CHASTITY & SENSUALITY

The subject of Sex is a remarkable one, since, though its phenomena concern us so much, both directly and indirectly, and, sooner or later, it occupies the thoughts of all, yet all mankind, as it were, agree to be silent about it, at least the sexes commonly one to another. One of the most interesting of all human facts is veiled more completely than any mystery. It is treated with such secrecy and awe as surely do not go to any religion. I believe that it is unusual even for the most intimate friends to communicate the pleasures and anxieties connected with this fact, — much as the external affair of love, its comings and goings, are bruited. The Shakers do not exaggerate it so much by their manner of speaking of it, as all mankind by their manner of keeping silence about it. Not that men should speak on this or any subject without having anything worthy to say; but it is plain that the education of man has hardly commenced, — there is so little genuine intercommunication.

In a pure society, the subject of marriage would not be so often avoided, — from shame and not from reverence, winked out of sight, and hinted at only; but treated naturally and simply, — perhaps simply avoided, like the kindred mysteries. If it cannot be spoken of for shame, how can it be acted of? But, doubtless, there is far more purity, as well as more impurity, than is apparent.

Men commonly couple with their idea of marriage a slight degree at least of sensuality; but every lover, the world over, believes in its inconceivable purity. If it is the result of a pure love, there can be nothing sensual in marriage. Chastity is something positive, not negative. It is the virtue of the married especially. All lusts or base pleasures must give place to loftier delights. They who meet as superior beings cannot perform the deeds of inferior ones. The deeds of love are less questionable than any action of an individual can be, for, it being founded on the rarest mutual respect, the parties incessantly stimulate each other to a loftier and purer life, and the act in which they are associated must be pure and noble indeed, for innocence and purity can have no equal. In this relation we deal with one whom we respect more religiously even than we respect our better selves, and we shall necessarily conduct as in the presence of God. What presence can be more awful to the lover than the presence of his beloved?

If you seek the warmth even of affection from a similar motive to that from which cats and dogs and slothful persons hug the fire, — because your temperature is low through sloth, — you are on the downward road, and it is but to plunge yet deeper into sloth. Better the cold affection of the sun, reflected from fields of ice and snow, or his warmth in some still, wintry dell. The warmth of celestial love does not relax, but nerves and braces its enjoyer. Warm your body by healthful exercise, not by cowering over a stove. Warm your spirit by performing independently noble deeds, not by ignobly seeking the sympathy
of your fellows who are no better than yourself. A man's social and spiritual discipline must answer to his corporeal. He must lean on a friend who has a hard breast, as he would lie on a hard bed. He must drink coldwater for his only beverage. So he must not hear sweetened and colored words, but pure and refreshing truths. He must daily bathe in truth cold as spring water, not warmed by the sympathy of friends.

Can love be in aught allied to dissipation? Let us love by refusing, not accepting one another. Love and lust are far asunder. The one is good, the other bad. When the affectionate sympathize by their higher natures, there is love; but there is danger that they will sympathize by their lower natures, and then there is lust. It is not necessary that this be deliberate, hardly even conscious; but, in the close contact of affection, there is danger that we may stain and pollute one another; for we cannot embrace but with an entire embrace.

We must love our friend so much that she shall be associated with our purest and holiest thoughts alone. When there is impurity, we have "descended to meet," though we knew it not. The luxury of affection, — there's the danger. There must be some nerve and heroism in our love, as of a winter morning. In the religion of all nations a purity is hinted at, which, I fear, men never attain to. We may love and not elevate one another. The love that takes us as it finds us degrades us. What watch we must keep over the fairest and purest of our affections, lest there be some taint about them. May we so love as never to have occasion to repent of our love.

There is to be attributed to sensuality the loss to language of how many pregnant symbols. Flowers, which, by their infinite hues and fragrance, celebrate the marriage of the plants, are intended for a symbol of the open and unsuspected beauty of all true marriage, when man's flowering season arrives.

Virginity, too, is a budding flower, and by an impure marriage the virgin is deflowered. Whoever loves flowers, loves virgins and chastity. Love and lust are as far asunder as a flower garden is from a brothel.

J. Biberg, in the "Amcenitates Botanicae," edited by Linnaeus, observes (I translate from the Latin): "The organs of generation, which, in the animal kingdom, are for the most part concealed by nature, as if they were to be ashamed of, in the vegetable kingdom are exposed to the eyes of all; and, when the nuptials of plants are celebrated, it is wonderful what delight they afford to the beholder, refreshing the senses with the most agreeable color and the sweetest odor; and, at the same time, bees and other insects, not to mention the humming bird, extract honey from their nectaries, and gather wax from their effete pollen." Linnaeus himself calls the calyx the thalamus, or bridal chamber; and the corolla the aulaeum, or tapestry of it, and proceeds to explain thus every part of the flower.

Who knows but evil spirits might corrupt the flowers themselves, rob them of their fragrance and their fair hues, and turn their marriage into a secret shame and defilement? Already they are of various qualities, and there is one whose nuptials fill the
lowlands in June with the odor of carrion.
The intercourse of the sexes, I have dreamed, is incredibly
beautiful, too fair to be remembered. I have had thoughts about
it, but they are among the most fleeting and irrecoverable in
my experience. It is strange that men will talk of miracles,
revelation, inspiration, and the like, as things past, while
love remains.
A true marriage will differ in no wise from illumination. In all
perception of the truth there is a divine ecstasy, an
inexpressible delirium of joy, as when a youth embraces his
betrothed virgin. The ultimate delights of a true marriage are
one with this.
No wonder that, out of such a union, not as end, but as
accompaniment, comes the undying race of man. The womb is a most
fertile soil.
Some have asked if the stock of men could not be improved, if
they could not be bred as cattle. Let Love be purified, and all
the rest will follow. A pure love is thus, indeed, the panacea
for all the ills of the world.
The only excuse for reproduction is improvement. Nature abhors
repetition. Beasts merely propagate their kind; but the
offspring of noble men and women will be superior to themselves,
as their aspirations are. By their fruits ye shall know them.