

A FEW WORDS ABOUT VISITS.

The poetry of the world is fast dying out. Love means a good bargain. Devotion means going to church in the morning on comfortable Sundays, and hospitality—well, we are forgetting what that does mean. It is a tradition, the rounding period of our grandmother's epitaphs.

I am a maiden lady, a little ancient, yet not old, I teach all the year round, except in vacations. Last winter a married schoolmate living in N—, wrote me a pressing invitation to visit her. "Come any time," she said. "We are always delighted to see you; only be sure and come, dear M." I am not credulous in the matter of invitations, having certain horrid examples of imposition ever before my eyes; but this I really thought I must accept. The summer vacation came, and a bright June day brought me to the home of my friend. I spied her as I came near the house drawing her baby in the yard, looking very fresh and pretty in her bright pink dress. I hurried a little, all ready for a warm embrace. Lo! the tips of her fingers, a tiny kiss on one cheek, and, "I'm very happy to see you, Margaret," in a tone that means, to sensitive ears, "I will be polite, but I wish you were in Joppa." My heart sank, but there was no help. Into the house I must go, and there must I stay ten mortal days. The invitation mood had passed off.

I resolved to make myself useful, and began vigorous embroidering of baby hoods a crocheting of baby-sacks; but I soon made the pleasing discovery that all this was calculated upon beforehand. These were the things that visitors would be likely to do! I did think in time to refrain from adding to the washing and ironing, and expressed the utmost indifference to certain rides and excursions which were proposed in the evident hope that I shouldn't wish to go. The price of provisions was discussed at the table in a way that made me afraid to take a second cup of tea or piece of cake, though the basket was always passed with the gingerbread side towards me.

The ten days came to an end. I packed my trunk with a lighter heart than I had felt since I had unpacked it, stretched my conscience woefully to say what a pleasant time I had had, and sped away with unutterable reflections. After riding five or six hours in cars and stage, the reflections were somewhat dulled by a decided sensation of faintness; for you must know that the custom of putting up luncheon for departing guests is quite obsolete. No matter if you are well aware they will have no chance to get even coffee and cake before night. Ask them no questions. Bid them good-bye with a smiling face. Urge them to come again very soon, and say "This has only been a call; we want a long visit next time." Then shut the door, and give a sigh of relief that that is over at last.

There are myths about sharing the last crust with a friend. There was certainly something in the geography about savage tribes, who revered even a mortal foe under the title of guest. Alas for the romantic faith of childhood. They had probably reckoned the value of the venison steak they had eaten, after they had gone. Don't be too indignant on the general subject. You know very well you didn't dare to ask your old friend George White home to dine with you yesterday, though you hadn't seen him before in a dozen years. You didn't like to risk the storm with madam. It wasn't in her plan to have company to dinner that day. She's a very systematic housekeeper. I told you I was an old maid, but I did once have brothers and sisters and a home, like other people; so I'm not so unpractical as you think. I know the hidden mysteries of housekeeping—the biscuit made in a hurry for unexpected company, the tirade from Bridget, who "won't stir a step to carry wather up stairs afther doin' all this day's ironin'." I know the hurry to finish sewing before the arrival of guests and the hurry after they have gone to make up the lost time; but to grudge all this effort was not the custom when I was young. To tell you the truth I think it was the religion in our little home that made it so easy to entertain guests in season and out of season. The mother's cheerful self-forgetfulness only emphasized the father's serious voice, reading at prayers, "Use hospitality without grudging." It rarely occurred to us to think of the trouble of company. If we did we were soon ashamed of it, and as for the visits of real friends they were the great delight of the year. How unsophisticated—how old-fashioned we were!

