

PROFESSIONAL MEN'S WIVES.

By the Author of "How to be Happy though Married," "The Five Talents of Women," etc.



GIRLS and women are fond of speculating what profession they would have entered if they had belonged to the other sex. "If I were a man," says one, "I would have been a bishop ;"

another would have been a judge, another a great doctor, another a general. They all think that they would have got to the top of the tree.

Well, young ladies, you cannot directly fill these positions, but you can do so indirectly, in a way that is quite as honourable and not less influential. You may marry, and have in your hands the moulding of the careers of men who are clergymen, lawyers, doctors, officers, and such like. Now it may or it may not be easy for you to marry a professional man, but it certainly is not easy to make him a good wife. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." There are girls who are ready to marry any men whom they like and who like them, without reflecting for a moment upon the sort of lives that will have to be lived by the wives of these men. Or they ask themselves the question: Would I like the position of a clergyman's wife—an officer's wife? and so forth; but not so often the more important question: Am I suited in disposition and training to fill these positions with credit?

Just think, for instance, how much society and public opinion, not to speak of God and her own conscience, require of a clergyman's wife. She is expected to be a friend of all her husband's parishioners, both rich and poor, a teacher, or at least an overseer of the parochial schools, the promoter of guilds, clubs, and other benefit societies for women. Her daily life is subjected to the microscopical gaze of the parish gossips, and they are not easy to please. Obviously a girl is not fitted naturally, or indeed at all, without a considerable amount of preparation to take up this position of light and leading. It requires tact, prudence, knowledge of human nature, good manners, good temper. I knew of one clergyman's wife who set a whole parish "by the ears" by carelessly repeating something that was said to her of another whose bad manner utterly destroyed her husband's chance of usefulness. The fact is, women require to be "called" to be clergywomen, as much as men have need of being "called" to be clergymen. One often hears it said of a woman who makes herself very useful in a parish that she was born or "cut out" to be a clergyman's wife. Such women seldom marry at all, and more seldom do they marry clergymen. When, however, a girl who is going to become a parson's wife enters upon the situation conscientiously, and carefully prepares herself for it, she may be sure that she will double her husband's usefulness.

Having been a chaplain in the army for thirteen years, I know the duties and temptations of an officer's wife as well as those of the wife of a parson; and I can say that it is anything but an easy thing to perform the one and to resist the other. The wives of

officers are generally supposed to have the control of plenty of money, and to lead brilliant, eventful lives, full of interest and movement. The reality is often very different. As a rule officers have only enough private means to eke out their pay and make it do with economy. When married, therefore, they must "come to smash," to use their expressive phrase, if their wives do not understand domestic economy and "management" generally. To do them justice, many of them do. I know officers' wives who on a few hundreds a year keep up a good appearance, and are not covered with shame and confusion when their husbands bring home a brother officer to lunch or dinner. Nor have the frequent changes of home incident to military life disheartened them. Resembling the ants, who when their nests are disturbed soon rectify matters, these ladies furnish up new homes upon their regiments changing stations with great quickness and at a very small cost. Then the frequent separations of military husbands and wives involve inconveniences and temptations which might prove too much for some women. The husband is in India and his wife has to remain a "grass widow" at Southsea or elsewhere, for the education of the children, or he is in the plains in India and she on the hills. To a young and handsome woman there is danger in this, unless she has been carefully brought up, and has prepared herself beforehand by adopting moral and religious principles.

Very great is the influence for good which an officer's wife may exercise upon a regiment. While keeping her own place, and making others do the same, she may—especially when her husband gets field rank—become a sort of mother to all, and make the last joined subaltern feel that he is not altogether away from purifying family life. An officer's wife will be able to put any useful or ornamental accomplishment she may have acquired to a good account. Is it cooking? She may want it much in a colonial garrison where the servants are unsatisfactory. Music will be a resource for herself in some dull station, and will come in useful when asked to help in entertainments for soldiers. Gratefully do I remember the artistic taste which Mrs. R— used to bring to the decoration of my garrison chapel, and the pretty pieces of furniture which she made out of her packing cases were the admiration of all who visited her.

A lady friend once ventured to ask General Gordon why he had never married. The General answered, speaking slowly and solemnly: "I never yet have met a woman who, for my sake, and perhaps at a moment's notice, would be prepared to sacrifice the comforts of home and the sweet society of loved ones, and accompany me whithersoever the demand of duty might lead—accompany me to the ends of the earth perhaps; would stand by me in times of danger and difficulty, and sustain me in times of hardship and perplexity. Such a woman I have not met, and such an one alone could be my wife." More fortunate was Sir Henry Lawrence. He did meet and marry a woman who fully realised even Gordon's ideal of what a soldier's wife should be.

It is said that a doctor begins life where other men leave off—with a carriage and a wife; and certainly if it be necessary for him to marry in order to get into practice, his success in keeping together his professional connection greatly depends upon his wife. The same thing applies to the wives of barristers. They can, if they have good manners and are socially

successful, do more for their husband's advancement in life than would at first sight appear possible. Then many barristers desire to become members of Parliament, and it is admitted that women exercise a great influence upon politics, an influence which perhaps is all the greater because they have not votes.

It is often the case when you see a great man, like a ship, sailing proudly along the current of renown, that there is a little tug, his wife, whom you cannot see, but who is directing his movements, and supplying the motive power.

This truth is well illustrated by the anecdote told of Lord Eldon, who, when he had received the Great Seal at the hands of the King, being about to retire, was addressed by His Majesty with the words—

"Give my remembrance to Lady Eldon."

The Chancellor, in acknowledging the condescension, intimated his ignorance of Lady Eldon's claim to such notice.

"Yes, yes," the King answered; "I know how much I owe to Lady Eldon. I know that you would have made yourself a country curate, and that she has made you my Lord Chancellor."

Burke, Daniel O'Connell, Lord Beaconsfield, and several other statesmen, have ascribed their success in the world principally to their wives.

It is well known that several of our best literary men would never have been able to do the work they did if it had not been for their wives. These helpmates, by managing for them the practical business and social conventionalities of life, enabled them to pursue their work in peace and comfort. The power of a literary man is doubled when he gets a clear-headed, sensible wife, who shields his sensitiveness against disagreeable things; who acts like one of those cushions that sailors put down the side of a vessel to keep it from jarring too roughly against the dock.

Nor is it only in this indirect way that literary men are helped by their wives. Fenimore Cooper became a novelist through his wife's challenge. One evening, while reading a novel, he threw it down, saying, "I believe I could write a better book myself." "Let me see you do it!" said his wife, with a smile. In a few days he had written several chapters of "Precaution," which, when finished, he published at his own expense. The novel attracted little attention, but it gave Cooper an inkling of his capacity for story-writing, and the "Spy," his next novel, appealed so strongly to the patriotic sympathies of his countrymen that it became a great success. Hawthorne, too, was induced to write his chief work by a remark of his wife.

All good girls and women desire to be of use in the world, and this is why they are applying for employments which until now were retained by men. Some go so far as to pretend to despise the oldest profession of all, that of wifehood. They speak of it as if it only meant suckling fools and chronicling small beer. We have briefly pointed out—and if we had space we might do so at much greater length—that the wives of professional men, and, indeed, of all men, exercise quite as useful and important an influence upon the world as do their husbands. Girls should cultivate and prepare themselves for anything that may happen. They know not to what position of usefulness God may call them through matrimony.