

The Inner Sisterhood eBook

The Inner Sisterhood

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The Inner Sisterhood.

The Inner Sisterhood

T.I.S.

—*A social study in high colors*—

by

DOUGLASS SHERLEY

WHO WROTE

The Valley of Unrest: A Book without a Woman

1884 IMPRIMARY *Louisville, Kentucky John P. Morton and company*

* * * * *

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1884,
By Douglass Sherley.

* * * * *

The Inner Sisterhood.

Dedicated to



One of the Sisterhood.

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Just After the Ball:

Miss Kate Meadows.

ROBERT FAIRFIELD, LOVER:

Miss Belle Mason.

THE BUZZ-SAW GIRL:

Miss Alice Wing.

FLIRTING FOR REVENUE ONLY:

Miss Rose Clendennin.

Mother and Daughter:

Miss Sophia Gilder.

A CASE OF COMPOUND FRACTURE.

Miss Mary Lee Manley.

Platitudes and Pleasures:



Miss Lena Searlwood.

* * * * *

I

A Bit of Sweet Simplicity
In Blue.

* * * * *

Just After The Ball.

The storm-door closes with a bang! My escort, a stupid fellow, has said "Good-night!" He drives down the street in his old rattletrap of a coupe. I am so glad he is gone! And yet I am always afraid of burglars—or—something dreadful, whenever I go into the house alone so late at night. I bolt the inside door. I mount the hall-chair, left waiting by papa, and, trembling with a nameless fear, turn out the gas and leave myself in darkness. I make two vain dashes for the stair; a third, and I have found it. I grope for the heavy rail and go rapidly up, two steps at a time,



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and finally, out of breath, badly frightened, reach my room. What a relief! I turn on the light—two, three, yes, four burners, and wish for more. I stir up the fire into a blaze; look over my left shoulder, but see nothing; listen, but hear nothing. I wheel my dressing-table near by; seat myself before the pretty oval mirror. I tear off those ugly blossoms, sent by that stupid man for me to wear; I look long and earnestly at the tired face I see reflected in the pretty oval mirror, with its beveled edges and dainty drapery of pink silk and pure white mull. It is not a pretty face; even my friends do not think me beautiful. Yet I sometimes fancy—alas! perhaps it is only a fancy—that I have on my face a suggestion of beauty, even if beauty itself be absent. My eyes are full and dark, with long lashes; my mouth is somewhat large, not a good shape either, and some people—who do not like me—say that they can easily detect a hard, cold expression which does not please them. But my profile is good in spite of my ill-featured mouth, and there is—generally acknowledged—a certain high-born, well-bred look about the poise of my shapely head which gains for me more than a mere passing notice. My manners are pronounced “charming,” and by many—those who like me—charmingly faultless. So, after all, in spite of this lack of a positive style of beauty, I am what might be termed a “social success.” But it is a social success which I have slowly gained, with much labor, and its duration is somewhat uncertain. I am just beginning to be sure of myself, although this is my fourth winter out. True, I have almost always had an escort to every thing given, but I have never been able to fully assert myself. Now, wherever I go, I boldly, and without fear, seek out some comfortable place in some one room, at reception, party, or ball, and rest assured that all of my now-many friends and half dozen or more lovers will seek me out, and having found me, will linger about me the entire evening; and if I like, I need not even move from that one pleasant place during the entertainment, but have my supper brought to me and the two or three other girls who make up our set, for you know it is so disagreeable to crowd into the supper-room; it is a vulgar eagerness, that carries with it a low-born air of actual hunger, and it is so vulgar to be hungry; and our set is so well-born and so well-reared. But, O, my! my hair’s all in a tangle; comes of trying to do it up in a Langtry-knot. I don’t think it is a nice way to fix hair, anyhow. I like to pile mine on the top of my head. Don’t much care if people like it or not. And yet—well, yes, I believe I do care a little bit. I suppose I’ll have to take it down myself to-night, and not call the maid, because she’s very tired, and when she’s tired she’s cross; I hate cross people. But I ought not to blame her, because I’ve been out four nights this week, and the musicale is to-morrow evening. The musicales are always so nice—for



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people who like music, and I have many friends who are so devoted to music, at least they say they are. O, this is such a gay season! I don't know why, but people say it is always going to be dull, and yet, it is always so gay. The men go down to the Pelham Club a great deal more than they ought, and yet they don't neglect us entirely; and surely we have no reason to complain for a lack of parties. Just think of it! three crushes in two weeks, seven small affairs, excellent play at the theater all of next week, and I already have three nights engaged, and a chance of two more. That stupid fellow said something about would I like to go with him some time during the week. How provokingly vague! But he never made it more definite and final; just never said another word about it. I hate men who neglect things.

Now, my hair is all combed out, and it's not a bad color, either. I never knew that Belle Mason to have as good a time as she undoubtedly had to-night. She was actually surrounded the entire evening; four or five men all the time, and I not more than three. I never did like her; she has such a conceited air; and now she'll be worse than ever. But I should not have cared if every other man in the house had stood by her the entire evening, but to think that even Robert Fairfield was with her constantly! He only bowed *AT ME* from across the room, and never came near me. At the Monday-night German he gave me, with a hand-touch and a smile, this red rose, then a bud, and I, foolishly, wore it to-night, although it was faded. The horrid, withered thing! Yes, I was actually foolish enough to wear it for his sake, and he all the time by the side of Belle Mason! It was a brilliant affair to-night—so every body said; at least a dozen said as much to me, and I heard a great many more saying that same thing to our hostess. All the people really seemed to have a good time. But somehow I didn't enjoy myself much, and there are several reasons why. I abominate going out with a stupid man; but there was no other to go with, so it was an absolute necessity, because go I must. He brought a shabby, uncomfortable coupe. He had sent ugly, dabby flowers; and he hung about me the entire evening with the silent, confident air of the young person who fancies himself engaged to you. He said nothing; he did nothing—except bring me a melted ice; but he looked a number of unutterably stupid things. And I heard more than one woman, in a loud, coarse whisper, say, "I wonder why she came with that stupid stick of a man?" But, of course, they didn't mean for me to hear it; they would not be so unkind; but, unfortunately for my comfort, I did hear, and every word. But that was not all. It's a hard thing for a woman, in a gay season, to appear each night in a new dress. Of course you can have one nice, white dress, and change the ribbons—sometimes pink, sometimes blue, or any color that may happen to strike your fancy—but sooner or later people will find



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that out; they will just know it's the same dress with other ribbons, and it's a social deception which fashionable society-idiots just will not tolerate. You must appear in a new dress or an old dress, undisguised. Now, to-night, how was I to know that Mrs. Babbington Brooks could afford to give so elegant an affair, or in fact would be able to induce so large a number of the best and nicest people in town to be present at this, her first entertainment. People said it was going to be crude, perhaps disagreeable. So I wore that pale-blue silk—old shade of blue—which I almost ruined at the Monday-night German. When I entered the dressing-room four or five of my best girl-friends affectionately kissed me on the cheek, and exclaimed something about being so glad that I had worn my pretty, pale-blue silk, and that it was so becoming; and was it not that same "love-of-a-dress" which I had worn at the Monday-night German? Now I really would believe those girls malicious if I did not know they were—each one of the dear, sweet creatures—*perfectly devoted* to me; because they have told me of their devotion many times, and I know they would not say any thing they did not mean—girls in our set never do!

But this painful fact remains: my pale-blue silk is *not* becoming! I am entirely too dark to wear pale-blue, and I am just dying for a terra-cotta. It's the loveliest shade in all the world! Papa likes blue, so I ordered it to please him, because he is of the opinion that every body looks well in that color, because mamma always looked well in blue when she was young and beautiful. That reminds me what several old married women said to me at the party to-night: "O, my dear, your mamma was perfectly beautiful when she was your age! And she had so much attention, and from such nice young men!" And they looked right at that stupid fellow, for his silent stupidity had driven away all the other men, who were just as nice as any of mamma's old beaux, too. But those old ladies could not have meant any thing, because they are dear mamma's most intimate friends, and I am sure must take a kindly interest in my welfare. It's a dreadful thing to have had a beautiful mamma, when you are not considered beautiful yourself, in fact barely good-looking.

But quickly to bed, or I will look what I am, tired and worn-out, at the musicale to-morrow evening. I must be fresh and well-rested, because I am to play, and alone, a most difficult instrumental piece. It's one of those lovely "Nocturnes." I wonder if I'll be encored? I was not when I played at the last musicale.

The lights are out! The fire burns low! I thrust back the little dressing-table, with its pretty oval mirror, beveled edges, and dainty drapery of pale pink silk and pure white mull. I tenderly take that withered rose from off the floor, where I rudely tossed it in my anger of an hour ago.



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I forget that stupid fellow, my escort; the pale-blue dress, so often worn; the random words—idle, thoughtless, and unkind, at least in their effect; even pretty Belle Mason fades away, and her charm and her triumph no longer remembered against her. I go a-drifting from all unpleasant memories! I murmur a prayer learned at mamma's knee long years ago, and alas! for long years left unsaid. I kneel in the firelight glow, I tenderly, fondly kiss that red rose. True, it is withered and dead, yet how sweet it is to my lips, and how dear it is to my heart! Something whispers that I love the man who gave it me! It seems to quiver to life again, and tremulous with a strange, new joy, I remember the hand-touch and the smile which came with the giving of that red rose.

[Illustration: Miss Kate Meadows (of the Inner Sisterhood)]

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II

A Dash of Jealousy and Hypocrisy
Done up in Old Gold.

* * * * *

ROBERT FAIRFIELD, LOVER.

Robert Fairfield is an average man among men—but he is something more: He is the ideal man among women. All women have ideals, and there is not, there can not be a more dangerous piece of heart-furniture. An ideal is easily broken, sometimes badly damaged, always liable to injury; and the heart of woman hath not one cabinet-maker who can, with his touch and skill, bring back one departed charm, one lost beauty.

I know this man—and yet I do not. I love him—and yet, again, I do not. I suspect that, woman-like, I am more fond of his charming, delicate attentions than I am of the man himself. I sometimes fancy that he loves me; but I am wise enough in my day and generation to be painfully aware of the fact that just about six other women entertain the same delicious fancy. He has told me of his love, told me in a gentle, artistic manner—and doubtless he has told the six other females the same story; for he need not trouble himself to vary the telling each time, because he has no fear of detection.

