

Kitty Howard's Journal.—SECOND SERIES.

BY ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.

JULY 23.

YES, Tom, it is a great mystery, this of which I speak, and if men and women would but consider, they would perceive that life is exceedingly beautiful, that its times and seasons are full of an infinite blessedness; they would see order and design where they now behold only what is fortuitous. Let any one consider what he observes around him, and he will perceive that at middle life a woman develops into what she had previously indicated only in the germ. Her children are grown, or nearly so—she will no more be a mother—the routine of the household may safely be divided with the daughters, or dependents, and she suddenly blooms out with renewed beauty, vivacity, and lucidness of intellect. She who had been simply a good, agreeable woman enough, becomes a brilliant converser, a delightful companion; enterprising, and wondrously self-poised.

This is the good aspect. If a woman of strong, coarse make, she blossoms out a perfect virago, a Xantippe of the first water, and her kin and neighbors wish heartily the old ducking-stool could be restored, and this fiery-tongued woman cooled down by the wholesome application of an enforced douche. If the woman be weak, mentally and physically, she fills the place of Wordsworth's Cumberland Beggar, by becoming a perpetual prompter to the Christian forbearance, and long-enduring patience of those doomed to minister to a weak, complaining invalid—one of those whom I designate as Forlornities.

Your Forlornity has the corners of the mouth perpetually drawn down. Her brow is rather drawn up, and she has not force enough to contract her eyebrows. Your Forlornity carries the head a little to one side, and the shoulders follow the same direction. The whole person has a sort of let-down look—the arms hang, and the toes incline to turn in. The expression of the face is of gentle deprecation—an exasperating deprecation, for it carries implied reproach to every body and every thing. You wish she would break out, but she never does. She "sits like patience on a monument," wearing out the patience of every body else. The very voice of your Forlornity drives you wild. It has no intonation, it neither rises nor

falls, it wanders on a perpetual mediocre cadence, pitched on the side of muggy, east-wind weather. If your own step is quick and elastic, you must abate its measure in her presence, or she stares at you blankly, with a thin quill-veined hand to her side, and seems to wonder what you are made of. A rainy day consigns your Forlornity to her shawl and easy chair—a cloud gives her a chill, a thunder-storm excites her only to doleful tales of the ravages of "chain-thunder." Children dread your Forlornity—they hate her worse than they hate a scold, and in very desperation will sometimes kick up their heels and slam through the doors, threatening by their noise to totally dislocate every joint and convert every fibre of the Forlornity to a jelly. In the process of time your Forlornity disappears—how I am unable to say, but her disappearance is followed by a brisk renovation of the house from cellar to attic; the old easy chair is new vamped, and a bright eye and stirring feet come to create "sunshine in a shady place." It is the second wife.

These are the women of middle life who blossom out into something quite new and unexpected, for better or worse, and the Forlornities who evaporate, having "dwindled, soaked and pined."

Now what I, Kitty Howard, mean is this, that the maternal woman does and will give place to the executive woman, whose sphere of action is outside of the mere household. She may adhere thereto just in proportion to its needs and her own sense of responsibility, but its requirements are apt to become irksome to her, and she covets intellectual pursuits—politics, art and literature, according to her capacity, engage her attention, and she becomes the peer of the professional or official man; or, broom in hand, she is ready to "brush the cobwebs from the sky," in the way of reform; or, with a veritable broom, she scares her husband and children with her doings, or, finally, *is not*, for something has taken her.

MEM.—The woman of middle life must be let alone. She must have her own way, or worse will come of it.

MEM.—I have known more than one man so overcome by this new blooming out of his wife in middle age, that he threatened a divorce;

another attempted to put his into an insane hospital !

MEM.—Women grow half crazy if they can not have their will. How is it with the men ?

MAY.—“I declare, Kitty, the above is quite an essay, and it is the solemn truth, also, although I had never thought of how to account for certain anomalies very perceptible to an observer in my profession. I had never thought that God, by limiting the period of maternity, had prepared the way for a broader and more dignified aspect in a woman's life. I believe, also, in his design to limit sexual passion, and leave both sexes to a more Christlike and spiritual walk.”

This from Tom.

MAY 10.—“Kitty,” said my husband, putting back my hair and looking tenderly into my eyes : “Kitty, are you quite content ?”

“No, my darling. No human being ought to be content.”

“Ah! you are mystical, Kitty; I have read your essay again. I am a plain man, darling; perhaps a dull one, but it would break my heart to have you burst out into any of the tantrums you describe in women.”

Then Kitty laughed, and smoothed back his beautiful grey hair, and with tears in her eyes told him how weak and poor and unenterprising she was, and that she believed the good Father had given her but one mission, that of love to husband and children, and that all her poetry was subordinate thereto.”

