

they can see farther than this. Between the betrothed and the wife, they know that there is a world of difference. What the mysteries of marriage are I know not,—what its effects are I do know. I have shuddered to witness the transmogrification that terrible ceremony produces. It must be some horrible jugglery which converts a pretty modest-looking girl into a red-faced flaunting virago, happy only in spanking the children, abusing the baker, and snubbing the poor flunky, her husband! If the “secrets of the prison-house” could be told, I am sure they would be dreadful. If married men only dared narrate all they suffer, it would indeed

“Freeze the young blood,

Make the two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,  
The knotted and combined locks to part,  
And each particular hair to stand on end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.”

The history of human torture does not, I verily believe, contain anything to equal the preaching, poking, pummelling, and pestering they, poor souls, endure!

The following short extract from the life of Wesley, will just give a faint, and very faint idea, of this state of bondage and misery:—

“Wesley’s domestic life was not happy. When about fifty years old, he contracted a marriage with Mrs. Vizzell, a widow of independent fortune; having first agreed with her, that he should not preach one sermon or travel one mile the less on that account. His constant journeys were, no doubt, a heavy sacrifice to duty; but the lady kindly made it as light as possible, by allowing him no peace at home. Her temper was insufferable, and her jealousy equally positive and groundless. She is said to have frequently searched his pockets and opened his letters, and sometimes even struck him and tore his hair! Wesley himself, in writing to her, complains that she had tried him in numberless ways, laid to his charge things that he knew not, robbed him, betrayed his confidence, revealed his secrets, given him a thousand treacherous wounds, purposely aspersed and murdered his character, and made it her business so to do! At length, without assigning any cause, she left his house, and declared her intention never to return. Wesley, whose journal had previously been silent on her conduct, shortly mentions her departure, and adds these remarkable words, ‘non eam reliqui, non dimisi, non revocabo.’ Their union—if so it can be called—had lasted twenty years, and Wesley survived their separation for twenty years more.”

One of the consequences of this state of things are the frequent acts of self-destruction committed by married men. As a general rule, bachelors do not commit suicide, simply because they do not commit matrimony. I have no doubt that if the investigation could be made, it would be found that matrimony and suicide go hand in hand. The more marriages you have, the more suicides you have. As the tyranny of the law does not allow a man to hang his wife, he goes and does the next best thing—hangs himself. With the aid of his matrimonial garters, he finds quiet in the grave. If he has a fear, it is perhaps that they may by and by place his tyrant near him, and that thought is alone sufficient to add agony to the pains of strangulation!

Enough, however, of these painful reflections!

Another of the charges urged against bachelors is, that they are useless. In what respect, I should like to know, are they useless? Matrimony, it is true, damps a man’s inventive powers, but celibacy sharpens them. When an unfortunate gets married, he gives the key of his wardrobe to his wife, and henceforward becomes a sluggard. But the bachelor surrenders neither his liberty nor his clothes-press, and either his mind or his fingers are always employed. His intellectual gaze takes in every article in his drawers, and calculates what shirts want buttons, and what require none. He seeks into the mysteries of darning, and upon occasions learns to hem. I have known brother bachelors who could show needle-work with the best sempstress that ever wrought a garment, and whose skill in the culinary art might make even Ude turn pale. And shall I be told that this is nothing? Is it nothing to be independent of the cook for one’s dinner and to be able to “carry on,” though the whole

generation of milliners and tailors conspire against you? The married man is doubly a slave because he is helpless. His wife has but to threaten him with a ragged garment, and he is left at her mercy. She gets at his pocket through his shirt-collars, and the fetters she exhibits to his eyes are a pair of undarned stockings!

I need scarcely say that married women greatly exaggerate these little services. They make a great deal of merit of a very little labour. I can imagine a community in which their services would not be required at all, and in which “every tub should stand on its own bottom.” I have frequently thought it would be a delightful thing for a number—say fifty of each sex—to set themselves aside from the great world, and seek happiness within the resources of their own minds. Fifty bachelors and fifty old maids would be enough to form a terrestrial Paradise! Imagine such beings participating in each other’s society without any selfish object—without claiming any rights of proprietorship, or exercising any rule of tyranny. Whilst young, their graces would charm—when old, their kindnesses would solace. They would see beauty fade away without regretting it, and the progress of age would be with them the progress of friendship. And when Death came, as he would come, to disturb their little society, they would meet him with philosophy, and endure his infliction with hope. How preferable this to the anxiety, the cares, the selfishness, that marriage is certain to bring!

And now a word or two of our sweet sister friends, the old maids. They have, indeed, much to complain of. What they suffer from slander, the world knows not—and yet how patiently they bear it! They are voted useless creatures, and yet every one demands their assistance. They are represented as selfish, and the world would want hospitals and almshouses but for them. They it is who rob the present to give to the future. Contrast the state of a married woman with that of a quiet old maid, and then say which is the happier creature. The one is full of cares,—always fretting, scolding, ailing. The other lives as a cricket, good-natured as a puppy dog, healthy as a trout! The married woman is never at peace, and if she has no real cares, makes imaginary ones. Her mind is always dwelling on some horrible circumstance. Perhaps the baby has swallowed a needle (they are always swallowing needles), or Master Bobby has tumbled into the hog-tub. Her life is a life of alarms, and her only satisfaction is, that she is permitted by the articles of marriage to enjoy the pleasure of making her husband just as miserable as herself. Oh, no; say what they may of the old maids, they are the only sensible part of the sex I could ever discover!

And now, in conclusion, lest I should be thought partial in my criticism, let me quote the remarks of a very old unmarried friend, whose opinions differ materially from my own on this not unimportant subject. He is absolutely rash enough to believe, that marriage is necessary to happiness, and in reply to my expostulations, has had the exceeding effrontery to write me a long epistle, in which he seriously defends the heresy, and endeavours to prove me in the wrong by what he very coolly calls “a fair statement of the question.” The following is a specimen of the special pleading with which he strives to support his case:—

“Every body makes way more readily for a man who is putting forth his best energies for one weaker and more tender than himself, whom he has respect to escort through the rough roughfare of life. We respect the office and him who discharges it. He may give you a sharp poke in the side which you may feel disposed to resent, and perhaps lift up your hand to do so; but the suppliant look of her at his side disarms you; you make way—if you have a heart, you do—and he moves on. He may have a surly countenance—a brutish manner. He excites your indignation—you eye him with anger, and say to yourself, “I should like to throw that fellow into the sea, if—” and here you pause, and look, not at him—“if it weren’t for that poor body at his side.” And so the couple pass on, sure of the sympathies