

Certainly some centuries; yet sensible girls cannot be made to see and to understand that a small waist is a deformity. Some few women have waists one could span, but they are to be pitied, not admired. It is a deformity, not a beauty. When did ever a sculptor give us a figure with an hour-glass waist?—and a terrible thing it would look in marble if he were to attempt any such atrocity! We should all start from it and lift our hands in horror at the deformity. And bad as the small waist is in point of art, it is a thousand times worse in the interest of health. There is no room for the play of the lungs, and the digestion is sure to become permanently impaired. Girls laced-up become pale and thin—are subject to all sorts of ailments, and bid for chronic disease in advanced life.

When Fashion has tightened up a lady so that she cannot well breathe, and has headaches, and neuralgic pains, and loss of appetite, and the rest of it, Fashion then goes and props her on heels so elevated that from a back-view she appears to have wooden legs, and if she walks on a gravel path, the result is holes, as if she were dibbling, in order that cabbages might be planted in the gravel. Now, a flat-footed person very naturally seeks a little elevation to get over a natural defect; but where the human foot is at all well-shaped with a natural arch, there is no occasion for artificial aids, and in the extent to which they are carried, high heels are as great a deformity as a thick-soled shoe worn for a club-foot. Besides, look at the effects. The wearer is in walking thrown forward beyond the perpendicular line, she walks on her toes, there is no purchase in the foot, no power of sustaining the fatigue of walking, while there is a tendency to throw up the hip-bones to the detriment of the cherished waist, and every facility is afforded for spinal curvature, and other affections of the beautiful column, the healthiness of which is essential to happiness.

This is a subject of paramount importance. We hear much of women's rights now-a-days. Would it not be well if women first exercised their undoubted right to free themselves from the domination of Fashion, and to dress sensibly and live healthily? They would then at least establish a claim to intelligence. They want the suffrage, they want Degrees in Universities, they want to have freedom accorded to them in all their actions; in fact, I hardly know what they don't want, except the education which would enable them to see that painted faces, idiotic costumes, artificial shapes, and incipient wooden legs, leads one to underrate their mental qualities, and to discount the admiration which their charms are calculated to inspire.

QUEVEDO REDIVIVUS.

LA PETITE MADELAINE.

BY MRS. SOUTHEY.

"Mais revenons à nos moutons." Our present business is with the young lover and his fair mistress, and the still younger Madelaine. Time will overtake them soon enough. We need not anticipate his work. The old inexorable brought to a conclusion Walter's leave of absence, just as certain discoveries to which we have alluded were beginning to break upon him; just as la belle Adrienne began to weary of playing at *parfait amour*, enacting the adorable to her lover, and the *aimable* to her cousin in his presence: just as Monsieur and Madame, her weak but worthy parents, were secretly praying for their future son-in-law's departure, in the forlorn hope (as they had stipulated that even *les fiançailles* should not take place for a twelve-month to come) that some unexpected page might yet turn over in the chapter of accidents, whereon might be written the name of Jules Marquis d'Arval, instead of that of the landless, untitled Walter Barnard, for the husband of their beautiful heiress.

Just at this critical juncture arrived the day of separation—of separation for a year certain! Will it be doubted that with the parting hour, rushed back upon Walter's heart a flood of tenderness, even more impassioned than that with which it had first pledged itself to the beautiful Adrienne? The enthusiasm of his nature, acting as a stimulus to her apathetic temperament, communicated to her farewell so much of the appearance of genuine feeling, that the young soldier returned to his country, and to his military duties, imbued with the blissful assurance that, whatever unworthy doubts had been suggested occasionally by fallacious appearances, the heart of his fair betrothed was as faultless as her person, and exclusively devoted to himself. So wholly had the "sweet sorrow" of that farewell absorbed his every faculty, that it was not till he was miles from St. Hilaire on his way to the coast, that Walter remembered la petite Madelaine; remembered that he had bid her no farewell; that she had slipped away to her own home the last evening of his stay at St. Hilaire, unobserved by all but an old *bonne*, who was commissioned to say Mademoiselle Madelaine had a headache, and that she had not reappeared the next morning, the morning of his departure. "Dear little Madelaine! how could I forget her?" was the next thought to that which had recalled her. "But she shall live with us when we are married." So having laid the flattering unction to his conscience, by that satisfactory arrangement for her future comfort, he "whistled her image down the wind" again, and betook himself with redoubled ardour to the contemplation of Adrienne.

And where was la petite Madelaine?—What became of her, and what was she doing that livelong day? Never was she so much wanted at St. Hilaire—to console—to support—to occupy the "fair forsaken"; and yet she came not. "What insensibility!—What ingratitude! at such a time!"—exclaimed the parents of the lovely desolate—so interesting in her becoming character of a lone bird "reft of its mutual heart," so amiable in her attempted exculpation of the neglectful Madelaine! "She does not mean to be unkind—to be cruel—as her conduct seems"—sweetly interposed the meek apologist. "But she is thoughtless—*insouciant*—and you know, chère Maman! I always told you la petite Madelaine has no sensibility—Ah Ciel!"—That mine were less acute!—was, of course, the implied sense of that concluding apostrophe—and every one will feel the eloquence of the appeal, so infinitely more affecting than the full-length sentence would have been. If vagueness is one great source of the sublime—it is also a grand secret in the arcana of sensibility.