“You are a poem, Kitty, a beautiful poem, sweet as the wind-harp, and stirring as the wind amid the cedars. I kiss the hem of your garment, my peerless wife.”

How beautiful is praise from beloved lips !

MEM.—People do not praise half enough. They are too crabbed. They have words enough for blame, but none for heartfelt recognition.

MAY.—When I offered the inclosed poem to my husband he shrank back and said :

“Kitty, I am a prose man. Somehow poetry makes me miserable. I am not exalted enough to enter into your poetic moods.”

“To me, darling, life without poetry would be the birds without song, the rose without its odor, a kiss without the soul.”

And so Tom read my poem and smiled and kissed my brow, and we two walked hand in hand like lovers, as we are.

A WOMAN'S THOUGHT.

I gave my love a scarlet rose one day,
And sideways looked, while, leaf by leaf, he tore
Unthinkingly the bloom, and one leaf took
And gathered all the edge into a ball
And snapped it on his hand, as school-boys do :
And careless talked he love that summer day.
As the last petal fell he brushed the seeds
That lay in golden powder on his breast
With dainty fingers carefully away,
And still talked love ; whereat, I, more intent
To read his heart, gave him a violet sweet,
Fresh from the dew, which his unconscious
hand

Soon seized upon, and twisted all the stem
To shreds, and with white teeth he bit away
The honey bag a bee had loved. I smiled,
But kept an even breath, and listened still ;
Nor rose, nor violet may win a thought,
I mentally exclaimed ; nor passion wins,
Nor modest guise of the same range of love,
Can lure this man : does he ask more or less ?
I gave a rose, white as a white-stoled nun,
Save maiden blush enshrined at the heart,
At which he started, smiled, and kissed the
leaves,

And laid it next his heart, and still talked on.
“Oh! he can talk his love despite of flowers,
He has no awe, no reverence at the heart.
He asks a wife, because 'tis well and wise ;
It pleases him to take one—nothing more.

Her soul must take its chance, his own must
grow ;
Needs aid and comfort.” Thus I grimly
thought.

“You do not love me,” whispered he so low,
And there was sadness in his eyes ; at which
I took my last, most precious bloom, the one
On which I staked my all, and held it forth.
He saw my asphodel all whiteyclad,
Fresh from the cold, pellucid stream, where she
Had all the night been folded in her robe
Until the rosy-fingered morning came
With her impassioned kiss to lift her lids—
My lover looked ; a sad, pale look, that grew
Unto a manly awe. He bent his head
And said no more, and did not touch the gift.
The angels never wore a face more fair
Than his at this one moment, and I saw
A clear, white light upon his brow, which
spread

Until my lover all transfigured grew,
And to my raptured vision he became

The very Christ. I laid my lily down On his dear brow, and did not kiss it once ; And so we two, since then, have walked with God.

Tom read aloud in his clear voice, and at the close he looked into my eyes most tenderly, and whispered, "Yes, we shall walk with God in the bright, eternal future."

JUNE.—David has just sailed for Europe. He has studied hard, and been admitted to the bar, but does not quite rally from that fatal love episode of his with Blanch Runyon. I saw him go with a sinking of the heart, for somehow it seems as if I shall see him no more in this world.

JUNE 19.—There is nothing in this world more beautiful than the sight of happy lovers.

The way Paul figures about pretty Lily Burns, in his sturdy, awkward manner, playing the agreeable, is a sight to do the heart good. I was reading, and Paul and Lily were so near me that I could hear their talk.

"How you do stare at me, Paul," said the pretty one, with a little pout.

"I am never tired of looking at you. You do not know how handsome you are," said honest Paul.

"Don't I though? I can guess at it, Paul, if you were not always telling me about it."

"I'm afraid such a beautiful girl will get tired of a farm-house, and that worries me sometimes;" and the dear, guileless boy kissed the pretty hand.

"Paul," whispered Lily, "will you not be there? Shall we not sing, and read, and love God always?"

"I am old-fashioned, like my mother. Let those I love be with me, and all places become paradisaical."

"You dear old boy! how nice you talk. And your mother! well, she is just the nicest, and handsomest lady in the world! my father says so, and my mother, too."

It must be confessed that poetry is very stent in these two, but their simple affection is full of a living poetry. Paul, in the mean time, held a skein of worsted for Lily to wind, and I heard her ask him,

"Paul (I am glad your name is Paul), did you ever read Paul and Virginia?"

"Yes, indeed, and have shed a thousand tears over it; for boys cry about as quick as

girls do, except at a flogging, and that they grin and bear, while girls scream with all their might."

"That they do," ejaculated Lily. "But isn't it a shame that they didn't live to be married, and love and be happy on that beautiful island?"