He knows that he is never the topic of conversation among women. They seldom, if ever, discuss their ideals, and all of them, myself included, have a most evidently-conscious air whenever dear Robert's name happens to be mentioned, no matter how trivial the mention. But I am the least touched, and surely the more unresponsive of the entire seven, consequently he is more devoted to me than to any of the others. He was by my side the entire evening at Mrs. Babbington Brooks's elegant and most fashionable ball the other night; he was my escort to the musicale last Tuesday, and O,



he did look so handsome! And he never before said *so many* positively tender things, and he said them in such a tired, pathetic tone, that he almost won my heart; really, when I'm with the man I am sure that I love him, and most devotedly. But I have perfect control over myself and my limited supply of feeling—Henry Seyhmoor says I am without a heart; so I only look at him full in the face when he tells me all those tender little things, and then turn away with a light laugh—assumed, of course—and gently but firmly remind him that I am *not* Kate Meadows.



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Ah, here is a note from him now! He always writes from the Club—the Pelham, of course. I don't know the people who belong to any other Club. What a nice thing it must be to go down to the Club at night, or whenever you like—I wish I was a man. And this is his note:

“Your Platonic friend, Henry Seyhmoor, seems quite devoted here of late, my dear Miss Mason. I saw you with him last evening at the theater; your talk charmed him into unusual silence. How entertaining you must have been!” “Won't you go with me to the opera Friday night; and won't you be as nice to me then as you were at the musicale—no, not that nice only, but even nicer still—as nice—as—well—as I should like you to be; won't you?”

“Robert Fairfield”

A note of mere nothings. My common sense tells me that much. Yet I find myself forming words for myself between the written lines, and twice read that dainty card, with the crest and motto of Pelham. Of course I'll go with him; for to go with Robert Fairfield any where means a delightful time to any girl so fortunate. It means a bunch of roses almost heavenly in their sweet loveliness! It means the two best seats in the theater! It means the turning of a hundred envious female eyes from all parts of the crowded house; for our theater is always crowded on Friday nights, no matter what the play or players may chance to be. Because it is fashionable to go on Friday nights, and theatergoers in this town are so fashionable.

I am glad, at least once a year, that I am a Methodist, because we don't keep Lent. But Kate Meadows is very high-church, and, of course, she ought to keep it! I wonder if she will? She was not out during the Langtry engagement; but that was on account of lack of men, not on account of Lent; because her little brother told my Cousin Mary's little girl that nobody had asked his sister to go any where for days and days, and that his papa had to take her whenever she went any where. However, I suppose she'll go, if she goes at all, with her papa; he often takes her out. I heard her say that she did just love to go out with her dear papa, and that it pleased him so much. Poor old man! I saw him nodding and napping, nearly dead for sleep, the last time he was out with her. It's a shame to keep him up so! As for myself, I would never go *any where* if I had to, for the lack of a man, always be dragging poor papa out. It must be so very mortifying. But nothing could mortify that girl; she is such an upstart. Her bonnets and her dresses are the talk of the town, because they are so ugly and unbecoming. But she has a gracious and pleasant manner, and sometimes has a good deal of attention—whenever she once gets out. People frequently say nice things about her; but I am sure it's their duty, because she entertains charmingly and often. She never gives any thing like a regular party, but quiet little affairs



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that are acknowledged to be very elegant by all who are so fortunate as to be invited—because people never decline invitations to her house. She is the only girl that I am afraid may finally win Robert Fairfield. She's passionately, foolishly in love with him! Why, I saw him give her a red rose-bud at our last Monday-night German, off in the corner—he didn't know I was looking—and didn't I see her wear that same red bud, then a withered rose, to Mrs. Babbington Brooks' the following Thursday evening? She wore the shriveled thing on her left shoulder, nestled down in a lover's knot of pale-blue ribbon. But I made myself so agreeable and altogether lovely that dear Robert F. did not go near her the entire evening; only gave her, from across the room, by my side, the *bow of compensation*. He left that rose, thanks to me and my successful efforts, to languish unnoticed in its lover's knot of pale blue. Ah, Kate Meadows, that time your lover's knot was made in vain!

The "Earnest Workers," a society of our church, for ladies only, meets this afternoon at four, and it's nearly that time now; so I must put on what I call my "charity dress and poverty hat." It's such a good thing to dress plain and religious-like now and then, just for a change, especially when it's becoming. I will carry my little work-basket and wear, as I go down the street, a quiet, sober smile, and cultivate a pious air—a trifle pious anyhow. And if I chance to meet Mr. Fairfield he will, of course, join me, and wonder as we walk how one so worldly can be, at times, so charitably inclined and so full of such good works and holy thoughts. I sometimes wish I was good. But it's so stupid to be good, and the men don't like you half as well. And I am very willing to acknowledge it, I like the admiration of men. I don't know any "balm in Gilead" so sweet and altogether acceptable.

But see! Down the street, right beneath my room-window, comes *that* Kate Meadows; and Robert Fairfield's with her! He holds her prayer-book in his hand! How earnestly they are talking! I wonder what it's about? What a tender look on his face turned full toward her downcast eyes! O, the *hypocrite*! They are both hypocrites; we are all hypocrites! On their way to that horrid afternoon Lenten service! It's a whole square out of the way to come by this house! She did it on purpose; I know it, I know it! She just wanted me to see her with him! She's the meanest girl in this town! I always disliked her, and now I fairly despise the very ground she walks on—when she's walking it with him! She's coming to spend all of Tuesday morning with me; won't I be gracious though! I'll kiss her three or four times, instead of the regulation-twice! I *can* be hypocritical, and *sauve* too! I don't wish I was good! I don't ever want to be good! They have turned the corner! They are out of sight! I just won't go one step to the "Earnest Workers!" It's all nonsense, any how! Just sewing, and gossiping, and talking about the minister and his wife, and all the rest of the congregation who are not there! No, *no*, NO! I'll just stay right here at home, and I'll have—yes, I will—I'll have a real good cry.



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[Illustration: Miss Bella Mason. (of the Inner Sisterhood.)]

* * * * *

III

A Wild Fantasy
In Garrulous Red.

* * * * *

The Buzz-Saw Girl

I just must talk! I must talk all the time! Of course I talk entirely too much—no one knows that any better than I do—yet I can not help it! I know that my continual cackling is dreadful, and I know just exactly when it begins to bore people, but somehow I can't stop myself, but go right on and on in spite of myself.

Aunt Patsey says I am simply fearful, and just like a girl she used to know, who lived down-East, a Miss Polly Blanton, who talked *all* the time; told every thing, every thing she knew, every thing she had ever heard; and then when she could think of nothing else, boldly began on the *family secrets*. Well, I believe I am just like that girl—because I am constantly telling things about our domestic life which is by no means pleasant. Pa and ma lead an awful kind of an existence—live just like cats and dogs. Now I ought never to tell that, yet somehow it will slip out in spite of myself!

My pa says I really do act as if I did not have good sense, and I am, for the world, just like ma. And ma, she says I am without delicacy, manners, or any of the other new touches that most girls have. As for Aunt Patsey, she is *always* after me! She is "Old Propriety" itself! She goes in heavy for *good form*. "Not good form, my dear, not good form!" is what I hear from morning until night. I do get so tired of it! They are all real hard on me! No body ever gives me encouragement, and yet every body is ready with heavy doses of admonition! Now ma is a powerful big talker herself, although she won't acknowledge it; but she always seems to know just what not to say! I call that real talking-luck! I am so unlucky talking.

But the big power in our house is Aunt Patsey Wing! There is always bound to be such a person in every well-furnished house! They seem to be just as necessary as the sofas and easy-chairs—but not quite so comfortable to have around. We are all deathly afraid of her! She is rich, stingy, and says that she has made a will, leaving every dollar to the "Widows and Orphans' Home"—a nice way to do her relations! So of course we are on the strain; on our best behavior to effect a change in our favor. Ma says she will never, in this world, change it—and changes made in any other world won't do us any good. But pa says he knows how to break it! Mr. Meggley, her lawyer, who drew up the



will, has made an agreement to sell pa the flaw—for of course there is one in it, for all wills have flaws—then he will employ another lawyer and break it without any trouble. My, it will be so exciting! I suppose we will have to prove that Aunt Patsey was



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of unsound mind. Pa will give us our testimony to learn by heart! Pa is a real enterprising man! Some people say he is a regular schemer, but Aunt Patsey says that he is a brilliant financier! He has made and lost two or three big fortunes! He lost one not long ago, and it is so hard just now to make both ends meet. But Aunt Patsey pays a little board; that helps along, at least with the table!

Pa gives me a small allowance—when he has the money; then not one cent more! I believe every body in town knows just how much he allows me! Pa says I told it, myself. Perhaps I did; one can't remember every thing one chances to say. Although my amount is small, yet I have quite a little way of fixing myself, and always looking real nice. Aunt Patsey says I do pretty well, until I open my big mouth and begin to rattle, rattle, rattle! She says I talk more and say less than any body she has ever known, except that down-East girl, Polly Blanton, who always told—when in want of any other topic—the *family secrets*. Aunt Patsey is forever-and-a-day preaching to me about *good form*; what I ought, and what I ought not to do; sometimes repeats long passages from the prayer-book—nearly all the morning service—then says, "It's no use, no use; just like pouring water on a duck's back!" But she must love to do useless things, for she just keeps right on. She says that I ought to be able to keep silent once in a while, anyhow; but I don't know *how* to keep silent.

Some body had to come and tell her—Aunt Patsey—that I talked a great deal, and very loud, at the theater, between acts. Now the idea of finding fault with girls, or any body, who talk *between acts*! Why it's just perfectly delightful! I begin the moment the curtain drops; I don't even wait for the music to begin—it is such a waste of time! I know that I do talk a little too loud; but just lots of real nice persons talk real loud at the theater—it comes natural. When people turn around and look at me as if I was really doing something dreadful, then I talk ever and ever so much more! People can't frown *me* down—no indeed, double deed, not if Alice Wing knows any thing about herself! People who know me never try; except my family, headed by Aunt Patsey, who always says, "We are prompted by a deep sense of duty, my dear, *duty*!"

