

Just at that moment I heard the tanyard gate swing back, and turning saw my father standing there with a gentleman, who, of course, must have seen me embracing my old nurse.

"What, children, are you here already?" said my father, coming forward in his shabby office coat; a grey-haired, grey-bearded man, stooping somewhat, and looking worn and weary in the bright sunlight. "It seems but a few minutes since I heard the train passing at the bottom of the meadows."

Mabel had already alighted from the dog cart, and she stepped forward, and in her pretty way asked father how he was, and put up her face to be kissed. I saw the stranger, who, I felt sure, must be Mr. Howard Steinthorpe, look at her with interest as she did so.

Perhaps it was because his companion's exceedingly well-to-do appearance acted as a foil that I thought my father looking so much more grey and worn than usual. Mr. Steinthorpe was a man in the prime of life, with a healthy, vigorous, well-satisfied air, of middle height, and by no means slim of figure, yet hardly to be called stout. He was considered a very handsome man by most persons at Burford, but this was not the impression which his appearance made on me as Mabel and I were now introduced to him, though I gradually became aware that his features were well cut and regular, that his cold blue

eyes were all that could be desired in size and shape, and that his fine auburn moustache was in itself a distinction. He was irreproachably dressed, in a style quite superior to anything to which we were accustomed at Burford, and was altogether so well groomed, if I may be allowed to use such a horsey expression, that my poor father, always careless of his personal appearance, looked deplorably shabby by his side. His manners, too, had a finish that Burford manners lacked, but which Mabel and I, fresh from our London boarding school, felt to be the correct thing. Mabel actually coloured with gratification as he bowed low before her. I was less elated by his courtesy, for I was not conscious of deserving admiration, and I fancied I detected a sardonic gleam in his eyes as they met mine.

We exchanged a few polite commonplaces, and then, gracefully expressing a hope that he should see more of us, Mr. Steinthorpe bowed again and went on his way. We entered the house with our father, I with a lurking sense of irritation, which I could hardly have explained.

"Father, dear, it is time I came home to look after you," Mabel said, as she laid her hand caressingly on his arm. "What a shocking coat! You must hand that over to Luke."

"Oh, it is good enough for me," said my father, wearily, as he hung up

his hat in the passage. "But I am glad to have you home again, children."

"So that is Mr. Steinthorpe!" Mabel said to me as we went upstairs together. "What a perfect gentleman he is! But I was vexed that he should see us all dusty and untidy from our journey."

"You mean that you are vexed he saw me so untidy," I said. "You looked most proper, as you always do." For I had felt some pride in Mabel as she talked to Mr. Steinthorpe. Although I had not taken to him myself, I was pleased that he should see what a charming little lady my sister was. Mabel appeared gratified by my words.

"He is very good-looking," she observed, as she surveyed her neat little person in the glass.

"Oh, I can't bear his looks," I burst out; "I think he has a dreadful expression. Depend upon it, he is not a man to be trusted."

"You don't mean to say that you have taken one of your unreasonable dislikes?" said Mabel, with an air of patiently enduring my perversity. "I never knew anyone like you for jumping to wild conclusions. You always set yourself against nice people."

"Someone else is jumping to conclusions now," I observed. "How do you know that Mr. Steinthorpe is nice?"

But Mabel vouchsafed me no reply to this question.

(To be continued.)

## UNPOPULAR GIRLS.

By A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN.



IRLS have their hopes and ambitions in beginning life as well as their brothers. Some, in these days of Girton and Newnham, aim at fame and intellectual progress; in others the instinct of motherhood is strongly developed. I remember a poor, hardworking girl of eighteen once saying to me, with indescribable earnestness, "The greatest happiness in life must be to have a dear little baby of one's very

own. If I had a darling child all to myself to work for and love, I don't think I should care for anything else in the whole world." Her eyes positively sparkled and her cheeks glowed with the imagined delight of a tiny creature to pet and cherish, and, as she said, "to live for."

The commonest ambition of all is, of course, to be married, and have a home of one's own. With some girls, perhaps, the home occupies a larger space in the mental vision than the husband; with others, especially if they happen to have fixed on the hero of their day-dreams, the home falls so far into

the background as scarcely to be recognised as a necessity at all. One hope, however, is shared by everyone—the hope of being liked. Admiration and love are, of course, more highly prized than popularity, but they can only be expected from a few, while any girl may reasonably aspire to be liked by the whole circle of her acquaintances. Indeed, probably all young people start in life with the expectation of seeing this aspiration fulfilled. As time goes on many quick-witted young women perceive that they are not liked, and wonder why. They are conscious of meaning well, and often of doing well, but they see that they are less attractive than many of their acquaintances whose virtues, talents, and accomplishments, so far as they can discover, by no means exceed their own. Now, some people, men as well as women, have a natural charm about them which is inexplicable. They fascinate; no one can tell why exactly, but they do. This kind of thing cannot be imitated or acquired; like beauty or genius, it is born with its fortunate possessors, and often stands them in good stead when health, fortune, and character are gone, and their lives wrecked by folly, self-indulgence, or vice.

