

Chapters to Young Men, on How to Win a Wife
Chapter VI – A Little Good Bye Chat
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Published in The Principia May 26, 1860

Well, Ned, are you trying it? Have you become fully convinced of the length and breadth of the undertaking? I know you admit the reasonableness of all I have said, and I know you have too high an opinion of Susie to think she would take up with one whit less of a man than I have described, and that you love her so well you wouldn't have her do it if she would! When you think of her you have a very high ideal of manhood. Now, strive to attain to it – she will love you and help you. You are on the right track!

Will and George, are you becoming more manly, more *gentlemanly*? Are you sure you are not trying to pass yourself off with the respective counterfeits of these qualities – conceitedness, or foppishness? Are you?

For all of you, I have an additional word of exhortation. Now don't laugh, or don't "be discouraged" if I go one step further, and tell you, you mustn't be all these good things *merely for the sake of* "winning a wife," but for their own sake. Getting married is not the great object of life. It is not the great object with young gentlemen and young ladies; to which they are to devote themselves till it be accomplished. Some young men go with girls just as they would go house-hunting – only to be able to make a good selection. Everything is viewed through the lens of "matrimony." A certain amount of effort and money is devoted to the business of wife-getting, as to any other necessary business transaction. Would such a girl make a good wife? If not, it is no use wasting any time and money on her! The idea that people may associate for the purpose of enjoying each other's society, as friends, for mutual improvement and happiness is unknown. They cannot see a gentleman and lady in company together but they are sure they must be thinking of matrimony! They experiment very carefully and economically, till they make a selection, and *then* draw their chosen one from the group and don't care a whistle for everybody else in the world – wouldn't as much as walk home from church with another girl – have *concluded* their business, and haven't any more to do with them! Now I hope you don't entertain any such narrow views of life! Who, what is life? And what is matrimony? What are your ideas on the subject? Do you think women were created just for nothing else in the world than to help you comfortably along through life, to bring you in a little capital, perhaps, to start with, to feed you, and fix you, and work, and help you to accumulate and coax you up, and flatter your vanity; to belong to you wholly, and conform to all your notions? Do you seek a wife as a convenience? Is *self* your object? Do you go wife-hunting, among the girls? If you do you won't succeed, and you don't deserve to! You know no more about love than the mole, digging under ground, does about the laws which govern the motions of the heavenly bodies!

I have said matrimony is not the chief object; yet it is a great event, *the* great event of life, to both man and woman. This habit of treating it as a light, trivial affair, something to be laughed at, and jested about, something rather funny than otherwise, is decidedly out of taste. *If* a young gentleman and lady like each other, their preference is made the subject of humorous remark; they are teased and jested, and "plagued," and made fun of; as if there were something vastly amusing about it. I am quite sure that I have, in most cases, as keen an appreciation of the ludicrous as anybody, but I must confess that I can't see anything particularly *funny* in the idea of two human beings loving each other – so far from that, I think it is about as sensible a thing as they can do! Seriously, does not such a view of one of the deepest emotions of the soul, betray great want of depth, in mind and feeling?

The higher your aim in life, the more exalted your ideas of matrimony. If you live for self; if your object is to accumulate for yourself the material things of this earthly planet, you will want simply a quiet, unobtrusive, bread-and-butter kind of a wife, who will be economical, and whose mind will never stray beyond the "sphere" of "home." If you have a soul full of great ideas, noble aspirations, you cannot be satisfied with less than a companion – one to whom you can reveal your whole heart – who can understand and sympathize with you, *fully*.

But perhaps your soul has not yet awakened; is not unfolded; is still in the bud. It is waiting for the sunshine; it will blossom one of these days, when you find – you'll know who!

L.