

DINNER GIVING.

The chief requisites for a successful dinner party are a very carefully selected group of congenial guests, a choice and well-assorted menu; prompt and watchful, but silent and unobtrusive servants; lights tastefully adjusted, and a host and hostess absolutely at their ease. Even to the folding of the napkins and the temperature of the wines, the etiquette of the dinner party is now exactly prescribed, and the hostess who wanders from the limits of the well-ordained rules will surely find herself led into profitless and embarrassing experiments.

For a ceremonious dinner the company consists of eight, twelve, fourteen or eighteen persons; and the guests must be seated at one table. It is a serious, almost an unforgivable, error to overestimate the capacity of one's dining-room or the powers of one's cook or waitress, and attempt the entertainment of a greater number of people than can be comfortably seated at one's table, and the provision and service of an entertainment too complicated and elaborate for one's facilities. The hour for a dinner, of such formality that the invitations have been issued a fortnight in advance of the chosen evening, is usually seven, seven-thirty, or eight o'clock. A dinner so elaborate that the actual serving of the many courses will occupy over two hours is a great mistake. A hostess should so arrange her menu and drill her servants that one hour and a half only will be spent at table, though in one hour a handsome and very complete feast can be dispatched, without crowding one course too close upon the heels of another. After an hour or an hour and a half the diners are usually well satisfied to leave the atmosphere of the dining-room and the sight of food. The serving can be successfully accomplished by a butler, a footman and one maid; by a butler and a maid, or by two skilful woman servants. For a dinner of eighteen covers, at least three servants are necessary; for one of twelve covers, two will manage everything nicely, while at one of eight covers a single, capable man or maid, if assisted by a well trained helper in the pantry, can expeditiously minister to everyone's wants.