CHAPTER III.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN.

In approaching this part of my subject, I cannot but feel that it is one which I have neither the understanding nor the skill to treat with ample justice. All I will venture upon, therefore, is to point out a few of those peculiarities, which women who have been but little accustomed to the society of men, might otherwise be surprised to find in a husband.

In pursuance of this task, what I am compelled to say, should appear in any way disparaging to the dignity of men in general, my apology must be this—that it is the very peculiarities I am about to point out, which constitute the chief difficulties a married woman has to contend with, and which, therefore, claim the sympathy of such as are anxious to assist her in the right performance of her duties as a wife.

Were all men excellent, without inconscionability, and without defects, there would be no need for words of caution or advice addressed to the weaker sex, but especially to wives, for each would have perpetually before her, a perfect model of true excellence, from which she would be ashamed to differ, and by which she would be taught at once to admire and imitate whatever is most worthy of esteem. With gratitude we ought to acknowledge our belief, that morally and spiritually there is perfect equality between men and women; yet, in the character of a noble, enlightened, and truly good man, there is a power and a sublimity, so nearly approaching what we believe to be the nature and capacity of angels, that as no feeling can exceed, so no language can describe, the degree of admiration and respect which the contemplation of such a character must excite. To be permitted to dwell within the influence of such a man, must be a privilege of the highest order; to listen to his conversation, must be a perpetual feast; but to be permitted into his heart—to share his counsels, and to be the chosen companion of his joys and sorrows—it is difficult to say whether humility or gratitude should predominate in the feelings of the woman thus distinguished and thus blest.

If all men were of this description, these pages might be given to the winds. We must suppose, however, for the sake of meeting every case, and especially the most difficult, that there are men occasionally found who are not, strictly speaking, noble, nor highly enlightened, nor altogether good. That such men are as much disposed as their superiors to enter into the married state, is also a fact of public notoriety, and it is to the women who venture upon uniting themselves to such men for life, that I would be understood chiefly to address myself.

In order to render the subject more clear, I will in the first place draw an imaginary line between reasonable, and unreasonable, men. A reasonable man is one who will give a candid hearing to arguments against his own preconceived opinions, and who, when he believes himself to have good cause for acting or thinking as he does, is yet willing to be shown a better cause for acting or thinking differently. The mind of a reasonable man is, therefore, open to conviction, impartial, and comprehensive; and all these qualities, from the very nature of his constitution, he possesses in a higher degree than they can be possessed by woman. An unreasonable man is one who will think and act in a particular manner, simply because he will. If he knows any better reason why he so thinks and acts, he deems it unnecessary to disclose it, because to him this is all-sufficient; and as it is one which no argument can refute, and no opposition overcome, the woman who has to accommodate her habits to his, had need commence the preparation for her married life, by a study of patience from the book of Job.

If, as I have stated, the example and influence of a truly excellent man, are such as to render the very atmosphere in which he lives one of perpetual improvement and delight; on the other hand, there is nothing more discouraging to a woman, than to find defects in the character she has associated herself with for life, having believed it to be thus excellent. Indeed, the peculiarities of the wise, and the inconsistencies of the good, among the nobler sex, have a peculiarly startling effect upon women in general, and often prove the means of retarding their improvement, by awakening the childish and petulant thought, that if such are the best, there can be little use in striving after excellence at all.

All women should, therefore, be treated for discovering faults in men, as they are for beholding spots in the sun, or clouds in the summer sky. Nor is it consistent with the disinterested nature of women's purest, deepest affection, that they should love them less, because they cannot admire them more.

Much allowance should be made in all such calculations, for the peculiar mode of education by which men are trained for the world. From their early childhood, girls are accustomed to fill an inferior place, to give up, to fall back, and to be as nothing in comparison with their brothers; while boys, on the other hand, have to suffer all the disadvantages in after life, of having had their precocious selfishness encouraged, from the time they first began to feel the dignity of superior power, and the triumph of occupying a superior place.

