



A method which might be classified as "appealing" or "flirtatious"

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happens several times every collection day and it always is a happy reunion, gratefully acknowledged by the "Seller."

Some people have No Money At All. They are inclined to tell you their whole Life Story, and you feel you have to listen sympathetically, while from the corner of your eye you see some sure cases pass by. You wish to believe them; you surely do not want them to waste the money they haven't got; but you do not want to waste your time either. One of these produced a shilling, two three-pennies and a button from his pocket and told me that this would have to do for his lunch. I felt an urge to take the button and give him a rose (a blue one); but I was afraid that the person who was to empty my box in the evening might misunderstand the presence of the button and take it for an untimely practical joke. So I let him go, button and all.

Some Give Advice

There are people who don't give money; but they give Advice. One came up to me, a woman, and said in a confidential tone as though she was presenting me with a most valuable secret: "You try and get hold of fat elderly gentlemen. They are rich." I did not think much of this advice. I know quite a number of fat elderly gentlemen who are not rich. I cannot see why there should be any casual connection between being Fat and being Rich. (Fatness is not always a consequence of over-eating). Even less connection did I see between being Elderly and Rich (the contrary might be the case). And moreover I have had much proof in the past that the Rich—even if they may be recognised by being Fat and Elderly—are not The Ones Who Give. So I took her advice, but I did not use it, and I did not give her a rose for it (not even a blue one).

Among my advisers was an old man who offered me a piece of philosophy in lieu of a shilling. It was a difficult philosophy, rather vague and hazy, something about the skies being full of aeroplanes designed for destruction and God being beyond and above those aeroplanes. I had an idea of what he was aiming at, though it was not too clear to me, nor to him, I am afraid. But I could not see why his philosophy should prevent him from buying a rose. He ought to have come to the opposite conclusion, I thought. I did not dare to argue with him however; for a number of people had gathered around us, and I feared he might produce a soap-box and mount it any minute. So I preferred to sell roses to the other people and let the old man have his skies and an empty button-hole.

Once—but that was on Poppy Day when the fighting was still on in Africa—I had an encounter with a man who had had one too many. I had not realised it when I offered him a poppy, and I was glad that the bands were just passing and holding the attention of the crowd. For he shouted at me at the top of his voice: "You women," he yelled, "You are standing here, selling flowers! Our boys are fighting over there. It should be the other way round!" I tried to picture myself and the like of me in the desert warfare, standing up to Rommel's onslaught. It would not work. I tried to imagine soldiers of the Second Expeditionary Force standing in Willis Street and selling poppies. It would not work either.

Those With Principles

The last type of Those Who Do Not Buy are those who don't do it On Principle. They have "I-would-not-buy-a-rose-for-the-life-of-me." written all over them. In a way I admire them, however little I may agree with their probable principles. For it must be much more difficult to walk through the streets with an empty button-hole and a Principle than to buy a rose for a shilling and be one, or at least appear to be one, with the great fraternity of rose-wearers on such a day. But what I cannot understand, and do resent, is that they are so nasty about it. There is much hostility in the way they turn away or look right through you when you approach them with your box and roses.

After all, we do not want them to sell their principles to us and pay a shilling on top of it. We stand for one thing; they stand for another. Could we not just grin at one another and respect our different points of view?

With roses (and with flags and poppies) it seems to be as it is with many things in life: we notice that there is one thing we do not share; it may be a liking, a conviction, a creed, or a political opinion. That divides us. We forget that there may be many things we have in common. We could live so much more happily, spare ourselves and others so much heartache, if we remembered the many things that join us instead of insisting on the importance of the one by which we may be separated.

—B.H.

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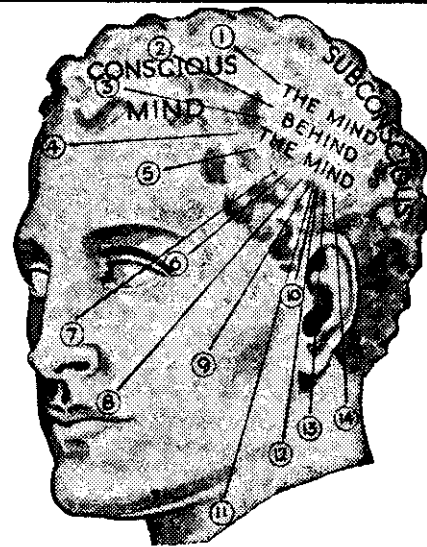
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