



Home Topics

HARLAND.

THE
"BITS OF
COMMON
SENSE"
SERIES

—
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BITS OF
COMMON SENSE SERIES

HOME TOPICS

BY

MARION HARLAND

Author of "Common Sense in the Household"



NEW YORK
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HOME TOPICS.

CHAPTER I.

HELPFUL OR HURTFUL?

THE little matron was not crying. Sound sense and the breeding which generates "pluck" as surely as the discipline of frost, heat and spring winds hardens spongy tissues into timber, held back the tears. But the corners of her mouth relaxed piteously; her dry eyes were dreary. A suspicion of petulance in her voice thinned and sharpened with the effort to speak temperately :

“ Either the people who write these—*things!*—don’t know what they are talking about, or there is no use in a woman with a small income and but twenty-four hours in her day trying to live like gentlefolk. There are no chairs of household economy in girls’ colleges as yet, and making believe keep house before one is married, with a mother to appeal to in every difficulty and papa’s purse to pull upon, isn’t a bit like running a small house of one’s very own, with one half-taught servant and an allowance of exactly twenty dollars a week for household expenses. Not that I feel ashamed of our circumstances. I told Harry when I married him that I would never complain of privations while our health and lives are spared. But I do want to live decently. I used to dream of simple ele-

gance and all that, you know, and was quite vain of my petticoated dressing-tables and stained floors and my cheap made dishes that looked and tasted like French *entrées*. And I *thought* we were clean. If these women writers, whose end and aim in this world are to make housekeeping easy and honorable, are to be credited, we are *weltering* in dirt and pest germs!"

"My dear!" I expostulated, aghast at her excitement and glancing wonderingly around the tasteful room, shining clean and sweet as nothing but neatness and fresh air can make human habitation, "I think that you are a capital manager and your cottage is a model home. What has injected these harrowing doubts into your youthful mind?"

For answer she read aloud from this

week's *Lady's Household Helper*, just taken from the wrapper :

“ Now that summer is upon us, every article of clothing worn near the perspiring skin should be changed every day, and sheets and pillow-cases at least twice a week. (It goes without saying that nobody who respects himself or herself ever uses the same table-napkin twice.) Linen, cotton and silk or merino underwear—silk being the best—become charged with the exudations of the skin, which in a few hours change into wriggling myriads of microbes. The same may be said of the light blankets and duvets one draws up to his chin as the night cools into morning. Duvets must be aired and disinfected frequently ; blankets washed certainly as often as once a month.

“It is not safe for human beings to sit or sleep in rooms that are not thoroughly swept every morning and then dusted carefully with a cloth dampened with a weak solution of carbolic acid or some other disinfectant. All the wood-work should be gone over every week with borax and water. The closet shelves ought to be scrubbed weekly with the same, every article being removed from them for that purpose.

“Another hot weather hint—sterilize the milk and boil the water drunk in the family, not only by children, but by adults.

“Still another—burn all the garbage. The mistress should make the round twice a day of cellar, refrigerator, pantries and pot-closets, to make sure that not an atom of putrefying matter is overlooked. Ran-

cid grease left in the seams of a saucepan or pail may breed cholera; the limpid water from faucet or pump may convey the germs of typhoid. The price of perfect health is perpetual vigilance."

"Now!" sending the admonitory sheet half-way across the room with the fillip of an impatient finger, "if I were to undertake to do all that, or one-tenth of it, I should land Harry and the baby in the poorhouse and my emaciated body in an untimely grave in less than six months. What confounds me utterly is the reasonableness of everything she says. Of course I know the danger of filth-bred bacteria and spores and infusoria and bacilli, and all that. The possibility that we may be inhaling and swallowing them by the dozen gross is gruesome always. But so far as I can see we must go on

doing it, *ad infinitum*. Viewed in the light of these revelations, the privations of poverty are as nothing compared with its perils. Yet the poor must live, and the educated poor are so presumptuous as to crave decency, comfort and health."

A bubble of sound fell down the stairs at this instant—an importunate huddle, one upon the other, of inarticulate aspirates that would link themselves into a wail unless speedily checked, proclaiming the awakening of the King of the household. A smile that chased the tired lines out of the mother's face flashed over it and she flitted away to avert the catastrophe, leaving me alone to reconsider and weigh her complaint.

I picked up the *Lady's Household Helper*, and read for myself the columns embraced by the ornate headline, THE INGLE-

NOOK. It contained, besides Seasonable Hints to Housekeepers, Practical Recipes and A Word Spoken in Love, a religious corner intended for the home. After perusing it conscientiously I decided that the department was neither much better nor at all worse than the average of its class. I recognized distinctly, moreover, the disheartening tendency of the leading "seasonable hint." The truth stared me in the face that the writer of each article of *The Inglenook* had in mind an audience of ignorant and eager rich women. Putting myself in the place of my late companion, I entered into her feelings with an energy that surprised myself.

The design of housewifely teachings is to help, not hinder, to raise, not to cast down spirits and aim. It would be nice, I went on to reason, in fact, exceedingly

luxurious, to sleep nightly in perfectly clean sheets, laundered, aired and laven-dered. I heard a woman say once that she envied Queen Victoria nothing but her ability to have her sheets changed every day. It is delicious to endue the body, just renovated by the matutinal bath, in fair and smooth and clean linen, or cambric, or silken web. Science has tied together the words "dirt and dis-ease" until the wise sweeper makes haste to commit the contents of her dustpan to cleansing fires. The end of sweepings is to be burned. The chamber which is swept and dusted every twenty-four hours and scrubbed tri-weekly is undeniably more wholesome than that which is "brushed up" and dusted daily and the wood-work of which is washed only when visibly soiled.

Sterilized milk was declared last year to be the best of artificial food for bottle babies. To-day we are told that the process of sterilizing destroys the beneficent, with the malevolent, germs latent in the milk, whereas to "Pasteurize" it—that is, to check the cooking suddenly, just short of the boiling point—kills the evil elements and spares the good. Apart from the news that vice is less tenacious of life than virtue, the information brings no comfort to the mother who is her own cook, housemaid and nurse, or who has but one servant. With all her desire to provide proper sustenance for her baby, she sees at once that she has not the time to hang over the saucepan, thermometer in hand, awaiting the exact moment when the vessel should be snatched from the fire and plunged into ice-water to insure

the survival of the fittest. The sterilizer takes care of itself, and she reflects with satisfaction that baby thrives upon the milk thus prepared.

So with the cremation of garbage, the minute inspection, morning and night, of every kitchen utensil, the boiling and cooling of drinking water—all sensible and sanitary precautions. The truth abides that there are not enough hours in the day to justify the housekeeper of moderate means in trying to do all or one-fifth of the things enjoined upon her as essential to the health and comfort of her family. "Something must be crowded out" is a golden saying that brightens with much using. In too many cases of conscience the thing crowded out is the worker's health and, not infrequently, her life. In a still larger number of instances

contentment with a modest lot goes to the wall. Harry's wife is first dismayed, then covetous. If she could hire a full staff of servants and a housekeeper to supervise them; if two dozen pillow cases, twenty-one pairs of sheets, and as many changes of body linen, six dozen towels and fifty-six napkins per week in the wash were the undisputed rule of the laundry, she and hers could be as neat and healthy as anybody. Mrs. Million may well have and keep a home worthy of the name and which can bear the scrutiny of *The Inglenook* board of health.

Harry's wife errs in the first place in imagining that in Mrs. Million's mansion sanitary dicta are obeyed. Overlookers and high-priced servants are prone to earn their wages with as little labor as is compatible with the glittering generalities of

outward seeming. Your microbe is a terrible democrat, who respects silver no more than tin, porcelain no more than stoneware. This has nothing to do with the fact that homes in which housekeeper, butler, laundress and lady's maid are kept are outnumbered a thousand to one by the homes of fairly well-to-do people, where a couple of maids do all the cooking, the housework, waiting, washing and ironing. And these last are, in many towns and villages, less in number than families in cottages and in flats, where a single maid-of-all-work is assisted in lighter household tasks by the mistress, or in which no regular servant is hired.

Then—and here is the gist of this protest—why fill the Woman's Page of religious and secular journals with direction and advice intended ostensibly for the

great majority who cannot be profited thereby? For, mark you, Mrs. Million never consults *The Inglenook* to learn how she shall order aright her handsome establishment. She leaves all minor and menial details to "the profession" and her corps of trained subordinates. If we would lend a helping hand to would-be pupils our lessons must be reasonable and within the limits of possible attainment.

Among the many disasters that have come to my knowledge as attendant upon the effort of the matronly novice to "do as she is bid" was the loss of a willing and competent laundress to a young wife whose fifteen white skirts per week made the woman throw up the engagement at the end of the first month.

"I wear only two a day as a rule," pleaded the mistress. "Of course, when

the weather is bad, an extra one is soiled."

