

O'Rell Max

Her Royal Highness Woman



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Max O'Rell
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**I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME TO 'THE
NICEST LITTLE WOMAN IN THE WORLD'**

(CHAPTER XXXI.)

PREFACE

'Monsieur, Madame, et Bébé,' that most delightful, untranslatable book of the late Gustave Droz, by its genial and humorous philosophy and its pretty pictures of matrimonial life, by its healthy teachings and its piquant, poetic illustrations, has taught to thousands of French people how to make their married lives happier and more cheerful.

This unpretentious little volume of mine, which appears simultaneously in Paris, London, and New York, will not have been written in vain if it causes one married couple in each of the three great countries where it is published to study and understand each other better.

I dedicate it to married men and women, and to young men and women contemplating matrimony – a large public indeed.

MAX O'RELL.

P.S. – Did I hear you ask whether I have been married?
Oh yes, that's all right.

M. O'R

April, 1901.

CHAPTER I

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

What do we know about women? – Generalities on the subject – I am requested to speak on some subject I know something about

'I am a man, and everything that concerns woman interests me,' might have said Terence. This is also what every Frenchman says, and why of all men on earth he is the one who knows women best. He is keenly alive to woman's influence, and woman is an ever-present, almost a fixed, idea with him. Whether he study her from the artistic, the psychological, even the physiological, point of view, his interest in her is never exhausted. And this explains why, since Aspasia inspired Socrates and advised Pericles, in no other country (not even in America) has woman's sovereignty been so supreme as it has always been, and still is, in France.

It is true that the leaders of thought in France, as in any other country, have long ago proclaimed that woman was the only problem it would never be given to man to solve. It is true that they have all tried and all failed, and that they acknowledge it, but they are trying still.

This characteristic of woman is probably, after all, what makes her ever so interesting to us. Nothing is more different from a woman than another woman. Nothing is more different from a woman than that very woman herself. The very moment we think we know her, she slips through our fingers and stands in front of us an absolute stranger. And so it should be. A man was one day complaining to a friend that he had been married twenty years without being able to understand his wife. 'You should not complain of that,' remarked the friend. 'I have been married to my wife three months only, and I understand her perfectly.'

When I come to think of it, I must confess that we men are sometimes perfectly lovely in our estimation of women. For example, you know, my dear fellow-men, that when we have a little cold in our heads – nothing more – the whole household is in a perfect state of commotion, and we wonder how it is that the earth still dares continue her course round the sun. Yet, when we see a woman patient, as she very generally is, of the most poignant physical and moral suffering, we exclaim, in admiration of her: 'She bears it like a man!' And what we seem to be unable to understand is, why women should smile when they hear us make that exclamation. Myself, I could roar, while holding my sides.

No man can say that he knows what a woman is unless he has met her in adversity. It is then that she can attain prodigious heights. Indeed, I believe that the head of a woman is much stronger in adversity than in prosperity. She can always surpass herself in misfortune, and often fails to stand success – I mean personal success, for she can associate herself to the success of a husband with all her heart and soul, but personal success is very often too much for her. How many women have I met during my twenty years of contact with the literary, artistic, dramatic, and social circles of life who completely lost their heads over a sudden personal success! I have seen women immediately lose all interest in home and family life; I have seen some abandon husband, and even children, on suddenly becoming a celebrity, a famous writer, actress, or singer, or a 'professional' beauty. A successful man will not alter in his feelings toward his family because he has become celebrated, unless he has a wife who should keep amusing herself with reminding him that, however the great 'John' of Oliver Wendell Holmes he may be to the public, he is only plain 'Jack' at home. On the contrary, the successful man will often most willingly give all the applause of the public for a few encouraging words of praise from a devoted wife, for a few expressions of admiration from a loving daughter. The easily unstrung, almost hysterical, temperament of a woman will sometimes make her give up all the quiet enjoyment of family happiness and love for the noisy applause of the crowd. It acts on her like an intoxicating

beverage; and if men sometimes get cured of the craving for drink, women, it is well known, never do. The celebrated woman is seldom fit to be, or, if she is, to remain, a wife and a mother. She becomes an anomaly, a freak. It is in woman's nature. She cannot look down to drop her love on a man; to love she must admire and look up. I would rather be the husband of a simple little dairymaid than that of a George Sand or a Madame de Staël.

All these are stray thoughts on the great eternal feminine. Like my fellow-men, I know nothing about women.

I quite appreciated a little scene only a few weeks old. I was announced to give a lecture on 'Women' to the students of a large ladies' college in North Carolina. A couple of hours before the lecture, three young ladies from the college called on me at the hotel where I was staying. I met them in the parlour. Three charming, bright, most intelligent-looking girls they were. After looking at each other for some time, so as to suggest that the other should speak, one at last made up her mind to be the spokeswoman of the little deputation. 'We have called on you,' she said, 'to ask if you would be kind enough to change the subject of your lecture to-night. Our lecture course is instituted for the instruction and the general improvement of the students, and we thought we should like to hear you talk to us on a subject which you know something about.' I must say that I felt fearfully small; but I was delighted at the frankness of those young American girls, and at once acceded to their request.

CHAPTER II

WOMAN'S INFLUENCE FOR GOOD AND EVIL

A woman at the beginning – The first love-story – Different versions – 'Cherchez la femme' – The influence of woman on national characteristics

If we look back into the dawn of the world, we see that, from her first appearance, woman has always been a great power. Indeed, she had the leading part in the first great drama of which the literature of the world gives any account. A snake and a poor weak man had the minor parts, the snake playing the villain and the poor man the fool. I have never read that story without feeling ashamed of the first representative of my sex. If I had been Adam, I would have stuck to Eve through thick and thin. To save, even only to shield, a woman (especially one I loved, or one who would have been as kind to me as Eve had been to Adam), I would tell lies by the yard and by the hour, and I admire that English judge who, being told so by a male co-respondent in a divorce case, replied, 'And so would I.'

How I prefer that story of our first parents as related in the sacred books of the Buddhists! There, as in the version that we know, man is tempted by woman, and, as in our version, and as he has done ever since, and will do for ever and ever, he succumbs. But when he is found out and sentence is to be passed on him, what a difference! He does not turn around and say, 'Please, it was not I who tempted her; it was she who tempted me.' No, he acknowledges his guilt, affirms that he alone disobeyed, and that he alone should be punished. Then Eve intervenes, and she, too, confesses her guilt. There is a regular attempt each at shielding the other. Then both fall on their knees and beg to be punished together, and their request is granted, and they go forth hand in hand into exile. This is the first record of love and devotion, not, as in our version, a first record of man's cowardice and selfishness.

From that memorable day to this, Her Royal Highness Woman has been the greatest power for good and evil that the world has known, for ever since Adam and Eve there have been men and women – especially women.

