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A Neglected Virtue.

BY FRANK E. R. MILLER.

Hospitality is one of the first virtues as well as one of the finest courtesies of life. One can do nothing better for a friend or confer a higher honor upon a stranger than to throw open the doors of his house with a generous invitation to join the family circle for a time. In the construction of a modern house a blunder fully as serious as the omission of a bath-room or a heating plant is the failure to provide one room more than the family will ordinarily need—a guest chamber. As an aid to culture and refinement, as a means to the proper training of the children in good manners and self-respect, there is nothing more effective than a wise and liberal hospitality. To the fact that his parents kept open house for the circuit preacher, the occasional sojourner, the visiting friend from the old home in the East, many a young person in the middle and western part of the country owes his early and useful knowledge of the ways of the world, his ease in society, and a fund of information gathered from the conversation to which often he has listened in breathless interest.

Hospitality is only one degree less valuable as an educational measure than travel. Next to seeing all lands and peoples and customs is to meet those who have travelled in different parts and brought back in their conversation specimens of what their faculty of observation picked up, understood and retained. It is true that "as iron sharpens iron so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend," the parent who denies himself and his family of growing children the benefit and pleasure of an occasional guest must be regarded as stupid and stingy and selfish.

But this virtue should find its spring not only in the fact that a guest in the house is a source of inspiration, that he leaves behind him the influences of his individuality, that the Scripture enjoins hospitality on the ground that we may be entertaining angels unaware, but also in the truth and obligations of brotherhood.

Emerson in his essay on "Friendship," says: "We are hidden to men by every sort of tie, by blood, by pride, by fear, by hope, by lucre, by lust, by hate, by admiration, by every circumstance and badge and trifle, but we can scarce believe that so much character can subsist in another as to draw us by love. Can another be so blessed and we so pure that we can offer him tenderness?"

Yet this is the very thing men need. When they come on voyages of discovery in our neighborhood they do not relish a flight of poisoned arrows, but they seek the gold and silver of our hearts. In some directions mankind is not slow to recognize and act upon the fact. The sick are visited, the dead are buried, the orphan is housed. In these matters benevolence lies in actions, not in feelings and sentiments. Are we aware that the possession of the capacity of hospitality carries with it an obligation of use? Many are not unlike Rebecca's Aunt Miranda. The child had been sent to represent the family at a missionary meeting in the church. During the session the speaker offered to remain in town for two days and tell more of the Lord's work if entertainment could be provided. "A pall of silence," says the evidently observant and well-informed author of "Rebecca," "settled over the assembly. There was some cogent reason why every sister there was disinclined for company." The little girl could not withstand the insult of that silence and therefore invited the missionary with his wife and children to the "brick house." But when she got home and imparted the news that company would be at the house within two hours, to stay all night and the next day, she met this rebuke from Aunt Miranda: "Explain if you can, who gave you any authority to invite a parcel of strangers to stop here over night, when you know we aint had any company for twenty years, and don't intend to have any for another twenty—or at any rate, while I'm the head of the house."

I say that there are a good many people who belong to the same hard shell club as Aunt Miranda, whose motto seems to be: "Don't do anything for anybody unless you can't help yourself, and when you can't help yourself, do just as little as you can."

It is a sad commentary upon the deficiency of the Christian people in our Baptist churches in respect of hospitality to know that a commercial traveler who visits a given circuit of towns, each town on an average of two Sundays in a year and a half, and makes himself known to his brethren, teaching in Sunday school, leading an occasional young people's meeting, never in the course of twelve years has had an invitation to step into a Baptist home. Look in the direction of the transient young people in the school and business life of almost any community and it will be found that the same outrageous neglect obtains.

