

hasty walk taken soon after, and one of these inquisitive people will not rest till he has fitted upon an unlucky victim one of several accommodating stories he has on hand to account for strange circumstances. And how that busybody gloats over the news when he finds out who that letter was from, and what it was about; how he glories in it if one of his nice little stories happens to be somewhat like the truth! For a while he tantalizes his victim with the knowledge of the secret; tiring of that sport he sells it off to the highest bidder at the next auction sale of scandal; then with renewed zest and freshened faculties starts again, spider-like, to weave new webs for future captives.

It makes one shudder to contemplate a poor wretch pursued by one of these scandal mongers; one could almost believe in the bodily existence of "avenging Furies," bloodthirsty Erinnys in modern garb.

In some people unscrupulousness unites with inquisitiveness. In the vicinity of such there is no keyhole safe, no hiding place undiscoverable, no lock that cannot be tampered with. They are over-fond of investigating your possessions, of overlooking your papers and books, of peeping into your desk or private drawers; should they ever find something strange or queer, some inexplicable article or circumstance, they are all alive with suppressed eagerness; ask out-of-the-way questions and scrutinize your face while you answer, note whether you change color or display uneasiness, and imagine it where you do not; very, oh so very confirmatory of what they suspect! Then, after exhausting surrounding sources of information, go abroad, complain of the degeneracy of the age, and gradually dropping from the general to the particular, throw out some stray hints, and follow them up with a few indefinite interrogatives, till some desired item is extracted; by the time they have carried through several such scenes, stories are afloat which in the end reach you, the innocent origin of them, and of course are refuted; then when found out how that mischief-maker fawns and cringes, and declares that it was quite unintentional!—he never meant any harm, oh, never!

But about the most aggravating of all inquisitive people is the unconsciously curious friend; he or she, whichever it is, bothers you continually with questions, un-

important, yet questions that take so much time to answer. If out with you upon the street, they must know the name of every person you recognize, and you are fortunate if they stop at the name; pedigree and occupation are sure to be asked for, if not a history of your acquaintance; then, "why did you do this?" when you know that if they taxed their thinking powers for half a minute the reason would be evident; they gratify their curiosity at your expense, instead of their own. At first you answer calmly and indifferently, inwardly pitying their stupidity; they are acquaintances if not intimate friends or relations, and must be treated with politeness; patience gives out sooner or later, and you begin to mutter your replies in a rather ungracious style; but they are as obtuse as a grindstone, and no more discern your vexation than the same grindstone would take notice of the steel that it was sharpening. Suppose you are trying to solve some stubborn problem, when this friend brings you from the depths of calculation by the query, "I would so much like to know why you wear that ring on your fourth instead of your third finger?"—"Because I want to," you growl.—"But why do you want to?" etc. More questions follow, and you have to go through a catechism that would gladden the heart of an inveterate tease; but it is so innocently done that you cannot be rude; hints are thrown away—as senselessly attempt to storm a fortress with bows and arrows as attempt to pierce such an intellectual hide with a hint. Your relieve your over-burdened mind with a muttered invocation to patience or some other heathen deity, then meekly resign yourself, till Fate considers you sufficiently chastised and your tormentor ceases.

Curiosity in children is excessively troublesome. So long as their questions are about things which it will profit them to know, we consider it a sort of a duty to make martyrs of ourselves for their benefit, but when they grow inquisitive, particularly about one's own private affairs, why then we feel that that child ought to be brought to realize the truth of the adage, "Infants are to be seen and not heard." A condensed statement of facts never satisfies them; the details, the whys and wherefores, must be duly set forth, not once only but several