

Grand Duchess of —" &c. But a hostess exercises her own discretion respecting the invitations she issues. If a ball is in contemplation, the county at large is invited to the mansion; but if dinner invitations only are issued, then the circle is necessarily restricted, and only a favoured few are bidden to the feast. The heart burnings and disappointments experienced by those who are left out of the charmed circle only those well versed in county society can thoroughly estimate. No after attention on the part of a hostess can soothe feelings that have been thus ruffled, or can efface the supposed slight; whereas a hostess is sometimes rather to be pitied than blamed. She is compelled to study the humour of her royal guest, and to give those entertainments likely to prove agreeable to his or her taste; and she must, therefore, invite those in the county whom the royal or imperial guest would most care to meet.

The arrival of a royal personage in any county, more especially if it is one remote from London, occasions quite a flutter of excitement, and raises the temperature of county society several degrees higher as far as the feelings of the ladies are concerned. The gentlemen take things more quietly. If there is to be a lawn meet, the sportsmen hope there will be a good run as much for their sakes as for that of the prince who is amongst them; and a good field always turns out in honour of the prince or princess, duke or duchess, as the case may be.

The neighbours who are not invited to a house where a royal guest is staying would avoid calling on the hostess until the departure of the royal visitor, even if calls were due, unless they had been absent from the county, and their return was not known to the hostess.

The principal people of a county who happen to be present at an entertainment, either dinner or dance, are usually introduced to the royal guests by the host or hostess, permission to do so having been first solicited. If the person to be introduced were a person of rank or distinction, it would only be necessary to say, "May I introduce Lord A. or General B. to you, Sir?" but if the person to be introduced had no particular rank beyond being popular in the county, a little preamble would be made to the request, such as "May I introduce a neighbour of ours to you, Ma'am, Mr. A., or Mrs. B.?" and if either of these individuals was remarkably clever, rich, or in any way excellent, his or her especial excellency would be mentioned. If the name or fame of those introduced has reached the ears of the royal guests, they usually shake hands on the introduction being made, and enter into conversation with them, otherwise they merely bow, and make one or two passing remarks. The house party itself is generally composed of those with whom the royal guest is more or less acquainted, and if the party should include a stranger or two, and their position warrants it, they are introduced on the first opportunity. In forming a house party to meet a royal guest personal acquaintance is one of the principal points to be considered, as the success of the party in no little measure depends upon it. These visits do not extend beyond three or four days, and there would be little time for total strangers to become acquainted; besides which, all the members of the royal family have each their particular set, as have also the foreign princes who periodically visit this country; and therefore, the house party is made up as far as possible of those moving in the set of the expected prince.

To turn to another point of etiquette, viz., the manner in which royal personages are addressed in social life, Her Majesty is addressed as Ma'am by the nobility and gentry, and by the ladies and gentlemen of her household and the upper professional classes. The word ma'am is not pronounced as if it were spelt "Mum," neither is it abbreviated nor yet drawn out into Marm, but is pronounced as if it were spelt Mam. All other classes than those enumerated address the Queen as "Your Majesty." The princesses are addressed individually as Ma'am by the upper classes, and as Your Royal Highness by the other classes. The royal Duchesses of Edinburgh, Connaught, and Teck are also styled Ma'am, as are foreign Arch-duchesses and Grand Duchesses and Crown Princesses, but the wives of foreign princes are simply styled Princess when addressed by the upper classes, as are the daughters of princes, although in this case the Christian name occasionally follows the title; by other classes they are styled "Your Serene or Imperial Highness," according to their rank. The Prince of Wales and the members of the royal family are respectively styled Sir by the upper classes, and Your Royal Highness by all others.

In addressing royal personages by letter the envelope would bear the full title, and the letter would commence, if to an English prince, Dear Sir; foreigners would be addressed by letter as Dear Prince B., or Dear Princess C. With regard to inviting royalty to assist at the opening of any public undertaking, with which request they are ever ready to comply, the request is in the first instance made through one of the members of a royal household by those who are not in a position to make a direct request to royalty.—*The Queen.*

HENDERSON'S CHRISTMAS CARDS are deservedly meeting with a large sale; they depict national scenes and sports, and are much more befitting than the imported cards. They are well executed and are faithful delineations, being a credit both to the designer and publisher. In sending them to friends in warmer climes, the appropriateness of the subjects is evident.

OYSTERS.

