

## TO BE A SOCIAL SUCCESS

By Ruth Ashmore

JENNY, who is pretty to look at, pleasant to those who know her, and eager, as every girl should be, to have a good time, is complaining. She writes me a most pathetic letter in which she says, "I am as good-looking as the average person, I am well dressed, I am as bright as the average girl, but when I go out into society nobody takes any notice of me. What is the reason?" I fear, my pretty Jenny, that the reason lies in yourself. When you are left alone for a minute you feel aggrieved; you are certain that you are not appreciated; you set your teeth together fiercely, while you try to convince yourself that you do not care; the expression on your face would drive away any one who wished to be pleasant to you. Society is commercial in one way: it is founded on the system of giving and taking, and what you offer it it returns in plenty.

### WHY YOU FAIL

MY DEAR girl, you fail socially because you look uninterested, you stand off and have a don't-care expression on your face. This drives would-be acquaintances away, and suggests to a hostess that if you do not care, and show it so plainly, she need not care to send you cards another time. Society is really based upon the Golden Rule, and it demands from you not only sympathy, but that outcome of the best of sympathy, tact. To be a social success you must learn to say the right things to the right people. Do not talk about flirting widows to a woman in mourning, nor of the value of beauty to an aged spinster forced to wear blue glasses. The aged spinster may be a perfect well of learning and wit. You will find this out if you touch her with the golden wand of tact. Possibly you are nervous and shy. Try to overcome that. Force yourself to say something. If you are unfortunate enough to be easily embarrassed, at least get used to the sound of your own voice, and then you will not find yourself screaming from sheer nervousness when you wish to speak low, or whispering in a husky manner when your words should be distinct. To be a social success you must govern your voice, and usage is the only thing that will make that possible. Do not be afraid to speak of simple things. There is no man too learned not to be interested in that which interests a pretty girl, and no woman too old or too world-worn not to care about ribbons or flowers, sweetmeats or novels.

### THE DEMANDS OF SOCIETY

ARE, first, that you should look well. Not that you should be a beauty, but that you should, on occasion, put on your best bib and tucker and help make up the picture that, all in all, constitutes society. You speak of the social world as selfish; so it is, for it demands from all its votaries absolute unselfishness. You must learn to have no ill-feeling toward anybody. If a chatterbox tells you that Madame Malice has made you the subject of her ridicule you must make yourself smile; go forward and meet Madame Malice with a pleasant word, a courteous bow, and you must entirely forget that she has ever said anything but that which was pleasant. Society ceases to be good when malicious sayings are recognized.

Then, in your own person, you must live up to what the social world asks. Achieve the stillness of form that is the great charm of the English woman. Learn to be quiet of body, do not jerk, do not wriggle, do not move from chair to chair, do not restlessly pick up first one and then another of the trifles on the table and toy with them, do not bite your lips, do not set your jaws as if you were going to fight a battle, do not tap your foot, and do not show, by moving your hands backward and forward, that the enemy of good form, restlessness, is controlling you. Then, when you talk, avoid all those little smart speeches that seem to you so clever, but which are very apt to be coined at the expense of somebody else. An old writer truly enough said that politeness was benevolence in trifles, that it simply meant the giving to somebody else the most comfortable seat, the first place, or the prestige of being the speaker while you are the listener.

Offer your courtesies in a quiet way, and do not overwhelm people with them. In the street car offer your seat to the elderly lady, to the invalid, or to the mother carrying her child, but before doing so give the men who are present an opportunity to do their duty. A second or two of waiting will not lessen your politeness, and will not make the other passengers think that you wish to be conspicuous.

### LEARN TO KEEP SILENT

LEARN, after you have learned to speak, to listen, and to listen intelligently. Express your interest through your eyes, and when it is needed say the encouraging word that, like hot water on the tea, brings out the strength. If a speaker mentions a wrong date do not correct her, the world cares for the interesting talk, not for whether the affair described happened on Thursday or Friday, nor whether the *bon mot* was born at nine or one o'clock. The effect on the speaker is belittling, and neither you nor I, my pretty Jenny, have the right to underrate any one. Chatter about anything you will but personalities. But do not feel that you must raise the tone of society by ringing in, when everybody is laughing at some funny little story about a child, or all are smiling at an amusing description of how the orange blossoms grow down South, your opinion of some heavy history that has lately been published. Society is not a school, it is a pleasure ground. It is true that we need schooling often to know how to play, but it is also true that we must not annoy our playmates by burdening them with heavy studies in playtime.

### ABOUT YOUR OPINIONS

YOU have decided opinions. That is good, for it means that you have a mind of your own. In society you find that your opinions are not appreciated as they should be, and you bristle like a hedgehog, causing everybody to get as far away from you as possible. You cannot make the world over. Live, yourself, up to that which you think right or wrong, but give to other people the same privilege and do not preach on the playground. If you do you will find the agreeable people drifting from you, and those who are less agreeable will ask in a jeering tone, "What does Jenny know of life? When she has lived in it as long as we have she will realize the worth of these hours of play. She will understand that every one of us has to work hard in some way, and that society offers a rest to the thinker. It says, 'Come and pick violets with me and make a ball out of them, and toss that ball backward and forward and so enjoy yourself.'" You will be counted a kill-joy if you foist your opinions upon the world. And you do not want to be that. You want to be a social success.

