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"TAKE MY SEAT, MADAM"

by Marion Wells.

Article - 500 words.

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Oh Yes! you still hear it, quite often in fact, and not only from older men in whom chivalry dies hard, but from young boys and girls also.

Middle-aged John Smith has decided again and again that he will not give up his seat to any of those dames who should have got an earlier tram anyhow, he works all day, pays his fare, and is entitled to a seat. But just let a stout elderly lady with a laden string bag in one hand and a bulging shopper in the other heave into the aisle and away goes his resolution and his seat.

Now there can be a certain amount of self-satisfaction in this duty-nobly-done example-to-the-young-fellers, etc. which will give an added zest to his dinner.

But sometimes the lady's conscience is pricking, she knows she should have left the city half-an-hour ago and so, instead of accepting the proffered seat she says rather loudly "No, you stay there". He says "No, you sit down." Instead, she gives him a little shove back towards the seat and says decidedly "You're tired, you stay there." By this time everyone in the tram is looking and listening, the winner throws out her chest triumphantly, and John hides his blushes behind his newspaper. NEVER AGAIN!

And then there is the occasion when a lovely young thing gets into a comfortably filled compartment, four or five males start to their feet, but she, in the pride of her youth, says "It's alright thank you, I can stand." They have their pride too, and invariably strap-hand for the remainder of the journey, leaving the seats for the fortunate passengers who get aboard later.

During the peak hours the main problem of tram and bus travelling is to get on and get off, but during the off-peak hours of the day and evening it is truly a comedy of manners. The day of seat-juggling begins with the school children, the college boys and girls who, as they travel at reduced rates are expected to relinquish their seats to any adult fare. Some of them immediately become so engrossed in their history or geometry that they cannot see anyone standing within an inch of them, but over a period of time the conductor marks them out and has them up and down throughout the journey.

Others will rise en masse when one slim lady gets in who could have scrounged a seat anyhow. Sometimes a buxom lass in school uniform will rise for a business girl of about her own age, and get an indignant glance for her pains.

Here again is the snag of female versus female.

Generally speaking, it is only safe for one woman to rise for another when that other has a babe in her arms or is obviously over ninety, but let a girl of twenty offer her seat to a woman of thirty, or a matron of forty hers to a ditto of fifty and the result in both cases is an indignant glance and low mutterings from the elder party, and an unoccupied seat.

But such is the cussedness of human nature that, now that John Smith and his young daughter Betty Smith have finally and irrevocably decided that never again will they vacate their legitimate, paid-for seats for anyone, they are certain to hear a voice immediately behind them remarking "Isn't it disgusting the way the men grab all the seats these days, and the young girls too - no manners!"
