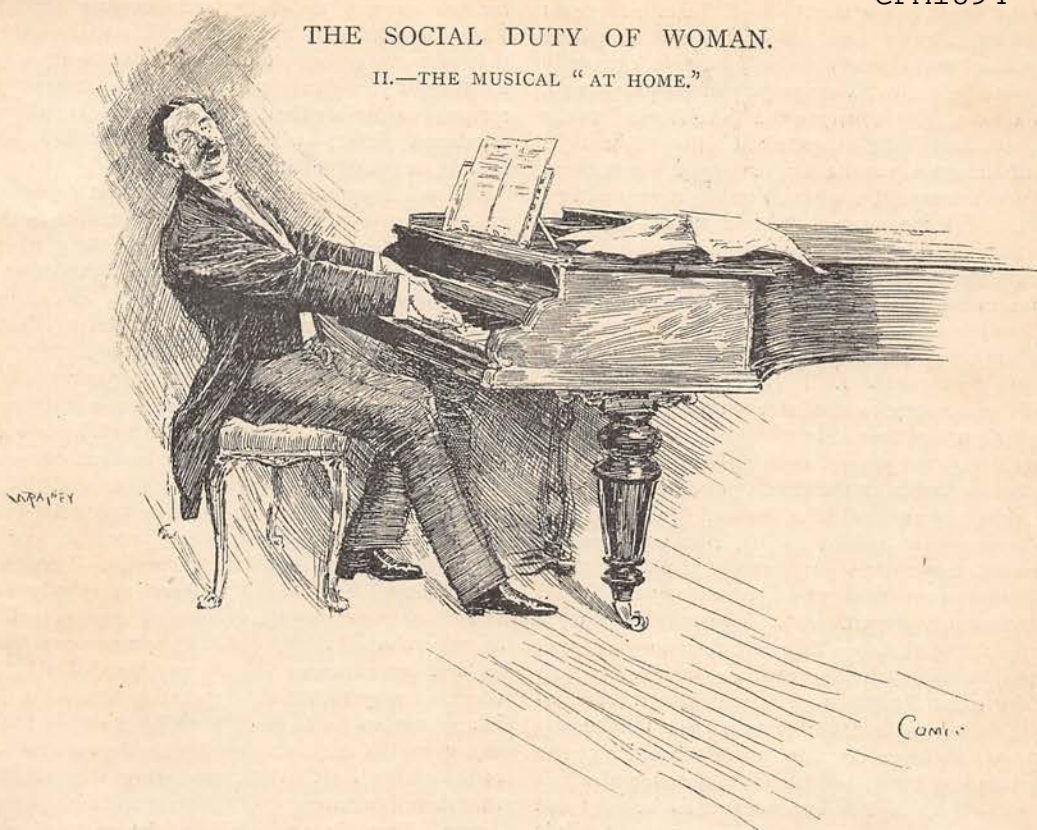


THE SOCIAL DUTY OF WOMAN.

II.—THE MUSICAL "AT HOME."



LET us begin at the beginning. When can musical "At Homes" be said to begin? At the time when you are asked, the unsophisticated would say. This sounds simple, but then in some cases you are not asked for any time at all, and the results of such ambiguity may be exceedingly awkward. Here is the card I received a short time back:

LADY XXX

At Home,

JUNE 10th.

Music.

Very early.

"Very early" had caused me some anxiety. I knew that fashionable people kept late hours; still, in my innocence, I thought "very early" might possibly mean about 10 o'clock or a quarter-past. Alas! I was undeceived. On my arrival, everything—the hall, the liveried footman, the cloak-room—looked chilly and desolate; there was a general air of being "before the play." And my heart sank into my shoes, for as yet no

other cloak could I discover! But it was too late to turn back. The ordeal must be faced. Still, I must own that never in my life have I more longed for the earth to open and swallow me, than on that occasion. . . . The music had not yet begun; indeed, there was no sign yet of the musicians; three mandolins, resembling nothing so much as giant lemons cut in halves, and tied with long ribbon streamers, were all in that line that greeted my despairing eyes. The big French double drawing-room, into which I was ushered, seemed to me as large as Trafalgar Square; and the footman shouted my name in stentorian tones. The house-party—numbering about fifteen, who had just finished their after-dinner coffee—glared at me; some of them used those terrible straight eye-glasses in my direction. But though the guests were something lacking in politeness, not so was the hostess; and "the party," after all, was not so very long in assembling. The mandolins struck up—the guests seemed to come in a surging crowd, all at once. Half an hour, I discovered, made all the difference. In social life, the most fatal blunder, the one unpardonable sin, is "not to know"; and I ought to have known that "very early" meant half-past ten, not ten.

