

lence varies, but we will take an average case in the house of a squire living on his paternal acres with five thousand pounds a year and knowing how to live.

It is 10 A.M. in October; family prayers, usual in nine country-houses out of ten, which a guest can attend or not as he pleases, are over. The company is gradually gathering in the breakfast-room. It is an ample apartment, paneled with oak and hung with family pictures. If you have any appreciation for fine plate—and you are to be pitied if you have not—you will mark the charming shape and exquisite chasing of the antique urn and other silver vessels, which shine as brilliantly as on the day they left the silversmiths to Her Majesty, Queen Anne. No "Brummagen" patterns will you find here.

On the table at equidistant points stand two tiny tables or dumb-waiters, which are made to revolve. On these are placed sugar, cream, butter, preserves, salt, pepper, mustard, etc., so that every one can help himself without troubling others—a great desideratum, for many people are of the same mind on this point as a well-known English family, of whom it was once observed that they were very nice people, but didn't like being bored to pass the mustard.

On the sideboard are three beautiful silver dishes with spirit-lamps beneath them. Let us look under their covers. Broiled chicken, fresh mushrooms on toast, and stewed kidney. On a larger dish is fish, and ranged behind these hot viands are cold ham, tongue, pheasant and game-pie. On huge platters of wood, with knives to correspond, are farm-house brown bread and white bread, whilst on the breakfast table itself you will find hot rolls, toast—of which two or three fresh relays are brought in during breakfast—buttered toast, muffins and the freshest of eggs. The hot dishes at breakfast are varied almost every morning, and where there is a good cook a variety of some twenty dishes is made.

Marmalade (Marie Malade) of oranges—said to have been originally prepared for Mary queen of Scots when ill, and introduced by her into Scotland—and "jams" of apricot and other fruit always form part of an English or Scotch breakfast. The living is just as good—often better—among the five-thousand-pounds-a-year gentry as among the very wealthy; the only difference lies in the number of servants and guests.

The luncheon-hour is from one to two. At luncheon there will be a roast leg of mutton or some such *pièce de résistance*, and a made dish, such as minced veal—a dish, by the way, not the least understood in this country, where it is horribly mangled—two hot dishes of meat and several cold, and various sorts of pastry. These, with bread, butter, fruit, cheese, sherry, port, claret and beer, complete the meal.

Few of the men of the party are present at this meal, and those who are eat but little, reserving their forces until dinner. All is placed on the table at once, and not, as at dinner, in courses. The servants leave the room when they have placed everything on the table, and people wait on themselves. Dumb-waiters with clean plates, glasses, etc. stand at each corner of the table, so that there is very little need to get up for what you want.

The afternoon is usually passed by the ladies alone, or with only one or two gentlemen who don't care to shoot, etc., and is spent in riding, driving and walking. Englishwomen are great walkers. With their skirts conveniently looped up, and boots well adapted to defy the mud, they brave all sorts of weather. "Oh it rains! what a bore! We can't go out," said a young lady, standing at the breakfast-room window at a house in Ireland; to which her host rejoined, "If you don't go out here when it rains, you don't go out at all;" which is pretty much the truth.

About five o'clock, as you sit over your book in the library, you hear a rapid firing off of guns, which apprises you that the men have returned from shooting. They linger awhile in the gun-room talking over their sport and seeing the record of the killed entered in the game-book. Then some, doffing the shooting gear for a free-and-easy but scrupulously neat attire, repair to the ladies' sitting-room or the library for "kettledrum."

On a low table is placed the tea equipage, and tea in beautiful little cups is being dispensed by fair hands. This is a very pleasant time in many houses, and particularly favorable to fun and flirtation. In houses where there are children, the cousins of the house and others very intimate adjourn to the school-room, where, when the party is further re-enforced by three or four boys home for the holidays, a scene of fun and frolic, which it requires all the energies of the staid governess to prevent going too far, ensues.

So time speeds on until the dressing-bell rings at seven o'clock, summoning all to prepare for the great event of the day—dinner. Every one dons evening-attire for this meal; and so strong a feeling obtains on this point that if, in case of his luggage going wrong or other accident, a man is compelled to join the party in morning-clothes, he feels painfully "fish-out-of-waterish." We know, indeed, of a case in which a guest absurdly sensitive would not come down to dinner until the arrival of his things, which did not make their appearance for a week.

