

Afternoon Parties.

ONE of the most sensible of the new departures in social life which have taken place of late years consists of the afternoon receptions which are so fashionable a substitute for the great evening parties which formerly extended beyond midnight.

It is well known that gentlemen always detested these parties, and avoided them whenever it was possible. Thus, many ladies were prohibited from accepting the invitation of their friends to the annual "crush," and many persons were debarred from reciprocating the civilities they had received, by the modern growth in luxury and the necessity for supplying a gorgeous supper far beyond the capacity of their financial and household resources.

Evening parties are now principally confined to Germans and sociables, given by young people to young people, or small *musicales* and literary reunions, which have a definite purpose, and for which guests are selected with special reference to their interest in these topics.

The regular weekly or fortnightly receptions of an informal character serve to create a number of social centers, each one of which is a *rendez-vous* for harmonious spirits, but the afternoon "At Home" is the only successor and the most popular substitute for the social necessity which compels persons who go much into society to, at least once during the year, bring their friends together, and, by one effort, wipe out many minor social obligations.

No special entertainment is needed for a "regular" afternoon reception beyond the refreshments, which are served from a table set either in the dining-room or an extension parlor. Sometimes these consist of pickled oysters, salad, and small sandwiches, in addition to ices, cake, biscuits, tea, coffee, and the like. But quite often the first of these are omitted and the table supplied only with the lighter viands.

Invitations during the season are always sent a week or more in advance—three weeks is not too much of a margin where people are very fashionable and the society large—but, of course, the more formal the invitations, the more fine and ceremonious the entertainment is expected to be. Ordinarily, the waiter who opens the door directs the guests to the dressing rooms, where they lay aside their wraps. The hostess stands inside the drawing-room door and receives each one as they enter. This is the only formality. The guest is then at liberty to look about for friends, accept the invitation of some gentleman to get an ice, or a cup of tea, and in half an hour make her way back to her carriage, or on foot to her home, in time to superintend the wants of her own family, receive a party to dinner, or prepare for the opera, or spend her evening in mending stockings, as circumstances may determine. The duties even of a woman in society are very multifarious, and some of those who are paraded as the most brilliant leaders are the most efficient in the performance of minute details which belong to home and family life.

"The Truants."

(See Page Illustration in Oil.)

OUR picture of "The Truants," reproduced from the celebrated painting by the same name, is a very homely and truthful bit of *genre* composition, and will not only revive in the old reminiscences of their youth, but enable the young to realize the difference between their modern high schools, their numerous classes and divisions, and the small, bare room, with its stone or boarded floor, in which the boys and girls of the first part of the

present century received their modicum of the three R's.

The ancient school-master, however, was not unfrequently a poor scholar, whose college learning had done but little to advance his material interests, and the stern pedagogue of our picture, small in stature, with his brown velvet knee-breeches, worn at the knee, his skull cap, and thin, just now severe, but not unkindly visage, is the exact embodiment of one whose "little Latin and less Greek" had only served to distinguish him in the eyes of his rustic neighbors.

Goldsmith's lines express the reverential awe which in those days was felt no less for the minister than for the school-master.

*"Still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
How one small head could carry all he knew."*

The grouping in the picture is excellently managed, and the pitiful aspect of the little girl who has her finger to her eye is in capital contrast to the quiet, subdued, but sturdier manner of the boy, whose courage only failed as he came into the dreaded presence of the "master." The urchin watching behind the door looks much more mischievous than either, and as if he intended to slide in and escape the consequences of his transgression. The black-board, with its significant figures, and the eager children in the background, evidently glad of the break upon the monotony of their studies, offer a suggestive contrast to the wild flowers dropping from the hands of the truants, and which tell of the fields and the sunshine outside the dull precincts of the school-room. The picture is charming in the faithfulness of its old-time rendering, and will add another representative to the gallery furnished to our subscribers.



The Law in New York as it Relates to Family.

BY LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE.

III.—MARRIED WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

As was said a former article, the old English common law forms the basis of the codes in nearly every state in the Union, and this law bears with peculiar hardship upon married women. Under its provisions, marriage is to a woman civil death, according to Blackstone's famous aphorism, "A husband and wife are one, and that one is the husband." As has been tersely stated, "The main principle of English law is that a married woman has no property;" and in much of its legislation as with regard to trusteeships, letters of administration, etc., the humiliating position of women who have entered "the honorable estate of matrimony," is indicated by the fact, that it is expressly stated that such trusts may not be given "to idiots, criminals, lunatics, and married women."

No wonder that such laws suggested Victor Hugo's bitter assertion that women are "politically minors, and in marriage slaves."

According to common law, "whatever personal property belonged to the wife before marriage, is by marriage absolutely vested in the husband. In chattel interests the sole and absolute property

vests in the husband, to be disposed of at his pleasure" (Blackstone's Com., book II., 443); and with regard to real estate the law is equally explicit. "If a woman be seized of an estate of inheritance, and marries, her husband shall be seized of it in her right" (Comyn's Digest, Baron and Feme). Nor does the cruelty of this law stop here, for no married woman can inherit property after marriage; it becomes at once her husband's; neither can she, no matter how hard she may labor, become entitled to any money of her own, as her earnings belong absolutely to her husband. In fact, the common law does not recognize her existence until she commits a crime, when, unless the act be perpetrated in her husband's presence and under his supposed orders, it instantly becomes aware of her actions, and she is punished without mercy.

Such is the law to-day in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and nearly all of the Southern States, Louisiana having adopted long ago the Code Napoleon much more just in its provisions. With this and a few other states excepted, however, the married women of this country are to-day under the provisions of the common law, which not only deprives her of all property, but permits her husband to inflict on his wife "proper personal chastisement," and to become, if he pleases, her jailer and lock her up or even chain her, as was recently (1877) done in England by a man in Spilsby, who was dismissed without punishment, though he had kept his wife chained to the wall for twenty-four hours, as "the courts of law permit a husband to restrain his wife of her liberty" (Blackstone, Com., p. 445).

In our own state of New York, thanks to the exertions of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other eminent women, the cruelties of the old English law have been largely modified, and it is now directly declared in the New York Code, that "Beyond the claim of mutual support, neither husband or wife has any interest whatever in the property of the other" (p. 95).

Article 6th of volume III. of the Revised Statutes of New York is devoted entirely to married women's rights, and by a series of laws they are given nearly all the rights and privileges in regard to property possessed by unmarried women or by men.

Beginning with a section securing to every married woman her own property, without control of her husband, the several following sections secure to her the right to inherit real and personal estate, to make contracts, to sue and be sued, to make a will, to carry on business, to buy and sell, to hold patents for inventions, to insure her husband's life, to own stock and to vote upon it. In fact, by the just provisions of these laws, a wife is, as it were, restored to life, made an intelligent responsible human being, and in this state, to the honor of New York be it said, marriage is not punished as if it were a crime.

In one respect, however, the law still fails of giving to the feminine partner in the matrimonial firm her equal share of the joint earnings of the two. In this state, as in any other state in the Union, the result of the labors of husband and wife in a store, on a farm, in editing a paper, etc., belong absolutely to the husband, and a woman may marry in the bloom and freshness of her youth, and for forty years labor hard in caring for her family, sewing, helping in a store or on a farm, etc., and yet she will not be entitled to one dollar of the wealth that may have been accumulated during this period.

All her life long she has no claim to anything as her own of right, but is always a dependent on her husband, and when she lies dying she may not give away even the articles of furniture bought with the money she has earned, if those earnings were under own roof.