

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Godey's Lady's Book for February.

THE SYMPATHY MEETING.

This appeared to be a regular 'experience meeting.' Mrs. Harris next took the floor.

'These are but minor troubles, after all; annoying, but resulting in no serious consequences.'

'I don't know what you call 'serious consequences,' retorted Mrs. Lane, 'if having one's life fretted out of her by inches be not one.'

'That is disagreeable, I grant; but what is it compared with the pain a mother experiences when seeing her children in the road to ruins without power to arrest them? I have no more control over mine than you have; indeed not so much, for they might stand in awe of a stranger. Mr. Harris neither corrects them, nor allows me to do so. It 'breaks their spirits,' he says. My life is a scene of perpetual discord and disturbance. Archibald, my oldest boy, respects my lowest menial more than he does his mother. When only five years old, he would return my caresses with blows. I endeavoured to chastise him but once, and he nearly destroyed the sight of my right eye, besides reducing to shreds a superb lace dress cap. His father upholds him in his unnatural rebellion.'

'Take care,' interposed Mrs. Parks, who had been visibly uneasy for some time; 'Mrs. Cushman will not thank us for teaching her to borrow trouble. We must not abuse husbands too much.'

'Where's the harm in telling her the truth?' asked Mrs. Merry, opening her great blue eyes in comic inquiry. 'I don't want her to be disappointed, as she will be, if she goes on thinking that married life is the height of happiness. It is well the novels stop when the characters are all paired off. They would spoil the story by repeating the quarrels that follow.'

'You are a silly girl, Annie. Who do you think, believes you?'

'Why, Mrs. Cushman here (let me call you Lizzie) will remember all that I have told her some of these days. I shall make you a visit of condolence. We shall be sisters in affliction.'

'I hope never to have occasion to make you such a call, Mrs. Cushman,' said Mrs. Oram, kindly; 'but I owe you an apology for having delayed until now a visit which it was my wish as well as my duty to pay. Mr. Oram and myself are under many obligations to Mr. Cushman's generous friendship. This of itself would create a desire to cultivate your acquaintance. My babe has been sick ever since your arrival amongst us, and I could not have left her this afternoon, but for the offer of my sister to take the place of nurse for a few hours. It is now time for my return. We shall meet soon, I hope.'

Lizzie responded heartily. Her interest in her new friend was redoubled, now that she knew her to be her husband's also. If Mrs. Parks really wished to turn the conversation, her first observation after Mrs. Oram's departure was unfortunate.

'Has Mr. Prescott recovered entirely from his attack of pneumonia?' she asked of one of her visitors.

'Thank you, he is apparently well; still I am not easy about him. Gentlemen are so imprudent. They consider any precautions against cold or damp as womanly weakness. I have tried again and again to induce James to wear a fur-lined overcoat since his illness, but he only 'pahaws' and asks if I take him to be a sickly woman. I wish he was. I could manage him then. He has a great horror of appearing to be ruled by me. The doctor advised him to tie a worsted comforter over his mouth when in the open air. He put it on one morning, but had not gone two squares when he met John Burton, who wanted to know if 'his wife thought he had lived long enough' that she muffled up his respiratory organs in that style, or was it a gag to prevent his talking to the girls?' He has never touched the comforter since, giving, as his reason for discarding it, that it is hot and inconvenient; but I know very well that it is nothing in the world but John's ridicule.'

The dusky of the room had put a stop to manual employment, and Lizzie thought with dismay of the impetus tongues would receive from this cessation. She anticipated nothing less than a declaration of an exterminating war against the other sex, should the indignation of these maltreated slaves continue to ferment. She was relieved, and the seditious symptoms quelled by the appearance of Mr. Parks, accompanied by Mr. Lane, who, to her surprise, bore little resemblance to the truculent boor she had imagined; nor did his wife's deportment towards him partake of servility or marked deference. The entrance of these two checked further divulgations, and introduced a new set of topics; but Lizzie's pleasure was marred for that evening. In vain she expostulated with herself. 'It was foolish to allow this idle gossip to discompose her. What if it were all true? George was so different from the men they had been describing; and she would try so hard to

gratify this every whim, that they could never be participants in such disgraceful altercations.' But reasoning and resolving did no good. She was low-spirited and miserable; and, worst of all, George, who came soon after Mr. Parks, saw at a glance that all was not right. Her smiling effort could not hoodwink him. He prudently forbore to take any notice of her dejection; and, by the time that his spicy sallies had set every body to joking and laughing, she was able to appear quite like herself again.

