

## THE ART OF BRINGING UP LOVERS.



"The art of bringing up lovers!" exclaimed a lady to whom I mentioned the subject of the next paper I proposed writing. "But the lover is Heaven-sent!"

So he is, but when he comes he must be received, and, in a matter so essentially mutual as love-making, the woman has her part to play as much as the man. And her part in the drama begins, just as his does, long before the two meet and find each

other the second self—the ideal of which they had dreamt, for which they had waited.

If we take marriage as a destiny, it is not a certain girl of the family of Smith, christened Mary, who is the woman in the whole world born to be Tom Brown's wife: but Mary Smith, with all the lovely and lovable qualities that were hers in embryo from birth, blossomed out into perfect development by a process for which she herself is responsible. It is this art, the art of preparing oneself for one's lover, of which the present article treats. Indeed, if I were not too much afraid of those sensible girls who think it derogatory so much as to desire a sweetheart, I might have entitled it "The Art of Having Lovers!"

Now, having had the boldness to confess this, I should like to have a few words with these same sensible girls, whom I do indeed respect most highly for the many excellent foundation qualities that generally go with a contempt for the exercise of charms calculated to attract young men, but who, I think, are too little influenced by their own strong solid sense in this same contempt, especially where it is extended, as is generally the case, to the whole class of girls who "go in" for being attractive.

It is quite true that the girls who only care to attract those of the opposite sex, while taking no pains to make themselves agreeable and obliging to their own, are very poor specimens of womanhood. A lower type, again, are the girls who of fixed design set themselves to win the affection of a man, without having love to offer in return, and take a pride in what is a cause of sorrow, not unmixed with shame, to the generous-minded woman—the offers they receive and refuse. And no condemnation can be too strong for the lowest grade of all, the girls who deliberately try to cut out other girls in the affection of a man for whom, it may be, they do not genuinely care.

But, because weeds will spring up in well-cultivated gardens, that need not prevent our having gardens for the production of flowers. Attractive girls should always be on their guard against the especial dangers that attend their especial case; but, I say it unflinchingly, girls are intended to be attractive: this quality of charm is one of the prerogatives of youth; it corresponds with the playfulness of all young animals, with the beauty of the opening blossom, with the melodies of birds in spring; it is a special provision of Nature, to keep life sweet and fresh, not for the young alone, but for all with whom the young come in contact; it is, in a deeper measure than we are apt to grasp, part of the economy of things. The young girl's charm, which makes her a "gude sight for the sair een" of the world-worn and aged, a delightful friend for other women, an ideal elder sister for children, and an attractive companion for young men, is a gift from God, which she has no right, for fear of the temptation to use it ill—if it is really from such a fear that the girl who can make herself pleasant refrains from doing so—to bury in a napkin.

The whole point is to realise that youthful attractiveness is a gift which, like all other gifts, belongs to God and is meant to be used by us for the benefit of others, through

which means alone do we ourselves reach the full blessing of any gift we own.

So long as the element of self is kept out and our aim is to please others, not to make others pleased with us, so long as we are sincere, and it is our own true selves that we show, not what we want other people to imagine us—is not this again but a department of selfishness?—we need never be afraid of being too attractive.

But after all, it is sometimes said, this quality of charm is born in some women and not in others. One family of daughters is invited about everywhere and the girls marry as soon as they are grown up, while another—"far superior girls," one generally finds interpolated—are in no demand in society and don't marry at all, or not until quite late in life. Before entering into the question of the truth of the inference drawn from these obvious facts, I should like to take up the point of "very superior girls." What does superior in this instance mean? If it implies, as it often does, more sensible, with better-balanced minds, more dependable, more industrious, I admit heartily that these are excellent qualities which it is a great pity the popular family missed, but in so far as they are less attractive, they are distinctly inferior. The prim girl, who prides herself on being out of touch with men, and having her ideas and interests fully absorbed in other directions, who, from a scornful indifference to the other sex, unbeautiful inasmuch as it is unnatural, or because she is so conscious the whole time she is with a man that he is a man and a possible lover, keeps her male acquaintances at arm's length and cannot show them the frank friendliness and sympathy due from one human being to another—is she the best suited to be a wife, the second self to one of the opposite sex, to become a mother of boys? The knowledge and sympathy that will be required of her to fill these high functions adequately are surely apt to be lacking if she has always lived in her own world and left men apart in theirs.