Let us be sensible, dearly-beloved reader. You know as well as I that with careful bathing, judicious airing of body and bed-linen, by the use of dustpan, whiskbroom and dampened duster, it is altogether feasible to live comfortably, healthfully and daintily without taxing mistress beyond her strength and maid beyond her patience in the futile strain to keep up to the standard raised by so-called teachers of household reform. We know that it is not necessary to the physical and moral well-being of the household to take down every picture from the wall every week to wipe the dust from the back and clean the wires supporting the frame. We know, also, that the mistress who pokes detective fingers and inquisi-

tive nose into every pan and kettle in every pantry every day of her mortal pilgrimage, will soon find that life is not worth living. Why then, O my sister apostle to much enduring, sorely-tempted American housewives, lay burdens heavy and grievous to be borne upon tender consciences and unskilled hands?

CHAPTER II.

MANNERS FOR EVERYDAY WEAR.

THERE are many so-called little things which are no trifles, although the perpetrators thereof find ample excuse for their commission in the fact that they are not actual sins, only small deviations from the course laid out by fashion and etiquette. Unfortunately, they prove themselves the fly in the ointment, the flaw in the gem of absolute courtesy.

Anything that makes another needlessly uncomfortable, or causes a doubt as to one's innate gentleness, is not only disagreeable, but wrong. It would be well for all of us to look closely to our own

manners and habits, and see wherein each of us errs.

Men, eating at restaurants, knowing that at a certain time they must return to business, or, daily thrown with other men who are careless or ignorant of proper modes and usages, are deplorably apt to drop from their careful home manners, time after time, until, unconsciously to themselves, they contract the habit of bolting their food, talking with the mouth full, dropping the "if you please," "I thank you," and "I beg your pardon," until at last their courtesy is conspicuous by its absence.

How often is one disappointed by seeing a man, a gentleman in many respects, do some little thing, when off his guard, which betrays that he has two sets of manners and speech,—one for company,

the other for home-people. For instance, one man I know, after acting with perfect circumspection throughout the length of a course dinner, became interested in conversation towards the end of the repast, and, while the plates were in changing, tipped his chair back on its hind legs, produced a quill tooth-pick from his pocket, and proceeded then and there to pick his teeth. Habit was mightier than the grace of circumstance.

But the guest is not always the one who is guilty of these "trifles." The host frequently makes himself disagreeable through his very desire to seem perfectly at his ease and the attempt to put others in the same condition. One man invariably urges upon his guest a second supply of some dish with the assurance that "there is a plenty here," while still another

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man, on seeing any viand declined, inquires anxiously—"What is the matter? Don't you like that?"

A sensible person generally has an excellent reason for declining to partake of a dish, and as digestive disorders are often the cause of such declinature, the fewer inquiries made into the subject the better. Well-bred people always when practicable, follow the apostle's advice to "eat what is set before them." There are few ruder things than to act as if there were nothing on the table good enough to prompt the appetite. Not to be able to eat is no indication of refinement, as some people seem to imagine, and the most graceful compliment you can pay a hostess is to enjoy at her board the food she has prepared for you.

Another common lapse in good breed-

ing is the habit of reluctantly accepting an invitation. If a friend or acquaintance invites you to her house she is bestowing a compliment upon you, and you, as the honored person, should consider it as such. If you can accept, do so gratefully, not condescendingly. One young man, whose youth must be his only excuse, told an elderly lady that he would like to dine with her, as she wished him to do, but that "business detained him so late at the office that he would have to disappoint her." She manifested her genuine ladyhood by not smiling at the patronizing declination.

When forced to refuse an invitation, do so regretfully, expressing your thanks for the thought of you, and your sorrow that circumstances will render your acceptance impossible. But when you can accept,

do it heartily and unconditionally. What woman does not know the satisfaction of a frank "I thank you! I will with pleasure?"

Another failing to be avoided is that of undue familiarity. A Christian man once told me that he never felt more like committing murder than when an acquaintance attracted his attention by slapping him on the back. "The laying on of hands" in this sense should be a seldom-taken liberty, and, if ever done, let it be only to the members of one's own household. Looked at in this way, familiarity breeds contempt, for it is very hard to help despising a man or woman who presumes upon acquaintanceship and becomes too "free and easy." Entering a room without knocking, asking "From whom is your letter?" or "To whom are you writing?"

“ How much did you pay for that thing ? ” are all so rude that it is a marvel that ordinary well-bred people should ever be guilty of them. And here let me remark, that of all odious familiarity the most exasperating is that of the naïve woman who pinches her stout sister’s arm, and snickeringly exclaims—“ Oh, how nice and fat your arm is ! I just *love* to pinch it ! ” Were the above-mentioned stout sister to commit violence upon the impertinent being, and I could be the jury who was to condemn or acquit her, I should let condemnation go to the winds, and send in a verdict of “ justifiable homicide.”

The secret of good manners is unselfishness and cordiality. With these two traits uppermost, one cannot fail to grace any society into which he may be thrown. A man who is unselfishly respectful will not

forget to bare the head to a lady, to give her the precedence in entering a room, or to pick up any article she has dropped. If he is thinking of others, he will not make his hostess uncomfortable by refusing the dainties on her table. If they are distasteful to him, he can at least take them on his plate and make the pretense of eating them. A few desperate swallows are to be preferred to the reputation of a boor.

Some men acquire while boys the execrable habit of dipping toast, bread, or biscuit into the cup of coffee which stands by their plate. Breakfasting with a friend not long since, my diaphragm was agitated by seeing the guest who sat opposite to me thickly butter a large hot muffin, souse it into his coffee, convey the dripping mass to his mouth, bite off the soaked portion, and return it to his cup

for another dip. After the muffin was disposed of, he poured the remaining coffee into the saucer to cool, and drank it from that. It is needless to say that he will not receive another invitation to the house of his disgusted hostess.

That she *was* annoyed and disgusted proves the selfish unkindness of neglecting to observe the etiquette of the table. Suppose a man does not see the sense of rising when a woman enters a room? If it makes the woman feel comfortable to have him lift himself to his feet, is it not for this reason his place to inconvenience himself, even for what he considers a folly?

It is a mistake for any one to be so perfectly sure of his breeding as to allow himself ever to be off his guard. It is in the little things that gentleness tells.

There is even a correct and a wrong way of using napkin, fork and spoon. I have seen a cultured woman wipe the perspiration from her face with her napkin, and one man roll his doyley into a ball and pound the table with it when he wished to accentuate his speech.

One rudeness, amounting sometimes to cruelty, is the thoughtless habit of wholesale criticism of any person who may be mentioned, in no matter what company. I, myself, have writhed under derogatory remarks passed upon some one of my friends by a person who did not know, or did not remember, that any particular intimacy existed between the subject of his tirade and his listener. But it was his business to think, and it certainly would have been the part of courtesy to say nothing of any one unless it were some-

thing pleasant. It is a time-worn rhyme
which tells us that—

“ Politeness is to do and say
The kindest things in the kindest way.”

Although old, it is never musty, being a
variation that is not a difference of the
often-sinfully-disregarded GOLDEN-RULE.

CHAPTER III.

OUR GIRL AND DOUBTFUL BOOKS.

“MY DEAR MARION HARLAND: A friend—the widow of a clergyman, and one of the most gifted women I know—has lent me ‘——’ to read. I sat up until two o’clock this morning to finish it, and find myself in a strange state of mind with regard to it.

“The views of social life, of human nature, and especially of the church and professing Christians, are novel and startling. I cannot help admiring the independence and originality of thought exhibited by the writer. She has a courage that must go with firm conviction of the evil she attacks. The boldness of the born reformer attends all she says.

“It may be that the dissatisfaction I feel in thinking over the book is a symptom that a needed revolution is beginning in myself, for I have been brought up to the straitest sect of a prominent denomination, and early impressions are hard to get rid of.

“My friend sent with the book a magazine which has a review of it by an eminent author. He hails the work as ‘a new departure—a vigorous blow dealt to an

ancient wrong, and hopes every young, earnest thinker in the land will study it.

“Tell me frankly your opinion of the good or evil done by such writings, and whether, or not, you would recommend young people to read them.”

New York City.

E. V. N.

Having every reason to believe the above letter genuine, and being deeply moved by the subject, the matter appears to me sufficiently grave to warrant the devotion of a chapter in this volume to this communication. In the hope of reaching other young people, as well as my correspondent, by directness and plainness of speech, I think it best to address this letter personally and familiarly.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND : Your letter was so evidently penned in the spirit of sincere inquiry, that I have purchased and read the book of which you wrote. I found it in a prominent position on a news-stand in a railway station just as I was setting out on a journey. As a keynote to my opinion of the volume, I will tell you that by the time I had read a

dozen pages of it, I covertly tore off the paper sides and back that my fellow-passengers might not discover what book I held.

I make a point of never reading a bad book—*knowing it to be bad*,—a rule which I have followed for years. In this case, I was impelled to continue the perusal of that which was distasteful to me, not only by your letter and my desire to give you an intelligent answer, but by the fact that I had read the review of this work in the periodical to which you refer. Nevertheless, had I had any conception of the revolting character of the story, the entire book would have followed the covers thereof out of the car-window.

It seems incredible that a good, pure woman, like your friend, should recommend such a story to a young man or

woman. In the doubtful class of literature that now floods the market, one often, however unwillingly, stumbles upon some book that, to quote Mr. Podsnap, "would bring a blush to the cheek of a Young Person," but to our comfort be it said, volumes like the one in question are few and far between, and seldom introduced among the better class of readers by such a sponsor as the reviewer whose criticism you have read.

