotel. "At that, the men have grievances, although the public doesn't believe it. They are fined at the least provocation. There's a fine for being late, there's a fine for a spot on your suit, there's a fine for breakage, and in some places they hold out so much a week whether a man breaks anything or not. Then, what a man is given to eat and where he has to eat it and how it is served in some places, is simply the limit."

Four Loyal Captains With Little Aid Meet Emergency at Marie Antoinette

Four captains were all that remained at the dinner hour last night of the battalions of waiters who had ministered to the hungry at the Marie Antoinette, but they were not overworked. When times did grow a little strenuous the cashier and a girl checker or two from the kitchen were pressed into service, and nobody went away with a gnawing sense of emptiness within, nor did the guests have to wait so long that their tempers rose. At 8 o'clock last night there were but ten persons dining in the red dining room, which was the only one open. The four captains were on the job and the cashier passed finger bowls. "We have had as busy a day as usual at this time of year," said one of the captains, "but we have got through it all right. It seems to me that this was a bad time for the waiters to go on a strike. People are leaving the city right along and it won't hurt the hotels so much. But I guess if they had tried it in the busy season it would have gone pretty hard with the strikers."

No Hitch in Service at the Plaza; Trained Men Fill Place of Strikers.

Manager Fred Sterry of the Plaza promptly filled the places of strikers. The result was that when the guests assembled for dinner last evening there was no delay or confusion in the hotel. Manager Sterry was not at the hotel, but Assistant Manager C. E. Halling found his staff large enough to take care of all the diners. He said that all the new waiters, all whites enlisted from New York and nearby cities, were experienced men and fully capable of handling the patrons at this time of the year at least. The dinner hours of the Plaza run from about 7 until 9 o'clock. During that time meals were served with wanted smoothness and at no time was there any sign of disorder. Plainclothes men were stationed at all the entrances, but there was no indication of trouble.

Herald Square Is Able to Serve Nothing But Drinks at Dinner Hour

At the Herald Square Hotel an Evening World reporter found the dining rooms full of negro bell-boys and elevator attendants, who were smilingly anxious to serve nothing. Severe, cold canvas was stretched over the tables in the restaurants. Normal business was being done only at the bar. "Drinks, yes! Food, no!" said the bartender. There were no waiters. The investigator went out to the cafe. Negro bell-

boys, bootblack and elevator boys were removing the remnants of food the waiters had left to the patrons when the without took place. "Noooo!" Nostalgia said a colored boy at the telephone booth, when asked whether a later application might bring forth real food, "Noooo. They done walk out and they left their guests sitting at their tables. The hall-boys and the elevator boys had to do the best they could." It was apparent that the hall-boys and elevator boys were doing the "best they could" cleaning off tables. Nobody could be served.

New Forces Able to Serve All Guests at Knickerbocker, Gotham and St. Regis.

At the Knickerbocker, Proprietor James B. Regan, who has bolted the Hotel Men's Association and is fighting his strike alone, had all his dining rooms open, and declared he was able to give regular service to all patrons. At the Gotham it was admitted that the service was hampered by the "newness" of their strike-breakers. Five head waiters coached the new men, among whom are several college students and a "tramp" from San Francisco, who proved a first-class waiter. All the guests were served last night and also a special dinner party for H. B. Steffansson of the Swedish Embassy, a Titanic survivor. At the St. Regis the guests were all served last night, and the fact that many were out of town for the holiday and week-end gave the new force a chance to break in. Proprietor Hahn was sure he would have everything working smoothly by Monday, and said all his strike-breakers are first-class men.

Room Guests Get Dinner at Martinique; Late Comer Finds Big Dining-Room Dark.

The Martinique, unprepared for any but its room patrons, managed to get dinner for them last night. But a man who tried to buy a late dinner found the big dining-rooms dark. Only the pads were on the tables. There were no waiters in sight. Guests sat in groups on the hall settees and talked in undertones. Hall boys, elevator boys and clerks forgot the usual imperious public institutions and behaved humbly. When interrupted to ask for the proper method of negotiating something to eat, they turned their heads only long enough to say: "Not until to-morrow, sir."

FEAR OF THE SEA DRIVES GIRL MAD ON BOARD LINER

(Continued from First Page.)

Today, when mother and daughter went down to La France's dock prepared to sail, the daughter balked at the sight of the steamer and refused to go aboard. No amount of urging or coaxing would prevail. In tears, the girl begged her mother to sail without her, she could never go on the ocean again, she cried. Senator Puleo allowed the steamer to sail without them, then she took her daughter to the Hotel Lafayette in University place and there succeeded in quieting her nerves until she agreed to sail on the St. Paul to-day. Tickets were exchanged and the two went down to the St. Paul's berth at Pier No. 62 an hour before sailing time. The young girl went aboard, but when she heard the warning gong for "visitors ashore," she grew hysterical, then violent. Her mother to sail without her, she could never go on the ocean again, she cried. 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