

plenty of it."

I had a very good meal in the end, mostly composed of bread and cheese, which the Professor told me was an almost perfect diet, if you ate it slowly. He then asked if I would take anything else. I said: "Yes, some coffee, please." Then, remembering the weak tea, I said: "I like my coffee black, please."

He looked troubled, and Katherine asked me anxiously if I were not afraid to drink strong coffee so late at night. She said she never drank coffee because it was a stimulant, and if you grew accustomed to stimulants when you were well, if you were ever ill and really required one, of course it would no longer be efficacious.

"Why not take brandy when you are ill?" said I. They seemed to think that a very dreadful suggestion; but, suppose they never get ill, what a lot they have missed to no purpose!

I only stayed there three days—quite long enough, too. It was with joy I went on my way to Warwick to see another brother and his family, and I wondered if they lived on nothing in particular, or sat naked in the sun. It being a cross country journey, I was late in getting there, and the clocks were striking seven as I passed the castle walls and down the road that leads to Stratford on Avon. Not very far down this road you come to "Lime Grove," my brother's place. Why "Lime Grove" I know not, for after careful investigation I found only two lime trees on the place, and to my mind two trees scarcely form a grove; but we will let that pass.

My brother (who has lost his figure) certainly does not belong to the chewing society, or whatever they call themselves, for we had an excellent dinner. I retired early as I was tired, and a very good-looking housemaid brought me a can of hot water, inquired if I liked a hot water bottle, and then departed, leaving a tumbler of hot water and a teaspoon on a small silver tray. I looked at the tumbler; it was a delicate attention, but why, oh why, had she not brought a slice of lemon and a nob or two of sugar? I had some whisky in my bag; I managed without the sugar and lemon and enjoyed it very much, especially as I conjured up in my mind the expression of the faces of Professor and Mrs. B. when I asked them why they did not take brandy.

I slept well, and awoke feeling on good terms with all the world. The pretty housemaid came in again, and, to my horror, she brought another glass of hot water and a teaspoon. A glass before retiring I think a very good thing, but before breakfast! What could my brother and his wife be like if they were in the habit of

drinking so early in the day? Yet they neither of them looked as though they drank much.

Well, I stayed there for some time and enjoyed myself amazingly. I visited all the places of interest in the neighbourhood—Stratford, Kenilworth, Guy's Cliff, Edgehill and Banbury Cross. My brother's only child, a girl of 20, went everywhere with me, as my sister-in-law was too delicate to go out much. I saw very little of my brother, who was always very busy, or thought he was, which comes to the same thing. Only one thing annoyed me there, and that was the glass of hot water and teaspoon in the morning. This got on my nerves to such an extent that one morning I mentioned it to my sister-in-law.

"Edith, my dear," I said, "I am not in the habit of taking anything to drink before dinner, so the maid need not bring the glass of hot water to my room in the morning."

"I don't quite understand," she said. "Don't you drink all day until dinner?"

"No, my dear, I think it unseemly for a lady in excellent health to take spirits. You may perhaps need it as you are an invalid. Of course I don't wish to hurt your feelings, but it seems to me—well, a bit early to begin before breakfast."

"But, Hannah dear, that is not spirits that Mary brings you; it is just hot water."

"Hot water? Yes, I know, but what is that for?"

"To drink. We all take it night and morning, we find it so good for us. I have not suffered nearly so much from indigestion since I have taken it."

Dear me! Fancy drinking hot water. Very good stuff to wash in, but to drink! I always thought it was an emetic. They never did such things when I lived in England, but that was fifty years ago.

After that the only people I visited were sensible folk who had no peculiarities, until I went to stay with Georgina. She was my god-child, and had always a bee in her bonnet. As a girl she would not wear stays or dress improvers. I think now that the latter were ugly things myself, but in those days everyone wore them, and she looked conspicuous without one. So I was prepared for anything. Moreover she had married a doctor who did not practice. I stayed there from Saturday until the following Tuesday; I wish now I had stayed longer, I might have learned more, but at the time I felt that it was long enough.

Georgina had altered very little. She had four children—I had nearly said five, for her husband was only an over-grown child who

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)