



Captain Pratt had reached that stage in his profession of raising himself when he had become a social barometer. \* \* \* And any of his acquaintances who cared to ascertain their own social status to a hair's breadth, had only to apply to it the touch-stone of Capt. Pratt's manner towards them.—Mary Chalmorley.

HOW full the world is of "Captain Pratts," and how easily we recognize the type. In fact, after so able a description of that genus, known under the distinguishing term of "tuft-hunter" or "loady," it is hardly necessary to speak of it further. To be a successful tuft-hunter one must adopt the profession early in life, and stick to it with unswerving pertinacity. To begin it late in one's career, and with half-heartedness, is to gain very little, and be the laughing-stock of one's friends. For, though the species is not, as a rule, beloved, it is invariably awarded admiration (of sorts), and that by reason of its unashamed, totally unquenchable, persistency.

Speaking generally, the man who has this talent and makes the most of it is far from being brainless. He must be possessed of an alert brain, a mind retentive of useful facts, and a large amount of observation. Of course, the most perfect type must have tact also, but this is not absolutely necessary, or, rather, is not always expected.

As the straw shows the course of the wind, so the embryo tuft-hunter explains himself even in his schooldays, when his preference for the boy who drives to school in a pony-cart, or has the most pocket-money, or is any way useful to his friends, invariably is singled out by him. He is, perhaps, not disagreeable to the others, no—for even they might serve an odd turn—but, nevertheless, the more there is to gain, the more it draws out his most ingratiating side.

And is he likely to change? Depend upon it, the leopard's spots do not cleave more unfailingly than these early evinced characteristics.

To the letter he carries out the idea of making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Though, if he is wise, he will never let this be his only acquaintance.

It is not circumspect to turn a cold shoulder to everyone who can't benefit him, for some few disagreeable people have an equally disagreeable habit of keeping their eyes upon his actions, and not minding an occasional distribution of highly deleterious remarks.

The "Captain Pratt" with whom we can, most of us, claim an acquaintance is ever seeking whom he may devour, to say nothing of what he may devour, in their houses or their clubs.

There is, of course, the moneyed "Captain Pratt," who is looking for social distinction only. He may get numerous snubs and rebuffs, but the consciousness of a good bank account is generally a balm to his wounded feelings, besides the knowledge that eventually, unless the majority of people have changed, he will climb up and cling on somewhere, if even on sufferance. But the "Captain Pratt" who lives by his wits, who has, perhaps, neither money or position, or has the latter to a certain extent and little of the former, how his type causes us to marvel unceasingly! He cannot afford to take time. The promise that everything comes to him who waits does not comfort him. "To have and to hold," is his motto, and how busy he is kept in order to live up to it!

\* To begin with, he always knows all the debutantes. It may even help him on to be pleasant to the little girl who, though without money and unable to entertain, will speak favorably

of him in the houses to which she has an entree, and he, as yet, none.

So, at a dance, he may be seen rushing about, being introduced to all the ones he does not know, asking for dances or claiming those he has previously given an order for, as it were, by telephone, and smiling so charmingly upon the girls he really cannot include in his programme that it does just as good work.

He is generally noticed, too, being especially winning to chaperones. His manner is such as to remind them of the dear old days when gallantry was a commodity owned by the many.

At the club, among the older men, he also gets his bearings quicker than the average young man. His willingness to be instructed in the requisite rules of club life; his unwillingness to trespass in any way unworthy of a man, that is a young man of standing, his evident appreciation of all that therein is, even a bad cigar if it happens to be presented by the right person—all these qualities help him on his way rejoicing.

But he must in no way overdo it. If he is clever he knows it. He "assumes at the same time a virtue that he knows not of," and by many a judicious hint or reference satisfies his newly-made friends that, did he choose to tell all, they would discover that they were entertaining an angel unawares. Of no family does it come so naturally to converse as of that family you have never possessed. As long as there is not in reality an approved father in some Canadian village, no matter how remote, there is little danger in conjuring up very superior antecedents, if they dwell in your imagination only.

To give him his due, he is usually a pleasant companion. It may be through force of circumstances, it is true. The dog that fawns upon your knee must not bite your dress or even show his teeth, or you will not notice the tail wagged to order. So Captain Pratt, speaking generally, cultivates a ready or a "semi-ready" wit, has a mine of good stories, the result of personal experiences (whether his own, or some one else's, matter little, where the first personal pronoun can be used at no greater expense), and is also appreciative of the feeble attempts of his companion—especially if the narrator of the weak jokes happens to sit at the head of a well-appointed table. Even the jibes and "would-be-smart" remarks of the girl who, at home, has been told she is clever, fail to puncture his plate armor of complacency, if it is generally known, or, more fortunate still, known to him alone, that dinner and theatre parties are her favorite mode of entertaining.

Another hall mark of the tuft-hunter is his wonderfully acute discrimination as to "bounders" and "cads." He spots them out and labels them for the benefit of his acquaintance. And he likes nothing better than to apprise, always from the highest motives, his numerous girl friends which men it is advisable for them to know, and which not. His smile is seraphic as he explains how B is "a dear old fellow, but it is such a pity, don't you know—" or that "C is an awfully decent chap if you don't mind a little lack of polish, and can forget that his father was—" etc. You will generally find, too, that he not only knows all "the best people," but has a marvellously accurate knowledge of their relations also. He can tell you their connections by marriage, and though he only occasionally meets the children in the street with their nurses, can probably name them all and put the right ages to the correct names, with less likelihood of a mistake than if their favorite uncle attempted to catalogue them.

So that no wonder he is seldom at a loss for conversation. If there is a famine in aught else, he will entertain you with a detailed account of his engagements, past, present, and future. And he does not look contemptuous if you do not happen to have been asked to any of these desirable places. He merely "wonders" a little, or remembers that he "heard it was going to be very small" and "can't imagine why he was invited." Or, "of course, he readily understands you can't know everybody. For a fellow like himself it does not matter. He likes to