FLIRTS AND FLIRTING.

Is a flirt? One might answer, a girl who does not know her own mind; some might even say, one who has no mind of her own to know. Perhaps, neither one nor the other of these definitions is strictly correct. Suppose we say a flirt is a pretty girl, who turns things into toys which ought never to be played with. Wallpole tells in his letters of a man of title who "flirted away his whole fortune at hazard," and even in a more disastrous sense this has often been done by a maiden, who has too readily listened to the syren charmer—

"To kiss your hand, or flirt your fan."

The dictionary will tell us that to flirt is to act with piddiness or levity. A politician is said to flirt with those who are not of his own party, and makes advances to them for sinister purposes.

"Ye bolles, and ye flirts, and ye pert little things Who flirt in this frolicsome round." In his Emblems, Quarles gives another turn to the meaning of flirt when he says:—

"Must these smiling roses entertain The blows of scorn, and flirts of base disdain."

To flirt about may mean to move nimbly; in some parts of England it may even signify to deliberately snap the fingers at a person; but from these instances we will not point the meaning corresponding with that given in a great dictionary. —To play at courtship; —to practise coquetish diversions; —to engage in amatory pastime; in general, to make insincere advances of any kind. It has been truly said of flirtation, that it is a propensity which belongs to no age or country, but in all lands, and in all times, it must alike prove dissatisfying.

One who plays at courtship, then, is the true definition of a flirt, and the paths she treads are the more slippery because such an adventurer will never wear her valentine or her invitee with any grace, nor will she remove her foot from one who is not her real friend. The opposite sex when her disposition is known. In some instances the flirt will deceive those who on their part are sincere when she wounds as well as wrongs. This is no less mean than foolish; the game is more than hazardous, and the character of one who engages in it will soon be generally known. Apart from this, however, the flirt will continue to attract those who are worthy of such preferences as hers—men who make a recreation of her company, and can deal in the wanton flattery, which though sweet at first, may turn to bitterness. If there is error committed on the one side, there is therefore selfishness on the other, and each will have its penalty. We need not suppose that the flirt's companions are a whit better than herself; oftentimes they are assuredly more to blame, having no valid excuse to offer for their conduct. That concession does not make the one any better, however. By indiscretion a girl may injure herself, while she loses the opportunity of being a teaching example to those who would learn from her. Let us then say of every flirt that her conduct will issue in the same sort of consequences which will be far-reaching, the flirt will herself be the chief sufferer. The sins of the day will come back at last; all needs of whatever kind soon in one way or another will bring a harvest after their own kind in future years.

We might then, further define the flirt as one who sacrifices the substance for the shadow, throwing opportunities away which are regretted without revile when it is too late to save them. This is more truly especial of those who seem to trifle with suitors without apparently knowing whether they care for them or not. Once yield to the temptation of over-eilishment through care or individual importance, and you will make a pitfall for yourself which may daik all the rest of your earthly pathway. This has often been shown before, and if not, let it be known that it will probably be done as often in the future as in the past. Perhaps there are no middle-class people of mature age whose life-experience has not made them familiar with cases of this kind—girls, who, in their day, were for the time carried away with the attentions and flattery of the unthinking. They had their day, and a good one, if it was well used. At some time would not wait for them, they were hurried forward to be lost sight of, or forgotten amid the great crowd of the rising generation. Such often become the playmates in the race of life, while more confirmed spinsters, whose supposed fortunes are made a butt for wit and banter, shew in their features that unnatural grace to which a well-known poet has made fitting reference.

Among the more celebrated flirts of history, I suppose we have to give a prominent place to Queen Elizabeth. This shows that that acknowledgments, which, according to Dr. Johnson would have given dignity to a bishop, are no sure safeguard against a weakness to which the feminine nature is too prone. What the great queen's sentiments in regard to marriage really were, it would be impossible for any one to tell. Her history reveals enough of her private life to be sure that regrets and disappointments came as in the case of more humble persons. In her youth Elizabeth Tudor was sprightly and good-looking; and as was perhaps inevitable, she more than sidled of the nectar of flattery, which was offered to her by interested persons. The habit of appropriating adulation as her own and believing it to be the truth, was strengthened, instead of being cured by time. Thus a woman of this temperament turns against herself what had been intended to work for her benefit. Though the suitors with whom she toyed in earlier years may subsequently have fallen off, the Queen's vanity in regard to her own personal charms it seems never to have waned. When they appeared on the scenes, she does not appear to have seriously intended to favour any one, but it seems never to have worried of protesting that she preferred a single life, but nevertheless, in her last days, Elizabeth's conscience was not at ease. If youth could but turn to her, she would have done differently. Even a queen is human, she makes mistakes, and has her regrets like more humble people.

It is with our everyday life and more commonplace surroundings that we have chiefly to do; however; and the social life of many eminent persons would supply us with instances for our text. Let us take the not very widely known case of Philip Doddridge and Catherine Freeman. A little piece of English village history, which belongs to the vicinity of George'l. This engaging and amiable young commentator was then a minister at Kidworth, and, after living in lodgings he became one in the household of a farmer named Freeman. There he was supposed to be a courted beauty, Miss Kitty, as the young preacher called her, and with this maiden he fell deeply in love. Being as "blind" as lovers of an ardent temperament usually are, Doddridge harboured a very exalted opinion of Catherine, but apart from her undoubtedly good looks, the farmer's daughter does not appear to have merited such admiration as she called for. For that age, her lover was one of the ten thousand; but of course it may not have been possible to detect all of his good qualities, nor to possess the exactitude to which he would attain. At the same time, a man of genuine worth commonly proclaims his character, and a woman whose own sterling merit helps her to detect the ring of true metal she will set aside judge in such matters. Miss Kitty saw in young Doddridge nothing more than an adored lover; however, and she encouraged his advances only in a very slight degree. Doddridge never doubted her devoted admirer never knew what her mind towards him really was. Now she seemed to favour him and then to repel him, just as a girl would do to support her六合 at courtship, instead of acting conscientiously. The opinion formed of Miss Catherine was no doubt too high; and her subsequent conduct showed that she was too unacquainted not to misinterpret the confidence that was placed in her. Though she married at last, she appears to have understood that none of the poorest creatures the country could have produced was equal to her. The case of Miss Kitty is typical of many others who have played with life opportunities, and with things too serious to be tried with, until it has been too late to rectify their errors.

Who is there with any great experience of the world that has not known such cases—girls who, through lack of character, or lack of decision of character, have hewn out for themselves a hard lot when they might have commanded a position and an influence of very different kind. There is no telling how we may take note of the fact, that from the standpoint of the world, the day may come when it is actually too late to mend; you may flirt with opportunities, as well as with individuals, until the error cannot ever be repaired. The girl who degenerates into a genuine flirt becomes blind to the signs of the times and of her little world. Others may read her characteristics, but carried away by trilles of the hour, she builds on no sure basis. A siren voice may lead her to think she is the queen of the situation; but the disillusion soon comes; and instead of being born to command, and to have a choice of any position she might be disposed to accept, the young adventurer finds that she is only the errand taskmaster, whose service she cannot escape.

The moral to be remembered then, is: Beware of little foxes which spoil the vines. The "little foxes" in your case may be defects in character which may seem to be small, or even insignificant, but which will, in the end, be the cause of your downfall. Any kind of behaviour which leads people to think that you are fickle, vain, or inconsistent, will surely tell against you. There is a prize to be gained, and that prize may be yours for it; but in the race that you have to run, you must beware of fluctuations of all kinds. Youth on a sense a time of glorious liberty; but its fatal mistakes may lead to life-long bewilderment.