



Ex-CBI Roundup

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Tales of CBI

BY CLYDE H. COWAN

FIRPO'S RESTAURANT

For more than half a century, Firpo's Restaurant, the "House of Firp," has been a tradition in Calcutta. Many of us CBI-ers visited this world-famous cafe at least once if we were stationed in or near this second largest city in the British Commonwealth of Nations. It is the outstanding place of its kind and its food specialties have been awarded more than a dozen gold medals in fairs throughout the world. The late Mr. Angelo Firpo was knighted in the Order of the British Empire for his never-ending efforts to make this popular establishment the ultimate in comfort, enchantment and delight. His motto was "Make the patron happy," and Mr. Firpo achieved overwhelming success in doing just that.

This spacious establishment outgrew a single floor some 35 years ago. Any improvement that would add to the clientele's enjoyment has been investigated and many times adopted. The elite of the Greater Calcutta Area soon learned that "The House of Firpo" was the center of "Royal Dining" in all of Bengal. The best whiskey from Scotland, the rare vintages of France, and Holland's greatest beers brought those in search of thirst quenchers. Nor was the food anything less than the very best. Choice fish, game, beef and lamb are to be found in the aging and freezing rooms in controlled humidity and ventilation. More than thirty varieties of well-baked bread are always fresh from the ovens, where machinery is used only where the result is a tastier product. Elaborate cakes are produced for festive occasions. Firpo's great pride is their spotless kitchen and hygienic methods used in every activity in preparing food.

Their tea cakes are works of art in tasty goodness, and include pastry of original creation that is not procurable any other place in the world. Choice bon-bons from the confectionery are dispatched by sea and air to candy lovers the world over. A rare blend of chocolate is Firpo's own formula and this exclusive again produces a luscious honey-sweet that is different.

The delectable food is prepared to its savory peak in one central galley, but patrons may enjoy it in several varied atmospheres. The Ballroom, The Louis XVI Restaurant, The Tea Room, and The Lido Bar offer just the type of hospitality a guest desires. Their world-famous packaged goodies may be purchased in the confec-

tionery adjacent to the Old English Tea Room.

The menus are not a long gazetteer of gastronomic delights to bewilder the patron, but are a small list of choice items that are available in minutes, and no price is quoted. For example, on a recent day the luncheon boasted of Creme St. Germain, Grilled Pork Chop with Sause Robert, Swiss Role and custard, assorted cold meats and potato stuffed with garden fresh vegetables. Although menus offer a limited choice, the leisurely diner can be served nearly any food he can name because Firpo's vast pantries are stocked complete, with the gourmand in mind.

With such an excellent cuisine, one would expect and does find the very best of entertainment procurable. Dancing is to the same type of music that the better New York hotels feature, and the air conditioned ballroom is the scene of many enchanted evenings. The featured acts of the floor show included Patricia Henry and her Gainsborough Girls. These five exponents of precision rhythm were obviously the current favorites. The Castillian team of Thresa and Antonio Jean from Madrid performed difficult Spanish dances, and the orchestra proved its versatility by executing the intricate scores. Mara Bayong, whose classical face suggested mixed parentage, displayed her sculptured body in several slow contortion and acrobatic numbers. In the pale blue spot light, she seemed like a living piece of marble statuary!

The performance contained no slapstick. The pantomimist said thousands of words, yet never uttered a sound. Each artist was of very top quality.

Now about the patrons, Anglo-Indians accounted for half, and the rest seemed to be British. After a visit to The House of Firpo, one remembers Kipling's words: "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Somehow, this could be wrong!

Roundup
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