

"PROVIDE THINGS HONEST"; OR, THOSE TWO YOUNG HILLS.

By GRACE STEBBING, Author of "Wild Kathleen," "That Aggravating School Girl," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A GOOD OPPORTUNITY.

"AND pray, miss, what may you be wanting?"

This question was addressed to a young lady one afternoon, by a woman standing behind the counter of a small shop in a quiet street in Islington, and the answer was so long in coming that we will meantime go back an hour in the day to tell how Margaret Hill came to be out on an errand that she was so timid about explaining.

Mrs. Hill had been suffering with a bad headache ever since she got up that morning, and as the heat of the day increased it had become so much worse that she had told her two young daughters she must go to bed, leaving them to dine without her, and spend the remainder of the day according to their own inclinations.

"You had better take a good walk, I think, girls," she said, pausing a minute at the door of the sitting-room before she went upstairs. "I shall get well more quickly, I expect, if I am left quite to myself, and fine days at this time of year should be made the most of."

Then Mrs. Hill went upstairs, and, while Margaret sighed, lovingly, "Poor mamma!" her younger sister ran across from the window at which she had been standing, seized her round the waist, and danced with her up the room. This little unexpected ceremony completed, she set her free again, with the laughing remark—

"There, madam, you are taller and older than I am, but you are not so strong, you see."

"Nor so thoughtless and unfeeling either, I am glad to say," answered Maggie, reproachfully. "Whatever can you be thinking of, Nelly, to act like this when mamma is suffering? You have quite bewildered me."

"So it seems. Poor, dear, ruffled-up-the-wrong-way, old Dolly," said Elinor, laying her cheek against her sister's as she spoke. "But don't be too shocked, Maggie dear, for I really am very sorry that mamma is not well, although I can't think a headache such a solemn affair as you do."

"If you do not, you need not laugh and dance about it," retorted Margaret, with her fair cheeks still flushed rather indignantly. And Miss Nelly's laughing face grew more serious as she answered—

"But I am not laughing and dancing about any such a thing; only it does seem so delightfully fortunate that you should get such a splendid opportunity to go out and sell our collection, without mamma's discovering the matter."

Margaret's face cleared suddenly. Some weeks ago the idea had occurred to the two girls to earn some money for the purchase of a new silk dress for their mother by the manufacture and sale of a number of little articles such as they saw in bazaars and fancy shops. Making the things had proved easy enough to their clever young fingers, but the last few days they had grown rather despondent as to the possibility of disposing of them without their mother's knowledge. For months they had not been outside the house door without her, and a request to take a lonely walk would certainly arouse her wonder and questions. As Nelly remarked, "What could be more opportune than the present liberty?"

"How stupid of me not to think of it!" exclaimed Maggie. "Why, it's the very thing, Nell. What o'clock is it? I wonder whether we should have time to go before dinner?"

"It would be much safer if we could," said

Nelly, eagerly. "Mamma's headaches are such uncertain things. She may be quite well, and up again, two hours hence."

"You speak as if you thought that would be half a calamity," replied Maggie, but with a smile this time, instead of angry astonishment.

The end of the matter was that Elinor decided to stay at home, in case their mother should want anything, or should wonder why dinner was served late; and Margaret, burdened with a full carpet bag, and overburdened with a long string of injunctions from her young sister not to let the things go too cheaply, and to take care that she was not robbed of the money they gained on the way home, started out on her first expedition as a saleswoman.

Elinor watched her sister from the window with sparkling eyes as far as she could see down the street, and then seated herself at the table with a pencil and a piece of paper to make a calculation of the sum that Maggie would have in her purse when she returned.

There were twelve pen-wipers, and innocent, inexperienced young Elinor Hill put opposite that first entry "Twelve Shillings." One or two of them were so tastefully ornamented with small, brilliant-coloured feathers, that Nellie paused for a few moments in doubt whether they should not be priced at two shillings each. She had seen some, a little while since, not a bit prettier, ticketed at half-a-crown. However, it would be nicer to get more than they expected, instead of only the exact sum she counted on; so she jotted down her "twelve shillings."