'I saw Arthur this afternoon,' said he to Mrs. Merry. 'He will be along presently.'

'Yes, I expect him,' she rejoined.

'You know Mr. Merry, then?' said Lizzie, in a low voice.

'Know him! what a question! Mrs. Merry, here a moment. You have to answer to the grave charge of having passed a whole afternoon with my wife, and not hinted once that Arthur and I were old chums and inseparables, until he took an unaccountable fancy to a certain lady (who shall be nameless) more than he did me. Is this your gratitude for my advocacy of his suit, when an unreasonable old gentleman demurred at granting it, because, forsooth, his daughter was too young to enter into a contract so important?'

Lizzie did not hear Mrs. Merry's retort. George and her tyrannical taskmaster had been boon companions. This argued a coincidence of tastes and sentiments. What if all men should, indeed, be alike? Would he, too, learn in time to rave, grumble, and neglect?

'Lizzie,' said George, leading up a noble-looking man, who had just entered, 'this is my friend Merry. You should have met before.'

'I have been unfortunate, but not to blame, that we have not,' replied Mr. Merry. And, having paid his respects gracefully to her, his next bow and smile were for 'Annie.'

'How different men are in society and at home!' reflected Mrs. Cushman, as she remarked this; and this feeling was uppermost in her mind until the company broke up.

'Mr. Sherman was at a returned meeting of the Colonial Society,' his wife stated; and Mr. Cushman, with difficulty, screwed his face into grave respectfulness as he volunteered himself as her escort, her residence being in the same street as their boarding-house. They had the talk all to themselves on the way home, Lizzie speaking only in monosyllables. The poison was not without its effect. She could not help thinking that, if George were suffering, as he must see that she was, she could not appear unconcerned. It was her first hard thought of him, and it almost broke her heart to admit it. She had no sullenness in her nature; but she was hurt and disappointed.

'You are not well to night, Lizzie?'

She stood by the fire, knotting her bonnet-strings around her taper fingers.

'Yes, I am quite well.'

'You are unhappy then. It is useless to try to deceive me. I have watched you all the evening. Already a grief which you will not let me share, Lizzie?'

This was the drop too much. She sunk her head upon his shoulder and burst into tears; nor was it until his anxiety had increased to an insupportable degree that she could command her voice to tell him of the boding fears that oppressed her heart, and their origin. He did not interrupt the relation, although his lips parted more than once; but it is doubtful whether the nearly uttered ejaculation might not have startled more than edified the narrator. When she ceased, he looked relieved, vexed, and amused.

'So your afternoon has been spent in discussing husbands,' he said. 'A sorry entertainment! I do not wonder at your being out of spirits. From your account, I should judge that we were pretty well 'showed up.' Is this a standing dish at these feminine assemblies?'

Lizzie could not refrain from smiling.

'I don't know. I never was at any but young lady parties before.'

'And then you talked of your beaux. Well, this is only a continuation of the same subject. —Lovers are developed into married men. You have learned much to day, dear Lizzie, of which I had rather you had remained ignorant. I hardly know whether you will now believe me, if I say that, as it is, I prefer your lessons in these matters should be taken from any one else than from me—that all your knowledge of the discomforts of house keeping and sour-tempered husbands should be acquired from hearsy, not experience.'