A beautiful woman was the cause of the Trojan War; the cause of David's single sin, a woman; the cause of Solomon's decadence, a woman, or rather, many women. A woman was the instigator of the greatest crime ever recorded in history, the terrible massacre of St. Bartholomew. A woman, who has dearly paid for it since, was the cause of the Franco-German war. On the other hand, France was saved in the fifteenth century by a sweet peasant girl at a time when King and people had given up all hope of ever again seeing France a free and independent nation – but that was a long time ago.

There is no country where the influence of women over men is so great as France, and the famous phrase 'Cherchez la femme' – 'Seek the woman' – emanated from the lips of the greatest jurisconsult France ever produced, President Dupin, in the reign of King Louis Philippe. And it is a fact that among French prisoners who belong to the better classes, there are ninety-nine out of every hundred who have committed murder, forgery, embezzlement, theft, for the sake of a woman. The English people (and the Americans, too, I believe) say that drunkenness is responsible for the great majority of crimes committed in Great Britain and America. The expensive ways of French women are responsible for the majority of crimes and offences committed by men in modern France, as these expensive ways of women are responsible for their own downfall nine times out of ten.

On the other hand, a man owes all his best qualities to the influence of the first woman he has known, his mother. A man will be what his mother has made him. A man does not learn how to be a gentleman at school, at college, or at the university. There he may improve his manner, but his mind is formed at home much earlier than that.

It is woman, and woman alone, that makes society polite. Men together can talk or chat, but it is only when women join them that they can *causer*, an equivalent for which the English language does not possess. And why? Simply because Englishmen do not as a rule care for the restraint that results from the presence of women.

Thanks to the tact, the brilliancy, and the high intellectual attainments of American women, one can *causer* in America, and the vocabulary of the language used in the United States ought to be richer by one word, a good equivalent for this French verb which both 'to talk' and 'to chat' most imperfectly translate; for *causer* means 'to chat with wit, humour, brilliancy, and great refinement.'

CHAPTER III

MAXIMS FOR THE MAN IN LOVE

How to deal with your girl – Avoid catching colds in your head – How women with humour can be saved

Never go down on your knees to declare your love; you will spoil your trousers and feel very uncomfortable. Rather give the lady an opportunity of denying that you were on your knees before her, for the simple reason that she was sitting on them.

Never put your hand near your lady's waistband or round her neck. Place it about the middle of her back; there are no pins there.

If she asks you to fasten her bracelet, never forget to apply a kiss on her arm. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, that is what she wants and why she does not secure her bracelet with a little chain.

Never call on your lady-love while you have a cold in your head. If you begin your declaration, you will never be able to resume it after a fit of sneezing. A cold in the head inspires pity neither in the heart of man nor in that of woman, and sneezing is fatal if the lady possesses the slightest particle of humour. Remember that, with a cold in your head, you will have to say to her: 'I lob you, be darling. Oh! I hab such a cold id be dose.' No romantic love, my dear fellow, could survive that.

I knew a man who once eloped with a married woman. They were deeply in love with each other. When they arrived at their destination, they went to the hotel where they had engaged rooms. It was a bitterly cold day, and they had forgotten to give orders for fires. The rooms were dull and chilly. They fell in each other's arms. 'At last, my darling!' he exclaimed. 'At last, my own beloved one!' He could say no more. He was seized with a violent fit of sneezing. The misled lady came at once to her senses. In no time the trunks were sent back to the station, and that same evening she had returned safe and sound to the conjugal roof. The 'saving grace' of humour has done still more for women than for men who owe so much to it.

The woman who has a keen sense of humour is a terrible one to make love to. The romantic one will find charms in all your shortcomings, but the other is inexorable. She is constantly on the look-out for something to laugh at; nothing will escape her. And you know that, if you laugh, love-making is out of the question.

I know a woman who was radically cured of her ardent love for a man because he had, near the tip of his nose, a tiny little wart which turned alternately white and red while he got passionately engaged telling her the sincerity and intensity of his love.

If you are bald, never make love to a woman taller than you. Looked at from below, you are all right.

Never let your lady-love see you without a collar, no, not even the very wife of your bosom. A man's head without a collar is like a bouquet without a holder.

Never let her see you asleep. Maybe you sleep with your mouth open. If you are married, let your wife sleep first. When you are quite sure she is off, let yourself go – and be careful to wake up first in the morning.

Never tell your lady-love that you are very steady in your affections, and that every time that you love a woman it is for ever. If you think she will enjoy the joke, you overrate her sense of humour.

If your wife or sweetheart be in love with you to such a degree that she tells you she could never survive you if you happened to die, reassure her and tell her that there is a way out of the difficulty – her setting out first.

Don't let your wife see you shave. Your idiotic, cowed look, your gaping mouth and grimaces are as many infallible remedies for love.

Never indulge in any little objectionable trick before the woman you love. Great affections should never be trifled with. Madame Bovary, in Gustave Flaubert's famous novel, took a dislike to her husband and went helplessly wrong, because the latter, after eating, used to clean his teeth by promenading his tongue inside his mouth. I sympathize with the poor woman and feel rather inclined to forgive her.

CHAPTER IV

ADVICE TO THE MAN WHO WANTS TO MARRY

What should attract him in matrimony – At what age should people get married? – Be superior to your wife in everything

When you are dead, once said a cynic, it's for a long time; but when you are married, it's for ever.

Therefore, before entering into the holy estate of matrimony, a man could not be too careful in the choice of his partner.

Now, what should influence him most in that choice? Money? Never – oh, never, unless it be out of philanthropy and on reflecting that, after all, it would be very hard on rich girls to feel that they cannot marry because they have money, and I do think that they want to marry as well as others. Beauty, then? No; beauty passes away. Ugliness? Certainly not; ugliness remains. What, then? An altogether of physical, moral, and intellectual charms which fit in exactly with all the ideals of that man, and, above all, a similarity of tastes.

After all, what is beauty, considered as an incentive to love? A man has in himself a hundred beings to every one of which a different kind of beauty can appeal. If he be an artist, the women of Raphael will inspire him with the purest sensations of love, those of Titian with the loftiest sentiments of admiration and respect. Those of Watteau will make him believe that he could live on candies and *choux à la crème*. Those of Teniers would reconcile him to the idea of a quiet life over a pipe and a tankard of beer. Some heroic beauty will inspire him with the most chivalrous sentiments; some melancholy one with dreams of a refined poetic life. Some sedate beauty, with her hair dressed *à la vierge*, will suggest to him a regular humdrum life, mid-day dinners, retiring and rising early, and will inculcate in him an immoderate desire to be the father of a large family. That same man, however, might become a criminal under the influence of some poisonous beauty. Some Bostonian girl educated beyond her intellect might induce that very man to spend the rest of his life studying Browning.

Now, my dear man, if beauty should influence you in the choice of a wife, never decide on a woman before you are absolutely sure that, whatever happens, you will be happy with her as your wife knitting by your side, while, under a veranda covered with jasmine and honeysuckle, you play with the babe on your knees. If a woman does not possess *that* kind of beauty, she is not fit for matrimony, and don't marry her.

