

"We'll set about learning everything," Rachel and Alice said.

"Not everything, one thing at a time. Begin by helping your mother in turn till in time you release her of all household cares. She has done her share of work. And get a knowledge of practical things first, and then set about learning one thing thoroughly, so that some day, if necessary, you may get your living at it. No matter whether you are married or single, or rich or poor, you cannot help having duties towards your fellow-creatures, and especially towards those near you, and one of these, first of all, is not to be ignorant, if you can help it, of those common things which by knowing you can help them."

"Dear auntie, we'll do our best," and they got up and kissed her, and she thought what sweet-tempered girls they were, "and we'll burn our caps."

"Pray don't," she laughed. "They are much too pretty; show your tresses while you can, but in case you do feel inclined to hide them sometimes, I shall buy you some muslin and ribbon to-morrow, and we'll all set to work and find out how to make them, and you shall each have new ones. I am sure I can manage them, and when you wear them you will think of your old aunt, dears, and the lecture she read you, with a mob cap for a subject."

DINNERS IN SOCIETY.



PERPETUAL solicitations on the part of the correspondents of this magazine to be further instructed in the usages of "polite society" must plead my excuse for the revival of a subject so trite and uninteresting to those no longer "girls."

Without further introduction, I will suppose that you are engaged to dine out, to meet a considerable assemblage of friends. Commence your preparations in good time, and let your dressing be completed a few minutes before the carriage is announced. To keep your elders waiting is most disrespectful; they have to choose between leaving you behind, or keeping your hosts and others waiting—spoiling their dinner, and perhaps of giving the horses cold also.

On being announced by one of the men-servants at the door of the vestibule or anti-room, you will find that your hostess awaits you, close at hand, within. Look at no one else, supposing that she had moved further into the drawing-room to lead some guest to a seat. Make a very slight curtsy as you give her your hand, a little act of politeness always observed in the upper ranks of society on formal occasions, and which needs to be practised, as it should be naturally and gracefully done. If not directed to a place, select one as little conspicuous as possible; not on a sofa, nor a large arm chair, unless desired to do so.

In ordinary society the ten minutes preceding the announcement of dinner are found to hang somewhat heavily on hand. Hungry, chilly, and possibly shy, or else naturally dull and uninteresting, people often appear to have nothing to say. I am, however, only writing for girls, who are not the proper leaders of general conversation. But they may speak to a next young neighbour without an introduction. After dinner you may assist your hostess in entertaining fellow-guests, though careful not to put yourself forward ostentatiously, so as to attract notice. Nothing could be in worse taste than to appear as if "doing the honours" (as people call it) of another person's house; instead of merely acting as a helper to her. Offer your small services, and follow her directions. I have seen young girls running about all over the room in a most forward and unseemly manner, taking the entire direction of the entertainment without the excuse of being daughters of the house.

But much may be gracefully and effectually done in a gentle, quiet way. Collect your thoughts before any kind of reunion, and be prepared with any little subjects of interest to form topics of pleasant conversation. Neither receive visitors at home, nor accept the hospitality of others, without making it a point of duty to return their kindness by making yourself agreeable. Do not sit silently scanning the dress of your neighbours, and saying nothing; nor answer in mere monosyllables, nor start when some one addresses you, as if you had just wakened up out of a nap. This is apt to occur in the case of young people who have few opportunities of mixing in society. Keep your hands still; do not move uneasily in your chair when first addressed, nor fiddle with the buttons of your gloves. Buttoned once they do not require to be touched again. Apart from any other objections to tricks like these, your awkward shyness presents a painful spectacle.

The dinner is now announced, and as the lady of the house has already signified to each of the gentlemen to whom he should offer his escort, and introduced to each other the pairs hitherto unacquainted, they all proceed to the dining-room according to the order of their respective precedence. With this matter—if ever a hostess yourself—you will have to make yourself thoroughly acquainted. Where there is no rank of birth nor professional position, age will always be your guide, which should never be overlooked.