Men who have been thus educated by foolish and indulgent mothers, who have been placed at public schools, where the influence, the character, and the very name of woman was a by-word for contempt; who have been afterwards associated with sisters who were capricious, ignorant, and vain—such men are very unjustly blamed for being selfish, domineering, and tyrannical to the other sex. In fact, how should they be otherwise? It is a common thing to complain of the selfishness of men, but I have often thought, on looking candidly at their early lives, and reflecting how little cultivation of the heart is blended with what is popularly called the best education, the wonder should be that men are not more selfish still.

With all these allowances, then, we may grant them to be selfish, and pitty, rather than blame them that they are so; for no happy being ever yet was found, whose hopes and wishes centred in its own bosom.

The young and inexperienced woman, who has but recently been made the subject of man's attention and choice, will probably be disposed to dispute this point with me, and to argue that one man at least is free from selfishness; because she seems, or rather hears her lover willing to give up everything for her. But let no woman
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trust to such unquestioned authority, for generally speaking, those who are the most extravagant in their professions, and the most servile in their adulation before marriage, are the most unreasonable and requiring afterwards. Let her sette it then in her own mind, what- ever aspect her affairs may assume at present; that men in general are more apt than women, to act and think as if they were created to exist of, and by themselves; and this self-sustained existence a wife can only share, in proportion as she is identified in every thing with her husband. Men have no idea, generally speaking, of having themselves and their affairs made subservient to an end, even though it may be a good one. They are, in fact, their own alphas and omegas — beginning and end. But all this, I repeat, is the consequence of a want of that moral training which ought ever to be made the prominent part of education.

Beyond this, however, it may be said to be a necessary part of man's nature, and conducive to his support in the position he has to maintain, that he should, in a greater degree than woman, be sufficient unto himself. The nature of his occupations, and the character of his peculiar duties, require this. The contending interests of the community at large, the strife of public affairs, and the competition of business, with the paramount importance of establishing himself as the master of a family, and the head of a household, all require a degree of concentrated effort in favor of self, and a powerful repulsion against others, which woman, happily for her, is seldom or never called upon to maintain.

The same degree of difference in the education of men and women, leads, on the one hand, to a more expansive range of intellect and thought; and on the other, to the exercise of the same faculties upon what is particular and minute. Men consequently are accustomcd to generalize. They look with far-stretching views to the general bearing of every question submitted to their consideration. Even when planning for the good of their fellow-creatures, it is on a large scale, and most frequently upon the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number. By following out this system, injustice is often unconsciously done to individuals, and even a species of cruelty exercised, which it should be woman's peculiar object to study to avert; but at the same time, to effect her purpose in such a way, as neither to thwart nor interfere with the greater and more important good.

We see here, as in a thousand other instances, the beautiful adaptation of the natural constitution of the two sexes, so as to effect a greater amount of good by their joint efforts, than either could effect alone. Were an island populated only by men, the strictness of its judicial regulations, and the cold formality of its public institutions, would render it an ungenial soil for the growth of those finer feelings, and those subtler impulses of nature, which not only beautify the whole aspect of human life, but are often proved to have been blossoms of the richest fruit, and seeds of the most abundant harvest. And were a neighboring island peopled by women only, the discord of Babylon, or the heated elements of a volcano, could scarcely equal the confusion, the ebullition, and the universal tumult, that would follow the partial attention given to every separate complaint, the ready credence accorded to every separate story, and the prompt and unhesitating application of means, to effect at all times the most in-compatible ends.

Those who argue for the perfect equality — the oneness of women in their intellectual nature with men, appear to know little of that higher philosophy, by which both, from the very distinctness of their characters, have been made subservient to the purposes of wisdom and of goodness; and after having observed with deep thought, and profound reverence, the operation of mind on mind, the powerful and instinctive sympathies which rule our very being, and the associated influence of different natures, all working together, yet too separate and distinct to create confusion; to those who have thus regarded the perfect adjustment of the plans of all-wise Providence, I own it does appear an ignorant and vulgar contest, to strive to establish the equality of that, which would lose not only its utility, but its perfection, by being assimilated with a different nature.

