

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF LOVE.

The man who is making this interesting study is Arthur MacDonald, who has been called the "Lombroso of America." Few, if any men of science are better fitted to handle such a delicate subject than is Dr. MacDonald. He has been a student of law, theology, medicine, psychology, psychophysics, metaphysics, insanity, hypnotism and criminology. His speciality is the study of human nature, both in its normal and abnormal developments.

In his experimental study of love, Dr. MacDonald is employing as far as possible, what he terms the "natural history method." He has been collecting love letters and various other data relating to romance in real life, tabulating them and studying them as an entomologist would study an anthill, or analyzing them as a chemist would analyze an unknown compound. He has been diligently collecting details of love affairs which have come within his own knowledge or which have been reported to him directly by the persons concerned. All of the letters and other data have been handled with the great care which evidence in such delicate cases demands. All names of persons and places, dates and other references which might in any manner betray the identities of those concerned have been carefully omitted.

In the doctor's records the love affairs are outlined briefly, only such circumstances as might cause turning points in the careers of the participants being given. The copied letters are interspersed with explanatory notes and deductions. Each case in itself suggests a brief novel, none the less romantic because an experience of real life, and all the more interesting on account of the mystery suggested by the suppression of the identities of the heroes and heroines.

A few cases might be briefly outlined to illustrate the varying moods of the different subjects of the investigation. For instance, Mr. B. falls in love at first sight on meeting Miss C. He shortly invites her to drive with the purpose of proposing to her uppermost in his mind. He becomes impatient, however, and calls at her house two days previous to the expected drive. He proposes. She is greatly surprised, cancels the drive, and forbids him her house. Commenting on this case the

doctor says that B. and C. appear to have been well adapted to each other. It is his opinion that B. might have won C. had he been less aggressive. "It seems to be instinctive in young women," says he, "to reject the impetuous lover, without the least consideration of his character, ability, or fitness. B. illustrates impetuous love, which at the time has little reason and less common sense. He was conscious of these facts all the time, but his impulses and desires were too strong."

In commenting upon this the doctor says that E. was poor, with little visible means of support, some of his clothes being threadbare. These so-called superficial beings, in his opinion, affect women unconsciously, whether they admit it or not. Long enforced economy in life, he believes, tends to make one too serious in appearance and often in reality. This feeling, he says, can become so extreme in love affairs as to be morbid, which morbidity sometimes results in terrible crimes in persons with morally weak and impetuous characters. There should, says he, be a good-natured disposition on both sides, especially when the course of true love does not run smooth, for sometimes a woman wishes she could love the man who loves her, although she feels it impossible to do so.

Miss F. and Mr. G., another couple, had met and corresponded occasionally without the least exchange of sentiment. They became better acquainted at a summer resort, where they walked together almost every day. They frequently quarrelled in argument. After one serious quarrel G. went away, but returned in a few weeks to find a great change in Miss F., who now became much less quarrelsome. They appeared to have a stronger feeling for each other and fell in love. Soon they quarrelled again, while on one of their customary walks. Both returned from their walk single file. Coming to a barbed wire fence G. held it up while Miss F. passed under. She hesitated before holding it up for G., but finally condescended to do so. She held it too low, causing the back of his coat to be caught and torn. This was the turning point of renewed affection. She relented and love again grew up between them.

Leisure time, in the doctor's opinion, is of great incidental importance so far as love affairs are concerned. In the country, he says, the beauties of nature give a directness to conversation which under the other conditions (as at a reception) would not be so natural. This case, in his opinion, illustrates how dependent love is upon what he terms spacious propriety. These few cases, given in outline, are sufficient to illustrate the process of recording the various data and the method of drawing the deductions. Of course the doctor must have in mind hundreds of details which for lack of space cannot be given to the reader in order that he may be fully equipped for his diagnosis, so to speak. The love letters in the doctor's collection, or rather the copied portions, are, of course, the most interesting of all the data relating to this experimental study. A few extracts taken at random will indicate the character of the correspondents:—

"I want you to feel you can come to me with anything and everything. Keep my soul and I will keep yours."

"Of course, my dear boy, I want to see you, nor do I want the "civilized, co-degenerate world," as you term it, to enjoy that pleasure with me. No, dear, I only want you."

"Are you sure you want to see me? Beware! I wonder how it will affect me to see you again."

"I'm only a mountain pink that grows in out of the way places—hard to reach—not easily taken from its hiding place."

"How I cling to you and wrap myself up in you. I'm a kind of mental chameleon."

"Emotions cannot be got up to order, and I must say you have jarred my feelings in so completely misunderstanding me."

In her following letter this correspondent somewhat changes her tune. "I should like to see you. I feel a strong impulse toward you, dearest."

"I wish you were here, dear, just now. I do not understand myself why my thoughts turn to you, for I did not conceive it possible for my jaded soul to be again aroused with interest. Strange, very strange!"

"And so, dear, you have been "emotional" in your letters to me. How very obtuse I must be, for I have not noticed any traces of emotion therein. It has been

rather a mild, unadulterated sort of emotion, hasn't it?"

"I am in one of my desperate moods when I simply would defy the devil, man, God and do what I pleased. I feel gloriously free."

"A young woman in the opening of her letter writes:—"Do you know that henceforth I'm going to follow your example and be very moderate and mild in my expressions?" In the conclusion to the same letter she says:—"Just come to my arms, dear." In her next letter to the same man she remarks:—"I have thought for a long time that woman and fool were synonymous terms, and my own experience confirms the opinion. I have played the part of a first-class idiot. It makes me smile at this moment at my own puerile faith that I could think that a man cared for me. I think a man would have a more serious task than he would care to undertake in convincing me of it again. Bah! It's all a farce." Her next letter begins:—"My dearest boy! I have been repenting my brutal letter to you. Will you forgive me, dear?"

When asked what suggested the idea of making this experimental study, Dr. MacDonald replied:—"It is well known that young men and young women—young men especially, perhaps—very often do foolish things because of love. We have instances of this effect all the time. It is a constant evil, although such cases are extreme. The question is why should such a great amount of suffering and pain be caused by unreciprocated love. In a number of experiments in which the subjects endeavored to concentrate their minds upon the idea of loving some one, experiencing for the time being the emotion of love, the effect of this concentration was a lessening of the breathing. This effect seems to be more intense than that caused by hatred in normal individuals, but in criminals that of hatred seems to be in excess of that of love. The effect of love, like that of any prolonged excitement, may after a while cause pallor and exhaustion."

It is generally true, also, that during high tension of feeling the desire for food lessens, perhaps because the system under nervous strain is much limited in its power of digestion and assimilation. When there is uncertainty as to the outcome of a love affair it is a wearing process. On the

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