Now, a woman should marry young, very young even, so that her husband should enjoy all the different phases of her beauty, from the beauty of girlhood to that second youth, or matronly beauty, which to my mind is perhaps the best of all. The Watteau of eighteen will become a Rubens at forty. It is, perhaps, at forty that a woman is most strikingly beautiful, and she is almost invariably so when she has taken care of herself, and has been loved and petted by husband and children alike. It is then that she knows how to make the best of herself, that she best understands how to exercise her gifts and charms in the most effective manner.

It is at forty that she enjoys the grace of perfect self-possession. She has tact, and dresses faultlessly. Her knowledge of the world, her experience of life, all help to make her a more delightful companion than ever. The love she has inspired is written on every one of her features. Her eyes sparkle with joy, her mouth expresses the ecstasy of past and present bliss, and also gratitude for the kisses that have been impressed upon it. Yes, the woman of forty is a joy, an intoxicating and an incomparable joy, to a husband. That woman is even more beautiful physically than she ever was, and her beauty is of such a different type from what it was at twenty that I can very well understand

how a husband can seriously fall in love with his wife a second time. All this is truth, my dear fellow. And don't even be afraid of white hair. With a good complexion, a cheerful expression, and two big black eyes, nothing goes better than white hair, and the whiter it is the better.

And, you will say, at what age should a man marry? Well, at all events, never before he is quite prepared to provide for a wife, whatever her position may be. When this indispensable condition is satisfied, I shall say never, or seldom, before thirty. Never try matrimony as an experiment – that is to say, never before you are absolutely certain you will prefer it to all the rest. I heard the other day a very good piece of advice, which I should like to repeat here, as I endorse it thoroughly: A man should marry a woman half his age, *plus* seven. Try it at whatever age you like, and you will find it works very well, taking for granted all the while that, after all, a man as well as a woman is the age that he looks and feels.

Never marry a woman richer than you, or one taller than you, or one older than you. Be always gently superior to your wife in fortune, in size, and in age, so that in every possible way she may appeal to you for help or protection, either through your purse, your strength, or your experience of life. Marry her at an age that will always enable you to play with her all the different characteristic parts of a husband, a chum, a lover, an adviser, a protector, and just a tiny suspicion of a father.

CHAPTER V

ON THE SELECTION OF LIFE PARTNERS

Be as careful in choosing your partners as you would in choosing your ancestors – Count your change before entering, as mistakes cannot be recognised afterwards

In choosing their partners for life, people should be as careful as in choosing their ancestors. To give advice in the matter, however, is a very delicate task to undertake.

You see, there is no probation allowed by the laws and customs of civilized nations, and we have to put aside at once the best piece of advice that could be given on the subject, which is: 'Go and have a try, and if you don't like it, why, give it up and try something else.' What a progress it will be, what a guarantee for the improved happiness of the human race, when couples will be allowed to associate on trial, say, for a few months! Yes, but how many will remain married? And then, what will become of the human race?

This not being legal now, or, if you prefer, not accepted by the rules of proper society, let us examine the case a bit.

Should couples study each other's characters during a long period of engagement? Alas! how could they be hopeful of success when, after ten years of married life, they often discover they were not made for each other? I have known English couples who had been engaged ten years trying to find out if they were fit for each other. Poor couples! they might have been engaged fifty years without any more chance of success. Life during an engagement means the daily repetition of an old story: sentimental walks. The sky is serene, the sea is smooth. As I say elsewhere, they will never know they are good sailors until they have been together on board the same boat in a good big storm – no, not until misfortunes have come to try them, not until they have been confronted with bills for meat and coal and the price of butter. Besides, long engagements should be avoided, because if they do not end in matrimony the prospects of a woman may be ruined.

Make your inquiries about your possible future partners, about their antecedents, their family, their social and financial position. If your partner is healthy (make sure of that), make up your mind quickly. Marriage is a lottery; go in for it at once and take your chance.

A woman should avoid accepting a man who has been particularly successful with women. At the same time, she should look for one to whom woman is not an enigma, and who is a man of the world and of strong character, so that she may feel sure that when he chose her, he said to himself: 'I know my mind; happiness for me lies there.' On that man she will be able to depend and lean safely.

As peace and security are the guarantees of happiness in matrimony, a man should not choose a lovely rose who will attract the attention of all the men, but look for a modest violet in some retired, shady spot. The violet is the emblem of peaceful and lasting love.

A woman should avoid marrying a man who at home is the favourite of many sisters who constantly dance attendance on him. That man is spoiled for matrimony. He will require his wife to bestow on him all the attentions he received from his sisters, besides those which he has a right to expect from a wife.

I should advise woman to shun a dragon of virtue like fire: she should prefer a dragoon rather. A man may be good, but he must not overdo it. He that has no wickedness is too good for this world; not even a nun could endure him. Fancy, my dear lady, a man being shocked by you! The male prig is the abomination of the earth, and should be the pet aversion of women.

Let a man avoid marrying a woman who has won the applause of the public. The life of a successful woman unfits her for matrimony and its peaceful joys. Of course there are, and I have

known, many exceptions. If you marry a well-known singer, you will soon discover yourself in the act of carrying her roll of music. Ah, if you are a great singer yourself, well and good! But then, take care that if you both appear at the same concert, one does not get more encores than the other, or peace will be destroyed.

Don't marry women who have big bouquets of roses and orchids sent to them, or your daily little bunch of violets or lilies-of-the-valley will soon run the risk of being despised.

CHAPTER VI

MAXIMS FOR THE MARRIED MAN

Keep your wife in order – How to deal with her (confidential)

If at the beginning of his married life a man cannot have enough control over himself to see that his wife does not get her own way in everything, and that he does not make himself her abject slave, he will never be able to recover his liberty, and he is done for, condemned to subjection for the rest of his natural life. The beginning of wisdom is to keep your wife in order.

No Government has ever been known to successfully suppress, or even reduce, any liberty or privilege previously granted to the people. If a man capitulates on the threshold of matrimony, he will never be able to recover one inch of the ground he has surrendered. In fact, a man has to be as careful to avoid spoiling a wife as he would a child, and that for her sake as well as for his own.

To be happy, for instance, a woman does not require the constant presence of her husband. On the contrary, she will enjoy his company very much more if he and she are not always thrown together.

I know men who, from the beginning of their married lives, visited their clubs, enjoyed men's company, while remaining very devoted to their wives and making them very happy.

But if a man waits ten years to decide on belonging to a club, he will soon discover the terrible mistake he has made. His visits to that club will be treated like perfect acts of unfaithfulness, reproaches will begin, followed by sulking, and the famous sentence will be uttered, 'You love me no more.'

To be happy, matrimonial life must be uniform. Every change must be discreet, gradual, and for the better. You have to keep a fire alive for the length of your natural life; see that your cellar is well stocked and the fuel used discriminately and economically.

Control your love and your ardour. If at the beginning you are too attentive, and do such things as you know you cannot do for ever, look out! The slightest inattention will take the most gigantic proportions.