Who is not acquainted with a substantial two-storey dwelling, planted firmly and attractively on a little natural terrace that fronts a fine residence street in town? Neatly kept, its out buildings screened from view by a stone wall or a painted fence it meets the approval of one's eye and inflames his pride in the town of which it is an ornament. But one day when a sight-seeing stranger asks,

"Whose house is that?" the resident is astonished to find that he has little more to say than, "Why that—that house over yonder?—that's old Scroogeley's place." For he remembers that he has never been invited to step within its doors, that he has never seen its curtains up at night and cheerful light within, that he has never heard of a generous feast being spread upon its board or a visitor being conducted to its guest chamber from one year's end to another. Somehow he is sorry that the stranger ever saw that house at all. Turning to the sight-seer he says: "But, have you seen Mr. Greatheart's cottage? It isn't much of a place architecturally; but it's a fine place to visit."

Is the reader sure that Scroogeley is a non-professor of religion and that Greatheart is a deacon in the Baptist church? Where is the pastor who does not sigh for householders who are given to the cultivating of the neglected virtue of hospitality?—The Standard.

The Purple Emperor.

The purple Emperor dropped from the topmost branch of a big oak and flew out into the sunshine. He was the proudest of all the butterflies, and that was natural, because he was the most beautiful.

He begged his wife to join him as he frolicked about and spread his strong wings under the blue sky. But his wife would not leave her home on this topmost bough. She was minding the eggs she had laid there ten days ago.

"Our caterpillars will soon be hatched," she said, "and you know I must be here to look after them."

"I didn't know," said the purple Emperor crossly, and his purple wings flashed unkindly as he flew above her head, "and if you don't come I shall go and see the world by myself, and I shall not come back for a long time."

Besides being the handsomest he was also the crossiest of all the butterflies, which was a pity. His imperial wife, however, was never very sorry when he went from home. He was in truth very selfish. He never allowed his neighbors to come and see him, or enjoy the view from his own oak branch; and he was always quarrelling with the butterfly strangers who stopped upon the wing to wish him good-day.

"The honey in the flowers will be sweet this morning," said his wife, quite good-humoredly, for she was not easily disturbed by her husband's crossness; "you will have a splendid game beyond the wood."

"You do not understand me," said the purple Emperor loftily. "I do not intend to look for honey out in the big world, or to waste any time in playing near the wood. I know of something much better—across the grass where the harebells grow, down the big hill. Is it a pity you are so stupid, and sit all day on your branch?"

And his wings shone more splendidly than all the purple raiment that was ever woven, as he flew away over the harebells, to the top of the big hill.

There a little brown moth flew away up from a plain leaf and fluttered respectfully before him and began to speak. But his Majesty was very haughty this morning and would not listen.

"Do not hinder me," he cried; "I am on my way to the pool at the bottom of the hill, where a dainty meal awaits me; I cannot stay to talk to a common moth."

"I do not want you to talk to me," said the brown moth kindly; "I only want to tell you of the boy who sits beside the pool with the great catching-net over his shoulder. But before the moth had finished speaking the Emperor was far out of reach of the friendly words, and was frolicking away to the pool at the foot of the hill, where the boy sat with the catching-net.

What a delicious meal there was in the pool! It was not there yesterday, but the great world, of course, knew the tastes of the purple Emperor and gave him what he desired.

"How greedy he is!" thought the boy on the grass; "how can he feed on such nasty things? I shall not want the net this time." And he stepped quietly to the pool and took the purple Emperor between his fingers. Before the proudest of all the butterflies had recovered from his surprise, he was in the boy's killing bottle feeling very sleepy, and trying to remember what the brown moth had said at the top of the hill.—Little Folks.

"Tricky Religion."

"Ethel dear will you open your heart to me and tell me why the one I thought more serious than any of my scholars at the opening of these glorious meetings has refrained from taking a stand for our Saviour in spite of all pleadings?"

The hand in that of the teacher trembled, but the child thus addressed made no reply, and so her pleading friend continued:

"Something is keeping you from consecrating your young life to Christ, something which might possibly be removed if you would tell me where the trouble lies. Do you not feel any inclination to serve the One who died that you might live?"

