

## NEW YORK TYPES.\*

BY JEANIE DRAKE, AUTHOR OF "THE METROPOLITANS"—No. 6.—THE LANDLADY.

"Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn, but I shall have my pocket picked!" cries the inimitable Falstaff. Ease in his time meant a good plenty to eat and drink with boon companionship, but otherwise with such appliances for comfort as a pauper would now make ground for complaint to the Board of Commissioners. If the jolly knight sought in these days comfort in a New York inn of the highest class, he might discern the only point of resemblance between then and now in having his pocket picked. But to permit this operation to be as pleasantly and satisfactorily performed as it would be in any of the vast caravansaries endlessly springing upward in regions bordering on the Park, that pocket must first be exceptionally well-filled. Not everyone visiting or residing in the great city may stay at the Waldorf or its like and take no thought for the morrow.

Outside the many who happily live in their own homes and the few who occupy one habitation from generation to generation, there are the shifting thousands, natives and new-comers, who must be provided for. They may be and are accommodated at every mode and cost, from a superb apartment with Delmonico fare to a one-night lodging house and a one-cent coffee-stand. The male influence prevails in both these extremes, in one case it being a manager, a man probably of wealth and fashion, having under him a janitor more autocratic than the Czar of Russia, in the other a "boss" to whom muscle and a natural and cultivated gift for profanity are essential attributes.

But for him whose modest purse forbids the former and yet who is not condemned by absolute penury to the latter, has been specially devised, confirmed and perpetuated, the Landlady.

Of her there are numerous and varying types. There is the elegant head of a handsome and luxurious establishment, needing, as she has found her profits increase, two or more adjoining roofs to cover the space demanded. She is rarely, if ever, seen by her guests, whom she does not call boarders, considering the word in execrable taste if used in her presence. These are admitted to her choice rooms and daintily-appointed table only after rigid scrutiny as to position and income. She is perhaps the widow of a professional man or an army or navy officer, whose style of living did not permit him to provide for his family. Or, else, she has a husband gone to South Africa, Alaska, or — some other place whence his return is neither expected nor desired. In this last-named case, she has required a strong social backing to establish her prestige and is, consequently, with prosperity, more than ever fastidious as to the standing of prospective guests. She has, perhaps, two or three pretty daughters who are as carefully kept above the atmosphere of business as though they were young princesses. They remain at a fashionable boarding-school until graduation, by which time their mother hopes to retire from affairs and circle with them in a more congenial orbit. Meanwhile, she has her own apartment, with a gem of a dining room in which she entertains those friends of former days who adhere to her. A bachelor guest of unimpeachable position and means is occasionally invited, but with reserve, as she does not wish to be the subject of petty gossip. All necessary household business is transacted by an efficient housekeeper, having under her well-trained and noiseless maids, their actual mistress constituting only in extreme cases a Court of Appeal. The glimpses caught of her by the ordinary guest show her to be a woman of agreeable appearance and uncertain age, dressed in quiet and refined taste, the only evidence of their business relations showing in the iron hand which in an interview he might be made to feel under the velvet glove.

Of her kind there are many Western and Southern representatives who draw their contingents of guests from their own States. Of these, the former is a trifle more accessible and more florid of taste than the New Yorker; the latter, of better means for elegance, is more inflexible as to the distinction accruing from "better days." "I will feed and house these

people" (meaning her patrons), said recently Mrs. Antebellum, whose son belongs, with difficulty, to the Dixie Club, "but they must not expect me to take them into Society." This lady would dismiss a housekeeper who brought her verbal complaint or request from anyone. When an obstinate or unruly guest insists upon communication with the Head, it must be done by note, to which he receives a written answer. If things go well with her, she will return in the fulness of time to her native region, where this temporary lapse into business is silently condoned and ignored, especially if her daughters have chanced to marry among the more desirable of her compatriot guests.

Of another order is the landlady who with some business instinct and a little capital makes this venture without personal pretensions, but with a single-minded and robust desire to make it a success financially. Not always at the expense of her boarders' comfort, as she may be a good-tempered, easy-going sort of woman, with plenty of charity and sympathy. The young clerk or bachelor, beginning with small means his career in any line, is fortunate in finding her, especially if far from his own home. She can only afford him, perhaps, plain furnishing and plain food, but in quantity it is abundant, and while indulgent to his little requirements in health, in sickness she is really motherly. Her house might not appeal to those of a quiet taste, as all amusements and pursuits not in themselves objectionable are freely permitted; if one young man practises the mandolin in his room, equal liberty is allowed his neighbor in the matter of a cello. The atmosphere of the house is easy and gay, though a trifle noisy, and liable to an impromptu dance at any moment, the piano, a little out of tune, standing invitingly open to unskilled fingers.

One risk, indeed, for the average young man in her establishment lies in her fondness for seeing her "young people" have a "good time," and incidentally fall in love with each other and marry. When her mind is off table supplies and house plenishing, her benevolent if ill-judged matchmaking proclivities have full sway. She considers how admirably the fortunes of the little music teacher in the first front and the energetic insurance man would combine. She thinks if the retired delicatessen merchant would bestow his elderly hand and fairly substantial income on the tall, thin typewriter, who has bronchitis and her second hall-bedroom, it would be a fitting arrangement. And the blonde photographer's assistant and the black-eyed post-office clerk are both so good-looking that they were evidently made for each other. So she delights herself with the part of *deus ex machina*, and boasts of the number of weddings which have taken place in her house. Of which it is well, perhaps, for her peace of mind, that she does not always know the outcome. She helps her servants actively in necessary household labors, and, being fairly considerate for them, keeps them a long time. Her business methods, though seemingly lax, work her not so much harm as might be expected; as, if she be without men-folk of her own, she is liked well enough for one or more of her male boarders to keep an eye on her interests to the extent of warning her, when possible, against the admission of those known to be financially unreliable. On the whole, her career is sufficiently prosperous sometimes to result in her owning her own house, having a bank account, and wearing a few diamonds at inappropriate times.

On her level as to antecedents, position and business instincts is another, but with wholly different temperament, methods, and, most likely, experiences. She is either unmarried and practically alone in the world, or left a widow early with small children to rear, or still the possessor of a husband, useless, through one failing or another, as a bread-winner. Boarding her fellow creatures seems, in emergencies calling for prompt action, the simplest and quickest thing for a woman without other special training to engage in for a living. Either her previous trials or her present difficulties, however, seem to embitter or else to narrow and sharpen this landlady. Her energy, neatness, industry and system are praiseworthy. So is her constant supervision of her help, but she seldom has them long, regarding them as natural enemies, to be subjected to constant and intolerable nagging and fault-finding. She may be within her rights in refusing small and inconsiderable concessions to

\* The sixth of a series of articles by the Author of "The Metropolitans," one of the most brilliant novels of the season. No. 1, THE WOMAN OF SOCIETY, appeared in THE DELINEATOR for May. No. 2, THE CLUB WOMAN, appeared in THE DELINEATOR for June. No. 3, THE ART STUDENT, appeared in THE DELINEATOR for July. No. 4, THE SHOPPER, appeared in THE DELINEATOR for August. No. 5, THE MATINEE GIRL, appeared in THE DELINEATOR for September.