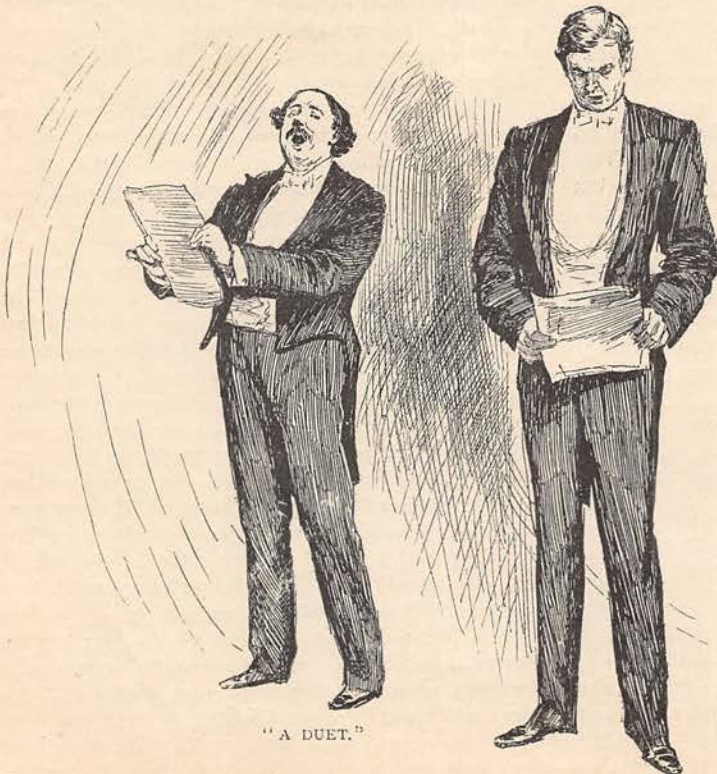
Here, we see, is the first pitfall that the unwary may fall into. Such a *mauvais quart d'heure* as the foregoing is surely sufficient to warn any of us, however rash, that it is much better to "put on" the time, and arrive, say, twenty or thirty minutes later than we have reason to believe the party will assemble.

As to the length of our stay, this will be in most cases decided for us by our bodily fatigue; for, although the fashionable world seems to be as a rule extremely robust—to judge from the numbers of people who go, in the season, from one crowded “At Home” to the other, standing long hours night after night in a vitiated atmosphere and a fatiguing crush—still, those of us who are candid confess to feeling a very natural fatigue. At some musical “At Homes”—alas, not all!—they provide seats; but it must be said that, as a rule, the more fashionable the party, the less the comfort meted out to the guests. Fewer seats are given, and more meagre refreshments: also, there is less attention paid to the music; indeed, people often talk straight through it. It is best, when attending one of these parties, to stroll slowly through the rooms, listen for a polite interval to the music, chat with one’s friends during the pauses, and time one’s leave-taking so as not to clash with the third verse of a sentimental song or the “adagio” of a sonata. Some musical “At Homes” are indeed so big, that you are not expected to take your leave verbally at all, but there is a separate staircase, down which you may quietly and unostentatiously depart. At a large musical party I recently attended, I found, indeed, that no guest was expected to make “the tour of the rooms” more than once, for naturally this would necessitate a fresh introduction, as neither the footman nor the hostess could possibly be expected to remember which of the ever-ascending guests had been introduced, and which had not. Such a little *contretemps* as being twice introduced is not, it is true, of much account, but it is

for the moment decidedly embarrassing; and here I may remark, that it is the small vexations of life that certainly contribute most to our annoyance. For instance, if you give a party, be sure to instruct your servants to number the cloaks and hats carefully with numbered tickets—which can be written at small trouble, or bought at small cost.

