The Lounger has often been asked to discourse on "Our Boarding Houses." The subject offers a fertile field for a reformer; but the Lounger is very little of a reformer, and so can treat it but inadequately. But some general principles which are patent to every one he, perhaps, can formulate as well as another. First, the term boarding house shall be held to include those places of resort known for a long time as "hash houses," and shall exclude among others Young's Hotel, Huyler's soda fountain, and the Park House. Of boarding houses there are two varieties, the good and the bad. The former is the theoretical form; the latter is in actual existence.

Boarding houses spring up like mushrooms in the path of the Freshman, and present to him more inducements than the catalogue of the Institute. In the dawn of their career they offer us the delicacies of the season at the hand of a pretty waiter girl. By the time of the semi-annuals, if the New Year has not rung them out of existence, their fare is expressed in its lowest terms: viz., beans in the numerator and hash in the denominator; and the waiter girl has become prematurely aged in her efforts to supply the appetites of ever-hungry students.

From the multitude of such boarding houses that yawn along the thoroughfare where the sons of Columbus still vend "bellissima banana" and grind the strident organ, let us select one indistinguishable from its companions by any alleviating features, and hold it up to the world; and in accordance with the spirit of specialization, which is the spirit of the age, let us limit our research to the consideration of one table in one corner of the particular eating house that we have selected. The landlord of this house is a lady of uncertain years and more uncertain income,—the possessor of a fine instinct for bargains in second-hand provisions, and a poor taste,—the latter qualification being universally admitted to be necessary for the enjoyment of life in a boarding house. The waitress, the direct agency to whom we look for our daily bread, is a damsel whom fate transplanted from the old sod in the time of the potato famine, and famine in general has been her attendant ever since. She has the voice of an auctioneer and the arm of an Amazon, and is a servant worthy of her hire.

The six students who fare at this round table, equal in that misfortune, are in other respects most dissimilar. First, Arthur Allen (S.B., M. I. T., '89), a survivor of a glorious class, whom five years' experience has acclimated to boarding-house life. He is taking a post mortem course in the 'Stute for his own amusement. On his right is another bachelor of learning,—Charles Greenleaf, Esq., astute and didactic, positive of ideas, and insatiable of appetite. Next him, a character that might be called an original. Otis Rankin, '92, is taking a special course in engineering. He is a scholar, a mechanic, a musician, a wit, and, above all, a critic. His imitations of Institute worthies might make their hair stand on end, and his criticism make them bald-headed. To hear him order a dinner is an inspiration, and to see him eat it a thing beyond description. Fourth on our journey around the table is Adam Smith, Jr., also '92. He is literally a man of figures; they drop from his lips like the jewels of the fairy story. His reason is limited only by infinity. It is as easy for him to say how much of the soupe maigre would be required to support the population of the globe, as for an ordinary man to calculate the amount needed to appease his own hunger. He has estimated the number of matches that can be made from a cord of wood, and can tell to the inch how far they would reach if placed end to end. His neighbor, Theophrastus Beard, '91, is studying for the stage, in anticipation of his sudden removal from the Institute, and at odd moments bends his energy to the conservation of a blonde moustache. Sixth and last is Robert Short, unclassed, who is addicted to shocking his companions by inventions reflecting on their private characters, and who is only tolerated among them on account of an unpaid board bill. The other interesting features of this little company must, for want of space, be relegated to the growing list of things best left unsaid.