


# Practical Etiquette.

## I.

### ON MAKING INTRODUCTIONS.

T is impossible to discuss the knotty question of introductions—when they should and when they should not be made—without speaking also of the change in American manners, which has given rise to a difference of opinion, on this as on several other points, between the disciples of the old school and those of the new.

Since the rise and alarmingly rapid spread of Anglomania in our country, there has been a strong effort made by that class which has an intense admiration for the British lord and all that belongs to him, to introduce English manners here, and especially those English customs which favor exclusiveness. Thus, while Parliament is seriously discussing whether or no the House of Lords shall be abolished, as a venerable but expensive and cumbrous ruin, in the United States the nobility cult has assumed formidable proportions, and the ways of the English milord are greatly admired and extensively copied by a certain set of people who belong to the new school.

Those of the old school, meantime, adhere, with little variation, to their original belief. They argue that the manners of well-bred Americans who were born during the early part of the present century, were and are very superior to those of the average society man—be he English or American—of to-day; and that, therefore, having in this country a school of manners of our own, we do not need to slavishly imitate the customs of another nation whose conditions differ so essentially from ours. It is manifestly contrary to reason and common sense, say they, that the social laws of a monarchical and aristocratic country should be adapted to a republic, where all men are born free and equal. Finally, they add the clinching argument, that the English admire pluck and independence much more than the toadying imitation—at best a poor one—with which many of our countrymen seek to propitiate them. At the same time, it should be added, in justice to all parties, that the vast increase of travel between England and America has developed a certain social reciprocity—a mutual exchange of ideas and customs—which affects all classes of society, to a certain degree.

The English custom of making comparatively few introductions has been adopted to some extent by the majority of cultivated people in the United States; but it is carried to an extreme only by a small class who aim at great exclusiveness, although in many cases the individuals who are so afraid of making the acquaintance of their fellows, have no valid claim to the social superiority which they would fain assume. We must deal with people as we find them, however; and a hostess who has tact will take into consideration the wishes and feelings of all her guests, making formal introductions only where the laws of politeness and hospitality demand them, especially where she has to deal with persons who are afflicted with a mania for exclusiveness.

According to the new-school doctrine, introductions are seldom made between visitors who are calling upon a mutual friend or acquaintance. It is expected, however, that the visitors will relieve the awkwardness which this arrangement might entail upon the hostess, by talking together, just as they would have done if they had been made acquainted with each other. Indeed, the only justification of this "return to barbarism" lies in the theory that the meeting under a friend's roof constitutes a sufficient introduction for the time being, and that guests who come together in this way should interchange the ordinary society

small-talk, the quasi-acquaintanceship thus formed ending with the occasion which gave it birth.

Many ladies of excellent social position, and belonging to what are called "old families," adhere still to the more cordial custom of introducing their visitors to one another; arguing that a casual introduction of this sort hurts no one, and that many persons feel ill at ease or even become painfully embarrassed when thus thrown into the society of strangers to whom they have not been introduced.

The same difference of opinion exists as to the propriety of making introductions at afternoon teas, dinner-parties, and receptions.

At a large reception, the hostess cannot personally make numerous presentations and at the same time receive all her guests. It is well, therefore, that she should have one or two friends to assist her in receiving and entertaining her guests, and in introducing them to one another where circumstances demand this course.

We will suppose that Mrs. A. gives an afternoon reception, at which are present ten persons of very exclusive views, forty persons of more catholic taste and inclination, and five ladies who are entirely unacquainted with the rest of the company. To make every one, especially the five "know-nobodies," have a pleasant time, might seem a puzzle like that of the celebrated "fox, goose and bag of corn;" nevertheless, the former, as well as the latter, can be solved.

Our hostess will of course avoid, if possible, presenting the ten exclusives to each other, or to any one else. Above all, she will avoid making them acquainted with the "know-nobodies," unless these latter have some special tastes or accomplishments which would recommend them to the notice of the former. Thus, one of them may have a talent for playing upon the French horn, in which case the exclusive Mrs. X., who is extravagantly fond of music, would perhaps be willing to make the acquaintance of the little musician, especially if their social positions were far enough apart to enable Mrs. X. to feel that there was little danger of her new acquaintance climbing to the lofty social station so proudly held by the X. family. Of course, in a case of this sort, the hostess would ask the permission of Mrs. X. before making the introduction, since it is against the laws of etiquette to introduce to each other two ladies who live in the same town, without first asking the permission of both.

With the "know-nobodies," the hostess would probably not be so ceremonious, however, since she would take it for granted that they must desire to form new acquaintances, and must, therefore, be willing to submit themselves to her guardianship. With the forty unprejudiced guests, she would manifestly have little trouble, although, even here, she would be wary of introducing to one another persons who belonged to the same "set," because if they did not already know each other, it would probably be because they did not wish to do so.

She would be careful, also, to introduce the younger person to the elder. The rule is, that an inferior should always be presented to a superior. A gentleman is always presented to a lady, no matter what his or her age or standing may be. There exist, of course, wide differences of opinion as to whether woman is or is not the intellectual equal of man, but her social preëminence is never questioned among civilized nations.

