

kettle sang snugly on the trivet, the decanters, glasses, and golden lemons glistened on the table, and we were prepared to make a night of it.

The centre-piece was a large china Bowl, with an old-fashioned punch-ladle, which had descended to our host through several generations of Douglasses.

This was THE BOWL.

"Now," said David, tenderly taking down from a shelf a manuscript receipt-book, that had been compiled in bye-gone days by his great grandmother, a dame famous far and wide for her confections, "I'll read the directions; and, Gerald, will you brew?"

"With all my heart," I replied, turning back my sleeves and preparing for action.

"Rub the sugar over the lemon until it has absorbed all the yellow part of the skin, then put the sugar into the bowl; add the lemon-juice (free from pips), and mix these ingredients together."

"Mixed they are, Sir."

"Pour over them the boiling water."

"How much?"

"About a pint, and take care that it boils."

"Take care that it boils! Why, the kettle is fuming and fretting and puffing out volumes of steam, as if it dared me to lay hold of it and make it do its duty."

"Add a tumbler of rum, a tumbler of brandy, some nutmeg—half a teaspoonful—and mix discreetly. Then spice it according to taste."

It was finished at last.

There it stood upon the table, its hot breath heavy with the odours of Indian spices, and offering up its incense of vapour, while it ladened the air with delicious aromas.

Again and again the ancient ladle did its duty. Then the sparks glowed in the bowls of the mist-compelling meerschaums, and there rolled to the ceiling thick, wreathing clouds of fragrant tobacco smoke.

The cold, polished, immaculate poker and tongs had forgotten their accustomed mathematical neatness, and lay honestly begrimed with unwonted labour, while the fire entered into the spirit of the thing, and crackled, and roared and tossed its tiny sparks up the chimney in wild and exuberant glee. How could we leave such a merry companion to take our places at the card-table? The thing was impossible.