From the same constitution of mind which leads men to generalize, and to look at every thing they contemplate on an extensive scale, they are seldom good economists. Even the most pious, the very misers of whom we read such extraordinary accounts, appear to have had a very mistaken idea of the best means of ensuring the great object of their lives. Thus, while, most anxious to avoid the least unnecessary expense, some men greatly increase the waste and the outlay of money in their household arrangements, by not allowing a sufficient number of implements, utensils, or other conveniences, and means, for the purpose of facilitating domestic operations, by making each individual thing supply the place for which it is most suitable, and best calculated to secure against absolute waste.

The master of a family is quite capable of perceiving that money for domestic purposes is often in demand; and that through some channel or other, it escapes very rapidly; but he is altogether incompetent — and would that all men would believe it! — to judge of the necessity there is for each particular sum, or how the whole in the end must unavoidably be increased, by making every article of household use answer as many purposes as it is capable of, without regard to fitness, durability, or strength.

But if, on the one hand, our first wish for the increased happiness of the homes of England would be, that men should let these things alone; our next, and perhaps it ought to stand first, and be still more earnest than the other, is this, that all women should be so educated, and so prepared by the right disposition of their own minds, as to afford their husbands just grounds for perfect confidence in their understanding and right principle, with regard to these important affairs.

For in the first place, without understanding, no woman can economize; and in the next, without being supremely anxious for the fulfillment of domestic duty, no woman will. Thus, in addition to other causes of anxiety, sufficiently abounding in the present day, throughout every department of business, hundreds and thousands of men in the respectable walks of life, have to suffer from daily and almost hourly apprehension, that a system of neglect and extravagance in their own houses, is wasting away the slender profits of their labor and their care. On the score of simple kindness, then, one would suppose that a right-minded woman would wish to spare her husband these distressing thoughts; while, on the score of domestic comfort, ease, and independence, it is impossible to calculate the vast amount to which she would herself be the gainer, by convincing her husband that she was not only able, but determined, to manage his household expenditure with the least possible waste.

With all this, however, and often in connection with the most rigid notions of economy, men are fond of personal indulgences; nor ought they ever to be absolutely denied a reasonable means of restoring their exhausted energy and cheerfulness, more especially, because those who are connected in any way with business, or who have to provide for their own efforts for the maintenance of their families, are generally so circumstance that through the greater portion of each day, as to be as far removed as possible from all opportunity of personal enjoyment.

It would, indeed, be a hard thing to refuse to the husband who returns home from his desk, his counter, or his fields, the best seat, or the choicest food, with any other indulgences his circumstances may afford. Here, however, in certain families, exist a great difficulty; for some men, and I need not say they are of the unreasonable class, are determined to have the indulgences, and yet are unwilling to incur the expense. From their habit of disregarding things in detail, and looking upon them only as a whole; they are utterly unconscious of the importance of every little addition in the shape of luxury to the general sum; and thus the wife is placed

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in the painful dilemma, either of denying her husband the gratification of his tastes and wishes, or of bearing all the blame of conducting her household expenses on too extravagant a scale.

There are few situations in the long catalogue of female perplexities more harassing than this; for it must ever be borne in mind, that men have a tendency to dislike the immediate instrument of their suffering or privation. And this again brings us to observe another of her peculiarities, so important in its influence upon the whole of married life, that if a woman should venture to judge man's love by her own, she would probably commit one of the most fatal mistakes by which human happiness was ever wrecked.

The love of woman appears to have been created solely to minister; that of man, to be ministered unto. It is true, his avocations lead him daily to some labor, or some effort for the maintenance of his family; and he often conscientiously believes that the welfare of his wife is for his wife. But the probability is, that he would be just as attentive to his business, and as eager about making money, had he no wife at all—witness the number of single men who provide with as great care, and as plentifully, according to their wants, for the maintenance of a house without either wife or child.