We are all familiar with the story of the artist who would never, if he could avoid it, look at a poor painting, for fear of injuring his style. This is an excellent rule for Our Girl to make with regard to her reading. You may despise the morals, the literary style, and the plot of a bad book, but once read it, and it is *yours*, strive as you may to forget it. Memory,

unfortunately, cannot be cleansed. If it could, how many stains—some, glaring spots, some, of the faintest tinge, but still stains—would be gladly scrubbed out of existence—yes, if it took precious time and painful labor to efface them! Have you ever, in writing, made an error, and then with pains scratched it out? If so, you will remember that though the erasure was carefully performed, so that not a mark was left, when you tried to write over that spot the *ink blotted it*, thus betraying that it had been soiled.

All women know that goods defaced and then cleaned gather soil, and show every speck of dust as they did not in their pristine freshness. You may think that you have forgotten a *double entendre*, a “shady” story, but a chance word will bring it all back to your mind, and your

cheeks will burn with regretful shame in recalling the doubtful tale or joke.

Poe, in his "Black Cat," tells a hideous story, and points out a moral. The murderer, recklessly confident that his crime will not be discovered, to prove his nonchalance strikes with his cane a blow on the panel in the wall behind which he has secreted the body of his wife, when, to his horror, the cat whom he has unwittingly entombed with his victim, aroused by the sound, utters a blood-curdling wail. Perhaps you persuade yourself that even the recollection of a sin against the purity of your mind is buried. Beware, that at some unlooked-for shock, slumbering conscience does not awake with a moan of misery.

Innocence and purity are so sweet! so unusual, in this world of ours! Sooner have your fresh girl-face scarred and

seamed into unsightliness than knowingly sully the whiteness of your soul.

It has become the fashion of late to recommend books of doubtful morals as "strong." The same adjective may be applied to Limburger cheese. Examine this under a microscope, and you will recoil at the sight of the crawling, wriggling larvæ it contains. Were you to bring clear, unbiased purity of conscience to bear upon the book you have read under advice, you would turn from it in disgust. If fondness for decayed cheese be an acquired taste, so is love of filth—to the pure mind.

And what is to be gained by the perusal of immoral literature? Knowledge of the world, possibly. The same kind of knowledge in which dwellers in the slums and *habitués* of rum-holes delight.

This is plain talk, but the subject is one which calls for fearless speech.

The knowledge of "things as they are," which you need to carry you safely to your journey's end, is not such as you will gain from bad books. If you are a *woman*, in the noblest, truest sense of the word, your own instinct, and, above all, your Christian religion, will enable you to travel through life to your final resting place, unsullied and unspotted from the world. To the pure all things are pure. See to it, then, that you protect your purity as you would defend your life, and close your eyes as resolutely against such vile literature as the book you mention as you would shut your lips and turn your head away were you offered a dose of arsenic. Leave rats and other vermin—(human and brute) to poison themselves.

While speaking of this book, suffer one question more. What does this author, what do *all* unbelievers, *alias* "born reformers," who "have the courage of their convictions," propose to give us in return for our "most holy faith," the foundations of which they attempt to shake? With many, thank God! that faith is so deeply rooted and grounded that it is impossible for any human power to so much as make it quiver. But what is their object, unless they proceed upon the theory that misery loves company, and wish to make us such as themselves, "without God, and without hope in the world"? If we, as they profess to think, are mistaken, why not let us be happy in such a blessed mistake? Why lay so much as a pebble of doubt or straw of unfaith in our pathway if we, although they know us to be deluded, be-

lieve that pathway leads to everlasting life and eternal bliss? If the blind beggar, who is surrounded by wretched squalor, fondly imagines that he is in the midst of beauty and luxury, would it not be cruel to undeceive him? It would be barbarity unworthy of humanity, leaving Christian charity out of the question.

Above the plausible prating of those who plead with us to "discard superstition and old wives' fables and moldy creeds which the world has outgrown," the devout philosopher hears the cry of the human, like that of Mary at the rifled sepulchre :

They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him ! "

Such setting-to-rights is, at the very best, only pulling to pieces, without offering a design of reconstruction.

Again, our author's logic is faulty. Because some Christians are hypocrites, does that prove the fallacy of the Christian religion? In the finest college in the land there are students who are a disgrace to the institution, who waste time foolishly and wickedly in gambling, drinking and all kinds of dissipation,—who study very little or not at all. Do they convince you that the ancient college is at fault, that its standards are low, its faculty careless?

A certain class of people, generally *very* young people, cultivate "doubts." The boy between seventeen and twenty-one, in the freshness of his "salad days, when he is green in judgment," hardly thinks himself a man unless he has at tongue's tip a score of things which he "cannot believe." Luckily, it is of small importance to anybody whether he can or no, as this

malady is one which he outgrows as he advances in years. A conceited youth once told the celebrated Dr. Parr that he would "believe nothing he could not understand." To which the doctor replied: "Then, sir, your creed would be the shortest of any man's whom I ever knew!"

My dear Girl! you cannot afford to run the risk of reading *any* book that makes even a feeble attempt to undermine your faith in purity and Christianity. I close this familiarly-affectionate talk with a wise saying you may bind your memory as a charm against evil counsel and unholy imaginations:

"The star I was born under tells me to look *up*! If we did not come into this world to benefit ourselves, we might as well have stayed where we were."

CHAPTER IV.

POLITENESS AS POLICY.

THAT courtesy of word and manner is a Christian and social duty, nobody denies. That the motto, *Noblesse oblige*, applies in a peculiar degree to the exercise, *for one's own sake*, of this duty, is also undeniable. There lives not the man or woman who does not imperil self-respect by indulging the inclination to be rude in speech or action.

To the thoroughbred the impulse should be as unnatural as the outward manifestation of the same.

Dismissing the question of moral obligation, with that of conventional amenities,

in the consideration of our subject, let us deal with a lower phase of motive, yet one the application of which should be yet more general and imperative.

The proportion of well-bred people in every community is comparatively small, and it is a deplorable minority of these who are so refined through-and-through that the practise of discourtesy would be a spiritual violence. Each of us is so happy as to know a few such. Each of us has occasion to say once in a while of an acquaintance, "He *could* not be impolite. It is not in him. He is sweet-natured and fine in every impulse." We all of us know hundreds who go through the forms of courteous behavior, and transgress neither constitution nor by-laws of social etiquette.

The most common, yet what seems the

most surprising experience with us all, is that such a multitude fail to appreciate the expediency—even the necessity of courtesy as the best *policy* in every department of everyday life.

It is never safe to be impolite.

The sentence is trite enough, and will appear to the casual reader like a mild statement of a not-vital truth. In a country where the beggar of to-day is the prince of to-morrow it ought not to be necessary to enforce the expediency of offending nobody needlessly. In communities where every man earns his living in one way or the other, the stupidest must appreciate the importance of civility.

Yet, my observation—and I am confident the observation of many readers—go to prove that no other business principle is more often violated than that form-

ulated by the blunt employer of many clerks to one just entering his service.

“Keep a hinge in the back of your neck, young man, and see to it that it is well-greased.”

During the week preceding Christmas, a rich woman with a long memorandum in her shopping-bag entered a china-shop in New York City, made selection of an inexpensive article, paid for it, and was leaving the place, when her eye was caught by a pretty chocolate-pot. On the same counter were three other costly bits which commended themselves to her fancy, which she resolved to add to her gift-list. She had them set aside, and opened her pocket-book, when the clerk who had sold her the first article, appeared with a flushed face and interposed:

“That is the style of doing business that

makes trouble in delivering goods!" partly to his fellow-salesman, partly to the customer. "If you meant to buy more things, why did you not say so? Here I have your order upon my book, and without mentioning it, you go around and buy from some other party. You ought to have made all your dealings with me."

"I did not notice the face of the salesman from whom I made my first purchase," responded the lady, quietly. "Nor had I the intention, when I came in, of buying anything else. Chancing to see these things, I thought of having them sent to my address. I have changed my mind."

She closed her purse and left the shop, *never* to re-cross the threshold while there is another establishment in New York where china can be bought.

“Don't handle the goods!” exclaimed another salesman to a customer who took hold of a piece of brown silk with a neatly-gloved hand, to call his attention to the color she would like to have. “When you see what you want, point to it, and let me take it out of the pile.”

“I will not give you the trouble,” replied the person accosted, dryly.

Turning away, she mingled with the crowd, to reappear presently with one of the heads of the great dry-goods house.

“I have asked you to escort me to this counter to protect me while this *gentleman* allows me to buy a silk gown,” she said, as dryly and coolly as before, as the eyes of the astonished employer and the horror-stricken clerk met over the heaped-up counter.

She was the near relative of the senior

partner, and the young man paid for the momentary spasm of temper with the loss of his situation.

In both of these cases the offenders were weary and irritated by unreasonable demands and fruitless attempts to suit exacting shoppers. As to the injustice of visiting the sins of predecessors upon the unoffending women whose demands were reasonable and whose conduct was ladylike, there can be no difference of opinion. Civility, at all times and in all circumstances, is a business-man's capital, and the supply should be—practically—inexhaustible.