There is no doubt that Tilburina was right, and that an oyster may be crossed in love. The present generation has indeed succeeded in crossing vast numbers of oysters in love, and very lamentable has the result been. The conditions necessary for the increase of the species have been interfered with, and the pleasures of love and the hope of posterity—to borrow an expression from Macaulay—denied to many an oyster. Owing to over-dredging and disregard of close time, the best liked of shell-fish cannot breed properly on our coasts, and in consequence there has been for some time past an oyster famine, which seems to grow worse and worse. Like cigars, oysters have become enormously dearer of late; and, unlike cigars, they are appreciated and liked by all. Dr. Richardson and other wise people, and a good many excellent people, think that it would be well for mankind if the supply of tobacco were to come to an end; but no human being, at least no rational human being, could think without the deepest pain of a total cessation of the supply of oysters. Such a cessation, however, so far as regards the coasts of this country, seems only too likely. Early in the seventeenth century, they rose from 4d. to 1s. a bushel, defying the edict of a Lord Mayor of London who had settled for good what their value was to be. After the lapse of two centuries the supply failed in part, and, all regulations to the contrary notwithstanding, the value of oysters rose, and continued to rise, until in 1634 they cost 8s. a bushel—a terrible price, according to the ideas of the times. With oysters, as with mankind, history repeats itself. Now, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, we have the same visitation which afflicted our ancestors. A huge demand, stimulating the greed of poor men who of course think only of the moment, has led in our own time to precisely similar results. The oyster grounds have grown more and more bare, and before very long we shall probably be dependent upon the foreign supply. How inferior are foreign oysters, including even those from America, are to natives need hardly be said, and there is assuredly no need to point out how desirable it is that measures should be taken to prevent oysters from becoming extinct on our coast. As to what those measures should be there will probably be considerable difference of opinion. Those which have been taken up to the present time have proved useless, and it is clear that other and more stringent regulations are required. Apparently the beds can only be maintained in a satisfactory state by keeping them stocked with the indigenous shell-fish. Foreign oysters have been relaid on parts of our coast, but the oyster has, it seems, tastes and preferences like creatures of more complete development, and—whatever his mysterious method of breeding may be—he steadily declines to follow it in strange bays, or, at least if he does breed, his progeny refuse to remain in alien waters, and, in some manner not yet understood of man, take themselves off. With natives it is very different. What constitutes a parent stock, and how its preservation is to be enforced by law, are of course difficult questions; but it is better to grapple with difficult questions than to let natives disappear altogether, and a Government which has produced a Ground Game Bill, and has certainly no undue regard for vested rights, may well be asked to preserve oysters by some heroic legislation from indiscriminate destruction. Arguments have, it is true, been brought forward in favour of that unlimited dredging which leaves the ground almost bare; but, to show what their nature is, it is only necessary to refer to one of them. It has been alleged that, unless the beds are kept "clean" by constant dredging, the five-fingers, the whelks, the tunicles, and other objectionable creatures will destroy the oysters. In other words, unless the beds are cleaned by taking out of them all the oysters and parasites, the latter will prey on the former. Oysters are to be exterminated in order to exterminate the parasites. This remarkable view certainly resembles that of the parent who cut his little boy's head off to cure him of squinting; and it would be a waste of time to refute the arguments of those who are capable of committing themselves to such nonsense. That over-dredging, and especially dredging in close time, is one of the principal causes of the present scarcity seems beyond a doubt, and though there may be considerable difficulty in putting a stop to it, some effort should be made to preserve natives for the delight of rich and poor alike. A legislative measure on the subject would be acceptable to both parties, provided it were not timidly drawn. Tories would be gratified by legislation which resembles that of our ancestors, who, as has been shown, made several attempts to put a stop to the indiscriminate destruction of oysters; and Liberals would like the proposed law, as being high-handed and despotic. Another legislative measure, of a different kind, we will venture to suggest as a corollary to this one. In one respect a beneficial result might have been expected from the oyster famine. The raw oyster is infinitely superior to the raw mussel; but, on the other hand, the cooked mussel is, as the French found out long ago, very much better than the cooked oyster; and it was not perhaps too much to expect that, when oysters became very dear, English cooks would find out the merits of the mussel; but English cooks are a stubborn race. Might they not, however, be forced to learn? Might not the legislators who have said that under no circumstances whatever shall the landlord have the ground game say that under no circumstances whatever shall oysters be cooked, and make dressing them punishable by fine and imprison-