

Concerning Clever Women.

BY JAMES L. FORD.

A SKETCH OF THE TRULY CULTIVATED WOMAN AND OF THE WOMAN WHO ONLY PRETENDS TO CULTURE—HOW THE TWO TYPES MAY BE DISTINGUISHED IN THIS AGE OF FEMININE ENDEAVOR.

THIS is indeed an age of marvelous achievement. I often wonder whether the historian of the future will call the period in which we now live the "electric age," the "expansion age," or the "age of feminine endeavor." Any of these titles would be justifiable, but my own choice would be the last named, for surely there has never been a time when woman was so much in evidence as now. Her brilliancy is generally acknowledged in a hundred different fields of effort, while her own especial sphere, that of society, is fairly filled to overflowing with clever members of her sex.

Indeed, there are so many clever women in the country that I firmly believe that the gentlemen employed to gather statistics for the next census will inquire in every house how many of them the family contains; and I can assure them that when they reach the brownstone district of New York in the prosecution of their duties they will discover an amount of feminine capacity that will surprise them. But to make their statistics strictly accurate, they will need some official standard by which to determine just which women are entitled to be rated in the category of genius.

THE TESTS OF GENIUS.

It will be no easy matter to prepare wholly satisfactory tests, nor could I at this moment suggest a series of questions which could be used in a house to house canvass. I may say, however, that the first query to be put to a woman of pretended cleverness is, "Has she creative gifts of any description?" Of course, if she can write real poetry, or

act, or paint with the feeling of an artist and the technique of one who has mastered her craft, then the question is settled at once and forever. But if, on the other hand, this leading inquiry be answered in the negative, the census taker should next demand, "What can she do, then?"

To this there must be some definite reply. If her sponsors can say nothing of her, except that she is a "bright conversationalist," or "knows such a lot about art," or "has met a number of distinguished people," or "is one of the very brightest girls in society, and so very well read," then it is pretty safe to regard her case as hopeless. Well bred, warm hearted, or agreeable she may be, but no more entitled to take rank as a woman of real cleverness than she would be on the strength of having a brother in law who worked in a glue factory.

I do not think that I demand too much of the clever woman. The creative gift is so rare that it is seldom taken into account in considering the attainments of the modern woman of society; but the really clever woman should have an appreciation of the particular field of art in which she has won her renown. I positively refuse to admit the cleverness of one whose fame is founded on her ability to remark, with a careless air of self confidence: "That picture does not look to me like a real Daubigny; it is not quite in his genre;" or, "Matthew Arnold was so insistent in his criticism." It is very easy to read a few critical essays and then retail fragments of them at luncheons and afternoon teas, but real cleverness signifies a good deal more than mere vocal juggling with half di-

gested scraps of information about books and pictures.

CULTURE, REAL AND IMITATION.

The woman who is really clever, from a literary standpoint, is the one who reads because she enjoys it, and not in order to procure fresh ammunition for an all too ready tongue. I am much more inclined to be suspicious of her who sets the conversational ball rolling with a platitude about Balzac than of her less pretentious sister who talks frankly about "David Harum" or "Richard Carvel"; for the simple reason that most well read persons of adult years are likely to be thinking of the freshest book, rather than of the one that was printed so long ago that it has ceased to be a topic for current discussion. Moreover, the very sound of the names of Emerson, Balzac, Carlyle, or Matthew Arnold suggests to my mind that empty and meretricious "Cultured" school of thought.

Fashionable art chatter is, in my opinion, a social disease unworthy of serious discussion. I will say, however, that a fairly intelligent mocking bird can be taught enough about "breadth of treatment," "atmosphere," and "middle distance," within six months, to enable that worthy biped to make a presentable appearance in select fashionable circles, and, possibly, to gain a reputation for "cleverness."

