

FEMALE AFFECTION

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Table of Contents

PREFACE.

THE PLEASURES OF AFFECTION.

§ I. FEMALE AFFECTION IN GENERAL.

MUNGO PARK.

GRIFFITH.

LEDYARD.

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

§ II. DIFFERENT FORMS OF FEMALE AFFECTION.

INFANCY.

YOUTH.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

WIFE.

THE ROBBER.

SENECA.

DAUGHTER.

MOTHER.

OLD MAIDS.

THE WIDOW.

CONCLUSION.

TO HIS DEAR EDITH, FROM HER
AFFECTIONATE GRANDFATHER.—B. M.

PREFACE.



THERE are certain properties of the female mind upon which doubt has existed, and may, possibly, long exist.

1. Women are said to be fond of ornament—an evil against which they were thus warned by St. Paul—“I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with embroidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but which becometh women professing godliness, with good works.”

2. Women are said to be fond of gaiety:

“Some men to business, some to pleasure take,”—

but the ruling passion of woman is not the love of business.

3. It is said that women act more from impulse than from foresight:

“Men have many faults, women have only two,—”

of which the want of foresight is one.

4. Women, it is said, are variable:

—“*Varium et mutabile semper
Fœmina.*”

Women are fond of intellect, of courage, of virtue; and are capable of the most heroic acts.

Such are properties of the female mind, upon which doubt may be entertained; but there is one property upon which doubt cannot exist—it is the nature of woman to be affectionate.

B. M.

FEMALE AFFECTION.



THE PLEASURES OF AFFECTION.

THE pleasures of the affections are Love, Friendship, Gratitude, and general Benevolence.

“For the pleasures of the affections,” says Lord Bacon, “we must resort to the poets, for there affection is on her throne, there we may find her painted forth to the life.”

Instead of referring us to the poets, he might, according to his own admonitions, have referred us to the certain mode of discovering truth, by observing facts around us, and particularly by observing the nature sought, where it is most conspicuous.

In searching, for any nature, observe it, he says, where it is most conspicuous; as, in inquiring into the nature of flame, observe the sudden ignition and expansion of gas—these are what he calls “*glaring instances.*”

The glaring instance of affection is *Female Affection*; there indeed she is on her throne, there we may find her painted forth to the life. It is the nature of woman to be affectionate.

§ I. FEMALE AFFECTION IN GENERAL.

MUNGO PARK.

WHEN stating the miseries to which he was exposed in Africa, Mungo Park says, “I never, when in distress and misery, applied for relief to a female, without finding pity,—and if she had the power, assistance.” And he thus mentions one instance,—“I waited,” he says, “more than two hours for an opportunity to cross that river, but one of the chief men informed me that I must not presume to cross without the King’s permission; he therefore advised me to lodge at a distant village, to which he pointed, for the night. I found to my great mortification that no person would admit me into his house;—I was regarded with astonishment and fear, and was obliged to sit all day without victuals in the shade of a tree; and the night threatened to be very uncomfortable, for the wind rose, and there was great appearance of a heavy rain; and the wild beasts are so very numerous that I should have been under the necessity of climbing up the tree and resting among the branches. About sunset as I was preparing to pass the night in this manner, and had turned my horse loose that he might graze at liberty, a woman, returning from the labours of the field, stopped to observe me, and perceiving that I was weary and dejected, inquired into my situation, which I briefly explained to her; whereupon, with looks of great compassion, she took up my saddle and bridle, and told me to follow her. Having conducted me into her hut, she lighted a

lamp, spread a mat on the floor, and told me I might remain there for the night. Finding that I was hungry, she gave me a very fine fish for my supper; and pointing to the mat, and telling me I might sleep there without apprehension, she called to the female part of her family, who had stood gazing on me all the while in fixed astonishment, to resume their task of spinning cotton, in which they continued to employ themselves great part of the night. They lightened their labour by songs; one of which was composed extempore—for I was, myself, the subject of it: it was sung by one of the young women, the rest joining in a sort of chorus. The air was sweet and plaintive; and the words, literally translated, were these:—

“The winds roared, and the rains fell,—the poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree,—he has no mother to bring him milk,—no wife to grind his corn.—Chorus—Let us pity the white man,—no mother has he!” &c.

GRIFFITH.

“ON the northern side of the plain we had just entered, was a large encampment of these people. Being in absolute want of milk, I determined to solicit the assistance of these Turcomans. Approaching their tents, with gradual step, and apparent indifference, I passed several, without observing any probability of succeeding: children, only, were to be seen near the spot where I was, and men with their flocks, at a certain distance; advancing still farther, I saw a woman, at the entrance of a small tent, occupied in domestic employment. Convinced that an appeal to the feelings of the female sex, offered with decency, by a man distressed with hunger, would not be rejected, I held out my wooden bowl, and reversing it, made a salutation according to the

forms of the country. The kind Turcomanee covered her face precipitately, and retired within the tent. I did not advance a step; she saw me unassuming,—my inverted bowl still explained my wants. The timidity of her sex, the usages of her country, and, even the fear of danger, gave way to the benevolence of her heart: she went to the tent again; returned speedily with a bowl of milk, and, advancing towards me with a glance more than half averted, filled my bowl to the brim, and vanished.”

