

WHY BE A WALLFLOWER?

A SEQUEL TO 'WHAT TO DO ON A DATE'

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PROBABLY we should have expected just what did happen. Perhaps we should not have been surprised when it happened, and happened with frequency. Nevertheless we were surprised. First, we were delighted with the response to our pamphlet "What to Do on a Date." The initial printing sold out before the pamphlet left the press, which seems to prove that Shakespeare wasn't too smart when he declared there is nothing in a name. Then we started to get the question which we should have set ourselves to expect:

"Now," wrote in a surprising number of young people -and some not quite so young—"now that you have told us what to do on a date, how about answering the real question: How does a person get a date?"

Both Boys and Girls

Now if our only inquirers had been girls, we might not have been too surprised. Vital Statistics to the contrary notwithstanding, the surplus supply of datable young ladies will always be one of our quasi-economic problems. "Three women to every man," ran an old song; and though that is gross exaggeration, the ratio of young ladies who are marriageable to young men who are ready to meet them at the end of the aisle always seems to be—well let's simply say unfair.

The letters did not however come only from girls. Boys wrote in too. I for one had always thought that a young man got a date by the easy process of picking up a phone, a hat, and a more or less honoured young lady in that order. Evidently I have been wrong. Though the privilege of inviting the other half of a date still rests primarily in a masculine monopoly, evidently the male is not always successful when he picks up the phone.

So having started the discussion, I saw there was nothing for it but to write a sequel to "What to Do on a Date." And here it is. Quite clearly the order of the two pamphlets is wrong. The first should have been "Why Be a Wallflower?" the second, "What to Do on a Date." But you can't turn back the clock or the printing press. So here is the first booklet second, and if you haven't read the second booklet, which actually came first, you are invited to do so, provided you can follow this slightly mad chronology.

Dates are important

I shall be frank enough to say that I am glad our young people are thinking of dates. Dates are most important. They are an exercise of the social virtues and instincts implanted in all of us by God. Or, to express it more beautifully, they are a chance to show Christian charity. Dates are a chance to be happily human and divinely good and virtuous. And the dear Lord, who gave us our happiness in one another's company, smiles approvingly on the fine young man and woman who are strong and gentle and kind and virtuous in each other's association.

Practically however dates are a sort of prelude to an engagement, which is in itself a prelude to marriage. And though a large percentage of our fine, brave Catholic young people are called to be nuns or priests, the majority are destined by the providence of God for married life.

For them the prelude to their true vocation, is extremely important.

We might easily then restate the question "How do I get a date?" and have it read "How do I become acquainted with the kind of person I should like to marry?" And that is the really important question.

Looking Ahead to Marriage

For with perfect propriety fine young Catholic men and women should be thinking ahead towards their marriage. It is a great sacrament, as St. Paul insisted, a high vocation and a noble responsibility for which, with all regard for modesty and

the conventions, young people should be preparing themselves.

There is a decided lack of balance between the careful preparation for secondary careers,—law, medicine, teaching, even business—and the haphazard bolting into marriage, the real career. Being a doctor or a business man or a civil servant or an artist is much less a career than being a husband and a father. The interlude during which a woman is a nurse or a teacher takes entirely second place to the years during which she will be a wife and a mother. If I am to be a partner in marriage, I should certainly give more careful scrutiny and thought to learning about my partner than I would give to a law associate or my partner in the tennis doubles or the leading lady in my play or the nurse I want to assist me in the operating room.

Unquestionably the question “Whom shall I marry?” is most important. And that question will in the overwhelming number of cases be answered by the prior question “Whom shall I date?”

More Prelude

So when a young man invites a young lady out for the evening and the young lady accepts his invitation with alacrity, their immediate objective may be the motion-picture hit of the evening or supper and dancing to a tip-top band; they may find immediate enjoyment in talking together, in the ride over the rolling road, in the hands of contract bridge, the radio hour they both approve, or the realization that they are both enthusiastic collectors of fine symphony records.

But beneath those surface things, recognized or not, are deeper considerations: “How would this ride seem if I knew that it was to last for the rest of our lives? Does the fact that we both enjoy dancing and that we agree on the same motion-picture stars prove anything? Have we in common deeper tastes that reach down into our fundamental natures? Does our quick sympathy prove we could safely marry? What would a lifetime together, judged on the basis of this date, be like?”

Off Guard

Young people are fortunate if they can work together on some fairly serious job. Work reveals the serious side of character. A young man can think himself lucky if he has seen a girl at work in her own home. The interest and zest that a young fellow shows for his work, his job, his profession can tell a shrewd and observant young lady much about him.

On the other hand the relaxed circumstances of a purely social appointment are even a clearer index. The young man may prove himself generous or miserly; the girl, greedy or considerate. The boy may show himself sensual or gentle; the girl, strong in character or weak and unreliably sensual. As they relax and come off guard, their predominant interests rise to the surface. If his only thought is sports, he yawns when she suggests a concert or a trip to the art museum. If all she wants to do is dance, he soon finds her looking bored when he starts talking of the law case that is puzzling him. And if his idea of a good time involves sin, their first date together is likely to make that idea brutally clear.

During those moments when one is looking for a good time, much more of character pops out than one ever intended. Perhaps that is why God and nature wisely suggest to young people the date. Nothing more clearly manifests deep interests and lays bare the strata of personality than the things one really wants to do when one is relaxing and is all intent on a good time.

Mere good manners unless they are sincere and deeply established, wear thin on a picnic. Morals are tested there probably as nowhere else. Even religion is revealed by the things a person likes to do when he is relaxing, certainly by the way in which he or she likes to do those things.

A great test of character, believe me, is a holiday. A wonderful gauge of personal virtue is a date.

Dates Aren't Just Dates

Hence a young person is a little silly to look on dates merely as dates. You'll meet a certain type of girl who counts her dates as a collector might count his stamps, coins, or polished shells. She is hardly interested in who takes her out but terribly interested in how many take her out. Her social programme is a score card. She wants a lot of dates; she wants to take in a lot of varied spots; she wants to be seen with a lot of men. Whether the dates mean anything more than an

evening spent dashing about for the world to see her is quite beside the point. Which strikes anyone with half, an eye for the future as being a pretty silly performance.