In the office of one of our most famous humorous publications is an institution known to the members of the staff as the "crucible." It is a room that contains only one table, without any drawers in it, a chair, and drawing materials. It is reached by a door leading directly from the private office of the art manager, a gentleman whose sunny Scottish temperament has been slightly soured through a life devoted to the judgment of funny pictures. The artist who seeks employment on this paper, and gives evidence of possible ability, is placed in the crucible and told to make a picture. There, in the awful silence of this remote chamber, and in the solitude which is disturbed only by the occasional furtive visits of the art manager, he must work out his own destiny. There are no files of foreign publications from

which, with a ready sheet of tracing paper, he may transfer a striking figure to his own paper. He must prove that he knows how to draw without the kindly aid of *Fliegende Blätter* or the *Petit Journal pour Rire*.

I have often wished that the crucible could be introduced into society. In it I would place the person of literary or artistic affectation, with no other companion or resource except a new book or a picture by a new artist; and at the end of a certain time I would have that person led blindfolded from the crucial chamber to the very heart of a fashionable conversation, and there compelled to talk. I am convinced that a few experiments of this kind would completely destroy many established reputations.

THE "SALONS" OF TODAY.

After all, the real and crucial test of a clever woman is the company she keeps. My suspicions take alarm when her reputation for brilliancy is supported by the statement that "her house is a rendezvous for so many celebrated and interesting people," for I well know that most of her geese are pretty sure to be swans, or most of her swans geese, as we may prefer to read the proverb. When I hear this, my first impulse is to ask what particular men and women of distinction make her home their favorite gathering place.

If I find that her supposed celebrities are artistic impostors, or insincere, pretentious amateurs in art, then I know that under no circumstances can she be called a clever woman. She may possess a kind heart, which leads her to be hospitable to those whom she regards as unfortunate; she may possess such a sympathetic nature as to believe in them in spite of adversity, and she may even be thoroughly well bred; but she is not clever. How can a woman so ignorant of the fundamental laws of society, so lacking in the intuitive perceptions common to her sex that she cannot distinguish between the true man and the false, the artist and the poseur—how can such a woman be regarded as clever?

It is not always an easy matter for a woman to choose wisely in her own particular social grade; but when she endeavors to create a following from the

ranks of persons brought up under conditions vastly unlike her own, men and women whose lives have been shaped by influences which she cannot even comprehend, then she is to be pitied as one rushing in where an angel of good judgment might well fear to tread.

For this reason the lion hunting microbe generally finds lodgment in an ill balanced brain. There is a yard stick standing in the corner of every so called salon in New York, and it plays an important part, too, in the work of assembling the Sunday night congress of talent and genius. Without it the ambitious hostess would be unable to measure the names of the musical and dramatic artists on the fence posters, and her salon would therefore be likely to suffer in point of true distinction.

THE LION HUNTER'S WEAKNESSES.

In order to realize how hollow are the pretensions of a literary and artistic leader of this type, you have only to try to interest her in the work of some unknown artist. You will find her about as sympathetic and responsive as a scallop. If, however, you desire to see her face light up with the eager glow of intellectuality, tell her that you are the bosom friend of the widely advertised singer or actor who is due on next week's steamer.

There have been a great many salons in New York within my own recollection, but at the present moment I do not recall the name of a single man or woman of present distinction who owes any-

thing to any one of them. On the other hand, our newsboys and bootblacks, who have no salon whatever, have discovered and encouraged with their appreciative applause some of the very best artists on our stage.

The woman who is fooled by the poseur and the quack is not of necessity lacking in either kindness or good breeding; but she has one trick, besides claiming to be clever, of which she should rid herself. When it has been proved, even to her satisfaction, that the gentleman who, through her credulity has foisted himself upon her suffering friends, is nothing more or less than a preposterous humbug, she reluctantly takes refuge in her last stronghold and declares that he is "very interesting." For my own part, I have a much higher opinion of the cleverness of a woman who frankly admits that she has made a mistake than of the one who persists in clinging to an exposed fraud simply because it was she who "brought him out."