I am *almost engaged*! Even Aunt Patsey likes the man, and O, so do I! He is nice and quiet, and just loves to hear me talk—never interrupts me, but lets me go on, and looks at me so admiring-like all the time! Ma says I am sure to spoil every thing by too much talking! He is so timid! I encourage him, though, all I can; he seems to like encouragement so much! He understands and appreciates me, too, and that is a great deal; for most of the other men act so funny when they are left alone with me! They nearly always have a solemn, almost scared look—but I really don't know why! I must confess



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that I like stupid men; they may not talk much, yet they seem real eager to listen! Then stupid men always have such good manners, which, in society, counts for a great deal! People who have good manners are so safe—they never do any thing startling! I wish my manners were better—but they are not! After one of Aunt Patsey's talks on *good form*, and strict propriety, I try to improve—regenerate, if possible. I often watch Miss Lena Searlwood, one of the older girls, who is a great favorite with Aunt Patsey—but it is no use! She is a self-contained woman, never ill at ease, and who puts you, and at once, at rights with yourself. She is a most beautiful and discreet talker! She would rather die, burn at the stake, suffer on the rack, than tell even the suspicion of a *family secret*! Aunt Patsey is always talking her up to me, wishing that I would be only a little bit like her anyhow. So the other night, at a party, I took special care to notice the attractive Lena. She is so graceful; quiet grace, ma calls it. She leaned against a heavy, carved chimney-piece, with dark-red plush hangings, and she looked for all the world just like a tall, white flower, slender, beautiful! She was slowly picking to pieces, leaf by leaf, a pale-pink rose, which she had stolen away from somewhere about her willowy, white throat. And while she was doing all this—and it took quite a while, too—she looked full in the face of the man by her side, that rather good-looking, stuck-up Calburt Young, *and said nothing*—absolutely not a word! She did this long enough to make me almost lose my breath. I could not do a thing like that; it would give me nervous prostration sure! Yet, I know it is very effective! It was just like some picture you read about, and it was beautiful, striking, down to the smallest detail. But situations effective, and details pleasing, are not in my line, and they are just as much a mystery as improper fractions used to be when I was a schoolgirl. I hated my school! It was called a “Young Ladies’ Seminary.” It was a fashionable, intellectual hot-house, where premature, fleeting blooms were cultivated regardless of any future consequence. But I was a barren bush! I never fashion-flowered into a profusion of showy blossoms. Aunt Patsey said that I did not reap the harvest of my golden opportunities; but pa, he growled and grumbled a good deal when the bills came pouring in, but paid them, and roundly swore that he was glad he had no more fool-daughters to finish off in a fashionable seminary.

I have a keen sense of the ridiculous, and it gets me in trouble all the time. I don't mean any harm; but I can't help telling a good thing when I hear it or see it myself. Now that *same* Calburt Young can't bear me; he hates me in good fashion because I made fun of his doleful air, and said that he had the looks and the manners of a man who had, in a desperate mood, shot down his sweetheart, concealed the fact, and was suffering the pangs of



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deep remorse for the dreadful deed. He heard about it and got angry! He *does* look awful gloomy! He says I am crude, *very* crude, and put people on edge; and that I am so good-natured, so good-humored all the time that it reduces less fortunate people into a state of most desperate defiance—defiance against my everlasting flow of animal spirits, unchecked by any thing. He told all that to Sophia Gilder, and Sophia is my bosom-friend; so she told me! Aunt Patsey has a great admiration for her mother, Mrs. John Robert Gilder, but says that Sophia, poor girl, is a milk-sop—weak, weak! and taps her shining forehead knowingly. Auntie has a most alarming way of disposing of people! I know all about her methods—gracious goodness! I ought by this time.

About two or three months after I was finished off at the Seminary, Miss Lena Searlwood gave a little affair in my honor. She called it a tea—it really was more like a dinner! They do entertain so well! I was taken home afterward by that Calburt Young—a great privilege I suppose! He was in a bad humor anyhow; had not seen enough of Miss Lena! He let me do all of the talking, never once suggesting a new topic, and listened with an air, not of attention, but enforced toleration. It made me furious! Two or three times he said “Yes?” which was really worse than nothing! Finally, when near home, he turned to me and in a tired, indifferent tone, said: “Beg pardon, Miss Wing; you are *just out*, I believe! What did you study while at school?” It was a fling—I knew it—so I answered, “I studied how to be rude to arrogant, patronizing people who are forever asking impudent questions with a desire to give pain, sir!” He placed my night-key in the door deliberately, calmly; pushed open the door, lifted his hat, turned on his heel, without even closing one half of the storm-doors, like other men always do, and said: “Miss Wing, you have been well taught! You were, indeed, a very apt scholar! I congratulate you! I have the honor to bid you good-night!” I could have picked a dozen pale-pink roses to pieces just then, but not leaf by leaf; I could have torn up a whole rose-tree by the roots! They say Mr. Young is so smart, wonderful deep, and all that; but he is just a mean, rude man, and I won’t ever have any thing more to do with him; and when I say I won’t, *I won’t!*

How some people do ruffle me into a fever-heat of dislike and ardent opposition. Of course I know that it is all wrong, yet after all there is a certain kind of satisfaction. Now, for instance, *that* Mrs. Babbington Brooks, with her smooth, oily tongue, abominable phrases, “Yes, my sweet loves,” and her “O! my dear doves,” sets me fairly wild. She is such a vulgar, low-born person! I always feel tempted to fly right at her and tear off her load of tawdry, costly finery, exhaling a strong, close odor of greenbacks. How people have taken them up! all on account of their money.



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They are invited every where; and only last season people were turning up their noses and asking, "Who, pray, are the Brookses?" Thanks to a cook from somewhere, and a butler from somewhere else, their entertainments are said to be really delightful, and their dinners perfection itself. They are not yet quite sure of their position! They are afraid it will not be permanent! But they will succeed. I know they will, because I *feel it!* To me there is always something very fascinating about these desperate social strugglers—especially when they are successful. Aunt Patsey, too, she says they will succeed, and Aunt Patsey knows! But she don't know every thing, for Mrs. John Robert Gilder has fooled her. But I am not surprised; she would have fooled me, also, if I was not so intimate with Sophia, who tells me *every thing*—the only person who ever did; and there is just nothing I would not do for her. I know Sophia Gilder's *other secret!* She is caring a great deal too much for a man who don't take overmuch interest in her. But the man don't even know that she cares any thing for him, and I don't believe he will ever know—unless I tell him myself! Now I call that real tragedy; just as good as any you ever see on the stage, or read about in books. I would love to tell him; but that is *one thing* I have never told, and I never will, either! As they say in novels, it will go down to my grave with me. I am so anxious about Sophia, I am afraid it may take her there. But I have my doubts, she is right healthy-looking yet. Aunt Patsey says that love hurts a powerful lot, but don't often kill out and out. Robert Fairfield is the man. Ma says she never could understand why he don't pay me devoted attention. His father was one of her old beaus. She was engaged to him; Aunt Patsey broke it off—she was scheming for pa—she could break off any thing, that ancient female! Mr. Fairfield is polite to me, and that is about all. When I was a school-girl I used to dream about him! In my dreams he was always dressed like a knight, and rode a milk-white steed, waved his hand toward me, and then I always waked up. It was so provoking. I never could get any further into the dream. I know I would like him if I knew him real well. He is quiet, but not one bit stupid. He talks little, but oh, he is such an attentive listener! He don't come after me, so I can't run after him. For I don't know, and I don't want to know any thing about *catching* men—as if they were wild animals, fish, or something. Aunt Patsey calls it *diplomacy!* Diplomacy? Fiddle-sticks! It is down right deception of the very worst kind. I know that I talk too much, tell a great many things that ought to be left unsaid, but I do not tell lies—there is no other name for them—and knowingly, with malice aforethought, make an injury or do a wrong to any body.



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But, my, my! I am always in trouble. Tom, my little brother, ran into the room just now, nearly out of breath, and made a little speech which almost gave me a nervous chill: "Oh, sister Alice! Won't you catch it, though? Aunt Patsey is just in from her meeting of the 'Cruelty to Animals' Association. She is in a dreadful way! She is just talking ma black and blue! She is giving you 'Hail Columbia!' She met Mrs. Par-dell, the manicure, the woman who ma says goes around fixing finger nails for fifty cents, and gives you five dollars' worth of gossip, sometimes scandal—to those who like it. She told Aunt Patsey a long tale about what you had certainly said: that Aunt Patsey was seven years older than she acknowledged; had been dyeing her hair for years; did not have a real tooth of her own in her head, and was a regular old tyrant here at home, and that all of us were afraid as death of even her thin, old shadow. Oh, but won't you catch it, though! Sis, you had better skip, and pretty quick, too! I think she's coming up-stairs now!"

It is awful, but I suppose I must have been telling just such a tale, but to whom I can not, for the life of me, think. See now, all this comes of telling the *family secrets*. That Mrs. Par-dell is a dangerous woman! I refused flatly to have her make bird-claws out of my finger-nails. This is her revenge! I am powerless! But it was not a slander, it was all the truth; just as true as gospel. That's the reason she is in such a rage. But she is coming; this house won't hold us both just now, so I am off *via* back stairs—to dine with my dear Sophia Gilder, if I don't find that fraud, Mrs. Babbington Brooks, there ahead of me. She and Mrs. John Robert G. are inseparable. The old dragon draws near—I am gone, leaving behind a smile and a kiss for my ancient female relative. Ah, Aunt Patsey, not *good form*, you know, to get angry with people—even with your niece,

[Illustration: Miss Alice Wing, (of the Inner Sisterhood.)]

* * * * *

IV

The Cool Quiet Flirtatious Underglow
Of a Green Opal.

* * * * *

FLIRTING FOR REVENUE ONLY

I am a Private Corporation.

My capital stock is a pretty face, a clear head, and pleasant manners.



I was incorporated by the “social legislature” four winters ago. Mamma was the active, successful lobbyist. My father was the silent, financial lever absolutely necessary for the passage of the bill—opposition small.

The social Banking-House (our residence), on a fashionable avenue, had been erected years before. A great mass of brick and mortar—stone-front of course—not beautiful, but imposing. It was left unfurnished—a portion of it—until I was ready to start in upon my social career. That is quite a usual plan with people who are prospectively fashionable. They do nothing with the drawing-room, library, and reception-room until the daughter of the house is pronounced ready. The plastering, after a dry of eighteen years, has had plenty of time to settle, and is not apt to crack the costly papers or ruin the elaborate frescoes; and the wood-work no longer in danger of warping or opening too much.



