

Diary of Anne Tracy of Stanway 1723-4

A SQUIRE'S HOUSEHOLD IN THE DAYS OF GEORGE I. BY W. H. MALLOCK



From age to age social conditions change, each age leaves in its writings, its art, its buildings, records which stamp it with a peculiar character of its own, and show us that the aspect which human life wore then, differed more or less widely from that which it wears now. But these records, however copious with regard to the conditions of life, are comparatively scanty with regard to life itself. They enable us to see the streets of the past, the houses, the plate, the dresses; but of the peculiar daily life to which these things belonged, they tend to be, for a very intelligible reason, scanty in exact proportion as the facts of that life are important. The routine of daily existence, with all its vanishing features, except in literature, leaves no record at all. Of such features the most important are those which are most familiar; and in proportion as they are familiar to his contemporaries, a writer omits to describe them. Why should he describe what his contemporary readers will assume? The consequence is that descriptions of daily life, which may be practically complete for the generation to which the writers address them, become incomplete as that generation passes, and as the dead take to their graves a fund of unwritten knowledge, which, because during their lives it was so obvious, is after their deaths so irrecoverable.

Many of the descriptions of even so recent a writer as Dickens are already, for this reason, ceasing to be wholly intelligible; and if we turn from Dickens to the novelists of the eighteenth century, we shall find the same fact exemplified in a still more striking way. Fielding and Smollett both give us voluminous accounts of the lives of country gentlemen and their families; but vividly distinct as certain of the details are, the impression produced by their chapters, on a reader of the present age, resembles that which would be produced by a chromolithograph, which is only half printed, a number of the colours being missing, required to complete the picture. We can understand something of the aspect of Squire Allworthy's house. We can understand perfectly the dramatic situations which arise in it; but we do not get—if I may borrow a phrase from Mr. Lecky—any comprehensive map of the daily life of the inmates—of the hours at which they rose, breakfasted, dined, and went to bed; of their daily amusements at various seasons of the year; of their intercourse with their neighbours; of their visits at country houses; of their relations with the world of London; of their literary and artistic culture. Fielding and other novelists tell us little of these things, because they assumed that their readers had a full and inevitable knowledge of them; and this knowledge imputed to the reader was, as it were, the background on which

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these artists painted all their pictures. But for us such knowledge, instead of being inevitable, is, of all kinds of knowledge, that which is most elusive ; and it is constantly inspiring the imagination with a vain desire to possess it.

The foregoing observations are applicable to the life of all past periods ; but I have applied them particularly here to life in the eighteenth century, and more particularly still to the life of our country gentlemen's households, partly because the life of those households, though in some ways so near our own lives, is in others so remote and different that it seems to belong to fairyland ; and partly because I desire to introduce the sympathetic reader to some vivid and curious evidences as to what that life really was, which I came on by what was, to me, a singularly delightful accident. These evidences consist of a diary, kept with minute and yet artless care by the daughter of a Gloucestershire squire, in the years 1723 and 1724, about a quarter of a century previous to the publication of 'Tom Jones.' Not only is the diary itself an exceptionally interesting document, but also the house in which a copy of it is preserved—the house which was the writer's home—and a large tract of country surrounding the house, still retain, owing to very unusual circumstances, much of the aspect which they wore when the writer herself lived.

Stanway House, which is the property of the Earl of Wemyss, and at present the home of his eldest son, Lord Elcho, enjoys the rare privilege of being nearly ten miles from a railway on one side, and eleven miles on the other ; and there is in the whole neighbourhood hardly a visible sign of the new order of things which railways have been instrumental in producing. The post-town, unknown to Bradshaw, seems to have been asleep for a century. The lonely wayside cottages, the villages, the farm buildings, and the many petty manor-houses, show rarely so much as a patch of modern masonry. Their heavy slated roofs are furred with moss ; and their buff-coloured stone gables, and the mullions of their square-headed windows, have on them all the same dim bloom which time alone can give. Among such surroundings stands Stanway, at the foot of the Cotswold Hills, up the green slopes of which its well-timbered park rises. Kip published an engraving of it at the beginning of the eighteenth century—a bird's-eye view embracing some neighbouring fields and cottages. Kip, in this case, has been more than usually accurate ; for the picture corresponds in almost every detail, to the house and its adjuncts, as they meet the eye to-day. There are the same cottages nestling into the same hedgerows, the same barn, the same paddocks, the same unrestored church almost touching the house ; the house itself also, chimney for chimney, roof for roof, window for window—one might almost say pane for pane—is the house that Kip copied in the days of Pope and Addison.

