

17. Woman's Sphere.

By One of the Sex.

The Lives We Live.

WHAT IS A "SOFTIE?"

They all sat chatting, two young girls and a married couple. The girls had just admitted that they were wishing for some good, jolly and nice beaux. But where were they to be found? The married man replied by naming a certain young man, who is certainly clever, well off, moral, and indeed is what could almost be called a model young man.

"Oh, but you wouldn't suggest that we should go with W—? Oh no, no, never. Not even if we never get another beau."

"Why not, pray?" asked the married man.

"Oh, he is too soft for anything; mush, mush, mushy, mush. Oh, oh!" And both young ladies raised their hands in disgusted and laughing remonstrance.

"Well," remarked the man, "I have known W— for years, and I can say that he is as good a young man as ever lived. If you girls are lucky enough to get such a husband as he will make you will be more than lucky, you will be blessed."

"Maybe so, but I will take a man not so good and not a bit soft," said one of the girls.

"Well, what is soft? What do you mean?" asked the puzzled man.

"Oh, I know what sort of boys or young men they mean," answered the married woman, "but I can't say why they are soft. Now, there is Johnny L—, he's soft."

"I should say so," chorused both the girls; "terribly, horribly soft."

"And M— and J—, they are soft, too, aren't they, girls?"

"Soft is no name for it. I just hate them all. I'll never get married if I have to marry such men as that."

"Well, but I haven't found out yet what a 'softie' is? Stop your laughing, girls, and tell me at once."

This was impossible to do. For although every Eve's daughter appealed to would give precisely the same decision as that given by the careless girls, yet not one of them could define what the particular quality meant. The disgusted married man remarked that he guessed it was because the young men alluded to were not dudes.

No, that was not it; it is and indefinable, illusive, and yet perfectly tangible something that floats about some men as an atmosphere. As one of the girls remarked, a man don't need to open his mouth; if he is soft, it will be seen in his smiling countenance. Certain it is, that reserved and taciturn men are rarely soft, and yet even yet, I have seen a very reserved and silent man, whom the girls used to call soft in his young days. After a man is married, he loses much of that softness, if he is lucky enough to get married; and he will find it easier to get along with women than before, when he was single. Can any of you, dear friends, solve this riddle and tell us why some men are soft?

FRIENDSHIP.

Have you a friend? Cherish her, love her, and oh, do not criticise her too harshly. The day may come to you as it does to others, when your friends will

need and cherish you. Be gentle, and if your friend needs some words of rebuke, or sharp criticism, administer them to her, in all sharpness, as you may be admonished by the Spirit. Yet, afterwards, as God tells you, show forth greater kindness, lest she esteem you an enemy. Does your friend do that which you think foolish or ill-advised? Tell her of it, don't tell others about it. She will love you for your frankness, for a true friend will never cover up your faults when they should be reproved. Would you make any sacrifice for your friend? Then remember that the sacrifice of cruel words unspoken if they bubble up to your lips when she is absent will be of more worth as friendship's offering than presents of jewels and fine purple. Is your friend given to grievous faults? Talk of them to no one but herself, and defend her when others would drag out her faults to exhibit. Does the dissection of your friends' spiritual nature ever wear a sort of cannibal aspect to you? Then love your sister, speak well of her and sharply to her. Such is true friendship, and such is worth a world of sacrifices and long suffering.

The Food We Eat.

We were talking last week about dinners. Let us exchange some ideas about soup. In some families soup appears on the table as an introduction to the dinner. But in most of cases, at least outside of the city, soup, when cooked, is the staple part of the dinner. There are many kinds of soup, from the hastily prepared vegetable soup to the elaborate mock turtle soup. The first and most important thing to watch in the preparation of this food, is that the grease is all skimmed off, and that it is not served full of scraps of meat, bits of bone and strings of vegetables. If you are making your soup from ends and fragments of meat, or if you do not intend having the meat served at dinner, it is best to put the meat on with cold water, as they will draw all the juices into the water as it becomes heated. If the meat is to serve as the *piece de resistance* for the dinner, you will need to pour boiling water over the meat when you put it into the pot, so that the juices may all be kept in.

CLEAR SOUP.

Half an hour before dinner, cut up some onions, a carrot, a small turnip and if you choose, a few cabbage leaves. Let these boil hard until is ready, when the soup should be carefully strained through a sieve and served with a slice of lemon.

GREEN TOMATO SOUP.

A quarter of an hour before dinner, cut up three ripe tomatoes, or take a few canned tomatoes, put them into the soup liquor with a small onion cut up. Let these cook until five minutes before ready to serve. Beat an egg, thicken it with a large teaspoonful of cornstarch or flour, add a piece of butter the size of an egg and a teacup of cream. The grease of your soup should have been most carefully removed while cooking. When your mixture is well beaten, add it to the soup, let it boil up for a moment, then strain it through a colander and serve with crackers or toasted bread. This makes a good dinner, if the meat is taken out of the pot previous to the cream being added. Some strain the soup before thickening, but it is less trouble and just as good to do so after

all is cooked. I learned to make this delicious soup from a most excellent cook and housekeeper, Aunt Lucy.

BEAN SOUP.

This soup is made in a family whose table is always spread with simple food and whose door is always open to receive friends. Your beans should be cooked the day before, and if you choose you can go through the tedious process of straining them through the strainer the night before you use them. Let me advise you to take a quart of beans (for a large family), soak them over night, cook them fifteen minutes the next day in soda water, then throw the water off, put them in the oven or in the pot with some good soup liquor and a piece of fat meat. When they are cooked soft, you can, if you choose, pour them into a baking dish, put a generous lump of butter on them with pepper (the salt should be boiled in them), then bake them for half an hour and you will find them delicious. Or you can serve them as boiled beans and they will be enjoyed. The next day, take what beans are left, we hope you had at least a pint left, mash them through a sieve, and hard work it is, too; but if you will put a little water in it will help you in straining them and then put them on the stove with a little water and about a quart of good rich milk. You should put them in a double kettle, if you have one, and if not improvise one by putting a lard bucket in your stove pot; in about fifteen minutes after they have begun boiling, taste them and season them or rather it, for it is soup now, and dish and send to the table very hot. Fresh bread and butter make a delightful accompaniment to this soup.

NOODLE SOUP.

This soup may or may not have vegetables cooked in it, just as you please. When nearly ready to serve, add noodles prepared in the following manner: Beat up an egg, and add flour enough to make rather a stiff dough. I always put the merest pinch of yeast powder into the flour, but it is not necessary; roll out the dough into a very thin sheet, sprinkle thickly with flour, roll up like a sheet of paper or a music roll, then with a sharp knife cut the roll into thin slices. If you have thoroughly floured the dough, the strips will fall apart like a thread. These should be cooked about ten minutes.

DUMPLINGS.

Either vegetable or plain soup can be used for dumplings, but it is better to have a few potatoes if any, as the dumplings thicken the soup. Dumplings should be cooked in a close and well-covered pot for a quarter of an hour, and then taken up at once. The lid should not be lifted while they are cooking. The recipe for them was given me years ago by the same friend who taught me to make bean soup. Into a quart of flour sift either a teaspoon (an even teaspoon) of soda, if you are going to use buttermilk, or two teaspoonfuls of yeast powder if sweet milk is used. Pour in the milk or buttermilk until a thick batter is made, about the same consistency as if they were to be rolled out in biscuits; but do not roll them out. Just leave them in the batter and dip a large tablespoonful at a time into your soup, and then shut up the pot close and let them cook. You should serve them on a large platter, as it is not good for them to be piled one