But we may remember that poor little Madelaine had slipped away to her own home the preceding evening, pleading a headache as the excuse for her evasion. Perhaps the same cause—(was it headache?)—holds her still captive in her little chamber, the topmost chamber in the western pepper-box turret,

four of which flank the four corners of the old Chateau du Résnel. Certain it is, from that same lofty lodging Madelaine has not stirred the livelong day—scarcely from that same station;—

"There at her chamber window high,
The lonely maiden sits—
Its casement fronts the western sky,
And balmy air admits.

And while her thoughts have wandered far
From all she hears and sees,
She gazes on the evening star,
That twinkles through the trees.—

Is it to watch the setting sun,
She does that seat prefer?
Alas! the maiden thinks of one,
Who little thinks of her."

"Eternal fidelity"—being, of course, the first article agreed and sworn to in the lovers' parting covenant, "Constant correspondence," as naturally came second in the list, and never was eagerness like Walter's to pour out the first sorrows of absence in his first letter to the beloved, or impatience like his for appearance of her answer. After some decorous delay—(a *little* maiden coyness was thought decorous in those days)—it arrived, the delightful letter! Delightful it would have been to Walter, in that second effervescence of his first passion, had the penmanship of the fair writer been barely legible, and her epistolary talent not absolutely below the lowest degree of mediocrity. Walter (to say the truth) had felt certain involuntary misgivings on that subject. Himself not only an ardent admirer of nature, but an unaffected lover of elegant literature, he had been frequently mortified at Adrienne's apparent indifference to the one, and seeming distaste to the other. Of her style of writing he had found no opportunities of judging. Albums were not the fashion in those days—and although, on the few occasions of his absence from St. Hilaire after his engagement with Adrienne (Caen being still his ostensible place of residence), he had failed to indite to her sundry billets, and even full-length letters, dispatched (as on a business of life and death) by bribed and special messengers,—either Mlle. de St. Hilaire was engaged or abroad when they arrived—or otherwise prevented from replying; and still more frequently the lover trod on the heels of his despatch. So it chanced that he had not carried away with him one hoarded treasure of the fair one's writing. And as to books—he had never detected the "*dame de ses pensées*" in the act of reading anything more intellectual than the words for a new Vaudeville, or a letter from her Paris milliner. He had more than once proposed to read aloud to her—but either she was seized with a fit of unconquerable yawning before he proceeded far in his attempt—or the migraine, or the vapours, to which distressing ailments she was constitutionally subject—were sure to come on at the unfortunate moment of his proposition—and thus, from a combination of untoward accidents, he was not only left in ignorance of his mistress's higher attainments, but at certain moments of disappointed feeling reduced to form conjectures on the subject, compared to which "ignorance was bliss"; and to some lingering doubts of the like nature, as well as to lover-like impatience, might be attributable the nervous trepidation with which he broke the seal of her first letter. That letter!—The first glimpse of its contents was a glimpse of Paradise!—The first hurried reading transported him to the seventh heaven—and the twentieth (of course, dispassionately critical) confirmed him in the fruition of its celestial beatitudes. Seriously speaking, Walter Barnard must have been a fool, as well as an ingrate, if he had not been pleased—enraptured with the sweet, modest, womanly feeling that breathed through every line of that dear letter. It was no long one—no laboured production (though perfectly correct as to style and grammar); but the artless affection that evinced itself in more than one sentence of those two short pages, would have stamped perfection on the whole, in Walter's estimation, had it not (as was the case) been throughout characterized by a beautiful, yet singular simplicity of expression, which surprised not less than it enchanted him. And then—how he reproached himself for the mixed emotion!—Why should it surprise him that Adrienne wrote thus? His was the inconceivable dulness—the want of discernment—of intuitive penetration into the intellectual depths of a character, veiled from vulgar eyes by the retiringness of self-depreciating delicacy, but which to him would gradually have revealed itself if he had applied himself sedulously to unravel the interesting mystery.

Thenceforward, as may well be imagined, the correspondence, so happily commenced, was established on the most satisfactory footing, and nothing could exceed the delightful interest with which Walter studied the beautiful parts of a character, which gradually developed itself as their epistolary intercourse proceeded, now enchanting him by its peculiar naïveté and innocent sportiveness, now affecting him more profoundly, and not less delightfully, by some tone of deep feeling and serious sweetness, so well in unison with all the better and higher feelings of his own nature, that it was with more than lover-like fervour he thanked Heaven for his prospects of happiness with the dear and amiable being, whose personal loveliness had now really sunk to a secondary rank in his estimation of her charms. A slight shade of the reserve which, in his personal intercourse with Adrienne, had kept him so unaccountably in the dark with respect to her true character, was still perceptible, even in her delightful letters, but only sufficiently to give a more piquant interest to their correspondence. It was evident that she hung back, as it were, to take from his letters the tone of her replies; that on any general subject, it was for him to take the lead, though having done so, whether in allusion to books, or any topic connected with taste or sentiment, she was ever modestly ready to take her part in the discussion, with simple good sense and unaffected feeling. It was almost unintentionally that he made a first allusion to some favourite book; and the letter, containing his remark, was despatched before he recollected that he had once been baffled in an attempt to enjoy it with Adrienne by the manner (more discouraging than indifference) with which she received his proposition, that they should read it together. He wished he had not touched upon the subject. Adrienne, excellent as was her capacity—spiritual as were her letters, might not love reading. He would, if possible, have recalled his letter. But its happy inadvertence was no longer matter of regret when the reply reached him. *That very book*—his favourite poet—was Adrienne's also! and more than one sweet passage she quoted from it! *His favourite passages* also! Was ever sympathy so miraculous! And that the dear diffident creature should so unaccountably have avoided, when they were together, all subjects that might lead to the discovery!

(To be continued.)