"Yes, yes, teacher," was the ready response, "I'd love to be a Christian. I would truly but, but—"

"But what, dear? Tell me frankly, for it breaks my heart to see my best loved pupil out of the fold."

"I—I don't like to tell, teacher, but it's folks that are keeping me out," was the broken reply.

"Why, child, do you know that you are making the same excuse that has, I verily believe, kept more people out of the kingdom than all others combined? Am I one who, by bad example, is hindering you? Tell me, truly," pleaded the faithful teacher.

"No, no! I'd love to be such a Christian as you are, for you are always so good, but it's other folks who talk so good in meeting, and—and—well, their religion is awful tricky anyhow."

"You are doubtless thinking of some of the older scholars who profess to serve Christ, but forget to be loyal to him when out of meeting; but you must not look at them, for they are still young and have much to overcome. You do not need to look beyond your own home, Ethel, for examples worthy of imitation—your godly parents, I mean who are so anxious for the salvation of their only child."

"But—but it's them I mean!" blurted out the child. Then realizing that her secret was out, which meant seeming disloyalty to her parents, the child tried to stammer some excuse which ended in a sob.

The teacher drew the weeping child to her, but knew not what to think or say, for the parents of Ethel, though not cultured people, were looked upon, outside the home at least, as an exemplary Christians; and so teacher and scholar walked on in silence, broken only by the sighs of one and the sobs of the other, until the latter said brokenly:

"I didn't ever mean to tell't was my own folks what was keeping me back, but it was out before I knew it."

"Yes, dear, I understand," said the teacher in a soothing tone; "you did not intend to be disloyal to your good parents."

"No, I didn't truly!" was the emphatic reply, for they are good, too, most times, and I love them, and if only they didn't have such tricky religion, I'd like they want me to."

"Tricky religion!" exclaimed the puzzled teacher. "Why, child I never heard of that kind before, but is likely your way of saying that they are inconsistent."

"I don't quite know the meaning of that last word teacher, but I'll own up what I mean. It is like this: Pa talks real good in meeting, but his religion is awful tricky; Why, just last night four 'fore he went to meeting he pounded his finger, and then I heard him use a swear word. I did truly and I just can't forget how mad he gets at every little thing, when he up and asks prayer for his little daughter."

The latter words were said in a tone so sarcastic that the listener ventured a rebuke, but the child, seemingly determined to make her meaning clear, now that she had told so much, continued:

"And—and ma's religion is tricky, too. Yes, it is, for a fact!" persisted Ethel, as the teacher attempted to hush her. "She talked so sweet in meeting to-night that she made lots of 'em cry; but when she begged sinners to confess Christ, and looked right at me, I wanted to do like some of the rest of them did, for about a minute, and then I thought how she scolded a blue streak this morning 'cause her bread was sour, and boxed my ears just as though I was to blame, and then I did not feel like one mite going forward."

The teacher was speechless, but the child voiced her sentiment when in a spirited tone she added:

"If there wasn't such tricky religion folks wouldn't be coaxed to have the right kind."—Selected.

At the Necktie Counter.

"Black neckties, if you please."

Drummond, the salesman, stared across the counter at the speaker, as if his thoughts were in Egypt.

"What is it?" he said at last.

"Black neckties. Silk."

Drummond threw a box down. The customer opened it.

"These are red—and not silk," he said, quickly.

"Nobody wears black silk now," Drummond said, yawning and looking indifferently at the plain old man before him. Then he took up the box and threw it back into its place.

"Have you none of the kind I want?" asked the old man.

"No; that kind of goods went out years ago. We don't keep 'em," said the salesman, insolently.

"There are plenty of black silk ties," said Saunders, the man at the next counter, in an undertone.

"I know; but what's the good of bothering with an old back number like that? Methodist preacher, I'll bet five to one! But I was telling you about my cousins, the Harts. The three brothers all left the village and came up to town. One is now a railway boss, one a banker, and the third a sugar man—all of them millionaires."

"A lucky family! How was that?"