George Ade had a favourite fable-in-slang about two girls who lived in adjacent houses. One had so many dates that her door bell rang as often as the bell in a shooting gallery; the other had a date—well, now and then. One evening a young man who couldn't quite make up his mind to take a place in the line that formed to the left, drifted into the friendly, quiet, and fairly deserted house of the girl next door. What he found there was a charming, cool, restful young woman who, without the use of a football eleven to run interference, somehow managed to bowl him over. He married her shortly after this meeting. The besieged girl had been so busy having dates and collecting men that she never paused long enough to take a good look at any of them. When any one of them managed a proposal, she thought of all the other dates she still had to have and asked him to wait. By and by the dates fell off; the bell stopped ringing; she wondered what had happened. And while she was thinking it over, she dropped in to play with the other girl's latest baby.

I can't remember George Ade's moral for that fable. It might well be: "If one swallow doesn't make a summer, one hundred dates don't make a marriage."

Don't Waste Dates

Certainly young people are unwise if they waste dates. They shouldn't date young people whom they would be foolish to marry. For dates, I repeat, lead normally to marriage, and hence young people, however young, may be preparing for an unhappy marriage by dating someone who would be even years later matrimonially unacceptable. Dates easily lead to love; and if love leads to the wrong partner in marriage, a life is spoiled. No matter how young boys or girls may be, if they are starting to go out socially, they are smart if they always go with the type of young person whom they would later on be willing to marry. And type takes into consideration all the major questions such as religion, morals, dependability, background, personal characteristics.

There are of course stretches in life, especially at the beginning of one's social experience—say in one's late teens—when companionship without any clear-cut thought of marriage is reason enough for dates. But even then a few worthwhile dates with good, charming, acceptable people are far more precious than an engagement book filled with records of dates with fly-by-nights and nonentities and worse.

A stamp collector throws aside as worthless stamps that are soiled, common, valueless. Looking at the question of dates, one should be at least as discriminating as a collector of stamps.

The Word Date

The passage of years does amazing things to words. There's that word date for instance. I sometimes am surprised to find myself using it without a shudder. For in my early youth a date was an oriental fruit, or a number on a calendar, or a particular day memorable for some historic event commemorated to the annoyance of school boys. I was in college before the word date began to be applied to any sort of social engagement. It was about the same time that we shuddered when someone called an invitation a bid. Bids were things made above the sound of an auctioneer's hammer.

At first a date meant a social engagement. Then it got a swift twist and came to mean a person who shared that social engagement. "Meet my date," said the youth with a wad of gum in his mouth. And you weren't surprised if he continued, "Ain't she a classy little number, huh?" Later on, ten to one, he'd refer to his wife as "the old lady" or "my ball and chain."

Fashions change and words with them. So I find myself using the word date in its double significance: the social event, the partner of the social event. If sometimes I confuse the meaning, so do the young people who handle the word most expertly.

Parents' Obligations

But we are still on the opening question, aren't we?

“Just how do I get a date?”

May I start answering that with a gentle reminder? If you young people have to wangle your own dates, your mother and father are not quite living up to their obligations.

Don't wince! I am in no sense going to advocate the return of those ancient days when parents sat around a council table with other parents, arranged a marriage, drew up a solemn contract, and then as a kind of afterthought smiled and said, “Well now I suppose it would be nice if the prospective bride and bridegroom had an opportunity to meet.” And meet they did—on the day before the ceremony.

Marriage Brokers

Not too long ago I happened to read in *The New Yorker* a sketch of a modern Jewish marriage broker. To my surprise I discovered that the old Jewish custom of arranged marriages has not altogether disappeared. Jewish parents still pick out brides and grooms for their very modern and entirely sophisticated children.

Of course in this age of wide freedom the method is not flat-footed or obvious. Indeed I sat back and admired the cleverness of the technique. The Goldsteins, let's say, have a daughter and the Cohens a son; and though the children pay no attention to each other, the parents are persuaded that the wedding of these two would be preamble to a very happy married life. So the parents call in a marriage broker, an expert in affairs of the heart.

Though from the moment of his appearance the broker is in the pay of the parents, he employs no strong-arm methods. He doesn't corral the two children and pin them down until they sign their names to a formal contract listing assets and liabilities, present status and future prospects. On the contrary he says nothing whatsoever about the marriage. Instead he arranges a party to which are invited, along with a number of other young people, the projected bride and bridegroom. He sees to it that the two are thrown together socially and have a chance to see mutual good qualities. Then the families give parties in which the children are as a matter of course included. If the families go away for the summer the broker arranges that they vacation near each other.

And all the while nothing of marriage is said to the youngsters. They have all the fun of thinking they are discovering each other. In fact a skilful broker is not above putting a few fictional obstacles in the way. So the young people think they are stumbling into each other's way, and indeed they are—with a little skilful choosing of the way and arranging of the stumbling blocks by someone else.

In the end the chances that they will fall in love are fairly good. The family acts properly surprised and pleased, thinks it over, gives judicial consent, and the marriage broker collects his fee and departs to play Jewish Dan Cupid for another lucky pair. But if the young people do not hit it off, the parents shrug their shoulders, call it a day, and look around for someone else to make a good match for Maurice or Shirley. But in all events they do not consider their duty done unless they play an important part in throwing the right young people in the paths of their sons and daughters.

More power to them, say I. And as I read the articles, I felt for once that the Jewish children had the better of it as compared with the often cut-adrift sons and daughters of Christian parents.

Mixed Blessing

Now when modern freedom came tidal-waving over the world, no one plunged into the waves more gaily than did young people. It's fine to strike out with strong young strokes, to feel the sting of the cold water and the rise and fall of the seas. But there is also such a thing as being shoved off the dock before one knows how to swim strongly. For then the undertow proves an enemy that frightens and drags down to ruin. The most adventurous is sometimes glad enough of a life-belt or a strong mature swimmer stroking reassuringly at his side.