Some men, good diplomatists, carry this principle the length of objecting to being their wives' lovers, simply because they know they cannot always be lovers, and that the day they cease to be lovers they will be considered perfect criminals.

Therefore, my friend, control yourself sufficiently to restrain your *épanchements* so cleverly that your wife may be led to believe that you love her more and more every day. Remember that you enter the holy estate of matrimony with a certain capital of love. The whole happiness of your married life will depend on the way you use that capital.

Live on the interest.

If you touch the capital, you are bound to become bankrupt sooner or later.

Married life is a comedy (sometimes, alas! a tragedy) in several acts. Like in a play, avoid putting into the first act of your married life all your strongest situations and all your smartest dialogue, for fear lest the interest should go on flagging steadily to the end.

The clever dramatist is invariably satisfied with writing a quiet and sober first act. No situations of any strength are required. He makes his audience thoroughly acquainted with his characters.

Then the action begins, and the climax is never reached before the end of the last act but one. A genius sometimes gives it in the last act.

The intelligent husband should bear this in mind and do the same.

The first act of matrimony should be a careful and sympathetic study of character, the laying down of a little plan of campaign full of considerate concessions and well-conceived resolutions.

It is only after at least ten years of matrimony that a climax should be reached, when the man is above forty, in the full possession of his manly powers, when the woman is above thirty, in the full possession of her glorious womanly charms, when both are sure of each other and tried friends.

Then, and then only, they can allow themselves to be lovers in the full meaning of the word. They will be able to enjoy that great bliss if they have not made the mistake of trying too soon.

The epicure, like the diplomatist, is the one who knows how to wait.

In matrimony it is not 'All is well that ends well': it is All is well that begins well, and not too well.

Don't read at mealtime in the presence of your wife, not even the newspaper at breakfast. Converse with her pleasantly; it will help to make her cheerful for the day; it will also help your digestion. The market may have gone down, and the reading of your newspaper may spoil your appetite.

If at night your room is lighted by the means of one lamp only, don't bring that lamp just behind you in order to read your paper comfortably. See that your wife is not compelled to do her needlework in the dark. You do not perhaps realize that women are not all cats and cannot all of them see in darkness.

Let your wife show and prove she loves you, but never let her tell it you. On the contrary, tell her all day long, if you choose. She will never tire of hearing you telling her; she will spend her life listening to you telling her.

If your wife loses her temper, keep cool as a cucumber and enjoy the scene. The effect will be marvellous and instantaneous.

If you are of a jealous disposition, take all the precautions in the world that your wife may not see it, for it will make her so proud that she may give you serious reasons for indulging in it. If you are suspicious, be a diplomatist and hide it from her; for if she does not deserve your suspicions, she will naturally resent it, and if she does, it will only make a hypocrite of her.

Quarrel with your wife, but never bore her. Never fidget, never fuss, and never sulk. If she is late keeping an appointment, don't scold, don't make yourself unpleasant. Tell her it's much better to have her late than not at all. Next time go without her. The cure is infallible.

If she is late coming down, take it for granted that she is trying to look her best for you. Feel flattered and show your gratitude. Remember that the modern *coming* woman is the one who says she will be ready in ten minutes. Laugh at it, make fun of it, crack a joke on it, but never let a woman suppose that, in your manly grandeur, you can lose your temper, even your equanimity, for such trifles.

Never appear to be idle in your house, in the morning especially. If you have nothing to do, go to your study, your library, or any other 'growlery'; inform your wife that you have to be very busy all the morning, and will she be kind enough to see that you are not disturbed? Then lock the door, light a cigar, and take a paper or a book, and be fearfully busy all the time. Your wife, being busy herself all the morning, giving orders and preparing the programme of the day, will be grateful to you for being out of the way, and think all the more of you for being so busy.

Whenever you do your wife a favour, make her a present, etc., never remind her of it. Gratitude, like love, is not to be had for the asking. What a woman admires most in a man is generosity, and to remind anyone of a favour is not generous. It looks like asking to be paid for a service.

When you lend money to your wife, never ask for the return of the loan. She would think it shabby of you. If she should return it (there are some extraordinary women), give it back to her in the shape of a jewel or any other thing that may be a fair representative of the value. She will say of you, 'My husband is a gentleman,' and this will cost you nothing, as you had made up your mind to the loss of that loan.

When your wife puts on a new gown, a new hat, or any new garment, never fail to notice it at once. She will appreciate an act which proves to her that your interest in her is keenly alive.

Never do unto your wife what, as a gentleman, you would never think of doing to any lady of your acquaintance, such as to enter a room before her, meet her in the street without taking off your hat, etc.

If your wife should ever appear in your presence with curlers on, or in any way she would sternly refuse to appear before a stranger, do not reprove her, but shame her by the irreproachableness of your appearance. Therefore, treat her as you want her to treat you. If she is intelligent, she will take the hint at once. Never put on slippers, a smoking-cap, spectacles, and such remedies for love. Always be freshly shaved, and let your *negligé* at home be as carefully put on as your best dress coat. Love feeds on even such trifles as these in the case of people of a refined and artistic temperament.

Never interfere with the liberty and independence of your wife, and never allow her to interfere with yours. Let her correspondence be sacred to you as yours to her. Mutual confidence and 'Liberty Hall' should be the motto of matrimony.

CHAPTER VII

MAXIMS FOR THE MARRIED WOMAN

A wife should follow and obey her husband, especially follow him – Feed the brute

The Roman and British Empires were founded by men who did not allow themselves to be led by women. The gentle submission of woman to man is the basis of every solid social system. But the appearance of it is all that is needed.

Never tell your husband that you give him this or that for dinner, and not what he asks for, because you know what is best for him. A man will willingly yield to the woman he loves, he will make any sacrifice she may require, but he will generally draw the line at being told what is good for him. Of this he will beg to remain the best judge and tell you so frankly and firmly.

If you suggest to your husband that he should go for a walk, and tell him that he must take to the right and go up the hill, because the air is much purer that way and will make his walk much more profitable, take it for granted that, if he is a man really worthy of the name, he will take to the left and go the other way, not at all to annoy you, but simply to assert his liberty and make himself believe that, although he is married, he is still a free man, able to go where he likes.

The whole being of a man craves for liberty. If he is not in real possession of it, give him sometimes a chance of fancying he is. He will be grateful to you for this delicate act of consideration, and boast in his club that he is one of the lucky married men absolutely free to do as they choose.

Never complain of your husband because he now and then criticises your dress or your new hat. On the contrary, return grateful thanks that he takes notice of what you wear. There are husbands who allow their wives perfect freedom in this respect, for the simple reason that they care absolutely nothing whether they have a garden of flowers or an old saucepan on their heads. Be grateful that your husband is none of those.

If you want to be quite sure that he will like at least one dress of yours, take him with you when you choose it and let him believe that you entirely submit to his taste. He will always be sure to admire that dress, especially if he has had the privilege of paying for it.

