

LITTLE WAYS.



A PERSON with a terrible temper we can put up with: we know all about it, and being warned, are armed. How carefully we avoid treading on the thin places of the good nature of that being! We take every possible precaution with so-and-so, and consequently we find him delightful. The same holds good with the

sullen one of our acquaintance, or the malicious. The faults of these are "writ large," and we give the failing wide room. It is the "little ways" that are really so provoking, the pins of faults that prick so hard. Why should I be so cross with the lady who brings an umbrella into my drawing-room where I and half-a-dozen others are at tea? It cannot really be of moment that she should try to find a place for it in impossible corners and against tables where it inevitably falls down; but it is a worry.

Why do people so often repeat their farewell messages and good-byes? Even through the closed door you may hear them saying "Then you *will* come on Saturday; *mind* you do," or "I'll be sure to bring it back; *good-bye*."

The incurably tidy person in a house is almost as tiresome as the inveterately untidy. The one puts every possession you have into some perfectly proper place, but one which it would never have occurred to you to choose for it; the other never can spend ten minutes in any room without bestrewing it with unnecessary odds and ends: both are unreasonably trying to the temper. The friend who talks every trivial subject through and through, plagues us quite as heartily as the person from whom no more than a bald comment on the most notable occurrence can be extracted; worse than either is she who repeats every remark we make, by way of answer, "The Browns were quite well, were they?" "Mrs. Jones' cold was worse, was it?" "You went to the Smiths', did you?" till your harmless speech is transformed in your mind to a savage one. Who does not know the worry of an acquaintance who finishes every sentence before you are half-way through it? "I had a delightful afternoon yesterday—" you begin, "At the twopenny concert? Oh, yes it *was* lovely," your visitor says, when you did not

even know there was such a thing as a twopenny concert! or else, "I think this weather is—" "*Atrocious*—yes, it really is," says your friend. You were going to say "delightfully bracing," but that is nothing.

The people whose tastes are never the same for six months together are tiresome, too. An elderly visitor, perhaps, to whom one wishes to make the house agreeable, comes to stay, and mentions that he always sleeps with his head at the bottom of the bed, and his feet where the pillows usually are, and things are so arranged for him. Before his next visit one gives lessons to the housemaid, and the room is prepared amidst the giggling of the maids in this eccentric fashion. He comes, and in five minutes rings the bell, and with upraised eyeglass inquires why his couch is thus topsy-turvyed? He has changed, and forgotten the fad of yore, but it is a "little way" that is provoking to his hostess. A lady who has travelled a great deal takes lemon in her milkless and sugarless tea. We bear it in mind, and when she comes a year later arrange and present cut lemons with pardonable pride. Alas! "*Milk*, if you please, and plenty of sugar," says the dame in an injured tone before a roomful of people. Her whilom "little way" has faded from her mind. The people who find some fault with everything you do, whose praise always has the sting of a "but" at the end which transmutes the whole into a reproof, the people who ask your advice, request addresses, patterns, information, lists of books; and never take any scrap of all for use, are provoking. The acquaintances who talk of what has befallen Augustus, Wilhelmina, Lady Flora, Basil, Cyrus, Amelia, or Lord Eustace, as if you knew all about them, when you have no faintest idea of their personality, plague you much. The girl who never seems to enjoy any amusement you provide for her, and who never observes such small courtesies as writing to acknowledge a gift, or recording her safe return after a visit; the one who covers sheets of paper with accounts of the merest trifles, the person who is effusively friendly at one time, and apparently forgets your name at another, all these things provoke one to disproportionate wrath.

When I was a school-girl I remember one night in the dormitory we were criticising, not in the most kindly fashion, the dress of some new arrivals, when the conversation was interrupted by a remark from the far corner of the room where slept a little girl of ten, who had, by the way, been sent early to bed for bad behaviour. In her somewhat deep voice she said slowly, "Thophy Thutton! turn your eyeth into your own wardrobe, and be thtill."

I often think of her when I make unkind remarks on the "little ways" of my neighbours, but they annoy me nevertheless, and in spite of my knowledge that my own ways are equally provoking.

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