

Female Society—The Woman for a Wife.

(Letter 2nd—Continued from last issue)

O woman, lovely woman, Nature made thee
To tempt man; we had been brutes without you.
Angels are painted fair to look like you.
—Otway.

When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think that I should live till I were married.—Shakespeare.

In many of the books addressed to young men a great deal is said about the purifying and elevating influence of female society. Sentimental young men effect this kind of reading, and if anywhere in it they can find countenance for the policy of early marriage they are deluged.

Now, while I will be the last man to deny the purifying and elevating influence of pure and elevated women, I do deny that there is anything in indiscriminate devotion to female society, which makes a man better or purer. Suppose a man cast away in the Cannibal Islands, and not in sufficiently good flesh to excite the appetites of the gentle epicureans among whom he has fallen. Suppose him, in fact, to be "received into society" and made the private secretary of a man without a liberal education. Suppose, after a while he feels himself subsiding into a state of barbarism, and casts around for some redeeming or conservative influence. At this moment it occurs to him that in the trunk on which he sailed ashore was a number of books. He flies to the trunk, and in an ecstasy of delight, discovers that among them is a volume addressed to young men. He opens it eagerly, and finds the writer to declare that next to the Christian religion, there is nothing that will lend so strongly to the elevation and purification of young men as female society. He accordingly seeks the society of women, and drinks in the marvellous influence of their presence. He finds them unacquainted with some of the most grateful uses of water and in evident ignorance of the use of ivory combs, about what year of the popular era is it to be supposed that he will arrive at a desirable state of purification and perfection. Now, perhaps, you do not perceive the force of this illustration. Let us get at it, then. When you find yourself shut out from all female society except that which is beneath you, that society will do you just as much and no more good than that of the fair cannibals, especially if it be young. If, in all this society, you can find an old woman of sixty, who has common sense, genial good nature, experience, some reading and a sympathetic heart, cherish her as you would her weight in gold, but let the young trash go. You will hear nothing from them but gossip and nonsense, and you will only get disgusted with the world and yourself. Inspiration to higher and purer life always comes from above a man; and female society can only elevate and purify a man when it is higher and purer than he is. In the element of purity, I doubt not that women generally are superior to men, but it is very largely a negative or unconscious element, and has not the power and influence of a positive virtue. Therefore, whenever you seek for female society as an agency in the elevation of your tastes, the preservation of your morals and the improvement of your

mind seek for that which is above you. I do not counsel you to treat with rudeness or studied neglect such inferior female society as you are obliged to come in contact with. On the contrary you owe such society a duty. You should stimulate it infuse new life into it, if possible, and do for it what you would have female society do for yourself.

This matter of seeking female society above yourself you should carry still further. Never content yourself with the idea of having a common place wife. You want one who will stimulate you. stir you up, keep you moving, show you your weak points and make something of you. Don't fear that you cannot get such a wife. I very well remember the reply which a gentleman, who happened to combine the qualities of wit and common sense, made to a young man who expressed a fear that a certain young lady of great beauty and attainments would dismiss him if he should become serious. "My friend," said the wit, "infinitely more beautiful and accomplished women than she is have married infinitely uglier and meaner men than you are," and such is the fact.

If you are honest and honorable, if your character is spotless, if you are enterprising and industrious, if you have some grace and a fair degree of sense, and if you love appreciatively and truly, you can marry almost anybody worth your having. So to encourage yourself, carry in your memory the above aphorism reduced to a form something like this: "Infinitely finer women than I ever expect to marry have loved and married men infinitely meaner than I am." The apprehension of women is finer and quicker than those of men. With equal early advantages the woman is more of a woman at eighteen than a man is a man at twenty-one. After marriage, a general thing, the woman ceases to acquire. Now, I do not say that this is necessary, or that it should be the case, but I simply state a general fact. The woman is absorbed in family cares, or perhaps devoted from ten to twenty years to the bearing and rearing of children, the most dignified, delightful and honorable office of her life. This consumes her time, and in a great multitude of instances, deprives her of intellectual culture.

In the meantime the man is out, engaged in business. He comes in daily contact with minds stronger and sharper than his own. He grows and matures and in ten years from the date of his marriage becomes in reality a new man.

Now, if he was so foolish as to marry a woman because she had a pretty form and face, or sweet eyes, or an amiable disposition; or a pleasant temper, or wealth, he will find that he has passed entirely by his wife, and that she is really no more of a companion to him than a child would be. I know of but few sadder sights in this world than that of mates whom the passage of time has mis-mated. A woman ought to have a long start of a man and then, ten to one, the man will come out ahead in the race of a long life. I suppose that in every young man's mind there exists the hope and the expectation of marriage. When a young man pretends to me that he has no wish to marry, I always infer one of two things: that he lies and is really very anxious for marriage, or that his heart has been polluted by association

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