

I drank some of the water the inspector held to my lips, and two constables who had been supporting me drew back.

"I've been very ill," I stammered, "and I am weak; but tell me, pray tell me the worst."

"Well, sir, the worst is that the young lady's getting better, I hope. That was the last report, if it's the same. She was knocked down by a van on the fifteenth; concussion of the brain; small bone of arm broken; no means of identification; taken to St. George's Hospital; last news, still insensible, but doctors hopeful."

This principally read to me from a book which the inspector consulted.

"A cab, please, quick!" I faltered.

"Cab directly, Thomson," said the inspector.—"There, I'll go with you."

That inspector holds a place in my heart amongst those to whom I owe gratitude, for he was very kind. He took me, trembling and agitated, to the hospital, and there, after a short delay, we were taken to a bedside in a small, beautifully clean, and airy ward, where a doctor was sitting by my darling, who lay there very feeble, but with the light of reason beginning to shine once more from her gentle eyes.

She recognised me, but her voice was quite a whisper, and I could see that she was confused and puzzled as to her presence there.

I need not tell you of her rapid strides back to convalescence, nor more of her accident than that all she recollected was a warning cry as she crossed the road, and then seeming to wake in the hospital with me standing at her bedside.

Our sojourn by the sea lasted another month for her sake, but by then I was busy once again, and working easily and well.

Need I say that my darlings were both soon back in their old home, never to leave us again? But stay, I speak too fast; I fear—yet why should I envy their happiness?—there may be fresh partings; for the son of our old clergyman, who called on Hetty in Woodmount Square, spends a great deal of his spare time at our house. Marie, too, blushed most vividly the other day, when I came upon her speaking to an old friend's son.

So the story of my great trouble is done, leaving me, as I recall the past, firmly assured that, whatever rain may fall into each life, God always sends some sunshine to dry the tears.

GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

THE DINNER-TABLES OF THE PAST.



"SUBTILTIE" OF PASTRY.

IT is really interesting to take a retrospective glance at our dinner-tables; it is curious to trace the gradual changes which have taken place, to notice the marked advance that was made as one century glided into another, and yet how long a time elapsed before the actual requirements, as we should now

term them, appeared upon the table. I verily believe that much less is generally known concerning the habits at table of the Early English than of the Early Greeks and Romans.

Faithful descriptions and illustrations of our dinner-tables in the olden times are to be found in our old libraries—the British Museum, the Bodleian, and others—and it is from these sources that I have drawn the information and drawings, which I hope will afford you, my readers, as much interest as the subject has given to me.

Let me introduce you to a dinner-table of the tenth century (Fig. 1); whether it is in a town or country house I cannot tell you, but in that day I fancy there was no distinction between the two.

The table looks bare, but it is ready for the three

people who are going to dine. The table itself is not of polished mahogany but of rough wood, and of rude construction; probably it has been shaped out of the trunk of a tree. It is only brought into the dining-hall for meals, and then removed. On it there is placed a knife (in shape like a modern razor), two salt-cellers of much larger dimensions than any we can show, a solitary dish, and two flat cakes of bread—*voilà tout*.

The scene which follows would certainly shock our feelings, but then we must remember there were ex-



Fig. 1.

tenuating circumstances. Two serving-men approach, each holding a spit, on one of which fish are impaled, on the other some pieces of meat. These spits are held to each person, who, if fish is preferred by him, takes it off with his fingers; if he wishes for meat, then he takes his knife and cuts off a portion. Fish-bones and scraps are thrown indiscriminately on the

table and floor. There are no glasses to be seen, nevertheless our Saxon ancestors drank, and drank deeply; but their glasses being literally tumblers, they they were not put on the table. A serving-man came with an ornamental bucket full of ale or mead, filled a tumbler, and handed it to his master or mistress, who of course was obliged to empty the glass before it could be laid down. There is clearly not much for us to observe at that period, so we will at once pass on to the thirteenth century, and see if time effected any improvements during the intervening years.

