

rasped on the rind of a fresh orange, crushed to powder, and added with half-a-teaspoonful of the best mixed spice that can be bought: that at two shillings a pound is really cheaper than spice at a shilling; nothing more certainly spoils anything than poor spice. Next put in a couple of ounces each of candied citron, lemon- and orange-peel, very finely chopped: trouble in this direction is well bestowed; finally, two ounces of grated cocoa-nut and the same weight of walnuts or almonds, as most convenient, go in, with half a

pound of pastry-flour and a quarter of a pound of corn-flour.

The mixture is then to be set aside to blend in a bowl, covered with a cloth, for a few hours; it will take no harm if left all night. When ready to bake, shake in as much more flour as will make it stiff enough to roll out and cut in shapes—fingers, or any other—then put it in a gentle oven, and remove when brown and crisp. Remember that everything containing treacle requires steady heat and watchfulness.

DEBORAH PLATTER.

THE SOCIAL DUTY OF WOMAN.—III.

A VISIT OF SYMPATHY.



VISITS of sympathy may be roughly divided into two classes. To begin with, there are the formal calls of condolence, where all you desire is to leave your card silently, or, if needs must, get through a few well-bred commonplaces, and escape as quickly as you conveniently can. If you are only a slight acquaintance, you do not ask for the lady of the house; and it is unnecessary to add that in any case you devoutly hope the card "with sympathy" may be all that duty requires of you. Either alternative is, at any rate, all that Society demands.

Real visits of sympathy, on the other hand, are like angels' visits: few and far between. It is a platitude to say that to be able to pay visits like these you must have a sympathetic, feeling heart. Unless you happen to be gifted with this "last best gift of Heaven," you will do more good by keeping away. It is a pity, I may here remark, that we do not know our own gifts and limitations better than we do. The poet was wise in his generation who wrote—

"The proper study of mankind is man."

And few accomplishments would be a better equipment for the journey of life than a thorough knowledge of ourselves.

To begin with mourning visits. None of our social duties demand so much from us as these. The really sympathetic visitor—whom we suppose in this case to be more or less intimate—must have sufficient tact

not to intrude where she is not wanted; for as often as not, people like to be alone with their grief. There is nothing in which people differ more than in their way of meeting trouble. One woman (we speak of women, because they are mostly concerned in visits of sympathy) on the loss of a beloved relative will be excitable, wild, nervously anxious to see friends to discuss details; another, not less devoted, but differently organised, mourns solitary, like David for Absalom, and will not be comforted. It is all a question of temperament. The human machine is so complex that one rule will not do for all. But the sympathetic woman will understand both types, and will know that the first does not imply callousness any more than the second implies loss of reason. Kindly, but not far-seeing, people are very likely to misunderstand the peculiarities of grief; indeed, in one case which I myself recollect a visitor was much shocked because a mother who had only the day before lost her only child was fretfully anxious that the cook should have a new kitchen poker. The kitchen poker and the fretfulness were only the outcome of a troubled mind; but the friend ever afterwards persisted in thinking the mother deficient in feeling. A person of a different temperament, but not necessarily more affectionate, would probably have sat down in the ruins of her home, and felt it hardly worth while even to dress in the face of such calamity. Either case proves nothing. But if people with excitable nerves did not in ties of affliction "take it out" by fretting over trifles, the mind might in some cases become absolutely unhinged. The fretting is the safety-valve.

Next among visits of sympathy we must class visits to the sick and the convalescent. These, which used to be called one of "the seven corporal works of charity," are often a source of untold good, both to the visitor and the visited. And this not only as regards the rich, but the poor also. How many a girl has enjoyed her evening's pleasure all the more for having spent a happy afternoon with the inmates of some hospital for incurables, where she has sung and played?



A VISIT OF CONDOLENCE.

How many a lady of fashion feels her hour's reading in the children's ward to have given a "backbone" to a day that would otherwise have been wretched from very emptiness? It is, perhaps, a significant sign of the times that hospital and work-house visiting have become, in a way, fashionable; and girls are no longer expected to lead empty lives, doing no good in their generation. Mr. Ruskin, in his celebrated "Letter to Young Girls," gave excellent advice on this subject. "Serve the poor," he says, "but for your lives . . . don't preach to them. They are probably, without the least knowing it, fifty times better Christians than you; and if anybody is to preach, let *them*. Make friends of them when they are nice, as you do of nice rich people; feel with them, work with them, and if you are not at last sure it is a pleasure to you both to see each other, keep out of their way." Could anything be better or more outspoken than this revolt against the business-like way of visiting the sick poor that was prevalent in the old days? Readers of Dickens's "Bleak House" will doubtless remember, in this connection, the worthy Mrs. Pardiggle's visit to the unregenerate brickmaker and his sick family:—"Mrs. Pardiggle, who had been regarding him (the brickmaker) through her spectacles with a forcible composure—calculated, I could not help thinking, to increase his antagonism—pulled out a good book, as if it were a constable's staff, and took the whole family into custody. I mean into religious custody, of course; but she really did it, as if she were an inexorable moral policeman carrying them all off to a station house."