As it is the natural characteristic of woman's love in its most refined, as well as its most practical development, to be perfunctorily performing something for the good or the happiness of the object of her affection, it is but reasonable that man's personal comfort should be studiously attended to; and in this, the complaisance and satisfaction which most men evince on finding themselves placed at table before a favorite dish, situated beside a clean hearth, or accommodated with an empty sofa, is of itself a sufficient reward for any sacrifice such indulgence may have cost. In proofs of affection like these, there is something tangible which speaks home to the senses—something which man can understand without an effort; and he will sit down to eat, or compose himself to rest, with more hearty good-will towards the wife who has been thoughtful about these things, than if she had been all day busily employed in writing a treatise on morals for his especial benefit.

Again, man's dignity, as well as his comfort, must be ministered unto. I propose to treat this subject more fully in another chapter, but in speaking of man's peculiarities it must never be forgotten that he ought not to be required to bear the least infliction upon his dignity as a man, and a husband. The woman who has the bad taste, and worse feeling, to venture upon this experiment, effectually lowers herself; for in proportion as her husband ainks, she must sink with him, and, even, as wife, be lower still. Many, however, from ignorance, and with the very best intentions, err in this way, and I am inclined to think that such persons suffer more from the consequences of their folly, than others do from their wilful deviation from what is right; just as self-love is more wounded by an innocent, than by an intentional humiliation; because the latter shows us how little we are really esteemed, while the former invests us with a certain degree of importance, as being worthy of a premeditated insult.

It is unquestionably the inalienable right of all men, whether ill or well, rich or poor, wise or foolish, to be treated with deference, and made much of in their own houses. It is true that in the last mentioned case, this duty may be attended with some difficulty in the performance; but as no man becomes a fool, or loses his senses by marriage, the woman who has selected such a companion must abide by the consequences; and even he, whatever may be his degree of folly, is entitled to respect from her, because she has voluntarily placed herself in such a position that she must necessarily be his inferior.

I have said, that whether well or ill, a husband is entitled to respect; and it is perhaps when ill, more than at any other time, that men are impressed with a sense of their own importance. It is therefore, an act of kindness, as well as of justice, and a concession easily made, to endeavor to keep up this idea.
characteristic of men, and as leading them to attach more importance to what is immediate and tangible, than what is remote or ideal, is one which renders them particularly liable to deception, or rather to be, what is more properly called, practised upon, than directly deceived; so much so, that I believe any woman who could manage her own temper, might manage her husband, provided she possessed his affections. I say might, because the mode of management by such means would be utterly revolting to a generous and upright mind. Thus, by fair speech and smooth manners, accompanied with servile and flattering subserviency in little things, some artful women have contrived to win their way to the accomplishment of almost every wish; when a single word or act, especially if it implied an assumption of the right to choose, would have effectually defeated their ends.

I have listened much when men have been discussing the merits of women, and have never heard any quality so universally commended by the nobler sex, as quietness; while the opposite desirability of a tongue too loud, too ready, or too importunate in its exertions, has been as universally condemned. Thus I am inclined to think that silence in general, and smooth speech when language must be used, are ranked by most men amongst the highest excellences of the female character; while on the other hand, those ready weapons sometimes so injudiciously made use of are of all things what they most abhor.

If, however, an artful woman finds it easy to practise upon her husband by the immediate instrumentality of a manner suited to his taste, this mean and degrading system of working out an end, becomes more difficult in proportion to the frequency of its detection, until at last, some men are brought to suspect that all women act indirectly in every thing they do. Hence comes that frequent answer when we ask a simple question merely for the sake of information—"Why do you wish to know?" as if it were impossible for women to be deeply interested where they had no end to serve, and as if there must of necessity be some hidden motive concealed behind that which is made apparent. This habitual retort falls hardly upon those who never have deserved it, and not unfrequently forms a serious obstacle in the way of obtaining useful knowledge; but it is greatly to be feared that such an expression, with the suspicion it implies, would never have become habitual to men, had not the general conduct of women brought this just punishment upon them.

