

opinion as to the size and quality of our seedlings, or "sets," as we otherwise call them. Some advocate planting whole and entire quite large potatoes; others cut them into pieces or slices, always, of course, providing that each piece has two or three eyes; perhaps, however, the generality of us are accustomed to plant whole the small-sized potato. So that when the harvesting and storing period comes round in October, you will generally find a gardener, as he is digging them up, have two, and sometimes three, little heaps or classes of potatoes by him—one for the kitchen, another of small-sized ones for sowing, and the third—alas! sometimes necessary—a heap of failures and bad ones for the pigs. Let your main crop be in rows some foot and a half from each other, and plant, using the dibble, not less than five or more than six inches deep; afterwards have the soil raked thoroughly and well over them, but not stamped or pressed tightly upon your crop. Too shallow planting might disastrously expose the tubers to frost; for we must not forget that though the winter proper is supposed to have gone, the winter improper not infrequently returns. Who of us, indeed, can forget that last year in some parts of the country we literally realised the fact that "snow in harvest" was by no means the anachronism that some of us imagined, when we saw the golden grain, after being long sore puzzled as to how to ripen, waving about finally over the whitened and wintry carpet? We have thought it well in this month of March to say a good deal about the potato, seeing that it is one of the staple supplies of every household—only, indeed, next in importance to bread itself. Continuing our sowing process in the kitchen garden, we might briefly notice a few other operations of the kind.

*Carrots.*—These should be sown on well-pulverised soil. The seeds being, from their nature, rather disposed to cling together, separate them by first of all rubbing them together with a little dry sand, so as to avoid sowing in clots, as it were. This plan will afterwards save you the trouble of much thinning out.

*Celery.*—This must be sown in a warm situation if in the open garden, but a better plan is to sow at first under a hand-glass or in a frame, pricking your young plants out later on.

*Spinach.*—This can be sown in drills or broadcast, but in drills is the better plan. Have your drills a foot apart, and see that you sow quite thinly, as you must recollect that you have by-and-by to thin out to some six inches apart. And why also need this thinning-out process involve some waste? for if you have been thoroughly cautious in sowing thinly, there will be not only less seed used, but less thinning-out afterwards to do; if, on the other hand, you have sown too thickly, the crop will grow so thickly that a very early thinning will be necessary, when the plants will be too small for kitchen use; whereas spinach thinned when the plants have gained a fairly respectable size can all be used in the kitchen and sent to table.

But our sowing just now is certainly not confined to the kitchen garden. All the round of hardy annuals may be sown this month in the open flower garden. We adverted just now to the peculiarities of the summer of 1888; many of us must have also noticed the effect of that strange season on even our hardy annuals—such, for example, as our sweet peas. In a hot and dry summer these lovely and favourite flowers have generally but a short life of it, as once in bloom, and if exposed to a long and hot day's sun, the petals soon become bleached and withered. In July, 1888, owing to the absence of all sun and plenty of rain, the writer noticed very few blooms on one favourite row; but in the genial warmth of the following October the whole bed was in the perfection of flower: in fact, between three and four months later than the usual blooming time. Such is our English climate. To be fore-warned, however, is to be fore-armed; and now, as we are just entering on a period that often oscillates between winter and summer in the same fortnight, we shall do well to prepare, as far as we can, for all emergencies.

## THE CHOICE MATRIMONIAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED."



TO choose a life-partner well is one of the most difficult and most important things in life. "O me! the word 'choose'!" for many young people cannot choose whom they would or refuse whom they dislike, or do not much care about, unless they are content to remain

all their lives in the unnatural condition of celibacy. "Mrs. Grundy" is a very exclusive old lady, and our social conditions are of such a cast-iron condition that it is impossible to marry out of the set or clique in which we live. The consequence is that each young

man and young woman has practically only two or three to choose from. This, of course, hinders the operation of the natural law of the marriage of the fittest.

But suppose young people have the opportunity of choosing, on what principle should they make their choice? The idea of the great electrician Edison's marrying was first suggested by an intimate friend, who made the point that he needed a mistress to preside over his large house, which was being managed by a housekeeper and several servants. Although a very shy man, he seemed pleased with the proposition, and timidly inquired whom he should marry. The friend somewhat testily replied, "Any one," thinking

that a man who had so little sentiment in his soul as to ask such a question ought to be satisfied with anything that wore a petticoat and was decent. Woe to the man or woman who follows such careless advice as this, and marries "any one," for what was said by the fox to the sick lion might be said with equal truth to Hymen—

"I notice that there are many prints of feet entering your cave, but I see no trace of any returning."