It is a common practice to tell little children, "If you are good, people will love you." Perhaps this is true—to a certain extent it must be so; but it certainly does not follow when you are grown up that if you are good, people will like you. It must be confessed that morals have much less to do with popularity than manners. Think over your acquaintances. Are the most agreeable persons in all cases those you consider the best, those for

whom you have the highest respect? You know very well that they are not. You may regret the fact, but a fact it remains. It is surely, then, worth your while to study to avoid those little ways which make even good people disagreeable, before they become stereotyped into habits. We cannot undertake to teach you to be agreeable, but we may give you a few hints now to escape being disagreeable. To this end keep a strict watch over your tongue. Of conversation it is especially true that

"Evil is wrought  
By want of thought  
As well as want of heart."

Talk as little as possible about yourself. To you, self is naturally a deeply-interesting subject, but it by no means follows that your friends will find it so. Of course, boasting and direct self-commendation will be eschewed by everyone with any pretensions to good manners. Whatever people think, they do not often say, as I once heard a very worthy woman remark at a charity working party, "I'm the most charitable and unselfishest person that can be."

But many persons, nevertheless, particularly young ones, manage perpetually to bring themselves on the tapis. Whatever the subject in hand may be, it is always brought round to themselves—their opinion, their experience, their expectations, what people said about them. Or they tell little stories in which they appear to advantage; or repeat compliments which have been paid them, in a deprecatory manner, of course, but still repeating them. Others go on quite a different tack;



they dwell perpetually on their defects, mental or physical. Politeness prevents their hearers showing their utter want of interest. They cannot say, what they feel, "At your age, neither your opinion nor experience can be of importance to anyone but yourself," or, "Yes, your temper is bad, your eyes are green, you are very indolent; it is a pity you do not try to improve." If they are conscientious they cannot endorse the compliments and deny the defects, which would be the shortest and pleasantest way out of the difficulty. Nothing remains but to take the earliest opportunity of escaping the infliction with a determination to keep out of the way of it for the future. All egotism is offensive, but that springing from "the pride that apes humility" is perhaps one of its most irritating manifestations.

The next thing to talking about yourself is talking about your relations. Young mothers are famous for teasing their friends with baby talk, but some girls are quite as great offenders. "My brother at college," "My uncle the Dean," or "My sister who paints," are perpetually in their mouths. Family affection is a pleasant thing to see, and a right thing to encourage, but it is possible to give outsiders too much of what "my people" think and say. On the other hand, take care how you speak of your friends' relatives. People often have a low opinion themselves of their parents, husbands, brothers or sisters, but they do not like to hear others echo this opinion. It may be illogical and inconsistent, but so it is. Family quarrels are generally made up sooner or later, and more or less forgotten, when no one is more unwelcome than the intimate friend who shows by her conversation that she remembers all about the disputes which have now sunk into oblivion. Avoid patronising or slighting expressions in referring to your friends' relatives. You may think this hint superfluous, but I assure you I have heard girls, who consider themselves well-bred, say such things as this: "Your mother was in here this morning; the poor old lady seemed quite in spirits." "Your father? Oh, let the poor old man have what he fancies." An affectionate child does not care to be reminded that her parents are old, and to a dutiful one the half-pitying, half-patronising tone is most offensive, innocent as the person using it may be of any wish or intention of giving offence.

Another unpleasant habit to which some young people are prone is that of giving advice unasked. Older persons, as a rule, are much too prudent to commit themselves in this way. Most people have their own ideas and methods, and dislike being interfered with. A young lady has devised a new costume with her dressmaker; it is nearly finished, perhaps quite, and she is pleased with the effect. A friend comes in and assures her that she ought to add a bow here and rosette there, turn the front to the side and remodel the drapery, and it will be exactly right.

