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Why Men Don't Marry

The marriage market in all English-speaking nations has become an arena of competition as keen as any auction room. The natural impulses of women are disregarded. Mothers advise prudent alliances, and discountenance, by fair means and foul, love matches. Girls choke down their feelings, and aid and abet their seniors in encouraging men who are "catches," throwing off the restraints which made their grandmothers charming. But still the cry goes up, "Men do not marry." And yet the most inveterate clubman, the mocker at love in a cottage, was once a youth not blasé, to whom the vision of a home was enchanting. Almost every man tries his hand at realizing some such dream early in life, but the attempt is usually nipped in the bud for want of means, or by failure to win the particular woman on whom his heart is set. He suffers acutely; but man is an elastic creature; in time he mingles again with the world, not entirely proof against feminine fascination, but finding it almost impossible again to set up an ideal.

Matrons with attractive daughters cannot complain that their girls see few men. The tendency of the age is to level the barriers between the sexes: girls play lawn-tennis, they row, they rink, they sit in the smoking room, they dance not only in the evenings but in the afternoons. The natural tendency of such intimate associations would be matrimony. But the fact is that men who might have had serious intention are frightened off before liking begets love. There is an all-prevailing fuss pervading the intercourse of young people which is altogether detrimental. The instant a pair begin to show any particular liking for each other's society the wide world around them is instantly on the *qui vive*. The mother watches, fusses, reports to her cronies, and too often catechises the girl, wounding her sense of delicacy, and making her conscious and constrained; or leading her to imagine herself beloved, when the man's feeling is only that of pleasure in the society of many a young woman who does her best to make herself agreeable.

Men are usually ignorant how girls note and weigh the attentions they receive, and that they impart the details of such homage of sympathetic, if envious, feminine ears, thus giving body to vague nothings, and brooding over trifles till they gather shape. Meanwhile the man, having said the pretty things his ideas of politeness have prompted, goes away, forgetting them and their recipient, while she is expecting a declaration as the result of a few soft nothings, a squeeze of the hand, or tender glances. Women are not aware, on the other hand, how sincerely he may like and admire a girl without a thought beyond mere good-will. And it is precisely the better kind of man who falls into the misfortune of raising false hopes—the man who believes in the simplicity and candor of women, desires their sympathy and values their regard.

A man of the world has the instinct of self-preservation developed strongly enough for his protection. The sense of safety is the real bond of many of the alliances now so fashionable—sometimes salutary, often mischievous—between men and married women. Kept within bounds, no suspicion attaches to them, no hopes are built upon them. The lady receives the *petits soins*, dear to the female nature, which the husband of long standing often neglects; the man receives

the sympathy grateful to the masculine creature. Men feel this without analyzing their sentiments, and it is a common complaint among them nowadays that it impossible to become well acquainted with a girl without exciting the too lively anxiety of her friends. And no wise man proposes without knowing the character of the girl he wishes to marry. The mothers who are so eager for their daughters' establishment are wise, although this precipitation is not only foolish, but indecorous. A. B.

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