Never allow your husband to frequent your dressing-room and poke his nose into all your little jars and bottles, for fear he should discover the secret of your beauty and of your lovely complexion. Remind him that Balzac said that a man must be a philosopher or a fool who enters his wife's dressing-room.

Cheerfulness is the keynote of happiness in matrimony. Never take life, and never let your husband take life, too seriously, if you happen to have the good fortune to be in easy circumstances. Indulge in little fads and yield to hundreds of innocent temptations. Your life will one day be worth remembering on account of the thousand and one little follies you will have indulged in and enjoyed.

If your husband has a hobby, encourage him in it; never snub him for it. If he brings home a little picture, an engraving, a set of books, a few bits of china he has taken a fancy to, admire his purchase, and don't tell him he has spent his money foolishly. Probably he has earned that money himself. Besides, reflect that there are men who spend their money in drink or at the gambling-table, not only their spare cash, but often the money that would buy the necessaries of life for their wives and families.

I know men who dare not change the place of a picture in their own house, for fear of being sneered at by their wives. Let your husband 'potter' about his house to his heart's content. Let his study be a lovely picture of disorder, and every time you enter that room, don't begin to turn up your nose at the door, and look everywhere to see if there is a little dust on the furniture.

When you have decided to go in for the spring-cleaning of your house, choose your time well and see that it fits in with one when your husband can have a little holiday. Spring-cleaning indulged in indiscriminately has been the cause of more disturbance in temper and language than all the immorality of the world put together.

Let the man smoke and the children romp all over the place. Don't compel them to withdraw, like culprits, one in some underground den, the others in a nursery at the top of the house. If some stuck-up prig of your acquaintance should call on you and spread the report that your house is not kept on the strictest lines of order and propriety, plead guilty, and show that woman, to obtain 'extenuating circumstances,' the marks of the kisses of your husband and children engraven on your cheerful, happy face.

Don't lavish yourself too much on your husband. Always leave something to be desired. If you saturate him with love, he will get tired of you.

When lots of people require your attention in your house and you have to reply to all in succession, do not exhaust your stock of sweetness, patience and gentleness on your friends, your relatives, your children and your servants, so that, when your husband's turn comes, you may not have to say to him with a frown: 'Now, what is it?'

He should be served first and best. Perhaps he deserves it. If not, your consideration for him may put it into his head to try and deserve it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GENTLE ART OF RULING A HUSBAND

The rule of women over men is the survival of the fittest

The best thing that can happen to a man is to be ruled by his wife; but she should rule him so discreetly, so diplomatically, that he could almost boast that it is he who rules her. At all events, he should remain very undecided which of the two it is that rules the other. And when a man is not quite sure that it is he who rules his wife, you may take it for granted that it is she who rules him. Of course, I start from this indispensable, fundamental element, that there is love between husband and wife. Without love existing in matrimonial life, no rule can be laid down, no advice can be given on the subject.

How is the art of ruling a husband to be learned? The American and the French girls are at a good school; they have only to study how Mamma does it. I have travelled all over the world, and so far I have discovered two countries only in which the men are in leading-strings and the women are the leaders – my own beloved one and the United States of America. In these two privileged nations the women lead the men by the nose; but in America the women boast of it, and I do not think they should. In France the women do not boast of it, but they do it, and with a vengeance. Yet, before the people a Frenchwoman will always say: 'Oh, I do so and so because it pleases my husband.' Dear little humbug! does she, though! Butter would not melt in her mouth when she says that.

Now, the rule of the women over the men, both in France and in America, is simply the survival of the fittest, the power of the most keen and intelligent; but for all that, and perfectly as he may realize it, a man objects to his submission being obvious to everybody. In public he will let his wife pass first; in the elevator with her he will take off his hat; in the street car he will give her a seat and remain standing. All this is not submission; it is merely politeness. He behaves, not like a henpecked husband, but only as a gentleman, and a man should always be as polite to his wife as he would to any lady he comes in contact with. A French gentleman, who meets his wife in the street and stops to speak to her, remains with his head uncovered until she begs him to put on his hat. A French son does the same to his mother.

This leads me to the first and the most important principle of the art of ruling a husband, and that is, never to allow him to do to her, or before her, what she knows he would never think of doing to or before any lady of his acquaintance – at any rate, without her permission. The day on which either a husband or a wife says, 'Oh, never mind; it's my husband,' or 'Oh, it's only my wife; I can do as I please,' on that day, that awful day, Cupid packs up his traps, and when that little fellow is gone he never comes back; he is too busy visiting.

To rule a husband it is not at all necessary that the wife should be the more clever of the two, unless by clever you mean intelligent, much less that she should possess a better education than he. The latter qualification would probably lead her to rule him in an assertive and aggressive manner, which would be fatal to their happiness. Very few marriages are happy when the wife is the superior of her husband. I know very clever men, scientific and literary men of prodigious ability, who are completely ruled by charming little geese who are fortunate enough to possess the most enviable of gifts – common-sense, delicacy, refinement, consideration, amiability, devotion, unselfishness, and a good temper. These men enjoy the rule of their wives thoroughly.

God save you, my dear fellow-man, from the conceited woman who cannot do wrong! You will find that you cannot live up to that. If the day after you are married you discover that your wife is

perfect, run away for your life. Perfection in a woman ought to be a cause for divorce. In fact, never have anything to do with angels this side of the grave.

How I do love that simple, fascinating little woman who gently puts her arms round her husband's neck, kisses him, and confesses that she was wrong! What a brute that man is if he does not at once take that dear creature in his arms and make all the apologies he is capable of for behaving in such an ungentlemanly way as to force his wife to acknowledge that she was in the wrong! That man, if he is a gentleman, a man even, will spend weeks and weeks after such a confession attending to the smallest wishes of his wife. I would lay all I am worth in this world at the feet of a woman who would acknowledge that she was in the wrong. Most of them will argue and talk you deaf, dumb, blind, and lame, until, for peace' sake, you will say: 'Yes, dear, you are right, of course. How could I imagine for a single moment that you were not?' Then a ray of satisfaction flashes across her face, which seems to say to you: 'I knew you would have to acknowledge it.'

To rule your husband, my dear lady, do exactly as you please, but always pretend that you do as he pleases. That is where your ability comes in.

Men are ruled, as children are, by the prospect of a reward. The reward of your husband is your amiability, your sweetness, your devotion, and your beauty, of which you should take a constant care. Love has to be fed constantly. And always let him suppose that it is for him only that you wish to remain beautiful.

The woman who believes that she is asserting her independence every time she puts on a hat particularly displeasing to her husband is as intelligent and clever as the Irishman who buys a return ticket at a railway office, and, on entering his compartment, says to his fellow-passengers: 'I have played a good joke on the company, I have bought a return ticket – but I don't mean to return.'

CHAPTER IX

ART IN LOVE

Pleasure and happiness – Love is the poetry of the senses – The artistic temperament – The instrument and the instrumentalist – The defence of monogamy on artistic principles – Polygamy *versus* monotony

Pleasure is a passing sensation. What the soul craves for is a permanent state. Pleasure is the satisfaction of the moment; happiness is the security of the morrow. Nothing but happiness gives satisfaction to the soul.

