HER ADVICE TO GIRLS

Ella Wheeler Wilcox Pays Her Respects to the Flirt.

AFFAIRS WITH MARRIED MEN

Three Types of Females Who Succumb--The Gushing, Over-Ripe Girl and Her Danger.

However much of a flirt the average American girl may be, she confines her field of conquest to the single men.

I say the average flirt. But now and then, in country places, in lesser cities and in the large metropolis, we come upon the exception to the rule, and find a girl who is not averse to numbering married men among her admirers, even among her victims.

The young women who get their names associated pleasantly with married admirers can be divided into three classes: the spoiled girl, who is over sentimental, conceited and gushing; the utterly selfish and vain girl, and the overripe girl.

I met one of the first type recently in the heart of the great metropolis. She was a beauty, an only child and motherless, and possessed wealth and position. She had gorged her naturally romantic mind on French novels and she was utterly spoiled by adulation.

Her Married Lover.

She loved to talk of herself, and she confessed to me that she had, at the age of 23, grown quite blase with the monotonous attentions of adoring swains, and that she found nothing so interesting now as the admiration of married men. "I suppose I like them because they are unattainable," she said quite nonchalantly; "and I confess the nearest sentiment I ever felt to love was inspired by a married man.

His unhappy domestic life first drew me to him, he said he felt I had such a sympathetic nature from the very first. Poor fellow! he is nearly crazy about me now; he fairly adores the ground I walk on."

"My dear girl, nothing is so uncertain as the impression a coquettish young woman makes on a married man," I replied. "Quite likely he is telling his wife that he prizes the fool who marries you. He may feel the charm of your beauty, but he would not defend your good name if he heard it assailed, if he is sufficiently lacking in principle to let you to receive his compromising attentions, he is lacking the honor to defend you from the tongue of gossip.

"He would defend me, because he is in love with me," she urged. "Did you never hear of an unhappy married man really feeling the love of a lifetime for some one he met afterward?"

Only An Amusement.

"Once in a while that occurs," I replied. "But you are scarcely the type of girl to inspire such a passion. A man would amuse himself with you, and try to lead you on, but he would not lose his head over you. Your position and wealth and beauty would flatter his egotistic pride, and he would enjoy making use of his power to turn your over sensitive heart, but he would feel a secret contempt for you all the same. You are a spoiled, sentimental girl, a hot-house product, not quite the better of the hot-house and heart.

"The most hopeless coquette is the heartless girl with an abnormal love of conquest and excitement, who finds with married men the adventure and reckless element necessary to her happiness. Such a girl is usually morally rotten in the generally accepted use of that term, and is regarded by her vacillating wife and mother. She takes her freedom and the opportunities of conquests and adventure it affords her. She has residence of game among but have to play about the bonds of honor. Her only companionship is that of imagination. Having by long exercise of her art to compel and trample and amuse those of male sex, she has begun wearying and more annoyed than troubled at the attentions of married men, who have lost her interest in the game of conquest. Her vanity is satisfied, the tragedy of the situation and the complete control of herself she has kept intact, she is free to leave and go on the same game, she pulls herself up, and she is ready to make wives passes.

The Over-Ripe Girl.

The world accuses the girl first of being far more dangerous than married men. Here is the popularity in mind without the accompanying frequency of fancy, that the public is sure to believe true. One hears her great name without being reminded of her and without being in mind a great fool.

The third and worst to be pitied type of girl, whose name is coupled by association with a married man, is the over-ripe girl. She has lived to pass her twenty-fifth birthday without having married or married. With more than ordinary mind, with a high level of sentiment, with strong emotions and intense longing for love, she sees her girlhood's companions mated one by one, while her own dreams and hopes slip farther and further back into the past with her first youth. Such a girl is liable to be superior to her early admirers, and as she reaches ripe womanhood she finds mental companionship in married men only. Then comes the dangerous association with some man whose domestic life is a disappointment, and who discovers in her what he misses at home.

It may be her pastor, it may be the family physician, it may be the husband of some old schoolmate whom she visits, but as a streak of lightning sets fire to dry buildings, his glance and touch influence her repressed and craving emotions.

Danger From Knowledge.

She is capable of feeling and inspiring a great passion, and, unlike either of the types already described, she attracts and is attracted by men strong in their emotions and of no mean mental endowments, men who have grown beyond their wives, and who have perhaps lived through years of brain solitude and heart hunger before they met this girl.

We speak of a young woman of 25 or 30 as old enough to be sensible and well behaved; but, in fact, that is the very time of life when it is most difficult for an unanchored woman to be prudent or reasonable. From 14 to 17 a healthy, vigorous girl is in danger of imprudence or folly from ignorance of her emotions; from 25 to 30 she is in danger from her knowledge of them.

Dead Sea Fruit.

When I hear of a girl in that period of life who has wrecked her future and lost her good name through some great act of folly, I am moved with the deepest pity and sorrow. She is like the ungathered dead ripe fruit that bursts in the sun and falls into the dust below.

It is all very well for you, with your satisfied lives, to sit in judgment and say: "But she should have spurned the first approach; she should have been indignant at such a thought; she should have shown womanly pride and strength." It is not so easy to call all those qualities to your aid when, with youth slipping behind, with loneliness before, with a heart breaking for sympathy, a brain on fire with feeling, and veins bursting with unused vitality, you encounter a beautiful and alluring temptation. It is so easy to believe at such a time that the world is well lost for love; that one hour of possession will be worth a lifetime of disgrace. But no more fallacious idea ever dazzled the eyes of the soul. Time has yet to show us the pair of lawless lovers who, having given up the world for love's sake, did not resent it if the world took them at their word.

Always Blames the Girl.

One would think the unhappily married man ought to have strength enough to protect the overripe girl against herself; that his wider knowledge of human emotions and temptations should fill him with pity for her. But it never does. Men have not been taught that self control is necessary to them in these matters. The whole tendency of the world has been toward masculine freedom and self indulgence, and it is not to be wondered at that he is the tempter instead of the protector.

But it does seem a wonder that he invariably blames the woman when he falls. Such is the fact, however, and many a passion blinded girl, who has believed that the world was well lost for the love of a married man, lives to hear him recriminate her for leading him astray. It is the man who first and most keenly feels the lash of public blame. Many a case has come under my observation where the husband has returned to the wife who was never able to make him happy, leaving the girl who was in every way endowed to be his companion, so powerful a factor in human happiness was public respect.

Strengthen the Spiritual Nature.

It is well for the overripe girl to recall such cases before she succumbs to the fascinating illusion held out to her by her emotions and her fancy. Nothing else in all the range of human experience is so overpoweringly alluring as the attraction of the sexes, and when the imagination and the senses are both on fire, reason leads but little light.

But also let those who have to sit in the ashes of the burned out sensations, the ruins of impossible ideals, and the wreck of disappointed hopes, take courage. Life is a school, and we are here to learn. We are all of us, more or less, prone to make mistakes, but we are not to be crushed by them. We are to make wise passes.

Only An Episode.

Love is a great factor in life, but it is not the factor. It is not even the most important factor in the development of character, but it is the most fascinating one, and so it is the one we are most prone to make the mistake of allowing to become the dominant factor in our lives. We are here to learn many lessons, and we are not to be crushed by any one lesson, however severe it may be. We are not to be crushed by our mistakes, however grievous they may be. We are not to be crushed by our sins, however they may have pierced our souls. We are here to learn, to grow, to become. The mistake we make, the sin we commit, the suffering we endure, are but episodes in our lives. They are not our lives. They are not our souls. They are not our selves. They are but episodes, they are but episodes, they are but episodes in our lives