"You mean Paul and Virginia? Yes, it always seemed when I was a boy that they ought to have lived!" said Paul, with his bright, honest eyes suffused with tears. He seemed startled by some painful association. I observed that Lily smiled when he spoke as if no longer a boy, and the eyes of the two lovers met in beautiful recognition. Lily blushed slightly, and soon came and took her seat at my side. I could not refrain a kiss upon her fair young brow.

Here will be an altogether suitable marriage—in age, position, character, well adapted. Lily is a little too yielding, perhaps, but as Paul is all kindness, all truth and prosaic manhood, her fault is one that Goldsmith so aptly describes as leaning "to virtue's side," and which Paul will never impose upon.

My husband long ago gave Paul a tract of land, which he has been assiduously cultivating. I observe he has planted rows of trees, and has terraced the ground to the river's brink, and thrown a rustic bridge over a trout stream, which he has strown with pebbles and planted with cresses, and, by the aid of art, widened to a pond, and made into miniature water-falls. Here, under the shade of an elm is a chair constructed of roots—there is a wall of stumps, the "fantastic roots" towering in the air, over which the wild grape and clematis and woodbine are made to climb in wild luxuriance; and here is the haunt of the squirrel, the bee and the bird, and from it a cool shadow deepens the trout-pond. Turf seats and mossy dells are found in unexpected glades, and already a barn gives shelter to some fine cattle, and receives the produce of the hay and harvest fields. I have been proud to see my handsome boy stripped to his toil, working with his own hands, with the sweat pouring from his brow; now mounting an eminence to catch the effect of some experiment in the picturesque, and now turning aside to his Latin or French, and then grappling with some geometric problem.

Here and there are pretty shady walks, with little bower at the close, a pretty descent to the river, where is a Titania-like beach with silver sand, and a granite seat under the old pine tree. It is plain to be seen that Paul has worked with a great love in his heart, a hope, an expectation of luring thither

"Some creature not too bright nor good

For human nature's daily food,"

and Lily has been the confident of many a plan, which she aided with as little self-consciousness as a bird that builds its nest.

Mrs. Burns is a perfectly lovely woman, with fine conjugal and maternal instincts, and it is a pleasure for us two mothers to meet together and talk over the prospects of our children; to watch their happy love, their fresh, generous and most beautiful youth; their sweet simple piety. Their attachment seems as natural as sunshine—a thing no more to be questioned than the budding of the rose, as spring-time merges toward summer; or the appearance of the water-lily when all the streams are warm with the sweet breath of the tender south wind.

I have said that Paul is not brilliant; no more is he, but he is very comfortable. I know just where to find him. The very soul of truth and honor is written in his ingenuous face; so uncompromising is he in all things, he goes straight to the mark of all that is right to be done, has such a sturdy endurance of toil, so confronts peril, so grapples with unpalatable realities, that I am learning to see that he has in him those elements that make up the true man always, and when the stress comes make the hero.

My tender Rachel and Lily and Paul live like pretty fairies, or young angels whose wings have not budded, and they talk over their plans with us all listening with the utmost candor. When they part at night it is with innocent kisses, and often a slight shade as each says, "We will pray the dear Father in Heaven to bless David." Ah! yes, my beautiful, gifted boy is learning that those who are worthy to tread the wine-press of suffering must tread it alone, and thus I wrote the following:

ALONE.

Alone, alone in utmost need,
The true soul banning evil deed,
And heart that breaks not though it bleed.

All, all alone to solve the doubt—
To work our life-long problem out—
Casting our feeble hands about

For human help, for human cheer,
Or only for a human tear,
Forgetting God is always near.

The loveliest face hath never brought
Its fairest look; the deepest thought
Is never into language wrought—

And beauty in the highest art
Slips from the painter's hand apart,
And leaves him pining at the heart;

And music borne by echo back
Pines on a solitary track,
Till faint hearts cry alas! alack!

Love seeks in vain some answer
To that deep meaning of its own
Known unto God himself alone.

The wine-press must alone be trod—
The burning plowshare pressed unshod—
There is no rock of help but God.

MEASURING THE FEET.—In measuring the feet for boots or shoes, should the person stand or sit?

Ans.—If possible stand, especially in getting the length and width of the foot. In walking, the foot expands about one-tenth, and allowance should be made for this. A shoe is usually sized by its length only, but it should be sized by both length and breadth. Considering the great injury that comes from tight, ill-shapen shoes, we can not be too careful to prevent distorting the feet by making the toes over-ride or crowd each other. The compression of children's feet by tight leather shoes is cruel. It is better for the feet for children to go barefooted in warm weather.

STEEL HOOPS.—Do steel hoops worn in ladies' skirts act as conductors of electricity, and in this way injure the health of women?

Ans.—No. They might possibly conduct away the electricity of the body if worn so as to touch the skin, but not touching the body at any point they can do no harm in this way.