Instead of a rude block of wood we have boards laid on tressels (Fig. 2); our forefathers are still without plates, for the round objects are flat cakes of bread; these were frequently ornamented by having a cross or flower imprinted on them.

The spits are now made of silver, and the thick glass tumblers have given place to cups, of which their owners are very proud; they place much value on

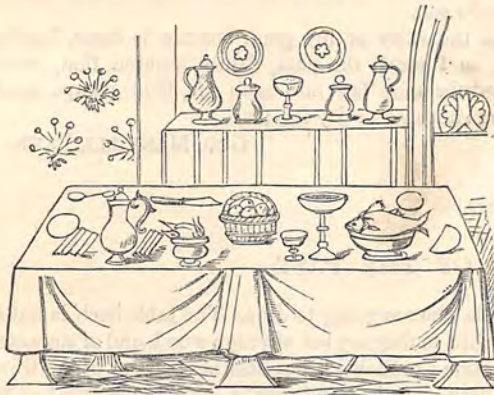


Fig. 2.

them, and generally make mention of these possessions in their wills.

There were cups of silver, cups with "fringed edges," wooden cups variegated with gold, wooden-knobbed cups, and other kinds; these were ranged on the dressoir or cup-board, which at this epoch became one of the principal pieces of furniture in the dining-hall.

We will now take another stride, and peep at them in the fifteenth century. The first change we find is that of a "table dormant" (Fig. 3)—namely, one that remains in the hall—and it is covered with a cloth, or to speak in the parlance of those days, a "nappe," which is a luxury only to be found on the tables of knights. Even yet there are no plates to be seen, but the good folk were becoming a little bit more civilised in their notions about things, for they made pieces of bread serve for plates whereon to put their meat. The only ornament which adorned the table was the salt-cellar, which graced the centre. One in use at this period was made in the form of a ship.

At this time it was the custom to lay the cloth after the guests were seated. In a metrical code written for the direction of servants, this duty is described; and they are also strictly enjoined to place the salt first on the table, "invariably and in all places."

Very soon after this period plates were invented, if we

may use the term; first, platters of wood, square in shape and having a hole sunk in one corner for the salt; next came pewter plates and dishes, and the platters were only used by the commonalty. There was but a scanty



Fig. 3.

supply of these luxuries, however, for as a rule one plate served two people; hence the saying, to "eat in the same dish," became a proverbial phrase for intimate friendship.

And now, but for the absence of forks, all the actual requirements for comfort would appear to be assembled; spoons there are, and a knife for each person, provided each brings his own, but forks for use at table there are none. It is not our province to speak of culinary art, but at this stage it had to do largely, we may say almost entirely, with the decorations of the table, and therefore it must needs be mentioned. At this time the meats were put on the table, and there was much display. On great occasions a roasted peacock, in all the glory of tail and feathers, appeared to grace the festal board, or a boar's head decked with rosemary, and many another uncommon dish; these were followed by "subtillies," which subtillies were marvellous representations of castles and giants, of knight and fair ladye, of saints and patriarchs, of birds and beasts, raised in a wondrous way in delicate pastry. One of these subtillies, which formed the centre ornament at a banquet, represented a ship filled



ANGLO-SAXON DRINKING VESSELS.

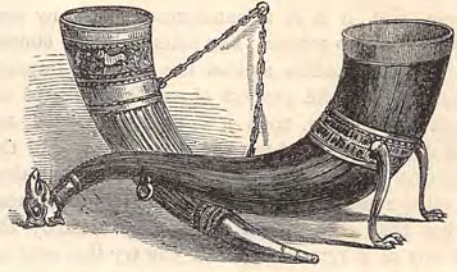
with birds, surrounded by a sea full of fishes, having a tall mast, with a sail of silk and ermine, surmounted by a figure of Venus. A wonderful construction this, as the drawing will show you.

