

the housekeeper quailed. Lord Seymour stayed a few moments longer to acquaint Molly with the supper hour, and assure her that as the bell rang he should be at her door to escort her to the dining-room.

"Shall I send you a maid to unpack your trunk and assist you to dress, 'My Lady?'" asked Meadows obsequiously, as she turned to leave the room.

"Wait on 'My Lady' yourself, Meadows," interposed Lord Seymour, "until such time as I can find a maid to whom I can entrust her comfort."

So Meadows remained. Molly threw herself carelessly in a chair by the window, entertained with looking out into the street. Was she thinking of her loving friends at the farm? were those unshed tears which made the exquisite eyes so liquid as they glanced at the passers-by?

Meadows assisted by a maid, unpacked the trunk. Molly turned with some haughtiness as a repressed laugh broke on her ear. The grey gown that Molly had insisted should be packed, was held up by the underling with a laugh at its prim fashion.

"That is a favourite gown of mine," said Molly coldly. She advanced slowly, took it and folded it with care. Some lavender lay in an open box. Molly strewed it in the drawer and laid down the gown as if it had been wrought in gold. There was no emotion visible in her manner, however, and the interested maid seeing the velvets and laces in the trunk, at once conceived that it was

simply a masquerade dress of "My Lady's." Molly gave no explanation of her conduct, merely returning to her seat by the window until the under-maid had departed, and Meadows said it was time to dress for supper.

Had Molly chosen, Meadows would have gossiped freely of the ladies of the household and their grand doings, but Molly's manner was cold and haughty; Meadows respected the newcomer the more for her indifference to her blandishments.

Marjorie was arrayed in the squire's favourite gown of blue velvet, showing the exquisite white neck and arms. It was too rich a dress for her years, but the squire would not be gainsaid when he took a fancy into his head, and even Mrs. Bathurst had enjoyed the fair picture the beautiful maid presented in such rich attire.

The effect upon her relatives was that of a thunder-clap. Was this the country cousin? A kind of kindling wrath gathered in Lady Seymour's mind as her son led Molly into the dark oaken-pannelled room—looking like a beautiful flower, and that an exotic. Her own daughters, pale girls with a lighter tint of the Seymour hair, looked washed-out, haggard and old beside Marjorie. Surely if hatred could kill, then before the glances of these three ladies Molly must have been slain.

There was no lack of breeding now in the advances made by the ladies Seymour, but it came too late, and the underlying tone of insincerity was easily

detected by Molly, who had been accustomed all her life since her awakening at the farm to absolute truth in her friends. She remained cold and haughty to Lord Seymour's eye, implacable as her father had been. Attempts to draw her out about her life in the country now and afterwards proved unavailing. She never mentioned any of her former friends, or in any way gratified the idle curiosity of her new relatives.

When supper was over, Lord Seymour drew Molly to a beautiful withdrawing-room. In an alcove there, a curtained recess, was a fine painting of a very handsome man in court dress. He led Molly to it and pointed it out to her, carefully watching its effect upon her. Molly looked long, colour came to her cheeks. It was evident that she recognised it. Lord Seymour looking back and forth from the pictured face to the living one, could read the likeness readily. At that moment angry, cold and haughty, Lady Marjorie was her father over again.

"You remember him, do you not?" asked Lord Seymour.

"C'est mon père," murmured Molly with a slight shrug of surprise at the question; "and," pointing to a portrait of "His Majesty" on another wall, "There's Charley!"

"His Majesty King Charles," said Lord Seymour gravely.

"His Majesty King Charles," repeated Molly, making a half mocking curtsy to the picture.

(To be continued.)

## MODERN GIRLS.

BY AMY S. WOODS.



HY does the question "what is your opinion of modern girls" invariably evoke such a disparaging and contemptuous reply? "Modern girls," and the specimen of masculine or feminine humanity to

whom the question is addressed, turns up his or her "noble nose with scorn," with a pleasant sense of superiority to the class under discussion.

Why—oh why, are we poor maidens of modern times so harshly criticised and judged? What have we done that we should as a class be treated with pitying contempt, thinly veiled by mock courtesy and exaggerated flattery? Is it not unjust that because some women are, as we must sadly confess, "slipshod, vain, inconstant, childish, proud and full of fancies," the majority of us should be treated as though we had no brains, and were incapable of appreciating any conversation beside the frothy, vapid, small talk of modern society? Men, as a rule, seem to consider that all women are, in a greater or less degree, stupid, and should feel intensely flattered if such infinitely superior beings as themselves condescend to talk sense to them. The age of chivalry and old-world courtesy is past—perhaps we would not desire its return, but is the change from the courtly manners of the last century to those of the present day entirely

welcome? Do we not occasionally long for the days when women were, at least outwardly, held in higher esteem, and treated with the courtesy and consideration due from strength to weakness?