Youth seemed to plunge into its freedom gaily enough. But I sometimes wonder whether the older generation, taking the youthful shouts of excitement to mean well-considered votes for freedom, didn't give a lot more freedom than the young people really enjoyed having. Just, for that matter, freedom in the whole question of getting dates. At the start it was probably fun to know that parents would not longer have anything to say about whom one went with, or when, or

why, and that one was perfectly free to pick one's partner for tennis, a dance, marriage.

But even though I risk putting myself on the shelf with the vintages of the early '80's, I still say that I'm not sure that too much freedom was a wonderful idea or a great deal of help to the young people themselves.

There's the bold spirit and the raving beauty who need no help in the finding of dates. But how few and far between such are compared with the somewhat shy person, the person whose charm must be discovered on second or third glance, the rather quiet soul, the unaggressive boy or girl who would gaily welcome a little help from someone older and wiser and far more widely acquainted.

Help Needed

The vast majority of young people, I honestly think, could be nicely assisted in the getting of their early—and possibly their later—dates. Yes; I'll risk your patronizing smiles and say that the original shaping of young people's social life rests with the parents. The logical friends of children are the sons and daughters of the parents' good and tried friends.

I certainly don't suggest that Mr. and Mrs. Smith can these days sit down with Mr. and Mrs. O'Riley and decide that Richard, now age seven, will eventually marry Helen, now age five, and that in the interval their social paths should run parallel all the way from dancing school to prenuptial showers. Ten to one Richard and Helen would, if they knew this, raise a mighty and highly effective howl. But if the Smiths and the O'Rileys are at all smart, they can achieve their objective by quite different means. They can plan a happy social home life which will very much include the children. They act merely as wise parents when they invite to their homes young people of the type they think should associate with their children. Indeed houses are serving the most normal purpose of houses if, during the days when children are growing up, they become the meeting and rallying places for the sons and daughters of the parents' friends.

And if from among these children of good friends, thrown together in charming and happy surroundings, some worthwhile marriages do not follow some extremely delightful dates, human nature is no longer human nature.

Matchmakers

For, romantic novels to the contrary notwithstanding, falling in love is seldom the result of a sharp and unexpected blow from Cupid's arrow. In ninety-nine out of one hundred cases it is the gradual result of coming to know and like and enjoy being with someone whose tastes and background are like one's own.

Even the most romantically married young couple know that. So they invite to their house young friends they think should meet, become acquainted, and marry. What they do for their friends is merely what normal parents should do for their children.

And if it is too late for you, my young reader, to train your parents in their attitude towards you and dates, it is not too late for you to plan to shape life happily for your sons and daughter when you are a parent.

Picking the School

When wise parents pick the right sort of school for their children, they really are looking ahead to their children's dates and happy marriage. They select a school where the young people will meet other young people of like tastes and temperaments and backgrounds. Coeducation is by no means necessary for this. Dick Smith goes to a Catholic boarding college and notices on his room mate's dresser the picture of the young man's sister. He asks to meet her, does meet her, and with happy consequences. Or among the girls from the neighbouring girls' Catholic college he meets friends he likes, dates them, and comes to think about one of them in serious fashion.

Helen O'Riley comes to know her school friend's brother and cousins. When she visits the girl's home, she meets young men of whom her parents would instinctively approve.

So though the parents in these cases have employed no marriage brokers, through their friends, their own home, and the right schools they have thrown in their children's paths precisely the kind of dates they want them to have, with happy prospects for a not-too-remote future.

Back to the Parties I and II

But we come now from those circumstances over which you have no control to yourself and your part in getting a date.

Just for a moment, I am afraid, I shall have to be crude and most undiplomatic. For before starting to consider the problem of getting a date, one very emphatically has to consider the person who is trying to get that date.

Several years ago I was dealing with a crowd of young people and paired them off for some work we were going to do. The pairing was by mere chance arrangement, which seemed as fair as any other way I could discover. One young lady in the crowd, by no means either a clock-stopper or a crowd-gatherer, drew by great good luck the young man who in the estimation of most was Male Number 1 of that particular group. She was visibly elated. Then a sudden and quite indeliberate shift altered the partners, and she drew another young male. He was undoubtedly one of the finest young men I have ever known, but not a match for No. 1. Never shall I forget the involuntary but unmistakable gasp of protest emitted by the girl. She had lost the No. 1 boy, and she was furious with me for pairing her off with what she thought decidedly second choice, and she was most ungracious and untactful in her reaction to the young man.

Stay in Your Class

Now the fact of the matter was that the girl was far below the standard of either of the young men. She didn't match up to No. 1 or No. 2. She merely had exalted ideas about herself, and for no real reason. She was, I grant, nice-looking, but far from a beauty; she was amusing, but only fairly so; nicely dressed, but not one of the town's twelve best-dressed women by several hundred thousand; sweet, but a little on the dumb side. The first boy, on the other hand, was the pick of the place, and the second exactly the kind you'd love your sister to marry—good background, smart, amusing, money, a nice future ahead, and solid basic goodness.

But the young lady, to put it crudely, was all for stepping right out of her class. She rated herself higher than anyone else in the world and if she couldn't have the top man in the crowd, she'd pout and not play.

Self Handicaps

And one of the biggest handicaps to the getting of dates is precisely this tendency on the part of both the males and the females of our human species to expect that when they date they'll date the best; and when they can't date the best, they condescend to the others or flatly (until they grow tired of ornamenting the wall or the family porch) decline to date at all.

I should not know quite how to advise anyone to do this, but I am sure that early in life it would be very smart to estimate your social qualifications and your own rating in any man's (or woman's) marriage market. We do precisely that in other fields. If we dub along at tennis we don't expect the national champions to come asking us to play a match. If our singing voice slightly alarms the neighbours, we are not angry when Bing Crosby or Jeanette McDonald or Martinelli doesn't ask us to take part in a duet. If we dance like . . . well, if we just call it dancing, we don't expect to be paired off with Fred Astaire or Zorina.

