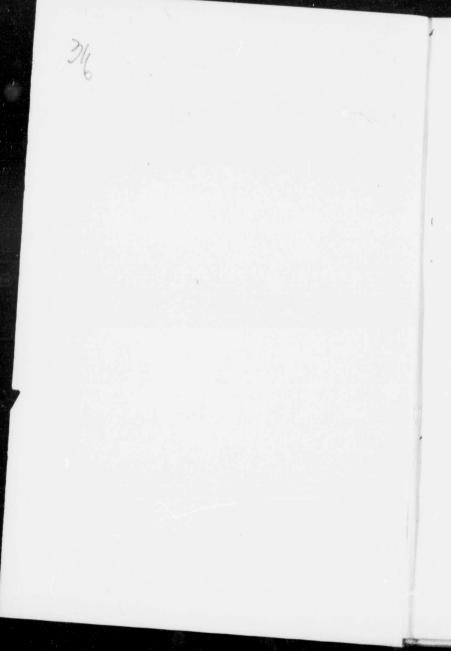
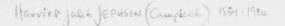


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# LETTERS TO A DÉBUTANTE





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BY

LADY JEPHSON

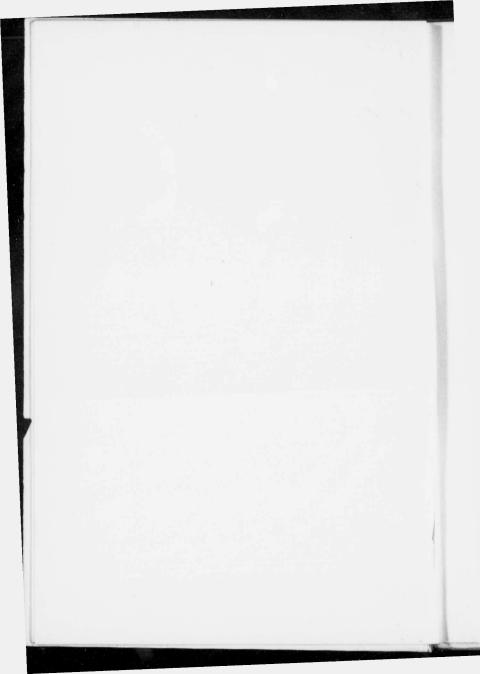
AUTHOR OF "A CANADIAN SCRAP-BOOK"



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# LETTERS TO A DÉBUTANTE

1

#### ON THE ART OF HAPPINESS

You have asked me, dearest Violet, to dip into my shallow well of wisdom and give you to drink of its waters. In other words, I, being come to years of presumable discretion and experience, am required to warn, and counsel, and advise one on the threshold of life, ignorant alike of its pitfalls and its pleasures. To know oneself is to be only too sadly conscious of human fallibility and limitations. How shall I, therefore, being this fallible, unwise mortal that I am, presume to put to your

lips the waters of knowledge, and tell you to drink of them? The giver of advice finds himself sooner or later walking the certain road to self-destruction. We all know how Mrs. Norris (prodigal of advice and miserly of money) was regarded in the Bertram family; and Lady Catherine de Burgh was another forcible instance of unappreciated altruism. Therefore I deprecate any accusation of laying down the law as to conduct or opinions. If letters be essential to your happiness you shall have them. I shall moralise, and prose, and sermonise, and chide, and quote—but advise you—Never!

Now to be young is to be something desirable and ephemeral. To be beautiful is to be enviable; to have mind is to have power; to be charming is to possess magnetism over the hearts of men greater than either beauty or intellect; and to be good is the consolation prize open to the

# On the Art of Happiness

plain, the stupid, the elderly, or the unattractive.

No one can be lovely or young by an act of volition, else would neither age nor ugliness exist; but charm may be cultivated, the mind can be trained and disciplined, and even age and ugliness may be palliated. That "to be good is to be happy" is a fallacy. Happiness is not only consequent on virtue, and thousands of good people are very far from being happy; but real, simple, sterling goodness stands the wear and tear of life better than any other quality, and gives more substantial happiness to those about us than either beauty or intellect.

To the débutante everything in the life that lies before her is seen through the medium of rose-coloured spectacles. This point of view is the natural and right one. A joyless, miserable youth is of all things most deplorable; and happiness, nay! even

a little frivolity, never unfits people for the serious duties of life: these come soon enough, and remain with us to the end of all things. Therefore be happy while you may; dance, and sing, and rejoice, for a time will come when it may be asked of you, as Hamlet demanded of Yorick's skull, "Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar?" To be happy sweetens one's nature, improves one's temper, adds to one's charm, and indeed "no one has any more right to go about unhappy than he has to go about ill-bred."

To dogmatise on the Art of Happiness is difficult, since each human being has his or her conception of that enviable state. There can, for instance, be no affinity between the realisation of vain ambitions, which is the ideal of happiness to one man, and the perching on one leg on the top of

# On the Art of Happiness

a pillar in order to reach happiness through self-martyrdom as did St. Simon Stylites. One woman defines happiness as a state of luxury in which a superfluity of tiaras, carriages, and fine houses exist. Another thinks that perfect bliss consists in popularity, a reputation for beauty, and endless admiration. Some base their ideals of happiness on success in literature and art. To the true woman, my dear Violet, there is only one royal road to happiness outside of Religion, and that lies simply and solely in the affections.

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
"Tis woman's whole existence,"

says Byron.

"Das Leben ist die Liebe,"

writes Goethe; and Schiller makes Thekla sing:

"Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück Ich habe gelebt und geliebet."

The love which exists between man and woman is not the only love, however, which makes of the prose of a woman's life an Filial love and maternal love bring supreme happiness or supreme misery to her lot. A life full of affection is a blessed life, and no success in other paths can for a moment compare with the exquisite happiness of loving and being loved by those for whom one cares. Let a woman be as intellectual as Madame de Staël, as keen in the cultivation of mental graces as Vittoria Colonna, she finds these resources turn to dust and ashes in her mouth when they become her only objects in life. George Eliot did not find literature enough for her happiness, and even strong-minded Queen Bess had her love passages.

For many centuries the long arm of the Roman Catholic Church has struck at natural affection as a snare of the flesh, and preached as its remedy a doctrine of self-repression and asceticism. If domestic happiness and the lawful exercise of affection for one's husband and children did not bring happiness to the greater proportion of people, convents and monasteries would never have originated and flourished. If misery had been the outcome of marriage, it is obvious that the conventual life would not have spelt renunciation.

Conspicuous among the factors of happiness in life is good-temper. If a woman allows herself to give vent to ill-temper. angry retort, discontent and acidity of disposition, she puts a strain on the rope of happiness which wears it so thin that its eventual snapping is only a question of time. Should she, on the contrary, face life bravely and patiently, taking with sweetness its good and evil as sent for a wise purpose, she secures by worth of character the affections of those about her. Granting my contention that love is the

embodiment of earthly happiness to a woman, we must consider that the art of happiness for her lies in so ordering her life and disciplining her character that she shall endear herself to those about her.

"We ought to be as cheerful as we can," says Lubbock, "if only because to be happy ourselves is a most effectual contribution to the happiness of others." "And to get peace if you do want it," says Ruskin, "make for yourself nests of pleasant thoughts. Those are nests on the sea, indeed, but safe beyond all other. Do you know what fairy palaces you may build of beautiful thoughts, proof against all adversity? Bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts, which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us-houses built without hands for our souls to live in." "If a man is unhappy," says

# On the Art of Happiness

Epictetus, "this must be his own fault, for God made all men to be happy."

So it comes to this, dear Violet, that I find myself dipping in the waters of others' wisdom, and giving you to drink not of my knowledge but of theirs; and this again reminds me of Ninon de l'Enclos' rejoinder when Mignard deplored his daughter's lack of memory. "All the better," said Ninon, "she will not make quotations."

#### II

# ON THE NEED FOR CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

# DEAREST VIOLET,-

No one has come to years of discretion without realising how his world has become smaller as his size has increased. To visit houses which you have not seen since childhood is to find rooms, in one's memory palatial, now shrunk to contemptible proportions. Childhood is the time of illusions and golden dreams. Adolescence somewhat robs the world of its glamour. Age strips it naked of all illusions. The age of perfect happiness is that of enthusiasms, of aspirations, of idealisa-

tions. Wear, therefore, your rose-coloured glasses while you may. Look on the poetry and romance of life as long as you can. The night cometh when no man may do so. While it is yet day be kind of heart, and charitable of tongue, lenient to the faults of others, tolerant of their failings. There comes a time when life's bitterness robs your spirits of their buoyancy, your eyes of their rose-coloured spectacles. When the kindly glasses fall, alas for you!

The charity which thinketh no evil is hard to find, still rarer in the world is the gentle tongue. She who possesses it is more beloved than if she were endowed with the physical perfections of a Venus. For it is neither beauty nor intellect that keeps love, however much either may attract it. Sweetness of nature, unselfishness, regard for the feelings of others, wear better in the long run than physical or

mental charms. Moral endowments outweigh all others in the close companionship of life which marriage brings about. In the end they are most potent in society, for beauty perishes, intellect can weary, but qualities of heart endure. In the endeavour to be amusing it is easy to be sharp of tongue. The consequence of such sharpness does not dawn upon the utterer of the unkind speeches until long afterwards. To raise a laugh, to wile away boredom:

> "Full many a shaft at random sent, Finds mark its archer little meant."

Alienation of friends, accumulation of enemies, dislike of acquaintances, are a few only of the consequences of an unbridled tongue. In the cock-sureness of youth, which is so certain of itself whatever else may befall, it is easy to laugh at the waning beauty catching at each straw

which helps it to retain a fast fading youth. The spectacle is pathetic rather than amusing to those of maturer years. To the very young and the stony-hearted how infinitely entertaining, how easily The sublime contempt for ridiculed! physical subterfuges lessens when the need for the first false tooth appears. There is nothing so laughable now in the endeavour to stow away the grey hairs where they will not so prominently clamour for notice. The middle-aged woman views the struggle with destiny and the inevitable from a different standpoint to the débutante. She has gained in breadth of view what she has lost in height. If she be wise she accepts her fate with dignified cheerfulness. If she be foolish she resents the decrees of Providence; she is jealous of those younger and better favoured than herself, her tongue lets itself go in unkind and bitter comments on, perhaps, unwise but innocent doings, and finally experience and fading charms find themselves in antagonistic relationship to youth and beauty. Thus we see the young jeering at their elders, the elders assuming a critical and uncharitable aspect when viewing the foibles of youth. "On ne jette des pierres qu'à l'arbre chargé de fruits." Sourness of nature finds its outlet in bitterness of tongue. In early youth the unruly member seldom wounds from ill-nature. Heedlessness and idleness cause it to err, and want of repression induces at last lamentable consequences.

The sarcastic is little better than the evil tongue. It serves to amuse those who for the moment are not lashed by its whip. It earns no confidence, however, gains no esteem. Those who have laughed loudest at the witticisms directed against others are in turn most fearful lest the arrows should be aimed at themselves. They are never deceived into imagining

that they can escape the clever tongue. They fear and hate it when laughing most. Let the *débutante*, therefore, be warned in time, and school herself never to be witty at the price of kindliness, never to be amusing at the expense of others.

The gossiping tongue, which dispenses harmless news and indulges in good-natured personalities, earns no more respect than its more dangerous rival. It is puerile to be for ever concerned in the affairs of others, and tittle-tattle belittles the mind and does nobody any good. What purpose can it serve to know whence Lady A. gets her gowns, or how much Mr. B. lost at Monte Carlo? Are we any wiser for the assurance that Mr. C. owes his tailor hundreds, or that the D.s are not on speaking terms with each other? No one is the happier for details of domestic quarrels, and it improves nobody's morals to find out how bad others are.

And the flattering, fawning, lying tongue is worse than all! Nothing in life is more hateful, nothing works greater mischief. A life-time of misery, an old age devoid of self-respect and happiness lies before her who suffers her tongue to stray from the paths of truthfulness.

The tongue of exaggeration follows close in the wake of the lying tongue. Guiltless of intent to misrepresent, it yet often distorts facts to the extent of downright want of truth. It is perilously easy to produce an effect by deepening the shadows and heightening the lights of a picture. A polychrome is always more attractive than a monochrome. Insensibly the desire to create a sensation in pictorial art, either as applied to brush or word-painting, leads the artist into the pitfall of exaggeration. As the painter wanders from the path of truth in Nature, so he loses the just sense of its values; and with that loss goes his

sensitiveness to gradations of colour and delicacy of tones. The final result is hardness, crudeness, glaring contrasts, want of atmosphere, and eventual vulgarity. Much the same result follows on a course of hyperbole. A landscape over-coloured and full of violent dissimilitudes is like a tale told by the tongue of exaggeration, where everything is either black or white, and in which neutral tints are wanting.

More general than any other among women is the inaccurate tongue. A slipshod habit of speech, and want of observation, are at the bottom of this universal fault. Women seldom tell a tale accurately; either the time they ascribe to the incident is too late or too early, or the place where the adventure happened is miscalled, or the sequence of events is topsy-turvy. Sometimes the wrong end of a story is seized, and occasionally

ludicrous, and not seldom lamentable, consequences follow. All this because women will not pause to observe carefully, to listen with attention, and to relate conscientiously.

And now let us look at the work of a righteous tongue: one which slandereth not its neighbour, is charitably disposed to all men, and gives utterance to nothing false. With dignity it speaks, with earnestness, with exactness. Wit without malice drops like pearls from those lips. The righteous tongue is quick to help and cheer the despondent. It is equally prompt to speak tender words of sympathy to the broken-hearted. It counsels with words of wisdom the young and foolish, and puts strength and heart into the moral coward. By its soft answers it turns away the wrath of many. All men praise it, none can revile it. Then, dear Violet, remembering all this, learn to watch over

# Need for Controlling the Tongue

the tongue, to think before you speak, to weigh well your words, to be wise in time.

"The wolf avoids the pit, the hawk the snare, And hidden hooks teach fishes to beware."

#### III

#### THE ETHICS OF DRESS

EMERSON has left it on record, dear Violet, that he had heard with admiring submission the experience of a lady who declared that the "sense of being well dressed gave her a feeling of inward tranquillity which religion was powerless to bestow."

