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"WOMAN."

ARCHBISHOP WHATELY defines woman as "A creature that does not reason and that pokes the fire from the top." I do not know whether His Lordship was a single or a married man, but from that statement we would gather that his mother had died in his infancy, that he never had any sisters, and had eschewed feminine society all his life. How little, oh! how little men understand the women of to-day, how hard it seems for them to realize that they are their equals in everything but bodily strength. The one thing that heretofore kept women in the back-ground was her education and the mode of her "bringing-up." And to-day, as we know, all this has been changed. Now, as there are men and men, so are there women and women. Show me the man (or woman either) who will attempt by set words or phrases to define successfully the character of woman in the abstract, for a man might live on earth a hundred years, meet all kinds of women in all ranks and stations of life, and never encounter two in all those years who would resemble each other in the least degree. Of all the marvelous works of the Supreme Being, man may have been the greatest, but woman certainly was His most complex, incomprehensible and unmanageable creation; therefore, do not imagine that I am going to attempt what great men have failed to do, an analysis of woman-kind, for I simply want to chat for a few moments about the faults, failings, and good qualities of women in general. Woman was made for man, of man, and after man ("And, begorra," says Paddy, "she has been after him ever since").

Let us then talk of the man's woman, for, to my mind, she is, with all her faults, follies, and foibles, the most interesting type of womankind. All the famous women of bygone ages have been "men's women." Semiramide, Cleopatra, Ninon de l'Enclos, Marie Stuart, Elizabeth of England, down to our famous women of the present day. But while those enumerated above were nearly all celebrated for their great beauty, as well as for their cleverness and brilliancy, it does not follow that only the beauty can be the successful man's woman. There is an indescribable something which we for lack of a better name call "charm," which far outweighs mere beauty of person, and what is this "charm" which all women would have, and which, after all, very few possess? It is—let me see—a happy combination of sweetness of manner and grace of bearing, with a large proportion of womanly tact, and a goodly quantity of unselfishness, coupled with a desire to make those around us happy.

I have a friend, very dear to me, who possesses this charm to a great degree, and is essentially a "man's woman," and, remember, I do not mean by this term "a flirt," but simply a woman who, by her sympathy, *bon camaraderie* and goodness, gains the confidence, respect and liking of the men in whose society she may be thrown. This little friend of mine can

scarcely be called pretty, is not at all clever, yet I have remarked time and time again, when we have been "out" together, that she has received more attention from the most "desirable" men present than half the other girls in the room put together. I once asked her why this was. She replied, laughing, "My dear, simply because I like men and find they always have something interesting to say. They do not pull their best friends to pieces, as girls do, or gossip, or make little disagreeable remarks, meant to sting; they entertain me, they amuse me; I don't try to entertain them." Now this was rather hard on her girl friends—but stop—I don't believe Rita has any girl friends, save myself, and I "don't count," as they say in "Patience." She says "girls are deceitful, that they will trample on their best friends to further their own interests, that they are jealous-minded, uncharitable, cruel to their own sex," and many other unpleasant things I cannot remember at present. Indeed she has a very poor opinion of our sex. "Give me a man for my friend," quoth she, "but heaven defend me from a woman." And yet the same girl is the kindest little soul in the world to women who happen to be in need of sympathy and who are thrown in her path, for while she never places confidence in womankind, neither does she invite it. Rita has always been a study to me, and while I have known her for years, her character, motives, aims, indeed the very girl herself, are as incomprehensible to me still as was the mystic Sphinx to the ancient Egyptians ages ago. The other day, speaking superficially and uncharitably, a person said of a woman whom he knew but slightly, "She disappoints me utterly. How could her husband have married her? She is commonplace and stupid." "Yes," said a friend, reflectively, "it is strange. She is not a brilliant woman, she is not even an intellectual one, but there is such a thing as a genius for affection, and she has it. It has been good for her husband that he married her. In the sphere of home the graces of gentleness, of patience, of generosity, are far more valuable than any personal attractions or mental gifts and accomplishments. They contribute more to happiness and are the source of sympathy and spiritual discernment, for does not the woman who can love see more and understand more than the most intellectual woman who has no heart." Now this genius for affection is one of the most lovable attributes in woman, discounting the power of beauty, or even cleverness in the long run, and happy is she who possesses it. But, dear me! we are what we are, and though we may by circumstances become changed to a certain degree, still our natures remain to a great extent the same. There are only two things which will change the nature of a woman. First, a will-power tremendous, which can not only mould her own life as she orders, but unconsciously shapes the lives and characters of everyone around her. This species of woman is not rare, and oh! what a power for good or evil she can be. Secondly, that love, true, pure and all-absorbing, which comes to a girl but once in her lifetime, the love which softens and purifies the hardest natures, the love which gladdens and glorifies a woman's whole existence, calling forth all that is best from the inmost depths of her nature. Oh! this love! what a magical power it is. But after all, in spite of all her weaknesses, would man have woman other than she is? I doubt it. Unworthy though she may often be found, alas! He loves her, she is his earthly idol what if her feet be "made of clay"; he forgets it all when from his lofty height of exalted manhood he kneels lowly at the feet of some small girl, acknowledging to himself in his heart of hearts that full of faults, though she may be puzzling, contradictory, incomprehensible, but, withal, adorable, what would his life be without her? and laying down that life and all his hopes for the future before her, he waits to hear the word which he knows will make or mar him for eternity.

GEORGIE WALLACE BIGNELL.