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Royal Pomp: viceregal celebrations and hospitality in Georgian Dublin

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The viceroy: chief host of the nation

During the successive reigns of the Hanoverian kings in England (1714-1830), a total of thirty-seven different viceroys were sent to Ireland as representatives of the British Crown (Table 1). The position of viceroy (also referred to as lord-lieutenant) was awarded as a matter of political exigency, but the viceroy's role was one of social as much as political significance. The viceroy and his vicereine played the roles of the British monarchs *in absentia,* and the Protestant minority ruling class, often referred to as the Ascendancy, expected the viceregal court at Dublin Castle to not merely mirror, but to outshine that of St. James's Palace in London. The standards of hospitality set by the Irish themselves ensured that no incoming lord lieutenant would long be in doubt as to what was expected of him as the chief host of the Irish nation, and, perhaps even more importantly, as the leader of Dublin society.

Ireland's elite consisted at this time of 'politicians, lawyers, divines, Huguenot merchants, bankers and landowners', all of whom looked to Dublin Castle to provide entertainment that was superior to the routs, plays, concerts, balls, gaming and masquerades available throughout the city (Somerville-Large 1996: 128). Although the actual government salary for the viceroy rose from 12,000 pounds at the start of the eighteenth century to 20,000 pounds by its end, in order to fund the opulent entertainments considered *de rigueur* by Ireland's elite it was usually necessary to reach into one's own private purse to the tune of several thousand pounds. Consequently, only a very wealthy individual could afford to take up the position of lord lieutenant. To adequately represent the absent monarch, it was necessary to make 'the grand figure', something very much appreciated by the Irish (Barnard 2004). Luxurious garments, coaches drawn by numerous fine horses, liveried servants and

Table 1: Listing of Irish Lords Lieutenant and dates of appointment to office (1714-1830)

Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland	September 1714
Charles, Viscount Townshend	February 1717
Charles Plowett, 2nd Duke of Bolton	April 1717
Charles Fitroy, 2nd Duke of Grafton	June 1720 (returned August 1723)
John Carteret, 2nd Baron Carteret	May 1724
Lionel Cranfield Sackville, 1st Duke of Dorset	June 1730
William Cavendish, 3rd Duke of Devonshire	April 1737 (returned March 1740 and Sept. 1741)
Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield	January 1745
William Stanhope, 1st Earl of Harrington	November 1747
Lionel Cranfield Sackville, 1st Duke of Dorset	December 1750
William Cavendish, Marquis of Hartington, 4th Duke of Devonshire	April 1755
John Russell, 4th Duke of Bedford	January 1757 (returned October 1759)
George Montague Dunk, Earl of Halifax	April 1761
Hugh Percy, 2nd Duke of Northumberland	April 1763
Thomas Wynne, 3rd Viscount Weymouth	June 1765
Francis Seymour-Conway, Earl of Hertford	August 1765
George William Hervey, 2nd Earl of Bristol	October 1766
George Townshend, 4th Viscount Townshend	August 1767
Simon Harcourt, 1st Earl of Harcourt	October 1772
John Hobart, 2nd Earl of Buckinghamshire	December 1776
Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of Carlisle	November 1780
William Henry Cavendish Bentick, 3rd Duke of Portland	April 1782
George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, 3rd Earl Temple	August 1782
Robert Henley, 2nd Earl of Northington	May 1783
Charles Manners, 4th Duke of Rutland	February 1784
George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, Marquis of Buckingham	November 1787
	October 1789
John Fane, 10th Earl of Westmorland	December 1794
William Wentford Fitzwilliam, 2nd Earl of Fitzwilliam	March 1795
John Jeffreys Pratt, 2nd Earl of Camden	June 1798
Charles Cornwallis, 1st Marquis Cornwallis	March 1801
Philip Yorke, 3rd Earl of Hardwicke	November 1805
Edward Clive, 1st Earl of Powis	February 1806
John Russell, 6th Duke of Bedford	April 1807
Charles Lennox, 4th Duke of Richmond	June 1813
Charles Whitworth, 1st Baron Whitworth	September 1817
Charles Chetwynd Talbot, 2nd Earl of Talbot	December 1821
Richard Wellesley, 1st Marquis Wellesley	February 1828
Henry William Paget, 1st Marquis of Anglesey	February 1829
Hugh Percy, 3rd Duke of Northumberland	

splendid repasts ─ all of these could help to distract from the political dissatisfaction evident at all levels of society. In 1701, the sight of the Earl of Rochester, travelling in a magnificent carriage hauled by 'eight greys', awed the populace. They were offended to an equal degree, however, when the Marquis of Hartington elected to appear in 'informal civilian garb' at an official function in 1755 (Barnard 2004: 9).