However sternly we might disapprove the mental attitude of a woman who by her own admission finds peace of mind in chiffons rather than in churches, we all feel that to be well dressed is a desirable state. The woman who knows her gown to be well-fitting, her boots faultless, and

# The Ethics of Dress

her gloves beyond reproach, will meet her enemies in the gate with courage.

That good dressing should be the prerogative of rich women, few women in moderate circumstances would care to admit. Nevertheless, at the present moment, when women have placed so large a portion of their individuality in the hands of their dressmakers, we may take it for granted that money is the most potent factor in the art of dressing.

Want of taste in dress has been for years a reproach hurled at the typical English woman. Foreign artists have caricatured her clothes, foreign journalists have derided them, and even her compatriots have relentlessly laid the sin of bad dressing at her door. Within the past ten years, however, a singular change for the better has set in. English women have improved in the cut of their garments, in the trimness of their boots and

gloves, and in artistic combination of colours. But in proportion as their taste has bettered, their extravagance has increased, and the masculine mind which deplored the want of taste is equally alive to the sin of extravagance. To spend recklessly, however rich, is foolish, but to buy where you have not the money to pay is immoral.

The laws of decency and of comfort require that one should be clothed, and the laws of æstheticism demand that the clothing should be in conformity with beauty. How to combine beauty with economy in the matter of garments is therefore a subject of moment to those women who recognise the importance of good dressing, and the still greater necessity for preserving their self-respect by an avoidance of debt.

There is some excuse to be made for the latter-day Englishwoman as touching this charge of extravagance if we take into account the fact that dress has never cost so much as at the present moment. One cannot suppose that the classic chyton was a ruinously expensive garment, and it had the enormous merit—besides its undeniable beauty—of being appropriate to all times and places. The Greek lady attended to the affairs of her household, and took her modicum of pleasure outdoors, in practically the same dress; whereas your modern fine dame must have as many gowns for different periods of the day and phases of life as an Englishman requires servants in India.

The wardrobe of a young lady in the early Victorian era seems to have been of the simplest description. It is to be hoped that she sometimes wore more substantial foot-gear than sandals, and in wintry weather abjured white muslin. We know that when the cold came she wrapped

herself in a pelisse made of cloth and fur, and donned a coalscuttle bonnet and muff of gigantic proportions. I have my suspicions as to the white muslin lurking concealed under the folds of the pelisse, but of this fact we have no historic evidence. What would those eighteenth-century young ladies, Elizabeth Bennet or Anne Elliot, have said to the wardrobe of a modern damsel? Can we by any stretch of imagination picture to ourselves Catherine Morland or Evelina in "tailor-built" gowns?

Time was when brocades and laces were worn on all occasions and at all times of the day. Fashion at the present moment decrees that to be well dressed is to be suitably dressed, and to be suitably dressed is to wear serge at Cowes, tweed on the moors, and cloth and silks and velvets in London. This variety of apparel brings with it consequent expenses, yet what

# The Ethics of Dress

would be thought of her who wore Ascot gowns on a yacht, or yachting clothes on the moors?

It would be easy to dismiss the whole matter by resorting to the time-honoured expedient of quoting St. Peter as an excuse for carelessness and disregard of dress. No woman can afford to despise so valuable an adjunct to her beauty. A love of dress carried to excess is demoralising; a proper attention to dress is derogatory to no woman, however intellectual. That our clothing should be seemly and beautiful is but paying proper respect to the shrine of that spirit with which God has endowed us. And the art of dressing comes no more by nature than do reading and writing, despite our old friend Dogberry. It is an art which may be cultivated as much as any other. The original minds of Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael thought it not unworthy to study

lines of drapery in dress and combinations of colour as important factors in the beauty of their pictures. Why, therefore, should such study be considered trivial and beneath the attention of a gentlewoman? Naturally, where women are not endowed with brains or taste, they are safest in the keeping of a dressmaker who possesses both, but they lose thereby their individuality and the small note of originality which Englishwomen are so afraid to strike, fearing the accusation of oddity. No dressmaker, however daring, actually creates; she simply evolves. Originality is relative, and, as Emerson says, "rotation is the law of nature." "If we require the originality which consists in weaving like a spider their web from their own bowels, in finding clay and making bricks and building the house, no great men are original." So it follows in humble as in great walks of life. What has gone

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before, and our knowledge of it, influences our thoughts and our imaginations. Will the "Marie Stuart" bonnet, the "Medici" collar, the "Elizabethan" ruffle, or the "Tudor" cloak ever be forgotten? They have influenced the history of dress, and will continue to affect it, as much as the "Aeneid" did Tasso in his "Gerusalemme Liberata," or the Decameron influenced Chaucer.

Our knowledge of history and painting ought therefore to help us materially in the study of dress, and it follows as a matter of course that an educated woman should excel in this art an illiterate one. I date in my mind the improvement in English dress from the time when ladies first thought the trade of dressmaking worthy of pursuit.

Unfortunately, however much the English lady dressmaker may possess capacity or ideas, her compatriot belong-

ing to a lower grade is inferior in imagination and invention to her French colleague. She may have originality and talent, but she allows them to lie dormant, since she sends to Paris for her models, and blindly follows Lutetian modes. The English cook can roast his beef or baste his joint with the best of cooks, but when it comes to delicate flavouring or piquant sauces, he runs to Soyer for inspiration, or else ruins his dish with too prodigal a use of what the French artist manipulates discreetly. So, in the matter of harmonious colouring, of delicate combinations and subtleties of finish, the French dressmaker outshines the English one. With greater delicacy she combines a bolder fancy. It is as if she had laid to heart the historic inscription on the gates of Busyrane, "Be bold, be bold, and evermore be bold!" She has the wisdom to design for individual clients, and does not

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make a hundred dresses on the same pattern for a hundred different types of womanhood, as does the dressmaker of Mayfair. Incontestably the Paris couturière beats the English dressmaker, as the Paris chef does the English cook, out of the field.

Hence it comes about that the woman who pines for the distinction of being well dressed on all occasions, and who will not (or cannot) exercise her own faculties on the subject, goes to Paris for her gowns. Equally, as a matter of course, follow huge bills, the righteous wrath of fathers and husbands, tears, distress, repentance, and often more dresses from Paris, concealment of debt, and gradual loss of self-respect.

The woman who orders her clothes in London fares little better, since English dresses from good dressmakers cost nearly as much as Paris ones. House-rent, luxurious furnishing of show-rooms, and

hire of hands must be paid before the dressmaker has a chance of making a profit, and nothing but high charges enable her to live and prosper.

It becomes, therefore, a problem to the woman whose means are limited, and who goes much into Society, to know how to dress well and keep clear of debt; how to satisfy the claims of æstheticism and appropriateness, and yet avoid the bills! We can imagine the sufferings of Damocles when the sword of Dionysius hung by a single hair over his head. Who has not known more than one parallel of suffering where you could substitute a "Worth bill" for the sword of Dionysius, and the name of a lady for that of Damocles?

The best solution of the question seems to me a combination among sensible women against the excessive quantity of clothes at present required. If a

## The Ethics of Dress

woman have artistic instincts and perceptions, she will not (nay, she cannot) wear an ugly gown. Once, however, that she has chosen a beautiful article she ought not to object to wear it often, and it is only moral cowardice that prevents her doing so. There is no necessity to resort to platitudes and to quote Tupper in support of my argument. If a thing be charming in itself, it cannot be made less so by being often seen. The custom of wearing a fresh gown every day at Ascot races does not necessarily make a woman look better, and it assuredly leads her into terrible pitfalls. To make of one's person a lay figure for the exhibition of garments is to degrade that person. Dress ought to be subordinate and expressive of the wearer's individuality, not assertive and claiming attention before one's face and figure. Few women are brave enough to wear their Ascot gowns at Goodwood, and

Cowes is yet another danger to the extravagant woman. The famous "week," instead of proving a time of happy sport and health-giving recreation, is often turned into an occasion for display and rivalry in the matter of dress. All this is wrong and morally unhealthy! We must have clothes, therefore by all means let them be beautiful, but the claims of beauty do not require endless variety and reckless expenditure. Our great-grand-mothers looked as well in their brocades and muslin kerchiefs, worn from year to year on all occasions, as we do in our incessant changes of apparel.

Economy, in the matter of our dress, should be in the quantity of our garments, not in their quality. No woman of refinement would wear cheap or common materials. Cotton-backed velvets, shiny silks, and imitation lace are odious, and ought to be repugnant to the

feelings of well-bred women. Under-wear should be of the finest, and even cotton and woollen gowns of the best quality. Venetian Republic ordained that only Patricians should array themselves in silks and velvets. Happily a well-bred woman is not, nowadays, dependent upon the gorgeousness of her attire for her identifi-She is dependent, to a certain cation. extent, upon the reality of its richness, since no lady could wear imitation stones and respect herself. A great economy may be effected by having one's clothes made at home, although the creative and imaginative power possessed by many intelligent women of the upper classes is discounted by the lack in their maids of executive capacity to carry out ideas. There is also a coupe Anglaise which is the reverse of beautiful, and a coupe Française which is distractingly becoming.

Few women succeed in home dress-

making. The result of amateur work as regards dressing stands in the same relation to the artistic work of a first-rate firm as the laboured productions of a school-miss on a door-panel does to the exquisitely decorative creations of Benozzo Gozzoli. Until dressmaking in its details is taught in a proper school, and maids and small dressmakers are obliged to gain certificates of merit before being admitted to situations, one cannot regard home-dressmaking as a way out of the difficulty. The remedy for the appalling extravagance in dress which ruins so many homes is none the less in every woman's hands. One of three courses is open to her of limited means. To be well and appropriately dressed, but have few clothes and wear them often; to have recourse to cheap materials and bad dressmakers; or, to be well gowned and display a variety of toilettes, but to this end plunge deeper and

## The Ethics of Dress

deeper into debt, the extrication from which becomes more hopeless every year.

No right-minded woman can hesitate between these alternatives. The Primrose League has shown what unity of purpose among women will do. If women would band together with the same determination and tenacity of purpose to resist this everincreasing evil of frightful extravagance in dress; to withstand the allurements of constant novelty and limit the amount of clothes to the proportion of dress allowance -then, indeed, a happier state of things might be foreshadowed. As it is, nowadays, many a woman begins a lifelong unhappiness by acts of sheer foolishness and weakness, is led on by vanity and cowardice, and ends in depths of extravagance which lead eventually to the loss of all probity and self-respect. "There is only one appointed way of doing good, and that is by being good."

#### IV

#### ON COUNTRY HOUSE VISITING

DEAREST VIOLET,-

Conspicuous among doubtful pleasures, begotten of wealth and idleness, is its offspring, Country House Visiting. To learn how to kill time without suffering unutterable boredom, to make of pleasure a science, to exist without aim higher than the killing of partridges or the landing of salmon, requires a special education. The real worker finds the art of idleness too intricate and complicated a one for him to master late in life. He is seldom at his ease when there is nothing for him to do. He has no small talk or light badinage; lounging is distasteful to him, and from

# On Country House Visiting

the vantage ground of his superior earnestness and solidity he finds himself in a country house actually coveting the frivolity he once despised. Assuredly an accomplished graceful idler is a product which nothing but heredity can evolve.

To be a welcome country house visitor requires no little talent, an enormous amount of tact, and a large share of that virtue so despised of the moderns, amiability. To know how to be everlastingly agreeable, easily pleased, showing enjoyment in what is done with the object of promoting one's pleasure; able to add to the enjoyment of others, and content to be outshone by them, necessitates, indeed, no mean share of mental and moral endow-There is no ordeal more fiery than ments. the heated ploughshares over which one must walk in a country house. Just as candle-light beauty and waning charms are cruelly revealed in the searching light of

curtainless windows, so shallow minds and surface attractions are easily found out in the intimate intercourse of a country house. The pedant soon bores, the egotist becomes ridiculous, and the pretentious disgust. The spring-time of life, when spirits are highest and moods merriest, before dispositions become soured by disappointment or warped by sorrow, is of all others the most fitting for the pretty trivialities and becoming indolence of country house visiting. Added to youth, if we bring beauty and charm to the banquet, we are armed indeed.

To be agreeable and charming and sympathetic lies within the capacity of the average woman. More alluring and enchanting than even beauty is the subtle influence of sympathy. It has, indeed, enormous potentialities. We have all, at some period of our lives, come in contact with the perfection of physical endowment,

which yet has left us cold and unmoved. Few have ever been swayed through the mysterious influence of sympathy without being dominated by it. The Italians, with commendable terseness, express all that we wish to convey when we describe a woman as "charming," "fascinating," "agreeable," by the simple adjective simpatica. Sympathetic to not one, but all, since to the weakly pining over ill-health, the brutally robust glorying in their strength, the intellectual, the commonplace, she is equally delightful. Such an one is never egotistical. To her is given the art of entering into her friends' interests, heart and soul. No bored expression, no indifferent air, no preoccupation is hers, whilst the woes of ill-health, bad servants, and straitened means are poured into her ear. Some one with exquisite irony has defined a bore as one who will persist in talking of himself and not allowing you to talk of

yourself, and we, all of us, soften towards the being who betrays interest in the petty concerns which are so vital to ourselves. The girl, therefore, who practises the virtue of unselfishness, who honestly endeavours to think first of others, will, if she put her mind to it, become in time In proportion as she really interested. ceases to dwell on herself, and finds others deserving of interest and attention, she becomes doubly attractive. The tragedies and comedies in the lives of those around her begin to dawn upon her awakening discernment. Her spiritual life quickens, and pity and love give to her features a greater beauty than that of youth. She begins to feel that she is at last an actor in the drama of life, and no longer a mere spectator. A débutante is more or less an embryonic creature—a crude, undeveloped mass of potentialities. In her own hands lie to a great extent her future well-being

# On Country House Visiting

or failure; as much in the great hazy future stretching before her as in the limited sphere of a country house.

