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THE  
BOSTONIAN

*AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF LOCAL  
INTEREST*



VOL. II

APRIL-SEPTEMBER 1895



BOSTON, MASS.  
THE BOSTONIAN PUBLISHING COMPANY  
83 NEWBURY STREET

## WOMEN'S CLUBS

Conducted by Mrs. Abby Morton Diaz

FROM Marcus Aurelius we have an injunction, in effect like this:

As the wise workman has his implements ever at hand, ready for use, so dost thou have thy principles ready for deciding the correctness of all proceedings. Now every right proceeding, however trifling, cannot be otherwise than in accordance with universal principles, or laws, as the tiniest atom cannot hold itself together without fulfilling the general law of attraction; and Emerson tells us, "The whirling bubble in the brook admits us to the secrets of the mechanism of the sky." So the Waltham Women's Club, that small bubble of humanity,—mere froth in the estimation of the reverend gentleman of Brooklyn, who asks: "Did you ever read in the Bible of a woman being in Heaven? I don't believe there is a woman there now, or ever will be. They will go back into their original state, whence they were taken by their Creator. When Christ said that there would be no marriages in Heaven, but that all should be as the angels, I believe He meant there were no such creatures as women in that world of blessedness and song. Women were made for the glory of man, and man for the glory of God." An old, familiar statement, this last, though we may well query if its authors could find at hand "*principles*" for its justification. But the Waltham Women's Club, in bringing together its sister clubs, on a recent occasion, was unconsciously fulfilling that universal law of *oneness*, or *togetherness*, which from planetary systems to atoms, inclusive, holds all life in its keeping. "All things work *together*," and at

the earliest date on record the morning stars sang *together*.

The club season was over, the last yearly reception had been held, but no picnic had yet been offered, and in the harmonious month of June representatives from nearly a dozen clubs were ready, and glad, to "flock" for an occasion promising not only an inning, but an outing.

Just where was it to be? Island Grove? A real island? all surrounded by water? how reached? boating up Charles River? how shall we know the way?—were some of the questions asked, as friend met friend on entering the Fitchburg train from its several stations. The rather general directions, "Follow the most intelligent-looking company of women," proved a safe one, though needless, as the cordial *receivers* at the station took us in friendly charge, and guided us safely to a most charming spot, not quite an island, but with the Charles River doing its best to make it so, and a grove, and a roomy pavilion in circular shape, having seats all the way round, and between these and the canopy-roof very wide space; thus, with the water so close about, it was almost like being on shipboard, and a blithesome little steamcraft was in readiness to make the seeming a reality.

The purpose of the *togetherness* was delightfully carried out by the various groups and twos, shifting and drifting, and the enthusiasm and inspiration visible in the eager faces showed that what was being told was worth the hearing, and made the enclosure seem a veritable thought-exchange for the day,—the kind which, in the light ages, will take

the place of the present stock-exchange. For we have the testimony of Froude that, "The best thing we can do for one another is to freely exchange thought." In the good time coming we shall *invest* in excellence, and draw our *interest* from priceless ideas and all the higher knowledges!

The picnicking proper transpired at noontime at the tables appointed therefor; but, though sociability prevailed and the merry jest went round, yet, by keeping an ear open at the right or left, one could learn that still, in varied forms, is being asked that query of old,—what is Truth?

Adjoining to the Pavilion we found the seats arranged audience-fashion, and this, with the flower and plant-bedecked platform, and a presiding officer and secretary, seemed to promise an aftertaste of what had served its time and finished its course, though it might well have been called the regular affair *thawed out*; the general air of festivity, and the *all-out-doors*, together with the absence of reports and rulings, and the variety given by the introduction of songs and recitations, and, above all, by the presence of a number of gentlemen,—special guests,—betokening a very unusual laxity of procedure. The verses, "Should all my Ships Come Home from Sea," which drew so much applause on their own account, and from their fine rendering, were given by Miss Maude Banks, a niece and namesake of the actress.

The exclusiveness of the above-quoted Reverend was even exceeded by John Milton, who suggested an improved plan whereby the Creator could just as well have created men angelic here on earth, leaving women out of the creative scheme altogether:

"Oh, why did God create at last  
This novelty on earth, this fair defect  
Of nature, and not fill the world at once  
With men as angels, without feminine?"