During the Civil War the office of provost-marshal in a captured city was given to a young man from the North, who had held it but a few days when a man entered the office and asked a civil question respecting

the facilities of communication with headquarters. In the flush of newly-acquired authority, the officer answered curtly, and, when the query was repeated, with insolence. The stranger lifted his hat with an exaggeration of respect, and departed, unsatisfied.

Four years later, the ex-provost-marshal, now an applicant for another and permanent office, was recommended to obtain, if possible, the influence of Hon. Mr. Blank in his behalf.

“If he takes your case in hand, you are all right,” a friend assured him. “Mrs. Blank has a large reception to-night. I have the *entrée* of the house and will take you. Be on your best behavior. Everything depends upon first impressions”

The aspirant, invested in company clothes and company manners, was chat-

ting with the mistress of the house, when she said smilingly :

“ Ah! here is Mr. Blank! My dear! let me introduce you to Mr. ——.”

The host drew himself to his full height, and looked the visitor squarely in the eye.

“ Mr. C—— and I have met before. You were, I think, provost-marshal in —— in 1865? I had occasion to call at your office upon business which was of importance to myself, but evidently *not* to you!”

The friend of the unfortunate office-seeker subsequently sought to excuse him to the inexorable magnate by saying:

“ But, my dear sir, how was C—— to know that the inquisitive stranger was yourself or any other personage of importance? ”

The answer deserves record and serious consideration :

“A gentleman is uncivil to nobody at any time. It is part of the business of a public official to practise politeness as diligently as he practises honesty. Rudeness is always vulgar. It is also unbusiness-like.”

It is pleasant to be able to add that civility is recollected as long as discourtesy. Every mind teems with instances of a goodly word in season, borne in grateful remembrance through years of strangerhood and separation, and recalled to the mind of the unconscious benefactor by the spoken or acted gratitude of the recipient.

One miserly old lady, whose riches were not dreamed of during her lifetime, by her neighbors, coupled the bequest of the

bulk of her property to a young man with the explanation : "He is the only person in town who, as man and boy, always raised his hat to me when I met him."

Yet the saw that "Politeness cost nothing," would lack confirmation if invariableness of practise be taken in evidence. Men are apt to put it, with other capital, where there is surest promise of profit. Instead of sowing beside all waters, and at evening not withholding the hand, even the shrewd are given to picking and choosing in the matter of soil and seasons. And when, as if the favorite old fairy-tales that might have taught us better things from our childhood up, the ragged old woman, fed by Rose and spurned by Blanche, changes into a fairy with blessing of roses and jewels, and ban of snakes

and toads in her gift, we bemoan the fates that did not make our foresight equal to our aftersight. Rather let us chide the folly that does not keep us consistent to the wise (even according to this world's wisdom) policy of universal courtesy to all sorts and conditions of men.

The astute merchant's precept touching the oiled hinge is so apt that one wishes it might hang in illuminated letters in shop, warehouse, factory, home, and thoroughfare, and be so rooted and grounded in the mind and conscience of the young as to enforce obedience in all circumstances.

It should be easier to say "If you please" and "Thank you," than to withhold the gracious formulas when occasion warrants their use. A smile consumes no more cellular tissue than a frown. Defer-

ence to age and consideration for infirmity should be practised, if for no nobler reason, because they are becoming to the young and strong. The man who lifts his hat, scores a point in his favor, by comparison with the boor who nods sulkily to a passing acquaintance. As surely as the early bird catches the earlier worm, the courteous vender secures the buyer. If there be any department of trade or position in society where the policy of politeness does not work to the advantage of him who orders his conduct and conversation thereby, it has thus far escaped the ken of sagacious students of human nature and mortal life.

CHAPTER V.

OUR FEET AND OUR HANDS.

PAUSING, for a moment before the window of a fashionable shoe-store, my admiration was excited by an exquisite model in marble of the human foot, set upon a cushion of wine-colored velvet. From the slim, rounded ankle to the tapering toes, with their filbert-shaped nails, it had not one ungraceful line. The instep was delicately arched, the heel and the ball of the foot were upon the same plane, the lines separating the toes followed slight and natural curves.

To the right and left of the marble member were rows and tiers of boots,

shoes, and slippers, cheap and costly, and of all sizes. On the right stood a pair of buttoned boots, labeled "CASTILIAN INSTEP." They were No. 4s; the toes were just half an inch wide at the tip; the heels were set a measured inch forward of the back of the foot, and two inches high—while the Castilian instep had the outline of an exaggerated Roman nose. Lest one might suspect caricature in the proximity of the suggested covering of the human foot to the "model," another pair of boots to the left of it were lettered, "THE LATEST THING," and reiterated the worst deformity of the "Castilian," not excepting the Romanesque instep.

The Spanish name was a fanciful touch of maker or vender who had heard the proverb of the old hidalgos—"The instep under which water can flow, proves the

owner to have come of a race that has known no slavery for three hundred years." To effect a pretense of the aristocratic arch, the cruel height of heel was added, and the artificial hump upon the top of the foot.

The practical observer might detect a touch of grim facetiousness on the part of the shoe-merchant who mutely directed attention to the unlikeness of art to nature. Dame Fashion is a heartless mistress, and in nothing is her inconsiderate tyranny more evident than in the "latest thing" in foot-gear. Why should she insist upon the cramped toes crushed into corns hard and soft, and why must the heel be set so near the hollow of the foot as to endanger the center of gravity? Not long ago, a paper had a picture of two girls of the period walking together, craning their

necks that they might look back at the "dear little short tracks we leave in the mud." Undoubtedly, the heel near the middle of the foot leaves a print in mud or sand that, when made by a woman of average size, is so ridiculously small, that did it represent the genuine size of the pedal extremities, it would indicate a deformity more to be deprecated than a foot twice too large for the rest of the frame.

A so-called sensible woman has frequently an inexplicable horror lest any one should guess that her foot is the size which the Almighty made it. She undergoes pain and inconvenience, resigns the healthful exercise of walking, and reaps an abundant harvest of corns, sooner than wear a comfortable shoe—since by so doing she virtually confesses that her feet have grown with the rest of her body.

American girls are blind to the fact that an unnaturally small foot and hand are as certain indications of an unequally developed body as are members so huge as to attract notice. A woman, five feet five inches tall, will acknowledge that she wears a No. 7 riding hat, that her waist measures twenty-five inches, and will sometimes tell that she wears a six, or six-and-a-quarter glove; but she will attempt to compress her foot into a two or two-and-a-half shoe, and will "endure grinding torments," such as ingrowing toe-nails, rather than unblushingly declare that her feet easily fill a four, or four-and-a-half boot.

With the exception of a toothache, there is no more torturing minor pain than that imparted by a narrow, pinching shoe. "Everybody knows where his

own shoe pinches." Everybody must be stupid, indeed, if he cannot see where the "Latest Thing" pinches—indeed, it would require an unusually clever observer, with a vivid imagination upon which to draw for his facts, to state where it does *not* pinch. Tightly buttoned around the ankle, it impedes circulation, forcing the blood downward until the swelling veins on the instep ache and throb almost to bursting. The spreading foot is compressed by the narrowing tip, and the toes, forced to be *somewhere*, crowd together, even overlapping one another, while the high heel throws the weight forward so that the toe-nails double over and cut into the tender flesh. And yet this foot was once like the sculptured model. Add to this work of distortion the unsightly corns, bunions, and misplaced and swollen toe-

joints, and who will admire the work of **man** (or woman) above that of nature?

Although such important members of our bodies, the feet are shamefully neglected. Custom demands that for sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, they must be closely confined in cotton or woolen stockings and leather shoes, thus rendering them peculiarly susceptible to many and varied discomforts, to avoid which the greatest care is requisite. It is not a pleasant thought, but it is none the less a fact that with too many people, a weekly washing of the feet is all the attention these useful servants receive.

First, and above all other needs of the feet, is cleanliness. Not a weekly sponging, or even plunging in warm water, but frequent and thorough washing, followed by a brisk rubbing with a harsh towel until

not a particle of moisture remains. Some persons are unspeakably mortified by a disagreeable odor about their feet. This is not of necessity the result of uncleanliness, although frequent bathing will do much to mitigate the trouble. Every morning and night such feet should be plunged in hot water, to which have been added a few drops of ammonia. They should not be soaked, but merely washed thoroughly, dried, and then powdered with carbolic powder. When practicable every person should sponge the feet each day. The nails also require care, although one need not go so far as to polish and beautify them, which is said to have been one of the Empress Josephine's chief delights. We all have our little vanities, but, as a rule they do not settle in our toe-tips. Nevertheless, the nails should be fre-

quently cut—not too close—with sharp scissors. If a nail, as is sometimes the case on the great toe, shows a tendency to “grow in,” it may be remedied without the help of the chiropodist, but must not be neglected until one of the most painful operations in surgery becomes necessary. With a coarse file, rub down the surface of the nail until it is almost as thin as a sheet of writing paper. Then cut a V-shape slit in the top of the nail, thus creating a tendency on the part of the two sides to grow together in the middle, relieving the pressure on the flesh.