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As one comes on it suddenly, driving through this primitive region, and sees it, in its beautiful antiquity, lying in its secluded hollow, and surrounded by an unnatural peace, it seems something too good to be true. It seems like a dream within a dream. Nor is this air of antiquity an outward appearance only. Everything within corresponds to it. The spirit of the eighteenth century there too reigns supreme. For this there is a peculiar reason. Before Lord and Lady Elcho came to it, and made it their home, it had not been lived in for something like a hundred years. Lord Wemyss' family became possessed of it early in the reign of George III., by a marriage with Miss Susan Tracey, an heiress, who inherited it from Mr. Tracey, her father, and was aunt to the writer of the diary. This lady's husband had houses and interests elsewhere; and after her marriage, Stanway, though kept in perfect repair, remained, till a recent date, a forgotten and abandoned dwelling. Thus when its present occupants came to take up their abode in it, they found it but little changed from what it had been in the Georgian epoch. Life seemed to have been arrested there about the year 1770, and they have carefully abstained from making any but the most necessary additions or alterations.

The family of Tracey is one of the most ancient in Gloucestershire; though the Traceys of Stanway were not the principal branch of it. It is enough here to mention that Mr. Ferdinando Tracey was Squire of Stanway in the reign of Charles II.; that he had by his wife, a daughter of Sir Anthony Keck, a son John, who succeeded him in 1682 and married the daughter of a neighbour, Sir Robert Atkyns; and that this Mr. John Tracey was the father of Anne, the diarist. Viewed in the light which his house, his connections, and his daughter's diary throw on him, this forgotten squire is, in certain respects, a more interesting historical character than many persons who figure in the pages of the biographer and the historian. He is an excellent type of an important and little understood class—the Georgian country gentlemen—who were, on the one hand, remote from the London world, but were, on the other, superior, beyond all comparison, to the awkward boor, with a pack of hounds and a pedigree, and with no literature but a book or two of sports and heraldry, whom Macaulay, misled by the literary caricatures of the time, offers us as a figure typical of our squirearchy as it existed then.

Let me first give the reader some further description of his home, and then we will turn to the diary, for an interpretation of the life lived in it. Stanway House is an irregular gabled structure, built round three sides of a square, and consisting, on each side, of a line of rooms and a passage. It can accommodate, under modern conditions, a party of about fourteen, exclusive of servants; but visitors, in the days of Mr. John Tracey and his daughter, would, on

