fallen from his lips. To do him justice, the world expected something a little more heroic from him in his extremity. It was prepared to be staggered as he had promised, but it would have been contented with much less. The figure of that uncouth figure fronting alone the approach of the invader, and maintaining up to the last the stern face of defiance would have called forth the admiration of us all. And among his own people Oom Paul would have remained a household, a national inspiration as that of William Tell is among the Swiss. But a patriot who uses his authority to fill his money bags when the foe is at the gates, and slips out by the back door, can never hope to merit anything but the execration of posterity. The fugitive Kruger cuts a very sorry figure at best after all his insolent boasts and braggadocio. I notice that he absolutely denies having the money or any intention of getting out of the country with it. Of course he must assert as much if he is to have the least chance of getting away safely with his booty. But if he lies there must be those who know the truth. An old man cannot carry about two millions in gold among his personal belongings and no one but himself be cognisant of the fact. I suppose Paul explains to his confidants that he is holding the money in trust for his country; that these sinews of war are to be used to prolong the struggle; or should that prove hopeless he will go to Europe with the money and there subsidise the already friendly continental press to stir up hatred against the British. In some recently published biographical notes on Napoleon it is stated that the fallen Emperor on several occasions declared that he could easily have bought the British press, the "Times" included, and he regretted he had not done so. Perhaps Mr Kruger anticipates being able to do something of the same kind. All that, however, is generous speculation on my part in which I confess I indulge with no great confidence of its turning out right. I cannot dispossess myself of the idea that Kruger's latter part in this drama will not be a heroic one in any sense, and that he will prove himself to be but a mean mercenary soul after all.

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THE LOST ART OF CONVERSATION.

It is a matter for profound regret, but the fact, I fear, remains, that for reasons hereinafter to be discussed, the gentle art of conversation would appear to be in a dying condition in this colony, and bids fair to become as extinct as the moa. To those wishful to controvert so sweeping an assertion, and desiring me to call evidence, I could supply many instances; but because it is apropos, I will choose, first, the reception given only the other evening by the Countess of Ranfurly, at Auckland Government House. The rooms, brilliantly lighted and beautifully decorated, were crowded with upwards of seven hundred well dressed and (presumably) well educated people, who would set themselves down as the cultured classes. From a spectacular standpoint, nothing was wanting. There were pretty women in pretty frocks, there were well groomed men, every arrangement that thoughtfulness, good taste, and ample means could provide, had been provided for the enjoyment of the guests; all they had to do was to enter the lists of conversation with their friends, and enjoy the tournament. As a matter of fact, gossip and personal comments held the somewhat shy gathering entirely in thrall. There was no attempt at mutual entertainment: the guests simply stuck to the persons forming their own party, and made short peregrinations from drawing-room to corridor, and vice-versa. In not one group, so far as I could see, was any topic of general interest being discussed: in not one instance did the conversation rise above the level of feminine criticism on the frocks, and commonplaces as to the prettiness of the decorations, and the number of the guests. Now, such topics were legitimate enough as a sort of implement to break the ice, but surely it is a pity that in such a gathering there should have been such an utter absence of that spirit of social communism which ought to have reigned, and that the power to talk pleasantly, amusingly, and, perhaps, even wittily, on such occasions should seem to have vanished so completely. The cause of the loss of the art is, of course, continued lack of exercise in even the rudiments of the same, and the terribly universal appreciation of gossip and petty scandal as a substitute. But one must go beneath these things if one wishes to get to the root of the matter, and find out how it is we have become so lazy, and so willing to accept tittle-tattle as a substitute for conversation. And I think we shall find that, to a great extent, the almost entire absence of the dinner party as a form of social entertainment is responsible for the moribund condition of the art of conversing. Much has been written, much alleged humour has been lavished on what is sometimes termed the professional diner out, the individual that is whom any hostess making out her dinner list knows for a discreet and polished talker, a patient listener, a man with the news of the day at his finger ends, with apropos comment or anecdote always ready for emergency, and who can therefore live—if he chose—at other men's tables from one end of the year to another. It is the fashion to chaff this individual, but had I a son of sufficient years I would consider I might do worse than place him under the tutelage of such a man. The discipline and the restraints, the snubbings and encouragements imposed in turn on the youngster who would succeed as a diner-out are only equalled in value by the constant reading, observing, and general keeping up with the world, also essential to success. At no other function are such qualities demanded to so full an extent. One can gossip at a reception, one can discuss domestic questions at a musical party, one can talk scandal in the smoke-room or at afternoon teas, because at all these places two or three can get together separately. But at the dining table all this is altered. Gossip is not a success at dinner. Domestic details are barred, and scandal, if at all piquant, must be left till a more fitting time, as "those confounded servants," as Lytton calls them in Pelham, "are always in the way." A bore can work his evil will and yet be admitted to drawing-room receptions and musical parties, but he is soon banished from any dining table, where the dinner itself is merely looked upon as an accompaniment to the mutual entertainment of intelligent men and women. True, the accompaniment must be good of its kind to insure complete success, but it need not necessarily be elaborate. Love making is possible at dinner, because it is possible anywhere, but the manner of it must be so suppressed so literally kept beneath the table, that it is really never any serious hindrance to the general enjoyment. Surely, then, it is a pity we have let the dinner party, as the school of polite conversation, arise from our social calendar. Surely it is a pity not to polish our ideas, our thoughts, our experiences against those of other people, to learn to derive pleasure from listening as well as talking, to prefer cleverness to scandal, and talking to tattling. It is a pity that most of us have not the means, have not the servants to give a dinner. Admitted that we cannot go in for elaborate menus, admitted that we cannot offer the vintages of Giesler, Ayala, Pol Roger, or whatsoever happens to be the popular brand of champagne, yet none of our friends are accustomed to these things either, so there can be not the smallest occasion to feel abashed at our non ability to furnish forth such entertainment. A tendency prevails—and really amongst a class who should know better—to imagine that there is a particular virtue in champagne, and that no self-respecting person of means in England drinks anything else. One would have imagined it unnecessary to controvert such an absurd vulgarism, but such is not the case. The detestable phrase, "a bottle of wine" (at Home confined to an unspeakable class) has been used (to denote champagne) to the writer by people one would have thought utterly incapable of such a solecism. If it is merely sparkling or other wines, and costly viands, that stand in the way of a revival of dinner parties and conversational art, let us at once sweep away such obstacles. Some of the most enjoyable dinner parties ever given in London were popularly known as the beef, baked potatoes, and beer parties, and to such simple fare, men whose names are world famous were willing to sit down and exchange opinions; and if the wine was lacking, the wit was not. Such parties could be arranged here, and would certainly serve to enliven and elevate the usual round of social pleasures.