As to the really clever women of New York who manage their homes and their husbands, too, and whose judgment of the men and women with whom they are brought in contact is marked by unfailing good sense; whose appreciation of the beautiful and agreeable sides of life is keen and true, and who draw towards themselves the very best society that the town affords, the essay which shall fitly celebrate their charm and worth has yet to be written. They, however, are the really clever women of society.

THE SWEETS O' NOON.

THE sweets o' noon encompass me;
Above me burns a gold bright sea
Of honeyed air; 'mid flowers I fling
Myself and watch the cloud fleets wing
Their way to ports of mystery.

What reck I of the wars that be,
Of state or empire's agony?
More dear than rights of czar or king,
The sweets o' noon.

Dream drugged in blissful apathy,
I hear June's magic jubilee
Through all the woodland's echoing—
While round about me throb and swing,
Lush rhymes, ambrosial poetry,
The sweets o' noon.

Mary T. Waggaman.

A Possible Prime Minister.

BY HAROLD PARKER.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, THE BUSINESS MAN OF THE PRESENT BRITISH ADMINISTRATION, AND THE CHAMPION OF EXPANSION—THE SUCCESSION TO THE PREMIERSHIP SEEMS TO LIE BETWEEN HIM AND ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR.

IN a consideration of British politicians two men hold the center of the canvas—Joseph Chamberlain and Arthur James Balfour. In the public mind those two statesmen are viewed as natural opponents, yet are they excellent friends. Chamberlain, the radical, born in London and identified with Birmingham, differs so much in character and origin from Balfour, the Scotsman and aristocrat, that their rivalry seems an essential. As a matter of fact, those very differences make friendship possible.

Mr. Chamberlain's real enemy in the cabinet of Lord Salisbury is Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the chancellor of the exchequer. Mr. Balfour is too much of a philosopher to permit personal distinctions to disturb political amenity. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, on the other hand—tall, thin, alert, bitter, and fiery—regards Mr. Chamberlain's presence in the Conservative camp as an insult and an intrusion. The enmity of those two has been ill disguised through the seven years they have sat together on the Treasury bench.

Never once in all these years have Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain been openly at variance on the floor of the House of Commons. Yet is their rivalry one upon which the country might be divided. Since the death of the Home Rule agitation, Liberal Unionism has represented but a small portion of the voters of the country, yet are there sixty eight avowed Liberal Unionists in the House of Commons. Those may be taken as the personal followers of Mr. Chamberlain, nominated by him, and encouraged to positions of power in the country. Their preponderance in the councils of the nation constitutes the gravest charge brought against Mr.

Chamberlain by Conservatives who have not fully accepted the alliance with the Liberal Unionists.

Old Conservatives of the type of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach resent the enthusiasm with which Mr. Chamberlain assists his personal followers up the ladder of political advancement. Mr. Balfour is a friend. Mr. Chamberlain is a patron. And in the distinction one realizes the difference between the two men.

The strongest of the young men of Parliament is George Wyndham, recently under secretary for war, now chief secretary for Ireland. In a cursory glance at the House of Commons, Mr. Wyndham at once holds the attention of the spectator. Tall, slight, graceful, with the face of an aristocrat, lighted by deep blue eyes and framed in a mass of thick black hair, Mr. Wyndham stands out from his fellows as a leader of men. Some years ago he was private secretary to Mr. Balfour. In the natural course of events, Mr. Balfour should have seconded a man of such outstanding ability for a position in the government, but it was years afterward before he received his first under secretaryship. Mr. Balfour advanced his claims, but did not push them, and, when the administration was complete, all he said was, "I am sorry for poor George." Had Mr. Wyndham been a protégé of Mr. Chamberlain, his inclusion in the government would have been made a cabinet issue.

Years ago, when Mr. Chamberlain was mayor of Birmingham, he was a Radical and a Republican. The country dreaded the result of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Birmingham during his mayoralty. Today, thirty years