

GOSSIP

By Gena Macfarlane

Written for "The Northwest Review"

St. Francis of Sales says: "There is no surer sign of unprofitable life than when people give way to inquisitiveness into the lives of other men." One who is seriously intent on living to some useful purpose rarely finds time to indulge in idle conjectures or gossip concerning the lives of others. A curiosity that is not justified by considerations of personal interest or the welfare of near and dear friends or relatives, is highly discreditable to an intelligent person. It is equivalent to a tacit confession that the particular objects and pursuits which should be of paramount interest to each individual, man or woman, are relegated to a place of secondary importance, while the attention is fixed on matters that come solely within the province of others, and which cannot be influenced in any favorable sense by the intelligence of an outsider.

A high sense of personal responsibility is incompatible with a tendency to meddle with the affairs of others. A natural delicacy of feeling also restrains persons of breeding from enquiring too curiously into the lives of their friends and acquaintances. A woman of well known tact and discretion was once asked by a friend, who was notably deficient in these attributes, how she so successfully avoided giving offence to her friends. Her reply was that she never asked an unnecessary question, believing that she would be told without asking what they desired her to know, and she had no wish to be informed of matters which they preferred to keep from her for reasons best known to themselves.

The average woman, it must be admitted, feels her curiosity sharpened by the suspicion that a friend or neighbor is desirous of concealing from her the knowledge of any event or intention, even though it be of a purely private nature. It is the exceptional nature which attains the high water mark of perfect breeding—complete absence of curiosity concerning the affairs of others.

In order to suppress a tendency towards idle curiosity or the disposition to meddle with other people's affairs, one has only to apply oneself with greater earnestness to the conscientious discharge of one's own duties. There is always room for improvement somewhere, and if one really desires to qualify one's self for the role of an adviser to others, there is no better way of doing so than by proving one's capacity for attending successfully to one's own affairs.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

The "oldster" regarded the youngster thoughtfully. "So your teacher doesn't whip you? What's the reason of that?" he asked eagerly, for he was not one, or so the Chicago News intimates, who recoiled in horror from any discussion of the principles and practices of education. "Don't you ever do anything that calls for a whipping?"

The youngster grinned. "Teachers ain't allowed to lick the children. If she licked us she'd get suspended," he explained. "She reasons with us, and if we don't behave she suspends us."

"Hum!" said the oldster, rubbing his chin. "I've heard of something of the kind, but I never quite understood exactly how it worked. How often have you been suspended?"

"I never was. Ethan Taylor, he was suspended once. He set fire to a girl's hair with a match, and when the teacher wanted him to say he was sorry he said bad words at her. They suspended him for two weeks."

"Hum!" said the oldster again. "And once when we all got to hollering and laughing in the geography lesson and when Miss Watson told us to stop we just kept right on."

"Why?"

"Oh, just for fun! Jimmy Willing, he was soaking paper balls in his ink

and throwing them at the map whenever Miss Watson turned her back to point to it. She got awful mad, and she said she'd suspend us all if we didn't behave ourselves. She didn't, though," with faint scorn. "She weakens easy."

"She must be a pretty harsh sort of a person even to talk of suspending you for a little thing like that," said the oldster, with irony that glanced off its object. "I suppose you whisper in school sometimes, and punch the boy in front of you in the back, and stick pins in him, and make faces, and shoot beans and peas and putty and things like that?"

"I should say yes!"

"And then you get suspended, eh?"

"Oh, most generally we get marked down on our deportment."

"Barbarous!" commented the oldster. "I don't see how a teacher can have the heart to do such a thing. It must be pretty painful, isn't it?"

"Oh, that don't hurt! You just get sixty or sixty-five average on your deportment card."

"Well," said the oldster, "it may be all right, but it sounds brutal to me. When I was at school the master we had never marked us down."

"Didn't he?" asked the youngster, in surprise.

"No," resumed the oldster, reflectively. "He always marked us up. He could leave tolerably well-defined marks with his bare hand. His thumb and finger when closed on a boy's ear could lead that boy along the path of knowledge irresistibly. But his marks of absolute disapproval he usually laid on with a hickory stick."

"He did suspend a boy occasionally, however—by the collar of his jacket—but never for as long as two weeks. We never made it necessary for him to speak to us at all—he barked. When he cleared his throat our knees knocked together."

"We strove to please him. We never walked out on a strike, as I recently read some of your school-fellows did. He had a monopoly of the striking. Yes, I think it would have done you good to attend his school."

"Did it do you good?"

"Well, come to think of it, I don't know that it did," replied the oldster

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candidly; "but," he added grimly, "I don't think we needed licking as badly as the present generation does." —Pittsburg Observer.

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Be very tidy in matters of dress. A girl reveals her character in the way she dresses, and loose or missing buttons on her shoes, rough and neglected hair, teeth which shows signs of unwholesome decay, soiled and ripped gloves, and dress which is tawdry and pretentious, are indications which observant people read to the girl's detriment. Be tidy. A girl should be trim, neat, compact, and, if in business, dressed for service. Don't go trailing through dusty and muddy streets in long gowns which are appropriate for the drawing-room, but out of place in a shop or office. Don't even let your gowns touch the street by so much as the rim of their outermost hem. I do not counsel any marked departure from ordinary styles, nor any costume which attracts attention by its oddity, for I think it a sign of weakness to be eccentric. Yet a girl may keep in the fashion and be quite simple and with out ostentation.

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