OPENING THE DOOR TO THE IMPERIAL ARMY.

Amongst many reforms which will be instituted directly the war is over, none will command more public attention or have further reaching consequences, than the schemes now in preparation by Lord Wolseley and his satellites, for terminating the wretched state of affairs which render the military career practically a closed one, save to men of independent means. It is, of course, perfectly well known that no man can hope to enter the army without the possession of from three hundred to a thousand or upwards a year, according to the regiment to which he attaches himself, unless, of course, he should be willing to endeavour to work his way up from the ranks, a task few have pluck and determination to carry out, so far as English regiments are concerned. It has been amply proved in the present war that the system of selecting our officers only from the leisured class has resulted somewhat disastrously. In bravery there was no cause for complaint, but over and over again it was obvious that loss of men and disaster were the result of incompetence, not wholly on the part of the commanding officers, but of their subordinates. It has not yet transpired in the brief despatches published, but after the war is over we shall no doubt hear of many cases where the care and forethought of the general was sacrificed to the foolish behaviour or incompetence of the subordinate to whom his instructions were entrusted. The reason for this is not hard to seek. These young officers are compact of pluck, they will endure misery, discomfort, cold, and semi-starvation with a cheery good nature beyond praise, when the call comes they will face death with smiling faces, with a jesting encouragement for those they lead on their lips, but, as one critic has observed, they do not know their trade, and have never taken the trouble to learn it as a man has to learn the trade of a lawyer, a barrister, a doctor. His time, when he is home, is devoted too much to those pleasures and pursuits which necessitate the aforementioned £300 to £1000 a year. Now, if all regimental expenses were rigidly curtailed, and the pay given to officers increased, it is obvious that an etirely new set would be available from which to draw officers. At present our officers enter the army mainly "pour passez le temps," and because it is a family tradition to serve the Queen. This is altogether admirable from a certain point of view, and the sentiment of traditional service of the sovereign is of the noblest, but if, owing to such men following the fashionable world more keenly than their profession we are to suffer humiliating disasters and defeats, we are paying somewhat dear for that sentiment. Men whose means did not allow them the multifarious pastimes and pleasures with which most army men now regale their somewhat too ample leisure, would naturally concentrate their attention on their profession, and not regard it as a mere plaything. Of course, there are officers taken from the class mentioned whose profession is all in all to them, but, as any one who knows the smart army set is aware, these are not, to say the least of it, in the majority. Lord Wolseley has long wished to bring about this reform to cut down regimental expenses to a more reasonable figure, and to raise the standard of pay. Hitherto influence and conservatism have proved too strong for him. Now undoubtedly he will get his way. Necessity backs him up, and necessity, as we know, heeds no law or custom. The granting of commissions to colonials—of no private means—is another spur, and this reform will indeed probably be one of the very first to receive attention when the "clearing up" process begins after the war is over.

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