



# Bringing Up Grandmama



RECENTLY Jennie Solomon, Assistant to the Supervisor of Women's Programmes, Commercial Division, came across a book of Victorian etiquette. Although it contained nothing meant to "bring a smile to the young or a blush to the fair," it was nevertheless amusing, and to share the fun with listeners, she has written six talks for the Women's Hour, which start at 2XN on Tuesday, March 5, and at 4ZB on Monday, March 11. The talks—positively crammed with social know-how—will be heard from other Commercial stations later.

Victorian manuals of etiquette seem to have had three objectives—instruction, amusement, and a combination of the two. The first was for the uninformed, the second for the sophisticated, and the third (apparently) for those who were not quite sure whether they were U or non-U. Quotations from such a manual give one some general impression of the Victorian way of life, from the first important moment when boy meets girl.

"To introduce persons who are mutually unknown is to undertake a serious responsibility. Always introduce the gentleman to the lady—the chivalry of etiquette assumes that the lady is invariably the superior in right of her sex, and that the gentleman is honoured in the introduction."

Naturally, in those circumstances, she does not offer him her hand. "On the continent," the book continues with the air of final authority, "ladies never shake hands with gentlemen unless under circumstances of great intimacy." To dance, at a ball, requires a formal introduction, although "an introduction given for the mere purpose of enabling a lady and a gentleman to go through a dance together does not constitute an acquaintanceship. The lady is at liberty to pass the gentleman in the park the next day without recognition."

She may, nevertheless, remember his conversation, for the Victorian gentleman should "offer at least three or four observations to his partner in the course of a long half-hour," since it was "to a certain extent incumbent upon him to do something more than dance."

But the book views with what sounds almost like prophetic alarm those who "race and romp through the dance in a manner fatiguing to themselves and dangerous to their fellow-dancers." Rock 'n' roll must have had its Victorian equivalent, for apparently the early waltz was "infinitely more graceful than the style which has superseded it." The book, however, concedes that the waltz, as danced by the then present generation, possessed a spirit and variety quite unknown to its stately predecessor.

Once a young man has felt "the inly touch" of love, the rules are firm. Before he ventures to take any step towards the pursuit of his lady, he must ask himself whether he can support a wife, and then he should "use fair opportunities to ascertain the estimation in which the young lady, as well as her family,

is held by friends." In other words (apparently): Can he afford her, and is she worth it? The young lady, pursued with such machiavellian calculation, is earnestly advised to seek hope, guidance and support from her mother who, she knows, will not fail her. The confidence thus established will "be productive of the most beneficial results—by securing the daughter's obedience to her parents' advice."

Meanwhile, the young couple must watch each other carefully to see that they do not fall short of the ideal standard. The delicate sentiments of the Vic-

torian gentlewoman could be forever alienated by a man who neglected to throw away his cigar when he met her, and her sensibilities would be offended at the thought of his offering her a chair "still warm from his person." She in her turn must combine all housewifely virtues with a modest manner and dress, never offending his ears with slang or puns, or an unseemly attempt at too much wit.

Once engaged, the young man has a privilege and duty to advise and correct her, since "the fair and loving creature is now disposed like pliant wax to mould



NEVER offer a lady a chair "still warm from the person"

herself to his reasonable wishes in all things." On the other hand, "her slightest wish is to be his law," and he may be excused if he neglects his business for her. Once married, that situation changes, and the lady who has been his idol must now take her turn in paying the many love-begotten attentions which the husband, weary and fatigued from his daily hours, expects from his loving spouse. She has, of course, had nothing to do all day, and now may welcome the dear, tired husband. One might add, for the benefit of husbands, that the book has copious advice on the management of the household staff.

While these do the housework, the Victorian matron may make morning calls (usually in the afternoon). At these, she must be careful to leave umbrellas in the hall, dogs outside, and children at home, since the last two, unless they are unusually well-trained, can only be productive of anxiety to both visitor and hostess. Meanwhile, the hostess may continue to do a little light or ornamental needlework (not the family darning), but any engrossing occupation must be at once abandoned on the arrival of visitors. The afternoons may, alternatively, be passed in parties, and the evenings at dinners or balls, where new generations of boys meet girls.

It would seem that the rules that regulated Victorian life are now a little out of touch with the times. But this account has cheated a little, by omitting much of the serious advice to young Victorians on how to win friends and influence people. We still agree that good conversation is desirable, without scandal, private discussions, or long arguments; and we try not to talk on subjects on which we know nothing. We like dress which is clean and appropriate, even if worsted or cotton gloves are not now "unutterably vulgar." Husbands and wives still may trust each other and listen to both sides of any discussion, although today they do dance together in society.

The Victorian manual states that manners are "the trifles which do most to make social intercourse agreeable." The details of its etiquette may be ignored in our less leisured age, but the spirit which presumably prompted them, the self-respect and respect for others, should perhaps not be entirely forgotten.

## New Programmes in Women's Session

THIS year, as in the past, the National women's programme from YA and YZ stations will link on Wednesday mornings at 11.0 a.m. for the major features of the week, documentaries and discussions, and plans for the year show a wide variety of topics which should be of interest and value to housewives. For the time being there will be no more Portraits from Life, but there will be one Picture of a Photographer. This will be of George Chance, of Dunedin, whose early adventures with a camera took him to many parts of the world, including South America. And there may be other Pictures from time to time. *Let's Talk It Over* will again be heard on the first Wednesday of each month. In this, a specially selected panel in Auckland will discuss and give advice on questions sent in by listeners. Over the years there have been most interesting topics in this session, and listeners are still sending in questions.

For March, Airini Grennell, of 3YA, has prepared two documentaries on the making of bread, and there will be a programme from Napier on the Hawke's Bay Art Society's Museum and Art Gallery. This Art Society is one of the most vigorous in the country, and the museum is a headquarters for activities in art, music and pottery.

In April the session will concentrate on the growing problem of road traffic in New Zealand. The first discussion will centre on traffic and the authorities, the second on traffic and the driver, and the third deals with traffic and the pedestrian. These programmes will be prepared in Auckland. Later in the year listeners will hear how the women on Pitcairn Island live. Mr. G. Williams, of the Department of Internal Affairs, recently spent a few weeks there with a tape recorder. A major series late in the year will concern house-building, including the problems of finances and whether to build or buy a house. The



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sites and planning of the house will be discussed, as will the style, foundations, materials and finishes, and the final furnishing of the new home.