

THE CATHOLIC SWEETHEART AND SPINSTER.

(Mary Sarsfield Gilmore in New York Freeman's Journal)

Popular fallacy ascribes perfect happiness to heart-free girlhood; but in truth there is a pathetic side to its dainty comedy. Under its laughter trembles a sob; and its smile shimmers with shed and unshed tears, as Spring sun shines between April showers. The days when boy is girl's childish duplicate are golden days indeed; but his subtle transformation into her social complement marks the dawn of a troublous era. There are transitional phases of attraction through which every girl is bound to pass, and continual readjustment of conviction accepted by her innocence and inexperience as final, frets and fevers her impatient young spirit.

Were she left to her own soul—wherein Christ, with the spirit of love and light, lives and acts—she would solve in due time, and with no risk of error, the deep and delicate problems of womanhood and vocation. But at this crisis she is not left in the peace her spirit craves, more's the pity; but rushed in upon by the inveterate flippancy and vulgarity of matrimony-mad matrons or would-be-matrons, whose banal badinage profanes the virgin ground that the angels of childhood still tread.

In the first blush of self-consciousness and life-knowledge, a girl is not only a sensitive plant, but a sensitive-plate, indelibly and disproportionately impressed by the special spirit envying her; and many a precocious and disastrous marriage not made in heaven results from the social microbe inoculating even the immature school-girl with an unholly horror of coming into the unpopular title of "old maid."

"To be, or not to be—love and marriage?" in truth is the vital question of every girl's life; but it should be left to ask and answer itself in God's good time; and the spiritual and social crudity that anticipates it in mere wanton frivolity has an account—a grave immortal account—to render!

But the Catholic "engaged girl" and her elder sister whose single blessedness is established as a permanent state of life have escaped the perils of youthful mistake, and solved the problem of girlhood differentially, yet with equal rectitude, each according to her vocative lights! The bride-elect represents the natural woman supernaturalized; the confirmed spinster—if her choice of the single state be voluntary—the exceptional woman whose marked individuality of temperament, taste, or ambition demands the independence of the unmarried life.

Comparison of the social value and personal happiness of these representative types is neither just nor delicate. Under Divine law, each legitimately is a spiritual law unto itself, bringing free will to the service of destiny.

Yet the truism is irrefutable that "All the world loves a lover;" and the pretty, poetic, blushing, smiling, magnetically joyous and hopeful "young sweetheart"—as the beautiful old name signifies the maiden loving and beloved—undoubtedly monopolizes popular favor. The spinster, conventionally maligned as sour and embittered by disappointment and envy, yet whom countless instances prove the most unselfish and tender-hearted creatures, is the last to quarrel with the natural preference that she shares openly or in secret. In truth, it is she who above all other women, reverses love as a mystery of beauty and joy, and idealizes the human lovers.

To sustain the ideal of love in the face of realities, is the characteristic mission of the Catholic sweetheart. To her alone is marriage a sacrament of the spirit, and not a mere social convention. It is she who brings to her engagement a sense of moral responsibility—a spiritual standard which is the touchstone of emotional privilege and romantic precedent. She stands not only for love, but for its youthful innocence, its tender purity, its divine obligations. In these sacred attributes, rather than in mere personal happiness and social honor, the real dignity and sweetness of her position consist.

In these, too, lie her supreme charm, her resistless spell for her lover. Materialism is bred in men, but they are born idealists, and like Esau, pine for their bartered heritage. Their social pretence of flippancy is a case of "still waters." Even as these "run deep," so maternal line levity is the mask of earnestness; and in spite of appearances which are against his depth and lot-

ness of character, the Catholic man is rare who is not grave and nobly stern at heart. He has tests and touchstones which the average woman fails all unknowingly, and standards of judgment of which he reveals no sign. But the Catholic sweetheart need not fear the husband of whom the lover is but the gallant precursor. She fulfils she surpasses his highest ideals; and her little hand not only holds his joy of earth, but also his faith in the practical good of human godliness, sustaining his hope of heaven.

