

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE

THE NEWCOMER IN SUBURBIA

CERTAIN students of society have maintained that women are the real social members of a community; that it is they who are the moulders and creators of the polite forms and usages which we call etiquette, the playing rules of gregarious life. This is an erroneous assumption, based upon surface observation.

Women appear to carry the social banner, but it is men who really create the principles and write the slogans. If the actual evolution of a code of social usage had been left entirely to women we should still be in the Neolithic age, when calls were made with the exclusive intention of emptying the neighbour's larder, and incidentally bouncing a large rock off his skull. For women are essentially unsocial.

Perhaps one should use the more specific term "wives." An unmarried woman, be she maid or widow, is, of course, essentially social. She is a very whirlwind of social activity. For therein lies her hope of securing unto herself a more or less permanent mate. But once this is acquired, she sits down to watch him. She becomes the jealous watchdog of the heart, just as, in prehistoric ages, her wolf-pelt clothed sister stood ready to repel invaders in the affection of her lord with tooth and talon. And it is especially toward other women that wives adopt this unsocial attitude.

One can readily imagine Ug and Ik, long-armed, sinewy giants who had but lately battered each other with their stone clubs, finally becoming good friends. One can hear Ug saying to his wife, "Do you know, my dear, that fellow Ik is really not a bad sort. We chased a diplosaurus fourteen miles this morning, and I got quite well acquainted with him. What do you say to having them round to dinner some night?" And just as plainly, one can hear Mrs. Ug saying, "Have you seen her? Why, that Ik woman is impossible! She is wearing last year's lion skins, and looks a fright. No, thank you." Is not this much the situation to-day?

A Suburban Problem

MORE so than in flats or boarding-house, it is when the newcomers remove to a suburban community that they find themselves up against a wall of exclusion, the breaching of which requires the utmost skill and patience. For here it is, in these congregations of homes, that we find woman's cruelty to woman displayed in its most subtle form.

Man's entry into this new world is comparatively easy. If he is socially inclined, he meets his fellows at the golf club or the bowling green. If those more or less luxurious pastimes are not for him, he scrapes acquaintance on the 7.55 or whatever pet train or boat he peculiarly affects. He is soon calling them Bill or Jerry. He sits in a certain car, where he knows he will, each morning, find companions, friends! And all this is accomplished in a week or so.

But his wife? Pursuing her isolated way through the suburban streets, she is the cynosure of all eyes, an object of suspicion, that pitiable creature—a strange woman. Does anyone extend a welcoming hand or call a greeting? No, no. The very houses seem suspicious. The day has a thousand eyes, and you may be sure that Mrs. Thompson is never too busy with her jam-making to fail to note the passage of the stranger; Mrs. Smith, even though she is polishing her own floor, does not miss

an item of this fresh apparition.

At the next meeting of the Guild (a charitable organisation) she will be appraised. Her looks, clothes, gait, household, children and reputation will be added up in a column. The result will be against her. This is inevitable at first. She must be patient, she must wait. Perhaps . . . in time. . . .

The Guild referred to, being of a semi-religious nature, might be expected to open its arms with some cordiality to the newcomer, should she show a disposition to enlighten the South Sea Islanders with her needlework. She cannot be kept out, to be sure. But woe betide the ill-advised lady who attempts to use the Guild as a social shoe-horn. Nothing, in fact, so tends to lengthen one's term of probation as an attempt to shorten it.

There are other organisations, too, as a rule, into which the strange wife may creep timidly, but let her be careful to keep a civil tongue in her head, or it will be the worse for her. Even at church she should walk warily. Just because a lady kneels beside you is no sign that you are in her set.

Here it is that the husband must show that he is the real moulder of public opinion. With the other husbands he is naturally all right, one of the clan, a blood brother. It is now up to him to meet a few of the wives, the established hierarchy. It used to be supposed that the wife did that sort of thing, and that her husband was brought out only on show occasions, but that day has passed. By dancing with the right people, by the occasional genial chat in the porch of the church, by a thousand subtle methods of ingratiation the husband is in a position to win that tolerance which is the first nick in the high wall which surrounds him and his family. If he be of gracious presence, as most husbands are, it is surprising what charming results can be attained in this way. Sometimes an actual call results from this method.

Dont's for Wives

THE wife, on her side, should play the game with great care. A primary rule is that of avoiding any display of beauty. Some wives, even the wives of strangers, possess great personal attractions. We have all heard the expression "the fatal gift of beauty." Never is the gift more fatal than in the wife who stands on the outer threshold of a suburban set. To begin with, the men all notice it. Nothing so infuriates a wife. Even as Mrs. Ug spoke of Mrs. Ik do they assail this new menace. "You men are all alike," they say. "She is frightfully made up, and so common looking."