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occasions, allow themselves to be packed more tightly. Before the front door is an oblong walled enclosure, which is entered from the road through a gate-house, built by Inigo Jones, and communicates, by means of a wicket, with the church and the walled churchyard. The front door admits the visitor to a somewhat narrow passage with a dining-room on the left, hung with pictures of Mr. John Tracey's contemporaries; and a large hall on the right, which goes up to the roof. It is about forty-five feet in length; at one end it has a minstrel's gallery, and at the other it is lit by a beautiful oriel window. It is flagged with white stone, and is furnished with oak chairs, a long black shuffle board, and some marble-topped side-tables, resting on heavy gilded legs, and supporting bowls and vases of blue and white china. Hung high on the walls are some portraits, and a few fragments of armour. Its condition is practically the same as it was in the days of the first Georges. From this hall, by a flight of some half-dozen steps, one ascends to a passage from which opens the small main staircase. At the end of the passage is the principal 'parlour' or drawing-room, about thirty-two feet by twenty; and a farther passage admits one to two other sitting-rooms. One of these is the library, which is specially interesting from the fact that no books have been added to it for a hundred and thirty years. These apartments are in the wing facing the garden; and the garden front, the most modern feature in the house, having in the middle of it a handsome classical doorway, has been absolutely untouched since its construction, at the end of the seventeenth century. The gardens themselves, and the grounds immediately surrounding them, have undergone considerable changes; but a large and elaborate picture, in one of the bedroom passages, shows precisely what they were at the time to which we are now referring. Directly before the house was a beautifully kept bowling-green. Beyond the bowling-green was a broad canal, or lake, now filled up. Beyond the canal, down a steep wooded slope, came an artificial cascade, by which the canal was fed; and high on the hill-side, embowered in tall trees, and reached by winding walks, stood a garden-house, of classical design, surmounted by a kind of obelisk. On the opposite side of the house, adjoining the servants' offices, were three or four walled kitchen-gardens, the stables, and some scattered farm buildings, these being surrounded by paddocks and deep pasture. The picture represents the aspect which Stanway might have presented on any summer afternoon in the reign of George I. Three gentlemen, in red coats and long wigs, are playing bowls on the bowling-green; several gardeners, in their shirt sleeves, are looking on. A little way off, some ladies are boating on the canal; a stout cleric, who has been taking a solitary walk, is solemnly eyeing some distant object through a telescope; and milkmaids are seen, in blue-and-white-striped dresses, carrying home on their heads the brown

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wooden milk-pails. The whole scene conveys an impression of almost idyllic peace—of a dignified seclusion unruffled by the outer world. Miss Tracey's diary will show us how far this impression is correct.

I shall begin by giving the reader some short extracts from it as a sample; but, as it is essentially a record of small and recurring incidents, it is a document the significance of which must be explained by an abstract, rather than by extracts. At the time when it was written, the Stanway family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Tracey, four daughters, including Anne the writer; and four sons, Robin, Antony, Thomas, and John. The diary opens thus:

A.D. 1723. Nov. 19.—Mourned for the loss of our friends, and would not be comforted by Major Baghot and T. Baghot.

Nov. 20.—Fatigued with cleaning out the old study. Heard the affair of Mr. Capon's losing his mistress. Taught Kitty and Nancy whist.

Nov. 21.—Worked very hard at my gown in Willy's cloth. I imagine 'twould be finished by Easter if I worked as hard every day.

Nov. 22.—The family meal lessened by my Papa's and most of the servants being gone to Winchcomb for the swearing. My mamma and I at Mrs. Warren's.

Nov. 23.—Had the pleasure of hearing that our dear friends got safe to Tew, and were well.

Nov. 24, Sunday.—Dressed my head! Church morn and afternoon. Mr. Wynde and Mr. Charles here. Even concluded with a barrel of oysters.

Nov. 25.—Papa hunting with Lord Tracey and Sir W. K. Mamma and I hard at work. Mrs. Nelly Warren and her brother here.

Nov. 26.—Papa rode out upon the hills with Mr. Wynde. Mr. and Mrs. Kirkham and the Wilsons dined here.

Nov. 27.—Papa went up to the hills in order to hunt. Rain sent him home again. The weather too bad for any of us to stir out.

Nov. 28.—Lord and Lady Tracey and Sir W. Keck etc. dined here. We played three pools at commerce. That is, the ladies did.

Turning over a page or two we come to the following entries:

Dec. 18.—Saw the brawn collard. Mr. Wynde dined here. Begun a receipt book for Cousin M. Keith.

Dec. 19.—Worked hard. Mr. Wynde here. Had a sad fit of the tooth-ache.

Dec. 20.—Papa hunting. My Mamma and I had nothing to do but to hear the description of a chase from Nando, all the rest being thrown out.

Dec. 21.—Did nothing particular. Work, etc., as usual. Even concluded with cards, and Burnett's history. Mr. Callan here.

Dec. 22, Sunday.—Indulged myself with wearing my wrapping-gown. Church as usual. Dr. L. p. on Christianity. Heard the moving account of poor Lord Russell's trial.

