

The Best Known Club Women of The Pacific Coast

BY SARAH COMSTOCK

MRS. LOWENBERG wins out by her womanliness.

That is the secret of her. She is a veteran club woman, and withal so unclublike according to the popular standard that she comes upon you with a little jolt of surprise.

She doesn't even believe thoroughly in suffrage. At least, she doesn't think she wants to vote.

Now that is very unlike the most of them. Many woman's clubs are a sort of disguise for suffrage. Women who want to vote sometimes band together under a literary and harmless exterior and watch their chance. They are going to get it, too, by the way, for they are in earnest. Mrs. Lowenberg says the same thing, and she says that she has the best kind of friends who are of the suffragists; that she believes them to be conscientious and serious and wise, perhaps, but she is doubtful of the righteousness of their cause.

Interesting, isn't it? For nearly all the women who even pretend to be up-to-date and broad-minded and advanced feel called upon to talk suffrage. Some of them wouldn't know what on earth to do with the ballot if they had it; would look at it wonderingly and then run away from it perhaps; but they must say that they want it. But Mrs. Lowenberg, one of the cleverest, brainiest, most earnest club women in this city, says frankly that although she believes the ballot for women is coming, she doubts if women or the country will be any better off for it.

"Will women purify politics?" she says. "It is a question.

"I am so afraid that instead of their improving politics, politics will hurt them. May not the polls rub off something of that sweet womanliness which every one loves and admires? I am not sure of this, you know. I am open to conviction on this as well as on all other subjects, but I fear it.

"A woman at the polls must mingle with all sorts and conditions. It is not being snobbish to dread this. Women must keep up their ideals. Men depend upon us for this.

"Suppose a woman were running for office (and why should she not, if she were permitted to vote?) would she not have to associate with all kinds of women in her seeking of votes? Would she not have the temptation to lower herself in order to gain favor? It is a great risk.



MRS. I. LOWENBERG.

Mrs. Lowenberg has been president of the Philomath Club ever since it was organized in 1894. Before that she was president of the Laurel Hall Club. She is second vice-president of the City Red Cross and chairman of its Manila library committee. There are few who have had so long service, and few who ought to, according to her.

For she is one of the women who, being devoted to a club and active in it, yet says that clubs are not for all. "I never saw so striking an instance of that as when I noticed a mother crossing a crowded street with one child, almost a baby, hanging to her skirts, and others, in danger of their lives, trying to follow. And when I asked my friend, who bowed to her, who she was, the answer came: 'She is a mother going to a mothers' club.'

"The proper mother's club for her to attend was at home instead of dragging little children away from home while she should be told how to take care of them."

Mrs. Lowenberg's theory is that moderation is as excellent in club life as in everything else. "It must never interfere with the home, but be made use of in the home by its broadening and brightening influence," she says.

Judging from the charm of her own home, she lives up to this standard. She takes as much pains with her dainty blue and gold parlor as if she had nothing else to think of. And yet that she has will be shown by these words from one of her most serious and successful addresses on the subject of the unemployed, which address she called

THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM.

Peoples and religions have come and gone, empires and nations have risen to civilization and sunk into barbarism, the sages of antiquity and the Roman and Greek orators with their words of gold have passed into the ages, and their lives would have been naught had they not left their "footprints on the sands of time."

Thought is immortal and can never die, and the thought of having national and private workshops for the unemployed will gather strength as a ball rolling down hill increases in velocity, gaining force by its own momentum.

So let the approaching twentieth century, with its rich heritage of discovery, invention, intellectual development and liberty of thought, press forward and practically demand the institution of a well-defined method of obtaining work for the unemployed as the only salvation of man and the only solution of the unsolved problem.

"The Best Known Club Women on the Pacific Coast?" Do you know who they are? Or, in knowing who they are, have you ever studied their personalities to know why they should be considered the "best known"? This sketch of Mrs. I. Lowenberg is the fourth in an interesting series on just those lines.

"A woman has it in her power to do so much for the Government in her home influence. It is there that she reaches the voters, or her share of them, and there she can make them better men, and so indirectly, but none the less surely,

lead them to be better citizens and voters.

"Perhaps I am mistaken in all this; perhaps the suffragists are right. I never like to be in a hurry about deciding anything.