The nails must be kept clean by brushing, and the thick skin about their roots pressed down. One of the evils of pinching shoes is that they force the nails into the flesh,—but another and more common result of an ill-fitting boot is the corn,

which is as often produced by a loose as by a tight shoe or slipper. The one security against this pest is a well-fitting shoe ; and as the only cure for one is not to have it to begin with, the kind of foot-wear purchased is a matter of vast importance. A cheap, machine-sewed boot is an abomination. The wretched condition of the feet of the poorer poor attests to this fact. But the corns once here, the question is how to relieve them. If they cannot be removed by the simple processes known to all, the best of which is soaking the feet, and then picking out the callous growth, seek the advice of a reliable chiropodist, who may give you relief for some weeks, or months. Never touch a corn or bunion with any sharp (or dull) instrument. There is such danger in doing this that it is strange any rational

being should thus run the risk of producing lockjaw and death. There have been repeated and well authenticated instances of the injury inflicted by this promiscuous corncutting, and still scarcely a week passes in which the newspapers do not report the death of some woman of blood-poisoning induced by paring a bunion with her husband's razor, or of a man who has lost his life by prying out his corn with a penknife. Only a few years ago, the community in which he had lived was shocked by the news of the death of a celebrated clergyman, and people spoke sadly of the "visitation of Providence." To those who were cognizant of the facts in the case, it seems as if Providence had been "tempted" to make this "visitation," for the eminent divine went to a quack to have a corn *cut out*. The operation was

performed, gangrene ensued, and the patient died.

There is a popular superstition to the effect that woolen hose are warmer than cotton. This is a theory which is open to doubt. In many cases, the wool induces perspiration, which cannot escape through the leather of the boot. As a consequence, the feet become wet and clammy cold, in which condition they remain until bed-time. The same objection applies to patent-leather shoes, which as old-fashioned people say, "draw the feet," and keep them in a state of unhealthy moisture.

During the winter months, heavy cotton stockings may be worn. In summer, thin cotton, lisle thread, or silk may take their place. To save the wear and tear on boots, it is well to remove them when

entering the house after drive or promenade, and put on in their place pretty, and less expensive kid slippers. Shoes should be bought, when practicable, a month or even longer, before they are needed. They will wear better, and be more comfortable if allowed to stand and "ripen" for some time. Before putting on a patent leather shoe, it should be slipped on the left hand and rubbed hard and briskly with the palm of the right. This softens the leather, and hinders it from cracking.

Hands naturally receive so much more attention than the feet, and the knowledge of the care due them is so much more universal, that it is hardly necessary to state what are their requirements. There are, however, busy housewives who declare that they cannot keep their hands in good condition, and that they "have

no time to spend on such nonsense." To them let me say here and now, that lawful measures which improve your appearance and make you pleasant to look upon, are not "nonsense." It is the duty of every woman to appear as well as she can. This being true, do not neglect such prominent objects as your hands. It is an admirable plan to consult a manicure frequently, but care should be taken as to the sort of manicure employed, as some of them nearly ruin the fingers by the use of acids, stains, etc. If you are so situated that, if your hands are to receive any attention, it must be bestowed by yourself, make up your mind to keep them in prime order. Before cutting the nails, soak the finger-tips in warm soap-suds, and then cleanse them with a stiff brush. While still soft from the soaking, cut the

nails with small curved scissors which come for that purpose. With a blunt wooden toothpick, or match, push down the encroaching flesh, leaving exposed the half-moons at the root of the nails; carefully cut off hang-nails and loose bits of skin. To remove the dirt from under the nails, use an ivory, celluloid, or bone nail-cleaner. The nails should not be cut square or pointed, but in a delicate curve. This done, rub them with a pink paste known as "rosaline," which may be procured from any druggist. Allow this to remain on for five minutes, wash off in warm water, and, with a chamois polisher dipped in pink nail-powder, polish the nails until they are smooth and bright.

After each washing of the hands, and before drying them, rub the backs with jellied glycerine, or with a mixture of gly-

cerine and rose-water, and then *wipe perfectly dry*. If, by any chance, and such chances are numerous during the cold season, your hands become roughened or chapped, they may be rendered smooth and white by an application of vaseline, mutton tallow or cold cream, on retiring. Then pull on a pair of loose gloves, and wear them all night.

To keep your hands in tolerable plight through the severe processes of dish-washing, sweeping, dusting, and cooking, wear, while engaged in these operations, a pair of very large gloves with the finger-tips cut off. Ask husband, father, or brother to give you his cast-off gloves for this purpose.

These precautions may seem to involve an unnecessary amount of trouble, but the pleasure you and your family will

derive from the sight of your shapely, well-kept hands, will amply repay you for your pains.

When purchasing gloves, be sure to get a pair that fits you. If your hand is short and broad, eschew short fingers and heavily embroidered backs, as they increase the apparent size of the hand. Tan shades, light and dark, and the ever-popular black, are always becoming and fashionable for hands, large or small.

CHAPTER VI.

COMMON-SENSE WINDOW-GARDENING.

ONE Christmas morning, twenty years ago, I found among my gifts what people who knew the thing by sight called a Wardian case, and those who had never seen or heard of it named "a fernery." As I write, it is at my elbow, filling up the bay window of the library. Upon four stout turned legs stands a stout glass case, five feet long by eighteen inches wide and twelve inches high. The sides, ends, and peaked roof are of French plate glass, set in a strong frame of black walnut (oiled). The top is hinged ; the joints are cemented and water-tight. In the bottom is fitted

a zinc box about three inches deep. The legs lift the bottom of the case about eighteen inches from the floor.

Before stocking the fernery the bottom was covered an inch deep with bits of earthen flower-pots, interspersed with broken charcoal and pebbles. Upon this was laid a layer of rich garden soil two inches in thickness. Moss from the woods, or decaying stumps, or wayside rocks, cover the earth, and in this were imbedded the roots of tiny ferns, and such wild things as the flower-lover knows how to find in the woods: partridge-berries, lobelia, hepaticas, and nameless hardy vines that grow all winter under the snow. Using these as a groundwork, the dear friend who brought this source of continual brightness and joy into my house, had planted begonias, lycopodium, trade-

scantia, a small palm, maiden-hair fern, and some low-growing plants with variegated leaves.

Shall I ever forget how they looked when the case was wheeled into the window of the room that had been for weary weeks a prison of pain and languor? It was purposely placed upon the sunless side of the apartment. When I exclaimed at the disposition of what looked to my longing eyes like a miniature forest-brake, I was told that sunshine was not needed for the health and growth of the contents of a Wardian case; in fact, that the direct rays falling upon the closed glass would "scald" the tender, shrinking things.

My informant subjoined playfully:

"It is expressly designed to make sunshine in a shady place."

This is, in brief, the history of the fern-

ery that was wheeled into my library in the second week in last October and put into the bay window. On Thanksgiving Day two hepaticas, one blue, the other white, unfolded delicate petals, confident that the winter was over and gone. The household gathered about the case when the cover was lifted, and looked at the brave, fragile little things with murmurs of pitying affection. The steady uplift of the mistaken pioneers was pathetic. As if inspired, or shamed, by their example, green heads popped up all over the mossy carpet. A pocket edition of the umbrella-palm—let us say a parasol-palm, and a doll's parasol at that—holding the place of honor in the middle of the case, unfolded and let droop, fountain-like, narrow green steamers; the solitary begonia sprouted redly; through the tough skin of an

ungainly cactus, kept because it was a gift, broke dumpy tassels like foliated warts; the lycopodium began to run toward the light, a branch of English ivy to chase it with darting shoots of tenderest green. In each corner of the case is a bunch of pitcher-plant, graceful vases, shaded green with red veins and edges, sent from a Massachusetts marsh, with lobelia, gold-thread, and anemones, by one who never fails, as autumn comes around, to seek, to pack, and express to me these mute but lively tokens of enduring friendship.

“Keep the pitchers full of water, and they will bloom in the spring,” said the accompanying letter.

I smiled in reading this injunction,—a moved smile that went with a thought of a heart ever fresh and ever full, and sure

to bloom in season. I know what the flowers will be,—royal in stateliness and color ; broad chalices carried as straight by the staunch stems as if it were needful that they too should hold water.

Not a leaf-bud unfolds in my miniature brake that I do not see and register it. The winds that have bitten all the life out of the landscape beyond the window cannot invade the perpetual summer calm of my “garden enclosed.” In a day or two I shall set a budding cyclamen among the wildling beauties. It will blossom for one month at least. I had one once that sent up in quick succession twenty-five pink flowers, and continued in bloom for six weeks. The florists are unanimous in their assurance that cyclamen will not grow under glass. For four winters mine have laughed saucy denial of professional dicta.

By the middle of April the case will be more like a tropical jungle than a Middle State forest dell. By the middle of May such plants as I wish to keep over—to wit, begonias, maiden-hair ferns, the palm, and the cactus—will be transplanted to the beds out of doors, and just kept alive all summer. After the winter campaign they need and shall have rest.

