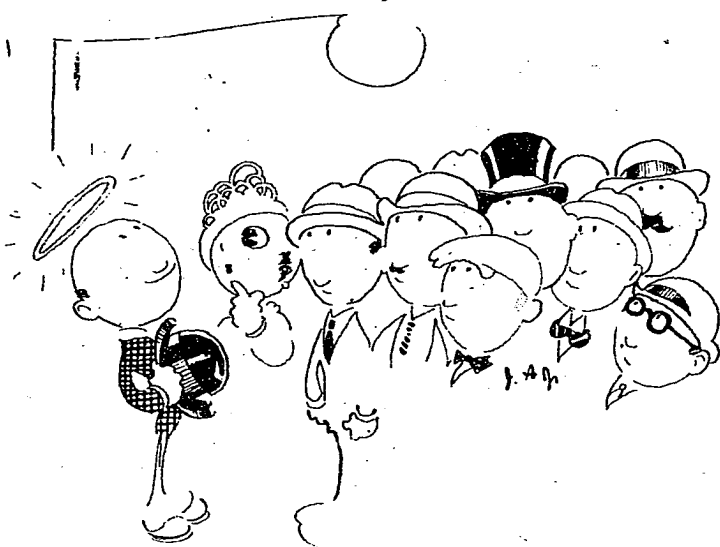


# Chivalry in Office Elevators



"One man in ten took off his hat."

By BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.

**W**HAT a creature is a New Yorker! How ignoble in the subway, in action how like an eel, in politeness how like a clod!

I hope the quotation marks will not fall off of the above paragraph in its peregrinations from the inkpot to the make-up man, because it was uttered by Professor Horn Rimm, President of the Washington Heights Branch of the Society for Renovating Courtesy in Elevators and Subways, as a poetic can opener to his condensed philosophy, expounded before the society at its usual Thursday night meeting last week at Sobersides Lyceum, up on the Heights.

An uproar ensued. The association was to hear on that evening the report of the Committee on Male Politeness in Elevators, the report of the Committee on Seats for Women in the Subway, report of the Committee on Rushing the Stamp Window in Sub-Post Offices, and the report of Committee on Traffic Rules versus Lady Chauffeurs.

In this prospective yeast of reason and blow of soul it was not very clubby of the President to delay matters by hurling an uncivic monkey wrench in the machinery of social uplift.

Mrs. Avoir du Pois, of French lemon extraction, arose to a blanket defense of the population of New York, including the Resident Sons of Oklahoma, untaxed Soviet Ambassadors stopping at the Waldorf, children born on the Far Rockaway deadline, vacationists on the Ile de Blackwell and everybody else not hereinbefore mentioned, untaxed keepers of Holes in the Wall and poverty-stricken prohibition agents not excepted.

It was a furious defense of New York as the politest city in the world, although she fought her verbal way through a barrage of epithets, interruptions and insinuations which would argue the reverse.

But that is just what makes of woman a superman—she rides the storm of facts with the gayety of a penniless idealist facing rent day.

Professor Horn Rimm finally poured some polite oil on the troubled hot air. He, too, was a New Yorker, he said; born at the confluence of Spuyten Duyvil waters with the lordly Harlem; father before him first saw the light of day where the Gowanus rills and purls

its way to the sea; grandfather was on the committee that received Lafayette at Pier 1, and so on backward to the day when the Battery was swapped to the Indians for a plug of Battle Axe.

All was quiet along the centre aisle trench after this, and Professor Rimm finished his speech to the subdued music of whispered threats.

Then came the business of the evening. The Committee on Male Politeness in Elevators fussed into their seats while the Quartette de la Wheeze rendered "He Was Polite to His Mother."

This committee had been sweated into life through the pores of many straw hats. Every male whose business it is to travel up and down in the passenger elevators of commercial buildings must face this question many times a month: "Should I or should I not remove my hat when a woman enters the car?"

What do Hoyle, Cushing and Desarte say about it? His reason and his instincts are at war.

Where does politeness begin and where will a cold end?

Has a man more rights to his headgear in a commercial elevator than in a Ritz elevator?

If business is business, then keep the hat on.

If you are going up to join the Midnight Bounders, why, take the hat off.

Is there a business politeness as well as a social politeness?

Suppose the girl is only a stenographer that gets into the car with you in the Woolworth Building. Should you be as chivalrous as you would be in a "lift" at the Hotel della Robberie if Mrs. Fuller Rhino, of Chicago got in?

Profound and ultimate questions of conscience which may yet bring the Supreme Court to loggerheads.

The chairman of the committee, Less N. Less, arose in his oxfords to read the report amid profound gum-chewing.