But though there is need of caution, I do not think that one is wise in choosing a life-partner from prudential considerations only. I must say that I believe in falling in love, and think that marriages with a little romance in them are more likely to turn out happily.

"Tell me where is fancy bred, or in the heart or in the head?" The word "fancy" in this little song of Shakespeare's means love, and I think that we shall be giving the right reply to the question if we say that this fancy or love should spring from the heart rather than from the head. That, at least, is what nature says. A young man is drawn by a mysterious and irresistible attraction to a young woman. The first time he sees her he says, "If ever I am married, it will be to her." And when he is known to have fallen in love, his friends say, "Well, I never could see what Mr. So-and-so saw to like in Miss So-and-so." The very inexplicability of this feeling shows that it is nature's prompting, telling him that the young woman is the complement of himself, and as such, most capable of making him happy. An old rustic once said—

"If every one had been of my mind, every one would have wanted to marry my old woman."

A friend replied—

"If every one had been of my mind, no one would have wanted to marry her."

So it is that each eye forms its own beauty, which is a capital provision of nature for some of us who otherwise would not have been able to get married at all. Mr. Ruskin says that a great many difficulties arise from falling in love with the wrong person. This, of course, is true, but though instinct is not infallible, it is, if it be a healthy one, that has not been spoiled, the best guide we have.

There is no saying that some moralists, especially ugly ones, are so fond of repeating as that "beauty is only skin-deep." I think this is a skin-deep saying. Beauty is often the outward and visible sign of good health, and therefore of good temper. A rounded figure, a clear complexion, bright laughing eyes, good teeth—these are not to be despised, for they show that the person who possesses them is healthy. Physical beauty in woman is, indeed, what primarily attracts men. In this they only follow the order of nature—the beautiful Divine provision to save the human race from degeneracy by causing the survival of the fittest. Then we must remember that the highest kind of beauty is that which reveals intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacity, and this leads us to speak of that most important factor of matrimonial felicity—character.

An Irish magistrate asked a prisoner before him if he were married.

"No, your honour."

"Oh, then, it is a good thing for your wife," was the reply.

It is a very good thing for herself when a woman has had enough good sense to refuse a man about whose character she knows little, and perhaps nothing that is good. A lady would not like to let a servant into her house if she had only what a servant-girl lately said that she had, a fortnight's character from her last place. With even less than this, some women will marry husbands, and vow to love and obey them! Some even say that they do not mind a man being a little wild. Those who marry men of this kind are like their mother Eve, who "knew not eating death." I do not believe in marrying a bad man, in a missionary spirit, intending to improve him. Such a man will improve his wife off the face of the earth before she improves him. A man need not hold exactly the same views as his wife, but if his heart and life are uninfluenced by the spirit of true religion, he is very unlikely to make home happy.

"Who can find a virtuous woman?" Alter the question, and put it in this way: "Who *seeks* for one?" Men about to marry seek for everything else in a woman except character, and then complain when they feel the inconvenience of this deficiency, because they have not got that for which they never sought. A Scotch minister's wife falling asleep in church, her husband thus addressed her:—

"Mrs. B., a' body kens that when I got ye for my wife, I got no beauty; yer frien's ken that I got nae siller; and, if I dinna get God's grace, I shall hae a puir bargain indeed."

Without the grace of God a husband or wife will not be able to control their passions and tempers, and without self-restraint it is impossible to imagine domestic happiness. Indeed, after drunkenness, gambling, and some other kinds of gross sins, there is nothing which destroys the peace of homes more than temper, in some of its many manifestations. The butler of a certain Scotch laird, who had been in the family a number of years, at last resigned his situation, because his lordship's wife was always scolding him.

"Oh!" exclaimed his master, "if that be all, ye've very little to complain of."

"Perhaps so," replied the butler; "but I have decided in my own mind to put up with it no longer."

"Go, then," said his lordship; "and be thankful for the rest of your life that ye're not married to her."

It is, indeed, a matter for thankfulness not to be married to a woman with a temper of her own, of which she is unselfish enough to give to her husband the full benefit.

