

BEING TALKED ABOUT.

It seems to have been the opinion of the most ancient philosophers, that the world loves "a bit of scandal," and we shrewdly suspect that present and future philosophers may preserve the same prejudice of belief, without running any risk of their judgment being impugned.

It is to be feared that the love of scandal is born with us all, from the highest to the lowest in society. While a man is immaculate, he gets little notice taken of him; he may walk, talk, and have his being like other proper people; he excites no degree of unusual interest among his compeers; but let him make a real or reputed slip from the regular highways of lawful rectitude, and the distinguished mark of "being talked about" is immediately earned.

This common idiom appears to possess but one interpretation. We never get "talked about" for our sufferings, our virtues, or our abstinences. Oh dear, no! We must "do something" in some shape or other, or at least be suspected of having an intention to "do something," before any of our good-natured friends will deem us worthy of this honour. Only let us hear that So-and-So is "being talked about," and we ask any impartial reader, what the instantaneous and conclusive impression is,—why, that he has committed or is committing some questionable something.

A flirtation of an aggravated order, an impending insolvency, an elopement—in short, anything that is ignored by highly respectable people, is immediately guessed at; and the very circumstance, that this idiom is invariably accepted in only one sense, of calumniating import, is ample proof that we have an unwholesome preference for the garbage of gossiping food, and that the errors, supposed or positive, of our fellow-creatures, are unceasingly agreeable and exciting themes to dwell and dilate on.

I was led into these remarks by having been present the other evening at a select and social party, where about a dozen ladies and gentlemen of considerable standing in society, and of unimpeachable religious principles, were gathered together to enjoy conversation, mocha and music, toast and twaddle (we beg pardon, the last word was a slip; no doubt the alliteration led us into it) finishing up with cold chicken *ad libitum*.

The entertainment afforded, consisted of conversational spasms under the effects of conventional opium, and we began to wish most heartily that we were at home. At length the talk turned on a subject which led to a discussion on the glorious light of Christian charity and the supreme beauty of mercy. The amount of generous sentiment expressed would have civilized the Thugs, and quotations to illustrate the subject fluttered about as thick as mosquitoes on a sultry summer evening. We heard that "mercy is twice blest," and so forth; and some remote voice gave the appeal of

"That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me,"

The great golden rule of "Do unto others," &c., met our ear twice; and all were edified exceedingly by scraps and sentences with which most had been acquainted since the date of our first eating pudding.

At length the speakers became very poor and very few, like mourners at a pauper's funeral; and a remark from an eminent reverend gentleman, that he thought one great feature of charity was, not to be too ready to think ill of our brethren, was the last we distinctly remember.

A mental mist succeeded, very cold and very still. Then came short coughs and using of handkerchiefs. A couple of ladies took desperately to an Album, which lay on the table, in the very height of scarlet-fever, turned up with golden jaundice. The hostess was embarrassed, and everybody sat as with golden jaundice. The hostess was embarrassed, and everybody sat as with golden jaundice. The hostess was embarrassed, and everybody sat as with golden jaundice.

Every one was either shy, stupid, or silent—perhaps all three blended; when I suddenly hit upon a plan which I had adopted once before in the like distress.

"Pray," said I, "addressing myself to the company generally, 'have any of you heard how Mr. Manby is being 'talked about'? A squib thrown among the dozen ladies and gentlemen would scarcely have moved them so effectually. The album was left wide open, without an eye to the striking likeness of some well-known beauty, the hostess breathed more freely, and a sort of mental ant-hill began to work.

A sudden thought struck the reverend gentleman, that Mr. Manby had lately increased his number of horses; that he had built a new wing to his house; that his drawing-rooms had been refurnished in a superb style; and the simultaneous conjunction of ideas was, that Mr. Manby was being "talked about" through having lived too fast.

An elderly lady, who had lately quoted the Great Teacher's rule, suddenly remembered that she had seen Mr. Manby walking in his grounds and talking very confidentially with his housekeeper; and, moreover, the housekeeper was a good-looking woman, so, of course, it was most likely that Mr. Manby was being "talked about" through some delinquency on the score of domestic propriety.

A gentleman, of very Low Church principles, had an impulsive conviction that Mr. Manby had gone over to Catholicism. The Low Church gentleman knew that Mr. Manby had contributed largely to some Irish schools, and that he was enthusiastic over his recollections of witnessing High Mass at St. Peter's at Rome, and that he declared it as his opinion, that a good Catholic was as much to be respected as a good Protestant; consequently, there could be little doubt that Mr. Manby was "talked about" for these reasons.

Each and every one present was deeply anxious to learn the extent of Mr. Manby's misdoings; for it was plain enough they all thought Mr. Manby must have done something *wrong* before he could be "talked about."

I permitted the appetite for scandal's highly-seasoned made-dishes to become as voracious as I deemed prudent, and then simply stated that Mr. Manby was being "talked about" for having generously taken his sister's two orphan children to bring up. Dear reader, you should have seen the sudden disappointment that marked every countenance,—the "Oh! is that all?" sort of expression which pervaded the Low Church lineaments, and the positive

sneer of indifference which sat upon the lady's lips who had incorporated the good-looking housekeeper in her liberal conclusion. You would have gleaned ample testimony that the love of detraction is very like an instinct, in all human bipeds, and that being "talked about" is tantamount to having infringed some law, either civil, moral, or conventional.

