

The Tea and Lunch Room Hostess

By W. E. Hill

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Suppose a patron so far forgets himself or herself as to ask for quicker service. That's where a hostess is invaluable. If the waitress is appealed to, like as not she will be hurt to the quick and will come back with "I've only got one pair of hands!" But a hostess will allow a vivid smile to break out all over and say in the most dulcet of tones, "O, hasn't your order been taken?" Then she will hand you a fresh paper napkin and go on to the next patron.



From 2:30 to 4:30 is the slack time in most lunch emporiums, and even the most elegant of the hostesses will let down a bit, just as this charming girl is doing. It's 3:00 p. m. by the clock over the cashier's cage, and Mrs. Olive Pugsley, a hostess in the Delicious Goody shop (famed for its meals as well as its bonbons), is looking straight ahead at nothing while dislodging a bit of lamb hash from a front tooth.



And by the way, hostesses in public eating places aren't such an innovation after all. They had them in the old pre-tea shop days, only they were called head waitresses, and they were just as grand, if not grander, than the present day lunchroom hostess. They could wither a fresh customer with a glance. And they could sweep disdainfully from the dining hall.



The first requisite of a successful tearoom hostess (particularly if she has to serve behind the pay desk and make change from the money box) is a devastating personality. One that lays waste right and left while making change. For instance, suppose a hostess is handing out four one dollar bills from a five. "One," she will say, looking up with arched brows. "Two," ditto, with just a teeny press of the hand. "Three," with fluttering eyelids and pursed lips, and "Four," with a merriest laugh and a long, deep glance with head on side. After which the patron will never forget the meal at "Bettie Minnie's Old World Tea Shop."

Even the candy store luncheonettes are employing hostesses these days. This is a welcome innovation to those unfortunate people whom waitresses instinctively belabor and insult. Because, on the way out a hostess will say, "I hope you enjoyed your lunch, dearie," or something equally nice, accompanied by a pat and a warm, loving look, and right away the past is forgotten and forgiven.



"Would you mind sitting over here? It's really pleasanter here by the service pantry, anyway!" A strong minded hostess, one whose determination brooks no quibbling, is almost as necessary as the vegetable soup or the Spanish rice in a tearoom at lunch time. There are bound to be patrons who don't believe in signs that have to be spirited away from a part of the room that is not in use.



When two lunch patrons are seated in a tearoom, right away the assistant hostess will fetch the water jug and fill glasses. The sight of two men deep in conversation fascinates an assistant hostess and she will reach between them with the water jug dozens of times, adding a drop here and there.



Some hostesses are apt to be offish and others quite maternal in their attentions. Mrs. Norma Neiderlein is one of the motherly kind, always seeing that the glass topped table hasn't a spot of chocolate sauce or a drop of water on it. Men like to be fussed over, and she's just the girl to do it.