But it's amazing how many people who date think that the one they go with must be top of the heap. Well, if we are no world-beater, socially, we should, by all the natural laws of parallel, be content to stay with others who aren't world-beaters either.

“Also-Rans” Limp

There is, it seems to me, something pathetic about that train of “also-rans” who straggle along after a startling beauty. They are so pitifully out of their class; but somewhere they read that great beauties always marry ugly mugs one pace ahead of the sheriff, and they won't be discouraged. There is something very sad about the charming but by no means wonderful girl who, if she can't have a date with the College Clark Gable, sits home, moping into her make-up box.

How can a young man without Wall Street backing him hope to date the girl whose father brings home his monthly income in an armoured truck? Here's a girl who is good and decent but by no means a beauty to rave about. Then by what absurd process of illogic does she come to expect a varsity squad to stand outside her window every night and break into

close harmony?

If he or she will only use a little self-analysis . . . a person does not need to be a raving beauty to have plenty of very pleasant dates. One does not need in order to be popular an unlimited supply of traveller's cheques or a wardrobe to make the Duchess of Windsor hurry back to her dressmaker.

But the smart and sensible person is the one who has determined his limitations and stays honestly in his own class. Great beauties do not as a rule, despite the novelists, marry mud fences unless the mud fence is supported by gold posts. The stableman in fiction may wed the duchess, but I'd hate to sit down at their dinner table some two years later.

Missing Out

So many a young man has missed having dates with dear, attractive, lovely girls just because he mooned on the outskirts of the crowd that rushed the raving beauty or the banker's daughter; and many a girl got a reputation for being high-hat and consequently froze off dates because she aimed her shafts and turned her smile at nothing less than a millionaire lawyer, member of the country's most important firm, whose smile left the lady jurors limp.

Don't miss the dates you might have in your own class while you're trying to get into a class you couldn't scale even if you were an Alpine climber. And don't be surprised if you miss all dates by overplaying your own natural and acquired endowments. You may be surprised how many charming people in your own street you miss if you walk around with your eyes glued to the stars.

Boys and Dates

Boys, one would normally think, would find dates relatively easy to get. Boys have the right to do the asking, and that gives them an almost unfair advantage. Where usually the girl has to sit until called on and has to wait until invited, the boy can take as his motto "Let us then be up and doing." He should be able to find some girl quite willing to place her hand in the crook of his elbow and go along with him.

Yet my post indicates that the mere fortuitous fact of being a male does not necessarily assure social success. Girls these days seem to exercise nice judicial detachment. They demand that their escorts be something more than merely masculine. So if a young man finds that he does not get a ready acceptance to his invitations; that when he phones a girl, she invariably has another engagement; and that when he suggests a date three weeks from next Tuesday, that day by singular coincidence is precisely the day Aunt Minnie is coming from the country with her entire family—when these things happen fairly regularly, the young man had better take a good look at himself in the mirror and in the ledger of his accomplishments.

Girls do not turn down dates for the fun of saying no. A little patient thought and perhaps frank self-confession may dig up some not-too-flattering information about the man.

Girls have Their Preferences

For instance. A girl does not like to be invited to a dance by a boy who does not dance or who dances largely on her insteps. Girls loathe going out to dinner with men whose manners are disgusting and who fumble a menu and make the waiter regard them as a little like something that might have crawled out from under the plate. In fact they dislike crude manners perhaps less because crudity touches them directly than because bad manners make them feel conspicuous and bring contempt upon the boy whom they want to be regarded as their strong and fine escort. They get tired risking their necks with youths who think every highway is a challenge to their skill as aviators and who drive so fast that any attempt at conversation is driven by the wind far back into the girls' throats.

They become very bored going out with a boy who goes only where he wants to go and insists on sitting through wrestling matches when the girls would love to see a good movie. If the lad never consults their tastes about the evening's entertainment but drags them to the dog races, which give them a headache and make them violently ill for days, they soon learn to say, "Oh so sorry, but Cousin Emma is going to die that night, and I'll have to arrange for her funeral." In

fact they say so before he starts with “How’d you like . . .”

Personal Factors

As the world widely knows, good looks are by no means necessary for a man’s social success. But neatness is essential. I have frequently been surprised at the number of times that girls have said that the man they want to marry must be “neat in dress and careful about his appearance.” Girls evidently feel a justified resentment of the fact that while their nails must be carefully manicured the boy’s nails can suggest his recent dabbling in a ton or two of coal. A girl demands to know why, if she is supposed to be immaculately clean about her dress, he can appear for her special birthday dinner in slacks and a turtle-neck sweater.

A girl is annoyed when, the party being formal, she comes in her loveliest spring frock and he refuses point-blank to match her. They insist, these modern girls, that a man’s hair be washed and brushed into place, that his clothes have a ‘fresh from the laundry and the pressing iron’ look about them. They are fastidious about themselves, and they see no excuse for the man’s verging towards the beachcomber. And in the words of Yum-Yum, “I for one don’t blame them.”

More Than a Phone Call

Getting a date is not a matter of just calling a girl on the phone, uttering a glib “Howz about it, kid?” and receiving a flattered, grateful “Yes, master.” More and more getting a date is becoming a question of deserving the company of the right sort of girl and developing the many qualities which make a girl proud to be seen with the boy.

If he expects charm of her, she quite rightly asks, “What about your own manly charm?” If he expects excellent manners, she resents his playing caveman and Tarzan at her expense.

And as for that word expense, the girl will rightly insist that she likes and admires decent generosity, the thoughtful gift of a flower for her shoulder, a man’s willingness to spend within the limits of his perhaps quite limited income. She likes generosity, but even more does she like the generosity that connotes thoughtfulness and a desire to please her. If she turns out to be the sort of girl who loves a playboy, who expects orchids on a violet budget and dinner at the Ritz when he has been planning on movies capped with a hamburger, she will be out of the class of most modern young men. But few men need to fear a refusal if the girl knows that their budgets lie somewhere between Sandy McIntosh of the comics and Reginald, chief support of the night spots.