These views were evidently not

shared by the Waltham clergymen, who endorsed by their presence a gathering of "feminine"—perhaps after earth life to go back to their original state!—and who were not only present, but spoke, and not only spoke, but spoke to the glory of the women and of their club; believed the latter to be doing a good work in the community; liked to have their wives belong; were glad to be allowed the privilege of even one afternoon's attendance. They went still further; they were willing women should vote. Now if the shepherds thus stray from the old-accustomed paths, who is to answer for the flocks?

This question, however, seemed in no wise to disturb the smooth flow of the proceedings. The president of the Detroit Women's Club was present, and expressed her gratification in being thus enabled to learn something of Eastern clubs and club representatives. Some of the latter spoke of the value of clubs to members, and through them to homes and to the community in general. It was declared that whatever of fine thought thereby gained, or of noble impulse aroused, must inevitably be felt in the homes. An undoubtedly true statement; for all improvement there, whether in kitchen, nursery, or around the evening lamp, is effected by mind, and this is in a special manner the working-ground of women's clubs.

A great deal is said of the responsibilities of women as home-makers, and as child-trainers. From every direction—press, pulpit, and platform—these are so persistently and eloquently urged upon women, that it might be supposed all the children in the land were half-orphaned,—left to the sole charge of one parent. But while no less should be said of women's home responsibilities, a great deal more needs to be said of men's. Mothers' Meetings have been considered of first importance, but why not Fathers' Meetings? Many

of the home topics, once the special concern of mothers' meetings, are now made the subjects of earnest consideration at women's clubs. Is there any reason why men also should not hold council concerning the wise guidance of their children, and the many vital matters pertaining to home life? Until their own gatherings shall have some such high purpose, it would seem fitting that they show some hesitancy in deriding those of women, a great deal more, in fact, than is now shown in newspaper columns and elsewhere.—What God has joined, let not man put asunder. The ideal club will be composed of both sexes,—the natural, and therefore divine, family arrangement. Men whose day is filled in with business cares and worries, need, equally with women, these weekly opportunities for the culture of faculties other and higher than are used in their daily avocations, need them as helps to themselves, and also in home-making—so surely the equal concern of both men and women. They should be united in these higher pursuits, and this not because they are alike, but for just the opposite reason: because they are different. In the great and splendid human force the masculine and feminine are complements of each other.

Says Edward Maitland: "And so it has come, that, divorced from its due companionship, England's masculine energy has insisted upon operating independently of its indispensable mate and counterpoise, England's feminine sympathy. . . . In the new Church of the Regeneration woman will be both a prophet and a priest, by the pure light of her intuitions. . . . Does the true inner significance of the woman's movement at length begin to dawn upon us? . . . Is the idea of a regeneration in Church and State and society, in which Religion and Science and Conduct shall go hand in hand, wholly absurd,—a regeneration in which

woman shall minister, not to door-keepers and chairmen merely, but as prophets and priests. Before Phœbus Apollo, is Aurora; before Horus, Isis; before Buddha, Mais; before Christ, Mary. But the woman does more than precede the man. No rivalry is possible between two whose functions are essentially distinct. To her belongs the suggestion and inspiration which prompt his first great work. Hers is the glory of the inauguration; of her the Gospel is born; from her lips the Christ takes the bidding for his first miracle. She it is who by virtue of her keener sympathies perceives that the people are athirst for a wine that shall be better, sweeter, purer than any that they have yet tasted."

The great midsummer event of Boston the present year acquaints us with what we may safely call the largest "Club" in the world,—that of the "Society of Christian Endeavor." It is doing that long-needed work,—uniting the Ideal with the Practical; Religion with every-day life; Heavenliness with worldliness. For long and dreary years has religion been preached away from us, and associated chiefly with a future state of existence; clearly a wrong done us, since its message is peace on earth and good will to all mankind. We have "endeavored" to sing and to preach, to pray the world into goodness; now we are going to endeavor to *do* what all these shall inspire. Everybody is to render a service to somebody, brighten somebody's life, encourage and assist somebody. The very wish and thought so widely extended, will work wonders in the way of creating an atmosphere of Love and Peace. The Society has already obtained such a hold that 250,000 children in the English-speaking world are trying to do "as Jesus would like to have them," and this is but a small part of its work.

It is idle to say that women alone,

or men alone, could have secured such results. These, however, it should be said, have not been gained wholly by uniting the two forces, but also by a more extended application of the Grand Law of *Oneness*, or *Together*ness, spoken of at the beginning as a universal principle variously manifested in the world of

nature and the world of humanity.

The same number of individuals, earnestly as they might endeavor, could scarcely have begun to effect what has been accomplished by the united effort of a host, working with one heart and one mind under a common leadership, and inspired with a common enthusiasm.