Dec. 23.—Papa gone to B—— to give Mr. Greenvil the oaths. Mama and I employed in writing. Mr. Kirkham and Mr. Bradley here.

Dec. 24.—Papa and my brothers hunting. Stayed till 'twas almost dusk. Mama and I worked. Kitty read. Master Carter here.

Dec. 25, Christmas Day.—Began the Xmas but indifferently, having a fainting fit in the morn. Spent the day in going to church, etc. The evening, Burnet.

Dec. 26.—I went a hunting. Had extraordinary good sport. Rode briskly (to use Mr. Fletcher's term). Three Bradleys here. Mama wrote ballads. Mr. T. Field came at night.

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Here again is a specimen, taken at random, from the diary seven months later :

July 1, 1724.—Worked a little, and played on the spinnet. We all dined at Barton where we had a nice entertainment. Met Mr. Allen there. The weather excessive cold.

July 2.—The Guiting family dined here. Spent the day with a great deal of satisfaction. Mama and Brother Jack not well at night, which made me very uneasy.

July 3.—Got up very early and went on horseback with Kitty to Evesham. Bought myself a nightgown at Mr. Inglis's, and breakfasted with Mr. Keck. Invited Mr. Izod to dinner : and lay all the afternoon.

July 4.—Dined at Mr. Kirkham's by invitation, with Papa, Mama, Brother Robin, Nando and Kitty. Poor Jacky not well enough to go. Played upon the spinnet in the morn.

Sunday, July 5.—After spending the day as usual, in being at church twice, Mama and I went to Guiting, where we met Mr. Egerton and lady. As we were going, had the misfortune to break the pole of the chariot, and was obliged to stand under a hedge till the coach was fetched to convey us.

July 21.—Worked a good deal, feasted with blackberries, played at cards with good success.

July 22.—Papa, Mama, Kitty and I, in the coach at 8 o'clock to go to Barrington, where we spent the day very agreeably. Met Mr. and Mrs. Webb there, and reached home after having gone thirty-five miles and a half.

July 23.—Went with Papa in the chariot to Borton, where he left me, and took Mr. Mostyn with him to dine at Mr. Overberry's. I passed the time very agreeably. At home late.

July 24.—Danced and walked about in the morn. Worked mitre in the even and walked about to see the Turkey-fowl at Goody Stephen's, when Papa and Robin rode out. We played whist in the kitchen garden by candle-light. Mr. Izod dined here.

These extracts are sufficient to show the character of the diary, as it would strike the casual reader—a monotonous record of days of little things. But when all these trifling incidents are analysed, collated, and arranged, it will be found to yield us a most striking and vivid picture of a life which differs from our life as much as the dresses of that period differ from the dresses of our own.

The daily routine of the Stanway household was as follows. The various members rose late or early, as suited their convenience, generally very early ; and they all met at breakfast at about eleven o'clock. Dinner as a rule was at four ; but in the short days of winter it was occasionally at half-past three ; whilst, for one cause or another, it was sometimes postponed till six. In the former case, at six, there was tea ; and at nine, a solid supper. In the latter there was no supper ; but at nine o'clock there was tea. On Sunday, there was generally morning and afternoon service in the church adjoining the house, at which all the family attended with the utmost punctuality ; but whenever there was no service, as seems now and then to have been the case, prayers were read in the hall.

The occupations and amusements of the family varied, of course,

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with the seasons. During November, December, and January, the squire and his sons hunted twice a week, and once a week during the two months following. Occasionally, though not often, the writer of the diary would accompany them. They shot also during the season—apparently about once a fortnight. Sometimes the huntsmen started as early as eight o'clock and were home in time for the eleven o'clock breakfast. Sometimes they started later and did not return till dusk, in which case dinner would be put off till six. Sometimes the squire would be absent on magistrate's business. Sometimes he would ride for exercise over the unenclosed Cotswold Hills.