Not too Much Bicep

Young men sometimes get the mistaken idea that their popularity will depend upon a certain muscular emphasis. Where the legend started, nobody quite knows. But tradition spread the impression that girls like cavemen and positively glow when a club thumps them just north of their lungs. Part of that same legend is the belief that girls are insulted if their date doesn’t “make a pass at them,” and that if he leaves without making things a little difficult for them, they should rush to the mirror and see what’s wrong.

The fact seems to be that the men with the biceps approach find girls consistently busy when they phone, busy with dates long, long in advance that simply can’t be broken. The truth is that any girl worth taking out has a marked fondness for gentle-men, and please note that the hyphen is not a misprint. I didn’t want you to read gentlemen and thereby take that for a commonplace word and not a significant trait. Girls like men who are considerate of their feelings, their “hair-do”, their new frocks, and, their innocence.

The Light Touch

They don’t like to be tackled as if the dance floor or the veranda of the clubhouse were a practice gridiron football session. They grow infinitely weary of matching their strength against the overwhelming superiority of shoulder development. They do not like to feel that they are expected to pay for an evening’s entertainment by gratifying the amorous urge of the dominant male. Women wrestlers are fortunately rare, and women regard those few with extreme

distaste. Even the male wrestler is not precisely a parlour pet. So the men who insist upon this sport must be content with the dates they can get and not pine for the dates they would like to have.

On the other hand easy is the popularity of the man who is gentle. He is not of that class of men who, because they demand intimacies which offend a girl's desire and convictions, are swiftly shrugged by. He makes no crude animal display that frightens the finer type of girl. He is thoughtful and considerate, and he is welcome and welcomed.

For a girl is smart enough to know that when a man makes the wrong kind of demands on her he makes them on others. Looking forward to the day of marriage, she wonders whether after marriage while she is at home he will continue his predatory ways and wander about, seeking whom he may devour.

Quite aside from any moral issues involved, that young man is date-wise who achieves a deserved reputation for gentle courtesy and respect for the fine feelings of the girl.

Rush 'Em and Leave 'Em

Girls soon learn the record of the chap who gives the maid of the moment an awful rush—practically putting up a tent on her doorstep, keeping her phone constantly busy, turning his car into her transport system—and then, after wearing away the porch steps with his eager boots, disappears as if the whole thing had been done with mirrors.

Dating him is a little like dating a cross between the Flying Dutchman and Enoch Arden. So when a chap of that sort asks for a date, a smart girl thinks twice and probably oftener. The impetuosity of his first rush and the monopoly he tries to exercise frighten other young men away; then when he does his famous vanishing act, she sits around waiting for the other men to realize the one-man picket line is gone and they can come back. So when our impetuous hero's reputation is once established he is amazed at the number of girls who are entertaining cousins from the country and sitting up with sick aunts.

Now for the Girl

Getting a date is of course more difficult for a girl than for a boy. She is more called upon than calling, more invited than—I was going to say inviting; but since the word is already pre-empted in another meaning, let's say—invitation-bearing.

Yet I persist in restating that that girl is wise who does not envy too wistfully the muchly dated girl. The smart man with real worth and a future made up of something besides soap bubbles hasn't time to waste standing in line in the hope of getting a fleeting nod from the 'belle-of-the-avenue'. Substantial men pick the less competitive, the 'happy-to-see-you,' and 'why of course I'd love to go' girl rather than the 'please send up your card a month in advance', 'how about Thursday the eleventh from nine-oh-five' type. There is undoubtedly such a thing as being too busy to spend time trying to trail down the too-dated girl: The man with success as his objective can't cool his heels waiting for Miss Popularity to get down to his number on her list.

Risks

I wonder whether the too, too popular girl knows the risks she runs. She is usually much discussed, with consequent bruises to her reputation. Certain people, both male and female, won't believe that excessive popularity can be won without compromise and personal payment. The girl with the perambulant stag line should know that at the end of the line is gossip herself, an ugly old hag with mean claws and a nasty tongue. And envy, gossip's twin, is tagging close behind.

If there is anything to the charges against the girl, her chances of a successful marriage are decidedly lowered. Anyone knows that great beauties are notoriously poor wives and the marriages of extremely popular young women are likely to be more frequent than durable.

Beauty and Money

Two things that are certainly not necessary in order to have dates are beauty and money. Both or either may help.

Neither is actually essential. Much more important in any girl who wants to be popular is charm, and charm depends neither on physical beauty nor on the money necessary for an elaborate wardrobe.

I've referred to charm before, and now as then I dodge a definition. Anyone can immediately recognize charm; it would take an encyclopaedia and a picture gallery to define it. Yet when the charming girl walks into the room, everyone is interested. Her smile is sweet, so sweet that one doesn't notice whether her nose conforms to classic standards and whether her eyes are violet, blue or some less romantic shade. Her manner is so gracious that you think of flowers blossoming and Lady Bountiful walking among her friends. She has a way of including in the sweep of her graceful manners the awkward boy and the important man of affairs.

Her manner with old people is unaffected, and she is kind without condescension towards children. Her charm is something that she carries with her into a kitchen, a parlour, a classroom, a shop, on to a tennis court, to a party, to church, into groups of people. The sky line is actually lovelier when she walks along the street; although when you stop to analyse the reason for that loveliness, you cannot find it in any perfection of profile or beauty of feature or elaborate simplicity of costume.

The Acquired Blend

Charm seems to be, not a single thing, but a perfect blend of a variety of things. Charm is sincere charity and fondness for our fellow men expressed in good manners; it is poise mingled with gracious thoughtfulness; it is a mingling of the persuasiveness of a trained (usually self-trained) voice with a willingness to listen when someone else speaks. I have seen badly physically deformed people who had amazing personal charm. I have seen ugly people with rugged faces and rather scrambled features who, when they smiled, have been positively enchanting.