Amiability, the out-of-date virtue of which I spoke, so much lauded by the old school of romancers, and so bespattered by the later, is a gift no less valuable in a career of country house visiting than the endowment of sympathy. As far as one can see, there is nothing essentially antithetical in the gifts of amiability and brains. Why they should occupy the accepted positions of amiability versus brains it is hard to say; yet there is a generally diffused belief that if you call a woman "amiable," you can call her nothing else that is interesting. The guest who is amiable, nevertheless, is the rock on which her hostess builds. Should conflicting plans be in the air, and one wish to bicycle, another to ride, and a third to play golf or croquet, who but the

amiable one has the sorely-tried hostess to fall back upon? When the carriage appears to take the elderly lady of the party for a dull morning airing, who but Miss Amiability volunteers to accompany her, and earns thereby the eternal gratitude of her hostess? No doubt, our amiable young lady suffers a certain amount of boredom in the execution of the task she has set herself to do. Nevertheless, to view the matter from the lowest standpoint, selfdenial, kindliness, and amiability pay in the end. When next shooting season comes round, and our hostess is preparing her list of guests, Miss Amiability is not forgotten; and if she only continues to live up to the character she has earned, the amiable one, without possessing either great beauty or brilliant wit, has none the less infinite possibilities in her future. Accomplishments are, as a matter of course, invaluable in a country house, and since music

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"... can touch Beyond all else the soul that loves it much,"

the advantage of being a musician is palpable. The art of conversation is, unhappily, one so fallen into disuse that it is almost hopeless to expect to find any one under fifty possessing it. What passes as current coin in our realm for conversation more aptly be described should "chatter." The average girl prattles her impressions of the hour, or discourses on the well-worn—but to her interesting theme of the masculine entity and its idiosyncrasies. Older women find subjects for discourse in their households, dressmakers, servants, occupations, husbands' shortcomings or amusements. To call such babble "conversation" is worse than foolishness. One does not require that women should talk pedantically or even learnedly, but sensible intelligent conversation is not too much to expect from an educated lady. "To speak of oneself," says a writer, "is as difficult as walking on the tightrope. One requires such wonderful balance and so much circumspection, not to fall in so doing." To speak of others is very nearly as difficult, since it is so hard to avoid criticising their actions, and thereby giving offence, or tumbling into the pitfalls of scandal and idle gossip. The safest rule to follow is that of talking about things, not people, and where human interest is needed falling back upon the characters of fiction or of history, instead of one's circle of friends. The debutante cannot come to great harm as far as her tongue is concerned if she observe this golden rule.

The maiden of to-day needs small encouragement to active exercise and sports. If we compare her day's programme with the dreary one followed by Lady Teazle before her marriage, we must see that the

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modern girl has gained enormously. Instead of being "stuck down to a spinnet" or told off to "copy receipts" in a cookery book, she motors, cycles, plays golf, tennis, goes in for gymnastics, and is consequently a finer specimen of animal development than her predecessor, however much she may lack her graces of femininity. In country houses a knowledge of horsemanship, golf, cycling, bridge, and tennis is not to be despised; in fact, the trite saying that "knowledge is power" applies wherever one goes, and will continue to do so until the end of time.

As for the out-of-date, old-fashioned virtue of punctuality, it is held in small esteem at the beginning of the twentieth century, yet none gives greater comfort to those whose hospitality we accept. Society has of late years formulated a new code of manners; and the young man or woman who keeps dinner, and his or her elders,

waiting, is no longer looked upon as outraging the rules of politeness. Be this as it may, the selfishness and want of consideration for others, which permeate English society of the present day, are neither well-bred nor deserving of imitation. The attitude one adopts towards others, the measure meted out to them, will be returned in kind. Hence the truest philosophy, combinedly worldly-wise and Christian as it is, consists in treating others as we would wish to be treated by them.

"L'on ne vaut dans ce monde que ce que l'on veut valoir."

#### V

#### ON THE CHOICE OF LITERATURE

## MY DEAR VIOLET,-

Albeit the training and early education of a woman lies in her parents' hands, the final result of that education as success or failure rests with the girl. From the time she comes to years of discretion, and develops the critical faculty, it remains for her to decide whether her taste in literature shall be sound or the reverse. If she allows a weak and worthless species of writing to amuse her, if she become habituated to slipshod sentences, to ungrammatical phrases, to want of beauty as regards style, she soon loses the

just sense of value, which renders a page of Pater or Ruskin a delight. To have something worth saving and to say it well is no mean feat. To be blind to felicities of expression and beauty of language in a book is as great a loss as physical blindness where a beautiful landscape is concerned. To be unconscious of subtlety of thought, or truthful portrayal of character is as sad a thing as to lack humour. A mind fed on vapid colourless fiction feebly expressed, on exaggerated sentiments, false pictures of life, and sensationalism, deteriorates, so that fiction of literary merit becomes distasteful to it. Just as it is necessary that a painter should be trained to highest and purest ideals in his art, so the man or woman who would become truly cultivated should strive to keep his or her literary taste pure. The artist who communes with Botticelli, Raphael, and Giotto will no more stoop

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to the meretricious in his art than the mind which appreciates Homer, Shakespeare, Bunyan, Milton, Heine, and Dante can descend to the third-rate in literature. To become an epicure in one's reading is essential to the keen intellectual enjoyment of literary food. If the palate be in proper health and retain its native delicacy of taste, gross coarse food will be as distasteful to it as that which lacks flavour. Sensational literature may be an occasional anodyne to the weariness of the flesh, and it has its uses and application; but if we accustom ourselves to much of it, by degrees solid literature loses its power of entertainment, and we crave for reading which gives us less trouble to understand. The average girl, having left nursery or schoolroom behind her, finds herself as unfettered in the choice of her mental diet as she is in her bodily food. If, as regards the latter, she elect to live

on caviare, truffles, and sweetmeats, we all know what the ultimate result will be to her digestion. Should she take as her mental fare fashion papers, society journals and trashy novels, her mental digestion must suffer, since it requires a robust and well-balanced intellectual system to assimilate such food. Starvation of the mind is as disastrous in its consequences as starvation of the body. It is safer to give a child an able, if coarse, book than a foolish one. What is gross in "Tom Jones," "Amelia," "Tristram Shandy," and "Gulliver's Travels," is not perceptible to the innocent mind of a child; whereas Squire Weston, Corporal Trim, Uncle Toby, and the Lilliputians remain lifelong and valuable possessions. The dross falls away, the gold remains. There is something virile and natural in the three characters I have named; but the utterly insipid dummies which do duty for people in the pages of the average young person's book neither instruct nor amuse. Fed on pap, it is small wonder if children's minds become flabby and their natural intelligence deteriorates. "The Fairchild Family" and "Sandford and Merton" of the days of our grandfathers were just as insipid as any "goody-goody" book of to-day. In the direction of boys' books there has been a marked improvement in recent years; and fine, manly, stirring tales of the sea and sword, of sport and travel, cannot fail to rouse noble impulses. Literature has, however, taken the girl into small account, and I know of no living writer who has done much to lighten the darkness in which she dwells.

Of all writers for children of the present age there is none more exquisitely pathetic, without maudlin tendency, more humorous without coarseness, than Juliana Horatia Ewing. Take, for example, the

manly, beautiful character of "Jackanapes," in its perfect naturalness and truth. The brave, unselfish, human boy in his gradual development into the chivalrous gentleman, who, unconscious of having done more than his plain duty, dies like a hero. The certain fate of death which overtakes all aggravatingly good children in a particular species of book is not here. "Jackanapes" is no unnatural, saint-like child, but a delightful little sinner, who tries to be good, and ends by being great. The moral is obvious to the most ordinary intelligence, and surely a noble lesson is taught. Apart from the ethical qualities of Mrs. Ewing's books, her style is charming and her English irreproachable.

Hitherto I have dealt with the question of literature chiefly from an æsthetic point of view. The problem of books viewed from an ethical standpoint is still more

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important. If we would keep ourselves morally clean and wholesome, we avoid contact with those of low minds and light repute. Books, therefore, standing in the relation of friends to the people who love them, it behoves us all to be eclectic: and as the contact of mud defiles, so gross subjects and indelicate allusions in a book injure the fine modesty which ought to be a woman's most precious possession. A steady course of French novels, and not a few English ones of the same stamp, would soon rub off the bloom from any girl's mind. By careless reading the débutante injures herself mentally and morally far more than she imagines possible. From the low standpoint of worldly wisdom and expediency she does herself incalculable harm. No charm she can throw over the masculine mind is so potent as that of innocence and purity. The antithesis of the ideal woman is the

coarse-minded female who can repeat gross tales without a blush, and talk of subjects she ought to be ashamed to mention. It is no doubt "smart" and fashionable just now to tell broad stories and indulge in double entendres. Those who can blush at the licence of tongue which shocks them are spoken of as "provincial" or "middle-class," nevertheless there is nothing to be ashamed of in a pure mind and modest ears; and despite the sneers of the worldly, no real great lady is without self-respect, dignity, and modesty. Our late Sovereign ever set an example to her sex in this respect as in every other.

To come to the practical consideration of fiction suitable for young girls, I know of no books more delightful, more humorous, more healthy in tone than Jane Austen's. Is not Mr. Collins, the tuft-hunting, obsequious, ignoble parson, a creation fit to rank with any author's?

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Pompous, vain Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall, arrogant Lady Catharine de Bourgh, foolish Mrs. Elton, delightful, faulty, irresistible Emma, sprightly Elizabeth Bennet, charming Fanny Price, sweet Anne Elliott,-do we not in turn live, and love, and laugh with them all? Then how true to life are Maria Edgeworth's sketches of character in "Castle Rackrent" and "Tales of Fashionable Life." in "Ennui" and "Ormond"! Who has not heard of a modern Almeria Turnbull, one that, in her ambitious ascent of the social ladder, ruthlessly tramples on former friends? How fertile the invention, how delicious the humour, to be found throughout Maria Edgeworth's novels! Sir Walter Scott wrote of "the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact" of her Irish books. Indeed, it was the example of Maria Edgeworth which first fired him with the desire to do

for Scotland what the Irish woman had done for Ireland.

To go farther back in the genesis of novels let me counsel you, if you should not yet have read "Evelina" or "Cecilia," to lose no time in making the acquaintance of Mrs. and Miss Mirvan, Madame Duval, the vulgar Brangtons, Sir Clement Willoughby, Lord Orville, and Mr. and Mrs. Hurrell, the Delvilles, the Harleys and Mr. Briggs. Mrs. Inchbald's "A Simple Story" and Mrs. Opie's "Henry Woodville," "Mrs. Arlington," "The Ruffian Boy" and other tales, are valuable, if only for the insight they give us into former days, and manners and customs now fallen into disuse.

Mrs. Radcliffe, in her "Romance of the Forest" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho" shows descriptive powers of a high order. Of a certainty no fiction can surpass the glorious "Waverley Novels"; but I have

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heard even "Ivanhoe" described as "dull" in this year of grace 1905! All the same there can be no question of the superior relation in which Scott's novels stand to the average romance. There may be a renaissance of enthusiasm for his genius, but at the present moment the works of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli are more to the mind of the modern maiden than the stately and powerful novels which entranced the imagination of our grandfathers. In much the same way the writings of Ibsen, Tolstoi, and Björnstjerne Björnson have ousted those of the famous northern writer Fredrika Bremer. Yet I question if "The Neighbours" has ever been surpassed in quiet humour, simplicity of style, and perception of character. "Autre temps autre mœurs!" The novels of the Bronté sisters are now read by every girl; yet when "Jane Eyre" first astonished the world by its marks of indubitable genius, it was

condemned as far from moral in its tendencies, and odious insinuations were whispered about its author. Thackeray and Dickens must ever delight both young and old, and how many other writers we have to be thankful for! Washington Irving, Hawthorne, Bret Harte, Howells, James, -are not their names legion? No novelist in modern times has, in my opinion, been more neglected, and that undeservedly, than Thomas Adolphus Trollope; yet his Florentine story "Marietta" is one of the most delightful books imaginable. strong is the character-drawing, how lively the humour, how true to life the descriptions of Italy and its manners and customs! Does not Nanni Palli, the country youth from the Casentino, live in its pages? No dummy he, nor his father Carlo, nor Sebastiano Lunardi, nor the treacherous priest Guido Guidi. Anthony Trollope's novels, if not of a high order, are at least

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generally entertaining and always pure in tone. His heroines, too, are singularly charming, feminine, and lovable. As for the Bishop and Mrs. Proudie, Archdeacon Grantley, Mr. Ouiverful, and Eleanor Bold, do we not look upon them as old friends? Mrs. Oliphant's books healthy in tone and noble in aim. Mrs. Marshall's, like Elizabeth Sewell's and Lady Georgina Fullerton's, are well written, but [can scarcely be classed as "literature." Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's and Gertrude Atherton's are distinctly clever; John Oliver Hobbes brilliant, but not adapted to the requirements of a The same may be said of débutante. Lucas Malet's novels, and my "Index Expurgatorius," as applied to the reading of young ladies, would contain many more, some of them, unhappily, books of undeniable power but of revolting topics. Time warns me that my letter must soon

end, yet I have said nothing of Charles Lamb's delightful Essays, of the genius of George Meredith, and George Eliot; of the gifts of the Kingsleys, Besant, Black, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mrs. Meynell, Mrs. Gaskell; the perfection of style we see in Addison, Pater, and Ruskin; and the entertainment to be found in the pages of Stevenson, Stanley Weyman, Marion Crawford, Andrew Lang in his "Fairy Tales," Bagot, M. E. Francis, the Egerton Castles, Parker, Rudyard Kipling, Mallock, and George Fleming.

Hitherto I have only touched, dear Violet, on English fiction. The French and Italian schools contain little that very young girls can read profitably. German novelists are cleaner and altogether healthier in their works, and Paul Heyse, Wildenbruch, Wolzogen, Georg Ebers, Hans Werder, Voss, Gustav Freitag, Friedrich Spielhagen, and Böhlau have all

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written books of merit. Suderman's "Geschwister," "Frau Sorge," and "Es War" though works of genius are hardly to be recommended to an *ingénue*.

The Breton peasant says, "Tel père, tel fils." As you train yourself to a love of sound literature, the offspring of your labours will be beauty of mind and richness of intellect. As you debase the gifts God gives you, so will your punishment be mental and moral ugliness and intellectual sterility.

## VI

#### A NEGLECTED ART

If there be one thing, dear Violet, more than another which is needful for the health and consequent happiness of mankind, that desideratum is good cookery. On the preparation and proper combination of food depend, to a large extent, our state of body and mind. Few can be unprejudiced, even-tempered, and cheerful when undergoing the torments of dyspepsia. It is impossible to be light-hearted and optimistic when afflicted with indigestion.

"The weeping pessimist that's allus taken blue, An' paintin' up his troubles with a cemetery hue," owes the largest share of those troubles (if he only knew it) to the state of his liver. Pessimism is generally the outcome of dyspepsia; and contentment and optimism are consequent on a state of perfect health. There is sound philosophy, if a lack of originality, in the familiar "Mens sana in corpore sano"; and the parable of Menenius Agrippa is as applicable a one to the twentieth century as ever it was in the sixth century B.C.