I may here observe that "the girls" seem strangely solicitous about "which arm" a gentleman should present to the lady whom he conducts to the dining-room. Why they should feel so distracted about it I am at a loss to divine. One rule is enough for you,—whichever arm your cavalier presents, accept it. Circumstances must guide him. Englishmen generally give the right, and foreigners the left. Where large entertainments are given the stairs are broad, as in our old country seats and stately town mansions. But in the humble dwellings of poor gentlemen and professionals, the narrow stairs have often an awkward turning at a sharp angle, leaving

scarcely a ledge whereon to place the foot. Let the young man having a lady under his charge take due note of the stairs, and act accordingly.

You are now seated at table. Immediately after "grace" has been said, unfold your dinner-napkin, lay it across your lap, and remove both your gloves. Put the latter in your pocket, because if they fell from your lap under the table, your companion would have to dive under it to recover them on your rising to leave the room.

If you take soup do not crumble nor break your bread into it, except in the privacy of home, where a small dinner might be thus supplemented. Fried toast will be served with it if suitable. Take the soup from the side of the spoon—do not turn round the point to your mouth; make no noise in drawing in the liquid, nor in the act of swallowing it. If this offer you any difficulty practise the art at home. Lastly, do not hold up the plate on one side, nor make a scraping with the spoon; you can finish the soup easily without raising the plate.

Fish will next be handed round. Be careful in removing the bones with your fish-knife and fork, because a choking fit at dinner would not be an agreeable diversion to your neighbours; and to remove anything objectionable from your mouth at any time, whether of bone or gristle, is by no means a pretty exhibition. So put nothing in that is to come out, however cleverly and privately contrived. At small dinners given by persons of limited means, who may have no silver fish knives, you must only take your fork in your right hand and a small wedge-like crust of bread in the left, with which to assist the fork. Again, I must impress on you the impropriety of making a noise when eating, showing what is in your mouth by keeping your lips apart; and drinking before you have swallowed what you have been eating, or without wiping your mouth both before and afterwards.

Various courses follow that of the fish. Should curry chance to be one of the dishes, use both fork and spoon, but not your knife; and if helped to a tart containing stone fruit, remove the stones neatly from the plums with your fork. It is quite unnecessary to perform that operation in your mouth.

Possibly, at a private dinner, a hostess may press a guest to try some viand which she does not like. Of course the obligations on a hostess are even more strict than those on a guest, simply because the latter is dependent on her wishes; and so long as she remains under her roof, her comfort and feelings, in every way, should be consulted. Thus, to press her to eat or drink after she has declined, is an act of ill-breeding. At the same time it would be gross rudeness to show a distaste for any dish laid before you, or to persist in refusing it, were it pressed upon you. Self-denial is a Christian grace. Amongst half-civilised nations it is a mark of distinction conferred on any guest for a chief to roll up some morsel of food in his hands, and insert the greasy pellet with his own unassisted fingers into the mouth of the visitor. To decline it—because by no means an appetising morsel—would be a reflection on the good taste of the host, and an evidence of ingratitude for the distinction intended. Moreover, your rejection of the *bonne bouche* might cost you your head, or purchase the novelty of a javelin through your heart!

Apropos of controlling your fancies at table or elsewhere, rather than cast a reflection on one who wishes to please you, I will mention a little incident told me long ago by one to whom I owe much of my own early training in the usages of society. Now a very aged and venerable man, his parents had lived much about the Court of the old King George III., having been honoured with his personal inti-

macy. He himself had lived and visited amongst the grandees of the Court of the Prince, as Regent and King, and was regarded as a man of most accomplished manners. Thus, I have no hesitation in giving my young readers advice derived from such competent authority.