As we have no recognized rank in this country, the usual rule is that the younger person be presented to the elder, and a single lady should be presented to a married one. The fashion of double presentation is now antiquated: people no longer say, "Mrs. A., Mrs. B.; Mrs. B., Mrs. A." The formal method of introduction, "Mrs. Smith, allow me to pre-

sent Mrs. Jones," is, of course, still used, but many persons dispense with it whenever it is possible to do so.

A lady who wished to make two of her friends acquainted with each other, might say, "Mr. A., you know Mr. G., do you not?" or, "Mr. A., I want you to know Mr. G.;" but she would not take one up to the other, if she could avoid doing so.

Gentlemen always shake hands when they are introduced to each other; ladies shake hands or not, according to the circumstances of the case. It is always the lady's privilege to give or to withhold her hand; but most ladies would take a gentleman's hand, where he had extended it through inadvertence, rather than cause him the mortification of perceiving that he had made a mistake. Where two people were introduced who had already a certain interest in each other, they would be very apt to shake hands; thus, a young lady would shake hands if a friend of her brother's were presented to her. Young ladies, however, do not shake hands with gentlemen so often as married ladies do. At a ball, the lady would make a courtesy and the gentleman a bow, when the latter was presented to the former.

A gentleman should never be formally introduced to a lady unless her permission has been asked beforehand. At a ball, however, a wise hostess will first of all ask the gentleman whether he would not like to be presented to the lady in question, since the young men of our day are not always as gallant as they might be, and knowing that a ball-room introduction implies an invitation to dance or to promenade, on their part, they sometimes refuse to be introduced to a strange young lady. A gentleman who knows a young lady quite well, may ask leave to present a friend to her; but he should not do so within hearing of the latter, since a refusal would be mortifying to him. A lady should never refuse such a request unless she have some very strong reason. A husband may always introduce his wife, or a wife her husband, and a mother may introduce her children, without asking permission.

The custom of introducing a new-comer to a roomful of people is rapidly going out of fashion—as it deserves to do. While the intention of the host in such a case is entirely kindly, the result is embarrassing to the victim, who is thus made a target for the eyes of all beholders. A hostess of tact will present one or two people in a quiet way to the new-comer, and take occasion to present others later in the evening.

Informal introductions do not always entail a subsequent acquaintance between the parties. Thus, where two people have merely been introduced to each other in order to avoid awkwardness, and have only exchanged bows, it would not be necessary for them to recognize each other afterward. As has been said above, however, introductions of this sort are not made now as often as formerly.

If a gentleman should meet two ladies in the street, one of whom he did not know, and if he should ask permission to accompany them, it would not be necessary for the lady whom he already knew, to introduce him to her friend. She would probably do so, however, if she had reason to suppose that the introduction would be agreeable to both parties, or if she saw that the situation was becoming an awkward one.

In a word, if one were called upon to give a *résumé* of the present theory of introducing people, it would be something like this. "Do not introduce thoughtlessly or indiscriminately, but introduce people whenever it is necessary to avoid awkwardness or embarrassment, or whenever, in the opinion of the hostess, the laws of hospitality, and the enjoyment of the guests, require that presentations should be made."

FLORENCE HOWE HALL.

## AUNT MEHITABLE'S WINTER IN WASHINGTON.

BY MRS. HARRIET HAZELTON.

WELL, girls, I promised to tell you all about my winter in Washington, or the Federal City, I call it, and I don't see how anybody can call it anything else, seem' as General Washin'ton himself called it so.

You know your Uncle 'Siah had got rich on our great valley farm, and had give the boys good schoolin'; and Nat, he'd got along so as to be 'lected to Congress. And after coaxin' me for two or three year, and sayin' as I'd worked so hard when I was young (and that was all true), and ought to have some rest, and see a little o' the world now, at last I agreed to go. So we got Miss Jinkens out from Petersburg, and 'Siah he bought me a black silk dress, and a alpaccy, and a brown moreen, and a fine shawl, and a black velvet bonnit, all fussed up with bows and a feather, and a great lot of other things to go with 'em. Miss Jinkens, she made 'em up real smart, and along about the first days o' December we drove to the station, and got in the cars, and started.

You know, girls, I'd never travelled so before, and I felt a little quare at first like; but when I seen everybody else laughin' and talkin' away, I come to the conclusion fiat it was all right. The furthest I'd ever been from home before was over the Shana'doahs to your Uncle Lishe's. That took us two days in the old carriage, and I thought it was a dreadful long ways. And here we went twenty mile or more every hour, and instead o' bumpin' around, fust this way and then that, over the rocks we went just as reg'lar, "thumpity thump," "thumpity thump," and hardly any bumpin' about it. After I got tired watchin' the people, I got to sayin' over things to myself, and listenin' to the way the clackin' o' the cars said it after me, "Goin' from home," "Goin' from home;" "Never get back," "Never get back;" "Run off the track," "Run off the track," and so on, till I got so frightened in my mind that I had to talk to 'Siah to cheer myself up a little. Of course, I couldn't let him know how silly I was—me, that had raised a family.

In a very few hours we come to the great wide river that looked like the sea, and then the cars went on to something, and the first thing I knowed we was in the middle of the river; and, lookin' off to the right, I seen a great white castle in the air, for all the world like a huge soap-bubble, and husband said it was the Capitol. But I thought of the "Castle Beautiful" in the Pilgrim's Progress, and of the "mansions in the skies," and the "great white throne" in the Revelations. You don't know how quare I felt. It was a'most like