As for the ladies of the family, they were generally up by eight, even during the winter. Most of Miss Tracey's mornings, and often her afternoons also, was devoted to needlework, music lessons, and dancing lessons. She made many of her own dresses, embroidered her finest gowns; now and then she did plain sewing for her brothers, and she would even give up part of an evening to the cutting out of socks. She was a practitioner of all kinds of fancy work: she made flowered tops for gloves; she knitted purses; there was no kind of embroidery which she did not do: whilst she and her mother between them manufactured a set of silk partridge nets—a task which seems to have occupied them for a great number of weeks. She several times mentions that she and her mother sewed from eight in the morning till four, when they went to dinner; though industry such as this was exceptional. But besides sewing and fancy work she had other useful occupations. She and her mother together superintended the household. They stood over the upholsterers when they came to cover the furniture. They watched the cook collar the brawn; they kept receipt books and gave copies of them as presents to their friends; and though they do not seem to have entered into the practical work of the kitchen, a week rarely passed one evening of which did not find them in the still-room making gooseberry paste, sweet-meats, mince-meat, or lemon jelly. Miss Tracey was also the presiding genius of the dairy and the poultry yard, and not seldom of the kennels.

Yet, with all these occupations, the young lady had ample leisure for the accomplishments of music and dancing, and, as we shall see, for much besides. Music and dancing were taught her by two masters who used to come to the house periodically and stay ten days at a time. The former she calls 'Old Glanvill,' the latter 'Tommy Field.' Half of a morning would be sometimes devoted to her dancing lesson and the other half to needle-work; and in Tommy Field's absence she would constantly practise her dances, especially in the winter, when she did so to keep herself warm, and would go through all her steps, for her mother's edification, in the parlour. Her lessons in music seem to have given her more trouble,

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for she often complains of having been kept by Old Glanvill 'drudging' all the morning at the spinet or the harpsichord; but she delighted in playing to her family, especially 'in consort with her mother, the one performing on one of these instruments, the other on the other. She and her sisters, moreover, were much given to serious reading. They studied 'Burnet's History,' 'Clarendon's History,' 'Wellwood's Memoirs,' and 'Blunt's Natural History,' which, together with similar books, they used to read out to each other. A farther occupation which claimed much of the diarist's time was letter writing. At a period when we are accustomed to think that correspondence was infrequent and difficult, a week rarely passed during which this young lady in the country did not receive and answer at least four or five letters—her copious answers being written at the rate of two in a morning.

None of the ladies during the winter seem to have had much out-door exercise, unless we give that name to drives in the coach or chariot. Except for these, they were satisfied with an occasional day's hunting, a short walk on gravelled paths, or a visit to the kennels and the poultry yard, the slightest inclemency of the weather being enough to confine them to the house. At other times of the year they walked more and oftener. Miss Tracey would stroll about in the garden, of a morning in the early spring, meditating and watching the primroses. As the weather became warmer, they spent much of their time out of doors. They floated in a boat on the canal. They made excursions to the 'groves' and summer-houses in the grounds, where they constantly had tea in the afternoon or the late evening, sometimes playing whist there at nine o'clock by candle-light. They would ramble also through the meadows or by the banks of 'a purling brook'; or go two miles on foot to visit some neighbouring cousins. But though, at the best, they were not very active pedestrians, from April to the end of October the young ladies were constantly on horseback, riding considerable distances by themselves, or in the company of their father and their brothers. Thus Miss Tracey and one of her sisters started at eight one morning and rode to Evesham, eleven miles away, where they bought a nightgown, and had breakfast with a friend. As for the gentlemen of the party, they were in the saddle almost every day, and on days when they did not ride they spent hours together on the bowling-green.

