

## WOMAN'S INFLUENCE IN SOCIETY.

A lady writes to me that she wishes me to say something about "Woman in her home, and the influence she exercises over society." I take exceptions to the words "over society." Do you know we have a little influence in society, but not a bit over it? Well, it is so. Look about you and see if it is not as I say. When has our protest been heeded, or our wishes consulted by society? Do you not know that women would, if they could, have a very different state of public morals from that which now prevails, and that they cannot have what they wish? We want honesty in business, we want purity in politics, we desire the administration of justice in the courts, we see the need of reforms in educational affairs; but who heeds our wishes in these respects? We would have, long ago, banished from society the vice that saps its moral and physical health, if it had been possible for us to do it; but is it? On the contrary, we are brought face to face with it every day, until we have ceased to blush at it. Every youngest maiden has heard that whole streets of our cities are given up to it; and matrons know that the money that should go to the embellishment or comfort of their home-life, goes to procure the embellishment of that other life that is the poison of society. Mothers know that their sons and daughters are familiar with newspaper advertisements that offer exemption from the penalties of vice, and are therefore tantamount to a temptation to tamper with it. Women are woefully familiar with the sorrows that come from the loosening of all manner of hot-beds of evil, such as liquor saloons, gambling houses, dance cellars, and the like. Some of them have been so deluded as to think that by a combined effort with the womanly weapon of prayer and entreaty they might do something toward abolishing such things. We all know how they succeeded. Oh, no; we have no influence over society! Society snaps its fingers at us. Not only that, it drags us into the whirlpool, and bears us along on the irresistible current, until by-and-by we yield from weariness of useless effort. Pope never wrote a truer couplet than that oft-quoted one of vice, that

"Seen too oft, familiar with her face  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

The very religion of this gushing age is pity of vice. If then, religion has reached the second stage, it is easy to see how society has reached the stage where vice is embraced without protest. I know that all this is very shocking, but the most shocking part of it is its truth.

## WOMAN IN HER HOME.

Well, here certainly, we ought to have some influence that should extend into society; and out of courtesy to a trite belief, I will assume that we have. The ideal wife and mother is a woman of the household exclusively, whose thoughts, time and attention are divided about equally between kitchen and nursery. She is thoughtful as to buttons, and careful as to pudding recipes. In the brief intervals that occur between these duties she goes out to the church societies, and makes calls upon the other ladies in her set. On Sundays she goes to meeting. What, with the annual irruption of infantile diseases, the semi-annual house cleanings, the quarterly set-to on the family sewing, and her own occasional illness, the years do not seem long enough to give time for thinking. How can she think with all the little cares of a whole household chasing each other through her tired brain day after day, year after year. How can she read, with the baby crying fretfully with its teething, and Johnny clamoring for a string to his kite. She cannot do it, and after a hasty glance at the morning paper in the middle of the afternoon, she gives it up. What is the outside world to her, with this restless, vociferous, exigent little world under her own roof? She asks papa when he comes home to dinner,

"What is the news?" but papa is too tired and too careless to give an intelligent answer. If he stays at home during the evening she may renew the questioning, but to one he is wholly absorbed in the evening paper, or dozing off to sleep upon the sofa, while she sits and sews in resigned silence. How is this woman to have any influence on society?

You say, through her husband and children. But how can she influence her husband when he only comes home to eat and sleep? and when it is he that controls every affair of importance that relates to the welfare of the whole family, including herself? Negatively she does, of course. If he had no home he might spend his leisure in less sanctified places; and by furnishing a cheerful, quiet, cosy haven of rest for him after the day's business, she does truly something for his good. If she is a woman gifted with intellectual charms and with tact, she may gain quite a strong hold upon him, so that he pays attention to what she says, and learns really to value her opinions. Even in this case, she is quite as likely to be influenced by his views, as he to accept hers. In any case he will convey to her the knowledge in a manner more or less decisive, that he expects to take charge of all affairs of importance outside of the family, if not in it, too.

But, you say, she must coax him, and flatter and wheedle him, and so gain her ends in that way. Well the coaxing is all very pleasant to both parties where they are fond of each other, and that sort of influence is sufficient to procure a new dress or bonnet; but it does not often go any farther than that. In short a man's character is formed usually before he is married, and the most that a wife, under the most favorable influences, can do towards governing his actions is to make him indulgent to her personally. Possibly she may persuade him to attend the church which she prefers instead of the one he was brought up in. But the most devoted wife I ever knew in my whole circle of observation was never able to get her husband inside of a church at all; and another woman of the same style who is a Congregationalist never has succeeded in getting her husband (an excellent man by the way) to go to her church when there were services at the Baptist church, to which he belonged; though she often went with him to his.