As I have said, my fernery was stocked in mid-winter. I have, then, no hesitation in calling the attention of those who love flowers, and who delight in the sight of green and growing things, yet whose time and room are limited, to this charming parlor, sitting-room, or chamber ornament. The case can be as costly or as cheap as one chooses to make it. A glass box set upon a table to be on a level with the window is all that is required.

Individual taste and circumstance can also be consulted as to dimensions. For an invalid's room it is a continual feast to eye and thought.

In entitling this chapter "Common-Sense Window-Gardening," I am moved by compassionate desire to bring into over-busy lives beauty that does not involve toil. We American women make life harder than it need be; and few American women, whatever their means, find life easy at the best. Without pausing to sentimentalize over the obvious teachings of the flowers of the field or garden to the human soul, I observe that every toiling woman would do better work and increase her chances of long life by setting up a hobby that is not akin to the routine of daily duties,—something aside from and unlike cooking, sewing, washing dishes,

sweeping, and dusting ; that is a diversion from the enforced round of social, charitable, and church work. Of the great family of hobbies, I set down flower-culture as the most healthful, graceful, and satisfactory as to result.

One of the most charming works of imagination in any language is Saintine's "Picciola." The heroine of the romance is a plant that breaks ground in the courtyard of the prison of state, and saves from ruin of mind, heart, and soul an accomplished French nobleman. Each stage and phase of plant-life are noted with loving care. To the solitary man it is the first herb that ever grew and flowered, and, with wondrous art, the author carries on the reader to the same point of romantic interest. Nobody thinks of terming Saintine a home missionary, but the

field of possibilities opened by the pure little idyl is limitless.

“I awoke this morning sad and apprehensive,” writes a correspondent. “I have been busy in my greenhouse for an hour, and left grief and forebodings among my roses.”

Which last word brings us to the most formidable obstacle to the mission-work aforesaid. This one woman has a conservatory, and can have roses. Nine-tenths of the other women who love flowers, and would cultivate them if they knew how, must practise the art in rooms where human beings live ; where there is furnace or stove heat, and gas or lamplight late in the evening. The more determined of them invest more than they are willing to lose in costly plants,—roses, heliotropes, cape-jasmine, azaleas, gloxinias,

and the like. If enthusiastic as well as resolute, they study the floral corner of family papers and subscribe for horticultural journals. These are they who believe in the gaudy and gigantic specimens of "plants we have for sale" that glare from the covers of catalogues, and buy seed and roots warranted to produce the same. Having purchased enough to stock a small greenhouse, they add injury to ignorance by planting them all in the same kind of soil, subject them to the same exposure, water all in like measure, and, we may add as a sequel, are equally chagrined at all the failures which fill the pages of their flower-register.

Flower-culture is a profession in itself. She who after experiences such as I have indicated sickens of the whole subject, and confesses to confusion of face and

sickness of heart in beholding the floral triumphs of shop windows, may brace up spirits and courage by remembering this. The best the amateur can do is to learn a few letters of the alphabet by comparison with the extensive practical lore of him who has given a score of years to the work. Let her be satisfied with *a*, *b*, *c*, until skill and opportunity warrant her in attempting *d*, *e*, and *f*.

We will assume the fernery to be *a*. It does not demand sunshine, although an hour of this will quicken growth and deepen color,—provided the cover of the case be raised while the sun shines upon it. I manage to keep mine in a southern window, by adjusting the inner blinds to suit the needs of the contents. The case should be opened for from half an hour to an hour every day. Water may be given

the plants once a fortnight, and the leaves be sprinkled once a week. Too much moisture causes them to rot in the ground. Bear in mind that the mist which collects upon the inner side of the glass is precipitated daily in the form of fine dew, so that the fernery may be said to be self-feeding. The evaporation is very slight, and an hour's supply of fresh air lasts it for a whole day. After the first outlay, the expense is slight. Palms, ivy, begonias, lycopodium, etc., will live from year to year, and cost little at first. In sheltered places in the woods, and on mild days, there is all winter a goodly store of creeping vines and ferns. Partridge-berries glow redly under the glass, and blow whitely in springtime. My Massachusetts friend sent me, one year, some roots of trailing arbutus that bore pale, deli-

ciously-fragrant flowers in February. Hyacinths on which the buds have *fully* formed also blossom freely, and a slip of coleus will thrive rankly. Geraniums, roses, heliotropes, and most other wood-stemmed plants will soon die in the enclosed garden. On the other hand, almost anything dug up in the woods takes kindly to it. Tradescantia ("Wandering Jew") runs rampant, and the variegated sorts make a brave show.

In the next chapter I shall treat unprofessionally of the home-made window-garden. I have myself suffered too much at the hands of lordly florists and enticing catalogues to give so much as a single botanical name. The flower-lover who has worked her way into the primer will probably smile at the homely simplicity of my vocabulary and the low range of my

list. The contented dweller among the earlier letters will, I hope, find matter of interest and practical benefit in our walks among the silent teachers of blessed lessons.

CHAPTER VII.

COMMON-SENSE WINDOW-GARDENING.
CONCLUDED.

WITHIN the last quarter-century there had spread through city, village and country a contagious eruption of projecting windows. Bay and bow windows, mullioned and oriel windows, three-cornered windows, windows square, hexagon, and embrasured in swell fronts, thrust themselves upon the eye from every point of observation, giving a perky, knobby, and bumptious air to what were else sober-going residences, tenanted by respectable, commonplace people.

Interiorly, the effect is generally pleasant. Mrs. Whitney, in her "Sights and Insights," tells of the relief to imaginations pained by massive, clumsy enclosures of huge stone and solid black beams overstretching the Knight's Hall, places and contrivances for tortures, and the horrible *oubliette* in the Castle of Chillon,—by coming suddenly upon a deep window with a stone seat, opening upon Lake Lemman.

"I could think of two warrior friends, mail-clad, with just their vizors up to show their human faces, with human kindness in them for each other, sitting here together for some minutes in the stone embrasure, looking out on the fair waters, and talking of adventure or plan in which they were companions. There was just room for two. One cannot help thinking

of some possible two, where is just space for them and no more."

Such suggestion of intimate human companionship is always given by nooks and corners in living-rooms. So well is this understood by the modern furnisher that our home magazines are generous in directions how to make cozy corners in rectangular rooms. The girl of the day queries curiously how her grandparents did their courting in barn-like, four-sided rooms, where all the chairs were ranged against the chair-board, which was put there for the purpose of receiving the backs of every seat in the apartment except those of the Old People at Home, which flanked the chimney-place.

Our flower-lover, who is always a lover of humankind, espies in the projecting window with a southern exposure oppor-

tunities of brightening a human habitation and bringing poetry into prosaic lives. Next to a conservatory, the bay, or bow, or mullioned, or oriel window, lined with glass, is the best place for carrying on winter floriculture.

Before putting in shelves or bringing in plants, see that the window-frames are tight. It is not well to nail or seal them up for the winter, as flowers require in mild weather as much air as people. Weather-strips are cheap, and easily tacked into place, and allow free play to the sashes. In the *real* country, where it is not easy to get them, a homely but tolerable substitute is strips of list, or, in default of these, double flannel, nailed on one side only, and overlapping the joints and seams of the sash. The best way of shelving the recess is to lay smooth boards

of proper length upon brackets. Iron brackets, more or less ornamental, may be procured from any builder, with screws for fastening them into place. Wooden supports will do as well so far as strength goes, but are more unsightly. Whichever you use, have them screwed, not nailed, into place. The advantage of loose shelves is that they can be removed and cleaned whenever this is desirable, and when taken down in the spring may be laid away in garret or loft, in a small compass, to be ready for next autumn. Oil or paint them, that they may be dusted or washed easily, to prevent the water from soaking into the wood.

Unpainted flower-pots are preferable to glazed or painted. The homely red earthen-ware pot and saucer are more

serviceable in the long run than "fancy" china or stoneware. In the bottom of each lay over the draining-hole a bit of broken crockery or a pebble, before the earth goes in, that the surplus water may escape, and that the earth may *not*. Fill the pot with rich, mellow soil. Gail Hamilton, reading that certain plants needed "light, mellow soil," filled her pots from the middle of the road, judging that the earth there, if anywhere, must have been beaten "mellow." Sprinkle a little sand between the layers of heavier earth in the pots intended for roses. The dwellers in cities, or in the vicinity of a florist, can buy soil already prepared, at a very low rate. One of the most successful amateur flower-growers I know made liberal use of the mold found under dead leaves in grooves and woods. She

mixed it with well-rotted manure, adding a little sand to prevent caking.

Bulbs of hyacinths, narcissus, crocuses, tulips, cyclamen, Easter and Calla lilies, should be buried in the earth and left in a dry cellar for four or five weeks, to make roots, before they are set in the window. Water them now and then, but not profusely, until a few days before they are brought out.

Cyclamen, one of the loveliest and most satisfactory of house plants, is easily raised and blossoms long.

Carnations do not care for very much heat if they can get sunshine. Purchase those that are "well-started," water them judiciously, keep them tied up to slender sticks, and they will give you flowers all winter. I have twenty pots of carnations that have blossomed steadily for a month

and more, and are full of buds in all stages of development. Like most other home comforts, carnations flourish the better for being generous. Cut and give away the perfected flowers, and their successors will be the finer for the neighborly act.