And your friend Jack must learn the same rule if he wishes to be popular socially. Older men will laugh at him if he brings his opinions of religion, of politics or of life into the playground, and they will manage to make him understand, a little severely, perhaps, that in the years to come these important things will rest heavy enough on his shoulders, and that he had better play with violets while he can. And he must learn to do it gracefully. When he is a social success he is perfect gold at heart, overlaid, like specially fine ornaments, with the enamel of good manners. He should dress well, though he need not be a fop, and he must remember that in society women especially like a manly man. And the manly man is the one who does not compromise a girl by over-attention, nor shun her when he is thrown with her simply because he is not attracted by her. He should be courteous to all the girls alike. What would a man think if he met a girl, a charming girl, a pretty girl, a lovable girl, but who, at her first word to him, made him conscious of the existence of that odorous vegetable, the onion? Then let him ask himself what must a girl think of him when, at his first greeting, she is conscious of the fact that he has been using tobacco. Men should leave the odor of the cigar or cigarette behind them if they wish to be socially successful.

Very often in society the most interesting man is not the gay young bachelor, but he who has more years on his shoulders and who is a married man. He talks well, he is considerate, and he is, as you say, "so well informed as to the way a girl likes to be treated." That is true, my Jenny. But did you ever think of his teacher? Probably it was his wife. You admire him and you pity him. Why? He has told you that he is not appreciated—that he made the common mistake: he married early, and—then he looks at you and you understand. You are sure he is too much of a gentleman to say anything against his wife, and yet you are equally sure that she is horrid. My dear girl, beware of this man as you would of a serpent. The flowers he sends are deadly nightshade, and if you accept them there will be a shadow over your pretty name, society will refuse to recognize you, and your friends will cease to respect you.

### WHAT IS GOOD SOCIETY?

NOT a small clique. Not one hundred, nor four hundred, nor a thousand, but the whole great world in which you live. Do you know why Titian's women are always so beautiful? Because no matter who his model was he selected only her best points to be made conspicuous, and hid the others by a clever drapery or whatever artistic mask suggested itself to him. That is what society asks, that you give to it your best, and give generously. Do not refuse to sing the little ballad that you know, because singers like Calvé and Eames exist, but do your best in the way of giving pleasure to those who are around you. Never refuse to learn, and never claim to know things of which you are ignorant. Society soon detects the sham. If a dance is to the fore, if a game is to be played, if a chorus is to be sung, tell of your ignorance if it exists, tell of it in a natural way, and you may be sure somebody will teach you, and teach you gladly. If you are weak enough to be untruthful the fact that you cannot dance, that you cannot play the game, that you cannot sing the chorus, will soon be proven, and you will be counted a fraud. Do not promise that which is impossible. The promise to send a new book or some flowers need never be made unless you are perfectly sure that you can keep your word.

### SOME OF THE RULES

PUNCTUALITY, first of all. You will never be a social success if, having been invited to a dinner or a luncheon, you appear late. There is no excuse for this breach of etiquette. Then, too, society demands that you be punctual in the acknowledgment of all letters and invitations, and that you shall not only write an interesting letter, but also that you write a clear hand and spell and express yourself correctly. You must learn the formula of answering invitations, and, by-the-by, it is well to remember that the answer to each invitation should be worded after the manner of the invitation. When you receive an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Weary Tiresome you cannot hold it over until to-morrow to see if anything pleasanter should arise. You must answer it at once and accept it if you can. Mrs. Tiresome's dinners may bore you, but you can make Mrs. Tiresome a friend forever if by your own tact you lift the weariness from all the other guests and make the evening pleasant.

Neglect none of the little courtesies. After a three days' visit in the country write as soon after your return home as possible; thank your hostess and tell her of your safe arrival and of the events of your journey. The trouble is slight, the courtesy is great. Then there is the pleasant letter to be written when happiness comes to a friend. You write to wish her happiness on the news you have heard about her engagement; you write to congratulate her on having received some great honor; you write to congratulate another friend on having become a happy mother. And because you are womanly you write a letter of kindly sympathy to the friend to whom sorrow has come—indeed, you will never forget, if you wish to be a social success, to express yourself, through the medium of your pen, as pleased or sorrowing with your friends. This is bread cast upon the waters, such bread as will come back to you in the form of sympathy with you when you shall need it, though you must never think, when you do what is polite and kind, of the return.

There is much that is vulgar, and which you must avoid. Avoid criticising the clothes of those who are not well off in this world's goods. Avoid criticising the speech of those, who, with old age, have grown careless. It is the height of vulgarity to criticise elderly people. You must remember that years alone demand respect. Remember this when frivolity gets the better of you, and, laughing and talking very much, you suddenly find yourself making a vulgar speech. It is almost more than vulgar to criticise any deformity. Only those who suffer know what it means to be physically deficient.

### THE END OF THE SERMON

I THINK, my Jenny, that you will be a social success, for you are pretty to talk with, and pleasant, too, to look upon, but you must remember every day and every hour of your life that social success is only obtained by continued thought of the value of little things. The little pleasures are really great ones, the little courtesies are keenly appreciated, and the little politenesses are those that will make you not only a lovable girl, but a lady. I think to be a social success you must be that. Reformers are prone to say that the finest name that can be given to you or to me is woman. Perhaps that is true. But it seems to me that you should also wish to be called a lady. You are a woman by birth, and a lady because of your tact and good manners. There is many a woman truthful and honest, but so lacking in tact and lacking in consideration that she cannot possibly be called a lady. If, therefore, you wish to have society approve of you you must be ladylike and tactful as well as womanly.

EDITOR'S NOTE—Miss Ashmore's answers to her correspondents, under the title of "Side-Talks with Girls," will be found on page 27 of this issue of the JOURNAL.