LEDYARD.

“I NEVER addressed myself in the language of decency and friendship to a woman, whether civilized or savage, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. With man it has often been otherwise,—in wandering over the barren plains of inhospitable Denmark, through honest Sweden, frozen Lapland, rude and churlish Finland, unprincipled Russia, and the wide-spread regions of the wandering Tartar, if hungry, dry, cold, wet, or sick, woman has ever been friendly to me,—and uniformly so; and to add to this virtue, so worthy the appellation of benevolence, these actions have been performed in so kind a manner, that if I was dry, I drank the sweet draught,—and if hungry, ate the coarse morsel with a double relish.”

PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER.

“AND there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink.

And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said,—This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?' And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Go.' And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, 'Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.' And the woman took the child, and nursed it."

§ II. DIFFERENT FORMS OF FEMALE AFFECTION.

THE nature of female affection may be seen in a variety of forms,—in Infancy, in the sweet love of Youth, of a Wife, of a Mother, of a Daughter, of a Widow.

INFANCY.

THE following is an account which I somewhere read of Nell Gwynn, when a child:—"My first love, you must know, was a link-boy,"—"A *what?*"—"Tis true," said she, "for all the frightfulness of your *what!*—and a very good soul he was, too, poor Dick! and had the heart of a gentleman; God knows what has become of him, but when I last saw him he said he would humbly love me to his dying day. He used to say that I must have been a lord's daughter for my beauty, and that I ought to ride in my coach; and he behaved to me as if I did. He, poor boy, would light me and my mother home, when we had sold our oranges, to our lodgings in Lewknor's Lane, as if we had been ladies of the land. He said he never felt easy for the evening 'till he had asked me how I did, then he went gaily about his work; and if he saw us housed at night, he slept like a prince. I shall never forget when he came flushing and stammering, and drew out of his pocket a pair of worsted stockings, which he brought for my naked feet. It was bitter cold weather; and I had chilblains, which made me hobble about 'till I cried,—and what does poor Richard do but work hard like a horse,

and buy me these worsted stockings? My mother bade him put them on; and so he did, and his warm tears fell on my chilblains, and he said he should be the happiest lad on earth if the stockings did me any good.”

When the Commissioners visited the Penitentiary at Lambeth, where the prisoners are punished by solitary confinement, they found in one cell a little girl, between eleven and twelve years of age. This child must have spent many hours every day in the dark; was poorly clad, and scantily fed, and her young limbs were deprived of all the joyous modes of playful exercise, so necessary and so pleasant to that age: she asked neither for food, nor clothes, nor light, nor liberty,—all she wished for was “a little doll, that she might dress and nurse it.” Her innocent and child-like request put an end to this cruel punishment for children.

“I yesterday took my dear grand-daughter to see Westminster Abbey. She is between seven and eight years of age, and is one of the sweetest angels that ever existed on earth. It was a bitter cold morning: on the tomb of Mrs. Warren, who was a mother to poor children, there is a beautiful statue of a poor half-clothed Irish girl, with her little naked baby in her arms;—my dear little child looked up at me, and, through her tears, earnestly said, ‘How I *should* like to nurse that little baby!’”

YOUTH.

OF the influence of love upon youth and inexperience, it can scarcely be necessary to adduce any instances. I must, however, mention one fact which occurred during the rebellion in '45.

“When I was a young boy, I had delicate health, and was somewhat of a pensive and contemplative turn of mind: it was my

delight in the long summer evenings, to slip away from my companions, that I might walk in the shade of a venerable wood, my favourite haunt, and listen to the cawing of the old rooks, who seemed as fond of this retreat as I was.

“One evening I sat later than usual, though the distant sound of the cathedral clock had more than once warned me to my home. There was a stillness in all nature that I was unwilling to disturb by the least motion. From this reverie I was suddenly startled by the sight of a tall slender female who was standing by me, looking sorrowfully and steadily in my face. She was dressed in white, from head to foot, in a fashion I had never seen before; her garments were unusually long and flowing, and rustled as she glided through the low shrubs near me as if they were made of the richest silk. My heart beat as if I was dying, and I knew not that I could have stirred from the spot; but she seemed so very mild and beautiful, I did not attempt it. Her pale brown hair was braided round her head, but there were some locks that strayed upon her neck; altogether she looked like a lovely picture, but not like a living woman. I closed my eyes forcibly with my hands, and when I looked again she had vanished.

“I cannot exactly say why I did not on my return speak of this beautiful appearance, nor why, with a strange mixture of hope and fear, I went again and again to the same spot that I might see her. She always came, and often in the storm and plashing rain, that never seemed to touch or to annoy her, looked sweetly at me, and silently passed on; and though she was so near to me, that once the wind lifted those light straying locks, and I felt them against my cheek, yet I never could move or speak to her. I fell ill; and when I recovered, my mother closely questioned me of the tall lady, of whom, in the height of my fever, I had so often spoken.