Heliotrope is hardy, and after it begins to bloom, prolific. It craves warmth and sunlight, being essentially a "child of the sun."

The *Nasturtium* family will endure much ill treatment and is never weary of blossoming after it begins. The droop of the luxuriant vines over pot and shelf, if of the dwarf species, and the clamber of the taller kinds up pole and frame, are graceful and pleasing.

Citronaloes, or lemon verbena, is a sweet, dauntless shrub, "easily entreated" to

grow and be fragrant, and really enjoys being clipped for *boutonnieres* and vases.

The plant best adapted for all kinds of usage is the *Geranium*, especially those known as the General Grant, the Coral, the Fish, and the Horse-shoe varieties. *Pelargoniums* (or Lady Washington geraniums) require rather more intelligent care, but repay it liberally. Geraniums must not be over-watered, requiring only half as much moisture as bulbous plants, such as callas. If faithfully tended, the blossoms will double in size, and press glowing faces against the glass from October to May.

One of the ornaments of my conservatory—which latter, I may say, has no custodian except my unprofessional self—is a great tree fern bought two years ago. “Give it a big bot and blenty of vater!”

said the German from whom I bought it. Following the simple rules, I have had the pleasure of seeing the croziers lift big, brown, hairy heads from root and stalk in sturdy apostolical succession, until I can almost stand under the shadow of the fronds.

Upon a tall shelf is a row of robust palms that expand newly at regular and frequent intervals. They are green, hardy, and comely, and keep the amateur in heart when more delicate nurselings droop or bleach. The same may be said of the *India Rubber Plant*.

For hanging-baskets or pots, *Sweet Alyssum* may be safely attempted. One of the most beautiful of my earlier experiments was a great bowl filled with this, and hung in a sitting-room window. By Christmas it was like a cataract of green,

capped with white foam, and remained a thing of beauty until May.

Wandering Jew and *English, German,* and *Japanese Ivies* are excellent creepers for this purpose.

Mignonette may be sowed now for spring blooming, as may pansy seed,—that is, if you have room for seedlings. It must be borne in mind that ambitious ignorance in floriculture goes before a fall, and that chagrin under such circumstances is the surest crop that grows. Be content to begin modestly, and make haste slowly.

Lay under your shelves a square of linoleum of generous dimensions, that one may not be afraid to give your flowers all the water they need and like. *Get a watering-pot that does not leak where the sprinkler joins the spout.* Otherwise, you will have wet sleeves, a ruffled temper,

and probably a cold, "aggravated by grip symptoms." The water should be just tepid. Take the chill off, but do not be beguiled into refreshing your ivies with hot water, as the advice of some is. I have known people who said they had practised the daring feat with success. I have known others who, under my eyes, killed the ivy, root and branch, by a similar attempt.

An inveterate, and too little dreaded, enemy of growing plants is *dust*. In the conservatory a hose, with a powerful "sprayer" attached, makes short work of the invader. In living-room and bay window, a soft, wet cloth, tenderly, applied, must often supplement the watering-pot. A dusty-leaved shrub or vine cannot be healthy. It breathes through the leaves, and the under side of each of

these is a tissue of veins and air vessels. Wet a fine sponge, or a bit of old linen, and at least twice a week wash off the foliage. After once seeing what the wet sponge or rag brings away, you will need no argument to induce you to continue the practise.

Another foe to greenery and bloom is *gas*. More of the failures to raise flowers under otherwise favorable circumstances is due to the impregnation of the air with gas than from all other causes combined. The cottager who cannot afford gas has a window full of blossoms and healthy leaves, while the expensive *jardinière* of the mistress of the brown-stone palace must be renewed weekly by a fashionable florist. Flowers do not like artificial light of any kind. After sunset they wish a rest, and need it as much as your babies

do. The wise plant-lover sees to it that they get it. If the family keep late hours, she draws a curtain or screen between the pots in the window and the illuminated room. Of course this is removed at bed-time, that the flowers may get the benefit of the heat during the coldest hours of the night. In bitter weather protect them from the outer cold by drawing down the holland shades between them and the glass ; or if this is not practicable, lay newspapers against the sash, that the leaves may not touch the frosted panes.

If your plants are infested by red spiders or *Aphidæ* (the small, green insects which are the pest of the conservatory), hang a thick curtain closely over the niche or window, and set within the recess thus formed an iron vessel contain-

ing loose tobacco stems and leaves. Light this, and leave it smoking for some hours. Then take the pots from the shelves and sweep up the dead insects. Two or three fumigations will rid you effectually of them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARRIAGE TIE.

A STRANGER once wrote to me from the Far West :—

“ Does the clause, ‘ Until death do you part,’ mean of necessity the separation of soul and body? May not deeper significance underlie the phrase? Is not the death of love, the death of respect, the death of the earthly hope of happiness, as valid cause for divorce as physical dissolution? I find ground for this belief in the wording of the marriage-vow. *Can* one continue to “ love ” and “ honor ” the unlovely and base? And failing to meet

these conditions, can the wife claim that she has not violated her solemn pledge? Does not the impossibility of esteeming the worthless to be worthy nullify the rest of the compact? Admit, however, the interpretation I offer of the formula, and all is clear. Surely the pagan torture of chaining a dead body to the living sufferer is opposed to the genius of Christian philanthropy! Yet what else is the fate of the innocent wife who is bound for life to an unkind, brutal, uncongenial husband? I appeal to you as woman to woman, for a candid reply."

As candidly and as tenderly as if the appellant sat in the chair over against me, her wistful eyes on mine, I will try to answer her queries.

If the real reading of "Until death do you part," and the sworn promise to take

one another "for better, for worse," were "during life, or good behavior," the reverend framers of the marriage-covenant, and He who instituted Marriage, would not have left this, the head and front of the subject, unguarded. Marriage is a sacred obligation, and binding for life-time, or it is a farce, played with, and for a purpose. The nuptial tie is absolute, or it is the loosest of civil contracts. It is of the latter class of agreements that the inspired writer speaks in commending him who "*swears to his own hurt and changes not.*" Hardly a week passes in the which each of us does not enter into some engagement of which he repents in the light of subsequent revelations; yet the man who attempts to cancel such an obligation, because to fulfil it would pain or injure him, justly incurs the reputation

of dishonesty. Casuists, who make the consideration of marriage-laws a speciality, ignore the truth that marriage is but one of many compacts upon which human society is built, all involving chances of loss, and all morally binding.

I anticipate the stale sarcasm respecting damaged goods by giving a more apt illustration of the true state of the case.

A man thinks that a piece of ground belonging to his neighbor is rich in ore. He applies tests of his own devising, and, confirmed by these, in his own opinion, offers a price for the property based upon his convictions. Should he find, after the papers are signed, that he, or his mineralogist, has blundered, he must abide by his bargain. He acted of his own free-will, and the question as to whether the seller shared his delusion, or not, does

not affect the legal aspect of the transaction.

The history of every real estate "boom" abounds in like instances of large expectations, heavy disbursements, and grievous losses.

Unless a warranty accompany a sale, the purchaser has no redress after the transfer is made. Upon this point the law is explicit :

"In sales of goods by persons in possession, there is an implied warranty of title, but as to the *quality* of goods, the rule of every sale is, *Caveat emptor.*"

Which, freely translated, means that the buyer must look out for himself.

We may wish that a warranty-deed were given with every man and woman who enter the honorable estate of matrimony. We may marvel yet more reasonably that,

the contract being inexorable, so many should rush blindly to the altar of sacrifice. Wish and wonder do not change the fact that the best interests of the family, the community, and the nation are subserved by literal obedience to the Divine injunction : " Whom, therefore, *God* hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

At the risk of making a sore heart sorer, I must call my correspondent's attention to the truth proven by countless divorce cases, that the right of private judgment as to the stage at which death comes to love, to respect, and to hope, is a dangerous grant.

Said a beautiful woman to me: " At seventeen, I was married to a man of fifty. I was young, credulous, and ignorant, and believed myself content with my lot for some years. In growing into wiser wom-

anhood, I saw the barbarity of sacrificing my fresh, glorious life to him. He loved me to infatuation, and was a most worthy old gentleman; but the union was monstrous. I did not consider it right in the sight of God."

Death to love, respect, and hope was, with her, synonymous with distaste for companionship with a respectable man who was thirty-three years her senior. By what hocus-pocus of legal enactment she obtained a divorce I had not the patience to ask. Probably upon that most elastic of all writs in the devil's court,—incompatibility of temper. It never seems to occur to plaintiffs, judge or jury that this plea is tantamount to a confession of wilful disinclination to live together, that tempers may be moulded into compatibility if the will be good.

I do not commit every one who reads these lines to endorsement of my private and personal doubts as to the righteousness of *any* divorce where liberty to marry again is granted to either of the parties involved. I acknowledge that my views on this matter may be rigidly impracticable, but, until convinced of my error by more cogent arguments than have, as yet, been submitted to me, I hold fast and firmly to the opinion that the number of divorces in our so-called courts of justice would be diminished by nine-tenths of the whole were the dissolution of the marriage tie coupled, in every case, with a prohibition against a second matrimonial contract. I am positive in the belief that there would not be one-half as many hasty marriages were this the law,—a belief that leads me into further discredit of the

validity of the causes of the triple death so often referred to in this article. If there were not the hope of doing something else which we consider better than the task committed to us, we would generally settle down into contentment with our lot, and try to make *that* the better thing.