Ladies' dress in country-houses depends altogether upon the occasion. If it be a quiet party of intimate friends, their attire is of the simplest, but in many fashionable houses the amount of dressing is fully as great as in London. English ladies do not dress nearly as expensively or with so much taste as Americans, but, on the

other hand, they have the subject much less in their thoughts; which is perhaps even more desirable.

There is a degree of pomp and ceremony, which, however, is far from being unpleasant, at dinner in a large country-house. The party is frequently joined by the rector and his wife, a neighboring squire or two, and a stray parson, so that it frequently reaches twenty. Of course in this case the pleasantness of the prandial period depends largely upon whom you have the luck to get next to; but there's this advantage in the situation over a similar one in London—that you have, at all events, a something of local topics in common, having picked up a little knowledge of places and people during your stay, or if you are quite a newcomer, you can easily set your neighbor a-going by questions about surroundings. Generally there is some acquaintance between most of the people staying in a house, as hosts make up their parties with the view of accommodating persons wishing to meet others whom they like. Young men will thus frequently get a good-natured hostess to ask some young lady whose society they especially affect, and thus country-houses become proverbially adapted for match-making.

There are few houses now-a-days in which the gentlemen linger in the dining-room long after the ladies have left it. Habits of hard drinking are now almost entirely confined to young men in the army and the lower classes. The evenings are spent chiefly in conversation: sometimes a rubber of whist is made up, or, if there are a number of young people, there is dancing.

A rather surprising step which occasioned something of a scandalous sensation in the social world was resorted to some years ago at a country-house in Devonshire. Two or three fast young ladies, finding the evening somewhat heavy, and lamenting a dearth of dancing men, rang the bell, and in five minutes the lady of the house, who was in another room, was agitated at seeing them whirling round in their Jeames's arms. It was understood that the ring-leader in this enterprise, the daughter of an Irish earl, was not likely to be asked to repeat her visit.

About eleven wine and water and biscuits are brought into the drawing-room, and a few minutes later the ladies retire. The wine and water, with the addition of other stimulants, are then transferred to the billiard and smoking-rooms, to which the gentlemen adjourn so soon as they have changed their black coats for dressing-gowns or lounging suits, in which great latitude is given to the caprice of individual fancy.

The sittings in these parlments are protracted until any hour, as the servants usually go to bed when they have provided every one with his flat candle-stick—that emblem of gentility which always so prominently recurred to the mind of Mrs. Micawber when recalling the happy days when she "lived at home with papa and mamma." In some fast houses pretty high play takes place at such times.

It not infrequently happens that the master of the house takes but a very limited share in the recreations of his guests, being much engrossed by the various avocations which fall to the lot of a country proprietor. After breakfast in the morning he will make it his business to see that each gentleman is provided with such recreation as he likes for the day. This man will shoot, that one will fish; Brown will like to have a horse and go over to see some London friends who are staying ten miles off; Jones has heaps of letters which must be written in the morning, but will ride with the ladies in the afternoon; and when all these arrangements are completed the squire will drive off with his old confidential groom in the dog-cart, with that fast-trotting bay, to attend the county meeting in the nearest cathedral town or dispense justice from the bench at Pottleton; and when eight o'clock brings all together a dinner and agreeable diversity is experienced during the day.

Of course some houses are desperately dull, whilst others are always agreeable. Haddo House, during the lifetime of Lord Aberdeen, the prime minister, had an exceptional reputation for the former quality. It was said to be the most silent house in England; and allience in these instances was regarded as quite the reverse of golden. The family scarcely ever spoke, and the guest, finding that his efforts brought no response, became alarmed at the echoes of his own voice. Lord Aberdeen and his son, Lord Haddo—an amiable but weak and eccentric man, father of the young earl who dropped his title and was drowned whilst working as mate of a merchantman—did not get on well together, and saw very little of each other for some years. At length a reconciliation was effected, and the son was invited to Haddo. Anxious to be pleasant and conciliatory, he faltered out admiringly, "The place looks nice, the trees are very green." "Did you expect to see 'em blue, then?" was the encouraging paternal rejoinder.

The degree of luxury in many of these great houses is less remarkable than its completeness. Everything is in keeping, thus presenting a remarkable contrast to most of our rich men's attempts at the same. The dinner, cooked by a *coron bleu* of the cuisine—whose resources in the way of "hot plates" and other accessories for furnishing a superlative dinner are unrivaled—is often served on glittering plate, or china

* Frenchmen say that the best English dinners are now the best in the world, because they combine the finest French *entrées* and *entrées* with *pièces de résistance* of unrivaled excellence.

almost equally valuable, by men six feet high, of splendid figure, and dressed with the most scrupulous neatness and cleanliness. Gloves are never worn by servants in first-rate English houses, but they carry a tiny napkin in their hands which they place between their fingers and the plates. Nearly all country gentlemen are hospitable, and it very rarely happens that guests are not staying in the house. A county ball or some other such gathering fills it from garret to cellar.

