

stood on the stairs and confronted Daisy's grieved face, she began to realise the existence of a spirit higher and purer than her own.

Perhaps it was just because she *could* weep for one who had injured her that Daisy was a happy girl. It was this power of forgetting herself and her own wrongs, and feeling with another, that almost startled Rhoda, so strange did it seem. It was the first revelation that she had ever received of the Spirit of Christ, and she stood amazed and almost awed by the sweetness of it.

"Do you really think we ought to let Maud alone?" she asked, suddenly.

"Just for the present it would be best," Daisy replied.

"Then I will tell my father that she is not well enough to come down," said Rhoda, moving towards the dining-room. "I hardly think he will insist upon her appearance."

Doctor Garnett did not insist, and Maud was permitted to remain in her self-chosen solitude.

She scarcely touched the luncheon that Jane brought her from the table downstairs; heart-sickness, a kind of ailment that was new to this girl, had deprived her of appetite, and the servant carried the dishes away again in some surprise.

"Miss Maud must be really ill," she thought. "This time it is something more than bad temper."

Yes, it was something more than temper; it was the deep sorrow of a sorely-wounded spirit.

After the first reading of Gertrude's letter, Maud had, indeed, burst out into a storm of passion; but her fury soon spent itself, and died away, leaving a dull, deep pain behind. She had called Gertrude hard names, but the outbreak had not relieved her in the least. And as she sat alone in her room, she felt that she would have given almost anything in the world to have been able to believe in her friend again.

She rose and opened her door a little way. There was no one moving about upstairs, and she stole into the corridor and went straight to the room that Gertrude had occupied.

There were many spare chambers in the Doctor's great house, and Miss Sandon's room was left empty. Gertrude and her personal belongings were gone; yet there were many things here that seemed to speak of her still.

There were the mirrors that had reflected her bright face and fairy figure; there was the easy chair in which she had sat while she talked by the fire with Maud. All the little winning ways and sparkling looks of her lost friend came back to Maud as she stood in that vacant room; and she lifted up her voice and wept.

She was still very young, and this feeling for Gertrude had been the most real and intense that her life had ever known. Such treasures as her nature could give she had lavished unreservedly on Gerty, believing that her affection was duly valued and returned. And now to find that her idol loathed its worshipper, and despised her offerings!

She was too miserable to care that her mortification was known to Miss Daugh-

ton and Rhoda. Gertrude's falseness was the only thought that filled her mind; never, never again should she spend happy hours by her friend's side, and listen to the silvery voice that had charmed her ears. It was all over; this first friendship of hers must be buried; but it never could be quite forgotten. A grave that is made early in life is often revisited in later years, even when the sense of loss is gone.

(To be continued.)



THE ART OF CONVERSING AGREEABLY.



It is somewhat difficult to restrict conversation within the limits of any particular rules. To many they would be quite superfluous, for the art above named is a natural gift to them, and they adapt the subjects they moot to the individuals whom they address with intuitive tact and a happy facility in the use of language, but which has to be acquired, as any other art, by the majority of persons.

As these few observations are designed for the benefit of the latter very suffering class, I must direct attention to the close connection existing between conversing and letter-writing. There must needs be the same reflection exercised as to the individuals to whom, whether by word or pen, your communications are made. The age and circumstances in life, profession or other calling; sex, religious and political opinions, health and spirits, and losses by death or of fortune, all demand to be taken into account. Tact, as I have before observed in reference to good breeding, must be cultivated, regulating the choice of topics in your conversation according to the society in which you are placed. In fact, the whole question of making your presence a comfort and pleasure to those with whom you associate, whether at home or in general society, resolves itself into the selection or avoidance of certain subjects in your converse with them. To those who take a religious view of the matter, the words of St. James must be very apposite and familiar, when the power of the tongue is compared to that of fire, which consumes almost all things exposed to its influence.

Let it ever be a standing rule to avoid raising subjects of probable, or even possible, disagreement, and reflect before you speak, when there are any points of dispute amongst your hearers, to which some leading remark of yours might prove like a spark to gunpowder. Thoughtlessness might cause you to be regarded on both sides as a dangerous person, from your apparent lack of common sense, if not actually from being an intentional firebrand.

Divergent views on religious and political questions are, unhappily, a very fruitful source of much estrangement between those who are

bound together by very near ties of kindred, and other mutual interests. In such cases remember that "Silence is gold," as compared with the most interesting observations that might be at all likely to start an ill-advised and irritating argument.

Keep your presence of mind, especially when in the company of any who are wearing mourning; avoid also allusions to accidents when, on collecting your thoughts a little, you might know that a friend of theirs was at sea, or engaged on active service abroad.

Take fully into consideration, as I said, the state of health of the individuals with whom you may converse, and beware of relating circumstances in the experience of others similarly afflicted that would tend to depress and alarm them; nor relate any news, such as of deaths resulting from the same indisposition.

As a young person, you should be very modest in the matter of leading a conversation, of raising your voice above that of anyone else, or of monopolising the attention of the chief speaker, and attracting the conversation more especially to yourself.