What wonder if the girl and the dressmaker feel something approaching detestation for the well-intentioned friend who has spoiled their pleasure at the very moment of success? A married lady of some standing, who prides herself on her housekeeping, makes the acquaintance of a lively young matron, who has scarcely kept house as many weeks as she has years. The girl, full of her own experiments, assures her friend that her ways are old-fashioned, her tradesmen expensive, and kindly points out how much better and more cheaply things may be done. It does not matter from my point of view, whether she is right or wrong, in either case the elder lady will be hurt if not offended, and will certainly exercise a careful reticence as to her domestic affairs in the younger one's presence for the future, if she does not avoid her altogether. I have met with girls, pleasant

and praiseworthy in other respects, who are almost insufferable as companions, in consequence of their mania for advising. Whatever subject may be under discussion—needlework, gardening, cookery, dress or mental improvement—a young lady of the sort I mean is always ready with "I can show you a better way of doing it," "We always do so and so," "My way is much quicker," and so on. This kind of thing may be borne with patience from a senior, though annoying, but from a junior, or even an equal, it is unendurable. Always remember that if people wish for your advice they will ask it; if they refrain from doing so keep it to yourself, however valuable it may be.

One way in which girls often thoughtlessly offend against good taste and good manners is by asking questions. Very few like to be examined as to their feelings, affairs, or intentions. I believe young people frequently ask questions simply for the sake of making conversation, without caring at all for the answers. Many, however, who are inquisitive and prying when young, develop into gossips and mischief-makers, with the natural result that they are dreaded and kept at arm's length by all sensible people. Habits formed in youth are rarely broken through afterwards, and, believe me, no habit is more likely to render you unpopular than that of asking questions. "Where have you been?" "Where are you going?" "How much did you pay for it?" "Where did you get this?" "Who told you that?" frequently reiterated, will assuredly lead your acquaintances to shun you as an ill-bred, troublesome meddler. Mind your own business and leave your neighbours to mind theirs. It is impossible to say how much harm has been done by inopportune questioning. Habits of deceit have been induced and fostered, hopeful prospects have been permanently destroyed, waverers have been driven into wrong doing, and sensitive persons have been set against their best friends by this objectionable climax.

As far as you can, avoid personal remarks altogether. They are seldom acceptable, and give offence oftener than not. Shy people are made uncomfortable by compliments or critical observations on their appearance. Nervous and self-conscious individuals are rendered absolutely miserable by having their little awkwardnesses and peculiarities of manner laughed at or remarked on. It is scarcely necessary to warn you against touching on sore points. You will not, of course, talk of "old maids" or "elderly young ladies" in the presence of women "of a certain age." Neither must you comment on the ugliness of large feet, red faces, a coarse complexion, a squint or any personal defects before people who have the misfortune to suffer from them. Do not be too ready to tell your friends they look ill or well; timid people are frightened by the former, and people who think it "interesting" to look delicate are annoyed by the latter. It is really provoking to a person whose face is flushed by toothache or some other of the so-called minor maladies of life to be met by a hearty congratulation on her blooming looks. Never grumble if you can help it. I quite admit that it is a relief for the time. You feel decidedly better after having aired your grievance, but you have bored your friend, who has, no doubt, plenty of grievances of her own and takes but a limited interest in yours. Do not be a wet blanket either. Who can help disliking the company of a person who always thinks it will rain if you have a special reason for wishing it to be fine; is convinced you will miss your train if the cab comes a minute or two late; predicts certain failure if you are trying an experiment; discovers faults in your newest toy; and, in

short, looks persistently on the dark side of things? If you wish your society to be sought after and appreciated, cultivate a hopeful frame of mind and a cheerful exterior, suppress your own troubles, and sympathise heartily in the pleasures of others.

Some girls, few I hope, have a morbid liking for painful subjects, physical or moral. Without absolutely indulging in "improper" conversation, they hover on its borders. Any coarse or nasty story has an attraction for them. Disgusting symptoms in illness, horrible crimes, distressing operations, are favourite topics. To refined women, and still more to refined men, this style of conversation in a young woman is peculiarly repugnant. Better be too fastidious than continually dabbling in the foul pools that must collect in this world of sin and shame.

I have only two more hints to give about the use of the tongue. One is, Do not contradict. If possible, agree with your friend; if not, say nothing. Opposition is always disagreeable; the feeling, "So-and-so is sure to think the opposite of what I do," has checked in the bud many a promising friendship. Of course, there are cases, where principle is concerned, when it is our duty to speak out, whether we are offensive or not, but they do not very often occur, and if we speak moderately, kindly, and politely, we rarely suffer for it in the estimation of our friends if they are worth preserving. This is quite different from continually contradicting about trifling and unimportant matters in everyday life, a common and very reprehensible practice.

