

WOMEN AND MEN.—THE FUTURE OF CLUB LIFE.

Here is a man's view of clubs, interesting both in itself and for the man that wrote it:

Does the extremely rapid growth of women's clubs stand for future social changes? says Mr Higginson in *The Bazar*. There is something very formidable in the unobserved steps with which the hitherto subject sex makes its way into masculine privileges, when once granted the smallest foothold. In our early colonies girls were often allowed to attend the public schools only in summer, when the boys were at work in the field; whereas now in most places the slight majority of pupils are of the female sex, and nine-tenths of the teachers. Even in church, at least among the Jews, the admission of women to anything like equal places in the synagogue is a thing only recently attempted. Is not even club life to be defended against these peaceful and insidious invaders?

At first sight, it would seem, no two things could be more remote from each other than men's and women's clubs. Men's clubs are usually housed. Women's are gradually creeping beyond the parlor, though usually reaching no farther than the vestry, but in some places have houses of their own. Men seek clubs for relaxation, women for at least mental exertion. Men go there to read newspapers; women, to read essays and reports, or to hear lectures by others. For many women the club is the most strenuous part of their lives; for most men it is avowedly the laziest. By the phrase "club woman" we commonly imply a person particularly laborious or useful; the phrase "club man" certainly suggests no such associations. Both imply some spending of money, but where a woman spends a dollar on a club, the man usually spends ten; where she spends five, he spends fifty. At both, food is occasionally served; but with this difference, that the woman's cup of tea probably costs her no more, all things considered, than it would cost at home, whereas the men's club dinners undoubtedly cost considerably more, although commonly at proportionate convenience to himself. It is a curious fact, as illustrating the lavishness of the American temperament, that the London clubs, on which ours are modelled, originated in the purpose of economy; and that to this day the American who dines at one of them is always amazed at the smallness of his bill. He is seldom astonished in that direction when he gets back to New York or Chicago.

Yet it is to be noticed that all these barriers of demarcation are slowly breaking down. The women's love for lectures or "papers" or discussions is more and more reproduced for the men under the more convivial name of smoke-talks. Some clubs of men habitually duplicate their supply of these for the benefit of wives and daughters. As such clubs have ladies' nights, so women's clubs have special occasions when their meetings are open to men also. Again, it is observable that classes for study begin to be formed in men's clubs, as in French or Spanish, perhaps as a relief from too arduous labors over American leads at whist.

So far as the business management of clubs is concerned, the great general development of women in this direction removes all obstacles from that quarter. In comparing, for instance, the list of officers in a benevolent society of women thirty years ago with today's standard, one notices that men were then always borrowed to preside at meetings and to manage the finances, whereas now it is more common to see the names of women in both capacities. It was once universally supposed that a man might as easily attempt to comprehend a new embroidery stitch, as a woman to

solve a point of parliamentary order, or to strike the balance in a complicated account. Both these obstacles are now overcome, although the effect of new knowledge sometimes shows itself in over-formality in both cases. It has been noticed, for instance, by male lecturers before women's clubs, that the time-honored habit of paying the lecturer his fee on the spot is sometimes abandoned in order to get written authority from several different officials, so that a week or two of delay is smilingly taken for granted. These, however, are trifles incident to early practice, and only show that women are constitutionally as businesslike as men.

I am not aware that there yet exists in America any club house, unless it be some of the so-called country clubs, where all the usual club conveniences are provided and where the sexes meet on precisely equal terms. In London there have been two or three such clubs with various fortunes for twenty-five years. I do not know that either the Nineteenth Century club or the Drawing club in New York has yet a club house or even permanent rooms of their own. They had not when I last visited them, although they have had successful and agreeable careers. The Appalachian Mountain club and the Twentieth Century club in Boston, both having a membership of both sexes, have suites of rooms of their own, with limited social advantages. In such cases the rooms need only to be expanded into a building, and the social advantages to be continuous and universal, in order to make a joint institution. It is worth trying, and is in line with the spirit of the age, to extend such joint enterprises farther. With reasonable precautions there would be no scandal or even suspicion, and such clubs would tend to make all society more reasonable and natural. Probably the only permanent difficulty would proceed from the fact that each would be an association not of individuals alone, but largely also of married pairs; and that in many cases where the husband or wife was delightful the corresponding wife or husband might be voted a bore.

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