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TALES OF THE TOWN.

*"I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind
To blow on whom I please."*

ON a certain evening, not long ago, a gentleman was invited out to dinner. He was a stranger in Victoria, and was undecided as to what style of coat should be worn on the occasion. He had a dress suit, but unfortunately he had left it behind him in Toronto; he did not want to borrow one, so he finally concluded to wear a plain, ordinary everyday evening coat. Judge of his surprise, however, when he was informed by his host that it was not customary to receive a gentleman at his table who did not appear in full dress. I will not criticize the action of the host, but shall content myself with sympathizing with the gentleman who was so unceremoniously and unfeelingly repulsed. The above is vouched for by a person well known in Victoria society, who suggested the wisdom of taking up the matter at length. To relieve many who are sometimes in doubt as to what to wear in making calls I have consulted all the leading authorities, and the result of my investigation is as follows: A little common sense is as good as anything in deciding such a point, and this question is answerable also by a fixed law. The dress suit is never assumed in society earlier than 6 o'clock. If an affair extends into the evening, very well, you are not supposed to run home to alter your toilette. In "The Rise of Silas Lapham" Howells sketches a scene which is ludicrous, looking at it from one point of view, but pathetic from another. The self-confident old man, who could make money all right, and who was perfectly at ease among men of business, was entirely out of his element when asked to dine at the house of a gentleman. His stumbling block is whether or not to wear gloves, and he finally decides to wear them, and buys a pair, into which he laboriously squeezes his red, puffy hands. At the house of his host, however, his heart fails him, and with the diplomacy of a minister of state he pulls one off and meets his host, ready to take off the other one, or to replace the one removed, whichever he discovers to be the proper thing. Another writer describes a man, a lawyer, who has led a busy professional life, who has a young sister come to the city to visit him. In order to please her he consents to go out to a dinner with her. This was a thing which he had never done in a formal way during all his professional life, and without a thought of social custom he attires himself in a frock coat, faultless waistcoat, linen and scarf, and goes to the dinner only to find himself the one creature who differed from all the others in dress. He is

miserable, and others are uncomfortable for him. It is to avoid differences in little things that the mandates of society are laid down. By lessening points of difference we are enabled to meet on a better and friendlier plane. Being odd and eccentric only shuts us out from the enjoyment of life.

A host, of whom I have recently heard, gave a dinner for a number of gentlemen who were of a variety of grades of civilization. I mean to say that some among the number were greatly lacking in the refinements and instincts of a gentleman, and yet because of political successes they were bound to be honored socially. Now this host used the kind of discretion of a woman in every particular, his one ambition being to make his guests happy and comfortable. He knew that certain of his guests would appear in full dress, and that others would not observe this ceremony. And in order to keep an equilibrium and a harmony he wore a dress waistcoat, and a frock coat. Moreover, he sacrificed in his dinner somewhat to the plebeian tastes of the lower strata of his company, and with rare management kept all from feeling annoyed or bored. It is good to meet with a charming hostess, but it is simply delightful to know a man who can so graciously extend hospitality.

If my readers have not been enlightened sufficiently on this subject, it is not my fault. Among other things, I discovered, while looking through the books, is that I have made some serious errors—both of omission and commission—while out calling myself. These I intend to avoid in future.

While I am on this subject, however, I should say that Florence Howe Hall, who is considered an excellent authority on etiquette, remarks of the time when party calls should be made: "The custom of making evening calls, except upon intimate friends, is rapidly going out of fashion. Young men now call in the afternoon, after an invitation to dinner for instance, and make a visit of twenty minutes or half an hour in length. This change of hours is due in part to the imitation of English customs, and in part to the present habit of dining late, which gives a gentleman an opportunity to make a call after business hours, and before 7 o'clock dinner, now so much in vogue."

The *Times* has imported a type-setting machine, which is intended to do away with the much abused compositor. I have not seen the machine working, but I am told that it is a marvel of mechanical ingenuity. This reminds me that if the veteran Victoria newspaper journalist—

Hon. D. W. Higgins—ever gets back into newspaper harness, he will be surprised at the great changes which have taken place in recent years. The type writer has become an almost absolute necessity, and reporters and editors have reached a wonderful degree of proficiency in their use. In some cases, the results attained are little short of marvellous. A worker on a daily paper is of necessity obliged to get out his "copy" in a hurry, and consequently he must know how to work his machine with rapidity or he will be left behind in the race. The one who easily leads all the rest of the key manipulators in the city is Mr. John F. Norris, who has acquired a rapidity and a delicacy of touch much admired and vainly imitated by his associates. He now uses two machines, working one with his right hand and the other with his left, and by this practical application of ambidexterity is able to turn out more good copy than any two ordinary men. It is an easy matter, I am told, for Mr. Norris to write a lengthy article on the hen as a domestic fowl with his right, and at the same time put together a beautiful spring sonnet with his left, the two machines clicking harmoniously in unison as the controlling brain supplies the rounded periods for one and the metrical lines for the other. But skill like this is not common, and few are able to reach that stage of perfection in the art.

I have been favored with a glance at the programme prepared by the Sons of Erin for their concert on the evening of St. Patrick's Day, and I have every reason to believe that the affair will surpass anything of the kind ever before attempted in this Province.

The anniversary of St. Patrick is a memorable day because it recalls the consecration of Ireland by one of the grandest saints that ever lived. The day awakens many pleasant recollections and he is not worthy of the name of Irishman who will permit the occasion to pass without some trifling observation. Who can do justice to a land that has produced a Sheridan, a Burke, a Grattan and an O'Connell? Who can do justice to the heart of the Irish nation, which has for generations and still is a powerful and central magnet among mankind, attracting to it from almost every corner of the globe the strongest sympathy and solicitude? That great heart has through all the stormy and turbulent history of its native land, preserved its national characteristics. It is indefinable. Like the color of the violet and the fragrance of the rose, it defies analysis. It is hopeful in its adversity, cheerful in its very affliction, generous in its want, hospitable in its poverty and irrepressible under all circumstances. Irishmen of Victoria will