The best guest-rooms are always reserved for the married: bachelors are stowed away comparatively "anywhere." In winter fires are always lit in the bed-rooms about five o'clock, so that they may be warm at dressing-time; and shortly before the dressing-bell rings the servant deputed to attend upon a guest who does not bring a valet with him goes to his room, lays out his evening-toilette, puts shirt, socks, etc., to air before the fire, places a capacious pitcher of boiling water on the washing-stand, and having lit the candles, drawn the easy-chair to the fire, just ready on provocation to burst into a blaze, lights the wax candle on the dressing-table and withdraws.

In winter the guest is asked whether he likes a fire to get up by, and in that event a housemaid enters early with as little noise as possible and lights it. On rising in the morning you find all your clothes carefully brushed and put in order, and every appliance for ample ablutions at hand.

A guest gives the servant who attends him a tip of from a dollar and a quarter to five dollars, according to the length of his stay. If he shoots, a couple of sovereigns for a week's sport is a usual fee to a keeper. Some people give absurdly large sums, but the habit of giving them has long been on the decline. The keeper supplies powder and shot, and sends in an account for them. Immense expense is involved in these shooting establishments. The late Sir Richard Sutton, a great celebrity in the sporting world, and therefore probably in the world, used to say that every pheasant he killed cost him a guinea. On some estates the sale of the game is in some degree a set-off to the cost of maintaining it, just as the sale of the fruit decreases the cost of pineries, etc. Nothing but the fact that the possession of land becomes more and more vested in those who regard it as luxury could have enabled this sacrifice of farming to sport to continue so long. It is the source of continual complaint and resentment on the part of the farmers, who are only pacified by allowance being made to them out of their rent for damage done by game.

The expense of keeping up large places becomes heavier every year, owing to the constantly increasing rates of wages, etc., and in some cases imposes a grievous burden, eating heavily into income and leaving men with thousands of acres very poor balances at their bankers to meet the Christmas bills. Those who have large families to provide for, and get seriously behindhand, usually shut up or let their places—which latter is easily done if they be near London or in a good shooting country—and recoup on the continent; but of late years prices there have risen so enormously that this plan of restoring the equilibrium between income and expenditure is far less satisfactory than it was forty years ago. The encumbrances on many estates are very heavy. A nobleman who twenty years ago succeeded to an entailed estate, with a house almost gutted, through having had an execution put in it, and a heavy debt—some of which though not legally bound to liquidate, he thought it his duty to settle—acted in a very spirited manner which few of his order have the courage to imitate. He dropped his title, went abroad and lived for some years on about three thousand dollars a year. He has now paid off all his encumbrances, and has a clear income, steadily increasing, of a hundred thousand dollars a year. In another case a gentleman accomplished a similar feat by living in a corner of his vast mansion and maintaining only a couple of servants.

In Ireland, owing to the lower rates of wages and far greater—in the remoter parts—cheapness of provisions, large places can be maintained at considerably less cost, but they are usually far less well kept, partly owing to their being on an absurdly large scale as compared with the means of the proprietors, and partly from the slovenly habits of the country. And in some cases people who could afford it will not spend the money. There are, however, notable exceptions. Powerscourt in Wicklow, the seat of Viscount Powerscourt, and Woodstock, in Kilkenny, the beautiful demesne of Mr. Tighe, are probably in as perfect order as any seats in England. A countryman was sent over to the latter one day with a message from another country. "Well, Jerry," said the master on his return, "what do you think of Woodstock?" "Shure, your honor," was the reply, "I never seed such a power of girl's a-swapping up the leaves."

Country-house life in Ireland and Scotland is almost identical with that in England, except that, in the former especially, there is generally less money. Scotland has of late years become so much the fashion, land has risen so enormously in value, and properties are so very large, that some of the establishments such as those at Drumlanrig, Dunrobin, Gordon Castle and Floors, the seats respectively of the Dukes of Buccleuch, Sutherland, Richmond and Roxburgh, are on a princely scale. The number of wealthy squires is far fewer than in England. It is a curious feature in the Scottish character that notwithstanding the radical politics of the country—for scarcely a conservative is returned

by it—the people cling fondly to primogeniture and their great lords, who, probably to a far greater extent than in England hold the soil. The Duke of Sutherland possesses nearly the whole of the county from which he derives his title, whilst the Duke of Buccleuch owns the greater part of four.