Thomas Carlyle spent his life in scolding the human race for trying to be happy. His diatribes should have been aimed only at those who are foolish enough to try to find happiness in pleasure.

Happiness is to be found in congenial work, in a regular and well-spent life, in obscurity and retirement, in sound and true friendship, and especially in the love of a man and a woman who thoroughly appreciate each other.

For instance, Carlyle abused money-making, that chief occupation of modern life which most people pursue in order to attain the great end, happiness. But men may find pleasure in money-grubbing, not happiness. Carlyle mistook pleasure for happiness. His dyspeptic state prevented him from enjoying any pleasure, and his sour disposition any happiness; and, just as a man who cannot eat a dinner loves to lecture another who enjoys a good digestion, he scolded and snarled. Now, mankind has never been improved by scolding, and that is why his writings have passed over the heads of the human race and done no good. Man has ever been, is, and ever will be, in search of the solution of the great problem of life, happiness; and what they want is thinkers, writers who will help them to find it. Carlyle treated the human race very much as he treated his wife: he wrote beautiful love-letters to her, but never said a kind or sweet word to her which might have helped to make her happy.

There is always something very unsatisfactory and inconclusive about a blind man discoursing on colour, or a dyspeptic one on pleasure and happiness.

No doubt the greatest source of happiness in this world is to be found in the love and devotion of a man and a woman. You may find it in every sphere of life, but more particularly in that little cottage covered with ivy, jasmine, and honeysuckle which seldom attracts the attention of the passer-by. Happy the one whose nest is hidden far from the crowd!

Now, what will especially help a man and woman to find happiness in love? Many, many things will help, but most especially the artistic temperament – that temperament which can be cultivated and developed, and which will cause the man and the woman to always look for the beautiful, for the enjoyment of the soul and the heart at the same time as that of the body.

Love is the poetry of the senses. It reveals its secrets and its ecstasies only to those who can so mingle their thoughts, their hearts, their souls, as to transform two beings into one – only to people of refinement and of artistic disposition.

The French, for example, are neither more moral nor more immoral than the English or the Americans: they are different in their morality, different in their immorality, as they are in their tastes, customs, and habits. But what I am perfectly sure of is that they are the happiest people on earth, simply because of their artistic temperament, which makes them take all their pleasures in discreet moderation, like epicures, and, by making the companionship of man and woman most pleasant and attractive, enables them to enjoy domestic relations in all their beautiful fulness.

But, some people will say, is not an artistic temperament conducive to unfaithfulness? Will not a man with an artistic temperament, for example, constantly have new 'artistic' aspirations, and

constantly fall in love with beauty? Not at all necessarily. If you will allow me to repeat an expression, of which I cannot say I am particularly proud, but the truth of which I insist on, that woman is a beautiful instrument and man a good or a bad instrumentalist, I will answer: No, not at all necessarily. I am not aware that Sarasate or Joachim require more than one violin to give their marvellous performances on, and I know that when Paderewski goes on tour, he insists on always playing on the same piano, which follows him everywhere.

It is not only on moral but on artistic grounds that I object to polygamy, and that I advocate monotony – I mean monogamy. And on this subject another question might be put: Should a woman prefer to marry a man to whom woman is an enigma? I know that most people who belong to the retinue of Mrs. Grundy will at once exclaim: Most decidedly a woman should expect to find the man as he expects to find her. There goes again the old saying: 'What is good for the goose should be good for the gander.'

Well, there is something in that; but when I consider that the whole happiness of a married life may depend on the start, I would fain reply: Remember that the first time a man whispers words of love he is a fearful stammerer.

Mrs. Grundy is a very moral person for whom I cannot help feeling some respect; but she is the cause of a great deal of happiness being missed in Anglo-Saxon lands. My greatest grudge against that lady is that she is the bitter, implacable enemy of the artistic, the beautiful, and the truthful, of which she has succeeded in denuding art, literature, and life itself. Anglo-Saxon intelligence – 'the intellectuals,' as we call them in France, are dead against her, loathe her, but the masses of the people are crawling on their knees before her. All the conventionalities of English life have been invented to suit her tastes, and to please her the most innocent pleasures have had to be transformed into funereal functions. Everything suggests impropriety and indecency to her distorted mind, and she is the cause that, in England, and also to some extent in America, art, literature, and life, have to lie in order to avoid running the risk of deserving her frowns.

CHAPTER X

SORE TRIALS FOR PEOPLE IN LOVE – WILL LOVE TRIUMPH OVER THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE BODY?

A pathetic story – Could you whisper words of love through an ear-trumpet? – The case presented on the stage – Take care of the woman you love

The following reflections were suggested to me by a pitiful story that I heard a few days ago only. A young, beautiful girl, belonging to the best society, was engaged to be married. During her lover's absence she had typhoid fever. She recovered and is now quite well, but (the 'but' is terrible) she has not a single hair left on her head. Of course, she wears a wig, but she has tried every possible thing, consulted the most eminent specialists, to no avail. Her lover is returning very soon. He knew she was ill, but does not know the terrible misfortune which has befallen his beautiful *fiancée*. Will he marry her? Will his love be powerful enough to overlook the loss of woman's best ornament on his sweetheart's head? Will he be able to behold her with the wig off, and say to her: 'I love you just the same?' In a melodrama he would, but will *he*? I dare not answer the question. We do not live in heroic times nowadays, and you must not ask too much of man.

As physical beauty is an appanage far more precious to a woman than a man, the question may perhaps be better put in the following manner: If a man loves a woman, will her disfigurement – the loss of a limb, the loss of her hair, deafness, blindness, or any other calamity of this sort which may afflict her – destroy the love of that man for that woman?

It is all very well to say that love is the yearning of the soul, but it must be admitted that the man himself is closely associated with it, and that the face is the means of expressing what the soul feels. You can softly whisper 'I love you' in a woman's ear; but if the poor thing is deaf, you cannot shout these three words at her, much less blow them through a trumpet. If you doubt me, try it in a play, and you will see the effect it will infallibly produce on the audience. Why, they will roar. Deafness is terrible, so dull, so prosaic, so suggestive of old age; I have sometimes heard men wish their wives were dumb, but deaf never.

I remember once seeing a play at a Paris Boulevard theatre, frequented by the emotional portion of the Parisian public, in which the heroine, in the fourth act, appears with a thick veil over her face. She has had small-pox and she is sadly disfigured for life; she expects her lover, who is returning from the war. A year has elapsed since the curtain went down over the third act; she has just received a letter announcing his arrival safe and sound. She is happy, radiant; then she looks at herself in a glass and weeps bitterly; she has told him of her illness, but not of her misfortune; he knows nothing about it. Will he love her still when he sees her, or will he go away from her? The suspense is awful, and the situation dramatic. At last he appears on the threshold of the door, and stretches out his arms to her; she remains speechless, motionless, and the audience breathless. He rushes up to her to take her in his arms. With a dramatic gesture of the hands she bids him stand back. Then she tells him what has happened; but he is one of those worthy, undaunted heroes of the Boulevard melodramas whose love can triumph over all obstacles. He swears that it will make no difference to his sentiments; she lifts up her veil; then he falls at her feet and exclaims from the depths of his heart: 'I love you just the same, my darling.' (Tableau, cheers, and applause.) Of course he does not say to her that he finds her more beautiful than ever, and that the marks suit her style of beauty and all that sort of thing, but he swears again that his love has not altered, and the audience applaud this lofty sentiment, and the women say: 'That's a man!'

