



INVALIDS may, I think, be divided into three classes.

First, there are those who suffer from some incurable complaint, and who are rarely able to leave their bed or couch. They are debarred from taking any active part in life's business; and yet what a wonderful amount of useful work they manage to get through sometimes! I have in my mind, as I pen these words, a friend of my own, now happily no longer an invalid, who was for many years a prisoner to her couch, suffering from spinal complaint, but who was always cheery and busy. Her room was the brightest in the house. All the family went to her for help and advice, and from that sick-room went forth many tender, helpful messages to those "in any ways afflicted or distressed."

The second class of sufferers are those whom we may call "arm-chair" invalids. They do not, perhaps, suffer from any definite disease—their cases would be easier to treat if they did; but, owing to some inherent delicacy of constitution, they rarely know what it means to feel well.

We are very sorry for them, oh yes, but we do not accord them the sympathy which we bestow so lavishly upon class Number One. "Oh, it is only so-and-so," we say lightly; "she is always ailing," and we speak briskly (perhaps she even thinks a little heartlessly) as we tell her not to think about her ailments, but remember how many there are who suffer far more than she does. This may be very true, but I do not think it makes our arm-chair invalid's lot any easier to tell her it, and the aggressively cheerful person must, I fear, often be distinctly irritating to the overwrought nerves of the sufferers.

It is *so easy* to be cheerful where our own personal comfort is not concerned! But let us try sometimes to put ourselves in our invalid friend's place, and realise, if we can, what it must mean to feel so often weak and ailing, and, while not actually ill, yet to be unable to

take any part in the active enjoyments and pursuits of life. It is not an enviable lot, my readers, is it? Rather it demands our fullest sympathy.

To the third class belong those who are recovering from recent illness, and whose invalidism is merely a temporary affair.

And now a few words to the invalids themselves. I know, only too well, what suffering means. If this were not so I could not enter into your feelings so fully; but, believe me, the best, nay, almost the only panacea for all our troubles, physical and mental, is *occupation*.

The less we dwell upon our own worries and sufferings, and the more we try to enter into the joys and sorrows of others, the better for ourselves and all those around us.

It is useless to nurse our troubles; it does not lessen them;—indeed, the more closely we hug them to our side, so much the more magnified do they become. It is far more philosophic to accept our lot, bravely and patiently, and endeavour to make the very most and best of it. Contentment is the wisest physician we can call to our aid.

Amongst the many pleasurable pursuits of which our invalids may still avail themselves I accord the pride of place to

READING.

It has a charm which no other occupation can offer, and a well-written story can often make the sufferer forget, for a time at least, the pain and weariness, and soothe and rest her as nothing else would have power to do.

But I would not confine the reading to fiction merely; it is well in this, as in other things, to have a definite plan and to take up a course of literature—History, Travel, Biography, Science; there is rich wealth to choose from, and in poetry a whole world of delight is at hand. If fond of poetry it is a good plan to learn some favourite pieces by heart; repeating them over and over again to oneself will frequently help to while away many sleepless

hours, while sometimes the repetition of the sweet, musical rhythm will even act as a sedative, and refreshing sleep will ensue.

Next in importance to reading I place

WRITING.

We do not want to be selfish and self-centred in our occupations ; I do not think, however, that any one can call reading a merely selfish employment. A well-informed mind is, or ought to be, a pleasure to all who come in contact with it : but writing certainly calls for more unselfishness, and therefore, perhaps, may not be quite so pleasurable. We may not all have "the pen of a ready writer," but in this, as in everything else, it is wonderful what practice will do.

Most people can write a bright, pleasant letter ; they may not all *like* doing it, but after a time it will become astonishingly easy, and they will be amply repaid for the effort when they think of the gladness those kindly written words brought to some toiling sister. There are many societies thankful to have such letters for distribution in our hospitals, prisons, etc., while "The Girls' Letter Guild" is always pleading urgently for new lady members.

Of this society I can speak personally. It is doing most excellent work, and the honorary secretary (who is also its founder), Mrs. Young, Acle Rectory, Norwich, is always glad to give inquirers all particulars of the work.

MUSIC

is almost always a pleasure to the invalid, but her enjoyment as a performer must, of necessity, be somewhat circumscribed, owing to the limited number of instruments open to her.

The mandolin is a charming instrument, and is not, I believe, very difficult to learn. Much pleasure may also be derived from the practice of the auto-harp ; and some of our arm-chair invalids might even take up the guitar, zither, or banjo.

If our invalids have a taste for drawing or painting, a whole fund of enjoyment is open to them, and they will readily find a means of utilising their talents, so we will now proceed to notice a few more homely ways of employment.

There are many pretty ways in which "crinkled" paper can be used, and it is exceedingly nice work for delicate hands. Dolls dressed in this way look very effective and sell well at bazaars, though woe betide dolly's dainty costume when tightly clutched in eager, childish arms !

Lamp- and candle-shades, fire-screens, table-centres, and "Butterflies" are a few of the uses to which crinkled paper may be put. It also makes extremely pretty plant-pot covers, and it is worth remembering that plants having such a covering thrive better than those encased in highly glazed or painted pots. Yet another use for it is in

FLOWER-MAKING,

and here artistic taste may be brought into requisition with really wonderful results.

A bouquet of flowers made in this way and exhibited, some time since, at a flower-show, so far deceived a gardener on duty that he was about to bestow upon it a sprinkling from his watering-can, when the attention of the exhibitor was called to his well-meant intention, and the flowers were saved. Thus closely and cleverly can Nature be imitated.

A novel way of utilising used postage-stamps, both English and foreign, is to paste them upon quaintly shaped jugs, jars, or plates, giving them a coat of varnish when dry. Matchbox-cases, bellows, and even small tables may be treated in this way, and present a curious and an uncommon appearance. Crests and monograms may also be used in the same way, and these have almost an "old china" appearance, and look very handsome.

The needle may be employed in such a variety of ways, familiar to every reader, that I will only mention one form of needlework which may perhaps be new to some, and that is the "autograph" tray-cloth. Procure a fine linen hem-stitched cloth, and all over it, in every available space, get your friends to write their names, which you must then embroider in various-coloured washing-silks. The cloth, when finished, will look better if lined, and it should be edged with a broad knitted or crochet lace. It will seem almost like a pleasant companion to you, when you are enjoying your early morning cup of tea. The sight of so many familiar names, and the well-known handwriting, will arouse all sorts of happy thoughts, and, in imagination, your room will be peopled with forms familiar and beloved.

And now, in conclusion, let me express the earnest hope that some of the occupations suggested in this brief paper may be the means of helping to brighten some weary hours for my invalid readers ; and may it also help them to realise that their greatest happiness will be found in employment !