



The Department of Boys and Girls.

WE wish that some good Samaritan, to whom all the world is a neighbor, would suggest to our young people growing up in the country some method for the self improvement of their manners and deportment. Their hearts are as good as gold; they stay at home from one day's end to another, helping father and mother caring for the younger children, and often doing the largest share of the house and field work; but when they do have a little outing, how much greater would be their enjoyment, and how much better their appearance, if they only knew how to deport themselves.

Looking at a company of young people gathered together at the house of one of their neighbors one cannot but help sympathizing with them as they express in their demeanor their embarrassed self-consciousness. Tall, over-grown boys and girls suffer most, for they have not yet become accustomed to their size, which is often disproportionate to their strength, while their anxiety not to appear awkward and ill at ease only makes them still more so. They do not know how to enter a room properly or to leave it, or to sit still anywhere without nervously twitching their hands and feet; while conducting a conversation with ease and grace to themselves and pleasure to others, might as well—for all they know about it—be one of the lost arts. The parents of these young people, who, to do them justice, usually spend much more time upon their children's morals than their manners, seldom go out with them, so that they even do not know that they are lacking in this respect; neither we are afraid, would many of them be able to recognize the deficiency if they did, having never enjoyed the advantages of much training in their own youth.

One does not expect country boys and girls to possess all the airs and graces of the city bred, but it is a pity for them to go out in the world so little that they are weighed down by a sense of their own personality to such an extent as to be a torture to themselves, and objects of pity and commiseration to those with whom they come in contact. Yet this is not because they are wanting in natural good sense and intelligence; it is simply a lack of training. Our large cities are continually recuperating their ranks from what they would call the raw material of the country, and from this source obtain their most substantial and useful citizens. The cosmopolitan learns, it is true, his own limitations; but he is also very particular to acquaint himself with all his capabilities within those limits. He studies to make the most of his inherent gifts, as well as to cultivate additional accomplishments; if he has not naturally a graceful carriage, he learns to bring all the muscles of his body under such control that he can stand or sit, walk or dance, with ease to himself and without enlisting the commiseration of the beholder.

How different are his manners from the average boy and girl brought up in a retired rural district! Why, there are dozens of them who have never been told that they should hold their heads well up, their shoulders back, elbows close to their sides, and not to carry themselves generally as though half their muscles were stiff or their bones out of joint. It would add considerably to their good appearance if they would, when in company, cultivate a pleasing and animated expression of countenance. How many otherwise comely faces are disfigured by an habitual frown or pucker, a pouting sulky expression, or frequently distorted by meaningless grins and inane giggles. The best way

to acquire a pleasing expression of countenance, as well as ease and grace of manner, is to become interested in the people and things around us and to think of ourselves as little as possible. If we strive to make some one else have a good time, we shall be surprised when the day is over to think how much enjoyment it has brought us. Self-forgetfulness makes the world seem broader and larger, and when we think how many other selves it contains of so much greater importance, we wonder that we were ever so narrow-minded as to concentrate our minds on so insignificant a portion of humanity.

But to return to our subject. Now that we know our deficiencies, what remedy can be applied for their improvement? Women all over the continent seem to think there is much to be gained by acting in concert, and why may not our young country women follow the same plan, and organize societies whose object shall be the improvement of mind and manners? The boys and girls of each neighborhood could arrange to meet at the house of one of the members of the club once a week, the afternoon being most suitable in summer and the evening in winter. This would be none too often, for young people in the country stay at home too closely anyway, which is the principal cause of their shyness. One of the most cultivated ladies or gentlemen of their acquaintance should be invited

to act as critic, and to give the company a short talk on the subject, or read a selection relating to the subject from some standard authority. Let each member request personal criticism of his conduct and deportment during the meeting, pledging himself to take no offence when such hints are kindly given. It would also be well for each member to accord the same privilege to all other members of the club, each striving to look upon his deportment impersonally, as if it and himself were two entirely different things, and the former much in need of mending.

If this could be done in a kindly, considerate manner no offence need be incurred, and if no other good came of it the young people would be set to thinking, and also be induced to rid themselves of some of their weight of self-consciousness, awkwardness and timidity. Other features of a social and literary character could be added, in order to make the meeting more enjoyable as well as more improving, and no arbitrary rules should be made and enforced. Let the principal object of each member be to make the others have a good time, which will go far toward improving their demeanor to each other, and will give them a clearer insight into the courtesies and duties of social intercourse. This will also cause the club to become exceedingly popular, and will ensure a good attendance.