The sweetheart has reached the true-time, the halcyon days of her life, though she does not realize it. Before her are the burden and heat of the day of maturity, the untold raptures of married life; behind, the travail and stress of maidenhood, to which peace has come through love alone! She rides at anchor in sight of the haven of love, and if her outlook is optimistic, she is worthy to have her "dream come true," inasmuch as she is worthy of love.

The Catholic sweetheart has not giggled or boldly coquetted her way into marriage-engagement "for fun," or in desire for a solitary ring! She has not invited or encouraged advances, morally or otherwise unworthy of her, for the sake of exploiting an admirer. She has not desecrated and sullied love by light and sentimental flirtations, or been influenced in her choice of the marriage vocation by any unscrupulous motive. She has not been the slave of mere fancy, or of soulless ambition, or been enslaved to the mere beauty-man, per se—the rich man, the society man, the fascinating man, the popular man whose preference flatters her because her dearest friend or bitterest foe is "dead in love" with him! Above all, she has not cast to the winds her selective privilege, lest fastidiousness result in celibacy! No, the Catholic sweetheart, enshrined in the pride and purity of spiritualized and self-respecting maidenhood, has stood apart and afar from vulgar folly, responding only when true love claimed her! Therefore she is a sweetheart, not only beloved but revered, and reverence is true love's more sacred name and synonym in the hearts and the souls of men!

For men have souls, though the sweetheart of devotional practices, especially if a brotherless youth, has failed to familiarize her with masculine simplicity of spirit, is apt to resent the spiritual torpor and unresponsiveness she seems to discover in her happy-go-lucky lover, and to jump at the conclusion that all men are soulless. But no! Men have souls, though starved and stunted by temporal ambitions and worldly avocations—souls that cry out to the sweetheart and wife for spiritual as well as perfect human complement. The girl of material standards, of lax ethics, of frivolous sentiments, of selfish ideals or rather non-ideals of life, fails this supreme challenge, and disappoints love's most dear demand. She may be courted and married by men at their worst, but she is not truly loved by them—and where true love is not, marriage is a tragical failure.

But the Catholic sweetheart will make marriage a success, if the social evils of the day have not brought God's curse on it. From her cradle she has been prepared for this special apostolate. Her "long, long thoughts of youth," inspirational and revelative, have been celestial texts for her wisely mission. As child and girl she has been infused with the grace that not only sanctifies but strengthens. Her innocence, the dream and desire of all men and lovers, was not "lost" with childish ignorance, but gently matured by knowledge into the nobler purity of mind and heart which is the shrine at which the worst man kneels. She has grown so instinctively and naturally into full moral responsibility and vital sense of Divine and human duty that to take life and love conscientiously and earnestly is no conscious effort, but as second nature to her, establishing her as the inspiring and congenially intelligent life-companion and comrade, as well as the worthy love-mate. Man can ask no more of woman in any or all of her possible relations to him than the Catholic sweetheart holds him. She blends spirituality with sweet feminine humanity, and no ideal surpasses this dual reality.

What she is in spirit and in truth, however, it is for her lover alone to learn, in the communion of love's more sacred hours, or of life's deep or crucial experiences. Superficially, she is neither more nor less than a



normal girl—a girl as proud of her lover, as happy in loving and being loved, as simply pleased with her gifts, and gratified by her social honors, as gay at the dance and the dinner, as absorbed in her trousseau, as thrilled in anticipation of the mere external glory of the wedding day—as the most inveterate little worldling with whom love dallies and trifles. But beneath these emotional shallows, what a Divine undercurrent the lover is breathing! What pure prayers, what grand resolves, what sublime consecration, what visions of life beautiful, of love mystical, of sweet home's ideal domesticity, of tender wifehood, of proudly dignified yet gracious social matronliness, of the divine mystery of human motherhood, the immortal visions that are the deifying, demoralizing lack of the society of the day! Nor does she forecast the conservative span of her own love-life only. The chord of love is the perfect chord of universal life, harmonizing both major and minor notes of humanity.

