

## HOW I ENTERTAINED A HUNDRED PEOPLE FOR FOURTEEN SHILLINGS AND A HALFPENNY.



SHORT time ago, I wrote a rough sketch of "How I Furnished my House for a Hundred Pounds," for the benefit of the many others who are wanting to do the same; and now, for a similar reason, I want to tell you how I entertained a great many people for a very

small sum. And I have a still stronger reason for dwelling on this subject, and that is that so many young married couples begin life by making the lamentable mistake of refusing to mix in society at all. "We cannot afford to entertain, therefore we cannot go out." So all invitations are declined, and Darby and Joan begin to live for themselves alone. Protestant as the English Darby generally is, there is still something of the Pope in his composition—his great temptation is to shut himself up in his castle or little villa, and, regardless of the claims of his neighbours and the outside world, to form a little court of his own, in which his opinion and his will are infallible.

His Joan soon becomes listless; household cares cannot occupy her all day; she tires of her accomplishments, and does not even take the trouble to read or think for herself; and when, on rare occasions, she finds herself one of a large company, she is ill at ease and shy; she has forgotten how to talk and what to talk of; and when she notices that her husband's self-confidence has deserted him, and that he looks quite at sea among his fellows, her last remnant of courage goes, and she longs for flight.

We certainly require the healthy friction of society to "rub our angles down," and from the day upon which I began life as the happy wife of a comparatively poor man, I resolved that, for our own good, no excuse of poverty should make us retire from the world. I had seen my husband caressed and honoured, one of the shining lights of society, and as for me!—well, he chose me; and, at any rate, I had read a great deal and had many interests, and though a great antagonist to the rights of women, I was somehow beset with a haunting fear that there was some power in that little gold ring which might reduce my conversation to details of my cook and housemaid, only varied, as the years went on, by little Tom's measles and Mary's teeth.

The first four months of our married life were spent in decorating our house, and in accepting invitations from many people in the town. At the end of that time we felt the time had come to make some return. Now we had not much choice about what kind of return to make, for our means were very limited. Dinners were quite beyond us, and even large musicals, with ices and supper, were not to be thought of; and yet there were a hundred and thirty people who must be asked and fed, and more or less amused.

Now our rooms, fortunately, were not small, there was space and ventilation for every one, so we resolved to divide our party into two, and have one entertainment in the afternoon and one in the evening. We sent out the invitations, giving about ten days' notice, and a hundred and four accepted. To the afternoon we asked the delicate and old people who would be afraid of the night air, but who would enjoy meeting their friends in the day. Forty accepted for that party. Now, an afternoon party is of all things the most difficult to make succeed; there is a flatness about the whole thing which ruins it; but as ours was certainly an exception, I will minutely describe what we did.

First of all we guarded against the usual mistake of the guests taking tea in the dining-room before seeing their hostess; if they do this, there is nothing to do when they are shown into the drawing-room. Our tea was laid on a long trestle table at one end of the drawing-room. The table was covered with a white cloth with a wide border worked in blue cross-stitch. In the centre of the table stood our silver kettle on its stand, doing duty for once as a tea-pot; our large brass urn was used for the same purpose, the tea being sewn into a muslin bag. This is a much better plan than constantly having to re-fill tea-pots, and the little spirit-of-wine lamp keeps the tea really hot. There was no choice of tea and coffee, because I could not afford the coffee; but when expense is not an object, it is nice to have both coffee and chocolate, whipped cream being used for both. I had plates of brown bread and butter, and white bread and coburg. I had two large dishes of sponge cake, which was considered delicious. It was really one of those ordinary tenpenny sponge cakes; as these are often dry after being kept at a grocer's, it is best to soak them in milk and to put them into the oven for a quarter of an hour, when they come out perfectly fresh. I also had a Valentia cake at fivepence halfpenny, and threepennyworth of halfpenny buns, these being cut in two and spread with Devonshire cream. A quarter of a pound of cream is quite sufficient for this dish. A small quantity of plain cream for the tea goes much further if it is whipped and a little milk added. My tea I always buy from a merchant in London, and give one-and-sixpence a pound, and find it equal to local teas at a much higher price. I only used three-quarters of a pound at the two parties.