Twelve book-markers came next—"six shillings."

"Twelve pairs of dolls' boots and shoes—nine shillings." Most dainty little affairs, made out of kid gloves and odds-and-ends of silk and cashmere. As Nelly jotted down that item her heart glowed with pardonable pride as she murmured the ejaculation—

"And they may just think themselves lucky folks to get them for that!"

"Twelve dolls' bonnets and hats, six shillings."

"Doll's ornamental bed and bedding"—Maggie's *chef d'œuvre*—"five shillings. And much too little too," was again the commentary on the price. "But I know Maggie won't ask more; she is always so humble about the things she has done herself."

Then "Twelve dolls' aprons and pinafores—four shillings."

Altogether the list was quite a long one. There were dolls' frocks and muffs and jackets, sets of table mats and little bags, pincushions and thimble-cases, each and all of which Elinor Hill priced according to bazaar prices. When every article of their manufacture had been set down and duly valued, Nelly reckoned up the amount, and clapped her hands for joy when she found her sum amounted to very little short of the required number of pounds.

"Why," she murmured, gladly, "with another fortnight's work we shall have all we want!" And full of that satisfactory thought, she flew up to the bedroom to turn over the precious bag of scraps which had proved so useful lately. Meantime, golden-haired Margaret pursued her way with light feet. It must be confessed that her heart beat somewhat rapidly, and her cheeks were very flushed, but those were the effects of a timid dislike to walking alone and having interviews with strangers. In her mind there were no more

misgivings than in her sister's as to the success of their loving undertaking.

CHAPTER II.

"IT IS NAUGHT," SAITH THE BUYER."

MAGGIE walked on steadily, as one who perfectly well knew her destination. More than a week since the two girls had been out with Mrs. Hill for an afternoon's constitutional, during which they had stopped at a second-rate, all-sorts kind of fancy shop to buy some stocking cotton and exercise-books. The owner of the shop had been very civil, and, while Mrs. Hill was choosing her cotton, she had offered a number of small articles for the inspection of her younger customers, with the remark that she always took care to have on hand a good selection of pretty and useful nick-nacks to suit all ladies' tastes.

"Capital, Maggie, capital! she'll be just the very person to buy ours," whispered Elinor, pulling her sister outside the door whilst their mother paid for her purchases.

More deliberate Margaret looked somewhat doubtful as she replied—

"How do you get at that conclusion, Nell? She keeps on hand a good collection to sell—"

"Just so," impulsively interrupted Nelly. "But if she has them to sell, she must buy them first, don't you see?"

Nelly's reasoning, as was often the case, brought Maggie over to her way of thinking, and when they returned home the bill in which Mrs. Hill's change had been wrapped was carefully taken possession of, and the name of the shopkeeper and the name of the street in which she lived at once learnt by heart. Thither Margaret was now bound.

When fair-faced young Maggie reached the shop she stood for at least five minutes looking at the things in the window, as though making up her mind which of them she would buy. In reality, she was concocting the sentences with which she meant to offer her dainty wares, and trying to lay in a stock of breath with which to give it utterance.

At last the shop-door was pushed open, and the carpet-bag carrier entered. But alas for the efforts of the past five minutes! When Dolly got as far as the threshold she stood still again in a sudden panic. She had forgotten every word of her speech, and she was almost breathless!

The shop-owner stared at the new-comer with considerable surprise, as was natural, and at length rather sharply asked the question with which the chapter opened—

"And pray, miss, what may you be wanting?"

Neither Mrs. Budgen's temper nor her wonder were improved or lessened by the reply. After a further short pause came the astonishing answer—

"Thank you—I—I—think—nothing."

"Umph!" exclaimed the woman, with a sort of snort. "If that's the case, then I'll say good-morning to you, miss. I'm going to my dinner."

And, so saying, Mrs. Budgen flounced round, and had actually entered the little sitting-room behind the shop before her unsatisfactory visitor arrested her with the hurried cry—

"I—I—beg your pardon—I mean—something."