Refrain also from any tendency to dogmatizing when expressing an opinion, remembering your comparatively small experience and limited information, and that you are not a Newton, likely to astonish the world by a high order of intellectual power and intuitive perceptions above those of the present company.

Try to forget yourself and those who may be looking at you, and what may be thought of your style of address and language; and, above all things, never interrupt anyone else. Wait scrupulously until they have finished speaking before you utter a remark. Good breeding alone demands of you that you should treat the observations of others, however trifling in character and feebly expressed, as though they were of superior importance to any remark of your own. As a rule, good listeners, who make but few observations, are far more agreeable in society than persons who possess what, in somewhat inelegant parlance, is described as the "gift of the gab," delighting in hearing their own voices and "talking down" everyone else. No matter how entertaining some of their conversation may be, they are felt by their hearers, whose mouths they have closed, as intrusive, vain, and ill-bred.

One more point deserves some passing notice. Unconsciously to yourself, the personal peculiarities, and infirmities of those in your society impress themselves on your imagination; and it needs the greatest self-possession to check yourself in time, before committing a sad act of indiscretion in reference to them. Thus, beware of speaking of a squint, deformity, lameness, baldness, stammering, corpulence, or the reverse; of false teeth, wigs, dyed hair; girls "like lamp-posts," or May-poles; dwarfs, or "crumpies;" and very especially about people being "on the shady side" of middle age, or "old maids." You may say much safely, without wounding the feelings of anyone at home, in the sacred privacy of the family circle, or in a *tête-à-tête* with an intimate friend; but you must set a careful watch on your words when you associate with others, and scrupulously guard against hurting their feelings. A thousand kind speeches would never take the sting from a wound inflicted by one thoughtless word of a personal character. Such observations are never forgotten.

Do not mistake me. I have not unconditionally excluded all these topics of conversation—such as religion, politics, war, perils, accidents, or personal remarks, even when in general society; but I do say, "keep your wits about you," and do not introduce them in a heedless way, irrespective of the circumstances, appearance, and opinions of those around.

"There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak," is a saying of Divine wisdom.

We will suppose that some friends are come to spend an evening with you, and your mother, not being very strong, depends much on your exertions to entertain her guests. You neither sing nor play, and, your friends not being very young, you have not any resource, such as that of introducing juvenile games and "small fun." Worst of all, you have never studied the art of conversing agreeably; and thus, when you have exhausted the subject of family news and polite inquiries for others, you are reduced to great straits, and make the most of inviting your friends to partake of this and that at table; and subsequently of showing them photographs, or making yourself a nuisance in urging them to sing or play in your stead. Better never to invite your friends at all than to inflict such a trying entertainment upon them.

To spare both them and yourself, collect together some little scraps of news which might prove of interest: new improvements, discoveries, inventions. So far as possible, keep the conversation from mere "tittle tattle" about your neighbours. One of your guests may be an artist, another very musical, a third a great reader. A naval or military man may be present, the rector of the parish, or the minister of the chapel which you attend. If a poor specimen of a "conversationalist" yourself, the next best thing is to act as a kind of prompter, and start a succession of subjects which will give your guests the opportunity for conversing amongst themselves. For instance, you ask the artist which pictures in the — Exhibition struck him as the most remarkable; and this may open a considerable field for interchange of opinion. When a little pause gives space for another remark on your part, you might observe that you "understood So-and-so's picture, entitled —, had sold for —, and you considered the price was —," which will elicit other opinions; and you may thus take advantage of your friends' brains, and, it may be, superior education, on a great variety of subjects. Under any circumstances, do not hurry them from one subject to another, which is fatiguing, as well as unsatisfactory. Allow time for a brief pause when the last subject has been exhausted; and then address the musician, offering an opinion on the last new piece of music you had heard, or on a concert, or the singing in church—no matter what, provided it be *à propos* of the art, or other pursuit in which he or she may take an especial interest. In so doing you have again started a theme which will find more or less of response, and die out after a time. To the clergyman you might name an interview with a fellow-parishioner—either an invalid or a poor person—or make a remark connected with the school, or a charitable guild, &c. He is trained to speak freely, and he will aid you by giving you questions to answer, thus supplying information to those who care for it, and "keeping the ball going" without much aid from you, when once, as the acting hostess, you have judiciously supplied a theme. Should there be an old naval or military man present, you might make a remark to him relative to the current news of the day in connection with either service; and supplement your first observation by a second of inquiry as to whether he were ever serving in the countries named, what he thought of the locality, climate, people, living, &c. If an elderly or old person, he will enjoy relating his early experiences; and to prove a good listener will be nearly all required of you, after having turned the course of general conversation into an agreeable channel. As a rule, all old people—women as well as men—enjoy being asked to relate the incidents and describe the impressions of their long-past lives.

Doubtless, some one in the party has been away, or ill; or is expecting a relative home, or is anxious about the health or to receive news of a friend. In such a case, and especially if any sympathy be needed, go over and place a chair by her side, and turn completely towards her, and say you have come to have a little special chat with her. Then ask all about herself, and listen attentively to what she will tell you, abstracting your thoughts from all other conversation for a time. Of course, questions of a prying, inquisitive character, respecting matters not usually made public, are not the style of questions to which I now refer; those on your neighbours' pecuniary circumstances, and any scandal connected with their friends, being especially unseemly and intrusive. Writing for young people, I may perhaps be excused for giving advice on what appears so very obvious, including my earnest charges to make use of no description of "slang," whether of the fledgling, ostler, or æsthetic type.

But perhaps some reader may complain that I have done no more than recommend the asking of leading questions, and suggested certain subjects for promoting the conversation of others more qualified to speak than yourself. True, but I can only do my best with the materials supplied to me; I cannot create better ones. You apply for my aid simply because you lack the natural gift of both originality of thought and fluency of speech. I cannot give you new and striking ideas, nor the eloquence that will clothe them in beautiful and poetical language; nor can I supply you with that wit and dry humour wherewith "poor Yorick" was wont—said Hamlet—to

"Set the table in a roar."

But by means of a little reflection, and judiciously adapting your questions and observations to suit each guest at your feast, and never allowing your eyes or thoughts to wander when the replies are given, or at times when you are yourself addressed, you will have made up, to a very considerable degree, for your natural deficiency in conversational powers.

But the art under our consideration may certainly be cultivated, and by degrees the shy and the least bright amongst "our girls" may acquire a certain amount of facility in expressing themselves. Some years ago a very sensible article appeared in one of the leading daily papers on the subject of training boys and girls, at an early age, to relate stories and incidents which have come under their notice. It struck me at the time as a piece of most valuable advice, tending greatly to further the future interests of those who have thus early learned to arrange their thoughts, and express them in suitable words.

Classes should be formed in every school for the purpose, and parents should include this training as an item in the catalogue of their children's home-studies. It needs not to be a dull lesson; far from it. If no little incident should have occurred which the children could be made to relate, give them a short story to read; and, when well acquainted with the main facts, place the young scholars in a row before you, and bid them each, in their turn, to give you the story in their own words. The lesson might even be converted into an amusing game by their paying a forfeit for every superfluous word with which stories are often interlarded by way of gaining time for thought. All children enjoy the game of "forfeits," and it might easily be adapted to the purpose under consideration.

As in a case of stammering, so also, and equally, in one of ordinary inability to make a relation agreeably, two or three rules must have due attention. Speak slowly; a hurried articulation makes your hearers sympathetically nervous. Do not hiss your words between your teeth, nor look away from the persons

whom you address, but turn quietly from one to another. Never begin to relate a history without first collecting your thoughts, and centring them on the main point of the story, from which they must never be allowed to wander—as in a portrait, there must be a centre of interest, to which all other objects must be subservient. The red military coat, or the various accessories surrounding the chief subject of the picture, must be toned down, and such a prominence should be given to the face, and such a light thrown upon it, as to attract the eye from all else at the first glance, and cause it to form the principal feature in the whole design, however beautifully the rest be executed. Exactly so separate items must be noted in every story; but the main fact to be recorded in each should always be given an especial prominence. Think of this chief point of interest, not of the mere words in which you narrate the history.

My second rule is that you should make your sentences short. Persons who lack eloquence must not venture to employ many words. My third rule is to avoid any "stop-gap" words and phrases, which are only used to give more time for recalling the events when your thoughts have wandered from your subject.

To elucidate what I mean, I will give a specimen of very ordinary story telling.

"Do you know what happened when I was at—at—uh—at, what's the name of the place? Uh—at Wimborne; staying at the—you know—that hotel up on the downs—or rather, I should say, at the turn of the road, on the top of the hill. Well—uh—but I ought to have said that, when we started, I was told that the horse was disposed to shy, and the carriage was a light one. It was a phaeton, or, I should say, a victoria. Well—uh—I forget where I was? Oh—ah—yes. We were trotting down the hill, you know, when—uh—we saw a white post, or something white, at the side of the road; and—uh—and, you see, the horse—the horse backed. So when the servant whipped him, he made a plunge or two and upset the carriage. Not at first, you know, but dashed us against a heap of stones; and—and—uh—of course I was thrown out."

Imagine how such a story-teller would exhaust the patience of the listeners! Yet eloquence would be thrown away on so simple a narrative. Ask yourself what the main point of that story must be. In this case the upset of the speaker. Relate the circumstances in very short sentences, and in plain, simple language. Thus:—

"During my stay at Wimborne I was thrown out of a carriage" (this is the main point of the story). "The horse shied at a white post at the side of the road, and dashed us against a heap of stones." *Voilà!* Persons who lack a ready flow of good language should try to abridge their sentences as much as possible, be careful to make no mistakes in grammar, and avoid having to retrace their steps in the narrative on account of circumstances which should have been previously named, as they usually forget then where they were in the sequence of the events described, and lose the thread of the story.

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