We had plenty of easy-chairs in our rooms, and there were comfortable seats for every one, little tables being scattered about for the tea-cups. The first hour was taken up with tea and talk; then, when subjects were getting a little worn, we suggested an adjournment to the dining-room, where some blind girls from the Blind Asylum were ready to sing. They gave us



two or three beautiful glees, and then I sang and my husband recited. The blind girls were so delighted at hearing us that others of the company volunteered, and so quite a concert ensued. Seven o'clock was striking before the departure of the last guest gave me the opportunity of seeing if my tea had been appreciated. Plenty had been eaten, and the blind girls did ample justice to the remains.

Now I knew my afternoon party would go off well, but I was very anxious about the sixty guests who were coming to spend an evening with us. An evening party is more trouble than an afternoon, for several reasons. More refreshments are expected, and if it is to go off well some kind of entertainment must be provided; still, it has many advantages over the afternoon. It is always easier to get more gentlemen, and people are more at leisure and ready for amusement at that time of the day, and consequently more easily amused. As our income did not at that time exceed £280 a year, any kind of supper was out of the question, so we arranged our programme so as to have refreshments the last thing instead of on arrival.

We had given much care and thought as to what kind of entertainment would be novel and inexpensive, and we determined to give a Shakespeare reading. We wrote to some of our visitors asking if they would take parts (of course there was no acting), and they seemed very pleased to do so. We decided upon the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is a play that if well read is delightful. The parts were all allotted to the different readers, who had time to practise them beforehand.

The guests arrived punctually at 8.30—they had been asked to be punctual. When they had laid aside their out-door wraps, they were ushered into the drawing-room, where the chairs of the readers were arranged in a large circle, each chair bearing a ticket with the name of its owner. The people who were not going to read had chairs facing the others, so they were all able to see and hear well.

The readers sat till their turn came to "enter," when they stood till their reading for the time being was over. The play went beautifully, every one seemed to

read excellently, and the audience was entranced. We finished at about eleven o'clock, then adjourned into the dining-room, where a table was spread with tea and coffee, dishes of sandwiches, plates of cake and bread-and-butter. All were glad to take something and to talk over the reading, which was pronounced "first-rate." At a quarter to twelve they took their departure, after congratulating us upon our "charming evening," which all said they had "thoroughly enjoyed."

The next morning I sat down to do my accounts, and to see at what cost I had entertained a hundred people, and as it seems to me that the sum was small in comparison to the amount of enjoyment we gave and received, I venture to put down the sum total and the items at the end of this paper.

The afternoon party for forty people cost four and sevenpence halfpenny, the items being:—

	s.	d.
A quarter of a pound of tea	...	0 6
Do. of butter	...	0 6
Do. of Devonshire cream	...	0 6
Milk	...	0 4
Two loaves of brown bread	...	0 6
One coburg	...	0 4
White bread	...	0 4
One sponge cake	...	0 10
One Valentin cake	...	0 5½
Six halfpenny buns	...	0 3
Sugar	...	0 2
		<u>4 7½</u>

The evening party for sixty-two people was as follows:—

	s.	d.
Coffee, half a pound	...	1 0
Tea, do.	...	0 9
Sugar do.	...	0 4
Milk	...	0 6
Cream	...	1 0
Tongue in a tin for sandwiches	...	2 0
Sponge cake	...	0 10
Bread	...	1 0
Butter, three-quarters of a pound	...	1 0
Currant cake	...	1 0
		<u>9 5</u>

Total of both being fourteen shillings and a halfpenny.

## AN OLD LOVE.

BY M. PAYNE SMITH.

## CHAPTER THE FIRST.



“DON'T be a goose, child! say 'Yes' or 'No,' but make up your mind and have done with it”—and Aunt Eleanor's voice grew grave as she looked lovingly at the fresh-faced girl who sat opposite, trying apparently to ruin the shape of a pretty summer hat.

“I don't want to make up my mind, auntie. He's very nice! I know that, but two years is a long time; and suppose I meet some one I like better?”

“Suppose you do nothing of the kind. Suppose you send him away, and then two years hence find he is the only man in the world for you, and that he has met some one he likes better. How about that, Madge?”

The girl's face fell, and the brim of her hat got a vicious dent.

“Some horrid minx!” she ejaculated.

“Nothing of the kind! Mind you, I am not supposing for a moment that, if he were engaged to you, he would as much as look at any other girl; but if you refuse him, why in the world should he not offer