



Have You an Uncouth Consort in Your Home?

By TOM DONNELLY

ARMED with a press release beginning "A good-sized cemetery could be filled in Washington with the remnants of careers ruined by uncouth consorts!" I dropped in on Agnes McCall Parker, originator of this remark and also founder and director of the Parker School of Personality Development, 1138 18th-st nw.

Mrs. Parker received me in company with her new public relations director, Gabor DeBusseney, formerly the proprietor of what I understand to be institutions somewhat similar to Mrs. Parker's in New York and California.

I asked Mrs. Parker what she meant by "uncouth" and she said: "A lack of graciousness and tact and good manners." She went on to say that a man's choice of wife can be terribly important, and that it is most unfortunate when a wife turns out to be an unseemly extreme, like a party-mad type or an eccentric recluse. "I felt so sorry that Mrs. Stevenson wasn't with Mr. Stevenson during the campaign," she sighed.

Mr. DeBusseney said, "But her position was so logical. Even to become First Lady she wouldn't change it."

Mrs. Parker said, "Now by tact I mean having a sense of the fitness of things. From the survival point of view to think of what's at stake—of course that's not the noble way! But now, Mr. Donnelly, if you were speaking to me and you saw my color change I'm sure you'd find some way to change the conversation to ease me out of my irritation or embarrassment, as the case might be. I have always tried to inculcate in people love of beauty, because if one loves beauty one can't be too gauche. In other words, tact is to imagine yourself in the position of the other person."

Since 1933 Mrs. Parker's school has offered courses in "Personality Development," "Psychology for Leadership" and "The Art of Thinking," designed to smooth the rough edges of new Washing-

ton arrivals suffering from a sense of social insecurity.

As of Feb. 2 Mrs. Parker will provide special courses for what she calls the "P. N. P.'s" (Powerful New People) who will swarm into Washington with the new administration. There will be courses in "Creating and Holding a Social Position in Washington," "Becoming Part of the Capital's Cultural Picture," and "The International Salon." This latter dealing with "the subtle forces that influence statecraft, high finance, and letters."

Mr. DeBusseney observed that "Washington has 50 diplomatic missions and there are thousands of people who do nothing but social. We can give the people who come to us something to talk about. We create an interest in art and letters and advise them how to decorate their homes and whom to have in."

Mrs. Parker shook her head thoughtfully. "You'd be surprised how many people have to be taught to take an interest in other people. But one must be careful. If you're motoring in unknown territory you can so easily get into the hands of the wrong person."



Mrs. Parker regretfully believes that Washington manners have degenerated in the recent past. "So many people are rude!"

I asked why this might be and Mr. DeBesseney blamed this pervasive rudeness on the "complete upset of the diplomatic embassies. You know how Mr. Roosevelt mixed them up."

I confessed I didn't know and Mr. DeBesseney said, "Why, he wanted to punish some of them and lift others up. He didn't raise the Swiss minister to ambassador because he was mad that Switzerland didn't get into the war. You'd never know that in times of war and trouble is precisely when you need diplomats functioning. Why, when Cordell Hull sent our declaration of war to the German embassy it was delivered to some sort of clerk in the basement."

"Oh, no, Mr. DeBesseney!" cried Mrs. Parker.

"Absolutely," insisted Mr. DeBesseney. "Of course they deserved it, but that still isn't the way of protocol."

Mrs. Parker said, "I know that manners can't be as important as morals." She gave a little laugh. "But on the other hand I've often thought that manners really are nearly as important as morals!"