Yet, though a knowledge of chemistry, physiology, and hygiene (all noble sciences), are necessary to the proper art of cookery, this branch of learning is both neglected and despised. Girls, with absolutely no musical gifts, waste years of their lives over pianos; or, without any artistic bias, are doomed to draw from the "flat," or from "life," and set to copy masterpieces for which they have neither appreciation nor understanding. Cookery is

considered derogatory and beneath the acquirement of a lady, and yet, strangely enough, every one recognises its importance. Weightier issues lie with it than with even the sympathetic rendering of Bach, or the correct copying of a Botticelli. Husbands are sad Goths, and a good dinner daintily served appeals more to the majority of them than the finest pre-Raphaelite picture ever painted. Mothers are universally credited with the earnest desire of seeing their daughters comfortably established in life with husbands and homes; nevertheless, who among them ever thinks of preparing these daughters for the state of life to which they are called? Day after day poor young girls enter upon the duties and responsibilities of married life utterly and entirely unprepared for them. Instruction and years of training are bestowed upon all other branches of knowledge before proficiency is expected, but housekeeping (like

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Dogberry's ideas of reading and writing) is supposed to come by nature.

The newly made wife, who in these days of higher education can often construe difficult passages of Virgil, and has left the Pons Asinorum far behind her, is utterly at sea as to the number of pounds of meat per head her household should, in reason, consume weekly. She, of course, is widely read in Tolstoi and Ibsen, and all latterday literature, yet would willingly part with a share of her knowledge of letters for that of joints. She is lucky if she knows baked meat from roast, or a frying-pan from a casserole. A "gammon" and a "flitch" are equal mysteries to her. She has the vaguest idea of when things are in season, and continually in her orders sins against the game laws. The weekly bills are sources of amazement and horror. Too long they are allowed to run unpaid and unexplained, until, as the Italian proverb says:

"Conti lunghi divengono serpenti." Who can wonder when anxieties, difficulties, and failure are the result of all this? It is as if a person ignorant of a note of music were given Wagner to read at sight. husband, accustomed to the good cooking of a club or to a menage (the machinery of which by long oiling run smoothly), finds the change to bad cookery, unpunctual meals, and enormous bills, trying even to the love of a honeymoon. Before long he acquires a disagreeable way of prefacing his sentences with the ominous and detestable words: "At my mother's . . ." The objectionable phrase (always used in antithesis to a grumble about his food): "Now, at my club . . ." is little better! At last incompetence begets contempt, misrule, anger, and the married life, which began so fairly, promises small happiness to those who are bound together till death parts them. Nothing is more worthy of admiration and respect than order, system, and good management; or more odious than their converse. "Thriftiness," says Lecky, "is one of the best regulators of life. It produces order, sobriety, moderation, self-restraint, patient industry, and all that caste of virtues which is designated by the term respectability."

And how apt is King Lemuel's description of a virtuous woman: "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

It is not to be supposed that emergencies will arise (out of the Colonies) which are likely to oblige a woman to put her culinary knowledge to active proof. English servants are, as a rule, sufficiently capable and well-trained to be able to send up meals after a fashion, more or less well as the case may be. Nevertheless, English cooks are not heaven-born geniuses, like French ones; and in the matter of cooking

vegetables, omelette-making and discreet flavouring, they have much to learn. Take, for example, the received British idea of a salad! Here is the orthodox receipt. Allow a couple of heads of lettuce to soak well over night in a pan of water, and when properly sodden and deprived of all crispness, mince them into little squares. (N.B.-Drying the lettuce first on a clean napkin would be fatal to the first principles of an English salad.) Next a small cupful of vinegar, a just proportion of salt and mustard, about three drops of oil, and a little cream. Beat all these ingredients together with the yellow of a hard-boiled egg, and when your dressing proves sufficiently acid to provoke a wry face, you will have achieved the object of your desires, salade à l'Anglaise! For the crisp French salad, with its taste of fresh lettuce and chervil, and its soupcon of onion, its squeeze of lemon, and generous

# A Neglected Art

dressing of oil, the true-born insular Briton can have nothing but contempt. "No vinegar! Gracious powers! and onion. Oh! horrible!" Nevertheless:

"Let still the onion lurk within the bowl, And half suspected animate the whole."

Whilst I am on the subject of the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies of English cooks, let me treat of their manner of cooking haricots verts as contrasted with that of their Gallic sisters. The average English cook contents herself with washing, stringing, and cutting the French beans, after which performance she considers by the time she has consigned them to water, a saucepan, and a pinch of salt, that her duty in life towards them is accomplished. Mark the subtlety of the French directions:

"Après avoir épluché et lavé les haricots, vous mettez de l'eau et du sel dans un chaudron, vous la faites bouillir, et vous y jetez les haricots; dès qu'ils ont bouilli un quart d'heure, vous tâtez s'ils fléchissent sous le doigt; laissez les égoutter dans une passoire, mettez les dans l'eau froide. Au moment de servir vous mettez un bon morçeau de beurre dans une casserole, vous égouttez les haricots, et vous les mettez dedans, avec du sel, du gros poivre, du persil, et de la ciboule hachés; vous les mettez sur un feu ardent, et vous les sautez; quand ils sont bien chauds, vous les servez sur le plat; ajoutez-y un jus de citron si vous voulez."

The merest tyro in household matters will admit, from this example alone, that at least there is something to learn in the art of cookery.

In Germany girls do not start in married life handicapped by ignorance of domestic affairs, as our girls do. Dora Spenlow could never have made the life of a German

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David Copperfield miserable, since she would certainly have passed through a course of training at one of the numerous Haushaltungschulen to be found all over Germany. When a young lady in that enlightened country has mastered the ordinary branches of learning, and is approaching that period of education miscalled "finishing," she is usually sent to a school to learn housekeeping, in conjunction very often with music, painting, and languages. There are celebrated Haushaltungschulen Bonn, Boppard, and many other places. Pupils, in addition to studying the mysteries of bread-making, baking, preserving, pickling, curing, and keeping household accounts, have in turn appointed days on which they repair to the kitchen to see the dinner cooked. They learn in this way the proper function of each kitchen utensil, and are not likely to excite the contempt of their cooks in after life by mistaking a

fish-kettle for a preserving pan, or a jellybag for a dish-clout. Again, a knowledge of the precise quantity of the ingredients of dishes is invaluable to the mistress of a household. Where a woman masters this difficulty she can readily detect wasteful-Dishonest housekeepers may be ness. kept in check and led into the paths of virtue, compulsory or otherwise; and, above all, when mistresses are experienced and competent, servants are not unjustly blamed, as is often the case when those who rule are ignorant or careless. The gross waste which takes place in most households is both appalling and wicked. A friend of mine once let her house in the South of England to a fine lady possessing more money than refinement, and a larger number of smart acquaintances than progenitors. A housemaid was left in the house by way of looking after the "lares and penates;" and one night she noticed a smell of burn-

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ing and proceeded on a tour of investigation. At last she discovered that the servants were destroying the loaves and meat (over and above their needs) which they could not sell in the country, and yet were obliged to order from the tradesmen, for fear of their mistress comparing the respective accounts of London and country. Remembering the starving and suffering children of the East End, one feels indignant at the wickedness which resulted from an ignorant mistress's gross carelessness.

In Canada, as in the United States, most ladies have a practical knowledge of cookery and housekeeping. This is the consequence, perhaps, of the servant difficulty, and also because in America every woman is her own housekeeper. There is no doubt that American women understand to perfection the art of dinner-giving in its subtlest and most artistic form. The decorations and arrangements of the table,

the composition of the ménu, and the manner in which things should be cooked and served, are all matters of careful study with them. American dinners are perhaps shorter and simpler, and certainly they are more perfect. Everything is beautifully cooked, and of the best "the bounteous housewife Nature" can provide. Of course, in this connection, dinners in private houses, not hotels, are understood, but the famous New York restaurants, Delmonico and Sherry's, are hard to beat in any country.

The inexperienced housewife in her entertainments generally errs on the side of too bountiful a ménu. Her dinners are interminably long and absurdly pretentious. Each dish is saddled with a high-sounding title, and is sure to be à la something else. Honest food masquerades in fancy attire until its identity is unrecognisable, and nothing is properly cooked or sent up

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decently hot. Course after course comes; cold soup, messy entrées, underdone joints, overdone game, jellies (either liquid or of the consistency of india-rubber), cold plates, cold dishes, much attempt at fine cookery and disastrous failure; the result of ignorance and incompetency being humiliation and mortification for host and hostess, and absolutely no wholesome eatable food for the guests.

Garrick spoke truth when he said: "Heaven sends us good meat, but the devil sends cooks."

#### VII

#### WOMEN AS PUBLIC SPEAKERS

You ask me, dearest Violet, to give you my opinion upon women as Public Speakers. Yet you frame your inquiry so vaguely that I am left in the dark as to whether you mean their success as orators, or the advisability of their appearing as public speakers. The emancipated and masculine woman is not, I confess, a favourite of mine, and I have little sympathy with women in the abstract as public speakers, since the ideal woman in my conception of her is the reverse of everything which challenges notoriety. Surely the essentials of femininity are gentleness,

sweetness, innocence, and all that is retiring and modest; and although these charms may be compatible with female oratory, there is, to my mind, something essentially antithetical in the domestic woman, the highest of all types, and the platform woman. A long course of platform appearances, of female oratory, and of challenging criticism must in the end deteriorate from the most beautiful of womanly characteristics, and lead to self-assertion, self-confidence, and other unlovely attributes.

I think it was Balzac who said he understood woman as little as her Creator did. It is certainly obvious that latter-day woman is in a state of evolution, and that her former limitations have been enormously extended. What was considered unwomanly, and even shocking, in the beginning of the century, is now accepted as allowable, and even as commendable.

Yet enfranchised woman is not a whit superior in moral or physical courage to the woman of the "distaff and workbasket." We know how the glorious Queen Philippa, daughter of Henry the Fourth of England, and wife of Erik the Second of Sweden, Gotha, Denmark, and Norway, defended Copenhagen against the ships of the Hanseatic League. We have read in history of the Countess of Derby, of Lady Herbert, of Rachel Russell, and of many more, and we do not deduce the moral that lives of domesticity and retirement unfitted them for splendid heroism when the occasion that demanded it arose.

On the other hand, there is no manner of doubt that woman of late years has been an immense factor in political successes, as well as in the enormous spread of philanthropical schemes. Triumphs have often been secured by platform oratory, and

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therefore it is unfair to deny merit to these methods of obtaining success. None the less, there seems to me small prospect of a future for woman in the field of public speaking. The past has not shown that woman can, in any sense, compete with man in this career. No woman has ever risen above mediocrity as an orator, except in the pages of fiction. Hypatias and Corinnes find no parallel in real life, and there has been but one Olympia Morata. Therefore, whilst by no means undervaluing the importance of intelligent woman's co-operation in politics and philanthropy, it seems to me that there are means to be cultivated to these ends, more in accordance with womanly traditions. We all know the political and social power that clever Frenchwomen of past ages wielded by means of the salon. Herein lies woman's legitimate and fitting rôle. No stupid or unattractive woman has ever yet mastered

l'art de tenir salon. Those who have distinguished themselves in the part have had their names handed down in history. Women as public speakers, with few exceptions, are bound by their physical limitations to be failures. Woman as the mistress of a salon has a great future before her.

#### VIII

## ARE ELOPEMENTS EVER JUSTIFIABLE?

THERE is an old-fashioned book, dear Violet, which promises long days in the land to those who honour their parents; and the average elopement being a direct breach of the fifth commandment, how shall we say that elopements are justifiable? Yet there are circumstances to be taken into account which modify and extenuate even so black a transgression as disobedience to parents. There exist, for instance, worldly, unscrupulous mothers, who are prepared to sell their own souls, and certainly their daughters', in order to secure for them brilliant marriages. "A

single man of large fortune!" cries Mrs. Bennet in "Pride and Prejudice." "What a thing for our girls!" And when at the end of the book Elizabeth announces her engagement to Mr. Darcy, she comments: "Oh! my sweetest Lizzy! how rich and great you will be! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have! . . . Dear, dear Lizzy! A house in town! Everything that is charming! Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh, Lord! what will become of me? I shall go distracted!"

In addition to worldly mothers like Mrs. Bennet, there are also arbitrary, unreasonable fathers, whose love-passages occurred so long ago that they have forgotten all about them. What possible sympathy or encouragement, for instance, can "Love's young dream" expect from parents like General Tilney in "Northanger Abbey," or Mrs. Skewton in "Dombey and Son"?

Obedience to such a mother as Dickens draws in Mrs. Skewton is neither commendable nor godly. There is a higher authority to be obeyed than even that of father and mother—one which tells us to "keep innocency," to preserve ourselves "unspotted from the world," to do not evil that good may come, and which asks: "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

In marrying where she does not love, a woman commits an outrage on herself. When Edith and Mr. Dombey walked through the galleries of Warwick Castle, Dickens describes the very pictures on the walls as mutely protesting against such a loveless, sordid marriage: "Grim knights and warriors looked scowling on them. A churchman with his hands upraised denounced the mockery of such a couple coming to God's altar. Quiet waters in landscapes with the sun reflected in their

depths asked if better means of escape were not at hand: was there not drowning left?"

Under no compulsion, in my opinion, should people be induced to marry in opposition to the dictates of their own hearts and consciences. Children owe an even more solemn duty to themselves than to their parents; and because a parent tells them to do what is obviously wrong, that fact does not extenuate their responsibility in the violation of their consciences.

Without doubt the obligation of parents towards their children is greater than that of children towards their parents. Having brought souls unasked into a world of suffering and sin, it is expedient that they should guide, guard, train, and develop the young creatures dependent on their care. It is also the obvious duty of parents to make the lives of their offspring as tolerable as circumstances permit. By

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forcing their children into loveless and mercenary marriages, and by opposing perfectly reasonable if not brilliant ones, parents are exceeding the bounds of justifiable authority.