“I cannot tell you what a weight was taken off my spirits when I learnt that this was no apparition, but a most lovely woman; not young, though she had kept her young looks,—for the grief which had broken her heart seemed to have spared her beauty.

“When the rebel troops were retreating after their total defeat, a young officer, in that very wood I was so fond of, unable any longer to endure the anguish of his wounds, sunk from his horse, and laid himself down to die. He was found there by the daughter of Sir Henry Robinson, and conveyed by a trusty domestic to her father’s mansion. Sir Henry was a loyalist; but the officer’s desperate condition excited his compassion, and his many wounds spoke a language a brave man could not misunderstand. Sir Henry’s daughter with many tears pleaded for him, and promised that he should be carefully and secretly attended. And well she kept that promise,—for she waited upon him (her mother being long dead) for many weeks, and anxiously watched for the first opening of eyes, that, languid as he was, looked brightly and gratefully upon his young nurse. You may fancy, better than I can tell you, as he slowly recovered, all the moments that were spent in reading, and low-voiced singing, and gentle playing on the lute; and how many fresh flowers were brought to one whose wounded limbs would not bear him to gather them for himself; and how calmly the days glided on in the blessedness of returning health, and in that sweet silence so carefully enjoined him. I will pass by this, to speak of one day, which, brighter and pleasanter than others, did not seem more bright or more lovely than the looks of the young maiden, as she gaily spoke of ‘a little festival, which (though it must bear an unworthier name) she meant really to give, in honour of her guest’s recovery;’—‘and it is time, lady,’ said he, ‘for that guest, so tended and so honoured, to tell you his whole

story, and speak to you of one who will help him to thank you—may I ask you, fair lady, to write a little note for me, which, even in these times of danger I may find some means to forward?’ To his mother, no doubt, she thought, as with light steps and a lighter heart she seated herself by his couch, and smilingly bade him dictate: but, when he said ‘*My Dear Wife,*’ and lifted up his eyes to be asked for more, he saw before him a pale statue, that gave him one look of utter despair, and fell (for he had no power to help her) heavily at his feet. Those eyes never truly reflected the pure soul again, or answered by answering looks the fond inquiries of her poor old father. She lived to be as I saw her,—sweet, and gentle, and delicate always, but reason returned no more. She visited, ’till the day of her death, the spot where she first saw that young soldier, and dressed herself in the very clothes he said so well became her.”

THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

“IN walking through a street in London, I saw a crowd of men women and children hooting and laughing at a woman, who, looking neither to the right-hand nor to the left, passed through the midst of them in perfect silence; upon approaching her, I saw that all this derision was caused by her dress, which, equally unsuited to the weather and her apparent rank in life, was from head to foot entirely *white*,—her bonnet, her shawl, her very shoes were *white*; and though all that she wore seemed of the coarsest materials, her dress was perfectly clean. As I walked past her, I looked stedfastly in her face. She was thin and pale, of a pleasing countenance, and totally unmoved by the clamour around her. I have since learnt her story:—The young man to whom she was betrothed died on the bridal-day, when she and her companions were dressed to go to church: she lost her senses,—and has ever since, to use her own

words, been ‘expecting her bridegroom.’ Neither insult or privation of any kind can induce her to change the colour of her dress; she is alike insensible of her bereavement by death, or of the lapse of time,—‘she is dressed for the bridal, and the bridegroom is at hand.’”

Such is the nature of Woman’s Love—continuing in imagination, when reality is no more:

“As once I knew a crazy Moorish maid,
Who dressed her in her buried lover’s clothes,
And o’er the smooth spring in the mountain’s cleft
Hung with her lute, and played the selfsame tune
He used to play, and listened to the shadow
Herself had made.”—COLERIDGE.

Such is the tenderness, such the intensity of the love of innocence. It has for ever existed, and will for ever exist,—from Eve, on the first day of her creation, to the many whose hearts at this moment beat with affection and love:

“All thoughts, all passions, all desires,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.”

WIFE.

LET us now consider affection where it appears in one of its sweetest forms,—in the love of a wife,—love, in the strength of which, hoping all things, she does not hesitate to quit her father and her mother and all dear to her to share the joys and sorrows of

her husband. In prosperity she delights in his happiness, in sickness she watches over him, feeling more grief than she shows.

A young soldier, thus speaks of the affection of his wife:—

“For five campaigns
Did my sweet Lucy know
Each hardship and each toil
We soldiers undergo.
Nor ever did she murmur,
Or at her fate repine,
She thought not of her sorrow,
But how to lessen mine:
In hunger, or hard marching,
Whate’er the ill might be,
In her I found a friend,
Who ne’er deserted me:
And in my tent when wounded,
And when I sickening lay,
Oft from my brow with trembling hand,
She wiped the damps away.
And when this heart, my Lucy,
Shall cease to beat for thee,
Oh! cold, clay cold,
Full sure this heart must be.”

THE ROBBER.

“A FRIEND of mine who had long struggled with a dangerous fever, approached that crisis on which his life depended, when sleep, uninterrupted sleep might ensure his recovery;—his wife, scarcely daring to breathe, sat by him; her servants, worn out by watching,

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