Vinous Hospitality at the Castle

Many different wines, from Canary to Rhenish, were available in Georgian Dublin, but the upper echelons of society were awash with claret. Lord Chesterfield (1745-1746), who distinguished himself amongst viceroys of this era by his abstemiousness, cited the vast amount of claret imported into Ireland annually as shocking evidence of its over-consumption by 'those of superior rank'. Maxwell (1946: 101) observed that 'no one of any position in Dublin would have thought himself truly hospitable unless he provided large quantities of claret for his guests'.

Quality, nevertheless, was expected to be allied with quantity, and there is copious evidence that the Irish gentry considered themselves to be wine connoisseurs. A letter to the *Hibernian Magazine* (February 1780: 85) heaps opprobrium upon a fictional couple of social climbers for serving cloudy wine to aristocratic guests. The Irish travelling in England were demanding oenophiles, frequently commenting on the ubiquity of inferior claret. In 1725, an Irish visitor and his companions fell upon an Irish-owned eating house as an oasis. Identifying his group to the proprietor as compatriots, he observed that they were consequently served 'excellent wine; and indeed it was a rarity as I had tasted none good since my coming to England' (Huth and Carew Hazlitt 1869: 125). Another group of visiting Irish roundly upbraided the owner of a London chophouse in 1761; upon being served poor quality wine they assured him that they 'belonged to the kingdom that knew the difference between good and bad claret' (Barnard 2004: 332).

Faced with such a high degree of native expertise, it was fortunate that the vast majority of viceroys managed to impress Dublin society with the quality and scale of their wine consumption. It was standard practice to allow members of parliament ─ who were well in with the Castle ─ to select wine from any hogshead in the lord lieutenant's cellar and drink to their individual limit. The 2nd Duke of Ormond, twice viceroy in the early 1700s, managed to impose a flexible cap on such consumption by stipulating that no chairs would be provided, thereby ensuring that no man would drink longer than he could remain standing (Robins 2001: 40). Other viceroys were more liberal: after the Marquis of Hartington presided over a spectacular drinking session that followed a Castle ball in 1755, the eminent Lord Kildare wrote his wife 'I don't think I ever drank so hard and fast in my life: everyone of the company complain today'(Fitzgerald 1949: 16). Lord Carteret (1724-1730) was deemed a success as lord lieutenant, his heavy drinking weighing in his favour with public opinion. Not all hard-drinking viceroys endeared themselves to Dublin's citizens, however. Dublin Castle was viewed as 'a glorified tavern and brothel' during the tenure of the Duke of Wharton (1708-1710), with the Duke himself often spotted careering around Dublin at night like 'a drunken madman' (O'Mahoney 1912: 131). The Marquis of Townshend may, inadvisably, have taken Wharton for a role model. As Townshend departed at the end of his term as viceroy in 1772, a local journal aimed the following farewell volley: 'Drunkards [...] go mourn: Townshend never shall return' (*Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, September 1772: 188).

Flowing wine was a feature of all viceregal banquets, but on red-letter days such as the king's birthday or the commencement of a viceroy's term of office, splendour and lavish generosity was obligatory. Throughout the two viceroyalties of Lionel Sackville, 1st Duke of Dorset, the general approach to royal anniversaries was observed, i.e., they were marked by day-long festivities culminating in a Castle ball. Dorset and his Duchess, however, strove to reach new heights of hospitality with the calibre of their entertainment. A font that flowed with wine all through the night was set up in the Castle's council chamber. Even the commonalty was not neglected as wine for its consumption was ducted to a courtyard below. In 1745,

Chesterfield refined these methods of wine distribution. For the king's birthday that year, Dublin Castle's supper room was partly transformed into a Temple of Minerva in which a continuous flow of wine spouted from sundry statues. Again, some of this was piped to a lower yard for the benefit of the king's less exalted citizens (Robins 2001: 27). By 1770, an Irish military correspondent reckoned the Castle's official celebrations on the queen's birthday superior to those he had experienced at St. James's Palace the previous year (Barnard 2001: 189).