Maggie was afraid of the shopkeeper, especially now that she had aroused her to such a state of hasty impatience; but, to confess the

truth, she was still more afraid to think of facing Miss Nelly with the admission that she had made no attempt to accomplish the object of her errand. She made a desperate effort to fight down her nervousness. Walking forward to the counter, she hastily lifted her bag on to it, and, with trembling fingers, undid the clasps. She next proceeded to undo the paper coverings of the doll's bedstead, which had been carried separately for its greater safety.

Meantime, Mrs. Budgen returned to the shop, and stood looking on with a countenance more mystified than before. She was not used to such nervous customers.

"Is it anything of matching that you've come about, miss?" she asked at last, doubtfully.

"Matching!" repeated Maggie, in an absent tone, and as if she did not know what the word meant.

"Aye, miss, matching!" was the snappish answer. "I suppose you're after wanting to match some silk, or wools, or tassels, to some of the things you've got there—isn't that it?"

"Oh, no," exclaimed Margaret, with sudden energy at the idea that some imputation of incompleteness had been cast upon her goods. "No, indeed! they are all finished off beautifully, I am sure you will find, if you will only kindly just look at them, please."

It was Mrs. Budgen's turn to repeat words now.

"Look at them! look at them!" she said twice over, while her companion hurriedly pulled out of the bag parcel after parcel, and displayed the contents before her astonished eyes. "An! pray, miss," she almost gasped at length—"and pray, miss, if I may make so bold as to ask, why may it be that I, of all people, am to look at all these fal-lals here?"

"Oh!" answered Margaret Hill, in tones of gentle assurance, her courage and confidence reviving as her eyes rested on the really pretty collection she had set out. "Oh! I should like you, please, to look at them before you buy them, and I know my sister would too, to make sure that they are all right and perfect."

Her voice was perfectly decided in spite of the slightly nervous tremor still lingering in it. Nelly making her calculations at home did not feel more innocently certain that their merchandise had only to be offered to be accepted than did Maggie. Poor Maggie!

Having finished her little speech, Margaret Hill was about to raise her eyes to her listener's face, to receive the expected gracious assent to her reasonable proposal, but the next moment she started back from the counter as if she had been shot.

The woman gazed at her for an instant with eyes that literally blazed with anger, and then let loose her indignation in words.

"Before I buy them! Before I buy them!" she shouted, in shriller accents than her listener had ever had to submit to before. "Do you mean to say that you've kept me all this while from my dinner, and dawdling here, to look at your trumpery rubbish because you thought that I'd buy it! I wouldn't give you a shilling, no, nor a paper of pins, for the lot, so there."

With those last words, happily for poor, young, inexperienced Margaret Hill, Mrs. Budgen turned sharp round, and once more retired to her sitting-room, and her half-cold dinner. Had she remained in the shop most decidedly the startled and terrified girl would have run out of it, and left all the tasteful little affairs made by her sister and herself at the shopkeeper's disposal, even without so much payment for them as a paper of pins. As it was, the packing was the most difficult task that Maggie had ever performed in her life, and the elegant bedstead was huddled into its wrappings with an utter want of the admiring care that had so shortly before been bestowed upon it by Elinor.

(To be continued.)

ETIQUETTE FOR ALL CLASSES.



O many are the queries put to the Editor of this Magazine on the above-named subject—as may be observed by readers of the correspondence columns—that it may not be offering "too much"

of a good thing to collect together fugitive remarks, and answers already made, and to supplement them in the form of a separate article.

The word "Etiquette" signifies a "Ticket," and owes its origin to the ancient custom of presenting a card, containing a list of directions and regulations connected with attendance at Court, to those about to be admitted. As employed by us, it therefore denotes the whole collection of laws by which, in all countries, though customs may vary in each respectively, "polite society" is inexorably governed.

Much that has reference to etiquette may be found, not merely under the title of "The Foundation of all Good Breeding," but likewise in "The Art of Letter-Writing," "The Art of Conversing Agreeably," and "Dinners in Society." But as multitudes who read this paper never dine "in society"—as we understand the expression—and to whom much advice that has been already given must be altogether superfluous, I gather up a few ideas, partly suggested by the correspondence, which may meet the position and circumstances of this class, as well as the better informed.

