

She Attends a Swell Dinner With "Un Petit Accident d'Amour."

[Anne Browster's Paris Letter to Philadelphia Telegraph.]

A friend of mine was at the dinner party in London where Sarah Bernhardt played the audacious prank when she first visited that city, which caused her to be sent to social Coventry. For it is well known that while her professional success this year was good, "the best people," as English say, did not "take her up" so eagerly as formerly. On the morning of the dinner she wrote to her hostess a request to bring a gentleman friend with her in the evening. Every one knows how difficult such a request is to grant. A dinner giver assort's the guests, and has always a certain fixed number. We remember the council of the most learned of the Imperial Romans, Varron. The number of guests should vary between that of the graces and muses, and never go beyond the latter. (Aulus Gellius, XIII., 24.) The hostess of Miss Bernhardt, however, was amiable, and wrote that she would be happy to receive the friend. The dinner hour arrived, but not Miss Bernhardt. Nine o'clock—ten struck! The guests were famished. Just on the stroke of eleven the servant threw open the drawing room door and announced in a loud voice, to the horror of respectable Vanity Fair—Miss Bernhardt and her son! The consternation was something that could not be described. It is probable that every one present knew that the French actress was not, and never had been as chaste as Diana, still they had tacitly resolved to ignore her lapses of virtue, because the heads of English society had "taken her up" so earnestly; but they were not at all prepared for this brazen thrusting of the fact upon them.

"Oh, pardon me for being a little late," said the audacious woman in her most *trainante* innocent tone, as the hostess advanced to receive her tardy guests. "The Prince of Wales called to see me, and I made him stay to drink tea with me."

Of course this was sufficient excuse for loyal Vanity Fair. The presence of their future sovereign at the actress' rooms made them accept humbly their spoiled dinner. But "the son" business was quite another matter, and could not be overlooked or pardoned. My friend says the dinner was very stiff and constrained, but neither Miss Bernhardt nor her son seemed conscious of the restraint. They chatted and prattled in the most unabashed manner. After dinner one of the highest nosed and most "respectable" of English dames approached the actress and said in a freezing voice:

"I did not know, Madame, that you were married."
"Not the least in world," sang out the bold Frenchwoman in reply, half closing her eyes and smiling impudently at her adversary.

"But, Madame," gasped our England's matron, "your son."

"Ah," replied Sarah, with a cool shrug of the shoulder, and turning away "*etait un petit accident d'amour.*"

Vanity Fair is very loyal and submissive. No flock of sheep could follow their leader more blindly than the English do their Queen, and especially the Prince of Wales, whose ways are more easy to follow, as all sinful ways are. But Sarah Bernhardt, with her audacious parade of bad morals, was more than virtuous Vanity Fair could stand, thus *elle a fait four*, as the French say, socially, this last season. It is to be hoped that when this bold actress of eccentric morality goes to the United States this Winter, she may not be *fete* and *gates* by our "silly fools of quality."