The Prince Regent was styled "the first gentleman in England," for, like our own Prince of Wales, few had so keen an intuitive perception of the principles that govern all rules of good breeding. On one occasion he had indulged in taking snuff, and turning to a lady beside him, he presented his open box and invited her to take a pinch likewise. Alas! the good woman was not equal to the occasion; she was not in the habit of taking snuff—perhaps she disliked it; in fact, she had not learnt her lesson in good manners. So she thanked him and declined. Of course he felt as if charged with an indiscretion; but, always self-possessed and dignified, he simply turned to another lady and made her the same offer. This time he had met with a woman who was not out of her place in a palace. She thanked him graciously for so distinguishing her, and took the snuff, just sufficient of course to smell, but not to produce a sneeze. Her act justified that of the Prince, who was only testing her good manners, and he showed his recognition of her conduct by presenting her with the beautiful jewelled box, as a memento of the occasion.

Again I must conduct you back to the dining-room. Observe how highly-bred people eat asparagus. They feel with the knife where the soft part ends, and dividing the stems, they eat with the fork. It is a disgusting spectacle to see people draw out a mangled end from their mouths reduced to a ragged fringe. Never eat peas with a spoon. You may change the fork into your right hand and use it as one, or you may press the peas with it—still in the right hand—making them adhere conveniently together. Excepting at a private dinner, where little variety, if any, is provided, never ask for a second help from the same dish.

Take care to keep your hands off the table. Never fiddle with the salt, nor the spoon, knife and fork, and make no crumbs with your bread. Avoid coughing, and the use of your handkerchief; having a cold you should remain at home. If disposed to sneeze, from pepper or mustard, contrive to hold your nose with your handkerchief for a moment, to stop it in time, but do so unobserved if possible. After the game, cheese is carried round, and its usual accompaniments of butter and biscuits, &c. If you take butter, do not scrape off a piece against the rim of your plate, turning the face of the knife downwards, as if you were cleaning a putty-knife on the edge of a piece of glass. Contrive to loosen the butter, so as to place it fairly in the plate at one side. Should you also take cheese, butter a small piece of bread or biscuit, place a piece of cheese upon it, and convey it to your mouth in this way. To do so with the blade of a knife is highly objectionable, and contrary to all rules that obtain in the upper ranks of society, though many, otherwise well-bred people, may be seen careless in this respect in private, and elderly people also allow themselves much license in trifling matters, which they do not mean to form an example to younger people. Such little infringements of the orthodox rules should not be criticised by young people. Advancing life sometimes brings lassitude and indifference about them; and, moreover, what would evidence much selfishness and greediness in youth, is only to be regarded as the consent of an infirm person, with a poor appetite, to be suitably nursed and provided for.

Dessert is now served, and the finger-glasses and d'oyleys are removed from all the plates by their respective owners. Fruit often pre-

sents difficulties to the consumers; what with the stones, skins, shells, or rind, it is not always easy to eat in a delicate and refined manner. Half-bred people may be seen inserting pieces of orange into their mouths and drawing out the peel again, showing the remains of the pulp on their plates. Pomegranates present some difficulty amongst other fruits. They are full of juice, and equally so of stones, too large to be swallowed wholesale. Cut one in two, and with the spoon press the stones within, as in a cup, extracting and taking up the juice with it.

Having taken what fruit they require, each lady dips her fingers in the finger-glass, and touches her lips also with the water, dries them, and puts on her gloves. She then lays the napkin on the seat of her chair. The lady of the house watches to attract the notice of the chief guest, seated at her husband's right hand, and smiles and bows to her, and they rise simultaneously, followed by all. The host opens the door, the chief lady walks out first, the rest according to their respective precedence, and the gentlemen stand until all have retired to the drawing-room.

In conclusion, I have a word of advice to offer on the subject of dinners at home, or after a homely fashion. Observe what dishes are being used, and those on which there appears to be a kind of "run," and never ask for that of which there is little, to the deprivation of any one yet unhelped. When there is a tart or a pie uncut, there being sufficient of some other dish, show some little consideration for your hostess. The expenses and difficulties of housekeeping in families of small means are great. Keep your eyes about you. Remember the invalids, or those advanced in years. Some small delicacy at the table may perhaps have been prepared for them. Try also to supplement the efforts of your hostess. However hospitable, and ready to give you anything you would like, she would appreciate a thoughtfulness on your part, that would leave something nice for one who is always last helped, or would spare an unbroken dish for the following day, without making the reason too apparent. Would you wish her to replace a sort of wreckage of all in her small larder, in return for her kindness to you?