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My incorporation was an event. Business at once set in, and, with slight fluctuations, has continued ever since brisk and healthful. The venture has been a decided success. The constant, untiring skill of mamma, and the valuable experience of each gay season has enabled me to frequently increase the capital stock. For my face is more pretty than it was four years ago, and my manners are more easy and pleasing. Mamma says manners are every thing—and they are a great deal. I have grown to be somewhat of a woman of the world. I have met so many new people—strangers from all parts of the earth! I have been every where, and done so much. There is nothing local about me! Some people say that I am all things to all men; perhaps I am, for if I am not *broad* I am not any thing. I abhor narrow-mindedness! I am a trifle fraudulent in a harmless way, which I am free to confess is more than a trifle fascinating to most of the men I know. I smile, make eyes, sometimes sigh, and with many devices coax the masculine fancy into life, and for my sake. Yet, withal, I am said to be conscientious—very, in fact, and never intentionally deceive. My reputation is better, alas! than I deserve. My network is invisible but effectual; my weaving-power artless, but it is the art concealing the artful.

I am a Private Corporation! Therefore, I own all the stock. I constantly make loans, but I never sell. The collateral—either the many shades of love or the subtle changes of friendship—must be A No. 1 in every respect. It is *collateral*, not indorsements which I require. Paper not able to sustain itself is not considered worth much in my Banking-House (social).

It is my sweet expectation to retire from business whenever I chance to find—or rather when I am found—by the right purchaser. I often long for that time; I often picture to myself the undoubted delights of a domestic life, and—but in the meantime I carry on a carefully perfected system of

=Flirting for Revenue Only.=

That is my long-chosen motto, from which I do not depart. A Private Corporation must have protection! Self-preservation is the first consideration, the first law. I am full of little formulas of both manner and speech—they afford me ample protection. Make-talk is the complete salvation of the female Banker (social). I never disdain the use of a *promoter*, no matter how trivial it may be. *Promoters* help you to float heavy, stupid men, and save you from a complete wreck on the shores of stupidity; and they act as most excellent elicitors when applied to clever men—draw out the very best in them. I have *promoters* and *promoters*. I was asked not long since to give my definition or receipt of this valuable article. This was the one which I gave: Take some tangible object visible to the eye; for instance, a banjo. Attract attention to it in some successful way. Talk first about the banjo itself (the promoter), then if the man is



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clever he will, unconsciously, be *led up* from a discussion of that or other musical instruments to a chat on music, ballads, operas, in fact the very best he has to tell, the best he happens to know on that subject. In this way we are able to rise above the trivial, worn topics of the day—the usual make-talk of the multitude. I am always very happy in the selection of my *promoters*. I may not be very original, but I am quick to appropriate new ideas. I rapidly get them into the line of march, ready for immediate use.

To be a “social success” one must be something of an actress. Men usually expect a vast amount of acting from young women, who will, if they are discreet, certainly live up to that expectation. Men are willing to be deceived, but it must not be a labeled deceit. I go down the street and meet Mr. Seyhmoor; although I see him a block off, and before he sees me, yet I affect great surprise when he greets me—a little start is quite effective. The trifling little deception floods my face with color, which comes almost at my command. It easily flashes upon him that I am indeed surprised, and betrayed into an expression of my delight. He is flattered. He joins me. A batch of envious women watch my little triumph. *That is*

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Then a walk down the street, a talk of mere wordy nothings, but of deep and tender looks. In point of words, a make-talk affair; in point of feeling, a vague shadowy suggestion of twenty delicious possibilities; in point of fact a walk without any serious results. Calburt Young, a fascinating man-about-town, a semi-Bohemian, joins me at a fashionable ball. He takes me away from the dancing-room (and the other men), for Bohemians never dance. He finds, as only he can, some quiet unoccupied nook, a little out of the way, and yet a very proper place. An effective spot environed by flowers, and palms broad and graceful, hung with dimly-lighted, richly-colored lanterns—where you may see but not be seen, where you may hear the gayety and yet by it not be disturbed. Music from the ball-room reaches me, and a delicate oriental perfume fills the air. Calburt Young, handsome, silent, with a look of earnest appeal on his face, looks down into mine. Not the man, but his manner, the situation, the music, the stealthy, intoxicating odor of perfume and flowers, the sway of each tropical leaf, the distant gayety, all surcharge my soul; gratify to the fullest extent my sensuous nature—my love of the picturesque and the luxurious. The temptation is strong to depart from my fixed principle. But I do not yield. I half extend my ungloved hand, white and ringless, murmur in a low voice suggestive of suppressed emotion, “You are very good to me! I was tired; I am glad to have this rest—and with you, Mr. Young!”

I am permeated with the deliciousness of the situation! I am conscious of the magnetic something about me, drawing him near to me! I can almost feel his hot, quick breath on my cheek where the color comes and goes. He is within my power! But I do not love



him. With an effort I banish the tender manner. My voice, now a trifle cold, asserts itself in clear, even tones: "Let us return; I am rested now. Mr. Seyhmoor claims me for the next dance!"



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The spell is broken! Calburt Young does not understand! He is wise, but I—I am a woman, and a woman of the world. But he does not reproach me. How can he? I have not allowed him to say a word of love to me. I have been environed not only with flowers, colored lights, and sweet music, but also with the harmless platitudes of speech. I whirl away into the dance with Henry Seyhmoor! I have been boldly flirting,

=Flirting for Revenue Only=.

Sometimes I am not so successful in this avoidance of exactly what I have skillfully brought out. Sometimes this policy leads to a proposal. The tide grows too strong. The man breaks down the barrier, but what good does it do? I have maintained a high protective tariff; there is nothing tangible which he can produce against me; there is never any thing which he can say against me; and if I have been ordinarily skillful and cautious there is absolutely nothing for him to *think*, but “How good she has been to me; how delicately, tenderly, she has tried to avoid giving me pain!”

At the start, my first season out, it was a hard policy to follow, and I would often spend a sleepless hour, after the man had said “good-night!” But those foolish old days have gone, and with them the early freshness of my youth, although the *appearance* remains. I have seen so many men promptly revive beneath the showers of another woman’s glance and of another woman’s tender—perhaps like mine—unmeant words, mere platitudes, platitudes effectual, intangible. They are not sufficient proof in any court of conscience, law, or public opinion. They are the glorious privileges of a woman who is a Private Corporation,

=Flirting for Revenue Only=.

Robert Fairfield! There is a magic something in the very name itself. And the man! ah, after all, old things are best. My heart never knew a sensation—the quick, throbbing something which we call *love*—until I met him, when hardly more than a school-girl. It was my first winter! He was young, attractive, somewhat wild, and quite the *fashion* that year, and in fact ever since. He is a dainty love-maker. He is ready with a hundred delicate little attentions unknown to most men, and highly gratifying to most women. But after all their influence is limited—at least with me. His actual presence is necessary. Mamma opposed the match—for we were engaged (never announced) at one time. She always disliked him, and on that one subject has always been unreasonable. But she has more influence over me than he has, or ever could have. She can generally eradicate the dangerous effects of his presence. This he resented—and rightly. I must renounce mother, home, every thing, and come to him, or—I must cling to him and let all other things go. He recognized no middle course; I constantly sought one. I put him off; I made him many promises, and meant them all—when with him. Finally he was forbidden the house, and now we barely more than speak. He is somewhat devoted to a half dozen or more of our best young women, and they are all more or less devoted to him. The world—our little world—once said we would marry;

but the world has decided that it was, mistaken, and that we did not even love one another. And did we, or not? In short, do we?



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There are times, moments of despondency, more frequent here of late, when something within whispers, "You are waiting too long! You are, indeed, far above par, but will it last?"

The credit of my Banking-House (social) is apparently without limit. My pretty face stands well the wear and tear of hard social work. My worst female enemy dares not call me *passe* in the slightest degree, although I am a shade beyond the uncertain age of twenty-five. But surely these strange premonitions must come as a warning. They surely mean something. My womanly intuition—and it can be trusted—plainly prompts me to give up this dangerous, ruinous policy of

=Flirting for Revenue Only=.

I must abandon my little formulas of speech and manners. I must quit making eyes. I must grant myself a pause in this social farce. I must try to let myself love the man whom my *real honest self* hath chosen years ago. The man I drove from my door for the sake of *general revenue*. The man against whom I closed my heart! But will he come back again? Will his proud spirit brook an uncertainty? But, after all, is it *well worth*, the while? Those are uncertain questions—I dismiss them. There is no immediate danger. My humor changes; I am no longer despondent. Away with Doubtful Uncertainty and all of his stale retinue, tricked out in danger-signals—each a false one. Sleep on, sweet Conscience, sleep on! To-night the wedding-reception—given to a woman married for her money! Another glorious opportunity for me!

=A.B.= *I may be found any time between the hours of nine and one, on the crowded stair, in a nook beneath, in the dancing-room, or—somewhere about the flower-decked house in my accustomed capacity of Private Corporation, skillfully, successfully*

=Flirting For Revenue Only.=

[Illustration: Miss Rose Clendennin, (of the Inner Sisterhood.)]

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V

A Symphony in Pink
With Philistine Traces.

* * * * *

=Mother and Daughter=

We are not on good terms, mamma and I, She is hard, exacting, unreasonable; she is proud, ambitious, worldly; she is deeply embittered against me because I am not a



social success, because I am not brilliant, attractive. Her one thought, by day and by night, has been the promotion of my interests—from her own selfish standpoint. I am never consulted—always ignored, and my feelings trampled upon. My slightest objection fills her with indignant surprise, and is met with a prompt rebuke and a *dictum*, from which there is absolutely no appeal. Always unwilling, yet always obedient—passively obedient.