I do not mean to imply that women have not to a great extent wrought this change themselves. Many of them prefer camaraderie to stately courtesy, and in many of the pursuits and amusements of modern life, stately manners would be terribly ludicrous and out of place. A woman can hardly expect to be honoured with a grandisonian bow from her partner at tennis each time he hands her a ball, or from her companion in the hunting-field when he gives her a lead over some awkward "bull-finch" or "oxer."

We live a much freer, bolder life than our great-grandmothers, have far more independence, and more ability to act for ourselves. Women join now in the brunt and battle of toil and active work, and meet men on their own ground in various walks of life, compete with them for the same positions, and enter for the same examinations—occasionally heading the list.

Though modern novels we are all more or less familiar with the imaginary literary modern girl. Her chroniclers are unanimous in depicting her either as a feminine monstrosity, severe of countenance and angular of form, the beauty of her short-sighted eyes enhanced by spectacles—her whole appearance from the crown of her uncompromising hat to the soles of her square-toed boots, proclaiming her as "deeply, darkly, desperately blue"—or as a dream of

beauty, "wearing all her weight of learning lightly like a flower," who clad in garments of artistic hue and cut, casts languishing glances from her lovely eyes upon stony-hearted professors, who hasten to cast themselves at her fairy feet. In point of fact the literary girl, as a rule, resembles neither the one nor the other of these creations of the novelist's brain. If she is only would-be literary, she probably affects eccentricity in order to call attention to her supposed acquirements, but if she is really clever and highly-educated, she will not stoop to such mean devices, and appears a very every-day sort of mortal to casual observers, who are often terribly disappointed and not a little aggrieved, when they find out that they have been talking small talk of the most washy description to a fair B.A. or sweet girl graduate.

Feminine inconsistency is the masculine war-cry of the present day. If a woman dares to have an opinion of her own upon questions of the day, and expresses a desire to see certain reforms carried out for the benefit of her poorer brethren, the masculine world thinks it her duty to be preternaturally grave, staid, and sedate in order that her demeanour may support her theories. And on the other hand, if a girl is naturally lively and fond of social pleasures, she is ranked with the empty-headed butterflies of society, and is not supposed to possess a mind capable of greater enthusiasm than that evoked by a gown or bonnet.

Can nothing convince our male critics that it is not necessary or even usual for a university graduate to appear as though her clothes were

thrown on with a pitch-fork, nor should attention to her attire and conformity to present fashion be considered incongruous in the case of a woman who devotes thought and personal influence to the improvement of the welfare of the masses. Finery is obnoxious anywhere; superfluity of colour and ornament an offence alike against the canons of good taste and mental refinement; but love of beauty, and the instinct of devoting care and thought to appearances are truly womanly characteristics, and deserve commendation rather than contempt.

I do not for one moment desire to question the superiority of man. Let the advocates of women's rights say what they may, we can never get away from the fact, that though superior to man in fact, quickness of perception and observation, we are inferior as a class.

"Woman's pleasure, woman's pain,  
Nature made them blinder motions bounded  
in a shallower brain."

One of the greatest evils of social life in these modern days is the desire, too many women possess, of placing themselves on an equality with man. They fail, miserably fail, and become weak, inferior copies, or rather caricatures of himself, that a man will never respect, and cannot honour. They lose refinement, and with that one of woman's greatest charms. Let a woman train her mind, and develop her faculties as much as is in her power to do so, not with the idea of thereby endeavouring to place herself on an equal footing with man, but rather with a view to rendering herself more fitted for the purpose she was originally created for, to be his help-meet.

If acquaintance with the higher branches of knowledge makes her a more useful member of society, and more helpful to her father or brother, or a more congenial companion to her husband, if by cultivating her mind she can share his interests and pursuits more fully than she could otherwise do; or if unmarried, she is willing to use her learning for the benefit of others less favoured than herself, by all means let her be highly educated; but if on the other hand she takes up study as a caprice, or with the view of selfish gratification only, let her beware lest she become one of those contemptible feminine prigs, who have brought such odium upon highly educated women.

Much is heard nowadays about woman's "sphere of labour" and her vocation. For my own part I consider that in the majority of cases the true sphere for a woman's work is Home. There is too great a tendency among modern women to deny this. It is one of the features of the age that the majority of girls are no longer satisfied with their home-life, but are always craving for a more independent and exciting existence.

With the exception of the girls who are true and constant lovers of learning and knowledge, and desire not other sweets of life than those the acquisition of knowledge can give, the time for emancipation and release from school-room routine is generally ardently anticipated. Before the happy *débutante* lies a golden dream of fairy-land, an unbroken holiday, which she fondly imagines will last for ever. But to many comes a time when having exulted in their liberty and made acquaintances with the pleasures of society, a gradual disillusion and vacuum appear in their lives, and a sense of *ennui* and discontent steals over them.

