

BITS OF TALK WITH OTHER WOMEN.

I.

OF NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS.

BY MARIE LOUISE SANDBROCK REDMOND.

AND first of all, let me bid the other women, the friends known and unknown, a very happy New Year!

There is hardly one of us, I fancy, whether she be of the new or old variety, who does not joyfully hail the newness of the year. Fresh beginnings are such a stimulus, such a long breath of invigorating oxygen after the close quarters of the old twelve-months. And so we set busily to work, with our string of good resolutions inscribed upon the clear tablets of January, half believing that we will at last do better, and half cynically fearing that all will come to naught again, as it has always done before. With a little self-knowledge one unconsciously looks with a more sceptical curve of the eyebrow at one's self than at the rest of the world.

And yet, it is only simplicity and faith that holds us to the best that is in us. We women, so far as our own lives and struggles are concerned, lack both.

"The world is too much with us." Its struggle and unrest have caught hold of us. Imitation and conventionality force us out of our round niche into the square one. Independence of thought or action leaves us. Self-assertion becomes impossible; self-development a dream long forgotten.

The world-spirit is responsible for much of this. A holier spirit, dragged out of due time and place, for much more. I mean—and I pray that I may not be misunderstood in saying so—the spirit of self-sacrifice, of unselfish devotion.

Only the unending New Year of heaven can tell us the number and the grandeur of the long martyrdoms of womankind, the lives spent in heroic charity towards the souls and bodies of the suffering and the sinful.

All honor to these heroines of sacrifice! In speaking of them, whether they be religious, or wives and mothers, there is no

question of misspent lives. But there is another side to the picture.

Who of us does not know instances of complete, all-absorbing, and alas! utterly useless, self-abnegation? It is the woman's shibboleth. Self-sacrifice is the beginning and end of our alphabet of domestic life, therefore of life unadjectived, for the new woman does not reign so completely among us but that domesticity is, and ever will be, our sphere.

Scarcely a family exists in which some member, generally of the order of father, husband, brother, does not claim and most willingly receive the self-sacrificing attention of the rest of the household. In most cases this devotion is both unnecessary and useless. It involves for the person sacrificed heedless destruction of health, strength, time and talent; as for the person who accepts the sacrifice, his gain is only the negative one of increased selfishness and wrong-heartedness. The wrong-heartedness lies in our woman's leaning towards the works of supererogation—not concerning God, nor, in general, our neighbor, but our masculine relations.

"Men are so selfish," sighs an amiable little woman. Alas! that amiability and logic so seldom dwell together! One plaintively accepts the fact; the other asks, *why* are men selfish?

It seems to me there were fine possibilities, even of unselfishness, about Adam, and that, even at the present day, more than one of his sons know the meaning and practice of noble self-abnegation. I doubt not, however, that as soon as Eden's honeymoon ended and more prosaic house-keeping began, our good-hearted Eve set about the same course of spoiling for complacent father Adam, that other Eves and Adams have been reciprocally indulging in ever since.

Set a man a high ideal, and there are nine chances out of ten that he will do his ut-