Horses are such a very expensive item that a large stable is seldom found unless there is a very large income, for otherwise the rest of the establishment must be cut down to a low figure. Hunting millionaires keep from ten to twenty, or even thirty, hacks and hunters, besides four or five carriage-horses. Three or four riding-horses, three carriage-horses and a pony or two is about the usual number in the stable of a country gentleman with from five to six thousand pounds a year. The stable-staff would be a coachman, groom and two helpers. The number of servants in country-houses varies from seven or eight to eighty, but probably there are not ten houses in the country where it reaches so high a figure as the last: from fifteen to twenty would be a common number.

There are many popular bachelors and old maids who live about half the year in the country-houses of their friends. A gentleman of this sort will have his chambers in London and his valet, whilst the lady will have her lodgings and maid. In London they will live cheaply and comfortably, he at his club and dining out with rich friends, she in her snug little room and passing half her time in friends' houses. There is not the slightest surrender of independence about these people. They would not stay a day in a house which they did not like, but their pleasant manners and company make them acceptable, and friends are charmed to have them.

One of the special recommendations of a great country-house is that you need not see too much of any one. There is no necessary meeting except at meals—in many houses then even only at dinner—and in the evening. Many sit a great deal in their own rooms if they have writing or work to do; some will be in the billiard-room, others in the library, others in the drawing-room: the host's great friend will be with him in his own private room, while the hostess's will pass most of the time in that lady's boudoir.

In some respects railroads have had a very injurious effect on the sociability of English country life. They have rendered people in great houses too apt to draw their supplies of society exclusively from town. English trains run so fast that this can be done in places quite remote from London. The journey from London to Rugby, for instance, eighty miles, is almost invariably accomplished in two hours. Leaving at five in the afternoon, a man reaches that station at 7.10: his friend's well-appointed dog-cart is there to meet him, and that exquisitely neat young groom, with his immaculate buckskins and boots in which you may see yourself, will make the thoroughbred do the four miles to the hall in time to enable you to dress for dinner by 7.45. Returning on Tuesday morning—and all the lines are most accommodating about return tickets—the barrister, guardsman, government clerk can easily be at his post in town by eleven o'clock. Thus the actual "country people" get to be held rather cheap, and come off badly, because Londoners, being more in the way of hearing, seeing and observing what is going on in society, are naturally more congenial to fine people in country-houses who live in the metropolis half the year.

It is evident from the following amusing squib, which appeared in one of the Annuals for 1832, how far more dependent the country gentleman was upon his country neighbors in those days, when only idle men could run down from town:

"Mr. J., having frequently witnessed with regret country gentlemen, in their country-houses, reduced to the dullness of a domestic circle, and nearly led to commit suicide in the month of November, or, what is more melan-

* Perhaps the most charming idea of a country-house was that conceived by Mr. Mathew of Thomastown—a huge mansion still extant, now the property of the Count de Jarnac, to whom it descended. This gentleman, who was an ancestor of the celebrated temperance leader, probably had as much claret drunk in his house as any one in his country, which is saying a good deal.

He had an income which would be equivalent to one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars a year in our money, and for several years traveled abroad and spent very little. On his return with an ample sum of ready money, he carried into execution a long cherished scheme of country life.

He arranged his immense mansion after the fashion of an inn. The guests arrived, were shown to their rooms, and treated as though they were in the most perfectly-appointed hotel. They ordered dinner when they pleased, dined together or alone as suited them, hunted, shot, played billiards, cards, etc., at will, and kept their own horses. There was a regular bar, where drinks of the finest quality were always served. The host never appeared in that character: he was just like any other gentleman in the house.

The only difference from a hotel lay in the choice character of the company, and the fact that not a farthing might be disbursed. The servants were all paid extra, with the strict understanding that they did not accept a farthing, and that any defalcation from this rule would be punished by instant dismissal.

Unlike most Irish establishments, especially at that date (about the middle of the last century), this was managed with the greatest order, method and economy.

Among the notable guests was Dean Swift, whose astonishment at the magnitude of the place, with the lights in hundreds of windows at night, is mentioned by Dr. Sheridan.

It is pleasant to add in this connection that the Count and Countess de Jarnac, who have sustained the high character of a century since by their remarkable ancestor, who was one of the best and most benevolent men of his day.