In terms of gastronomic connoisseurship, the Duke of Rutland (1784-1787) stands out amongst Georgian era lord lieutenants. *The Hibernian Magazine* (March 1784: 164) reported details of the first ball he hosted at the Castle as viceroy. A particularly fine impression was made by the stunning silver and gold plate Rutland and his Duchess put on display, and the supper provided 'consisted of every curiosity that art could procure, imagination suggest, or the season furnish'. Tantalizingly, this report neglects to list specific dishes. However, it can be assumed that they were indeed of the highest gastronomic standard as the Duke was a most exacting epicure. Upon his orders, the chief cook at Dublin Castle was despatched to France. His brief was to expand his culinary repertoire by undertaking *stages* at French royal courts, such as those of the renowned gourmets, the Franco-Irish Archbishop of Narbonne, Arthur Richard Dillon, and the Duc d'Orléans. Rutland's quest for gustatory perfection naturally required superior wines. In 1786, he sent another member of staff on a quest to France to source the finest available. A resulting consignment to the Castle cellars included '500 bottles of the very best quality Sillery champagne' as well as '300 bottles of Hautevillers champagne, the growth preferred in Paris to any other' (Robins 2001: 72).

Toasting

In a nation where claret was quaffed 'cold, mulled, or buttered' (Barrington 1826: 43) it cannot surprise that toasting provided an ideal excuse for downing multiple glasses at any given sitting. In the delightful *Recollections of Jonah Barrington*, the aptness of the title for one

chapter ─ 'Irish Dissipation in 1778' ─ is soon evident. Detailing a convivial get together, the author notes:

> numerous toasts [...] as was customary in those days, intervened to prolong and give zest to the repast ─ every man shouted forth his fair favourite, or convivial pledge; and each voluntarily surrendered a portion of his own reason in bumpers to the beauty of his neighbour's toast [...] one songster chanted the joys of wine and women; another gave [...] the pleasures of the fox and chase [...] claret flowed.
>
> (Barrington 1826: 45)

Claret must have flowed, likewise, at a celebratory dinner in a Dublin Masonic Lodge in 1741. Many of the Castle grandees were members of the fraternity, and the tenor and number of toasts proposed should bear some resemblance to the style of toasting favoured at the Castle. On this occasion, nine specific toasts were prescribed, headed by one to 'The King and the Craft' and including 'Masons and Masons' Bearns & those that lye in Masons Arms wch. some Folks have wth. Curious Impert' (Parkinson 1957: 101). Even taking into consideration the fact that toasting glasses of the period had thick bowls that magnified the appearance of a small amount of wine, the cumulative effect of multiple glasses could not have been insignificant.

An even more onerous toasting session evolved at Dublin Castle. After an annual banquet given there to fete the lord mayor of the city, the latter was conducted, along with his officials, to the cellars. There, a large glass of wine, constantly replenished, was passed from man to man. Not only was each obliged to propose the lord lieutenant's good health, but he was expected to drop a gold coin into the glass! This ritual continued till the 1760s when a sitting lord mayor begged to be excused from the demands on his purse, and, presumably, his constitution (Robins 2001: 40). Maxwell (1946: 101) confirms that festive occasions at the Castle witnessed the most intensive drinking sessions with 'the chief stimulating agent being the interminable toasts that were given, in accordance with the fashion of the times'.

Private and public dining at Dublin Castle

The Duke of Shrewsbury is credited with modelling the viceregal household on that of the Court of St. James's, where he served as court chamberlain. During his term of office in Dublin (1713-1714), an ordinary dinner at his table would have comprised four removes, i.e., a dish removed when finished and replenished, sixteen dishes, and desserts on certain weekdays (Robins 2001: 36-38).