Now men see this instinctively, if dimly, and are not perhaps to be blamed so much as some think for choosing for their wives pleasant attractive girls rather than looking out simply for solid worth. In knowledge of men and their ways, in sympathy with their pursuits, and in another quality peculiarly essential for married life, adaptability, the married-off girls were probably superior to those of the family who look on them as so incontestably their inferiors.

And now for the question whether the gift of charm is purely a quality bestowed by nature, like taper fingers or a Grecian nose, or whether it is to be acquired. In part, no doubt, this attractiveness is born with some people; one tiny child wins everybody's heart, while another is dear to no one but its parents. But the attractive child may, through an injudicious course of spoiling or of snubbing, lose all its attractiveness before it is grown up, and the shy, awkward little girl whose reserve was put down to sullenness, or perhaps had really a disagreeable temper to overcome, may, under the warm sunshine of love and sympathetically perceptive management, blossom out of its hard little bud into a lovable woman.

There is not a question that the gift of attractiveness may be utterly crushed out, or on the other hand developed from the smallest material by the manner of bringing up. A child may be trained to express its feelings of gratitude, of pleasure, of love, and to conceal its impulses of vexation and disgust; it may be taught courteous bearing to elders, little refinements of speech and manner, habits of rendering services and doing small, graceful, kindly acts; it may have its ideas drawn out, so that it learns to converse readily and intelligently, and thus, quite naturally and imperceptibly, it grows up an attractive person, when all would have been far otherwise had a system of repression caused it to hide its feelings under a hard exterior, through which could pierce no little flowers of sympathetic utterance, of spontaneous expression of delight, if it had been subjected to the rough

and ready treatment which, as Herbert Spencer shows, will destroy a child's courtesy, if no pains had been taken with its manners at the time when good manners could have been rendered a second nature, instead of something to be assumed—clumsily enough most likely—on special occasions in later life.

Now, what our parents might have done for us, we must set ourselves to do for ourselves as soon as we are capable of discerning the defects in our education. There is something almost as ludicrous as pitiable in hearing grown-up people set down defects in their own character which they passively accept, and live their lives with, as "the fault of their bringing-up." Between the ages of twenty and thirty I have known a woman develop all her previously undeveloped faculties of charm.

Now let us see wherein lie the elements and what are the conditions of this quality of attractiveness which I deem it the duty of every young woman—and old woman too, for that matter—to cultivate. I will take them according to the rule of a procession, in inverse order to their importance, and begin at the lower end of the scale.

1. Beauty. "Well, here at least," you will exclaim, "is something born with us, not acquired!"

In part, yes, but there is some truth in the old saying that every person makes his own face. The greatest beauty there is lies in expression. When there look out from the soul within, purity, high aims, enthusiasm, sweet temper, intelligence, a sense of humour, a quick sympathy with others' joy or grief, is not that a more attractive face, even if plain, than one with every feature perfect, which lies in changeless, expressionless repose? Moreover, there are other points that come under the head of beauty which lie in the power of the possessor; deft, graceful movements, a gentle low-pitched voice, besides that important adjunct to good looks on which they depend in an extraordinary measure, neat, pretty, becoming dress.