But fathers and mothers are not all ogres and monsters, and neither are all lovers to be pitied and admired. We know how far from happily the elopement of Lydia and Wickam ended, and certainly "the waters wild " would never have gone "o'er his child" if Lord Ullin's counsels had prevailed with his daughter. Parents, not being blinded by the fever of love, judge dispassionately; and the important question of worth of character, of equality of station, of sufficient means, and of suitability as regards age, enter largely into the consideration of wise guardians. Few young men and maidens who love ardently and blindly can be expected to consider such trifles. "Amare simul et sapere vix Jovi

conceditur"; and Charron wrote with some amount of truth when he said: "Le premier soupir de l'amour est le dernier de la sagesse." Lord Burleigh won his village maiden, and brought her to the

"Mansion more majestic
Than all those she saw before;

but when she realised her position and possessions, and all that they entailed,

"A trouble weighed upon her,
And perplexed her night and morn
With the burden of an honour
Unto which she was not born."

Had the Lord of Burleigh's parents been alive, the village maiden, instead of dying in the flower of her youth and beauty, would most probably have married the village blacksmith, and "lived happy ever after."

The question of means is one which enters not at all into the calculations of

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green youth, but a great deal into those of its parents. They, having come to years of discretion, have learnt by experience how important a factor money is in the happiness or misery of the future. With them it is a plain duty to warn their children that even the most ideal love can be robbed of much of its glamour by sordid care. It is equally the first duty of children to be guided by those who have the authority over them, to consider their advice, and take heed to the wisdom of older heads. But no parents are justified in spoiling the lives of their children, or in separating devoted hearts for merely worldly considerations. Elopements should be the last resource of the desperate. Only when patience and endurance and remonstrance and entreaty have failed, and there is no sufficient reason why an honest and worthy love should not have its reward, then-and not till then-is an elopement justifiable.

#### IX

#### CONCERNING WIT

# DEAREST VIOLET,-

Of all personal gifts the rarest and perhaps the most widely popular in society is wit. Humour is more often to be found, and its possession adds a certain pleasure to life; but the price of a witty man is, like that of a virtuous woman, above rubies.

Locke defined wit as "lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity thereby to make up pleasant pictures in the fancy."

For the successful presentment of "pleasant pictures" there are two things need-First, an artist to produce them, and, secondly, an audience to appreciate them. For no man can be witty to his own soul, and wit is essentially and obviously a gift which requires certain social conditions for its development. A witty retort falls flat indeed if the point of the jest need explanation; and wit, like music, requires sympathetic hearers to draw forth its highest expression. As it is a waste of ammunition to aim steel-tipped arrows at stone targets, so is it futile to play Wagner to him who finds pleasure in the tune of "Ta ra-ra-boom de-ay"; and Mr. Bennet would never have launched his witticisms at Mrs. Bennet had he not known that they were anything but wasted on Elizabeth.

The process of painting "pictures in the fancy," unlike the tangible art of transferring ideas and images to canvas,

has no recognised technique. Nor has it conventions to regulate its methods. All must of necessity be spontaneous and unpremeditated. To think good things, and to be able to say them, are by no means the same. It is possible for even dull people to have "pleasant pictures in the fancy," but the faculty of describing these pictures in brilliant apposite terms is given to few among the children of men. "L'esprit," says Lebrun, "est le dieu des instants; le génie est le dieu des ages." This is true enough; but because wit is ephemeral, and the results of genius live for ever, there is no obligation upon us to think lightly of wit. Few intellectual qualities are rarer, and certainly none give more pleasure to others. To be stuffed full of knowledge, and yet be desperately dull, is easy of attainment; to be intelligent, and even intellectual, in these days is commonplace; but to be genuinely and

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brilliantly witty is, in truth, a gift from the gods.

And, alas! no amount of academical training, no "higher education," and no known process of evolution, can turn out a wit unless he be to the manner born. This most precious of endowments must lie latent in our brains at birth, and be nourished by sympathetic environment. is the expression of mental conditions which are independent of training or education. A reserve of knowledge is naturally invaluable to him who is witty, since for allusion and illustration he has sources to draw upon which are not possessed by the illiterate; but the monopoly of wit does not lie with the patrician, since the proletarian often outshines in this gift him who is by birth and education his superior.

It is recorded of Grattan that he once laid a wager with an Englishman that no Irishman was ever at a loss for a witty answer. Accordingly, he stood at the window of his club in Dublin and accosted the first passer-by thus:

"Tell me, Pat, if the devil were to come to earth, which of us two do you think he would take first?"

"Why me, yer Honour!"

"And why, Pat?"

"Bekase he's shure of you at anny time!"

Marie Antoinette's milliner knew how to say a good thing when she remarked: "Il n'y a de nouveau que ce qui est oublié;" and the wit of the masses found its outlet in Rome in the days when Pasquin and Marforio flourished. During the French occupation of Rome and Napoleon's plunderings, Pasquin observed:

"I Francesi sono tutti ladri."

To which Marforio wittily retorted:

"Non tutti, ma Buona-parte!"

The "vox populi" was not dumb at an

earlier date, when Pope Alexander the Sixth went fishing in the Tiber for the body of his son, Giovanni, murdered by Cesare.

"Piscatorem hominum," said Pasquin, "re te non Sexte, putemus, Piscaris natum retibus ecce tuum!"

Of absolute originality in anything Göethe was incredulous, since he wrote: "Alles Gescheidte ist schon gedacht worden, Man muss nur versuchen, es noch einmal zu denken."

"A palpable imitation is always an unpardonable sin," says a well-known aphorism, and he who is genuinely witty can so manipulate ideas which have seen the light before that they shall have at least the semblance of originality. The materials with which artists paint pictures have been much the same since art began; and even when Giotto started his career by drawing on a fragment of slate with a pointed stone, he only reverted to the use of

archaic implements. The mind which can control and make use of hackneyed materials so as to compose new subjects is the master mind alike in art and in literature, so:

"True wit is nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed."

An evening spent at the Hotel Rambouillet in the society of Bossuet, Balzac, Racan, the Duchesse de Longueville and Madame de Sevigné, must have seen the creation of many "pleasant pictures in the fancy"; and Holland House, Madame de Mohl's Salon, Madame Recamier's, and No. 8 Curzon Street, in the days of the Miss Berrys, could not have been far behind in intellectual brilliancy. The repartee of Madame de Staël and the dainty humour of Madame de Sevigné have lived through the years which have rolled away since their deaths. Perhaps one of the most

delicately humorous descriptions in literature is the sketch Madame de Sevigné gives of Madame de Brissac—in bed.

Of recent Irish wits, Lord Morris and Father Healy were notable examples. The priest once upon a time was visiting a pompous nouveau riche neighbour, who took him to see a gorgeous and seldomused library. "There!" said the vulgarian, pointing to a table covered with books, "there are my best friends."

"Ah!" said the priest, with a quick sidelong glance at the virginal leaves, "I'm glad you don't cut them."

Theodore Hook was an inveterate punster. Boasting one day of his ability to make pun on any subject, his friend retorted: "Take the King, then, and pun on him."

"The King," said Hook, "is no subject."

Sydney Smith's wit was of a more delicate

flavour, as the well-known story of the lovely girl and the rose will show.

"Oh, Mr. Smith!" cried the damsel, "that rose will never come to perfection."

"Then," replied Mr. Smith, "allow me to lead perfection to the rose."

An American lady I once heard of was supremely witty when she said—after visiting the studio of an insufferably conceited Roman artist—that until she came to Rome she had always believed Titian's "Assumption" to be the greatest in the world.

Sometimes people are unconsciously witty, as when the Comte d'Artois at the Restoration remarked: "Il n'y a qu'un Français de plus." But few indeed there be who are not only witty in themselves "but the cause that wit is in other men."

# ON THE ADVISABILITY OF FRIENDSHIPS WITH MEN

To condemn all friendships with those of opposite sex, dear Violet, would be the extreme of fatuity; nevertheless, platonic friendships between very young people are full of pitfalls, in fear of which the débutante must walk warily. It is difficult to say where the good comradeship ceases and the lovemaking begins. The transition is often so subtle that the principal actors in the drama are those least conscious of the phases through which they pass. We all, from nursery days upwards, have heard that the god of

Love was blind, and likewise that lovers
"Cannot see

The pretty follies that themselves commit." Propinquity in most cases has much for which to answer, and where those who are thrown together are in the heyday of youth and beauty there is undoubted danger. To make a hard and fast rule, however, that because people fall in love there shall be no more cakes and ale (in other words, the pleasures derived from the society of those of the opposite sex) would be indeed absurd. There is small doubt that the society of man broadens and deepens a woman's outlook on life. Man is more logical, more open to conviction, less prejudiced, less narrow, slower to arrive at conclusions, but tenacious of opinions once carefully formed. Woman, on the other hand, has a humanising influence on man. Her intuition is quicker, she is more sympathetic; her heart beats

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sooner in response to the cry of misery. She influences (or ought to influence) man to be gentler, more considerate for the feelings of others, less harsh in his judg-In fact, the ideal man and woman dovetail each other in character as much as ever did geography puzzle, and this being the case it is obvious that the society of men and women must be for their mutual benefit. In proportion as civilisation advances does the companionship of woman and her influence become of higher value to man. Civilised woman lives as his partner and comrade. An ideal state of society would be that in which a friendship between men and women distinct from courtship or love-making, should exist. The young girl of French society sees in every man a possible monster, ready on the smallest provocation to gobble her She cannot shake off her convent up. tuition, or emerge at short notice from

conventual traditions. She is told from the beginning that man is the natural enemy of her sex, and she believes it. In Italy the signorina's estimate of man is almost identical with that of the jeune fille. Before marriage all acquaintance with the ogre is conducted on the most guarded and ceremonious lines. After marriage comes the natural sequence of such habits. Unaccustomed to the society of men, the attractive young married woman finds the admiration and adulation which is her portion nothing short of intoxicating. She has had no sort of preparation which should enable her to preserve her moral ballast. In pure thoughtlessness and innocence she often does and says things which are not only highly imprudent, but which are also capable of misconstruction. the husband who has been chosen for her, she frequently finds a being antipathetic to her in every idea. For sympathy she

turns to one whose character or tastes appear to be all of which she has dreamed in the ideal man. The end is not far to The cavaliere servente is soon an seek. institution in her palace; she drifts hopelessly away from all chance of sympathy with her husband; he in turn becomes some one else's cavaliere, and we see the egregious folly of a social law which treats friendship before marriage as all wrong and after marriage as all right. Far be it from me to infer that the married woman should abjure the friendship of man other than her husband. Life would be slightly dull under such rigid conditions. Nevertheless, a woman's husband should be her best friend, and no marriage can be a happy one where good comradeship and sympathy are not its foundations.

Intercourse between girls and young men is, in America, placed upon an entirely different and, in consequence, a more

rational footing. Men are not looked upon by parents and guardians as ogres; nor are fair maidens shut up, figuratively speaking, in lonely towers, surrounded by briar bushes. In France and Italy young unmarried men and women have absolutely no sort of chance as regards the formation of friendships. Girls are hedged about with convention and surrounded by a chevaux de frise of absurd restrictions. In America, the natural, frank, simple friendship of young man and maiden is accepted as the logical sequence of human nature and its requirements or conditions; nor does the feminine entity seem to have suffered in reputation by increased liberty of action. American girls are allowed to receive the visits of young men evening after evening, whilst the complacent parents efface themselves, amiably remembering the ancient saying as to "two being company and three none."

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How this sort of thing would answer in England is a question for sociologists to determine. Mrs. Grundy is a lady whose tongue is as sharp as a two-edged sword, and in no society does that representative female flourish and grow fat to the extent she does in England. She is, therefore, a force to be taken into account and by no means to be despised. Meanwhile, remembering that Cæsar's wife should be above suspicion, it is open to doubt whether the social laws which regulate the intercourse of unmarried people are not too strict with us, although so much less stringent than in France or Italy. Take, for instance, the fact that here a married woman in her teens is given full liberty of action and every freedom; she may, in fact, steal her neighbour's horse, meanwhile that the unmarried spinster of thirty must not look over the hedge. our Colonies the enfranchisement of un-

married women has long been patent. In Canada, for example, there is certainly no prudery in the intercourse of young unmarried men and women. There is none the less remarkable propriety. Hence I draw the conclusion that it harms neither young man nor maiden to trust them fully, and that a girl who has been wisely brought up and taught to discriminate between right and wrong, will not, when the responsibility for her actions is shifted to her own shoulders, belie her years of early training. Women are often (and most unjustly) accused of finesse or duplicity. Certainly nothing is more beautiful or more to be commended than perfect truthfulness, but in their relations with mankind this virtue is not always possible for women. The reason is not far to seek. If a woman loves the man who is wooing her, she often affects coldness of demeanour that he may not think she is

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trying to entrap him, or ready to fall into his arms at the first suggestion of his love. No proud woman is won in a canter, nor do women who are worthy the name wear their hearts on their sleeve for daws to peck at. All women know that when a prize is difficult of attainment its value is proportionately enhanced in the eyes of him who seeks to make it his own. This truth Schiller has recognised in the lines:

"Liebe Kennt der Allein, Der ohne Hoffnung liebt."

Which, although hyperbolically expressed, means pretty much what I have said. If, therefore, an excuse can be offered for want of candour, assuredly in her relations with man, woman has justification.

No friendships—platonic or erotic—should be lightly entered into. We must remember:

"On the choice of friends
Our good or evil name depends."

#### and also that:

"Who friendship with a knave hath made
Is judged a partner in the trade."

Therefore, dear Violet, if you plump for men friendships do so only after mature deliberation, and always with discretion. Certainly not in the spirit of the one who said:

> "A sudden thought strikes me, Let us swear an eternal friendship."

#### XI

#### "L'ART DE TENIR SALON"

## DEAREST VIOLET,-

In this matter-of-fact phlegmatic England, in this year of grace 1905, l'art de tenir salon is well-nigh a forgotten one. The art of entertaining, as understood by constant dinner-giving at restaurants and dinner-parties at home, is widely practised. The material aspect of the art flourishes vigorously, but its intellectual and spiritual side is almost extinct. Who among us nowadays, could make our guests forget the meagre fare placed before them by the charm and grace of our conversation? Yet we all know the story of Madame

Scarron's servant whispering to her when the food ran short: "Causez, madame! Causez! Il n'y a pas d'autre plat." We give serious thought to the bodily food to be set before our guests, and none at all to the mental. That conversation is an "art" is a recognised fact. Arts must be cultivated before proficiency comes. The best talkers of all times have given thought and preparation to their conversation. Who has not heard of the prying guest who, peering about before his hostess came in, discovered Madame de Staël's little notebook with her carefully prepared headings for the evening's conversation? Forced, pedantic talk is one thing, but a little reflection given beforehand to subjects likely to come under discussion, is another. Why should we devote our talents solely to the bodily entertainment of our guests, and none at all to the intellectual? Is it not because the material side of our

lives is so much more to us than the spiritual?