Women very often marry men to "save them from ruin." There is love between them, and the man tells the woman that undoubtedly he shall go to the bad unless she consents to act as his redeeming angel. Her friends oppose the sacrifice; but she believes him before all the world, and the marriage takes place. For a short time the novel pleasures of love and home hold the young husband steady, and the wife feels all the pride and joy of having successfully used her "influence" on the man she loves to keep him in the path of right. But by-and-by there comes a time when she learns with bitterest certainty that she might as well expect to hold the winds with jetties as to keep her husband from the courses to which he is tempted either by appetite or evil associations. Of the children of such a marriage as many are likely to inherit the base appetites of the father as the gentle self-sacrifice of the mother; and the result is her happiness ruined with that of all her children, half of whom may repeat their father's faults. Instead, therefore, of saving one man, she has given the world several more like him to go to ruin. Is this the kind of influence that will save society? If any of your friends have it in mind to "save" any worthless young men by marrying them, tell them they had better take a "cup of cold poison" at once. But first represent to them how much safer would be the experiment of "saving" honest, industrious, upright young men; and how much better such an enterprise would pay in money, in comfort and respectability.

Nevertheless there is security for men in the quiet pleasures of home; and inasmuch as women make the home, and contribute to its attractiveness by a thousand feminine devices, in so much do they exercise an influence over

men. But a recipe for making happy homes is much in style of that one for cooking a hare: "First catch your hare." First you must have a husband who can be attracted by your pretty little artifices. There are thousands of women who would give their eyes to have their husbands acknowledge the charms of the place that passes for his home, but is not, because his heart is not there. In vain are all the cunning ornaments, the sweet smelling flowers, the dainty dress and bright aspect of things generally. He comes and goes fitfully; his breath, when he gives the hasty kiss of home-coming or parting, is redolent of stimulants. Up to the present the wife is in ignorance of any positive public shame; but her heart is wildly troubled lest the dreaded truth should burst upon her at any moment. She knows she is doomed, and the poor little pretence of affecting to believe she is still his darling, is horribly hard to support.

Then there are poorer homes that might be happy if the husband could be made to see more pleasure in it than he finds in the boorish company outside. But he does not. The small house, with the noise of children, and the jaded looks of the tired mother and housekeeper are not agreeable to him; while the woman's entire ignorance of the ward politics and kindred subjects forces him to go outside for sympathy in his views, whatever they may be; and there he finds the strong, coarse mental aliment suited to his wants, the relish of which is heightened by the pipe and the glass of beer or whisky. Where is the influence in this case?

Perhaps you will say the woman should have been so intelligent as to have overborne the attractions of the outside company, or that her house should have been so complete a picture of comfort as to have held the strong man away from vicious associations. I shall not say no to the first proposition, but I shall inquire as to the second, by what supernatural strength one poor, uncultivated woman is to be wife, mother, housekeeper, cook, laundry-woman, governess, ward politician, and charming center of an attractive home at one and the same time? I do not say that I never saw a woman who was all this; but I do say she who accomplished this marvel was a very intellectual and considerably cultivated person. Her husband took great comfort in her society and was very proud of her; but I never knew him to take her advice in a single case of any importance to their mutual interests, though by neglecting to do so, he several times lost all their common property and brought very severe trials and want upon her.

Oh, no! it is all a mistake about the "influence"—one of those pleasant humbugs I would gladly see exploded, because very unjustly it is made a cause of reproach to us. And it is done in this way: A man falls into bad habits, and his wife who loves him, very gently, with secret tears and a public proud forbearance, tries to persuade him to give up the dangerous vice. He listens half impatiently, kisses her as if he were conferring a pardon upon her for being so disagreeable as to mention the matter to him, and tells her she must be very loving and patient with him, and try to exercise a strong influence over him through his affections! She takes this disinterested advice, not knowing what else to do, and forgives him sweetly over and over again. But by-and-by, when the evil habits are confirmed, she is aroused to a sense of the uselessness of patience and shows a little spirit upon occasions. What does my lord say to that? He makes it the excuse for behaving more wickedly than before, telling her with lofty assurance that her cold, unloving ways have driven him to dissipation, and will be the ruin of him yet. So it goes on from bad to worse continually, until there comes a time when she says, "I can no longer endure this; we shall have to live apart." And then he says, "why, what's the matter? You didn't use to take these things so seriously!"

Behold the reward of your sweetness—to be told that you used not to care about these abominable practices, but of late you are quite putting on airs! Let me inquire in this case, who used the controlling influence? Was it the