ETIQUETTE--BY MRS. BURTON KINGSLAND.

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talkers must be careful not to overshadow others, if they would give pleasure. A fluent talker is apt to be over-eager to say what he has in his mind and his conversation often becomes a monologue. A professional talker is a professional bore.

At table he should not engross one's neighbor by conversation, however charming, so that he is unable to satisfy his appetite and in some measure to appreciate what his hostess has been at pains to provide. Courtesy excludes the introduction of all subjects calculated to excite heated argument, unpleasant discussion or anything that may be obnoxious to any one present.

Upon the return of the men to the drawing room to rejoin the ladies there is sometimes an awkward moment. A suggestive opening may be to carry on the central idea of the talk just concluded in the dining room. A man may say "We have been having a most interesting discussion since you left us," and the lady may ask "What have you men been talking about that called forth such spontaneous laughter?" It is unnecessary to add that gentlemen do not discuss in the neighborhood of ladies matters that could not be repeated in their hearing and it is a rule that should work both ways.

Compliments.

The famous Mme. Recamier said that she always found two words sufficed to make her guests feel their welcome. Upon their arrival she exclaimed "At last!" and when they took leave she said "Already?" If taken literally we should deprecate the flattery. Flattery is insincere praise and wrongs "him that gives and him that takes." It is sometimes kinder to accept a compliment than to parry it. One may say "Thank you, it is pleasant to be seen through such kind (or partial) eyes," or perhaps, "It is a comfort to know that friendship is partly blind as well as the mythological boy," or any nonsense that serves to show that one appreciates the spirit that prompted the kind expressions, however wide of the truth. The frequent repetition of the name of the person addressed holds a subtle compliment, implying more complete concentration of the speaker's thought upon his or her personality.

Good Listeners.

De Quincey says: "More is done for the benefit of conversation by the simple magic of good manners than by all varieties of intellectual power." It is the sympathetic and responsive listeners that call forth the best efforts of a talker. For such are reserved his choicest stories, his finest thoughts. A kindling of the face, a flash of the eye, a ready smile, act as in-

spiration, and interest shown in the conversation of others stimulates and vivifies their thought.

To a good listener the diffident will say what they think and the verbose will think what they say.

There is nothing more trying than to find that one's conversation is receiving but a divided attention, and nothing more rude than for a person to pick up a book or paper and look over it while pretending to listen to what one is saying.

Test Words and Phrases.

In our whimsical language, accuracy is largely a matter of custom. We instantly assign a low place to those who are guilty of grammatical errors, but we classify one as lacking in refined training who would say "I don't know as," "a long ways," "somewheres." It is the evidence that the speaker has reached a certain grade of cultivation, and no higher. Society has its test words. It is considered provincial to say "depot" for "station," "bureau" for "dressing-table," "store" for "shop." Fruits, nuts, etc., are "dessert," sweets are not "dessert." We refer to our sisters, sweethearts, and wives without the prefix of "Miss" or "Mrs." Lord Roberts, for instance, in his autobiography says, "I met my fate in the form of Nora Bews." He does not say "Miss Nora," nor does a lady in England ever speak of her husband as "Mr. Smith," any more than she would of her daughter as "Miss Smith," to her friends and equals. She says "my husband," as, of course, she says, "my daughter," or calls them by name, and in America we are fast following her example. A man is plain "Smith" to his men friends, and so referred to by them. We used to be much ridiculed for our exaggeration of modesty in conversation. An Englishman once told an American girl that he had received a "limb-acy" from an old aunt, seeking to adapt his conversation to his hearer.

The Bible word "sick" is only used to express nausea in England, and we too have adopted the word "ill" in its stead. One would-be-elegant young woman in the country asked the writer if she were "sea-ill" on her return voyage!

Phrases that are considered so provincial as to grade the speaker are, "Commend me to your wife," "Our home is at —," "We have company," and to refer to one's relatives as "Cousin Mary," "Uncle John," to strangers, is not in good taste unless with the preface of the personal pronoun followed by the surname,—"My uncle, Mr. Jones."