No; if one would help some charming woman to a pleasant relation with her own sex, let him carefully refrain from praising her beauty. Let him criticise it, saying, "What a strange looking creature she is!" Ten to one, his wife will disagree with him. "I thought she was quite attractive," she will say. Even this cold championship is an entering wedge. On the whole, however, it is safer for the newcomer to disguise and conceal any beauty she may possess.

Next to beauty, perhaps, brains are the most dangerous possession to introduce into a close corporation in the suburbs. By brains, one doesn't mean ordinary intelligence. That is naturally desirable; but care should be taken to keep it ordinary. Extraordinary brains—the power to think, to do anything extraordinarily well—invariably creates distrust. Such people are regarded as queer. Brainy people usually do things differently from people without brains, and this puts them in the freak class.

This is a fearful indictment, and very hard to live down. Brains, therefore, should be smuggled in, and carefully concealed, until one's position is firmly established.

So with material possessions, or even the lack of them; all display should be avoided.

There are young wives who make a boast of doing their own housework under the impression that it redounds to their credit. The more solid ladies of the community draw away from these interlopers, with whom they cannot talk servants, because there aren't any. The most favourable mental attitude to be adopted should be that of careful, conventional concealment, showing on its surface no unusual features of any kind, but only the drab, regular outline of the great human average.

Avoid eccentricity. Be banal. Be as average as possible.

A Ruse

THERE is more than one way to skin a cat, or a community of cats. A lovely lady of the writer's acquaintance proved this by a clever scheme of her own. Relying on the deeply feminine trait of curiosity, she followed the famous Ghandi principle of non-co-operation. In other words, she just wouldn't play. She made no efforts to go anywhere, meet anyone, or join any feminine organisation. And whenever she went out of doors she was heavily veiled. Her face was a dark mystery.

Who was she? What was she like? Have you ever met her?

These questions were on every tongue. At last the good ladies of the district could not stand it any longer. They descended upon her in a body, consumed by curiosity. They were surprised to find her charming, and lo! the day was hers.

WHY NOT ABOUT MEN?

by A. MANN

AN old commonplace of the newspaper world alleges that any reasonably well written article will find a journal to print it, provided it concerns women. The public avidly

The LADIES' MIRROR SNAPSHOT COMPETITION

SUMMER and holiday times are approaching, and soon cameras will be busy at all our beaches and seaside resorts.

To encourage young amateur photographers to obtain good pictures, *The Ladies' Mirror* offers three first-class cameras as prizes for the best holiday snapshots of children.

Children happily splashing in the water, racing on the shore, building sand-castles, gathering shells or indulging in any of the hundred and one pastimes which children love, all present attractive subjects for the camera.

The First Prize offered is a No. 1a Folding Autographic Kodak, valued at £5.

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Rules:

The competition is strictly confined to amateur photographers under 21 years of age.

A month's intimation will be given before the end of the competition.

Prints only should be submitted.

On the back of each print must be written the name, age, and permanent

peruses information about women—their fashions, their ways, their adventures, their character, to say nothing of their lack of character—it likes to look at their photographs, and to read lists of their frocks.

This is strange, for the newspaper public is largely feminine. Why do women not dwell on the classic features of the male? Why at a marriage ceremony does nobody take details of their exotic socks?

It may be that men are uninteresting. Many women, and more men agree on that point. Probably it is the masculine lack of daintiness, and the fact that among men one misses the—let us say, the occasionally erratic emotion which makes women so magnificent a subject for description and debate.

All the same, it seems rather unfair, for there are many things about men that one might debate on with profit.

For instance, one might discuss, "Have men grown less moral?" It is a wonderful subject, lending itself to attack and defence. Why it is not treated I do not know, unless the cynical public assumes that men cannot be less moral than they were.

Or one might discuss, "Do the nicest men follow the fashions?" One might go deeply into the question of slits at the back of the coat, permanent turn-ups, tie and shirt colour schemes, the proper curl of the hat-brim. The subject is immense, and yet is apparently despised.

Again, here is a subject which has been used in hundreds of novels, and will be used again: "Will a man sacrifice his love or his career?" Men are continually being told by women that they give themselves entirely to their work, and take no heed of their sweethearts and wives.

If that is so, why is it not discussed? It is an intensely exciting subject, it lends itself to romance. But no; silence, deep—profound as that before the worlds were made.

The more I reflect on this, the more humiliated I am by the lack of popular interest in my sex. The above subjects are but a hint. We are also waiting to hear whether "Men are more religious than women?" "Male Logic: is it Logical?" "Is the toothbrush moustache going out?" "Is the American haircut going to stay in?" "Can men cook?" "The male bird and how to snare it."

The neglected subject "Man" awaits its epic—its Homer—its Sappho, perhaps—who knows? It is an inspiring subject—if anyone cares.

address of the competitor, and the place at which the photograph was taken.

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