Lizzie's arms were round his neck in an instant. 'Dear George!' was all that she could say. He went on kindly, and seriously,—

'But this cannot be. I know that, in the revulsion of feeling, you are ready to look upon the histories of the tribulations of Mrs. Merry and her compeers as sheer fabrications, or exaggerations of trivial misunderstandings. The latter supposition may be correct, to a certain extent; and I shall presently enlighten you somewhat with regard to these benevolent ladies who have taken pity on your ignorance; still, I must admit that there is probably much sober truth in what they have said. Women are not angels; and men are more than one remove from perfection. Where there are faults, there must be suffering; but this may be greatly alleviated by mutual confidence, and a just appreciation, on each side, of the peculiar trials of the other. If, hereafter, you shall feel the want of perfect

sympathy with your dispirited and nervous mood after toiling through the harassing routine of woman's every-day duties—laborious, if well performed; mortifying, in case of failure—I, seated in my comfortable chair in the corner, I forget, even while reaping the fruits of your industry, whose hands have adorned my Eden, you must not grieve your affectionate little heart with misgivings of my love. The thanks for which you had hoped, as the easily bestowed reward of your self-denial; the look that should have blessed your thoughtful kindness, may be for a time withheld; and instead, a coldly spoken word, which sounds very like a taunt, or a tart notice of some omission or blunder, may pierce you with a bitter sense of injustice. These are darkened moments, such as fall to the lot of the happiest wife. I say it to our shame; but do not judge us too harshly. You know nothing of the world in which we strive; I pray that you never may. I have heard of plants, natives of the tropics, which, on being transplanted in a colder climate, grow strong and hardy, but bear no more flowers or fruits; and a woman fighting her way in a business life, reminds me of these. Her mind may be more vigorous than that of one raised in the atmosphere of home and visited only by the breath of affection, but the sweet blossoms of trust and love can never be again unfolded, it is a hard world, Lizzie—a hateful suspicious world full of heartlessness and deceit—a world that fosters men's ignoble passions, and beats down, with a hailstorm of ridicule, their holiest sentiments. You need not cling to me so tightly, love; while I have an arm to shield you, you shall never encounter these hardships. I am a man and my duty is in the field, I only ask, when I am worn out and heart sick with defeat and discouragement, and will think of all this and pity instead of chide.'

Again 'Dear, dear George?' And then a silence. George broke it with a laugh.

'And you were surprised at my keeping company with an ogre like Merry, and already beheld yourself crying with Annie upon the rug before a fireless hearth? Arthur deserves sympathy more than censure. His baseless fabric or perfect harmony and contentment came tumbling about his ears before he was a Benedict of two months' standing. Annie is a dear, warm-hearted creature, but incorrigible thoughtless and frivolous. I shall never forget their first dinner-party. Arthur invited the members of our 'bachelor club'—six in number—hinting, as he did so, at the superiority of 'voluntary' over 'hired' housekeepers. Two of us kept bachelor's hall, and the others picked up a living at boarding-houses and hotels. Being quite alive to the manifold disadvantages of these modes of subsistence, we considered this homethrust cruel and ungenerous; and held a council of resentment for some time before we decided to pocket the insult and go. About an hour before dinner time, I left my office to prepare for the convivial occasion. I met Mrs. Merry ten steps from my door. She looked bewitchingly lovely; and there were two or three girls with her, all in the highest spirits, and apparently bound upon some frolic.

'Oh, Mr. Cushman!' she called, 'have you been to the menagerie?'

'I answered in the negative.'

'Then do—there's a good creature! go with us to the door. I don't mind being beardless after we get in, but I can't pass through the crowd around the ticket box. We must hurry, too, for I have only half an hour to spare. You know you dine with us to day; and Arthur will be angry if I am not dressed in time. Ain't husbands particular?'

'Thus she prattled until we ascended Council Chamber Hill, on which the show was located. I procured tickets for the party; saw them seated above the arena of sawdust, and human mingling with brute animals.

'Now,' said Mrs. Merry, 'go dress for dinner.'

'As you may suppose I did not fatigue myself by the hurry of my preparations. I dressed and read all the daily newspapers ere I started. The guests were gathered together, but I was not surprised that the hostess was minus. Arthur controlled himself wonderfully well; but his eye wandered at the window every other minute, and more than once he broke of a sentence, as a step approached the parlor door. It was only a servant, who peered in with eyes that told of overdone beef and fowls burnt to a cinder, as plainly as his lips growled on his retreat: 'I wish mistress would come along.'

(To be continued.)

SCRAPS.

A belle's face, in a bonnet a score of years since, was like a rose at the bottom of a coal scuttle. Now it stands forth from her bonnet like that rose bursting from the bud.