Public dining, of necessity, required a larger number of more sumptuous dishes. Greater pomp and abundance surrounded public dining as the court became grander and more sophisticated under successive viceroys, reaching its apogee towards the end of the eighteenth century. The rich, varied cuisine that was served was produced by cooks who had trained in royal and aristocratic kitchens in England or France. Having a private cook had become essential for the Irish elite (Mac Con Iomaire 2009: 50). Mrs. Mary Delany (cited in Cahill 2005: 68), a contemporary social arbiter, was amazed to find that even a modest Anglo-Irish gentleman kept a 'man cook'. Employing a French cook carried the greatest cachet, and the Earl of Chesterfield was bitterly disappointed when a perceived dearth of Italian opera in Dublin dissuaded a prominent French chef from accompanying him to the Castle (Robins 2001). This did not, however, preclude the sating of the appetites of the viceroy's guests. All public dinners given under Chesterfield provided 'two courses of twenty-one dishes each, not including removes and a generous provision of desserts' (Robins 2001: 39).

Great dinners coming together

Married to an Irish dean and a friend to Jonathan Swift, Mrs. Delany is renowned in her own right for her fascinating floral découpage and incisive letters. She had occasion to entertain viceregal guests in her home, Delville, so she was *au fait* with the prerequisites of contemporary hospitality at the highest level. In 1752, she observed that the Irish gentry were too fond of 'high living'. Coming from England, Delany (cited in Cahill 2005: 77) was amazed to find that in Ireland 'you are not invited to dinner to any private gentleman of £1000

a year or less, that does not give you seven dishes at one course, and Burgundy and Champagne: and these dinners they give once or twice a week'. That same year, she considered inviting the current viceroy and his wife (the Duke and Duchess of Dorset) to breakfast, reasoning that 'dinners are grown such luxurious feasts in this country [...] and our viceroy loves magnificence too well to be pleased with our way of entertaining company' (Delany cited in Cahill 2005: 54). Nevertheless, she sometimes enjoyed the opulence on offer at Dublin Castle:

> The grand ball was given last Wednesday [...] musicians and singers were dressed like Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses, and placed among rocks. If tea, coffee or chocolate were wanting, you held your cup to a leaf of a tree, and it was filled; and whatever you wanted to eat or drink, was immediately found on a rock, or on a branch, or in the hollow of a tree.
>
> (Cahill 2005: 87)

Rare was the lord lieutenant who conceded defeat in the face of a virtually uninterrupted onslaught of gargantuan repasts. In 1781, however, Lord Carlisle admitted that his constitution was suffering, complaining that '... two great dinners coming together (for almost before I have lost sight of the knives and forks of one, the soup of the other makes its appearance) fatigue me very much' (Robins 2001: 66).

The Duke of Rutland recognized no such limits. His predilections as a gourmet have been noted, but, more prosaically, he was also famed as a man 'who dearly loved a good dinner' and set a record for dining out which remained unequalled by subsequent viceroys (O'Mahoney 1912: 191). In 1787, he undertook a tour of the estates of Irish noblemen, during which he amazed his hosts by the staggering ─ even by contemporary standards ─ quantities of food and wine he consumed. Gamble (1810: 59) opined that Rutland attempted to drink ─ and, it appears, to eat himself 'into the hearts of the Irish', but that 'he fell a martyr to his exertions, and died of a fever, brought on by carousing and hard drinking'. The Duke did fall

ill and die immediately after returning to Dublin Castle from his three-month long immersion in excess. An autopsy showed his liver to be utterly decayed; he was thirty-three years old!

Robert Smith (1725), a former cook to the 2nd Duke of Ormond, published a book of recipes of court cookery which provides an insight into the variety of rich dishes which would have graced viceregal dining tables in the early eighteenth century. Smith had trained under Patrick Lamb, who had served as Master Cook to reigning monarchs from the time of Charles II to that of Queen Anne (Mennell 1996: 93). Smith was well versed in the preparation of dishes for courtly feasts. Numbering amongst these must surely have been the intriguingly named 'surpriz'd fowls' who find themselves stewed along with oysters, cockscombs, morels and anchovies, to be garnished with 'truffels' (sic) (Smith 1725: 14). Many of his recipes are categorized as 'royal' ─ an adjective that appears to apply to dishes with a multiplicity of ingredients. 'Royal Sausages' provide one such example, with partridge, quail, snipe, pigeon, chicken, veal, ham fat, chives, parsley, mushrooms, truffles, mace, eggs, cream, cinnamon, onion, beef and bacon all to be formed into sausages 'about six inches in Length, and three in Thickness' (Smith 1725: 99). Custards, very popular at this time, were displaced by ices at viceregal suppers by the 1750s (Barnard 2004: 144).

