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Produced by Daniel Fromont

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The Duchess

How to marry well

Some girls start in life with the idea that to snub the opposite sex is the surest way of bringing it to their feet. All such imaginings are vain! A man may be amused by the coquettish impertinences of a girl, he may even be attracted by it to a certain extent, but in the end he feels repulsion, and unless it be the exception that proves the rule, hastens away presently to lay his name and fortune at the disposal of some more modest girl.

To marry *well* is the note that strikes more clearly on the brain of the *débutante's* mother than on the ear of that interesting person herself. A girl starting in life feels all the world is before her where to choose. She gives, indeed, too little thought to the subject. She comes fresh from the schoolroom into the crowded drawing-room, thinking only how best to enjoy herself. The thought of marriage, if near, is yet so far, that it hardly interferes with her pleasure in the waltz, the theatre, or the eternal afternoon tea.

It is a pity that the educational standard fixed for young girls now-a-days is of so low an order. A smattering of French, a word or two of German, an *idea* of what music really means, as gained from a three years' acquaintance with scales and movements, and songs without words—this is all! There is, of course, a good deal of reading with scientific masters that serves only to puzzle the brains half given to the matter in hand, and then the girl is emancipated from the schoolroom, and let loose upon society to "be settled in life," says Mamma.

Some of these girls *do* marry well—surprisingly so! But they are amongst the few. As for the rest, they make their own lives and their husband's a burden to them. Without having time given them to mature their ideas, these latter are hurried into matrimony while still children, without having formed a conception of the terrible responsibility that attaches itself to every human soul who agrees to join itself to another.

These latter do not make good matches in any one sense of the word. The struggling barrister, the clerk, the curate, the brainless masher—such are their prey; and if they make richer prizes than these, still the match cannot be called *good*; presently there is dis-union as the clever husband finds the pretty but nonsensical wife utterly unable to follow him through the paths of life that Fate has opened out to him.

It is a common idea that men care only for beauty, and are to be attracted by no lesser virtue—if virtue it may be called. This is a most gross error that even the earliest of our thinkers has laid bare. What says Thomas Carew:

"But a smooth and steadfast mind,  
Gentle thoughts and calm desires,  
Hearts with equal love combined,  
Kindle never-dying fires:—  
Where these are not, I despise  
Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes."

We see, then, that there are things more desirable to the masculine mind than the mere charms of the flesh. To be beautiful is a good thing, for which we should thank Nature—to be attractive, morally, rather than physically, is, however, a thing for which we should thank Nature even more, if she be good enough to have endowed us with that lasting quality. Let a girl learn once for all that her little schoolgirl airs and graces can please only the unintellectual of her set, that to make a good match, in the most noble sense of the word, is to form herself to be the equal of the man she marries, and all will be right. I speak advisedly, because a girl who has the courage to so plan out her future is very unlikely to wed with any save the most desirable of the other sex.

But what *is* a good match? Does it mean a man with money only, or position only, or intellect only, or only a capacity for being good humored under each and every circumstance? The common acceptance of the term means a man in such a moneyed position that he can place his wife considerably above that of her friends, so far as money goes. And that is a very good thing too, so far as it goes. But to be rich is not everything! The merely sordid, the entirely uneducated can rise to this height, but surely to make a *good* match one's husband should be the possessor of something more than money. He should be cultured, refined, intelligent, and therefore the girl who wishes to mate with him, should take care to be cultured and refined herself. Half the bad matches in the world are caused either by the educated women marrying the man thoroughly beneath her in all moral qualities, or the man who has spent his life cultivating his mind, falling a slave to the petty fascination of a pretty woman who has only beauty to give him—nothing more!

What girls should never forget is to be *neat*! Not primly so, but daintily so. The girl well got up, with irreproachable gloves, and shoes that fit, though her gown be only cotton, yet if it be well turned out, may compete with the richest, while the slovenly dresser, who scorns or forgets to give attention to details, is passed over by the discontented eye, though her gown may be a masterpiece of Worth.

A girl should learn to put her gown on properly. No creature living takes more heed of externals than your orthodox man. He may not know the price, color, or material of your clothes, but he will know to a nicety whether you are well or badly gowned.

One special point I would impress upon the girl who desires, (as all girls do) to range themselves well, to make a good marriage—is to be *gentle*. The craze for vivacity, for the free and easy style that border so closely on the manners of the *demi monde* that distinguished the society of ten years ago has providentially died a natural death. Now-a-days, men are sensible enough to look for *comfort* in their married lives. And surely the knowledge that one's future wife has a heart as tender as it is sympathetic should, and does, go far to arrange a man's decision of who shall be the partner of his daily life.

I was much struck by a little incident that occurred last year, and helped to prove the truth of this argument. I, amongst others, belonging to a large party who were waiting at a railway station for the train that was to carry us down to a garden party at one of the many lovely places on the Thames, saw an old man, a decrepit creature, bowed and palsied, making his way to where the third-class compartment would be. His arms were full of bundles of various sizes. Coming near a truck, the old man, who was half blind, marched against the edge of it, and all his little bundles fell helplessly to the ground. Most of the young people belonging to our party broke into an irresistible laugh. They were not so much to be blamed. Youth *will* see amusement in even trifles, but there was one amongst us who did not laugh. The old man's chagrin seemed to touch *her*. She went quickly forward, and as he groped nervously for his parcels she lifted them one by one, and laid them in his arms. She was not a strictly pretty girl, but there was dignity and sweetness both in her face and in her action. I noticed that a young man, one of our party, watched her intently. He was rich, titled, one of *the* matches of the

London season. Supreme admiration showed itself in his face. He demanded an introduction. I gave it. In six months they were man and wife. *She* made a good match, and so did he, in every sense of the word.

There is one last remark, however, and a vital one, that I must make. No match, however distinguished either by money or position, can be called a *good* one unless "love," who "is a great Master," be the very core of it.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOW TO MARRY WELL \*\*\*

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