Visiting our sick friends—though it may be much easier than a mourning visit—yet demands a good deal of intuition. Sick people are often cross and irritable, old age is exacting; and we must make allowances for these failings. One cannot have a better example of want of tact than is given in the well-known story of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle. Mr. Carlyle, as everybody knows, was immersed in his work, and did not very often see his wife when she

was ill. She was suffering from violent facial neuralgia, which prevented her shutting her mouth properly. Mr. Carlyle meant well, but "he disliked an open mouth; he thought it a sign of foolishness." So he said: "Jane, ye'll find yerself in a more compact and pious frame of mind if ye shut your mouth."

Almost second to this in tactlessness is a story of a lady who visited a little sick cripple-girl of fifteen. She looked at the child with tears in her eyes, and evidently wished to say something kind, but knew not how. At last she took the bull by the horns. "Poor little girl!" she said; "how sad for you to have to sit still while others run about and play! But you are resigned, aren't you?" Now, this was about the most unfortunate speech that could have been made. The subject of her affliction had never been by any chance mentioned either by the child or by her friends. It was a fact that could only be made worse by being talked of. The reference was cruel, and most unintentionally so on the part of the visitor, who, happening to be herself the mother of nine children, ought to have known better. But, as Charles Lamb somewhere says, the real maternal feeling is not always—indeed, not oftenest—to be found among mothers of large families. A lonely spinster, with real sympathy, would not have made such a blunder as the foregoing.

Tact is a kind of second-sight—quite as extraordinary, when you come to think of it, as some of the wonders of the Psychological Research Society. Tact makes us know what subjects will be distasteful, and what pleasant. It is a kind of large unselfishness, a power of throwing one's self temporarily into other people's affairs, and of seeing with their eyes. If the sick friend you visit be in pain, it is better, however intimate you may be, to find out first from the servants whether she wishes to see you. No amount of intimacy justifies intrusion; and often it

happens that the sufferer will turn her face, like Hezekiah, to the wall, and only pray for silence. If you do see her, do not hold her hand or sit on the bed; and if she be nervous, do not tell her with pride that you have no nerves yourself. And at the risk of seeming unpleasant, I must add, do not call her "Poor dear!" oftener than you can help. It is better not to be unduly commiserating; I have often felt a quite distinct pain after a visit from a too effusively sympathetic friend. I need hardly add that it is unwise to dilate, as some ladies will, on their own and their friends' past severe sufferings and ailments. All this would argue kindness, but hardly tact.

There are certainly some few people—few and far between—in the world who only show their kindest side to people in trouble. These, if you happened to be so unfortunate as, say, to break a leg in front of their door, would take you in and "do" for you with the greatest kindness; but as long as you are happy

dom of heaven" would undoubtedly, if a census could be taken, be discovered to be the favourite text of the poor, who evidently derive some consolation from this assurance of equality in the end; it comes in with their sense of the fitness of things. Our surroundings encircle us too much; they keep our fellow-creatures' misery out of sight. A poor man, reduced to the lowest ebb, will more often beg from another as poor as himself than from the rich—

"He turns from that cold succour which attends
The unknown little from the unknowing great;"

and often with a better result. The poor know what suffering is, and hence they are pitiful.

Visits of sympathy to the poor are distinctly a social duty, and these demand no less intuition than any other. They can always be paid, for "the poor we have always with us." It was, I think, Goethe who said that we should every day see a great picture, hear a fine piece of music, and read a stirring poem. It would be well to add to the above and pay a "visit of sympathy" to the poor, given of the charity

"That blesseth him that gives and him that takes."



THE CONVALESCENT.

and prosperous, they will take no notice of you. We need some such good Samaritans, for the world in truth is generally but too ready to "pass by on the other side."

The poor are more sympathetic as a class than the rich. Part of the cause of this is not far to seek. They are nearer together; there is not so much "flummery" dividing them; there is not a hall, two housemaids, or three footmen between them and the starving stranger at the gate.

"How hard it is for a rich man to enter the king-

dom of heaven," before quoted, our duties are to poor and rich alike, and in all cases sympathy is needed. Sympathy is a great gift. In this connection we might transpose St. Paul's saying, and write that "if a woman have all other gifts, and have not sympathy, she is become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." After all, it is much like charity: "it suffereth long, and is kind"; it "endureth all things." And unless you can "endure all things" in this sense, do not venture forth on visits of sympathy.