'My dear,' said a young gentleman to a young lady to whom he thought to be married, 'do you wish to make a fool of me?' 'No,' replied the lady, 'Nature saved me the trouble.'

An orator holding forth in favor of 'woman—dear divine,' concluded in this wise—'Oh, my hearers depend upon it, nothing beats a good wife.' 'I beg your pardon,' replied an auditor 'a bad husband does.'

A Richmond paper in speaking of a party speech, says the orator held the audience breath for nearly two hours! Those who composed it must have had extraordinary lungs.

The Politician.

THE BRITISH PRESS.

From the Times.

THE APPROACHING CONFERENCES AT VIENNA.

... We have no doubt that the time is coming, and probably is already come, when very different views will be taken of the policy of the Austrian government from those which were long professed and encouraged by a party in this country to which Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell once belonged. The greatest proof of this change, which has happily taken place in Vienna as well as in London, is that the nomination of Lord Palmerston to the post of Prime Minister, which would have spread terror through some parts of Europe a few years ago, has now been hailed with marked satisfaction by the Austrian government; and on the other hand, that the first act of Lord Palmerston's administration is to send Lord John Russell to Vienna for the purpose of cultivating the most friendly relations with that court. In point of fact, such a measure can more easily be taken by Lord Palmerston as head of her Majesty's government than it could have been by Lord Aberdeen, whom it was the fashion to stigmatise as the friend of Austria. The effect of this mission—the effect of Lord Palmerston's appearance at the head of affairs—must be to give a more decisive turn to the course of events whether for peace or for war. On both sides there is a determination to negotiate as if peace were within our grasp, but at the same time to prepare for war as if war were inevitable. The season is approaching when the near encounter of hostile forces, the menacing attitude not only of enemies, but of allies and confederates, and the obligations of the treaty of the 2nd of December must terminate the state of suspense in which the winter months have left us. The result of the Vienna conferences between the allied powers and the Russian plenipotentiary must be to determine speedily whether peace be possible, or, if it be not possible, to what extent and by what means the war is to be carried on. On both these questions Lord John Russell may speak with authority at Vienna in the name of the British government and may speak with authority on his return from Vienna to the parliament at home. We have no doubt that he will speak there with proper national spirit, and here with prudence and knowledge of the case; and we regard it as a fortunate circumstance that, at a time when he is unavoidably removed from public affairs at home, he should be enabled to render a considerable service to the country abroad.

From the London Daily News.

Since the declaration of the Ozar, that he was willing to renew negotiations on the basis of the four points, has rendered them inevitable, it is reassuring that the management of these negotiations, on the part of England, is entrusted to Lord John Russell. The habitual tone in which our differences with Russia have been talked of at the English embassy in Vienna has been such as would have awakened serious fears for the honour of England had their management devolved on our resident minister there. The reasons assigned by Lord John for quitting the Aberdeen cabinet—the cautious and reluctant manner in which he gave his assent to the Austrian treaty—and the whole tenor of his political life, afford a guarantee that, in these renewed negotiations, the honour and interests of England will be safe in his hands. Again, the acceptance of this mission by Lord John, and the request of Lord Palmerston that he would undertake it, are strong proofs of the sincerity of the professions of mutual cordiality and confidence publicly made by these two statesmen. From their continued good understanding and co-operation the country will look for satisfactory results. Our own opinion as to the probable results of the negotiations about to be opened at Vienna remains unchanged. We may, however, congratulate the country that they are to be conducted by a trustworthy minister. At the same time it may be allowed us to remind the new premier that the people will look with impatience for the resumption of active hostilities in the Crimea as soon as the season permits.

From the Morning Herald.

THE PALMERSTON GOVERNMENT.

The Public will learn, we apprehend, both with surprise and indignation a statement which has been communicated to us in a manner which does not permit us to doubt its accuracy. Indeed, the subject matter of that statement was freely canvassed yesterday evening at the clubs. We give however, the communications as it has reached us, in the words of our correspondent:—'The vacant office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was intended by Lord Palmerston for the Earl of Shaftesbury. It was actually offered by the Premier to the noble earl, and was accepted by him. It was offered with a seat in the cabinet attached, and Lord Shaftesbury had actually assented to the wish of the prime minister that he should join his