Society grows more vulgar every year, and Plutus sways rule over a larger number of subjects in our capital nowadays than perhaps he ever did. We worship lavishness, display, wealth, and luxury; but refinement, good-breeding, and brains, are at a discount. The age of sentiment (in company with many other good things) is past. There are no "Lydia Languishes" nowadays; no tender, impressionable "Evelinas," and few chivalrous "Orvilles." "Elizabeth Bennets" and "Fanny Prices" would be thought priggish; and "elegant females," in company with " excellent understandings," have quite gone out of fashion. Modern authors do not heap misfortunes on their heroines as Lady Blessington did on Miss Mordaunt; nor do they make amends eventually by wedding bells and a coronet. The novels

of each age are mirrors of its manners. We cannot lay the flattering unction to our souls that we have improved, if we exchange the tender, gentle, fainting, feminine creatures of yesterday for the "Dodos," "Noras," and "Evadnes" of to-day. The "Knightleys" and "Darcys" of a past generation may be priggish, even stilted; but surely they are better than the modern hero. If people talked nowadays as they do in the pages of "Evelina" and "Cecilia" they would be voted bores and pedants. It is open to doubt whether the commonplaces, the trivialities, and "chaff" of this age are in any sense superior to the superrefinement, the stilted phraseology, and sensibility of the past one. Few, in our undignified times of hurry and scurry, of advertisement and push, have leisure to cultivate the tender graces of life. It is the ambition of every fashionable woman in London to be seen at as many smart

crushes as she can compass in a night. She has no chance of cultivating the obsolete accomplishment of talking well, since, at most, her interchange of ideas at these functions is limited to the query, "Goin' on to-night?" The art of talk survives with a few old people; that of chatter has taken its place with the young ones. When woman was content with her legitimate and unrivalled sphere as queen in domestic life, and in her salon, she was best and greatest. There lay her true kingdom, and in ruling it she could give exercise to the most brilliant talents. History has shown us what an important part the salon played in the development of literature and art in France. We know that the powerful Cardinals, Richelieu and Mazarin, were jealous of the influence wielded by the Marquise de Rambouillet and the Marquise de Sablé in their salons. The same fear and jealousy were shown by Napoleon when

he banished Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier from Paris. Men in those days recognised the power charming and intelligent women possessed of influencing and captivating.

"De toutes les façons vous avez droit de plaire," wrote the Abbé de Montreuil of Madame de Sévigné. Women, in their panoply of feminine graces, were "foemen worthy of the steel" even of iron men like Richelieu and Bonaparte. What a triumph when the gentle, sweet graces of womanhood, combined with superior intelligence, were considered formidable enough weapons to be reckoned with! Now that woman has entered into competition with man, and invaded his precincts, she has, as a natural consequence, abdicated her sovereignty. Mrs. Jellaby was neither a success in public nor in private life. Entrenched behind her own earthworks, woman was invulnerable; leading forlorn hopes, followed by a straggling band of adherents, she is pitiable.

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Frenchwomen seem to have been particularly endowed with the social gifts and charms which fit women for the rôle of hostesses, Madame de Rambouillet, Madame de Sablé, Madame Scarron, Madame de Scudéry, Madame de Sévigné, Madame de Staël, Madame Récamier, and the gallicised Madame Mohl were all famous in their generation for l'art de tenir salon. We do not find that the pleasures of the table entered much into the enjoyment of these receptions. There seems to have been infinite bonhomie, and a genial give and take of spicy wit. information, anecdote, and quotation. Those who had ideas made a present of them for the common good; there was discussion, argument, raillery, delicate humour, and veiled compliment. Sometimes serious questions occupied the

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attention of these graceful triflers. There were political salons, as well as those devoted to the arts of conversation and music. Madame Mohl, in her sketch of Madame de Rambouillet, says: "Of all the distinguished ladies of the seventeenth century, the Marquise de Rambouillet deserves the first place, not only as the earliest in order of time, but because she first set on foot that long series of salons which for two hundred and fifty years have been a real institution, known only to modern civilisation;" and she goes on to explain that the increasing taste for the society of women "might indeed have created salons; but it is to Madame de Rambouillet's individual qualities that we owe the moral stamp given to the Society she founded, which, in spite of all the inferior imitations that appeared long after, remains the precedent which has always been unconsciously followed. . . .

### "L'Art de Tenir Salon"

Reform is in the course of nature, and one of its laws is a tendency to exaggeration in the opposite extreme from the evil that has been overcome The excessive coarseness, both in talking and writing, that had been universal, was succeeded by what was thought at the time over-strained refinement, but we should not listen to the accusations of some of her contemporaries on this head, if we could hear and know all that Madame de Rambouillet put an end to. Ideas and expressions current in palaces in 1600 would not now be admitted into the porter's lodge; and if any of us would compare the plays acted in London before the Court of Charles II. with what would be tolerated now, we should get some notion of what the précieuses, at whose head stood Madame de Rambouillet, effected in France."

The Hotel Rambouillet stood in the

Rue St. Thomas du Louvre, and for thirty years it was the rallying-point of all that was choice in wit, beauty, intellect, and birth. Madame de Rambouillet was the first among the noblesse of France to welcome learned plebeians or low-born men of letters to her salon. Madame Mohl says: "The most illustrious persons in every line met in her rooms, and each gained by contact with the others. The nobility improved in real civilisation by acquiring a taste for letters; the manners of the learned became easy and dignified, not only from their intercourse with those who were polished by a court life, but much more from the respect that was paid to them by the presiding spirit out of regard for their own intrinsic value." Walckenaer, in his "Life of Sévigné" describes one of the celebrated gatherings at the Hotel Rambouillet. where a brilliant and distinguished company is assembled to hear Corneille read his latest work. Lovely young women, poets, courtiers, prelates, and grandes dames are gathered together; and we can somewhat picture the company when we know that among them were Madame de Sévigné (then in her youth and beauty), Madame de Sablé, the Princesse de Condé, the Duchesse de Longueville, Madame de la Fayette (unmarried), and the Duchesse de Chevreuse. Of Madame de Rambouillet's wit and presence of mind, as well as dignity, a good story is told. Cardinal Richelieu knew that all ranks of society, as well as shades of political opinion, met in the Hotel Rambouillet; and he accordingly was consumed with curiosity to know what was said about him there. In order to arrive at this knowledge he sent Boisrobert to the Marquise desiring her to be friendly enough to let him know who spoke against him in her

house! Madame de Rambouillet, with the greatest presence of mind, answered that: "Ses amis sachant combien elle était attachée a son Eminence, personne n'osait en sa présence parler contre lui."

It is a strong proof of the influence the salon exercised as a refining and elevating agency, that the famous French Academy had its origin in a lady's drawing-room. Among Madame de Rambouillet's guests were Balzac, Racan, Gombault, and Voiture, and they all joined in deploring the want of style in French literature. Madame Mohl says: "They would discuss a word in all its acceptations before it was admitted, and the ladies were constantly consulted. Several words were banished from conversation by the Marquise so completely that I could not venture even to quote them." Cardinal Richelieu eventually became the patron of this Society, and letters patent were issued entitling the Association to call itself the French Academy, "because its express purpose was to preserve and improve the French language."

To Madame de Rambouillet's receptions succeeded the Saturday evenings of Mlle. de Scudéry. Cousin's account of these sounds very pleasant: "The habitual conversation was easy and airy, tending to pleasantry; the women, like those of the Hotel de Rambouillet, were correct without prudery or primness; the men were gallant and attentive, and surrounded them with the graceful homage which distinguished the best manners of the time." Authors read aloud their latest contributions to literature, and friendly criticism and discussions followed. Madame de Staël's salon was, perhaps, less literary and more aristocratic. Certainly a departure was made when the brilliant and intellectual society of the Hotel Rambouillet, as time advanced,

developed into the deeply religious gatherings which met in the small house of the garden of Port Royal. Madame de Sablé embraced Jansenism, so did the Duchesse de Longueville, and many others of the friends of Madame de Sablé's youth. Mère Angélique Arnauld the (Abbess of Port Royal and victim of the persecutions of the Jesuits) was one of her dearest friends, whilst Pascal (the profound thinker), Madame de la Fayette, Pierre Nicole (the author of "Essaies Morales"), and Antoine Arnauld (who wrote "De la Perpetuité de la Foi," "Traité des vraies et des fausses Idées," &c.), were among the pious and learned people who formed the society of Madame de Sablé's old age. Madame de Maintenon, writing to one of the nuns of St. Cyr, describes how, in the days of her indigent widowhood, society followed her even to her poverty-stricken rooms; and at a later date Madame

Récamier, in the third floor of the Abbaye-au-Bois, was able to say that she was as much sought after there as she was in the days of her affluence in the Rue du Mont Blanc. Certainly society did not go to either attic or brick-floored lodging for what it found there in the shape of material enjoyment, and we can only suppose that the charm of an intelligent woman's society and the need for womanly sympathy were strong enough attractions. Of Madame de Sévigné's social graces we have many testimonies, and Sainte Beuve says of her: "It is impossible to speak of women without first putting oneself into good-humour by the thought of Madame de Sévigné." Mlle. Scudéry, in the "Grand Cyrus," describes her as Princess Clarinte in the most delightful manner. "She receives all the honest people, and inspires affection in all hearts that are capable of feeling it . . . Nobody

else has ever better known the art of being graceful without affectation, witty without malice, gay without folly, modest without constraint, and virtuous without severity."

No words of mine could paint the salon of Madame Récamier with the force of an eye-witness, Madame Mohl, who thus describes it:

"Nothing remarkable in private or public ever passed that was not known there sooner than elsewhere. Whoever had first read a new book came to give an account of it; a sort of emulation made each habitué anxious to bring something to the common stock." "Tête-à-têtes, in a low voice, were entirely discouraged. If any of the younger habitués took this liberty they received a gentle chiding in a real tête-à-tête when everybody was gone . . . Whoever had an observation to make contributed it to the common

stock. Madame Récamier spoke little, but threw in an occasional word . . . If any one in the circle was likely to have any special knowledge, she would appeal to him with an air of deference; if he chanced to be unknown and shy, her manner raised his spirits. Some who, before they frequented the Abbaye, could only talk to one or two persons, soon learnt to put their ideas into the compact form fitted for several. The number who were thus drawn into the conversation secured this advantage, that talking of the weather or of one's health, or any other egotistical topic, could scarcely be indulged in long. ... No one ever understood more thoroughly how to show off others to the best advantage."

Italy at the present day can show many salons presided over by wit and grace and charm; in which the attractions of good eating and drinking (so powerful in our

country) play small part in the proceedings. The wits and beaux and belles of society meet night after night at each other's palaces, and enjoy much pleasant social life, without any commensurate expense.

Few Italians are wealthy as we esteem wealth; but lack of money is no crime there, and does not debar those who by birth and education are entitled to it from entering the sacred portals of society. Genius and talent are more potent charms than money-bags; and poor sculptors and musicians, artists and authors, enter salons whose gates are closed to the appeals of Dives. "Pecuniam in loco negligere maximum est lucrum."

First, perhaps, in the list of gifts which are necessary to a woman who aspires to the rôle of hostess, is that of sympathy. She who has a capacity for entering into another's situation, who has real interest

in that situation, and who possesses the power to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," is sure to be a beloved woman. We are all of us egotists, and nothing is so keenly interesting to us as what concerns ourselves. The man or woman who talks to us of our own affairs, and who exhibits a real interest in them, strikes a responsive chord. The devoted mother who has paid little heed to a rhapsody on Browning, is alive with keenest interest when the charms of her children are discussed. The newly married couple believe themselves and their mutual happiness, their home and their new furniture, of liveliest importance to the world in general. valetudinarian values a kind inquiry after the weak back, or the hacking cough. The sailor likes to "yarn" about topsails, fair winds, and turret ships. The soldier loves to shoulder his crutch and show

how fields are won. We are egotists, every one of us, and it is only the cultivation of the graces of unselfishness and love for others which makes us ever care really for their welfare and happiness. Proctor, with more cynicism than charity, used to say: "Never tell people how you are; they don't want to know." The wish to speak of ourselves to others shows at least a desire for pity and sympathy. How lovable and attractive, therefore, is she who shows an interest in our concerns, and invites us to talk of our beloved selves and our doings! How flattered and pleased we are! and how soon the woman wise in her generation goes down on the tablets of our hearts as a "charming creature."

Absence of shyness, self-possession, and a ready wit, are invaluable attributes to her who would *tenir salon*. Diffidence and shyness are seldom understood in this

world. They are apt to be confounded strangely enough with their opposites, pride and self-conceit. The social success of American women is largely to be attributed to their absence of shyness. They feel at their ease—and look it. They are natural and agreeable, because they are not torturing themselves as to whether they are making the impression they desire or not. They feel sure of themselves and their looks and their company, and are unaffected and entertaining. Wit, alas! is a gift which no amount of cultivation can ensure. Its absolute spontaneity constitutes its value. "L'esprit ressemble aux coquettes; ceux qui courent après lui sont ceux qu'il favorise le moins."

Another necessary endowment for a hostess is tact—the knowledge of how far to go without being intrusive; where to stop without incurring the charge of want

of interest—an intuition which leads you to introduce the right people to each other, to say what gives pleasure, and causes you to avoid wounding people's susceptibilities. The woman without tact tells the fond mother that her child is "very small for his age;" that "it is surprising he cannot walk yet;" that she is sorry to see "how indifferently the new gown from Paris fits;" and that the contractor who undertook to relay the drains "is notorious for scamping his work."

"But of all plagues, good Heaven, thy wrath can send, Save, save, oh! save me from the candid friend."

Tact is a royal gift and a noble one; a gift, curiously enough, too often despised in this world. Some foolish people pride themselves on being "above tact." These have probably mistaken tact for finesse. A love of intrigue and shifty managing ways are surely widely removed

from the praiseworthy wish to give pleasure to others and avoid paining them.