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This is my third winter out and, to quote mamma, no prospects, no prospects! Of course, I am nothing of a belle, nothing of a social queen among women. This is a source of endless mortification to mamma. But there is no reason why it should be so, because a belle in this town is a lost art. Lost in the days of the brilliant Bettie V. and the beautiful Alice B. Nowadays belleship is like statesmanship, the honors are divided. We have plenty of real pretty women, but no startling beauties. There is not a girl in my set but who is fully up to the average in appearance, manners, mind. Competition may do well enough for trade, but it does not produce any one reigning belle in social circles. So I am not entirely to blame; the causes which work against me also work against others. I go to the utmost limit, and sometimes beyond. I do every thing which my better nature will license—often a great deal besides. My opportunities are excellent. I am invited every where, because we belong to a highly respectable and somewhat ancient family (we have a beautiful family-tree, *arranged* by mamma before I was grown); and I go every where, even when I am forced to go with papa, which, I am glad to say, is never more than twice in one season.

Papa is really a dear, good man. He has not only the love but also the pity of a devoted daughter, for he does have such a hard time with mamma. While he understands perfectly all about making money, and just lots of it, too, yet, *papa does not shine* in mamma's fashionable circle. He is a slave to her slightest whim—and she is full of them. He is ready, and always, to do her most capricious bidding. Yet they are not congenial; I am positive she never loved him. He was, even when they married, counted among the rich men of the community. And she—she was the youngest child in a large family, with high notions and small income. But he is devoted to her! She may not be lovable, but she is magnetic. She forces homage from all, devotion from many. But she is an evil magnet; and she is conscious of her power, which she wields in a high-handed and a most unscrupulous manner. Unlike most women of the fashionable world, she makes a decided point of poor papa's attendance. He must always go with her—and he does. Often he comes to his home tired out, worn down to the very quick—making money he calls it—and mamma, fresh and ready, eager for the social battle which, like a war-horse, she scents from afar, drags him out with her—somewhere—generally, when there is nothing more exciting on hand, across the way to that bric-a-brac-shop of a house, where the tawdry elegant, always weary Mrs. Babbington Brooks holds forth in an ultra-aesthetic style peculiarly her own. There they spend the entire evening in what mamma softly calls “a sweet communion of congenial souls,” which, being translated according to methods of the earth, earthy, means simply a tiresome time over cards, the constant sipping of a pale pink stuff which foams—dissipated looking, but harmless. This they drink out of dainty little cups somewhat larger than a thimble. “Fragile art gems,” to quote Mrs. Babbington Brooks, “which I was so wildly fortunate as to find in a curiously jolly shop somewhere about Venice, the last time I was over on the other side. Ah! how I do love Venice!”



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Now, there is a fair sample of that woman's talk; it is a mystery to me how she keeps it up. Mamma says that she is "wierdly picturesque;" papa says (but only to me) that she is "a regular downright fool." But they are both wrong; she is a woman with a sufficient amount of brains to know just how easily and successfully so-called sensible people may be imposed upon; and how readily they can be made use of—stepping stones to the accomplishment of selfish desires. But she does not fool mamma. They both use one another to advantage. There is always between them a tacit little arrangement. Mrs. Babbington Brooks never stops short of a positive sensation. Her methods are bold, startling, successful. Her husband, an insignificant looking man, invented something, an air-brake for railway trains, an improvement on the Westinghouse air-brake, "Brooks' Unbroken Circuit." This, after years of obscure struggling, brought them into immediate wealth, but not at once into social notice. Their first efforts in that direction, or rather, *her* first efforts, were complete failures. They nibbled about on the outer edge; finally, it dawned upon her to play some decided role. She determined to be an aesthete. She built a house accordingly; she dressed accordingly; and she acted, but above all, she talked accordingly. Thanks to her wandering brother, an ideal American adventurer, she obtained from London, far ahead of the general importation, a complete outfit of Lilies, Languors, Yearnings, Reachings-out, Poppies, Wasted Passions, Platonics, Heart-throbs, and all the more lately approved instruments of aesthetic torture. Her establishment was ready. She wanted recognition. She waited for an opportune moment. It came. Oscar Wilde, the apostle in chief of the aesthetic school, reached our shores. He brought a letter of introduction "To the one aesthete in all America, Mrs. Babbington Brooks." On his arrival he sent her this letter, and with it a note, written in a full, round hand, stating that he would be at her service after his lecture in her town, on the eighteenth of the coming February, and, being it was she, his terms were only three hundred dollars; usual price, five hundred. She wired an eager acceptance of his generous offer, and at once set her household in readiness. She invited the town—the fashionable, so-called desirable portion of it—and waited the issue. Her gilded net was well spread; her bait irresistible. She easily caught them all, large and small; her house was crowded; her effort a recognized masterpiece. Mamma says she could have readily made arrangements with Oscar Wilde for a season in London—a female aesthete, and from the crude land of America! Now, she is actually quite the rage! Her triumph is now complete; her following large, composed of a batch of deluded fools, caught by the glamour and the blow of brazen trumpets, with just the *tincture* of an artistic principle.

A large amount of money was spent on my educational training, both at home and abroad. A young woman who can play a little, sing in fairly good voice a few pretty songs, popular ballads, and paint an occasional plaque, or even rise to the dignity of a panel, can surely make claim to the free chromo distribution of that flattering term, "most highly accomplished."



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I was systematically advertised—by mamma—for about four years prior to my *debut*. Every body was made to know that I was “growing up” rapidly, “coming on,” but still young, “oh, very young, and cares absolutely nothing about men.” Fact: cared more than I do now. Young fellows—available matches—would be invited out “very informally indeed,” to dinner or to tea, “would just drop in, you know,” each occasion skillfully planned by mamma. She is an excellent manager—always manages to have her own way. On each one of these occasions it was so arranged that they would catch a glimpse of me—supposed to be entirely accidental. I was made to pose for the occasion over my books or fancy-work. I was “so studious!” or “so skillful with my needle!”—running comment by mamma during the *accidental* glimpse of her darling daughter. These things are always effective, for mamma is really an artistic woman. Her social villainy fascinates me into a constant state of acquiescence. There is an irresistible glamour, there is a touch of his Satanic majesty which gains me, against my will, body and soul. She is a bad, dangerous woman. What an awful idea to have of my own mother! but, fortunately, other people don’t know her as we do—papa and I.

But after all the constant planning, the education with trimmings, the high art dressing, the effective situations without number, in short, the whole broad system of skillful social advertising, I am not the one magnet-point; I am not the belle of the town. This has caused the breach between us; and it grows wider every day. Mamma used to be unkind, but now she is cruel. Those uncertain social honors can never be mine; therefore a reconciliation is out of the question. Men come to the house frequently and in fair numbers, but frequent and merely polite attentions do not satisfy mamma. I have never had a real lover. Men seem to like me well enough; they send me flowers, take me out, and do not let me suffer at balls or parties for want of attention. But they do not make love or ask me the all—important question, “Will you be my wife?” This confession would surprise most people. My name is constantly mentioned in a tender way with some one man of my acquaintance, but there is never any thing beyond the mention.

During the past winter mamma has been trying a new plan. She has determined to marry me off, having proved to be such worthless material for the make up of a reigning belle. She has made earnest, successful effort to induce a batch of clever young lawyers into a frequent and regular attendance at the house, under pretext of a quasi-ideal Literary Association. A wise bait, which always ensnares the eager-nibbling lawyer. It *sounds well* to have people say that he is a gifted young lawyer and a member of a most delightful and highly select literary association—and the average young lawyer acknowledges a fondness—inexpensive, of course—for all things which *sound well*; the legal mind bows down before the mighty shrine of “Euphony.”

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Any thing can be readily organized in this town, but to keep it going is a different matter and a desperate hard thing to do after the novelty wears off. But mamma seldom allows any of her organizations to die a natural death. Her present venture, of a literary nature, is thriving; it has grown to be the idle fashion of the social hour. Mamma alternates with her always coadjutor, Mrs. Babbington Brooks, in entertaining the motley, and somewhat cultured crowd. Mamma, First Director and Chief Manager; Mrs. Babbington Brooks, Second Director and Most Worthy Assistant. This “Culture-Seeking Club” (its name) has been organized, mamma says, on my account. It is her last effort in my behalf. She has always opposed the idea of my forming an alliance with a poor, petty young lawyer; but she has grown desperate, and organized this club in order that I might, or rather she, angle for some rising young barrister with brains, and a promise of something better than the usual fulfillment—poverty. It is a positive tragedy, this being calculatingly thrown at the head of a so-called desirable young man!

Nominally I am a member of the “Culture-Seeking Club,” but actually and at heart I am a Philistine out and out. This pernicious high-art and culture-seeking fever has never caught my practical soul in its relentless grasp. I love not the ways of the social aesthete. Gleams and shadows do not thrill me; sunflowers and daisies do not gratify my hungry soul—or self. Mamma says I am not sufficiently clever to tempt the brainy monster, *i.e.*, Culture Fiend. She has taken me in hand; I am to play a role also. She has a strange power over me which I am unable to withstand. It is the fatal power which a strong mind gets over the more weak and readily yielding mind incapable of a successful resistance. She is a woman with a bad heart and a clear head. I am irresolute, full of most excellent intentions, and in effect as bad as she without the redeeming features of extraordinary cleverness. I am to play the role of a young maiden with an object in life. I am to be full of a new desire to grapple with the weighty problems of the moment. I am to be carefully coached for each club meeting; I am to be veneered with a thin skin of glittering knowledge. I am, indeed, bewildered, startled. I am made to read all of the book notices worth the reading. I am made to pore over a half dozen reviews which people in this town know absolutely nothing about—although they do call mamma the “Pioneer introducer of good Periodicals.” I am superficial, but she is not. She reads each good book itself, not the criticism only. She reads it carefully, thoroughly, as few other people ever do. Then she gives me a special line of thought to follow, and I am made to go through a little combination of what I have read and of that which she has told me in her direct, compact manner. Thus does she enable me to produce a written paper which never fails to start the “Culture-Seeking Club” into

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a little flutter of supposed intellectual excitement. For a moment, at least, I am forgotten, or, if remembered at all, they say to one another as they sip that everlasting pale pink foam out of the “dainty art gems from Venice, you know:” “Ah, Sophia Gilder is her more clever mamma’s own daughter; but, alas! she will never be such a woman as her mother—the gifted Mrs. John Robert Gilder, the life and soul of our Culture-Seeking Club!” And I piously hope to heaven that I may be saved from such a fate, and never be the woman that I know mamma to be!