That "love begets love" is a truth stopping short of the whole truth. Love begets nobler charity—true Christian altruism. Before first love youth, in spite of its popular reputation to the contrary, is hard and cold and unconsciously cruel. Its response to lavish parental love is virtually untender and selfish. It accepts affection as a matter of course, and devoted service as a right, never doubting or questioning its own personal worth, or scrupling its scant or graceless reciprocation. It is critical of its neighbor, and perchance dutifully punctilious rather than spontaneously generous in its love and service of God. But love's divine miracle changes all this, expanding the heart by the identical emotion that concentrates it. God is revealed or realized with new vividness—as the living God, prayer becomes impassioned, and all the human world is near and dear in its joy and sorrow—man and woman and little child. The self-absorption and egotism of the past are recognized and repented; selfish indifference glows to generous enthusiasms, and all that is beautiful and noble and lofty in life takes on intimate significance, while personal blessings strain beyond self like ministering angels to share their sweet grace with others. Gentle words, tender deeds, date from love's apocalypse—noble efforts and grandest ideals. And all these the Catholic sweetheart brings to the married life, to dignify, to sweeten, to exalt, to immortalize it.

Well may the heart of lover and husband rest in her, his pearl of great price, whose value is indeed

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above the rubies. In her he has no light love, the mere vane of his fortunes; no false love, to fail his love's holiest visions; no fair-weather love, to flee when shadows gather. True and faithful loving and loyal unto death is the Catholic sweetheart, whom man loves, and God blesses.

What, then, of her sister, the Catholic spinster? In sacred truth can she plead justification, and recompense and vocative mission—or is her life as tradition is fain to convince us, a desolate and barren waste? Let us put to her the censor's intelligent question: Who is justified in assuming that the spinster is unloving and unloved? If hearts know their own bitterness, may they not know, too, secret sweetness. Perchance the spinster has loved unworthily, and gained, not lost by the divine mistake. Perchance she has loved sacrificially, immolating on the altar of duty her woman-dream of wedlock. Perchance she has loved, as the moth loves the star, some unattainable good that she is better and best for loving, since love is never vain, never futile. Perchance she has "loved and lost," and in losing the mortal lover, retained immortal love. Let none presume in sheer ignorance to judge and therefore misjudge her. It is true, provisionally true, that to the few women, love and lover in the sense of marriage opportunity, never come, but the few exceptions do not stand for the great majority—single by force of vocation, or because their course of true love has not "run smooth." In any case, a loveless life is an impossible paradox. Love is the life of the human heart, and every living creature loves some person or some ideal. If the love be unhappy, has it no claim to reverence? Oh, light world, oh, cruel world, think!

But the representative Catholic spinster has the single vocation, and her problem is what to do with it. That the world makes it hard for her, there is no gainsaying. It cedes her such tribute as it must, but its concession is grudging. If perforce it favors her, it condescends and patronizes. "Poor" spinster! What though she is proving great soul, great intellect, great heartedness? Still, she is "only an old maid"—not a wife or mother.

Is there no union of heart, then? Is there no maternity in the spirit? A whole class of celibate men serve religion, art, science, philanthropy. Is it according to Divine economy, to natural harmony, that these masculine souls, minds and hearts have no spiritual, intellectual, sympathetic feminine counterparts? And aside from this fact that social class balances class, is there no motherhood save in the natural order? What of the creative gifts of genius, the prolific Divine spark? What of the social mission that leaves fruit even unto future generations? What of the maternal service of the strong and unselfish, to the weak and impotent? What of the motherhood of orphans by the life of active charity, whose heroic sacrifice and consecration are not confined to the convent?

Mother Church first, and we might almost add "and last," since as yet she has few followers, recognizes the single life as a secular vocation, and the spinster honorable in her observance of it. Therefore the Church is the Catholic spinster's court of appeal and refuge. It supplies all that the blind, foolish world may deny her. In the Church is love—Divine love humanized in the Savior, idealized in the eucharistic real presence, and vitalized in its tenderest and most appealing incarnate phase, in the crib of Bethlehem. In the Church is friendship of the supreme type that, even a Napoleon recognized as "the true image of the Deity" the friendship of the father of souls, of the priestly brother of Catholic men and women, whose wounds are faithful, and who heals them with sacramental balm. In the Church, too, the arts and aesthetics lavish upon the socially isolated woman their purest and highest achievements—classic beauty of architecture, of sculpture, of painting; the divine art of music in its ecclesiastical simplicity, inspired eloquence and oratory, impressive rites,

