

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN.

THE society woman is very much, in her sex, as the professional politician is in his—the scapegoat for all the follies, foibles, short-comings, crimes, of the species, says the New York *Sunday Mercury*. The pulpit discants endlessly upon her frivolity and general abominableness. The country press has inexhaustible tales to tell of both. Interest is always aroused everywhere by anecdotes relative to the bacchanalian vices, secret and public, or the Lucullian luxury, of well-known society women. Well, it cannot be maintained that the thorough-going society woman is always an angel of light. But people who think there is nothing to be said in favor of the influence which society has on the feminine nature make a very great mistake, indeed. "Take the matter of gossip," said a bright woman who knew the world, both in society and out of it. "Would you not think that society women spent their lives setting afoot the most slanderous reports concerning each other? Would you not think that they were the most inveterate scandal-mongers? As a matter of fact, they don't compare to the gossiping busy-bodies to be found outside of social life. I don't say that it is because they are any more charitable than women not in society. But they don't gossip so much for two other and very excellent reasons—because they have not the time and because they are not sufficiently interested in other people's concerns, having quite enough egotistic amusement of their own to absorb their attention. If you want the classic gossip, who tears every human creature's character to pieces from sheer lack of any other excitement to fill her empty mind, you must go to the country village, with its dames and maids, ancient or not, who indulge in quilting bees and the like. Did you ever know a pretty young girl with an admirer or two who was a gossip? No. Neither you nor any one else. It's not in nature. And why? The pretty young girl has other sources of pleasurable stimulation to her interests. Well, so it is with the real society woman all her life through. She is surrounded by excitement. And, then, a point not sufficiently observed, she is driven every moment of the day. She lives in a round of gayeties, going from one to the other, and she has literally not the leisure, anywhere, summer or winter, spring or fall, to sit down and indulge in the vacuous, interminable tittle-tattle about other women that those of her sex not situated as she is often enough find time for.

"You can't excite yourself so much about some particular woman's particular

failings, about how she looks, how she dresses and how she flirts, when you have an enormous visiting list and are incessantly seeing crowds of other people, and hearing other things discussed. Oh, society women can speed venomous darts on their way, with a passing word or look, well enough, but they don't systematically apply themselves to long-drawn out debauches of scandal-mongering, as too many others do. They can't. What keeps them from gossip is not, you will say, anything very noble. But they are, generally speaking, certainly kept from indulging in it to the great extent supposed, that I must repeat. Then, take another matter; that of dress. If I were a portionless girl, with a paucity of stylish frocks, I should far prefer to be thrown among the most fashionable women, and those to whom beautiful apparel is as much a matter of course as dining and bathing, than among those women whom one might call 'half-ways,' those whose social aspirations are greater than their actual position. Society women—the genuine ones—really care less for dress, a great deal, than the average woman not in society. They are so accustomed to the handsomest, the latest, the choicest, that they don't especially dwell on the matter. Then they are quite lifted above the knowledge of "contrivances," of the expedients that more modest folk are so unfailingly familiar with. You can easily blind a millionaire's daughter, who never had a made-over gown in her life, to your revampings; you can't blind that lynx-eyed young woman whose father had neither a million nor anything else, but who manages, thanks to executive qualities that would grace a great chief, to be charmingly garbed on every occasion. The first can wear lovely gowns without thinking of them, and is therefore less observant; the other can't wear them without thinking a great deal. To that which one has always had, and can have at any moment, one is frequently indifferent. This explains why, among the highest ranks of European society, there will be found women who delight in little cotton frocks, and never wear even a ring except on state occasions. Their simplicity is a coquetry, a pleasure to them. No. Whatever may be thought to the contrary, society women do not gauge people by their dress half so much as some other women. And if you find a society woman who seems so to do you may be assured that she has not been in society very long. Her position is still new to her."

It is impossible not to concur with this lady's remarks. They have a great foundation of truth. But then some reader may ask, what is the practical service to one of knowing that society

women have not quite such great failings as those with which they are credited. Of this service: Where there is a juster conception of society women, there may also be a juster conception of society. Not necessarily the whirl of the very fashionable society, to which every woman cannot belong, and should not wish to if she could; but society in the more rational and worthy sense, the social intercourse, of civilized human beings. If you have growing daughters, younger sisters over whom you have some authority, don't try to keep them away from what good society they can get. The more one sees of the world the more one becomes convinced that the disadvantages that may accrue to man or woman from too great a devotion to the claims and conventions of society are much more than outweighed by the other sort of disadvantage that come from the leading of an unsocial life. Women and girls need not be encouraged in the stupid frivolity, the extravagance and the silly frittering away of time, that a hollow and exclusive pursuit of social excitement is apt to develop in the empty-minded. But a little more justice should be done to the gain that can come, or does come, from social experience when the brain is well balanced. Women, especially, all need some knowledge of society. You should never therefore, influence a girl against taking all of it that she can get. It is not only a school of grace, of manners, of savoir-faire; but it is really a preventive, as we have seen, against a good many weaknesses deemed characteristically feminine. Women who have no circle of friends, who think it a feather in their cap to remark, stiffly, that "their household duties are quite enough for them;" that "they have no leisure for visiting and receiving visits," are open to just as many foibles, and perhaps more deleterious ones, than their flighty neighbor, whose whole life is spent in a wild chase after social amusement. This point, truly, has always been too much overlooked. Social life is a cure for many very morbid and unhealthy states of the body and mind. The exasperating feminine tendency to make a great matter out of every unimportant trifle dissolves and evaporates in social life. The very selfishness of people who have too many interests and amusements to think much of any one person's grievances or fancies, is an excellent check on the woman inclined to make a great ado over aches and pains, or imagined slights. Social life is always rather hard and superficial, and "give and takes." It "drops" the undesirable because it has not time to bother with them. To be liked, socially, you must have some social qualities, and they are not all contemptible ones. They involve