LETTERS TO YOUNG WOMEN.

Unreasonable and Injurious Restraints.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Lend impediments.—SHAKSPERE.

I suppose that most have observed the following facts, from which I propose to draw a lesson:—First, that young married women have a peculiar charm for unmarried young men, and that a young man's first love is almost uniformly devoted to a woman older than himself. A marriageable young woman occupies, or is made to occupy, a position of peculiar hardship. Our theory is that a woman should never make an advance towards the man she loves and would marry. Such a step is deemed inconsistent with maiden modesty. I do not quarrel with this, but the effect has been to make young women, who possess sensitive natures, hypocrites. It ought not to do it, but it does. Every modest young woman possessing a good degree of sagacity, plays a part, almost always, when in the society of young men. The fear is that, by some word, or look, or act, she shall express such a degree of interest in a young man as shall lead him to believe that she wishes to marry him. Young women study the effect of their language, then often shun civilities, they put on an artificial and constrained style of behavior,—for fear that some complacent fool will misconstrue them, or some gentleman, whom they wish to please, will deem them too forward, and so become disgusted. The result is that a man rarely finds out the best or the worst points of his wife's character before he marries her.

Social intercourse is carried on under a kind of protest, which places every young woman in a position absolutely false before the eyes of young men. Many a woman owes a life of celibacy and disappointment to the fact that she never felt at liberty to act out herself. With these statements it is very easy to understand the attractions which a young married woman has for a bachelor, and explain the phenomenon of a young man falling in love with a woman older than himself. In the first instance, a married woman becomes agreeable because she becomes perfectly natural and unconstrained, her circumstances allowing all the more grateful forms of politeness—The cordial greeting, the complimentary attentions, and the free conversation—without the danger of being misconstrued. In the latter instance, the woman throws off her constraint in the same manner, because she is in the society of one whom she regards as, in reality, a boy. She finds, very much to her surprise, that she has won the boy's heart; but it was the most natural thing in the world. He had never had a sight of a woman's nature before. The girls with whom he had associated had always worn a mask. The real heart behind it he had thus far failed to appreciate.

There is a very general impression among the young men whose affections are not engaged that the best women are married, and that those who are left do not amount to much. They will think differently some time or other.

Now my idea is that this universal mask-wearing system should be broken up. It does injustice to all parties.

If there is, in society, any poor creature in the form of a man whose vanity is so open to flattery that a young woman cannot treat him with natural cordial politeness, without his thinking that she would like to marry him, let him think so, and trust to time and circumstances for justice. Such men are of too little account in the world to pay for carrying a deceitful face, and despoiling the intercourse of the young of its sweetest charms. If you liks the society of a young man, take no pains to conceal it, but treat him with frank cordiality. No true gentleman among them will misconstrue you.

It is not necessary for you to tell him that you calculate to live a maiden life. They know you lie. It will not do to indicate to any man of sense that you do not like the attentions and society of gentlemen, for he knows better. He knows, at least, that you ought to like them, and that, if you do not, there is something wrong about you. Don't practice deception of any kind. A man who is frank and open-hearted with you, deserves to be met with a frank and open heart by you, and ninety-nine cases in every hundred, men will be honorable and manly with you, if you will lay aside suspicion and trust them. If a man proves unworthy of your confidence, you have your remedy. Cut him or tell him what you think of him, and bring him upon his knees.

I have given my advice without many qualifications, but do not misconstrue me. I write upon the supposition that you have common sense and know what I mean. Some people, I suppose, would present you with a formula by which to conduct all your intercourse with young men. I know a large number of fathers and mothers who will think that, upon this subject, I ought to guard my language and be more particular, but I know very well that if you have not sense and prudence enough to take this general counsel and use it judiciously, no qualifications that I could make would be of any service to you. I trust you. I believe you are virtuous young women with pure hearts and true intentions; and I know there is no danger to you until you cease to be such. You have an instinct, God's word in your own soul—that tells you that when a man takes the first wrong step towards you; and if you do not repel that step in such a manner that it will never be repeated, do you suppose that anything I could say to you would do you any good. I say this: that perfect frankness and cordiality in the treatment of young men are entirely consistent with the safety of any true woman from insult or offensive familiarity. Is your father afraid to trust you out of his sight. I am not. If I were I would be ashamed to confess it, particularly if you were a daughter of mine. I believe in you, and I believe, moreover, that if this contemptible idea that men are your natural enemies, and that you must cheat them and look out for them, could be got out of the way, and a free and unconstrained social intercourse established between you them, they would be much better, and you altogether safer for it. There is another subject more or less intimately associated with this, which may as well be treated here. It is very natural for young women to get in the habit of treating only those young men politely, whom they happen, for various reasons, to fancy. They "don't care" what the majority of young men think of them, provided they retain the good will of their particular pets. They are whimsical and take on special and strong likes and dislikes for the young men whom they meet.

(To be continued)

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