

## THE MODERN DINNER PARTY.

HERE is a certain air of unreality and make-believe about the dinner party of today. Compare it with the dinner party of half a century ago, or, to go further back still, of Queen Anne's reign. One can get a fair idea of the latter entertainment from Swift's "Polite Conversation." Lord Smart's dinner hour was at 3 o'clock in the afternoon—"court hours," as one of his guests remarked—and the hour was none too early for the business that the company got through. Table decorations were unknown, and the attendance was not so perfect that the guests should refrain from helping each other, with their fingers, from the dishes before them. A company of eight were thus provided for: First course, a sirloin of beef, a shoulder of veal, a tongue, and a fish. Second course: Almond puddings, black puddings, fritters, chicken and soup. Third course; Hot venison pastry, a hare, a goose, a ham, and sundry rabbits, pigeons and partridges. A simple dinner, but conscientiously attacked by the guests, who seem to have partaken of every dish, and not spared the claret, the Burgundy and the strong October ale by which it was accompanied. Here was a menu that left the guests little leisure for polite conversation, but it was not for the pleasure of conversing, but of eating, that they were met together, and for that purpose the quality and quantity of the food are the only questions worth consideration.

A little more than a century later, dinner giving was still a simple matter of feeding invited guests. Just fifty years ago Thackeray wrote a paper in *Fraser's Magazine*, under the name of George Fitzboodle, upon the subject of dinner-giving. Thackeray was no unwilling diner-out; he pretended to look upon himself as somewhat of a gourmet, and he loved the discussion of "Barmecide Banquets." In this instance he was occupied in criticising a recent book on cookery, which seemed to have invited his warm commendation.

The dinners that he selected for special praise are almost as far removed from the ideas of today as the dinner given by Lord Smart. The following may be taken as a specimen: Crimped salmon, Irish stew, mashed potatoes, mince pies, Oxford dumplings, mince veal, pickles, roast and apple pie. All the dishes were to be placed on the table together, with the exception of the apple pie, which formed what was called a "remove" for the Irish stew. People who sat down to a dinner of this kind must have had very serious intentions upon their food. And Thackeray's ideal dinner was a very serious business, indeed. "In the first place—as to central ornaments," he wrote, "have them as handsome, as massive as you like, but be hanged to flowers! I say. Roses, bouquets, moss and foliage I have an utter contempt for as quite foolish ornaments that have no right to appear in atmospheres composed of the fumes of ham, gravy, soup, game, lobstersauce, etc. \* \* \* Flowers were not made to eat—away with them! I doubt even whether young unmarried ladies should be allowed to come down to dinner. They are a sort of flowers—pretty little sentimental gewgaws—what can they know of eating?"

It is not fair, of course, to assume that Thackeray would have upheld all of Mr. Fitzboodle's opinions on the subject, but there is no doubt that they were very largely his own and those of a good many men of his day. The food and the drink had real attractions then for the diner-out, who cared not a whit what his company might be, provided that the dinner was a good one. The times have changed. No longer can he afford to despise the Persicos apparatus, for those foreign adjuncts have become the chief attraction of the feast. We feast our eyes on the "sentimental gewgaws" that lie on the table before us, and lend our ears to the other "sentimental gewgaws" who sit beside us, and it is not the dinner—the food and the drink—that we care for.

### SHE PAID GEORGE.

They sat cozily side by side at the theater enjoying to the top of their bent the miserable fate of Desdemona, and dear George told her that he would never be jealous of her—no, not if she should give away 1,000 pocket handkerchiefs, and then they had squeezed each other's hands under her lace wrap, and they were happy as happy can be. "Dear George" bought her a box of bonbons and then ate them all up, for no man was ever so much in love as to be shy in the matter of eating.

By and by it came to the end of the third act, and after looking

very restless and wretched George said fondly, "You won't mind, dear, will you, if I just step out into the vestibule to stretch my legs a bit, will you?"

If George had had half an eye he would have seen that she did mind—very much. No woman likes to be left alone in a theater, but she only said coolly, "Oh, not in the least, if you care to go."

So George crawled over the laps of half a dozen ladies, treading on their toes, scratching their chins with his watch chain and brushing the bloom off their laces and evening attire.

She waited about five minutes, and then, swiftly bundling her wrap around her, and with her pretty face scarlet with indignation and embarrassment, she bravely left the theater and went home.

And it served George right.

## THE OLD, OLD STORY.

A couple of robins  
That perched on a tree  
Said to each other:  
"How sweet it would be  
To love and to marry  
And always agree!"

They loved and married,  
But husband and wife,  
While yet in the honeymoon,  
Kindled a strife,  
And all about nothing,  
Yet spoiling their life.

They lived in a garden  
Where cherries are red,  
They sleep in the downiest  
Nest for a bed.  
Yet always are wishing  
They never had wed.

They bicker, they fidget,  
They flutter their wings,  
And this is what each  
To the other now sings:  
"To love and to marry  
Are opposite things."

## CONSIDERATE.

"Then, when you have finished your lecture," said the professor of elocution and deportment to young Dulle, "bow gracefully and leave the platform on tiptoe."

"Why on tiptoe?" queried Dulle.

"So as not to wake the audience," replied the professor.

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