After all, it is a fancy of ours that we don't live just to have as easy a time as possible, and that generous hospitality

needn't be confined to the rich. It reflects no great honor on our common nature, if the struggle to make small means meet high prices must blunt our affection, cool our ardor, and change the genial, graceful courtesy of hearty friendship into a mere calculation of trouble and expense. No matter on what "hamely fare we din," or how often the "hodden gray" has to be made over; do let us welcome our friends with simple, old-time sincerity to share it just as it is. If we can't have all the new magazines on the table, or many pictures on the walls, we can be so truly affectionate, so thoughtful of our sister's comfort, so thoroughly hospitable, in the true, old sense of the word, that there will always be in their memories a halo round our plain, quiet home. If we can have all these comforts for ourselves, it argues a miserable, indolent selfishness not to rejoice in sharing them with our friends. We want another Mrs. Opie to write a new chapter on "White Lies,"—the lies of invitation,—and a new apostle to preach on the beauty of ministering.—*Springfield Republican.*

THE AGASSIZ EXPEDITION IN BRASIL.

The Boston Transcript publishes several letters relating to the Brazilian expedition of Professor Agassiz. Among them is a note from Agassiz to Governor Andrew introducing M. Azambuja, the Brazilian minister, and adding:

"The Emperor has overwhelmed me with attentions and given me the most substantial assistance in the way of a steamer placed at my disposal upon the Amazon; so you see that the liberality of Mr. Thayer has already produced more results than any of us could have expected. I only hope that, now that the war is over, the means of the Museum may be so enlarged as to make that institution the most important in existence, within as short a period as possible. We have vindicated our political institutions, let us now place our social condition and our means of intellectual and moral improvements far above those of other nations."

L. AGASSIZ.

A letter from one of Agassiz's assistants contains the following interesting information:

"During three days we spent at the Lake Hyuanuary we caught seventy-six different species, most of them new. The most important was a new genus of the *Chromides*, with a tail ending in the shape of a lance, which Professor Agassiz called after Dr. Coutinho. We were accompanied by the President of the province, who afforded us all conveniences by his secretary, and other gentlemen.

"Our collection is at the present time of seven hundred and seventy-six species, of which six hundred and fifty are new. Professor Agassiz said before entering the Amazonas, he would be satisfied if he could obtain two hundred and fifty species. The result as you perceive is beyond all expectation. The Professor calls it a true revelation for science.

"The species of Para are entirely distinct from those of Tajaparu; the latter from those of Gurupa, these from those of Monte-Allegre, and so on—even between neighboring places the difference is great.

"Besides, the Amazonas contain a large number of provinces inhabited by distinct species. The discovery of this important fact opens a new horizon to scientific investigations, and is the safest basis in the study of the distribution of species.

"This great principle being established, the number of the ichthyological provinces remain to be known and the extension of their limits as well as the causes of their difference. These questions require much labor and study, but their result must be extraordinary, and perhaps the most interesting in the study of nature."

Another letter, dated November 25, says that the number of new fishes found is eleven hundred and sixty-three.

NITRO-GLYCERINE.

Since the invention of nitro-glycerine, about a year ago, there have been two or three accidents caused by its explosion in Europe and one in New York city. At one of the explosions in Europe, Mr. Nobel brother of Alfred Nobel, the inventor, was killed. The explosion in New York city occurred in May last, in front of the Wyoming Hotel, in Greenwich street. The box

containing the article was brought to the hotel by a German from Bremen, and left in the baggage-room for several weeks, where it was kicked about and used as a stool to black boots on etc. One Sunday morning, while a guest of the hotel was resting his foot upon the box to have his boot blacked, he remarked that the box leaked, and asked what was in it. The servant replied he didn't know, whereupon an examination took place, and an offensive odor issuing from the box, it was carried out and placed on the curb stone. The concussion produced by dropping it on the curb stone caused it to explode, and every window in the hotel was broken as well as all the mirrors. The report was heard for a distance of three miles. Only one person was fatally injured by the accident. A subsequent examination proved that the box contained nitro-glycerine, but the German who brought it to the hotel was supposed to have been ignorant of its dangerous character.