Indeed, there is something revolting to man's very nature in having to calculate upon that kind of petty artifice which takes advantage of unwariness and credulity, for working out a purpose, even where that purpose may not in itself be wrong. And here we are brought at once to that great leading peculiarity in man's character—his nobility, or, in other words, his exemption from those innumerable little weaknesses which obscure the beauty, and sully the integrity of woman's life. From all their underhand contrivances, their secret envious, and petty spite, man is exempt; so much so, that the mere contemplation of the broad clear basis of his moral character, his open truth, his singleness of aim, and, above all, his dignified forbearance under provocation, might often put the weaker sex to shame.

I am aware that there is much in the situation of both parties to create this difficulty; that undisputed power to will, and to act, is often accompanied by a kind of moral majesty, which a weaker spirit never can attain, while kept in bondage, either by fear or by absolute restraint. I am aware too, that boys, from their very infancy, are accustomed to a mode of treatment as much calculated to make them determined, frank, and bold, as that of girls is to induce the opposite extremes of weakness, artificial, and timid helplessness; but even with these allowances, I am persuaded there are broad clear features in the moral dignity of man, which it is impossible to contemplate in their strength and reality, without respect and admiration.

And a sacred and ennobling trust it is for woman to have the happiness of such a being committed to her charge—a holy privilege to be the chosen companion of his lot—to come with her helplessness and weakness to find safety under his protection, and to possess her own perturbed and troubled mind beneath the shelter of his love.

What then, if by perpetual provocation she should awake the tempest of his wrath? We will not contemplate the thought, for there is something as fearful in his indignation, as there is attractive in his kindness, and flattering in his seinem.

Nor, in return for this kindness, are we accustomed to feel gratitude enough; for take away from social life not only the civility, but the actual service done by men, in removing difficulty, protecting weakness, and assisting in distress, what a joyless, helpless world would women find themselves, left only to the slender aid, and the tender mercies of each other!

It is too much regarded merely as a thing of course, for men to be obliging and attentive; and it is too little remembered at what cost to them we purchase their help and their indulgence. Nor is it only in solitary instances, or for especial favorites, that these efforts have to be made. It is the sacrifice of a whole lifetime for a man to be polite. There is no fireside so warm, but he must leave it on a winter's night to walk home with some female visitor, who has probably no charm for him. There is no situation so eligible, but he must resign it if required. There is no difficulty he must not encounter, no fatigue he must not endure, and no gratification he must not give up; and for whom? All would do this perhaps for one being in the world—perhaps for more; but to be willing to do it every day and every hour, even for the most repulsive, or the most selfish and requiring of her sex—there is a martyrdom of self in all this, which puts to shame the partial kindness and disinterestedness of women.

It may be said that the popularity of politeness affords at once its incentive, and its reward. But whence then do we receive those many private acts of unrestrained særvice, when no other eye is there but ours to witness—no other tongue to praise? and when we ourselves would probably have been the last recipients of such favors, had our companion chosen to assume the right of selecting an object better suited to his taste?

It is from considerations such as these, and I would wish to impress them upon every female mind, that I have not included the selfishness of man among his peculiarities, though some might think the case would warrant a notice of this nature. Yet such is my conviction, that man has much to bear with from the capriciousness of woman; such is my grateful estimate of his uncalculating kindness, not less to be admired because it is expected and required; such too has been my own experience of his general willingness to oblige, where there was little to attract, and still less to reward; that whatever may be said by others, it would ill become me to lift up a voice, and that a public one, against the selfishness of men.

Let us rather look again at that nobility of which I have already spoken, and while we blush to feel the stirrings of an inferior spirit prompting us to many an unworthy thought and act, let us study to assimilate our nature, in all that is truly excellent, with his, who was at first expressly formed in the image of his Maker.

CHAPTER IV.

BEHAVIOR TO HUSBANDS.

Last the reader should suppose, from the heading of this chapter, that the management of husbands is what is really meant, I must at once disclaim all pretension to this particular kind of skill; not because I do not think it capable of being carried out into a system, whereby every woman might become the actual ruler in her own domestic sphere, but because I consider the system itself a bad one, and utterly unworthy of being applied