Accustomed to high caste guests ─ including viceregal couples ─ and a regular at Castle entertainments, Mrs. Delany is an excellent source for detailing the range of dishes typical of elite Georgian Irish households. The list of dishes she served to visiting 'grandees' in 1747 demonstrates the necessary components of a menu 'as showy as any eighteenth-century chatelaine could wish' (Cahill 2005: 69-70). The first course included fish, beef, rabbits, steaks, soup, and veal. The second course comprised grilled salmon, young turkey, pickled salad and quails, dishes of peas, onions, mushrooms and savoury pies. Desserts, of which nine were offered, consisted of four types of fruits, served with or without cream, blamange (sic), sweetmeats and jelly, and Dutch cheese. Delany (cited in Cahill 2005: 78), though quite proud of her own table, disapproved of high ecclesiastics aping 'the fantastical luxuriances of fashionable tables' such as Perigord pie.

This rich game and truffle-laden pastry would not, however, have appeared incongruous at a viceregal entertainment, nor would it have been difficult to obtain its ingredients since an extensive range of imported foods and wines were widely available from specialist merchants in Georgian Dublin. Robins (2001: 54) relates that a merchant at *The Blue Door* on Abbey Street stocked 'Bayonne hams, Parmesan cheese, peaches in brandy, West Indian sweetmeats, green ginger, truffles, olives, macaroni, anchovies, Muscatel raisins and Marseille figs.' A broadsheet entitled 'The Dublin Cries', printed sometime between 1773 and 1793, shows the types of foods and beverages that would have been available from street hawkers operating in the vicinity of Dublin Castle. Dairy products like milk, butter, curds and whey were on offer, as were fish (Dublin Bay herrings, Boyne salmon) and shellfish (Carlingford oysters, black cockles, boiled crabs and lobsters). A range of fruit and vegetables, including cherries, gooseberries, Winsor beans, peas, green sprouts, white cabbage, white cauliflower and artichokes ─ not to mention the now ubiquitous potato ─ round off the list of some of the hawkers' edible merchandise (Panter 1924: 70). As Barnard (2004: 191) points out, the desire amongst the gentry and the aristocracy to make a grand figure played a key role in fruit and vegetable cultivation in this period. In 1759, Mrs. Delany was impressed when served a pineapple 'ready pared and cut, all served in fine old china' (cited in Cahill 2005: 50). By 1772, however, a guest entertained at a nobleman's country seat in county Down had become sufficiently accustomed to such exotica that he was able to observe that the pineapple served there was subpar (Barnard 2004: 191).

Private papers from various Irish estates also provide insight into food and wine purchases typical of the upper class in this period. A list of accounts in the Wicklow Papers at the National Library of Ireland, (Dublin, NLI, MS 38,575/6) details payments made in 1746 for items such as '6 Trowts (sic), a kid, caraway seeds, a stone of salt, 3 pair of rabbits, sack and brandy, a half sammon (sic)'. A very early nineteenth-century cellar-book from the Clonbrock Estate Papers (NLI, MS 19,504) reveals purchases from several different wine merchants. The following margin notation within it highlights the discrimination of the Anglo-

Irish palate: 'Oct.24th 1814: 23 doz. Sneyd's claret. Stated to be prime Chateau Margaux vint. 1811, also 3 magnums of same'.

Native hospitality and Castle celebrations

Whilst the Irish gentry generally seemed disinterested in the appearance of their homes and the poor impression this might make upon visitors, this apparent defect as hosts was counterbalanced by lavish displays of hospitality. After a round of visits in 1732, amongst which one to 'a gentlemen of fifteen hundred pounds a year' appeared typical, Mrs. Delany wrote her sister that:

> I have not seen less than fourteen dishes of meat for dinner, and seven for supper [...] they not only treat us at their houses magnificently but if we are to go to an inn, they constantly provide us with a basket crammed with good things; no people can be more hospitable or obliging.
>
> (Glin and Peill 2007: 60)

The same year, an Englishman travelling in Ireland observed that 'the Irish Gentry are an expensive People; they live in the most open hospitable manner, continually feasting with one another' (Markham 1984: 124).

