

THE  
YOUNG MAIDEN.

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"Young Men, and Maidens; \* \* \*  
Let them praise the name of the Lord."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### FIRST LOVE.

What is love? The first, the only all-pervading. Petrarch and Laura. "Love-matches." Self-oblivion indicates true love. Proofs of one's being affected by this sentiment. Shakspeare's description of a lover. Jealousy and Timidity indicate love. Overtures. Unrequited love. Rejection of Addresses.

I USE the expression at the head of this chapter, because of the importance I attach, not only to the sentiment in general, but especially to its earliest developement. There are those, who sneer at the name of love. There are many, who laugh at its mention, if made in sober earnestness, and yet some of these, who thus speak in public, do, I believe, in the secrecy of their hearts, believe in, ay, reverence, it, as one of the most sacred impulses of our nature. Because we have witnessed, or read of, a silly sentimentalism, that affected its character, let us not straightway question the possibility of its existence in any one.

Nor would I encourage the little girl in musing over novels, or listening to talk on this subject, until she dreams herself in love. There is indeed little danger of this where friends have not made

it a theme for perpetual inuendos and jests, but spoken frankly, simply, and seriously of it, as a reality in human experience. She, who finds herself tending to foolish imaginings on this subject, has but to employ her mind constantly, and preserve her health in soundness, and the illusion will be dispelled.

But what is love? Shall we take the description of it given by the master poet of our nature, who tells us that

“ Love with the motion of all elements,  
Courses as swift as thought in every power;  
And gives to every power a double power,  
Above their functions and their offices”?

It may be thus mighty in its sway over some hearts; but not always are its courses so “swift.” The affections of some “tremble, like a leaf, at every breath of love; while others, like the ocean, are moved only by the breath of a storm.” Yet in all, its approach causes great changes in the character, and usually alters the entire complexion of life. Where the individual has enjoyed great mental culture, it brings in its train increased hazards; and in not a few hearts, its involutions are strangely complex, and its abysses of fearful depth.

I am one of those who believe, that in strict truth, the first love is the only real, all-pervading affection. There are other sentiments, on which

the marriage relation may be founded with fair and reasonable hopes of an happy result. But no one can love two individuals, simultaneously or successively, with equal strength. There is a fervor, in the freshness of the heart's first gift, that no second occasion can quicken. Petrarch could never have found another Laura. Though his was love at first sight, it endured until twenty-one years had terminated the life of its object. Our earliest manners, tones of voice, and expression of countenance, endure the longest. So does the stamp of love's seal, when new, outshine every subsequent impression. Hence the importance of bestowing this primal treasure with wisdom. Where all of this life, and all of the future is at stake, wary should be our steps, and well pondered our decisions.

We hear much of "love-matches." Weak transactions, but the foam of love's great deep, are many of these matches. Still there is such a thing as marriage based on spontaneous love. It may occur at a chance meeting, not, I allow, to be consummated without the revision of calm judgment, but still the fruit of a moment's impression. There is a kind of love, which is not natural, impulsive, and cordial, but the result of an unnatural predisposition, and an inflamed and diseased imagination. None the less is there an up-welling,

genuine affection, that for the time, commands and absorbs woman's entire being. It is possible, that what is treated here as a jest, and there, as a matter of skepticism, may exist in some true hearts, suddenly conceived, yet persevered in, and permanent.

Some marry for money, others for beauty, for intelligence, or rank, or family, or fancy; there are those who marry for love. We have known females, who venerated the object of their affection so completely, as to mourn sincerely their own unworthiness of, and regard themselves as a simple gift of God to so good a man. Where one sees this beautiful self-oblivion, can he be a true philosopher, and assign any cause for it, save the existence of genuine love? She, who unites to this passion a provident self-possession, who is as calm, as she is keenly susceptible, will enter the marriage relation with the happiest omens of joy, and ever-growing success, in every coming duty.

After these preliminary remarks, it will be expected that I should give a sketch of the tokens and proofs of one's being under the influence of this sentiment. It occasions, on its approach, important changes in the feelings and character, such as no one experiences without being sensible of their occurrence, although, so close is the

resemblance between love and the effects of a warm imagination, that one may fancy herself in love, when she really is not. It wakes emotions and sympathies never before awakened, and lying deep in our nature. No writer has described its signs and effects so minutely as Shakspeare. If we may believe him, it is not always marked by deliberation, and entire self-possession:

“ If thou rememberest not the slightest folly  
That ever love did make thee run into,  
Thou hast not loved ;  
Or if thou hast not sat, as I do now,  
Wearing thy hearer in thy mistress' praise,  
Thou hast not loved -  
Or if thou hast not broke from company,  
Abruptly, as my passion now makes me,  
Thou hast not loved.”