Sir David Baird and some other English officers, being captured by Tippoo Saib, were confined for some time in one of the dungeons of his palace at Bangalore. When Sir David's mother heard the news in Scotland, referring to the method in which prisoners were chained together, and to her son's well-known irascible temper, she exclaimed—

"How I pity the lad that's tied to our Davie!"

How much more to be pitied is he or she whom

matrimony has tied for life to a person with a bad temper!

It is, of course, very difficult to know about the temper and other characteristics of one with whom we have fallen in love. How easy to appear at one's best during a *lover's* visit! "Men were deceivers ever," and even women can do a little in that way. Indeed, the cheat is often managed on both sides with so much art, and discovered afterwards with so much abruptness, that each has reason to suspect that some transformation has happened during the wedding ceremony, and that by a strange imposture, as in the case of Jacob, one has been courted and another married. A friend of Robert Hall, the famous preacher, once asked him regarding a lady of their acquaintance—

"Will she make a good wife for me?"

"Well," replied Hall, "I can hardly say—I never lived in the same house with her!"

It is one thing to see ladies on "dress" occasions, and when every effort is being made to please them; it is quite another thing to see them amidst the varied and often conflicting circumstances of married life. We have all heard the old conundrum: Why are ladies like bells?—Because you never know what metal they are made of until you *ring* them.

And yet a small straw shows what way the wind blows, and there are little indications which enable us to make a pretty good guess as to the kind of husbands and wives men and girls will become. Are they good sons and brothers? are they good daughters and sisters? In his "Advice to Young Men," Cobbett warns them against marrying lazy wives, for they will make their servants and children lazy. "But how," he asks, "is the purblind lover to ascertain whether she whose smiles have bereft him of his senses is industrious or lazy?"

In answer to this question several outward and visible signs are suggested, such as early rising, a lively, distinct utterance, a quick step, "the labours of the teeth; for these correspond with those of the

other members of the body, and with the operations of the mind."

Then we are told of a young man who, courting one of three sisters, happened to be on a visit to her when all the three were present, and when one said to the other, "I *wonder* where *our* needle is?" Upon which he withdrew, as soon as consistent with politeness, resolved never to think more of a girl who possessed a needle only in partnership, and who, it appeared, was not well informed as to the place where even that share was deposited.

It is to be feared that there are some people who are incapable of affection. They will never become "thoroughly domesticated," for they are so hard that if you were to bore a hole in them sawdust would come out. Do not choose for a life partner one of this nature.

Above all things, do not marry a fool. A husband fool is bad enough, but a wife fool is worse, for the husband fool can be managed by his wife, but no one can manage a foolish wife. Archbishop Whately defined woman as "a creature who does not reason, and who pokes the fire from the top." The wife who does not and cannot make use of reason to overcome the daily difficulties of domestic life, and who can in no sense be called the companion of her husband, is a mate who hinders rather than helps.

At the same time, it is useless to seek for perfection. The man who will not marry till he finds a perfect wife, must necessarily remain always unmarried. He is a sour grape hanging by the twig of obstinacy on a wall of great expectations, and the one thing to be said in his favour is that he has missed the opportunity of making a woman miserable.

"My intended must have three things," said a man to his friend—"she must be handsome, rich, and stupid."

"Why these three?—explain yourself."

"Well, she must be handsome and rich, or else I will not have her; and she must be stupid, or else she will not have me."

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## GROWN-UP CHILDREN.

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JUST as there are many children—mere babies in years—who have quaint grown-up ways, there are many grown-up people who are wonderfully like children. This child-like character is quite a different thing from the attempt to be juvenile. Nobody believes in

the sincerity of the lady of forty who says that she is for all practical matters a child of fourteen, and who trades upon her helplessness till she bores her friends to the verge of distraction. All imitations are

such failures that they are not even worth remark; but the genuine grown-up children are well worth observation.

First there is the professional man who has a secret liking for marbles. He always feels that he would play marbles if he dared. When he thrusts his hands into his pockets he expects to feel a rattling cluster of "commoneys"—which, alas! shall never be there again. One of the losses of growing up has been the loss of all his boyish "larks," and especially of marbles—and perhaps of leap-frog. But he never breathes these things to mortal ear, except in the most con-