We will suppose that you really want to see your guests, to enjoy them, and to make them enjoy themselves; and that your object is not solely to “get through” as long a list of your acquaintances as you can. Nay, we will stretch a point, and suppose that you know them by sight, and feel a slight interest in them. To begin at the beginning, it is better not to put R. S. V. P. on your invitation cards. To spare your intended guest the trouble of answering is an attention for which he is always grateful; and though no doubt it is more convenient to know exactly how many people to expect, still, you can always provide for the many; and, as a matter of fact, even when guests *have* accepted, you can never be quite sure of their coming. Very foggy nights have been known to keep everybody away. It is better to provide against all contingencies by securing a small number of one’s own personal friends, to save appearances should anything of this kind occur. I may mention here that it is a good thing, in any case, to get as many available “sisters, cousins, and aunts” as one can, to help one in the arduous duties of the evening. It is so encouraging always to know that there is someone to fall back upon in any emergency. Then, in preparing for the rush of guests, you might leave a little furniture in your rooms, instead of turning your house out of doors, as though you were preparing to receive the occupants of the Augean stables. It always looks more comfortable to see a few armchairs and sofas scattered about. And do not give your guests either too little or too much to eat, but strike the happy mean. People do not go to a party, like children to a school feast, having starved previously for a week. If in the afternoon, tea, coffee, ices will be all-sufficient; if in the evening, the visitor, who has presumably dined, will certainly not require a big sit-down supper, but soups, sweets, and other light refreshments.

Afternoon parties, it is hardly necessary to remark, usually take place from four to seven; evening parties, as a rule, last from ten to one. Of these the evening parties are distinctly the more popular form of entertainment. Busy professional men, to whom an afternoon free would be an impossibility, can generally get away in the evening; and as the majority of men are busy, the afternoon “At Home”



“A DUET.”

consists often of bevy of ladies, among whom men are "few and far between." At a musical party last year, I remember the arrival of one such solitary man. He was abashed to find himself alone among thirty ladies, and did not dare, apparently, to advance much beyond the door, where he took up a mildly apologetic attitude. And very often I have been amused to see several young men arrive at once, as if they had been waiting about outside, to gain confidence from numbers.

As to the musicians, of course it is always nice to have available friends, if their music be at all tolerable; but should you have recourse to professionals, have the best if you can afford them; if not, then the best you can. If your guests are many of them young and frivolous, do not overdo the

line; generally, it must be confessed, in friendly amateurs. With regard to the paying of professional artists' fees, that is not such a difficult matter as some people imagine, who go through great mental agonies on that account. All those ladies and gentlemen who give their services to musical parties have their stipulated fees, and the whole matter is easily arranged by letter.

Finally, when you have secured your musicians,



"SERIOUS."

classical music. People do not like to be bored, and their weaknesses must be indulged. So have your songs "up to date" as much as possible—but a *little* real music will not hurt—and a sentimental ditty of Tosti's, a piano-piece of Grieg, or, more especially, a nocturne of Chopin, will always give delight. If you get a comic singer, be careful to get one who will be "in keeping" with his audience. There is a vast difference in audiences. Some will be amused at what will irretrievably shock others. And, a last word of warning, should you decide on having recitations, see that your reciter be equal to the occasion. It has been our lot to see—and to pity—most painful exhibitions of incompetency in this

and the evening has fairly begun, do not seize upon your guest and nail him or her to listen *malgré soi*, but let them all do as they like. They will not listen any the better for being obliged to listen against their will. The music is there for the guests, not the guests for the music; therefore, do not enslave them. Their good feeling should make them know how to listen and be quiet; and, at any rate, it is not your business to teach them. For the "lady of the house" to go about saying "Hush" and gesticulating wildly at the beginning of each fresh song, has a painful, if not a ludicrous effect.

Let your guests, then, wander about at will, and do not oblige them to stay in the music-room. Introduce

your guests at convenient intervals to one another, and when the opportunity occurs; never mind if it is "the thing" to do or not. I may remark in this connection that it is as well to be thoughtful in the selection of one's guests, and not to invite people to meet each other whom you happen to know do not assimilate. And, finally, do not ask more people than your house will hold. It is best, indeed, to ask more than you can conveniently entertain: more, say, than you have chairs for; because you may be quite certain that all will not come. Then, again—but I do not mean to lay down any hard-and-fast rules. There are many roads to success; and there are more ways than one of making a musical party pleasant. Tact and

thoughtfulness for others are, after all, the chief desiderata. With them you can do much; without them, nothing. If you have really had kindly feelings towards everyone, and have wished not so much to "swagger" as to make your friends happy; if you have worked not so much in the aim of "enlarging your acquaintance" as in that of keeping those friends you already have; if, thanks to your endeavours, things have gone smoothly, comfortably, and without hitches, you may, when the last carriage has driven away from the door, betake yourself to a well-earned rest, with a proud consciousness of having successfully accomplished a thoroughly enjoyable "Musical At Home."

