



THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

OCTOBER, 1898

YOUNG MEN IN BUSINESS HOURS



HE serious part which business plays in the life of a man is clearly understood by only a very few women. Business is essentially a masculine thing—so masculine, in fact, that some women never get beyond the point of complaining of its constant exactions upon the men of their homes. But business, if it be rightly conducted, is constant: it is exacting. It cannot be otherwise. It is a case of eternal vigilance. A man understands this, and accepts it. It is his life. He was born for it, made for it, and lives by it. Every element so simple to him is foreign to the normal feminine nature. Nor is it necessary that our wives should learn to comprehend business as men understand it. But it is essential, I think, that women should, not only in their own minds, accustom themselves to apportion off a man's business to its proper place in his life, but that they should likewise teach their daughters the same important lesson.

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GIRLS are by far too apt to thoughtlessly punch holes in the business prospects of the young men of their acquaintance. They work this mischief in various ways. They consider it "great fun" to step to a telephone, for example, and "ring up" some young man while he is at his office, only to send him some unnecessary message or indulge in some flippant talk. They are forgetful of the fact that what may be rare sport at their end of the line may cause serious embarrassment or worse to the young man at the other end. Even if the young man enjoys it his employer does not, in whose eyes the prospects of his employee are not increased by a use of his telephone for other than urgent or business messages.

Sending unnecessary or even fancied necessary notes to young men at their offices during business hours is another favorite "pastime" of girls. Sometimes the "fun" is carried further by meeting a young man at his luncheon hour, or by even calling at his office. Again, even a more dangerous element is introduced by girls urging young men to leave their offices before closing hours to escort them to some place of amusement, some game or to a train. "Just once" is the seductive excuse. These entreaties, made by a girl of whom a young man may be fond, are not easily set aside or refused, and, wishing to win her favor, he is apt to yield, although his own judgment tells him that he is not doing right nor acting fairly to his employer or to himself.

THE danger in these acts is not in themselves, but in the injurious distractions which they mean. Business hours, though doubtless they seem inexplicably long to girls, are, in reality, all too short for the accomplishment of things necessary to a young man's success. Hence every moment when he is at business should be precious to him, and it is mightily precious to the right sort of a young man. His mind should be focused on the problems before him, which mean either his success or his failure. Only from criminal thoughtlessness or willful intent can a girl thrust herself upon a young man's attention at such a time, and distract him from what means everything to him, present or future. The act may mean very little to her: possibly nothing. But that is because she does not know the mechanism of an office. To many a young man a foreign interruption in business hours has proved a very costly distraction: the loss of a point which he was never able to regain. I put this matter in its most serious light, because I have personally seen it work in more instances than one to the detriment of a young man's prospects. Girls fail to realize the importance of business hours to young men, and in that ignorance often do things which, were they conscious of the injury effected, they would never think of doing. Particularly does this apply to the girl whose interest in a young man is more than that of a friend. She of all girls should be studiously careful in her avoidance of that part of the life of a young man which means so much to her as well as to him. He of all young men needs his time at the office to carve out the way he seeks for her and for himself. No distractions should she hold out to him. On the contrary, let her see to it that her every act tends to keep him at his desk when he should be there, and when his hours belong not to her but to his employer. And if such a young man should have progressed so far as to be his own employer, even more important is it that his business hours should belong to his business and his customers. Absence with an employer is oftentimes far more costly than absence with an employee. The greater our responsibilities the greater the necessity for constant attention.

EVERY girl should learn and be taught by her parents that the business life of a young man is a time of his life apart from any other interests. Into that part of his life she must not come, either by presence, letter or message. To make that portion of his life most effective for himself, his undivided attention must belong to its interests. Only the most urgent domestic emergency excuses a woman for entering into the business hours of a man unless she be associated with him. This every sensible and discriminating wife understands by a wise

acceptance of what business means to a man. But girls must be taught what wives have learned by experience in this respect. They ought to be made to understand that young men during business hours must be left undisturbed. No matter how attractive the social event, if it occur during business hours they should understand that it is not for a young man who has his way to make in the world. Nor must they hold the temptation before a young man. Employers dislike absences from the office which have no other basis than some social pleasure. They are quick to associate such tendencies with their employees, and their confidence in them is proportionately lessened. An employer has a right to ask that the time for which he pays be spent in his service. An occasional absence is permissible, but care should be taken that it remains occasional—not occasional according to girls' notions of such things, but occasional according to business requirements. The young man surer of promotion is he who is invariably found at his desk.

ELSEWHERE have I said, and I repeat it here, that a young man is wisest who sees to it that his personal letters do not come to his business address. Aside from the technical point that he has no right to use his employer's address for social correspondence, and that it is not the place for such letters, it means a freedom from distraction which is valuable to him. The receipt of social letters at business places often means their answer there, and so one evil multiplies into another. It is never a commendation of a young man's work to his employer to have a stack of personal letters come to his desk. That is an evidence of popularity which may go for something socially, but it never appeals to an employer. In short, a young man's business hours should be devoted to business, and he cannot be too strict in the observance of that rule. Nor should our girls seek in any respect to lead our young men to give laxity to that rule. The best kind of a self-respecting girl, on the other hand, is she who helps a young man to keep inviolate a rule so obviously for his own best interests, present and future. A girl cannot too rigidly let a young man alone during business hours. That is the rule of wisdom, and I wish with all my heart that every girl would learn it and adhere to it.