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Yet another valuable attribute is repose. The woman who perpetually fusses about from guest to guest creates confusion, unrest, discomfort; breaks in upon conversations, and is, in a word, ill-bred. "And so," says one, "just as I was leaving the room, what do you suppose happened?" At this juncture our restless hostess breaks in, carries off the narrator to be introduced to some one she would probably rather not know, and the interested listener is left for ever in suspense as to the startling event.

Then the salon of her who is musical to those who are not! Was ever a worse purgatory invented? The discussion of musical technicalities to him who cannot distinguish between "God Save the King" and Mascagni's "Intermezzo," and the absolute boredom to the non-musical of

a whole evening devoted to art! Again, how truly awful is the salon or studio of an artistic woman to her Philistine friends! No well-invented excuses avail against her innocent density. "Can't come next week? Ah! well, you must come the week after! I want you to see my last picture in the Impressionist style. You know, I used to be a pre-Raphaelite, adored Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, and Giotto; but since going to last year's Salon, I have completely changed." And so on ad nauseam.

And, no doubt, to make a salon really pleasant, our hostess must keep her individual tastes in the background in deference to those of her guests. If she be a poetess, let her suppress all reference to the Muses, as far as she is concerned. If she be an artist, let her avoid placing easels and their contents in every available corner. If she be a musician, let her exercise her art only so far as it gives pleasure to her guests.

## "L'Art de Tenir Salon"

The woman who makes use of her drawingroom as a stage, whereon she can pose and make display of her gifts, excites the contempt, and not the admiration, of her friends. Her *rôle* should be that of bringing out the talents of her friends, and enabling *them* to shine.

L'art de tenir salon, on the whole, is not so easy a one as might be supposed. For its perfection, unselfishness should be the keystone; a spirit of kindliness, of geniality, and of good-fellowship, the edifice. Cross-grained, sour-tempered women have never shone as mistresses of salons.

"When we ourselves least kindly are,
We deem the world unkind;
Dark hearts in flowers where honey lies
Only the poison find."

In conclusion, dear Violet, let us hope that the day may come when the art of entertaining in its highest sense may be

more widely practised in England; when the worship of money and luxury shall diminish; and when it may not be reserved for the rich man alone to enjoy the privileges and pleasures of exercising hospitality.

### XII

#### A SERMON ON HOUSES

Quite congruously in my series of letters, dear Violet, comes a sermon on houses, since, as I have told you with persistency and iteration, the home is the natural and right sphere for every woman. An untidy, unlovely house stamps its owner as one who fails in the first duties of her sex. A beautiful well-ordered home, on the contrary, proclaims its mistress as one who carries out her duties and fulfils her responsibilities as she should. All women are not gifted with perception of beauty and artistic feeling, neither has every woman possession of the sinews of war by

means of which to gratify her preference for beautiful and original things. But, at least, a house, even if poorly furnished and barely decorated, need not be ugly, and only ignorance and perverted taste prefer meretricious ornament and accumulation of rubbish to simplicity and cleanliness. To know something about houses is, therefore, part of the education of an intelligent woman; and if I treat you, dear Violet, to a lengthy dissertation on a subject which may lead me to become prolix, and you to suffer boredom—forgive!

Houses to be interesting, in my opinion, should express as far as possible in their arrangement, furniture and decoration, the tastes and characters of the individuals who occupy them. The woman who hands over the decoration and adornment of her home to a professional decorator and upholsterer and originates nothing distinctive in it, may be rewarded by rooms severely

synchronous, but she will pay the penalty in lack of character and want of human interest in her house. The general effect indeed will be that of a succession of show-rooms at a fashionable decorator's. You cannot buy expression or individuality as you can curtains and carpets. They are subtle, unmerchantable, and in these qualities lies their value. It is only natural that the instinct of imitation being large in the human heart, we should follow patterns set us; just as we begin to learn writing by repeating a word at the top of our first copy-book. If we never made use of our faculty of penmanship however, for any other purpose than that of copying we should be poor creatures indeed. Houses enriched by the traditions and associations of successive generations interest us as no new ones can. Old furniture and tapestry, rare china and pictures, are objects of value at any time; but when historic,

how doubly delightful they become! Those therefore who start houses on their own account should try to give to them a certain stamp of individuality failing those charms of family traditions. Houses, like people, are most interesting where they are original without being bizarre; where they show character without affectation.

To trace the genesis of houses one must go a long way back in the history of the human race. We have scriptural authority for stating that Abraham and Isaac and their contemporaries abode in tents. In Ireland round huts have been discovered which the Philo-Israelites declare can be traced across Europe from Babylonian times. The ancient Briton pinned his faith to huts made of wattle and clay, and curious specimens of these have lately been disinterred at Glastonbury. Primeval man burrowed in the ground, or dwelt in caves or lake structures. Of ancient domestic

architecture our most reliable information is what concerns the Romans. The usual form of building a domus or house (which differed in important particulars from the insulæ or several storied lodging-houses) was that of an atrium or court surrounded by rooms which opened into it, and derived light and air from the compluvium in the roof. Beneath the compluvium lay a basin (termed an impluvium) into which the rain fell. In a description of the Roman house by Professor Becker, we learn that the atrium was "the original focus" of all domestic life--" somewhat," says he, "like the great hall of the mediæval knight, and with it were connected all the most important incidents of their existence. from the cradle to the grave. In the old atrium stood the hearth (focus), serving alike for the profane purposes of cooking and also for the spectacle of the penates. . . . Near the familiar flame they took

their common meal (Cato, in Serv. ad Virg., Æn. i. 730)—et in atrio et duobus arculis epulabantur antiqui. . . . Here sat enthroned the mistress of the house in the midst of her maids; here was the thalamus nuptialis, and the strong-box of the father of the family. . . . Several such have been dug up at Pompeii. Here all visits were received. . . . Here the corpses of the deceased members of the family lay in state till their interment; here, lastly, were suspended the waxen masks or imagines, those dear mementoes of their deceased forefathers. For the admission of light and escape of smoke there was an opening in the roof, which was never of such magnitude as that the room lost its character of a ceiled apartment. But when the frugal family meal had given place to huge banquets, and instead of a few intimate friends and more familiar clients, whole troops of people crowded to the

house, the whole arrangement of the atrium would suit no longer." The lares were now placed in a sacrarium, and the family hearth was moved to another part of the house, whilst all cooking took place in a room specially devoted to that purpose. Becker points out, however, that the atrium still continued to be the place where the dead lay in state, and where their images remained. As the opening in the roof was not now necessary for the purpose of a chimney, it gradually grew larger and larger, until the atrium was almost entirely open. What remained of the roof was often supported by pillars of beautiful marble, and carpets called vela were hung horizontally to protect the inhabitants of the villa from sun and rain. The impluvium was gradually converted into a fountain, which gave scope to the artistic skill of sculptors and artists; and the mosaic pavements, in many instances, gave place to

lawns and flower-beds. Before the atrium lay the vestibulum or porch, and, according to Cicero, Pliny, and Virgil, it was generally ornamented by spolia and equestrian Here also the hospitable and statues. graceful Salve met the eye of the comer. The tablinum or dining-room lay behind the atrium, and behind that again and the cavum ædium (or inner court) was the peri-The small rooms which opened stylium. off the courts were called cubicula. The triclinia were smaller dining-rooms. The roofs of Roman homes were chiefly flat, and these, we learn, "had a firm pavement of stucco, stone, and metal. The sloping ones were covered with straw and shingles; later, with tiles, slates, and metal." Floors were usually paved with marble slabs, or inlaid with mosaic, except where (as in England) the ancient Romans substituted tiles in the absence of marble. Doors were of wood or metal: Parker describes them

as "occasionally of marble, panelled, and turning on pivots working in sockets." Doorways, in those old times, were rectangular in form. In the later and debased times of the Roman Empire they were arched; but as the arch was distinctly an innovation, and opposed to all classical principles, it belongs, properly speaking, to Gothic architecture. We must now turn our attention to the furniture of a house such as we have described; and from the collection of Pompeian curiosities to be seen in the Naples museum, as well as from contemporaneous frescoes, we can readily form correct ideas on the subject. Becker, in his "Gallus oder Römische Scenen aus der Zeit Augusts," tells us that, "according to the ideas of the moderns, the Roman rooms would seem rather bare of furniture. Lecti, tables, chairs, and candelabra comprised the whole of the furniture, with the exception, now and then, of a water-clock or a coal-

pan in winter. At the same time, the little they had was replete with elegance and splendour. The wooden lecti," he tells us. "were inlaid with ivory, tortoise-shell, and precious metals, and provided with ivory, silver, and gold feet." The bedsteads of Heliogobalus "caused surprise, being solido argento"; the majority of lecti were inlaid or veneered. The mattress or bed (torus) was stuffed with locks of wool. "In olden times," says Becker, "they had nothing but straw mattresses, and in later also the poorer classes stuffed their beds with chopped sedge or hay. At a later period the voluptuous Roman became dissatisfied with wool, and not only the cervicalea, but also the torus, began to be stuffed with feathers;" and he quotes Pliny, Cicero, Juvenal and other writers as authorities for what he says.

"Chairs," says Becker, "were not so much used by the Romans as by us, and

only required for visitors (Gell. ii. 2; Sen. de Clem. i. 9), although they also had exedræ. A distinction is made between sella and cathedra, and the latter is assigned particularly to the women." "Sella denotes every kind of chair from the sella quotidiani quæstus of the artisan (Cic. in Cat., iv. 8; Mus. Barb., iv. 6, 50) to the sella curulis. Chairs were in shape varied, and often," says Becker, "remarkably like our modern chairs. . . . The feet were most elegantly turned, and either straight or gracefully curved. The backs displayed an even greater variety. Sometimes there were none, as in the modern stool. Sometimes they are very low, others again are very tall, and incline forward or backwards. But generally the back is semicircular and broad. The frames of chairs were of wood (often veneered with ivory or other costly materials) or of metal like the lecti." With the chairs cushions were used. "Benches,"

says the same authority, "were not used in the houses of the wealthy Romans, except in the baths, or for the purpose of facilitating the ascent into the lectus." Tables were the source of immense extravagance to the ancient Romans, especially the monopodia, which, according to Livy and Pliny, came from Asia, and were made of "massive plates of wood, cut off the stem in its whole diameter." For this purpose the wood of the citrus was preferred above all others. These tables rested on an ivory column, and were thence termed monopodia. "Pliny relates that Cicero paid for a table of this description no less than 1,000,000 sesterces. For meals, larger tables of ordinary wood veneered with citrus were generally used. The small side-tables, at meals, were usually of marble, "sometimes of silver, gold, or other costly material," and they were in shape generally square. Mirrors were portable in size, but

they were often fastened to the walls of Roman houses. They were of metal, and the backs, says Becker, were "usually embossed." "In the earlier periods a composition of tin and copper was used, but, as luxury increased, those made of silver became more common." (Plin. xxx. iii. 90.) Tripods were much in evidence in wealthy houses, and were frequently of elaborate and exquisite workmanship, adorned with statues and reliefs. Cupboards and chests were also part of the indispensable furniture of a noble or wealthy Roman's house. They stood in the atrium, and were (one authority says) "either entirely of metal or of wood, ornamented and secured with metal."

The vasa of the ancients were remarkable for the grace and beauty of their forms; and Pliny reminds us that, even in Numa's time, there was a guild of potters in Rome. The vasa varied from beautiful produc-

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tions in terra-cotta and brass, and bronze, to vessels of amethyst and onyx, or of gold set with cameos or precious stones. The glass vessels of the ancients, as Becker says, "appear to throw all the skill of the English and Bohemian glass polishers completely into the shade." They had also the secret of making glass of differently coloured layers joined together, which they cut into cameos like the onyx. Curtains, brooms ("made of the branches of the wild myrtle"), sponges, oil-lamps (of exquisitely artistic designs, and made of terra cotta, bronze, and marble), sun-dials and waterclocks, were among the many useful articles of a Roman house. Libraries were then, as now, the ambition of many ignorant parvenus. The rolls of parchment were kept in cupboards called armaria, and slaves called librarii were specially told off to transcribe, bind the rolls, and keep the library in good order. "The walls of

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Roman houses," says Mr. Davenport Adams, "were adorned with a stucco of great excellence, equally adapted to receive pictorial embellishment, or to be modelled into bas-relief. This stucco was called albarium, from its whiteness, or opus marmoratum, from its resemblance to marble. It seems to have been made of calcined gypsum (plaster of Paris), mixed with pulverised stone; and in the more expensive sort, with powdered marble. A wall thus prepared was divided by the artist into rectangular compartments, which he filled with free and fanciful designs of landscapes, buildings, animals, gardens, or ideal subjects."

Our early northern domestic architecture and furniture were of an entirely different type to the Roman. To this day, however, the *patio* of a Spanish house, and the *cortile* of an Italian one, preserve the main features of the *atrium*, even to the

fountain in the centre; and in mediæval times the great hall of a Saxon thane was to him what the *atrium* was to the Roman noble.

From the writings of Bede, and other chroniclers, we find that houses were built in England in early times of both stone and wood. Existing examples of Saxon masonry show that it was often ashlar or "clene hewen." The earth floors, as civilisation advanced, gave place to wooden ones; and whereas distempered and frescoed walls were the rule in ancient classical houses, rough plaster covered with hangings prevailed in England. The first impetus to house decoration in our country may be said to have been given by women. As they gained skill and knowledge in needlework, they applied this beautiful art to the embellishment of their own homes. Matilda and her handmaidens worked the famous Bayeux

tapestry in the eleventh century for a hall, and it contains what were intended for portraits of contemporaneous personages. A very artistic manufacture for domestic purposes was that of tiles. Although we have proof that in England the Romans used them for pavements in their villas, there is no testimony that the English copied Roman fashions in this respect. As coverings for roofs, and lining for fireplaces, they were extensively used in the Middle Ages; also for pavements in ecclesiastical structures. In the British Museum is an example of glazed decorative tiles applied to pavements, which came from the ruins of a Priory Church, and is immensely old.

Wooden and timber-framed houses have been common in this country from the earliest period. The Romans used brick in their buildings here as elsewhere, yet the art of brick making seems to have

been lost for a period. One authority says: "In our numerous twelfth-century buildings no traces of brick occur, except in a few instances. The using them up as old material from buildings left by the Romans, as at Colchester and St. Alban's, suggested making others in imitation. Perhaps the earliest true brick building existing is that of Little Wenham Hall (1260). A few instances of early four-teenth-century brick work occur, and in the fifteenth century it becomes common."