H'm! is it, though?

A friend who was with me on that occasion, and who is a bit of a cynic, said to me: 'There was only one possible *dénouement* for that play to give satisfaction to an audience that must go home perfectly persuaded that the hero and the heroine will be happy and in love with each other for ever and ever. The author missed a fine dramatic curtain. As the small-pox marks cannot be taken away, that man should have carried his love for that girl further than he did. He should have torn his eyes out in her presence. The sacrifice would have gone straight to her heart, and would have made the continuation of his love possible.'

'Well,' I said, 'yes, I see what you mean, but how do you know that the girl would have cared to marry a blind man? Maybe her love would not triumph over the difficulty.'

I may tell you that I knew a loving married couple who ceased to love each other, he because her hair turned white, and she because his turned outwards.

This is a psychological subject that may well puzzle the best sociologist.

I have not tried to answer the question, but merely intended to offer it for discussion.

However, this I will say to my fellow-men: 'I know how truly and deeply you love your wives and sweethearts, but let me advise you: Don't try the experiment; don't put your love to so severe a test. Take the greatest care of the said wives and sweethearts, and see that no accident happens to them, that no disease disfigures them or permanently injures their health. This is wisdom.'

CHAPTER XI

MAN VERSUS WOMAN IN LOVE

How many times can a man and a woman love? – They love differently – A delicate question – 'Lucky dog!' – The inexorability of the virtuous woman

Man is capable of love as earnestly as woman is; but love is not the whole business of his life, whereas it is a woman's. When a child, she loves her doll; when a girl, her mother; when a woman, a man. She can feed on love and die of it. When a mother, she loves her children; when she dies, surrounded by beloved grandchildren, she may say that her life has been well filled.

I believe that a woman can love more than once. I have known widows remarry, and love their second husbands with the same devotion as their first.

A man really loves once only. I knew a man under fifty who was married three times. He was a good and devoted husband to his three wives, but he never really loved but the second. If he dies suddenly without having time to take all his precautions, the portrait of his second wife will be found on his heart.

The reason of this is that men and women love in different ways. A man loves because his whole being – heart, soul, and body – craves for a woman. A woman often gives herself to a man because it pleases her to be loved by him. For a man, love is the pleasure he feels in the company of a woman; for a woman, it is the enjoyment of the pleasure she gives to a man. A woman is proud to call herself a reward, and that is why all heroes appeal to her so much. Mirabeau was the plainest of men, with his face covered with smallpox marks, yet no man ever made so many conquests among women. Successful generals, explorers, great orators, authors, artists, singers, all appeal to women. They may not love them personally, but it affords them great pleasure to be loved by them. There is in every woman a craving for a man superior to herself, and that is why women who try to dominate men are such dismal failures.

To a woman love is sacred, her food, her life.

Never have a sneer at a woman or at a child. Whenever you feel sarcastic, exercise your talents on something else.

Never profane the words, 'I love you'; they may seal the fate of a woman; but when you have uttered these three words in great earnestness, and the woman has answered with that great religious, almost sad, smile that Victor Hugo called 'the smile of angels,' when, in a word, she is yours, place her on a pedestal, on an altar, and worship her. The world has nothing better to offer you.

A man can cure a woman of a man. Nothing can cure a man of a woman, unless it be that woman herself.

While on the subject of love and tender relations, let me ask a question of my lady readers: Which would you rather know, that the man you love had broken his allegiance to you, but kept his heart faithful, or that he had lost his heart with another woman, but kept his 'monastic' vows? A clever woman once answered me in the following manner: 'If that man was my husband, I would much rather know that his heart had gone from me for a time. If I was not married to him, I would prefer to know that his heart had remained faithful.'

Only I must warn you that if a man put this question to his wife, she would probably say to him at once: 'Jack, which of the two are you guilty of?'

'In ninety cases out of a hundred,' says Paul Bourget, 'for a woman to play her heart in the game of love is to play at cards with a sharper, and gold against counterfeit pieces.' How true! for when the game is over, society (which ought to be ashamed of itself in its treatment of men and women)

says of the man, 'Lucky dog!' but mocks at the woman who has given way, puts her outside the pale when she forgets herself for the moment, and turns away from her when she gives way to despair. Poor woman! She cannot rebel, for if man is the cause of her downfall, it is woman who becomes her bitterest enemy. There is no pity in the breast of a woman for the woman who has fallen, unless she herself has had the same sad experience. The virtuous woman is inexorable, although her virtue is very often like a fortress which never had to capitulate for the reason that it never was attacked.

If I were a woman, oh, how I should hate women!

Madame de Staël said that what consoled her to know that she was a woman was that she would never have to marry a woman.

CHAPTER XII

COURTING IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND

Kneeling and sitting – The piquancy of French courting – The use of the second person singular – The sealing kiss

The art of courtship as practised in France and England leaves the amorous Gaul sometimes at a decided disadvantage, and sometimes at a marked advantage, by comparison with the Briton. On the whole, I think honours are easy. Take the declaration of love. In France the foolish animal has to go on his knees at the feet of the adored one, who through her modestly drooping eyelashes can make an inventory of the suitor's least defects – of the bald spot on his crown, his languishing eyes, with their white turned up in the ardour of passion, maybe of the little wart which will obtrude itself for observation, especially at such a moment. The poor Frenchman is obliged to run the risk of making himself very ridiculous.

But now turn to England. There, if you would a-wooing go, you sit down comfortably, very much at your ease, with the beloved object of your dreams at your side, or sitting on a cushion at your feet. Thus situated, you can murmur your soft whispers of love into her ears without any risk of dislocating your spinal column. The ladies will possibly think that the business is more nicely arranged in France, but they will hardly get the other sex to agree with them.

In America I never was able to make any observations on the subject. Those provoking Yankees invariably waited until I had left their houses to proceed to business.

What adds, however, to the charm of the French system of making love is that French girls do not enjoy the same freedom as English ones, and that the declarations of love are made in the sweet moments stolen from the watchfulness of their parents.

What, for instance, would an English girl, or for that matter an American one, think of the young lady in M. Victorien Sardou's comedy of 'Old Bachelors,' who, finding herself alone with her lover – a lover to whom she is engaged to be married – reproaches him with having ventured into her presence when he knew that there was no one with her?

'N'est-ce pas que c'est bon d'être ensemble?' pleads the young man.