2. Brightness, quickness, capacity and agreeableness in conversation. All these are mainly matters of practice, particularly perhaps the last. It is often complained of English girls, in contradistinction to their American or Colonial sisters, that they do not know how to talk. Who has not gone through the damping experience of attempting to converse with a young girl whose responses of "Yes," "No," "I don't know," "Is it?" bring every subject started to a *cul-de-sac*? It is not a bad rule for those prone to these unattractive brevities always to make a response which in some measure carries on the conversation. But sometimes the girl finds herself with a person not inclined to take the trouble to start a topic; then the initiative is left to her, and she should always be ready to initiate. "Everybody ought to come down to breakfast with three topics to start a talk with," I once heard. The art comes in choosing the right topic to bring out the person with whom one has to talk, and the secret of this is to get upon the subjects that interest him or her.

Most mothers like to talk about their children; musical, artistic, literary, philanthropic people have each their own hobby, on which it is a joy to them to pour out; nearly everybody likes to describe their own travels and adventures. Only the listener must be sympathetic; one dull and flat response, one wandering of the hearer's eyes to other groups of talkers, quenches the fire immediately, and renders the greatest enthusiast silent or prosy; the art of sympathetic listening, which all may acquire, and ought to acquire, is the larger part of the art of being agreeable. Sympathy, like other good qualities, grows in the using; at first it may need an effort to be interested in the affairs of a

stranger on a subject entirely new to one, but the mere concentration of the mind which is the first step *thereto* is an excellent brain-discipline and bit of training in manners, and it is seldom one grows absorbed in any subject without finding something in it to attract and arouse one's curiosity.

3. Womanliness. The more manly the man the more he values and desires femininity in the woman. The main ambition of the modern girl, to be as boyish as she can, is fatal to her attractiveness, if it develops into masculinity when she becomes a woman. Why one of our sex should ever wish to be a poor imitation of a man instead of reaching the perfect development of her own proper nature, I cannot imagine. Perhaps, theoretically, none of us really do, but it certainly seems to me that the young women of the day in general fail to cultivate what would be their greatest charm and the secret of legitimate power, the gentleness, sweetness, moral delicacy of touch, and kindred attractive qualities, which are included in true womanliness.

4. Good-nature. Under this head I place good temper, the cheery spirit that always makes the best of things, the peace-loving disposition that goes its way oiling the wheels of life, and the readiness to do obliging actions, great or small, irrespective of return and independent of thanks.

Well, these are not bad qualities, are they, if universally applied? And the girl I have in my mind who does apply them thus—to her own relations and to strangers, to women and to men alike—is as great a blessing in her present home with her parents, and brothers and sisters, as she will be in the home that is destined to be hers when *he* has come to claim her—the Heaven-sent lover!

Will you not cultivate a little of this charm, my dear, good, sensible girls, who have so many fine qualities for wives? You do not object to matrimony, and you would like to be married for love; then please make yourselves lovable. Young men are poor stupid creatures, are they not, very easily blinded and carried away by attractive qualities that have nothing but emptiness and selfishness behind them? Then how can you expect them to see through the stone wall that you have set up between yourselves and them? Have pity on them and allow them to see you as the dear girls you really are. Be kind to your brothers' friends, as you are to your own. You need not be afraid that they will all fall in love with you and want to marry you. Very likely not in one case in a hundred will it "come to that." But a frank, innocent, unsentimental friendship will be good for you both; for you, as an education for marriage if you are to marry, and as a prevention of your shrivelling into the typical "old maid" if you are to remain single; but much more for them. You probably are in the shelter of your home, with all its warm loving influences, its freedom from temptation; they—most of them—are out in the world, with its loneliness on one side, its cruel perils on the other. The friendliness of undesirable women is always too open to them; they need a counter-acting influence in genial intercourse with pure, good, healthy-minded girls; they want to be shown that goodness in woman does not necessarily go hand in hand with dulness, and that sweet dignity can be maintained without any prudery.

And, when the right man comes, he will not, for the sake of your solid worth, have to get over the lack of those attractive qualities which he has met with in other women. He will not find his tree full of good fruit alone, for which he needs must sacrifice the dream of blossom, but, as crown to all, working a double thankfulness for that great gift which Heaven has kept for him, endowed besides with the fair flowers of spring.

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