S. F. A. CAULFEILD.

HOW TO REAR FOWLS.

POULTRY-keeping is both an interesting and profitable occupation. If girls only knew what pleasure it would give them, more would pursue it. Remember, however, that it is not a thing to be done by fits and starts. Poultry requires constant care; no arduous work, but regular daily thought and attention. My present paper shall only treat the subject as applicable to the keeping of a limited number of fowls, as can be practically done by any young lady.

Poultry-farming becomes, of course, a matter of capital and interest; while prize poultry-keeping is generally a hobby, very often lucrative, but depending very much on the success your fowls have at shows. It is not by any means to be discouraged, only fowls intended for exhibition require different treatment from those kept merely for household use. If you are successful in taking prizes, and can command a high price for setting eggs—for instance, from ten shillings to a guinea a dozen—it is a very good thing. Before, however, you can expect to succeed with prize poultry it is necessary to obtain a correct knowledge of the management of ordinary fowls.

Proper housing, feeding, and early hatching are the three great requisites to profitable

poultry-keeping, and I purpose now to say a little on each subject.

1ST. THE HEN-HOUSE.

Cleanliness, dryness, warmth, and ventilation, without draughts, are the principal essentials to the health of the fowls. A proper hen-house need not be an expensive affair. Of course, if you have ample means at your command, and wish for ornamental houses, you can have them in endless variety, but please don't consider that as part of the expense of poultry-keeping. My own houses cost a mere trifle. If there is any stone or brick outhouse which can be converted into a hen-house, nothing is better. If it is necessary to build a new one, wood is the cheapest and best material to be employed. We cannot expect all girls to become carpenters, but often they have a brother willing to help them, who would delight in a little joiner work. A house five or six feet square is quite large enough for a cock and six hens; if larger, it only increases their liability to cold in winter. The roof must be made sloping, and either covered with felt or tarred. It must be perfectly watertight.

It is an advantage if the house can be built against a wall, especially if it be a stable wall or at the back of the kitchen fire-place. A stove inside the hen-house is not generally considered a good thing, because the fowls get heated and then when they go out are very apt to catch cold.

The roof of the hen-house may be carried on a little longer than the house, so as to form a shed under which the fowls can shelter. If, however, the house be raised from the ground about two feet, the shed can be dispensed with and the fowls shelter under the house. If space be an object, the latter plan will be found an advantage. A slide for the fowls to go in and out by must be made near the ground. A window is absolutely necessary; one part of it can be covered with perforated zinc for ventilation, as pure air must be had without draughts. For the floor, Roman cement or concrete is best, but any hard substance that can be easily brushed will do. For perches, nothing answers better than a fir pole. Be particular in having them placed away from the nests. For the larger breeds, such as Brahmans, Cochins, &c., it should not be more than a foot from the ground. Indeed, these birds very often prefer to roost on the ground on nice, clean straw. Brahmans and Cochins are so liable to foot disease owing to their heavy bodies, and this liability is often increased by their having unsuitable perches. For the lighter breeds the perches can be placed higher, but not too high, as is frequently the case.

Boxes or little round hampers, without lids, answer capitally for nests. Hens seem to prefer laying on the ground. They must be furnished with clean straw or hay; three bricks laid at the wall, with straw between, make very good nests. Use china or chalk nest-eggs and gather the eggs every evening.

Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of cleanliness. The hen-house must be whitewashed with lime at least once a year. It must be thoroughly cleaned out twice a week or oftener, and the floor sprinkled with dry sand. It is a good plan to have a board placed under the perches to catch the droppings. It is so easily cleaned, and keeps the manure free from sand, &c. The manure must be carefully preserved, as it is one of the profits of poultry-keeping. For garden purposes it is equal to guano, especially for strawberries. If quite pure, the tanner gives a good price for it. In hot weather use powdered sulphur for sprinkling over the floor, nests, &c. This kills the vermin. It should also be used freely for sitting hens, but that belongs to the treatment of hatching,