

A WORD UPON CONCEITEDNESS.

BY ELIZABETH OKES SMITH, AUTHOR OF "THE SINLESS CHILD," ETC.

A WOMAN may pardon many errors in manhood, but she will never pardon those that spring from vanity nor conceitedness; any modification of these is, in her eyes, the "unpardonable sin" of a man, the "great gulf" lying between him and love, the "black flag" upon the high seas of society, which is entitled to no quarter.

We will not go into analysis, such being the fact; but it may be that she has an innate consciousness that vanity is her own especial foible; the right and prerogative of her own sex; the little woman weakness half bordering upon a grace; the cloud that gives birth to the rainbow, so flexible, so amiable, so nearly engaging are the lighter manifestations of the fault.

But conceitedness, that quality of combined self-love and vanity by which a man believes himself to be just the thing, killing, irresistible, the not-to-be-withstood subduer of hearts, not only excites her contempt, but harmless spirit of revenge. Her pride of sex is aroused; she becomes a champion, the penalty she inflicts, however absurd or spiteful it may be, is administered in behalf of, and in the pride of womanhood.

A man may be a worshiper of the sex; he may pour out his devotions before one, even till his best manhood, the majesty of his nature be half subverted, and he is yet a subject of interest; but let this idolatry become introversive, let a woman detect a complacent self-gratulation, a conceited fondness, and he may

"Give his mind to form a sonnet quaint,
Of Silvia's shoe-string, or of Chloe's fan,
Or sweetly fashioned tip of Celia's ear,"

and it is all the same to him, no woman will "listen to the voice of the charmer, charm be never so wisely."

This conceitedness is altogether opposed to that nobler self-reliance, that manly egotism which wins so much upon the admiration of a woman. Indeed, she may tyrannize, she may be petulant and unreasonable, but she is inwardly gratified when a man is tolerant of her whimsies, but unmoved thereby. There is something in her nature, a beautiful sentiment of reverence, it may be, that makes her half willing to be wooed in the style of the Vikings of old; her love well nigh challenged; her troth demanded, not only as her glory, but his right. It is as the eagle taking the dove to its nest, and spreading its broad wing to protect; for in this doth she recognize power, and willingly, like the vine, doth she meekly, yet confidingly, send forth her tendrils of affection in the strong shadow of the oak. All this implies the

absence of self; the possession of power, exercised to sustain; of power that becomes stronger, even that the true and the beautiful rely thereon.

Spite of the cruelty, the cool malice of Shakspeare's Maria, every woman enters heartily into the real spirit of the saucy waiting woman, whereby she promises to make the steward "a common recreation," to "gull him into a nay-word," all because, in the fullness of his conceit, he has whispered,

"Maria once told me she did affect me; and I have heard herself come thus near, that, should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion."

Ah, foolish Malvolio,

"Yonder, i' the sun,
Practicing behavior to his own shadow."

Maria is beholding thee, and already plotting to mortify thy self-love with which the gentle Olivia hath heretofore reproached thee.

"Oh, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite."

We forget the redeeming traits of the poor steward, his honest zeal in behalf of his mistress, his indignant rebuke of her uproarious kinsman—

"Do you make an ale-house of my Lady's house? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time, in you?"

and only remember Malvolio, the coxcomb, assured in his own mind of the favor of the ready-witted maid, and now presuming to look higher.

Maria bethinks herself of all the courteous speeches she may have uttered that have been thus wrested from their intention; all the saucy witticisms devoured as the gravest truths; all the absurd nonsense demurely expressed; in short, all the mockery of female attractiveness that served but to swell the self-love of the conceited Malvolio; exulting in fun and mischief, confident of success, and full of resources, she exclaims,

"Here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling."
Malvolio.—"To be Count Malvolio!"

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Here is example for it;

"The Lady Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe."

On this hint, Maria writes a letter, and leaves it in the pathway of the credulous steward, whereby the penmanship of her mistress is aptly imitated, and many ambiguous hints thrown out, as to his being beloved by one of superior estate. A course of conduct is recommended, and hints as to dress, all of which the deluded Malvolio obeys to the letter.

Olivia is mourning the death of her brother, at the same time that her grief is not too absorbing to render her invulnerable to new wounds, coming in the shape

of a pretty youth of her own sex, disguised in doublet and hose. She says—

"Where is Malvolio? he is sad and civil,
And adapted to my fortunes."

Then cometh this sad and civil steward, "smiling more lines than are in the new map, with the augmentation of the Indies," accoutred in "yellow stockings," and "cross-gartered." Olivia is amazed, and readily adopts the hint of the mischievous waiting maid, that

"The man is tainted in his wits."
Olivia.—"Smil'st thou?
I sent for thee upon a sad occasion."

Malvolio replies, with much feeling,

"I could be sad; this does make some obstruction in the blood, this cross-gartering."

Malvolio is, at length, righted, but not till Maria has had him well punished for his foolish conceit and presumption.

Love is always arbitrary; like the wind, it bloweth where it listeth.

"Love gives itself, and is not bought."

Thousands barter manhood, fame, glory, all the true and the beautiful that should appertain to humanity, and yet win but the semblance of love, perhaps not even that. Let the sex regard it as an axiom, that no man wins upon the regard of a true woman, by compromising his own manly self-respect; by adapting himself to her fancies, or, as Shakspeare hath it, by wearing "yellow stockings," and going "cross-gartered," in the hope to please.

THE MEETING.

BY MRS. M. T. W. CHANDLER.

Oh! Harry, don't ask me to go—
I really can scarcely refuse,
And yet, it perplexes me so,
I hardly know *which* way to choose.
Though our meetings, by stealth, we now snatch,
In the grove just behind the old stile,
I'm sure Pa'll consent to the match,
If you'll only have patience awhile.

He always *was* hard to persuade,
And now he's so cross with the gout,
That pain and ill humor have made
His denial just ten times *more* stout—
But, oh! I'm the only one left
Of his children, to soothe his decay—
Of his daughter, dear Harry, bereft,
How cheerless and dark were his way.

Aunt says you are poor and too young,
To Pa she has told the same things—
I wish she would just hold her tongue,
For nothing but trouble she brings.
But, oh! if you only would wait
A year, dearest Harry, or two,
No change need you fear in your Kate,
She'll ever be constant to you.

Your miniature, Harry, I keep
On the chain round my neck all the time—
With it pressed to my bosom I sleep,
(Aunt would think it a terrible crime.)
Don't fancy your pleadings I slight,
But ask me no more, love, to rove,
And—I'll meet you, dear Harry, to-night
Just behind the old stile in the grove.

THE TOLL BRIDGE.

BY T. B. READ.

COME, Mary, rest thy hand in mine,
Sit nearer to my side,
I'll tell thee, love, what were my thoughts
When crossing yonder tide.

'T was solitary, long and cold,
The bridge I trod to-night;
Three half fed lamps shone ghostly pale
And gave a fitful light.

The river moaned all sullenly,
With never ceasing flow,
The yawning planks displayed, between,
The ebon flood below.

Grim figures moved beside me there
With solemn noiseless tread;

But when I breathed thy name, my love,
How fast those shadows fled.

The echoes of my hurrying feet
Like heralds ran before,
And bade the tottering toller gray
Stand ready at the door.

When gazing on the old man's face,
All scarred with age and strife,
I could but think of him who stands
Beside the bridge of Life.

The bridge to the eternal shore
Time ceaseless rolls beneath,
And all who tread that cheerless way
Must pay the tollman, Death.