

'Yes, mother, I know it ; but why didn't you make me go ?' Whether books on manners are desirable, however, may seem questionable. Those who have good manners do not need a book, and those who have not will find it hard to acquire them from a book. 'What John needs,' said Sidney Smith of a bashful young man, 'is indiscretion.' That grateful unconsciousness of self which is the first requisite of self-possession, can hardly be acquired by poring over details of information. But on second thought one discovers a really wide mission for a book on such matters judiciously prepared. Even one 'well up' in the social scale may be glad of a hint, in case of a new fashion such as afternoon teas, whether it is expected of one to call after the tea ; or whether in calling upon a friend visiting a stranger it is proper to inquire for the stranger ; or whether, noting that naval officers and professors have a habit of addressing each other as 'Mr.', it is proper to introduce them as 'Mr. ;' while it has been found by the experience of the editors of *Harper's Bazar* that an immense class of *nouveaux riches*, or of those who, if not yet rich, are a little richer than they were last year, apply for knowledge of the proper thing to be done in the very simplest circumstances. Mrs. Sherwood's book is nominally prepared largely for this latter class, although the greater part of the instruction is for dinners of such elegance and social obligations of such magnitude, as to imply that those thirsting for the information have leaped suddenly from poverty to Vanderbiltism.

Granting, then, a call for such a book, we should have known Mrs. Sherwood to be just the one to prepare it, if only from her treatment of social obligations in her story of 'The Transplanted Rose,' where the generous kindness of several women of the world is of the kind that would not have known how to be kind, with the best intentions in the world, except for knowledge of etiquette and manners. It is to be remembered that our young people—by whom we mean those young in society as well as those young in years—need to know what is 'the thing,' less that they may do the right thing, than that they may have that comfort of thinking they are doing the right thing,—which is the surest guarantee that they will do it. The agony of the social novice is something terrible, and if one has lessened the suffering of a single youthful soul by so little as telling which glass on the table is meant for hock, the service is an honorable one. Mrs. Sherwood has prepared her book with taste and judgment. She has tried to help all of us, from those who are 'dying to know' what the English do, to those who inquire of *Harper's Bazar* whether it is really bad form to eat with one's knife. She has shown herself equally free from the snobishness that demands the extreme of 'social usages,' and the snobishness that would refuse to answer the perplexed questions of the *Bazar* correspondents. Her condescension, indeed, to the latter class sometimes seems unnecessarily extreme ; as when she tells them, in regard to the management of a wedding, that the 'bridegroom may make what presents he pleases to the bride,' that 'the father, mother and intimate friends of the bride' usually kiss her as she leaves the house after the wedding, that the manner of presenting the engagement ring 'may' be a secret between the young couple, and that it is perfectly proper for a bride to wear her wedding-dress to dinners during the year after her wedding, 'provided she divests herself of the veil and orange-blossoms.' Here we close our eyes in a delicious effort to materialize the vision of a bride of six-months' standing who should enter at a dinner-party in her bridal robe with the veil and orange-blossoms. On the other hand, there is an occasional insistence on forms of extreme etiquette which, coming from so sensible a source, is equally surprising. Thus we are told that husbands and wives rarely call together nowadays, 'although there is no law against their doing so.' It is insisted upon with a degree of decision in singular contrast with the general latitude of instruction, that of course no one, under any circumstances whatever, will think of introducing two peo-

Reviews

"Manners and Social Usages."*

THE desirability of manners no one will deny. Etiquette, after all, is sublimated kindness—a social law compelling you to be polite where nature does not prompt you to be attentive. Nothing unkind in itself could ever become such a social law, the only danger of exquisite etiquette—the hollowness of society so much regretted by Mrs. Skewton—being that it shall become too kind to the extent of being hypocritical. Even what seems at first the cold-blooded etiquette that permits you to send a card by post, or leave one at the door, is intended, not so much to imply that you need not make a personal call as to insist that you shall do *something* to acknowledge the existence of the individual or the invitation. So grateful is grace of manner to the heart as well as to the eye, that poor Leah of Mr. Fawcett's 'Tinkling Cymbals' touched upon what ought to be a social truth, when she confessed in bitterness of heart, 'The mistake I made was in supposing that perfect manners meant perfect morals.' Ignorance of the world is a far more pregnant source of trouble than knowledge of the world ; a fact long ago expressed by the author of 'Charles Auchester,' when she wrote : 'Innocence is incompatible with wisdom, though purity from wisdom never separates ; to know no evil is to know nothing that can be of service to others in this evil world.' How desirable it is to acquire that knowledge of the world which comes through knowledge of society, and which teaches one to be kinder to others as well as to acquire for one's self the comfort of self-possession, Mrs. Sherwood has herself admirably shown in a paragraph of her new book : 'People who are looking on at society from a distance must remember that women of the world are not always worldly women. They forget that brilliancy in society may be accompanied by the best heart and the sternest principle. The best people of the world are those who know the world best. They recognize the fact that this world should be known, and served, and treated with as much respect and sincerity as that other world, which is to be our reward for having conquered the one in which we live now.'

No matter how much our young people may rebel against mastering the 'manners and social usages' of society, no matter how much higher the individual taste may seem that prompts them to seclusion for literary, or artistic, or musical education, they are not to be indulged in forgetfulness of the 'world.' If they are, the time will come when they themselves will be the first to rebuke us, like the awkward young student in one of Dr. Holland's tales, who, falling in love with a brilliant society girl whom he did not in the least know how to entertain, asked his mother indignantly, 'O mother, why *didn't* you have me go to dancing-school ?' 'Why, my son,' was the poor harassed mother's reply, 'I did everything I possibly could to persuade you to go !'

* Manners and Social Usages. By Mrs. John Sherwood. \$1. New York ; Harper & Brothers.

ple who live in the same town, and that, equally of course, no lady with the slightest self-respect will allow such a thing on her table as a napkin-ring—dread symbol of napkins used a second time without washing ! But as a rule the information is wise, kindly and helpful ; written from the standpoint that a fine-tempered woman can always find etiquette for being agreeable, and that a disagreeable woman can never find etiquette for being rude, or even formal and chilling. If our young men can learn from a book that in taking off their hats to a lady they are to bow their heads and not their *chapeaux*, and if our young girls can take the hint that the young men are so indifferent to their charms in the ball-room because so many of them come without *chaperons* and there is no one to whom the young men can take them back after a reasonable length of dance or promenade—by all means let us have the books. Only why does Mrs. Sherwood personify all elegance and social wisdom as ‘ Mrs. Well-Known Uptown,’ and all awkwardness and social ignorance as ‘ Miss Kansas ? ’ We should enjoy taking Mrs. Sherwood to a little knot of homes in central Kansas, in one of which a prominent New York artist—Mr. Very Well-Known Uptown—said last year in the shooting season, as he leaned back in his luxurious chair and gazed through a vista of *portières* and be-rugged hall into a dining-room glittering with silver and glass : ‘ No, I am not taking back any “ interiors.” If I want a Kansas interior at any time, you know, I can run up the steps of any Fifth Avenue house and get a few points. No one will know the difference.’