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V. Hotels and Restaurants.

Hotels. The quality of the hotels of the United States varies very greatly in different localities; but it is, perhaps, safe to say that the best American houses will be found fully as comfortable as the first-class hotels of Europe by all who can accommodate themselves to the manners of the country and do not demand everything precisely as they have been used to it at home. The luxury of some of the leading American hotels is, indeed, seldom paralleled in Europe. The charges are little, if at all, higher than those of the best European houses; but the comforts often afforded by the smaller and less pretentious inns of the old country can seldom be looked for from American houses of the second or third class, and the traveller who wishes to economize will find boarding-houses (see p. xxvii) preferable. When ladies are of the party, it is advisable to frequent the best hotels only. The hotels of the South, except where built and managed by Northern enterprise, are apt to be poor and (in proportion to their accommodation) dear; many of the hotels in the West, on the other hand, even in the newest cities, are astonishingly good, and California contains some of the best and cheapest hotels in the United States. The food is generally abundant and of good quality, though the cuisine is unequal (*comp. p. xxvii*). Beds are almost uniformly excellent. The quality of the service varies.

A distinction is made between *Hotels on the American Plan*, in which a fixed charge is made per day for board and lodging, and *Hotels on the European Plan*, in which a fixed charge is made for rooms only, while meals are taken *à la carte* either in the hotel or elsewhere. No separate charge is made for service. The European system is becoming more and more common in the larger cities, especially in the East; but the American plan is universal in the smaller towns and country-districts. Many hotels in the large cities offer a choice of systems. The rate of hotels on the American plan varies from about \$5 per day in the best houses down to \$2 per day or even less in the smaller towns; and \$3-4 a day will probably be found about the average rate on an ordinary tour. The charge for a room at a good hotel on the European plan is from \$1 upwards. Many of the American hotels vary their rate according to the room, and where two prices are mentioned in the Handbook the traveller should indicate the rate he wishes to pay. Most of the objections to rooms on the upper floor are obviated by the excellent service of 'elevators' (lifts). Very large reductions are made by the week or for two persons occupying the same room; and very much higher prices may be paid for extra accommodation. Throughout the Handbook the insertion of a price behind the name of a hotel (\$5) means its rate on the American plan; where the hotel is on the European plan (exclusively or alternatively) the price of the room is indicated (E. from \$1). The above rates include all the ordinary requirements of hotel-life, and no 'extras' appear in the bill. The custom of giving fees to the servants is by no means so general as in Europe, though it is becoming more common in the Eastern States. Even there, however, it is practically confined to a small gratuity to the porter and, if the stay is prolonged, an occasional 'refresher' to the regular waiter. In hotels on the American system the meals are usually served at regular hours (a latitude of about 2 hrs. being allowed for each). The daily charge is considered as made up of four items (room, breakfast, dinner, and supper), and the visitor should see that his bill begins with the first meal he takes. Thus, at a \$4 a day house, if the traveller arrives before supper and leaves after breakfast the next day, his bill will be

\$3; if he arrives after supper and leaves at the same time, \$2; and so on. No allowance is made for absence from meals. Dinner is usually served in the middle of the day, except in large cities.

On reaching the hotel, the traveller enters the *Office*, a large and often comfortably fitted-up apartment, used as a general rendezvous and smoking room, not only by the hotel-guests, but often also by local residents. On one side of it is the desk of the *Hotel Clerk*, who keeps the keys of the bedrooms, supplies unlimited letter-paper gratis, and is supposed to be more or less omniscient on all points on which the traveller is likely to require information. Here the visitor enters his name in the 'register' kept for the purpose, and has his room assigned to him by the clerk, who details a 'bell-boy' to show him the way to his room and carry up his hand-baggage. If he has not already disposed of his 'baggage-checks' in the way described at p. xxii, he should now give them to the clerk and ask to have his trunks fetched from the station and sent up to his room. If he has already parted with his checks, he identifies his baggage in the hall when it arrives and tells the head-porter what room he wishes it sent to. On entering the dining-room the visitor is shown to his seat by the head-waiter, instead of selecting the first vacant seat that suits his fancy. The table-waiter then hands the guest the menu of the day, from which (in hotels on the American plan) he orders what he chooses. Many Americans order the whole of their meals at once, but this is by no means necessary except in primitive localities or inferior hotels. The key of the bedroom should always be left at the office when the visitor goes out. Guests do not leave their boots at the bedroom door to be blacked as in Europe (except in the first-class houses), but will find a 'boot-black' in the toilette-room (fee 10 c.; elsewhere 5 c.). Large American hotels also generally contain a barber's shop (shave 20-25 c.; elsewhere 15 c.), railway-ticket, express, telegraph, telephone, messenger-service, type-writing, theatrical, and livery offices, book-stalls, etc.

The following hints may be useful to hotel-keepers who wish to meet the tastes of European visitors. The wash-basins in the bedrooms should be much larger than is generally the case. Two or three large towels are preferable to the half-dozen small ones usually provided. A carafe or jug of fresh drinking water (not necessarily iced) and a tumbler should always be kept in each bedroom. If it were possible to give baths more easily and cheaply, it would be a great boon to English visitors. At present a bath attached to a bedroom costs \$1 (4s.) a day extra, while the charge for using the public bathroom is usually 35-75 c. (1s. 6d.-3s.). No hotel can be considered first class or receive an asterisk of commendation which refuses to supply food to travellers who are prevented from appearing at the regular meal hours.

Boarding Houses. For a stay of more than a day or two the visitor will sometimes find it convenient and more economical to live at a *Boarding House*. These abound everywhere and can easily be found on enquiry. Their rates vary from about \$8 a week upwards. At many places the keepers of such houses also receive transient guests, and they are generally preferable to inferior hotels. — *Furnished Rooms* are easily procured in the larger cities, from \$4-5 a week upwards (comp. p. 9). Soap, curiously enough, though provided in hotels, is not provided in boarding-houses or lodgings.

Restaurants. In New York and other large cities the traveller will find many excellent restaurants, but in other places he will do well to take his meals at his hotel or boarding-house. Restaurants are attached to all hotels on the European plan (p. xxvi). A single traveller will generally find the *à la carte* restaurants rather expensive, but one portion will usually be found enough for two guests