

For Fair Readers.

Lower Lights.

BY GARTH GODFREY.

It was Junius Henry Browne who said that 'women were made to be written about.' In view, however of all the nonsense that is written about them, this does not seem to be a good and sufficient reason for their creation. In reading what is written for and about women of the period, the conclusion is irresistible that the proper mental attitude for women is standing on tip-toe; in other words reaching and straining after abnormal conditions of mind, body and estate. It is amusing, it is pathetic; but it seems to be cumulative, and the wonder is: where will it end?

She is not only brilliant in conversation, an artist of no mean ability, a composer of music, a writer of essays, but also, mirable dictu,— a 'leader of society' and a 'model wife and mother.' It is not unusual to add to all these wholly incompatible attainments a face and figure suggestive of 'a fine old portrait. In addition to all these gifts and graces the poor creature must be a shining success as a philanthropist, a promoter of Foreign Missions and her pastor's right-hand woman. As one personally sweet woman remarked, "These things make me feel like a plated spoon; I don't feel as if I had any mind to cultivate and if anything makes me pugnacious it is 'style.'" Contrasting this declaration of a woman who has 'assured position,' with the straining and tip toeing and pretending of countless women, with an "Uplift,"— a cool dash of common-sense seem to refresh a much wearied inner consciousness of universal sham.

Yet all this is not a protest against aspiration. The powers that be, among the literati, have declared "there is no crime but low aim." The difficulty is not with the aim to 'do noble things, not dream them,' but the whole trouble lies in misdirected

energy, misguided force and altogether misunderstood resources. The demand seems to be for more common-sense; for this is the wisdom in little things that makes life worth living with those who have it. All women may not be distinctly 'brilliant in conversation,' yet all women may cultivate a generosity of spirit which will keep them from hating and picking to pieces those who are supposed to possess the perilous 'gift of gab.'

All women may not be artists or musicians or 'leaders of society' or the 'hostess of the nation,' or any other wildly pronounced creation, yet it lies in every woman's power to be

in her friends and rejoices in it. One who detects sham or ill-nature and withdraws from it, rather than stays with it to fight and punish it. One who makes you feel comfortable and happy by her faith in you, her uncritical, kindly and tolerant way of dealing with the world's faults and foibles. To be learned, to be brilliant, to be successful, in a literary or social way, requires the proverbial pound of flesh nearest the heart; but there are better and altogether more necessary achievements for women, the average woman, than standing on tip-toe and straining after these things.

The woman who is loved most is the woman who keeps the 'lower lights burning,' the small tender-nesses that make those around her happy while they are with her. The woman who knows how to compass home-comfort by the nameless charm of a sweet spirit, a happy faith, a quiet manner and well chosen speech is the woman who will be adored by those who live with her. There are women who work, either with mind or hand or both, until they are too exhausted to talk, too weary to listen and too utterly fagged to make another effort to be bright or even pleasant, and these are they who fail;

these are they who are 'cross,' who are 'unreasonable,' and whose most conspicuous achievement is the red robe of martyrdom. If they had but done half as much and had done it in the right way and at the right time and in the right place they would now be wearing a laurel wreath instead of a crown of thorns.

Let us leave the women with an 'Outlook' and an 'Uplift' unto the idols to which they are joined. Let us consider the average woman with her deep, true heart, her sweet womanly yearning to make somebody happy, and her normal mental confusion concerning ways and means. Her first guidance is an entreaty to remember that she is lovely and loved not because of what she knows, called 'education,' nor yet because of what she does, called 'charity,' or 'social leadership,' nor yet again because of what she can compass, in things or furniture, but

what she is in herself, what she holds of power to make others happy in themselves rather than miserable because of what she has of superior advantages and attainments. If she cannot use what she knows and what she has to make life better or more interesting to others, vain and thrice vain are all her possessions.

If she cannot entertain handsomely and elaborately with triumphs of the caterer, modiste and florist, she can at least offer the everyday cheer of her table to a friend or two at a time, and leave on each an impression of so much good will, so much grace, mercy and peace toward all the world that each will go from her presence refreshed and fed not only physically but spiritually.

In this way she will build up, one by one, friendships that will surround her life with escapes, resources and defences in every possible trial that may come to her.

"But the people I know are so commonplace. They do not seem to be worth the trouble, besides they bore me and their presence untunes me."

How often one hears this plaint from those who could be charming to these poor commonplace people. Yet the truth remains that very