

'THAT OTHER WOMAN.'

'Il-y-en à toujours un autre.'

SINCE the world began but one woman has had a perfectly good time, and that was the first. The *Other Woman* came after the Fall, in the train of sin and sorrow; for, although it is not specially mentioned in Holy Writ, there can be no manner of doubt but that she was part of the primeval curse upon Eve—and the worst part, too; 'And thou shalt have Another Woman to dwell beside thee, and thy desire shall be towards her to eclipse her utterly, but it shall not be so, and with sorrow shalt thou suffer her all the days of thy life,' etc. Could any orthodox reading of the text attain the bitterness of this obvious, although unrecorded, curse!

As at the beginning of all life, so at the beginning of each individual life there is a short respite. *Every* baby—even a girl—is 'just the sweetest baby that ever was,' and 'in trailing clouds of glory,' and embroidered cambric does it enjoy the golden age of Ignorance. But the 'shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the growing girl when she is "short-coated"—shorn of her strength, so to speak, like Samson, and delivered to the Philistines. Alas! poor victim of the curse: as soon as you can realise anything, you realise the *other little girl*—the horrid little wretch who does everything that is nice; or the 'horrid' little wretch who has everything that is nice. The *other little girl* never seems to soil her pinafore or break her toys, or make mud pies, or sulk, or scream. *Ragie* never comes for her. She has prettier dolls, and bigger lollipops, and longer sashes and curlier hair than you. She is always being petted and praised, because she is so pretty, or so clever. She does wonders in potbooks when you are struggling with the mysteries of a-b-ab. 'See what little May Brown can do!' cry the authorities who so lately worshipped you, and you feel the keen anguish of eclipse, and hate little May Brown with all the force of your childish soul.

You grow bigger and go to school, but you find the other girl there before you. She takes the prizes for which you strive. She steals your bosom friends. She borrows your nicest things, and forgets to lend you hers. She says nasty things about the shape of your nose, and laughs at your mortification. She outshines you in hair, in hampers, and in pocket-money. When the final good-bye comes you kiss her and 'dear' her, and hope she'll come and visit you, and go home inwardly rejoicing that you have seen the last of her. Now, you are going to have a good time at last. Alas! the other girl is a progressive curse, and she culminates in the *Other Woman*. You have but exchanged that odious Selina Smith for the still more odious Rose Robinson.

The *Other Woman* is a terrible creature. Your weak points are always her strong ones. If you are chubby, she is spirituelle; and *Juno*esque, if you are scraggy. She never tans or freckles, and looks equally well by night or by day. She wears the frocks and hats which you long for but cannot afford. She waltzes divinely,

and appears cool and charming when you are red and crumpled. She steals your partners remorselessly and shamelessly, and, adding insult to injury, will audibly pity you for being a 'wallflower'—perhaps even offer to introduce some undesirable cavalier whom she wishes to discard. Truly the tender mercies of the *Other Woman* are cruel!

But it is when *she* comes on the scene that your cup of bitterness is filled to overflowing. Why should she always look her best then, and *you* your worst? You feel nervous and stupid, whilst she is brilliant and self-possessed. Of course she attracts him, and you agonise. How you burn with jealous rage when he is with her, and freeze with mortified dignity when he returns to you; and melt altogether into bitter tears in secret! How you loathe what people call her 'taking ways.' *Taking!* The *Other Woman* is always taking something; and the 'ewe lambs' of her neighbours are the express objects of her ambition! If she does not take him from you altogether, she takes all she can get; and you have to endure in silence until he ends the torture by declaring himself plainly. Ah, that was the proudest moment of your life; but between ourselves—it was not so much because you had won him, as because you had triumphed over her at last!

Of course, he told you that he had never loved before—and you believed him because you wanted to believe him. All your life you had dreamed of this paradise—a kingdom wherein the *Other Woman's* foot had never trod, and now it is yours. Like Robinson Crusoe, you dwell securely in your isolated sovereignty. But, one day—like Crusoe you will make a discovery—only a 'footprint in the sands of time,' perchance—but it is *hers*!

I said one woman at least had been perfectly happy—but I am not sure about that. Perhaps Eve discovered the truth about *Little*, and deliberately planned the Fall to get Adam away from all connection with his past.

Alas, poor Woman! You may outgrow love, and outlive beauty, but the curse clings; and hoary hairs find you anxiously striving to socially eclipse Mrs de Tomkins!

Mrs Vermont Browne: 'Why on earth don't you get your husband to cut off his whiskers?' Mrs Sniffan Jones: 'I wouldn't have him do it for the world. I want him to let them grow, and get them all out of his system.'



F. Dinton, Wellington Camera Club.

SHAVING, WITH OPERATOR INCLUDED.



Australasian Art Co's photo.

BEHIND THE SCENES.