

*a community called ...*

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## HELPFUL VISITING AMONG THE POOR.

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THE following rules and suggestions, taken largely from the Leaflets of the Associated Charities of Boston, Mass., have been found helpful in work among the poor. They have been adapted in phraseology to religious work, and some suggestions especially along that line have been added.

In every church, especially in our cities, there should be semi-monthly meetings of the women of the Church Charitable Society, at which the pastor should be present to confer with the women workers of the church about the needs of the section where the church is located. At this meeting reports of sub-pastoral visiting by the women should be made, the pastor notified of all cases of sickness and distress and of new-comers to the community, and then work arranged for visitation until the next meeting. It is well if the Sunday-school superin-

## 2 HELPFUL VISITING AMONG THE POOR.

tendent or an assistant, especially the secretary, can be present. Of course all missionaries, deaconesses, etc., will be at this meeting.

When the work is arranged and the workers start out, they will find the following rules and suggestions very helpful :

### RULES.

1. In visiting a family, let the first object be to establish a friendly relation with all its members; learn their interests and aspirations as well as their wants; but make no undue haste to acquire their confidence, and always approach them with respect and tact.

2. Keep in constant communication with your pastor and the officers of your charitable society, either in person or by writing. Attend the meetings as often as possible: you will find them helpful in your individual work, and your experience will help others in theirs.

3. Give no money or its equivalent to a family, even when evidently in need, except in emergencies admitting of no delay, but consult your fellow-workers as to the best method of meeting this need.

4. All you learn about a poor family should be regarded as confidential. Unfavorable information

especially should be used with great discretion, and its sources should be disclosed only to those charitably interested. The mere repetition of a story may reveal its source.

5. Do not take notes in the homes of the poor, but be sure and keep a record of your visits and of all the important facts about the family or the individual. It is well to make this record as soon as you return home from your visits.

### SUGGESTIONS.

Study the family, and the causes of their need. Gradually learn their means of support, and from what charities they receive relief. Do not show suspicion, nor be too credulous. Inexperienced visitors are often, very often, deceived, especially if the poor think they have any thing to gain. The confession of every experienced visitor is that he has often been deceived. Follow every clew with judicious outside inquiry under the advice of your society, so that, when a crisis comes, you will be prepared to act intelligently.

Injudicious relief fosters thriftlessness, indolence, and blamable inefficiency, lessening self-respect and self-reliance. While a kindly impulse may prompt you to give relief, your duty to the family requires

#### 4 HELPFUL VISITING AMONG THE POOR.

you to consider their moral good, and not the gratification of your own emotions. Relief is easy to give; permanent improvement is slow, and hard to effect.

When relief is wise, it must be procured from existing city or town or church relief-giving societies, or from private persons, with the approval of your society. Use your thought and ingenuity to devise a means of relief which shall obviate the cause of the need, and take the family from the poor lists altogether. When that is accomplished, guard them carefully from any false step which would bring them back to dependence.

Make boys, or girls, over fourteen years old, work; and, if possible, in a trade where skill is well paid. Let them come to your house occasionally. Interest their employer.

Teach in season and out of season that, if a man will be industrious, and will become a skilled workman in his trade, or a woman in hers, or boys and girls in theirs, steadier and better paid employment can be procured.

Insist on work; help them to find it, but beware not to let them rely on your finding it for them.

A visitor will do harm if he makes the poor discontented without showing them a way toward

improvement. Their lot is hard enough. Do not make it harder. Close rooms, poor fare, thin clothes, they are often accustomed to. But a wife may be wisely influenced to keep her rooms and children neat, that her husband may enjoy staying at home more; and to get fresh air without wasting heat.

The gift of a growing plant or a colored print for their walls or the loan of a book or game may help them to make their homes more tasteful and attractive, and raise their standard of life in a simple and wholesome way. To the sick or aged, some little comfort will not be amiss.

In cases where want is due to habitual use of intoxicating liquor, ascertain where it is obtained, and report to your society.

One great want in the life of the poor which we do not sufficiently understand is the want of healthful amusement. Crowded rooms and general discomfort drive many a man to the rum-shop, and young persons to unhealthful entertainments. Pleasant occasions might be arranged by the visitors, which should give their poor friends something to look forward to from one week or month to another. A good laugh is a good thing. Help them to forget for a time their hard lot.

Wherever a family, especially with children, is in

## 6 HELPFUL VISITING AMONG THE POOR.

a foul tenement or foul neighborhood, a visitor can perhaps do nothing so wise as to secure sanitary reforms through the Board of Health, or to urge and aid them to move into healthy rooms in a good street.

Information concerning the dispensary physicians, overseers of the poor, police officers, city missionaries, missionaries at large, almoners of charities, asylums, hospitals, the Board of Health, etc., may be usually found in the Directory.

### THE SICK.

Do not stay long, and yet be careful not to appear in a hurry. Talk about other things than the sickness. Bring in the freshest, brightest, most encouraging news. Sick folks need cheery tidings. Flowers are almost always welcome, and a tract; a story-tract like those written by Mark Guy Pearse (see the tract catalogue), or a hymn tract, a tract that tells of the love of God in Christ Jesus, will do good after you have gone. Do not be sanctimonious, or talk about the Saviour as if he was to be taken along with distasteful remedies because needed. Still remember you have come as his servant and leave some loving message of his with the sick one. By a word you can make his presence very real.

No. 237.

FOR THE CHURCH.

All the above suggestions are for workers in general. When you visit in the name of your church, you will naturally find out without too much apparent inquisitiveness what have been the church habits of those whom you are visiting. If they have a preference for another church than yours, direct them to the church of their choice, and tell some of the workers of that church about them. If they have no such preference, invite them to meet you at some of your services, to sit in your pew until they make arrangements for themselves.

Be sure and learn the names of the children and invite them to Sunday-school, and remember them by name when you see them there.

Try and fix on your mind the faces and names of all the persons you visit, so that you will be able to greet them if you should meet them on the street. By some wise word, if you are alert, you may find out whether they have a personal experience of faith in God. If they have, rejoice with them; if they have not, it is rarely wise to say much at the first interview. A choice tract left with them will often open the way for a closer conversation at the next meeting. Remember what tract you gave them and



## 8 HELPFUL VISITING AMONG THE POOR.

refer to it when you call again. Rarely debate, Drop the seed and trust the Spirit of God to care for it. Let the folks feel that you want them at the church to help you in winning others for Christ. Get them as soon as you can to go out visiting with you—that will identify them with the Church work.

Many other suggestions might be offered. It is hoped that these will do good. One of the most important of them all is the suggestion to be regular in attendance, on the meetings for report and for conference about the work.

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