'Je n'ai pas dit que ce ne fût pas bon,' replies the young lady in good epigrammatic style; 'j'ai dit que ce n'était pas bien.'

To the Anglo-Saxon people who have not familiarized themselves with French customs and modes of thought, it seems simply inconceivable that a girl who intends to entrust to a particular man the happiness of her life should think there could be danger, indiscretion, impropriety of any, even the slightest kind, in talking to him for a few moments without the presence of witnesses.

I have always pitied the English-speaking people for using the second person singular only when addressing the Almighty.

I am not speaking of poetry, of course, but of everyday conversational prose. This second person singular seems to me indispensable for the due expression of love. Where is the Frenchwoman who does not remember with a thrill of pleasure the never-to-be-forgotten moment when her lover, after many times saying to her 'Je vous aime,' got emboldened enough, by her return of his deep affection, to change that 'Je vous aime' into 'Je t'aime'?

She knows that this change of person sealed her fate, that from the very moment that second person singular was used she became his. 'Je vous aime' will, of course, always appeal to the woman who loves the man who utters these words; but when 'Je t'aime' is whispered into her ears, she will close her eyes in ecstasy and be transported to heaven as if for eternal bliss.

This use of the second person singular in love affairs is not the only superiority that the French have over the Anglo-Saxons in the expression of the tender feelings. In England, and I believe also in America, a woman is kissed on the lips by her father, mother, brothers and lady and girl friends. Of course her lover will do the same, with more ardour, more expression, more 'impressions;' but in France this is very seldom the case. Girls are kissed on the forehead by their father, and on the cheeks by all their other relatives and friends. Even a tiny little girl, on being asked for a kiss, will offer her cheeks, never her mouth. The lips are entirely reserved for Cupid.

A French philosopher has said that when a woman has surrendered her lips she has surrendered everything; but he is right only as far as his countrywomen are concerned. Even after saying 'Je vous aime,' the Frenchman will not dare kiss his sweetheart on the lips. It is only after risking the sacred second person singular, 'Je t'aime,' that he will venture to do so, and thus stamp her his.

Well, after all is said and done, I have no doubt that Britons and Americans find that the second person plural, for want of the second person singular, answers the purpose well enough. And for ever and ever men and women will love without attempting to discover new methods or adopt foreign ones. The old story will ever be told; the old method will ever do.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WOMAN-HATER

Should a woman marry a woman-hater? – The portrait of a woman-hater – The risk a woman runs in marrying a woman-lover – Take your chance, don't cast your pearls before swine

Should a woman marry a woman-hater? Yes, some people say, because he will pay no attention to any other woman, and will be a faithful husband in all the force of the expression. A woman-hater is *par excellence* a one-woman's man, and just the sort of man that a woman should wish to marry.

No, other people say, the woman-hater is a no-woman's man. A woman should marry a lover of her sex, and feel proud to know that it is she whom he prefers to all and loves best of all. Of course, they admit that she will have to be careful and ever-watchful in order to keep alive the interest which her husband takes in her and the affection which he feels for her. But a woman-hater is a prig, and the male prig is the last man that a woman should care to marry.

I think the latter are right. The woman-hater hates all women, and will never be capable of any love for his wife any more than for any other woman. Only the sense of ownership will make him value her. He may like her, be a good friend to her, a hard-working and devoted husband, but he will never be a lover to her; and the husband who, during at least the first fifteen years of his married life, cannot now and then be the lover of his wife fails to give to that woman that bliss which is a perfect compensation for all the troubles and miseries of that which the Popes are fond of calling the Vale of Tears, and Mrs. Gamp 'the Wale of Tears.'

The woman-hater is a man who has never petted his mother, who has never been the 'chum' of his sisters, who as a boy has despised girls, and as a young man has treated them with disrespect and even contempt. This kind of man has never once in his life given a thought to woman, has never deemed it consistent with his dignity to devote a minute to the study of her character. He has never given way to her charms, he has never felt her influence, he has never learned to smile kindly at her little foibles and fads. The idea has never occurred to him to indulge her, to treat her, in turn, as a beloved child, even sometimes a spoiled one, as a friend whose advice is worth following nine times out of ten, as a sweet companion either for moments of pleasure or for those of studious retirement. For him woman is a necessary evil. He puts up with her, and is always glad when she is gone. She annoys him, provokes him – nay, even shocks him, and her frivolity is for him a constant source of torment. He breathes more freely when at last he is left alone or finds himself in the company of men at his club.

He is seldom generous, and is not infrequently a miser.

The woman-hater is always conceited, and most generally selfish, and conceit and selfishness are the two worst, the two most objectionable, pieces of furniture in the household of a married couple. The woman-hater is also dull, and often sulky, which is worse still. With him there can be no cheerfulness in the house, and dulness is the bitterest enemy of happiness in matrimony.

The woman-hater has not a redeeming fault or foible which may enable his wife to get hold of him. He has no weaknesses to make him lovable or even tolerable. He is ironclad, and a woman cannot come near him without getting a bruise of some sort or other. He will ever stand before his wife a perfect model for her to look up to, and all her pretty little womanly ways, being a closed letter to him, will be wretchedly wasted on him.

Like all conceited men, the woman-hater has no humour in him. He cannot for the life of him see a joke. A frivolous remark will make him frown. He is a moral man with a vengeance, but all

his morality and all the gold in the world are not worth the smile of a genial, cheerful husband. And, worst of all, the woman-hater is generally dyspeptic, and if a woman marries a dyspeptic man she is done for.

The man-flirt is the most despicable creature on earth, but the woman-hater is undoubtedly the most objectionable.

Yes, my dear lady, avoid the woman-hater, and, above all, don't marry him. Have to your wedded husband a lover of women, full of foibles and weaknesses, a man who understands and appreciates women. It will depend upon you whether that man will make the best of husbands or not.

With a woman-lover marriage is a risk; with a woman-hater it is a certainty. With the latter you will be casting pearls before swine.

Marry the former and take your chance.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT DO WOMEN ADMIRE MOST IN MEN?

People generally admire in others the qualities they do not themselves possess – The sexes differ in their opinions of infidelity and its causes – The eleventh commandment: Never confess

I believe that what sexes admire most in the other are the qualities which they do not generally possess themselves. For instance, a man will always tell you that the qualities he admires most in a woman are constancy, good, equal temper, and such others as his most flattering friends would never accuse him of possessing. If, on the other hand, you read the confession-books of women, you will invariably discover that the qualities they most admire in men are generosity, broad-mindedness, magnanimity, absence of prejudice, and a lofty sense of justice, of toleration, and of forgiveness. Now, some women may possess these qualities, but no one, I think, will say that they are eminently feminine virtues.

And it may also be added that what sexes hate most each in the other are the very defects which they themselves not infrequently possess. Out of twenty confession-books which I have this moment under my eyes, and in which is to be found the question, 'What defect do you hate most in man?' eighteen women have answered, 'Meanness.' That is just what you would expect, now, don't you think so?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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