My last effort was said to be a wild, jagged thing—a reaching out, a groping after. It was called “Souls Antagonistic: A Symphony.” I wore an especial costume—“suited to the subject,” said mamma. “A sweet poem of a gown,” echoed Mrs. Babbington Brooks. When I finished my task, for it was a task, and imposed by a hard task-master, Mrs. Brooks glided, like the serpent she is, over to my seat and looked down with a false longing into my flushed face. Then in a low, somewhat musical voice, full of a false tenderness and a borrowed pathos, “May I, sweet young girl, touch with mine the precious lips which to-night have made exceeding glad my sad, sad soul with those wise and honeyed words?” She kissed me. I fairly trembled with an intense loathing. That oily-tongued creature hates me with a deadly hatred. And she fears me, for she knows that I have found her out and know her to be what she is, a most *successful fashionable fraud*. But it is folly to run counter to the social current. It is best to hold my peace. It is hard to do, but it can be, and it must be done. I was nervous—rebellious. I quickly fled away from that false woman and her loathsome caress. I sought rest and quiet in a distant cushioned corner of the deserted hallway. I was angry—too angry for tears. I buried my throbbing head in my hands and tried to forget my miserable existence; it was such a failure. It was so unlike that which I wished it to be, and yet I did not have the will-power to make it so. I was in one of my morbid moods. Resolutions I knew to be useless. On the morrow they would be broken. It was always, and I fear ever will be “Mother and Daughter;” never “Daughter and Mother.” She always takes the lead, and I, always weak enough to follow. Was there no one to whom I could turn? No one to yield me a few kindly words to strengthen me for that constant, useless warfare against, yes, against my own mother?

As if in answer to my silent call, a footstep! My hands dropped into my lap. A man stood near. I did not look up; I knew who he was. We need hear but once the footfall of certain people and always after know instantly if they are near. A voice: “Miss Gilder, do I intrude?”



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Robert Fairfield is not a man of many words. He stood by me in an attitude of *sympathetic silence*. He made to me an unspoken appeal. In my heart there was a grateful answer. A sad, smileless face was uplifted, and then my lips also gave answer. It was a brief story. It was my daily life of home oppression. But it was not briefly told. It ought not have been told at all; but I am human, so human. The time had reached me when somebody *must know*, and the time had brought with it into my sorrowful presence this same Robert Fairfield. I had barely known him. An accidental introduction, a few dances at a ball, and once—just once—a brief but serious talk at a summer-night concert. I was nothing to him; he was every thing to me; I loved him, I love him. But custom, and rightly, too, keeps a woman silent. He may know the story of my miserable home life, but he does not know—and he must never know—of the magnetic power which drew me toward him, made me tell my story, and left me with a regret and a tenderness which has closed my heart to any other who may chance to come.

[Illustration: Miss Sophia Gilder, (of the Inner Sisterhood.)]

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VI

A Cold Gray Study.

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A CASE OF COMPOUND FRACTURE.

Family Position, Wealth, and Personal Beauty are potent factors in the mysterious make-up of a social success, but they are not omnipotent. A woman may have this desirable trinity, and yet be as nothing in the social world. In fact, she may be without one, two, or all three, and yet achieve unaccountable success in a social way.

My first winter out was a flat failure. I did not lack wealth and family position, but I was awkward and not beautiful; in short, ugly. But my failure was not due to this lack of beauty, for other women far more ugly than I outshone me in every way. *I did not know myself*. There is the key to many a mystery. I tried to be like other women and—failed. I had a little individuality of my own, but for a time did not know it.

During that formative period I had one love-affair; at least, I did the loving and Gerome Meadows did the “affair,” for with him it was nothing more. He was a man just a trifle above the average in looks and manners, intellect—every thing. He was always attractive and agreeable. He was always making a graceful effort to please, and He was—with me—always successful. He was four and twenty, yet he was a genuine boy. He was full of a boy’s love and full of a boy’s charming susceptibility. He was



responsive to the different natures of many women. He was peculiarly a loveable man. He had diligently, conscientiously courted a goodly number of these different natured women; and they all had, at some one time, a tender leaning toward, without a positive love for, this Gerome Meadows. I am one of the number. Twice has he courted me, and twice have I refused him. First, because *he* did not love me; second, because *I* did not love him.

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It was during that formative period when first he came, *sent by his mother*. She was a wise woman, who selected mates for her always obedient children. It was an honor to be selected—so she thought. A sacrifice—so considered by the unselected.

Gerome had for me somewhat of a circumstantial love. We had always known one another. We had been constantly thrown together. It would have been a pre-eminently proper arrangement. It would have been the alliance of the two influential and wealthy families. Therefore, his mother wished it and ordered it to be so. But an unexpected disappointment awaited her honorable ladyship. It had not occurred to her that a woman could be so foolish, so neglectful of her own interests and of her own happiness, as to refuse in marriage the hand of her precious son. My evident hesitation—for at heart I loved him—surprised and somewhat alarmed her. I was invited to dine with the family. I was treated as a prospective member. With the soup, the fish, and the heavy meats, they dealt out the virtues of their Gerome, seriously and earnestly. With the sweetmeats and the coffee they smilingly touched upon his lightest and most pardonable faults. My heart trembled for its safety. It was a well planned effective process. That night he told me of his love with the air of a man who fully expects a warm response and affirmative answer. Both were bravely denied him. I told him that he was mistaken; I told him he did not, and never would, have for me the grand passion of his life. He said—what else could he say?—“You are wrong; you deeply wrong me. You are plunging my young life, hitherto so full of hope, down into a depth of bitterness and regret from which it may never rise again!” This was said in a tragic, somewhat stilted, but impressive manner. I was touched; it was my first experience; it was the first time that I had ever heard a man talk about his broken, blasted hopes and his empty, ruined life. But it is all a very old story now. I know just how much to believe—in truth, precious little. Nothing dulls the edge of a woman’s sensibilities more quickly than frequent proposals. His rejection was a relief to Gerome; he was tired of making love to women especially selected by his mother; he did not fancy the process. Thus far he had always been unsuccessful. I had told him no—but, womanlike, I did not mean it; I did not want him to go out of my life. In a vague way I was conscious of a desire to win his love, but it was during my social formative period when every thing was vague. I was unconscious of my power, yet I did not know how to accomplish my end. So Gerome left me. I was unable to keep him. But, somehow, I did not consider it a finality; it was simply an awkward pause. I hoped for his return and a renewal of his protestations. I had heard women say that if a man really cared for a woman he would easily brook the first refusal and speedily return. So I thought, but I was mistaken; he did not return.



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Two moons had not waxed and waned before he was having what now I am sure must have been the one passionate love of his life. This was unexpected; a blow in the dark to my pride, and, alas! I fear, also, to my heart. It was the death-knell to my better nature. It gave direction to the formation of my social life. From that moment I am conscious of a change, and for the worse, in my hitherto attractive nature. It was attractive on account of its sweetness and its purity. It was a nature which, until then, had known nothing of the hot, passionate love of the world and of all things worldly. The formative period was gone, and with it most that was good.

It was hard to have a man court me, not exactly for my money, but because I chanced to be the nearest fruit in reach and because his crafty mother thought it would be an excellent arrangement! Especially hard, because in spite of myself I had for him a very tender feeling. My sudden loss and quick appropriation by another created within me an unjust resentment; my resentment was silent and unnoticed, but it filled me with a desire for revenge. This was the evil which crept into my life; this was the element which warped my better nature, made me grasping, worldly, hard to please. This sudden desertion placed me in a false position. People said that Gerome had never loved me—simply trifling. The friends of that *other woman*, a great brown-eyed beauty with the subtle charm and fatal fascination of a devil most lovely, made it appear that of course Gerome Meadows had never loved me—why should he? He cowardly held his peace and let them prattle; he was kneeling low before the shrine of his own selection; he was in open rebellion against his irate mother, who did not approve of this brown-eyed beauty.

I was left alone and let alone. But fate was not altogether against me. Death did me a friendly service. He called to her last resting-place an ancient dame who had severely played the role of grandmother and mother-in-law in our large establishment—unloved, tyrannical, unregretted. But custom bade us mourn. Then was my opportunity. Our doors were closed, but I was not idle—I *studied myself*, and, retrospectively, all of my friends. After several months of hard training and much serious thought I found myself ready. I had established my little theories about life, and their intricate relations to myself, and cast about carefully for something upon which I might with safety and good results practice upon. Most of my friends were tame, uninteresting, and none of them just then my lovers. I resorted to many of the little airs and tricks of social trade. I soon found myself doing quite a brisk little business in a quiet way; quite quiet, for I still wore light mourning and, of course, was not going out; we all thought it best to pay the highest possible respect to the late but unlamented grandmother. I soon gained the reputation—which I bravely sustained—of



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being far above the idle, cruel dealer in human hearts; I was said to be full of old-fashioned coquetry, but not even flirtatious; that I was gracious, had pleasing manners, but was the very soul of sincerity, and would never be guilty of leading men on and on. I was frequently contrasted with that devilish brown-eyed beauty—a recognized flirt, ready to sacrifice any man on her crowded altar. A man once said to me of her:

“Such kings of shreds have wooed and won her,
Such crafty knaves her laurel owned,
It has become almost an honor
Not to be crowned.”

“Hush! hush! she is my friend,” I said, for I knew him to be one of her rejected lovers. In a month I had gently told him nay. But he was innocent, he did not know that I had played my cards for him. He thought me cold, but he thought me kind. He advertised me in desirable places and with most desirable people. I captivated several other desirable men. It is so easy for a woman to fool a man. But I was eager to try my powers on better metal—some man of the world. A victory in such a quarter would fully establish me, and it would bring the very best men to my side, for they, like sheep, readily follow the well-known leader. And perhaps—Gerome might return.

One winter’s night late, after I had gone to my room, two men called. Ordinarily I should have excused myself, but something—we call it fate, I believe—prompted me to see them. One was an old friend—a friend of the family. The other a thorough man of the world, and—I knew it intuitively—my desired victim. He was an idle, indifferent, Social Drifter. He was an artist by profession; his inclination—and his leisure—made him more of a *diletante* than any thing else. He was more notorious than famous. He had done nothing to give himself fame, but he had done many odd things which gave him notoriety. I have always had a secret but deep-rooted love of notoriety; it makes my blood tingle with a most delicious sensation. I knew that he could give me a great deal of *quiet notoriety* which was the one thing needed to make me a success—notice, notice, constant notice! The surgeon may be ever so skillful and yet if his skill be not known his instruments, rusted with disuse, will cling to their unopened cases and his hand will forget its cunning. So is it with the flirtatious maiden; she must hang forth a sign which may be read, and quickly, even by those who run.