He deplored, first of all, that there was no standard of politeness in New York, or anywhere else for that matter.

He had read Lord Chesterfield from end to end, but could find nothing about elevators and hats.

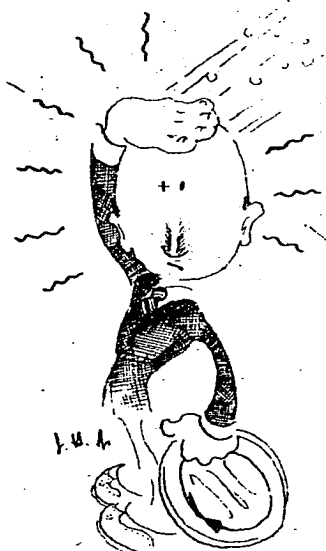
He had gone through fifteen lives of Beau Brummell and Beau Nash, and found that those gentlemen had never even walked up or down steps—they were generally carried. They did not recognize elevators in their day; and the only mention of "lift" in their lives is as aforesaid.

He found the growing necessity for a Muse of Politeness. He would consult the foreman of the "lobster shift" in the Hall of Fame about it.

Coming down to polished tacks, Less N. Less found all of downtown and almost all of midtown New York agog and a-burble over the question, superseding in interest in some office buildings the question, Whose turn is it tonight for the cellar party?

Lower New York is, he found, divided into three camps—the men who defiantly refuse to remove their hats in the presence of women in elevators, those who do (subdivided into two classes, those who do it instinctively and those who do it because they fear elevator opinion) and those who nervously play with the rim of their hat from floor to floor, being all "up in the air" about it.

Many men are polite, but bald headed. Many bald heads are copped to ride, Winter and Summer, twelve to fifteen times a day in commercial elevators. A draft striking a bald head from a certain angle



"Many men are polite, but bald headed."

between floors produces a chill which may run like lightning straight down to the hip pocket.

A beautiful girl steps into the elevator on the second floor. Baldhead is going to the thirtieth. It looks as though the beautiful girl would go the distance with him.

Puzzle: Should Baldhead remove hat and run the risk of contracting pneumonia or violent anti-amendment sneezing or keep his hat on and encounter the mental diagnosis of Beautiful Girl as "No gentleman"?

It was the unanimous opinion of Less N. Less—who enforced the unit rule on his committee on all decisions arrived at by his lonesome—that baldheads are justified in keeping their hats on on all occasions. The society voted a unanimous "yea" after ejecting a minority of ten.

Those other than baldheads who kept their hats on in the presence of women in elevators were roundly condemned as enemies of chivalry. Mrs. Avoir du Pois advocated an elevator-cattle-car amendment to the national Constitution for these men.

Horn Rimm ruled her resolution out of order. He wisely said that the Constitution did not need any more amendments, but that the amendments would soon need a new Constitution.

Less N. Less had found that only one man in ten took off his hat in a commercial elevator in the presence of women, and that nearly all these men were residents of Brooklyn [Hear! Hear!], and that Southerners and Westerners were rarely seen in commercial elevators, as they came here for an entirely different purpose. [Cries of "Oh! Oh!" and "Tell it!" and "Ha! Ha!"]

Touching the third class—those men who fumble with their hats and watch what the other fellow is doing with his—Less N. Less said they were pitiful victims of doubt, neither fish nor fowl nor good red rough-necks.

The cattle-car candidates were, he said, up-stage, while the brim-fumblers were up-State.

This last stir roused the ire of Hastings Tuckahoe, born in Goat's Island, Niagara County; and educated in the public schools of the town of Matteawan.

He denied that the chivalry from up-State was milk-fed. The Republican majority last year was—

He was thrown out at this point by the Sergeant at Arms, Rook E. Kidd, for addressing the meeting with his hat on.

A vote was then taken on the whole matter. It was finally the sense of the society that some men who ride in elevators are born chivalrous, others achieve chivalry, while others ought to be kicked out of elevators and have their hats thrust upon them.

Arose then a great clamor as to the precedence of the three other committees on politeness in public getting in their reports. The Subway Committee, the Automobile Committee and the Stamp Window Committee partisans fought all over the floor. Professor Horn Rimm lost control of the Society for Promoting Politeness in Public Places.

He finally put his gavel in the hooch drawer of his desk and declared that, as it was past 11 o'clock, and the currants had been popping for a week in the bottles in the coat bin at home, he would declare the meeting adjourned. But his voice was lost in the tumult.

The police made no arrests, but

they gathered up fifty ruined straw hats from the floor—souvenirs of the battle for the Advancement of Chivalry in Elevators.

