

### SPHERICAL DOMESTICITY

No households where love holds its empire undisputed there is never need of considering the problem, How shall husband and wife settle upon their road when it comes to a parting of the ways? Each will trust to the other's judgment; and before the fork is reached the path will be chosen upon which they may walk together. But there are many households where love does not hold its empire supreme, or where if, shattered and bleeding, love still abides strong trust and confidence do not. And in those households the question does frequently arise, How shall two walk together, not being agreed?

Miss Lavinia Goodell, in a recent article in the "Woman's Journal," thus recommends as a recipe for the settlement of all such questions what we may call the law of spherical domesticity:

"Teach him [the husband], on the contrary, that his wife is his equal; give her equal power with him; let her decide the questions pertaining to her 'sphere,' and he those pertaining to his, after mutual consultation and deference to each other, and the happiness and well-being of both and of the family will be increased a hundred-fold; even as now domestic happiness is far greater in civilization, where there is a nearer approach toward equality, than in barbarism, where the wife is reduced to a mere abject state of submission."

We have no inclination to a controversy with Miss Goodell or the "Woman's Journal." But thousands of wives and mothers read the Christian Union, and we counsel them against spherical domesticity. It is a delusion and a snare; as prolific of petty troubles as an alder swamp is of mosquitoes. In every organization there must be some final appeal: in the firm some senior partner; in the army some commander-in-chief; in government some king, or house of lords, or plebiscitum; in church some council, or convocation, or Pope, or the great congregation; and in every committee some chairman holding a casting vote. In the household, according to Paul, the husband holds the casting-vote; and the Christian Union agrees with Paul.

There are, indeed, households where individual idiosyncrasies override general laws, and the stronger wife is the natural head of the abnormal and, generally, not truly well-ordered family. There are instances where a brutal husband must needs be resisted by a will stronger than his own, and vanquished by some other weapon than that which is almost always the strongest and the best in woman's armory, "the irresistible might of meekness." There are also, in all naturally ordered households, certain questions of detail which clearly belong to the wife; and certain others which as clearly belong to the husband. Generally the husband earns the money, and must therefore determine how much can be spent. Generally the wife expends the money, and must therefore determine in detail how it shall be appropriated. Questions of the kitchen and the household belong to the wife; questions of the counting-room to the husband. But the questions where come the parting of the ways are not on either side of a line real or imaginary. If the father is allopathic and the mother homeopathic and the child is sick, who shall

decide what doctor shall be summoned? If the father is Episcopalian and the mother is Baptist, who shall determine where the children shall go to Sunday school? If the mother is a New England girl, and business seems to call the father West, who shall decide where the home shall be? It would take an act of legislature to define the respective "spheres," and an annual session to amend the definition. Such a union would be like that we should have had in this country if secession had been a success; the border line would be a scene of perpetual conflict, and only infinite patience could prevent eternal wrangling.

When a man assumes the rudder of a double life he assumes a responsibility more sacred and solemn than that of chief executive of a realm. When a woman reposes in other hands than her own the guidance of her life and that of children yet unborn, she reposes a trust more sacred and Solemn than any that surrogate's court was ever asked to enforce. But the happiness of the married life is not to be enhanced by lightening the responsibility or lessening the trust. It is to be guarded by developing in man a profounder sense of his obligation of chivalrous devotion to the life intrusted to his keeping, and by developing in woman a profounder sense of the largeness of the trust she reposes in her husband, and the need of a love as large to justify it. The Christian Union repeats its counsel, glad of the occasion, and not unwilling if it could burn the advice in letters of living fire into the memory and heart of every husband and every wife:

“HUSBANDS TO RECOGNIZE THE EQUAL RICHES OF WIVES, AND TO DEFER TO THEIR WISHES IN ALL MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE COMMON WELFARE. WE ALSO EXHORT THE WIFE TO SUBMIT HERSELF 'TO HER HUSBAND RATHER THAN HAVE STRIFE WITH HIM. FOR ALMOST ANY ERROR WILL BRING LESS SUFFERING UPON A HOUSEHOLD AND LESS EVIL UPON THE CHILDREN THAN PERPETUAL CONFLICT BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE.