

THE ETIQUETTE OF CARD-LEAVING.

By S. F. A. CAULFEILD.



is an undeniable fact that the whole universal creation within our mortal ken, or stretching away into invisible, and almost illimitable space, must be ruled by certain laws. A "needs be" exists for a wonderful and complicated machinery, whereby all things are governed and held in place by an infinitely wise and almighty providence, which from the grandest works of creation, down to the minutest living organisms, holds all in their fitting place and permits of no confusion. No creature, no atom exists that does not show its subjection to these Divine laws. So, likewise, all our trivial works, words and ways must be regarded as trifling only when compared to those of the supreme Creator of the universe, and must take pattern, in however humble a degree, from the exactitude and perfect order displayed by that Higher Power.

It may, at first sight, provoke a smile when, from scanning the title of this little article, my readers proceed to note the grave introductory words that follow. But great principles underlie all rules of good breeding, as I have before represented to them, and demonstrated also very elaborately, as I hope. And we may also trace them to a certain degree even in the apparently unmeaning rules and exactions of etiquette.

Do not feel superior, my reader, to what may appear insignificant. Try to realise the grand axiom that "nothing is a trifle," nothing is beneath your consideration. By an everywhere existing and divine ordinance we are under obligations of good will and service to our fellows, both high and low, as well as to those duties which exclusively relate to our Creator, and these are all distinctly specified in Holy Writ. Amongst our duties to our neighbour we find that we must be "pitiful" and "courteous," "gentle" and "unto all pleasing," "rendering honour to whom honour" (is due), "condescending to men of low estate," and bound to "show hospitality without grudging." To assist in carrying-out these obligations it was necessary to adopt a code of rules which should be of general acceptance, so that there should be no confusion; but that in all our intercourse, one with another, everything should be "done decently and in order," and so as to "give no offence to any man." In obedience to such commands as those quoted from Holy Writ, we shall "walk in the ways of wisdom" and shall assuredly find them "ways of pleasantness," and that "all her paths are peace."

And now, remembering that "courtesy" is of Divine obligation, as well as the constant endeavour to be "pleasing" "unto all," we may find innumerable little ways and means

of fulfilling our duty to our neighbour, no great acts of devotion and self-denial being often required of us. The little friendly courtesies of society, such as obtain in our several ranks of life, are therefore never to be despised, nor ungraciously withheld from those around us, nor any mistakes made, nor misapprehensions occur to disturb the friendly intercourse between us and our associates. A well-defined code of rules has been laid down by common consent, extending to the mere custom of "card-leaving" and complimentary visitings.

The use made of visiting-cards constitutes a species of "sign language," the little cards bearing our names carrying a message that needs no interpretation by word of mouth nor by letter. For example, it denotes a reciprocal feeling on our part as to the forming of a friendly social intercourse, in return for a visit received. It may denote our willingness to take the initiative in the welcome of a new resident in our neighbourhood. It may acknowledge our obligation for hospitality accepted. It may express our solicitude in cases of illness, and our sympathy in those of bereavement, as well as of congratulation on some happy family event. Without, it may be, a single word written upon them beyond our name and address, we may show both friendship, appreciation of hospitality, and that sympathy in joy or sorrow which it is incumbent on us to express, if we would "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

From the numerous answers given in this magazine on the subject of complimentary visits, and the usages of polite society in reference to the "leaving of cards," it is evident that a brief article thereupon will be acceptable to many. The cards themselves and the persons entitled to use them should be considered in the first place. There are titles of distinction which can, and others which cannot, appear on a visiting-card, nor may they be used as a prefix in giving a personal introduction. For example, the title of "Honourable" must be dropped when you introduce the possessor to a stranger, and it may not be placed on a visiting-card. But the case is different in regard to the address given on a letter, or on any printed list; when it must be invariably prefixed to the Christian name if unmarried, or preceding "Mrs." The habit amongst ill-informed if not vulgar persons usually below the circle of upper-class society, of omitting the prefix "Mr." or "Miss" is inadmissible amongst thoroughly well-taught and highly-bred persons. In the case of women it is usually an indication of masculine proclivities. It is rough and unfeminine, although many young women of really womanly natures may copy the style from others less well-bred than themselves, and not from any innate roughness. In any case the omission of the common prefix of "Mr." "Mrs." or "Miss" may be condemned as very "bad form" amongst those who claim to be regarded as belonging to the class distinguished by the term "gentle."

I can remember the time when women's visiting-cards were tinted and embossed. One example is still fresh in my memory, which was of a delicate pink colour; and stamped with rays, springing outwards from the name in the centre, where they were very fine, and widened as they diverged from it, to the outer edges. The cards were covered with a shining paste, or enamel, whether of a plain white, or coloured, which could not be written upon, and was chipped off if the card were bent. But no such fashion now exists. The incon-

venience experienced, when it was desirable to write upon this composition was an objection which an equally smooth, hot-pressed card does not present. The style of engraving which they bear, whether in ordinary writing, Roman capitals, or old English type, is perfectly non-essential; and a matter of unrestricted personal fancy. But if in ordinary writing-style, flourishes are very inelegant, and out of place, and have a vulgar appearance. They seem to present an index to the character, to a certain extent, of the writer; and to denote a good deal of ostentation; which is always very objectionable. The form and dimensions of the card itself, is simply a matter of fashion at the time of purchase; as also the question of a pure white, or a cream-coloured hue, and the thickness or thinness of the card. It is usual to place the permanent address in the *dexter* corner, and if a man's card, the name of his club in the other. The daughters of the house should have their names engraved under that of their mother; but if she be dead, and they be of full age, they may have a card of their own, inscribed, "The Misses So-and-So," or "Miss —," and underneath it, "Miss Julia —."

If visiting with a friend, and you chance to have no card with you, inscribe your name underneath hers. But if the case be reversed and you oblige her by adding hers, write it above your own. All titles, with the exception of "the Hon.," as before observed, and furthermore, of Baronet (or "Bart."), together with the distinctions indicated by the initials "K.G.," "K.T.," "D.L.," and "M.P.," and such-like, should be omitted on a visiting-card. The custom of inscribing the names of a husband and wife on the same card is no longer correct, according to present usage; but when a brother and sister keep house together, the sister's card (which is always of full size, not small, like a man's) should likewise bear her brother's name above her own, not "Mr. and Miss" So-and-So, on a line, as though they were man and wife, according to the practice now no longer in fashion; and so, likewise, when the eldest daughter keeps house for her widowed father, she has his name inscribed above her own. After dinners, afternoon receptions, parties, suppers, and, in fact, after all entertainments, with the exception of luncheons and teas, cards should be personally left. When persons "in society" leave town, in accordance with general custom, when the season is over, it has ceased to be customary to leave farewell cards, inscribed with "T. T. L.," "P. P. C.," or "P. D. A.," and the "thanks" returned to inquirers after illness or other domestic affliction, are not printed nor written, on special cards designed for the purpose; which was *de rigueur* till quite recently. The ordinary visiting-card without inscription, and thanks verbally given, are now regarded as an equally gracious acknowledgment; but when calling to make inquiry after a friend or family, in cases of sickness or other affliction, write "To Enquire" at the top of your card; if married, on your husband's as well as on your own; unless the case be that of a confinement, it would not be etiquette to leave your husband's. A widow's period of seclusion may be known as terminated by her sending (not leaving) her cards to her friends, before which indication on her part, it would be intrusive to call for the purpose of a visit and personal interview. No wedding nor funeral cards are now in use. Some member of the family, appointed so to do by the persons chiefly concerned, writes to give invitations, and due notice of the dates.

A first visit should be returned within a week at most, whether the visitor were admitted, or had to leave a card only. The resident of longest date in any locality has the privilege of taking the initiative, and calling first. But when there is an acknowledged precedence in right of bearing a title, precedence in the option of calling must be accorded to those of the highest rank. It would be an act of very intrusive assumption for any untitled gentlewoman, however nobly born, to make the first call on a titled member of her own class "in Society," apart from the familiar intercourse which obtains between friends in a more simple and homely way. Cards are now left wholesale when making a round of visits, and by general consent are accepted as equivalent to a personal visit, a practice which was in former days regarded as very uncomplimentary and offensive. Should the acquaintance whose visiting-card has been left be one who holds a higher position in society than yourself, do not ask whether she be "at home" for the purpose of paying a visit in return for the mere receipt of her card.

There is one rule which may never be set aside in the question of card-leaving, *viz.*, that they may never be sent by post. If unable, for any special reason, to leave them in person, they may be sent by a servant or private messenger. Gentlemen may leave cards on ladies, but ladies do not call on them, excepting on the occasion of a dinner, party, or other entertainment at which she has been a guest, provided that such party were given at his private residence. But it would scarcely be a settled custom for her to leave her card on him, were the hospitality to be shown at a club or hotel. In the case of an ambassador (or a minister) a lady is at liberty to leave her card on him at the Embassy, and, if she be married, with that of her husband. A mother does not leave her sons' cards, nor does a sister those of her brothers. When on a card-leaving expedition,

if the lady called upon be married, leave two of your husband's cards with one of your own; if a widow, or unmarried, leave one of his cards and one of yours. If there be a husband living at the house where you leave cards, then send in one of your own (as a lady does not leave them on men) but two of his (your husband's), as men may "pay their respects" to ladies in this manner.