The singularity of Irish hospitality has long been remarked upon by visitors. In the sixteenth century, Stanihurst noted that Gaelic Irish chieftains were 'the most hospitable of men, nor could you please them more in anything than by frequently visiting their houses willingly of your own accord, or claiming an invitation from them' (1584: 33). Simms (1978: 94-95) opines that the 'riotous hospitality' exhibited throughout the Georgian era by members of the Ascendancy was not, in fact, an English import. Over time, the Protestant ruling class had assimilated traditional Gaelic standards of hospitality. Commentary by contemporaneous English observers supports the proposition that the ruling class emulated the native Irish in their displays of generous hospitality; English visitors invariably remarked upon the

overwhelming level of Irish hospitality in comparison to the prevailing English norms (Barnard 2004: Mac Con Iomaire 2009: Maxwell 1946: O'Mahoney 1912).

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Lord Harcourt distinguished himself by the social magnificence of his viceregal court. The results of his munificence were quite extraordinary. In attempting to emulate and even supercede the standards of Dublin Castle, important families actually 'beggared themselves, spending in a few years the income of a whole generation' (O'Mahoney 1912: 179). A vicious cycle became established; as reigning viceroys strove to outdo the Irish peers in their displays of hospitality, the latter were forced to ever escalating degrees of excess in reciprocation. The *Gentleman's Magazine* (November 1785: 913) noted that while touring Ireland the Duke and Duchess of Rutland 'visited the principal seats [...] of this country, where they have been received with that magnificence and hospitality which has ever distinguished the nobility and gentry of Ireland'. O'Mahoney (1912: 191) later pointed out, however, that the cost to these honoured hosts ran to thousands of pounds. Gamble (1810: 82) mused that 'The usages of Dublin make it necessary to give dinners, often beyond the income of the entertainer; who, in his ordinary mode of living, probably pays the penalty of his [...] profusion'. Clarkson (1999: 101-102) assumed that upper-class expenditure at this time amounted to thirty percent of total income, but it appears likely that this must have been exceeded by the Irish elite in their Georgian heyday. Ireland's premier peer, The Duke of Leinster, and many other members of the Irish aristocracy, such as the Marchioness of Antrim, matched the viceroys in the scale of their entertaining (Maxwell 1946: 111). Visitors to the private houses of Irish grandees were struck by their 'peculiarly splendid way of living ─ a multiplicity of servants, great profusion of dishes on the table, abundant wine' (Maxwell 1946: 101). Some, however, disapproved of a noticeable tendency towards one-upmanship, suggesting that assemblies in the private residences of the quality 'would have been agreeable enough if they did not vie with one another in expense' (Guy 1990: 40). The Duchess of Northumberland, a vicereine, expressed shock in her diary at the 'luxury of both rich and poor [...] The people in Trade generally keep one, nay some have 2 livery servants and

they give dinners, Balls, Routs and suppers and think nothing of sitting up till 3 or 5 in the morning' (Glin and Peill 2007: 115).

The end of an era

Dublin Castle really only commenced to offer the exaggerated level of hospitality expected by the Irish in the 1670s, when Lady Essex became the first vicereine to offer truly lavish entertainments (Robins 2001: 6). Rising to the demanding standards of Gaelic hospitality which had been imbibed by the Ascendancy, succeeding viceroys continued in like mode. The implementation of the Act of Union in 1801, however, which resulted in the dissolution of the Irish Parliament, put an end to the halcyon days of Dublin's viceregal court and the more outrageous excesses of Georgian hospitality.

Within ten years of the Act, Gamble (1912: 58) explained that the lord lieutenant's role was reduced to keeping 'the people [...] in good-humour, if he can'. This is not to imply that the court no longer played any role in Irish society; rather that society changed alongside new political and economic realities, and the mores of the times. Levels of over-indulgence that were once aspired to were now, generally, viewed with disapproval. Maria Edgeworth (cited in Maxwell 1946: 117-118) welcomed the fact that 'to make the stranger eat or drink to excess [...] to set before him old wine and old plate, was no longer the sum of good breeding'. Guests, she enthused, now 'escaped the pomp of grand entertainments'.

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