Alfred Noble, the inventor of the nitro-glycerine, in a circular dated Hamburg, November 21st, 1865, thus speaks of the accidents that have occurred from its use in Europe, and of its liability to explode when improperly handled:

"Unfortunately, it has been often the case that the workmen have treated the blasting oil like water, whenever they found that it did not explode by ignition, and thus it has happened that leaky tin boxes, filled with blasting oil, have been soldered; that blasting oil mixed with water has been dried in a kettle on a blacksmith's fire; that frozen blasting oil has been placed into drying furnaces, and on boilers of high pressure; that cartridges have been charged and provided with fuse in wooden shanties, where straw and gun-powder were spread on the floor, with a tallow candle sticking to the wooden partition; that blasting oil has been swallowed on account of its sweet taste, etc.—thus making it miraculous that in spite of all this so few accidents have happened by its use.

"Every new invention is liable to have its disadvantages exaggerated, and its benefits underrated. Now the gigantic power, and the great advantages in the use of blasting oil, cannot be denied; hence, it only remains to make a prudent and careful use of it, and I shall do all in my power to remove the danger by introducing elastic flasks (*packflaschen*) provided with safety-plates, which will make its explosion a matter of impossibility, even against the heaviest blows, these metal plates melting at 100 degrees Celsius, (boiling point of water,) thus preventing the blasting oil from becoming overheated in a closed space to the degree necessary for exploding, but allowing it to run out in case of conflagration and burn harmless, as it will always do in the open air.

"I constitute myself responsible to furnish the proof before a committee of experts, that no accident of any kind can happen in transporting, storing and using my patent blasting oil, if the means of precaution are employed which I have proposed; and, further, I am convinced that the use of my blasting oil will lessen the accidents which accompany the use of blasting powder."

EXPERIMENTS MADE IN EUROPE.

The following experiments were made in Europe last summer, partly to show the difficulty of exploding the nitro-glycerine in any other manner than that patented by the Engineer, Alfred Nobel, and partly to show that in several respects the nitro-glycerine is less dangerous than the common blasting powder.

First trial—A quantity of nitro-glycerine was poured on a flattened stone; a red-hot iron bar was then made to wear along the surface of the nitro-glycerine without igniting it, and finally placed into the blasting oil, spread on the stone, which, after being warmed, took partly fire and burned with a flame, but without exploding. After removing the iron bar, some undecomposed oil remained on the stone.

Second trial—A cavity in a stone was filled with nitro-glycerine; a burning wood shaving was introduced, and on stirring it, the nitro-glycerine burned with a flame, but without exploding. The combustion ceased as soon as the shaving was consumed.

Third trial—Several glass bottles were filled with nitro-glycerine; these bottles were thrown with great force from a height against a rock below. The bottles were shattered, but without, however, exploding the oil.

Fourth trial—On the suggestion of some of the gentlemen present, who desired that the preceding trial should be re-

peated, with the nitro-glycerine warmed to a more than ordinary temperature, three bottles filled with this agent were heated in warm-water to 50 deg. Celsius, or 120 deg. Fahrenheit. These bottles thrown with great force against the rock, shattered likewise, without causing an explosion of the blasting oil.

Fifth trial—A cartridge of tinned iron, filled with nitro-glycerine, was placed in a kettle with boiling water, without producing any result.

Sixth trial—Two flasks of tinned iron, (of the same kind as those used by the Nitro-Glycerine Company,) filled with nitro-glycerine, were packed into a wooden box, as is customary in forwarding them. After having screwed down the cover, this box was thrown from a height of 9 or 10 feet, upon the rock below, and without any result.

To make sure of the quality of the material used in these experiments, a borehole of 10 feet in depth was charged with 3 pounds of the same blasting oil. The effect of the blast was astonishing. The charging of the blast was as follows: After having introduced the blasting oil, a paper stopper was inserted into the borehole, but without touching the oil. A handful of powder was then poured therein, the fuse applied, and after introducing another small quantity of powder, the borehole was filled with sand.—[*Bulletin.*]

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HOLY LAND.—An exchange says the improvements which are taking place in Judea are very great. For some distant around Jerusalem there are extensive plantations of young olive trees, and in and about the city the new buildings are both numerous and handsome. Every European nation seems anxious to have a footing in the Holy City.—[*Bulletin.*]

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