Their amusements indoors consisted of music, of dancing, of card-playing—their games being picquet, ombre, commerce, and whist—and of listening to one of the party reading some book aloud, the principal readers being Miss Tracey and her father. The books chosen for this purpose were occasionally books of history, but more often poems, plays, and essays. Mr. Tracey, for example, read out Congreve's comedies, 'The Old Bachelor,' 'The Double Dealer,' and

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'The Way of the World,' besides many other dramas, such as 'The Tender Husband,' 'The Humourist,' 'The Captain,' and 'The Fatal Constancy,' whose names are now forgotten. Miss Tracey read out Rowe's tragedy of 'The Fair Penitent' and 'The Shipwreck'; but her favourite literature, beyond all comparison, was *The Taster*, with which she delighted her home circle, and which she devoured privately in her bedroom. Once a week the family had another excitement. This was the appearance of a box from London which arrived by carrier, either on Saturday night or on Sunday morning; the unpacking of which enlivened the Sunday afternoons, and out of which came all sorts of delightful things—new books, new pieces of plate, cambrics, hollands, and linings, and not infrequently new jackets for the young ladies. Sunday was a red-letter day also for a further reason. They always on that day had 'fine fish' for dinner, generally presented to them by some friend; and they always at supper had oysters, which Miss Tracey used to open beforehand—once, as she pathetically records, cutting her thumb in doing so.

It is easy from these details to reconstruct a typical day spent by this squire's family a hundred and eighty years ago. Miss Tracey gets up at half-past seven and dresses with the help of a maid. At eight o'clock she has a dish of chocolate. Then for an hour and a half she writes letters in her bedroom. Then she joins her mother in one of the small parlours, and the two embroider purses, or sew petticoats till eleven. At eleven the whole family meet together at breakfast, which the mother's presence always makes a delightful meal. The gentlemen have come in from riding and are ready for bowls afterwards. The family are ten in number, the parents and eight children; and to them we may add Old Glanvill and Tommy Field. At noon, breakfast being over, one or other of these two carries Miss Tracey off to a lesson in music or dancing, keeping her hard at work till half-past one or two, whilst the voices of her brothers come through the window from the bowling-green. As soon as she is set free she returns to her mother's sitting-room—works with her for another hour, or else plays a duet with her, or shows off the new steps she has just learnt from her dancing-master. At half-past two she goes down to the kennels. She inspects Chloe's puppies and settles the name of the prettiest. She then has an interview with the hen-wife and discusses the condition of the poultry, picking her way carefully amongst the dirt and puddles of the yard, in order that she may not sully the daintiness of her high-heeled shoes. She then returns to the house, finds out her sister Kitty, and either gives her a lesson in ombre, or reads her Lord Clarendon's History, till it is time to change their frocks for the dinner at four o'clock. After dinner, if the weather is wet, the ladies all stay indoors. Some of them work; one reads aloud; or one plays on the harpsichord; and those who are working show each other new

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stitches. After an hour or so of such employment they generally take to cards and play at commerce or ombre, till tea at six o'clock brings back the father and brothers from the bowling-green or the Cotswold Hills. When the days are long, from half-past six to nine, they walk or ride or play cards in the garden; till the dews, of which they seem all to have had a wholesome horror, send them in to supper and a bowl of punch. After supper Mr. Tracey reads two acts of a comedy, or perhaps, on some saint's day, a sermon, while the mother and the young ladies work. Then for an hour or so they all return to cards, sitting at two tables; and at eleven they go to bed. Or the day has possibly been enlivened by some other diversion—by a sword-dancer and a juggler who used to make the round of the country; by one of the gentlemen of the party dressing up as a lady; by Miss Tracey dressing up as a man; by Tommy Field giving a performance on his violin; or by Old Glanville, who gives them an entertainment consisting of 'the life and actions of Mrs. Bovey's coachman set to music.'

This daily routine, however, of strictly family life, was being constantly varied by the presence of guests, callers, and visitors; and by the paying of calls and visits in return. Thus, for example, during one week towards the end of November, we find that on Monday and Tuesday, they have two visitors staying. On Thursday, these having gone, two more arrive; and on Friday, two more—cousins who lived ten miles off. On Saturday the house party is augmented by five diners; the party at dinner being seventeen or eighteen people. Next Monday there are five more guests, and the dinner-party is equally large. The same thing happens on Tuesday. On Thursday and Friday also neighbours dine with them. Then follows a week during which they are almost by themselves; then a week during which they have two or three friends staying with them; and then for a fortnight the house is quite full, the party consisting of sixteen or eighteen people, and three card-tables being made up every night. During this period members of the Stanway party dine four times, and breakfast once, with neighbours. In the spring and summer we find them equally sociable. Between the middle of April and the first week in May they drive or ride out, to breakfast, to dine, or to pass the afternoon with neighbours every other day, occasionally starting as early as eight o'clock, and reaching their friend's house at eleven after a drive of seventeen miles.