And this much is certain: Though good looks are in the main a gracious (and dangerous) gift from God, charm is something that is thoughtfully and often painfully acquired. The charming girl (and the charming man) is one who has carefully trained herself to think in terms of others' feelings, sensibilities, likes, prejudices; who actually develop a sort of antennae through which she senses what things would hurt the other, what things would make him smile. Charm increases with the practice of good manners, the quick gratitude for even the inexpensive gift, the challenging attention paid to mothers and fathers, the air of camaraderie displayed to younger brothers and sisters—one's own and those of the young man. Charm grows as one finds pleasant things to say and says them. Charm can be smothered under affectation and studied mannerisms; it simply beams through simple naturalness and the frank development of one's better gifts.

All the plastic surgeons in the world can't really remake one's face into lines of Grecian beauty. But the ability to cultivate charity, sympathy, a ready smile, a grateful appreciative heart, a pleasant voice and something to say—this is within the power of anyone; this means charm and charm is the short cut to eager and numerous dates.

Aliveness

If a girl's features do not fall into any recognized category of beauty and her figure is more vigorous than graceful and yet she nonetheless strikes one immediately as good to look at and attractive to be with, that girl, a hundred to one, has vitality. There is no other quality more conducive to charm than the tingling aliveness that marks interesting and interested persons. We glow to the quick response of their eyes and smile. We follow with approval the ease and grace of their movements. They seem to see everything that is going on around them. They have what Hollywood calls "the take," a mobile expression that shows that they have listened, watched, caught what was going on and responded to it.

Many a beauty is, truth to confess, hopelessly insipid. To be with one of them is a little like escorting a carefully draped Venus de Milo. To talk with her is like making gestures through a show window at a dummy wearing a summer frock. I have seen dateless girls who by all the tests were perfect beauties. They failed in that vitality which makes the difference between a beautiful human being and a classic statue.

But when a live face smiles, when a vital person listens or talks or moves, when eagerness greets one's remarks and quick enthusiasm welcomes one's suggestions, one doesn't stop to ask: "Is she beautiful?" Who cares? She has a deeper,

more human quality than physical perfection. And continuously and happily dated the girl who cultivates that vitality.

Frank Interest

That vitality manifests itself of course in the interest that a person displays in those around him or her. Men are admittedly egotists who enjoy dating the girl who is concerned with what they have to tell her. They quickly invite out again the young woman who provided a gracious, attentive, stimulating, interested audience. Chatter-boxes and scatter-brains may get a succession of dates with many men; the girls who are invited out again are, not the brilliant conversationalists, but the charming listeners. An ounce of responsive attention is worth a drawing-room of Noel Coward small talk or Dorothy Parker 'bons mots'.

Clothes

Without any reasonable basis girls are likely to think that exactly the right clothes—and plenty of them—are necessary for popularity. But the question that immediately arises is: What are right clothes? Clearly they are less a matter of expense than of style; their rightness depends less on how much they cost than on how well they become the individual wearer.

If the modern girl herself lacks the ability to pick becoming clothes, there are people endowed by nature and trained to teach her—and not too expensively. All of us know young ladies whose clothes' budget would not keep a society glamour girl in face powder but who are smartly dressed in a manner that makes their escorts proud to be seen with them. They have style, which again can be cultivated. Their wardrobe is limited, but it shows the result of planning and thought. Vanity perhaps, but harmless vanity in most cases, and very important in its effect upon the number and quality of the girls' dates.

Many a modern young man is inclined to run from a girl whose wardrobe seems to have the capacity of that of a motion-picture studio. "That girl?" said a wise but rising youth. "Why, I couldn't pay her cleaning bills." And he went looking for a girl whose idea of a wardrobe fell within his budget. Old-fashioned perhaps, but I have noticed young men glow when their partner of the evening confessed that the particularly chic (is that the word?) frock she was wearing was something she herself made. He is a little more hopeful about early marriage.

What Does She Do?

Matching the adornments of fashion are the more subtle adornments that can't be bought over any counter. There are the varied things about which a girl can talk with intelligent interest. There is her knowledge of sports, which makes a man feel he can meet her as an equal. There is her awareness of what is going on in the great modern world. She can develop, if she is interested in men of that type, the ability to match her golf or tennis or swimming not too badly (and not too aggressively and victoriously—men are such good winners) against the young man who loves sports. She can improve her distinctively feminine charm by becoming an expert disher-upper of pleasant little snacks. Her skill as a housekeeper is no discouragement, believe me, to a young man weary of a can opener and of toast with more than its share of carbon.

Shunning the Pursuer

Many a girl has lost dates simply by being too obvious in her pursuit of them. Hunters went out of fashion a long time ago, and the male animal, like the fox and the tiger, has learned to dodge the raised cupid's bow and the levelled Diana-ish eye. Every man worth dating wants to think that he chooses the girl and does the actual inviting. For some reason he does not feel flattered by any girl's determined desire to be dated by him. And he runs.

So foolish indeed in the ways of date-getting is the girl who calls a man on the 'phone. Much has been said of a man's shudderful attitude towards that practice, but girls still won't believe that they are unwise in this. And absolutely fatal to the girl's prospects is the 'phone call so timed that the man knows it connotes, "Isn't this a nice night for a movie?" or "Aren't you glad I called so that you can invite me for a bite and a dance?" If girls could hear what even their devoted

swains say about their taking the initiative in 'phoning, they'd be ashamed to look a receiver in the face.

Not the Lead

A girl should be very sure that the man is her devout and loyal attendant before she starts initiating the dates in any form. Otherwise she may as well bow to the queer psychological sense of male superiority that makes men writhe when the girl takes the lead into her own hands. If he asks: "Where would you like to go?" he usually wants her to suggest. But if she asks: "How about your taking me to . . ." or "Don't you think it's about time you and I went to see . . ." his collar begins to fit too tightly, and he becomes as nervous as a colt offered a nice new bit and bridle.