My artist lover was not the ideal slender, pale-faced youth; he was not beautiful, he was not good looking. But perhaps I should have loved him if he had been the one, and tolerated him longer if he had been the other. He was aggressive; he was open, direct always; he was not blunt, yet he was free from the all-prevalent use of the *preliminary*. He loved me! And he very soon told me as much and more. He made no concealment of the fact to me, or indeed to others. He loved me, was



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proud of it, and glad to have all know of it. Of course this was just what I wanted, for he was not a susceptible man. He had not been in love for years. His declarations meant something, and people knew it. Thus was I brought into notice. "Who, pray, is this Mary Lee Manley?" they began to ask. "Is she the same scrawny, ugly girl who was such a flat failure in society two years ago?" "What has she done to herself? She is certainly not a beauty but she has improved, just how we are unable to say."

The men began to find me, hunted me up, and were unable to realize that I was that self same individual whom they had so diligently avoided her first season out. All the while my affair went on, systematically artistic, with that Social Drifter. No man will ever love me again as I was loved by that man. I wantonly played with his openly avowed affections. I was deliberate, artistic. I was cold. I led him on blindly. I calculated every move with mathematical accuracy. I left nothing undone. I skillfully covered my tracks. I always told him sadly, gently, that I did not love him, and that I never could. Yet I told him in such a manner that, almost breathless with a new hope, he refused to believe me, refused to listen. He was always considerate and I hated him for his consideration. He was always thoughtful, unselfish, and alas, always loving. Finally, after I had successfully played him for all that he was worth—which was a great deal to me—I told him to go. I dismissed him with scorn and without reason. Of course there had been no love in my heart for this man, but his delicate attentions were always intensely flattering. And once, just once, I might have yielded, but my family, my own judgment, every thing, was against the man, and to the end he continued to be simply a trial for my untried and newly discovered powers. And then, perhaps the more potent reason of all, Gerome Meadows gave uneasy indications of a desire to return. I, and immediately, made arrangements for the full gratification of his desire. Now was my chance. Revenge, when delayed, is all the sweeter for the delay. The world must know of my power, and through Gerome Meadows! I had waited long and patiently, but I had not wasted my time. I had gone through a severe social training, and with the best results. I was an accomplished flirt, but I was not trammled by the always dangerous reputation—it was not known. It was simply a rumor about town that I might be somewhat of a trifler, but it had not been affirmed, and few believed the idle, unauthorized rumor; it had not even reached the ears of Gerome Meadows. He had hotly quarreled with his devilish, brown-eyed beauty. She had dismissed him after a highly tragic scene. The details were highly sensational—as told by her devoted partizans, and warmly denied by his and his outraged family (principally irate mother). They sound like the fragments of a romance written by Bulwer, and with a liberal



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touch of Lucile. It was the talk of the town, and many things were said, and a few were done. I was silent and hopeful. My triumph was near! She had done with him, and forever. He did not cut his handsome throat! He did not do any of the thrilling but uncomfortable things done by the usual rejected lover in the average novel—*but he came back to me!* Once more Gerome Meadows was my recognized lover, and the people—the fickle people—began to whisper it about (greatly to my satisfaction), that perhaps this very uncertain Mr. Meadows had always loved me from the time his sister Kate and myself were school-girls together. And furthermore, he had for a while yielded to the manifold fascinations of that devilish brown-eyed beauty. In fact, he himself told me a goodly number of just such little speeches; discoursed on the difference between real love and mere fascination. He told me that I was the only woman he ever could really love, and that he had for me a pure and warm affection. Ah! how sweet were those declarations to my ear. But not to my heart—it was closed against him.

I was not the woman he had known and halfway loved before—for I had eagerly tasted deep and long of the Egyptian flesh-pots, and I refused any other kind of social sustenance. I allowed him to believe that his tardy return had routed all rivals from the field. I forced him to fancy me to be so different from *that other woman*. I was, in truth, a cool, quiet reaction. I coaxed him into believing me to be full of a gentle, womanly purity. I made him blind to the fact that I was a worldly woman, conscious of and ready to unhesitatingly use my worldliness. I measured my powers aright—I could at my own sweet will allow him, force him, coax him, make him *do any thing*. I cunningly wove a web in and around the heart of Gerome Meadows—his rejected, torn and dejected heart. I gently soothed him into not quite a forgetfulness, yet a strong and healthful calm. He was grateful. Reactions are always dangerous; he wondered why he had not known me before as he knew me then. And while he wondered I charmed him into a new love fever. It was almost a touch of real passion. It was a skillful drawing together of the scattered ligaments of that other and violently broken love. I had labored hard, and not altogether in vain. He was mine for the taking. Would I take him?

We stood together late one afternoon in a rich oriel window which overhung the street. We were silent. The rustle of the light summer drapery filled the air with a faint but melodiously tender undertone. We looked out of the broad open window down the street. It was near the close of a superb summer's day. I was in a mood to yield. My old nature seemed to rise out of its former self. It was the one golden opportunity for the man by my side. The old tender leaning toward him came back again, stronger, more subtle than ever before. It was—for the while—love, or something very like



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unto love. My nature, my soul was at its utmost flow, but no one touched the flood-gates. Gerome was passive, silent. One word, a hand-touch, and I would have loved him and bound myself to him for weal or woe! Little things are every thing in a woman's life. Robert Fairfield passed by beneath the window; he briefly paused, politely looked up, lifted his hat, *smiled*, and—innocent of what he had done—went on his way. He had simply done what was the proper and usual thing, but his conventional smile had come into my life at a strangely opportune moment—or, was it opportune? My heart had been laid bare, the flood-gates had been touched, and they had slowly opened beneath the magic influence of a *smile*. Gerome Meadows had been silent. He had lost his one golden opportunity. I told him so, and sent him away. I fired upon him a volley of ridicule and contempt; my revenge was complete. He was angry, surprised, disappointed. The old wounds were torn open afresh; but he was not easily undone. He immediately made peace with his irate mother. He placed himself in her charge. He promised to try again, but under her direction and according to her selection. In a few days more he goes to the altar with this new and latest love. But, ah! Gerome, your charming, susceptible self never loved but once! Where is that devilish brown-eyed beauty? It is well that she is silent! One word from her and—but, go marry. And pray, take with you my conventional wishes for your peace and happiness. On your wedding day I will write you a dainty card and send you a trifle.

What shall it be? What would be, under the “existing circumstances,” the most appropriate thing? Perhaps a little Cupid, somewhat weather-beaten and with an empty quiver might do, or, best of all, *a lock of golden-brown hair* stolen from the rich, heavy tresses of that devilish brown-eyed beauty. What say you? But *au revoir*, Gerome Meadows.

There is to be a reception—a most elegant affair—the night of the wedding. It is to be given by that now well-satisfied lady, Mrs. Gillespie Meadows, the mother of my dear, dear Gerome. My escort: Robert Fairfield. The beginning of another end! What will it be?

[Illustration: Miss Mary Lee Manley, (of The Inner Sisterhood.)]

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VII

An Olive Outline
In Shades and Shadows
Of a Clever Social Life.

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Platitudes and Pleasures.

My life is different from the usual social existence of the average society girl.

I have never followed the mirage of a definite ideal.

I have never been a straggler for social honors—they have been mine without the struggling. I was born to a position. It is mine by right of inheritance. There is no strong odor of lately acquired greenbacks about our old and very respectable establishment. We live on a quiet, unfashionable street; we are somewhat apart from the world, and yet we are frequently sought—for we never seek. My grandfather was a man of excellent parts and much power in his native State. He was a well-known, important factor in the home of his adoption. His wife was celebrated for her ready wit and radiant beauty in the days when Madison was President.



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My father is a great man. It is not a greatness hedged in by a local limit; he is known far and wide. His scientific researches have made him famous and his name familiar and beloved on foreign shores. Nor is he a prophet without honor even in his own country.

My mother is a rare woman. She is peculiarly a womanly woman. She constantly gives her best thought, her best effort, to the members of her family, always forgetting self; and she is full of the tenderest consideration toward other people. She never speaks ill of her neighbor; she is always true. She is always ready to discharge her duty—and more. She is tender, gentle, firm; there is not a flower which blooms more full, better rounded out, more sweet, better to look upon, or in any way more complete, more perfect than she.

I may not be great or entirely good myself, but I constantly breathe an atmosphere exhilarating and pure—made so by the presence of a great man and a good woman.

Our house is the tacitly recognized head-quarters for all kinds and conditions of clever people, and some not so clever, but who—in their way—are just as interesting:

Social Exquisites.

Social Drifters.

Briefless Barristers.

Men Who Have Risen.

Men Unsuccessful.

Sympathy Seekers.

Sympathy Finders.

Newspaper Reporters.

Newspaper Poets.

Authors Private.

Authors Public.

People Of The Army.

People Of The Navy.

Bohemians, Ragged As To Their Cuffs, Unkempt

As To Their Raiment.

All Classes, Shades And Conditions Of Life.

In Short, A Strange Kaleidoscopic Circle.

To be a gentleman above question is the *badge of admission*. To be clever is the *badge of promotion*. I am the center of this intensely interesting circle. I am the focus, the magnet around which they all revolve. The bulk of the social burden rests on me. The minute but highly important details are carefully watched and skillfully righted by the good mother. I am the General Entertainer, but she is the ameliorator of those little roughnesses, those little sharp corners which cling even to unconventional people. Her clear, well-balanced mind, her gentle, yet quietly positive temperament, peculiarly fit her for this necessary but frequently neglected social work.



I am young, beautiful, untrammelled; I am full of an unlimited ambition; I am not content with the small things of life; I will have none of those precious morsels—mere fragments—which tempt and readily please my sweet sisters in Vanity Fair. Young, yet I am far enough beyond twenty to have ideas of my own. Beautiful, yet I am free from that all-conscious air which pervades the average beauty. Untrammelled, because men do not touch me—have not the power to rouse within me one tender feeling. I am interested always, but I am never susceptible. Women depend too much on their intuitions; they know so little about human



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nature, and less about man-nature. An intuition is oftentimes a safeguard to woman but more frequently a danger, because it creates within her too much of a servile dependence upon mere impulses and first impressions. My own intuitions are strong, but I want my knowledge to be stronger. I want to know all there is to know about men, women, and things. Women are usually like open books to me, easily read while passing on to matters more interesting—men.