On May 5, the whole of the Stanway family go to stay with some relations who live about ten miles away, on a visit which lasts very nearly three weeks—the squire and his wife and two daughters making the journey in the coach, the two other daughters and all the sons on horseback. The house is full of company, and during the latter part of the time the number of the

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house-party mounts up to twenty-seven. This is the only occasion during the period covered by the diary, on which Miss Tracey stayed for more than a day out of her father's house ; and her account of the visit is very circumstantial and interesting. The gathering at first was a trifle stiff and prim, though Miss Tracey created a sensation the morning after her arrival by appearing in her 'worked gown,' which surprised the whole company, not only by its beauty but still more by the fact that this splendid garment was finished, all the country-side having long known that it was in preparation. After breakfast that day the ladies did fancy work, while Miss Tracey read to them 'The Fair Penitent.' In the evening the company entertained themselves by admiring the Indian cabinets, and seeing the curiosities contained in them taken out and exhibited. Next night every one was still so stiff that Miss Tracey pulled her gloves off and on all the evening in order to keep awake. The following day, however, reserve at last breaks down, and laughter takes the place of stiffness. The young people amuse themselves by seeing their hostess make oat-cakes, or by walking in the 'grove,' exchanging tender confidences, and staying out 'till the dew proved dangerous.' On other days they play whist between dinner and supper in the Park House. After supper they have music, round games, and whist, and they are 'much diverted by our old friend the juggler.' In the mornings the young gentlemen find their way to the fish-ponds. The young ladies read Gay's poems, compare their work, drink tea in the grove, 'sit on the mount' or walk, or for two hours together have 'a consort in the music room.' Excursions are made to the houses of neighbouring friends, and those who go return laden with gossip, descanting on 'the surprising fineness of Mr. D.'s cascade,' and 'his elegant way of living,' or on Lord D.'s 'pictures and furniture.' One day the young ladies make almond cakes till dinner-time. Another day they get up early in order to allow of their maid's going off betimes to some servants' festivity in the neighbourhood. The principal event of another day is an eclipse which the party watch from the Park House, where the view is not blocked by trees ; and the last evening of the visit is enlivened by some foot races in the park, which gather together 'a vast concourse' of spectators.

When the Tracey's return to Stanway they have no visitors for a week or so ; but the whole house resounds with the noise made by the servants, who are practising morris dances for the impending 'Whitsun-Ale.' When this festival is over the household resumes its normal condition. Visitors begin to arrive again as before. A day rarely passes without a neighbour coming to breakfast, dinner, or tea. There are generally two or three guests, sometimes more, in the house, and they stay for periods varying from three days to a month. Near neighbours are constantly dropping in for breakfast,

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for dinner, and sometimes even for supper. Now and then there is a large formal dinner-party, which usually happens to be augmented by a few uninvited guests, sure of a welcome; and twenty people or more sit down at the hospitable board.

The conversation seems to have consisted very largely of local gossip. Sir Richard's courtship, Miss Warren's new gown, Mrs. D.'s new saddle, the passage of Sir John's coach through the park on its way to London, the robbery of a butcher in a neighbouring wood, the illness of Goody Jones, the death of Goody Dightwood, or the confinement of a tramp's wife in the barn, would supply a sufficient topic for many a dinner and breakfast. But sometimes a friend would be present, familiar with the London world, who would 'talk very agreeably about the quality.' Sometimes a couple of clergymen would take all the conversation to themselves, and argue for a good two hours about the merits of the rival universities; whilst another clergyman—an old friend of the family—consumed an entire evening by a dissertation on God's providence as evidenced by the preservation of some sailors on the coast of Greenland, an account of which he had been reading in some new work on geography.