A positive relish for the follies and crimes of our brothers and sisters seems to preponderate in ninety-nine dispositions out of a hundred. If we cannot find circumstances that involve a damaged reputation, to amuse our speculative minds and tongues, we generally contrive to fish out some eccentric deviation from worldly customs—nay, the chatters will even raise their jargon over those who are to be pitied rather than blamed, and whose sad position claims our delicate sympathy rather than our loud and coarse discussion.

We have doubtless heard men—wise, benevolent, grey-headed men—"talking about" a lady, in a public conveyance, with reckless indiscretion, laughing over vile insinuations, and promulgating unseemly reports with careless tongue, while, to our positive knowledge, every word they uttered was false.

It strikes me that parties should be soundly authorized before they "talk about" a woman's character to the ears of the crowd; and even if they held convincing proof of an erring sister's wrong, it would savour more of manhood and nobility to deal gently with it.

There is a fearful amount of unhappiness and injustice wrought by this "talking about," and doubtless the fullest and most mischievous libels published are stereotyped in the every-day prating which escapes all indictment, and eludes all proof.

It would be a great sanitary reform in social life, if men and women would learn to swallow their wine, and drink their tea, without "talking about" people, of whose real principles and actual conduct they know little or nothing.

This being "talked about" is a tax which we all pay, more or less. I have heard a lady "talked about" for daring to wear the same dress at five separate evening parties, and at last she was rudely stigmatized as "Miss Evergreen," the unfortunate dress being of that colour; and a thoughtless cousin of mine, incurred no end of being "talked about" by asking for a glass of ale at one of these parties.

It is certain that those who are most prone to gloat over the fancied or existing misdemeanours of others are frequently not among the most immaculate of creation. Our wholesale denouncers of impropriety, our stern, inflexible censors, and our gabbling purveyors of peccadilloes, are not invariably taintless themselves.

But I must be careful and not weary your readers with more illustrations of the odious "talking about" habit than are necessary; and if this slight sketch deters one thoughtless or mischievous tongue from saying that which is alike cowardly and scandalous, or at least frivolous and paltry, I shall be well repaid for the hour I have spent over my desk; and I can assure my dearest friends that, highly as I respect Lady Fame, I would much rather have this scrap of writing acted upon than "talked about." QUEVEDO REDIVIVUS.

HIGH SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS.

The other day, Jones and I were comparing notes on the subject of what is called the "higher education" of women. (I may remark that Jones is an authority on female education; having been such a careful observer of young women for the last thirty years that he is still—at fifty—a bachelor.) Our conversation could scarcely be called controversy, for I found myself in pretty strong sympathy with my friend's views; and if I now and then dissented, it was rather to "draw" Jones than to confute him. "Look at this paper," said he; "these are 'Regulations for the Higher Examination of Women,' just laid down by a certain University: tell me what you think of them." I ran my eye over the paper, and found it to be a list of subjects upon which it was proposed to examine "women over sixteen years of age," in order to the granting them certificates as "Senior Associates in Arts." Some of the subjects were "imperative," others optional. The first were pretty extensive; embracing in Latin, Livy, Cicero and Virgil, with Prose Composition, etc., or Greek in various authors, including the Philippics of Demosthenes; then came, in Mathematics, almost the whole of Euclid, Algebra beyond Quadratics, and Trigonometry. Next came Logic, Anglo-Saxon, and Philology; Roman Greek, and English History being appended to their respective courses. The list of Options embraced Botany, Chemistry, (with chemical manipulation,) Mathematical and Experimental Physics, Biology, Geology, Mental Philosophy; winding up with Language and Literature in English, French and German. "Now," said Jones, "I maintain that this is a monstrous perversion of nature; and that, like all perversions, it has a harmful influence on society. No true girl can take such a course of study, and hope to become a true woman." "Jones," said I, "you are behind the age: don't you know that it is the glory of our day to have at last recognized the superior mental endowments of women, and that they are fast going ahead of us, not only in literature, but in art and science? Are they not fast displacing us at the bar, in the pulpit, on the rostrum, and in the medical and scientific chairs? Are they not even now gathering for a final assault upon our legislative halls? Have they not discovered the source of power in the law-making prerogative, and is not the woman the 'coming man'?"

"Ah," replied Jones, "now you have hit it. The woman is fast becoming a man; at any rate she is fast losing her femininity. The distinctive grace and delicacy of womanhood is being sacrificed for an unnecessary imitation of a man. Competing in study with boys and men, girls inevitably imitate their language and manners; and if they do not become manly, at least become unwomanly. Why, in our own little town the so-called 'High School' is lower in manners and morals than many of the common schools. The boys and girls are too closely associated; and those citizens who live near the school buildings declare that they cannot send their children to have their moral tone lowered and their girls to become only distinguishable from their boys by their dress."

Here I ventured to observe that surely girls had a right to the same educational advantages as boys; that many of them would have to fight their own way in the world; and that it was only fair that they should enter on the struggle as well equipped as the sterner sex. Says Jones, "You cannot alter the law of humanity any more than the law of gravity. The woman was never