In the article entitled "The Foundation of all Good Breeding" I endeavoured to demonstrate that certain rules which may appear very trifling are the natural offspring of the highest and noblest feelings. In the present article I wish to point out the fact that amongst these rules of etiquette there are some which belong as much to the young girls of the working class as to those in a higher position. Furthermore, that they are positively essential to their morals and preservation, not alone from the gross evils to which their more or less unprotected situation may often expose them, but also from making most unfortunate marriages, plunging them in pecuniary difficulties and distress. From these remarks it will at once be apparent that the point from which I now regard the question of good manners is that which has reference to the deportment of our girls towards those, of all ranks and ages, not of their own sex.

In common with others, I have been amused, yet even more shocked, with the strange questions raised as to the conduct of young girls and women with reference to young men. Hitherto an extraordinary amount of freedom, and reckless want of caution, as well as of self-respect, has been winked at by the parents of respectable girls of the middle and lower classes, simply because many of them were brought up, or, as I have heard it graphically described, "dragged up," in the same utter disregard or ignorance of the risks run, by infringing the common laws of female self-restraint, tact, and propriety.

At this moment, as I write, my thoughts have been interrupted by loud laughter out-

side my open window. I looked up to see three well-dressed, fine-looking girls—two of about seventeen years of age, and one rather younger—and, as the habit is of many young people, they accompanied their laughter by rolling about, like boats in a swell, first on one side, then on the other, and tumbling up against one another in a very ungraceful way. I enjoy hearing the happy sounds of merriment amongst the young, and can sympathise in the freedom from care, and the keen sense of the ridiculous, which result in laughter at almost an inappreciable joke—for I was one of that class myself, in

" . . . the days that are no more!"

But such *abandon* and complete freedom of action are inadmissible elsewhere than within the precincts of home, or in that of an intimate friend, when all around are on familiar terms; with the merry-makers within some garden enclosure; in a country field, and amongst familiar associates; or at some comic entertainment. But even under such circumstances as these there should be an ever-abiding self-recollection, and slight self-restraint, when in the company of young men; and loud laughter and rolling about are by no means what may be commonly understood as "ladylike," under any circumstances, and outrageously the reverse in the streets.

"Why so?" I think I hear some readers inquire.

Because such utter disregard of propriety, such a public and uninvited display of your feelings and emotions, such an attraction of notice to yourself—directing all eyes to you, even of the "street Arabs"—invites the intrusion of men into your party of merry-makers, naturally disposing them to join you, to learn the nature of the joke. And in thus forcing their acquaintance upon yourself, remember that it is not with feelings of deferential attraction, but with a full appreciation of your lack of proper dignity, and of that amount of maidenly reserve which a girl should always maintain when in the company of acquaintances of the other sex, and even more so in the presence of utter strangers.

Perhaps some may wonder that I should dwell so long on this point. But their surprise will cease when I direct attention to a query recently made, by certain evidently respectable and well-meaning girls, in the correspondence columns, who inquire "how they should act in reference to the strange men who continually address them in the street, and sometimes make an excuse of asking the time, and then join them in their walk, as they (the girls) do not wish to be rude and impolite to them"! The answer given was that such impertinence is generally the result of some lack of dignity of demeanour in themselves—some ill-timed and unseemly laughter or loud talking, inviting the attention of strangers—or from looking in a man's face as he passes. A girl's conduct is thus very often misunderstood, and she has to pay the penalty. Acquaintances are continually formed in this way that may be most unsuitable, and lead to grave and disastrous results. Besides this, they are formed clandestinely, and might be highly objected to by the parents.

I know, from information obtained from domestic servants of my own family, that it is permissible in their class to allow a man to address them without any introduction; and, if found agreeable by the girl, she consents to his "keeping company" with her, should he desire it.

Now, to you, my young friends who belong to this class, I more especially address myself, and tell you that of which you are now quite unaware—that etiquette forbids any man presuming to introduce himself to you; that it is a gross act of impertinence, and