Lastly, and this is very important—Do not talk too much. The most brilliant of talkers, such as Macaulay and Rogers, have become wearisome at times, because they did not know when to stop. Sydney Smith on one occasion said Macaulay had been more agreeable than usual because he had had "several brilliant flashes of silence." Think, then, what an intolerable bore perpetual chatter must be which has neither genius nor wit to recommend it. I have seen the youngest and most uninteresting member of a party entirely spoil what might have been a pleasant evening by monopolising the conversation, and consequently reducing to silence those who had something to say worth listening to. A good listener, responsive and appreciative, is often a more valuable acquisition in society than even a fairly good talker. Observe the word "responsive." A listener who sits stolidly silent, never smiling at a joke or assenting to a proposition, showing no sign of hearing what you say, possibly not even answering a question till it is repeated a second time, is by no means a pleasing addition to any company.

I will mention two more habits which, though unconnected with conversation, tend to make some worthy and excellent people unpopular. They may be considered trifling, but in many cases they are a real bar to happy intimacy. The first is a habit of borrowing. This is often troublesome to the lender. Some girls seem invariably short of change; you scarcely ever take a walk with them without a request for a small sum, which they probably forget to return. To remind a friend of a debt is at best a delicate operation, and many girls would rather sustain a slight pecuniary loss than attempt it. Besides, the transaction often escapes the lender's memory as well as the borrower's, and leads to vexations and hopeless confusion in accounts. Persons whose income is strictly "limited," and who can only just make both ends meet, may be put to serious inconvenience in this way.

But other things may be borrowed besides money—books, for instance. *We all know* how apt we are to borrow books and keep them (by accident of course!) for weeks, months, and even years. Sometimes valuable



works are spoiled by the loss of one volume, or when a book is wanted for reference a space is found where it ought to be, and the owner has no guide to its whereabouts beyond a vague idea that it was "lent to somebody." I have known people so unscrupulous as to borrow a new, brightly bound volume, warp its covers over the fire or in the sun, lend it to their friends without the owner's permission, and at last return it, shabby, faded, and old.

Some women are fond of borrowing bags, portmanteaus, waterproofs, umbrellas, and articles of wearing apparel, forgetful apparently of the fact that these things do not last for ever, and wear out quite soon enough in their owner's service. Bad housekeepers have been known to plague their neighbours by continual requests for small quantities of tea, sugar, flour, coals, and the like "till they can get in their own." It will be remembered that poor Mrs. Carlyle in her letters complains bitterly of Mrs. Leigh Hunt, her next door neighbour, who seems to have carried the practice to abnormal lengths. Few girls, however, are likely to have the

opportunity of offending in this way. They do, however, sometimes venture to ask the loan of jewellery and curiosities of value which are lent with many anxious fears for their safety by amiable people, who are too kind and polite to refuse, but who would much prefer to keep their treasures under their own eyes. Of course these observations do not apply when your friends offer to lend without any hints or suggestions from yourselves, but even then, except to relations and very old friends, it is better as a rule to avoid incurring the obligation.

Unpunctuality is a sad drawback in a companion. A girl agrees to call for her friend at a specified time. The friend keeps her waiting just long enough to make her late at church or for class, or to compel her to run all the way to the station to catch the train. This happens not once merely but frequently. Who can be surprised that after a time the girl prefers to walk alone or finds a fresh companion? The causes which lead to unpunctuality are threefold—trying to squeeze too much work into a given time; careless

forgetfulness, which makes girls oblivious altogether of engagements; and a habit of dawdling procrastination, which is easily acquired and very difficult to shake off. Whatever the cause may be, the effect is generally fatal to a girl's popularity.

I have but just touched the borders of many important subjects. I have passed by some altogether which are perhaps even more important. Do not imagine that I have set up a warning at every pitfall that lies in your way. Far from this, I have but selected a few that seemed most likely to escape notice. "Little things," you may say, "mere trifles, hardly looking for!" Not so; life is made up of little things. It is but a fly that spoils the pot of ointment, a little blot disfigures the fairest page, and a little failing may so obscure the good points of a girl's disposition in the eyes of her neighbours as to render her a bugbear to be shunned, instead of a treasure to be sought after. And it should never be forgotten that we are bidden by Divine authority to strive after "Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

## COURTLEROY.

By ANNE BEALE.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

#### DRIVEN TO BAY.



BARBER looked sadly crestfallen when he answered Mr. Le Roy's summons. He received his orders like a mute. He was told to see that everything was prepared for the autocrat—dinner, his room, and sundry other matters.

"I will do my best, sir," he said, at last. "But Mr. Sellon would be glad to see you at once. Searle is anxious to be off."