It is commonly supposed that the Georgian country gentlemen were grossly intemperate as a class, and rarely rose from dinner sober. There is nothing in Miss Tracey's diary which gives countenance to this supposition. Drunkenness could not have been common at dinner in the circle in which she lived; for immediately after dinner, whenever the season permitted, the men played bowls, or rode, or walked with the ladies, or, if confined to the house, took part in some indoor amusement; and Squire Tracey at all events must have been habitually sober after supper, because after supper for an hour he would read aloud to his family.

Such, then, was life in an English squire's household—as seen from within, as depicted by a most observant member of it—a hundred and eighty years ago. The picture thus presented to us is remarkable for many reasons. In the first place, instead of the coarseness and rustic ignorance which the London wits of the time and many modern writers might lead us to expect, we have a picture of people, simple indeed, but polished—by no means deficient in education and literary culture, singularly gracious and amiable in all their family relationships, and singularly hospitable and open-hearted to their neighbours. In the second place, we have a most striking and vivid illustration of the movement and vitality evinced by the social life of the upper class in what was then a very remote district. Houses then were in visiting distance of one another, whose owners to-day have never crossed one another's thresholds. The circle of friends and neighbours amongst whom the Stanway family lived comprised their kinsman, Lord Tracey, who lived but three miles

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away from them ; some other Tracey cousins, who had a house in Lord Tracey's park, Sir Richard Cox, Sir John Rushout, Sir John Packington, Sir John Dutton, a number of other squires, some of whose descendants still live in the old family homes, a still greater number of their relations—younger sons and old maids—whose houses may still be seen in villages such as Broadway, and some half-dozen neighbouring clergymen. Many members of this circle were people of considerable wealth and connected with some of the most important families in the kingdom. Their houses were stately and commodious ; their hospitality was profuse ; their stables and coach-houses were filled with horses and carriages ; London millinery ornamented their wives and daughters ; the newest London books found their way to their libraries. All these observations apply to the Stanway family in particular ; yet the Stanway family from one year's end to another never moved beyond the borders of their own county and rarely more than seventeen miles from their own door. They lived, in fact, in a circle of about thirty-five miles in diameter. Within this circle all the world was familiar to them. The world beyond it was practically an unknown region. To us so circumscribed a life would seem dull and narrow enough, because it is easier now for a person in Squire Tracey's position to spend three months in London, in Paris, in the South of France, or in Egypt, than it was for Squire Tracey to spend three weeks out of Gloucestershire. But though the new life has pleasures and excitements which the old did not possess, the old had a charm which is beyond the reach of the new, and was due to the very absence of our own more varied experiences. The limits of the life of the Georgian squire were enlarged by the fact that all his interests, hopes, occupations, ambitions, and memories were contained within the circuit of the same familiar horizons and associated with the same valleys, hedgerows, lanes, market towns and villages, and the lodges, the gables, and the deer parks, of the same squires, his neighbours. His world was large to him because he had no other. His own house and pleasure-grounds, because he rarely deserted them, were for him and his family amplified into a kind of kingdom. An excursion to the grove, or tea in the park house, was an adventure which provided them with a whole afternoon's excitement ; and their various occupations, amusements and dissipations, their reading, their dancing, their music, their sports and their household duties—all followed one another in an atmosphere of spacious leisure—an atmosphere full of a sense of individual duties to be done, but unvitiated by any sense that the world as a whole needs mending. To those who regard such a condition of things with sympathy, the life of the Georgian squire and the dignified and beneficent oligarchy of which he formed a part will seem, as viewed in the light of Miss Tracey's diary, to belong to a sort of Golden Age. To recall that

A GEORGIAN SQUIRE'S HOUSEHOLD

age in imagination, to live again through its irrevocable summers, is a delight to many who neither regret it nor greatly admire it. Nowhere to myself has it ever come back more vividly than where, with Miss Tracey's diary to assist in the evocation of it, it came back to me in the rooms, the passages, the gardens, and the groves of Stanway, where the living voices of to-day 'were as the voice of the dead,'

And all along the valley, by rock and stream and tree,
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.