No girl in history ever made herself popular by rushing the man in the case. Presents from her embarrass him until the two have established a solid and permanent relationship. Otherwise the presents make him feel he is being bought or is being placed under obligations for which he will have to pay. Invitations on her part should be confined to an occasional pleasant family meal or some club party to which she as a member has a recognized right to invite an escort. Any other kind of invitation from her he regards as an elbowing into his territory. Whether you approve or disapprove, the male is a chary and phenomenally scary animal, and wise is the girl whose technique of getting dates never for an instant includes the frank beckoning or obvious pursuit, much less the ruthless tracking down of possible escorts.

Not Too Shy

On the other hand a false and quite unnecessary shyness and hesitation may be equal bars to dates. Modesty is one of the loveliest of virtues, and, thank God, good Catholic girls still know this and set the world a charming example. Yet no virtue, not even modesty, can be carried to excess without fault entering in. If a Catholic girl decides to become a nun, she can with perfect right limit her dates almost to a minimum. She may be one out of a thousand cases and follow the most difficult vocation, deliberate virginity in the world. Here again dates would be entirely limited.

But for the rest of young womanhood marriage is a normal and sacred vocation. Hence the girl moves towards it with all modesty and purity and charm, prepares for it as for any other splendid career, and certainly places no deliberate obstacles in its way. She has almost a serious obligation to be interested in personable young men. She should be glad that they like her, and she should regard dates as the precise means to take her out into society and make her acquaintance with marriageable young people.

With marriage as her goal, she does only what is fair to herself when she makes herself attractive, charming, clever, sociable, and pleasantly approachable. By none of this and in none of this need there be the slightest sootiness of sin. But if her attitude is not normal, if she adopts a reluctance to consider the career of marriage for which God and nature intended her, she harms herself and her chance of forming those pleasant, innocent social relationships which lead to the altar and the happy Catholic home.

False Hesitance

I am convinced that an exaggeration of modesty which leads to thinking disdainfully of marriage has made certain potentially popular girls snub young men who came a-calling, pretend against the facts to be utterly uninterested in men, go out only with girls, claw a bit at the popular girls around them, and then in the end wonder why they are left dustily on the shelf.

Their course of conduct is stupid. Their ultimate isolation is their own fault. Rare indeed is the explorer who sets out to follow the course of a glacier or scale a mountain of floating ice.

Quite naturally young men like to date girls who show a normal interest in them, take them for granted in pleasant, friendly fashion, enjoy their company, do not regard them as a breath-taking event or parade them as a captive chieftain. They like their dates to be bright of eye, attentive of ear, to have laughing lips, an alert mind, to be companionable without being sentimental, sweet without being sticky, joyous without too much noise, eager without hysteria, and appreciative without being abjectly grateful. A large order, but all within the reach of any normal girl.

Accomplishments

A girl who wants to go out owes it to herself these days to be a fairly passable dancer. For some reason custom permits that boys become dancers by the unaided impulse of nature, though the results are often something for nature to worry about. But though a boy who is a bad dancer can still find smiling partners to risk their slippers and their dispositions, men objectively select dance dates on the basis of the girl's ability to dance flowingly and without the suggestion of having recently sprained her ankle.

Boys are inclined to like a girl who has a sense of humour. In fact a sense of humour is often prime requisite in both future husbands and future wives. Young people seem to feel that the whole of life will be smoother and sweeter if their partner has a quick smile and a ready laugh. Maybe they feel in all honesty that the partner will need both, and in good working order.

Humour can, however, have its distressing and repellent forms. There is that young man whose humour is all on the level of pulling chairs but from under unsuspecting friends, whose laughter is a roar or a whinny, whose jokes cause pain or peril to others, and whose comedy is horseplay and clowning. A girl will run down a dark alley if such a man appears.

On the other hand a girl should be sure of the soundness of her humour before she sets herself up as a minor Dorothy Parker. No joke dropped limply from human lips is ever so flat as a silly witticism from an otherwise beautiful woman.

Blues Sometimes Bad

As for the blue story and purple jest, let a boy or a girl get a reputation for obtruding these upon a date, and young people with taste and morals run from him or her as they would from (forgive the brutality) any evil odour. I've known young men who tried a dirty story on a girl, got a freezing reaction, thought her a bit dumb, and yet wondered why she said a crisp no the next time they asked her for a date.

Is there on the other hand anything sillier than the girl who repeats a story when she has not the foggiest idea what it really means? No wonder she is bewildered by the shocked amazement of the boy who does know what the story means and doesn't know what he ought to do about it. Many a girl has lost her date by a dirty story. If the boy is sure she knows what it means, he puts her in a class that is utterly unflattering. If he feels she doesn't know what it means, he thinks her a choice little fool much too young and immature for his further attentions.

Where to Look For Dates

Where does one go to meet the people one would like to date?

Quite clearly, as I have already insisted, the first place to meet prospective dates is at home. This holds both for boys and for girls. Splendid, though really merely fulfilling their expected duty, are the parents who as soon as their children are old enough to enjoy company (and wouldn't that be about the age of three?) start inviting to the house companions of both sexes.

But even later in life the girl should feel quite free to invite to her house a boy she likes. The out-of-town boy is especially likely to find this a most welcome invitation. The college man, let's say, who is living in a strange town often finds himself at a loss to meet girls. Then if one of them does invite him to a family dinner after a pleasant if rather casual acquaintance, he has a happy feeling of friendliness and hospitality that goes straight to his heart. He probably insures himself a second home dinner by inviting her out.

The same is true if the girl happens to work in an office with a young man whose own home is in another city. If she knows he is not dating other girls, if they have reached a point of pleasant acquaintanceship, if he happens to seem a little shy and lonesome in the strange town an invitation from her to Sunday-night supper may come to him as a social lifesaver. Why shouldn't she offer the invitation?

Brothers and Sisters, Help!

Of course the invitation comes even more tactfully if it is handled by a brother who happens to know the young man and can make the invitation in easy, manlike fashion.