All this is plainness, maybe hardness, of speech, and is, I repeat, a private, not an official, expression of opinion. I deprecate, far more than indignant attack of my position, the suspicion on the part of my correspondent, or others, that I am unmindful of the cruel fate of the woman whose marriage has been, to her apprehension, a mistake. The world holds no more pitiable object. Her sorrow is unique. It saddens with the sadness of present death; it bites like adversity, and stings

like disgrace. Yet—the death of beloved ones, poverty, and shame, must be borne when the Father suffers them to come upon us,—must be bravely borne because His hand has not withheld them; borne with a cheerful front, because behind and above the cloud lies the heaven which will be solution and compensation. If men and women would meet the miseries of mistaken marriages in the spirit that enables them to endure other afflictions, such unfortunates would have a dignity that does not pertain to them now. Let the disappointed husband or wife gather into a seemly whole the wrecks of a ruined life, and, with God's help, make the best of it. Such advice is not in tune with sentimental pipings over wasted affections and broken dreams, and the glorious Might-have-been each of us claims as his

lawful heritage,—but it is common-sense of the sturdiest kind, and every-day religion.

Carlyle breaks out roughly with : “What is this that thou hast been fretting and fuming and lamenting and self-tormenting on account of? Say it in a word. Is it not because thou art not *happy*? Foolish soul! What act of legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be happy?”

We forgive the caustic quip when we read on to the immortal words: “There is in Man a higher than happiness. He can do without happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness.”

Furthermore,—and this is suggested in simplicity and truth to my correspondent,—there is so often a chance that patience has not had her perfect work,—that, made reckless by pain, one may have left undone

some blessed thing that might have been done toward righting a hideous wrong; that hope dies prematurely when she leaves the living heart. The calmness wrought by the resolution to endure unmurmuringly unto the end sometimes brings the perception of untried ways and means by which the affliction may be mitigated. Many an erring husband has been reclaimed by gentle arts. Many more have been driven, by reproaches and coldness, from foible to fault, from fault to sin.

However this may be with you, tried and troubled sister, keep your own conscience void of offense, and stand fast in your lot while forbearance is compatible with bodily safety, and the preservation of your own and your children's fair fame. That love is crushed to death does not

absolve you from duty ; that the garland has become a cross is not a warrant for casting it down.

In sweeter, wiser words than any my brain can indite, let me remind you, in conclusion, that " We make mistakes, or what we call such. The nature that could make such mistake exactly needs, and in the goodness of the dear God is given, the living of it out. And beyond this I believe more,—that in the pure and patient living of it out we come to find that we have fallen, not into hopeless confusion of our own wild, ignorant making, but that the finger of God has been at work among our lines, and that the emerging is into His blessed order ; that He is forever making up for us our own undoings."—*Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney.*

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT PEOPLE SHOULD NOT WEAR.

YEARS ago one of my babies happened to be in the parlor while I was entertaining a fantastically-arrayed caller. The visitor was fond of children, and took the three-year-old boy on her lap and told him stories, the variety and coloring of which accorded admirably with her costume. The little man's eyes were large with wonder and amazement. When the lady had made her adieux and left the house, he stood at the front gate and gazed after her retreating form, until a corner of the street hid the gorgeous apparition from

his sight. Then he turned to me questioningly :

“ Mamma ! A blue *dwess*, a purple cloak and a *bwight wed* bonnet,—is *that* good taste ? ”

The incident occurred thirty years ago, but to this day the query comes to my mind many times at home and abroad.

“ I suppose,” said a young Southerner to me when we were together in a New York dry-goods store, “ that *somebody* must buy those things or they would not be made.”

“ Those things ” were half a dozen elaborate mantles, some of electric blue, some brick-dust red, others coppery-brown in color, all profusely ornamented with steel and jet beads, feather-trimming and ruffle after ruffle of lace. In price they ranged from forty-five dollars up to one

hundred. The woman who bought one, unless she had more money than has the average purchaser of ready-made wraps, —would be obliged to wear the remarkable garment until she and all her friends wearied of it.

A day in New York City convinced my girl-friend that people wore many things even more flashy than the mass of cloth, silk, lace, and beads that had attracted her wondering attention.

A few days ago I sat at a glove-counter next to a plain-faced girl utterly devoid of that quality known as "style," which makes it possible for some women to wear dashing articles of dress. The box in front of this maiden contained gloves that were a dream of horror. Five minutes were spent in attempting to decide between the comparative merits of a pair of pale-

green atrocities, heavily-stitched and finished with olive, and a hideous combination of scarlet-and-white kid. The scales tipped in favor of Ireland's color, and they were borne off triumphantly by the satisfied young woman, who looked with pitying tolerance at me, upon whose unpretending hands plain black gloves were being fitted. Probably she understood my taste as little as I comprehended hers.

A nice girl burst upon my vision last week in a costume of such gorgeousness that for an instant it fairly took my breath away. It was ten o'clock in the morning, and the surprising apparition was in the same public conveyance with myself. Her gown was of white India silk, shot with brilliant cardinal. The foot-trimming, vest, V-shaped back, collar and cuffs were of velvet of the same vivid hue, as

was also the trimming with which the large, broad-brimmed hat was loaded. This structure was crowned with a mass of cherries which, if real, would have easily filled a pint measure, and by their size and brilliant color delighted the heart of a horticulturist. The shoes that accompanied this costume were of red morocco, and the cardinal kid-gloves were stitched with white. Had the wearer of the startling combination been a pretty, striking-looking girl, and had the occasion been a suburban lawn-tea instead of the elevated railway, one could have pardoned—even perhaps admired—the effect. As it was, it enhanced the homeliness of a far-from-pretty face, and gave a “fast” appearance to one whose dress was the only loud thing about her.

And here I pause to enter a protest

against the custom prevalent among Americans during warm weather of wearing *decolleté* gowns on the street and in public places in the daytime. By *decolleté* I do not mean very low cut, but V-shaped necks, sometimes only open in front, sometimes both in the front and back. They are undoubtedly cooler than high collars, but are as much out of place outside of the house as would be slippers and white silk stockings. Both are entirely proper for evening wear, or in the daytime in the privacy of the home, but they are undeniably common and vulgar with a walking or driving costume. Quite as disgusting are the sweeping light skirts with which many fair dames scavenge our dirty sidewalks in the summer. After trailing over a quarter-mile of dust, mud, cigar stumps, and quids of tobacco, such a dress is a

good subject for refining fires, without pausing to consider the germs of disease which may thus be swept up and lodged in the other clothing. Inexpressibly revolting is the thought of the filth which a would-be fashionable woman picks up and scatters about her.

To the credit of women be it said that *ladies* no longer allow their skirts to trail; although many human beings of the feminine gender still hold to this custom. While the graceful, long bell-skirt is still worn, its use by "nice" people is either confined to the house, or the train (short or long) is carried in the hand of the wearer. If a woman is too busy or too lazy to lift her dress, let her draperies be a full inch above the sidewalk, that she may at least be decent.

I note with distress the growing ten-

dency to wear vivid colors and startling combinations on the street. In public it is better to be under than over-dressed. Quaker simplicity is to be greatly preferred to too great elaboration, and in many circumstances a plain gingham shows the lady more truly than does satin or lace. When a woman wears to market her best silk gown, it is pretty sure evidence that it is the only place where she has an opportunity to show it.

Not only is texture to be considered in choosing the material for a costume, but the buyer must bear in mind her own peculiar style, and if, as is often the case, she has no style, she should employ still greater care.

Any extreme of fashion is to be avoided. The only class of women who can afford to adopt extremes are those whose reputa-

tion cannot suffer by any undue attention and remark they may excite. If a woman is small and undeveloped in figure, she may, with safety, indulge in full fronts and *bouffante* effects, and in light colors. But if she be stout, let her study plain, "pointed" effects. She may wear stripes, but not plaids, close-fitting basques and straight skirts, leaving the many pleats and bunched blouse-waists for her more slender sisters. Dark colors are always best for her. Another recent fashion of which I do not approve is wearing white shoes for town-walking. For country lawns and for the house they are pretty; for the street they are "loud."

So much has been said in our daily papers about the "suspender" girl that I will not dwell upon her here. Her time is justly destined to be short.

I marvel that so few women—especially those who are inclined to fleshiness—adopt black as their only wear. Many say that their husbands dislike the somber garb, but were the sable costume lightened by some pretty color, would John object? Orange, violet, or red, covered with black net or chiffon, makes a pretty vest for a black silk or lace costume, and is bright and tasteful, while there is no lovelier combination than black-and-silver or delicate gray. Jet or steel trimming gives a handsome finish to a gown, and relieves dulness. Amid all the changes and chances of fashion, happy and safe is the woman who possesses a well-fitting black street-dress and a handsome black silk, velvet, lace, or satin gown, for she need then never be under or over dressed.

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