

MEHITABEL'S MUSINGS.

ONE of the acts which always stamps a person as underbred or even vulgar is the munching of fruit or confections in public. The uneducated classes are never happy unless they are eating, and many people who know better yield to the temptation only too often of burying their teeth in juicy fruit, when the act is disgusting to people who are forced to witness it. The juice from the fruit trickles down upon their clothing and besmears their hands and face. Then a handkerchief is used in lieu of a napkin and finger bowl to aid the reformatory process with the result of leaving the face streaked and making the handkerchief unfit for sight. The whole performance is enough to make the person eternally forfeit the regard of a friend. Is this severe? Not a bit of it.

"I know there are plenty of people of refinement traveling all the time," said a woman to me, "but some way I never meet them when I am traveling. There are always these objectionable people who must eat all the time." Everybody knows this is true. Did you ever get on a train that had been out a few hours on the road that wasn't littered from end to end with orange peeling, peanut shells, apple cores and other disgusting remnants of the feast. Why can't these travelers be made to flock in a car by themselves where they can feast their eyes as well as tickle their palates, and not make other people participate mentally in the affair?

It is nothing but an animal instinct which makes us eat at all, and though we are unfortunately obliged to respect the animal of our nature, we don't need to make it more important than our mind and soul. We don't need to let the servant dictate the order of our lives. This servant must be properly and kindly cared for, if we would get the work from it which we need, and we must do

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all in our power to refine the servant. But when the servant rules, the house is unfit to live in. How beautifully Lowell speaks of the proper spirit in which to partake of food. He says that the master and servant should sit down to the board together, as in an Arab tent. There should be a good view from the windows for the food of the soul, there should be bright and sparkling conversation for the satisfaction of the intelligence, and there should be light and wholesome food for the body. All this is worded very much better by the great critic and poet, but the substance is the same.

When the table is laid and everything is in keeping with decency and refinement, then is the only proper time to eat. Of course there are times when ceremony is necessarily dispensed with, but dinner is ever so much better when the family takes a little care to dress for it and when there are flowers in the vases.

We have not learned yet as we should that dining may be made ennobling or degrading. In the first place, upon the quality of the food depends the character of many moral acts of the future, and upon the nicety with which we handle our fork often hinges our own self respect. When dinner is served and all has been done to make it wholesome and pleasing, it is nothing but degrading to either gloat over it, or growl about it.

You never can tell whether a

man is a gentleman or not until you have dined with him, and even then, dining alone with him is not a fair test, as self possession with one person is an easy accomplishment. You may have liked him ever so much, he may even have convinced you that he came of noble lineage, and still when the fatal accessories of knife and fork are given him to demonstrate further his gentle breeding, he is confused, or betrayed by overconfidence. What difference does it make whether he eats pastry with a spoon or fork, or whether he smears a piece of bread with butter and breaks off a crescent with his teeth? He is no more a gentleman you know then, than he would be if he dropped his h's or g's. The word nice has been somewhat perverted from its true meaning, but one can easily see how it followed that those who displayed a nice discernment in little things came to be called nice people, which adjective left the impression of pleasantness.

MEHITABEL

A curious feature of the Sunday amusement problem is that the really first-class theatres in Chicago, which are open but six nights of the week, are doing more business than the others are in seven. This with the failure of the Sunday Fair to draw, is taken as evidence that the foreigners in Chicago during the exposition season are not so clamorous for Sunday amusements as they were thought to be. In fact, they are setting Americans an example of Sunday observance, which, if not religious, is at least wholesome.

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