A man once asked me what special impression or effect I should like to have on a man of the world who had been every where, done every thing, seen every thing, knew every thing (or at least thought so)—in fine, a man with the edge of every desire dulled, the glow of every passion cooled. My answer was simply this: I should try to give him what I constantly and without much effort gave most men—*A new sensation*. After all it is not such a hard thing to do. Blase men are my especial prey; they can always be reached; their vulnerable points are many, but generally well concealed.

I have lost my early enthusiasms, but my enthusiastic *manner* still remains. A genuine, cynical touch has, here of late, fallen into my life. It is not an affectation. I am all the better for that touch; it makes me more of a power among my subjects. For they are in reality my subjects. In the main they are loyal. They are ready to fight for me and my cause—if I had one.

I have divided my subjects—and other men—into:

- I. Platitudes,
- II. Pleasures.

Platitudes are men who lead an honest, stupid existence. They are contented with their lot—because ignorant of any other. They are resentful of all innovations—because they are narrow-minded and full of deep ruts; they are guiltless of one clever thought; they sometimes stumble into somewhat of a clever action, but humbly deprecate the move, unconscious of having done a clever thing. Such men used to float about me in shoals of delicious stupidity. I was such a new creature! I was so different from the women they had met and always known. They were the foolish moths, I the candle-flame. They dashed blindly into danger; they fluttered about in ungraceful, ungracious misery. Finally, they would fly out and go on their little commonplace ways full of scars and petty burns, but not altogether marred—all the better for their uncomfortable but harmless burning. But nowadays it is quality not numbers which I desire, so they let me alone and are indeed astonished, bewildered, to find that I can go on, quite successfully too, and *without them*. Poor little fools; they are not an absolute necessity to any one—hardly to themselves.



A Platitute is a selfish creature, and never very grateful unless he expects a continuance of past favors. With him a cessation of favors means a cessation of gratitude. A limited number of the Platitute class still linger about me—principally on account of a long-contracted habit. They are content with whatever they get; they are entirely harmless, always useful in some way, and occasionally quite interesting.



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A Pleasure is the direct opposite of a Platitude.

He is a clever man—clever in some one particular way. He is generally a man with many brilliant theories brilliantly brought forth. He is ready to entertain any proposition. He is ready to try any new field of human action. He is sometimes sympathetic, more frequently antagonistic. But my so-called *Pleasures* may not be forced under any one head which will accurately describe them as a class. Indeed, each one is a class within himself; that is my reason for using so broad a term as Pleasures: they are, in fact, Pleasures to me. They are really necessary to my happiness—not individually, but as an entirety.

Most of these men have been at some one time my lovers—at least after a fashion. Some of them are foolishly constant. They are not foolish on account of their constancy—a most commendable trait—but because of their inability to know just when to make a display of their devotion. The general run of lovers—at least mine—are distressingly inopportune. This a woman, in spite of herself, deeply resents; it is so unpardonably stupid of a sensible man not to know just when to make known his tender passion. Lovers seldom study the women they love. They labor hard and plow straight on, in spite of any timid opposition from the other quarter; they are heedless of the future; they are eager to gain the prize, and often stride far beyond—overstep the mark, which sometimes is but a mere shadow line.

Most women fail to understand why they are unable to retain their rejected lovers. To me the explanation is plain. The average woman has nothing to give her lover, when he asks the all-important question, but a few tender, meaningless words to environ her *yes* or *no*. Of course, when the answer is *yes*, they both feed on the thought of marriage until its consummation. But if she is forced to say *no*, it leaves her barren of any thing to offer in lieu of the affection demanded. She is at once destituted of resources. She has no mental reservoir out of which she may feed the man's desire, and gently but effectually turn it into an intellectual channel of her own making and directing. Therefore the man is lost to her—be he Platitude or Pleasure. She has made the fatal failure of neglecting to furnish—and at once—a sufficient amount of intellectual excitement to fascinate the man into lingering, and force him finally into a steadfast allegiance. Women ought never insult their rejected lovers by *asking* them for their friendship. Those things come, if come they can, of themselves. It is such an ugly mistake to insist on giving every thing a name. Emotions thrive so much better when they are nameless. We rightly label poisons, but why should we label perfumes? I love a touch of the vague and of the mysterious. It is the mystery-man who wins the woman. Direct courtships—when found



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in novels—read well, but they are not advisable in real life. Women like to upset well-laid plans by perverse and counter movements. A man must always let a woman do a reasonable share of the courting. I know so many men who have been courted outright by their wives—of course in a gentle, womanly way. It is often done. I have sometimes been so much interested in a man that I have fancied myself at last in love. But it is always a fleet-footed fancy. Interest and Love are not always the same—Robert Fairfield once interested me, but I never loved him.

I lead an ideal, independent life. I have no uncongenial family ties. My wishes, yea, even my whims, find instant gratification, if gratification is possible. I am just delicate enough to gain the tenderest consideration from all who know me. My little social sins gain the readiest forgiveness—from those who love me—and, in the eyes of some, grow into positive virtues. I maybe outrageously tardy for an engagement, or, without any particular reason, break it altogether, yet be understood and upheld. Platitudes do not always understand, and sometimes foolishly rebel. But it is of no use. I have a little way of making them believe that it was actually they and not I who had committed the offense. And they plead for *me* to forgive *them!*

My modes of life are somewhat peculiar—at least commonplace persons think them so. I give little lunches and dinners. I invite just whomsoever I please. Now and then, for the sake of good form, and of the good mother, I have regulation affairs, to which I bid the *society regulars*—the so-called first and best set, who take invitations as a matter of course, who consider themselves the social salt of the earth, who go every where, and move about the houses of other people as if they owned them. The *Society Regular* is a well-dressed, bad-mannered, somewhat disagreeable animal, devoid of innate delicacy, and absolutely without gratitude. They are Platitudes of the first water. They do not frequent my house. They never dine or lunch with me, my Pleasures and other Platitudes.

This regulation affair is generally an afternoon tea. I leave out my retinue, the Kaleidoscopic Circle, and tell them about it afterward. My Social Exquisites and my Social Drifters are *reformed regulars*—brands snatched from the burning by me. Briefless Barristers delight me very much. I have several interesting specimens in the legal line. It is interesting to have “young men of great promise” around me. True, their fees are small and few between, yet that enables them to see just that much more of me. In the old days I used to read law with them; but I have very wisely abandoned that little habit—it was tiresome.

I have one or two Men Who Have Risen. They are crude, uncultured creatures, but full of excellent points. One of them is a widower, who made his large fortune killing hogs, and afterward canning peas, tomatoes, *etc.* Of course he talks all the time about how

he made his money. I am always an attentive listener, and I verily believe that I now have a practical knowledge of the hog business and canning interests of the country.



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Men Unsuccessful look to me for new inspiration, new hope. They are always interesting. They are mental fragments flung aside by God, and by Him held down—so they tell me. They are bitter, cynical, and nearly always dyspeptic. They are near of kin to my Sympathy Seekers, who are pale, light-haired creatures, continually making appeals for sympathy. But my Sympathy Finders are very near and dear to me. They are generally silent, melancholy men. They are always bearable, unless they chance to be in love with some other woman, and make me, along with a dozen other people, their *one and only* confidant. Then is my life made a burden. I am privately interviewed on all occasions, the more inopportune the better. I am cornered and made a vessel for his pent-up feelings. I am told of her cruel treatment. I am told of her charms and of her faults—principally not loving him. I am worked up into a nervous state. My physical nature grants him tears, while my mental nature speculates about the sincerity of his passion and just to how many others he may have told the self-same story. Of course all this is wearing, yet it is very interesting.

Newspaper Reporters are a much-abused, downtrodden class. I have known many, and I have yet to know one unworthy of a true woman's confidence. Treat them as if they were dogs, and they will act like dogs—forever barking and biting at your heels; but treat them like human beings, with due and just consideration, and they will prove to you the wisdom of your course. Newspaper Poets gather about me in a body. I have all styles and gradations. They run the entire range from bad to fairly good; but there is one who writes a most exquisite verse. He is a tender, sympathetic, yet cynical man. Somehow he has slipped away. I was not able to hold him, nor did I wish or even dare to keep him. He is scornful of the world. He sees no reason why he should be here. He would rather not have been born—if *he* had been consulted. After all, I may have idealized and overrated him. One of his rival poet friends once told me that my favorite and favored verse-maker was an inveterate poker-player and a continual loser! Ergo, the cynicism and scornfulness of the world. But banish tawdry thought!

Authors Private and Authors Public haunt my salon; men who have written and printed "little things of their own" for "private circulation only;" and men who have given their books to the world at large—generally to the detriment of the world. They are full of twists and notions. They seek me to gain admiration, and they do—for I am a generous person. People Of The Army and People Of The Navy are valuable to have around, for the sake of looks and manners. They never disappoint you. A man who has been on an Arctic expedition is especially desirable. You get material for a hero at small cost. I have one Arctic Explorer, and two army men who have been stationed in Yellowstone Park, and who fought with the dead Custer. My Bohemians are my chief delight, and they are many. They give the brightest, strongest colors to my Kaleidoscopic Circle. They give me new strength to fight the little battles and calms of every-day life. They give me the halo and the aroma of a new existence. This, in brief, the retinue.



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I seldom have—and less here of late than ever—a desire to marry. To me marriage would be such an uncertain thing—a risk with so little to gain. I am unwilling to relinquish my hold on the center of this charming circle. As it is I am a possibility—unfulfilled, it is true, yet a possibility—to twenty men or more. So I am unwilling to give up *all* of my Pleasures just for the sake of any *one* particular Pleasure, who might in six months, aye six days, reduce himself into a miserable Platitude. I may and I may not be a great number of things; but alas, above all, I am critical. Platitudes as Platitudes may constantly afford even considerable interest, but Platitudes do not make ideal husbands for women of my peculiar temperament and mental caliber.

I would rather be a Queen of Possibilities reigning over many hearts than a Queen of just one heart, and that one, perhaps, a most unworthy heart.

[Illustration: Miss Lina Searlwood, (of the Inner Sisterhood.)]