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majestic service, a bounty of lights and flowers, all encompassed by the atmosphere of the "peace passing understanding"—that is the desire of all humanity, yet the world's vain quest, sought outside of the one true "sanctuary." The Catholic spinster who loves her church knows that all love, all friendship, all pure pleasures are in it. Possessing it, she lacks nothing, she misses nothing, even of heart-life, of social life. In truth, the Church is the earthly vestibule of the heaven where there is "neither marriage nor giving in marriage."

But the spinster of especially religious instincts is apt to cloister herself in seclusion, so she is less familiarly in evidence than the spinster called to the active life, against whom the world's darts are directed. If she serves little children her "maternal passion" is criticized. If she visits the sick, "charity is the resource of old maids." If she is generous in alms-giving, "she has no other use for her money." If modest means or absorbing life-work compel financial economy, "old maids are stingy, selfish old things." If her nature is genial and her youth and

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Entry may be made personally at the local land office for the district in which the land is situate, or if the homesteader desires, he may, on application to the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, the Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, or the local agent receive authority for some one to make entry for him.

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(1) At least six months' residence upon and cultivation of the land in each year for three years.
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SOGG

Irish Affection

When I served on the 1st division, frequent house-to-house visits in my district formed, as with mixed feelings, no part of my ordinary duties. I was often in the tenement of visitation is under the influence of a very useful, or rather a very useful, for the interests of religion. Non-Catholic atmosphere in the city. The streets of my district were inhabited by the poorer working class, almost needless to say, dominantly Irish by birth. There were whole streets of Catholics as any in Dublin, and one could hear there the accents of many of the pronunciation of Antrim, rich brogue of Kerry; and plausible, insinuating tones to the broad, Gaelic of Connaught.

To go amongst them in the pleasure to me in one of pain in another. It was sure to receive their warm Irish welcome; and it was, in fact, a painful thing to see so many of them had given up the practice of their religion. They were poor, too, and wretchedly so. Poor they were to Liverpool in the famine, for the most part, their children remained in the land, as it were, to return cargo at a non-coal boats, in the "bad" after long years of toil at their material condition was at all improved, from the were shot out as so much the quays, friendless, and worse still, possibly alienated.

I confess it often brought into my throat to see, in among them, an aged sitting by a cold, cheerless stove, in some miserable with a sad, far-away, tear-dimmed, weary eyes, looking to my fancy the dreaming of a cottage in land, situated, mayhap, in a green hillside or in a valley, in which she spent girlhood, but which she saw again. I must return to my theme, which is the Parish.

Some time after I was tied down in the Mount the bright thought struck me I was not overburdened I might, profitably to my with agreeable variety to introduce the English system to-house visitation among the excess, perhaps, of my as I afterwards thought, in abundant exuberance of my ardent enterprise, I accordingly on one fine morning for a visits, taking the leading rather "boreen" up the hill. I had a blackthorn and was armed with the which my predecessor had.

I may say, in passing, I considered this book defective complete in many particulars, was my intention to bring improved and amended edition with marginal notes regarding different entries, notes perhaps, prove useful to ratings. This, to my mind, was proof of the necessity of a course on which I was embarked. I noticed, in looking over the book, that the compiler, careless, at times, in regard of the members of the families, in cases more where they were all grown in the record of "Honorary dow," whose family consisted of one boy, the younger was registered as years of age; and after the oldest girl, Mary Briggs, was, in the age column, a interrogation, with ditto column opposite the name of other girls. In another place this entry: "Sarah Morrison, aged, 31—(mortality)" led to remedy such defects.

In every house I visited, needless to say, a kindly and invariably an invitation to take an air of the house. I kept the object of my mission in view, however; and in the inquiries in each whether or not all went to church, and attended to their duties. In some cases before replying to these questions, the people thus looked at me in surprised