Indeed I should like to pause right here for a second and take up the question of the relationship of elder brothers and sisters to dates. What a wonderful help they could be to date-promoting! What a surprisingly meagre sense of responsibility most of them have towards their younger brothers and sisters!

That brother has merely a proper sense of responsibility who invites his boy-friends home, perhaps ostensibly for supper or a game of cards but really to meet his younger and probably very attractive sisters. A real benefit would be conferred on the social life of our race if brothers—instead of endlessly kidding sisters about the boys who come to call, instead of making slighting remarks which sometimes they crudely think will warn a girl against an undesirable man—really took an interest in their sisters. Without in any sense forcing their friends on the women of the family or playing domestic matchmaker, they could certainly make life much pleasanter for the girls in their families if they thought a little about providing them with dates.

And there would be no occasion for them to issue subtle warnings against this youth or that, for they would see to it that only worth-while young men were brought home to the family circle.

Sisters Too

Though there is probably much less necessity for stressing this, I am always delighted when I see a girl bring to the house girl acquaintances for her brothers to meet.

Any girl is, of course, very simple and naive if she tries to ram her girl friends down her brothers' throats. They gag and refuse to be coerced. But even brothers have a way of liking a girl who happens to be around. And why shouldn't these girls be the good and charming friends of the boys' sisters?

If your elder brother and sister fail you, you still have a grand opportunity to make pleasanter the social life of your younger brother and sister. I wish in all seriousness that this opportunity were taken seriously by families.

Showing Off Can Be Good

Any young woman who has real domestic abilities is a chump if she doesn't show them off. Naturally the best place to display them is in her home. Young men from the dawn of history have been highly and favourably impressed with the dinner well prepared by a maiden's fair hands. In fact he's a hopeless case, to be cast aside as a miser in the making, if he fails to repay the dinner by an invitation to dine out. Very likely the sight of the restaurant fare will make him think more wistfully of the dinner she prepared for him, and that wistfulness is prelude to wishful thinking, dates, and possibly more.

If he proves to be the kind of man who is not impressed by her efficiency around the house and by the assistance that she gives willingly to her mother, if he continues to date the polished mannequin whose manicured nails keep her from engaging in any useful pursuits, he deserves to marry the mannequin, and though it may sound a little like a curse, I hope he does.

The Parish Centre

Thank heaven the modern Catholic parish is constantly taking more seriously its responsibility to supplement the home as a place where Catholic young men and women, boys and girls, can meet, become acquainted and associate happily. In fact since the home so often dodges its duty; the parish, seems to have a wider obligation.

So whenever I meet a boy who finds it difficult to meet acceptable young girls, or a girl who claims she does not know any young men, I hopefully send him or her to the parish Sodality or club.

Out of the blessed parish clubs to which as a youngster I belonged—our Sodality, dramatic club, choir, even our ushers' society—I saw all sorts of dates of the right kind and in the right number develop. No girl who attended our meetings, however shy she might have been at the beginning, long remained dateless. The Catholic marriages which

resulted were a joy to our dear old socially-minded pastor.

Seek The Centres

A person interested in dates should gravitate to the informal places where people of like tastes are to be found. A tennis court or a golf links or the neighbourhood badminton court is a natural meeting-ground. Usually there is no need for formal invitations. Usually a similar taste in sports leads to easy acquaintances and is an easy approach to fuller social life.

From Work to Dates

Modern working conditions have had their effect, some good, some bad, upon dates. Well may we worry about the casual date made with any fellow-worker who happens to eye and invite a willing recipient. Through the offices and factories of the nation roam the slaving wolves seeking whom they may devour, and paralleling them are more than enough predatory females whose quest is dates, any dates, with any willing male, at any price. They make us watch with troubled eyes the young person heading off for a job.

But clean happy friendships may be the results of a job in the right place. I have often advised a momentarily dateless man or woman to get a job some place where a large number of people of approximately his or her own age are employed. There young people will more than likely meet acceptable people. In addition they will see these people under revealing circumstances. For how in the world could one come to know more about a human being than by watching him at his work? That is where men and women show their powers, their limitations, their strengths and shortcomings, their resourcefulness and ambition, their respect for authority, their initiative, and their attitude towards subordinates and dependants.

So in choosing her temporary career, a girl with marriage as her objective is by no means stupid if she prefers to work for a firm that engages a large number of employees. There, rather than in an office where she would meet a limited group, she is likely to meet men, be dated, and find pleasant companionship.

No Magic, No Major Problem

So the whole question of getting a date is by no means an abstruse, occult one. It is a matter of being in the places where young people are—home, school, and parish, office, plant—cultivating a temperament and interests that people find attractive and after one has been invited once, depending upon personality and skilfully developed charm. The question of dates is solved if parents and friends and brothers and sisters lend a helpful hand. Ultimately it depends upon a smile that is half a gift from God and half the result of thoughtful training, an attitude of sympathetic interest and ready sympathy, and a frank enjoyment of life in others' company.

Why Not Through Prayer?

Sometimes I myself have made mild jokes about the girl who prays, "Good Saint Anne, send me a man." I have pretended to find a little funny the man who depends entirely upon prayer and forgets his manners and allows his clothes to become a mess.

But in my heart I haven't been serious about those jokes, if you see what I mean. God should not be expected to work a miracle even to get a lonely heart a date. God expects co-operation there as elsewhere. Good manners, developed abilities, charm, and personality must not be allowed to decay while one begs Our Lady or St. Jude to make one attractive and cause the belle of the boulevard to fall over in a faint at one's approach.

Yet wise is the young man or woman who prays God, not that dates may be numerous enough to demand the book-keeping of a social secretary, but that the right person may come along. I think it quite right that young people should pray that their lives may be socially happy and blessed with acceptable dates. For dates, like all other natural gifts, are from the hand of God. And God will, I'm sure of it, be interested in the young person who prays that he (or she) may meet charming, good friends among whom will be the perfect partner for life, For God is interested in the fact that from dates

may come another home like the holy house of Nazareth and a beautiful love that will be the most powerful natural force for good in the world.
