

their ears. If, while trying to maintain a dialogue with an uninteresting neighbour, they want to catch what is being said on the opposite side of the table, they allow their glances to wander unmistakably to the point of attraction, or try to look out of the corners of them, as a magpie does, in a fashion which neither improves their own personal appearance nor gratifies the party to whom they affect to give their undivided attention. The cleverest compliment in words will fail to propitiate the lady who sits next you, if she discovers that all the time your eyes are, like the fool's, in the ends of the earth. So long as these do their duty, she may construe silence into admiration, and excuse your stupidity to herself on the ground that the charms of her person and conversation may be rather overwhelming to a modest man: but there can be no misinterpreting the fatal evidence of the wandering glances. It is only the really accomplished listener who can devote his eyes and all his visible allegiance where they are legally due, and yet keep his ears open to what he really wants to hear. To do this well requires something of the quality of mind which can play two games of chess at once. It is a great social triumph to be able, after having done your duty in one quarter, and receiving an honourable dismissal from the bore of the evening, to walk quietly across the room, and take up at once the threads of conversation somewhere else, and show a thorough acquaintance with all that has been said there already. It implies the compliment that your interest has been irresistibly drawn in that direction, though duty chained you to the ear elsewhere.

It is a mistake to suppose that the choice of subjects has much to do with the success of conversation. As the devout reader of nature is said to possess the faculty of finding "sermons in stones," so the true social artist finds talk in everything. A writer in a popular journal speaks as if, in London society, the exhibitions and the opera during half the year, and travelling for the other half, formed the necessary topics, and that the great art would be to treat them with sufficient variety. No doubt they are very useful subjects, and in the hands of a good talker will do just as well as anything else. But the conversational powers which can only discourse upon a theme, are not of the true order. They will be of very little use at those awful moments when the regular stock subjects have been worn to death by more clumsy hands, and a diversion is acquired.

Some of the most important ingredients in a good talker are mainly physical, when all is said. Lively animal spirits, moderate self-confidence, and a wish to please, will go much farther to make an agreeable, if not a highly accomplished talker, than great abilities or fulness of information. It is because they possess very largely the two first qualifications, that the Irish, the French, and, in a less degree, the Welsh, are more ready in conversation than most Englishmen. And where really clever men fail in the art, it may be often from a morbid dislike to compete in a race which they enter at a disadvantage against the light-weights whose natural vivacity, imperturbable digestion, and happy unconsciousness carry them through to the end.

BLACKWOOD.

ETIQUETTE.

"It is well known," says Sir Walter Scott, "that a man may with more impunity be guilty of an actual breach either of good-breeding or of good morals than appear ignorant of the most minute point of etiquette." In fact, etiquette is the manual exercise and regulation of society. It is to the citizen what drill and exercise are to the soldier. The latter may be a brave man, but he can not be an accomplished soldier unless he is acquainted with the minutiae of his profession. So, in the world, to be thoroughly well-bred, one must be *au fait* to the etiquette of society. A knowledge of etiquette, therefore, may be said to be an important part of good-breeding. Now all persons desire to be thought well-bred. Inferiority in any thing is not pleasant; but inferiority in that which is so constantly manifest, and in

that in which all claim to be equal, is most wounding to that extremely sensitive feature in human character—vanity. A breach of etiquette almost always draws ridicule upon the offender. It betokens a want of acquaintance with the rules of society, a want of familiarity with the manners of refined life. Society, too, is always lynx-eyed, critical, and exacting. It promptly avenges the violation of its minutest laws, whether those laws be founded in reason or not. It will more easily endure bad morals than vulgarity. Thus, at the feast given by Prince John, after the tournament of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, Cedric the Saxon, "who dried his hands with a towel, instead of suffering the moisture to exhale by waving them gracefully in the air, incurred more ridicule from the cultivated Normans than his companion, Athelstane, when the latter swallowed, to his own single share, the whole of a large pasty composed of the most exquisite foreign delicacies, termed at that time a *Karumpio*." Again, in illustration of the same principle, when at this feast "it was discovered, after a serious cross-examination, that the Thane of Coningsburg had no idea of what he had been devouring, and that he had taken the contents of the *Karumpio* for larks and pigeons, whereas they were in fact beccaficoes and nightingales, his ignorance brought him in for an ample share of the ridicule which would have been more justly bestowed on his gluttony."

It requires a great deal of hardihood or insensibility of character to escape from the feeling of mortification or chagrin which always accompanies the exhibition of an ignorance of etiquette. Yet nothing is more arbitrary than etiquette. It varies with the nation and with the city, and it may well be asked: How is it to be learned? Must the etiquette of all the world be studied to constitute one well-bred? To a certain extent it must, or one must be content either to remain at home or pass for uncultivated, and thus not infrequently meet with mortifications which might have been avoided. Ignorance of the etiquette of the society in which we ordinarily move is unpardonable; the arbitrary rules of other society may be sufficiently ascertained to enable one to move in it with propriety, if not with elegance. The American who has learned in New York and Paris that a gentleman should always appear gloved in a drawing-room, and would not venture to display himself ungloved in the salons of either of the cities we have mentioned, would naturally feel surprised upon entering the drawing-room of the Queen with irreproachable lavender to find himself quietly requested to remove his gloves, as it is not the etiquette to cover the hands in the presence of her Majesty. If the same gentleman were to sport his beaver in the presence of the King of Spain, because he saw others do so, he would be quietly informed that it was not the etiquette for a foreigner to infringe the peculiar privilege of the *grandees* of Castile. A little inquiry would prevent such errors and the chagrin that ever accompanies them. No person should presume to mingle in a society which is unfamiliar to him without endeavoring first to learn some of its peculiarities. When Hajji Baba went to England, attached to the legation of the Turkish ambassador, and heard the people hiss the Prince Regent, he thought it was the thing to hiss; and so he hissed with all his might; but very soon Hajji found that he had "eaten dirt." An incident once occurred in St. Petersburg which illustrates the annoyance which may spring from an absence of acquaintance with a particular usage or matter of etiquette. During the life of the late Emperor a court dinner was given in honor of a foreign gentleman and his daughter. The latter of course occupied the seat of honor on the right of his Majesty. Toward the close of the dinner white grapes were offered, and, as usual, the servitor presented the golden vase crowned with white grapes of rare quality to the young lady first. She had been brought up, if not in a sunny clime, at least where white grapes were no uncommon fruit. It was winter. But, doubtless, the young lady had often seen white grapes on her father's table at home even in winter, and was not surprised to find them on the table of