"My home-life is so dull, there is really nothing to do, and one is sick of tennis-parties and visiting, so I have determined to cut out

a new kind of life for myself. I am tired of this stale, hum-drum existence, I want to go out into the world and earn my own living."

Such is the remark which is heard, with variations, from the lips of too many girls in the present day.

Not for one moment would I condemn the honest desire of a woman to support herself, if there is any need for her to do so; or if, after earnest reflection, she can truthfully say she is not needed at home, and has talents and energies lying fallow which she desires to use on behalf of her fellow-creatures.

But too often it is not by this class of girls that the complaint is made, but by those who are naturally discontented and conceited. Very frequently, if that apparently noble and self-sacrificing resolve to earn her own living, made by one who has hitherto "fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life," were analysed and shown in its true colours, it would read very differently. "I am not appreciated at home. I want to go amongst strangers who will estimate and value my talents and my nobility of character more highly." This is too often the true motive that prompts a girl to leave the happy shelter of her home.

Because a nineteenth century maiden can bind up a cut finger and does not faint at



the sight of a severed artery, she imagines she is cut out for a hospital nurse, and fondly pictures herself as a sort of ministering angel, who, wearing a most becoming uniform, smooths the pillows and watches by the bedside of interesting patients, or performs miracles of Herculean strength in lifting and supporting burly costermongers and colliers, and is the wonder and admiration of doctors, nurses, and patients. Fortunately, if she carries out her intention and enters a hospital, she is speedily awakened to a sense of her folly and incapacity by the hard work she has to do, and the scant consideration with which her inexperience is treated, and in many cases she gladly resigns her post and returns to the home she has learned to appreciate.

Nursing has become one of the fashionable crazes of the day, and almost every girl seems to imagine she is a born nurse. As a refuge for discontented and dissatisfied women, the hospitals and training institutions seem to have taken the place of the sisterhoods, possibly because no vows are enforced on those who enter them, and masculine society is not prohibited.

But, while condemning the actions of heedless girls, who lightly throw aside home duties and responsibilities for more exciting occupations, we cannot deny that the home-life of

many women is "a life of nothing—nothing worth." A little shopping and visiting, a little letter-writing, and a great deal of gossip, tittle-tattle, and frivolity, are their sole interests. Accomplishments, if only learnt because they were included in the curriculum of a fashionable education, are seldom kept up, and novel-skipping ousts more solid reading from the field. In these cases church and parish work is frequently turned to as a means for killing time, and because decorations, choir-practices, and guild-meetings infuse a little excitement into dull lives. Excellent and commendable in every way is this work, if undertaken with a right spirit and a higher motive than mere occupation and self-pleasing; but too often it is carried on in such an erratic manner as to be worse than useless, and by descending into mere "curatolary" brings discredit and ridicule upon the Church.

A great many girls scorn the idea of using their spare time in learning household management and domestic economy, and so training themselves for the time when they may have households of their own. Childlike innocence is their rôle, and they love to profess entire and utter ignorance of the prosaic details of daily life. Certainly we may pity them, and pity still more the unfortunate men who marry them.

The foolish idea that it is derogatory for a woman to visit her own kitchen, or to arrange and keep in order her own drawing-room, is happily dying out, but it is not yet extinct. The hardest and most menial work will be undertaken in a sisterhood or hospital by a woman who would be horrified if asked to perform the lightest duties in her own home; and many women have yet to learn that a knowledge of house-management is not incompatible with mental culture, and that she has quite as great a duty to perform towards her husband in seeing after his home comforts as in sympathising with his work and interests.

Because women are domesticated, it does not follow that they are un-intellectual. A woman who loves her home, and takes a pride in ordering everything aright for the comfort of those who dwell in it, will take just as much pride in acquainting herself with all the topics of interest that have an attraction for them, in order that she may be a more congenial companion for those with whom she lives. Home is the woman's kingdom; it is there she has so great a power to influence, soothe, and charm. Let her, then, rule that kingdom well and faithfully, remembering that the hallowed influences of early years spent in a home where love and gentle pity exert their sway are never lost. The tender memories of a mother's or sister's loving influence will soften many a disappointment of after-life, and, maybe, withstand many a strong temptation.

A woman is endowed with an immense and almost unrivalled power of influence; but that power is not used aright on usurping man's place and swaying the hearts of the populace by platform eloquence. Hers must be the holier influence of a life eloquent with all the feminine attributes of sympathy, love, and self-sacrifice, the graces of sweet condescension and courtesy to all around her, that she may rule as a queen over all hearts and prove herself—

"A creature not too fine and good  
For human nature's daily food;  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

\* \* \* \* \*  
A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command."

—Wordsworth.