

at present, and so is getting some of those modern strong-minded notions into her head. The fact is, that our region is a little too much out of the world; there is nobody around here, probably, that she would think a suitable match for her. The fact is, Caroline ought to visit, and cruise about a little in some of the watering places next summer, and be seen. There are few girls with a finer air, or more sure to make a sensation. I fancy she would soon find the right sphere under other circumstances."

"But does it not occur to you, uncle, that the very idea of going out into the world, seeking to attract and fall into the way of offers of marriage, is one from which such a spirit as Caroline's must revolt? Is there not something essentially unwomanly in it—something humiliating? I know, myself, that she is too proud, too justly self-respecting, to do it. And why should a superior woman be condemned to smother her whole nature, to bind down all her faculties, and wait for occupation in a sphere which it is unwomanly to seek directly, and unwomanly to accept when offered to her, unless offered by the one of a thousand for whom she can have a certain feeling?"

"To tell the truth," said my uncle, looking at me again, "I always thought in my heart that Caroline was just the proper person for you—just the woman you need—brave, strong, and yet lovely; and I don't see any objection in the way of your taking her."

"You talk as if she were a golden apple, that I had nothing to do but reach forth my hand to pick," said I. "Did it never occur to you that I *couldn't* take her if I were to try?"

"Well, I don't know," said Uncle Jacob, looking me over in a manner which indicated a complimentary opinion. "I'm not so sure of that. She's not in the way of seeing many men superior to you."

"And suppose that she were that sort of woman who did not wish to marry at all?" said I.

My uncle looked quizzical, and said, "I doubt the existence of that species."

"It appears to me," said I, "that Caroline is by nature so much more fitted for the life of a scholar than that of an ordinary domestic woman, that nothing but a most absorbing and extraordinary amount of personal affection would ever make the routine of domestic life agreeable to her. She is very fastidious and individual in her tastes, too, and the probabilities of her finding the person whom she could love in this manner are very small. Now it appears to me that the taking for granted that all women, without respect to taste or temperament, must have no sphere or opening for their faculties except domestic life, is

as great an absurdity in our modern civilization as the stupid custom of half-civilized nations, by which every son, no matter what his character, is obliged to confine himself to the trade of his father. I should have felt it a hardship to be condemned always to be a shoemaker if my father had been one."

"Nay," said my uncle, "the cases are not parallel. The domestic sphere of wife and mother to which woman is called, is divine and god-like; it is sacred, and solemn, and no woman can go higher than that, and anything else to which she devotes herself, falls infinitely below it."

"Well, then," said I, "let me use another simile. My father was a minister, and I reverence and almost adore the ideal of such a minister and such a ministry as his was. Yet it would be an oppression on me to constrain me to enter into it. I am not adapted to it, or fitted for it. I should make a failure in it, while I might succeed in a lower sphere. Now it seems to me just as no one should enter the ministry as a means of support or worldly position, but wholly from a divine enthusiasm, so no woman should enter marriage for provision, or station, or support; but simply and only for the most purely personal affection. And my theory of life would be, to have society so arranged that independent woman shall have every facility for developing her mind and perfecting herself that independent man has, and every opportunity in society for acquiring and holding property, for securing influence, and position, and fame just as man can. If laws are to make any difference between the two sexes, they ought to help, and not to hinder the weaker party. Then, I think a man might feel that his wife came to him from the purest and highest kind of love—not driven to him as a refuge, not compelled to take him as a *dernier resort*, not struggling and striving to bring her mind to him, because she *must* marry somebody,—but choosing him intelligently and freely, because he is *the one* more to her than all the world beside."

"Well," said my uncle, regretfully, "of course I don't want to be a matchmaker, but I did hope that you and Caroline would be so agreed; and I think now that if you would try, you might put these notions out of her head, and put yourself in their place."

"And what if I had tried, and become certain that it was of no use?"

"You don't say she has refused you!" said my uncle, with a start.

"No, indeed!" said I. "Caroline is one of those women whose whole manner keeps off entirely all approaches of that kind. You may rely upon it, uncle, that while she loves me as frankly and truly and honestly as ever sister loved a brother, yet