When calling for the purpose of seeing a friend, and she be at home, do not announce yourself by giving your card to the servant to be presented, but give your name, very distinctly pronounced, to the servant who is to conduct you to the reception-room; and, if you be married and unaccompanied by your husband, leave two cards for him, on taking your departure, on the hall-table, or one only if there be no master of the house.

Supposing that there were daughters already in society, you should leave a card for them turned up at one side if for more than one; and if by chance you failed to bring out a second card, or had only one left after making many visits, it is permissible to fold up the side of that which you leave for the lady of the house, to indicate that you have not forgotten the daughters of the house, nor failed in showing them due attention. In great houses a hall-porter is kept, who enters the names of visitors, and distinguishes between those who seek admission as visitors, and those who leave cards only; as these memoranda serve as a guide to the lady of the house when returning the attentions she has received in a similar manner.

When people have neither the leisure nor the means of keeping up a large circle of acquaintances, and have but a very limited number with whom they are on more or less friendly and intimate terms, it would be regarded as a slight were they to leave a card in lieu of a friendly visit; a very extensive visiting roll alone necessitating so formal a style of showing an attention, and that the caller does

not desire to drop the acquaintance, though unable to spare time for an interview. The usual hours for both leaving cards and paying visits of ceremony, are from three to six o'clock.

It is only on intimate friends that you may make a morning call, unless by express appointment. When a visitor leaves cards only, you may return the call in the same way within a fortnight. Of course the earlier a visit is returned, the greater the compliment. I almost forgot to observe that the words "Senior" and "Junior" must not be employed on a visiting-card. If necessary to make any such distinctions the junior members of a family must prefix the surname with one of their Christian names. Young men should have cards from the time they go to the universities, or at least are out in society at about eighteen or nineteen. When making a long round of visits and card-leavings it is advisable to take a "Court Guide" in the carriage, or to make out a list for the coachman that he may take certain streets in due rotation, and so save time, and also the necessity for using the check-string, giving your directions out of the windows, and raising your voice so as to be heard in the noise of the streets.

Before concluding I must supplement my directions in reference to the error of sending in your card for the servant to present, in lieu of announcing yourself by name only when you desire a personal interview. One exception to this rule should be observed. In calling on a stranger to take up the character of a servant, and with no view to paying a complimentary visit, you may send in your card accompanied by a message to indicate the purport of your visit. As a rule you should make a previous appointment, and be scrupulously careful to be punctual, so that the lady who has specified the hour at which it may suit her to receive you for your advantage, not usually her own, may be in no degree inconvenienced by the interview.



HAPPY ON PRINCIPLE.

"Look at life through happy eyes!"

TURNING over bewildering heaps of cards at a bookseller's counter in the festive season, such a motto as that for a new year's greeting was like coming upon a glint of gold-dust amid the refuse of the diggings. Small though it was, it was a sign of the times. Instead of the old meaningless wishes for—

"Plenty of roses and never a thorn."
"Troops of friends and never a care,"

it took its stand on quite another principle, and, putting aside idle dreams of a paradise on earth, contented itself with facts and realities as they are, or may be made.

It is a cheery, hopeful sign, for it is the mouthpiece of many an Englishwoman now-

adays. They are showing plainly that an earthly paradise with thornless roses is not their idea of happiness; they have "got leave to work in this world," and all ranks and conditions are taking advantage of such permission. Health of body and its twin sister, occupation, are coming into the front ranks more widely year by year, and a life without a definite purpose is now hardly conceivable to some as worth having.

All this is bright indeed within certain necessary limits, for there can be no doubt that Goethe's theory of happiness has much of truth in it, that it consists in faithful obedience to a pursuit assigned to us by Nature through the capacities she has given us. He goes so far as to say that "the usefulness and effectiveness of life depend on the right choice

of one's vocation, and therefore that to choose aright is the greatest of duties, not so much for the sake of others, as for one's own happiness and inward harmony."

It would take too long to discuss in this place whether that last sentence is selfish or otherwise, whether it may not be in the end the best way of "living for others" to develop oneself to the utmost. Anyway, I think we are being taught to-day that it does matter about being happy, though many people speak slightly of it as a thing of quite secondary consideration. And that brings me to the subject of this sketch, whose opinion on the point is worth having, for she did at least learn to "look at life through happy eyes."

It is not to Fanny Burney, as the authoress of *Evelina*, that I would listen just now, but