Castles were, as a rule, built more or less with a view to their becoming fortresses and refuges for the neighbouring villagers and retainers in time of war. We have so many good examples of ancient castles in England, of drawbridges, portcullises, and all the other characteristics belonging to them, that I should indeed lay myself open to the charge of repeating a twice-told tale were I to enlarge upon

such a well-worn subject. We know from tradition that the stone or earth floors were strewn with rushes, that the walls often boasted tapestry, and that the tables and benches were simple in fashion. pets, like most other luxuries and refinements, came from the East, and they are mentioned in the Bible as used by persons "who dwell in tents." The Romans set great store by Babylonian carpets, and it is known that, even at this late date, towns bordering on the site of Babylon and Nineveh are remarkable for the beauty of their carpets. Wall-papers were also Eastern products, and came first from China and Japan. The oldest papers handed down to us are most beautiful in colouring and design; the ground being invariably white or cream, and the pattern large, with conventionalised birds and flowers. fashion of hanging walls with silk was too costly a one to find general acceptance.

Some idea of a Saxon thane's house may be gathered from the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum; and Sir Walter Scott, in "Ivanhoe," gives a vivid word-picture of the house of Cedric. As Norman civilisation progressed, however, the rudeness of Saxon houses and furniture disappeared to a great measure. Litchfield, in his valuable book, "The Illustrated History of Furniture," says of this period: "Bedsteads were not usual except for kings, queens, and great ladies; tapestry covered the walls, and the floors were generally sanded. As the country became more calm, and security for property more assured, this comfortless state of living disappeared. . . . Stairs were introduced into houses, the 'parlour' or talking-room was added, and fireplaces of brick or stonework were made in some of the rooms. where previously the smoke was allowed to escape through an aperture in the roof.

Bedsteads were carved and draped with rich hangings. Armoires made of oak, and enriched with carving, and presses date from about the end of the eleventh century." Panelling was first used for the walls of rooms in the reign of Henry III. About this time furniture followed the style of the architecture in vogue, and became distinctly Gothic, as we see in the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey, which, as all the world knows, was made for King Edward I. In France, the fourteenth century was remarkable for the finish and beauty of its industrial arts. Litchfield quotes Lacroix's account of a chair made for the King of France in 1352, which was of silver, incrusted with precious stones, and for which the Court silversmith received the sum of 774 louis. Forks came to us first from Italy, as did the fashion of decorated plaster-work for ceilings. In the old Tudor mansion,

"Great Fulford," near Exeter, are to be seen choice specimens of plaster-work done by Italian workmen in the reign of Henry VIII. By the end of the fourteenth century the rude benches of Saxon times had developed into beautifully carved Gothic seats; the boxes then used for beds had been superseded by four-posters, and fine linen sheets were in use in the houses of the rich. In France and Italy embroidered hangings of cloth of gold, velvet and silk, reached a point of magnificence never since surpassed.

The Renaissance may be said to have had its rise in Italy, and to have been a return to classic principles. The Palladian and Sansovinian palaces of Vicenza and Venice are good illustrations of Renaissance architecture applied to domestic purposes. Their furniture in great measure followed classic models. Who is not familiar with the Italian cabinet of pietra dura, in which

miniature Corinthian or Doric brass pillars support a tiny entablature, behind which are flights of Lilliputian steps leading to a classic doorway? Of this date, too, is the curule chair revival, and the magnificent cassone, or dower chest (often covered with gesso work and painted and gilt, or with simple panels, decorated in oils by the first artists of the day), was a favourite article of furniture at this and earlier periods in Italy. The Pitti Palace, in Florence, has many exquisite specimens of Italian Renaissance furniture, notably cabinets. Both intarsia and mosaic work developed in beauty of workmanship at this time. The choir stalls of a church in Perugia show some beautiful and genuinely old examples of intarsia work. Italian wood-carving has long been famous for its beauty; it is in higher relief than English carving, and the subjects are different and more artistically treated.

The distinguishing characteristics of Renaissance carving were mythological subjects, wreaths, medallions, grape-vines, cornucopiæ and masks.

English Renaissance in architecture was not marked by the erection of sumptuous palaces such as the Rezzonico and Grimani. It took the form of the beautiful Tudor and Jacobean country house, a worthy successor to the battlemented for-Skilled workmen, most of them tress. Italian artificers, were employed for the interior decoration of these houses. Francis I. had largely encouraged Italian artists to come to his capital and aid in its embellishment; and Henry VIII., not to be behindhand with his rival, gave ample encouragement to art also. The consequence was that artistic handicraft in England gained much from foreign sources. Notable examples of Italian work in intarsia and plaster are to be

seen at Montacute House and Great Fulford, besides many other old English houses.

At a later period Inigo Jones introduced Italian classical domestic architecture into England; and he was mainly inspired in his career by admiration for the works of Palladio which he saw at Venice. A curious survival of the domestic classic exists in America, where temple-like façades of Doric pillars and pilasters, supporting architraves, friezes, and cornices, carried out in the humble materials of wood and plaster, find much favour for houses under the term "Colonial." Vanbrugh, in the seventeenth century, followed in the footsteps of Inigo Jones, and Grinling Gibbons added to the beauty of English homes and churches by his inimitable carvings in wood and stone. Charles II. employed him in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and

also in St. Paul's Cathedral; and he executed important work at Chatsworth and Hampton Court Palace.

In England at this time Chippendale was inaugurating as original a departure in furniture, as ever did Boule in France. His designs in the beginning were almost exclusively Chinese in character. were carried out in mahogany and rosewood, and were invariably without inlay. The carving was elaborate and rococo in style. Hepplewhite, who wrote a textbook on furniture, Ince, Mayhew, and Sheraton, were all more or less of the school of Chippendale; but Sheraton abandoned rococo carving for severe lines and marqueterie ornament. English marqueterie was never highly coloured like the Dutch, nor did English workers in marqueterie delight in the reproduction of flowers.

Towards the end of the eighteenth

century the brothers Adam rose into fame as decorators, and Flaxman, and Wedgwood, and Angelica Kaufmann thought it not beneath them to make our houses beautiful. Angelica Kaufmann remained in England seventeen years, and became one of the first members of the Royal Academy. During her stay she did a great deal of mural painting for Adams' houses. The beginning of the nineteenth century saw "empire" furniture in vogue, both in France and England. Litchfield dates its decline in favour from the date of the Restoration of Monarchy in France. Next succeeded a long period of absolute Philistinism in England. Houses, decoration and furniture, were equally tasteless Art seemed at its lowest and hideous. ebb. Chippendale and Sheraton treasures were banished to garrets to make room for the veriest atrocities in cabinet-making, which were the fashion of the day. No

more were seen the knife-boxes, the mahogany urns, the wine-coolers, and the mirrors which were associated with the skilled group of craftsmen of whom I have written. Carpets, hangings, and wallpapers were beneath the commonplace. Everything beautiful and of ancient design or workmanship was voted "oldfashioned" and condemned to the attics. The graceful delicacy of Sheraton forms was supplanted by ponderous and shapeless masses of wood without ornamentation of brass, buhl, carving, or inlay. Vivid green was the favourite colour, and woollen fringe finished off all upholstery. Art in the home could scarcely go lower, until the era of rubbish set in and showed us to what depths taste could descend. Early Victorian furniture and decoration might be heavy, and devoid of beauty and grace, but at least it was dignified and respectable. When the rubbish mania raged in England, solid mahogany was banished for the doubtful support of cheap wicker-work. Flimsy "art" muslins and silks beguiled the dust, and disguised the squareness, of honest rectangular doorways. Tapanese fans tied up with ridiculous bows covered the walls. Valueless china plates were dotted about at every opportunity. Tea was served no longer on decent substantial mahogany; it made wicker-work to creak beneath the weight of trays, and cups and saucers. Frameless, dusty, begrimed photos stared at us from the backs of pianos, and littered mantel-pieces. Pampas-grass, and bulrushes, and peacocks' feathers, filled the air with downy atoms and dust. Wisps of "high art" silk draped everything. It was as if all corners and squareness were downright immoral. Sad coloured greens and blues covered with well-meaning, but hideous, crewel-work, formed the adornment of cushions and chairs. Rubbish

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and dust and dirt were at a premium. Severity, simplicity, cleanliness, and real beauty at a discount.

From this melancholy state of things the last ten years have largely delivered us. A purer, better taste prevails; severity is beginning to be appreciated, and people have at last discovered that Greek art was always rectangular. Little originality in industrial arts exist, but the exhibitions at the New Gallery have given an impetus to what there is, and helped to educate and improve the popular taste. The chinaplate mania has been relegated to lodginghouses, and really beautiful and valuable specimens of pottery and porcelain are preserved in cabinets as of old. Walls are cleaner and more reposeful to look at, denuded of their dusty draperies and dirty fans. It is to be hoped that this improvement in taste may herald the advent of better things, and that the arts and crafts

of Old England may flourish and make our houses beautiful as they did of yore.

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

#### XIII

#### ON "LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM"

Woman, in her relation to man, my Violet, will continue to provide themes for essayists as long as the world lasts. Courtship, marriage, divorce, or the happy or unhappy married life must of necessity interest us all, since there are none who can by any possibility be unaffected by these relationships. The behaviour of woman in her different phases, as the child, the maiden, and the developed woman, are of highest interest. When the sixth age shifts, unhappily, nothing you can say of her will matter much.

And in her relationship to man, woman 164

is indeed Protean! "Everything by turns, and nothing long." Coy, reserved, forward, modest, bashful, simple, full of wiles, calculating, sincere, honest, a prey to passionate love, cold and unemotional. The woman who does not love her children is by common consent recognised as an abnormal being. The woman who does not love her husband is, curiously enough, never placed in that category. Yet as woman of her own free will gives herself to the keeping of a strange man, it follows, as a matter of course, that she shall have found something in that man which is responsive to her nature, and which makes her choice of him as a companion for life no matter of surprise. Consequently, when the love wanes, or appears never to have existed, the condition of things which remains (a life-long partnership with the motive for that partnership gone) is worse than unnatural. To err is epicene.

Married life must necessarily be full of ups and downs. Yet by far the larger proportion of marriages are happy ones. Few are ideal, and the majority may be described as of the jog-trot, kick-by-the-way order. Still, taking the average, not of society, but of our population, it must be confessed that the married state is happier than the single one, and the greater number of married people are reasonably truly (if not ecstatically) happy. modern and average man is an iconoclast, as far as woman is concerned. He does not idealise her, he has ceased to worship her, he no longer makes woeful ballad to her eyebrow; and he does not even propose nowadays on his bended knees. He can find it in his irreverent heart to "chaff" the object of his warmest affections. He is seldom sentimental, never romantic; and yet, in spite of all, there still exists a manly, chivalrous love,

# On "Love's Young Dream"

than which nothing in life is better worth possessing.

An old couplet has it that:

"There swims no goose so grey, but soon or late She finds an honest gander for her mate,"

which I take to mean that every woman, however ill-favoured, has, at some period or other of her life, a chance of changing her state. That all do not choose to take advantage of this chance is certain, but the woman who has never been told that she is loved must indeed be a curiosity.

To the débutante, love and marriage may come in her first year of entry into society; or she may have many avowals of love which she cannot reciprocate; or it may so chance that she have none at all until later. Great physical advantages count, unhappily, for most in the forces which lead man to find love in his heart for woman. That the physical advantages

count for less than the mental and moral in the long run, is also undeniable. Nevertheless, while man is man, golden hair and dazzling complexions, violet eyes and symmetry of features will attract and stimulate love more than the amiable disposition of a patient Griselda, the force of character of a Queen Elizabeth, or the attainments of an Olympia Morata. Hence my deduction is, that those endowed with beauty or palpable charm are more generally sought after in marriage early in their lives than they who base their chief claim for attractiveness on less patent but more durable qualifications.

To know yourself loved by the man you love is exquisite happiness, and nothing in after life can compare with it. It is like profanity to write of such idyllic and solemn moments, and they come not only to those who are in their salad days, but, happily, to people of mature years as well.

But even though engaged to the man of her affections, the débutante's path is not altogether strewn with roses. Misunderstandings are sure to arise between two people, comparatively speaking, strangers to each other. It is long before a complete grasp of one another's character is arrived at; and people often show little patience with shortcomings they fail to One may be exigent and understand. impetuous, fiery and impatient; the other provokingly lackadaisical and indolent, ever inclined to adopt in life a passive rôle, which is trying and irritating to the one of action and energy. Again, one may be full of enthusiasm and generous impulses, the other cynical and apt to treat honest enthusiasm as childish. He may chance to love the country and sport, and fresh air; she may adore the excitements of Society and town amusements. ments arise, sometimes obstinacy and

temper are shown, occasionally estrangements ensue; and all this between two people who have elected to spend their lives together, and who look forward to happiness in so doing. If ever in life need exists for mutual forbearance it is when people stand in the relation to each other of betrothed husband and wife. Later in life with years comes philosophy-not infrequently judgment and patience, but these are hard to find in conjunction with extreme youth. Not the least trying moments are those when, together before a critical public, the newly declared engagement is discussed and observed. Nothing is worse taste than brandishing a love in the face of others; being demonstratively affectionate or assertively conspicuous. At the same time, I know of few things more charming than the shy happiness which modestly seeks to hide itself and which yet unconsciously breaks forth in smiles

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and radiant glances and tender looks. There are those who affect a studied indifference to each other in public; a coldness of demeanour which they are very far from feeling. Such affectation is unnatural and absurd. As the French say:

"L'amour et la fumée ne peuvent se cacher."

It deceives no one to pretend indifference where the affections are naturally expected to be engaged. Anything unnatural is in bad taste. Nature carried to extreme is equally offensive. The happy medium is that wherein people are simple and natural; free from exaggeration, self-controlled and content to be happy without claiming the sympathy of the whole world in that happiness. And, indeed, my Violet, the girl who is truly and honestly in love regards her future husband as towering above his kind as much as ever did "Triton among min-

nows." To such as she, the music of her lover's voice is sweeter than stringed instruments. His presence makes the world full of sunshine. His absence causes it to look grey and gloomy. With him the true-hearted woman can face adversity and poverty. Without him, riches and rank and pleasures are as nothing. There is no boon greater than the gift of a "good man's love"—and:

"Nothing half so sweet in life As love's young dream."

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