ENGLISH MONARCHS AS AUTHORS.—III.



Ever English monarch were afflicted with *cacoëthes scribendi* it was that pitiful king, James I., the undignified pedant whom flatterers called "The British Solomon" to his face, and laughed at behind his back. Most of James's works were printed before he succeeded Elizabeth, and were then repub-

lished. His first book was brought out when he was eighteen years old, and was entitled "Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie." Besides some indifferent "sonnets," this volume contains "ane schort treatise containing some revlis and cantelis to be obseruit and eschewit in Scottish poesie." This chapter is the only part which is worth the while of a modern student to peruse. The law in English verse had already been laid down, and the "prentise" thought it time to teach his betters in his native country. James and a French writer Du Bartas (1544 to 1590) admired one another, and translated each other's works; but the royal author, conscious that his rendering of Du Bartas's "divine and learned works" contained faults innumerable, threw himself unreservedly on the reader's leniency. Whether I am right in describing James's first poetic efforts as indifferent, the reader can judge for himself from the following exact copy:—

"The faound Greke, Demosthenes by name,
His toung was ones into his youth so slow,
As evin that airt, which floorish made his fame,
He scarce could name it for a time, ye know.
So of small seidis the Liban Cedres grow:
So of an egg the egle doeth proceed:
From fountains small great Nilus flood doeth flow:
Evin so of rawnis do mightie fishes breid.
Therefore, good Reader, when as thou dois reid
These my first fruitis, dispysse them not at all.
Who watts both these may able be indeid
Of fyner poemis the begynning small.
Then, rather loave my meaning and my panis
Than lak my dull ingyne and blunted branis."

James's next book was "Exercises at Vacant Hours," published in 1591, of which I need only say that the author in a preface to a later edition declared that he had "composed these things in my verie young and tender yeares: wherein nature (except shee were a monster) can admit of no perfection." And now when he is wiser and could do better he has no time: "yea, scarslie but at stollen moments haue I the leasure to blenk vpon any paper, and yet not that with free and vnvexed spirit." Who excuses

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Harmony may be made up for the maintenance of the whole Body.

The application then of a thing of a contrary nature to any of these parts, is to interrupt them of their due function, and by consequence hurtful to the health of the whole Body; as if a man, because the Liver is as the fountain of Bloud, and, as it were, an Oven to the Stomach, would therefore apply and wear close upon his Liver and Stomach a Cake of Lead, he might within a very short time (I hope) be sustained very good cheap at an Ordinary, besides the clearing of his Conscience from that deadly sin of Gluttony; And as if because the Heart is full of vital Spirits, and in perpetual motion; a man would therefore lay a heavy pound stone on his Breast, for staying and holding down that wanton Palpitation; I doubt not but his Breast would be more bruised with the weight thereof, then the Heart would be comforted with such a disagreeable and contrarious Cure. And even so is it with the Brains; for if a man because the Brains are cold and humide, would therefore use inwardly by smells, or outwardly by application, things of hot and dry quality; all the gain that he could make thereof, would onely be to put himself in great forwardness for running mad, by over-watching himself; the coldness and moisture of our Brains being the onely ordinary means that procure our Sleep and Rest. Indeed, I do not deny, that when it falls out that any of these, or any part of our Body, grows to be distempered, and to tend to an extremity beyond the compass of Nature's temperate mixture, that in that case Cures of contrary qualities to the Intemperate inclination of that part being wisely prepared, and discreetly ministred, may be both necessary and helpful for strengthening and assisting Nature in the expulsion of her Enemies; for this is the true definition of all profitable Physick.

But first, These Cures ought not to be used, but where there is need of them; the contrary whereof is daily practised in this general use of Tobacco, by all sorts and Complexions of people.

And next, I deny the *misuse* of this Argument, as I have already said, in regard that this Tobacco is not simply of a dry and hot quality, but rather hath a certain venomous faculty joyned with the heat thereof, which makes it have an Antipathy against Nature, as by the hateful smell thereof doth well appear; for the Nose being the proper Organ and Convoy of the fence of smelling to the Brains, which are the onely fountain of that fence, doth ever serve