We must not stop to describe all the curious and fanciful objects made by those clever cooks, but step on

to the seventeenth century, in which the principal event surely was that of the introduction of forks on to the table. The custom came to us and to others from Italy—so it appears from the observation of a traveller, one Thomas Coryate, who having visited that country, says that “the Italian, and almost most strangers who comorant in Italy, doe alwaies at their meales use a little forke when they cut their meate;” and then he proceeds minutely to describe how this wonderful performance was managed, and concludes by remarking: “I think no other nation of Christendom doth use it but only Italy.” He had the honour of teaching the English its use. But the chief objects of consideration were the drinking cups and vessels, of which, it would appear, our ancestors had apparently as great a variety as of liquors. There were noggins and piggins and whiskins, ale-bowles, wassell-bowles, tankards and kannes, small jacks and great black jacks—the use of which latter caused the report in France that the Englishmen drank out of their own boots! There were cups “made out of the horns of beasts, of cocker-nuts, of goords, of the eggs of ostriches, others made of the shells of divers fishes brought from the Indies.” There were “tankards and flagons and wine bowls, some white, some purcell-gilt, some gilt all over, some with covers and some without, of sundry shapes and qualities.” What a goodly array, to be sure!

During this, the eighteenth century, the fashion for gold and silver table utensils and ornaments grew apace, and it became the ambition of many to exhibit

as much plate as possible, so that every article that could be made of gold or silver was made of those metals. It therefore came to pass that in time the accumulation was great, and we had silver salt-cellars and mustard-pots, cream-jugs and sugar-basins, butter-dishes and meat-dishes, épergnes and wine-



DRINKING HORNS.

coolers, till the tables fairly groaned beneath the weight of all these costly and heavy decorations. The effect of all this glittering grandeur was striking, it is true, but on the other hand it looked ponderous and solemn. By-and-by there came a revulsion, and most if not all of our silver decorations were swept off our dinner-tables. But this was done for the purpose of putting china and glass in the place of silver. The arrangements of the table in this our day are increasingly augmented and varied, and show a complete and striking contrast to the bare boards at which our early ancestors ate their repasts.

E. C.

WASHING AT HOME: THE ERADICATION OF STAINS.

BY A PRACTICAL WOMAN.



IN a former article on “Washing at Home,” which appeared in CASSELL’S FAMILY MAGAZINE for June, 1876, I alluded to the subject of eradicating stains preparatory to washing, and gave a receipt for preparing a chloride of lime bleach, which with care could be successfully applied to wine and fruit stains without injuring the fabric.

I am afraid, however, that from time to time other difficulties will arise in the home laundry which will not be so easily combated. As a general rule, all fruit and wine stains yield to treatment with this chloride of lime water, properly boiled out subsequently, but I have known obstinate cases, more especially of walnut-juice, where a very weak solution of ammonia, hartshorn, or sal volatile (in good truth all one and the same) was far more efficacious. It must be borne in mind the solution should be weak; if too strong it will not answer the purpose.

Many old-fashioned people will not admit chloride of lime in any form into their laundries, and are content, when wine-stains occur, to apply salt at once, and wash them out in plain water as soon as the

cloth has been removed. Soap sets the stain, and should not be used until it has been taken out. Milk is often effectual where water and other things fail; this should be applied by putting the wine-spot in when the liquid is tepid, and letting it come to the boil.

Where many other kinds of stains are concerned, milk is a very valuable ingredient indeed. Should by any mishap a bottle of ink be spilt on a print dress, as will sometimes occur in the best-regulated school-rooms, fly at once to the milk-jug and saturate the place with milk, rubbing it and rinsing it in the milk till it disappears, which it will do with a little patience, without injuring the colour. Moreover, in the course of this misfortune a spot or two of the ink falls on a nice new carpet, put plenty of milk on them, and sop up the inky fluid as soon as it becomes inky, renewing the fresh milk. If, instead of the carpet, it is the woollen table-cloth, put a basin of milk beneath it, and let the stain soak in, and it will very soon be invisible, a sponge with clean water removing all the traces of the milk afterwards.

I have come across, in many receipt-books, a variety of directions for removing ink and ironmould from white things, and I have tried many of them, always