Love makes the hours, when its object is absent, long and dreary. It renders even the contemplation of the preferred one more agreeable than the society of others. A prepossession for a particular individual usually makes one jealous of attentions bestowed by him on other persons. I once heard a gentleman remark, that it was this jealousy, which first convinced him that he was in love. You cannot open your lips to speak against him, who has impressed your heart. You will inwardly, although not probably in words, defend him from the attacks of others. To blush and falter under such circumstances would indicate love, much more surely than open professions.

Were the question put by yourself "Do I love this person?" the first reply,—that of timidity and doubt,—would be, "no." Still for no consideration could you rest an hour in that conclusion. Unstaid in all motions else, there would be one fixed object,

"The constant image of the creature  
That is beloved."

Should Overtures be made by a gentleman, it requires great delicacy to treat them aright. Are you decided in the determination to accept them, let your reply be prompt. It is ungenerous to trifle with the feelings of another, when in your power. Perhaps you need advice. Those entitled to your first regard, on this subject, are your parents. Reserve at this period causes many unhappy mistakes. A word of information, a hint from so true a friend as a mother, may confirm your undecided purpose, or lead you at once to abandon it. Let it not be your fault, if you do not enjoy the benefit of such valuable counsel. Suppose your parents object to the connection, when your heart is interested, and judgment approves your affection. There are examples of noble self-denial under these circumstances. Cases there are, too, in which health, peace of mind, and even life, have been the forfeit paid for compliance with such advice. I believe it right, where the opposition is

evidently unreasonable, that a young lady should obey the promptings of her own heart. Gretna Green, if it have witnessed the union of some unprincipled fugitives from home, has seen others joined in a true and sacred bond. Is not such a resort better than to hang, or suffocate oneself, as is so often done in France by thwarted lovers? The instances that justify this procedure may be very rare, yet surely it is better to follow nature's holiest law, than to drag out a lingering life of martyrdom, as thousands have done, to gratify what the world knew to be but a whim of an ambitious father, or a capricious mother. When conscience approves the step, let it be firmly taken. If the blessing of God can be invoked upon it, then is it right.

Another event may occur. The offering of the heart may prove Unrequited. She, who has poured forth the fulness of her affections, meets a chilling repulse. Perhaps it is instant; or there may be intimations of a favorable regard that shall fan, and keep alive, a hope. That hope is at length totally crushed. How is one to demean herself, under this severe trial? Let her cherish no resentment. This will but aggravate her sufferings and expose her to contempt. Neither should she dwell morbidly on her fate, and nurse in her bosom the seeds of consumption. Rather let the

whole energy of her soul be given to banish the occurrence from her thoughts, and let her seek relief from the Source of all solace.

The task of extinguishing our affection for an individual, voluntarily, is never an easy one. They, who are called by circumstances to this effort, should know that it can usually be effected only by a resolute purpose, and by a force of exertion which, to those of strong feelings, seems almost to rend the spirit in twain. Yet so it must be. As a lady has well remarked—"to a frank and ardent nature," and such usually have this sex, "reasoning on love is a useless pastime;—it can be overcome only by an effort strong as the whirlwind, such as uproots the young and vigorous oak, in its bright leafing time. Woman's warm nature must cast it far away at once, though death were in the parting."

You may feel it a duty to reject the offers of a suitor. In this case, let your decision be communicated in such a manner as to spare the feelings of him, who cannot but be mortified, if not humbled, by your decision. How can she maintain a clear conscience, or even a sense of honor, who exposes a gentleman, under these circumstances, to the derision of the public? Let no one share the secret, beyond the precincts of your own family. Return all letters, and leave no evidence of

the disappointment of your friend, where it may be discovered.

She, who conducts thus kindly and wisely, will retain still a respect for her suitor. If she lose his friendship, or alienate him entirely from her regard, it is sufficient proof that there was something wrong, either in the spirit, or the manner, of her refusal. Why should one sink in your estimation, for an event unexpected on his part, and for which he had seen nothing in your previous deportment, perhaps, to prepare him? Let your conduct be judicious, and then, should he address himself to another lady, she will not indeed have his first love, yet, unless greatly prejudiced by the fact of his previous rejection, she may accept his addresses, and be united to him, with the fair hope of a happy life.