"Ask them to come here, and send refreshments for Mr. Sellon and me." "How can I go through with it?" mused Le Roy. "This place will kill me. I wish I had read the letters and attended more to George Hope; but Searle must be honest."

Mr. Sellon came in alone. He began upon business at once.

"I find that all your papers are either at Mr. Searle's house or with the Prestbury firm," he said. "I propose to return with him and look into the affairs to-night; to-morrow morning we can all three proceed to Prestbury and see after the Units. I have asked Mr. Searle to give me a bed, as your establishment here is not—well, not quite—equal to your London one, and Miss Marmont is not accustomed to chance visitors. I fear Searle is a scoundrel, and we must not lose sight of him for a moment. I have left him under your man's special care at present lest he escape us. The scene at the farm was ominous, and I think you must be prepared for the worst, since it is impossible to say what excesses he may have been guilty of in your name. Of course, I do not know what you have actually ordered and approved of, but it seems scarcely probable that you can have willingly let your property go to rack and ruin."

"I trusted Searle, and I trust him still!" said Mr. Le Roy, coldly and majestically.

"We shall discover to-morrow whether your confidence has been misplaced or not; to-day you can remain in happy ignorance. I had no idea that you had been living in the dark for the best part of twenty years. The little I have gathered from Miss Marmont proves that a system of extortion and neglect has been carried on here during that period on the plea that money must be secured for Mr. Le Roy's needs at all costs. Excuse my speaking plainly, but you must face it at last."

"I shall return to town to-morrow and leave the affairs between you and Searle," returned Le Roy.

"We shall see," added Sellon, significantly.

"I have ordered—dinner. You will stay?" asked Le Roy, pausing long and doubtfully on the name of the proffered repast.

"No, thank you; I dare not leave the lion's provider, alias the jackall, Searle. He will hunt up food for me, I daresay, knowing that he is in my power, in the same way that he cannot refuse to find me a lair. I wish you a good appetite and a good night's rest."

Mr. Le Roy was offended at Sellon's ironical tone, scarcely understanding that the lawyer was worked up into a state of indignation at what he saw and heard. He rose, however, and opened for him the door which led into the passage.

"You know your way to—to—the library, the business-room, the—Where is Searle?" he asked, with affected indifference.

Barber appeared, his lugubrious face longer and more melancholy than ever.

"Those rooms are no longer habitable, sir; but Mr. Searle won't wait, he is off by the path across the park. There he is, sir! You will catch him if you make haste," he added to Sellon.

"Send my portmanteau in the fly!" cried Sellon, and rushed out of the hall door.

Mr. Le Roy looked after him with some show of interest, but when he saw him overtake Searle he turned from the window. In the centre of the room he saw an elderly woman leaning on a stick. He made a sort of bow, for with all his faults he was a gentleman; but did not recognise her.

"I am right glad to welcome you home

again, master," she said, with an attempt at a curtsy. "I'm thankful to a' lived to see this day. You don't remember me, sir, and no wonder, for I'm near seventy now, and when you saw me last I wasn't much over—I beg your pardon, sir, I didn't mean to speak of that time—indeed, I made a solemn vow not—but rheumatism do make one so forgetful!"

"Mrs. Stone! I beg your pardon," said Le Roy, going towards her, and shaking hands with her, as if some sudden memory impelled him.

He had never so honoured her before, and the good woman's stick slipped, and the rheumatic hip gave way in her attempt at a second curtsy, so that she nearly fell. He was obliged to support her, and the kind act brought tears to her eyes. He helped her to a seat near the table, seeing that she had difficulty in standing.

"Thank you kindly, sir. The doctor says my rheumatism's crownick, and sure enough like an old crow I am. But the offices are damp, and the rain comes into my bedroom. There now, I come to ask about dinner and I'm talking about myself. I am afraid, sir, that we're not prepared as we ought to be, seeing you were not expected; but if you'll be so good as to make a 'igh tea with the ladies to-night we'll manage better to-morrow. Miss Marmont says we can lay it here, sir, instead of in the schoolroom."

"Why not in the dining-room?" interrupted Mr. Le Roy.

"Well, sir, it's damp, and there's no fire; and if I may make so bold, this 'all is more comfortable. Miss Marmont has made a porter to draw right across the windows so that it's the 'ottest place in the house in winter, and, as you may remember, sir, the coolest in summer. There now, I'm forgetting again."

He remembered but too well.

"Settle it as you will, only let me have something to eat and drink," he said, between irritation and a sort of desire not to be exacting under the circumstances.

"Yes, sir. There are spring chickens, and early vegetables, and blancmange, and tea or coffee, or both."

"Wine if you please. I hate tea and coffee with meat."