A much ridiculed phrase is "a lady friend of mine," "a gentleman friend." It is to be assumed that all one's friends are ladies and gentlemen. "A man friend of mine," "a lady whom I know," is sufficiently explicit. Natural courtesy teaches us when to say "woman," when "lady." There are those who

may have every instinct of gentility, but if their position in life is not such as is recognized by the world they are not accorded the title of lady.

In the Society which spells itself with a capital S, there is a fashion in pronunciation—conformity to whose shibboleth marks the exact rung of the social ladder to which one belongs. In its conversation the form is often better than the substance. The final "t" in "valet" is sounded, "patent" rhymes with "latent," etc. Fortunately the tendency is toward correctness and simplicity, and small inelegancies offend ears fastidious.

Slang.

Slang vulgarizes the language, no matter how piquant and pithy it may seem. The use of it, begun in fun, ends in habit. Some one has said that "slang is language in the making," and it is true that what is linguistic heterodoxy in one age is orthodoxy in the next, but one may leave the pioneer work to others, with advantage to her own speech. Especially do slang phrases seem to coarsen the conversation of young women. Lowell says of Chaucer that "he found his native tongue a dialect and left it a language." The process may be reversed. Already a learned professor has ascribed the deterioration of the English language (which he assumes as proven) to the fact that the Bible and Shakespeare are so much less read than formerly.

Final Suggestions.

As an "accomplishment" the art of conversation has many advantages. In some of its various phases it is always available, and one never lacks an instrument.

A few suggestions may serve to show how far simple good manners are a guide to success and charm in conversation, and those who charm in influence.

Offer to each one who speaks the homage of your undivided attention. Look people in the face when you talk to them. We should talk often but never long, giving others their opportunity. Conversation should be like a game of ball.

Show courteous respect for another's point of view. In argument give fair play. Concede to your opponent his full due, allowing him to finish his statement without fear of interruption. Unless principle is involved, it is better to leave him apparently master of the field than prolong a discussion beyond the limits of good taste. You will snatch victory from defeat.

The best substitute for wisdom is silence. Never claim to know things of which you are ignorant. Some one will see through the sham. Acknowledge your ignorance frankly and naturally.

Have convictions of your own. Be yourself and not a mere echo. No one else can contribute your peculiar personality to the world, and God made nothing su-

perfluous.

If you are so unfortunate as to be easily embarrassed, get used to the sound of your voice and force yourself to say something. Confidence will be the reward of perseverance.

A platitude at the right time is worth a dozen repartees the next morning.

If a speaker mentions a wrong date or makes some trifling misstatement, do not correct him. No one cares whether the affair happened on Monday or Tuesday.

Never ask leading or personal questions. We should show curiosity about the concerns of others only so far as it may gratify them to tell us.

Do not feel obliged to talk incessantly. Strive to be natural and at ease. The nervousness that seeks to conceal itself under affected or exaggerated vivacity should be controlled, as should "the loud laugh that speaks a vacant mind."

Be ready with the small courtesies. Always thank children and servants.

Talk of things, not people. Of a charming woman it was said, "There are no names in her talk." It is the height of vulgarity to criticize elderly people, and to betray that your estimate of others depends upon what they have rather than upon what they are. Show yourself an artist in conversation when speaking of people. An artist selects only the best points of his model to make conspicuous, and hides the rest with clever drapery.

Our worst regrets are for the things one has said, not for those we have left unsaid.

Draw out your neighbor without catechizing him. Correct him, if necessary, without contradicting him. Avoid mannerisms and provincialisms. Among the latter none is worse than the mistaken politeness of saying "Yes, sir," "No, ma'am," to one's equal.

It is a distinct discourtesy for two persons to begin or continue a conversation in which a third person who has joined them can have no interest, unless, by a few words of explanation or apology, he or she may be drawn into it and may at least listen intelligently.

Make of your mind a treasury from which to draw bits of entertaining information, pithy anecdote, good stories apropos, timely quotations of strong, helpful thoughts—that whatever subject may arise you will have something to contribute.

The wish to praise, to say pleasant things, is an amiable one, and adds grace to conversation where there is an honest chance for it without flattery.

In society the first duty of man and woman is to be agreeable. Sir Arthur Helps says: "When wit is kind as well as playful, when information knows how to be silent as well as how to speak, when good will is shown to the absent as well as to those who are present, we may know that we are in good society."